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The Ottoman – German Missions to Afghanistan 1914-1916

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Abstract

Representing the Central Asian dimension of the Ottoman – German Jihad Plot and the Hindu – German Conspiracy, the Ottoman – German Missions to Afghanistan (1914-1915) provides a unique case where the Turkish and German Empires attempt to threaten the British presence in India via Afghanistan during the First World War. Dispatched to alter the power balances in the Great War, these Afghan expeditions were distinct from the other secret subversive secret expeditions; given that they were assigned with greater strategic objectives such as to persuade the Afghan Amir to join the Central Powers, spread subversive Jihad propaganda in South Asia, assist the Indian Revolutionary activities, and organize an armed assault towards northern India. This paper by revolving around the question of why the missions fell short of achieving these objectives analyzes the background, personnel, and the activities of these expeditions and argues that there were intricate political, economic, military, and religious reasons which have negatively affected the outcome of the missions and that the several external factors, together with the British counter-intelligence activities had rendered both expeditions to be disappointments. It concludes that the Ottoman – German missions to Afghanistan were a fine example of an attempt to influence a fragile region and create sedition through an elite but ill-equipped task force.

Introduction

The First World War, which is remembered for its horrifying trench warfare, tanks, submarines, or heavy artillery, was not merely an armed conflict on a global scaled. There was more than that behind the curtain where an intriguing clandestine war in the areas of espionage, intelligence gathering, subversion, and secret missions existed. Implemented by spies, free agents, officers, archeologists, merchants, or other interesting personalities, the belligerent states, tried to influence the course of the conflict through an espionage war and gain strategic advantage over their adversaries. Successful covert activities had a large potential to change the course of the war, and states, through influential characters such as Lawrence of Arabia, Wilhelm Wassmuss, or Sidney Reilly, attempted to destabilize the fighting capabilities of their enemies by executing ideological, religious, and socio-economic subversion to create sedition.¹

Among those secret activities, the Ottoman–German Secret Missions² to Afghanistan (1914 – 1916)³ has a distinct place. Although initially dispatched as a semi-official diplomatic concordance to the Afghan Amir Habibullah, these expeditions were commissioned to accomplish the strategic aims of the German and Ottoman Empires, and through subversion, disrupt the fragile regions of British India and Russian Central Asia. Constituting a part of the German – Ottoman Jihad Plot and the German – Indian Scheme, the secret expeditions to Afghanistan had various ambitions such as to: induce the Afghan Amir to reply affirmatively to the Ottoman Holy War call, persuade the Afghans to join the war against Entente Powers, influence the Amir to give permission for using Afghanistan as a base for further operations towards India and Turkestan, and assist the Indian Revolutionaries who were plotting to revolt against the British presence in South Asia.

This paper, by revolving around the question of why the missions failed to accomplish their strategic goals, describes the strategic setting of the First World War and analyzes the missions by investigating the aspirations of the German and Ottoman Empires in the East, and

¹ Jeffrey T. Richelson, *A Century of Spies: Intelligence in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Publishing, 1997), 18 – 31.

² The word “Mission” corresponds to the subversive activities of specifically appointed persons in fragile enemy territories. For its use within the Ottoman Empire see: Gülsüm Polat. “İngiliz İstihbaratına Göre Birinci Dünya Harbi Başlarında Orta Doğu’daki Osmanlı Ajanları”. *History Studies Middle East Special Issue*. Ankara. 2010.

³ During the course of the war, there were two Ottoman - German Missions that targeted Afghanistan. The first mission, dispatched in September 1914, failed reach its intended destination and was eventually decommissioned in September 1915. The second mission, departed from Berlin in March 1915, succeeded in reaching Afghanistan in October 1915 and stayed within that country for a year.

also the reasons of the expeditions' departure, interesting personalities who took part in these missions, interactions between the parties, and consequences or repercussions after the journey. It concludes that there were a number of political, military, and economic reasons that made a negative impact on the Ottoman – German Missions to Afghanistan, and that these complications prompted the failure to achieve the broader German and Ottoman strategic aspirations regarding the German–Hindu Plot and the overall Jihad plans of Germany and the Ottoman Empire.

The primary reason in choosing such a research on the Ottoman – German Missions to Afghanistan is to make a contribution to the existing literature that touches upon the subversive and military intelligence activities of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, and to refine the written evidence on these two strategic missions by detailing their implications. When compared with the British, Russian, and the French intelligence, subversion, espionage, and counter-insurgency operations within the Great War, sources on the retrievable Ottoman intelligence activities are relatively inadequate, and are less thoroughly analyzed.^{4,5} Hence, a coherent research on the strategic expeditions to Afghanistan deserves to be scrutinized using evidence from the Turkish archival sources. Furthermore, this mission is presumably one of the most interesting of the ones implemented outside of Ottoman territories since it connected the Germans, Turks, Afghans, and Indians under a single grand political aim, and signified a very bold attempt to subvert the enemy in an unanticipated area. Therefore, the unorthodox and extraordinary nature of this mission deserves to be examined with a deeper historical analysis.

The second reason is to provide a thorough analysis of why the missions, although comprised of highly skilled individuals, fell short of accomplishing their main purposes and failed to tilt the course of the war in favor of the Central Powers by disrupting the British positions in Central and Southern Asia. The selected personnel were there as representatives of the two great powers, which their victories in the European Fronts was thought to make an impact on the Afghan desire to take part on the Central Powers' side, and as experienced officers, knew how to persuade the Afghans to join the Ottoman Jihad declaration, since they

⁴ Polat Safi "History in the Trench: The Ottoman Special Organization – Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Literature." *Middle Eastern Studies* 48 (2012): 89 – 106.

⁵ The major source that explicates on the Ottoman intelligence activities during the Great War is: Ahmet Tetik, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Tarihi (Umur-ı Şarkıyye Dairesi)* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014).

promised substantial monetary and military aid. Therefore, the paper aims to reveal that there still exist areas for further investigation of the complications that the expeditions encountered.

Under this framework, the paper has three sections. The first part is a historical background, dealing with the general strategic overview of the statuses of the Ottoman and German Empires in the early years of the First World War, and the intention of both powers to launch such an expedition. The second section scrutinizes the missions, its participants, the journey, and their interactions with the Amir. Lastly, the final section provides the subjective observation and analysis on why the mission fell short of accomplishing its major objectives and the consequences of the expeditions' on the politics of the Ottoman, German, & British Empires, and the Afghan people.

Germany and the Middle East

German ambitions and interests towards the Near East, Central Asia, and India had its origins in the late 19th century. Under the Chancellorship of Otto von Bismarck (1871 – 1890), Germany, had been following a policy of its own towards the Ottoman Empire and Persia, in which political, diplomatic, economic, and military contacts with the Turks, Arabs, Persians, or other peoples, were carefully selected cordial moves, following minimal interference with the already uneasy Eastern Question, and refraining from antagonizing other European powers on matters concerning the Middle East.⁶

However, such vigilant strategic regional policies were neglected by Kaiser Wilhelm II, who, after visiting the lands of the Ottoman Empire in 1889 (one year after his accession to the throne) and in 1898, had formed up his own grand scheme, which was aimed at placing Germany as a new player in the affairs of the East. It was evident that the Kaiser had a different strategy in his mind when during his trip to the territories of the Sultanate, he stated that “Germany is friend to the Sultan Abdulhamid II and his Muslim subjects all around the world”, or when he visited Jerusalem, a religious and political flashpoint of the Middle East, that even prompted the nickname Hajji (pilgrim) Wilhelm to be attached to the Emperor.⁷ Such moves annoyed the foreign departments of Britain, France, and Russia; since, they had correctly anticipated that the new German policy towards the Middle East would involve

⁶ Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, *Germany and the Middle East 1871 – 1945* (Princeton: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 2004): 1-25.

⁷ Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power 1898 – 1918* (London: Allan Lane, 2010): 7-32.

extensive interference with the geo-strategy of the Ottoman Empire, the political side of Islam, and the agitation of Muslims, who already had negative perceptions towards Christian imperial ambitions towards the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and India.⁸

Germany's new policy towards the East had two major purposes; the first was to use the Ottoman Empire as a political, economic, and military base for further German penetration towards the economic potential of the East, and the second, to challenge and weaken Britain's power position in world affairs by subverting its presence in the East (particularly in Egypt) and India, the two jewels of the British crown.⁹ The Germans attained their first goal by securing a close network of relationship with the leaders of the Ottoman Empire (first Sultan Abdulhamit II, then the Ottoman government in the assembly, most notably the Committee of Union and Progress) who were also looking for allies to counter-balance against the possible aggressions of Russia and Britain, the two European powers which were dismembering the Turkish Empire since 1876.¹⁰

The Berlin-Baghdad railway program, mutual military exchanges, large arms dealings, economic investments, and many other diplomatic contacts were all aimed at securing a close partnership with the Sultan and the Committee of Union and Progress, so that the Germans could increase their sphere of influence in the Middle East and establish a strong strategic base that would spring them towards becoming a *weltmacht* (world power).¹¹ Germany knew that through the Ottoman Empire, they could pave their way towards their second objective, which was to threaten the Russian Caucasus, Russian Turkestan, the Suez Canal in Egypt, and the Indian subcontinent, the most valuable and also the most vulnerable assets of Russia and Britain. If these territories could somehow be detached or at least ignited to revolt against the two enemies of Germany, then the Second Reich could surely weaken its western and eastern rivals with a surprising move, and gain significant advantage.

⁸ For details concerning the reactions of the Entente powers to the new German policy towards the East see: Donald McKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War One* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1998), 10-22.

⁹ McMeekin, *The Berlin Baghdad*, 32-54.

¹⁰ On the German-Ottoman political relations see: İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Alman Nüfuzu* (İstanbul: Alkım Yayınevi, 2006).

¹¹ The Ottoman – German relations during that era were multi-dimensional, for an analysis see: Edward Mead, Earle, *Turkey, The Great Powers, and The Baghdad Railway: A Study in Imperialism*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923) or H. S. W., Corrigan, 'German-Turkish Relations and the Outbreak of War in 1914: Re-Assessment', *Past and Present*, Issue 36 (April, 1967), pp. 144-152. or Lothar Rathmann, *Alman Emperyalizminin Türkiye'ye Girişi*, (İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1976).

The Ottoman – German Jihad Plot

Though, neither the Ottoman Empire, nor Germany was ready or strong enough to confront both great powers on such a global scale even if it required subversive warfare; thence a new plan was needed which would use a new and unexpected element, such as the spiritual unifying powers of the Ottoman Caliphate and the rallying effect of Pan-Islam, which was a late 19th century ideology used by the Sultanate and the Ottoman governments in office to unite all Muslim communities under the banner of the Caliphate, create a form of loyalty with the Ottoman state, prevent the loss of further territory to Christian imperialist ambitions, and to form a diplomatic bond with other Muslim peoples around the world.¹² This Ottoman – German Jihad and global Pan-Islamist schemes were part of the German preparations for a world war. In parallel with the military arrangements, German military and civil planners had envisaged an asymmetric war that was to be employed behind enemy lines and gradually disturb the fighting potential of the enemies of the Second Reich. It was intended that these operations follow an organized set of methods and creeds mentioned in the *Revolutionierung Programm* of 1914 (Revolution Plans), such as generating subversion and triggering upheavals particularly in Russia, where there was a potentially fragile multi-ethnic structure, and of course in British India, which was also ripe for seditive activity.¹³ These plans were the effect of a long time work and analysis of regional experts such as Max von Oppenheim¹⁴, Curt Prüfer¹⁵, Sven Hedin¹⁶, Bernhard Moritz¹⁷, or the reports from the heads of military missions in the East, such as von Moltke the Elder, von der Goltz or von Sanders.¹⁸ Nevertheless, it is not wrong to argue that it was Max von Oppenheim who was the mastermind behind the Jihad Plot during the First World War and it was his *Panislamische*

¹² Pan-Islamism is a controversial and intricate concept. For its affects on international politics see: Kadir Kon, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Almanya'nın İslam Stratejisi* (İstanbul:Küre Yayınları, 2013) 32-36 ; George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs* (London: Cornell University Press, 1980) 62-65.

¹³ Carl Mühlmann, *İmparatorluğun sonu 1914*, trans.Kadir Kon (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009),24-27.

¹⁴ Max von Oppenheim was the mastermind behind the German Jihad conspiracy and headmaster the of the German Intelligence Bureau for the East, established to create pro-German propaganda and generate subversion towards the British presence in the Middle East. Lionel Gossman, *The Passion of Max von Oppenheim: Archaeology and Intrigue in the Middle East from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishing, 2013), 20-42.

¹⁵ Curt Prüfer was a very significant figure among the German orientalists and was a very active person in Egypt working for disturbing the Suez Canal. Donald McKale, *Curt Prüfer: German Diplomat from Kaiser to Hitler* (Kent, The Kent State University Press, 1987).

¹⁶ Sven Hedin was a Swedish orientalist, explorer, and geographer who traveled extensively in the Middle East and Central Asia, even providing information to the Turkish – German secret mission to Afghanistan. George Kish, *To the Heart of Asia: The Life of Sven Hedin* (Chicago: University of Michigan Press, 1985).

¹⁷ Bernhard Moritz was an influential academic on the matters concerning Middle Eastern affairs and the involvement of Germany in Arabia. His mission was to engage in propaganda activities in the Hejaz region. Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power 1898 – 1918* (London: Allan Lane, 2010), 7-32.

¹⁸ İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Alman Nüfuzu* (İstanbul: Alkim Yayınevi, 2006). 89 – 106.

Bewegung of 1898 (Pan-Islam Move) and his detailed report of *Denkschrift betreffend die Revolutionierung der Islamischen Gebiete unserer Feinde* of 1914 (Memorandum of Creating Revolutions in the Islamic Lands Ruled by our Enemies) that defined the moves needed for Germany to launch its asymmetric war using Islam as an ideological and religious base and how to implement successful rebellions from India to Morocco.¹⁹

Oppenheim, the prominent German orientalist, had worked as a regional analyst for the German Consulate in Cairo in the early decade of the 20th century, and had contemplated to reawaken the political power and the rallying potential within Islam in the conflicts of the Ottoman Empire. With the Sultanate meddling with numerous international crises, Oppenheim reported his observations that there had been a large sentiment among the Muslims towards the weakening of the Ottoman Empire in its regional wars (the Ottoman-Greek War of 1897, Aqaba border crisis of 1900, the Tripolitanian War of 1911-1912, and the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913) and that there existed even a larger potential for a global Muslim upheaval if the Ottoman Empire declared war against great powers such as Britain and Russia.²⁰ Therefore, with the ambition to use the Ottoman Jihad as a weapon towards the Entente Powers, Oppenheim and the German Intelligence Bureau for the East had set up the strategic base for a global Ottoman-German Jihad scheme, which would try to influence the Ottoman Empire to declare war against the Entente powers, and manipulate Muslim populations from Indonesia to Morocco, by generating plans for their upheaval.

The most important part of Oppenheim's plot was to convince the Ottomans to join the Great War on the side of Germany, and through the Caliphate's religious institutions, to issue a declaration of Holy War which would initiate a general call to arms for all Muslims to support their Caliph (Sultan Reshad), and to pave the way in creating an upheaval against the Sultan's enemies in the Middle East, Central Asia, and India. Ottoman aims to declare war on the Entente Powers and join Germany in its asymmetric and subversion warfare were surely complicated.²¹ There were political, economic, religious, and military aspirations of the

¹⁹ These documents of Oppenheim are extremely intricate. Wolfgang G. Schwanitz, "Max von Oppenheim und der Heilige Krieg. Zwei Denkschriften zur Revolutionierung islamischer Gebiete 1914 und 1940", *Sozial. Geschichte*, XIX/32004, 28-59. ; Kadir Kon, Almanya'nın İslam Strateji Mimarlarından Max von Oppenheim ve Bu Konudaki Üç Memorandumu *Tarih Dergisi*, 53(2012): 211-252.

²⁰ Quoted in: McMeekin, *Berlin Baghdad*, 27.

²¹ The literature on Ottoman decisions to join the First World War is huge; however, Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Stanford Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire and the World War I* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2006) 626-742. ; and Ulrich Trumpener, "Turkey's entry into World War I: An Assessment of Responsibilities", *Journal of Modern History*, 34(1962): 369-380. provide coherent analyses on this issue.

Ottomans which corresponded to many multidimensional decisions such as abolishing the capitulations and breaking free from other humiliating concessions given to the Entente Powers, re-conquering the lost territories that were crucial for the Empire such as Thrace, the Balkans, Eastern Anatolia, the Caucasus, Egypt, Kuwait, Hadramut, Qatar, Nejd, Bahrain, Mount Lebanon, Cyprus, Libya and the Aegean Islands, re-asserting the authority of the Caliphate in Arabia, Central Asia, and beyond, and re-establishing the central Ottoman government influence within the Empire.

For the implementation of the Ottoman – German Jihad scheme and the subsequent Hindu – German Conspiracy that would target a general uprising in India through Afghanistan both the Ottoman Empire and Germany sought to benefit from their state organizations that dealt with Eastern affairs, intelligence gathering, covert activities, propaganda generation, coordination, and mission planning. The six major German state departments that directly implemented the abovementioned activities were:²²

- *Nachrichten Abteilung des Auswärtiges Amt* (Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office) was the center of the diplomatic intelligence-gathering web.
- *Zentralstelle für den Auslandsdienst* (Central Office for the Foreign Service), centered upon propaganda, misinformation, printing of books, newspapers, and pamphlets, and sending them to various carefully selected locations, the Ottoman Empire being the most of the recipients.
- Army Intelligence Offices (*Sektion Politik* and *Section III b*) was the military parallel of the Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office. Headed by Rudolf Nadolny and Walter Nicolai respectively, these departments had the role of implementing covert operations, sustaining coordination with the field agents, organizing teams, generating plans, and organizing revolts.

²² Further information on German intelligence activities and departmental organizations can be found here: Markus Pöhlmann, "German Intelligence at War, 1914–1918". *The Journal of Intelligence History*. 5 (2005):25–54., ; Florian Altenhöner, "Total War - Total Control? German Military Intelligence on the Home Front, 1914-1918." *The Journal of Intelligence History*. 5, (2005): 55-72. ; Jürgen W. Schmidt, "Against Russia: Department IIIb of the Deputy General Staff in Berlin – Intelligence, Counter-intelligence and Newspaper Research, 1914-1918." *The Journal of Intelligence History*. 5, (2005):73-89.

- *Militrische Abteilung des Auswrtiges Amt* (Military Department of the Foreign Office) dealt with the coordination between the intelligence, propaganda, and seditive activities of civil and military intelligence departments.
- *Nachrichtenstelle fr den Orient* (German Intelligence Bureau for the East) was one of the most important departments working under the German Foreign Office tasked with implementing propaganda and counter-propaganda activities in Turkey, Iran, Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Central Asia, North Africa, Arabia, India, Far East, and China battling with the British in gaining influence over the peoples of Asia and Africa. By extensively using newspapers, pamphlets, journals, brochures, and posters, the Bureau mainly used academicians to translate documents and send them to the Foreign Office, to forge new material that would be noteworthy for propaganda and jihad manipulation, and to contact agitators for further seditive activities.²³
- *Nachrichtenstelle der Kaiserlichen Botschaft in Konstantinople* (Intelligence Bureau of the German Imperial Embassy in Istanbul) was formed in March 1915 after the requests of Ambassador Wangenheim to counter the British propaganda activities directed towards the Ottoman Empire. With the initiatives of Oppenheim, a propaganda center that would directly deal with the Ottoman Empire was set up in the German Embassy. Later on new centers in many cities across Anatolia and Arabia were opened, aiming to reach more people.²⁴ These centers were open to all citizens of the Ottoman Empire, providing multilingual up-to-date newspapers, journals, photographs, maps, and political news bulletins, so that German propaganda could reach even the most remote locations and all ethnic groups.²⁵

Though not as complex as the organization networks in Germany, the Ottoman Empire also had established a department that would deal with asymmetric warfare, creating sedition, encouraging rebellions, and providing propaganda activities. *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*, which was the Turkish name for the Ottoman Special Organization²⁶ was founded in 1913²⁷ with the

²³ Olaf Farschid, Manfred Kropp, Stephan Dhne ed. *The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Beirut: Orient Institute, 2006): 3-26.

²⁴ A map is available at Kon, *Birinci Dnya Savaşı'nda*, 88.

²⁵ For additional information on the German Intelligence Bureau for the East and its activities see: Kadir Kon, *Birinci Dnya Savaşında Almanya'nın İslam Stratejisi* (İstanbul:Kre Yayınları, 2013)75-93. ; Kadir Kon, "Almanya'nın İslam Strateji Mimarlarından Max von Oppenheim ve bu Konudaki  Memorandumu" *Tarih Dergisi*, 53(2012): 211-252.

²⁶ For those interested, before moving within the Ottoman War Department, the first official address of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* was Şeref Efendi Sokak(street), no:39, Fatih, İstanbul.

directives of Enver Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of War, who aimed at forming a well-organized covert operations and intelligence unit that would deal with numerous covert activities of espionage, infiltration, insurgency, counter-insurgency, asymmetric warfare and subversion.²⁸ The exact origins of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* is difficult to sketch, but with respect to the agents employed²⁹, it is possible to trace its main cadre and the organizational structure within the previous bureaus, *Emniyet Nezareti*³⁰, *Feda-i Zabitan*³¹, and *Garbî Trakya Hükûmet-i Muvakkatesi*³² which were previous organizational attempts to formalize a multi purposed unit, capable of conducting various operations ranging from espionage to asymmetric warfare. It is also argued that Enver Pasha was inspired from the operational successes of the above-mentioned units which were quite successful in organizing resistance by rallying the local population, hindering movements of enemy regular army columns in hostile environments such as Tripolitania, or the Balkans, and conducting large scale guerilla operations against superior regular enemy formations to establish an organization which would employ all of these activities in the remote areas of the Empire with little cost and less regular army interference.³³

The Ottoman Special Organization, although established just before the Great War, had a complex web of operational units assigned to accomplish missions in every problematic part of the Empire such as Libya or Yemen, and even beyond, for instance Morocco and South Asia. The operatives received direct orders from Enver Pasha, who, by assessing the information influx, demanded the implementation of delicate and difficult covert missions.³⁴ The cadre of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* consisted of the combination of civilian and military

²⁷ Mustafa Balcıoğlu. *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Cumhuriyet'e*. (Ankara: Asil Yayın, 2004):2-4.

²⁸ Balcıoğlu, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan*, 2-10.

²⁹ Many of the officers who worked in previous Ottoman intelligence and security institutions such as *Emniyet Nezareti*, *Feda-i Zabitan*, and *Garbî Trakya Hükûmet-i Muvakkatesi*, were also recruited to the *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* after its creation. To compare the list see: Shaw. *The Ottoman Empire and the World War I Volume I*, 330.

³⁰ *Emniyet Nezareti* or the Ministry of Security was set up after the deposition of Sultan Abdulhamit II to replace the abolished *Yıldız* Intelligence structure in 1909.

³¹ The *Feda-i Zabitan* was an Ottoman military elite unit comprised of highly qualified officers who were sent to employ asymmetric warfare in areas which were indefensible by the regular Ottoman army. Its activities were notable in the Tripolitanian War of 1911 – 1912. The formation proved to be very successful in employing guerilla warfare against regular army formations of the Italians.

³² *Garbî Trakya Hükûmet-i Muvakkatesi*, or the Provisional Government of Western Thrace (August 1913-October 1913) was a Turkish republic (not recognized by the Ottoman Empire) centered around Komotini after the Balkan Wars. It had the role to be a buffer state and to employ guerilla operations if Bulgaria or Greece attacked the Ottoman Empire again. Kemal Şevket Batıbey, *Batı Trakya Türk Devleti*, (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1978).

³³ Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire and the World War I*, 626.

³⁴ Vahdet Keleşyılmaz. *Teşkilat – ı Mahsusa'nın Hindistan Misyonu (1914 – 1918)*. Ankara: Atatürk, Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, 1999.

operatives.³⁵ The civilian personnel were professional doctors, interpreters, or merchants; but the majority were comprised of selected officers from the military.³⁶ Nevertheless, it is also argued that these military officers did not get a particular training in counter-insurgency or other intelligence gathering, but mainly read German Army manuals and regularly participated in seminar-like lectures given by Lieutenant Colonel Nuri Bey³⁷ and other staff officers who shared their experiences in the operations executed at the troublesome regions of the Empire.³⁸ According to Shaw, the organization was outside the usual budgetary; when needed, funds were received from the secret budget of the Ministry of War (*Tahsisat-ı Mesture*) and interestingly from the German Military Mission to Istanbul, led by Friedrich Bronsart von Schellendorf^{39,40}. The operatives assigned for duties called *İhvan* or brothers, either carried money for themselves, or secured financial support from the regional *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* bureaus. There were numerous departments within *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* that worked on surveillance, translation, and analysis of the incoming information to the organization, however, the most important department was the *Umur-u Şarkîye Dairesi* (Department of Eastern Countries) and its sub-section *Şark Şubesi* (Bureau of Eastern Affairs) that directly dealt with the regional developments and intelligence activities implemented in the eastern provinces or beyond.⁴¹ The operational responsibility of this largest department encompassed Anatolia, Caucasus, Arabia, Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, and India, and operatives were put on the field to facilitate propaganda activities, send reports on enemy movements, obtain loyalty of tribes in remote areas, and hinder enemy intelligence activities.⁴²

With the initiation of the Great War, German and the Ottoman Empires let loose their Jihad scheme by issuing Jihad fatwas (November 1914)⁴³, dispatching secret missions around the Muslim geographies, creating sedition among the Entente colonies, and igniting the Muslim peoples to fight against Entente Powers. Careful not to include the Central Powers as infidels but only allies to the Caliph, Oppenheim instructed the Muslims to respond the call of

³⁵ Balcıoğlu. *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Cumhuriyet'e*. 6.

³⁶ Ibid. 9.

³⁷ Nuri Bey is likely to be Nuri [Kılıgil] Pasha, who was the brother of Enver Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of War at that time.

³⁸ Erickson "Bayonets on Musa Dagh", 530.

³⁹ Shaw. *The Ottoman Empire and the World War I*, 330.

⁴⁰ He was the Chief of Staff of the Ottoman Army during 1914 – 1917.

⁴¹ Balcıoğlu. *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Cumhuriyet'e*. 9.

⁴² Polat, Safi. "History in the Trench: The Ottoman Special Organization – Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Literature." *Middle Eastern Studies* 48 (2012). 89 – 106.

⁴³ For the original document of the Ottoman Jihad declaration see: Ottoman Archives of the Turkish Prime Ministry (BOA), İ.DUİT Dossier Code 1, Case Code 13, Year 1914; or Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power 1898 – 1918* (London: Allan Lane, 2010), 123-141.

the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph and engage in “Jihad by Bands” which was the formation of local asymmetric groups infiltrating fragile zones such as Suez, Cairo, Hejaz, and Delhi.⁴⁴ Ottoman, Austrian, and German intelligence operatives, organized in teams, were dispatched to Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Hejaz, Arabia, Caucasus, Afghanistan, India, Turkistan, and Indonesia where they were tasked with covert subversive operations.⁴⁵ Although Egypt was the most significant objective for the Germans and Ottomans in the Middle East, it was India and Afghanistan which possessed the real capability to grant the Central Powers to deliver the *coup de grace* towards Britain. For that purpose, German Intelligence Departments, the Ottoman Special Organization, and several prominent Hindu-Muslim dissidents initiated a series of operations in several countries, including the United States aiming at organizing large scale oppositions, revolts, mutinies, arms shipments, secret expeditions, and other subversive activities which would be named as the Hindu – German Conspiracy.

Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and India

There were several reasons for Germany to target India and initiate its Hindu - German Conspiracy, which included the Mission to Afghanistan as its major subset. The first reason was to deprive the British of their most economically and militarily valuable colony and diminish its sphere of influence in Asia.⁴⁶ India was a huge potential for Britain, its population provided a huge market for British goods thereby enhancing British trade operations towards the East. Its manpower enabled the recruitment of an immense number of additional soldiers, the elite formation of Ghurkas for instance being the most renowned of Asia’s ferocious fighters. Moreover, situating at the center of the Indian Ocean, the subcontinent granted British access to the African and Asian trade routes allowing for the further expansion of British potency towards its other colonial possessions, notably in Africa, around the Persian Gulf and in Australia. The second German ambition was to prevent Britain from using these advantages in the Great War. Mentioned in Oppenheim’s memorandum, if a coordinated Hindu-Muslim revolt can be triggered, or if the Muslim population could be influenced with the Jihad fever, then the British would have to deal with a huge unrest, tying thousands of its

⁴⁴ Kadir Kon, “Almanya’nın İslam Strateji Mimarlarından Max von Oppenheim ve Bu Konudaki Üç Memorandumu” *Tarih Dergisi*, 53(2012): 211-252.

⁴⁵ For details of these early Turkish missions see: Gülsüm Polat, “İngiliz İstihbaratına Göre Birinci Dünya Harbi Başlarında Orta Doğu’daki Osmanlı Ajanları”. *History Studies Middle East Special Issue*. (2010): 394-410. For the German missions see: Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany’s Bid for World Power 1898 – 1918* (London: Allan Lane, 2010), 141-153.

⁴⁶ On the German-British relations concerning India see: Perry Myers, *German Visions of India 1871 – 1918: Commandeering the Holy Ganges during the Kaiserreich* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan 2013).

troops to the subcontinent, losing a large amount of capital for their upkeep, and granting a significant advantage to Germany in their *Drang nach Osten* and *Drang nach Westen*.⁴⁷

The Germans, similar to their initial Jihad scheme aimed to use the spiritual influence of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph and the Ottoman government in power, which already had cordial relations with the Indian Muslims and their northern neighbors, the Afghans. The Ottoman-Indian relations goes back to the 19th century when a group of Indian Muslims appealed to the Ottoman Empire to seek assistance against the British.⁴⁸ At the beginning of the 1800s, there existed several religious oriented uprisings occurring right after the fall of Delhi in 1803, when the most prominent religious Muslim scholar of India announced that India was no longer an Islamic state, or when a huge anti-British revolt erupted in the Indian capital in 1857.⁴⁹ Religious scholars tried to investigate if an Ottoman alliance or at least logistical assistance could facilitate Indian attempts to throw off the British presence in India. After several contacts under the Sultanates of Abdulaziz and Abdulhamid II, the Ottoman-Indian interactions reached its zenith under the governance of Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which was also pursuing the policy of Pan-Islam.⁵⁰ Indian Muslims working under several societies such as *Anjuman-i Islam* or *Anjuman-i Khuddam-i Ka'ba* had established close networks working for charity, educational, cultural, religious, and political activities under the newspapers *Cihan-i İslam* and *Seb-i'ül Reş'ad*.⁵¹ Even the Hejaz railway descending down to Medina was largely funded by the Indian Muslims. There existed Pan-Islam and anti-British cooperative activities between the Indian Muslims and the Ottomans right at the eve of the First World War in which influential religious figures, such as Mahmud-ul Hasan⁵², the Sheikh-ul Hind (Sheikh of India), were in touch with the Ottoman government towards formulating a “special programme” for India.⁵³ From 1914 and onwards, the Ottoman Empire had dispatched several missions for intelligence and to increase its contacts with the local populations.⁵⁴ The most significant among these expeditions were the Adnan Bey – Kemal Ömer Bey mission to India, which was under the cover of the Ottoman

⁴⁷ Kon, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda*, 62-75.

⁴⁸ Syed Tanvir Wasti, “The Political Aspirations of Indian Muslims and the Ottoman Nexus”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (2005): 709 – 722.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 718.

⁵⁰ The Committee of Union and Progress followed Pan-Islam policy for pragmatic reasons, not due to ideational conceptualization.

⁵¹ Asta Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan* (Wiltshire: Curzon Press, 1995): 95-107.

⁵² Mahmud al Hasan was a prominent Islamic scholar member of the Deobandi School of Islamic studies. He is renowned for his famous fatwa of 1919, rallying Muslims around Mahatma Gandhi.

⁵³ Wasti, “The Political Aspirations of Indian Muslims and the Ottoman Nexus”, 713.

⁵⁴ For those missions refer to: Polat, “İngiliz İstihbaratına Göre Birinci Dünya Harbi Başlarında Orta Doğu'daki Osmanlı Ajanları”. 7.

Red Crescent, the Muhammed Sami Bey – Mustafa Sadık Bey mission to Bombay, and the Sami Kuşçubaşı Mission⁵⁵ which aimed towards spreading Pan-Islamic and anti-British sentiments, and pave the ground for further rebellious activities.⁵⁶ The Hindu – Turkish subversive activities would later reach its zenith in 1915 and onwards, when a group of Indian Muslims participated in the Mission to Afghanistan to persuade the Amir Habibullah to assist them with his army. Further in 1916, when after secretly communicating through Silk Letters⁵⁷, the Indian Muslim representatives, under the leadership of Mahmud-ul Hasan received a documental pledge from Enver Pasha notifying that the Central Powers would support India at the post-war peace conferences and another written text agreeing to form an Islamic army centered in Medina.

While the Ottomans approached and influenced the Indian Muslims in their own way, Germany also used its Indian connections to stimulate the Hindu – German Conspiracy. It is argued that, in September 1914, Germany and the Indian revolutionaries had reached an agreement to cooperate on matters concerning the disturbance of British presence in India and supporting Indian revolutionary activities around the world. To set up a base in Germany, in early 1915, the Indian revolutionaries had established an Indian Independence Committee in Berlin operating in concert with the German Foreign Office. Germany also aimed to get into contact with the Hindu and Muslim revolutionaries in California aspiring to implement its Hindu-German Conspiracy via America. German covert activity in the United States were common through the Great War in which it is possible to observe arms smuggling activities, wireless communication manipulations, bomb plots, and many other clandestine activities towards assisting Indian activists.⁵⁸ Both parties, Indians and the Germans, sought to use the United States territories to avoid detection and to work under cover of a neutral American government. The most prominent Indian revolutionaries working for the Hindu – German conspiracy in America was Har Dayal, a lecturer at Stanford University. Dayal, with his other radical associates had founded an anti-British newspaper called *Ghadar*(mutiny) which quickly became the propaganda tool for the pro-Indian organization network called “The

⁵⁵ Sami Kuşçubaşı was a member of the Teşkilat-ı Mahususa and was sent to India to make contact with the revolutionary Indian Muslims. Eşref Kuşçubaşı, *Hayber de Türk Cengi*, ed.Philip Stoddard and Basri Danışman (İstanbul: Arba Yayınları), 226.

⁵⁶ Wasti, “The Political Aspirations of Indian Muslims and the Ottoman Nexus”, 711.

⁵⁷ Muslim Indian revolutionaries made their secret communications through Persian writings sewn in colored silk in garments and cloths. For further information see: M .E. Yapp, "That Great Mass of Unmixed Mahomedanism": Reflections on the Historical Links between the Middle East and Asia, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 19(1992): 3–15.

⁵⁸ Karl Hoover, “The Hindu Conspiracy in California 1913 – 1918”, *German Studies Review*, 8(1985): 245 – 261.

Hindi Association of the Pacific Coast” using the United States as a base for evading British surveillance and providing assistance to the revolutionary activity in India.⁵⁹ Just as Oppenheim’s propaganda offices, *Ghadar* also worked as a propaganda network promoting violence and subversive activities towards the British presence in India and in British colonies in the Pacific region. From 1915 and onwards, indoctrinated and organized groups under The Hindi Association of the Pacific Coast, were then setting off towards creating sedition and rebellions in various critical areas, most prominent being the Annie Larsen(ship) affair, in which a large arms cargo was to be shipped from California to India; the Singapore Mutiny, where an Indian military unit clashed with its British officers; the Christmas Day Plot in which the Ghadar agents attempted to ignite a series of unrests from Burma to Calcutta, and the Hong Kong uprisings.⁶⁰

The Turkish – German Missions to Afghanistan

The missions to Afghanistan were the subset of both the Ottoman – German Jihad scheme and the Hindu – German Conspiracy. Since Germany and the Ottoman Empire valued Afghanistan as a precious asset in injecting the Jihad towards India or towards Turkistan, with contiguous borders to both of these regions, Afghanistan had the potential of providing the Germans, the Turks, and the Indian Revolutionaries a base for their subversive operations. Having links with the Hindu – Muslim activists, the Central Powers have seriously considered and advocated an expedition towards Afghanistan, a neutral Muslim country with an antagonistic perspective towards Britain and Russia, but situated outside the influence of the Jihad declaration.⁶¹ Nevertheless, from the dispatch of two missions to accomplish the goal of persuading Afghanistan to join the war on the Central Powers’ side, it is observed that the expeditions had the objective of blockading India from the East (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa* and German Intelligence Bureau for the East) and from the West (as the *Ghadar* provided a front from America).

Afghanistan at the eve of the First World War was a landlocked country with little contact with the outside world. Prohibited by the Dane – Habibullah Treaty of 1905, the country was linked to the British in its dealings with other countries and therefore was

⁵⁹ Ibid. 251.

⁶⁰ Peter Hopkirk, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople: The Plot to Bring Down the British Empire*(London: John Murray), 66-85.

⁶¹ Thomas Hughes, “The German Mission to Afghanistan: 1915 – 1916”, *German Studies Review* (2002): 447 – 476.

strongly connected with Britain over its overall foreign policy agenda.⁶² The country was ruled by the Amir Habibullah, who governed the state by the Islamic law. Even though the Amir aspired to modernize Afghanistan, the lack of infrastructure, limited capital output, harshness of the geography, and the ever present conservatism were negatively affecting the development of the society; therefore providing very little area for the Afghans to support modernizing activities, reforms or alterations. High illiteracy, existence of only one newspaper (*Siraj-ul Akhbar*), and no provision for higher education meant that Afghanistan was in dear conditions. With a small percent of the population representing the middle class, the country was mostly agrarian presenting only a few raw materials for trade; other services such as health, transportation, communication were extremely limited.⁶³

The Afghan perspective towards the Ottoman Empire was cordial, but the Afghans had negative perceptions towards European states and held the notion that the aim of the Entente was to diminish the power of the Muslim states, most notably the Ottoman Empire in political, economic, and military affairs.^{64,65} Numerous articles were being published in the sole Afghan newspaper condemning the belligerent acts of the Balkan states and particularly Italy during the Balkan and Tripolitanian Wars.⁶⁶ Gregorian for instance, adds that “the Afghans also had positive inclinations towards the CUP and particularly Enver Pasha who was perceived as the person to bring salvation to Islamic communities and a dear friend of Muslims of Central Asia, Afghanistan, and India”, thereby considering the defense of the Ottoman Empire essential, since the Turkish state not only represented the head of the Muslim world, but was also the only Muslim country with a significant military potential and possessed a modern Islamic society.⁶⁷ At the outset of the Great War, many Afghans were sympathetic to the Ottoman cause, believing that Enver Pasha’s decision to go to war were justified on the grounds that the Turks had the right to avenge themselves on the Balkan and the Entente States; and without having any war partners, they were forced to conclude an alliance with a Christian power, the Germans. Having ties with India, the Afghans, especially learned, and followed the world political developments through the Indian Muslims.⁶⁸ The

⁶² B.D Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 82-122.

⁶³ Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* 82-107 ; Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical Dictionary of Afghanistan* (London: Scarecrow Press, 2003): 91-92.

⁶⁴ On the Ottoman-Afghan Relations see: Mehmet Saray, *Afganistan ve Türkler* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1987). 83-94.

⁶⁵ Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 214.

⁶⁶ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 215.

⁶⁷ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 216.

⁶⁸ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 215.

Afghan ulema, for instance, were greatly influenced by the Islamists in India, particularly the Pan-Islamist and anti-British *al-Hilal* newspaper, and the writings from the religious faculty at Deoband. Other Afghans, particularly supported the Indian *Aligarh* movement, which pursued and imitated the socio-political accomplishments of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹

Under the framework of this Afghan pro-Ottoman political alignment, it is stated that, “the Afghan masses were disappointed when their Amir declared that Afghanistan would be neutral for the time being unless its independence and territorial integrity was not jeopardized; thereby distancing Afghanistan with the Jihad call of the Caliphate.”⁷⁰ This, of course, prompted the dispatch of the Turkish – German missions to Afghanistan. Even though the Amir was following the neutrality path, there were divisions among the factions of the Afghan court. A pro-British group composed of the Amir, the Chief Minister, and the mercantile class working with India were in constant clash with the pro-Ottoman group which was comprised of the ulema, certain tribal leaders, modernist Afghans supporting the movements of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress, Amir’s bother, and some members of the Afghan military.⁷¹ Amir Habibullah was thus subject to considerable pressure to abandon its neutrality policy and enter the Great War against the Entente Powers so that after the conflict, Afghanistan would possess strategic advantages of obtaining new territories, and gaining full independence from the British tutelage.

⁶⁹ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 215.

⁷⁰ Ludwig Adamec, *Afghanistan: A Diplomatic History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 83.

⁷¹ Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, 101.

The First Ottoman - German Mission to Afghanistan

In late August 1914⁷², Enver Pasha, the Ottoman War Minister, requested from Rauf [Orbay] Bey⁷³, to lead a secret mission to Afghanistan and become the first Ottoman political representative in Kabul. In his memoirs, Rauf Bey mentions that Enver Pasha had told him: “the Ottoman Sultan gives utmost significance to get into political relations with the isolated Afghanistan and making substantial reforms in its military”.^{74,75} Surprised to receive such a mission, Rauf Bey asked several questions to Enver Pasha who then revealed the real intention of the expedition with these words: “The real matter is achieving the significant job of preparing Afghanistan for a war against the British”.⁷⁶ Rauf Bey then made a very significant remark in his memoirs and said “In the hostile environment of the First World War, the German Emperor must have thought to mobilize and stir the Afghans against the British in India, and to accomplish such an act, he must have found it suitable to get this job done through Enver Pasha, who had considerable respect for the Kaiser.”⁷⁷ Interestingly, it is also argued that rather than from Wilhelm II or the German Orientalists, the intention to send a mission to Afghanistan had directly come from Enver Pasha himself, who told the Germans that he had received a letter from the Amir of Afghanistan saying that his allegiance was with the Ottoman Empire, and had asked the Germans that they should also participate in this semi-diplomatic expedition by supplying arms and money to the Afghans so to win their support in the war.^{78,79} It is noteworthy that the Ottoman Empire was not at war at that time and it is surprising that Enver Pasha was not only interacting with the Germans over an operation towards a third party, but also jeopardizing the neutrality of the Ottoman position by creating such a mission.

Preparations were made through the Ottoman Bureau of Eastern Affairs, a sub-section of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*, and prominent Turkish officers were assigned under command of Rauf

⁷² The exact date of this conversation is not explicit. Rauf Bey does not give a date in his memoirs. However, since he was near Lisbon when Goeben and Breslau entered through the straits (16 August), he must have reached Istanbul either in late August or at early September.

⁷³ Rauf [Orbay] Bey (1881 – 1964) was an Ottoman naval major at that time. He was a successful naval commander who became famous for his stealth tactics with the Ottoman battlecruiser *Hamidiye* during the Balkan Wars. For his memoirs see: Ferdiun Kandemir, *Hatıraları ve Söylemedikleriyle Rauf Orbay*. İstanbul: Sinan Matbaa, 1965 ; Rauf Orbay, *Cehennem Değirmeni: Siyasi Hatıralarım I*. İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1993.

⁷⁴ Rauf Orbay, *Cehennem Değirmeni: Siyasi Hatıralarım I*. İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1993. 17.

⁷⁵ It is interesting for Enver Pasha to give such a mission to Rauf Bey, who was a naval officer and had no previous activity in the Far East or Central Asia. The reason for the selection of this person to lead the Turkish military and diplomatic contingent is not explicit.

⁷⁶ Orbay, *Cehennem Değirmeni*. 18.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 18.

⁷⁸ Vitaly Baskakov, *A History of Afghanistan*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. 1982. 204.

⁷⁹ Ludwig W. Adamec, *Afghanistan: A Diplomatic History*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1967.83.

Bey to assist in his interactions and operations. Unable to use naval transportation, the mission had to travel by land and cross Mesopotamia, Persia, and the Afghan plateau to reach Kabul. The most notable Turkish persona who were in the expedition were Major Ömer Fevzi [Mardini] Bey⁸⁰, who was the chief of staff of the expedition, and Captains Hasan Fehmi [Atakan] Bey⁸¹ and Osman [Tufan] Bey.⁸² The Ottoman contingent was somewhat large; more than 20 middle ranked Turkish soldiers and a strong armed detachment were selected to accompany the expedition.⁸³ Rauf Bey mentions the existence of an Afghan, Abdurrahman Nihad Bey, as a translator to accompany the group. The Germans of course, were also taking part in the expedition; there were around 25 or so German military and civilian officials taking part in the mission.⁸⁴ The Germans however had two leaders, one civil and one military, which eventually triggered command problems. The head of German diplomatic representation was Wilhelm Wassmuss⁸⁵, and the leader of the military personnel was Oskar von Niedermayer⁸⁶. Other prominent German members were Prof. Erich Zugmayer⁸⁷, Hans Jakob⁸⁸, Dr. Fritz Niedermayer⁸⁹, Hermann Consten⁹⁰, Walter Griesinger⁹¹, Eduard Seiler⁹²,

⁸⁰ Ömer Fevzi [Mardini] Bey was a prominent military officer and a secret agent of *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*. Before and during the First World War, he had implemented clandestine activities in Arabia, Yemen, Libya, and Egypt and sought to reform the loyalty bonds between the Arabian tribes and the Ottoman government. His father Mehmet Arif Bey was a notable person among the Arab communities of the Ottoman Empire and was the governor of the Damascus province. Zekeriya Kurşun. *Necid ve Ahşa'da Osmanlı Hakimiyeti*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu. 1998).

⁸¹ Not much documental evidence is there on Hasan Fehmi Bey (1889) apart that he had a Circassian origin, and was a cavalry general in the western front of the Turkish War of Independence (1919 – 1922).

⁸² Osman Bey was an Ottoman military officer who had participated in the Balkan Wars and the First World War in the Mesopotamian Front.. For his memoirs see: Osman Tufan. *Kurtuluş Savaşı Hatıraları*, (Ankara:Arma Yayınları 1998).

⁸³ Interestingly, there is no full list of the participants. The closest list to complete can be found in Turkish General Staff Archives (ATASE). File: 3610, Dossier: 30, Index: 1/1.

⁸⁴ The exact number of German members are also not certain. For an approximate see: Frank G. Weber, *Eagles on the Crescent: Germany, Austria, and the Diplomacy of the Turkish Alliance* (New York: Cornell University Press,1970), 169.

⁸⁵ Wassmuss was a German agent and a former German consul in Bushehr (Persia) who was following the mission of leading the Persians in a guerilla war against the British and organizing successful tribal revolts in southern Iran.

⁸⁶ Oskar von Niedermayer (1885-1948) was a German military officer who had considerable knowledge on Asian affairs. Assigned to map reconnoitre, and report on the languages, cultures, and geography of Central Asia, he had extensive experience in leading expeditions towards Persia, India, and Afghanistan.

⁸⁷ Although a zoologist, Prof. Zugmayer was incorporated into the mission due to his knowledge of the Iran – Afghanistan border area. Later on, he would serve in Southern Persia, engaging in subversive activities towards the British.

⁸⁸ Hans Jakob was Niedermayer's orderly. He would later die on route to Kabul due to his illness.

⁸⁹ Brother of Oskar Niedermayer, Fritz accompanied the mission as a doctor.

⁹⁰ Constant was a multilingual, and an explorer of Central Asia and Mongolia.

⁹¹ Griesinger was a German lieutenant, like Zugmayer he also stayed in Persia operating as a field agent.

⁹² He was a German regional expert who would stay in Persia during the expedition's trip in Persia and like Greisinger operate as a field agent.

and Otto Schünemann.⁹³ At least one Parsi Indian person was also present in this expedition named Dada Chanji Kersasp⁹⁴, and represented the Indian revolutionaries. The Germans were very interested in Afghanistan, wanting to establish diplomatic relations with that country hoping that through Afghanistan they could threaten British India and achieve their own sphere of influence in Asia. Therefore the immediate objective of the mission was, through Pan-Islamic sentiments, to bring about an uprising in the Central and Southern Asia, winning Afghanistan on the side of the Central Powers, and persuading the Amir to join the Jihad. The Germans hoped that even if they could not achieve their goals, the mission would still be instrumental in forcing Russia and Britain to maintain a large number of troops on Afghan borders thereby crippling their fighting potential in European fronts.

However, let alone creating subversion in India, this first Afghan expedition did not even reach its intended original target, dismembering itself near the Persian border due to various internal and external complications, which eventually broke down the Ottoman – German cooperation. It is revealed that there were no clear instructions pertaining to the leadership of the mission.⁹⁵ Since the expedition had three leaders (Rauf Bey, Wassmuss, and Niedermayer), there were disputes over the chain of command, issues concerning the distribution of arms and money between the participants, and over the divergent Turkish – German strategies towards Mesopotamia, Persia, and Central Asia.⁹⁶ On this leadership issue for instance, Adamec touches upon the problematic composition and adds that the mission was doomed to fail as “it was not a long planned and carefully through out enterprise, for most of its members had been serving in various European battlefronts before they were called and were collected only gradually from all points of the compass to join the mission”.⁹⁷ Moreover, it is revealed that that there was an ever present personality clashes and mutual suspicion between the Turks and the Germans where that the members had difficulty in trusting each other and even doubted others motives.⁹⁸ Further, the Turks resented German initiatives and operations to awaken Islamic fanaticism in the Middle East, as they feared that it might endanger the mission, which also included Christians.⁹⁹ Enver Pasha’s motives must

⁹³ For further details on the German participants see: Sean McMeekin, *The Berlin Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany’s Bid for World Power 1898 – 1918* (London: Allan Lane, 2010), 123-141.

⁹⁴ This name was not present in the previously mentioned ATASE Archival documents.

⁹⁵ D. Ahmad, *The Survival of Afghanistan: A Diplomatic History with an Analytic and Reflective Approach* (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1990): 133.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 133.

⁹⁷ Adamec, *Afghanistan*, 84.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 84.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 84.

have also affected the mission, and “his insistence of a substantial Turkish armed detachment to accompany the Germans and all the details of the group’s actions to be reported to him” has created a rift between the Germans and the Ottomans.¹⁰⁰ Other complications were the problems among the Germans themselves particularly between the militarist Niedermayer group and the diplomatic Wassmuss group which differed over course of actions, equipment problems such as the absence of wireless radios, regional maps, gold, and the Germans’ frustration after Enver Pasha’s order to temporarily halt the mission in Persia to obtain a corridor by persuading Iran towards the cause of the Ottomans and to conduct operations to secure the eastern flank of Baghdad.¹⁰¹ The Germans also resented the military operations of the Rauf Bey Force in Persia fearing that further armed aggression within Iranian territory would not only disturb the Persian perception towards the Central Powers but also reawaken the Ottoman – Persian animosity, thereby damaging the Jihad scheme in Persia; thus advocating that rather than a large detachment a smaller group should move on.¹⁰² Hence, the first mission to Afghanistan was aborted due to the order of Enver Pasha, who had certain territorial ambitions over Persia and wanted to include neutral Iran within the Ottoman sphere of influence by using the means (arms-money) of the German participants.^{103,104}

Turkish sources indicate other factors for the failure of the mission, such as the German desire to cross from Iran to Afghanistan without the escort and presence of the Turks so that it would be possible to exert direct German influence to South and Central Asia, and the German reluctance to divide the propaganda gold with the participating Ottoman troops.¹⁰⁵ This explains the deliberate exit of the Germans from the mission at the Mesopotamia – Persia border. Others mention the British counter-espionage activities towards the mission and argue that the British had attached an agent to follow Rauf Bey, who knew the objective, participants, and the luggage of the mission, and was constantly reporting to the British diplomatic personnel on route, allowing the British to take countermeasures to hinder the expedition’s movements.¹⁰⁶ Arguing that the British counter-intelligence activities prevented the mission’s cohesive entrance into Iran, Polat for instance, states that “the British had extensive knowledge regarding the moves of the mission through its local field informants,

¹⁰⁰ McMeekin, *The Berlin Baghdad Express*, 209- 233.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 220.

¹⁰² Ibid.220.

¹⁰³ Hopkirk, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople*, 89-90.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 90.

¹⁰⁵ Orbay, *Cehennem Değirmeni*, 20

¹⁰⁶ Polat, “İngiliz Belgelerinde”, 400.

and an influential agent named Muhammed Amir was providing the British with significant Turkish documents and had even obtained the mission's communication reports".¹⁰⁷

There also exists significant evidence towards the failure of the mission in the memoirs of Rauf Bey. The Turkish officer states that because the British had occupied Basra, Djavit Pasha, the Turkish commander in Baghdad who was supposed to assist the Ottoman – German members, was incapable to provide the necessary equipment and provisions to the expedition, and had even made matters worse when he revealed that Sheikh Hazal, a British paid agent according to Rauf Bey, was commissioned to escort the mission, thus further endangering the personnel discretion.¹⁰⁸ The other person who did not provide adequate assistance was Asım Bey, the Turkish diplomat in Tehran, who, according to Rauf Bey, was meddling with so many matters that he did not have the opportunity to facilitate the covert travel of the expedition in Iran, thereby complicating the mission's travel within Persia. The Turkish officer also mentions his problems with the Germans.¹⁰⁹ On one occasion, months after the mission's dispersion in Mesopotamia, Rauf Bey stated that Iranian tribes near Kirind, interestingly lead by Wilhelm Wassmuss and von Kanitz, who were acting to prevent further Ottoman penetration towards neutral Iran, had attacked his force.^{110, 111}

The Second Turkish - German Mission to Afghanistan

With these complications bothering the team, the first expedition failed to reach its objective.¹¹² However, neither the Germans nor Ottomans and Indians were prone to give up and a second expedition was organized in Germany, this time on the direct suggestions of the Indian Committee in Berlin, which was a revolutionary anti-British organization formed by Indian academics, political activists, and independence campaigners, who sought to promote independence from British rule, organizing a Hindu – Muslim revolution in India by smuggling arms, subversive personnel, and money to the subcontinent. The Indian Committee had contacted the German Foreign Office and managed to persuade the Germans to retry sending another expedition, this time also recruiting prominent and influential Indians such as

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 400.

¹⁰⁸ Orbay, *Cehennem Değirmeni*, 20.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 20.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 20.

¹¹¹ Georg von Kanitz was the German military attaché to Tehran during the First World War; known for propaganda activities within Persia and his battle with the Russian forces near Kangavar. Donald McKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War One* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1998): 10-22.

¹¹² The expedition was officially dissolved in September 1915.

Raja Mahendra Pratap¹¹³, Chempakaraman Pillai¹¹⁴, and Maulana Barakatullah Bhopali¹¹⁵ who were members of the Indian Revolutionary Committee in Berlin, and later on Maulana Obeidullah Sindhi¹¹⁶, a notable Muslim scholar in India and the right hand man of Mahmoud-ul Hasan, the Sheikh of India. From Berlin, Otto von Hentig¹¹⁷, Günther Voigt¹¹⁸, Kurt Wagner¹¹⁹, Dr. Karl Becker¹²⁰, and Walter Röhr¹²¹ joined the team to represent Germany. According to McMeekin one of the direct reasons for the dispatch of this second expedition was the pleas of Prince Reuß, the German Ambassador to Tehran, who was frustrated by the insubordinate activities of the German members (Niedermayer, his team, and Wassmuss)¹²² of the previous mission, who, after departing from the Rauf Bey Force in Iraq had entered Persia to continue to hamper the British influence there by acting independent of the German Ambassadorial diplomats which triggered negative responses from the neutral Iranian government. The other main German motivation to send another expedition in 1915 was the positive decision of the German General Staff who thought that German and Ottoman successes in the War (Dardanelles and East Prussia-Poland) would have a better impression on persuading the Amir, since those victories would represent the combat potential of the Central Powers.

¹¹³ Raja Mahendra Pratap (1886 – 1979) was born into an aristocratic Hindu family. After his studies in India, he left for Europe aiming to find outside support for Indian revolutionary activity. During the World War years, he was active in the Indian Committee in Berlin, and had established contacts with the German government and the Kaiser to receive support for Indian independence.

¹¹⁴ Pillai (1891 – 1934) was a member of the Indian Committee in Berlin. He represented the Hindu Indians in the Mission.

¹¹⁵ Barakatullah (1854 – 1927) was an Indian political activist and the main person connecting the links between the Pan-Islamic movements in India with Germany and the Ottoman Empire. Being a member of the Indian Committee he was assigned to accompany the mission.

¹¹⁶ Sindhi (1872 – 1939) who was an Islamic scholar from the Indian Deobandi School, was a member of the Indian Committee in Berlin and had actively participated in the Silk Letter Conspiracy. His mission was to join the 2nd expedition from India, representing the Indian Muslims.

¹¹⁷ Otto von Hentig (1886 – 1984) was a German lieutenant who had experience with the Eastern Affairs. Having worked in Beijing, Istanbul, and Tehran, as an attaché and secretary of legation he had links with the notable persona in these countries and was commissioned to diplomatically lead the Afghan expedition.

¹¹⁸ Günther Voigt was a German lieutenant who was the adjutant of Niedermayer. It is not certain if he accompanied Niedermayer in his previous expeditions to the East.

¹¹⁹ Kurt Wagner was a naval officer (*kapitänleutnant*) who was knowledgeable on the Persian Gulf.

¹²⁰ Dr. Karl Becker was the mission's doctor and an expert on tropical diseases of the Middle East and Central Asia. During the voyage to Afghanistan, he was captured by the Russians and sent to prisoner camp.

¹²¹ Walter Röhr (1872 – 1944) was the assistant of von Hentig. A multilingual, he acted as a negotiator and interpreter.

¹²² From March 1915 to July 1915 Niedermayer and Wassmuss had been implementing covert activities in Iran, spreading Jihad propaganda, meeting with dissidents, and interacting with the tribes to rally them against the British.

Traveling through Istanbul, where the members of the expedition met with Enver Pasha, who inserted Kazım [Orbay] Bey¹²³ as the Ottoman representative in the mission, set off for Iran, where the Niedermayer team¹²⁴, and a group of Austrian prisoners of war, also joined them on their adventure.¹²⁵ After their final preparations, the expedition¹²⁶ re-checked their equipment, luggage, and valuable materials and set off for Afghanistan in July 1915 reaching the Afghan territory in October¹²⁷, and met the Amir on 25 October 1915.¹²⁸ At their meeting, all the members presented their diplomatic letters to the Amir Habibullah, aiming to persuade him to their own cause.¹²⁹ However, this second expedition failed to break Afghan policy of neutrality. After many negotiations, the mission only managed to obtain a “draft treaty” which the Amir Habibullah demanded huge amount of arms and ammunition, gold, and a large Turkish – German military force to arrive in Afghanistan before joining the Central Powers and initiating an operation towards India.

There were many reasons for the second mission to fail; however, the major factors can be categorized as being political, economic, military, and religious in origin. Religious reasons depended upon the inconsistency of the German - Ottoman Jihad policy. On this issue, it is stipulated that the Amir perceived Pan-Islam and the scheme for a global Muslim – Christian war as controversial and actually thought that such an action had no religious and ideological background.¹³⁰ Issues such as the Ottoman alliance with Christian Germany and Austria, the lack of religious uprisings in the Indian subcontinent, and the eruption of the Arab revolt in the Middle East had undermined the religious background of the mission itself.¹³¹ Olesen, similarly, argues that religion was a significant factor and that it was the role of

¹²³ Kazım [Orbay] Bey (1887 – 1964) was an Ottoman military officer (first lieutenant) working as the chief adjutant of the ministry of war working under Enver Pasha. Being a member of the Ottoman Special Organization (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*) and knowledgeable in Persian and German, he was personally selected by Enver Pasha.

¹²⁴ Unfortunately the number of people in the Niedermayer team is not certain.

¹²⁵ For an extremely detailed narration of their journey through Persia see: F. J. Moberly, *Operations in Persia 1914 – 1919* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1987).

¹²⁶ All the names of the participants which I managed to collect was the following: From Berlin: Otto von Hentig, Mahendra Pratap, Maulana Barakatullah, Chempakaraman Pillai, Walter Röhr, Karl Becker, Mirmast, Itbargul, Mohabad Khan, Seyed Ahmed (the cook), Abdur Rahman Khan, Abdul Subhan Khan. From Istanbul: Kazim Bey. From Iran: Oskar von Niedermayer, Kurt Wagner, Günther Voigt, Hans Jakob, Fritz Niedermayer, Wilhelm Paschen, Sergeant Beierl, Josef Janosch, Emil Rybitschka. From India: Obeidullah Sindhi.

¹²⁷ Their voyage in Persia and Afghanistan were full of adventure. For a novelistic description see: Peter Hopkirk, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople* (London: John Murray, 1994).

¹²⁸ The daily schedule of the expedition was the following: 14 April (Berlin) - 11 May (Istanbul) - 20 May (Aleppo) - 31 May (Baghdad) - 13 June (Kirmanshah) - 21 June (Tehran) - 29 June (Isfahan) - 4 July (Majin) - 23 July (Tebbes) - 4 August (Boshruyeh) - 18 August (Birjand) - 22 August (Persia - Afghan border) - 25 August (Herat) - 1 October (Kabul).

¹²⁹ Hopkirk, *On Secret Service*, 149.

¹³⁰ Ahmad, *The Survival of Afghanistan*, 136.

¹³¹ Ibid. 133-136.

several influential Afghan religious persona such as the *Hazrat-i Sahib* of Chaharbagh (Çayırbağ) that appeased the pro-war faction within the Afghan court, advising that “it was better to remain neutral until the best opportunity occurred or circumstances that would render Afghan intervention in the war is absolutely necessary”.¹³² Others such as Saadeddin Khan (Amir’s father in law) had even produced a pamphlet endorsing the view that disobedience to the Amir equaled disobedience to Islam and Islamic law.¹³³ With such acts, the Amir appeased the impetus of the Ulema and supporters of war. It is even stated that the Amir had announced that the Ottoman Jihad fatwa was invalid unless it was proclaimed by the Ulema of Afghanistan and approved by the monarch of Afghanistan. With no fatwa declared by the Afghan religious council, most of the regional tribes were mainly passive throughout the war.¹³⁴ It is also arguable that Afghanistan pursued a neutral policy due to the personality to the Amir. Several historians have argued that Habibullah was a risk averse person, did not desire to pursue adventurous policies such as joining wars, plots, or other damaging operations, mainly let others to do the fight rather than joining the bandwagon, and greatly appreciated the British military strength. With these personal opinions already in mind of the Amir, the members of the expedition had difficulty to alter his character.^{135,136,137} Such perspectives of Habibullah were shaped by his direct observations regarding the British and Russian militaries, which were close to Afghanistan; though he had difficulty in assessing the prowess of the German and the Ottoman armed forces, which he had no direct experience with.

One of the significant factors that hindered the mission was the British counter-intelligence activities. Although the British did not counter the Central Powers’ expedition with an Entente one, Britain was careful to spy on the activities within Afghanistan. For instance, the British agent in Kabul regularly met with the Amir, reminding him about his annual subsidy bestowed by the British officials in India and the delicacy of the Afghan trade links with the Indian subcontinent, thereby closely checking the Amir’s pulse regarding his opinions on the war and prevented any surprising Afghan decrees that might be issued. It is also argued that the British successes in uncovering the Silk Letter Conspiracy (organization

¹³² Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, 106.

¹³³ Ibid. 106.

¹³⁴ Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 434.

¹³⁵ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 178.

¹³⁶ Raja Anwar, *The Tragedy of Afghanistan A First Hand Account* (London: Verso, 1988), 18.

¹³⁷ T. A Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars*, (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1983): 167.

for a large Muslim revolt in India), suppressing any religious uprising in Southern Asia, and the arresting of the ringleaders who were organized to link up with the Afghan tribes near the Indian border were significant.¹³⁸ On this issue for instance, Ahmad states that “the persuasive and appeasing activities of the British, such as counter-propaganda, and spreading misinformation towards the frontier tribes, was a blow to the aspirations of the mission, diminishing the religious and anti-British fervor among the tribal Afghans”.¹³⁹

Some sources also reveal that a major counter-intelligence activity of the British were to intercept the courier messengers. Hughes¹⁴⁰ and Baskakov¹⁴¹ provides additional details on this problem for the mission and argue that the couriers were unreliable to the mission personnel, since they, on several occasions, revealed their secret messages to the Entente officers. The British for instance, after intercepting the telegraph communication of the German members of the expedition, had even forged a counter-propaganda letter to the Amir indicating that the members of the expedition was plotting to overthrow him and are in progress to stage a *coup d'état* in Kabul, which shocked Habibullah, who refused to meet with the mission for some time. Britain also used its air force in success to hinder the activities of the mission, engaged in frequent demonstrations over tribal jirga (meetings) to intimate the tribal leaders of Afghanistan and Peshawar, and displayed its invulnerability.¹⁴² Though not directly connected to the British intelligence activities, the Habibullah – King George correspondence was also an important factor in persuading the Amir to stay neutral. Directly communicating with the King of the British Empire must have certainly affected Amir's feelings towards the war believing that staying neutral was more beneficial than risking the lives of his people to a war which the Afghans had not direct connection and possibly thought that breaking relations with a person whom he directly communicated could seriously damage British – Afghan relations in the future.

Another element that affected Afghan neutrality and the failure of the mission was the Afghan internal weakness and its dangerous geo-strategic position between the Russian Turkestan and British India. Given that joining a war would expose Afghanistan to a two front war, and without any allies nearby, the country was prone to be overwhelmed by the superior

¹³⁸ Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 434-435.

¹³⁹ Ahmad, *The Survival of Afghanistan*, 136.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Hughes, “The German Mission to Afghanistan, 1915 - 1916” *German Studies Review* 25 (2002): 468-472.

¹⁴¹ Vitaly Baskakov, *A History of Afghanistan* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985):204-207.

¹⁴² Hughes, “The German Mission to Afghanistan”, 471.

Entente troops.¹⁴³ Afghan economy and its production capacity was also frail since there were no modernized armaments factories and the Afghan army was not ready enough to counter the modern forces of the British and Russians. Ahmad argues that the Amir had a great deal of profit by staying neutral and “since the members of the mission did not provide a short term alternative to Amir’s profits from trade income, resource exchanges with Turkestan and India, or double Habibullah’s annual subsidy lent by the Viceroy of India, they had little chance to persuade Habibullah and the pro-British mercantile faction within Kabul”.¹⁴⁴ In some time during the war, the British had even enlarged the annual subsidy for the Amir and that it was nearly impossible for the Germans to counter and transfer such a number in the near future to replace the British money, hence failed to persuade Habibullah financially.¹⁴⁵

External factors concerning the war itself must have had a profound affect on Afghanistan. In 1916 the balance of power was slowly shifting in favor of the Entente Powers. The Russians had captured Erzurum, the Ottoman base in Eastern Anatolia, and had completely routed the Turkish Third Army thereby rendering impossible for reinforcements to arrive in Afghanistan or Persia. The outcome of the battles in Mesopotamia and Persia was still inconclusive, thus proving it to be impossible to divert troops to Afghanistan, and that Germany had still failed to show its superiority in the Western Front, with the Battle of Verdun draining the majority of the country’s resources. With such external developments, plus the eruption of the Arab Revolt, had already damaged the overall fighting potential of the Central Powers, and the Afghan hope of a Central Power victory tattered in late 1916. To complement on this issue Hughes for instance argues that since the team had lost their wireless equipment in Persia, they had little chance for communicating with their superiors and had little capacity (apart from couriers from their diplomatic representatives in Iran) receiving knowledge about the other fronts and influencing the Amir.^{146,147}

Even though the second mission failed its objectives, it disturbed Russia and Britain greatly with its activities, and succeeded in carrying hostile propaganda into an isolated country, established contact with a number of revolutionaries of India, and stirred up trouble within the tribal belt, where several minor incursions against the British India did occur. Two

¹⁴³ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Afghanistan*, 221-222.

¹⁴⁴ Ahmad, *The Survival of Afghanistan*, 136.

¹⁴⁵ Adamec, *Afghanistan*, 96.

¹⁴⁶ Let alone the Foreign Ministries, the German ambassador to Istanbul after Wangenheim, Count von Wolff-Metternich, had no connection with the mission at all, thereby further diminishing chances for sending reinforcements or support. Hughes, “The German Mission to Afghanistan”, 463.

¹⁴⁷ Hughes, “The German Mission to Afghanistan”, 463.

of the most serious incursions were a Mohmand raid, led by Haji Turungzai, and a Waziri revolt.¹⁴⁸ Hayri Bey, who was a Turkish army officer in Afghanistan responsible for the modernization of the Afghan army, and Kazim Bey were particularly active along the Afghan – Indian frontier, crossing the Afghan-Indian border several times and meeting with the Mohmand, Afridi, and Waziri tribes hoping to recruit them for the Jihad.¹⁴⁹ In early January 1916, a probably forged letter purportedly signed by the Amir and the Afghan religious leaders was sent to the tribal chiefs and mullahs of Tirah, near the Khyber Pass urging them to prepare themselves for Jihad after the arrival of Germans carrying arms and then to attack the British positions in India.¹⁵⁰

The mission, apart from Afghanistan also tried its luck in rallying Turkistan against the Russians. Especially with the initiatives of Kazim Bey and Kurt Wagner, contacts were established between the Turkomans, Orakzais, and Chamanids, and additional trips were made to Samarkand, Bukhara, and Tashkent, looking for regional allies.¹⁵¹ These trips seemed to have made an affect on the Turkmen, Kazak and Kyrgyz populations since it is observed that in 1916 there was an ongoing asymmetric war in Turkestan, where railways were being sabotaged and guerilla operations were being implementing. Such activities continued until the February Revolution in 1917. The Indian members were also somewhat successful, founding the Provisional Government of India in Kabul, and succeeded in using Afghanistan as a temporary base towards accomplishing their long-term operations until 1919.¹⁵² The mission, receiving no reinforcements from either their home countries nor the revolutionaries in India eventually departed Afghanistan in late 1916, leaving behind seeds of independence and anti-British sentiments.

Conclusion

The missions, although failed to accomplish their original intention, were nearly successful in breaking Afghan neutrality and persuading the Afghan government in attacking British India. However, even though the members were capable persona, various complex reasons such as leadership problems, material inadequacy, lack of previous Afghan-German contact, inactivity among the Indian Muslims, British counter-espionage activities,

¹⁴⁸ Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 223.

¹⁴⁹ Adamec, *Afghanistan*, 96.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 98-99.

¹⁵¹ Wasti, "The Political Aspirations", 718.

¹⁵² Zahid Anwar, "Indian Freedom Fighters in Central Asia (1914-1939), *J.R.S.P.* 45 (2008): 147-158.

inaccessible supply routes, and the disappointing overall war performance of the Central Powers rendered the missions to be failures; thereby it was evident that the expeditions would have dire complications. The expeditions, especially the second, were significant since, through the draft treaty and the negotiations between the members of the expedition, the Amir Habibullah officially broke the Afghan diplomatic isolation and such a diplomatic move affected Afghan desires to become independent and obtain self-determination, which culminated in the Third Anglo – Afghan War. The missions also indicate the power potential of secret expeditions and their capacity to influence fragile regions; though, the Afghanistan missions, possessing limited money and arms, and having no sustainable logistics and communication opportunities with their governments, were doomed to failure to convince the Amir Habibullah who had neither the capacity nor the willpower to embark on an operation towards the British in India with inadequate weapons or commanders at his disposal, were adequate enough to frighten the British political units in India and prompted them to take additional precautions.

The missions also reveal that for such expeditions to be successful its organizational structure and logistics should be carefully planned beforehand and these operations should be explicit in their nature, signifying whether they represent their states diplomatically or militarily; and that leadership, discipline, and command-control are extremely important in multinational expeditions. Secondly it is also revealed that such expeditions need to be thoroughly planned with utmost importance be given to the geo-strategic situation, regional contacts, supply routes, availability of provisions, arms, passage ways, maps, and communication materials. Lastly, the expeditions show that extensive internal and external support is necessary so that with the arrival of reinforcements a strong base, clear of enemy intervention, could operate fluidly with the guidance of the mission members.

The expeditions also signify that even though Islam and Jihad were powerful rallying elements, they did not prevail over *realpolitik*. Albeit the Afghan Amir was a pious Muslim, the Jihad fatwa was not issued in Afghanistan; since, the Amir knew that the day he declared war, the British and the Russians, which were his northern and southern neighbors, would converge upon his country rendering impossible for Afghanistan obtaining its independence in the near future. This indicates that concepts such as Pan-Islam and Jihad possessed only little meaning when compared with rationality and the Amir had only partially embraced such ideologies, actually placing primacy to *realpolitik* and military strategy.

Nevertheless, the expeditions to Afghanistan still deserve an appreciation since they represent the audaciousness of attempting even the extreme in order to damage the enemy. Other Central Powers' missions such as the Egypt Mission, Hejaz Mission, or Persia Mission had all access to the strategic centers of the Ottoman Empire and had higher potential of success when compared to the ones sent to Afghanistan. Assigned to accomplish an extremely difficult mission of reaching a remote territory in the hostile environment of war with valuable equipment, avoiding British and Russian detachments, fighting against the forces of nature such as sandstorms, mountain gales, and diseases, and pushing body limits of thirst and hunger, the expeditions representing creativity and resilience, no doubt stand a unique case in the history of the First World War and covert subversive operations.

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