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ARTICLE

Transnationalism and insurrection: independence committees, anti-colonial networks, and Germany's global war†

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Abstract
This article analyses the Indian, Persian, and Algerian–Tunisian independence committees and their place in Germany's 'programme for revolution', Berlin's attempt to instigate insurrection across the British, French, and Russian empires during the First World War. The agency of Asian and North African activists in this programme remains largely unknown, and their wartime collaboration in Germany is an under-researched topic in the histories of anti-colonial activism. This article explores the collaboration between the three committees, highlighting their strategic relationships with German officials and with each other. Criticizing the Eurocentric framings still present in studies of wartime strategy, it contributes to a growing historiography on the war as a global conflict. It argues that the independence committees were central actors in Germany's programme, that the transnationalism of the pre-1914 anti-colonial movements both imprinted Germany's programme and was furthered by it, and that only a comparative perspective exploring the interactions of its anti-colonial activists fully grasps the global scope of this topic.

Keywords: Asian and African anti-colonial networks; First World War, global history; pan-Islamism; transnationalism

Introduction

In April 1914, at the age of thirty-four, the Indian revolutionary Virendranath Chattopadhyaya enrolled as a student of comparative linguistics at the University of Halle. His path to Germany had passed through Britain and France on the way to Halle and Berlin. Leaving India in 1902 to study at Oxford, he had been radicalized by the revolutionary nationalist circles at London's India House and Paris's Indian Society. One month after the outbreak of the First World War, Chattopadhyaya co-founded the Indian Independence Committee (IIC) in Berlin with a group of fellow activists. He was to be one of its most important leaders.[1]

As Chattopadhyaya moved from London to Paris, the Persian nationalist revolutionary Seyyed Hassan Taqizadah fled his Iranian homeland for Europe. A cleric's son and advocate of modern

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[1]Nirode K. Barooah, *Chatto: the life and times of an Indian anti-imperialist in Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

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science, Taqizadah had been hailed as the 'Danton' of his country's Constitutional Revolution. Forced into exile and relying on his linguistic expertise for support, he landed first at Cambridge University before travelling to the United States. The outbreak of the war found him cataloguing Persian and Turkish manuscripts at the New York Public Library. Accepting an invitation from the German Foreign Office to join its programme of imperial insurrection, in 1914 Taqizadah travelled to Berlin. In early 1915 he founded the Persian National Committee, together with fellow revolutionary exiles.[2]

As Taqizadah plied his scholarly skills in Cambridge, the Sheik Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi was busy testing out a radical new form of political mobilization on the Libyan front. A religious scholar from Tunisia, al-Tunisi had travelled with the later Ottoman Minister of War, Enver Pasha, to Tripolitania in 1911 to protest Italy's brutal invasion. Al-Tunisi used his religious credentials to proclaim a 'jihad' against the Italian invaders in the name of the Ottoman empire, successfully mobilizing anti-colonial and pan-Islamic sentiments among the local soldiers.[3] Following their successful collaboration in Libya, Enver recommended al-Tunisi to his German partners as a talented revolutionary propagandist for North African affairs. With this imprimatur in hand, al-Tunisi went to Berlin in the autumn of 1914 and became a central figure in the Ottoman–German alliance. He was to be the public face of Germany's revolutionary strategy, and an important member of the Algerian–Tunisian Independence Committee.

These three men, experienced activists from different arenas of imperial conflict, played leading roles in the unfolding of Germany's wartime programme, specifically in its attempt to instigate popular unrest across the British, French, and Russian empires (what officials called *Aufwiegelung*). As the leaders of three of its independence committees, Chattopadhyaya, Taqizadah, and al-Tunisi, together with their fellow activists, engaged with German officials in a common project. In contrast to older studies on *Aufwiegelung*, which concentrated primarily on German efforts,[4] this article shows that anti-imperial activists sat at the heart of what has been called 'the programme for revolution'. German officials relied on their experience and connections in the making of wartime strategy; their activity gave the programme its global scope.[5] Starting in 1914, the committees and their German partners founded institutions, organized intelligence networks, located agents, and assembled funds. Drawing on institutional and financial support from officials in Berlin and Istanbul, the activists created far-flung pathways for the supply of weapons, funds, and information to different theatres of war. In 1916, at the height of the conflict, their networks of agents, texts, and money connected Stockholm to Shanghai, Tashkent to San Francisco, and all of them with Berlin and Istanbul, the two centres of the *Aufwiegelung* strategy.

This article analyses the independence committees and their collaboration in Berlin, complementing recent research on the intense activity of German-supported networks during the war.[6] Despite the committees' strategic importance to Germany's programme, much about them is unknown. This is particularly true with regard to relationships between their members, rather than the relationships with German officials (of which more is known). How were the committees

[2]Tim Epkenhans, *Die iranische Moderne im Exil: Bibliographie der Zeitschrift Kāve, Berlin 1916–1922*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2000, pp. 34–9.

[3]Eugene Rogan, *The fall of the Ottomans: the Great War in the Middle East*, New York: Basic Books, 2015, p. 72; Tilman Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany: Ottoman and German propaganda and intelligence operations in the First World War*, Münster: LIT, 2015, pp. 117–25.

[4]Renate Vogel, *Die Persien- und Afghanistanexpedition Oskar Ritter von Niedermayers 1915–1916*, Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag, 1976.

[5]Hew Strachan, *The First World War, vol 1: to arms*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 694–819; Jennifer Jenkins, 'Fritz Fischer's "programme for revolution": implications for a global history of Germany in the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48, 2, 2013, pp. 397–417.

[6]Heather Streets-Salter, *World War One in Southeast Asia: colonialism and anticolonialism in an era of global conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

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entangled with each other and to what ends?[7] Rather than being 'German' entities, the following sections detail how they were forged from already existing anti-colonial networks, the transnationalism of which imprinted Berlin's programme in interesting ways. When the Foreign Office formally established their committees in 1914, this was only the latest organizational incarnation for a group of political figures who had been active in exile networks since the revolutionary ferment of 1905–11. Their networks, in other words, predated the war, and the transnational activism that they brought to Berlin was furthered by their collaborative work in that city, a point often missed in existing studies.

The independence committees are rarely analysed together. Most studies have examined them separately, isolating them geographically and conceptually into various 'area studies' niches and distinct national histories. Scholarly accounts of the better-known committees – the Indian one in particular – have been predominantly related to histories of post-war anti-colonial nationalism.[8] Research on the Persian Committee has focused on the fate of the country's Constitutional Revolution and on the committee newspaper *Kāveh* as an example of 'Third World' nationalism.[9] The Algerian–Tunisian Committee has primarily been studied in its connection with the histories of Algerian and Tunisian independence, a literature which has ignored all ties to the wartime German Foreign Office.[10] Other committees, such as the Egyptian and the Irish, have been analysed in the context of their national revolutionary movements and their shared anti-British claims.[11] To date, little research exists on the Tatar, Ukrainian, Finnish, Polish, Georgian, Armenian, and Azeri committees, although they all moved in Berlin's strategic orbit.[12]

National division between scholarly literatures has been the norm. There is a growing body of research on wartime insurrection from the Ottoman side, for example, which highlights the actions of its revolutionary organization, the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* ('Special Organization'), but this literature exists at one remove from that on the German programme. This is despite the similarities – at least initially – between Berlin's and Istanbul's insurrection plans in terms of their

[7]Kris Manjapra, *Age of entanglement: German and Indian intellectuals across empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

[8]Thomas Fraser, 'Germany and Indian revolution, 1914–1918', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 12, 2, 1977, pp. 255–72; Maia Ramnath, *Haj to utopia: how the Ghadar movement charted global radicalism and attempted to overthrow the British empire*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011; Kris Manjapra, 'The illusions of encounter: Muslim "minds" and Hindu revolutionaries in First World War Germany and after', *Journal of Global History*, 1, 3, 2006, pp. 363–82.

[9]Ilse Itscherenska, 'Heydar Hān, das Berliner Persische Komitee und die Deutschen: interkulturelle Begegnungen im Ersten Weltkrieg', in Gerhard Höpp and Brigitte Reinwald, eds., *Fremdeinsätze: Afrikaner und Asiaten in europäischen Kriegen, 1914–1945*, Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000, pp. 57–78; Mohammed Alsulami, 'Iranian journals during the interwar period', in Götz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad, eds., *Transnational Islam in interwar Europe: Muslim activists and thinkers*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 157–80; Epkenhans, *Iranische Moderne*.

[10]James McDougall, *History and the culture of nationalism in Algeria*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 28–59; Charles-Robert Ageron, *Les Algériens Musulmans et la France, 1871–1919*, vol. 2, Paris: Editions Bouchene, 1968; Daniel Goldstein, *Libération ou annexion: aux chémins croisés de l'histoire tunisienne, 1914–1922*, Tunis: Maison tunisienne de l'édition, 1978, pp. 265–89.

[11]Lothar Rathmann, 'Ägypten im Exil, 1914–1918: Patrioten oder Kollaborateure des deutschen Imperialismus?', in *Asien in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart: Beiträge der Asienwissenschaftler der DDR zum XXIX. internationalen Orientalistenkongreß 1973 in Paris*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1974, pp. 1–23; Christine Strothmann, 'The revolutionary program of the German empire: the case of Ireland', in Gearóid Barry, Enrico Dal Lago, and Róisín Healy, eds., *Small nations and colonial peripheries in World War I*, Leiden: Brill, 2016, pp. 19–36; Reinhard Dörries, *Prelude to the Easter Rising: Sir Roger Casement in imperial Germany*, London: Routledge, 2000; Noor-Aiman I. Khan, *Egyptian–Indian nationalist collaboration and the British empire*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011; M. C. Rast, '"Ireland's sister nations": internationalism and sectarianism in the Irish struggle for independence 1916–22', *Journal of Global History*, 10, 2015, pp. 479–501.

[12]For an overview, see Wolfdieter Bihl, *Die Kaukasus-Politik der Mittelmächte Vol. 1: Ihre Basis in der Orient-Politik und ihre Aktionen 1914–1917*, Vienna: Böhlau, 1975; Gerhard Höpp, 'Zwischen Entente und Mittelmächten', *Asien, Afrika, Lateinamerika*, 19, 5, 1991, pp. 827–45.

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aims, tactics, and geographical expansiveness.[13] Most importantly, no study has treated the committees themselves to a systematic comparison with regard to their wartime work. This article, by contrast, explores their interaction and highlights the encounter with Germany that facilitated it.

The following pages focus on three committees in particular – the Indian, the Persian, and the Algerian–Tunisian – given their exemplary status, degree of entanglement, and ability to represent different stages and aspects of the programme for revolution. The IIC was the largest and the first founded. It exhibited a high degree of political and religious complexity, and, given India's strategic importance for the German Foreign Office during the war, the IIC enjoyed a particularly prominent status. The Persian Committee, by contrast, was smaller and more homogenous. Directed at two theatres of war (the British and the Russian), rather than one, its members worked extensively with the IIC in establishing intelligence networks across Mesopotamia and South Asia. Moreover, its members (and particularly its leader, the aforementioned Taqizadah) exhibited a marked secular, nationalist, and anti-Ottoman focus in their work. They saw the Ottoman jihad, for example, as Turkish aggression directed at Iranian territory.[14] In contrast to both the Persians and the Indians, the Algerian–Tunisian Committee was founded later and represented a particular direction in thinking about popular insurrection. Working more closely with Ottoman officials and the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* than did the others – and sharing none of the Berlin Persians' hostility to Ottoman officials' aims – the operations of its activists across North Africa were among the most radical in their determined mobilization of Islam as a strategic instrument of war.

The next four sections detail the interworkings of the three committees between 1914 and 1916, when the launching of the British-directed Arab revolt brought the first phase of Germany's programme to an end. Following an overview of the programme, we explore their remarkably similar founding stories, their propaganda work for the Foreign Office and its affiliated Information Service for the East (Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient, NfO), and their intensifying levels of interaction through the independent political missions they sent to the Mesopotamian theatre of war in 1915. Throughout, we highlight the pathways they created and followed, and their relationships with German officials and with each other. Finally, it bears repeating that committee members worked in the service of Germany but only when it suited their own political goals. Cooperating with German officials, they were not fully controlled by them. In fact, their independence from both German oversight and German war aims grew as the war ground on.

The programme and the committees

Germany's insurrection strategy was formally inaugurated on 2 August 1914, as the Germans and Ottomans signed their secret alliance and the archaeologist and consular official Max von Oppenheim arrived at a high-level meeting at the Foreign Office in Berlin. Working from ideas and contacts provided by Enver Pasha, his Ottoman ally, Oppenheim was tasked with the goal of raising popular revolt across the British, French, and Russian empires and given initial control over a project with a truly broad scope. His famous memorandum of October 1914, 'Revolutionizing the Islamic territories of our enemies', often presented as the work of a single man, articulated grand strategy and war aims from both the German and Ottoman points of view

[13]Polat Safi, 'History in the trench: the Ottoman special organization – Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa literature', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 48, 1, 2012, pp. 89–106; Polat Safi, 'Mirage in the sands: the Ottoman special organization on the Sinai–Palestine front', *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 66, 2016, pp. 39–54; Yücel Yiğit, 'The *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* and World War I', *Middle East Critique*, 23, 2, 2014, pp. 157–74; Eugene Rogan, 'Rival jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East, 1914–1918', *Journal of the British Academy*, 4, 2016, pp. 1–20.

[14]Jennifer Jenkins, 'Jihad or nationalist uprising? Germany's "programme for revolution" in the Middle East', in Andreas Gestrich and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, eds., *Bid for world power? New research on the outbreak of the First World War*, London: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 357–76.

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and relied heavily on Ottoman agents and contacts in the Muslim world.[15] The 'jihad' strategy outlined in his memorandum was not 'made in Germany' but drew on a policy put in place by the Ottomans before 1914.[16] Supported by the religious credentials provided by their Ottoman alliance partner, German officials set to work.

Geographically, the programme was to extend from French North Africa through Russian Central Asia to British South Asia. Strategically, it followed an expansive set of goals. Beginning with the desire of German and Ottoman officials to 'raise the Islamic world' in revolt, by 1915 its activities extended well beyond the calls to jihad that have been the focus of recent research.[17] Insurrection, the programme's expressed aim, took different forms. Militarily, the programme was to mobilize colonial soldiers and open new theatres of combat, drawing Entente troops away from the western battlefields. Politically, it was to work towards the establishment of new states and the drawing of new boundaries at the war's end. It had an expanding scope and a fairly chaotic character. To further complicate matters, what started in 1914 as a top-down German–Ottoman programme for jihad as a staging ground for a global war, had, by the beginning of 1915 – and as the result of discussions between committee members – become a more diverse programme of nationalist political mobilization, particularly from the side of the Indian and Persian activists in Berlin.

The committees fitted within an institutional structure directed jointly by the Foreign Office and the Supreme Army Command. Two new institutions took Germany's evolving vision of global revolt and turned it into a programme: the NfO propaganda organization, directed by Oppenheim, and the military intelligence office for covert operations, Section IIIb of the Political Section of the Reserve General Staff, run by the diplomat Rudolf Nadolny. Both were founded in the early weeks of the war. The NfO started as a bureau for translation and developed into an institution for systematic intelligence gathering, extending over numerous bureaus and consular offices, particularly those in neutral countries.[18] Intelligence aims connected the NfO to its sister organization, Nadolny's Section IIIb, which had a comparable scope. If the NfO worked as a political intelligence bureau (the German word *Nachrichtendienst* means both intelligence service and information bureau), Section IIIb did the same on the military side.[19]

To successfully complete its myriad tasks, the programme required expansive linguistic expertise and political knowledge that German agents did not possess. With this in mind, Oppenheim and Nadolny actively searched for partners in 1914, looking to recruit intelligence operatives from the existing circles of anti-colonial exiles in Europe and North America. Working from their intelligence contacts, the Foreign Office looked towards the nationalist, anti-colonial, and pan-Islamic networks that had arisen in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War. Following Russia's defeat by a non-Western power, politicians and intellectuals from Istanbul to Beijing called for the establishment of national parliaments, the writing of constitutions, and

[15]Max von Oppenheim, 'Die Revolutionierung der Islamischen Gebiete unserer Feinde', in Tim Epkenhans, 'Geld darf keine Rolle spielen', *Archivum Ottomanicum*, 19, 2001, pp. 121–63; Suzanne L. Marchand, *German orientalism in the age of empire: religion, race, and scholarship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 49; Herbert Landolin Müller, *Islam, gihād ('Heiliger Krieg') und Deutsches Reich: ein Nachspiel zur wilhelminischen Weltpolitik im Maghreb 1914–1918*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1991, pp. 247–51.

[16]Erik-Jan Zürcher, ed., *Jihad and Islam in World War I: studies on the Ottoman jihad on the centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's 'Holy war made in Germany'*, Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2016; Rogan, 'Rival jihads'; Mustafa Aksakal, '"Holy war made in Germany?" Ottoman origins of the 1914 jihad', *War in History*, 18, 2, 2011, pp. 184–99.

[17]Wilfried Loth and Marc Hanisch, eds., *Erster Weltkrieg und Dschihad: die Deutschen und die Revolutionierung des Orients*, Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2014; Zürcher, *Jihad and Islam*.

[18]Maren Bragulla, *Die Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient: Fallstudie einer Propagandainstitution im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Saarbrücken: VDM, 2007; Gottfried Hagen, 'German heralds of holy war: orientalists and applied oriental studies', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 24, 2, 2004, pp. 145–62.

[19]Rudolf Nadolny, *Mein Beitrag*, Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1955, p. 85.

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the recognition of popular sovereignty.[20] When forced to flee their homelands, these revolutionaries had travelled in all directions, establishing their networks across Europe, the Ottoman empire, and North America. North African reformists gathered in the Ottoman capital, where they agitated against French rule in North Africa and supported pan-Islamic politics.[21] South Asian revolutionaries congregated in cities across the globe. The suppression of the Swadeshi movement by Great Britain and the expulsion of its leaders led to its activists taking up residence in Europe and North America.[22]

By 1905, London and Paris were centres for the Indian anti-colonial movement's intense internationalism, and Persian, Egyptian, Irish, and Indian activists and exiles assembled their networks in Lausanne, Bern, and Geneva.[23] The Ghadr movement set up shop in San Francisco. Diversity reigned within and between these groups – a vital aspect of their transnational activity that they brought to Berlin. The Parisian circles of the Indian revolutionary Shyamji Krishnavarma included 'French Socialists, Chinese and Javanese Pan-Asians, Egyptian nationalists, English suffragists, Russian anarchists and Irish Fenians'.[24] Groups formed in Swiss cities, as liberal asylum laws had made the country a magnet for political dissidents, starting with the Armenian national movement in the 1890s. When Krishnavarma shifted his revolutionary work from Paris and London, he moved to Lausanne, where he had contact with Persian, Turkish, Armenian, and Egyptian students and could cooperate with activists such as the Egyptian journalist Mansur Rifa'at.[25] The founder of the South Asian Ghadr movement, Har Dayal, also moved to Lausanne in the spring of 1914.[26] When Persian revolutionaries fled the violence of their country's civil war, they found havens in Switzerland. They were joined by North African exiles such as Mohammed Bach Hamba, who moved to Geneva in 1913.[27]

In August 1914, the German Foreign Office came into focus for these groups as a source of needed financial, political, and institutional support. Germany's anti-British, anti-French, and anti-Russian politics mirrored their own; furthermore, German diplomats had attracted sympathy for their support of Persian nationalists and Young Turk politicians in their ongoing struggles against the European imperial powers.[28] Germany could be a safe site for further organization and action, as well as a provider of logistical support. Berlin could be what the historian Quinn Slobodian, in a different context, called a 'foreign front' for their own struggles.[29] Correspondingly, diverse activists sought contact with German and Turkish officials in the months leading up to the war. In Istanbul, they pursued discussions with the German ambassador, Hans Otto von Wangenheim, the Ottoman War Minister, Enver Pasha, and the German general Colmar von der Goltz, commander of the Turkish Sixth Army. Enver's office at the Ottoman War Ministry, in which planning for a September 1914 revolt in Tunisia and Algeria was underway,

[20]Cemil Aydin, 'A global anti-Western moment? The Russo-Japanese War, decolonization and Asian modernity', in Sebastian Conrad and Dominic Sachsenmaier, eds., *Competing visions of world order: global moments and movements, 1880s–1930s*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 213–36.

[21]Pierre Bardin, *Algériens et Tunisiens dans l'Empire Ottoman, 1848–1918*, Paris: CNRS, 1980, p. 190.

[22]Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'Transnational and diasporic dimensions of the Indian freedom movement on the eve of the First World War', *Journal of Global History*, 2, 3, 2007, p. 329; Manjapra, 'Illusions of encounter', p. 369.

[23]Manu Goswami, 'Imaginary futures and colonial internationalism', *American Historical Review*, 117, 5, 2012, pp. 1461–85; Horst Krüger, 'Indian nationalist revolutionaries in Paris before World War I', *Archiv Orientální*, 45, 1977, pp. 329–43.

[24]Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Shyamji Krishnavarma: Sanskrit, sociology and anti-imperialism*, London: Routledge, 2014, p. 226.

[25]Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'The other side of internationalism: Switzerland as a hub of militant anti-colonialism c. 1910–1920', in Patricia Purtschert and Harald Fischer-Tiné, eds., *Colonial Switzerland: rethinking colonialism from the margins*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p. 226; Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Vorkämpfer der 'Neuen Türkei': revolutionäre Bildungseliten am Genfersee (1870–1939)*, Zürich: Chronos, 2005; Kate O'Malley, *Ireland, India and empire: Indo-Irish radical connections 1919–64*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008.

[26]Horst Krüger, 'Har Dayal in Deutschland', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*, 10, 1, 1964, p. 145.

[27]Müller, *Islam*, pp. 247–51.

[28]Jenkins, 'Jihad or nationalist uprising?', pp. 365–6.

[29]Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign front: Third World politics in sixties West Germany*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012, p. 13.

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provided Wangenheim with contacts to Muslim leaders in the Arabian peninsula, India, Persia, and Morocco who were ready to fight against the Entente powers.[30]

As the activists' initiatives met Nadolny's and Oppenheim's recruiting efforts the programme's first committee, the IIC, was officially founded in September 1914. It was based on the aforementioned networks of South Asians in Europe and America, which were now partly shifted to Berlin and reconfigured. Various actors contributed to its founding. One of them was Abhinash Chandra Bhattacharya, co-founder of the Indian newspaper *Yugantar* (*New Era*), in 1906. A member of the extremist wing of the Indian National Congress, Bhattacharya had left India for Germany in 1910, after being accused of terrorist activities. In August 1914, while a student in Halle, he found his way to Berlin via Helmuth von Delbrück, nephew of the vice-president of the Prussian State Ministry. Expressing his anti-British and pro-German views, specifically that Germany supported anti-colonial nationalism, Bhattacharya wrote:

> The English, who are the biggest liars in the world, must now receive real punishment from Germany. I know the English very well. I also have great trust in Germany and believe that she, despite fighting on three sides, will emerge victorious and will give freedom to Poland, Finland, India and Egypt. World history will be written in gold letters proclaiming that Germany has rescued half of the world's people from slavery and repression. For without India, the English will no longer have the ability to rule over the whole world.[31]

As a follow-up, Bhattacharya and his friend Chattopadhyaya were invited to the Foreign Office.[32]

Concurrently, Oppenheim had begun to systematically inquire into 'the Indians, Persians, Afghans, Egyptians and residents of Russian Muslim areas ... who are living in Germany and Austria-Hungary', and was gathering information on politically active Indians in the United States.[33] A further activist, Chempakaraman Pillai, the leader of the Pro India Committee in Zürich and the editor of its newspaper, contacted Consul Romberg in Bern with a report on Indians living in Switzerland.[34] As a result, on 11 September 1914, Oppenheim informed the diplomat Otto von Wesendonk, Nadolny's colleague, that a bureau for Indian affairs had been officially constituted in Berlin.[35] One week later, he reported that a similar Indian committee, also operating under the control of the NfO, had been established in Istanbul.[36]

Over the next few months, Berlin's South Asian activists put forward the names of Indian revolutionaries living in other parts of Europe and America to be invited to join the Berlin and Istanbul committees. Har Dayal, previously contacted by German officials, approached his colleagues and friends in the United States.[37] This active involvement was a sign of things to come. The IIC functioned during the war as a loose association of more than fifty political activists and was known for resisting the control of German officials.[38] As early as December 1914, IIC members

[30]Political Archive of the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, Berlin (henceforth PA AA), R 21167, Wangenheim to Foreign Office Berlin, 4 September 1914; Müller, *Islam*, p. 240.

[31]PA AA, R 21070, letter from Bhattacharya, Halle, 11 August 1914.

[32]Barooah, *Chatto*, pp. 40–1; Purnima Bose, 'Transnational resistance and fictive truths: Virendranath Chattophadhyaya, Agnes Smedley and the Indian national movement', *South Asian History and Culture*, 2, 4, 2011, pp. 502–21.

[33]PA AA, R 21070, correspondence between Oppenheim and von Prittwitz, 31 August–1 September 1914.

[34]PA AA, R 21070, Romberg to Bethmann Hollweg, 2 September 1914.

[35]PA AA, R 21071, Oppenheim to Wesendonk, 11 September 1914.

[36]PA AA, R 21071, Oppenheim to Foreign Office, 16 September 1914.

[37]PA AA, R 21070, Romberg to Foreign Office, 3 September 1914; Benjamin Zachariah, 'A long strange trip: the lives in exile of Har Dayal', *South Asian History and Culture*, 4, 4, 2013, pp. 574–92; Emily Brown, *Har Dayal: Hindu revolutionary and rationalist*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1976.

[38]Frank Oesterheld, '"Der Feind meines Feindes ist mein Freund": zur Tätigkeit des Indian Independence Committee (IIC) während des Ersten Weltkrieges in Berlin', MA thesis, Humboldt University Berlin, 2004.

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sought to break free of Oppenheim's supervision.[39] However, the IIC could not yet function as independently as its members wished. In fact, all of the activists were subjected to German control.[40] Their communications were monitored; their letters were opened, read, and translated. All of the central figures had German 'minders': Har Dayal was under the purview of Helmuth von Glasenapp; Schabinger von Schowingen of the NfO was assigned to al-Tunisi; Taqizadah was watched by Nadolny.[41]

Following the IIC's founding, the Foreign Office set out to find reliable Persian operatives. Iran had been partitioned between Britain and Russia by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, and Persian nationalists presented the Foreign Office with an ideal set of agents. They were anti-British, anti-Russian, and in need of funds and institutional support. As with the Indian Committee, relations between German diplomats and Persian nationalists predated the war. They had begun in 1906, when German diplomats in Tehran supported Iran's Constitutional Revolution, and they intensified in 1910–11 as prominent constitutionalists were forced into exile in the Ottoman empire and Europe.[42] Thus, the Persian Committee's founding mirrored that of the Indian in being constituted from existing activist networks, but differed in being immediately tied to an active military strategy. At the beginning of August 1914 the German General Staff had vetted plans for instigating a national uprising in Iran as a way of striking against Russia. 'Persia is to be encouraged', stated a report of 4 August, 'to use the favourable circumstances to throw off the Russian yoke and if possible to advance together with Turkey.'[43] In the autumn of 1914, the Foreign Office dispatched agents to Iran, including members of the Afghanistan expedition, to ready the country for war.[44] The committee's founding in early 1915 was the next step in this strategy. Taqizadah sat at its head.

Taqizadah worked with Nadolny and Wesendonk in locating exiled Persian constitutionalists throughout Europe and the Ottoman empire.[45] Husayn Quli Khan Nawab, the former foreign minister of Iran's constitutional government, was in Paris. The radical constitutionalist Haydar Khan was in Istanbul. Others were located in Baghdad, Lausanne, and Brussels.[46] Persian diplomats in high-level European postings signalled their willingness to serve as official representatives.[47] Assembling in Berlin in February 1915, the committee put forward its programme in March.[48] They defined themselves as a constitutionalist government-in-exile and the embodiment of 'all of the elements of Persian patriotism'.[49] Like the other committees, they planned to widely distribute propaganda, both inside Iran and throughout Persian-speaking international networks, to create intelligence facilities to fulminate against the Russian and British control of their country, and to work with Muslim prisoners, particularly Shi'i prisoners from the Caucasus, in German prisoner-of-war (POW) camps.[50]

In contrast to the Indian and Persian committees, the Algerian–Tunisian Committee was established not at the war's beginning but at its height. Compared to the others it was generally

[39]PA AA, R 21076, Chattopadhyaya and Kersasp to Wesendonk, 8 December 1914.

[40]Daniel Brückenhaus, 'Every stranger must be suspected: trust relationships and the surveillance of anti-colonialists in early twentieth-century western Europe', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 36, 2010, pp. 523–66.

[41]Helmuth von Glasenapp, *Meine Lebensreise: Menschen, Länder und Dinge, die ich sah,* Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1964, p. 75; Karl Emil Schabinger von Schowingen, *Weltgeschichtliche Mosaiksplitter: Erlebnisse und Erinnerungen eines kaiserlichen Dragomans,* Baden-Baden: K.F. Schabinger Frhr von Schowingen, 1967, p. 113.

[42]Edward Granville Browne, *The reign of terror at Tabriz*, Manchester: Taylor, Garnett, Evans and Co., 1912.

[43]PA AA, R 21028, 'Wünsche des Grossen Generalstabs betreffend Persien', 4 August 1914.

[44]PA AA, R 21028, Reichenau to Bethmann Hollweg, 5 September 1914.

[45]Epkenhans, *Iranische Moderne*, pp. 34–9; PA AA, R 21034, report of the German Consul General in New York, 23 December 1914.

[46]PA AA, R 21035, Oppenheim to Wesendonk, 30 January 1915.

[47]PA AA, R 21034, Foreign Office Berlin to German Legation in The Hague, 26 January 1915.

[48]PA AA, R 21035, report from Wesendonk, 4 February 1915.

[49]Epkenhans, *Iranische Moderne*, p. 25.

[50]PA AA, R 21037, programme of the Persian Committee, 1 March 1915.

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less secular in its outreach, with most members taking a decidedly pan-Islamic and pro-Enver direction, particularly when contrasted to the Persian activists. Constituted at a meeting at the Hotel Esplanade in Berlin on 7 January 1916, it drew its members from exile networks of politically active North Africans in Istanbul and Switzerland. Its leader, al-Tunisi, had gone to Istanbul in 1906, where he had developed close ties to Young Turk politicians. In 1912 a second wave of activists from the new Young Tunisia Party (founded 1907) joined him in Istanbul. This group of French-educated intellectuals differed from the first, being interestingly secular in their political leanings. They had been exiled by the French authorities as local protests had devolved into riots and strikes following Italy's invasion of Libya. Initially the group concentrated its activities in Istanbul, extending its networks to Berlin and Geneva during the war. Members included the activist Ali Bach Hamba, the leader of the Young Tunisia Party and later coordinator of the German–Ottoman military mission in North Africa as head of the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*.[51] He was joined by his brother, Mohammed Bach Hamba, who had moved from Istanbul to Geneva in 1913, and Ismael Sefaihi, a religious Tunisian scholar, who had moved from Istanbul to Switzerland in 1908. From 1916 to 1918 Mohammed Bach Hamba, who published the journal *Revue du Maghreb* with funding from the Turkish War Ministry, created a nodal point for the North African exiles in Switzerland.[52]

The committee's most prominent member, however, was al-Tunisi. In the autumn of 1914, Enver Pasha had recommended the religious scholar to the Foreign Office in Berlin.[53] Given the sheik's established authority in matters of 'holy war', al-Tunisi was seen by German and Ottoman officials alike as the man best suited for turning the Muslim soldiers of the Entente towards the cause of the Central Powers. He arrived in Berlin in the winter of 1914, and became the central propagandist for North African affairs for the NfO, translating and producing leaflets for the front and publications for the POW camps. By the end of 1915, this Algerian-born religious scholar was well established, known particularly as the author of the book *Haqiqat aldschihad*, translated into German as *Die Wahrheit über den Glaubenskrieg* (*The truth concerning the holy war*), which explained the idea of 'holy war' to the German public.[54] In the spring of 1916, al-Tunisi publicly toured throughout Germany promoting the Ottoman–German alliance in Saxony, Bavaria, Württemberg, and Baden. As a sign of his status, he was introduced to members of the German nobility and visited strategic sites, such as the Krupp war industries in Essen and the secret Fokker aircraft factory near Schwerin.[55]

In December 1915, al-Tunisi, Mohammed Bach Hamba, and Ismael Sefaihi presented the committee's independence declaration to Schabinger von Schowingen, head of the NfO; with Wesendonk and Nadolny, the NfO officially launched the group in January 1916.[56] Al-Tunisi was elected as its head. At the meeting, Tunisian and Egyptian activists mingled with high-ranking German and Ottoman officials and scholars of oriental studies. Among the first group was 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish, whom al-Tunisi knew from Istanbul. Shawish worked for the NfO, was close to Enver, and was active in the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*.[57] Mobilizing news of the committee's founding for the NfO's propaganda purposes, telegrams were sent to the respective heads of states in which the

[51]Müller, *Islam*, p. 243; Safi, 'History in the trench', p. 98.

[52]Mohammed Bach Hamba, *La revue du Maghreb: Algérie, Tunisie, Maroc, Tripolitaine: tribune des revendications des indigènes,* 1–8, 1916–18.

[53]Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans,* p. 72; Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany,* pp. 117–25.

[54]Salih Ascharif Attunisi, *Haqiqat aldschihad: die Wahrheit über den Glaubenskrieg,* Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1915.

[55]Peter Heine, 'Sâlih ash-Sharîf at-Tunisî, a north African nationalist in Berlin during the First World War', *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée,* 33, 1982, pp. 89–95.

[56]'Ein algerisch-tunesischer Unabhängigkeitsausschuß', *Lokal-Anzeiger*, 7 January 1916; 'Der Islam gegen Frankreich: Protestversammlung der Mohammedaner aus Tunis und Algerien in Berlin', *Berliner Morgenpost*, 8 January 1916; 'Für die Befreiung Algeriens und Tunesiens', *Lokal-Anzeiger*, 9 January 1916.

[57]Bardin, *Algériens et Tunisiens*, p. 242.

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independence of Tunisia and Algeria had been declared.[58] And, although the 'German friendly' al-Tunisi seemed to be the committee's leader, the real power behind the scenes was the author of the independence declaration, the Geneva activist Mohammed Bach Hamba.[59] For his part, Bach Hamba tracked closer to Ottoman views on insurrection and jihad as the war continued. His evolving position between Berlin and Istanbul illuminated not only the complex organizational situation facing the North African activists, but also Enver's dual role as both Berlin's ally and its competitor in the matter of wartime insurrection.

Being pro-German: propaganda on the front lines

From their first months in Berlin, Oppenheim and Nadolny expected committee members to intensively collaborate with German officials and with each other; they were to make collective use of the support provided. Correspondingly, committee members came together first – with each other and with the NfO – in the generation and dissemination of propaganda, particularly that directed at colonial soldiers. Here Germany's wartime interests and the insurrectionary aspirations of the committees found common ground. The NfO's brief was to 'influence oriental lands and peoples to support the Central Powers using a large collection of diverse publications: India, Egypt and Persia should be influenced against England, the Tatars and Georgians against Russia, and the Muslim peoples of North Africa, separate from Egypt, should be mobilized against France and Italy'.[60] Texts were 'to be translated into Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Hindustani, Kiswahili and the languages of the Russian Muslims'.[61]

Starting in the autumn of 1914, the NfO produced propaganda for different audiences: colonial soldiers fighting for the Entente on the front lines; colonial prisoners in Germany's POW camps; nationalist audiences in the committees' countries of origin; nationals living in neutral countries (such as the Persians in Switzerland or the Indians in San Francisco); and the German public itself. It disseminated texts via operatives in neutral countries, who became progressively more important as the war continued. By 1915, the NfO's propaganda distribution system included a wide array of military and civilian sites: the front lines and camps, consulates, hotels, book shops, and companies in neutral countries such as Switzerland, Sweden, and Spain, and a special news service in The Hague that coordinated German propaganda for Egypt, the Dutch Indies, and British India.[62] No contact was too small. Texts were sent to newspapers in the Dutch Indies, and the NfO used connections to Indian merchants, seamen, and students in the Netherlands to gather information about India.[63] Similarly, a Swiss branch of the NfO gathered information from Arab, Persian, and Ottoman students and exiles in Switzerland.[64]

This wide array of propaganda activities was based on the collaboration between the NfO and the activists. But, while the latter did the work, made the contacts, and disseminated the results, the NfO emphasized that it was in charge, particularly in the early months of the war. Propaganda was produced under its control and coordination, and it financed the entire operation.[65] The main thrust of these activities was to counter the claims of British and French war propaganda and to

[58]PA AA, R 21182, Schabinger to Wesendonk, 20 December 1915; Scheich Saleh Scherif and Scheich Ismail Sefaihi, *Tunesien und Algerien: ein Protest gegen französische Gewaltherrschaft*, Berlin: Ausschuss für die Unabhängigkeit Tunesiens und Algeriens, 1916.

[59]PA AA, R 21183, Zimmermann to Bern envoy, 19 February 1916.

[60]Bihl, *Kaukasus-Politik*, p. 104.

[61]*Ibid*.

[62]PA AA, R 1513, report of 15 November 1915.

[63]PA AA, R 21092, plan for a new service for Egypt, the Dutch Indies and British India, December 1915.

[64]PA AA, R 21263–7, 'Monitoring and surveillance of the Orientals currently in Switzerland (1915–1916)'.

[65]PA AA, Schabinger von Schowingen Papers, vol. 12, Schabinger von Schowingen to Istanbul Ambassador Wolff-Metternich, 12 June 1916.

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mobilize fighters in the name of jihad for the German cause.[66] This began immediately, in the first weeks of the war, as the committees collaborated in fashioning a pro-German narrative for the front lines. In October 1914, prior to the appearance of Oppenheim's memorandum, the Indian revolutionary Har Dayal had contacted Wangenheim in Istanbul with his plan for mobilizing Indian soldiers fighting on the western front for the Central Powers. The first Indian regiments had arrived in France, and Har Dayal recommended reaching them via organized propaganda messages; he submitted a sample text to the Foreign Office to illustrate what he meant. His tactic was enthusiastically approved, but his text was rejected in favour of one written by German officials. The latter read:

> To the brave Indian soldiers! This missive comes to you in the name of your ancestors, kings and your holy religion. You have been deceived! You have been asked to fight in a foreign land for an England that holds your country in slavery. But you don't know that your own people in this same moment have risen up against the English and have demanded freedom … The English have hidden this from you … You believe that the English are the most powerful nation and that they will defeat your enemies. This is not true. They are lying to you. The English have spread their lies throughout the world … German battleships have already shelled Indian ports and have sunk English ships in the Indian Ocean … [In France] you see how powerful the German armies are.[67]

The pamphlet described the fearful power of the German military, while emphasizing that the Germans wished the Indians no harm. The Germans 'love your land and are friendly toward you … If you cannot support the liberation movement of your brothers in your own land, you can help by not fighting for England. Lay down your weapons and go over to the Germans!'[68] Its overall thrust illustrated what German authorities had in mind: it countered a British narrative of the war with a German one and exhorted Indian soldiers to cross the lines in the name of their own freedom. Committee members and the NfO distributed it by the tens of thousands on the western front as well as more broadly. Leaflets in Hindi, Urdu, and Punjabi were sent via Istanbul to German consulates in Damascus and Baghdad. Others went to the IIC's missions in Mesopotamia and Syria for dissemination among colonial soldiers.[69] In October 1915, the NfO sent three crates, each containing 25,000 copies of the pamphlet, for distribution in Mesopotamia, Syria, China, Siam, and the United States. Here the office's immense global translation abilities – and the fruits of the collaboration between German officials and committee members – were on full display.[70]

Texts were one thing; people were another. Committee members travelled to the western front to personally spread the discourse of 'holy war' and pro-German strategy on the front lines. In December 1914, Schabinger von Schowingen took al-Tunisi and the IIC members Hormuz Kersasp and Basant Singh on such a trip.[71] Kersasp, a Hindu activist, took on a 'Muslim' name, appearing as Hasan Ali Khan, which German authorities thought made him a more convincing disseminator of the jihad message.[72] As in other venues, assigning 'Muslim' or 'Arab' names to Hindu and Persian activists became a common tactic in the cooperation between the authorities and the

[66]Ravi Ahuja, 'Lost engagements? Traces of South Asian soldiers in German captivity, 1915–1918', in Franziska Roy, Heike Liebau, and Ravi Ahuja, eds., *'When the war began we heard of several kings': South Asian prisoners in World War I Germany*, New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011, pp. 17–52.

[67]PA AA, R 21073, 'Ihr tapferen Krieger von Indien', 16 October 1914.

[68]PA AA, R 21073; Heike Liebau, 'The German Foreign Office, Indian emigrants and propaganda efforts among the "sepoys"', in Roy, Liebau, and Ahuja, *'When the war began'*, pp. 96–129.

[69]PA AA, R 21081, Foreign Office to Istanbul Embassy, 7 April 1915.

[70]Liebau, 'German Foreign Office', p. 112; Ahuja, 'Lost engagements?'.

[71]Schabinger von Schowingen, *Weltgeschichtliche Mosaiksplitter*, p. 112.

[72]Liebau, 'German Foreign Office', p. 128.

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activists.[73] At the front, Kersasp and Singh agitated for their countrymen to change sides, dropping leaflets with appeals to the sepoys over the trenches and speaking to them via loudspeaker. At the IIC's direction they photographed the soldiers, highlighting their physical condition. IIC members specifically desired images depicting prisoners 'seriously wounded and in wretched condition' for publication in the Indian press in both India and the United States. There they would be juxtaposed with images showing the 'good treatment' of Indian soldiers by the Germans.[74]

Singh and Kersasp's travelling companion, al-Tunisi, played a starring role in the propaganda tour. At the Lille citadel, where captured troops were held prior to being sent to POW camps inside of Germany, al-Tunisi lectured to Indian and Arab soldiers on the meaning of the Ottoman jihad proclamation.[75] According to a report in the German newspaper *Tägliche Rundschau*, the Indian troops were 'noticeably moved' by the sheik's speech and showed their respect by kissing his garment. Interestingly, the reporter noted that the listening Indian troops did not understand Arabic, yet, with the translation provided by the NfO, 'it was astonishing to see how their interest in the speaker grew with every passing minute'.[76]

German newspapers were here clearly carrying out their own propaganda mission, disseminating a form of pan-Islamic outreach geared to their own specific aims on the front lines. Committee members, however, generated different stories from the Germans, highlighting the tensions emerging from their 'cooperative' work. Refusing to see colonial soldiers as objects, Kersasp impressed on Wesendonk the challenge of carrying out propaganda efforts among the sepoys, given that they were deeply frightened. 'They are afraid of enemy fire, and they are afraid that the English will kill them if they refuse to fight. They don't wish to be taken prisoner', he told Wesendonk. Moreover, 'the English have told them that the Germans will cut off their hands and legs and will slit their throats' if they were to change sides.[77] The Indian and Arab troops listening to al-Tunisi at Lille expressed similar experiences and fears. 'They described, with some indignation, how the English had lied to them', wrote the reporter Pietsch at the *Tägliche Rundschau*, 'telling them that if the Germans took them prisoner they would mutilate them by cutting off their ears and the like.'[78]

Propaganda actions at the front brought members of the different committees together, such as Kersasp with al-Tunisi, but also revealed diverging interests. Indian activists reported on their successful collaboration with the sheik in convincing Muslim prisoners to return to the front to fight for the downfall of the imperial powers. Al-Tunisi's account, by contrast, emphasized his overall ambivalence towards the IIC's approach.[79] He complained that Indian activists were pursuing their own nationalist revolutionary goals, rather than following the supposed common goals of the jihad campaign.[80]

As shown by the example of Kersasp and al-Tunisi, as Germany's pressure for a unified message brought committee members together, archival sources reveal how the Indian, Persian, and Tunisian–Algerian activists reacted differently to this demand, approaching their propaganda work with reference to their committees' specific aims, namely the type of uprising that they sought. One sees this particularly in the diverse approaches taken by the three committees to the topic of jihad. While an early focus of committee work in general, by 1915 it had become abundantly clear that the concept of jihad was not understood across the committees in a uniform fashion. In the North African context, jihad was viewed as a useful instrument of anti-colonial

[73] Manjapra, 'Illusions of encounter', p. 375.

[74] PA AA, R 21076, IIC to Basant Singh and Hormuz Kersasp, 29 December 1914; Liebau, 'German Foreign Office', pp. 114–15.

[75] Ahuja, 'Lost engagements?', p. 20.

[76] PA AA, R 21244, Pietsch, 'Bei den indischen Gefangenen', *Tägliche Rundschau*, 31 December 1914.

[77] PA AA, R 21076, Kersasp to Wesendonk, 26 December 1914.

[78] Pietsch, 'Bei den indischen Gefangenen'.

[79] PA AA, R 21076, Kersasp to Wesendonk, 26 December 1914.

[80] PA AA, R 21076, Wesendonk to Nadolny, 25 December 1914.

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resistance against European expansion and was used as such.[81] By contrast, many Indian and Persian operatives saw the matter differently. The Persians did not wish to use the language of the Ottoman jihad, and acquiesced to its use as a tactic only. A separate Shi'a declaration had been secured for their use, but it was not seen as authentic.[82] From 1915 on, Berlin's Indian and Persian activists increasingly eschewed jihad language in favour of utilizing nationalist and secular appeals in the propaganda messages to their various audiences.

Diverging messages: propaganda in the prisoner-of-war camps

Beyond the front lines, German officials and the activists collaborated energetically in Germany's POW camps. The NfO, the military authorities, and the committees organized activities for the colonial soldiers interned in the twin propaganda camps on Berlin's outskirts: the Half Moon Camp in Wünsdorf and the Weinberg Camp in Zossen. The latter camp housed primarily Muslim prisoners from the Russian empire, while the Half Moon Camp held a variety of soldiers: Muslim POWs from North Africa and South Asia, as well as Sikhs and Hindus.[83] The project of segregating and targeting particular groups of soldiers for propaganda purposes was driven by Germany's specific political ambitions and military aims.[84] These were 'show camps', through which Germany sought to present itself as the 'only true friend of the Muslim world', to turn colonial prisoners towards the German cause. The two camps appealed to the religious identity of the Muslim prisoners by offering better accommodation, respecting religious dietary requirements, and building – in the Half Moon Camp in July 1915 – a large wooden mosque. This last became a main instrument for showcasing Germany's policy of 'good treatment' of Muslims to audiences in the prisoners' home countries. Picture postcards and newspaper clippings spread its image far and wide, to the alarm of the French and British military authorities.[85]

The strategy of winning Muslim POWs to Germany's cause by means of better treatment in camps had been developed by Oppenheim in his memorandum 'The use of Muslim prisoners-of-war' in October 1914.[86] Here German officials envisioned transforming the prisoners into intelligence agents capable of communicating insurrectionary messages to audiences in North Africa, the Near East, and South Asia. In the 'special camps', prisoners were to be convinced to participate in a 'holy war' in two ways: ideally by being recruited into new military units for the Ottoman front, or, if recruitment was out of the question, by including pro-German messages and war narratives in their letters home. Approximately 2,000 so-called military 'volunteers' of this sort, comprising North African, Tatar, and Indian POWs, were sent from Germany to Istanbul between February 1916 and April 1917.[87] How voluntary their actions were is debatable, as recent research has highlighted the considerable physical punishments and moral pressures to which these prisoners were exposed.[88]

[81] Rudolph Peters, *Islam and colonialism: the doctrine of jihad in modern history*, The Hague: Mouton, 1979.

[82] Jenkins, 'Jihad or nationalist uprising?', p. 362.

[83] Gerhard Höpp, *Muslime in der Mark: als Kriegsgefangene und Internierte in Wünsdorf und Zossen, 1914–1924*, Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1997.

[84] Heather Jones, 'A missing paradigm? Military captivity and the prisoner of war, 1914–18', *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, 26, 1–2, 2008, pp. 19–48.

[85] Richard Fogarty, *Race and war in France: colonial subjects in the French army, 1914–1918*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008, p. 169.

[86] PA AA, R 21167, Max von Oppenheim, 'Benutzung der kriegsgefangenen Muhammedaner', 2 October 1914.

[87] Kenneth Steuer, 'German propaganda and prisoners-of-war during World War I', in Troy R. E. Paddock, ed., *World War I and propaganda*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, p. 176.

[88] Sophie Bajart, 'Die wiedergefundenen Stimmen der muslimischen Gefangenen', in Benedikt Burkard and Céline Lebret, eds., *Gefangene Bilder: Wissenschaft und Propaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2014, p. 121; Richard Fogarty, 'Out of North Africa: contested visions of French Muslim soldiers during World War I', in Richard Fogarty and Andrew Tait Jarboe, eds., *Empires in World War I: shifting frontiers and imperial dynamics in a global conflict*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2014, p. 148.

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As on the front, German officials aimed to control the work done by Asian and North African propagandists in the camps, and they pressured committee members to work together. The common project, however, soon ran into difficulty. Initially, native speakers of the prisoners' languages were brought to Zossen from Berlin's Seminar for Oriental Languages to contribute to various German-directed activities: reading and discussing newspaper articles with prisoners, giving lectures, providing religious instruction, and teaching German and Arabic classes.[89] A handful of such propagandists were hired to tend to the North African POWs. Under al-Tunisi's direction, and with German approval, they propagated pan-Islamic ideas to the Muslim POWs. However, al-Tunisi was regularly absent, given his frequent trips to Istanbul, and the work of other North African activists, such as the Moroccan lecturer Mohammed bel-Harbi, or the Algerian-born Rabah Boukabouya, the only indigenous French officer who had gone over to the Germans, was brought forward. Propaganda messages began to diverge as a result, and differences to arise. By the summer of 1915, German officials decided to replace the native propagandists with German functionaries, in an effort to forcibly unify the overall message, but they did not succeed. The difficulties continued.[90] The pitched arguments around a core propaganda vehicle, the camp newspaper *El Dschihad* (*Jihad*), were a case in point.

All of the activists participated in the NfO's central project: the production of *El Dschihad*. The idea of a newspaper specifically for Muslim prisoners had been worked out between al-Tunisi and Oppenheim at the beginning of 1915.[91] Printed in Arabic, Russian, Turko-Tatarian, Georgian, Hindi, and Urdu, its content and format were the subject of lively dispute between committee members. While agreeing on the overall goal of insurrection, they disagreed on the approach and the strategic language used. IIC members expressed strong reservations about *El Dschihad*, objecting not only to their involvement in such blatant German propaganda work, but also to its title. The latter was a genuine problem for them, given that their chief objective was not pan-Islamic propaganda but the strengthening of nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments among South Asian populations at large. Instead of *El Dschihad*, the IIC suggested the title *Hindostan* for the Hindi and Urdu editions of the camp newspaper, which German officials pragmatically accepted.[92]

Under *Hindostan* and other titles, *El Dschihad* was published regularly – from every few days up to every two weeks – and distributed in the two propaganda camps. Illustrating the complicated patterns of collaboration and divergence emerging between the committees, and between the activists and the Germans, its several versions differed in both title and content. All versions published articles relating to Germany – presenting it as a formidable military power with anti-colonial aims and a friendly attitude towards Islam – as well as reports from the various theatres of war, and information on political and economic developments in the prisoners' home countries.[93] Beyond that, however, the paper's issues differed depending on which audience was being addressed. For the two papers in South Asian languages, both the Hindi and Urdu versions addressed the patriotic feelings of their audiences – reminding readers of the 'tyranny of the English' in the 1857 uprising, for example – but only the Urdu version carried specific content for Muslim readers. A direct appeal to Muslim soldiers, combined with jihad propaganda and articles with pan-Islamic content, was published in Urdu. The content of the Urdu version became a truly

[89]Höpp, *Muslime in der Mark*, p. 54; Larissa Schmid, 'Competing visions of area studies in the interwar period: the Seminar of Oriental Languages in Berlin', *Middle East: Topics & Arguments*, 4, 2015, pp. 50–60.

[90]PA AA, R 21250, Camp report, 25 July 1915; PA AA, R 21251, Schabinger to Wesendonk, 30 October 1915.

[91]PA AA, R 20938, Max von Oppenheim, 'Denkschrift betreffend die Revolutionierung der islamischen Gebiete unserer Feinde', appendix to vol. 2, October 1914.

[92]Heike Liebau, '*Hindostan* (newspaper)', in Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, eds., *1914-18-online: international encyclopedia of the First World War*, 8 October 2014, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/hindostan_newspaper?version=1.0 (consulted 4 September 2019).

[93]Jan Peter Brauburger, 'Das Gihād-Verständnis osmanischer und deutscher Propagandisten im Ersten Weltkrieg am Beispiel der arabischsprachigen Lagerzeitung *El-Dschihad: Zeitung für die mohammedanischen Kriegsgefangen* 1915–1916', MA thesis, Freie Universität Berlin, 2017.

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interesting mélange of messages, as it published the Bolshevik appeal to Russian and 'eastern' Muslims – 'The proclamation of the Russian government to all Muslims in Russia and the East' of 3 December 1917, which had been signed by Stalin and Lenin – together with pan-Islamic messages. The Hindi version, by contrast, published primarily secular and nationalistic articles and messages devoid of pan-Islamic content.[94]

Propaganda work revealed further that the cooperation between committee members in the camps, as on the front, had been largely a product of German pressure rather than shared political goals. Yet the ways in which members of different committees worked together – Indians, Persians, Tunisians – also showed new forms of interaction. Moreover, the disputes over the specific content of *El Dschihad* illustrated the limits of Germany's control. German officials accused activists of agitating for their own political goals in an attempt to keep them in line, but it was clear that the committees' particular political messages were diverging from a unified pro-German approach.[95] This trend became more pronounced during the fighting of 1915, as Nadolny and Wesendonk decided to give the Indian, Persian, and North African committee members much greater autonomy in an arena where they needed their participation most: extending insurrectionary networks across the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. This was the terrain of the independent political missions.

Cooperation and conflict: the independent missions

Committee members had initially focused on the European battlefields, but by 1915 Berlin's activists were looking further afield. They targeted neutral countries as useful venues for the transfer of propaganda, money, and weapons, and they looked towards building activist connections across the Ottoman empire towards Persia, South Asia, and North Africa. Starting in 1914, the committees organized independent political and military missions to several theatres of war. Those sent to Mesopotamia and North Africa, the focus of this section, illustrate several trends: a strong uptick in inter-committee collaborative work, particularly between members of the Persian and Indian committees, and the geographic expansion of their activist networks via the use of German funds.

Germany's interest in political missions started in the first months of the war. In September 1914, Berlin sent expeditions staffed with German agents to establish alliances with leaders in Afghanistan, the Maghreb, and the Arabian peninsula. The Afghanistan mission of Oskar von Niedermayer, which travelled to Kabul in an appeal to the emir to join the war, was the first of these wartime missions. Arguably the most famous, it is traditionally seen as a purely German endeavour.[96] Closer examination, however, reveals a different picture, one in which the expertise of a transnational group of activists proved essential. As the news wafted back to Berlin that the Niedermayer mission's initial plans had been bungled by German officials, the mission turned to committee personnel and expertise for a remedy. In April 1915, Nadolny outfitted a second, competing, Afghanistan expedition with help from both the IIC and al-Tunisi. The IIC, together with Mahendra Pratap, selected a group of Afridi POWs in Germany to staff the endeavour, and the mission left Germany with the diplomat Werner Otto von Hentig.[97] In

[94]Heike Liebau, 'Hindostan: a camp newspaper for South Asian prisoners of World War One in Germany', in Roy, Liebau and Ahuja, *'When the war began'*, pp. 231–49.

[95]Ravi Ahuja, 'The corrosiveness of comparison: reverberations of Indian wartime experiences in German prison camps', in Heike Liebau, Katrin Bromber, Katharina Lange, Dyala Hamzah, and Ravi Ahuja, eds., *The world in world wars: experiences, perceptions and perspectives from Africa and Asia*, Brill: Leiden 2010, pp. 131–66.

[96]Vogel, *Die Persien- und Afghanistanexpedition*; W. O. von Hentig, *Mein Leben eine Dienstreise*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1962; Thomas Hughes, 'The German mission to Afghanistan 1915–1916', *German Studies Review*, 25, 3, 2002, pp. 447–76.

[97]PA AA, R 21077, report from Barakatullah and Chattopadhyaya on the plan of the IIC, 26 January 1915; PA AA, R 21078, Statement of Mahendra Pratap presented through the IIC, 17 February 1915.

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Istanbul they met up with the IIC member Maulavi Barakatullah for further travel to Kabul. Once there, the IIC members stayed on in Afghanistan as the core of a future Indian provisional government (with Barakatullah as prime minister, Pratap as president, and another member, Chempakaraman Pillai, as the foreign minister).[98] In short, archival sources show that the Afghanistan mission was by no means an exclusively German endeavour. The influence of the IIC in the second mission was, in fact, so pronounced that it has been called a 'creature of the Indian Independence Committee'.[99]

The clashing histories of the Afghanistan expeditions stressed the centrality of the political and military missions in extending activist networks beyond Europe, and the fact that, although the missions were carried out with German funds and support, they did not necessarily operate in Germany's service beyond the general aim to sow the seeds of anti-imperial insurrection as widely as possible. With time, the committees' independent missions corresponded more closely to their own aims regarding uprisings in their home countries. The IIC's connections were by far the most expansive, stretching from Berlin to San Francisco and into Singapore – funnelling information and funds to that city's anti-British mutiny in 1915, an accomplishment achieved via the global connections of the Ghadr movement and the IIC's use of these networks via German logistics and funds.[100] The IIC's work in Berlin, moreover, illustrated this committee's particular ability to engage transnationally and forge joint projects. The IIC member Taraknath Das wrote in 1915 that 'The Indian Committee should not depend upon Germany alone to achieve our goal of Indian Independence … we can establish committees in all foreign states, which will be able to carry on independent negotiations about Indian affairs.'[101] Working with activists and officials in China and Japan, for example, was something that IIC members considered, should it help them reach their strategic goals.

Starting in 1915, the IIC, the Persians, and the Algerian–Tunisian activists sent their own missions to the Ottoman empire and North Africa. Barakatullah and Chattopadhyaya informed the Germans that the Indian nationalists intended to travel to Turkey to agitate among Indian soldiers in Egypt, Basra, and Kashkat, and to establish propaganda networks from Istanbul to Medina, Damascus, and Baghdad.[102] These networks had both military and propaganda aims. Often the two were so tightly connected that it was difficult to see where the one ended and the other began. The 'pay-off for all propaganda lay on the battlefield', as Strachan emphasized, and Germany's need for troops and agents in the Ottoman empire had generated the more independent space that Berlin provided to the committees in 1915.[103] As Egypt entered the war in early 1915, and British Indian soldiers landed in Mesopotamia, exporting the war across Persia and Central Asia was a central goal.[104] For Nadolny and Wesendonk, the Indian and Persian missions to Mesopotamia were to expand Germany's influence across the Near East in the aftermath of Enver's failed Caucasus campaign.

The committees, however, also had their own aims in view. The Indian Baghdad mission, for example, wanted to agitate among the thousands of British Indian soldiers serving across the Mesopotamian front. 'The primary object of the mission', its members stated, 'will be to try to find men for the proposed Indian Corps. The mission will further try to spread news of the war, and the political situation generally, in and out of India, and further to get news of the political situation in India.'[105] Their outreach to colonial soldiers registered immediately in British

[98]Mahendra Pratap, 'My German mission to high Asia', *Asia*, 25, 1925, pp. 382–8.

[99]Strachan, *To arms*, p. 772.

[100]Streets-Salter, *World War One in Southeast Asia*, pp. 33–50.

[101]PA AA, R 21091, report from Taraknath Das, 12 November 1915.

[102]PA AA, R 21077, report from Barakatullah and Chattopadhyaya, 26 January 1915; PA AA, R 21081, document dated 26 March 1915.

[103]Strachan, *To arms*, p. 712.

[104]*Ibid*., pp. 729–30.

[105]PA AA, R 21093, IIC statement, 5 February 1916.

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propaganda as 'German'. 'German plot revealed: inciting Indians to murder [British] officers. Inflammatory pamphlets seized', blared a March 1915 headline from the *Daily Chronicle*. The article stated that the pamphlets were in 'English, Urdu, Hindu, Punjabi and Sikh languages' and were 'addressed to the Indian Army, calling on them to take the opportunity to throw off the hated yoke and rise and kill their officers'.[106] The mission's emphasis on monitoring 'the political situation in India' was not mentioned by the article, although this was a central concern of IIC members.

In Baghdad, military aims segued neatly into intelligence and propaganda work, as Indian and Persian members of their respective Baghdad missions were active in military intelligence. Persian committee members had established a military surveillance post on the Turco-Persian border to assist German and Turkish troops. Pur Davuud and Mohammad Jamalzadeh, two of Taqizadah's young operatives, edited a Persian journal called *Rastahiz* (*Uprising*) in Baghdad as part of an extensive propaganda programme with many possibilities for collaborative work with the IIC. In March 1915, the Persian Committee had outlined its plan to establish a network of 'nationalist missions' in Istanbul, Baghdad, Tehran, and Shiraz that, via subcommittees, would erect a vast propaganda apparatus across the Near Eastern theatres of war.[107] The national mission in Baghdad, for example, would work with subcommittees throughout Mesopotamia and target the Shiite centres of Kerbela, Samarra, and Kazimeyn.

Taqizadah envisioned reaching out to various Persian audiences across the region – nationalists, mystics, and Shi'i pilgrims from India, the Caucasus, and Syria – and distributing a range of materials. Mission members would edit journals, publish brochures, and distribute a dizzying array of proclamations, from nationalist statements to clerical fatwas. The Tehran mission, for example, was to engage in 'regular' propaganda work – translating the Persian press for German newspapers and vice versa – while also setting a broader scope for activism through theatre and cinema programmes.[108] From Berlin, the committee projected that Persians in the Caucasus could be mobilized as agents for the new Persian- and Russian-language networks spanning Transcaspia and Central Asia.

Propaganda work in Baghdad deepened the cooperation between Persian and Indian committee members, as their missions, while formally separate, assisted each other. The Persian Committee, in fact, saw their Baghdad organization as a joint venture. It was to 'assist the Indian and Afghan committees in their work', specifically 'to facilitate the travel of their missions and members to Persia and the surrounding areas' by organizing transport and providing contacts and documents.[109] This happened not infrequently. To escape wartime controls, IIC members travelled to Baghdad disguised as Persians and/or Turks, complete with fake names and papers.[110] The Shiraz mission likewise brought the committees together. Its outreach brief included agitating among Shiites in India and erecting Persian subcommittees in Bombay and Calcutta. The communication centre in Kirman in eastern Iran was to direct material at Persian audiences and at listeners in neighbouring British Baluchistan.[111] These Persian networks were of particular interest to the IIC, as they could be used to establish connections both to India and to Muslim troops serving in the British Indian forces. By mid 1916 a full-fledged IIC Baghdad mission was up and running. Its brief was to distribute propaganda, receive and send news to India and Persia, organize outreach to Indian troops in Mesopotamia, and recruit an 'Indian National Legion'. It also planned to produce weekly newspapers in Baghdad for Indians in Arab regions, Mesopotamia, North and South Africa, and the Dutch Indies.[112]

[106]PA AA, R 21038, *Daily Chronicle*, 19 March 1915.
[107]PA AA, R 21037, report of the Persian Committee, 1 March 1915.
[108]PA AA, R 21037, 'Mission de Constantinople', report of the Persian Committee, section H, 1 March 1915.
[109]PA AA, R 21037, 'Mission de Baghdad', report of the Persian Committee, section L, 1 March 1915.
[110]PA AA, R 21078, IIC report, 15 February 1915.
[111]PA AA, R 21037, 'Mission de Chiraz', report of the Persian Committee, section L, 1 March 1915.
[112]PA AA, R 21091, IIC to Wesendonk, October 1915.

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The growing cooperation between the Indian and Persian committees highlighted the distinct path taken by the North African activists. The complications faced by this group dwarfed all of the others. Working within the fiendishly complicated dynamics of cooperation and competition between Berlin and Istanbul, relatively few activists crossed the fronts. One such person was the Tunisian activist Ali Bach Hamba. A central figure behind the Algerian-Tunisian Committee, Bach Hamba was also the liaison between the IIC committee and the Ottoman elite, and was a leading member of the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*.[113] He worked out of an office in the Istanbul Ministry of War, and coordinated with Ottoman officials in organizing military missions and propaganda campaigns for the activists in Baghdad. He visited the Baghdad mission of the IIC and the Persians in the summer of 1916, and was responsible for organizing passports for its Indian members.[114]

Bach Hamba's activities and the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* networks connected Berlin to North Africa in complex ways. An expedition run by his comrade Tahir Bey, in late 1915, provides a case in point. Designated as an Ottoman mission, it was to advance Germany's aims in neutral Spain and to mount a campaign to threaten French rule in Morocco.[115] Spain and the Spanish zone in Morocco had been targeted as ideal zones for organizing the transport of weapons from Spanish ports, for wiring money to German agents in the Spanish zone, and for distributing propaganda produced in Berlin. Here the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* worked with Nadolny's Section IIIb and German agents organizing operations out of the German embassy in Madrid. They issued cheques and arranged for the transport of weapons and funds. Al-Tunisi was also in the mix. His Berlin-produced propaganda was distributed on the North African front, specifically his open letter to the Sultan of Morocco to join the jihad and turn his back on France.[116] In this sense, the founding of the official Algerian–Tunisian Committee in January 1916 appears in a different light. This meeting of activists, government officials, and business elites can be read as a renewed German effort to hold the group together and place it more securely under Berlin's control.

The greater autonomy provided by the missions work increasingly drove the committees in different directions, as illustrated in the summer and autumn of 1917 in the Swedish capital, Stockholm. On the invitation of European socialists, Chattopadhyaya, Taqizadah, and al-Tunisi travelled to the city to represent their committee's particular goals. This took place at a moment of intensifying cooperation towards peace by a broadened alliance of anti-imperial forces.[117] It also happened at a time when Berlin's activists were no longer confident that Germany would win the war. The committees' growing autonomy, together with the launching of the British-supported Arab Revolt of June 1916, signalled that the first phase of Germany's insurrection programme had come to an end. New partners would be needed for the path forward.

Conclusion

The First World War was a global conflict in innumerable ways. Germany's insurrection strategy was both founded on the transnational activism of the pre-1914 anti-colonial movement and took it further. The activists saw Germany as a supporter of their revolutionary goals in 1914, and the German programme encouraged further cooperation. Indeed, it demanded it. In exchange for

[113]Safi, 'History in the trench', p. 98.

[114]PA AA, R 21095, report from Istanbul, 4 July 1916.

[115]Odile Moreau, 'Une "mission militaire" ottomane au Maroc au début du 20e siècle', *Maghreb Review*, 30, 2–4, 2005, pp. 209–24; Odile Moreau, *La Turquie dans la Grande Guerre: de l'Empire ottomane à la République de Turquie*, Paris: Editions Soteca, 2016, pp. 154–62; Edmund Burke III, 'Moroccan resistance, pan-Islam and German war strategy, 1914–1918', *Francia*, 1975, pp. 434–64.

[116]Gottfried Hagen, *Die Türkei im Ersten Weltkrieg: Flugblätter, und Flugschriften in Arabischer, Persischer und Osmanisch-Türkischer Sprache,* Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1990.

[117]Camille Huysmans, ed., *Stockholm: mémoires, notes verbales, rapports, manifestes. Comité organisateur de la conférence socialiste internationale de Stockholm*, Stockholm: Tidens Förlag, 1918, pp. xiv–xv.

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funds and institutional support, activists collaborated in pursuit of Germany's goals. Actors hailing from a wide array of places were brought together in Berlin, where they translated texts and founded journals, travelled to the western front, and engaged with colonial soldiers in POW camps. The committees' work in Berlin entangled them on various levels; archival sources document their increasing interaction.

But the work of the committees did not end there. Their decision to accept German support had always been more pragmatic than ideological. In 1915, German officials conceded more autonomy, and the activists struck out in more independent directions. The Indians and Persians extended their networks across Ottoman terrain, reaching into Persia, the Caucasus, Baluchistan, and South Asia. Radicalized agents penetrated North Africa. Committee members increasingly pursued their own aims, distancing themselves from Germany's goals. The differences between their programmes likewise became more pronounced. In 1917 Chattopadhyaya, Taqizadah, and al-Tunisi travelled to Stockholm. The first two went as national delegates to preparatory discussions for the congress to be convened by the International Socialist Bureau. Al-Tunisi, by contrast, went there for a second congress, convened by Ottoman officials, that brought together Muslim delegates and discussed pan-Islamic causes.[118] Although the French ambassador fulminated that Berlin had sent them as German representatives, they had gone of their own accord.[119]

This article has explored the agency of members of the Indian, Persian, and Algerian–Tunisian committees. By analysing and comparing their aims and actions, it has sought to bring them out of their area studies niches and situate them as makers of a global political arena.[120] The First World War was generative of anti-imperialist networks that spanned the globe, and the activists' work in Berlin was central to this story.

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[118]Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, 'Da pan-Islamismen kom til Skandinavien', *Kritik*, 162–3, 2003, pp. 44–51.
[119]*Ibid*.
[120]Streets-Salter, *World War One in Southeast Asia*; Franziska Roy, Ali Raza, and Benjamin Zachariah, eds., *The internationalist moment: South Asia, worlds and world views, 1917–39*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2015.

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