Nazis in the Middle East: Assessing Links Between Nazism and Islam

MIA LEE

Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers, *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz. Das 'Dritte Reich', die Araber und Palästina* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006) 288 pp., ISBN 978-3-534-19729-3.

Barry Rubin and Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, *Nazis, Islamists, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2014) 360pp., $35, ISBN 978-0-300-14090-3.

Matthias Küntzel, *Jihad and Jew Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11*, trans. Colin Meade (New York: Telos Press, 2007) 210 pp. (pb), $21.95, ISBN 978-0-914386-39-1.

Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 2009) 352pp., $30, ISBN: 978-0-300-14579-3.

David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2014) 512 pp., ISBN: 978-0-674-72460-0.

Stefan Ihrig, *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2014) 320 pp. (hb), $29.95/£22.95/€27, ISBN: 978-0-674-36837-8.

Since the early-2000s there has been an increasing amount of research on connections between the Nazi regime and the Arab world largely spurred by scholars of Germany. One of the key contributions of this scholarship has been the argument that historic links between National Socialism and Islam, in particular the connection between National Socialist racial ideology and contemporary anti-Semitism in the Middle East, persisted into the post-war period and crucially shaped Middle Eastern politics and policies. This approach is represented in this review in the studies by Matthias Küntzel, Jeffrey Herf, Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers and Barry Rubin and Wolfgang Schwanitz, who all – in various ways – suggest that there is a direct line of continuity between National Socialism, the Muslim Brotherhood and the rise of al-Qaeda. By calling attention to the role of National Socialism, these studies challenge what has hitherto been the dominant historiography of the modern Middle East, which contextualises the rise of anti-Semitism in the region within a

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Contemporary European History, page 1 of 11. © Cambridge University Press 2016
doi:10.1017/S0960777316000333

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broader analysis of Arab nationalism, anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism. The debate on the importance of National Socialism in the Arab world continues to develop. Recent books by historians David Motadel and Stefan Ihrig return the focus from the Middle East to Nazi policy in the region allowing them to place the Nazi regime within a longer history of Western misapprehensions of the 'Muslim' world. Placing these two approaches side by side allows us to evaluate the historical evidence of collaboration between Nazism and radical Islam and thereby assess the extent to which Nazi racial ideology penetrated the Arab world.

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Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers's *Crescent Moon and Swastika: The Third Reich, the Arabs and Palestine* (originally published in German as: *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz. Das 'Dritte Reich', die Araber und Palästina*) and Barry Rubin and Wolfgang G. Schwanitz's *Nazis, Islamists, and the Making of the Modern Middle East* overlap both in the sources they use and in the arguments they make about Nazi policy in the Middle East. Based on German and US government sources, *Crescent Moon and Swastika* details how the Third Reich planned to extend its Jewish policy to North Africa and the Middle East. The documents show that the regime created new military divisions – integrating a couple of hundred Germans who had managed to leave Palestine for Germany before the outbreak of war – for the eventual occupation of the southern Mediterranean. They also show that Axis troops commanded by German officers persecuted Jews across North Africa. For instance, in German-occupied Tunisia Jews were separated from the rest of the population and imprisoned in forced labour camps (8, 92–104).[1] Mallmann and Cuppers suggest that if Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, the Nazi commander in charge of the desert campaign, had succeeded in invading Egypt in 1942, Berlin would have sent an SS-Commando to implement Nazi racial policies in the newly conquered territories. In other words, the authors contend that the Third Reich had plans to extend their racial policy across North Africa.

Looking at similar sources, Rubin and Schwanitz also examine how the Third Reich planned to extend its racial policies. For instance, they elaborate on the role of SS officer Walter Rauff, who was sent to Tunisia in 1942. Rauff had previously headed the Reich Security Head Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*), during which time he had overseen the design and implementation of the mobile killing vans used by the mobile killing units (*Einsatzgruppen*) in the Soviet territories.[2] Rubin and Schwanitz

[1] For more on this see Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers, '"Exekutivmaßnahmen gegenüber der Zivilbevölkerung in eigener Verantwortung": Das Einsatzkommando bei der Panzerarmee Afrika', 137–47.

[2] Rauff was found working in Chile after the war, but German authorities failed to extradite him to face charges. During the war he worked for Reinhard Heydrich, who commissioned Rauff to create a more 'humane method of execution' based on experiments with exhaust gases. The mobile killing vans were put to use by mobile killing units in Soviet territories and then likely at Chelmno. See Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March*

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claim he was responsible for killing 2,500 Jews in German-occupied North Africa from 1942–1943.

Both of these books reinsert racial ideology into the study of the desert conflict and thereby offer new insights into the Nazis' relationships with their North African and Middle Eastern partners. Yet their assessment misses the opportunity to provide a close examination of the tensions between the Nazis and the various local groups co-existing in the region. Notably, in both accounts it remains unclear to what extent pre-existing anti-Semitism was influenced by National Socialism. Mallmann and Cüppers point out, for example, that Muslims and colonial settlers in Tunisia engaged in anti-Semitic acts before the Germans took control of the territory (203–7). Both sets of authors claim that Arabs increasingly participated in operations against Jews during the German occupation. But they do so without showing significant corroborating evidence of this alleged increase in violence, thus creating ambiguity about the reasons behind the rise of anti-Semitism in the region. Moreover, while they emphasise Arabs' welcome of the Germans, neither set of authors convincingly addresses the findings of numerous studies from scholars of the Middle East that document how Middle Eastern leaders in the interwar era were suspicious or antipathetic toward imperial powers (first Britain and France after the initial Mandates were created and, soon thereafter, Germany). Germany's aggressive foreign policy as well as its alliance with Fascist Italy, which extended its control over Libya and Ethiopia in the 1930s, made it difficult for the Third Reich to sell itself as an anti-imperial power. As Middle East historians Stefan Wild and Gudrun Kramer have persuasively demonstrated, the vast majority of Middle Eastern politicians, intellectuals and activists had no interest in supporting the Nazi regime.[3] Indeed, Wild describes at length the ideological and political incompatibility between National Socialism and Arab nationalism. There were, of course, exceptions, most notably Amin al-Husaini, who was appointed the Mufti of Jerusalem by the British authorities in Palestine. Al-Husaini held this position from 1921 until 1937 when a warrant for his arrest was issued for his role in organising the Arab Revolt of 1936. He eventually sought asylum in Nazi Germany, where he became the most prominent Muslim religious leader to collaborate with the regime. In addition to boastful claims that he would be able to raise an army of

1942, with contributions by Jürgen Matthäus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004), 355–6 and 418–9.

[3] See, Stefan Wild, 'National Socialism in the Arab near East between 1933 and 1939', *Die Welt des Islams*, 25, 1/4 (1985), 126–73; Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914–1952* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1989); Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski, *Confronting Fascism in Egypt: Dictatorship versus Democracy in the 1930s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Francis Nicosia, 'Arab Nationalism and National Socialist Germany, 1933–1939: Ideological and Strategic Incompatibility', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 12 (1980), 351–72; René Wildangel, *Zwischen Achse und Mandatsmacht: Palästina und der Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2007); Mustafa Kabha, *Writing Up a Story: The Palestinian Press as Shaper of Public Opinion, 1929–1939* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2007); Gerhard Höpp, Peter Wien and René Wildangel, eds., *Blind für die Geschichte? Arabische Begegnungen mit dem Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2004); Götz Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria and Lebanon: The Ambivalence of the German Option, 1933–1945* (London: Routledge, 2009) and Peter Wien, *Iraqi Arab Nationalism: Authoritarian, Totalitarian, and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932–1941* (London: Routledge, 2006).

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Muslims to join the Germans, he wrote and broadcast Nazi propaganda in Arabic aimed at the Middle East and North Africa. The National Socialists relied on figures like the Mufti to win support among Muslim populations in places like the Caucasus, particularly after the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.

The turn in both books to the Mufti is thus not surprising but, nonetheless, it demonstrates how the Mufti's boastful memoir, in which he overstates his own power and influence, has skewed the historical record.[4] Rubin and Schwanitz open their book with the well-documented meeting of Adolf Hitler and the Mufti on 28 November 1941, during which the two authors maintain that al-Husaini and Hitler agreed to commit genocide against Jews. Mallmann and Cüppers use the Mufti as their central evidence to demonstrate the National Socialist origins of anti-Semitism in the Middle East. Certainly Al-Husaini was a strident anti-Semite who played a vocal and active role on behalf of the regime, in particular visiting Muslim communities living under German occupation and broadcasting National Socialist radio programs in Arabic. The Mufti was not, however, the voice of the Muslim world. This was most clearly demonstrated in his failure to fulfil his promises of inciting a popular Muslim uprising against Allied imperial powers.

In addition to obscuring al-Husaini's actual influence in the Muslim world, the focus on the Mufti also creates a false link between contemporary anti-Semitism in the Middle East and the Nazis' racial programme. Mallmann and Cüppers explicitly advise that the historical lesson – the collaboration between the Nazis and the Mufti – should be taken as a warning against 'irrational modes of thought' that persist in the region today (257). Rubin and Schwanitz contend that political liberalism was effectively destroyed in the 1940s and 1950s allowing the Middle East to be 'the only part of the world where the local allies of Nazi Germany and those holding so many of the same ideas actually emerged triumphant in the postwar world' (x). Thus, the parties that came to power in the post-war period drew inspiration from Nazism and fascism, and the Nazi legacy 'continues to reverberate many decades later given its profound effects on Arab nationalism, Islamism, and the course taken by the Palestinian Arab movement' (ix).

Certainly anti-Semitism was a component of German-Arab relations during the 1930s and 1940s. Al-Husaini's career testifies to the opportunities that it created. Nonetheless, these works do not prove that it was the key component in the relationship between the Middle East and Nazi Germany. There is no new evidence that the Mufti commanded the support of any significant number of Arab Muslims either during his exile or afterward. Moreover, neither book satisfactorily demonstrates that the Mufti's anti-Semitic position was shared by Islamic groups in the Middle East during the war.[5] What is convincing about their research, however, is that German leaders consistently misapprehended the situation in the Middle East,

[4] See David G. Dalin and John F. Rothmann, *Icon of Evil: Hitler's Mufti and the Rise of Radical Islam* (New York: Random House, 2008). Cf. Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab – Israeli War of Narratives* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).

[5] Götz Nordbruch, 'Reviewed Work: *Halbmond und Hakenkreuz. Das Dritte Reich, die Araber und Palästina* by Klaus-Michael Mallmann, Martin Cüppers', *Die Welt des Islams*, 49, 2 (2009), 269–73, here 272.

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which is clear from the large role the Nazis accorded Husaini in trying to win over Muslim allies.

Matthias Küntzel's *Jihad and Jew Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11* picks up where Mallmann and Cüppers, and Rubin and Schwanitz leave off. Küntzel moves into the post-war period and focuses on the ideological parallels between National Socialism, the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda to posit a direct connection between National Socialism and contemporary Islamic terrorism.[6] Küntzel begins his narrative with the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, which became the largest mass organisation in Egypt in the 1930s. During the war the Brotherhood was stridently anti-British, anti-foreigner and increasingly anti-Jewish. Its leader, Hassan al-Banna, had ties to al-Husaini. Once the war was over al-Banna was one of the most prominent Arab leaders to petition the Allied authorities for al-Husaini's release from detention, and when the Mufti escaped from France in 1947 al-Banna personally welcomed him in Cairo. On the evidence of these ties, as well as his study of the Brotherhood's ideology, Küntzel argues that the Brotherhood was the key point of transference of anti-Semitism from National Socialism to the Arab world.

In order to develop this argument, Küntzel downplays al-Banna's ideological stance during the war, in which the Muslim leader expressly 'rejected racial theory as utterly incompatible with Islam'.[7] Instead, Küntzel insists that Islamist anti-Semitism, as embodied in the Muslim Brotherhood, originated in fascism rather than anti-colonialism. To make this case, he discusses the writings of Sayyid Qutb, who joined the Muslim Brotherhood in 1950 and a year later penned the anti-Semitic essay, 'Our Battle with the Jews', as further evidence of the link between the Brotherhood and Nazism.[8] Yet, Sayyid Qutb's radicalisation appears to stem from the post-war period starting with his visit to the United States in 1950, thereby suggesting that his radicalisation had origins other than Nazism.

Although Küntzel looks only at a few key figures in the Brotherhood, he also examines the Brotherhood's ideology in order to demonstrate its natural alliance with Nazism: a phobia of sensuality/sexuality, gender roles that naturalised women as mothers and wives and a celebration of martyrdom. Küntzel further argues that the Muslim Brotherhood shared a common worldview with National Socialism: 'the German idea of the people ('*Volk*') defined by language, culture and blood rather than borders and political sovereignty, was far closer to the Islamic notion of the *umma* [community of believers] than to the British or French concept of citizenship (26). Because the Muslim Brotherhood was the most popular mass political movement in the 1940s, he continues, it subsequently became the vehicle for dispersing 'Islamofascism' and Nazi-inspired anti-Semitism to international Islamic terrorist organisations.

[6] *Jihad and Jew Hatred* was expanded for the English version published in 2007.

[7] Gudrun Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914–1952* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd., 1989), 151.

[8] Sayyid Qutb, 'Ma 'rakatuna ma'a al-Yahud' (Our Battle with the Jews). Cited in Joel Beinin, 'Book Reviews', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42 (2010), 689–92, here 691. For further information on the text, see Adnan A. Musallam, *From Secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the Foundations of Radical Islamism* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2005).

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Küntzel's conceptual framing for the alliance between Nazism and Islamism finds empirical support from historian Jeffrey Herf's *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*. Published in 2009 and winner of the German Studies Association Sybil Halpern Milton Prize in 2011, the book sets out to 'push the history of Nazism beyond its customary Eurocentric limits' by illuminating 'the European dimensions of Arabic and Islamic radicalism of the mid-twentieth century (1). His extensive research demonstrates that the Nazis dedicated substantial resources and personnel to win Arab public opinion to the Nazi cause, depicting Germany as an anti-imperialist and pro-Arab European nation. In this endeavour, Herf shows that the Nazi regime believed it could employ anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism as a bridge to the Arab world.

While Herf admits the difficulties of assessing the reception of Nazi propaganda, he argues that the importance of Nazi ideology in the formulation and development of anti-Semitism in the Arab world has been underestimated. He points out that a large number of people in North Africa and the Middle East would have had access to Nazi and fascist radio broadcasts via public spaces like cafes. He considers figures like al-Husaini as critical partners of the regime whose contributions refigured National Socialist as well as Islamic anti-Semitism. This partnership, what Herf terms a 'cultural fusion', then produced 'Islamofascism' – 'the blend of modern and reactionary elements in both Nazism and fascism in the 1940s and radical Islamism of recent decades' (14).[9] Like Küntzel, Herf argues that historical studies that emphasise the importance of anti-imperialism actually obscure the importance of Nazi-inspired anti-Semitism: 'In the decades since World War II, the passions of anti-imperialism have shifted attention away from the issue of the diffusion of elements of fascist and Nazi ideology beyond their European origins' (265).

The cultural fusion that Herf describes as a marriage of sorts between Nazi racial anti-Semitism and Islamist activism fails to account, however, for either the specific contours of the interwar political landscape or the dramatic shifts of the post-war order. Research on the Arab reception of National Socialist propaganda, including collaborative work from scholars of the Middle East and Germany attest to mixed Arab reactions to the rise of fascism and National Socialism. For example, historians Israel Gershoni and James Jankowski have published various articles and books examining the political landscape of interwar Egypt and the appeals of fascism across a wide range of political parties.[10] In particular, their co-authored book *Confronting Fascism in Egypt: Dictatorship versus Democracy in the 1930s* demonstrates that most intellectuals and political figures were critical of fascism and National Socialism even if their views would not be considered classically liberal. In Egypt, the Communists, the Muslim Brotherhood and the Liberals opposed Fascist ideology for its repressiveness

[9] Herf elaborates on this development in the chapter, 'Postwar Aftereffects', 231–60.

[10] A very limited sample: Israel Gershoni, 'Confronting Fascism in Egypt: Tawfiq al-Hakim's Anti-Totalitarianism, 1938–1945', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, 26 (1997), 121–50; ibid. 'Egyptian Liberalism in an Age of "Crisis of Orientation": *al-Risala*'s Reaction to Fascism and Nazism, 1933–1939', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31 (1999), 551–76 and James Jankowski, 'The Egyptian Blue Shirt and the Egyptian Waft, 1935–1938', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 6 (1970), 77–95.

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(totalitarian aims), its racism and anti-Semitism and its territorial expansionism.[11] The Egyptian press also expressed increasing alarm over Hitler's expansionist aims. Both print dailies and illustrated journals, including *al-Ahram*, *al-Muqattam* and *al-Misri* (the print outlet for the Egyptian liberal Wafd party) condemned fascist and National Socialist imperialist actions in North Africa and Ethiopia as well as the German annexation of the Sudetenland. Editors and writers issued warnings against both Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany as untrustworthy, imperial dictatorships. Intellectual journals further criticised the repressive and authoritarian character of National Socialism and fascism as detrimental to the human condition.[12]

Yet around the same time – the mid-1930s to mid-1940s – Egypt became the site of increasing anti-Semitism. By not taking into account the wider political context developed in works such as that of Gershoni and Jankowski, the books under review here by Herf, Küntzel, Rubin and Schwanitz and Mallmann and Cüppers only partially address the conditions under which anti-Semitism in the Middle East and North Africa increased.

After the war, attitudes and policies toward Jews living in Egypt continued to shift with the emergence of the state of Israel, another key event only partially treated by the books reviewed above.[13] While there was no official policy against Jews after the Israeli air strikes during the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948–49, many Egyptian Jews, particularly among the lower-classes, emigrated. The propertied classes generally opted to stay, believing that they could weather a temporary change in political climate. But in 1956, after the Anglo-British-Israeli invasion of Suez, the Egyptian government changed its position to one that firmly linked imperialism and Zionism. The rising xenophobia and feelings of pan-Islamism that came in the wake of the Suez crisis affected Jewish as well as non-Jewish minorities. The government criminalised Zionism and conducted mass arrests of Jews. It also expelled British and French nationals and later stateless Jews.[14] Nationalisation decrees from the early 1960s affected all private businesses including those of Jews of the upper and middle classes. Tens of thousands of Jews left the country by the mid-1960s.[15] This political context should be a central part of accounts of the rise of anti-Semitic and xenophobic policies.

Despite these shortcomings – or perhaps because of them – these works have given an important push to Middle East scholars to clarify the ideological and

[11] According to his memoir, the leader of the Wafd Party Mustafa al-Nahhas compared the imperial nature of the Italian and German regimes to all the European powers then at war.

[12] See, Gershoni and Jankowski, 'Part II: Dictatorship versus Democracy in Egyptian Public Discourse', in idem, *Confronting Fascism in Egypt*, 49–204.

[13] Most Jews did not have Egyptian citizenship. According to Krämer, 25–30 per cent were Egyptian nationals in the interwar period with another 25 per cent with foreign passports or foreign protection. The remaining 45–50 per cent were stateless. This number shifted in favour of Egyptian nationalism over the course of the 1950s (80 per cent Egyptian, 20 per cent foreign nationals). Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 32.

[14] Stateless Jews had existed in Egypt since the nineteenth century. See, Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*.

[15] Krämer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt*, 217–21.

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political relationships between the Nazis and various Arab and Muslim groups. For example, several recent articles point out the clearer affinities between Arab parties and fascism compared to Islamic parties and fascism. The Lebanese Kata'ib (Phalanges) – a Christian Party – and the militantly secular Syrian Social National Party and Syrian Ba'ath Party were both strongly influenced by the fascists.[16] In this sense, a kind of cultural fusion might have existed in the Middle East – but not with Islam.

Moreover, by analysing collaboration in circles beyond the Mufti, Middle Eastern scholars have suggested a range of reasons that Arabs and Muslims worked with the Nazi regime, including political sympathy, personal ambition, opportunism and statelessness. Their work demonstrates that across the spectrum of collaborators – from high-ranking individuals such as Rashid Ali al'Gaylani, who led the failed coup in Iraq in 1941, to exchange students caught in Berlin when war broke out – individuals had different reasons for cooperating with the Nazi regime. Historian Peter Wien issues a useful caution against making generalisations about the direct link between Nazi and Arab anti-Semitism on the basis of individual contacts because of the disparity between each case and the way that they reveal a complex set of exchanges between Arabs in exile in Germany and the Nazi regime.[17] Some were unable to return to their home countries. Others sympathised with Nazism. And some saw personal and professional opportunities with the new regime. To characterise all collaborators as anti-Semites unnecessarily simplifies life in exile.

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The works reviewed above focus on Nazi-Muslim collaboration and shared ideological commitments in the Third Reich and the Middle East. More recent works contribute to this discussion while taking a different approach. Instead of treating Nazi policy as a window onto attitudes in the Arab or Muslim world, this second strand of research examines how Nazi policy in the Middle East fit into a wider context of European assumptions about Islam and the Muslim world. Since the nineteenth century – one might begin with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 – European powers have treated the Middle East as a region dominated by religious rather than political, cultural, ethnic or other competing interests. This has led to a series of misunderstandings of the role and influence of religious leaders. The following books discuss this critical misunderstanding.

David Motadel's *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* examines the Nazi regime's attempt to win over Muslims throughout Europe, the Caucasus, North Africa and India. After

[16] See Joel Beinin, 'Book Reviews', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 42 (2010), 689–726, here, 689. In addition, the notion that the Ba'ath was influenced by the fascists is still being debated as demonstrated by Gilbert Achcar's *The Arabs and the Holocaust*. Among these works, there is a general consensus that the neither the National Socialists nor the fascists were able to launch lasting movements in the region.

[17] Peter Wien, 'The Culpability of Exile: Arabs in Nazi Germany', *Geschichte und* Gesellschaft, 37 (2011), 332–58.

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the invasion of the Soviet Union, both the Axis and Allied powers recognised that the support of Muslims around the globe could be crucial in the outcome of the war. As a result, the Germans, the British and the Americans invested heavily in recruiting Muslim allies and presenting themselves as the true protector of Muslim interests. Motadel demonstrates that from this 'Muslim moment' until the end of the war the regime took an unrefined view of Muslims that focused on religion and subordinated other markers of identity such as ethnicity and nationalism. Motadel further situates the Nazis' approach toward the Middle East within a long tradition of European foreign policy in the Muslim world that persisted well after the war – a longer historical narrative of the 'strategic employment of Islam by the (non-Muslim) great powers in the modern age' (322).[18]

Islam and Nazi Germany's War is a carefully researched and detailed book drawing on archives in a half dozen different countries including Germany, Britain, the United States, the Czech Republic, Russia, Latvia, Albania and Iran (325–7). One particularly intriguing issue developed in the book is the Nazis' shifting accommodation of Muslims at the expense of Nazi ideological and racial categories. Motadel shows that the Nazis relaxed ideological and racial policies to achieve strategic aims. Rank-and-file attitudes also had to be reformed to avoid offending Muslim communities and recruits. The contrast between the attitudes of ordinary soldiers and the Nazi leadership could be stark. Motadel points out that Hitler and Himmler came to increasingly admire Islam as a 'religion of men' (*Männerreligion*). Himmler especially spoke positively of Islam and even speculated on the missed historic opportunities to fuse the Germanic race and Islam during the wars of Ottoman expansion (66).

Nazi appeals to Muslim populations, Motadel suggests, contributed to the competition over resources within the regime. The Foreign Ministry, the Wehrmacht, the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories and the SS all vied with each other from early 1943 over jurisdiction on Muslim policy. In the end the extensive endeavours to incite global jihad failed. Motadel points out that the living conditions for Muslims in the eastern territories, the Balkans, the Crimea and the Caucasus deteriorated because of the war, which made communities more sympathetic to joining the Wehrmacht and SS Divisions stationed in the East. Arab recruits, by contrast, were tiny in number, no more than a couple thousand at their peak. They were also notoriously uncommitted and disloyal. Overall, the Muslim world did not respond to Hitler's call. Propaganda was launched too late and was founded upon misconceptions about both Muslims and Islam. The regime relied on religious leaders, even those like al-Husaini, whose authority Motadel describes as inconsistent and limited, because they believed that religion rather than regionalism, ethnicity, nationality or any other political commitment was the most fundamental and critical

[18] In West Germany a small number of high-level Muslim collaborators were able to avoid repatriation to Eastern Europe in Munich, where both the Federal Republic and the Americans helped fund their religious and refugee organisations. During the Cold War Americans took up ideas similar to the National Socialists, believing that Muslims were key to destabilising the Soviet Union, a rationale that justified involvement in the war in Afghanistan and relations with religious leaders like Said Ramadan, disciple and son-in-law of Hassan al-Banna.

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component of those individuals identified as Muslims. Pan-Islam, though in revival, was not pervasive. Moreover, many Muslims understood Germany's embrace of Islam as strategic rather than authentic. Motadel shows that the Nazis were unsuccessful in their bid to gain Arab allies in large part due to their belief that religious identity was the most or only significant form of Muslim allegiance – an approach with a long and still relevant legacy in Western policy in the Middle East.

Stefan Ihrig's *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination* expands the discussion still further by looking at how the National Socialist movement found inspiration in the Turkish National Movement. Ihrig combs through party literature, correspondence and records of key figures, and material artefacts to demonstrate the remarkable depth and longevity of the Nazi adulation of the Turkish National Movement and in particular its leader Mustafa Kemal, later known as Atatürk. Based on the impressive accumulation of evidence, Ihrig develops a compelling model of cultural exchange.

Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination corrects the one-sided focus on Mussolini as an international influence on National Socialism and shows instead that Atatürk was central to the way that the Nazis saw their own rise to power. Ankara, not Rome, was the first inspiration for the 1923 Hitler Putsch. The Nazi party organ, the *People's Observer* (*Völkischer Beobachter*), published thousands of positive accounts of the new Turkey and Atatürk before the Nazis came to power. In 1933 the leader of the SA Ernst Röhm went on a pilgrimage to Italy and Turkey to pay homage to Fascism and Kemalism. Hitler so admired Atatürk that he personally commissioned various portraits and busts, one of which he kept in his Reich Chancellery office.

Moreover, the Nazi regime went to great lengths to emphasise the common ideological and strategic objectives Nazism shared with Kemalism and the new Turkey. Atatürk's model of Turkish nationalism helped shape Hitler's understanding of the racially pure *Volk*. In addition, Ihrig points out that Germany and Turkey were not only 'intertwined economically', but also entangled in strategic and military relations (213–4).[19] In the wake of the French capitulation, the Nazis attempted to push Turkish cooperation still further by aligning Turkish imperial ambitions – pan-Turanism, the union of Turkic peoples from the Aegean to north-western China — to the Third Reich's war of eastern expansion. Finally, Ihrig begins a discussion of the Holocaust by suggesting that the Armenian Genocide influenced the Final Solution.[20]

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The books under review here share a key strength in their persuasive demonstration that the Nazi regime's global ambitions allowed for flexibility in its racial policy. The works by Motadel and Ihrig are especially useful because they contextualise the regime's policies in a wider European context and also highlight the gulf that

[19] For example, Germany acquired half of the chromite necessary for the production of stainless steel from Turkey.

[20] This issue is no doubt clarified in his recently published *Justifying Genocide: Germany and the Armenians from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016).

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existed between the regime and its rank-and-file when it came to articulating or expressing racial superiority. When it came to Turks and Arabs, the regime was willing to renegotiate or even subordinate racial categories to other criteria whereas the rank-and-file had to be disciplined for offensive or aggressive actions. To this end the works also reveal the complicated story of religious identity and nationalism and the range of racial policies and approaches that developed in the mid-twentieth century.

The books under review also show that the Nazi regime deliberately attempted to cultivate alliances with Muslim communities in Eastern Europe and the southern Mediterranean basin. Yet, there are critical differences. Motadel and Ihrig convincingly demonstrate that the regime's policies reveal the Third Reich's desire for strategic partnerships with Muslims, and more significantly, they reveal the Reich's misguided belief that it shared a common worldview with its potential Muslim allies. By contrast, the works by Herf, Küntzel, Mallmann and Cüppers and Rubin and Schwanitz cast the Nazis' perception of a common worldview and shared ideology as the central premise of their books' arguments. From this starting point, they argue that Nazi anti-Semitism shaped the post-war political landscape in the Middle East. Within the wider political context of the 1930s and 1940s, however, their approach fails to establish clear and lasting links between Islam and Nazism. These works would benefit from a closer investigation of such links, particularly with the Muslim Brotherhood, to contribute more fully to discussions on the emergence of anti-Semitism in the region and avoid flattening the political landscapes of the Middle East. There may be echoes of Nazi violence in the Middle East but not via a simple inheritance of National Socialist anti-Semitism.[21] There is then still much work to be done in mapping Nazi-Middle Eastern exchanges in the twentieth century.

[21] Even without a consensus on the legacies of colonial violence, it remains premature to cast them aside. Historian Charles S. Maier discusses two narratives of the twentieth century – a moral narrative of atrocities and a Third World narrative focusing on imperialism and its legacies. In terms of the second, he writes that there is no consensus on the legacies of colonial violence, yet 'imperial power and inequality on a world scale remains the key for understanding world history'. See his Forum Essay, 'Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era', *American Historical Review*, 105, 3 (2000), 807–31, here 826–7.

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Islam is an all-encompassing religion that covers all aspects of Muslim life, including governance. Ideally, the ummah of Islam would be governed under a single caliphate that unites mosque and state under the political and religious leadership of the Khalifa (considered a successor of Muhammad).Â In the following citation, replace the words: Nazism with Islam, and Nazis with Muslims ; racial with religious, and race with religion ; Aryan with Arab . . . Nazism held racial theories based upon the belief of the existence of an Aryan master race that was superior to all other races . The Nazis emphasised the existence of racial conflict between the Aryan race and othersâ€"particularly Jews. The book analyzes the role of Nazi propaganda and the mufti, in spreading Nazi ideology and inciting antisemitism in the Middle East.[3][1][4][5][6] The book also charts the development of the Middle East as it became modern, leading reviewer Johannes Houwink ten Cate to describe the title as apt.[2].Â Retrieved 2020-06-24. ^ Lee, Mia (February 2018). "Nazis in the Middle East: Assessing Links Between Nazism and Islam". Contemporary European History. 27 (1): 125â€"135. doi:10.1017/S0960777316000333. Download Citation | Nazis in the Middle East: Assessing Links Between Nazism and Islam | Since the early-2000s there has been an increasing amount of research on connections between the Nazi regime and the Arab world largely spurred by | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate.Â Placing these two approaches side by side allows us to evaluate the historical evidence of collaboration between Nazism and radical Islam and thereby assess the extent to which Nazi racial ideology penetrated the Arab world. Discover the world's research. 19+ million members. In Nazi Germany, anti-Semitism reached a racial dimension never before experienced. Christianity had sought the conversion of the Jews, and political leaders from Spain to England had sought.Â The storm of anti-Semitic violence loosed by Nazi Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler from 1933 to 1945 not only reached a terrifying intensity in Germany itself but also inspired anti-Jewish movements elsewhere.Â In the 1980s and 1990s, international controversy over the legacies of Nazism in Austria and Switzerland triggered increased anti-Semitism in those countries. Foreign concern over Kurt Waldheim â€™s Nazi past provoked angry anti-Semitic reactions among some of his supporters during his successful 1986 campaign for the Austrian presidency.