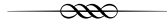


*Introduction*

**RESPONSES TO NAZISM AND  
THE HOLOCAUST IN THE MIDDLE EAST  
AND NORTH AFRICA**



*Francis R. Nicosia and Boğaç A. Ergene*

THE CLOSE GEOGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY OF the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to Europe is a significant factor in the modern history of Europe, Germany, World War II, and the Holocaust. This large, ethnically, culturally, religiously, and politically diverse region once again became an important theater of war for European and other great powers in 1940. It was also home to ancient Jewish communities in the Arab world, Turkey, and Iran, communities with a combined population of about one million Jews. The fate of these Jewish communities during World War II and the Holocaust in Europe hung in the balance, pending the outcome of the war. In a region so close to German-occupied Europe during World War II, Hitler's regime, in anticipation of victory in the war, intended to extend the "final solution" to the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa. Logistically, this would not have been difficult for the Nazi government given the close proximity of those communities to Europe, their much smaller numbers in comparison to the Jewish population in Europe, and the existence of some degree of animosity or indifference toward Jews among the populations of the MENA region.

This volume considers how some of those diverse populations in the MENA—predominantly, but not exclusively, Arab and Turkish, and predominantly, but not exclusively, Muslim—responded to the possibility of a German victory in the war and to the prospect of Axis domination

in some form in those regions. How did they respond to the political philosophy of Fascism in general, particularly to German National Socialism, in Europe? How did they view the second struggle within a generation among the world's existing great powers, in Europe and beyond? How did they react to Nazi anti-Semitism and propaganda, to Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany, and, ultimately, to the systematic mass murder of the Jews in Europe? How much did they know about what was happening to the Jews in Germany and Europe, just some hundreds of kilometers away? And how did they connect these issues with their own interests, within the context of existing and expanding European strategic interests and ambitions in their part of the world?

In recent years, events in the Middle East and beyond have generated a renewed interest among scholars and others in the relationship between Hitler's Germany, Arab states, and the nationalist government of the new Turkish state that emerged after World War I. This is especially true with regard to World War II, within the context of the Nazi persecution and mass murder of the Jews in Europe. Before this, a few scholarly studies appeared beginning in the 1960s, studies that focused on the aims and policies of Nazi Germany in the Middle East. Few if any provided much detail on the reactions of Arab, Turkish, and other leaders, intellectuals, and general populations to German National Socialism, Nazi Jewish policy, and the Holocaust.<sup>1</sup> However, much of the more recent literature has provided more substantive examinations of the responses of the Arab, Turkish, and other populations in the MENA to Nazism, German and European anti-Semitism, and the persecution and destruction of the Jews in Europe. Moreover, with regard to the Arab populations of the MENA region, some consider these responses during World War II and in the turbulent decades in that part of the world after 1945.

Some of the recent literature addresses those responses in the large, complex, and highly diverse Arab world, a region that stretches from the Atlantic coast of Morocco in the west to the Persian Gulf and Iraq's border with Iran in the east, and from the Syrian and Iraqi borders with Turkey in the north to the southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It includes the works of authors who are not specifically scholars of the history, societies, and cultures of the Middle East or North Africa.<sup>2</sup> In his analysis of Nazi propaganda in the Middle East during the World War II, Jeffrey Herf observes that the Nazi state, party and the German military "made strenuous efforts with the resources at their disposal to export the regime's ideology in ways that they hoped would strike a nerve among

Arabs and Muslims.”<sup>3</sup> He also points out that Allied and German intelligence services “all found evidence that there were individuals and groups from which the Axis might have expected strong support.”<sup>4</sup> Scholars of the history of the Third Reich and World War II would certainly agree with Herf’s first point, while most scholars of modern Middle Eastern history would concur with the second. Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers present significant information about Nazi plans and activities with regard to the Middle East during the World War II. This would include efforts to intensify hatred of the Jews among the Arab populations and evidence for Nazi plans to extend the mass murder of the Jews in Europe to the ancient Jewish communities in the Arab lands of the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>5</sup> Their focus on the handful of Arab exiles in wartime Berlin and Rome is indeed important for understanding German and Axis policy toward the Arab world during the war. However, a focus on those Arab exiles in wartime Berlin alone is not an adequate lens for understanding how the diverse populations, organizations, and institutions in the Arab world responded to National Socialism and the Holocaust in Europe.

Much of this recent literature has tended to attribute Arab violence against the Jews in Palestine and elsewhere in the region during those years to a historically rooted, religiously and culturally based hatred of Jews. Klaus Gensicke links the Mufti’s particular hatred of the Jews to Arabs in general: “This fanatical extremism has become a tradition that remains as virulent as it was at the time of the ‘great uprising’ (1936–1939) and represents a failed policy of refusal to compromise, of irreconcilability, and of ‘all or nothing.’”<sup>6</sup> Mallmann and Cüppers speculate that the anti-Semitic potential of the Arabs as a whole in 1942, as Rommel seemed poised to achieve victory over Great Britain in Egypt and eventually Palestine, was the same as that among those Europeans who collaborated with the Germans in the genocide against the Jews: “There is no reason, therefore, why the anti-Semitic potential of the Lithuanian, Latvian, or Ukrainian nationalists should have been greater than that of the Arabs as they awaited the German army.”<sup>7</sup> In drawing conclusions about Nazi wartime propaganda to the Arab world, a joint effort of the Nazi regime and Arab exiles in Berlin, Herf concludes: “Nazi Germany’s Arabic-language propaganda during World War II was the product of a remarkable political and ideological synthesis that took place in wartime Berlin . . . These materials displayed a synthesis of Nazism, Arab nationalism, and fundamentalist Islam.”<sup>8</sup> While each of these three points may indeed possess some element of truth for some

Arabs, they also infer general truths about Arabs, Arab history, Arab nationalism, Islam, and Arab responses to National Socialism. As such, they exist without a necessary non-European, non-Western or Middle Eastern historical context.

These historians, along with historians and other scholars of the Middle East and Islam, have taken up the issue of Nazi hopes that Arabs might help them against the Jewish populations of the MENA. As a result, a rapidly growing body of scholarly work has appeared, one that includes monographs, collections of essays, and individual journal articles by scholars of Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Islam, including the contributors to this volume, scholars who have examined the complexities and varieties of both Arab and Turkish responses to Hitler's Germany.<sup>9</sup>

The chapters in this volume are authored by regional specialists familiar with local sources and languages of the region, who are able to produce scholarship informed by contextual nuances and variables. In this sense, these chapters are not derivatives of European-centered scholarship on the Holocaust. They exhibit a general recognition of the considerable size, diversity, and complexity of the Middle East and North Africa, and of the consequent multiplicity and range of attitudes and responses to these questions. These varied responses, the natural consequence of such a diverse region, preclude generalizations about the Arab world and Turkey in the 1930s and 1940s. Their knowledge and understanding of the modern history of the region, as well as their research in Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew, and other sources, provide a necessary context for the debates that arise from this very sensitive topic.

The chapters in this collection reflect the "state of the art" in Holocaust Studies that focuses on peoples in the Middle East and North Africa. The volume begins with Gilbert Achcar's reflections on how the Holocaust has shaped the conflicting discourses of the Zionist and non-/anti-Zionist parties in the Arab-Israeli conflict and how, in return, its memory came to be shaped by them. There is evidence for the latter in the attempts to characterize contemporary Palestinians and Arabs in general as supporters of the Nazi policies of Jewish eradication and of the relative popularity of Holocaust denial in the Arab world and beyond. Against such politically motivated and often ahistorical inclinations to redefine the past, Achcar invites all parties to the conflict to acknowledge and dispel their personal biases and prejudices, without which a peaceful engagement among them might be impossible.

The remaining six chapters provide rare and region-specific information about how various communities responded to Hitler's rise to power and to Nazi policies toward European Jews. With this in mind, it is not surprising that the primary task of a number of the chapters is to challenge some prevalent assumptions by providing nuanced and source-based counterarguments. For example, Israel Gershoni's chapter demonstrates that British-controlled Egypt before the war was home to many anti-Fascist, anti-Nazi, and anti-Hitler intellectuals and writers, a fact that is not well known or acknowledged among students of the Holocaust. By focusing on the writings of three popular Egyptian intellectuals during World War II, Tawfiq al-Hakim, 'Abbas Mahmud al 'Aqqad, and Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat, Gershoni demonstrates that a significant stream in the Egyptian public discourse condemned and rejected the Nazi policies and racism.

Esther Webman further complicates the question of Arab perceptions of the Holocaust in her chapter on two very important Arab newspapers, the Egyptian *al-Ahram*, and the Palestinian *Filastin*, in the 1930s. The chapter surveys how these publications represented the Nazis' rise to power in Germany, their persecution of the Jews, and how these reflections changed over time. It also reveals that the newspapers' coverage of the persecution of the Jews was complex and not entirely consistent. While the consequences of Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine generated anti-Jewish feelings among Palestinian Arabs, this tendency was much less noticeable in the Egyptian paper, a finding consistent with Israel Gershoni's arguments.

Webman's observations regarding Egypt and Palestine find an echo in Götz Nordbruch's chapter on four major Syrian and Lebanese intellectual figures in the 1930s, Antun Sa'ada, Edmond Rabbath, Constantin Zurayq and Raif Khuri. Nordbruch's research on the writings of these individuals has identified diverging attitudes toward the Nazis and the fate of the European Jews at the time, a finding that must be understood within the context of a wide variety of local and historical factors that influenced the intellectuals' thinking. After the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire following World War I, the peoples of the Levant were busy building their political structures, defining their collective identities, and reimagining intercommunal relationships. Discrepancies in the opinions about these issues translated into a wide spectrum of views on the Jewish question in Europe.

Other chapters in this volume take the reader to the margins of the Middle East and North Africa: Turkey, Northern Iraq, and Morocco.

Corry Guttstadt's chapter looks into Turkey's relationship with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and surveys that country's treatment of European Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution and its own Jewish minority during and after World War II. Although Turkey officially pursued a neutral foreign policy during the war, and many Turkish public voices rejected the persecution of European Jews, Guttstadt argues in her chapter that the Holocaust was largely unnoticed in public life. Furthermore, anti-Jewish and anti-Christian sentiments, related to various forms of Turkish nationalism, became increasingly prevalent in the country during the war. Orit Bashkin, on the other hand, demonstrates in her chapter that the Jewish communities in Northern Iraq possessed the ability and resources to defend themselves against regional and national threats. According to Bashkin, these threats, instead of being consequences of the popularization of Nazi ideology in the country, were connected to regional tensions and opportunistic inclinations on the part of government functionaries who desired to take advantage of a minority group in difficult times. Nevertheless, the Jews of northern Iraq managed to utilize the ethnic diversity in the region, which also included Kurdish, Turkoman, Sunni Arab, and Christian communities, and devised strategic alliances with other groups to shield themselves and their possessions during a very difficult period.

In his chapter, Daniel Schroeter surveys how various political movements and ideologies had an impact on the peoples of northern Africa, Jews, and others, specifically in the Spanish protectorate of Morocco during the 1930s and World War II. The main contribution of the chapter, consistent with the overall argument of this volume, is that the social, political, and legal circumstances of local Jewish communities in the region—in this case, Morocco and northwest Africa—can only be understood in the context of the imperialist rivalry between Spain and France. Additional contextual considerations include the popularity of various forms of nationalism and Pan-Islamic movements, and the intensification of Jewish settlement in Palestine, as well as the influence of European anti-Semitism. Without a nuanced appreciation of all these factors in relation to each other, it would be impossible to explain, for example, why the Spanish government defended Sephardi Jews in Morocco while it simultaneously promoted anti-Semitic ideas at home.

Cutting-edge research, such as that contained in the present volume, also provides insight into some of the potential and much-needed avenues of future development in the subfield. Although some regions in the MENA, particularly Egypt and Palestine, and to some extent Syria,

Lebanon, and Turkey, have received scholarly attention in recent years, there seems to be a dearth of scholarly research in European languages on others, including Iran, the Arabian Peninsula, and much of North Africa. Also, there is still a lack of *comparative* scholarship on Nazism and the Holocaust *within* the context of the Middle East and North Africa. Historical studies that focus on a particular region often remain confined to that setting and do not make concerted attempts to consider parallel trends in other parts of the Middle East or North Africa. When comparisons are made in scholarly works on this topic, they are often done within the context of European settings and events. Thus, Esther Webman's, Götz Nordbruch's and Daniel Schroeter's chapters, which seek to make explicit interregional comparisons, require our recognition and appreciation.

Moreover, this subfield has been developed for the most part by European, American, and Israeli scholars. With the exception of two, none of the contributors to this volume is indigenous to the regions on which they focus: Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Morocco, and Turkey. While the contributors do make serious efforts to engage regional scholarship, indigenous historians and their viewpoints are generally underrepresented in the subfield. However, certain methodological choices are well represented in the collection. They include research based on systematic readings of contemporary newspapers, journals, and literary materials, as well as some focus on the lives, works, and actions of specific intellectuals in order to make broader generalizations about public opinion and societal attitudes toward Nazi Germany and the fate of Europe's Jews in the Holocaust. Political history also receives attention in the volume, as multiple contributors make use of government documents from official archives. Moreover, Orit Bashkin uses an exemplary ethnographic methodology. Beyond the confines of this volume, however, relatively little research exists on the lives and circumstances of indigenous Jewish communities all over the region, research that focuses on how these communities were uniquely affected by the rise of Hitler and Nazism in Germany. Besides Orit Bashkin's chapter on Jews in Iraq, Corry Gutstadt covers the relatively limited literature on the Jews of Turkey in the early and mid-twentieth century, thereby providing nuanced and contextually based understandings of these communities and their struggles at the time of the Holocaust and thereafter.

Finally, there is still a need to connect these discussions to broader historical trends and developments in the region. The history of mod-

ernization in the Middle East and North Africa begins in the mid-nineteenth century, and there now exists a growing literature on how this process influenced the lives of minorities, including Jewish communities in various parts of the Ottoman Empire, Qajar Iran, and Egypt.<sup>10</sup> This literature not only provides valuable information on how modern regional administrations governed their minorities but also reflects on intercommunal relationships involving different ethnic and confessional groups. To what extent can we understand the history of Jewish experience in the MENA before and during World War II without this background? It is within the contexts of broader historical trends that connected the nineteenth century to the twentieth century that the peoples of the region reacted to Nazism and the Holocaust. For example, it is difficult to separate the anti-Jewish sentiment and policies in modern Middle East from the Ottoman legacy pertaining to Muslim–non-Muslim relations. Thus, any consideration of the modern Turkish and Iraqi governments’ policies toward their Jewish minorities should be based on this historical context in order to identify how intra-communal tensions and state-society relations in the Ottoman Empire influenced the historical processes related in the following pages. Similarly, should we not understand the attitudes toward Jewish peoples in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt in the broader context of the rising, regionally specific, nationalist movements, which again find their roots in the political and intellectual trends of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries?

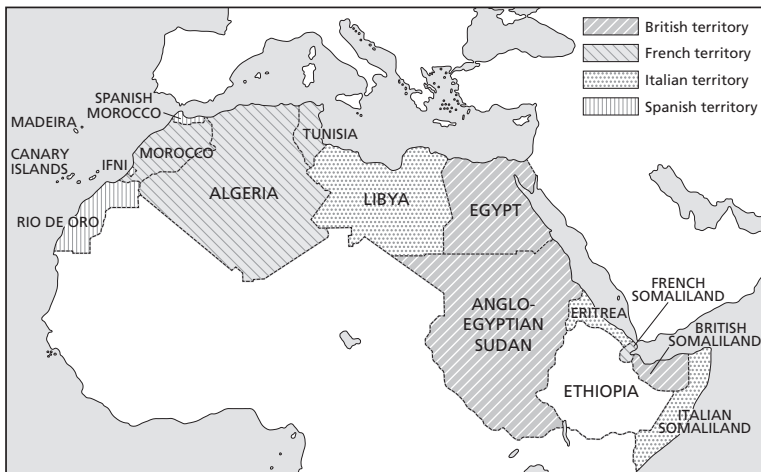
Before we proceed to the chapters, it might be useful to present a summary of the actual intent and policies of Hitler’s regime toward the region between 1933 and 1945. That some Arabs sought to make common cause with both Weimar and Nazi Germany in the decades following World War I is both clear and not surprising. It was a logical and inevitable outcome of a post–World War I settlement in the Middle East that clearly did not satisfy the goal of most Arabs for immediate national self-determination and independence from foreign rule. Winston Churchill met with a delegation of Muslim and Christian Arabs in Haifa during his visit to Palestine in March 1921, following Arab unrest and violence there in the immediate postwar years. With a postwar settlement that ignored the expectations and demands of Arabs throughout the region already in place, the atmosphere for this meeting was one of confrontation and recrimination. The Arabs expressed anger over what they perceived as broken promises and betrayal by the Allies during and



immediately following World War I. By the time of Churchill's meeting with Arab leaders in Haifa, it had become clear that British and French control over the former Ottoman-Arab territories in the Fertile Crescent would be formalized with League of Nations Mandates. These included a British Mandate for Palestine, with a Jewish National Home that was to be incorporated into that Mandate. This major expansion of Anglo-French imperial control in the region, along with the continuation of European rule in all of North Africa and continuing British control over significant parts of the Arabian Peninsula, would preclude the attainment of Arab national self-determination and independence.

The Arab delegation issued the following warning to Churchill that would be of significance in the decades that followed: "Today the Arabs' belief in England is not what it was . . . If England does not take up the cause of the Arabs, other powers will. From India, Mesopotamia, the Hedjaz and Palestine the cry goes up to England now. If she does not listen, then perhaps Russia will take up their call someday, or perhaps even Germany."<sup>11</sup>

Germany's alliance with the Ottoman Empire during World War I did not preclude a continuation of friendly relations between the new Weimar government in Germany and the new nationalist Turkish Republic that emerged in Anatolia by 1923.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, a defeated Germany continued to enjoy a general sympathy among many Arab na-



**Map 0.1.** Map of European-controlled states of North Africa, 1914. *Courtesy:* Cambridge University Press and Cox Cartographic Ltd.



**Map 0.2.** Map of the Anglo-French Mandate states (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Palestine), 1922. *Courtesy:* Cambridge University Press and Cox Cartographic Ltd.

tionalists and intellectuals following the war, despite Germany's wartime alliance with their former Ottoman overlords. Germany's prewar and wartime status among Arabs in general appears to have been positive, although not entirely above suspicion, and it persisted following the war.<sup>13</sup> This positive view was probably due in part to the general perception that Germany, unlike the other European powers, had never harbored tangible imperial ambitions in the region that might compromise the Arab quest for national self-determination in some form. In September 1921, the German ambassador in London, Friedrich Stahmer, notified Berlin of his recent talks in London with an Arab delegation similar to the one that had met with Churchill in Haifa in March of that year. Stahmer's conversations with the Arab delegation were not substantive in nature. They concluded with general statements about the wish of the "Arab people" and Germany to maintain friendly relations in the coming years. In his report to Berlin, Stahmer described the Arab view

of past Arab-German relations in the following manner: “They have never had hostile feelings for Germany, having instead trusted Germany more than the other Great Powers because of their impression that, in the pursuit of its interests, Germany has never acted in a purely selfish manner, having instead respected the interests of the indigenous inhabitants.”<sup>14</sup> Stahmer’s meeting in London with the Arab delegation was the beginning of a succession of initiatives by various Arab nationalist leaders to enlist German diplomatic and later material support for ending the post-World War I status quo in the Middle East, based as it was on Anglo-French and Italian dominance in, and control over, most of the Arabic-speaking world. Some of these initiatives also demanded an end to the Jewish National Home in Palestine. These attempts to secure German support for Arab independence in whatever form are evident during the years of the Weimar Republic, and they continued with greater intensity through the 1930s and World War II.

This general sympathy for Germany following World War I also produced an important constant in German policy toward the Arab world, namely the consistent refusal of both the Weimar and Nazi governments to materially support Arab efforts to achieve real independence from *de facto* European control. Moreover, both consistently supported the security and territorial integrity of the Turkish state, with the Nazis, of course, supporting Turkish neutrality in World War II. The substance of Nazi Germany’s ideological and strategic interests and policies in the Middle East and North Africa, beyond the platitudes about Arab independence and Arab-German-Islamic friendship contained in Nazi propaganda during World War II, was the maintenance of European dominance in some form in the Arab lands, along with the maintenance of an independent and neutral Turkey.<sup>15</sup>

Hitler’s policy toward the Arab world reflected a degree of continuity from the Wilhelminian period through the Weimar years and the Third Reich. The Kaiser’s government had generally accommodated itself to a status quo that included shared control among the Ottoman, British, French, Italian, and Spanish Empires over the lands of the southern and eastern Mediterranean Sea. It remained generally content with its expanding economic and cultural presence within the existing political structures as it pursued its own colonial ambitions in areas of the world beyond the Middle East and North Africa. Its alliance with the Ottomans in World War I and subsequent defeat precluded any role in the establishment of a postwar order in the region, one that would be based on an expansion of British and French control over the remaining

Ottoman-Arab territories of the Fertile Crescent. The end of World War I more or less completed a process begun almost a century earlier, namely the expansion of European imperial control over the Arab lands of the Fertile Crescent, the Arabian Peninsula, and North Africa. In general, the prewar status quo in the Arab world was retained, albeit without the Ottoman Empire, with an expanded Anglo-French presence in its place, and with the new Jewish National Home in Palestine under British authority, as mandated by the new League of Nations.

The primary foreign policy focus of the new German republic beginning in 1919 was the peaceful revision of much of the postwar settlement in Europe, as contained in the Versailles Treaty. As such, Arabs, particularly in the new Mandates in the Fertile Crescent, viewed Germany as a fellow victim of imposed peace settlements. Given its military and political weakness and diplomatic isolation after the war, Weimar Germany was in no position to contest the new postwar order in the Middle East, even if it had wanted to. Indeed, the governments of the Weimar Republic did not inherit any compelling reasons to challenge the settlement in the Fertile Crescent and Arabia, while the states in North Africa simply remained under the control of their respective prewar European rulers. Therefore, Weimar Germany quietly pursued its rather modest interests in the southern and eastern Mediterranean regions, interests that more or less mirrored those of its Wilhelminian predecessor. It too defined Germany's interests in the Middle East primarily as economic and cultural; as was the case before 1914, the government in Berlin set out to promote those interests within the context of adhering to the political status quo in the region. With its primary focus on Europe, Weimar Germany accepted Anglo-French-Italian-Spanish imperial positions in the Middle East and North Africa, the emergence by 1923 of a modern Turkish national state, and the establishment and future development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. Moreover, in its acceptance of the postwar settlement in the region, Weimar Germany's response to Arab efforts to reverse the settlement and to achieve Arab national self-determination and independence and an end to the Jewish National Home in Palestine ranged from indifference to outright rejection.<sup>16</sup>

Much like the governments of the Weimar Republic, Hitler's policy regarding Arab demands for independence also ranged from indifference to rejection, notwithstanding Nazi propaganda during the war.<sup>17</sup> Nazi racial ideology and geopolitical ambitions in Europe necessitated a general continuation of the status quo in the Middle East and North Africa, especially Turkish neutrality in the event of a European war. Hit-

ler's quest for German "living space" in central and eastern Europe and his racial world view presumed the maintenance of European colonial rule over much of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East as part of a natural world order in which there was no place for the self-determination of "colonial peoples." Moreover, policies to end Jewish life in Germany between 1933 and 1941 required the dispossession and rapid emigration/deportation of the German Jews, preferably to destinations outside of Europe, including to the Jewish National Home in Palestine.<sup>18</sup> The reliance of Nazi Jewish policy on the continued existence of the Jewish National Home, albeit under British control, meant the rejection, at least before 1938, of Arab initiatives for German diplomatic and material support in their quest to end British colonial rule and the Jewish National Home in Palestine. Thus, Hitler's Germany during the prewar years, as was the case with previous German governments since the late nineteenth century, generally accepted the post-World War I status quo in the Middle East. This strategy changed somewhat in 1938 and 1939 as tensions in Europe increased with Hitler's pursuit of the annexation of Austria, the breakup of Czechoslovakia, and the looming war with Poland. However, Hitler soon realized that growing anti-colonial unrest in the British and French empires around the world was not enough to pressure London and Paris into accepting entirely his plans for central and Eastern Europe. By the summer of 1939, it was clear that Hitler would have to seek his goals in Europe through war. His altered policy of some encouragement and relatively insignificant material support for Arab unrest in Palestine and elsewhere in 1938 and 1939, meant primarily to distract Anglo-French attention from Central Europe rather than actually threaten the existence of the British and French empires, was ultimately unsuccessful.

Germany's victory over France in June 1940, coupled with Italy's entry into the war on Germany's side and the unsuccessful Italian invasions of Greece and Egypt in the fall, directly extended Germany's political and military involvement into the region. It also brought Hitler face to face with the conflicting French, Italian, and Spanish imperial interests in the Mediterranean region, with potential conflicts of interest in the Balkans and Syria between Italy and Turkey, and with Arab demands that a seemingly invincible and victorious Germany formally commit itself to support Arab independence. However, Hitler took the very clear position from the start that Italian interests and ambitions in the entire Mediterranean were paramount in Axis relations and policy, albeit in avoidance of conflict with Turkey. Moreover, France's colonial position

in the region would have to be more or less preserved, in the interest of enlisting the support of Vichy France and French civilian and military officials in the colonies against Great Britain and the United States.<sup>19</sup> In the end, Arab hopes for a genuine Axis commitment to Arab independence were brushed aside by Hitler and, of course, by Mussolini, the French government in Vichy, and Franco's government in Spain. Yet, Nazi propaganda broadcasts to the region continued to preach Axis solidarity with Arabs and Muslims everywhere against their common "Anglo-American and Jewish enemies." Even as British forces easily defeated the brief pro-Axis coup of Rashid Ali al-Gaylani in Iraq and, with the assistance of French Gaullist troops, seized control of Syria and Lebanon from the Vichy French in May and June 1941, an explicit German commitment to Arab independence was never forthcoming. Repeated attempts by the increasingly frustrated Mufti of Jerusalem from his pre-war and wartime exiles in Lebanon, Iraq, and, beginning in November 1941, Berlin, respectively, to secure such a commitment from Germany, remained unfulfilled.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the only firm commitment for change in the Arab world that Nazi Germany hoped to undertake was the destruction of the Jewish National Home in Palestine and, with that, of the Jewish communities throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

Germany's primary focus on Europe and its military campaign in the Soviet Union meant that the resources necessary for a victory in the Middle East and North Africa would be limited. This problem was compounded by the infusion of American resources into the war and by the landing of Anglo-American forces in Northwest Africa on 8 November 1942. Moreover, Germany's continuing deference to the interests and ambitions of its Italian ally in North Africa and the Fertile Crescent, coupled with the perceived strategic requirements of protecting the imperial interests of Vichy France and Franco's Spain in North Africa, generally precluded an Axis commitment to Arab independence.<sup>21</sup> In the end, this policy produced no political or strategic advantages for the Axis war effort in the region. The arguments of Arab exiles in Berlin and Rome to Hitler and Mussolini that an Axis military victory in the Mediterranean region was possible only with a clear and active Axis commitment to Arab independence seemed to fall on deaf ears. Indeed, it is not at all certain that an Arab revolt would have occurred even if Hitler had made such an open and clear commitment in 1941 and 1942. With the possible exception of the short-lived pro-Axis coup in Iraq in April and May of 1941, the Arab world remained relatively quiet during the war years.

By the end of 1942, the tide of battle had turned decidedly against the Germans and their Italian allies in North Africa and especially in the Soviet Union. This made Germany's hitherto murky policy toward the Arabs increasingly irrelevant. The New Year 1943 would see the massive defeat of German forces at Stalingrad in February, followed by the final Axis defeat in Tunis and expulsion from North Africa in May. This end of an Axis presence anywhere in the Arab world relegated the Middle East and North Africa further to the periphery of Germany's strategic interests and policy for the remainder of the war. This in turn produced a new and very different imperative for Hitler's government, namely the immediate need to defend its rapidly shrinking position in Europe against Allied offensives from the Soviet Union in the East, from Italy in the South, and from an anticipated Allied invasion of France in the West.

By the fall of 1943, following Italy's surrender in early September, conflicting Italian, French, and Spanish imperial interests, along with Arab nationalism and independence and the elimination of the Jewish National Home in Palestine had for the most part ceased to have any relevance in German policy. Through late 1943 and 1944, the Mufti in Berlin concluded that Germany had never been in a position to help secure Arab independence after all and had in fact never really intended to do so.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, between 1942 and 1944, he found himself unable to reverse Germany's decision to send relatively small numbers of Jewish refugees from German-occupied Europe to Palestine in exchange for German nationals who had been in British custody since the beginning of the war.<sup>23</sup> The Mufti's role in the formation of the Muslim Waffen-SS (Handschar) division in Bosnia in 1943 had little if anything to do with Arab independence, the Middle East, and North Africa. That project was a German idea and a European creation, meant to support Germany's war effort in Europe. It consisted mostly of European Muslims and had little if anything to do with any interests the Nazi regime might still have had in the Middle East and North Africa during the final two years of the war.

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## Notes

Epigraphs: Doreen Ingrams, ed., *Palestine Papers, 1917–1922: Seeds of Conflict* (London, 1972), 118; Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*; Jubiläumsausgabe anlässlich der Vollendung des 50. Lebensjahres des Führers (Munich, 1939), 655.

1. On the question of Nazi Germany’s Middle East policy, there was some interest in the mid-1960s with the appearance of the following: Lukasz Hirsowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East* (London, 1966); Heinz Tillmann, *Deutschlands Araberpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin, 1965); Robert Melka, “The Axis and the Arab Middle East, 1930–1945,” PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1966; Mohamed-Kamal el Dessouki, “Hitler und der Nahe Osten,” PhD diss., Free University of Berlin, 1963; Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Mufti and the Führer: The Rise and Fall of Haj Amin el-Husseini* (New York, 1965); and Johannes Glasneck, *Methoden der deutschen Propagandatätigkeit in der Türkei vor und während des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Halle, 1966). Several additional works on specific aspects of Nazi Middle East policy appeared during the three decades following the 1960s, among them: Bernd Philipp Schröder, *Deutschland und der Mittlere Osten im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 1975); Yair P. Hirschfeld, *Deutschland und Iran im Spielfeld der Mächte: Internationale Beziehungen unter Reza Schach, 1921–1941* (Düsseldorf, 1980); Francis R. Nicosia, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question* (Austin, TX, 1985); Uriel Dann, ed., *The Great Powers and the Middle East, 1919–1939* (New York, 1988); and Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust: Turkey’s Role in Rescuing Turkish and European Jewry from Nazi Persecution, 1933–1945* (New York, 1993).
2. Much of this literature focuses on the life and politics of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husayni, his opposition to Zionism and Jewish settlement in Palestine following World War I, and, in particular, his relationship with Nazi Germany and his exile in Berlin during World War II. They also



tend to emphasize Germany's propaganda campaign during the war. See, e.g., Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz: Das Dritte Reich, die Araber und Palästina* (Darmstadt, 2006), published in English as *Nazi Palestine: The Plan for the Extermination of the Jews in Palestine*, trans. Krista Smith (New York, 2010); Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem und die Nationalsozialisten: Eine politische Biographie Amin el-Husseinis* (Darmstadt, 2007), published in English as *The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Nazis: The Berlin Years*, trans. Alexander Fraser Gunn (London, 2011); Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven, CT, 2009); Barry Rubin and Wolfgang G. Schwanz, *Nazis, Islamists, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New Haven, CT, 2014); and Matthias Küntzel, *Djihad und Judenhaß: Über den neuen antijüdischen Krieg* (Freiburg, 2002), published in English as *Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11* trans. Colin Meade (New York, 2007). For the Mufti, see the useful collection of his essays in *Through the Eyes of the Mufti: The Essays of Haj Amin, Translated and Annotated*, ed. Zvi Elpeleg (London and Portland, OR, 2015).

3. Herf, *Nazi Propaganda*, 263
4. *Ibid.*
5. Mallmann and Cüppers, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz*, 137.
6. Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem*, 192.
7. Mallmann and Cüppers, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz*, 164.
8. Herf, *Nazi Propaganda*, 261.
9. See, most recently, David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (Cambridge, MA, 2014); Stefan Wild, ed., "Islamofascism?" special issue, *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam*, 52, nos. 3–4 (2012); and Omar Kamil, *Der Holocaust im arabischen Gedächtnis: Eine Diskursgeschichte 1945–1967* (Göttingen, 2012). See also Corry Guttsstadt, *Die Türkei, die Juden und der Holocaust* (Berlin, 2008), published in English as *Turkey, the Jews and the Holocaust*, trans. Kathleen M. Dell'Orto, Sabine Bartel, and Michelle Miles (New York, 2013); Götz Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria and Lebanon: The Ambivalence of the German Option, 1933–1945* (New York, 2009); Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (New York, 2009); Meir Litvak and Esther Webman, *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust* (New York, 2009); Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian, and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932–1941* (New York, 2006); Israel Gershoni and Götz Nordbruch, *Sympathie und Schrecken: Begegnungen mit Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus in Ägypten 1922–1937* (Berlin, 2011); Gerhard Höpp, Peter Wien, and René Wildangel, eds., *Blind für die Geschichte? Arabische Begegnungen mit dem Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin, 2004); and Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*. See also the articles in Ulrike Freitag and Israel Gershoni, eds., "Arab Encounters with Fascist Propaganda, 1933–1945," special issue, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37, no. 3 (2011). These articles are from the international workshop "Arab Responses to Fascism and Nazism, 1933–1945: Reappraisals and New Directions," which took place at Tel Aviv University and the Open University in Israel in May 2010. An older but still very useful source on this question is Stefan Wild, "National Socialism in the Arab Near East Between 1933 and 1939," *Die Welt des Islams* 25 (1985).

10. See, e.g., Feroz Ahmed, *The Young Turks and the Ottoman Nationalities: Armenians, Greeks, Albanians, Jews, and Arabs, 1908–1918* (Salt Lake City, 2014); Michelle Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-century Palestine* (Stanford, CA, 2010); Julia P. Cohen, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era* (Oxford, 2014); Will Hanley, *Identifying with Nationality: Europeans, Ottomans, and Egyptians in Alexandria* (New York, 2017); Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, CA, 2000); Bruce A. Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (New York, 2001); Devin E. Naar, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece* (Stanford, CA, 2016); Christine M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley, CA, 2011); and Daniel Tsadik, *Between Foreigners and Shi'is: Nineteenth-century Iran and Its Jewish Minority* (Stanford, CA, 2007).
11. Doreen Ingram, ed., *Palestine Papers, 1917–1922: Seeds of Conflict* (London, 1972), 118.
12. For Turkey, see, e.g., Stefan Ihrig, *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), chaps. 1–3. See also Corry Guttsstadt, *Turkey, the Jews and the Holocaust*; and Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*.
13. See Götz Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria and Lebanon, 2–3*.
14. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (hereinafter PAAA), Berlin: Pol.Abt. III, Politik 6-Palästina, Bd. I, DB-London an AA-Berlin, K.Nr. 69, 1 September 1921.
15. See Francis R. Nicosia, *Nazi Germany and the Arab World* (New York, 2015), 132–134.
16. This view is referred to often in the correspondence within the German Foreign Office in Berlin, and between it and German diplomatic missions in the Arab world and Turkey during the Weimar and Nazi periods. For the Weimar period, see, e.g., *Gustav Stresemann: His Diaries, Letters, and Papers*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Eric Sutton (London, 1935), 317. See also PAAA: Botschaft Ankara, Pol.3-Palästina, 1924–1938, “Bericht über meine Reise nach Palästina im März und April 1925,” III O 1269, and Pol.Abt. III, Politik 5, Bd. I, Aufzeichnung von Sobernheim an V.L.R. von Richthofen, 8 December 1924. See also Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik (hereinafter ADAP), Serie B, Bd. II-1, 363–371.
17. For the Nazi period, see, e.g., Institut für Zeitgeschichte (hereinafter IfZ): Nachlaß Werner-Otto von Hentig, ED 113/34, “Großarabien und die Lage in Syrien,” Aufzeichnung Werner-Otto von Hentig, 26 February 1941; and ED 113/6, “Der Orient in seiner politischen Entwicklung seit dem Weltkrieg” (no date). See also Zentrum Moderner Orient (hereinafter ZMO): Nachlaß Höpp, 1.26, Aufzeichnung über Fragen des Vorderen Orients, Politische Abteilung, U.St.S. Pol.Nr. 959, 6 November 1941; ADAP: Serie D, Bd. XIII/2, Nr. 515. See more generally Francis R. Nicosia, *Nazi Germany and the Arab World*, chaps. 3–7.
18. See Francis R. Nicosia, *Zionism and Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany* (New York, 2010).
19. See, e.g., Galeazzo Ciano, *Ciano's Diplomatic Papers*, ed. Malcolm Muggeridge, trans. Stuart Hood (London, 1948), 44, 246, 250–251, 258, 278; and Ga-

- leazzo Ciano, *Ciano's Hidden Diary, 1937–1938*, ed. Malcolm Muggeridge, trans. Andreas Mayor (New York, 1953), 116, 191. See also Nir Arielli, *Fascist Italy and the Middle East, 1933–1940* (Basingstoke, 2010), 144–162; and Nicosia, *Nazi Germany and the Arab World*, 116–127, 154–179.
20. See, e.g., Amin al-Husayni *Mufti-Papiere: Briefe, Memoranden, Reden und Auftrufe Amin al-Husainis aus dem Exil, 1940–1945*, ed. Gerhard Höpp (Berlin, 2004), 20–23, 39–40, 67–71, 77–78, 91–92, 98–103, 107–112, 116–117, 137–141, 156–159, 183–189, 192–201, 226–228.
  21. For France, see, e.g., ADAP: Serie D, Bd. IX, Nr. 479; and the memoirs of two German diplomats at the time, Rudolf Rahn, *Ruheloses Leben: Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen* (Düsseldorf, 1949), 145–146; and Otto Abetz, *Das offene Problem: Ein Rückblick auf zwei Jahrzehnte deutscher Frankreichpolitik* (Cologne, 1951), 130–131. See also Roland Ray, *Annäherung an Frankreich im Dienste Hitlers? Otto Abetz und die deutsche Frankreichpolitik 1930–1942* (Munich, 2000). For Spain, see, e.g., ADAP: Serie D, Bd. IX, Nr. 488; Galeazzo Ciano, *The Ciano Diaries 1939–1943*, ed. Hugh Gibson (Safety Harbor, FL, 2001), 312; Stanley Payne, *Franco and Hitler: Spain, Germany and World War II* (New Haven, CT, 2008), 72, 76–77; and Norman J. W. Goda, *Tomorrow the World: Hitler, Northwest Africa, and the Path toward America* (College Station, TX, 1998), chap. 2.
  22. See Husayni, *Mufti-Papiere*, 160–162, 189, 215–216; PAAA: R2732, Handakten Ertel, Erlaß des RAM, Arbeitsexemplar, Bd.-, Gesandter Ertel, Aufzeichnung, 16 April 1943; IfZ: Nachlaß Werner-Otto von Hentig, ED 113/6, Aufzeichnung von Hentig, 27 April 1943, and ED 113/2, Abschrift Hamburg, 20 June 1957.
  23. For more on the wartime exchange of Jews for German nationals, see Shlomo Aronson, *Hitler, the Allies, and the Jews* (New York, 2004), 330–331; Christopher Browning, *The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office* (New York, 1978), 102–108, 134–141, 164–170; Tuvia Friling, “Istanbul 1942–1945: The Kollek-Avriel and Berman-Ofner Networks,” in *Secret Intelligence and the Holocaust: Collected Essays from the Colloquium at the City University of New York Graduate Center*, ed. David Bankier, (New York, 2006), 105–156; Francis R. Nicosia, *Nazi Germany and the Arab World*, 241–257; Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel, 1939–1944* (New York, 1990), 164, 189–198, 320; and Stanford J. Shaw, *Turkey and the Holocaust*, 256–258, 261–264, 268–269.

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