



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

NARRATIVE SECTION OF A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the Research Programs Notice of Funding Opportunity at the appropriate resource page ([Awards for Faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#), [Awards for Faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#), [Awards for Faculty at Tribal Colleges and Universities](#)) for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Research Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials. **The application format may have been changed since this application was submitted.** You must follow the guidelines in the currently posted Notice of Funding Opportunity (see above links).

Project Title: The Last Treaty: The Middle Eastern Front and the End of the First World War

Institution: University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Project Director: Michelle Tusan

Grant Program: Awards for Faculty at Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Significance, contribution and methods

“During the days following the Armistice... all those black days... I could not free myself of my nightmare,” recalled Armenian genocide survivor Grigoris Balakian in his memoir. For those stuck in the No Man’s Land between war and peace in the Ottoman Empire, World War I did not end with the signing of the 1918 armistices or the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. It continued for nearly five more years on the Middle Eastern Front and produced the world’s largest refugee crisis to date while leaving a legacy of political instability that continues to plague the region.

An NEH fellowship would provide me with time and funding to complete my book, *“The Last Treaty: The Middle Eastern Front and the End of the First World War”* which rewrites the final years of the war as a story of humanitarian crisis and failed diplomacy. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, I argue, marked the true end of WWI. My book extends the timeline of the war still tied in the popular and scholarly imagination to the Guns of August and the Treaty of Versailles in order to show how the protracted nature of the conflict fed civilian nightmares and questioned old certainties about a European-led imperial order. Historians have studied the war’s origins outside of Western Europe before the August 1914 war declarations. We know much less about its end in the Middle East. The Allied prosecution of WWI when viewed from the vantage point of the last treaty relied on assumptions about the role of diplomacy and humanitarianism in war and peacemaking which drew on deep imperial institutions and attitudes rooted in the idea of minority protection and humanitarian intervention.

“The Last Treaty” challenges the conventional treatment in European historiography of the Middle East and successive peace settlements as a postscript to the war’s end in Western Europe. My wide geographic and chronological lens places the decisive Allied victory over Germany in 1918 in sharp relief against an unrelenting war with the Ottoman Empire. Britain played an outsized role on the Middle Eastern Front starting in 1915 and brokered the failed 1920 Sèvres peace treaty that was revised in 1923 at Lausanne. Along with France, Britain guided the Allied war strategy to advantage an imperial system that favored European dominance within the nascent international system. Britain led in the establishment of new standards for civilian treatment in wartime along racial and ethno-religious lines through the invention of the refugee camp which expanded the West’s humanitarian footprint in the Middle East and control over minority populations. This protected and expanded the British Empire while managing US, French and Russian interests beyond the war. I explore these developments using official documents and correspondence between state and non-state actors, media and film, and institutional records and diaries of aid workers, refugees and other non-combatants from previously untapped British, US and French archives. One methodological innovation in the book is my use of ARC-GIS mapping to show war relief infrastructure and refugee routes, making visible the human geography of total war. (Appendix 6)

My methodology draws on my expertise in British studies, cultural and diplomatic history and humanitarianism in the Middle East to correct the still lopsided focus in WWI studies on the Western Front. It reorients the current emphasis on outcomes like the Mandate System and interwar anxiety to take seriously how the Middle Eastern Front shaped the military and civilian experience of the war itself. Most historians do not acknowledge this warfront by name, preserving “Eastern Front” for battles fought along the Russian and Central European borderlands. European historians rarely focus on the Middle Eastern Front, a term I deploy in this book to describe the war in Ottoman territory. Naming this front allows me to focus on the military conflict and civilian tragedy that enveloped the region in order to assess the geopolitical and human consequences of total war beyond Europe.

This integrative approach puts recent scholarship in dialogue with newly discovered primary sources about the Middle Eastern Front to tell a more complete story of WWI that does not segregate Ottoman and European historiographies. Historians have shown the war’s importance to the birth of modern Turkey. Others have focused on the Ottoman home front or the Armenian genocide. My own previous research analyzes the extent and limits of humanitarian intervention. Since the World War I centenary, these strands have converged to broaden the war narrative beyond the trenches of the Western Front to include the consequences of wartime alliances and civilian sacrifices. This book moves these stories from the periphery and incorporates them into WWI’s grand narrative. I build on the scholarship on the “greater war” which extends WWI beyond the geographic boundaries of Western Europe and the

traditional 1914-1918 periodization to show the war's truly global reach. In the case of the Ottoman Empire, fighting took place for more than a decade on lands that extended from the Balkans to the Caucasus to the Arabian Peninsula. These Middle Eastern Fronts, I argue, remain crucial sites for understanding the human costs of war making and diplomacy and a war incompletely won. This book thus recasts the period after the signing of the first armistices as the war's final chapter which shaped home and battlefield as well as the contours of the Interwar period.

Competencies, skills and access

An NEH Fellowship will fund full time writing in the Spring 2022/Fall 2022 semesters and would come at a crucial time for this book as I have completed my archival research and skills acquisition. I now need time to finish three main tasks: write the introduction and chapters 4 and 7; complete partially drafted chapters 1,2,3,5 and 6 and polish the entire manuscript. My preparation included intensive French language training, engaging the literature on human geography and completing digital map training through my university library. This allowed me to map camps, aid stations and refugee routes using around fifty autobiographies and memoirs for chapter 3. I will work in my home office as it affords space, quiet and access to my university library, interlibrary borrowing and digitized archives. I successfully used grant-funded and sabbatical leave at a similar point to finish two previous monographs and am confident that two semesters of writing and revision will result in this book's completion and publication.

Organization, final product and dissemination

"The Last Treaty" begins after a short introduction with the Allied defeats at Gallipoli and Kut-al-Amara and a discussion of how diplomatic agreements and regional alliances made the Middle East central to the Allied war effort. **Chapter 1: Conflict** explains how failure at Gallipoli in spring 1915 focused attention on fighting Germany's new Ottoman ally. The secret 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement, understood by historians as emblematic of broader British and French imperial ambitions, also provided a blueprint for the prosecution of the war. The tide turned with the British capture of Baghdad in March 1917 and the Allied entry to Jerusalem. It resulted in a war strategy focused on shoring up control over the region's natural resources and its peoples using soldiers and personnel largely from the British Empire. The Allies forged the Arab Alliance and promised to liberate Ottoman Christians persecuted during the 1915 Armenian genocide using the rhetoric of minority protection to bolster support for WWI at home.

Chapter 2: Occupation argues that the successful prosecution of the war relied on civilians living under Allied occupation. As early as 1917, refugee camps and social services emerged as tools of humanitarian aid and administration to help secure Allied authority. The Allies signed the Mudros Armistice with the Ottoman Empire in October 1918. However, Mustafa Kemal's rising Turkish nationalist movement and growing resentment over Allied occupation under the British High Commission in Constantinople, meant that war continued. As peace negotiations got underway at Versailles, full-scale military engagements continued to claim tens of thousands of civilian and military casualties in the Middle East. From Constantinople to Port Said, the British, with French support, set up a string of camps and auxiliary services that delivered aid to mainly Christian and Arab communities. Allied refugee camps controlled the movement of civilians who often crisscrossed battle lines to escape the fighting.

Chapter 3: Civilians at War analyzes the administration of the camps and auxiliary services alongside writings of refugees, eye-witnesses and aid workers who learned to live with a war that wreaked havoc on the local economy, social services and regional governance. Aid networks shown on this layered [ARC-GIS map](#) followed displaced people trying to get home along the same routes that Ottoman concentration camps had once stood. At the same time, Allied war strategy relied on an administrative aid apparatus including the refugee camp to hold the region and secure long-term influence over Ottoman lands. Back in Europe, new media fundraising campaigns represented this aid as transformative and bolstered interest in the plight of refugees. As a consequence, civilians became a new weapon in the fight to achieve Allied war objectives.

The Treaty of Versailles had its counterpart in the multiple attempts at peacemaking that resulted in the doomed Treaty of Sèvres signed by Ottoman representatives of the Allied-backed government in

Constantinople in August 1920. Its provisions to divide Turkey between Britain and France along the lines of Sykes-Picot never materialized because the Lausanne Treaty replaced Sèvres in 1923. What Sèvres did do was create conditions that fueled continued armed conflict and exacerbated an already urgent humanitarian crisis. **Chapter 4: Making Peace, Part I** argues that peacemaking between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire was guided by the idea of minority protection and humanitarian intervention that relied on 19th century imperial preoccupations dating back to the Crimean War and Russo-Turkish War. As the Austro-Hungarian Empire crumbled in Eastern Europe, unrest after the Amritsar massacre grew in British India and war continued on Russia's borderlands, Kemal's nationalist movement gained momentum. This instability threatened to undermine Allied plans to divide the Ottoman Empire into European-controlled zones and establish an Armenian state in eastern Anatolia. Nationalists rejected Sèvres and Allied occupation making the first draft at peace a dead letter.

Chapter 5: War in Peace tells the story of the blurred line between war and peace that existed from the signing of Sèvres to Lausanne in Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Twenty-four peace conferences and demands for humanitarian intervention over these three years failed to bring peace. The Greek invasion and subsequent occupation of the Pontic coast with the blessing of Prime Minister Lloyd George's government in the spring of 1919 exacerbated tensions. While the French and Italians faced defeat in southeastern Anatolia, the British failed to maintain a foothold in the Caucasus where massacres committed by Kemalist troops devastated the remaining Christian minority population. Massacres of Muslim civilians by occupying Greek troops fueled further conflict and culminated in the destruction of Smyrna and its minority communities in 1922 at the hand of nationalist forces. This sparked an international humanitarian response and forced the Allies back to the negotiating table.

The failure of Sèvres to stop the fighting made a new treaty inevitable, raising questions in Europe about the tenuous state of the Allied victory. Less than two months after the last fires died out in Smyrna, the Allies were ready to make the necessary concessions for peace at Lausanne. **Chapter 6: Making Peace, Part II** shows how seven months of negotiating at Lausanne failed to adequately resolve key outstanding issues revolving around sovereignty, minority protection and the refugee problem which had consequences well beyond the signing of the treaty for populations living under the Mandate System. The powerful position of the newly legitimated Kemalist government on the heels of its victory over Greek forces meant that the Allies occupied a much weaker position than at any time after the Armistice. Britain, France and Italy refused to dedicate manpower to helping the Greeks continue to fight Kemalist forces in a war that had become increasingly unpopular back in Europe.

Chapter 7: How the Great War Ended assesses how extending the war's chronology to include the story of a now little remembered peace treaty broadens our understanding of the global reach and human cost of WWI. For Europe, these final war years marked a watershed moment. They forged new ties between an imperial world that existed alongside the nation state and nascent international system which, in the Middle East, led to the European-controlled Mandate System. Peacemaking and war-making inevitably overlapped as diplomats and humanitarian organizations responded to a conflict which exacerbated already existing ethno-religious tensions. The war ended in less than victory for the Allies and had important consequences for the emergent international order and domestic politics including the British Liberal Party which never recovered its influence after Lloyd George's unsteady leadership in the Smyrna disaster. Lausanne paved the way for a modern humanitarian internationalism based on the principle of national sovereignty at the root of today's refugee crisis. This old international system in new bottles proclaimed itself in defense of a peace that came at a heavy price. Not taking Lausanne seriously as the end of WWI has blinded historians to the moment when Great Power politics faced its biggest challenge to date and marked the beginning of the end of the old European order.

I plan to deliver my completed manuscript in December 2022 to an academic press which targets scholarly and general educated readers and has experience publishing print and ebook publications which include a digital mapping component. Bloomsbury and UC Press have expressed interest in the project. The latter published my book, *Smyrna's Ashes*, with accompanying online maps. I am focused on publishing the book in a timely manner in order to participate in academic and public discussions surrounding the 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Lausanne.

Archive collections:

British Library: Robert Cecil Papers; G.N. Curzon Papers; Map Collection; Mark Sykes Papers; National Archives, Kew: FO 78, 96, 141, 195, 286, 383, 369, 371, 395, 608, 925; CAB 23, 24; Middle East Center Archives, Oxford: Philby papers; Friends Library, London: Marshall Fox Papers; Friends of Armenia Papers; Burgess Collection; Lambeth Palace Archives, London; Davidson Papers; Douglas Papers; British Film Institute: Humanitarian org. documentaries, 1917- 1925; Imperial War Museum, London: Military Diaries; Refugee Camp Reports; Churchill College, Cambridge, Chartwell Collection; Hankey, De Robeck and Godfrey Papers; Bibliothèque nationale de France, *Mémoires d'une déportée arménienne*; Nubar Library, Paris: Le fonds Andonian; Les Archives de La Délégation nationale arménienne; Les archives de l'UGAB; Huntington Library: Bryce Papers; Hoover Institute, Stanford, American Red Cross.

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