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Old Hostilities, New Propaganda: A Comparative Account of Public Opinion during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911[1]

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses public opinion and propaganda during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911 in the Ottoman Empire and Italy in a comparative perspective through visual and textual materials. An examination of major themes and channels of war propaganda in both countries shows how such propaganda often developed in response to that of the adversary. A study of the two cases together also gives us a better understanding of how and why medieval hostilities between the two cultures were brought forward for the purposes of propaganda. The article draws attention to the global socio-political context of the war, the role of international law, and specific domestic dynamics of the belligerent countries and investigates the reasons for the participation of a wider public in the war debate.

Introduction

This article focuses on the important role of public opinion and propaganda during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911. In doing so, it discusses the wider socio-political context with an emphasis on the dynamics that contributed to greater civilian participation in the war effort. Although a fair number of studies have drawn attention to the lively public opinion in both countries during the war, most of them focus on only one belligerent and do not attempt to put the two cases into dialogue. However, it will be demonstrated that the propaganda efforts of the opposing camps often developed in response to each other. In addition, the involvement of a wider public in the unfolding of events during the war was a result of a particular context in which debates over international law and discourses of colonial expansion played significant roles. Even though the battles between the Ottoman and Italian forces were mostly limited to the coastal areas of Tripoli and Cyrenaica, an imaginary "home front" of the war included a wider geography involving Italo-Americans, the Muslim populations of India, Egypt, South Africa, and other societies, and the public opinion of different European countries. While appealing to international public sentiment proved important for the war effort in both countries, their domestic social and political crises greatly contributed to the centrality of propaganda and public opinion.

Throughout the article, I use visual and textual materials to examine some major themes and channels of war propaganda in both countries. The Italian colonial discourse and propaganda that were utilized

[1] I would like to thank Daniela L. Caglioti for her invaluable comments on the drafts. I am also thankful to Ali Aydın Karamustafa for linguistic revisions which improved the quality of the text.

to legitimize the war in Tripoli laid special emphasis on the concept of the "civilizing mission", East-West dichotomies, and stereotypes regarding local communities. Although the historiography has focused on the domestic political and social conditions that contributed to the rise of these discourses, the impact of international legitimacy and war atrocities has often remained overlooked. On the Ottoman side of the story, while it is true that Tripoli was geopolitically important in the Mediterranean in addition to its symbolic value for the continuity of Turkish-Arab cooperation and Muslim solidarity, the political rivalry within the Ottoman government had a decisive role in the empire's cultural mobilization for the war. The article begins with the context of the war before attending to debates about the Italian *casus belli*, war atrocities and international law as well as their respective roles in public opinion. Next, the reasons for the revival of ancient and medieval hostilities and religious themes are studied, while the final part of the article evaluates the historiography of the Italo-Turkish War and suggests a bottom-up perspective.

2. Why Appeal to Public Opinion? The Context of 1911

In 1911, the region that is known today as Libya was composed of three provinces: Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan. It was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire in 1551 and as in other distant *eyalet*s, Ottoman authority rested on local rulers. In the case of Tripolitania, these came from the *Karamanlı* family.[2] In 1835, the Ottoman government sent a military governor from Istanbul to bring the region under direct control of the center after the French occupation of Algeria in 1830. With the centralizing reforms of the Ottoman Tanzimat (*Reorganization*) from 1839 to 1876, Tripolitania and Fezzan were defined as provinces (*vilayet*), further attaching them to the government, while Cyrenaica was defined a semi-autonomous district (*sancak*). Tripolitania, already a key point along the trade routes (transporting the slaves) connecting the African hinterland to the coast, gained further strategical importance as a channel providing access to Central and Saharan Africa due to the pan-Islamic policies of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909). The Senussi, a commercial organization as much as a religious one, also grew powerful owing to this trade route. The order was established in the second half of the 19th century at the time of the Ottoman centralization and was highly respected by the local tribes of the region. The relationship between the Ottoman central government and the Senussi order, as defined by Minawi, "was not typical of the usual relationship between an imperial state and local rulers along its frontier," it was more "cooperative" and "complementary".[3] Even though the Senussi did not approve of Ottoman secular ideas of the Young Turks, the ties between the government and the order were re-established after the revolution.[4] The leadership of the order had collaborated on different occasions with the Ottomans to resist further French colonial penetration into Equatorial Africa.[5]

Despite several attempts to modernize schooling, communication, and other public investments, the Ottoman reform program was limited by the region's low tax yields because of the difficulties of

[2] On the history of Tripolitania and its administration before 1911, see Ali Abdullatif Ahmida, *The Making of Modern Libya: State Formation, Colonization, and Resistance, 1830-1932* (State University of New York Press, 1994); Rachel Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism: The Ottoman Involvement in Libya during the War with Italy (1911-1919)* (Berlin: K. Schwarz, 1987); Lisa Anderson, "Nineteenth-Century Reform in Ottoman Libya," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 3 (August 1984): 325–48, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800028208; Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830-1980* (Princeton University Press, 2014); Mostafa Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[3] Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa*, 36.

[4] During this period of change, some ruling elites were alienated from the new power structure who later sought for cooperation with the Italians such as the Muntasırs. Lisa Anderson, *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya, 1830-1980*, 126.

[5] Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism*, 6–7.

taxing the nomadic and semi-nomadic population in the region, and the drought-prone climate which rendered agriculture impossible. For the Ottomans, Libya had not only a significant geopolitical position but also symbolic value. It was the only Muslim land in North Africa that remained independent, therefore its loss to a Christian power would increase not only the Christian-European activity in Africa but also the opposition against the Ottomans in the whole Arab world.[6]

Italian peaceful penetration into Libya had begun with the investments and loan activities of Banco di Roma since 1907.[7] According to Bosworth, the bank was "a veritable agent, or even propellant, of Italian imperialism, with major interests in Libya and Egypt, and with ambitions to secure more in Asia Minor."[8] The bank was largely financed by the Vatican and the Italian government considered this collaboration with the Holy See vital for the Italian political and financial influence in the Ottoman Empire.[9] The Ottoman Empire was aware of the colonial character of this collaboration and was in a constant struggle with the Italian authorities to limit their financial and cultural involvement without provoking a strong reaction. As summarized by Conte, "the Italian presence was tolerated – if not properly encouraged – by the Ottomans in areas where German and French power was becoming an alarming problem. However, the moment it acted as a hegemonic power in a given area, such as Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, was regarded with suspect."[10] One of the main aims of the bank was to guarantee the concessions for the search for minerals (phosphates and sulfur) in Tripoli, however, the Ottoman government would attempt to block these attempts in every possible way,[11] leading further to the emergence of a perception of discrimination in Italian public opinion.[12]

Cultural activities, schools, and charity establishments mainly intended for the non-Muslim community constituted other tools with which Italy began to establish a colonial presence in the early 1900s.[13] According to Simon, at that time there were about one thousand Italian citizens of which many were the Jews who had lived there for generations, in addition to some Italian workers who had a lower status compared to the European workers in Tripoli.[14]

For Italy, the war and the will to colonize an African territory were justified by reasons beyond those formally announced. Expansion in Africa and in the eastern Mediterranean was considered necessary to achieve great power status. The French invasion of Tunis in 1881 and the British invasion of Egypt in 1882 made the Tripoli issue urgent for Italy, as it feared losing it to another great power. The "Moroccan Crisis" which began with the arrival of the German gunboat Panther to Agadir on July 1,

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[6] Stefan Hock, "'Waking Us from This Endless Slumber': The Ottoman–Italian War and North Africa in the Ottoman Twentieth Century:," *War in History*, December 11, 2017, 206–7, https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344517706729.
[7] On the activities of the Banco di Roma from an Ottoman perspective, see Özcan Mert, "Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre Banco di Roma'nın Trablusgarb'daki Faaliyetleri," *Belleten*, no. 200 (1987): 829–48.
[8] B.J.B. Bosworth, "Italy and the End of the Ottoman Empire," in *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Marian Kent (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 54.
[9] See, Giampaolo Conte, "Unholy Alliances: Disentangling the Economic Relations between Italy, the Holy See and the Ottoman Empire," *The International History Review* 43, no. 5 (Eylül 2021): 1142–59, https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2020.1711799; Giampaolo Conte, "National Struggle in Foreign Market: Banco Di Roma and Società Commerciale d'Oriente in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Eurasian Studies*, no. 14 (2016): 179–204.
[10] Conte, "National Struggle in Foreign Market: Banco Di Roma and Società Commerciale d'Oriente in the Late Ottoman Empire," 181.
[11] See, Conte, "National Struggle in Foreign Market: Banco Di Roma and Società Commerciale d'Oriente in the Late Ottoman Empire."
[12] See, Renato Mori, "La penetrazione pacifica italiana in Libia dal 1907 al 1911 e il Banco di Roma," *Rivista di Studi Politici Internazionali* 24, no. 1 (1957): 102–18.
[13] For the Italian schools and cultural penetration into Tripolitania and Ottoman resistance to it, see Emine O. Evered, *Empire and Education Under the Ottomans: Politics, Reform and Resistance from the Tanzimat to the Young Turks* (I.B.Tauris, 2012), 174–94.
[14] Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism*, 50.

1911 with the pretext of protecting German interests in Morocco constituted the decisive moment for the declaration of war by the Italian government as it wanted to act before the settlement of the crisis.[15]

Italy decided to act not only to restore its international image after its 1896 defeat in Ethiopia and gain control of a territory in Africa, but also to use the phenomenon of mass migration in the service of colonial expansion. Using a colonial war to channel public attention away from poverty and the divisions between North and South which had persisted since Italian unification in 1861 would also be useful in domestic politics.[16] Thus, in search of a new destination for Italian workers and a united society, the Italian government saw the war as an opportunity to realize multiple aims at once.[17] As discussed by Proglio, the war aided in the creation of a national identity of *Italianità* through myths and memories of the past by providing a cultural background for the construction of the "other" and the "self."[18]

The success of the pro-war political position owed much to the political rivalry in Italy. In his attempt to reconcile the different needs of a polarized society, the Prime Minister Giovanni Giolitti, although himself a liberal and not a strong advocate of war, opted for a colonial enterprise as part of an uneasy political calculation aiming to consolidate the support of the international and domestic public. Domestically, where he had already undertaken steps to secure the support of the socialists through the granting of voting rights for men and the nationalization of social security, one of his aims was to also gain the support of the Catholics and other conservatives.[19] While there were anti-war voices among the socialists and anarchists, an unusual nationalist and socialist rhetoric came together to emphasize the issue of the widespread migration of Italian workers and finding new colonies as a solution to the migration problem.[20] The Italian migratory flow was towards Europe and the Americas but also the Ottoman Empire, where most Italians worked in the modernization of infrastructure, especially railway construction.

The political positioning of the Catholic Church and its multi-faceted participation to the war effort contributed greatly to the popularity of the war among the masses.[21] Banco di Roma, the source of soft power behind Italy's colonial penetration, had a great share in creating a pro-war public opinion.[22] The Catholic Church also resented the Young Turks due to the latter's strong ties to Freemasonry.[23] Sermons fomenting hostility toward Muslims or symbolic acts such as the blessing of Italian soldiers

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[15] Bosworth, "Italy and the End of the Ottoman Empire," 56; William C. Askew, *Europe and Italy's Acquisition of Libya, 1911-1912* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1942), 46–48.
[16] On the dynamics of the pro-war political context, see Nicola Labanca, *La Guerra Italiana per la Libia: 1911-1931* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2012), 27–52. For a synthetic summary of the Italian historiography on the Italo-Turkish War, see Gabriele Proglio, *Libia 1911-1912. Immaginari Coloniali e Italianità* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2016), 5–7.
[17] While the war propaganda emphasized colonialism as a solution to the migration problem, the idea behind this propaganda was "to make migration profitable" rather than solving it. I owe this explanation to Caglioti.
[18] Proglio, *Libia 1911-1912. Immaginari Coloniali e Italianità*.
[19] Fabio L. Grassi, "Niçin Trablusgarp? İtalyan Çıkarması Ardındaki Siyaset ve Kültür," in *Osmanlı Devleti'nin Dağılma Sürecinde Trablusgarp ve Balkan Savaşları 16-18 Mayıs 2011 İzmir, Bildiriler*, ed. Mehmet Ersan and Nuri Karakaş (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2013), 40–41; Labanca, *La guerra italiana per la Libia*, 45–46. Re also points out the role of the war in silencing the Italian suffrage and women's movements, see Lucia Re, "Italians and the Invention of Race: The Poetics and Politics of Difference in the Struggle over Libya, 1890-1913," *California Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010), https://doi.org/10.5070/C311008862.
[20] Jonathan McCollum, "Reimagining Mediterranean Spaces: Libya and the Italo-Turkish War, 1911-1912," *Diacronie. Studi Di Storia Contemporanea*, no. N° 23, 3 (October 29, 2015): 6–7, https://doi.org/10.4000/diacronie.2356.
[21] Labanca, *La guerra italiana per la Libia*, 86.
[22] Marcella Pincherle, "La preparazione dell'opinione pubblica all'impresa di Libia," *Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento* 3, no. LVI (1969): 450.
[23] Grassi, "Niçin Trablusgarp? İtalyan Çıkarması Ardındaki Siyaset ve Kültür," 43.

by the Pope to "replace the Crescent with the Cross" in Libya were important contributions to a public opinion campaign to describe a new holy war against Islam.[24]

At the time of the Italian ultimatum which launched the war in September 1911, the Ottoman government was in deep political turmoil. With the Young Turk political party in power, its leading faction, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), was challenged by several opponents both from conservative and the liberal circles. Although of different political orientations, these opponents were united in their resentment for the CUP's mode of politics which they identified with the interventions and overbearing influence of the military and with the ongoing "secret society" character of the ruling faction which prioritized the decisions of its leaders over the parliamentary process.[25] Domestic political crisis had reached a peak with the Albanian insurgence in 1910, the revolts in Montenegro and Kosovo targeting the CUP's centralization policies, and the revolt of Imam Yahya in Yemen; meanwhile, the empire's political dissolution continued with Austria-Hungary's formal annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (occupied in 1876), Bulgaria's declaration of official independence, and Crete's unification with Greece.[26] Domestic public opinion was successfully harnessed for a boycott against Austria-Hungary in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but the Ottoman government was unable to garner any diplomatic assistance from either Britain or France during these crises.[27]

What is often overlooked in the Ottoman historiography regarding the public opinion during the Italo-Turkish War is this specific context of political turmoil.[28] It was in these circumstances that the CUP managed to channel attention to the war by celebrating the Unionist military men who volunteered to fight in Tripolitania under the leadership of Major Enver Bey (these included the young Mustafa Kemal, the founding father of contemporary Turkey). This move emphasized the CUP as the sole site of resistance to Italian aggression, chiefly because the mobilization of the volunteers owed much to the Unionists' powerful military network. Despite the unconvincing Italian claims seeking to legitimize the war and the later emergence of the problem of war atrocities, it was the Unionists who managed to convince the public (and perhaps first themselves) that the solution to the Ottoman downfall lay in military action rather than diplomatic appeal.[29] In this sense, the Italian ultimatum was timely validation of their ideas and a test of their international appeal.

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[24] Simon, *Libya between Ottomanism and Nationalism*, 87; Roberta Viola, "La Guerra di Libia nella percezione dell'opinione pubblica italiana," in *Le cinque dita del sultano: Turchi, Armeni, Arabi, Greci ed Ebrei nel continente mediterraneo del '900*, ed. Stefano Trinchese (L'Aquila: Textus, 2005), 46.

[25] Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 4rd edition (London, New York: I.B.Tauris, 2017), 99–100.

[26] Zürcher, 101–2.

[27] On the boycott movements and nationalism of the CUP, see Doğan Y. Çetinkaya, *The Young Turks and the Boycott Movement: Nationalism, Protest and the Working Classes in the Formation of Modern Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

[28] Ulucutsoy's study constitutes an exception to this point. He discusses the political rivalry through the propaganda materials published by the CUP organs in his dissertation on war and propaganda in the late Ottoman period, see Hasan Ulucutsoy, "Türk Savaş Edebiyatı ve Propaganda 1828-1912" (Ph.D. Thesis, Istanbul, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2019).

[29] Here I follow Aksakal's argument about public opinion in the Ottoman Empire prior to the First World War. He demonstrates that the Ottoman entry into the war was not only the result of a top-down political decision taken by a few Unionists but also the consequence of pro-war public opinion which had formed during the Tripoli and Balkan Wars and the public's conviction that it was not international law and diplomacy but war which could save the nation. The same was valid for the 1914 Ottoman declaration of jihad, which had roots in the public sentiments desiring revenge for the wars immediately preceding the First World War, see Mustafa Aksakal, "'Holy War Made in Germany'? Ottoman Origins of the 1914 Jihad," *War in History* 18, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 184–99, https://doi.org/10.1177/0968344510393596; Mustafa Aksakal, "Not 'by Those Old Books of International Law, but Only by War': Ottoman Intellectuals on the Eve of the Great War," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 15, no. 3 (September 1, 2004): 507–44, https://doi.org/10.1080/09592290490498884; Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War*, Cambridge Military Histories (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

3. The Ultimatum, and the Public Debates Regarding International Law

In September 1911, Italy issued an ultimatum to the Ottoman Empire stating that the Italians and Italian interests in the regions of Tripoli and Cyrenaica were under threat.[30] The ultimatum highlighted "the state of disorder and neglect in which Tripoli and Cyrenaica are left by Turkey" and that "these regions should be allowed to enjoy the same progress as that attained by other parts of Northern Africa." This progress was due to the "general exigencies of civilization" by virtue of geographical vicinity of the region to Italy. The ultimatum, with its language and the manner in which it was imposed, left no room for negotiation. Yet, the Ottoman government responded with a moderate reply with an expectation of intervention by other great powers. The official reply stressed the fact that the "constitutional Ottoman government" (*hükûmet-i meşrûtî-i Osmânî*) could not be held responsible for the mistakes of the old regime (referring to the reign of Abdülhamid II, 1876-1909, dethroned by the Young Turks), in response to the Italian claims of Ottoman neglect regarding the underdevelopment of the region. The reply included an invitation to the Italian authorities to discuss the conditions regarding Italian interests and their safety.[31] However, the occupation was launched immediately without regard for the Ottoman response.

Although the ultimatum and the Ottoman reply to it do not fully elucidate the reasons of war, they offer clues about the discourses that would be utilized throughout the war in both countries. Indeed, because of its resonance in the international sphere, Italian propaganda retained the civilization discourse (more than that of the threat to Italian interests), while the Ottoman public opinion campaign underlined upholding of international law and the lack of European support with an emphasis on the unconvincing *casus belli* of the Italian ultimatum.[32]

After the Revolution of 1908, the Young Turks believed that the declaration of a constitution and establishment of a parliament would put an end to both separatist-nationalist movements as well as European "humanitarian interventions" in Ottoman affairs in the name of the law. The classical colonial discourse on "lawlessness," "backwardness," and "barbarity" in the Italian ultimatum led to a disenchantment in Ottoman politics regarding the European order and the discourses therein on law and civilization. In the same vein, the Young Turks expected greater international support of the Ottoman cause in 1911 based on the sympathy that their Revolution had gained worldwide, but the pre-1914 politics of interstate alliances precluded most powers from supporting the Ottoman defense apart from modest humanitarian support provided mostly by France and Germany.[33] As a consequence, the consensus among the Young Turks shifted to the idea that European order was a "Christian order," and that the Ottoman Empire was still in the periphery of Western power despite the Revolution.[34]

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[30] Text available in English at: "Ultimatum From Italy to Turkey Regarding Tripoli" *The American Journal of International Law* 6, no. 1 (1912): 11–12.

[31] BOA (Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri) HR. SYS, 1551/1, 2, *Cânib-i Bâb-ı Âli'den 29 Eylül 1911 tarihiyle İtalya sefâretine irsâl olunan cevabî notanın tercümesidir in* Uğur Ünal and Kemal Gurulkan, eds., *Osmanlı belgelerinde Trablusgarb*, Yayın / Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı 125 (İstanbul: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 2013), 476–77.

[32] A detailed analysis of the Ottoman diplomatic efforts and appeal to international law, see Jonathan McCollum, "The Anti-Colonial Empire: Ottoman Mobilization and Resistance in the Italo-Turkish War, 1911-1912" (Los Angeles, University of California, LA, 2018), 23–54.

[33] The Ottoman humanitarian missions had to carry the neutral powers' flags, McCollum, 84.

[34] This strengthened the emphasis on jihad in the following years, see Aksakal, "'Holy War Made in Germany'?," 194–95. The discourse of crusades against Islam grew stronger with the outbreak of the Balkan Wars. Enver Bey, the commander of the forces in Tripolitania, following the news about the Balkan Wars while he was still in Tripolitania wrote in his diary: "Gehaltvolle Predigten sind in den Zeitungen zu lesen! So soll also dieser Krieg ein Kreuzzug des 20. Jahrhunderts gegen den Islam sein!" Enver Pascha, *Um Tripolis* (München: Hugo Bruckmann Verlag, 1918), 95.

Both sides, Italy to legitimize the war and the Ottoman Empire to legitimize the defense, mobilized a lively public opinion to gather international and domestic support for their causes. It was an "opportunity" for both governments to manifest their power beyond their borders and test their alliances. On such an occasion, international law played a significant role. Initially, the Ottoman government appealed to British intervention and arbitration to stop the Italian aggression. As a second measure, the grand vizier Sait Paşa requested the mediation of the Triple Alliance between Italy and the Ottoman Empire.[35] None of the great powers condemned the Italian declaration of war. The government soon realized that it was alone in the legal realm, yet the Ottoman-Italian case opened a lively debate about the implications of international law. Indeed, the Ottoman government had a good number of sympathizers among European statesmen and/or the jurists who took up the debate in order to study the "new order" and "conduct of war" in the light of recent conventions on peace. As a matter of fact, the timing of the war corresponded to the peak moment of discourses on "humanizing and civilizing" war and the application of international law during the conflicts.[36]

The advocates of the Ottoman cause discussed the arbitration debate through the publication of volumes such as that of the British newspaper editor William Stead, in which he stressed the duty of humanity to make the world hear Ottoman cries of appeal to The Hague.[37] At the time, as discussed by Bernstorff, the editors of the American Journal of International Law, as prominent names in international legal pacifism, intervened on the topic in three separate issues and concluded that it would be proper for Italy to use the means of arbitration in line with the Hague Convention. However, the jurists refrained from describing the Italian war as illegal.[38] What is more interesting is that while the European governments did not intervene on behalf of the Ottomans, they did not fully support the Italian case either. In this sense, Bernstorff explains the peculiarity of the Italo-Turkish War:

> "What made this war problematic in the eyes of the other European powers was the fact that it led to an aggrandizement of Italian territory at the expense of the Ottoman Empire without any prior collective approval or mediation by the great European powers. Critical reactions among liberal Western elites and public opinion regarding the Italian aggression also show a tendency for unilateral wars of conquest, at least morally, to become more difficult to justify in the more liberally minded Western public, even if they took place outside the core."[39]

The Italian response to the "illegitimacy" of the war was to carry the discourse to another level in the realm of public opinion, advocating for the application of the rules for colonial wars given that international law could be applied only for "interstate" conflicts (i.e. between two sovereign states) and the Ottoman Empire was not an equal state of a "fully civilized" character.[40] I argue that it was

[35] Feroz Ahmad, *İttihat ve Terakki 1908-1914* (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1999), 122–23. On the official appeals of the Ottoman Empire to international law during the war, see Mustafa Aksakal and Aimee Genell, "Salvation through War? The Ottoman Search for Sovereignty in 1914," in *The Justification of War and International Order: From Past to Present*, The History and Theory of International Law (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 212–14.
[36] As discussed by Caglioti, a series of conferences on the conduct of war, with the last one being the Second Hague Peace Conference of 1907, shared the role of creating "a new, international, post-Vienna order with a language impregnated with law, rights and humanity." See, Daniela L. Caglioti, *War and Citizenship: Enemy Aliens and National Belonging from the French Revolution to the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 63. Caglioti also asserts that neither Italy nor the Ottoman Empire had ratified the 1907 Convention despite the fact that they often referred to it in their claims of violation of the international law, Caglioti, 64.
[37] William T. Stead, *Tripoli and the Treaties, Britain's Duty in this War: A Plain Statement of Facts for the Man in the Street* (London: Stead's Publishing House, 1911), 39. McCollum, "The Anti-Colonial Empire," 44.
[38] Jochen von Bernstorff, "The Use of Force in International Law before World War I: On Imperial Ordering and the Ontology of the Nation-State," *European Journal of International Law* 29, no. 1 (May 8, 2018): 253, https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chy010.
[39] von Bernstorff, 254.
[40] von Bernstorff, 253–54.

this aspect of the war that shaped the public debate for its duration. As a result, while Italian propaganda used references to Roman history, myths about the region and the locals, and religious differences in an effort to prove the "colonial" nature of war and the necessities of a "civilizing mission" in the arena of international public opinion, the Ottomans attempted to discredit such an image of a colony.

The international law and public opinion campaigns took on a new form in the course of the war after the harsh Italian response to the surprise attack planned by the Ottoman and Arab forces in the oasis Shar al-Shatt on 23 October in which hundreds of Italian soldiers were killed. On 31 October 1911, an article titled, "Arabs Slaughtered by Italian Troops: Terrible Retribution for Tripoli Uprising, Many Women Among the Slain" appeared in the New York Times.[41] The Italian retribution for the massacre in Shar al-Shatt was described as "indiscriminate slaughter" of the local population. The British cables, especially the ones published in the Daily Mirror, carried the photos of atrocities on its front pages under the headline "Photographic Proof of Italian Barbarity in Tripoli: Native Family Slaughtered in an Arab Village" and an additional note to the graphic image: "It is not a pleasant picture, but we consider it our duty to publish it in the interests of humanity."[42] Arab children and women accompanied by Italian soldiers while the bodies of their husbands and fathers lay on the ground appeared on the pages of the Daily Mirror. The war correspondent, Francis McCullagh, published photos of atrocities and described terrifying episodes about the killing of Arab civilians in his dispatches.[43] Some of these articles are also available in the Ottoman archives as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Ottoman embassies abroad, had them translated and circulated to prove that the Italians were conducting a "barbarian war".[44]

The bombings of the Ottoman Red Crescent units in Aziziyah during the Italian air bombardment constituted another aspect of war atrocities that was discussed in the public with reference to international law.[45] The use of poisonous and asphyxiating gases and exploding projectiles by Italy – prohibited in the Hague Conventions – was decried by the Ottoman government in an official protest to the Foreign Ministry of the Netherlands, but went ignored and only elicited a reply stating that the Ottomans had to address all the signatories of the Hague Conventions.[46] As the official doors had been closed to them, the Ottoman and Muslim press put the themes and narratives of victimhood at the center of their propaganda against Italy.

4. Hostilities and Stereotypes in the Framework of War Propaganda

Italian colonial discourse had developed well before 1911.[47] However, the justification of the war in Libya, made with the aim of influencing not only Italian but also European and American public

[41] "Arabs Slaughtered by Italian Troops," 1911, October 1. New York Times (October 31, 1911): 1. Discussed in, Giorgio Bertellini, "Dramatizing the Italian-Turkish War (1911–12): Reports of Atrocities, Newsreels, and Epic Films in Italy and the USA," *Early Popular Visual Culture* 14 (April 2, 2016): 134, https://doi.org/10.1080/17460654.2016.1169033.
[42] "Photographic Proof of Italian Barbarity in Tripoli: Native Family Slaughtered in an Arab Village," Daily Mirror, November 4, 1911.
[43] Later published as a book, Francis McCullagh, *Italy's War for a Desert, Being Some Experiences of a War-Correspondent with the Italians in Tripoli* (London: Herbert and Daniel, 1912).
[44] Ünal and Gurulkan, *Osmanlı belgelerinde Trablusgarb*, 493–96.
[45] McCollum, "The Anti-Colonial Empire," 45–46.
[46] Aksakal and Genell, "Salvation through War? The Ottoman Search for Sovereignty in 1914," 213.
[47] De Napoli asserts that the legal justification of colonialism through an emphasis on Roman civilization and the exportation of civilization and law to the colonies through the "civilizing mission" were expressed since the 1880s in the Italian juridical thought. In that view, the indigenous populations of the colonies were considered incapable of creating a

opinion, as well as the rejection of all claims regarding Italian atrocities, added fresh momentum to the colonial discourse in the country. A burst of propaganda activity found analogies for the war in ancient hostilities between the Turks and Italians and leaned on a general Orientalist treatment of East and West dichotomies expressed in religious and cultural terms. References to classical literature and historical conflicts such as the Rome's war against Carthage or the Crusade expeditions were abundant. The victory of the Holy League over the Ottomans at the Battle of Lepanto (1571) was another theme of the revivalist propaganda. As discussed by Guidetti, the year 1911 would be the 340th anniversary of Lepanto – an anniversary to be marked to boost the morale of the army and the public. In this context, the Ottoman banners that were captured at Lepanto and kept in different locations had gained public interest.[48]

As described by Roberta Viola, "il tema del ritorno" became common in the press and in literary works that defended the idea of Italy's historical link with the Mediterranean, in reference both to the Roman Empire with its notion of "Mare Nostrum" as well as to the late Medieval and Renaissance-era Italian Maritime Republics and their control of the Mediterranean.[49] Libya was imagined as Italy's fourth shore ("la quarta sponda"). The channels for such propaganda were the Italian interventionist press and the literary and journalistic activities of Italian authors including renowned figures such as the journalist Enrico Corradini and the poets Gabriele D'Annunzio and Giovanni Pascoli.

Enrico Corradini's *L'Ora di Tripoli*, the collected volume of his writings, speeches, and travel notes in Africa published in September 1911, constitutes a good example of the discourses that prepared the Italian public for the war.[50] According to Corradini, Tripoli was the only available ex-Roman territory in North Africa after the British and French colonial occupations in the region. He emphasized the Roman past to create the necessary civilizational link between Italy and Libya and to suggest the sense of historical continuity created by this colonial enterprise. The geographical proximity would ease the migration of Italian workers to the new colony, and an Italian success in the Mediterranean would elevate the reputation of Italian citizens elsewhere.

Corradini's opinions about the Turks and Arabs and the government of the Ottoman Empire represent the classical colonialist mindset accompanied by a racist discourse. Yet, his analysis of political conditions needs to be stressed as it concerns his views of the Ottoman Empire as well. According to him, the occupation of Tripoli would not cause any problems in the international area since the region was neither a nation nor even a civilization. For him, the Young Turks were not to be taken seriously as they were *un errore storico* (an historical error) and the Constitutional Revolution of 1908 only a weak attempt to revive "a dead or almost dead" empire.[51] The local Arab population awaited a savior to liberate them from the Turkish yoke, whose negligence had created the primitive conditions in Tripoli, although the potential richness of the land made investment in the region worthwhile. Turkish domination was thus the real reason for the spoiled state of the land which had been left uncultivated and abandoned and which Italian hands could revive. His travel notes also depict the backwardness

legal system on their own. See, Olindo De Napoli, "Race and Empire: The Legitimation of Italian Colonialism in Juridical Thought," *The Journal of Modern History* 85, no. 4 (2013): 801–32, https://doi.org/10.1086/672530.

[48] See Mattia Guidetti, *Trofei turcheschi nelle Marche. Circolazione e ricezione di oggetti ottomani nella Marca Pontificia, 1684-1723* (Roma: Viella, 2022).
[49] Viola, "La Guerra di Libia nella percezione dell'opinione pubblica italiana," 51.
[50] A summary and excerpts available in Isabella Nardi and Sandro Gentili, eds., *La grande illusione: opinione pubblica e mass media al tempo della Guerra di Libia* (Perugia: Morlacchi Editore, 2009), 111–50.
[51] Cited in, Nardi and Gentili, 119.

of the region with special emphasis on the incapacity of the locals and the Turkish government to invest and modernize its infrastructure.

Although from a different background than that of Corradini, the socialist poet Giovanni Pascoli embraced the colonial enterprise with his speech in Teatro di Barga on 26 November 1911 known as "La grande proletaria si è mossa" (The great proletarian, She has risen!).[52] In his talk, he defended the colonial expansion of Italy for the prestige of the country and Italian workers across the world. They were paid less and working inferior jobs under grueling conditions. In the United States, they were even treated "like the Negroes" (*come i negri*), "outlawed and dehumanized" (*fuori della legge e della umanità*) and "lynched."[53] Being an Italian was associated with the Camorra, illiteracy, or past defeats such as the unsuccessful colonial war in Ethiopia. He stressed Italy's good intentions to share the "duty of humanizing and civilizing" other populations. His talk included responses to the claims of atrocities, for which he harshly criticized the foreign press and defied all the accusations by saying that the Italian strategy was more of a defensive e one rather than an offensive one.

What popularized the war further in both the international and domestic arenas was the widespread newsreel and feature-length film production that took place both in Italy and elsewhere.[54] Cinema and newsreels demonstrated the advanced modern technology of the Italians such as the conduct of aeroplane warfare in contrast to the old and under-developed Ottoman Empire while also honoring the 50th anniversary of Risorgimento (Unification of Italy).[55] Banco di Roma also financed the Rome-based film company La Cines, through which the war and its propaganda was brought to cinema halls.[56] While in Italy the medieval theme of *la minaccia turca* (the Turkish threat) was revitalized by the year 1910 in movies based on classical literature about the Crusades, the Battle of Lepanto, and the theme of "Reconquista" – the reconquest of the Iberian peninsula from the Muslims,[57] the wider global public was captivated by the conflict as a result of the reports regarding war atrocities. According to Bertellini, the boost in newsreel and feature-length film production during the war served to silence accusations against Italy of atrocities in Tripoli combined a cultural and commercial agenda with the aim of garnering wider European and American public support through colonialist narratives about the civilizing mission and East-West dichotomies.[58]

The participation of the Italo-American community in the debates over war atrocities added new momentum to the production of visual materials supporting the Italian war effort. The case discussed by Bertellini is particularly significant. In December 1911, upon the release of a movie called "War" by the American Vitagraph allegedly showing war atrocities in general but at that time interpreted as addressing the Italian atrocities in Tripoli, the Italo-American press and the community organized a successful campaign against the movie with rallies and protests. The Italo-American community

[52] Isabella Nardi and Sandro Gentili, eds., "Giovanni Pascoli: L'ora di Barga-Inno a Torino-La Notte di Natale," in *La grande illusione: opinione pubblica e mass media al tempo della Guerra di Libia* (Perugia: Morlacchi Editore, 2009), 197–217; Adriana M. Baranello, "Giovanni Pascoli's 'La Grande Proletaria Si e' Mossa': A Translation and Critical Introduction," *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011), https://doi.org/10.5070/C321008941.
[53] Nardi and Gentili, "Giovanni Pascoli: L'ora di Barga-Inno a Torino-La Notte di Natale," 202.
[54] The emerging Italian artistic movement, Futurism, also contributed to the war propaganda and greeted the war in Libya with declarations such as "For the war, the world's only hygiene and the only moral educator" by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. On a collection of various intellectual responses to the war, see Antonio Schiavulli, La Guerra lirica. Il dibattito dei letterati italiani sull'impresa di Libia (1911-1912), Ravenna: Giorgio Pozzi Editore, 2009.
[55] Luca Mazzei and Sila Berruti, "Il giornale mi lascia freddo'. I film 'dal vero' dalla Libia (1911– 1912) e il pubblico italiano," *Immagine. Note di Storia del Cinema*, no. 3 (n.d.): 55–57.
[56] Lotti Dennis, "La guerra allusa. L'imperialismo nel cinema di finzione italiano tra propaganda e speranza (1909-12)," *Immagine. Note di Storia del Cinema*, no. 3 (2011): 23.
[57] Dennis, 23.
[58] See Bertellini, "Dramatizing the Italian-Turkish War (1911–12)."

feared that the association of their home country with war crimes would add to the already existing racial discrimination against them. Eventually, the movie was withdrawn and soon many Italy-made propaganda movies and newsreels filled the halls of American cinemas.[59] The "aesthetic contest" of war transcended the sphere of movie production; posters, illustrated books, and images had become part of a cultural contestation that aimed at showing Italy on the side of Western civilization, the heir to the Roman Empire, and among the ranks of modern Western powers in contrast to the uncivilized, Oriental, and backward Turks and Arabs.[60] Eventually, by the end of 1911, the Italian colonial war had hegemonized the cultural sphere in the US and the early claims of atrocities were silenced.[61]

Among the many war-themed Italian movies in 1911 and 1912, some achieved great success. The themes of the movies leave no doubt about the popularity of past hostilities. *Il Cid*, for instance, was based on the conquests of the famous knight El Cid in the 11th-century Iberian Peninsula against Moorish rulers. Another, *La Gerusalemme Liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered), was based on an epic poem of the First Crusade by the Italian poet Torquato Tasso in the year 1581. While Tasso's poem appealed to a larger audience at the time when it was written owing to the context in which the Ottomans were advancing in Europe in the 16th century, the movie version was able to boost the morale of the public by recalling the theme of the "reconquest" and the successful campaigns of the Crusaders at the time of the Italo-Turkish War. Another famous movie was *I Cavalieri di Rodi* (The Rhodes Knights) which was based on the Knights' resistance to the Ottoman siege of Rhodes in 1522. Again, the historical setting portrays a glorious Italian past and links it to the present, as Italy reclaimed Rhodes during the war in Tripoli.[62] In 1911, the movie adaptation of Dante's *Inferno*, distributed in Italy and the USA, although not directly linked to the Arab-Turkish confrontation, broke cinema records with its Christian imagery.[63]

In addition to their historical themes, the Italian movies of the time were also characterized by a gendered Orientalist representation of the Middle East. The cultural confrontation emphasized women's inferior position in Muslim society, the harem, and the fears over trafficking in white women (*tratta delle bianche*) leading Italian women to fall captive in the harems of Arabs. For example, the movie *Gelosia dello Sceicco* told the story of an Arab sheikh kidnapping the fiancé of an Italian reporter in Libya and the rescue of both by Italian soldiers.[64] The movie *Il fiore del deserto* told a love story of two young people in a Bedouin camp, where the emir wanted to close the girl in his harem and the female protagonist, Lahme, eventually committed suicide.[65]

References to past hostilities and stereotypes were not missing on the Ottoman side either. These reflected the facts on the ground, namely that the powerful Italian navy had control of the Mediterranean during the war and blocked all transport of arms, soldiers, and in some cases even humanitarian aid which the Ottomans exploited to transport undercover soldiers.[66] The Ottomans simply lacked the naval forces to confront the Italians from the sea. In response, the Ottoman anti-

[59] Bertellini, 137–38.
[60] Bertellini, 139–40.
[61] Bertellini, 143–45.
[62] On the movie plots, see Mazzei and Berruti, "Il giornale mi lascia freddo'. I film 'dal vero' dalla Libia (1911– 1912) e il pubblico italiano."
[63] Bertellini, "Dramatizing the Italian-Turkish War (1911–12)," 140.
[64] Giovanni Lasi, "Viva Tripoli Italiana! Viva L'Italia! La propaganda bellica nei film a soggetto realizzati in Italia durante il conflitto Italo-Turco (1911-1912)," *Immagine. Note di Storia del Cinema*, no. 3 (2011): 114.
[65] Dennis, "La guerra allusa. L'imperialismo nel cinema di finzione italiano tra propaganda e speranza (1909-12)," 32.
[66] Oya Macar Dağlar, "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin Kurumsal Tarihinde Önemli Bir Deneyim: Trablusgarp Savaşı (1911-1912)," *Belleten* 81, no. 292 (December 1, 2017): 971, https://doi.org/10.37879/belleten.2017.947.

occupation narrative put the words "piracy" and "plunder" at the center of their depiction of Italy.[67] This narrative sought to prove that it was not the Ottomans but the Italians who were "lawless" by not abiding international law and committing atrocities against the local civilians. Although the Ottomans did not have a national cinema company, they could gather popular support through the narratives of war correspondents, photograph collections, literary works, poems, propaganda pamphlets, and theater. Ottoman mobilization of civil society was most successful in the realm of charity: The Ottoman Red Crescent and the Ottoman Navy Association became the pillars of Ottoman resistance throughout the war.

A closer look at Ottoman propaganda materials shows the leadership of the CUP's powerful local networks and their efficient use of press. The mouthpiece of the CUP, the newspaper Tanin, assumed a leading role in anti-Italian propaganda with its overexaggerated language. The propaganda of the press also encouraged the government to impose strict measures against Italy and the Italians living in the Ottoman Empire. These measures included a general boycott for all Italian goods and services, abolition of the Capitulations (the free trade agreements) to Italian companies, and expulsion of the Italians leaving in the empire as part of a wave of "anti-alienism" that emerged out of political crises of the time.[68] Tanin organized a campaign that invited the Ottoman public to undersign a ten-article vow called, "The Accord of Hostility Against Italy" (*İtalya Aleyhinde İttihad-ı Husûmet*). The vows included a list of promises to boycott Italian shops, goods, Italian transportations, Italian schools, the use of the Italian language, and display a general hostility against Italians "within the limits of moral and humanitarian principles" (*kavâid-i ahlâkiyye ve insâniyye*) including raising children to be hostile towards Italians.[69] The undersigned would also become a member of the CUP which was signaled in the newspaper as the only site of the resistance. Tanin's news consisted of announcements from the battlefield and propaganda of the cheerleading variety peddling the notion that the Ottomans were winning the war. In fact, the Italian caricatures ridiculed the newspaper "Il Tanin" and its Ottoman readership as "ignorant Turks happy while reading the fake news in Tanin".[70] Tanin was painted in La Tribuna Illustrata as "Turkish air forces" flying in the sky with a paper and ink distributing fake news, with the caption: "Turkey also has an air force, and it is bombing the whole world."[71]

Italian claims regarding the heritage of the Roman Empire and its civilization in North Africa found echoes in Ottoman propaganda as well. Ottoman commentators ridiculed the Roman heritage vaunted Italian propaganda and due to the war atrocities associated contemporary Italy not with the great Roman emperors but with the "evil" ones such as Nero.[72] A common response to the Italian "civilization mission" in Tripoli was to ridicule Italy for the backwardness of its own territories.[73] One Ottoman play countered the Italian claim to the Roman legacy in North Africa by emphasizing

[67] McCollum, "The Anti-Colonial Empire," 34.
[68] Caglioti, *War and Citizenship: Enemy Aliens and National Belonging from the French Revolution to the First World War*, 65.
[69] "İtalya Aleyhinde İttihâd-ı Husumet," *Tanin*, 1118, 13 October 1911, p. 1. Cited in Ulucutsoy, "Türk Savaş Edebiyatı ve Propaganda 1828-1912," 347–48.
[70] *Papagallo*, XI 1912, No.18. Koloğlu collected many of the caricatures from the Italian, Ottoman, as well as from other European satirical magazines about the Italo-Turkish War in a rarely found old book. I am thankful to my friend G. Ceren Deniz for helping me to see a copy of this book from Zweigbibliothek Vorderer Orient Ethnologie of the Martin Luther University, Halle. Orhan Koloğlu, *1911-12'de Karikatür Savaşı* (Ankara: Engin yayınları, 1989). The number of the caricature mentioned here is 52.
[71] *La Tribune Illustrata*, 7-14 April 1912. In Koloğlu. Caricature No: 50.
[72] An article appeared in a local CUP newspaper with the title "Canavar İtalya" (Monstrous Italy) attributed the atrocities to the Italian heritage of Emperor Nero. Hafız Zekeriya Hilmi, "Canavar İtalya," *Hakikat*, 195, 24 April 1912. Cited in: Ulucutsoy, "Türk Savaş Edebiyatı ve Propaganda 1828-1912," 361.
[73] Ulucutsoy, 353–54.

the history of the Carthaginian Empire and its glories against the Romans.[74] In other instances, emphasis was laid on the Italian medieval ages, inquisition, and dark ages in contrast to the Islamic Golden Age.[75] When it came to stereotypes, the Ottoman press often referred to the Italians as "pasta makers" (*makarnacılar*).[76]

The documentation and "aestheticization" of war atrocities constituted a important part of the Ottoman response to the civilization mission of the Italian ultimatum. While Ottoman journalists described the brutality of Italian attacks in the daily press,[77] propaganda pamphlets were published by different authors with various motives as were translations from the foreign press. The pamphlets aimed at demonstrating the support from Muslim public opinion for the Ottoman cause. For instance, a member of the Egypt Islamic court, Mehmed Faik published his pamphlet titled, "Trablusgarp: İtalyan Vahşeti Sulh ve İntibah"[78] under the sponsorship of the Egyptian ruling dynasty, while a compilation of photographs and dispatches from the foreign press titled "The Red Oasis: A Record of the Massacres Perpetrated in Tripoli by the Italian Army" was prepared by Charles Rosher, an engineer to the ex-Sultan of Morocco Muli Abd-el Aziz.[79] The pamphlets were meant to discredit Italian diplomatic discourses legitimizing the war and instead blame Italy for lawlessness and piracy. Other reasons expressed for the publications of propaganda pamphlets include uniting the public around the leadership of the CUP and calling for donations to the Ottoman Naval Society.[80] Although only a single example, a "sexual propaganda" pamphlet regarding the Italo-Turkish War was published during the First World War depicting sexual relations between Italian women and Turkish prisoners of war in Naples taken by the Italian army during the war in Tripoli and later during the Italian occupation of Rhodes. Ulucutsoy cites this pamphlet as the first sexual propaganda text in the late Ottoman era and explains the reason for such a publication during the First World War as "boosting the morale" after the defeats in Libya and the Balkans.[81]

The journalist Ahmet Şerif complained in his war reports that while Italian poets (referring to Gabriele D'Annunzio) were busy contributing to the war effort with their poems, Turkish authors were silent regarding the war campaigns. As a matter of fact, after an initial period of silence, Turkish literature took up the theme of the Italo-Turkish War centered on a discourse of "victimhood". The war

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[74] See the theater play (also printed as text) Mehmed Sezai, *Cihad-ı Mukaddes Yahut Trablugarp'ta Osmanlı-İtalya Cengi* (İzmir: Keşişyan Matbaası, 1912). In addition to the Carthaginian emphasis, the years 1911 and 1912 witnessed a great deal of publications in the Ottoman press about the history of Tripolitania and its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire. Some examples include, Hasan Sâfî, *Trablusgarp Tarihi* (Istanbul: Resimli Kitap Matbaası, 1912); Mehmet Nuri and Mahmut Naci, *Trablusgarp* (Istanbul, 1911); Avanzâde Süleyman, *Trablusgarp ve Devlet-i Aliye-İtalya Vekâyi-i Harbiyesi* (Istanbul: Matbaa ve Kütüphane-i Cihân, 1911). On a discussion on the Ottomanist discourse on Libya in the Ottoman press, see Hock, "'Waking Us from This Endless Slumber.'"

[75] For example M. Sezâî's theater play was based on this comparison, M. Sezai, *Cihad-ı Mukaddes Yahut Trablugarp'ta Osmanlı-İtalya Cengi*.

[76] Cited in Ulucutsoy, "Türk Savaş Edebiyatı ve Propaganda 1828-1912," 359. The prominent Turkish female author, Halide Edib, wrote in her memoirs that the boycott against the Italians included boycotting eating pasta. She wrote that the slogan, ""I will not eat macaroni" cost Italy a good deal, for Turkey until then had consumed a great amount of Italian macaroni, and the opening of macaroni factories in Turkey probably begins at that time." Halide Edib Adıvar, *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (New York & London: The Century Co., 1926), 303.

[77] The journalist Ahmet Şerif's reports in Tanin are particularly important. Collected in, Mehmet Çetin Börekçi, ed., *Ahmet Şerif Arnavutluk'ta, Suriye'de, Trablusgarb'ta Tanin* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1999).

[78] Mehmed Faik, *Trablusgarp İtalyan Vahşeti Sulh ve İntibah*, Diyarbakır Matbaası, Diyarbakır, 19 February 1912, cited in Ulucutsoy, "Türk Savaş Edebiyatı ve Propaganda 1828-1912," 381.

[79] Charles Rosher, *The Red Oasis: A Record of the Massacres Perpetrated in Tripoli by the Italian Army* (London: The Century Press, 1912).

[80] For a summary and discussion of these pamphlets, see Ulucutsoy, "Türk Savaş Edebiyatı ve Propaganda 1828-1912," 380–91.

[81] M. Alişan, *İtalya'da Türk Esirlerinin Hayatı* (Istanbul: Cemiyet Kütüphanesi, 1914). Ulucutsoy, "Türk Savaş Edebiyatı ve Propaganda 1828-1912," 391.

provided the first opportunity for the development of the genre of national literature in the Ottoman Empire. This movement started in the Salonica-based journal Genç Kalemler in 1911 with famous names Ziya Gökalp, Ali Canib, and Ömer Seyfeddin. The use of popular Turkish in literary works was the highlight of this movement, but it was the Italo-Turkish War that provided an important point of thematic departure. In this respect, the stories penned by Aka Gündüz on the war both in Genç Kalemler and in various newspapers and journals of the time, as well as those penned by perhaps the most famous nationalist author of the last century, Ömer Seyfeddin, were the earliest examples of the romantic descriptions of war, heroism, and martyrdom for the Ottoman national cause.[82]

A closer look at the war stories written by Aka Gündüz shows the centrality of the "home front" and the importance of civilian contributions to the war. Most of his stories depict either the families of soldiers who volunteered to fight in Tripoli or the Arab civilians who were exposed to brutalities of war. A common theme in these stories is the idea of "revenge" against not only the Italians but all the powers who left the Ottomans alone. They emphasize the continuous wars waged against the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the century by the Great Powers and the nationalist movements of the Ottoman subjects such as the Greeks. While the youth in these narratives are pessimistic about the future of the Empire in this cycle of wars, the elderly and women convince them to fight for the *vatan* ("homeland"), as martyrdom and military service were key aspects of Ottoman identity (many Ottomans being born into families of martyrs and veterans). These stories sought to gather popular enthusiasm for two ends: the Turks in Anatolia had to be convinced that Tripolitania was part of the Ottoman homeland, while Arabs had to fight voluntarily in this war and be proud citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Some of the stories also aimed to mobilize the public to donate to the Ottoman Naval Society.

According to Aksakal, the predominant belief in Ottoman public opinion at the eve of the First World was that international law or diplomacy would not avert the Empire's downfall. Unlike the official historiography of the Turkish Republic which put forth that the decision to enter the First World War was taken by a small group of CUP leadership (mostly Enver Pasa), Ottoman public opinion favored "a war of independence" and held that only military success could save the Ottomans from destruction.[83] The starting point for this pro-war public sentiment was the Italo-Turkish War.[84] The theme of "jihad" emerged out of this context by appealing to the public sentiment that almost the entire Muslim world was under the colonial rule of "Christian powers." Quoting from Aksakal:

> "It was in the Libyan War, with the Balkan inferno hard on its heels, that the officers and leaders of 1914 cut their teeth: these 'Christian' aggressions were the crucible that produced in them a deep sense of violation and victimhood. This generation embodied the lesson that 'our honour and our people's dignity cannot be preserved by those old books of international law, but only by war'."[85]

Although the Ottoman government did not officially declare jihad during the Italo-Turkish War in part due to the expectation of diplomatic support from the Great Powers, the Ottoman public acted as

[82] These stories are collected in: Nesime Ceyhan, *Trablusgarp Hikayeleri, Osmanlı Dağılırken Ağlayan Hikayeler 2* (Istanbul: Selis Kitaplar, 2006). I am thankful to Nesime Ceyhan for sending me a copy of her book which is currently out of stock.

[83] Aksakal, "Not 'by Those Old Books of International Law, but Only by War.'"

[84] Essays and collection of essays appeared on the Ottoman press criticizing the silence of the international law advocates during the Italo-Turkish War and arguing that it was after all a "Christian law," Hock, "'Waking Us from This Endless Slumber,'" 208–9. As stated by Aksakal and Genell, "Italy's wanton aggression in Ottoman Libya transformed the role of international law in the empire's relations with Europe," see Aksakal and Genell, "Salvation through War? The Ottoman Search for Sovereignty in 1914," 212.

[85] Aksakal, "'Holy War Made in Germany'?," 194–95.

if it had and most propaganda materials treated the war as a religious conflict. The practical reasons to stress the role of religion involved gathering broader support for the Ottoman cause from the Muslim world and strengthening Arab-Turkish cooperation and Senussi participation around the theme of religious solidarity. One of the most visible acts of solidarity from the Muslim communities around the world was concentrated on the *Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti* (The Ottoman Red Crescent Society). Hilâl-i Ahmer was established in 1868, however, it was only during the Tripoli War that it became institutionalized and finally overcame the lack of equipment and personnel that had always hampered its activities thanks to the aid that was collected from the public and volunteers who joined its teams on the field.[86] The Red Crescent's activity in the region was also important for stressing the need for aid the locals and soldiers as victims of Italian atrocities. Foreign donations to the Ottoman Red Crescent reached a record amount equivalent to approximately one million dollars.[87] As argued by Hock, "The Italian attack engendered not only the need for a national response, but one that called upon the whole of the Muslim world to awake from its spiritual 'slumber'."[88]

Although religious motives played an important role in the support for the Ottoman government from the Muslim world, some local social and political dynamics also exacerbated the reactions against the Italian attack. In Egypt, the Khedivial dynasty supported the Ottoman war effort as a way to distance itself from the Egyptian government which had remained silent due to the British declaration of neutrality on the part of Egypt.[89] In another neighboring country, Tunisia, the tensions between the locals and the Italian workers escalated at the outbreak of the war leading to violent clashes.[90] The neighboring countries' were important both for the Italian and Ottoman war efforts; while the Italian communities (especially in Tunisia) tried to convince the colonial administration to support the Italian occupation and prevent the flow of any military aid from the region, Arab political sentiment departed from the neutral positions of their country's colonial administrators and asked for permission to be granted for the passage of the Ottoman army and munitions.[91] The civilization discourse of the Italian ultimatum was highly criticized in the Muslim press from India to Africa and as counter-propaganda war atrocities were published in great detail to expose the "hypocrisy" of "civilization missions" not only in Tripoli but also elsewhere under colonial rule.[92]

As opposed to Muslim women's subordinate image in Italian propaganda materials, Ottoman press coverage and works of literary propaganda were concentrated on the centrality of Turkish and Arab

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[86] Macar Dağlar, "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin Kurumsal Tarihinde Önemli Bir Deneyim." Although the use of a red crescent instead of a cross had been proposed to the Geneva Convention earlier, the widespread use of the Red Crescent emblem started with the Tripoli War, probably to stress and visualize the "Islamic" solidarity aspect of its services provided by the Ottoman government and Ottoman volunteers. The Ottoman Red Crescent's presence in the region had become a social policy campaign; it did not only aim at serving the wounded of the war, but also introduced vaccines, performed circumcisions, established hospitals, and organized educational meetings for the locals with respect to health issues.

[87] McCollum, "The Anti-Colonial Empire," 93.

[88] Hock, "'Waking Us from This Endless Slumber,'" 217.

[89] The propaganda pamphlet of Mehmed Faik titled, *Trablusgarp İtalyan Vahşeti Sulh ve İntibah* was written to demonstrate this difference between the two. Cited in Ulucutsoy, "Türk Savaş Edebiyatı ve Propaganda 1828-1912," 381.

[90] See Gabriele Montalbano, "The Italian Community of Tunisia: From Libyan Colonial Ambitions to the First World War," in *The First World War from Tripoli to Addis Ababa (1911-1924)*, ed. Shiferaw Bekele et al., Corne de l'Afrique Contemporaine / Contemporary Horn of Africa (Addis Abbeba: Centre français des études éthiopiennes, 2018), http://books.openedition.org/cfee/1532.

[91] The Egyptian nationalist press had the leading role in this campaign with the prominent Al Djarida and Al Liwa newspapers and the Egyptian nationalist party Hizb-al Watani, Orhan Koloğlu, *The Islamic Public Opinion During The Libyan War* (Tripoli: Libyan Studies Center, 1988), 35–38. Also see Salvatore Bono, "Solidarietà Islamica per La Resistenza Anticoloniale in Libia (1911-1912)," *Islam Storia e Civiltà* 22, no. 1 (1988): 53–61.

[92] Koloğlu, *The Islamic Public Opinion During The Libyan War*, 42–43.

women in the war effort both on the home front and in battle. In the literature, the home front stories were mostly narrated around Anatolian Muslim women's endurance of the hardships of the war and their patriotism in encouraging their husbands, fiancés, and sons to join the military. In this sense, particularly interesting was a short story penned by Aka Gündüz titled, "Bingazi'de Enver Bey'e" (To Enver Bey in Benghazi).[93] The story was narrated in Enver Bey's mother's voice as a letter to him. It opens with her giving the "good news" to Enver about the Balkan Wars which broke out in October 1912. "There is war. Not one, not three. We have exactly four wars. My Enver!" she writes, calling it "good news" because at last there was a chance to win these wars and perhaps they would be the final steps to a lasting victory. Although the story employed a classic nationalist rhetoric, it is important to note these lines below, written in a mother's voice not only encouraging men to join the war but also reflecting a public sentiment about revenge and victory in the continuous wars of the time costing thousands of lives:

"Enough is enough! The tears in our eyes have festered and turned to pus; the fire in our souls leaves no space for mourning. Something must happen. The great men of the world must stop thinking only about themselves and for a moment think also of us, mothers, sisters, and newlyweds. Please - something must happen, whatever the result. Let a gunpowder cellar explode! Then our eyes, used to seeing only darkness, may finally see color and light in its red flame."[94]

She was convinced that all men in the homeland were eager to fight but she continued her call to arms and call for victory, which would provide solace to the mothers who had lost their sons. In other home front stories, local Arab women appeared as protagonists not only as civilian victims of atrocities but as fighters themselves, as in the story penned by Hemedanizade Ali Naci in which an Arab girl disguises herself as a boy to join the battle as flagbearer out of her passion for the Turkish flag. She dies in the battle defending the flag. When the Italians collect it as a trophy, they discover she was a girl, and are frightened as implied in the story by the fact that even little girls were fighting against them.[95] In addition to these stories and their women protagonists, Arab woman fighters were also praised in the Ottoman press. A certain "Mebruke," an Arab woman, became a legendary symbol of resistance with her rifle and bullets around her body.[96] Arab women's participation in the war effort was also echoed in the international press. The New York Times correspondent named them the "amazon adjunct to the Turkish fighting forces." [97] Some girls between the ages of sixteen and eighteen assumed some duties to "mend the courage of the falling, to rebuke the wavering and inspire the brave." The correspondent defined them as "Arab substitutes for Red Cross nurses," helping the wounded and carrying the dead from the battlefield.

5. On the Historiography of The Italo-Turkish War

Non-Eurocentric views of the global conflict at the turn of the 20th century consider a wider chronology beyond 1914-1918 with regards to the fronts in the Ottoman, Muslim, and the

[93] Aka Gündüz, "Bingazi'de Enver Bey'e," Tanin, No. 1468, 11 October 1912, in Ceyhan, *Trablusgarp Hikayeleri, Osmanlı Dağılırken Ağlayan Hikayeler 2*, 138–42.
[94] "Hem artık yeter. … Gözlere yaş yerine irin; ciğerlere eyvah yerine ateş doldu. Ne olacaksa olsun. Dünyanın büyük erkekleri biraz da kendilerini bırakıp biz anaları, hemşireleri ve taze gelinleri düşünsünler. Olsun bir şey, ne olursa olsun bir şey çıksın. Bir barut mahzeni patlasın; kırmızı yalazlarından kara görmeye alışan gözlerimize renk ve ziya dolsun." Ceyhan, 139.
[95] Hemedanizade Ali Naci, 'Bayrakçının Aşkı,' Rübâb, 17-19, 180-183, in Ceyhan, 114–23.
[96] Ulucutsoy, "Türk Savaş Edebiyatı ve Propaganda 1828-1912," 496.
[97] "Arab Amazons in Tripoli Girls of Sixteen to Eighteen Keep Up the Courage of the Fighters,"
New York Times 19 May 1912 available at ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times
pg. C4. Also discussed in Macar Dağlar, "Hilal-i Ahmer Cemiyeti'nin Kurumsal Tarihinde Önemli Bir Deneyim," 968.

Mediterranean world, that is, the "periphery" of Europe.[98] Such a perspective would place the Italo-Turkish War as the first conflict in this order. In Ottoman historiography, there already exists an approach emphasizing the continuity and connections between the consecutive wars in the last decade of the Empire which had started with the Italo-Turkish War followed by the Balkan Wars (1912-1913).[99] In classical Turkish historiography, the Italo-Turkish War is often treated in connection with the outbreak of the Balkan Wars, leaving the former in the shadow of the latter. In this narrative, the Balkan nationalist movements benefited from the focus of the Ottoman government and military forces on Tripolitania and declared war at a moment when the Ottomans were on the verge of defeating the Italians. Then, due to the urgency of the war in the Balkans, the Ottoman government was forced to agree to the peace conditions in the Treaty of Ouchy in October 1912, evacuating the region and leaving it to Italy.[100]

So far, historians have mostly stressed the continuity between the Italo-Turkish War and the First World War in the framework of diplomacy and policy. Indeed, the war threatened the Triple Alliance of 1882 between Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Germany, since the latter maintained its support for the Ottoman Empire despite its agreement with Italy. The isolation of the Ottoman Empire from the "Concert of Europe" and from the "civilized world" during the Italo-Turkish War also signaled a new direction in diplomacy that led to a chain of events in the following conflicts and the formation of new alliances.[101] I add to this broader periodization that the Italo-Turkish War also marked the beginning of a new notion of war involving the robust participation of civilians and public opinion.

Civilian participation in the war effort is a phenomenon usually associated with the First World War. However, as shown in this article, the wider appeal of the war in European, American, and Muslim public opinion had the impact of "globalizing" the war. The Italo-Turkish War was not only the diplomatic and political starting point of the following conflicts, but also seminal to the new dynamics of the "home front." These were characterized by the cultural mobilization of society around militaristic and nationalist views and the wider appeal of the "holy war" theme, as in the declaration of jihad during the First World War.[102] These dynamics also include the treatment of civilians on the home front, such as the expulsion of the Italians living in the Ottoman Empire and declaration of them as "enemy aliens", which eventually would serve to purposes of Italian propaganda in restoring the international image of the country and gaining popular support.[103]

In the case of Italo-Turkish War, popular enthusiasm and the participation of civilians in the war effort owed much to the motives and perceptions of individuals beyond the "high politics of

[98] On the broader periodization of the global conflict, see Andrea Graziosi, *Guerrra e Rivoluzione in Europa 1905-1956* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001); Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War: 1911-1923*, The Greater War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Shiferaw Bekele et al., "Introduction," in *The First World War from Tripoli to Addis Ababa (1911-1924)*, Corne de l'Afrique Contemporaine / Contemporary Horn of Africa (Addis Abbeba: Centre français des études éthiopiennes, 2018), http://books.openedition.org/cfee/1454.

[99] Mehmet Beşikçi, "On Yıllık Harp ve Topyekûn Seferberlik," in *Osmanlı Askeri Tarihi: Kara, Deniz ve Hava Kuvvetleri, 1792-1918*, ed. Gültekin Yıldız (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2013), 205–25. However, only recently was the period of wars considered to have begun with the Italo-Turkish War rather than with the Balkan Wars.

[100] The text can be found in: Ünal and Gurulkan, *Osmanlı belgelerinde Trablusgarb*, 550–53. In the treaty, while the Ottoman forces agreed to evacuate Tripoli and Cyrenaica, Italy agreed to evacuate the Dodecanese, although its forces remained on the islands.

[101] Shiferaw Bekele et al., "Introduction," 32.

[102] Chiti describes the Italo-Turkish War as a turning point for Egyptian public opinion and draws attention to the cultural and literary continuity between this war and the First World War, see Elena Chiti, "Et si la Grande Guerre commençait en 1911 ? L'entrée en guerre vue d'Alexandrie," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, no. 141 (June 15, 2017): Vol 141, 153-171, https://doi.org/10.4000/remmm.9900.

[103] Caglioti, *War and Citizenship: Enemy Aliens and National Belonging from the French Revolution to the First World War*, 67.

propaganda" conducted by their respective governments. Italian expatriate communities all around the world were concerned about the reputation of their home country that could impact their lives as immigrants. On the other side of the conflict were the Muslim communities, in great part ruled by the colonial regimes, who attached great importance to the last independent Muslim territories not colonized by European powers. In this context, the Ottoman Empire assumed the self-assigned role of an "anti-colonial Empire."[104]

Extant local tensions at the time of the war, such as the conflicts between the Italian and Arab workers in Tunisia, or political rivalries such as that of Egyptian Khedivial dynasty and the Egyptian government constituted other reasons for widespread involvement in public debate about the war. Within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, civilian motives for participating in the war effort included the political polarization within the country around the CUP and the rival Liberal Entente as well as the polarization between non-Muslims and Muslims due to ethnic and religious conflicts and nationalist movements. Eventually, we see the increased participation of the Ottoman non-Muslims in the charity activity for the war while they also extended their support to the production of cultural propaganda through the press. The records of local donations for the war indicate that commissions were established by locals themselves, both Muslim and non-Muslim (including local Greek, Armenian, and Jewish community leaders).[105]

6. Conclusion

This article has attempted to take a closer look at public opinion and propaganda in the Ottoman Empire, Italy, and elsewhere during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911. Through a cross-reading of propaganda campaigns in different parts of the world, it presents the cultural mobilization that accompanied the war from a holistic perspective taking into account the interplay between the social and political dynamics at the local and the global levels. In doing so, it demonstrates that war propaganda often developed in response to the propaganda of the adversary. While in the Italian case the reasons for public attention to the war is mostly explained by domestic factors, I emphasize the role of international law and its new discourse on war atrocities as reasons behind the rise of public opinion campaigns which depicted the war as a conflict between a sovereign state and an uncivilized population. On the contrary, while Ottoman historiography had already treated the role of international law in the Ottoman campaign against Italian occupation, the domestic dynamics fueling public attention to the war had remained overlooked in the literature. The empire and its government, public opinion, and policy are often considered a single entity. But as shown throughout the article, it was political rivalry that ignited the intense public outcry against the Italians. Responding to the Italian discourse of the civilization mission and the supposed barbarity of the local population constituted other important factors in the development of the Ottoman war propaganda. At the end of the war, Ottoman public opinion shifted to a position favoring revenge and war for the sake of a final victory, a sentiment that culminated in the Balkan Wars. In Italy, the war signaled the end of the

[104] On the concept, see Hans-Lukas Kieser, Kerem Öktem, and Maurus Reinkowski, "Introduction," in *World War I and the End of the Ottomans: From the Balkan Wars to the Armenian Genocide* (I.B. Tauris, 2015), 8, https://doi.org/10.5040/9780755609093. I follow the concept of "anti-colonial empire" as used in these works within the context of the Italo-Turkish War, see Hock, "'Waking Us from This Endless Slumber'"; McCollum, "The Anti-Colonial Empire."

[105] For a micro account on voluntary donations and commissions established for the war in the Black Sea city of Trabzon, see Melek Öksüz, "'Trablusgarp ve Bingazi Havalisi Mevaki-i Harbiyyesi İane Defteri'ne Göre Trablusgarp Savaşı İçin Toplanan Yardımlar," *Karadeniz İncelemeleri Dergisi* 15, no. 15 (2013): 147–204. The participation of the non-Muslim press is examined in, McCollum, "The Anti-Colonial Empire," 35–40.

liberal era, radicalizing the politics which later would evolve into the rise of fascism. In this framework, too, the Italo-Turkish War changed public perceptions about the future of politics.

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