

6 Propaganda or Culture War

Jihad, Islam, and Nationalism in Turkish Literature during World War I

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During the period of the jealously guarded absolute power of the CUP, from the *Bab-ı âli* (Sublime Porte) Raid of 23 January 1913 until the defeat in 1918, the government banned the publication of even the slightest opposition in newspapers and periodicals. In particular, the outbreak of war in 1914 in Europe and the declaration of a general mobilization in the Ottoman Empire brought about the introduction of military censorship. With the introduction on 7 August 1914 of a temporary law, the existing censorship became even stricter.

Actually, the regime had planned an even stricter censorship than the one they implemented. Kâzım Karabekir, who at the time was Chief of Intelligence at the Office of the General Staff, included in his memoirs of the war an event related to the introduction of censorship. He had a meeting on 3 August 1914 with İsmail Canbulat, an Under-Secretary in the Interior Ministry and one of the most eminent members of the CUP, who said that, with the exception of *Tanin* which was the mouthpiece of the government, all newspapers would be closed to prevent them from publishing anti-war views. Karabekir opposed this move and said that it would destroy the credibility both of *Tanin* and of the constitutional system and would also be in conflict with the principle of “armed neutrality”. He later complained to Enver Pasha about this proposal. Enver accepted his views and prevented the newspapers from being shut down.¹

Nevertheless, the official censorship regulation introduced a few days later was also very strict and all-encompassing. According to this new regulation, no new newspapers or press agencies were to be founded; newspapers could not publish additional editions; all newspapers were to be distributed only after having been taken to the censorship room at the Istanbul Post Office, where they were to be checked and stamped as being “in accordance with regulations” and finally signed by the censorship official and censorship officer on duty; and no telegrams were to be sent in languages other than Turkish, Arabic or French.²

Despite the censorship, the period between the outbreak of the war in Europe and the Ottoman empire's entry as an ally of Germany and Austro-Hungary contained a very fierce and aggressive Ottoman propaganda effort aimed at Ottoman public opinion in order to prepare it for the ultimate result of entry into the war. The Turkist movement in particular was sliding very quickly towards Turanism and becoming immersed in warmongering and propaganda of a Turanist and pan-Islamist nature in the months of August–November 1914. There is evidence that the Turkist movement did not begin this activity spontaneously or in an uncoordinated fashion, but as a result of a concerted effort arising from a single centre and was operating systematically, following precise orders.

A short cautionary notice was published at the end of the 71st issue of *Türk Yurdu*, the famous Turkist magazine, on 6 August 1914. According to this notice, due to the political situation the *Türk Yurdu*, published once every fifteen days, would henceforth be published monthly, while the weekly *Türk Sözü* would be published once every fifteen days.³ Notwithstanding this, the next issue of the *Türk Yurdu* appeared only four and a half months later, on 10 December 1914, with no explanation regarding the delay, while *Türk Sözü* would never again be published. If this delay were the result of paper shortages or other similar difficulties, it would most certainly have been explained in the next issue. Kâzım Karabekir interpreted this interruption in the following way: “[t]his means that for some reason the *Türk Yurdu* preferred to keep silent throughout the general mobilization. In this way *Tanin* newspaper was reinforced with some of the journalists of the *Türk Yurdu*.”⁴

Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, in the chapter of his memoirs titled “Summer of 1914”, observes how the political leadership and the cultural sphere were pursuing the same aims. “It was generally felt that we were Germany’s ally and that we would end up entering the war.” He also mentions a conversation he had with Celâl Sahir. According to Celâl Sahir, who was a latecomer to the CUP but nevertheless very close to both Talât Pasha and Ziya Gökalp, the Ottoman State should have conquered Egypt and the Caucasus to get closer to both the Islamic and Turkish worlds, because if it did not, the state would inevitably fall apart. The real aim of this operation would have been of an economic nature, because by then the Ottoman treasury was incapable of finding enough foreign loans even to pay its outstanding debts. In this way it would have gained control of Egypt’s cotton and of Baku’s oil, putting an end to its difficulties. Yahya Kemal was aware that in reality the source of these words was not Celâl Sahir and that they were just words “put out to convince people of the need to enter the war”.

According to Yahya Kemal, in those days there were two approaches, one negative and the other positive. According to the negative approach there was no possibility of trusting the Allied Powers and of opening the Straits because this would have meant giving too much latitude to Russia. The positive approach, on the other hand, was the one put forward by Celâl Sahir and was also very frequently heard. Enver Pasha used this approach to justify an offensive war. According to Yahya Kemal, all subsequent disasters were the result of this logic, because if the war had been organized as a defensive one the results would have been very different. He concludes by saying, "In those days, when it was like having been left with one horse and three shoes, the conquest of the Caucasus and of Egypt was the most popular currency."⁵

Poetical Propaganda during the Mobilization

At that time, Kâzım Karabekir was an officer of the general staff and, like Yahya Kemal, a nationalist who thought that precedence should not be given to Turan or to an Islamic union, but to Anatolia.⁶ Karabekir underlined the fact that the blame for the Ottoman Empire's entry into the war as a result of Turanist and pan-Islamist dreams lay on the Turkists operating in the cultural sphere, and he devoted a large part of his *Birinci Cihan Harbine Nasıl Girdik?* to the subject of war propaganda during the period of mobilization. According to Karabekir, in those days the press repeated these points: Germany's victory is a sure thing; Muslims should not lose an opportunity to become free; the Islamic world is awaiting the orders of its Caliph to revolt; it is impossible for the Balkan nations of Romania, Greece and Bulgaria to enter the war against Germany; there is no harmony among the Allied Powers and the moment the Ottomans enter the war revolts by the Turks of Russia and by the Muslims in other parts of the world will put Russia and Britain into a wretched condition.⁷

As early as 8 August, Ziya Gökalp was claiming, in his poem "Kızıl Destan" (Red Epic) published in *Tanin*, "The lands of the enemy will be ruined! / Turkey will grow and become Turan!"⁸ This rather provocative poem was presented by the newspaper with the words "Our readers should keep in mind that 'Gökalp Beyefendi' will continue following the events muddling Europe and describing and analysing them with such national language and a national philosophy."⁹ In his book, Karabekir includes an extract from a long poem entitled "Türkün Yolu" (The Path of the Turk) published in *Donanma Mecmuası* (Magazine of the Navy), dated 19 October 1914:

Carefully look and perceive you will
 Of the longing spirit of Algeria, Morocco
 India, Tunisia, Zanzibar, Java, the Caucasus
 There is the love of the Turk

Happily and without awe he will go
 He will demolish mountains even if of steel they are
 If his resolution you don't know, learn you will
 The Turk's path is the one leading to the "True homeland".¹⁰

Let us concentrate a little more in detail on Ziya Gökalp's "Kızıl Destan." When it was first published in *Tanin*, it was presented as a commentary on the war in Europe and it began with the epigraph, "The lands of the enemy will be in ruin! / Turkey will grow and become Turan!" This epigraph reflects the main underlying idea of the poem, made up of 24 stanzas of five lines each. Gökalp begins by spurring Turks to cooperate in the recently declared general mobilization, as early as the first stanza and defines the war as a "moment of heroism". The poem can be interpreted as a reflection of a sly happiness. The Ottoman Empire had just signed an alliance with Germany, but had not yet entered the war. When seen from this point of view, it is clear that Gökalp, remembering all the pain of the Balkan War, was happy about the slaughter in Europe, which he considered to be the main reason for the bad situation in which the Ottoman Empire found itself: "The land of civilisation will be red blood! / Each of its regions will be a new Balkan!"¹¹

Gökalp tried to recount the reasons for the war in poetic fashion and went back a few years before the war, concluding that everything was due to the hostility of "the Cross" towards Islam. It was because of this enmity that the Libyan and Balkan wars had started, but in the end the Christian countries had started quarrelling among themselves. In the midst of this confusion, the Serbian nationalist Princip killed the Austro-Hungarian crown prince and his wife, putting Serbia and the German world on a collision course. Gökalp interpreted phase by phase the events leading to war and made clear that he supported Germany, while at the same time showing how all this affected the Turks: "The Hungarian said: Don't think that I want to stay, / I would like to let loose my horse, / I would like to avenge the Turks / The Altay lands will become a great country / The Sultan will be the sovereign of Turan!"¹²

Even if it was not clearly stated, in this poem it is Germany that is right and Gökalp has the German Kaiser speak as if he were a Muslim: "The Kaiser has declared to the soldiery and population: / Let your heart reunite in chain! / Trampling the enemy is like praying, / Faith will be the

guide of my army! / The All-Compassionate will protect us!”¹³ The last stanza of the poem looks as if it had been written expressly for Muslims: “The Englishman has imprisoned *Sultan Osman*, / With it hostage he will hold India, Amman! / Islam has recognised its enemy, / Soon there will be happiness: / It will be the *Quran*, which takes its revenge!”¹⁴

This poem, which was written when the Ottoman empire was still neutral, shows clearly the attitude of the CUP and of the writers close to it. Their goal was to enter the war as an ally of Germany as soon as possible. Germany’s early victories were the main factors used to convince the people that there would be a quick victory, as a result of which not only would the lost territories be regained, but, thanks to Russia’s defeat, the Turan union would also be achieved. Thus while Gökalp was on the one hand commenting on the war in an “impartial” way saying, “they will fight among each other growing weaker and this will give us an advantage”, on the other, he was implying “let’s enter the war as soon as possible so that we can get the maximum benefit”.

Tevfik Fikret as a (False?) Propagandist of Jihad

There are other examples of this propaganda literature and I will discuss some of them below but before that I would like to concentrate on two important poems about the war and declaration of Jihad by Tevfik Fikret (1867–1915), who was undisputedly the most important and famous poet of that period. Tevfik Fikret, who would die during the first year of the war, on 19 August 1915, was anti-CUP and vehemently against the participation of the Ottoman empire in the war. After the Ottoman Empire’s entry into war and consequent declaration of Jihad, the poet published a poem entitled “Fetâvâ-yı Şerîfe’den Sonra: Sancak-ı Şerîf Huzurunda” (After the sacred fatwa: in the presence of the sacred banner), in the 1227th issue of *Servet-i Fünun*, dated 27 Teşrinisani 1330/10 December 1914. The poem starts with the note, *Müftî’ül-enâm Hazretlerine ithaf olunmuştur* (Dedicated to the holy mufti/şeyhülislam of the Koran) and it is stated that it is recounted by a pious warrior. This “pious warrior” repeats over and over again throughout the poem that in the name of religion he is ready to face any difficulty and also to die. The poem ends with an almost masochistic note:

As difficulties oppress me, my joy and calm increase;
Towards my God
I am always favourably disposed, in submission and forbearing
Whether I die or live, I am happy in any case!¹⁵

Those who do not know the relationship between Tevfik Fikret and the CUP and the way he wrote poems criticizing them may think that this is a simple poem of religious propaganda. Actually, those who know the literary environment of those days will also know that Fikret was against both religion and the CUP and notice immediately how, contrary to appearances, this poem was ironic and satirical. In an astute manoeuvre, Fikret had managed to write a poem of opposition that would not have damaged him and that would not have been censored. Probably the Unionists were angered by this poem, but there was nothing they could do.

Yet this is just one way of explaining the situation. When we produce a close reading of the poem, we feel the exaggeration, but it becomes harder to look at it as a satire, although the pompous style of the title, the subtitle and the dedication supports this interpretation. The poet also gives the completion date at the end of the poem in an unconventional way, in the *Hijri* calendar, as “aşrū muharrem’il-harâm 1333”, in order to exaggerate the level of religiosity. Yet Tevfik Fikret does another important thing and uses a pious Muslim warrior as his poetical voice/persona all through the poem. We listen to this persona’s voice as if he is in front of the *seyhülislam* when he is announcing the sacred fatwa of Jihad. He accepts the fatwa and contemplates it. Therefore, the whole poem turns into an interior monologue of this warrior and we develop empathy towards him, through seeing his emotions and psychological mood.

The Muslim warrior accepts the ceremonial banner that was present during the announcement of the fatwa as the banner owned by the prophet, and he sees it as the last hope of millions. Even its light hissing sound in the wind is heard as the harbinger of a holy victory. Although the real colour of the banner is pale, its blessed sacredness will illuminate everything with red and green lights. The poetic voice calls the banner “wave of consolation” and begs it to flow towards the martyrs in order to wake up the sleeping Muslim world. He also calls on the sword of holy war to shed blood and kill the enemies of Islam. The warrior sees the black conscience of the Western civilization as an abyss that will be filled only by death. The Western civilization is a vengeful and poisonous dragon that will burn the resigned and calm Muslim warrior, but every drop of his blood will damn the dragon. The warrior hallucinates about angelic wings and horses that will carry the already dead souls to help him. The warrior will be thankful to Allah and ready for Jihad. He gave up his belongings and hopes for the sake of religion, and now he will walk unwaveringly even if volcanoes fall on him. Now, God’s help (*avn-i Hüda*) is his torch and the prophet’s banner is his shelter, and it means eternal conservation and salvation for him. The angels will save him from

the enemies. And in this way, the poem ends: "As difficulties oppress me, my joy and calm increase; / Towards my God / I am always favourably disposed, in submission and forbearing / Whether I die or live, I am happy in any case!"

For a public figure such as Tevfik Fikret who was known as a strict opponent of religion, the poetic voice of that poem was undoubtedly a fanatic and the poet openly displayed his stance through the abovementioned features such as its exaggerated title and subtitle and unconventional *hijri* dates. Yet it is not easy to see the poem as a mere ridicule because the persona displays an honest and integrated person-ality all over the poem. It seems that the poet tried to understand and poetically represent a certain way of thinking. Tevfik Fikret was not mocking the pious warrior here although he emphasized the futility of this warrior's belief in holy war. The poet used certain words in the poem and they were taken from both the Jihad fatwa and the sultan's royal declaration to the army and navy about that fatwa.

This last feature of the poem in particular makes us think about the possibility of Tevfik Fikret's writing this poem as a propaganda poem. We do not have any information on this issue, but the propaganda effort of the government was very ambitious and persistent at that time. Of course, it is a speculation but perhaps he wrote and published this poem in order to get rid of governmental pressure. He used the very vocabulary of the propaganda effort but he framed the poem in such an exaggerated way that the government was not able to use it for further propaganda efforts.

Tevfik Fikret as an Anti-War Poet

Tevfik Fikret wrote a second and long, 153 line poem entitled "Harb-i Mukaddes" (holy war), but he did not or could not publish it before his death in 1915. This second poem is the ultimate opposite of "in the presence of the sacred banner". Perhaps he wrote it not to be published but to clear his conscience because he had written and published the former poem. The latter poem seems like a long melodramatic oratory. It starts with a cry due to the ongoing war's distress: "Alas! The fire of war hasn't burnt out yet / We are ruined day by day because of war's suffering / It is better to die at once with the zeal of victory, / Actually all earth moulded with human blood."¹⁶ Then he curses all national leaders who rush all humanity into war. But then he directs his rage against the Ottoman warlords and their supporters: "O, these nonsense-writers talking about the guarding religion / As if the blood [that spilt] in Balkan

[Wars] were insufficient, / Now encourage the people with hell, / Telling Allah's and his prophet's order / Encourage the millions to the war with *Kuran* and the prophet's sayings / Turn everybody into bloody earth.”¹⁷

After this introduction, Fikret tells of all those martyrs who died in vain and left their orphans in misery. He mentions the Russian front and the Sarıkamış Battle, saying that “his corpse is not in the paradise but on the Caucasus plains” (*Cennette değil lâşesi Kafkas ovasında*), and then he describes in detail how soldiers died painfully and in horrible ways. All the same, the war is not limited to ultimately bloody but small battlefields. Home fronts are more awful due to the war-created misery and poverty. While every family is in mourning, the wives of martyrs have to be prostitutes. Fikret describes in detail the rise of prostitution and points to the state as the encouraging and responsible agent of this situation.

The misery on the home front is not limited to the widows but also to the mothers of martyrs. They become beggars. Fikret concludes the poem by cursing the entire war: “Damn you! Damn you! O, ‘holy war,’ / You tarnished all creatures / Damn you, damn you! O, tragedy of war, / You’re a blow to humanity, o, effort of war! ...”¹⁸

The main difference between “After the Sacred Fatwa” and “Holy War” is undoubtedly their approach to the war: the former is implicit, cautious and ironic, but the latter is explicit, righteous and furious. Fikret constructs his anti-war attitude in “Holy War” through direct observation and detailed illustrations. Yet in the first poem he uses a persona that is totally different from himself and he tries to understand and construct a pious warrior’s psychology. He does this in order to show the illusions of Muslims and pro-Jihad people, but in the end the psychological portrayal of the warrior is very akin to the literary depictions of heroes by pro-war writers. The very words in particular he borrowed from the fatwa and the royal declaration create ambiguity in the interpretation of the poem. Was it propaganda or criticism? We may also say that it was criticism disguised as propaganda.

Typical Jihad Propaganda Texts

I would like to quote the piece Mehmed Akif wrote in his long poem, “Berlin Hatıraları” (memoirs of Berlin), which he started to write when he was in Germany as a special agent sent by the Ottoman state in order to make pan-Islamic propaganda for the Muslim prisoners of war in Germany. At the end of this poem, he is anxious about the Allied raid on Gallipoli and the Ottoman soldier replies and soothes him with an absolute self-confidence:

– Don't be afraid!
 Even hell we would stop on our chests;
 This is God's way, there is no returning!
 Not a single stone of the private quarters of our families will fall!
 Unless the last soldier at war is martyred.
 If this great crowd in front of us should attack us viciously;
 If armies should arise from the seas, navies rain from the clouds;
 If where we are volcanoes,
 Should erupt and a bitter red wind should envelop the horizons;
 Isn't there a single faith on our front;
 A common joy, sadness, aim, conscience;
 Haven't we all got a single heart in our breasts ... It won't surrender!
 Even if the world should fall down, this front would resist!
 In the same way the craziness of humanity falls to pieces on the
 horizon,
 When trying to overwhelm God,
 In the same way that illusions fighting the light of truth;
 Are after sparks of ardour forgotten,
 Thus the Doomsday in front of us will be assembled.
 Soon this front will be relieved ...¹⁹

As is seen in this piece, the heroic voice in this poem and Tevfik Fikret's pious warrior are not very far from each other. Yet Fikret evaluates this heroism as an illusion while Akif unhesitatingly thinks of it as heroism. Yet there is one more important difference between them. Mehmet Akif gives us a very sharp narrative full of original expressions and imagination. Therefore, his poetic approach is more akin to Fikret's "Holy War" poem. The literary approach, however, is very different in propaganda literature in general, in which schematic concepts and phrases chosen by the political authorities are passed on to literary writers to be used in their propaganda pieces. Therefore, we see the repetition of similar elements in propaganda literature. Is there a typical literary text making Jihad propaganda that will help us understand the mechanism? Yes, we can look at a certain theatrical play, written by Muhyiddin Baha [Pars], *Halife Ordusu Mısır ve Kafkasya'da* (The Caliph's Army in Egypt and the Caucasus). It was published in Bursa in *Rumi* 1331 (1915–1916). The completion date at the end of the play is given as "21 Haziran sene 1331" (3 July 1915).²⁰

This didactic and schematic play opens with Turkish university students discussing the outbreak of war in Europe. All of them will be reserve officers when the general mobilization is declared. One of those students worries about the calamities that the war will cause and

the ultimate annihilation of Western civilization. His friends, however, evaluate it as a divine opportunity for revenge and think that “the war that burns Europe will illuminate Asia.”²¹ Then they chide their friend who is worried for Europe, asking “will we abandon our enslaved brothers in India, Egypt, Iran, and the Caucasus and instead of them, will we worry about the ones who enslaved them? Shall we have pity on the oppressor instead of the oppressed? ...”²² Meanwhile, the play refers often and in a similar vein to an important injury of Ottoman public opinion, i.e. the defeat in the Balkan Wars. A character, for instance, compares the new war and the Balkan: “Don’t mention that damned war to us! ... We didn’t do it; it is not the war of youth but senility, not the war of a nation but treachery. This new war will be fought by Muhammed’s umma, Oguz Khan’s nation; and history is full of this umma’s, this nation’s heroism.”²³

The attitude of integrating Islam umma and the Turkish nation, which is evident in the above passage, will continually be repeated all through the play, and Turk and Islam will be mentioned as synonyms or identical twins as if there is no conflict or problem between them. Actually this attitude had been invented even before the war by the late Ottoman Turkists such as Ziya Gökalp. Gökalp tried to theorize it and worked hard to show it as natural. Gökalp was the ideologist of the party and had the overall responsibility for cultural affairs. His “Millet ve Vatan” article published in the 67th issue of *Türk Yurdu* dated 28 May 1914 was the last part of his “Türkleşmek, İslâmlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak” (Turkification, Islamization, Modernization) series. At the end of this article Gökalp comes back to the fatherland concept and puts forward the example of intersecting groups. There are two nations: the one deriving from nationhood and the other deriving from religion.

There is, in fact, a homeland of Islam, which is the beloved land of all Muslims. The other one is the national home, which, for Turks, is what we call Turan. The Ottoman territories are that portion of Islamdom that has remained independent. A portion of these is the home of the Turks, and is at the same time a portion of Turan. Another portion of them is the homeland of the Arabs, which is again a part of the great Arab fatherland. The fact that the Turks have a special love for the home of the Turks, Turan, does not necessitate that they forget the Ottoman land which is a small Muslim homeland, or the great land of all Muslims. For national, political and international ideals are different things and all are sacred ideals.²⁴

We see lots of formulations in this play which are congruent with Gökalp’s flexible definition. One of the young students/reserve officers, for instance, says “that great ruler who thought that even the entire world would not be enough for one sultan [Selim II] first decided to

gather the complete Islamic universe under the banner of the Caliphate. Tomorrow the Muslims of three continents who will run to fight under the flag of *jihad* will impose the great principle of Islamic unity of which Sultan Selim first laid the foundations ...”²⁵ The play progresses, always mentioning the umma and the nation together. All Muslims all over the world wait for the banner of the Caliph: Turks, Circassians and Georgians in the Caucasus; Arabs in Egypt; and (Muslim) Hindus in India ...

The third act of the play takes place at the Russian Front. We see that the Russian officers are not only fighting against the Turkish army but also dealing with the Muslims in their own army: “[t]hose issued fatwas sparked the Islamic hearts. Neither threats nor banishment, not even death is enough to extinguish the flames of enmity in the Muslim hearts.”²⁶ Indeed the Muslim soldiers in the Tsarist army join the Turkish army and they together devastate Russians. The next act opens with a scene near the Suez Canal in which British agents try to bribe an Arab shaykh against the Ottomans. But the shaykh and his men insultingly kick the British out because they are ignited after the fatwa of Jihad. After the British, Turkish officers visit the shaykh and he openly pledges his alliance to the Caliph and his decision to join the Ottoman army. We also see Indian Muslims in the British army in Suez, who prepare to unite with the Ottoman army in the subsequent act. British forces also have the same experience that the Russians had against the Ottoman army. An Ottoman officer cries at the end of the play, “Come on soldiers, come on co-religionists, come on every individual of the Caliph’s army, the success of Islam is in front of you, go forward, always go forward ...”²⁷

The Relationship of Religion and Nationalism in Ziya Gökalp’s Poetry

I argued in my dissertation and in two books in Turkish and English that I prepared from that dissertation that the Ottoman war propaganda effort was inefficient during World War I due to some material conditions.²⁸ Turkish intellectuals who did not produce sufficient propaganda were encouraged by Ziya Gökalp to produce cultural material focusing on Turkish national identity. I can claim here that the same applies to the Jihad propaganda. Although we can find other propaganda works like Muhiddin Baha’s play, it is really hard to discover original literary and propagandistic texts. Therefore it will be better for us to focus on Gökalp’s literary production on this issue, as we did above during the discussion of his “Red Epic” poem. Gökalp had actually published poems connecting religion and nationalism since the first Balkan War. His

poems on the religion-nationalism connection were published in dailies and magazines between 1913 and 1918. He published his first poetry compilation, *Kızılalma* (Red Apple), in 1914 and the poems he wrote and published after that date were compiled into a second book, *Yeni Hayat* (New Life) in 1918. Due to his changing ideological proclivities and political agenda, his first book is more agitative and propagandist, while the second book is composed of cooler poems that aim at defining and organizing national life.

Gökalp's first poem in *Kızılalma* about Islam and Turkism is "Polvan Veli", a 16-quatrain narrative poem in which an epic and heroic fairy tale is told. The ruler of India sends the most famous wrestler of the country, *Devpençe* (giant paw), to Turkistan to challenge and defeat the Turkish wrestler Polvan Veli. The Khwarezm Khan in Khiva is not a Muslim and does not like the Muslim Polvan Veli's Islamization of the people. Therefore he sees this match as an opportunity to get rid of Polvan Veli and announces that the defeated wrestler will be executed. Devpençe, on the other hand, is also a Muslim and Polvan Veli learns this in the mosque where Devpençe's mother is praying for her son's success. Polvan Veli decides to lose the match in order to save a co-religionist. Yet, an accident happens during the wrestling and Polvan Veli saves the khan's life. Because of this incident, the khan and all the Turan people become Muslim.

Gökalp had formerly published this poem in *Halka Doğru* (towards the people) magazine in 11 April 1913. There are specific phrases in the poem such as "Muhammad's lion", "Muslim hero", "warrior" (*mücahit*) and "divine guidance" (*ilahi irşat*). Although the poem does not contain explicit Jihad propaganda, it seems like an early harbinger of Jihad propaganda due to its affirmation of Turks' early conversion to Islam, thus associating Islam with Turkish nationalism. Obviously, Gökalp uses the religion and nationalism connection as an agitation tool that will resonate easily with public opinion due to the Balkan War's social psychological depression. Similarly, his poem "Asker Duası" (soldier's pray) which was first published in *Halka Doğru* in 16 May 1913 is a typical example of this situation. We see a praying soldier in this poem who wishes for the wellbeing of his fatherland and religion. His road is *gaza* (holy war) and the ultimate destination is martyrdom; his banner is *tawhid* (*tevhid*, oneness) and his flag is the crescent. We can infer from this relatively early poem why Islam and Turkish-ness become synonyms in subsequent Jihad propaganda.

The merging of religion and nationalism was sealed by Gökalp after the outbreak of the war in Europe in his "Tawhid" poem. He first published this poem in *Tanin* on 14 August 1914 and declared that no dissent would

be tolerated in this new period: “There cannot be several souls in the country, / or more than one conscience, / a beloved cannot be shared, / there is no God but God! // There is an exuberance of bodies, / but hearts are united, / there is no individual but society! / there is no God but God!”²⁹

Actually Gökalp predicts the proclamation of Jihad in “Türkün Tekbiri” (The Turk’s Allahu Akbar) which was published even before the above poem, on 9 August 1914, and three months before the proclamation:

God’s will,
Sprang from the people,
We proclaimed the jihad,
God is great ...

We obeyed the banner,
Came to the far,
to the old country,
God is great ...

Bloods mixed,
The khans concurred,
The souls united,
God is great,
Praises to God ...³⁰ (p. 60)

It seems that the proclamation of Jihad was discussed in CUP quarters and this dream was merged with the Turan ideal, yet there was no mention of Egypt’s conquest at that time.

Beside this and other similar poems, the most detailed poem about Jihad from this period was the “Red Epic” that was discussed above. Actually, Gökalp’s use of the word Jihad stopped after these poems. The poems he compiled in 1918’s *Yeni Hayat* were the poems that were written and published after 1915. His poem entitled “Religion”, which was published in *Tanin* on 20 January 1915 under the title of “Religion according to a Turk”, is a typical example of how Gökalp and other Turkists thought of religion: “My religion is neither hope nor fear; / I worship my God because of love! / Without a fear of paradise or hell, I do my duty”³¹ This is the opening quatrain of the poem and we see here that religion was only a social glue in Gökalp’s solidarist nationalism. He demotes the complex nature of religion into a simple emotion of affection. Here, religion is only a tool for creating social affection and harmony in the future nation-state’s “new” national life. We know that Gökalp and

other Turkists developed and inseminated this interpretation towards Islam mainly in *Islam* periodical and advocated the construction of the specific Turkish version of secularism through legal regulations until 1918. Hence, the great number of poems about religion in Gökalp's *Yeni Hayat*. Those poems were prescriptive texts proclaiming how religion should be.

Yeni Hayat's poem most related to the idea of Jihad is "Union of Islam" (*İslâm İttihadi*) (p. 129). Gökalp publishes this poem for first time in this book and it is an argumentative, essay-like poem like most of the poems in the book. He opens the poem with a definition of what a caliph is not: the caliph is not a sovereign-pope, neither a pope who acts like a ruler, nor a Dalai Lama, nor the Tsar who rules his country's church with power. The caliph is the ruler of an imaginary state that embraces all Muslims. There are independent khans but they are all affiliated with the caliph. He is *de jure* the sultan of all Islamic sultans and *de facto* the sultan of the Turkish country. For an Islamic unification, first every Muslim state should gain its own independence, then it should obey the orders of the caliph in order to form a political unity. If this is not possible at the present time, the caliph should put this dream aside and improve his own country. "We need to establish at first the foundation of a contemporary [he means modern here] state", he says and concludes the poem indicating the necessity of being strong in the international sphere in order to be effective. Therefore unity of Islam is a far away dream and the caliphate is only a *de jure* position. Obviously this is not important for Gökalp, as the most important things for him are the nation and nationality. As a result, he minimizes the importance of the power of religion for the sake of the construction of national life. Islam is nothing more than a useful vehicle for Turkish nationalism after that time and it would never be an autonomous power. Thus, it becomes easier to understand why the issue of Jihad proclamation was abandoned easily in literature and in the areas of propaganda.

It seems that the issue of Islamic unification and Jihad were used as levers in order to get the support of their ally Germany. It was abandoned after a while, even long before the Arab Revolt. Similarly, it was used in order to agitate Ottoman citizens during the period between August and November 1914, when public opinion was being prepared for the war. Obviously, Turkist elites did not think very differently from Tevfik Fikret about the usefulness of the Jihad idea, but they were not direct and honest like him. The only person who approached this issue seriously was the literary leader of Islamists in Istanbul, Mehmet Akif. His approach, however, was more traditional, deeper or perhaps more authentically religious than the Turkists'. He was interested in the brotherhood of

umma. We see an idealism of Islamic umma in Mehmet Akif's poems, which is very realistic. Even when he was part of the Jihad propaganda mechanism during his official visit to Germany to make propaganda for the Muslim prisoners of war in German camps, he was far from romanticism and exaggeration. His "Islamic brotherhood" approach would be passed on to the national struggle movement in Anatolia after the defeat in the First World War. Yet this war would also end eventually and Islam's agitative effect would be redundant. This deep-rooted Islamic brotherhood propaganda, just like the Jihad propaganda that stormed the country for a short while, would be abandoned by the new nation-state's elites and the establishment of a new secular state would start.

Notes

- 1 Kâzım Karabekir, *Birinci Cihan Harbine Nasıl Girdik*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Emre, 1994 [1937]), pp. 166–170.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 170–171.
- 3 "Ahvâl-i hâzıra dolayısıyla bademâ 'Türk Yurdu' ayda bir kere, 'Türk Sözü' on beş günde bir kere neşredilecektir." "İhtar," *Türk Yurdu* 71 (24 Temmuz 1330/6 Ağustos 1914) translit. ed., vol. 3, p. 396.
- 4 Karabekir, p. 172. Kâzım Karabekir discusses the period and the propaganda process in detail and through different cases in this book.
- 5 Beyatlı, *Çocukluğum, Gençliğim, Siyâsî ve Edebî Hâtıralarım*, pp. 132–133.
- 6 At least they both claimed that they were Anatolian nationalists, even though such an approach was at the time in the minority and very inconspicuous, in their autobiographies written after the war.
- 7 Karabekir, p. 189.
- 8 "Düşmanın ülkesi viran olacak! / Türkiye büyüyüp Turan olacak!" Ziya Gökalp. *Ziya Gökalp Külliyyatı 1: Şiirler ve Halk Masalları*, ed. By Fevziye Abdullah Tansel. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1952, p. 102.
- 9 "Okuyucularımız bilmelidir ki Gökalp Beyefendi olayları takip ederek Avrupa'yı altüst eden olayların hep böyle milli bir lisanla milli bir felsefesini yapmaya devam edecektir." Ibid.
- 10 "Çeşm-i dikkatle bak eder ihsas / İhtiyak-ı derun Cezayir, Fas / Hind, Tunus, Zengibar, Cava, Kafkas / Aşkî orarlarda hep Türkün // Gidecek şimdi bimehaba şen / Yıkacak dağlarda olsa ahenden / Azmini bilmiyor isen öğren / Yolu şimdi Asıl vatan' Türkün." Ibid., pp. 195–196.
- 11 "Medeniyet yurdu al kan olacak! / Her ucu yeni bir Balkan olacak!" Şiirler, ibid.
- 12 "Macar dedi: Sanma, kalmak isterim, / Atımı meydana salmak isterim, / Türklerin öcünü almak isterim, / Altay yurdu büyük vatan olacak! / Turan'ın hakimi sultan olacak!" Şiirler, p. 104.
- 13 "Kayser ilan etti askere, halka: / Kalbiniz birleşsin, olun bir halka! / Düşmanı

- çiğnemek tapmaktır Hakka, / Ordumun rehberi iman olacak! / Bizi esirgeyen Rahman olacak!” Şiirler, p. 105.
- 14 “İngiliz gasbetti Sultan Osman’ı, / Bununla tutacak Hind’i, Amman’ı! / İslamlık tanıdı kimdir düşmanı, / Çok geçmez ki mesut bir an olacak: / Düşmandan oç alan Kuran olacak!” Şiirler, ibid.
- 15 “Artar, beni ezdikçe belâ, hazz u huzurum; / Ben Rabbime doğru / Her an müteveccih, mütevekkil ve sabûrum; / Ölse de ne mutlu bana, kalsam da ne mutlu!” Tefvîk Fikret, *Bütün Şiirleri*, İsmail Parlatır and Nurullah Çetin, eds. (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 2001), pp. 666–668.
- 16 “Eyvâh ki yanan âteş-i harb sönmedi elân / Günden güne mahvolmadayız kahr-ı vegâdan. / Bir hamlede ölmek ne revâ şevk-i zaferle, / Yuğruldu bütün rû-yı zemîn hûn-ı beşerle.” Tefvîk Fikret, *Bütün Şiirleri*, İsmail Parlatır and Nurullah Çetin, eds. (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 2001), p. 669.
- 17 “Ey dîni siyânet diye hep herze yazanlar / Az geldi, evet, sanki o Balkan’daki kanlar, / Teşvîk ediniz şimdi cehennem ile artık, / Allah ile peygamberinin emrini nâtık / Âyât ü ehâdis ile milyonları ahrbe, / Kalbeyeyiniz herkesi bir kanlı türâbe ...” Ibid., p. 670.
- 18 “Lânet sana! lânet sana! ey ‘harb-ı mukaddes’, / Sensin bütün ekvâm eden böyle mülevves / Lânet sana lânet sana! ey hâile-i harb, / İnsanlığa bir darbesin, ey gâile-i harb!” Ibid., p. 673.
- 19 “– Korkma! / Cehennem olsa gelen göğsümüzde söndürürüz; / Bu yol ki Hak yoludur, dönme bilmeyiz, yürürüz! / Düşer mi tek taşı, sandın, harîm-i nâmûsun? / Meğer ki harbe giren son nefer şehîd olsun. / Şu karşımızdaki mahşer kudursa, çıldırsa; / Denizler ordu, bulutlar donanma yağdırsa; / Bu altımızdaki yerden bütün yanardağlar, / Taşıp da kaplasa âfâkı bir kızıl sarsar; / Değil mi cephemizin sînesinde iman bir; / Sevinme bir, acı bir, gâye aynı, vicdan bir; / Değil mi sîne de birdir vuran yürek ... Yılmaz! / Cihan yıkılsa, emin ol, bu cephe sarsılmaz! / Nasıl ki yarmadan âfâkı pâre pâre düşer, / Hudâyı boğmak için saldıran cünûn-i beşer, / Nasıl ki nûr-i hakikatle çarpışan evhâm; / Olur şerâre-i gayretle âkîbet güm-nâm, / Şu karşımızdaki mahşer de öyle haşrolacak. / Yakında kurtulacaktır bu cephe ...” Mehmet Akif Ersoy, *Safahat: Eski ve Yeni Harflerle Tenkitli Neşir*, ed. By M.E. Düzdağ (İstanbul: İz, 1991), pp. 324–325.
- 20 For its transliteration to Latin alphabet see İsmail Kara, ed., *Hilafet Risâleleri: İslâm Siyasi Düşüncesinde Değişme ve Süreklilik*, 3. Cilt: *Meşrutiyet Devri* (İstanbul: Klasik, 2003), pp. 383–426.
- 21 “Avrupa’yı yakan Asya’yı tenvir edecek.” Ibid., p. 387.
- 22 “Hindistan’da, Mısır’da, İran’da, Kafkas’ta Avrupalılara esir olan kardeşlerimizi bırakıp, onları bu hale koyanlara, mazlumları bırakıp zalimlere mi acıyalım? ...” Ibid.
- 23 “Bize o melun harpten bahs etme! ... Onu biz yapmadık; o milletin değil bunaklığın, hıyanetin harbi idi; o, milletin ruhunu boğmak isteyenlerin harbi idi. Bu yeni harbi Muhammed ümmeti, Oğuz Han milleti yapacak; o ümmet, o millet ki tarih onların kahramanlıklarıyla doludur.” Ibid., p. 389.
- 24 Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays of Ziya Gökalp*, trans. and ed. Niyazi Berkes (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1959), pp. 78–79.

- 25 “Dünyayı bir padişaha az gören o büyük hükümdar, evvelâ İslâm âlemini livâ-yı hilafet altına toplamaya karar vermişti. Yarınalem-i cihad altına koşacak üç kıta Müslümanları, Sultan Selim’in temel taşı koyduğu İslâm bina-yı ittihadının umde-i azametini vaz’ edecekelr ...” Ibid., p. 391.
- 26 “Neşr edilen fetvâlar kulûb-ı İslâmı ateşledi. Ne tehdit, ne nefy, hatta ne de ölüm, İslâm kalplerinde yanan ateş-i kini söndürmeye kifâyet etmiyor.” Ibid., p. 402.
- 27 “Haydi askerler, haydi dindaşlar haydi halife ordusu efrâdı, İslâmın ikbâl-i müşâ’a’ı ileride ileri, dâima ileri ...” Ibid., p. 426.
- 28 See Erol Köroğlu, “From Propaganda to National Identity Construction: Turkish Literature and the First World War”, Ph.D. Dissertation, Istanbul: Boğaziçi University, 2003; *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı (1914–1918): Propagandadan Millî Kimlik İnşasına*. İstanbul: İletişim, 2004; *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity: Turkish Literature during World War I*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2007.
- 29 “Yurtta birkaç can olmaz, / Birden çok vicdan olmaz, / Ortaklı cânan olmaz, / Lâilâheillâllah! // Gövdelerde kesret var, / Gönüllerde vahdet var, / Fertler yok, cemiyet var! Lâilâheillâllah!” Şiirler, p. 59.
- 30 “Hakk’ın muradı, / Halktan fırladı, / Açtık cihadı, / Allah’u ekber ... // Uyduk sancağa, / Geldik uzağa, / Eski toprağa, / Allah’u ekber ... // Kaynaştı kanlar, / Anlaştı Hanlar, / Birleşti canlar. / Allah’u ekber, / Velillâh-ül hamd ...” Şiirler, p. 60.
- 31 “Benim dinim ne ümittir, ne korku; / Allah’ıma sevdiğimden taparım! / Ne Cennet, ne Cehennem’den bir korku / Almaksızın, vazifemi yaparım.” Şiirler, p. 111.

