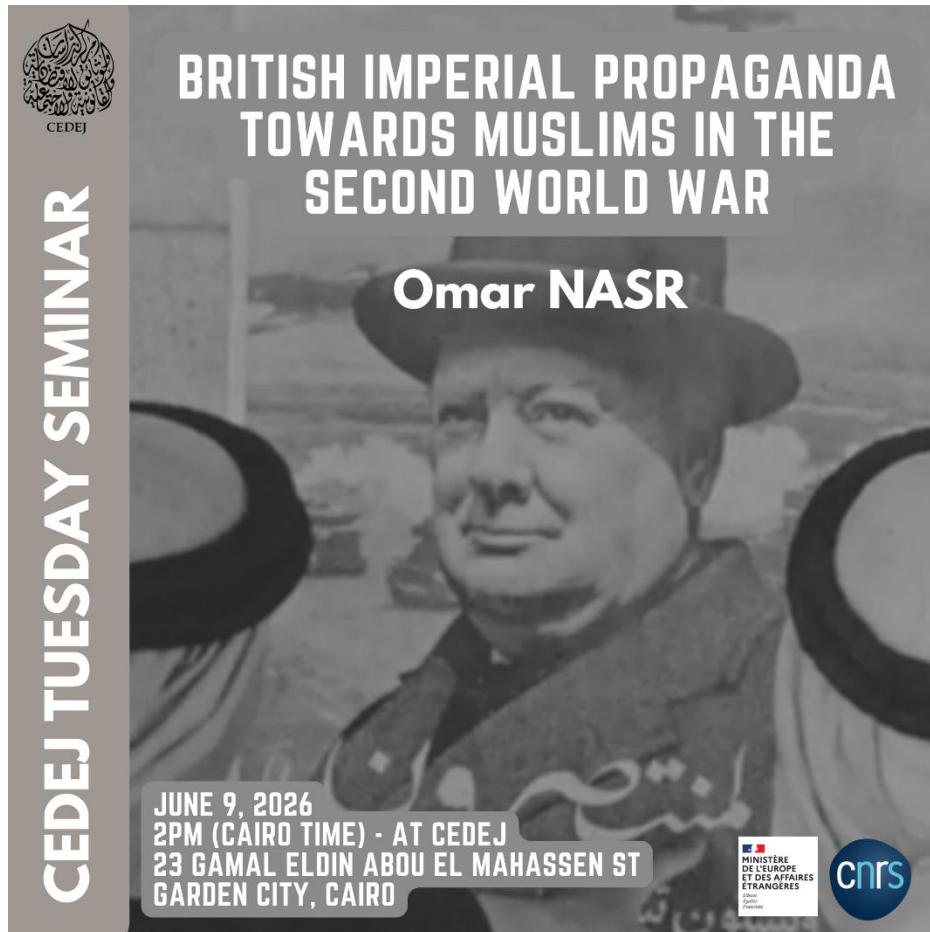


CEDEJ Tuesday Seminar
British imperial propaganda towards Muslims in the Second World War

By Omar Nasr
June 9, 2026 at 2pm

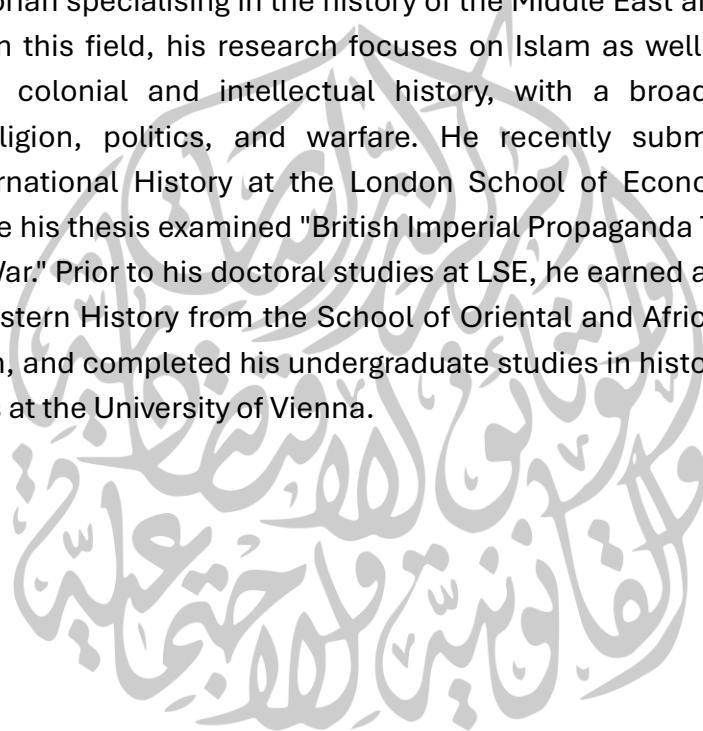
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By the late 1930s, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan all sought to win the support of Muslim populations in view of a looming global war. In doing so, they challenged Britain's claim to be "the greatest Mohammedan power." To lose this identity was to risk undermining British imperial legitimacy across large parts of its empire. This presentation discusses how Britain sought to preserve its image as a Muslim power through imperial propaganda in the Muslim world during the Second World War, thus countering Axis efforts to court Muslims and incite unrest across the empire. After giving a broad overview of these efforts across the British Empire, from Nigeria through British India to British Malaya, the presentation will focus on Egypt. Regarded by British officials as both a point of crucial strategic importance for Britain's wartime position and "the nerve centre of the Muslim world," Egypt became a central hub for religiously inflected propaganda efforts. The

presentation will examine British efforts to court al-Azhar, Sufi brotherhoods, and various politico-religious movements, analysing both overt propaganda measures, such as broadcasting, and clandestine, subversive operations. Through this analysis, this research emphasises Britain's reliance on Muslim intermediaries to convey its propaganda more credibly. This reliance, in turn, offers a window into the agency of the actors involved and highlights how this dependency reflected a broader crisis of imperial legitimacy amidst Britain's last imperial war.

Omar Nasr is a historian specialising in the history of the Middle East and Europe and their intersections. Within this field, his research focuses on Islam as well as Muslim-Jewish-Christian relations, colonial and intellectual history, with a broader interest in the intersections of religion, politics, and warfare. He recently submitted his doctoral dissertation in International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where his thesis examined "British Imperial Propaganda Towards Muslims in the Second World War." Prior to his doctoral studies at LSE, he earned a master's degree in Near and Middle Eastern History from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and completed his undergraduate studies in history, oriental studies, and German studies at the University of Vienna.



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