

# Germany and its plans for "revolutionization" of the Islamic World during World War I

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## Abstract

The article dwells on the attempts of Germany to use the Islamic factor as a tool to apply pressure on the Entente countries during the First World War. Representing itself as "the friend of Islam," Germany tried to oppose the so-called "colonial world" of England, France and Russia. Muslim prisoners of war were subjected to propaganda manipulation in "special" camps, in order that they might, according to the understanding of German strategists, become proponents of German influence in Muslim countries. The German diplomat and famous archaeologist, Max von Oppenheim, became the main theorist behind the idea of using "sacred war" and the author of the idea of the "revolutionization" of the Muslim world. The purpose of this article is to define the main characteristic features of the specified policy of revolutionization. The concept of revolutionization was based on the theory of "jihad" (i.e. struggle with the aim of defending and disseminating Islam) by means of which, Oppenheim believed, it would be possible to raise the Muslim world against alien rule and domination. The Ottoman Empire was to carry out a leading role in the revolutionizing of Muslims. It was thought that the declaration of jihad by the Sultan would create internal difficulties for the Entente military forces, whose colonial holdings were home to millions of Muslim citizens. Max von Oppenheim's memorandum is an extremely important document, which provides an opportunity to observe what Germany expected from the collaboration with Islam and the Islamic world in the war years, as well the methods it planned to use to bring about this cooperation. It could be said that Max von Oppenheim's biggest mistake was to believe that the Muslim world, despite its variety and diversity, could be controlled and manipulated as a whole, and that a small push would generally be enough to direct its energies against the "Unfaithful".

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## Keywords

Entente, Foreign policy, Germany, Islam, Revolutionization of the Islamic world, World War I