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The Anti-Colonial Empire:

Ottoman Mobilization and Resistance in the Italo-Turkish War,

1911-1912

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in History

by

Jonathan Claymore McCollum

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Anti-Colonial Empire:

Ottoman Mobilization and Resistance in the Italo-Turkish War,

1911-1912

by

Jonathan Claymore McCollum

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor James L. Gelvin, Chair

The Italo-Turkish War (1911-1912), now remembered primarily as Italy's war for what is now Libya, swelled from a localized colonial invasion into a significant Mediterranean conflict and a global cause célèbre that attracted support and aid for the embattled Ottoman regime from diverse locations both inside and outside the borders of the empire. This dissertation examines the means by which the Ottoman Empire erected an asymmetric defense of its last North African provinces to preserve its territory and empire from Italian occupation and annexation. Drawing on sources in Ottoman Turkish, Arabic, Greek, and Judeo-Spanish, this study demonstrates how

the Sublime Porte and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) initially deployed a rhetoric of unity, constitutionalism, and international law to protect the empire from the Italian invasion. Due to the efficacy of Italian diplomacy, the Ottomans, unable to enlist Great Power support for the preservation of imperial territory, developed a defensive strategy for its North African territories that relied primarily on humanitarianism and volunteerism. This dissertation, therefore, investigates the vital contribution of pan-Islamism and the broad appeal of a loose ideology of Muslim anticolonialism in the empire's attempts to bolster its forces with international aid and volunteers. While many studies tend to brush aside the importance of early twentieth-century pan-Islamism as either a pipe dream of Wilhelmine champions of German imperialism and their Ottoman collaborators or as merely a rhetorical movement devoid of substantial consequence, this dissertation reveals how global appeals to Islamic unity to combat European expansionism translated into material benefits for Ottomans on the battlefield. Through an examination of documents from the Turkish Red Crescent and the Turkish General Staff archives, it highlights the crucial assistance of global Islamic humanitarian aid to the Ottoman war effort in the form of sizeable financial contributions to the Ottoman Red Crescent from Muslims over the duration of the conflict. The Red Crescent organization provided a means to funnel aid to the battlefield collected in mosques, mass meetings, newspaper subscriptions, and Islamic associations within and without the Ottoman Empire. This charitable aid facilitated the deployment to North Africa of multiple Red Crescent teams which assumed, in most cases, sole responsibility for the medical care of both soldiers and civilians of the Ottoman provinces. Simultaneously, the Ottoman ranks in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica swelled as calls for coreligionist volunteers to take up arms were heeded throughout Africa and Asia. Ultimately, the empire's anticolonial ideology proved an effective unifier for the many Muslims around the

world who shouldered a great deal of the cost of the conflict. While Italy's expenses for its war for colonial expansion ballooned, the defense of North Africa cost the Ottoman treasury very little.

The dissertation of Jonathan Claymore McCollum is approved.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

In transliterating Ottoman Turkish and Arabic words, I have employed a modified version of the style adopted by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Turkish and Arabic terms already in common usage in English, such as Pasha, have retained their English orthography rather than their Turkish or Arabic orthography. Romanization of Greek words has followed the standard of the Library of Congress. Judeo-Spanish transliteration has rendered the words into their modern Spanish equivalents. Names of places and people in Libya have retained their current and official Romanized names when they exist in English (i.e. Tripoli rather than *Ṭrāblus*).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Archives in Turkey:

Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA)

Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Arşivi (ATASE)

Türk Kızılayı Arşivi (Kızılay)

Archives in Britain:

British National Archives: Foreign Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FO)

Archives in Italy:

Archivio Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (ASMAE)

Archives in France:

Archives diplomatiques du ministère des Affaires étrangères (MAE)

Archives in Germany:

Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PA/AA)

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First and foremost, I extend my gratitude to the members of my dissertation committee who have volunteered their time and expert advice whenever I needed it. Sarah Stein, who had to jump into the committee at an unexpected moment, provided crucial suggestions and support to complete this project. Mia Fuller, whose expertise in Italian colonialism was essential for this work, was ever eager to offer her help even when we found ourselves in different parts of the globe. Lynn Hunt has been a constant support in my graduate career, and I've learned to trust her advice implicitly. James Gelvin, as my committee chair, has given so much of his time, efforts, and expertise to this endeavor that I don't believe I could ever thank him enough. His advice and guidance has helped me navigate the labyrinth of graduate school and make sense of the often puzzling field of Middle East studies.

I must also thank the many professors that have instructed me in the less commonly taught languages I needed to complete this dissertation. Yorgos Dedes and Selim Kuru were phenomenal teachers of the Ottoman language—no small feat considering the sheer complexity of this beautiful, and lamentably dead, variety of Turkish. Latifeh Hagigi provided the building blocks I needed to learn Ottoman through her exceptional instruction of the Persian language. I only regret not being able to use Persian sources in this dissertation. Christina Bogdanou prepared a path for me to learn the Greek language and aided me in finding suitable intensive programs in Greece to learn another burdensome language, Katharevousa. Abeer Hamza was an excellent and supportive instructor at UCLA who offered her time to evaluate my Arabic for many fellowship programs.

The funding for this research was made possible by various institutions to which I owe a great deal of gratitude. The Institute of Turkish Studies funded much of my intensive Ottoman language courses in Turkey. The American Research Institute in Turkey generously donated funds to

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while their son and grandchildren were off on the other side of the world. To the many people who have loved me through this all, I express my deepest thanks.

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"The Nazi Appropriation of Thomas Carlyle: Or How *Frederick* Wound Up in the Bunker." In *Thomas Carlyle Resartus*. Edited by Paul Kerry and Marylu Hill. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010.

Introduction

“Here We Do Nothing but Laugh and Joke”

The Italo-Turkish War, a veritable cause célèbre for contemporary spectators in 1911, has receded into the margins of historical memory as a sideshow in contrast to the world war that immediately followed. The war, often remembered as the Italian colonial war for Libya, became, in fact, a Mediterranean-wide conflict that attracted the world’s attention and, to a lesser extent, participation. For many in the Kingdom of Italy, however, the war was considered won before the first shots were fired. Days before Italy’s declaration of war on 29 September 1911, the Italian press, excited by a jingoistic fervor for the invasion and a belief in a rapid and glorious victory, was already announcing the spoils of war. “Within a few days Tripoli will not only be the point of arrival for the ships bearing Italian soldiers, but the final destination for the abundance of patriotic sentiment and civic love that exists in our country.”¹ Another article reported with evident satisfaction that a notable Ottoman general, Şerif Pasha, who happened to be a dissident of the government in Istanbul, purportedly intimated to an Italian journalist that “Tripolitania is lost.”²

This exuberant optimism about a war yet to be fought was not confined to the press but extended into the government of Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti which issued an official note to all the Great Powers three days prior to the Italian declaration of war to justify its upcoming invasion of Ottoman Tripolitania. The note affirmed that the “Italian government found itself in

¹ “Si va!,” *La stampa*, September 24, 1911.

² “Un generale turco che non esita a dire la verità,” *La stampa*, September 29, 1911.

front of the unavoidable necessity of a decisive action,” and then laid out its case for the swift seizure of Tripoli:

The continual expansion of the dominions of other powers in the Mediterranean has already for a long time preoccupied Rome with the fact that Italy, despite her geographic position that makes her a Mediterranean power par excellence, could come little by little to be excluded completely from the African sphere of this sea. At the first appearance of this prospect, Italy was compelled to turn her attention to Tripoli, the only territory that could prevent the possibility of irreparable damage to Italian interests... The conviction of all Italy is that the government would commit a grave and irreversible error towards the political and economic interests of the country if it didn't act to resolve the question of Tripoli in a manner consonant with the vital interest of Italy in the Mediterranean.³

The note thus set out an argument for why the European powers should acquiesce in Italy's rapid occupation of Ottoman territory. Absent from Italy's near admission to its impending invasion was any concern for the possibility that “a decisive action”—that is war with the Ottoman Empire—would entail a costly investment of blood and material. Giolitti's government, on the eve of combat, took no stock of the possible Ottoman resistance to the Italian invasion.

For the Italian soldiers at the front who disembarked at Tripoli on 5 October 1911, their government's lack of concern for the threat of Ottoman resistance seemed reasonable until the first combined counterattack from an army composed of imperial soldiers and irregular volunteers. Rear-Admiral Borea Ricci arrived with a few thousand sailors to a city devoid of armed defenders and set about dining with local notables.⁴ A young soldier attached to the occupying force wrote home a week after the invasion consoling his parents that his “company has yet to see combat, the Turks have come only once on the night of the thirteenth, and as soon

³ Paolo Maltese, *La terra promessa: La guerra italo-turca e la conquista della Libia 1911-1912* (Milan: Sugar Editore, 1968), 95.

⁴ W. K. McClure, *Italy in North Africa: An Account of the Tripoli Enterprise* (London: Constable and Company, 1913), 50-51.

as they felt the blasts of our navy's cannons, they fled... Here there is no danger because we have excellent trenches ... and we're behind them to open fire when the occasion presents itself, but there won't be any shooting because the Turks should surrender." He concluded with the confession that "here we do nothing but laugh and joke all day."⁵ A week later, after a popular revolt in the city and a concerted counterattack from an Ottoman army bolstered by new volunteer recruits, optimism for a short and bloodless war gave way to the bitter realization of the mounting resistance to the Italian invasion. One soldier wrote of the "dead and wounded lying at my feet, also a friend of mine fell victim to this betrayal, this is true treachery because we never could have suspected that a people so befriended by us could betray us."⁶ The Italian press and soldiers excused the failure of the Italian offensive beyond the confines of the city of Tripoli by laying blame on the "betrayal" and "treachery" of the local population. Yet, what this treachery articulated was, in fact, the effective union between imperial soldiers and local volunteers.

How the Ottomans Resisted

The rapid victory Italians had hoped for gave way to a year-long war of attrition managed in Istanbul and supported by the world. Giolitti's government attempted in vain to force a peace on the Ottoman government in order to wrest the provinces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica from the empire. When peace was finally struck, it came more from the threat of other powers than from the war led from Rome. Ottoman War Minister Mahmut Şevket Pasha summarized this obstinacy in the face of Italian aggression to an Arab journalist nearly six months into hostilities:

⁵ Salvatore Bono, *Morire per questi deserti: Lettere di soldati italiani dal fronte libico, 1911-1912* (Milan: Abramo, 1992), 51-52.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

I say to you with clarity that the Ottoman government has not entered into formal negotiations on the issue of peace because there is nothing that requires it to do so. The whole world knows that victory remains with our soldiers in Tripoli and Cyrenaica and that the breasts of our soldiers, both Turk and Arab alike, are still filled with enthusiasm. Aid continues to flow into our armies from the Islamic lands neighboring Tripoli, and war supplies and provisions are abundant in the Ottoman Army. I don't deny to you that the European states are discussing the issue of intervention in the peace process, but there is no dignified approach for us to enter into the dialogue.⁷

Mahmut Şevket was no stranger to optics and made his comments on the Ottomans' conviction to continue the war well aware of the possible repercussions. The Committee of Union and Progress, the power behind the Ottoman parliamentary government, could ill afford to abandon an Ottoman province to the Italians. The integrity of the empire was paramount for officers like Mahmut Şevket, who had taken up arms against their Sultan only years before with the intention of preserving the polity intact. Still, Mahmut's tenacity to reject peace with Italy was built on a logical foundation that he assumed his contemporaries would accept. The war would continue as long as soldiers were willing to fight it and had sufficient supplies to do so. The Ottoman War Minister thus assured the reporter that the morale of both the regular (Turk) and irregular (Arab) soldiers remained high and the needed supplies to continue the war were on hand. Further, he emphasized that the "Islamic lands" were crucial to a system of aid that furnished the resisting armies with material and men. This then was the method that he and others would believe kept men in the field.

Finding New Patrons in International Humanitarianism

The Anti-Colonial Empire: Ottoman Mobilization and Resistance in the Italo-Turkish War, 1911-1912 primarily investigates how the Ottomans persisted in a war that appeared so

⁷ "Ḥadīth ma' Wazīr al-Ḥarbīyah," *al-Mahrūsah*, February 7, 1912.

utterly hopeless from the outset and constructed a unified defense in a historically fragmented and peripheral region of the empire. The Italian Navy outclassed in every respect the aging and obsolete vessels of the Porte.⁸ With a naval blockade in place and the over-land route to Ottoman North Africa closed by the European Powers, the empire could not hope to bring its army to the defense of its threatened territories. The impossibility of transferring a sizeable force to bolster the meager imperial garrisons led the Italian war planners to assume that the war would be of short duration. Nonetheless, the Porte persisted in its fight, initially searching out possible alliances with European states to rein in Rome's ambitions on their territory. Finding the door closed to international intervention on its behalf, the Ottoman Empire used more informal channels to access aid for its embattled troops in North Africa. From a historical perspective of Ottoman warfare, the strategy pursued by its leadership in the Italo-Turkish War represents a growing appreciation for the necessity of new approaches to fighting asymmetric wars. In the Ottomans' most recent conflict with a European Great Power, the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, their forces attempted to confront their adversaries in traditional combat in set-piece battles. With their army routed and resistance crumbling, the Hamidian government relied entirely on the diplomatic entreaties to their British patrons to intervene on their behalf and extricate the empire from the devastating conflict. The Italo-Turkish War, according to Christopher Clark, marked the end of this style of "Eastern Question" Ottoman diplomacy and a watershed in European relations.⁹

⁸ Sergio Romano, *La quarta sponda: Dalla Guerra di Libia alle Rivolte Arabe* (Milan: Longanesi, 2005), 75. Rome invested heavily in their navy in the years before the war increasing their yearly expenditures on the fleet by nearly thirty percent in 1895.

⁹ Christopher Clark, *Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), 250.

Support from Britain was thus absent but the Ottoman military's close connections to Germany secured a first-rate Red Cross mission for its troops in Tripoli. The Red Cross physicians' specialization in bacteriology and experience operating in colonial environments supplemented the Ottoman Red Crescent medical staff and facilitated the treatment of many soldiers and civilians who fell ill from an outbreak of Typhus. Far more aid poured in from global Muslims who, prepared by civilizational discourse and pan-Islamic propaganda to sympathize with the Ottoman cause and to support the sultan-caliph in Istanbul, donated thousands of Ottoman lira to the war effort and thus reduced the Porte's expenses on the conflict. The development of the Red Crescent institution alongside international law, which protected the humanitarian organization's free movement, provided an ideal vehicle to transmit donations collected around the world to the Ottoman battlefield where an elaborate and effective hospital system was erected to sustain the health of the men and women fighting against the Italian invader. This dissertation thus identifies humanitarian aid as a significant variable in the maintenance of asymmetric warfare and singles out the Red Cross/Red Crescent Society as a central pillar in the Ottomans' internationalized resistance to their militarily superior foe.

This study, therefore, engages and casts light on recent debates on humanitarianism, its origins, and the limitations of its neutrality. The proliferation of humanitarian actions in the post-Cold War world has intensified the study of humanitarian groups which are often bifurcated into two historically differentiable types: Dunantist organizations and Wilsonian organizations. The Dunantists, named after the founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and revered patriarch of modern humanitarianism Henry Dunant, define humanitarianism as a strictly neutral act, devoid of political intent, and impartial in any conflict while Wilsonian organizations follow the tradition of President Woodrow Wilson and see as desirable the use of political means

to transform the social and economic circumstances of afflicted individuals.¹⁰ The acceptance of Dunantist organizations as inherently neutral because, traditionally, they provided only medical assistance to soldiers and civilians regardless of their patient's nationality is too often accepted at face value.¹¹ In the field of history, however, this belief in the innate neutrality of the Red Cross is often discarded and disproved in investigations of national humanitarian societies. Jean Quataert's work on the Prussian and later German Red Cross Society effectively demonstrates how humanitarian philanthropy, rather than sitting on the sidelines, took an active role in German unification and contributed to the construction of a German national identity. Kaiser Wilhelm even confirmed its significance in his assertion that "German unity was carried out successfully first by the humanitarian work of the Central Committee [of the Red Cross] at a time when the political unification of the fatherland remained but an ambition."¹² Julia Irwin's investigation of the significance of the American Red Cross in forming a new openness towards foreign aid among the American populace also explains how the U.S. government came to recognize the potential of humanitarian aid as a means of diplomacy and statecraft.¹³ This dissertation takes a similar approach affirming that the Ottoman Red Crescent became an integral

¹⁰ Michael Barnett, "Humanitarianism Transformed," *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 4 (Dec. 2005): 723-740; and Dirk Salomons. "The perils of Dunantism: the need for a rights-based approach to humanitarianism," in *Humanitarian Action: Global, Regional and Domestic Legal Responses*, ed. Andrej Zwitter, Christopher Lamont, Hans-Joachim Heintze, and Joost Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 33-53.

¹¹ See: Robin Geiß, Andreas Zimmermann, and Stefanie Haumer, eds., *Humanizing the Laws of War: The Red Cross and the Development of International Humanitarian Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and Barbara Ann Rieffer-Flanagan, "Is Neutral Humanitarianism Dead? Red Cross Neutrality: Walking the Tightrope of Neutral Humanitarianism," *Human Rights Quarterly* 31 (2009): 888-915. Much of the scholarship such as Rieffer-Flanagan's are prescriptive in approach and rarely investigate the ICRC prior to the advent of the Cold War. Investigations such as these prescribe policies to ensure neutrality but fail to focus on the inherent partiality of national Red Cross societies that select intervention based on political and strategic concerns shared by humanitarians and their respective governments.

¹² Jean Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), 88.

¹³ Julia Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

tool to project and protect the national interests of the Ottoman polity; however, the Ottoman Red Crescent differed from other national chapters of the Red Cross in that it could draw upon a global community of Muslims as potential donors. This, in effect, permitted an internationalization of the cost of waging war.

The inclusion of the Red Crescent in transnational investigations of humanitarianism is therefore of paramount importance. Keith Watenpaugh's work on the development of modern international humanitarianism, which he detaches from its more parochial origins, omits the internationalism of the Red Crescent from this narrative. He suggests early humanitarianism emerged from an inchoate collective of Christian organizations whose eagerness to alleviate suffering often conflated with desires to proselytize. Early humanitarians often fell prey to the designs of imperial actors and were deployed in colonial civilizing missions, but this sort of imperial humanitarianism gave way to what he labels "modern humanitarianism" in the aftermath of World War I and the Armenian Genocide. This modern international humanitarianism cast off the mantra of a *mission civilisatrice* and under the auspices of the League of Nations developed into a "permanent, transnational, institutional, and secular regime," an unprecedented phenomenon in his estimation.¹⁴ The story of Muslim humanitarians is notably absent in this narrative and presents a different perspective on the imperial cooptation he observes in early Christian aid societies. This dissertation underscores the Ottoman Red Crescent's ability to transcend borders and mobilize aid from a variety of sources. In this way,

¹⁴ Keith David Watenpaugh, "The League of Nations' Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 1920-1927," *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 5 (Dec. 2010): 1319. See also: Keith David Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

the Red Crescent became both a tool of Ottoman national defense and a statement of global anticolonial resentment.

This dissertation also augments Michael Barnett's attempts to historicize humanitarianism, in which he contradicts arguments that posit a post-Cold War transformation of humanitarianism into a politicized object of state policy and contends that Dunantist humanitarianism could never properly stay the course of strict neutrality.¹⁵ In his estimation, to the contrary of narratives of a humanitarianism drowning in an unprecedented morass of deadly internecine conflicts and seduced into political entanglements to meet the needs of a post-Cold War world, humanitarianism is as it always was—a product of the geo-political environment in which it maneuvers. Therefore, humanitarianism and the ICRC developed in coordination with colonialism, commerce, and European “civilizing” missions. Humanitarianism is not *sui generis* but an extension of “the passions, politics, and power of its time.”¹⁶ As such, he sees the early years of humanitarianism as “an age of imperial humanitarianism” in which local senses of community gave way to the ethos of a late-nineteenth-century globalizing world, and new ideologies of humanity heavily inflected with Western Christian values set sail for distant horizons.¹⁷ This study affixes an illuminative addendum to this narrative, namely that resistance to Western imperialism adopted similar weapons to combat European encroachment on its territories. Yet, because of its asymmetry, the Ottoman variation of imperial humanitarianism

¹⁵ See: Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, “Humanitarianism: A Brief History of the Present,” in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*, ed. Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 1-48.

¹⁶ Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

transcended imperial boundaries, seeking out and attaining contributions and aid from the many disaffected subjects of European colonial expansion.

Volunteerism

Foreign financial and humanitarian aid ensured the supply of necessary materials to the front, but volunteerism filled the ranks of the ethnically diverse Ottoman army that effectively parried Italian thrusts into the hinterland of the country. This dissertation examines the mobilization and deployment of this force of volunteers scrutinizing the ideology and motivations of this irregular army to explain its cohesion. While a discourse of secular Ottomanism was advanced from Istanbul in an attempt to garner support from Europe and promote unity among the empire's varied religious communities, a loose ideology of Muslim anticolonialism bound Unionist volunteer officers to local and foreign irregular fighters. This Muslim anticolonialism, mated to the strategic flexibility the empire, which facilitated the formulation and maintenance of alliances with local power holders at the periphery of the state's reach, permitted a projection of Ottoman power into regions where the polity had previously held only a tenuous grasp on authority.

In its investigation into humanitarian aid and volunteerism, this dissertation cleanly integrates into recent studies of pan-Islamic and mass anticolonial ideologies. Cemil Aydın's extensive work on the racialization of Muslims through civilizational discourse lays a foundation to understand why Muslims around the world identified with the Ottoman cause in the Italo-Turkish War and willingly gave of their money, or their lives in some instances, to preserve the boundaries of a distant polity.¹⁸ According to Aydın, the non-Western, anticolonial, or pan-

¹⁸ See: Cemil Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-*

Islamic movements of the late nineteenth century did not emerge from an innate, cultural rejection of European values in the vein of Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis, but stemmed from a discursive civilizational programming inflected by geopolitics.¹⁹ Hamidian and Young Turk regimes in Istanbul effectively mobilized pan-Islamic discourse to enhance Ottoman soft power and extend its influence beyond the border of the empire. While ideas of Muslim solidarity and reverence for the Ottoman Caliphate rejected the racist rhetoric and practices of European colonizers, the discourse of Muslim exclusivity reaffirmed Muslim difference from the West. Muslims were thus exposed to a two-pronged discursive offensive: a maligning rhetoric advanced from the imperial West and a defensive rhetoric of Islamic unity promoted from Istanbul and other power centers in the Muslim world. In effect, Muslims were racialized by global discourses of religious identity serving the demands of both European colonizers and Ottoman defenders. This dissertation asserts that a supranationalist identity, quickened by a shared sense of disenfranchisement and colonial oppression, made fertile ground for Ottoman recruitment.²⁰

The point of this study is not, however, to rehash former investigations of pan-Islamic discourse in this period. The Libyan Studies Center has even published a work devoted entirely to Islamic public opinion during the Italo-Turkish War.²¹ This dissertation sets out to investigate

Asian Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and "Imperial Paradoxes: A Caliphate for Subaltern Muslims," *ReOrient* 1, no. 2 (2016): 171-191.

¹⁹ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996). Huntington's thesis, rejected by all but the most stubborn Middle Eastern specialists of the Orientalist persuasion, held that immutable cultural and religious traits will motivate future post-Cold War conflicts.

²⁰ Noor-Aiman Khan, *Egyptian-Indian Nationalist Collaboration and the British Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Khan's work points to Egyptian-Indian solidarity based on shared colonial experiences under imperial British rule.

²¹ See: Mohamed Farhat Mehdi, *The Islamic Public Opinion during the Libyan War, 1911-1912* (Tripoli: Libyan Studies Center, 1988). The book, while it does not conform to the patterns of Anglo-American scholarship, collects a

the material and martial benefits afforded the Ottoman war effort from the twin pillars of its resistance to the Italian invasion: humanitarian aid and volunteerism. The Ottoman Constitutional Revolution of 1908 ultimately failed both to secure the support of Europe in the war and avert the avarice of eager European colonizers. With this failure, Ottoman defense and mobilization required a different ideological underpinning. Pan-Islam and anticolonialism provided just that foundation that could effectively unite volunteers from the center of the empire and eager recruits from its periphery and beyond.

Situating the Italo-Turkish War in Late Ottoman History

This dissertation also intersects with studies of the Ottoman Second Constitutional Period while making a much-needed contribution to the history of the Italo-Turkish War. Scholars such as Kayalı, Campos, and Matossian have revisited the second constitutional period and see indications of a willingness on the part of linguistic and ethnic minorities to participate in the building of an inclusive Ottoman nation.²² Each of these historians uncover structural flaws in the Ottoman edifice which, under the weight of a string of wars, ultimately collapsed. Communal disillusionment, it is argued, followed a series of unpopular measures instituted to tighten Istanbul's grip on the provinces and provide the necessary soldiers and provisions to defend the empire's embattled territories. The Italo-Turkish War, however, provides a different perspective

large corpus of pro-Ottoman, pan-Islamic texts which it quotes at length. For a text solely devoted to pro-Ottoman, pan-Islamic movements in India see: Azmi Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

²² Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010); and Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1909-1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997); Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

on this narrative. The Ottoman imperial volunteers, both military and humanitarian, brought with them the common desire to Ottomanize the North African territories which they were defending and to impose modernist reforms on the population. Nonetheless, accommodations were made to ensure participation of local irregulars in the conflict. The needs of fighting an asymmetric war and maintaining a volunteer army outweighed the ideological impetuses of centralization. A negotiation of sorts between the imperial emissaries of the Porte and the local power holders occurred that served to unite center and periphery.

This study thus brings nuance to simplistic assertions that the Ottoman government, under constant threat from war and internal political turmoil, appropriated extraconstitutional powers and ultimately undermined the vitality of the project of Ottomanism.²³ Unionist officers tightening their grip on the North African provinces and their institution of unpopular measures such as taxes generated effects other than communal disillusionment. The threat of an intruder and the necessities of war contributed to cohesion rather than exacerbating it. In this way, this study aligns with Michael Mann's recent work on nationalism and warfare in the twentieth century, which provides an alternative view of a war's effect on the populace.²⁴ Flipping the commonly assumed relationship between nationalism and war on its head, Mann suggests that in the case of the two world wars the conflicts and the mechanisms of warfare, most especially conscription, produced nationalism and not vice versa. Employing such an argument on the wars that preceded the collapse of the Ottoman Empire permits a novel perspective on what transformative effects armed conflict had on Ottoman territories. The Unionist officers'

²³ Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 7-23.

²⁴ Michael Mann, "The Role of Nationalism in the Two World Wars," in *Nationalism and War*, eds. John Hall and Siniša Malešević (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 172-196.

experience of mobilizing a volunteer army in Ottoman North Africa suggests that the empire's minority communities were not necessarily averse to fighting for the imperial government, especially if their own homes were threatened. Furthermore, shared confessional identities and a broad encompassing ideology of anticolonialism produced a level of cooperation between imperial and local actors never before documented in the North African provinces.

New Perspectives on the Italo-Turkish War

With relatively few histories of the Italo-Turkish War in the English language, this dissertation contributes to our general historical knowledge of a conflict instrumental in reshaping the Mediterranean map.²⁵ For years, the majority of these works were based solely on Italian accounts of the war and thus provided meager insight into the Ottoman experience in the conflict or their mode of resistance.²⁶ With the war's recent centennial coinciding rather

²⁵ There are few monographs on the Italo-Turkish War. From the Ottoman angle, perhaps the most extensive work is Rachel Simon's *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism. The Ottoman Involvement in Libya during the War with Italy (1911-1919)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1987). Histories of Libya and Italian colonial history also touch on the conflict but rarely explore the war in its Mediterranean and Ottoman context. See: Ali Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance, 1830-1932* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). While the conflict is sparsely studied in English, there is a thriving interest in the war in both Italy and Turkey. Histories of Libya and Italian colonial history also touch on the conflict but infrequently explore the war in its Mediterranean and Ottoman context. While such works shed light on the effects of Italian colonialism on the development of Libya, their focus on either Italian or local experience often has the effect of writing the Ottomans out of the history of this war. The Ottoman Empire is thus introduced as an extraneous element whose inclusion in the episode of the Italian war is of peripheral importance. Ali Ahmida's work, perhaps the most comprehensive work on Libyan state formation, provides some insight into the nature of Ottoman reforms in Libya and the ways in which imperial modernization efforts interacted with local conditions producing the basis of a modern state only to be interrupted by the Italian invasion and the resulting exclusion of the majority of the populace from the colonial economy. There remains an interest in the war in both Italy and Turkey. While many of these works contain significant empirical research, Italian volumes naturally tend to emphasize the experience of Italian colonials, and Turkish historians have more specific interest in the combatants and the war itself. In Turkish historiography, most works focus on the principal figures of the conflict, not surprisingly special emphasis is given to Mustafa Kemal's service and, to a lesser extent, Enver Pasha's service in the conflict; however, this is not insignificant. It was, in effect, a training ground for conducting a grass-roots resistance movement against colonial powers. The historiography of Libya periodizes the conflict as one of ongoing resistance to the Italian invader until ultimate independence is secured while Italian histories offer multiple chronologies. While I accept the utility of these varied perspectives on the war, for my purposes the conflict will be studied as the formal war between the Ottomans and the Italians.

fortuitously with Western involvement in the Libyan war which overthrew Muammar Qaddafi's regime in 2011, the Italo-Turkish War attracted new attention from military historians. Again, the majority of these histories rely primarily on Italian and European documents and narratives of the conflict and have interest in the war for its many "firsts," including the first use of aircraft, wireless radio, and armored cars in combat.²⁷ While invaluable for documenting the human impact on the soldiers and sailors whose lives were risked in the war, these military histories omit serious inquiry into the Ottoman development and management of an asymmetric defense.

This dissertation, by discussing the strategy employed by the Ottomans, integrates this war into the study of asymmetric conflicts and points to the importance of cohesion, international aid, and foreign backing in the support and supply of nontraditional armies. The Ottoman volunteer army in North Africa proved more successful in preventing Italian incursions outside the range of their heavy artillery than the subsequent two-decade resistance to the Italian invasion and occupation. After the Ottoman peace in October 1912, the resistance lacked cohesive leadership and was hindered by intense factionalism which aided the Italians in their efforts to pacify the hinterland.²⁸ Thus, the cohesion structured by the perceived legitimacy of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph, the efficacy of an anticolonial ideology, and the disciplining and hierarchy introduced by the Ottoman Unionist officers who smuggled themselves into the country were arguably essential factors in the development of a united front.

²⁶ See: Renato Tittoni, *The Italo-Turkish War* (Kansas City, MO, 1913). This earliest work on the war in English presented a translation of a compilation of documents published by the Italian General Staff.

²⁷ See: Charles Stephenson, *A Box of Sand: The Italo-Ottoman War 1911-1912* (East Sussex: Tattered Flag Press, 2014); and Bruce Vandervort, *To the Fourth Shore: Italy's War for a Desert, 1911-1912* (Rome: Stato Maggiore del Esercito, 2012).

²⁸ Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance, 1830-1932*, 117-140.

A study of the Ottoman asymmetric conflict in North Africa is just as much a study of the effectiveness of the politics of its leaders as it is a discussion of its martial strategy. Theorists of asymmetric war underscore the significance of a belligerent's relative resolve or interest to explain the potential for weak powers to best their stronger opponents. As asserted by Andrew Mack, strong actors are politically vulnerable in relation to the superior power they wield over their opponents: the greater the power asymmetry, the greater the expectation of a swift and crushing victory. If such a victory does not materialize, the strong actor must deal with frustrated publics or countervailing elites eager to take advantage of the government's inability to achieve success.²⁹ In this calculus, the resolve of each actor is the ultimate determiner of final success in an asymmetric war. Addressing the resolve of the Ottoman forces and the interest of both the central government and more local actors in the conflict produces a new perspective on this conflict. Victory for the Ottomans ultimately proved unachievable because of factors outside the purview of the Ottoman-Italian conflict, namely the threat to the imperial capital from the Balkan coalition. The war against the combined forces of Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro forced the Porte to make rapid peace with Rome. Yet, the Ottoman interest in its North African provinces remained and the Porte continued to furtively supply the resistance with material and men. Furthermore, the mobilization of a Muslim anticolonial ethos that bound imperial officer to local volunteer proved to be an effective political instrument to project Ottoman power and defend its territories on an asymmetric battlefield. The conclusions of this study, namely that volunteerism and humanitarianism were integral elements in the Ottoman resistance, suggest that

²⁹ See: Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27, no. 2 (1975): 175-200; Ivan Arreguín-Toft, "How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict," *International Security* 26, no. 1 (2001): 93-128; Rod Thorton, *Assymmetric Warfare: Threat and Response in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007). Works on asymmetric warfare abound but they focus their insights primarily on post-World War II conflicts to analyze and explain the victories of decolonization and other guerrilla wars that tended to favor weaker opponents in long, drawn-out conflicts.

international aid or intervention are integral components in the calculus of victory for weaker opponents.

Nomenclature of the Italo-Turkish War and the Ottoman Territories of North Africa

Any study of the Italo-Turkish War must inevitably address the multiplicity of titles the conflict has been given over the years. For Italians, the war was initially called *la guerra italo-turca* (the Italo-Turkish War) as it was called in English; however, when the war persisted as a colonial war of occupation that dragged out over the next two decades, the war came to be called *la guerra per la Libia* (the War for Libya) by historians.³⁰ In Ottoman Turkish, the war was consistently designated *Devlet-i Osmaniyye-İtalya Muhârebesi* (the War of the Ottoman State and Italy), but today the war is more often referred to as *Trablusgarp Savaşı* (the War of Tripoli). In Arabic, multiple titles exist for the war. In Libya, under the Qaddafi regime the war was referred to with obvious nationalist overtones as *jihād al-libiyīn ḍid al-ghazw al-iṭālī* (The War/Jihad against the Italian Invasion). More common Arabic titles outside of Libya include *ḥarb al-‘uthmāniyyah al-iṭāliyyah* (The Ottoman-Italian War) and *ḥarb ṭrāblus* (The Tripoli War). From the diversity of titles the ambiguous nature of the war is evident and the national biases are unmistakable. It was at once a conflict between the Ottoman and Italian states and a war against a local and, to smaller extent, global insurgency. It was both a colonial war of occupation and an imperial war for control over North African territories. Recent English titles for the war have included “the Italo-Ottoman War” and “the Libyan War.”³¹ For this text I have selected the title the *Italo-Turkish War* because this was the original and most common title used

³⁰ Vico Mantegazza, *La guerra per la Libia* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1913). This work is one of the earliest instances of the use of this title for the war.

³¹ Stephenson, *A Box of Sand: The Italo-Ottoman War 1911-1912*; Andrea Ungari and Luca Micheletta, *The Libyan War, 1911-1912* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

in English since the beginning of the conflict. While the *Italo-Ottoman War* may convey more appropriately the belligerents that participated in the conflict, I deem it more important for the audience to accustom themselves to the most common title designated for the conflict. More recent use of the title “the Libyan War” is anachronistic and therefore anathema to historians.

Throughout this work, I have endeavored to refer to the Ottoman provinces of North Africa by their historic Ottoman and European titles rather than Libya. It is, of course, an anachronism to refer to the geographic space in which the nation-state of Libya persists to this day (who knows if it will continue) as *Libya*. For the Ottoman Empire of 1911, the territory was divided into three parts: *Trablusgarp vilâyeti* (the province of West Tripoli), *Fizan vilâyeti* (the province of Fezzan), and *Bingazi müstakil sancağı* (the autonomous Sanjak of Benghazi). For Europeans, the territory followed the Ottoman designations, labeling the three provinces Tripolitania, Fezzan, and Cyrenaica, in reference to the seventh-century-BCE Greek colony of Cyrene. Despite the division into separate administrative regions, Europeans and Ottomans often labeled the entire region Tripolitania (or *Trablusgarp* in Ottoman Turkish) in reference to its largest city. The title *Libya* was introduced officially to the country only in 1934 when Fascist Italy conjoined the three provinces into one administrative unit. The introduction of this title, a reference to the ancient Roman province of Libya, attempted to bridge Fascist Italy’s empire to its Roman antecedent by associating Mussolini’s imperial ambitions with a glorious Roman past. Ironically, the title stuck even after independence, not because of the absence of other names, but because both the Sanūsī monarchy of 1951 and Muammar Gaddafi’s regime after 1969 hoped to dampen the centrifugal forces of regional divisions by adopting the Italian geographical designation. Our present difficulty with the proper historical designation of Libya in the Ottoman and early colonial period provides a glimpse at a radical transformation in Mediterranean space

of which the Italo-Turkish War was part and parcel. The territories that became Libya required hardened borders and boundaries that the Italians and, to lesser extent, the Ottomans attempted to provide through the nationalization of the territorial gap between British Egypt and French Tunisia and Algeria.³²

Outline of the Study

The Anti-Colonial Empire resituates the Ottoman conflict in North Africa separating this war from the narrative of imperial loss and dissolution by emphasizing the empire's effective asymmetric defense of its territories. Despite Italy's overwhelming strategic advantage both diplomatically and militarily, the Ottoman Empire mobilized, supplied, and deployed a competent and efficacious force of volunteer officers, soldiers, and even humanitarians able to resist and deflect Italian efforts to occupy Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. The central components of this resistance were the twin pillars of humanitarianism and volunteerism which permitted the empire to deploy material and humans to the battlefield in spite of the polity's diplomatic isolation and financial weakness. This study thus emphasizes the significance of Muslim anticolonialism as a potent motivating and centripetal force to build a cohesive, global resistance to the Italian invasion.

Chapter one, "'This Means War': Ottoman Diplomatic and Discursive Efforts on an Asymmetric Battlefield," analyzes the Ottoman diplomatic and popular media campaign to entreat the European Great Powers to intervene on their behalf. Rebuffed by the European states in their efforts, diplomats and publicists targeted the European public in a persuasive campaign

³² Jonathan McCollum, "Reimagining Mediterranean Spaces: Libya and the Italo-Turkish War, 1911-1912," in *Unsettling Colonial Modernity in Islamicate Contexts*, eds. Siavash Saffari, Roxana Akhbari, Karen Abdolmaleki, and Evelyn Hamdon (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 49-66.

to demonstrate the unity of the empire against the Italian threat and the legality of the empire's position. Simultaneously, the empire slowly began to redefine the members of its nation expelling Italian citizens and protégés as internal enemies in an attempt to constrict Italian expansion of the conflict into the eastern Mediterranean.

Chapter two, “‘For the Sake of German Honor’ or the Ottoman Empire?,” rehearses the German Red Cross expedition and other German contributions to the Ottoman resistance in North Africa. An analysis of Ottoman informal networks demonstrates how the close cooperation between Ottoman and German armed forces helped secure the rapid and vital deployment of a German Red Cross team to Libya (incidentally the only Red Cross expedition to aid the Ottomans in the war) under the umbrella of the International Committee of the Red Cross. This advanced and well-outfitted team serving under the command of the Ottoman Red Crescent provided crucial support in the treatment of wounds and diseases amongst the military and civilian population in Tripoli.

Chapter three, “Muslim Anticolonialism and the Subvention and Deployment of the Red Crescent,” examines the global Islamic supply chain that collected subventions from Ottoman sympathizers all around the globe. The Ottoman Red Crescent Society proved a convenient and efficient vehicle for translating the disaffection and sympathies of Muslim European subjects into material support for the Ottoman forces on the battlefield. Drawing heavily on the Turkish Red Crescent archives, this chapter traces the global donations of cash on their journey to the front in order to give a glimpse of the first-rate field hospitals built from this humanitarian offensive against European colonial intrusion.

Chapter four, “Enver's War: Young Turk State Building and Muslim Anticolonialism,” accentuates two contradictory strategies employed in defense of Ottoman North Africa: the

rebuilding of former Hamidian alliances with the Sanūsī Order, an influential religio-political institution in Cyrenaica, and the simultaneous attempt to reinforce a sense of Ottomanism among the combatants and citizens in Ottoman North Africa. This chapter follows the Unionist volunteer officers, whose anticolonial zeal harmonized with local warriors eager to fight off the Italian invader, on their incognito expedition into Tripolitania to recruit and discipline a volunteer force of irregulars. Renowned Unionist officer Enver Bey's narrative becomes almost quixotic in his efforts to fashion an effective army, build a modern state, and strike an enduring alliance with the chief Sanūsī leader, Sayyid Aḥmad. Ultimately, the securing of anticolonial alliances proved more effective than instilling a lasting sense of nationalism amongst the combatants.

Chapter five, “‘Defending your Tribe, your Women, your Hometown, and your Patria’: The Ottoman Empire and Volunteerism in the Italo Turkish War,” continues the analysis of volunteerism focusing on the volunteer irregulars that made up the bulk of the resistance in North Africa. Because of the strategic flexibility of the Ottoman Empire and Young Turk anticolonialism, the Ottoman Army could elicit the support of thousands of volunteers from the local population and even encourage Muslims of distant lands to take part in the conflict. Ottoman alliances were maintained with local leaders to ensure their support in the battle and Ottoman officers and Parliamentary deputies preached Muslim solidarity and anticolonial warfare to prospective volunteers. Masses of irregular soldiers, some coming from very distant lands, served under Ottoman officers in an anticolonial offensive against the European menace.

To conclude this study the Italian desperation to bring the conflict to an end is contrasted with Ottoman intransigence during the peace process. The Ottoman Empire, because of the success of its asymmetric resistance, its financial support through international aid organizations,

and volunteerism, could prolong the war indefinitely while bleeding the Italian treasury white. The strategy proved effective for a time but would collapse under the weight of new threats to the empire in the Balkans. While research into the final years of the Ottoman Empire emphasizes the deleterious effects of war on the Young Turk regime's attempts to unify and strengthen the empire, the Italo-Turkish War stands out as an instance in which warfare facilitated cohesion between the center and periphery. The asymmetric nature of this war necessitated the cooperation and coordination of local and imperial actors. The weak position of the Ottomans under threat from the avarice of its European peers made it an anticolonial protagonist, capable of acquiring aid and support from a global Muslim community. The Ottoman Empire, with its capable officer corps and its transnational Red Crescent aid organization, became for a time a potent anticolonial force in North Africa.

Chapter 1

“This Means War”: Ottoman Diplomatic and Discursive Efforts on an Asymmetric Battlefield

On 28 September 1911 at approximately 2:30 in the afternoon Giacomo de Martino, Italian *chargé de affaires* in Istanbul, personally delivered an official telegram from the Italian Foreign Office to then Ottoman Grand Vizier Hakkı Pasha. The telegram, an ultimatum informing the Porte of the impending Italian invasion and occupation of Tripoli and Cyrenaica, demanded “a peremptory reply on this matter from the Ottoman Government within twenty-four hours” and called for the effective surrender of all Ottoman soldiers to the occupation force.¹ Hakkı Pasha, having read the document at de Martino’s insistence, is said to have exclaimed, “C’est donc la guerre!”² And indeed a day after the ultimatum’s delivery, despite a conciliatory response from the Ottoman government promising further concessions to Italian interests in its North African provinces, Italy officially declared war on the Ottoman Empire.

While Rome’s war for diplomatic and public approval reached its peak in the years and days prior to de Martino’s fateful meeting with the Ottoman Grand Vizier, the Sublime Porte’s struggle to secure aid and support from European governments and people began in earnest after the delivery of the Italian ultimatum. The Porte, shocked by the abrupt declaration of war, expended great effort to manage a crisis that threatened not only the cohesion of the empire but its standing as an imperial power. The Ottoman government, cognizant of the inferiority of the forces it could deploy to defend its far-flung African provinces, hoped to gain the upper hand off

¹ “Ultimatum from Italy to Turkey Regarding Tripoli” in *The American Journal of International Law*, Volume 6, No. 1 Supplement: Official Documents (January 1912): 12-14.

² Angelo del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Libia: Tripoli bel suol d’amore, 1860-1922* (Milan: Oscar Modadori, 2010), 76.

the battlefield through appeals to intervention and attempts to undermine the Italian resolve to fight. For a century, Ottoman wars had been won or lost by the dictates of the European Great Powers rather than by victories on the battlefield. In their most recent war, the Ottomans had scored a crushing defeat against their Greek opponents on the battlefield only to have all their territorial gains reversed in a Great Powers-brokered peace settlement.³ Acutely aware of the imperative of Great Power patronage, or at the minimal permission to resist the Italians, the Ottomans thus advanced a discursive strategy to appeal to European public sentiment in the hope of forcing a settlement on Italy more advantageous to the empire. The Young Turk regime repeatedly defended its case on a global stage asserting its parity with Europe on the basis of its constitution, its national unity, and the legality of its position.

The following analysis demonstrates an evolving strategy evident in diplomatic texts and publications of the Ottoman popular press to entreat, at first, the European Powers and their populations to intervene on behalf of the empire and, later, to justify Europe's exclusion from the Porte's actions. Employing its revolutionary discourse of constitutionalism and unity, the Ottoman constitutional regime hoped to parry the attacks of Italian civilizational discourse, which relegated the Ottomans to a state of savagery and thus invited their conquest in the name of humanity. Once European intervention proved unlikely, the Porte gradually redefined the members of its nation, locating and expelling internal enemies in order to coerce Italy to make peace, or at least curb the expansion of the conflict. Ultimately, the war for diplomatic and public opinion waged from Istanbul appealed to both domestic and international goodwill for the unity and harmony of the empire's peoples and its nascent constitutionalism—hallmarks of the Young

³ See: Thomas Gallant, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, 1768-1913: The Long Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 297-301.

Turk regime; however, this discursive strategy, doomed from the start by adroit Italian diplomatic maneuvering, failed to persuade the European Powers to intervene on the Ottoman polity's behalf. This failure opened the door to new policies in Istanbul, ones adopted regardless of European assent, which limited citizenship and nationality in the empire. As a result, the empire had a free hand to forcibly deport Italian citizens and protégés.

Italy's Diplomatic Ascendancy and the Outbreak of War

The Kingdom of Italy's haste to declare war not only indicates its belief in a rapid victory but the near universal consent it had obtained from the other Great Powers. So eager was Rome for armed conflict that even before the twenty-four hour ultimatum officially expired, the Italian Navy had already fired the first shots of the war. A squadron of five Italian destroyers under the command of the Duke of Albruzzi, who had received conflicting orders about the use of military force prior to the official declaration of war, engaged and fired on two Ottoman torpedo boats, the *Tokat* and the *Antalya*, attempting to flee the harbor of Preveza in the Adriatic. Disabled from direct hits from the destroyers' cannons, the *Tokat* suffered nine casualties before the rest of the crew managed to beach the vessel. The *Antalya* escaped harm by returning to port before the Italian squadron could score any direct hits.⁴ Meanwhile the Italian Navy was already enforcing a blockade of the Tripolitanian coastline and had assembled a landing force for the imminent invasion that exceeded the size of the small Ottoman garrisons by a factor of ten. Reuters had been informed of a contingent of 23,000 Italian soldiers prepared to embark from Sicily by 3 October and another 13,000 would be deployed in the coming week.⁵ The Italian ultimatum was,

⁴ Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Askeri Tarih Yayınları, *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi: Osmanlı Devri Osmanlı-İtalyan Harbi (1911-1912)* (Ankara: Gnkur Basımevi, 1981), 125; Romano, *La quarta sponda: dalle Guerra di Libia alle Rivolte Arabe*, 75-76

⁵ "War Declared. Italy and Turkey to Fight." *Blackburn Weekly Telegraph*, September 30, 1911.

in fact, little more than a formality, a diplomatic necessity intended to demonstrate Italy's legal and rightful acquisition of the Ottoman provinces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica. Naturally, it was intended purely for foreign consumption, as an instrument of diplomatic and public relations to prepare European governments and their peoples for the inevitable invasion. Some observers understood it as little more than "a declaration of war, with but twenty-four hours allowed to Turkey to ... surrender."⁶ The rapid seizure of Tripoli by Italian armed forces would at once present a *fait accompli* to the other European powers and appeal to the nationalists in Giolitti's coalition who fervently campaigned for a colonial victory to redeem Italy on the world stage after its disgraceful defeat at Adwa.⁷ Beginning with the ultimatum and the Ottoman response, the Italo-Turkish War, more than merely a conventional war over the territory of Tripoli and Cyrenaica, was a struggle for international public opinion and a campaign of European diplomatic suasion.

Rome had spent years obtaining diplomatic assent for its acquisition of Ottoman North Africa and months preparing both Italian and European public opinion for its military venture. Italian designs on Tripolitania had their origin in the 1878 Congress of Berlin. German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, in an attempt to distract Paris from its revanchist politics against Germany and simultaneously set the Kingdom of Italy against the Third Republic in the

⁶ "Italy's Ultimatum to Turkey," *The Yorkshire Daily Observer*, September 29, 1911.

⁷ Italian forces suffered a humiliating loss at the hands of their Ethiopian foes on 1 March 1896 at the Battle of Adwa, precluding any further expansion of their colonies in Eritrea and Somaliland. Of the 20,000 Italian forces and local allies, some 16,000 were killed in battle and the rest were forced to surrender. This devastating defeat precipitated Italy's complete disengagement from the "scramble for Africa" and haunted Italian governments for generations. The so-called "Adwa complex" weighed heavily on Italian politics in 1911. Prime Minister Giolitti sought to win a rapid and glorious victory for the kingdom that would regain its international prestige; however, his own and his military's utter aversion to any military risk ensured that the Libyan venture would be anything but a quick and decisive victory. See: Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2002), 80-83, 113-114.

Mediterranean, separately encouraged both powers to occupy Tunisia.⁸ France, however, acted first landing soldiers in the Ottoman province in 1881. With its troops in place, Paris imposed the Bardo Treaty on the autonomous Bey of Tunis Muhammad III and declared Tunisia a *Tricouleur* protectorate. Events transpired just as the Iron Chancellor had envisioned. A year later, Rome eagerly signed on to the Triple Alliance with Berlin and Vienna. Britain's occupation of Egypt of the same year demonstrated Italy's minimal influence in the Mediterranean appeared. In response, successive Italian governments ceaselessly sought arrangements with all the Great Powers to guarantee Italian influence and claims to Tripolitania the last available territory in the Mediterranean.⁹ The most consequential of these diplomatic arrangements for the timing of the Italian invasion seems to have been the 1900 and 1902 Franco-Italian Agreements, whereby it was agreed that if the status quo in the Mediterranean were to change, Paris and Rome would be given a free hand in Morocco and Tripoli respectively.¹⁰ The Second Moroccan Crisis, in which French forces occupied Fez at the behest of Sultan Mulai Abd al-Hafid and later declared a protectorate over the sultanate, impelled Rome to take action in Tripoli lest the fruits of the arrangement with France be lost.¹¹ To Prime Minister Giolitti and his Minister of Foreign Affairs Marquis di San Giuliano, the moment seemed to be the last opportunity to seize Tripolitania

⁸ Maltese, *La terra promessa: La guerra italo-turca e la conquista della Libia, 1911-1912*, 9.

⁹ Timothy Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya, 1911-1912* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 1-28.

¹⁰ "The Tripoli Question: Benevolent Neutrality of France," *The Times*, September 25, 1911.

¹¹ The crisis erupted when Germany objected to France's occupation of Fez with the ulterior motive of gouging Paris for colonial concessions elsewhere on the continent. To add teeth to Wilhelmstraße's diplomatic objections, the German Navy dispatched a cruiser, the *Panther*, to Agadir, Morocco, where it anchored menacingly. The crisis resulted in negotiations concluded in November of 1911 with the Treaty of Fez, by which Germany accepted France's protectorate over Morocco and was granted territory in French Equatorial Africa in exchange. See: David Herrmann, *The Arming of Europe and the Making of the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 147-161; Hans Helmott, *Ein Vierteljahrhundert Weltgeschichte, 1894-1919* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik, 1919), 49-51.

from the Ottoman Empire with the blessings of the other Great Powers.¹² Having obtained diplomatic license for the invasion, Rome initiated a press campaign to prime the Italian and European public for the impending invasion. Newspapers denounced the discrimination of Italian businesses in Ottoman North Africa, aggressive movements on the part of Ottoman vessels in the Mediterranean and the Red Seas, and violence against Italian citizens in Tripoli.¹³ *The Times* commented that “a Press campaign calling for vigorous measures in Tripoli has been in progress in Italy since the beginning of the month,” and shared their sympathies for their European neighbors by informing their readers that “for a long time past the Turkish authorities have consistently exposed Italian subjects from the kingdom itself and from the Levant to the systematic annoyances which only Turkish officials can inflict. They are past masters in the petty arts of exasperation...”¹⁴ The liberal German daily *Vossische Zeitung* was more critical of Italian actions, stating that “the Italian press and parliament are to blame, and through their absurdly insensible demands and grievances, they have awoken the mistrust of Istanbul and Tripolitania.”¹⁵ Given the minimal grievances which Rome could deploy to establish its *casus belli*, efforts to secure public approval were lackluster at best. Still, Giolitti retained the diplomatic authorization needed to march off to war.

Italy’s Ultimatum and the Ottoman Response

¹² Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Libia*, 67-70.

¹³ “Per un’aggressione turca,” *Il Secolo XIX*, September 22, 1911; “Incitamenti al Governo e discussione,” *Corriere della Sera*, September 22, 1911; Renato Paoli, “Tripoli nostra,” *Rivista Coloniale: organo dell’Istituto Coloniale Italiano*, September 1911.

¹⁴ “Italian Grievances in Tripoli,” *The Times*, September 26, 1911.

¹⁵ “Italiens tripolitanische Schmerzen,” *Vossische Zeitung*, September 12, 1911.

The texts of the Italian ultimatum and the Ottoman reply understandably differ greatly, the former in its bold and accusatory tone and the latter in its disarming and placatory spirit; however, more intriguing is the divergence of the two states' justifications in the defense of their rights over the North African lands. The Italian *casus belli*, the purported abuses of Italian citizens within these Ottoman territories, was articulated in the terminology of nineteenth-century imperialism. The ultimatum accused the Porte of permitting a "state of disorder and neglect" in Tripoli and Cyrenaica that prohibits these regions from enjoying "the same progress as that attained by other parts of Northern Africa." The apparent solution, according to the ultimatum, was a "transformation, which is required by the general exigencies of civilization," and "constitutes, so far as Italy is concerned, a vital interest of the very first order, by reason of the small distance separating these countries from the coasts of Italy."¹⁶ The Italian government thus asserted its right to intervention using a legal and geographical framework. International law, which had presided over the European "scramble for Africa," applied only to "civilized" nations and could sanction the occupation of "uncivilized" territories. In fact, the very terms "civilized" and "uncivilized" carried a legal significance and later were notably included in the official language of the League of Nations mandate which rendered temporary colonization a "sacred trust of civilization." Italy's ultimatum invoked a legal discourse that the Ottoman Empire had previously accepted when the Hamidian government signed onto the General Act of Berlin in 1885, an act which established the Porte's rights over the provinces of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica but also forfeited its position in both Tunisia and Egypt to the French and British occupations respectively.¹⁷ To further its claim, the Italian document also referred to the

¹⁶ "Ultimatum from Italy to Turkey Regarding Tripoli," 12.

¹⁷ See: Mostafa Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016).

geographical proximity of the Ottoman territories. The legal and geographic implications of the ultimatum amounted to an eviction of the Ottoman Empire from its foothold in Africa.

The Ottoman government, in its response, proved willing to concede Italian claims of its failures in Tripolitania, but deflected any censure by pointing out that the current Ottoman government could not be held accountable for actions of the *ancien régime*. The Ottoman note reminded the Italian government of “the many difficulties of the circumstances which made it impossible for Tripoli and Cyrenaica to share in the benefit of progress. An impartial examination of conditions does, in effect, suffice to establish that the constitutional Ottoman Government could not be held responsible for the existence of a situation created by a former regime.”¹⁸ If there was an absence of civilization in Ottoman North Africa, it was therefore the result of the previous absolutist Hamidian regime and not the neglect of the present constitutional, or we could say “civilized,” Ottoman government. While willing to grant further concessions to Italian economic interests in the territory, the reply informed the Italian government that it would not consent to the violation of “its territorial integrity.” Despite distancing itself from the Hamidian regime, in calling for the maintenance of territorial integrity, the Ottoman government shared its predecessor’s primary aims in foreign policy. After all, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) Ottoman Army officers who instigated the 1908 revolution had done so while waging an incessant and bloody war against separatist insurgents in Macedonia. The constitutional government was intended to be a bulwark against further European encroachment and dismantlement of the empire. It set the Ottoman state on civilizational parity with the Great Powers of Europe. Further, binding the empire together with

¹⁸ “The Turkish Reply to Italian Ultimatum Regarding Tripoli” in *The American Journal of International Law*, Volume 6, No. 1. Supplement: Official Documents (January 1912): 12-14.

the glue of constitutional citizenship seemed to offer the fundamental answer to the centrifugal forces that threatened the empire.

The CUP's Response

While its newly adopted constitution was intended to establish parity between the Ottomans and the Great Powers of Europe, the CUP was well aware that the equivalence of governmental forms did not translate to immediate parity on the battlefield. Nonetheless, touting the civilization of the constitutional regime remained a pervasive rhetorical instrument employed to champion the defense of the empire. So widespread was the discourse that Western war correspondents even parroted these talking points of Ottoman officers to their readers. English journalist Ernest Bennett after embedding himself in the Ottoman camp in Tripolitania touted the victories of constitutionalism in Istanbul: “Representative government has been firmly established, and despite many serious difficulties and some bad mistakes, far-reaching reforms have been secured.” In his estimation, however, Europe “has helped to spoil their work by the robbery of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the encouragement given to Italy in her shameless raid on Tripoli.” A “Turkish officer,” he reported, explained to him that “Europe sets itself to thwart our efforts: you are strangling the infant at its birth: you do not give it a chance.”¹⁹ Indeed, the shock of war with a European Power and the almost certain loss of territory—anathema to the CUP and the *raison d'être* for its constitutional revolution—were enough to prompt the resignation of the pro-CUP Hakkı Pasha from the Grand Vizierate. Mehmed Said Pasha vacillated but ultimately accepted the position of Grand Vizier for his eighth, but not final,

¹⁹ Ernest Bennett, *With the Turks in Tripoli, Being some Experiences in the Turco-Italian War of 1911* (London: Methuen & Co., 1912), 4.

service in the office and immediately set to work assailing the Great Powers with a barrage of appeals for intervention to preserve the empire's territory.²⁰

The Committee's influence over Said Pasha's government markedly declined; however, the Unionist organization remained active penning its own manifesto that at once reasserted the claims of the Hakkı Pasha's response to the Italian ultimatum and intensified a rhetoric of unity and rights. The day following the Italian declaration of war, the Committee composed its own statement divulging its solidarity with the government and encouraging the unity of the Ottoman nation. "The state is at war," the manifesto read. "It is a day in which the nation must only have but one mind and one heart, one single will. One of the means of saving the homeland is for the nation to grant the government with all sincerity its entire confidence and lend it its complete support." Yet, couched in its professions of loyalty, the CUP couldn't help up but remind Said Pasha's yet-to-be-formed cabinet that it governed only at the Unionists' discretion. "The Committee of Union and Progress, which with all its members is ready to die for even the smallest piece of the nation's land, judges that it is a sacred duty of the current cabinet to strive with firmness and energy to surmount all difficulties and grants the cabinet its confidence and its support as long as it fulfills this duty."²¹ Evidently, for the CUP unity of the nation and territorial integrity superseded constitutionality and the legal mandate to govern the constitution afforded to Said and his cabinet. Support and loyalty for the government was contingent upon the cabinet's capacity to discharge its duties, namely to effect a resistance to Italy's intended invasion.

²⁰ Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 93.

²¹ "Manifeste de l'Union et Progrès aux Ottomans," *La Jeune Turquie*, October 4, 1911; "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Protestosu," *Tanin*, October 1, 1911.

While constitutionalism took a back seat in Unionist statements, national unity coupled with denunciations of the illegality of the Italian invasion saturated the Committee's statements. The Committee wished "the whole world to be convinced" of the country's resolve to "oppose the aggression against the fatherland... In the presence of the danger that surrounds the land, all citizens, Muslim and non[Muslim], are soldiers ready to die for the fatherland with honor and dignity." The Committee went so far as to "invite all citizens to engage in permanent hostilities with the enemy in order to prolong the state of war indefinitely."²² Only the unity of national purpose could counter the impending menace of a foreign and illegal attack. With such rhetoric, the Unionists hoped to advance the righteousness of the Ottoman cause. On the day the ultimatum was delivered, the CUP prepared a hasty manifesto threatening that "if Italy doesn't renounce its illegal proposition, the declaration of war between the two states will be inevitable. And all the Ottoman nation, united in body and spirit, will use every and all measures against the enemy."²³

In the early days of the invasion Hüseyin Cahit, editor of the semi-official Unionist press organ *Tanîn*, published an editorial condemning the Italian invasion and the acquiescence of the Great Powers in this attempted seizure of Ottoman territory. Infused with a nationalist fervor, Cahit's account of the initial invasion attacked both the Italians and the other European powers for their complicity in this assault on Ottoman territory. His abounding nationalist metaphors, such as his rendering of the Italian flags hoisted over Tripoli as "arrows piercing our heart," are emblematic of an article intended to excite its readers' wrath against the belligerent Italians; however, his systematized nationalist vocabulary requires further scrutiny. With consistent usage

²² "Manifeste de l'Union et Progrès aux Ottomans," October 4, 1911.

²³ "Manifeste Lancé hier par le Siège de l'Union et Progrès," *La Jeune Turquie*, September 29, 1911.

of the first person plural he labeled his fellow countrymen only as “citizens” (*vatandaşlar*) or “Ottomans” (*Osmanlılar*). Other titles for those struggling to resist the Italian invasion were conspicuously absent. It was “a handful of our citizens” (*bir avuç vatandaşımız*) that “preserve and defend Ottoman valiancy and Ottoman soil” (*Osmanlı şecaatini Osmanlı toprağını*).²⁴ In his avoidance of all communal and ethnic distinctions Cahit framed the war as a conflict solely between “Ottomans and Italians” (*Osmanlılar ile İtalyanlar*) employing a discourse of inclusion characteristic of the early years of the Second Constitutional Period (1908-1918).²⁵ The CUP thus amplified a discourse of nationalism and unity as a rallying cry and a countermeasure to the Italian invasion.

Simultaneously, Unionist rhetoric advanced the just and legal position of the Ottoman state and constantly contrasted it with the criminality of Italian aggression. In an article encouraging patriotic sacrifice for the benefit of the fatherland, “the entire nation” was positioned in opposition to “the Italians’ plunderous ambitions and acts of piracy.”²⁶ In Ottoman discourse throughout the war, “Piracy” and “plunder” became synonymous with Italian aggression in the Mediterranean emphasizing the illegality of the kingdom’s war on the empire.

The Unionist network of clubs and press contacts disseminated this rhetoric throughout the empire, attempting to demonstrate the cohesion and resolve of the Ottoman people in the face of an illegal and immoral act of piracy on the part of the Italians. In Edirne, theater performances were interrupted for “a manifestation of Ottoman patriotism” and announcements of battlefield

²⁴ Hüseyin Cahid, “Ne Bekliyorlar,” *Tanîn*, October 7, 1911.

²⁵ Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early 20th Century Palestine*.

²⁶ “Vazife-i Vataniyye Karşısında,” *Tanîn*, October 4, 1911.

victories were declared to the public in the central plaza.²⁷ In Trabzon, leaflets were disseminated house to house reminding the citizens that “by appearances the Ottoman nation is composed of different groups (*‘anâsır*) but in reality is one united body (*yekvucud bir heyet*).” The pamphlet went on to encourage unity and stated that “the health and happiness of our city, as well as our salvation from foreign attacks, depend on maintaining good relations between all Muslims and Christians. It is indispensable that everyone observes this principle.”²⁸ Unity was to be upheld at all costs, and restraint exercised, not merely to ensure peace and security, but also to project Ottoman unity and civility to the European Great Powers. Hüseyin Cahit of *Tanîn* warned the Ottoman press against inciting enmity between Muslims and Christians through pan-Islamic propaganda as this would have global repercussions and provoke a negative response from Britain, France, and Russia.²⁹ In Monastir, the French vice-consul when describing the absence of any reprisals against European, or even Italian, subjects and protégés in the region, noted that “the members of the Committee of Union and Progress are displaying a great degree of self-control.”³⁰ As a diplomatic and public relations strategy to defend its territory from invasion and dislocation, the CUP and the Ottoman government mobilized a discourse of civility, unity, and lawfulness to contrast with Italian belligerence and rapacity.

Minority Press Support and Unity

²⁷ MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 49, Vice-Consul Parson to Ambassador Bompard, November 1, 1911.

²⁸ MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 52, Trabzon Vice-Consul to Ambassador Bompard, October 11, 1911.

²⁹ Hüseyin Cahit, “İttihad-ı İslam ve Matbuat-ı Osmaniye,” *Tanîn*, September 23, 1911, referenced in Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 94-95.

³⁰ MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 62, Monastir Vice-Consul to Ambassador Bompard, October 23, 1911.

This discourse of unity and national opposition was not limited to the CUP or even the Turkish-language press; however, few media outlets dabbled in the sort of jingoistic fervor common to *Tanîn*. Still, many minority dailies joined in the rhetorical support of the Ottoman nation, denouncing the Italian perfidy and championing unity amongst the polyglot citizens of the empire in opposition to the invasion.

Arabic dailies throughout the empire echoed the calls for resistance and national unity voiced by the organs of the CUP. From Beirut, the daily *al-Mufîd* printed a Unionist manifesto crafted in Arabic for its readers recounting Italy's delivery of the 24-hour ultimatum. "The Ottoman nation (*umma*) prefers its honor over its own life. Thus, we respond with contempt and defiance to these popular schemes [of Italy], and there's no doubt that our government, God support it, has sent its reply to Italy in this vein. But if Italy insists in its unlawful demands, there remains no other recourse but to declare war."³¹ From Baghdad, a similar recounting of the ultimatum appeared in the pages of *Şidā Bābil*, which wrote of Italy's "ceaseless and despotic claims to the province of Tripolitania, which is an essential part of the Ottoman lands. And [Italy] does not tire of making these unlawful demands. When the demands threatened the sublime Ottoman state and its coasts, it refused these demands and responded with perfect resolution... The Ottoman Empire is thus in a state of war."³² In the Arab lands, so strong was the patriotic sentiment aroused by the conflict that the Committee had already begun to collect donations for the war just days after its declaration.³³ The rhetoric and activities in the Arab lands

³¹ "Al-Mulḥaq al-Mufîd," *al-Mufîd*, September 30, 1911.

³² "Ta'rib al-Beyān al-Mu'ī min Jānib al-Wilāyah," *Sidā Bābil*, October 14, 1911.

³³ MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 26, Haifa and Acre Vice-Consul to Chargé d'Affaires Boppe (8 October 1911); BOA BEO 4003/300222.1 (14 February 1912). These French and Ottoman documents demonstrate the activities of the CUP in collecting subscriptions for the war effort in Nablus, Acre, and Haifa. The French Vice-Consul wrote that

of the Ottoman Empire matched those in other Turkish-speaking regions, and the reach of CUP propaganda had evidently penetrated these areas.

Similar sentiments were evident in Jewish communities as well. The Istanbul daily *El Tiempo*, a renowned anti-Zionist Ladino journal servicing the large minority of Sephardic Jewish subjects of the empire, ridiculed the Italian designs on Tripolitania as “a modern crusade” and launched into a tirade against the European Powers reminiscent of Cahit’s attack on the Europeans as complicit actors in Italy’s act of piracy. In its rather melodramatic editorial, the paper drew its readers’ attention to the atavistic predations of Italy:

Humanity watches in this moment an act of barbarism for which an example is even extremely rare in the dark and somber history of the Middle Ages. This act is so odious that posterity will refuse to believe it... A group of great and powerful nations had the cowardice to throw themselves, without any motive, upon a weaker nation just beginning to recover from a great illness in order to insult and wound her with such savagery... For it is not just one power, Italy, that commits this infamy. It is all of Europe, “civilized” Europe, Christian Europe.³⁴

Echoing the discourse of civilizational parity evident in the Ottoman response to Italy’s ultimatum, the *El Tiempo* editor questioned the humanity of Italy and the European Powers, who countenanced the Italian invasion. The Ottoman Empire, recovering from years of Hamidian absolutism and entering the supposed fellowship of other civilized nations, stumbled into a trap hatched by perfidious and retrograde usurpers who belong in the Middle Ages. From Palestine, noted Zionist and an architect behind the revival of the Hebrew language Eli‘ezer Ben-Yehuda published a similar patriotic tract urging for Ottoman unity in his Hebrew journal *Ha-Or* as the

subscriptions were collected from “the natives, both Muslim and Christian, to whom the greater part of foreign merchants joined” in giving “large sums.”

³⁴ “Una Cruzada Moderna,” *El Tiempo*, October 3, 1911.

empire faced war with Italy. “Now there is one duty upon all Ottomans, from all nations as Muslims, Christians, and Jews, to unite together and to stand alongside the empire with one spirit, to help her get out of this great embarrassment as quickly as possible with honor to the empire and under as good of terms as possible.”³⁵ Whether Zionist or anti-Zionist, Jewish publications expressed similar sentiments and encouraged their readers to stand by the empire in its hour of need.³⁶

The Greek press proved more moderate in its treatment of the other European Powers yet remained decidedly loyal to the Ottoman cause if less prone to echo the embittered Unionist vitriol against Italy. From Smyrna, the Greek daily *Amáltheia* fretted over the war with Italy that was far more powerful than the empire’s most recent opponent, the Kingdom of Greece. “For the Italians, and maybe even for Italian politics, Tripolitania is a fruit ripe for the picking!” the paper warned.³⁷ The Istanbul Greek-language daily *Tachydrómos*, while overtly antagonistic to the CUP, supported the new government of Said Pasha and placed great trust in his abilities to unite the country and manage the crisis at hand. “For Said Pasha is in a position to satisfy both the politically active and inactive in the country. He may have his proponents and opponents but he cannot excite neither envy nor disapproval.” Perhaps with too much faith in the European Powers’ willingness to intervene, the Ottoman Greek editor asked, “What do we have to fear? Italian shells? A bombardment of one city is not more fearsome than the great fire of

³⁵ Quoted in: Michelle Campos, “‘The Ottoman Sickness and its Doctors’: Imperial Loyalty in Palestine on the Eve of World War I,” in *World War I and the End of the Ottomans: From the Balkan Wars to the Armenian Genocide*, eds. Hans-Lukas Kieser, Kerem Öktem, and Maurus Reinkowski (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 136.

³⁶ See: Julia Phillips Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 134-135.

³⁷ “To Tripolitikón Zítima,” *Amáltheia*, September 29, 1911.

Constantinople.³⁸ Complications in the Balkans are not probable. All of the Powers are disposed to intervene to prevent any landings by the Italians.”³⁹ The belligerency of Italian demands, however, soon made it “evident that there is a storm coming. And a violent wind is already hissing.”⁴⁰ Yet, on the day Italian troops disembarked in Tripoli, the daily optimistically assessed the empire’s prospects in the war. “Turkey’s circumstances and position remain sound in regards to the war and are not reduced on account of the estimate of our might. First and fore mostly, we are hopeful for the intervention of the Great Powers.”⁴¹ While the Greek press lacked the zeal and condemnation common in the other presses, it retained a discourse of unity, including its readers in the Ottoman polity through consistent usage of the first person plural in reference to the empire.

By the time the preliminary occupation force of 1,700 Italian sailors disembarked on Tripolitanian soil on 4 October 1911, the Ottoman government in cooperation with the CUP had devised and disseminated a discourse of civilizational, moral, and legal defense of the empire against the unfolding invasion.⁴² The discourse of national unity and patriotic resistance to a foe whom the Ottomans could not possibly defeat on the battlefield was intended for both domestic and foreign consumption. In a press campaign that ran the gamut of the Ottoman polity’s diverse languages, the outpouring of patriotism and unity articulated in the early days of the war approximated that of the jubilation extolled in the days after the Young Turk Revolution just

³⁸ A great fire swept through Istanbul in June 1870 leaving 900 dead and over 3,000 houses in ashes.

³⁹ “O Tourko-Italikó Pólemos,” *Tachydromos*, October 1, 1911.

⁴⁰ “Thýella: Dylóseis Italou Politikou, Antegklíseis Rifaat kai Tittoni,” *Tachydromos*, October 2, 1911.

⁴¹ “O Tourko-Italikó Pólemos: Sovárei Apofáseis,” *Tachydromos*, October 4, 1911.

⁴² Tittoni, Renato. *The Italo-Turkish War (1911-1912)*, 25-26.

three years earlier.⁴³ Outbursts of violence against Europeans and even Italians were checked as CUP members and military officers urged restraint on the population. After all, an appeal to the Great Powers required convincing the European public and leaders of the worth of their cause. İsmail Enver Bey, a hero of the 1908 revolution and later Minister of War in 1914, intimated as much after he had convened with the Committee on 4 October 1911. After marveling at the “patriotism” that he found “in the soul of his people,” who “were singing the national anthems and presenting themselves with joy, all together, Muslims and non-Muslims,” he revealed to a German friend that these effusions of unity among the Ottoman people were not purely measures intended to promote peace and tranquility at home as the nation embarked for war but also a form of publicity to convince their European neighbors of their civility. “I hope,” he proclaimed, “that we will show to civilized Europe that we are not ‘*lawless barbarians*,’ and that we deserve to be respected; if not, we will die for our honor.”⁴⁴ Unity and national mobilization were thus, in Enver’s assessment, a means of gaining the “respect” of the civilized world. Furthermore, the legality of their actions would likewise demonstrate the Ottomans honorable inclusion into the fold of civilized nations.

The Failure of Conventional Diplomacy

Before Said could even form his cabinet, the Porte recognized that European intervention would not be immediately forthcoming. Rome had painstakingly built a tacit Great Power assent to the Italian seizure of Tripoli over the preceding three decades through an elaborate strategy of

⁴³ See: Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early 20th Century Palestine*, 1-19; and Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 23-58.

⁴⁴ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, ed., *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa* (Istanbul: Der Yayınları, 1989), Enver to Maria Sarre (4 October 1911), 76-77. Italics are added. In the letter, Enver code switches from French to German and uses the term “*rechtlose Barbaren*” in quotations.

secret, closed-door meetings that played both ends of the European alliance system against the middle.⁴⁵ So formidable was this Italian strategy that even the most appealing of Ottoman overtures directed at the Great Powers were ignored. On the very day Said Pasha assumed office he beseeched London for intervention and over the course of the next month expressed the Ottoman government's willingness to enter into a formal alliance with either Britain alone or the Triple Entente if only the empire's sovereignty over Tripoli were sustained.⁴⁶ Simultaneously, the hero of the Ottoman Third Army and close Unionist confidant Mahmut Şevket, the recently reappointed Ottoman Minister of War, worked through informal channels and contacted his close friend and confidant German Field Marshal Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz to plead for his intercession with the Kaiser and to remind him of the value the Ottoman State could render as a partner in the Triple Alliance. Unfortunately for the Ottomans, Wilhelm had already departed for an extended hunting holiday, and von der Goltz could not intercede personally on the Ottomans' behalf only managing to communicate Mahmut's sentiments via the German Foreign Office.⁴⁷ In the end, neither the Triple Entente nor the Triple Alliance proved willing to restrain Rome's Tripolitanian ambitions. The Kingdom of Italy, it appeared, was considered a far bigger prize than the Ottoman Empire for either of the opposing alliances. The failure of European diplomacy in preventing the Italian invasion proved to Unionists the fruitlessness of the panacea of constitutionalism. The efforts to achieve diplomatic parity with the European Powers fell short and the integrity of the Ottoman lands would have to be pursued by other means.

⁴⁵ Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya, 1911-1912*, 1-28.

⁴⁶ F.O. 38344/30691/11/44, Edward Grey to G. Lowther (30 September 1911); see also: Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 95.

⁴⁷ Carl Alexander Krethlow, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz Pascha: Eine Biographie* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2012), 357.

International Law and International Sympathy

Despite its failure to achieve Great Power intervention to curb Italy's ambitions in North Africa, the public relations campaign continued but the main audience shifted from leaders of the Great Powers to their populations. Since the start of hostilities, the Great Powers disapproved of the Italian invasion of Libya, but because each state hoped to entice the kingdom—ever the free agent despite its membership in the Triple Alliance—to take its side in the polarized European treaty system, none could afford to antagonize Italy. All the Powers supported in principle the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and all feared the consequences of a prolonged war between Rome and the Porte. Yet, with the Triple Alliance up for renewal in 1912, no state could afford to unduly offend Italy in their quest for national redemption. The calculations made in European capitals, however, did not reflect public opinion which became ever more critical of the Italian war for Libya as its actions and activities purportedly contravened international law.

Over the course of the war a slew of publications excoriating the Italian forces' unlawful conduct of an illegal war packed bookshelves across Europe. The discourse of these tomes was heavily inflected by the new international law, which was mobilized to impugn Italy for its illegal actions. Sir Thomas Barclay, a former MP of the British Parliament and Chairman of the International Law Association, traced the infractions of treaties on the part of the Italians from the 1856 Treaty of Paris, which concluded the Crimean War and included the Ottoman Empire in the Concert of Europe, all the way to The Hague Convention of 1907. He therefore recommended both Great Power intervention for the cessation of hostilities and the referral of the dispute over the territory of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica to the Permanent Court of Arbitration.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Thomas Barclay, *The Turco-Italian War and Its Problems with Appendices Containing the Chief State Papers Bearing on the Subject* (London: Constable and Company, 1912).

Infantry Officer and former Dutch Minister of War J.C.C. den Beer Poortugael seconded these arguments in his French-language tome *le Droit des gens* (the law of nations) with an identical call for arbitration and claimed that “Italy, knowing the law is completely on the side of Turkey, refrains from an appeal to arbitration. The impossibility of arbitration reaffirms the condemnation of Italy before the law.”⁴⁹ In advancing the need for arbitration, these authors were merely repeating the Porte’s legalistic rhetoric since the initiation of hostilities.

In fact, the Young Turks had long appreciated the effect of international law on public opinion in Europe and even prior to the 1908 revolution, a contingency plan against a possible Italian invasion of Tripoli had been concocted in the anti-Hamidian press.⁵⁰ An article printed in the Young Turk journal *Meşveret* during the reign of Abdülhamid II outlined a proposal of appealing to the International Court of Arbitration in the likely event of hostilities with either Italy, France, or England over the remaining territories of Ottoman North Africa. Having addressed the fact that international agreements and laws were stacked in Europe’s favor against the Ottoman Empire, the author nonetheless concluded that:

The issue ought to be submitted to The Hague and a protest against the attack on the territorial integrity and liberty [of the Ottoman Empire] ought to be offered. If a d’Estournelles⁵¹ manages to block its access to the court, I would not be surprised. And if the court, made up as it is of mostly partisan members, should arrive at a decision against Turkey, I would be even less surprised. However, it is not important at all. Without

⁴⁹ J.C.C. Den Beer Portugael, *le Droit des gens en marche vers la paix et la guerre de Tripoli* (The Hague: Martinus NijHoff, 1912), 30.

⁵⁰ Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık, “International Law for Survival: Teaching International Law in the Late Ottoman Empire (1859-1922),” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 78, no. 2 (2015): 271-292.

⁵¹ Paul-Henri-Benjamin d’Estournelles de Constant was a French politician and diplomat deeply involved in French colonial politics. He was an advocate for the establishment of protectorates rather than incorporating colonies into the French political structure. He also strongly advocated arbitration and was the French representative at The Hague Peace Conferences. The author most likely uses his name to represent a possible actor that could impede the case of Tripoli being heard at The Hague given his supposed influence at the court.

sending it to the court, we would be unable to prove the bias of this nonsensical commission which is supposedly the masterpiece of European diplomacy.⁵²

The author's intentions, he states, were not to "insult" the principles of international arbitration but to prove that truly international agreements "must be accepted on the principle of respect for the rights of all the peoples who comprise human society."⁵³ This Young Turk publication illustrates a critical and pragmatic view of international law and its application for the Ottomans. Unionists were keenly aware of the might-equals-right dimensions of international law in practice; however, exposing hypocrisy and advancing moral arguments for these once exiled and clandestine revolutionaries also served a purpose. These anticolonial defenders of the Ottoman state would make their appeals to the people if the leaders of the Great Powers chose to turn a blind eye.

The Ottoman appeals for arbitration were echoed in the numerous anti-war tracts that filled the shelves of Europe. William Stead, British newspaper editor and pioneer of the modern tabloid, in his pro-Ottoman volume intended for "the man on the street," reprinted in its entirety the Porte's public entreaty to Great Britain to enforce arbitration on Rome with all its hyperbolic intensity:

To save humanity from so dire a disaster, we appeal to you to join us in crying, in the hearing of the whole world: **TO THE HAGUE! TO THE HAGUE! TO THE HAGUE!** Although war is still being waged against us, and although the questions at issue involve our honour, our vital interests, our independence and our integrity, the Turkish Government unreservedly submit the whole question to arbitration.⁵⁴

⁵² "Fas'tan sonra Trablus," *Meşveret*, May 1, 1904.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ William T. Stead, *Tripoli and the Treaties, Britain's Duty in this War: A Plain Statement of Facts for the Man in the Street* (London: Stead's Publishing House, 1911), 39. For an example of a similar German anti-Italian tract see: Arthur von Studnitz, *Tripolis und der Dreibund* (Berlin: Deutsche Druck- und Verlagshaus, 1912). Studnitz even argued that the German Empire should withdraw from the Triple Alliance and intervene to end the conflict in

The Porte with its persistent demands for the administration of international law found in many European populations an ally. These calls may have failed to produce the desired effect but they did not fall on deaf ears. Prime Minister Giolitti was acutely aware that European public opinion was against him and unnerved by the fact that European governments were tiring of his protracted war.⁵⁵

Calls for arbitration were not the only pleas for legal assistance that garnered sympathy in European capitals. Italian bombing of Red Crescent medical facilities were noted with extreme regularity and communicated to European capitals to request intervention in Rome on the Porte's behalf. In Aziziyah, a 22 April attack from a dirigible on the Red Crescent hospital left two individuals injured and also damaged the cemetery located near the hospital.⁵⁶ Bombing runs from aircraft on Red Crescent hospitals were reported in Istanbul dailies which usually informed that "protests were made by means of our ambassadors at the Great Powers."⁵⁷ War Minister Mahmut Şevket noted his personal frustrations at the Italian indifference to firing on hospitals and medical personnel to the Central Office of the Red Crescent stating that "the Italians, giving no importance on any occasion to either the Red Crescent personnel and its flag, bombard them at will."⁵⁸ Ultimately, the Porte seemed incapable of moderating Italian conduct, but Italy's disregard for the sanctity of the Red Crescent managed to excite the hostility of many in the European public. Den Beer Poortugael lamented the "Italian cruelties" that were publicized by

Tripoli. He suggested presciently that Italy could not be trusted to enter a conflict on the side of Germany against France.

⁵⁵ Del Boca, *Gli Italiani in Libia*, 160-161.

⁵⁶ Kızılay 195/1.

⁵⁷ "Son saat," *Takvimli Gazete*, September 15, 1912, 3.

⁵⁸ Kızılay 3/13.

correspondents from Reuters, the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and even the *New York World*.⁵⁹ On one occasion in which a hospital was attacked, the British war correspondent Bennet found the Italian disregard for the immunity of the Red Crescent “inexcusable” as “a big Red Crescent flag was flying over the field-hospital in question.”⁶⁰ German Foreign Minister Kiderlen-Wächter even prepared a rather blunt *démarche* for his counterpart San Giuliano describing the Italian forces’ indiscriminate bombing and harassment of Red Crescent installations. He urged him to “proceed to take the necessary steps with the Italian Cabinet in view of preventing the recurrence of these acts which constitute a flagrant violation of the principles of The Hague Convention.”⁶¹

The growing public disdain for Italy’s war in North Africa combined with formal protests from other European states evoked a response from the Italian government even if it failed to protect Ottoman medical teams on the battlefield. At the end of February 1912, the Italian government, apparently with the belief that the best defense is a good offense, launched its own public relations campaign by printing a meticulously documented “statement ... concerning the atrocities committed by the Arabo-Turks on fallen and wounded soldiers in the combat of 23-26 October” 1911. While half the hundred-page document catalogued various acts of brutal violence against Italian servicemen who had been caught unawares and thrown back by the Ottoman counterattack at the Shara Shat oasis, the other half detailed all Ottoman attacks on Italian Red Cross personnel and claimed that the Ottoman forces employed “dumdum bullets,” that is hollow-point expanding projectiles, in contravention to The Hague Treaty of 1899.⁶² The

⁵⁹ Den Beer Portugael, *le Droit des gens en marche vers la paix et la guerre de Tripoli*, 11.

⁶⁰ Bennet, *With the Turks in Tripoli: Being some Experiences in the Turco-Italian War of 1911*, 143.

⁶¹ PA/AA, R 1912, Kiderlen Wächter to San Giuliano, February 26, 1912

⁶² *Mémoire du gouvernement Italien concernant les atrocités commises par les Arabo-Turcs sur des soldats Italiens tombés morts ou blessés dans les combats du 23 et du 26 Octobre, l’action des mêmes Arabo-Turcs contre*

statement, which included many gruesome photographs of the atrocities, was circularized to the embassies of the Great Powers, presumably with the intent of exonerating the Italian armed forces of wrongdoing by proving the Ottomans' equal disregard for humanitarian law; however, Italy's state-driven public relations campaign failed to garner the sympathy that the Ottomans elicited from the European public. While publications abounded in German, French, and English lambasted the Italians for atrocities and a general disregard for humanitarian and international law, few defenders for Rome's war for Libya could be found outside the peninsula.⁶³

The Ottomans' Asymmetric War and its Redefinition of the Boundaries of the Nation

European public opinion may have been in the Ottomans' corner but it only assured the neutrality of the Great Powers, who could neither afford to offend Italy diplomatically nor to display an overt Italian bias publically. With the diplomatic route closed, the Porte and the CUP rushed to develop an extra-military strategy to preserve the integrity of the empire. The Ottoman War Ministry received continual dispatches from their military attaché in Rome confirming Italian intents on rapid seizure of the whole of Tripoli and Cyrenaica and the adversary's confidence in a quick and bloodless seizure of the North African territory. The attaché explained to his superiors that the Italians "had arrived at a certainty that Tripoli could not be defended because of the relative weakness of our navy to theirs" and "in comparison to the Italian army stood a rather inconsiderable force of five or six thousand men."⁶⁴ The naval inferiority of the

les ambulances et l'emploi qu'ils ont fait déformables (doum-doum), (Rome: Imprimerie du Ministère Royal des Affaires Étrangères, 1912).

⁶³ A notable exception was: Adolf Sommerfeld, *Der italienisch türkische Krieg und seine Folgen* (Berlin: Verlag Continent, 1912). Sommerfeld argued against the pervasive pro-Ottoman publications which he considered detrimental to the vitality of the Triple Alliance. Italy, he argued, was a far more valuable ally than the Ottoman Empire, and thus relations with Italy must be repaired by full support of Rome's war effort against its Ottoman foe.

⁶⁴ Genelkurmay Askerî Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt (ATASE), Osmanlı-İtalyan Harbi (OİH) 2/9.1 (17 September 1911).

Ottoman fleet ensured that the defense of Tripolitania would require an inventive means to block Italian incursions into the vulnerable territory. İzzet Fuat Paşa, then Inspector of Cavalry of the First Ottoman Army, published a professedly sincere open letter to challenge the Italians to a duel in which the two Mediterranean opponents would select “one or two army corps, of completely equal strength” and face off in open combat to decide the fate of Tripoli. The victor would be “verified by military attachés of neutral powers. In this way, this war which has begun in such an underhanded fashion will not remain an eternal disgrace for the Italian army, and the memories they’ll keep will prevent them from provoking any army in the future that is ready to die to the last man for the integrity of its country.” Considering such a challenge lacking without slandering the Italians for the inadequacy of their martial prowess, the Pasha chose to remind the Italians that their army “had never experienced any past glory nor been victorious in any land.”⁶⁵ Despite the seeming absurdity of İzzet Paşa’s pipe dream of an epic duel between the two armies, his letter discloses the consensus of the Ottoman military that the war would be fought and almost certainly lost on an asymmetric field of battle. The sea lanes closed to proper reinforcement of the insufficient Ottoman garrison in Tripoli and the land route barred by Egypt’s neutrality—an extension of Britain’s arrangement with Italy, the defense of Ottoman Africa would fall to the soldiers already in place and whatever forces could reach the territory through extra-legal means.

Said Paşa began floating the idea to the German ambassador in Istanbul of mass expulsion of all Italian citizens from the empire as a means to force Rome to withdraw its ambitions on North Africa; however, accepting the advice of the German ambassador, the Grand Vizier shelved the idea temporarily as both ineffectual and disastrous for Ottoman optics vis-à-

⁶⁵ İzzet Fuat Paşa, “Lettre ouverte à MM. les Italiens,” *Jeune Turc*, October 4, 1911.

vis Europe.⁶⁶ It was thought that whatever sympathy the empire garnered in European press would vanish with the forced removal of thousands of European citizens from Ottoman lands. Yet, the plan ultimately resurfaced when European Great Power intervention on behalf of the Ottomans became a near impossibility.

Even before the intervention of the Great Powers was dismissed as an impossibility, the Porte began to redraw the boundaries of inclusion in the Ottoman polity. In opposition to its discourse of constitutionality and unity promulgated throughout the conflict, the empire measuredly but persistently excluded Italian citizens and protégés from its boundaries. Expulsion began as a military necessity before evolving into a weapon of asymmetric warfare. By 7 October 1911, just a week after the declaration of war, the Ottoman War Ministry informed “all railroad companies” of the Ottoman Empire in “an urgent message” of the order to expel all Italian citizens from employment and subsequently from the empire. The vacant positions opened by this expulsion “must necessarily (*behemehâl*) be filled by Ottoman subjects.”⁶⁷ Over the following months, companies from Salonica to İzmir carried out a systemized expulsion of all Italian employees in the Ottoman railroad industry at the behest of the Ottoman military. Special “Military Commissioners for the Coherence of the Railroad (*İltisak Hattı Askeri Komiseri*),” usually of the rank of major, oversaw these expulsions investigating all employees who could not produce evidence of “Ottoman citizenship (*teba‘iyyet-i Osmaniyye*)” and matching their names with “those registered at the Italian Consulate. All employees proven to be

⁶⁶ PA/AA, R 14178, No. 284.

⁶⁷ ATASE OİH 22/92/2.3 (12 October 1911). The document contains an exchange between the Ministry of Commerce and Public Works and the Ministry of War indicating that the decision to expel all Italian employees of Ottoman railroad companies had been disseminated on 7 October 1911.

Italian subjects must be immediately expelled.”⁶⁸ Thus, the Ottoman railroad industry, deemed sensitive by the military, became the first sight of expulsion of Italian nationals. The railroads thus became “Ottomanized” as Ottoman subjects gradually replaced Italian nationals.

These expulsions increased in scope as the Porte, in response to Italian aggression in the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean, sought to utilize expulsion as a weapon to dissuade Rome from expanding the range of its military activities. The Ottoman government, provoked by the Italian raid on the port of Beirut that effectively destroyed two antiquated Ottoman naval vessels and incited considerable panic in the city when Italian shells fell on the Ottoman Bank and the Salonica Bank near the port killing thirteen, responded with more expulsions.⁶⁹ On 28 February 1912, four days after the attack on Beirut, the Ottoman government circulated a note to the Great Powers informing them of the decision “to expel Italian subjects” from the empire. “This expulsion [was] limited at the moment to the Italians located in the provinces of Beirut, Syria, and Aleppo and in the *mutasarrıflık* of Jerusalem.” Yet, the note warned that in the case of further attacks against the European and Asiatic coasts, the expulsion would be extended to all Italian nationals with the exception of “Italian religious functionaries who at the date of this decree reside in the churches and monasteries under the protection of France.”⁷⁰ The final expulsion of all Italians followed on the heels of the Italian occupation of the island of Rhodes and its subsequent seizure of the Dodecanese Islands from the empire on 25 May 1912.⁷¹ This

⁶⁸ ATASE OİH 22/92/3.2 (15 December 1911); ATASE OİH 22/92/2.4 (24 October 1911); ATASE OİH 22/92/3.3 (9 January 1912).

⁶⁹ “Die Spuren des Bombardements von Beirut durch Italienische Kriegsschiffe,” *Der Tag*, March 9, 1912; PA/AA, R 1912, Bieberstein to Kiderlen-Wächter (26 February 1912).

⁷⁰ PA/AA, R 3859, Bieberstein to Kiderlen-Wächter (28 February 1912).

⁷¹ BOA HR SFR 3 655/7.17 (25 May 1912).

comprehensive expulsion, intended to include all Italians resident in the empire including the thousands of protégés or *beratlis* who were granted protection and even citizenship from the Italian government despite their residence in the empire for generations, like the earlier localized expulsion of Italians in the Levant, was deployed as a response to Italy's expansion of the war zone from North Africa to the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean. Italian naval supremacy over its Ottoman counterpart permitted the kingdom to operate with seeming impunity. In response, the Porte abandoned its policy of incessant appeals to the neutral powers to attacks on Italian interests.

The Ottoman use of expulsion marked a significant development in the empire's European public relations campaign. Having previously acquiesced to German Ambassador Adolf Marschall von Bieberstein's suggestion to eschew the use of expulsions, for the sake of European good opinion, the Porte now adopted a course of strategic flexibility executing a war against its opponent as it saw fit and legitimizing its actions as retaliatory measures.⁷² The Porte's rhetoric no longer sought to involve the European powers in the conflict but exclude them and, in the process, secure freedom of action. For this reason, the Ottoman announcement of the expulsion of the Levantine Italians merely expressed a sense of justification rather than an appeal to intervention. The circularized note to the European Powers rendered the expulsion a legitimate response "to the Italian fleet's bombardment of the open port of Beirut and of the destruction of two of our ships under conditions contrary to modern international law and to the expressed stipulations of The Hague Conventions." After condemning the Italian actions, the Porte, rather than requesting assistance or intervention, reasserted its right to act stating

⁷² PA/AA, R 14178, No. 284, Marschall to Berlin (9 October 1911). Marschall von Bieberstein reported that dissuaded Grand Vizier Said Pasha from expelling Italian nationals because of the disastrous effects it would have the empire's optics in Europe.

unequivocally that “the Imperial Government...has reserved the right to expel its Italian subjects.”⁷³ The circulaire composed for the comprehensive expulsion of 25 May contained even more bold and determined language and even belittled the Italian war effort:

As a result of the surprises and difficulties that it has encountered since the start of its expedition against Tripoli and Benghazi, and the impotence, in which it has found itself and still finds itself at this very moment, to break the resistance which opposes it on the land, Italy has decided to use all means possible to bring the Imperial Government and the Ottoman Nation to cede to it the provinces which it was unable to occupy with its troops.

The circulaire, after maligning the Italian forces for their impotence, expatiated for four pages on the many injustices “that Italy employed contrary to international law and the principles established at The Hague Conference and even in complete disregard for humanity and civilization.” Yet, this enumeration of Italy’s illicit behavior did not represent a petition for European intervention but a justification for the Porte’s unilateral and unfettered action irrespective of European opinion. It was “the indignation of all Ottomans without distinction” upon which “the Imperial Government ... justified the necessity of taking the measure of expulsion that it has taken against Italians residing in Turkey.”⁷⁴ According to the Porte, it was the “Ottoman nation” who had thus decreed the expulsion. Ironically, those expelled included many Ottoman residents who had elected to retain or obtain Italian protection under the protégé system. Many Sephardic Jews, residents of the empire for hundreds of years, were among those that were expelled or under threat of expulsion.⁷⁵ Paolo Maltese estimates that approximately

⁷³ PA/AA, R 3859, Bieberstein to Kiderlen-Wächter (28 February 1912).

⁷⁴ BOA HR SFR 3 655/7.17 (25 May 1912).

⁷⁵ “Italian Jews in Turkey,” *The Jewish Era*, July 1912, 97-98.

50,000 Italian subjects were ultimately expelled from the empire over the course of the war.⁷⁶ While this number of deportations may pale in comparison to the great expulsions, massacres, and genocide which accompanied the Balkan Wars, World War I, and the Turkish War of Independence, the process of redefining the boundaries of Ottoman and then Turkish nationhood through ethnic cleansing began in the Italo-Turkish War with the expulsion of Italian nationals. When the enemies without could not be defeated, the Porte directed its attention to the enemies within. The discourse of unity, civilization, and international law, once uttered to rally Ottomans and Europeans to the defense of the empire's territorial integrity, became a justification for expulsions.

Conclusion

Over the course of the Italo-Turkish War, the discourse of nation, unity, and international law was mobilized both to defend Ottoman territory from the predations on its avaricious Mediterranean neighbor and to excuse mass expulsions tantamount to ethnic cleansing. Initially, the Ottoman government sought intervention from the European Great Powers to preserve its territory from Italian annexation accentuating the empire's reconstitution as a civilized state and claiming its place in the fold of modern nations. The CUP and the Porte cooperated in disseminating a discourse of unity and harmony to appeal to both local and foreign sympathies. This discursive campaign achieved success on the home front where Ottoman citizens of diverse communities voiced their support for the war but failed to secure many diplomatic gains from the neutral powers. In the end, the Porte, defeated by shrewd Italian diplomacy and European inaction, decided to jettison its fears of European censure and expel thousands of Italian

⁷⁶ Maltese, *La terra promessa: La guerra italo-turca e la conquista della Libia 1911-1912*, 275.

nationals from the empire. In so doing, it employed the same discourse of unity, nation, and international law to justify ethnic cleansing.

In the city of Aleppo alone 600 Italians, according to the estimates of the German Consul, were expelled after the bombardment of Beirut. The French Consul reported that the departure of the Italians on 12 March 1912 “occurred without incident.” One family in particular, that of Georges Marcopoli, “composed of twenty-five individuals, all born in Aleppo ... generated considerable sympathy” with “many Muslims accompanying them to the station” for their departure.⁷⁷ Despite the intercession of the Russian, British, Austro-Hungarian, and the American ambassadors on the family’s behalf, all members were expelled from the land of their nativity.⁷⁸ The war began with an Ottoman cabinet eager to placate the Great Powers and secure either a patron or an ally to defend its territory. As it became evident that the European powers intended to remain on the sidelines, the Porte enacted its own policies despite the objections of its European counterparts. The Italo-Turkish War signaled a change in Ottoman policy if not discourse. While the elements of Young Turk discourse remained unchanged, principles, like nation, unity, and international law, were reshaped and redeployed to defend the empire’s actions against “foreign” enemies in its territory.

⁷⁷ MAE 166 PO/e/306, No. 24, Grapin to Bompard (12 March 1912).

⁷⁸ MAE 166 PO/e/306, No. 74, Telegram from Grapin to Bompard (5 March 1912).

Chapter 2

“For the Sake of German Honor” or the Ottoman Empire?

The German Red Cross Sacrifices on an Ottoman Field of Battle

In the small town of Gharyan nestled in the mountains 60 miles to the south of Tripoli a marble obelisk stands to mark the final resting place of three German Red Cross volunteers. Dr. Albert Schütze, medical student Paul Duckstein, and nurse Johann Scheuring fell victim to the same Typhus-inducing bacteria for which they had treated their patients. The three volunteers had come to North Africa in the midst of the Italo-Turkish War as members of a well-equipped and financed Red Cross expedition which established the primary hospital for care of the Ottoman forces on the Tripolitanian front. As a memory of the service they rendered, ultimately with their own blood, the stone monument was unveiled June 16, 1913 in a well-attended ceremony that included the German consul, numerous German residents of Tripoli, a complement of Italian officers, and “stirring demonstrations of deep gratitude from the local inhabitants.”¹

Dr. Goebel, the chief physician and head of the mission to Tripoli, wrote a year later that “Still today the monument for these three members of the expedition who fell in quiet battle for the sake of German honor stands in the new Italian province of Libya and ‘the German Red Cross’ is boldly emblazoned on the inscription.”² The absence of an Ottoman delegation at the

¹ Central-Komitee der deutschen Vereine vom Roten Kreuz, *Beiträge zur Kriegsheilkunde aus den Hilfsunternehmungen der deutschen Vereine vom Roten Kreuz während des Italienisch-Türkischen Feldzuges 1912 und des Balkankrieges 1912/1913* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1914), 11.

² K. Goebbel, “Das Rote Kreuz im türkisch-italienischen Kriege 1912,” *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, July 21, 1914.

unveiling and Dr. Goebel's pride in the monument's inscription of the "German Red Cross" should not conceal the Ottoman elements of the German expedition. After all, the Red Cross mission pledged its support to the Ottoman Red Crescent and operated under its direction and auspices during its six-month expedition.³ Upon the expedition's arrival outside of Tripoli all of its Red Cross emblems were replaced with the Ottoman Red Crescent and from then on the expedition was known to locals as "the German Red Crescent."⁴ As the primary care facility for the Ottoman forces it became an essential ally, if not part and parcel, of the Ottoman resistance to the Italian invasion of Tripolitania. Moreover, the rapid deployment of state-of-the-art medical equipment and supplies provided crucial assistance at the front and exceeded in quality and quantity all other medical expeditions of both the Ottoman Red Crescent and the Porte's military.

Wilhelmine Pan-Islamic Intrigues or a Savvy Unofficial Ottoman Alliance?

The speedy and immense assistance proffered by the German Red Cross in Tripolitania, at first glance, appears to be just another instance of Wilhelmine Germany's subvention of pan-Islamism. Indeed, the interest of Kaiser Wilhelm II, who in a celebrated state visit in 1889 became the first reigning European monarch to visit the Ottoman Empire, and of the German Reich's economic and military magnates in the Ottoman lands had accelerated in the years prior to the Italo-Turkish War. The prospect of inciting jihad and unrest amongst the Muslim subjects of their European adversaries, namely Britain, France, and Russia, held Wilhelm and some of his entourage in thrall of the possibilities of a German-Ottoman alliance. Over the period of Abdulhamid II's reign (1876-1909), a close friendship between the Kaiser and the Sultan

³ "Die Tripolis-Expedition des Deutschen Roten Kreuzes," *Amtliche Mitteilungen des Central-Komitees der Deutschen Vereine vom Roten Kreuz*, January 14, 1912.

⁴ "Mit dem deutschen Roten Kreuz in Tripolis," *Vossische Zeitung*, March 5, 1912.

developed, and strategic and economic schemes between the two empires, like the never-to-be-completed Berlin-Baghdad Express multiplied. While many past studies of the German-Ottoman alliance elucidate the diplomatic and strategic initiatives conjured up in smoke-filled rooms in Berlin or Abdülhamid's Yıldız palace, their limitation is evident in their portrayal of Germany as the active agent and the Ottomans as passive recipients of German imperial beneficence.⁵ The recent work of Mustafa Aksakal provides an important intervention to the field by demonstrating that the young Unionist leadership, rather than duped by dubious German offers of aid and assistance in aggrandizing the Ottoman Empire, hitched their imperial wagons to the Central Powers in an attempt to preserve the state from certain collapse.⁶ In Aksakal's estimation the Young Turks reacted to the catastrophe their state suffered in the Balkan Wars and consciously sought alliance with the Germans in a sincere endeavor to save the empire from the avarice of their imperial neighbors. Enver Pasha and other young Unionist officers became convinced after the Italian invasion of Libya and the brief Balkan alliance against the Ottomans that taking up arms was the only means of salvation in a world at war.⁷

This chapter follows the path laid by Aksakal and asserts that the Ottoman leadership, far from dilettante extras on a stage dominated by the great European powers, were not only aware of their subordinate role in European affairs but effectively magnified their own allotted part in order to defend the integrity of the empire. In so doing, the Young Turk regime's foreign policy

⁵ See: Donald M. McKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I* (Kent, OH: Kent University Press, 1998) or Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010). McMeekin's monograph, an elegantly composed volume that draws on considerable archival research in Germany, Russia, and Turkey, represents the best in this vein of research but it too tends to portray its eccentric, bumbling, and sometimes effectual German protagonists as the star actors in front of an Ottoman backdrop.

⁶ Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 8-18.

did not differ markedly from the Hamidian balancing act of the previous decades in which the Porte enticed patronage from Germany but never closed the door to other possible European alliances. A case in point was the Baghdad Railway concession offered to the Société Impériale Ottomane du Chemin du Fer de Baghdad (a partnership between the Deutsche Bank and the Ottoman Government) in 1903 and the Black Sea Agreement of 1900 that granted Russia exclusive concession to railway construction on the Russo-Ottoman frontier in eastern Anatolia.⁸ The Ottomans had become adept at attracting needed assistance but simultaneously managed to keep their patrons at arm's length. Therefore, rather than disregarding the Red Cross mission to Tripoli as one more instance of German imperial meddling in the Ottoman lands, I examine this German expedition as a notable success for the embattled Ottoman government. After all, the humanitarian expedition ran contrary to the strategic interest of the German government which at the time of the war was eager to renew the Triple Alliance with its erstwhile Italian ally.⁹ Rome had adeptly isolated the Porte, and no Great Power, Germany included, could effectively intervene lest they further estrange Italy from one of the two alliances. Moreover, Germany, by means of the German Red Cross Society, a semi-official organ of the imperial government, happened to be the sole European Power to sanction and carry out a humanitarian intervention on behalf of the Ottomans during the conflict. An analysis of the means and connections that Ottoman actors utilized to secure vitally necessary medical relief for their soldiers and citizens demonstrates an Ottoman capacity to effectively navigate the alliance system. Further, it reveals

⁸ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 132-134.

⁹ Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya, 1911-1912*, 92-93; and W. David Wrigley, "Germany and the Turco-Italian War, 1911-1912," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11, no. 3 (1980): 313-338. Wrigley's article is an excellent analysis of Germany's difficult balancing act. He argues that Wilhelmstrasse negotiated a foreign policy that prioritized preserving the Triple Alliance while attempting to retain good relations with the Porte to effectively extend its influence into the Middle East.

the hardening of bonds between the Porte and Wilhelmstraße through the intimate and personal military relations between the two countries. When attempts to persuade Britain and Germany to rein in Italy failed, the Unionists recognized their failure and pursued a strategy of internationalization in the Italo-Turkish War through extra-diplomatic means. Not official channels but personal, military, and economic relationships delivered the German expedition to Tripoli. The intervention of the German Red Cross can be considered an extra-diplomatic coup for Istanbul because it covered crucial necessities for the Ottoman forces in Tripolitania and became an integral element in the Ottoman war effort.

An examination of the humanitarian intervention of the German Red Cross also demonstrates the inherent partiality of humanitarianism and the limitations of its claims to neutrality. Humanitarianism and the International Committee of the Red Cross developed in coordination with colonialism, commerce, and European “civilizing” missions. According to this thesis, humanitarianism is not neutral but inflected and ensconced in “the passions, politics, and power of its time.”¹⁰ As such, the early years of humanitarianism was, as Michael Barnett claims, “an age of imperial humanitarianism” in which local senses of community gave way to the ethos of a late-nineteenth-century globalizing world. New ideologies of humanity heavily inflected with Western Christian values set sail for distant horizons.¹¹ From this perspective, German humanitarian assistance to the Ottoman Empire cannot be disentangled from the imperial and economic environment from which it originated. That is not to say, however, that the German Red Cross mission served only German economic and imperial designs on the Middle East.

¹⁰ Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

To tell the story of the Red Cross mission from the perspective of increasing German commercial and military interest in the Ottoman lands would only be half the story and would portray the Ottomans as passive beneficiaries of foreign aid.¹² Quite to the contrary, Ottoman leadership took an active role in both securing and distributing German aid in the war with Italy. The story of the Tripoli expedition exemplifies an instance of the sort of diversion of humanitarian assistance observed in studies of “new wars.” Research on the post-Cold-War proliferation of these wars fought by state and non-state actors emphasizes the ways in which belligerents appropriate humanitarian aid.¹³ The heavy Ottoman reliance on the German expedition for both material and medical expertise instantiates an exploitation of humanitarian aid, demonstrating that the ICRC, because of its close coordination with belligerents, can have an important effect on the battlefield and be a sustaining force in an asymmetric war. Because of its versatility—the Ottoman state was simultaneously an integral player in a nascent international community and a target for European economic and political penetration—the Ottoman Empire could attract and commandeer assistance.

Indeed, the protean and subordinate nature of the empire made it an effective instrument in the appropriation of aid from the ICRC organization. The Porte had endeavored to maintain its inclusion in the European state system and was therefore an eager and early signatory of the Geneva Conventions, signing the 1864 Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field in 1865, a year before Austria-Hungary and two years before

¹² See: Naci Yorulmaz, *Arming the Sultan: German Arms Trade and Personal Diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire Before World War I*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014). Yorulmaz provides a detailed account of the German Arms industry’s relations with the port and the way in which it capitalized—quite literally—on personal friendships and connections between German military advisers and Ottoman officers and civil servants. His narrative however does not advance into the immediate years preceding World War I and gives no account of the means by which the Ottoman Empire benefitted in conflicts, such as the Italo-Turkish War from German military and humanitarian aid.

¹³ Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*. 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).

the Russian Empire.¹⁴ By 1868 with support from the Porte, Sultan Abdülaziz and even his mother Valide Sultan Pertevniyal authorized the establishment of “the Society for the Help and Treatment of Wounded and Ill Soldiers” (*Mecruhin ve Marda-yı Askeriyyeye İmdat ve Muavenet Cemiyeti*) which eventually developed into the Ottoman Red Crescent Society (*Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*), an official member of the ICRC.¹⁵ At the same time, the Ottoman lands and the state itself remained in a semi-colonial status that attracted considerable European economic interest and reinforced the empire’s inclusion in the institutional framework of international law.¹⁶ Under these circumstances, the ICRC became an ideal vehicle to secure aid for the Ottoman war effort. The German Red Cross expedition provides an ideal case in point to demonstrate how the Ottomans effectively enticed international groups to support their imperial aims over their territory in North Africa.

The Ottoman cooptation of the Red Cross mission also exemplifies a novel development in Ottoman warfare that at once recognized the futility of fighting Europeans on a level playing field and simultaneously set out to internationalize its war expenses. By the time of the Italo-Turkish War, the pro-Ottoman coalition that had preserved the empire from the predations of the Great Powers had effectively collapsed.¹⁷ The Ottoman government, facing the invasion of its last foothold in Africa and left without a European patron to defend it, set out to fight an asymmetric war with whatever resources it could muster. Under these circumstances, young Ottoman military officers marched off to war carrying with them not only the training they had

¹⁴ Seçil Karal Akgün and Murat Uluğtekin, *Hilal-i Ahmer'den Kızılay'a* (Ankara: Beyda Basımevi, 2000), 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 12-18.

¹⁶ Richard S. Horowitz, “International Law and State Transformation in China, Siam, and the Ottoman Empire during the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of World History* 15, no. 4 (Dec. 2004): 445-486.

¹⁷ Clark, *Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, 250.

received at the hands of German officers, but drawing on their contacts with their German counterparts.

In examining the assembly, arrival, and service of the German Red Cross Tripoli expedition this chapter explores an essential facet of Ottoman strategy, namely the absorption of humanitarian assistance to defray the costs of war. When the door to diplomatic support was closed to the Ottomans, young Ottoman officers and Unionists made use of their personal networks in order to secure foreign aid. The ICRC proved an effective instrument for the Ottomans in circumventing the Italian naval blockade of Tripolitania and providing vital medical assistance for their troops. The German Red Cross volunteers marching under the banner of the Red Crescent illustrate the versatility of late Ottoman warfare and its ability to fuse humanitarianism into its war making capabilities. The material limitations of fighting a distant war from a position of naval inferiority and the war's occurrence following the 1907 Geneva Convention circumscribed the possible Ottoman responses to the Italian seizure of Libya. These circumstances, in turn, would inflect the lessons that the Ottomans derived from the conflict.

German Military Aid

Before Italian soldiers disembarked on Tripolitanian soil on 5 October 1911, the decision to adopt a guerrilla-style resistance was taken but on whose suggestion is uncertain. An asymmetric battle plan materialized almost instantly in communication between Berlin, Salonica, Istanbul, and Tripoli. German Field Marshal Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz's friendship with Ottoman War Minister Mahmut Şevket stretched back decades to when at Abdulhamid's invitation the German general came to Istanbul to devise a complete overhaul of the Ottoman

Royal Military Academy on the model of the German Kriegsakademie.¹⁸ Under the spell of German military prowess from its 1870-71 victory over France, Ottoman officers and cadets developed a strong affinity with their instructors, most especially with military strategist and astute lecturer von der Goltz. From 1883 to 1895 von der Goltz guided the restructuring of the Military Academy and served as an instructor and mentor for a generation of Ottoman officers.¹⁹ He even acquired the title Goltz Pasha by which all his students would endearingly refer to him. So close was his relationship with the Ottoman War Minister that he maintained a correspondence with Mahmut throughout the course of the conflict giving strategic and tactical advice despite his retirement from active service and against the wishes of the German Foreign Ministry.²⁰ In a letter posted 30 September 1911 just hours after the start of the war the field marshal offered detailed advice that included the number and disposition of Ottoman troops in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. He pressed Mahmut to abandon the coast to the Italians whose naval artillery would render the meager and antiquated Ottoman coastal defenses useless for protecting the infantry. Rather than battle the Italians on the beaches, he suggested a strategic withdrawal of the forces to the interior of the country where they could form the nucleus of a great resistance drawn from the local inhabitants. With the use of hit-and-run tactics these bands of guerrillas could lure the Italian forces out of range of their heavy artillery and inflict decisive blows to the overly extended lines of the invader.²¹

¹⁸ See: Salih Kış, *Osmanlı Ordusunda Alman Ekolü: Von der Goltz Paşa (1883-1895)* (Konya: Palet Yayınları, 2017). Kış provides a detailed account of von der Goltz's years in Istanbul and his radical overhaul of the Ottoman Royal Military Academy from the Turkish officers' perspective.

¹⁹ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 50-56.

²⁰ Krethlow, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz Pascha: Eine Biographie*, 357-364.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 357.

İsmail Enver Bey, the hero of the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 and a member of the inner circle of the CUP, proposed a similar strategy to the CUP congress then at session in Salonica. He described his plan to his Unionist colleagues in a letter to a close German confidant as such:

In order to continue the battle, we will propose to the government to conduct a “Guerilla-Krieg” in the interior of Tripolitania. The Italians can take the shores which will not be difficult with the support of the powerful artillery of their naval vessels. We will mass our forces in the interior. Bands composed of Arabs, citizens of the country, commanded by young officers, will lay in wait close to the Italians harrassing them day and night.²²

Enver’s “Guerilla-Krieg” in almost every aspect matched that of his German mentor, including both men’s hope that a Muslim rebellion in the Italian colony of Eritrea could be incited.²³ This is not to say that both men could not have independently devised the same strategy; however, it does indicate that the younger generation of Ottoman officers, trained in martial combat at a military academy restructured by the German Field Marshal, shared the same assessment of Ottoman prospects for the war. Enver, nonetheless, did indeed thank the field marshal for his “very useful advice” and described the German’s support for the Ottoman effort as having a positive influence on the moral of the Ottoman officers in a letter dated 14 December 1911.²⁴

Mahmut Şevket, the vanguard of this new generation of officers, also seems to have been instrumental in the adoption of the “Guerrilla-Krieg” strategy. It was not a forgone conclusion

²² Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (4 September 1911), 77. The collection of these letters is in itself quite a story. The letters, written in French and German to a close friend, Maria Sarre, and later entrusted to the care of another of Enver’s German connections, the naval attaché Hans Humann, were only a few years ago brought to public attention by Hanioglu, who located them amongst the papers of German journalist, professor, and publicist Ernst Jäckh, who had bequeathed them to Yale University.

²³ *Ibid.*, 77; Krethlow, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz Pascha: Eine Biographie*, 357.

²⁴ Krethlow, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz Pascha: Eine Biographie*, 360.

that the Ottomans would take up arms to resist an Italian invasion. In deliberation with his interim cabinet and advisers, Mehmed Said Pasha encountered two-opposing factions, one led by Mahmut Şevket arguing for an insurgency-style war against the Italian invader and another under the respected leadership of Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha, the embodiment of the Hamidian old guard and hero of the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War, who argued that resistance to the Italian invasion would merely mean a fruitless expenditure of “men and resources” (*can ve mal*).²⁵ In the end, Mehmed Said decided that despite the meager resources at its disposal the Porte could pursue a course of resistance to the invasion on the lines championed by Mahmut.

In any case, withdrawal from the coastal cities and recruitment of the local resistance force had already begun. Muḥammad Ramaḍān Aḥmad, a then 25-year-old resident of Tripoli, joined other locals that immediately gathered to resist the foreign invader. Muhammad explains that at the very start of hostilities recruitment had already begun in earnest and preparations for a protracted war were shared by both Turks and local men.

When the artillery began to bombard Tripoli, some of the residents of the mountain who owned horses rose up and began to gather camels. We were able to obtain 500 head of camel in just one day and then dispatched them to Tripoli. The Turks had been stockpiling small arms and ammunition in the Pasha’s estate... From this location the arms were moved to the city of ‘Aziziya and from there to the town of Gharyan. These activities carried on for seven days, and throughout that period we brought a large quantity of arms as well as a group of Turks with their families in our caravan to Gharyan. There a tent was erected to be used as a hospital.²⁶

Thus, a general withdrawal to the interior was effected and guerrilla-style war developed. The Ottoman troops devoid of almost any field artillery using stealth and surprise to confront their

²⁵ Cemaleddin Efendi, *Siyasi Hatıralarım 1909-1913* (Istanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 2005), 68-69.

²⁶ Al-Mabrūk al-Sā’idī ed., *Mawsū‘at Riwāyāt al-Jihād* (Tripoli, Libya: al-Fātiḥ University, 1983), 1.

Italian opponent. Taken from a distant perspective we see a coordination of efforts from Istanbul, Salonica, Berlin, and Tripoli under the umbrella of an Ottoman project, which proved versatile in recruiting aid from both the mountains surrounding Tripoli to the heart of German General Staff.

This recruitment of German military aid did not end with von der Goltz's initial suggestions. From several accounts there is evidence of German military advisers taking direct part in the conflict and fighting under the Ottoman banner in the war. Of course, their participation, if revealed to the Italians would have certainly jeopardized Germany's alliance with Rome. Understandably, no official documents attest to their participation; however, many eyewitnesses attest to their involvement. British war correspondent Seppings Wright, embedded in the main Ottoman camp at 'Aziziya just south of Tripoli, mentioned in passing "the German officers who were here to help the Turks." He indicated two by name, "Lieut. Baron Dulwigs, his brother, and Lieut. Rodênski," and that "they were attached to the cavalry... Their duties were light, principally visiting the advanced posts at Mamura and Fonduk Touar [close to the Italian lines] and riding the line as far as Ain Zara."²⁷ Far to the east in Cyrenaica, Enver Bey also wrote of the enrollment of German officers in his forces. He felt compelled to single out one such officer, a Lieutenant von Bentheim, the commander of his company of machine gunners, for special appreciation because "he has done so well in his duty of encouraging them in their work."²⁸ French correspondent Georges Rémond in his May 1912 visit to Enver's camp in Darnah stated that "I have had the acquaintance of four German officers who, since the month of March, are fighting here in the ranks of the Turco-Arabs."²⁹ No account indicated that these men

²⁷ H. C. Seppings Wright, *Two Years under the Crescent* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1913), 99.

²⁸ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (9 July 1912), 151.

²⁹ Georges Rémond, *Aux Camps Turco-Arabs: Notes de Route et de Guerre en Cyrénaïque et en Tripolitaine* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1913), 184.

had surrendered their commissions in the German Armed Forces and so must assumedly be operating under orders from their military or at least with the consent of their superiors. The Ottomans were therefore not completely abandoned by erstwhile European allies and secured from their close military association with Germany advisers who trained and undertook operations against their own official allies.

Medical Aid for the Guerrilla Forces

By early 1912 Italian commander-in-chief of the invasion General Carlo Caneva, reticent to make any incursions into the interior of Tripolitania beyond the range of the Italian naval artillery, permitted the war to persist as a series of skirmishes between the Italian forces heavily fortified in their trenches and the Ottoman forces who only indulged in the occasional night raid to harass the invaders. The Italian governor of the Piazza of Tripoli General Tommaso Salsa remarked in a letter to his daughter that “we wouldn’t even realize we were at war were it not for the occasional skirmish. Life continues as if we were at peace with all the boredom that comes with it.”³⁰ Under these circumstances the threat of disease became far more dangerous for the Ottomans than the occasional shelling or the bombing from the nascent Italian air force. The Italian naval blockade limited the supplies that could effectively be smuggled into the interior, and the medical equipment needed to provision the Red Crescent missions were on short supply. For a force composed mainly of irregular volunteers drawn from the countryside, the health and wellbeing of these volunteers was paramount for the continued war effort and the resolve of its participants.

³⁰ Angelo del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, 157.

War correspondent G. R. Abbott reported that upon his arrival to the Ottoman camp he had “learnt that the army had suffered from a variety of maladies, including cholera... Insufficient shelter and clothing apart, there was a rich field for the propagation of microbes in the water and in the air they breathed. No sanitary arrangements of any kind or description were made.”³¹ For a time the rugged constitution of the irregulars and in Abbott’s opinion, their belief in a higher cause, seemed to inoculate the majority of the army against a serious outbreak of disease. Eventually, the outbreak of an epidemic threw the doctors of the small and ill-equipped Ottoman Red Cross mission into serious action to rectify the poor sanitary conditions of the camps and most especially, the hospitals. Remarking on the consequences of the outbreak, Abbot asserted that it “was impossible to find out the number of its victims, for simultaneously with it there raged all sorts of other deadly maladies. And those continue. We have in our midst nearly all forms of disease that human flesh is heir to—malarial fever, typhoid fever, dysentery, diarrhea, pneumonia, and Heaven only knows what else.”³²

It is not surprising that under these distressing circumstances that the news of the arrival of a German Red Cross Mission was met with a great deal of euphoria.³³ Alan Ostler, another British war correspondent, explained that:

The doctors of the Turkish Red Crescent were already come to Azizia; but these, being few in number, and being short of drugs and stores and tents, by no means filled the want of doctors’ aid. The ship in which a second party of their surgeons were bringing great stores of medicaments, was captured by the Italians off the coast of Tunis; and the coming of the German mission was, for all in the camp, an interesting theme.³⁴

³¹ G. F. Abbot, *The Holy War in Tripoli* (London: Darf Publishers, 1912), 237-238.

³² *Ibid.*, 240.

³³ *Ibid.*, 247.

³⁴ Alan Ostler, *The Arabs in Tripoli* (London: John Murray, 1914), 244.

Such was the mass of material that arrived with the mission that Abbott, using the inclusive first person plural to refer to the Ottoman forces as he often did, remarked that the Red Cross' "packs and boxes piled up in the desert" formed "a sarcastic comment on the poverty of our own Red Crescent. The speed, too, with which so enormous a mass of material was transported from Tunis was no less of a criticism on our own torpor."³⁵ His compatriot and colleague Ostler was less derisive of the Ottoman company he kept and more disposed to effusive encomia on the feats of the German mission. Recounting the Red Cross' journey from 'Aziziya to its final destination in Gharyan, 90 kilometers south of Tripoli, Ostler declared the expedition to be "a feat which great Hannibal—possibly not unfamiliar with that country—might have envied; and it took them four days to make that journey, which is counted one day's ride from Azizia. But the end of it was that they got their carts and camels up those incredible ascents, and there, in the heart of those wild hills, established a hospital as neat and orderly as Berlin itself."³⁶ So considerable were Ostler's adulations for the German humanitarian team that they caught the eye of the *Hamburgischer Correspondent*, which translated and published his report in its entirety for the benefit of their readers.³⁷

While Ostler's assertion that "the bringing of the German hospital to Gharien was a feat worthy to be the theme of an Epic" may be exaggerated, the effort and expense of setting up a state-of-the-art field hospital in the desert south of Tripoli is noteworthy.³⁸ The German Red Cross expedition, led by Dr. Goebel, the chief physician of the Augusta Hospital of Beslau, and

³⁵ Abbot, *The Holy War in Tripoli*, 248.

³⁶ Ostler, *The Arabs in Tripoli*, 245.

³⁷ "Mit dem deutschen Roten Kreuz über die Felsenberge von Tripolis," *Hamburgischer Correspondent*, March 13, 1912.

³⁸ Ostler, *The Arabs in Tripoli*, 262.

accompanied by two other physicians Dr. Fritz-Ludwigsburg and Dr. Schütze, an expert bacteriologist, was as equipped as its team was experienced in such field operations. Dr. Goebel had served the German government as a physician for five years in Egypt while Fritz-Ludwigsburg and Schütze had been imbedded as physicians in the German field operations in Manchuria and Southwest Africa respectively.³⁹ Despite the experience of mission's chief physicians, hauling the team's equipment across the desert on the several-hundred-mile overland journey from Sfax in Tunisia to Gharyan proved costly and exacting. The expedition was especially outfitted for treating both war injuries and the diseases that often accompany such military campaigns. Tents, specialized water filters, disinfection equipment, and an X-ray machine were amongst the baggage train that required the assistance of 360 camels, each one at the cost of 5 Franks a day, to move the team across the desert.⁴⁰

In Dr. Felix Theilhaber's assessment, a German physician who visited the Ottoman's field hospital prior to the Red Cross' arrival, such equipment and assistance were urgently needed. "If I am to speak of the "field hospital" (*Lazarett*), then I must first beg your pardon that I use the word. In one room alone sixty ill and injured lay in a complete muddle on the floor, one atop the other."⁴¹ The essential equipment to properly diagnose patients and fight off the spread of disease including material for dressing wounds was completely absent in the camp. Over the course of a month he claimed to have not even encountered a doctor on duty. "Only once did I run into a nurse that was redressing a man's wounds but I can't even ask myself how! A doctor

³⁹ Central-Komitee der deutschen Vereine vom Roten Kreuz, 2.

⁴⁰ "Mit dem deutschen Roten Kreuz in Tripolis," March 5, 1912.

⁴¹ Felix A. Theilhaber, "Beim roten Halbmond vor Tripolis. Reiseerlebnisse auf einer Fahrt ins Kriegsgebiet," *Berliner Tageblatt*, February 2, 1912.

on duty was nowhere to be found. Operations were not carried out throughout December. The bullets, I suppose, could stay where they were, in the wounded.”⁴²

Many of the British media correspondents embedded with the Ottoman forces seconded Theilhaber’s judgment of the necessity of a fully-equipped hospital that the German expedition would ultimately fulfill. Ernest Bennet even asked his compatriots, “Why is our own Red Cross Society doing nothing?” He explained to his reader that the “dispatch of a competent staff of English doctors and nurses would be a godsend to the Ottoman army, and how deeply would such humanitarian effort be appreciated by millions of our Moslem fellow-subjects in India!”⁴³ As it turned out, the British Empire would send no such Red Cross team; however, a Red Crescent team assembled from donations by the empire’s Muslims eventually reached Tripolitania before the end of the war. Still, no humanitarian team Red Crescent or Red Cross, could match the German expedition’s contribution in money and blood.



Figure 2.1: The Unloading of the Supplies of the German Red Cross Mission

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Bennett, *With the Turks in Tripoli: Being some Experiences in the Turco-Italian War of 1911*, 40.

Source: *Der Tag*, February 16, 1912

The German Red Cross expedition to Tripoli when it arrived in February 1912 established the central military hospital for all the Ottoman forces on the Tripolitanian front for the duration of the conflict. The initial delivery of the hospital supplies to its mountainous redoubt in Gharyan, which in Ostler's estimation required such Herculean effort to reach, amounted to a shipment of 48 tons of equipment and materials.⁴⁴ The X-ray machine alone that was subsequently gifted to the Ottoman Red Crescent after the completion of the German expedition was reported to have weighed 1200 kilos and its delivery required the instrument's disassembly into 26 separate boxes and conveyance with extreme caution.⁴⁵ Aside from the considerable expense incurred in the installation of the military hospital, the German volunteers experienced considerable physical hardship and personal risk. In fact, beyond the deaths of Dr. Schütze, medical student Duckstein and the professional nurse Scheuring, three other nurses fell ill from typhus, two of whom, Stiegler and Schwitthal had to be evacuated and one, Schneider, recovered in the hospital in Gharyan. During the six-month mission, Dr. Goebel claimed the hospital and its staff received and attended to close to one thousand outpatients from the local population and treated some 280 combatants for a variety of maladies.⁴⁶

Financing the Red Cross Expedition

This crucial assistance to the Ottoman war effort, unmatched by any other single instance of aid during the war would not have made it to the remote Libyan Desert without significant

⁴⁴ Central-Komitee der deutschen Vereine vom Roten Kreuz, 34.

⁴⁵ Türk Kızılay Arşivi, 23/82.

⁴⁶ K. Goebel, July 21, 1914.

investment and backing. In December 1911 the Central Committee of the German Association of the Red Cross convened and resolved to send an expedition to the Italo-Turkish front. In accordance with the founding principles of the organization an offer of humanitarian assistance was extended to both the Italian Red Cross and the Ottoman Red Crescent. While the Italian Red Cross believed it could forgo the aid, the *Official Bulletin of the Central-Committee of the German Association of the Red Cross (Amtliche Mitteilungen des Central-Komitees der Deutschen Vereine vom Roten Kreuz)* reported that the “Turkish government accepted our offer with gratitude.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the committee doubted its ability to finance such an expedition due to the proximity of Christmas and the economic condition of the population at that time of the year. A mission of such magnitude would exceed the budget of the association and could only be achieved through donations. Furthermore, the German Red Cross itself could not use its own funds to assemble such an expedition because of its need to be prepared for rapid deployment in case of a German war and its own ongoing obligations during peacetime.⁴⁸ A solicitation for donations was prepared and began appearing in German newspapers as of 20 December 1911.⁴⁹ In the end, these typical channels of obtaining funds would not permit the rapid mobilization of a Red Cross mission.

It seems that the initial donations for the Tripoli expedition came from large donations from banks and industrial concerns. Citing the Red Cross volunteers as his source, Abbott claimed that the mission had been “financed by Krupp, Mauser, the Deutsche Bank, and other German firms connected with Turkey.”⁵⁰ Krupp and Mauser had sizeable contracts with the

⁴⁷ “Die Tripolis-Expedition des Deutschen Roten Kreuzes,” January 14, 1912.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, January 14, 1912.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, January 14, 1912; “Aufruf,” *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 20, 1911.

Ottoman military, each supplying the lion's share of artillery and small arms respectively to Ottoman ground forces. Krupp was especially eager to secure a contract with the new constitutional regime for the rearmament of the Ottoman artillery and coastal fortifications.⁵¹ Certainly, these firms were heavily invested in the fate of the empire and worked in close coordination with the German military mission that was at that time advising the Ottoman military in Istanbul at the behest of the Young Turk regime.⁵²

While documentation on the exact sums and the particular firms that provided the initial cash to organize the expedition is no longer available at the *Rotes Kreuz Archiv*, the *Official Bulletin* disclosed how the money was acquired. It was only with the "cooperation of a Turkophile committee in Germany that was willing to place at the Red Cross' disposal its circle of donors and members" that the "decided upon expedition could once and for all be put under way."⁵³ The *Bulletin* singled out von der Goltz as the indispensable agent that facilitated these donations:

His excellence Field Marshal von der Goltz is especially deserving of thanks because, under his honorable chairmanship, this committee from the beginning on transferred to us considerable contributions (*erhebliche Beiträge*) from a group of distinguished banks and industrial companies (*aus den Kreisen angesehener Banken und großindustrieller Gesellschaften*), and thus put the Red Cross in a position to take up its preparations [for the expedition] before it had collected sufficient funds from its own channels (*aus seinen eigenen Reihen*).⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Abbott, *The Holy War in Tripoli*, 247.

⁵¹ Jonathan Grant, "The Sword of the Sultan: Ottoman Arms Imports, 1854-1914," *The Journal of Military History* 66, no. 1 (Jan. 2002): 9-36.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵³ "Die Tripolis-Expedition des Deutschen Roten Kreuzes," January 14, 1912.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, January 14, 1912.

Von der Goltz, a vocal advocate of the Ottomans, sat on several “Turcophile” committees. Notably, he was the chairman of both the German branch of the Red Crescent and the Committee for Turkish Travel Study (*Das Komitee für die türkische Studienreise*), amongst whose membership included important capitalists and representatives of industry, like Arthur von Gwinner, the director of the Deutsche Bank, and Ludwig Max Goldberger, the chairman of Commission for Standing Exhibitions for German Industry (*die Ständigen Ausstellungskommission für die Deutsche Industrie*),⁵⁵ and Ottoman members such as Hakkı Paşa’s Minister of War Salih Paşa. This interlinking of German industrialist, capitalists, and soldiers with Ottoman military and government officials proved instrumental in securing and expediting aid to the undersupplied Ottoman forces in Tripoli.

Von der Goltz, perhaps the most influential member of this German Turcophile network, attracted the ire of both the Kaiser and the Italians for his incessant vocal support for Ottoman cause in North Africa. *La Stampa* even accused the field marshal as the chairman of the German branch of the Red Crescent Society for personally equipping the Turkish troops with medical equipment and material and demanded the Kaiser intervene.⁵⁶ Eventually, von der Goltz’s pro-Ottoman columns in the *Neue Freie Presse* instigated a diplomatic row. His June article in which he advised the Ottomans against making peace with the Italians as “this would be tantamount to its abdication from the entire Islamic world” had the effect of the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back on Italo-German relations.⁵⁷ Italian dailies and politicians voiced outrage at the German officer’s comments asking, “what is the Italian government waiting for?... It is

⁵⁵ Krethlow, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz Pascha: Eine Biographie*, 549.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁵⁷ Field marshal Freiherr von der Goltz, “Die Türkei und der Frieden,” *Neue Freie Presse*, June 29, 1912.

intolerable that a general of an allied nation behave in such a manner.”⁵⁸ Kaiser Wilhelm, forced by the Italian threat of abandoning the Triple Alliance, reprimanded the field marshal and forbade him from publishing anything in the press.⁵⁹ So, while his vocal support garnered the attention of a vast audience, his advocacy behind the scenes in obtaining funding for the Red Cross mission achieved far more tangible results.

The Cross under the Crescent



Figure 2.2: “The Return of the Expedition of the German Red Cross from Tripoli”
The caption mentions that “the entirety of its valuable materials was gifted to the Turkish Red Crescent.”

Source: *Der Tag*, July 3, 1912

While von der Goltz and German capital provided the means of dispatching the Red Cross mission to Tripoli, it would be a mistake to see it as purely a German endeavor. As a sister institution of the ICRC, the Ottoman Red Crescent Society (*Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*)

⁵⁸ “Italienische Angriffe gegen den Freiherrn v. d. Goltz,” *Vossische Zeitung*, July 3, 1912.

⁵⁹ PA/AA, R 14190, 202, 28/2, von Bieberstein to Bethmann Hollweg (9 July 1912); E. Krethlow, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz Pascha: Eine Biographie*, 362-363.

was the umbrella institution under whose aegis the Red Cross mission operated. Once arrived in Tripoli decisions about the location of the hospital and the tasks it was assigned fell directly to the Ottoman Red Crescent, which since its arrival in Tripoli in late 1911 became the central and sole medical team for all Ottoman forces and the local inhabitants outside the Italian occupied zones.⁶⁰ Arriving in November to the front from Istanbul via France, Dr. Kerim Sebatî Bey, who had studied medicine for several years in Germany, acted as chief of the Red Crescent in Tripoli for the duration of the conflict.⁶¹ Under his direction, a proper location was selected for the German Red Cross field hospital, which incidentally only bore the markings of the Red Crescent. German, local, and Ottoman staff set about erecting the team's tents adjacent to the schoolhouse in the fortress of Gharyan. Dr. Kerim immediately assigned a German-speaking attaché, Dr. Rifat Bey, to the group to facilitate the coordination of efforts.⁶² So significant was the cooperation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent a month after their arrival that Dr. Kerim Sebatî Bey, in a letter reporting the unfortunate death of Dr. Schütze, which had "saddened the entire military camp (*bütün ordugahı teesürler içinde bırakmıştır*)," could boast to the headquarters of the Red Crescent Society in Istanbul "the Tripoli army's medical condition is perfect (*Trablus ordusunun ahval-i mükemmeldir*)."⁶³

Conclusion

⁶⁰ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi* (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı Matbaacılık, 1913), 95-101.

⁶¹ "Der Krieg um Tripolis. Die Sanitären Einrichtungen im türkischen Lager," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, February 15, 1912.

⁶² Central-Komitee der deutschen Vereine vom Roten Kreuz, 42.

⁶³ Türk Kızılay Arşivi, 31/13.

9 June 1912 the German Red Cross Tripoli Expedition departed from Gharyan, but only after having “handed over all material and equipment in the field hospital to the Ottoman Red Cross.”⁶⁴ The central hospital for the Tripolitanian front remained in service as the Ottoman doctors assumed the duties of their German colleagues. This expedition and the hospital it erected exemplify the Ottoman internationalization of its war with Italy. When diplomacy and constitutionalism failed to achieve results, the Ottomans, compelled to adopt a strategy of resistance, found in the ICRC a vital channel for provisioning medical assistance for its isolated guerrilla forces. The Ottomans, outplayed by the Italians on the diplomatic front and outclassed on the battlefield, secured non-governmental assistance protected under international law. Humanitarianism became not only an instrument in the hands of doctors and nurses from Istanbul and Berlin to relieve the suffering of soldiers and civilians in the Libyan desert, but also a potent tool for field marshals and pashas to reinforce an Ottoman project bereft of a formal alliance with a European patron.

⁶⁴ Central-Komitee der deutschen Vereine vom Roten Kreuz, 11.

Chapter 3

Muslim Anticolonialism and the Subvention and Deployment of the Red Crescent

The *Manouba* Incident

At dawn of 4 February 1912 a large crowd assembled at the port of Bizerte in the French protectorate of Tunisia to welcome the arrival of a team of Ottoman Red Crescent doctors and nurses. This second mission, dispatched at the request of Dr. Kerim Sebati, the Red Crescent physician coordinating the medical needs for all soldiers and civilians in Ottoman-controlled Tripolitania, was intended to bolster the main Red Crescent hospital at 'Aziziyah. According to the Tunisian Arabic daily *al-Zahrah*, which covered the event, when the French steamer *Saint Augustin* put into port, a “great crowd” of both “French and Tunisian” spectators welcomed its arrival with the cheers, “long live France!” and “long live Turkey!.”¹ Members of the Red Crescent mission including the team’s head physician Doctor Emin Bey shouted back in reply, “Long live France!.” Amongst the spectators were a group of dignitaries that included the Resident-General of France in Tunisia Gabriel Alapetite, the protectorate’s police commissioner, and the editors of the French daily *Le Courier* and the Arabic daily *al-Zahrah*. Once docked at the pier, the dignitaries boarded the vessel and offered the three Red Crescent physicians each a golden watch bearing the inscription, “To the prisoners of Cagliari, from their French and Tunisian friends in the land of Tunis, 1912.”²

The Ottoman Red Crescent mission’s journey from Marseilles to Tunisia was not without its misadventures and had become both a *cause célèbre* and an international diplomatic debacle.

¹ “Wuṣūl ba‘thah al-hilāl al-aḥmar min Kaliyārī,” *Al-Zahrah*, February 5, 1912.

² *Ibid.*, February 5, 1912.

On 17 January 1912 the Red Crescent team united in Marseilles having purchased “instruments, medicines, and much-needed provisions” and boarded the French mail steamer *Manouba* of the *Compagnie mixte de navigation* with the destination of Tunisia.³ The next day off the coast of Sardinia the Italian cruiser *Agordat* intercepted the *Manouba* and having ascertained that amongst the ship’s passengers were 29 Ottoman nationals, forcibly escorted the French steamer to the port of Cagliari. There the Italian authorities demanded the French captain release the Ottoman passengers into their custody and a tense standoff ensued upon the captain’s refusal. The French ship was seized and only allowed to depart once the captain relented and the Ottomans were remanded into Italian custody.⁴ The incident provoked an immediate response from the French, the Ottomans, and from the popular press of Europe and the Middle East. The Parisian daily *Le Figaro* claimed that the “telegrams we are receiving indicate that this new seizure of a French mail boat ... produced yesterday a great agitation not only in Marseilles and amongst the maritime milieu, but in all of France and even abroad.”⁵ The Istanbul daily *İkdam* informed its readers that “the Sublime Porte in correspondence with all the Great Powers” had issued a “resolute protest” against the Italian actions which contravened the “Geneva accords which had been ratified for the rights of states and the Red Cross.”⁶ Italian historian Sergio Romano even argues that under the aggressive foreign policy of Raymond Poincaré, who had become French Prime Minister and Foreign Minister just days prior to the incident, the seizure of the *Manouba* and the arrest of the Ottoman Red Crescent mission risked becoming a *casus belli*

³ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi* (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı Matbaacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, 1913), 101. Stephenson, *A Box of Sand: The Italo-Ottoman War 1911-1912, The First Land, Air, and Sea War*, 155-158.

⁴ “La saisie du *Manouba*,” *Le Figaro*, January 20, 1912.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ “Şuunât: Devlet-i Osmaniyye – İtalya Muharabesi,” *İkdam*, January 26, 1912.

between Italy and the French Republic.⁷ Ultimately, cooler heads prevailed, and French Ambassador to the Kingdom of Italy Camille Barrère, who had spent the better part of two decades engineering a rapprochement between the two states, reminded his prime minister of the necessity of enticing Italy to abandon the Triple Alliance. Nonetheless, the seizure of the French vessel and the prolonged detention of the members of Ottoman Red Crescent mission attracted the ire of both the French and German governments who both at the behest of the Porte pressured Rome to release its captives.⁸ After ten days in custody in Cagliari during which the team was subjected to a series of inquisitions to ensure their identity as physicians and nurses rather than combatants, the twenty nine members of the mission, due to an agreement reached between France and Italy, were returned to Marseilles, where they again underwent a battery of examinations to prove their medical knowledge. Thereafter, they were permitted to board a French steamer to Tunisia.

The team's belated arrival on the *Saint Augustin* in Bizerte was met with all the fanfare of a victory parade. The police commissioner offered an official escort for the team on their way through the French protectorate. *Al-Zahrah* reported that "a band of educated youths cheered in front of the ship: 'long live the French-Turkish alliance!' and applauded."⁹ The assembled crowds remained at the levee until the mission finally departed at 2:30 pm for the next leg of its journey to the Tripolitanian border.¹⁰ Showered with bouquets of flowers and applauded by a sea of cheerful Tunisians waving handkerchiefs and parasols, the Ottoman Red Crescent mission

⁷ Romano, *La quarta sponda: Dalla Guerra di Libia alle Rivolte Arabe*, 214-216.

⁸ BOA, BEO 3996/299656 [January 28, 1912]; BOA, BEO 3997/299718 [January 29, 1913].

⁹ "Wuṣūl ba'thah al-hilāl al-aḥmar min Kaliyārī," February 5, 1912.

¹⁰ Ibid.

departed, but their crowd of devotees continued their peaceful demonstration marching from the docks to the Central French Embassy, the real seat of political power in the French protectorate of Tunisia, to continue their expressions of elation. “Long live France! Long live the French-Ottoman alliance!” they repeatedly intoned before dispersing.¹¹

The *Manouba* incident, or more specifically the Ottoman Red Crescent mission’s detention, its release, and its victorious and celebrated arrival in Tunisia, exemplifies the role of the Red Crescent in the Ottomans’ conduct of an asymmetric war and the mobilization and supply of an effective resistance to Italy’s colonial designs on the Tripolitanian province. In this war, the Ottomans were not bereft of allies, but their supporters and advocates, like the Tunisians assembled at the Quay, were subjects and citizens of neutral empires spread across the globe. The reestablishment of the Ottoman Red Crescent fortuitously preceded the Italian invasion of Tripoli and the international outrage that accompanied it. Pan-Islamic discourse mated with a pervasive anticolonial sentiment provided fertile ground for the growth of grass-roots campaigns for the collection of funds to support the Ottoman war effort in North Africa.

While the empathy of millions of Muslims assembled a powerful moral backing for the embattled Ottomans, the fiscal contributions of the Red Crescent bolstered the war effort and provided essential medical assistance to the troops and the civilian population of Tripolitania and Benghazi. The Ottoman Red Crescent team, whose considerable expenses included state-of-the-art equipment, trained medical experts, transport, and support, would have strained the Ottoman budget already under strict control from the Ottoman Public Debt Administration; however, the newly reformed Ottoman Red Crescent Organization provided an exceptional vehicle for the

¹¹ Ibid.

subvention of the Ottoman war expenses by a burgeoning civil society.¹² Collection campaigns from across the empire secured donations from diverse segments of the population. Of course, the weight of the expense did not fall on the Ottoman population alone. Collections for the Red Crescent transcended borders as donations from the Islamic world and, to a much lesser extent, other nations poured into the coffers of the Red Crescent Organization. In this way, the Ottoman Red Crescent permitted an internationalization of the cost of the war and buttressed the Ottoman forces resisting the invasion by providing much needed medical support for its troops. Aside from this injection of financial capital into the war effort, the Red Crescent also contributed moral capital to the Ottoman cause in North Africa as evidenced by the spirited gathering of Tunisians at Bizerte. The Red Crescent organization remained an important symbol of Muslim anticolonial resistance. While not all subventions of the Ottoman cause in Tripolitania came from Muslims as the previous analysis of the German Red Cross expedition's contributions revealed, the lion's share of donations came from Muslim individuals and Islamic organizations in distant locations around the world. Furthermore, alongside the Ottoman Red Crescent expeditions financed primarily through these imperial and global donations, two other Red Crescent expeditions, one Egyptian, the other British, were deployed to aid the Ottoman forces and the local population. The Red Crescent in its various national iterations became, in essence, a symbol of Muslim unity and a path of defiance. French and British Muslim subjects, receiving and reacting to a civilizational discourse of a world divided between East and West, Muslim and Christian, saw in the Red Crescent a modern, Islamic organization by which the rhetoric of civilizational unity could be transformed into physical action. Discourses of pan-Islamism and

¹² Yusuf Doğan Çentinkaya, *The Young Turks and the Boycott Movement: Nationalism, Protest and the Working Classes in the Formation of Modern Turkey* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris & Co, 2014), 12-38.

anticolonialism converged in the Ottoman war effort and the Red Crescent became a material expression of global Muslim political activism.

These donations would have had little effect if they were not able to rapidly reach the battlefield and support the resistance. Thus an analysis of the means by which this financial backing transformed into physical support demonstrates the centrality of the Red Crescent in this asymmetric conflict. The Sublime Porte, acutely aware of the inferiority of its position and neither able to breach the Italian blockade of North Africa by force nor to appeal to France or Britain to open the borders of their protectorates on either flank of the Ottomans' embattled forces, appealed to international law to safeguard their supply route to North Africa. The Ottoman navy, left to decay and crumble into obsolescence under Abdülhamid II, could not provide sufficient escort for groups such as the Ottoman Red Crescent that ventured to cross the Mediterranean; however, in the recent codification of international humanitarian law the Ottomans found a protective shield under which they could deliver assistance to their encircled forces. Rome, which had spent decades contriving Great Power assent to the invasion of Ottoman North Africa, had expected to suffocate the isolated Ottoman garrisons through the neutrality of Britain and France. Although the British and French acquiesced to the Italian demands to seal their borders, the Ottomans could circumvent these diplomatic pincers with appeals to the Geneva Conventions (1864 and 1906) and The Hague conferences (1899 and 1907).¹³ Such an approach proved effective, however, only if the Ottoman humanitarian missions traveled under the flag of the neutral powers.

¹³ Jean Quataert, "War-making and restraint by law: the formative years, 1864-1914," in *The Cambridge History of War*, vol. 4, *War and the Modern World* ed. Roger Chickering, Dennis Showalter, and Hans van de Ven (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 142-162.

Red Crescent missions thus made their way to the front and devised an effective military hospital system that became the central provider of medical care for both the combatants and civilians behind Ottoman lines. This chapter thus delineates how the diplomatically isolated Ottoman Empire through its Red Crescent Organization converted global sympathies into a first-rate hospital system in a far-flung province under naval blockade. While the Porte was unable to forge an official alliance with any of the Great Powers to restrain Italy, the Ottomans found in Muslim colonial subjects of the European empires an advantageous ally who rallied around the banner of the Red Crescent.

The Red Crescent Rising

Although the Ottoman Red Crescent would administer all military and even civilian medical care for the duration of the Italo-Turkish War, the organization had only just been “reestablished (*İhyaen Tesis*)” months before the outbreak of hostilities.¹⁴ The Ottoman Empire, in fact, had signed the First Geneva Convention in 1865 and participated in the first International Conference of National Aid Societies for the Nursing of the War Wounded in 1867 under the direction of the Dr. Abdullah Bey, an Ottoman immigrant and Muslim convert from Hungary who founded the Society for the Rescue and Assistance for Wounded and Sick Soldiers (*Mecruhin ve Marda-yı Askeriyeye İmdat ve Muavenet Cemiyeti*) which would later take the name of the Ottoman Red Crescent Society.¹⁵ In the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878), the Red Crescent Society deteriorated without any patronage from the government throughout the reign of Abdülhamid II, who as a rule distrusted social institutions including the

¹⁴ Akgün and Uluğtekin, *Hilal-i Ahmer'den Kızılay'a*, 47.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13-27.

Red Crescent.¹⁶ It wasn't until well after the 1908 Revolution that the reorganization of the Red Crescent Society gained traction with the Ottoman elite. Mehmed Rıfat Pasha, then foreign minister, and his spouse took a particular interest in the society forming a special committee to investigate its reorganization in 1911. At the organization's first meeting in April of that year, it was decided that the Red Crescent should be lifted from its obscurity and, following the example of other European Red Cross institutions, placed under the patronage of the sultanate. Thus, the sultan and caliph Mehmed V Reşad became the first patron of the Ottoman Red Crescent.¹⁷

Even with such powerful patronage the Society's financial assets did not even reach fifteen thousand Ottoman Lira when Italy declared war on the empire.¹⁸ With war declared, Mahmut Şevket Pasha requested an inspection of the central Red Crescent depot to evaluate the equipment that might be rendered useful to the troops; however, it was discovered that much of the equipment was on the verge of ruin.¹⁹ Furthermore, stocks of medicine and surgical equipment were also on short supply. To make matters worse for the Ottoman forces, in their hasty retreat from the Italian invasion of the main coastal cities all the stores of the imperial medical services (*Osmanlı hey'et-i sıhhiyesi*) were abandoned to the occupation, and most of the doctors attached to the Ottoman regiments were taken prisoner.²⁰ Thus, the resistance forces and the civilian population behind Ottoman lines had almost no access to medical attention of any

¹⁶ Ibid., 35.

¹⁷ Ibid., 38..

¹⁸ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 95. 15,000 Lira was the equivalent of U.S. \$55,000 in 1911.

¹⁹ Akgün and Uluğtekin, *Hilal-i Ahmer'den Kızılay'a*, 50-51; Kızılay 211/1.

²⁰ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 95.

kind, and the Red Crescent with its minimal supplies and capital holdings had neither the funds nor the equipment to rapidly deploy aid to North Africa.

Despite the apparent hopelessness of the situation, the Ottoman cause, with its broad appeal among global Muslim populations, who in “an age of steam and print” were exposed to a civilizational discourse of Muslim unity, required a vehicle to translate this public sentiment into material action.²¹ The Red Crescent provided just such an organization that could convert the compassion of sympathetic spectators into measurable results for the Ottoman war effort. Over the course of the conflict, the Ottoman Red Crescent received donations that exceeded all expectations permitting the organization to take charge of not only the medical care of the sick and wounded soldiers of Ottoman North Africa, but also provide primary care for the civilian population.

Civilizational Discourse and the Mobilization of the Muslim World

Although the Ottoman Empire had been the feeding ground for European nations craving colonial conquest for over a century, the seemingly merciless Italian invasion of a territory so categorically Muslim after several decades of relative peace within the Ottoman Empire ignited the passions of Muslim populations exposed to world events through print media like never before. Over a generation had passed since the disastrous defeat of the Ottomans at the hands of the Tsar’s armies in the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878). Since then, the Hamidian regime had nurtured pan-Islamist ideas and promoted the sultan as caliph while pressing antiracist and antiimperialist propaganda to bolster the Empire at home and abroad.²² With the end of the

²¹ James Gelvin and Nile Green, eds., *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). See especially: “Introduction,” p. 1-24. Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*, 65-130.

Hamidian regime these ideas did not cease to hold currency, and the Young Turks were careful to preserve the sultan and his geo-political cache as caliph and even intensified the antiimperialist rhetoric of the *ancien régime*.²³ The Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia Herzegovina amidst the confusion of the Young Turk Revolution stirred national emotion and precipitated mass protests in Istanbul and an empire-wide boycott of Austrian goods but failed to attract mass attention of Muslims abroad.²⁴ The Italo-Turkish War, however, from the moment of Italy's invasion enflamed the passions of Muslims across the globe. Within days of the outbreak of war, the Tunisian Arabic daily *al-Şawāb* did not “doubt that all readers know very well the insolence and depravity with which the government of Rome has assailed the sublime Ottoman state.”²⁵ Khilafat leader Mohammad Ali Jauhar's daily *Comrade* described a similar sentiment on the streets of Calcutta just one day later:

The war is now the one topic of conversation among Muhammadans, who are daily growing more and more excited over the wrongs suffered by Turkey. Passengers in the Durbar Railway trains also are seen eagerly reading and discussing the latest newspapers and supplements, and even Khansamahs and other Muhammadan servants employed in various camps are said to be taking an extra-ordinary interest in the war news. The sober treatment of the subject that first characterized the utterances of leading Muslim journals is fast disappearing, and is giving way to denunciation of European Powers in general and of Italy in particular.²⁶

²² See: Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Taurus, 1998); Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World*, 65-96.

²³ Ahmad, *The Young Turks*. 43-46; Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*, 103-105. M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 53-54.

²⁴ See: Çentinkaya, *The Young Turks and the Boycott Movement*, 39-88; Leyla Amzi-Erdoğan, “Afterlife of Empire: Muslim-Ottoman Relations in Habsburg Bosnia Herzegovina” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2013), 193-205.

²⁵ “Al-dawlah al-‘uthmāniyah wa ḥukūmah itāliyā,” *al-Şawāb*, October 6, 1911.

²⁶ Quoted in: Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)*, 138.

These reports and their testimonies of the grave public sentiment for the plight of the Ottoman Empire might be dismissed as inconsequential to the course of the conflict were it not for the Red Crescent's ability to monetize the sympathies of a global Muslim community.

The Red Crescent Organization was able to tap into the general empathy the besieged Ottoman forces in North Africa evoked in the global Muslim population. It is thus important to note that the propaganda of the caliphate and the discourse of anticolonialism was only able to generate these results with a proper catalyst and a suitable vehicle. The Italian invasion of Tripoli and Benghazi was just such a catalyst that infuriated a colonized Muslim world whose overlords proved unwilling to react to the perceived injustice of the precipitous attack on the Ottoman Empire. From Egypt, famed Islamic reformer and Islamist intellectual Rashid Rida called the Italian invasion a “criminal attack” and saw it as “consistent with the European desire not only eradicate our [Muslim] rule over Tripoli but over the entire world.”²⁷ In a letter to the *Times*, famed jurist and founding member of the All India Muslim League Ameer Ali denounced the hypocrisy of British civilization that overlooked Italian atrocities pointing out that “were even a fraction of these acts committed by the Turks, there would have been a howl of indignation throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain.” He demanded to know whether “the Christian men and women of England, who cherish the noble ideas of their Faith, [will] raise their voice against this reversion to the barbarism of bygone days.”²⁸ Such discourse made no distinction between Italy and other European states. Christian and European were used synonymously to invoke the ire of a populations unnerved by Europe's seemingly unquenchable thirst for imperial expansion.

²⁷ Muhammad Rashid Rida, “Al-mas’alah al-sharqiyyah wa l’tidā’ īṭāliyyah ‘ala trāblus al-gharb,” *al-Mu’ayyad*, October 4, 1911.

²⁸ “Letter from Ameer Ali,” *The Times*, November 1, 1911.

Adopting the rhetoric advanced by intellectuals in print media, Muslim communities of European colonies attempted in vain to persuade their imperial overlords to intervene on behalf of their Ottoman coreligionists through mass protests. French imperial observers noted that the “appearance of the Savoy monarchy’s standard on the shores of Tripoli has furnished a precise aim for the confused tendencies” of pan-Islam. As such, “it has provoked the formation of an Islamic ‘bloc.’” A general animosity against Europeans and most especially Italians was noted in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria.²⁹

Mass meetings were convoked to bring attention to the Empire’s plight, to persuade Europe to end the conflict, and to demonstrate solidarity among Muslims. A meeting arranged in London by Muslim residents of the city passed two motions in support of their Ottoman coreligionists. First, the meeting expressed that “it deeply resents, as does the whole of the Moslem world, Italy’s high-handed proceedings against a friendly power.” In the second motion, the assembly hoped to persuade the British government to intervene on the Ottomans’ behalf:

placing absolute confidence in the justice and humanity characteristic of the British nation and relying on the unfailing regard of the British Government for the religious sentiments of its hundred million Moslem subjects, this meeting earnestly entreats the Government ... to use its good offices for securing the early conclusion of peace on the basis of the *status quo* and the integrity of the Turkish Empire.³⁰

The Ottoman parliament received a telegraphic message from a meeting convoked in the Jama Mosque of Bombay in support of the Ottoman cause against Italy in which “a sentiment of hatred” was expressed “against the unacceptable Italian declaration of war.” Further expressions of support were pronounced “for the holy caliph of Islam” and of “the strong religious bonds”

²⁹ “Le conflit italo-turc et l’opinion musulmane,” *L’Asie Française*, March, 1912.

³⁰ “London Moslems and the War,” *The Times*, October 5, 1911.

between the two peoples. It was “with prayers to God” that the assembly assured “the victory of the holy warriors of Islam.”³¹

Collections for the Ottoman Red Crescent accompanied these mass meetings and literally capitalized on the indignation of the seemingly powerless Muslim community.³² Colonized Muslims without a voice in imperial politics turned to the Red Crescent, channeling their frustrations into an aid network that they hoped would produce results. The Ottoman Red Crescent, protected under international law, was the only vehicle that promised to transform donations into support for the embattled Ottomans. As the principal intermediary for resistance to European rapacity, the Ottoman Red Crescent became a powerful symbol to a disenfranchised Muslim colonial class. The mass gathering of Tunisians to cheer the victorious arrival of Dr. Emin Bey and his Red Crescent Mission who had thwarted the designs of Italian avarice and escaped its clutches on the island of Cagliari demonstrates that the Ottoman Red Crescent was as much a mode of resistance as it was a means of humanitarian aid.

Donations from the Muslim World

The Ottoman Red Crescent Committee working through the Ottoman diplomatic corps communicated and collaborated with foreign civic institutions to capitalize on this global sentiment and collect aid desperately needed on the battlefield.³³ Osman Ahmed, a secretary of the Ottoman Red Crescent, traveled to embassies and consuls across the Muslim world

³¹ “Osmanlı-İtalyan Habi, Bombay Müslümanları,” *Tanîn*, October 13, 1911.

³² See: HR SFR 3 647/2.7 (1 October 1911); HR SFR 3 659/2.5 (8 February 1912); HR SFR 3 659/2.7 (24 February 1912); Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)*, 139-141.

³³ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 95.

distributing brochures entitled “*The Crescent, for the Defense of Islam*.”³⁴ Advertisements appeared in newspapers to request donations.³⁵ The Ottoman Embassy in London became a central node in a donation network spanning the British Empire by which Muslim subjects funneled cash into the Red Crescent Society. Tevfik Pasha, resident ambassador in London, regularly accepted checks of thousands of pounds each almost exclusively from Muslim societies and groups, including the All-India Muslim League and the Egyptian Arab-Ottoman Committee.³⁶ By connecting the Red Crescent with local political and charitable societies in diverse locations around the world, the Ottoman consulates and embassies became essential intermediaries to harness the financial power of the world’s Muslim population, the majority of whom were subjects of the European colonial powers and advocates of the Ottoman cause in North Africa.

The Ottoman Red Crescent in its first *Salname* (yearbook)—a text prepared to document its efforts and celebrate its benefactors—distinguished the Islamic world with special gratitude. In its report, the Society methodically divided foreign donations into two categories: Muslim and non-Muslim contributions. This categorization of donations over the course of the Italo-Turkish War (1911-1912) accentuated the organization’s impressions of the significance of foreign Muslims’ backing for the Ottoman war effort. The *Salname* reported that the “those coming from the Islamic world form the most important part of the aid contributions.”³⁷ With approximately 263,000 Ottoman Lira collected from foreign Muslim-majority countries or Muslim minority

³⁴ BOA, HR SFR 3 659.2 (16 March 1912).

³⁵ “Aufruf,” *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 20, 1911.

³⁶ BOA, HR SFR 3 647/2.7 (1 October 1911). BOA, BEO 4012/300827.1 (10 March 1912); BOA, HR SFR.3 657/2.3(1) (4 November 1912); BOA, HR SFR.3 657/2 (2 November 1912).

³⁷ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 312.

communities in foreign lands, these contributions exceeded the aid collected from within the Empire’s territories by a factor of four. To better understand the size of these subventions it should be noted that one Ottoman lira equaled the value of 3.7 American dollars of 1911. To give a comparison of the size of these contributions, the American Red Cross at the time had only a permanent endowment of \$50,000 and relied heavily on public funds from the Federal government for its humanitarian interventions.³⁸ Over the course a year, the Ottoman Red Crescent collected the equivalent of approximately one million U.S. dollars from foreign donations alone. In fact, the aid contributions from within the Ottoman lands barely exceeded sixty thousand Ottoman Lira and foreign aid from non-Muslim countries totaled only fifteen thousand Lira.³⁹ Therefore, almost eighty percent of the Ottoman Red Crescent Society’s contributions over the course of the war originated from foreign Muslims. The discourse of a “Muslim world” and the propaganda of pan-Islamism, a hallmark of the Hamidian regime but one perpetuated by the Young Turks, had potential material benefits that the Red Crescent Society in coordination with the Ottoman diplomatic corps were able to tap.

Origin of Donation	Amount donated in Ottoman Lira
India	157,044
Russian Muslims	19,464
Algeria	13,804
South African Muslims	13,311

³⁸ See: Irwin, *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation’s Humanitarian Awakening*, 39-41.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 310-313.

Egypt	9,857
Bosnia Herzegovina	6,210
Afghanistan	3,734
Romanian Muslims	3,255
Iran	2,597
Batavia (Dutch East Indies)	1,599
Bulgarian Muslims	986
Cyprus	963
Tunisia	612
Chinese Muslims	372
Crete	75
Benghazi*	7
Unidentified	28,000 (approximate)
Total	263,000 (approximate)

Table 3.1: Donations to the Ottoman Red Crescent from the Muslim world (1911-1912)

* Donations given from regions of Benghazi occupied by Italy.

Source: *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi* (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı Matbaacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, 1913), 312.

As is evident in Table 1, the vast majority of donations originated from British India, at that time the most populous and wealthy Muslim country in the world despite the fact that Muslims comprised only a minority of the colony's total population. With donations in excess of 157,000 Ottoman Lira, Indian Muslim contributions to the Red Crescent far exceeded the aid of any other country, including the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁰ The diffusion of print media and the genesis of mass politics and grass-roots political organizations on the subcontinent no doubt facilitated the collection of these funds. The All India Muslim League, formed in 1906, organized mass meetings and protests to condemn "Italy's brigandage."⁴¹ By 2 October 1911, just days after the outbreak of hostilities, devoted Pan-Islamic activists, such as Abdullah Suhrawardi, the founder of the London Pan-Islamic Society, and Aga Muidul Islam, editor of the pan-Islamic *Habu'l-Metin*, established the "Committee for Aid to the Ottoman Red Crescent Society" in Calcutta. This was the first and largest mass humanitarian aid society established to collect funds for Ottoman soldiers. Following the example of the Ottoman Red Crescent and other national Red Cross societies, the Committee shortened its name and became the Indian Red Crescent Society.⁴² Indian dailies, such as *Wakil* and *Zamindar*, issued advertisements and began collection campaigns for the Red Crescent Society intended "for the support of Ottoman wounded soldiers."⁴³ This outburst of pan-Islamic political activism on the subcontinent

⁴⁰ In fact, the *Salname* suggests that most of the 28,000 Lira from unidentified sources most likely originated from India as it was transferred via English banks, which usually handled the donations of colonial subjects of the British Empire. If that was the case, the total donations from India may have exceeded 180,000 Lira, almost three times the donations from within the Ottoman Empire. *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 312.

⁴¹ Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain (1877-1924)*, 138.

⁴² Azmi Özcan, *Pan-İslamizm: Osmanlı Devleti, Hindistan Müslümanları ve İngilterre (1877-1914)* (Istanbul: TDV İslam Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1992), 202.

⁴³ BOA, BEO 4042/303089.1 (8 May 1912); BOA, BEO 4047/303504.1 (3 June 1912); Qureshi, 54.

culminated in a windfall for the Ottoman Red Crescent, which became the primary beneficiary of these collection campaigns.

Although the large cities of India, such as Lahore, Calcutta, and Bombay, contributed the lion's share of aid to the Red Crescent, similar pan-Islamic political activism encouraged Muslims to give in diverse locations. The Ottoman Consul at Johannesburg noted with regularity the occurrence of public meetings of the Muslim community at which funds for the Red Crescent were collected and notes of formal protest to the metropole were drafted.⁴⁴ The editor of the Tunisian daily *al-Zahrah* encountered "a wonderful poem" in the pages of the Egyptian *al-R'aī al-'ām* "with the intent of collecting donations for the Red Crescent" and thus "thought it appropriate to republish it."⁴⁵ The poem enshrined the Ottoman commanders in Benghazi and Tripolitania as heroes of the faith exalting them triumphantly, "Long live Nuri, long live Enver with us, for they are the sword of an effulgent victory. Long live Ibrahim, long live the military that vanquishes the foes through struggle and strife!" The audience was then invited to act for the poet reminded them that these valiant warriors "will fall ill and be injured," and "we are the cure for the sick and whoever falls wounded in battle we will esteem as our son." The poet concluded by inspiring his readers to take part in this battle by "lifting the banner of the Red Crescent to the hills and mountains if it wavers."⁴⁶ The message was evident: all Muslims could support their coreligionists locked in heroic battle with generous aid to the Red Crescent. In response to a letter from the Red Crescent expressing gratitude to a collection campaign in Sfax that collected 6500 French Francs, the charitable donors voiced similar sentiments: "When we do something

⁴⁴ BOA, HR SFR 3 647/2.8 (1 October 1911); BOA, HR SFR 3 655/10.17 (9 September 1912).

⁴⁵ "L'i'ānah lajnah al-Hilāl al-Ahmar," *al-Zahrah*, February 8, 1912.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

obligatory by religion, there is no need for thanks. How can you thank a man for praying? ... Every Muslim is ready to sacrifice his life and soul for his homeland.”⁴⁷

Contemporaries to these events attributed this religious subvention of the conflict to an inveterate and ossified Islamic fanaticism but the means and rationale for supporting the Red Crescent were of recent origin.⁴⁸ While some foreign contributions of over one thousand Ottoman Lira came from the hands of single wealthy donors in Egypt and India, the majority of donations were collected via subscriptions and represent a popular effort to subsidize the war effort in Libya.⁴⁹ The collected money was then transferred to the headquarters of the Ottoman Red Crescent in Istanbul through local bank branches or Ottoman Consulates. Omar Shah Khan of Barbil, India transferred four installments each of 154.10 British Sterling to the Red Crescent through the local Allahabad Bank branch. His donations were the product of “subscriptions raised by the people of Rampur in aid of the sick and wounded among the Turko-Arab forces fighting in Tripoli.”⁵⁰ Other funds were shipped via post, most often from neighboring countries of the Ottoman Empire. The school director of the Eski Zağra Meteb-i Rüştîyesi, an Ottoman era middle school in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria organized a collection campaign “to offer the excess of our salaries for the benefit of our Tripolitanian brothers.”⁵¹ The collection amounted to only ten French Francs and was mailed via Bulgarian post to the Red Crescent headquarters where a

⁴⁷ Akgün and Uluğtekin, 55.

⁴⁸ See: Anonymous, *Histoire de la Guerre Italo-Turque 1911-1912* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1912). The author presents himself/herself as merely a witness or observer (*témoin*). This French observer was convinced that the reason for the Muslim support for the conflict and the Italian failure to bring the conflict to a close was the “fanaticism” of the Islamic world.

⁴⁹ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 314.

⁵⁰ Kızılay 99/144.1-3 (4 September 1912).

⁵¹ The meteb-i rüştîyesi was a Tanzimat-era school first instituted in the reign of Abdülmecid I (1839-1861 reigned) and was inspired by Western, most notably French, school systems.

receipt was issued and sent back to the school director.⁵² The Red Crescent even developed specialized receipts to facilitate record keeping and animate others to give (Figure 1). Such receipts were issued in former Ottoman lands in which the Porte still retained Consulates. The Islamic women's society of the Mevlid-i Hazret-i Nebevi Mosque of Ruse, Bulgaria collected and donated a sum of 7,980 Ottoman Kuruş for which they were issued an official Ottoman Red Crescent Society receipt.⁵³ The Ottoman Red Crescent had thus instituted a systematic mode for receiving donations from abroad that included issuing and retaining records of charitable donations. In the end, mass media, grass-roots mobilization, the Porte's diplomatic corps, and the interlinkages facilitated by modern banking and postal services facilitated the spectacular subvention of the Red Crescent in the Italo-Turkish War.

⁵² Kızılay 79/78 (27 May 1912).

⁵³ BOA, HR SFR 4 627/102.2 (9 June 1912).



HR.SFR.04.00627.00102.003

Figure 3.1: Ottoman Red Crescent receipt issued to the Islamic women's (*Mukhaddirât-ı İslamiyye*) group of Ruse, Bulgaria which contributed 7,980 Kuruş for the soldiers in Tripolitania.

Source: BOA HR SFR 4 627/102.3 (8 June 1912)

Donations from Non-Muslim Countries: Germany's Pan-Islamic Angle

The more modest contributions originating from Non-Muslim countries indicate that the Red Crescent's message of resistance to Italian brutality failed to resonate so sharply outside the Muslim world. The campaign to subsidize the war effort was not so much a global anticolonial effort to protect Ottoman North Africa from the predations of European avarice, but a pan-Islamic anticolonial movement to support Muslims against imperial aggression and prop up the caliph against an intruding Europe. Of course, the donation of over fourteen thousand Ottoman Lira from non-Muslims was not a meager sum amounting to about a fourth of what Ottoman

citizens contributed to the Red Crescent; however, over half of the donations originated from Germany and Austria-Hungary alone which suggests that the principal motivations for contributing to the Red Crescent may have differed from country to country and certainly diverged from the common motivations in the Muslim world (Table 2). While undoubtedly humanitarian concern for the Ottoman soldiers played some role in each individual's calculus of donating to the cause, the sheer weight of contributions from Germany and Austria-Hungary indicate that different attitudes prevailed in these nations as opposed to other European countries with equivalent wealth and economic resources. With the sources available, it would be impossible to establish the motivations for giving, but in the prior analysis of German military and humanitarian aid for the Ottoman war effort, it is evident that the German government and its Red Cross Society, an exemplary and well-funded society in its time, took an active and partisan role in supporting the Ottoman cause. Furthermore, German and Austrian press coverage displayed a deliberate bias on the part of many dailies for the Ottoman resistance and most especially the Ottoman military commander in Cyrenaica and former military attaché in Berlin, Enver Bey.⁵⁴ The complimentary press mirrored Berlin's supportive relationship with the Porte and Wilhelmstrasse's precarious balancing act to support the Ottoman Empire in order to retain it as a useful pan-Islamic weapon against its adversaries while avoiding active and overt partiality that would certainly aggravate Rome.⁵⁵ Ultimately, the pattern of giving in European states

⁵⁴ See: Field Marshall Freiherr von der Goltz, "Tripolis, Ein Wort für die junge Türkei," *Neue Freie Presse*, October 8, 1911; "Ein Schlachtbericht von Enver Bei," *Berliner Tageblatt*, March 2, 1912; "Enver Bei gestorben?" *Berliner Tageblatt*, April 23, 1912; "Enver Bei, der Held von Derna," *Neue Hamburger Zeitung*, April 24, 1912; "Bilder und Briefe aus Enver Beys Lager," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, July 7 1912; and "Enver Beis Irgendwehr," *Neue Hamburger Zeitung*, July 18, 1912.

⁵⁵ Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya*, 61-62, 67.

seems consistent with the sort of relations the Porte maintained with each country: Germany gave the most while Italy, not surprisingly, gave the least.⁵⁶

Origin of Donation	Amount Donated in Ottoman Lira
Germany	4,676
Austria-Hungary	3,866
England	2,038
United States of America	1,813
France	1,192
Netherlands	251
Spain	184
Belgium	127
Sweden	48
Japan	43
Denmark	43
Switzerland	23
Italy	4
Total	14,308

⁵⁶ Russia, the Ottoman Empire's principal antagonist in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, is notably absent as well; however, Russian Muslims donated considerable to the Red Crescent.

Table 3.2: Foreign Donations to the Ottoman Red Crescent from non-Muslim countries. Note that Germany gave over 150 percent more than England to the Red Crescent.

Source: *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi* (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekâsı Matbaacılık Osmanlı Şirketi, 1913), 313.

Among the existing records housed at the Turkish Red Crescent today are those recording numerous contributions from German citizens. The close relations that had developed between the Ottoman and the German Empire, an extension of Wilhelm's pan-Islamic politics, no doubt contributed to the ease with which collection campaigns could be effected on German soil. For instance, the Porte's ambassador in Berlin Osman Nizami Pasha spearheaded one such campaign and succeeded in collecting 8,934.56 German Marks, or roughly 480 Ottoman lira.⁵⁷ Other donations emerged from the close commercial and economic ties that bound the states together.⁵⁸ Margot Lehmann of Stuttgart "deployed her charitable zeal in favor of the Red Crescent" because of her uncle Heinrich Lehmann's "numerous commercial relations in Turkey."⁵⁹ German newspapers ran adverts in coordination with the German Red Cross Society encouraging citizens to contribute to the Red Crescent because "it is in its first stage of development and will likely not be able to achieve first-rate efficacy." It therefore had need of "equipment, physicians, and bandaging as well as personnel."⁶⁰ The German Red Cross, at that moment arguably the most advanced humanitarian aid organization in the world, could certainly assess the needs of its Ottoman counterpart and utilized its extensive network to bolster donations for the Red Crescent. Furthermore, the mode of civilian mobilization through dynastic patronage networks in Germany made the Red Cross an ideal instrument of the state and ensured that the goals of the Red Cross

⁵⁷ Kızılay 19/87 (27 March 1912).

⁵⁸ See: Yorulmaz, *Arming the Sultan: German Arms Trade and Personal Diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire Before World War I*, 15-67; McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*, 32-82.

⁵⁹ Kızılay 19/91 (19 January 1912).

⁶⁰ "Aufruf," *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 20, 1911.

and the exigencies of empire were one and the same.⁶¹ In one of the most fruitful collection campaigns in Germany, the Berlin Red Crescent branch exploited the channels of donation assembled by the Red Cross to secure a total of 19,246 German Marks, or approximately 1050 Ottoman lira.⁶² In collaboration with the Red Cross, the Red Crescent thus elicited considerable donations from German citizens to support a war against one of the German Empire's principal allies.

The fact that foreign non-Muslim contributions to the Red Crescent represented a mere fraction of the aid given by Muslims in India alone indicates that while an international distaste for the Italian invasion of North Africa was evident in most countries, peace movements in Western Europe and beyond failed to generate the sort of support that mass mobilization in the name of pan-Islamic solidarity achieved. Germany and Austria-Hungary's contributions reflect those states' international position on the Italo-Turkish War, namely to avoid direct confrontation with Italy while working to preserve both the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, the stability of the Balkans, and friendship of the Porte. Other states such as Britain, whose economic position and previous close bonds with the Ottoman Empire suggest that its donations would have at least equaled those of Austria-Hungary, proved less willing to give. Thus, the foreign subvention of the Ottoman war effort was predominantly a pan-Islamic, antiimperialist affair.

Ottoman Patriotism and Donations to the Red Crescent

At approximately sixty thousand Ottoman Lira, Ottoman financial contributions to the Red Crescent was over four times greater than that received from non-Muslim foreign lands but

⁶¹ Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916*, 1-20.

⁶² Kızılay 166/18 (24 March 1912).

paled in comparison to the donations flowing in from foreign Muslims.⁶³ Although the Red Crescent Society relied heavily on foreign subvention, there was little coordination in the methods of collection employed in the Ottoman lands with those employed abroad and little similarity in the types of contributors. Large parastatal companies and organizations dominated and administered predominantly by Europeans, such as the Ottoman Public Debt Administration (OPDA), the Régie des Tabacs, and the Anatolian Ottoman Railroad Company (*Société du Chemin de fer Ottoman d'Anatolie*), made some of the single greatest contributions to the Red Crescent: both the OPDA and its subsidiary, the Régie Company, donated one thousand Lira each.⁶⁴ Banks were also leading contributors, the Ottoman and Salonica Bank each donated one hundred Lira. Per contra, the greatest single foreign contributors from India and Egypt were aristocrats and notables rather than corporations and companies. While in India newspapers initiated the most successful collection campaigns, in the Ottoman lands the Red Crescent Society branches took primary responsibility for mass collections. The Red Crescent, therefore, initiated, advertised, and carried out the sort of campaigns editors and political organizations did in India. In some cases, whole Ottoman regiments donated their salaries to the Ottoman Red Crescent. The Brigadier General of the 36th regiment in Kırcaali (now Kardzali, Bulgaria) arranged for his troops to donate their pay “voluntarily” to the Red Crescent for the express purpose of “aiding our sacred (*muazzez*) nation.”⁶⁵ On the whole, as opposed to the contributions collected in India and many of the other European colonies, donations in the Ottoman Empire

⁶³ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 311.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁶⁵ Kızılay 79/63 (7 May 1912).

and in the former Ottoman lands originated far more often from hierarchical institutions with direct or indirect connections to the imperial government.

While the methods of collection may have differed, the vast majority of donors tended to be Muslim and framed their rationale for giving in a language imbued with religiosity and patriotism. Therefore, the cause of the Red Crescent for most donors represented an act of Muslim solidarity both within and without the Ottoman Empire. Because Muslims dominated state and parastatal organizations at the time of the war, most donations in the Ottoman lands originated from the central and bureaucratic sectors of the economy.⁶⁶ That is not to say that no Ottoman non-Muslims donated to the Red Crescent; however, donations from the Christian and Jewish communities were few and far between. Records indicate that Christians did take part in these collection campaigns. For instance, a Ohannes Kuyumcuyan donated two, a Kosti Papadopoulos gave five, and a Lazaro Franko contributed three Lira.⁶⁷ Yet, in the list of donors prepared by the *Salname*, non-Muslims represent less than five percent of the total despite comprising over twenty three percent of the Ottoman population at the time.⁶⁸ For whatever reason, the Ottoman Red Crescent collection campaigns elicited more donations from Muslims than non-Muslims.

We are left with few records from private individuals explaining their motivations for giving; however, the testimony of one donor Captain Mehmet Hamdi of the 103rd regiment, who described himself as *Trablusgarbli* (Tripolitanian) evidently in solidarity with those fighting in North Africa, does touch on both national and Islamic themes. When the captain sent three

⁶⁶ Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York, 1988), 107-112.

⁶⁷ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 321-333.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 315-374. For population figures, see: Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 72.

Ottoman lira he had collected from friends’ “cigarette money and pocket change,” he enclosed a thank you note of sorts to the Red Crescent declaring that “it is well known and trusted that the Red Crescent Charitable Society has a holy purpose. For the esteemed Society it is a religious commandment (*farz*) to render aid to all humans but especially Ottomans and the people of Islam.” After describing the dire situation of his country, Captain Mehmet expressed both his recognition of the global aid his nation was receiving and the sacrifice the Ottoman Army and Red Crescent were willing to make:

When people from every corner of the globe stand and give aid to all nationalities but especially to our citizens, we cannot remain indifferent spectators. For in this work is the salvation of the homeland (*vatan*) and the benefit of our nation. Essentially, we are now certain that there is a threatening foreign lust for our fatherland (*yurdumuza*) as a result of the evil designs and conspiracies that surround our holy country and our great nation. But that being the case, our treacherous enemies know for certain that the Ottomans, and especially the Ottoman Army and the great [Red Crescent] Society, from our lowliest private to our highest commander is willing and ready to make any and all sacrifices, even to give up their precious lives if necessary, in defense of the homeland and for the sake of the nation.⁶⁹

Captain Mehmet thus praises the efforts of both the Ottoman Army and the Ottoman Red Crescent whose purpose and goal are the defense of his homeland under siege. Yet, his nationalist motivations seamlessly fuse with his religious sentiments. In his reference to the machinations against the Ottoman lands and in the religious embellishments of his language, his motivations approximate those of foreign Muslims. No doubt, his utmost concern for the Ottoman “nation” was not the primary rationale for global Muslims’ subvention of the Red Crescent, but his conflation of Ottoman land with Islamic land should not be discounted. He even describes Tripolitania as “beloved Tripoli which is bound tight to our nation and is the solid

⁶⁹ Kızılay 99/34 (27 April 1912).

ground of our Islamic Caliphate.”⁷⁰ For the captain, the attack on Tripoli was as much an affront to Islam as it was an assault on the Ottoman Empire.

Islamic solidarity and support for their beleaguered coreligionists of Tripoli appear to have been essential motivations for Muslims’ contributing to the Red Crescent in the Italo-Turkish War. A sense of besiegement from the colonizing powers incited Muslims in and outside of the Ottoman Empire to give to the Red Crescent. Muslims were thus overrepresented in the donation tables of the Ottoman Red Crescent Society. The Ottoman Red Crescent became an instrument of protest and active resistance to the forces of European colonization, by which global Muslims could mobilize money for the aid and defense of Ottoman North Africa. Ultimately, the size of these donations must be appreciated. The Ottoman parliament in January 1912 set the budget for the war in North Africa at 120,000 Ottoman lira per month while over the course of the war the Ottoman Red Crescent received nearly 340,000 Ottoman lira in donations.⁷¹

Transforming Donations into Deeds

At the conclusion of the Italo-Turkish War, British Ambassador to the Porte Sir Gerard Lowther assessed the Italo-Turkish War for the benefit of British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey pointing out that:

The Tripoli War has been a useful object-lesson as regards pan-Islamism, and enabled us to gauge its importance as a political force since the removal of Abdul Hamid and the advent of the new régime in Turkey. At the outset of the war there were violent manifestations of pan-Islamic feeling in the press, &c., but this feeling did not translate itself into acts, beyond sending pecuniary assistance to the Moslem Arabs in Tripoli and

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *Meclisi Mebusân Zabıt Ceridesi*, Vol. 2 (18 January 1912), 552.

Cyrenaica, and one may perhaps legitimately conclude that estimates of the politic force of pan-Islamism founded on its workings during the reign of the ex-Sultan are exaggerated, now that the driving force at the Caliphate centre has been weakened.⁷²

Lowther's bleak assessment of the potency of pan-Islamism because of its failure to produce nothing more than a trifle of cash for the Ottoman war effort understates the achievements that the pecuniary assistance and the Red Crescent afforded the Ottoman resistance in North Africa. Even Foreign Minister Grey contradicts Lowther's assertions warning that "it would be misjudging the case if we were to assume that Pan-Islamism is a weakening force—it could not, owing to Egyptian neutrality and loss of the sea routes, do more than send pecuniary aid to Tripoli."⁷³ This pecuniary aid, while ostensibly relegated only to the medical needs of the Ottoman troops in North Africa, proved essential in transporting men, material, and cash to the battlefield and implementing a first-rate system of field hospitals that met the needs of both the combatants and the civilian population.

The Limits of International Law in Delivering Aid

Over the half century prior to the Italo-Turkish War, the Geneva and Hague conferences had codified laws to protect individuals on the battlefield and limit states' methods and means of waging war. The initial impetus for the 1864 Geneva Convention came from the emergent Red Cross movement and its insistence on instituting international legislation for the protection of wounded soldiers and medical personnel on the battlefield. Later, the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions, in their attempts to restrict the conduct of war on land (1899) and sea (1907), adopted the categories of protected individuals singled out in the Geneva Convention reasserting

⁷² F.O. 44674/4/12/44 (17 October 1912).

⁷³ *Ibid.*

these safeguards for battlefield medical responders. Such protection was intended to ensure the safe passage and transport of these medical teams over land or water. Despite these radical innovations that birthed a new body of law, that is international humanitarian law, the generation of these laws in the context of a geopolitical environment marked by unequal power relations limited their effectiveness.⁷⁴ The sovereignty of states and the prerogatives of the Great Powers set the boundaries for international justice. Thus, appeals to The Hague's Permanent Court of Arbitration only produced results when both parties submitted to its jurisdiction. Therefore, international law only proved effective in resolving disputes—as was the case with the *Manouba* and the twenty nine Ottoman captives—when combined with the sort of big-stick diplomacy that the European Great Powers alone could wield. Fortunately for the Ottomans, Prime Minister Poincaré had taken up the cause of the twenty nine detainees as a matter of national prestige and therefore demanded their immediate return. The agreement penned by San Giuliano and Barrère therefore entailed the immediate release of the Ottoman nationals into French custody and their return to their port of embarkation along with referring the case to the International Court of Arbitration at The Hague.⁷⁵ The French government would be charged with the responsibility to take “the necessary measures to prevent the Ottoman passengers not belonging to the Red Crescent but to the combat corps from departing from a French port with the destination of

⁷⁴ Jean Quataert, “International Law and the Laws of War,” in *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, eds. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jone, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2014), 1-18. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.10483

⁷⁵ San Giuliano and Barrère employed The Hague Tribunal as an escape route to an otherwise precarious impasse. Yet, the real power and potential of the International Court of Arbitration should not be overestimated. The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 had instituted and refined the Permanent Court of Arbitration to serve as a mediator between states and arbitrate pursuant of a peaceful settlement; however, the court could be called into session only by the agreement of both states to refer their dispute to international arbitration. So, while it provided a means for San Giuliano and Barrère to ratchet down the heightened tensions between Italy and France and postpone arbitration to the following year at which time cooler heads would presumably have prevailed, the limited power of the Hague could do nothing to resolve the immediate needs of the Ottoman Red Crescent mission detained in contravention to the Geneva and Hague Conventions.

Tunisia or the theater of combat.”⁷⁶ The “Ottoman-French alliance” that the “educated” Tunisian youths extolled on the quay was as instrumental in securing the release of its detainees as the international law governing their safe passage across the Mediterranean.

International law provided a safe conduit for the delivery of individuals and material protected under international law as long as they travelled under the flag of the neutral Powers. Paris and London were no more eager to alienate the Porte as they were to see the Triple Alliance renewed.⁷⁷ On British or French sovereign soil or flagged vessels the Red Crescent missions could enjoy the immunity that international law dictated. The Italian Navy, however, showed no discretion in boarding and seizing Ottoman vessels flying the Red Crescent banner operating anywhere near combat zones, especially in the Red Sea, even when these vessels were evidently hospital ships carrying wounded soldiers. After the battle of Kufuda Bay in the Red Sea in early January 1912, the Italian Navy tightened the grip on all naval traffic in the Red Sea. Most Ottoman vessels operated out of the port of Al-Hudaydah as were the hospital ships *Kayseri* and *Kızıllırmak* when they were seized despite their clear markings as a Red Crescent vessel and sequestered for the duration of the conflict.⁷⁸ Geography and Italian disregard for international law restricted the movement of the Red Crescent and its essential aid to the front. As the war progressed, all Red Crescent missions travelled under European-flagged vessels, as was the case with the *Manouba*, and through the British or French protectorates of Tunisia and Egypt into the combat zone.⁷⁹ That, however, does not diminish the significance of the Red

⁷⁶ “L’Incident Franco-Italien: Texte de la note,” *le Figaro*, January 27, 1912, 1.

⁷⁷ Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya, 1911-1912*, 92-105. The Triple Alliance was scheduled for renewal in 1912. Rome used the renewal as a bargaining chip to ensure the assent of all the Great Powers in their designs on Libya.

⁷⁸ BOA, BEO 3966/297384.2 (22 November 1911); *Kızıllay* 25/11.

Crescent as a supply vehicle for much needed material and cash at the front. The Red Crescent supply route was indeed limited, but traveling through the neutral territories was far more secure than attempting to run the Italian naval blockade.

The Red Crescent as a Blockade Runner

Rome had expected that an Ottoman Army without supplies would neither be able to persist in defending North Africa nor win the support of the local population. The blockade was therefore a crucial element in the Italian strategy to strangle the Porte and the population's will to resist. The Italian blockade and the Franco-British assent to Italian appeals to close off the borders between their North African colonies and the besieged Ottoman provinces ensured that most material needed for the war effort would be deemed illicit as either absolute or conditional contraband. The transportation of bulk supplies or even large amounts of cash would draw the attention of border guards along the Tunisian or Egyptian frontiers. Despite the general sympathy Ottomans could count on from among their Muslim coreligionists in the French and British colonies of North Africa, the forceful petitions of Giolitti's government to the other European powers to block the flow of contraband had transformed the Ottoman supply chain into a few weak strings of Ottoman clandestine operations alongside the more constant, furtive crossings led by Bedouin entrepreneurs.⁸⁰ So tight was the Italian diplomatic and naval stranglehold over the Ottoman North African provinces that in March 1912 Ottoman Ambassador in Berlin Osman Nizami Pasha suggested to Foreign Minister Asım Bey that if peace were concluded with

⁷⁹ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 95-110.

⁸⁰ Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya, 1911-1912*, 133.

Italy and the blockade lifted, it would facilitate the supply of weaponry to the resisting Arabs, who could then more effectively defend the territory.⁸¹

Alongside the medical care that the Red Crescent missions administered to soldiers and civilians alike, the teams carried with it a considerable amount of cash that, on close examination, appears to have been indispensable to the Ottoman war effort. After the sequestration and detainment of the second Red Crescent mission in Cagliari, the Ottoman embassy in Paris brought up the matter of the cash with which the team traveled. According to communications sent between the Ottoman Ministry of War and the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the cash had arrived in Sfax with the cargo of the vessel while the twenty nine Ottoman nationals remained in Italian custody. Although the exchange does not reveal the means of conveyance to the battlefield due to the detainment of the Ottoman Red Crescent mission, it does imply that the cash was to be sent to the Ottoman camp nonetheless. The Ottoman Ministry of War “recommended that the [Ottoman] embassy [in Paris] be informed via telegraph” that “the cash must have been neglected to be sent to the theater of war because the French government is occupied resolving the current difficulties” and should therefore be “sent with the utmost expediency.”⁸²

Although the exact amount of cash with which the team was traveling is not revealed in the communications, other sources indicate that it was a considerable amount. Doctor Besim Ömer, the Ottoman delegate to the Ninth International Red Cross Conference in Washington, revealed in his address to the other delegates in May 1912 that each Red Crescent mission deployed to Tripolitania travelled with a “sum of 1.5 million Francs in order to purchase

⁸¹ Ibid., 128.

⁸² BOA, BEO 3996/299656 (29 January 1912).

materials, such as ambulances, stretchers, surgical instruments, and medicines.”⁸³ These materials, however, had already been purchased before the team boarded the *Manouba*. Of course, the team also would require cash for transportation from Sfax to the Ottoman camp in Khoms, a journey that was usually taken by camels. The Ottoman daily *İkdam* cited Italian sources claiming that “an amount of roughly a million Francs was discovered amongst the medical equipment and instruments with which the team traveled.”⁸⁴ If true, an amount such as that no doubt intensified the suspicions of the Italian authorities and provides further evidence to explain the Italian insistence on detaining the Red Crescent mission.⁸⁵

While the available sources do not divulge the amount nor the intended purpose of the cash with which the team was purportedly discovered, the Ottoman Ministry of War’s insistence on its rapid delivery to the battlefield indicate its importance to the war effort. If an army truly “marches on its stomach,” the Ottoman army in Tripolitania was no exception. Foreign correspondants covering the conflict in Tripolitania more often than not remarked on the large markets that congregated in the Ottoman camps. War correspondent Alan Ostler described the feverish business of supplying the army and the great profits to be made:

Tunisians and Algerian Arabs, better instructed, from contact with the French, than the ignorant Tripolitans, reaped great harvests during the war. Some—but this was not at first—brought caravans across the frontier, laden with biscuits, conserves, shirts, hosiery, chocolate, paraffin lamps, glassware and crockery, canned goods, small mirrors, knives, and handkerchiefs, which they sold in the needy camp at huge profits.⁸⁶

⁸³ Besim Ömer, *Dokuzuncu Washinton Sâlib-i Ahmer Konferansı Memuriyetim* (İstanbul: Ahmed İhsân ve Şürekâsı Osmanlı Matbaacılık Şirketi, 1912), 39.

⁸⁴ “Manouba Hadisesi,” *İkdam*, January 26, 1912, 2.

⁸⁵ One million Francs in 1912 is roughly the equivalent of 12 million current US dollars.

⁸⁶ Ostler, *The Arabs in Tripoli*, 98-99.

Ernest Bennet noted that so desired were the readily accepted currencies at these Ottoman camp markets that the banks of the city of Tunis “had almost been depleted of napoleons, for paper money was useless in Tripoli.”⁸⁷ War correspondents were not the only ones to struggle to find fungible currency during the war. When Enver Bey, commander of the Ottoman forces in Benghazi, was unable to obtain cash for his army’s expenses from his supply network in Cairo, he determined to print his own money, which alleviated his army’s needs until more funds could be delivered.⁸⁸ If Besim Ömer’s comments to the International Red Cross conference of 1912 were correct, the Red Crescent teams that participated in the conflict traveled with an exorbitant amount of cash, far beyond their needs to purchase medical supplies, equipment, transportation, and sustenance.⁸⁹ International Law codified by the 1907 Hague Convention guaranteed the immunity of medical teams such as those of the Red Crescent and stipulated no injunction against the transport of cash with medical personnel. The Ottoman Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of War were aware of these funds and saw to their speedy delivery to the Ottoman camps.⁹⁰ This close coordination of the Ottoman government and the Red Crescent in the delivery of these funds demonstrate not only the significance of the Red Crescent to the battlefield but its capability as a delivery system of essential supplies to the front. Furthermore, the financial capital that these Red Crescent missions injected into the battle front did not strain

⁸⁷ Bennet, *With the Turks in Tripoli*, 34.

⁸⁸ Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Makedonya’dan Ortaasya’ya Enver Paşa, İkinci Cilt (1908-1914)* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1971), 236.

⁸⁹ Ömer, *Dokuzuncu Washinton Sâlib-i Ahmer Konferansı Memuriyetim*, 39. In fact, Ömer reported that the teams as of his speaking were now sent off with another half million Francs making the total supply of cash per team 2 million Francs.

⁹⁰ BOA, BEO 3996/299656 (29 January 1912).

the Ottoman War Ministry's budget, nor even the Ottoman economy, as the majority of this cash was donated from abroad.

A Godsend to the Ottoman Forces

Upon the arrival of the first Red Crescent mission to Tripoli in late November 1911, the head doctor Kerim Sebatî Bey found the medical circumstances of the main Ottoman camp in 'Aziziya to be in complete disarray. The few military doctors who had accompanied the troops in their rapid retreat from the city of Tripoli described to Kerim "with their heart burning with anguish" that "no medicine or especially materials for treatment remained. There was absolutely no surgical equipment. There wasn't even a regular saw on hand to amputate gangrenous limbs."⁹¹ The Red Crescent team immediately set to work erecting their field hospital with thirteen tents, all of them purchased in Paris and transported to the war zone at the expense of Tunisian "compatriots Ramadhan and Tawfiq al-Sharif in Sfax and Ali Bash and Hamba Bey in Tunis."⁹² When completed, a converted school house, which became the central hospital building, and the tents made up a state-of-the-art hospital complex equipped with over 160 beds. Within two days of their arrival, the Red Crescent mission examined and treated close to 300 patients and performed numerous surgeries.⁹³ The British War correspondent Ernest Bennet extolled the efforts of the Red Crescent and its doctors, "whose advent was a veritable godsend to the Ottoman forces."⁹⁴

⁹¹ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 98.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 97.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁹⁴ Bennet, *With the Turks in Tripoli*, 134.

Despite the crucial aid the first team brought with it, more cash, supplies, and trained personnel were required to meet the needs of an asymmetric war of attrition. By November, the war had reverted into a stalemate in which the Italian Army rarely left the safety of their trenches to mount an offensive, and the Ottoman forces relied on guerrilla raids to plunder their well-supplied foes and sap their morale. Such operations could be costly and necessitated frontline hospitals to give instantaneous medical care to the soldiers wounded in raids or injured by artillery bombardments. Furthermore, maintaining the lines for a protracted war meant that medical services would have to deal with the sort of illnesses that accompany life in a military camp. Bennet voiced his concerns over the general sanitary neglect in the camp at ‘Aziziya saying “in short, the camp presented an altogether favourable nidus for the bacilli of cholera, enteric, gastritis, trachoma, and other troubles.” Kerim Sebatî was also aware of the threat of the spread of diseases noting the increasing cases of “typhus, cholera, malaria, and influenza” among the Ottoman troops.⁹⁵ In order to meet the needs of treating these diseases and injuries, in late November Kerim requested a further team from the Red Crescent headquarters in Istanbul. A second mission was organized, but its arrival was delayed several weeks on account of the *Manouba* incident.

By early March, the Ottoman Red Crescent, enriched by donation campaigns, and reinforced by the arrival of the German Red Cross, the British Red Crescent, and the Egyptian Red Crescent missions, had established an elaborate hospital system for both the Tripoli and Benghazi front. The central hospital remained in ‘Aziziya along with a depot of medical supplies (Figure 4). Furthermore, an ambulatory field hospital (*seyyar hastahane*) was maintained at ‘Aziziya giving the medical services a degree of tactical flexibility and allowing the hospital to

⁹⁵ Kızılay 31/13 (18 March 1912).

deploy rapidly to address the sort of medical emergencies that would accompany an Italian attack on the front. At the front lines, three light field hospitals were erected to treat battle wounds. Far in the rear at Gharyan, a cluster of hospitals and a central depot were erected comprising missions from the Ottoman Red Crescent, the German Red Cross, and the British Red Crescent. Gharyan became the main treatment facility for illnesses.⁹⁶

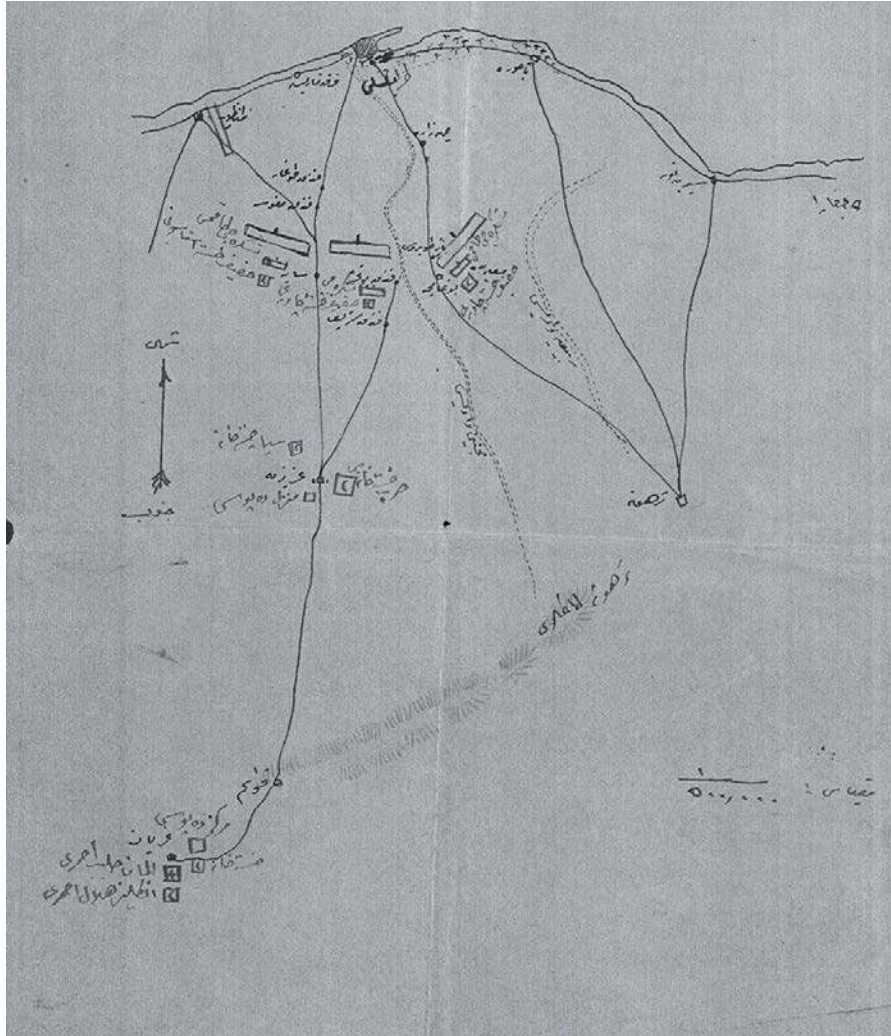


Figure 3.2: Map of Red Crescent hospital system in Tripoli as drawn by Dr. Kerim Sebati Bey. At top, in the far north is the Italian occupied port city of Tripoli, and the front lines are designated by the opposing rectangles. Each crescent flag indicates the location of a Red Crescent hospital. In the southwest corner (bottom left), a cross flag indicates the location of the German Red Cross hospital in Gharyan along with the English and Ottoman Red Crescent hospitals.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

Source: Kızılay 31/13.2 (18 March 1911)

This elaborate hospital system exceeded expectations providing for the health care of the Ottoman combatants and the civilian population. Kerim proudly announced to the Ottoman Red Crescent headquarters in Istanbul that “the health conditions of the Tripoli army are perfect (*mükemmel*).”⁹⁷ The British war correspondent H. C. Seppings Wright, no stranger to field hospitals as he was a former soldier and veteran of the Boer War, was vocally impressed by the Ottoman Red Crescent hospital of Gharyan calling it “quite a modern affair” and devoting some attention to its description:

It had been a school, but is now given over to the use of the Red Crescent. Frock-coated, white-collared gentlemen wearing the fez, requested the pleasure of my company to a welcome dinner. I very gladly availed myself of the invitation, and sat down to a meal worthy of a Parisian restaurant... I found it to be the occasion of the return of Riphath and Jussef Beys from a visit to Paris. They had come to take charge of the hospital, and they pointed out to me with pardonable pride the well-ordered wards, the cases of drugs, the surgical instruments, and so on. In fact there was nothing to find any fault with at all. Everything was as comfortable and up to date as in a modern hospital. I recognized some of my old friends from Ain Zara now recovering rapidly, and anxious to return to fight once more for the Sultan.⁹⁸

Reportedly, the civilian population appreciated the Gharyan hospital as much as Seppings Wright. Not only did the hospital treat 503 wounded and sick soldiers, it also became a “polyclinic” treating locals for illnesses and injuries. The hospital even performed four hundred circumcisions on children and provided each child with a gift as was custom.⁹⁹ The Red Crescent hospital in Khoms to the east of Tripoli also established great rapport with local Arabs treating over a thousand patients over the course of the war. The Red Crescent hospital of Tobruk

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Seppings Wright, *Two Years under the Crescent*, 79-80.

⁹⁹ *Taht-ı Himâye-i Hazret-i Mülûkânede Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti 1329-1331 Sâlnâmesi*, 105.

attended to over 1,718 patients, of them thirty three were Ottoman officers, fifty three were enlisted men, and 167 were volunteers (*mücahitlerden*). The rest were civilians.¹⁰⁰ The Red Crescent, therefore, in coordination with the German Red Cross and Egyptian Red Crescent established a military hospital system that kept soldiers in the field and performed outreach in the local community, strengthening ties with the native population by extending free medical services to regions that had not previously enjoyed access to modern medicine. The global Muslim solidarity that filled the coffers of the Red Crescent could then be deployed to forge stronger bonds and greater solidarity between the Ottoman officers and the native soldiers endeavoring to fend off the Italian invasion.

Conclusion

The Red Crescent mission's arrival at Sfax aboard the *Saint Augustin* represented the efforts of a global supply chain of anticolonial resistance. Beyond being merely a delivery system of much needed medical services and supplies to a beleaguered outpost of the Ottoman Empire, it was a potent symbol for a colonized Muslim world and an integral “weapon of the weak” capable of transforming the indignation of the politically impotent into action on the battlefield.¹⁰¹ From Istanbul, a *Manchester Guardian* correspondent reported his conversation with an Ottoman general who openly expressed the Ottoman Empire and its global patrons' will to resist:

We have sworn on the Koran that we will not give up Tripoli... We no longer put much confidence in the good faith of Christian nations. Treaties are nothing to them. This war is fast becoming a religious war, and England stands to lose or gain more than any other nation. Not fanatics but thoughtful Moslems are beginning to think there is a Christian

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 110.

¹⁰¹ James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

conspiracy against Moslem rule. This war and the attacks on Persia have stirred Moslems as they have not been stirred in many years... This seemingly concerted action of Christians against Moslems has drawn Moslems together as no Pan-Islamism ever did. We have had offers of help from India, Bokhara, Caucasus, and Yemen, and the Arabs are with our soldiers in the field.¹⁰²

The global community of colonized Muslims, partaking of a common antiimperialist discourse and drawn together by an ascendant colonizing Europe, erupted in outrage at the attack on Ottoman North Africa, but the war against the Italians was not of a conventional sort. The soft power of European colonization and the brute force of the Italian Navy restricted the supply of men and material to the front. Nonetheless, the guerrilla war against the Italians continued bolstered by the donations of many incensed Muslims around the world. Cash donated in Bombay, Cairo, or Calcutta poured into the Ottoman war chest and made its way to the front under the banner of the Red Crescent. Upon reaching the theatre of war, this pecuniary assistance played a crucial role of keeping soldiers on the battlefield and civilians satisfied. Humanitarian assistance at once succored the wounded and battle weary and sustained their will to fight.

¹⁰² "The Turks and the War: Factors for and against Peace," *The Manchester Guardian*, January 19, 1912.

Chapter 4

Enver's War: Young Turk State Building and Muslim Anticolonialism

What struck British war correspondent G. F. Abbott, who passed much of the war encamped at 'Aziziya, about the composition of the Ottoman Army was its "variety." He declared it to be "a veritable museum of human odds and ends drawn from all the elements that make up the motley of the Ottoman Empire." Yet, despite this "bewildering... military mosaic" of "race, speech, complexion, and character, as well as costume," Abbott found that "the confusion lies only on the surface." He observed that "all these men are bound together by two ties infinitely stronger than any difference of blood or speech—allegiance to the Khalif, and, far more important, to the Prophet, of whom the Khalif is the Vicar." For Abbott, Islamic unity composed an "essential harmony" from the observed "superficial diversity" of the cosmopolitan ranks of the Ottoman Army.¹ Common religion, he supposed, and obedience to the sultan-caliph in Istanbul bound imperial and local, officer and irregular together in what he entitled a "Holy War in Tripoli."

İsmail Enver Bey, then a major in the Ottoman Army and a leader of the Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress, confided a similar sentiment of religious unity when departing for Cyrenaica on 9 October 1911 to recruit Libyan irregulars to fight the Italians then ensconced in Benghazi. Lamenting to his close friend Maria Sarre from his time as a military attaché to Berlin, Enver expressed his worries that "Tripolitania, that poor country, is lost for the moment, and who knows? Perhaps forever?" Although he saw little hope in reclaiming the territory—the officials in Istanbul were unaware that the Italian advances into the hinterland had effectively stalled—the sole reason for his desperate mission "of the utmost secrecy," he explained, was to "perform a moral duty that the Islamic world expects from us."² That Enver Bey, a Unionist hero of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, would justify his government's commitment to wage war with the Italians as an Islamic moral duty is indicative of the abiding importance of Hamidian

¹ Abbott, *The Holy War in Tripoli*, 79-80.

² Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (9 October 1911), 79.

pan-Islamism among Young Turk officers as instrumental for their fight to preserve the cohesion of the empire.³ Despite its significance for rallying Muslims around the banner of the sultan caliph, Unionist officers retained a troubled relationship with the *‘ulema* and other religious activists within the Ottoman polity. Enver, after all, had been a prominent commander of the “Action Army” (*Hareket Ordusu*), which had bombarded the capital, suppressed the Society of Muhammad with its calls for the reinstatement of *Shari‘ah* law, and deposed Abdülhamid II in April 1909. Thereafter, he had been declared the “Champion of Liberty” (*Hürriyet Kahramanı*) and obtained cross-communal acclaim for his commitment to the constitution.⁴

Despite Enver and the many other Unionist officers’ credentials as anti-Hamidian activists, the pan-Islamic discourse of the *ancien régime* and the strategic flexibility of imperial alliances with regional power-brokers initiated by Abdülhamid became integral tools for the Ottoman officers assigned to fashion a resistance from local elements. The holy war described by Abbott was one of expediency and combined interests, which reached a level of coherence under an umbrella of Muslim anticolonialism. Pan-Islam, for the vanguard of the Committee, and dreams of Muslim solidarity were transactional commitments deployed for the strengthening of the empire. Although the cohesion of this diverse resistance has been attributed to a “Muslim nationalism,” such terminology ignores the tension that existed between the Unionist officers’ impulse to Ottomanize the territory and the entrenched, decentralized structures that governed imperial-local relations.⁵ The Unionist officers who marched into North Africa hoped to fortify the empire by

³ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*. Deringil maintains that the Ottoman Empire, faced with a “crisis of legitimacy,” integrated Islam into its legitimating discourse, paying acute attention to its role in the world as the protector of Islamic peoples and the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina.

⁴ Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 14-46; Aydemir, *Makedonya’dan Ortaasya’ya Enver Paşa, İkinci Cilt (1908-1914)*, 155-161.

⁵ Benjamin Fortna, *The Circassian: A Life of Eşref Bey, Late Ottoman Insurgent and Special Agent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 59. It is unclear whether Fortna applies the term “Muslim nationalism” to refer only to the Ottoman volunteer officers in Libya hailing from the Balkans and the Caucasus or also to their Arab and Amazigh allies in North Africa. He derives the term itself from Zürcher’s “Ottoman-Muslim nationalism,” which Zürcher employs to describe the mobilizing ethos of Young Turk and early Republican leaders against internal Christian

instituting Ottomanist policies to homogenize its people and to strengthen the bonds between the metropole and its distant provinces. Yet, it is doubtful that the same aspirations were shared by the Tripolitanian irregulars and people. It is more appropriate to label this anti-Italian activism that congealed in the Italo-Turkish War as a loose movement of Muslim anticolonialism, of which Young Turk volunteer officers exploited in their self-strengthening efforts in Ottoman North Africa; however, this shared Muslim resentment for an ascendant and intrusive Christian Europe did not nullify the overt differences in goals and expectations of the imperial officers and the local fighters. Over the course of the conflict, Ottoman officers sought to synthesize the exigencies of strengthening the empire with the aspirations of their local Arab allies. The broad ideology of Muslim anti-colonialism provided the necessary consensus upon which the resistance achieved coherence. Convinced Unionist officers, in turn, attempted to capitalize on this movement to centralize and Ottomanize the North African provinces.

An acute analysis of the experiences of the Young Turk officers who furtively made their way to Ottoman North Africa to command an insurgent war against the Italians reveals the uneasy opposition inherent in the Unionist drive to centralize authority and the operation's wholesale dependence on local power brokers to fill the ranks of their guerrilla army. Unionist officers were, in essence, caught in the middle of a tug of war, continually pulled by the centrifugal forces of the CUP, eager to centralize government to strengthen the empire, and the centripetal forces of the previous Ottoman imperial institutions, which devolved power to local sheikhs and religious leaders.⁶ Defending the remote lands of Ottoman North Africa entailed negotiating between the demands of Young Turk "defensive

enemies. See: Erik Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 195-198.

⁶ See: Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918*. Kayalı's work rejects previous assertions that the CUP introduced heavy-handed means to "Turkify" the empire and in the process alienated Ottoman Arab subjects. Rather than cruel "Turkification," Kayalı maintains that the CUP attempted to centralize governance in order to strengthen the empire. The CUP was therefore not a force of Turkish nationalism per se but a self-strengthening regime intent on checking European encroachment through centralization.

developmentalism” and the expectations of the local volunteers.⁷ The discourse of Muslim anticolonialism provided the banner behind which the resistance could be forged.

This chapter thus investigates the experience of Unionist volunteers in their efforts as representatives of both the Ottoman Army and the CUP to centralize authority and commandeer a Muslim anticolonial movement. A crucial figure in this analysis is Enver Bey, the Young Turk officer extraordinaire, whose energetic leadership and popular appeal was matched by his forceful determination to remake Cyrenaica in the Unionist vision of modernity.⁸ CUP officers, in essence, became anticolonial imperialists as they fought an asymmetric war for colonial freedom and simultaneously sought to strengthen Ottoman imperial power in the region.

The Ottoman Volunteers and the Parallel Institutions of the CUP and the Army

The abrupt Italian invasion of Tripoli sent shockwaves through the ranks of the CUP, the veritable spearhead of the 1908 Revolution, whose legitimacy and self-proclaimed *raison d'être* was based on its ability to preserve the empire from further dismemberment.⁹ By mere happenstance, the CUP convened for

⁷ See: James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 351. Gelvin defines “defensive developmentalism” as a “policy of centralization and ‘modernization’ undertaken by governments in the Middle East to strengthen their power and promote economic activity.” Elemental to this self-strengthening policy was the elimination of middle men to streamline tax collection. This, in turn, resulted in conflict between the center and the periphery, where notables and subjects often defended their rights from intrusive emissaries from the capital.

⁸ This analysis will therefore draw heavily on Hanioglu’s edited volume of Enver’s letters from the period, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*. This resource is of utmost significance because contained in these compiled letters is Enver’s attempt to describe, embellish, and translate his plans and ambitions for Cyrenaica, the territory in which he was sole civilian and military commander from the time of his arrival until the end of the war. Strangely, this resource is rarely exploited in histories of the Italo-Turkish War. Many authors rely heavily on Enver’s “diary,” Enver Pascha, *Um Tripolis* (Munich: Hugo Bruckmann, 1918). This source, however, is highly problematic as it is an abridgment of the letters compiled by Hanioglu and presented as a diary. Thus, the progeny of the letters of obfuscated, and Enver’s writings are both truncated and reworked to fulfill the parameters of German propaganda in World War I. In this way, *Um Tripolis* is more suitable as a source to analyze German visions of the Ottoman-German alliance than to understand Enver’s ambitions in the Italo-Turkish War. For recent works that employ *Um Tripolis*, see: Stephenson, *A Box of Sand: The Italo-Ottoman War, 1911-1912*; Stefan Hock, “Waking us from this Endless Slumber’: The Ottoman-Italian War and North Africa in the Ottoman Twentieth Century,” *War in History* (2017): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344517706729>; and Fortna, *The Circassian: A Life of Eşref Bey, Late Ottoman Insurgent and Special Agent*, 69.

its fourth annual congress in Salonica on 30 September 1911 a day after Rome, through the Reuters Press Association, “officially announced that the Ottoman Government, having failed to meet the demands contained in the Italian ultimatum, Italy and Turkey ‘are in a state of war from half-past two in the afternoon of ... September 29.’”¹⁰ Thus the Committee pushed other issues aside to address its response to the conflict. The congress adopted the title of the “Committee of National Defense” and prepared a strident manifesto to resist the invasion.¹¹ The Committee was reportedly “displeased” with the new cabinet that Said Pasha had selected in the capital because of their reluctance to announce the government’s intention to resist the Italian invasion.¹² In fact, the Porte never did issue an official declaration of war despite its decision to defend its North African territories and its conduct of a de facto war of defense.¹³ Many of the younger professional officers of the army, instrumental in the initial *putsch* against the Hamidian regime and the suppression of the 1909 counter-revolution, were affiliated with the CUP and imbued with the same patriotic zeal for the empire’s territorial integrity.¹⁴ For these young soldiers of the CUP, this silence on the part of their government was too much to bear. The Committee’s rising star, Enver Bey, had just arrived from his post as military attaché to Berlin and, in a meeting with the central Committee, had urged that they “continue the war” even if compelled to “form a temporary state in Tripoli ... if the government is forced to cede [the territory] to the Italians.” In order to preserve the empire’s territory, Enver was disposed to an official Ottoman disengagement from North Africa to afford an independence of command for its defenders.

⁹ Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 2-4; Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1-32.

¹⁰ “İttihad ve Terakki Kongresinin Beyannâmesidiri,” *Tanin*, October 6, 1911; “War Declared. Italy and Turkey to Fight. An Official Announcement in Rome. Immediate Blockade of Tripoli. A Landing already Effectuated. Safety of Europeans to be Provided for,” *Blackburn Weekly Telegraph*, September 30, 1911.

¹¹ Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 96; “İttihad ve Terakki Kongresinin Beyannâmesidiri,” *Tanin*.

¹² “Saloniki gegen Konstantinopel,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, October 4, 1911.

¹³ The government had issued a response to the ultimatum and issued a semi-official response which it distributed to the media defending the empire’s position and its defense of the territory. See: Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism: The Ottoman Involvement in Libya during the War with Italy (1911-1919)*, 62-63.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 47-50.

Thus the internal contradictions in Unionist officers' execution of the conflict emerged even before they had departed for the front. A patriotic Ottoman defense of the nation would be effected even if it required defiance of the central government and the institution of an independent state in the territories under attack. In effect, to assure the cohesion of empire the CUP officers were willing to dismember the empire. Enver's analysis of the situation was evidently amenable to the majority of the members of the Congress, and he reported with satisfaction that the central Committee, after five hours of debate, had accepted his "idea on Tripoli."¹⁵

While the CUP in Salonica adopted Enver's "strategy" along with his suggestions that the defense be mounted by young officers commanding irregular, local volunteers, the government at Istanbul had arrived at similar conclusions. So, when Enver arrived in Istanbul, he and other officers set to work in coordination with Mahmut Şevket Pasha's Ministry of War. These volunteer officers styled themselves as "*fedaî*," a word which denoted a volunteer willing to sacrifice his life for a cause.¹⁶ They also took on a conspiratorial air operating outside the normal channels of government and undertaking the defense of the nation on their own accord. Most of the group were members of the CUP, like Eşref Kuşçubaşı, Fuat Bulca, or Halil Bey (Enver's uncle).¹⁷ The other *fedaî* shared the same modernist convictions about strong centralized government, like the future founder of the Republic of Turkey Mustafa Kemal, then a captain in the Ottoman Army.¹⁸

These "volunteers" served under a shadow of ambiguity, being both self-selected but also taking orders from both the official military hierarchy and the CUP. The CUP officers had, in effect, established a parallel system of command alongside the official military chain of command. In early October 1911,

¹⁵ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (4 October 1911), 77.

¹⁶ The word derives from the Arabic *fidā'*, often translated as redemption or sacrifice.

¹⁷ Arslan Tekin, *Enver Paşa ve Dönemi* (Istanbul: Kariyer Yayıncılık, 2016), 181-182.

¹⁸ Mustafa Kemal's rank was at that time *Kolağası*, a rank for which there was no direct Western equivalent and would be somewhere between a captain or a major in current military hierarchy.

Fuat Bulca received orders from Colonel Ali Fethi Okyar, then in Paris, to accompany Mustafa Kemal to discuss a covert operation with Enver Bey. Ali Fethi, serving as military attaché to France, was a central figure in the CUP system of command. The officers convened with Enver, who recounted his meeting with the newly formed cabinet. Foreign Minister Assım Bey had asserted that the war could only be resolved by diplomatic means, a suggestion to which Mahmut Şevket Pasha immediately rejected and demanded an armed defense of Tripolitania. Assım was not dissuaded from his convictions reportedly questioning the Minister of War, “You know the condition of our fleet better than I. How and by what road will we send our soldiers to Tripoli? Let’s say we are able to send them, from where will we acquire the weapons, ammunition, supplies, and food for them?”¹⁹ Enver recounted all this to Mustafa Kemal and Fuat Bulca with evident “anguish” but then informed the officers of his and Mahmut’s covert plan:

The plan is the following: We, on our own volition and as a private organization (*hususî bir teşkilât*) will take up the defense [of Tripolitania]. The Ministry of War will grant us leave. There we will form insurgent groups, you all know I’ve been to Tripoli before. I know the way it is over there. If we commit ourselves to the defense, the people will help us ...²⁰

Before separating, Enver warned them to keep the whole matter secret and later called them and other officers to his house where he conveyed to them the severity of their country’s predicament. He reiterated that their actions in Tripolitania would not be as official soldiers, “the army would grant them leave; if and when official war with Italy is declared, our actions will be officially and formally recognized. If the issue can be resolved politically, the responsibility for the actions we take from this moment will fall upon our own persons.”²¹ From the outset the *fedaî* officers were to act at the interstices of various fields of authority.

¹⁹ Orhan Koloğlu, ed., *Trablusgarp Savaşı ve Türk Subayları, 1911-1912* (Ankara: Basın Yayın Genel. 1979), 67. Koloğlu collected a series of testimonies from the *fedaî* officers and published them without commentary in this work.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

Their point of contact with both the CUP and the army was through the intermediation of Enver, who acted simultaneously as a Unionist agent and a deputy of Mahmut Şevket. While Mahmut Şevket tolerated the CUP and in many ways shared their vision of resistance, he was neither a Unionist nor beholden to the Committee as the Minister of War and as such, led and represented the Ottoman Army.

The volunteer officers, therefore, embarked as both operatives of the CUP and the army, but were neither fully one nor the other. The army had granted them leave and many, such as Mustafa Kemal, maintained their distance from the Committee. Others were committed Unionists, such as Halil Kut, who at the outbreak of the war was fighting insurgents in Macedonia as a commander in the Ottoman Third Army. He received orders from both the channels of the army and the CUP to make his way to Tripoli via Paris. The parallel organizations of the army and the CUP funded his journey: the army donated 150 Ottoman lira and the central Committee contributed one hundred lira. Upon his arrival in Paris, Rahmi Bey, a founding member of the CUP and the future governor of Izmir, took on the role of his handler. Rahmi would aid him in acquiring a passport and visa under the alias of Halid Muzaffer.²² Ali Fethi, also in Paris, used more official channels to make his way to North Africa. Exploiting his contacts as a member of the Ottoman Embassy in Paris, he worked closely with Ambassador Rifat Pasha to devise a plan to smuggle himself into Tripolitania. “Some trusted friends in the French Ministry of War” advised him to travel to Sfax and from there to “travel to Tobruk surreptitiously using an alias and disguise.” In Tobruk, the French Consulate would offer him “asylum if he found no other options.”²³ Other officers even took up the call to serve despite the objections of the Ottoman Army, such as Süleyman Askerî, Cemil Tevfik, and Fehmi Beys, who initially requested permission from Mahmut Şevket to travel to Tripoli but were denied because of the British injunction on the travel of Ottoman officers to Egypt to prevent their crossing into Libya. Eventually, the intercession of Cemal Pasha, a leading member of the CUP and then governor of Baghdad, proved successful and the officers were allowed to leave their posts but no funds were granted for their

²² Ibid., 78.

²³ Ibid., 104.

travel. As a result, the officers were compelled to sell their own belongings to reach the front.²⁴ On the whole, these volunteer officers departed for the front navigating between the parallel and competing institutions of the CUP and the Ottoman bureaucracy. This ambiguity of loyalties would only be compounded as they were further dislocated from the centers of power in the empire. The only constant point of reference for all these officers seemed to be Enver who drew them all into his orbit as a rising star in both the Army and Committee.

Running the Blockade: The Secret Crossing of the *Fedaî*

Aside from the internal difficulties of maneuvering the vagaries of Ottoman politics, the officers were faced with the very real danger of being caught attempting to run the Italian blockade or evade British and French border officers that cordoned off over-land access to Ottoman North Africa at the behest of Italy. In the month of January 1912, the Italian cruiser *Volturno* captured twenty six Ottoman soldiers aboard the British steamer *Africa* and the Austrian steamer *Bregenz* in the Red Sea. Those captured included eighteen corporals, two noncommissioned officers, three captains, and a major of artillery. The Italian Navy transferred the arrested Ottomans to the Italian colony of Eritrea where they remained imprisoned for the duration of the war.²⁵ When Halil Kut arrived in Paris, he encountered some fifty other volunteer officers, who having been turned away by the French authorities in Tunisia on the way to Tripoli, worked with Rahmi Bey to find another point of entry. Halil, however, remembering his lessons in international law at the Ottoman Military Academy, was convinced he could make it across the border in Tunisia. He explained “there’s the Geneva convention. According to this, if two states are at war, a citizen of one of them can enter and exit freely from any neutral country under the condition that he carries no arms nor bears any military insignia.”²⁶ Yet, upon arriving in Tunisia, he found that laws in the abstract and interstate relations

²⁴ Fortna, *The Circassian: A Life of Eşref Bey, Late Ottoman Insurgent and Special Agent*, 61-64.

²⁵ “26 militari turchi arrestati sull’ ‘Africa’ e sul ‘Bregenz,’” *Corriere della Sera*, January 26, 1912.

²⁶ Koloğlu, ed., *Trablusgarp Savaşı ve Türk Subayları, 1911-1912*, 78-79.

in practice rarely agree. He was stopped on multiple occasions by gendarmes and soldiers and only managed to cross the front because, if his account is to be believed, the French commander at the border willfully decided to look the other way in contravention to his orders from the civil authorities.²⁷ And while the Egyptian border appears to have been more porous, Enver, Mustafa Kemal, and the other *fedaî* were compelled to adopt aliases and even disguises to avoid the suspicion of the British authorities.

Mahmut Şevket outlined the situation to Eşref Bey before his departure intimating that he “was uncertain whether a neutral country can be found to permit the transport of Red Crescent supplies let alone military material.” Under such circumstances, the Ottoman Minister of War advised that “the only resort we have is that you act with your own conscience and feeling of patriotism.”²⁸ Ultimately, the Italian diplomatic and naval blockade further dislocated the Young Turk officers from the formal channels of command and necessitated their near complete independence in securing their arrival to the battlefield. The war for these imperial officers became one of personal initiative, but still, a uniform vision for the resistance and a cohesive structure of command followed them into the field of battle.

Enver’s War or Local Insurgency

This cohesion was imbedded in the network that connected these volunteers. The one point of reference for the diverse imperial officers who made their way to the front with little to no official Ottoman backing and doubtful logistical support was their commander, Enver Bey. Enver had attracted these men to the battlefield and facilitated their travel to the front by making use of his position within the Committee and his close connections to Mahmut Şevket, under whom he had served with distinction in the Third Army and the “Hareket Ordusu.” He was also representative of these officers in many ways. Like many of them, he had passed his formative years at the Royal Military Academy, recently reformed under the direction of Field Marshal Colmar von der Goltz, and studied the German military theorist’s magnum opus *Das Volk in*

²⁷ Ibid., 80-86.

²⁸ Ibid., 70.

Waffen, which called for the reconstitution of the nation under the strict order and discipline of the military.²⁹ Enthralled with the idea that the Empire must be transformed into a militarized nation, Enver and these other capable staff officers also cut their military teeth suppressing separatist guerrillas in Macedonia and witnessing firsthand the destructive capacity of the nationalist aspirations of their opponents.³⁰ Freed from the strictures of the older generation of the armed forces and the Ottoman bureaucracy due to their isolation, Enver and his Young Turk cadre in North Africa could experiment with the self-strengthening principles upon which they placed their trust in a reinvigorated empire.

Fortunately, in the form of Enver's letters to his German friend Maria Sarre, we possess a detailed narrative of the Unionist officer's designs for the territory under his control and his struggles in realizing them. In resisting the Italian invasion, the Young Turk officers found willing allies in the local population. Building a cohesive resistance, however, involved the reconstitution of Hamidian alliances with local tribes and the North African religious order of the Sanūsiyyah which had forged an understanding with the imperial government and projected Ottoman strength into the Sudan and the province of Fezzan.³¹ Enver and his officers discovered that the necessary adhesive for binding the imperial forces with their local allies in the form of the Sultan-Caliph.

After smuggling himself through British-occupied Egypt, Enver arrived on the outskirts of Tobruk to take command of a growing army of Arab soldiers commanded by mainly Turkish officers. Within a few months he had assembled an army of 20,000 with over 10,000 camels at his disposal for supply. Much of this success was due to Enver's close relations with the "Grand Sanūsi Sheikh," Sayyid Ahmad al-Sharīf al-Sanūsī. Bringing over the Sanūsiyyah to the Ottoman side was a coup for the Young Turk officers that few in Italy had expected. As late as February 1912, the Milan daily *la Corriere della Sera* ran an article doubting reports that the Sanūsiyyah had sided with the Ottomans stating that many of the paper's

²⁹ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 51-56.

³⁰ Tekin, *Enver Paşa Dönemi*, 31-56; Murat Bardakçı, *Enver* (Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2015), 81-85.

³¹ See: Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz*.

correspondents “assure us that they are and will remain neutral.”³² The Sanūsiyyah, ensconced in Cyrenaica and with a network of *Zawiyas* spread across North and Central Africa, had long disputed the Ottoman government’s demands for the payment of taxes (*öşür*). Such disputes had dissipated during the reign of Abdülhamid II, who sought to draw the powerful religious order under his influence. During the Second Constitutional period, however, the tax dispute again required resolution. The Porte finally granted the Sanūsiyyah government salaries in exchange for the payment of taxes.³³

Despite the influential Sanūsī Order’s troubled past with Istanbul, Enver believed it was his familial relations with the Sultan (he was engaged to be married to Naciye Sultan, granddaughter of Sultan Abdülmecit and niece of the reigning Sultan Mehmed V Reşad) that impressed them greatly: “The Arabs are ignorant to the title Enver Bey, ... but they do respect the name of the caliph. I reign here in the name of the Sultan, and my country can also be proud of me from the perspective of my advantageous marriage.” He explained with astonishment that it was as “the son-in-law of the Sultan and the ambassador of the Caliph,” and not as “the hero of liberty, nor as a commander of the rank of major” that his orders were obeyed.³⁴ The Ottoman Sultan ruled also as “Caliph of the Faithful,” a title whose significance became more central in the Hamidian period and one that retained considerable traction with the obstreperous Sanūsī Sheikhs.³⁵ Enver’s astonishment and perhaps ignorance at the social capital of his familial relations and the particular importance of the Caliph in the region indicates the vast disparity between his culture of the Ottoman professional class and that of Ottoman North Africa in which he attempted to build his resistance.

³² “La neutralità dei Senussi,” *La Corriere della Sera*, February 3, 1912.

³³ Nevzat Artuç, *İttihatçı-Senüsi ilişkileri (1908-1918)* (İstanbul: Bilge Kültür Sanat, 2013), 62-79.

³⁴ Hanioğlu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, 93-94.

³⁵ See: Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*; Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*; Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism: The Ottoman Involvement in Libya during the War with Italy (1911-1919)*. Simon contends that the Sanūsiyya, with all their misgivings about Ottoman Sunni Orthodoxy, never desisted from referring to the Sultan as the leader of the believers.

Religion and, most especially, the figure of the Sultan as the sovereign was the central coordinate in the map of political relations between Enver and the Sanūsī. The Ottoman major, eager for the assistance of the Sanūsīyyah, played the part of the Sultan's kin but not without a sense of apprehension. When he received a letter from the head of the Sanūsī order Sayyid Ahmad pledging to support Enver in the resistance, he translated it and commented on it for the benefit of his German friend. Sayyid Ahmad, after praising God and the prophet Muhammad, included an encomium for Enver:

Hail to the vanquisher of the enemies of the fatherland and of the religion, the son-in-law of his majesty the Sultan, the symbol of strength, whose wisdom makes him the greatest of the great men of the world, the leader of all virtuous monarchs, the vessel of virtue... the light to all Sanūsī Sheikhs, both living and dead ...

Enver's observation on the letter was to deem it "*tout à fait orientale*." Thereafter he excused the style of the letter to his European correspondent and stated, "but for the cause I defend here it is very important, especially if this power [of the Sanūsīyyah] is in my hands."³⁶ For Enver, a former military attaché to Berlin and a professional Ottoman officer schooled at the Royal Military Academy, the erudite expressions of praise and the religious devotion it conveyed was of little import and could be dismissed as mere "oriental" language; however, the letter's acceptance of Enver's position as commander in Cyrenaica elated him. In translating his correspondence to his German friend, Enver, in effect, revealed the transactional contours to his commitment to pan-Islamism.

The motive force of Islam was evident to him and the imperial soldiers that took to the field to rally the locals to take up arms against the Italians. Enver employed this sort of Islamic discourse to explicate his cause and for whom he fought:

³⁶ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (9 July 1912) 151-152.

And you ask me now if I would side with the Turks or with the Arabs! For me and for Sayyid Ahmad (the Sanusi Sheikh) nationality does not exist in Islam. It's enough to cast your eyes about the Islamic world. Thus you see, that I will defend us by whatever means and will forget everything for that fight.³⁷

Yet, he also admitted his own internal conflict and the internal contradictions inherent in his mission. He continued his letter conflating the terms religion, culture, and civilization, signaling his conflicted relationship with Europe. He expressed his reverence for the simple lives of his Arab allies and his fear of their corruption by European civilization:

But if these Bedouins who have no need at all, who are content with so little, are to be civilized one day, I'm certain that they'll lose all their qualities and become spoiled—their principles, their way of life today will no longer please them. They'll be sad, but this sadness will be a necessity for them in their life. They will be enticed by this malady of civilization for which they will not want to take a remedy to cure it. It's a poison, your civilization, but it's a poison that awakens you when you don't want it to, and you can never sleep again.

Enver knew this poison all too well and regretted he ever ingested it. “Who knows,” he questioned, “if I had never known the enticements of your culture, it would be much easier to lead the life I lead.”³⁸ The fight for Islam was at once the preservation of a precolonial ideal and a resistance to an encroaching European civilization. Islam and anti-imperialism were fused in his words as a premodern, anti-Western mode of life. The Hamidian regime had promoted the religious position of the Sultan-Caliph in Istanbul while tacitly endorsing British imperial rule over the largest concentrations of Muslims in the world.³⁹ Enver and his cadre of *fedaî*, however, marched into North Africa as champions of anticolonial Islam, defenders of not just faith but as the protectors of those under threat of European domination.

³⁷ Ibid., Enver to Sarre (23 September 1912), 188.

³⁸ Ibid., 188.

³⁹ Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*, 65-96.

To defend the land and its people from this encroachment, ironically required its transformation. The pan-Islamic inflection of his speech should not mask the very national intentions he had on the territory of Cyrenaica. As opposed to the Italian proponents for the invasion of Libya who envisioned Tripolitania as an empty oasis, a *Lebensraum* of sorts prepared for repopulation, Enver's imperial territory was one peopled by fellow believers whose alliance with Ottoman officers must be exploited as an opportunity to Ottomanize and modernize the territory.

In Enver's communications with the Ottoman High Command in Istanbul his intent to Ottomanize and nationalize the territory is evident in his speech. For instance, the local volunteers that made up the lion's share of the Ottoman forces facing the Italians were often referred to collectively in many communications as "*mücâhidler*," a word denoting the voluntary nature of the soldiers.⁴⁰ Enver, however, eschewed such terminology in his telegraphic communiqués and divided his soldiers into two groups: "national (*millî*)" and "regular (*nizâmî*)."⁴¹ Enver never used the word "*mücâhid*" to describe his soldiers. Rather, he consistently employed the terms "national" and "regular," utilizing this dichotomy when reporting actions, casualties, and deaths among the soldiers under his command. At times, he would employ ethnic terms, such as "Arabs (*urbân*)," to refer to his irregular troops but more often than not, distinguished the irregular volunteers under his command as "national" troops.⁴²

⁴⁰ See: BOA, BEO 4003/300222 (18 February 1912); and BOA, BEO 4047/303504 (26 June 1912).

⁴¹ See: BOA, HR SYS 1549/87.1 (4 March 1912); and BOA, HR SYS 1548/7.1 (15 February 1912). The term *millî* at that time could refer to one's nationality in the modern sense but also retained an ethno-religious connotation. Yet, this religious connotation did not specify religion nor refer specifically to Islam. As the millet system, the system by which the Ottoman imperial government interacted and divided its peoples based on their religious confession, had gradually lost its legal status over the course of the Tanzimat and finally disappeared in the Second Constitutional Period, the term *millî* came to refer more and more to one's nationality; however, this religious separation so integral to the Ottoman Empire and the cohesion of its religious communities who were granted powers for self-regulation remained an important aspect of interethnic relations in the empire and during the period of its gradual dissolution. Turkish nationalist theorists in the early twentieth century popularized the term "*millî*" and "*millet*" to refer to nationality rather than "*kavmi*" demonstrating their preference for a Turkish nation with Islam as its one religion. See: Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslâmlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak* (İstanbul: Yeni Mecmua, 1918).

⁴² BOA, HR SYS 1549/87.1 (4 March 1912).

Enver was evidently set upon building a nation from his troops and his plans delineate a ceaseless desire to discipline and unify his irregular forces. From the time of his arrival, Enver set about to draw from the ranks of the various tribes and the Sanūsiyyah a cohort of irregular soldiers that he could retrain and rebrand as his own special unit. In early December 1911, he detailed his plan to “form a *compagnie de la garde*” which would be “a permanent formation of troops composed of the indigenous people.”⁴³ His enthusiasm for this company, an elite formation, derived from his ambition not only to improve the training and discipline of his men but also to unify the people of Cyrenaica and to bridge the tribal fissures endemic to the area by bringing them all under his imperial command structure. On 27 January 1912 with effusive pride he explained, “Recently I have formed the first *compagnie de la garde*—it’s composed of one hundred native volunteers, commanded by my officers—they are all armed with small-caliber Mausers and they are all children or relatives of the most celebrated Sheikhs.”⁴⁴ He also reported to have formed two other companies of a similar kind from the eastern and western tribes of the region. The rest of the companies of irregulars, however, did not incorporate individuals from a variety of tribes but were unitary groupings with each company comprising individuals from the same tribe. While he did not consider these other unitary companies “regulars” or “well-exercised” like his *compagnie de la garde*, they did at least “display incredible discipline”—an issue that had preoccupied him in an earlier failed assault on the Italian lines to which he attributed a lack of discipline.⁴⁵ Each tribe was assigned an imperial officer and several auxiliary officers to command and train them. Enver, with sole Ottoman command in Cyrenaica, had thus set about instituting von Goltz’s ideal of a union between nation and army, blurring the lines between the civil and the military. In fact, civil and military leadership were officially united when in April of 1912 the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior formally designated Enver Bey as the *Mutasarrıf*, the civilian governor, of the

⁴³ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (9 December 1911), 107.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Enver to Sarre (27 January 1912), 113.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Enver to Sarre (1 December 1911), 101, Enver to Sarre (27 January 1912), 113. By May 1912, Enver reported he had organized four more companies on the model of his *compagnie de la garde*. *Ibid.*, Enver to Sarre (8 May 1912), 130.

Ottoman province of Cyrenaica.⁴⁶ The appointment conformed perfectly to his view on the proper structure of government. He once confided to his German friend, “As for me as a soldier, I’m for the absolutism of the army, and for a system of government, a moderate constitution, just as you have.”⁴⁷ Enver’s vision for his province in Cyrenaica approached his mentor’s *das Volk in Waffen*, and his liberty of action due to his isolation from the capital permitted him to realize some of these ambitions.

With a strong belief in the military’s ability to address and satisfy the needs of civilian government, Enver eagerly set to work expanding his control of the state apparatus. Further, he devised plans to modernize and streamline the state, hoping to erase the cleavages of tribal affiliation. After only two months in the country, he claimed to have rebuilt the province in an orderly fashion. He even invited Maria to visit him in what he described as his own modernized principality, built in his own vision. To assuage her fears of travel to this distant and seemingly uncivilized country, he declared that “here reigns absolute security.” He explained that “the civil machine functions superbly, the Arabs and the Sheikhs of the *zāwiyyahs* address the government, something that until now had never existed.” He attributed this marvelous transformation to the institution of “justice” and to his own “dedication” and that of his imperial comrades. He even put words into the local Arabs’ mouths, claiming that they testified, “we are very happy for this war, because it has shown us the need for the authority of our Caliph and he has understood that we are his obedient children.” One could conclude with a fair amount of skepticism that such satisfaction was a result of the many economic and public works projects he put in place “to cover the necessities of the population and to substitute for the communication with the sea.” He avidly detailed such projects asserting, “Among other things, in order to improve the exportation of raw materials, I have these resources administered by special agents that maintain fixed prices. I have even discovered the routes the ancient Romans used that can be driven by automobiles from Egypt all the way to Tripoli and the Tunisian border.” One notable, and

⁴⁶ BOA, İ DH 1492/70.1 (9 April 1912). Under the Ottoman Empire the region of Cyrenaica was for governing purposes a *mutasarrıflık*. In Ottoman, it was called the *Bingazi mutasarrıflığı*.

⁴⁷ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (2 September 1912), 175.

verifiable, development was the printing of his own currency “with the value inscribed in both Arabic and Turkish.” Whether or not his currency obtained the level of exchange he claimed (according to Enver it was as fungible as gold or silver), they were fungible enough to cover the expenses of his province until cash could arrive from Egypt.⁴⁸ In August of 1912, he even began designing a new capital for his province, which would be located along the central supply corridor o the Benghazi-Solom road. Like a petit Bonaparte, he announced his plans with unrestrained optimism, “I will change the capital in my province in the true sense of the word.” His explanation, not surprisingly revealed the centrality of the military in his vision. “I have chosen the place where I shall install the munitions factory, etc. For this will be the military residence of the country.”⁴⁹ While the rosy picture he paints of Cyrenaica under his Young Turk regime may have little basis in reality, it demonstrates the ethos of the Unionist officer and the vision for an ideal state with which they marched into the field of battle.

It also illustrates the necessity of the caliph to legitimize the Ottoman Army’s rule over the land and the threat of conquest to unite the empire with its periphery. Enver was well aware of the fact that his proximity to the sultan-caliph granted him prestige among the Arabs. Each time he departed from a camp, the residents would cry out “God grant victory to our sultan and to our lord Enver Pasha!”⁵⁰ Moreover, this apparent cohesion between imperial and local troops, while facilitated by the figure of the caliph, intensified because of the foreign threat of the Italian invasion. In Enver’s words (or those he put in the mouth of the Arabs) the war permitted the strengthening of the Ottoman hold over the territory despite, or perhaps because, of the Italian blockade’s isolation of the territory. In an interview with French correspondent Rémond, Enver highlighted the irony of his achievements as direct developments of the war:

⁴⁸ Bardakçı, *Enver*, 113-114.

⁴⁹ Hanioğlu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (5 August 1912), 161.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Enver to Sarre (31 January 1912), 117.

The war has reconciled the tribes; in fact, it was necessary to rekindle the efforts of the Turkish government to civilize this country, efforts made now far simpler by the cessation of internal quarrels and the submission to the authority of the sultan. In place of the cities we've lost and while we wait, as we hope, for them to be reconquered, you see that everything has been organized in the camps to make veritable cities: roads are being laid, routes have begun; markets have been regularized, the souks are erected by the efforts of individual merchants, who, on my order, construct each [merchant] a house.

So enamored was Rémond with Enver's camp and his future plans that he expressed his belief that "this work, if it succeeds here, will serve as a model for the rest of your vast empire and even beyond... The Young Turkey, after having passed through its revolutionary trials, now faces, and not without some success, its trials of administration and organization in this Arab environment which offers perhaps less resistance than its Christian empire in Europe."⁵¹ Enver's enthusiasm for a modernized Cyrenaica had won him the accolades of his Western visitor.

His vision for Ottoman North Africa did not end with military reform or public works but required the reeducation of its people. Shortly after his arrival in Cyrenaica, Enver set about establishing a school for the children of his irregular soldiers. After a few months of instruction, he could boast that "today we gave out prizes to the young pupils, it was their trimestral exam. Everyone was amazed with their progress in such little time." In the midst of a war and with serious logistical obstacles to overcome, Enver Bey devoted his time and attention to schooling the locals. He extolled his contentment at seeing his "150 young Bedouin pupils at the school accompanied by their parents who had previously feared seeing a school even from a distance" and excused his small handwriting in his letters to his friend as a means of preserving paper for his students.⁵² Rémond reported in his visit that this was "one of his happiest ideas" and indicated that by March he had two hundred students in one camp and sixty in another.⁵³

⁵¹ Rémond, *Aux Camps Turco-Arabes*, 174-175.

⁵² Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (17 June 1912), 142.

⁵³ Rémond, *Aux Camps Turco-Arabes*, 169.

Education for Enver meant more than establishing primary schools for the local children, he saw it as a military endeavor, one that had the potential of strengthening his nation and placing its citizens under the care of the armed forces. He ensured that combat training would be part of the primary school curriculum. He reported on their training writing, “I’ve just returned from reviewing my young students who have their target practice regularly on Fridays. You should see how hard they work, how they have the martial spirit with their little rifles.”⁵⁴ He further mentioned that he had arranged for twenty three children of the local sheikhs to attend the imperial high schools in the capital, all at the expense of the government. He would send another thirty students to the military academies of the capital. Education by such means laid further groundwork for the militarization and Ottomanization of the local population. He thus saw these educational initiatives as a necessity to “prepare for the future a suitable material for the benefit of the nation. They will become the sworn enemies (*Erbfeinde*) of the Italians.”⁵⁵ Enver, like many others of his generation, believed in the transformative power of education, which possessed the means to counter the European cultural and political assault on the empire.⁵⁶ The war Unionist officers like Enver waged was not just against the Italians, but one against the backwardness of the empire’s peoples. It was to be a war of imperial construction bringing the light of the Ottoman state to the benighted subjects of the empire. It was an operationalization of what Ussama Makdisi labels “Ottoman Orientalism,” a late nineteenth-century modernizing nationalist discourse of progress, an imperial effort to discipline and reform imperial subjects of a segmented empire of modern and pre-modern spaces.⁵⁷

Enver, educated at the elite schools of the capital and a representative of the modern vanguard of the CUP, enacted his own *mission civilisatrice* amongst his North African soldiers and their families.

⁵⁴ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (30 September 1912), 189.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Enver to Sarre (30 September 1912), 189-190. The official enrollment of these students in imperial schools is recorded in the Turkish General Staff archives. See: ATASE, OİH 38/174 (25 March 1913).

⁵⁶ Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁵⁷ Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 768-96.

Organizing his Bedouin irregulars into companies, he even arranged for them to dress the part by distributing khaki uniforms of Ottoman regulars to replace their “national costumes.” He reported with effusive pride that the Sanūsī Sheikhs found “that the color of the military uniform adapted very well to the color of the terrain and that the troops dressed in this manner would be better protected.” At this point, the majority of his irregulars eagerly replaced their clothing with new uniforms, and thus Enver “had won for the motherland a completely regular army which will serve her very well.”⁵⁸

Enver, an Ottomanizing missionary of progress, perceived his role as military commander and civilian governor as one of conversion. Rather than merely charging the Italian lines, he had to transform the land and people of Cyrenaica from its *Oriental* state—he even uses the term to describe the Sanūsīyya—into a progressive military force. He expressed with pride the providential force he had acquired for his nation:

I have become the master of the situation. Into my hands has fallen a power (the Sanusiyya), a force for which the various powers of Europe, the Italians, the French, the English spend millions to have in their hands. Even the Khedive had tried to appropriate and employ them against us. And thus, this force has come to me without my spending a dime.⁵⁹

Enver, indeed, took great pride in the frugality of his campaign, much of which was the result of these irregular forces. Ottoman expenses on the Cyrenaican front amounted to only 25,000 Ottoman Lira a month, which was smuggled to Enver’s headquarters by means of the Extraordinary Ottoman Mission in Egypt (*Mısır Fevkalâde Komiserliği*), the de jure representation of the Ottoman Sultan’s loose sovereignty over Egypt.⁶⁰ Enver claimed his expenses were even less than the 25,000 Ottoman Lira his government sent, maintaining he had only spent 15,000 Lira on his 20,000 combatants and civil servants over the course of

⁵⁸ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa* (9 July 1912), 150-151.

⁵⁹ Ibid. Enver to Sarre (9 July 1912), 152.

⁶⁰ BOA, BEO 3998/299793 (19 December 1911).

three months.⁶¹ The precision of his accounting may be called into question here as he had only been present in the country for two months on 13 January 1912 when he penned the letter. Furthermore, periodic disturbances in the transportation of the cash from Cairo to the Ottoman camp in Derne required Enver to take extraordinary measures and print his own currency.⁶² Nonetheless, his expenses for soldiers were minimal. His Arab volunteers required little for sustenance as they lived off the considerable booty they could plunder from their Italian attacks. Eşref Kuşçubaşı recounted the surprise of a French war correspondent who marveled at all the Italian equipment and clothing in use at the camp. The journalist reportedly asked in jest, “Are you allies of the Italians, or are you at war with them.” Eşref responded, “Italy is a guest who came without invitation. So, we feel comfortable using all their belongings.”⁶³

In fact, the territory of Libya underwent two invasions over the course of the Italo-Turkish War. First, Italian forces stormed North Africa with the design of annexing the territory and acquiring a destination for the millions of Italians who were emigrating from the peninsula. For proponents of the invasion, the Italian nation, seemingly losing its lifeblood through emigration, could only be cured of this hemorrhaging through a settler-colonial expansion into North Africa. The second invasion, that of the Young Turk officers of whom Enver was emblematic, descended upon North Africa with differing designs on the territory. For these Young Turks, it was not migration but alliance and conversion to Ottomanism that could save its nation/empire. From this perspective, Enver’s *fedaî* effected an equally aggressive incursion into the same land as the Italians, not to claim the territory but its inhabitants. Even as peace with the Italians appeared to be on the horizon, on 30 August, Enver wrote of the opening of new school facilities in the fortress of Jaghbub. In the same letter in which he expressed his concerns of a rebellion in Albania and war clouds forming over the Ottoman Balkan territories, he detailed his enormous efforts in educating the people of Cyrenaica: “God help us in this *ordre de civilization*. There is so much to be done in this

⁶¹ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (13 January 1912), 109-110.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Enver to Sarre (23 September 1912), 187.

⁶³ Koloğlu, ed., *Trablusgarp Savaşı ve Türk Subayları, 1911-1912*, 74.

country and that is enough to encourage a desire to work.” After centuries of soldiers trampling the area, the population and their environs had become “primitive” in Enver’s estimation. Had it not been for the minimal efforts of the Sanūsī, “the population ... would now be completely illiterate and without any religion.” The taming of this “mountainous terrain” presenting “enormous difficulties” could only be achieved through a rigid education and the absorption of the people into a progressive nation.⁶⁴ The territory could only be recovered for civilization via its people. Enver’s Cyrenaica was not, as Italians claimed, empty of people, but empty of progressive Ottomans.

Conclusion: Idealizing Reality

“Wenn wir unsere Ideale nicht verwirklichen können, dann können wir wenigstens unsere Wirklichkeit idealisieren.” (If we can’t realize our ideal, then we can at least idealize our reality.) Attributed to a “German book” Enver Bey read while stationed in Cyrenaica.⁶⁵

Enver and his Young Turk cadre of *fedaî*, never managed to achieve their designs for the land of Cyrenaica and its people. The Peace of Ouchy of 18 October 1912 and the outbreak of the First Balkan War compelled them to abandon the Ottoman provinces of North Africa and to take their fight to the last Ottoman foothold in Europe. While these imperial officers had erected a robust defense of the territory of Libya, the contradictions between their application of Hamidian-style pan-Islamism and Young Turk-style defensive developmentalism hindered their efforts to Ottomanize its people. In the end, Enver’s mobilization of the Sanūsī was not so different from Abdülhamid’s earlier alliances with the religious brotherhood. To ensure Sheikh Ahmad’s support in the war and award his loyalty, the Porte arranged for Sultan Mehmed Reşid to offer a gift of a diamond encrusted sword, a gold watch, and a fine, hand-woven prayer rug.⁶⁶ Enver

⁶⁴ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (30 August 1912), 172-173.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁶⁶ BOA DVN NMH 37/2.2 (8 March 1912).

delivered these gifts along with an Ottoman medal, the *Osmaniyye* First Class, to the Sheikh. He estimated the value of the sword to be 25,000 Ottoman Lira, equal in value to his monthly budget for the entirety of Cyrenaica.⁶⁷ The bestowing of such considerable gifts evinces the relative independence the Sanūsī retained since the Hamidian period. The Sanūsī Sheikh was no common citizen in the reformed Young Turk Ottoman Empire but a vassal of the sultan-caliph in the tradition of the *ancien régime*. Enver was well aware of his impotence in relation to the Sheikh. When complaining of his lack of officers and eagerly awaiting Sayyid Ahmad's arrival, he wondered "if he would change his loyal attitude." A thought that caused him considerable consternation and left him envisioning his own death.⁶⁸

To effectively defend the imperial territory of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, Enver and the other Young Turk officers led an anticolonial resistance movement framed within a pan-Islamic discourse. Enver could claim that he would "live to work for the defense of the supreme right of a people, their liberty," but to do so required the reformation of a people "by order and discipline."⁶⁹ These Young Turk volunteers became anticolonial imperialists, who could justify the seeming dissonance in their ideologies through a reliance on a mobilizing discourse of pan-Islamism. Yet, when the orders arrived for his departure, Enver was well aware that the resistance he commanded was not so much an enduring composite of Ottoman brothers but a temporary alliance of forces between the vanguard of the Young Turk movement and the local power brokers of North Africa. Having received news of peace between the Ottoman and Italian government, he immediately sped away in a Fiat sports car despoiled from the Italian army to make a personal visit to Sheikh Ahmad in his headquarters in Jaghbub.⁷⁰ After a reportedly long meeting with the Sanūsī Sheikh, Enver returned to his camp and announced the guidance he had received to Eşref Kuşçubaşı and the other commanders in Cyrenaica. "We will carry on the resistance as long as it is granted to us," he

⁶⁷ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (24 July 1912), 157.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Enver to Sarre (12 July 1912), 155.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Enver to Sarre (May 1912), 132, and (31 January 1912), 116.

⁷⁰ F.O. 195/2397, Jones to Grey (17 December 1912). Francis Jones, the British consul in Benghazi was informed of the visit and sent a report on to Secretary of State Edward Grey.

had assured Enver. “If the inevitability of fate and more holy and pressing matters call you to leave the battlefield, do not sorrow... For we must resign ourselves to our fate.”⁷¹ Eşref reported there was not a dry eye among the Young Turk officers who had gathered to hear the news from the Sheikh. The demands of defending the last fragment of the Ottoman Empire in Africa from the Italian invader unified, for a time, the imperial *fedaî* and the local *mücahid* into a cohesive force. Undoubtedly, the shared Muslim anticolonial sentiment provided an effective mobilizing discourse for officer and soldier; however, their mutual allegiance was fleeting. The imperial officers, having failed to Ottomanize North Africa, were swept away to the heartland of the empire, where other threats imperilled the fate of the Young Turk project.

⁷¹ Koloğlu, ed., *Trablusgarp Savaşı ve Türk Subayları, 1911-1912*, 76.

Chapter 5

“Defending your Tribe, your Women, your Hometown, and your Patria”: The Ottoman Empire and Volunteerism in the Italo Turkish War

Military Parade or Strategic Stalemate?

On the very day the Italian *chargé d'affaires* delivered the ultimatum to Ottoman Grand Vezir İbrahim Hakkı Pasha, the Turin-daily *La stampa* assured its readers that the impending war would be one of liberation and not conquest:

The *Tribuna*'s correspondent at Constantinople interviewed an esteemed and very influential Arab just now from Tripoli. He has confirmed that the Grand Sanūsī categorically and definitively responded “no” to the solicitations of the Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress for warriors against the Italians. The Arabs have expressed their discontent and disgust with the misgovernment that the Young Turks have installed and perpetuated in Tripoli and Cyrenaica. The Arabs will embrace the Italians with great hope and faith if they intervene.

Thereafter the article quoted the “esteemed” Arab denouncing the Turks as “our worst parasites.” The correspondent then reportedly asked, “But doesn’t it disgust the Arabs that a foreigner may one day occupy Arab soil?” to which he replied, “None! Not one foreigner nor even an enemy could provoke as much disgust and contempt as Turkish domination does!”¹ Reports such as these about an Arab population indifferent or even eagerly awaiting an Italian occupation abounded in the Italian press leading many to dismiss the imminent conflict as merely a “military parade (*passeggiata militare*).”² These accounts even influenced the Italian General Staff, who

¹ “La situazione a Tripoli dopo l’arrivo del ‘Derna,’” *La stampa*, September 28, 1911.

² Maltese, *La terra promessa: La guerra italo-turca e la conquista della Libia, 1911-1912*, 79-81.

believed that the rapid capture of a few significant ports would be sufficient to bring the Turks to the bargaining table, planned for a naval war of short duration.

In a calculated attempt to mollify the population, Rear Admiral Borea Ricci issued a proclamation assuring the rights of the inhabitants of Tripoli to their property and abolishing the Ottoman practices of conscription and the head tax. The proclamation further unfolded the altruistic motives of the Italian occupiers, who sought to lead the country from its “deplorable economic conditions” to one of general welfare, to bring Tripolitarians “from poverty to wealth, from misery to prosperity.”³ However, the benevolent effusions of the armed forces proved ineffectual, and the Italian occupiers soon resorted to more coercive means to ensure the passivity of the Arab population. The first of a series of deportations, according to a directive signed by Giolitti, sent 595 Arabs to isolation and imprisonment on the islands of Tremiti on 26 October 1911.⁴

When the first troops met fierce resistance not only from the Ottoman garrisons but the local population, the Italian General Staff expressed wonder. The General Staff attributed the fact that the population “became hostile” to “the efficacy of Turkish propaganda” and ascribed the Turkish successes at repulsing Italian attacks to “their admirable knowledge of the intricate and treacherous locality.”⁵ Writing for the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Gottlob Adolf Krause, a German linguist in residence in Tripoli in 1911, marveled at the coordination of the Arab and Turkish forces in response to the Italian invasion:

³ Luigi Goglia and Fabio Grassi, *Il colonialismo italiano da Adua all’Imperio* (Rome: Laterza, 1981), 161. The book contains a selection of official government documents and private accounts of Italian *colons* and soldiers.

⁴ Nicola Labanca, *Un nodo. Immagini e documenti sulla repressione coloniale italiana in Libia* (Rome, 2002), 121.

⁵ Tittoni, *The Italo-Turkish War*, 26. These excerpts are derived from Tittoni’s translation of documents of the Italian General Staff on the conduct of the war.

With such calm and confidence everything is executed! The Turkish officers proved themselves outstandingly in a difficult and distressing situation, the whole of Turkey can be proud of them. An entire flotilla of a great power arrived to occupy an undefended city devoid of any soldiers. And the Tripolitanian Police! How have these brave men, who are mostly Arabs, managed to perform their most difficult duty day and night without falling to sleep?⁶

This unexpected close cooperation between the Ottoman garrison forces and the local population astonished European spectators and frustrated Italian plans to occupy the country. Popular participation in the conflict only increased as the war dragged on. The mobilization of thousands of volunteer irregular soldiers from North Africa and from diverse locations inside and outside the empire filled the ranks of an Ottoman guerrilla army, a force that effectively suppressed Italian advances into the interior of the country. The fantasy of a military parade gave way to the reality of a year-long siege, a product of the willing and ambitious volunteers eager to resist the Italian invasion.

Explaining Volunteerism in the Italo-Turkish War

Just as the *fedaî* imperial officers, like Enver Bey and Ali Fethi Okyar, exerted their energies and risked their lives building an effective resistance, many more untrained volunteers made similar sacrifices. These men and women, some travelling great distances, took up arms under the same Ottoman banner and fought for the empire. The cannon fodder of the Ottomans, unlike that of the Italians, was not scores of conscripts but self-selected volunteers. Many thousands ultimately served under Ottoman officers in the defense of Tripoli and Cyrenaica. The success of fielding this grand volunteer army highlights the strategic flexibility of the late

⁶ Peter Seebald, "Die italienische Kolonialeroberung von Tripolis – gesehen mit den Augen eines deutschen Antikolonialisten, Gottlob Adolf Krause (1850-1938)," in Sabine Frank and Martina Kamp, *Libyen im 20. Jahrhundert. Zwischen Fremdherrschaft und nationaler Selbstbestimmung* (Hamburg, 1995).

Ottoman Empire. Preserving the Ottoman state and its rule in North Africa could at once mean saving a “a part of the patria (*vatanından bir parça*),” as Fethi had declared when he left his post as military attaché in Paris, or “defending your tribe, your women, your hometown, and your patria,” as Sheikh Aḥmad al-Sanūsī proclaimed in his declaration of jihad.⁷

The empire’s geopolitical position as the center of an Islamic civilization, strenuously cultivated since the years of Abdülhamid II to counter European civilizational discourse by projecting the religious influence of the caliphate, facilitated Muslim volunteerism.⁸ Further, with the 1908 revolution and the propagation of Young Turk anticolonial discourse, the empire was poised to attract sympathetic actors from within and without its territory. The energetic Unionist support for the war and the Committee’s dispatch of young capable officers to the front showcased to spectators the empire’s commitment to Islam and its North African territories. Sulayman al-Barūnī and Ferhat Bey, both Unionist allies and the Ottoman Parliamentary Deputies of the Tripolitanian districts of Jabal al-Gharbī and Tripoli respectively, traveled throughout the North African countryside sermonizing the local population and negotiating with tribal and religious leaders. The threat of the colonial invader and the appeals to religious solidarity produced near immediate results. Riding a wave of Muslim anticolonialism, the empire absorbed an army of eager volunteers into its ranks.

The capacious ideology of Muslim anticolonialism alone did not field thousands of soldiers. The empire’s ability to distribute salaries—though they were meager—coupled with the opportunity to loot a well-rationed European army attracted many opportunist recruits to the

⁷ *Trablusgarp Savaşı ve Türk Subayları, 1911-1912*, 105; BOA AMTZ 5 9-C/302.1 (12 January 1912).

⁸ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire*; Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*, 65-130.

Ottoman banner and kept them in the field for the duration of the conflict. Furthermore, the preservation of an alliance with the Sanūsiyyah devised in the Hamidian era to expand Ottoman North Africa into the hinterlands and thus protect its southern flank from imperial rivals won the support of the most influential religious leader of the region.⁹ Generous gifts and adroit diplomacy with Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sanūsī ultimately yielded a long-lasting military alliance with arguably the most influential Islamic order in North Africa. This alliance would perpetuate Ottoman influence in the region until the empire's dissolution. Allies, opportunists, and ideologues all flocked to the front to serve under the direction of Ottoman officers and oust the Italian invader. This chapter thus highlights both the capacious ideology of anticolonialism that underpinned the cohesive volunteer Ottoman army in North Africa and the strategic flexibility of the empire in its formulation of alliances on the imperial periphery. In this way, the Young Turk officers of the Ottoman Empire managed to take charge of an anticolonial enterprise forged by the heated civilizational discourse that accompanied the apogee of European imperialism in Africa.

Earning Their Trust

When and how this army of volunteers emerged and integrated into the Ottoman forces arrayed in Tripoli remains somewhat of a mystery due to the paucity of sources. Few of the local men and women that filled the ranks of this army were literate and therefore left little written record of their involvement in the conflict. The war correspondents arrived more than a month after the beginning of hostilities and often relied on Ottoman officers and hearsay to retell the initial development of the irregular resistance. British journalist Ernest Bennet, embedded with

⁹ See: Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and Hijaz*.

the Ottoman Army in late November 1911 for the battle waged around the port city of Zuwarah, located northwest of Tripoli, noted that it was the local Arabs' fierce disdain for the invaders more than anything else that bound the Arabs to the Ottoman regular forces.

One of the most foolish stories spread by Italian newspapers is that the Arabs are only fighting because compelled by the Turks. Compulsion indeed! Apart from the numerical proportion of Turks and Arabs, a glance at the faces of these Arabs when the word "Italiano" is mentioned is enough to disabuse any writer's mind of this belief.

The Arabs reserved this "bitterest resentment" for the enemy, Bennet explained, because they witnessed firsthand the invasion's destruction meted out on "their houses and date palms."¹⁰ The attack on their own soil no doubt provoked the wrath of many of the inhabitants and thrust them into the arms of their Ottoman protectors.

¹⁰ Bennett, *With the Turks in Tripoli*, 65-66.

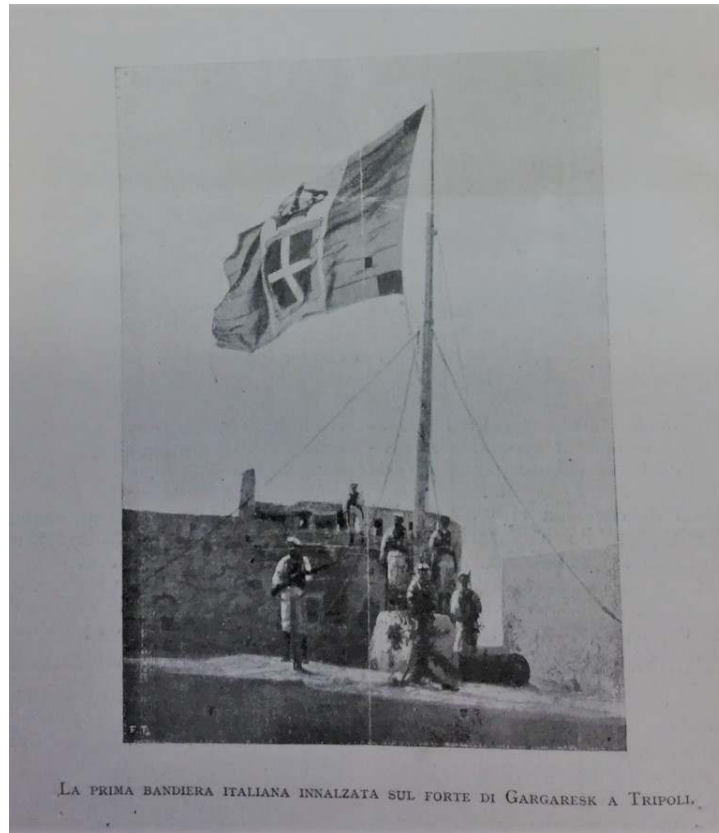


Figure 5.1: The Italian flag hoisted over the Pasha's fort in Tripoli
Source: "La nuova colonia italiana," *Il Secolo XX*, 1911, 936.

To some inhabitants the hasty withdrawal of the Ottoman forces from the city of Tripoli at the moment of Italian preparatory shelling for the amphibious assault may have been reason enough to question their faith in their imperial overlords. The 1,500 Italian marines who disembarked and hoisted the Italian flag over Tripoli's citadel found the thirty thousand inhabitants of the city seemingly indifferent to their arrival.¹¹ The locals would have had good reason to feel abandoned. An Ottoman commander in Tripolitania, Yusuf Cemal, intimated as much to French correspondent Georges Rémond in January of 1912:

The situation of the Turks during the first fifteen days, he tells me, was terrible. The Arabs believed that they had sold Tripoli to the Italians and refused not only to help them, but to supply them with men and camels. After the Ottoman officers had organized

¹¹ Lino del Fra, *Sciara Sciat: Genocidio nell'oasi. L'esercito italiano a Tripoli* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2011), 29.

the first skirmishes, the Arabs were convinced that they were not traitors and began to have a better impression of them.¹²

Alfred Dickson, the British Consul in Tripoli, confirmed the local population's seeming indifference to the arrival of the invaders. After the arrival of the Italian marines and the cessation of the naval bombardment, the locals reportedly opened their shops and began moving "about unmolested and in security." So positive was his appraisal of the situation that he believed Admiral Borea Ricci, the Italian Provisional Governor of Tripoli, was "likely to win the respect and confidence of the population."¹³

From the earliest moments there was also evidence of resistance on the part of the local population to the Italian invasion. One day prior to the disembarkation of Italian troops, Dickson reported that "some Arabs on a cliff having fired on an Italian torpedo boat with the white flag, three battleships directed a furious cannonade against the shore killing some natives and doing much damage to property."¹⁴ On the day of Italy's declaration of war, French Vice-Consul Lecoutour informed Paris that "the Muslim population of Benghazi, already very agitated against the Italians, is bound to provoke an incident between Italy and Turkey which may redound with grave consequences." Lecoutour further reported that a large group of locals, having heard that a shipment of arms was to be delivered to the Italian Consulate in Benghazi, blocked its delivery and ransacked the freight. "The package in question was opened by force by the population in a fury. Inside, in all truth, some twenty Mausers were found, as were a great number of revolvers,

¹² Rémond, *Aux Camps Turco-Arabs: Notes de Route et de Guerre en Cyrénaïque et en Tripolitaine*, 29.

¹³ F.O. 160/29/11116310, Alfred Dickson to Sir Edward Grey (12 October 1911). Incidentally, Ricci only retained the governorship for a little more than a week and returned to his post in the fleet after the arrival of General Caneva and his assumption of the title of Governor General of Tripoli and Cyrenaica.

¹⁴ F.O. 160/29, Alfred Dickson to Sir Edward Grey (5 October 1911).

boxes of ammunition, and bayonets and ammo pouches as well.” After the discovery, “the mob’s rage was such that the gendarmes were obliged to fire in the air to disperse the crowd” which had overtaken the customs yard. The assembled group then declared a boycott on all Italian goods.¹⁵ From Lecoutour’s perspective, the fear was not so much of the Ottomans’ dragging the Arabs into a war, but quite the contrary. When the Italians finally invaded Benghazi on 20 October 1911, they met stiff opposition from the Ottoman forces who were buttressed by a large Sanūsī contingent reportedly on the orders of Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sanūsī.¹⁶ The Ottoman garrison ultimately withdrew to a few kilometers outside the city where it would regroup and harass the city for the duration of the conflict.

The Participants’ Testimonies

These reports fail to some extent to capture the experience of the many local Arabs who took part in these initial campaigns. Fortunately, later initiatives by the Libyan government of Muammar Gaddafi to integrate the Italo-Turkish War into a grander narrative of the Libyan people’s struggle for national independence provide some insight, even if problematic, from the perspective of the local participants. The voices of those who flocked to the resistance in the early days of the conflict remain somewhat muted and eroded, transmitted to us decades later by “Libya’s Center for the Study of the *Jihad* of the Libyans against the Italian Invasion;” however, their recollections demonstrate the near instantaneous and perfunctory manner by which North Africans integrated into an Ottoman-led resistance.¹⁷

¹⁵ MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 309, Telegram Lecoutour to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (29 September 1911).

¹⁶ Tekin, *Enver Paşa ve Dönemi*, 181; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 109-110.

¹⁷ See: Al-Mabrūk al-Sā‘idī ed., *Mawsū‘at Riwāyāt al-Jihād*. The director of the Center for the Study of the *Jihad* of the Libyans against the Italian Invasion Dr. Muḥammad al-Ṭahir al-Jarārī maintains that the series of recorded oral



Figure 5.2: “The Defenders of Tripoli: Arab Militia under a Turkish Officer”

“The number of regular Turkish troops who are fighting against the Italians in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica is known to be very slight. The Sultan’s military strength is comprised to a great extent of Arab volunteers who battle admirably under the command of Turkish officers, even if they do not leave the impression of disciplined European soldiers.”

Source: *Der Tag*, March 15, 1912

One combatant from the mountainous area just south of Tripoli, Muḥammad Ramaḍān, recalled the close coordination of efforts with the Turks from the early days of the war. Camels were requisitioned, and arms were collected and distributed to the locals with rapidity. The weapons were late-model Mauser repeating rifles, then the current service rifle of the Ottoman Army.¹⁸ According to Muḥammad Ramaḍān, “the Turks had been stockpiling small arms and ammunition in the Pasha’s estate” in Tripoli. “From this location the arms were moved to the

histories of Libyan combatants were intended to “provide an essential source” to “the greatest number of readers possible” so they in turn can “contribute to the Center in its research endeavors.”

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1. This source, problematic as it is, conveys memory more than the facts of the events. A case in point is Muḥammad Ramaḍān’s assertion that the Mauser had “a ten-round capacity.” The rifle in question is most likely a variant of the Mauser M98 or K98, both of which had a capacity of only five rounds. These oral interviews were conducted nearly sixty-five years after the event, and thus the details described by the participants are of doubtful value. Their general impressions are far more useful.

city of ‘Aziziya and from there to the town of Gharyan.’¹⁹ After having moved the arms to a secure location, “two individuals from each quarter of Gharyan were selected” to distribute arms. Muḥammad Ramaḍān recalled no obstacles to this coordination of efforts between Ottoman officers and local volunteers. In fact, the time frame for the collection, distribution, and use of Ottoman arms by the Tripolitanian volunteers was a matter of days. By 23 October 1911, not three weeks after the bombardment of Tripoli the Ottoman volunteer army converged on the Shara Shatt oasis catching the Italian Army off guard and delivering a decisive defeat to their European invader. The preparations for the attack drew many volunteers, even young boys, as Muḥammad Ramaḍān recalled:

We handed out the weapons and then waited three days in Tghessāt²⁰. Individuals were gathered to receive weapons but the officials did not supply them with arms when they discovered they were between 10 and 12 years of age. We headed towards Tripoli with such a multitude of people that its head was already in Abū Ghaylān while the tail of our group was still back at Tghesāt²¹. The horses numbered 2000.²²

While the purported size of the army’s baggage train may be exaggerated, Muḥammad Ramaḍān’s description of the rapidity and ease with which an army was assembled is significant. A volunteer force materialized with little investment of time and effort on the part of the imperial army. Another participant, ‘Alī Aḥmad Ibrāhīm, described this union of forces in a similar fashion. “The Italians invaded Tripoli, and the Turks withdrew to the interior. There they armed

¹⁹ ‘Aziziya and Gharyan were two cities along a significant trade route that tied Fezzan in what is now southern Libya to the port of Tripoli. Located in plateaus along the Nafusa Mountains, both cities could rely on their geography to protect them from Italian incursions. Gharyan is noted as the center of resistance to the Italian occupation.

²⁰ A village on the northern end of Gharyan some ninety kilometers south of Tripoli.

²¹ A distance of some fifteen kilometers.

²² Al-Mabrūk al-Sā‘idī ed., *Mawsū‘at Riwāyāt al-Jihād*, 1-2.

themselves from their stockpiles in ‘Aziziya and Gharyan. The volunteers rushed in from diverse directions and came together at al-Suwānī.”²³ Whether the passage of time erased their memory of a concerted effort on the part of the Ottomans to recruit volunteers or, as they recalled, the insurgent army of local Tripolitarians spontaneously and rapidly congressed with imperial officers to attack the Italians remains uncertain; however, what is certain is that in less than three weeks from the Italian landing in Tripoli an army supplied and armed by the Ottoman Empire but composed primarily of local volunteers sent the Italians into full scale retreat.

Recruitment

Yusuf Cemal, Rémond’s Ottoman officer informant, expressed that skilled and esteemed locals aided in the clarion call to arms and the recruitment of able-bodied soldiers for the Ottoman victory at the Sharah Shatt Oasis:

The [parliamentary] deputy of the country, Sulayman al-Barūnī, and a few other religious leaders began to preach resistance and to enroll volunteers. Thereafter came the victories of the oasis, when the Italians were thrown back into the interior of Tripoli and the Turkish forward positions were established inside the city itself, ... just four kilometers from the walls.

For the Italians the breaking of their lines and the attack on their troops primarily by an irregular, insurgent force of North Africans disproved the notion that the Arabs would peacefully accept their occupation. Italian dailies labeled the Arabs “insidious and obstinate” or “treacherous.”²⁴

Vocal opponents of Giolitti’s government explained that “the country ignored the fact that the Italian armies would be opposed not only by the Turks, but by the Arabs and the other natives.”²⁵

²³ Ibid., 251. Al-Suwānī is located to the southwest of Tripoli, just 20 kilometers west of ‘Aziziyah.

²⁴ “La prova,” *Corriere della Sera*, 26 October 1911. See: del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia: Tripoli bel suol d’amore*, 119-136.

For the Ottomans the victory, however, was temporary because “after forty days, and cognizant of the arrival of new [Italian] reinforcements,” their forces, “fearing their flank would be turned,” returned to ‘Aziziyah. Yet, this achievement, which Yusuf attributed to recruitment efforts, also yielded more permanent results for the cohesion of the Ottoman volunteer army. “The alliance between the Turks and the Arabs became once and for all a *fait accompli*, the enthusiasm for a holy war reached its peak amongst the tribes of the plains and those of the mountains and the distant peoples of Fezzan and Sudan.”²⁶

Observers noted that Ferhat Bey and Sulaymān al-Baarūnī, who could both navigate with just as much facility in the imperial capital as they could in their home soil, were integral in recruiting fighters and building cohesion between the regular army and its local volunteers. British Red Crescent volunteer Ernest Griffin, who worked alongside Sulaymān al-Barūnī, described him as “a man of great influence” and claimed that “it was largely owing to his efforts that the tribes had rallied so loyally to the Turkish flag when the invader appeared off Tripoli.” He was invaluable to the Ottomans as “a well-educated man, with considerable organizing powers” and because “he was never averse to exposing himself to hostile fire,...[he] made a reputation for himself amongst the Arabs.”²⁷ Ostler went so far as to claim that Ferhat Bey and Sulaymān al-Barūnī were “almost entirely responsible for the resistance offered by the Arabs. Turkey owes much to these two patriots. But for them the Italian occupation of Tripoli would have been accomplished within three months after the declaration of war.”²⁸

²⁵ Giulio Barni, Arturo Labriola, Alfredo Polledro, et alia, *Pro e contro la guerra di Tripoli. Discussioni nel campo rivoluzionario* (Naples: Società Editrice Partenopta, 1912), 63.

²⁶ Rémond, *Aux Camps Turco-Arabs: Notes de Route et de Guerre en Cyrénaïque et en Tripolitaine*, 28-29.

²⁷ Ernest Griffin, *Adventures in Tripoli: A Doctor in the Desert* (London: Philip Allan & Co., 1924). 96-97.

²⁸ Ostler, *The Arabs in Tripoli*, 64.

Once, Ostler even happened upon Ferhat and al-Bārūnī in council with tribal leaders in one of their recruitment missions and was roped into their rhetorical efforts to aggrandize the Ottoman Army. Ferhat, speaking privately to Ostler, reportedly explained:

Here ... are some notables of the Arabs of this district and of Zawia,²⁹ who were at first reluctant to take up the war, or urge their people to do so. They thought that if they made terms in the beginning with the Italians, and neither helped the Turks nor fought against them in the war, they could not suffer much, no matter how the business should turn out. They had hoped to stand well with both sides, and yet throw in their lot with neither. And we had hard work to persuade them to fight at all. After the Turks were driven from Ain Zara,³⁰ these men had almost given up the fight: but now, after our successes, they are keenly on our side; and so, to-day, Barouni Bey has brought them to his tent, and he and I will fan the flame of their enthusiasm.

Ferhat then requested that Ostler, as a British observer, praise the bravery of the Arab forces facing off the Italian Army.³¹ From Ostler's account, it appears that these recruitment efforts were required as much for retention as they were for enlistment.

Enthusiasm and investment for a long war necessitated negotiation and suasion. Rémond, in contradiction to the widespread opinion in Europe that the Arab insurgents while bolstering the Ottoman numbers, were “an inorganic force,” incapable of the discipline necessary to defeat their Italian opponent, averred that “thanks ... to the indefatigable activity of deputies Ferhat Bey, of Tripoli, and Sulaymān al-Barūnī, of Jebel, this force has now achieved a certain discipline, which they have exercised in a war quite distinct from the *razzias* between tribes.” This effort of disciplining on the part of Ferhat and al-Barūnī had delivered a capable army,

²⁹ A town approximately forty kilometers west of Tripoli.

³⁰ In late November of 1911, the Ottoman forces retreated from ‘Ayn Zārah, a southeast suburb of Tripoli, which they had retaken in the battle of Shara Shatt.

³¹ Ostler, *The Arabs in Tripoli*, 224.

habituated to the climate and acquainted with the terrain, which “was animated to the greatest extent by a patriotic and religious exaltation ... that cannot be ignored.”³²

Ostler’s report of the elegant and energetic appeals of the two rhetoricians—Ferhat claimed that his townspeople memorized his speeches as a young man on account of their erudition—attests to their method of encouragement and negotiation to inspire and discipline the tribes. Enraging their audience they asked rhetorically, “how many did they shoot down in Tripoli who never bore a gun?” Charges of Italian brutality, especially in their indiscriminate use of artillery and aircraft against the local population, were deployed to great effect to denigrate the Italians and draw more soldiers to the fight. The Italian practice of shelling from afar had protected their army but turned the population against them. Neşet Bey’s headquarters in ‘Aziziya noted the ire invoked in the local population whose “women, elderly, and innocent children the Italians bombed daily.”³³ Yet, the death of the innocent was not the only means of encouragement that these recruiters employed to provoke action from the local population. Following a lofty panegyric on the bravery of the Arabs, al-Barūnī warned of the consequences of an Italian victory. “For, look you, this war costs every day to the Italians more than all the money that the richest amongst us has. And if they win our country, who, think you shall pay them back for their loss?” Asked why they should risk everything for the Turk, Ferhat reportedly responded:

True, the Turk was not the most just of overlords in the old days, and I myself have suffered under his misrule. But that was in the days of the old Sultan, when the taxes were cruel, and there was no law. But all that has been changed; and I tell you, if the

³² Rémond, *Aux Camps Turco-Arabs: Notes de Route et de Guerre en Cyrénaïque et en Tripolitaine*, 46.

³³ ATASE OİH 16/71.4 (20 January 1912).

Italian should come to Tripoli, you will change stale bread for stone... So when he comes here, out goes the Arab from the fields into the desert.³⁴

Ferhat and al-Barūnī, locals with intricate knowledge of the people, served as an indispensable mediator between the center and the periphery. Their integration into the culture and politics of Istanbul were also evident. They parroted the talking points of the Unionist leadership that perfunctorily deflected any accusations of misrule as a crime to the *ancien régime*. Likewise, they decried the avarice of European imperialism and warned against intriguing with would be colonizers. Further, they could testify of the benefits of the new Young Turk regime having been elected parliamentary deputies after the revolution. The message they imparted was one of Muslim anticolonial solidarity, a message repeated globally for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire. These astute Ottoman agents, able to convene and convince local notables of the exigency of fighting off the Italians, were preachers of an anticolonial empire.

Recruitment in Benghazi

The Ottoman forces were in effect divided into two fronts corresponding to the Ottoman geopolitical divisions of its last provinces of North Africa. *Trablusgarp vilâyeti* (the province of West Tripoli) and *Bingazi müstakil sancağı* (the autonomous Sanjak of Benghazi) retained their separate political and military structures throughout the war. From the beginning of hostilities Colonel Neşet Bey took on the post of acting governor and supreme military commander of Ottoman forces in Tripolitania and thus commanded the lion's share of regular Ottoman troops, numbering no more than three thousand.³⁵ While Neset's army in Tripoli faced the bulk of the

³⁴ Ostler, *The Arabs in Tripoli*, 226-9.

³⁵ Del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia: Tripoli bel suol d'amore, 1860-1922*, 94; Stephenson *A Box of Sand: The Italo-Ottoman War, 1911-1912*, 64; Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism: The Ottoman Involvement in Libya during the War with Italy (1911-1912)*, 134; Hale Şıvgın, *Trablusgarp Savaşı ve Türk-İtalyan İlişkileri*, 55.

Italian Army and his supply lines stretched surreptitiously into Tunisia, Enver's army headquartered in Darnah³⁶ relied primarily on a supplies smuggled across the Egyptian border.³⁷ Enver, upon his arrival in Cyrenaica, took command of the Ottoman forces in the province from Aziz Ali al-Misri, an Ottoman officer of Egyptian origin.³⁸

The army Enver inherited was distinct from Neşet's in the west because of its acute dependence on the brotherhood of the Sanūsiyya for troops. The Sanūsiyya was heavily entrenched in Cyrenaica but held very little sway in the more urbanized areas of western Tripoli. While Neşet relied primarily on Ferhat and al- Barūnī's incessant negotiations with myriad tribes to ensure his ranks remained replete with volunteers, the hierarchical structure of the Sanūsiyya meant that Enver and the Ottoman government's entreaties for support could, to a great extent, bypass tribal notables of the region and go directly to the Grand Sanūsī, Sayyid Aḥmad.³⁹

From the very early days of the conflict this provided Enver with a more cohesive force of irregulars, one that even Neşet at times envied. Shortly after his arrival in Benghazi, the success of Enver's irregular forces swept through the dailies of Europe and the Middle East in front-page articles extolling the exploits of his volunteer army.⁴⁰ Even the Ottoman High

Neşet Bey took over the post of governor (*vali*) from İbrahim Pasha who had been dismissed to appease Rome just weeks before the declaration of war.

³⁶ Darnah is located approximately three-hundred kilometers east of Benghazi.

³⁷ See: ATASE OİH 26/127 (15 July 1912) and ATASE OİH 28/127 (29 June 1912). Small arms and ammunition were often smuggled into the camps but fungible cash tended to be the main means of acquiring the armies necessities as the war progressed. Smugglers would thus penetrate the borders and supply the army which would pay for its purchases with cash sent from Tunisia or Egypt to the armies in Tripoli and Benghazi respectively.

³⁸ 'Aziz al-Masrī later recommended the tactics the Ottoman forces employed in Cyrenaica as a commander of insurgents during the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans in 1916. See: Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 83-100.

³⁹ Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism: The Ottoman Involvement in Libya during the War with Italy (1911-1912)*, 143-144.

Command began to doubt his reports of success deeming them to be “embellished.”⁴¹ Neşet Bey reminded his volunteer army of these victories of his compatriot in his general orders reported in Arabic dailies in the region:

Oh sons of Islam, it is incumbent upon you, faithful warriors (*al-mu'minīn al-mujāhidīn*), to face the Italians in Tripoli just as your brothers did with the Italians in Benghazi and Darnah, where they [the Italians] can't even advance from the walls of their two occupied cities, which they control only by the strength of their fleet... Be on the ready at this moment in Tripoli, and assuredly you will retake 'Ayn Zahrah⁴² from the enemy, and their garrison will take refuge in the city of Tripoli.⁴³

Enver's Sanūsī volunteers, by repelling all Italian advances out of their strongholds on the coast, had achieved renown globally and become a model of success for Neşet's insurgent forces to the west.

Enver Bey, in his boastful dispatches, interviews, and letters, aggrandized his own role in forging this effective defense in Tripoli, but his own words often reveal the crucial role the Sanūsī Order played in mobilizing and sustaining his forces. To his visitor Rémond, Enver Bey touted the elements of progress the empire had brought the people of Benghazi during the Italian invasion. “In every camp, we have founded schools and hospitals. A telephone line will soon join our forward posts between Sollum and Benghazi.” Yet, when discussing the defense of Tripoli,

⁴⁰ See: “Ein Schreiben Enver Beys,” *Vossische Zeitung*, December 27, 1911; “Ueber Enver Bey,” *Aegyptische Nachrichten*, January 10, 1912; “Ein Schlachtbericht von Enver Bei,” *Berliner Tageblatt*, March 2, 1912; “Enver Bei, der Held von Derna,” *Neue Hamburger Zeitung*, April 24, 1912; “Khuṭbah Anwar Bak,” *al-Mahrūsah*, January 18, 1912; and “Khiṭāb Qā'id al-Mujāhidīn,” *al-Zahrah*, April 10, 1912.

⁴¹ BOA BEO 3999/299903.1 (6 February 1912). The report details a telegram in which Enver Bey claimed that several thousand volunteers arrived to join his army. The Porte, however, doubted the veracity of the Benghazi commander's claims.

⁴² The Italians reoccupied 'Ayn Zahrah in late November pushing out Neşet's forces, who had been ensconced in the region since the Battle of Shara Shatt of 23-26 October 1911.

⁴³ “Amir 'Ālin min Nash'at Bak,” *al-Mahrūsah*, January 31, 1912.

he explained the necessity of his allies: “This country, which we have armed, we shall protect against the ambitions of whomever it may be, and by any means possible, religious or other, that we have in our hands.”⁴⁴ He thus detailed the significance of his volunteer soldiers, the ones the Ottomans had “armed,” and whom he employed religion as an instrument in their recruitment. The defense was one erected through arming insurgents and, through appeals to religious solidarity, encouraging them to fight. In a letter to Marie Sarre, he declared his esteem for his volunteer soldiers stating that “what is most essential are my Arabs whom I have come to admire. They merit all praise.”⁴⁵ In June 1912, Enver submitted an official report of the numbers of volunteers serving under his command in Cyrenaica. According to his report, over twenty thousand were serving under the Ottoman flag facing Benghazi alone, with another ten thousand in Darnah, and two thousand in Tobruk.⁴⁶ A decade after the war with Italy when Enver was organizing and leading a resistance movement of Muslim insurgents in Bukhara against the Soviet Union, he lamented the irresolution of his Central Asian troops asking “where are my Bedouins of Tripoli?” Evidently, Enver recognized the great contribution his Sanūsī troops had rendered in his campaigns in North Africa. His hopes for building an effective resistance in Central Asia were dashed when he understood that his campaign against the USSR would not be a repeat of his successes in Benghazi. “These [soldiers] are not of the mettle of my Benghazi warriors... My despair persists. I feel a deep sadness in my heart.”⁴⁷ Aziz al-Misri, commander

⁴⁴ Rémond, *Aux Camps Turco-Arabs: Notes de Route et de Guerre en Cyrénaïque et en Tripolitaine*, 174, 176.

⁴⁵ Hanioglu, *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, 105.

⁴⁶ ATASE OİH 20/86, 18.2, (16 June 1912).

⁴⁷ Bardakçı, *Enver*, 335.

of Ottoman forces in Benghazi under Enver, likewise recognized the valor and aptitude of these volunteer troops of Cyrenaica:

I've fought against the Bulgarian Komitajis,⁴⁸ against Albanians, against Arab Yemenis, who are some of the most courageous men in the world, and I've had under my command, in this last campaign, the best Turkish soldiers. I thus know a thing or two about bravery. And well, these Arabs of Cyrenaica are more valuable than the Albanians, the Turks, or the Yemenis. They are not inferior except in the sense of tactics... They never give up. If their ammunition is spent, they'll fight on with their hands and even their teeth.⁴⁹

These volunteer soldiers of Cyrenaica, for whom Enver and Aziz al-Misri had such respect, made up the backbone of the Ottoman resistance in the region and, through their blood and toil, kept their Italian opponents bottled up in their coastal fortifications for the duration of the war.

This cohesive integration of a few *fedaî* commanders and vast numbers of Sanūsî volunteers depended upon the acquiescence of the Sanūsî hierarchy and the stability and longevity of its alliance with the Ottoman state. Since the Hamidian regime, the Ottoman state had sought to strengthen ties with the Sanūsîyya in order to project its power into Fezzan and secure its provinces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica from French and British incursions. The Sanūsî Order, with its established hierarchical leadership and its network of lodges (*Zawāyā*) stretching into every settlement of import in the eastern Sahara, was the local power broker on which the Porte could depend to extend its influence.⁵⁰ In return, the Ottoman state offered gifts and even exempted the Sanūsî Order from taxes.⁵¹ The Ottoman state rarely intruded on Sanūsî affairs,

⁴⁸ Bulgarian insurgent forces who fought against the Ottoman Empire in the region of Macedonia.

⁴⁹ Rémond, *Aux Camps Turco-Arabs: Notes de Route et de Guerre en Cyrénaïque et en Tripolitaine*, 145.

⁵⁰ Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz*, 10-11.

⁵¹ BOA DH.MKT. 1004/43 (7 October 1905). See also: Artuç, *İttihatçı-Senûsi İlişkileri (1908-1918)*, 55-67. Artuç documents the continued negotiations between the Porte and Sanūsî, who were consistently granted immunity from taxes.

who were left to proselytize with little interference from the imperial center. In fact, the order's promotion of literacy and religious education as well as its submission to the Ottoman sultan-caliph as the highest religious and temporal leader in the land corresponded to the modernizing imperial projects of Istanbul throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵² Even the Young Turk regime was forced to accept the Porte's special relationship with the Sanūsī Order. The Unionists, eager to homogenize the empire, asserted the state's right to enforce tax policy on the Sanūsī but would then promised to compensate for the order's fiscal losses by offering a monthly salary from the treasury of four-thousand Ottoman Kuruş.⁵³

Enver's mission to Cyrenaica was not only as a military commander but as an ambassador to the Sanūsī Order. Through the mediation of Enver extensive correspondence and elaborate gifts were exchanged between the Porte and the Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sanūsī to ensure the Grand Sanūsī's support in the war with Italy. In response to Sayyid Aḥmad's declaration of jihad against the Italians of January 1912, Enver set to work preparing a suitable gift for the sheikh.⁵⁴ His preparations included "two camels loaded with silk cloth, four camels with loaded with cotton batiste cloth, forty kilos of tea, two-hundred kilos of sugar, twenty more camels bearing rice, thirty camels loaded with wheat, and one mule loaded down with rifles and ammunition."⁵⁵ The Porte also sent along gifts via Enver bestowing the Sheikh with "a diamond-encrusted sword, watch, and prayer rug" for "his service and patriotism to the sultan and the empire in

⁵² Lisa Anderson, "Nineteenth-Century Reform in Ottoman Libya," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 3 (1984): 325-348.

⁵³ BOA DH.İD 37-1/6, 7.3 (16 October 1911).

⁵⁴ BOA AMTZ 5 9-C/302.1 (12 January 1912); MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 44, DeFrance to Poincaré (7 February 1912).

⁵⁵ Hanioglu, *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Marie Sarre (31 January 1912), 116.

joining with the noble *mujāhidīn* and working tirelessly to defeat and destroy the Italians who have invaded Tripoli and Benghazi.”⁵⁶ The port also awarded Sayyid Aḥmad the Nişan-ı Ali, the highest decoration of the Ottoman Empire, sending the medal to Enver along with yet another “prayer rug with a cashmere shawl, and a bejeweled sword and watch.”⁵⁷ The Ottoman High Command in Istanbul also kept close tabs on the correspondence exchanged between Enver and Sayyid Aḥmad via telegraphic communications from Enver’s headquarters in Darnah.⁵⁸ In one such communication, Enver related that Sheikh Aḥmad and his brother Sayyid Muḥammad “declared that they were ready to follow every command of the Caliph,” but unfortunately were unable to travel to the front on account of a “lack of camels.”⁵⁹ The Porte, through its *fedai* lieutenant, had evidently made the Grand Sanūsī and his order a priority and maintained relations with him as a ruler in his own right. The Ottomans recognized this religious leader to be a potent and crucial ally to ensure the steady flow of volunteers to the front.

The effort that the Porte invested in securing the Sanūsī’s aid in the war was not misplaced. The French, whose colonial forces had pushed into the region of Lake Chad and Wadai to the south of Sanūsī controlled Fezzan, took an active interest in Sheikh Aḥmad. The French Consul-General in Cairo, the appropriately named Defrance, detailed to Paris his inquiries into the matter of the Sanūsī in conference with Egyptian Khedive ‘Abbās II. The khedive assured the consul in late December that while “the Arab tribes and Sanūsī were filled with ardor to combat the Italians and they were already poised to arrive on the battlefield, ... in

⁵⁶ BOA DVN.NMH 37/2, 2.1 (8 March 1912).

⁵⁷ BOA BEO 4061/304502, 2.1 (6 July 1912).

⁵⁸ BOA BEO 4055/304123, 1 (26 June 1912); BOA BEO 4055/304123, 2 (2 April 1912); BOA BEO 4055/304123, 3 (6 July 1912); BOA BEO 4055/304123, 4 (20 July 1912).

⁵⁹ One wonders where all the camels bearing Enver’s gifts had gone.

regards to the Sanūsī leaders and the sheikh in Kufra, they themselves will not fight. They wouldn't dare budge for fear of your troops that operate in the south." Therefore, according to the khedive's assessment Sheikh Aḥmad's reluctance to travel north to accompany the many volunteers he had sent to the Italian front had nothing to do, not surprisingly, with a lack of camels, but pertained to his fears of abandoning his southern front facing the French. Such a move, said the khedive, would be tantamount to "the beginning of the end of the domination of the Sanūsī Sheikh in Africa."⁶⁰ Of course, eventually the sheikh would move his headquarters to Jaghbub, where he could more easily confer with Enver and support the war effort; however, the khedive's comments demonstrate the Grand Sanūsī's independence of action from his Ottoman sovereign.⁶¹

Certainly, the French were just as aware as the Ottomans of the independent nature of this local political formation so distant from the imperial center. Therefore, with the intent of ascertaining the attitudes and actions of the order and its leader, the French Consul-General in Cairo contracted informants, most often Abdallah al-Kahhal, a wealthy merchant of Syrian origin whose business ventures brought him in close contact with the Grand Sanūsī.⁶² Al-Kahhal assured the French that above all Aḥmad al-Sharīf "will desire to remain neutral and not compromise himself." The informant believed that the sheikh was hedging his bets by promising troops to the Ottomans in order to "project his position as the leader of a great Muslim religious sect." Still he "also hoped not to offend the Italians who would one day become the definitive

⁶⁰ MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 545, Defrance to de Selves (28 December 1911).

⁶¹ MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 234, Defrance to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (23 May 1912).

⁶² Terence Walz, "Libya, the Trans-Saharan Trade of Egypt, and 'Abdallah al-Kahhal, 1880-1914," *Islamic Africa* 1, no. 1 (2010): 85-107.

masters of Tripoli.”⁶³ DeFrance later empowered Bonnel de Mézières, a local entrepreneur, to determine the intentions of Sheikh Aḥmad. From his correspondence with the sheikh, de Mézières deduced that “Aḥmad al-Sharīf is deluded about his own importance.” He had the apparent audacity, de Mézières recounted, to “believe he could negotiate with us, from one power to another.” The French informant supposed that the Sheikh’s designs were to enlist the French in “securing temporal rule for his own profit which the Turks had always impeded.” The French Consul concluded that while “the importance of the Sheikh of the Sanūsiyya has certainly been exaggerated for quite some time in the press of diverse countries, ... it is nevertheless incontrovertible that Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sharīf exercises a great influence over a notable part of the Muslim world, especially over the diverse populations that inhabit or roam the land from the Mediterranean coast to the region of Chad and Wadai.” The Consul-General thus advised that “the Sheikh of the Sanūsiyya is not a person with whom we can be pressured into dealing as an equal, but he is a person with whom we can have, if possible, the interest of forming good relations on a local level.”⁶⁴

Although the French were convinced the Grand Sanūsī was playing all sides in an effort to establish an independent state, his relations with the Ottomans prove otherwise. Sheikh Aḥmad remained content throughout the Italo-Turkish War to send troops and support to the Ottoman front as long as his prestige and autonomy within the empire were preserved. This arrangement also satisfied the Porte, which upheld the alliance it had struck with Sayyid Aḥmad and his Sanūsiyya by means of Enver for years to come. The close relationship Enver Bey had cultivated with the Grand Sanūsī persisted throughout the decade. Sheikh Aḥmad made a pledge

⁶³ MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 250 DeFrance to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (6 June 1912).

⁶⁴ MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 221 DeFrance to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (20 May 1912).

to Enver to continue the battle against the Italians once peace was finally agreed upon at Ouchy, Switzerland between the Kingdom of Italy and the Ottoman Empire in October of 1912.⁶⁵

Indeed, peace brought no cessation of hostilities in North Africa, and the war persisted with the aid of Ottoman officers, such as ‘Azīz al-Misrī, who remained in Cyrenaica to command the Sanūsī forces.⁶⁶ The war thus dragged on long after official peace was declared, and the Ottomans furtively supplied aid to the Sanūsīyya in their revolt against Italian rule. In World War I, Sheikh Aḥmad would once again demonstrate his loyalty to the alliance with the Ottoman state, taking part in the Ottoman Fourth Army’s disastrous Sinai campaign against the British in Egypt. By the end of World War I, his forces exhausted from fighting both the Italians and the British colonial armies in Egypt and Libya, Sheikh Aḥmad continued to direct his soldiers to wage war as one with the Ottomans against their adversaries urging his followers to have “the vital objective of achieving oneness, cooperation, and solidarity (*al-taḍāmun*) so that you become one hand against your enemies and multiply your numbers until you take back your glory of old and your complete freedom.” He reminded his warriors that “this is the opportunity of this war of resistance... for which the Sublime State [the Ottoman Empire], that is the Islamic State (*dawlah al-islām*), has mobilized all its resources.”⁶⁷ Ultimately, the Sheikh would lead the fight in North Africa until August of 1918 when a German U-boat transported him to safety in Istanbul.⁶⁸ For the defense of Cyrenaica Sayyid Aḥmad and his Sanūsī Order was a crucial ally, a sentiment that Said Pasha declared in the Ottoman Parliament after his defeat in the elections of

⁶⁵ *Trablusgarp Savaşı ve Türk Subayları, 1911-1912*, 76-77.

⁶⁶ Artuç, *İttihatçı-Senûsi İlişkileri (1908-1918)*, 121-122.

⁶⁷ BOA HR SFR (4) 287/85, 2.1 (28 March 1918).

⁶⁸ Nihat Azamat, “Senûsî, Ahmed Şerif,” in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2009), 36:528.

July 1912: “Indeed, the esteemed Sheikh Aḥmad al-Sharīf al-Sanūsī is the leader of the Arab volunteers. Whatever human strength can be mustered to defend one’s homeland, he has given and yet gives both physically and spiritually.”⁶⁹

Volunteers From Afar

Although the lion’s share of recruits were drawn from the local population, many volunteers from distant locations were ultimately welcomed into the ranks of the Ottoman insurgent army. Because the *fedaî* officers left no statistical accounting of the origin of their volunteers, our understanding of their contribution must rely primarily on the reports from the journalists that were embedded with the Ottoman Army. Most evident in these reports is the arrival of large numbers of Fezzanis from today’s southern Libya who, as tribal units, made the arduous journey across the Sahara to the front. Abbott indicated that the arrival of these southern recruits was not just in response to the Grand Sanūsī’s declaration of jihad of January 1912, but was also a result of seasonal unemployment. “Arab volunteers are swarming up from the south in larger hordes than ever, for seedtime is over and the harvest will not begin till June.” He explained away their eager participation in the war as a means of “a relaxation from prosaic labor such as the Arab’s heart loves.”⁷⁰ Bennett, however, was more impressed with the sacrifice these tribes made to arrive at the main Ottoman camp at ‘Aziziya. “Splendid reinforcements came from Tibou and distant Fezzan, as well as from nearer regions in the east, south, and west. The Fezzani had actually taken forty-six days to cover their tremendous march across the desert, and a large contingent from the fierce Tuaregs of the Sahara was expected daily.”⁷¹ Rémond recorded

⁶⁹ Orhan Koloğlu, *Osmanlı Meclislerinde Libya ve Libyalılar* (Istanbul: Boyut Yayınları, 2010), 608.

⁷⁰ Abbott, *The Holy War in Tripoli*, 251.

⁷¹ Bennett, *With the Turks in Tripoli: Being some Experiences in the Turco-Italian War of 1911, 1912*.

the arrival of one tribe “the Awlād bū Sayf (Sanūsīs) who, with a number of four or five hundred, came from a country on the other side of the mountains, in the direction of Fezzan.”⁷²

The arrival of these new elements produced excitement for the Ottoman camp and the journalists embedded within. Abbott stated that the coming of the Awlād bū Sayf stirred up “a great commotion in the camp. All the men, women, and little children turned out in a body.” The spectacle of “a compact mass of lean warriors, bristling with rifle-barrels, naked sword-blades, blunderbusses, and axes which glistened in the sunlight” evidently made an impression on the camp and the British journalist who declared “I had seldom before seen such intense, passionate faces, eyes so full of the fire of the desert.”⁷³ War correspondent Seppings Wright described this “martial scene” as “thrilling in the extreme, and the excitement is contagious. As they came along, the earth seemed to tremble beneath their tramp.”⁷⁴ These fanciful Western descriptions aside, the arrival of distant allies evidently lifted the spirits of the Ottoman camps, bolstered the Ottoman forces, and extended the human resources needed to block the Italian advances into the interior.

The integration of these diverse elements into the Ottoman Army further increased the heterogeneity of the resistance and illustrated the international scope of the Muslim resistance to this latest European colonial endeavor. Rémond marveled at the ‘Aziziya camp’s diversity exclaiming “there’s the Touareg with their heads concealed under pointed hats, ... the Fezzanis, the volunteers from the distant countryside of Islamic Africa, and the peoples coming from all

⁷² Rémond, *Aux Camps Turco-Arabes: Notes de Route et de Guerre en Cyrénaïque et en Tripolitaine*, 45.

⁷³ Abbott, *The Holy War in Tripoli*, 251.

⁷⁴ Seppings Wright, *Two Years under the Crescent*, 90-91.

parts of the mountains and plains of Tripolitania.”⁷⁵ Seppings Wright also “saw how amazingly the army grew. From the distant Sahara and beyond, from the Barbary, Egypt, the Soudan, even Lake Tchad, supplied its contingents. Fuzzan [sic] sent the prime of its manhood, of the finest fighting force in the wide world.”⁷⁶ Other European spectators not surprisingly compared their experience in the camp as if witnessing a modern-day crusade with all its diversity of participants. Abbott pointed out to those that may dismiss the Ottoman resistance as an amorphous and therefore disunified force “that the medieval Crusaders lacked both homogeneity and concentration... The national gulfs and linguistic gulfs between those nations were infinitely wider than the gulfs which separate the Arab-speaking tribes of North Africa.” His “own conclusion” about the war he was witnessing assured him “that the Pan-Islamic movement ... is a force with which Europe will have to reckon.”⁷⁷

The successes of this Muslim anticolonial movement martialled by Ottoman officers produced unexpected heroes and attracted even more distant volunteers. British war correspondent Ostler stumbled upon one such heroine of the Battle of Qerqarish, in which the Ottoman forces had defeated an Italian division attempting to extend its fortifications to the west of Tripoli. Having heard “chanting” and “loud shouts,” he followed the martial chorus into the Fezzani camp until he “came upon a little procession, at whose head a woman strode, chanting. It was the heroine of Gargaresh... She strode up and down with huge strides, brandishing her staff and half chanting, half reciting, in the deepest tones.” She had been among the first to charge the newly-dug trenches at Qerqarish and despite being wounded by an Italian shell, leapt into battle

⁷⁵ Rémond, *Aux Camps Turco-Arabes: Notes de Route et de Guerre en Cyrénaïque et en Tripolitaine*, 53.

⁷⁶ Seppings Wright, *Two Years under the Crescent*, 89.

⁷⁷ Abbott, *The Holy War in Tripoli*, 270.

with only her staff. She is said to have demanded a rifle from the Turkish officers who obligingly offered her a cavalry carbine. She declared that “for every cartridge an Italian woman shall go husbandless.”⁷⁸ Others documented the participation of women in combat. Seppings Wright told of one such woman whom he encountered on her return from the trenches “armed with Italian rifle and bandolier, a scimitar and a long lance, once the arm of some unfortunate Italian picket whom she had surprised.”⁷⁹ In Benghazi, Enver also wrote of an “Arab female warrior” who had taken shrapnel in the chest, “but she didn’t want to stay in the hospital. She departed to go encourage her warriors.”⁸⁰

Lone travelers from distant locations with similar zeal for battle also attracted the eye of journalists. Abbott encountered “the true Citizen of the World,” an Ottoman of Albanian origin who had spent years travelling and preaching pan-Islam. On his return from Afghanistan, “the Turco-Italian War broke out. He immediately gained the Syrian coast, crossed to Alexandria, and set out on this last tour.” He saw in “this last encroachment of Christian Europe on Moslem Africa as the beginning of the great Jihad of which he had dreamed all his life.”⁸¹ On the road between ‘Aziziya and al-Swānī, Ostler encountered a volunteer from Afghanistan, who having heard of the war while performing the Hajj, abruptly decided to join the fight. “Mecca is halfway here from my place,” he explained. “So I came on. After passing the border of Egypt, I fell in with a caravan for Benghazi. We had good fighting there, but the Italians would not come out against us; so I came here.” When asked whether he knew of other Afghan volunteers, he

⁷⁸ Ostler, *The Arabs in Tripoli*, 209-215.

⁷⁹ Seppings Wright, *Two Years under the Crescent*, 89.

⁸⁰ Hanioglu, *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Marie Sarre, (18 December 1911), 103.

⁸¹ Abbott, *The Holy War in Tripoli*, 261-266.

declared himself to be the only one “but there are men already here from Fezzan, down to Bornu and even Tibesti; and there are others on the road.”⁸²

More prominent volunteers also made their way to the Ottoman front. Ayhan Songar recounted his journey as a disciple of noted Russian pan-Islamist Abdürreşid İbrahim from his home in Istanbul. Abdürreşid İbrahim led Ayhan and seven others to Alexandria where they procured camels and guides to cross the desert. Evading border guards and brigands, the group, after weeks of wandering in the Saharan desert, finally arrived at Enver’s camp at Darnah where they joined up as volunteers in the “only small company of Turkish soldiers” in the region.⁸³ After hearing of the Italian invasion, distinguished author, Druze prince, and pan-Islamic activist Shakib Arslan “went to Damascus and spoke with the commanders of the fifth corps about sending a number of soldiers incognito across the border disguised as Bedouin.” With permission from Istanbul, he led his volunteer recruits, the majority of them Arab officers of the Ottoman Army, to the border, where some of his group managed to cross the border and proceed to Enver’s camp. Shakib, however, along with a number of officers accompanying him were barred from crossing by an English colonel who had been adverted of his intention to join the Ottoman Army. Shakib thus devoted his efforts to recruiting volunteers and aid for the Red Crescent through his activities with the Egyptian daily *al-Mu’ayyad*.⁸⁴ The defense of Ottoman North Africa thus became an international endeavor, lending weight to the idea of pan-Islam’s ability to transcend imperial boundaries and defend Muslim populations from the predations of European colonialism.

⁸² Ostler, *The Arabs in Tripoli*, 290-292.

⁸³ Yusuf Gedikli, *Tırablusgarp Cephesi Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Bilgeoğuz, 2009), 18-41.

⁸⁴ Shakīb Arslān, *Sīrah Dhātīyyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ah lil-Ṭabā‘ah wal-Nashur, 1969), 77-82.

Conclusion

Before the Ottoman Parliament's recess of 14 July 1912, Ali Haydar Bey, grandson of the former Emir of Mecca, stood before his fellow MPs as parliamentary president to review the state of the empire. "As you well know, we have been at war with Italy for the past ten months," he reminded his colleagues. "We must publically honor the awesome sacrifices which our military and volunteer brothers in Tripoli and Benghazi have been giving for the sake of the defense of our homeland." It was therefore "by the grace of the sacrifice of the Ottoman nation" that Ali Haydar considered it possible "to persist with strength of purpose and full intent ... until a peaceful conclusion be reached that preserves our law, honor, and respect."⁸⁵ The war for Tripoli would indeed persist for several more months until the threat of a two-front war forced a peace on the empire.

Italy's military parade had devolved into a stagnant, bloody contest with little hope of decisive victory for the kingdom's well-equipped and supplied army. A volunteer force of diverse warriors imposed a strategic stalemate on the would-be Great Power of Italy. Building unity from this multinational army required considerable diplomatic investment on the part of the empire and a capacious ideology of religious solidarity and anticolonialism. Locals enraged at Italian aggression, ideologues eager to unify Islam, and allies impatient to preserve their power united under the Ottoman banner and effectively halted their enemy's advances.

⁸⁵ *Meclisi Mebusân Zabıt Ceridesi*, Vol. 1, (17 July 1912), 368.

Conclusion

“We Can Continue the War without Serious Sacrifices for Years”

Peace Concluded?

“The day of the conclusion of peace should be a day of forgiveness and gladness,” declared the proclamation made by General Ottavio Briccola, the commander and chief of the Italian army of occupation in Cyrenaica. The proclamation, signed by the general on 19 October 1912, informed its readers in Italian and Arabic that “peace has been concluded between H. M. the King of Italy and H. M. the Sultan. Praise be to God for having thus restored quiet to you, your families and your homes.” The brief pamphlet concluded with an invitation to “learn ... and spread afar quickly the joyful news.” Francis Jones, the British consul in Benghazi, received the proclamation from a local Arab who, in contradiction to the optimistic proclamation of peace, confided to him “that peace had not been established between the Beduin [sic] tribes and the invading army.” The consul also “gathered from his conversation that ... it was unlikely that the Arabs would consent to the restoration of peace.”¹

Peace remained elusive for the Kingdom of Italy. What had been planned as a mere *passaggiata militare* had become a military standstill interspersed by periodic skirmishes and raids that resulted in dozens of casualties at a time.² Enver Bey had entrusted command of the Ottoman forces that volunteered to remain in the fight to his lieutenant ‘Azīz al-Masrī before departing and had met with Sayyid Aḥmad al-Sanūsī to ensure him of the furtive Ottoman

¹ F.O. 195/2397, No. 150-154, Jones to Lowther (25 October 1912).

² For an assessment of Italian casualties from larger battles see: Vandervort, *To the Fourth Shore: Italy's War for Libya (1911-1912)*, 153-158.

support for the continuance of the resistance.³ A memorandum communicated by the Italian ambassador in Cairo two months after peace was struck reported that “the Italophobe element in Egypt proposes to continue to lend assistance to the forces still opposing the Italian arms in Cirenaica [sic] and that the Ottoman High Commissioner intends to do the same.” The memorandum also claimed that two thousand sacks of grain purchased by the Ottoman government were in transit from Mariout, Egypt to the rebel forces in Cyrenaica.⁴ Although the withdrawal of the majority of Ottoman officers and soldiers following the peace with Italy would weaken the resistance and end the stalemate of the Italo-Turkish War, the conflict continued as a guerrilla-style slog for another two decades.⁵ The 1912 Peace of Ouchy had failed to pacify the natives of what became Libya, a result the Italian colonial government would only achieve with the death of over half a million Libyans from warfare, disease, starvation, and thirst over the course of a two-decade occupation, a sobering statistic considering that population figures for the territory of Libya in 1911 range from one to one and a half million.⁶

Why and How Did the Ottomans Hold Out?

Even the “joyous” peace with the Ottoman Empire, which had cost so many lives, required an investment and effort the Italians had not expected. The rapid occupation of the major coastal cities, it was believed, would force the Porte to accept peace on Italy’s terms. Italian dailies had advised that “Turkey, by sea or by land, is not in conditions to oppose Italy

³ F.O. 195/2397, No. 164, Jones to Grey (17 December 1912); Şabrī Abū al-Majd, *‘Azīz ‘Alī al-Miṣrī wa-ṣaḥbiḥ : bunāt al-waḥdah al-‘Arabīyah wa-al-Islāmīyah, 1900-1916* (Cairo: al-Hay’ah al-Miṣrīyah al-‘Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1990), 345.

⁴ F.O. 195/2397, No. 157, (16 December 1912).

⁵ For an account of the Italian conduct of this twenty-year guerrilla war see: Nicola Labanca, *La Guerra italiana per la Libia, 1911-1931* (Bologna: Societa editrice il Mulino, 2012).

⁶ Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance, 1830-1932*, 1.

with a serious resistance,” and that “we all know in Constantinople that Turkey has already resigned itself to the loss of Tripolitania.”⁷ Even Alberto Theodoli, resident in Istanbul on the board of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration, predicted that “Italy, with its powerful navy and Caneva’s twenty thousand soldiers” would be enough to force Turkey to cede the provinces.⁸ A few months later with no end in sight for the fighting, Italy was forced to deploy over 100,000 soldiers to the front. Giolitti and his advisers had miscalculated Ottoman and local resistance to the invasion and were ultimately unable to force a peace on the Porte either militarily or diplomatically as planned. The questions of *why* and *how* the Ottomans refrained from making peace until compelled by events in the Balkans—the Bulgarian Army invaded Ottoman Thrace on the very day the Peace of Ouchy was signed—are the organizing themes of this dissertation.⁹ A brief review of Italy’s diplomatic struggles with their Ottoman counterparts demonstrates that the answers to these two questions are intertwined: Ottoman elites, of either the government or the military, refused to cede their provinces to Italy *because* they feared the loss of Arab and Muslim backing for the preservation of the empire. In turn, Ottoman elites could persist in the conflict *by* drawing upon the aid and support of Arab subjects and a global Muslim community.

The Fear of Arab “Furor”

⁷ From articles published in *Giornale d’Italia* and *Corriere d’Italia* respectively quoted in: Maltese, *La terra promessa: La guerra italo-turca e la conquista della Libia, 1911-1912*, 79-81.

⁸ Angelo del Boca, *Gli italiani in Libia*, 77.

⁹ See: Richard Hall, *The Balkan Wars, 1911-1912: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000), 22-25; and James Pettifer and Tom Buchanan, eds., *War in the Balkans: Conflict and Diplomacy before World War I* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016). Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire over a week earlier on October 8, 1912; however, Bulgaria had the largest army among the briefly allied Balkan powers and was able to mobilize nearly 600,000 men before the conflict began.

Brokering a peace remained at the top of the Great Powers agenda since the initiation of hostilities between the Kingdom of Italy and the Ottoman Empire, but after a few weeks it became evident to all spectators of the intransigency of both parties. After two weeks of warfare, the French and German governments concluded that “the chances of mediation by the Great Powers between the two belligerents are less and less favorable.” The Ottomans would not accept Italian annexation, and the Italians would not allow the Porte to retain suzerainty.¹⁰ Giolitti’s government, urged on by the nationalist press pushing for the addition of a *quarta sponda*, a fourth shore, to Italy’s peninsular national space, could accept nothing less than “the cessation pure and simple of Tripolitania” to the kingdom.¹¹ San Giuliano intimated to French Ambassador Camille Barrère that the precondition to any talks with the Porte was the “condition that it preliminarily accepts Italy’s taking possession of Tripolitania without the persistence of any political connection between the province and the Ottoman Empire, that is to say, annexation.”¹² At the same time, *Tanîn* reported to its Ottoman readers that Italy “didn’t intend to establish a protectorate, but was intent on annexation” and “in this thought it will not change.”¹³ The Italian government’s position on the territories became official on 5 November 1911, when King Victor Emanuel III officially declared the annexation of Tripoli and Cyrenaica.¹⁴ Ottoman Foreign Minister Assım Bey responded with an immediate response “declaring the indissoluble union of these provinces to the Empire and made an appeal to the

¹⁰ MAE 166 PO/E/309, No. 92, Cambon to de Selves (14 October 1912).

¹¹ MAE 166 PO/E/309, No. 92, Daeschner to de Selves (16 October 1912).

¹² MAE 166 PO/E/309, No. 92, Barrère to de Selves (17 October 1912).

¹³ “İtalya İlhak İstiyor,” *Tanîn*, October 15, 1911.

¹⁴ Childs, *Italo-Turkish Diplomacy and the War over Libya, 1911-1912*, 88-91.

Powers to guarantee the integrity of the Ottoman Empire.”¹⁵ The Italian declaration was, in any case, wishful at best and absurd at worst. Commenting on an official protest on the floor of the Ottoman Parliament against Italian “inhumane” and “illegal” actions in Tripolitania, Mehmet Tevfik Efendi of the deputy from the province of Çankırı made light of the King Vittorio Emanuele’s decree to his colleagues:

Sirs, we find ourselves debating two situations: One is extremely distressing, the other rather laughable. The one that’s distressing is the atrocities and savagery being meted out in Tripoli; this is what we protest. There’s also something quite comical: while they have before their eyes today their defeats, which we announce and extoll with pride, and their retreat from their positions which we have effectively retaken, the Italian King is publishing an annexation decree.¹⁶

The Italians only controlled a few miles of beachhead around the principal coastal cities of the provinces and had yet to score any substantial victory against the growing number of defenders resisting the invasion.

The annexation decree did little more than ensure the persistence of the conflict.¹⁷ The Istanbul representative of the Società Commerciale d’Oriente Bernardino Nogara, who doubled as an intelligence operative for Rome, pointed out as much in an early 1912 communiqué to his

¹⁵ MAE 166 PO/E/309, No. 92, Bompard to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (7 November 1911).

¹⁶ *Meclisi Mebusân Zabıt Ceridesi*, Vol. 1, (9 November 1911), 335.

¹⁷ Gian Paolo Ferraioli, “Giolitti e San Giuliano de fronte alla questione della chiusura dell’impresa di Libia: Annessione o protettorato,” *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente* 56, no. 3 (2001): 325-363. Ferraioli argues that the decision to annex to the two provinces prolonged the war. A more moderate stance of establishing a protectorate, he contends, would have prevented the outbreak of general hostilities with the local population by permitting the Ottoman Empire to work as a partner in developing relations between the Italian government and the indigenous subjects. The evidence for such an argument may be sparse, but his research into Giolitti and San Giuliano’s rationale for their decision is superb. Ultimately, evidence indicates that the Italian government wanted to present the world with a *fait accompli* and in the process stirred up a hornets’ nest which required years of killing to calm.

superior Giuseppe Volpi, an industrial magnate assigned by Giolitti to head the peace process. “Because the annexation decree of the Italian government which does not permit Turkey to make peace under the desired condition of an apparent sovereignty of the Sultan, it is logical to think that a rapid peace is not possible between Italy and Turkey.”¹⁸ The Porte and the CUP were convinced that ceding territory to the Italians may invite the ire of many Ottoman citizens. According to former Grand Vezir Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, a government considered “too much inclined to neglect the interests of the other races of the Empire, especially the Arabs, could never agree to relinquish an Arab Province to a Christian Power. It would mean the rising *en masse* of all the Arab Provinces of the Empire against the Government.”¹⁹ Indeed, this same reason for avoiding peace was commonly expressed.²⁰

After the Italian gradual extension of the conflict into the eastern Mediterranean culminating in the occupation of Rhodes and the other Dodecanese Islands in May 1912 and following the fall of Said’s government in July 1912, Rome considered the time ripe to energize its peace efforts and successfully persuaded the Porte, no longer dominated by the CUP, to take a seat at the negotiating table. Still, the Ottomans hesitated to make peace even as war in the Balkans loomed citing the possible blowback from the empire’s Arab subjects. Nogara pointed out to Volpi that “the passive resistance of the Turks is always immense, and in their argumentation the principal element remains the Arab “furor” which they don’t dare affront.”²¹ As Wilhelmstrasse even began to lay pressure on the Porte to accept peace in a desperate hope to

¹⁸ ASMAE B. 192, Nogara to Volpi (January 7 1912).

¹⁹ F.O. 371/1259/49376, Lowther to Grey (4 December 1911); quoted in Ahmad, *The Young Turks*, 93.

²⁰ F.O. 2544/4/12/44, No. 28, Grey to Bertie (20 January 1912).

²¹ ASMAE B. 192, Nogara to Volpi (1 October 1912).

retain what was left of its alliance with Rome, the Italians “always encountered the preoccupation of a general Arab insurrection.”²²

This “furor” of the Arab was often broadened to include the negative reaction of Muslims in general to the cessation of imperial territory to the invading colonizer. When the first approximations of a solution to the impasse between the Italian and Ottoman positions were voiced (it was suggested that the Ottoman Sultan would not need to recognize Italian sovereignty but only grant autonomy to the North African provinces), it was the “Muslim prestige” that would be saved by this diplomatic sleight of hand.²³ The purported injury the official recognition of Italian rule would have on all of Islam also preoccupied Field Marshal von der Goltz in his inflammatory piece for the *Neue Freie Presse*. Von der Goltz reminded his readers that “Sidi Aḥmad al-Sharīf, the Sheikh of the Sanūsī, declared ‘Jihad’ in any case.” For the Ottomans to declare peace at such a moment and submit to the demands of Rome would be tantamount to “renunciation” of the leadership in “the entire Islamic world” and would also “leave their Arab people in the lurch in Tripolitania.”²⁴ An article published in *Tanīn* and picked up by the Arab press claimed that the notion of peace was anathema to the empire and that only “amongst the brainless and lunatics is there talk of Turkey leaning towards peace.” The author asked, “what would the Islamic world think if we signed a peace?”²⁵ Noted Russian pan-Islamist Abdürreşid İbrahim, before his departure to join Enver’s army in Cyrenaica, held a conference in Istanbul in March 1912 in which he proclaimed to the audience, “Gentlemen, the problem of Tripoli is not a

²² ASMAE B. 192, Nogara to Volpi (29 September 1912).

²³ ASMAE B. 192, Nogara to Volpi (27 June 1912).

²⁴ Von der Goltz, “Die Türkei und der Frieden,” June 29, 1912.

²⁵ “Al-Şaḥaf al-Turkiyah wa al-Şulḥ,” *al-Maḥrūsah*, February 7, 1912.

problem of two or three Ottomans, or even a problem of thirty million Ottomans. This problem is a matter of life and death for the Muslim world (*Âlem-i İslam*)... Even if Europe constrains us or compels the Sublime Porte [to desist], ... we will fight and defend [Tripoli] by ourselves.”²⁶

Enver Bey articulated similar sentiments before his departure considering the defense of Tripolitania “a moral duty that Islamic world expects of us.”²⁷ From the testimonies of the Porte, European observers, and Ottoman combatants, the Ottoman state could not easily come to terms with Italy without offending Arabs and Muslims within and outside the empire.

In the end, peace with Italy could only be struck if the Ottoman Sultan and the Porte refrained from recognizing Italian sovereignty. The solution, first conveyed to Volpi in June by Nogara, of permitting the Ottoman Empire to merely grant independence to the North African provinces was finally adopted four months later on 15 October 1912 when a provisional treaty was signed. It required the imperial government “to address an imperial *ferman* to the populations of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica” which granted independence.²⁸ Thereafter, Italy would supposedly have a free hand in North Africa following the withdrawal of the Ottoman forces. The text of the *ferman* did not include any reference to Italy or its sovereignty over the two disputed provinces. The sultan merely “granted complete independence (*muhtâriyet-i tâme*)” suggesting that the Ottoman government was “unable to provide efficacious aid necessary to defend your country” and did not “want to continue a war that was disastrous to you and your families and our empire.” Thereafter the text informs the people of Tripolitania that Şemseddin Bey will act as the representative (*Naibiüssultan*) of the Ottoman Sultan with a mandate of five

²⁶ Orhan Koloğlu, *Fizan Korkusundan Libya Mücahitliğine* (İstanbul: Truva Yayınları, 2008), 215-217.

²⁷ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (9 October 1911), 79.

²⁸ Edward Blech, ed., *British and Foreign State Papers. 1913*, vol. 106 (London: Harrison and Sons, 1916), 1097.

years to institute a system whereby an Ottoman *qadi* would nominate the Sultan's representative with assent from the local 'ulema. In this way the "dispositions of the holy shari'ah will remain continuously in vigor."²⁹ From first glance, this deal appears to be nothing more than a cheap face-saving maneuver, and indeed it was an attempt to preserve the prestige of the Ottoman Empire. Yet, it was a prestige for which the Ottomans and many more volunteers had fought and died. The fates of the empire and of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph as an international actor and symbol were linked in the minds of Ottoman Muslim elites who governed at the Porte and filled the ranks of the CUP. Preserving the empire meant defending its territory and protecting the prestige of its Muslim sultan. The territory was lost but the figure of the sultan-caliph could be retained.

The Cost of War

The struggle over this distant Ottoman territory became a symbolic war for the preservation of empire, but the cause of empire alone could not keep the outmatched and impoverished Ottoman forces in the field for over a year. The peace process could and did drag on because the Ottomans were able to afford to make war. Sir Edward Grey in conversation with the German Ambassador Paul Wolff Metternich asserted that this was precisely the reason for the delay in striking peace. "That Turkey until now displays no desire to submit to the Italian demands is primarily a result of the fact that she makes no expense for the war effort (*Kriegszustand*) and she can bear it without any burden."³⁰ This is precisely what Ottoman ministers informed Nogara in his incessant peace feelers. His contacts concluded that the

²⁹ For the Ottoman text see: "Ferman-ı Hümayun Suretidir," *Ceride-i Askeriye*, November 30, 1912; for French see: Blech, ed., *British and Foreign State Papers. 1913*, vol. 106, 1098.

³⁰ PA/AA, R 14185, Metternich to Bethmann Hollweg (8 February 1912).

Ottoman government was “intransigent in only this point because the transaction [the recognition of Italian claims to Tripoli] is impossible for us. If peace can be made quickly, all the better. If not, we can continue the war without serious sacrifices for years to come.”³¹ Even Italy’s occupation of the Aegean islands seemed to have little effect on the position of the Ottomans. In late May 1912 after the invasion of Rhodes, Nogara observed that “from the point of view of politics nothing has changed.” In fact it was the disturbances in Albania “more than the war” that concerned Ottoman officials. Nogara concluded his message disappointed with the statement that “there is no talk of an international [peace] conference.”³² Cavid Bey, the Turkish Finance Minister informed a European correspondent that “the war for Turkey is not very expensive. The Turkish government has only spent 56 million German marks [approximately three million Ottoman Lira] on the troops in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica.” He concluded by stating that the Turkish finances were in good order.”³³ Yet, the Ottoman finances were not without their faults, the Porte required a loan of close to fifteen million Ottoman lira to balance its budget in the beginning of 1912.³⁴

This may be an instance of the Porte playing its cards close and putting on a good poker face for the Italians, but the cost of the Italo-Turkish War for the Ottomans was certainly minute in relation to the Italian expenses on the invasion and occupation. The French military attaché in Paris estimated the cost of the Italian war to be close to five million francs a day, or approximately 220,000 Ottoman lira a day. According to his estimates, the Italian expenditures

³¹ ASMAE B. 192, Nogara to Volpi (15 August 1912).

³² ASMAE B. 192, Nogara to Volpi (25 May 1912).

³³ “Der türkische Finanzminister über die Kosten des Tripoliskrieges,” *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, September 20, 1912.

³⁴ PA/AA, R 14185, OPDA Report to Zimmermann (30 January 1912).

in one day were close to double the Ottoman war expenses over the course of a month.³⁵ Of course, these expenses are all relative but neither power experienced a serious budget shortfall that would compel them to end the war. British war correspondent Bennett reported that every time the Italian forces bombarded their positions erratically with their naval artillery, “the Turkish officers rejoiced to see a few more thousand lire of the Italian taxpayers dissipated in noise and smoke.”³⁶ Over a month after the Peace of Ouchy, Enver was still in Darnah declaring that his “budget was balanced from indirect revenues”—he had imposed a system of tariffs on all imports.³⁷ The Ottoman officers and government continued to fight because they believed they could. They believed they were winning the economic game. The Italians, despite their heavy investment in the war, their invasion and occupation of Ottoman territories in the Aegean, their incessant harassment of Ottoman ports, and their naval and diplomatic blockade of North Africa, had failed to make the war too costly to continue. The war for Libya was won in the Balkans when Montenegro, Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria put aside their differences to attack the Ottoman Empire and threaten its capital.

³⁵ MAE 166 PO/E/306, No. 614, Lieutenant de Vaisseau to Minister of the Marine (10 July 1912). According to Ottoman Parliamentary proceedings, the budget for the war in Tripoli was 120,000 Ottoman lira. See: *Meclisi Mebusân Zabıt Ceridesi*, Vol. 2 (18 January 1912), 552.

³⁶ Bennet, *With the Turks in Tripoli*, 120.

³⁷ Hanioglu, *Kendi mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, Enver to Sarre (25 November 1912), 208-211.



Figure 6.1: The Tripoli Laurel Tree

The man depicted above is an Italian officer bearing the likeness of General Caneva, commander of Italian forces in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica

Source: *Kladderadatsch*, June 23, 1912

A Peace without Peace

Representatives of the Kingdom of Italy and the Ottoman Empire finally signed the peace treaty on 18 October 1912 in Ouchy, Switzerland. Recognition of Italian sovereignty was strictly excluded from the text. Hostilities would immediately cease and Ottoman and Italian soldiers were to be withdrawn from North Africa and the occupied Aegean islands respectively; however, these primary conditions laid out in the first and second articles of the treaty were never carried out. While many Ottoman soldiers departed from North Africa, others remained in the service of Şulayman al-Barūnī in Tripoli and Sheikh Aḥmad in Cyrenaica, whose forces continued the resistance against the occupiers. Likewise, the occupation of the Dodecanese Islands continued

despite local Greek resistance until officially annexed by Mussolini's government in 1923.

Evidently, there was little incentive for the Ottomans to end the war except to transfer the skilled *fedaî* officers and men to defend a more strategic location in the empire threatened by an impending invasion.

The asymmetric conflict over what is now Libya pitted a well-supplied, advanced European army against a coalition of anticolonial volunteers united under the banner of the Ottoman Empire. Keeping this volunteer army in the field required little sacrifice for the capital which garnered support from distant allies and local patriots. Allies in Germany sought to prop up the empire and preserve its pan-Islamic potency. Muslim sympathizers throughout the globe contributed to the war in donation campaigns that aided the indebted Ottoman state. Zealous volunteers made their way to the battlegrounds of North Africa and carried with them an ideology of anticolonialism that served to unite them with the local population. Islam and anticolonialism merged in their fight against this latest European colonial incursion. In convening this disparate group of allies, the Ottoman polity became an anticolonial empire poised to fight off the avarices of imperial Europe.

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