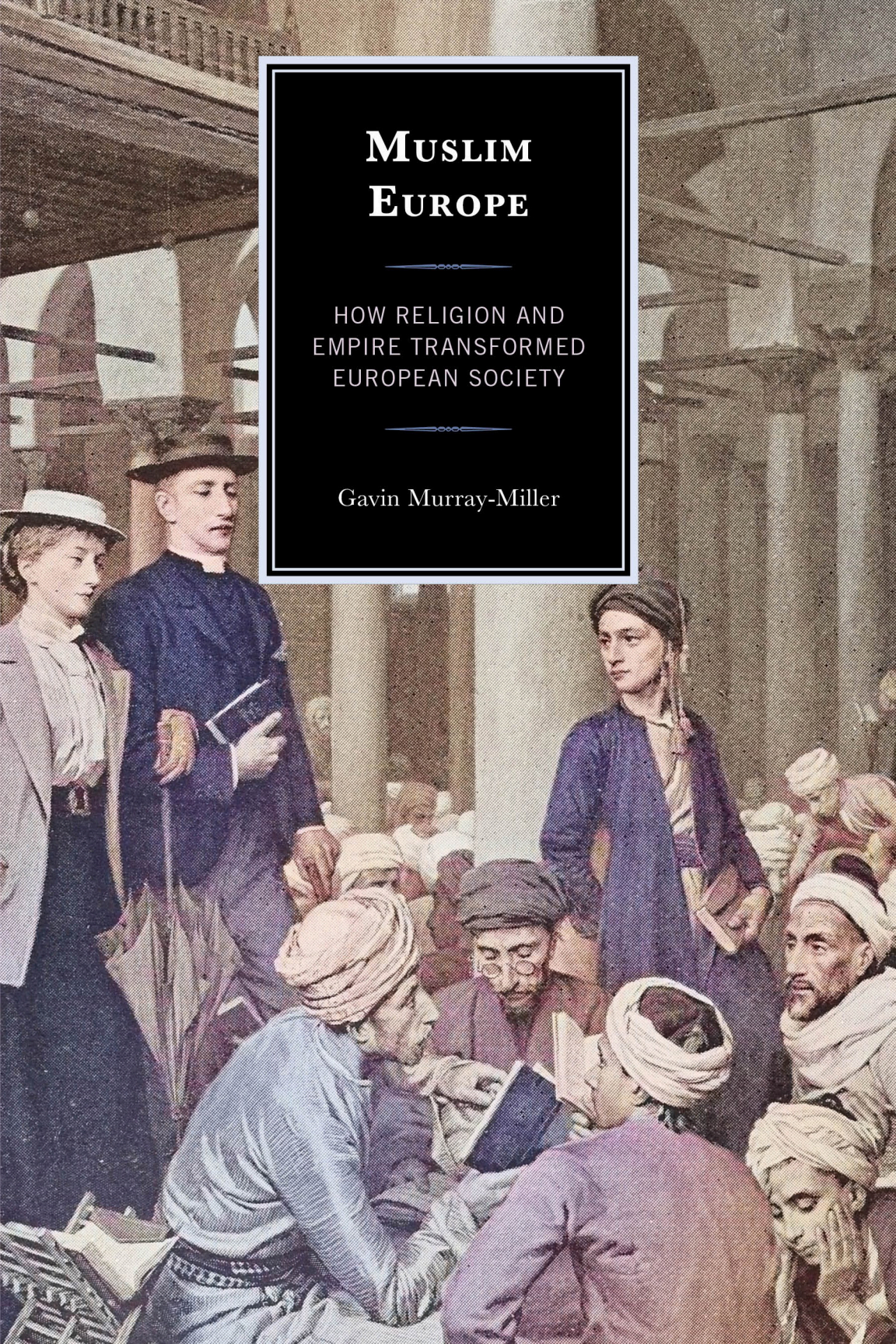




MUSLIM EUROPE

HOW RELIGION AND
EMPIRE TRANSFORMED
EUROPEAN SOCIETY

Gavin Murray-Miller

Muslim Europe

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*For Justine and Salomé,
distant but never apart*

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A Note on Terminology

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, European commentators used a range of spellings and terms to refer to Muslims. Quotes used in the book reflect these varied terms. Designations such as “Muhammadan,” “Mohammedan,” “Mohametan,” “Moslim,” and “Mussulman” have been preserved for the sake of accuracy. Likewise, the spelling of the name Muhammad also possesses variations in spelling, including “Mohammad,” “Muhammed,” and “Mohamet” within selected quotes. Place names referred to in the book reflect current toponyms, although quotes referring to historical place names such as “Constantinople” (present-day Istanbul) and “Bombay” (present-day Mumbai) have been retained.

Introduction

Europe's Muslim Question

In 2018, as the European Union continued to grapple with the repercussions of an unprecedented refugee crisis that saw over 2 million people from Africa and the Middle East head to the shores of Europe, the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán made clear what he believed this mass migration held for the future.¹ Defending his government's decision to close its borders at the height of the crisis, Orbán fashioned himself a guardian of Europe. "We are those who think Europe's last hope is Christianity," he remarked. "If all this continues, in the big cities of Europe there will be a Muslim majority."² These sentiments were later echoed by the Polish Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro, who saw fit to justify Poland's anti-immigrant stance in the face of EU pleas to do their part in alleviating the refugee crisis. "We defended our sovereignty against the foreign culture of Islam that [Brussels] wanted to impose on us," he proclaimed, explaining why Poland had little desire to shelter incoming migrants.³ What might seem like a conservative reaction to a momentary crisis was, in fact, only the latest manifestation of an ongoing debate that has divided Europe for at least two decades. Calls to defend Europe from a modern-day Muslim onslaught have attained a central place in European political discourse, reiterating familiar fears that unless something is done to stanch current migration flows to the continent, Europe will find itself inundated with foreigners and Islamized, a pessimistic scenario popularly referred to as "Eurabia" in the conservative media.⁴

The notion that Islam is alien to European society and culture is hardly new. It can be traced back to the formative years of the Islamic faith when the medieval kingdoms of continental Europe warned of the impending submission of Christendom to Islam. Yet if "Islamophobia" has long roots in Europe's history, the current tenor of this rhetoric is distinctive. It has found expression in contemporary issues ranging from concerns over immigration

and European identity to the threat posed by Islamic radicalization and domestic terrorism. While conservative politicians like Orbán and Ziobro might present themselves as defenders of a reimagined European Christendom, more liberal politicians have not been reticent when commenting on the alleged problems Islam raises in their own societies. Speaking in the wake of a series of galvanizing terrorist attacks carried out by radical Islamists in France, President Emmanuel Macron felt compelled to warn of the dangers posed by Muslim extremists. Unassimilated Muslim communities in the country resulted in “the creation of counter-societies” that remained alienated from French national life, he claimed.⁵ Although not the aggressive anti-immigrant rhetoric of politicians like Orbán, Macron’s cautioning against what he labeled “Islamist separatism” perpetuated underlying assumptions of a fundamental conflict between Islam and French values, a message which has been tenaciously driven home in the so-called respectable racism touted by French political spokespeople on the right.⁶ The French dilemma on how to address very real issues of religious extremism and Muslim marginalization is not isolated from the broader currents of continental politics in the twenty-first century. They are part and parcel of what experts have deemed Europe’s “Muslim question” and even “Muslim problem.”⁷

A 2016 report issued by the Pew Research Center determined that Muslims made up nearly 5 percent of Europe’s population, with the highest concentrations located in France, Germany, and Britain.⁸ An estimated 26 million Muslims live within EU member states, making Islam the third-largest—and fastest-growing—religious community on the continent.⁹ These statistics are the result of rising immigration rates just as much as a testament to the resilience of established Muslim communities in Europe. As expected, reactions to this shift in Europe’s cultural geography have been mixed. Conservative pundits and political elites have routinely fallen back on arguments that Muslim immigration imperils the very future of Europe’s secular principles and national identities. In the past decade, such views have crept into the political center as European publics have been shaken by acts of religiously motivated violence perpetrated by Islamist extremists and the swelling number of asylum seekers crossing the Mediterranean.

These phenomena have imparted an urgency to a host of long-standing questions. How should European governments respond to immigration? Should they encourage assimilation or adopt multiculturalist policies to accommodate immigrants of different confessional backgrounds? What impact will the growth of Muslim communities have on European national identities and ultimately European society itself? Conservatives have argued that an “Islamized” continent will sound the death knell of an essentially European lifestyle and set of values associated with a Christian and Enlightenment heritage. Indeed, as Douglas Murray claimed, immigration and the

identity politics resulting from it were contributing to the “strange death of Europe,” suggesting that should these developments continue, there would be no European community to speak of within a few generations.¹⁰ Proponents of assimilation have expressed doubts as to whether Muslims can effectively integrate to a sufficient degree demanded by host countries. According to critics, Muslims live in accordance with the prescriptive laws of the Sharia, which lays down strict regulations for personal and collective conduct deemed essential to living life as a good Muslim. These dictates include regulations on family law, forms of dress, and gender relations, without which one might not consider oneself “Muslim.” Skeptics have asked whether Muslim women can be expected to give up wearing the traditional *hijab* head covering and adopt modern feminist outlooks or whether men can forsake practices of polygyny or public ritual stipulated in the Qur’an. At base, they claim that Islamic law in almost every way contradicts the legal norms and secular culture of modern democratic societies.¹¹ Such views presuppose that Islam is a totalizing identity and marker of cultural difference, one which is incompatible with Western values at its very core.¹² Jacques Soustelle, the former governor-general of French Algeria, put the matter bluntly in 1990 when he stated:

Islam is not only a religion . . . but a determining and constrictive framework of all aspects of life. . . . To speak of integration, that is to say assimilation, is dangerously utopian. You can only assimilate what can be assimilated.¹³

On the other side, progressives and Muslim community leaders have lashed out at what they see as an ingrained “Islamophobia” prevalent among European policymakers and publics. In coming to support a pluralist vision of Europe, they have maintained that European states have an obligation to uphold their self-proclaimed commitment to tolerance and diversity.¹⁴ Muslim spokespeople have formed representative organizations in European countries, some with a broad national reach. Organizations such as the Muslim Council of Britain and the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman commonly work in conjunction with national governments to ensure that Muslim concerns are adequately taken into account and that Muslims have a public voice. In turn, this strategy has had the tendency of politicizing issues relevant to Islamic cultural and religious worship, whether concerning the wearing of Muslim religious garments in public schools or official recognition of Islamic festivities and holidays.¹⁵ These contests have, in many ways, elicited a wider debate over the proper role of religion in a nominally secular European society and public sphere.¹⁶ As the sociologist Jürgen Habermas has indicated, Europeans of the twenty-first century are now faced with the question of how to live in a “post-secular society” as issues over religion and

identity become central components of public debate and policy.¹⁷ This prospect has, to say the least, been unsettling for many accustomed to equating liberal, modern society with secular values.

According to some, the assimilationist vs. multiculturalist debate has set the agenda for a new “culture war” in Europe.¹⁸ In a broader perspective, it has also broached the question of whether Islam has any place in European society. Scholars and critics have asked whether there is a putatively “European Islam” to speak of and, if so, what it might look like. Europe’s Muslim communities are by their very nature diverse. If France’s Muslim communities are preponderantly of North and West African extraction, in Britain the largest Muslim communities tend to derive from South Asia while in Germany, Turkish influences prevail. These differences speak to the divergent immigration policies of nations as well as the legacies and connections tied to Europe’s past imperial undertakings. Given the varied ethnic and national makeup of Europe’s Muslim communities, experts have wrangled over whether it is more appropriate to speak of “Muslims in Europe” or “European Muslims.” If the latter, is there a distinct brand of “Euro-Islam” that gives definition to a “European” Muslim community?¹⁹

The question of Islam in Europe is not strictly associated with religious belief either. As varying assessments have made clear, religious discrimination in Western Europe has been linked to—if not shaped by—ethnic and racial considerations. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, faith-based groups such as Muslims and Jews were frequently categorized by reference to culture, physical appearance, behavior, and dress, in addition to confessional identity. This tradition has intensified in recent years, accenting the alleged “foreign” character of Islam within European publics. It has resulted in what some scholars identify as a process of “racialization” that has influenced perceptions of Muslims just as much as current debates on national culture and immigration.²⁰ “Muslim” has, in this context, become a counterpoint to “whiteness,” fueling racist, anti-immigrant sentiments that are easily fungible with enduring strains of Islamophobia in European public discourse.²¹ Behind the threat of an “Islamized” Europe perennially lurks fears of a multiethnic and racially diverse society that European conservatives are loath to recognize.

These questions are by no means straightforward. Complicating them is the fact that Europe’s historic engagement with Islam is intimately bound up with the troubling legacy of colonial rule and empire in the modern period. From the eighteenth century onward, European states held large swaths of the Muslim world as colonial dependencies. At a moment when controversies over public monuments and historical memories are forcing Europeans to grapple with the traumas of a conflicted colonial past, issues relevant to Islam have intersected with postcolonial grievances calling Europe to account

for the violence and injustices perpetrated on non-Western peoples.²² In many respects, colonialism and its afterlife have conditioned immigration policies and prevailing attitudes regarding Muslims, prompting critics to insist that the racism and Islamophobia currently evident across the continent bear all the marks of a familiar colonial narrative.²³ Muslim community leaders in Europe have not been reticent in drawing upon the memories of colonialism, in some cases framing demands for cultural rights and recognition as a means of postcolonial redress and the “reappropriation” of their identities.²⁴ As some commentators have charged, appeals to colonial memory and the suffering endured by the formerly colonized have constituted a leitmotif in the messages spread by Islamists, serving to radicalize a new generation of Muslims living within Europe.²⁵

Taking these numerous issues and conflicts into account, it is clear that questions of Europe’s historic relationship with the Muslim world and how it will address the realities of a growing Muslim population on the continent are important ones. Scholars and policy analysts have spared no amount of ink in examining topics related to European immigration, interfaith governmental initiatives, and European-Muslim relations in various countries. Be that as it may, the overwhelming majority of these studies have focused on Europe since 1945. As the story goes, the period after World War II saw Europe abandon its global imperial projects and retreat to the continent. During this same period, Europe witnessed a wave of postcolonial migration unlike anything experienced in the past, raising concerns that Europe was being subjected to a process of “reverse colonization” that would dramatically alter the racial and cultural makeup of societies.²⁶ It is precisely at the moment when Islam was removed from its colonial context that Europe’s current Muslim “problem” emerged, and the intertwined trajectories of these two phenomena are not a coincidence. They are chapters in a much longer story, one concerning the historical experience of empire and Europe’s ambivalent relationship with Islam in the modern period.

In comparison to the sheer amount of attention that Europe’s present-day “Muslim question” has elicited, there is a noticeable lack of historical scholarship concerning the presence of Muslim communities in Europe and government efforts to integrate and assimilate such groups prior to the postwar period. Many of the historical studies that do exist tend to be nation-specific, often giving detailed assessments of particular policies and histories with little consideration of comparative assessments elsewhere.²⁷ Historians have insisted that the Muslim world, or what nineteenth-century Europeans commonly referred to as “the Orient,” was by no means an alien and unfamiliar terrain for those on the continent. Nor did all Europeans subscribe to simplified ideas of East and West locked in an age-old “clash of civilizations” between cross and crescent.²⁸ The long-standing cultural and religious

divisions commonly assumed to lie at the heart of European-Muslim relations are only one side of a more complex and entangled history characterized by moments of conflict as well as exchange and interaction. The notion that Muslims are somehow foreigners in Europe or a recent presence in European life is in need of revision. While prior to 1945 there did not exist Muslim communities of the size and scale currently evident across the continent, this is not to imply that Europe possessed no Muslims. Indigenous Muslim communities existed in both the Balkans and Iberia while cities such as London, Paris, and Vienna contained Muslim enclaves and housed expatriate communities. The frontier between Europe and Islam was often quite porous, with mobility, exchange, and even integration occurring in various ways. Taking note of this history, certain historians have been inclined to speak of an “invisible integration” that took place as Muslims carried out their daily lives and inserted themselves into the rhythms of continental societies from the seventeenth century onward.²⁹

While scholars have suggested that European identity historically developed in opposition to the Islamic world, recent accounts have begun to narrate a different story. In many ways, this history is inextricably bound up with the connections, institutions, and traditions that accompanied the “age of empire” in the nineteenth century. During this period, European states expanded their reach across the globe, and in the process assumed control over territories traditionally contained within *dar al-Islam*, those areas of the world where Islam was practiced as a reigning sect. Questions of how to integrate colonial subjects and how to cultivate imperial loyalties among non-European peoples engendered a specific type of “Muslim question” that would preoccupy imperial administrators and ideologues over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While France and Britain—the two preeminent European imperial powers of the age—were at the forefront of these developments, the question of how Europe should relate to and accommodate Islam in a colonial world became a general European concern. From the Dutch in Indonesia to state administrators in Russia, questions regarding how to administer Muslim populations acquired a broad resonance. In an age of rampant imperialism, European states increasingly showed a penchant to mold themselves as “Muslim powers” as they came to exercise greater control and authority over *dar al-Islam*. The French Catholic reformer Hyacinthe Loyson perhaps put it best when in 1897 he stated: “There are Christian powers that are at the same time Muslim powers, by reason of the very great number of their subjects . . . that belong to the religion of Islam and which are governed by its laws.”³⁰

Loyson was hardly what we might consider a full-blown imperialist, although he, like many others of his generation, was not immune to the imperial mindsets ingrained within European outlooks and attitudes at the time. It would be obtuse to simply write off his statement as the mere product of a

colonial ideology. During the nineteenth century, Europeans were certainly coming to think imperially, but this new outlook often encouraged them to think about their own societies in distinct and different ways. As scholars over the past decades have indicated, imperialism had a profound impact on colonizing societies just as much as on those that were colonized.³¹ What has often been labeled as an “imperial turn” in history writing today has served to alter some of our most basic assumptions about European identity and nation-building in radical ways. Many key theorists of nationalism have acknowledged that Europe’s turn toward national association took place within imperial frameworks since empire was the predominant form of political organization at the time. Drawing attention to the diffuse role imperialism played in modern Europe not only illustrates the important influence empire and colonial practices exercised on European nations but also suggests that empires themselves were “nationalized” and used to communicate concepts of national identity and European selfhood that continue to have implications today.³² Europe’s Muslim imperial holdings were, in other words, intimately connected with the making of modern Europe.

Rather than focusing on simplified categories of “European imperialists” and “colonized peoples,” a more nuanced approach might ask how possessing empires altered perceptions of Europe and what it meant to be European. Imperial nations were constantly forced to reimagine themselves as they attempted to cultivate the allegiance of ethnically and religiously diverse populations. Imperialism was neither a monolithic nor unitary process. Questions of how to be imperial, how to represent imperial power, and how to define specific national visions of empire against competitors entailed that empire was a historically diverse phenomenon. This needs to be taken into account when examining the various paths of empire apparent during the period.³³ What this book calls Europe’s “Muslim imperium” marks an effort to place Europe’s imperial experience within a specific historical and cultural context, indicating one way among others that governments and individuals attempted to reimagine their respective nations in light of the imperial dominions over which they ruled. In taking control of territories inhabited by Muslims, European states thought of themselves and endeavored to act like the “Muslim powers” they claimed to be.³⁴

States catered to Muslim subjects in multiple ways, and in doing so, came to function as quasi-Islamic states in their own right, often paralleling and competing with nominally “authentic” or “traditional” Islamic states. As European colonial power grew and intensified throughout the world, empires themselves became more diverse and less Western in their qualities and makeup. This premise runs counter to prevailing views on European empire that have interpreted colonialism as a process seeking to replicate European social, cultural, and economic conventions abroad.³⁵ It also questions some of

the underlying assumptions that have informed the theory of Orientalism outlined by Edward Said, a theory that has enjoyed a long-standing influence in shaping the respective histories of Europe and the Islamic world. According to Said, Europeans characterized Islam as a culture and civilization immune to the processes of modernity and social change occurring in the West. In this vision of the world, East and West were imagined as polar opposites, fostering notions of Western superiority and dominance that abetted European imperial expansion across the globe. The realization of a European sense of self, it would seem, was always mediated through comparative reflections on Islam and the Muslim world.³⁶

Notwithstanding the Orientalist mindsets evident among Europeans of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the history of Europe's conquest and consolidation over the Muslim world cannot be reduced to such generalizations. As this book argues, Europe's Muslim imperium constituted a third space between the conceptual poles of a European West and Islamic East. Imperialism was a violent and destructive process for certain, but it also facilitated social, political, and cultural exchanges that had an impact on European societies just as much as those they colonized. This collapsing of imperial and national space hints at the rudiments of what we might consider a post-Orientalist theory of empire. Rubrics of "nation" and "empire" were never isolated concepts and more often than not overlapped and blended together, making it difficult at times to indicate where the West ended and the East began. On another level, examining how imperial states responded to governing and accommodating Muslim subjects, we might question the extent to which the West relied upon monolithic visions of Islam and the Middle East. Islam and "the Orient" were perennially imagined within specific imperial contexts. In what ways did British views of Islam derive from the country's experience in India? Was this understanding different from French perceptions culled from its engagement with North Africa? Examining how European powers attempted to construct identities as Muslim powers and influence specific brands of Islam hints at a more complex picture than previously supposed.

Conceptions of being a "Muslim power" informed how empires behaved and organized themselves. Imperial administrations faced challenges of integrating Islamic institutions into the colonial order and garnering support at the local level among native populations.³⁷ Colonial bureaucrats were charged with a variety of tasks, including appointing Islamic religious officials, overseeing local mosques and law courts, and, in some cases, creating a veritable Muslim clergy that had not previously existed. "Accommodating" Islam was, in many respects, a European tradition of sorts, one dating back as early as the eighteenth century. Many of these measures were designed to exercise a more robust influence over Muslim subjects whose loyalties and intentions remained perpetually in question. Yet despite the motivations that lay behind

such efforts, imperial states did provide many of the services associated with traditional Muslim powers. They assisted in codifying Muslim legal codes. They sanctioned correct and traditional forms of practice and belief. They took an active role in the life of mosques and religious affairs, and established education curriculums based upon both traditional and new sources of knowledge. In various instances, these efforts were led by native reformers who looked to imperial administrations for support. The modernizing agendas imperial institutions pursued were not simply thrust onto passive colonized subjects. These were projects responsive to larger debates cutting across the Muslim world in the nineteenth century as questions over modernization and tradition arose both within and outside imperial domains. By the dawn of the twentieth century, the empire was becoming a container for many of the aspirations, frustrations, and sectarian conflicts agitating the wider Muslim world.

It cannot be denied that states sought to co-opt Islam as an instrument of imperialism. Moreover, as the nineteenth century wore on, these efforts were pursued more aggressively to combat the rise of Pan-Islamic and anti-colonial movements directed from the leading centers of *dar al-Islam*. Yet, the flip side of this strategy should not be overlooked either. In order to channel Islam for the purposes of colonial rule, states had to engage with Muslims, draw them into the process of constructing Islamic institutions, and offer patronage to those who could aid in disciplining imperial subjects. Muslims were expected to focus their allegiances inward and look toward the institutions of empire rather than abroad. This process entailed not only nationalizing Islam but also Islamizing empire, making the idea of “Muslim power” real and meaningful to subjects.

The extent to which these visions of empire became national in content was plain to see in the tenor of metropolitan debates that were taking shape by the turn of the century. European publicists and colonial subjects alike discussed issues relevant to Muslims in Europe, broaching topics connected with mosque building in European capitals, the role of Muslims in public and political life, and how best to accommodate the presence of small “home-grown” Muslim communities. More intriguing is the fact that demands to give Islam a visible presence in imperial capitals were frequently couched in the new language of Muslim imperium and often accompanied other gestures aimed at indigenizing a religion with foreign attributes for most Europeans. By the early twentieth century, a host of journalists and Muslim community leaders in places such as London and Paris were engaged in collective efforts to create a space for the discussion and articulation of Islamic concerns in European settings. Reform-minded critics used the press and their social influence to correct long-standing colonial stereotypes regarding Muslim religious “fanaticism” and Islam’s inability to embrace modernity. A variety of social organizations—some politically

motivated—were also active in these campaigns. If Islam was being colonized in order to accommodate and buttress imperial authority beyond the continent, European metropolitans were simultaneously working to fashion a space for Islam within the public sphere. Journals bearing names such as *Le Monde Musulman*, *The Crescent* and *The Islamic Review* were among a host of new publications committed to realizing a brand of European Islam within the context of imperial unity and equality. Comprising a mix of colonial reformers and subjects, religious converts, and foreign exiles, these groups provided a counterpoint to colonial officialdom that helped to not only reimagine the contours of nation and empire but also transform colonial Islam into a national currency.

Debates on Islam were never simply a colonial question by the late nineteenth century. They were emblematic of the many counterflows of empire that came back to the continent, provoking crucial questions relevant to national identity, social integration, and citizenship that continue to haunt European societies. While the period of decolonization has characteristically been seen as a sharp break with the past, the threads and continuities connecting Europe to its imperial past persist to this day. If, in the twenty-first century, the question of “Islam in Europe” has become the litmus test of Europe’s ability to adapt to the cultural diversity and cosmopolitanism of a globalized world, examining the divergent ways in which Europeans conceptualized and thought about their own societies in the past may prove enlightening. The cultural exchanges and reciprocal influences that colonialism encouraged presented new possibilities for imagining and articulating conceptions of European selfhood that deserve further exploration. Europe’s present-day “Muslim question” is by no means a new one. It was and remains part of a longer historical narrative that has yet to be concluded. This is not to suggest that a more global understanding of Europe and its place in the world prizes an optimistic narrative of history favoring coexistence and commonality over conflict and struggle. While globalization serves to encourage the entanglement of disparate cultures and identities, it equally possesses the capacity for creating a violently divided world. It is, ultimately, between these two extremes that we must seek to locate the history of Muslim Europe.

NOTES

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Part One

THE PATHS OF EMPIRE

“It would be the height of unwisdom on our part not to recognize what is going on, not to take advantage of [the] favourable disposition of the leaders of Mohammedan opinion, and not to adapt our policy to meet it.”

William H. Gregory, 1886

“The French are true Muslims.”

Napoleon Bonaparte, 1798

Chapter One

Through a Glass Darkly

Even eight years after his death in 1722, the French nobleman and historian Henri de Boulainvilliers could still be an insightful observer of European society. In his *Life of Mahomed*, published posthumously in 1730, Boulainvilliers drew readers' attention to what he believed to be a serious gap in the general knowledge of most Europeans. "Curious admirers of the Greek and Italian past," those on the continent were virtually ignorant of the world-changing events that had occurred in the Arabian desert a millennia before. Scholars who did happen to take an interest in the history of Islam were, he added, inclined to exhibit a "strong contempt" for the religion. "It is lamentable that so few educated individuals have applied themselves to learning Arabic, and of those that do, still fewer extend their studies to the public," Boulainvilliers complained.¹ In chronicling the life of the Prophet Muhammad, he intended to take a modest step toward correcting this deficit in knowledge.

Boulainvilliers was not completely incorrect, but he did not present a fully accurate picture of European attitudes in the early eighteenth century either. In fact, Boulainvilliers's work testified to a broad change occurring within continental outlooks at the time, one which was encouraging a new curiosity about Islam and the Muslim world. Contrasting attitudes toward religion and the East were reflective of the diverse intellectual traditions that shaped prevailing conceptions of Islam in the minds of Western thinkers. Europeans of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries inherited many of these outlooks and paradigms, often modifying them along the way as they acquired a more nuanced understanding of foreign societies and different histories. In this respect, Islam—or more precisely how Europeans understood Islam—was never static. It was part of a general evolutionary process that encompassed broad shifts in knowledge just as much as changes in the social and political relations between Europe and the rest of the world.

Many theologians treated Islam as a Christian heresy. Europeans rarely used the term “Muslim” to identify those adhering to Islam. Instead, they spoke of “Mahometists” or “Mohammedans,” designating that one was a follower of Muhammad. These epithets derived from terms used to label Christian heretics, such as the Arians and Nestorians of late antiquity.² It was generally presumed that “Mohammedans” came from the lands beyond Christendom. Followers of the Muslim faith were frequently described as “Turks,” “Moors,” “Saracens,” and even “Black,” suggesting not only a religious difference from Europeans but a racial one as well.³ Heretics might be brought back into the fold, but the alien nature of Islam ran still deeper, acquiring the character of an immutable difference. Christian polemicists in later years perpetuated many of these views stemming from the Middle Ages, but not all adopted the stance upheld by churchmen.

European humanists took a different interest in the East. Beginning in the sixteenth century, scholars became infatuated with a new mania for collecting Oriental texts and manuscripts. They sought out Persian manuscripts and decorative books written in Arabic, oftentimes resulting in the creation of sizable Oriental libraries in the process. These repositories gave Europeans greater access to Eastern sources of knowledge and literature. They were also reading these works in a changing intellectual environment. With the ebb of the sharp confessional politics common to Counter-Reformation Europe, a more neutral atmosphere emerged in which scholars could discuss religious topics and explore subjects outside the Christian canon. A new generation of Orientalists across continental Europe began translating the Qur’an from Arabic and conducting studies on Islamic culture and civilization that would have been impermissible a century earlier.⁴

By the 1700s, chairs in Arabic had been established at the Collège de France, the University of Leiden, Cambridge, and Oxford, and these would soon be joined by other chairs in Sanskrit, Turkish, Persian, and Semitic languages.⁵ Increased contact with the East due to trade and diplomacy over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries encouraged Europeans to take a more relativistic view of non-Christian societies. If medieval critics had been inclined to see the East as a lost Christian land populated by heretics in need of conversion, Enlightenment thinkers proved more secular in their attitudes toward religion. Comparatively, they were more appreciative of the diversity that existed beyond their own societies, placing their faith in ideas of a common human nature conditioned by reason and universal laws of social development. When it came to making sense of the cultural differences or “varieties” found across the world, they made qualitative distinctions between stages of development or levels of “civilization.” Christian polemicists might have retained their traditional hostility toward the Islamic East, but it was undeniable that by the eighteenth century a broader section

of European elites was coming to adopt an objective and scientific view of the world that ran counter to the old crusading rhetoric of Christian scholars. Rather than an imminent threat to Christendom or the domain of pagan heathens, what Europeans referred to as “the Orient” was a terrain that needed to be studied with greater accuracy in order to better understand the varieties found in human society.⁶

Orientalists, therefore, were specialists of a particular type. They claimed to possess a deep knowledge of Eastern history, languages, and religions, often poring over texts and arcane manuscripts to elucidate the particularities of nominally “Oriental” civilizations. Some scholars—especially those working in Germany—remained indebted to established traditions of Christian humanism and Biblical exegesis inherited from the Reformation.⁷ Others, however, adopted methodologies from the emerging natural sciences, joining Orientalist scholarship with more general Enlightenment pursuits related to inquiries into man and the social world. The Austrian Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall was exemplary of Europe’s new Orientalist culture in the eighteenth century. Having graduated from the Academy of Oriental Languages in Vienna, he spent years in Istanbul and Egypt studying Islamic history and science, gaining a new appreciation for Muslim societies in the process. Hammer-Purgstall’s understanding of Islam was grounded in empirical knowledge and data collected through experience. His history of the Ottoman Empire was a lifelong project, and the journal he cofounded in 1809, *Fundgruben des Orients* (*Sources of the Orient*), would inspire a new generation of Austrian Orientalists. In many ways, Hammer-Purgstall’s work embodied the Enlightenment spirit and endeavored to produce a more accurate, relative view of Eastern societies.⁸

His outlooks also exemplified many of the prejudices inherent within Enlightenment thought as well. Hammer-Purgstall drew attention to numerous deficiencies within Ottoman society, among them a deeply rooted religious fatalism and culture of stagnation. Similar criticisms of Islam were found in the writings of Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Constantin-François Volney, all of whom commented on the decline of Islamic social and political institutions in their own time. Volney famously argued that Islam encouraged blind obedience rather than inquiry. Because Quranic law had nothing to say on government, despotism had been the logical result.⁹ These and other assumptions provided Europeans with a mental shorthand for conceptualizing Muslim societies, marking them as fundamentally illiberal, barbaric, and motivated by the most extreme forms of religious fanaticism. It was easy for the French consul in Ioannina, François Pouqueville, to dismiss his Ottoman hosts outright in 1805, given the ingrained views most European observers held. “The Turks, sunk in profound barbarity, think only how to devastate, something which they relish, and this misfortune is linked to their

religious belief.”¹⁰ Islam was not only a marker of religious difference but also a marker of cultural and moral difference, a framework for explaining the divergent paths taken by East and West.

Enlightenment thinkers and later nineteenth-century Orientalists interpreted Islam within a social as well as theological context. It constituted at once a religious doctrine, a system of social legislation, and a world civilization.¹¹ Islam was not understood as a set of rituals and practices shared among diverse societies. It was *the* dominant force determining the behavior and customs of all who adhered. Muslims not only followed the spirit of the Qur’an, many Europeans believed, but also adhered to the very letter of the book.¹² “You know what a sad and sombre decorum it is that outwardly reigns through the lands oppressed by Moslem sway,” wrote Alexander Kinglake recalling a trip made through Egypt and the Levant in the 1830s. “The Mahometans make beauty their prisoner, and enforce such a stern and gloomy morality, or at all events such a frightfully close semblance of it, that far and long the wearied traveller may go without catching a glimpse of outward happiness.”¹³ The Austrian scholar and administrator Adolf Strausz underscored this point in 1882 when observing the centrality of Quranic precepts within the Muslim communities of the Balkans. “They live and die just as the Qur’an dictates and perform their religious and civic duties just as the book of books commands,” he insisted.¹⁴ It was a view shared by many of his fellow German-speaking colleagues. As the Orientalist Carl-Heinrich Becker claimed in 1910: “State and society, knowledge and economic life, all stand under the rule of religious formalism.”¹⁵ To be Muslim was to submit fully to the dictates of faith, as Europeans understood it. “Religion is inborn within Muslims,” stated the religious spokeswoman Emilie Jane Loyson in 1905. “It is inhaled with the air they breathe.”¹⁶ The omnipresence of religion in Muslim social, political, and intellectual life left little room for secular consideration. As the British Orientalist Wilfrid Scawen Blunt professed, “there is no such thing as a Mohammedan sceptic, that is to say, a Moslem who does not believe in the divine mission of Mohammad.”¹⁷

Whether considering politics or social customs, religion was the definitive mark of “the Muslim” in the European imagination. Critics and writers frequently accented this quality in making comparisons with the secular culture of the West, but Muslim religiosity was not always perceived in a negative light. Devout Christians, alarmed at the waning of faith on the continent as the nineteenth century progressed, found something laudable in the pious Muslim. The author and Orientalist Henry de Castries fondly recalled a trip taken to Algeria in the late 1870s where he witnessed Muslim troops performing their prayer in the Sahara Desert. The sight left a profound impression on his young mind. Nothing like it could be found in his native France. “It seemed to me that for the first time, in this nomadic life of the desert, I had really seen men

render homage to divinity,” he recorded. “My thoughts turned to those Christian temples where most often women alone pray, and an indignation filled me for those irreligious men of the West.”¹⁸ The French bishop Maurice Landrieux was similarly taken by exhibitions of Muslim religious devotion in Algeria.

Like everyone, I am struck by the public demonstrations of faith by Muslims. Generally, this faith is profound and sincere. . . . The cry of the muezzins calling the faithful to prayer in the deep silence of the Oriental night has always impressed me. . . . My emotion drove me to tears . . . I thought of all the Catholics who, in our country, never pray.

Yet Landrieux was not entirely convinced. For Muslims, religion was only an “exterior practice” made of “liturgical gestures” and formalized rituals, he contended. “They pray, but they do not know that profound sentiment of intimate piety.”¹⁹ Unlike Christians who reflected on their faith and used reason to justify their belief, Muslims were driven by blind submission to their creed. Some writers took offense at the idea that Muslims were somehow more pious than Europeans. According to a Catholic Austrian journalist writing for the weekly magazine *Das Interessante Blatt* in 1885, Christianity remained alive and well on the continent. “Belief is still very strong among the individual peoples of Europe,” the author reproved. “It cannot be said that the Oriental of the present possesses a greater devotional faith than the European.”²⁰



Figure 1.1 Muslims Praying in Algeria (c. 1900). Sahara algérien, la prière / ND Phot. Neurdein frères. Gallica/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Judging from the tenor of debate on the continent, this was indeed true. The nineteenth century witnessed a veritable religious revival, in part a reaction to the secular influences promoted by the Enlightenment during the previous century. Scholars and officials were not shy in pressing for confessional policies and refuting the basic tenets of liberal enlightenment. Religious polemicists took to the press and organized campaigns to make their voices heard. In many ways, the Papacy set the tone. In 1864, Pope Pius IX stridently claimed that the Catholic Church need not reconcile itself to liberalism, nationalism, or modern society. The religious right took their cue from Rome, seeing themselves as engaged in a Manichean struggle for the heart and soul of Europe. "Two forces lie and combat one another in the modern world: Revelation and Revolution," stated the Catholic conservative Louis Veuillot. "These two forces reciprocally reject each other. This is the current state of things."²¹ Right wing polemicists like Veuillot were only the most vocal proponents of the revivalism and evangelicalism sweeping across Europe. Writers, social reformers, and even savants revealed a newfound appreciation for faith-based forms of association. The European public sphere may have been secularized in the nineteenth century, but religion clearly had a place within it.

It was not surprising, therefore, that older theological disputes and pronouncements on "the Muhammadan" found a new resonance in this atmosphere. Arguments over Islam extended right through the century, drawing in a range of scholars with different opinions. The French intellectual Ernest Renan is remembered for giving one of the most damning critiques of Islam in the nineteenth century. Renan began his career as a theologian, although his diminishing faith, not to mention his tact for provoking religious controversies, quickly discouraged him from pursuing a clerical vocation. In 1863, his humanistic interpretation of Jesus, which contradicted the gospels and denied the occurrence of miracles, got him sacked from his position at the Collège de France. Renan's audacity offended Church officials, but it won him the respect of anticlerical republicans in France. In 1878, he was rewarded with a nomination to the prestigious Académie Française, securing his stature as a major intellectual figure of the period. In a keynote lecture delivered at the Sorbonne in 1883, Renan candidly professed that Islam had little to offer modern society. The Muslim religion remained steeped in an obdurate medievalism and impervious to change. "Any person who is remotely familiar with our modern times can clearly see the current inferiority of Muslim countries, the decadence of states governed by Islam, the intellectual vacuity of their religion, their culture, and their education," Renan declared. Muslims remained closed to science, "incapable of learning anything," and resistant to new ideas coming from the West, and for Renan, religion was the culprit. In Muslim society, religion permeated everything from politics to daily rituals.

It exercised a “damaging” influence on human reason, confining it within the narrow limits of rigid theology. As Renan informed listeners: “[Islam] constitutes the reign of a dogma and is the heaviest chain humanity has yet had to carry.”²²

From a modern perspective, declarations of this sort coming from a respected intellectual might seem astounding. However, at the time Renan spoke, many of these views were commonly accepted as fact. The Indian civil servant and Anglican missionary William Muir held remarkably similar views when it came to Islam. In his multivolume study *The Life of Mahomet*, he concluded that the “sword of Mahomet” and the Qur’an were “the most fatal enemies of Civilization, Liberty, and Truth which the world has yet known.”²³ These tendentious claims were arrived at through a close reading of the Qur’an and reference to Islamic history, often blending scholarly arguments with theological quarrels. It was in this vein that the Anglican reverend and Orientalist scholar William St. Clair Tisdall published his lecture *Religion of the Crescent* in 1894. Although a work of history tracing the origins of the Islamic religion, Tisdall refuted the idea of Muhammad as a divine prophet and argued that Islam had been primarily influenced by Judeo-Christian culture, effectively recapitulating older arguments that interpreted Islam as a Christian heresy.²⁴

These claims did not go uncontested. The stature of men like Renan and Muir was so great that Muslims felt compelled to reply. In 1883, the Persian scholar Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, who was living in Paris at the time, took Renan to task, publishing his retort in the popular Parisian daily *Journal des Débats*. Contrary to Renan’s limited view of Islam, Afghānī reminded readers that Islamic society had a rich tradition of respect for science and philosophy. Nor had this necessarily been extinguished in the nineteenth century, despite the deep attachment to religion Muslims professed. “As long as humanity exists, the struggle between dogma and free examination, between religion and philosophy will not cease,” he declared.²⁵ In a comparable fashion, Indian intellectuals such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Rafiüddin Ahmed published works and wrote articles that challenged the findings of men like Muir.²⁶ As late as 1900, these types of theological arguments over belief and scripture continued to be found in the pages of many of Europe’s leading newspapers and magazines, resisting any notion that the European public sphere was confined to “secular” concerns. Secularization expanded the scope of religious debate rather than restricted it.

Nor did these debates break down along exclusively European-Muslim lines either. For much of the century, arguments over the character and origins of Islam were confined to circles of European Orientalists and religious thinkers. Those who refused to cede the ground to Renan and his ilk produced counterarguments that were taken up in the press and scholarly debates. As

the field of comparative religion grew over the course of the nineteenth century, experts and open-minded churchmen began underscoring the similarities between Christianity and Islam just as much as the differences. For the most part, Orientalists acknowledged that Islam was the product of Judeo-Christian monotheism. Rather than mining the Qur'an to paint an "accurate" view of Muhammad or deny his standing as a prophet, critics turned to history. They drew attention to the common Semitic origins of monotheism, seeing a continuous chain linking Judaism and Islam. According to the English schoolmaster and author Reginald Bosworth Smith, the differences that existed between Christianity and Islam may be cultural, but they were not theological. "The mass of our people still pray to the God of Abraham, and turn eastwards towards that land which is Arabia's half-sister, the Holy Land of the Jews," he explained.²⁷ Conflicts between Muslims and Christians were "a quarrel between near religions" that said more about "mutual misunderstanding" than foundational disagreements. Where scholars like Muir and Renan saw immutable difference, Smith saw potential religious coexistence. "The three creeds are branches from the same parent stock, not different stocks; and they all alike look back to the majestic character of Abraham as the first teacher of the unity of God."²⁸

Thinkers like Smith believed that Islam and Christianity could exist in a complementary co-dependence with "each rejoicing in the success of the other." For most observers, however, this outlook appeared flawed and hopelessly utopian. The divides separating Christians and Muslims were not simply a matter of belief. As Europeans formed their opinions of Islam, they drew upon a number of established intellectual traditions inherited from the works of Christian apologists as well as Renaissance and Enlightenment scholars. Collectively, these came to emphasize a certain idea of Islam as a "civilization" that was not merely illiberal and theocratic but also static. "The whole Eastern world, with very few exceptions, has been hitherto stationary." Smith admitted in 1875. "What Oriental society is now, it was at the time of Solomon—I might say, in the time of Abraham."²⁹ While Smith hoped Europeans might turn to a benighted Islam in order to rediscover the original spiritual life and values of their creed, others were not as sanguine.

The reign of Islam had left a portion of the world to slumber in decadence and sterility, the argument went. "Islam has long vanished from the stage of history and has retreated into Oriental ease and repose," as Hegel attested.³⁰ European savants had set out to understand the Orient, employing new historical and sociological models to do so. If these undertakings had provided a fresh perspective on the peoples and culture of the East, they had done little to alter prevailing notions of Islam as different and alien to European sensibilities. On the contrary, these perceptions had only been reinforced. A greater understanding of the Islamic world only served to underscore what European

experts had assumed all along: Islam and Europe constituted two distinct and vastly divergent models of life and thought.

These impressions, often formed from a distance, were the products of white European elites for the most part. They were subjects debated between scholars and theologians, many of whom never bothered to consult the opinions of actual Muslims. However, by the early nineteenth century, the context of these conversations was changing. Driven by trade and the pursuit of global commerce, European states were showing a greater determination to extend political and military control over territories beyond the continent. As countries entrenched themselves across Asia and the southern Mediterranean, scholarly curiosity in Islam became saturated with more aggressive attitudes touted by military men and hawked by politicians to mobilize publics. Savants might postulate on what religious and cultural differences implied for humanity, but imperialism deepened these cleavages and transformed them into a framework for a new world order built upon the opposing poles of “civilization” and “barbarism.” Empire encouraged a polarizing view of the world, one that saw the West pitted against an Islamic civilization that could neither tolerate nor embrace its values.

“VANQUISHING MOHAMMED”

Walking through the streets of Kanpur in 1859, William Howard Russell tried to imagine what the city must have looked like in its days of splendor. He had read travel accounts describing the European balls and social clubs, the military officials sauntering about the streets in decorative uniforms, the golden-robed native elites and the liveliness of the bazaars. But he had arrived too late. All of it was gone. Before him stretched burned buildings, roads strewn with rubble, walls pock-marked by bullets, destroyed bridges, and churches lying in ruin. “Among those heaps of dust and ashes, those arid mounds of bricks, those new-made trenches, I try in vain to realize what was once this station in Cawnpore,” he wrote in his diary that evening.³¹ A correspondent for *The Times*, Russell had arrived in India just as insurgent forces were retreating and the British were recapturing Lucknow. He was no stranger to war, having covered the recent military conflict in the Crimea. Yet the picture of complete devastation he encountered in Kanpur was different.

In 1857, security forces under the charge of the British East India Company had been unable to protect the besieged city from Indian insurgents. Surrendering to Nana Saheb’s forces, they expected civilians would be evacuated safely to Prayagraj. But things had not gone according to plan. The civilians were hacked to pieces in the courtyard of The Ladies House, and their bodies thrown down a nearby well to hide any evidence of the massacre. Entering

Kanpur in the aftermath of the carnage, William Forbes-Mitchell, a sergeant in the ninety-third Highlanders, recalled finding blood-soaked scraps of women's clothing, broken children's toys, torn pictures, and burned books. Stepping into the courtyard, all became clear to him. "The floors of the room were still covered with congealed blood, littered with trampled, torn dresses of women and children, shoes, slippers, and locks of long hair, many of which had evidently been severed from the living scalps by sword-cuts." At that instant, Forbes-Mitchell admitted only one thing was on his mind: the "desire for revenge."³² He was not alone. British public opinion was in an uproar as British forces killed, devastated, and destroyed rebel strongholds.

The Kanpur massacre was one detail among many in the Indian rebellion that erupted in 1857. The uprising had multiple causes, many of which boiled down to native discontent with the way the British East India Company governed the various territories under its authority. Since the seventeenth century, the merchant company had progressively extended its influence over the Mughal Empire and various principalities of Subcontinental Asia, carving out a British empire in India. Company officials callously dispossessed Indian landholders and ignored local customs with the typical arrogance of a colonial power. Yet the public punishment and humiliation of disobedient sepoy infantrymen in Meerut that April provided the spark for the mutiny that would metastasize into a widespread rebellion. That May, as unrest spread across central and northwest India, sepoys marched to Delhi and declared the last surviving Mughal dynast, the eighty-two-year-old Bahadur Shah, emperor.³³ Given the old dynast's age and ailing health, the gesture was more symbolic than an attempt to establish a counter-government. In Lucknow, a prominent city in the Islamic world known for its mosques and shrines, Muslims marched under the banner of Islam, besieging the residency of Sir Henry Lawrence, chief commissioner to the local prince, where the government took refuge. For British troops bent on revenge, Muslims became targets. They were tortured, bayoneted, and roasted over fires. They were sewn into pig skins and smeared with pork fat before execution. The British exacted violence on entire villages, burning them to the ground and killing civilians indiscriminately.³⁴ Participating in the siege of Lucknow in March 1858, William Forbes-Mitchell watched as British soldiers subjected the palace to close-range gunpowder bombings and dislodged rebel snipers hiding in mosques. By the conclusion of the siege, Lucknow looked much like Russell's Kanpur. "All around Lucknow for miles the country was covered with dead carcasses of every kind—human beings, horses, camels, bullocks, and donkeys—and for miles the atmosphere was tainted and the swarms of flies were horrible, a positive torment and a nuisance."³⁵

In general, missionaries were the first to publish accounts of the Indian rebellion, and this fact was not insignificant. Although Hindus participated

in the rebellion, missionaries were quick to point the finger at the adversary they knew best, pronouncing on the “Mohammedan Rebellion of 1857.” British readers, who already held deep prejudices against Muslims, were inclined to agree with these accounts.³⁶ It was taken for granted that Muslims naturally hated Christians and refused to live under infidel rule. Newspaper reports spread stories of Muslim gangs attacking Christian clergymen and congregations forced to flee in horror.³⁷ It was “Mohammedan rebels” rather than “the mild Hindoo” that posed the greatest danger to Britain. “The mutiny has been, from beginning to end, a purely Mussulman display of antipathy to British rule,” as one commentator charged.³⁸ Reverend Alexander Duff, a missionary of the Church of Scotland who had spent more than twenty years in India building schools and promoting Western education, concurred. He confirmed the many attacks on Christian missions in November 1857, attributing the violence to “Mohammedan fanatics” inspired by visions of holy war and revenge. “The preponderant central element [of the mutiny] has been of Mohammedan origin, directed to the realization of the long cherished dynastic designs of Mohammedan ambition.”³⁹

Enlarging the picture, authors saw the hand of a vast conspiracy, a war of civilizations with global dimensions. In 1858, when a crowd attacked French and British consular officers in Jeddah during the hajj season, killing both, European authorities drew parallels with the events taking place on the subcontinent. “Since the Indian war, the elation acquires a more threatening character each day,” reported the newly appointed French consul. “Pilgrims coming from the banks of the Ganges and Indus openly preach the massacre of the English.”⁴⁰ War had radicalized Asian Muslims and generated flows of émigrés who subsequently settled in Arabia and the Ottoman Empire, carrying with them the “spirit of 1857.”⁴¹ For British observers, the international reverberations of Muslim outrage were proof of a broad-based “Moslem movement” imperiling Christian civilization. One journalist claimed,

Whatever the moving cause, here we have the whole Moslem body, from Arabia in the south to Bulgaria in the north and amongst our own Indian possession in the east, agitated by some common impulse, and, as usual, when it parts from its usual lethargic course, seeking the extermination of all whose religious tenets are adverse to the doctrines of Islamism.

Under the circumstances, unforgiving retaliation was not only needed but also justified “in the face of outraged Christendom.”⁴² As *The New Monthly Magazine* reported in 1857 as Kanpur burned:

The hopes of better days, the promises of success and triumphs, have been once more brought home to the impulsive imagination of the followers of the

Prophet, and have caused the pulse of Islamism to vibrate from Tehran and Bokhara and from Constantinople to Cairo, to Algiers and to Morocco.⁴³

French officials hardly needed to be reminded of the civilizational contest playing out in North Africa. They were, after all, in the middle of it. Since 1830, France had been fighting Muslim insurgents in the territories that would soon be dubbed Algeria. With little preparation and knowledge of the region, the French had invaded the Barbary Coast and toppled the Dey of Algiers, setting off a series of ethnic and tribal conflicts that tore the region apart. During the 1840s, the *Armée d'Afrique* waged a grueling war against the Sufi leader Abd al-Qādir for control of the Algerian interior. With military support from the 'Alawī dynasty in Morocco, Abd al-Qādir constructed an impressive Islamic Emirate across much of central and western Algeria, taking the title "Commander of the Faithful." His Islamic state drew support from the various Sufi networks that stretched across the Maghreb and managed to broker delicate alliances with tribal chieftains and powerful local families. Jihad against the French provided the impetus for a new type of state-building and militarization that bogged down French forces in nasty guerrilla wars.⁴⁴ By the mid-1840s, some 100,000 troops had been deployed to occupy the area. Tribal violence and the decapitation of French collaborators shaped the military's perceptions of their North African adversaries.⁴⁵ Liberal politicians at home came to appreciate that they were fighting a different kind of war and adjusted their outlooks accordingly. "I believe that the rule of war authorizes us to ravage the country," claimed Alexis de Tocqueville in 1841, "and that we must do it whether by destroying the crops at the time of the harvest or by carrying out rapid forays constantly . . . with the objective of seizing men or livestock."⁴⁶ The military intentionally destroyed local economies and broke up communities as they mercilessly pursued those believed to be combatants. By the time French forces toppled Abd al-Qādir's Emirate in 1847, much of the interior was left devastated.⁴⁷

Military victory brought with it new questions of how to govern a conquered people. "According to the Turks, the jackal and the Arab are two animals that can never be tamed," commander Ferdinand Lapasset advised in 1847. "The wisdom of the former rulers should guide us in our policies vis-à-vis this race that can be suppressed but not tied down."⁴⁸ To this end, the military set up the Arab Offices to liaise with Arab notables, collect taxes, and monitor religious officials. Major combat operations gave way to counter-insurgency strategies. Military forces worked to root out imams and marabouts who periodically stirred calls to jihad, in some instances suppressing these localized movements violently. When one of Abd al-Qādir's former lieutenants, Bou Bahgla, mobilized followers in the Mitidja and Kabylia in 1849, the *Armée d'Afrique* took no quarter. Capturing one of his allies, Aïssa Ben Kouider, in

Orleansville, French troops summarily put him to death, sending his severed head to Miliana and his hand to Theniet El Had as a warning to other insurgents. Colonial warfare encouraged and even normalized levels of violence and destruction unimaginable in Europe, resulting in military extremism. “I have truly monstrous dreams” the *chef de bataillon*, Lucien-François de Montagnac, confessed in 1843. “I scour Algeria from north to south, from east to west, and, like one inspired or possessed I imagine that to me alone belongs the power to put an end to every last Arab in Africa.”⁴⁹

Encounters on the battlefield conditioned Europeans to see Islam as a militant religion and Arabs as a warlike people. For many French, the two—Arab and Muslim—went hand in hand, one serving as a metonym for the other. In the wake of the Algerian War, Nicolas Perron, a French educational director in Algeria and an expert on medieval Arab poetry, was not reticent in expressing his firm belief that Muslims were an innately hostile people.

War is all that fills his active thought, and not a wise or intelligent war but only brutal war. Everything is in those words: be Muslim or kill; do not be a Muslim and be a slave or be killed. Without this principle, there is no Islam. War is very nearly the only social work which Islam believes imposed on it.⁵⁰

Christian polemicists did not need provocation when warning of the dangers posed by Islam. They had been repeating the same cautionary lines for centuries. “Fanaticism constitutes their force. War is their duty,” claimed the Catholic religious historian Jean-Joseph François Poujoulat. A vanquished Muslim population could never be taught to love their Christian conquerors, he admonished. “The publicists who affirm that it is necessary to win over the Arabs through gentleness do not sufficiently understand the character of the Muslim races.”⁵¹

Catholic writers often contrasted the brutality of the Muslim with the compassion of the Christian, but it was difficult to put much faith in Christian virtues when radical religious writers like Louis Veuillot proposed “vanquishing Mohammed” and “exterminating the Arabs” as promising solutions to France’s Algerian predicament.⁵² Even if certain opinion leaders could be written off as extremists, ideas of religious conflict and holy war remained widespread in the nineteenth century. Those on the frontlines of this conflict, moreover, tended to be sensitive when it came to matters of confessional difference. According to the Spanish philosopher Gumersindo de Azcárate, Spain had a particular interest in the struggle between Cross and Crescent. Only some twenty miles from the tip of Morocco, Spain was situated at the crossroads of the Christian-Muslim frontier. If Christian Europe had a duty to defend the faith and spread the blessings of Christian civilization, “it is an elemental duty for those living in Spain,” Azcárate claimed.⁵³ It helped that

this historical obligation also gelled with new imperial impulses stirring in the country at mid-century.

In the autumn of 1859, Madrid seethed with a wild energy. That October, the Spanish prime minister, Leopoldo O'Donnell y Jorris, stood before parliament to address a foreign policy issue that had recently drawn national attention. Berber tribesmen had engaged Spanish soldiers at Ceuta, a small fortification on the Moroccan coast held by Spain since the seventeenth century. The territory was one of many garrison towns along the Moroccan littoral that serviced Spanish merchant vessels and housed a small population of soldiers, missionaries, traders, and convicts.⁵⁴ In themselves, these garrisons possessed limited commercial value for Spain. More galling was the fact that the new Moroccan sultan, Sidi Muhammad, was unwilling to rein in the rowdy tribes and accommodate Spanish security concerns. After weeks of futile negotiations with Fez, the Spanish government opted for a military response. Punctuating an otherwise dry speech with a burst of patriotic outpouring, O'Donnell declared, "With our weapons in hand, we are going [to Africa] to obtain satisfaction for the insult offered to our flag."⁵⁵

The Spanish public did not need much prodding when it came to a war in Africa. Once a dominant world power, Spain had lost much of its American empire to nationalist revolutionaries and freedom fighters in the early nineteenth century. Accompanied by destructive and often violent political infighting between royalists and liberals at home, a series of unstable regimes, and monarchs who preferred to live in the decadent splendor of the Old Regime rather than modernize the country and economy, Spain appeared on the verge of becoming a second-rate power. When recounting Spain's turbulent modern history, the poet and statesman Gaspar Núñez de Arce could only throw his hands up in frustration. "We have participated in the monstrous and rapid performance of a Shakespearean drama and a parodic interlude jumbled together," he lamented.⁵⁶ During the 1850s, a small cluster of journalists and pamphlet writers had begun whetting people's appetite for a second round of imperial expansion, hoping to recoup some of the country's former prestige. Authors drew attention to France's growing presence directly across the Mediterranean in North Africa, warning that should Spaniards hesitate, they may find themselves cut out of the great colonial game being played by the major European powers. "Let us imitate France in its conquest and colonization of Algeria," the publicist Ruperto de Aguirre enjoined in 1858. "We already slavishly imitate them in matters of less importance."⁵⁷ The injunction was as much an appeal to nationalist vigor as it was an admission of Spanish decline in the nineteenth century.

The response to O'Donnell's speech was immediate. "Anywhere you passed, you only heard one cry: 'War to the Death! Vengeance against the perfidious followers of Muhammad!'" Núñez de Arce claimed. Everyone,

in his opinion, was succumbing to “the unanimous sentiment of the fatherland.”⁵⁸ Describing the scene in the capital, Owen Charles Dalhousie Ross, a British national working as an engineer in Spain, noted the celebratory mood. “At night the houses were spontaneously illuminated, and a feeling of intense satisfaction was evident in the whole population.”⁵⁹ In the coming days, volunteers enrolled in the military, public subscriptions were taken up across the country, and cities offered to supply battalions with pack animals or provide medical supplies. It was as though “an electric impulse” had galvanized Spaniards, according to Nicasio Landa. Landa himself succumbed to this “holy enthusiasm,” enlisting in the military medical corps and leaving for North Africa that month.⁶⁰ Attempting to impress upon readers the importance of the moment, the journalist Manuel Ibo Alfaro put the matter bluntly: “Our flag is stained, and this stain will only be washed away with blood . . . Africa awaits us. Europe watches us. What should Spain do in this situation?”⁶¹

Like many others that autumn, Alfaro believed that a patriotic war against a “barbarous” Muslim people would be beneficial for Spain. It would put an end to the squabbles in the Spanish parliament, unite the nation around a great patriotic cause, and prove to Europe that the Spanish were not a decadent people on the verge of becoming a second-rate power. “Enlist the parties under one flag more noble, greater, without another name other than the Spanish flag,” urged Alfaro. “Today Spain offers a sublime sight that Europe contemplates with admiration.” Those supporting the war espoused familiar colonial tropes, stating that Spain would spread “civilization” across Africa. The war was cast as the prelude to a new era of Spanish imperial conquest. Alfaro himself contributed to this imperial bravado. “We will triumph because civilization must triumph over the uncivilized,” he claimed, “because the Cross must triumph over the Crescent.”⁶² Frederick Hardman, a correspondent for *The Times* embedded with Spanish troops in Morocco, was conscious of the way the press stirred up this new nationalist-colonial frenzy and drew parallels between Spain and other European powers. “What France has done in Algeria, [the Spanish] seem to have aspired to do in Morocco,” he stated. However, in Hardman’s opinion, their efforts were only “a parody,” and nothing more.⁶³

Even if the public had France’s Algerian campaign in the back of its mind, the mood in Spain was nonetheless distinct. Catholicism was a central component of Spanish national identity, and the country had an entrenched Catholic tradition. For much of the Middle Ages, the Iberian Peninsula had been dominated by Muslim princes, with Al-Andalus—a territory consisting of various Moorish principalities in the center and south of Spain—serving as an Islamic outpost on the edge of continental Europe. The Spanish monarchs had united the country in a series of wars against the Moors, progressively

pushing the Muslims into Africa. Given this history, many conservative nationalists and clerics thought of Spain and Catholicism as one. For much of the nineteenth century, religious tolerance was not even recognized under the law.⁶⁴ It was the “religious element” that made Spain great, as the economist José de Carvajal explained. Spain’s “own nationality” was rooted in Catholicism.⁶⁵ Such sentiments were certainly at the forefront of minds as Spain once again contemplated war with a Muslim government. “Don’t forget that your fathers fought against the Moors at Simancas and beat them,” Alfaro imparted to troops embarking across the Mediterranean. “Don’t forget that your fathers fought against the Moors at Granada and won.”⁶⁶ The Marquis de Molins, a Spanish politician who also fancied himself a poet, was equally disposed to reviving the old crusading rhetoric of the conquistadors. Recalling the days when valiant Spanish soldiers drove the Moors out of Iberia and claimed the land for Christianity, Molins implored his fellow Spaniards to take up the glorious mantle once again. “Our entire history has shown Spain to be the country which is destined to drive back the followers of the Prophet and to replace them.”⁶⁷ 1860 was not, however, 1492. Anyone seeking a splendid repeat of Spain’s heroic medieval victories was bound to be disappointed.

At Ceuta, ships arrived daily, unloading supplies and men. Soldiers sat about playing cards or took part in the military band, awaiting the march to Tétouan. The dreary Moroccan winter was hardly inspiring. Soldiers complained incessantly of leaky tents when it rained, of the mud, and of the cholera and dysentery that became part of everyday life. “Notwithstanding the light-sounding notes of enthusiasm, the promises of brilliant triumphs, of which some of the Madrid papers are so lavish, I can positively assure you that there are not a few who begin to cool upon the enterprise, in consequence of difficulties and hardship they had not anticipated . . .” a war correspondent for *The Times* stated. “Some who were most eager to get to Africa would now be just as glad to get back to Spain.”⁶⁸ Not all succumbed to disillusion. Pedro Antonio de Alacrón, a writer who enlisted out of patriotic motives, kept up his spirit during the arduous days by constantly reminding himself of the noble intentions that had brought Spain to Morocco. “Our mission is no longer one of ire, nor of terror, nor of tribulation and scandal,” he wrote in his diary. “It is of civilization, of progress, of liberty for our fellow men.”⁶⁹ When the fighting did begin, these ideals quickly gave way to the more familiar horrors of war. Spanish forces had difficulty pinning down Moroccan forces and navigating the terrain. Charles Yriarte, a writer and technical illustrator who came to Morocco as a correspondent for *Le Monde Illustré*, spared no details in describing the Arab tribesmen on the battlefield. They rushed about wildly, charging and retreating, luring Spanish forces along the inhospitable terrain. “Their fanaticism which animates these ferocious enemies forbids even the thought of surrender,” he claimed. Following one battle, he noted Arab

bodies scattered along the beach, others lying still in the incoming waves. "The earth had still not absorbed the blood."⁷⁰

As a French writer, Yriarte had the Algerian campaign fresh in his mind. Although he had not experienced the Algerian war firsthand, it did not prevent him from drawing comparisons between the two. "It is truly war just as described in the histories of the campaigns in Algeria."⁷¹ Visually, as well, the campaign had corollaries with the Algerian campaign. In the 1830s and 1840s, the artist Horace Vernet had been commissioned by the French government to produce dazzling canvases depicting the heroism and epic struggles of the French military against Arab forces. The large paintings, with their romantic scenes of battle, had become iconic, drawing the attention of French art critics and of Europe. Not to be outdone, the Spanish government followed suit, sending the artist Marià Fortuny to Morocco to capture the heroism of Spanish troops in action. The state even paid for Fortuny to go to Paris and study Vernet's canvases to obtain the desired effect.⁷² In the end, the effort was a disappointment, with Fortuny finishing his immense canvas *The Battle of Tetuán* well after the conclusion of the war.

In all, the war was not the dramatic affair that Spanish nationalists had anticipated. Spanish forces managed a series of quick military victories before Britain intervened and demanded a halt to hostilities. The resulting treaty was far from ideal. Spain acquired minimal territorial gains and certain trading rights in Morocco, but these failed to satisfy the nationalist ambitions promising glory and a panacea to all the ills afflicting Spanish society. Journalists had stoked aspirations of carving out a colony similar to French Algeria while publicists stirred old memories of Crusade and religious warfare. By the conclusion, it indeed seemed the campaign had been an imitation of the French in Algeria, a poor one at that. Spain did gain control over the city of Tétouan as a result of the treaty, a concession which served as a sop to nationalists. But as the press correspondent Frederick Hardman noted, Tétouan, with its dilapidated buildings and squalid streets, was a poor prize. In his opinion, Spain was better off razing the city than trying to govern it. "Demolish Tétouan, pass the ploughshare over its foundation, [and] irrigate it for a week with chloride of lime," he advised.⁷³ This was the best Spain could do; Tétouan was certainly no Algiers.

Failed expectations aside, the Moroccan campaign exhibited all the impulses of the "new imperialism" coming of age in Europe. Familiar chants of "Cross versus Crescent!" and "Death to the Muhammadans!" were mixed with more novel ideas of spreading "civilization" to benighted peoples. Nineteenth-century imperialism created a new context in which Europeans encountered Muslims, invoking images of the "fanatical Mohammedan" and "barbaric Arab." These images not only encouraged ideas of a backward and degenerate Eastern civilization in comparison to an advanced Western

one but also positioned East and West within a clash of civilizations possessing religious, cultural, and racial connotations. The Muslim, according to the journalist Auguste Meylan, nurtured himself on “memories of hatred and vengeance” against Christian Europe, and there was very little to believe this would change anytime soon.⁷⁴ If anything, these conceptual dichotomies hardened over the century and became more pronounced. Time would tell who would prevail in the clash of civilizations, but needless to say many Europeans believed they were on the winning side of history. They, after all, had the force of “modern civilization” behind them.

“NEITHER EUROPE NOR ASIA”

“It seems to me that I have lived in the Orient . . .” the French writer Théophile Gautier claimed. “I am always surprised I cannot understand Arabic. I must have forgotten it.”⁷⁵ Although born and raised in Paris, Gautier had never been able to ignore the feeling that destiny had cheated him. He was not meant for the urbanity of the nineteenth century. He deplored the current obsession with money and industry evident among his contemporaries. It was nothing but a lamentable philistinism repackaged under the guise of “modern progress.” Walking the streets of Paris, he criticized the shantytowns and urban squalor that industrialization was bringing forth with its “black and fetid” alleys, its poverty-stricken workers, and cheaply produced housing. The French capital had become a sprawling metropolis with “no traces of art or elegance,” he claimed.⁷⁶ These were the horrors of modern civilization, as Gautier saw it. His penchant for antique fineries and aversion to the “stupid uniformity” that modernity encouraged reflected a more distant time, one emblematic of the splendors of those old, noble societies beyond the continent. Colonial ideologues might rhapsodize on spreading the benefits of modern civilization and progress to less-advanced societies, but Gautier clearly preferred the “profound and mysterious Orient” with its intense spiritual life and heroic Bedouins mounted on horses to anything he found in Europe.⁷⁷ “I would have certainly been a good pasha,” he admitted.⁷⁸

For a sullen Parisian of solid bourgeois stock, the “mysterious Orient” was an object of intense fascination just as much as it was an escape from the *ennui* of modern life. After reading Victor Hugo’s collection of poems, *Les Orientales*, Gautier abandoned his youthful aspirations of becoming an artist and decided to take up a career as a writer. In imitation of the master, he drafted poems about dreaming obelisks on the Nile River and later progressed to grotesque stories set in Egypt about Pharaonic princesses and mummies. His literary undertakings might have earned him a reputation as an up-and-coming writer, but they rarely paid the bills, compelling him to earn

money as a literary critic for leading newspapers of the day. In 1840, one of the newspapers for which he wrote, *La Presse*, offered to finance a trip to Spain with the intention of publishing regular installments of Gautier's travel accounts in the journal. Lured by the appeal of old Moorish Iberia, Gautier readily accepted the offer. During a six-month sojourn, he wandered through the country, recording his impressions of the medieval churches and Moorish fortresses dotting the landscape. In Andalusia, he marveled at the "fairyland" and "Biblical magnificence" of the Orient, which, up until then, Gautier had only known through paintings exhibited in Parisian salons and the imaginative ballads of romantic poets. "Spain . . . is not made for European mores," he admired. "The genius of the Orient reveals itself under all forms here."⁷⁹

Gautier's Spanish travels nurtured his fascination with the exoticism of the East. He came to refer to himself as an "Orientalist" with pride. Yet Spain he knew was not the "real Orient," and in 1845 when his publisher, Jules Hetzel, again offered to cover his travel expenses for a second trip, this time to Algeria, he jumped at the chance.⁸⁰ Arriving in North Africa, Gautier reveled in the conspicuous charms offered by the Maghreb. In Algiers, he lost himself in the labyrinthine streets of the Casbah and indulged in the "opaque obscurity" of the city. "Nothing is more amusing for a man who doesn't have any preconceived ideas about conquest and civilization than to stroll about the Moorish streets of Algiers in the morning," he claimed.⁸¹ He feverishly recorded his impressions of wailing dervishes and scantily clad belly dancers, indulging in what he called the "sublime Orient." The trip left a strong impression. Returning home, Gautier took to wearing traditional Arab dress, smoking hashish, and even walking about the streets of Paris with a lion cub tethered to a leash, excusing his eccentricities with a terse reply of "everyone returns [from Algeria] slightly Muslim at heart."⁸² Later travels took him to Istanbul where he contemplated the nature of mortality in Turkish cemeteries and gladly discarded his cap in the waters of the Bosphorus in exchange for a fez. During the 1860s in Egypt, he spent nights dreaming in the desert and recording his impressions among the crumbling vestiges of the ancient world. For Gautier, the Orient was an obsession.

Notwithstanding his bohemian extravagance, Gautier's behavior was hardly exceptional. Orientalist self-fashioning was in vogue among French literary and artistic circles of the mid-nineteenth century, amounting to a veritable mania. "We are preoccupied today more than ever before with the Orient," Victor Hugo insisted in 1829. "The Orient, whether as image or whether as thought, has become for the intelligence as much as for the imagination a sort of general preoccupation."⁸³ A generation of poets, writers, and artists turned to the East, traveling to Jerusalem and Alexandria, Algiers and Fez in search of mystery and adventure. They marveled at the traces of past civilizations so dissimilar from their own and drew inspiration from the quaint

“Oriental” life on display in cities. In the popular imagination, the Orient came to constitute an alternative to modern bourgeois life with its industrial metropolises, clattering railroads, and crass materialism. It was an imaginative form of escapism for those disenchanted with the trappings of Western modernity. As the novelist Gustave Flaubert pointedly remarked, “we covet the Orient on rainy days.”⁸⁴

Writers and reformers disconsolate over the changes occurring in their own societies held up the Orient as a potential remedy to the problems that modernization wrought. According to Gautier, the Orient, with its religious sensibilities, wisdom, and poetry, had much to offer Europe. “Descending like a beacon of light toward the obscure regions of the West,” it would provide a “counter-current” to the materialism and skepticism that plagued the nineteenth century.⁸⁵ After spending time in the Ottoman Empire during the 1830s, the French cartographer and geologist Ami Bové came to a similar conclusion, proposing that the Orient could “correct [the West’s] overly artificial and complicated life.”⁸⁶ As colonial expansion brought East and West together in new ways, nineteenth-century intellectuals became increasingly disillusioned with the mantra of “modern progress.” They entertained ideas that East and West need not stand opposed to one another. In fact, they could be wed together in working toward a more harmonious social order. As the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe intoned:

Orient and Occident
No longer are you separate.⁸⁷

Elites envisioned a new world liberated from the anomy and violent forms of conquest that modern times encouraged. If the Orient stood opposed to European civilization, this, in itself, was not necessarily a bad thing, critics argued. Writers and artists sensitive to the burdens imposed by modernity sought solace in a particular idea of the East, seeing in it a remedy for the many ills contaminating their own societies.

This cathectic attachment to the Orient was well-suited for the new cultural forms of romantic poetry and travel literature emerging during the period. Yet when it came to the domain of real-life experience, literary Orientalism was bound to disappoint. Writers like Gautier may have been keen to discover the “sublime Orient,” but what they did in fact find was not always to their liking. In Algiers, Gautier could not ignore the new buildings being constructed on the Place du Gouvernement by the French colonial administration. He cringed at the cafés and shopping arcades frequented by European colonists, all of which evoked the familiar “bourgeois banality” he had hoped to leave behind in Paris. The true Algeria would “soon disappear under the invasion of French tastes,” he complained.⁸⁸ His wanderings through the streets of

Istanbul were similarly upsetting. "Constantinople looks a lot like London and has nothing of the Orient," he mused in a letter to a friend.⁸⁹ It was hard to ignore that the Orient was changing, and these changes were most evident in the places recently brought under European rule.

Travelers to colonial Algiers looked askance at the noticeably Parisian buildings beginning to occlude the landscape of slanting houses and resplendent mosques. Beginning in 1854, a *Commission des Plans* under the engineer Charles Frédéric Chassériau set to the task of renovating the old Moorish city with the intention of transforming it into a new capital for France's North African empire.⁹⁰ The scenic bay was lined with neo-classical promenades while Parisian-styled boulevards and shopping districts replaced the old, torturous streets. Inaugurating the new Boulevard de l'Impératrice, completed in 1864, a spokesman for Morton Peto, the British firm contracted to carry out the work, praised the thoroughfare as a symbol of France's commitment to North African development. "From these initial works," the representative proclaimed before a crowd of colonists and government officials, "it is obvious that the commerce of Algiers and the public in general will receive an immense advantage."⁹¹ Not everyone concurred. Making a trip through Algiers and its environs in the late 1860s, the tourist Charles Desprez observed that the Moorish cafés familiar to the city's cultural life were now only "a mere shadow" of what they had once been while nearly every street in the city center was obstructed by "excavations, piles of rubble, and ruins." The Oriental beauty and charm of the city were gone, compelling him to ask, "Where can one now find a secluded quarter to live in that Oriental incognito?"⁹² Charles Thierry-Mieg, an entrepreneur with an interest in the colonial cotton trade, was explicit when it came to the changes taking place in the colony. "Today Algiers is an entirely European city," he concluded in 1860.⁹³

As in North Africa, so too in British Subcontinental Asia. In the early 1870s, the Scottish missionary Norman Macleod arrived in Bombay on the western coast of mainland India to find a "Europeanised city" bustling with commerce and trade.⁹⁴ The cotton boom of the 1860s had been instrumental in transforming this former garrison town ruled by the East India Company into a colonial urban metropolis supervised directly by a technocratic and well-oiled imperial administration. With the American Civil War disrupting cotton imports across the Atlantic, Bombay quickly became the chief hub of Britain's colonial cotton industry. Infrastructure and transport were developed to facilitate shipping, mills were built to process raw cotton, and structures were erected in accordance with the tastes of the city's new merchant class rising to predominance. The central Esplanade featured rows of buildings done up in Gothic Victorian style while Bombay University, established in 1857 at the behest of the British Bombay Association, similarly testified to Britain's growing presence on the subcontinent. Modeled on the

University of London, its imposing buildings and Gothic clock tower were redolent of the British Isles and suggestive of Britain's "civilizing" influence in Asia. Yet "the jewel" of British Bombay was the grand Victoria Terminus built to headquarter the Great Indian Peninsular Railway in 1887. Based on London's St. Pancras rail station, the central rail terminal was intended as a tribute to British ingenuity and commerce, marking Bombay as a rapidly industrializing city akin to London, Manchester, or Liverpool. These monuments of colonial grandeur were only the most notable examples of the mark left by Britain on the city. Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, James Furneaux, editor for the *Times of India*, summed up the impression that many Europeans held upon arriving, insisting that the Yacht Club, the imposing arcades of the Apollo Restaurant, and the electric lights all reminded him of his native land.⁹⁵

Much the same could be said regarding other subcontinental cities. In Calcutta, it was difficult to ignore the resemblance between the stately St. Andrew's Kirk and London's own St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Those who had grown rich from imperial trade in muslin, indigo, and spices built palatial homes, while the East India Company oversaw the construction of wide avenues, squares, and commercial centers in the "white town" district inhabited primarily by Europeans. The seat of the East India Company, the Writers' Building, sported a handsome portico with ionic columns and parapets adorned with Greco-Roman statues and palm trees. Much as in Bombay, industry had transfigured the Bengali capital, outfitting it with docks and factories along the waterfront. With British industry also came the miseries of industrialization. The thick smoke that hung in the air and the teams of poor laborers milling about the wharfs easily brought to mind the unseemly aspects of the industrial revolution evident back home in the British Isles. "Why this is London!" Rudyard Kipling mocked when describing the quayside around Hughli Bridge in 1891. "This is the docks. This is Imperial. This is worth coming across India to see!"⁹⁶ Europeans observing these transformations in either French North Africa or the British Raj expressed a mix of awe and unease as an imagined Oriental terrain populated with lush palaces and minarets evaporated in the bustling milieu of modern urban life. "The Orient is disappearing," the dramatist Ernest Feydeau mourned while gazing upon the new landscape of boulevards and Arabs drinking absinthe at French cafés in Algiers. "It is disputing the terrain step by step, but it is disappearing with its exquisite forms."⁹⁷

The extent to which the East was "disputing" this transformation was questionable. Poets and writers may have waxed lyrical over the spectacles of the "old Orient," but these impressions were always more myth than reality.⁹⁸ Muslims traveling to Europe on business or diplomatic missions during the century hinted at the changes that were occurring outside Europe.

Preconceptions of overtly pious Muslims or the “terrible Turk” rarely held up under scrutiny as travelers arriving on the continent demonstrated the extent to which nominally “Oriental” cultures were espousing Western habits. When a Tunisian delegation was sent to France in 1825 to offer gifts to Charles X upon his coronation, the French public was shocked by the way the officials conducted themselves. The delegation stayed in the chic Faubourg Saint-Germain for three months, and during the various receptions they attended, members were seen drinking champagne and engaging in typical Parisian social activities. One journalist was so taken by the liveliness of the delegation head, Sidi Mahmud, as to refer to him as “a very brown Frenchman.”⁹⁹

Forward-looking pashas and sultans embraced modernization, seeking to stave off European colonialism and make their societies more competitive. From the 1840s onward, both Egypt and the Ottoman Empire spearheaded impressive modernization campaigns, with “restructuring” (or *tanzimat*) a central component of these ambitious projects. Railroad construction, modernized militaries, and new financial and political institutions were all encouraged. Leaders did not think twice about showing off their achievements to European audiences in the hopes of attracting foreign financiers and challenging ingrained stereotypes of Oriental backwardness. In the 1860s, the Egyptian Khedive Isma’il Pasha went to great lengths to project the image of Egypt as a modern country in the mold of Europe. Fluent in French and notorious for enjoying cognac and cigars after meals, Isma’il was emblematic of the new Western-looking Muslim elite growing up during the period. Desiring to rid himself of Ottoman oversight, he placed his faith in rapid modernization, believing a strong and financially independent Egypt was the best guarantee of success. With large sums of money borrowed from European creditors, he committed the state to public works projects like the Suez Canal and endeavored to develop the country’s booming cotton industry.¹⁰⁰ The *pièce de résistance* in this bold vision was Cairo itself, which was refashioned as a “Paris of the Orient.” Technicians and architects brought in from Europe descended on the old quarters of the city, erecting large squares, theater houses, cafés, and monumental buildings befitting a great capital. Admiring his work, Isma’il Pasha was confident in the legacy he would leave behind him as Egypt entered the modern age. “My country is no longer in Africa . . .” he once remarked. “It is now in Europe!”¹⁰¹

While Muslim leaders flaunted their achievements and celebrated the changes taking place in their countries, various European spectators were appalled. Visiting Egypt in 1869 to attend the inaugural opening of the Suez Canal, Gautier, now old and wizened, could only disparage the “clumsy European forms” and “mechanical barbarism” pervading Egypt. He complained about the train stations built in Alexandria and the European music halls and theaters catering to tourists in Cairo. “Without the distinguishable



Figure 1.2 Rue Bab el Hadid, Cairo (1898). Photographies sur les transformations urbaines du Caire entre 1849 et 1946. Gallica/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

minarets and palm trees,” he bristled, “you would hardly believe yourself to be in Africa.”¹⁰² The British observer Edwin De Leon was similarly conscious of the new arcades thronging Ezbekieh Square in imitation of those on the Rue de Rivoli in Paris. He too lamented the disappearance of the small Arab cafés, splendid gardens, and the storytellers that had once gathered on squares to entertain listeners. “Like the mirage of the deserts . . . these sights and sounds, so truly Oriental, have passed away from the vision of the traveler as he sits on the veranda of his hotel,” he recorded. “All is now decorous, dull, and European.” Comfort and convenience were replacing the “picturesque,” prompting De Leon to insist that “the old Cairo has given way to the new.” Unlike Gautier, however, De Leon acknowledged that with modernization had come improvements in public hygiene and urban planning that could not be overlooked. He had little patience for the “sentimental rubbish” spouted by poets and tourists pining for the days of old.¹⁰³

Whether maudlin or pragmatic, Europeans were conscious that a certain idea of the Orient was coming to an end during the nineteenth century. “Where are the glories of the gorgeous East in scenery, clouds, skies, jewels, purple or fine linen palaces?” asked William Howard Russell in 1859 as he gazed out over the landscape of colonial Muddenpore, some 300 miles from Calcutta. “I see them not.”¹⁰⁴ The “old Orient” was entering the currents of the modern world as processes like industrialization and urbanization acquired

a global scope and context. "Now is the time to see the Orient," Flaubert advised his mother while making a trip through Egypt and the Levant in the late 1840s, "because it's disappearing, it's getting civilized."¹⁰⁵ A generation later, critics feared that Flaubert's warning may have been accurate. In 1912, the English author and journalist Ellis Schaap bewailed the pernicious European influences transforming the East. "The large influx of Europeans at Cairo and Damascus has not only de-Orientalized these cities with their ridiculous modern hotels, electric-light, up-to-date garages, and those manifold luxuries that the West imagines it cannot exist without even on its travels, but has changed the character of the people." The spectacle of Westernization left an "unpleasant impression upon the mind of an inharmonious whole, neither true East nor true West," he charged.¹⁰⁶ The journalist and writer Paul Burzon noticed a similar phenomenon occurring in Istanbul, where modernization and European forms of sociability were fast eclipsing the sights of whirling dervishes and scholars dressed in flowing Oriental robes. "Must all these admirable things soon disappear?" he asked an imaginary Turkish reader. "I certainly fear so. Already the first signs are manifest. The pianos of the West, the *toilettes* of our high society, the books of our psychologists have penetrated your harems. You yourself wear our ridiculous jackets and tight-fitting clothes." Istanbul was becoming a "city without memories," in his opinion. "It is Paris, it is London, it is New York," but it would soon no longer be Istanbul.¹⁰⁷ The English travel writer Frances Elliot had a similar impression of the Ottoman capital during her stay in the 1890s. Nothing of the city's Oriental character remained, she complained. "All is dying out. All matter of fact and modern. Neither Europe nor Asia, but with the worst of both elements!"¹⁰⁸

Colonialism and globalization were easy culprits when it came to explaining the changes occurring in Eastern societies. Many romantics were quick to point the finger at these larger processes when the Orient failed to live up to their expectations. More perceptive observers, however, could recognize that Muslim and Eastern societies were undergoing a process of profound change, one that might be driven by contact with Europe but which, in and of itself, was hardly a product of an omnipresent colonialism. "Are the Oriental populations, Muslim and Christian, not agitated by the incontestable precursors of the storm which upsets the equilibrium of the modern world?" asked Paul-Albert Simmone in 1867.¹⁰⁹ Wilfrid Scawen Blunt was similarly convinced that the Islamic world was on the brink of a profound transformation. Muslim scholars and theologians were no longer beholden to a "medieval scholasticism" while rulers appeared to be adopting foreign influences and endorsing modernization. "The fact is, Islam does move," he claimed.¹¹⁰ Rather than degrading indigenous cultures, Westernization was proof that Muslim societies could adapt to the currents of the modern world order. "The

Islamic world is no longer closed to foreigners,” Octave Houdas, a professor at the *École des Langues Orientales* and an inspector general of madrassas in French Algeria, explained in 1904. “European penetration, evermore pronounced and inevitably transforming the habits of Muslims, has become very visible in recent years.”¹¹¹ By the dawn of the twentieth century, European scholars were insisting on the need for a more accurate understanding of the Islamic world. The German Orientalist Carl Becker chided experts who routinely pronounced on Islam without ever considering the diverse peoples and “racial composition” that a supposedly monolithic “Islamic civilization” encompassed. Ethnographic and historical considerations were encouraging a view of Islamic civilization as something living and evolving rather than static. A “large chasm” existed between the age of Muhammad and the present, Becker insisted. “The name Islam remains but its content [today] is something completely different.”¹¹²

Over the nineteenth century, Europeans came to see Muslim societies in new and different terms, revising many of the inherited traditions and outlooks that informed conceptions of the Islamic world. If the Orient had been imagined as a Biblical land or exotic escape from the West, travelers and experts were conscious of the similarities as well as the differences that now existed between Europe and its historic other. Yet in spite of the modernizing tendencies evident in Eastern societies, some assumptions were more difficult to abandon than others. The East may be adopting the forms of European civilization, but it was questionable whether these exterior changes would modify the perspectives of a people believed to be inherently fanatical and barbarous. As Bosworth Smith pointedly remarked, “Western science, with its railways, its canals, and its printing presses, may, no doubt, do something for the material prosperity of Eastern countries, but by itself it will do little for their moral welfare.”¹¹³

EUROPE AND THE FABLED EAST

By the 1870s, Charles Yriarte believed he knew a thing or two about Oriental societies. Having toured North Africa and Bosnia over the past two decades, he had seen his fair share of bazaars, winding streets, and tapering minarets. Although fascinated by these exotic landscapes at first, Yriarte had to admit that over time they could wear thin. “If one has seen Algiers, Fez or Tétouan, Sarajevo or Damascus, there is nothing left to anticipate, nothing new to amuse the eye and arrest it,” he concluded. “Muslims are the same everywhere.”¹¹⁴ Considering the mosques in Istanbul at the tail end of the century, Frances Elliot would have been inclined to agree. “If you have seen one mosque, you have seen all. The variations are so trifling, the

absence of art so complete, and the monotony so excessive.”¹¹⁵ As Europeans set out to see the “sublime Orient” for themselves, what had once been considered mysterious and charming was now seen as mundane, if not dull. Increased tourism coupled with the endless platitudes found in standard guidebooks of the day had rendered the exoticism of the East banal, even hackneyed. British travelers to India complained about the same Bombay hotels, told stories of “bowling over tigers” and cracked the same old jokes about Indian servants, William Gregory whined in 1886. “The Taj and Agra, the Futtehpore Sikri, and the Ghauts of Benares, are as well-known as Westminster Abbey, Windsor Castle, and the landing steps at Greenwich.”¹¹⁶ All said, by the end of the century European adventure seekers were prepared to move on to uncharted terrains. Boredom and *ennui* were all the Orient had to offer.

What had once been a great unknown in the lifetime of Henri de Boulainvilliers had, by the end of the nineteenth century, lost its mystique. Europeans believed they knew the Orient, even if “the Orient” conjured up different images in the imagination. While some continued to see the East as a Biblical land characterized by the religious practices and sensibilities of a bygone age, others could not ignore the evident changes taking place across Muslim societies in the nineteenth century. As railroads, Western forms of sociability, and new technologies became familiar features of global modernity, romantics could only lament the demise of the fabled Orient, the last refuge from the mechanization and insipidness of the modern world. Yet even this recognition of a modernizing East did not eschew the well-established stereotypes and conventional wisdom that frequently colored perceptions of the Muslim world. In its political traditions, its racial diversity, and its idiosyncratic religious rituals, Islamic civilization bore the marks of its profound difference to Europe. Whether beneficial or destructive, modernity amounted to a perversion.

This basic assumption was a logical outgrowth of the intellectual traditions inherited from the Middle Ages and Enlightenment. Even as they adapted to the changing circumstances of the world, such outlooks persisted to inform a certain idea of Muslim society that set it apart from the continent. Greater contact and study may have encouraged an appreciation for the complexities and variations evident within the Muslim world, but the basic norms and forms prescribed by Islam always provided a point of contrast with the West. And yet, phenomena like globalization and colonialism could not be discounted outright. The entanglements between Europe and the Islamic world ran deep, especially as European powers began to take a more direct role in the governance and management of Muslim populations. For over a century, scholars had posed the question of whether Islamic civilization could

assimilate Western values, but they rarely considered the contrary. In an age of global empire, would Europe need to reconcile itself to Islam?

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Chapter Two

Are We Not a Great Muslim Nation?

Ignoring the pessimism of romantics, one might assume the changes occurring in Islamic societies by mid-century were a positive development. Muslim statesmen and scholars long indifferent to the West were coming to appreciate what Europe had to offer. They were disregarding the protests of sclerotic religious authorities stuck in their ways and adopting the technological and social innovations of the modern world. Indeed, European critics spoke of the “progressive awakening” of Islam as these trends proceeded apace. According to certain experts, modern progress did not necessarily imply abandoning Islam either. Colonialists might insist that Muslim societies required the stern but beneficent hand of Europe to nudge them along the path of progress, but others were not so sure. “Asia is not like clay in the hands of the European potter, and least of all can this be said of Islam,” Ármín Vámbéry protested.¹ As he saw it, Islam contained all the necessary elements to effect change on its own terms, entailing that the “awakening of the Muslim world” need not amount to an egregious parroting of European social and cultural values.

Vámbéry had never accepted the judgments of colleagues prone to see the East as backward and somehow inferior when compared with the West. A Hungarian Orientalist and son of a Talmudic scholar, he remained conscious of his own “Oriental” origins as a Jew. Vámbéry even believed that his Semitic heritage gave him a unique perspective when it came to the Orient. People commonly mistook him for “a disguised Persian” or Turk, he liked to boast.² These impressions were largely the product of his own self-fashioning, which served Vámbéry well as he established himself as a renowned Turkologist in Budapest. As questions regarding the future of Islam came to divide European opinion, he felt obliged to weigh in on these debates and left little doubt as to where he stood on the matter. In 1878, he gave the public one of his strongest defenses of Islam to date. The idea that

Islamic societies were beyond the pale of modern civilization was “ridiculous and malicious,” he contended. “Turks, Persians, and Arabs visit Europe, frequent European schools, and do everything they can to imitate the Christian West, which Islam is not opposed to.”³ Reiterating arguments from his earlier works, Vámbéry made clear that Islam was in no way an obstacle to progress. It was even capable of promoting social change.⁴ Although his opinions on Islam were relevant to Arabia just as much as Muslim North Africa, Vámbéry nonetheless had a particular understanding of the religion. As a Turkologist, his views on Islam were largely shaped by his studies on Turkic peoples and, more specifically, the Ottoman Empire.

This was true of many leading European elites. Most Europeans were familiar with the Ottoman Empire, even if many of their perceptions remained wildly inaccurate. Its borders extended right up to Hungary, placing the southeast corner of the European continent—and its many Christian populations—under Muslim rule. During the sixteenth century, tales of the “terrible Turk” were publicized in broadsheets and books, warning against the rapacious Muslims who threatened to overrun Christendom. As the Ottoman threat waned over time, anxiety gradually transformed into curiosity. By the eighteenth century, Europeans appeared enamored with all things *à la turca*, ranging from decorative goods kept in homes to stage performances given at major European opera houses. As diplomatic and commercial contacts were normalized between Istanbul and the continental powers and as Westerners began to travel to the Ottoman Empire in greater numbers, Europeans even came to express a certain admiration for the Turks. Taking note of the modernizing reforms spearheaded by the Sublime Porte, critics began to find the stereotypes of Turkish barbarism passé.⁵ During the Crimean War, France and Britain even allied with the Ottoman Empire against Russia. This newfound accord earned the Ottomans a place at the negotiating table during the Congress of Paris in 1856 as an equal partner, a watershed in European diplomacy.

Vámbéry’s conjecture that the Ottomans were making strides toward “a higher degree of civilization,” while not shared by all, was certainly not an isolated opinion.⁶ Be that as it may, Vámbéry did have his own reasons for writing his pamphlet in 1878. As a leading academic on the Turkic world, Vámbéry played an important role in European-Ottoman relations. Friendly with many of Istanbul’s elite families, including the royal dynasty, he had been a guest of honor at the Ottoman court on numerous occasions in the past. His access to British and Austrian diplomatic circles made him a valuable interlocutor for the Ottoman regime, providing Istanbul with a spokesman who could mediate through backdoor channels in the major European capitals. In essence, through official patronage and gifts, the Ottoman dynasty managed to secure a faithful ally in the heart of Europe, one whose opinion

was well regarded and who could speak for Ottoman interests. More important, in the mid-1870s, the new sultan Abdülhamid was in need of just such a friend as the empire attempted to manage an unprecedented public relations crisis vis-à-vis Europe.

Since the summer of 1875, the Ottoman government had been embroiled in a series of uprisings on its Balkan periphery. That year, a dispute between Ottoman tax collectors and the local Serbian population inhabiting the province of Herzegovina escalated into violence when Serb farmers proved unable to pay. In the past, Balkan Christians had persistently complained of the near-feudal system they were subject to and were especially loath to toil for the class of landowning Muslim elites who dominated Bosnian society. The privileged status enjoyed by Muslims in the Ottoman Empire bred deep resentments, generating ethnic and confessional divisions that ran right through Ottoman Balkan society. Confronting declining living standards and a series of bad harvests in the 1870s, Bosnian Christians had reached their breaking point. As Ottoman forces bore down on the recalcitrant Serbs, radicals responded in kind. Recruiting peasants into local militias, they exacted a ferocious revenge on the Bosnian Muslim community, burning and pillaging the estates of their detested overlords and ravaging Muslim villages. Within months, these conflicts had spread beyond Herzegovina, drawing in Slavic communities across the Balkans from Montenegro to Bulgaria.⁷ The European powers watched with alarm as Croats and Serbs formed their own armies and towns splintered along Muslim-Christian lines. Balkan society was dissolving into anarchy, and what this denouement held for the ailing Ottoman Empire's place in southeastern Europe was not yet clear.

Charles Yriarte happened to be traveling through southeastern Europe just as the conflict broke out. What he witnessed left a strong impression on him. The towns no longer had the cosmopolitan mix of people and cultures so characteristic of Balkan life. The fields once cultivated by the Christian peasantry had been abandoned and left to grow wild. There were soldiers everywhere. Nearing Kostanjica in September 1875, Yriarte came across a makeshift garrison on the Turkish side of the Bay of Kotor. From a distance, he spotted two heads nailed to a post and stared at "these two bloody trophies" in disbelief. Returning to the town, he received disdainful looks from pedestrians on the street. Later, sitting on a bench outside a tobacco shop, Ottoman soldiers approached him and inquired whether he was German or Italian. When he replied he was French, the mood lightened "as if I had pronounced a magic word," Yriarte claimed.⁸

As he moved across the region over the next few months, violence and massacres became a familiar sight. Militants on both sides were decapitating corpses and taking heads, noses, and ears as trophies. "These are the horrendous procedures that have given such a ferocious character to the

struggle,” he wrote. “The fact however is not particular to this region. We have experienced it in our African wars. In all countries of Islam, the combatants act in such a manner.” The human costs of the war were not only measurable on the battlefield. In Dvor, on the Croatian-Bosnia border, Yriarte witnessed a crowd of five hundred Christian refugees attempting to cross the Una River into Habsburg territory with their cows, goats, and pigs in tow. “A vast camp without tents, shivering in the morning cold, seated or sleeping in the frozen grass, mixing with the animals that now made up all their belongings,” he recorded. “It is a lamentable sight.” Ethnic conflict was fueling a massive humanitarian crisis as Christian Slavs fled their villages and sought refuge in neighboring Austria-Hungary. These details, Yriarte believed, were only a prelude to what was to come. “We are probably on the eve of a great political convulsion that threatens to encompass all of the Orient,” he prophesized.⁹

Yriarte’s account of the Balkan conflict was one among a growing number of publications chronicling the suffering and atrocities taking place in the Ottoman Empire. The Swiss journalist Auguste Meylan was appalled by what he found in Dubrovnik, where he encountered a camp of white tents in a valley of olive groves containing Herzegovinian refugees. He described dirty, half-dressed children playing among the rocks and families huddled under improvised shelters. Without exception, the refugees were women, children, and the elderly. “As for the men, they are with the band [of insurgents], disputing the Turks for possession of their country of stones.”¹⁰ The situation was worse closer to the Bosnian-Croatian border, according to the American journalist William James Stillman. Arriving at Bosansko Grahovo in late 1875, Stillman encountered refugee camps inhabited by women “in such a state of rags and misery that they would not have been allowed to beg in the streets of London.”¹¹ People begged for food and alms in the local church. In the improvised field hospital, wounded resistance fighters limped about and lay sprawled across stretchers made of twigs and linen. Passing the yard, Stillman was greeted by a wounded fighter who had lost half his foot to a stray bullet. “[He] was bargaining for a gun to go back to the war with. He showed me laughingly the pieces of bone he had taken from his foot, and which he kept carefully wrapped in paper, as if something talismanic were in them.”¹² The British archaeologist Arthur Evans, who had been traveling through the Balkans with his brother as the war broke, had few reservations in doling out blame for this humanitarian catastrophe. By his estimation, nearly 100,000 refugees had perished on Austro-Hungarian soil due to privation and disease. The Habsburg government had done little to support the flood of migrants displaced by the conflict. “In the interests of humanity, as well as of European peace . . . an armed occupation of Bosnia by civilized forces has become indispensable,” he insisted.¹³

For the time being, Evans' call for a humanitarian occupation was ignored while Habsburg aid to Balkan refugees remained embarrassingly insufficient. Independent charitable initiatives stepped in to fill the gap where they could. The British travel writer Paulina Irby left England in 1875 and headed to the Balkans to assist with the humanitarian relief effort on the Austrian frontier and would play a key role in organizing a relief fund in Britain. In her reports back home, Irby detailed the starving refugees without shelter, people dressed in rags, and families torn apart and scattered in different refugee camps along the Croatian border. While the native Croats and Slovenes received their "exiled brethren with a generous and beautiful hospitality," there was only so much they could do.¹⁴ International aid was needed, and fast. The feminist activist Millicent Garrett Fawcett could not understand how Europeans could be so apathetic to human suffering, nor could she accept that upon hearing of the barbaric treatment meted out by the Turks, the British public could "shut their eyes and close their hearts to the daily and horrible miseries" faced by Balkan Christians. These atrocities were not simply sporadic and uncontrolled instances of violence, she accused. They had been perpetrated by Muslims time and time again on Christian peoples. For Fawcett, the Balkan insurgents were fighting a just war against the abuse and mistreatment they had endured for centuries. "Their stubborn resistance, their dogged and uncrushed spirit under the worst oppression, ought to appeal strongly to the sympathy of the English people."¹⁵

In generating interest in the humanitarian initiative, Fawcett was clearly evoking the old image of the "terrible Turk" to mobilize support. Such appeals resonated with audiences. In 1876, an Eastern Question Association was formed in Britain to organize relief efforts, but it also assumed responsibility for investigating and publicizing Turkish misrule in the Balkans. Christian charitable organizations and spokespeople also took a leading role in these operations, mixing humanitarian and religious concerns in equal measure. Henry Richard, a Congregational minister and Welsh parliamentarian, condemned the Turkish atrocities with strong words, casting doubt on whether the Ottoman Empire had a place among the civilized nations of Europe. "The Ottoman Turks have been encamped for more than four centuries in Europe," Richard charged. "During that time they have been brought into contact with every form of European civilization; but they have remained so obstinately impervious to all the influences brought to bear upon them, that we are at last constrained to the conclusion that they have no capacity for civilization."¹⁶ The Anglican clergyman and theologian John Llewellyn Davies proudly observed that British Christians of all denominations were standing shoulder to shoulder in their support for Balkan Christians, revealing "our common humanity feels itself outraged."¹⁷ Yet beneath this humanitarian rhetoric always lay the implicit assumption of Islamic fanaticism and the

ingrained hatreds and moral failings it bred. “[The Turks] are always accustomed to consider [Christians] as of less value than dumb brutes, and generally a Turk will treat a dog with a tenderness as remarkable as his brutality towards Christians,” observed William James Stillman. “One can only say at heart he is a good fellow, and that his religion is to blame.”¹⁸ If people conjured the image of the “terrible Turk,” right behind this familiar stereotype lay the all too familiar denunciation of Islam, which perennially served to place the Turk beyond the pale of the civilized world.

As public opinion turned against the Ottoman government, critics showed little reservation in heaping calumny on the Turks and Islam by association. According to the Austrian geographer and historian Friedrich von Hellwald, the latest situation in the Balkans was proof that the benefits of Western civilization were “absolutely indigestible” for a Muslim people. The problem, as he saw it, was the “essential spirit” [*Geistesleben*] of Islamic civilization, which was incompatible with Western values at its core. Muslim society could not be expected to adapt to the currents of modern progress. Such optimism was “an absurdity which is now only sustained in the most excitable political fantasies,” Hellwald maintained. As he saw it, Slavic nationalism offered the only hope of affecting meaningful change in the region, “since in our century culture inexorably travels from West to East.”¹⁹ His colleague, Carl Grübler, was even more hostile in his attack. Sympathetic to Slav nationalism, Grübler professed that the “theocratic” Ottoman state could not undertake reform. It was “abnormal to its nature.”²⁰ Pushing this line of argument further, he insisted that Muslim society—because it was Muslim—would remain wracked by “physical and moral ruin.” The only hope of reversing this decay was Westernization, and this was wholly out of the question. “If the Turk accepts Western culture he must break with his entire past. . . . He must renounce his essential identity [*Volkstum*],” Grübler pronounced.²¹ As one Austrian newspaper frankly stated in 1879:

The entire Mahommedan Orient is permeated with an implacable decay. Every appearance indicates that the end is near, and that it would be a vain endeavor to try and rejuvenate these states. . . . They cannot be helped by any kind of method, or any help from outside.²²

Given the tenor of these criticisms, it was no wonder Sultan Abdülhamid sought out Vámbéry’s gilded pen. Having come to power in 1876 in the midst of what Europeans were now calling “the Eastern Crisis,” the new sultan in Istanbul inherited a state on the verge of collapse and vilified in the eyes of international opinion. Years of steady progress and goodwill had seemingly evaporated overnight, leaving the Ottoman government in a precarious situation. Worse still was the fact that the crisis had yet to be concluded. As the

situation deteriorated, the Balkan quagmire threatened to draw in the European powers, an outcome Abdülhamid sought to avoid at all costs. In order to do so, he would have to convince the powers of his ability to see through meaningful and lasting reforms in his empire. Taking into account the current moral outrage and Islamophobia evident among European publics, the prospect of doing so appeared dim.

BRITAIN, THE GREATEST MUSLIM POWER

While Abdülhamid was fretting over how to preserve his imperial dominion, Britain was coming to terms with its own imperial dilemmas. The 1857 Indian rebellion had left many British authorities rattled. Adding to the alarm, in 1865 the Baptist deacon Paul Bogle mobilized native resistance against British rule in Jamaica, spurring a series of riots that left British confidence severely shaken. The Governor, Edward John Eyre, ruthlessly suppressed the uprising, sentencing Bogle to death. The incident provoked a scandal. Eyre was called before a court in London to face charges of cruelty and murder in his handling of the revolt. While he escaped conviction, the case drew criticism from leading intellectuals of the day, including John Stuart Mill, Thomas Huxley, and Charles Darwin, all of whom protested the governor's draconian measures and flagrant violation of British rights. The affair incited a national debate on the British Empire, one which raised the thorny question of how to handle native populations and whether they could be integrated into imperial society. For stalwart imperialists committed to Britain's ventures overseas, the Jamaican revolt was one more indicator of the need for a more forceful imperial government that could control rowdy natives.²³

Concerns over the health and vitality of the empire were coupled with evolving understandings of the territories over which Britain ruled. By the mid-nineteenth century, the British Empire was a sprawling global enterprise. It comprised the profitable West Indian sugar islands and large swaths of North America held since the seventeenth century. Added to this was the more recently acquired Australian settler colony in the Pacific and the Indian subcontinent with an estimated 193 million native inhabitants, the majority Hindu and Muslim.²⁴ Britons were no strangers to empire. During the 1860s and 1870s, Anthony Trollope was only the latest writer to travel across "Greater Britain" and provide readers with a picture of the lands ruled by the Union Jack. His intent was not to entertain readers with exotic tales of the colonies but to educate his fellow countrymen on their empire and its achievements.²⁵ The settler colonies of the Atlantic and Pacific were "new hives" for "new swarms" of the Anglo-Saxon race, he claimed. "Great Britain should feel the greatest glory" knowing that its people had spread across

the globe, civilizing the wilderness and creating self-governing communities unparalleled in history.²⁶ Liberal politicians of the 1850s shared many of these sentiments, arguing that Britons abroad exemplified the spirit of independence and innovation that made Britain superior to other nations.²⁷ Like Trollope, they envisioned a network of bustling settler colonies united by core British values of self-sufficiency, industriousness, and liberty. It was essentially an image of empire composed of white colonists exemplifying the virtues of the Anglo-Saxon race. Yet even at the time Trollope wrote, this vision was being revised. A decade after Trollope's imperial wanderings, the historian and essayist Sir John Robert Seeley was inclined to present a wholly different picture of Britain's extensive imperial possessions. Reflecting on Britain's Indian empire and the large Muslim population it ruled over, Seeley contended that Britain was now "the greatest Mussulman power in the world."²⁸ Sheer demographics dictated that the British Empire was no longer one composed of white, patriotic settlers. "Our Indian Empire constitutes us statistically [as] the greatest modern Mohammedan Power," one journalist proclaimed. They were not wholly incorrect.²⁹ Although the idea of a Muslim empire was never the dominant way Britons viewed their global dominion, it was fast becoming one possible way of understanding the British imperial community among others as Britain's reach expanded across Asia.³⁰

This change said much about the political divisions that ran through the nation during the 1870s and 1880s, just as much as it did about the shifting geographic and strategic focus of British imperialism itself. During the early 1870s, Conservative politicians eager to capture the political spotlight consciously focused attention on the empire in an effort to win over voters to a nationalist platform. They attacked Liberal opponents, holding them responsible for years of stagnation and imperial decline. At the forefront of this assault was Benjamin Disraeli, the leading voice of the Conservative Party. Professing that Britain was "an imperial country" in 1872, he urged voters to consider who the real patriots were.³¹ Was Britain to be a competitive global power with a presence in Asia and the Middle East, he asked? Or would a "comfortable England, modeled and molded upon continental principles," retreat evermore into isolation and await its inevitable demise? Although unknown at the time, contained within this question was the prospect of a radically different vision of empire that encouraged Britons to look East and assume the mantle of a "Muslim power."

Scion of a Jewish immigrant family, Disraeli was hardly a model candidate to lead one of Britain's premier political parties in the 1870s. In his formative years, he had consciously fashioned himself as an "Oriental" and "Semite" despite fully assimilating into upper-class English society. Prior to entering political life, he enjoyed success as an Orientalist writer and novelist. His romantic bestsellers extolled the natural kinship between

Muslims and Jews and featured characters driven by desires of emancipating the Semitic peoples of the East. These stories were not without their touch of imperial messianism, often envisioning a future in which England would stand as the “supreme power” in the Orient.³² Yet given the Protestant political establishment in Britain, Disraeli’s Jewish origins and status as a relative outsider posed certain obstacles. Edward Stanley, the long-standing leader of the Conservative Party, certainly had his doubts, seeing Disraeli as an opportunist that lacked political conviction. “There is certainly a very prevalent impression that Disraeli has no well-defined opinions of his own,” he remarked in 1850.³³

Notwithstanding these reservations, Disraeli did understand the new political mood of the country at mid-century better than many of his Conservative cohorts. He appreciated the importance of Britain’s empire and its possibilities in nurturing a particular type of patriotic adhesion. Entering the House of Commons in 1837, he touted empire as a national project, declaring, “The English nation formed the empire. Ours is the imperial isle.”³⁴ This premise wove itself through his political outlooks, emphasizing the value of empire to Britain’s world pre-eminence and national identity. Due to its global entanglements, Britain was “really more an Asiatic power than a European [one],” in his opinion.³⁵ As Disraeli closed in on the political leadership of the party during the 1860s and 1870s, the empire remained a focal point of his platform. He supported greater control from the center over Britain’s imperial domains, alluding to the disastrous 1857 Indian rebellion as a lesson in the dangers of leaving imperial governance to careless officials and profiteering trading companies.³⁶ He also argued for more forceful support from the government on issues of imperial and strategic importance. In no uncertain terms, Disraeli endeavored to transform the Conservative Party into a national one, and a strong commitment to the empire was envisaged as the means of doing so. Speaking to party members in 1872 at the Crystal Palace in London, he unequivocally declared that Britain faced a stark choice: “England will have to decide between national and cosmopolitan principles.” Should they go with cosmopolitanism—and presumably Disraeli himself—the English would accept their calling as an “imperial country,” inspiring “the esteem of their countrymen” not to mention “the respect of the world.”³⁷ With these bold words, Disraeli rallied Conservatives to a vision of imperial nationhood. Two years later, with the Liberals divided, his brand of Conservative patriotism won over the electorate, propelling Disraeli to the coveted premiership.

The Conservative victory did nothing to temper the ire of political opponents, many of whom were repulsed by the new imperial rhetoric coming from 10 Downing Street. The term “imperialism” was hurled as an epithet against the government, equating it with the imperialism that propped up illiberal regimes on the European continent like the Habsburg Monarchy.

Opponents similarly assailed the hardline approach the government took toward India and Central Asia, arguing it would push the nation into war with Russia. The newly appointed Indian Viceroy, Robert Bulwer, Lord Lytton, appeared an ominous choice. A proponent of imperial consolidation, Lytton was perennially convinced of the threats posed to Britain's imperial status by foreign enemies and did not hesitate to recommend military force to guard against subversion. "We are not grown too poor to support our colonial empire," he warned in a draft speech, "but it is implied that we are grown too cowardly."³⁸ Weakness and indecision would spell the end of British predominance, he predicted. With Russia expanding across Central Asia and establishing a presence in Afghanistan, hawks like Lytton and Disraeli believed there was little room for compromise. In 1876, Disraeli procured some £4 million from parliament to purchase stocks in the Egyptian Suez Canal and ensure the waterway so vital to Indian trade did not fall into foreign hands.³⁹ At the same time, he desired to send a message to Russia "in language that cannot be mistaken" that Britain's commitment in India was firm and permanent.⁴⁰ To this end, in 1877 Lytton had Queen Victoria crowned Empress of India, presenting the House of Windsor as a replacement for the Mughal dynasty. In a lavish ceremony attended by a crowd of decorated imperial officials and Indian royalty in Delhi, Victoria expressed her hope via telegraph that the new throne offered to her would "unite in bonds of yet closer affection" Britain and the Raj.⁴¹ Liberals balked at such brazenness, protesting that the new royal title was leading the country down the path of absolutism. The popular magazine *The Fortnightly Review* captured these rising apprehensions when it questioned whether this effort to "add an ornament to the crown" would come at the expense of parliamentary rule and set a precedent for "future Emperors."⁴²

In hindsight, these and other objections proved alarmist. The formal declaration of Britain's Indian Empire did not compromise liberal rule at home. Yet the ensuing conflicts did expose the fact that the character and identity of the British nation were subjects of intense public debate during the 1870s. The Conservative idea of empire struck a chord that resonated with a section of the public seeking to make sense of Britain's status as a global world power. As the writer and journalist Edward Dicey explained, "The preservation of our dominion in the East is a matter of paramount importance to us, only less important, indeed, than the preservation of our national independence."⁴³ Like Disraeli, Dicey had an expansive view of England as an imperial nation. The empire was, he contended, the common inheritance of the English and, by extension, British people. It had been forged through collective efforts and through natural tendencies of migration and liberty. It was part of the English story. "Englishmen who live out their lives in the small islands, who give the best of their labor to the questions, conflicts, [and] issues of our insular

existence, are apt to forget what England is in truth," he claimed. Those who stood beside the notion of a "little England" tucked away in the corner of northwest Europe and content to attend to its own affairs did not understand the centrality of empire to Britain's national development. "If our Empire beyond the seas is to be undone of our own free will and consent, we shall have not only to rewrite our history, but to remodel our character as a nation," Dicey maintained. "To say that our Empire is 'bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh' is not to express an opinion, but to assert a fact."⁴⁴

Although proponents of empire expressed greater confidence in Britain's imperial status, they paradoxically exhibited a heightened sense of anxiety over the security of the empire itself. Statesmen and analysts were not reserved in illuminating the many threats they believed capable of eroding British influence and power abroad. Lytton's decision to anoint Victoria Empress of India had been a reaction to underlying fears of Russian expansion and the loyalty of Britain's Indian subjects. In 1872, William Wilson Hunter, an employee in the Indian Civil Service, alerted the government to the potential dangers brewing among the native populations. As he saw it, Muslim subjects were "eagerly drinking in the poisoned teachings of the Apostles of Insurrection." Painting a dire picture of conspiratorial societies bent on fomenting unrest and foreign powers eager to exploit native disaffection, Hunter insisted that a fanatical "Wahhabism" was at work in India, sowing the seeds for a massive insurrection that would shake British India at its core.⁴⁵ While the Indian Muslim reformer Sayyid Ahmad Khan curtly dismissed Hunter's warnings, asserting "he turns and twists everything connected with Mahomedism in support of his cherished theories," the India Office took the warning seriously.⁴⁶ Suspicious of native loyalties and prone to seeing foreign threats around every corner, the new imperial policymakers subscribed to a worldview that at once rationalized desires for imperial aggrandizement just as much as it cast doubts on the very sustainability of the imperial edifice.

These debates over national character and security provided the backdrop against which the Eastern Crisis unfolded as the Ottoman Empire teetered on the brink of collapse. With Disraeli's Conservative government in power for just over a year, the conflict was bound to become a test of his foreign and imperial policy. Some £200 million worth in Ottoman bonds had been sold on the London market following the Porte's declaration of insolvency earlier that year, giving Britain a major financial stake in the empire. Although Disraeli could imagine the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, it was not a prospect he welcomed. Not only did Britain stand to lose financially but the collapse of Ottoman power also threatened to open a power vacuum in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean that European rivals—most notably Russia—were eager to fill. British policymakers had long feared the day that Russia might

become a Mediterranean naval power, jeopardizing British access to the Suez Canal and, ultimately, its trade with India. Disraeli was determined to uphold Britain's economic and strategic interests in the region. Having only recently asserted his leadership over the Conservative Party and kept the ascendant Liberals at bay, he could not afford to have the government appear weak-willed in a moment of international crisis.⁴⁷ A decisive Eastern policy was needed and quickly.

His twin objectives of propping up the Ottoman Empire and thwarting Russian expansion were, however, soon complicated by events on the ground. With Ottoman forces tied down in Bosnia, Bulgarian nationalists saw an opportunity to bid for their own independence in the spring of 1876. Prodded by Russia, Bulgarian revolutionaries fomented uprisings throughout the Sredna Gora and surrounding areas, provoking Ottoman retaliation. By late May, British consular agents in Adrianople were sending back unconfirmed reports of Turkish regiments burning villages, looting homes, and slaughtering entire Christian communities. Estimates placed the death toll between 12,000 and 15,000 as diplomats and local missionaries began to condemn the "atrocities" perpetrated by Ottoman forces.⁴⁸ Whereas Disraeli wrote off these unverified accounts as "coffee-house babble" cooked up by Bulgarian nationalists, others cried "massacre."⁴⁹ Public opinion in Britain was turning sharply against the Ottomans. Churchmen and religious polemicists denouncing the "Turkish horrors" perpetrated against Balkan Christians became more adamant in their calls for intervention on humanitarian grounds.⁵⁰ It was not only undisciplined Ottoman forces that were held to account, but Islam itself was considered the culprit. In a scathing sermon delivered at the Howard Street Congregational Church in Sheffield, the reverend Joseph Ketley informed parishioners that "Mohamedanism demoralized and brutalized men," adding, "No Christian country which cared for its Christianity could uphold Mohamedan power or rule."⁵¹ In pamphlets and meetings held throughout the country, a simple message was reiterated of age-old religious antagonisms and mutual hatred, casting the conflict in stark terms of Christian versus Muslim.

Soon enough, Disraeli himself came under fire in the press. He was accused of being sympathetic to the Turks and "unfit to play the leading part as the spokesman of England" in the current crisis.⁵² "Mr. Disraeli's heart and mind are in Constantinople," chided the *Daily News*. "What is going on in Turkey interests him far more than what is going on in England."⁵³ More hostile attacks tied Disraeli's pro-Ottoman and "anti-Christian" policy to his Jewish identity as Islamophobic and anti-Turk sentiments blended into Judeophobic outpourings. Cartoons depicted "Ben Juju" as a conniving Semite indifferent to the suffering of European Christians. As the *Church Times* bluntly put it: "The Jew premier sympathizes with the Turks because they are neither Europeans nor Christians."⁵⁴

Liberals were quick to capitalize on the growing mood of discontent and use it as a battering ram against their political opponents. At a meeting called in Darlington that August, the local Member of Parliament, Edmund Backhouse, stunned his audience with accounts of the “wholesale slaughter” motivated by the “religious fanaticism” of the Turks, details that were “quite sufficient to arouse the strongest feelings of Englishmen,” in his opinion.⁵⁵ Leading the charge was the retired Liberal stalwart, William Ewart Gladstone. A devout Anglican who had successfully won over churchmen and radical non-conformists to the Liberal Party during the 1860s, Gladstone was a formidable opponent. While 1875 found Liberals divided over foreign policy objectives, Gladstone intended to exploit the rising moral outrage against the Turks to rally public opinion and unify his old party.⁵⁶ “Good ends can rarely be attained in politics without passion,” he wrote to a friend in the summer of 1876, “and there is now, the first time for a good many years, a virtuous passion.”⁵⁷ True to form, Gladstone lashed out at the Disraeli government in newspapers and public speeches, deriding its inaction and seeming indifference to Christian suffering. He went as far as casting aspersions on Disraeli’s personal character, remarking on the conspicuous “Judaic sympathies” that appeared to be guiding his Eastern policy.⁵⁸ In his defense of Balkan Christians, Gladstone heaped scorn on the “satanic orgies” and “unbounded savagery” of the Turks, “the one great anti-human specimen of humanity.” He urged the people of Britain to pressure the government to change course, and he let it be known that the Liberals, unlike the Conservatives, were in accord with the sentiments of a Christian nation that could condone neither “Mahomedan fanaticism” nor Turkish barbarism.⁵⁹ “Mohammedanism now appears, in the light of experience, to be radically incapable of establishing a good and tolerable government over civilized and Christian races,” he condemned, suggesting that the government’s pro-Ottoman policy was hopelessly flawed.⁶⁰ Unequivocally, Gladstone’s political language inspired a crusading rhetoric that galvanized the public and generated a marked anti-Turkish and anti-Islamic response.⁶¹ As one writer claimed, so-called “Turkophiles” in the government were out of touch with national public opinion. “Men will wonder that such a nation as ours, after reiterated proofs that the Mussulman power is essentially and ineradicably barbarous can have ever seemed to repress its sympathy with the [Christians] who aspire to free themselves from a cruel and degrading yoke.”⁶²

Conservatives and their supporters had little intention of ceding the political terrain to the evangelicalism and crusading rhetoric of their opponents. Not only were such inflammatory comments inaccurate but they were politically dangerous, they argued. “For mercy’s sake let these gentlemen be quiet and restrain their feelings,” urged one anonymous writer in the pages of the *Morning Post*. “Remember, if Turkey is the great head of the Mohammedan

world, England is also a very great Mohammedan Power; in other words, a very great number of English subjects are followers of Mahomet.”⁶³ Edward Sullivan, a former Liberal MP who rejected Gladstone’s deceptive humanitarianism and warmongering, concurred. Convinced that military action against the Ottomans—the world’s predominant Muslim power—would inflame Muslim public opinion across the globe, he spelled out his frank assessment of the situation in an open letter to the press. “Next to Turkey we are the largest Mussulman Power in the world,” he contended. “We have 75 million Mussulman subjects. In case of a religious war, we must be prepared for another outbreak in India.”⁶⁴ Imperial officialdom was hardly ignorant of these concerns. In the midst of Gladstone’s anti-Ottoman politicking, Lord Lytton expressed his own anxieties over what such a turn in political opinion could spell for Britain’s Indian possession. Having mused over the various reports and findings suggesting there was little love for British rule among its Muslim subjects, Lytton believed it imperative to tread lightly when it came to the Eastern Crisis. Should Britain go to war with the Ottomans, he candidly admitted to Queen Victoria, Muslim loyalty would be “rudely shaken” in Asia, potentially destabilizing the entire empire on a scale reminiscent of 1857.⁶⁵ Lytton certainly saw the merit in promoting a more imperial vision of Britain and was not hesitant to espouse the rhetoric of Muslim imperium for the ends of imperial security and stability. “There is no getting over the fact,” he wrote confidently in 1877, “that the British Empire is a Mohamedan power.”⁶⁶

Herein lay a counter-narrative to the Turkophobia and evangelicalism of clerics and Liberals: maintaining cordial relations with the Ottoman Empire was imperative to the security of the empire and Britain’s global interests. In contrast to the image of “Christian” Britain defended by Gladstone and his followers, Conservatives projected the idea of a British imperial community or, more appropriately, the concept of Britain as a “Muslim power” with a duty to act as such. While the government would “never allow the policy of this country to be dictated by Calcutta,” as James Lowther told a gathering at the Tynemouth Conservative Association in early 1877, it had to take into consideration that “this country is the largest Mohammedan Power.” Such a position meant ensuring that the government stood above narrowly driven confessional politics and supported the Ottomans, Britain’s natural ally.⁶⁷ “If one thing more than another seems to be stamped in red letters on the map of the world it is this, that, as a great Mohammedan Power, we are naturally the ally of the Sultan,” reported the *Morning Post*. Under the circumstances, maintaining “a brother and a friend” in Istanbul was paramount.⁶⁸

This posturing became even more imperative as tensions in the eastern Mediterranean began to forecast a possible Anglo-Russian military conflict in the spring of 1877. That April, Russia precipitously declared war on the

Ottoman Empire and sent troops into Romania with the intention of marching on Istanbul and delivering a death blow to the ailing Porte. Inspired by strategic designs on the Black Sea and Turkish Straits, Russian authorities had been arming Bulgarian Orthodox militias in the hopes of establishing a protectorate in the region. When the militias proved ineffective, Russia shifted gears and announced that it would directly intervene in the conflict under the pretext of protecting beleaguered Christian communities.⁶⁹ London saw through this ruse and was not about to tolerate Russian domination at the Straits. Disraeli had never intended to fight a war for the Ottomans, but with the Liberals hounding him at home and Russia poised to take Istanbul, it helped to have a message that could communicate complex geo-strategic interests in simplified terms and rationalize military intervention if necessary. The idiom of Muslim imperium suited these ends. When Britain threatened a military response, Russia scoffed and attempted to play confessional politics off against the British government. If Disraeli opposed Russian operations in the Balkans it was only by virtue of "proclaiming that England is the foremost Mussulman Power in the world, and that she consequently wishes the maintenance of Turkish domination over the Christians," Russian officials accused in a public memo.⁷⁰ Such pronouncements were designed to strike a sensitive chord at home among evangelical Liberals and force a British retreat, but Disraeli remained resolute to the end.

All said, the Eastern Crisis did not metastasize into a major Anglo-Russian war. Brinksmanship gave way to diplomacy, averting military conflict by 1878. Nonetheless, the crisis did fuel the emergence of new political discourses as Conservatives and Liberals sparred off against one another in the mid-1870s. The heated debates between the two camps and the dynamics of party politics brought to the surface two contrasting ideas of Great Britain, which possessed implications for both domestic and imperial politics. Gladstonian Liberals mixed populist rhetoric with themes of evangelical moralism and Christian humanitarianism to criticize established political elites like Disraeli and Lytton, who were seen as out of touch with the national base.⁷¹ However, behind Gladstone's moral outrage always loomed more fundamental questions regarding British identity and interests. Gladstone remained mistrustful of what he called the "Turkish Party" in Britain and those who used India as an excuse for lapsed judgment. "[They] threaten us with the revolt of forty millions of men unless we are content to stand among the supporters of the most cruel and mischievous despotism upon earth," he demurred.⁷² Conservatives had placed imperial ambitions over national sentiment, suggesting that the country was indeed being "dictated by Calcutta." If Gladstone resented the Indian card played by Disraeli and his supporters, he was also skeptical of the general assumptions that underpinned such actions. "It is my firm conviction . . . that, as a general rule, enlargements of

the Empire are for us an evil fraught with serious, though possibly not with immediate dangers,” he claimed, rebuffing Conservatives. Blatant imperial adventurism would only compromise Britain’s standing in the world and hurt global commerce. “We already have our hands too full,” he declared.⁷³ Attention needed to be given to domestic issues of temperance, tax reform, and better administration. The “entanglements of empire” were nothing but distractions.

Conservatives assumed a defensive crouch as they deflected these barbed criticisms. They were compelled to explain their pro-Ottoman leanings and great power politics while also presenting themselves as patriots receptive to national interests. The concept of Britain as a “great Muslim power” was a workable solution and evolved over the three years of the crisis. It corresponded with an imperial vision of Britain held by Conservative ideologues, but it also furnished Conservatives with a platform on which to validate claims of patriotism and servicing Britain’s global empire. The poles of nation and empire were never mutually exclusive. However, they did come to shape rival political identities in the years ahead and gave greater definition to an idea of a British Muslim imperium in the public imagination.

In the upcoming general election scheduled for 1880, Liberals aspired to claim the premiership and led a series of mass-election campaigns aimed at uniting supporters. With his typical flair for fiery rhetoric and moving oratory, Gladstone vehemently attacked the Conservatives on a broad range of national issues. Liberals dug in when it came to the recent Eastern Crisis, further exposing the partisan elements that were coming to inform Britain’s imperial identity and, by proxy, the “Muslim” issue. At the annual dinner of the Liberal Association in Oxford held that January, the statesman William Harcourt took the government to task. “The Prime Minister has told us that England is a great Mohammedan Power, and the Government organ—the *Daily Telegraph*—will tell you we are the patrons and protector of Islam,” he snickered. “What a farce the whole thing is!”⁷⁴ For their part, Conservatives rallied to the defense of their policies, fashioning themselves as imperial patriots with the foresight to lead a world power. Conservatives were the true defenders of the queen’s government and empire, reminded the diplomat Sir Henry Drummond Wolff at a political banquet hosted in 1879. “England [is] not only a great European Power, but also a great Asiatic Power—not only a Christian, but a Mussulman Power.” It was, Wolff declared, important to fend off attacks by those who sought to “imperil Imperial interests” for the sake of party politics.⁷⁵ In their campaign speeches and writings, Conservatives lashed out at the “peace-loving and Christian liberals” who, contradictorily, gave themselves over to the most rabid war mongering and Islamophobia.⁷⁶ They rejected Gladstonian liberalism and committed themselves to a principled defense of empire, upholding the message that Britain, due to its

imperial entanglements, was indeed a “great Mussulman power” that could not afford to alienate its Muslim subjects.

**“FRANCE, AS WELL AS ENGLAND,
IS A MUSSULMAN POWER”**

The Eastern Crisis inaugurated a debate on Britain’s imperial orientation and identity, but it hardly settled it. The fact that the Liberals took the election in 1880 and forced Disraeli’s resignation might have signaled that change was in the air, yet it soon became apparent that the idea Britain might be a “Muslim power” in addition to a Christian commonwealth was here to stay. In opposition, Conservatives persisted in driving home their message and hounding their Liberal opponents. Moreover, as events took their course, it became evident to Gladstone and his cohorts that they had inherited an existing legacy that commanded attention. The entanglements of empire could not be placed on the back burner, as the Liberals discovered. No sooner had the Balkan situation quieted down than the subject of British imperial and foreign policy was once again placed squarely on the table. This time, however, the issue at hand was Egypt, a semiautonomous *eyalet* of the Ottoman Empire. Notwithstanding their attacks on Conservative imperial policymaking, once in office, Liberals found themselves dragged into another diplomatic quagmire that placed Britain’s international obligations front and center.

Since the 1860s, the Egyptian Khedive, Isma’il Pasha, had worked assiduously to present his government as a model of a forward-looking and modernizing Muslim regime. He had developed Egypt’s cotton industry and earmarked funds for the construction of brilliant urbanization projects that attracted European tourists and, more importantly, European financiers. He even created new political institutions designed to win over Egypt’s political class and signal to European backers that a more liberal Egypt was on the horizon.⁷⁷ These strategies had bolstered a new sense of dynastic patriotism among certain elite circles in the country, but modernization was not without its problems. While it benefited the cities and investors, the impoverished mass of Arab peasants—the *fellahin*—bore the social and financial burden of these changes. It did not help that the ruling dynasty and court retained a particular “Ottoman” quality in its culture and social life, ascribing a “foreign” character to the government that proved difficult to shake.⁷⁸ While intellectuals encouraged Isma’il to cultivate an image as a sincere Muslim and Egyptian patriot, his policies often highlighted the growing inequalities between the ruling class of imperial elites and the general population of Arabic-speaking workers and peasants. Adding to these tensions, the state was confronting a precarious financial situation. With the decline of international

cotton markets in the 1870s, Isma'il found himself strapped for cash. Unable to pay back the European loans that had financed his modernization projects, Egypt faced the very real prospect of bankruptcy, an outcome that European creditors refused to accept. In 1876, therefore, France and Britain were called in to manage the state debt, effectively handing over the Egyptian economy to a joint Anglo-French Debt Commission. Responsible to European investors rather than the Egyptian people, the commissioners proceeded to impose austerity measures on the country that did nothing to ease mounting social pressures.

The imposition of European control marked a breaking point for many Egyptian political elites who had hoped Isma'il's reign would foreshadow a move toward greater autonomy and liberalization. By the late 1870s, a new generation of Egyptian intellectuals and lower-level bureaucrats had become emboldened to speak out openly against the corruption and authoritarianism of the Khedival state. Drawing together a diverse group of officials and military officers, a veritable "nationalist party" (*al-hizb al-watanī*) took shape that proposed a program of fiscal and political reform designed to save the floundering regime.⁷⁹ Certain journalists and Islamic thinkers added to the ferment, blending liberal and nationalist aspirations with new ideas of Islamic renewal and Muslim unity. As the situation evolved, street protests and mutinies erupted, making it appear the Egyptian state was on the verge of collapse. More distressing still was the fact that in 1881, the various pockets of opposition found a leader in the enthusiastic military officer Ahmed 'Urābī, an ambitious firebrand who had risen from the ranks of the *fellahin*.⁸⁰

Rallying protestors around the banner of "Egypt for the Egyptians," 'Urābī quickly took the lead in the patriotic movement and began pressing demands for a constitution on the unwilling Khedive. For all intended purposes, the Khedive was now hostage to 'Urābī and his allies. Popular anger directed at European residents in Cairo and Alexandria exploded, and in certain instances, erupted in violence. Crowds rioted in the streets as European residents fled. The urban revolts were only one of a growing number of problems facing the faltering government. In the Egyptian Sudan further to the south, guerrilla fighters in the Nuba Mountains began carrying out attacks on government outposts, butchering Egyptian soldiers and threatening an all-out war against the state. In contrast to 'Urābī's nationalist movement in the north, the Sudanese found their champion in Mohammed Ahmad, a local Sufi religious leader and self-styled prophet who declared himself *Mahdi* ("the Guided One") and began setting up an independent Islamic state. Ahmad's message of piety and resistance drew in local Sudanese chiefs and mobilized support on the ground. The relatively thin Egyptian administration stretched across the Sudan proved no match for the numerous peasants, slaves, and local strongmen who joined the Mahdi army, estimated to be 20,000 strong

by 1880.⁸¹ Opposed by the ‘Urābists in the cities and facing a revolutionary Islamic movement led by the Mahdists on the periphery, the Egyptian government imploded.

France and Britain watched in horror as the situation on the Nile rapidly deteriorated. Despite their vested financial interests in Egypt, both powers found their hands tied. The Debt Commission, headed by Europeans, had assumed control over state finances, but it had no authority to intervene in political matters. Legally, Egypt remained part of the Ottoman Empire, placing it under the jurisdiction of Sultan Abdülhamid. Although the sultan had little patience for ‘Urābī and his nationalist supporters, he was reluctant to use military force to quell the unrest. Still recovering from the aftershocks of the Eastern Crisis, Abdülhamid had no intention of handing the European powers a pretext to intervene in his affairs once again. Instead of military force, he opted for a lighter touch, hoping to diffuse the ‘Urābist revolt through negotiation. As talks stalled, however, the situation continued to disintegrate.⁸²

France and Britain were not blind to the delicate nature of the brewing Egyptian crisis at hand. Given the ineffectiveness of the Ottoman approach, the two governments were motivated to seek a resolution on their own. As the British government attempted to formulate a response to the ‘Urābist revolt, Conservatives resorted to a familiar line of argument, urging cooperation with the sultan and respect for Ottoman sovereignty. “We must be careful to remember that besides being a great European, we are also a great Mussulman Power as well,” Henry Chaplin told his cohorts assembled at the Junior Conservative Association in 1882. “[We] must not do anything by which the feeling of the Mussulman world would permanently be estranged from us.”⁸³ Political dailies reiterated the importance of prudence when it came to tackling the Egyptian question, warning that military intervention on the Nile could encourage Muslim revolt further afield. “Great Britain as an Empire is a great Mussulman Power. The Empress of India rules over more Mahometans than the Sultan of Turkey,” one journalist warned. “It is not enough to respect their religious rights; their susceptibilities, their prejudices even must be conciliated as well.”⁸⁴ Even certain Liberals evinced a chary attitude, fearing that French pressure might steer Britain toward an intractable situation vis-à-vis Cairo and Istanbul. A “resolute and independent British policy” was needed to safeguard Britain’s interests in Egypt and at the Suez Canal, Sir Henry Hoare reasoned, and this required coming to a solution in conjunction with Abdülhamid rather than pushing a resolution on the Khedive. “Considering that we are a great Mussulman Power with 40,000,000 Mohammedan subjects in India,” Hoare contended, an aggressive stance was hardly desirable.⁸⁵

As the Egyptian crisis progressed, appeals to Britain’s status as a Muslim power found a broader resonance. “It must not be forgotten that we are a great Mohammedan Power, and it is in that character that we should interpose,” the

Morning Post advised its wide readership.⁸⁶ ‘Urābī himself played upon these fears, hoping to discourage foreign military intervention against the nationalists. “Use will be made of the religious zeal of Mohammedans to preach holy war in Syria, in Arabia, and in India. . . . The first blow struck at Egypt by England or her allies will cause blood to flow throughout the breadth of Asia and of Africa.”⁸⁷

Gladstone was in no mood to tolerate such grandstanding. Himself a bondholder in the Suez Company, the aged prime minister was not about to lose his own investment, let alone sacrifice British “prestige” on the international stage for the sake of vague threats. When negotiations faltered, Gladstone showed little reluctance to take decisive action. That summer, British gunboats were dispatched to the eastern Mediterranean. After shelling Alexandria, British forces occupied the city and crushed the patriotic resistance with blatant disregard for Ottoman sovereignty.⁸⁸ Yet even this forceful gesture found its rationale in the language of Muslim imperium. As “a great Mussulman Power,” Britain had an obligation to defend the Khedive and safeguard Islamic sovereigns from usurpers like ‘Urābī, Francis Charteris explained before the House of Commons.⁸⁹ This apologia for the British occupation could only ring hollow in Istanbul where Sultan Abdülhamid confronted the prospect of losing yet another piece of his empire to European meddling.

Muslim opinion was not the only backlash Britain had to worry about. As British occupation forces dug in, France watched from the sidelines, apoplectic. Since the Napoleonic period, France had harbored dreams of carving out its own colony on the Nile River. Even as French military prowess declined over the 1820s and 1830s, it had never lost sight of Egypt. Policymakers committed resources to building schools and cultural institutions in the province. If France could not dominate the country militarily, it could seek to win over Egyptian elites with the persuasive power of French “civilization.”⁹⁰ For the most part, this style of cultural imperialism worked, strengthening the *présence française* in the eastern Mediterranean. Cultural ties were complemented by diplomatic and financial support for the reigning dynasty, allowing France to wield power through informal influences and consolidate what the journalist and travel writer Gabriel Charmes called a “moral colony” on the Nile.⁹¹ France was content to play the long game in Egypt, believing it could ply its influence surreptitiously to political and financial advantage. British intervention put short shrift to this plan. France was willing to tolerate a compliant Khedival state under a weak Ottoman sultan. What it could not tolerate was an Egypt under the control of its foremost imperial rival.

France was inclined to keep a close eye on events in the Mediterranean, and for good reason. Since taking Algeria in 1830, politicians had increasingly come to boast that the Mediterranean Sea was nothing more than a “French lake.” In 1881, Paris backed up this imperial braggadocio with

action, extending its control over neighboring Ottoman Tunisia and projecting its power further into Muslim North Africa. The Egyptian crisis broke just as French forces were wrapping up their negotiations at the Bardo Palace in Tunis. Publicists hailed France's new acquisition as a victory for its imperial policy and enumerated the many ways a Tunisian protectorate would enhance French security and prestige throughout Muslim Africa, but the hard work of imperial consolidation still lay ahead.⁹² The military had yet to "pacify" the Tunisian Regency. Local resistance fighters bogged down French forces in the east, compelling the new Resident General Paul Cambon to resort to heavy-handed measures that painfully exposed the fiction of French goodwill toward Tunisia and its ruling dynasty. Events in Egypt only threatened to further destabilize the region. The Algerian government was keenly aware that unrest in Egypt could easily spread like wildfire across Muslim North Africa.⁹³ All variety of rumor and false news was trickling into the French colonies. Tunis was a "bastion of intrigues par excellence," as one commander on the ground claimed.⁹⁴ "[The Tunisians] follow the events [in Egypt] with an interest that should not escape our attention."⁹⁵ A quick resolution to the Egyptian crisis was imperative.

As events unfolded in 1882, the French government made a firm stand not to abandon its Egyptian policy to Britain. The official government journal, *République Française*, spelled out its position clearly that year as the situation broke. "France, as well as England, is a Mussulman Power," it asserted. "It is not just at the moment in which Islam is in a state of dangerous effervescence that we should contemplate with an indifferent eye an undertaking which would only encourage Mussulman fanaticism."⁹⁶ For French authorities, the Urābist and Mahdist uprisings were more than just a hazard to French financial interests and influence abroad. They were an existential threat. The "dangerous effervescence" and "fanaticism" these events were unleashing portended a radical tide with the potential to sweep across the entire region from Morocco to the Middle East. French Algeria and the occupation forces in Tunisia were vulnerable. As a "Muslim power," France could not afford to let events take their own course, officials argued. "France is being attacked wherever her prestige is open to the attempts of the votaries of Islam, in Egypt as in Syria, in Tunis as in Algeria," stated the Premier, Léon Gambetta. "If tomorrow these self-same agitators acquire the conviction that France will remain passive in the presence of these attacks against her in the East . . . the consequences will immediately be felt in Tunis."⁹⁷

In outlining France's interests in Egypt and warming opinion to a potential military intervention along the Nile, French politicians were taking a page from the British playbook. Through the din of international politics, however, one voice in particular struck a resonant note. That summer, Gabriel Charmes published an op-ed piece in the leading French daily *Journal des Débats* in

which he insisted the crisis in the East was greater than questions of finances or French prestige. Since the late eighteenth century, Egypt had been a center of French ideas and cultural influence, securing the nation's presence in the Orient. Indifference to the current situation would signal the defeat of France's long-term eastern policy and jeopardize its standing in the Mediterranean, an outcome France could not abide. "Whether we regret or celebrate it, France is a great Muslim power and the only Arab power of Europe after Turkey," Charmes stated candidly.

Since the day that we went down and installed ourselves on the coast of Algeria, we ceased to be exclusively a Christian country. We became in addition an Islamic nation and it is no longer permitted to us to be indifferent to the revolutions of Islam.

Inactivity would only embolden Islamic radicalism and plunge the region into uncertainty, imperiling French interests.⁹⁸ In carving out its North African empire, France had tied its fate to the Muslim world. Apathy would not only be disreputable. It would be fatal, Charmes warned.

The Eastern Crisis of the 1870s had prompted British politicians to take up the rhetoric of Muslim imperium. The Egyptian crisis of the following decade did the same for France. From the columns of newspapers to speeches delivered in the National Assembly, writers and statesmen increasingly defended French prerogative in Egypt with appeals to the nation's status as a "Muslim power," often adopting many of the same rationales and motivations outlined by their British counterparts.⁹⁹ Even with the Urābist revolt suppressed, British and French newspapers turned their attention to the ongoing Mahdist movement spreading through the Sudan. Over the coming year, frantic reports heightened the sense of existential threat associated with the rebellion as Mahdist forces secured their hold over the area and cobbled together a radical Islamic Caliphate. According to a correspondent writing for the *Journal des Débats* in 1884, the Mahdi threatened the very principles of Islamic sovereignty and authority. The rebellion was a "revolutionary Islamic movement which could spread and become dangerous" for the entire Muslim world.¹⁰⁰ "[The uprising] threatens not only the throne of the Khedive but the security of every Mussulman Power," one British newspaper reported, "and what power rules over so vast a Mahomedan population as England?"¹⁰¹ A firm response in Egypt was essential lest the European powers find themselves discredited in the eyes of Muslims and confronted by a wave of religiously inspired anti-colonial violence. "Peace-at-any-price" was not an option, the British Conservative Edward Murray Ind contended in 1885.

"What step could be taken more fatal to civilization, and to the prestige of the largest Mohammedan power in the world? No, there must be no

retirement until our work is done; until we have . . . “smashed up the Mahdi” . . . for the sake of securing the permanent safety of Egypt.¹⁰²

French and British publicists appeared to be on the same page regarding the nature of the threat and the necessity of action. Government officials, however, were not. Relations between London and Paris remained fraught with mutual suspicion as each side wrangled over the Egyptian spoils. Having led the bombardment and occupied the country, Britain held the advantage. Yet as it consolidated its power over Egypt to the exclusion of France, French critics responded with accusations of insincerity and duplicity. According to the political journalist Jean Lemoigne, Britain’s stated desire to uphold the integrity of the Ottoman Empire as a “Muslim power” was a charade. “By the integrity of the Ottoman Empire they mean the substitution of English for Mussulman domination. It is on this account that they style themselves the greatest Mussulman Power in the world.”¹⁰³ When Britain sought to formalize its control in Egypt through an international agreement in 1887, the French foreign minister Émile Flourens accused Britain of trying to cut off Egyptian Muslims from their rightful sovereign, the Ottoman sultan. As the leading Muslim power in the Mediterranean, France could not permit such an egregious affront to Islam. *The Times* scoffed at this posturing.

France, in virtue of her Algerian colony, is to pose before the Mussulman world as a Mussulman Power, while England, whose Indian Empire numbers more Mussulmans than the whole population of France, is to pass as a Power in whom the same Mussulman world may see nothing Mussulman.¹⁰⁴

French efforts to subvert British dominance in Egypt set off a competition within diplomatic circles to lay claim to great Muslim power status, and for British commentators, it was not a contest the French could win. “It is practically impossible that France, even assuring that her most extravagant hopes of African conquest were fulfilled, could ever be the first Mussulman Power,” the *Glasgow Herald* boasted in 1892. “That position, not altogether an enviable one, belongs definitely to Great Britain.”¹⁰⁵

Undeterred, throughout the 1880s the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs channeled funds into local Arabic language newspapers in Egypt in an effort to maintain French influence in the country. Some 1,500 francs were provided annually to enlist Arab editors and publicists in the intensifying propaganda war. From the Tunisian protectorate, government authorities sought out journalists in Egypt willing to collaborate with the French and run newspapers that could speak for France abroad. They were, of course, careful to preserve the “independent” character of these papers so as not to discredit them.¹⁰⁶ The overall results were negligible. As Britain consolidated its hold over the Egyptian government, France was increasingly

relegated to the margins. It was especially galling to see the last remaining official organ of French opinion, the *Journal Égyptien*, cease publication in 1899, “a direct consequence of the death of French influence in the country,” as the Caireen newspaper *Al-Muqattam* remarked.¹⁰⁷ By this point, French colonial officials conceded that most Egyptian papers were under the sway of the British administration, their columns filled with articles “clearly hostile to France.”¹⁰⁸ With limited options, the Tunisian government cut loose its Egyptian contacts and tightened its borders to prevent pesky Egyptian newspapers from entering the protectorate. Stricter controls were placed on Arabic journals as France grudgingly came to accept they had lost Egypt.¹⁰⁹

Yet the propaganda war had never been entirely about Egypt to begin with. French-sponsored newspapers were distributed in Syria and the Near East, and they were especially allowed to circulate within France’s North African territories. The Tunisian administration had been clever enough to realize the value of a friendly Arabic press in the region. In paying Egyptian journalists to spread stories of France’s tolerance for Islam and goodwill toward its Muslim subjects, it was expected these newspapers would be distributed in Tunisia and Algeria. Proclamations from French colonial officials were one thing, but Arabic newspaper articles from abroad carrying news of France’s achievements in Africa lent an air of authenticity to these claims, or so colonial officials presumed.¹¹⁰ “In the Muslim world, people have a favorable impression of our work’s progress,” Paul Cambon vaunted. “They compare our administrative procedures to those of the English in Egypt and the comparison is to our advantage.”¹¹¹

If French officials expressed optimism that their colonial policies might curry favor with Muslims the world over, it was essential to maintain this positive image. Unfortunately, this proved difficult. Algeria, with its colonial government and vocal settler population, was a sticking point in this upbeat narrative. The administration evinced a near-pathological suspicion of Islam, while reports of the abuses meted out on North African natives by the European settler population were widely circulated. Algerian Muslims were subject to government surveillance, unequal taxes, and special punitive measures laid out under the *Indigénat*, a special legal code applied explicitly to natives. France’s supposed goodwill toward Muslims could only ring hollow as long as the realities of colonial rule and exploitation evident in Algeria were plain for anyone to see, a fact that French metropolitan opinion was slowly beginning to grasp. Algeria was an embarrassment, the economist and colonial analyst Pierre Paul Leroy-Beaulieu asserted in 1884. “We have given ourselves over . . . to a retrograde mentality and delivered ourselves to a reaction which is incompatible with the general character of modern civilization.”¹¹² As talk of colonial reform began to germinate in Paris, the contrasts between

France's imagined status as a "Muslim power" and the actualities of colonial rule became manifest.

Goaded by these criticisms, in 1891 the senate authorized an official investigation into the Algerian administration in response to charges of financial and bureaucratic inefficiency. Jules Ferry, a chief spokesman of the republican empire and the "civilizing mission" during the 1880s, was selected to head the commission. Using his position to drill home the necessities of a sound colonial policy, Ferry gathered statistical and documentary evidence on topics from budgetary concerns to the native policies overseen by the colonial government. The Ferry Report of 1891 was a damning critique of the Algerian administration's "civilizing" influence on the colony. It highlighted the unequal tax system imposed on natives, the poor state of infrastructure and education, and the egregious inequalities that existed between European settlers and Muslims. With national dailies like *Le Temps* publishing the details of the report in their columns, public opinion turned sharply against the Algerian settler regime. Over the coming year, the National Assembly was forced to take up the issue, eliciting calls for reform and further investigations.¹¹³ The politician Émile Combes, who participated in the senatorial inquest, was forced to agree with critics. The policy review clearly revealed that the colonizing work of France "had not taken sufficient account" of the Algerian natives, leaving them in a deplorable state.¹¹⁴

The shocking disclosures contained in the senatorial reports elicited deeper concerns with France's Muslim subjects and the dangers that failing to "civilize" them might entail. In his criticism of the regime before the National Assembly, the deputy Auguste Burdeau faulted the administration for neglecting Muslim education and Islam, a religion that was "the most formidable war machine ever ranged against Western civilization."¹¹⁵ In 1894, Combes addressed these anxieties, noting France had to exercise a greater "moral authority" on its subjects. Failing to take an active role in native education would only reinforce the dominance of traditional and conservative Islam throughout the country and perpetuate the cultural divide between Europeans and Muslims. Constructing schools for Algerian children would "satisfy the current desires of Muslims" and encourage them to abandon their "zawiyas and orthodox universities," he believed. What Combes and his colleagues anticipated was a more pronounced French presence in the cultural and social development of colonial subjects, and this would inevitably require a more robust policy toward North African Islam. "The possession of Algeria by our army made this country a second France, but also a Muslim France," Combes concluded. "Our protectorate in Tunisia confirms and expands this new character of our domination. We are by necessity a Muslim power. . . . The cause of Islam is in part our cause."¹¹⁶

The debates of the early 1890s opened a space for the discussion of France's colonial policies and status as an alleged "Muslim power." They also provoked questions on the nature of colonial reform and especially the plight of France's colonial subjects. For the retired colonial military official, Ludovic de Polignac, these issues were closely linked. Polignac had spent his career in Algeria nourishing himself on dreams of forging an African empire that would leave France in control of the Mediterranean region. The advance of Britain into Egypt and the Sudan after 1882 undermined this ambition, leaving Polignac to worry over French security in the region. The potential for enemies to exploit native discontent in the colonies was a vulnerability, one that Polignac believed would only be resolved by guaranteeing "home rule" to the Arabs. "We shouldn't wait for our misguided ways at present to transform Arab Algeria into a new Ireland," he remarked in 1893. Yet more pointedly, Polignac's vision of empire rested upon what he believed was France's natural and historic relationship with the Muslim world. "There can be no doubt about it," he insisted. "Our natural penchant is toward Islam. The French are the true Muslims."¹¹⁷

In the past, politicians and colonial ideologues had referred to France as a "friend of Islam" or a supporter of "Arab nationality." Yet with the entrance of France into Tunisia and the rhetoric surrounding the Egyptian crisis, French perceptions of their empire and even their own society underwent a change. "We are . . . a Muslim nation," wrote the philosopher Pierre Laffitte in 1882.¹¹⁸ As France expanded across North Africa and became embroiled in the new imperial rivalries roiling the southern Mediterranean, officials and publicists were inclined to give more attention to France's imperial obligations, wondering whether a specific "Muslim policy" was needed to govern the nation's African territories. These considerations seamlessly blended with the rhetoric of Islamic sovereignty growing in diplomatic and political circles of the period. Taking stock of France's North African possessions in 1899, the colonial lobbyist and editor of the *Revue du Monde Musulman*, Alfred Le Châtelier, traced the sinews of French power stretching from Morocco to Tunisia and into Senegal and Chad. "France is an African Muslim power," he concluded.¹¹⁹ Documents like the Ferry Report were a harsh reminder of the inequalities and abuses that characterized the practice of empire in the nineteenth century. Yet they also brought into question the cultural identity of France's empire and, with it, the future course of French imperial and foreign relations. "One can say without exaggeration that the colonial future of France in Africa and perhaps, by consequence, its future continental power depends in large measure on how it will govern its Mohammedan subjects and the sentiments that it will inspire in them," claimed the journalist and geographer Gaston Dujarric in 1897.¹²⁰

Reconciling the disparities between imperial image and colonial rule was no easy task. Yet by the turn of the century, it was evident that France was

making a claim for itself as a “Muslim power” equal, if not superior, to Britain. In doing so, Islam and empire became interwoven in the popular imagination. “Mohammedanism has become a current question [and] is very much in favor among us,” Henry de Castries admitted in the early 1890s.¹²¹ This interest was precisely because of the perceived role France played in the Muslim world at the turn of the century. Like their British counterparts, French critics were coming to appreciate that ruling over Muslim populations gave the French Empire a certain character and identity that could not be ignored and which would come to occupy an important role in French empire-building projects.

As the twentieth century dawned, imperial publicists showed a greater resolve to project this new imperial identity to broader audiences, transforming rhetoric into reality. As luck would have it, in 1900 Paris was scheduled to host the upcoming Exposition Universelle, which was anticipated to draw millions of people to the French capital. In the past, world fairs had provided occasions for domesticating the empire and familiarizing audiences with the work being carried out in the distant imperial territories, and the Exposition Universelle was no different in this respect. Yet the image communicated in 1900 drew particular attention to France’s distinctly Muslim imperium, confirming its self-appointed status as a “Muslim power.”¹²² At the Tunisian Pavilion, visitors were permitted to tour an impressive reproduction of the exotic Sidi-Mahrez Mosque while a walk through the gardens of the Trocadero was intended to recreate the experience of strolling along the streets of Algiers with its stucco towers and Oriental facades. Walking through this colonial *mise-en-scène* with its replicas of mosques and North Africans plying their trades, observers were encouraged to see France as the Muslim power it claimed to be. Muslim North Africa had come to the heart of Europe, to the heart of the Muslim imperium. Staring up at the reconstructed mosques and pondering France’s role in the Orient, the writer Gaston de Wailly could not help but ask, “Are we not a great Muslim nation, given our vast African colonies?”¹²³ The question was purely rhetorical.

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Chapter Three

Among the Muslim Powers of the Earth

The imperial rivalry generated between France and Britain was one of the great dramas of the nineteenth century. From 1880 onward, newspapers were awash with the latest stories of the “scramble” for Africa and the Middle East while politicians in Paris and London sparred against one another in fiery public speeches. These details were part of the “new imperialism” that by 1914 would see the majority of Africa placed under direct European control and Western influence extended across much of the Near and Far East. Yet, in a more specific way, the geopolitical tensions between Britain and France also inaugurated a new style of imperial rhetoric and self-fashioning. With the age of high imperialism also came the age of Muslim imperium. By the turn of the century, to claim that Britain was a Muslim power had become a “hackneyed saying,” according to R. G. Corbet. It did not, however, prevent Corbet from putting credence in this assumption. By his calculations, over 107 million Muslims—a little less than half the world’s Muslim population—lived under British rule at the dawn of the twentieth century.¹ As European states expanded their reach across the globe, the tendency to see *dar al-Islam* as a preserve of Europe only increased. “If we count the English, Russian, French, Spanish, Austrian, Portuguese, Dutch, Bulgarian, Romanian, Serbian, and Greek Muslim subjects, we can see that the great majority of Muslims subsist today under the rule of Christian governments,” one critic writing for the *Revue de l’Islam* stated in 1896.²

During the late nineteenth century, the idea of being a “Muslim power” became woven into the very fabric of Europe’s imperial culture. It established a convenient script for imperialists desperate to justify their rule over large Muslim populations. That said, it was also a malleable script. If it accommodated the designs of European superpowers like France and Britain, it also had something to offer states located on the European periphery. Smaller powers

proved just as creative in refashioning themselves as “Oriental” empires. Statesmen began looking to history and past precedent, underscoring their own unique relationship with the East. The Orient may have been an antipodal concept in the minds of many Europeans, but it was also a proximate one as well.³ Parts of continental Europe just as much as the Arabian desert could be considered “the East” depending on where one stood, permitting certain groups to claim a nominally “Oriental” inheritance that transcended the neat mental geography of East and West.⁴ Such ambiguities played right into the hands of wishful colonialists.

That this supposed “special” relationship with the East was more often than not pure fantasy was beside the point. It furnished a means of legitimizing claims to territory and rule, inviting further articulations of Muslim imperium that rejected, if not actively challenged, French and British hegemony. On the European periphery, notions of being a “Muslim power” assumed different forms. The irony was that lying behind the acts of Oriental self-fashioning was a shared desire: to be considered modern states on par with the great powers of Europe. For countries with questionable “European” credentials, Oriental empire offered a path to equality. Yet obtaining this status necessitated a reimagining of nation and country. In the imperial politics of the late nineteenth century, policymakers did not hesitate to bolster supposed Oriental credentials in the hope of joining the ranks of Europe’s great powers. Muslim empire was the ticket into the European family of nations.

ARABIZING THE *PATRIA*

“Spain is one of the countries of Europe which we are most imperfectly acquainted, and yet its monuments are most various, and its history the most interesting of any.”⁵ So began George Downing Whittington’s Spanish travelogue published in 1808. An antiquarian and travel writer, Whittington had toured Iberia in the early nineteenth century. His account was somewhat of a novelty given that many British and French observers during the period felt they knew little about their immediate neighbor to the south. Whittington wrote, however, at a time when Iberia was attracting greater attention among Europeans. During the Napoleonic Wars, French and British forces occupied the peninsula, acquiring a more intimate knowledge of the region and effectively “re-discovering” Spain in the process. French officers marveled over the remnants of medieval Christianity they encountered and took notes on the many monasteries and ruins dotting the countryside. Less scrupulous officials pillaged churches and religious buildings, shipping their loot back to France in droves. As these cultural artifacts came to inform a certain romanticized idea of Spain that accented the country’s

heroic medieval past and premodern qualities, events across the Atlantic were also coming to attract European attention and influence views on the country.⁶ With Latin America succumbing to the revolutionary impulses of the period, Spain lost a significant portion of its New World empire to the liberation movements roiling the Western Hemisphere. At a moment when France and Britain were expanding their imperial reach, Spain's status as a global imperial power was receding, prompting critics to speculate on whether the halcyon days of Spanish supremacy were rapidly coming to an end.⁷

With a primarily agrarian economy, conservative monarchy, and strong Catholic tradition, Spain appeared a moribund relic in a century driven by industry and modern scientific progress.⁸ French and British observers might have found its medieval religious sensibilities and monasteries quaint, but these vestiges of past glories were hardly an assuring promise of a competitive and healthy nation. The retired military commander Auguste Gourlez de Lamotte, who fought in the Napoleonic Wars, had a discouraging opinion of the country. He could appreciate that nineteenth-century Europe was succumbing to all the "perfections of the century," be they economic, political, or social, but Spain appeared to be behind the trend. "Surrounded by the abyss of two vast oceans, cut off behind one of the highest mountain ranges in Europe, Spain alone remains isolated, immobile, impenetrable," he wrote in 1835.⁹ Nearly three decades later, Charles Yriarte found that little had changed. "That life, that movement, that agitation, that fervor which is evident in . . . Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux, London, Plymouth, or Manchester is entirely ignored down here."¹⁰

If tourists were lured to Spain by the country's evocative past and historic charm, they discovered other aspects of Spain's history as well. The traces of Al-Andalus, dating from the period of Moorish rule in Iberia between the eighth and fifteenth centuries, were among the ancient curiosities most visited by travelers. The palatial ruins of the Alhambra and the Great Mosque of Córdoba in the south, built by the former Muslim dynasties that had ruled medieval Iberia, became objects of fascination for a generation of romantics.¹¹ These very same attractions, however, also cast doubt on whether Spain was a truly "European" and Western country at all. Traveling through Iberia in the 1830s, the American author Washington Irving was conscious of "that dash of Arabian spice which pervades everything in Spain."¹² Visiting Granada and Andalusia a decade later, Théophile Gautier was likewise enchanted by the "Oriental" qualities and exoticism he found. His contemporary Marie-Henri Beyle, better known by the penname Stendhal, shared this opinion. "Blood, manners, language, way of living and fighting, everything in Spain is African," he remarked. "If the Spaniard were a Muslim he would be a complete African."¹³

These observations were not merely the musings of foreigners. Spaniards themselves were conflicted when it came to their historic identity and culture. For many, the country's Catholic heritage was considered a key—if not *the* essential—mark of Spain's national identity. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Catholicism and the Church had provided the singular force uniting the various Iberian kingdoms as they fought and expelled the Muslim “conquerors.” Yet as romantic fascination with Andalusia grew, Spanish scholars similarly began to look to Spain's Arabo-Moorish past to understand their own national history. During the 1820s, the historian José Antonio Conde wrote the first complete history of Al-Andalus, emphasizing the contributions made by Arab scholars to the preservation of classical knowledge and the sciences.¹⁴ As director of the Escorial Library in Madrid, Conde had access to its extensive collection of Arabic manuscripts, which provided the basis for his study. His seminal work linking medieval Al-Andalus with classical Arab civilization not only highlighted the achievements of Islamic culture but also traced the contours of a particularly Spanish Islamic inheritance tied to Iberia. Subsequent generations of so-called “Arabists” developed this line of thought over the coming decades, drawing attention to the Moorish influences on Spanish literature, music, and Provencal poetry. Collectively, they urged Spanish scholars to see Arab culture as a part of their own national heritage and patrimony.¹⁵

The nineteenth century saw the rise of Arabist historiography in Spain, with chairs in Arabic studies created in all the major Spanish universities by mid-century. These changes were broadly influenced by Enlightenment humanism and secular approaches to comparative religion popularized across Europe. More immediately, however, Spanish Arabists were responding to evolving ideas of romantic nationalism fashionable in the post-Napoleonic period. As French and German scholars began to conceptualize the nation as a community bound by shared cultural and historical factors, intellectuals across the continent busied themselves with charting ethnic genealogies and categorizing archaeological ruins in order to validate claims to nationhood. The model of the *Kulturnation* stressed cultural roots and continuity over time. Taking this to heart, elites engaged in an emotional search for the primeval traces and visible markers of the past that would reveal the particular qualities and characteristics of their own national communities. In turning to Iberia's past, Spanish romantics became sensitive to its mixed inheritance and exceptional cultural diversity. They rediscovered—or more accurately *reinvented*—an Oriental and Moorish past repressed by Spain's traditional Catholic patrimony and claimed it as their own.¹⁶ As an article in the *Semanario Pintoresco Español* discussing Hispano-Arabic monuments claimed in 1839, these monumental traces of the past “prove to the present generation the culture of their progenitors.”¹⁷ For foreigners, Spain's nominally “Oriental” character was a mark of difference that set it apart from the

modernizing currents reshaping European societies in the nineteenth century. Yet for Spaniards, recognition of an Arab past was part of the discovery of the nation, and hence integral to its path toward modern nationhood.

There was a certain dualism evident. Arabists may have found something unique in their country's Oriental heritage, but this discovery raised questions over whether and in what capacity Spain was a European nation. Many Spanish elites were sensitive to their perceived backwardness when compared with the rest of the continent and endeavored to project an image of their country as a modern European nation on par with France or Britain. Paradoxically enough, Spain's connection to Africa offered a solution to this problem. Aspirations of forging a new North African empire to compensate for Spain's imperial decline in the Americas were imagined as the means to achieving this desired equality. In his support for the Moroccan war in the late 1850s, the pro-imperial pamphleteer Ruperto de Aguirre made the connection explicit. "Yielding to the thrust of modern civilization and the progressive march of humanity," Spain was required to spread its beneficent influence across Africa. He urged,

It is necessary to prove to the world that the Iberian race . . . possesses the elements to rise to this noble mission and the level of other nations, taking an active role in the crusade that cultured peoples have waged against despotism and barbarism.

In this way, and only in this way, will Spain obtain a distinguished position among the European states.¹⁸

The war fever drummed up over the course of 1858 and 1859 reflected latent anxieties regarding Spain's questionable European identity. In the minds of Spanish imperialists, claims to modern European selfhood were to be found not on the continent but in Muslim Africa.¹⁹

The disappointment of the Moroccan expedition struck a blow to Spanish nationalists, but it did not dampen imperial aspirations. Spain continued to hold Ceuta and Melilla on the Moroccan coast, and these footholds were imagined as the seeds of a grander Maghrebin empire to come. As powers like France and Britain began to clamp down on Mediterranean Africa over the next two decades, Spanish elites expressed apprehensions over what these developments might hold for the future. Given the imperial appetites of the major European states, would there soon be any territory left to take? With the "scramble for Africa" fueling a new round of imperial rivalries, Spanish critics believed that action was critical. By the early 1880s, a growing number of colonial interest groups had formed with the intention of pressing for the cause of a Spanish Africa. José de Carvajal, who associated with the influential *Sociedad Española de Africanistas y Colonistas*, insisted, "We are going to develop in the public mind a lively desire and definitive resolve favorable

to our historic and ethnographic claims in the Moroccan question.”²⁰ His cohort, Joaquín Costa, similarly implored audiences attending the colonial society to “petition energetically” and make their desires for Spain’s imperial mission known to the government and people.²¹ For Costa, a well-regarded social theorist and leading figure in such circles, European expansion into Africa was of vital importance. “The problem of Africa is the problem *par excellence* of our century,” he contended. “To work in it is to contribute to the spread and strengthening of European civilization; it is to contribute to the formation of contemporary history.”²²

As in France and Britain, lobby groups allied with the academic establishment, drawing together anthropologists, geographers, ethnographers, and historians who were ready and willing to apply their specialized knowledge in the service of empire-building.²³ At a meeting of the Spanish Geography Society focused on the theme of trade and colonialism in 1883, Costa did not hide the agenda of the congress: “the Geographical Society has convened this congress . . . in the hope of inaugurating a new period of colonial renewal, more brilliant it is expected than the one that ended in the founding of the Spanish-American republics!”²⁴ Certain critics looked askance at this awkward marriage between colonial financial interests and the scientific community. For author and historian Saturnino Giménez Enrich, savants were pushing a colonial agenda that pandered to base nationalist sentiments. “True patriotism is precisely what is lacking in Spain,” he snapped. “It is supplanted by a ridiculous patriotism, a cowardly chauvinism, which is the most obvious symptom of decadence in a people.” Opinions on Africa were now monopolized by a “group of impassioned individuals,” he complained, adding: “If I cannot understand this [nationalist] spirit when it comes to patriotic and scientific men, I can understand it perfectly when the *patria* and science serve as mere pretexts for personal business interests and more or less blatant speculation.”²⁵ Giménez was not against Spanish expansion into North Africa in principle, but he did believe it ought to be done rationally and without bolstering a fierce right-wing nationalism that could undermine Spain’s long-term commercial goals or, worse, generate an international conflict.

It was not simply that colonial lobbying was reviving dreams of imperial grandeur or giving expression to pent-up nationalist desires. The message communicated by these so-called *Africanistas* was also novel and drew upon the groundwork laid by former Arabist scholars. “Spanish civilization recognizes Muslim civilization as its immediate antecedent,” Costa explained.²⁶ Such statements deviated from the old Catholic crusading rhetoric of the Cross versus Crescent. *Africanistas* emphasized the historical continuities between Spain and Africa, explaining them through new scholarly disciplines like anthropology and human geography that lent their claims an air of scientific validity. The leading geographer and colonial advocate Francisco

Coello reminded the public of the “numerous links” that united Spain and Morocco. Citing geographic and cultural affinities, Coello argued that in light of centuries of Arab rule in Iberia “there has always existed a great similarity and harmony between the destinies of the two people.”²⁷ Geographic proximity and a common history even placed Spain in a better position vis-à-vis France when it came to exercising influence on the Muslim peoples across the Mediterranean, some argued. These views became more pronounced as Spain came to see France as its principal imperial rival in the region. According to Gumersindo Azcarate, a philosopher and jurist who taught at the Free Institution of Education in Madrid, there was “no point of contact between French and African civilization.” Spain was the natural link. “Between the refined customs of France and the barbarism and primitive customs of Africa there are those of Spain, at once cultured and primitive.” This continuity included, oddly enough, “religious continuity” as well, in Azcarate’s opinion. “Between the fanatical Mohammedanism of Africa and French philosophical Catholicism there is Spanish Catholicism with its fatalist tendencies and its Oriental reflexes.”²⁸

Africanistas consciously repurposed the image of “Oriental” Spain and channeled it into a new imperial project centered on Muslim Africa. Costa famously extended the connection between Spaniards and the Arabo-Berber populations further, insisting there existed an “ethnic kinship” between the two peoples. Centuries of Celtic migrations across the Strait of Gibraltar coupled with the Arab invasions of the Middle Ages had resulted in racial mixing and a strong “instinctive affection” between Spaniards and North Africans. “The Moors and Spanish are brothers that belong to a common Mediterranean race,” Costa stated confidently.²⁹ Arguments rooted in ethnicity and race seamlessly papered over long-standing cultural and religious differences, suggesting that the conflicts between Christians and Muslims were neither ineradicable nor even as significant when compared with deeper ties forged by race and blood. In Costa’s view, the Moroccans were not “immune to all progress” and with the proper guidance could reverse their cultural decline. Naturally, this stewardship fell to Spain. In renewing its links with the Arab past, Spain would assist in reviving a decadent Muslim culture and nationality. “The Spanish nation must . . . found in Córdoba a new Rome and in Granada a new Athens, and it must do it independent of all political considerations,” Costa professed. Spanish efforts would produce a “virile, independent, and developed nation” on the opposite banks of the Mediterranean linked to Spain through “bonds of common interests just as much as bonds conditioned by vicinity and history.”³⁰

Not all *Africanistas* were willing to subscribe to Costa’s radical claims. While thinkers like Carvajal actively subscribed to the new imperial ethos, they refused to put stock in the racial theories proposed by Costa and flatly

rejected ideas of Islamic regeneration. The notion that “modern civilization” could accommodate Islam was an idealistic fantasy “contrary to the laws of history,” in Carvajal’s estimation. Assimilating European values was the only salvation for a degraded Muslim race, prescribing that Spain must serve as a “moral and social isthmus” connecting Europe with Africa.³¹ Despite these disagreements, the new generation of Spanish imperialists was united in its conviction that Spain had a moral mission to fulfill in North Africa and that this moral imperative derived from Spain’s long historical interaction with the Arab Muslim world. As Costa explained,

in the Middle Ages, Morocco accomplished its providential destiny of founding a civilization on our peninsula. In the modern period, Spain has the providential mission of promoting civilization in Morocco. This mission is a moral duty. Should Spain fail, it will be a monumental calamity.³²

Spanish imperialists were coming to speak the same language as their European neighbors, and it was precisely by framing Spanish ambitions in North Africa through the rhetoric of a “civilizing mission” that Spanish critics claimed equality with other continental powers. “There is a spirit which animates all European nations, [and] that is the civilizing spirit,” stated Martín Ferreiro y Peralta at a gathering of the Spanish Geographic Society in 1883. Spain, he admitted, had been slumbering in a “prolonged lethargy.” But, he continued, “[Spain] has now awakened in the light of modern civilization, and, like all enlightened nations . . . feels that vague, irresistible impulse which is dragging it into the modern age.”³³ In embracing this “civilizing spirit,” Spain was acquiring the modern, European attributes it coveted. “The duty of Europe is to civilize, modifying where it can, transforming where it is necessary,” Carvajal declared. “This is Spain in respect to Morocco.”³⁴

There was, of course, a certain irony in all this. In the ideological program outlined by the *Africanistas*, Spain’s role as a “civilizing” influence in North Africa stemmed from its self-proclaimed affinity with the Orient. Europeanizing Spain entailed a simultaneous process of “Orientalization” as proponents of African empire justified their aspirations through Spain’s Islamic past and “natural” links with the populations of the Maghreb. Whether sincere or opportunistic, Spanish publicists sought to shape a cultural identity for their empire that highlighted Iberian Arabism and Spain’s Islamic past. Here was the rhetoric of Muslim imperium espoused by rivals like France and Britain, albeit with a unique twist. An Arabized Spanish nation may have naturalized Spanish claims to North Africa, but it exposed and even perpetuated many underlying anxieties surrounding Spain’s modern, European credentials. Tensions between Spain’s European and Oriental qualities had been evident within Spanish nationalist circles since the early nineteenth century. By the 1880s, these tensions had

managed to come together within a peculiar colonial ideology that affirmed Spain's European identity through its unique connection to Arabo-Islamic civilization. It was not merely that Spaniards could choose to depict themselves as African or European depending on the context.³⁵ These two aspects remained intertwined in the Spanish colonial imagination, shaping a particular vision of the nation that emphasized Spain's cultural and ethnic hybridity.

The right-wing imperial nationalism fueled by the *Áfricanistas* was a potent force among a select group of individuals. It validated Spain's new imperial project in the Mediterranean while also reinvigorating a taste for empire. After all, Spain had been "the first colonizing nation," Gumersindo Azcarate reminded in 1910. An exponent of African expansion and a frequent writer for the *Revista España en África* published by the Centros Comerciales Hispano-Marroquíes, Azcarate exemplified the new type of colonial pundit in Spain at the dawn of the twentieth century. Spain's mission was "in agreement with its calling and its history," he maintained, signaling that the time had come for Spain to "return to being a colonizer," albeit under a new model and system.³⁶ These exhortations were, however, always a fantasy. If anything, Spain's foremost experience in the nineteenth century was of being *colonized* rather than colonizing. Efforts to modernize Spain's domestic economy and infrastructure were uneven, while many of the rail networks and industries that were constructed came at the behest of French and British financiers. Economically, Spain remained on the European periphery, its mines and railroads owned by foreign companies that either extracted natural resources for export markets or built infrastructure based upon their own financial interests. In its endeavor to modernize and compete with the major colonial empires of the day, Spain became reliant upon foreign aid and investment, subjecting the country to a process of "reverse colonization" at the hands of its European neighbors.³⁷

Writing for the magazine *África Español*—a journal committed to developing Spanish colonialism in North Africa—in 1913, the publicist Rafael Gasset brought attention to the evident disparities between ideology and reality. He acknowledged Spain's commitment to spreading "civilization" in Morocco and its intention to regenerate Muslim society. "But what can we say about our own soil . . .?" Gasset asked pointedly. "We need this same transformation in the metropolitan homeland which, due to misadventures in our history, finds itself in an inferior state when compared with other European nations." It was noble to sacrifice for the good of others, Gasset stated, "but the burden increases terribly, and we can only bear it if Spain, in a supreme effort, amasses all the energy it has applied to fulfilling its duty in Africa and fulfils it within our own Peninsula without the slightest delay."³⁸ If African colonization had promised a path into the modern era for Spain, it was by no means a direct route.

VIRIBUS UNITIS

While Spanish anthropologists and imperialists were busy imagining what a prospective African empire might resemble, Austro-Hungarian officials did not have the luxury of dealing in abstractions. The Eastern Crisis of the mid-1870s presented the Habsburg dynasty with a new set of challenges that demanded immediate attention. For starters, there was a severe refugee crisis to deal with. Administrators looked askance at the influx of Bosnians amassing along the Croatian border. It was not unthinkable that the nationalist movement, which had encouraged opposition to the Ottoman Empire, might seep across the border and infect the provinces on the Habsburg's southeast Slavic periphery. The government also had to consider the broader regional implications wrought by the conflict. The convulsions that roiled the Balkans in the 1870s made apparent many long-term security and geostrategic problems afflicting the Habsburg Empire vis-à-vis the Ottoman borderlands. With the major European powers set to meet in Berlin in 1878 and hammer out a settlement between the interested parties, Viennese politicians were eager to have their demands addressed. These issues were not only central to Habsburg strategic designs in southeast Europe but also touched upon the Habsburg imperial system, and with it the very identity of the empire itself.

For centuries, the Habsburg family had ruled over an impressive empire encompassing much of central Europe. From Vienna in the Austrian crown lands, the dynasty lay claim to the kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia, as well as an assemblage of small duchies and principalities around the fringes. The ruling dynasty was German, but the 36 million subjects it ruled over were a mix of Germans, Magyars, Italians, Ruthenians, Ashkenazi Jews, Czechs, Poles, and other Slavic nationalities. The royal geographer Friedrich Umlauf aptly described the empire as a "state of contrasts" in which "all Europe's major people [live] in significant numbers."³⁹ Because of this diversity, the Habsburg state was never conceptualized as a wholly "German" one. The guiding imperial polity had been simple and direct: *Einheit in der Vielheit* (Unity in Diversity).⁴⁰ Until the nineteenth century, this "diversity" was typically understood in religious rather than national terms. The imperial patent of religious tolerance decreed in 1781 had marked a milestone in the state's approach to confessional difference, extending public recognition to Protestants, Orthodox Christians, and Jews. In doing so, the state claimed the power to arbitrate between the empire's major religious groups in the name of public order. While the dynasty was German and Catholic, the state was theoretically neutral and committed to an integrative *Religionspolitik* that would, over the nineteenth century, come to influence nationality policies as well.⁴¹

This brand of imperial "cosmopolitanism" did have its limits, of course. The monarchy continued to publicly identify with the Catholic Church and

faith; German remained the administrative language of the empire well into the nineteenth century while government centralization drew resentment from local elites who were increasingly disposed to couch demands in overtly national terms. Arguments regarding the rights of the monarch and the powers of local diets proliferated, revealing tensions between the imperial center and the periphery. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Habsburg imperial model was being tested. In 1848, protests and revolutions erupted across the empire as Hungarians, Czechs, and Slavs contemptuous of Viennese centralism demanded greater autonomy and political freedoms, in some cases threatening secession if their demands were not met. That spring, the entire imperial edifice appeared on the verge of collapse as the weak-willed Emperor Ferdinand abdicated in favor of his young and inexperienced nephew, Franz Josef.

Only eighteen years of age, Franz Josef proceeded with caution as he settled into his new role. He and his ministers were acutely aware of the problems confronting the government and were especially mindful of the difficulty nationalism posed for a baroque and multinational empire. In his first declaration as emperor, Franz Josef promised to forge a “new bond” between his imperial subjects, “uniting all the territories and peoples of the Monarchy within a great political community.”⁴² From the start of his reign, therefore, Franz Josef emphasized the multinational composition of the empire and the need to overcome differences conditioned by nationality, race, and religion. Throughout his life, he remained suspicious of political nationalism and the conflicts it bred. Counseling his nephew in 1903, he reminded him that the House of Habsburg-Lorraine must “offer the most tenacious resistance against such tendencies.”⁴³ The empire was conceptualized as a *Völkerfamilie* (Family of Peoples) headed by a stern yet paternal sovereign. Over his long reign, Franz Josef assiduously cultivated just such an image. Parades, civic festivities, and public appearances by the emperor were all used to nurture dynastic loyalties and foster a shared attachment to monarch and state. This style of “imperial patriotism” was progressively woven into the political culture and spectacle of Habsburg imperialism. During the festivities celebrating Franz Josef’s sixtieth coronation anniversary in 1908, Vienna was dazzled by a parade in which participants donned historical costumes and portrayed the entire Habsburg dynastic lineage. Behind the emperors of old marched 8,000 representatives of “the people,” each wearing regional dress and wafting banners paying homage to the monarchy in their native tongue.⁴⁴ Whether subtle or garish, displays of imperial patriotism reinforced the “cosmopolitan” tradition central to Habsburg empire-building, promoting the idea of a multinational, multilingual, and multi-confessional society united through a common dynasty and state.

Officials encouraged the notion of the popular monarch standing above national differences, but they never allowed themselves to be lulled into a

false sense of security. Imperial statesmen continued to see nationalism as a problem that could erode dynastic authority if left unchecked. These anxieties only grew following a series of disastrous military defeats during the 1860s that left the government vulnerable to attacks. The government could stomach the loss of its northern Italian provinces to nationalists in 1860, but it was left devastated in the wake of the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Long-standing goals of Habsburg predominance across Germany evaporated virtually overnight as Prussia defeated Austrian forces in six weeks and announced the creation of a new North German Confederation excluding Austria. In this weakened state, the imperial government was obliged to cede ground to Hungarian autonomists the next year, bringing into existence a dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy with two distinct administrative halves. As many officials in Vienna feared, the bargain struck with the Hungarians opened the door for other nationalities to request comparable arrangements. To appease autonomists, Franz Josef made concessions on education, language policies, and representation at the local levels of government. Although these compromises promoted integration and outlined a potential model of imperial citizenship for a multiethnic society, critics grumbled. The empire was being handed over to the national minorities, they complained. Concessions on the part of the monarchy only served to embolden nationalists and imperil the state.⁴⁵ Visiting Austria and the Balkans in the 1870s, Auguste Meylan still found the “diversity” and “colorful multiplicity” for which the empire was known. Yet he was also doubtful how much longer this state of affairs could persist as Franz Josef placated national minorities and reformers. “Where is the old Austria, that powerful agglomeration of peoples that a policy of iron knew how to maintain under imperial domination?” he asked. As the appeal of nationalism grew and the Habsburgs’s international situation became ever more precarious, a sentiment of disquiet seized imperial officials. “There is fear and anxiety everywhere,” Meylan observed.⁴⁶

These various apprehensions loomed over Habsburg policymakers as they prepared for the Berlin peace negotiations in 1878. The immediate problems generated by the Eastern Crisis notwithstanding, Franz Josef intended to address the more systemic concerns troubling his empire. Territorial losses and military defeat needed to be compensated for if the Habsburg Empire was to remain a great European power. Franz Josef and his advisers had been entertaining expansion into neighboring Bosnia for some time. With Ottoman control in the region deteriorating, the moment appeared opportune.⁴⁷ Newly liberated Serbia was likely to claim Bosnia and its 800,000 Orthodox Serbs as its own, but Habsburg diplomats correctly wagered they had little to fear from the quarrelsome South Slavs. Assembling in Berlin, the major European powers dominated the congress, dividing up Balkan territories and handing the agreement to the Ottoman Empire as a veritable *fait accompli*. As desired,

Bosnia and Herzegovina were placed under Austro-Hungarian administration, with the Habsburgs permitted to maintain a military force and garrisons in the region under the pretext of a peacekeeping mission.⁴⁸ Theoretically, the Ottomans were still the sovereign authority in the provinces. However, maintaining peace and order between warring religious groups required the stewardship of a more “enlightened” power, European diplomats contended. The declaration made by the Dual Monarchy to the people of Bosnia as it prepared for the occupation communicated this exact sentiment: “[The troops of His Majesty the Kaiser] come not as enemies to occupy the land with force, but as a friend wishing to put an end to your misery.”⁴⁹

One only needed to read Austrian newspapers to grasp that these stated intentions might be suspect. The press was brimming with suggestions on how best to “colonize” Bosnia, with wishful emigrants attempting to stake early claims to the province.⁵⁰ As some 80,000 armed troops crossed from Dalmatia into Bosnia that June, the “peacekeeping” pretext quickly wore thin. Critics at home warned that imperial forces were “likely to meet considerable resistance” and anticipated a “dismal expenditure” for the monarchy.⁵¹ The Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, Gyula Andrassy, brushed these warnings aside, comparing the occupation to nothing more than “a stroll with a brass band.” The rhetoric coming from administrators and military officials was equally grandiose. Bolstering the morale of his troops that summer, the commanding field marshal, General Josip Filipović, gave a rousing speech: “Soldiers . . . ! Rather than a victorious triumph I will lead you to hard work performed in the service of humanity and civilization!”⁵² References to humanity and civilization had the all-too-familiar ring of colonial conquest, exposing the peacekeeping mission as mere window dressing.⁵³

As warned, the advancing soldiers did encounter resistance. In Sarajevo, Muslims overthrew the impotent Ottoman administration and formed a paramilitary brigade to defend the capital. In the mountainous countryside, religious authorities urged local communities to repel the infidel and take up arms in the name of the Ottoman Sultan. Resistance among Muslims and Serbs never managed to cohere into a widespread or popular movement, however. By late autumn, these pockets of resistance were suppressed. Nonetheless, approximately 5,000 Austro-Hungarian lives were lost in the fighting, enough to indicate that the occupation was hardly a “stroll with a brass band.”⁵⁴ A cartoon printed in the satirical newspaper *Kikeriki* that August told the entire story. The illustration showed two contrasting images of Austrian servicemen. In one, a pair of soldiers walked leisurely through Bosnia, greeted by a smiling crowd. The other depicted the pair surrounded by Balkan combatants concealed in mountains and behind bushes. The caption below read: “We had hoped to stroll happily and well through Bosnia, but now we have to crawl around cautiously, threatened by treachery and deceit”⁵⁵ (Figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1 “We had hoped to stroll happily and well through Bosnia, but now we have to crawl around cautiously, threatened by treachery and deceit.” Cartoon from Kikeriki, August 29, 1878.

Newspapers chronicled the brutal fighting and guerrilla warfare that accompanied the invasion, presenting resistance fighters in demoralizing terms, but one group in particular stood out. “We have seen unfurling before us day by day in bright images what aberrations Muslim fanaticism is capable of,” one critic remarked. “Of course, half-barbarous people, as most of those on the Balkan Peninsula are, were not expected to accept willingly a cause guided by the postulates of culture and civilization.”⁵⁶

As a territory of the Ottoman Empire, Bosnia possessed an estimated 600,000 Muslim inhabitants, the second largest confessional group in the provinces.⁵⁷ While popular perceptions of Eastern Europe often stressed the benighted and under-developed character of these regions when compared to nominally “civilized” European countries, Bosnia’s sizable Muslim population set it apart from other Balkan societies in significant ways.⁵⁸ Critics highlighted the “Turkified” character of Bosnians and attributed their lack of civilization specifically to the influence of Islam. “The Mohammedan does not know a higher type of intellectual culture,” one writer alleged. “It is no wonder that the whole people—Christians and non-Christians alike—languish in a spiritual decline and lag behind the cultural advances of neighboring countries.”⁵⁹ More to the point, European observers were sensitive to the particular style of Islam practiced in the Balkans. In 1868, the military official Johann Rośkiewicz traveled through the province and was taken by the public forms of religious devotion he saw. The Qur’an was not just a religious text but exercised “an important influence on public and private life,” he insisted.⁶⁰ Arthur Evans was of the same mind.

Bosnia remains the chosen land of Mahometan Conservatism. . . . Fanaticism has struck its deepest roots among her renegade population and reflects itself even in their dress. In no other European province of Turkey is the veiling of woman so strictly attended to.⁶¹

Islam was likewise complicit in the ferocious temperament found in the people. "They are fanatical in matters of faith, perhaps more fanatical than any Muslim in Damascus or in the middle of the Arabian desert," one newspaper columnist accused.⁶²

In assuming control over Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Austro-Hungarian government was now responsible for Europe's largest Muslim population, a factor that complicated the occupation. Christian opinion leaders, emboldened by the recent wave of Islamophobia generated during the Eastern Crisis, were in no mood to make concessions to a barbarous "Turkic" people. Catholic opinion was especially vocal in its condemnation of Ottoman rule in Europe. Spokesmen expected the Habsburg Monarchy to protect and foster Catholicism in the Balkans, a message that resonated with Croatian Catholics sympathetic to the plight of their co-nationals in Bosnia. During the Eastern Crisis, the bishop and former head of the Croatian People's Party, Josip Juraj Strossmayer, had attempted to gain international support for a liberated Bosnia. The Turkish presence in the Balkans was a "gangrene," he claimed. The powers had a moral duty to combat the "Turkish plague" and establish a free Slav nation in southeastern Europe.⁶³ Catholics even imagined relocating to a new Bosnian colony to bolster the Catholic community overshadowed by Bosnia's Orthodox and Muslim majorities. It was understandable why the government might want to be selective in permitting subjects to settle across the border, but advocates of confessional colonization emphatically dictated that "the emigration to Bosnia would be best suited to those who have for years been the most pious people."⁶⁴

The 1878 occupation provided an outlet for a range of Orientalist and colonial fantasies. Whatever policies the state chose to follow, however, expressions of outward hostility toward Islam were worrying. If not managed correctly, they could prove explosive. In certain ways, Bosnia fit the traditional script of Habsburg imperialism. Historically, the government had experience dealing with multi-confessional Slavic minorities. It had little experience, however, managing a Muslim population. While the Christian populations outnumbered the Bosnian Muslims, pursuing an explicit Christian policy was out of the question. Under the Ottoman Empire, the Muslims were the ruling class in the provinces, making up the landowners and urban notables who controlled the economy and ran the government.⁶⁵ The Habsburg administration needed their support, without which rule would prove impossible. This objective was complicated by Muslims' attachment to the Ottoman religious establishment and sultan, who remained sovereign in Bosnia despite Habsburg oversight. With the resistance crushed, various Muslims contemplated emigration, writing to Istanbul for support and advice. "The Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina are beginning to send petitions to the sultan," the *Neue Freie Presse* reported in May 1879. "They do not

want, as they say, to live under foreign rule which, in whatever form it is, will always hate them.”⁶⁶ As late as 1880, Foreign Minister Baron Heinrich Karl von Haymerle remained skeptical as to whether the Dual Monarchy could win over Muslim opinion. The Habsburgs would always be identified with Christian rule, under which Muslims were poised to lose their privileged status in society. What Haymerle called “the Muslim element” might learn to adapt to Christian rule, but “it will never be a sure support for us, because it will no more forget in Bosnia than it has, for instance, in India, Algeria, and the Caucasus that it once ruled.”⁶⁷

The occupation regime headed by the military worked to make inroads with Muslim elites in Sarajevo where it could. Despite the resistance mounted by the Sarajevo assembly in 1878, most upper-class elites eschewed appeals from lower and middle-class radicals to fight. Rather, they anticipated cooperating with the occupying forces in order to safeguard their property and influence. Their prudence was rewarded after the Austro-Hungarian military crushed the resistance.⁶⁸ Sarajevo allies were appointed to key posts on the multi-confessional City Council and within the local administration. Mustafa Fadićpašić, a wealthy landowner who had positioned himself as a chief liaison between the Muslim community and military, was named mayor of Sarajevo. These appointments were intended to facilitate the transfer of power, ensuring public and municipal services were maintained, taxes collected, and Austrian decrees communicated to the people. Cooperation did not, however, entail complete submission. In November, Muslim notables in the city delivered a handwritten address to General Filipović, demanding an independent religious administration and a decree of amnesty for those who had engaged in acts of resistance.⁶⁹ It would be the first of many efforts on the part of the Muslim community to preserve their cultural autonomy under a Christian power.

Could the old imperial maxim of *Einheit in der Vielheit* accommodate a non-Christian people? Habsburg administrators wagered that it could. Given its imperial heritage, the dynasty believed itself up to the challenge of assimilating an Oriental Muslim population to European “civilization” and bringing peace to a Balkan society torn asunder by sharp religious and ethnic feuds. More importantly though, Bosnia might prove the saving grace of the imperial system itself. Challenged by nationalist ideologues and autonomist movements at home, imperial officials and opinion leaders expressed hope that Bosnia could rekindle faith in Habsburg cosmopolitanism. With its Serb, Croat, and Muslim communities, the province offered a laboratory in which core values of integration and coexistence could be refined, validated, and demonstrated to the world.⁷⁰ Old religious hatreds once believed indelible would be effaced; conflict would be replaced with common accord; imperial subjects would discover a new sense of unity in these collective achievements.



Figure 3.2 Mostar Bazaar (c. 1890). 21 phot. d'Istrie, Dalmatie, Bosnie, Herzégovine, Montenegro et de Yalta en Crimée par M. Richtenberger. Gallica/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Such illusions filled the imagination as the government began to undertake its “cultural work” in Bosnia. “The Austria of the future will, I hope, not be a twofold picture of inner division and disintegration,” one journalist wrote,

but rather, thanks to progressive advances and general education, it will become a self-contained state, which is able gradually to assimilate, even reluctantly, the foreign constituents of its empire and thereby restore full meaning to the electoral slogan *viribus unitis* (With United Forces). From this point of view, the occupation and seizure of Bosnia and Herzegovina is by no means dreadful.⁷¹

HUNGARY’S ORIENT

To make the Bosnian occupation a success story, the Habsburg government was going to have to develop a Muslim policy, one consistent with the core values of multi-confessionalism and tolerance professed by the regime. Given the state of opinion, however, this prospect could prove difficult. Writing in the early 1880s, the Hungarian-born political economist and expert on Balkan affairs, Adolf Strausz candidly laid out what he saw as the problem. Bosnia was “stuck at a point [in the Middle Ages], its living energy petrified and suffocated by the rule of Islam,” he argued.⁷² Establishing a civilian administration and pressing forward with the Habsburg “civilizing mission” was

imperative, and according to Strausz, the man who could bring this about was one Béni Kállay de Nagy-Kálló, a fellow Hungarian with bold ideas for developing the new province on the periphery of the Habsburg domain.

A historian and former diplomat, Kállay had an intimate knowledge of the Balkan region. "I have occupied myself with the language, history, and customs of these people for numerous years," he once boasted. "I know them."⁷³ He had served as consul in Belgrade from 1869 to 1875, working to orient Serbian trade and foreign policy toward Austria-Hungary. Well-connected with political society in both Budapest and Vienna, Kállay presented himself as both a Hungarian patriot and firm proponent of imperial unity, never seeing these as contradictory. He was a product of the conservative liberalism taking root in Hungary at mid-century and possessed a strong belief in the power of modernization and civil society as the motors of progress. Indeed, it would be these exact attributes that he would seek to import to Bosnia as he helped lift the province out of its imputed medievalism and backwardness.⁷⁴ In 1882, he was appointed to head the Joint Ministry of Finance, a body responsible solely to the imperial government and not, therefore, strictly attached to either side of the Dual Monarchy. The Bosnian *Landesregierung* (provincial government) was, in this respect, an imperial rather than Austrian or Hungarian enterprise. It was staffed by bureaucrats coming from across the empire who had a fair amount of autonomy in running the Bosnian administration. For a man of Kállay's ambition, these circumstances were ideal. Writing in his diary in 1869, he openly admitted his desires for personal power and authority, claiming, "I do not abandon hope that one day I shall rule over a people."⁷⁵

Given his credentials, Kállay appeared a sensible appointment. However, powerful political forces were also at work. The Hungarian government had taken a cautious approach to the Bosnian question. A sudden influx of Slavs into the empire not only threatened to dilute Magyar power but also had the potential to generate ethnic tensions within the Kingdom of Hungary, which had a considerable Slav population of its own. It was not that Hungarian political elites were uninterested in the Balkans. They simply had their own plans for the region. With their spirits buoyed by the recent success of the autonomist movement, Hungarian politicians now dreamed of playing a dominant role in southeastern Europe. The small, divided nations on the eastern periphery could be lured into Hungary's orbit through a mix of trade and policy incentives, bringing into existence an informal Hungarian empire. With these goals in mind, Hungarians like Andrassy took up posts in the imperial foreign ministry and from there attempted to influence policy.⁷⁶ In accordance with Hungarian designs, Bosnia had to remain outside Serbian control while also being kept separate from the formal administrative structures of the Habsburg Empire. Indefinite occupation under a colonial-style regime was the optimal

solution. These types of internal rivalries exposed fault lines within the imperial edifice, but it was one more detail in the “baroque complexity” that was the Habsburg Empire.

In its bureaucratic structures and ideological outlook, the occupation government resembled a European-style colonial regime, the first of its kind within the Habsburg Empire. The analogy was not lost on observers. Taking note of French advances across North Africa at the time, the foreign minister Gustav Kálnoky readily drew comparisons between the two empires. “France finds itself in Tunisia in a situation having a clear analogy to the occupation of Bosnia Herzegovina,” he stated in 1882.⁷⁷ Yet if Bosnia was seen as a colony, it was, as one historian has claimed, a “proximate” colony.⁷⁸ While certain commentators like the Croatian journalist Abel Luksić were inclined to liken Bosnia to “the great white spaces on the maps of Central Africa,” the comparison was never perfect.⁷⁹ The Balkans was not an alien terrain to most Habsburg officials. Vienna and Budapest had conducted diplomatic and trade relations with the Ottoman Empire for centuries. The government had a pool of competent administrators knowledgeable in the languages and history of the region. Bosnia was not the plains of Africa, despite how certain colonial ideologists might present it to the public. Yet in an age when nations like France and Britain were seizing large swaths of Africa and fashioning themselves as “Muslim” powers, Bosnia offered the Habsburgs their own Oriental colony to remake in their image.

Accomplishing this feat was, however, fraught with difficulties. Like the French in Tunisia and the British in Egypt, Bosnia was classified as a protectorate under international law. While the occupation was open-ended, the territory was still theoretically under Ottoman jurisdiction. The treaty brokered with Istanbul in 1878 stipulated the Habsburg government would “in no way infringe upon the rights of sovereignty of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan.”⁸⁰ The supplementary Austro-Ottoman Convention concluded on April 21, 1879, guaranteed “full liberty” to all Bosnian Muslims “in their relations with their spiritual leaders,” the most important spiritual authority being Sultan Abdülhamid himself. The sultan’s name would continue to be pronounced in public prayers as they had in the past while the Ottoman flag was permitted to be displayed on the minarets of mosques.⁸¹ These concessions, guaranteed by international treaty, ensured that the Ottoman sovereign would continue to exercise a powerful presence in the lives of Muslim subjects, and through it, ensure the vitality of Bosnian Islam.⁸² These measures also encouraged Bosnian Muslims to look to Istanbul rather than the Habsburg administration, a factor which elicited profound mistrust among Kállay and his entourage. Kállay was intent on winning over Muslim loyalties and consolidating the Habsburg presence, and this goal required “governing Bosnia in such a way that the population comes to the realization that it owes its welfare to the

union with the monarchy.”⁸³ From the start, he endeavored to attract Muslim notables to the government, making a series of symbolic gestures designed to show Habsburg goodwill. It was telling on August 6, 1882, when he received a deputation headed by Mehmed-beg Kapetanović who, in the name of the Bosnian Muslim community, expressed loyalty to Emperor Franz Josef. Kállay greeted the delegation warmly, assuring that the emperor had the interests of the Islamic religion at heart and would work to ensure that “the Mohammedans may live as happily as the other inhabitants of this beautiful and proud land.”⁸⁴

Given the importance of Muslim support, the government could not afford to be seen as giving preferential treatment to Christians. Nor could it attack the privileges historically enjoyed by Muslims under Ottoman rule without alienating Muslim opinion. Under the circumstances, “fair” treatment for all confessional groups matched with an ambitious program of social and economic modernizing was deemed the best guarantee of success. For the next twenty years, Kállay and a small circle of Hungarian confidants would take an active role in shaping Bosnian policy and the Habsburg “civilizing mission.” Adolf Strausz, an early champion of Kállay, was adamant that the government needed to “manage the Orient” rather than conquer it, entailing a policy of careful oversight and stewardship. “The government must not operate according to principles of Occident or Orient,” Strausz warned, “because it is necessary to bind the later through civilization and bring it happily into accordance with it.”⁸⁵ Put otherwise, Bosnian Islam was to be accommodated. Time and patience would pave the way for a more intimate union in the future as Muslims were progressively integrated into the social and economic life of the colony. According to Lajos Thallóczy, a lifelong acquaintance of Kállay and Joint Finance Ministry *Sektionschef* under his tenure, Western ideas could “become natural in an Oriental environment,” and this process was part and parcel of what he understood to be the “civilizing process.”⁸⁶ While Thallóczy shared Strausz’s conviction in the power of modernization, he was also influenced by currents of Hungarian nationalism and desires to re-establish a Hungarian empire in the Balkans, suggesting that the Bosnian “civilizing mission” was first and foremost a Hungarian affair.

This link between Hungarian nationalism and “Oriental” empire was not surprising considering the overlapping boundaries the two shared. At mid-century, Budapest was a thriving center of Orientalist scholarship, producing notable specialists such as Ármín Vámbéry and his well-regarded protégé, Ignác Goldziher. While Hungary’s geographic location explained this Orientalist flourishing in part, it was not the entire story. Nationalism equally played a crucial role in this development. Philologists and ethnographers seeking the origins of the historic Magyar nation were commonly some of the most prolific Orientalist scholars of the day. As Vámbéry claimed,

Hungarian Orientalism proceeded “in the double view of science and nationality.”⁸⁷ Studies on Ural-Altaic or Turanian language groups were central to the discovery of Hungarian national identity, as scholars charted a Hungarian ethnic genealogy leading back to primeval Asia. The Magyars, it was claimed, descended from the Asiatic and Turkic races that had migrated westward during the Middle Ages.⁸⁸ Eastern Europe was historically a crossroads where “two worlds clashed,” Vámbéry explained, and the Magyars had been the “ethnic buffer” situated between East and West.⁸⁹ Having preserved their unique language and cultural identity, the Hungarian people were a “lush island of the Orient in an Ocean of Germanic and Slavic languages,” according to the editors of *Keleti Szemle* (*The Oriental Review*), the official journal of the Hungarian Ethnographic Society’s Oriental Section. Yet as experts pointed out, the Magyars had also adopted the acumen and manners of the “civilized world” without losing their “precious national traits.”⁹⁰ This link between Hungarian national character and the East explained why the Hungarians excelled in “the exploration of the Orient” and had “a special predilection for Muslim studies,” according to the French Orientalist Lucien Bouvat.⁹¹ Orientalism was not simply considered a momentary fascination or passing trend among Hungarian intellectuals. It was a scientific pursuit that revealed the distinct ethno-cultural identity and character of the Magyar people, setting them apart from other European nations.⁹² And it was this supposed unique mix of Oriental and Western influences that portended Hungary’s “lofty historic mission” in the present, critics claimed.⁹³

Turanism—a romantic and nationalist movement focused on the Asian origins of the Magyar people—exercised a considerable influence on Kállay and his cohorts. “We were an Oriental people in our sentiments, our character, and the common course of our development,” he claimed in 1883. “Yet early on Western values and outlooks were imprinted on the souls of the Hungarian people.”⁹⁴ For Thallóczy, Hungarians were inclined to view the Orient “through the glasses of Western theories.” But these spectacles could always be removed, he maintained, allowing Hungarians to sympathize with and understand the Oriental populations now under their charge.⁹⁵ Turanism rested upon conventional dichotomies of East and West, but it always had the power to blur and distort these conceptual boundaries. Kállay ascribed to the popular belief that East and West were opposing civilizations guided by two different “spirits.”⁹⁶ However, if he imagined Occident and Orient as polar opposites, they were not irreconcilable. More to the point, Hungary had a unique role to play in the “union” of the two. As an “Oriental people that became Western,” the Magyars were best suited to lead the south Slavs and Muslims of the Balkans to Western civilization, and in doing so “claim [their] place with full equality in the ranks of the European nations.”⁹⁷ Such was how Kállay understood Hungary’s historic “mission.” The antagonism between

East and West was the “great spiritual struggle” of the age, and he believed that Hungary alone was destined to resolve it. “Our wishes, our aspirations, our common outlooks draw us with irresistible force toward the West, and today we feel more at home in the circle of Western nations,” he declared. “However, the thread has not been entirely severed that links us with the Orient. . . . The spirit of the West and East join themselves in the holy crown [of Hungary].”⁹⁸

Much like the Spanish *Áfricanistas*, Hungarian Turanianists venerated the “Orient within.” By highlighting the Eastern origins and qualities of the Hungarian people, thinkers like Kállay claimed that Hungary possessed an imperial mission, one destined to modernize the Orient and, by proxy, reveal to all that the Hungarians were a modern and “European” people. Yet Hungary’s Orient did not reside in Africa or the plains of Asia. It was at their doorstep. The Balkans was a territory “primarily Oriental” in its character and makeup, Kállay contended. “Bosnia forms a border where the spirits of the West and East encounter one another, and one must take account of this when considering all questions regarding [our] situation.” It was precisely because Bosnia was a liminal space situated between East and West that Hungary was best suited to oversee its progressive march toward modern civilization. “One must proceed with care when one intends to import Western European institutions in a land which is still in the Middle Ages,” Kállay insisted. As a Hungarian, moreover, he was “well aware” of these intricacies. “I have been conscious of what has to be accomplished if I want to achieve something productive,” he assured.⁹⁹ If the Habsburgs were now called upon to “manage the Orient,” Kállay was certainly their man.

IN THE SHADOW OF GOD

In June of 1893, Frances Minto Elliot was being driven through the streets of Istanbul in a carriage accompanied by a hired dragoman. A magazine writer and author of well-received travelogues in England, Elliot was no stranger to the enchantments of foreign places. However, Istanbul had yet to work its magic on her. A week into her trip, Elliot had already formed a negative opinion of the city. As she made her way from Pera, the main diplomatic quarter frequented by Europeans, to the Yildiz Palace in the northeast, she gazed out the carriage window and abhorred what she saw: hilly neighborhoods, dirty streets, and crowds of pedestrians—what she referred to as “turban-headed ruins”—who appeared unperturbed by the clouds of dust that accumulated in the summer air and settled over everything.¹⁰⁰ The refinery of the Yildiz gardens was a pleasant relief from the squalor and bustle of the city center, she noted, exiting the carriage to join a crowd of foreign dignitaries and tourists

packed into a pavilion on the palace grounds. Guests stood about drinking coffee and chatting. The early arrivals had already staked out choice positions by the windows overlooking the courtyard where a large assembly of Ottoman soldiers and officials congregated around an elegant white mosque. Everyone in the pavilion could speak of one thing: the imminent arrival of the Ottoman sultan, Abdülhamid.

Elliot, like many European travelers to the Ottoman capital in the late nineteenth century, had come to see the weekly *selamlık*, a Friday prayer session led by the Ottoman head of state. Upon hearing the band start up, she shuffled toward the windows and craned her neck as the sultan's landau entered through the palace gates. The man sitting in the carriage was unimpressive: "the most wretched, pinched-up little sovereign I ever saw," as Elliot later remarked.¹⁰¹ The spectacle, however, did leave a strong impression. The sultan exited the royal carriage thronged by his faithful subjects. As Abdülhamid was assisted up the steps toward the ceremonial mosque, the resonant cry of the muezzin cleaved the air and a stillness descended.¹⁰² Inside, the sultan performed the ritualistic *salah* while the crowd of soldiers, banner holders, and public officials on the lawn looked onward in reverential silence. Despite the incessant chatter and gawking of the tourists in the room, Elliot was left bedazzled by the spectacle. "The finest theatrical effect could not exceed it," she insisted.¹⁰³

European visitors like Elliot believed themselves to be observing a ritual with deep historic roots in the Ottoman Muslim tradition. Yet this impression was only a half-truth. Sultans had carried out the weekly *selamlık* in the past, typically staging these events at the more august Hagia Sophia Mosque with less fanfare. Only recently had the ceremony been moved to Yildiz, where a mosque had been commissioned at the behest of Abdülhamid in 1884 to accommodate the style of public religious ceremonies becoming increasingly popularized under the Hamidian government.¹⁰⁴ What guests were witnessing was, in fact, the invention of an Ottoman tradition, one that aimed to project an image of the sultan as a beloved ruler and Islamic Caliph venerated by the Sunni Muslim community the world over.

By the 1890s, these types of public religious spectacles were part of a broader ideological retrenchment occurring within the Ottoman Empire as the inscrutable Abdülhamid attempted to come to grips with the political unrest and threat of European imperialism that persistently loomed over his domain. Ottoman elites had for some time been faced with the prospect of imperial decline and weakness vis-à-vis Europe. As early as the 1830s, reformers began to reflect critically on the problem. In their opinion, the cause was clear. The Ottoman state had abandoned its Islamic principles, adopting absolutist and European ideas at the expense of the Sharia and Sunni tradition. "In the last 150 years . . . the sacred *Şeriat* was not obeyed nor were

the beneficent regulations followed,” read the opening statement of the 1839 Gülhane decree. “Consequently, the former strength and prosperity have changed into weakness and poverty.”¹⁰⁵ Returning to sound Islamic principles was the antidote, but this did not imply seeking comfort in the well-tested and purifying doctrines of a mythic golden age. The empire required a reworked Islamic polity, one which could guide Ottoman society into the modern age.¹⁰⁶ The challenges at hand were formidable. The Ottoman Empire was a composite state that had been stitched together over centuries. Stretching from the Balkans to the edge of Persia, it possessed an ethnically diverse population organized along confessional lines, or *millets*. The ruling dynasty may have been Turkic and the elite class Muslim, but the empire could hardly be considered a homogenous “nation” by any standard given the sizable Christian and Jewish populations it contained. The empire’s various provinces and administrative jurisdictions entailed that the imperial government lacked the type of robust state structures to coordinate modernizing initiatives on a large scale. In some areas, populations remained nomadic, making the empire appear medieval and benighted in comparison to the nation-states of Europe. Taking these features into account, the differences between the Ottoman world and the supposedly “civilized” powers of the continent were not hard to discern.

Ottoman dignitaries were motivated to establish the empire as an equal on the world stage, and they remained particularly sensitive to the demoralizing views many Europeans held when it came to Muslim societies in particular.¹⁰⁷ From the 1840s onward, forward-looking officials spearheaded a program of “restructuring” (*tanzimat*) designed to strengthen state institutions and spur economic growth in line with other industrializing nations. Modernizers did not repudiate the Islamic traditions that remained central to Ottoman identity, but they proposed a healthy dose of liberalism mixed with good state administration over religion as the panacea to the many problems facing the government. Constitutionalist like the former Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha were not timid when it came to letting the Ottoman political establishment and European public know where their priorities lay. “In Turkey everyone is desirous to see constitutional government acclimatized, established, and becoming at the same time the soul and the mainspring of our institutions,” he assured. Having served as an imperial governor in the Danube and Baghdad, Midhat was fully aware of the challenges at hand. It was imperative to transform the empire into a “common country” for all its inhabitants, Christian as well as Muslim, and this task fell to the imperial state. Government policy needed to affect a “fusion” of the different races, and “out of this fusion should spring the progressive development of the population, to whatever nationality and whatever religion they may belong.”¹⁰⁸

That this rhetoric sounded similar to European colonialists who spoke of “fusing” populations and modernizing backward peoples in Africa or Asia was not incidental. Reformers like Midhat sought to promote a vision of the Ottoman Empire as a progressive and modern power, and in an intellectual environment in which “civilization” was readily fungible with colonial empire, being modern and civilized required having a civilizing mission to fulfil.¹⁰⁹ As a theoretically Muslim state, moreover, the empire had a special relationship with the East, making it aptly suited to carry out this civilizing process. “Europe is progressive with so many inventions and modernized with new laws of civilization and has really amazed the human mind, while the vast Islamic world in fact needs our guidance in matters of progress and innovation,” Midhat contended. “As we are between both, it is our greatest and even sacred duty to take a closer look at the state of civilization in Europe and the Islamic countries and compare them with one another.”¹¹⁰ During the 1870s, Ottoman modernizers took up an imperial script. They were conscious of the ways the Orient was manipulated and represented in European outlooks. They were also aware of the ways in which these unflattering representations supported claims to imperial rule and a nominally “civilized” identity.¹¹¹ In claiming equality with Europe, elites appropriated a modern imperialist identity for themselves, insisting that like other European powers they too had a civilizing mission to achieve. This mission was found in the territories populated by “savage” nomadic peoples and the non-Turkic Arab and Kurdish populations on the Ottoman periphery.¹¹² Modernizers showed few qualms about deploying this “borrowed colonialism” for their own ends. Nevertheless, there was something distinct in this brand of Ottoman Orientalism.¹¹³ It imagined a form of colonialism perpetrated on Muslims *by* Muslims, and this raised a number of issues. Ranking fellow Muslims according to the hierarchies of civilizational development not only went against notions of Islamic fraternity taught by the Qur’an but also completely destabilized the social and confessional categories customarily used to organize Ottoman society.

Modernization posed a series of questions that were not easy to resolve. Yet in the wake of the disastrous Eastern Crisis, the modernization question could not be ignored either. It was precisely this conundrum that the new sultan coming to the throne in 1876 was forced to contemplate. With his empire in a state of disarray and the European powers demanding further reforms that threatened to dilute Ottoman sovereignty, Abdülhamid inherited a hazardous state of affairs. Modernizers within the government were pressing for social and political change, arguing that if the state did not take immediate action, the empire would continue to disintegrate and fall prey to foreign machinations. While convinced of their logic, Abdülhamid had little desire to hand over the reins to liberal technocrats. He was also conscious of the attitudes

of traditionalists suspicious of Westernization.¹¹⁴ According to religious conservatives, Islam rather than Westernization would be the saving grace of the empire. The fact that Islam provided the historical basis for the Ottoman state and, therefore, the legitimization of power could not be overlooked.¹¹⁵ As one government memo put it, “for more than thirteen centuries, this country has been ruled by the sacred law of the Qur’an which is, in effect, the only one capable of securing the material and moral happiness of all.”¹¹⁶ The Islamic religious establishment exercised a significant influence over Ottoman society. It was the *Shaykh al-Islām* who conferred power on the sultan while the various *‘ulamā* interpreted the laws and backed up governmental decrees through reference to scripture.¹¹⁷ This authoritative body of officials, judges, and religious scholars constituted the guardians of the Sunni Islamic tradition, and they took their responsibility seriously to ensure all laws, education, and political policies conformed to their understanding of what an Islamic society ought to be. Although the *‘ulamā* was by no means a uniform group, collectively it did expect the sultan to honor his religious obligations and defend the faith in public.¹¹⁸ Abdülhamid knew he needed the support of the *‘ulamā* just as much as the bureaucratic intelligentsia to rule. Nor was he blind to the fact that appeasing both sides would require a careful balancing act. If the Ottoman Empire was to be a modern imperial state in form, it would, by necessity, need to be a Muslim one in content.

Over the next thirty years, Abdülhamid committed himself to an impressive modernizing program. Privatization in land holding and enterprise was encouraged. New financial institutions were set up, with the Ottoman Bank and European-supervised Debt Administration imposed upon the state in 1882 serving to attract foreign capital and create the architecture for a modern financial infrastructure, albeit one largely directed in the interests of foreign powers.¹¹⁹ As in Europe, the most visible symbol of economic change was the railroad. By 1918, some 4,000 kilometers of rail threaded through Anatolia, not to mention the highly publicized Hijaz Railway project running from Damascus to Medina started by the government in 1900.¹²⁰ “Constantinople has been connected with Budapest, Vienna, and Paris by the rail lines, and one can go from the banks of the Seine to the shores of the Bosphorus without changing cars,” the French writer Auguste Lepage marveled in 1897.¹²¹ Foreigners commended the railroad boom that was facilitating travel and opening regional markets in the eastern Mediterranean. They were also taken by the urbanization projects transforming Istanbul, the tram lines laid in cities, the cotton mills and silk producing enterprises testifying to the empire’s renewed economic vitality. According to the American writer and Muslim convert Alexander Russell Webb in 1895, Istanbul was on its way to becoming “one of the first commercial centers of the entire world.” In his estimation, the Ottoman people had the utmost faith in Abdülhamid; he was “truly a great

monarch.”¹²² Pro-Ottoman papers in Europe equally lavished praise on the *sultan réformateur*.¹²³ “It is due to the wise foresight and unrelenting will of the Sultan, to his intelligence in economic and financial questions that the miraculous renewal of Turkey has been accomplished in the span of fifteen years,” the pro-Hamidian Belgian journal *Abeille du Bosphore* crowed.¹²⁴ These impressions were not lost on Muslims either. As one Tunisian newspaper reported, the Ottoman Empire was “marching with rapid steps along the path of progress and prosperity thanks to the vigilance and initiative of our lord and master, the Commander of the Faithful.”¹²⁵

Abdülhamid coveted his image as a *sultan réformateur*, but he never lost sight of the conservative camp. Material progress in no way corresponded to unabashed Westernization, he insisted. Least of all did it entail abandoning the religious values that had guided Ottoman society in the past. “What is beneficial to us is not to imitate the so-called European civilization but return to the *Şeriat*, the source of our strength,” he proclaimed.¹²⁶ Although such pronouncements aimed to assuage the fears of traditionalists, his concern for religion was neither insincere nor opportunistic. Abdülhamid had cultivated an interest in traditional Islamic spirituality from a young age. Prior to ascending the throne, he was known to associate with Sufi leaders in Istanbul, participating in *dhikr* gatherings focused on intense devotional acts and prayer.¹²⁷ In his scrupulous attention to ritual and orthodoxy, the sultan was clearly a “pious and devout disciple of the Prophet,” as one journalist observed.¹²⁸ Yet his faith was never of a wholly conservative cast. The British politician George Shaw Lefevre found the sultan “simple and unostentatious in his personal habits, without religious fanaticism, and anxious to be held in esteem in Western Europe.”¹²⁹ However, Lefevre also observed Abdülhamid was persistently apprehensive of plots and assassination attempts, almost pathologically so. He took comfort in the inner life of the harem and preferred the sumptuous Yildiz Palace to public life, oftentimes remaining confined within the palace walls for months on end. His penchant for privacy and isolation earned him the popular epithet “the hidden sultan.” Raised in the world of an Ottoman court notorious for its intrigues and secrecy, Abdülhamid never managed to shake his deep suspicions of those around him, even when it came to his most trusted advisers.

An enigmatic character in many respects, Abdülhamid was nonetheless sensitive to the importance that perceptions of royal power played in modern politics. Sequestration from the public eye did not imply a complete absence. What impressions Ottoman subjects did hold of their sovereign were carefully mediated through a rich repertoire of gestures and symbols designed to emphasize the sublime presence of sultanic authority.¹³⁰ The modernizing thrust of the government aside, Islam remained the primary language of power and legitimacy in the Ottoman world. The sultan was the

embodiment of public authority, but he was also a spiritual authority as well. As Caliph—a title held by the dynasty since the sixteenth century—the sultan was the “shadow of God” on earth and inheritor of the Prophet’s legacy. In addition to political rule, the sultan was the “protector of Islam,” invested with the right to appoint Muslim authorities and speak on behalf of the Sunni community.¹³¹ These spiritual responsibilities extended to administering and protecting Muslim holy sites, most importantly the Arabian cities of Mecca and Medina, the birthplace of the Islamic tradition and the “jewel in the crown of the Caliphate,” as one historian has claimed.¹³² Ottoman rulers had invoked the Caliphal inheritance for various ends in the past, but under the Hamidian regime the office acquired a new importance in imperial politics. Spectacles such as the weekly *selamlık* held at the Yildiz Mosque manifested sultanic power and presence in ways that economic improvements and railroad building could not. It shrouded the sultan in a quasi-mystical aura, representing a particular idea of the empire and imperial community for mass audiences. Forward-looking elites might appreciate the gains made by a reform-minded leader, but religious rhetoric offered something more. It had the capacity to mobilize crowds and articulate the relationship between the sovereign and the people in terms that were emotionally charged and meaningful. Under the Hamidian government, politics acquired a patently Islamic character.

Tradition alone was not the only factor at play. If Islam assumed a more pronounced role in Ottoman politics under Abdülhamid, this was because the empire was a predominantly Muslim state demographically speaking by the late nineteenth century. The territories lost during the Eastern Crisis contained the majority of the empire’s Christian subjects, diminishing the number of Catholic and Orthodox Slavs. At the same time, a new wave of migration was dramatically altering the ethno-confessional composition of Ottoman society. As European powers extended their reach across North Africa, Bosnia, and the Caucasus, Muslim inhabitants in these regions packed their bags and fled. With little intention of living under infidel rule, Muslims relocated to the Ottoman Empire in droves, expressing their desires to dwell within the confines of *dar al-Islam* and carry out their lives in accordance with their faith. The Ottoman domain became home to Algerian and Tunisian émigrés, Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Indians from the Punjab, and Balkan Muslims. By 1900, more than 70 percent of the Ottoman population identified as Muslim.¹³³ This was not to imply that Muslims were a homogenous group. Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia possessed Arab populations that were culturally distinct from the Turkic peoples of Anatolia. The loyalties of incoming Tatar and Caucasian refugees were also suspect, especially as resettlement policies and access to resources incited conflicts within local villages.¹³⁴ Problems stemming from migration and instability revealed more than ever

the need to integrate and assimilate the various populations of the empire, and Islam was the common denominator.

Abdülhamid was clever enough to realize that economic and social modernization could be adapted to a specifically Muslim brand of state-building, and religion was the key. In the cities, the state pursued economic development and centralization with the objective of creating a pro-imperial “urban Muslim bloc” consisting of professionals and office holders who would look to the state to secure their interests. On the imperial frontiers, officials used appeals to Islam and Muslim cultural identity to bind local and tribal elites closer to the government.¹³⁵ In the provinces, imams were instructed to invoke the sultan’s name in the *khutba* read out in prayer rooms, emphasizing the state’s Islamic identity.¹³⁶ Some of these provincial mosques were of recent origin, having been constructed under the orders of the sultan himself. Their facades and interiors adorned with dynastic emblems incarnated the sultan’s mystic aura in towns and villages far from the capital, giving the state a presence in the daily lives of worshipers.¹³⁷ The government even took a leading role in the printing and sale of the Qur’an, the authoritative source of all imperial policy and legislation. The education ministry strictly monitored Quranic texts and commentary to ensure that religious writings were accurate and aligned with state interests.¹³⁸ “The survival of the Sublime State depends on the preservation of the Islamic faith,” as one official claimed, suggesting the intimate and indissoluble link between the two.¹³⁹ In all of these efforts, Hamidian Islamism strove to focus loyalty on the sultan and reinforce notions of Muslim brotherhood, offering a vision of the Ottoman Empire as a bastion of Islam. It was imperial patriotism embellished with Islamic motifs and symbols.¹⁴⁰

The royal court itself became a microcosm of the empire’s new Islamist orientation. According to Frances Elliot, Abdülhamid routinely surrounded himself with religious authorities, keeping a close watch over those with the power to challenge his spiritual and political credentials. “The mollahs and dervishes find in him a ready listener and a liberal protector,” she discerned.¹⁴¹ The Anglican missionary Daniel Bates was likewise conscious of the change in court culture brought about by the Hamidian government. The old royal court with its sober tastes and officials dressed in Western-style uniforms was, by the 1890s, becoming a thing of the past. At the Yildiz Palace, one now found Turkish *‘ulamā* dressed in turbans and flowing robes, Arab shaykhs, Khans from Central Asia and Africa, Persian emissaries, and Albanian bays. The royal chambers were frequented by “representatives from all the various divisions of Islam,” and their presence was illuminating. “The legal caliph of the orthodox Mohammedans, [designs] to rekindle among them their ancient zeal and unity of purpose, and to fuse all Moslems under one central authority,” Bates accused.¹⁴² Such thoughts were not far

from the mind of the French colonial official Robert Arnaud, who professed that Abdülhamid designed to fashion himself “a Pope of Islam, from whom emanates all truth and all salutary blessings.”¹⁴³

The broader implications of Abdülhamid’s appeal to Muslim unity were not lost on European critics, especially those mindful of their own imperial presence in the Islamic world. In a period in which *dar al-Islam* appeared under threat of European encroachment, Ottoman calls for Muslim solidarity could and did possess a wider resonance across borders. During the 1880s and 1890s, Istanbul worked diligently to set up pro-Caliphal organizations in former Ottoman territories and across the Muslim world. Organizers established links with prominent Muslim community leaders in North Africa, Sub-continental Asia, and Indonesia, nurturing ideas of Pan-Islamic association centered on the Caliph and the Ottoman Empire by proxy. These activities were accompanied by a spate of Pan-Islamic newspapers and pamphlets published in Istanbul, Beirut, Cairo, and abroad. “We must strengthen our links with the Muslims of other lands and get closer to each other,” Abdülhamid vowed. “The only hope for our future lies in this idea.”¹⁴⁴ Notions of Muslim unity and Caliphal authority blended together, and the conjoining of the two was exactly the point. In emphasizing his position as Caliph, Abdülhamid intended to bolster religious loyalties among the global Muslim community. This policy offered the Porte a diplomatic lever when dealing with the European powers, holding out the continued prospect of mobilizing pro-Ottoman support in Europe’s Muslim territories at moments when international relations became fraught or broke down altogether.¹⁴⁵ “As long as the union of Islam continues . . . in the Muslim lands now under [European] domination,” Abdülhamid once boasted, “one word from the Caliph would be enough to start a jihad against them which would be a catastrophe for the Christians.”¹⁴⁶

Such assertions were hyperbole for certain, and the sultan knew it. However, the affective bond forged through Caliphal authority was not imaginary. In Algeria, Tunisia, Bosnia, and India, Muslim subjects transposed their hopes and anxieties onto the personage of the Caliph, seeing in him a protector against infidel misrule and the promise of a restored and independent Muslim community. Considering his spiritual authority and stature, Abdülhamid was believed to be the only one capable of alleviating the “legitimate apprehensions over the future of Islam” and bringing together Muslims as “a single nation,” as the Tunisian publicist Atha-Bey-Hussin explained.¹⁴⁷ European writers recognized all too well the dangers implicit in Pan-Islamic association to their own positions abroad. As the French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire argued in 1896, the sultan was playing an imperial game, relying upon Pan-Islamic sympathies to extend Istanbul’s influence and erode Muslim loyalties in populations under European control. “We cannot ignore that the interested advances of Abdülhamid are inspired by policy needs and

not by religious faith," he warned.¹⁴⁸ The idea that Muslims might form a "single nation" under an Ottoman Caliphate, while unrealistic, was a direct threat to Europe's own Muslim empire-building projects and could only be treated as a threat. As the British clergyman Malcolm MacColl bluntly snapped in 1896:

The sooner the Musulmans of India . . . understand that they have no more to do with the Sultan of Turkey than an Englishman has to do with the Emperor of Germany or an Italian with the Tsar of Russia, the better for all parties concerned.¹⁴⁹

What these anxieties revealed was telling. Like his European cohorts, Abdülhamid was engaged in a process of empire-building, one that employed the rhetoric and symbols of Muslim imperium growing up in the late nineteenth century. However, unlike European states, the Ottoman sultan could pose as a genuine Muslim sovereign and champion of Islam. Abdülhamid fostered a new style of religious politics with the dual objectives of consolidating a Muslim base of support at home and commanding the loyalty of the global Muslim community. In accentuating his role as Caliph, he envisioned a specific idea of empire that was territorial while also transnational in scope. Ottoman Pan-Islamism encouraged Muslims to see themselves as "spiritual subjects" of the Caliph, underscoring the religious, historical, and emotional attachments binding an imagined Muslim world.¹⁵⁰ While modernizers aspired to mold an Ottoman imperial state united in its purpose and sheltered from foreign intrigues, the envisaged Caliphate was different. It constituted an empire of the mind possessing the power to challenge and undermine self-proclaimed "Muslim powers" claiming dominion over segments of *dar al-Islam*. Spanish and Hungarian imperialists might have sought to refashion the cultural identities of their empires through recourse to an alleged Oriental inheritance, but these stratagems paled in comparison to a state that could legitimately claim to speak for "the Orient." Whether European powers liked it or not, the Ottoman Empire had its own plans for the future, putting itself at the forefront of a uniquely Islamic vision of modernity. As the esteemed statesman Mehmed Kâmil Pasha averred, "we will march down the path of progress compatible with the Oriental spirit."¹⁵¹

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Chapter Four

Allah's Empire

A poet rarely finds themselves at a loss for words. Yet, for Wilfred Scawen Blunt, conveying the details of life in Egypt proved difficult. "I don't know how sufficiently to describe the delight of the life here," he recorded in his diary in 1889. Each winter, Blunt fled the damp and gloomy environs of his native Sussex for Sheykh Obeyed, a ranch located just outside Cairo that served as a family vacation home. There, Blunt divided his time between breeding Arabian horses, lounging about his garden, and living "in an Oriental way," as he put it. For a man who had studied the East and come to know it intimately, life in this "beautiful, retired place on the desert edge far from European intrusion" was a paradise on earth.¹

Isolated splendor did not, however, mean Blunt remained ignorant of the fierce political divisions and infighting roiling British-occupied Egypt. On the contrary, he had pointed views about his compatriots' involvement in Egyptian affairs. He never hid his belief that Britain's invasion and subsequent occupation of Egypt had been a colossal mistake. A decade on, British forces were still waging a bloody war in the Sudan against Mahdist rebels. The administration imposed on the country to resolve Egypt's chronic debt crisis had yet to make sufficient headway. Officials found themselves hobbled by a seemingly endless string of issues ranging from security to civil governance they had not planned for. The administrators dispatched to Cairo and Alexandria were grossly inexperienced to handle the situation, in Blunt's estimation. Most spoke little to no Arabic and had a scant knowledge of "good Eastern manners." They came to Egypt from different parts of the empire and were disposed to treat Egypt like a new colony, repeating all the mistakes colonists were apt to make. "The relations between the English officers and the [Egyptian] natives seem to be much as they are in India," Blunt demurred.² It was not a promising sign for the future.

Blunt's opinions carried a fair amount of weight. He was not some eager journalist trying to make his mark or a disgruntled official with an axe to grind. The scion of an English aristocratic family, Blunt had connections to leading individuals in England's governing class. He wrote for prestigious journals like the *Fortnightly Review* and boasted a solid reputation as an expert on Oriental affairs. Having traveled extensively through North Africa and the Middle East, he had acquired a firm command of Arabic and was known to socialize with Arabian Shaykhs and the *'ulamā* at Cairo's Al-Azhar University just as much as with polite British society. For Blunt, Orientalism was a lifelong obsession. He was fascinated by Bedouin culture, often romanticizing Arabs as a proud and chivalrous people cast in the mold of heroic men like Saladin. He was famous for dressing in Oriental garb, giving rise to rumors that he had renounced his Catholic upbringing and converted to Islam. While these rumors remained unconfirmed, through his studies and interactions with the Arab world, Blunt did come to appreciate Islam on an erudite level. He had "supreme confidence" in Islam's ability to develop in conjunction with modern society and he rejected the idea that Muslims required the stern, unyielding hand of European supervisors.³ Quite the opposite. European encroachment was a threat to the positive changes occurring in Islamic societies, a position he firmly applied to his views on Egypt.

Blunt had taken an interest in the Egyptian campaign from the start, and his judgments had hardly been flattering. In 1882, he supported the Urābist uprising and took it upon himself to act as a negotiator between the nationalists and the British government. His involvement earned him a four-year ban from Egypt. In later years, he would present his side of events in books with seductive titles like *Atrocities of Justice Under the English Rule of Egypt* and *The Secret History of the English Occupation*. Blunt did not deny that Britain was a "great Muslim power" nor that Britain had much to offer the Muslim world. He was, however, a staunch critic of imperialism. He watched with horror as proponents of empire applauded the atrocious crimes perpetrated on non-European peoples, wondering what it meant for the values of individual liberty and freedom back home. A more humane and equitable form of rule was required to govern Britain's far-flung multiracial empire, he believed. When it came to Islam, Blunt was resolute in his prescriptions. Imperial rule entailed greater consideration for Britain's "Mohammedan" subjects, who were now a part of Britain's imperial social fabric.

For good or for evil, [Britain] has admitted a vast body of Mohammedans into her social community, and contracted engagements from which she can hardly recede. . . . As Christians, Englishmen may regret this; but as practical men, they would surely be wise to recognize the fact and to accept the duties it entails.⁴

In short, Blunt was urging British officialdom to act like the "Muslim power" it claimed to be. Injunctions to imagine Britain as a Muslim power needed to be more than mere rhetoric. They had to be manifest in policy and action if Britain ever hoped to win the support of the millions of Muslims it ruled over.

Blunt was in many ways ahead of the curve. Over the coming decades, similar pronouncements were heard across Europe. "What the Muhammadan element needs is what the government will undertake," boasted one Habsburg official in 1900.⁵ Reform-minded writers in Paris appeared to be singing from the same hymn book. "France must recognize the obligation that is imposed on her by ensuring the greatest management in its relations with African Islam," Henry de Castries argued.⁶ As with British writers like Blunt, French critics were coming to appreciate that being a Muslim power required greater attention to Islamic affairs and the needs of Muslim subjects. It might even entail a new social contract befitting France's great Muslim power status. "By its very possessions," remarked one writer, "France is a Muslim nation, and it must help and protect its Muslim subjects as it does its others."⁷ As the Dutch colonial administrator Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje acknowledged in 1911, the Muslims "problem" was "the main question of colonial politics."⁸

These shifting attitudes stemmed from a variety of causes. Growing awareness of the poor conditions and misrule suffered by colonial subjects brought about genuine calls for imperial accommodation among metropolitan critics. At the same time, Pan-Islamism and the changes occurring in the Ottoman Empire could not be ignored either. For one reason or another, European states were coming to accept that being a Muslim power effectively meant running a Muslim empire and servicing a Muslim populace. "It is not a matter of forcefully transporting over there without forethought or discernment the institutions of the metropole," the Tunisian Resident General Gabriel Alapetite explained. "It is a question of improving . . . what already exists, of respecting the mores, traditions and beliefs [of our Muslim subjects]."⁹ Taking this approach, officials found themselves charged with a host of new responsibilities. Maintaining mosques, negotiating with Islamic authorities, and attending to the daily life of colonial subjects: all these functions now fell to European colonial administrators. In many cases, authorities had to create new institutions to meet these challenges. European governments were no strangers to dealing with confessional groups. Many states had existing models of church-state relations they could draw upon and mold to an Islamic context.¹⁰ These changes were not negligible. They fundamentally transformed the relationship between state and society and impacted the lives of millions of individuals. Underpinning these state-building projects was, however, a basic question: How were European states to govern Islam? Predictably enough, this question was prompted by concerns about how best to control colonial subjects just as much as how to accommodate them.

ISLAMOCRACY

By the mid-1880s, Paul Cambon believed he knew a thing or two about running an empire. Having joined the French diplomatic corps in 1882, he had been posted to Tunisia where he served two terms as Resident General, assisting France in consolidating its hold over its new North African protectorate. In the summer of 1884, he took time out of his busy schedule to write to his former superior and confidant, Jules Ferry, who at that moment was facing mounting pressure in the National Assembly for his brazen colonial policies in Africa and Indochina. Drawing on his experience in Tunisia, he offered the embattled premier a word of helpful advice. "Among the populations which differ from us by habits, language, religion, industry, and custom, it is necessary to apply other laws than ours. An Arab or Chinese province cannot be administered like a French *arrondissement*."¹¹ When it came to the way the Algerian Arab Office or Tunisian administration regulated native populations, this pronouncement was no doubt true. Colonial subjects faced unequal legal systems and were subject to special police regimes that Europeans were not. However, when it came to the way France administered the Islamic religion, there was room for debate in Cambon's judgment.

The French Republic had an ambivalent relationship with organized religion. Secular in principle, the state nonetheless possessed a long tradition of intervening in confessional affairs. Under the *Concordat* system implemented by Napoleon in 1801, Church lands were placed under government control and clerical officials were made salaried employees of the state.¹² These policies, which came to form the basis of church-state relations in the country, were not entirely distinct from the approaches to religion found in places like the Habsburg Empire, although the intent was different. In France, the state assumed the power to regulate religion, seeing this arrangement as the best means of guaranteeing the separation of the two. Catholics, Protestants, and Jews each had their own organizational bodies, or *cultes*, that worked with the government. As state employees, religious officials were responsible to the Ministry of Education and Religion as well as their respective congregations.

European governments may have possessed preestablished systems for dealing with confessional groups, but these were derived from their interaction with religious groups on the continent. As to whether these practices could be extended to Islam was another matter. Islam did not possess a history of institutionalization. Imams and the *'ulamā* were not "clerics" in any strict sense of the word. Teachers and preachers acted autonomously. Quranic scripture and religious interpretation provided by the *'ulamā* were often the only guiding principles that regulated the faith, while Sufi orders looked to their own spiritual leaders for guidance altogether. In the territories under Ottoman rule, the sultan claimed the power to appoint the muftis who

presided over the Quranic judicial systems and mosques, but muftis were not religious officials in the way most Europeans understood this term. Traditionally, they were responsible for weighing in on doctrinal controversies and issuing *fatwas* that clarified Islamic rulings. Nominating muftis gave the Ottomans some influence over how the Qur'an was interpreted and how prayer sessions were conducted, but muftis were hardly government officials beholden to Istanbul.

In taking charge of former Ottoman territories, European powers had the option of working through these existing institutional arrangements, but rarely did they offer the type of influence desired by the colonial state. Officials remained suspicious of "fanatical" *'ulamā* prone to resistance and incessantly worried that calls to jihad would invite mass rebellion. They needed support from religious authorities to temper critics and garner Muslim consent on the delicate issue of infidel rule. A change in the relationship between the Islamic community and the colonial state was inevitable.

In 1851, France created the *culte musulman*, effectively extending the *Concordat* system to Algeria.¹³ Imams, qadis, and Quranic educators were all reclassified as state employees, giving the government broad powers over the management of Algerian Islam. The objective behind this decision was not difficult to grasp. Managing Islam was not simply about doctrine. It touched upon almost every aspect of Algerian life, ranging from worship to law and education. France's ability to influence Algerian social life was in a very real sense dependent upon its ability to control religion. France could try to "civilize" its Muslims all it wanted, but enlightened rule only went so far. "It is the Muslim clergy that it is necessary to begin modifying," one colonist argued. "It is them alone who can and must become the instrument of the transition and the initiator of Mohammedan civilization."¹⁴ Accordingly, from the 1850s onward, Algerian Islam was subject to a number of "reforms" aimed at increasing state supervision over the Islamic establishment. Weekly prayer sessions which routinely evoked the name of the Ottoman sultan were banned in mosques. Disobedient imams were silenced and subjected to disciplinary measures. Rulings issued by the muftis now acquired the character of a French script handed down by the governor-general to the ranks of Muslim jurists. "The European powers which have Muslim subjects have not failed to understand the importance of *fatwas* in order to better assure their domination," Octave Houdas observed years later.¹⁵

It fell to officers in the Arab Bureau to seek out legal and religious authorities willing to work with the French regime. Selections were based upon varying criteria, but typically whether one was "well disposed to the French occupation" or known for being "an educated [individual] without fanaticism" took precedent.¹⁶ Other candidates were selected based upon their prior cooperation with the state or their family background.¹⁷ Natives had various

reasons for collaborating, but more often than not pecuniary factors were decisive in these decisions. Muftis on the state payroll could earn anywhere between 1,200 and 1,800 francs per year (approximately \$35,000 by today's standard) while imams had a starting salary of 900 francs per annum.¹⁸ On average, these sums were more than the amounts religious authorities and scholars customarily received from local communities in return for their services. This did not include extra money doled out by the government to individuals willing to prove their worth to France. In 1869, the civil commissaire petitioned the prefect of Oran, requesting that the teacher El Hadj Salem Bel Azbi be given an extra sum of 180 francs per year due to his dedicated service to France. At his madrassa, Salem encouraged students to attend the French schools in the locality. "He takes very great care to bring up his students," the commissaire noted, "and every day takes them himself to French classes and makes every effort to persuade natives to allow their children to attend our schools."¹⁹ Certainly, this type of behavior was worthy of a bonus. Given the fact that state employment meant access to financial and material rewards, ambitious individuals were willing to collaborate with the colonial regime. It was no wonder that the educator Buret wrote to the Ministry of Education and Religion in 1898 to introduce himself and request an appointment as an imam of the first rank. To his credit, he cited his previous service to the government and his local community, insisting, "I fulfill all my duties as a Muslim and Frenchman."²⁰

Finding suitable candidates was always a challenge. Officials periodically complained of the lack of trustworthy clients to staff the *culte musulman*. The most promising nominees were those who attended French schools and received a European education. Yet the schools built by the French were never popular among Muslims. Parents feared European educators would try to convert their children to Christianity, entailing that state schools remained largely the preserve of European colonists. In 1894, the senator Émile Combes addressed this issue head-on, arguing that French education initiatives needed to change. Traditional Muslim schools (*madrassas*) were a bastion of Islamic fanaticism, Combes believed. France was competing with established Quranic schools for the hearts and minds of Algerian youth. As long as it continued to offer an unattractive curriculum, it would find itself on the losing end. To make French schools more competitive, Combes proposed recruiting native educators who could provide students with a Quranic education, albeit one that would "orient them toward the principles of our civilization." In an ambitious mission statement, he called for a far-reaching policy of education reform in the colony, spotlighting the creation of new Franco-Muslim schools designed to turn out a loyal and forward-looking native elite who could take up roles in the administration.²¹ Over the coming years, a series of state-backed madrassas were set up in the major Algerian

cities with the hope of attracting Muslim students. Upon the opening of the Algiers Madrassa in 1904, Auguste Mouli  ras, a missionary whose expertise in Arabic had earned him a professorship in Oran, attempted to assuage suspicious parents with the promise that any child who passed through the halls of the new school would receive a solid Quranic education. "[Parents] hand over Muslim to us and we return Muslims to them, but enlightened Muslims conscious of their duties and tolerant of others," he proclaimed.²² Despite such assurances, attendance at these schools remained low.

In all these efforts, France endeavored to create what had not previously existed in Algeria: a class of Muslim functionaries responsible to the state. The *culte musulman* was a unique creation, a point highlighted by several observers. The explorer Alfred le Ch  telier unabashedly applauded the work undertaken by the government in Algeria, boasting, "we have created an Islam unique to the world."²³ Henry de Castries was less optimistic. While he did not deny that having a faithful Muslim clientele was essential, the extent of their authority was doubtful. "This salaried clergy by the infidel [is] a monstrosity in the eyes of believers," he contended, leaving doubts as to whether it could win over Algerian natives.²⁴

For better or worse, the *culte musulman* effectively made France the guardian of an "official" Islam in the colony. This role incurred a number of new responsibilities that French officials had little enthusiasm for. The government took it upon itself to seek out interlocutors, staff judicial posts, and run Quranic schools. It was also responsible for servicing and maintaining the many mosques under the charge of the *culte musulman*. Inevitably, colonial officials found themselves embroiled in local disputes and rivalries that they would just as much rather avoid. When a qadi in Annaba levied accusations of corruption and bribery against one of his assistants in 1867, French authorities were required to carry out a full investigation to determine whether criminal charges should be sought.²⁵ On other occasions, officials had to follow up on charges of legal mismanagement or imams who failed to meet the standards of the community.²⁶ There was seemingly no end to the complaints and local wrangling that colonial officials faced. They also had to deal with requests coming from mosques. Lamps, oil, ceremonial objects, carpets for prayer rooms: all of these had to be supplied by the state, and this was on top of the many repairs needed to keep mosques functioning.²⁷

According to government assessments during the 1850s, most mosques in Algeria were in a state of neglect, if not total ruin.²⁸ This was in addition to the mosques that the French military had destroyed or occupied during the initial conquest. Renovations would be required, and the hefty sums needed to carry out this work would have to be covered by the state. There were not enough funds to go around given the extent of needed repairs. Officials had to make judicious decisions on which buildings to save. The

large, highly trafficked mosques located in the main cities received the lion's share of state money. The Djamaa el Kabir in Algiers was a particular focus of government attention. The building was "the most complete monument of Arab architecture" that existed in Algeria, according to the surveyor. It was also "the most beautiful of the monuments" in the city.²⁹ Outside the colonial capital, the government spearheaded similar urban redevelopment campaigns focused on religious buildings. In 1856, officials singled out the thirteenth-century Sidi Belhassen Mosque in Tlemcen with its majestic minarets and walls lined with Arabic inscriptions as "an historical monument that is important to conserve."³⁰ Likewise, the Salah Bey Ben Mostafa Mosque in Constantine was slated for restoration work. Civil authorities did not conceal their hopes that the mosque would contribute to beautifying the city and assist in making it a provincial capital of note on par with Algiers. "It is impossible to refuse to the city of Constantine, capital city of the province and home of a large native population, what we have done already for Algiers," one official declared.³¹ The state's focus on the "great" mosques in the colony made evident that the practical needs of Muslim worshipers were not the only or even primary motivating factor in carrying out these public works projects. For a self-proclaimed "Muslim power," mosques possessed an important symbolic value. Preserving Algeria's Muslim "patrimony" demonstrated the *culte musulman*'s commitment to the Islamic community and, by extension, France's goodwill toward its Muslim subjects.³²

When it came to Muslim demands for new mosques in small, isolated communities, the situation could be quite different. In many instances, requests for funds exceeded what the government was willing to give. In 1883, Muslims in Oran's Village Nègre put forward a new plan for a mosque estimated at 10,500 francs. The *Conseil Général*, however, was only willing to provide 3,000 for the project, instructing residents they would have to make up the shortfall.³³ Organizing a public subscription to raise funds was the most likely alternative, although the assessor feared this would not be feasible given the poverty of most residents. The state remained firm, replying that "in this situation, it is absolutely unrealistic to count on the support of the state."³⁴ In the end, the residents of Village Nègre had to reconcile themselves to a simple prayer room. In some instances, however, the state forbade Muslim residents from organizing public subscriptions for unauthorized building projects. In 1899, Muslim notables in Miliana sought funds to finance work on a Sufi zawiya in the locality. The government refused to help, and when local Muslim elites request permission to organize a subscription campaign in the vicinity, officials denied the request, giving the flimsy rationale that outside communities would reap no benefit from the proposed project. In reality, the government did not want to deal with the annoyance of having to

issue travel permits and keep tabs on Muslims traveling across the region to collect money.³⁵

Disputes over the allocation of resources were not the only problem the *culte musulman* faced. Building projects themselves generated fissures. Plans to construct a mosque in Aïn Témouchent touched off a fierce debate between the government and local residents in the late 1890s. The state had drawn up blueprints for the mosque based upon the size of the local Muslim population. Residents, however, noted that the mosque was bound to attract Muslims from the surrounding areas, meaning the current plan was insufficient. They also insisted that the location for the mosque had been poorly chosen. It would be better placed in the Muslim quarters on the outskirts rather than in the city center. A heated exchange ensued with state officials feeling the residents of Aïn Témouchent were trying to mislead the government to attain a grand mosque of their own.³⁶ Such quarrels were not an isolated incident. Disagreements over the location of public works projects were a common occurrence. On more than one occasion, imams complained that the placement of newly built mosques was inadequate. State architects did not take into account the fact that prayer rooms should be built facing Mecca. As a result, these buildings "did not present the desired conditions for Muslims to carry out prayer."³⁷ In communes with a mixed population of Europeans and Muslims, fights over space were legion. In 1897, Muslims in Jijel protested when a brothel was opened across from a local mosque in the town. The municipality prudently decided to move the brothel to a different location to avoid conflict.³⁸

These scenarios were all too familiar to many colonial officials as they attended to the daily work that came with governing a Muslim population. In taking control of Islam, French authorities may have felt they had bitten off more than they could chew. Dealing with the constant requests of Muslim communities and negotiating between Muslims and Europeans was a full-time job. Yet underlying the many quarrels that came with managing Islam, one question was paramount: who would pay for it all? On this question, there was little debate among European officials. It was the responsibility of the Muslim community itself.

In theory, this was no different from how Islamic societies had managed their own affairs in the past. Mosques, schools, and other services provided to the community were customarily supported by endowments known as *waqfs*. These charitable institutions were funded by wealthy notable families and rulers who, according to Islamic teaching, were obliged to contribute to their locality and support religious activities. *Waqfs* usually consisted of land, buildings, and other revenue-generating property set aside by donors, establishing a class of civic and religious benefactors who sustained the Islamic community. Although this system could encourage corruption and

favoritism, the *waqfs* were a central pillar of Muslim societies, furnishing the essential financial resources they needed to operate. Institutions like the *culte musulman* set up by the French were intended to assume these functions. As early as 1840, the governor-general of Algeria, Sylvain Valée contended that Algerian *waqfs* would better serve their purpose under French management since French officials were “best placed to appreciate the needs of the population” and could ensure corruption was kept to a minimum.³⁹ Within a decade, most lands were under French control, placing these assets at the disposal of the *culte musulman*. As the colonial regime saw it, the state was simply arrogating the traditional functions of elites for the benefit of the Muslim community. In reality, such tactics made Algerian Islam dependent on the colonial state for its livelihood and existence.⁴⁰ Controlling the purse strings was the most assured means of controlling Islam, a lesson that was not lost on European colonial powers as they expanded their reach across *dar al-Islam*.

“PATIENT AND CAUTIOUS OPPORTUNISM”

Was Algeria a successful model for managing Islam in a colonial setting? The verdict was unclear, but it didn’t prevent others from speculating on whether there were lessons to be learned from the French experience. In 1882, the Austrian financial and legal analyst Karl Scheimpflug frankly admitted that the Habsburg monarchy need not re-invent the wheel when it came to Bosnia. “A comparison between Bosnia and Algeria is not meaningless. In both cases, a Catholic-Christian state working in accordance with its historical nature seeks to incorporate a territory previously dominated by Islam.” Austro-Hungarian officials would do well to consider the French example in North Africa. All the same, Scheimpflug was conscious of one important difference. While France had the Mediterranean Sea between the nation and its African colony, the Habsburgs had only “a narrow stream” separating the imperial center from the colonial periphery.⁴¹

Incoming Habsburg authorities were content to work through the existing Ottoman system to make the transition as smooth as possible. They needed the support of the local population and could not afford to muddy the waters. This was doubly true of the Muslim notables. “Attention needs to be directed [at] the Muslim population and special attention given to it,” General Philipovich alerted Vienna. The Muslims were not only the largest landholding class in the province but represented “the most progressive and enlightened part of the population.”⁴² Anything that might jeopardize Muslim support was to be avoided at all costs. Preserving the status quo seemed the optimal way forward.

Such thinking, however, was due to change as the Habsburgs solidified their rule. For starters, the traditional Ottoman administration consisting of roughly 120 officials proved insufficient to address all the needs arising from the occupation. There was, of course, also the question of whether Ottoman subjects could be trusted. From the start, German, Czech, and Croatian officials were dispatched to Bosnia to assist the government. By 1881, the civil service had already grown to approximately 600 administrators. By 1908, this number had ballooned to a staggering 10,000.⁴³ With Austro-Hungarian rule came a more robust bureaucracy and interventionist state, one similar in scope to the *Religionspolitik* in force throughout the rest of the empire. The multinational governing class was expected to administer and keep the peace among the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims under its rule. The “foreign” character of the government certainly accentuated its colonial nature. Only two years after Habsburg forces entered Bosnia, Arthur Evans was convinced that the province was being run like any other European colony. “Many of the officials are absolutely ignorant of the language of the country. Most of them hold the people in absolute contempt, and treat them like cattle,” he accused. Not a day passed during which some “fresh wound” was inflicted on the local population by military authorities.⁴⁴ Uprisings in 1878 and early 1882 appeared to vindicate Evans. It was no wonder the military commander Baron Joseph von Szilávy deemed it essential to seek out support at the local level and find “personalities who will exercise influence on their coreligionists because of their integration, education, irreproachable conduct, and social status.”⁴⁵

With Kállay taking charge in 1882, a more focused policy of state administration was introduced. He fully agreed with men like Szilávy that the way forward was through working with the established religious communities. Kállay was cautious when it came to the Slav nationalist movements growing up in the Balkans. If allowed to spread, the Habsburgs could face a potential nightmare scenario in which Bosnian Slavs mounted a unified resistance movement against the occupation.⁴⁶ The government’s decision to recognize and establish separate relations with the province’s Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim communities was a strategic decision adhering to the familiar maxim of *divide et impera*. Yet cynicism was not the only factor at work. Centuries of Ottoman imperial rule had left their mark. The *millet* had been the basic social and political unit of the Ottoman Empire, with religious identity favored over nationality. “In Bosnia, confession forms the foundation of social life,” Kállay asserted.⁴⁷

Taking the reins of the Bosnian administration, he was determined to maintain separate institutions for each of the province’s confessional groups. He was also resolved to build bridges with the Muslim community and win them over to Habsburg rule. This objective posed evident difficulties. The Ottoman

sultan, still technically sovereign, continued to possess the right to appoint the mufti and other religious officials in the territory. For Kállay, this power-sharing agreement was unworkable. Left in place, it would consistently hamper Austro-Hungarian authority and provide an alternative center of power to which Muslims could turn. As one of his first acts as finance minister, therefore, he supported the creation of the Reis-el-Ulema, a new religious office appointed by Emperor Franz Josef. Contrary to the former Ottoman system, the Reis-el-Ulema was designated the chief Islamic official of the state. He had at his disposal a council of Muslim advisers—the Medžlissi-Ulema—drawn from the ranks of Bosnia’s Muslim elite. Together, these bodies were responsible for recommending Islamic judicial and religious appointments in Bosnia-Herzegovina.⁴⁸ All said, these reforms proposed a new model of Islamic governance, establishing an independent Muslim administration that sidelined the Ottoman sultan and gave exclusive control to the Habsburg ministry. The government could count on the support of a carefully selected team of Islamic bureaucrats who would back Austrian policies and provide them with a sheen of religious legitimacy.

In exerting greater power over Bosnian Islam, Kállay remained conscious of the need to assuage Muslim fears regarding the intentions of an infidel Catholic dynasty. Consequently, state neutrality in religious affairs became his guiding mantra. He refused to entertain proposals for a policy of state-sponsored Christian resettlement, curtly remarking, “I don’t want a stream of people flocking to Bosnia.”⁴⁹ He likewise dismissed Catholics demanding preferential treatment for Bosnian Croats. The administration could not afford to take sides when it came to religion.⁵⁰ The government recognized only one principle when it came to Bosnia’s confessional groups: namely “complete equality” in the practice of religion and “completely equal support on the part of the government.”⁵¹ This was a controversial claim. Many Catholics saw the Habsburg Empire as a Catholic state with no obligation to cater to Muslims. Kállay also faced the challenge of convincing Bosnian Muslims of the state’s good intentions. Working through the Reis-ul-Ulema, he intended to demonstrate that the Catholic Habsburgs could be just as attentive to the needs of their Muslim subjects as any Ottoman sultan.

As in French Algeria, the state assumed responsibility for maintaining and building mosques, staffing the qadis, and administering Quranic schools. And as in Algeria, Kállay made it clear that any expenses associated with the Muslim community would be financed through local institutions rather than state coffers. Following the appointment of the Reis-ul-Ulema, Kállay set up a special commission for the management of Bosnian *waqfs*, or *vakufs* in their Turkish variant. In 1882, the government assumed the right to take charge of surplus income generated by *vakuf* properties currently in a state of neglect.⁵² A Vakuf Commission was set up in Sarajevo to oversee the work.

The Finance Ministry treaded carefully, using recourse to Ottoman law to verify which *vakufs* were designated property of the state and which were privately owned.⁵³ Two years later, vakuf commissions were established for each district. Local qadis and imams were instructed to draw up lists of properties in their areas, assess their values, and turn this information over to Sarajevo. These activities were “to ensure the orderly functioning” of the Islamic endowments that supported the community.⁵⁴ They also extended the reach of the state down to the local levels of Muslim society. The state even claimed the power to appoint the individuals who managed *vakuf* lands and buildings, with the “competence and worthiness of the candidate” decided by the Vakuf Commission.⁵⁵

According to government reports, state oversight saw a rise in the income generated by the *vakufs*, with better management and accountability cited as the chief reasons. In the past, revenue had largely remained in the hands of landowners invested with the power to decide how the funds were spent. Now, the money was channeled back to Sarajevo with funds distributed more equitably based upon need. While the Vakuf fund was theoretically “independent” from the state and administered by local Muslim officials, in reality, the government had far-reaching powers over its functioning.⁵⁶ It organized the commission and had the power to appoint the top religious officials who decided how to best use the funds. By design, this relationship encouraged a certain dependency on the state.

On one hand, Kállay's state-oriented approach to religion marked a continuation of Ottoman administrative policies. Yet on the other hand, the presence of the state intervened in the lives of subjects like never before. The new religious bureaucracy diminished the traditional autonomy enjoyed by the Muslim community. It created an official Muslim class that gave the government a fair amount of influence over Bosnian Islam. Naturally, this was not how officials portrayed their actions. According to Lajos Thallóczy, the state was pursuing a “conservative” policy that accorded with Muslim traditions. “The government desires to invigorate the entire life of Bosnian Islam. It is not a question of innovation but rather of wishing to inject external energy into Islam which is not prohibited on religious grounds.”⁵⁷ This dual plan of “conserving” and invigorating Islamic society presented itself in contradictory ways. Kállay was a firm proponent of the “civilizing” ethos touted by many Austrian and Hungarian politicians. As he told journalists at a press conference in 1895, “Austria is a great Occidental Empire charged with the mission of carrying civilization to Oriental peoples.”⁵⁸ How to square this message with a “conservative” religious policy was always tricky.

As expected, tensions emerged between Habsburg officials and local Muslim community leaders who interpreted state initiatives as a threat to their religion and way of life. This conflict played out on various levels, not

least of all in the domain of education. Viennese publicists championing the Bosnian “civilizing mission” imagined a new system of state schools turning out the type of enlightened subjects desired by the regime. “If it is generally the mission of Austria to carry culture to the East,” stated one journalist in 1880, “[then] the means for achieving this is preferably the school.”⁵⁹ In the late 1890s, the government appeared to be acting on this injunction when it took the lead in establishing schools for Muslim girls. Females received a rudimentary religious education at *maktebs* but had few opportunities for advancement beyond these elementary institutions. To address this shortcoming, the government invested in building a small number of schools committed to providing education opportunities to female students. To alleviate Muslim anxieties, school curriculums offered a traditional Quranic education. However, they also introduced students to new subjects as well, including lessons in French and German. While the state presented these schools as a progressive step in line with Islamic tradition, many Bosnian Muslims disagreed. Critics remained suspicious of state-funded schools, complaining they would spread irreligious ideas and encourage the “Europeanization” of Muslims. They wanted girls to remain “Muslim women,” as one petition stated. The government was sensitive to these grievances and attempted to make female educations as palatable as possible by limiting the curriculum to household “handiwork” and domestic responsibilities.⁶⁰ However, complaints persisted.

Navigating the strict gender roles prescribed by conservative religious authorities was never easy. Dictates on the sequestration of Muslim women and conventions regarding gender relationships provided grounds for cultural conflicts that the state would just as much avoid. The government took measures to accommodate Islam where it could. When Muslims objected to state tax collectors entering the private chambers of women during official visits, the government responded. An official circular was sent around instructing state employees not to enter Muslim residencies without a male chaperon, lest they run the risk of offending husbands.⁶¹ The state also invested in training female doctors to provide health services to Muslim women. Theodora Krajewska, who was assigned to Tuzla and Sarajevo in the late 1890s, came to understand that treating Muslim patients required more than simply administering medical services. “The lifestyle of the female Mohammedan population is different in so many ways from her Christian counterpart that a doctor must first learn about their customs and traditions before knowing how to treat Mohammedans,” she claimed.⁶² Krajewska was among a small number of female medical practitioners sent out to the provinces to treat ailments and instruct women in proper methods of hygiene. She made routine visits to Muslim homes where she lectured women on the benefits of washing clothes, preparing food in a sanitary manner, and keeping a tidy household. She also had to convince women of the benefits of modern medicine over folk remedies.

Krajewska took her responsibilities seriously, claiming that “when it comes to the instruction of the population regarding hygiene, efficient lifestyles, and health care a great deal of time, patience, and methodical procedure is required.”⁶³ Experts noted that Muslim households were a breeding ground for disease. “Most women, and all the Muslims, dwell in isolated living spaces with little consideration for sanitary conditions,” Bohuslava Keckova recorded when surveying homes in Mostar. In her opinion, domestic seclusion, poor ventilation, and generally filthy living conditions contributed to a variety of pulmonary disorders, most dangerously the spread of tuberculosis.⁶⁴

Experts like Keckova and Krajewska took up their duties with alacrity, believing they were providing a public good to the Muslim community. Yet their work was never divorced from the general “civilizing mission” endorsed by the government. Keckova found Muslim girls “intelligent, talented, and eager to learn.” Instructing them in the ways of modern medicine, she believed she was serving the greater cause of Habsburg imperialism. “I aspire in several well-off Mohammedan families to influence intelligent women in the ways of civilization while speaking with them on long winter evenings about different aspects of our culture.”⁶⁵ In their outreach with Muslim communities, European women found the means of claiming a role for themselves in the “civilizing mission.” Their work was part of a general effort to transform Muslim society, educate women in the ways of modern Europe, and produce loyal imperial subjects convinced of the benefits brought by Austria-Hungary.

Together, these details contributed to a picture of a Muslim society in transition. “Patient and cautious opportunism” became the basis of Kállay’s approach when it came to governing a Muslim populace.⁶⁶ Understanding when to act and when to yield was key. It could not be denied that under Austro-Hungarian rule, Bosnian Islam acquired a new relationship with the state. The Habsburg government believed that its policies were dragging a reluctant Islam into the modern age, or “pumping healthy blood into a half-dead corpse,” as one commentator phrased it.⁶⁷ State interventions were never removed from the colonial mentality that guided administrative officials. Under Habsburg stewardship, Bosnian Islam was a colonized Islam.

“WE HAVE NEVER HAD AN ENEMY SO SAVAGE”

The tightening of state control and the creation of bureaucratic institutions to manage Islam were shared features of an emergent colonial order. However, these strategies were not without past precedent. French and Austrian officials were unwittingly traveling a well-trodden route.

European statesmen would have been stunned had they been told their colonial policies bore a striking resemblance to those in places like the

Russian Empire further to the east. However, such was the case. It was no secret that Russia possessed a large and diverse Muslim population consisting of Mongol descendants, Volga Tatars, Bashkirs, and other Turkic-speaking peoples. Yet, for most Western observers, this factor set Russia apart from Europe in significant ways. Popular perceptions of Russia emphasized the empire's "Oriental" and semi-barbaric qualities. While Catherine the Great may have resolutely asserted in 1767 that "Russia is a European state," many Europeans begged to differ.⁶⁸

Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Tsars expanded their power across the Volga-Ural region and much of Central Asia. By the dawn of the eighteenth century, the empire stretched from Ukraine in the west to the far reaches of Siberia and the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk. "European" Russia was only one part of this massive land empire spanning two continents. The strict binary concepts of "East" and "West" that most Europeans took for granted seemingly melted away when considering the Tsarist imperial domain. While the state officially identified with the Orthodox Christian faith, it ruled over a multiethnic population consisting of Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, and animists. According to the first imperial census carried out at the tail end of the nineteenth century, the empire was home to some 20 million Muslim subjects—15 percent of the total imperial population—giving it a larger Muslim population than the neighboring Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹ Cities like Kazan, nestled at the confluence of the Volga and Kazanka rivers, reflected the diversity the empire embodied. As one visitor described it, the city appeared a strange blend of "Russian" sophistication and "Asiatic" simplicity. "Islam and Christianity, Russian and Tatar, the vista of churches and mosques, the sound of pealing bells mingling with the savage, penetrating howls of the muezzins . . . is an astonishing panorama of paradoxes."⁷⁰ Various intellectuals expressed ambivalence when it came to defining Russian culture and identity.⁷¹ "We do not belong to any of the great families of the human race," wrote the philosopher Pyotr Chaadayev in 1829. "We are neither of the West, nor of the East."⁷²

For some, Orthodox Christianity was the essential bond that held the Russian community together. Since the sixteenth century, the Tsars had claimed the status of protector of the Orthodox faith, resulting in a close relationship between church and state.⁷³ Naturally, this complicated rule over non-Christian subjects. Many looked askance at the considerable Muslim population in their midst. Could Muslims be loyal subjects of a Christian ruler? Or would they instinctively look toward other centers of authority, most notably the Ottoman sultan? Orthodox missionaries took no chances and during the sixteenth century commenced a widespread conversion campaign with the blessing of the state. These encroachments, however, provoked intense and often violent conflicts that tore communities apart. Even those forcibly converted

remained suspect.⁷⁴ In the 1780s, these tensions reached a head as Russia entered a protracted war with the Ottoman Empire that lasted throughout most of the decade. Fearful that Muslims might side with the besieged Ottomans and invite a constant state of religious warfare, the Tsarina Catherine the Great felt it imperative to keep the peace and come to an agreement with her Muslim subjects. "In so vast an Empire which extends its dominion over such a variety of people," she proclaimed, "the prohibiting, or not tolerating of their respective religions would be an evil very detrimental to the peace and security of its subjects."⁷⁵

In 1788, Catherine authorized the creation of the Ecclesiastical Assembly of the Muhammadan Creed, a body that would soon become known by the official title of the Orenburg Muhammadan Ecclesiastical Assembly. Orenburg was an administrative outpost located on the frontier separating the lower Ural Mountains from the Kazakh Steppe. As a gateway to Asia, it was an ideal location for establishing a native administration for the empire's Asiatic territories. In accordance with Catherine's decree, the Assembly was responsible for liaising with the Muslim communities of the Volga-Ural region and establishing contacts with Islamic authorities further afield. The body contained a state-appointed mufti who was to serve as a figurehead for Russia's Muslim community. In conjunction with the Ministry of the Interior, the mufti was granted the power to certify imams, judges, and educators employed in the local mosques. Officials drew up a system of Muslim "parishes" based upon the Orthodox model, bringing into existence a network of mosques and religious institutions under state control.⁷⁶ Sixty years ahead of France in Algeria, the Russian imperial government had succeeded in creating its own Islamic "church" staffed by a disciplined Muslim "clergy" responsible to St. Petersburg.

In some ways the new imperial frameworks marked a departure for the Tsarist state, trading in a narrowly defined religious ideology for one modeled upon Enlightened notions of religious "tolerance" and state mediation. Yet in other ways, it possessed continuity with traditional forms of Tsarist governance. The empire had always been to a certain degree a "confessional state" that worked alongside religious institutions.⁷⁷ The difference was now these institutions were coming to include Islam in addition to Orthodox Christianity.

As with other colonial empires, the power of a centralized Islamic bureaucracy was far from absolute. Muslim subjects did not accept the muftiate unconditionally, and many unlicensed clerics and itinerant teachers—so-called "false mullahs"—continued to operate with support from local patrons. All the same, changes were evident in the daily religious life of the empire. The Assembly laid out uniform religious practices for mosques. Public ceremonies and legal proceedings were accompanied by Quranic proclamations.

Imams invoked the name of the Russian Tsars in their prayers while religious officials urged Muslim congregations to serve the imperial government and abide by its laws.⁷⁸ These gestures presented an image of Russia as a Muslim power deserving of the trust and loyalty of its many Muslim subjects. It even encouraged comparison with other European powers. "England is bragging that it is the first Muslim power in the world," stated the military attaché Viktor Antonovich Frankini in 1863, "but Russia also has a lot of Muslim subjects whose number is growing every day."⁷⁹ Comparisons did not, however, imply that Russian authorities were merely aping their Western counterparts, some insisted. Unlike the French or British who were subjugating foreign populations and placing them under an alien rule, Russia was following its natural historical development as it expanded ever further eastward. There was, in other words, an organic bond between Russia and the peoples of the East, one that was destined in time to achieve a natural unity through the inexorable processes of history. "Russia, in reality, conquers nothing in the East, since all the alien races visibly absorbed by her are related to us in blood, in traditions, in thought," proclaimed the poet and confidant of Tsar Nicholas II, Prince Esper Esperovich Ukhtomsky. "We are only knitting together closer the bonds between us and that which in reality was always ours."⁸⁰ These Eurasianist fantasies were adhered to by a minority, but they did acquire greater saliency as Russia enlarged its empire, giving Russian imperialism a unique character when compared with other European powers.⁸¹

Yet ironically, as Russia became a formidable and expansionist "Muslim power," the image of its empire began to change. In the 1820s, Russian military forces invaded the Caucasus, slowly extending control into Dagestan and Chechnya. Sufi shaykhs in the south, led by the charismatic leader Imam Shamil, mounted a fierce resistance campaign that Russian troops were hard-pressed to put down. "We have never had . . . an enemy so savage and dangerous as Shamil," remarked the acting General Adjutant Evgenii Alexandrovich Golovin, who compared the imam's "religious-military character" to Muhammad himself.⁸² The war was grueling and brutal. By the time Shamil was driven into submission in 1859, Caucasian society was devastated.⁸³ Considering the resources committed to the war and the sheer violence it unleashed, Russian officials were quick to draw parallels with the French in Algeria, and even suggested that French colonial policies could offer a model for Russia to emulate.⁸⁴ Conquest brought a diverse Muslim population of Chechens, Ingush, and Aziris into the empire, which were distinct from the Tatars to the north-east. In the wake of the conflict, the military government set up dual Shi'ite and Sunni ecclesiastical boards for the region with a Sheikh-ul-Islam appointed to select mullahs and qadis to serve the local population. Although similar to the Orenburg Assembly, the Caucasian administration had its own idiosyncrasies. This "official" brand of Islam was designed to serve as an arm

of the Russian occupation. One of its chief purposes was to infiltrate the Sufi networks popular in the North Caucasus and weed out any potential radical spiritual leaders.⁸⁵ Colonial style rule was the order of the day, shattering any illusions that Russian expansion was a “natural” process.⁸⁶

No sooner were the Caucasus pacified than Russian forces penetrated further into Central Asia, setting up a military governorship in Turkestan stretching to the edge of the Fergana Valley. Far more than any of Russia's previous conquests, Turkestan embodied a new imperial ethos, one focused on “civilizing” an Asiatic and semi-nomadic people through enlightened rule. The painter Vasily Vereshchagin was dispatched to the region to record the conquest, turning out large canvases depicting the heroism of Russian troops and the “barbarism” endemic to the native Turkic populations. The Russian government made certain his paintings were exhibited across Europe to publicize the empire's latest acquisition. When showing his work at London's Crystal Palace in 1873, Vereshchagin drafted the exhibition catalogue and drew stark parallels with British colonialism in India. “The central Asian population's barbarism is so glaring, its economic and social conditions so degraded, that the sooner European civilization penetrates into the land, whether from one side or the other, the better,” he declared.⁸⁷ Through these types of publicity campaigns, Russia was claiming a role for itself in the European colonial enterprise, announcing itself as a partner among the great powers called upon to spread modern civilization wherever they planted their flags.

If the tone of Russian imperialism was changing, so too was the administrative machinery. The governor-general of Turkestan, Konstantin von Kaufmann, a former military engineer who had received his apprenticeship working in the Caucasus, took a different approach to the native populations. Hardened by the experience of war and Sufi resistance, he deployed the tactics of modern colonial rule in the region. Against the judgment of high-ranking officials, he refused to set up an ecclesiastic administration, claiming it would be better to “ignore” Islam all together. For Kaufmann, “fanatical” Islam was the principal threat. To encourage it was to invite certain catastrophe. Accordingly, he abolished the position of the Shaykh al-Islam and dismissed all high-ranking Muslim authorities. The Islamic faith in Turkestan would be “tolerated” but it would not be “protected,” he decreed.⁸⁸ At the same time, colonists migrated into cities like Tashkent and established settlements in the northern part of territory, bolstering a Russian presence in the region. Civilizing the natives through state-sponsored education programs and economic modernization were the chief objectives outlined by the government. In time, Islam would wither away, breaking down the cultural barriers that separated natives from the incoming Russian settlers.⁸⁹

The conquest of the Steppe clearly broke with the old Catherinian tradition of religious governance. Turkestan and its seven million Muslims were

placed outside the structures of the Tsarist confessional state. Its mixture of military and civilian rule set it apart from the Volga-Ural region and marked a heightening of the colonial mentality that had taken hold during the Caucasian War.⁹⁰ Russian attitudes toward Islam were clearly in flux as officials began to speak of the “Muslim question.” Religious warfare and the ever-present threat posed by Ottoman Pan-Islamism, not to mention the tensions arising with Britain as Russia inched closer to Afghanistan and the Raj engendered a more antagonistic atmosphere. By consequence, military officials and state administrators were willing to place their faith in the redemptive power of the colonial civilizing mission, relegating Islam to the margins. “There are no favorable outcomes from Islam, unless it be through the intervention of outside elements,” wrote the general Lev Feofilovich Kostenko in 1871. “Islamism petrifies its people, so that not only are they incapable of development, but on the contrary, they regress still further into a type of ignorance.”⁹¹ European colonial regimes may have inadvertently adopted policies similar to the Tsarist empire as they built up religious bureaucracies and exerted greater control through Islamic institutions. Russian officials, however, were applying the lessons gleaned from their European competitors, espousing a colonial ideology that promised to secure Russia’s status as an equal among the great imperial powers of the earth.

TAKING THE MIDDLE GROUND

Russian efforts to publicize their work in Central Asia did not go unnoticed by European observers. British audiences took a particular interest in the subject and were not necessarily pleased with what they saw. Russian expansion into Turkestan’s Fergana Valley was dangerously close to the British Raj. Onlookers warned that St. Petersburg had every intention of moving into neighboring Afghanistan, setting the stage for an imperial test of wills across Asia. “Russia means to try and turn us out of India the moment she gets close enough,” the author Charles Marvin cried in 1885.⁹² A writer with a knack for churning out popular books on political subjects, Marvin was among a cohort of experts and journalists in the 1880s whipping up fears of an impending Anglo-Russian conflict, what diplomats would come to call “The Great Game.” In sounding the alarm, they cautioned that to ignore the Russian advance into Turkestan would be tantamount to abandoning India and ceding British hegemony across the Asian continent.

For the most part, these anxieties were overstated, although they certainly sold books and newspapers. Hyperbole notwithstanding, alarmist accounts did reflect certain apprehensions over Britain’s continued presence in South Asia during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In part, these growing

fears stemmed from the particularities of British imperialism itself. Whereas other powers relied upon military force and centralized bureaucracies to impose their will over colonial territories, British imperial rule proceeded along very different lines. From its origins, the British Empire had been a commercial enterprise. Trade and commerce rather than settler colonialism were the chief objectives, entailing Britain had a relatively light footprint in many of the areas over which it ruled, informally or otherwise.⁹³ The Indian administration consisted of a modest number of British officials who largely depended upon the cooperation of native and merchant elites. British economic clout rather than military strength was the fulcrum of this system, as many commentators pointed out. "Our government of India is essentially a government of prestige, of a belief in our enormous resources, of our unswerving justice, and of our capacity to rule," reminded the retired politician William Henry Gregory in 1886. "If that belief be shaken, the hand of power at once becomes palsied."⁹⁴

Officials always kept the 1857 Indian rebellion in the back of their minds, wondering if they could convince Muslims of the benefits of British rule. Although a minority in India—making up 25 percent of the population at most—India's Muslim population loomed large in the British imagination.⁹⁵ William Howard Russell's remark in 1858 said it all: "[the Muslims] are unquestionably more dangerous to our rule [than the Hindus]."⁹⁶ Yet to speak of *the* Indian Muslim community was a misnomer. In fact, it was largely a British creation.⁹⁷ Authorities repeatedly cautioned against another rebellion and offered dubious evidence of Pan-Islamic conspiracies in the works, but these were more fantasy than reality. Indian Muslims were not the cohesive group imagined by authorities. They were divided by crucial factors of language, ethnicity, economic conditions, occupation, and social background. Under the Mughal Empire, Muslims had scarcely thought of themselves as belonging to a single, homogenous community.⁹⁸ In a society characterized by Islamic custom and ritual, as the Mughal Empire was, distinctions according to sect, ethnicity, and caste carried more weight.

Just the same, the post-rebellion atmosphere suggested that things were changing. Pockets of resistance along the northern frontier and in the Punjab continued well after 1858, with calls to jihad stamping the conflict as a collective Muslim struggle against the infidel.⁹⁹ Further south, a new wave of Sunni religious revivalism was sweeping across Asia, drawing in disgruntled *'ulamā* and Sufi leaders. Reacting to both the British intrusion and the rise of a Hindu faction with quasi-nationalist overtones, movements like the Deoband originating in Uttar Pradesh preached a return to "pure" Islamic values and practices, presenting these as a source of social renewal. Religious leaders enjoined Muslims to disregard the British government and look inward to rediscover their true identity as Muslims. Notions of reclaiming a purified

faith and living in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet were gaining tractions across the Muslim world at this time and not confined solely to India. These movements, therefore, never congealed into a unified front and acquired various local and regional iterations as they spread. However, the revivalist movements of the nineteenth century did provide a context for thinking about a unified Muslim community linked by common beliefs and rituals. In peddling the fantasy of an Islamic “golden age” that could be recovered, Sufis and Deobandi were encouraging a new type of religious association emphasizing Islamic identification above and beyond local affiliation.¹⁰⁰

The widening gap between Muslims and the Indian government was cause for concern. Critics like William Hunter warned of the “dangerous firebrands” who spread their message of hatred and resistance, casting doubts on whether Muslims could ever be loyal imperial subjects.¹⁰¹ Colonial authorities felt it imperative to establish a rapport with the Muslim community and win support for British rule, lest they face another crisis akin to 1857. Yet to do so, they needed native partners who could speak for the British and earn the trust of India’s Muslim populations. During the 1870s, officials found just such an ally: the reformer and scholar Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

Born in 1817 to a family with connections to the Mughal court in Delhi, Sayyid Ahmad received a traditional Quranic education and later served the East India Company working in the court system. In 1858, he held the district of Bijnor for the British, refusing to join with the rebels. His support for the government notwithstanding, he was appalled by the British reaction and the atrocities that followed. In later years, he would publish his views on the incident, defending Indian Muslims from the slurs of critics like Hunter. He rejected that the rebellion had been an Islamic holy war, instead laying blame on the many long-term grievances the British had failed to address prior to 1857.¹⁰² Sayyid Ahmad recognized that the differences between the Europeans and natives were vast, but they were not insurmountable. His proposal to the British was simple: “let sympathy and confidence be instilled into the minds of the native community,” from which a more harmonious and equitable relationship would derive.¹⁰³ Following a trip made to England in 1869, Sayyid Ahmad became convinced that the British were in India for the long haul. Anglo-Muslim reconciliation was the only way forward, in his opinion. Trustworthy allies would be needed in this endeavor, and Sayyid Ahmad believed he was one of the few who could bring about the necessary rapprochement.

A staunch defender of Indian Muslims, Sayyid Ahmad played an instrumental role in giving form and substance to the idea of a “British” Muslim community in India. During the 1860s, he organized scientific societies and public lectures intended to “enlighten” Indian Muslims. He ran his own newspaper and gave speeches across the Raj encouraging his fellow believers to

appreciate what the British could offer. Returning from England in 1870, he expressed his aspiration of building a new university modeled upon Cambridge. His efforts paid off. Five years later, he helped lead a campaign for education reform that would culminate in the founding of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh. The College was the first of its kind in the colony, offering Muslims a Western style education designed to hasten their integration into British colonial society. Sayyid Ahmad's intention was to produce a new generation of Muslim leaders who could both serve the empire and their local communities.¹⁰⁴ His message that Indian Muslims should reconcile themselves to British rule and adopt what was best in the West struck a chord among a small group of Indian poets, educators, and reformers. Together, they stressed that Muslims need not reject change on the basis of religious conviction. Islam could be adapted to modern times, providing a framework for Anglo-Muslim cooperation and with it the advancement of India's Muslim population.¹⁰⁵ British officials certainly valued this message. In 1877, Sayyid Ahmad was knighted as a token of appreciation for his work in India. Even Lord Lytton, perennially suspicious of India's Muslims, expressed admiration for the man. In a show of support, he laid the ceremonial keystone for the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College.

Allies like Sayyid Ahmad went a long way in building trust with certain sections of India's Muslim community, but it was questionable whether his message of cooperation and modernization permeated downward beyond a small stratum of elites. How to engage and monitor these other communities was unclear. Britain's traditional approach to religion did not offer a helpful guide. Unlike France and Austria-Hungary, Britain did not foster the creation of a specifically Muslim bureaucracy to manage religious affairs. Britain had an established church—the Church of England—but aside from this the state rarely intervened directly in confessional matters. Religious communities were, for the most part, autonomous. The state might tolerate and accommodate other confessions, but it did not support them.¹⁰⁶ Complicating matters was the fact that Liberals were pressuring the government to re-think church-state relations. Calls for Anglican disestablishment were growing in parliament as issues surrounding education and religious politics in Ireland brought forth demands for religious “equality.”¹⁰⁷ The moment was hardly opportune for pushing forward with a state-sponsored “Muslim policy” that might fan the flames of Liberal discontent.

The absence of a definitive Muslim policy did not suggest indifference. British colonial authorities worried about the loyalty of Muslim subjects and were especially nervous over the rise of Pan-Islamic movements following the ascension of Abdülhamid to power. The efforts by men like Sayyid Ahmad could bear fruit in the long run, but what should be done in the meantime? States that refrained from intervening directly in religious affairs certainly

had a different relationship to Islam. Yet it did not preclude the possibility of devising a “Muslim policy” altogether. In fact, as the century progressed, British authorities only needed to look to one of their oldest imperial rivals in southeast Asia to understand this: the Dutch.

For much of the seventeenth century, The United Provinces of the Netherlands had been one of the predominant imperial powers on the world stage. Run by Calvinist merchants thirsty for profit, the Dutch Republic rapidly amassed an impressive maritime empire stretching from Indonesia to South America, with trading outposts located along the coasts of Japan, India, Africa, and North America. As the poet Joost van den Vondel claimed, Dutch power extended “as far as the sun shines . . . to all seas and coasts wherever profit leads us.”¹⁰⁸ Yet this confident outlook was not to last. Defeated by the British in a series of naval conflicts over the eighteenth century and weakened by growing religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants at home, the Dutch Empire lost much of its luster. As international trade declined, statesmen increasingly turned their attention inward to the problems afflicting Dutch society. From the 1780s onward, conflicts between Protestants and Catholics in the south destabilized the country. In the coming years, the state would meet this challenge by pushing through a series of limited reforms guaranteeing protection to religious minorities and restricting state intervention in religious affairs.¹⁰⁹ Sectarian strife at home was, however, only one problem among others faced by the government. As the nineteenth century progressed, European imperial expansion increasingly posed a threat. While the Dutch Empire of the nineteenth century may have been a shrunken and punier version of its former self, the Netherlands was still a colonial power. Moreover, politicians were not only determined to hold on to what they had. Like other European powers, they intended to expand, and Indonesia appeared the most appropriate place to realize this aspiration.

The first Dutch ships had arrived in West Java in the late sixteenth century, with the Dutch East India Company (VOC) being established shortly afterward. Much like the British in India, the Dutch permitted the Company to govern the distal eastern colonies through a model of corporate rule that favored trade and commerce. And like the British East India Company, the VOC revealed it was not up to the task of running an empire. It periodically intervened in Indonesian politics, becoming embroiled in the wars and conflicts that broke out among the various Indonesian chieftains and sultans. Despite expanding Dutch influence in Sumatra and Java, the VOC proved inept at governing the territories. In 1800, the Company, debt-ridden and wracked by local revolts, was liquidated and nationalized, setting the stage for a more formal style of colonial rule centered in Jakarta.¹¹⁰

The transfer of power did little to alter the situation. While the main sultans and local aristocracy accepted Dutch rule, the Islamized populations

of Indonesia did not. Buoyed by Islamic revivalist movements sweeping through the archipelagos during the nineteenth century, members of the *'ulamā* spearheaded campaigns calling for a return to Islamic governance and the expulsion of infidel influences.¹¹¹ For the most part, these fights were waged between the native nobility and Muslim authorities. However, over time the Dutch were gradually drawn into these disputes. In the 1820s, the local Adat nobility in Sumatra was compelled to call upon the Dutch when Islamic clerics from Sumatra coalesced in a unified Padri faction and led a revolt that the native chieftains proved unable to suppress. The Dutch were all too happy to intervene. Dutch intervention in Sumatra and Java paved the way for a more sustained colonial presence in the region. Further conflicts against the Aceh Sultanate of northern Sumatra in the 1870s only continued this trend. In pursuing Acehese guerrilla forces, the Dutch commander Joannes van Heutsz led a merciless war against civilians that by the dawn of the twentieth century had driven the resistance into submission. Heutsz's brutal tactics, what today would surely be considered war crimes, succeeded in securing the area under Dutch military control, but at what costs?¹¹² The vicious wars in Aceh against Muslim combatants not only further enflamed Dutch-native relations in Indonesia but also was an international embarrassment, signaling to the world that the Dutch were incapable of governing what remained of its once prestigious global empire. Taking stock of the situation in 1906, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje could only hope that his compatriots might learn something during this moment of "disaster and discredit."¹¹³

Hurgronje was writing at a transitional moment. The Dutch Empire, believed to be a mere shell of the former imperial power that had once commanded the respect of the world, was showing signs of renewal. It wasn't necessarily that the Netherlands were an expansionist power comparable to France and Britain. A new generation of Dutch imperialists was clearly sensitive to the growing importance of empire within nineteenth-century political culture. As European powers flaunted their imperial prowess, Dutch ideologues hoped to do the same. By the 1880s, the government was working to instill a revived imperial ethos in its citizens. Starting with the International Colonial and Export Exhibition staged in Amsterdam in 1883, imperial-minded officials began emphasizing their colonial presence across the globe. At expos and world fairs held in Europe, they presented visitors with replicas of Javanese villages and put on ethnographic displays featuring inhabitants from Suriname. These exhibitions were designed to remind audiences that the Dutch had a long tradition of colonial exploration and were still a colonial people.¹¹⁴ While the seat of Europe's economic and industrial productivity may have shifted since the seventeenth century, it was clear the Netherlands "still had a lot to do in their immense colonial empire," contended a French

observer admiring the Dutch displays erected in Amsterdam. "They have a great civilizing role to play in the Far East."¹¹⁵

Yet if outlooks in the Netherlands were changing, so too was the society and culture of its Indonesian colonies. Events like the Java and Aceh wars revealed the growing presence of Islam within Indonesia life during the nineteenth century. As merchants and itinerant travelers coming from the Middle East and India arrived in the archipelagos, Islam was becoming more important to its inhabitants.¹¹⁶ War hardened these religious attachments. In their struggles against Indonesian leaders and ultimately the Dutch, members of the *'ulamā* championed a more militant and oppositional brand of Islam in their local communities. The Dutch were not blind to these changes. For the most part, the former VOC had often taken a detached approach in its relationship to Indonesian Islam.¹¹⁷ It was content to outsource any semblance of a religious policy to Christian missionaries, who were permitted to operate freely in the colonies and hopefully win over Muslims through Christianization.¹¹⁸ Now, however, it appeared this strategy needed to be re-thought. However, the means for doing this were not always clear. In 1881, the government made overtures when it rebuilt the Great Mosque in Kota Raja destroyed during the Aceh War. Officials hoped it would send a message of the government's good intentions. On the contrary, the gesture set off protests when Acehese Muslims complained that the building was reflective of the Indo-Saracenic style used by the British in India and hence alien to Indonesia.¹¹⁹

Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje was all too aware of these brewing conflicts. An Orientalist scholar by trade, Hurgronje had spent years in Arabia studying the history and culture of Islam. In 1884, he even disguised himself as a Muslim pilgrim and made the trek to Mecca, producing a well-documented account that offered readers a history of the Hajj and a sketch of Meccan social and cultural life.¹²⁰ During the Aceh War, he spent his time in Jakarta writing a two-volume study of northern Sumatra and its people. His scholarship earned him a reputation as a prominent expert on Islam, and soon enough the Dutch government took note of his talents. Hurgronje quickly became Colonel Van Heutsz's personal adviser, counselling him on the best means for pacifying the Acehese uprising. As adviser on Arabian and Native Affairs, he came to exercise a significant influence over Dutch colonial policy. Yet it was also evident that he held views contrary to his superiors. Time and time again, he expressed frustration with Heutsz's heavy-handed approach to the war.¹²¹ The military, he contended, had a poor understanding of Indonesian Islam and was inclined to view Muslims as "savages" in need of stern discipline. This line would lead nowhere. Hurgronje was sensitive to the anxieties Muslims felt as European power extended across *dar al-Islam*. He also believed that educated Muslim elites were not as closed to European ideas as many supposed. Muslim encounters with Europe were "teaching

Islam that it had definitely to change its conduct," he claimed. The question facing modern Islam was how to do this without "emptying its spiritual treasury altogether."¹²²

In his estimation, to give Muslims a stark choice between apostasy or alienation was a losing strategy. The real question at hand was how to find "a durable *modus vivendi*" between Europeans and Muslims. "England, France, Holland, and other countries governing Mohammedan populations are all endeavoring to find the right way to incorporate their Mohammedan subjects into their own civilization," he stated. The old idea of "simply leaving Muslims to Islam" was no longer possible. The current issue was "how the Moslim world is to be associated with modern thought."¹²³ Unlike many in the military, Hurgronje did not hold ingrained suspicions of Muslims simply because they were Muslim. The problem was not religion per se. It was the politicization of Islam that posed an issue. "We must brace ourselves as much as possible against any influence of direct or indirect political orientation," he warned.¹²⁴ The government would better be served clamping down on local militancy driven by the *'ulamā* and precluding *fatwas* rousing Muslims to jihad. He was also conscious of the appeal that Pan-Islamism had among Indonesians and saw it as a danger. While Pan-Islamic ideas coming from the Ottoman Empire were "absolutely incapable" of achieving universal Muslim brotherhood, they did "nevertheless cause agitations and trouble" that needed to be addressed. These "foreign influences" had to be combatted and suppressed.¹²⁵ Tolerating Pan-Islamism was not an option that Hurgronje was willing to abide.

Curbing a "foreign" political Islam did not, however, entail a concerted resistance to Islam in general. In fact, Hurgronje advised against such a stance.

Whichever way we look at the matter, the conclusion remains that the only wise and just attitude appropriate to the government towards Islam consists in the strictest and most sincere maintenance of freedom of religion, albeit with important reservations on the political side of the Muslim system.

It was imperative that the government abide by "the unconditional and strictly fair maintenance of religious freedom." Indonesians had a "dubious tendency" of viewing their relationship with the government as "an essentially abnormal, temporary transitional stage," a view that Pan-Islamic propaganda encouraged. The way forward was to win the respect of Muslims by allowing them to practice their religion unimpeded by the state. In sum, the government would "maintain absolute freedom" on "purely religious" grounds while using the full force of the state to restrict a politicized Islam coming from abroad. In the meantime, the government would encourage native elites to

attend Dutch schools and prepare them for leadership positions in the colonial administration. The plan was to target the native aristocracy. Secular and scientific ideas would, in the long run, permeate down to the lower levels of society. The natives were, after all, “adoptive children into our national family,” as Hurgronje stated. “As a people and as a state, we must reach out to them in a religiously neutral field, leaving the intended rapprochement of a higher and more intimate nature to the various bodies and institutions better suited for this mission.”¹²⁶

Hurgronje’s hands-off approach resisted the model of the interventionist state found in Algeria and Bosnia. Yet this did not mean it was any less colonial in nature. In his time working for the colonial administration in Jakarta, Hurgronje clearly foresaw a “civilizing mission” for the Dutch in Indonesia, often parroting the lofty rhetoric used by the primary colonial powers. Yet as an Orientalist who had socialized with Islamic men of learning in his formative years, he was convinced of Islam’s ability and willingness to change. Muslims of the late nineteenth century were seeking to align their faith with the thought and culture of the modern world. European states could assist in this process, but ultimately change had to come from “the inside out, not the other way around,” as he argued.¹²⁷ “This is a work in which we all may collaborate, whatever our own religious conviction may be,” he claimed. What he labeled “the problem of Islam” was the most important question of the age. “Between Islam and the modern world an understanding *is* to be attained,” Hurgronje proclaimed optimistically, “and at no period has there been a better chance for furthering it than the time in which we are living.”¹²⁸

Between the bureaucratized Islam of North Africa and the indifference of administrators like Kaufmann, Hurgronje was proposing a middle way. Reaching out to native elites, diminishing religious politics, and refraining from interference in Muslim affairs: These were the methods of a sound “Muslim policy” with reasonable gains. The Dutch had thankfully come to the realization they would have to integrate Muslims into “modern culture,” Hurgronje professed.¹²⁹ What was left to prove was whether his pragmatic suggestions could, in fact, deliver this outcome.

THE MANY ROADS TO MECCA

Hurgronje may have been a pragmatist, but he was no idealist. He understood that combating political Islam would be a major undertaking. “Amongst the Moslim peoples placed under the direct government of European states a tendency prevails to be considered in some way or another subjects of the Sultan-Khalif,” he admitted.¹³⁰ Yet Ottoman Pan-Islamism aside, there was a more general concern when it came to stemming “foreign” influences. The

Islamic tradition was, by its very nature, linked to Arabia and Arabic culture. In Aceh, the local *'ulamā* possessed impressive libraries containing Arabic manuscripts and reproductions of the Qur'an. Arab scholarship and learning were widespread in the East Indies, as in every Muslim society. It was fine to instruct officials they should not "impudently neglect" the Islamic faith.¹³¹ Yet what to do when this faith was built upon broader cultural connections and social networks extending across Anatolia, North Africa, and especially the Middle East?

Given these questions, one of Islam's central pillars was particularly noteworthy: the annual Hajj to Mecca. Each year, Muslims left their homeland and undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca in fulfillment of their religious obligations. In the past, this journey was usually performed by individuals with the means to do so. However, during the nineteenth century, this was beginning to change. Improvements in transportation like the steamship and railroad collapsed geographical distances and made travel more affordable. Over the century, the Hajj was transformed from an elite into a mass phenomenon. By 1900, some 300,000 Muslims were departing for Arabia annually.¹³² Mecca was no longer some distant place on the edge of the desert that one might visit once in a lifetime. Rail, steam, and print brought Mecca closer like never before, stimulating a new fascination with the sacred city that played into the revivalist movements of the period. As Islamic religious authorities emphasized first principles and encouraged followers to harken back to an originary Islam, Mecca obtained a new cultural significance in Muslim perspectives. As Hurgonje observed in 1908, "this holy city has become the center of life of Islam in the East Indies."¹³³ This was just as true in North Africa and India.

The fact that the chief cities of Mecca and Medina lay within the Ottoman *vilayet* of the Hejaz did not sit well with European observers either. In 1902, the French consul in Jeddah had to wonder whether it was renewed religious fervor or Ottoman chicanery that was driving the new fascination with pilgrimage. "Must we see in this unusual growth in the number of pilgrims a recrudescence of the religious faith among Muslims or the results of a new policy inaugurated by the Turkish government?"¹³⁴ The answer was complex. No matter what the reason though, it was not difficult to see that the Hajj was becoming central to understandings of Muslim religious identity in the nineteenth century. Numbers alone bore out this conclusion. Self-proclaimed "Muslim" powers could hypothesize all they wanted on the causes of this trend, but the fact remained they were going to have to formulate some kind of response to it.

On one hand, the Hajj offered colonial governments a bargaining chip for negotiating with their Muslim subjects. Officials used pilgrimage as a carrot, permitting cooperative Muslims to undertake the trip as a reward for their loyalty. Support for hajjis also made for good public relations campaigns,

demonstrating the state's respect for the Islamic religion in general.¹³⁵ These tactics were no doubt useful tools in the colonial arsenal, but things did not always go as planned. Muslims outside the small circles of privileged elites found ways of participating in the pilgrimage without government authorization. In 1853, the British explorer Sir Richard Burton disguised himself as a Muslim and made the trip through the Hedjaz. What he found was eye opening. The highways to Mecca abounded with "pathetic Indian beggars" and poverty-stricken Muslims who had little affection for Great Britain. These individuals not only reflected poorly on the British government but also spread insidious lies about the administration, tarnishing Britain's image abroad. Once home, they spread "fanatical" ideas and stoked anti-colonial resistance movements. According to Burton, the Hajj was "fraught with evil."¹³⁶ British consular authorities were quick to agree, claiming the Hajj presented an opportunity for "Muslims of all nationalities" to socialize and hatch plots directed against colonial authority.¹³⁷ As Mecca became a center of Islam, it also became imagined as a meeting grounds for Pan-Islamic conspirators and radical jihadis. "They go [to Mecca] to whet their fanaticism, to fortify their prejudices against Christians," one Algerian colonist assailed in the 1870s. "In a word, too often they go there to seek out the marching orders transmitted from Constantinople."¹³⁸

As suspicion of Muslim subversion grew, officials demanded action. However, they were also conscious of the delicate nature of the situation. European powers could not simply shut down pilgrimage routes and prevent individuals from traveling to Mecca. Such drastic measures were bound to generate a backlash from Muslim subject and elicit accusations of interference in Muslim religious life. "Managing" the Hajj was a more promising solution. If imperial governments could not prevent Muslims from setting out to the Holy Land, they could take a more active role in policing pilgrimage routes, monitoring travelers, and providing services for hajjis along route.¹³⁹ Starting in the 1870s, governments began setting up state-operated quarantine stations, ostensibly to prevent against the spread of cholera and other illnesses. European officials enthusiastically advertised these public health initiatives as a means of caring for Muslim pilgrims abroad.¹⁴⁰ In reality, these measures outfitted governments with more effective ways of monitoring and tracing subjects. Consular authorities were also made responsible for issuing passports, keeping tabs on Muslim travelers, and attending to the needs of pilgrims. By the 1840s, the Russian consulate in Damascus was functioning as a main hub for the Hajj traffic coming from Central Asia while the Caucasian government vetted potential pilgrims to ensure that only "trustworthy" Muslims were allowed to leave the region.¹⁴¹ After 1878, the Austro-Hungarian government instituted a passport system for Bosnian Muslims headed to Mecca and urged them to apply, citing safety reason. Government issued

passports were essential “because the situation in Arabia is very unsafe and the pilgrim, who will not enjoy the security of a foreign authority, will be exploited at every turn.”¹⁴² While this rationale was sound, passports provided officials with the ability to verify traveler identity and itineraries and control the flow of religious pilgrims in ways that had not existed previously. By 1900, almost every European government was operating under a passport system that tracked pilgrims from their point of origin to their final destination and back.

Acclimating Muslims to an official system of travel was not always easy. Many governments struggled with Muslims who for one reason or another flouted official controls and set out on their own. The French required proof of income before issuing a passport to prospective hajjis.¹⁴³ However, each year the government contended with countless “unauthorized pilgrimages” (*pèlerinages clandestins*) which placed a strain on the colonial administration. In 1910, the French consul at Jeddah reported that despite the many measures in place Muslims persisted to circumvent official channels. “Each year hundreds of our subjects leave Algeria or Tunisia without permission and, whether by foot through Tripolitania, or by boat via Constantinople or Syria, carry out the hajj, and after the pilgrimage is concluded demand repatriation from the consulate.”¹⁴⁴ Consulates were bombarded by official requests from impecunious Muslims who lacked the funds to return home, expecting the government to foot the bill. In 1909, an argument erupted between France and the Ottoman government when pilgrims found without passports or money claimed to be North African subjects. The Ottomans expected France to pay for their transport back home, but without passports there was no way of validating if they were in fact the French subjects they claimed to be. A long quarrel ensued, with neither side wanting to claim responsibility for the stranded pilgrims.¹⁴⁵ To avoid such scenarios, the British government systematically refused to repatriate pilgrims on such grounds. The Algerian governor-general Charles Lutaud felt that it would be “assuredly more logical” for France to adopt the same position.¹⁴⁶

In addition to passport controls, states also intervened directly in organizing Hajj travel, with official travel routes approved by governments. As early as the 1850s, the British India Steam Navigation Company was transporting pilgrims from India to the Arabian Peninsula. With the opening of the Suez Canal and Red Sea passage, other European companies entered the business. British lines sailed from Indian ports to Jeddah while Dutch ships traveling from the Dutch East India to the Netherlands dropped passengers off in Arabia en route. Regular travel routes running across the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean serviced an increasing number of pilgrims each year. Because of the growing numbers of travelers, the Hajj meant big business for European shipping firms. British companies like Alfred Holt and Thomas Cook

got involved, offering package deals for travelers that were better organized and more expedient than the more traditional land routes to Mecca.¹⁴⁷ For territories connected to the Middle East by land, governments built upon existing networks in the region, using consular offices as hubs for monitoring the movements of Muslim subjects and directing the flows of Hajj traffic.¹⁴⁸

Watching all of this from a distance, Abdülhamid grew anxious. Managing pilgrimage traffic and offering protection to hajjis along route was a traditional service provided by the Caliph to his Muslim subjects, one that Abdülhamid took seriously as he attempted to bolster his image as Defender of the Faithful among Muslims worldwide.¹⁴⁹ The deepening involvement of European powers in one of Islam's most sacred rituals was not to be taken lightly. It wasn't simply that Europeans were appropriating the functions of the Caliph that was so vexing. The transport lines and quarantine stations set up by European governments were giving colonial powers a greater presence in the region. The Hejaz, which contained the premier Muslim holy sites, was the proverbial jewel in the crown of the Caliphal empire. Yet it was one of the most volatile provinces of the empire as well. Populated by Bedouin tribes and headed by an appointed steward coming from one of the local Arab families, Ottoman authority was never absolute along the frontier regions of Arabia. As Caliph, the Hajj possessed a symbolic importance that could not be ignored. However, as sultan of the Ottoman Empire, the Hajj was a matter of realpolitik. Exerting great control over the Hajj was to exert greater control over the Hejaz, securing it for the empire.¹⁵⁰

European attempts to instrumentalize Islam tested the resolve of Abdülhamid's Islamist policies on numerous fronts. For his part, the sultan was determined to meet these challenges. In carrying out his Caliphal duties, he allocated state funds to cover travel expenses for Muslims otherwise too poor to make the journey. Along pilgrimage routes, the state financed a series of service stations to feed and shelter hajjis. Ottoman troops were dispatched to patrol caravan highways, delivering protection to pilgrims while simultaneously augmenting the state's military presence in the region. In Arabia, where the arm of the state remained relatively weak, Abdülhamid negotiated with the Bedouin tribes and donated money for the construction of new buildings in the Hejaz to house religious and state authorities. In tandem with these more conventional duties, the sultan also showed himself willing to adopt the tactics employed by European powers. In 1894 the Ottoman shipping company *Edara-i Makhsus* was set up, providing Ottoman pilgrims with a direct route to Mecca via the Red Sea. Six years later, the government committed itself to a more elaborate project, drawing up plans for the Hejaz Railway snaking from Damascus to Medina. The work was initiated with Ottoman state loans in the first instance and later financed through public donations collected from across the Middle East. It was a railroad built by Muslims for

Muslims, as the official line stressed. With its completion in 1907, travelers could now ride from Istanbul all the way to the Muslim holy sites of the Arabian Peninsula in a matter of days, offering pilgrims a safe and expedient alternative to the arduous four-month long caravan routes that ran through the desert. As expected, Abdülhamid never failed to emphasize the religious dimensions of these modernizing projects, holding them up as proof of his dedication to the faith and the greater Muslim community.¹⁵¹

Innovations like the Hejaz Railway and the steamboat companies operated by European agents presented a strange mix of tradition and modernity as one of Islam's oldest rituals was brought into the age of steam and rapid travel. However, by the turn of the century, one may have asked to what extent the Hajj was exceptional. From the coasts of North Africa to the heart of Asia, it appeared that a more general process was underway: the intensification of state control over Muslim religious life.¹⁵² As the rhetoric of Muslim empire took hold, states sought to capitalize on their alleged "Islamic" credentials hoping to command the loyalties of those over which they ruled. European officials built up Islamic bureaucracies, worked through Quranic schools and law courts, and got involved in organizing religious pilgrimages. In servicing their Muslim empires, they supplanted and even enhanced many of the traditional functions carried out by Muslim sovereigns. Colonizers may have insisted they were bringing modern "civilization" to a backward and benighted people. Yet the confident narrative repeated by European imperialists never told the entire story. Rulers like Abdülhamid seamlessly blended a religious ideology focused on Islamic renewal and association with the modernizing impulses of the nineteenth century. That it began to look like European imperialism and Ottoman Islamism were cut from the same cloth was not surprising. Colonialism was deeply entangled with processes of Islamic modernization. Its coercive and violent features provided the context in which many Muslims experienced the transition to modernity.¹⁵³

NOTES

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Part Two

MUSLIM EUROPE

“We no longer live in the times in which it could be said to the Mussulmans: ‘Become Christians, if you wish to remain in Europe.’”

Midhat Pasha, 1878

“If all the Arabs and Berbers of Algeria were considered as Frenchmen . . . my village would no longer be called Colombey-les-Deux-Églises, but Colombey-les-deux-Mosquées.”

Charles de Gaulle, 1959

Chapter Five

Domesticating Islam

For most Viennese residents, the start of the new year in 1893 was a normal day. Shops were closed, the streets empty, and the sound of distant church bells could be heard pealing through the morning air. Yet at the royal residency, things were different. While the rest of Vienna was recovering from the balls and festivities of the previous night, Emperor Franz Josef was busy meeting with a small delegation of Muslim notables who had made the trip from Bosnia to the capital. The deputation had come to thank the emperor in person for building a Sharia law school in Sarajevo, which had turned out its first graduating class that autumn. The lead spokesman of the group lauded the “paternal care” Franz Josef showed toward Bosnia’s Muslims and assured him such gestures would not be quickly forgotten. “Your Majesty has no greater and more devoted subjects than the Mohammedans of Bosnia and Herzegovina,” the deputation concluded.¹

Members of the delegation may have claimed to speak on behalf of the entire Bosnian Muslim community, but there was little doubt that behind their expression of appreciation lay the hand of the Bosnian administration. A shrewd statesman, Kállay understood the symbolic politics of empire better than most. Dynastic loyalty was the linchpin of the Habsburg system. In sending this carefully vetted delegation to Vienna, Kállay was conveying a message. Under the proper conditions, supposedly “uncivilized” Bosnians could be transformed into peaceable and loyal subjects. The Muslims of Bosnia were the most striking proof that Austria-Hungary’s “civilizing mission” was progressing.

Self-congratulatory gestures aside, Kállay did have a more direct interest in sending a handful of Muslim loyalists to the capital. Kállay’s Bosnian policy was dependent upon establishing good relations with Muslim community leaders. He cultivated ties with pragmatic elites in Sarajevo, believing

this class constituted the necessary “state-building element” in Bosnia.² His plan was to create a reliable client group in the province, win them over with promises of support, and make them partners in the execution of Austro-Hungarian rule. This strategy, however, relied upon having a solid Muslim constituency to work through, a prospect which was not at all clear by the 1890s.

For centuries, Europe had been imagined as a preserve of Christendom. European states might rule over large Muslim populations, but these were located in Africa and Asia. For all their talk of being “Muslim powers,” issues regarding Muslim worship and integration into European society primarily remained a distant concern for nations like France and Britain. In southeast Europe, the picture was quite different. The former Ottoman Danubian Vilayet recently parceled out between regional powers had over 1 million Muslims, while Bosnia contained nearly 600,000 and Romania upward of 100,000 or more.³ These did not include the 300,000 plus living in Ottoman Rumelia ensconced between Greece and Bulgaria. Whether statesmen recognized it or not, Europe contained a substantial Muslim presence on its eastern periphery. Considering these numbers, questions of how to accommodate Islam were valid ones. Could Balkan Muslims, who had long nurtured an attachment to the Ottoman Empire, come to see themselves as part of a European society?

According to Kállay, the answer was yes. However, he was under no illusions that in order for this to occur, the Habsburg Empire was going to have to mold the faithful Muslim subjects it desired. In essence, he needed to create authentically “Bosnian” Muslims who were at once distinct from the Ottoman Empire and integrated into Habsburg imperial society.

Given Kállay’s background as a Balkanist, he turned to history as a guide. He was convinced that no matter the divisions engendered by religion, Bosnians shared a common heritage and nationality. “I see a land which for 1200 years has been called Bosnia. I see a people which have always called themselves Bosnian,” he claimed in 1893.⁴ Building upon this premise, Kállay insisted that Islam had followed a different path in Bosnia, setting it apart from its Ottoman neighbor. Prior to the Ottoman conquest, the Muslim land-owning class had been Slavic Christians. They had judiciously converted to Islam to preserve their social status, but conversion did not mean they were ethnic Turks or that the nobility had been thoroughly “Orientalized.” They were and remained Islamized Slavs who continued to possess a “Bosnian consciousness,” according to Kállay. The task at hand was to “regenerate” the Muslim community and unite it within a multiethnic Bosnian society consisting of all the major religious groups in the region.⁵ “The Bosnian Muslim is by all accounts a race of South Slav Bosnians [who] speak the relatively same language of their blood compatriots of the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox religion,” Lajos Thallóczy insisted. “Their Turkish sympathy is of

recent origin, and they will soon become fixed to our political sympathies.”⁶ The government was so certain of this eventuality that it channeled resources into developing a putatively “Bosnian” Muslim community that, over time, would come to realize its shared “Bosnianism” (*Bošnjaštvo*) with the Serbs and Croats.

Despite the evident contradictions in this logic—at once encouraging a sense of Muslim distinctiveness while also touting the idea of a collective Bosnian nationality—Kállay and his team of bureaucrats set to work. The government provided funds to begin publishing *Bošnjak*, a newspaper run by prominent Muslim editors oriented toward an elite Muslim readership. The government also sponsored the creation of reading societies in Sarajevo and Mostar where issues of *Bošnjak* were made freely available and guests were invited to converse and exchange ideas.⁷ The message conveyed was one of modernization and mobilization as government officials attempted to engage Muslim leaders and position them at the forefront of a progressive Muslim movement in the province. Authors like Osman Nuri Hadžić were happy to help, explaining to readers that to be a “modern” Muslim did not entail a complete abnegation of one’s faith. “The Muslim should not withdraw from the West, but rather participate in a new state of progress without sacrificing his essential nature,” Hadžić urged.⁸ Such injunctions carried favor with Habsburg administrators and adhered to the government’s plan of turning out loyal, Western-looking subjects.

The circle of primarily Sarajevan Muslims that rallied to the government were not simply yes-men. They shared the government’s vision of creating a modern and national Muslim constituency in Bosnia. They took note of the Serb and Croatian nationalist movements acquiring momentum and even drew inspiration from them. Hoping to imitate their success, Muslim leaders began speaking of nurturing a similar cultural revival among their own people. The impetus behind this objective was defensive just as much as proactive. Serbs were aggressively competing for Muslim loyalties. By the 1880s, Serbian nationalists emphasizing a common Slavic nationality were making inroads among Muslim elites. A select number of writers and scholars were not shy in identifying as “Serbian Mohammedans” or urging fellow Muslims to ally with their Orthodox co-nationals. In Mostar, the Bosnian editor Osman Đikić promoted just such a platform. In the various newspapers he ran, Đikić actively tried to enlist Muslims in the Serbian nationalist cause. He even went about collecting folk poetry to validate the historic kinship between Serbs and Bosnian Muslims he believed existed.⁹

This scenario was anathema to Kállay, who wanted to neutralize Serb nationalists and keep the three major confessional groups in Bosnia separated. But it also alarmed many Muslims intent on retaining an independent identity. Striking back, Muslim intellectuals spearheaded their own literary

campaigns designed to show that Bosnian Islam possessed its own distinct traditions and culture. Above all, they sought to differentiate themselves from the other Balkan nationalities in the province. “We are neither Serbs nor Croats,” a writer for *Bošnjak* asserted, but rather “Mohammedans” or “Bosnian Muslims.” In 1887, the writer and public official Mehmed-beg Kapetanović published his own collection of folk tales entitled *The National Wealth* (*Narodna blago*) that showed the fallacy of Serbian claims. This was followed a year later by Kosta Hörmann’s two-volume study of *Folk Poems of Mohammedans in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, which similarly refuted the idea of Muslim-Serbian kinship. Both men were well-connected to the Habsburg administration. Kapetanović was one of the chief editors of *Bošnjak*, while Hörmann a career bureaucrat who had worked his way up through the Croatian administration prior to being transferred to Bosnia. Kállay was happy to encourage their work, and even provided government subsidies to assist with the publications. He also signaled that service to the government could bring rewards. In 1893, Kapetanović was appointed mayor of Sarajevo, confirming his status as a leading representative of the Bosnian Muslim community and committed ally of the administration.¹⁰

Outside of encouraging a veritable Muslim literary renaissance, the government took a role in other spheres of activity. It funded archaeological excavations and ethnographic studies designed to assist with the “regeneration” of Bosnian nationality. The same year Hörmann published his collection of folk poetry, he was nominated director of the newly constructed Landesmuseum (*Zemaljski Muzej*) in Sarajevo, which aimed to instruct the public on Bosnian history and society. The museum possessed displays of artifacts obtained through recent archaeological digs as well as wax mannequins sporting traditional folk dress, examples of Bosnian embroidery, and placards informing visitors of Bosnia’s cultural heritage. Admission was free of charge, and exhibits featured a range of items dating back to antiquity and the Middle Ages, buttressing the historical narrative proffered by Kállay and the government.¹¹ The British travel writer Maude Holbach was impressed with the Landesmuseum upon her visit in 1910, noting that “the traveler who wishes to study Bosnia seriously” could spend days and even weeks poring over the many historical curiosities it contained.¹²

The fact that travelers were coming to Bosnia at all was also thanks in part to the work of the government. Writers like Maude Holbach received support and backing from state officials eager to encourage tourism to the region and show off the achievements of the Habsburg “civilizing mission.”¹³ Visitors during the 1880s and 1890s commented on the roads being built and the presence of soldiers in towns to keep the peace. “Bosnia is known to be a wild and romantic country offering many natural beauties and many foreign and interesting sights,” one journalist remarked. “At present the roads are so safe

that one can relax without any military escorts.” To underscore this point, the article recounted a trip taken through Bosnia with two young ladies, both of whom were free to visit the province’s many towns and cities unmolested.¹⁴ In addition to showcasing the “civilizing” initiative of the government, officials were also keen to broadcast the administration’s specific understanding of Bosnia to a broader international audience. During his trip through the Balkan Peninsula in the mid-1880s, the Belgian economist and amateur folklorist Émile de Laveleye was persuaded to visit Bosnia, and his observations were clearly influenced by the propaganda disseminated by the state. He found it absurd that Muslims in Bosnia would be considered “Turks,” noting the ethnic differences between Bosnians and their Ottoman coreligionists. “The Mussulmans whom we meet are of pure Slav blood,” he stated. Yet, he was also adamant that Bosnians were “Mussulmans to the core, just like those of Constantinople, Cairo, Tangiers, and the Indies”¹⁵

While visitors admired Kállay’s modernizing work, official narratives and travel literature persisted in emphasizing Bosnia’s patently “Oriental” character. This was no paradox. It marked part of a comprehensive campaign to depict the province as both a European and Oriental country. Earlier travel writers like Charles Yriarte had described Bosnia, with its sloping mountains and mix of people, as the “Switzerland of Eastern Europe.”¹⁶ Habsburg officials perpetuated this view, adding an Oriental twist. In his book *Huit Jours en Bosnie*, published in 1897 and dedicated to Kállay, the writer Eugène Meignen praised the government for opening up this “Muslim Switzerland” to the West.¹⁷ In his travelogue filled with photographs and illustrations, Meignen made a series of observations on Bosnia’s Muslim communities, noting their differences and idiosyncrasies compared to Muslims in North Africa or Anatolia. The natives were well-dressed, and women were not as heavily veiled as those found in Morocco. In the cafés, Muslims drank beer which, in Meignen’s account, flowed as freely as it did in the brasseries of Friedrichstrasse. The government used travel writing to promote the idea of Bosnia as an Oriental “Switzerland,” casting it as a land with European attributes yet shrouded in exotic mystery.

A trip to Bosnia was incomplete without a stop in Sarajevo, a city which Habsburg administrators were keen to depict as a new provincial capital of the Habsburg Empire. The Hungarian author János Asbóth, who worked in conjunction with Kállay and Thallóczy, took an “official tour” through Bosnia in the late 1880s and faithfully reiterated the government line. In his opinion, Sarajevo was the “Damascus of the North” and “Islam’s second town” in Europe.¹⁸ Visitors never tired of describing the bazaars where Muslim merchants sold their wares, the winding dusty streets, or the commotion in the squares where colorfully dressed people went about their business. These were standard tropes culled from colonial travel literature, and they

were routinely applied to the Bosnian capital by tourists. “One is stunned by the motley crowd they find there. Turks, Serbs, and Jews, townspeople, and peasants, all wrapped in garments of bright color, veiled women, half-naked children, a crowd of hundreds in white, red, and yellow turbans push, shove, and jostle amongst each other,” reported one observer. The surrounding landscape only served to accent the sense of exoticism. “Mighty tree-tops tower above the maze of houses and through them the bright domes of the mosque shimmer, and the white tip of a minaret towers high in the deep blue of the sky.”¹⁹ Sarajevo, with its mix of East and West, was pictured as a city rife with Oriental features, yet one that was also recognizable and familiar. In 1901, the imperial councilor Adolf Ružička summed up his impression of the quaint city, claiming,

Sarajevo, with its 100 minarets, makes as interesting an impression as the tower-studded landscape of Prague. These round towers, built beside each mosque and unadorned . . . serve to call the Muslims to prayer five times a day. And these cries from the heights, which sound at almost the same time from all minarets in all directions with a sonorous, strong voice make a deep impression on foreigners.²⁰

The motif of a city with “a hundred minarets” became a commonplace in the travelogues either directly sponsored or implicitly encouraged by the Bosnian administration. “It is clear to see that the Muslim religion, preserve of the elites and those who own the land, has always been richly endowed [here],” Eugène Meignen stated. He described the city’s mosques with their alabaster white minarets and decorative walls covered in the “serpentine script” of the Qur’an. He also highlighted the bazaar with its winding streets and merchants smoking narghiles. He was taken by the way the merchants kept their goods locked away in cabinets and behind shutters each night. “One does not shop [here] like they do on Broadway or Fifth Avenue!” he stated. Yet the city’s peculiarities were its charm, in Meignen’s estimation. “Nothing is more poetic than a summer night in Sarajevo!” he commented.²¹ The star-studded sky, the mountains in the distance, the Austro-Hungarian officers in their uniforms, the many religious confessions, and calls of the muezzins: all was there for the traveler to experience, and without leaving Europe. “Not even in Cairo is the appearance more Oriental,” Laveleye exclaimed as he observed the daily life of the city.²²

Kállay and his crew of civil servants even enhanced the Oriental features of the city, corroborating these impressions. In 1891, Kállay commissioned the architect Alexander Wittek to design and build the new city hall—the Vijećnica—in Sarajevo. Wittek’s Neo-Moorish design was selected over the Byzantine-Romanesque blueprints drawn up by the architect Karl Parik,

sending a clear message as to the image Kállay sought to project. Over the next year, Wittek made two trips to Cairo to sketch detailed images of medieval Islamic monuments and in 1896 unveiled a building with a handsome façade lined by Oriental arches and crenelated balustrades.²³ Vijećnica was only the most notable of the buildings erected by the government. The same Orientalist style was used in the building of Muslim schools, mosques, and Islamic community centers. "Austria has wanted to give clear proof of its respect for the past," Meignen asserted, gazing upon a newly built Quranic school in the city. "It has constructed, on the purest models of Oriental architecture, an immense building where the *softas* occupy themselves with the study of the Qur'an and Muslim law."²⁴ The alleged "purity" of the style was open to debate. Blending a French-inspired *arabesque* aesthetic with Ottoman imperial style, Habsburg architecture was exemplary of the Neo-Moorish eclecticism and panache that was coming to define European colonial landscapes.²⁵ The style quickly became popular with local residents and was adopted by urban benefactors and Muslim organizations operating independently of the government. By the end of the century, the Neo-Moorish aesthetic was an integral aspect of Islam's confessional presence in Sarajevo, providing the backdrop against which Bosnian public life was carried out.²⁶

As with leading imperial powers like France or Britain, this Orientalist architecture aimed to symbolize continuity with the past and naturalize Habsburg rule in the province. Moreover, as with other leading imperial powers, the government flaunted its new colonial prowess at the standard world's fairs hosted throughout Europe. In 1897, the Habsburg government commissioned a Bosnian pavilion at the International Exposition held in Brussels, complete with a mosque built in pseudo-Moorish style. The building itself was an invention of the exposition designers. Its stylized appearance was deliberate and intended to stamp Bosnia with a definitively Oriental character in the public imagination. Three years later, Bosnia was again put on display at the Exposition Universelle staged in Paris with a pavilion featuring decorative murals painted by the Czech artist Alphonse Mucha.²⁷ Alongside this Oriental simulacrum, exhibitions drew attention to the Habsburg "civilizing mission," telling a story of Bosnia's transformation from a war-torn backwater into a modern European society. Highlighting the government's economic policies and infrastructure projects, placards boasted that the Austro-Hungarian Empire was "raising the intellectual and moral standard of the population." Ćiro Truhelka, custodian of the Sarajevo Landesmuseum, was specially called upon to assemble the ethnographic displays shown in Paris. As he informed spectators who came to view the exhibit, "Bosnia was formerly a Balkan country that had no civilization . . . a country that was a dark spot on the map of the European continent." The displays offered visitors "a segment of Oriental romance [in] a modern framework,"

Truhelka claimed, demonstrating to visitors the work being undertaken by the Habsburg dynasty in Europe's Orient.²⁸

In its building projects, as with its cultural policies, the Habsburg administration was speaking the language of a Muslim empire. Yet the Orient was not some distant land across the sea. It was part of the empire's Slavic periphery on the edge of Europe. As Kállay recognized, winning over Bosnian Muslims required domesticating Islam, both within Bosnia and within the broader framework of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The image of a "Muslim Switzerland" fit well with this strategy, casting the territory as yet another European province of the Habsburg imperial family. In 1904, Lajos Thallóczy unreservedly praised the success of Kállay's policies. Print media and imaginative histories had cultivated a class of modern Muslim elites disposed toward "Western ideas in the raw" while "Bosnianism" was the prevailing idea among the people. "Turkish Bosnia" was a thing of the past, Thallóczy boasted.²⁹ The civilizing mission was, he insisted, bearing fruit as Muslims assimilated Western attributes and Islam became indigenized within the currents of Bosnian national life. In a not-too-distant future, Bosnia would take its place among the other territories of the empire, incorporating Islam into an Austro-Hungarian system comprised of multiple nationalities and faiths. Contained within this imperial vision were the roots of a genuinely European Islam.³⁰

By the turn of the century, this assessment was not as far-fetched as one might assume. East and West were coming together in new ways, and the question of whether Islam could be integrated into European society was obtaining greater salience among the public. A sleepy Balkan province populated by Muslims might inspire dreams of a potential Muslim Switzerland, but could these aspirations be transposed to nations like France and Britain? Could Islam move from the periphery to the center of European life? And if so, by what measures?

THE TURK FROM PONTARLIER

Just before Christmas in 1896, a correspondent for the French daily *Le Matin* arrived in Pontarlier, a small commune in the Franche-Comté region bordering Switzerland. A municipality with just under 8,000 inhabitants, Pontarlier was notable for its surrounding natural beauty as well as the numerous absinthe distilleries that employed nearly a third of the town's population. Upon the reporter's arrival, a newly fallen snow covered the buildings and streets, completing the picturesque image of a sleepy provincial town nestled among sloping mountain ranges and dense pine forests. The mood in the town, however, was hardly in keeping with this tranquil image. "Pontarlier

is jubilant and excited,” the correspondent noted as he made his way to the Faubourg Saint-Pierre to gain an audience with Philippe Grenier, a local doctor recently elected to the National Assembly. Entering the old house that doubled as a medical office, the journalist waited patiently in the large reception room, sitting in silence with the other townspeople who had come to seek the doctor’s council. Eventually, a small, bearded man dressed in white entered the room. The correspondent rose and requested an interview. Grenier feigned surprise, asking why a Parisian journalist would come all the way from the capital to speak with him. The journalist balked. “But Doctor, all Paris is preoccupied with your recent election,” he told him. “We have spoken about you enough. It is now your turn to speak.”³¹

Since early December, the Parisian press had taken an interest in the obscure provincial doctor running for a seat in the National Assembly, dubbing him the “*homme du jour*.” It was not that the vacant seat in the department of Doubs possessed any real significance in terms of the nation’s political alignments; nor was the campaign characterized by the fiery rhetoric and sharp ideological contentions that so often enlivened French politics in the fin de siècle. The first round of the election had proceeded in unspectacular fashion. The two main republican contenders had split the vote, allowing a doctor with limited political experience and a modicum of local support to close in on the contested seat. These details were hardly the makings of a campaign worthy of national attention. It was the candidate himself who captured the public imagination. Grenier was a Muslim, making him the first Muslim deputy to win election to the French national parliament. The significance was not lost on his local constituency. “The electors of our arrondissement have just elected a deputy that will cause a sensation,” declared Dauphin Meunier, resident of Pontarlier, “not only in the parliament, but throughout France, right up to the confines of our African possessions, if not beyond.”³² Indeed, as the reporter for *Le Matin* described it, the voters of Pontarlier were ecstatic, “imagining that, like a new Mehmed, [Grenier] is going to take some Hagia Sophia by storm and conquer Paris just like Constantinople.”³³

The allusion to Ottoman rapacity, while poorly chosen, was indicative of the numerous stereotypes and generalities filling the columns of the major French newspapers that winter. Over the coming months, papers wrote of “*le candidat mohométan*,” “*le député musulman*” and even the “*Turk de Pontarlier*”—epithets that highlighted Grenier’s *musulmanité* (Muslimness) and imputed an element of foreignness that would linger throughout Grenier’s political career.³⁴ Not surprising, the Catholic press bristled at the victory of a Muslim deputy elected in one of the nation’s traditional Catholic strongholds. The voters had nominated a “madman” and “miserable apostate,” complained *La Croix*, “and we won’t hesitate to say that the electors of Pontarlier have given the gravest offense to our holy religion.”³⁵

Not all writers despaired. Gaston Dujarric, editor of the *Revue de l'Islam*, a publication committed to increasing knowledge of France's colonial African empire, was elated at the news, hailing Grenier's victory as a "favorable evolution" for France and Islam. "Does it not signify that in the eyes of many Frenchmen one can be both a Muslim and good citizen?" Dujarric asked.³⁶ It was this very question that Grenier's election would provoke, and in doing so mark a moment in a larger ongoing debate concerning the French nation, its empire, and France's place in the world at the turn of the century.

Grenier had been born to Catholic parents of Franc-Comtois stock. His father had served as a captain in the *Chasseurs d'Afrique*, although he had died when Grenier was quite young. After attending medical school in Paris, Grenier set up practice in his native Doubs and acquired a reputation as a "doctor of the poor" who provided medical services free of charge to those who could not afford them. His Catholic faith dwindled over the years, but he found his interest in religion renewed during a trip to Algeria where he was visiting a brother serving in the military. After reading the Qur'an and speaking with senior religious authorities, he converted to Islam "by conviction at first and then by religious duty," as he later explained.³⁷ After completing the hajj to Mecca in 1894, he began referring to himself as the "Prophet of God" and returned to Pontarlier where he continued his medical practice and became involved in local municipal politics. In a strongly Catholic region, a Muslim convert was bound to be conspicuous. Grenier, as a self-declared "prophet," quickly became a local spectacle.

He took to wearing the Maghrebin *burnous* exclusively and conducting his prayer in the town square among the tolling church bells of Saint-Bénigne. It was important to perform the *salāh* in public, Grenier claimed, since it was precisely through such means that Muhammad had won over his followers.³⁸ He even took to conducting the *whadu*—the ritualistic washing performed before prayer—in the Doubs River that ran through Pontarlier. In short, Grenier publicly identified himself as a Muslim, and his fellow townspeople were not oblivious to either the "extreme ardor" of his faith or the "superb courage" it took to conduct oneself as a Muslim in provincial France. His mother constantly despaired over his conversion, although her hectoring was the least menacing affront. While bent in prayer, people pelted him with mud and spat at him. In Levier, he was assaulted by a band of locals one night and left for dead.³⁹ Yet for a good number of Pontarlier's denizens, his religious conviction and charitable acts were admirable. "While some laugh at his bizarre dress, many more seem to admire and like him," one reporter claimed.⁴⁰ With his entrance into politics, Grenier promised to gain recognition for religious minorities and support rights for the disenfranchised, policies that struck a chord with the voters of his district.⁴¹

During the election of 1896, Grenier made Islam a centerpiece of his campaign. He declared his candidacy “in the name of clement and merciful God” and exhorted voters to “praise God alone” on his campaign posters.⁴² If the press dubbed him “*le candidat mohométan*” and “*le député musulman*,” Grenier encouraged such perceptions by closely allying his religious and political identities. In speeches, he drew comparisons between the revolutionary principle of *fraternité* and the teachings of the Qur’an. His platform of Algerian civil and political equality entailed defending “the rights of my coreligionists” living on French soil. He concluded each political declaration with the same slogan: “God and *Patrie*. Honor and *Patrie*. Humanity. Praise to God alone and *vive la France!*”⁴³ Grenier’s campaign blended religion and politics in no uncertain terms. “Not only is Doctor Grenier a Muslim, which is the right of any French citizen since the proclamation of religious freedom,” reported *Le Temps* that December; “he has also given his confessional preoccupations a great place in his posters and circulars to the extent of saying that it is as a Muslim that he has been elected.”⁴⁴ In his victory speech, Grenier did nothing to refute these charges and persisted in drawing parallels between his political activism and faith. “I am the Prophet of God,” he claimed. “Allah wants me to teach his religion in the Chamber.”⁴⁵

Entering political life meant doing so as a sincere and devout Muslim, and Grenier candidly acknowledged his hope of using the National Assembly to draw attention to Islam, promote religious and educational reforms, and spread the message of the Qur’an.⁴⁶ “I have received the mission of preaching the Qur’an to the French. I will fulfill my task, all the more so now that I have a bigger field opened before me.”⁴⁷ With the nation now watching, Grenier assumed the role of spokesman for a rational, modern form of Islam consistent with French values and sensibilities. In religious matters, he observed “the greatest tolerance,” he assured readers.⁴⁸ His brand of Islam was not the backward and ferocious superstitions that too often buoyed anti-colonial resistance and nurtured hatred. His faith was representative of a “neo-Islamism,” a religion “essentially rational” at its core.⁴⁹ “I am a Muslim, but I am not a fanatic,” he assured. “If I have become Muslim, it is because I studied the sacred books in depth and was convinced that Islam was a splendid religion. But I believe that it is necessary to clarify certain exaggerations and errors that later interpreters have added throughout the centuries.”⁵⁰ He supported science and modern education and insisted that the ills of society could be combated through the mutual “Christian and Muslim virtues” of charity and compassion.⁵¹ “You say that I claim the title Prophet of God,” he remarked to one journalist. “This is true. But prophets, as you know, are also reformers.”⁵²

His commitment to promoting a brand of Islam compatible with French values extended to his colonial platform. Hardly anti-colonial, he emphasized

France's positive role in spreading education and modernizing Muslim societies. Yet he also found French efforts lacking, especially when it came to the blatant inequalities that the empire perpetuated. As loyal subjects of France, Algerians and Tunisians deserved equal civil rights with the European populations of the colonies. Only then would it be shown that Islam and civilization were truly compatible.⁵³ Throughout his political career, Grenier touted a colonialism favoring "rapprochement between the great Muslim family and France." It was not only French values of tolerance and liberty that warranted this development. Foreign policy also demanded it. "If [France] manages to attract the sympathies of the Muslim world, it will have a great influence in Africa," he explained. "Colonial expansion is an essential concern if [France] does not want to descend to the ranks of Spain and Portugal. If we love France, let's work toward a rapprochement between the two races." It was, ultimately, this desire for accord between France and Islam that provided the basis of what Grenier identified as "my patriotism."⁵⁴ As a French Muslim, he believed France had a special role to fulfill in the Muslim world. His support for a supposedly modernizing, humane, and "enlightened" colonialism was equated with a specific type of patriotism tied to the empire and his religious identity.

The issue of patriotism was paramount for Grenier. At the start of his campaign in 1896, newspapers scoffed at his self-proclaimed title as "Prophet of God." "He might as well simply call himself Muhammad," one journalist remarked. "Yet what is most important to know is whether M. Philippe Grenier will be a prophet of his country."⁵⁵ Could one be a good French patriot and identify with a global community of believers? Many thought it impossible. Upon his election, opponents called for an official investigation into Grenier's national origins, arguing that his religious proclivities placed his nationality in question. The bureau of the chamber easily found him to be a French citizen and declared his election valid, but this hardly ended the debate on Grenier's putatively "foreign" loyalties.⁵⁶ As a Muslim, Grenier was compelled to go to extra lengths in demonstrating his loyalty to the nation. He repeatedly insisted that his policies on education, social reform, and even colonial integration were inspired by an ardent love of country. He wanted nothing short of "assuring the moral progress, material life, enjoyment and security of all those living beneath the national flag in France . . . [and to] extend the genius and influence of the *patrie* far and wide." His policy initiatives sought neither to shock nor disrupt the nation and stemmed only from a "disinterested love of country."⁵⁷ It was his aspiration to ensure "a France strong from within and respected without; a fraternal and amiable society."⁵⁸

These assurances did little to temper public attitudes inclined toward suspicion and xenophobia. The pages of national dailies brimmed with popular

stereotypes and religious prejudices of the day. Journalists commented on his religious practices at length, reducing Grenier to an Orientalist caricature. According to one paper, Paris was an ideal place for a Muslim because it was easy to orient yourself toward Mecca at prayer time. One only needed to follow the tram lines running between Madeleine and Bastille.⁵⁹ Other journals printed rumors that Grenier would institutionalize polygamy and impose Islamic holidays like Ramadan on the nation. The sarcasm of *La Presse* appeared to know no bounds when it came to satirizing the new deputy. "Philippe Grenier will not be selling sweet lozenges on the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli or hawking slippers, dates and nougat," it claimed, playing upon familiar images of the itinerant Muslim peddler. "He comes to Paris for a more important purpose."⁶⁰ The article went on to inform readers of Grenier's habits of washing in public fountains and speculated on whether the Palais Bourbon would have to be outfitted with new fixtures to accommodate the hygienic needs of a Muslim. "But what will cost most dearly of all will be the installation of a harem in the outbuildings of the parliament," the paper cracked. Perhaps the fine arts administration would be called in to design and administer this harem. "At least we know that they have experience judging pretty women."

Quips emphasizing the ritualistic behavior and compulsive piety of Muslims provided fodder for critics, but they also spoke to enduring outlooks shaped over the years by French Orientalism and colonialism. In countless studies on Algerian Islam, colonial ethnographers routinely highlighted ritual and strict adherence to religious practices as the quintessential marks of Muslim selfhood and society.⁶¹ Taken together, these conclusions were distilled into a broad assumption: Islam constituted a totalizing faith and identity. A Muslim could *only* be a Muslim. In prevailing French perspectives, Muslims, to quote the historian Naomi Davidson, were "saturated with Muslimness."⁶² In their coverage of Grenier, journalists and critics persistently drew attention to his fastidious prayer schedule, his ritualistic comportment, and his alleged desires to impose Islamic law on French society, singling out the very attributes that marked him as a Muslim in popular perceptions.

Grenier's overt *musulmanité* was not, however, purely the creation of the press. Grenier himself played a part in cultivating this public persona. In Pontarlier, he had fashioned his identity as a Muslim through ritualized practices and dramatic displays of public piety. Having encountered Islam in the French colonies, Grenier adopted the more "orthodox" practices popular in Morocco and Algeria. His "Muslimness" was, therefore, a product of colonial North Africa, an *Islam français*, so to speak.⁶³ Yet the extremely public nature of Grenier's faith ran deeper than its colonial influences. In publicizing his *musulmanité*, Grenier transformed religious conviction into spectacle, and by doing so endeavored to define a public identity as a French Muslim. Whether

branding himself as a Muslim political candidate or carrying out highly ritualized practices in public spaces, Grenier relied upon spectacle and dramatic acts of self-fashioning to craft an identity that was both French and Muslim. His “Muslimness” was, in this respect, performative. He endeavored to carve out a place for Islam with all its rituals and embodied religious practices within French public life. It was, therefore, not surprising when Grenier let it be known he had no intention of donning a tie and frock coat upon taking up his seat in the Chamber. Rather, he would retain the traditional *burnous*, an iconic symbol of Oriental difference and distinction. In synthesizing an “authentic” Muslim cultural identity with a progressive Islamic ideology, Grenier was actively attempting to define the contours of a specifically French Islam.

The problem was that Grenier could hardly control the extent of public opinion and perception. Once taken up by the Parisian press, only a fine line distinguished self-fashioning from caricature. Grenier’s idiosyncrasies had captivated the citizens of Pontarlier and they similarly enticed Parisians. “He is set to seize Paris which, always enthusiastic for shows of originality and avid for novelty, will celebrate this harmless disciple of the Qur’an now turned serious legislator,” affirmed *Le Matin*.⁶⁴ A Muslim deputy sporting Oriental gowns and reciting prayers in Arabic was ideal material for a public weaned on penny dailies and hungry for the sensationalized dramas churned out by late nineteenth-century presses. “The parliament has seen a senator in Breton garb and a deputy wearing a worker’s smock. All it was missing was a Muslim from Pontarlier and now it has one,” Charles Chincholle jested in *Le Figaro*. “We definitely won’t be bored.”⁶⁵ He was not mistaken. Through the efforts of the Parisian press and popular illustrated publications like *Le Petit Parisien*, Grenier became one of the many “spectacular realities” offered up by the mass culture of the fin de siècle.⁶⁶

The newspapers dubbed the opening session of the National Assembly in 1897 the *Séance du Prophète*. On the anticipated day, a throng of deputies and journalists gathered on the front steps of the Palais Bourbon to catch a first glimpse of Paris’s new celebrity. When his coach finally arrived, Grenier exited dressed in an immaculate white *burnous*, turban, and crimson gloves. Before entering the building amid a crowd of onlookers, he knelt three times on the front steps as a gesture of reverence and then proceeded to walk through the front doors of the Palais. In the main salon, eager journalists and politicians stood about gawking and rooms echoed with sibilant whispers of “Have you seen him?” Throughout the session, all eyes were fixed on the Muslim from Pontarlier. The constant kneeling and bowing by Grenier drew laughs and snickers. These gestures seemed “a little exaggerated,” according to the paper *Le Rappel*. “If not for this attraction, there would have been absolutely no interest in the first meeting.”⁶⁷ Grenier was less than ecstatic

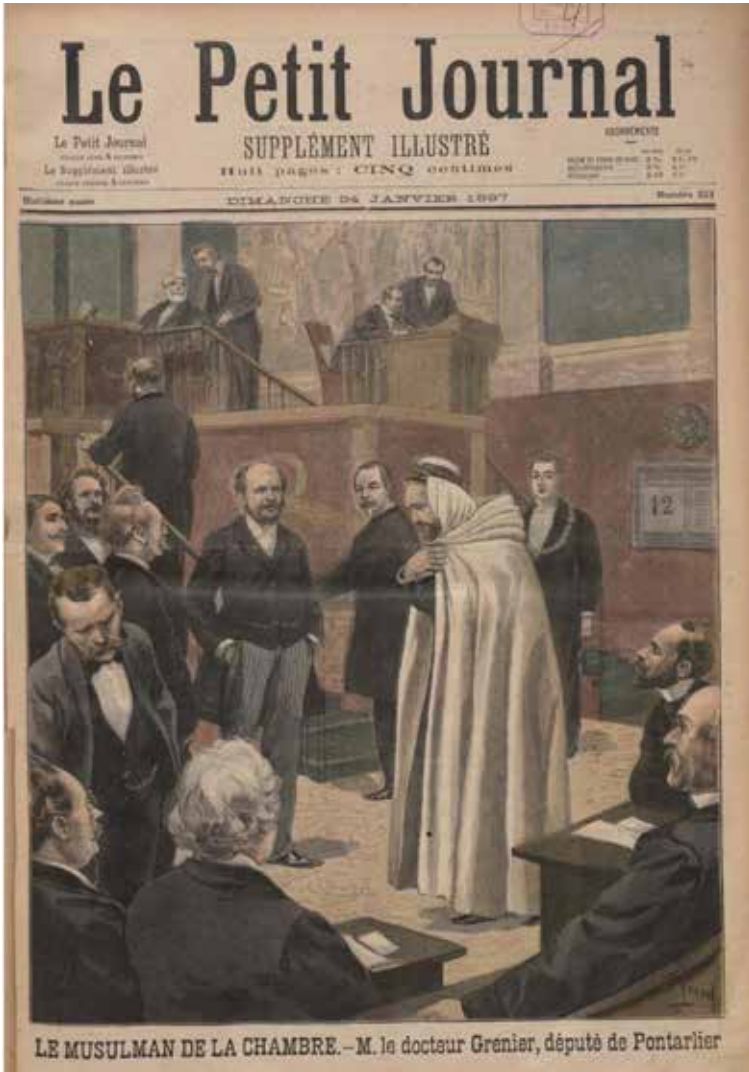


Figure 5.1 Philippe Grenier, “the Turk from Pontarlier.” *Le Petit Journal*, January 24, 1897. Gallica/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

with the way the press covered the story. “My clothing is not a carnival costume,” he reminded a journalist later that evening with mild annoyance. “It is a religious habit as respectable as the cassock worn by the Abbé Lemire and ought to be respected in the same manner.”⁶⁸

Contrary to Grenier’s expectations of defining a public space and identity for French Muslims, the press treated him like a cabaret spectacle that

at times bordered on the absurd. His persistent ceremonial kneeling in the chambers, his public recitals of the *salāh*, and his Orientalist dress armed journalists with ammunition for a host of satirical quips and comedic portrayals. The papers were fond of reporting on his daily ablutions, giving detailed accounts of how he cleansed his feet on the banks of the Seine River just outside the Palais Bourbon.⁶⁹ It was not long before crowds of spectators began congregating on the Pont de la Concorde and Pont Solférino to catch a glimpse. Lines of people blocked the roads and arrested traffic, compelling the police to break up the crowds and block off intersections. “The life of the entire quarter of Paris is suspended as circulation becomes impossible and the police bar the streets,” *Le Matin* reported. “And all because a single person is washing his feet in the Seine!”⁷⁰ As the papers turned his calculated religious spectacle into carnivalesque pageantry, Grenier requested a room in the corner of the Palais to carry out his ablutions in private, putting an end to the daily performances on the riverbank.⁷¹

Outside the tabloid press, however, Grenier’s Muslimness did provoke more serious debates surrounding issues of secularism and the place of Muslims in French society. During the first week of the *Séance du Prophète*, deputies shared in the public’s amusement over Grenier’s constant genuflecting and ritualized ceremonies. They chuckled at the taunts of “Allah! Allah!” that were directed toward Grenier and his allies at the end of sessions.⁷² Yet the fanfare was short-lived in the chambers. It was difficult to ignore the questions that Grenier’s overt Muslimness raised or the potential ideological conflicts such questions threatened to unleash. Grenier’s decision to attend the sessions in Arab dress and his performance of Muslim religious rituals in the chamber elicited deliberation on the secular values of the French Republic and the place of religion in the public sphere, a debate that would no doubt exacerbate existing religious and ideological divisions running through the country. The anticlerical faction, perennially mistrustful of religious influences in politics, could easily use the issue of Islam to antagonize Catholic opponents. In this atmosphere, tensions began to mount. During one session, as Grenier went through the ceremonial process of kneeling and prostrating himself before taking the podium, the assembly president sharply reprimanded him. “The legislative assemblies are not the place for religious demonstrations, but for the discussion of legislative propositions that are submitted to them,” he snapped. “I hope that this observation will be understood, and I will not have to remind you again.”⁷³

In mid-January, a request was made to introduce an article forbidding “exotic garments” and ritualistic practices of any religion in the chamber.⁷⁴ The measure never got off the ground, but the proposition ignited a flurry of debate that winter. The critic Paul Royer was sensitive to how such a ban might be interpreted by France’s colonial subjects. As Royer argued, it was

legal and, therefore, permissible to wear religious clothing in the National Assembly. There was no reason why this right should be denied to a French Muslim. "The Arab dress is, in effect, that of French subjects," he stated, "and it cannot be questioned that an Arab who is a naturalized Frenchman and elected deputy would sit in his national dress."⁷⁵ The *burnous* affair also drew in Muslim critics as well. Ahmet Riza, the exiled leader of the Young Turk movement residing in Paris at the time, came to Grenier's defense, claiming that the *burnous* was worn by millions of Africans under French rule. "This resolution to ban the *burnous* from the French parliament hurts the dignity of an entire people," he railed.⁷⁶ Public demonstrations of faith and disputes over religious dress touched upon key issues regarding the impact of empire on French national identity and the republic's aggressive brand of secularism, or *laïcité*. As these subjects crept into political debate, France found itself confronted with a new "cultural war" focused on Islam and its place in national life.⁷⁷

Yet if Grenier provoked tensions between secularism and religious identity, he was also caught up in debates regarding the proper role of Islam in modern society. From the first days of his political candidacy, critics spotlighted his dramatized displays of faith. In an open letter, the photographer and Algerian resident Jules Gervais-Courtellemont charged that Grenier's religious demeanor seemed more theater than reality. "You know just as well as I do that good Muslims dress themselves in European frock coats," he chided. "Why do you make yourself so conspicuous and make a fool of yourself in Paris with this useless costume which will only come to discredit the mission that you want to accomplish?" For Gervais-Courtellemont, a man who had traveled extensively through North Africa and the Middle East, Grenier's Muslimness was anti-modern, quaint, and contrary to any notion that Islam could be assimilated into modern European society. His prescription was blunt and simple: "Take up the dress of a Frenchman once again and act like a true French deputy."⁷⁸ Others reprimanded Grenier's "imaginative style" and constant desire to transform his faith into a public spectacle. As one journalist put it, "Grenier could have converted to Islam without feeling himself obliged to dress like an Arab."⁷⁹

Grenier was not the anti-modernist critics made him out to be. "To remain immobile is to go backward! Muslims know this," he once proclaimed.

Purify, expand, clarify the interpretation of the Qur'an, make this book agree with the knowledge of the nineteenth century, this is the task that the new Muslims must accomplish! This undertaking conforms with the teachings of God, to the law of progress, and to the evolution of humanity.⁸⁰

Such pronouncements were a far cry from Islamic conservatism. Nor was his overt *musulmanité* necessarily backward-looking either. For Grenier, religious identity was performative just as much as a question of conscience. By emphasizing outward demonstrations of faith and carefully selecting cultural markers of difference, Grenier endeavored to establish a public space for Islam and distinguish it as a feature of French social life. Loyalty need not demand complete cultural assimilation, he suggested. Whether critics realized it or not, Grenier was inviting his compatriots to reimagine the French Republic as a pluralist society capable of embracing confessional differences. It held out the prospect of a new social contract, one that was applicable to French metropolitans just as much as colonial subjects. In his message, Grenier was clear. One could be French and Muslim, and as a Muslim convert, he intended to demonstrate this simple truth.

THE MUSLIM COLONY OF PARIS

The French media capitalized on Grenier's momentary celebrity in its quest to draw in readers, but a Muslim in Paris was hardly headline news by the late nineteenth century. In fact, the city had regularly hosted Muslims over the 1800s. Egyptian refugees returning with Napoleonic forces after 1801 had settled in the French capital, with a select few finding employment in state institutions as translators and Orientalist scholars. Cities such as Paris and Marseille were common destinations for Muslim dignitaries in transit. During times of upheaval, Paris was among the more popular destinations for the usual group of political exiles and refugees coming from the Near and Middle East.⁸¹ When Young Ottoman reformers fled Anatolia during the 1860s, a group took up residence in Paris and continued their opposition from the banks of the Seine. Following the British occupation of Egypt, the suppression of the nationalist opposition sent a new wave of Arab exiles toward France. The most famous of these political refugees was the Pan-Islamic revolutionary Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, who arrived in Paris in the early 1880s and ran a short-lived newspaper with his acolyte Muhammad 'Abduh. The Turkish and Arab exiles that found their way to Paris typically remained engaged in politics back home. While abroad, they attempted to bolster international support for their causes and gain audiences with French officials and socialites who might prove influential in assisting them. During the 1890s, the Egyptian nationalist Mustafa Kamil ran a newspaper from Paris and ingratiated himself with members of the French press. He gave public speeches supporting the cause of Egyptian liberation to liberals who would listen, and his condemnation of the British occupation government drew the approval of pro-colonial circles. By the late nineteenth century,

Paris was becoming a center for Muslim intellectuals. They expressed their grievances over colonialism and authoritarian rule back home and used their time abroad to promote new ideas of Islamic modernism that attracted a select crowd of European listeners. Yet exiles always moved on. Rarely did they run the risk of offending their hosts by getting engaged in French political issues, and still less did they think of themselves as belonging to a wider collective movement.

Grenier was different. He was a home-grown Muslim who, in his political speeches, drew attention to issues of imperial reform and civil equality that could undermine the rigid hierarchies that buttressed colonial rule. Moreover, in addressing the subject of Islamic cultural reform more generally, he identified with a Muslim community beyond France. Some eyebrows were raised when, only six months in office, Grenier used his political position to contact the Bey of Tunis and solicit funds for the building of a mosque and madrasa in Paris.⁸² Apprehensive over the rise of international movements like Pan-Islamism, critics had to speculate whether France might follow this trend. "Could the victory of Charles Martel have been in vain?" asked *Le Temps*.⁸³ Catholic conservatives seethed, chalking up such pessimism to an "unbridled liberalism" that dampened Christian zeal to the advantage of Islam.⁸⁴ Yet internationally as well, Grenier's election appeared a sign of things to come. *The Crescent*, a British newspaper dedicated to global Muslim affairs, ran an open letter to the editor which asked, "Will France be Mohammedanised?" According to the author, the prospect now seemed likely.

Having momentarily captured the imagination of the nation, Grenier's entrance into politics offered an opportunity to inaugurate a broader dialogue on issues relevant to Islam and the Muslim world that certain individuals were keen to seize. That spring, a coterie of foreign journalists and students took the first step. In March, Ayachi Hassouna, a Tunisian student resident in Paris, sent out invitations requesting guests to attend "a tea" at the Restaurant Mignon on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. The meeting was intended to celebrate Grenier's electoral victory and, as the postcard advertised, strengthen "the links of solidarity that unite all Muslims of this earth, no matter their origin or nationality."⁸⁵ The invitation was provocatively signed *la Colonie Musulmane de Paris*.

Only twenty-three years of age, Hassouna was a relatively new arrival in Paris. He had left a civil service post in Tunisia in 1896 to study law in France.⁸⁶ For a French-speaking Tunisian with few contacts in the city, life in the bustling European metropolis was characterized by loneliness and estrangement. He cultivated friendships with other Maghrebi and Egyptian students who had come to pursue their studies at France's prestigious schools. He also reached out to Turkish expatriates in the city, nurturing a greater appreciation for Pan-Islamic solidarity in his outlook. Although having come

to France to study, Hassouna was taken in by the intellectual atmosphere of fin-de-siècle Paris where exiles influenced by new ideas of Islamic modernism ran newspapers and discussed politics and where French journalists deliberated on the future of France's North African empire. At the same time he was sending out invitations on behalf of the "Muslim colony of Paris," Hassouna began making his ideas known in print. In an article submitted to the francophone Ottoman newspaper *Mechveret*, he expressed concerns over the present state of the Muslim world, but also contended that the situation was not hopeless. "Let's make it known to the civilized people of Europe that we are not completely depraved and that we still possess a sufficient amount of will and energy to lift ourselves up and regenerate ourselves," he urged.⁸⁷ Unity and action were the panacea for Islamic civilization's miserable decline, and achieving this change fell to the "young Muslims of the present generation," he claimed. "This evolution, it is in us, the youth of today."⁸⁸ His call to Muslim youth was intended to animate the best and brightest minds from across Africa, Asia, and Europe and persuade them to apply their talents to the noble mission of Islamic regeneration. Hassouna made it clear that his message was not an appeal to resistance or religious conservatism. As a self-identified "liberal Muslim," he believed the West, and especially France, had much to teach the Muslim world. "We must come to Europe to obtain an education without however rejecting what we still conserve of our faltering civilization," he proclaimed. In his opinion, Islamic "regeneration" was a shared project, one that required the input of Europe just as much as the self-initiative of Muslims. He envisaged Islamic societies acquiring the attributes of modern civilization, and through it equality with the West. With his cry of "*Vive l'Islam! Vive la Fraternité Universelle!*" Hassouna aspired to make France's "Muslim colony" a catalyst for Islamic modernization and give Muslims a voice in one of Europe's most influential cities.⁸⁹

The gathering at the Restaurant Mignon on April 5 brought together various Parisian circles, not all of which were Muslim. Aside from the foreign students, émigrés, and Ottoman diplomats in attendance, members of the French press and prominent Orientalist scholars answered the invitation. Even noteworthy French colonial publicists like Antoine Bernard d'Attanoux and Ferdinand de Béhagle turned up. Grenier, the man of the hour, arrived dressed in his characteristic white *burnous*, which to several journalists appeared out of place among the other Muslim attendees dressed in frock coats and trousers.⁹⁰ Gaston Dujarric, who ran the relatively obscure monthly *Revue de L'Islam*, was taken by the Europeanized manner of many of those in attendance, interpreting it as a promising sign for the future. "They live our life, have adopted our best ways, wear—at least temporarily—our dress, and more often than not partake in the best of our ideals," he admired.⁹¹ More striking than the congratulatory speeches and declarations of Muslim

solidarity that filled the restaurant that night was the fact that there did appear to be a “Muslim colony” in the heart of the French Empire. “The new colony is not particular to a nationality of the Orient or Africa,” reported the colonial correspondent Jean Hess in the pages of *Le Figaro*. “It is Muslim.”⁹² Overall, coverage of the event was positive, with papers mentioning the “enthusiastic speeches on religious tolerance and human solidarity” delivered throughout the evening.⁹³

Exactly who or what this “Muslim colony” constituted was by no means clear. One paper credited Grenier with organizing the colony, while others gave the less conspicuous students and journalists their due.⁹⁴ Evident, however, was that Grenier, Hassouna, and other organizers had momentarily given a unified public face to Paris’s disparate Muslim community. Over the next year, the “Muslim colony” assumed a collective identity. Participants like Hassouna sought to portray themselves as “modern” Muslims who wore Western clothing and held progressive views yet nonetheless remained bound to other Muslims by a common faith and culture. To this end, emphasizing markers of cultural distinction was important, and Parisian Muslims contributed where they could to building a broad consensus and reinforcing notions of a common Islamic culture. This effort was not, however, simply the work of French citizens and colonial subjects. Given the pockets of Muslim emigres residing in the French capital, foreigners also took part in these debates.

Although primarily a forum for Ottoman oppositional politics, the organ *Mechveret*, run out of Paris, entered the fray regarding issues relevant to Muslim cultural identity and Islamic politics. In 1897, the paper came to the defense of Grenier, taking his side in the *burnous* affair in order to protect “the dignity of Islam,” as it claimed.⁹⁵ The paper’s editor, Ahmet Riza, was keenly aware of Western misconceptions of Islam. From his arrival in the country in 1889, Riza would routinely draw attention to the authoritarian policies of the Hamidian regime in Istanbul and attempt to convince French opinion leaders that Islamic government could be liberal and progressive. This objective necessitated correcting certain ingrained Orientalist stereotypes and revising perspectives on Muslim culture shaped by French colonialism. For Riza, this mission was motivated by personal circumstances just as much as political interests. It was vexing when acquaintances asked whether wearing a frock coat bothered him or whether trousers were uncomfortable. “For [Parisians], the Turk is always a grotesque being represented by the caricatures with a large turban, ballooning pants, and Oriental slippers on his feet,” he complained.⁹⁶ Living abroad, Riza was subject to the prejudices and preconceptions held by many Europeans when it came to Muslims. “For Westerners, the Orient is the country of mysteries,” he concluded. “Everything that one relates on the harem and *sérail* must have a mysterious and veiled character like the memories of a Thousand and One Nights.”⁹⁷ In 1900, he witnessed

just how deep these fantasies ran when attending the Exposition Universelle staged in Paris that year. The stalls at the Moroccan pavilion were “nothing more than a bazaar . . . selling Oriental trinkets manufactured in Paris and Vienna,” he grumbled. Everywhere he looked he found “ridiculous exhibitions humiliating for Orientals and particularly for Muslims.”⁹⁸ In addition to criticizing Europe’s disparaging views on Islam and the East, Riza also used his position as a journalist to highlight the problems faced by Muslims living on the continent. On one occasion, he drew public attention to the lack of an affordable Muslim cemetery in Paris, arguing “a Muslim [was] condemned to be buried in a common pit” if they could not afford the exorbitant fees associated with receiving proper Islamic burial rites. “By its very nature, this perspective seems to us to prevent Muslims, Algerians or others, from establishing themselves in France,” Riza charged.⁹⁹ These and other delicate criticisms touched upon issues of public accommodation and inclusion intended to give Islam a more pronounced presence in the French metropole.

The most dramatic instance in these cultural debates came as the government considered proposals to build a mosque in the French capital. The suggestion had been floated by various parties since the 1840s. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, government officials such as the Tunisian Resident General Charles Rouvier were coming to see some merit in the proposition. “The realization of this project could only increase our prestige in the eye of Islamic populations,” he insisted, not to mention providing for the religious needs of the many Muslim visitors who made their way to the city each year.¹⁰⁰ Others were of a similar mindset. In 1895, a commission spearheaded by the *Comité de l’Afrique Française* was formed to study the issue. Public reception was mixed. Some journalists lampooned the suggestion, offering comical depictions of imams and muezzins sauntering among the iconic cabaret halls and absinthe dens of the French capital.¹⁰¹ The conservative Catholic press was naturally hostile to the idea. “Rendering honor to the faith of Mohammad in such a fashion would represent for us the denial of our glories and our traditions, even our principles,” *L’Universe* seethed.¹⁰² The monarchist daily *Le Soleil* equally assumed an antagonistic stance, asking how it could be that the republican government was always ready and willing to “despoil” the Catholic Church and yet had few reservations about encouraging Muslims to establish a place of worship in the capital.¹⁰³

However, for those with an open mind or who understood the symbolic importance of the gesture for the Muslim community, a mosque was not unimaginable. “The project is hardly absurd since France counts millions of Muslim subjects,” one writer argued, “and if the Muslim colony is not numerous in Paris, it is certain that there is here constantly numerous Muslims in passage.”¹⁰⁴ According to one Algerian Muslim, the French Republic had a “duty” to construct a mosque in the capital. “Just because [Muslims] are far

from the Orient does not mean that they forget their religious obligations in order to sit at the café terraces or runabout to the music halls,” he stated. “No, he goes to the café. He goes to the theater, but five times a day he prays, he prostrates himself and addresses God with praise.”¹⁰⁵ Islam was after all France’s “fourth religion,” the newspaper *Le Matin* claimed without irony.¹⁰⁶ Building a mosque would give colonial Muslim subjects a place to conduct their religious affairs, but it would also send a message to the global Islamic community of the metropole’s good intentions toward their faith. “In the eyes of Muslims who belong to such diverse races, the mosque is not only a place of prayer, but the symbol of their common fatherland *par excellence*, the religious fatherland,” the paper explained.¹⁰⁷

Grenier and members of the Muslim colony encouraged the initiative in their public addresses. Yet from the start, it was questionable what the actual role of Muslims would be in the project. As the government deliberated, Muslims in Paris and the colonies began organizing subscription campaigns and approached wealthy backers like Abdülhamid and notable Egyptian philanthropists to raise money.¹⁰⁸ Despite obtaining independent sources of support, Muslim activists were relegated to the sidelines for the most part. The government retained a measure of control over the debates. As one newspaper pointed out, all the members of the exploratory committee were French, giving the proposal an eminently colonial character.¹⁰⁹ The architectural design of the mosque also became an issue. When Ambroise Baudry was asked to draw up the initial blueprints for the building, some questioned the decision.¹¹⁰ Having worked in Egypt and France, Baudry was known for turning out palatial Orientalist buildings that captured the imagination. Critics speculated whether Muslim architects should be consulted to ensure the edifice would meet the requirements of a functioning mosque, rather than be a “purely monumental” edifice meant to resemble “some sort of Alcazar.” One only had to look at the Cathedral of Sacré Cœur in Montmartre to get an idea of how such a building might turn out, one critic stated. If left up to the government, the fear was that the mosque would reflect the Orientalist “pastiche” so familiar to European designs, rendering it “a European type of a Mohametan temple.”¹¹¹

Plans to build the mosque continued for another decade, although in the end the project remained unrealized. Debates would be resumed after World War I, albeit under very different circumstances.¹¹² Yet even as debates over the mosque stalled, Muslims continued to find other means of reinforcing a shared cultural identity among the Parisian community by organizing public events and gatherings in the city. In August 1897, Grenier led a memorial service in commemoration of Muhammad’s death that drew members of the colony together.¹¹³ The following January, the “colony” assembled in Paris to celebrate the birthday of the Sultan and Caliph Abdülhamid.¹¹⁴ Organizers

selected occasions and dates with broad symbolic meaning for a diverse Muslim community, but these activities equally suggested that Paris's Muslim colony might not be the tight-knit group imagined by organizers and the press. Hassouna was loath to recognize the sultan and his claims to spiritual authority over the Islamic world. "Any Muslim worthy of carrying that name" could not abide by such sclerotic views, he scolded.¹¹⁵ These opinions were likewise shared among Ottoman exiles in Paris like Ahmet Riza. Victims of Hamidian censorship and surveilled by Ottoman authorities abroad, Young Turk activists had little love for Abdülhamid or his conservative Pan-Islamic policies.

In the end, maintaining a united front among a mix of émigré journalists and students proved difficult. In 1898, Hassouna completed his degree at the Faculty of Law and returned home to Tunisia, where he would become active in the nascent "Young Tunisian" movement. In the general elections held that same year, Grenier, always more concerned with national and colonial affairs than with the bread-and-butter issues of his constituents back in Pontarlier, lost his seat in the French parliament to a political rival. The "Grenier moment" proved brief. As France's first Muslim deputy departed from office, attention was already shifting to other more pressing matters. Talk of political scandal was in the air as the revelation of a Jewish military officer falsely accused of espionage roiled French society. With intellectuals denouncing the government for its complicity in the scandal and right-wing activists organizing anti-Semitic demonstrations across the country, Grenier faded from public view. The Dreyfus Affair was about to break. In the French public sphere, Islamophobia was being traded in for a more vicious strain of antisemitism.

"BORN AND BRED" MUSLIMS

Efforts to construct a Muslim identity in France independent of the state had mixed results by the dawn of the twentieth century. Grenier employed colonial and exoticized notions of Islam with the intention of defining a distinctly "Muslim" space in French public life. Yet emphasizing and even politicizing markers of cultural difference produced a backlash that revealed the difficulties inherent in such an approach. While Grenier expressed hope that his entrance into public life as a Muslim would encourage his fellow compatriots to adopt Islam, his aspirations fell short. The "Muslim colony" in Paris remained largely composed of foreigners, reinforcing Islam's foreign and colonial character. French writers may have sympathized with the cause of inclusion and equality central to Grenier's platform, but it was hard to claim that a French Muslim community existed in the heart of the metropolis.

Observers only needed to look across the Channel to understand these shortcomings. French critics were aware that a “Muslim colony” also existed in Great Britain, one experiencing greater success and notoriety than its Parisian counterpart. In Liverpool, a Muslim cultural institute and mosque had recently been built, noted the travel writer and historian Lucien Heudebert. “Thanks to these institutions, a Muslim traveler arriving in Liverpool from India, Persia or the Sudan can make contact little by little with the people, ideas, and attributes of the West all while remaining in a familiar environment.”¹¹⁶ More significant was the fact that the community was made up of British converts. Although the professor at the *École des Langue Orientale* in Paris, Octave Houdas, narrowly observed that it was “primarily composed of English women,” he nonetheless understood the importance of what was occurring in Liverpool. “Europe is beginning to submit to the first efforts of Islamic propaganda,” he stated.¹¹⁷

The center of a preeminent global empire, Britain was home to an array of foreign communities coming from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. There were Moroccan merchants, Somali and Yemeni dock workers, lascars employed in the shipping and trade industries, not to mention subjects coming from the Subcontinent for reasons of education or official business. Outside the capital, port cities such as Cardiff and Manchester had established Arab and South Asian communities connected to trade and shipping.¹¹⁸ Muslims carried out their daily lives in various settings, in many cases enduring poverty and extreme hardship. In certain instances, indigent Muslims traveled the country, begging or seeking odd jobs as the season warranted. These peregrinations followed popular tourist routes from Plymouth to Ben Lomond or from Aberdeen to Hastings and were often “sufficiently remunerative,” according to the missionary Joseph Salter.¹¹⁹ Having worked in London’s “Oriental Quarter” for fifteen years, Salter was quite familiar with Britain’s immigrant communities. London was only one of many such examples. Migrants from across the world took up residence in Britain’s industrializing cities, creating ethnic enclaves and neighborhoods with their own social networks and rhythms. Despite their shared religious adherence, Islam was rarely a dominant form of social identification among immigrant groups coming from different parts of the world.

The establishment of a native-born convert community was, however, unique. Unlike the Asian or Arab communities that tended to be insular, British converts openly identify themselves as Muslims. Faith became the basis of their community and public identity.¹²⁰ Conversion also placed Islam within a wholly different context for most Britons. As the convert Henry Mustapha Leon explained,

a successful propaganda of Islamic principles in the British Isles can only be conducted by those who are “Britons, born and bred.” The Briton, with true

insular pride, not unmixed with prejudice, will always decline to receive instruction from any person other than one of his own compatriots.¹²¹

The origins of this “born and bred” community sprang from an unlikely source: the well-known Liverpool solicitor William Quilliam. Raised in the traditions of Methodist nonconformism, Quilliam had a sturdy religious upbringing. Over the years, however, he progressively lost touch with the traditions and teachings of his faith. Like so many of his generation, he found it difficult to reconcile Christian teachings with the scientific spirit of the nineteenth century and the moral challenges posed by late Victorian society.¹²² Flirting briefly with Unitarianism, he eventually converted to Islam following a series of trips to North Africa for health-related reasons, taking the Islamic name Abdullah. In Quilliam’s estimation, Islam had more to offer the individual seeking belief in an age of skepticism and reason. It was guided by “a revolt against empty theological claims,” he contended. More specifically, Islam’s elevating message focused on temperance, cleanliness, and the brotherhood of man. These were also attractive in a period in which the Christian faith no longer seemed capable of guiding society’s moral compass.¹²³ Following his conversion, Quilliam continued his practice as a lawyer and remained engaged in the local social circles and clubs of Liverpool, but he was never discreet when it came to his religious identity. In 1887, he founded the Liverpool Muslim Institute and four years later repurposed a building near the premises for use as a mosque. His objective was ambitious. Committed to *da’wah*, or the promotion of Islam, he aspired to build a Muslim community in one of Britain’s foremost industrial cities, encouraging his compatriots to embrace the religion of the Prophet.¹²⁴ He ran two newspapers—the weekly *Crescent* and the monthly *Islamic World*—both of which acquired an international readership that contributed to the notoriety of the Liverpool Muslim community. These various responsibilities occupied a great deal of his time. “He is an enthusiast, and seems to be killing himself with work,” one writer remarked after observing his habits.¹²⁵ Yet in all these activities, his goals remained consistent: to convert Britain to Islam. “We shall yet witness the triumph of Islamic principles and hear the British nation with one unanimous voice exclaim ‘There is but One God, alone, and Muhammed is His prophet!’”¹²⁶

The group of converts drawn to Quilliam shared a similar experience of disillusion and discontent with modern Christianity. One of Quilliam’s early converts, the Irishman Alfred Browne, claimed that Christianity was “inconsistent” with rational belief and amounted to a “lifeless creed.” As he asked: “Is it not in this that we may most surely find the chief cause of the rampant vice and immorality of Christian lands?”¹²⁷ William Obeidullah Cunliffe, an engineer by trade who contributed regularly to *The Crescent* and

Islamic World, was of a similar opinion, insisting that the Christian world was afflicted by a “chronic disease” fed by uncertainty and doubt in the midst of scientific progress.¹²⁸ Its entire system of faith seemed “a jumble of inexplicable conclusion, repulsion and inconsistency.”¹²⁹ By comparison, Islam was rational and compatible with modern forms of knowledge, marking it as a religion for the modern age. As an article in the *Islamic World* claimed:

The trend of European thought is towards Islam. Rationalism discovers principles many of which coincide with Islam. Unconsciously and unintentionally the Western world has become nearly Muslimised. They are moving in the groove toward the teaching of the Quran. What European culture thinks is Islam.¹³⁰

The intellectual trend toward rationality signaled a shift toward Islam, whether doubting Christians were aware of it or not. “Europe and the whole Occident are crying for a pure, heartfelt practical religion,” the convert Khalid Sheldrake contended. “Christianity has had nearly two thousand years in which to invert Europe and to make a perfect civilization, and owing to her own incompleteness has signally failed. To-day Christians cling to orthodoxy as mariners in their despair to a drowning craft.”¹³¹ Islam, he believed, was capable of alleviating this spiritual shipwreck.

Skepticism was not the only factor that drew people to Quilliam and his small circle of followers. Quilliam was an eloquent speaker, and in 1894 his credentials as a spokesman for Islam were given a boost when Sultan Abdülhamid bestowed upon him the title of Shaykh al-Islam of the British Isles. For the Ottoman sultan, the appointment was strategic, providing him with an ally in Britain who was expected to advocate for Ottoman foreign and diplomatic interests. For Quilliam, it offered legitimate authority to speak on behalf of all British Muslims. Although the title enhanced his status at home and internationally, it proved problematic throughout his lifetime, especially as tensions between Britain and the Ottoman Empire mounted.¹³² Detractors pegged Quilliam as a foreign agent of the sultan and frequently questioned where his true loyalties lay. Time and time again, he was called upon to defend himself against charges of treachery, affirming he was “a loyal British subject by birth and a sincere Muslim from conviction.”¹³³ Quilliam took his responsibilities as Shaykh al-Islam of the British Isles seriously, appearing at public events and using his newfound authority to weigh in on important issues relevant to Islam. “There is not and has never been a question of politics with me,” he assured. “It is purely and solely a question of religion.”¹³⁴ As the recognized “leader of the English Mussulmans,” he strove to fulfil his religious mission of converting the British nation.¹³⁵

His strategy in this undertaking was to demonstrate the superiority of Islamic values and explain how they might remedy many of the social ills

generated by modern society. He attended temperance meetings and pressed upon listeners the benefits that would accrue from practices of abstinence and sobriety.¹³⁶ “More than half the number of crimes committed would disappear from the world if Muslim abstinence were observed,” he argued.¹³⁷ In public lectures, he defended polygyny, claiming it was preferable to contemporary Victorian sexual mores where philandering men had no obligations to care for mistresses or illegitimate children. “The polyandrous English are not entitled to cast stones at polygamous Moslems,” he charged.¹³⁸ Alfred Browne, who worked closely alongside Quilliam, agreed. In an address given before the Liverpool Mosque in 1893, he argued that polygyny and Islamic divorce laws were far superior to the current system in Britain.

How many homes in Christian England are wrecked by the impossibility of severing the unhappy bonds that keep men and women entirely unsuited to each other in what is essentially a perpetual slavery, resulting in the life-long misery of the ill-fated pair, and only too often, in the ruin of the children?¹³⁹

These prescriptions also extended to Islamic fraternity. Theoretically, all Muslims were equal while those endowed with wealth were obliged to give to charitable causes, Quilliam explained. Islam was “a *practical* brotherhood,” in his view.¹⁴⁰ Nothing of the sort was found in British society, with its rampant inequalities and stark social divisions. “[Only once Britons have adopted Islam] will they be able to cope effectually with those evils which have grown up under their false system of ethics and morals, dubbed Christian civilization,” he maintained.¹⁴¹

Quilliam and his followers envisioned Islam as an alternative social model. Its values of temperance and equality were not distinct from many leading British social and political causes of the day. Christians could support teetotaling. Social reformers could get behind more equitable marriage laws that benefited women and the family just as those inclined toward socialism might find something of merit in ideas of social leveling and poor relief. The task was to frame these collective concerns within an Islamic idiom, and in doing so win Britons over to the faith. This strategy also included indigenizing Islam and rendering it familiar to a British audience.¹⁴² At the Liverpool Mosque, prayer meetings were consciously modeled on Christian cultural practices with meetings held on Sundays featuring Qur’an readings and songs sung in the style of Christian hymns. According to Thomas Omar Byrne, a regular attendee at the mosque, this process of creative adaptation was designed to accommodate “those enquiring Christians who were feeling their way out of the darkness of their own creed into the light of Islam.”¹⁴³ On Christmas, the Liverpool Mosque offered free meals to Muslims and Christians alike, with *The Crescent* reporting, “Our beloved brethren and sisters all worked with a

will to show that Islam taught them to be kind to the poor and distressed followers of a corrupt and semi-idolatrous creed.”¹⁴⁴ In an article entitled “Sunday with the Moslems” published in 1896, the Christian periodical *Sunday at Home* ran a feature on the Liverpool Muslim community, remarking on the “influence which Christian surroundings are exercising upon the religion of Mohammed in Liverpool.”¹⁴⁵ Indigenizing Islam also extended to more general forms of Western sociability as well, including sponsoring a cricket team and an amateur theater company. During the celebration of Eid-al-Fitr marking the end of Ramadan in 1905, festivities at the Liverpool Mosque included activities such as “parlor games and dancing” in addition to Islamic religious rituals.¹⁴⁶

This is not to imply that all Britons welcomed Quilliam’s proselytizing. Members of the Liverpool community were harassed and the mosque subjected to vandalism on numerous occasions. In one such incident, trespassers broke into the premises and tossed rocks through the windows, sprinkling shards of glass over the hall carpeting.¹⁴⁷ The British press was divided on its coverage of the community, fluctuating between curiosity, caricature, and outright hostility. Quilliam himself was occasionally branded the “old Turk” and lampooned in typically Orientalist fashion.¹⁴⁸ “I was looked upon as a species of monomaniac,” Quilliam confessed, “and if I endeavored to induce people to discuss the respective merits of the two religions, I was either laughed at or insulted.”¹⁴⁹ The Christian missionary John J. Pool had an altogether negative view of Quilliam’s efforts, believing that the Liverpool Muslim community received an inordinate amount of public attention given its austere mosque and small congregation. “Islam in England may drag on for some years a feeble existence,” he concluded, “but then it will probably die a sudden death.”¹⁵⁰

Pool’s pessimistic appraisal was baseless. Quilliam and the Liverpool community did not experience the predicted “sudden death.” On the contrary, it seemed to be growing, and through its popularity shaping a set of practices and discourses that integrated Islam into the social fabric of British life. By his own calculations, Quilliam converted some 500 Britons to the faith, primarily among the middle classes.¹⁵¹ As converts, British Muslims were not joining a preestablished religious community with deep roots and set cultural traditions. They had the freedom to actively create and develop an Islamic tradition of their own, drawing upon the surrounding environment as they did so.¹⁵² The tactics and strategies employed by Quilliam and his followers were far-reaching, and Quilliam himself aspired to enlarge the scope of his Islamic movement beyond Liverpool. In 1902, he set up the British Muslim Association, taking a step in the creation of a decidedly “British” Muslim community. The organization was intended to be a fount of Islamic modernist ideas and “walk in the van of Islamic progress and to hold aloft the banner of

Islam in the heart of Christendom.”¹⁵³ In this respect, members were expected to lead upright and moral lives, placing them beyond reproach as they spread the faith and carried out “the scared *jihad* in the British Isles.” What Quilliam meant by this was not a militant struggle of the faithful against the infidel. Rather, he promoted notions of a spiritual jihad that aimed to combat Christian fallacies and win over followers through force of conviction. To this end, Quilliam liaised with fledgling Muslim movements in London, such as the Young England Islamic Society created by his cohort Khalid Sheldrake, a pickle manufacturer and Islamic convert. He equally reached out to Pan-Islamic organizations like the *Anjuman-i Islamia* run by the Indian notables Abdullah al-Mamun Suhrawardy and Muhammad Kahia in the capital. In drawing these disparate movements together, Quilliam hoped to forge a broad national movement that would realize his dream of converting Britain to the true faith.

Quilliam’s outreach said much about the way he envisioned British Islam. On one level, his activism was responsive to a home-grown Muslim community in Britain, one inspired by the currents of Islamic modernism and reform. Yet this community was never entirely national in its orientation. Quilliam’s affection for the Ottoman Empire was always evident in his speeches and writing, encouraging support for a brand of Pan-Islamic association centered on Istanbul and Caliphal authority. The Ottoman Caliph was, in his estimation, the only source of Islamic unity capable of rallying Muslims the world over.¹⁵⁴ If he spoke out on behalf of British Muslims, therefore, he never confined his view to British converts. Quilliam took the idea of Britain as a “Muslim Power” seriously, arguing that the sheer number of Muslim subjects under British rule implored the government to take account of Muslim opinion. “It may be said that we Muslims in England are but a small body,” he stated.

It is true that the number of Muslims resident in the British Isles does not at the present time exceed 1,000 persons, but we are merely the outposts of the great Muslim community, numbering 100 millions of persons who are subject to the British crown. We are stationed in the very citadel of Protestant Christianity, but what we say to-day our brethren in the Faith throughout the British Empire feel and will re-echo.¹⁵⁵

In his role as Shaykh al-Islam of the British Isles, Quilliam claimed the authority to speak on behalf of the millions of Muslims within the empire, demanding consideration and representative institutions for Muslim members of the imperial family. “Her Most Gracious Majesty has resident within her Dominions the largest Moslem population governed by any Christian power, and that hence they naturally, and very justly, look for both a central

place of worship and, more particularly, a central representative body,” Quilliam insisted.¹⁵⁶ John Parkinson, a Scottish poet converted through the Liverpool mission whose energy and enthusiasm matched Quilliam’s, underscored the imperial dimensions of British Islam, arguing the task at hand was to “establish harmony between the mother country and her Islamic subjects” and act “in the interest of and for the unity of the Empire.”¹⁵⁷ As Parkinson asked: “Are the Muslims of the Empire, who outnumber the Christians, to have no voice in the dealings in the Empire with their brother Muslims?”¹⁵⁸

Quilliam and his followers saw British Islam as an empire-wide matter. The activities and aspirations of the convert community were persistently tied to a vision of a multicultural imperial society and, more specifically, Britain’s own self-image as a “Muslim power.” British Muslims were drawing upon the Conservative script outlined during the Eastern Crisis, emphasizing empire over “little England” nationalism. Quilliam did not fail to make the connection. “It is to the Tory Party which we Moslems look for help and aid,” he claimed, “the Tory, who to a man, has always upheld and fought for the right of every man to be absolute lord and master of his own home . . . Islam may be held as the life center and the standard of the Tory power throughout the world.”¹⁵⁹ Whether or not Conservatives agreed with Quilliam’s assertions was unclear. What was clear, however, was that Quilliam was extending the idea of Britain’s Muslim imperium to the metropole and recasting it to fit a vision of empire based upon equality and religious tolerance. Integrating Islam was a national just as much as an imperial priority, in his view. It would serve to create “a new empire, inconceivably stronger and greater than the old.”¹⁶⁰ The proof was found in the rising sense of imperial loyalty evident from Liverpool to the Punjab. No matter that they may be Muslim. Here were trustworthy imperial subjects, ready and willing to serve Britain.

This stance became a consistent theme in Quilliam’s public declarations as he took on the role of Islam’s public spokesman in Britain. In early 1898, as the Liverpool community prepared to celebrate Eid al-Fitr, the Shaykh al-Islam of the British Isles saw no better occasion to underscore his central message. With John Houlding, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, scheduled to attend the event, Quilliam planned to transform the annual celebration into a show of Muslim allegiance. As the Liverpool Mosque filled with celebrants and a select few of the city’s local officials on the day, Quilliam took the podium. Addressing himself to Houlding, he made explicit that Britain’s Muslims were committed to country and empire. “Your lordship has no more dutiful citizens under your control than the Muslims of Liverpool,” he proclaimed. “We are law-abiding citizens—loyal to the municipality in which we live; loyal to the country in which we dwell; loyal to the sovereign who rules over us and over a body of nearly seventy millions of Muslims

throughout the world.”¹⁶¹ The point was clear: the government could count on the support of its Muslim subjects.

Despite the home-grown nature of Britain’s convert community, the message reiterated by leaders like Quilliam was not dissimilar to those heard across other European empires at the time. Declarations of Muslim loyalty and patriotism were becoming a standard refrain at the close of the nineteenth century. Colonial authorities and European officials touting their credentials as “Muslim” powers had always been focused on the distant territories of the empire. They sought to convince colonial subjects of their good intentions and provide rationales for intervening and occupying foreign territories. Rarely did they consider what being a Muslim power might entail for those back home. Yet by the tail end of the nineteenth century, this was due to change. As Bosnians affirmed their devotion to an aged German monarch and “born and bred” Muslims in Britain proclaimed their allegiance to crown and country, it was evident that the politics of Muslim empire were finding expression within European capitals. The cultural and conceptual distance that historically separated East and West was collapsing. It was becoming imaginable that Muslims might call Europe home and even engage in public life as Muslims.

The turn taken by European imperialism in the late nineteenth century gave Muslims on the continent a means of claiming a place within European politics and social life. Grenier’s highly exoticized French Islam contrasted starkly with the indigenized Islam touted by British converts, but each in their own way sought to carve out a place for Muslims within the public sphere. Yet what gave these individuals and groups the ability to represent their specific brands of Islam and attract European listeners? Grenier and Quilliam were not foreigners, nor were they colonial subjects. They were white, middle-class Europeans. From at least the early modern period, religions like Islam and Judaism had been equated with “foreign,” non-European peoples and imagined racial categories. Muslims commonly conjured up images of the various “colored” races found outside Europe. In the colonies, the comingling of religion and race regulated access to citizenship and defined specific communities and social groupings.¹⁶² Converts were not only permitted to participate in national politics as full-fledged citizens. They did so as white Europeans, making “born and bred” Muslims palatable to a broader section of European society.

Converts in France and Britain had a cultural capital and freedom of action that colonial subjects did not, and they used this freedom to good effect. Colonial officials were not blind to the changes occurring on the continent, but they remained skeptical as to whether home-grown Muslims had much to offer the empire. Taking stock of the Liverpool community in 1904, Octave Houdas was doubtful that a handful of Muslims in northern England could

hold any sway over Indian Muslims accustomed to receiving instructions from Islamic scholars and native religious authorities. "As adept and intelligent as they are, European converts to Islam will never enjoy a considerable enough influence to determine a current of opinion among the new coreligionists that they give themselves to," he surmised.¹⁶³ Yet Houdas, a colonialist through and through, seemed to be missing a fundamental point. Unlike authorities who sought to instrumentalize Islam for the purposes of colonial rule and control, converts had more than persuading colonial subjects in mind. They endeavored to bring the politics of empire to the metropole and demonstrate that one could be both a Muslim and a European citizen.

At the turn of the century, Muslim leaders were finding their voice and honing their message. However, even as they did so, political circumstances often appeared to be working in the opposite direction. Declarations of loyalty provided good talking points, but trailblazers like Quilliam understood it would require more than words to change prevailing opinions on Islam. Action and collective organization were needed. "Brothers, we are engaged in a mighty work," he informed his followers. "Upon our shoulders rests the responsibility of converting the British nation to Islam. It rests upon not one, but all of us." The battle for hearts and minds was a herculean undertaking, but Quilliam was convinced Britain's Muslim community was up to the task. If Muslims acted in accordance with the unassailable principles of their faith, he assured they had nothing to fear.¹⁶⁴

NOTES

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Chapter Six

“Let the Sun of Islam Rise in the West”

Readers perusing French newspapers in the spring of 1894 could have been excused for overlooking the coverage of the conflicts breaking out in Turkey. Buried in the back pages of major dailies and the Catholic press, reports wired from Istanbul gave a few lines on the clashes between Ottoman police and Armenian dissidents occurring in Yozgat and Amasya in the Black Sea region. Compared with Emperor Franz Josef’s recent visit to Paris or the Lent festivities taking place in the French capital, a few “bloody squabbles” in distant Turkey failed to capture public attention.¹ Yet by that fall, French readers were well-versed in the violence between Christians and Muslims roiling Anatolia. Headlines carried news of the indiscriminate “massacres” and “atrocities” transpiring in the east and faulted the international community for doing nothing to cease the bloodshed. As the year came to a close, attention was gravitating toward the Ottoman Empire. European publics took sides in the debate and vociferated on the “new Eastern Crisis” agitating Turkey. How had the “civilized” nations of the world permitted such carnage to arise, they wanted to know, and who was to blame?

Following the last Eastern Crisis, the Ottoman government had kept a closer eye on the remaining Christians under its rule. The Armenians, a population inhabiting eastern Anatolia, were a particularly questionable group in the eyes of state officials. Given their long presence in the region and adherence to Christian traditions, the Armenians remained distinct from the Muslim Turks and Kurds in their midst. Moreover, as the nineteenth century progressed, Armenian community leaders became more vocal in making demands, calling for greater autonomy and recognition as a nation. In themselves, these issues were troubling signs for local Ottoman authorities. Yet demands for Armenian emancipation clearly possessed a broader resonance. By the mid-nineteenth century, diasporic Armenian communities

could be found as far away as Europe and the United States. A significant number had settled in Transcaucasia and the Crimea, establishing themselves in the adjacent Russian Empire. These communitarian and commercial ties abroad—especially to Russia, the Ottomans' foremost enemy at the time—were looked upon with suspicion by the government. Kurds in the area had never fully reconciled themselves to sharing the region with their Christian neighbors either. Over the 1880s and early 1890s, Kurdish brigands regularly carried out raids on Armenian settlements, often with impunity. By all measures, the Ottoman state lacked the resolve and resources to rein in rowdy Kurds. Hardly sympathetic to the plight of the Armenians, Abdülhamid found it easier to overlook the pillaging and terror inflicted on civilians. In some instances, this behavior was even encouraged.² The scenario had all the marks of a brewing ethnic conflict as violence spread and the death toll mounted. It was beginning to look like the Eastern Crisis all over again.

As in the past, Christian missionaries were at the forefront of this evolving calamity. Reports from missionaries working in Batman and the Van interior began issuing warnings of the escalating hostilities starting in 1894, providing graphic accounts of Kurdish brutality. They described bodies hung from trees and defenseless people skinned alive. "The motto is still the same today as it always was," stated a Catholic missionary in Van. "It continues to be slaughter and murder."³ In his "appeal to the civilized world," the American missionary Frederick Davis Green began collecting anonymous accounts given by Armenian refugees, recording their experiences of persecution. These stories, published in 1895, were intended to evidence Ottoman misdeeds and stir up an emotional response among Christian readers. "Children were frequently held up by their hair and cut in two, or had their jaws torn apart," one claimant reported. "Women with children were ripped open; older children were pulled apart by their legs."⁴ Soon enough, French and British newspapers were carrying harrowing stories of the extreme cruelty and suffering. In an interview printed in a British daily, an NCO in the Ottoman military confessed to murdering children, claiming he was ordered to do so by his commanding officer. "The soldiers raised infants on their bayonets as one lifts the sheaves of corn on their pitchfork and flung them thus into the ravine as one tosses hay onto the wagon."⁵ These and other appalling details filled the columns of European newspapers and broadsheets throughout 1895. According to one eyewitness who fled Sason at the start of the killings, the ruthless slaughter permitted by Ottoman forces was tantamount to genocide. "Unless so-called Christian nations extend a helping hand, [the Armenians] will become wellnigh extinct," they cautioned.⁶

As the Armenian death toll soared to an estimated 300,000 over the next year, reports of atrocities multiplied, and it did not take long for the familiar charges of Turkish "barbarism" and Muslim intolerance to surface. The

French Catholic missionary Félix Charmetant was clear when it came to explaining the causes of these repulsive acts. "Due to the hatred of Christians, a hundred thousand Armenians have fallen under the Muslim scimitar."⁷ Protestants were just as outraged. At a public meeting convened in Bristol, the newly ordained Bishop of Hereford, John Percival, claimed that the bloodshed occurring in the east could not be excused and followed an all too familiar pattern. "This combination of barbarity, greed, fanaticism, and lust [is] as old as the Turk Mohammedan," Percival assailed.⁸ Critics interpreted the Armenian "massacres" as a religious and ethnic struggle, attributing it squarely to "Muslim fanaticism."⁹ The Armenian émigré and reverend M. C. Gabrielian summed up the fury felt by many Europeans when he insisted in 1895 that Muslims could not be expected to treat Christians humanely. The Ottoman Turks were "ravenous Mohammedan wolves" devoid of pity or compassion for those they considered the infidel.¹⁰

Ottoman émigrés abroad felt the impact of these damning criticisms most acutely. As anger mounted, they had little choice but to respond to the barrage of anti-Turk and Islamophobic sentiments pervading the press. Although they had fled Turkey to avoid the illiberal crackdown of Abdülhamid, Ottoman liberals had never abandoned hopes of enacting necessary reforms in their home country. The police state operated by the sultan made it impossible for opponents to have their voices heard. "As far as the Press Bureau, we know how it functions in Constantinople," seethed the Syrian Khalil Ghanem. "It is an abrupt guillotine slicing everything that falls under its blade."¹¹ Ghanem had left the empire in the late 1870s, taking up residence in Paris. From the major capitals of Europe, liberals continued the fight for a free and constitutional Ottoman state. By running newspapers and organizing political events in places such as Paris and London, they circumvented the imperial bureaucracy's rigorous censorship policies and struck back against the detested Hamidian regime. Demetrius Georgiades, a Greek Ottoman living in Paris, published the short-lived *Turquie contemporaine* from his office on the rue Lafayette in the early 1890s, criticizing the sultan's government and its conservative brand of Pan-Islamism. In his opinion, Abdülhamid and his henchmen were "the degenerate sons" of the sultans of old.¹² Their authoritarianism doomed Ottoman society to sterility, and the regressive religious politics they endorsed was only increasing the distance between the empire and the progressive, modern world of the West. "In the capacity that the Qur'an is the base, the fundamental principle of the state, the Ottoman Empire could never lift itself to walk in harmony with the other civilized societies," Georgiades moaned.¹³ Georgiades's incisive remarks did not go unobserved by Istanbul. Always concerned with his image abroad, Abdülhamid kept a number of European publicists on the payroll, instructing them to run stories that discredited his opponents and painted a favorable image of the Ottoman

Empire.¹⁴ Whether these tactics worked was questionable, but it was evident that Abdülhamid took the opposition in exile seriously and was determined to bring the fight to these “rodents on two legs” who persistently proved a thorn in the government’s side.¹⁵

In criticizing the Hamidian state, liberals and self-proclaimed “Young Turk” dissidents sought to earn the trust and support of European publics. Their goal was not merely to maintain the small liberal movement abroad. They sought to convince European statesmen and opinion leaders of the plausibility of their ideas. Banding together behind values of liberty and equality, activists touted a vision of a liberalized Ottoman Empire and mobilized international support against Abdülhamid. Despite the integrity of their convictions, Young Turks faced a daunting task. They not only had to contend with the sultan and his army of bureaucrats but also had to persuade European elites that an “Oriental” people were fit for self-governance and had the capacity for liberal reform. In this respect, the Armenian massacres were a shocking setback for liberals. The anti-Turk and anti-Muslim sentiments they encouraged among religious and political officials threatened to undermine any belief in the possibilities of Ottoman liberal reform, virtually obliterating the Young Turk position.

Ahmet Riza, a reform-minded liberal who never concealed his abhorrence for the government in Istanbul, was not one to sit back idly. He intended to build on the gains opponents had made over the past decades and was willing to wage an all-out war against the sultanic state if necessary. From Paris, he and a small circle of cohorts began running a French edition of the opposition paper *Mechveret* in late 1895. Their intention was to enlighten readers on the true situation of Ottoman politics and correct prevailing misconceptions of Islam found in the European media. As Riza lamented, “Every time that troubles or a political war erupt in the Orient, they immediately attribute it to Muslim fanaticism.”¹⁶ The crimes of the government could not be attributed to a religion or an entire people, he protested. Blame needed to be placed squarely on the root cause of the problem, and for Riza, the culprit was Abdülhamid.¹⁷ “These massacres have not been the work of Muslim fanaticism, as is generally believed in Europe. . . . They are the results solely of the government of the Sultan.”¹⁸

To underscore this message, Riza offered a series of arguments insisting on the fundamentally liberal and progressive character of Islam. “For us, religious questions remain something confined to the private domain and . . . it must never be mixed with politics,” he contended.¹⁹ This did not mean that Islam had no place in the social and political life of Muslim society. However, the Young Turks vehemently opposed conservative arguments that Islam was impervious to the changes coming from the West. “The great principle of Islam is that of continuity, of evolution, and progress in religion,

a principle that is in no way entombed within the insurmountable limits of a narrow and immutable dogma," Riza stated.²⁰

We [Ottomans] have the firm intention of resolutely marching along the path of progress conforming to our mores and the spirit of our laws. Preserving the character and traditions of our own Oriental civilization, we will borrow from the Occident only the general results of its scientific evolution, which alone is truly adaptable and essential to enlighten a people on its march toward liberty and progress.²¹

These were bold words. In Riza's estimation, Abdülhamid had strayed quite far from the essentially democratic spirit of the Qur'an, raising doubts as to whether he could claim to be the spiritual guardian of the Muslim world. "Our Sultan and our current muftis have departed from the path of Islam," he railed. "It is precisely the return to the true traditions of Islam that we demand of them today."²²

Riza's Paris-based movement was not the only center of activity. Ottoman exiles had taken up in Belgium, Switzerland, and Britain, running opposition platforms similar to the Young Turks in France. In 1894, Salim Faris, an Arab Ottoman subject who led a Constitutional Party in exile, began publishing the newspaper *Hürriyet* (Freedom) in London.²³ This was followed in 1897 by the Francophone *Osmanli*, a paper associated with a branch of the Young Turk movement in Geneva headed by the journalist Mizanci Murat and the medical student Abdulla Cevdet. Like Riza, Murat wanted to provide readers with an "accurate" picture of the Ottoman Empire, detailing the injustices that Ottoman subjects endured. Believing that the Swiss government would continue to "protect political refugees," Murat and his cohorts took liberties in excoriating the Porte and appealing to European liberal sympathies.²⁴ "The Young Turks . . . are always there, in London, in Paris, in Geneva," he boasted. "The entire country awaits their success while for foreigners they are the object of a thousand sympathies."²⁵ This alleged sympathy derived from the progressive message they preached, one that was intimately tied to Islam. "Liberal in its dogma, Islam is no less liberal in its political theories," Murat affirmed.²⁶ The Muslim religion was not the problem when it came to the Ottoman body politic. Abdülhamid may have harnessed Islam to his conservative political agenda, but this in no way meant he spoke for all Muslims. According to *Osmanli*, it was the democratic opposition that cultivated the true "liberal spirit" of Islam, demonstrating that a Muslim society could also be a constitutional and emancipated one as well.²⁷ Young Turk activists in western Europe were effectively challenging Orientalist stereotypes and Abdülhamid in a single stroke. They questioned the sultan's role as Caliph and presented a modern and updated vision of

Islam that contrasted sharply with the sclerotic Islamism of Abdülhamid and conservative *'ulamā*.

Young Turk activists built up an impressive network as they made inroads in Europe. Riza managed to find a Belgian printer and distributor for *Mechveret* in Brussels, and he took trips to London where he met with journalists and tried to gain access to the halls of political power, believing it was in England's best interest to support the exile camp.²⁸ The sultan's spies abroad kept themselves informed of Riza's comings and goings, pegging him as a "Muslim protestor" with radical opinions. They nonetheless wrote him off as a crank. "There is not one person in 100,000 among the populations of the Ottoman Empire who know Ahmet Riza, and as far as the newspaper by which he attempts to publicize himself, most people who read it find it completely offensive."²⁹ Riza painted himself as a reformer, but no faithful Muslim took him seriously, authorities insisted. This did not prevent the government from trying to muzzle him and his associates. In its usual manner, the Ottoman government exerted pressure on foreign governments to shut down newspapers run by exiles critical of the regime. In 1896, it scored a victory when British authorities acquiesced and closed down *Hürriyet*.

Emboldened by this success, the Ottoman ambassador in Paris, Salih Münir Bey, sought to strike a similar blow against the Parisian branch of the opposition. At the behest of Münir, the French Ministry of the Interior moved to ban the publication of *Mechveret* and threatened its journalists with expulsion if they persisted in their attacks against the sultan. When they refused, the editors were hauled before a tribunal in Paris after the Porte filed a lawsuit against the paper.³⁰ Riza had little intention of bowing to the will of Istanbul and stated as much. "I will change the tone of the journal when the sultan changes his manner of government."³¹ Riza's defiance drew support from various French publicists and intellectuals of the day. "France has always considered it a duty as well as an honor to be a land of asylum for victims of despots," the paper *L'Intransigeant* claimed. "It will not betray this sacred tradition to please the *Grand Turc*."³² The right-wing journalist Paul de Cassagnac took a playful jab at both the sultan and the French government, questioning whether France, as a Muslim power, was now expected to be subservient to the Caliph. "Now that we are building mosques in Paris in place of the churches we no longer build, the Muslims have the right of making their own law here as well," he remarked sardonically.³³ Cassagnac's impudence aside, those who came to defend free speech and French sovereignty did not see the case as a laughing matter. The distinguished republican journalist Georges Clemenceau was adamant in laying the matter to rest. He chided the French government for allowing the "despot of Asia" to presume he could "dictate the law on our territory against the ideas of liberty and equity."³⁴ The trial became a cause célèbre that summer and reflected poorly on the sultan.

Contrary to the expectations of Istanbul, the French court refused to extradite the journalists and doled out a lenient punitive fine that was ultimately rescinded. The Young Turks emerged triumphant from the affair, vindicated in their criticism of the sultanate and celebrated by their Parisian defenders.³⁵

Not deterred, Abdülhamid decided to move on to Switzerland in 1898, sending his special council Nédjib Melhamé to deal with *Osmanli*. The editorial team, already in financial trouble, thought it best to blandish the Swiss government and make their case in public. Switzerland was "known throughout the world for its great ideas and hospitality," the paper extolled. They saw no reason why it would buckle now at the demands of a foreign official "who is more or less the equivalent of an accredited spy."³⁶ Their expectations proved accurate to the consternation of the Porte. In Belgium, the chance of success seemed equally grim. Etienne Carathéodory, the sultan's *envoyé extraordinaire* in Brussels, moved to have *Mechveret* banned. He put pressure on Riza's Belgian publisher, Denis Lorand, but admitted he was "completely powerless" to do anything more. The Belgian constitution forbade the government from interfering in the free press. Trying to suppress the journal would generate a controversy just as it had in Paris, Carathéodory feared. He prudently advised a restrained approach. "The more we meet the latest upheavals of Ahmet Riza and Lorand with indifference, the sooner we will shut up these individuals."³⁷ Aléco Aristarchi Bey, an employee at the Turkish Legation in Brussels, felt this soft-touch approach would achieve nothing. Stepping up the attack, he set out to blacken Riza's name among Belgian politicians. He branded Riza an anarchist, adding that *Mechveret* was "disposed to create a revolutionary base [in Belgium] that it was imperative to uproot."³⁸ Belgian authorities took these charges seriously and launched an investigation. Given the severity of the accusations, the ministry managed to obtain an expulsion order preventing Riza from entering the country.³⁹ Yet as Carathéodory feared, the plan quickly unraveled. When leftist parties in the Belgian parliament got word of the expulsion order, they took to the floor of the Chamber of Representatives and used the incident to embarrass the government. Cajoled by Aristarchi, the ministry had overstepped its bounds and intervened in the press, effectively violating the national constitution. As in Paris, the case backfired.⁴⁰ The only consolation Carathéodory drew was the fact that Lorand was broke and Riza temporarily denied entrance into Belgium on a libel charge. It was a meager victory, but by this point Carathéodory desired to wash his hands of the entire matter. The affair was now "good and well buried," he reported, leaving out the details.⁴¹

Mechveret proved to be an intractable problem that the government could not seem to rid itself of. Officials seethed, complaining the papers were a "notorious instrument of blackmail" and a danger to order, but these calumnies never translated into practical results.⁴² European governments refused

to bend to the will of Istanbul, and attempting to crack down on journalists only seemed to enhance their credibility. The London-Paris-Brussels-Geneva axis was a *fait accompli*. The Young Turks had managed to establish a political network across Western Europe and secure asylum, placing them beyond the reach of the imperial government. Exiles were free to disseminate their opinions to European audiences, and as much as Abdülhamid despised this prospect, there was little he could do about it. As Ottoman-European relations deteriorated after 1894, debates on Islam were beginning to percolate into the European public sphere, and with it, transform Europe into a space of Muslim activism.

"THE CHICKENS ARE COMING HOME TO ROOST"

Ottoman liberals quick to condemn the sultan for his role in the Armenian massacre presented a headache for the regime in Istanbul. However, as momentum gained in Europe, it was clear Abdülhamid had bigger problems to worry about than the refractory Young Turks. Across Europe, public opinion was mobilizing against the Ottoman Empire. Britain in particular was seized by an intense outpouring of sympathy for the Armenian victims. Relief committees were set up across the country while local church networks staged rallies and spread stories of the atrocities perpetrated by the "unspeakable Turk."⁴³ In Hawarden, parishioners dedicated money for the erection of a memorial to the "Armenian martyrs."⁴⁴ Religious spokesmen and women directed anger at the Ottoman Empire and expressed discontent with the British government's seeming indifference to the slaughter. "Moslem fanaticism wreaks its wicked will against the Christian in Armenia," one journalist fumed, while the government stood by idly and watched this "wholesale murder and outrage."⁴⁵ At townhall meetings across England, conscientious citizens came out to condemn the Turkish atrocities.⁴⁶ Britons made appeals "in the name of humanity" for the government to intervene, to depose Abdülhamid, and to put an end to the Muslim butchery so deplorable to "civilized" nations.⁴⁷ In May 1895, a national protest was organized at St. James Hall in London. Participants demanded immediate action be taken "to put an end to the system of barbarous misrule which prevails in Turkish Armenia."⁴⁸ Even Gladstone, the famed anti-Turk crusader of the Eastern Crisis, was moved to contribute to the rising chorus. Old and wizened, the stalwart Liberal had lost none of his thunder. Giving a public address in Chester that August, the Grand Old Man dug into the Turks and urged Britons to let the voice of moral justice be heard. He, like all Britons, was revolted by the "plunder, murder, rape, and torture" taking place. It was, he stormed, time to hold the Turks accountable for their "crimes."⁴⁹

While English crowds issued fiery denunciations in meeting halls across the country, halfway around the world the situation looked quite different. By the summer of 1895, word of the events roiling Anatolia was becoming known in the Raj. "The news of the Armenian agitation has spread like wildfire from town to town and village to village throughout the length and breadth of India," one newspaper reported with excitement.⁵⁰ Yet the indignation heard in Bombay was not equivalent to the protests taking place in Britain. Indian Muslims followed the stories in the press, aghast at the anti-Muslim rhetoric coming from the metropole. "In the fever-heat of their deluded enthusiasm, certain bigoted priests and irresponsible politicians have expressed themselves in language which well-nigh borders on a crusade against Islam," the journalist Ghazanfar Ali Khan stated.⁵¹ As cautious imperial strategists had always feared, Indian Muslims were coming out in support of the Ottoman Empire. Muslims had a "religious and moral duty" to support the Turks, *The Moslem Chronicle* proclaimed. "Suffice it to say now that the Islamic world is wholly united in regarding the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire as the *Khalifa* or the representative of the Prophet on earth."⁵² The divergence of opinion between the metropole and the colonies was stark and created a potentially nightmarish foreign policy dilemma for the government.

Given the tenor of public outrage, British Muslims could not refrain from comment. To convey the anger of Britain's distant imperial subjects, Indian notables residing in the metropole sprang into action. As early as December 1894, organizers associated with the Pan-Islamic organization *Anjuman-i Islamia* based in Lahore met in London to address the Armenian issue. Led by the Bengali lawyer Abdullah al-Mamun Suhrawardy and his associate Muhammad Kahia, the gathering passed a resolution unequivocally making known its disapproval of British reactions to the events in Anatolia, protesting against "the gross misrepresentations of the Moslem law and religion" and the vile "pulpit oratory" that was currently being exploited for political ends.⁵³ This reproach was quickly followed by other reproofs. The English press and certain individuals "in the 'humanitarian' class" were publishing inflammatory articles or "haranguing from pulpits and platforms . . . with the object of exciting the English people to force the Porte to introduce reforms," complained the Indian barrister and journalist Rafiuddin Ahmed.⁵⁴ A prominent leader among London's budding Muslim community, Rafiuddin Ahmed took his arguments directly to the nation, presenting his views in *The Nineteenth Century*, a popular publication among British intellectuals and elites with a national readership.⁵⁵ So too did other Muslim writers. "The language in which Islam and Moslems are denounced from public platforms and in public journals carries us back to the days of Peter the Hermit," the lawyer Ameer Ali claimed.⁵⁶ Muslim publicist disparaged over the "new crusade" and public outbursts of Islamophobia that had become perfectly

acceptable under the pretext of humanitarian sentiment. The fact that these outcries might compel government action and imperil Anglo-Ottoman relations entailed they could not be brushed aside or quietly ignored. As Quilliam avowed, "Christian fanaticism" could not be allowed to guide government policy.⁵⁷

For Quilliam, the Armenian issue was not only one of defending British Muslims from public ridicule. As Shayk al-Islam of the British Isles, he was an official representative of the Ottoman sultan in Britain. Should public opinion goad the government into action, it would certainly be to the detriment of the Ottoman Empire. Armed with his newspaper *The Crescent*, Quilliam lashed out at officials and religious spokesmen, writing them off as "shrieking atrocity-mongers."⁵⁸ He placed blame on Armenian revolutionaries aided by Russia, claiming no government would tolerate such subversion and insubordination from its citizens. British forces had been far more vicious when putting down Indian rebels in 1857, he reminded, "but then the former were of course good Christians fighting for the 'Union Jack of England,' and the people butchered were only blacks, Hindoos or Muslims."⁵⁹ It was necessary to see through the lies and slander designed to smear the Ottoman government. "Muslim Turkey protects every faithful and law-abiding Christian or Jew within its territory and promotes their leading men to high honors and respectable positions," Quilliam contended.⁶⁰ He was not the only British Muslim to stand by the Ottomans either. Rafiuddin Ahmed was critical of Britain's brusque approach and "bullying" when it came to the Ottomans, insisting a more "conciliatory mood" was needed.⁶¹ For Ameer Ali, he directly addressed the charges that the brutality in Anatolia had anything to do with Muslim fanaticism. Britons might have a favorable impression of Armenians they met in London, but, he added, "the Armenian at home is not so gentle as supposed, nor does he fight with kid gloves."⁶²

It was clear that the Armenian massacre put British Muslims in an awkward position, and this situation hinted at a larger issue that would become evident over the next decade as Anglo-Ottoman relations deteriorated. Quilliam and others defended the Ottoman sultan, recognizing him as both Caliph of the Muslim world and head of the most prominent Muslim state. However, attachment to a foreign sovereign, especially one as controversial as Abdülhamid, entailed taking positions that were not always popular. Over the coming years, Quilliam became a staunch defender of Ottoman policy and the sultan as violence and instability destabilized Anatolia and the Balkans. He inveighed against Christian polemicists who concealed their deep religious prejudices behind the banner of "European civilization." He was always on hand to present "the Turkish side of the question," chalking up attacks to Christian bigotry and anti-Ottoman sentiments held by those in the government.⁶³ Quilliam was considered "a voice crying out in the wilderness," a

voice, one might add, that many found unwelcome. "In his opinion England is black and Turkey is all white," one journalist rebuked. "Of course, that is only his view, but then, everyone knows that he is a pro-Turk and believes the Sultan to be a perfect angel."⁶⁴

Alleged "pro-Turk" sympathies could explain Quilliam's support for the Ottoman Empire, but they carried less weight when explaining his criticism of British involvement in Afghanistan in 1895. Nor did "Turkish" sympathies play a role in his protests against the British suppression of Mahdist forces in the Sudan at the end of the decade.⁶⁵ In reality, Turkophilia had little to do with his consistent harangues. In his religious as well as political outlooks, Islam was always the common denominator. Writing in his capacity as the Shaykh al-Islam of the British Isles in 1896, Quilliam explained to the public that Muslims had an obligation to stand up for the *ummah*, the global community of believers. "Among Muslims none should be known as Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Ajem, Afghans, Indians or English. They are all Muslims, and verily the True-Believers are brothers. Islam is erected on the foundation of the Unity of God, the unity of His religion, and the unity of the Muslims." This unity, moreover, was found in adherence to the Ottoman Caliphate. In the numerous articles he churned out, Quilliam was never reticent when it came to British foreign policy, at times likening overseas engagements to a "Crusade" seeking to "shatter the Muslim powers" under the pretext of spreading civilization.⁶⁶ He took it upon himself to issue *fatwas* condemning British intervention in Muslim territories and urged Indian subjects to let their voice be heard. He ordered British converts to use the power of the ballot to censure officials who supported military campaigns against Muslim powers.⁶⁷ "Islam is not like Christianity," he reminded. "It is a fraternity. He who strikes one Muslim injures every Mussulman. The True-Believers are brethren, and the power which strikes at the Caliph of the faithful at once places itself in antagonism with the whole of the Muslim world."

It was, in Quilliam's opinion, the Caliph's spiritual authority that provided the common bond uniting Muslims the world over. Without this shared reference point, there was no *ummah* to speak of.⁶⁸ Abdülhamid may have cynically envisioned Ottoman Pan-Islamism as an instrument of domestic and foreign policy. Yet Muslims beyond the Ottoman Empire hardly saw it as such. For those living under oppressive colonial governments or those apprehensive over the fate of *dar al-Islam*, the Caliphate offered a source of renewed strength and even salvation. From Indonesia to the Americas, Muslims transposed their hopes and anxieties onto an imagined global Muslim community, investing the idea of the Caliphate, and by proxy the Ottoman sultan, with real political and religious significance. At Eid al-Fitr celebrations held in London, toasts were made to the sultan and the sultanian anthem—the *Hamidiye*—was played.⁶⁹ In 1900, Quilliam and his followers

used the occasion of Abdülhamid's Silver Jubilee to demonstrate their strong emotional attachment to the Defender of the Faithful. Ribbons and Ottoman banners were displayed throughout the Liverpool Mosque while dinner speeches expressed support for the Caliph and Ottoman Empire.⁷⁰ These types of festivities were not unique to Britain. They were staged around the world in Paris, Africa, and India, constituting declarations of Islamic solidarity. Yet as Anglo-Ottoman relations narrowed, the Ottoman Empire became an albatross for Muslims. Their willingness to support the sultan raised questions regarding where Muslim loyalties really lay. Quilliam himself did nothing to clarify this predicament. For all his assurances of Muslim fidelity to the crown, he also averred that Muslims could not think in strict terms of national loyalty and obedience. "Man has a double duty," he insisted, "one of which is undoubtedly towards the country which was the place of his birth and the Sovereign who rules over it; but there is another and a higher duty, and that is towards God and his religion."⁷¹

Similar tensions were evident among Britain's Indian subjects. Indian spokesmen like Sayyid Ahmad Khan consistently assured the government that the Muslim faith was not an obstacle to obedience. "I am perfectly certain in my own mind that the purification of the faith and our loyalty to the government under whom we live and serve are perfectly compatible," he claimed.⁷² Sayyid Ahmad believed that the future of Indian Muslims lay within the British Empire. With loyalty would come integration and advancement, paving the way for future opportunities on an equal footing.⁷³ This "loyalist" approach was a common theme among leading colonial elites. "As a community, the Muhammadans yield to none in their loyalty and attachment to the British Government," asserted the *Moslem Chronicle* in 1895.⁷⁴ Demonstrating this loyalty assumed various forms. Public displays of mourning upon the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 provided an occasion to "show that the people of this country yield to none their loyalty and homage to the throne."⁷⁵ In a similar fashion, the coronation of Edward VII in August 1902 was accompanied by flag waving and local celebrations exhibiting "the loyalty of the great British Empire in the East."⁷⁶ Muslims across the Raj gathered in mosques and offered prayers for the health and prosperity of India's new emperor. It was "a day of rejoicing and merry-making," with towns illuminated across the Raj in a show of support. At the Metropolitan Club in Murshidabad, the local nobility staged festivities featuring bunting and flags in the colors of the Union Jack.⁷⁷ As the paper *The Muhammadan* claimed, the coronation presented a series of "magnificent pageants," leaving no doubt of "the resources and strength of the wide flung Empire" ruled by Edward VII.⁷⁸

And yet, despite these enthusiastic demonstrations of imperial patriotism, India was not immune to the currents of Pan-Islamism. Leading Indian Muslim opinion leaders argued that the Ottoman question had "nothing to do with

loyalty or disloyalty.”⁷⁹ The Turks were “entitled” to Muslim sympathy as “brothers in religion.” Indians had a “religious and moral duty” to support the Caliphate.⁸⁰ Religious loyalty in no way undermined allegiance to the monarch and empire. This position was sustainable as long as Anglo-Ottoman relations remained cordial. However, as British opinion and foreign policy objectives shifted course over the late nineteenth century, issues like the occupation of Egypt and the treatment of Balkan Christians drove a wedge between the two powers. Writers and activists did everything in their power to convince the government that Britain’s imperial interests as a Muslim power commanded support for the Ottomans, but public opinion appeared to be moving in the opposite direction. Religious publicists and Liberal politicians had little patience for the “barbarous Turks” or the Pan-Islamic sympathies nurtured by Istanbul. “It is time to scotch this legend about the Sultan’s Khalifate, for it is charged with potential mischief, suggesting, as it does, a divided allegiance on the part of Her Majesty’s Musulman subjects,” Malcolm MacColl pointedly declared in 1896.⁸¹

The Anatolian troubles of the mid-1890s revealed the extent to which British foreign policy, international politics, and the British Muslim community were all interrelated. More precisely, it exposed emerging cracks in the base of Britain’s Muslim empire as questions of allegiance came to the surface. Writing at the height of the Armenian massacres, Quilliam spelled out the dangers that an anti-Ottoman stance portended when it came to the empire. Muslim loyalty, while sincere, came with conditions, the most significant being that British treatment toward all Muslims be perceived as “fair and equitable.” Capitulating to Christian zealotry severely compromised this arrangement. Here was a reformulated take on the old Conservative argument emphasizing empire over little-England nationalism. Yet it was also a warning to government officials who failed to heed the demands of British Muslims. “Create distrust in the minds of these men, insult the Caliph of their creed, attempt to injure and degrade their religion and you at once will turn them into a phalanx of bitter foes,” Quilliam cautioned. “As Muslims our creed is our life and we cannot submit to see it insulted. The True-Believers are brethren of all the world over. Act unjustly to one and you thereby injure the whole fraternity.”⁸² As the public took sides in the latest Eastern Crisis, Britain found itself wrestling with questions of what being a “Muslim power” entailed and the implications this status implied. “The chickens are coming home to roost,” observed one journalist. “The English people are being taught in a rude and painful way to realize the fact that this country controls a great Mussulman Empire, and that the interests and even the feelings of our Mussulman fellow subjects have to be considered.”⁸³

SHIFTING GROUND

The Armenian massacre presented Europe's Muslim communities with a central issue and a collective set of concerns that allowed them to speak out as Muslims. In this respect, it marked one of the first public campaigns to mobilize Muslim communities across European borders. In Britain, the event spurred Muslims into action like never before as organizers and journalists responded to the Islamophobic backlash seizing the country. However, it also signaled a shift in the locus of British Muslim activism as well. Quilliam continued to claim leadership of Britain's vast Muslim community, but during the 1890s, it was Indian Muslims residing in London who played a prominent role in defending the Ottoman Empire and the sanctity of Islam. As the nineteenth century came to an end, London rather than Liverpool was coming to command the spotlight.

This change did not occur overnight. Even as Quilliam was busy consolidating his position in Liverpool, he was forced to contend with potential rivals at home. In Woking, just outside of London, the Hungarian Jew and Orientalist Gottlieb Leitner ran an Oriental Institute that presented a challenge to Quilliam's own institute in Liverpool. Born in Budapest, raised in Istanbul, and educated in England, Leitner had a curious background. A linguist by training, he was fluent in over a dozen languages, including Turkish, Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu. His intense commitment to study earned him a professorship in Arabic and Muslim law at King's College by the age of twenty-three, a virtually unprecedented achievement. Within three years, he was serving the British government in the Punjab, running the Government College University in Lahore. Upon returning to England, he purchased the site of the former Royal Dramatic College in 1884, and there, with financial backing from India, opened his own institute, complete with a mosque and library stacked with Persian and Arabic manuscripts. The Woking Mosque was distinct from Quilliam's Liverpool Institute in almost every respect. It was founded to service visiting Muslim elites from India and provide resources for scholars pursuing a degree at the university in Lahore. A scholar with close ties to Indian royalty, Leitner had little interest in proselytism and even less desire for political engagements.⁸⁴ His exclusivity was diametrically opposed to Quilliam's broad-based national approach, and during the 1890s these contrasting attitudes generated friction. One of Quilliam's followers—Frank Djaffar Mortimore—questioned why a mosque was owned by “a Jewish gentleman,” and complained that Muslim residents experienced “the utmost difficulty” in gaining entrance at Woking. “This certainly is not an act of British tolerance and British sympathy,” he bluntly remarked.⁸⁵

After Leitner's death in 1899, the mosque fell into disuse. Muslims in London had hopes of taking control of the building and reopening the mosque,

but these plans failed to materialize. By the turn of the century, Muslims in both Britain and India had begun expressing desires to establish a mosque in the capital. For some, this goal was intended as a symbolic gesture crowning Britain as a "Muslim" power. For many in and around London, however, a mosque was a necessity. Despite the city's growing Muslim population, there existed no place for Muslims to congregate or carry out basic Islamic rituals. Whatever the motivation, an idle mosque situated just twenty miles outside London was unacceptable. "Does it not seem terrible to think," asked Khalid Sheldrake,

that although Christendom's outposts are established in all Muslim countries . . . London, the capital of the mighty British Empire has no place of worship for the resident Muslims who must either take a long journey by rail or are compelled to hold *Namaz* in a room in a London restaurant?⁸⁶

Yet try as they might, Muslims proved unable to enlist the support of municipal officials or wealthy patrons in their cause. In 1895, Mohammad Dollie, a Cape Town imam recently arrived in London, attempted to remedy this lamentable situation by converting part of his home near Regent's Park into an improvised place of worship.⁸⁷ It was a temporary solution at best.

By 1910, collective efforts to establish a mosque in the capital led to the creation of a London Mosque Fund. Under the chairmanship of Sayyid Ameer Ali, an Indian jurist and scholar resident in the city since 1869, the organization was responsible for scouting potential building sites for a mosque and raising the necessary capital for its construction. Although the committee managed to garner donations from India, Persia, and the Ottoman Empire, its efforts failed to bear substantial fruit.⁸⁸ Despite these failures, though, such initiatives testified to the shifting parameters of British Islam. By the early 1900s, the Liverpool community was losing ground to London. The final blow came in 1908, when Quilliam became caught up in a legal scandal and was charged with professional misconduct as a solicitor. With his legal career in ruins, the Shaykh al-Islam of Britain fled the country in disgrace, taking up residence in Istanbul and disposing of the property on which the mosque and Islamic Institute stood. Lacking Quilliam's indomitable leadership, the Liverpool community soon fizzled out. In the coming years, London effectively eclipsed its northern counterpart as a place of Muslim organization and activism.

While converts from the Liverpool community slowly gravitated toward London and enhanced its stature as a new center of British Islam, it could not be denied that the capital provided a different context and landscape for Muslim social activities. Unlike the small but dedicated group of converts built up by Quilliam over the years, London boasted a diverse community consisting

of South Asian Muslims, foreign diplomats, migrant laborers, and asylum seekers. In the wake of the protest movements that took shape in 1895, an array of large and small organizational bodies sprouted up in the city led by students and Asian professionals. Many of these leaders moved through disparate social circles. Yet in spite of their different orbits, organizers managed to nurture a collective sense of purpose and identity among Muslim residents, transforming London into a nucleus of Islamic activism. As Sayyid Ahmad Khan later remarked, “[it was only] after my arrival in London, I became a true and faithful Muslim.”⁸⁹ It helped that imperial loyalists like Sayyid Ahmad had access to Britain’s close-knit elite society, providing them with a certain measure of influence. These ties had been forged through years of service to the empire and fostered through the emergent social networks connecting British Muslims in the urban metropolis. In certain cases, these imperial connections extended right up to Queen Victoria’s inner circle. The queen’s personal attendant, Munshi Abdul Karim, hailed from Uttar Pradesh and was acquainted with many Indian leaders in the capital, including Rafiuddin Ahmed, the law student who had presented himself as a chief spokesman for Indian Muslims in 1895. As one of the recognized leaders of London’s Muslim community, he, along with activists such as Sayyid Ameer Ali, were instrumental in initiating groups like the *Anjuman-i Islamia* and the Moslem Patriotic League set up to defend Islam from its distractors.⁹⁰ These Indian networks, bound by both imperial and national ties, took a leading role in Muslim politics, while other groups assumed shape within specific ethnic communities or via the activities of British converts.⁹¹ The causes these groups supported were just as diverse as their participants. Imperial loyalists, Pan-Islamists, Muslim cultural reformers, and Islamic student organizations all partook in London’s lively civic and political life. While many of these platforms overlapped with causes spearheaded by the Liverpool community during the previous decades, it was evident that Quilliam’s circle of converts was being overshadowed by a new South Asian cast of characters with ties to the subcontinental empire.

If a changing of the guard was in fact occurring, the dual objectives of defending Islam from its critics and spreading the faith central to Quilliam’s group remained on the table. The generation coming of age in London was drawn from the ranks of an Indian imperial elite committed to both the empire and religious reform. They supported notions of loyalty and Islamic unity in principle, but they also reinterpreted these goals in line with new perspectives regarding the potential for Islamic revival and modernization. Taking inspiration from colonial reformers, they were inclined to emphasize the Western orientation of Indian Muslims, going as far as to indicate that the West could serve as a model for the Islamic world. “The light comes no more from the East!” proclaimed Ameer Ali in 1899. “In order to acquire a knowledge of

the arts and amenities of civilized life one must turn to the West."⁹² While such claims were by no means novel, for some, this "turn to the West" had more far-reaching implications than simple emulation. The Peshawari lawyer and journalist Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din could agree that the future of Islam lay in the West, but revitalizing Islamic civilization required more than simply adopting Western forms of culture and knowledge. As he saw it, if the West had an important role to play in Islamic regeneration, Islam in turn had a role to play in the coming evolution of Western civilization. In fact, in his opinion, Islam *was* the future of Europe.

Kamal-ud-Din was one of many Indian Muslim professionals to take up residence in London during the early twentieth century, but his approach to Islam and worldview set him apart in various ways. Hailing from the Punjab, he had been exposed to the Islamic revivalist movements growing up in northern India. At a young age, he became engaged with the Ahmadiyya movement based in Qadian. Led by the self-proclaimed prophet Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Ahmadiyya Jama'at stood out among the myriad religious movements cropping up in the Raj in the second half of the nineteenth century. Like many *'alim* across the Muslim world, Ahmad called for a return to core Islamic principles and the prophetic tradition outlined in the Hadith. That said, he opposed militant jihadism and criticized movements like the Deoband which sought to insulate Indian Muslims from Western influences. By contrast, Ahmad openly supported cooperation with the British. In this regard, his message cohered with the goals of imperial loyalists and reformers like Sayyid Ahmad Khan who stressed collaboration and the promotion of Indian Islam through imperial institutions. Yet to place the Ahmadiyya squarely within the reformist camp would be a mistake. Its overt identification with Hanafi orthodoxy and Ahmad's grandiose claims to be a "shadow prophet" ran counter to the modernism evident among leading reformist circles, giving the movement a unique character.⁹³

If the Ahmadiyya appeared to mix revivalist and reformist sentiments in equal measure, what gave it a distinctive flavor was its fervent missionary spirit. During the 1890s, Ghulam Ahmad made a name for himself as a staunch champion of Islam, one willing to take the fight directly to the infidel. Well-versed in Islamic theology and the arguments of Christian apologists, Ahmad was eager to engage British missionaries in public debates. He challenged missionaries to refute the rational arguments supported by Islamic scripture and learning, thereby revealing the flimsy premises on which Christian doctrine stood. In Qadian, he repeatedly called upon Christian missionaries and officials to defend their faith, daring them to find fault in his well-crafted arguments and rebuttals. On many occasions, Ahmad offered cash prizes to anyone who could refute his claims. At times, his provocations assumed an air of spectacle. He hectored top Anglican officials and imperial

statesmen, goading them to accept his challenge. In 1899, he took out an ad in the *New York Times*, offering to submit himself to crucifixion should his reasoning fail to prove that Muhammad was the greatest prophet.⁹⁴ Through these types of theatrical publicity stunts, Ahmad amassed a small but loyal following. His calls for public debate were designed to win over the infidel, and many Anglican officials found it preferable to ignore Ahmad's aggressive baiting rather than run the risk of getting ensnared in his persuasive oratory. Ahmad firmly believed that through sound arguments and airtight logic he could convert the West to Islam. Moreover, he was convinced that Britain was the key to achieving this goal. "I saw a vision that I was standing on a minbar in the city of London demonstrating the truth and excellence of Islam in a most cogent form in the English language," Ahmad once told his followers.⁹⁵ The missionary strategy of the Ahmadiyya was simple: challenge adversaries in public and offer incontrovertible arguments defending Islam in the English language. These methods would, in the coming years, become the base of an Islamic missionary movement focused on Britain, which aspired to see Islam flourish outside its native soil.⁹⁶

Such ambitions were not altogether distinct from Quilliam's proselytizing. Nor were they unique to Ahmad and his followers. In 1893, the radical Pan-Islamist Abdul Hafiz Mohammed Barkatullah gave an address at the Liverpool Muslim Institute announcing his own hope that "the sun of Islam" would rise in the West to "illumine every corner of the globe."⁹⁷ British observers were not oblivious to the missionary zeal evident among Muslim adherents of the day. "The East is actually engaged in trying to convert the West," chided the *Manchester Clarion* when covering a story on the Liverpool Institute.⁹⁸ Like Quilliam and his disciples, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad subscribed to notions of spiritual jihad, seeing the struggle between Christianity and Islam as a war of words and persuasion rather than a violent clash of civilizations. The difference, however, was that the Ahmadiyya originated on the subcontinent, making it a colonial import. It could not claim to be a movement directed by "born and bred" Britons, leaving it at a disadvantage when compared with Quilliam's efforts.

Kamal-ud-Din arrived in England in 1912 to serve as a legal aid for an Indian defendant in the London courts, but his professional duties did not preclude undertaking missionary activities while in the metropole. In fact, as the months passed, he became increasingly convinced of his purpose in London. "I came here with the object of finding the best methods of preaching Islam and disseminating Muslim literature in the West," he admitted, leaving little doubt as to his aims in crossing the empire.⁹⁹ True to his objectives, Kamal-ud-Din took to giving lectures on Islamic history and theology before London clubs and civic societies.¹⁰⁰ Within a year, he was running the journal *The Islamic Review*, which featured works on theology and comparative

religion with the intention of enlightening Westerners on Islamic doctrine. "Our sole remedy lies in dispelling the cloud of ignorance which enshrouds Europe and prevents her appreciating Islam and its true value," he claimed.¹⁰¹ More impressive, he contacted Leitner's relatives and negotiated the sale of the Woking Mosque in 1913, establishing a base from which to carry out his missionary activities. Within a short period of time, Kamal-ud-Din managed to integrate himself with the various Muslim circles of the city, playing an active role in existing organizational bodies and even founding new ones. Despite his personal adherence to the Ahmadiyya Jama'at, Kamal-ud-Din was open-minded when it came to spreading the faith. *The Islamic Review* attracted contributors from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas, providing a forum for a variety of opinions. As with the organization's journal, the newly christened Woking Muslim Mission drew together South Asians, Muslim intellectuals, and British converts, creating a space in which a diverse community could come together as Muslims. "Islam is the only religion within our knowledge that gives a broad cosmopolitan soul to its true adherents," *The Islamic Review* averred.¹⁰²

The possession of a mosque directly outside London offered a hub from which to organize and mobilize the city's Muslim communities. As one contributor to the *Islamic Review* contended in 1914, the Woking Mosque was "the centre at present of Islam in England."¹⁰³ This claim was no exaggeration. Muslim religious festivities such as Eid al-Fitr, Ramadan, and Maulid al-Nabi (the Prophet's birthday) were all celebrated at Woking, providing occasions for gathering and sociability. The mosque also hosted regular lectures and talks given by visiting journalists and scholars. Kamal-ud-Din, who served as imam at Woking, led regular *jumu'ah* prayer sessions which drew subcontinental immigrants, foreign visitors, and British converts.¹⁰⁴ *The Islamic Review* even featured poetry written by female converts. In her piece "The Woking Mosque" published in the summer of 1914, Alice Welch emphasized the missionary spirit of the Woking establishment, writing:

There is a peaceful little Mosque
From out the green tree peeping,
God sends a gentle call to break
The silence she is keeping.¹⁰⁵

Other works of poetry regularly appeared in the pages of the review lauding the achievements of the Woking Mission and extolling the sense of community that the mosque encouraged. These contributions were by no means literary masterpieces, but they did underscore the importance that British Muslims invested in the mosque. As the contributor Marie Perkins composed,

O edifice of beauty
 In which our fond hopes dwell,
 Teach us our sacred duty
 Praise Allah—all is well!¹⁰⁶

Through his organizational tact and relentless energy, Kamal-ud-Din reanimated the community built by Quilliam two decades earlier. He drew old converts like John Perkinson and Khalid Sheldrake to Woking and played an active role in the creation of new civic organizations that cut across social and religious groups in the country.¹⁰⁷ Even the chastened Quilliam, returning to the British Isles in 1913, took an active but less conspicuous role in these groups. It helped that the Ahmadiyya's acceptance of British rule gelled with Quilliam's message of imperial loyalty and union. According to the *Islamic Review*, the British imperial polity rested upon the "complete fusion of its various components." Muslim integration and the public recognition of Islam were, in this view, essential to ensuring the British Empire remained a "healthy imperial organism" and a preeminent Muslim world power.¹⁰⁸ "I believe in the maintenance of British rule in India for the benefit of the Muslims there, and have used my pen and tongue in its support," proclaimed Kamal-ud-Din. "From the pulpit to the press I have preached loyalty to rule, and have never sought any official for the purpose of any reward."¹⁰⁹

The Woking Mission acted as a central node in the British Muslim community taking shape in the early twentieth century, but it was not the only center of action. Muslims developed a robust civic life in the capital during the Edwardian period. A range of clubs emerged with the intention of holding social gatherings and promoting Islamic culture. In July of 1914, the Islamic Society, which had grown out of the earlier Pan-Islamic Society headed by Abdullah Suhrawardy, organized a self-styled "Moslem Day" in Hammersmith's White City district. The event featured prayer sessions led by Kamal-ud-Din and Khalid Sheldrake, in addition to talks by prominent Indian journalists, Lahori "missionaries," and visiting Ottoman subjects.¹¹⁰ Journalists labeled the occasion a gathering of "the Moslem colony of London," noting the mix of non-European and native converts in attendance.¹¹¹ The British Muslim Society, established that same year with the assistance of Kamal-ud-Din, was similarly instrumental in staging events that gave a level of public visibility to London's Muslim community. It held Islamic poetry readings and lectures on Islamic history that were open to the general public. Celebrating Muhammad's birthday became an annual tradition, with the society renting out a London hotel in which to stage the festivities. Guests participated in prayer, but they also drank champagne and toasted to Muhammad. These forms of sociability not only provided occasions for gathering and reinforcing a Muslim group identity but also diminished Islam's "foreign"

connotation as participants conducted themselves in the social conventions and etiquette of British national life.¹¹² Beginning in 1915, the *Islamic Review* started including photographs of British Muslims at the end of every issue. The images typically featured ordinary-looking men and women donning contemporary dress, each accompanied by a short biography and reference to profession. Using the modern medium of photography, the review sought to replace the orientalized Muslim with a familiar and relatable image of British middle-class domesticity.

In many ways, the president of the British Muslim Society, Rowland Allanson-Winn, Lord Headley, was the face of this indigenized Islam. Headley had served in the Indian administration during the 1890s, exposing him to the Muslim culture of the Sub-Continent. Like many converts, his life followed a familiar narrative of disillusion with Christianity matched with a growing appreciation for the tolerance and wisdom preached by Islam. Islam was, in Headley's opinion, a religion that "appeals to reason as well as to the natural longing of the heart and soul to be in touch with the Creator."¹¹³ Despite his admiration for all that Islam had to offer, Headley did not convert to Islam until 1913, when he was approached by Kamal-ud-Din. Introduced through a mutual acquaintance, Headley was immediately taken in by the lawyer's "quiet dignity and gracious manner."¹¹⁴ While Kamal-ud-Din found Headley personable, he clearly had other motives in pursuing the friendship. He was under no illusions about what a man of Headley's stature could mean for his missionary work. Not only was Headley a notable author and socialite connected to Britain's aristocratic upper crust, but in 1913, Headley had just inherited an Irish peerage through his cousin, permitting him to sit in the House of Lords. For Kamal-ud-Din, who entertained fantasies of transforming the British Isles into a bastion of Islam, the importance of such a high-ranking Islamophile like Headley was obvious. Conscious that the success and notoriety of his missionary work depended upon bringing notable Britons into the fold, Kamal-ud-Din set to work on winning over Headley.¹¹⁵ Given Headley's appreciation for Islam, persuading him to convert did not require much work. Kamal-ud-Din was ecstatic.¹¹⁶

The British Muslim Society, organized by Headley and Kamal-ud-Din, was intended to promote ideas of accommodation, demonstrating that Islam could be adopted in a Western nation "without seriously interfering with the manners and customs of the West or the spirit of the teaching we find in the Quran."¹¹⁷ Abandoning "dogmatic teachings" and "the rigid observance of certain ceremonies and forms intended for certain people thirteen hundred years ago" was essential, in Headley's opinion.

We may appreciate the piety and zeal of the modern Muslim, but we must also consider the great hindrances there are, to say, a modern European businessman,

*who is certainly in accord with Islamic teaching in the spirit and truth of our grand religion, who finds himself unable to conform rigidly to the letter of the law of Islam.*¹¹⁸

For a convert like Headley, Islam had very little to do with outward ceremony and ritual, both of which gave the religion an alien character in the West. "Whether lying down, standing up, sitting down, kneeling, or prostrating with our foreheads touching the ground, we are equally acceptable to God, if our hearts are beating with the true love for Him," Headley argued.¹¹⁹ *The Islamic Review* similarly underscored this message, informing its readers that "rituals and formalisms" were "by no means indispensable to Muslims."¹²⁰ What Headley deemed "outward forms and ceremony" did not make a Muslim, in his estimation.¹²¹ What was important was an emphasis on broad theological principles and the unity these provided for the community. In his demeanor and outlook, Headley provided an example of the modern Muslim, conducting himself as "a sincere Moslem without parade," as Wilfrid Scawen Blunt remarked.¹²²

Arguments in favor of adaptation and accommodation had constituted part of a broader strategy employed by converts since the 1880s. While this message had a familiar ring, organizations like the British Muslim Society also suggested that domesticating Islam entailed more than simply dispensing with "rigid observance." It required rethinking the place of Islam within civil society. The Islamophobia generated by the Armenian massacres had energized Muslim activism. Muslims took to the press and formed political associations. They organized clubs that claimed to speak for explicitly Muslim interests. These activities gave British Muslims a greater public voice, but something else was at play. Passive declarations of loyalty were being converted into active forms of political participation. Quilliam had always stressed that Islam was "a religion of active effort" based on deeds and good works.¹²³ Taking this idea to heart, spokesmen like Ameer Ali and Kamal-ud-Din were demonstrating that Islam could be consistent with the values of a healthy and vigorous liberal democracy. Islam had a long tradition of respect for law and authority, Kamal-ud-Din insisted.¹²⁴ Yet it also contained basic principles for being "a good citizen" and "useful member" of society. "Islam is a perfect code of life to regulate your daily conduct and make you a useful citizen of the world," he stated in an address given before the Heretic Club in 1913. "It gives you certain principles to guide your life and enjoins upon you certain practices to bring those principles into actions."¹²⁵ When defending the integrity of Islam against European critics, Khalid Sheldrake made a point of emphasizing that Islam was "quite suitable" for European society, adding: "Islam teaches a man nobility, makes a better citizen; and owing to its reverence for constituted authority anarchy is unknown to Islam."¹²⁶ These arguments extended

beyond obligatory declarations of loyalty to insist that Islam could sustain a robust civil society. The proof of these claims was plain to see in the growing number of Muslim organizations and clubs metastasizing across the country. Through their social activism and political engagement, British Muslims were demonstrating that Islam was compatible with modern society and capable of turning out upright citizens engaged in their local communities.

Taking stock of the political landscape in 1913, the Scottish occultist and trade union campaigner George Watson MacGregor Reid was convinced a sea change was occurring. "In the heart of the British Empire Islam is firmly fixed, and it may be said with truth, that Islam is stronger within our own Empire than is the Christian Church itself."¹²⁷ Reid's verdict was an exaggeration, but it nonetheless captured the mood as Islam attained a place in the British public sphere. As the Victorian era gave way to the Edwardian, Muslim community leaders expressed a sense of pride in their collective achievements. "The tree of Islam is flourishing in Britain," Parkinson rejoiced in late 1914. "It has borne fruit, and the British Muslim Society is the first offerings of its activity."¹²⁸ Khalid Sheldrake was equally optimistic as he surveyed the movements developing in Britain and on the continent, proudly affirming, "Islam is gaining ground daily in all quarters of Europe."¹²⁹ For Sheldrake, the gains made by Islam in the West were due to the ardor of its adherents just as much as the flexibility and openness of its supporters. "Beliefs are nothing if not accompanied by good actions," he remarked. "Unity of God and Brotherhood of Man, that is the message of Islam to the West, and is it not a creed that anyone should be proud of?"¹³⁰

Proponents of British Islam like Sheldrake were convinced of this simple message, but it remained unclear whether a small group of Muslims in London could claim to speak on behalf of all. In fact, as groups like the Young Turks and the British Moslem Society increasingly brought Islam into the European public sphere, this claim seemed suspect. Muslim activism gave Islam a greater presence in European public life, but it also raised another question: who, if anyone, had the authority to speak for Islam?

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Chapter Seven

Who Speaks for Islam?

In the autumn of 1895, as tensions flared over Armenia, Gaston Dujarric felt compelled to join the fray. To some, Dujarric appeared an interloper. For starters, he was not a Muslim. A former employee of the French merchant marine, Dujarric now made his living as a writer and editor in Paris. His interests were broad, ranging from travel writing to topics on literary criticism and geology. In recent years, he had become connected with the French colonial lobby through the *Société Africaine de France*, an interest group that hosted lectures and events designed to generate public awareness of French African expansion. Dujarric's fascination with the colonial empire predictably nurtured a corresponding interest in Islam. He familiarized himself with the life of Muhammad and the history of the Middle East, after which he concluded that most Europeans knew next to nothing about the Islamic religion. "Prejudice and error," Dujarric claimed, had shaped prevailing views of Muslim societies in the West. As Christian opinion leaders and politicians weighed in on the Armenian crisis that year, Dujarric became disconcerted by the "anti-Islamic crusade" spreading across France and Britain. "European public opinion has been unleashed against the Muslim world," he lamented.¹

Fair to say, Dujarric was in agreement with the basic arguments marshaled by activists like Quilliam and Riza. However, his concern stemmed from a different source. As a staunch supporter of the French "civilizing mission," Dujarric worried about what the hateful speeches and condemnation of Muslim "fanaticism" implied for the French empire with its millions of Muslim subjects. As a great Muslim power, France could not afford to stoke a divisive Islamophobia that might ripple across the colonies. In a more general sense, Dujarric believed that the disparaging views spread by modern crusaders were erroneous. Muslims were not the backward and blood-thirsty creatures so often depicted in literature and history books.² The doctrine of the Qur'an

was “in no way incompatible with the ideas of civilization and progress,” he stressed.³ To convince Europeans of this basic truth, he felt it necessary to “correct” the many misunderstandings Europeans held when it came to Islam. With this goal in mind, Dujarric founded his own journal in late 1895 entitled the *Revue de L'Islam*.

Dujarric's intention was straightforward. He proposed “to call attention to and evaluate Islam in Europe, to justify and defend it, to explain it everywhere it is misunderstood, accused, or defamed.”⁴ The *Revue de L'Islam* would be the first journal of its kind, he believed. “It is the only journal in the

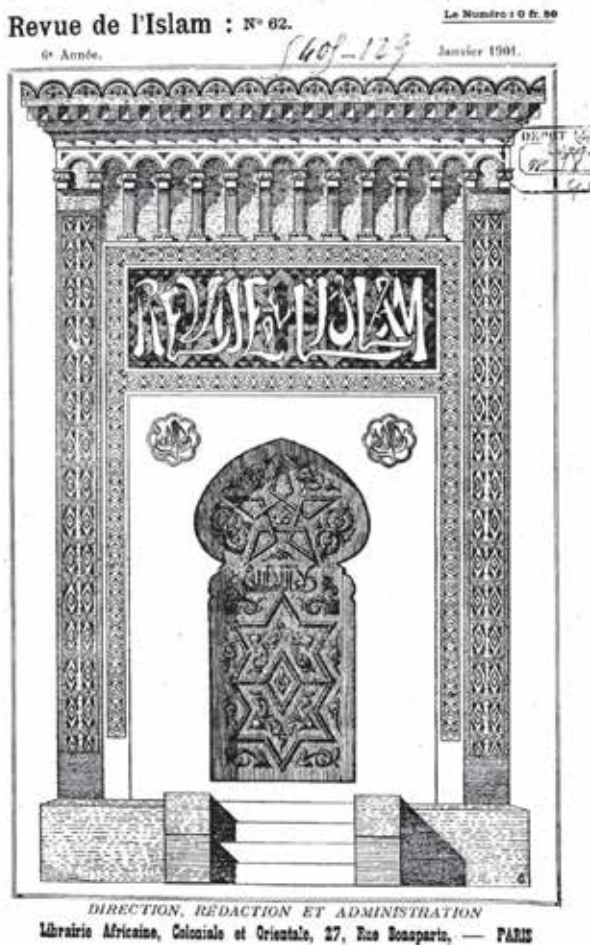


Figure 7.1 Cover of the *Revue de L'Islam*, January 1901. Gallica/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

world which is exclusively dedicated to the popularization of Islam,” Dujarric boasted.⁵ It did not serve the interests of any particular government or party, whether Muslim or European. Nor did it have a specific agenda outside of its broad mission of enlightening the public and portraying Islam accurately. In this respect, the *Revue* aspired to be “the organ of Islam in Europe” and committed itself to “opening the eyes of the West to Muslim religion and society, which everywhere is unjustly discredited.”⁶ In the pages of the *Revue de L’Islam*, readers found articles on Islamic history and culture. It featured editorials by experts dedicated to reforming France’s North African empire, commentary from Ottoman dignitaries, and opinion pieces contributed by leading Islamic intellectuals from North Africa and Egypt. Dujarric used his connections to prominent French colonial lobbyists to draw together like-minded individuals who shared his outlook. Writers lashed out at the “ignorance” and prejudice that colored European perceptions of Islam and attempted to explain more abstruse aspects of the religion such as polygamy and Islam’s fastidious attention to ritual to a European audience.⁷ Contributors also provided articles covering current affairs in Africa and the Ottoman Empire in addition to reports on France’s Muslim colonies. In addressing these issues, Dujarric and his cohorts presented a modern vision of the Orient and never failed to comment upon the important role France had to play in bringing about “the social regeneration of Islam.”⁸

Featuring illustrations with its articles and bearing a flashy Arabic-inspired font on its cover, the *Revue de L’Islam* stood out among the more standard colonial journals filled with ethnographic studies and dense academic commentary. It brought together an array of colonial reformers, Orientalists, and Western-educated Muslim critics, all of whom shared a similar optimism regarding the future of the Muslim world. This is not to claim that the *Revue* eschewed colonial propaganda or attacked the moral underpinnings of European imperialism. On the contrary, Dujarric firmly believed that France was a Muslim power and was never modest when it came to touting the benefits that France was exporting to Muslim Africa. In “correcting” established European assumptions, Dujarric was arguing that Muslim society was not the benighted relic many made it out to be. Islam could assimilate the knowledge and progress of the West. His vision for Islam was, in essence, a Gallicized Islam that could furnish a blueprint for a modern Muslim empire. Europe and Islam were not irreconcilable. They could “take each other by the hand and develop side by side.”⁹ Yet there was little question that in this relationship France enjoyed a hegemonic position.

Despite Dujarric’s hope of establishing the *Revue* as the “organ of Islam in Europe,” the publication’s readership remained relatively small and confined to France. By the turn of the century, it was primarily serving as a mouthpiece for the African colonial lobby, and in 1902 the *Revue* closed its office

on Rue Bonaparte for good. For all its limitations, however, the *Revue de L'Islam* was ahead of the game in many respects. In the early 1900s, colonial interest groups were adapting the approach and central message promoted by Dujarric and his associates. They even copied the format of his periodical, disguising colonial policy recommendations as well-written editorials and opinion pieces focused on the Muslim world. In 1906, Alfred le Châtelier, a former officer of native affairs in Algeria and an investor in French rail building projects in the Congo, began publishing the *Revue du Monde Musulman*, seemingly taking up where the *Revue de L'Islam* had left off. The magazine even opened its office on Rue Bonaparte in Paris, the very same street where Dujarric had carried out his work.

Like its predecessor, the *Revue du Monde Musulman* sought to inform readers on contemporary issues, offering a wide spread of articles and op-ed pieces that painted an image of a Muslim world agitated by the momentous changes wrought by modernization and contact with the West. Each issue contained a monthly summary of the Muslim press from Africa and Asia. Modern style newspapers—a relatively new phenomenon in Islamic societies—were “allowing ideas of progress to penetrate the great community of Islam” across the globe, challenging the authority of the *‘ulamā* and the conservative regimes they supported.¹⁰ In addition to providing regular newspaper briefs from abroad, Châtelier also set aside space for Muslim writers, lending a certain air of legitimacy to his publication. He commissioned a number of articles by Tunisian and Algerian elites to give the impression that France enjoyed support among the educated North African classes. These thinly veiled justifications of colonialism were in line with the general tenor of the magazine and accompanied updates on Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia, areas where France had yet to extend its imperial hold. Like Dujarric, Châtelier was well connected to colonial circles and fashioned himself an expert on Islam. In 1902, he accepted a post at the Collège de France where a chair was created for him in the field of Muslim sociology. Throughout his career, he took an avid interest in current affairs and kept abreast of developments within other European empires. The *Revue du Monde Musulman* regularly featured articles on Dutch, British, Russian, and Habsburg imperial policies, usually comparing them against France’s own achievements as a Muslim power. The journal also commented on issues closer to home, including a biographical piece on Quilliam and articles chronicling the growth of Islam in Britain.¹¹ In its comprehensive coverage, the review not only drew attention to ideas of Islamic modernization; it situated Europe within a new imaginary geography, supporting the notion that continental Europe and its imperial domains belonged to a vast “Muslim world” poised to enter the modern age. Châtelier went as far as to compare the Muslim world to France on the eve of the French Revolution, drawing parallels between the world historic events of 1789 and

the present.¹² It was an exciting time to be an Islamologist and Châtelier certainly approached his meticulous studies of Muslim society with alacrity.

Publicists like Dujarric and Châtelier freely claimed to represent and speak for modern Islam. In their own ways, they drew upon the shifting perceptions of the religion among imperial apologists and leading Orientalists at the turn of the century to refute popular notions that Islam was static and impervious to change. "In the Muslim Orient just as in the Christian West, human progress is carrying out its work unabated," the Orientalist Lucien Bouvat wrote in one of his many editorials for the *Revue du Monde Musulman* in 1907.¹³ This conviction was genuine. Nonetheless, suggestions that Islam could accommodate modern forms of knowledge and culture were never free of colonial assumptions and often supported claims that Muslims could be won over to accepting European rule. As Bosworth Smith maintained, if Islam could evolve and change with the currents of modern society, Muslims could reconcile themselves to different forms of rule beyond the hidebound precepts of Sharia law. "It is not quite so true as is commonly supposed that Islam is reconcilable with one narrow form of government or society only," Smith concluded.¹⁴

The new "Muslim" periodicals issued by European publicists were never divorced from imperial interests. While they advanced a new interpretation of Islam for European audiences, it was undoubtedly a "colonized" Islam they endorsed. In certain cases, the intentions behind specific magazines that appeared during the early twentieth century were blatantly transparent. The quarterly review *The Moslem World*, started in 1911, was just such an example. Published in London by the Christian Literature Society of India and run by the American Presbyterian missionary Elwood Morris Wherry, the periodical proudly stated its goal of seeking to "help the Churches in their plans for the evangelization of the Moslem world."¹⁵ The "Muslim world" Wherry and his authors portrayed was vastly different than the progressive, Western-looking one envisioned by colonialists like Châtelier. Articles drafted by Christian converts and missionaries highlighted the fallacies of Islamic doctrine and recounted the moving stories of those who had come to accept Christ over Allah. Its coverage of world affairs and Islamic history was explicitly aimed at discrediting Pan-Islamism, which was written off as a delusional fantasy propagated by fanatics. At the same time, writers underscored the similarities between Christianity and its inferior Oriental counterpart, suggesting that conversion was not apostasy. Interviews—whether real or invented—with Muslim scholars and shaykhs across the Middle East were meant to show that Islam was a religion suitable to "savage and semi-savage peoples" but could scarcely be expected to provide a scaffolding for modern political institutions or guide humanity toward loftier aspirations.¹⁶

An insightful critic like Kamal-ud-Din was capable of seeing right through the artifice of Christian polemicists. *The Moslem World* was nothing but a “pseudo-Muslim paper” that sought to misrepresent Islam for its own ends, he accused.¹⁷ He was likewise suspicious of colonialist publications that presented themselves as authentic “Muslim” journals and the many newspapers run by colonial governments that claimed to reflect Muslim opinion. “They start periodicals under Islamic names to deceive innocent Muslims and write books in sympathetic tones to ensnare the faithful. It is high time we were alive to the needs of the day, and that these Judas Iscariots of Islam should be ruthlessly exposed.”¹⁸ Simply put, it was time for Muslims to speak for themselves, and in this British Muslims appeared to be leading the way.

The Liverpool community had been a pioneer in its strategic use of the press. The Mancunian convert Abdul-Huloem Harrison commended Quilliam for starting *The Crescent* in the 1880s, noting that it was the most effective means of spreading the faith. “Newspapers are read more extensively than any other kind of literature and therefore our faith will now be brought more prominently before the public mind than it has heretofore.”¹⁹ Muhammad may have preached his message in the streets, but Quilliam understood the power of the press in the modern age. “In England we enjoy the blessed privilege of a free press with liberty to express our thoughts in a reasonable way,” he claimed, “and this advantageous position can be used for the purposes of promoting the entire re-union of Muslim powers.”²⁰ From the start, print media had been fundamental to Muslim activism in the country, a fact which Kamal-ud-Din clearly recognized. His own publication, *The Islamic Review*, was conceptualized as a genuinely “Muslim” journal produced by Muslims to further the cause of Islam in the West. “The whole Muslim world, for the purpose of defense, should be in touch, not only linked by one Faith, one religion, but also united in thought and action, supported and maintained by a virile, energetic and scholarly press,” the paper claimed.²¹ John Perkinson acknowledged the importance of the review in building a Muslim community with a national reach, contending that it gave Britons the ability to publicize their views and make their message known. “Our principal weapon is the pen, our organ the REVIEW,” he cried in 1918. “It is war, but what we destroy are not human lives, but wrong ideas.”²²

In the envisaged “war” between Islam and its detractors, the press was seen as a weapon in the Muslim arsenal, one considered vital as politicians condemned the Ottoman Empire from podiums and hardline Christians fed a rabid Islamophobia. “Statesmen, without troubling to study the religion of Islam, its history, or its laws, have poured out diatribes against the iniquities of the faith of Muhammad,” complained the Syrian lexicographer and London resident Habib Anthony Salmoné in 1896.²³ For many British converts, this appeared politics as usual. “Today Christians generally, with few

exceptions, know or own as little of the real truth about Islam and its adherents as the darkest medieval ages, and evince a spirit as inimical, vindictive and unfair towards them as the bigots of bygone centuries,” William Obeidullah Cunliffe complained.²⁴ The situation hardly improved over time and activists knew where to point the finger. “A vast majority of the European public, for whom thinking is done by the Press, seem to be hopelessly confirmed in their conviction that Europe and Asia will always remain an enigma unto each other,” assailed *The Islamic Review*. “Muslims are the greatest sufferers of all other communities through misrepresentation in Europe. With all this deluge of literature in this cosmopolitan town, an average Londoner is more ignorant of the Islamic world than many Englishmen are of the Arctic zone.”²⁵ It was imperative to fight fire with fire, in Kamal-ud-Din’s opinion, and the free press was the weapon of choice. “Our sole remedy lies in dispelling the cloud of ignorance which enshrouds Europe and prevents her appreciating Islam and its true value,” he stated unequivocally.²⁶

Such claims had been a centerpiece of Young Turk journalists and the small “Muslim colony” active in Paris during the 1890s, both of which used the press to draw attention to their respective platforms and defend Islam from its critics. In the following decades, however, France’s “Muslim press” appeared to be changing, especially as Muslim journalists in Algeria and Tunisia began running their own newspapers. The dailies and broadsheets published by French colonial governments had never been popular with Muslim readers. However, for the most part, French authorities had little competition save for the Arabic journals smuggled across the border from Egypt and the Levant.²⁷ By the early twentieth century, this situation was changing. Francophone North African elites were beginning to run their own journals independent of the government. These journals were not only critical of colonialism. They were printed in French, making them accessible to liberal and leftist readers in France. It was only a matter of time before the complaints of Algerian and Tunisian Muslims were taken up by metropolitans, portending a general movement toward colonial reform spanning the Mediterranean and with it a new resolve concerning the equitable treatment of France’s Muslim subjects.

Chief among these new journals was *L’Islam*, founded by the Algerian Sadek Denden in 1908. The paper was the main organ of the so-called “Young Algerians” coming of age in the colony and quickly developed a small readership in Paris. Inspired by the success of the Young Turks, Algerian activists were determined to press the cause of colonial equality and integration, insisting, “our religion . . . has never been an obstacle to our accession to modern civilization or our admission into the French family.”²⁸ Newspapers like *L’Islam* and the Paris-based *La France Islamique*, run by “pro-native” intellectuals collectively referred to as *indigénophiles*, may have invoked Islam, but they were not motivated by purely religious concerns.

“Islam” was synonymous with Muslim, hinting at the reform-minded and pro-Muslim orientations these new publications followed. As the Parisian lawyer and prominent *indigénophile* Numa-Léal explained in 1913, these journals existed “because there exists an *Islam français* that we have a duty to defend.” Critics asserted there was a specifically “French” brand of Islam that was at once modern and patriotic and which France could no longer ignore. This position echoed the message broadcasted in such publications as the *Revue de L’Islam* and *Revue du Monde Musulman*, not to mention earlier forerunners like Grenier. However, it was no longer the preserve of Parisian colonialists. The recognition of *Islam français* was used as a battering ram against alleged “French Islamophobes” who persistently summoned the specter of Pan-Islamic revolt and religious fanaticism to deny North African Muslims the basic rights enjoyed by French citizens.²⁹ Activists in both Algiers and Paris were attempting to give French Muslims a political voice and compel France to act like the “great Muslim power” it claimed to be.³⁰ As one writer declared, “it is necessary to howl disagreeably in order to make the deaf hear because they are only voluntarily deaf.”³¹ The press was key to this style of Muslim activism as colonial subjects made appeals to metropolitan liberals and advocated for civil and political rights. “French Islam” implied there were French Muslims, and as such, they were entitled to the basic rights guaranteed by the French Republic rather than being treated as second-class citizens.

In the various calls for understanding and inclusion resonating across France and Britain, it was clear that Muslims were using the power of the press to their benefit. They were no longer an object to be commented upon and spoken for by European colonialists and Christian opinion leaders. The printed word gave Muslims an active voice and a forum in which to shape their own narratives, and organizers knew it. Muslim activism and journalism went hand in hand, creating a public space in which Anglophone and Francophone Muslims could speak for themselves. A war was brewing in Europe, and it was unquestionably a war of words as interest groups and factions attempted to assert their control over public discourse. A nascent Muslim press was emerging in Europe, and this development opened new possibilities for imagining a type of politically engaged and vocal citizenry that was both Muslim and European.

SET FREE THE CAGED BIRDS!

Whether reform-minded colonialists or bona fide champions of Islam, the debates that took place in the press were indicative of Islam’s growing presence in European public life. Journalists approached subjects related

to politics, citizenship, and Islamic modernization determined to show that Islam was not a rigid and static system of belief. As the French expert Émile Amar claimed in 1907, "It is a false idea . . . that the Muslim world of our day, resistant to modern civilization, is hopelessly doomed to remain at the margins of the great scientific and literary movements coming from the West."³² Amar was a French professor of Arabic and a member of the scientific expedition to Morocco assembled by Châtelier in 1905. The point he was making was that Muslims could benefit from the improvements brought by France, thereby reducing the moral and intellectual gap between European colonists and natives in North Africa. Many Muslims were reluctant to subscribe to the demeaning "civilizing" rhetoric of colonialists, but in the atmosphere of the early twentieth century, a man like Amar could find common ground with Islamic modernists on the continent despite their different outlooks. The English writer and Muslim convert Marmaduke Pickthall, who would produce one of the best-known English translations of the Qur'an, was in broad agreement on the changes taking place in the Muslim world. "Many Muslims of to-day have outgrown the mental atmosphere of their remote forefathers," Pickthall remarked, alluding to the free thought and liberal aspirations which he believed Islam encouraged.³³ Muslims, in his opinion, were not beyond the pale of modern civilization by virtue of their faith.

While colonialists lauded the development of Muslim elites accepting Western values (and hence European colonization), Muslim critics were more concerned with defending their religion from narrow-minded critics who persistently saw Islam as a relic of the past. Both offered interpretations of Islam that, despite their different starting points, found their rationale in a common premise: Islam could accommodate and adapt to modern times. "Knowledgeable individuals appear won over to a sort of modernism," noted the French politician Lucien Hubert. "The press itself is a method of action, strong without doubt, but which brings sooner or later a more robust freedom of discussion."³⁴ Hubert's observation was trenchant. In the battle between Islam and its detractors playing out in Europe, the press was key. Activists used the printed word to rebuff their critics and highlight core issues ranging from politics to religious practices. They aimed to illustrate how and in what measure Islam was consonant with Western values, chipping away at long-standing Orientalist stereotypes. Yet there was more at stake here. In obtaining an independent and public voice, Muslims and colonialists alike were not simply "clarifying" Islam for a European audience. They were actively contributing to a vision of Islam believed to be compatible with European social and cultural life. In the exchanges that took place, journalists and activists were adumbrating the contours of a veritable European Islam.

Modernists felt confident that the Qur'an justified their liberal interpretations of Islam. However, scripture alone was not enough. Most Europeans

were neither familiar with the teachings of Islam nor had they read the Qur'an. They drew their inferences from the customs and aspects of daily life they observed in Muslim societies rather than religious doctrine as such. Writers and journalists not only faced the task of explaining the basic precepts of the Islamic religion to Europeans but also needed to demonstrate that Muslim society itself had the capacity for change.

One of the thorniest issues in these debates was also one of the most commonly cited differences between Islam and the West: the role of women in society. Arguments presented by Orientalist scholars and missionaries routinely singled out the treatment of women as one of the most egregious examples of Islam's moral failings. Writing in 1858, Nicolas Perron, the director of the Collège Imperial in Algeria, offered a standard view on the subject. "I say it with truth, the Arab woman is significantly denigrated. Her position in the family has been more firmly and seriously regulated by Islam." Perron drew his conclusions from the study of pre-Islamic Bedouin poetry in which women were treated with chivalry and as objects of love and devotion. Islam had snuffed out Arab gentility and with it "annulled women in public affairs," confining them to the harem.³⁵ In the nineteenth century, nothing had changed, according to the French journalist Antoine Bernard d'Attanoux. Flagrant inequalities between the sexes extended from public society right up to the household. Muslim society exhibited a strong sentiment of patriarchy that kept women in a state of servitude. "The woman constitutes a being apart, an inferior being that is expected to obey," Attanoux fumed, adding that these expectations ran "counter to our conception of social life."³⁶ His cohort, Henri Carnoy, agreed, remarking, "the Arab is ferociously jealous and the tyranny within his household surpasses anything we are accustomed to."³⁷ Edward Glenny, a Protestant missionary who had spent much of his career in North Africa, was blunt when it came to the treatment of women in Muslim societies. "Under Mohammedanism women are looked upon as animals."³⁸ Writers incessantly objected that women were secluded from society, forced to veil themselves in public, and at the mercy of draconian husbands. The harem became a universal symbol for the oppression endured by women, conjuring up images of imprisoned wives and daughters locked away from society. More broadly, it was symptomatic of the evils inherent in Muslim society as a whole. "No countries under heaven present such a cesspool of seething corruption and sensuality as those ruled over by the Muslims," Elwood Wherry stormed. "No man acquainted with the state of things in Muslim harems can honestly deny [it]."³⁹

Notwithstanding these reproaches, romantic writers and artists found a certain allure in the gender relations that governed Islamic societies, depicting the secluded, veiled woman as one more example of oriental exoticism. Authors let their imaginations run wild with accounts of the sexual

debauchery and indulgences presumed to take place in these most intimate of settings. Artists like Jean-Léon Gérôme and Eugène Delacroix painted scenes of half-dressed women serviced by slaves and supine pashas surrounded by multiple wives. These overly sexualized images were reproduced in travel literature and historical accounts, elevating them to the status of a received truth.⁴⁰ In certain instances, supposed “truthful” accounts were presented in narrative form as romances intended to entertain rather than inform readers. In 1875, a Christian writer using the pseudonym Seraphael claimed to offer a factual account of the harem by recounting an interview with Mathon Orlodes, a Greek man residing in Istanbul who had married a Turkish woman. *Nights in the Harem*—the title of the work—fulfilled readers’ expectations, providing a story that alleged to give insight into Oriental life while not forgetting to offer glimpses of the “vice and immorality” that took place behind closed doors. *Nights in the Harem* was peppered with bland observations and pronouncements, apprising readers that

the woman is considered in Eastern countries as something intangible and mysterious. . . . The lives of these caged birds pass away without any of those momentous changes that their European sisters have to endure, for when once the Moslem woman is a wife, she has attained her destiny in this world.⁴¹

This, much like the descriptions found in travel literature and the images manufactured by artists, was pure fantasy. They were intended to titillate and satisfy the curiosity of European readers, not provide factual information on Muslim societies.

Europeans were fascinated with the conjugal life and marital customs of Muslims. In comparison to the West, the gender relations outlined by Quranic law appeared exotic and strange. The practice of polygamy was especially noteworthy. The pasha with his numerous wives and slave girls was a fixture of Orientalist imagery and, as critics never failed to point out, was sanctioned by the Qur’an. Polygamy was taken as evidence of the inherent prurience of Muslim men. Many writers, both popular and academic, even traced these qualities back to Muhammad himself, depicting the Prophet as a lecherous charlatan preoccupied with the longings of the flesh rather than the soul. Naturally, Christian polemicists condemned the practice outright, claiming it was anathema to Christian morals and the sanctity of marriage. According to the French bishop Maurice Landrieux, polygamy was simply a further indication of the tyranny that prevailed in the East. “[Muslim men] have more wives than they can feed,” he objected. “They have arms to perform work but don’t have to pay them.”⁴² For others, it was reflective of the general backwardness found across Muslim societies. The Austrian historian Carl Grüber posited that polygamy was “rooted” in the origins of the Asiatic race, which

appeared impervious to change. "The degree to which the intellectual culture of a people progresses, the institution of polygamy . . . must be reduced in extent and acceptability," he calculated.⁴³ These opinions found their way into popular forms of culture as time went on. In the 1890s, the German publisher Karl Baedeker released a guidebook for travelers bound for the Levant that included bits of "local color" and history in its descriptions. The authors took the liberty of weighing in on Muslim domestic life, preparing European holidaymakers for the culture shock they would no doubt experience among Oriental peoples who had failed to keep pace with modern sensibilities. "Polygamy stands in close relation to the ancient Oriental view that women are creatures of an inferior order," the book claimed, underscoring the sharp inequalities between the sexes that ordered Muslim society.⁴⁴

The plight of women in Islamic societies was a favorite topic of discussion among European writers. Critics issued blanket judgments, citing the "enslavement" of wives and daughters as one more indication of the despotism that reigned in the East. Rarely did they pause to reflect critically on the status of women in their own societies. They conveniently overlooked the fact that nowhere on the continent did women hold political rights, or that in many countries, women were still legally categorized as the commodity of husbands. At a time when female activists were beginning to attack the gendered hierarchies that governed European societies and suffragettes were calling for the vote, male critics cast their glances elsewhere, preferring to impugn a foreign culture rather than confront evident problems closer to home.⁴⁵

Given the objections surrounding the social status of Muslim women, opponents had little choice but to take up the issue directly. According to Gottlieb Leitner, polygamy was a "much-abused subject" in studies of Islam. Europeans showed little understanding of Muslim conjugal relations, and the impression that all Muslim men had multiple wives at their beck and call was a complete fabrication.⁴⁶ Hoping to give European readers an object lesson in history, the French writer Henry de Castries argued that many of the restrictive measures placed on women pre-dated Islam and were in no way justified by recourse to religious explanations. Turning to the issue of polygamy, it was a "luxury in the Orient inaccessible to men of modest means and permitted only to some favored by fortune." This was one of many exaggerations presented as fact, resulting in a narrow view of Muslim society. "The reputation given to Islam is the result of superficial generalizations without which the traveler would have, nothing at all to write about," Castries sneered.⁴⁷ The more academic-minded Octave Houdas concurred, adding that for the most part, Muslim women enjoyed greater independence than their Western counterparts. Contrary to prevailing opinion, the advent of the Islamic religion had, Houdas insisted, actually improved the condition

of Arab women by formalizing laws on property ownership and marital obligations absent in Bedouin society. In the larger picture, Muslim women were beginning to benefit from new social attitudes emerging in the Near and Middle East, and according to Houdas, these changes were incontrovertibly due to contact with the West. "The movement [to improve the conditions of women], begun some years ago in certain countries, has accelerated very quickly with the contact of European peoples." In time, these sentiments would "spread to the masses" and secure for women "a more prominent place in society."⁴⁸

Onlookers like Houdas, who waxed lyrical on the benefits of colonialism and Westernization, held women up as a visible example of the improvements brought by Europe. However, changes regarding gender roles and relationships in the Muslim world extended far beyond the moral justifications of empire. Houdas himself was sensitive to the shifting perspectives occurring in elite Muslim families where a greater number of women were receiving formal education and liberating themselves from the strictures prescribed by custom and tradition. These modest beginnings were the seeds that would pave the way for wide-ranging and comprehensive social change.⁴⁹ Muslims did not need to be goaded by European overseers to appreciate the nature of these transformations. While colonialists congratulated themselves for propelling a backward and ignorant people into the modern age, Islamic modernists were busy convincing their compatriots of the need for change and promoting ideas of reform that looked more to the traditions of Islam than the West.

Pointing to the work carried out by the Egyptian government, the jurist and intellectual Qasim Amin noted that the Khedival administration did not need prompting from the British when it came to the issue of female advancement. The state had willingly passed legislation in line with Quranic dictates, securing civil equality between the sexes. Egyptian women were not the "enslaved" and helpless beings depicted by Europeans. In fact, there was every indication that the state would continue to advance the cause of female emancipation. The next step, according to Amin, was to ensure equal access to education, something that was not beyond the realm of the possible.⁵⁰ In a series of articles written for the *Revue de L'Islam* in 1899, Amin assured European readers that Islam was susceptible to change on its own terms. Conservative 'ulamā might protest that female emancipation was a Western import, but these accusations held little weight. Women, just like men, needed a "serious education," a point that was in no way opposed to Quranic scripture.⁵¹ The days when women were expected to languish inside the harem and attend to the whims of their husband were finished, Amin believed. "Correctly understood, this religion [Islam] appears a marvelous factor in progress, rather than the immobility of routine, as it seems today,"

Amin declared.⁵² Islamic doctrine was not an obstacle to women's education and advancement, in his estimation. Prevailing social attitudes were.⁵³

This position was taken up by other modernists, many of whom, like Amin, sought to assure Western audiences that Islam was not a barrier to modernization. In 1908, the Tunisian journalist and reformer Sadok Zmerli drove this point home when speaking at the North African Congress convoked in Paris that year. It was time to stop repeating the familiar misnomer that the Qur'an forbade female education, he declared.

If the Muslim woman has not benefited in the greatest measure from instruction, it is not Islam which it is necessary to attribute this to . . . but to the blind passion and fanatical zeal of some commentators of a dead age.⁵⁴

Conservative clerics rather than religious doctrine were the problem. Once enlightened statesmen and intellectuals were permitted to make laws and rule on important issues of the day, the Muslim nations of the world would be free to progress in accordance with the prescriptions demanded by modern societies.

Zmerli was part of a cohort of Young Tunisian reformers active in Tunis at this time. Educated in French schools set up in the Tunisian protectorate and professing a "liberal" outlook, Young Tunisian partisans were committed to modernizing the education system and molding a new generation of Westernized Muslim elites in the protectorate. The French readily encouraged these activities, hoping they might have an influence on Tunisia's large Muslim population. As reformist and imperial interests came together, modernists found ample opportunities to work through the colonial administration, presenting themselves as much-needed partners in the French imperial enterprise. The government even sponsored their work, providing spaces for meetings and subsidizing newspapers in which to spread their ideas.⁵⁵ Tunisian intellectuals did not necessarily need prompting. As early as the 1860s, Tunisian elites had begun flirting with ideas of liberal reform, primarily to stave off European colonization. The end goal may have failed, but French occupation did little to stifle these aspirations. Proponents of reform were conscious of the modernist movements growing up in places like Egypt and Syria, and like these movements, they drew their ideas from sound Islamic principles. Liberal Islam, according to the Tunisian jurist and civil servant Mohammed Essnoussi, required returning to "the words of the Prophet." Part of this program contained support for female education. It was "easy to realize the rights of the woman in Islam," Essnoussi confirmed, as long as scholars adhered to original scripture. That said, thinkers like Essnoussi were a far cry from open-minded advocates like Qasim Amin. For all their talk of women's rights, they maintained a relatively conservative position. They supported the

sequestration and veiling of women on the grounds of tradition, insisting, as Essnoussi did, that no “honest Muslim woman” would think of relinquishing the veil or challenging the commands of their husband.⁵⁶ This was miles away from the “liberated” woman imagined by Europeans, but it nonetheless provided a foundation on which colonialists could build. In the coming years, colonial authorities in Tunisia aggressively scouted out Muslim intellectuals supportive of reform with the objective of shaping a thoroughly modernized brand of Islam. In these debates, the woman question loomed large.

In 1905, the French government gave assistance to the Young Tunisian journalist Abdelaziz Thâalbi, who subsequently coauthored a book with the provocative title *The Liberal Spirit of the Qur'an*. Thâalbi had spent time in Egypt and established relations with leading Islamic modernists in the country. Drawing inspiration from these interactions, he and his associates proceeded to craft a series of arguments that offered a “correct” interpretation of the Qur'an, touching upon everything from liberal politics to the necessity of a Western-style education curriculum. When it came to the issue of women, the authors left little ambiguity regarding where their views lay.

The suppression of the veil is the emancipation of women, it is war against fanaticism and ignorance, it is the diffusion of ideas of progress and civilization, it protects the higher interest of the family and family patrimony, finally it is the reconstitution of Muslim society as it was in the time of the Prophet and his wives, that is to say like European society.

The authors referenced Quranic passages, arguing that nothing in the original text restricted women to a cloistered existence or commanded sartorial conformity. “Like a European woman, [a Muslim woman] can come and go and attend to her affairs without any danger for Muslim society,” the authors concluded.⁵⁷ Modernists committed to shaping a liberal view of Islam saw the woman issue as a battering ram with which they could attack critics, and they allied with colonialists to take on both European detractors and the conservative religious establishment in their own countries.

While certain groups found utility in working with colonialists, these concerns were hardly colonial in their making. Debates over the role of women in public and private life were taking place across the Middle East at this time, predictably splintering into modernist and conservative camps. In the 1890s, the female Turkish author Fatma Aliye captured this frenzied atmosphere in a number of writings focused explicitly on the status of women in Ottoman society. Through a series of alleged interviews conducted with European women visiting Istanbul, she took aim at the popular stereotype of the captive “Oriental woman,” using dialogues to encapsulate the competing arguments of traditionalists and modernists. Aliye painted a vivid picture of

contemporary Istanbul where women dressed *à la franca*, were content in their conjugal relations, and found little contradiction between religious custom and present-day concerns. "In imagining the Muslim woman as a captive creature, [Europeans] perpetually find fault with Islam," she indicted. The image presented by Aliye was quite different. Women had the option to dress as they wanted and most had only a single husband, giving short shrift to the myth of the polygamous Muslim. Religion was not what dictated sartorial and social conventions. The "local customs of each country" did, and as for Aliye, she lived in an Istanbul where women were free to dress in the latest Parisian fashions, lived in apartments rather than harems, and socialized at cafés conversing in English and French. As she phrased it, a stratum of elite women was abandoning the strictures imposed by religion and "taking up the habits of modern life just as if they were the precepts of the Sharia."⁵⁸

These descriptions of modern Ottoman life came at a time when European writers—many of them women—were providing more precise accounts of the inner life of the harem obtained through first-hand experience. During her Egyptian travels, Emmeline Lott, the English governess charged with educating the son of Isma'il Pasha, acquired a good knowledge of the royal Egyptian household. Her memoir *Harem Life* published after leaving Egypt, presented an account contrary to the images evoked in Orientalist literature and art. The Princess Consort, Shehret Feza Hanim, was depicted as a shrewd and capable woman who managed a tight household composed of extended family members and lower-ranking wives. She even "meddled indirectly in the weightiest affairs of the state."⁵⁹ This trend in travel writing by women with access to the most intimate domains of Muslim life replaced the idea of kept women idling their days away in Oriental splendor with descriptions of complex familial relations and household economies managed by assertive females.⁶⁰ Writers continued to reiterate familiar images of "caged birds" suffering under the yoke of an indomitable Muslim patriarchy, but these impressions were being exposed as the fantasies they were. Memoirs written by women and travelers possessing direct knowledge of harem life revealed a more dynamic picture of the gender and power relations that governed Islamic societies. In an address given before the International Congress of Monotheistic Religion held in Geneva during the summer of 1905, Emilie Jane Loyson expressed disappointment that Europeans still clung to the most misleading and imaginative falsehoods when it came to Muslim domesticity. "The harem-home is not the abode of conjugal disorder as has sometimes been odiously imagined by Christian men who have never been admitted therein."⁶¹ Having visited harems in Istanbul and Egypt, she knew of what she spoke. The harem was not a "shut-in-kingdom" but a well-administered and disciplined abode where children were reared and wives attended to household affairs.

Wife of the theologian Hyacinthe Loyson, Emilie had undertaken travels in Jerusalem and across North Africa, coming to know women like Fatma Aliye personally. In 1898, she was involved in setting up the Alliance of Women from the East and West, an organization primarily relegated to paper, but which did attempt to foster an awareness of sororal solidarity across cultural divides. With offices planned for Paris, Algiers, and Istanbul, the Alliance was a mix of French colonial reformers and notable women like the Egyptian Princess Zainab Nazli. According to its founding charter, the organization aspired to show “the influence of women” in working toward the noble ideals of international peace and cooperation, drawing Christians and Muslims into a common coalition attentive to issues concerning family and female education. While virile colonialists and politicians resorted to the battlefield to effect change, female activists were looking elsewhere. “Can we not find a means of persuasion that is wiser and has a more humane means of reaching hearts than the saber and bullets?” the founders asked.⁶² For all its moralizing, such rhetoric suggested a difference in approach rather than objective. Behind its international outreach and stated pacifism, the Alliance was calling for a more innocuous brand of colonialism, one that aimed to change minds through example rather than force. The fact that the organization advertised in the pages of the *Revue de L'Islam* was a telling sign of its agenda. Yet these colonial entanglements aside, the founding of the Alliance was nonetheless indicative of the international scope that issues of female education and emancipation possessed, and in the coming years these common threads would be woven together ever more tightly thanks in part to the work of spokeswomen like Emilie Jane Loyson.

Although frankly admitting, “I am not a radical feminist,” Loyson’s speech given in Geneva in 1905 clearly linked the issue of the modern Muslim woman to broader trends occurring in the international arena. “What is needed everywhere in the world is womanly sympathy for women, for help in every acceptable and judicious way, for advancement in her higher calling of maternity and wifely fidelity and wisdom,” she proclaimed.⁶³ If the veiled and oppressed woman was an iconic symbol used to differentiate modernists and traditionalists, this image also provided fodder for the budding internationalist women’s movement that was growing across the West by the turn of the century. Feminine activists and female reformers like Loyson strategically drew attention to the liberties women enjoyed in Muslim societies, contrasting them with the shortcomings found in the West. These issues were designed to highlight the plight of women internationally, removing it from an explicitly Islamic context and presenting it as a broader matter with universal implications. This was clearly the objective of the Spanish musician and international activist Clotilde Cerdà when speaking before a crowd of notable feminist activists at the World’s Congress of Representative Women staged

in Chicago in 1894. Praising writers like Fatma Aliye, she reiterated that Turkish women were not treated like “abject slaves” and were afforded ample opportunities to advance themselves through education.⁶⁴ Twenty years later, the Indian political activist and poet Sarojini Naidu had a similar message to convey to listeners attending the London Lyceum Club. Taking the stage, she discussed movements like the British suffragettes and recent changes to divorce laws, holding them up as tangible achievements in the emancipation of the modern woman. In her opinion, it was Europe that now appeared to be catching up with the Muslim world regarding issues of women’s rights. “I know of no principle which gives greater dignity to woman than economic independence,” she stated confidently. “The laws of civilization now fulfilling themselves in Europe were long ago anticipated by the teacher who made laws in Arabia and India.”⁶⁵

Arguments initially intended to highlight Oriental exceptionalism and the deplorable situation faced by Muslim women had, by the early twentieth century, paradoxically acquired a symbolic value that feminist activists were now claiming as their own. As debates on Islam intersected with larger social and political movements of the period, the heated disputes between Islamophobes and modernists waged in the press were taking on a broader dimension. Women’s advocacy groups may have been small and the issue of women’s rights continued to remain something for men to confer, but the woman question was clearly opening up channels for new forms of female activism and engagement from Europe to Asia. Islamic modernism was no longer solely a question to be debated between clerics and Muslim intellectuals. In the opinions of feminist reformers, the burden of the Muslim woman was now the burden of all women. The conceptual abyss that had long distanced Islam from the West was closing.

RACE AND INTERNATIONALISM

When most people thought of Leiden, it was with a sense of profound nostalgia. Once a leading center of the Dutch textile industry, the fortunes of Leiden had followed the fate of the Netherlandish Empire. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the population progressively shrank, and its cloth manufacturing industries collapsed. By the mid-1800s, the city was primarily known for its university attended by a moderate number of students and its book publishing industry. Yet its provincial feel concealed the fact that Leiden was “a center of immense intellectual activity,” as one French journalist wrote.⁶⁶ Anyone familiar with the city would have instantly agreed.

In September 1883, over 200 visitors descended on Leiden to attend the Sixth International Congress of Orientalists. The meeting, which drew

participants from across the continent, was a tradition started in Paris in the 1870s. The conference organizers had initially selected Amsterdam as the location. However, since the Dutch capital was already slated to host the International Colonial and Export Exhibition that spring, the event was shifted to Leiden.⁶⁷ Leiden was an obvious choice. Its university had a solid reputation for Orientalist studies, and its library housed an impressive collection of Oriental manuscripts. However, as scholars began arriving from France, Russia, Germany, Italy, and other parts of Europe, the limitations of the city were made apparent. Hotels quickly filled up, leaving some guests to seek out accommodations with local residents.

These kinds of international assemblies were common features of European intellectual life. Broadly, they were designed to keep colleagues up to date on the latest findings in their field and promote academic exchange across borders. Rotating between continental cities, the Orientalist congress held every three years was an important venue and contributed to establishing Orientalism as a specialized discipline of academic study in Europe. By the 1880s, however, it was evident that these events were beginning to attract a different cast of characters aside from regulars like the German Sinologist Friedrich Müller and Ignác Goldziher. Starting with the congress organized in Leiden, Arab book dealers, Ottoman officials, Egyptian intellectuals, and Indian spokesmen started to make an appearance at the sessions. The subjects treated at meetings were typically academic in nature, but it was clear that foreign governments and Muslim elites felt it important to be included in the discussions. In taking part, Muslim representatives sought to add their own voices to the conversation. They gave speeches on Islamic history, science, and the current state of Muslim education. They touched upon topics related to Quranic law and contemporary society.⁶⁸ These gatherings also provided Muslim attendees with a chance to speak directly to the European press and reach a wider audience. When the Ottoman dignitary Kâmil Pasha attended the congress held in Paris in 1897, he gave interviews to French journalists with an eye on mitigating the damage done by the recent Armenian crisis. He criticized European meddling in Ottoman affairs, adding, “the fanaticism that is often conceived in Europe does not exist in us.”⁶⁹ In 1905, the organizing committee made the unorthodox decision to move the congress to Algiers. French colonial academics were ecstatic, believing it would secure the city’s status as a leading center of Orientalist scholarship. Yet holding the congress in North Africa also allowed for a greater number of Muslim participants. Presenters used the event to promote their own modernist interpretations of Islam, broaching subjects on theology, literature, and Arab culture. The Egyptian representative, Shaykh Muhammad Sultan, reflected the overall tone of the contributors when, giving a paper on Islamic legal practices, he remarked

that Sharia law was “applicable to all times” and could accommodate modern social conventions such as representative government and female education.⁷⁰

Orientalist congresses provided another forum for Muslims to clarify opinions on Islam and shape public narratives on international affairs.⁷¹ Participants understood the influence exercised by Orientalist scholars when it came to perceptions of the Muslim world, and they were not oblivious to the interwoven relationship between academic knowledge, colonial policy-making, and power. Orientalists had always claimed the authority to speak for the East. In cities like Lisbon, Florence, Stockholm, Paris, and London, Muslims were suddenly speaking back to Europe and presenting their views to an international audience. For the most part, their contributions were welcome additions. Savants valued the insights of genuine “Orientals,” believing their participation would “tend to the advancement of important studies,” as Thomas Baring, the former Viceroy of the Raj, announced during the opening ceremonies of the ninth congress held in London.⁷² Colonial publicists like Gaston Dujarric were also approving. Islam was “brilliantly represented” at these events, as he claimed, with lectures on Islamic history and philosophy delivered by “some of the most notable individuals” from the Muslim world.⁷³ Scholars and colonialists alike endorsed the modernist platforms taken up at these congresses, believing they were a promising sign of things to come. There were, however, limits to what colonists could accept, and as other issues pervaded the international arena, the commonalities between supporters of empire and Muslim activists began to erode.

Representatives coming to Europe to speak their part did so with the intention of tempering the anti-Muslim rhetoric that had been building on the continent. The problem, however, was that European Islamophobia was never simply about religion. It encompassed notions of race and civilizational development that were written into the very framework of colonial rule. The term “Muslim” always connoted a certain element of foreignness in the European imagination. Yet as colonial ethnography and Darwinian notions of biological race emerged over the course of the nineteenth century, religious differences often came to assume racial differences as well.⁷⁴ White Europeans were prone to make sharp distinctions between themselves and the “colored races” that subscribed to Islam. Arabs, Turks, Indians, and Persians were not only seen as belonging to a “Muhammadan race.” They were categorized into specific racial groups with inherited qualities. Scientific racism ranked “superior” and “inferior” races based on skin color, with black Africans occupying the lowest rung in this hierarchy. These categories naturally fed into colonial forms of rule outside Europe. Proponents of colonialism might support and even encourage ideas of Islamic modernism when it pertained strictly to issues of religious doctrine and custom. Yet they were

reluctant to embrace ideas of racial equality that threatened to disrupt the boundaries between white colonizers and non-European colonized peoples. To do so risked overturning the entire colonial order and could foreseeably pave the way for independence movements which colonialists were loath to accept. The British explorer and soldier Claude Reignier Conder stated the case openly in 1884, warning that “[to treat] such races as though they stood equally high in the scale of progress with the educated thought and intelligent social condition of the West,” would be a grave error.⁷⁵ Colonialism was dependent upon the rule of the superior race over less-evolved peoples. Without this basic understanding, the colonial edifice fell apart.

This was not to imply that colonized peoples accepted this logic. In fact, by the early twentieth century, “the colored races” were beginning to show their resolve in pushing back against the colonial order. In 1900, bands of so-called “boxers” went on a rampage across northern China, slaughtering Christian missionaries and burning the homes of European residents. Fast on the heels of the Boxer Rebellion, Moroccans began staging protests and carrying out attacks on Europeans residing in Fez and Marrakesh, prompting a military response by the French. At the same time, Egyptians tired of British rule organized into a nationalist party, demanding equal rights and greater self-governance. Tunisians observing the situation were impressed. “The Egyptians have given us the example of their patriotism,” one newspaper professed. “We should act in such a way ourselves.”⁷⁶ The French had no intention of letting this occur and immediately heightened security in the protectorate. Authorities took a hardline approach against anything that smacked of dissent. In 1912, police clamped down on protesters and arrested anyone audacious enough to stand up for Muslim unity or native political rights. The Young Tunisians, once considered potential allies of the French government, became *persona non grata* overnight, deepening the rift between Tunisian Muslims and the French administration in the country.

These and other events damaged European prestige and served to embolden opponents. Events from outside also had an impact. In 1905, the Russo-Japanese War sent shockwaves across the globe when an “inferior” Asian race defeated a presumably “superior” European power. “From coast to coast, the news of Japanese victories came like the announcement of a deliverance, not only of Asia against the West but also of the non-Christian against the Christian,” remarked the author Fernand Farjenel. In his estimation, this upset would doubtless have repercussions across the Muslim world. His prediction was accurate. As the Algerian newspaper *El Misbah* soon pronounced: “The Far East has given the signal of the evolution of the yellow race. Islam must also awaken from its old slumber.”⁷⁷

Europeans monitoring the Muslim press began to grow nervous. The tenor of discontent and outrage was plainly evident on the front pages of Arabic

newspapers. As one Austrian journalist cautioned: "The Islamic press . . . has immense influence and writes in a manner hostile to Europe. . . . The Mohammedans are not weak, they simply lack unity. If this union occurs, Europe had best watch out."⁷⁸ Colonial officials had perennially worried over the possibility of Pan-Islamic revolt. Now people were speaking of the "awakening" of Islam and issuing solemn warnings of upheavals stretching from Morocco to Iran. "At present, we can only observe the taking of sides in an age-old struggle between the two worlds of the Occident and the Orient," one newspaper reported in 1908.

There is Islam, which gathers all the colored peoples around the green flag professing their instinctive and deliberate hostility to European civilization and culture, and there is European civilization, which through its manifold influences, progressively destroys the forces that lay at the heart of the Islamic polity.⁷⁹

The mounting anti-colonial sentiments roiling Africa and Asia at the dawn of the twentieth century may have been novel, but the anger they encapsulated had deep roots. Over the nineteenth century, Muslims had watched with trepidation as *dar al-Islam* came under European control. They had expressed outrage at the plundering of mosques and holy sites and condemned the bloodshed perpetrated on supposed "uncivilized" races. European writers freely expounded upon the degraded character of the Arab or Turkish races and presented European guardianship as the only remedy for reform, adding insult to injury. "How many times have [European governments] proclaimed and announced to the world that they respect the rights of humanity without consideration for religion or race?" asked the Young Tunisian Ali Bash-Hamba. "Yet their acts are in direct opposition with these declarations."⁸⁰ Muslims such as Bash-Hamba reacted by placing their faith in Pan-Islamic solidarity and using the press to defy their enemies. Yet the atmosphere of the early 1900s added a new element to these protests. The upheavals surging from Africa to East Asia revealed that these indignities were not suffered by Muslims alone. They were a common experience shared among colonized peoples across the world. Anti-colonial sentiments had been brewing for some time.⁸¹ The myriad challenges issued against the Western colonial order only revealed what had been evident all along: the grievances of Muslims were part of a wider resistance to the brutalities and racism perpetrated by colonizing powers. As movements such as Pan-Islamism, Pan-Asianism, and anti-colonial nationalism assumed center stage in international politics, the commonalities of these diverse movements were becoming evident.⁸² For the first time, Muslims were imagining themselves as engaged in a common struggle against a white, colonial order built upon inequality and racial subjugation.

Conscientious observers were capable of seeing the writing on the wall. *Indigénophiles* in Paris saw the agitation erupting across North Africa for what it was. The only way to quell the outrage, they argued, was for France to stop treating its Muslims as second-class citizens. The time had come to “destroy prejudice” and confer “without distinction of race, origin, or belief” the rights guaranteed by a republican France.⁸³ The *Revue Indigène*, a journal sympathetic to the cause of colonial integration, gave a more sober projection. “How can we not see by such thoughtlessness and sovereign imprudence we risk the entire future of our African Empire?”⁸⁴ British commentators shared similar concerns when it came to the state of their own empire. In 1903, the New Zealand author Arthur Henry Adams, recently returned from China where he had covered the Boxer Rebellion for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, flatly indicated that things could not persist as they were. The Englishman was “inalterably convinced” he was “the finest fellow in the human race,” Adams smugly remarked. Over the years, this conceit had resulted in sharp cleavages between “the Islanders and the Outside,” generating fissures that ran right through the British Empire. Unless the English were “prepared to admit a greater measure of equality to the colonial” and grant them a more “honorable position,” the empire would surely fragment.⁸⁵ The activist Dusé Mohamed Ali came to a comparable conclusion. “Enduring dominion rests alone upon the basic principles of political and administrative equity and justice,” he claimed. “The absence of these principles can only result in unrest, riot, revolution, and disintegration.”⁸⁶

Dusé’s appeal for a more just form of imperialism possessed a familiar ring in the volatile atmosphere of the early 1900s. However, unlike many European critics, his convictions stemmed from personal experience just as much as ethical considerations. A dark-skinned Egyptian born to a Sudanese mother, Dusé was no stranger to the bloodshed and ignominy wrought by colonialism. His brothers had been killed during the British bombardment of Alexandria in 1882. His father had died fighting the British in the trenches of Tell El Kebir. During the invasion, his mother and sister were evacuated to Sudan. Dusé never heard from them again despite numerous inquiries as to their whereabouts over his lifetime. As for himself, Dusé was spared the violence that gripped Egypt in the 1880s. Just before the Egyptian crisis broke, he had been sent to England to study. The move would prove permanent. In London, he took up work as an actor, playing roles as slaves and Moors—what Dusé referred to as “dark parts”—on the stage.⁸⁷ His stints with traveling theater companies rarely provided enough to live on. In between touring seasons, he supplemented his income with odd jobs. He worked nights on the London docks, served as a railroad foreman in Hull, and took temporary employment hanging carbon lamps as an electrician’s assistant: anything to keep afloat.

Even with much of his attention divided between acting and grueling manual labor, Dusé amazingly found time to work as a freelance journalist. In the early 1890s, he wrote a series of articles on the underbelly of English society. Posing as a dock worker, he spent weeks sleeping at a Salvation Army shelter in the East End of London, conducting interviews with defrocked priests, tramps, and shady doctors who had been disbarred from practice. His background also earned him work as a correspondent for “Oriental affairs,” a step up from Grub Street-style reportage on down-and-out London. As he established a name for himself, Dusé was afforded opportunities to expand his horizons through travel. He moved from India to the Caribbean, made a small tour through South America, and visited China. His foreign itineraries followed the path of empire. Wherever the tendrils of British imperialism extended, Dusé was there. His familiarity with the British Empire did not, however, mean he was an imperialist. Quite the contrary. In British Guiana, he saw the ravages of colonialism firsthand, describing abandoned sugar plantations and desolate villages that were a mere shadow “of a once rich and prosperous country.” When his globe-hopping brought him back to Egypt, he expressed dismay at what he saw. The new buildings and streets packed with European tourists bore little resemblance to the country he remembered from his childhood. “I found myself a stranger in my own country,” Dusé sullenly remarked.⁸⁸ Following this bittersweet homecoming, he began working on a history of modern Egypt in his spare time between writing gigs. Published in 1911 under the title *In The Land of The Pharaohs*, the book chronicled the downfall of Isma’il Pasha and the subsequent struggles of the Egyptian nationalist movement under British rule, a cause with which he clearly sympathized. For all intended purposes, the book was written with the intention of convincing the British government to reconsider its approach in Egypt. As he wrote, “[I hope] that a better understanding [will] be arrived at, and the just claims of the Egyptian people be recognized at the hands of a race whose traditional motto is Freedom, Justice, and Impartiality.”⁸⁹

It would take more than an obscure work of history to persuade British officials. However, *In The Land of The Pharaohs* did bring Dusé to the attention of certain important figures, including the poet and Egyptian expert Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. With little modesty, Blunt accused Dusé of liberally borrowing from his own works on Egypt. Nonetheless, he was eager to meet the author, and after reading *In The Land of The Pharaohs*, Blunt extended an invitation to meet at his home in Sussex. The famed Orientalist was not impressed: “an odd creature, an Egyptian mulatto . . . knowing no word of Arabic; A Moham-medan, but unable to recite the formula of the faith; an Egyptian historian with almost no knowledge of Egypt,” he recorded in his diary after their meeting.⁹⁰ The feeling was mutual. Arriving in Sussex, Dusé found Blunt stretched out on a divan draped in a colorful Oriental patterned robe. “To my surprise while

I was habited in a formal dinner suit, Blunt was array Sheik-like in a wonderful blue cloth *jibbah* complete with *khaftan*." The suit, fez, and spectacles worn by Dusé could not have been more disagreeable to Blunt, who luxuriated in "the fullest aplomb of an Oriental potentate."⁹¹ Dusé was too discerning not to find this reversal of Orient and Occident comical.

Yet Blunt was not the only one taking notice. Working as a writer, Dusé built up a network of contacts in London, many of them connected with the journalism scene centered around Fleet Street. By the time *In The Land of The Pharaohs* was published, Dusé had begun to consider setting out on his own. He wanted to run a newspaper, one concerned with global affairs that would promote "concord between Europe, Asia, and Africa."⁹² He reached out to various editors and authors he knew, feeling out whether there might be an audience for a newspaper "operated by colored people." His solicitations led him to approach Gustave Spiller, a Hungarian-born writer living in England who was active in a number of humanitarian and "ethical" societies of the period. In 1911, Spiller was busy organizing an international congress dedicated to the subject of race and racial equality. Dusé inquired whether Spiller would provide him with the names of those planning to attend the congress, believing he could interest them in subscribing to his yet unreleased newspaper. Spiller was happy to oblige, and within two months Dusé had managed to attract some 200 subscribers, enough to push ahead with his project.

Dusé's lobbying also earned him a place on the organizing committee of the Universal Races Congress scheduled to be held in London that July. The congress was intended to draw attention to issues of human rights and racial injustice, the latter being "unworthy of an enlightened and progressive age," as the program invitation proclaimed.⁹³ Its message resonated with a range of intellectuals, political activists, and government officials from around the world, including such luminaries as W. E. B. Debois and the Native American activist Charles Eastman. In panels stretching over four days, Indian spokesmen attacked the segregationist policies of the British Empire, and Japanese representatives averred it was time to recognize that the Asian race had acquired all the attributes of "modern civilization." The papers read by African Americans were especially poignant, bringing international awareness to the deep-seated racial discrimination they continued to face in the United States. The Turkish poet and statesman Riza Tevfik Bey used the occasion to refute the charges of intolerance and brutality levied against the Ottoman Empire in the European press. He offered an image of the Ottoman Empire as a multiethnic state which respected the rights of each of its people, avowing that

The civilized nations which have accepted the noble mission of moralizing inferior races, as it is usually expressed, have always preached that tolerance is

one of the first conditions of morality. True civilization begins with it, and not with the application of steam and electricity to industry. It is in the recognition of rights and the mutual respect of individuals and societies that we must seek the test of a true civilization.⁹⁴

Contained within this backhanded criticism of European imperialism was a clear message: European governments eager to “civilize” the world ought to first look to their own colonies before making judgments.

While attendees discussed the broad subject of race and racial fraternity, it was clear that the congress was seen as a forum to broadcast specific grievances to the international community. Dusé watched all of this from the sidelines. His duties consisted mainly of organizing the receptions and entertainment that took place in the evenings. Even so, the congress did leave an impression on him. No sooner had the organizers delivered their closing statements than Dusé was hard at work on his envisioned newspaper. He set up an office at 158 Fleet Street, and the next year released the first issue of *The African Times and Orient Review*.

The paper was bold in its assertions. The premier issue claimed to speak on behalf of all subjugated races, giving them the voice that the white world denied them. “As for you of the Black race, the Brown race, the Yellow race, this is your very own journal. The more humble you are, the more need you have of us and the more readily shall we extend our sympathy and advice.”⁹⁵ Articles treated a gamut of topical concerns from Indian politics and nationalist movements to the current protests agitating the Muslim world. Dusé himself characterized the newspaper as “the rendezvous for all sorts and conditions of reformers,” and he was not wrong.⁹⁶ Aside from British campaigners supporting racial equality, *The African Times* attracted imperial reformers, trade unionists, travel writers, and female activists. It even featured pieces by eccentric personages like George Watson Macgregor Reid, a spiritualist and self-confirmed “citizen of the world” who supported cosmopolitan brotherhood over the principle of nationality.⁹⁷ Dusé brought a range of national, imperial, and international interests together. At one point, his office was being used by the Leeds reformer C. F. Ryder as a base for his League of Justice which pledged to unite all the subject races within the British Empire. Dusé also brought in Muslim activists operating in London, featuring a spread of articles on the Pan-Islamic movement and the complexities surrounding British Muslim loyalty. As Dusé boasted, “158 Fleet Street had become the clearing house for African and Oriental grievances.”⁹⁸

The coverage given to Islamic politics was consistent with the general theme of *The African Times*, but it also spoke to Dusé’s increasing involvement in British Muslim circles. Although a Muslim, Dusé had never placed a strong emphasis on his religious identity. He followed politics in Egypt and

the Ottoman Empire but rarely addressed issues regarding Islamic modernism or theology. Yet, the circles he ran in frequently intersected with the journalists and campaigners active within Britain's lively Muslim community. In the summer of 1913, a mutual acquaintance introduced him to Kamal-ud-Din, who at the time had yet to expand his influence beyond a small circle of primarily Ahmadiyya adherents. Dusé mentioned he could muster up a handful of Egyptians and Indians to attend prayer meetings and advised Kamal-ud-Din to rent out Caxton Hall to hold his Friday prayer sessions. Over the next six months, Dusé delivered as promised. He persuaded those who passed through his Fleet Street office to attend, transforming Kamal-ud-Din's Ahmadiyya mission into a multi-national Muslim association.⁹⁹ Fleet Street and Woking represented two distinct nodal points in Britain's Muslim community. Shared social circles and mutual interests were now bringing them together.

In the coming years, Dusé's involvement only deepened. He would serve as the vice president of the Islamic Society, bringing with him his specific brand of political activism. His criticism of British policy toward the Ottoman Empire in the pages of *The African Times* drew the attention of Ottoman dignitaries in London, including Riza Tawfik, who had contributed a paper to the Universal Races Congress two years previously. Teaming up with Aubrey Herbert, a former British attaché to Constantinople infamous for gallivanting around the Middle East, and Marmaduke Pickthall, Dusé assisted in forming the Anglo-Ottoman Society and Ottoman Committee, a lobby group committed to easing international tensions between London and Istanbul. Dusé's political attachments were far-reaching, and his criticism of imperialism mixed with his vocal support for the Ottoman Empire eventually drew the suspicion of authorities. His office on Fleet Street, which saw a revolving cast of known political agitators, was constantly subject to police surveillance. Dusé, who despite his radicalism remained loyal to Britain and empire, was not intimidated. "The average British official mind could not be brought to understand that I could be pro-Turk, pro-Egyptian, or pro-anything without being anti-British," he scoffed.¹⁰⁰

Activists like Dusé added a new element to British Muslim politics in the years prior to World War I. They infused specifically Muslim concerns with aspects of anti-colonial internationalism and racial solidarity, giving them a wider resonance. These positions had been latent within the ideas of earlier activists like Quilliam. Now, they were being openly vocalized and actualized. Proponents like Kamal-ud-Din adapted their message to the changing environment, laying emphasis on Islam's inherent cosmopolitanism and universalism. Islam was "above nationality" and made no distinction between its members, as the *Islamic Review* told its readers.¹⁰¹ "Islam is the only religion within our knowledge that gives a broad cosmopolitan soul to its true adherents."¹⁰² To be

a Muslim was to be part of the *ummah*, a global community of believers. This basic principle contained within the Pan-Islamic platform could easily elide with international radical movements critical of European racism and colonial subjugation. Muslim activism was going international as writers and organizers raised their voices against the injustices of a colonial order they could not abide. The “colored races” could no longer “bear the white burden,” Kamal-ud-Din stated.¹⁰³ The cosmopolitanism and tolerance taught by Islam was a sharp rebuke to the existing order.¹⁰⁴ Islam contained “no invidious color or class prejudice” the likes of which one found across Europe, affirmed Khalid Shel-drake. “All men—black, yellow, red or white, prince or peasant—meet together as brethren.”¹⁰⁵ In Marmaduke Pickthall’s opinion, Islam had succeeded where Christianity had failed. Under the banner of the Prophet, the people of the world were uniting against the inequalities imposed by race and wealth, holding out the hope of a truly egalitarian society. “White, black, brown, yellow people intermingle in its mosques and palaces, fraternize and intermarry without bad results,” Pickthall claimed. “There is none of that supreme contempt of one race for another which marks the intercourse of Christian peoples.”¹⁰⁶

Muslim activists were coming to speak the same language as anti-colonial campaigners and social reformers, and this was no coincidence. Men like Dusé revealed the overlapping borders of Islamic politics and the emergent global radicalism of the early twentieth century. In their ideas, just as much as their political engagements, Islamic concerns were never far removed from more basic issues regarding rights and equality. Issues relevant to racial discrimination, female emancipation, and colonial injustice had an international purview, but they could also be expressed through an Islamic idiom as activists honed their criticisms and aligned them with universal demands for change. “Is it too much to ask that the laws of humanity be applied to us?” asked the Algerian Sadek Denden.¹⁰⁷ This exact question was being asked across the world as colonial subjects staged demonstrations, took to the press, and spoke out against the European imperial order. Watching on from Paris, the French senator Henry Béranger saw the larger picture. A representative of French Guadeloupe in the assembly, he understood the implications of the anti-colonial protests taking shape and what they foreshadowed for Europe’s imperial possessions. “The principles of individual liberty and equality . . . are beginning to penetrate our most distant colonies,” he stated, “and will eventually serve to vanquish the prejudices nurtured by race and class conflict.”¹⁰⁸ The threads that had once bound Islam and empire were beginning to fray.

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Chapter Eight

Too Little, Too Late

Muslim activism in France and Great Britain was certainly a sign of the times. Political elites and reformers were critically reflecting on subjects like European imperial expansion, the role of religion in the public sphere, and the status of minorities in European societies as a new century dawned. Muslims proved adroit at wedding these concerns to their own platforms, broaching a series of issues that highlighted the place of Islam in modern European life. However, these were not purely “European” questions. Muslim elites were also responding to and participating in larger debates taking place across the Islamic world. By the late 1800s, Muslim intellectuals in Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, and Istanbul were asking similar questions of their religion. Could Islam embrace modern notions of liberalism and emancipation? Could it be synthesized with new ideas of scientific progress and innovation coming from the West? If so, what did this mean for Muslim cultural identity? These were hefty questions that touched upon all aspects of Muslim social and religious life.¹ Across North Africa, the Middle East, and India, reform and revivalist movements were addressing novel concerns as territories once contained within the familiar world of *dar al-Islam* came under European control or were exposed to Western influences.² Traditionalists bristled at what they saw as an assault on time-honored Islamic values and cited the numerous threats the import of Western ideas posed: loss of faith, the disintegration of the Muslim community, a continued slide into the abyss. Reformers, on the other hand, expressed optimism in Islam’s ability to transform and embrace modernity.

That European Muslim elites were struggling with many of the same questions as their brethren further afield was not surprising. These were large questions that most educated Muslims could not ignore. However, in European cities such as Paris and London, the scope of these debates was

severely restricted. Public figures like Quilliam, Grenier, or Dusé may have commanded the spotlight from time to time, but by and large, they remained obscure individuals. Those who did pay attention often characterized them as idiosyncratic, a bit outlandish perhaps, if not completely crazy. Likewise, the communities that took shape in Western Europe were relatively small, comprising a mix of converts and foreigners. Meetings held at the Woking Mosque never attracted large audiences, while the periodicals and journals that Muslims wrote for were aimed at a limited readership of specialists, exiles, policymakers, and Orientalists. Muslim elites may have been vocal in their demands, but their message rarely extended beyond a small circle of readers and enthusiasts. The minuscule number of Muslims residing in European capitals at the time ensured that these were hardly mass movements.

Further east, however, the picture was different. Unlike Western Europe, the Russian Empire and Balkans possessed sizeable indigenous Muslim populations. The further east one went, the more ambiguous the boundaries between European and Islamic civilization became. Travel accounts of the period commonly accented the hybridized character of Eastern Europe with its odd mix of cathedrals, mosques, and synagogues. Many were reluctant to believe that the Muslims inhabiting the periphery were “European” at all. They donned fezzes and wore the loose, baggy clothing of “the Turk.” Veiled women meandered through the streets while the Islamic call to prayer resonated among the tolling of church bells. It was difficult to see how this “picturesque and somewhat squalid chaos,” as the German traveler Franz Mauer put it, was representative of the Europe he knew.³ The conservative Russian journalist Mikhail Nikiforovich Katkov was even more assertive when considering Russia’s territories in the Volga-Ural region with its immense Tatar population. Few traces of Russian “national” life and culture could be found there despite three centuries of Russian rule. Kazan, the capital city, was a “flaming hearth of Muhammadanism.”⁴ Unless something was done, Katkov warned, the “rising spirit of Islam” would soon eclipse Russian supremacy.⁵ Such observations testified to the fact that Muslims in post-Ottoman territories and European Russia retained cultural and intellectual ties to the neighboring Ottoman Empire and broader Islamic world.⁶ Authorities in Vienna, Sofia, or Saint Petersburg might boast they were “civilizing” their Muslim subjects and “accommodating” them to a European style of life, but this did not necessarily translate into full integration or assimilation.⁷

Katkov’s warning of a rising “Muhammadan” movement was also telling. In an age where Muslims across the world were becoming politically active and vocal, imperial authorities had much to fear. As Muslim reform movements and modernizing initiatives took shape, it was conceivable that these ideas could influence the populations over which Europeans ruled. The anti-colonial undertones in these movements were troubling, but imperial

authorities had bigger reservations.⁸ Given the sheer numbers of Muslims in the Habsburg and Russian empires, such currents had the potential to produce mass movements on a scale that intellectuals and reformers in Western Europe could not. Officials were vigilant when it came to Pan-Islamic influences coming from abroad, but notions of Muslim unity always possessed local implications as well. In fact, by the late nineteenth century, imperial subjects were coming to articulate identities as explicit “Russian” or “Bosnian” Muslims, couching their demands in a language of imperial citizenship and religious tolerance. At the heart of these arguments lay questions of “confessional sovereignty” and cultural autonomy.⁹ If Muslims were willing to concede they were part of a national or imperial community, they were adamant to have a say in the way their religious life was administered, what was taught in Quranic schools, and the selection of religious officials presiding over their communities. Muslims could accommodate themselves to living under Christian rule, but they intended to do so as equal citizens free to live in accordance with the dictates of their faith and traditions. Stated otherwise, the colonial model of control and supervision would have to change.

RUSSIAN MUSLIMS IN REFORM AND POLITICS

“It is possible to annihilate Muslims or banish them out of the empire, if that is considered necessary, but radically transforming them is not possible,” wrote Vasily Vasil’evich Grigor’ev in the early 1860s. “And what is not possible should not be pursued.”¹⁰ An Orientalist and ethnographer employed by the Orenburg *guberniya*, Grigor’ev was offering his advice to imperial authorities considering how best to address Russia’s large Muslim population. In recent years, political elites have become cagey over the future of Russia’s multiethnic empire. With nationalism on the rise across Europe, officials worried what it might spell for the empire. Poles, Ukrainians, and Baltic Germans close to Europe were a top priority, but the Pan-Islamic currents emanating from Istanbul and elsewhere appeared to be giving the empire’s many Turkic peoples a sense of their own self-awareness as a community. The Tatars scattered throughout the Volga-Ural region were a particular concern, especially following the mass demonstrations staged in the 1860s in which forcibly baptized Tatars publicly repudiated Orthodox Christianity and petitioned the government to have their Islamic confessional identity officially recognized by the state.¹¹ Some began to suspect that a distinct “Tatar Empire” might well exist in the heart of the Russian imperial state, stoking fears of an ascendant Tatar nationalism that could challenge Russian predominance.¹² “Among the Tatars, the idea of being a Tatar and being a Muslim are inseparable,” as one religious official explained. “In

propagandizing Muhammadanism, they propagandize Tatariness as well. He who accepts Islam also accepts the [Tatar] nationality.”¹³ A strong dose of “Russification” was proposed as one possible solution to this dilemma, but as Grigor’ev admonished, the hope that Turkic Muslims might identify with Russians as national brothers was pure fantasy.¹⁴

The problem was that Russian officialdom was not listening. In 1870, the education minister, Count Dmitry Andreyevich Tolstoy, pushed through a series of policies designed to give the Russian government greater control over state-run Muslim primary schools, introducing a European curriculum and compulsory Russian language instruction.¹⁵ As these plans were rolled out, certain conscientious authorities expressed misgivings about the impact the new laws would have. Writing to Saint Petersburg, the governor of Orenburg warned that the education policy was a bad idea. It would “serve as an occasion for the awakening of dissatisfaction among Muslims” reluctant to tolerate any outside interference in their religious affairs.¹⁶ His assessment proved accurate.

Community leaders protested, condemning the imposition of Russian culture on their institutions. Some mullahs went as far as to claim the Qur’an prohibited the study of Russian altogether. Others likened the initiative to the forcible conversions of the past, interpreting any interference in Muslim cultural institutions as an attack on their faith.¹⁷ The state ultimately rescinded its insistence on language qualifications in the first instance, but it did little to temper Muslim anger. Over the next two decades, protests continually mounted. Muslims wrote petitions and appealed to local administrators. They turned to their religious leaders and vented their concerns. Imposing the Russian language on Muslims would “alienate them from their piety,” community leaders argued, because the Qur’an was not written in Russian, and scholars required expert knowledge of Arabic in order to interpret holy scripture. In petitions submitted to the Orenburg Muhammadan Ecclesiastical Assembly, Muslims appealed to the “privileges” and even “rights” that guaranteed them protection by the state.¹⁸ By the early 1880s, the Ministry of the Interior was second-guessing its approach, even as education authorities warned against the precedent that would be set should the state concede to Tatar demands.¹⁹

Overall, the success of the government’s educational policies was questionable. Muslim parents showed little inclination to abandon Quranic schools and send their children to state institutions.²⁰ Yet if the gains were minimal, the discontent the school issue sparked was widespread. It politicized thousands of villagers and townspeople across the Volga-Ural region. In doing so, it fostered links between mosque communities that had not previously existed. Russia’s Muslim communities were ethnically and culturally diverse despite their common adherence to the Islamic faith. They comprised a mix of

Tatars, Azeris, Uzbeks, Chechens, and Kazakhs adhering to Sunni and Shi'ite traditions. Yet in the face of a perceived state onslaught, Muslims could find common cause. Not all Muslims turned against the state or condemned the use of the Russian language. Some saw benefits to Russian instruction, arguing it would allow Muslims to defend themselves in Russian courts, attain positions in the local administration, or engage in trade with other parts of the empire.²¹ Opinions varied. Discussions on state reform inaugurated a series of debates regarding how the Russian Empire should relate to Islam, and this issue predictably created tensions within communities. Yet as these debates surfaced and Muslims grappled with how best to preserve their faith and culture under infidel rule, another phenomenon was also at work. Muslims were finding a voice as "Russian" Muslims for the first time.²² In pushing the "Muslim question," the state had unwittingly encouraged Muslims to mobilize and speak out on behalf of their coreligionists, permitting them to imagine a Russian Muslim community that had a stake in the empire.

Protests and anxious officials were not promising signs. If Muslims were to have their grievances addressed, they needed representatives who spoke the language of Russian officialdom and could propose solutions. Imams and muftis might be able to fulfill this role, but they themselves were part of the establishment. Moreover, doubts persisted as to whether the Islamic clergy could enact meaningful change at all. If not, Muslims were going to need new leaders who could speak on their behalf, and this would require a greater measure of cohesion.

In 1881, these questions preoccupied Ismā'il Gasprinsky, a Crimean Tatar serving out his tenure as mayor in the provincial town of Bakhchysarai. Putting his thoughts to paper, he published a pamphlet with the suggestive title "Russian Muslimhood" (*Russkoe Musul'manstvo*), a lengthy piece intended to give an assessment of the government's Muslim policies and offer new suggestions. Gasprinsky despaired over the state's past performance, insisting there was no coherent strategy when it came to one of the empire's largest religious minorities. After two centuries of Russian rule, Muslims remained isolated and cut off from the currents of imperial life. In towns and villages across the empire, poverty and inertia were all Muslims knew. This deplorable situation was not entirely the fault of the Russian state. Muslims themselves bore much of the blame. They had persistently alienated themselves and refused to integrate. "Russian Muslimhood is vegetating in the narrow, suffocating atmosphere of its old concepts and prejudices," Gasprinsky charged.²³ Changing this situation warranted a deeper "moral connection" between the Russians and Muslims, without which Muslims could never hope to prosper.²⁴ The way to achieve this moral union was not by preserving Islamic tradition or falling back on a petrified Muslim culture. It required embracing what modernity had to offer and reforming the community from



Figure 8.1 Russian Muslims praying at a St. Petersburg Mosque, 1914. Les musulmans de Petrograd dans leur mosquée. Photographie de presse. Agence Rol. Gallica/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

within. “How deplorable it is that Russian rule does not lead the Muslims to progress and civilization,” wrote Gasprinsky, “and that it is not able to blow new life, new ideas, and new goals into the Russian-Tatar dead body.”²⁵

At first glance, it may have appeared Gasprinsky was arguing for Russification and urging Muslims to adopt the lifestyles of their imperial rulers. This was, however, only half the story. Abandoning Islam was never a realistic option. Gasprinsky encouraged Muslims to reject an overbearing policy of national-cultural assimilation that stood little chance of success. Rather, “moral Russification” was the objective. Muslims could integrate themselves

into imperial society, but they could not be expected to forsake their religious and ethnic identity in doing so.²⁶ “Russian Muslimhood” was a reality. The predominantly Turkic-speaking Muslim populations of the empire formed a single community bound by a shared confession and historical experience, and they had to begin acting as such.

Many of these ideas had been growing among Tatar intellectuals by the mid-nineteenth century. Theologians and political figures like Shihāb al-Dīn Marjānī and Atā’ullah Bayazitov, who served as imam at the Saint Petersburg Mosque, held similar positions and were aware of the modernizing agendas being spearheaded abroad by pioneers like Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī.²⁷ They espoused notions of Islamic “renewal” (*tajdīd*) and reform (*islah*) with the aspiration of restoring the greatness of Islam. Gasprinsky, however, was unique. He had little connection to the traditional ‘*ulamā* and his notion of reform was eminently more modern in its scope and outlook.²⁸ He came from a Tatar family with a tradition of state service. After completing his education at a Quranic maktab, he pursued his studies in the state Russian school system. Later traveling through France and the Ottoman Empire, he became acquainted with the modernism popular among Muslim intellectuals in places such as Cairo, Istanbul, and Beirut.²⁹ By the time he returned to Crimea in the late 1870s, Gasprinsky was convinced that the Muslim world was poised for change. He was not uncritical of European society with its “deficient and fallacious foundations.” Nevertheless, he firmly rejected the idea that Islam was incompatible with modern life. Secular knowledge and Western technologies in no way posed a threat to the Islamic faith. On the contrary, they would allow for a “better and more complete Muslim way of life.”³⁰ His native Crimea was an acute example of everything that was wrong with Islamic society. The mullahs and religious scholars had taken up a fiercely combative posture, believing it their moral obligation to protect and preserve Islamic traditionalism. In their schools, students received a religious education in Arabic, memorizing the Qur’an and Hadith to the exclusion of all other subjects. Nothing would ever change if the conservative establishment retained its monopoly on power. The only path forward, as Gasprinsky saw it, was to actively change Muslim outlooks, and this meant taking on the establishment.³¹

In this struggle, print and education were the primary weapons. In 1883, Gasprinsky launched his own newspaper, *Turjiman* (The Translator). While not the first Muslim newspaper in Russia, it was the first to obtain a wide readership and address broader issues relevant to the Muslim world.³² The paper endorsed a reform program focused on empowerment through education and offered practical advice to Muslims on how to improve their lot. *Turjiman* bore the masthead “Unity in Language, Thought, and Deed,” a motto that would come to crystallize Gasprinsky’s basic reform program. The paper

was written in a hybrid Turkic with the intention of promoting a common language and fostering connections among the many Turkic-speaking Muslims of the empire.³³ The motto was also a philosophy of action. To spread “European sciences and knowledge among the Muslims of Russia,” print was not enough.³⁴ “Muslims society does not yet have an intelligentsia,” he claimed in 1886. “Nobody enlightens it, nobody points out its ailments, nobody helps it out of the sea of ignorance, and nobody sacrifices his labor or works for it benefit.”³⁵ Gasprinsky intended to cultivate just such a group. In the coming years, he set up a school in Bakhchysarai to replace the “old methods” focused on oral instruction and religious texts. In his “new method” schools, students were taught to read and write in phonetic Turkic and introduced to secular subjects like history, geography, and the natural sciences.³⁶ They were also instructed to be active, civic-minded participants in society, acquiring the traits of “enlightened men” who could take up leadership positions in the community. By framing his approach as a “method,” he envisioned his education program being adopted elsewhere, making the Tatar school a model of Muslim reform.³⁷

During the 1890s, Gasprinsky solicited both the Ministry of the Interior and the Turkestani governor-general in a bid to garner state backing for his program. Authorities remained cold to the idea. They correctly saw that new method schools would compete with Russian state schools. Not only was the curriculum in the new schools more progressive but the schools also did not have the stain of being associated with the state, potentially making them more attractive to Muslims.³⁸ Critics slammed Gasprinsky’s schools as citadels of Pan-Islamism and Tatar nationalism. Nikolai Ostroumov, who was responsible for education policy in Turkestan, dismissed the proposal outright. “In the matter of the education of foreigners [*inorodtsy*] in Russia,” he claimed, “we need the direction of a Russian member of the Ministry of Education, not that of a Tatar foreigner vehemently defending the inviolability of a foreigner’s way of life with all its particularities.”³⁹ Although disappointed, Gasprinsky was not deterred. Officials misunderstood his intention, he believed. His loyalty to Tsar and empire was never in question. In fact, his reform policies dovetailed with Russian imperial interests, he argued. He imagined enlightened Tatar intellectuals and the Russian state working in concert, “carrying Western civilization into the East.”⁴⁰ If the imperial state would not abide, he and his followers were determined to do it on their own.

Gasprinsky laid the groundwork, hoping to generate a movement similar to the Young Turks in the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹ By the late nineteenth century, the “new method” program (*usul-i jadīd*) had attracted a number of dedicated adherents in Crimea, the Volga, and Turkestan. As Abdullah Awlān, an education reformer who ran a new method school in Tashkent, remarked: “I began reading *Turjiman* and became aware of the world.”⁴² Branded as

Jadīds, activists like Awlān saw themselves as part of a new Muslim intelligentsia at odds with the sclerotic traditionalism of “Qadimists”—hidebound members of the ‘*ulamā* desperately clinging to the past. With Gasprinsky as a model, *Jadīds* opened schools and ran their own newspapers. They used new developments in print media to challenge the authority of traditional elites, taking debates outside the mosques and contributing to the creation of an autonomous Muslim public sphere that had not existed previously. The focus on material and progressive reform departed from more conventional methods of textual analysis and interpretation that typically guided Islamic discussions.⁴³ It offered a new style of debate and engagement with which Qadimists were unfamiliar. The press also had the benefit of expanding the purview of Russian Muslims. They now had access to newspapers coming from Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, Europe, and India. When recalling his time as a student in Kazan, the Tatar writer ‘Ajaz Ishaki admitted that newspaper reading was a widespread practice among his cohorts. “We regularly read newspapers from Constantinople, the Parisian editions of *Meshveret*, *Mizan* from Bulgaria, *Türk* from Egypt, and periodicals from Cyprus as well as other countries.”⁴⁴ Not that Russian Muslims lacked their own periodicals. By the 1880s, the Muslim print trade was at its apogee in Russia. Cities like Kazan, Ufa, Astrakhan, Baku, and even Moscow and Saint Petersburg were turning out an unprecedented number of Muslim books, estimated at 2.5 million volumes annually.⁴⁵ In Azerbaijan, newspapers like *Kaspī* and *Ekinchi* founded in 1875 were starting to “awaken” the people and “save the future generation from the disease that has befallen our social organism,” as one journalist wrote.⁴⁶ Print not only reconfigured Muslim cultural debate and posed new questions but also drew a broader section of the Muslim community into these arguments.

These activities revealed the changing social environment of Russian society in the late nineteenth century. As the Russian Empire was integrated into the world economy, trade and commercial activity were bringing into existence new social groups amenable to reform. Entrepreneurs and merchants began acting as civic benefactors, using their wealth and social capital to improve their local communities when the state proved reluctant to do so.⁴⁷ In Muslim areas, economic elites played an important role in funding community initiatives. They provided endowments for schools, built mosques, and founded orphanages and hospitals. They organized subscription campaigns and gathered donations for a variety of civic and religious projects.⁴⁸ In Azerbaijan, for example, entrepreneurial Muslims who had made a killing in the Caucasian oil trade participated in the city council in Baku and were not shy when it came to speaking out on behalf of their fellow co-religionists. They also acted as patrons of the Azerbaijani Muslim community, funding cultural institutions, schools, and the arts. Conscious of the limits of

political participation, they aimed to improve the community through their own means. The oil tycoon Haji Zeinalabedin Taghiev founded the first Azerbaijani national theater in 1873, owned and financed a newspaper, and built a number of schools, among them a school for Muslim women in 1896. As he claimed: "In order to introduce Muslims to the modern world, the road to education must be taken in order for them to recognize their inalienable human rights."⁴⁹

Urban benefactors and civic patrons were important for the maintenance of Muslim cultural institutions, and for this reason, reformers and traditionalists alike competed for their favor. Qadimists rightly worried that their Jadīd rivals might siphon off much needed funding for mosques and Quranic schools. Educators and religious authorities depended upon charitable funds and patronage networks to run their establishments. As progressives increasingly attracted the attention of financial elites, funding sources began to dry up. In some cities, teachers associated with the local mosque schools were forced to live on meager salaries and even apply for government aid to subsist.⁵⁰ The fierce splits between progressives and traditionalists were never purely ideological in nature, even if this was how they were presented in public. For Qadimists, mosques and Quranic schools were the central pillars of an Islamic community bound together by adherence to Sharia law. Without their moral authority, Islam would cease to exist.⁵¹ The very future and existence of the Muslim community were at stake and conservatives did not intend to sit by idly. Lashing out at their adversaries, Qadimists called upon the state to crack down on Jadīd activities. They were dangerous "revolutionaries," critics assailed. Their schools were hotbeds of radicalism where impiety reigned, and children were taught to sing the Marseillaise, the international anthem of revolutionary liberty.⁵² The polemical fury of traditionalists knew no bounds, often resulting in tense and heated exchanges that exacerbated ideological rifts. "Whoever believes in God and Muhammad must be an enemy of the modernists," one Qadimist railed. "For them the Sharia demands the death penalty."⁵³

For their part, progressives heaped calumny on the recalcitrant class of mullahs and traditionalists that opposed them. In a "century of science and progress," the Qadimists had little to offer Muslims.⁵⁴ The Jadīds coming of age at the turn of the twentieth century consciously dissociated themselves from the conservative *'ulamā*, instead taking up the title of *ziyāhlar* (intellectuals). They defined themselves by their service to the community and their commitment to moral and material progress. Conservative retorts had the tendency of radicalizing Muslim youth. The new generation was not just abandoning the mosque to take up positions as engineers and teachers spreading "useful" knowledge. They smoked, drank vodka, and ignored religious practices like fasting. They flirted with leftist political movements

such as socialism and anarchism. Even for old-guard progressives who had encouraged education reform in the 1880s, the behavior of the new generation was alarming. Writing in 1904, the esteemed legal official Rizaeddin bin Fahreddin, who had helped publicize the Jadīd movement in the Volga region, expressed reservations on the way Muslim youths were flouting religious duties and aping European customs. "Alas, they became wild animals in the guise of human beings," he chided.⁵⁵ In general, the Jadīdists were a small group of activists and in no way represented the majority of Muslim opinion.⁵⁶ For many devout Muslims, their ripostes and confrontational manner were impious at best, heretical at worst. Even Gasprinsky was starting to have his doubts, cautioning activists that to politicize the movement for cultural reform would be perilous.⁵⁷ However, according to some, politicizing the movement was exactly what was needed if Muslims were to attain a voice and presence in the Russian Empire.

In 1905, political activists got their chance. That January, liberal protesters disillusioned with the pace of reform took to the streets in Saint Petersburg, ratcheting up demands for a constitution and parliamentary Duma. The extent of the protests was unlike anything ever seen in Russia. Liberals gathered in clubs, crying out "long live the constitution!" and insisting that Russia was no longer the "personal property and fiefdom of the Tsar."⁵⁸ Workers staged mass strikes in solidarity with the liberals, soldiers mutinied, and peasants set up rural committees demanding land. The government was hard-pressed to put down the protests. As momentum grew that spring and summer, national minorities joined the fray, with Jews, Georgians, and Armenians seeing the moment as an opportunity to air their own grievances and wrest concessions from the state. Tsarist authority appeared to evaporate as calls for liberalization and civil rights rapidly spread across the empire, bringing the government to its knees.⁵⁹

Muslims played a minimal role in the initial revolutionary wave that broke in 1905. Yet once it began, leaders understood they too could capitalize on the political agitation. Writing in the pages of *Kaspii* that March, the Azeri Ahmad Aghaev encouraged Muslims to assert themselves as a single national group, claiming, "[we are] not only one religious community, but also one ethnic organism. . . . All Russian Muslims, with little exception, belong to the Great Turko-Tatar race, speak almost the same language, and follow the same religion."⁶⁰ Tatar organizers in Crimea were of a similar opinion. A month later, they drafted a preliminary list of demands calling for control over Muslim religious institutions, the election of muftis, and equal civil and political rights. These points were intended to solidify a common platform and provided the basis for an All-Russian Muslim congress. Once Gasprinsky and other leaders learned of the declaration, they threw their support behind it, urging it was time to "unite all Muslims in

Russia and act and work together in accordance with the ideas and needs of the nation.”⁶¹

Chaired by Gasprinsky, the First All-Russian Muslim Congress met in Nizhny Novgorod that August, circumventing imperial authorities by meeting in secret on a steamboat in the middle of the Oka River. True to its name, the gathering brought together a range of participants coming from Crimea, Azerbaijan, and the Volga. Attendees were committed to addressing Muslim concerns in a spirit of unity, but whether all endorsed the new rhetoric of Muslim “nationalism” was questionable. Organizers had no set agenda and remained divided on several crucial issues.⁶² The question of whether Muslims should form an independent “national” party or seek concessions through an alliance with liberals was a sticking point. To add to this confusion, the political situation in Russia itself was rapidly changing. Just as Muslim organizers took up these debates, Tsar Nicholas issued his October Manifesto in a sop to the protestors. The decree formally recognized “freedom of conscience” throughout the empire and authorized the creation of a representative Duma. By the time it reconvened in 1906, the Muslim leadership faced a quite different political landscape.

With the promise of a parliament now on the table, activists had at their disposal a means of translating Muslim demographic strength into real political power. They were, after all, the “second largest nation in Russia,” as Gasprinsky stated.⁶³ In the coming year, Muslim organizers did just this. They employed the press and focused attention on key issues of cultural autonomy and tolerance. Between 1905 and 1907, over fifty newspapers and magazines featuring Arabic script appeared in Kazan, Orenburg, Ufa, Saint Petersburg, and Baku.⁶⁴ Activists also made gains on the ground, building a coalition of like-minded reformers from Crimea, the Volga, and the Caucasus who could win votes and carry the grievances of their local constituents into the State Duma. While a minority faction with thirty-six deputies at its height in 1907, Muslim delegates strategically aligned with the larger liberal parties and participated in the commissions formed, weighing in on policy initiatives concerned with religious legislation, self-governance, education, and colonialism.⁶⁵ The concrete achievements attained through these efforts were debatable, especially as the Tsarist government found ways of undermining the Duma and suppressing dissent at every turn. Yet it was undeniable that political engagement placed Russian Muslims in a new situation, contributing to a sense of cooperation and solidarity among participants. In late 1906, just as the first Duma convened, the Azeri-Tatar leadership established the Muslim Union (*Ittifak*) and publicized the organization as an explicit Muslim party committed to “bringing all Muslim citizens of Russia together in one movement.”⁶⁶ It wed Jadīdist ideas of cultural renewal with a liberal political platform, seeking to advance the program for institutional reform and civil

equality where it could. Sadri Maksudi Aksal, one of the chief spokesmen for the *Ittifak*, was representative of the party's outlook, emphasizing loyalty to the empire while also defending the right of the Russian Muslim "nation" (*narod*) to live in accordance with its own culture and traditions. "Our style of national life is not opposed to the Russian state," he proclaimed. "These two things are perfectly compatible. From the heights of the public tribunal, we continue to speak, as we always have, as Russian citizens who desire nothing other than the flourishing of the Russian state."⁶⁷

At the turn of the twentieth century, Muslim elites were finding their voice in a changing Russian society. Long accustomed to being spoken for by policymakers and sending petitions to distant officials in the hopes of redress, Muslims were now engaging in politics and, indeed, asserting themselves as a "nation" deserving of rights and recognition. The path from Russian "Muslimhood" to nationhood over the late nineteenth century revealed that Muslims were no longer content to be passive imperial subjects. They were coming to think and act as citizens of a multiethnic empire, forming organizations and parties that spoke directly for them. Whether "Russian Muslims" were in fact the tight-knit, unified group leaders claimed was never certain. Yet after 1905, one thing was clear: the "Muslim question" was no longer the sole prerogative of imperial officials. How Russia was to deal with its Muslim minority and what place Muslims occupied in imperial society was, henceforth, an issue of significant debate as Muslims mobilized their coreligionists and articulated their grievances before the Russian people.

"A GREAT WORK IS OCCURRING IN THE MUHAMMADAN WORLD"

At a moment when Russian Muslims were organizing and making demands on the state, it might seem odd that Gasprinsky would direct his attention elsewhere. However, in May 1906, the famed Tatar reformer left Crimea for Ruse, a small city located in the northeast corner of Bulgaria. The country was home to a sizeable Turkish population, a vestige of the long years of Ottoman rule in the Balkans. In recent years, it had become a popular destination for Crimean Tatars fleeing the Russian Empire, a factor that explained Gasprinsky's visit. Arriving in Ruse, Gasprinsky met with members of the local Islamic Charity Association and made a tour of the city. What he found was unsettling. Compared to Russia, Bulgarian Turks had few newspapers of their own and lacked organization. Their schools were in particularly bad shape, with students receiving an insipid religious education that failed to prepare them for modern life. "I have not seen a single Muslim doctor, engineer, lawyer, officer, or pharmacist [during my trip]," he remarked curtly.

More shocking still was the fact that Muslims enjoyed a fair amount of freedom under Bulgaria's liberal constitutional system, and yet they failed to capitalize on it. "Your country gave you all the rights and opportunities, but you do not use them," Gasprinsky lamented. Offering words of encouragement, he urged Bulgarians to imitate their Tatar brethren in Russia. Reform, modernization, and political engagement were the future. "Leave the old, and use the rights that the constitutional government offers . . . [Without this] attitude, survival is impossible."⁶⁸

For Bulgarian Muslims, Gasprinsky's injunction was hardly a revelation. With the end of formal Ottoman rule in Bulgaria in 1878, statesmen were divided on how to treat the remaining Turkish population in their midst. Uncompromising nationalists saw no place for them in a new Bulgarian nation. Unable to forcibly expel Muslims, politicians were not above making life as difficult as possible in the hopes they might simply leave. This, however, was easier said than done. Independence had come with certain conditions. The government was obliged to respect freedom of religion and had made extra concessions to the Muslim community to facilitate the transfer of power from Ottoman to Bulgarian hands. The Ottoman sultan was allowed to appoint commissars in major cities who could advocate for Muslim interests on behalf of Istanbul. Likewise, the Ottoman Shaykh al-Islam retained the power to appoint Islamic religious authorities in the principality. Muslims were also granted control over existing Sharia law courts and Quranic schools in their localities. Under the liberal constitution adopted by the state, furthermore, Muslims were considered Bulgarian citizens with equal civil and political rights.⁶⁹ Nationalists might speak of breaking the "Turkish yoke," but it was evident from the start there were limits to what this implied. By necessity, post-Ottoman Bulgaria was going to be a multiethnic state.

Compromise, however, did not mean acceptance. Once in power, Bulgarian officials began scaling back many of these initial provisions. The resident Ottoman commissars were routinely ignored or sidelined. Additionally, the state began exercising more control over Islamic religious life. In the 1890s, a Chief Mufti was established in Sofia to serve as the supreme leader of Bulgarian Islam, putting a measure of distance between Bulgarian Turks and Istanbul. Local religious authorities were ordered to communicate regularly with the interior ministry, while the Ministry of Foreign and Religious Affairs assumed supervision over the vakufs and Islamic endowments needed to fund communities. The state wisely avoided intervening in Muslim schools, but their "private" status made them ineligible to receive state money.⁷⁰ As a result, Muslim schools were left underfunded and bereft of qualified teachers, a trend that persisted well into the twentieth century.⁷¹ In the cities, mosques were demolished and repurposed as nationalists endeavored to erase the vestiges of Ottoman rule. Out of the forty mosques

in Sofia prior to 1878, only the Banya Bashi Mosque located in the city center remained by the end of the century.⁷² The situation in the countryside was hardly better. Speculators exploited Muslim emigration after the devastating wars of the 1870s, laying claim to land and creating a new class of Christian landholders.⁷³ In their daily lives, Muslims experienced a number of indignities meted out by acrimonious Christians. Muslim properties were vandalized and defaced. Ordinary Bulgarian citizens knocked fezzes from men's heads in the streets of Sofia or snatched the veils off respectable women.⁷⁴

Muslims did not suffer these humiliations quietly, but there seemed little they could do. Emigration had thinned the ranks of the Muslim leadership. Muslims made up a significant part of the population—some 600,000 (28 percent) in 1880—but these numbers failed to translate into political power. The Muslim community was divided along ethnic and ideological lines. Religious officials preached adhesion to Istanbul and Sultan Abdülhamid, while Muslim notables lent support to the Bulgarian government in exchange for economic and personal favors. A small number of reform-minded elites were willing to work within the Bulgarian system, but they remained isolated for the most part. In this confusion, voters were lured away by politicians bearing empty promises, harassed by nationalists, and cowed by corrupt grandees who had little interest in improving the situation of their coreligionists in the



Figure 8.2 The Banya Bashi Mosque, Sofia. Photographie de presse. Agence Rol. Gallica/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

country.⁷⁵ Bulgaria's Muslim community persisted to remain "a body without a head," as the popular saying went.⁷⁶

It was no wonder that elites found something in the ideas promoted by Gasprinsky and the Jadīds. Here was a model of reform to emulate. "It's a pity that the Muslims of Bulgaria wallow in corruption and ignorance," the journal *Muvazene* (Equilibrium) remarked in late 1903. "An uneducated nation is like a soulless body."⁷⁷ *Muvazene* was one of a handful of Muslim newspapers run in Bulgaria at the turn of the century. Its founder, Ali Fehmi, was a fiery trailblazer based in Plovdiv. In the columns of his newspaper, he lashed out at corrupt muftis and government officials, drawing attention to the egregious mismanagement of the vakufs.⁷⁸ In 1901, while running for parliament, Fehmi distilled his arguments in a concise pamphlet entitled *The Bulgarian Muslims*, in which readers were informed of the deplorable state of schools and the ongoing destruction of mosques and Muslim heritage sites in the country. Reversing this situation required not only independent initiative but also political engagement as well. "Don't think that you are few," Fehmi urged. "Everyone has the right to vote."⁷⁹

Fehmi's bid for political office was ultimately unsuccessful, but the insistence of his message was not lost on his fellow Muslims. In urban centers like Ruse, Vidin, Nikopol, Varna, and Sofia, Muslims were beginning to reflect critically on their situation and propose measures aimed at improving their lot. Local reading societies were set up in cities where participants discussed newspaper articles and exchanged ideas. Organizers also set up civic associations to promote Muslim culture and raise funds for charitable causes and public works projects in their localities.⁸⁰ Many of these ventures were possible thanks in part to the new Muslim press emerging in the country. To *Muvazene* could be added titles like *Gayret*, started in 1895 by the Hamidian loyalist Riza Pasha Ibrahim, *Balkan*, and the more radical *Tuna* and *Uhuvvet*. These papers claimed to speak to and for a Muslim audience. Print not only outfitted Muslims with a forum for their collective grievances and concerns but also bolstered a new sense of unity and community among the Turks, Tatars, and Pomaks scattered throughout the country, and with it a new sense of collective purpose.⁸¹

The appalling state of Muslim schools was a particular sore point, since without an educated class of leaders the prospects for affecting change were dim. As early as 1898, Osman Nuri Peremeci, a teacher working out of Tarnovo in north-central Bulgaria, suggested forming a Muslim teachers' association with the aim of bringing together educators and implementing change on the model of the Tatar new method schools.⁸² In 1906, this initiative bore fruit, with twenty-five representatives from across the country gathering in Shumen to deliberate on education reform. The Teachers' Association may have been small, but it marked one of the first independent efforts by Muslims

to take control of their education system.⁸³ Predicably enough, members of the *‘ulamā* were hesitant to endorse the movement, setting the stage for a contest of wills. Local Muslim notables, many of whom remained sympathetic to the conservative Hamidian regime in Istanbul, were equally skeptical of the “modern” ideas touted by reformers.⁸⁴ It wasn’t just that journalists and teachers were adopting the ideas of Tatar reformers that appeared worrying. They were speaking of modernization and the need for change with a new urgency, drawing comparisons with the Young Turks, the veritable *bête noire* of the Hamidian government in Istanbul.

That reformers appeared to be speaking a similar language to the Young Turks was not incidental. Ottoman newspapers circulated through Bulgaria on a regular basis. Some were oriented toward audiences loyal to Abdülhamid and his conservative brand of Islamism. Others, however, were more radical in nature. By 1900, Bulgaria had become a popular destination for Ottoman political exiles, making the principality a hotbed of Young Turk activism.⁸⁵ Bulgarian Muslims could get behind Young Turk notions of unity and modern progress, ideals that were central to their own movement. Moreover, radicals didn’t fail to point out that Bulgarians were ethnically Turks, making the cause of the Young Turks their cause as well.⁸⁶ As reformers increasingly took up a more active posture in the country, the potential that Ottoman politics might spill across the border became a real concern for Bulgarian authorities perennially suspicious of Istanbul’s influence in the country.

The Young Turks had always been representative of an attitude and mindset rather than a political program, strictly speaking. Banding together under the name of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), they opposed the Hamidian government and touted vague ideas of liberal reform. But aside from this, collaborators disagreed over basic questions of what type of regime should replace Abdülhamid, what role the great European powers should play, and how to solve the ever-present problem of ethnic separatism that plagued the empire. The First Congress of Ottoman Opposition held in Paris in 1902 did nothing to iron out these wrinkles. When the head of the liberal faction, Prince Sabahaddin, proposed using revolutionary violence to goad the European powers to intervene against the sultan, Ahmet Riza and his cohorts balked. By the conclusion of the congress, the opposition movement was more divided than ever.⁸⁷ Riza continued to head the Paris-based CUP, but the extent of his influence back in the Ottoman Empire was questionable. It was, therefore, propitious when in 1907 the newly-formed Ottoman Freedom Committee—a conspiratorial party composed of bureaucrats and army officers stationed in Macedonia—proposed a merger with the CUP. The alliance gave Riza’s exile faction an internal presence. Yet it also altered the ideological orientation and organizational strategy of the movement. The secretary general of the internal branch, Mehmed Talaat, was more radical

than Riza, calling for a “genuine revolution” against the sultan. It helped that he had the backing of refractory officers in the Third Army who were increasingly coming to favor a junta-style coup to replace the ineffective Abdülhamid.⁸⁸

Whether Riza wanted to admit it or not, the radicals had the upper hand. Just as the CUP was transforming from an exile party into a secret revolutionary organization, the Ottoman cauldron boiled over. In the summer of 1908, military officers seized the initiative, staging a wave of demonstrations and mutinies in Macedonia that authorities were powerless to suppress.⁸⁹ Officers took to the streets, calling for a resumption of the constitution and making bold declarations in the name of the Ottoman nation. Prominent CUP members played a role in mobilizing crowds and ratcheting up demands. Within weeks, the protests spread to Istanbul, where crowds gathered in the streets. Faced with public opposition, Abdülhamid had little choice but to concede. “It would be impossible to give and accurately convey the enthusiasm which has seized our population in the past days,” reported one enthusiastic journalist that July.⁹⁰ Virtually overnight, the censorship and police apparatus that had propped up the Hamidian regime vanished. “What changes . . . !” one observer remarked. “There is now a general neglect [for conventions] everywhere. We speak in raised voices and the street is animated with a candid and sincere sense of life.”⁹¹ In public squares and city streets across the empire, subjects assembled and organized parades. They waved Ottoman flags and gave dramatic speeches on the new era of liberty and fraternity that was about to unfold.

From the outside, observers were just as quick to celebrate what was occurring on Europe’s Muslim periphery and pronounce on what it might entail for the future. According to Alfred Le Châtelier, Islam was now in the midst of a veritable “revolution” as Muslim politicians attempted to liberalize their societies and bring them into the modern age.⁹² “It’s the beginning of the end,” agreed one Austrian journalist in 1908. “The old principles—Islam is capable of everything, the Qur’an is finer than a hair and sharper than a sword—have received a significant shock. The bitter opponents of all innovations will finally have to yield.”⁹³ Islamic sovereigns and the *‘ulamā* were under attack, signaling a transition that would have repercussions across the entire Muslim world, critics argued. “A great work is occurring in the Muhammadan world,” declared the French statesman Stéphen Pichon.⁹⁴ The optimism could not be understated. Watching the Young Turk revolution unfold from Paris that autumn, the French senator Marcel Saint-Germain was unable to conceal his enthusiasm. “The Orient has rid itself of its old prejudices against the spirit and methods of a younger civilization,” he stated.⁹⁵ As Muslims came to appreciate European notions of liberty and progress, it was not too farfetched to imagine a new world order in which

East and West came together to cement a more perfect unity of peoples across the globe.

Ottoman revolutionaries played their part in reinforcing this view. With the CUP set to sweep the coming elections and secure a majority in the parliament, they were eager to gain international support for their revolutionary platform. In the fall of 1908, CUP members made a tour of the major European capitals to win over public opinion. The Ottoman Empire was “no longer the purely Muslim power that one could, as in the past, oppose to the Christian powers,” remarked the CUP representative Nazim Bey in Paris. The Young Turk revolution was “liberal and egalitarian” in spirit. It was fighting for the freedoms of Muslims just as much as Christians. This point was underscored in the opening session of the parliament that December. As deputies arrived at the Yıldız Palace, they were greeted by a subdued Abdülhamid in the reception room. On his right stood the Grand Vizier, and to his left was seated the new parliamentary president, Ahmet Rıza, and vice president, Mehmed Talaat. The sight of the sultan sitting astride his most erstwhile critics could only strike observers as ironic. At the reception, Rıza gave a toast, praising the new union between the sultan and his people, announcing that the gathering offered “the most auspicious moment” to establish a lasting and durable liberal regime in the country.⁹⁶ European writers and politicians seemed willing to take him at his word. As one journalist affirmed, the Ottoman revolution offered a chance to demonstrate to the world that Islam was not the regressive and unenlightened religion Westerners assumed. “Never has Islam had a greater occasion than today of proving its qualities of adaptation to the times and the environment [of the modern world].”⁹⁷ The Qur’an was not an obstacle to constitutional government nor an impediment to progress, critics maintained, and the Young Turk revolution would prove it.⁹⁸ “The often-expressed view that Islam is ‘frozen in its despotic essence and culturally backward’ stems from the idea that it is ‘unfit for development,’” stated one writer for the *Salzburger Wacht*. “That it is not so has been proven, at least to a degree, by the revolutionary transformation in Turkey and its transition to constitutionalism.”⁹⁹

Not all were sanguine. European colonial authorities had to wonder whether protestors in Istanbul demanding a constitution might have ripple effects in neighboring territories, disrupting the delicate colonial order in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria.¹⁰⁰ Others had doubts as to whether the Young Turks were as “liberal” as they claimed. References to the “Ottoman nation” and “fatherland” echoing across the empire were disconcerting, hinting at an underlying nationalist current among revolutionaries that cast doubts on their stated “liberal” aspirations. The French deputy Joseph Reinach, who recently returned from an exploratory trip to the Balkans, expressed apprehensions about the course the revolution was taking. “[The revolution] is liberal,” he

conceded, “but it is especially, in the strictest sense of the word, nationalist, that is to say patriotic and religious with Islam representing the great fatherland for most Muslims.”¹⁰¹ Could revolution in Istanbul enflame the currents of anticolonial Pan-Islamism that so many Europeans feared? The apparent “nationalist religious chauvinism” evident among many Young Turk partisans did not bode well. Protestors may have been rejoicing over the new constitution and singing the Marseillaise, but these celebrations of liberty were not the entire picture. Pockets of Hamidian loyalists and conservative clerics were urging the government to take up the banner of Islam, and nationalists appeared receptive to these demands. “The Muslims of Turkey feel and understand quite well that their role in Europe is finished forever,” reported a French diplomatic consul watching events from Salonica. “They even toy with the idea of founding an immense empire throughout the East and Far East that can one day dictate terms to the Christian world.” What would hold this massive empire together if not Islam?¹⁰²

The political ferment arising in the East was by no means clear-cut. What it held for the Muslim world had yet to be seen. For all those who remained optimistic, there were others who felt the political agitations roiling Russia and the Balkans were an ominous warning sign. Taking a broad view of the unrest unfolding from North Africa to the Ottoman Near East, a writer for the Austrian *Volkszeitung* in Bukovina gave a pessimistic appraisal. Political upheavals were symptomatic of the fact that Islamic governance and statehood had reached a point of crisis. “The whole soil from which Islam springs is today a vast field of rubble littered with the debris of states,” the author claimed.¹⁰³ It was foolish to believe that the Qur’an and its teaching could secure a genuinely modern, liberal order. The old Islamic institutions were fast crumbling away, and they would continue to do so until Europeans took control of Muslim territories and provided the “civilized” institutions needed to stave off this anarchy. Of course, Austria had its own interests to consider. With political unrest breaking out in Istanbul, would Bosnia be impacted by the Young Turk agitations? If so, were Habsburg administrators up to the task of meeting the challenges a politicized Islam presented?

A HANDFUL OF “MUSLIM MALCONTENTS”

Since the 1880s, Austro-Hungarian bureaucrats had been working with Muslim elites to mold a Bosnian Muslim community tied to the Habsburg Empire. They had created a religious administration, taken control of Islamic cultural institutions, and forged ties with key intellectuals hoping to draw Bosnians closer to the state. Results had been mixed, but it wasn’t for lack of trying. Certain critics of Kállay even charged that his policies appeared

to be favoring the “Muhammadan element” over Christian interests.¹⁰⁴ As the Czech representative in the imperial Reichsrat, Tomáš Masaryk, pointedly remarked, “there is a tendency to comfort the Muslims.”¹⁰⁵ And yet if politicians saw a certain Islamophilia in Kállay’s approach, Bosnian Muslims themselves had a different view.

In numerous petitions filed with officials, a common litany of grievances was beginning to emerge. Muslims expressed indignation over the way the Vakuf Administration used public properties, in some instances repurposing them as gendarmerie stations or public parks. They complained about the reformed schools offering a European curriculum in Sarajevo. They were suspicious of the state-appointed Reis-ul-Ulema and council of scholars, arguing Muslims had little say in selecting those who ruled on matters vital to their religion.¹⁰⁶ Of particular concern was the number of Muslims departing Bosnia each year. Between 1883 and 1905, some 32,000 Muslims left Bosnia-Herzegovina for the Ottoman Empire. This did not account for the estimated 200,000 that fled during the initial occupation period.¹⁰⁷ If the trend persisted, Muslims would find themselves a diminished minority. Even Habsburg officials were mindful of the Muslim exodus, believing it cast doubts on the government’s credibility.¹⁰⁸ If nothing was done to stem the tide of emigration, “the accusation could not be spared that Austria-Hungary occupied [Bosnia] only to allow a considerable and respectable part of the population to leave,” one journalist observed.¹⁰⁹

Despite grandiose declarations by the government regarding the “civilizing” work being carried out in Bosnia, it was evident all was not well.¹¹⁰ The majority of Bosnian Muslims had not been won over to Habsburg rule in any meaningful sense of the word. The state relied upon a small cluster of elites based in Sarajevo, while the majority of clerics (*hodžas*) in the towns and villages remained skeptical of the government’s intentions. These divisions ran through Bosnian communities, and given the proper circumstances had the potential to generate conflicts the government had every intention of avoiding.

In Mostar, the largest city in Herzegovina, tensions were particularly acute. The local mufti, Ali Fehmi Džabić, was an outspoken individual who never hid his repugnance for Austrian rule. A formidable presence in the city, Džabić commanded the loyalties of the local *hodžas* and insisted on the virtues of a society governed by Sharia law. At first, the Bosnian administration hoped to exploit his influence and reluctantly appointed him to the coveted religious post in 1884. This marriage of convenience was, however, far from ideal. Džabić took a hard line against Catholic missionary efforts in the province and had strict views on how best to preserve Muslim cultural identity under Christian rule. He was not prone to take orders from religious authorities in Istanbul, but neither was he content to be a simple “yes-man” for the

Habsburg government.¹¹¹ As mufti, he cast himself as a defender of Bosnian Islam and was quick to lash out at any perceived interference in Muslim religious affairs. Džabić was equally critical of the new generation of Muslim intellectuals coming of age in the country. On this front, he found his rival in Mujaga Komadina, a Mostar businessman with aspirations of modernizing Muslim society through education and philanthropy. At first glance, Džabić and Komadina appeared polar opposites. Whereas Džabić preached from the minbar, Komadina spread his ideas in the local reading society, instructing listeners on modern agricultural techniques and scientific innovations. If Džabić lectured on Islamic traditionalism, Komadina spoke of reform and Bosnian social regeneration. At times, this rivalry could be intense, and the heated exchanges that occurred between the two men did nothing to alter this perception. Yet each in their own way was committed to serving the Bosnian Muslim community, and on this basis, there always existed the potential for common ground.¹¹² As it so happened, in 1899 an event occurred that would bring the two antagonists together.

That spring, Mostar was galvanized by a public scandal that sent shock waves through the Muslim community. The controversy focused on the sixteen-year-old Fata Omanović, a Muslim girl from the outskirts of Mostar. Refusing to consent to a marriage arranged by her father, Fata had absconded with the help of priests to Dalmatia, where she renounced her faith and converted to Catholicism. When her father learned of this betrayal, he immediately alerted religious authorities, insisting his daughter had been stolen from the house in the dead of night and forcibly converted.¹¹³ Fears over conversion were nothing new. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, the conversion of Muslim children—and especially girls—had drawn sharp criticism from religious leaders who mobilized followers and petitioned local authorities whenever their religion seemed under threat.¹¹⁴ Yet the Fata Omanović scandal was different. With Džabić and Komadina vying for the leadership of Mostar's Muslim community, neither could afford to remain silent. Muslim outrage had been stoked, demanding a reply.

Within days, Džabić and his supporters began traveling from village to village drumming up support for the return of Fata Omanović. At the same time, Komadina organized gatherings at the local reading society, drawing together reformers but also reaching out to embittered *hodžas*. Religious issues and fears over Muslim cultural decline rapidly came together, energizing activists. Hardened imperial officials were slow to grasp the implications of the uproar. They dismissed the protests as the work of Džabić and a handful of cantankerous clerics. “[Džabić] wouldn’t miss a chance to seize the opportunity and wave the banner of Islam high,” one authority assailed.¹¹⁵ Hugo von Kutchera, a civil servant working in Sarajevo, advised simply ignoring the protesters, believing the movement would soon peter out. Kállay was not

so certain. Rather than abating, the Mostar movement appeared to be gaining momentum. Džabić and his coterie of *hodžas* were attracting new adherents every day while the reading society run by Komadina was beginning to broach political issues and inflame anti-government sentiments. Left to its own devices, the movement might spread like wildfire across the provinces, setting the stage for a showdown with the government.¹¹⁶ Kállay's fears proved justified.

After procuring the return of Fata Omanović to Mostar, the protestors kept up the agitation. They gathered in the local reading society, formed committees, and drafted petitions enumerating Muslim grievances. Džabić's appeal to religious sensibilities and symbols was demonstrating the power of Islam to mobilize supporters on a broad scale.¹¹⁷ Organizers had taken a single event and turned it into a common cause touching upon a range of issues relevant to Muslim religious and cultural life present since the Habsburgs first occupied the territories. Protestors charged that the state was not doing enough to protect Muslims. They complained about the poor state of Muslim schools and the lack of qualified teachers to staff them. They railed against the power of the Reis-ul-Ulema and Vakuf Administration, demanding that the religious establishment be subject to elected Muslim representatives rather than state-appointed officials. Anti-government feelings had been building for a decade. Now Muslim elites were beginning to talk of reform and confessional "autonomy." They were calling Kállay's entire policy into question, seeking to redefine the relationship between the state and its Muslim subjects. Government authorities had reason to fear a politicized Islam. It was conceivable that angry Muslim protestors might find common political ground with Serb nationalists in the country, engendering widespread opposition. Hoping to silence the movement in one quick blow, the government dismissed Džabić that April and began clamping down on the Mostar organizers. Force failed to cow the protestors. If anything, it electrified the movement.¹¹⁸

Over the next year, Muslims gathered in Kiseljak and Sarajevo, reiterating calls for greater confessional autonomy and drawing in participants beyond Mostar. They mobilized support through the press, calling Bosnians to the defense of Islam, the "soul of the national body," in the opinion of one writer.¹¹⁹ When the Bosnian administration turned a deaf ear, organizers attempted to bypass it altogether. In late 1899, a Muslim delegation headed by Sahih Efendi Alojbegović arrived in Vienna to present a list of grievances. The talks were reportedly "friendly" enough. It therefore came as a shock to Alojbegović to learn upon returning to Herzegovina that the government had no intention of taking up any of the points discussed. Adding insult to injury, members of the Vakuf Commission who had participated in the delegation were discharged from their positions and fined. Having failed in Vienna, Muslims immediately moved on to Budapest where they allied with Serb and

Hungarian activists willing to help. That spring, the Slovenian lawyer and Hungarian deputy Nikola Gjurgjević assisted in drafting a memorandum on behalf of Muslim representatives to be read before the Hungarian diet. "The government does not respect our customs, traditions, behaves recklessly, [and] persecutes the Muhammadan population," the resolution read.¹²⁰ A further plea was printed in the francophone Hungarian journal *Revue d'Orient*. The article, signed by "a Muslim" from Mostar, offered readers a familiar list of complaints. Citing Muslim schools being taken over by Jesuits and the conversion of Muslim cemeteries into rail stations, it was impossible to see how Muslims couldn't view these acts as a threat to their religion. "We demand autonomy in those things which concern our religious affairs as well as public instruction," the article stressed. "All the Muslims of the occupied provinces are in agreement on these questions vital to them." If things continued in this way, emigration would be the only feasible option for Muslims desiring "to pray to God as they see fit, raise their children as they judge right, live peacefully and die piously."¹²¹

The reception of the Muslim delegation in Budapest was an embarrassment for the government. Kállay was attacked in the Hungarian press and reprimanded for ignoring Hungary's own interest in the colony. It appeared the finance minister was "acting more like an Austrian than a Hungarian," one journalist charged, calling into question his entire "administrative art" [*Verwaltungskunst*].¹²² Kállay's "famous pacification project" was in shambles, another accused. The government's egregious "violation" [*Vergewaltigung*] of Muslim rights in Bosnia was plain to see, and this "wholesome bloodletting" could only serve to stir up communitarian troubles that the state would be wise to avoid.¹²³ As Muslim grievances resonated outside Bosnia, liberals did not hesitate to take an interest and use the uproar for their own ends. The Czech political writer and representative in the imperial council, František Sláma, expressed sympathy with the Muslim delegations, noting Muslim spokesmen had no other means of seeking redress at their disposal. This reality was just as true of the Czechs' Christian "brothers" in the province as it was of the Muslims. The Bosnian administration's heavy-handed policies were fast creating an unworkable situation as officials stifled free speech and denied the Bosnian people representative institutions essential for meaningful dialogue. "As all this comes to light, it is easy to grasp that discontent is growing [in Bosnia]," Sláma emphatically concluded.¹²⁴

What had begun as a local protest movement headed by Džabić and Komadina had, within a year, metastasized into a damning critique of the entire Bosnian administration. Kállay had little choice but to respond. Following the Hungarian delegation's attack, he held a two-hour public meeting aimed at "enlightening" public opinion on the situation. The accusations and subsequent press storm in Hungary were unfounded, he seethed. The government

“energetically supported” every confessional group in the territory. If Muslims were discontent with the state of their society, the fault lay with the Muslim community itself, not the government. “They should do more for their own culture and education,” Kállay snapped.¹²⁵ These arguments were distilled into a timely pamphlet entitled *The Situation of the Bosnian Muhammadans* published later that year and presumably penned by Kállay’s right-hand man, Lajos Thallóczy. The book outlined the state’s approach to Bosnian Islam and gave a favorable balance sheet of the government’s efforts. “The Habsburgs have defended the Islamic religion,” the author affirmed. “Alone the monarchy has done more to sustain the Muslim faith. It supports the Muslim church and through it supports the purity of Muslim religious law.”¹²⁶ The protests roiling Bosnia were not symptomatic of a failed policy. On the contrary, they demonstrated the patent inability of Islamic clerics to accept and assimilate the forms of modern civilization.

Kállay’s retorts found sympathy among a spate of officials and Catholic writers. The Muslim demands were outrageous, one journalist claimed. “We can assure sincerely that there is no civilized state in the world which could fulfil the wishes of the Muhammadans, even partially.” It was questionable whether Bosnian Muslims were ready for full autonomy. “A new generation must be educated in a completely different spirit before the Muhammadans are ready for autonomy, and this generation is neither today nor the next.”¹²⁷ The government had the unenviable task of fighting against “stubborn” clerics who interpreted any change as an assault on their religion and culture. “What should the government do?” asked one writer. “Nothing, like the Turks?”¹²⁸ To do so would leave the Muslim community in a deplorable state of poverty and ignorance. Even the Ban of Croatia, Dragutin Károly Khuen-Héderváry, weighed in on the debate. Attending the world’s fair in Paris as the situation broke in 1900, Khuen gave an interview in the foreign press, flatly denying the charges that the Bosnian administration in any way suppressed Muslims or threatened their religion. The government was abolishing certain privileges and laws inherited from the Ottoman period in the interest of equality, but this was a far cry from attacking Islam. “Such a policy exists only in the imagination of a certain part of the Hungarian press, which was goaded by the machinations of some Muslim malcontents,” he affirmed, writing off the entire protest movement as nonsense.¹²⁹

Kállay had his supporters, but he knew this was not a battle he could win with the press alone. He was going to have to come to some understanding with the Muslim leadership. The government had “always endeavored to promote and protect Islam,” he assured, and on these grounds, there was room for compromise.¹³⁰ Hoping to appease reformists and split the movement, Kállay signaled his willingness to meet some of the demands raised by the autonomists. He would consider decentralizing the Vakuf Administration and

addressing some concerns over Muslim education, but relinquishing control over the appointment of Muslim officials was out of the question. Officials repeated that Muslims could “continue to count on the support of the government,” but by this point, Muslim organizers needed more than vague promises.¹³¹ Autonomists were becoming bolder in their demands over the course of 1900, arguing they would not be content with half-measures. The Bosnian Muslims were an “autonomous national-political unity,” they claimed. They, therefore, deserved representatives responsible to the “Islamic nation.”¹³² Such demands were far too radical for Kállay to countenance. Writing to Kutchera in February 1901, he flatly spelled out his fears, reporting it was imperative to avoid anything that “could lead to the creation of a Muhammadan nation” in the province.¹³³

Predictably, negotiations broke down. A veteran administrator who had ruled Bosnia like a personal fiefdom for twenty years, Kállay was not about to relent. Having used the carrot to no effect, he turned to the stick. Muslim representatives in Budapest were arrested and brought to trial. The ringleaders in Mostar were imprisoned and stripped of any official titles they held. Thallóczy waged a tireless war in the Austrian press against the protestors, comparing the Bosnian leadership to the Young Turks and justifying the government’s extreme measures.¹³⁴ Feeling the full brunt of the state administration, the autonomy movement ground to a halt.

LOYAL AND APPRECIATIVE SUBJECTS

The protests that began in 1899 may have been a localized phenomenon led and directed from Mostar, but they were not inconsequential. Organizers had managed to build bridges, uniting conservative *hodžas* in rural areas with reform-minded elites in the cities. They rallied supporters around common religious and cultural concerns, successfully directing these apprehensions against the state. Calls for autonomy resonated across Bosnia-Herzegovina, forming a broad coalition of interests that claimed to speak for the entire Muslim community.¹³⁵ Organizers had also forged alliances with other groups in the empire, appealing to Serb nationalists and the Hungarians for support. These achievements had all the makings of a political movement, and after 1900 Bosnian organizers appeared to be thinking in such terms. They were speaking of the “Islamic nation” (*islamskii narod*) and employing a rhetoric at odds with purely confessional concerns.¹³⁶ Journalist abandoned the older term “Muhammadan” and asserted themselves as Bosnian “Muslims” distinct from the Christian Serbs and Croats of the provinces.¹³⁷ For a government fearful of centrifugal nationalist movements, these were worrying signs. Men like Kállay and Kutchera might be willing to make certain concessions on

religious grounds, but they were not about to tolerate a full-blown political movement claiming to speak for an indigenous Muslim nationality.

It was clear a shift was occurring in Bosnia at the turn of the century as Muslims couched demands in national terms and drew lessons from their Serb and Croatian counterparts. Questions of whether the status quo could be maintained were mounting, and in 1903 further uncertainty prevailed when Kállay suddenly died of kidney failure. "Relentless death has claimed a man like no other associated with Austria's cultural work!" lamented the *Volksblatt* upon delivering the sad news.¹³⁸ For two decades, Kállay had been the architect of the Habsburg civilizing mission, browbeating opponents and defending government policies before the imperial assembly with his typical air of sangfroid. Now he was gone, and some wondered whether anyone could fill his shoes. His replacement, the Hungarian diplomat István Burián de Rajeczi, was a mild and practical man by comparison who was fully aware of the challenge he was inheriting. He was responsive to demands coming from the Hungarian diet critical of the "absolutism" and press censorship that reigned in Bosnia.¹³⁹ Moreover, he was convinced that Kállay's system could not be preserved indefinitely. Reversing course, Burián decided to take a more lenient stance on the nationality question, hoping to appease protestors through gradual political reforms. He scaled back state censorship and allowed for the formation of political parties. In 1905, Burián made concessions to the Serb majority, issuing a statute of cultural autonomy that emboldened nationalists and encouraged the formation of a Serbian Nationalist party that would press for further gains in the coming years.¹⁴⁰

These were significant changes, and Muslims were not blind to the opportunities that liberalization offered. However, still reeling from the crackdown in 1900, their position was hardly comparable to the well-organized Serbs. The former Mostar leaders were fragmented or in exile, making any collective action nearly impossible. That said, a host of new issues were beginning to draw the attention of the Muslim landowning elite. Part of Burián's reform program touched upon issues of taxation and land tenure that threatened the livelihoods of prominent landlords, the majority of whom were Muslim. These men were neither *hodžas* nor intellectuals, but they had taken the lessons of the former protest movement to heart. Issues of religious and cultural autonomy were capable of mobilizing Muslim resistance on a broad scale, and property owners were not above pressing the autonomy issue in defense of landed interests. As complaints mounted, their appeals breathed new life into the defunct protest movement. In 1906, a newspaper bearing the name *Musavat* (Equality) was set up to speak exclusively for Muslim interests and promote Bosnian Muslim culture. Later that year, representatives from across Bosnia-Herzegovina convened at Slavonski Brod on the Croatian side of the Bosnian border and there agreed to found their own party, the Muslim

National Organization (MNO). Shortly after, the merchant and philanthropist Adem-aga Mašić established his own Muslim Progressive Party, which placed issues of education and cultural reform at the center of its program, offering an alternative to the more anti-government platform of the MNO.¹⁴¹

Seeking to make the most of the Burián government's liberalizing agenda, Muslim elites set out to mobilize voters and make themselves a presence in Bosnian political life. They also capitalized on the Hungarian alliances forged in 1900, exerting pressure on the Burián administration in the Hungarian parliament.¹⁴² While the focus on Muslim "cultural" autonomy theoretically eschewed explicit political demands, it was clear that organizers were using the press and assemblies to exert influence on the state.¹⁴³ Parties like the MNO remained primarily the instruments of elites, but they did have the capacity to make inroads in local communities. More importantly, though, Muslim publicists and organizers were carving out a movement of their own, presenting a political force that distinguished them from the Serb and Croat parties taking shape.¹⁴⁴ This was not to imply Muslim leaders were united in their outlooks. Questions of how far Westernization should be encouraged and what modernization meant for Islamic tradition remained divisive subjects that split "conservatives" and "progressives." Also unresolved was whether Muslims shared affinities as Slavs or whether they were an independent nationality. Should they think of themselves as "Bosnians" and work with the Habsburg government or endorse Pan-Islamic association and seek union with the Ottoman Empire, of which they were technically still a part?¹⁴⁵ None of these issues were clear-cut. *Hodžas*, progressives, landowners, and intellectuals had varying opinions, making the MNO an umbrella organization more than a political party with a comprehensive set of goals. Be that as it may, the party did enjoy a measure of popular support, demonstrating the power of the autonomist movement and its ability to bring together diverse sections of the Bosnian Muslim community.

At least one of these sticking points was resolved in 1908. From the beginning of the Austro-Hungarian occupation, the question of Ottoman sovereignty had been a persistent bone of contention. The Treaty of Berlin (1878) and subsequent Novi Bazaar Convention (1879) had maintained Ottoman sovereignty over Bosnia and Herzegovina, reducing Habsburg freedom of action in the two provinces. This stipulation always held out the prospect of reunification with the Ottoman Empire and sustained Caliphal loyalties among a section of the population. Over the years, Bosnians continued to celebrate Ottoman holidays, displayed portraits of Abdülhamid, and wafted the Ottoman banner from flagpoles.¹⁴⁶ By the turn of the century, some were flirting with Hamidian Pan-Islamism, expressing desires "to connect with Muslims in other states, and in particular Turkey," as Mašić stated.¹⁴⁷ Habsburg authorities routinely frowned on these pro-Ottoman sympathies, discouraging

and even punishing them.¹⁴⁸ When Muslims mobilized or took to the streets, newspapers warned of purported “secret religious-political” groups organized by Abdülhamid in the country, pointing the finger at Istanbul.¹⁴⁹ It was, therefore, opportune in October 1908 for Vienna to make the most of the Young Turk revolution agitating the Ottoman Empire. With Istanbul momentarily thrown into a state of chaos, the Habsburgs seized the moment and formally annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, putting an end to any pretense of Ottoman sovereignty over the territories. Young Turks balked at this egregious land grab, but there was little they could do as the other European powers quietly looked the other way. Henceforth, Bosnia was now officially a province of the Habsburg Empire, dramatically altering its relationship to Vienna.

If annexation solved one problem, it undoubtedly created another: how and in what measure were the various Bosnian nationalities to be integrated into the imperial system now that their colonial tutelage was at an end? This question was especially critical for Muslims since Islam had never been formally recognized as a state religion. If they were to become part of the imperial “family of peoples,” it entailed an end to the colonial form of Islam the Bosnian administration oversaw. Muslims had been pressing the issue of confessional autonomy for a decade with little success. Now, international and domestic politics were forcing the issue at a moment when Muslim leaders were in a position to act.

That autumn, Bosnian Muslims sent a delegation to Vienna to address concerns arising from the annexation. The question of integration was clearly present in their minds. In addition to topics relevant to education and religious administration, delegates proposed building a mosque in the imperial capital. The proposal was intended as a symbolic gesture on the part of the government, although spokesmen readily pointed out the practical needs associated with the request as well. Muslims coming to study in Vienna had no place to worship. The small contingent of Bosnian soldiers stationed in the capital was afforded only a small, makeshift prayer room in a garrison serviced by a military *hodža*.¹⁵⁰ These arrangements hardly sufficed. Was the government prepared to rectify this situation and give a meaningful demonstration of support for its Muslim subjects, delegates wanted to know? As expected, the proposal raised eyebrows. In the first instance, it was the mayor of Vienna, the hot-tempered politician Karl Lueger, who was compelled to offer a response.

A founder of the conservative Christian Social Party, Lueger was known for his combative approach to politics. He showed little affection for the non-German nationalities of the Habsburg Empire and persistently riled up crowds with anti-Semitic rhetoric. “Vienna will not become Jerusalem!” he famously proclaimed in one of his speeches.¹⁵¹ Given his nationalist stance, one could also assume that Vienna would not become Istanbul or Mecca as long as he was mayor. With Lueger, the prospects of a Viennese mosque

looked dim. And yet, Lueger showed he could be a wild card. At a press conference held in late November, journalists plied Lueger with questions, asking whether the government was seriously considering building a mosque in the city. His response was shocking. "I attach great importance to the idea of establishing a mosque in Vienna," he claimed. Outlining the numerous political and diplomatic advantages the proposal offered, it was not off the table. A mosque in Vienna would give "a visible pledge that there is no hostility toward Muslims in Vienna and Austria."¹⁵² A few days later, Lueger reiterated his position. Goaded by the Bosnian delegation, Muslim students residing in the capital had formed an Action Committee of the Muhammadan Student Body in Vienna to lobby for the recognition of Islam in Austria.¹⁵³ The body met with Lueger on December 14, requesting his support. Once again, Lueger surprised, assuring them of his sympathies for their cause and noting he hoped for "a political and cultural alliance" between Muslims and Catholics.¹⁵⁴ A specific site for the mosque had yet to be determined, although officials within the municipal administration noted it would be "in the city center."¹⁵⁵

Public reception was mixed. The Hungarian essayist and political writer Hugo Veigelsberg, better known by his pen name Ignotus, gave a positive appraisal, claiming a Viennese mosque would constitute

a symbol of fraternity between the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Austrians. . . . With the Muslims, a new confessional element enters the circle of the Austrian family of peoples which requires special needs. The least we can do it build a mosque in Vienna!¹⁵⁶

Not everyone agreed. The satirical newspaper *Wiener Caricaturen* had a field day with the mosque proposal. In a poem drafted by one of its contributors, the paper described a mother taking her son to see a Christian religious pilgrimage in Vienna. Upon hearing the oncoming pilgrims, the mother curtly remarks, "Catholics don't sound like that!" before they are pushed aside by a procession of "howling dervishes," muftis, Confucians coming from China, and even pagans. As the mother and child stare in bemusement, one of the Muslim pilgrims turns to them with the retort: "here others may pray, Lueger has established it!" The refrain "*Lueger hat's erreicht!*" (Lueger has established it!) runs through the poem, depicting Vienna as a "modern" cosmopolitan capital that has lost its Catholic identity.¹⁵⁷ Accompanying the poem was a cartoon of an "inter-confessional Lueger" smothering a weeping Austria in his breast. The following month, *Wiener Caricaturen* ran a piece detailing the myriad ways Islam would be pressed upon Austrian life. Bans on alcohol, the call to prayer, and even polygamy were all singled out as marks of a new multi-confessional Austria. "We advise Dr. Lueger to wait with the

mosque and first attend to putting in the new water system promised for the city,” the paper jested. “The Muhammadans, who do not drink wine and have to wash themselves often for ritualistic reasons, need more water than we do. In attending to this work, he would also be doing Islam a great favor.”¹⁵⁸ The periodical *Die Muskete* was also heavy on the humor. In an article taking the format of an interview, a person asked about the Viennese mosque coyly replied: “It’s very clever, but I think more necessary was a temple for the Viennese Chinese.”¹⁵⁹

Questions of Islam and empire may have seemed a distant and even comical concern for citizens in the imperial metropole, but in Bosnia, they were no laughing matter. Events were rapidly proceeding apace that would have profound implications for the province and empire as a whole. In April 1909, long-standing Muslim goals were realized when the government, prompted by “concerns for the stable existence and undisturbed development of Islam in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” conceded to the autonomists.¹⁶⁰ The religious bureaucracy was revised, allowing Muslims greater control over the Vakuf Administration and more say in the selection of the Reis-ul-Ulema and Ulema-Medžlis. The government retained the right to appoint muftis responsible for delivering fatwas and running the mosques, but candidates were to be selected from those proposed by qualified Muslims themselves. In closing, Emperor Franz Josef expressed his hopes that the statute would “benefit in perpetuity the Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims [*Muslims*] through its utility and piety and cultivate in them an attachment to their native soil as well as fidelity to us and our House. We assure the Islamic people of Bosnia and Herzegovina of our further paternal benevolence and caring protection.”¹⁶¹ The government was demonstrating its “consolatory spirit,” and it was hoped that Muslims would show themselves to be “loyal and appreciative” subjects worthy of self-governance.¹⁶² The forthcoming installation of the new Reis-ul-Ulema, Hafiz Suleman Sarac, in the summer of 1910 provided a public occasion to show this appreciation firsthand. Convened at the Careva Mosque in Sarajevo, the ceremony brought together muftis, imams, Muslim notables, and the top brass of the Austrian administration. Baron Isidor Benko, head of the civil administration in Sarajevo, read out a prepared statement drafted by Franz Josef confirming Sarac as Reis-ul-Ulema. “Guided by paternal care for all believers of Islam,” the emperor claimed, he was “fulfilling the wishes” of the Bosnian people. On cue, Sarac thanked the “most gracious of emperors and kings” for the opportunity to serve the Muslim community and assured him of the “security of our loyalties” to sovereign and state.¹⁶³

Public demonstrations of loyalty were a staple of imperial politics, and the installation of the new Reis-ul-Ulema was no different in this respect. However, in the wake of the annexation, these types of ceremonies possessed greater significance. The imperial state’s “conciliatory spirit” was, by all



Figure 8.3 The “Interconfessional” Karl Lueger Consoling a Weeping Austria. *Wiener Caricaturen*, November 15, 1908.

accounts, an exercise in crisis management. Across the empire, embittered nationalities were pouring on demands, requesting administration in their native languages, political decentralization, and representative institutions through which they could exercise real power. In Prague, Czech delegates were demanding more control over the Bohemian government. In Budapest, emboldened Hungarian politicians were testing the limits of their autonomy while Poles and South Slavs were ratcheting up demands for national recognition.¹⁶⁴ Bosnian Muslims were one part of a larger empire-wide dilemma. Yet as the state wrestled with the ever-problematic nationality question, Muslims clearly stood to benefit. Talk of attaching Bosnians to their “native soil” and making them “loyal” subjects were no longer promissory notes to be bargained over with colonial officials. By the turn of the century, imperial integration and reform were urgent matters of state. More importantly, the government in Vienna was responding, showing its willingness to compromise and transform a baroque empire into a multinational polity. In 1912, one of the final pieces of the puzzle was put into place when the so-called “Muslim law” decreed Hanifite Islam a religion of state, endowing it with official recognition across the empire.¹⁶⁵ The decree extended the law of 1867 declaring “the equality of religion in principle” to the Muslim community.¹⁶⁶ Henceforth, Islam was recognized as a legally constituted “religious society” (*Religionsgesellschaft*) and Muslims as a “religious community” (*Kultusgemeinde*), with the Bosnian religious bureaucracy serving as the official seat of Islam within the empire.¹⁶⁷ For one of the oldest Catholic monarchies of Europe, the law marked a milestone. Throughout the empire, Islam was now accorded the same rights and protections as Christianity, capping the hard-fought struggle for religious equality on the part of Muslim activists.

Yet Vienna was not Sarajevo. If the imperial government appeared to be taking a conciliatory approach, how this would translate within the Bosnian government itself was never fully clear. With annexation came a Bosnian constitution and parliament (the Sabor), both of which were instituted in 1910. Long denied political participation, Serbs, Croats, and Muslims now possessed an arena in which to voice their demands and influence policy. The Serb Nationalist Organization led the charge, taking thirty-one seats in the Sabor, followed by the MNO, which managed to mobilize voters and capture all twenty-four seats allocated to Muslims.¹⁶⁸ Burián’s reformers had “laid the groundwork for the government’s program in Bosnia,” Benko explained, and he hoped the parties would conduct themselves in the spirit of liberal rather than nationalist politics.¹⁶⁹ His optimism proved naïve. From the start, politics assumed an ethno-religious character. Partisans squabbled over budgetary issues and attempted to channel state funds toward their own communities. The thorny land issue divided Muslim landowners and Serb peasant farmers, engendering “a struggle for their very

existence” that defied resolution.¹⁷⁰ Debates over religious affairs assumed a particularly sharp character, “filling the air with electricity” as arguments between Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Muslims mounted.¹⁷¹ Political disturbances in neighboring Serbia and the Ottoman Empire equally found their way into parliamentary politics, revealing the fragility of Bosnian nationhood. Within two years, civil and military officials feared the situation was growing out of hand and contemplated shutting down the assembly altogether.¹⁷²

Liberalization brought clear gains for Bosnian Muslims as community leaders and elites positioned themselves as the voice of an indigenous Muslim “nation.” For representatives, it appeared the long-sought goal of imperial equality was finally within reach. However, was reform a case of too little, too late? Watching the situation evolve, officials grew wary of the politicization of Bosnian life. Reform had its limits. Muslims could express their opinions through the press and participate in the parliament, but “illegal actions and rioting would now and in the future be energetically suppressed,” warned a government newspaper.¹⁷³ Delegates were aware of the fragile situation, but the fate of a liberal Bosnia was not entirely in their hands either.

In 1914, mounting tensions reached a tragic climax. On June 28, Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, arrived in Sarajevo to oversee a public military inspection of the Bosnian army. As his car passed through the streets, Gavrilo Princip, a young Serb student with ties to radical nationalist circles, drew a revolver and fired, killing both the Archduke and his wife. The outrage was instantaneous. The next day, Sarajevo was rocked by street demonstrations. Muslims marched through the streets carrying portraits of Emperor Franz Josef and decrying the crime perpetrated by Princip. Their loyalty to the empire was put on full display. Later that evening, angry mobs descended on stores owned by Serbian shopkeepers and pillaged the homes of notable Bosnian Serb residents. When one business owner fought back, shots were fired, and the crowd dissolved into a flurry of chaos.¹⁷⁴ The government had little alternative other than to declare martial law, shutting down the Sabor and suspending press liberties. In Vienna, anti-Serb demonstrations were staged outside the Serbian embassy with the crowd shouting, “down with Serbia!”¹⁷⁵ The pressures that had been building in Bosnia’s multiethnic community were coming to a head and threatening to unleash an international crisis. War between Austria and Serbia now appeared imminent, but statesmen and journalists across the continent were beginning to fear that the ensuing conflict might have implications beyond the Balkans. The Powers were splitting into opposing camps as Germany pledged to support its Austrian ally and Russia threatened to come to the defense of its Orthodox Slav brothers in Serbia. “War at this moment between Austria and Serbia could not be

localized,” *The Dundee Courier* stated that July. “The certainty is that the whole of Europe would be set ablaze.”¹⁷⁶

NOTES

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Chapter Nine

Waging War as a Muslim Power

In the summer of 1914, alarm bells were ringing throughout every major European capital, warning of an approaching war. But for all intents and purposes, the war had already begun.

In 1907, France invaded Morocco, establishing a protectorate over the Sharifian state to the consternation of Spain. This turn marked a departure in French foreign policy, which up until then had sought to control Morocco through a mix of economic and soft power. The time had come “to abandon the chimera of a [French] Morocco on the cheap,” explained René Millet, the former Resident General of Tunisia.¹ Direct military occupation rather than indirect influence was now the operative principle, upsetting the delicate power balance that had reigned in the Maghreb since the 1880s. Moroccans did not accept this outcome passively. Supplied from abroad, rebels organized Pan-Islamic resistance movements, generating a low-grade anti-colonial struggle that progressively rippled across North Africa.² Four years later, Italy added fuel to the fire when Rome, hoping to claim its own piece of North Africa, launched a unilateral invasion of Ottoman Libya in a blatant affront to international law. According to the Italian prime minister Giovanni Giolitti, colonial expansion was a “vital” national interest. Italy could not “renounce the mission imposed on it by history” and stand aside as competing European powers gobbled up what remained of Africa.³ The CUP vehemently protested the invasion and offered military support to Arab combatants on the ground. With the Ottomans momentarily preoccupied in Africa, Balkan politicians decided the time was ripe to liberate their ethnic brothers in neighboring Ottoman provinces, effectively fulfilling long-standing aspirations for national unification. Starting in 1912, Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria scrambled to claim as much Ottoman territory as possible across southeastern Europe, igniting a Balkan war that would see the Ottoman Empire pushed to the edges

of continental Europe by the end of the year.⁴ The assassination of Franz Ferdinand was merely the coda to this mounting crisis. Imperial ambitions and the age-old “Eastern Question” were reaching a head, threatening to unleash a broader regional—if not global—war involving the major world powers.⁵

Nationalism and imperialism drove the coming conflict, and Europe’s Muslim empires were not absent in these calculations. It was, however, the addition of a relatively new arrival on the international stage that solidified this relationship: Germany. In 1871, the assemblage of kingdoms, duchies, and free cities making up the German Confederation were consolidated into a federally united German Empire under the Prussian dynasty. The chief architect of German unification, Otto von Bismarck, had not minced words regarding what it would take to forge a strong Germany, insisting only a policy of “blood and iron” would do. True to his word, Bismarck waged a war against Austria, followed by a more protracted conflict against France to achieve his goal. In a matter of a few years, the balance of power in continental Europe had shifted dramatically. “Europe has lost a mistress and gained a master,” claimed one observer commenting on the French defeat.⁶ Yet it was the ascent of a young and ambitious Kaiser to the throne in 1888 that would demonstrate the real import of these words. Wilhelm II came to power with the intention of making Germany a premier world power on par with Great Britain. In fulfilling this dream, an active policy of expansion was imperative.

Germany was a latecomer to the imperial contests of the nineteenth century. This did not mean that publicists and policymakers were content with their status as parvenus. By the 1880s, certain groups were exhibiting an eagerness to carve out a German colonial empire, often exerting pressure on the hesitant government.⁷ Pro-colonial spokesmen believed that a unified German state would finally lay out a comprehensive plan of imperial expansion, and Wilhelm catered to these expectations with an ambitious naval-building campaign and promises that Germany would finally enjoy its “place in the sun,” as he stated in 1901. Laying claim to whatever territories it could, Berlin snatched up land in East and West Africa and acquired a series of islands in the Pacific. For many, though, these efforts fell short. In 1902, the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*, a lobby group organized to promote German colonial expansion, staged a national congress in Berlin, calling for a more robust policy of overseas acquisition. “We must go forward, driven by the elemental force of the nation [*Volkskraft*],” Oscar Wilhelm Stübel informed listeners. “The unwilling can no longer be allowed to halt our momentum.”⁸ As the director of the Reich Colonial Office, Stübel was charged with administering Germany’s overseas territories. His assertion that colonialism was a matter of what he deemed *Volkskraft* was a telling indication of the mentality arising in both official and unofficial circles at the time. Colonial acquisition was not just a matter of national prestige. It was an expression of a healthy

and vigorous national life, a common project carried out for the welfare of the Fatherland.

Despite the admonitions of colonial lobbyists, policymakers were forced to confront some hard facts. Germany was competing on an already crowded world stage and had limited opportunities to piece together a colonial empire comparable to the likes of France or Britain. As such, Germany's imperial experience was distinct. Conquest and direct control could only work in territories like East Africa, Cameroon, and Togoland, places wholly under the authority of the Reich Colonial Office. Beyond Africa, power and influence had to be wielded in more creative ways. Foreign economic ventures and German emigration abroad offered alternative means of informal empire building.⁹ This was particularly evident when it came to the Ottoman Empire.

In 1898, Wilhelm arrived in Damascus as part of a royal tour with stops across Anatolia and the Near East. It was the Kaiser's second official trip to the Ottoman Empire since his ascension to the throne. In a choreographed presentation, Wilhelm laid a wreath on the grave of Saladin and gave a speech eulogizing the famed Arab warrior before a crowd of spectators. He didn't fail to blandish the reigning Ottoman sultan, Abdülhamid, either. Wilhelm assured his audience he was a "friend" of all Muslims and even pledged to protect the "300 million Muslim subjects scattered across the earth."¹⁰ Ottoman newspapers printed rumors that the Kaiser had converted to Islam, assuring readers that "*hajji* Wilhelm" could be expected to defend the Islamic faith from hostile European imperialists. Such posturing was bound to alarm France and Britain, two powers that had gone to great lengths over the years to cultivate images of themselves as "Muslim powers." It didn't help that prior to his eastern tour, Wilhelm had announced his intentions of pursuing a new *Weltpolitik* for Germany, openly challenging French and especially British hegemony on the world stage. Nobody doubted the extent of Wilhelm's ambition to make Germany a leading world power in the coming century. But it now seemed apparent he was consciously positioning himself as a potential rival for the affection of the Muslim world as well. Was it too far-fetched to believe a man of Wilhelm's temperament might be imagining a potential "Muslim" empire of his own? The idea was not preposterous, and the sudden warming of relations between Berlin and Istanbul provided grounds for suspicion.

The Kaiser's eastern tour was the latest attempt to nurture good relations between Germany and the Porte. In newspapers and pamphlets, German "Turkophiles" championed Ottoman modernization and took a critical stance when it came to French and British interventions in Ottoman affairs. It helped that Istanbul offered generous financial compensation to journalists in return for favorable coverage of Abdülhamid and his policies. When news of the Armenian massacres broke in the mid-1890s, the German media was an

outlier in its support for the Hamidian government against the “trumped-up” charges of European Islamophobes. As Ottoman relations with France and Britain floundered at the turn of the century, the sultan was eager to find a new European ally, and an ascendant Germany fit the bill. The German government itself was keen on developing German-Turko relations and encouraged the public to identify with the Ottoman Empire against their erstwhile European rivals. Noting the tenor of public opinion, the classical historian Heinrich Gelzer complained he felt like a pariah for refusing to abandon his pro-Armenian sympathies and endorse the government line. “It is now the ‘in’ thing to enthuse over the Turks,” he demurred in 1900, “and anyone who doesn’t automatically go along with this fashion is considered narrow-minded and a person of backward views.”¹¹

Policymakers were coming to envision Anatolia and the Near East as a potential sphere of influence that would expand German commerce and secure markets in the Near and Middle East. By the 1890s, Deutsche Bank was bankrolling Abdülhamid’s modernization projects. At the same time, the *Orientbahngesellschaft* was negotiating contracts for rail construction in the region, cultivating ties that would eventually lead to the impressive Berlin-Baghdad rail project commenced in 1903.¹² The teams of German technicians, financiers, workers, and project managers sent to develop Ottoman infrastructure could form a veritable “colony” in its own right, cementing a German presence in the region. These “industrial colonies” (*Handelskolonien*) would, it was believed, constitute the long arm of German influence throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.¹³ Commercial projects were linked to aspirations for German economic expansion, but they were never divorced from emergent ideas of Germany’s own role in the Muslim world. As the prominent Orientalist Martin Hartmann contended in 1910, the new *Ostpolitik* was driven by “the pursuit of German economic life through industrial investments.” Yet this objective was easily fungible with the modernization of Muslim societies on the whole. “Elevating the cultural and economic state of Muslim lands is in German’s national interest as well as the interest of those countries,” he explained.¹⁴

Hartmann was a leading German scholar and a recognized authority on the Orient. He had started his career at the German consulate in Beirut working as a translator before formally studying Oriental and Semitic languages at the University of Leipzig and assuming a post at the Department of Oriental Languages in Berlin. His persistent warnings of “Islamic fanaticism” and interest in Arab culture rarely aligned him with the government’s pro-Ottoman line. While Hartmann’s opinions began to shift in the years before 1914—primarily to advance his career—his intellectual activities were broadly representative of trends in German academia. As desires for empire grew and the government presented itself as a “friend” to Muslims the world

over, scholars increasingly focused their attention on contemporary Islamic societies and, in particular, Germany's relationship to the Muslim world.¹⁵ In 1910, Carl Heinrich Becker, a pioneer in modern German Orientalist scholarship, started the journal *Der Islam*, dedicated to historical and cultural studies on the Islamic Orient, a publication for which Hartmann himself wrote. Unlike his colleague, however, Becker had a more positive appraisal of Islam's ability to adapt to the modern world. "A renaissance is possible in the East," he contended, "not merely by the importation and imitation of European progress, but primarily by intellectual advancement at home even within the sphere of religion."¹⁶ This outlook, much like Becker's scholarly interests, was consistent with German imperial aspirations. Becker candidly acknowledged his admiration for France's *politique musulmane* in North Africa and insisted that it might be used as a starting point for "the study of Islam in our Germany colonies."¹⁷

The government pressed Orientalists into service where it could, occasionally relying upon less scrupulous individuals than the likes of renowned scholars such as Hartmann and Becker. Max von Oppenheim, the scion of a rich banking family with a background in history and archaeology, was a prime example. Often known for donning a turban and traditional Arab dress, Oppenheim had worked with the German diplomatic corps in North Africa and the Middle East before moving on to pursue his personal interest in archaeological exploration. His familiarity with the region meant he was well-connected to Muslim elites and leaders, offering German authorities a possible entrée into local political circles. By 1905, under the pretext of conducting archaeological excavations, Oppenheim was working for the German consulate in Cairo, contracting relations with known Egyptian nationalists. The French government suspected he was behind the Pan-Islamic literature passing through Morocco and Algeria.¹⁸ The alleged "scientific character" of Oppenheim's work appeared questionable, prompting inquiries into what exactly Germany was intending.¹⁹ Kaiser Wilhelm foresaw a potential conflict with France and Britain over Muslim Africa, but had little desire to rush headlong into a confrontation. For the moment, making contacts and building up German influence on the ground was sufficient. "We need not proceed before the alliance with Islam is perfect," he wisely cautioned.²⁰

Germany's newfound interest in the Muslim Orient was received coldly in Paris and London. Europe's established "Muslim powers" could only interpret these activities as a direct challenge to their own imperial interests. The French Foreign Ministry kept a close eye on German agents in Egypt, Syria, and Morocco, rightfully convinced they were stoking anti-French sentiments among the local populations.²¹ Germany's growing influence within the Ottoman Empire was similarly suspect. "Whereas ten years ago there were not five Germans in Turkey, today there are legions," one observer warned in

1909. "If this movement continues, within some time they will invade Asia minor, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Syria."²² More alarming still was the fact that German-Ottoman economic relations were acquiring an overtly political dimension as the CUP ascended to power. German efforts to supplant France and Britain as the primary stakeholders in the Ottoman Empire were encouraging anti-imperial rhetoric, leaving few doubts as to the real intentions behind Berlin's dealings with Istanbul. "The danger of Pan-Islamism does not come from Constantinople," advised the journalist Maurice Heine in 1912. "It is coming from Berlin."²³

The Kaiser's determination to attain Germany's "place in the sun" was disrupting the imperial status quo. At a moment when international tensions were escalating in Europe, it was difficult to see how a military conflict between the continental superpowers could fail to involve the colonies. The coming struggle would not simply be a European war. It would pose the question of which power would control the Muslim world as the premier "Muslim power" of Europe.

HOLY WAR IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The push to war occurred rapidly as international relations deteriorated that summer. On July 28, Austria-Hungary, goaded by Germany, began shelling Belgrade, breaking a month-long diplomatic standoff. In response, Russia announced a general mobilization in support of its Serbian ally. By the end of the month, Germany had entered the fray, declaring war on Russia and sending additional troops across the Belgian border in a preemptive strike against France, Russia's treaty-bound ally. Unable to accept the violation of Belgium's neutrality, Britain issued an ultimatum that August ordering an immediate end to the occupation, threatening war if Germany persisted. The ultimatum went unheeded.

The outbreak of fighting elicited a swell of nationalist rhetoric on all sides. Citizens enlisted in armies and prepared for military service. Political parties rallied around governments in the name of national defense, and governments took control of industries, planning to fight a "total war." Religion had its part to play in this nationalist outpouring. Most European countries had long traditions of church-state relations. Leaders readily turned to the religious establishment to bolster morale and generate popular support for the war cause. The Anglican bishop Arthur F. Winnington-Ingram publicly called upon the Church of England "to mobilize the nation for a holy war."²⁴ The French cleric Bernard Gaudéau cast the conflict in explicitly spiritual terms, lecturing Catholics on the "theology of patriotism" and their obligation to defend the homeland. "Our duty towards the Fatherland is one of the

Christian laws of war," he proclaimed.²⁵ Catholic writers were not the only ones to espouse such oratory. A steadfast anti-clericalist, the French president Raymond Poincaré was not above employing religious language as he prepared the nation for war. "Nothing will break the Sacred Union in the face of the enemy," he insisted in a letter addressed to the Chamber of Deputies that August. Poincaré was hoping to mend the deep rifts between republican secularists and Catholics that had played such a prominent role in French political life since the 1890s. The "Sacred Union" to which he referred amounted to a plea for national unity in the face of a common enemy.²⁶ Fellow republicans showed few scruples in putting aside old feuds, and conservatives responded in kind. The right-wing journalist Maurice Barrès, notorious for his anti-Semitic tirades during the Dreyfus Affair, enthusiastically endorsed the idea of a "Sacred Union," drumming up support for the war. In a complete reversal, he praised the patriotic zeal shown by churchmen, Jews, and socialists. "The bells sound, awakening all slumbering souls in a passionate elan," he applauded.²⁷ Across Europe, citizens and soldiers were succumbing to what the German minister Adam Ritzhaupt called the "heavenly exaltation" of war, linking country, faith, and national defense in a common cause.²⁸

The Christian militarism surging through Europe had its counterpart in the Islamic world. Germany and Austria were eager to draw the Ottoman Empire into a wartime alliance. Britain, France, and Russia—collectively making up the Entente camp in the conflict—had extensive Muslim populations in their empires. From the start, Germany hoped to exploit the latent ethnic and religious tensions that existed between colonizer and colonized. Winning the war required an "aggressive Islamic policy," one journalist explained, since it would extend the war into Africa and Asia and divert Entente resources.²⁹ Kaiser Wilhelm was more blunt, promising to "inflame the whole Mohammedan world to wild revolt" against his enemies.³⁰ To do so required the backing of Muslim spiritual authorities, and this meant gaining the support of the new sultan, Mehmed V, the nominal Caliph of the Muslim world. Publicists openly courted the CUP, emphasizing the friendly ties and common objectives binding the Ottoman Empire to the Central Powers. Writing in early October, the Austrian journalist Karl Kaltdorff praised the Young Turk Revolution as an "Islamic renaissance" and assured that the CUP's desire for liberation was shared with Germany and Austria. "This struggle is a religious and national liberation war," Kaltdorff declared. "European and Muhammadan civilization are allied against barbarism. . . . The rebirth of Europe and the renaissance of Islam have the same preconditions and share the same goals."³¹ As Kaltdorff pitched it, European and Islamic civilizations were no longer diametrically opposed to one another. Wartime alliances necessitated a rethinking of world cultures, as both now appeared to face a common threat.

While the Young Turks hesitated to throw in their lot with Germany, they could not sit on the fence for long. That October, the Ottoman Empire formally entered the war on the side of the Central Powers. As expected, the CUP enlisted the Ottoman religious establishment in the war cause, encouraging the Shaykh al-Islam to draft a series of *fatwas* that officially declared the conflict a holy war. Defining the war as a jihad made it “compulsory for all Muslims” to take up arms and defend the Caliphate.³² Although this injunction possessed serious ramifications in Entente colonies, the CUP had more immediate goals in mind. The Ottoman population was a mix of Turks, Arabs, and Kurds, different ethnic groups that nonetheless shared a common Islamic faith. Much like Poincaré’s “Sacred Union,” appeals to Muslim solidarity aimed to mobilize a diverse citizenry behind a common effort, one sanctioned by Islamic authority.³³ Ottomans were expected to “defend the fatherland” against its enemies, Mehmed V affirmed. “In order to save the Muslim nation which has been under threat for some time, it is necessary that you show firmness and perseverance!”³⁴ Invocations to defend the Ottoman fatherland were seamlessly blended with the defense of the Caliphate and the broader Muslim community, urging Muslims across the globe to resist Entente imperialism and defend their Ottoman brethren. “The entire Islamic world is in danger of perishing,” one declaration enjoined. “The time has now come to revolt against those who want to destroy us.”³⁵ Despite the CUP’s hostility to Abdülhamid and his brand of religious conservatism, it was not above adopting and even enhancing aspects of Hamidian Pan-Islamism to unite the empire. The one difference, however, was that now these goals aligned with the objectives of a dominant European power.

When news of the jihad *fatwas* broke, German propagandists were ecstatic. The alliance marked a “world historical event” that would unleash a “great Islamic movement” capable of bringing the Entente Powers to their knees, claimed one writer.³⁶ Yet selling the Ottoman alliance to European publics long taught to see Muslims as foreign required a more nuanced approach. Experts and propagandists stepped in, stressing that an alliance between Christian Europe and Islam was by no means unnatural. The Austrian Orientalist Rudolf Geyer gave a lengthy lecture on the history of Islam in November 1915, informing listeners, “it has been proven that the culture of Islam is in no way alien to European culture.”³⁷ The Viennese newspaper *Der Montag* was equally emphatic, insisting the alliance fully demonstrated “the struggle between two world religions is finished.”³⁸ According to the diplomat and journalist Ernst Jäckh, the new “armed brotherhood” between Germany and Islam was not only natural but also essential. With an expanding population in need of material resources, Germany could not allow Turkish Asia to be transformed into a “Russian province.” A strong, independent Ottoman state was fundamental to Germany’s national survival, and to this end, the

Ottoman Empire had to be restored to a position of strength and authority—"a sort of Muhammadan Prussia," as Jäckh saw it. Germany alone could offer this guarantee. The jihad was not "a religious war against Christians" but a "political struggle" against Entente encroachment.³⁹

This point was driven home by government policy initiatives. While Caliphal proclamations and *fatwas* dictated from Istanbul served German wartime goals, extending the conflict into the colonies required cooperation and close coordination. The German War Ministry sought to tap into the various Pan-Islamic and paramilitary movements covertly supported by the CUP. To this end, the German General Staff and Foreign Office set up a propaganda bureau in Berlin—the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* (NFO)—headed by none other than Max von Oppenheim. Armed with propaganda organs bearing titles like *Der Neue Orient* and *Die Islamische Welt*, Oppenheim liaised with shaykhs, Ottoman officials, and Islamic insurgents from Morocco to India with the objective of "revolutionizing" Islam and using it as an instrument of war. In Berlin, he drew together North Africans, Egyptian nationalists, Turks, Persians, and Indian militants associated with the revolutionary Ghadr Party. Many of these activists had been circulating through Europe and the Ottoman Empire prior to the war, but after 1914 Berlin and Istanbul became havens for them to organize.⁴⁰ The NFO assisted in forming national committees designed to coordinate anti-colonial resistance movements and give militants a forum for their views.⁴¹ Committee members were expected to assist with propaganda and establish ties to their home communities. Some were given military training and arms before being sent out to build radical movements in Afghanistan, North Africa, Mesopotamia, and Persia.⁴² These political organizations were accompanied by ostensibly cultural associations that drew together Muslim activists. In September 1916, a meeting billed under the German Society of Islamic Culture was hosted by German Orientalists and the Ottoman war minister, Enver Pasha, in Berlin. At the meeting, attendees confirmed the bond that existed between Germany and the Islamic world before discussing future plans relevant to recruitment and propaganda.⁴³ The Society placed 5 million marks at the disposal of Enver Pasha for these activities, exposing the "cultural" aspect of the gathering as dubious at best.⁴⁴

In public, Entente officials scoffed at what Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje called the "Holy War made in Germany," writing it off as mere fantasy.⁴⁵ In private, however, authorities worried about the potential danger the Ottoman alliance posed to colonial stability.⁴⁶ Muslim loyalties were by no means assured. Colonial administrators maintained relations with key Islamic authorities and native elites in their respective territories, but this support by no means entailed the support of the millions of colonial subjects under European rule. With the Ottoman call to jihad now testing colonial loyalties,

self-proclaimed “Muslim powers” needed to affirm the support of those over whom they ruled and bulk up their putatively Islamic credentials. Authorities were doubly concerned because the war effort compelled a new reliance on overseas territories. In waging “total war,” France and Britain were forced to call upon colonial subjects to serve on the European front and meet manpower demands at home. After 1914, large numbers of Muslims were dispatched to the metropole, ordered to fight for country and empire. Questions of loyalty were, therefore, paramount. They were a matter of national defense just as much as colonial dominance. Wartime policies were going to have to take account of Muslim demands and Europe’s relationship with the Islamic world more broadly. With the World War I, Islam was set to attain a more conspicuous presence in continental life and politics.

In various ways, Muslim activists in Britain were ahead of the game. In the years leading up to the war, organizers like Dusé Mohamed Ali and Kamal-ud-Din had been diligently working to reverse the fallout in Anglo-Ottoman relations, knowing full well any conflict with Istanbul would have repercussions on Britain’s Muslim community and the empire at large. In 1913, Dusé and the trade unionist Arthur Field created an Ottoman Committee with the assistance of William Quilliam, the old Liverpoolian stalwart and former Shayk al-Islam of the British Isles. By the end of the year, the Committee had splintered into two complementary advocacy groups, the Anglo-Ottoman Society and the more politically oriented Ottoman Association. Working together, the dual organizations drafted a series of petitions, urging British officials to rethink their position vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire. The campaign came to naught. Nevertheless, the pressing “Ottoman question” did manage to draw together a broad spectrum of British Muslims, attracting Pan-Islamists like the Indian-born lawyer Mushir Hosain Qidwai, prominent spokesmen like Quilliam, and the circles of South Asian emigrants who congregated at the Woking Mosque. Not all participants in these organizations were Muslim either. A handful of English political elites shared reservations over Britain’s drift from the old pro-Ottoman policy and were not reticent in vocalizing their concerns.

The journalist and writer Marmaduke Pickthall was a prime example of the cooperation encouraged by wartime politics. Coming from an English family with a long tradition of Anglican service, Pickthall had rejected his religious upbringing at a young age. Travels through Egypt and the Levant at the turn of the century cultivated an intellectual fascination with the Muslim world, leading to Pickthall’s eventual conversion to Islam in 1917. More importantly, though, Pickthall’s time spent in Egypt impressed upon him the importance of British influence across the Near and Middle East, a region sorely in need of the administrative competence and just rule Britain guaranteed.⁴⁷ The specter of Islamic “fanaticism” perpetually loomed over

Muslim politics. Should “a hundred mad fanatic heads” manage to assert their authority over the global Muslim population, it would pose infinite problems for British imperial dominion across Asia. Whether out of choice or necessity, Britain was obliged to support Islamic modernism, and for Pickthall, the Young Turks were a promising partner in this endeavor. The CUP’s stated Islamic liberalism was consistent with British objectives. From this perspective, the anti-Ottoman attitudes currently in vogue among top officials made little sense. It was “unreason near to madness,” he scolded. “If progressive Turkey must be crushed, as Europe says, then one day Europe will behold an Arab Empire with little of the toleration and good temper of the Turks.”⁴⁸ Starting in 1908, Pickthall began publicizing his views in the press. Unlike Pan-Islamists, however, his pro-Turk sympathies were not rooted in religious attachment to the Ottoman Caliphate. His outlooks stemmed directly from his pro-empire stance and concerns over British imperial rule. “I care so much about the British Empire in the East . . . [and] realized the terrible effect which [our policy] could have upon my Oriental fellow-subjects,” he admitted.⁴⁹ In 1912, Pickthall joined the Islamic Society in London, introducing him to leading figures within the British Muslim community. Alongside Duse and Quilliam, he helped set up the Ottoman Committee and took a commanding role in the Anglo-Ottoman Society devised to sway public opinion on the Ottoman question.

Pickthall was aware that he and his fellow organizers were “defending an unpopular cause,” but they were not deterred.⁵⁰ Activists aimed to rally British Muslims and pro-imperial ideologues to a common platform, using public meetings and the press to get their message across. The issue of the Ottoman Caliphate was a particularly touchy subject, especially considering the jihad sanctioned by Mehmet V. A draft resolution prepared by the British Islamic Society in 1915 sought to clarify the prevailing mood among British subjects. It stated in unambiguous terms that Muslims would look askance at any effort to partition the Ottoman Empire or “change the status” of the Caliph. “Muslims . . . firmly hold it to be beyond the province of any other people or government to encroach upon the exclusive prerogative of Muslims regarding this or any other Islamic affair,” the resolution warned.⁵¹ That said, Muslim activists were careful to note they did not endorse the Ottoman jihad and used every occasion to reaffirm their unwavering loyalty to crown and country. “Our holy faith enjoins us to be loyal to whatever country under whose protection we reside,” reminded Quilliam in a letter to Foreign Secretary Edward Grey in late 1914.⁵² The *Islamic Review* took a similar position as hostilities erupted, condemning the war while simultaneously lending support to the British war effort. “A Muslim must be loyal to the rulers, even should they be of a different race or creed,” the journal insisted. “Muslims all over the British Empire are ready, and, should the necessity arise, will offer their lives,

their property, and serve the state in any capacity that should be necessary, showing gratitude and at the same time performing their duty to the state.” Britain was, after all, “the greatest Muslim power of the present age,” and British Muslims were prepared to support their own “Muslim Government.”⁵³

Such assurances did nothing to temper official doubts. Authorities remained leery of any pro-Ottoman sympathies and kept a watchful eye on Muslim activists throughout the war. Dusé complained of being constantly harassed by the police, with officers knocking at the door of his office and making inquiries on the merest of pretexts. “A detective was always stationed across Fleet Street who carefully scrutinized all visitors,” he recalled.⁵⁴ Police agents monitored both the Anglo-Ottoman Association and Ottoman Society for any “undesirable activities” but never found just cause to break up the organizations. It was disgraceful that men “of some repute at home” held such opinions, but since society members were not engaging in any overt acts of subversion “nothing could be done” to stop them.⁵⁵ In the end, authorities found little to substantiate their suspicions, writing off many Muslim activists as nothing more than “Muhammadan cranks.”⁵⁶ The fact that British subjects were turning out pro-Ottoman pamphlets at a time when the government was planting anti-Ottoman propaganda in national newspapers was frustrating, to say the least.⁵⁷ Yet for all their objectionable views, British Muslims and their allies were not traitors, nor were they anti-patriotic. They resolutely clung to a vision of imperial patriotism central to Muslim outlooks since the 1870s, one that saw Britain as a preeminent “Muslim power” with an obligation to act in accordance with the expectations of its Muslim subjects.

Across the Channel, civic organizations similarly espoused currents of imperial patriotism, although here state officials were inclined to exert a more direct role in their management. As in Britain, a *Ligue Franco-Ottomane* was formed in Paris during the spring of 1914, comprising a mix of lower-level diplomatic officials and *indigénophiles* such as Paul Bruzon and Christian Cherfils. In its mission statement, the league stated its intentions of normalizing relations between the two powers, although the extent of its influence was limited.⁵⁸ Dissatisfied with the efforts of the small pro-Ottoman circle, the architect Raymond Barbaud proposed establishing a more robust *Comité Franco-Musulman* that autumn at the behest of one Ali Sami Bey, an Ottoman national residing in Paris since early 1914.⁵⁹ The *Comité* convened its first meeting a month later at an office rented on the Boulevard Morland, bringing together a select number of Ottoman émigrés and publicists associated with the journal *La France Musulmane*, a new organ designed to air *indigénophile* views.⁶⁰ Other honorary members were soon added to the list to enhance the organization’s credentials, among them the travel writer and Orientalist Pierre Loti and the philosopher Léopold Mabillean. According to the document drawn up at the initial meeting, the *Comité* sought to “strengthen the

links which unite the Muslims of the colonies and countries of the protectorates with the Mother Country and, in a general manner, assist in stimulating affection for France among Orientals, even non-Muslims.”⁶¹

The prefect of police had few qualms about letting the group carry on its work. “The notoriety and eminence of the members sitting on the committee bureau permits us to hope that their efforts will have favorable results for French influence in the Orient,” one report recommended. While the Comité did not offer a guarantee of success in neutralizing the impact of the Ottoman jihad in North Africa, it was a seemingly “benign” organization with a more-or-less reputable membership.⁶² British authorities flatly disagreed. In particular, they had reservations when it came to Ali Sami. A former Ottoman naval officer who had once served as the sultan’s official photographer, he was known to have ties to Hamidian loyalists. Released from active service as part of the CUP’s general purge of the military after 1908, Ali Sami had relocated to Cairo, and there ran an unprofitable photography studio. “Like most of his countrymen who are used to getting their living without much personal effort, [he] was too lazy to work and the enterprise was a failure,” a British intelligence agent contemptuously noted.⁶³ Ali Sami was nothing but an opportunist, in his opinion, implying that the entire Comité might be an elaborate scheme to extort money from the French state. Leading committee members appeared to share this assessment. They discreetly limited Ali Sami’s functions within the organization and curtailed his access to committee funds.⁶⁴

For all its inadequacies, the Comité Franco-Musulman did indicate a shift in the nature of civic activism occurring in France. Concerns over colonial loyalties and the impact of the Ottoman jihad were coming to preoccupy outlooks, bringing forward a host of citizen-led organizations that, in one way or another, hoped to bolster French affection among Muslims. The only question was whether those involved in the campaigns could be trusted. As organizations sprouted up over the course of 1915, government officials began to express skepticism.

The society *Les Amitiés Musulmanes*, headquartered on Rue Edouard VII in Paris’s upscale Opera district, was a case in point. Founded in February 1915 under the presidency of deputy Maurice Raynaud, the organization, like its antecedent the Comité Franco-Musulman, spearheaded an energetic campaign to “spread French civilization among Muslims” and “improve knowledge of Islamic civilization among the French.” To achieve this goal, it ran a bilingual newspaper printed in French and Arabic. Yet unlike other organizations, *Les Amitiés Musulmanes* offered services to arriving colonial subjects, setting up a *Hôpital Auxiliaire* to treat Muslim servicemen and a “foyer musulman” complete with a mosque where Muslim soldiers could congregate during periods of leave. The inaugural issue of *Les Amitiés*

Musulmanes featured a picture of the “small mosque . . . established for Muslim of Paris and the suburbs,” advertising it as the first purpose-built mosque in the French capital.⁶⁵ Domestic and colonial officials naturally publicized the mosque, presenting it as an example of France’s accommodating attitude vis-à-vis its Muslim subjects.⁶⁶ Others, however, were not impressed. The caricaturist Gustave-Henri Jossot, a French Muslim convert living in Tunisia, lashed out at *Les Amitiés Musulmanes* in the press. The organization had constructed a “profane mosque” in Paris decorated with Syrian fixtures, Ottoman lamps, and “a thousand-and-one baubles of Oriental brick-a-brac that anyone can procure in the bazaars and souks of Tunisia,” he objected. These “false friends of Islam” had nothing to offer save “simple exotic attractions” for gawking Parisians. “*Les Amitiés Musulmanes* has provoked a great deal of hilarity among educated Tunisian Muslims. The errors scattered throughout the Arab text of its bilingual newspaper are so extensive that people are saying it has been drafted by ignorant Kabyles.”⁶⁷ In Jossot’s estimation, *Les Amitiés Musulmanes* was encouraging the usual Orientalist stereotypes, a grievous faux pas for an organization claiming to be a “friend” and representative of Muslims in France.

Charges of Orientalism aside, the military had more serious apprehensions when it came to this latest Muslim association. A memo drafted by the Section d’Afrique that November drew attention to the *foyer musulman*, observing that its director, Lutfi Jomael Bey, was a non-naturalized Ottoman subject. The building was being run by Turks and Egyptians, making it suspect. “Given the well-known duplicity of Orientals, there is, in the current circumstances, some drawback to putting Muslim troops from North Africa in contact with their Turkish, Egyptian, Albanian, and other coreligionists who, a priori, could be renowned suspects,” the report admonished. The *foyer* was also attracting Algerian workers who did not “represent the healthiest part of the native Algerian population.” Was it wise to have them mingling with colonial soldiers who might be persuaded to “abandon their duties”?⁶⁸ As authorities began investigating, the activities of *Les Amitiés Musulmanes* began to look more suspicious. According to Missoud Chukroun Chérif, a Moroccan interpreter employed in the *foyer*, Lutfi Bey was embezzling state funds by inflating prices quoted for medical services and food supplies provided to Muslim soldiers. It was evident the director had connections with Turkey, and Missoud surmised he might be funneling supplies to enemy POWs across the front lines.⁶⁹ When the left-leaning newspaper *L’Œuvre* got wind of this corruption, it published a scathing diatribe against the organization in its columns. *Les Amitiés Musulmanes* was nothing less than a “branch of the Committee of Union and Progress in Paris and a center of Pan-Islamic propaganda hostile to France,” it inveighed.⁷⁰ Taking these accusations seriously, on 19 January, General Joseph Gallieni banned the organization’s

newspaper after internal government memos suggested its Arabic translations could be construed as veiled criticisms of the French administration. Following suit, the Ministry of War forbade colonial troops from accessing the *foyer musulman*.⁷¹ A month later, the Ministry of the Interior issued an *arrêté d'expulsion* against Lutfi Bey, forcing him to leave the country. The injunction generated a rift among the organization's members, some of whom stridently denied the accusations of encouraging "Turkish sympathies" among troops.⁷²

The French state was willing to tolerate and even financially support nominally Muslim organizations that could assist the war effort. However, greater trust and oversight were clearly needed. In the spring of 1916, officials found a more amenable partner in the newly created association La Solidarité Franco-Musulmane, set up "to assist morally and materially the Muslims enrolled under our flag."⁷³ The organization boasted an impressive membership roll consisting of political elites and former high-ranking colonial administrators. The elected president, Maurice Raynaud, was a notable medical professional and member of the Académie de Médecine. Stephen Pichon and Charles Jonnart, both former ministers and ex-colonial officials, were listed as vice-presidents.⁷⁴ The founding charter of Solidarité Franco-Musulmane laid out an ambitious program, promising medical services to wounded soldiers and a *service de correspondance* to assist with transport to France and accommodation upon arrival. In addition, the organization would disseminate helpful information—essentially state-approved propaganda—ensuring that soldiers and workers coming from Africa were kept well-informed of the war effort. "We are extending a fraternal hand to all those who at this difficult time have come in haste to our shores," affiliates proclaimed.⁷⁵ Although a private initiative, Solidarité Franco-Musulmane received broad government support and approval. Officials were confident they could trust the organizers, many of whom were known within French high political society. The propagandistic appeal of Solidarité Franco-Musulmane could not be denied either. State-sponsored colonial newspapers like *La Dépêche Marocaine* and the Tunisian organ *Taraqqi* commended the initiative, holding it up as yet another example of France's goodwill toward its Muslims.⁷⁶ With individuals like Pichon and Jonnart at the helm, authorities no longer had to worry whether official funds might be lining the pockets of shady interlopers or being used for questionable ends.

Compared with Britain, France took a more interventionist approach in dealing with questions of colonial loyalties and the Ottoman holy war. The state was willing to dispense funds and support patriotic associations that might assist in rallying the colonies to the national effort. Whether or not these campaigns were effective was unclear, but by 1916 it was evident that the war had acquired a specific dimension for Muslims and those concerned with the

empire. The clubs and patriotic campaigns that assumed shape during the first years of the war claimed to speak to, or in some cases, for Muslims. They came about primarily through the efforts of civic organizers and activists worried over what war with the Ottoman Empire meant for Europe's established "Muslim powers." Governments responded to organizations claiming to represent Muslim opinion with a mix of trepidation and optimism. The increased surveillance of such groups revealed that colonial politics and concerns over Islam were closely linked to issues of national defense on the home front. As the war bled into the colonies, a range of activists and political elites stepped forward, bringing imperial and colonial concerns directly into the metropole. Given the German war strategy, countries like France and Britain could not afford to ignore Muslim opinion. National and imperial priorities were converging in novel ways, giving Islam greater prominence in European political life.

THE CRESCENT IN THE TRENCHES

That religion and empire came to figure in continental wartime activities said a great deal about how Europeans imagined the conflict. But it also suggested the very real ways in which the war years transformed the relationship between Europe and its colonies. Prior to 1914, most Europeans thought of the overseas territories as distant, peripheral places, if they thought about them at all. The war collapsed these geographic and conceptual distances as metropolises pressed colonial subjects into the service of the nation. Some German writers sharply criticized the initiative, smirking at how nations allegedly fighting for "civilization" could approve of "inciting Mongols and Negroes against the white race."⁷⁷ Entente Powers paid these comments little mind, knowing full well that winning the war depended upon mobilizing all imperial resources at hand.

By October 1914, significant numbers of foreign troops were landing in Marseille, the main entry point for Allied forces coming from overseas. A correspondent for *The Times* was on the spot to capture this "historic" moment. "For a couple of months now Marseille's streets have echoed to the tread of a remarkable medley of soldiers—picturesque Zouaves and Turcos from Algiers, white-turbaned, swarthy Moors from Morocco, coal-black negroes from Senegal, and a score of different units from France itself." It was, however, the latest arrival to the French port city—the contingent of Indian soldiers transferred from the British Raj—that most impressed the journalist. "I have seen the troops of one of the world's most ancient civilizations set foot for the first time on the shores of Europe," he declared.⁷⁸ If it was the first time Indian forces had set foot on European soil, it would not be the last.

Between 1914 and 1918, over 1 million Indian troops served overseas. In the first year, some 140,000 men were transported to continental Europe via Marseille to take up positions as frontline infantrymen and auxiliary laborers. They saw combat in France and Belgium before certain military officials, anxious over whether ostensibly “inferior” dark races should be encouraged to kill white Europeans, decided Indian regiments might be better used in the Middle East fighting Arabs and Turks. Notwithstanding the obligation to their French ally, British authorities candidly admitted that wartime commitments should in no way disrupt the delicate racial hierarchies that governed colonial society.⁷⁹ Like Britain, France also made use of its colonial manpower. In August 1914, roughly 90,000 *troupes indigènes* were already enlisted in the ranks of the French army. The high casualty rates of French servicemen by late 1915 entailed more would be needed. In total, the colonies contributed approximately 500,000 soldiers, the majority coming from West Africa, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.⁸⁰ An additional 200,000 were called upon to provide much-needed labor in domestic industries.⁸¹ Unlike the arriving Indian recruits, the bulk of these troops were Muslim. Forward-looking individuals could not ignore what this significant contribution might occasion for France’s Muslim African empire. “It would be foolish to deny that new men will be returning to the Arab *douar* [and] African huts,” the senator Lucien Hubert shrewdly observed. “They will know how to demand the rights they have paid for with their blood and labor. . . . France owes them a sacred debt.”⁸² According to many North African elites, Hubert was absolutely correct.⁸³

In the years leading up to the war, Muslims had gone to great lengths to present themselves as loyal subjects and citizens. Demonstrating they could be peaceable subjects would pave the way for acceptance and, in colonial settings, equal civil and political rights. At least this was the hope. Supposed “pro-Turk” sympathies complicated these expectations, placing Muslims in an awkward position. In a world where one was forced to pick sides, dual loyalties to faith and empire became difficult. On the other hand, World War I offered Muslims new opportunities to demonstrate their loyalty through public expressions of support and service. The newspaper *Rachidi*, run by Young Algerian activists, assured the French government that it had nothing to fear from its Muslim subjects. “Our Muslim friends are enrolling by the thousands in the ranks of the French army,” the paper proclaimed. “Muslims have learned to know and love France during these past eighty years.”⁸⁴ As the paper’s editor insisted, North Africans understood that France was “the Fatherland of African Muslims” and they would fulfill their duties to defend the homeland.⁸⁵ Two months later, Khalid Sheldrake took it upon himself to write to his own government “in the name of the British Muslims” and impart a similar message. In his opinion, Britain was respected as a Muslim power

in the Islamic world and could count on the support of its Muslim community. “[We] assure you of our complete cooperation and loyalty against all enemies of His Most Gracious Majesty King George,” he remarked in closing.⁸⁶ Colonial soldiers likewise abided. “What better occasion can I find than this to prove the loyalty of my family to the British Government?” one Indian soldier asked upon landing in France. “Turkey, it is true, is a Muslim Power, but what has it to do with us? Turkey is nothing at all to us.”⁸⁷

The notion that Muslims could fight for Britain as faithful Muslims was underscored by King George V himself in a public address to his Indian troops. They were fighting for both empire and religion, he affirmed, and the two need not be antagonistic.⁸⁸ The message was well-received. Just as the Ottomans entered the war, the British Muslim Society held a meeting at the Woking Mosque and issued a resolution commending the many Muslims turning out to fight for Britain. “[We] express our delight to find that our co-religionists in Islam are fighting on the side of honor, truth, and justice and are carrying into effect the principles of Islam as inculcated by the Holy Prophet Muhammad.”⁸⁹ The notion that patriotic military service was consistent with Islamic values was reiterated in various appeals to Muslim solidarity. Sheldrake, who enlisted in the armed forces and saw combat during the war, compared military life to the “self-discipline” needed to “obey the orders of Allah.” In his opinion, military service made him a better Muslim. “We must learn the lesson of obedience which is inculcated by our officers,” he claimed. “We must learn Islam.”⁹⁰

Wartime propaganda attempted to construct an idealized image of the Muslim soldier, one that encouraged values of discipline and obedience to authority deemed consistent with Islamic teachings. Entente nations hardly had a monopoly on such discourse. In 1917, Shaykh Abdul Aziz Shawish, an Egyptian nationalist dispatched to Berlin to assist the NFO, wrote an article for the government-backed magazine *Die Islamische Welt* on the “Islamic soldier,” offering his own views on the subject. “The Muhammadan does not fight for personal zeal or his own interests,” he maintained. The ideal Muslim soldier was frugal, tenacious, and capable of enduring hardship. They did not “imitate the gold-embroidered uniforms or the splendid sabers of the French, nor take up the weapons of the Italians or even the whiskey and soda of the English . . . Rigor and simplicity” were the virtues of the Muslim soldier who forsook material comforts and was guided by faith alone. “He is hungry, but he does not complain. Thirst and misery do not drive him to despair. Material goods matter little to him compared with holy promises.”⁹¹ Austrian accounts from the Eastern front, where Bosnian soldiers fought against Serbian and Russian forces, also emphasized the attributes of Muslim combatants, in many cases relying upon Orientalized stereotypes of Muslim ferocity and tenacity. As one officer in the Austro-Hungarian army commented: “All

Austro-Hungarian soldiers fight the Russians in the most heroic manner, but the Bosnians are a very different sight." Instructed by their imam regarding "a Muslim's duty in this war," Bosnian troops unleashed a veritable terror on Russian forces, in some cases throwing aside their rifles and grabbing enemy combatants by the throat. "I will never forget the sight," the officer stated.⁹²

How Muslims were to conduct themselves on the battlefield was a European-wide concern. It was especially acute for Entente Powers mindful of colonial morale and the allure of Pan-Islamism. Wartime propaganda repeatedly highlighted what was expected of a "good" Muslim soldier, underscoring key themes of loyalty and patriotism. The French government even experimented with the medium of literature to convey its message. In 1917, the author Lucienne-Marie Enfrey was commissioned to write a book entitled *The Crescent in the Trenches* containing a series of fictionalized accounts aimed at capturing the Muslim wartime experience. As expected, the vignettes were filled with instances of bravery and dramatic acts of Muslim heroism. In the story "Le Djaouak," for example, the protagonist Brahim from Beni-Snassen sees the colonial *spahis* in his Algerian village and becomes enamored by their uniforms and the respect they command in the local community. "They dazzle their friends. They have money. They are brave . . . they will win a military medal one day!" Like a good colonial patriot, Brahim subsequently enlists in the French army against his father's wishes and is sent to fight on the Marne against Germany.⁹³ The enthusiasm and tenacity highlighted in Enfrey's stories contrasted sharply with how some French officials interpreted the motivations of African soldiers. Long accustomed to considering Muslims a "fatalistic" people, they argued that Muslim military service was not so much a sign of patriotic fervor as it was an ingrained willingness to accept their lot as Allah's will. "They are resigned, like every good Muslim," an officer maintained when discussing Tunisian troops under his charge. "God has decreed that they serve France during the hostilities; they bow, demanding simply of the Most High to permit them to return to their country as soon as possible."⁹⁴

These official perspectives said little about the actual experiences of Muslims on the battlefield. Like their European counterparts, colonial regiments on the Western Front confronted bad weather, disease, strict discipline, death, and privation on a daily basis. Casualty rates were consistent with the high death tolls suffered in every European army during the conflict, with approximately 48,000 Indian sepoys, 31,000 West Africans, and 26,000 Algerians either dying in combat or from combat-related deaths.⁹⁵ These miseries were compounded by the indignities of European racism—both overt and subtle—that African and South Asian soldiers faced while serving under commanding officers disposed to see colonial troops as naturally "inferior" to white Europeans. It didn't help that colonial subjects found themselves far

from their homes and families overseas. Under the circumstances, comfort and sociability had to be sought elsewhere. The Punjabi Naik Buland Khan, who served in France, fondly recalled how his compatriot Subedar Gul Muhammad Khan would sit and converse with fellow Muslims in distress. "If he heard anywhere of a young man who was troubled in mind, he went to him and talked to him in such a way that all his discomfort, exile, and his homesickness faded away."⁹⁶ Not all were as fortunate. In his letters home, the Tunisian *tirailleur* Tidjoni Ben Sadak conveyed the horrors and isolation of military life that many experienced. "We are exposed to bombs set against us," he wrote in 1916. "I beseech thee, my God, to save us, to cease our separation from our family and to recall us home from this unhappy army."⁹⁷ For others, though, life at the front was not as traumatic. In France, the Indian cavalryman Zabu Shah was happy to receive three square meals a day, a steady supply of tobacco, and a comfortable place to sleep, amenities unknown in his native village. "Life and death are in the hands of God, but there is no real discomfort in this war," he admitted to his mother. "Here in the midst of the battlefield, in [the] most dangerous places, we get not only necessities but every sort of luxury."⁹⁸

Being stationed in Europe was not only relegated to military life. Off the battlefield too, Muslim soldiers and workers found a new world open to them, one unregulated by the dictates of Islamic law and custom. During periods of leave, colonial troops had opportunities to visit cities like London and Paris, and many walked away awestruck by what they saw. "If I were to set about writing down the praises of Marseille, my hand would be wearied with writing," Mohamed Firoz Din, a Punjabi in the 19th Lancers, wrote home. "Further, I went to Paris for seven days. What is Paris? It is heaven."⁹⁹ For all the marvels and novelty European cities had to offer foreign soldiers, officials remained guarded. Urban centers were rife with prostitution, lewd forms of entertainment, and bars which abstemious Muslims should avoid. The British government took it upon itself the responsibility of organizing tours of London for Muslim troops, ensuring that they got a taste of the city without indulging in its many vices.¹⁰⁰ Insulating troops from the unseemly aspects of European society proved impossible, but it didn't prevent authorities from trying. When Indian soldiers on sick leave in Bristol were discovered drinking whiskey to the chagrin of local officials, the alcohol was confiscated and a strict no-drinking policy was rigorously enforced in the hospital. For good measure, the individual who had procured the liquor for the troops was handed a stiff fine.¹⁰¹ In Marseille, a chief magistrate filed a complaint in 1916, alerting the local commissary that North Africans stationed in the city were carousing in the cafés and causing trouble. "The numerous bars are frequented by Arabs who get involved in all types of bloody fights and without fail perpetrate aggression against late night passers-by," he

grumbled.¹⁰² Interactions with white European women were also frowned upon. Colonial and metropolitan administrators warned that interracial sexual relations would be “most detrimental to the prestige and spirit of European rule” abroad. They doubly worried that white women would be attracted by the exoticism of colonial subjects, tempting soldiers.¹⁰³ Officials cringed to learn that after spending a few nights with a French woman in Marseille, one Algerian soldier had taken to slicking back his hair and wearing a stylish hat pushed back on his head. Loping about the streets, he assumed the “attitude and dress of a pimp,” according to the report.¹⁰⁴ This conduct was certainly a far cry from the “good” Muslim soldier depicted in French propaganda.

Life on the Western Front had its difficulties but also promised new opportunities. In southeastern Europe, the situation was quite different. There, the boundaries between military conflict and daily civilian life remained more fluid. World War I followed close upon the heels of the Balkan Wars that devastated the region between 1912 and 1913. The conflicts had been brutal, pitting Christian nationalists against Ottoman Muslim residents across Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Thrace. Those who refused to flee their homes ahead of invading armies faced military occupation, food shortages, and violent acts of retribution meted out by zealous commanders. In some cities, mosques were pillaged and re-Christianized to the consternation of Muslim inhabitants. Charles Grieg, the British vice-consul stationed in Monastir in 1912, was especially critical of the way Serbian occupation forces behaved. They wanted to “exterminate the Moslem element and seize their lands,” he accused, equating the campaign to a veritable “reign of terror.”¹⁰⁵ Austrian publicists were happy to endorse these views once the war started, hoping to take full advantage of the ethnic tensions in areas making up what nationalists were now calling “New Serbia.” Newspapers printed—and frequently exaggerated—daily reports of Serbian cruelty in Albania and along the Bosnian frontier. Serb officials were allegedly revoking Muslim property rights while Montenegrin gangs patrolled villages, looting and murdering Muslims indiscriminately. “Serbian officials have hunted [Muslims] down just like Englishmen hunt down savages in the colonies,” one journalist assailed.¹⁰⁶ Articles noted Serbian efforts to conscript Muslims into the army had provoked “great agitation” and “bloody clashes,” with Muslims choosing to flee rather than serve the enemy.¹⁰⁷ Resistance was calling into question whether Serbia could command the loyalties of Muslims in the territories it had acquired during the Balkan Wars. “The situation is becoming untenable,” the Austrian daily *Die Neue Zeitung* cautioned in early 1915. “All the signs point to the outbreak of a general revolution in New Serbia.”¹⁰⁸

Austrian journalists were consciously attempting to stoke Muslim revolt across the border. After nearly a year of fighting, Austro-Hungarian forces had failed to make any significant gains along the Sava and Drina rivers. The

Balkan front was at a stalemate, and the consequences were nothing short of catastrophic. Critics recognized the Imperial and Royal Army was grossly unprepared for the style of modern warfare the situation demanded. So-called “Ringstrasse Generals” might be good for parading about during military ceremonies, the popular joke went, but they were largely unfit to conduct large-scale military operations.¹⁰⁹ When Austro-Hungarian forces finally managed to overrun Serbia with the help of Bulgaria in autumn 1915, Habsburg officials wasted no time in exploiting the communitarian rifts dividing the country. They established an occupation government and began courting disaffected Muslims, often making promises to restore Quranic schools and appoint Muslim elites to positions of local authority.¹¹⁰ István Burián, now serving as foreign minister, did not conceal his government’s intention of dismantling New Serbia and breaking “Serbdom.” Fittingly enough, Lajos Thallóczy was appointed civilian commissioner for the occupation government. Burián and Thallóczy were both veteran administrators who had played instrumental roles in the Bosnian “civilizing mission.” For Thallóczy, Serbia was simply an extension of the empire’s “world historical mission,” and he saw no reason why similar policies should not be implemented in the newly conquered territories.¹¹¹

Habsburg authorities contended that, unlike Serbia, they could attract the sympathies of Balkan Muslims. Muslim leaders in Serbia had kept a close eye on imperial policies in Bosnia and were impressed by the autonomy Bosnians had managed to secure. It was not too idealistic to hope that a similar system might be adopted in Serbia.¹¹² From the first salvo of the war, the Habsburgs had understood the importance of mobilizing the Muslim community. In December 1914, the Reis-ul-Ulema Džemaludin Čaušević issued a decree modeled on the Ottoman *fatwa*, calling upon Bosnians to take up arms in defense of their faith and empire. At the same time, the state-sanctioned council of *‘ulamā* implored brethren to provide care and assistance to wounded soldiers, effectively enlisting the support of Muslim networks and charities in the war effort. Volunteers came forward, as did donations to the Ottoman Red Crescent Society running field hospitals in combat zones. The Imperial and Royal Army organized thirty-five battalions composed of Muslim troops, dispatching them to the Italian frontier and across the Eastern Front. Approximately 100 imams were recruited to oversee Muslim units, providing spiritual services as well as ensuring basic religious provisions related to diet and burial were observed.¹¹³ Religious authorities were also expected to bolster morale. Addressing the soldiers under his care as they prepared for combat in 1914, the imam Hafiz Ibrahim Kurbegović recounted stories of Serbian atrocities against Muslim women and children, rousing his unit to action with the promise: “Those who die in the war will be martyrs, and those that survive *ghazis*!”¹¹⁴ Such stirring invocations were intended to

unleash the Muslim “ferocity” that Habsburg officials believed so effective on the battlefield.

This is not to say the empire fully trusted its Muslim citizens. At the start of the war, the government took precautionary measures against potential troublemakers. Some sixty known Bosnian activists, among them the editorial staff of the pro-Serb newspaper *Gajret*, were promptly rounded up and imprisoned once hostilities broke.¹¹⁵ However, overall, the war years did offer Muslims opportunities for integration and greater public recognition as imperial citizens. The influx of Muslim soldiers garrisoned in cities across the empire meant that places of worship needed to be constructed. In December 1914, a request was tabled by the Budapest municipal government to have a mosque built in the city. The motion noted that some 2,000 Muslims living in the metropolitan area had no place to practice their religion.¹¹⁶ Two years later, Islam was granted official state recognition in both Hungary and Croatia, solidifying Islam’s status across the empire. At the same time, community leaders used this new status to their advantage, pressing for greater autonomy and “[the] right to make our own decisions,” as one resolution drafted by Muslim notables declared.¹¹⁷ In an interview given to a German reporter in late 1915, a certain “high-ranking personality” in Bosnia gave his assessment of the new landscape facing Muslims as the war progressed. “On the whole, the situation of the Muhammadans is politically and economically quite favorable,” he stated. “The annexation made it clear to us Muhammadans that we are subjects of the Emperor and King Franz Josef.”¹¹⁸ Having momentarily defeated Serbia, that “bitter enemy” of Balkan Islam, the Habsburgs were inclined to think about how they might accommodate Muslim communities at home and on the imperial periphery. For the moment, the empire was the unquestionable “Muslim power” in Eastern Europe.

MANAGING A MUSLIM ARMY

Austria-Hungary’s endeavor to mobilize and integrate Islam was not unique. Every major power in the war faced similar challenges. Military officials were well aware of the strains military service in Europe placed on devout followers of the Qur’an. Soldiers complained they had few opportunities to practice their faith. European cities lacked mosques for worship. Islamic religious holidays were not regularly observed. “We don’t even know what are our sacred days and festivals,” lamented one soldier in the Indian cavalry division.¹¹⁹ Observing Ramadan was especially difficult. Long summer days made it almost impossible to fast until sundown while military rations did not always accommodate Muslim dietary restrictions. Fears that Muslims might abandon their religious customs in the land of the infidel abounded.

"Muslims are in the process of losing their way in the midst of unbelievers," a Tunisian soldier worried.¹²⁰ Many soldiers wrote home to trusted spiritual authorities, seeking advice on how they should proceed. What obligations did a Muslim have in times of war? Were certain exceptions allowed outside *dar al-Islam*? "I have scrupulously performed all the necessary rites, prayers, charity and abstention from what is unlawful," Jemadar Abdul Khan stationed in France confided to a spiritual mentor in Delhi. "But through weakness, the flesh is now beginning to assert itself."¹²¹ He was not the only one. Serving in Europe, Muslims confronted serious questions regarding piety and the practice of their faith. Failing to address these concerns risked undermining morale or, worse still, revolt. To sustain the image of a "Muslim power," European militaries were going to have to accommodate Islam on the continent.

Demands for mosques in European capitals had grown during the early twentieth century. Aside from the Woking Mosque in England, though, most projects remained confined to paper by 1914. The influx of Muslims and the need to treat wounded soldiers altered this situation. Providing medical and religious services to Muslims fell outside the remit of military officials. Imams and specialists with Quranic training were needed, and this meant working closely with religious authorities in order to dispense essential services in accordance with Islamic rites and customs.

To assuage Muslim anxieties, the French government committed funds to constructing facilities in the Parisian suburb of Nogent-sur-Marne, giving it the bucolic name *Jardin Colonial*. The "garden" featured a hospital designated to house convalescing African soldiers, complete with a mosque and Muslim burial ground. The project mimicked a previous initiative undertaken by Les Amitiés Musulmanes in the capital. However, since the facility was under state supervision, it avoided working through dubious intermediaries. The mufti Boumezra El-Mokrani, one of the "official" Muslim clergy handpicked by the Algerian administration, was selected to attend to the needs of Muslim soldiers on site. Newspapers were quick to publicize Jardin Colonial as an example of French largess, highlighting the services available to soldiers and the government's attentiveness to the needs of Islamic worship. "The French population has no greater occasion to demonstrate to Muslims soldiers its sympathy," reported the newspaper *Akhbar-el-Harb*, one of the chief propaganda organs run by the ministry of war.¹²² The *Dépêche Marocaine* went further in its praise. Noting that there were now two purpose-built mosques in the Île-de-France area, the paper interpreted it as a sign of progress to come. "We see that Islam is in the process of being installed in Christian France," it commended.¹²³ The propagandistic value of the hospital and mosque was obvious. Postcards were printed up with images of Jardin Colonial and the mosque and distributed freely to convalescents. The expectation was that

they would send these back home to family and friends, indirectly publicizing French efforts to accommodate Islam on the continent.¹²⁴

At the same time, Marseille was undertaking provisions to accommodate its expanding North African population, albeit under different circumstances. The port was the main entry point for soldiers and workers. The military established a number of immigration centers in Marseille to monitor incoming workers, but measures were notoriously lax.¹²⁵ Residents objected to the rapid influx of immigrants and “Arab criminals” flooding the city. Local authorities were also on edge. There were not enough buildings to house immigrant laborers. Workers lived in poor conditions, packed five or six to a room in some instances. More alarming, government oversight of immigrants was inadequate, with laborers shirking work and spending their nights in cafés, frequently inciting street fights. In addressing these concerns, the Marseillaise Chamber of Commerce requested to have a designated “Arab quarter” built on the edge of the city to house the colonial workforce. Plans were drawn up in late 1916 for a Muslim “village” to accommodate Arab and Kabyle immigrants. The proposal included a mosque, Moorish bathhouse, halal restaurants, and even a bazaar, making Marseille the first French city to welcome North Africans in their “native conditions.”¹²⁶ The Orientalist painter Étienne Dinet, a convert to Islam who had spent part of his life in Algeria, was consulted to provide sketches of the mosque, with the proviso



Figure 9.1 Wounded Soldiers Posing for a photograph at the Inauguration of a Muslim Hospital, Neuilly, France (1915). Photographie de presse. Agence Rol. Gallica/ Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

that it be “as simple and cheap as possible.”¹²⁷ In the end, the project was never realized.

The envisioned Muslim “village,” like the Jardin Colonial, was intended to “accommodate” incoming Muslims and show France’s commitment to its colonial subjects. All the same, more practical considerations were evident in these projects. Government responses were never dissociated from efforts to surveil Muslim servicemen and segregate them from the white European population. It was even more urgent to do so since some of the foreigners arriving in Marseille were not even French subjects. Indian troops supplied by Britain were also in need of medical care, and already by late 1914, facilities in southern France were proving woefully inadequate to offer these services. British authorities mounted a public fundraising campaign to raise money for hospitals in Marseille that autumn, but the scheme fell short.¹²⁸ By the end of the year, officials made the decision to transport “at least a portion” of the wounded Indian expeditionary force to England. “No doubt can exist in India as to the reception which would be accorded to any of his Majesty’s Indian troops were they brought here,” one newspaper assured.¹²⁹

Availability of medical facilities in England was an issue. Hospitals in South Hampton caring for British units were already full.¹³⁰ Walter Lawrence, recently appointed Commissioner for Sick and Wounded Indian Soldiers, decided it was best to set up a separate hospital specifically dedicated to colonial troops and began scouting out possible locations, eventually settling on Brighton. His choice was not one of mere convenience. Among the city’s attributes was the Royal Pavilion, a palatial structure decorated in the high Indo-Saracenic style popular in the Raj. With its oriental domes and minarets, Lawrence believed the Pavilion would be a welcoming sight to wounded soldiers and possibly mitigate any feelings of homesickness they were suffering.¹³¹ Between late 1914 and the end of 1916, roughly 12,000 soldiers were treated in Brighton, with the Pavilion housing over 700 beds at any given time. The staff was a mix of officers from the Indian Medical Service and Indian doctors, orderlies, and cooks.¹³² From the start, the government was attentive to the religious and ethnic differences that existed among troops and took every measure possible to ensure not to offend religious sensibilities. Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs were housed in separate wards. Three separate kitchens were built on the premises to accommodate dietary restrictions. Convalescents had access to religious authorities, with a prayer room built for Muslims. “Each must find within the Hospital the possibility of living according to his own custom and religion,” boasted a state-commissioned pamphlet destined for Indian readers.¹³³ The press also helped spread awareness. “Let no one in India suppose that the conditions of Indian life have been overlooked in the Pavilion Hospital,” one journalist averred. “On the contrary, they have been carried out with the most scrupulous detail. . . . Hindu or Mussulman, Sikh or Gurkha,

each soldier will find that he is attended to by his own people, and after his own fashion.”¹³⁴ Muslim soldiers seemed to agree, aware that their letters back home were carefully monitored by government censors. Havildar Ghufuran Khan, a fighter in the 129th Baluchis who stayed in the hospital, informed his compatriots that the staff was considerate of his needs and that he was able to observe Ramadan without hindrance. The hospital administration, in his opinion, “made excellent arrangements and takes great trouble for us Muslims.”¹³⁵

These positive appraisals overlooked other aspects of life at the Pavilion. Convalescing soldiers could not help but notice the restrictions placed on their movement. A line of barbed wire ran along the hospital perimeter,



Figure 9.2 Indian Soldiers Convalescing at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton. British Library Collections.

sequestering patients from Brighton residents. Military authorities, perpetually anxious over inter-racial sexual relations, wanted to ensure that local women didn't contract a sudden case of "khaki fever."¹³⁶ Patients were permitted to leave the hospital grounds for strolls or to enjoy the summer weather, but only under strict supervision. Malcolm Ross, a correspondent for the New Zealand *Wanganui Chronicle*, caught a glimpse of one such excursion while passing through the area in August 1915. "Driving along country roads one meets often char-a-bancs filled with men in bright blue hospital suits who are having an outing and thoroughly enjoying it," he recorded.¹³⁷ Inside the hospital walls, soldiers were insulated from any materials that might undermine morale or bring their loyalties into question. The reading rooms were stacked with the standard fare of British propaganda like *Akhbar-i-Jang* and *El-Hakika*, government-sponsored journals that carried news deemed "suitable" for colonial troops.¹³⁸ Much like French efforts, the Royal Pavilion was both an exercise in imperial propaganda and a space of racial and religious regulation.¹³⁹ Yet this did not eclipse the fact that European authorities took Muslim opinion seriously and were willing to adapt policy as needed.

The issue of Muslim burials was particularly sensitive. Maulvi Sadr-ud-Din, who had taken over for Kamal-ud-Din at the Woking Mosque, raised the issue with the British government in the summer of 1915. Requested to oversee the burial of Muslim soldiers killed in combat, he found that few provisions were in place. The location selected for a Muslim cemetery around Woking was a patch of marshland populated by stray dogs. It was clearly unfit for purpose, prompting the Maulvi to bury twenty-five Muslim soldiers at nearby Brookwood at his own expense. He feared "the resent which must inevitably be felt when the truth becomes known of the manner in which the British Government have treated their dead heroes." England was not showing "sufficient respect" to the memories of those who had given their lives for the empire.¹⁴⁰ Walter Lawrence agreed, stating that burial procedures were essentially a "political" issue that demanded immediate attention.¹⁴¹ The government responded. The War Office earmarked funds for restoration work, enclosing the grounds in a handsome brick wall and outfitting the main entrance with a domed archway flanked by a minaret.¹⁴² By 1918, twenty-one soldiers had been interred on the grounds, having received the proper Islamic burial rites followed by the honorary firing salute customary at military funerals.¹⁴³

Colonial officials recognized the importance Islamic rites and rituals played in wartime propaganda. Muslims attached "a very great importance to the observation of their religious rites, particularly at the hour of death," the Moroccan resident general, Hubert Lyautey reminded. To avoid problems, he recommended the government take into account of Muslim funerary practices: "It is important that we pay attention to this subject, as failure to do so

will risk severely injuring public opinion among [North African] natives.”¹⁴⁴ This advice came in the wake of reports that had discredited the French military. In April 1915, the prefect of the Seine informed that Muslims fighting for France had been buried in the Parisian cemetery of Pantin. During the burial ceremony, the cross had been placed on their graves in error, prompting the Minister of the Interior to request that the crucifixes be removed.¹⁴⁵ It was also noted that “native soldiers could even sometimes be buried at the same time as Christian soldiers and with the same ceremonies.”¹⁴⁶ For Lyautey, these missteps were unforgivable. “Near the bell towers of our villages and alongside the crosses of our cemeteries are to be erected numerous Arab headstones turned toward Mecca,” he demanded.¹⁴⁷

Lyautey was right to be alarmed, as was the Ministry of the Interior. For good measure, the Under-Secretary of State wrote to the Ministry of War, stressing that Muslim soldiers must be given proper burials conforming to Islamic rites. The loyalty of Muslim subjects was always “conditioned by absolute respect of their sentiments and of their religious practices.” To ignore this would have “regrettable consequences.”¹⁴⁸ The government did not hesitate. It distributed circulars to military authorities on the correct burial customs and even manufactured standard Muslim headstones featuring a black crescent with a star on them to be used for all fallen soldiers.¹⁴⁹ In December 1915, Pierre de Margerie, chief of the African and Eastern Affairs Sub-Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sought to neutralize the bad press. He sent two photos of tombs belonging to *tirailleurs musulmans* recently buried in the cemetery in Nogent-sur-Marne to the Tunisian



Figure 9.3 Muslim Tombstones Honoring Fallen French Troops at the Front in Belgium. Photographie de presse. Agence Rol. Gallica/Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

government. These photos were to “demonstrate to the native populations of North Africa the extent to which the government of the Republic respects their beliefs and honors those of their children fallen in combat for France.”¹⁵⁰ Gabriel Alapetite, the Tunisian Resident General, was instructed to use the photos as he saw fit.

Yet orders to observe Muslim rites and actually carrying out these orders were different things. Local officials faced numerous obstacles in trying to implement military burial policies. In 1917, the mayors of Saint-Vrain and Brétigny complained that Muslim funerary customs violated existing public health measures. Islamic practice called for bodies to be wrapped in swaddles rather than transported in coffins. It also dictated that graves must be one meter in depth, rather than the 1.5 meters prescribed by public officials. These issues drew in the Conseil Supérieur d’Hygiène Publique, which attempted to enforce regulations. Imams had the power to alter certain practices if conditions warranted it, and this included procedures for the wrapping of the body, burial without a coffin, and the placement of the body facing Mecca. According to public health officials, Muslim customs needed to be modified “on matters that [were] optional.” However, it was imperative that these changes be communicated to Muslims through the “official interpreters and imams” charged with attending to Islamic religious affairs.¹⁵¹ In short, the state needed to work through Islamic clerics to make these changes palatable. A closer relationship between policymakers and Islamic spiritual leaders was required. The need for imams was not relegated to issues over burial and funerary rites either. Medical units and field hospitals had to ensure that Muslim needs were attended to while military chaplaincies had to provide for Islamic worship. In all these endeavors, imams and muftis were required, and French authorities were quick to press the “official” clergy at their disposal into service.

The reason officials placed such high importance on these matters was that mismanagement was an easy target for German propaganda. Pamphlets and leaflets aimed at Entente forces never missed an opportunity to highlight the disregard shown to colonial troops. German officials were keen to show that they, rather than France or Britain, were the real “friend” of Islam. Special POW camps were set up in Wünsdorf and Zossen just outside Berlin to house captured Indians, North Africans, and Central Asians fighting for the enemy. In these camps, prisoners were subject to German propaganda and lectured to by imams furnished by the Ottomans. Approximately 2,000 were passed on to Istanbul, where they were either used in propaganda campaigns or co-opted into the service of the Ottoman military.¹⁵² Muslim prisoners were instructed to see themselves as “guests” in the camps, and German officials went to some lengths to accommodate their Muslim captives and show it was “better here than in the trenches.”¹⁵³ At Wünsdorf, a “splendid mosque” was

built to allow for Muslim worship, a “gift from the Kaiser to Mohammedans,” according to one writer.¹⁵⁴ When the Ottoman politician Mustafa Nedim Bey toured the Zossen camp on an official visit to Germany in 1916, he spoke at length to the prisoners and commended the “respect” Germany showed to Muslims. “We hope that you show yourselves grateful, and that you will spread further among your brothers at home what you have learned here,” he enjoined them.¹⁵⁵ Postcards and photographs were produced to publicize the mosque and distributed among enemy forces. The propaganda campaign was also aided by colonial troops that defected to Germany during the war and Muslim intellectuals collaborating with the NFO. After the war, some of these Muslims—like the Tunisian firebrand Sālah al-Sharīf al-Tunisi, the Egyptian nationalist Abdul Aziz Shawish, and the Indian educator Abdul Jabbar Kheri—would remain in Berlin and play a role in developing German Orientalist studies through institutions like the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Islamkunde* and the *Akademisch-Islamische Vereinigung*.¹⁵⁶

For officials eager to appeal to Muslim loyalties and cultivate national images as a “friend of Muslims” or “Muslim powers,” accommodating Islamic religious worship in European countries was held up as a litmus test of a government’s putative “Muslim” credentials. Clubs and civic initiatives might help on the home front, but military authorities understood the need for more dynamic measures when it came to managing colonial units populated with thousands of Muslims. Mosques were hastily constructed in European cities, imams deployed to hospitals and battlefields, and Orientalist architecture incorporated into the built environment. At the same time, Muslims in uniform were now seen promenading through city streets or sitting at cafés, occasionally accompanied by white women. As war, empire, and religion intersected between 1914 and 1918, the implications were becoming evident. The Muslim Empire had come home.

WAR AND THE UNGODLY CIVILIZATION

In tandem with government attempts to accommodate Islam for wartime ends, the World War I opened a new space for Muslim publicists operating in Europe. In some instances, governments aimed to co-opt Muslim elites in the hopes they might influence public opinion. This policy was most explicit in colonial newspapers circulating through North Africa and the Middle East, which routinely employed Syrian and Arab journalists to parrot government lines.¹⁵⁷ However, Muslim publicists were not simply agents of colonial propaganda. The war years offered occasions to make their own views known to European and colonial readers. More to the point, the war itself provided a

means of critiquing “European civilization” and reflecting comparatively on the Islamic world.

It was not surprising that Ottoman and Muslim writers in the pay of Germany published blistering criticisms of Entente colonialism, insisting that it demonstrated the shortcomings of European “civilization” and, by extension, the European “civilizing mission.” Publicists working with the NFO pressed the notion of the war as an Islamic “liberation” struggle, drawing together a range of Algerian, Tunisian, Indian, Egyptian, and Ottoman writers residing in Central Europe. Collectively, they illuminated the many hypocrisies that propped up the European colonial order.¹⁵⁸ This anti-colonial rhetoric was hardly novel and had been circulating for some time.¹⁵⁹ Yet Muslim publicists not only questioned the values that underpinned European social and political outlooks. They asked whether European civilization was a model for the Muslim world at all. “The superiority of European civilization is only based on technical achievements,” explained Abdul Malik Hamza, an Egyptian working in Berlin. “Place this material progress beside the spiritual values which have matured and enlightened culture for a thousand years, and it remains questionable as to whether the old Oriental or modern Western culture is more advanced.”¹⁶⁰ Menemenli Zade Edhem, an Ottoman envoy stationed at the embassy in Berlin, was not alone when speculating that “European civilization” only seemed to benefit Europeans, leaving the rest of the world in deplorable servitude. “Civilization,” as a concept, derived from European ideas of social and economic progress and was far too “materialistic” in its outlook and values. Did Muslims even desire such a culture? According to Edhem, the answer was “no.”¹⁶¹ In Shawish’s estimation, Islam had more to offer the world than material progress. If European civilization eroded morality and encouraged antagonisms based upon race and nationality, Islam provided the necessary antidote. It fostered “ties of brotherhood that eliminates racial hatreds, that curse of humanity and perpetual threat to world peace.”¹⁶²

Such sentiments were not simply the product of pro-German propaganda. They were shared among a diverse section of Muslims during the war. Khalide Sheldrake sounded much like Abdul Malik Hamza and Shawish when offering his views on the current state of European culture. “European ‘civilization’ has been the excuse to enslave weaker races, to blot out nations, to murder innocents in all lands, to destroy mosques, to burn and ravage ‘uncivilized’ countries,” he seethed. “Europe is the cockpit of the world, and her religious life has proved a complete failure, her morality negligible, her honor shattered.”¹⁶³ While Sheldrake encouraged British Muslims to support the war effort, as the conflict dragged on and the bodies piled up, he and others began to suspect that the war had something to say about the state of Europe. According to his fellow convert, John Parkinson, the war

was unleashing the most debased and violent attributes of Western societies, a “Pandora’s Box [vomiting] forth evil things hydra-headed.”¹⁶⁴ If left unchecked, all that would remain would be the accumulated rubble of a corrupted civilization. As might be expected, Islam was presented as the panacea for European materialism. “Let the West become less material and more spiritual,” Sheldrake admonished, “and she will lose her feeling of strangeness in the temple of Allah.”¹⁶⁵ Much as *The Islamic Review* proclaimed, Islam rather than European “progress” had the potential to reconcile warring nationalities and provide a framework for peaceful human relations. The teachings of the Qur’an rejected “the very root of the evil from which sprang such pernicious differences that widened the cleavages between man and man.”¹⁶⁶

It was evident that whether in Berlin or London, Muslim activists were using the war to critique colonialism, nationalism, and the very idea of European civilization. If, prior to the war, Muslims had been cowed into accepting a Eurocentric narrative of social progress and advancement, the war years witnessed renewed criticism of the entire European world order, and with it, the predominance of Western cultural values.¹⁶⁷ The destruction wrought by the war was demonstrating the fallacies of European progress on a vast scale, critics claimed, raising questions as to what lessons could be drawn from the devastating conflict and what it meant for Europe’s future.

One of the most trenchant critics among these circles was the Indian lawyer and political activist, Mushir Hosain Qidwai. Coming to London at the turn of the century to complete his studies, Qidwai became involved in Pan-Islamic political circles in England and was an officeholder in the London-based Islamic Society. Throughout the war, Qidwai remained in England, publicizing Muslim social and political issues among British readers and stridently defending the Ottoman Empire as the true Islamic Caliphate.¹⁶⁸ In his many writings, he took a critical stance when it came to the profligacy and moral failings of Europe. He chided the British for their excessive drinking and “corrupt amusements,” consoling himself only by the fact that “the condition of France in these matters is still worse.” He also contended that Christian Europe was one of the most militant and aggressive civilizations. “It is the Christian people who have shed the greatest quantity of human blood in the past and who are still bent on their bloody pursuits.”¹⁶⁹ World War I provided a new context for elaborating these criticisms, but it also elicited a more philosophical critique of European society in relation to his own Islamic faith.

Qidwai lamented the bloodshed and destruction wrought by the war, but in his opinion, it was a consequence of the materialism encouraged by European values. As he bluntly claimed, “this is a war of which *materialism* is mainly responsible.” The very object of “materialistic progress” was to “forcibly dominate over the weaker people.” Science had been used to create weapons with no other purpose than destroying lives and property. These atrocities

had, of course, been prefigured in the wars of colonial conquest throughout the nineteenth century. "All these horrible acts which are shocking Europe today were practiced before on weaker people. They, in fact, are inherent in the material 'civilization.'"¹⁷⁰ Consistent with his earlier views, Qidwai highlighted the licentiousness and belligerence rife within European societies, insisting Europeans had grown "more or less indifferent" to social ills. The war was the most pronounced manifestation of this mentality. "This terrible war, which is shaking the very foundations of the earth by its concussions, has . . . revealed the true character of the much-vaunted European civilization and culture," he claimed. "This ungodly civilization and materialistic culture had inherent in them those failings and weaknesses which have now become so glaringly conspicuous."¹⁷¹

In his condemnation of the indecencies, "half-nude dresses," and inebriation evident in European societies, Qidwai likened them to a "disease."¹⁷² Notions of pathological decline persistently crept into his writings as the war continued, depicting Europe as a decrepit civilization hurtling toward its own demise. The cause of this decline was self-evident, he believed: "[it] stems from a lack of religious faith."¹⁷³ The antidote, therefore, was just as apparent: religion. "Of all the known agencies religion is the strongest to control and regulate human passions. . . . The control of a powerful, living, and practical religion is necessary to keep wild and brutal human passions in check."¹⁷⁴ Religion encouraged "moral purity and health." It regulated human actions and even the "thoughts of people."¹⁷⁵ "Man-made laws" were insufficient to perform this task. "A moral code from God Himself" was required to ensure a healthy body politic.¹⁷⁶ The question was straightforward: "Will the European peoples submit themselves to religious control?"¹⁷⁷ As Qidwai presented the problem, Christian Europe was in need of extensive reform, and Islam provided the solution. "If Europe does not take refuge under the banner of Islam . . . it shall perish by its own sword of individualism and materialism, and it shall burn itself in its own fire of immorality, irreligiousness, and atheism."¹⁷⁸

The war marked a profound turning point in Europe's development and would produce a corresponding "moral" revolution in its wake. Like many reformers of the period, Qidwai foresaw a golden age on the horizon in which the weak would no longer be at the mercy of the strong, in which liberty and dignity would be respected by all.

Man will come to learn that solemn undertakings, treaties, and pledges should be respected, that brotherhood of men does not recognize the limitation of race and country, or color or creed, and that nations of Asia and Africa, whether Christians or non-Christians have as much right to liberty as those of Europe.

The current conflict was, in Qidwai's estimation, a "moral war" just as much as a military one. If it was destructive, it would also provide fresh ground for re-establishing "moral principles in the society of nations."¹⁷⁹ The notion of a "moral war" was shared by many anti-colonial activists, pacifists, and internationalists of the period who, looking ahead, prophesized a new era of emancipated colonies and greater cooperation among nations. Qidwai was certainly in tune with these irenic aspirations. Yet he nonetheless interpreted them within a different discursive framework. His internationalism and ideas of peaceful coexistence were grounded in an Islamic discourse. He saw World War I as a "moral war" because it would replace Europe's decadent and materialist civilization with a "spiritual civilization."¹⁸⁰

If Europe gives up its greed of material gain, if it gives up the exploitation of the countries of such people who are materially weak, if it learns to entertain brotherliness towards all nations, whether weak or strong, large or small, Asiatic or European, colored or discolored—then this war will prove a blessing in disguise.¹⁸¹

Islam had an important role to play in this transformation. As a resolute Pan-Islamist, Qidwai placed great emphasis on Islamic fraternity, believing religion could forge an insoluble bond between people across national and racial lines. In no uncertain terms, Islam was the basis for a new world order. "The nation best suited to bring about universal brotherhood is the 'intermediate nation'—the Muslim nation," he claimed.¹⁸² Qidwai's Edenic postwar Europe was clearly imagined as an Islamized Europe. The waning of Christianity would bring an end to atheism and skepticism. "The present ungodly civilization will give place to a spiritual civilization and culture—material tendencies of humanity will come under the control of an effective, practical, scientific, rational and ethically highly evolved systematized faith, and thus Islam shall come into its own."¹⁸³ Already by the autumn of 1915, Qidwai had sketched the contours of a rejuvenated postwar Europe, anticipating the emergence of a new world free of militarism and racial oppression. Yet it was a Europe fundamentally transformed in light of its history, culture, and religious identity.

The destruction, high casualty rates, and internecine struggles of the war years engendered deep reflections among a number of European intellectuals. Thinkers expressed incomprehension over how supposedly "civilized" nations had come to unleash the furies of war on an entire continent. With growing pessimism, they turned their gazes to the future, speculating on Europe's place in the world. From the notion of a "lost generation" to Oswald Spengler's chilling prophecy of the "decline of the West," intellectuals were aware that a particular idea of man and life was ending. "Almost all the affairs

of men remain in a terrible uncertainty,” wrote the French essayist and philosopher Paul Valéry.

We think of what has disappeared, we are almost destroyed by what has been destroyed; we do not know what will be born, and we fear the future, not without reason. We hope vaguely, we dread precisely . . . the charm of life is behind us.¹⁸⁴

Muslim critics shared these outlooks, yet their perspectives—just as much as their proposed solutions—remained nonetheless distinct. If the future held the promise of a new world order, it was not to be greeted with dread. The “decline of the West” signaled the ascension of Islam and with it the rebirth of decadent Christian society. Noting the changes occurring in Europe as the war progressed, Qidwai foresaw a magnificent future dawning on the horizon. “The time, in short, will come . . . when Islam will be accepted by the European nations as THE religion which satisfies man’s reason and conscience both,” he wrote with the tone of a prophet. “The time will come when in European countries Eid-ul-Fitr and other Muslim festivals will no more remain novelties, and when the cry of ‘*La illallah Muhammad Rasulallah*’ will be heard from the highest minarets five times every day from European cities.”¹⁸⁵

NOTES

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Epilogue

Qidwai's vision of a Europe dotted with minarets and heeding the *adhan* was one of many postwar visions for the continent. It was inspired by aspirations for peace and international accord, but it also reflected a vision of European society promoted among certain Muslim activists since the late nineteenth century. The devastation wrought by the war and the sense of new possibilities it conjured sustained dreams that the Christian West might one day bask in the light shone by Islam upon the world.

Although perhaps fanciful, it is not difficult to understand how the war years fed prevailing hopes for an Islamized Europe. World War I revealed the strong linkages between metropole and colony that had been evolving over the century. For years, pro-imperial partisans had given serious thought to what it meant for nominally Christian societies to be "Muslim powers." During the war, this premise was put to the test in novel ways. Through military recruitment policies and acts of accommodation, Islam attained a greater presence in European political and civil society. Although these measures were responses to immediate concerns, they would have lasting implications. As the war wound down, Lucien Hubert was already able to grasp what the contributions of Muslim subjects meant for France. "Near the bell towers of our villages and alongside the crosses of our cemeteries are to be erected numerous Arab headstones turned toward Mecca," he discerned in 1918.¹ A transformation was underway, Hubert realized. Once relegated to the imperial periphery, Islam was coming to possess a symbolic presence on the continent it had not had prior to 1914.² While a far cry from the thoroughly Islamized Europe imagined by some, these changes were nonetheless suggestive of a more confessionally diverse society in which Islam had a place.

In the immediate postwar years, mosques and Islamic institutions became notable features of European cities. Urban centers like Sarajevo—now

incorporated into a new Yugoslav Serbian kingdom—and Sofia, as well as Woking outside London, already possessed functioning mosques by the end of the war. In Wünsdorf, the mosque constructed for POWs continued to be used, creating a small “Muslim village” just outside Berlin.³ Muslims had to wait until 1925 to worship in the German capital itself when a modest onion-domed mosque was erected in Berlin’s upscale Wilmersdorf neighborhood with the support of scholar Abdul Jabbar Kheri and Ahmadi missionaries based in Woking. After 1918, demands similarly increased for mosques in former imperial cities such as Vienna and Budapest. In France, which by 1924 had some 70,000 North Africans working in the country, the issue assumed particular urgency. Already by the final years of the war, proposals for an official mosque in Paris were back on the table. France had experience constructing Muslim environments in the colonies. During the war, administrators had experimented with similar urban projects in Marseille and Nogent-sur-Marne, transporting the colonial “Muslim city” to the metropole. In the immediate postwar period, however, Islam obtained a new status in the French capital. In 1922, the first stone was laid for a Grande Mosquée in the fifth arrondissement. Four years later, the mosque, accompanied by a Muslim Institute, was inaugurated in an official ceremony attended by President Gaston Doumergue and the Moroccan sultan, Yusef Ben Hassan. From its inception, the Paris Mosque was intended to serve as more than a purely religious site. The building reaffirmed Paris as an imperial city with a substantial Muslim empire, confirming the message to Muslims across the world that France was indeed a “friend” and benefactor of Islam. “The new mosque must be the symbol of a closer union between peoples with a common destiny” and a monument to “Franco-Muslim amity,” urged one journalist after observing the inauguration festivities.⁴ The links between the colonial empire and Islam in France were not difficult to discern. The presiding imams and muftis charged with running the mosque were all recruited from North Africa. The building itself was financed through the Algerian-based Société des Habous, giving the colonial administration a great deal of control over the establishment.⁵ As officials scrambled to keep pace with the influx of North African immigrants in the country, they readily borrowed from the colonial model, establishing an administrative apparatus to monitor incoming Muslims and provide needed social services. As in the colonies, Islam never simply designated a religious community. It was an instrument for governing a foreign population, one which the state played an important role in managing.⁶

Symbolic integration was not the only legacy. Between 1914 and 1918, Muslims came to Europe, either to serve on the front lines or to take up work as translators, religious authorities, and propagandists. In the preceding years, activists had made inroads organizing advocacy groups and civic associations intended to promote Muslim representation in the public

sphere. The influx of writers and intellectuals coupled with specific government policies adopted during the war expanded these networks. Muslims had at their disposal newspapers and political associations that sought to vocalize their opinions and address matters relevant to Muslims living on the continent. Henceforth, issues concerning Islamic religious practice and the defense of Muslim cultural values acquired a more pronounced presence in the European public sphere and intensified in the years after 1918. The career path of the Bosnian activist and writer Husein Hilmi Durić was a revealing indication of how Muslims were coming to operate in the interwar period. During the 1920s, Durić drew together Balkan and Turkish Muslims residing in the Hungarian capital, taking the title of High Mufti and heading the Budapest Autonomous Islamic Religious Community after 1931. The organization spearheaded an international campaign to collect funds for a mosque and a Muslim cultural center in the city, neither of which materialized in the end. Yet failure did not suggest apathy. As a spokesman for Hungary's Muslim citizenry, Durić strategically allied with the Hungarian National Front in the 1930s, pressing for greater representation and autonomy for Muslims in the country, a cause he championed until his death in 1941.⁷

The fact that Durić allied with Hungarian nationalists was a telling sign of the new political environment that Muslims confronted after the war. For much of the nineteenth century, Islam had routinely been entangled with questions of imperial rule and state-building. Goaded by fears of Pan-Islamic fellowship, statesmen had courted Muslim subjects, using integration and autonomy as a means of shoring up colonial loyalties. However, World War I brought with it a radical change in both the mental and geographic landscape of the Muslim world. Under the strains of war, the Ottoman Empire collapsed in 1918. The new Turkish Republic set up by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk grudgingly relinquished much of the old Ottoman Empire. Motivated by a nationalist-reformist agenda, Atatürk focused his attention on Anatolia and clamped down on the Islamic religious establishment that had propped up sultanic rule. In 1924, he sent the last Ottoman sultan, Abdulmejid II, into exile and formally abolished the position of Caliph. Across the Middle East, Ottoman territories in the Levant and Mesopotamia were broken up and parceled out among the European victors as protectorates. These changes fundamentally transformed the region, bringing into existence the modern Arab state system that continues to exist to this day.⁸ Muslims across the world mounted protests in support of the Caliphate at the war's conclusion, but the uproar failed to reverse the tide of history.⁹ The dream of a Muslim world united under one Caliph was a dead letter. Henceforth, religious association now had to compete with new forms of national association and identification promoted by governments.

The fragmentation of the Muslim world occurred in tandem with the collapse of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, creating a constellation of new nation-states across Central and Eastern Europe. Since 1878, newly emancipated Balkan nations had confronted challenges of how to integrate Muslim citizens into the cultural and political body of the nation. After 1918, such challenges became a broader European concern. Hubert, always an astute observer of the colonial situation, stated it best: it was not simply a matter of enlightening Muslim subjects anymore, but “adapting little by little *Islam Français* to the civilization of our country.”¹⁰ The writing was on the wall. In the past, the diverse and often baroque structure of imperial governments offered Muslims various channels to work through as they appealed to sovereigns, colonial administrators, and national parliaments in turn. Muslim subjects had fought for inclusion within diverse, multi-confessional imperial societies. After the war, they would have to interact with national governments foregrounding citizenship over dynastic loyalty and cultural assimilation over ethno-religious diversity. New circumstances entailed refining old talking points and rebranding messages as ideas of being a “Muslim power” now became a question of whether secular European nation-states could and would accommodate a seemingly foreign religious community at home. The rhetoric of inclusion and accommodation underwent a shift, eliciting a more sustained focus on national politics, civic participation, and representation at the local and national levels.

In some instances, Muslims were compelled to navigate political landscapes that bore little resemblance to the imperial politics of old. World War I had placed severe strains on the Tsarist Empire. Russian military officials were reluctant to send Muslims to the battlefield, feeling that exposure to Pan-Islamic enemy propaganda would encourage Pan-Turkic nationalism across Crimea and Central Asia. As German forces occupied parts of Eastern Europe, the government was forced to relocate entire populations into the interior, often inciting ethnic conflicts and eroding the state’s influence over native elites. Waning confidence in Tsar Nicholas and his ability to hold Russia’s vast empire together set the stage for an “imperial apocalypse,” in the words of one historian.¹¹ The radical Bolshevik regime that seized power in October 1917 was a different animal. An aggressively secular communist government committed to the world proletariat presumably had little affection or need for Islam. That said, the Bolshevik leadership was sensitive to the multiethnic makeup of the territories it still controlled. In November 1918, with Russia officially withdrawn from the war, Joseph Stalin proclaimed that the Bolshevik takeover had created “a new revolutionary front” running from the Western proletariat to the “oppressed peoples of the East” against global imperialism.¹² A handful of Muslim parties allied with the Marxists, albeit their appeals to religion and nationality over class solidarity remained

suspect. The Tatar party *Tangchylar* flirted with the left, while radical intellectuals in Kazan formed a Muslim Socialist Committee to liaise with the post-Tsarist state.¹³

The most prominent leader among the Kazan group was Mirsaid Sultan Galiev. An Azerbaijani journalist who had joined the Bolshevik Party just after the October Revolution, he would prove to be one of the new regime's most enthusiastic supporters, heading the Central Muslim Commissariat and putting his organizational skills to use.¹⁴ He and his associates promoted a distinct ideology aimed at Muslims in the Russian Empire: national communism. According to Hanafi Muzaffar, one of Galiev's right-hand men, an "alliance between the Russian proletariat and the Muslims" would deal a death blow to European imperialism. Islam and Communism were not opposed. "Like communism," Muzaffar maintained, "Islam rejects narrow nationalism. Islam is international and recognizes only brotherhood and the unity of all nations under the banner of Islam."¹⁵ Galiev was more strident. "All Muslim colonized people are proletarian peoples . . . the national liberation movement in Muslim countries has the character of a socialist revolution."¹⁶ In the coming years, a select group of Muslim elites took up the banner of "national communism," distilling class, nation, and religion into a single message compatible with Bolshevism's anti-capitalist and anti-colonial ideology. Despite their abhorrence for "bourgeois" nationalism, the Soviets pursued a nationality policy and carved up the former Tsarist Empire into newly minted Soviet republics that would attempt to manage ethnic differences with promises of autonomy and "affirmative action" style policies.¹⁷ Many traditionalists flatly opposed the regime and remained guarded against state intervention in Islamic religious and cultural affairs, sparking varying degrees of protest across Central Asia.¹⁸ The prospect of communism with an Islamic face was always tricky. Soviet authorities carefully monitored nationalist movements across the reconstituted Russian Empire to ensure that ethnic leaders were compliant with the directives handed down from Moscow. In 1923, Galiev himself ran afoul of the Bolsheviks and was expelled from the party on the grounds of encouraging Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic sympathies. Muslim elites were resigned to working within the structures of new republics like Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, engaging in a carefully choreographed *pas de deux* with local party officials to obtain guarantees of autonomy and neutrality in a society theoretically committed to modernization and proletarian liberation.

Those outside the Soviet Empire turned to the international community, believing that the League of Nations set up after the war could provide Muslim spokespeople with a forum for their views. In the last year of the war, colonial subjects eagerly anticipated having their grievances arbitrated in the international arena, in some cases advocating for complete national

independence. These aspirations were brusquely squashed when it became clear that the United States, let alone France and Britain, had no plans of addressing strictly “colonial questions.”¹⁹ Noting the cool response of leading world powers, the Indian jurist Sayyid Ameer Ali expressed doubts as to whether the League of Nations could, in fact, serve Muslim interests. His reservations did not prevent him from speaking before an international commission in 1919 on vital issues related to the Ottoman Caliphate and Muslim world opinion. As expected, his concerns were dismissed out of hand. The British philanthropist of Portuguese Jewish origin, Sir Basil Henriques, curtly informed him the future League of Nations had no interest in dealing with “religious” communities. It would only engage with “independent sovereign states.”²⁰ For intellectuals like Qidwai, this verdict was incomprehensible. Muslims did not think in terms of *nations* “in the plural,” he argued. Only “one nation existed all over the world,” and this was the *ummah*. Muslim universalism was the surest guarantee of international fraternity, in Qidwai’s estimation. Nations encouraged divisions, setting the stage for future conflicts that would ineluctably bring Europe to the brink of war again. “Those nations who are keen on a League of Nations should revert to Muhammad’s model,” he bluntly claimed.²¹ Stalwart Pan-Islamists like Qidwai were quickly losing the fight, though. Concepts of nationhood and national self-determination were becoming “axiomatic features” of the new world order, and Muslims could not ignore this reality.²² Rather than imperial integration, activists would have to employ the terms of nation and nationality in their struggle for recognition. All the same, this new mindset never precluded identifying with the broader Islamic world beyond the continent. Muslim activism remained characterized by multiple layers of identity and political activism, with participants engaging European actors and participating in a range of political causes that transcended specifically “Islamic” issues.²³

The 1920s and 1930s witnessed the expansion of a Muslim public and political sphere across Europe. It assumed varied forms, with the experience of Muslims in socialist states like Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union differing markedly from those in national republics and constitutional monarchies further west. Despite these differences, though, and despite the relatively small size of Muslim advocacy groups, it was evident that Muslims were carving out a place for themselves in the European political landscape as a minority group. The devastating impact of World War II and the resulting turn toward European decolonization in its wake would significantly alter and enhance what was already in place as Europe faced new waves of immigration and post-colonial resettlement after 1945. These trends remained consistent with former imperial trajectories, demonstrating the long shadow cast by European empire-building projects. Domestic labor demands compelled European nations to once again draw upon colonial manpower, sending unprecedented

numbers of North Africans and South Asians to the shores of Europe. Many of these immigrants would settle permanently in host countries.²⁴ Unable to recruit from a colonial labor force, West Germany invited “guest workers,” many of whom were Turks, to assist with post-war reconstruction projects. Although intended as temporary migrants, many remained, establishing a Turkish community in the country. Between 3.4 and 4 million Muslims reside in Germany today, with Islam standing as the third largest religious group next to Protestants and Catholics.²⁵

If imperial legacies have continued to influence migration patterns in postcolonial Europe, the experience of Muslims in countries has been shaped by traditions of church-state relations just as much as colonialism. Governments have wrestled with issues of how to recognize Muslim religious rights, whether Islamic schools and organizations should receive state funding, and what direction public policy should take toward Islam. No single solution exists. Responses have tended to be nation-specific. In Britain, state commitment to religious tolerance has allowed Muslim advocacy groups to push for accommodation within the framework of a “multicultural” and multi-confessional society. This approach differs markedly from French efforts to integrate Islam, where the state’s adhesion to republican secularism (*laïcité*) has inhibited the public recognition of “French Islam.” Despite the growing Muslim population in the country, Germany has yet to recognize Islam as a legally sanctioned “public entity” on par with other major religious communities, unlike Austria, where Islamic communities are recognized and protected under the state-promulgated “Islam law” (*Islamgesetz*).²⁶ The various forms of official recognition extended to Islam in European countries have set the parameters for Muslim political and social activism. European modernity may be “secular” in its orientation, but this does not entail that the state remains neutral or disinterested in religious affairs.²⁷ Secularism, in this context, does not simply boil down to an absence of religion in society or freedom of conscience. Nor does it map neatly onto dichotomies of “public” and “private” forms of behavior. It broaches critical questions of how religion is managed by the state and the regulation of religious freedom vis-à-vis civil rights and public recognition.²⁸

In various countries, community leaders have shown a willingness to work with and alongside the state, strengthening these ties through intermediary bodies. The Muslim Council of Britain, an umbrella organization bringing together mosques and community-based Muslim organizations across the United Kingdom, has been active in politics since its formation in 1998. The Conseil Français du Culte Musulman has fulfilled a similar role in France since 2003, although it has been less successful than independent civic organizations in constructing meaningful dialogues with the state and garnering support for community initiatives.²⁹ The challenges to forging broad

coalitions are many. Muslims are a minority religious group in Europe, but they are not homogenous. Ethnic and national differences are apparent as are sectarian rifts among different schools of Islamic thought, raising the age-old question of who speaks for Islam in Europe?³⁰ Assimilated elites, representatives of specific immigrant communities, and foreign-born religious authorities have all come forward as possible contenders. Given this heterogeneity, Muslim leaders in Europe have tended to focus on a range of key issues related to religious rites, education, dress, and gender relations in their campaigns, placing aspects of Muslim identity at the center of their platforms. They have endeavored to transcend ethnic and national differences through appeals to core Muslim values, engendering what Jørgen Nielsen has called a “search for [Muslim] specificity” in European societies.³¹ The “headscarf affair” that erupted in France in 1989 was one of the most intense examples of this style of political mobilization, with leaders rallying supporters to the defense of Muslim rights following the suspension of three girls from a public school for wearing the hijab.³² These engagements have conversely had an impact on understandings of what, in fact, constitutes “Islamic” identity and tradition. Appeals to Muslim cultural identity are never divorced from questions of integration, with many leaders emphasizing that Islam can be adapted to a European context.³³ National political organizations and advocacy groups have routinely functioned as “domestic organizations” with a home-grown leadership focused almost exclusively on national political agendas.³⁴ While leaders may make symbolic gestures of attachment to the larger Muslim world, they have cemented their status as national actors responsive to local constituents with specific grievances. “Muslim politics” have become part of European politics, a fact that politicians at the local and national levels have not ignored in recent years.

Do these changes suggest that we can speak of a “Muslim Europe” rather than simply “Islam in Europe”? It is difficult to say. The immigration experience and specific forms of political engagement have shaped a tradition of Muslim activism in Europe dating back to the nineteenth century. Central to this history has been the self-image of European culture and civilization itself, whether understood in religious or secular terms. Traditionally, pronouncements on Islamic religious life and values served to highlight the progressive features of European modernity, placing the two in opposition. Yet Islam and Europe have always been mutually constructed imaginaries.³⁵ In the past as today, Muslim activists have posed challenges to dominant ideas of “European” heritage and identity in their attempts to claim a place in the daily life of European nations. Poised between monolithic visions of European and Muslim selfhood, “Muslim Europe” occupies a third space that is neither one nor the other. As a concept, it has perennially been a “quintessential borderland,” to use the term proffered by Nezar Alsayyad some twenty

years ago.³⁶ The difference today is that the borderland is no longer relegated to the colonial periphery. It has moved from the margins to the center, eliciting reflections on how European states should manage religious life, the exercise and meaning of religious freedom in nominally secular societies, and how Europe is to make sense of its colonial past. These issues are distinct from more wide-ranging issues concerned with immigration and multiculturalism. Although Muslim integration often converges with questions of race and belonging, Islam in Europe has supposed a specific set of “problems” for states to deal with in the eyes of many middling and right-wing pundits. Can Muslims adapt to a secular culture? Can Islam be harmonized with liberal values? More importantly, in the wake of the War on Terror and the rise of radical Islamic movements across the globe, political elites began to once again see Islam as a foreign threat and potential fifth column, reformulating old fears of Pan-Islamic association touted by imperial officials and writers a century earlier. In 2001, the leader of the nativist British National Party, Nick Griffin, provoked controversy when alerting voters to the very real threat posed by Islamic extremism in a polarized world. “[Britain] does not have an Asian problem,” he remarked, “but a Muslim one.”³⁷

Islam as “problem” has remained a persistent theme within European mindsets. The visible symbols of Islamic integration have never failed to arouse underlying fears of national disintegration and perversion. Writing in the aftermath of World War II, the journalist Jean Couvreur wondered what the future held for the French capital. “Paris, with its 30,000 North Africans, its Muslim institute, its mosque, is it not an Islamic capital?” he asked.³⁸ Europe’s nationalist heritage has long rested upon mythologized notions of origin and cultural uniformity. Since 1945, the substantial growth of immigrant communities on the continent has exposed underlying tensions between particular understandings of national culture and memory and the collective experience of immigrant groups. Multiculturalists and national conservatives have continued to present the issue as one of “integration” or “assimilation,” but these approaches fail to understand the overlapping ties that immigrant communities typically embody. To be a Muslim is to identify with a cultural tradition and global community of believers as well as the national culture of host countries. The two are not mutually exclusive, a point which many Muslim activists of the nineteenth century attempted to argue.³⁹ As European societies contend with the pressures of globalization and the rise of identitarian political movements, it is evident that questions of national belonging and even what it means to be “European” are continuously evolving and never static.

Conservatives keen to rally voters to anti-immigration platforms continue to see Islam as antithetical to Western values, pegging Muslim activists as “Islamists” bent on destroying European civil society and culture. The

notion of an existential conflict between world civilizations has long roots, but it has largely been an ideological fiction.⁴⁰ The imperial contests and religious debates of the nineteenth century marked a transformative moment in Europe's relationship with the Muslim world, one that continues to influence discussions at present. Much like previous generations, foreign-born and European activists today persist in building coalitions and taking to the press in search of greater social recognition and acceptance. They appeal to notions of diversity and civil rights, equating accommodation with a more just and tolerant society. These aspirations are hardly new. The difference is that millions of Muslims today participate in European societies as neighbors, community organizers, and voters. They are *de facto* European citizens sensitive to the distinct forms of discrimination and Islamophobia that continue to inform ideas of European belonging.⁴¹ While the age of the European colonial empire may be finished, the question of whether a "Muslim Europe" can exist and what it will look like remains ongoing.

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ANOM: Archives Nationales d’Outre-Mer (Aix-en-Provence, France)

ANT: Archives Nationales de Tunisie (Tunis, Tunisia)

BL, EUR/Mss: British Library, European Manuscripts (London, UK)

BNA: British National Archives (Kew, UK)

CADN: Centre des Archives Diplomatiques (Nantes, France)

IOR: India Office Records (London, UK)

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Reichsgesetzblatt für die reichsrate vertretenen Königreiche und Länder
Revue de l'Islam
Revue d'Orient
Revue du Monde Musulman
Salzburger Wacht
Tages-Blatt (Linz)
Tages-Post
The Churchman
The Crescent
The Derby Mercury
The Dundee Courier
The Fortnightly Review
The Guardian
The Hampshire Advertiser
The Ipswich Journal
The Islamic Review
The Leeds Mercury
The Morning Post
The Moslem Chronicle and Muhammadan Observer
The Moslem World
The Near East
The Newcastle Courant
The Nineteenth Century

The Nottingham Guardian
The Review of Reviews
The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent
The Standard
The Times
The Times of Africa and Oriental Review
Turquie Contemporaine
Ungarische Revue
Vorarlberger Volksblatt
Welt Blatt
Western Daily Press
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