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Songs of Araby

The Middle East in the British imaginary, 1906–1923

Harry Vossen

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in History at the University of Auckland, 2019.

In memory of my grandmother, who taught me to always be curious.
You left fingerprints of grace upon our lives.

...As soon as someone had said it and someone else had listened and repeated it, it didn't matter a tinker's cuss whether it ever happened or not. The *story* was what mattered.

— Terry Pratchett, *Interesting Times*

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A note on nomenclature

Throughout the following pages I have translated Ottoman Turkish terms such as Abdülhamid and *ittihad* using modern Turkish spellings. For Arabic words such as *jihad*, *sheikh* and *fellahin* I have employed a simplified version of the system used by the International Journal of Middle East Studies, omitting diacritical marks except the ‘*ayn* and *hamza*. For terms that are well-known in English I have opted to use generally accepted English spellings over transliterations: ‘Sheikh ul-Islam’ rather than ‘Şeyhülislâm’ and ‘Caliph’ over ‘Khilāfah’.

I have tended to refer to cities by their modern Turkish names rather than the classical European forms commonly employed in the early twentieth century. For instance, I refer to ‘Istanbul’ rather than ‘Constantinople’, in the hopes that readers will find it easier to locate them on modern maps. I have used standard Western spellings for Arab cities—Beirut, Damascus, Mecca and Medina rather than Bayrut, Dimashq, Makka and Madina—for the same reason.

In the interest of consistency, I have chosen to replace the jumble of inaccurate or inappropriate early twentieth-century names for the faith and followers of the Prophet with the widely accepted terms ‘Islam’ and ‘Muslim’.

Abstract

Using a framework inspired by Edward Said's notions of "othering" and "discourses of representation", this study examines three major newspapers which contain and represent a broad section of the early twentieth-century British discourse regarding the Middle East in a preliminary attempt to unearth the British imagining of the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East. By examining a network of images, narratives and interpretive frameworks over the course of a period which saw dramatic changes in Britain's relation to and engagement with the heartlands of Islam, it sketches the contours of Britons' "imagined geography" of the Muslim East and uncovers a connection between the provinces of Britain's imagined geography and the apparatus of justification which underpinned British imperial power.

Henry and Bill

In July 1922 a cryptic message appeared in the “personals” section on the front page of the *London Times*. Sandwiched between a few lines advocating that visitors to Eastbourne consult the paper’s “Hotel and board-residence” columns and an advertisement seeking to let “perhaps the finest” eleven-bedroom flat in Mayfair, was a note:

‘Enery—If it is of any use, I’ll sing thee songs of Araby.

—Bill.¹

According to the “scale of charges” on the same page,² this two-line personal advertisement cost Bill ten shillings, a not-insignificant portion of the average weekly wage in early twentieth-century Britain.³ It was, we can assume, a message which he considered to be of some importance. There is no further detail, and neither Bill nor ‘Enery (probably, given the apostrophe indicating a dropped letter, an affectionately idiosyncratic misspelling of “Henry”) reappeared in *The Times* after that episode. Nevertheless, in a single line that

¹ “Personal”. *Times*, 22 July 1922, p. 1.

² “Index to Small Advertisements. Including Scale of Charges”. *Times*, 22 July 1922, p. 1.

³ The average weekly wage in the first half of the 1920s was approximately 60 shillings. This figure was calculated using data from the 1925 British Minister of Labour’s answer to a parliamentary written question, available at: “Average Weekly Wages”, Written Answers (Commons), 30 July 1925. *United Kingdom Parliament Historic Hansard 1803–2005*, vol. 187, col. 671 [Electronic version].

parochial incident captures the entanglement of British reading culture with the wider world.

The existence of Bill's advertisement illustrates the importance of the newspaper in early twentieth-century British society. For Bill to spend a meaningful portion of an average weekly income on placing the advertisement—and then never place another one, because neither Bill nor Henry appear in subsequent issues of *The Times*—he must have had some confidence that it would be seen. We can infer that reading the newspaper was a consistent feature of the British daily routine. In the same vein, Bill's note is an unmistakable illustration of the literacy of early twentieth-century Britons, living in what Paul Fussell calls a “special historical moment” when “belief in the educative powers of classical and English literature” and the “appeal of popular education and ‘self-improvement’” were coinciding to produce a society with an unparalleled respect and appetite for culture and literature.⁴ “I'll sing thee songs of Araby” is a Victorian parlour song from Frederick Clay's 1877 cantata *Lalla Rookh*, which appears in James Joyce's 1905 *Araby*, and which was based upon Thomas Moore's 1817 romantic narrative poem of the same name.⁵ From one line we can draw some detail: not only was Bill sufficiently wracked with emotion to part with a modest but meaningful sum of money; not only was he part of a culture which read and contributed to daily newspapers as a matter of course; he and his intended audience were culturally engaged enough to draw upon and communicate using a piece of 45-year-old operatic music, situating themselves within a tradition extending from folk tales of the Islamic Golden Age (or at least from the first English translation of *One Thousand and One Nights* in 1706) through Romantic “oriental” tales from the likes of Lord Byron into the most up-to-date literature coming out of early twentieth-century modernism.⁶

⁴ Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 170.

⁵ Derek B. Scott, *The Singing Bourgeois: Songs of the Victorian Drawing Room and Parlour*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2001, p. 178.

⁶ Tetsuo Nishio and Yuriko Yamanaka, *Arabian Nights and Orientalism: Perspectives from East and West*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2006, p. 190.

Whatever its precise meaning—an appeal to an ex-lover, an attempt to connect with an estranged child, a particularly inscrutable epitaph—Bill’s message for Henry embeds him within a wider societal discourse represented by the newspaper, and transcends his immediate locale, drawing on the images and associations of a distant, different, *foreign* world to communicate. It is not my intention to, as Carolyn Steedman quipped, conjure a social system from the nutmeg grater of a single advertisement; Bill’s message provides a hint at an avenue that might allow us to explore *something* of his intellectual landscape. This thesis examines some elements of the perception and distortion of the Middle East in the British public discourse of which Henry and Bill were a small part. In doing so, it sketches the outlines of the British imagining of “Araby” and its people, and examines how the imagining of Islam, Muslims, and the Middle East interacted with British political power. In particular, it explores how the British interpretation of the Muslim East as a monolithic “other”, inferior and opposed to an imagined Christian-European civilisation, functioned as an instrument in the British imperial apparatus of justification and contributed to the dominance of the British Empire.

One unequivocal fact we can draw from Bill’s message is important: the note, short as it is, is *comprehensible to us*. Virtually any English-speaking person could today look at Bill’s message and understand that there is a story wrapped up in its subtext, even without knowing the cantata it references or having any knowledge of who Bill or Henry were. We can see an undercurrent of human emotion which makes Bill’s note comprehensible; we have seen and perhaps lived stories that might explain his message.

Hayden White considers the source of that comprehensibility a *narrative*: something which, in Roland Barthes’ terms, is “simply *there* like life itself... international, transhistorical, transcultural... [a way of] fashioning human experience into familiar structures of meaning that are generally human rather than culture-specific”.⁷ Through our lens on the world and our mental model of

⁷ Roland Barthes, “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives”, in his *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, London: Fontana Press, 1977, p. 79. Hayden White,

1920s Britain—our *structure of meaning*—we are able to interpret Bill’s message in a narrative with familiar imagery: “human emotion”. While our interpretation may not be *accurate*—and a great deal of ink has been expended by historians grappling with the inaccuracies that we, fettered by our own structures of meaning, impart to historical events⁸—it is *plausible*.

We interpret the 1920s world in general and Bill’s message in particular through a self-constituting complex of ideas, images, imaginings and “ways of knowing” regarding that time and place. In psychology and sociology that underlying background information is called a *schema*, a cognitive mechanism which categorises knowledge to provide a framework for future understanding.⁹ Experimental psychology has found that humans are far more likely to accept information—to *find it comprehensible*—which coheres with an established schema, and to interpret new information in such a way as to minimise the necessity for changes to our schema.¹⁰ In cases where we have relatively little knowledge about a subject, studies have demonstrated that we are even more likely to interpret new information through a framework which resolves contradictions with the minimum possible change to our schema.¹¹ Such interpretive frameworks rely on a lexicon of what Norman Daniel termed “images”, whose function is not to represent *the thing itself* but to represent it *for the viewer* by filtering and collapsing raw information into images of what matters to the viewer, occluding what is irrelevant or schema-challenging.¹²

“The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality”, *Critical Inquiry*, 7, 1, 1980, p.5.

⁸ See Joan W. Scott, “The Evidence of Experience”, *Critical Inquiry*, 17, 4, 1991, pp. 773–797; Susan A. Crane, “Historical Subjectivity: A Review Essay”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 78, 2, 2006, pp. 434–456; David Harlan, “Intellectual History and the Return of Literature”, *The American Historical Review*, 94, 3, 1989, pp. 581–609.

⁹ Paul DiMaggio, “Culture and Cognition”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23, 1997, p. 269.

¹⁰ Charles S. Taber and Milton Lodge, “Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs”, *American Journal of Political Science*, 50, 3, 2006, p. 762.

¹¹ Michelle Rae Tuckey and Neil Brewer, “The Influence of Schemas, Stimulus Ambiguity, and Interview Schedule on Eyewitness Memory Over Time”, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 9, 2, 2003, p. 114.

¹² Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960.

This insight from the fields of sociology and psychology dovetails tidily with the historian Hayden White's notion that without the "coherence, integrity, fullness and closure" of a narrative, past events lack a "structure" or "order of meaning" without which they do not seem *real*.¹³ That is to say, they do not fit into our lexicon of imagery, are incomprehensible to our interpretive framework, and are therefore difficult to reconcile with our schemas. White's notion of an "order of meaning" is critical because we understand the world not in terms of *data*, but in terms of *what that data means*. To relate all this to the early twentieth century, consider Ümit Kurt and Dogan Gürpınar's observation that "nationalisms are not rooted in a single authoritative script"; instead, they are a contest over the *meaning* of the nation, each of which, because of the schema it represents, renders its narratives and assumptions inherent and primordial.¹⁴

Michel Foucault, describing the intersection of knowledge, discourses, and beliefs with the production of perceived reality, used the term *regime of truth*.¹⁵ This phrase is perhaps more useful in this context, if more grandiloquent, than the shorthand *lens* because it connects the nominally neutral and objective idea of "truth" with the expressly political "regime", highlighting the underlying power involved in assigning meaning. In 1976 Foucault clarified that "each society has its regime of truth"; the shared system of meaning by which information is interpreted. By assigning meaning through a regime of truth informed by a lexicon of imagery which *filters* and *represents* information so as to make it coherent with an existing schema, each society builds and inhabits a world composed of socially defined images, assumptions, interpretations, and meanings—an *imagined geography*.¹⁶

¹³ Hayden White, *The Content of the Form*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, pp. 5–6.

¹⁴ Ümit Kurt and Dogan Gürpınar, "The Young Turk Historical Imagination in the Pursuit of Mythical Turkishness and its Lost Grandeur (1911–1914)", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 43, 4, 2016, p. 560.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Pantheon, 1977, p. 30.

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, "The Political Function of the Intellectual", *Radical Philosophy*, 17, 13, 1977, p. 127.

This is not to suggest that there was an effort on the part of some centralised “British discourse” to manipulate the societal regime of truth and the ways in which Islam and the Middle East were perceived and imagined; systems of representation are emergent constructs, products of certain mindsets and ways of knowing rather than functional tools of political agendas. Nevertheless, they are also vectors of power.

One expression of the power of representation appears in the long tradition of literature justifying and examining the justifications for European imperial domination of other lands and peoples. The history of justifying imperialism extends almost as far back as European transcontinental imperialism itself, for example with the 1550–1551 debates between Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda about the morality of Spanish conquest and colonisation in the Americas.¹⁷ Richard Waswo locates the emergence of a coherent discourse justifying imperialism between 1539 and 1689;¹⁸ by the early twentieth century the major empires were equipped with well-developed apparatuses of justification embracing economics, science and the social idea of the “white man’s burden”.¹⁹ In his 1978 *Orientalism* Edward Said suggested that the systems of knowledge-production underpinning the patronising Western view of the “Orient” played into that wider discourse serving imperial power.²⁰ This thesis uses a framework inspired by Said to show that the early twentieth-century British imaginary, in particular the British-imagined Middle East, was

¹⁷ Robert E. Quirk, “Some Notes on a Controversial Controversy: Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Natural Servitude”, *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 34, 3, 1954, pp. 357–364.

¹⁸ Richard Waswo, “The Formation of Natural Law to Justify Colonialism, 1539–1689”, *New Literary History*, 27, 4, 1996, pp. 743–759.

¹⁹ See Christopher Hollis, “The Morals of Imperialism”, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 30, 120, 1941, pp. 531–540; Eileen Sullivan, “Liberalism and Imperialism: J. S. Mill’s Defense of the British Empire”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44, 4, 1983, pp. 599–617; Mason Hammond, “Ancient Imperialism: Contemporary Justifications”, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 58/59, 1948, pp. 105–161; J. A. Hobson, “The Scientific Basis of Imperialism”, *Political Science Quarterly*, 17, 3, 1902, pp. 460–489.

²⁰ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Vintage, 1978.

an important instrument in the apparatus of justification which enabled British domination of Muslim lands and peoples.

Approaching the imaginary

Employing newspaper articles as artifacts of the British intellectual landscape, this thesis examines the representation of the world that Bill invoked with the term “Araby”—the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim East—in three major British newspapers of the early twentieth century. The unprecedented literacy and cultural engagement of early twentieth-century Britons makes newspaper analysis an effective means for mining insight about their regime of truth; a significant portion, if not the majority, of British cultural discourse appears or is referenced in newspapers. In particular, newspapers contained regular news about and therefore representations of distant lands which would not appear so consistently in more personal texts such as letters or diaries.

By the early twentieth century the machinery of news consisted not only of a huge number of publications serving a range of widely popular viewpoints, but also of transportation technologies and telegram networks allowing news to travel swiftly, and a literate public for whom news was—as Bill’s faith that Henry would see his message illustrates—an important and popular commodity.²¹ In 1859 the Scottish journalist Eneas Sweetland Dallas exalted in the “enormous diffusion” of periodical literature, noting that any “flourishing newsvender’s shop is loaded with periodicals... at prices from a halfpenny up to a shilling”, and celebrated “the rapidity with which he disposes of all of these”.²² Those periodicals printed stories entangling every corner of the planet, including news about the Middle East.²³ By the beginning of the twentieth century the newspaper

²¹ Patrick Brantlinger, “Mass Media and Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Europe” in Mikuláš Teich and Roy Porter, eds., *Fin de Siècle and its legacy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 101–102.

²² E. S. Dallas, “Popular Literature — the Periodical Press”, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, 1859, p. 101.

²³ See Daniel Foliard, *Dislocating the Orient: British Maps and the Making of the Middle East, 1854–1921*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017, p. 80; Cameron Whitehead, “The Bulgarian Horrors: Culture and the International History of the Great Eastern Crisis,

market had only grown. More than just being available and up-to-date, news was *interactive*, adding another dimension to its value for the historian: a perusal of letters to the editor in the *Times* of the 1890s turns up a full gamut of correspondence from ministers and generals, as one would expect, but also from butchers, bakers and candlestick-makers. People *cared* about, *engaged with*, and *used* the newspaper, not only for information and diversion but also to communicate their own views.²⁴

The commodification of news is particularly important to the excavation of societal imaginings because, with a readership in the hundreds of thousands, the press possessed an enormous representative power.²⁵ W. T. Stead wrote in 1886 that “...the editor’s mandate is renewed day by day”: because of their reliance on public interest, appreciation and willingness to part with “the daily pence”, newspapers *had* to align with and represent popular viewpoints. An editor had to, “often sorely against his will, write on topics about which he cares nothing”, and produce a newspaper which, in memorable terms, must “palpitate with actuality” or face being deserted by the reading public for a rival in the saturated market. A newspaper which ceased to be read ceased to exist.²⁶

Some historians quibble over whether newspapers in fact *crystallise and reflect* or *inform and construct* public opinion,²⁷ but in the context of this study the

1876–1878”, Ph. D thesis, University of British Columbia, 2014, pp. 114–129; Stéphanie Prévost, “W.T. Stead and the Eastern Question (1875–1911); or, How to Rouse England and Why?”, *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 16, 2013, [Electronic version], DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1.16995/ntn.654>.

²⁴ Kevin Williams, *Read all about it! A History of the British Newspaper*, London: Routledge, 2010, pp. 125–6; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, New York: Bantam Books, 2000, p. 633.

²⁵ Joanne Shattock, *Introduction to Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 2–3.

²⁶ W. T. Stead, “Government by journalism”, *The Contemporary Review*, 49, 1886, p. 655.

²⁷ See: Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England*, London: Routledge, 2016; Bill Bell, Joanne Shattock, Laurel Brake and Padmini Ray Murray, “Periodicals and Newspapers” in Bill Bell, ed., *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland Volume III: Ambition and Industry 1800–1880*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007, pp. 340–82; Annalise Higgins, “Petitioning for Peace: the British public movement in support of the proposed first Hague Peace Conference, 1898–1899”, Master’s thesis, University of Auckland, 2016, p. 40.

question is moot: the process of public opinion informing newspapers informing public opinion is mutually constitutive. Papers were at once an “expression of public opinion and index of contemporary history” and also a “great force that reacts on the life which it represents, half creating what it professes only to reflect”.²⁸ Irrespective of how we weight the creative force, newspapers unquestionably reflect public opinion *to some extent*, and because of their ephemeral nature—a collection of images and narratives which matter in the moment and might be forgotten by the next day—they preserve fragments of the ideas and discourses of a moment in time. By engaging with those fragments we can glimpse the system of meaning with which Britons understood and imagined the Middle East in the closing years of the Ottoman age.

This thesis engages primarily with *The Times*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Mail*. These papers were chosen because of their accessibility in digital archives, their enormous readerships, and their distinct political attitudes. Although no set of newspapers can reasonably be considered to represent the views of all Britons, or even of that elusive, diffuse beast known as “the public”, the scale of each paper’s circulation suggests a mass appeal which implies that they held popular viewpoints and aligned with common intellectual frameworks. The contrast between the views of the populist *Mail*, which in 1902 boasted the largest circulation of any newspaper in the world;²⁹ the *Guardian*, so staunch in its radical, liberal, reformist principles that it had in 1899 put its own existence in jeopardy by supporting the Boers against the British;³⁰ and the conservative, pro-empire, establishment-oriented *Times*—“an integral and important part of the political structure of Britain”... always operating “with an eye to the best interests of Britain”... “for long periods in close touch with 10 Downing Street”³¹—gives us a broad sweep of the popular opinions in mainstream British

²⁸ E. S. Dallas, “Popular Literature — the Periodical Press”, p. 97.

²⁹ Dennis Griffiths, *Fleet Street: Five Hundred Years of the Press*, London: British Library, 2006, pp. 132–133.

³⁰ Mark Hampton, “The Press, Patriotism, and Public Discussion: C. P. Scott, the ‘Manchester Guardian’ and the Boer War, 1899–1902”, *The Historical Journal*, 44, 1, 2001, p. 179.

³¹ Allan Nevins, “American Journalism and its Historical Treatment”, *Journalism Quarterly*, 36, 4, 1959, p. 414.

society. Anchoring our analysis in sources which embrace a range of widely-shared viewpoints gives us a sense of the extent to which we can generalise about the British public discourse. In order to situate the 1906–1923 focus period within a broader historical context, this thesis draws upon sources from 1900 to 1930.

In the past, histories of the end of the Ottoman Empire, the First World War in the Middle East, and indeed the Middle Eastern twentieth century have tended to focus on military and diplomatic elements of the narrative, evident in the work of early writers such as George Antonius as well as recent historians like Eugene Rogan and Rashid Khalidi. Even treatments which explicitly focus on cultural—in the context of the Middle East, thanks in part to the persistent image of otherness which this thesis examines, *cultural* almost inevitably comes to mean *religious*—aspects of the period trend toward military history. For example, Erik Zürcher’s study of jihad in the First World War tacitly focuses on European strategy (“jihad made in Germany” is a recurrent phrase, for reasons we will encounter in chapter three) and the relative success of Western strategists’ appeals to Islamic populations more than it does on the culture of the Middle East. The image of “otherness” has wider implications in historical literature as well, for instance locating the *First World War* firmly in Europe between 1914 and 1918 and occluding the Middle East and the Ottoman Empire as sideshows.³² This is not wholly surprising: much of the history of the global early twentieth century is dominated by military and diplomatic narratives, eliding events and processes that do not fit into the orbit of the First World War.³³

³² A particularly egregious example appears in the prologue to Gordon Martel’s *The Month that Changed the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 22–56), in which some thirty pages are dedicated to the geopolitical backdrop of the First World War. The First World War began in the Balkans partially as a result, writers such as Paul Schroeder and Christopher Clark suggest, of the geopolitical problems posed by the disintegration of Ottoman power (see: Paul W. Schroeder, “World War One as a Galloping Gertie”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 33, 3, 1972, p. 336 and Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, New York: Harpercollins, 2013, p. 242–3). Nevertheless, Martel’s overview makes just two passing references to the Ottoman Empire.

³³ For a particularly striking example see the treatment of the international peace movement, especially the First and Second Hague Peace Conventions, in Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850–2000*, London: Reaktion

The problem of military-political-oriented treatments has been compounded by the subsequent history of the Middle East. As a result of the changes wrought by the end of the Ottoman Empire and the consequently “topical” nature of the story, the tradition of post-colonial histories of the Middle East in the wake of Said’s *Orientalism* has largely been confined to forward-looking examinations of the “making of the modern Middle East”. Fromkin’s 1989 *A Peace to End All Peace* is an admirable example, focused on the failures and betrayals of the Western powers, the reactions of Middle Eastern populations, and the subsequent century-long cataclysm that has convulsed the former Ottoman Arab provinces.³⁴

Given the vexed political history and entanglements of those territories and the generally Western identity of Anglophone authors, an alternative approach to post-colonial histories of the Middle East—eschewing the military-religious focus of international historians and the gloomy presentist outlook of Fromkin’s “making of the modern Middle East”-ers in favour of an attempt to understand the relations between Europe and the “Orient” as a meeting of relative equals—has struggled to transcend the politics of its writers. While they critique Said for inaccurate history, for being primarily interested in making political points of his own, and for “sentimental Third Worldism”,³⁵ such writers as Samuel Huntington, Eliezer Tauber and Efraim Karsh tend to fall into the same

Books, 2000, pp. 84–107 and Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 11–21. At best the Hague Conventions, which captured the public imagination and dominated newspaper discourses especially in 1898–1899, receive a single sentence of acknowledgement.

³⁴ For further examples, as well as evidence of the preoccupation with the “making of the modern Middle East” see Scott Anderson, *Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Folly, and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, New York: Doubleday, 2013; James Barr, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France, and the Struggle for the Mastery of the Middle East*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011; or Sean McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution, and the Making of the Modern Middle East, 1908–1923*, London: Penguin, 2015.

³⁵ For critiques of Edward Said see: Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies*, London: Allen Lane, 2006, pp. 281–282; C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 142–144; Ernest Gellner, “The Mightier Pen? Edward Said and the Double Standards of Inside-Out Colonialism”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 February 1993, pp. 3–4.

traps.³⁶ Responding writers, such as Tolan, Veinstein and Laurens with their refutation of Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* build upon rather than eroding the frameworks they attack, for example by employing the concept of an "Islamo-Christian civilisation", complicating but not challenging what are often politically-constructed paradigms of history.³⁷ The Karsh's *Empires of the Sand*, for example, was lambasted as a "knee-jerk criticism of Arab and Ottoman Turkish leaders", for "presenting contentious beliefs as gospel truth, using only evidence that supports their arguments and ignoring anything that may be contradictory", solely of "interest to those studying the effect of ideology on the writing of history".³⁸ That this review, accurate as it may be, was published in the *Journal of Palestinian Studies* only further demonstrates the impact of personal politics on this fraught field of historiography.

With respect to Said's *Orientalism*, this thesis has two goals. By applying a Said-esque framework to the Ottoman Empire it complicates the argument which has been advanced against Said's notion of "othering" on the basis that the Ottoman Empire was a great Oriental power threatening Europe, therefore Orientalism did not suborn and "other" a powerless Orient.³⁹ Second, this thesis sits within a fourth, relatively new tradition of studies which seek to examine Western perceptions of Islam using the principles of Said's *Orientalism* while avoiding the projection of modern political meaning onto the past.

³⁶ See: Efraim and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789–1922*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999 or Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007; Eliezer Tauber, *The Formation of Modern Iraq and Syria*, London: Frank Cass, 1995, which focuses narrowly on the political goal of disproving the idea that Iraq and Syria were constructs of Western imperialism rather than products of homegrown nationalisms; and Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

³⁷ John Tolan, Gilles Veinstein and Henry Laurens, *Europe and the Islamic World: A History*, trans. Jane Marie Todd, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 4.

³⁸ Anthony B. Toth, "History as Ideology", *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, 31, 2, 2002, p. 85.

³⁹ Derek Bryce, "The Absence of Ottoman, Islamic Europe in Edward W. Said's *Orientalism*", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 30, 1, 2013, pp. 99–121; Edhem Eldem, "The Ottoman Empire and Orientalism: An Awkward Relationship", in François Pouillion and Jean-Claude Vatin, eds., *After Orientalism*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 89–102.

Admirable work has been done in this field by writers such as Shahin Khattak, exploring the figure of the “Saracen” in Victorian fiction, music and art;⁴⁰ Philip Almond, studying nineteenth century representations of Islam in academic texts;⁴¹ Clinton Bennett, who approached the conceived collision of “Christianity” and “Islam” through ecclesiastical writings;⁴² and Albert Hourani, who sought to trace the movement of “ideas about God, man, history and society” by examining European academics’ engagement with Islamic texts and thinkers in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁴³ More recent texts have transcended the restrictive intellectual framework represented by studies of European relations with a monolithic “Islam”, but they tend because of the necessity for detail to be relatively narrow in scope. Reinhold Schiffer’s magisterial study of the “panorama” of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, for instance, deals only with the view of the empire through the lens of travellers’ writings.⁴⁴ Ron Geaves’ work similarly studies the British imagining of Islam, but does so through biographies of individuals⁴⁵ and the specific study of Islamic proselytisation in Britain.⁴⁶ The Turkish academic Aslı Çırakman Deveci has pushed the study of Western views of Islam further with her wide-ranging examination of the European perception of the Ottoman Empire and society, but her survey ends in the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ These works leave a gap both temporally and in terms of the opinions and perceptions that have been

⁴⁰ Shahin Khattak, *Islam and the Victorians: Nineteenth Century Perceptions of Muslim Practices and Beliefs*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2008.

⁴¹ Philip Almond, *Heretic and Hero: Muhammad and the Victorians*, Wiesbaden: Harrosowitz, 1989.

⁴² Clinton Bennett, *Victorian Images of Islam*, London: Grey Seal, 1992.

⁴³ Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

⁴⁴ Reinhold Schiffer, *Oriental Panorama: British Travellers in Nineteenth Century Turkey*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999.

⁴⁵ Ron Geaves, *Islam in Britain: The Life and Times of Abdullah Quilliam*, London: Kube, 2010.

⁴⁶ Ron Geaves, *Islam and Britain: Muslim Mission in the Age of Empire*, London: Bloomsburg, 2017.

⁴⁷ Aslı Çırakman Deveci, *From the ‘Terror of the World’ to the ‘Sick Man of Europe’: European images of Ottoman Empire and Society from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth*, Bern: Peter Lang, 2002.

surveyed. There remains a dearth of research on European perceptions of the Ottoman state in the twentieth century, and a gap in our knowledge of everyday British discourse as it concerned the Middle East. This thesis aims to highlight that lacuna by employing Said's "Orientalist" framework to examine the image of the Middle East in early twentieth-century public discourse, rather than the cloistered literatures of academics, clergymen and adventurers, sketching the outlines of *Britain's*, rather than specialised *individuals'* imagined Middle East.

With that being said, the Middle East from 1906 to 1923 covers a scope far too large and demanding of detail to fit into this study. To preserve some essential boundaries, this thesis focuses on a set of related images to build a foundation for understanding how Britons imagined Islam and Muslims. Specifically, it examines how the lexicon of imagery which rendered Muslims as fanatical and which reduced and confined Muslims—for example by constructing Islam and shari'a as the "Muslim Church" and "Muslim Canon Law"⁴⁸—as an inferior analogue of Western civilisation justified British domination over Islamic peoples and countries and underpinned the power of the British Empire.

First, we examine the British press representations of state nationalisms which appeared in the Ottoman Empire in the first decade of the twentieth century: "pan-Islam" and "Ottomanism", establishing that the British interpretive framework regarding Islam and Islamic movements coalesced around the ideas of religiosity and opposition to the West; their threatening "Islamicness". Second, we interrogate the imagery of Islamicness, delineating the precise attributes which defined and constituted Islamicness for *The Times*, *Guardian* and *Daily Mail*: fanaticism, backwardness, the solidarity of the monolithic "Muslims", and subservience to the Caliphate. Finally, we consider the concept of "jihad", a narrative which encapsulated and epitomised Islamicness, and the ways in which the British understanding of jihad reacted to the realities of the Middle East in order to preserve the basic assumptions of the British schema regarding Islam and its adherents.

⁴⁸ "Book of the Day", *The Times*, 6 January 1925, p. 7.

Imagined geographies

In 1884, thirty-eight years before Bill penned his note, the first edition of the Oxford Dictionary defined “Araby” as an archaic or poetic term for “the country of Arabia”.⁴⁹ Like the wonders, terrors, and cruciform layout of the medieval Hereford *mappaemundi*,⁵⁰ or the irregular coastlines and distorted landmasses of Islamic-Persianate maps that abandoned readily available geographic information in favour of representing the world as caught between shadow and light,⁵¹ Bill’s choice of an archaic term for a foreign land gives us a hint at shape and meaning of his imagined world. Just as medieval maps of the Earth embedding Babel, Paradise and the trails of the Children of Israel in real, known geographies tell us little about the physical world but a great deal about the world inhabited by the *medieval consciousness*, interrogating the distortions and dissonances between the representations of peoples, places and things in British discourse and the reality of those things—insofar as we understand it now—gives us a view of the imaginary that distorted them.

Despite being considered “archaic”, “Araby” had not fallen out of use after 1884: it appeared 246 times in *The Times* between 1900 and 1926,⁵² always in the same deeply romantic context: Arabia as a lost, forgotten land, set apart from the modern world. When Araby appeared in a newspaper it was invariably as the setting for a narrative about or as a metonym for the mysterious, backward East. That image of Arabia was epitomised in Marmaduke Pickthall’s 1917 novel *Knights of Araby*, described by a gushing reviewer as a tale about “men of head and heart, some black with the Ethiopian blood of Habesh, some Arabs of the

⁴⁹ *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles – Part II: Ant-Batten*, s.v. “Araby”, James A. H. Murray, ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885.

⁵⁰ Albrecht Classen, *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 16; David Woodward, “Reality, Symbolism, Time and Space in Medieval World Maps”, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 75, 4, 1985, p. 513; Malcolm Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe 1050–1320*, London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 375–98.

⁵¹ Karen C. Pinto, *Medieval Islamic Maps: An Exploration*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016, pp. 147–148.

⁵² 99 times in the *Daily Mail* and 116 times in the *Guardian*.

purest strain of Ishmael”.⁵³ Arabia, in texts of this sort, was always—though not always actually *called* Araby—constructed in the same way:

For centuries Arabia has been... an unknown land round which the main currents of human history have swept without penetration... though tens of thousands of voyagers stare listlessly every year at its bare and mysterious coasts, less is known about Arabia than was known in Assyria in the days of Asurbanipal... Stories reach the bazaars of Bombay and Cairo of strange fights between mail-clad warriors, of armies still contending with bows and arrows...⁵⁴

“Araby” was quite clearly understood to be a real physical place. There is no sense that it was considered mythical or fantastic: it was explicitly grounded in the historical past with reference to Assyria, and in the present within a world which also included Cairo, Bombay, and shipping lanes plied by “tens of thousands of voyagers” every year. Arabia, however, was coloured in a pseudo-mythical light: it was “unknown”, “bare and mysterious”, “strange”; backward, distant, impenetrable and therefore incomprehensible. When it was not mysterious and unknowable, it became “Araby the Blest”: “aromatic”,⁵⁵ like the “sweet violets” that scent the “windswept streets” at Christmastime,⁵⁶ a land of “mystery”, “fair orchards and fountains”,⁵⁷ “fabled wealth” filled with “forbidden cities”, and “fearful deserts” crossed by “caravan routes seemingly as old as the burning sands”.⁵⁸ That Araby, defined by its “Sabaeen odours” and picturesque grace,⁵⁹ contrasted with the Arabia which appeared concurrently in major British newspapers in sober reports on Middle Eastern politics. At the

⁵³ “Multiple Display Advertisements”, *The Times*, 31 August 1917, p. 9.

⁵⁴ “Turkey in Arabia”, *The Times*, 20 August 1913, p. 7.

⁵⁵ “Disaffected Ireland”, *Daily Mail*, 10 June 1902, p. 4.

⁵⁶ “Christmas Shopping”, *Daily Mail*, 1 December 1903, p. 9.

⁵⁷ “Miscellany”, *Manchester Guardian*, 9 May 1905.

⁵⁸ “Book of the Week”, *Manchester Guardian*, 30 August 1904.

⁵⁹ Milton refers to Araby’s “Sabaeen odours” in *Paradise Lost*, cited in: “List of New Books and Reprints”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 30 October 1924, p. 687–688; for a salute to the “Arab grace” of the “burrow” (the traditional Arab robe, now variously known as a thawb, thobe, kandoora or dishdasha) see: “A Professor’s Stories”, *Daily Mail*, 12 December 1904, p. 10.

same time and in the same pages as it described “Araby the mysterious” and “Araby the Blest”, the British press detailed the strategic importance of the Hijaz railway in cementing Ottoman power and making the army independent of the sea;⁶⁰ the threat of the Zaydi revolt in Yemen to Franco-British interests in Syria and the Red Sea;⁶¹ and the internecine squabbles between the small Wahhabi states in the Najd.⁶²

It is worth noting that although there was a clear divide in the overall tone of these texts—there was no space in the landscape of Morley Roberts’ “magic tale of Araby” for the geopolitical realities that led to Harold Jacob’s arrest in Yemen on suspicion of being a British spy⁶³—the detail was far murkier. Even within a comparatively grounded report articulating the geopolitics of the Hijaz railway and the roots and nature of the confrontation between the Ottomans and Zaydis in Arabia, *The Times*’ imagery was muddled. The Zaydis, although the context was decidedly modern, became medieval: in taking Sana‘a, they “rushed down like vultures... he who did not lay down his arms was cleft in twain by their marvelous swords”. They were also firmly anchored in the past: the emergence of an Arab state is constructed not as looking forward but as a “restoration of the glories of Harun al-Rashid”;⁶⁴ and constructed as existing within a world of mysticism and superstition: they inhabited a land described as “not fit for men. Burning heat, no water, and everywhere desert... those Arabs seem to be the offspring of *Jinns*”.⁶⁵ The strand of the British press discourse that dealt with “Araby” presented it through a framework that foregrounded its exoticness,

⁶⁰ “The Hedjaz Railway and the Rising in the Yemen”, *The Times*, 1 September 1905, p. 6.

⁶¹ “Ousting the Turk”, *Daily Mail*, 24 February 1903, p. 5,

⁶² “Fighting in Central Arabia”, *Manchester Guardian*, 13 April 1901, p. 8.

⁶³ Sir Frank Herbert Brown, “Saul among the Prophets”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 February 1920, p. 122, *The Times Literary Supplement Historical Archive, 1902–2013*; for an example of the collision between “Arabia” and “Araby” see also Jacob’s book about his experience: Harold Fenton Jacob, *Perfumes of Araby: Silhouettes of Al Yemen*, London: Martin Secker, 1915.

⁶⁴ The fifth Abbasid Caliph, whose epithet translates to “the Just” or “the Rightly-Guided”. Harun al-Rashid reigned from 786 to 809 CE, presiding over the peak of the Islamic golden age.

⁶⁵ *Jinni* are spirits and demons from pre-Islamic Arabian mythology, co-opted into Islamic mythology and theology. “The Hedjaz Railway”, *The Times*.

emphasising the sensuality, splendor, and backwardness of the Middle East and eliding the mundane aspects of Middle Eastern politics and strategy that would render it familiar to British readers.

This contradiction in British representations of the Middle East was not a product of ignorance, it was an expression of power. Even in Renaissance times an English reader “of average education and intelligence” could read about or see dramatised on stage a number of detailed events in the history of Arabia and the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁶ By the early twentieth century exploration, advances in communication, and centuries of deepening entanglement can only have made that information more complete. The contradiction and exoticness of Britain’s “Arabies” was a product of the way Britain imagined Islam and Muslim societies. The British lens distorted the Middle East to be picturesque, mysterious, romantic, sensual and alluring—but also, precisely because of the picturesqueness and sensuality that made it romantic, despotic, aberrant, and its people untruthful, “under-humanised, antidemocratic, backward, and barbaric”.⁶⁷ In 1978 Edward Said suggested that the exotic construction of the non-European world, particularly the “Orient” in Anatolia, the Mashriq and the Maghrib,⁶⁸ was a means of stamping those places and peoples with a “constitutive otherness”, confining them to a single meaning—“Oriental”—and essentialising that meaning as fundamentally different, distant, exotic, and backward.⁶⁹ Said regards “othering” the Middle East as a function of meaning-making that made the Orient “less fearsome to the West”,⁷⁰ with “ruling paradigms” that “do not contest, and perhaps even confirm, the imperial design to dominate Asia”.⁷¹ The romance, exoticness, picturesque beauty and consonant

⁶⁶ Samuel Chew, *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1937, p. 103.

⁶⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 205.

⁶⁸ Mashriq refers to the eastern portion of the Arab world, from the Arabic verb *sharaqa*, “to illuminate” or “to rise”, giving the poetic meaning “the place of sunrise”. Maghrib embraces the western portion of the Arab world, roughly modern Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, from *gharaba*, “to set”.

⁶⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 97.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

“otherness” of the Middle East was a persistent feature of the discourse throughout the period. In 1919 the *Manchester Guardian* described an Assyrian delegate to the Paris Peace Conference as a “princess” who looked like “one of those Assyrian sculptures in the British museum”.⁷² In 1923 the *Daily Mail* emphasised the barbarity of Siwa Berbers with a report about the fact that they *ate puppies as food*.⁷³ As late as 1925 *The Times Literary Supplement* reflected that “the Arab” was popular in romance because he lived in “the wilds of the desert”, and could “read every caravan track, relate the history of each footprint, and remember waterholes in pathless wildernesses”.⁷⁴ The otherness of the Middle East was powerful and enduring, irrespective of the fact that the same landscape was simultaneously “known”.

The dissonance within the Occidental imaginary between Arabia the knowable and Araby the mystical had deep roots. Goods from the Near East were used to display elite identity in the Early Minoan period of the Bronze Age Mediterranean,⁷⁵ and Said explores the Orientalisation of Asia in Herodotus’ *Histories* and Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁷⁶ The crusades, of which the Britons of the early twentieth century were only too conscious, saw a similar conflict between the European crusading image of vicious Saracens “more pagan in their cult than Decius”⁷⁷ and the image, relayed by many Christian writers, of hygienic and hospitable Muslims, for instance the Latin knight who, upon visiting Usama ibn Munqidh’s bathhouse in Ma’arra, was so taken with the Arabic custom of

⁷² “Assyria’s Call For Help”, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 October 1919, p. 7.

⁷³ “Puppies as Food”, *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition*, 16 April 1923, p. 4.

⁷⁴ “The Arab at Home”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 24 September 1924, p. 607.

⁷⁵ For an impressive roundup of studies regarding the interconnection of the Aegean and the Near East in the Bronze Age see Cynthia S. Colburn, “Exotica and the Early Minoan Elite: Eastern Imports in Prepalatial Crete”, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 112, 2, 2008, pp. 203–224.

⁷⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 56–58.

⁷⁷ John V. Tolan, “Muslims as Pagan Idolaters in the Chronicles of the First Crusade”, in Michael Frassetto and David Blanks, eds., *Western Views of the Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1999, pp. 97–98.

shaving off one's pubic hair that he came back with his wife to get hers removed as well.⁷⁸

This is a thesis about Britain

The European vision of the Middle East constantly evolved rather than transitioning from medieval crusades to modern colonialism, always retaining the contradiction exemplified by “Arabia” and “Araby”. But between 1906 and 1923, as the Ottoman state fell apart and Britain transitioned from a peripheral position on the Indian and West African fringes of the Islamic world to a new role of direct involvement in Islam's Mashriqi heartlands, the British imagining of the Middle East transformed from an intellectual peculiarity into a pillar of British power.

This thesis focuses on the closing decades of the Ottoman period in the Arab world but, in line with Said's approach in *Orientalism*, not on the Arab world; the imaginary *is* and does not simply *represent* a considerable dimension of political-intellectual culture,⁷⁹ and as a consequence it has less to do with Arabia than it does with Britain. This is a thesis about the imagined geography of Britain's Middle East, the simulacrum-Arabies of the British imaginary. Questions about the British imagining of the wider world can only be answered from the streets, publishing houses and newsvendors' shops of London, not from Baghdad or Damascus. In order to understand Britain's imagined Arabia, we must engage with Britain's *songs* of Araby.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Phillips, *Holy Warriors: A Modern History of the Crusades*, New York: Vintage, 2009, p. 37.

⁷⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 12.

Ottoman nationalisms

The British imagining of the Middle East in the early twentieth century was dominated by anxiety about Islam and the threat that Muslims posed to the British Empire and Christian civilisation. Islam and Islamic countries, movements and people were interpreted with a framework which foregrounded religiosity, emphasising their “Islamic-ness”, and “confining” them, to borrow a term from Said,¹ to a single stage. As a result, the British discourse defined Islam and Muslims not individually, in line with their complex differences, but as a monolithic unit in opposition to a unitary Christian-European civilisation. This is evident in the press discourse that represented Ottoman state nationalist projects at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The discourse about politics in the Middle East focused on two major political movements in the first decades of the twentieth century. Before 1908, the press was concerned with the danger posed by “pan-Islamism”, understood to mean the creation of an artificial, supranational Islamic identity that would submerge nationality and ethnicity and build a unified Islamic great power in opposition to the European Powers. Then, in the wake of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, the British press refocused on the “Ottomanist” ideology of the ascendant “Young Turk” regime. Ottomanism was imagined as an effort to create a centralised identity for the subjects of the Porte as members not of distinct ethnoreligious groups ruled over by an Ottoman *elite* but as citizens of an

¹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 143.

Ottoman *nation*. Both pan-Islam and Ottomanism have come to be understood by modern historians as defensive, anticolonial state nationalisms, but the discourse evident in the newspapers this thesis examined presented them as aggressive, sectarian movements challenging the West. Through the lens of *The Times*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Manchester Guardian*—and, we can assume, much of the British reading public in a wider system of meaning—pan-Islam and Ottomanism were perceived to be radically different from one another and primarily characterised by their relationship to Islam. “Pan-Islamism” was encapsulated in the idea of a vicious anti-European fanaticism, controlled by the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II. “Ottomanism” was understood as an enlightened pursuit of tolerance and secularism—until the confronting reality of its implementation caused it to be reassessed as “Turkification”; an effort to enforce the ascendancy of Islam over the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. By examining the dissonances between the reality and the British imaginings of pan-Islam and Ottomanism—that is, precisely which aspects of anticolonial Ottoman nationalisms the press discourse emphasised, minimised, or elided—this chapter defines the interpretive framework with which the reading public regarded Ottoman state nationalisms.

Because Ottomanism and pan-Islam were imagined as the hegemonic ideologies of their respective regimes, the entirety of the Hamidian and Young Turk Ottoman states were coloured by the British imagining of those movements.² An understanding of the interpretive framework through which the British reading public regarded pan-Islam and Ottomanism therefore sheds light on how the Ottoman Empire as well as Islam, Muslims, and other Islamic countries were imagined, illuminating the contours of Britain’s imagined Middle East.

² For an examination of the intersection between ideology and “common sense”, and how hegemonic ideologies come to characterise a society, see Stuart Hall and Alan O’Shea, “Common-sense Neoliberalism”, *Soundings: A Journal of Politics & Culture*, 55, 2013, pp. 8–24.

Pan-Islam

“Pan-Islamism” was a European term which bound a number of loosely-related movements and events in Islamic societies around the world into one force. Although some of the phenomena which came to be associated with “pan-Islamism” were anti-imperialist, irredentist, defensive, or social and intellectual, they were interpreted by Britons through a framework which occluded their reality and foregrounded their religiosity and opposition, real or imagined, to Christianity, Europe, and Britain.

The largest of the political forces that would come to be known in British discourse as “pan-Islam” first appeared in *The Times* in the twentieth century in August 1901, after the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II ordered French missionaries in the Beirut vilayet to pay taxes.³ *The Times* denounced this measure as inspired by the new “Ottoman form of Nationalism” which aimed to “weld together the disparate nations of Islam”; an expression of the “‘Boxer’ spirit, infinitely more dangerous than that with which Europe has had to deal in China, growing up in the Near East”.⁴ The “Boxer” spirit was a reference to the “Boxer Rebellion”, a protonationalist anticolonial movement sparked by a combination of famine, opposition to European imperialism and resentment of missionary activity, which took place in China between 1899 and 1901.⁵ While some Western figures, notably including Mark Twain, felt some sympathy with the Boxer “patriots”,⁶ the dominant discourse considered them uncivilised, irrational bandits; equated the rebellion with the Indian Mutiny, and cast the Rebellion as a representation of the barbaric danger of the East.⁷ By equating actions which could be construed as an attack against Christianity or the European powers with the Boxer Rebellion *The Times* contributed to a vision of Islam and Muslims as similarly barbaric and opposed to the West. That image

³ “France and Turkey”, *The Times*, 31 August 1901, p. 3.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See Larry Thompson, *William Scott Ament and the Boxer Rebellion: Heroism, Hubris and the ‘Ideal Missionary’*, Jefferson: McFarland, 2009.

⁶ Mark Twain, *Mark Twain’s Speeches*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1910.

⁷ Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture, and Colonialism, 1900–1949* New York: Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 34.

was by no means new: reports on the Bulgarian atrocities and the Mahdist War had already painted both the Ottomans and Muslims in general in a poor light,⁸ and negative visions of Islam dated back to the early medieval period. In the early twentieth century, though, the “Boxerine” view of Islam—the assumption that it was intractably opposed to European power—was associated with religious fanaticism and interpreted as “symptoms of what steps the Sultan’s supreme religious functions may inspire”.⁹ That is to say, as evidence that Muslims were, because of their religion, operating as a monolithic group led by the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid in direct opposition to the European powers.

The notion of “the steps the Sultan’s supreme religious functions may inspire” among Muslims underlay the British imagining of “pan-Islam”. Movements from the sympathy of Russian Tartars for the Tsar’s Ottoman enemies,¹⁰ through British tensions with the Porte over the frontier between Ottoman Syria and British-occupied Sinai—a Turkish “violation of Egyptian frontiers”¹¹—to Egyptian agitation for an end to British occupation¹² were folded into the narrative of pan-Islam as “steps inspired by the Sultan”. Importantly, the notion of pan-Islam was not only deployed to explain difficulties with the Ottomans: Pashtun attacks against India’s North West Frontier¹³ and Moroccan resistance to French colonial encroachment were also collapsed into the narrative of a pan-Islamic threat.¹⁴ These ideas were mainstream, invoked regularly in major British papers without any consistent alternative narrative. Ordinary Britons in the early twentieth century imagined pan-Islam as a vast

⁸ See Whitehead, “The Bulgarian Horrors”; Richard Fulton, “The Sudan Sensation of 1898”, *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 42, 1, 2009, pp. 37–63.

⁹ “France and Turkey”, *The Times*, 31 August 1901, p. 3.

¹⁰ “The Caucasus: Tartar view of Baku Industry”, *Manchester Guardian*, 13 October 1905, p. 7.

¹¹ “Tangier Trip Sequel”, *Daily Mail*, 9 July 1906, p. 7.

¹² “Pan-Islamism in Egypt”, *The Times*, 22 August 1906, p. 3.

¹³ “The Fighting in the Khyber”, *Manchester Guardian*, 7 May 1908, p. 6.

¹⁴ “The Outlook”, *Daily Mail*, 16 August 1907, p. 4.

enemy, with tentacles everywhere Muslims were to be found, whose sole object was to “awaken Muslim fanaticism and inspire barbarians against civilisation”.¹⁵

As well as demonising Islamic anti-colonial efforts, the narrative of pan-Islam enabled the British press to present events such as the punitive expedition against the Mohmands on the North West Frontier in a positive light.¹⁶ The exercise of British imperial power was constructed not as putting down anticolonial resistance but as defending “the cause of civilisation” against fanaticism and barbarity.¹⁷ The ability to translate the complexity of events and political movements from the Atlantic Ocean to the Bay of Bengal into a simplistic, unifying narrative made pan-Islam an effective interpretive tool, making the Middle East comprehensible and simultaneously vindicating imperial domination. As a result, it became an important component of Britain’s imagined Middle East.

An example of the power of pan-Islam to simplify and justify British imperialism appears in Lord Cromer’s 1907 report on occupied Egypt, which he as Consul-General *de facto* ruled. 1906 in Egypt had seen “riots at Alexandria, a law students’ strike, a frontier dispute, the Denshawi Affray, and other incidents”, all of which, the *Manchester Guardian* reported, were evidence of “holy wars, nationalistic agitations and political conspiracies” by “the forces of shiftless barbarism and medieval bigotry”.¹⁸ Lord Cromer, who according to the reckoning of *The Times* knew Egypt “more intimately than any other man in the world”,¹⁹ folded all of those events into the single umbrella of “Egyptian nationalism” and announced that while it was not always easy to recognise the “pan-Islamic figure under the nationalist cloak”, the Egyptian national movement was “deeply tinged” with pan-Islamism.²⁰ In the same report, Cromer defined pan-Islam as a movement seeking “the combination of all

¹⁵ “Cause of Islam Fanaticism”, *The Observer*, 8 July 1906, p. 5.

¹⁶ “The Meaning of the Mohmand Outbreak”, *The Times*, 27 June 1908, p. 8.

¹⁷ “Sir E. Grey’s Speech”, *Manchester Guardian*, 9 July 1906, p. 6.

¹⁸ “Pan-Islamism in Egypt”, *Manchester Guardian*, 18 July 1906, p. 7.

¹⁹ “Lord Cromer on Egypt”, *The Times*, 16 December 1908, p. 12.

²⁰ “Lord Cromer’s Report”, *The Times*, 4 April 1907, p. 5.

Muslims throughout the world *to defy and resist the Christian powers*". In the view of Britain's foremost expert, every expression of opposition to Cromer's rule was part of the nationalist movement, and the nationalist movement was the pan-Islamic movement. And, according to Cromer and *The Times*, pan-Islam was anathema to Britain's civilising mission: "a fatal obstacle to progress wherever [Islam] is supreme".²¹ The *Manchester Guardian* reported that, in Cromer's view, the dominant nationalist movement in Egypt was "nationalist by accident rather than its real nature", its "real nature", of course, being pan-Islamic.²² On the other hand Cromer believed that the followers of the Egyptian Sheikh Mohammed Abdou were *true* nationalists, because "their programme requires not opposition to but cooperation with Western civilisation".

Similarly, the newspapers did not construct the anti-colonial resistance in Morocco as a recursive stiffening of opposition by Moroccans in response to greater imperial encroachment by the French in response to a stiffening of opposition, as historians have come to understand it.²³ Rather, they saw it as an irrational refusal by *Muslims*, "sensitive to the call" and "sanctified by the rage of fanaticism" to "honour the tissue of peace" being woven around the world.²⁴ Opposition to European rule, in the British regime of truth, became opposition to peace and Western civilisation. It was irrational and required some explanation beyond the pursuit of self-interest.

With a single concept, "pan-Islamism" provided, delegitimised, and dismissed that explanation: Muslims were opposed to British rule *because they were Muslims*, and because being Muslim meant they were being manipulated by the enemies of Britain, especially the "oriental despot" Abdülhamid II. The possibility that the Islamicness of the people resisting British rule was simply a coincidence of history and geography was not countenanced. In the British discourse they were resisting because opposing the West is what Muslims—

²¹ "Lord Cromer's Annual Report Upon the Condi—" *The Times*, 4 April 1907, p. 7.

²² "Editorial Article No. 1", *Manchester Guardian*, 5 April 1907, p. 6.

²³ See Edmund Burke, "Pan-Islam and Moroccan Resistance to French Colonial Occupation, 1900–1912", *The Journal of African History*, 13, 1, 1972, pp. 97–118.

²⁴ "The Outlook", *Daily Mail*, 16 August 1907, p. 4.

“fanatics”, “barbarians”, “a fatal obstacle to progress”—*did*. The only way, in the early twentieth-century British regime of truth, for a Muslim to legitimately militate against the West was by, like Mohammed Abdou, cooperating with the West. Otherwise, as the Ottoman parliamentarian Riza Tawfik pointed out, whenever a Muslim “gave indications of seeking to ameliorate the position of his co-religionists” he was subsumed into the narrative of pan-Islam, assumed to be a pan-Islamist, “and therefore a dangerous man”.²⁵

‘A terrible bogey’: alternate readings of pan-Islam

The preponderant image of pan-Islam, emphasising the mutually constitutive discursive formations of the Islamicness of resistance to Western power and the oppositional-ness of Muslims, was not without critics. In January 1907 the Indian Muslim Sheikh M. H. Kidwai directly attacked that idea, complaining in *The Times* that pan-Islam had been “made a terrible bogey of” and that even European governments and “responsible ministers” seemed nervous of it.²⁶ *The Times* printed a brief summary of his speech alongside a report on Bovril profits, mining news, and notes from a lecture on the history of the Guildhall library, but neither returned to the subject nor printed letters engaging with his position. Kidwai’s view of pan-Islam, evidently, had gained little traction.

Although they did not reference Kidwai, letters from other writers appeared periodically in *The Times* either arguing on behalf of or attempting to explain the pan-Islamic movement. In 1906 a “member of the corps diplomatique” expressed admiration for the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid’s prestige in the Islamic world and suggested that it was “natural for the Turks to resist foreign interference in their lands” and for “exception to be taken to the constant encroachment upon Muslim rights and the treatment of the Sultan”.²⁷ Letters also appeared *from Muslims*, challenging the dominant narrative of what

²⁵ “The New Indian Students Centre”, *The Times*, 18 August 1910, p. 4.

²⁶ “The Guildhall Library”, *The Times*, 28 January 1907, p. 11.

²⁷ “A Good Word for the Sultan”, *Daily Mail*, 9 August 1906, p. 4.

pan-Islam meant: “pan-Islamic policy is by no means what it’s imagined to be, the outcome of fanaticism;” Prince Sabah ad-Din, the nephew of Abdülhamid II, wrote to the *Guardian* in 1906, “it is merely the expression of discontent caused by the encroachment of European powers”.²⁸ Letters from a regular *Times* correspondent in Istanbul, going by the pseudonym “Galata” for the district where he lived, attacked the notion that pan-Islam was artificial and centred on Abdülhamid, warning against “the dangerous illusion that the revival of Muslim feeling... is engineered by clever intriguers at Yıldız”.²⁹ The sentiments driving Islamic anti-colonialism were, Galata suggested, “too natural and too deep to owe their existence to any palace intrigues”. In another letter, he criticised the characterisation of Muslims as superstitious and fanatical, remembering that “Turkey practised the principle of toleration at a time when the Christians of Europe still held the stake and the rack as proper treatments for subjects who refused to accept the state religion”.³⁰ There were fanatics and bigots among the Turks, Galata conceded, but probably no more than among nations of other religions. Sheikh Kidwai, meanwhile, reconstructed pan-Islam as a wholly positive movement which Britons should celebrate rather than fear: “it aims at enlightening the world as to true Islam, and so removing ignorance and fanaticism”, and “[pan-Islam is] not against the British protectorate over Egypt, though it has great sympathy with those educated Muslims groaning under the despotism of Lord Cromer”.³¹

Despite the efforts of writers militating against reading pan-Islam as irrational, artificial, centralised, and intractably opposed to Western civilisation—cumulatively, challenging the very idea of pan-Islam as imagined in Britain—the narrative of pan-Islam continued to dominate the discourse. The only noticeable shift that occurred in the newspapers was a reassessment of the

²⁸ “The Sultan of Turkey: An Improvement Again Reported”, *Manchester Guardian*, 14 August 1906, p. 6.

²⁹ “Pan-Islamism”, *The Times*, 21 January 1908, p. 4. “Yıldız”, the palace where Abdülhamid II moved his court in 1880 after vacating the Dolmabaçe Palace, is often used as a metonym for the Ottoman government in Hamidian-era newspapers, much like the modern use of “Whitehall” to refer to the British government.

³⁰ “Turkey and the Macedonian Question”, *The Times*, 2 August 1907, p. 2.

³¹ “The Guildhall Library”, *The Times*, 28 January 1907, p. 11.

level of threat posed by the barbaric, pan-Islamic resistance to the West. In 1908 *The Times* announced that while there was, in the concern about pan-Islam, a “solid substratum of well-grounded apprehension”, those who dreaded the potential of the pan-Islamic movement had been led astray by their failure to perceive the “less grandiose facts of practical politics which have impact on our present world”.³² A real unification of all the Muslims of the world “would have startling effects”, but there were too many different sorts of Muslim for any cohesion—between the “barbarous fetishists who call themselves Muslims in West Africa and the philosophical mullahs of Tehran or the mosque of al-Azhar”, let alone “the fanatics, who swarm in Arabia and Africa”—to be achieved.³³ Ten weeks later *The Times* corrected itself and printed a chastising letter from one Mr. O. Browne, a medical officer posted in West Africa. Far from being barbarous fetishists, Mr. Browne informed *The Times*, there was no more respectable or better-behaved portion of the West African community than the Muslims, “who form the backbone of the country”.³⁴ The barbarous fetishists were “the unruly tribes against whom the Muslim soldiers are our greatest asset”.³⁵

In general, though, the narrative of pan-Islam remained consistent, interpreting violence in Islamic countries across the world as part of a unified Islamic anti-civilisational movement and emphasising the importance of keeping it contained. The power of the pan-Islamic narrative in the British schema of the Middle East is perhaps best demonstrated by its durability in the face of contradictory evidence. In 1908 the *Manchester Guardian* reported that Ali Topchibasheff, leader of the Muslim party in Russia’s first Duma, had been sentenced to imprisonment for supporting “Muslim liberation” in the form of autonomy for Caucasian Muslims.³⁶ After printing Topchibasheff’s long explanation that while Russia’s Caucasian Muslims sought autonomy, they did not aim for “a reunion of all the Muslims in Europe, Asia and Africa in one vast Muslim Empire”, as his interviewer suggested, the *Guardian* focused on his

³² “Pan-Islamism”, *The Times*, 21 January 1908, p. 7.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Central Criminal Court, March 31”, *The Times*, 1 April 1908, p. 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ “A Mussulman Leader”, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 January 1908, p. 7.

admission that he was trying to make his Caucasian allies feel that they were “first and foremost Muslims” and that he “had a very strong sense of the spiritual solidarity of the Muslim peoples”. Another article blamed the perennial trouble with Pashtuns on India’s North West Frontier on pan-Islam rather than the official governmental position that it was driven by “sheer cussedness”,³⁷ noting that the situation was even worse than 1897 “when as now there was an explosion of pan-Islamism”.³⁸

Anxiety about pan-Islam even coloured the interpretation of policy in places where it was explicitly not a threat: in mid-1908 the *Economist* reported that the Mashrutiyyat revolution in Persia “had brought the country almost to civil war”, but that Britain and Russia were containing the matter, precluding any opening for pan-Islam.³⁹ Later, in the euphoric mood which prevailed after the secular Young Turks took control of the Ottoman Empire, the *Manchester Guardian* suggested that a “new kind of pan-Islamism” might be approaching, in which the secular, liberal Young Turks could liberate the constitutionalist Persian reformers from the Shah’s Islamic despotism.⁴⁰ That suggestion—given that the Young Turks, as we will see later in this chapter were celebrated precisely *because* their secularism was interpreted as a departure from the Islamic opposition to “civilisation”—illustrates the dominance of religiosity and difference in the framework through the British press regarded the Muslim East.

There was some divergence between the different papers’ views on pan-Islam, especially between those of *The Times* and *Daily Mail*—disdainful and contemptuous, respectively—and the more understanding attitude of the *Manchester Guardian*. Whereas *The Times* in 1907 made a short, sober report on the fact of Lord Cromer’s resignation, the *Guardian* made space for a description of the opinions in Egypt, noting that the nationalist paper *Al Lewa* had coined

³⁷ “India—North-West Frontier Policy”, Lords Sitting (Lords), 26 February 1908, *United Kingdom Historic Hansard, 1803–2005*, vol. 184, col. 1718 [Electronic version].

³⁸ “The Fighting in the Khyber: Russian Press Opinions”, *Manchester Guardian*, 7 May 1908, p. 6.

³⁹ “The Disintegration of Persia”, *The Economist*, 27 June 1908, pp. 1343–1344.

⁴⁰ “Young Turks and New Cabinet”, *Manchester Guardian*, 8 August 1908, p. 9.

Cromerism as “a retort to the epithets of pan-Islamism and fanaticism”.⁴¹ Similarly, *The Times*’ coverage of Cromer’s report on the nationalist movement in Egypt was uncritical and supportive, focusing on his assertions regarding the hidden influence of pan-Islam in Egypt. There was no sense of irony in *The Times*’ repetition of Cromer’s pronouncement that liberal principles could not be extended to Egypt because they were too backward, as evidenced by their willingness to deny people elementary liberal principles.⁴² The *Guardian*, by contrast, editorialised. In the issue including Cromer’s report, the *Guardian*’s editor wrote that he found Cromer’s argument against Egyptian nationalism unconvincing because “politics in Islamic countries always take a religious form... if we wait for Erastian principles to triumph in Egypt we may wait forever”.⁴³ The tension between the *Times* and *Guardian* representations of pan-Islam betrays some nuance in the British view of pan-Islam and Muslim resistance to British rule as a whole. Although the disdainful view of the pro-empire, establishment-oriented *Times* was unquestionably dominant—it ran significantly more articles on the subject⁴⁴ and its viewpoint was replicated in other papers such as the *Economist*, *Daily Mail*, and even New Zealand’s *Oamaru Mail*,⁴⁵ *Feilding Star*,⁴⁶ *Bush Advocate*⁴⁷ and *New Zealand Times*.⁴⁸ The *Guardian*’s attitude, on the other hand, was more or less unique. Nevertheless, the liberal attitude of the *Guardian* suggests that there was space in the British imaginary to allow for a narrative of non-European resistance against despotism and misrule

⁴¹ “Lord Cromer’s Resignation”, *Manchester Guardian*, 22 April 1907, p. 6.

⁴² “Lord Cromer’s Annual Report Upon the Condi—”, *The Times*, 4 April 1907, p. 7.

⁴³ “Editorial Article No. 1”, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 April 1907, p. 6.

⁴⁴ 42 articles with some permutation of “pan-Islam” in the title in the *Manchester Guardian* between 1900 and 1910; 122 articles with “pan-Islam” in the title in *The Times*. Although this is a proxy measurement, the sheer number of oblique references to pan-Islam make a more accurate count prohibitively difficult. The magnitude of the difference—more than twice as many articles in *The Times* as the *Guardian*—provides some reasonable basis for assuming that the real difference, even if it is not as large as this title analysis suggests, is considerable.

⁴⁵ “Turkey and Macedonia”, *Oamaru Mail*, 29 December 1905, p. 1.

⁴⁶ “When Will Turkey Cease to Exist?”, *Feilding Star*, 27 October 1906, p. 6.

⁴⁷ “Pan-Islamism and Japan”, *Bush Advocate*, 27 August 1906, p. 3.

⁴⁸ “The Dagger in Egypt”, *New Zealand Times*, 8 May 1906, p. 4.

by individual British officials, as seen in the *Guardian's* even-handed if not reproachful treatment of Lord Cromer and Egyptian nationalism-cum-pan-Islam. With that being said, none of the newspapers ever expressed *support* for pan-Islam, except in serving as a platform for letters from third parties, or even for the charitable interpretation of pan-Islam as a reasonable response to colonial encroachment, which would have required a major reassessment of European imperialism. While the *Guardian* might have excused Muslims their opposition to a particular British official's rule, it did not support opposition to *British* rule.

The relative negativity of their attitudes toward pan-Islam aside, all of the papers this thesis examined approached pan-Islam with a consistent framework. By interrogating the differences between the way that newspapers *represented* pan-Islam, as we have seen, with the way that historians now understand pan-Islam, we can gain some insight into the system of meaning which mediated the way that pan-Islam was perceived by early twentieth century Britons.

Unity through faith: pan-Islam in history

Pan-Islam is now understood as a European term that referred to what were in fact a number of contemporaneous but unrelated political and intellectual developments in Islamic societies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁴⁹ In his study seeking to complicate the received wisdom of European press and intelligence agencies in the period, the Pakistani historian Adeb Khalid draws a distinction between two large-scale developments which the British discourse and subsequent historiography frequently folded together. On the one hand, Khalid identifies "state pan-Islam": Abdülhamid's leverage of his subjects' Islamic identity in an effort to assimilate, solidify and consolidate

⁴⁹ That is, insofar as any pair of simultaneous political-cultural-intellectual movements can be unrelated. Certainly, the emergence of Hamidian Ottoman nationalism, anti-imperial resentment in newly colonised Muslim countries and the development of a transnational Arabic-Persian-Turkish intellectual-culture sphere were developments which *influenced* one another, but not enough that they can reasonably be considered to be manifestations of a unified movement.

his realm. On the other he sees “public pan-Islam”, the emergence of a transnational intellectual network that bound together Islamic elites and publications and allowed them to circulate more widely and in greater numbers than ever before, producing an informed Islamic public, interested in Islamic matters and Islamic countries and therefore deeply suspicious of the encroaching European Christian powers.⁵⁰

The “pan-Islamic” policy of Abdülhamid II (*İttihad-ı İslam*, translated as “unity of Islam”),⁵¹ which Khalid calls “state pan-Islam”, needs to be understood in the context of the early twentieth century Ottoman state.⁵² The Ottoman empire at the beginning of the twentieth century was (as Sheikh Kidwai pointed at a 1907 meeting of the pan-Islamic society)⁵³ a semicolonial state on the defensive, seeking to protect and consolidate what was left of its territorial and political integrity, not to aggrandise and extend itself.⁵⁴ To that end, Hamidian “state pan-Islam” was designed for domestic consumption, not as an instrument of aggressive propaganda.⁵⁵ The inward-facing nature of Abdülhamid’s pan-Islam was noted in the period by the anonymous *Times* correspondent “Galata”, who pointed out that despite the widespread fear of a pan-Islamic enemy gathering in Muslims around the world, Indian Muslims who came to Istanbul looking for support from the “great Muslim power” of Ottoman Turkey were unfailingly turned away.⁵⁶ Hamidian *İttihad-ı İslam* was an ideology constructed to meet the problems that Abdülhamid’s Ottoman Empire faced: European pressure, as the press worried, but also nationalists, secessionists, and

⁵⁰ Adeb Khalid, “Pan-Islamism in Practice” in Elisabeth Özdalga, ed., *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, London: Routledge, 2005, p. 202.

⁵¹ Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, p. 37.

⁵² Bora Kanra, *Islam, Democracy and Dialogue in Turkey: Deliberating in Divided Societies*, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 106.

⁵³ “The Pan-Islamic Movement”, *The Times*, 13 June 1907, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Murat Kaya, “Western Interventions and the Formation of the Young Turks’ Siege Mentality”, *Middle East Critique*, 23, 2, 2014, pp. 129–130.

⁵⁵ Azmi Özcan, “The Press and Anglo-Ottoman Relations, 1876-1909”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 29, 1, 1993, p. 115.

⁵⁶ “Pan-Islamism”, *The Times*, 21 January 1908, p. 4.

internal cultural and political challenges. Although Islam was a crucial element of Abdülhamid's sociopolitical project, focusing *solely* on Islam (as the British press was inclined to do) impedes an understanding of the real nature of Hamidian state nationalism, which emphasised religion as a common bond but articulated and moved beyond that bond as a means to an assimilationist end.⁵⁷ *İttihad-ı Islam* invoked religion as the basis of a nationalism which could unify and assimilate the Muslim ethnic groups within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire into a shared identity. It was an attempt, first, to solidify the political integrity of the Ottoman state by “doing unto the Europeans what they were doing to the Ottomans through their patronage of various non-Muslim *millet*s”,⁵⁸ and secondly to implement a unifying, assimilationist “official nationalism” much like the Russification efforts of Alexander II in Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine and Bessarabia.⁵⁹ Just as ethnic as it was religious, *İttihad-ı Islam* was built upon an explicit understanding that the Turks were the “fundamental element of the empire”⁶⁰ and a complementary belief that the Ottoman Empire needed to assimilate other ethnicities into that fundamental element, for example by “making the Kurds part of us”.⁶¹

Hamidian pan-Islam was certainly *powered* by religion—Feroze Yasamee characterised it as an effort to woo Ottoman Muslims by recasting the Ottoman polity as a Muslim polity and the Ottoman political nation as a Muslim political nation, but that is not how it was represented in Britain.⁶² Despite the imagery in

⁵⁷ Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism”, *American Historical Review*, 107, 3, 2002, p. 769.

⁵⁸ Khalid, “Pan-Islamism in Practice”, p. 205.

⁵⁹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 1983, p. 87.

⁶⁰ Osman Nuri Pasha, also known as Ghazi Osman Pasha, quoted in Selim Deringil, “They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45, 2, 2003, p. 328.

⁶¹ Quoted in Metin Heper, *The State and the Kurds in Turkey - The Question of Assimilation*, London: Palgrave: 2007, p. 47.

⁶² F.A.K. Yasamee, *Ottoman Diplomacy: Abdülhamid II and the Great Powers, 1878–1888*, Istanbul: Isis Press, 1996, p. 25. For a useful definition of “political nation” in the context of exclusionary regimes such as the late Hamidian state see María L. Lagos,

The Times, the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* of the early twentieth century, Hamidian pan-Islam was not a Quixotic attempt to unify the vast and internally riven Islamic world behind the leadership of a single ruler. While Abdülhamid II certainly capitalised on Muslim opposition to European colonialism and leveraged his position as Caliph for political advantage, it does not follow that he sought, as the British press imagined, to unify and rule the entire Muslim world, or that he was deluded enough to believe all Muslims, even all *Ottoman* Muslims, were ready to follow his lead.

On the other hand, what Khalid distinguishes as “public pan-Islam” had little to do with religion and a sense of religious unity (much less uniformity), and nothing at all to do with government-sponsored Hamidian ideology. Rather, it was driven by the emergence of newspapers and other printed materials in Islamic countries, the widespread fluency of Muslim elites in Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish, and the increased mobility of ideas and news enabled by developing transportation technologies. The confluence of those forces created a “shared reading experience and shared concern with the state of the Muslim world”—a distinct Arabo-Turco-Persian and, by coincidence of language and history, largely Islamic public sphere.⁶³ As Galata and the “member of the corps diplomatique” quoted in *The Times* noted, the opposition of that Islamic public sphere to foreign interference in Islamic lands was “natural”.⁶⁴ Despite the inclination of British discourse to ascribe opposition to British dominance to a sinister pan-Islamic antagonist, the emerging transnational Islamic consciousness and intellectual community underscored that the notion that “the revival of Muslim feeling” was “engineered by clever intriguers at Yıldız” was an “illusion”.⁶⁵

“Livelihood, Citizenship, and the Gender of Politics” in David Nugent, ed., *Locating Capitalism in Time and Space*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 216.

⁶³ Khalid, “Pan-Islamism in Practice”, p. 204; Nikki Keddie, “Pan-Islam as Proto-Nationalism”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 41, 1, 1969, p. 24.

⁶⁴ “A Good Word for the Sultan”, *Daily Mail*, 9 August 1906, p.4.

⁶⁵ “Pan-Islamism”. *The Times*, 21 January 1908, p. 4.

This leaves us with two models of what pan-Islam was. First, there is the pan-Islam imagined by the British press, which saw European civilisation on the one hand, opposed to a monolithic pan-Islamic creed, shared by Muslim “fanatics and barbarians”,⁶⁶ with the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph at its head.⁶⁷ Alternatively, we have the understanding proposed by modern historians—and by Muslims and their sympathisers in the period—that the uniformity thought to inhere in early twentieth-century Islam, upon which the British idea of pan-Islam was predicated, did not exist. Rather, the phenomena collapsed into the term “pan-Islam” were a heterogeneous collection of nationalisms and anti-colonialisms, constructed *ad hoc* in response to local needs, operating alongside other Iranian, Egyptian, Turkish, Berber, Circassian and Arabic forms of nationalism, which happened by coincidences of political and linguistic commonality to be largely Islamic.⁶⁸

The specific dissonances between the imagining and the reality of the pan-Islamic movement cast some light on the interpretive framework through which the British reading public in the early twentieth century encountered the Middle East. The dominant discourse unfailingly interpreted pan-Islam as a global Oriental threat. That interpretation fits tidily with Britain’s history of anxiety about the security of her empire. Although the geopolitical tensions threatening India which Rudyard Kipling termed the “Great Game”⁶⁹ came to an end between 1895 and 1907, the British reading public had by the early twentieth century been reading about threats to the Indian “jewel in the crown” for almost a hundred years.⁷⁰ Further, in the wake of Japan’s Meiji Restoration and

⁶⁶ “Cause of Islam Fanaticism”, *The Observer*, 8 July 1906, p. 5.

⁶⁷ For a superb examination of the ways in which European discourse used religion to define itself in opposition to the “other”, see Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁶⁹ Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1994, p. 111.

⁷⁰ See Evgeny Sergeey, *The Great Game, 1856–1907: Russo–British Relations in Central and East Asia*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, pp. 276–298 and Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia, and the Final Struggle for Central Asia*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2002, p. 18.

especially the stunning defeat of the Russian Empire in the 1905 Russo–Japanese War, a deep-seated fear of pan-Asianism and the advancement of non-European powers—that the global Rest might grow so big for their boots that they came and gave the West a good kicking—gained wide credence in the British reading sphere.⁷¹ Pashtun resistance to British power on India’s Northwest Frontier, for instance, was attributed—as well as to pan-Islam—to the sight of the “total defeat of an Occidental power by a purely Oriental nation”, and the effect that image had on the “Pashtun mind”.⁷² Anxiety about pan-Islam represents a confluence between the concerns about the security of India and the fear of the rising Orient. That discursive junction was illustrated perfectly by *The Times* in October 1907, which worried that there were “more Muslims in British-ruled India than Christians in the entire empire... and Islam continues to advance”.⁷³

Secondly, the discourse regarding pan-Islam interpreted it in terms of *Islam*, rather than *anti-colonialism*, *nationalism*, *growing literacy*, or *intellectual exchange*. Regardless of the motivations driving the activities collapsed into the narrative of pan-Islam—and in cases such as Moroccan anti-colonial resistance, Ottoman efforts to collect taxes from organisations within the Ottoman Empire and Egyptian nationalism material interests seem abundantly clear—the newspapers relegated self-interest to the background and emphasised the Islamicness of the actors. What mattered about pan-Islam, to that portion of the British reading public who gave their daily pence to *The Times*, *Guardian* and *Mail*, was that it was *Islamic*. Rather than *people pursuing self-interest*, the narrative of pan-Islam confined and “othered” its characters as *Muslims doing Muslim things*, where “Muslim things” was understood to mean “opposing Christianity, civilisation, and the West”. In 1907 a “Church Congress” captured that idea perfectly: in a lecture tellingly entitled “The Muslem World, a Challenge to Christianity”, it laid out the problem of pan-Islam and the threat posed by Indian Muslims to the British Empire because of their adherence to a religion which “degrades women, opposes social progress beyond the limit reached by the Arabs

⁷¹ “Europe’s Relations with Asia”, *The Times*, 24 May 1911, p. 4.

⁷² “The Meaning of the Mohmand Outbreak”, *The Times*, 3 October 1907, p. 10.

⁷³ “The Church Congress”, *The Times*, 3 October 1907, p. 10.

in Muhammad's day, and sanctions polygamy, servile concubinage and slavery for all time..."⁷⁴ Pan-Islam, for the early twentieth-century British reading public, reinterpreted Islamic peoples' agency and pursuit of their own self-interest as a struggle of retrograde Islamicness against progress and civilisation.

Ottomanism

On the third of July 1908, concerned that his opposition to Abdülhamid's regime would be discovered by an investigative military commission from Istanbul,⁷⁵ the ethnic Albanian⁷⁶ "Young Turk" Ahmed Niyazi and 160 volunteers revolted in Resen, in southern Macedonia, and called for the restoration of the 1876 constitution.⁷⁷ The revolt spread swiftly between locals and Ottoman army units without any orders or oversight from major constitutionalist bodies such as the Committee of Union and Progress in Salonika.⁷⁸

Niyazi and his comrades, including the soon-to-be-famous Enver Bey,⁷⁹ found support among the local populace, including Macedonians, Bulgarians, and Serbs, with the promise that they were "working for the goal of justice" and assurance of "absolute equality because we are all brothers, the Turk, Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Vlach, Serb".⁸⁰ Many towns across Macedonia declared their sympathy with the cause and their adherence to the abrogated constitution; Niyazi himself proclaimed the constitution before a large crowd in the provincial capital of the Monastir vilayet (modern Bitola in the Republic of North

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Alexander Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1923*, Harlow: Longman, 1998, p. 20.

⁷⁶ George Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle: Ottoman rule, Islam, and the Albanians, 1874–1913*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2006, p. 150.

⁷⁷ Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, pp. 97–98.

⁷⁸ Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, pp. 340–341.

⁷⁹ William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military*, London: Routledge, 2013, p. 35.

⁸⁰ M. Sükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 248.

Macedonia) on July 23.⁸¹ Facing growing pressure at home and from foreign powers, and with the looming threat of the mutinied Third Army marching from Macedonia to impose the constitution themselves, Sultan Abdülhamid II capitulated and issued an imperial decree announcing the restoration of the constitution on July 24.⁸² For their part in forcing the Sultan's hand, the "Young Turks" are credited with a revolution.

Ottomanism emerged in the British media consciousness in the immediate wake of the revolution. The attitude of the British media evolved swiftly between two poles: at first the Young Turks and Ottomanism were understood as a response against Abdülhamid's repressive, pan-Islamic *ancien régime* and hailed as the modernising liberal saviours of the Ottoman Empire. By 1910, however, that optimism was eroding before a more sceptical assessment of Ottomanism and its impact on the territories under Ottoman rule. By 1911 the British press had settled on a new consensus: that the Young Turks had led the Ottoman state into "a more lamentable position than Abdülhamid ever occupied".⁸³ Just as the reception of pan-Islam was distorted by the British discourse's preoccupation with religiosity and opposition to Christianity and the West, the Young Turks and Ottomanism were similarly interpreted through a framework which foregrounded religiosity and opposition to the West. This chapter examines the representation of Ottomanism in the major British newspapers. Just as the dissonances between *real* and *imaginary* reveal what was important to British readers in pan-Islam, this chapter builds an understanding of the continuities in representing different nationalisms to examine what was understood to be attached to a *particular political movement* and what was a consistent feature of Britain's imagined Middle East.

In this more than perhaps any other period of the early twentieth century, it is clear that the British understanding of events in the Middle East was an *imagining*. "Young Turk", like "pan-Islam", was a European term, cognate with

⁸¹ Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908*, pp. 97–98.

⁸² Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East 1914–1920*, New York: Basic Books, 2015, pp. 1–5.

⁸³ "Europe and the Crisis", *The Observer*, 1 October 1911, p. 8.

“Young Germany” and “Young Italy” which referred to the various constitutionalist groups opposing Abdülhamid II. The term is unfortunate because it implies that the constitutionalist movement was unitary and that it was composed entirely, or even mostly, of ethnic Turks. As a result, the varied and often mutually antagonistic constitutionalist forces become one “Young Turk” in opposition to an equally fantastical “Old Turk”.⁸⁴ Consequently, the Young Turks and their creed are frequently presented even now in a forward-looking Turcocentric narrative, epitomised by Karl Deutsch’s 1969 *précis* of Turkish history: “there was a revolution in 1908 which put the Young Turk nationalists in power, and the second instalment followed in 1918 under Kemal”.⁸⁵

The notion of “Young Turks” was criticised even by contemporaries: in an 1877 book on “the modern Turk”, the German Orientalist Andreas David Mordtmann attacked the “reductionist dichotomy” between “progressive young Turks” and “reactionary old Turks”.⁸⁶ In fact the “Young Turks”, with roots in the Tanzimat-era “New Ottomans” movement were neither unified, nor young, nor predominantly Turkish; nor can they justly be considered analogues to the liberal ethnic nationalist movements of Young Germany or Young Italy.⁸⁷ The term lumps together a range of groups whose only commonality was their

⁸⁴ Dogan Gürpınar, “The Rise and Fall of Turcophilism in Nineteenth Century British Discourses: Visions of the Turk ‘Young’ and ‘Old’”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 39, 3, 2012, pp. 347–372; also M. Şükrü Hanioglu, “Notes on the Young Turks and the Freemasons, 1875–1908”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 25, 2, 1989, p. 186.

⁸⁵ Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969, p. 50.

⁸⁶ A. D. Mordtmann, *Stambul und das Moderne Türkentum*, Leipzig: Verlag Von Duncker & Humblot, 1877, pp. 153–168. I am indebted to my good friend Marco Müller for translating choice sections of this book where my machine-assisted reading was insufficient.

⁸⁷ For the links between the Young Turks and the Tanzimat-era New Ottomans see Hripsimé Demonian, *The Sick Men of Europe*, Gyumri: Shirak State University Press, 1996, p. 11. The traditional mistranslation of the Turkish *Yeni Osmanlılar* (literally “New Ottomans”) as “Young Ottomans”, presumably to bring them into conformity with other nationalist forces in nineteenth century Europe, may well be partly to blame for the unfortunate misnomer of the Young Turks. For an examination of the New Ottomans’ ideology and history, see Ahmet Akgündüz and Said Oztürk, *Ottoman History: Misperceptions and Truths*, Rotterdam: IUR Press, 2011, p. 318.

opposition to the absolutism of the Hamidian state,⁸⁸ the first nucleus of which—*İttihad-ı Osmani Cemiyeti*, or the Society of Ottoman Union—was founded in 1889 by two Kurds, an Albanian, and a Circassian.⁸⁹ Other Young Turk organisations would include the Committee of Union and Progress (C.U.P), which came to dominate the movement; the Turco-Syrian Committee; the Constitutional Party of Turkey; the Freedom and Accord Party or Liberal Entente, and the Society of Ottoman Knowledge.⁹⁰ Like their individual identities, the Young Turk organisations’ politics reflected the multiethnic makeup of the empire. Although they were certainly nationalists—Eugene Rogan calls the Young Turks as a whole and the C.U.P in particular “*ultranationalistic*”⁹¹—they were *Ottoman* and not *Turkish* nationalists, wholly distinct from the contemporaneous Turkish nationalist movement which came to dominate Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal.

Unlike Hamidian state pan-Islam, which aimed to leverage religious identity to assimilate the subjects of the empire, the Young Turks’ Ottoman nationalism centred on a political-national identity. It had its roots in the Tanzimat and First Constitutional Eras of the empire, evident in works such as Namık Kemal’s 1870 play *Vatan* (“Fatherland”), which posited national-territorial loyalty as an alternative to the traditional religious communities—*millet*s—that gave Ottoman subjects identity.⁹² Specifically, “Ottomanism” promoted equality between the *millet*s of the Ottoman Empire and advocated for dismantling the different legal systems and privileges that divided the subjects

⁸⁸ Hanioglu, “Notes on the Young Turks and the Freemasons”, p. 186.

⁸⁹ İshak Sukuti (1868–1902), a Kurd; Abdullah Cevdet (1869–1939), also a Kurd; İbrahim Temo (1865–1939), the founder of the group and an Albanian; and Mehmet Reşit (1873–1919), a Circassian. See Murat Kaya, “Western Interventions”, p. 130.

⁹⁰ Hanioglu, “Notes on the Young Turks and the Freemasons”, p. 186; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle* p. 190; Stanford J and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey Volume II: Reform, Revolution and Republic, the Rise of Modern Turkey 1808–1975*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 110.

⁹¹ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, p. 15.

⁹² William Cleveland and Martin Buton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Boulder: Westview Press, 2012, p. 79; Fatih Öztürk, “The Ottoman Millet System” in *Essays in Turkish and Comparative Law*, Istanbul: Filiz Kitabevi, 2013, p. 73.

of the empire along lines of religious and ethnic affiliation.⁹³ The Ottomanist program aimed to create a new “Ottoman” identity embracing all the subjects of the Sultan, which would subsume the old ethnic and religious identities in an effort to arrest the forces of nationalism and separatism that threatened the empire. Most importantly in the eyes of the *Times*, *Guardian* and *Mail*—focused as they were on the Islamicness of the Middle East and the threat that Muslims posed to European civilisation—the Young Turks were committed to granting all the subjects of the Ottoman state the same legal rights and treatment under the law regardless of their religious identity and, necessarily in pursuit of that goal, abandoning Islam as the centrepiece of state ideology.

British press coverage of the celebrations after the “Young Turk Revolution” focused on the fact that the Revolution appealed to a broad multiethnic swathe of the Ottoman population. Although the historiographical term “Ottomanism” appeared rarely in the discourse, with 14 instances in *The Times*, five in the *Guardian* and not even one in the *Daily Mail*, the British press manifestly understood and engaged with the principles of the Young Turks’ “Ottomanist” agenda. The initial report in *The Times* after Abdülhamid’s capitulation expressly foregrounded the multicultural aspect of the celebration. A crowd of 50,000 people went to Yıldız to cheer for the Sultan, according to *The Times*, “composed at first mainly of Turks” but “joined by many Greeks and Armenians”; “the demonstrations were orderly and enthusiastic, notwithstanding the mixture of religions and races”.⁹⁴ The *Manchester Guardian* reported on a scene in the Galata quarter where “businessmen and those engaged in the money market, chiefly Greeks and Armenians” cheered imperial troops, and noted that the Greek, Armenian and Jewish newspapers were “unanimous in their expressions of gratification... and their sentiments of loyalty to the Sultan”.⁹⁵ The *Observer* reported that, in Macedonia, the proclamation of the constitution and the “unity and fraternity of Muslims and Christians” was met

⁹³ Gregory Goalwin, “Understanding the Exclusionary Politics of Early Turkish Nationalism: An ethnic boundary-making approach”, *Nationalities Papers*, 2017, pp. 10–12.

⁹⁴ “The Turkish Constitution”, *The Times*, 28 July 1908, p. 7.

⁹⁵ “At Constantinople”, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 July 1908, p. 7.

with “perfect order and tranquillity”.⁹⁶ The *Daily Mail*, in the wake of the revolution, described the “sudden advent of the millennium”: where five years before between thirty and forty thousand Christians had fled Beirut to escape Islamic violence, “today Muslim greets Christian with that sacred salutation, ‘peace be upon you, o brother’, which until a few weeks ago was reserved for the followers of the Prophet”.⁹⁷ All three of the major newspapers reprinted a telegram from the Turkish–Albanian revolutionary officer Enver Bey, whom the *Guardian*, in line with the misinterpretations encouraged by the misnomer, termed “the Young Turks’ leader”.⁹⁸ Enver’s telegram embraced the diversity of the Ottoman Empire in an announcement that “the whole population of Turks, Bulgarians, Serbians and others [in Macedonia] join in this feast day”.⁹⁹

The British press acceptance of the Ottomanist ideal is illustrated by the explosion, in the wake of the revolution, of references to Ottoman patriotism, “the common Fatherland”, and “the *Ottoman people*”.¹⁰⁰ Between 1880 and the revolution the “Ottoman people” had appeared in the *Guardian* six times; between 1908 and 1926 it appeared 59 times. *The Times* saw twelve uses of “Ottoman people” before 1908 and 37 after. The comparatively populist *Daily Mail*, more inclined to lean into sensationalised constructions of its subject matter closer to the extremes of the prevailing public imaginary, did not see a single instance of the idea of an “Ottoman people” before 1908, then used the term nine times within a year of the Revolution. In 1908 the “Ottoman people”, according to the *Manchester Guardian*, proceeded in deputations “Muslims and non-Muslim alike” to thank the Sultan for enabling them “irrespective of race and religion, to live in the future like human beings”.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ “Sultan’s Good Sense”, *The Observer*, 26 July 1908.

⁹⁷ “Exuberance of Young Turks”, *Daily Mail*, 15 August 1908, p. 4.

⁹⁸ “Rejoicing in Macedonia”, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 July 1908, p. 7.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ “The Turkish Constitution”, *The Times*.

¹⁰¹ “A Remarkable Article”, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 July 1908, p. 7.

Two days after that breathless report *The Times* published a round-up articulating the significance—to *The Times* and its readership—of the revolution’s breadth of appeal:

“there is nothing *Muslim* about this movement. It is an *Ottoman* movement, in which Armenians, Macedonians of various races, Jews and Greeks are playing a part beside Turks, Albanians and Circassians...”¹⁰²

The Young Turk Revolution, in the British imagination, was important enough to deserve pages of reportage, and the burgeoning discourse was dominated by the new principle of equality and shared identity in the Ottoman Empire. Ottomanism was a movement for *everyone*, not just for Turks. An anonymous commentator wrote that the minorities of the empire had “embraced the Turks wholeheartedly, in the belief that there were no longer Arabs or Turks or Armenians or Kurds in the state, but that everyone had become an Ottoman with equal rights and responsibilities”.¹⁰³ Secondly, *The Times* article directly connected the Young Turk revolution to the overarching British fears of the previous years, the Islamicness of Ottoman society:

...not only is no trace of fanaticism visible here or reported from the provinces, but the leading organ of the Liberals has been taken to task by many Young Turks and other journals for emphasising the fact that the restored Constitution is in conformity with the sacred law, and the final proof [that there is nothing Muslim about the movement] is the fact that the Young Turk programme includes the extension of military service to all sects of the empire without distinction.¹⁰⁴

Rather than focusing on the economic, diplomatic or geostrategic implications of the seismic shift caused by Abdülhamid’s capitulation, the British imagination was concerned with the fact that the Young Turks were *secular*.

¹⁰² “Turkey”, *The Times*, 29 July 1908, p. 7.

¹⁰³ Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, p.6.

¹⁰⁴ “Turkey”, *The Times*.

The multiethnic nature of the celebrations was given a great deal of space, but on close inspection, those reports show a continuity with the focus on religion which dominated the pan-Islamic period. Reports about celebrations of the Young Turk Revolution focused on the fact that religious communities *other than the Muslim majority* were overjoyed—the responses of Jews, Armenians and Greeks were given individual attention, but the myriad predominantly Islamic ethnic groups of the empire, notably the Kurds, Circassians, Arabs and Turks, were collapsed into a single Islamic umbrella. When the newspapers emphasised that the Young Turks’ represented an *Ottoman movement*, they framed that statement not as meaning that it was Ottoman rather than *Turkish*, but that it was Ottoman rather than *Muslim*. Ottomanism was understood and celebrated not through a political lens as a movement creating a modern state of citizens rather than subjects, or through a socioeconomic lens as a project seeking to consolidate and more effectively leverage the resources of the empire, for example in the Young Turks’ decision to allow recruits into the Ottoman army irrespective of their religion.¹⁰⁵ The British reading public encountered Ottomanism and the Young Turks through the same framework that they had encountered pan-Islam: a framework which focused on religious and civilisational aspects of the narrative—Islamicness and opposition to Christianity—and elided everything else.

Islam and the Young Turks

As we have seen, the issue of religion dominated the interpretation of pan-Islam and the issue of pan-Islam dominated the interpretation of the Ottoman Empire. The emergence of Ottomanism represented a fundamental shift in the issue of religion, and displaced pan-Islam in British discourse. Ottomanism was expressly non-Islamist, and because of its joyous reception among the many races and religious denominations of the Ottoman realm the British press announced that “pan-Islamism, forced upon Turkey against the

¹⁰⁵ Erik Jan Zürcher, “The Ottoman Conscript System”, *International Review of Social History*, 43, 1998, p. 447.

will of all but a few” had been “rejected by Turkish liberalism”.¹⁰⁶ Pan-Islam disappeared from the discourse virtually overnight. On the 16th of July 1908, two weeks before the revolution, the *Times Literary Supplement* had gushed a review of the newly-published monograph *Pan-Islamism*—a subject evidently thought worth writing and publishing entire books on.¹⁰⁷ On the 25th, the success of the Young Turk Revolution left pan-Islam defanged, deprived of its imagined leader in the absolutist Abdülhamid II, and disowned by the Young Turks. Prince Mehmet ‘Ali, younger brother of the Khedive of Egypt and himself a Young Turk, told *The Times* that it was impossible to “attribute to [the Young Turks] a base desire to promote pan-Islamic propaganda” when they were fighting for “fraternisation of all elements throughout the empire” and when they “proclaim before the whole world that they will no longer tolerate personal power precisely because it provokes deplorable divisions between Muslims and Christians”.¹⁰⁸ Between the 25th of July and the end of 1908, references to pan-Islam dried up in major British newspapers. From some 17 references in the *Guardian* before the end of July, only two appear after the revolution. Similarly, the number of direct and indirect references to the force of pan-Islam in *The Times* dropped from 39 to 16—and twelve of the articles which referred to pan-Islam after the revolution did so in announcing that it had been defused by the Young Turks and was no longer a concern.¹⁰⁹ By December even Lord Cromer, the expert voice behind the British imagining of pan-Islam conceded that pan-Islam was no longer militant or a real danger.¹¹⁰ By 1912 pan-Islam was not only no longer a threat, but never had been: *The Times* called it a “phantasm”.¹¹¹ Anxiety about the security of India

¹⁰⁶ “Turkey” *The Times*, 29 July 1908, p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ “List of New Books and Reprints”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 July 1908, pp. 231–232.

¹⁰⁸ “Turkey” *The Times*, 3 August 1908, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ These numbers were acquired using text searches of the Times Digital Archive and the ProQuest Historical Newspaper archive, which stores the Manchester Guardian. I employed a range of search terms which were used to refer tangentially to pan-Islamism in an effort to capture every reference possible. If we limit the search to articles explicitly referencing the pan-Islamic movement, the drop-off is even more striking.

¹¹⁰ “Lord Cromer on Egypt”, *The Times*, 16 December 1908, p. 12.

¹¹¹ “Pan-Islamism”, *The Times*, 11 January 1912, p. 11.

continued—in January 1910 Sir George Birdwood, deprived of the pan-Islamic spectre, wrote a letter to *The Times* detailing the blowing of *chaukya* war trumpets in Hindu temples, noting that more than one-half of the population of the British Empire consisted of Hindus, and warning about the potential danger of “pan-Hinduism”¹¹²—but that danger was no longer emanating from the Ottoman Empire or the Muslim East.

The Young Turks went further than merely distancing themselves from pan-Islam, they actively sought to erode the British idea of Muslim opposition to the West. Prince Mehmet ‘Ali assured *The Times* that “the sole ambition of the Turks is to maintain the integrity of their country as it now appears on the map and to regenerate the nation by their own efforts”.¹¹³ Similarly, although the very first article about the revolution in the *Guardian* worried about the effect of the new Turkish regime on Egypt,¹¹⁴ Enver Bey made it clear in an interview with a *Times* correspondent that the Young Turks’ commitment to Ottoman integrity and disavowal of territorial aggrandisement extended to Egypt, which lay “outside their vision”.¹¹⁵ Anxiety about the Young Turk regime reconquering lost Ottoman lands swiftly evaporated.

As a consequence the British discourse, no longer focused on the pan-Islamic threat, could turn to other aspects of their imagined East. Stripped of the oppositional pan-Islamic prism through which the Ottoman Empire had been interpreted as a threat to European civilisation, the preoccupation with Islamic religiosity found a new focus: the progress of secularism, and especially the relations between Muslims and Christians in the Ottoman Empire. The framework of religion through which Britons regarded the Middle East had not changed, it had merely reoriented.

¹¹² “Pan-Hinduism”, *The Times*, 7 January 1910, p. 8.

¹¹³ “Turkey”, *The Times* 3 August 1908, p. 6.

¹¹⁴ “Turkey in Egypt”, *Manchester Guardian*, 17 December 1908, p. 6.

¹¹⁵ “The Turkish Situation”, *The Times*, 1 September 1908, p. 3.

‘The worst enemies of Islam’: the image of Turkification

The evolution of Ottomanism in the British imaginary is effectively illustrated by the terminology employed to discuss it. Rather than the historiographical term “Ottomanism”, British newspapers through 1908 and 1909 referred to the Young Turks’ ideology with phrases such as “Ottoman nationalism”, “Ottoman patriotism”, “Young Turkism” or—tellingly, given the overwhelmingly positive attitude with which it was viewed—“Turkish liberalism”.¹¹⁶ In the wake of the revolution the press celebrated “the conception of a common nationalism” which “submerged the differences of race and religion”,¹¹⁷ cheering that all Ottoman subjects were now “brothers, good Ottomans, and participators in the constitution”.¹¹⁸ The reality of implementing the Ottomanist ideal, however, was a challenge. Creating a common nationalism to eliminate the divisions of race and religion required a common—centralised, *standardised*—identity: Turkish, written in Arabic script, became the dominant language in schools, courtrooms and government offices; government appointments went to Turks; and, although the British press was almost entirely unaware, traditional *qabila* power structures rooted in Islam were replaced with new, secular models.¹¹⁹ By 1910 the exultant mood with which the British press had regarded the Young Turks and their all-embracing creed had given way to an expressly negative construction of their aims: rather than “Young Turkism” or the force of “Turkish Liberalism”, British discourse about the Ottoman regime came to be dominated by the term *Turkification*.

Rather than a common nationalism to submerge all differences, *The Times* of 1911 understood Ottomanism-Turkification as an “effort to obliterate the national sentiments of non-Turkish peoples and to create and impose an official and non-racial patriotism”.¹²⁰ According to *The Times*’ correspondent in the

¹¹⁶ See Dimitris Stamatopoulous, *The Eastern Question or Balkan Nationalism(s): Balkan History Reconsidered*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlag, 2018, pp. 53–54.

¹¹⁷ “Turkey and Egypt”, *Manchester Guardian*, 17 December 1908, p. 6.

¹¹⁸ “The State of Macedonia”, *The Times*, 5 January 1911, p. 5.

¹¹⁹ See Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, pp. 82–95.

¹²⁰ “The State of Macedonia”, *The Times*, 3 February 1911, p. 5.

Balkans, the Macedonians and Bulgarians looked back on the Hamidian regime, which was at least open to compromise in the form of the *millet* system, as preferable.¹²¹ The *Guardian* suggested that the Young Turks had “sacrificed all sense of the relative to the cult of the absolute”.¹²² The more emotive *Observer*, meanwhile, condemned the “Salonika Committee”—that is, the C.U.P—“whose constitutionalism has amounted in the long run to little more than Turkification” as “the worst enemies of Islam”.¹²³

Like the multiethnic jubilation surrounding Ottomanism, the British press presented “Turkification” in terms which emphasised a diverse cast of Christian peoples against monolithic “Muslims”. In that imaginary the fact that the Muslim Ottoman Empire was ruled by a Turkish Sultan (and a misleadingly-named cohort of “Young Turks”) meant that, for Britons, “Turk”, “Ottoman” and “Muslim” collapsed neatly into a single concept. When the journalist William Miller wrote that the C.U.P were reducing the races and regions of the Ottoman Empire to “one dead level of Turkish uniformity”, it was the threat to Ottoman *Christians* that concerned him; Ottoman Muslims were already Turkish and uniform because, like “Saracen” in the medieval period, “Turk” equated with “Muslim”. The *Manchester Guardian*, for example, described Turkification as a dream of the Young Turks’ (by now “the scum of the cafes of the Quartier Latin”) “which meant the debasement of all the Christian communities, who are so far in advance of the Turks in civilisation”.¹²⁴ There was no acknowledgement of the impact of Young Turk identity-imposition on Muslim Arabs or Kurds, who suffered in the same ways as Ottoman Christians: the Kurds in particular had been expressly identified by Young Turk policymakers as easier to artificially assimilate than other ethnoreligious groups of the empire.¹²⁵ Similarly, *The Times* denounced the “practically Hamidian” methods of the Young Turks, hoped that

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² “French Criticism of Young Turkish Methods”, *Manchester Guardian*, 14 February 1911, p. 5.

¹²³ “Europe and the Crisis”, *The Observer*, 1 October 1911, p. 8.

¹²⁴ “The Case of Greece”, *Manchester Guardian*, 3 October 1912, p. 9.

¹²⁵ Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Geographies of Nationalism and Violence: Rethinking Young Turk ‘Social Engineering’”, *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 7, 2008, p. 9.

the power of the C.U.P—the leading Young Turk body at the time—was waning, and announced that, if the Turks were “able to learn the lesson of religious equality”, they could “take their place among civilised nations”—but “it is a tremendous ‘if’”.¹²⁶ Linguistic and political strictures, such as those which Zeine Zeine suggests forced Muslim Arabs into opposing to the Ottomans,¹²⁷ were completely elided by the British discourse’s focus on religion and civilisation. Muslims could not have Islam forced upon them, so the Muslim experience of Turkification was ignored. *The Observer* described the project of the “Salonika extremists” as “seeking to effect the complete Ottomanisation of *all Turkish subjects*” by disarming Christians and leaving *Muslims* their weapons, settling *Muslims* on Christian frontiers, and encouraging the understanding that Turkey was a fundamentally *Muslim* state.¹²⁸ The emergence of the image of Turkification represented continuity with a religious-oppositional reading very much like the interpretation of Hamidian pan-Islam; regardless of the reality of the events, Ottomanism-Turkification was interpreted in terms of religious confrontation, creating a narrative of Muslims doing Muslim things, because that was all that Muslims *could* do.

‘Alienating Their Puritans’: The Young Turks in history

This imagining of what the British diplomat Sir Gerard Lowther described as “pounding non-Turkish elements in a Turkish mortar” is entirely at odds with the modern understanding of the Young Turks’ efforts and impacts on the Ottoman state.¹²⁹ By and large the Young Turks, and especially the dominant C.U.P are associated with efforts to pursue secularism. Many historians read the 1909 intra-Young Turk rebellion against the C.U.P as a reaction against their secular policies, wherein the religious elements of the Young Turk movement

¹²⁶ “Turkey and its People”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 October 1911, p. 359; “The Salonika Congress”, *The Times*, 17 October 1911, p. 5.

¹²⁷ Zeine Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism*, New York: Caravan, 1973.

¹²⁸ “Europe and the Crisis”, *The Observer*.

¹²⁹ Zeine, *Emergence of Arab Nationalism*, p. 76.

such as the *ulema*-led Society of Ottoman Knowledge sought to restore shari‘a (Islamic religious law) as the foundation of the Ottoman legal system.¹³⁰

As well as misrepresenting the Young Turks’ secular goals as the pursuit of Muslim dominance, the British press construction of the Young Turks’ activities totally elides the imposition and ramifications of Ottomanism in the Muslim provinces of the empire in favour of a narrative which aligns with the existing schema of Islam and Muslims: that the Young Turks were persecuting Christians in order to aggrandise Islam. In reality, by 1911, the Sublime Porte had lost control of Bulgaria and the Bosnia vilayet, and was swiftly (with the Italian invasion of the exclave provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica) becoming a contiguous, coherent, Islamic West Asian state with a shrinking European periphery. The representation of the empire in *The Times*, *Guardian* and *Mail* turned that reality on its head, emphasising the peripheral Ottoman Christians to the exclusion of the Muslim provinces.

Further, despite the newspapers’ enduring concern with the Young Turks’ zealous imposition of Islam on their Christian subjects, in reality a major problem faced by the Young Turk regime was that their secular ideology and policies were alienating Muslim communities, driving the emergence of separatist movements in the Arab lands.¹³¹ Not only was the Christian population affected by C.U.P “Turkification” dramatically smaller than the Islamic one, Ottomanism was causing discontent in Islamic communities because its “short-sighted and chauvinistic” secular policies were outraging and ostracising Ottoman Muslims. Zeine Zeine, challenging the accepted wisdom of George Antonius’ 1938 *Arab Awakening* suggested that “separation was almost forced on Muslim Arab leaders” by the Young Turks’ policies.¹³² Albert Hourani found that while there had historically been “no lines of exclusion that kept the Arabs out [of the Ottoman state apparatus]”, the Young Turk regime alienated Arab

¹³⁰ Feroz Ahmad, “The Young Turk Revolution”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 3, 3, 1968, p. 30; Hanioglu, “Notes on the Young Turks and the Freemasons”, p. 186.

¹³¹ Youssef M. Choueiri, “Review Article: The Middle East, Colonialism, Islam and the Nation-State”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37, 4, 2002, p. 654.

¹³² Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism*, p. 132.

Muslims and politicised Arabism.¹³³ When Sharif Hussein of Mecca declared war on the Porte in 1916, sparking the Arab Revolt, the aggressive secular reforms of the C.U.P was one of the affronts he condemned.¹³⁴ The idea that the Ottoman state under the Young Turks was vigorously imposing Islam on its Christian subjects was entirely divorced from the reality of Young Turk policy, demonstrating the resilience of the British framework that sought out, emphasised and exaggerated the religiosity and anti-Christian, anti-civilisational tendencies of Britain's imagined Islam.

Similar to the discursive landscape around pan-Islam, there was an undercurrent of discourse aware that "Ottomanism" or "Turkification" was meeting resistance in the Arab and Kurdish territories as well as the Balkans. In 1911 *The Times* reprinted a letter from an Arab sheikh complaining that the C.U.P was undermining Arabic traditions, devaluing the Arabic language and Turkifying Arab culture.¹³⁵ The letter bound together the "bloody events in the Balkans and the Yemen" as being driven by the same "absurd policy", explicitly coupling the troubles of Balkan Christians with those of Muslim Arabs as an issue facing not *Christians* or *Muslims* but *Ottomans*.¹³⁶ The notion of a poorly implemented centralising policy rather than a clash between Islam and Christianity did not fit the British schema and failed to capture the imagination, though, and the paper never returned to the subject. Similarly, a 1911 book on *Turkey and its People* noted that the Young Turks were "alienating their puritans with the doctrine of religious freedom" and frustrating both Christians and Muslims with the "policy of Turkification".¹³⁷ The dominant discourse continued unaffected. Such schema-challenging acknowledgements of the non-religious—indeed, secular—nature of the problems with Ottomanism and Turkification were incidental. The British regime of truth expected to see

¹³³ Albert Hourani, "The Arab Awakening: Forty Years After" (pp. 193–215) and "The Ottoman Background of the Modern Middle East" (pp. 8–11) in his *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

¹³⁴ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, p. 196.

¹³⁵ "An Arab on the Internal Situation", *The Times*, 12 July 1911, p. 5.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ "Turkey and its People", *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 October 1911, p. 359.

problems of religiosity and barbarism in uncivilised Muslim countries, and as a result the British newspapers and reading public approached them with a framework that interpreted the Ottoman Empire as a battleground of faiths, Allah ranged against Christ.

Islamicness

There are two immediately evident reasons for the positive shift in the British imagining of Islam and the Ottoman Empire after the Young Turk Revolution. First, the Young Turks took great pains to position themselves as inward-focused and amenable to British policy. They disowned pan-Islam, ensuring that they would not be seen as a continuation of that global threat to civilisation, announced that Egypt was beyond the range of their ambition, and committed themselves to regenerating their nation rather than expanding their territory. By assuming a non-threatening posture the Young Turks insulated themselves from charges of opposition to British rule. As a result, unlike Ottoman “state pan-Islam”, the Young Turks did not suffer meet immediate suspicion and hostility, and their creed of Ottomanism was interpreted on more even terms. Second, the Young Turk agenda was, at least in the immediate wake of the revolution, understood to be self-consciously and expressly secular.

Secularism, or at least *not being Islamic*, was critically important for the Young Turks’ image in the British press because the British discourse, represented Islam and its adherents with a framework which foregrounded and exaggerated their religiosity. That framework meant that British readers and newspapers frequently interpreted events in Islamic countries in sectarian terms rather than conceptually “allowing” them to pursue material self-interest; Islam and Muslims were constructed as backward, violent, illiberal, hostile to progress and inclined toward brutality against non-Muslims. The imagery of backwardness, intolerance, and fanaticism confined Muslims in the British discourse upon a stage which only allowed them certain meanings: Muslims were inveterately Islamic and opposed to the West, so they did Islamic things, and “Islamic things” were, because of the self-constituting framework with which Muslims were encountered, being inveterately religious and opposed to

the West. Even though Abdülhamid's *İttihad-ı İslam* is understood to have been an inward-focused anti-colonial ideology, its Islamic nature meant that it was interpreted as confrontational and threatening. Even though the Young Turks pursued secularism and anti-Islamism to the point of undermining their power in the vast Muslim territories of their empire, the framework through which British readers of the major newspapers regarded them focused on difference and Islamic-Christian conflict, so their agenda came to be understood as an effort to enforce Islamic domination of civilised Christians.

Britain's imagined Middle East in the early twentieth century was the product of an intellectual framework which foregrounded the religiosity of its events and inhabitants and emphasised the notion of an intractable rivalry between imagined Christian-Islamic blocs. The two major anticolonial nationalisms which filtered into the British press consciousness between 1906 and 1914 were interpreted—aside from undercurrents of contrary discourse which were brushed aside and forgotten—through a framework which foregrounded the reductive, self-constituting discursive formations of Islamic religiosity and opposition to civilisation, feeding the perception of civilisational conflict. Pan-Islam and Ottomanism were valued based on *how Muslim* they appeared to be; peoples were granted more or less individual recognition in British newspapers depending on their faith; and inward-facing sociopolitical projects were lionised or vilified based on their perceived threat to British, European and Christian power, a function—in the British imaginary—of the extent to which they were pervaded by Islam. The only change that occurred in the discourse as a result of the systemic break that was the Young Turk Revolution was the *subjects* of British scrutiny, and the ways in which those actors were thought to relate to the dominant interpretive “meanings” of Islam: religiosity and opposition to the West. Abdülhamid II in the era of pan-Islamic anxiety was understood as religious and anti-West; the Young Turks as secular and non-threatening to British rule. Nevertheless, interpretation in terms of religion and civilisation remained dominant: in the wake of the Young Turk Revolution, British writers made much of there being “nothing *Muslim*” about the Ottomanist agenda precisely because they were preoccupied with anxiety about the religiosity of Muslims. Ottomanist attempts to overcome ethnic

differences were seen as evidence demonstrating that the Ottoman leadership was moving away from Islam as the centre of state ideology. The British regime of truth rested upon an imagining which rendered the Ottoman Empire as a contest between Christianity and Islam; there was no conceptual space for conflicts *among* Muslims. When the vast Islamic provinces of the empire did appear in the British press it was in passing, and deeply romantic—in 1913 *The Times* still framed Arabia as “an unknown land” with “bare and mysterious coasts”, from which came stories of “strange fights between mail-clad warriors” and “armies still contending with bows and arrows...”¹³⁸

That the British press was fearful of and hostile to pan-Islam but not to Ottomanism—until Ottomanism was reinterpreted into Turkification and the spectre of Islam once again reared as a threat—even though both movements were similar in their aims and internal focus demonstrates the underlying meaning-making framework in the British discourse regarding the Middle East: the problem with Muslims was not their difference and Orientalness; rather, the problem with *Oriental*s was their *Islamicness*.

¹³⁸ “Turkey in Arabia”, *The Times*, 20 August 1913, p. 7.

‘Can the Koran stretch this far?’

The representation of Islam in British newspapers betrays the fundamental assumption in the British imaginary that Muslims could be reduced to and understood through the single characteristic of their Islamicness rather than any other aspect of their identities. Religion, specifically Islam and Islamicness, subsumed every other aspect of Islamic countries and peoples to become the dominant feature of Britain’s imagined Middle East. Rather than asking questions of industry, bureaucracy, economy, education systems or governmental institutions, the concerns of the early twentieth-century British discourse echo those of an Englishman who in 1812 considered the changes necessary to reform and regenerate the Ottoman Empire: “can the Koran stretch this far?”¹

This chapter examines the imagery of Islam which was emphasised in and which dominated British interpretations of Islam and Muslims. Mirroring our past approach to the interpretive framework employed to understand Ottoman nationalisms, this chapter highlights the aspects of Islam that were distorted and emphasised in the early twentieth-century *Times*, *Guardian* and *Daily Mail*, in order to build an understanding of what—for the British press and reading public—Islam and Islamicness *meant*. There were clear examples in early twentieth century British newspapers of assumptions or selective reporting of

¹ Allan Cunningham, *Eastern Questions in the Nineteenth Century Volume 2*, Edward Ingram, ed., London: Routledge, 1993, p. 99.

facts, such as the assertion that the *fellahin* (farmers and agricultural labourers in Egypt and the Mashriq, from the Arabic for “ploughman”) “do not read” that explicitly presented Muslims as backward and unintelligent, but such pronouncements were relatively rare and are not the focus of this thesis.² Britain’s imagined East was not composed of isolated offhand comments, but from deep-seated formations of ideas and understandings built into the bones of British discourse. Rather than individual remarks, *products* of the British regime of truth, this chapter seeks to examine the underlying images and representations which informed the frameworks and schemas that gave it shape.

The discursive formations which supported Britain’s lexicon of imagery of the Middle East were evident in the responses to the nationalist movements we have already discussed: the British imagining of pan-Islam rested on an underlying “knowledge”, an integral element of the British schema of Islamicness, of what *The Times* called the “solidarity of Islam”.³ The image of Islam as internally solid rendered Muslims as a bloc, unified in purpose, political inclination, and loyalty. The imagining of pan-Islam and Islam as a whole also drew upon a widely held belief in the Ottoman sultans’ power over Muslims as the holder of the Caliphate, understood as a “Muslim Papacy” or, more romantically, a “hereditary Pontiff of the Blood of the Prophet”.⁴ Said’s *Orientalism* explicitly engages with that aspect of European “orientalising” discourse, which he suggests confined and suborned Islam by making it a mere analogue—a reinforcing “complementary opposite”—of Christianity and the West.⁵ Perhaps the most visible element of the British lexicon of backwardness surrounding Islam and Muslims is the pre-eminence of the concept of “fanaticism” in British discourse about the Middle East. “Fanatic”, an epithet that was regularly applied without any kind of self-consciousness or

² “Pan-Islamism in Egypt”, *The Times*, 22 August 1906, p. 3.

³ “The Siege of Tabriz”, *The Times*, 3 July 1909, p. 6.

⁴ “THE SHERIFATE AND THE KHALIFATE”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 August 1917, p. 377.

⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 58–61.

qualification, was a powerfully reductive image, emphasising that Muslims were irrational and credulous, ruled by the faith that defined them.

Unlike Muslims, Britons felt, European civilisation had transcended the confines of religion—if religion had ever dominated Western thinking and reasoning in the way that Islam was understood to dominate Muslims. Reviewing a book about Muhammad, one in a series on the “heroes of the nations” which included such figures as Horatio Nelson, Oliver Cromwell and Pericles but shied away from Jesus or any other Christian religious personality,⁶ Edwyn Bevan congratulated his intellectual milieu for transcending religious backwardness:

To our ancestors the religious interest was predominant... [but] the modern professor can fix his attention on the secular greatness of Muhammad as a statesman and commander. A godly zeal pervaded our ancestor’s language; they saw matter for indignation where the modern professor sees comedy.⁷

Meanwhile the British press held that for Muslims, “the religious interest” was still predominant: “politics in Islamic countries”, as the *Manchester Guardian* wrote in 1907, “always take religious form”.⁸ A reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1911 expressed the same opinion, similarly without evidence or qualification; it was an ingrained cultural assumption, an element of Britain’s regime of truth, that—among Muslims—“religion counts before race”.⁹

‘Excessive and mistaken zeal’: Islamic Fanaticism

The understanding of Muslims as not merely religious but as *fanatical*, driven to great lengths and simultaneously held back from progress by the zealously observed strictures and expectations of their faith was a central image

⁶ “Heroes of the Nations (advertisement)” *The Athenaeum*, 3 May 1890, p. 583.

⁷ “The Hero as Medium”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 January 1906, p. 12.

⁸ “Editorial Article 1 — no title”, *The Manchester Guardian*, April 5 1907, p. 6.

⁹ “Turkey and its People”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 October 1911, p. 359.

in Britain's regime of truth regarding Islam. The word "fanatic" appeared in every paper this thesis examined, from the very beginning of the twentieth century¹⁰ through to the end of my research period in 1930.¹¹ "Fanatic" and its derivatives "fanatical" and "fanaticism" jointly appear 2,914 times in the *Times* archive across the period, with some 35–40% of those instances—from the first, regarding "fanatical risings on the North-West Frontier" in January 1900,¹² to the last, on the "Lahore Crime" carried out by a "fanatic" in late December 1930¹³—deployed with reference to Muslims.¹⁴

"Fanatic" is only one example of the reductive terminology with which British newspapers and writers formulated and confined Muslims into a single image and meaning, but it is indicative of the wider imaginary. "Fanatic", according to the 1919 edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, meant a person "filled with excessive and mistaken zeal and enthusiasm, especially in religion".¹⁵ Even where *fanatic* appears in a context other than the description of Muslims, it carries unequivocally negative connotations: the *Times Literary Supplement*, for instance, described a French mountain-climber as "a Radical to the backbone... full of an almost superstitious veneration for the orators of his party—narrow-minded, fanatic, taciturn".¹⁶ One E. V. Lucas, in reviewing a crime novel, reported that the main character died "at the hand of a fanatic" with no further explication.¹⁷ The figure of the threatening fanatic was

¹⁰ "Sketches in Barbary", *The Manchester Guardian*, August 16 1900, p. 10.

¹¹ "The Quondam 'Sick Man'", *Sunday Times*, 14 September 1930, p. 6.

¹² "Russia and Afghanistan", *The Times*, 8 January 1900, p. 4.

¹³ "The Lahore Crime", *The Times*, 24 December 1930, p. 9.

¹⁴ Because of the sheer number of articles found by a text search for the terms "fanatic", "fanatical" and "fanaticism", and the limitations of the technology available to refine and sort through the output of that search, this rather broad figure is a conservative estimate produced by hand-counting a sample of 200 articles spread across the length of the search period (i.e. 20 articles each from 1906, 1908, 1910, 1912, 1914, 1916, 1918, 1920, 1922 and 1924) and applying a some conservative restraint. Of the actual sample, 84 (that is 42%) of the instances of "fanatic" etc used the term in the context of Islam.

¹⁵ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, s.v., "fanatic", H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, eds., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919.

¹⁶ "Some French Young Men", *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 January 1906, p. 28.

¹⁷ "The Spoilers", *Times Literary Supplement*, 2 February 1906, p. 37.

sufficiently well-established an archetype that Lucas felt no more need be said. Similarly, a writer for the *Daily Mail* expressed contempt for “the fanatic” who, “restrained in his actions by law” since “nowadays there are no burnings at the stake... joins a ‘movement’, vapours in parks, or broods over the ignorance of less ‘enlightened’ neighbours”.¹⁸

It is worth noting that the British image of the fanatic was not always negative. It was, however, consistently threatening. In 1920 the *Observer* warned against the danger, “much greater than that of its open enemies”, posed by the “fanatical friends” of the League of Nations who sought to turn it “not by mere acquiescence but by red-hot conviction” into a “super-state with all the trappings of a military empire”.¹⁹ In a similar vein, the *Guardian* accused opponents of free trade of “fanatical nationalism”, a “menacing factor” in European life.²⁰ The association of the “fanatic” with superstition, danger, intolerance and the expressly religious image of burnings at the stake folds tidily into the early twentieth-century imagining of the fanatical Muslim: irrational, ignorant and violent because of his zealous adherence to the demands of his faith. The fanatic was not merely superstitious and radical, he was *dangerous*. And he was generally a Muslim.

Fanaticism and Ottoman nationalisms

The image of the fanatical Muslim was crucial to Britain’s Middle East. It was in many ways a source and justification for Britain’s imagined geography. British-imagined fanaticism was what made the British-imagined pan-Islam possible and dangerous. In the intellectual landscape typified by Lord Cromer’s 1907 report on the state of Egypt, or *The Times*’ 1908 pronouncement that “it is not easy to discern any motive that appears rational” in Pashtun resistance to

¹⁸ “Fanatics”, *Daily Mail*, 8 April 1926, p. 8.

¹⁹ “Scenes at St. Stephen’s”, *The Observer*, 20 June 1920, p. 16.

²⁰ “Tariffs and Racial Fanaticism”, *Manchester Guardian*, 24 February 1927, p. 13.

British power on India's North West Frontier, opposition to European and especially British colonial encroachment was irrational and indefensible.²¹

That intellectual landscape was coloured by the suggestion that Kaiser Wilhelm's 1906 visit to Morocco had "awakened Muslim fanaticism",²² that the culture of propagating news among the aforementioned *fellahin* in Egypt by crowds listening to public readers rather than reading themselves was "nursing fanaticism",²³ and that, in fact, "Muslim fanaticism" was "capable of anything".²⁴ "Nothing", *The Times* suggested in 1912, "is easier than to propagate in the wildest possible fashion any new movements among Muslims".²⁵ The notion of fanaticism was powerful because it neatly supported the surrounding mental frameworks regarding the Middle East. Together with the imperial-civilisational logics which made resistance to European rule (and therefore colonial encroachment) irrational, "fanaticism" collapsed the varied forms and reasons for Muslims' resistance to the West under the single umbrella of superstition and backwardness, which was *known* to be irrational and could be easily discredited.

Some writers, such as *The Times*' intermittent correspondent Galata, criticised the British regime of truth for collapsing "Muslims" into a single unit which could be used as an antagonist or flatly ignored, pointing out that it was "the fashion" to "violently denounce the atrocities [in the Ottoman Empire] which from time to time are committed by the Turks" while ignoring those committed by Christians.²⁶ The response to the charge of anti-Muslim prejudice was swift—a letter signed by the parliamentarian Noel Buxton and the secretary of the Balkan Committee W. A. Moore appeared ten days later—and clear: "the British hold no racial prejudice against the Turks".²⁷ In fact, Buxton and Moore

²¹ "The Meaning of the Mohmand Outbreak", *The Times*, 27 June 1908, p. 8.

²² "Cause of Islamic Fanaticism", *The Observer*, 8 July 1906, p. 5.

²³ "Pan-Islamism in Egypt", *The Times*, 22 August 1906, p. 3.

²⁴ "Special Morning Express", *Manchester Guardian*, 13 July 1909, p. 14.

²⁵ "Pan-Islamism in India", *The Times*, 3 September 1912, p. 3.

²⁶ "Turkey and the Macedonian Question", *The Times*, 2 August 1907, p. 2.

²⁷ "Turkey and the Macedonian Question", *The Times*, 12 August 1907, p. 9.

contended, they had a predisposition *toward* the Turks. “No one will deny the fascination which the East possesses for most Englishmen... and the Turk and the creed of Islam hold no small measure of this secret”.²⁸ All this conciliatory effort to express that some of Moore’s *best friends* were Muslims, though, fit within the intellectual landscape created, defined and corralled by the British regime of truth and its imagining of the Middle East. It is redolent with, in fact it unselfconsciously *announces*, the romance and exoticness of Islam and Muslims. As a result of their position embedded within the assumptions and imaginings of the British regime of truth, the imagining of the Muslim fanatic slipped into Buxton and Moore’s attempt to draw a clear distinction between the *types* of fanaticism in each civilisation. They acknowledged that while there were religious fanatics in England “as in all countries”, *Islamic* fanaticism was something different and worse: “a danger, which it is possible to exaggerate, but which is undoubtedly grave”.²⁹ Further, Moore announced the impossibility of change coming to the Ottoman Empire from within, dismissing the notion “that the official sink of corruption and rottenness which centres at Constantinople can contain the seeds of fruitful life”. He concluded with a construction of Muslims commensurate with and uncritical of the discursive formation of Islamic backwardness and difference in a defence of the need to use force to control the Ottoman state: “the Turk, like every Oriental, respects only one thing in the world—his master”.³⁰

The Buxton and Moore letter is a perfect illustration of the early twentieth-century British imagining of the threat of Islam. First, their response to the charge of prejudice against Muslims by announcing that they had no *racial* prejudices conflated race and religion, illustrating the British view of Muslims as defined by their faith—“religion comes before race”, after all, among Muslims—rather than as a collection of disparate peoples sharing related belief systems. Second, they expressly invoked the romantic attitude with which they and other British writers regarded “the East”. Third, they announced the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

stagnation of the Ottoman state, articulating what Said calls the image of the “unchanging Orient”,³¹ which together with the exoticness of their Middle East demonstrates the idea of *difference* that underpinned the notion of a confrontation between two irreconcilably different civilisations. Finally, they underscored the deep-seated belief that Muslims were different, irrational, and lesser; while Europeans might respect sensible reasoning and debate or the expectation of proper moral behaviour as regards the issue of Ottoman rule in Macedonia, Muslims in the British imaginary respected only power.

Much like the imagining of pan-Islam, the British newspapers’ interpretations of Ottomanism and Turkification were constructed in accordance with the discursive formation of Islamic fanaticism. The imagined power and danger of “Turkification” in particular was rooted in the notion of an intractable Islamic opposition to Christianity. As we have seen, Ottomanism-Turkification—as the ideology and its implementation became separately imagined in British discourse—was in reality a secular effort to impose a standardised Ottoman identity on Islamic and non-Islamic peoples alike so as to *overcome* the divisions between faith communities which plagued the Ottoman state. Because the notion of Islamic religiosity dominated Britain’s imagined Middle East, though, the Islamic experience of Ottomanism receded into the background. The dominance of “fanaticism” in the British press discourse meant that what was left—a narrative of an Islamic elite oppressing its Christian subjects—was interpreted in imagery that presupposed Muslim superstition, barbarity, and subservience to the faith. That distortion of the Ottomanist sociopolitical project is brilliantly illustrated in *The Times*’ 1912 sketch of “the Young Turks’ programme”. *The Times* articulated the Young Turks’ ideology and intent for its British readers: “Turkey is a Muslim country... and Muslim ideas and influence must preponderate... sooner or later the complete Ottomanisation of all Turkish subjects must be effected, but this could never be achieved by persuasion and recourse must be had to force of arms”.³²

³¹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 96.

³² “The Salonika Congress”, *The Times*, 3 October 1911, p. 3.

This article showcases the tension between the reality of the Middle East and the imagery of “fanaticism” and unrelenting Islamic opposition to Christianity and civilisation which the British interpretive framework presupposed. That framework is evident in the assumption that everything done by the Ottoman government came back to a campaign for the domination of Islam.

Even in this most critical article attacking the Young Turks’ for their Islamicness, though, some elements of the Young Turks’ secular programme come through: that decentralisation and autonomy were opposed by the Turkish state and that the Turkish language was being “diffused throughout the empire” to assist with the assimilation of its peoples. Further, contradicting his earlier doomsaying, the writer noted that that “other nationalities” in the Empire—other, that is, to a unitary *Muslims*, not other to the Turks—would be allowed to “retain their religion”.³³ Nevertheless, without addressing the contradiction, the writer returns to his sectarian lens, reporting that the Young Turks sought “intimate relations” with Muslims from Turkestan, Persia, India, and Egypt, “who possess common interests and a common enemy”.³⁴ A later article leaned further into the construction of the Young Turks as dominated by their Muslimness, with Muslimness meaning backwardness, superstition and fanaticism:

Europe [after the Young Turk Revolution] talked of combining the ancient virtues of the Muslim with the enlightenment of our scientific age... but anyone who has been five minutes in a Muslim country knows that if Islam is to *remain* Islam it cannot progress. Islam is... the negation of progress... to think you can make a Muslim into a sceptical Muslim is folly.³⁵

The fear of Islamic fanaticism was evident to a greater or lesser extent in all three of the major British newspapers this paper examined. *The Times*, far and away the dominant paper in the discourse about the Middle East by dint of its focus on imperial affairs, was swift to apply to the epithet of “fanatic” to any

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Constantinople To-Day”, *The Times*, 29 November 1912, p. 7.

Islamic action which opposed colonial interests. Conflicts from the repeated revolts against the French in Morocco³⁶ and the emergence of new nationalist parties in Egypt, where “very little” would “fan the embers into a blaze”,³⁷ to the international Muslim outcry against the Italian invasion of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania,³⁸ were folded into and dismissed by the narrative and discursive formation of fanaticism. At and after the end of the period, *The Times* continued to view Muslims as fanatics. Demonstrating the British unselfconscious inability to rationalise any opposition to European imperialism, *The Times* in 1929 reported on the death of Sheikh Abd al-Aziz Shawish, a lecturer in Arabic at Oxford and Cambridge: Shawish had supported pan-Islam and contributed “tirades against the evils of British rule in Egypt” to the Cairene newspaper *Al-Lewa*, “then discussed the merits of Oxford with an intelligent zest that was all the more surprising in one who was reputed to be a Muslim fanatic”.³⁹ That the paper constructed him, without the suggestion of evidence, as a *converted agitator* and having “become a moderate” is telling: Shawish’s final employment before his death, taken up in 1924, was as Egypt’s Controller of Elementary Education. The pro-British Prime Minister Zaghlul Pasha⁴⁰ attempted to prevent Shawish from entering the country, and his appointment caused “surprise and concern” in British circles. Nevertheless, Muslims who opposed Britain were fanatics, and fanatics *could not* be intelligent; the only way Shawish fit into the British schema was by being posthumously stripped of his anti-British attitudes and fanaticism.

In another example of the British inability to comprehend opposition to colonial rule except in terms of backwardness and fanaticism, the *Daily Mail*

³⁶ “A ‘Holy War’”, *The Times*, 20 August 1924, p. 10.

³⁷ “Great Britain and Egypt”, *The Times*, 24 May 1913, pp. 25–26.

³⁸ “The Visit to India”, *The Times*, 12 November 1911, p. 10.

³⁹ “A Converted Agitator”, *The Times*, 26 January 1929, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Although Sa’id Zaghlul was a nationalist leader and rose to power upon election of the nationalist Wafdist party, he toed a carefully pro-British line. The political scientist “with reference to the Near and Middle East” P. J. Vatikiotis observed that, following his exile, Zaghlul rose to power because he “implicitly accepted the conditions governing the safeguarding of British interests in Egypt”. See P. J. Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969.

wrote on the subject of the Bou Hmara pretender revolt in Morocco—prompted, according to the *Guardian*, by “Muslim indignation against the Sultan’s bicycles, cameras, and electrical toys” rather than by French interference in Sultan Moulay Abd al-Hafid’s government—that there was “no reason to believe that the advent of the French and the introduction of law and order is regarded as an unmitigated evil by these tribes”.⁴¹ Moroccans were not opposing the French because they were resisting imperial rule, but because their Islamic backwardness had been affronted.

The imagery of backward, fanatical Islam is equally consistent in the *Manchester Guardian*. In 1900 it printed a lengthy description of the cities of the Maghrib in North Africa, describing those societies as gripped by the “curse of Islam”, but being forced back by the “slow tide of Western progress”.⁴² The only time that the “apathy” of the Maghrib was broken, according to the *Guardian*, was when “a preacher raises jihad... and then a fierce spirit of fanaticism arises”.⁴³ In 1909, after the Young Turk Revolution but before the overwhelmingly positive view of Ottomanism took hold, it published an article discussing the Islamic moral and legal code, shari‘a. In the *Guardian*’s conception, shari‘a was the paramount law for Muslims not only in religion but also “in matters of politics, ethics, and science”.⁴⁴ The *Guardian*’s alarmist representation of shari‘a is telling: it “enjoins the jihad, or war for the propagation of Islam, as a divine duty”, and advocates punishments such as “the loss of a hand for theft... for robbery with murder death by the sword or crucifixion... for wine-drinking eighty lashes... for apostasy death”.⁴⁵ So as to avoid wading into the ongoing moral panic about injunctions to violence in the Qur‘an I will merely point out that this reading of Islamic law focuses on the fanatical, oppositional aspects of shari‘a, eliding the discussion, reinterpretation

⁴¹ “Morocco”, *Daily Mail*, 2 August 1900, p. 7.

⁴² “Sketches in Barbary”, *Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1900, p. 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ “The Old Way in Turkey”, *Manchester Guardian*, 17 April 1909, p. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

and repudiation of many of those principles which appear within and alongside the same texts in *fiqh*.⁴⁶

Anxiety about Islamic fanaticism persisted across the length of the period, coming to a head with the collision between European states and the Ottoman Empire which began in 1911. Following the invasion of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania by the Kingdom of Italy in 1911, however, the focus of discourse regarding Islamic fanaticism shifted and tightened from a general concern about *fanaticism* to the specific fear of *holy war*, a subject that we will return to in the next chapter.

The Unity of Islam

Entwined with the understanding of Muslims as backward and fanatical was a further fundamental image of the unity of peoples across the vast swathe of territory from Morocco to Altishahr based on their shared Islamic identity. That image was characterised as a “the natural impulse of Muslims to combine for the preservation of their culture”.⁴⁷ The British imagining of Islam as a monolithic unit is self-evident in the context of anxiety about pan-Islam— anxiety about pan-Islam was anxiety about Islam as a monolith—but it extended well beyond the relatively limited period of fear about pan-Islamic propaganda. In October 1908—after pan-Islam had been disowned by the Young Turks and not long before even the zealous Lord Cromer was to announce that pan-Islamism was no longer a threat—*The Times* celebrated Ottomanism by announcing that the “liberty and justice” prevailing in the Ottoman empire would allow the Ottomans to “lead the Muslim world” toward progress and

⁴⁶ See Khalid M. Abou El Fadi, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*, New York: HarperCollins, 2009; Jan Michiel Otto, *Sharia and National Law in Muslim Countries*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008; Philip Sutton and Stephen Vertigans, *Resurgent Islam: A Sociological Approach*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005; or, for historical documents in translation providing access to Islamic thought and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) around the development of shari‘a, Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri’s 1368 manual, *Reliance of the Traveller*, Nuh Keller, trans., Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1997.

⁴⁷ “The Turk Militant”, *The Times*, 3 January 1918, p. 5.

reform.⁴⁸ The success of liberty and justice in one Muslim state was taken to mean that it would succeed among *all* Muslim states.

Unlike the broad notion of fanaticism, Islamic unity as a pillar of British understanding of the Middle East is not explicitly articulated in contemporary texts. Rather, it is an ingrained, underlying assumption which gives shape to the discourse: when *The Times* mentioned Muslims' "natural impulse" to work together it did not need to couch or qualify that idea. Similarly, when it wrote about a singular "Islam" operating as a unit, as when "...Islam realised with a shock the extent of its present weakness..." *The Times* saw no need to explain or evidence that perception.⁴⁹ A single all-encompassing "Islam" was part of the British vernacular. Muslims were *known* to be defined by the characteristics of Islamicness and to operate as a unified whole.

Similarly, as we have seen throughout the press discourse regarding nationalisms and sociopolitical projects in the early twentieth-century Ottoman state, the predominantly Islamic ethnic groups of the empire were referred to as *Muslims* while Christian peoples were granted individual identities. The perception of a cohesive Islam flew in the face of the realities of the Middle East, obscuring the heterogeneity of Muslim countries and societies. Even within the period—even within the *discourse*—Britons were dimly conscious of Arab discontent with the Porte,⁵⁰ anti-Ottoman nationalism in Yemen,⁵¹ conflict between the Khedive of Egypt and the Ottoman Sultan,⁵² and tensions between the Ottoman Turks, Circassians and Bedouin.⁵³ These conflicts, however, rarely reappeared in the discourse after one or two initial reports, and never gained the same spotlight—as narratives in their own right—as revolts in Morocco or the perennial difficulties on the North West Frontier. A simplistic comparison of

⁴⁸ "Turkey and Pan-Islamism", *The Times*, 6 October 1908, p. 5.

⁴⁹ "The Turk Militant", *The Times*, 3 January 1918, p. 5.

⁵⁰ "Miscellany", *Manchester Guardian*, 31 May 1905, p. 5.

⁵¹ "The Hedjaz Railway and the Rising in the Yemen", *The Times*, 1 September 1905, p. 6.

⁵² "Pan-Islamism and the Khedive", *The Times*, 26 November 1902, p. 7.

⁵³ G. L. Bell, "Turkish Rule East of the Jordan", *The Nineteenth Century and After: A Monthly Review*, 52, 1902, pp. 226–238.

representations is illustrative: the French conquest of Morocco saw France fighting a “major colonial war” between 1907 and 1912, employing 11,500 French soldiers in 1907, reduced to 3,000 in 1908.⁵⁴ Excluding shipping news, “Morocco” appears in *The Times* archive on 5,467 occasions between 1904 and 1912. At roughly the same time (1904–1911) the Ottoman Empire faced a separatist revolt in Yemen, led by the Zaydi Imam of Sana‘a. The Zaydi revolt seized a vast swathe of territory, struck its own coins, and ultimately—because the Ottomans could not, despite the deployment of 10,000 men in a single action at Shaharah and more than 25,000 casualties, regain control—established itself as an autonomous state under nominal Ottoman suzerainty.⁵⁵ Despite being a longer, larger war with more lasting consequences, “Yemen” makes just 318 appearances in *The Times* between 1904 and 1912. Muslims fighting Muslims did not fit into the British lexicon of imagery which presupposed a solidarity in Islam. As a result, internecine Islamic conflict received limited attention in the discourse and the schematic imagining of a united Islamic monolith persisted in the face of contradiction.

Muslim solidarity was not always portrayed in a negative light: during the Mashrutiyyat constitutionalist revolution in Iran, which overlapped with the Young Turk revolution, *The Times* suggested that—due to the solidarity of Islam—Turkey, “the Muslim country which has shown some real constitutional capacity and won its own liberty may help in some legitimate way the Muslim country which has shown constitutional incapacity”.⁵⁶ But even if it was not always negative the imagining of a monolithic “Islam” with a single set of purposes and sympathies had an important impact on the British public imaginary. As we have seen, it collapsed the ethnic complexity of the Middle East, even just the *Ottoman* Middle East, into a single analytical category.

⁵⁴ William T. Dean, “Strategic Dilemmas of Colonization: France and Morocco during the Great War”, *The Historian*, 73, 4, 2011, pp. 731–732.

⁵⁵ See J. Richard Blackburn, “The Collapse of Ottoman Authority in Yemen”, *Die Welt des Islams*, 19, 1, 1979, pp. 119–176; Abdol Rauh Yaccob, “Yemeni Opposition to Ottoman Rule: An Overview”, *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, 42, 2012, pp. 411–419.

⁵⁶ “The Siege of Tabriz”, *The Times*, 3 July 1909, p. 6.

Beyond merely being inaccurate, the simplification of the ethnic landscape of the Middle East had serious implications for the interests of Ottoman Muslims. As Galata observed in 1907, the British populace took an “ardent interest in the welfare of Turkish subjects when they happen to be Christian” but failed to show the “slightest concern” regarding the welfare of the Ottomans’ Muslim subjects.⁵⁷ In the British-imagined geography of the Middle East, that lack of concern was logical: the Ottomans were Muslims, and so were their Muslim subjects. Muslims were typified by fanaticism, which threatened non-Muslims; internal solidarity, which meant they all got along; and opposition to Europe, civilisation, and Christianity. What concern about the welfare of Muslims ruled by Muslims could there be?

The collapse of the Ottomans’ Islamic subjects into a single “Muslim” group is epitomised by Sir Edwin Pears’ 1911 book *Turkey and its People*, reviewed by the respected Orientalist Stanley Lane-Poole. Lane-Poole considered Pears to have “set out a considered account of the various peoples of Turkey, both in Europe and Asia”.⁵⁸ This assessment was objectively inaccurate. The book contains several chapters dealing with individual European ethnoreligious communities: one on “the Greeks”, another on “Vlachs, Pomaks, Jews and Dunmays”, and further chapters on “the Albanians”, “Macedonia”, “the Armenians” and “Foreign communities”, followed by a single “Asia Minor” chapter whose subjects are listed as “the Nomad Races, Turcomans, Euruks etc; Druses, Maronites, Nestorians, Crypto-Christians, Kizilbashis, Stavriotai”.⁵⁹ There is no chapter on the Arab provinces, the largest geographic and second largest ethnic portion of the empire after the Turks, or the Kurds, another major geographic and demographic constituent of the empire.⁶⁰ Other notable absences

⁵⁷ “Turkey and the Macedonian Question”, *The Times*, 2 August 1907, p. 2.

⁵⁸ “Turkey and its People”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 October 1911, p. 359.

⁵⁹ Sir Edwin Pears, *Turkey and its People*, London: Methuen & Co., 1911, p. 246.

⁶⁰ Census data for the Ottoman Empire is piecemeal and inconsistent at best, but there are useful figures to be found in other places. My population assessments are based on figures drawn from the German Consul in Beirut’s communications with Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg. Refuting an article on “The Turkish Hegemony” (*Osmanischer Lloyd*, 24 July 1910), Consul Padel gathered and analysed the data available to him and estimated that the empire held some 12.1 million Turks and 12.6 million Arabs (cited in

include Iranians, Zazas, Tartars and Circassians.⁶¹ In line with the dominant formations in the British discourse, Lane-Poole and the *Times Literary Supplement* saw in the Ottoman Empire a collection of small, threatened Christian communities and a vast population of homogenous, uncivilised “Muslims”.

‘Alien to Ottoman ideals’: Islam and civilisation

The underlying impact of conceiving a homogenous Islam was an effective “othering” of Muslims—they belonged to a unified group totally distinct from Britons; and the widespread imagining of a “Muslim civilisation”, “other” to Britain, Europe and Christianity. The idea of Islamic civilisation—or backward superstitious *uncivilisation*—separate and opposed to the civilisation and progress represented by the West was an enduring image in the discourse. In 1901 the first twentieth-century *Times* reference to pan-Islam accused the Ottoman Sultan of resisting the West by ordering French missionaries to pay taxes because the “influence of civilisation” represented by France was “alien to Ottoman ideals”.⁶² A letter responding to that charge reassured readers that pan-Islam could not “be directed against European civilisation”, demonstrating at the very beginning of the period the oppositional British imagining of Islam. The same discursive formation of Islamic backwardness against European progress persisted throughout the period. In 1902 “the Turk” was constructed as having “taken up, according to his lights [because Muslims could not *fully* achieve the Western civilisation represented by the term] the white man’s burden; he is Civilisation where there is none”.⁶³ In 1906 all three newspapers reported on a speech which accused German intervention in Morocco of stoking fanaticism and

Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*). See also: Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, p. 150; Zeine, *Emergence*, pp. 140–143; and Dawn, *Ottomanism to Arabism*, p. 153.

⁶¹ Servet Mutlu, “Late Ottoman Population and its Ethnic Distribution”, *Turkish Journal of Population Studies*, 25, 2003, p. 24.

⁶² “France and Turkey”, *The Times*, 31 August 1901, p. 3.

⁶³ Bell, “Turkish Rule”.

“inspiring barbarians with fresh hopes against civilisation”⁶⁴ Later in 1906 the *Guardian* published an article articulating the “meaning of pan-Islamism” as “a Muslim civilisation”.⁶⁵ In 1912, denouncing Ottomanism-Turkification, the *Guardian* characterised the Christian communities of the Ottoman Empire as “far in advance of the Turks in civilisation”, underscoring the imagined Islamic-Christian civilisational divide.⁶⁶

On the other hand, the discourse imagined Britain and the West as defending progress and civilisation in the face of Islamic backwardness. A 1906 article referred to British rule in Egypt as fostering a “nascent Egyptian civilisation” which needed to be protected from pan-Islam.⁶⁷ This idea was ironic in light of earlier reports regarding Egypt as an archaeological “Eldorado”⁶⁸ revealing a history stretching back 2,000 years.⁶⁹ In 1919 Cyril Cox wrote to *The Times* advocating for British rule over the territories which Britain had occupied during the Mesopotamian Campaign of the First World War. “If Muslims prefer to live in a state of anarchy under an Islamic power”, Cox allowed, “Christians have no right to enforce a system of government upon them”.⁷⁰ But Cox felt that they did not. While the “bandits and desert tribes” might have preferred the Turkish regime, the *civilised* Arabs had preferred civilisation since the British occupied Mesopotamia.⁷¹ Later in 1919 *The Times* constructed the British annexation of the Tigris and Euphrates valleys and Southern Kurdistan—what would become Iraq—as “asking the Arab to give up pride and independence for a little civilisation”.⁷² The image of Muslims as a unified force—an *Islamic*

⁶⁴ “Cause of Islam Fanaticism”, *The Observer*, 8 July 1906, p. 5; “Tangier Trip Sequel”, *Daily Mail*, 9 July 1906, p. 7; “Sir E. Grey’s Speech”, *Manchester Guardian*, 9 July 1906, p. 6.

⁶⁵ “Meaning of Pan-Islamism: A Mahometan Civilisation”, *Manchester Guardian*, 13 June 1906, p. 7.

⁶⁶ “The Case of Greece”, *Manchester Guardian*, 3 October 1912, p. 9.

⁶⁷ “Pan-Islamism in Egypt”, *Manchester Guardian*, 18 July 1906, p. 7.

⁶⁸ “Fresh Discoveries in the Palace of Knossos”, *The Times*, 28 May 1901, p. 4.

⁶⁹ “Professor Petrie on Egyptian Civilization”, *The Times*, 13 May 1901, p. 10.

⁷⁰ Cyril Cox, “Forgetting Islam”, *The Times*, 20 May 1919, p. 8.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² “Britain in Mesopotamia”, *The Times*, 8 November 1919, p. 11.

civilisation—allowed them to be cast as a single monolith different from but analogous to Britain, Europe, and Christianity. Alongside the image of fanaticism and the predominant narrative of opposition, it enabled a view of Islam as uncivilised, lesser, and threatening, translating the meaning of Western suppressions of Islamic violence from colonial domination into defences of the cause of civilisation against uncivilised Muslims.

The notion of Islamic unity had analogues in the Ottoman state, where because of the centrality of religion in Ottoman administration—in the structure of *millet*s which allowed faith communities to rule themselves⁷³—what census data was collected was rarely more granular than providing a figure for the “Islam *millet*” as against the “Rûm” (Eastern Orthodox Christians), “Yahudi” (Jewish) and other *millet*s in each sançak.⁷⁴ The *millet*-based view of Middle Eastern populations, however, does not appear to have translated into the British discourse. Rather, the British imagining of Islamic solidarity centred around two concepts rooted in the British understanding of the Islamic worldview. First, the classical Islamic division of the world into *Dar al-Islam*, the House of Islam and *Dar al-Harb*, the House of War, which the *Observer* interpreted as the cause of the “ancient spirit of Muslim militancy” behind the “widespread unrest in the Muslim world”.⁷⁵ Second, and most importantly, the imagined living symbol of Islamic unity in the Caliphate.

The Caliphate

In line with the tendency that Edward Said identified for European discourses to schematise and diminish the East by rendering it as an analogue of the West,⁷⁶ British discourse constructed the Caliphate not as an institution of its

⁷³ Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 61–2.

⁷⁴ Aşkin Koyuncu, “Tuna Vilâyetinde nüfus ve Demografi (1864–1877)”, *Turkish Studies*, 9, 4, 2014, p. 681.

⁷⁵ “Article 1 — no title”, *The Observer*, January 29 1922, p. 14.

⁷⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 60.

own but as a “Muslim Papacy”.⁷⁷ Together with the conception of Muslims as fanatical—utterly, irrationally under the control of their faith—and the understanding of Islam as unified, that meant that the British-imagined Caliphate was enormously powerful, hence British concern about “what steps the Sultan’s supreme religious functions may inspire”.⁷⁸ The British view of the Caliphate was founded in a reductive view of Islam and schematic understanding of Islamic custom, scripture, and jurisprudence, which Said calls a “rigorous picture of Islam” which “neglected what the Qur’an meant, or what Muslims thought it meant”.⁷⁹ The British imagining of the Caliphate effectively demonstrates the way in which Britain’s superstition-and-fanaticism-focused discourse stripped Middle Eastern people of agency. As with the other examples in this paper, there is not enough space to fully treat the engagement of the British imaginary with the idea of the Islamic Caliphate over the period 1906–1920, so I turn to a selected example.

In 1908, immediately after the Young Turk Revolution and shortly before the spectre of pan-Islam was laid to rest, an exchange of letters in *The Times* illustrates the British imagining of the Caliphate. One side of the correspondence was the Islamic “anti-imperialist intellectual” Halil Halid Bey, “one of the first writers against Orientalism”;⁸⁰ the other was Sir George Birdwood, an esteemed Anglo-Indian Orientalist.⁸¹ Halid Bey wrote to *The Times* in an explicit effort to dispel the then-popular notion that Muslims across the world slavishly followed the word of the Caliph, suggesting that the idea had been invented “by a European who wanted to alarm Europe by discovering a ‘pan-Islamic peril’”.⁸² Specifically, Halid made it clear that the *office* of the Ottoman Caliph and not the

⁷⁷ “THE SHERIFATE AND THE KHALIFATE”, *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 August 1917, p. 377.

⁷⁸ “France and Turkey”, *Times*, 31 August 1901, p. 3.

⁷⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 60–61.

⁸⁰ S. Tanvir Wasti, “Halil Halid: Anti-Imperialist Muslim Intellectual”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 29, 3, 1993, p. 559.

⁸¹ K. de B. Codrington, “Birdwood and the Study of the Arts of India”, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 118, 1970, p. 138.

⁸² “Pan-Islamism and the Khalifate”, *The Times*, 6 August 1908, p. 4.

person—therefore the spiritual authority but not necessarily the orders—of the Caliph were venerated.

Birdwood's response is telling: firstly, because he felt competent as a European Orientalist to instruct a Muslim intellectual on the meaning of his own faith. Secondly, because he pointed out that the Ottoman claim to the Caliphate was founded not on the traditional requirements of lineage and Qur'anic learning but on the "right of the sword" and that, therefore, "in religious principle" there *could be* no Ottoman Turkish Caliphate; the Caliph had to be from the *Arab* tribe of Quraysh.⁸³ Birdwood's letter reveals an attempt to reconcile information with the British schema of Islam: to discredit the Ottoman Caliphate and thereby reinforce the British societal knowledge that Muslims do indeed follow the Caliph, even if not *this* Caliph; and to represent Muslims' decision-making in a manner consonant with the image of fanaticism—based in "religious principle". On a more personal level, we might regard Birdwood's response to Halid as an effort to publicly demonstrate the depth of his personal knowledge of Islamic custom and jurisprudence, or in Said's terms to "confine" and "dominate" the "Orient" by making it a *known thing*.

The next exchange of letters is even more revealing. In response to Birdwood's somewhat romantic dismissal of the Ottoman Caliphate as being founded on "the right of the sword" and ownership of "sacred relics such as the cloak of Mohammad and the sword of Omar", Halil Halid pointed out that the Ottoman Sultan Selim assumed the Caliphate when he was given the keys to the Holy Places by the Sherif of Mecca, descended from the Prophet himself, and that "millions upon millions of Muslims... respect and have respected the Sultan's title all over the Muslim East".⁸⁴ Birdwood's response the next day, the final letter in the exchange, avoided the issue of *what Muslims thought* and delved into the literal meaning of the Arabic *khilāfah* ("one left behind", from which the idiomatic meaning "a successor, lieutenant or viceregent") using semantic meaning in an effort to dismiss Halid's defence of the Ottoman Caliphate and

⁸³ "Pan-Islamism and the Khalifate", *The Times*, 7 August 1908, p. 4.

⁸⁴ "Pan-Islamism and the Khalifate", *The Times*, 11 August 1908, p. 6.

establish that, regardless of what the Muslims it ruled thought, the Ottoman Caliphate was something “which does not exist”.⁸⁵

This collision of views illustrates the reductive way in which the British regime of truth, even experts such as George Birdwood, imagined Islam and Muslims. Birdwood’s arguments were based in his schematic understanding of Islamic law and doctrine; Halil Halid’s were based on an understanding of the Middle East *as it was*. Where Birdwood argued that the Ottoman Caliphate cannot exist because Islamic law forbade anyone other than a Qurayshi Arab (a descendant of the Prophet) from being Caliph, Halid pointed out that regardless of the letter of law, the Ottoman Caliphate *did* exist and millions of Muslims respected it. Birdwood’s view, an expression of the formation which ran through and dominated all of the British discourse regarding Islam, entirely elides the ability of Muslims to act in their own self-interest or of their own accord. Just as the British imaginary could not reconcile anti-colonial resistance except by constructing those doing the resisting as irrational and fanatical, Birdwood and the British imaginary could not comprehend Islamic people operating outside of the schema they used to understand, “creating, confining, and judging”, the Muslim East.⁸⁶

The notion of Islamic unity persisted across the period of this study, through the First World War in the form of anxiety about the reaction of Entente-ruled Muslims to being cast in opposition to the Caliph, and into the 1920s. Despite ongoing conflicts evidencing the fractures between Islamic peoples—the long-standing rivalry between Morocco and Ottomans over the Caliphate, which Birdwood himself touched upon;⁸⁷ the separatist movement in Yemen and later revolt throughout the Arab lands;⁸⁸ and the willingness of almost a million Indian

⁸⁵ “Pan-Islamism and the Khalifate”. *The Times*, 12 August 1908, p. 6.

⁸⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 143.

⁸⁷ Burke, “Pan-Islam and Moroccan Resistance”, pp. 101–102.

⁸⁸ “The Revolt in the Yemen”, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 March 1905, p. 7; “The Hedjaz Railway and the Rising in the Yemen”, *The Times*, 1 September 1905, p. 6; “Great Arab Revolt”, *The Times*, 22 June 1916, p. 9.

Muslims to go into the field in opposition to the Caliph's troops,⁸⁹ as well as more esoteric refutations such as the late-nineteenth-century Mahdist movement's roots in Sufi resistance to Turkish rule and "dry, scholastic Egyptian Islam"⁹⁰—it was not until 1919 that James L. Barton of the *Harvard Theological Review* suggested that Islam had "lost its power as a centralised religious force".⁹¹ Even then, Barton did not feel that Islam had lost that force because of rivalries and confrontations between Islamic states or because distinctive Islamic ethnic groups were asserting their desires for independence and nationhood, but because, he thought, they had lost their religious head in the person of the Caliph. Despite Barton's article, belief in the internal unity of Islam persisted. As late as 1920 the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewed a book which considered Muslims to be unified enough that they fell in behind a single state, and made the case that the "brainless Turk" was no longer fit to be that leader.⁹² In 1923, faced with the emergence of militant Islamic nationalist movements explicitly opposed to the Caliphate, *The Times* was bewildered. In an article tellingly entitled "Islam at a crossroads", *The Times* suggested that while Islam *had* been unified without regard to "differences of race, colour and family", "sunk in a curiously effective equality" where Muslims made common cause because of their faith, the monolithic "Islam" was "now distracted by an explosion of nationalism, almost tropical in its rapidity and magnitude".⁹³ Faced with undeniable evidence of nationalism in the Middle East, *The Times* still tried to fit it into a schema dominated by religion: Muslims *had* been dominated by their Islamicness, but now other things distracted them. Even in the face of that shift, the notion of Islamic unity was remarkably durable. In 1924 the *Economist* was pleased with the abolition of the Caliphate by the new Turkish republic, "the marker of a new epoch in the expansion of Western ideas over the non-Western world", but

⁸⁹ Ulrich Trampener, "The Turkish War, 1914–1918" in *A Companion to the First World War*, John Horne, ed., Hoboken: Wiley & Sons, 2012, p. 106.

⁹⁰ Mortimer Edward, *Faith and Power*, New York: Vintage, 1982, p. 77; Hasan Qasim Murad, "The Mahdist Movement in the Sudan", *Islamic Studies*, 17, 3, 1978, p. 178.

⁹¹ "List of New Books and Reprints", *Times Literary Supplement*, 13 February 1919, p. 85–86

⁹² "Saul Among the Prophets", *Times Literary Supplement*, 19 February 1920, p. 122.

⁹³ "The World of Islam", *The Times*, 23 November 1923, p. 9.

expressed concern that those celebrated Western ideas would have to contend with “international Islamic solidarity”.⁹⁴

The various threads of the British discourse regarding Islam and its adherents coincided in a lexicon of imagery which represented Muslims as zealously, dangerously superstitious without recourse to reason or intellect—the *fellahin*, after all, did not read. The ideas of Islamic fanaticism, unity, and subservience to the Caliph were the dominant strands of what the British papers understood to mean *what it was to be Muslim*—fanaticism, unity and the Caliphate were the constitutive images of “Islamicness”. That notion of Islamicness combined with the understanding of Islam as violent and inimically opposed to Christian-European civilisation in a powerful, abiding anxiety about the threat of irrational, fanatical, anti-European Islamic violence—the spectre of jihad.

⁹⁴ “The Abolition of the Caliphate”, *The Economist*, 8 March 1924, p. 523–524.

‘The Black Flag of Jihad’

The best example of the confluence between the British imaginings of Muslims as backward, fanatical, and subservient to the Caliph and the British narrative of opposition is the abiding fear, evident in all three papers this thesis examined, of Islamic religious violence. The term “jihad” (also appearing interchangeably as *djihad* and *jehad*) first emerged in the newspapers I studied in 1851, when the *Guardian* reported that an “Arab of great sanctity” had exhorted the Muslims of Bombay to “have a jihad, or battle against the infidels”, leading to a riot.¹ The term was first used in *The Times* in 1856, in a letter from one “Mr. Mather of Mirzapore” describing jihad as “a war for religion” and suggesting that, for Muslims, such a war was “at all times obligatory whenever practicable”.² The *Daily Mail* was not founded until 1896, but used *jihad* in May of its first year, reporting on the Mahdist War in the Sudan.³ The word “jihad” itself (as “jehad or djihad”) appeared in the “Jew to Kairene” facsimile of the first edition of the Oxford Dictionary, then called the *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, in July 1901.⁴ In October 1905 the British army’s Irish Command carried out exercises—wargames—underpinned by the story that a Muslim prince had killed his father and seized control of a country with the object

¹ “Article 2 – No title”, *Manchester Guardian*, 6 December 1851, p. 5.

² “The Evangelical Alliance”, *The Times*, 1 November 1856, p. 6.

³ “Forward Movement Expected”, *Daily Mail*, 19 May 1896, p. 5.

⁴ “Books of the Week”, *Manchester Guardian*, 16 July 1901, p. 4.

of raising a jihad, and needed to be overcome.⁵ Even better evidence of the cultural currency of jihad in British discourse is its appearance in all the major British papers, throughout the period, in reports on subjects entirely unrelated to Islam or violence: a letter in the *Daily Mail* denouncing farmers' "jihad" against sparrows;⁶ a book called *Ninety-Eight* representing the 1798 rebellion in the south of Ireland as "nothing less than the jihad of the Roman Catholics against the Protestants";⁷ a *Times* article dismissing "Mr. Dillon's jihad against the landlords";⁸ the *Daily Mail* attacking Lloyd George's "social jihad";⁹ *The Times* worrying that linking them with disease would precipitate a "jihad" against house flies¹⁰ and later reminding readers that although maggots had been found inside a snail shell it was too early to declare a jihad against snails;¹¹ and the *Mail* announcing that if the man who prosecuted a high school teacher in the United States for teaching his pupils Darwinism were to lose, he would preach a jihad.¹² As early as 1907 and persisting at least until 1925, "jihad" had penetrated into the British vernacular as a term referring to a total—with connotations of being unwise or misinformed—war against a specific target.

In the context of Islam and Muslims, where it was overwhelmingly deployed, the concept of jihad crystallised Britain's lexicon of imagery around Islam into a single focus of anxiety. The image of jihad captured and embodied all of the problems and dangers posed by Islamicness: it leveraged the unity of Islam, it was powered by mysticism and fanaticism, and it placed those unified, fanatical Muslims at the command of the Caliph.

Examining British anxiety about jihad is useful in two ways: first, the discourse regarding jihad demonstrates the general societal fears about Islam,

⁵ "The Irish Command Staff Ride", *The Times*, 24 October 1905, p. 10.

⁶ "The Sparrow", *Daily Mail*, 25 August 1908, p. 4.

⁷ "The World of Books", *Sunday Times*, 3 April 1910, p. 5.

⁸ "The Home Rule Campaign", *The Times*, 17 October 1911, p. 7.

⁹ "The Importance of the Squire", *Daily Mail*, 17 August 1912, p. 4.

¹⁰ "House Flies and Disease", *The Times*, 7 June 1913, p. 9.

¹¹ "House Flies in Winter", *The Times*, 18 December 1919, p. 8.

¹² "Prayer and Genesis at Opening", *Daily Mail*, 11 July 1925, p. 9.

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capturing the threatening *meaning* of Islamicness as evident in the parts of British discourse represented by the *Guardian*, *Times* and *Daily Mail*. As the epitome of British-imagined Islamicness, the imagined jihad exposes the reductiveness of the system of meaning with which Britons regarded Muslims and the Middle East. More than any other element of the discourse, jihad illustrates the self-constituting nature of the British regime of truth: every outbreak of violence in the Islamic world was labelled jihad, because it was a well-established pillar of discourse that Islamic violence was jihadist, because every outbreak of violence in the Islamic world was labelled jihad.

The British discussion around jihad also illustrates the formulated, schematic way in which Britons understood Islam to be bound by externally comprehensible concrete laws and doctrines which reduced and confined Islam into a *known thing*. In particular, the confluence between the common understanding that Islamic violence equated to jihad, the well-established image of “Islamic fanaticism”, and the depiction of jihad within a romanticised landscape made jihad itself a powerful image in the British imaginary. Violent, fanatical, and romantic, jihad was simultaneously dangerous, illegitimate, and lesser. It was not until 1916 that the imagery began to change. By folding all Islamic violence into the same category, the British regime of truth further cemented and justified its domination over the Middle East.

Jihad serves as a particularly useful case study in the early twentieth century British imagining of Islam: it is almost unique in that Britons within the period both *imagined* and *confronted* jihad, whereas the forces of pan-Islam, Ottomanism and Turkification were, for most Britons, confined to the imaginary. Before 1914 jihad lived wholly in the imaginary and the discourse was free to construct it without fear of contradiction. As well as evidencing the meaning of Islamicness and the ways in which Britons regarded the Middle East, the British response to the reality and failure of Mehmed V’s jihad after November 1914 demonstrates the resistance of Britons’ schema to change.

Before 1914: The Spectre of Jihad

The “preaching” of jihad was a constant theme in the British papers this thesis surveyed. Virtually every outbreak of violence reported in an Islamic territory was accompanied by the suggestion that a jihad was being preached: reports on the revolt in Moroccan Chaouia, for example, tied the violence to jihad rather than the anger about French interference demands which had precipitated it.¹³ Over the course of August 1907 the *Guardian* and the *Mail* published several reports on the flight of Europeans from the revolt in Morocco, worrying that “a jihad is being preached at many places in the interior”, and that “the Moors are clamouring for a holy war”.¹⁴ By January 1908 *The Times* reported that Abd al-Hafid had seized the Moroccan throne from his brother Abd al-Aziz, “declared jihad” and that “a danger undoubtedly exists of a sudden blaze of fanaticism all over the country”.¹⁵ On January 26, however, five months after the initial reports of jihad, the *Observer* noted that “whether a jihad will materialise is yet to be seen”.¹⁶ Similarly, the Italian invasion of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania sparked reports that jihad was being proclaimed at Scutari (modern Shkodër), arousing “religious fanaticism” and the enrolment of many Muslim volunteers¹⁷ alongside simultaneous reports that while the Ottomans’ “summoning the faithful to jihad” had “irked Catholic clergy and foreign consuls” it was “not very efficacious... the response was unprepossessing”.¹⁸ Ten months later the question of jihad was still not settled; William Stead reported for *The Times* that “the Caliph of Islam” was “said to be *considering* whether he ought to proclaim a jihad”.¹⁹ In January 1912 *The Times* announced that the C.U.P had abandoned

¹³ Thomas Park, Aomar Boum, *Historical Dictionary of Morocco*, New York: Scarecrow Press, 2006, p. 84.

¹⁴ “The Outlook”, *Daily Mail*, 16 August 1907, p. 4; “Flight Continues”. *Daily Mail*, 17 August 1907, p. 5; “Casa Blanca”, *Manchester Guardian*, 17 August 1907, p. 9; “Only Two Europeans left in the Interior”, *Daily Mail*, 30 August 1907, p. 7.

¹⁵ “Morocco”, *The Times*, 18 January 1908, p. 5.

¹⁶ “The Week”, *The Observer*, 26 January 1908, p. 6.

¹⁷ “The Albanian Revolt”, *Manchester Guardian*, 31 March 1911, p. 7.

¹⁸ “Montenegrin Assurances”, *The Times*, 31 March 1911, p. 5.

¹⁹ “The War and the Hague Conventions”, *The Times*, 5 October 1911, p. 2.

Ottomanism “and has refocused on jihad and the green flag”.²⁰ Like the disagreement regarding jihad in Morocco and the Ottoman Balkans, however, that pronouncement was swiftly followed with contradictions: by October 1912 a review of G. F. Abbott’s *The Holy War In Tripoli* stated unequivocally that “there is no jihad, despite the title of Mr. Abbot’s book”.²¹

Jihad was a similarly common theme in reports regarding the Pashtuns on British India’s North West Frontier, where the preaching of jihad was consistently referenced alongside all manner of activities: after a battle in which the Mohmand Pashtuns suffered heavy losses, the *Guardian* reported that emissaries were sent to preach jihad;²² *The Times* made a similar report that while support for the Mohmand resistance was dwindling, “resistance Mullahs” were preaching jihad,²³ and later that the Mohmands, were “gathering the harvest as fast as they can” and preaching jihad, which was “meeting with some success”.²⁴ A week later the *Guardian* returned to the subject, announcing that the Afghans had proven unable to face field guns and that even the restive Zakka Khel clan refused to help the rebels, despite the preaching of jihad.²⁵

The oscillating discourse surrounding the preaching of jihad reflects to a wider fact of the British imaginary: there was very little agreement about precisely what jihad was. While the readers and writers of the *Times*, *Guardian* and *Mail* clearly understood that jihad existed and associated it with Muslims and violence, there is very little else unifying their understanding. This is perhaps best illustrated by the *Daily Mail*’s report on the Mashrutiiyat Revolution against the Qajar dynasty in Persia. In 1908 the *Mail* published an article sneering at the Persians for being poor soldiers, punctuating the fighting with rest and repose, driven by their mullahs’ preaching of “revolutionary jihad”.²⁶ The notion of a

²⁰ “The Balkan Danger”, *The Times*, 18 January 1912, p. 5.

²¹ “The War in Tripoli”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 10 October 1912, p. 413.

²² “Frontier Battle”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 27 April 1908, p. 7.

²³ “News in Brief”, *The Times*, 29 April 1908, p. 7.

²⁴ “The Indian Frontier”, *The Times*, 30 April 1908, p. 5.

²⁵ “Second Edition”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 6 May 1908, p. 14.

²⁶ “Persia in Revolt”, *Daily Mail*, 28 August 1908, p. 6.

“revolutionary jihad”, quite apart from being completely out of keeping with the secular aims of the revolution,²⁷ contravenes the implicit unifying feature of jihad in British discourse: that jihad meant *religious* violence. If the *Daily Mail* could write about a *revolutionary* jihad fought *between* Muslims, then jihad was no longer understood as a “battle against the infidels”, but simply as battle. Jihad, by 1908, embraced any kind of violence. This interpretation is buttressed by the discussion that appeared in response to the *Times Literary Supplement*’s negative review of Abbotts’ *Holy War in Tripoli*. Two weeks after the review was published, Abbott wrote to the *Literary Supplement* contesting the assertion that there “was no jihad”; Abbott suggested that the truth could “only be ascertained among the Arab fighters themselves” and stated from personal experience that “they habitually refer to the war as jihad, and to those engaged in it as mujahidin”.²⁸ The reviewer returned with the qualification that, regardless of what the Arab mujahidin might think, there was “no *true* jihad”.²⁹ Meanwhile in the same vein, *The Times* announced—in contradiction of its report on the declaration of jihad from March 1911—that no jihad had been proclaimed because “that can only be done by the Sultan himself entering the Mosque of St. Sophia, drawing the sword of Osman, and calling upon the faithful to follow him”, and that the campaign was “not generally regarded by the combatants as a religious war”.³⁰

Like Birdwood’s understanding of the Caliphate, the phenomena of jihad and religious war were thought to be understood better by the writers of *The Times* and *Daily Mail*, and the staff reviewers of the *Times Literary Supplement* than by the mujahidin who were supposed to be fighting them. Rather than a phenomenon to be studied and understood, the word “jihad” had become an

²⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, “The Causes of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 10, no 3, 1979, pp. 384–385.

²⁸ “The Holy War in Tripoli”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 24 October 1912, p. 465. *Mujāhidīn* is the plural of *mujāhīd*; “one engaged in jihad”.

²⁹ “The Holy War in Tripoli”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 24 October 1912, p. 465.

³⁰ “Indian Mahomedan Feeling”, *The Times*, 13 November 1912, p. 9; “Non-Combatant Victims of the War”, *The Times*, 25 March 1913, p. 5.

image in the British lexicon of imagery which captured, confined, and explained Islamic violence.

The imagining of jihad sat alongside, feeding and fed by two other elements of the imagined Middle East: the notion of Islamic backwardness, fanaticism and implacable opposition to the West and the romantic image of “Araby”. Together, these three strands of discourse produced an image of jihad, entirely divorced from the reality of the concept in Islamic thought and jurisprudence, which dominated the British imagining of the Middle East.

Jihad was tightly bound to the British idea of Muslim fanaticism, evident in the announcement in a lecture on “the Muslim world” in 1907 that all Muslims were “bound to take part in a jihad whenever duly called upon to do so” and emphasising “how readily obedience to such a command was rendered by vast hosts of brave but deluded fanatics”.³¹ In a similar juxtaposition, the *Times* report on Abd al-Hafid’s seizure of the Moroccan throne worried, in the wake of jihad being declared at Fez, about the danger of a “sudden blaze of fanaticism” all over Morocco.³² A letter published in *The Times* warned that the abandonment of Somaliland would “let loose” thousands of Somalis “with the zeal of their faith added to their love of fighting... when they start their jihad the story of the Dervishes in Sudan will pale in comparison”.³³ Perhaps most revealing of the connection between fanaticism and jihad, a report in the wake of the *Mail*’s announcement of “revolutionary jihad” in Persia pronounced wonderingly that “a jihad against Muslims is absolutely unprecedented... Muslim fanaticism is capable of anything”.³⁴ Fanaticism was also employed as a means to delegitimise and patronise Muslims: a pair of 1911 reports on the Moroccan resistance to French colonial encroachment highlighted both the condescending British view of Muslims as irrational—riled by the “wildest stories” from “filibustering groups” into jihad against the Christian powers³⁵—and as barbaric and

³¹ “The Church Congress”, *The Times*, 3 October 1907, p. 10.

³² “Morocco”, *The Times*, 18 January 1908, p. 5.

³³ “The Abandonment of Somaliland”, *The Times*, 11 April 1910, p. 6.

³⁴ “Special Morning Express”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 13 July 1909, p. 14.

³⁵ “Raids on Communications”, *The Times*, 19 May 1911, p. 5.

backward: “those more supportive of the jihad have taken their daughters to the doors of the less enthusiastic and threatened to sacrifice them there unless all girded up their loins to join in the holy war”.³⁶ Similarly, the potential jihad against the Italian invasion of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica was constructed as the “pouring of Arab hordes into Tripoli”.³⁷ Much later, the Bishop of London in June 1915 would make it clear that he was *not* a fanatic by referring to the First World War as a “sacred cause” rather than a “holy war” because he did not want to be thought a “Mad Mullah preaching a jihad”.³⁸

Jihad was also regularly embedded in a romantic world which served on the one hand to emphasise the backwardness of Islam, distancing it from the known reality inhabited by the British readerships of the *Mail*, *Guardian* and *Times* and on the other to bind it into distant, romantic Muslim world. In March 1911 the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewed *The Garden of Fate* by Rox Norton, calling it “a novel of Morocco, of a jihad and its defeat” complete with “a picturesque Moor”.³⁹ In 1916 it reviewed *Greenmantle*, in which the British hero is on a mission to discover the prophet who is preaching jihad in order to “hurl united Islam on the British Empire” and which ends with the image of “the prophet riding in his green mantle at the head of a great host to drive them from Erzurum”.⁴⁰ Even the reviewer’s brief sketch of *Greenmantle*, one of five novels about Buchan’s character Richard Hannay, is revealing. It tells us that, as late as 1916, Muslims and Islam were seen as a unitary force; that the preaching of jihad was a source of anxiety, and that the British imagination still conceived of Muslims in medieval terms: a “fighting creed” with commanders on horseback leading “great hosts” from the front. The romantic image of Muslims riding to war stands in contrast to the industrial imagery of the Western Front in Buchan’s other work, heavy with strafing, air raids, trenches, machine guns and artillery or the images of the European war presented contemporaneously in *The Times*,

³⁶ “The French in Fez”, *The Times*, 3 June 1911, p. 5.

³⁷ “Egypt and Tripoli”, *Manchester Guardian*, 20 December 1911, p.

³⁸ “Save and Lends”, *The Times*, 30 June 1915, p. 9–10.

³⁹ “List of New Books and Reprints”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 9 March, 1911, pp. 102–103.

⁴⁰ “New Novels”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 26 October 1916, p. 512.

with “aeroplanes, trench mortars, mine-throwers and U-boats”.⁴¹ The tradition of jihad fiction continued in 1917 with *King of the Khyber Rifles*, a “rollicking read” about a plot to raise a jihad and overwhelm India, set in a world of “deadly caves, vast wilderness and the heart of the Himalayas”.⁴²

The images of jihad employed earlier in the period were similarly romantic and redolent of a bygone era: during the First Balkan War the *Observer* constructed the gigantic conflict between the Balkan League and the Ottoman Empire—“the greatest clash of disciplined hosts that Europe has ever known”—in bold headline font as “crusade and jihad”.⁴³ No further explication was provided; the construction of confrontations between Christians and Muslims as a “clash of east and west called ‘el jihad’” was common cultural currency, appearing in both romantic fiction and scholarly works.⁴⁴ Alongside the constant usage of the term “jihad” and anxious reports of jihads from Morocco to the Ganges, Britain’s major newspapers hammered home the idea that Britons needed to fear the potential of Islamic religious violence. In the period of anxiety about pan-Islam, which had a close conceptual connection to jihad, the *Daily Mail* reminded its readers that although a “tissue of peace” was being woven around the world, “no nation, least of all the British Empire” could be inattentive to the threat of jihad, “still a living fact among the Moors”.⁴⁵ In 1911, well after pan-Islam had been discredited by the discourse, the *Guardian* reminded readers of the importance—for Britain—of managing the “Muslim mind”; for “if a jihad were preached in the Muslim world it would be impossible to say what would happen to our empire”.⁴⁶ A vision of an implacable opposition, Allah against

⁴¹ “Troops before strong German Line”, *The Times*, 12 March 1917, pp. 5–6; for John Buchan’s work regarding the Western Front, see his *Mr. Standfast*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919.

⁴² “New Novels”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 23 August 1917, p. 404; “New Books and Reprints”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 16 August 1917, p. 394.

⁴³ “The Greatness of the War”, *The Observer*, 20 October 1912, p. 8.

⁴⁴ See “‘Charity’”, *The Sunday Times*, 24 March 1912, p. 6, for its use in the context of fiction; “Book of the Day”, *The Times*, 6 January 1925, p. 7, for a deployment of the “the clash between West and East” in non-fiction.

⁴⁵ “The Outlook”, *The Daily Mail*, 16 August 1907, p. 4.

⁴⁶ “House of Commons”, *Manchester Guardian*, 15 December 1911, p. 10.

Christ, and of Islam crashing unified and fundamentally *different* into European Christianity was a powerful formation in British discourse, and a fundamental element of the geography of Britain's imagined Middle East.

Jihad made in Germany

Between October 29 and November 5 1914, after a long effort to maintain neutrality by both the Porte and the Entente, the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War on the side of the Central Powers.⁴⁷ On November 11 jihad against the Entente was deliberated upon, drafted in the form of five *fetvas*, signed by twenty-nine Islamic legal scholars, blessed by the Sultan, and presented in a closed ceremony to the empire's leading political, military and religious dignitaries.⁴⁸ On November 14 it was read out publicly by the *Fetva Emini* Ali Haydar Efendi—not the Sheikh ul-Islam—to a crowd outside the Mosque of Mehmed the Conqueror in the Fatih district of Istanbul.⁴⁹ On November 23, Sultan Mehmed V Reşad promulgated the *fetvas*, now signed by the Sheikh ul-Islam, the highest religious authority in the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁰ For the first time since the Tanzimat era, the Ottoman Sultan had formally and ceremonially used his position as Caliph to raise the “black flag of jihad”.⁵¹

⁴⁷ For a superb overview of the Ottomans' diplomatic efforts to maintain neutrality after the outbreak of war, including their attempts *after* concluding an alliance with Germany to reach an agreement with Russia and the Entente, see “The Peace Before the Great War” in Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, pp. 29–52.

⁴⁸ Mustafa Aksakal, ““Holy War Made in Germany”? Ottoman Origins of the 1914 Jihad”, *War in History*, 18, 2, 2011, pp. 185–186.

⁴⁹ For photographs of the ceremonies of November 11 and 14 in Istanbul, see Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 2, Triumph and Tragedy: November 1914–July 1916*, Ankara: Turkish Historical Society, 2008, pp. 751–3.

⁵⁰ Arnold Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs: 1925, vol. 1, The Islamic World Since the Peace Settlement*, London: Oxford University Press, 1927, p. 43.

⁵¹ See François Georgeon, *Abdülhamid II, Le sultan calife (1876–1909)*, Paris: Fayard, 2003, which emphasises Abdülhamid's opposition to “official jihad”; although writers such as Eugene Rogan imply that jihad was deployed against the Russians in 1877 (see Rogan, 2015, p. 52) and the Italians in 1911, “official” jihad declared by the Caliph had been abandoned by the Ottomans during the Tanzimat era, see M. Şükrü Hanioglu,

Curiously, after more than a decade of anxiety about the potential for Islam to unite against the Christian powers and for the Ottoman Sultan to stir up pan-Islamic fanaticism in a jihad against the British Empire, the preaching of Ottoman jihad in 1914 was associated with Germany. Before the Ottomans entered the war, *The Times* had announced that “every effort is being made” by “German intrigue” to “stir up pan-Islamic feeling” in the Empire.⁵² After the Ottomans declared war on Russia, but before Mehmed Reşad’s proclamation of jihad, it suggested that race and religion were “slender reeds to lean upon”.⁵³ On November 9 it revealed that a Russian Caucasian Muslim, “Sultanoff”, had *proven* “using the Koran” that “the Turkish government cannot declare a holy war... jihad is a war undertaken in self-defence and when danger threatens the religion of Islam”.⁵⁴

Two of those ideas, that the jihad was, in the words of the Dutch Orientalist Christiaan Hurgronje, “made in Germany”⁵⁵ and that it was, German-made or not, understood—*known* and *confined*—and illegitimate, became centrepieces of the British discourse as it shifted from *speculating about* into *confronting* jihad. All of the earlier imagery of jihad as something near-constant in the Muslim world, which permeated every instance of Islamic violence, vanished. Suddenly jihad was something to be second-guessed and doubted. The November 9 article presenting Sultanoff’s proof of the impossibility of jihad represents a critical point in this *volte face*: with the prospect of a powerful Muslim leader like the Ottoman Sultan preaching an “official jihad” against them, Britain sought a way to defuse and alleviate anxiety about jihad, maintaining calm. The article positively drips with Muslim loyalty: the Aga Khan, the Imam of the Nizari Isma‘ili Shia and the highest Islamic authority in the British Empire, had “appealed to Muslims”, “creating a great impression in

“Ottoman jihad or jihads: the Ottoman Shīī jihad, the Successful One”, in Erik-Jan Zürcher, ed., *Jihad and Islam in World War I*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, p. 118.

⁵² “German Intrigue”, *The Times*, 5 September 1914, p. 5.

⁵³ “Turkey’s Acts of War”, *The Times*, 2 November 1914, p. 9.

⁵⁴ “The Aga Khan’s Appeal”, *The Times*, 9 November 1914, p. 8.

⁵⁵ C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Holy War ‘Made in Germany’*, New York: Putnam, 1915, pp. 1–33.

Russia”); hundreds of thousands of African and Asian Muslims were fighting for the Entente in the French, British and Russian armies; Muslims were *volunteering* for Entente armies, and Muslim communities were, by word and deed, supporting the war effort.⁵⁶ Jihad, suddenly, was not something to fear—Muslim fanaticism had evidently been overcome.

When the proclamation of jihad did come, Britain’s newspapers lost no time in casting aspersions on it. The *Guardian* reported immediately on the “Real Object of the ‘Holy War’ Proclamation”—the jihad was, according to the *Guardian*, “worthless because Turkey is fighting alongside two Christian powers against other Christian countries”; the real object of the proclamation was to make the war popular in Turkey.⁵⁷ Similarly, they continued the project of foregrounding Islamic loyalty; the *Daily Mail*, just two years after presenting Muslims as “men who will slave for nothing... who cannot starve... united in thought or, equally valuable, in absence of thought”,⁵⁸ ran an article announcing that no regiments in the British Army had “behaved with greater gallantry, patience and resource” than those which contained [Muslim] Pashtuns and Jats.⁵⁹ It went on to relate the story of an Indian soldier who was caught by Germans but treated well when he revealed himself to be a Muslim. When he indicated that a nearby British trench contained other Muslims whom he could bring over to the German side he was let go, according to the *Mail*, and rejoined his friends.⁶⁰ Belief in Islamic unity and implacable Muslim opposition to the European powers in 1914 was now something for foolish Germans, not the well-informed British.

The foolishness of the Germans for believing that their artificial jihad could be legitimate came to be a dominant feature of British discourse about the jihad and the Middle East in the First World War, an idea which persists into the

⁵⁶ “The Aga Khan’s Appeal”, *The Times*.

⁵⁷ “Special Morning Express”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1914, p. 12.

⁵⁸ “The Madness of Montenegro”, *Daily Mail*, 10 October 1912, p. 9.

⁵⁹ “Germans Bested”, *Daily Mail*, 25 November 1914, p. 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

present day.⁶¹ Having lauded the loyalty and quality of Indian and Afghan Muslim soldiers, the *Mail* recounted a further anecdote about German foolishness: they had “a day or two ago... recently emitted a snowstorm of leaflets” proclaiming that jihad had been declared at Mecca, that the Sultan had joined the war against the British, French and Russians, and that Afghanistan had taken their side as well. “Unfortunately... the literature was dropped over British and not Indian troops”.⁶² The *Guardian* reinforced that reassuring tone, reporting that German intrigue had failed in Egypt, where the proclamation of jihad had “met with small interest”; that there was “confidence in every quarter that Egypt will remain tranquil”; and that “in Palestine... Muslims ridicule the idea of a holy war alongside Christian nations”.⁶³ Reports emphasising Muslim barbarity did emerge, for instance when *The Times* reported that the *hoças* (Islamic religious teachers) of Beirut had “exhorted the populace to massacre the Christians and Europeans on the first appearance of Entente warships”, but in the wake of Mehmed Reşad’s declaration of jihad, they were swamped by articles foregrounding reassurance.⁶⁴ Among the most revealing demonstrations of the British press shift toward minimising and dismissing the danger of jihad is the about face performed by the populist, sensational *Daily Mail*. Earlier in the period, the *Mail* had emphasised the preaching of jihad in Morocco, Persia, Tripoli and Cyrenaica, and the Balkans, even advancing ideas like “revolutionary jihad” where the notion of “war against the infidel” made very little sense.⁶⁵ In

⁶¹ See the wealth of literature turned up by any internet search for the term “jihad made in Germany”. In particular Eugene Rogan, “Rival jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East, 1914–1918”, *Journal of the British Academy*, 4, 2016, pp. 1–20; Donald M. McKale, “Germany and the Arab Question in the First World War”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 29, 2, 1993, pp. 236–253; Tilman Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany: Ottoman and German Propaganda and Intelligence Operations in the First World War*, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005; Tibor Krausz, “The Kaiser’s Jihad”, *Jerusalem Post*, 2011, p. 1; or part 1 of Lionel Gossman, *The Passion of Max von Oppenheim: Archaeology and Intrigue in the Middle East from Wilhelm II to Hitler*, Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2013.

⁶² “Germans Bested”, *Daily Mail*, 25 November 1914, p. 6.

⁶³ “Calm and Confidence in Egypt”, *Manchester Guardian*, 5 December 1914, p. 7.

⁶⁴ “Turkish March on Egypt”, *The Times*, 30 November 1914, p. 7.

⁶⁵ “The Outlook: the Flight from Morocco”, *Daily Mail*, 16 August 1907, p. 4; “Flight Continues”, *Daily Mail*, 17 August 1907, p. 5; “Persia in Revolt”, *Daily Mail*, 28 August 1908, p. 6; “Dr. Verdon’s Story”, *Daily Mail*, 5 September 1908, p. 5; “The Madness of Montenegro”, *Daily Mail*, 10 October 1912, p. 9.

the context of the First World War, however, the *Mail* completely changed tack, focusing instead on the failure and purposelessness of the Ottoman jihad, emphasising Muslim loyalty; that the Egyptians and Sudanese were satisfied with British rule; that the Mashriqi Arabs and Red Crescent League in Alexandria were opening a fund for the British wounded;⁶⁶ and especially that the jihad had been engineered by perfidious Germans, calling it a “scheme to plant sedition in India and Egypt”,⁶⁷ and an effort by the Germans to work on the “ever-present fanatical element” in Islamic territories such as Afghanistan.⁶⁸ The shift in the *Mail*’s rhetoric, replicated in the other papers under examination, is telling because it reveals how closely the discourse in at least some British newspapers was bound to the interests of the British Empire. In times of relative peace, violence in the Muslim world and the prospect of jihad was a threat to the empire and appeared in a negative light; from late 1914 on, however, jihad had been officially declared and aimed at Britain. Then, it was in the interests of the empire—in order to minimise the possibility of Britain’s Muslim subjects rallying behind the “green flag”—to emphasise first that Mehmed Reşad’s jihad was illegitimate, a failure, and not something to fear, and second, as in the reports about the gallantry of Jats, the wit of the Indian soldier, and the magnanimity of the Red Crescent League, that Britain appreciated and respected its Muslims.

‘A holy war in unholy company?’

One aspect of jihad remained consistent: it was confined to a known, *other*, Islamic space. That confinement is evident in all of the many articles which appeared throughout the period of the First World War in Europe, explicating in greater or lesser detail why the “jihad made in Germany” had failed. From the *Guardian*’s announcement that it was “worthless” in the immediate wake of the declaration,⁶⁹ through the *Observer*’s calling the “Holy War Made In Germany”

⁶⁶ “Jihad Ineffective”, *Daily Mail*, 7 December 1914, p. 6.

⁶⁷ “Germany Day by Day”, *Daily Mail*, 22 April 1915, p. 6.

⁶⁸ “Loyalty of the Amir”, *Daily Mail*, 17 June 1916, p. 5.

⁶⁹ “Special Morning Express”, *Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1914, p. 12.

“futile”,⁷⁰ to *The Times*’ reporting on the German Consul in Damascus’s attempts to “stir up religious fanaticism”,⁷¹ the common theme is that the much-feared preaching of jihad failed not because the British schema of jihad and Islam was wrong, but *because the Germans did not understand jihad*. In December 1914, Lord Cromer articulated this perfectly: the Germans, Cromer felt, appeared to be “singularly incompetent in dealing with Eastern affairs”; the attempt to preach “a sort of jihad” had failed, “which wouldn’t have surprised anyone with a *real knowledge* of the East”, because “an invitation to war against the infidels couldn’t be taken seriously coming from a Sultan in league with two infidel emperors... even the most fanatic mujahid would first have to decide which infidels were most deserving of his wrath”.⁷²

Jihad had failed, the towering Orientalist Lord Cromer had determined, not because it did not suit *Muslims* to endanger themselves in support of a Sultan-Caliph to whom they owed no particular loyalty—outside the “unity of Islam” so integral to the British imagining of Muslims—but because the Germans had failed to understand the schematised Islam and requirements of jihad as well as the British did. The reasons for the failure of the Ottoman jihad fit tidily within the pre-existing landscape of Britain’s imagined Middle East.

Cromer’s interpretation of the failure of Mehmed Reşad’s jihad became common currency. *The Observer* had no fear of difficulties with Muslims in India because “the sword now drawn has been drawn on the order of an infidel”.⁷³ *The Times* quoted a soliloquy from “the Sheikh of Damascus”, who supposedly announced that: “it is better to tread on my turban than murder the Christians who, like us, pay tribute to the Sultan. This war is no jihad, but one of Christians against Christians”.⁷⁴ Even the relatively sober *Economist* expressed amusement at the efforts of the Germans to attract Muslim sympathies, “preaching that the Kaiser has changed his name to Hajji Mohammed Wilhelm and that the English

⁷⁰ “Conflict on the Yser Line”, *The Observer*, 3 January 1915, p. 9.

⁷¹ “The Defence of Egypt”, *The Times*, 11 January 1915, p. 7.

⁷² “German Methods in the East”, *The Times*, 15 December 1914, p. 9.

⁷³ “Conflict on the Yser Line”, *The Observer*, 3 January 1915, p. 9.

⁷⁴ “The Defence of Egypt”, *The Times*, 11 January 1915, p. 7.

are planning to attack Mecca and seize the Black Stone...”⁷⁵ The *Daily Mail*, ever supportive of the prevailing discourse plus some sensationalism, reported that “the Mufti of Medina” had told the Young Turk governor of Arabia, Çemal Paşa, that it was “impossible to conduct a jihad side-by-side with wine-bibbers” and been found dead in bed the next morning.⁷⁶ The *Sunday Times* dismissed any apprehensions by explaining that the nature of jihad was “evidently not understood even by those careful students, the Germans”, suggesting that Indian Muslims regarded the Ottoman jihad disbelievingly as “a holy war in unholy company”.⁷⁷

The *Sunday Times*’ discussion of jihad is particularly illuminating in that it underscores the confinement of jihad, despite the shift in its imagery, to the pre-existing imagined Middle East. The *Sunday Times*’ writers established that the jihad was illegitimate by presenting the received “facts” of Islamic doctrine: that Turkey, in setting up a parliament had “laid the axe heavily to the root of her powers to raise jihad”; that jihad could only be proclaimed to advance purely Muslim interests and could not be selective in the Christians it opposed. Then, they returned to reinforce the 1908–1914 image of Islamicness by pronouncing that despite German aspirations “no one has yet been able to guide the currents of Muslim fanaticism in any given direction”.⁷⁸ Buttressing the notion of Muslims as credulous and backward, *The Times* in March 1915 reported that when German, Austrian and Turkish officials gathered before an “awestruck crowd” in Syria to rally the faithful against the “infidel English, French and Russians”, they met with “prolonged cheers of ‘Allah yensirhoo-o-o’”, until “with a sickening crash the massive flagstaff over the government house came crashing down” and the crowd dispersed, muttering about omens and reciting incantations to ward off evil.⁷⁹ This story was so impressive that it was reproduced as far afield as New

⁷⁵ “Persia and the War”, *The Economist*, 15 May 1915, p. 932.

⁷⁶ “Drunken Germans Nullify Holy War”, *Daily Mail*, 23 January 1915, p. 8.

⁷⁷ “A Holy War”, *The Sunday Times*, 12 December 1915, p. 7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ “The Omen”, *The Times*, 20 March 1915, p. 9.

Zealand, in the Cantabrian dailies *The Press* and *The Star*.⁸⁰ As late as 1919, a book called “pan-Islam”—which had forgotten the “state pan-Islam” of Abdülhamid, and instead discussed Germany’s wartime “pan-Islamic propaganda” as the jihad came to be known—focused the failure of the jihad on the Germans’ misunderstanding of what jihad meant.⁸¹ Elegantly binding together the known-ness of the Middle East for Britons (as against its unknown-ness for Germans) and the romantic backwardness of Muslims themselves, the book relates the scene when the so-called “Mullah of Damascus” was ordered to proclaim jihad against Britain. The “Mullah” climbed the steps unwillingly and, when he saw a group of German officers “wearing tarboushes⁸² with a look of almost porcine complacency”, burst into a rage: “I am ordered to proclaim jihad. A jihad, as you know, is a holy war to protect our holy places against infidels. This being so, what are these infidel pigs doing in our mosque?”⁸³

As with every other major discursive formation in the British discourse regarding the Middle East, the notion of jihad as having utterly failed and that failure being the sole result of German Orientalists’ foolishness was preponderant but not uncontested. In January 1915 *The Times* reported that Persian Kurds had supported the Turks against the Russians at Tabriz “on the pretext of jihad”.⁸⁴ In 1916 the *Guardian* reported that Adjars (Georgian Muslims) near Batumi had formed bands, under the banner of jihad and assisted the Turks in their invasion of the Caucasus.⁸⁵ Similarly, there were occasional suggestions that the reason for the failure of jihad went beyond the fact that it was “wrong” according to the requirements that the *Guardian*, *Times* and *Mail* imagined Muslims to hold: in 1916 the *Guardian* pointed out that “*thinking Muslims* are agreed that jihad became an anachronism when Islam ceased to be a political unit

⁸⁰ “An Eastern Spectacle”, *The Star*, 18 May 1915, p. 4; “The Omen”, *The Press*, 15 May 1915, p. 7.

⁸¹ Reginald Campbell Thompson, “Pan-Islam”, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 25 December 1919, p. 776.

⁸² More correctly *ṭarbūsh*, widely known as the “fez” after the pre-1927 capital city of Morocco.

⁸³ G. Wyman Bury, *Pan-Islam*, London: MacMillan, 1919, p. 81.

⁸⁴ “The March on Tabriz”, *The Times*, 15 January 1915, p. 7.

⁸⁵ “Russia’s Conquests in Armenia”, *Manchester Guardian*, 13 September 1916, p. 6.

and broke up into principalities”.⁸⁶ One writer for *The Times* noted that “the material interests of both Indians and Egyptians are in line with the Entente”, granting Muslims an unprecedented level of agency with respect to jihad.⁸⁷ Neither idea resurfaced in either paper, and the wider discourse—indeed, even the articles where those points were advanced—returned to the general narrative that the jihad had failed because it possessed “no Oriental finesse”, but “betrayed Teutonic clumsiness”.

‘A projecting bastion’: Britain in the Mashriq

The narrative of “Teutonic clumsiness” reconciling the failure of the Ottoman jihad with the British focus on fanaticism and implacable opposition to Christianity began to shift in 1916. The shift in the imagining of jihad—and, we can assume given the reliance of jihad imagery upon the underlying intellectual frameworks regarding Islam and Muslims, in the imagining of Islamicness and the Middle East as a whole—centred on two developments emerging from the change in Britain’s relationship with the Middle East.

At the beginning of the period Britain ruled a huge Muslim population in Asia and Africa, but in India, Nigeria, the Sudan and the Horn of Africa Britain’s Muslims were on the periphery of the Muslim world. Islamic civilisation was considered to be centred on the Persianate Turco-Arab culture with its metropole in the Mashriq and principal cities at Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, Damascus and Baghdad.⁸⁸ Similarly, in line with the British imagining of Islamic unity and subservience to the Caliph, the political world of Islam was thought to centre on the Sublime Porte and Yıldız Palace in Istanbul.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ “Miscellany”, *Manchester Guardian*, 31 July 1916, p. 3.

⁸⁷ “German Methods in the East”, *The Times*, 15 December 1915, p. 9.

⁸⁸ “Pan-Islamism in India”, *The Times*, 3 September 1912, p. 3; “The Delivery of Jerusalem”, *The Times*, 4 February 1918, p. 5.

⁸⁹ “The Turkish Constitution”, *The Times*, 28 July 1908, p. 13; “Pan-Islamism and the Khalifate”, *The Times*, 11 August 1908, p. 6; “Pan-Islamism in India”, *The Times*, 3 September 1912, p. 3; “Meaning of Pan-Islam”, *Manchester Guardian*, 13 June 1906, p. 7.

By the 1920s, Britain was no longer merely engaged on the periphery of the Islamic territories. Since 1914 it had invaded, occupied territory, captured cities and allied itself with Arab rulers in the Mashriqi heartlands of Islam. As of 1920 Britain was still fighting the Great War in the Middle East against Mustafa Kemal's provisional nationalist government in an effort to impose the Treaty of Sèvres. The treaty had been accepted (though not ratified) by the imperial Ottoman government in Istanbul, but not by Kemal and the nationalist government in Ankara.⁹⁰ Further, with the establishment of the British Mandate for Mesopotamia in 1920,⁹¹ the Mandate for Transjordan in 1921,⁹² and the Mandate for Palestine in 1923,⁹³ Britain acquired a band of colonial possessions stretching across the Mashriq from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. Whereas before the war, when the images and discursive formations that this thesis has so far unearthed were formed and deployed, Britain existed on the periphery of Islamic civilisation, by the 1920s British power was embedded in the heart of the Muslim world.

The Arab Revolt

The change in Britain's relationship to the Middle East is reflected in the complications which arose in the discourse regarding jihad from 1916 on. Where previously jihad had been a catch-all term covering any kind of Islamic violence, the realities that confronted the discourse as Britain shifted from a position of

⁹⁰ William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774–2000*, New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 36–38; Whitney Dylan Durham, "The 1920 Treaty of Sèvres and the Struggle for a Kurdish Homeland in Iraq and Turkey between World Wars", Ph.D. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 2010, p. 13.

⁹¹ C. L. Mowat, *The New Cambridge Modern History Volume 12: The Shifting Balance of World Forces, 1898–1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 293.

⁹² Mary Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain, and the Making of Jordan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 53.

⁹³ Nele Matz, "Civilization and the Mandate System under the League of Nations as Origin of Trusteeship", in Frauke Lauchenmann and Rüdiger Wolrum, eds., *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law*, 9, 2005, p. 72.

distant observation to direct engagement were too contradictory to easily reconcile with the existing schema of Islamicness and jihad.

On the 10th of June 1916, with promises of British support for an Arab state extending across the Peninsula and the Mashriq to the Taurus Mountains⁹⁴ Hussein bin ‘Ali, the Sharif of Mecca and nominally a subject of the Ottoman Sultan, declared war against the Ottoman Empire and officially began the Arab Revolt.⁹⁵ Immediately after bin ‘Ali’s revolt, *The Times* was forced to contend with the fact that a Muslim revolt in favour of Britain against the Caliph *in a time of jihad* directly contradicted the deep-seating imagining of Muslims as subservient to the Caliph, opposed to the West, and ruled by their jihad-preaching faith.

Jihad made in Germany or not, pious Muslims going to war against their Caliph could not be reconciled with the existing schema of Islamicness. On the 27th of June 1916 *The Times* announced that the Arab revolt signified “the collapse of the pretended jihad... and the failure of the Sultan’s prestige in all Arabic speaking countries”.⁹⁶ The *Guardian* similarly reassessed its position. Abandoning the explanation that a jihad alongside infidels was impossible, hence no global jihad had materialised, the *Guardian* suggested instead that the jihad had failed to materialise because of *Ottoman weakness*. In the past the Ottomans’ “pretensions” to the Caliphate had been tolerated because they had “made of a Muslim nation a great world power”, and their “might made right”.⁹⁷ Now that the Ottomans were weak, however, Muslims were turning back to Birdwood’s vaunted law that the Caliph “must be an Arab of the tribe of Quraysh”; Mehmed Reşad’s jihad had foundered because it contravened Muslim

⁹⁴ “Palestine: Legal Arguments Likely to be Advanced by Arab Representatives”, memorandum by Lord Halifax, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 23 January 1939. *The National Archives of the United Kingdom*, CAB 24/282/19 [electronic version].

⁹⁵ David Murphy, *The Arab Revolt 1916–18, Lawrence sets Arabia Ablaze*, London: Osprey, 2008, pp. 33–34.

⁹⁶ “Muslim World and Mecca Revolt”, *The Times*, 27 June 1916, p. 7.

⁹⁷ “Miscellany”, *Manchester Guardian*, 31 July 1916, p. 3.

law.⁹⁸ This represented a sea change in the imagining of Muslims' subservience to the Caliphate, although the narrative still sought to explain it within the schema of Islamicness. When Arabs had previously revolted against the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph it had, as a direct challenge to the established schema, been regarded with something approaching incredulity. In 1905 Arab discontent had manifest in separatist violence in Yemen and the Syria vilayet⁹⁹ and *The Times* had considered it "a noteworthy circumstance" that there were "Muslims so discontented with their Caliph that they do not hesitate at the idea of a complete separation from him, even at the risk of causing the utter disruption of the Ottoman Empire".¹⁰⁰

The shift in the view of jihad and subjugation to the Caliph was subtle but meaningful. For the first time the fanaticism, unity and subservience to the Caliph that made up British-imagined Islamicness had been explicitly decoupled. Sharif Hussein's Arabs may or may not have been *fanatical*, but they were neither part of the great monolithic "Muslims" of the Ottoman Empire, nor subservient to the Muslim Caliph. Further, the potential of Arab states as allies of Britain, of a "projecting bastion in front of positions that are really vital", and of railways across the Hauran desert to the Persian Gulf began to be discussed in terms of geostrategic value; Britain's imaginary was flirting with the *realities* of the Mashriq.¹⁰¹ Other aspects of the British view of Arabs began to change soon afterward: in March 1917 the *Guardian* celebrated Arab successes against the Ottomans in Syria and Mesopotamia, announced its respect for the Arabs' "distinctive intellectual quality, instinct toward progress and material wellbeing, fine physique and singularly high mental development (despite lack of education)", and cheered for the prospect of "restoring this ancient and noble civilisation",¹⁰² "one of the great marvels of history".¹⁰³ Although *The Times* was

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Eugene Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850–1921*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 190–191.

¹⁰⁰ "The Arab Revolt", *The Times*, 23 September 1905, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ "The Empire and the Settlement", *Manchester Guardian*, 20 March 1917, p. 41.

¹⁰² "The Proclamation to the Arabs", *Manchester Guardian*, 20 March 1917, p. 4.

¹⁰³ "The Epic of the Hedjaz", *The Times*, 27 November 1918, p. 9.

generally disapproving of the costs that Britain had and would continue to incur as a result of its involvement in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, it too reacted to the shift in the imagery and discursive formations regarding Islam and Arabs. In a January 1918 article surveying the perceived vileness of the Young Turks, *The Times* included the Arabs for the first time in the list of peoples affected by their “atrocious race war”.¹⁰⁴ A week later, a letter-writer made the same distinction between “Muslims” and “Arabs”, suggesting that the discursive shift had percolated through to and been accepted at least by *The Times*’ immediate readership.¹⁰⁵ Further emphasising the distinction between Turkish and Arab Muslims, *The Times* in February 1918 reminded its readers that “it is well to remember that the Turk is as much a foreigner to Jerusalem as his British conqueror”.¹⁰⁶ The *Manchester Guardian* also constructed the Arabs as a distinct people that had been dominated and their glory undone by the barbaric Turks: canals ruined, cut off from commerce, they were “bound, impoverished, denied by policy and isolated by events”.¹⁰⁷ The Arabs, in the *Guardian*’s view, were nevertheless still glorious:

Were they dead? Never. The Semite sleeps but never dies. Wherever there were men of Arab stock, whether in Nigeria or Chicago, Java or Manchester, one would find progressive people who took interest in art, in literature, in philosophy, and had a high place in commerce.¹⁰⁸

Positive as it was, this new construction of the Arabs was still heavy with romantic language and the underlying imagery of difference. The *Guardian* went on to describe what might happen in the Arab lands now that they were free of Ottoman rule. The Arabs had:

A combination of man-power, virgin soil, petroleum, and brains. What would that produce in 1950? The seven or eight millions [of Arabs] would turn to 20 millions; the Mesopotamian canal system would be

¹⁰⁴ “The Turk Militant”, *The Times*, 3 January 1918, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ “Crescent and Iron Cross”, *The Times*, 10 January 1918, p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ “The Delivery of Jerusalem”, *The Times*, 4 February 1918, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ “The Jews and Palestine”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 10 December 1917, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

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reconstructed; Syria must become the granary of Europe; Baghdad, Damascus and Aleppo would be each as big as Manchester; universities and a great press would arise. *Arab civilisation was coming there.*¹⁰⁹

In another continuity with the past imaginary, the *Times Literary Supplement* wondered how long the Ottomans' clinging to the title of Caliph would survive the "renaissance of Arab civilisation".¹¹⁰ While the Arabs had managed to transcend the Islamic monolith that the British imaginary had forced them into, and were even able to move beyond imagined their Islamic backwardness, they were still contained within an "other" "Arab" civilisation and expected to be concerned about the Caliphate. The British imagining of Islamicness had *changed, not disappeared.*

Paradoxically, that the British imagining of jihad and Islamicness could shift to accommodate the Arab Revolt is perhaps the best evidence of its durability. Confronted with events which could not be reconciled with its schema, the discourse changed to accommodate what it had to—distinguishing between Arabs and Turks in contravention of the imagined unity of Islam; building a narrative to explain Arabs' not respecting the Ottoman Caliphate—while maintaining as much of its previous integrity as possible. With respect to Islam and Muslims in a wider non-Arab context, the discourse continued largely unperturbed. There was some evidence of a softening view of Muslims—after the twelfth of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points for Peace promised the subject peoples of the Ottoman state "an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development"¹¹¹ *The Times* conceded that "not even a Kurd should be an outcast from the Parisian millennium".¹¹² All three British newspapers, also, despite the move toward a conception of jihad that would require it be declared by a descendant of the Prophet, carried their anxiety about jihad into the 1920s. In 1918 *The Times* worried about the possibility

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ "The Sherifate and the Khalifate", *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 August 1917, p. 377.

¹¹¹ Henry Jessup, "The Future of the Ottoman Empire", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 84, 1919, p. 6.

¹¹² "The Case of Kurdistan", *The Times*, 15 November 1919, p. 11.

that Turkish sympathisers among the Mohmand Pashtuns on the North West Frontier might, in response to the fall of Baghdad, preach a jihad and attack British India.¹¹³ In 1919 it reported again that a jihad was “being preached vigorously... and everyone in Kandahar is buying arms”,¹¹⁴ and that Muslims in Siberia and Turkestan were “participating in a jihad” against the Bolsheviks.¹¹⁵ In 1920, the *Daily Mail* agonised over the danger of a jihad in India if the Turks were forced to give up Istanbul.¹¹⁶ Arabs had moved away from Islamicness, but Islamicness was still alive.

The British newspapers continued to worry about jihadi violence in the *de jure* dismembered Ottoman Empire long after the end of the First World War in Europe. After the nominal defeat of the Turks in 1918 Britain had to reconcile its conflicting territorial promises to the French and the Arabs, and the Arabs—disappointed in the outcome of the negotiations—once again became an enemy.¹¹⁷ Further demonstrating the resilience of the imaginary and that the c.1916–1919 change in the imagining of Arabs and jihad was a subtle shift rather than an epistemic break, Arab violence was once again collapsed into the British lexicon of imagery and regarded as jihad. In 1920 *The Times* reported on restlessness and attacks from the now-hostile tribes between the Lower Tigris and Euphrates in what was at that time the British imperial territory of Mesopotamia, and announced that “a violent jihad” was being preached.¹¹⁸ The movement that would become the “Great Iraqi Revolution”,¹¹⁹ a nationalist independence movement,¹²⁰ began with peaceful protests and gatherings at

¹¹³ “Stirring up Afridis”, *The Times*, 9 April 1918, p. 5; “German Plots in India”, *The Times*, 17 September 1918, p. 5.

¹¹⁴ “Afghan Menace”, *The Times*, 23 May 1919, p. 12.

¹¹⁵ “Denikin for One Great Russia”, *The Times*, 1 October 1919, p. 7.

¹¹⁶ “‘Holy War’ Threats”, *Daily Mail*, 12 February 1920, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ See Elie Kedouri, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and Its Interpretations 1914–1939*, New York: Routledge, 2014.

¹¹⁸ “Bad News from Mesopotamia”, *The Times*, 31 August 1920, p. 10.

¹¹⁹ See “Part Two: Revolution and Suppression” of Ian Rutledge, *Enemy on the Euphrates: the British Occupation of Iraq and the Great Arab Revolt, 1914–1921*, London: Saqi Books, 2014.

¹²⁰ Ghassan Atiyah, *Iraq: 1908–1921 A Socio-political Study*, Beirut: Arab Institute for Research and Publication, 1973, p. 307.

mosques to demonstrate the unity of both Sunni and Shia behind the cause.¹²¹ Irrespective of its clearly irreligious nature, though, the newspapers constructed the Iraqi nationalist movement as a “jihad” and “largely fanatical and anarchistic”.¹²² That interpretation of Arab violence in the Mashriq, given the previous rehabilitation of the Arabs, demonstrates the durability and schematic nature of the British imaginary. The flexibility of the term “jihad”, and its ability to encompass any and all kinds of violence against European powers, had persisted.

The Turkish War of Independence

More or less immediately following the reassessment driven by the Arab Revolt, the British discourse around jihad was forced to confront another contradiction. The Ottoman Empire signed the Armistice of Mudros, a cessation of hostilities for negotiation with the Entente, on the 30th of October 1918.¹²³ On the 10th of August 1920, representatives of the Empire signed the Treaty of Sèvres, which divided virtually all of the Ottoman realm between the victorious powers, leaving a dislocated rump Turkish state in the hinterlands of Anatolia, which was criticised even by contemporaries as unstable and destructive.¹²⁴ The Ottoman Brigadier-General Mustafa Kemal, who would later become known as Atatürk, rejected the treaty. Beginning with his 1919 assignment as a General Inspector responsible for demobilising the Ottoman armies in Anatolia, Kemal established a base in Ankara, prosecuted a continuation of the war against the Entente and their allies, and set up a provisional nationalist government which ultimately superseded the Ottoman government in Istanbul.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 43.

¹²² “Holy War in Mesopotamia”, *The Times*, 3 September 1920, p. 10; “Anarchy in Mesopotamia”, *The Times*, 8 September 1920, p. 10.

¹²³ David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, London: MacMillan, 2009, p. 372.

¹²⁴ Philip Marshall Brown, “From Sèvres to Lausanne”, *The American Journal of International Law*, 18, 1, 1924, p. 113.

¹²⁵ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, pp. 393–395.

The British press represented Kemal's Islamic violence in the same reductive imagery that they had used for Islamic violence from the beginning of the period: in 1920 the *Guardian* announced that Mustafa Kemal relied on "pan-Islam and holy war";¹²⁶ *The Times* suggested that Kemal sought to make himself a "ghazi"—a sanctified Muslim warrior against non-Muslims¹²⁷—and worried, because of the unity of Islam, that the British government needed to make it clear that their opposition to Kemal did not mean opposition to Islam.¹²⁸ Shortly afterward, however, a new contradiction once again forced the British imagining of Islam to shift: Mustafa Kemal and the nationalist government in Ankara opposed the Sultan-Caliph's Ottoman government in Istanbul. "Who," *The Times* asked, "will proclaim the jihad? Not the Sultan, who is threatened by the Kemalists..."¹²⁹ The ultimate break between Kemal's Turkish nationalism and the framework of Islamicness emerged on the 1st of November 1922, when the Grand National Assembly of Turkey abolished the Ottoman Sultanate and the Caliphate with it.¹³⁰ The last Sultan-Caliph, Mehmed VI Vahideddin went into exile via the back door of the Dolmabaçe Palace on the 17th of November 1922.¹³¹

As was so often the case when the imaginary contended with a contradictory narrative, the British schema resisted change. In November 1923, a full year after Mustafa Kemal had disowned Islamicness by abolishing the Caliphate and announcing that the Dolmabaçe Palace belonged "no longer to the 'Shadows of Allah on Earth', but to the nation, which is a fact and not a shadow",¹³² the *Guardian* announced that "a great Muslim power had arisen at

¹²⁶ "The Young Turks", *The Manchester Guardian*, 19 March 1920, p. 10.

¹²⁷ "Bitter Extremist Comment", *The Times*, 23 September 1922, p. 8.

¹²⁸ "Near East Crisis", *The Times*, 25 September 1922, p. 11.

¹²⁹ "Near East Crisis", *The Times*, 3 October 1922, p. 6.

¹³⁰ Gavin D. Brockett, "When Ottomans Become Turks: Commemorating the Conquest of Constantinople and Its Contribution to World History", *The American Historical Review*, 119, 2, 2014, p. 410.

¹³¹ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, p. 395; "Sultan Vahideddin (Mehmet VI) departing from the Backdoor of his Palace in Istanbul", hosted on Creative Syria's *mideastimage.com*, <https://mideastimage.com/viewimages/viewimage.php?id=26>, accessed 23 July 2018.

¹³² Brockett, "When Ottomans Become Turks", p. 410.

Ankara and supplied a fresh impulse to Islam".¹³³ Nevertheless, despite the discursive inertia of Britain's imagining of Islam—and despite ongoing anxiety about jihad and the "jihadi" imagery of anti-imperial Arab violence in Britain's new possessions—some of the 1916–1919 nuance around jihad persisted. In 1922 *The Times* dismissed the idea that attacking Turkey would drive Indian Muslims to jihad as "extremist".¹³⁴

By 1928 even the *Mail* had begun to consider jihad anachronistic. In a report describing Abd al-Aziz ibn Sa'ud's army of Salafi nomads, the *Ikhwan*, and constructing their conquest of Hijaz—the foundation of modern Saudi Arabia—as "tribal trouble in Arabia" it cleft to all of the old discursive formations regarding the romance and exoticness of the East:

...the camel is their charger, and they can live on scanty rations of dates and milk and cover great distances when at war. Each Wahhabi warrior before he sets out on campaign has a small paper worn round his neck, bearing an inscription which in the case of his death acts as a passport straight to paradise.¹³⁵

According to the *Mail* the Wahhabi "resented the onward march of progress" and were "fanatical and courageous... splendid and careful fighters".¹³⁶ Not long later the *Guardian* wrote that ibn Sa'ud was a great man, a "real, rugged, unaffected Arab" with "an Arab's failings... there are no puddles in his mind, except that dark zone which in his race is the result of centuries of uneducation; and no dark spots in his soul, except the vacuities for which al-Islam alone is responsible".¹³⁷ Little, evidently, had changed in the general portrayal of Muslims, except that the *Mail* also announced, almost as an afterthought, that "the fact that ibn Sa'ud has proclaimed a jihad by no means

¹³³ "Indan Mohammedans and Hindus", *Manchester Guardian*, 2 November 1923, p. 13.

¹³⁴ "Bitter Extremist Comment", *The Times*, 23 September 1922, p. 8.

¹³⁵ "Desert Warriors", *Daily Mail*, 7 March 1928, p. 10.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ "Ibn Saud of Arabia: A Traveller's Impressions", *Manchester Guardian*, 15 March 1928, p. 9.

signifies a general revolt of Islam against the Christians... the probability of it becoming a serious menace is very remote".¹³⁸

The shift in the perception of jihad from something to be feared to a non-threatening oddity of the past was by no means complete: reports about the threat of jihad against the new British possessions in the Mashriq,¹³⁹ within India,¹⁴⁰ and from Afghanistan¹⁴¹ continued until the end of my research period in 1930. In 1924 a new book on Islamic politics warned that "Islam seeks to dominate the Earth" and would "wage jihad against unbelievers until there is no government on Earth save that of Allah".¹⁴² In 1929 "jihad" was still considered important enough a word to be added in the second edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, but, subtle as it was, Britain's entanglement in the heartlands of "Araby" had prompted the beginnings of change in the imagining of Islam and its people.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ "Desert Warriors", *Daily Mail*, 7 March 1928, p. 10.

¹³⁹ "A Tribe of Desert Warriors", *Daily Mail*, 10 October 1924, p. 11.

¹⁴⁰ "A Holy War", *Daily Mail*, 22 January 1929, p. 9.

¹⁴¹ "Afghanistan". *The Times*, 10 September 1920, p. 11.

¹⁴² "The Caliphate: An Expert's Study", *The Times*, 19 September 1924, p. 7n

¹⁴³ "The C.O.D. up-to-date", *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 May 1929, p. 397.

Empires of the imagination

Between 1906 and 1923 the Islamic heartlands of the Mashriq went through enormous change. The region saw state nationalist programs, three major wars, two constitutional revolutions, a host of separatist movements, the preaching of holy wars, invasions, partitions, resistance efforts, and ultimately colonial subjugation. It saw oppression, hope, disillusionment and domination. The Ottoman Empire, a serious geopolitical player in the region from 1299 and unquestionably the dominant power from 1517,¹ disappeared from the map, replaced by a patchwork of successor states: the Republic of Turkey, the League of Nations Mandates for Syria, Mesopotamia, and Transjordan, and the independent Sultanate of Najd and Kingdom of Hijaz.

Despite that change, over the course of the period, the *British imagining* of the Middle East remained consistent. Information about Islam and Muslims was articulated into a social imaginary through a self-reinforcing system of meaning-making or “regime of truth” which confined and staged Islam and Muslims for British consumption.² The British regime of truth was comprised of several parts. First, a schema—a collection of pre-built ideas and understandings about Islam and its adherents, which enabled participants in the

¹ When Sultan Selim I’s Ottoman state conquered and incorporated the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt, taking control of the traditional heart of Islam including Mecca, Cairo, Damascus and Aleppo. See Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History*, New York: Basic Books, 2009, pp. 1–38.

² Said, *Orientalism*, p. 61.

system to understand and explain phenomena they encountered, which was understood to accurately describe and explain that world. Second, the underlying schemas informed a network of intellectual frameworks which interpreted events into comprehensible narratives. Third, the intellectual frameworks with which the British discourse interpreted the Middle East employed a lexicon of imagery constructed by filtering information about Islam and Muslims into simplistic characterisations—caricatures—which foregrounded those aspects of the information thought to be relevant or important. Cumulatively, this produced an imagining of Islam and Muslims entirely divorced from the reality of the Middle East.

Over the course of the nineteenth century Britain saw a powerful confluence between huge advances in the machinery of communication and the literacy of ordinary people. As a result, early twentieth-century British society had an unprecedented appetite for and access to narratives and information about both their own and other worlds. That appetite was served by a diverse corpus of work representing the Middle East, from the expressly fictive and fantastical such as C. N. and A. M. Williamson's *Golden Silence*, about a girl who succumbs to “the call of the desert”;³ through the purportedly factual but unselfconsciously romantic, such as D. G. Hogarth's *Penetration of Arabia*,⁴ to ostensibly serious scholarly literature, for instance W. E. D. Allen's *The Turks in Europe*.⁵ It was also served by newspapers such as *The Times*, *Guardian* and *Daily Mail*. Newspapers represented the only windows on foreign worlds that were simultaneously up-to-date, imbued with the “authority of reality”, and sufficiently institutionalised to represent widely shared societal knowledge. As a result, this thesis used those three major papers as sources of understanding regarding the British discourse.

The discourse in those newspapers, operating within the British regime of truth, schematically formulated Islam and Muslims as others by representing them with two dominant characteristics: *Islamicness*, which foregrounded their

³ C. N. and A. M. Williamson, *The Golden Silence*, London: Methuen, 1910.

⁴ D. G. Hogarth, *The Penetration of Arabia*, London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1904.

⁵ W. E. D. Allen, *The Turks in Europe: A Sketch Study*, London: John Murray, 1920.

religiosity, and the idea of *civilisation*, which emphasised the backwardness and barbarism of events and peoples in the Middle East.

The image of Islamicness rested upon an archetypal idea of the Muslim built around three central themes: the notion of *Islamic fanaticism*, which emphasised that the Muslim was superstitious, backward and dangerous; an understanding of the *unity of Islam*, which constructed Muslims as united in a monolithic unit with no individual agency; and the idea of *subservience to the Caliph*, which confined Muslims to the precepts of their religion and bound the unitary, agency-less Muslims—because of their superstition—to the whims of an individual caliph, who was cast as a retrograde antagonist to the West—an Oriental despot.

That lexicon of imagery coloured the British understanding of the Ottoman state's nationalist efforts. Events and processes such as the emergence of a Turco-Arabo-Persian “Islamic” public sphere; Abdülhamid II's effort to leverage Islam as a means to assimilate the non-Turkish peoples of the empire into a centralised identity, the explosions of anti-colonial violence in many Muslim countries resisting Western imperial encroachment, and even the so-called Young Turks' explicitly secular sociopolitical programme of “Ottomanism” were collapsed into narratives which foregrounded their Islamicness and interpreted them as challenges to Christianity and European civilisation.

The confinement of Muslims, underpinned by the self-reinforcing process of the British system of meaning foregrounding their Islamicness because they were perceived to be defined by their Islamicness because the British system of meaning foregrounded their Islamicness, was encapsulated and demonstrated by the concept and fear of *jihad*. Like the wider British imagining of Islam, the imagery, frameworks and schemas surrounding the idea of *jihad* adapted to accommodate the realities which it confronted while minimising changes to its basic assumptions. Before 1914, *jihad* was conceptualised as an Islamic holy war against “the infidels”, taken to mean any and all non-Muslims, and occasionally deployed in an even wider context as a catch-all term covering any kind of Muslim violence—even Muslim violence

against other Muslims, as in the “revolutionary jihad” supposedly preached during the Mashrutiiyyat revolution in Persia.⁶ In November 1914 the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed V Reşad preached a jihad with all the pomp and circumstance that the British imagined necessary for an “official jihad”, but it was ignored by Muslim communities around the world. The British interpretive framework, resting upon a schema which *knew* that jihad meant a war of all Muslims against all infidels at the behest of the Caliph, reconciled the contradiction without changing that basic assumption: Reşad’s jihad was “made in Germany”, and therefore illegitimate in Islamic law. It was only at the very end of the period, as Britain became directly entangled as an imperial power in the Middle East and constantly confronted by the schema-contradicting realities of that world, that the imagining of jihad and Islamicness began to show signs of unravelling.

In June 1920 the *Daily Mail* presented an image of Damascus complete with Arabs on camelback, “hawk-like men in flowing robes and with curved scimitars”, and lamented that civilisation was “set to stride onto the scene and strip this magic stage... the first signs of the inevitable end have arrived in Damascus... the wild hair of the Orient is growing grey”.⁷ As Said demonstrated in *Orientalism*, the West—in this context, the Christian European powers and especially Britain—regarded themselves as a monolithic unit in opposition to an analogous monolithic Islam. The British focus on Muslim unity and archetypes, epitomised by their foregrounding “Islamicness”, illustrates that conceptual Muslim monolith. As a consequence, the British regime of truth could interpret conflicts between Muslims and European powers as a *clash of civilisations* rather than imperial oppression or “natural” opposition to foreign domination. Civilisation was *striding onto the scene* to save Islam and Muslims by eroding their otherness. European imperial power in that conception served the *cause of civilisation* against the retrograde backwardness and fanaticism—the *Islamicness*—of the imagined Middle East.

⁶ “Persia in Revolt”, *The Times*, 28 August 1908, p. 6.

⁷ “The Changing Holy Land”, *Daily Mail*, 23 June 1920, p. 4.

The British regime of truth underpinned British power. Alongside the imagery of the Middle East which appeared concurrently in books,⁸ songs,⁹ and poetry¹⁰ over the length of the period, emphasising the romance, exoticness and fundamental *difference* of that foreign world, it “othered” Islam, Muslims, and Islamic countries and peoples. That “othering”—the notion of Islam as a world apart—laid the foundations for the idea of a separate Islamic civilisation and, among other things, the idea in modern historiography that the First World War ended on the 11th of November 1918, despite the fact that no treaty was ratified and hostilities did not cease between Turkey and the Entente until 1923.¹¹ Further, it confined Islamic peoples—Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Iranians, Türkmens and Azeris, to name only dominant ethnic groups—on a conceptual stage where they could only be “Muslims”.

The ability to “other” Muslims, as well as the interpretation of conflict with Islamic “others” as a global struggle in which Britain served the cause of civilisation in the face of an inferior but implacable enemy transmuted the British regime of truth into an instrument in the imperial apparatus of justification. “Araby the Blest” was a place which did not exist anywhere except in the empire of the British imagination. But, as a means of rationalising and enabling the unseeing domination of one society by another, *imagination* was *power*.

In considering the makeup of the British Empire, John Darwin wrote about a “virtual India” of financial interests, companies and other intangible possessions orbiting the City of London which was as vital a part of the empire as the political possessions which appeared in red on maps of the globe.¹² Tamson

⁸ “Book of the Day: Miss Kennedy’s New Novel”, *Manchester Guardian*, 29 September 1930, p. 5.

⁹ “Princes Theatre: ‘Cinderella’”, *The Times*, 27 December 1912, p. 8.

¹⁰ “Recent Verse”, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 January 1918, p. 3.

¹¹ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, p. 395. The text of the Treaty of Lausanne, in English translation, is available at “Treaty of Peace with Turkey signed at Lausanne, July 24, 1923”, *World War I Document Archive*, 20 May 2009, <https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/TreatyofLausanne>, accessed 17 June 2018.

¹² John Darwin, *The Empire Project*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 11.

Pietsch posits an equally intangible but powerful “empire of the mind” extending along the contours of the Enlightenment-era “republic of letters” and orbiting the great British universities.¹³ In the same vein, we might conceive of an invisible British “empire of the imagination” composed of the schemas, images and intellectual frameworks which created and informed Britain’s imagined geographies, as well as those imagined geographies themselves. In this conception, Britain’s “Araby” is a province somewhere between Kipling’s Kafiristan and Shangri-La. Although it was one among many pillars, the power of the British Empire—in part—rested upon songs of Araby.

¹³ Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks, and the British Academic World 1850–1939*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.

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