

Introduction: The Ottoman Empire and the “Germansphere” in the Age of Imperialism – Rethinking Transregional Approaches in Ottoman History

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1. The “Germansphere”: A Useful Spatial Concept

The way we write history is shaped by our spatial conceptions. Far from being neutral, spatial concepts often imply asymmetrical power relations, most notably the supposed superiority of the “West” over the “Orient”, a pattern of interpretation that has long been prevalent in historical narratives. An astonishing number of influential studies in recent decades have historicized and deconstructed our use of ubiquitous geographical categories such as the “Middle East”, the “Muslim World”, “Eastern Europe”, and the

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“Balkans”.¹ We have also learned to think of spatial units such as “Europe” or “Asia” in the plural rather than the singular.² One can even argue that all major spatial concepts are inherently political rather than being neutral attempts to describe reality.³ Despite their problematic implications, all the above-mentioned concepts are still widely-used, not least because we need spatial concepts to grasp and describe the world. Even the “Orient”, singled-out in Edward Said’s seminal study, is still wide-spread, especially in German scholarship, where it is used to designate an area that encompasses large parts of North Africa and West Asia. Building on the afore-mentioned insights, our thematic issue encourages historians to adopt a more pragmatic and flexible approach to space and geography. In particular, we argue for a bolder adaptation of spatial concepts to our research interests, in our case the transregional history of the Ottoman Empire. The contributions in this issue examine, from various angles, Ottoman interactions with what we tentatively call the “Germansphere”. We understand “Germansphere” as a heuristic spatial category that allows us not only to bring research on Ottoman interactions with Germany, Austria(-Hungary), and Switzerland into a common framework but also to effectively address border-crossing aspects of these interactions.

The history of Ottoman interactions with Germany, Austria(-Hungary), and Switzerland has been written mainly from two different perspectives: either from the perspective of the nation-state or from the larger framework of Ottoman exchanges with Europe or the West. Both approaches have their specific problems. The nation-state perspective has been heavily criticized by supporters of global history for its inability to capture transnational processes, connections, and exchanges.⁴ On the other hand, situating countries such as Germany, Austria(-Hungary), and Switzerland in broad categories such as Europe and the West tends to downplay the specificities of German, Austrian, and Swiss encounters with the Ottomans. This second approach is particularly problematic from the viewpoint of non-Western countries such as the Ottoman Empire because, as Kris Manjapra has pointed out, it often contrasts a “fetishized” and homogenized European or Western norm with what accordingly emerges as a non-Western local variation.⁵ We believe that it is important to avoid such asymmetries in our historiographical approach to Ottoman interactions with the non-Ottoman world, as they can lead to a distorted understanding of actual power relations that cannot be reduced to an East-West binary. The study of Ottoman interactions with the “Germansphere” can serve as a meso-perspective that allows

1 C. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History*, Cambridge, MA 2017; M. E. Bonine/A. Amanat/M. E. Gasper (eds.), *Is There a Middle East?: The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, Stanford 2011; M. N. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford 2009; L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford 1994.

2 S. Subrahmanyam, *One Asia, or Many?: Reflections from Connected History*, in: *Modern Asian Studies* 50 (2016) 1, pp. 5–43; A. Pagden (ed.), *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*, Cambridge 2002.

3 F. B. Schenk, *Mental Maps: Die Konstruktion von geographischen Räumen in Europa seit der Aufklärung*, *Ge-schichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002) 3, pp. 493–514, at 514.

4 S. Conrad, *Globalgeschichte: Eine Einführung*, München 2013.

5 K. Manjapra, *Transnational Approaches to Global History: A View from the Study of German-Indian Entangle-ment*, in: *German History* 32 (2014) 2, pp. 274–293.

us, on the one hand, to overcome the constraints of the nation-state perspective and, on the other hand, grasp historical specificity better than broader spatial concepts.

2. Shared Marginalities in the Age of Imperialism

The category of the “Germansphere” can help us to think beyond the “West”. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in the colonial and postcolonial pasts of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, which largely lacked formal colonies but nonetheless participated in and benefited from colonial exploitation.⁶ At the same time, a number of studies have pointed to affinities and “perceptions of partnership” that can be identified in German interactions especially with India and with East Asian countries, which were sometimes explicitly directed against the “West”.⁷ During the two world wars, Germany even positioned itself as an anti-colonial liberator, lending its support to anti-colonialists from the Middle East and elsewhere.⁸ Switzerland was involved in maintaining the colonial system but at the same time became a hub for anti-colonial actors from the Ottoman Empire, India, and other countries.⁹ Rather than integrating marginal imperialist actors such as Germany, Austria(-Hungary), and Switzerland into an overall category of “imperial Europe”, as recently proposed in this journal,¹⁰ we consider it more instructive to start from the assumption of shared marginality. The Ottoman Empire became a marginal member of the European concert at the latest after the Crimean War 1853–56 and pursued its own imperialist projects in the years that followed, while at the same time trying to defend itself against European colonialism.¹¹ Germans, as “latecomers to modernity”, often expressed a sense of marginality and resentment towards the political, cultural, and economic power of France and Britain.¹² It is also crucial to take

6 S. Conrad/J. Osterhammel (eds.), *Das Kaiserreich transnational: Deutschland in der Welt 1871–1914*, 2nd edn, Göttingen 2006; S. Conrad, *Globalisierung und Nation im deutschen Kaiserreich*, München 2006; P. Purtschert/H. Fischer-Tiné (eds.), *Colonial Switzerland: Rethinking Colonialism from the Margins*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire 2015; W. Sauer (ed.), *K.u.k. kolonial: Habsburgermonarchie und europäische Herrschaft in Afrika*, Wien 2002; A. Zangger, *Koloniale Schweiz: Ein Stück Globalgeschichte zwischen Europa und Südostasien (1860–1930)*, Bielefeld 2011.

7 J. M. Cho/L. M. Roberts/C. W. Spang (eds.), *Transnational Encounters between Germany and Japan: Perceptions of Partnership in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire 2016; J. M. Cho/E. Kurlander/D. T. McGetchin (eds.), *Transcultural Encounters between Germany and India: Kindred Spirits in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, London 2013.

8 D. Motadel, *The Global Authoritarian Moment and the Revolt against Empire*, in: *The American Historical Review* 124 (2019) 3, pp. 843–877; W. G. Schwanitz, *Paschas, Politiker und Paradigmen: Deutsche Politik im Nahen und Mittleren Orient 1871–1945*, in: *Comparativ* 14 (2004) 1, pp. 22–45.

9 H. Fischer-Tiné, *The Other Side of Internationalism: Switzerland as a Hub of Militant Anti-Colonialism, c. 1910–1920*, in: P. Purtschert/H. Fischer-Tiné (eds.), *Colonial Switzerland: Rethinking Colonialism from the Margins*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire 2015, pp. 221–258.

10 C. L. Blaser/M. Ligtenberg/J. Selander, *Introduction: Transimperial Webs of Knowledge at the Margins of Imperial Europe*, *Comparativ* 31 (2021) 5–6, pp. 527–539.

11 C. Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought*, New York 2007; M. Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz*, Stanford 2016.

12 P. Mishra, *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*, [London] 2017, pp. 32–33. For Germany’s ambivalent relation-

into account Germany's often ambivalent self-positioning between "Asia" and "the West" and, in Manjapra's words, to examine the "gradients of otherness and the spectrum of strange identifications" in transnational interactions.¹³ We think that it is necessary to consider both aspects and – while remaining aware of the racial, religious, and social inequalities of the imperialist world-order – to look at Ottoman interactions with the "Germansphere" in an open-ended manner that explores configurations of domination and resistance as well as cooperation and solidarity.

By the "Germansphere" we refer to a fluid space characterized by strong influences of the German language and shared forms of cultural literacy, which at its core includes Germany, Austria(-Hungary), and Switzerland. Our intention is heuristic and grounded in the historiography of the Ottoman Empire, where comparable meso-perspectives are largely absent. We do not deny that other spatial concepts may be more appropriate in different contexts and that we must take into account the significant overlaps between the "Germansphere" and areas of French cultural influence, among others. We also recognize substantial differences between ethno-nationalist Germany, the multi-ethnic Austria-Hungarian Empire, and multilingual Switzerland. Our aim is not to homogenize this area in what might be called a "pan-German" misreading of history, but on the contrary to capture both commonalities and differences among actors from the "Germansphere" in their interactions with the Ottoman Empire. We therefore conceive of the "Germansphere" as an interconnected but decidedly transnational space, both in its internal composition and in its coexistence with other culturally delineated spaces, such as the "Anglosphere", "Urdusphere", or "Sinosphere". In their inspiring critique of "metageography", Martin Lewis and Kären Wigen suggest that spatial units should be delineated more on the basis of cultural and historical proximity rather than political or geographical borders.¹⁴ One problem with familiar and superficially neutral concepts such as "Central Europe" is, however, that they implicitly carry strong political and culturally exclusionary connotations, for example German hegemony or the othering of Russia.¹⁵ By using the term "Germansphere", we want to delineate a culturally and historically interconnected space without resorting to politicized terminology.

3. State of Research on Ottoman Interactions with the "Germansphere"

Until now, historical research on Ottoman interactions with the "Germansphere" has been strongly wedded to the national history paradigm. It has focused unevenly on Germany, Austria(-Hungary), and Switzerland, with a clear priority given to German-Ot-

ship with the West, see also R. Bavaj/M. Steber (eds.), *Germany and 'The West': The History of a Modern Concept*, New York 2017.

13 K. Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2014, pp. 290–291.

14 M. W. Lewis/K. E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*, Berkeley 1997, pp. 13–14.

15 Schenk, *Mental Maps*, pp. 510–512.

toman interactions. This is due in part to the political and economic power of imperial Germany, as well as the size of the historiographical market in post-1945 Germany compared to its smaller neighbours, Austria and Switzerland. Moreover, Germany's alliance with the Ottomans during the First World War is a topic that has particularly fascinated German historians in the context of Germany's presumptive "bid for world power".¹⁶ It is therefore not surprising that a substantial body of research has dealt with the alliance between Germany and the Ottoman Empire and the development of German-Ottoman relations.¹⁷ Particular attention has been paid to three salient features of the relationship: first, military cooperation and the experiences of German (and previously Prussian) experts in reforming the Ottoman army;¹⁸ second, the Baghdad Railway project and its effects;¹⁹ and third, the German-Ottoman attempt to mobilize the so-called Muslim world under the religious authority of the Ottoman caliph.²⁰ We should also highlight the contributions of Malte Fuhrmann, which shed particular light on the colonialist

- 16 F. Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18*, Düsseldorf 1967.
- 17 F. Adanır, *Wandlungen des deutschen Türkeibildes in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, in: I. Lohmann/J. Böttcher (eds.), *Türken- und Türkeibilder im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Pädagogik, Bildungspolitik, Kulturtransfer*, Bad Heilbrunn 2021, pp. 23–42; N. Alkan, *Die deutsche Weltpolitik und die Konkurrenz der Mächte um das osmanische Erbe: Die deutsch-osmanischen Beziehungen in der deutschen Presse 1890–1909*, Münster 2003; M. Cebeci, *Die deutsch-türkischen Beziehungen in der Epoche Abdülhamids II. (1876–1908): Die Rolle Deutschlands in der türkischen Aussenpolitik unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der bulgarischen, ägyptischen und armenischen Frage*, Marburg 2010; I. Farah, *Die deutsche Pressepolitik und Propagandatätigkeit im Osmanischen Reich von 1908–1918 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des „Osmanischen Lloyd“*, Stuttgart 1993; M. Gencer, *Bildungspolitik, Modernisierung und kulturelle Interaktion: Deutsch-türkische Beziehungen (1908–1918)*, Münster 2002; D. Guillemarre-Acet, *Impérialisme et nationalisme: L'Allemagne, l'Empire ottoman et la Turquie (1908–1933)*, Würzburg 2016; İ. Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Alman Nüfuzu [German Influence in the Ottoman Empire]*, 20th edn, İstanbul 2020; F. Scherer, *Adler und Halbmond: Bismarck und der Orient 1878–1890*, Paderborn 2001; G. Schöllgen, *Imperialismus und Gleichgewicht: Deutschland, England und die orientalische Frage 1871–1914*, 3rd edn, München 2000; C. Schöningh/R. Çalık/H. Bayraktar (eds.), *Türkisch-deutsche Beziehungen: Perspektiven aus Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, Berlin 2012; U. Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914–1918*, Princeton 1968; W. van Kampen, *Studien zur deutschen Türkeipolitik in der Zeit Wilhelms II.*, Dissertation, Kiel 1968; A. Will, *Kein Griff nach der Weltmacht: Geheime Dienste und Propaganda im deutsch-österreichisch-türkischen Bündnis 1914–1918*, Köln 2012; S. Mangold-Will, *Begrenzte Freundschaft: Deutschland und die Türkei, 1918–1933*, Göttingen 2013.
- 18 H. N. Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I*, London 2005; G. Grüßhaber, *The 'German Spirit' in the Ottoman and Turkish Army, 1908–1938: A History of Military Knowledge Transfer*, Berlin; H. W. Neulen, *Feldgrau in Jerusalem: Das Levantekorps des kaiserlichen Deutschland*, München 1991; J. L. Wallach, *Anatomie einer Militärhilfe: Die preußisch-deutschen Militärmissionen in der Türkei 1835–1919*, Düsseldorf 1976.
- 19 P. H. Christensen, *Germany and the Ottoman Railways: Art, Empire, and Infrastructure*, New Haven 2017; J. Manzenreiter, *Die Bagdadbahn: Als Beispiel für die Entstehung des Finanzimperialismus in Europa (1872–1903)*, Bochum 1982; S. McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power, 1898–1918*, Cambridge, MA 2010; M. Özyüksel, *The Berlin-Baghdad Railway and the Ottoman Empire: Industrialization, Imperial Germany and the Middle East*, London 2016.
- 20 G. Hagen, *German Heralds of Holy War: Orientalists and Applied Oriental Studies*, in: *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24 (2004) 2, pp. 113–132; G. Höpp, *Zwischen Entente und Mittelmächten: Arabische Nationalisten und Panislamisten in Deutschland (1914 bis 1918)*, in: *Asien, Afrika, Lateinamerika* 19 (1999) 5, pp. 827–845; W. G. Schwanitz (ed.), *Germany and the Middle East: 1871–1945*, Madrid 2004; A.-R. Sinnü, *Almāniyā wa-l-islām fī l-qarnayn al-tāsi 'āshar wa-l-'ishrin [Germany and Islam in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries]*, Bayrūt 2007; E.-J. Zürcher (ed.), *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad at the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's "Holy War Made in Germany"*, Leiden 2015.

agenda of German presence and involvement in the Ottoman Empire.²¹ A number of other studies have also provided us with valuable insights into the experiences of Ottomans in Germany and Germans in the Ottoman Empire, but have mostly remained within the paradigm of bilateral relations.²²

In contrast to bilateral German-Ottoman relations, Austria-Hungary's participation in the First World War alliance has remained rather marginal in Austrian historiography.²³ Studies on Austrian or Austro-Hungarian interactions with the Ottoman Empire are generally rarer, especially for the time of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Austrians and Ottomans have a long shared history of peaceful and sometimes warlike neighbourly existence, and the focus of interest often seems to have been on the earlier phases of Austro-Ottoman interactions.²⁴ On the other hand, Austria-Hungary's interest in the stability of the Balkan region and the threat of Russian hegemony shaped its relations with the Ottoman Empire and made them an essential aspect of foreign policy, especially after the occupation and annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878/1908.²⁵ There are a few comprehensive works on Austrian interests in the Ottoman Empire in the modern era and on Austrian interactions with the Middle East in general.²⁶ A considerable body of research has dealt with Austrian relations with Egypt, which formally remained a part of the Ottoman Empire until 1914 but is beyond the scope of this thematic issue.²⁷ Another way to link Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman histories, which has

- 21 M. Fuhrmann, *Anatolia as a Site of German Colonial Desire and National Re-Awakenings*, in: *New Perspectives on Turkey* 41 (2009), pp. 117–150; M. Fuhrmann, *Der Traum vom deutschen Orient: Zwei deutsche Kolonien im Osmanischen Reich 1851–1918*, Frankfurt am Main 2006; for German colonialist images of the Ottomans, see also Lohmann/Böttcher, *Türken- und Türkebilder*.
- 22 I. Böer et al. (eds.), *Türken in Berlin 1871–1945: Eine Metropole in den Erinnerungen osmanischer und türkischer Zeitzeugen*, Berlin 2002; M. v. Kummer (ed.), *Deutsche Präsenz am Bosphorus: 130 Jahre Kaiserliches Botschaftspalais – 120 Jahre historische Sommerresidenz des deutschen Botschafters in Tarabya (= Boğaziçi'ndeki Almanya)*, Istanbul 2009; E. Pauw (ed.), *Daheim in Konstantinopel: Deutsche Spuren am Bosphorus ab 1850*, Nürnberg 2014.
- 23 Will, *Kein Griff nach der Weltmacht*, p. 28; see, however, R.-T. Fischer, *Österreich-Ungarns Kampf um das Heilige Land: Kaiserliche Palästinalpolitik im Ersten Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt am Main 2004; P. Jung, *Der k.u.k. Wüstenkrieg: Österreich-Ungarn im Vorderen Orient, 1915–1918*, Graz 1992.
- 24 B. M. Buchmann, *Österreich und das Osmanische Reich: Eine bilaterale Geschichte*, Wien 1999; M. Kurz et al. (eds.), *Das osmanische Reich und die Habsburgermonarchie: Akten des internationalen Kongresses zum 150-jährigen Bestehen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, Wien, 22.–25. September 2004, Wien 2005; P. Jordan, *Die österreichische Militärgrenze gegen das Osmanische Reich: Ein geographischer Blick auf ihre Nachwirkungen bis heute*, in: *Österreich, Geschichte, Literatur, Geographie* (2015) 3: *Die Habsburgermonarchie und das Osmanische Reich*, pp. 245–266.
- 25 E. Kolm, *Die Ambitionen Österreich-Ungarns im Zeitalter des Hochimperialismus*, Frankfurt am Main 2001; C. Reichl-Ham, *Die Habsburgermonarchie, das Osmanische Reich und die Orientalische Frage im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, in: *Österreich, Geschichte, Literatur, Geographie* (2015) 3: *Die Habsburgermonarchie und das Osmanische Reich*, pp. 290–305; C. Ruthner et al. (eds.), *Wechselwirkungen: Austria-Hungary, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Western Balkans, 1878–1918*, New York 2015.
- 26 R. Agstner/E. Samsinger (eds.), *Österreich in Istanbul: K. (u.) K. Präsenz im Osmanischen Reich*, Wien 2010; R.-T. Fischer, *Österreich im Nahen Osten: Die Grossmachtspolitik der Habsburgermonarchie im Arabischen Orient, 1633–1918*, Wien 2006.
- 27 R. Agstner, *125 Jahre Suezkanal: Österreich(-Ungarn) und seine Präsenz am Isthmus von Suez zur Geschichte der Konsulate in Suez, Ismailia und Port Said, 1844–1956*, Kairo 1995; R. Agstner, *Von k.k. Konsularagentur zum Österreichischen Generalkonsulat: Österreich(-Ungarn) und Alexandrien 1763–1993*, Kairo 1993.

recently gained popularity, is to compare the two multi-ethnic empires or analyze Austria-Hungary's role as a model for administrative reform in the late Ottoman Empire.²⁸ Studies of Swiss-Ottoman interactions are even more limited, focusing in particular on Switzerland's economic interests in the Ottoman Empire,²⁹ Ottoman exiles and their publishing activities in Geneva and Lausanne,³⁰ and Swiss responses to the persecution of Armenians before and during the First World War.³¹ It is one of the aims of this thematic issue to show the relevance of smaller actors such as Austria(-Hungary) and Switzerland and give visibility to the significance of their interactions with the Ottoman Empire.

German, Austrian, and Swiss interactions with the Ottoman Empire have been treated not only unequally but also largely separately. Malte Fuhrmann is one of the few historians who have studied Ottoman interactions with both Germany and Austro-Hungary,³² and Yavuz Köse, who is one of the contributors to this issue, is probably the only one who has covered all three areas.³³ Köse's work on economic exchanges clearly demonstrates the limitations of the national history paradigm, as larger corporations often had no clear national identity and did not stop at political borders. Similar cross-border dynamics can also be observed in studies with a more literature-based approach, especially regarding German Orientalism and Oriental Studies, although they often do not explicitly address these aspects.³⁴ The academic orientalist discourse at German universities, for example, connected scholars and interlocutors from different countries, as Barbara Henning's article in this issue points out. A major problem in another respect is the

- 28 J. Chovanec/O. Heilo (eds.), *Narrated Empires: Perceptions of Late Habsburg and Ottoman Multinationalism*, Cham 2021; T. D. Sechel (ed.), *Medicine within and between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires: 18th–19th Centuries*, Bochum 2011; A. Yenen, *Envisioning Turco-Arab Co-Existence between Empire and Nationalism*, in: *Die Welt des Islams* 61 (2020) 1, pp. 331–365; A. Mestyan, *A Muslim Dualism? Inter-Imperial History and Austria-Hungary in Ottoman Thought, 1867–1921*, in: *Contemporary European History* 30 (2021) 4: *European-Middle Eastern Relations: Continuities and Changes from the Time of Empires to the Cold War*, pp. 478–496.
- 29 S. Sigerist, *Schweizer im Orient*, Schaffhausen 2004; B. Witschi, *Schweizer auf imperialistischen Pfaden: Die schweizerischen Handelsbeziehungen mit der Levante 1848–1914*, Stuttgart 1987.
- 30 H.-L. Kieser, *Vorkämpfer der „Neuen Türkei“: Revolutionäre Bildungseliten am Genfersee (1870–1939)*, Zürich 2005.
- 31 H.-L. Kieser, *Die armenische Frage und die Schweiz (1896–1923): La question arménienne et la Suisse (1896–1923)*, Zürich 1999; A. Manoukian, *Bearing Witness to Humanity: Switzerland's Humanitarian Contribution during the Armenian Genocide in the Ottoman Empire 1894–1923*, Waugh, Peter (trans.), Münster 2018.
- 32 M. Fuhrmann, 'Western Perversions' at the Threshold of Felicity: The European Prostitutes of Galata-Pera (1870–1915), in: *History and Anthropology* 21 (2010) 2, pp. 159–172; Fuhrmann, *Der Traum vom deutschen Orient*; N. Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000–1989*, Ann Arbor 2011; for other examples, see also Will, *Kein Griff nach der Weltmacht*.
- 33 Y. Köse, *Osmanen in Hamburg: Eine Beziehungsgeschichte zur Zeit des Ersten Weltkrieges*, Hamburg 2016; Y. Köse, *Westlicher Konsum am Bosphorus: Warenhäuser, Nestlé & Co. im späten Osmanischen Reich (1855–1923)*, München 2010; Y. Köse, „Stein billig und fein – Mayer schlecht und teuer“: *Österreichische Warenhäuser in Istanbul (1855–1942)*, in: R. Agstner/E. Samsinger (eds.), *Österreich in Istanbul: K. (u.) K. Präsenz im Osmanischen Reich*, Wien 2010, pp. 201–228.
- 34 N. Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900*, Stuttgart 1997; Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East*; A. Polaschegg, *Der andere Orientalismus: Regeln deutsch-morgenländischer Imagination im 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin 2005; S. L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, Cambridge 2010; U. Wokoeck, *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945*, London 2009; S. Mangold-Will, *Eine „weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft“: Die deutsche Orientalistik im 19. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 2004.

historiographical treatment of the founding of the German nation-state in 1871. Most studies on German-Ottoman relations and the German community in the Ottoman Empire limit themselves to the period after 1871 or look back on earlier decades from the perspective of the nation-state, a problem discussed in Tobias Völker's contribution in this issue. Although a few works have addressed Ottoman interactions with German states before 1871,³⁵ the teleology of the German nation-state tends to overshadow the diversity of German loyalties and interests that existed throughout much of the nineteenth century. With the perspective of the "Germansphere" we want to capture such diversity not only spatially, but to a certain extent also temporally.

4. Overview of this Thematic Issue

The first two articles in this thematic issue deal with questions of unity and diversity from two distinct angles. Tobias Völker's contribution examines the activities of the Mordtmann family in Istanbul before and after the establishment of the German nation-state. Zooming in on the activities and social relations of three family members from a biographical perspective, Völker shows how the generational tensions between Andreas David Mordtmann senior and his two sons reflect an increasingly homogeneous self-image of the German community in the Ottoman Empire. While Mordtmann senior was a self-taught orientalist and diplomat for the northern German states of the Hanseatic League, his sons had to build their careers against the background of German and Ottoman imperial ambitions. Giorgio Ennas approaches Swiss-Ottoman interactions from the viewpoint of diplomatic history, tracing the gradual shift of Switzerland from a sphere of French diplomatic predominance towards a "diplomatic Germansphere". Examining interrelations between Switzerland, Austria-Hungary, France and Germany, Ennas shows how Swiss residents in the Ottoman Empire benefited from French protection for much of the nineteenth century. After the establishment of Germany as a nation-state, German-speakers from Switzerland increasingly opted for German protection. This process reached its conclusion during the First World War, when Germany and the Ottoman Empire used pressure and promises to convince Switzerland to place its citizens under the protection of German diplomats. Ennas's contribution demonstrates how the Ottoman-German alliance helped create a "diplomatic Germansphere" in the Ottoman Empire and accordingly affected the living conditions of politically neutral Swiss citizens as well. Using the examples of the Hanseatic League and Switzerland, both Völker and Ennas illustrate the tensions that existed between small-power independence and the pull of a larger cultural community.

35 E. S. Fiebig, *Hanseatenkreuz und Halbmond: Die hanseatischen Konsulate in der Levante im 19. Jahrhundert*, Marburg 2005; K. Pröhl, *Die Bedeutung preußischer Politik in den Phasen der orientalischen Frage: Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung deutsch-türkischer Beziehungen von 1606 bis 1871*, Frankfurt am Main 1986.

The two following contributions focus on entanglements between the “Germansphere” and the Ottoman Empire in the scientific field. Barbara Henning examines the multi-layered exchanges between German-speaking orientalist and their Kurdish-speaking interlocutors in the emergence of Kurdish studies. Unraveling the complex web of transnational cooperation and competition, Henning emphasizes the colonialist background of Kurdish studies in Germany, the transnational networks and backgrounds of orientalist scholars as well as the interests and agendas of Kurdish-speaking informants and intellectuals. Henning thus illuminates both the heterogeneous background of “Germansphere” scholars and the multi-ethnic composition of the Ottoman Empire. Similarly, but with a focus on the Ottoman capital Istanbul, Elife Biçer-Deveci traces exchanges and knowledge circulation in the emergence of the Ottoman anti-alcohol movement. Biçer-Deveci highlights the substantial influence of “Germansphere” networks on Ottoman debates about alcohol, dwelling in particular on the triangular relationship between the renowned Swiss psychiatrist Auguste Forel and two of his colleagues, the Ottoman Turk Mazhar Osman and the Ottoman Armenian Haçig Boghossian. While all three scholars and activists were influenced by innovations in German psychiatry, it was ultimately the multi-lingual Swiss Forel who, in the eyes of his partners, seemed best suited to popularize alcohol abstinence in the Ottoman Empire. Henning and Biçer-Deveci combine insights into the processes of knowledge circulation with a thorough examination of interpersonal encounters, shedding light on the power asymmetries that determined, hindered or sometimes enabled transnational cooperation.

The last two articles in this issue adopt a micro-historical approach to explore lesser-known aspects of Ottoman interactions with Austria-Hungary and Germany. Yavuz Köse analyses unpublished letters written by the Ottoman nationalist politician Rıza Nur during his stay in Vienna in 1911. Nur presented the relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary as something special and explained various ways in which Ottomans could benefit and learn from their northern neighbours. Only a few years after the controversial annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary, Vienna thus appeared as a “treasure” in the eyes of a controversial political figure who would become known in later years as a champion of Turkist racism. Umar Ryad, too, dedicates his contribution to a complex and at times contradictory figure: the Ottoman Arab officer Zeki Kirâm. Ryad examines Kirâm’s unpublished diaries and traces how his protagonist managed to make a place for himself in Berlin during the last years of the First World War and the first post-war years. Kirâm came to Germany in 1917 for medical treatment after being wounded as a commander of Bedouin troops in the Sinai. He then remained in Berlin, where he witnessed the revolutionary upheavals, worked, and married. Although Kirâm was in close contact with Arab anti-colonialists such as Shakib Arslan in later years, he never returned to his native Syria and lived in Berlin as a Turkish citizen until his death in 1946. Through Kirâm’s life story, Ryad uncovers a human side of the German-Ottoman alliance and sheds light on individual encounters that took place beyond official politics. Based on previously unexplored source material, Köse and Ryad thus offer surprising insights into how Ottomans of different backgrounds experienced and related to Austria-Hungary and Germany.

5. Towards an Ottoman-Centred Global History?

We hope that the articles collected in this issue can provide building blocks for a more comprehensive understanding of the Ottoman Empire's and by extension the Middle East's place in global history. The longevity of the Ottoman Empire, its heterogeneous population, and its spatial extent make it a challenge to write a history of its global interactions that is both meaningful and innovative. The disciplines of Ottoman and Middle Eastern studies have long been concerned with transfers and comparisons as well as linguistic and ethnic diversity. They are in a sense inherently transnational, and it is no coincidence that scholars of the Middle East have called for a strengthening of transregional – rather than transnational – approaches.³⁶ The main goal from our perspective is to gain a more complete picture of the Ottoman Empire's external interactions. Recent studies have taken important steps in this direction, particularly shedding light on the history of Ottoman interactions with non-Western areas.³⁷ In contrast, the use of broad categories such as “Europe” and “the West” is of little help in this endeavor, as it obscures the importance of Ottoman interactions not only with a rising power such as Germany but especially with less prominent actors such as Austria-Hungary, Switzerland, and others. The study of Ottoman interactions with the “Germansphere” contributes to our understanding in two ways: First, it allows us to integrate research on German, Austrian, and Swiss interactions with the Ottomans into a common framework and to emphasize the importance of the Swiss and Austrian cases in particular. Second, it enables us to examine cross-influences and spillover effects between these different national contexts and beyond. Both aspects, in our opinion, are essential steps towards managing global complexity from an Ottoman point of view, on the path towards an Ottoman-centered history of the world.

36 A. Fischer-Tahir/S. Wippel, Transregionale Verflechtungen der MENA-Region: Konzeptionelle und forschungspraktische Herausforderungen, in: S. Wippel/A. Fischer-Tahir (eds.), *Jenseits etablierter Meta-Geographien: Der Nahe Osten und Nordafrika in transregionaler Perspektive*, Baden-Baden 2018.

37 Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*; D. J. Brophy, 'He Causes a Ruckus Wherever He Goes': Sa'id Muhammad al-'Asali as a Missionary of Modernism in North-West China, in: *Modern Asian Studies* 54 (2020) 4, pp. 1192–1224; Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa*; R. Worringer, *Ottomans Imagining Japan: East, Middle East, and Non-Western Modernity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, New York 2014.