Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences, Volume 53, No. 12, 2026, 11474

Deanship of Scientific Research

The German Infiltration into the Ottoman Empire through Orientalism, 1898–1908: A Study of the Transformation of Structure and Discourse

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Received: 21/4/2025
Revised: 30/6/2025
Accepted: 29/9/2025
Published online: 1/9/2026

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Citation: Alzoubi, A. A., & Telfah, S. M. (2026). The German Infiltration into the Ottoman Empire through Orientalism, 1898–1908: A Study of the Transformation of Structure and Discourse. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 53(12), 11474. https://doi.org/10.35516/Hum.2026.11474

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Abstract

Objectives: This study examined German infiltration into the Ottoman Empire and its relationship with Orientalism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It analyzed how German Orientalism influenced political, economic, and cultural expansion, highlighting the connection between infiltration and Orientalism in both practice and theory. The study further explored the German-Ottoman alliance during World War I, opening new avenues for investigating German propaganda in the Ottoman Empire and the Levant. The German Orientalist School was distinct among other Orientalist schools, shaped by the development of the German state itself. Before German unification, Orientalism leaned toward science, research, and discovery; however, the German Orientalist School evolved into an institution closely tied to government interests. Its scholarly capabilities were harnessed to advance German policy, particularly concerning the Ottoman Empire, and proved successful in facilitating German influence.

Methods: A historical–analytical method was employed, drawing on primary and modern sources to examine the evolving elements and structural shifts within German Orientalist discourse during the period of German infiltration into the Ottoman Empire, 1898–1908.

Results: The study concluded that German infiltration of the Ottoman Empire was shaped by Orientalism, which influenced the characteristics and dynamics of German-Ottoman relations. German Orientalism played a central role in defining this relationship, with its discourse seeking to interpret contemporary Oriental society by identifying its driving forces, particularly the leaders of the Islamic League. The study also examined the Ottoman Sultanate's influence on Islamic peoples.

Keywords: Orientalism, German infiltration, colonialism, Islamic League, Boxer Revolution, German-Ottoman relations.

التغلغل الألماني في الدولة العثمانية من خلال الاستشراق 1898-1908: دراسة في تحول البنية والخطاب

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ملخّص

الأهداف: تُركز هذه الدراسة على التغلغل الألماني في الدولة العثمانية وعلاقته بالاستشراق خلال أواخر القرن التاسع عشر ومطلع القرن العشرين. وتبحث في كيفية تأثير الاستشراق الألماني على التوسع السياسي والاقتصادي والثقافي الألماني، وتُبرز العلاقة بين التغلغل والاستشراق في التطبيق والنظرية. وتُرسي الدراسة فهمًا أعمق لمسار التحالف الألماني العثماني خلال الحرب العالمية الأولى، فاتحةً آفاقًا جديدة لدراسة طبيعة الدعاية الألمانية في الدولة العثمانية وبلاد الشام. فالمدرسة الاستشراقية الألمانية تميزت عن غيرها من المدارس الاستشراقية، وكان هذا التمايز نتاجًا لتطور الدولة الألمانية ذاتها؛ فما قبل قيام الدولة، اتجه الاستشراق نحو العلم والبحث والاكتشاف، إلا أن المدرسة الاستشراقية الألمانية أضحت مؤسسةً مرتبطة بمصالح الحكومة الألمانية. وقد وظفت قدراتها المعرفية لخدمة هذه السياسة، خاصةً ما يتعلق بالدولة العثمانية، وكان نجاحها جليًا في تسهيل التغلغل الألماني في مفاصل الدولة العثمانية.

المنهجية: اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج التاريخي التحليلي، بدراسة متعمقة للمصادر الأولية والحديثة، لتحقيق فهمٍ أعمق للعناصر المتطورة والتغيرات الهيكلية في الخطاب الاستشراقي الألماني، خاصةً خلال فترة التغلغل الألماني في الدولة العثمانية (1898-1908).

النتائج: خلصت الدراسة إلى أن التغلغل الألماني للإمبراطورية العثمانية تأثر بالاستشراق، مما شكّل خصائص وديناميكيات العلاقات الألمانية العثمانية، فكان للاستشراق الألماني دورٌ مهم في تحديد هذه العلاقة، حيث هدف خطاب المستشرقين الألمان إلى تطوير فهم أعمق لواقع المجتمع الشرقي المعاصر، من خلال التركيز على التعرف على القوى المؤثرة فيه، خاصة رواد الجامعة الإسلامية، وفهم تأثير مركز السلطان العثماني على الشعوب الإسلامية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستشراق؛ التغلغل، الاستعمار، الجامعة الإسلامية، ثورة البوكسر، التاريخ الألماني- العثماني.

Introduction.

Domestic and foreign policies shifted significantly in late-nineteenth-century Germany, with the European balance preservation policy established by Bismarck after German unity in 1871 being abandoned. The young German Kaiser embraced a new policy: rushing toward the East and establishing a "colonial empire," with German Orientalism playing a crucial role. German-Oriental studies displayed significant growth and development, shifting from knowledge, theology, and science to direct involvement in politics, economics, and culture (Alzoubi 2018: 357–369; Schelfter 1998:1-49).

During the early twentieth century, German projects expanded within the Ottoman Empire alongside the growth of German Orientalist institutions. Simultaneously, internal events unfolded within the Ottoman Empire, particularly the adoption of the Islamic League by Sultan Abdul Hamid to renew his legitimacy. This coincided with the visit of the German Emperor to the Ottoman Empire, during which his determination to penetrate the empire became apparent. The slogan of the German Empire strengthened Ottoman resistance to European projects, mainly through the policies of European alliances.

Research Questions

This study mainly attempted to answer the following question: To what extent did Germany succeed in employing Orientalism to serve its colonial interests? The study also aimed to investigate the following:

(1) What was the impact of the 1898 visit of the German Emperor to the Ottoman Empire on the growth of Oriental studies and German interests?

(2) Did Orientalist institutions contribute to qualifying experts and employees in the economic and political fields?

(3) Given international alliances and blocs, what was the impact of German foreign policy on deepening German influence in the Ottoman Empire?

(4) To what extent did German aspirations coincide with those of the Ottoman Sultan in building the Islamic League, and ultimately, what was the role of Orientalist institutions in these endeavors?

(5) To what degree does Orientalist discourse intersect with that of the Islamic League?

Hypothesis

The study's hypothesis centers on the coincidence of German infiltration into the Ottoman Empire with the growth and development of Oriental studies, directly leading to the German-Ottoman alliance. Orientalist discourse is reflected in various forms of Islamic discourse.

Significance and Objectives

This study is one of the first to focus on infiltration and Orientalism. It establishes a deeper understanding of the course of the German-Ottoman alliance during World War I, opening new avenues for studying the nature of German propaganda in the Ottoman Empire and Levant. To the researchers' knowledge, this is also the first study that opens new horizons for postgraduate students and researchers to expand this field of study. Furthermore, it aims to analyze a previously underexplored topic, linking Orientalism to colonial control and its employment in the service of colonial states, given the shift in Orientalist discourse and its interim connection with colonial interests. The subject of Orientalism, with its scientific epistemology and imperialist suspicions, has long been studied, particularly as German Orientalism was considered impartial by researchers in the context of colonial purposes, since Germany did not colonize parts of the Arab world.

Previous Studies

This study is a continuation of a 2018 work with the same title, "German Orientalism and Infiltration in the Ottoman Empire: A Study of Functions and Roles of German Orientalism in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century" by Alzoubi. This was an established study covering the topic thoroughly and conclusion, which Alzoubi built: "Orientalism was accompanied and coincided with penetration in terms of functions and roles. This coincidence made the German state the main player on the stage of events in Ottoman politics, and enabled the Germans smoothly build their interests with official and popular Ottoman blessing. This would not have been possible without the role of German Orientalist School". (Alzoubi 2018: 357).

What is new in this study is that it starts from it to cover the second period of German penetration into the Ottoman Empire through Orientalism, but with new foundations related to adopting a new discourse practiced by the German Orientalist School.

To the researcher's knowledge, no other studies have been conducted with the same title, time period, hypothesis, problem, and theoretical perspective. The list of sources and references illustrates the relevance of the topic, many of these studies covering multiple topics.

Time Boundaries

This document covers events from 1898 to 1908, beginning with the visit of the German Emperor to the Ottoman Empire and ending with the start of the constitutional revolt during the Abdul Hamid era.

Place Boundaries

This study mainly discusses events in Germany and the Ottoman Empire.

I. Penetration and Orientalism: Structure of Objective Reality.

a) Penetration: from Latin penetrat- 'placed or gone into', from the verb penetrare; related to penitus 'inner'." go into or through (something), especially with force or effort", (Oxford Dictionary 2025) as an adjective "used to describe a way of looking at someone in which you seem to know what they are thinking". (Cambridge Dictionary:2025) The term is linguistically identical to what we use, the German colonial state's slow and systematic strategy to penetrate the Ottoman state economically, politically and culturally.

b) Orientalism: Western scholarly discipline of the 18th and 19th centuries that encompassed the study of the languages, literatures, religions, philosophies, histories, art, and laws of Asian societies, especially ancient ones**.** **(**Thomas 2025) The science of the East, that is, research into the sciences, beliefs, and literature of the East, and the preparation of studies in them.(Paret 1968: 11-12; Said 2006: 45–46)

Orientalism is used as a tool of hegemony over the East, stemming from a geopolitical perspective that divides the world into two unequal parts: East and West. The notion of superiority between these regions is linked to Western academic traditions that have fostered interest in controlling the East. Political authorities represented by colonial institutions, intellectualism represented by dominant sciences, and moral authority embodied in the perception of cultural superiority over others (Said 2006: *47*-48) contribute to the dialectical relationship between Penetration and Orientalism.

During the late nineteenth century, the stability and economic growth of Germany led to a strategic interest in the East. The East—embodied by the Ottoman Empire—offered vast natural resources and a demographic field for German settlements and potential colonies. Following Kaiser Wilhelm II's (1859–1941) accession to the throne, German policy shifted from focusing on European affairs to pursuing soft penetration into the Ottoman Empire. Germany aimed to serve as a neutral, trustworthy mediator for the Ottoman Sultan, driven by the historical role of the Germans in the golden era of Bismarck: the first and second Berlin Congresses, investment in the Ottoman public debt, training and arming Ottoman army, building Orientalist institutions, and their apostolic mission to lead and liberate the world. (Grant 2002: 23–24; Alzoubi 2019: 357–369).

Germany's aspiration for unity and its delayed rise, compared to Britain and France, fueled increased aggression and competition with other European powers. German investment in the Ottoman Empire differed from that of other nations due to "Foreign Capitulations- trade facilities granted by the Ottoman Empire since the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, to facilitate trade between France and Ottoman Empire, then to the rest of the European countries, which were transformed into gains and rights for these countries during the period of weakness of the Ottoman Empire, especially at the end of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To become a means for foreign consuls and ambassadors to interfere in internal affairs, when the Germans were in power, these Capitulations were intended to revitalize the economy. However, by the time German power weakened, other European countries had used the Capitulations to pressure the Ottoman Empire and interfere in its domestic and foreign policies. (Al-Arid 1997: 145-174)

German investment—particularly in the industrial sector, such as the Hejaz Railway and the Berlin-Baghdad railroad—significantly influenced the Ottoman Empire. Germany's transition from a continental to a global power was marked by

the motto “a foothold in the sun,” positioning it in direct opposition to its European neighbors. This further advanced German Orientalist thinking and provided solutions for Germany’s engagement with these powers, enhancing its superpower status, especially after the collapse of the League of the Three Emperors in 1890 (Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary), while Russia, France, and Britain became increasingly hostile. (Pamuk 2010: 78–79; Sinno 2007: 45–50).

Edward Said and several Arab scholars from the modern era, such as Malik Bin Nabi (1969: 5-48), assert that German Orientalists were more interested in the scientific and cognitive aspects of Orientalism than that Islam as a belief and religion. Their studies encompassed language, linguistics, history, and archaeology, distinguishing them from the English and French schools. However, in-depth German Orientalist studies have revealed that many scholars have concentrated on religious beliefs and the Prophet Muhammad; Gustav Weil (1808–1889) was a distinguished German Orientalist and historian with a mastery of Arabic and Hebrew. Born into a family of Jewish rabbis, he pursued theology and history at Heidelberg and acquired proficiency in multiple languages. His studies under the French Orientalist de Sacy in Paris were formative, followed by his work as a correspondent during the French occupation of Algeria. Weil further immersed himself in the Arab world by directing the French Medical School “Abu Zaabal” in Cairo, where he learned Arabic, and later studied Islamic culture in Istanbul. His significant contributions include translations of Al-Zamakhshari and Ibn Ishaq, alongside his influential historical works such as “The Life of Muhammad,” the five-volume “History of the Caliphs,” and “History of the Islamic Peoples” (1866). His scholarship notably engaged with fundamental aspects of early Islamic history, including questioning the Prophet Muhammad's literacy. (Weil 1837:1–2; Ruchama 2014: 49–59)

Weil attempted to establish links between Islam and Jewish/Talmudic influences, and the influence of biblical stories and early Christians in the Arabian Peninsula on the founding scriptures of Islamic traditions. In *Poetic Literature of the Arabs Before and After Muhammad* and *Talmudic Myths of Muslims, Through Its Early Sources and Comparing it to Talmudic Myths*, (Weil 1837:3-4; Ruchama 2014: 56–59) published in Frankfurt 1845, he referred to Talmudic influences in Islam, which he partially attributed to the Muslim conversion of Jews such as Ka’b al-Ahbar (551–652), who converted during the reign of the first Islamic Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq(Weil 1845: 54).

Most Orientalist knowledge of that time considered a novel argument about the origins of Muhammad’s religion: Judaism or Christianity. This debate persisted for nearly a century and damaged the reputation of Orientalism and its scientific integrity. For example, in his approach, Gustav Weil attributed the Qur'an to biblical origins. Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), who wrote *History of the Qur'an*, echoed these beliefs (Alsayed 2016: 25). Similarly, Orientalist Edward Sachau (1845–1930) and his student Eugun Mitwoch (1876–1942), in *The History of the Origin of Islamic Prayer and Worship*, claimed that Jewish tradition influence Islamic prayer (Walk 1988: 346).

During this time, German Oriental studies evolved from traditional schools, which focused on researching and excavating Arab Islamic heritage, to establishing strict traditions aligned with German political goals in 1884 (Habermas 2014: 233–255; Chaghatai 1995). Notable Orientalists interested in Islam and Arab culture include Alfred von Kremer who was a scholar fluent in Arabic, Persian, and Hebrew. He traveled to Syria and Egypt, worked at the Austrian consulate, and was later a consul in Beirut and advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He wrote over 263 works, including translations of Arabic books, and authored influential texts on Islam, its history, and the concept of God and the state. He published about 20 books from Arabic books, including Al-Maghazi by Al-Waqidi and Al-Hakam Al-Sultaniya by Al-Mawardi. He wrote "The History of Ruling Ideas in Islam," "The Concept of God, Prophet hood and the Idea of the State" ("Geschichte der herrschenden ideen des islams," "Der Gottesbegriff, die prophetie und staatsidee"), "Cultural History of the East during the Era of the Caliphs," and "The Topography of Damascus" (Al-Zarkali Vol. 2: 7).

While Alfred von Kremer focused broadly on Islamic history, theology, and statecraft through translation and original works, Aloys Sprenger's (1813-1893) contribution was more centered on the critical editing and publication of foundational primary sources of Islamic history and literature. Both scholars were pivotal figures in 19th-century Orientalism, but Sprenger's emphasis on making crucial early texts accessible through meticulous scholarly editions provided a vital basis for the broader historical and cultural analyses undertaken by figures like von Kremer. Sprenger's work laid the groundwork for a deeper understanding of the earliest periods of Islam through direct engagement with its foundational texts (Chaghatai 2025).

As Germany entered the colonial competition for the Ottoman Empire, the *Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen* (Seminar for Oriental Languages) was established under Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin. The seminar received special attention and support from the Reich and Prussian governments, aiming to produce highly qualified researchers and translators in preparation for foreign services, addressing the practical and theoretical needs of the time (Kampffmeyer 1923: 347–350). Even at the level of party work involved in colonial politics, we find the interest of the leader of the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SPD), August Bebel (1840–1913), who edited the publication of "The Mohammedan-Arab Cultural Period" (Die Mohammedanisch-Arabische Kulturperiode) (Matthias 2023).

During this period, nationalistic sentiments emphasized the transcendent apostolic role of the German nation in civilizing and colonizing "backward" peoples. Numerous Orientalists, including Friedrich Naumann, Ernst Rieke, and Ernst Friedrich Hasse (1846-1908) the second president of the Pan-German League (Alldeutscher Verband 1891-1939) - A radical national association- advocated for German expansion and called for a German protectorate over Mesopotamia, Syria, and the Arabian Peninsula (Kruck 1954: 36–39). The German press also echoed this sentiment, as Die Welt am Montag stated in its editorial: 'Only Turkey can be India for Germany' (Sinno 2007: 63–64).

III. The Structural Evolution of German Orientalism: 1900–1908

The significant changes that occurred in Germany in the final quarter of the nineteenth century led to a shift in the country's approach to imperialism, resulting in the diminishing power of religious culture and the undoing of the effects of the feudal system on power centralization, economic privatization, and the infusion of large sums of money. As all disciplines rapidly embraced developmental theories, the spirit of adventure and faith in scientific ideals permeated the field of economics. Consequently, Oriental studies had to embody this fresh spirit of invention and academic freedom.

Suzanna Marchand, a German Orientalist historian, coined the term "second Orientalist renaissance" to describe this transformative period between 1871 and 1900. Marchand drew parallels between these changes and the first European Renaissance, which saw the Latinization of Greek texts after the fall of Constantinople, and the first Oriental Renaissance, marked by the arrival of Sanskrit texts and the decoding of ancient Eastern languages. The characteristics of this second Orientalist renaissance focused on the theology, philology, and heritage of the East (Marchand 2009: 156–161).

Notably, the term "Orientalist Renaissance" was initially used by Edgar Quinet in The Genius of Religions, published in 1841. However, it was not until 1950, with the publication of Raymond Schwab's Die Orientalische Renaissanc (The Oriental Renaissance) (Schwab 1984: XXIII), that the term became part of the German historical lexicon. Marchand's framing and formulation of the Second Orientalist Renaissance became fundamental to the German state structure until the early twentieth century, shifting the emphasis from individual efforts and the leadership of senior Orientalists to the influence of Orientalism in literature and poetry (Marchand 2009: 156–161).

The "fin de siècle" crisis characterized the end of the nineteenth century—impacting all human sciences, including Oriental studies—and was marked by prevailing pessimism, isolation, and feasibility concerns, as Husserl articulates in *The Crisis of European Sciences*. This crisis raised fundamental questions about the purpose of the universe and human life, and the ability to navigate a world where history seemed to be an unending series of impulses, delusions, and painful disappointments (Husserl 2008: 44).

In this context, pioneers such as Maximilian Karl-Emil Weber (1864–1920) and Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) played significant roles in introducing new theories to the humanities. Their contributions added new dimensions to social and historical studies, emphasizing that historical events occur within societies, forming systems with values and rules that govern social behavior. This perspective enables a deeper understanding of social change. The objectives of classic Orientalism, based on the notion of civilizational superiority and the central role of a superior civilization over the East regarding culture and religion, conflict with this evolving paradigm. The traditional view that Islamic texts are fraudulent imitations of Jewish and Christian faiths is no longer sufficient to explain the reality of contemporary Islamic societies. The limitations of the general Orientalist understanding have become increasingly apparent (Morrison 2006: 3–5).

The rise of Karl Heinrich Becker (1876-1933) as a leading figure in contemporary German Oriental schools marked a milestone in the trajectory of modern Orientalism. Becker, a renowned jurist of the nineteenth century, was taught by

Heinrich Lebrecht Fleischer, a German Orientalist (Irwin 2006: 198). Becker blended traditional Orientalism, Wilhelmian ambitions, and the modern theories of Max Weber articulated in *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). Similarly, Émile Durkheim's work influenced Becker, particularly in *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912). Becker's fusion of religious sociology and Oriental studies culminated in the publication of his thesis, *Christianity and Islam* (1907), which represents the maturity of the modern German Oriental School, referred to by Marchand as the Second Orientalist Renaissance. Becker's approach focuses on understanding the influence of religion on human behavior and social activity, clarifying the nature of modern social and political environments (Herman 2014: 11–12; Irwin 2006: 198–199; Morrison 2006: 4).

In *Christianity and Islam*, Becker sought to situate Islam as a civilization within the context of global history. He argued that Christianity and Islam are complex systems, and their core principles have changed significantly since the time of Christ and Muhammad owing to various factors. Becker challenged the conventional Orientalist philosophy, which often viewed the Qur'an as a distortion of the Torah or the Bible. Instead, he acknowledged the historical significance of the Qur'an as a document from Muhammad to the present. His innovative perspective highlights the historical connections and borrowing of ideas between early Christianity and Islam. By approaching Islam from a historical standpoint, Becker aimed to dispel misconceptions and make foreign ideas, such as the Islamic religion and its culture, less alien to Western society (Herman 2014: 13–14). As he stated, the historical method should not shy away from its consequences, unlike when critiquing Christianity, where preconceived notions often cloud inquiries (Becker 1909: 1ff).

Becker's career encompassed academic work as an Orientalist and political involvement in German imperialism. He utilized Orientalism for colonial purposes, leveraging his understanding of Islamic cultural history to support Germany's endeavors in the East. Becker's ideas were preceded by Martin Hartmann (1851-1919), who advocated for the defense of the Ottoman Empire and engaged in activities on its behalf in his work, *Islamic East*. Hartmann emphasized the employment of knowledge about the modern East within the German political framework, focusing on modern Islamic society and its contemporary issues, particularly in the Turkish and Arab media. Hartmann's influence and political connections within Ottoman circles, along with his credibility in German political circles, allowed him to contribute to his experiences and writings. He authored over a thousand articles on contemporary Islam and participated in establishing the *Alam al-Islam* magazine, which focused on modern Islam (Avcı 2019: 470–485; Herman 2014: 11–12; Berman 2011: 160; Alsayed 2016: 34–35).

Becker further shaped Orientalist policy regarding Germany's colonial pursuits in Africa and its alliance with the Ottoman Empire. He engaged in correspondence and meetings with Hartmann, and his involvement with the "Colonial Institute" allowed him to develop a new philosophy for the institute, drawing inspiration from the French and British Orientalist schools. The potential role of Orientalism in penetrating and furthering the higher interests of the German nation was emphasized (Avcı 2019: 470–473; Alsayed 2016: 34–35).

IV. The Impact of the Visit of the German Kaiser to the Ottoman Empire on Strengthening German Influence in the Ottoman Empire

After his first visit to the Ottoman Empire in 1889, Kaiser Wilhelm II was mesmerized by the allure and beauty of Istanbul (also known as Constantinople) and returned after establishing his political and economic ties with the latter. His second visit occurred between October 16 and November 12, 1898, less than ten years later. New German trends were symbolized by the intense rush toward the East, the center of world politics. These visits occurred at a crucial time for the Ottoman Empire during its wars with the Armenians in 1895 and the Greeks in 1897 (Sinno 2007: 349–356; Schelfter 1998: 13-47).

Goltz Phasha (1843–1916) explained in *Anatolische Ausflüge* (Travels in Anatolia) that he tried to convince Germans sympathetic to the Armenians that Balkan immigrants, due to the crisis, were good workers in various German productive sectors. This was in response to those who claimed that what happened to the Armenians was due to jealousy and laziness, which were believed to be dominant features of Muslim peasants and workers. After the Greek War, Goltz Phasha wrote *Militärische Wochenblatt* (Military Weekly Papers), which he later developed into a book describing Ottoman military

organizations positively. He attributed the development of the Ottoman military to the Germans due to the Prussian mission. In this book, he described his visions for military development and Ottoman Empire reform as a future ally (Goltz 1896: vol. VIIIl; Gummer 2010: 47–48).

The primary purpose of the visit was to further German interest in the Ottoman Empire. The Kaiser was referred to as the "Godfather of German industry," which was the headline of the *Die Neue Freie Presse* (The New Free Press, October 12–15, 1898). Foreign Minister Graf von Bernhard von Bulow believed that the visit created new opportunities for German capital and significant investments—such as in agricultural growth and industrial production—and that Bismarck's previous policy had ended (Rathmann 1961: 164–166). The German consul in Istanbul aimed to give giant corporations control over funds and export trade, run frequent ship excursions to Ottoman ports, strengthen the trade and market information network, and enhance its influence and penetration (Rathmann 1961: 166–168).

The visit reflected the extent of the impact of Orientalism and its ability to attract attention from the Arab and Ottoman press. The Arab region within the Ottoman Empire included Hejaz, Iraq, and the Levant. Egypt was under British colonial control, which portrayed the German Kaiser as the loyal friend of the Ottoman Sultan. Newspaper headlines were characterized by reverence and respect for the German state and the ruling family. Headlines of the Ottoman newspaper Al-Hilal and the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram described the Kaiser as "the most active and energetic king of Europe" (Al-Hilal 1898 no. 19) and "the greatest king of the world and a great leader." (*Al-Ahram* 1898 no. 6257).

In contrast, newspapers that opposed Ottoman policy, such as *Al-Muqattam* and *Al-Moayad* in Egypt, began to attack the extravagant strategy followed by the Ottoman government, running headlines such as, "What does the Emperor say about us?"(Al-Mokattam 1898, no. 2832) The Syrian, Lebanese, and Turkish press admired Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid and his distinguished guest, referring to them as the "Sultan's closest friend" and the "Spanish self's most devoted monarch," respectively. The visit's politicization was considerably emphasized in Ottoman publications, as evidenced by the following sentence from the *Thamarāt al Funūn*: "The Commander of the Faithful and the Dean of all Islam receives the great one of the West and the Dean of Europe." (1898, no. 1204).

The German Kaiser's statements influenced the public and private spheres, whether he was in Astana or the Holy Land. People of various stations were moved by these speeches. *Thamarāt al Funūn* newspaper claimed that tears flowed from the Empress' eyes as she left Istanbul for Jerusalem (1898, no. 1204). The prince of poets, Ahmad Shawqi (1869–1922), wrote a poem titled "Great One of People Is He Who Weeps for the Greats," influenced by the Kaiser's speech in Damascus and his visit to the tomb of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi (Shawqiy 1951: 255):

"Is there a messenger who can convey to 'Gallium' about me
A satisfying message to that high rank?
May God protect you from a king who takes care of his kingdom.
Do you know which sultan you are greeting?
Moreover, which kingdom are you sending your regards to?"

During his visit, the German Kaiser primarily addressed three topics: the gracious welcome that stemmed from the friendship between Germany and the Ottoman Empire, support for Germany's presence in the Empire, and loyalty to Muslims and the Ottoman Sultan in his capacity as the Caliph of the Muslims (Sinno 2007: 361–364). The three topics are summarized as follows:

The Gracious Welcome

"The amenities that Sultan Abdul Hamid provided were similar to the compassion of a father for his son, and that of the two nations, despite their differences... can be loyal, love, and support each other." (*Thamarat Al-Funun* 1898, no. 1204) The Damascus newspaper *Al-Sabah* quoted the Kaiser's delegation:

"I have not witnessed a throng that welcomed a king and cheered at his presence more than the people of Damascus welcomed him... Damascus is the most gorgeous place on earth. If my people travel to these nations, they may discover how kings are welcomed in the East." (*Almsbah* 1898, no. 1281).

Support for the German Presence in the Ottoman Empire

The Kaiser's statements reflected the success of his eastern policy, especially regarding Orientalism, and his ability to use it for the settlement and protection of German Protestant and Catholic minorities. He foresaw potential victory for the Germanic element and culture within the Ottoman state, praising German schools and their role in spreading German culture. When meeting with the Temple group, which had settled in Palestine in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Kaiser expressed his happiness with the group's preservation of ties to the motherland. He noted that he would confer with his friend, the Sultan, to ensure the continuity of their settlement. Simultaneously, he assured the German Catholic subjects in Palestine that he would build a church for them, as he had for the Protestant subjects, on the plot of land given to him by his friend Sultan Abdul Hamid, stressing the special royal care for them (*Al-Manar* 1898/ 1315 AH vol. 36: 713).

Loyalty to Muslims and the Sultan

The words were chosen with great care, informed by an understanding of the East and the factors that resonate with its people's emotions, prepared by an Orientalist well-versed in the region's culture. This is evident from the Kaiser's speech in Damascus, where he expressed his happiness at being in a city "where the greatest kings lived, teaching their enemies how to be heroes" -it was a reference to Salah al-Din's treatment of the Crusaders after he entered Jerusalem in 1187-. Regarding Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the Kaiser noted, "I am grateful to the great Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan for his honest love and lovely compliments, Your Honor. May His Majesty Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan II and the 300 million Muslims, who are widely dispersed over the world and who are closely linked to his great caliphate, know that the Emperor of Germany will always be kind to them." (*Thamarat Al Funun* 1898, no. 1207).

This language remained the central theme of German policy towards the Ottoman Empire until the end of World War I. Furthermore, military plans for jihad against infidels and a plan for Muslims in the colonies of allied countries to revolt were established.

V. The Islamic League and German Orientalism:

As we saw previously in the visit of the German Kaiser claiming to protect Muslims, we find that it intersects with Abdul Hamid's policy of seeking legitimacy as the Caliph of Muslims. Successive political evolutions of Islam, the Ottoman Empire combined Turkish customs, Sufi activities in hostile border regions, and Sunni Islam based on the Hanafi school of thought. The nation established its hegemony and European presence through force and a new form of government that incorporated diverse elements into an unprecedented historical social fabric. This social fabric allowed many religious and ethnic groups to actively engage in a government that combined direct and indirect rule.

After the Mongols captured Baghdad in 1258 and the caliphate became vacant, the Ottoman sultans did not seek to become traditional caliphs or appoint a Hashemite as a nominal caliph like the Mamluks in Egypt. The Ottoman sultan neither called himself the caliph of Muslims nor claimed rights to the caliphate. During the empire's expansion toward the Arab world, the Ottoman sultan assumed the leadership of Muslims through control over the Islamic holy lands of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem. Under this system, the Ottoman sultan became the axis of the state, and the state could not function appropriately without effective leadership. However, starting from the seventeenth century, the era of strong Ottoman sultans ended, giving way to an era of weak sultans. This period was marked by the emergence of the "Grand Vizier" and the Sheikh of Islam as the second most important personalities in the state. Behind them, the influence of the harem (women of the caliphate palace) and the weakening of the army resulted in the overall corruption of the administration (Hourani 1977: 40–42).

Sultan Abdul Hamid II inherited a challenging legacy of internal and external concerns. He came to power as a result of the Constitution and the turmoil of 1876–1878. While the Sunni Islamist State was entirely under his control after he abolished the Constitution, he did not exercise absolute power over all his people, including Christians, Jews, and numerous Sunni and Shiite adherents. His interest in asserting his leadership as caliph over Muslims grew, particularly to counter European countries governing Muslim subjects, such as those in the Caucasus and Turkmenistan under Russian rule, Muslim Arabs in North Africa under French colonialism, and India, the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, and Sudan under British colonialism (Hourani 1977: 135–136).

Sultan Abdul Hamid gathered individuals who supported the concepts of the "Islamic League" and the Ottoman League, both of which aimed to unite the elements of the state and its various constituents around the Ottoman ruling family, transcending its Turkish origins. Their goal was to achieve solidarity and halt the colonial advancement of Muslims while affirming the symbolism and status of the Muslim people. Among the prominent figures who embraced this proposition were Ahmad Fares al-Shidyaq (Lebanese, 1804–1887), a writer, poet, and owner of a printing press in Istanbul; Ahmad Dhafer al-Makki (1829–1907), a Sufi following the Shadhili order; Sheikh Fadl Al-Alawi (1825–1900) from Hadramout; and Sheikh Abu Ali al-Sayyadi (1850–1910), a follower of the Rifa'i order and Abdul Hamid's closest associate. Other key personalities involved in formulating the idea of the Islamic League included Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897) and Sheikh Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905). They co-published the *al-Urwa al-Wuthqa* magazine in Cairo (Hourani 1977: 136–140).

Wilhelm II recognized the importance of the Islamic League and its thinkers as an opportunity to advance his country's interests. He strengthened alliances between Germany and the Ottoman Empire, becoming one of the most important financial supporters of Ottoman projects, particularly those involving arms and railways. His support was crucial during the Moroccan crisis, as he actively worked to protect the interests of the Ottoman Empire. His visit to Tangier reaffirmed the alliance with the Ottoman Empire and highlighted the role of Sultan Abdul Hamid II as a caliph for Muslims (Sinno 2007: 361–364). The discourse of the Islamic League influenced thinkers of the time to believe that Wilhelm II had converted to Islam and saw his visit as confirmation of the success of Orientalist discourse and the policy of the Islamic League. Moreover, they found that it is a chance to resist colonial influence and create centers of power outside direct Ottoman control (Mahafaza 1981: 18–19).

The following examples illustrate how religion has participated in identity formation amidst the West's dominance over the East, and the role of the Islamic League in German colonial and Orientalist mentalities. The fundamental idea that emerged from the prolonged conflict between the East and West caused global division into two regions: Islam, considered the home of peace, and the West, considered the world of war. However, this did not imply the absence of coexistence and mutual influence, which became particularly evident during the colonial era.

The Boxer Rebellion in China (1898–1901) was characterized by heightened nationalism and a desire to end colonial rule over the country. It can also be described as a revolt of Chinese traditions and customs against Western imperialist and capitalist rule. It was primarily directed at the ruling Chinese emperor and the complex and poor living conditions of the Chinese people, who suffered from corruption in government and business. The center of this revolt was in China's Muslim-dominated provinces. European citizens—such as clerics, businesspeople, and staff members of European consulates, including two German nuns and one German minister—were the focus of the waves of violence. To save the Chinese emperor and European communities there, the colonial nations worked together under the direction of Germany, which was able to seize control of Beijing, the capital, and several other areas. However, this was insufficient to end the revolution that persisted in various provinces of China. German troops, in particular, engaged in punitive actions against Chinese villagers; villages were destroyed, and more than 400 locals were killed, further escalating tensions. The Boxer Rebellion ultimately failed to achieve its goals. The intervention of foreign powers suppressed the uprising and forced China to accept harsh terms in the Boxer Protocol. The event accelerated the decline of the Qing dynasty and paved the way for the rise of revolutionary forces in China (Muramatsu 1953: 236–261).

Germany sought to leverage all available resources to suppress the Boxer Rebellion. This included requesting the Ottoman Sultan, as the Caliph of Muslims, to use his religious authority to condemn the rebellion through Germany's ambassador in Istanbul. The Sultan was also persuaded to send forces to participate in the elimination of the Rebellion. When proposing that, he gathered 14,000 soldiers and urged Muslim subjects not to participate in the revolution. However, the Sultan was not enthusiastic about siding with the European faction, who were greedy for his property, and fighting his religious brothers, especially since Ottoman public opinion was biased toward revolution. The Sultan used the pretext of financial incapability to avoid sending military forces. With the expansion of the revolution, the German Kaiser appealed to the Sultan again, urging him to intervene, concluding by saying: "The time has come for the Sultan to prove to the world

that his influence as a caliph over Muslims extends to the depths of China." (Sinno 2007: 257–261) The Sultan succeeded in what the German ambassador called Abdul Hamid's "manipulations" by sending a futile delegation (Sinno 2007: 262).

During Kaiser Wilhelm II's visit to Tangier in 1905, the 1904 cordial agreement between France and Britain significantly challenged Germany and its Islamic policy. Germany responded with a swift visit by the Kaiser to Morocco, which tested the seriousness of the new alliance and dealt a solid blow to this policy. This affirmed Berlin's commitment to an alliance with the Ottoman Empire. In a speech he delivered in Tangier, the German Kaiser emphasized Sultan Abdul Hamid II's leadership of the Islamic League as the caliph of Muslims and, at the same time, stressed the independence and sovereignty of the Moroccan state (Sinno 2007: 262).

Germany became part of the Moroccan issue when it persuaded the Sultan of Morocco to request the 1906 Algeciras International Conference, attended by most European nations and the United States. Germany showed the Moroccans that it was committed to upholding the independence of their state and defended Moroccan interests when they refused to sign the conference agreement until it received the Sultan of Morocco's approval, even though the conference highlighted French and Spanish interests in Morocco. Consequently, Moroccan egos were satisfied. The Germans continued negotiating with France about Morocco to secure colonial advantages in other areas. In 1911, Germany gained colonial rule over the Congo in exchange for its exit from Morocco (Hamid 2016: 1–20; Batrawi 2017: 246–257; Faris 1961: 288–290).

This discourse persuaded theorists from the Islamic League—led by Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Sheikh Muhammad Abdo—of friendship and loyalty to the Kaiser's Reich government and the Muslims and their fateful issues. This led individuals associated with Abdul Hamid's close circle to believe in and promote the conversion of the German Kaiser Wilhelm II to Islam. This was not merely a suggestion, as in his visit to Damascus, but rather a direct and open invitation from the owners of the *Nebras Al-Masharqa* newspaper, Sheikh Qasim bin Saeed Al-Shamakhi 1857-1915 - was an Ibadi cleric and thinker from Libya. He was educated in Cairo and became a prominent figure in the Islamic revival movement - (Al-Shaibani 2015: 1–10) and his student and companion, Sheikh Mustafa bin Ismail Al-Omari Al-Faridi, to the German Emperor to convert to Islam. This invitation was not the first sent to the German Emperor. An in-depth reading of the tow invitation (Al-Shammakhi and Ibn Ismail's letter to Wilhelm II regarding his call to Islam, February 24, 1906, Appendix no.5 in: Sinno 2007: 546-547) notes the intersection of the success of the Orientalist discourse and the policy of the Islamic League, as it came in the invitation:

"...from the two brothers in God Almighty... to the source of intelligence and the source of loftiness and leadership among the noble kings of the West, the friend of Muslims and the ally of the Commander of the Faithful, the Emperor Gallium II... May God grant him success for the benefit of his people and the reformation of the country…" (Sinno 2007: 546).

In the context of emphasizing the success of the German speech and its effects on Muslims, they said the following (Sinno 2007: 546-547):

"…Your loyalty and obedience to our esteemed master, Abdul Hamid II, has brought immeasurable joy and happiness to all Muslims. We recognize and appreciate your fulfilment of the sacred covenant, a testament to your unwavering commitment... The bond between you, the Muslim Ummah, and our Caliph is unbreakable… We urged you to rethink our earlier pleas... We stressed the need for wise leadership in guiding the Muslim world. ...so we could form a united nation, including the Emperor's honor, his nation, and the Mikado of Japan—after the defeat of Russia from Japan 1904–1905—and his nation, and the Caliph Abdul Hamid and his nation, all under God's banner, free from false worship...".

In addition to calling for an alliance between the anti-French, Russian, and British forces, this invitation expresses the hopes and aspirations of pioneers in the Islamic League who wanted to resist colonial influence. The invitation simultaneously expresses the extent of Abdul Hamid's success in creating centers of power outside his direct control in the Islamic world. It also reflects the extent to which propaganda and Orientalist thought succeeded in influencing Islamic groups, which later justified calls for support for Germany, not in World War I, but in World War II during the rise of Nazism.

VI. Results

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, as Orientalism developed in its scientific, cognitive, and colonial dimensions, the Ottoman Empire became crucial for Germany's expanding economy and its aspiration to participate significantly in international politics, particularly in Eastern issues. This encouraged a closer alignment between Oriental studies and liberal discourse, especially among proponents of the Islamic League. They saw in this discourse an opportunity, albeit the lesser of two evils, to present Germany as a benevolent protector of the Ottoman Empire, distinct from other European powers harboring colonial ambitions, like France, Britain, and Russia. It aimed to create an ideal image of Germany from the perspective of the East's public and private spheres.

So, by confirming the study's hypothesis, the research concludes that the simultaneous rise of German penetration into the Ottoman Empire and the development of German Orientalist studies directly precipitated the German-Ottoman alliance. German Orientalist discourse profoundly impacted various forms of Islamic thought. This was exemplified by Germany's embrace of the Islamic League concept and its successful efforts to influence Ottoman public opinion. Ultimately, the cultivation of strong relationships with the Ottoman military and political elite allowed Germany to deeply entrench itself within the Ottoman Empire.

Furthermore, the study concluded that German Orientalist discourse was evident during the German Emperor's visit, particularly in his appeals to Ottoman public sentiment, as extensively reflected in contemporary press coverage. The Emperor's speeches in Jerusalem and Damascus, notably formulated by Durkheim—a key figure in German Orientalism—subsequently prepared German public opinion for an alliance with an Islamic state, a nation historically perceived as an existential threat to European powers.

The study also concluded that the German invasion of the Ottoman Empire was influenced by Orientalism, shaping the characteristics and dynamics of German-Ottoman relations. German Orientalism was significant in defining this relationship, and the shared discourse aimed to understand contemporary Oriental society. Germany sought to rival European powers and expand its regional and international influence, and the Ottomans, aiming to counter European ambitions, contributed to and reinforced this discourse. This was evident in the German Kaiser's visit, its impact on the Ottoman press, and the transformation of German Orientalism to serve its penetration into various aspects of the Ottoman Empire, including its economy, politics, and culture.

Declaration of interest statement:

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

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