

The Global Authoritarian Moment and the Revolt against Empire

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IN THE YEARS OF THE Second World War, Berlin became a hub of global anti-imperial revolutionary activism. Between 1941 and 1945, scores of anticolonial leaders flocked to Germany, among them Indians, most famously Subhas Chandra Bose; prominent Arabs, including the Iraqi nationalist Rashid ‘Ali al-Kaylani, the Syrian rebel leader Fawzi al-Qawuqji, and Amin al-Husayni, the notorious Mufti of Jerusalem; Irish radicals, such as Seán Russell; and nationalist revolutionaries from Central Asia and the Caucasus—Turkestanis, Azerbaijanis, Chechens, and others. One of these men, the Arab nationalist Yunus Bahri, exulted in his memoirs about wartime Germany’s anticolonial international: “Delegations from oppressed, colonized, and occupied lands such as the Maghrib, Russia, the Arab lands, and India were coming to Berlin, which was victorious on all battlefields.”¹ Many of them saw Germany as an ally in their struggle for a new world order. They set up political committees. They published their own papers. They convened congresses, calling for the liberation of the oppressed peoples. Some even made efforts to organize military and paramilitary units. The Nazi regime increasingly tried to employ these groups politically. Although Berlin never established anything like the Communist International or Japan’s pan-Asian alliance, it did make substantial efforts to mobilize anticolonial movements.

To date, this anticolonial international has received little attention.² In fact, historians have often dismissed Germany’s cooperation with anticolonial nationalists

¹ Yunus Bahri, *Huna Birlin! Hayya al-‘Arab! [This Is Berlin! Long Live the Arabs!]*, vol. 3: *Hitlir wa’l-Shuyu’iyya [Hitler and Communism]* (Beirut, n.d.), 87.

² Historians have so far mainly studied some individual anticolonial nationalists who came to Germany during the war in isolation, and not as part of a broader phenomenon.

during the Second World War as insignificant, assuming that the regime's racism and uncompromising policies did not leave room for such alliances.³ It was "Hitler's brutal

On al-Husayni, see Klaus Gensicke, *The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Nazis: The Berlin Years, 1941–1945*, trans. Alexander Fraser Gunn (London, 2011). On Bose, see Romain Hayes, *Subhas Chandra Bose in Nazi Germany: Politics, Intelligence and Propaganda, 1941–43* (London, 2011); Jan Kuhlmann, *Netaji in Europe*, trans. Christel Das (New Delhi, 2012); and Sugata Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's Struggle against Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012), chap. 7. On Soviet nationalists, see Patrik von zur Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern: Der Nationalismus der sowjetischen Orientvölker im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf, 1971). And on Irish nationalists, see Carole J. Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika: German Espionage in Ireland in World War II* (Palo Alto, Calif., 1977), chaps. 8–11. Some important thoughts from a comparative perspective are offered by Daniel Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest: Liberal Imperialism and the Surveillance of Anticolonialists in Europe, 1905–1945* (Oxford, 2017), 187–194. Similarly, Germany's engagements in colonial and semicolonial territories have mainly been studied in isolation. On India, see Reimund Schnabel, *Tiger und Schakal: Deutsche Indienpolitik, 1941–1943* (Vienna, 1968); and Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War* (Stuttgart, 1981). On the Middle East, see Bernd Philipp Schröder, *Deutschland und der Mittlere Osten im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 1975); Heinz Tillmann, *Deutschlands Araberpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (East Berlin, 1965); Łukasz Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East* (London, 1966); and Francis R. Nicosia, *Nazi Germany and the Arab World* (Cambridge, 2014). On Central Asia and the Caucasus, see Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*. And on Ireland, see Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika*.

³ Milan Hauner noted that "the unique opportunity of encouraging anti-Western uprisings" in the colonial world "was not exploited," see Hauner, "The Professionals and the Amateurs in National Socialist Foreign Policy: Revolution and Subversion in the Islamic and Indian World," in Gerhard Hirschfeld and Lothar Kettenacker, eds., *The "Führer State": Myth and Reality—Studies on the Structure and Politics of the Third Reich* (Stuttgart, 1981), 305–328, here 326.

‘realism,’” Mark Mazower claims, that “deprived the Germans of the chance of exploiting nationalism as a tool of political warfare” in North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and beyond.⁴ Historians of empire have generally concurred. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper assure us that “Hitler”—for “ideological as well as practical reasons”—did not engage “effectively” in “the colonies of the countries Germany conquered” and “failed to make a systematic effort” to confront British imperialism.⁵ The reality was more complicated. Although the Nazi leadership initially showed little interest in the colonial world, in practice, as the tide of war turned against the Axis, various competing wings of the regime, for pragmatic reasons, began engaging in anti-imperial policies. This, in turn, provided anticolonial nationalists who were willing to work with Hitler’s Germany with remarkable opportunities to organize their struggles. Using the room and resources provided by Berlin, they forged a radical international against empire, characterized by transnational militancy and anticolonial solidarity.

This story can be seen as an episode in a wider history. As nationalist movements across the imperial world gained momentum in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, governments increasingly made efforts to support them in order to undermine the sovereignty of their adversaries’ empires.⁶ The list of examples is long.

⁴ Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: Nazi Rule in Occupied Europe* (London, 2008), 588–590, quote from 588.

⁵ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J., 2010), 405.

⁶ On the Crimean War, see Mara Kozelsky, “Casualties of Conflict: Crimean Tatars during the Crimean War,” *Slavic Review* 67, no. 4 (2008): 866–891. On the Austro-Prussian War, see Andreas Kienast, *Die Legion Klapka: Eine Episode aus dem Jahre 1866 und ihre Vorgeschichte* (Vienna, 1900). On Imperial Germany’s courtship of anti-imperial movements in the First World War, see Fritz Fischer, *Germany’s Aims in the First World War* (New York, 1967); and, reassessing Fischer’s contribution on the

During the Crimean War, the British, French, and Ottoman empires supported national minorities in the southern borderlands of the Tsarist Empire. In the Austro-Prussian War, the Prussian military armed Hungarian nationalists against the Habsburg Empire. The most significant efforts were made during the First World War, when London aided Arab independence movements in the Ottoman Empire; St. Petersburg supported Armenian, Kurdish, Assyrian, and other nationalists in the Ottoman Empire; Istanbul assisted Turkic revolutionaries in the Tsarist Empire; and Berlin launched a major anti-imperial scheme, backing nationalists in Poland, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkestan, Flanders, Ireland, Egypt, India, and beyond. As nationalism became the hegemonic discourse of sovereignty, the political order of multinational polities could be

subject, Jennifer Jenkins, “Fritz Fischer’s ‘Programme for Revolution’: Implications for a Global History of Germany in the First World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, no. 2 (2013): 397–417; and, providing more specific studies, Donald M. McKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I* (Kent, Ohio, 1998); Seppo Zetterberg, *Die Liga der Fremdvölker Russlands, 1916–1918: Ein Beitrag zu Deutschlands antirussischem Propagandakrieg unter den Fremdvölkern Russlands im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Helsinki, 1978); and Reinhard R. Doerries, “Introduction,” in Doerries, ed., *Prelude to the Easter Rising: Sir Roger Casement in Imperial Germany* (London, 2000), 1–31. On British support for Arab nationalists in the Ottoman Empire in the years of the First World War, see Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I* (London, 1993). On tsarist and Ottoman policies toward national groups in their respective states during the First World War, see David Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (Piscataway, N.J., 2006); Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, Calif., 2011); and Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908–1918* (Cambridge, 2011).

challenged from both within and without.⁷ In consequence, great power patronage of anti-imperial nationalist movements emerged as a major phenomenon in world politics, fundamentally challenging the existing relationship between sovereignty and territoriality.⁸ This phenomenon was part of a more general shift in the global order that took place throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, “from traditional diplomacy to population politics,” as Eric Weitz put it—“from mere territorial adjustments to the handling of entire population groups categorized by ethnicity, nationality, or race, or some combination thereof.”⁹

On the other side, the regime was attractive to the anticolonial nationalists who came to Berlin for a variety of reasons, both pragmatic and ideological. (Often these motivations were interconnected, although to some, one was more important than the other.) In pragmatic terms, it appeared to be a powerful ally against mutual enemies. In ideological terms, it represented the primacy of the nation and offered an alternative to the liberal imperial world order. It stood for a global order based on nation-states, not multiethnic empires. Moreover, to many of the anticolonialists, the regime had a

⁷ Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, “Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation,” in Eley and Suny, eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (Oxford, 1996), 3–38, here 19.

⁸ On this reconfiguration of territoriality and changes in the political geography of allegiance, see Charles S. Maier, “Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era,” *American Historical Review* 105, no. 3 (June 2000): 807–831; and, more detailed, Maier, *Once within Borders: Territories of Power, Wealth, and Belonging since 1500* (Cambridge, Mass., 2016).

⁹ Eric D. Weitz, “From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Missions,” *American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (December 2008): 1313–1343, here 1314–1315, quotes from 1314.

deeper ideological appeal, with its revolutionary nature, authoritarian nationalism, and anti-liberal vision of modernity.

Indeed, the story of Berlin's anticolonial nationalists may shed some light on the often neglected larger phenomenon of the impact of the global authoritarian surge on anti-imperial movements during the interwar and war years. Following the "Wilsonian moment" in 1919, when hopes for national self-determination outside of Europe were shattered, many anticolonial nationalists, disillusioned with liberal universalism and the liberal world order, turned to more radical allies and ideologies to achieve national independence.¹⁰ Some embraced communism, spread by the cadres of the Communist International.¹¹ Others turned to the new right-wing regimes, and at

¹⁰ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York, 2007); and, focusing on India and China, Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (December 2006): 1327–1351. More generally, on the crisis of empire and visions of alternative world orders in the interwar years, see Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2015).

¹¹ Stephen White, "Colonial Revolution and the Communist International, 1919–1924," *Science and Society* 40, no. 2 (1976): 173–193; Ronald Grigor Suny, "'Don't Paint Nationalism Red': National Revolution and Socialist Anti-Imperialism," in Prasenjit Duara, ed., *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then* (New York, 2003), 176–198; Jean-François Fayet, "1919," in S. A. Smith, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Communism* (Oxford, 2014), 109–124, especially 119–124; Fredrik Petersson, "Imperialism and the Communist International," *Journal of Labor and Society* 20, no. 1 (2017): 23–42; and, more generally, Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism, 1917–1991*, trans. Allan Cameron (Oxford, 2014), chap. 2. Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton, N.J., 2009), offers a brilliant case study providing insights into interwar left-wing anticolonialism.

times embraced authoritarian nationalist and revolutionary visions of modernity—their models were Turkish Kemalism, Italian Fascism, and German National Socialism.¹²

In this global authoritarian moment, the rising revolutionary nationalist regimes had great appeal among anticolonial nationalists. They were considered an opportunity because of their hostility to the Versailles system and their antagonism toward their imperial oppressors. Ideologically, they stood for the nation and for a world organized along national and racial lines, not by multinational empires or socialist internationality. Moreover, around the world, nationalist anticolonial movements were influenced by ideals of strong leadership, militarism, physical discipline, and collectivism, by authoritarian principles of governance, and by the veneration of violence, which appeared to be superior to the liberal values of individualism, parliamentarism, and democracy.¹³ Forging an authoritarian, anti-liberal

¹² Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York, 2007), provides an important general account of these shifts from liberalism to nativism. Regional studies on right-wing and fascist anticolonial movements in the Middle East, South Asia, and beyond are discussed in the following note.

¹³ A global history of fascism remains to be written. On North Africa and the Middle East, see Stefan Wild, “National Socialism in the Arab Near East between 1933 and 1939,” *Die Welt des Islams* 25, no. 1/4 (1985): 126–173; Fritz Steppart, “Das Jahr 1933 und seine Folgen für die arabischen Länder des Vorderen Orients,” in Gerhard Schulz, ed., *Die große Krise der dreißiger Jahre: Vom Niedergang der Weltwirtschaft zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 1985), 261–278; and Mikloš Mendel and Zdeněk Müller, “Fascist Tendencies in the Levant in the 1930s and 1940s,” *Archív Orientální* 55, no. 1 (1987): 1–17; and, providing important case studies, Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian, and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932–1941* (London, 2006); Götz Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria and Lebanon: The Ambivalence of the German Option, 1933–1945* (London, 2009); Edmond Cao-Van-Hoa, “*Der Feind meines Feindes . . .*”: *Darstellungen des nationalsozialistischen Deutschland in*

anticolonialism, the most extreme took direct inspiration from Fascism and Nazism—from Syria’s Social Nationalists (al-Hizb al-Suri al-Qawmi al-Ijtima‘i) and Lebanon’s Phalanges (al-Kata’ib) to India’s National Patriots (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh),

ägyptischen Schriften (Frankfurt a.M., 1990); Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Confronting Fascism in Egypt: Dictatorship versus Democracy in the 1930s* (Stanford, Calif., 2010); and, on anti-fascist responses, the chapters in Israel Gershoni, ed., *Arab Responses to Fascism and Nazism: Attraction and Repulsion* (Austin, Tex., 2014). On South Asia, see Markus Daechsel, *The Politics of Self-Expression: The Urdu Middle-Class Milieu in Mid-Twentieth Century India and Pakistan* (London, 2006); Tobias Delfs, *Hindu-Nationalismus und europäischer Faschismus: Vergleich, Transfer- und Beziehungsgeschichte* (Hamburg, 2008); and Maria Framke, *Delhi-Rom-Berlin: Die indische Wahrnehmung von Faschismus und Nationalsozialismus, 1922–1939* (Darmstadt, 2013); as well as Sumit Sarkar, “The Fascism of the Sangh Parivar,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 5 (1993): 163–167; Mario Prayer, “Self, Other and *alter idem*: Bengali Internationalism and Fascist Italy in the 1920s and 30s,” *Calcutta Historical Journal* 26, no. 1 (2006): 1–32; Benjamin Zachariah, “Rethinking (the Absence of) Fascism in India, c. 1922–1945,” in Sugata Bose and Kris Manjappa, eds., *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones: South Asia and the Global Circulation of Ideas* (New York, 2010), 178–209; Zachariah, “A Voluntary *Gleichschaltung*? Perspectives from India towards a Non-Eurocentric Understanding of Fascism,” *Transcultural Studies*, no. 2 (2014): 63–100; and the contributions in Jairus Banaji, ed., *Fascism: Essays on Europe and India* (Delhi, 2013). On Indian Germanophilia more generally, see Kris Manjappa, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014). On Central Asia and the Caucasus, see Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 14–43. On Africa, see Patrick J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era* (Hanover, N.H., 1991); Jonathan Derrick, *Africa’s “Agitators”: Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West, 1918–1939* (New York, 2008), 361–382; and, focusing on Italian Africa, Luigi Goglia, “Sulle organizzazioni fasciste indigene nelle colonie africane d’Italia,” in Giuliana Di Febo and Renato Moro, eds., *Fascismo e franchismo: Relazioni, immagini, rappresentazioni* (Soveria Mannelli, 2005), 173–212.

from the Young Egypt movement (Misr al-Fatah) to South Africa's Afrikaner Oxwagon Guard (Ossewabrandwag), to name but a few. In the end, during the war, significant numbers of anticolonial nationalists supported the Axis. While anticolonial revolutionaries across Asia sided with Japan, others aligned themselves with Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy.¹⁴ Although they did not represent the majority of anticolonial nationalists, they nonetheless formed a significant global movement—and there is no better place to study this phenomenon than in the microcosm of wartime Berlin, where some of their key proponents assembled.¹⁵

While historians have shown much interest in the surge of anticolonial nationalist movements in the aftermath of the First World War, their works have mainly focused on nationalists who embraced (Wilsonian) liberalism and socialism.

¹⁴ Eri Hotta, *Pan-Asianism and Japan's War, 1931–1945* (New York, 2007), provides an overview of Japan's wartime engagement with anticolonial nationalists. Other important works on the subject are Willard H. Elsbree, *Japan's Role in Southeast Asian Nationalist Movements, 1940 to 1945* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953); Joyce C. Lebra, "Introduction," in Lebra, ed., *Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere in World War II: Selected Readings and Documents* (Oxford, 1975), ix–xxi; Lebra, *Japanese-Trained Armies in Southeast Asia* (New York, 1977); and Jeremy A. Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2019). Renzo De Felice, *Il fascismo e l'Oriente: Arabi, Ebrei e indiani nella politica di Mussolini* (Bologna, 1988), offers insights into Italy's engagement with Indian and Arab anticolonial nationalists.

¹⁵ Gregory Mann has emphasized the role of locality as a unit of historical analysis in studying broader trends in colonial history. See Mann, "Locating Colonial Histories: Between France and West Africa," *American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (April 2005): 409–434, here 410. For the context of a European metropolis, see Michael Goebel, "The Capital of the Men without a Country: Migrants and Anticolonialism in Interwar Paris," *American Historical Review* 121, no. 5 (December 2016): 1444–1467; and, more generally, Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third-World Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2015).

Less attention has been paid to those anticolonial revolutionaries who turned to right-wing regimes and embraced a more extreme, authoritarian nationalism. We need to put this group back on our map. We can thereby draw on the trend in the study of anti-imperial movements, reflected most notably in the works of Cemil Aydin, Erez Manela, and Michael Goebel, which has emphasized the importance of transnational and transimperial connections in the history of anti-imperial nationalism.¹⁶

United in their global struggle against the imperial world order, Berlin's anticolonial revolutionaries formed a nationalist international against empire. Strikingly, this was an internationalism that takes us beyond conventional forms of liberal or socialist internationalism.¹⁷ Interacting across ethnic, national, and imperial boundaries, these nationalists were also remarkably cosmopolitan. While generations of scholars, from Jacques Derrida to Homi Bhabha, have studied the phenomenon of cosmopolitanism as both idea and practice, pointing to its various forms shaped by historical conditions, they have generally assumed it to be the opposite of

¹⁶ Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*; Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*; and Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*. Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial, 1890–1920: Resistance in Interaction* (Oxford, 2002), provides an excellent theoretical perspective on this history.

¹⁷ Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia, 2013); Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge, 2017); and the contributions in Ali Raza, Franziska Roy, and Benjamin Zachariah, eds., *The Internationalist Moment: South Asia, Worlds, and World Views, 1917–39* (London, 2015). Yet fascist internationalism has been studied less, and even then it is considered as a European, not a global, phenomenon. Madeleine Herren, "Fascist Internationalism," in Sluga and Clavin, *Internationalisms*, 191–212, ignores the colonial world. Arnd Bauerkämper mentions it briefly in "Interwar Fascism in Europe and Beyond: Toward a Transnational Radical Right," in Martin Durham and Margaret Power, eds., *New Perspectives on the Transnational Right* (London, 2010), 39–66, here 52–53.

nationalism.¹⁸ Yet there is no necessary contradiction between particularist nationalism and universalist cosmopolitanism. A cosmopolitanism that implicitly recognized differences between nations could also be embraced by the most ardent nationalists. Wartime Berlin's anticolonial milieu was characterized by a reactionary cosmopolitanism, which served its members as a means to pursue their radical nationalist agendas.

The relationship between Berlin's anticolonial revolutionaries and the regime was full of tensions. Whereas the Germans sought to use the exiles to destabilize their adversaries' territories, the exiles sought practical assistance for their liberation struggles and official recognition of their legitimacy and their countries' sovereignty. More generally, this history can widen our understanding of political exiles in modern history.¹⁹ Although historians have shown much interest in émigré communities, they

¹⁸ Glenda Sluga and Julia Horne, "Cosmopolitanism: Its Past and Practices," *Journal of World History* 21, no. 3 (2010): 369–373, provides a brief historiographical and conceptual discussion. Bernhard Gißibl and Isabella Löhr, eds., *Bessere Welten: Kosmopolitismus in den Geschichtswissenschaften* (Frankfurt a.M., 2017), offers a more general overview and good case studies. Other important historical case studies are Nico Slate, *Colored Cosmopolitanism: The Shared Struggle for Freedom in the United States and India* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012); Seema Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 2015); and the essays in Bose and Manjapra, *Cosmopolitan Thought Zones*. On the study of cosmopolitanism more generally, see the contributions in Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, eds., *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis, 1998); Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds., *Cosmopolitanism* (Durham, N.C., 2002); and Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, eds., *The Cosmopolitanism Reader* (Cambridge, 2010).

¹⁹ Yossi Shain, *The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State* (Middletown, Conn., 1989); and the essays in Shain, ed., *Governments-in-Exile in*

have given little attention to the geopolitics of political exiles. Yet the study of political émigré communities can provide insights into the history of geopolitical patronage relationships, illuminating the myriad mechanisms of great power exploitation of these groups as well as the exiles' techniques of utilizing their protector states. It demonstrates that exile politicians can almost never be reduced to one role, as they were usually instruments of their patrons, intermediaries, and independent actors, with their own political interests and worldviews, at the same time.

FOLLOWING GERMANY'S LOSS of its colonies at Versailles, German colonialist circles worked throughout the 1920s and 1930s for the restoration of the overseas empire, promoting their country as a "model colonizer," a phenomenon that has been described as colonialism without colonies.²⁰ Yet at the same time, the loss (and lack) of its colonies gave Germans on both the left and the right the opportunity to claim that they were interested in the liberation of colonized peoples.

The Nazi regime initially pursued no clear line in its policies toward the colonial world. Some factions—mainly the imperialist conservative circles around Hitler's self-proclaimed chief colonialist, Franz Xaver Ritter von Epp—advocated

Contemporary World Politics (New York, 1991); and, more generally, Paul Tabori, *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study* (London, 1972).

²⁰ Sebastian Conrad, *German Colonialism: A Short History*, trans. Sorcha O'Hagan (Cambridge, 2012), provides an overview of German colonial empire and its loss at Versailles. On colonialism without colonies after 1919, see Wolfe W. Schmokel, *Dream of Empire: German Colonialism, 1919–1945* (New Haven, Conn., 1964). On the idea of the "model colonizer," see Michelle R. Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Athens, Ohio, 2014), 8–9; and, for an excellent case study, "Conclusion: Making Askari Myths," *ibid.*, 207–212.

colonial expansion overseas and saw anticolonial movements as a threat to Europe's imperial hegemony.²¹ On the other side, however, there had always been an anticolonial wing in the Nazi Party. The earliest group was the party's so-called revolutionary "socialists," centered around the Strasser brothers, Gregor and Otto, who advocated the right of national self-determination in the colonial world.²² Railing against the liberal, capitalist, and imperialist world order, the "Strasser group" proposed that Germany should lead an "alliance of the oppressed peoples" against the victors of Versailles.²³ In the group's "Fourteen Theses on the German Revolution" of 1929, the suppression of "foreign peoples" was categorically rejected.²⁴

²¹ Klaus Hildebrand, *Vom Reich zum Weltreich: Hitler, NSDAP und die koloniale Frage, 1919–1945* (Munich, 1969); Alexandre Kum'a N'dumbe III, *Was wollte Hitler in Afrika? NS-Planungen für eine faschistische Neugestaltung Afrikas* (Frankfurt a.M., 1993); Karten Linne, *Deutschland jenseits des Äquators? Die NS-Kolonialplanungen für Afrika* (Berlin, 2008); and Willeke Sandler, *Empire in the Heimat: Colonialism and Public Culture in the Third Reich* (Oxford, 2018).

²² Reinhard Kühnl, *Die nationalsozialistische Linke, 1925–1930* (Meisenheim, 1966), 37–39, 108–126; Hildebrand, *Vom Reich zum Weltreich*, 237–247; and Klaus Hildebrand, *The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich* (London, 1973), 15–21. Some of these ideas may be traced back to 1919; see, for example, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, *Das Recht der jungen Völker* (Munich, 1919).

²³ Gregor Strasser, "Nationale Außenpolitik! Der Bund der unterdrückten Völker (17. Juli 1925)," in Strasser, ed., *Freiheit und Brot: Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften eines National-Sozialisten* (Berlin, 1928), 43–48. Another example is Strasser, "Der deutsche Landsknecht als Kanonenfutter gegen Rußland," *Völkischer Beobachter*, October 22, 1925, which called for an alliance of the "oppressed peoples," be they in India, China, or Egypt, against the "ring of the capitalist-imperialist world powers" and the "defenders of Versailles."

²⁴ Otto Strasser, "14 Thesen der Deutschen Revolution," *Nationalsozialistische Briefe*, August 1, 1929, 22–24.

In the end, both of these movements remained marginal. Initially, the regime's leadership did not care much about the colonial world. Hitler was interested in territories in Central and Eastern Europe, not overseas. In the non-European world, Berlin acknowledged the imperial interests of Italy, Spain, and, most importantly, Britain, which Hitler sought as allies. Moreover, in terms of ideology, colonial peoples were considered racially inferior, and thus could never be treated as equals, let alone partners. Their subjugation was justified as the natural result of Europe's racial superiority. Hitler also made no secret of his deep admiration for the British Empire. "If the earth has an English world empire today," he wrote in the late 1920s, "then there is also no people that would currently be more qualified for it."²⁵ On the other hand, he never hid his contempt for anticolonial nationalist movements. In *Mein Kampf* he wrote that the Egyptians, Indians, and others whom he had encountered in interwar Germany "had always struck me as garrulous posers, without any real substance," and warned his comrades against entering discussions with "such bumptious Orientals" who "roved around in Europe."²⁶ In a speech to his commanding generals at the Obersalzberg on August 22, 1939, he was even more frank: "Let us think as rulers and let us see in these peoples at best lacquered half-monkeys who want to feel the knout."²⁷ Even worse were his and the Nazi elites' resentments against the peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus, who were routinely dismissed as subhuman "Asiatics."

²⁵ *Hitlers Zweites Buch: Ein Dokument aus dem Jahr 1928*, ed. Gerhard L. Weinberg (Stuttgart, 1961), 165; translated into English as *Hitler's Second Book: The Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf*, ed. Gerhard L. Weinberg, trans. Krista Smith (New York, 2003), 161–162, quote from 161.

²⁶ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich, 1939; first published 1925 and 1926), 757.

²⁷ Hitler, Speech to the Chief Commanders, August 22, 1939, Obersalzberg ("Zweite Ansprache des Führers am 22. August 1939"), in *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik 1918–*

It was the course of the war that changed the situation. The quest for a strategic alliance with Britain failed. The British, French (Third Republic and, later, Free French), Dutch, and Belgian empires became adversaries. As the war reached its turning point in late 1941 and Berlin's policies became more pragmatic, aimed at building broader alliances (as reflected, for instance, in its attempts to foster a European struggle against Bolshevism), several parts of the Nazi state began to make efforts to engage in anticolonial policies and to reach out to anticolonial movements. This was not, to be sure, a return to the old Strasser anti-imperialism, but rather the result of wartime pragmatism.

Various memoranda on the support of anticolonial nationalist movements had already been circulating since the beginning of the war. They were put forward by an older generation of officers who had been involved in similar policies during the First World War, most importantly Oskar von Niedermayer, now an officer in the Wehrmacht, and his rival, Werner Otto von Hentig, now at the Wilhelmstraße, both of whom had led missions to organize insurgents on the North-West Frontier against the British Empire between 1914 and 1916. While Niedermayer, in a memorandum of November 3, 1939, espoused backing "indigenous forces" in the imperial world, from the Arab lands to India, to destabilize London's and Paris's global empires, Hentig's plan, drawn up around the same time, was less ambitious, advocating the support of nationalists in Afghanistan and northern India.²⁸ Their former superior, the diplomat

1945: *Aus dem Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes*, Series D: 1937–1945, vol. 7 (Baden-Baden, 1961), 171–172 (Document 193), here 172.

²⁸ Niedermayer, Memorandum ("Politik und Kriegsführung im Vorderen Orient: Eine wehrpolitisch-strategische Studie"), November 3, 1939, Berlin, Political Archive of the German Foreign Office (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes), Berlin [hereafter PA], R 261179; Werner Otto von Hentig, *Mein Leben: Eine Dienstreise* (Göttingen,

Max von Oppenheim—an architect of Germany’s revolutionary policies in the First World War, now retired in Berlin—submitted a similar memorandum to the Foreign Office after the fall of France on July 25, 1940, proposing that the regime should engage in anticolonial policies from North Africa to South Asia.²⁹ These memoranda, however, were unshelved only when the military situation deteriorated—between late 1941 and early 1942.

In fall 1941, a number of new memoranda on the colonial world were being produced in Berlin. The first of these were drawn up in the Foreign Office. The most important was a strategy paper about the organization and coordination of support for anticolonial movements in India, North Africa and the Middle East, and Central Asia, written on the orders of Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop by the head of the Foreign Office’s Political Department, Ernst Woermann, and Hentig on November 6, 1941.³⁰ It recommended massive coordinated support for anticolonial movements across the world, providing blueprints for the organization of anticolonial propaganda, cooperation with anticolonial leaders, the establishment of anticolonial councils, declarations of support for independence in the Arab world, India, and Central Asia, and even the mobilization of volunteers from these countries into the armed forces. The colonial world was conceptualized as a single geopolitical space, composed of different continents and ethnic groups. Ribbentrop presented the program to Hitler,

1962), 330–335; Hentig, Report (“Aufzeichnungen 1934–1969”), vols. 1 and 2, Archive of the Institute of Contemporary History (Archiv des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte), Munich, Ed. 113; and Theodor Habicht (Foreign Office), Memorandum, November 29, 1939, Berlin, PA, R 261179.

²⁹ Oppenheim, Memorandum, July 25, 1940, Berlin, PA, Nachlass Hentig, vol. 84.

³⁰ Woermann, Memorandum (“Aufzeichnung über Fragen des Vorderen Orients”), November 6, 1941, Berlin, PA, R 28876 (also in R 261179); and, attached, Hentig, Memorandum (“Turanismus”), n.d., Berlin.

who was still undecided.³¹ Over the course of the year, many other more concrete and regionally focused policy papers were produced.³² A memorandum on the British Empire, for example, detailed practical steps for the support of nationalists from India to Ireland, from the Arab countries to South Africa.³³ Eventually, beginning in late 1941, with Hitler's toleration, Berlin made increasing efforts to back anticolonial nationalists from Africa's Atlantic to Asia's Pacific.

This policy was initially organized by the Foreign Office, which was in charge of the non-European world and relations with anticolonial nationalists (one of the few areas in which it had not become irrelevant). It was coordinated by the officers of the

³¹ Ribbentrop, Internal Note ("Notiz für den Führer"), November 13, 1941, Train ("Westfalen"), PA, R 28876; and for Hitler's response, Walther Hewel (Foreign Office liaison officer with Hitler), Note ("Notiz für Herrn Reichsaussenminister"), November 15, 1941, Führerhauptquartier, PA, R 28876.

³² Woermann, Memorandum ("Aufzeichnung zur arabischen Frage"), March 7, 1941, Berlin, PA, R 261123, which discussed anti-imperial propaganda, support of insurrection—with arms, ammunition, and money—and sabotage activities in the Arab world; and Ettel to Woermann, June 11, 1942, Berlin, PA, R 261179, which had attached four memoranda, including one on the Arab world ("Die Länder des arabischen Raumes") based on reports by diplomat Fritz Grobba, and one on the Caucasus ("Die Kaukasusländer") based on reports by diplomat Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg, are all important examples. Woermann, Memorandum ("Aufzeichnung über Fragen des Vorderen Orients"), November 6, 1941, Berlin, PA, R 28876 (also in R 261179), had attached papers on various aspects, from the Arab question to the Turkestani question. As early as 1940, Woermann in a memorandum had even alluded that Irish militants were the "natural ally of Germany" against the British Empire and soon after assured Ribbentrop's decision "on the question of an Irish rebellion," see Woermann, Memorandum, February 10, 1940, Berlin, PA, R 29623; and also Woermann, Memorandum, March 28, 1940, Berlin, PA, R 29623.

³³ Woermann, Memorandum ("Aktion Britisches Weltreich"), May 20, 1941, Berlin, PA, R 67483.

Political Department, namely the Orient Section (Orientreferat) under Wilhelm Melchers, with veteran diplomats Fritz Grobba, Curt Prüfer, and Erwin Ettel; the India Section (Sonderreferat Indien), run by SS officer Wilhelm Keppler and his assistants Adam von Trott zu Solz and Karl Kapp; and the Soviet Union section (Russlandkommittee), with Hentig in charge of Central Asia. It is worth noting that many of these officers were older professional diplomats who had been involved in similar anti-imperial schemes in the First World War. As the war progressed, other parts of the regime adopted these anticolonial policies, most importantly the Wehrmacht, particularly its intelligence service, the East Ministry, with its Central Asia and Caucasus section (Abteilung Fremde Völker), and, toward the end of the war, the SS. Despite institutional rivalries and shifting competencies, their policies toward non-European national liberation movements were remarkably coherent.

In terms of its racism, the regime proved to be pragmatic.³⁴ (Non-Jewish) Arabs, Iranians, and Turks had already been explicitly exempted from any institutional

³⁴ On these debates of the 1930s, see the files entitled “Inclusion of Egyptians, Iraqis, Iranians, Persians and Turks in the Aryan Race” (“Zugehörigkeit der Ägypter, Iraker, Iraner, Perser und Türken zur arischen Rasse”), PA, R 99173 and R 99174, which contain the documents on the racial classification of Arabs, Turks, and Iranians; and the file entitled “Political Relations between India and Germany” (“Politische Beziehungen Indiens zu Deutschland”), PA, R 77417, which contains documents on the racial categorization of Indians and other non-Europeans, especially the report by diplomat Vicco von Bülow-Schwante, Internal Note (“Aufzeichnung”), August 7, 1934, PA, R 77417; and, more generally, the file entitled “Repercussions of the German Race Policy on Relations with Foreign States” (“Rückwirkung der deutschen Rassenpolitik auf die Beziehungen zu fremden Staaten”), PA, R 99182. On the wartime pragmatism, see also Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 46–56, on Central Asians and Caucasians; and Clarence Lusane, *Hitler’s Black Victims: The*

racial discrimination in the mid-1930s, following diplomatic interventions from the governments in Cairo, Tehran, and Ankara. Similarly, Indians, as subjects of the English crown, were officially exempt from racial policies early on. During the war, the Germans showed similar pragmatism when working with Caucasian and Central Asian, as well as, though to a lesser extent, sub-Saharan African nationalists. The apparent contradictions of the regime's racial policies, which at the same time led to the murder of millions, are indeed striking. In the end, with the exception of its antisemitism, the Nazi state proved to be increasingly flexible in its racial policies, showing that racisms in practice are often situational, contingent, even arbitrary.

The central pillar of the regime's anticolonial policies was a massive pamphlet and shortwave radio propaganda campaign that was launched across the Global South, denouncing imperial rule and promoting an anti-liberal (non-Wilsonian) vision of national self-determination, nationalism, and ethnic sovereignty.³⁵ In North Africa and the Middle East alone, the Germans distributed millions of anticolonial pamphlets and aired continuous broadcasts railing against empire. After Erwin Rommel's tanks had crossed the Egyptian border in the summer of 1942, Radio Berlin declared that they would not only guarantee "Egypt's independence and sovereignty," but also "liberate"

Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era (New York, 2002), chap. 4, on Africans.

³⁵ Willi A. Boelcke, *Die Macht des Radios: Weltpolitik und Auslandsrundfunk, 1924–1976* (Frankfurt a.M., 1977), 402–405 (Africa), 405–416 (Arab world), and 416–430 (Iran, Afghanistan, and India). More specific studies include Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven, Conn., 2009); Eugene J. D'Souza, "Nazi Propaganda in India," *Social Scientist* 28, no. 5/6 (2000): 77–90; David O'Donoghue, *Hitler's Irish Voices: The Story of German Radio's Wartime Irish Service* (Belfast, 1998); and Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 166–182.

the “whole of the Near East” from the “British yoke.”³⁶ German propaganda in Arabic relentlessly promoted Germany as the champion of national liberation of the oppressed peoples. “[T]he domination of the tyrants,” it promised, would “not survive for very long.”³⁷ In India, Radio Berlin, broadcasting in several South Asian languages, regularly called for national self-determination. At the height of the disturbances triggered by Mahatma Gandhi’s Quit India movement, it urged Indians to engage in a more uncompromising struggle against their colonial masters.³⁸ Promises by the Allies were a hoax, it warned—Roosevelt’s Atlantic Charter was as devious as Wilson’s Fourteen Points had been. Although Berlin was more cautious with nationalist propaganda in Central Asia and the Caucasus, here too it routinely called for liberation from foreign rule; in late 1941, German propaganda in Azerbaijan went so far as to call for violent revolt: “Azerbaijanis! Arm yourselves with rifles and machine guns, form underground organizations!” “Fight for the liberation of your homeland and prove thereby your national spirit!”³⁹ By the end of the war, Berlin had become a major global exporter of anti-imperial radicalism. Its propaganda reached millions, causing much anxiety among the Allies. George Orwell, who was involved in British wartime propaganda in the colonial world, noted the ruthless hypocrisy behind the Germans’ propaganda, which “with an utter unscrupulousness,” he wrote in his diary in spring 1942, was “offering everything to everybody, freedom to India and a colonial empire

³⁶ U.S. Legation Cairo, Broadcast Monitoring Script (“Berlin in Arabic”), July 3, 1942, U.S. National Archives, College Park, Maryland [hereafter USNA], Record Group [hereafter RG] 84, Entry UD 2410, box 77.

³⁷ U.S. Legation Cairo, Broadcast Monitoring Script (“The Arab Nation”), January 4, 1943, USNA, RG 84, Entry UD 2410, box 93.

³⁸ Trott to German Embassy Rome, August 3, 1942, Berlin, PA, RAV Rom Quirinal Geheim, vol. 165.

³⁹ Hentig, Internal Note, December 15, 1941, Berlin, PA, R 29900.

to Spain, emancipation to the Kaffirs and stricter race laws to the Boers.”⁴⁰ <FIG. 1 NEAR HERE>

Moreover, Berlin forged alliances with anticolonial leaders. The most important among them were those in exile in the German capital. But the regime also fostered links with anticolonial revolutionaries outside of Germany. Future Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat, for example, who during the war was a young radical member of the Free Officers, cooperated with German military intelligence in 1942, later explaining in his memoirs that “anything that weakened the British position” had been “of prime importance” to him.⁴¹ Habib Abu Raqiba (Bourguiba), who would become president of Tunisia, was freed from a Vichy prison in Lyon in late 1942 by the Germans, together with other Tunisian anticolonial leaders, and sent to Tunis via Rome, where he was welcomed like a head of state and resided at Respighi Palace.⁴² Although Bourguiba warmly thanked his liberators in a speech on an Axis broadcast, he remained on guard, and following the Allied occupation of Tunisia, he changed sides.⁴³ Numerous Central

⁴⁰ George Orwell, “War-time Diary,” in Orwell, *All Propaganda Is Lies, 1941–1942*, ed. Peter Davison (London, 1998), 239–241 (March 22, 1942), here 240.

⁴¹ Anwar el-Sadat, *In Search of Identity* (London, 1978), 31; more generally on his cooperation with the Germans, see 30–40.

⁴² Juliette Bessis, *La Méditerranée fasciste: L’Italie mussolinienne et la Tunisie* (Paris, 1981), 344–352; Sophie Bessis and Souhayr Belhassen, *Bourguiba*, vol. 1: *À la conquête d’un destin (1901–1957)* (Paris, 1988), chap. 4; and, for the wider context, Waldis Greiselis, *Das Ringen um den Brückenkopf Tunesien 1942/43: Strategie der “Achse” und Innenpolitik im Protektorat* (Bern, 1976), 133–159.

⁴³ Bourguiba, speech on Radio Bari, April 6, 1943, Rome, in Habib Bourguiba, *Ma vie, mon œuvre*, vol. 3: *1938–1943*, ed. Mohamed Sayah (Paris, 1986), 707–709. On his belief that the war was lost, see Bourguiba to Habib Thameur, August 8, 1942, Haut-Fort Saint-Nicolas, *ibid.*, 693–696.

Asian nationalists who were exiled in Kabul, such as the prominent Uzbek dissident Said Mubashir Tarasi, worked with the German legation there.⁴⁴

Even colonial prisoners of war were courted. Although, during the Battle of France, the Germans initially treated colonial soldiers particularly cruelly, massacring many, French colonial prisoners of war—numbering nearly 100,000—were soon wooed with better treatment and extra rations, and targeted by extensive anticolonial propaganda, which, unsurprisingly, raised the suspicions of the Vichy authorities.⁴⁵ One of the prisoners, Senegal's later president Léopold Sédar Senghor, who was interned in camps in Poitiers and Saint-Médard (Bordeaux), reported after his release on the “well organized” German propaganda, which was aimed at North African

⁴⁴ Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 177–182.

⁴⁵ On the massacres, see Raffael Scheck, *Hitler's African Victims: The German Army Massacres of Black French Soldiers in 1940* (Cambridge, 2006); and the contributions in Johann Chapoutot and Jean Vigreux, eds., *Des soldats noirs face au Reich: Les massacres racistes de 1940* (Paris, 2015). For the normality of such acts in the eyes of German soldiers, see Peter Fritzsche, *An Iron Wind: Europe under Hitler* (New York, 2016), 147. On the propaganda, see Raffael Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity during World War II* (Cambridge, 2014); Belkacem Recham, “Les indigènes nord-africains prisonniers de guerre (1940–1945),” *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, no. 223 (July 2006): 109–125; Martin C. Thomas, “The Vichy Government and French Colonial Prisoners of War, 1940–1944,” *French Historical Studies* 25, no. 4 (2002): 657–692; and Armelle Mabon, *Prisonniers de guerre “indigènes”: Visages oubliés de la France occupée* (Paris, 2010). On British colonial prisoners, see David Killingray, “Africans and African Americans in Enemy Hands,” in Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, eds., *Prisoners of War and Their Captors in World War II* (Leicester, 1996), 181–204. On Central Asian and Caucasian prisoners, see Camilla Dawletschin-Linder, “Die turko-tatarischen sowjetischen Kriegsgefangenen im Zweiten Weltkrieg im Dreiecksverhältnis zwischen deutscher Politik, turanistischen Aspirationen und türkischer Außenpolitik,” *Der Islam* 80, no. 1 (2003): 1–29.

prisoners in particular, and apparently led to tensions between them and West African, Caribbean, and other captives.⁴⁶ In late 1941, the Germans started releasing thousands of French colonial prisoners of war. Some went to Berlin to work with pro-Axis anticolonial nationalists there; others volunteered to fight against the Allies.<FIG. 2 NEAR HERE>

In 1941, the Wehrmacht (and later the Waffen-SS) began mobilizing anticolonial volunteers into regular and irregular units: the Indian Legion, Azad Hind Fauj, which grew to more than 3,000 men during the war; the Arab Legion, which attracted around 1,000 volunteers; and, most importantly, the Eastern Legions of national minorities of Central Asia and the Caucasus, whose numbers swelled to almost 250,000 recruits.⁴⁷ Even a unit of Irish nationalists was formed, albeit with less

⁴⁶ Anonymous (Senghor), Report, n.d. (1942), attached to L. Bonnaud (French Camp Inspection), Internal Note (“Note pour le Cabinet”), June 27, 1942, Paris, National Archives (Archives nationales), Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, F/9/2345; reprinted in Nicolas Michel, “Senghor: Le manuscrit inconnu,” *Jeune Afrique* 51, no. 2637 (July 24, 2011): 22–31, which includes the full report, discovered by Raffael Scheck. On his wartime experience more generally, see János Riesz, “Léopold Sédar Senghor in deutscher Kriegsgefangenschaft,” in Peter Martin and Christine Alonzo, eds., *Zwischen Charleston und Stehschritt: Schwarze im Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg, 2004), 596–603.

⁴⁷ On the Indian Legion, see Rudolf Hartog, *The Sign of the Tiger: Subhas Chandra Bose and His Indian Legion in Germany, 1941–45* (New Delhi, 2001); and Lothar Günther, *Von Indien nach Annaburg: Die Geschichte der Indischen Legion und des Kriegsgefangenenlagers in Deutschland* (Berlin, 2003). On the Arab Legion, see Carlos Caballero Jurado, *La espada del Islam: Voluntarios árabes en ejército alemán 1941–1945* (Madrid, 1990). On the Eastern Legions, see Joachim Hoffmann, *Die Ostlegionen 1941–1943: Turkotataren, Kaukasier und Wolgafinnen im deutschen Heer* (Freiburg, 1976).

success.⁴⁸ And toward the end of the war, the regime also made attempts to mobilize sub-Saharan African volunteers.⁴⁹ Most of these men were recruited in prisoner-of-war camps, but some were anticolonial exiles and radicalized students. They were told to liberate their home countries militarily, in both regular and commando operations. In practice, however, they were employed only as auxiliaries on the fronts of Europe.<FIGS. 3 AND 4 NEAR HERE>

Moreover, the Wehrmacht sent numerous military missions into the imperial hinterlands to organize local insurgencies. Such operations were organized in southern Iran between 1942 and 1944; in Iraq in 1941, where the German army backed the coup by Iraqi army officers to overthrow the pro-British government and install the pro-Axis politician Rashid ‘Ali al-Kaylani as prime minister; in Palestine in 1944, where German soldiers and Arab fighters were parachuted in with a cargo of rifles, machine guns, and explosives designed for guerrilla warfare to organize local resistance and sabotage the imperial infrastructure; on the Raj’s North-West Frontier between 1941 and 1942, where couriers from the German legation in Kabul sent arms and ammunition to the rebels of Mirza Ali Khan; and in the Caucasus, where several German military units were deployed between 1942 and 1944 to arm revolutionary autonomists.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Ian S. Wood, *Britain, Ireland and the Second World War* (Edinburgh, 2010), 121–122.

⁴⁹ Peter Lieb, *Konventioneller Krieg oder NS-Weltanschauungskrieg? Kriegführung und Partisanenbekämpfung in Frankreich 1943/44* (Munich, 2007), 126–127.

⁵⁰ On the missions to Iran, see Burkhard Ganzer, “Virtuelle Kombattantenschaft und Cargo-Erwartung: Iranische Stämme und deutsche Agenten 1942–1944,” in Gerhard Höpp and Brigitte Reinwald, eds., *Fremdeinsätze: Afrikaner und Asiaten in europäischen Kriegen, 1914–1945* (Berlin, 2000), 189–198. On the mission in Iraq, see Bernd Philipp Schröder, *Irak 1941* (Freiburg, 1980). On the missions in Palestine,

To be sure, these policies had limits. Until the end, Berlin remained reluctant to interfere in regions considered to be spheres of interest of Fascist Italy, Vichy France, and Francoist Spain. And yet, Germany's policies to undermine the European empires, involving almost all factions of the regime, were more forceful than scholars have generally acknowledged. They provided significant space for an international group of anticolonial radicals to organize their fight against empire from Nazi Berlin.

THE OTHER SIDE OF this history—the stories of anticolonial nationalists who sided with Germany—is even more complex. Berlin's wartime exile community was highly fluid and vastly heterogeneous, composed of revolutionaries with various backgrounds, motivations, and strategies. The militant Irish nationalist Seán Russell was one of the first anti-imperial revolutionaries to travel to Berlin, arriving in summer 1940. Many came at the height of the war, in 1941–1942, including well-known leaders such as Amin al-Husayni, who in 1937 had fled Jerusalem to Beirut and later Baghdad, eventually reaching Berlin in fall 1941; Rashid al-Kaylani, who escaped Iraq after the failed coup in April 1941 and arrived in the German capital a few weeks later; and Subhas Chandra Bose, the former leader of the Indian National Congress and one of Asia's most radical anticolonial revolutionaries, who secretly escaped from Calcutta in

see René Wildangel, *Zwischen Achse und Mandatsmacht: Palästina und der Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin, 2007), 350–357. On the missions in Ireland, see Enno Stephan, *Spies in Ireland* (London, 1963). On the missions on the North-West Frontier, see Milan Hauner, “One Man against the Empire: The Faqir of Ipi and the British in Central Asia on the Eve of and during the Second World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 16, no. 1 (1981): 183–212. On the missions in Central Asia and the Caucasus, see Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 166–182.

early 1941 and arrived in Berlin via Kabul and Moscow in the spring. Some of them were accompanied by large entourages.⁵¹

Perhaps more importantly, there were scores of lesser-known anticolonial nationalists who made Germany their base during the war and rose to prominence in Berlin's wartime anticolonial community. Most came from North Africa and the Middle East—figures such as the Syrian revolutionary Fawzi al-Qawuqji, who had fought against the European imperial presence across the Middle East, and who in the summer of 1941 was brought by plane from Aleppo via Athens to Berlin; the Iraqi nationalist and anticolonial radical Yunus Bahri, who moved from Baghdad to Berlin in the early years of the war; and the Egyptian nationalist (and distant cousin of King Farouk) Mansur Daoud, who in 1942, at the height of the battle for North Africa, fled from Cairo via Istanbul to Berlin. The group of South Asian anticolonial activists was slightly smaller—the most prominent among them was the Indian radical Arathil Chandeth Narayanan Nambiar, who had moved to Germany from France in spring 1942. The community of Central Asian and Caucasian nationalists was large, and included figures such as the North Caucasian nationalist Ali Khan Kantemir, who had been a minister of the short-lived Republic of the North Caucasus in 1917–1919; the Azerbaijani nationalist Abbas Bey Atamalibekov, who had been a member of the Azerbaijani delegation at Versailles; and the Georgian nationalists Spiridon Kedia, Leo Keresselidse, and Zurab Avalishvili, all prominent leaders of the interwar years. Many

⁵¹ On al-Husayni, see Gensicke, *The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Nazis*. On al-Kaylani, see Renate Dieterich, "Rashid 'Ali al-Kailani in Berlin: Ein irakischer Nationalist in NS-Deutschland," *Al Rafidayn: Jahrbuch zu Geschichte und Kultur des modernen Iraq* 3 (1995): 47–79. On Bose, see Hayes, *Subhas Chandra Bose in Nazi Germany*; Kuhlmann, *Netaji in Europe*; and Bose, *His Majesty's Opponent*, chap. 7. On Russell, see Carter, *The Shamrock and the Swastika*, chap. 9; and Wood, *Britain, Ireland and the Second World War*, 117–122.

of them arrived in spring 1942, when the Foreign Office invited Central Asian and Caucasian exile nationalists from across Europe to a lavish congress at the Adlon Hotel; impressed by the warm welcome, they decided to stay.⁵²

In Berlin they mingled with an older generation of anti-imperial exiles who had moved to Germany before the war, having turned Weimar Berlin into one of Europe's great anticolonial metropolises.⁵³ The Nazi takeover in 1933—which was followed by a crackdown on left-wing anticolonial groups, most importantly the International Secretariat of the League against Imperialism in Berlin—had been a serious blow to the community, and many had been arrested, had fled, or had been expelled. Still, a sizable group of non-communist anticolonial activists had remained, and some of them became prominent anticolonial leaders in wartime Berlin, among them colorful figures such as the Indian anticolonialist Habibur Rahman, who had moved to Germany in 1923, where he became one of the Indian community's most ardent supporters of

⁵² On al-Qawuqji, see Gerhard Höpp, "Ruhmloses Zwischenspiel: Fawzi al-Qawuqji in Deutschland, 1941–1947," in Heine, *Al Rafidayn*, 3: 19–46; and Laila Parsons, *The Commander: Fawzi al-Qawuqji and the Fight for Arab Independence, 1914–1948* (New York, 2016). On Nambiar, see Vappala Balachandran, *A Life in Shadow: The Secret Story of ACN Nambiar* (New Delhi, 2016). On the exiles from the Caucasus and Central Asia, see Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, especially, for the Adlon conference, 71–72; and on Volga Tatars, see Sebastian Cwiklinski, *Wolgatataren im Deutschland des Zweiten Weltkriegs: Deutsche Ostpolitik und tatarischer Nationalismus* (Berlin, 2002), 37–41.

⁵³ Horst Krüger, "Berlin als Treffpunkt von Antikolonialisten und Antiimperialisten in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik," *Bulletin des Arbeitskreises Zweiter Weltkrieg*, no. 3–4 (1987): 94–108; Nathanael Kuck, "Anti-Colonialism in a Post-Imperial Environment: The Case of Berlin, 1914–33," *Journal of Contemporary History* 49, no. 1 (2014): 134–159; and Fredrik Petersson, "Hub of the Anti-Imperialist Movement: The League against Imperialism and Berlin, 1927–1933," *Interventions* 16, no. 1 (2014): 49–71.

Nazism, writing for newspapers such as the *Völkischer Beobachter*; the Moroccan anticolonial leader Taqi al-Hilali, who had studied in Bonn before settling in Berlin in 1939; and the Turkestanian nationalist Veli Kajum, who had come to Berlin as a student from Bukhara in 1922.⁵⁴ <FIG. 5 NEAR HERE>

While most of these leaders stayed in the German capital until the end of the war, some came only for brief stints, to sound out the regime's support. Among them were prominent figures like Morocco's nationalist leader (and later prime minister) Ahmad Balafrej, the Chechen rebel leader Said Shamil, and the Azerbaijani separatist (and former leader of the short-lived Azerbaijan People's Republic) Amin Rasulzadeh.⁵⁵ As Berlin became known as a sponsor of the global anticolonial struggle, revolutionaries from around the world visited to see what was on offer.

Many of these nationalists had similar backgrounds. Most had put their hopes in Wilsonianism after the First World War, but soon became disillusioned with liberal ideas. Turning away from liberalism, which seemed inseparably connected to empire, they had toyed with a number of different authoritarian ideologies in the interwar period, looking to Stalin's Soviet Union, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany for

⁵⁴ On al-Hilali, see Umar Ryad, "A *Salafi* Student, Orientalist Scholarship, and Radio Berlin in Nazi Germany: Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and His Experiences in the West," in Götz Nordbruch and Umar Ryad, eds., *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe: Muslim Activists and Thinkers* (New York, 2014), 107–156; Henri Lauzière, "Islamic Nationalism through the Airwaves: Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī's Encounter with Shortwave Radio, 1937–39," *Die Welt des Islams* 56, no. 1 (2016): 6–33; and Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2016), 134–146. On Rahman, see Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy*, 118. On Kajum, see Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 38–39.

⁵⁵ On Balafrej, see Lauzière, "Islamic Nationalism through the Airwaves," 31–32. On Shamil and Rasulzadeh, see Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 86–87, 110–112, 121–122.

inspiration and support. In fact, it was not unusual for interwar anticolonial nationalists and intellectuals to discuss, adopt, and merge different political ideas, ranging from authoritarian nationalism to cosmopolitan socialism. Revolutionaries like Bose, who in his book *The Indian Struggle* had called for a synthesis between communism and fascism, had been sympathetic to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which seemed to create a forceful offense against British, French, and Dutch colonial hegemony.⁵⁶ Nationalists from the Caucasus and Central Asia, on the other hand, who had welcomed Lenin's courtship of national minorities and his anti-imperialism, had soon become disenchanted with communism and turned to the right, moving closer to more militant nationalism and right-wing authoritarianism. There were various forms of nationalism among the revolutionaries of wartime Berlin, most importantly, perhaps, ethnic nationalisms such as racial pan-Arabism and pan-Turanism.

It is also worth mentioning that most of them had lived remarkably cosmopolitan lives. In a world of heightened global connectivity, the experience of global displacement was part of their political struggle. Bose, for example, had moved between Britain, Ireland, Italy, Austria, Egypt, and India, mingling with political leaders from Mustafa al-Nahas Pasha to Mussolini. Al-Husayni had roamed the world in the interwar years, from London to Geneva to Mecca, before leaving Palestine for Lebanon and, later, Iraq. Most Central Asian and Caucasian nationalists had lived in exile communities in Europe and the Middle East between the wars. Al-Qawuqji had become a popular hero of international anti-imperialism, having fought against the French in the Syrian Revolt of 1925–1927, against the British in both the Palestine Revolt of 1936 and the Iraqi conflict of 1941, and against the 1941 Gaullist invasion of Syria, where he was severely wounded when British planes bombed his convoy near

⁵⁶ Subhas C. Bose, *The Indian Struggle, 1920–1934* (London, 1935).

Tadmur (Palmyra). Nambiar had lived in interwar Germany, where he was persecuted as a communist in 1933, and had moved between anticolonial exile communities in Prague, Zurich, London, Paris, and Marseilles. Taqi al-Hilali had roamed between Tangier, Alexandria, Basra, Mecca, and Calcutta. Yunus Bahri had worked as an anticolonial publicist in the Dutch East Indies and later settled in Iraq, where he published a newspaper and was employed as an announcer at the state broadcast station. The British felt quite uneasy about him, with a colonial intelligence report remarking: “Berlin could never have been able to find a better-suited man to be its propaganda instrument . . . He is a man famous for nothing more than his dirty tongue, intrigues and a first class inventor of lies and mischief maker and above all ready to be hired by anyone who pays a good price.”⁵⁷

The motives of these men varied. Ideologically, Nazi Germany appealed to them because it offered an alternative to the liberal imperial world order, unchained from the Versailles settlement. Many also were attracted by the regime’s revolutionary nature, its anti-liberal nationalism, and its authoritarian vision of modernity. Moreover, pragmatically it constituted a powerful ally against their imperial oppressors. And the initial military victories further boosted Germany’s prestige. For a time, as the Axis armies overran Batavia, Singapore, and Rangoon and advanced toward Cairo, Baku, and Calcutta, it seemed that the Axis would determine the future world order. Indeed, for some of the more opportunistic anticolonial leaders, it was pragmatic strategic considerations—Germany’s military and technical might and its hostility toward their colonial masters—rather than ideological commitment that drove them to Berlin. Yet the motives behind cooperation were often complex and cannot be reduced to a binary

⁵⁷ Information Sheet on Yunus Bahri, n.d. (July 1939), sent by Lampson (Embassy Cairo) to Halifax (Foreign Office), July 6, 1939, Alexandria, The National Archives, Kew, FO 395/664.

distinction between pragmatism and ideology. Many who turned to the Germans had a variety of overlapping reasons for doing so, and these reasons could change over time.

In Germany, most of these leaders had considerable agency. Berlin's increasing efforts to side with anticolonial nationalists (and the rivalries between different branches of the regime) created spaces within which the revolutionaries could pursue their own interests. Once their institutions—committees, publications, and congresses—were established, they developed their own inner life, which was often difficult to control.

Almost all of these groups organized themselves into national committees.⁵⁸ The Indians created the Free India Committee, which was headed initially by Subhas Chandra Bose and then, after his departure from Germany, by Nambiar, with its headquarters, the Free India Center or Azad Hind Sangh (Zentrale Freies Indien), located in the heart of Berlin, near Tiergarten. The Arabs founded several smaller groups. The national committees of revolutionaries from Central Asia and the Caucasus, established between summer 1942 and spring 1943, included the National Turkestani Unity Committee (Nationalturkestanisches Einheitskomitee) and the Volga Tatar Fighting League (Kampfbund der Turktataren Idel-Urals). Less successful were the committees of Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and nationalists from the North Caucasus, as the Germans had not decided upon the status of those territories in the future New Order. Many of the committees were autocratically organized. The most extreme example, perhaps, was the National Turkestani Unity Committee, or Milli Türkistan Birlik Komitasi, as its members called it, which was dictatorially led by

⁵⁸ On the Indian committee, see Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy*, 253–254, 364–372, 558, 576–592. On the Arab council, see Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East*, 312; and Höpp, “Ruhmloses Zwischenspiel,” 30–31. On the Central Asian and Caucasian committees, see Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 82–138.

strongman Veli Kajum through an authoritarian presidential system. Similarly, Azad Hind was strictly hierarchical, headed by Bose as its all-powerful “leader” (*Netaji*). For the exiles, the committees had two functions. First, they were to organize the national liberation of their respective countries. Their members would plan the political order of their future states, right down to the details of their symbols of sovereignty such as anthems, flags, and medals. Second, they were to represent their cause collectively, in contact with the German authorities. Many considered the committees governments in exile. The Nazi regime, for its part, used them to organize and control the exile communities.

Berlin’s anticolonial revolutionaries organized a number of major congresses to debate their struggle against empire. On November 2, 1943, on the twenty-sixth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, Arab nationalists assembled at a major gathering at the Haus der Flieger in the heart of Berlin to denounce British imperialism, with speeches by al-Husayni, al-Kaylani, and Daoud. The event was attended by numerous German officials. Himmler sent a telegram affirming his support. The congress brought together anticolonial activists from across the world, including Central Asian nationalists such as Kajum. An SS officer later explained that the gathering had integrated “representatives of the various committees” to give “declarations of sympathy.”⁵⁹ The *Völkischer Beobachter* praised it as a “powerful demonstration” against “the British-American-Jewish policy of suppression and exploitation.”⁶⁰ <FIG. 6 NEAR HERE>

⁵⁹ Olzscha, Report, 1945, n.p., Archives of the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Documents (Bundesbeauftragter für die Stasi-Unterlagen), Berlin, MfS, HA IX/11, ZR 920, A. 54.

⁶⁰ “Aufruf an alle islamischen Völker: Der Großmufti von Jerusalem und Gailani sprachen,” *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin edition), November 3, 1943.

The Indian exiles had organized a similar commemorative congress a few months earlier at Berlin's grand Hotel Kaiserhof on the occasion of the anniversary of the 1919 Amritsar Massacre (Jallianwallah Bagh Day). A speech by Bose, who had left Berlin a few weeks earlier for Tokyo, was read out denouncing the betrayal of Versailles.⁶¹ An even bigger Indian anti-imperial congress, with no fewer than six hundred guests, was held in Berlin on January 26, 1943, marking the anniversary of the Indian National Congress's declaration of Indian independence in 1930. It was a spectacle, both visual and aural, of Indian sovereignty. The hall was decorated with flowers in the national colors—orange tulips and white lilacs—and national flags. The Indian national anthem was sung. Dressed in a black *sherwani*, Bose gave a passionate speech, denouncing “British imperialism” as “a cunning and diabolical enemy.” His address was replete with references to the global anticolonial struggle, to India, Burma, Palestine, and Iran: “The war offers not only India, but also all other enslaved nations of the British Empire a unique opportunity for throwing off the foreign yoke.”⁶² Among the guests were German officials, foreign diplomats, and non-Indian anticolonial leaders, such as al-Husayni and al-Kaylani. Under Nambiar, a similar,

⁶¹ Bose, Speech, read out on April 13, 1943, Berlin, in Sisir K. Bose and Sugata Bose, eds., *Azad Hind: Writings and Speeches, 1941–1943* (Kolkata, 2002), 200–204, reprint of “Subhas Chandra Bose’s Message on the Occasion of the 24th Anniversary of the Blood-Bath of Amritsar (Read on April 13, 1943, in Hotel Kaiserhof, Berlin),” *Azad Hind* 3/4 (1943): 2–6. The issues of *Azad Hind* are stored in the archives of the Netaji Research Bureau, Kolkata.

⁶² Bose, Speech, January 26, 1943, Berlin, in Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 182–192, quotes from 188, 191; reprinted from “Subhas Chandra Bose’s Speech on the Occasion of the Independence Day on January 26, 1943 in Berlin, ‘Haus der Flieger,’” *Azad Hind* 1/2 (1943): 14–23; a slightly different version was printed in Hö, “Kundgebung zum Indischen Unabhängigkeitstag,” *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin edition), January 27, 1943.

though more militaristic, congress was organized in fall 1943, on the occasion of the foundation of a provisional Indian national government. It included a procession by a uniformed delegation of Azad Hind soldiers. In a martial speech, Nambiar declared that the time for compromise was over and the final phase of the liberation struggle had begun. On its front page, the *Völkischer Beobachter* celebrated an “emotive and passionate denouncement” of British imperial oppression.⁶³ <FIGS. 7 AND 8 NEAR HERE>

The congresses organized by the nationalists from the Caucasus and Central Asia were very similar in nature. The Azerbaijani committee held a “national congress” at the Hotel Kaiserhof from November 6 to 9, 1943, with many speeches and receptions.⁶⁴ The *Berliner Börsenzeitung* reported that, as in the tsarist era, the Azerbaijanis were fighting for their “national life,” being now part of the Axis’s “peoples’ front” (*Völkerfront*).⁶⁵ Similarly lavish was the congress of the Volga Tatars (Qurultay, literally “meeting of the tribes”) from March 4 to 5, 1944, in Greifswald, where two hundred delegates engaged in political debates about the war and future independence. The biggest and most opulent national congress was organized by Kajum’s Turkestani committee and held from June 8 to 10, 1944, in Vienna. It

⁶³ “Flammendes Bekenntnis zur Befreiung Indiens: Feierstunde der Zentrale ‘Freies Indien’ in Berlin,” *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin edition), November 16, 1943; and for images, “Für die Befreiung Indiens,” *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin edition), November 17, 1943.

⁶⁴ Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 100, 102–103, 115, 135, on the Azerbaijan, Volga Tatar, and Turkestan congresses. The proceedings of the Volga Tatar congress can be found in the twelve-page report Anonymous (Sultan), Report (Kurultaj in Greifswald), n.d., n.p., German Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv), Berlin-Lichterfelde [hereafter BAB], NS 31/31.

⁶⁵ “Bewährte Mitkämpfer im Osten: Die aserbeidschanische Legion,” *Berliner Börsenzeitung* (morning edition), November 9, 1943.

included not only political debates and declarations, but also readings of national poetry, gala dinners, and visits to the opera. Hitler cabled his congratulations to an ecstatic Kajum, who excitedly wrote to Himmler about his appreciation of the “Führer telegram,” which had “enhanced” the participants’ “fighting spirit.”⁶⁶ These congresses, too, were attended by regime officials, as well as by other anticolonial leaders in Berlin, from Amin al-Husayni to Yunus Bahri.

Overall, the congresses became major displays of national sovereignty, with national flags and emblems thoroughly integrated into their overall composition. Usually carefully staged, they elevated the status of the exiles and their committees and allowed them to articulate their national aspirations and further their political agendas. Most of these congresses involved anticolonial leaders from a range of different countries, fostering a distinct anticolonial internationalism. Bahri, who in late 1941 attended a conference organized by Caucasian and Central Asian nationalists, would later quote in his memoirs the entire text of their declaration of liberation, which had been announced at the meeting. It concluded with an appeal to Hitler: “We are confident that you will give full support to our efforts, until it becomes clearly manifest that you are working for the liberation of the oppressed.”⁶⁷ In fall 1942, Habibur Rahman even organized an anticolonial solidarity conference at the Haus der Flieger—as the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* put it, it was “an impressive and solemn declaration of sympathy with the liberation struggle of the Arabs and Indians.”⁶⁸ The room was packed with anticolonial nationalists and Axis functionaries. From the

⁶⁶ Kajum to Himmler, October 13, 1944, Berlin, BAB, NS 31/30.

⁶⁷ Bahri, *Huna Birlin! Hayya al-‘Arab!*, 3: 78–87, quote from 87.

⁶⁸ “Gailani und Bose sprachen in Berlin: Sympathiekundgebung für den Freiheitskampf der Araber,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (Berlin edition), September 23, 1942.

podium, al-Kaylani outlined the global anti-imperial struggle, from the Arab world to Iran to India. “Today India has the opportunity,” he announced, “to throw off the shackles of serfdom,” and he expressed full solidarity with India’s “fight” for “freedom, independence, and sovereignty.” In response, Bose wished the “Arab nation” all “success” in its “liberation struggle”: “Long live the free Arab nation! Long live the Tripartite Powers and their allies! Long live the free India!”⁶⁹

Most anticolonial nationalist groups published their own newspapers, creating intellectual space for debates about their struggles. These publications functioned as both exile and propaganda papers.⁷⁰ The list included the Arab paper *Barid al-Sharq* (*Orient Post*), the Indian paper *Azad Hind* (*Free India*), and various Central Asian and Caucasian papers, such as *Milli Türkistan* (*National Turkestan*), *Idel-Ural* (*Volga-Ural*), and *Severnyj Kavkaz* (*North Caucasus*), all published on the regime’s printing presses.⁷¹ One of the most prolific political exile writers, Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, a Chechen dissident who had gone over to the Germans when they reached the

⁶⁹ “Araber und Inder in gemeinsamer Front,” *Völkischer Beobachter* (Berlin edition), September 24, 1942, includes the speeches and an image of the event.

⁷⁰ On Arab periodicals, see Gerhard Höpp, *Arabische und islamische Periodika in Berlin und Brandenburg, 1915 bis 1945: Geschichtlicher Abriss und Bibliographie* (Berlin, 1994), 66; and Höpp, *Texte aus der Fremde: Arabische politische Publizistik in Deutschland, 1896–1945: Eine Bibliographie* (Berlin, 2000). On Caucasian and Central Asian periodicals, see Johannes Benzing, “Berliner politische Veröffentlichungen der Türken aus der Sowjetunion,” *Die Welt des Islams* 18 (1936): 122–131.

⁷¹ The issues of *Barid al-Sharq* are stored in the German National Library (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek), Leipzig, ZB 47105, and in the Berlin State Library (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin), Berlin [hereafter StaBi], Stabi 670. Most of the papers of nationalists from Central Asia and the Caucasus can be found in StaBi, Stabi 544 (*Milli Türkistan*); Zsn 55624 and (for the German translation) Zsn 55636 (*Idel-Ural*); Stabi 798 (*Milli Adabijat*); and 521900 (*Tatar Adabijat*).

Caucasus in 1942 and who wrote for many different exile publications, recalled in his memoirs his constant fear of Moscow's potential postwar revenge, noting that he "published all articles under a pseudonym," and "never signed two articles published in a row with the same pseudonym."⁷² The papers usually appeared in the nationalists' native language, but some of them were multilingual. Their discourses were similar, drawing on anti-liberalism, anticolonialism, anti-communism, and at times antisemitism, while at the same time praising the Axis's new global order. Articles were replete with words like "independence," "sovereignty," and "liberation." Their content often not only dealt with the respective national question, but also demonstrated internationalist solidarities. Even *Azad Hind*, the most nationalist, inward-looking of all these papers, once proclaimed: "India of tomorrow, by the very logic of things, will be a strong partisan of international co-operation and justice for all nations big or small."⁷³

Eventually, Berlin's anticolonial nationalists became directly involved in the organization of the volunteer legions. In their eyes, these units had two functions. First, they were conceived as national liberation armies that would free their home countries from foreign rule. Second, they were to aid the German war effort, in the hope that Berlin would, in return, support their future independence. Both anticolonial leaders and German officials were at pains to stress that they were autonomous, not mercenary armies. Their soldiers swore their oath under their new national flags and were subjected to radical nationalist and anti-imperial propaganda.⁷⁴ In the eyes of the

⁷² A. Avtorkhanov, *Memuary (Memoirs)* (Frankfurt a.M., 1983), 634.

⁷³ J. K. Banerji, "International Importance of India's Independence," *Azad Hind* 1/2 (1943): 28–33, here 33.

⁷⁴ Bose, Speech to Indian Legion in Europe, June 1942, n.p., in Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 113–114, is a good example. It was also broadcast on Azad Hind Radio.

Arabs, for example, their unit was not a regular Wehrmacht contingent, but an “Arab Liberation Army” (*al-mafraza al-‘arabiyya al-hurra*). Al-Husayni later explained that its main aim was “the liberation of the Arab countries.”⁷⁵ Al-Qawuqji compared it to Sharif Husayn’s army, which had fought alongside the British in the First World War. He understood it as the “nucleus of the future army” of an independent Levant.⁷⁶ The Tatar nationalist leader Ahmet Temir, who had been a student in interwar Germany, and who during the war became involved in the recruitment of Tatar nationalists, regarded the Tatars’ units as part of the “national affairs” of the Tatars.⁷⁷ And an Indian commander of Azad Hind saw in his unit the basis of a future national army.⁷⁸

TO SOME EXTENT, THE anticolonial activists in Berlin formed a community. Their committee meetings, congresses, and informal gatherings in cafés, canteens, and private houses created spaces for sociability. These spaces were nationalist, anticolonial, often bourgeois, and above all homosocial. In his memoirs, Yunus Bahri gives some fascinating insights into this milieu, writing that he often went to the grand Café Kranzler on Kurfürstendamm, where he would meet with “a number of Arab

⁷⁵ *Mudhakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husayni* [*The Memoirs of Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husayni*], ed. ‘Abd al-Karim al-‘Umar (Damascus, 1999), 145.

⁷⁶ *Mudhakkirat Fawzi al-Qawuqji* [*The Memoirs of Fawzi al-Qawuqji*], ed. Khayriyya Qasimiyya (Damascus, 1995), 293, 302, quote from 296. The parts on the war are based on his wartime diary. A typescript of an English draft translation of an earlier (longer) version of the memoirs can be found in the Qawuqji family archive in Beirut.

⁷⁷ Ahmet Temir, *60 Yil Almanya (1936–1996): Bir yabancının gözü ile Geziler, Araştırmalar, Hatıralar* [*Sixty Years Germany (1936–1996): Travels, Research, Memories through the Eyes of a Stranger*] (Ankara, 1998), 219.

⁷⁸ Abid Hasan Safrani, “A Soldier Remembers,” *The Oracle* 6, no. 1 (1984): 24–65, and 7, no. 1 (1985): 17–29. Transcript of a taped interview, which is stored in the Archives of the Netaji Research Bureau, Kolkata.

brothers [who] would frequent this café every afternoon”: “We would hang out and discuss the latest developments in Germany and Europe” and “all kinds of matters in the Arab world” and share “anecdotes on the National Socialist Party [Hizb al-Irtikha’ al-Watani].”⁷⁹ Anticolonial nationalists also met regularly in private locations. Al-Qawuqji’s Berlin apartment, for example, became a hub for gatherings of Arab nationalists throughout the war.⁸⁰ Remembering one of those evenings, Bahri later revealed: “We ate, drank, and laughed as if we were not at war at all!”⁸¹ Munir al-Rayyis, a Syrian nationalist who had fought with al-Qawuqji in several anticolonial battles across the Middle East, fondly remembered an “evening party” at al-Qawuqji’s apartment “that lasted until the next morning.”⁸² For the Tatar nationalists, the house of a certain Abdurrahman Şafi Almas became a political center. “Especially during the war years, nearly every Saturday afternoon, I would be their guest and stay with them until the middle of the night,” Temir recounted.⁸³ “Yet, nearly every time I went, I would encounter some other guests. It was as if this lively house were an office of the consulate for Tatars—never lacking visitors.” Nazi Berlin became a “contact zone” for anticolonial nationalists, to use Mary Louise Pratt’s words—a “space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other.”⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Bahri, *Huna Birlin! Hayya al-‘Arab!*, 3: 27.

⁸⁰ Höpp, “Ruhmloses Zwischenspiel,” 37.

⁸¹ Yunus Bahri, *Huna Birlin! Hayya al-‘Arab!*, vol. 4: *Hitler wa al-Qada al-‘Arab fi Birlin [Hitler and the Arab Leaders in Berlin]* (Cairo, 1960), 53.

⁸² Munir al-Rayyis, *Al-Kitab al-Dhahabi li-l-Thawrat al-Wataniyya fi al-Mashriq al-‘Arabi: Harb al-‘Iraq, 1941 [The Golden Book of the Arab Revolts in the Arab East: The Iraq War, 1941]* (Damascus, 1977), 219.

⁸³ Temir, *60 Yil Almanya*, 151.

⁸⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992), 6.

Often these meetings (much like the congresses) brought together nationalists from across the colonized world, forging a cosmopolitan, non-European nationalist international. Al-Husayni later recalled the visits he received from “Arab, Muslim, and Eastern dignitaries who were resident in Germany at the time,” adding: “Among them was Siddiq Khan, the former Afghan foreign minister, the famous Indian leader Subhas Chandra Bose, a number of leaders from Azerbaijan and the Caucasus, as well as other leaders of the Muslims of Russia.”⁸⁵ Temir spoke of an “atmosphere of intimate friendliness [*samimi bir arkadaşlık*] and amicability [*dostluk*]” among the Eastern nationalists. “Everyone looked to this war as a sacred [*kutsal*] war that would bring liberation to their nations.”⁸⁶ Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov compared Berlin’s heterogeneous global exile community to Noah’s “biblical ark [*bibleïskom kovchege*].”⁸⁷

This internationalism was reflected not only in social practices—gatherings and congresses—but also in the émigrés’ self-perceptions and worldviews. Their writings show a remarkable degree of anti-imperial solidarity, with Amin al-Husayni praising the Axis-sponsored wartime “progress of Indonesia toward independence,” Munir al-Rayyis celebrating the nationalities of the Soviet Union and their “revolt against Russian colonialism,” and Yunus Bahri admiring the “independence movements that had been operating secretly in Muslim Turkestan, the Urals, and the Crimean Peninsula,” which had “headed toward the Führer Hitler,” whom they saw as a “savior

⁸⁵ *Mudhakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husayni*, 104.

⁸⁶ Temir, *60 Yil Almanya*, 218.

⁸⁷ Avtorkhanov, *Memuary*, 630.

who had descended from the heavens to aid their liberation and the elimination of the fog of communist imperialism.”⁸⁸

In a memorandum sent to the Germans in spring 1941, Bose described India’s struggle as part of a global movement, expressing solidarity with the independence struggles in “Ireland, South Africa, India, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq” and claiming that “the heterogeneous British Empire” was “the one outstanding obstacle” for the world’s “New Order” and had “to be broken up completely.”⁸⁹ In a subsequent memorandum, he spoke of an anti-imperial “moment” that would allow the Axis to “capture the imagination” of the oppressed from the Middle East to South Asia.⁹⁰ Similarly, in his speeches to his followers, he would routinely refer to the internationalist character of his fight, portraying it as part of a global anti-imperial revolt against the order of 1919: “In the present world struggle one group of nations is trying to maintain the power it achieved as a sequel to the Versailles Treaty. The other group of nations is fighting with an iron will to eradicate the unhappy state of affairs looming large in the world and to establish a ‘New Order.’”⁹¹ “Let us rejoice that the old order which was set up at

⁸⁸ *Mudhakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husayni*, 104 (on India), 123 (on Indonesia); Al-Rayyis, *Al-Kitab al-Dhahabi li-l-Thawrat al-Wataniyya fi al-Mashriq al-‘Arabi*, 262–266, quote from 263; and Bahri, *Huna Birlin! Hayya al-‘Arab!*, 3: 77–78.

⁸⁹ Bose, Memorandum (“Plan einer Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Achsemächten und Indien”), April 9, 1941, Berlin, PA, R 29615; English translation in Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 38–49, quotes from 44, 42.

⁹⁰ Bose, Memorandum, May 3, 1941, Berlin, PA, R 29615; English translation in Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 50–52, quote from 50.

⁹¹ Bose, Broadcast Speech, March 13, 1942, [n.p.](#), in Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 71–74, quote from 74; and, very similar, Bose, Broadcast Speech, March 19, 1942, *ibid.*, 75–79.

Versailles is crashing before our very eyes.”⁹² At the same time, he warned of the Allies’ wartime “promises” of postwar national self-determination, recalling the betrayal of 1919: “Have we forgotten what happened to President Wilson’s Fourteen Points?”⁹³ The oppressed would not be tricked again: “The Atlantic Charter, of which we have heard so much, is as much a scrap of paper as President Wilson’s Fourteen Points in the last war.”⁹⁴

In similarly general terms, Kajum described his Central Asian national movement as part of a global anti-imperial liberation struggle, merging notions of youth, the new man, anti-liberalism, anti-imperialism, and internationalist solidarity: “Today, the world is split into two parts. On one side stand the villains who want to exterminate the freedom-loving peoples; grouped on the other side are the young nations who, with their youthful dynamic strength and their will, confront these old nations, these liberalists. The future belongs to the youth and the young nations; because they want to live and have to live, so they will live and sweep away the old liberalist capitalists.” The struggle had already been decided, and the “days” of the “imperialist-colonialist and outdated” powers were “numbered.”⁹⁵

This transnational chorus of anticolonial solidarity was an expression of the nationalists’ particular situation. In Germany, they mingled, liaised, and engaged with each other. Remapping their political geography, their exile provoked self-reflection on their own position in the global anticolonial struggle. It made the activists reconceptualize their own movements as part of the global revolt against empire. The

⁹² Bose, Broadcast Speech, March 19, 1942, *ibid.*, 75–79, quote from 79.

⁹³ Bose, Broadcast Speech, April 13, 1942, *ibid.*, 89–93, quote from 89.

⁹⁴ Bose, Broadcast Speech, October 15, 1942, *ibid.*, 162–169, quote from 165.

⁹⁵ Veli Kajum-Chan, *Die Probleme Turkestans: Reden und Aufsätze des Präsidenten des National-Turkestanischen Einheitskomitees* (Berlin, 1944), 16.

reasons for their cooperation were both idealistic—an ethos of solidarity—and pragmatic—the convenience of alliances that allowed them to speak collectively and pursue their political aims more forcefully.

The community also reached beyond the Reich, connecting anticolonial nationalists across the Axis world. The wartime life of these activists was marked by mobility, supported by German financial resources, and facilitated by modern means of transport, enabling, for instance, Kajum to go to Paris by train, al-Husayni to fly to Italy to meet anticolonial leaders in Rome, and Bose to move to Tokyo by submarine to organize his struggle from Asia. Some of the major anti-imperial metropolises of the interwar years—Paris, Rome, Brussels, Amsterdam—were now under Axis control. While the Germans suppressed numerous anticolonial activists across occupied Europe, especially communist groups, everywhere they found nationalists eager to cooperate.

In 1942, al-Qawuqji and some of his comrades went to Paris, where they stayed at the luxurious Bristol Hotel on the Champs-Élysées, met with anticolonial leaders and German officials for lunches and dinners at the Ritz, the Carlton, and La Nouvelle Europe restaurant, and enjoyed long evenings at cabarets, the Lido nightclub, and the cafés of Saint-Michel. At a meeting at the Hôtel Claridge, organized by Arab nationalists and attended by German officials, they gave anticolonial speeches and read poems on the “struggle of the Syrian people” and “their revolutions,” as al-Rayyis later put it; for him, it seemed like the ultimate triumph: “Paris was our focal point! It was a celebration to take revenge on France in the heart of Paris and in one of its great hotels, attended by hundreds of Arabs and foreigners, without France being able to prevent

it!”⁹⁶ Kajum visited Paris in early 1942 to mingle with revolutionary exiles there in an attempt to convince some of them to come to Berlin.⁹⁷ Bose, too, moved between Europe’s metropolises, meeting anticolonial revolutionaries in Rome, Paris, and Brussels.⁹⁸ Al-Husayni later described at length his “numerous discussions” with North African nationalists—such as the “heroic leaders of Libya” around Emir Sulayman al-Qaramanali, Mahmud al-Muntasir (the future prime minister), and Wahbi al-Buri (the future foreign minister)—as well as “Palestinians, Egyptians, Iraqis, and others,” who were all “rejoicing at the victories of Marshal Rommel” and “the defeats of the British” during a visit to Rome in 1942.⁹⁹ By moving around, they not only fostered a transnational anticolonial network, but also created the idea of an international anticolonial underground. The network of anti-imperial nationalists cut across Axis Europe, and also reached into neutral countries, from Switzerland to Turkey.

It was the movement not just of people but also of ideas that connected anticolonial revolutionaries in Berlin with those beyond German borders. Their writings were circulated through the Axis global postal and publishing networks. Many engaged in international correspondences that connected them to places as far away as French West Africa and the Dutch East Indies. Others would write, as long as they

⁹⁶ Al-Rayyis, *Al-Kitab al-Dhahabi li-l-Thawrat al-Wataniyya fi al-Mashriq al-‘Arabi*, 243–247, quotes from 245, 246.

⁹⁷ R., Internal Note (“Vermerk über eine Unterredung mit dem Führer im Führer-Hauptquartier am 8.5.42.”), May 13, 1942, Berlin, in *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal*, vol. 27: *Documents and Other Material in Evidence, Numbers 1104-PS to 1739-PS* (Nuremberg, 1948), 283–294 (Document 1520-PS), here 289.

⁹⁸ Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy*, 257–258, 363–364, 480–481.

⁹⁹ *Mudhakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husayni*, 102. Brückenhaus, *Policing Transnational Protest*, 194–203, provides other examples of the trans-European wartime connections of anticolonial nationalists.

could, for publications outside of Germany.¹⁰⁰ Anticolonial nationalists from across the world, in turn, published articles in Germany's anticolonial press, creating a global intellectual-political public under Axis patronage. The Syrian pan-Arab nationalist Shakib Arslan published in *Barid al-Sharq*, for instance, and a Tatar exile in Paris had his thoughts printed in *Milli Türkistan*. They also used modern means of communication, such as the telegraph and the radio, to communicate globally. Bose, for example, cabled a message to Japan's pan-Asian Bangkok Conference on June 15, 1942.¹⁰¹ He also frequently used the radio to speak to his followers in South Asia, routinely ending his messages with the battle cry "Long Live the Revolution! Long Live Free India!" (Inqilab Zindabad! Azad Hind Zindabad!).¹⁰²

EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN the nationalists' relations with each other were those with the regime. They cultivated their relationships with various German institutions, competing for official support. Anticolonial leaders bombarded the Germans with memoranda and petitions. Most interacted with officials of the regime on a daily basis. Many worked for its institutions and were involved in its policies in the colonial world. Some of the most prominent anticolonial leaders would even engage directly with the Nazi elite. Bahri met with Goebbels; Bose, al-Kaylani, and al-Husayni with Hitler,

¹⁰⁰ On the international publications of *Barid al-Sharq*'s editor Kamal al-Din al-Galal, see Peter Wien, "The Culpability of Exile: Arabs in Nazi Germany," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 37, no. 3 (2011): 332–358, here 339. On the writings of the Central Asian exile Alimjan Idris, see David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014), 44. On Taqi al-Din al-Hilali's publications, see Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism*.

¹⁰¹ Bose, Message to the Bangkok Conference, June 15, 1942, n.p., in Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 115–116.

¹⁰² Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, provides various examples.

Himmler, and Ribbentrop; and Kajum with Rosenberg, their communication enabled through translators. Often these meetings were propagandistically staged, planned in the minutest detail, with *Wochenschau* (newsreel) camera teams and propaganda photographers present. Such spectacles gave legitimacy to the exile politicians and their quest for self-determination.

At times the relations between the state and the exiles were marked by the nationalists' attempts to align themselves with the regime's ideology. While most of these adaptations were an expression of genuine ideological conviction, others were functional, aimed at achieving concessions. Emphasizing the revolutionary nature of their movements, Bose greeted Hitler as the "old revolutionary" in the hope that he would show more solidarity with India's liberation struggle.¹⁰³ Al-Husayni emphasized his hatred of "international Jewry and the colonialist countries," which, he told Hitler, was their "strongest bond."¹⁰⁴ He never left any doubt that his future independent state would be ethnically cleansed of the Jewish population. The Caucasian revolutionary Ali Khan Kantemir explained (correctly) to the Germans that he and his comrades had always confronted "international democracy" and sympathized with Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy, Franco's Spain, and the new Japan: "National Socialism and Fascism

¹⁰³ Schmidt, Minutes ("Aufzeichnung über die Unterredung zwischen dem Führer und dem indischen Nationalistenführer Bose in Anwesenheit des RAM, des Staatssekretärs Keppler und des Gesandten Hewel im Hauptquartier am 27. Mai 1942"), May 30, 1942, Berlin, PA, R 35551; English translation in Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 102–108.

¹⁰⁴ *Mudhakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husayni*, 109. Schmidt, Internal Note ("Aufzeichnung über die Unterredung zwischen dem Führer und dem Grossmufti von Jerusalem in Anwesenheit des Reichsaussenministers u. des Gesandten Grobba in Berlin am 28. November 1941"), November 30, 1941, Berlin, PA, R 35475; and Grobba, Internal Note ("Empfang des Großmufti durch den Führer"), December 1, 1941, Berlin, PA, R 261123, provide the minutes of the meeting.

are the powerful means which alone can save the world from anarchy and civil war.”¹⁰⁵ Kajum, who publicly revered Hitler as the “leader of the freedom-loving peoples,” advocated the merging of nationalism, socialism, and traditionalism.¹⁰⁶ In their interactions with regime officials, the exiles proved remarkably capable of relating to the regime’s ideology (as they perceived it) to give intellectual meaning to their cooperation. Just as anticolonial nationalists in interwar Paris embraced the ideals of the revolution when reaching out to state and society, as we know from the work of Michael Goebel, those in wartime Berlin at times adopted the regime’s ideology and political language.¹⁰⁷

And yet, the ideological relations were anything but straightforward. This became most obvious in Bose’s engagement with the Nazi regime. Bose had a weakness for autocratic policies, militarism, and radical nationalism. In a key article on the future India, published in 1942, he announced that all “anti-national and disruptive elements” were to be “firmly suppressed.” “An adequate police force will have to be organised for this purpose and the law will have to be amended, so that offences against national unity may be punished heavily.” National education was to imbue the youth with “the spirit of national unity.”¹⁰⁸ He also envisioned welfare and labor institutions modeled after the Nazi Arbeitsdienst (Labor Service), Winterhilfe (“Winter Relief” initiative), and Kraft durch Freude (Strength through Joy, the regime’s leisure

¹⁰⁵ Kantemir, Memorandum (“Die kaukasische Frage”), n.d., n.p., BAB, R 6/65.

¹⁰⁶ Kajum to Himmler, October 13, 1944, Berlin, BAB, NS 31/30; and, for his remarks on Hitler, Kajum in *Deutsch-Tatarisches Nachrichtenblatt* 14 (1944): 5.

¹⁰⁷ Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*, chap. 7.

¹⁰⁸ Subhas Chandra Bose, “Free India and Her Problems,” in Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 148–156, quotes from 152, reprinted from *Azad Hind* 9/10 (1942): 1–9; and in German, “Das freie Indien und seine Probleme,” *Wille und Macht* 10, no. 8 (August 1942): 1–7.

organization). At one point, Bose even asked Himmler if the SS would assist his new India in the building of a secret police, patterned after the Gestapo.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, however, he was perhaps the most critical of the Nazi regime's ideology of all the exiles, and he never tired of emphasizing in his speeches that cooperation with the Axis would not mean accepting its ideologies. Bose even confronted Hitler directly about his negative remarks about Indians in *Mein Kampf*. Unimpressed, Hitler replied that, first, he had thought it wrong that "the subject nations were supposed to build up a unified front against the oppressors" given the "weakness of these nations," and, second, that he had not wanted to resort to "passive resistance for the Reich of the Indian pattern."¹¹⁰

To be sure, the Germans were always in control, defining the framework of the relations. Exile politicians are by the nature of their situation tools of their foreign protectors. They require an apparatus to finance them and allow them to operate politically. Trapped in an asymmetric power relationship, the anticolonial nationalists were dependent on the regime and its resources and had to navigate its complex mechanics of power. On the one side, the Germans provided them with the room and resources to organize their struggle. In fact, the regime often granted their leaders a wide range of privileges, for instance providing Kajum with a diplomatic passport, a limousine, and a Berlin residence; al-Qawuqji with an apartment in the bourgeois Hansviertel and a car and driver; al-Husayni with several residences for himself and his

¹⁰⁹ Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy*, 559; and on the actual attempts to train a future Indian security police in Nazi Germany, N. C. Ganpuley, *Netaji in Germany: A Little-Known Chapter* (Bombay, 1959), 108–109.

¹¹⁰ Schmidt, Minutes ("Aufzeichnung über die Unterredung zwischen dem Führer und dem indischen Nationalistenführer Bose in Anwesenheit des RAM, des Staatssekretärs Keppler und des Gesandten Hewel im Hauptquartier am 27. Mai 1942"), May 30, 1942, Berlin, PA, R 35551; English translation in Bose and Bose, *Azad Hind*, 102–108.

entourage, including a stately villa in Berlin-Zehlendorf; and Bose with a Berlin-Charlottenburg mansion.¹¹¹ They were all paid substantial monthly salaries. Living a life of luxury that would have been unthinkable for ordinary Germans during the war years, they frequented Europe's most expensive hotels, restaurants, and cafés. Even the less prominent activists enjoyed generous privileges.

On the other side, the regime strictly controlled their activities and set firm boundaries. "We were at the mercy of the leaders," al-Rayyis later dryly remarked.¹¹² They were subject to repressive acts, such as censorship, surveillance, and even detention. Their phones were tapped.¹¹³ Their movements could be restricted at any time. Their finances could be cut off; when Bose returned from a visit to Rome with suits from the city's best tailors and costly furniture for his villa, his Foreign Office handler humiliatingly questioned this expense.¹¹⁴ They were dependent on resident permits, travel documents, and censorship permissions. The Germans provided the political platform, but dictated the terms and set the limits.

This became most obvious in the struggles over a German public declaration supporting national independence in the Global South. Throughout the war, the regime issued only vague or secret proclamations of postwar independence. Attempts by

¹¹¹ On Kajum, see Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 85, 95. On al-Qawuqji, see Höpp, "Ruhmloses Zwischenspiel," 30. On al-Husayni, see Gensicke, *The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Nazis*, 161–167. On Bose, see Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy*, 368.

¹¹² Al-Rayyis, *Al-Kitab al-Dhahabi li-l-Thawrat al-Wataniyya fi al-Mashriq al-'Arabi*, 259.

¹¹³ Keppler, Internal Note ("Aufzeichnung betreffs Indien"), December 3, 1941, Berlin, PA, R 27501, discusses the tapping of Bose's phone to "better control" his "political activities and his various connections."

¹¹⁴ Christopher Sykes, *Troubled Loyalty: A Biography of Adam Trott zu Solz* (London, 1968), 360.

anticolonial leaders and German diplomats to push for stronger public declarations were rejected by Hitler on the pretext that such announcements would become necessary only once German troops had reached these non-European regions and could support them militarily. The anticolonial activists submitted countless memoranda pushing for strong independence declarations, and they regularly brought up the issue in their meetings with regime functionaries. Only toward the end of the war did Berlin issue open and official declarations recognizing the independence of the peoples of the Arab world, India, and Central Asia.¹¹⁵ Overall, however, these disputes should still be considered with caution. In practice, the regime engaged closely with liberation movements from North Africa to South Asia, and its propaganda in Arabic, Hindi, Turkic, and other languages routinely endorsed anticolonial independence. Moreover, the Nazi state provided significant room for anticolonial activists to turn the capital into a hub of the global revolt against empire. Their activities—their national publications, committees, congresses, and militias (with all the symbolism, from flags to anthems)—gave unambiguous expression to their countries' national sovereignty, even in the absence of any formal German declarations.

Of course, there were many other obstacles. Anticolonial nationalists in Nazi Germany struggled with linguistic difficulties. Most of them suffered under everyday racial discrimination and the violent substance of Nazi politics more generally.¹¹⁶ Bose

¹¹⁵ Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy*, 479–493, 640; Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 82–138, especially 117, 118, 130; Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East*, chaps. 5 and 11; and Gerhard Höpp, “Nicht ‘Ali zuliebe, sondern aus Hass gegen Mu‘awiya’: Zum Ringen um die ‘Arabien-Erklärung’ der Achsenmächte 1940–1942,” *Asien, Afrika, Lateinamerika* 27, no. 6 (1999): 569–587.

¹¹⁶ On racism against Indians and Bose's complaints, see Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy*, 257. On discrimination against Central Asian and Caucasian nationalists, see Mühlen, *Zwischen Hakenkreuz und Sowjetstern*, 46–56. On racism against Africans,

frequently complained about Nazi racism. Nationalists from Central Asia in particular endured harassment and humiliation in the Reich. Mustafa Çokay, the former leader of the short-lived Turkestan Republic, who had been in exile in interwar Paris, was physically attacked by a Nazi thug on the street in Berlin, prompting the regime to issue a formal apology. “Yellow ant tribes are being absorbed,” Ernst Jünger remarked in his diary about Central Asian war volunteers—in his words, “Mongols in German uniforms”—whom he encountered in the Paris metro in 1944, articulating widespread German racism against the new allies.¹¹⁷ Undoubtedly, the racism that anticolonial nationalists encountered tainted their views of the German regime. The general wartime hardship, too, became a burden. The exiles were trapped in a “total war” that “brutalized German society,” as Peter Fritzsche put it, a war in which “air raids bludgeoned civilians and destroyed their homes, while Nazi authorities enforced ruthless discipline.”¹¹⁸ Al-Husayni later recalled that he and his comrades continually “sensed the state of war that prevailed in the lands of the German Reich, which could be felt in the streets and markets”—“in private houses and in the public places, and everywhere, city or countryside.”¹¹⁹ Remembering the “tragedy of defeat,” al-Qawuqji described a country in which the “German people” had “suddenly turned into a semi-nomadic people, living in filthy, wet, dark shelters,” suffering from “cold and starvation”: “With the German retreat on all fronts, our negotiations have been less

see Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft, *Black Germany: The Making and Unmaking of a Diaspora Community, 1884–1960* (Cambridge, 2013), chap. 7 and 302–315; and Lusane, *Hitler’s Black Victims*.

¹¹⁷ Ernst Jünger, *Das zweite Pariser Tagebuch*, Werke, Tagebücher, vol. 3: *Strahlungen, Zweiter Teil* (1949; repr., Stuttgart, 1962), 271–272 (May 12, 1944), here 272.

¹¹⁸ Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, Mass., 2008), 284.

¹¹⁹ *Mudhakkirat al-Hajj Muhammad Amin al-Husayni*, 149.

active, and we have lost hope of achieving what we hoped for.”¹²⁰ As German efforts to mobilize anticolonial nationalists became more aggressive in 1943 and 1944, the exiles, with the Allies advancing and tightening their control over their colonies, became increasingly disillusioned, trapped in a situation they had not foreseen.

Most of the anticolonial leaders survived the war, and many continued their struggle against empire. Among the most prominent were al-Husayni and al-Qawuqji, both of whom played leading roles in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.¹²¹ Al-Kaylani worked as an advisor to the Saudi king.¹²² Some anti-imperial figures who had been in contact with Berlin went on to become leaders of their postcolonial nation-states—Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, Ahmad Balafrej of Morocco, Anwar al-Sadat of Egypt. Killed in a plane crash over Taiwan in 1945, Subhas Chandra Bose became an icon of the anticolonial revolt in postcolonial India. The Central Asian nationalists, in contrast, often descended into the political insignificance of postwar exile lives in Europe and America. Strikingly, many would continue to champion the idea of anticolonial (and later “Third World”) solidarity—and some would meet again a decade later, in 1955 in Bandung.¹²³

The broader impact of the authoritarian moment on nationalist movements in the colonial world can hardly be overstated. In the postwar years, many of the anticolonial authoritarian nationalist movements that had emerged in the 1930s and

¹²⁰ *Mudhakkirat Fawzi al-Qawuqji*, 304.

¹²¹ Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven, Conn., 2008).

¹²² Dieterich, “Rashid ‘Ali al-Kailani in Berlin,” 69.

¹²³ Zvi Elpeleg, *The Grand Mufti: Haj Amin al-Hussaini, Founder of the Palestinian National Movement* (London, 1992), 131–132; and Enver Altayli, *A Dark Path to Freedom: Ruzi Nazar, from the Red Army to the CIA*, trans. David Barchard (London, 2017), 183–191.

1940s, taking inspiration from Fascism and Nazism—from the Ba‘thists in the Middle East to the National Patriots in South Asia—shaped the politics of postcolonial states.

ALTHOUGH THE REGIME’S LEADERSHIP was often halfhearted in its support for anticolonial nationalists, in practice various branches of the Nazi state increasingly adopted anticolonial policies, giving anticolonial revolutionaries who were willing to cooperate remarkable space and means to organize their struggle. At the height of the war, Berlin became a hub of revolutionary anticolonialism in the global war against the liberal imperial world order. The cooperation between the regime and anticolonial radicals was messy and uneven, marked by contingencies, and faced many obstacles—and yet it was far more extensive than most scholars have acknowledged. It is one of the incongruities of the Nazi regime that at a time when it murdered peoples deemed racially inferior across Europe, its capital became a place where non-European men could make pleas for freedom.

Historians have tended to see Nazi Germany as an imperial, rather than an anti-imperial, state. In many respects, this view can be traced back to Hannah Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1951.¹²⁴ More recent research has revived this line of thought, looking at continuities from the imperial period as well as connections to (and emulation of) other contemporary empires.¹²⁵ The history of Berlin’s

¹²⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1951).

¹²⁵ Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire*, and Shelley Baranowski, *Nazi Empire: German Colonialism and Imperialism from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge, 2011), are the most impressive examples. Among the most important recent works representing this paradigm, in horizontal perspective, are Patrick Bernhard, “Hitler’s Africa in the East: Italian Colonialism as a Model for German Planning in Eastern Europe,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 51, no. 1 (2016): 61–90; Bernhard, “Colonial Crossovers: Nazi Germany and Its Entanglements with Other Empires,” *Journal of Global History* 12,

anticolonial revolutionaries, to some extent, challenges this paradigm. It reveals the Nazi regime as an enemy of empire, a revolutionary anticolonial force, a champion of an international order based on the principles of the nation, not empire, and therefore, despite its ruthlessness and brutality, as appealing to (and cooperating with) some anticolonial nationalists.

Moreover, the story of the anti-imperial nationalists' evolving relations with the Nazi regime adds an important chapter to the entangled histories of the twentieth-century struggle for anticolonial emancipation in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. It illuminates the paths of anticolonialists who in the 1930s and 1940s turned to the rising

no. 2 (2017): 206–227; and, more generally, Reto Hofmann and Daniel Hedinger, “Axis Empires: Towards a Global History of Fascist Imperialism,” *Journal of Global History* 12, no. 2 (2017): 161–165. Among the most important works based on this paradigm in vertical perspective are Jürgen Zimmerer, “Die Geburt des ‘Ostlandes’ aus dem Geiste des Kolonialismus: Die nationalsozialistische Eroberungs- und Beherrschungspolitik in (post-)kolonialer Perspektive,” *Sozial.Geschichte* 19, no. 1 (2004): 10–43; and, in relation to the Holocaust, Zimmerer, “Holocaust und Kolonialismus: Beitrag zu einer Archäologie des genozidalen Gedankens,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 51, no. 12 (2003): 1098–1119; Benjamin Madley, “From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe,” *European History Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (2005): 429–464; and the essays in Jürgen Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz? Beiträge zum Verhältnis von Kolonialismus und Holocaust* (Münster, 2011). For a critique of these approaches, see Pascal Grosse, “What Does German Colonialism Have to Do with National Socialism? A Conceptual Framework,” in Eric Ames, Marcia Klotz, and Lora Wildenthal, eds., *Germany's Colonial Pasts* (Lincoln, Neb., 2005), 115–143; Birthe Kundrus, “Kontinuitäten, Parallelen, Rezeptionen: Über ‘Kolonialisierung’ des Nationalsozialismus,” *Werkstatt Geschichte* 43 (2006): 45–62; and Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, “Der Holocaust als ‘kolonialer Genzid’? Europäische Kolonialgewalt und nationalsozialistischer Vernichtungskrieg,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 33, no. 3 (2007): 439–466.

authoritarian nationalist regimes, be it for pragmatic or ideological reasons, or both. Their histories thereby also shed new light on the phenomenon of authoritarian nationalist anticolonialism in the world's age of extremes. Above all, it illustrates that anticolonialism—its practices and worldviews—was always shaped by the global political conditions, and this also applies to its liberal and socialist variants.

Building bonds across ethnic, national, and imperial boundaries, even the most ardent nationalists among Berlin's anticolonial exiles became part of an international against empire. We have tended to idealize the histories of cosmopolitan globetrotters, but we should not forget the darker side of twentieth-century internationalism—reactionary cosmopolitanism and global cooperation of radical nationalists. Global history, at times dominated by narratives of the intrinsically progressive nature of global connections, can also be a history of militant, nationalist, and authoritarian movements.

To be sure, Berlin's anticolonialists did not represent the majority. While some anticolonial leaders sought support from the Axis, many—from Ho Chi Minh to Muhammad Ali Jinnah—supported the war effort of the Allies. We should also not forget that Nazi Germany was in competition with other powers to win support in the colonial world—as reflected most notably in the promises made by the Allies in the Atlantic Charter and in Japan's efforts to rally anticolonial nationalist movements across Asia and beyond.¹²⁶ There was an anticolonial moment in the Second World

¹²⁶ Wm. Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941–1945* (Oxford, 1977); Martin Thomas, *The French Empire at War, 1940–45* (Manchester, 1998); and Ashley Jackson, *The British Empire and the Second World War* (London, 2006), discuss the Allies' attempts to mobilize the colonial world. The literature in note 14 provides insights into Japan's anticolonial policies.

War—a prelude to decolonization. The imperial prewar world order was shattered, even though the Allies were not immediately willing to give it up.

In the last days of the war, Hitler, under siege in his bunker in Berlin, lamented the failure of his regime to cooperate more successfully with anticolonial movements, telling his secretary, Martin Bormann, that their concessions to Vichy France and their loyalty to Fascist Italy in the colonial world had been disastrous: “Never, at any price, should we have put our money on France and against the peoples subjected to her yoke. On the contrary, we should have helped them to achieve their liberty and, if necessary, should have goaded them into doing so.”¹²⁷ Ironically, Hitler blamed his diplomats at the Wilhelmstraße for fostering this alliance with Vichy: “Our ‘gentlemen’ obviously preferred to maintain cordial relations with distinguished Frenchmen, rather than with a lot of hirsute revolutionaries,” he lamented. Similarly, he bemoaned the Italian alliance, which had prevented a stronger anticolonial policy in the Italian Empire, the French Empire, and beyond: “Had we been on our own, we could have emancipated the Moslem countries dominated by France; and that would have had enormous repercussions in the Near East, dominated by Britain, and in Egypt. But with our fortunes linked to those of the Italians, the pursuit of such a policy was not possible.”¹²⁸ In stark contrast to his earlier statements on Europe’s empires, Hitler’s final remarks exemplify the wartime shift in German policies toward the colonial world. In the end, for Hitler, his regime’s anticolonial policies had not gone far enough.

¹²⁷ *The Testament of Adolf Hitler: The Hitler-Bormann Documents, February–April 1945*, ed. François Genoud, trans. R. H. Stevens (London, 1961), 58–62 (February 14, 1945), 67 (February 15, 1945), and 69–75 (February 17, 1945) all give insights into Hitler’s view of anticolonial movements at the end of the war. Quote from 61.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 69–75 (February 17, 1945), here 70.

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Illustrations

FIGURE 1: German propaganda pamphlet for colonial soldiers in the French Army; 80,000 copies were distributed in June 1940. Archives of the Imperial War Museum, London, Image LBY K. 40808-16.

FIGURE 2: French colonial prisoner of war and German guards, France, 1940. German Federal Archives, Image 121-0417.

FIGURE 3: Erwin Rommel and soldiers of the Indian Legion, France, 1943. German Federal Archives, Image 183-J16796.

FIGURE 4: Soldiers of the Free Arabia Legion, Cape Sounion, Greece, 1943. German Federal Archives, Image 101I-177-1465-16.

FIGURE 5: Indian nationalists commemorate the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar (April 13, 1919), Hotel Kaiserhof, Berlin, April 13, 1940. SZ Photo Archive, Image 00044141.

FIGURE 6: Rashid 'Ali al-Kaylani speaks to Arab nationalists, flanked by Yunus Bahri (left), Amin al-Husayni (center), and Ibrahim Pasha Rawi (right), Berlin, May 3, 1943. SZ Photo Archive, Image 00005730.

FIGURE 7: Celebration of the foundation of the provisional Indian national government: A. C. N. Nambiar delivers his speech, flanked by soldiers of the Azad Hind Legion, Hotel Kaiserhof, Berlin, November 15, 1943. SZ Photo Archive, Image 00081541.

FIGURE 8: Celebration of the foundation of the provisional Indian national government: soldier of Azad Hind Legion, Hotel Kaiserhof, Berlin, November 15, 1943. SZ Photo Archive, Image 00081540.

Abstract

This article sheds light on the history of anti-imperialism in the years of the global authoritarian surge of the 1930s and 1940s, looking at the evolving relations between

anticolonial nationalists and the Nazi regime. At the height of the Second World War, scores of anticolonial revolutionaries flocked to Germany from North Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia, turning wartime Berlin into a hub of global anti-imperial revolutionary activism. Driven by the contingencies of war, German officials made increasing efforts to mobilize anti-imperial movements, reaching out to the subjects of the British and French empires and the minorities of the Soviet Union. The history of Berlin's anticolonial nationalists illuminates the broader phenomenon of right-wing authoritarian anticolonialism that emerged in the shifting political landscape of the interwar years and reached its peak during the Second World War. In this global authoritarian moment, many anticolonial nationalists, in search of an alternative to (Wilsonian) liberalism and socialism, turned to the rising authoritarian states, which stood for the primacy of the nation and a new world order based on the nation, not multiethnic empires. Cultivating bonds across imperial, national, and ethnic boundaries, they formed a nationalist international against empire, marked by anticolonial militancy and reactionary cosmopolitanism. The article also addresses broader questions of exile politics and international patronage relations in modern history.

Keywords

anticolonialism, anti-imperialism, internationalism, Nazi Germany, World War II