



## 5 Ottoman Jihad or Jihads

### The Ottoman Shiʿī Jihad, the Successful One

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In his provocative *Holy War Made in Germany*, the Dutch orientalist Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje maintained that the Ottoman grand Jihad declared in November 1914 was a German invention aimed at stirring up Muslims under Allied rule.<sup>1</sup> Hurgronje further claimed that German orientalists and public intellectuals such as Carl Heinrich Becker, Hugo Grothe and Martin Hartmann, who had previously derided and ridiculed Jihad as a medieval institution and a threat to the civilized world, reinterpreted it after the July crisis to serve the interests of German war aims.<sup>2</sup>

Kaiser Wilhelm II's late nineteenth century manifestations of friendship with the Muslim world and Max von Oppenheim's infamous *Denkschrift betreffend die Revolutionierung der islamischen Gebiete unserer Feinde* (*Memorandum Concerning the Fomenting of Revolutions in the Islamic Territories of Our Enemies*) penned in October 1914<sup>3</sup> made many contemporary observers believe that the Ottoman grand jihād was merely an implementation of the German plans prepared before the Ottoman entry into the Great War. Likewise, on 21 October 1914, Friedrich Bronsart von Schellendorf, Chief of the General Staff of the Ottoman Field Troops, stated that one of the major expectations of Germany from the Ottoman Empire was a declaration of Jihad after the Ottoman entry into the war.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the Kaiser approached the Ottoman Minister of War Enver Pasha on 22 October, a week before the bombardment of the Russian Black Sea ports, and inquired about the possibility of a declaration of Jihad in the wake of Ottoman entry into the Great War.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt that the German war planners wished to use a Jihad declared by the Ottoman Caliph to its fullest extent to incite the substantial Muslim populations under Allied rule to rebel. In fact, the establishment of the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* under the auspices of the German Foreign Ministry and Oppenheim's appointment as the director of that body reveal that the Germans desired to make the most of the Ottoman Jihad.<sup>6</sup> This bureau published a journal called *al-Jihād* in

a number of languages, including Arabic, Tatar and Russian, on a regular basis between 1915 and 1918 and produced a host of leaflets and appeals to be distributed in India, Afghanistan, North Africa and Central Asia.<sup>7</sup>

It should be stressed; however, that “official jihad” had become an almost forgotten tool of propaganda after the Tanzimat was initiated in 1839. Having changed its official ideology and become an empire of Ottoman citizens regardless of religion and ethnicity, the empire refrained from declaring a holy war against Christian powers during several subsequent conflicts.

Similarly the leaders of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress decided not to declare an official Jihad against Italy, although they characterized the resistance in Tripoli of Barbary exclusively in Islamic terms. Furthermore, the Balkan states’ declaration of Holy War against the Ottoman Empire in 1912 and their “cross against crescent” rhetoric did not prompt a similar response from Istanbul.<sup>8</sup> Instead, the Ottoman sultan advised his troops, including battalions of Christian soldiers who wore crosses on their collars, to defend the fatherland like their forefathers who had shed their blood to accomplish that goal.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the Balkan leaders, the Ottoman Minister of War asked his troops “to protect those sites considered sacred by different races.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus the immediate declaration of Jihad in the Great War seemed to be a departure from post-Tanzimat Ottoman policy. Furthermore, the Ottomans’ declaration of Jihad while allied with the Christian powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary was legalistically problematic. Pointing to this issue, the Ottoman Minister of War Enver Pasha told the Kaiser that the Ottoman declaration of Jihad would be imprudent and that instead the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph as the commander of the faithful should simply ask the Muslims under British, French, or Russian rule to rebel.<sup>11</sup>

All of this leads one to assume that the Ottoman declaration of Jihad was nothing other than a cynical act carried out for the sake of appeasing the German empire and its ruler who had unrealistic expectations from his weak eastern ally. While there is some truth in this thesis, the fact is that the Ottoman leadership did view Jihad as a tool that might help advance Ottoman strategic plans and prevent backstabbing by unreliable Muslim elements of the empire.

Therefore, while the Germans unrealistically expected major uprisings in India, North Africa and Central Asia to follow from the declaration of Jihad, the Ottoman leadership had four relatively more realistic objectives: first and foremost, using the weapon of an independent Jihad in the first front that had opened even before the Ottoman declaration of global Jihad; second, galvanizing the Muslim populations in Arabia against

Allied encroachments and preventing local leaders from changing sides; third, receiving better support in the areas heavily inhabited by the Kurds who had become a major target of Russian policies aimed at winning them over; and, finally, benefiting from the Jihad in special operations in Iran and Azarbaijan.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, instead of an asset to be projected into faraway lands such as India and Central Asia the Ottoman war planners considered Jihad a strategic weapon that would assist them in defending their empire. For the Ottoman leaders the most important service of the Jihad would be on the Iraqi front that opened immediately following the Ottoman entry into the Great War. The Ottoman leaders knew that the impact of the declaration of Jihad in Arabia would be minimal.

The Ottoman authorities rightly assumed that the local rulers who had been won over by the Ottomans, such as the Zaydī leader Imām Yahyā Ḥamid al-Dīn in Yemen and Saʿūd ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz of Haʿil, would fight the war on the Ottoman side. On the other hand, the Ottoman leaders knew that the declaration of Jihad would not affect Abd al-Azīz ibn al-Saʿūd's decision to collaborate with the Entente powers despite the deal cut immediately before the war that made him the hereditary Ottoman governor of Najd.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Idrīsī, who had turned down all Ottoman offers and established a de facto Sufi state in ʿAsīr, would not pay any heed to such a declaration.<sup>14</sup> As for Sharif Ḥusayn, he would pursue his ambitious plans regardless of the Ottoman religious propaganda.<sup>15</sup>

The intensified British naval activity in Ottoman territorial waters and the Royal Navy's virtual blockade of the entrance to the Shatt al ʿArab that started before the Ottoman entry into the Great War<sup>16</sup> had been an unambiguous signal of where the first front in the Middle East would be opened. The British also brought a brigade from India and kept it in Bahrain as an expeditionary force. As expected, two days after the opening of hostilities, the British captured Fao, whence they marched on Basra. Faced with only sporadic Ottoman resistance, the British expeditionary force quickly captured the town of Basra on 22 November, and the remaining Ottoman troops hastily retreated northwards to form a new line of defence.<sup>17</sup>

For the Ottoman war planners, who viewed Jihad as a strategic weapon, the effect of a holy war would be first tested on the Iraqi front that had opened in Basra. Optimally, this should be in the form of an independent Jihad since the Sunnī Hanafī Ottoman centre could not rally the heavily Shīʿī population directly. Hoping for an independent Jihad in southern Iraq, Ottoman war planners crafted the declaration of global Jihad with care. They feared that an Ottoman declaration of Jihad justified in strict

Sunnī terminology would jeopardize a jihad led by Shī'ī mujtahids (jurisconsults) in the shrine cities of Iraq. It should be remembered that Shī'ī mujtahids acting on their own had issued a call for Jihad against the Allies a few days before the official Ottoman declaration of holy war.

Hence, the original collection of Ottoman fatwās issued by the Şeyhülislām Ürgüblü Hayri Efendi made just a single reference to the Caliphate, an institution that the Shī'īs did not recognize.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless the Ottoman authorities did not circulate these fatwās in southern Iraq, being aware that turning this undertaking into a Sunnī holy war would jeopardize the prospects of the Shī'ī Jihad in Iraq. Likewise the more detailed scholarly appeal for Jihad that appeared in the original fatwās circulated throughout the empire. In this collection, the text referred to the Ottoman administration as the Islamic government and the sultan as the sultan of the Muslims without making frequent and clear-cut references to the Caliph.<sup>19</sup>

Two weeks after the Şeyhülislām issued the declaration of the grand Jihad, the Ottoman cabinet issued its first own decree regarding the holy war on 25 November. That ruling stated that the fatwās and orders issued by mujtahids regarding the Jihad would be cabled from Najaf and Karbala free of charge and the related expenses would be met by the Ministry of the Interior's special funds.<sup>20</sup> The cabinet decision did not mention that this Jihad was independent of the Ottoman global Jihad. Indeed, the Shī'ī mujtahids shaped the first Jihad experiment in the Ottoman Empire through a wide range of fatwās issued in its support. This was a different Jihad from the global Jihad.<sup>21</sup> In effect, the Ottoman war planners launched two Jihads upon their entry into the Great War: a Sunnī Jihad which would provide minimal help to the Ottomans but would, however, appease the Germans; and a Shī'ī Jihad which would yield important strategic advantages. In fact, this was the major successful Ottoman Jihad initiative during the Great War.

The Ottoman decision to launch a Shī'ī Jihad did not come out of the blue in 1914. It was a result of the historical rapprochement between the Ottoman centre and its Shī'ī subjects in Iraq after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.

The rapid expansion of Shī'ism in southern Iraq at the turn of the twentieth century was one of the major concerns of the Ottoman government under Abdülhamid II.<sup>22</sup> The ascendancy of the Usūlī school of Shī'īte jurisprudence advocating for the primacy of the 'ulamā' as interpreters of Islamic law and Imāmī traditions had been a source of annoyance for the Hamidian regime. The sultan, wishing to counteract the expansion of Shī'ism and the Iranian missionary activities, sent Sunnī 'ulamā' to the region and launched extensive campaigns of Sunnī

propaganda.<sup>23</sup> In addition he made overtures to the Shī'ite mujtahids to win them over to the cause of pan-Islamism.<sup>24</sup> The results, however, were disappointing. By the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the Shī'ites had gained a considerable majority in the region due to the mass conversion of tribesmen, much to the dismay of the Ottoman centre, and the attempts to persuade the Shī'ite mujtahids to support Ottoman Panislamism did not produce any tangible results.<sup>25</sup>

The reinstatement of the constitutional regime in the wake of the Young Turk Revolution dramatically changed the relationship between the Ottoman centre and the region. Seizing the opportunity, the Shī'is launched a major educational reform programme by opening a number of schools and madrasas and started publishing *al-Ilm*, a major Shī'ī scholarly journal, in 1910.<sup>26</sup> The new regime also facilitated a debate on argument for Sunnī-Shī'ite unity promoted by Shī'ī scholars such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Na'inī and Muhammad Ḥusayn Kashīf al-Ghīta. The Committee of Union and Progress likewise gave strong support to the ideal of Sunnī-Shī'ite cooperation. It also worked with local political leaders such as Nakibzāde Talib Bey, who negotiated the most delicate deals with other Arab leaders, such as 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn al-Sa'ūd, on behalf of the Ottoman government.<sup>27</sup>

In 1910 the CUP backed a mujtahid initiative led by Muḥammad Kāzīm Khurāsānī and other major Shī'ite religious leaders. They issued a strong fatwā stating that "it is obligatory upon all Muslims to unite in order to defend the Islamic lands and to guard all the Ottoman and Iranian territories against the foreigners and their attacks. We remind all Muslims of the brotherhood by which God has joined the believers. We also call upon them to protect the noble Islamic banner."<sup>28</sup> This fatwā issued against Russians was the first major joint Sunnī-Shī'ī religious initiative in the region. The Sunnī 'ulamā' of Baghdad and prominent religious figures such as Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā gave their enthusiastic support to the initiative. In 1911 the same mujtahids and others joined them in issuing a stronger fatwā against the Italian aggression in Tripoli of Barbary and Benghazi. They invited all Muslims to participate in a Jihad against the Italian invaders.<sup>29</sup>

Whereas the Ottoman centre opted not to declare a Jihad against the Italians, the Shī'ite mujtahids' calls for holy war turned southern Iraq into a hotbed of anti-Italian activity during the war over Tripoli of Barbary.<sup>30</sup> The Committee of Union and Progress and the Ottoman centre viewed this development as the emergence of an invaluable resource to be exploited in future conflicts. They did not have to wait too long.

The government in Istanbul launched a major propaganda offensive after the declaration of the Ottoman global Jihd. The Ottoman consulate

in Jakarta became the centre for disseminating the Jihad material to the Muslim communities in the large geographic area of South and Southeast Asia.<sup>31</sup> Copies of the Ottoman Jihad fatwās in Turkish, Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Tatar were smuggled in substantial numbers into India and Central Asia to satisfy the Germans, who nurtured great expectations for the reception of the holy war.<sup>32</sup>

Obviously this was not the Ottoman priority. For the Ottoman war planners the most important Jihad was not the Sunnī but the Shī'ī one. For the Ottoman government this independent Jihad was not merely an issue of propaganda aimed at inciting Muslims in different parts of the world but a crucial means of defence.

The small Ottoman garrison in Basra consisted of 8,000 ill-trained recruits and reservists who could not resist the well-equipped and combat-ready British expeditionary force of 15,000 troops sent from India.<sup>33</sup> The Ottoman authorities, therefore, approached the leading mujtahids in the shrine cities and Baghdad to invite them to support the war efforts of the Islamic state. They received affirmative responses from all.<sup>34</sup>

A day before the official declaration of the Ottoman global Jihad, a major meeting attended by all leading mujtahids of the shrine cities, ulama, local shaykhs and tribal leaders was held in Najaf. The mujtahids and ulama told the audience of 40,000 (a figure provided by the Ottoman sub-governor of Najaf) in passionate Islamic language that they should participate in the Jihad. The organizers and the Ottoman sub-governor decided to organize at once a militia force of 5,000 to 6,000 men to be followed later by new volunteer reinforcements.<sup>35</sup> On 11 November, the government instructed the Ottoman governor in Baghdad to distribute all Jihad fatwās and orders issued by mujtahids in shrine cities free of charge.<sup>36</sup> The mujtahids churned out a plethora of fatwās in a short period of time, and the local Ottoman telegraph offices sent copies of these fatwās to every town in the region. These fatwās helped the Ottoman authorities enormously in recruiting militia and strengthening the local resistance against the advancing British. In the meantime, the Ottoman Minister of War Enver Pasha dispatched Süleyman Askerî, the director of the Special Organization, to Iraq with the hope of creating a strong local resistance movement similar to that which had taken place in Bēghazî two years earlier.<sup>37</sup>

Most of the fatwās issued by the leading 'ulamā' were in Arabic, although a number of fatwās were written in Persian. The Ottoman government additionally instructed local administrators to collect fatwās or opinions from all leading mujtahids so that the impact would be stronger. Leading Shī'ī mujtahids, including Abd al-Ḥusayn

Asad Allāh, Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Yas, ‘Alī al-Nakhjawānī, ‘Alī Rafīsh, Ismā‘īl al-Sadr (the grandfather of Musa al-Sadr of Lebanon), Mahdī al-Khurāsānī, Muḥammad Amīn Asad Allāh, Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ḥā’irī al-Māzandarānī, Muḥammad Kāẓim al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Muḥammad Kāẓim Yazdī, Muḥammad Sa‘īd Ḥabbūbī, Muḥammad al-Sayyid ‘Alī al-Tabrīzī, Muḥammad Taqī al-Shīrāzī, Muṣṭafā al-Ḥusaynī al-Kāshānī and Muṣṭafā al-Nakhjawānī al-Īrānī al-Muhājir, provided a large number fatwās and opinions calling upon Muslims for a Jihad against the Allies.<sup>38</sup> Also a joint fatwa signed by 23 leading mujtahids rallied the Shī‘ī population against the Allied invasion.<sup>39</sup>

Not surprisingly, these fatwās did not make any reference to the fatwā collection used in the Ottoman declaration of global Jihad. Just as the Ottoman material refrained from employing distinctly Sunnī language, the fatwās issued by the leading mujtahids avoided obvious Shī‘ī references. When after the Allied declarations of war Ottoman officials approached the leading mujtahids for fatwās, they posed the question in non-sectarian terms as well:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

The request at hand for a fatwa, from the learned ‘ulamā’, [concerns] what scholars of the faith and those who make clear the provisions of the Sharī‘a of the chief of the messengers (upon him be the blessings of the Lord of the Worlds) is in this legal matter. For the seven countries, Russia, England, France, Japan, Belgium, Serbia, and Montenegro, have declared war today on the Sublime Islamic Ottoman State ... and from all directions, by land and by sea, have attacked the Islamic lands (al-mamālik al-Islamiyya), and have taken to plundering their possessions, killing their men, taking captive their women, and destroying (hadm) the lands of the Muslims. Is it therefore the obligation of all Muslims (al-taklif ‘alā ‘umūm al-muslimīn), of every madhhab, milla, and ṭarīqa, to repel the unbelievers (kuffār) from the Islamic lands, and to fight [them] and to confront [them], or not?

And if one is able to go forth, to fight, and to give of one’s wealth, but stays quiet in one’s house, what is God’s judgment (ḥukm), in a clear and explicit way? Please provide an explanation to the first part of this question, adorned and stamped with the noble seal (al-khātim al-sharīf).

Provide us with a fatwa, that God may reward you.<sup>40</sup>

The responses given to this inquiry likewise avoided any overt Shī‘ī references. For instance, Muḥammad Kāẓim al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī plainly responded that “With the attack of the unbelievers (*kuffār*) on the lands of the



Muslims it is obligatory (*wājib*) – when there is ability (*qudra*) – upon the Muslims at large so capable (*al-mutamakkanīn min ‘āmmat al-muslimīm*) to defend against them (*difā‘uhum*), when there does not exist a sufficient number (*man bihi al-kifāya*) already.”<sup>41</sup>

Some authorities even maintained that all Islamic sects were in agreement that the Muslims should fight against Christian encroachments. It is interesting that those mujtahids refrained from making any references to the Ottoman alliance with Christian powers in these responses, and presented the war as one between Islam and Christianity.

For example, Shaykh al-Sharī‘a al-Aṣfahānī commented that:

The Islamic sects (*madhāhib*) today consist of the Sunnī sects, Imāmism, Ismā‘īlism, Zaydism, Wahhābism, and the Khārijites. All the ‘ulamā’ of these sects are in agreement and consensus that, with the attack of the kuffār against the lands of the Muslims, and their engaging in killing their men and robbing their property and raising the work of kufr and forsaking the word of Islam and the truth ... that it is obligatory upon every capable Muslim to expend his effort and what ability he has to repel the kuffār and the mushrikīn attacking the lands of Islam and to break his advance ... to expend their efforts to subdue them and free themselves from the agony of the hereafter, not to fail to achieve what is within reach, not to be pleased with shirking this ... one of them with his property, a second with his soul, a third by using weapons, a fourth by using standing and honor, a fifth by employing wile and deliberation, a sixth by using arms and archery. Thus did God say: ‘Make ready for them whatever force and strings of horses you can, to terrify thereby the enemy of God and your enemy’ [Q. 8:60]. And all that we have said is with respect to those Muslims of the groups enumerated [above]. Each one of them constitutes an element of force and a part of preparations.

O brother believers, o Muslim peoples: Awaken from your sleep, you are woken by guns and cannons and the religion of war. Be not pleased that the word of tawhīd be replaced by talthīth [“the trinity”], calls to prayer (*ādhān*) by church bells (*nāqūs*); [be not pleased that] your men become the servants and slaves of the kuffār, and your women and children prisoners and slave girls for the most wicked among them, belonging to one hand and the next. Fight the kuffār with cheerful face, with bodies raised and unsheathed from their clothes, with stomachs empty of food, such that you do not extend your hands to the kuffār seeking their charity you lose your honor. Maintain your honor, honor yourselves [lit., make your faces white] before the Prophet so that your independence remains forever and ever, God willing.<sup>42</sup>

By responding favourably to the Ottoman request and depicting the Allied war as a Christian crusade against Islam, the leading Shī'ī mujtahids helped the Ottoman centre to resist the initial attack in southern Iraq, much to the dismay of the British war planners.<sup>43</sup> The local militia and volunteer units responding to the calls of mujtahids facilitated the orderly retreat of the Ottoman regular forces. In addition the fatwās issued by the local religious authorities prevented any manifestations of anti-Ottoman and Arab nationalist sentiments.

Upon strong urging by the Ottoman authorities, the leading mujtahids also depicted the Ottoman state as the defender of the entire Muslim world without making any references to the Caliphate. For instance, Muḥammad Kāzīm al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī decreed that:

It is not hidden from anyone that the European states, and especially England, Russia, and France, have from the earliest days always been transgressing and encroaching upon the Islamic territories (mamālik), such that they have violated most of the Islamic territories. And they have no intention in these transgressions (ta'addiyāt) but the erasure of the religion (maḥw al-dīn), God forbid! In recent times their objectives have been made clear. They have attacked the territories of the Sublime Ottoman Empire (mamālik al-dawla al-'aliyya al-'uthmāniyya), may God strengthen it to give victory to Islam, and the long hand of transgression is on the verge of reaching the two holy sanctuaries (al-ḥaramayn al-sharīfayn) and the shrines of the virtuous imāms (mashāhid al-a'imma al-ṭāhirīn), peace be upon them. They have attacked the Islamic lands, their inhabitants, their honor, and their possessions.

Thus it is obligatory (yajibu) upon the tribes living on the war fronts (thughūr), and upon all able Muslims – should there not be a sufficient number among them [the tribes] to protect the borders – to protect their borders and defend the territory of Islam (bayḍat al-Islām) such as they can. God is He who provides victory, aid, and support to the Muslims.<sup>44</sup>

With the exception of a reference to the “virtuous imāms” the fatwā lacked an exclusive Shī'ite tone, and presented the struggle as one led by the Ottoman empire in defence of the Islamic world.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, Muḥammad Taqī al-Shīrāzī's fatwa painted a threat to the entire Muslim community:

The attacks of the aggressing enemies have approached the holy places (ḥuram) of God, the holy places of His messenger, and the shrines of

the virtuous imāms, God's blessings be upon them all. These [people] desire to shed, by means of their aggression, the blood of the Muslims and disgrace the sanctity of their religion. The danger has escalated, God forbid, to the lands of the Muslims, their places of worship, their senses, and their minds. Thus it is obligatory upon all the tribes living on the war fronts, and upon all Muslims, to protect their war fronts and their borders and to defend the territory of Islam howsoever they can. God is He who provides victory and aid. Fear you God, fear you God in this, O Muslims (ma'āshir al-muslimīn). Peace be upon you, and God's mercy and blessings.<sup>46</sup>

As compared to the official Ottoman fatwā collection initially issued by the Şeyülislām and followed by many leading Sunnī 'ulamā', these documents adopted a decisively passionate tone and rhetoric and consequently had a deeper effect on the targeted audiences. In fact, the Shī'ite Jihad, carefully crafted by mujtahids in Iraq, was the most successful one for the Ottomans. The only comparable Jihd initiative was the one launched in the Yemen with the help of another non-Sunnī religious authority, Imām Yahyā, who had signed a contract commonly known as the Da'ān Treaty with the Ottomans in 1911.<sup>47</sup> Imām Yahyā called on his Zaydī followers for Jihad and the Ottomans made most of it in their fight against the British. The region composed of Yemen, Aden and 'Asīr was a much smaller theatre of war, however.<sup>48</sup>

By contrast, the Ottoman Sunnī or global Jihad did not provide any tangible results. Unlike their German allies, the Ottoman war planners regarded the issue as a strategic one. They thought that the Sunnī Jihad would help them rally the Kurds in central and northern Iraq and Iran against the enemy. For this Jihad, the Ottomans used translations of the original Ottoman Jihad fatwās. Various Ottoman authorities maintained during the early stages of war that a large number of irregular Kurdish units including those in Iran responded favourably to the Ottoman Sunnī Jihad and joined the war effort.<sup>49</sup> The Kurdish affirmative response to the Ottoman call for Jihad was, of course, too little to meet the expectations. Interestingly enough no major Sunnī Arab leader in Arabia followed suit. On 23 November the Ottoman authorities sent a message to 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn al-Sa'ūd asking him to help the Ottoman Jihad and refrain from any clashes with Sa'ūd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, the emīr of the House of Rashīd in Ha'il.<sup>50</sup> 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn al-Sa'ūd, who had cut a deal with the Ottoman government immediately before the Great War, had no such desire to cooperate with this request, however. In fact, a rather long fatwa issued by Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Siḥmān on 22 June 1915 provides an insight regarding the Wahhābī reaction to the Ottoman

Jihad. The following question was put before Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Siḥmān, a leading Wahhābī religious authority and a scholar who had major influence over ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn al-Sa‘ūd: “What is your opinion, may God magnify your virtue, concerning the Turkish state and the Christians, may God curse them all? Which of them is greater in unbelief and which of the two is it preferred to support over the other? Provide us with a fatwā that you may be recompensed. May God grant you Paradise. Amen.”<sup>51</sup>

The main points of his response were as follows:

There is no doubt that those apostate Turkish forces (al-‘asākīr al-Turkiyya) and others are greater in unbelief than the Jews and the Christians, as one learns from the Shaykh al-Islam’s [Ibn Taymiyya’s] words and as he explained the matter in the case of the Nuṣayrīs. It is known that they [the Turkish forces] feign Islam, make the proclamation of faith, offer the Friday and congregational prayers, and appoint qāḍīs when they overcome a territory. Nonetheless the Shaykh al-Islam’s [Ibn Taymiyya’s] words apply in their case, as you can see, and as the Shaykh al-Islam Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb also made clear in the tenth level of what he said concerning God’s words, “The places of worship belong to God; so call not, along with God, upon anyone” [Q. 72.18].

As for which of the two groups [the Turkish state or the Christians] it is preferred to support over the other, Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya has remarked in his al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīḥ, concerning God’s words ... “The Romans have been vanquished in the nearer part of the land; and, after their vanquishing, they shall be the victors in a few years. To God belongs the command before and after, and on that day the believers shall rejoice in God’s help; God helps whomsoever He will ...” [Q. 30:1–5] ... If you understand this, then it ought to become clear to you that these Turks [in the current day], even if they make the proclamation of faith, are more severe in unbelief [than the Christians] on account of their apostasy from Islam, and greater in harm against the Muslims than the Christians, as the Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyya explained.

However, seeing as the Christians have gotten the upper hand over the Turks in our day, and that they are the nearer enemy, then should they [the Christians] provide those before them [the Turks] security and make it possible for them [to persist] in their affairs, then their [the Christians’] fame has ascended and their harm to the people of Islam has expanded. What we were seeking, and what we were asking and beseeching God for, was that He confound the both of them as parties set against one

another; that He cause the one to taste the might and strength of the other; that He tie down the one with the other; that He not setup for them a standard and bring them into mutual allegiance against Islam; that He prolong hostilities between them; that He set the people of Islam in security and wellbeing against the evil of the both of them; and that He give victory to the religion and its Prophet and its Book and its believing servants.<sup>52</sup>

Wahhābī scholars also took issue with the fact that the Ottomans had an alliance with the German empire, and were under the influence of this Christian power.<sup>53</sup> Despite these strong criticisms of the Ottomans for cooperating with the Christian Germans, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn al-Sa‘ūd signed a treaty of alliance with the Christian British in Darin in December 1915.<sup>54</sup>

Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Idrisī, who had established a Sufī state in ‘Asīr with the help of the Italians and the British, responded to the Ottoman Jihad in a similar vein;<sup>55</sup> he too signed a treaty with the British in April 1915.<sup>56</sup> Likewise, even before the declaration of the Ottoman grand Jihad Sharif Ḥusayn promised the British, who had been requested to abstain from holy war, that he “would take, of his good will, no measure of Turkish interest.” He reiterated his unequivocal promise in November 1914 and dispelled the deep British fear of “the Holy Cities endorsing the Holy War.”<sup>57</sup> Unlike the Shī‘ī mujtahids, Sharif Ḥusayn maintained that the alliance of the Ottoman empire with Christian powers and the German aggression made the declaration of a genuine Muslim Jihad impossible.<sup>58</sup> Interestingly, when Sharif Ḥusayn initiated the Arab Revolt against Istanbul in 1916, the leading Shī‘ī mujtahids issued fatwās in support of the Ottoman state.<sup>59</sup>

In conclusion, while the Ottoman Shī‘ī Jihad was a success, the Sunnī/global one was a failure for both Berlin and Istanbul. The accomplishment on the Shī‘ī front prompted the Germans to continue their efforts in this regard.<sup>60</sup> Likewise the Ottoman authorities used the Shī‘ī card against the Allies until their loss of Mesopotamia. Many scholars of Islam found it surprising that a state possessing the Caliphate received strong support from Shī‘ī mujtahids and the Zaydī leadership while Sunnī leaders paid almost no heed to its calls. Indeed, from a religious viewpoint this was an astounding development. For those who understood the bitter power struggle in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman empire, including many Ottoman war planners, however, this result was a predictable one.

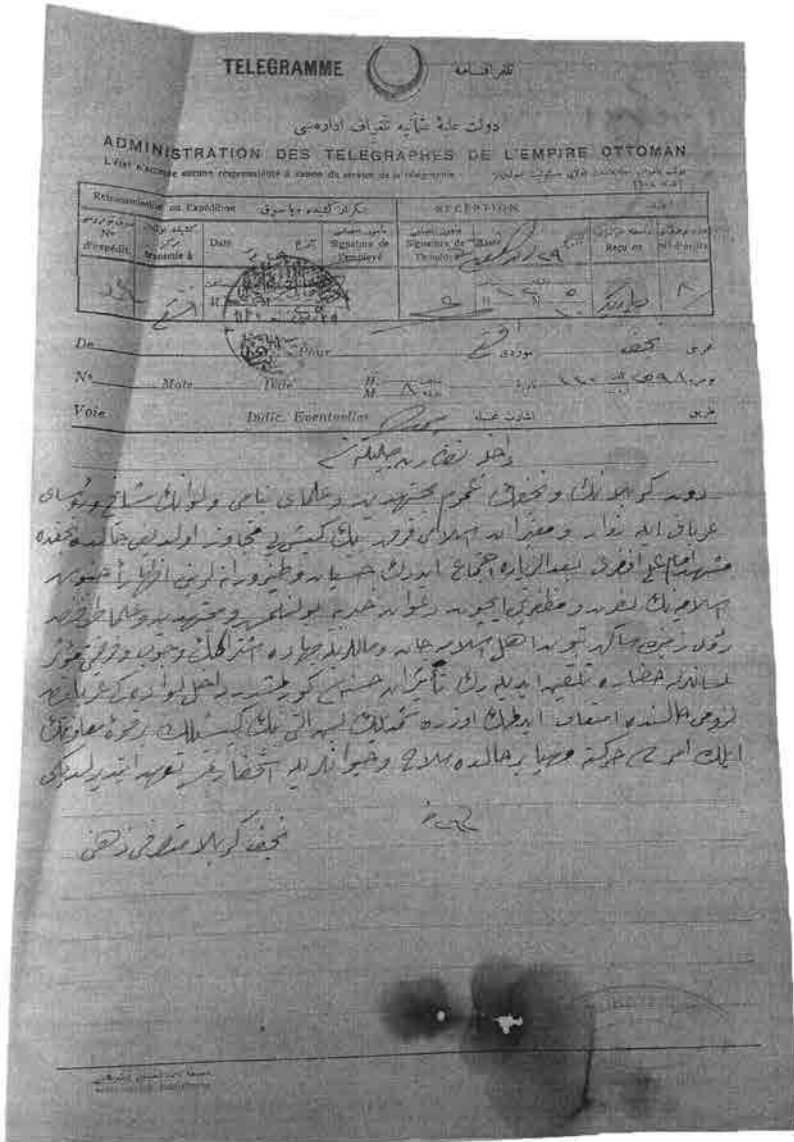


FIGURE 5.1 Telegram sent by the Ottoman governor of Najaf and Karbala to the Interior Ministry in Istanbul (in Turkish).



FIGURE 5.2 Telegram from Muhammad Taqi al-Shirazi, one of the leading Shi'I religious authorities in Iraq (in Arabic).

## Notes

- 1 C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Holy War "Made in Germany"* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1915).
- 2 Ibid., pp. 34 ff.
- 3 Ernst Jäckh Papers, Yale University Sterling Memorial Library, Ms group 466.
- 4 Kâzım Karabekir, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Anıları* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2007), pp. 364–366.
- 5 Mustafa Aksakal, "‘Holy War Made in Germany’ Ottoman Origins of the 1914 Jihad", *War in History*, 18/2 (2011), p. 195.
- 6 Lionel Gossman, *The Passion of Max von Oppenheim: Archeology and Intrigue in the Middle East from Wilhelm II to Hitler* ([Cambridge]: OpenBook Publishers, 2013), pp. 92–94.
- 7 Tilman Lüdke, *Jihad Made in Germany: Ottoman and German Propaganda and Intelligence Operations in the First World War* (London: Global, 2005), pp. 118 ff.
- 8 While there was no official response to the cross against crescent rhetoric, those pro the Committee of Union and Progress press strongly criticized it and encouraged Muslims to take the anti-Islamic attitude of the Balkan allies into serious consideration. See, for example, Ahmed Agayef, "Dedik Ya, Hilâl ve Salib Cidâli", *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 20 October 1912.
- 9 "Beyannâme-i Hümayûn", *Tanin*, 12 October 1912.
- 10 See "Beyannâme", *Cenin*, 19 October 1912.
- 11 Aksakal, "‘Holy War Made in Germany’", p. 195. Interestingly, a German diplomat also underlined the difficulties in this regard. See Gottfried Galli, *Dschihad der heilige Krieg des Islams und seine Bedeutung im Weltkriege unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Interessen Deutschlands* (Frieberg im Breisgau: C. Troemers, 1915), p. 6 ff.
- 12 For more information on the Ottoman use of Jihad in special organizations in Iran see Mustafa Arıkan, "Arşiv Vesikalarına Göre Osmanlı-İran İlişkileri, 1914–1918", unpublished M.A. Thesis, Gazi University (Ankara), 2010, pp. 21–22 and 31–32.
- 13 BOA-DH. SYS 25/103 [28 May 1914]. The 12<sup>th</sup> article of the contract signed between the Ottoman administration and Abd al-Azîz ibn al-Sa‘ûd is as follows: "If, God forbid, war erupts between the Sublime State and foreign nations, or if there occurs an internal disturbance in any province whatsoever, and the government were to request the said governor a force to join its own forces, then it is incumbent upon the governor to man a sufficient force, complete with its ammunition and subsistence means, and respond the call immediately according to his power and ability."
- 14 In fact, during the war the Ottoman government annulled the pardon which had been granted to Muḥammad ‘Alî al-İdrisî on 16 October 1912 on the grounds that he and his followers "have not until now changed their former way action and activities and have stubbornly continued their rebellion and revolt." See BOA-BEO, file 333422 [2 December 1916].
- 15 For Sharif Ḥusayn's plans see Joshua Teitelbaum, "Sharif Husayn ibn Ali and the Hashemite Vision of the Post-Ottoman Order: From Chieftaincy to Suzerainty", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 34/1 (1998), pp. 106 ff.



- 16 See A.J. Barker, *The First Iraq War, 1914–1918: Britain’s Mesopotamian Campaign* (New York: Enigma Books, 2009), pp. 18–20.
- 17 *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914–1918*, ed. F.J. Moberly, vol. 1 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1923), pp. 99–132.
- 18 “Kâffe-i Müslimîn Üzerine Cihadın Farzıyeti Hakkında Fetavâ-yı Şerife”, *Sebilü’r-Reşad*, 13/ 314 [19 November 1914], p. 12.
- 19 “Meclis-i Âli-i İlmî’nin Cihad-ı Ekber Hakkındaki Beyannâmesi”, *Sebilü’r-Reşad*, 13/ 315 [26 November 1914], pp. 9. 19–20. Despite this, a later pamphlet written by Abdülaziz Çavuş and addressing all Muslims made frequent references to the Caliphate. In fact the pamphlet gave the publication place as “Dâr al-Khilâfa al-‘Aliyya” instead of Istanbul. See *Balâğh ‘âmmli-jamî’ ahl al-Islâm* (Dâr al-Khilâfa al-‘Aliyya: al-Maṭba‘a al-Khayriyya 1333 [1915]).
- 20 Under-Secretary of the Grand Vizier’s Office Emin Bey to the Ministry of the Interior [25 November 1914],/no. 1246–324172, BOA-DH. EUM. 4. Şb. 1 (1323 M 7).
- 21 While praising the fatwās issued by the Shī‘ī mujtahids, the Ottoman religious press acknowledged them as a part of a separate Jihad although it asked all Muslims to join the effort. See “Cihad-ı Mukaddes ve Mezheb-i Ca’ferî”, *İslâm Mecmuası*, 1/15 [19 November 1914], p. 445.
- 22 Gökhan Çetinsaya, *Ottoman Administration of Iraq, 1890–1908* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 99–126.
- 23 Selim Deringil, “The Struggle against Shiism in Hamidian Iraq: A Study in Ottoman Counter-Propaganda”, *Die Welt des Islams*, 30/1–4 (1990), pp. 49 ff.
- 24 Gökhan Çetinsaya, “The Caliph and the Mujtahids: Ottoman Policy towards the Shiite Community of Iraq in the late Nineteenth Century”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 41/4 (2005), pp. 561–574.
- 25 Yitzak Nakash, *The Shi‘is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 48.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 53.
- 27 See the coded telegram from Şüleyman Şefik Pasha, the governor and commander of Basra to the Ministry of the Interior [22 June 1914], BOA-DH. KMS. 2/2–2.
- 28 As translated by Yitzak Nakash from *al-Ilm*, 1 (1911), pp. 434–436. Nakash, *Shi‘is of Iraq*, p. 58.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 From the political affairs department of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Interior [19 January 1915],/no. 2184–60200, BOA-DH.EUM. 6. Şb. 2/63 (1333 Ra. 3).
- 32 Ministry of the Interior’s note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [23 January 1915], *ibid.*
- 33 See *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914–1918*, ed. F.J. Moberly, vol. 1 (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1923), pp. 100–101.
- 34 The Ottoman authorities asked the governor in Baghdad to report whether certain mujtahids in Karbala, Najaf and Samarra had issued fatwās inviting Muslims to join the Jihad. See the Minister of the Interior Talât Pasha to the

- acting governor of Baghdad [17 December 1914],/no. 11, BOA-DH. ŞFR. 48.42 (1333. M. 29) and BOA-DH. EUM. 7. Şb, 2/52 (1333. S.1).
- 35 Sub-governor Zihni Bey to the Ministry of the Interior, Najaf, [11 November 1914], BOA-DH. EUM. 4. Şb. 1/18 (1323 M).
- 36 Coded telegram from the Ministry of the Interior to the Baghdad Province [11 November 1914], BOA-BOA-DH. EUM. 4. Şb. 1/18 (1323 M).
- 37 Ahmet Tetik, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Umur-ı Şarkıyye Dairesi)*, vol. 1, 1914–1915 (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014), p. 15.
- 38 Copies of these fatwās are in DH.EUM.6. Şb, 2/25 (25 M 1333). Some of these were reproduced in Kāmil Salmān al-Jubūrī, *Wathā'iq al-thawra al-'Irāqīyya al-kubrā wa-muqaddimātuhā wa-natā'ijuhā, 1914–1923*, vol. 1: *Ḥarb al-'Irāq 1914* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Mu'arrikh al-'Arabī, 2009), pp. 23–32. These fatwas were not issued at the same time. For instance, it had taken the Ottoman authorities a long time to persuade Muḥammad Kāzīm Yazdī, *the marja al-taqlid* of Najaf, with whom they were on bad terms, to join the effort. See Werner Ende, “Iraq in the World War I: The Turks, the Germans and the Shi'ite Mujtahids' Call for Jihād”, *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabistes et Islamisants*, ed. Rudolph Peters (Leiden: Brill, 1981), pp. 65–66.
- 39 For the text see “Heilige Befehle Sämtlicher Grossen Müdschtehiden”, *Die Welt des Islams*, 1/3–2 (August 1915), pp. 131–133.
- 40 Kāmil Salmān al-Jubūrī, *Wathā'iq al-thawra al-'Irāqīyya*, vol. 1, p. 29.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 31. Similarly, an appeal issued by the leading Shī'i mujtahids of the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala made the following statement: “As the mujtahids of the Ja'fari sect, we, at the moment, ask all Muslims and comrades of religion to get united as brothers.” “Necef ve Kerbelâ Müctehidlerinin Beyannâmesi”, *Vak'a-i Kerbelâ Münâsebetiyle, Rusların İstifâdelerini Bildiren: Tahran'dan İstanbul'a Bir Mektub*, ed. Ali Eşref (Istanbul: Kader Matbaası, 1332 [1915]), p. 2.
- 43 Sir Percy Cox stated that “the Turks ... utilize[d] the factor of *Jahad* [sic] with more effect. At Basra, Amara, and in Arabistan this factor was producing some results”: *The Campaign in Mesopotamia, 1914–1918*, p. 161.
- 44 DH.EUM.6.Şb, 2/25 (25 M 1333); and Kāmil Salmān al-Jubūrī, *Wathā'iq al-thawra al-'Irāqīyya*, vol. 1, p. 25.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 DH.EUM.6.Şb, 2/25 (25 M 1333); and Kāmil Salmān al-Jubūrī, *Wathā'iq al-thawra al-'Irāqīyya*, vol. 1, p. 26.
- 47 BOA-DVN. 37/1 [20 October 1911].
- 48 See the Ottoman grand vizier's telegram to Imām Yahyā thanking him for his efforts in the *jihād* against the enemies of the Ottoman state. BOA-BEO, file 326306 [25 April 1915].
- 49 See, for instance, the Under-Secretary of the Ottoman Foreign Ministry to the Ministry of the Interior [2 January 1915]/no. 2011–59357, BOA-DH-EUM. 2. Şb. 3/43 (1333 S 15).
- 50 See the Minister of the Interior Talāt Pasha's telegram to 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn al-Sa'ūd in Arabic and dated Muharram 2, 1333 [20 November 1914], BOA-DH. ŞFR. 47/97 (1333 M 2).

- 51 “Shaykh Sulaymān ibn Siḥmān’s Treatise Concerning the Turks and the Christians: Which is Less Harmful, etc,” Library of Prince Salmān at the University of King Sa‘ūd, Ms. 3422, ff. 134–145. I am grateful to Cole Bunzel for drawing my attention to this important fatwa and for providing me with a translation of the entire text.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 See ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Laṭīf’s endorsement of Ibn Siḥmān’s fatwā: “[there is] a distinction between when the state was independent and today when it is in the hands of the Christians and subservient to them, it no longer having independence apart from the unbelieving Germans. I hope that God will extend his judgment of enmity and hatred between them till the Day of Resurrection, and set their mutual might and strength against each other.” Ibid., p. 145.
- 54 *The Expansion of Wahhabi Power in Arabia, 1798–1932: British Documentary Records*, vol. IV, 1902–1916, ed. A.L.P. Burdett (Cambridge: Cambridge Archive Editions, 2013), pp. 628–632.
- 55 Despite knowing Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Idrisī’s position, the Ottoman authorities expressed the desire to have him join the Jihad. See “Muhterem Sunūsi Kardeşlerin Cihad-ı Mukaddese İştirakleri”, *İslâm Mecmuası*, 1/15, p. 445.
- 56 Johannes Reissner, “Die Idrisiden in ‘Asīr: Ein historischer Überblick”, *Die Welt des Islams*, 21/1–4 (1981), p. 175.
- 57 H.W.V. Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, vol. VI (London: Henry Frowde, 1924), pp. 120–121.
- 58 T. A Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph* (The Complete 1922 Text) (Fordingbridge: Castle Hill Press, 1997), p. 33.
- 59 Kāmil Salmān al-Jubūrī, *Wathā’iq al-thawra al-‘Irāqīyya*, vol. 2: *al-Iḥtilāl al-Barīṭānī 1915–1919* (Beirut: Dār al-Mu‘arrikh al-‘Arabī, 2009), pp. 11–12. They declared the following: “[i]t is not hidden that the occurrence of a rumor to the noble ‘ulamā’ of Najaf has reached us, concerning what is well-known in the case of Sharif of Mecca, that they wrote in support of his case. We were surprised at this obvious and detestable lie and plan and evident attack. Far be that from them! I don’t think that any Muslim would expect such from the likes of them. We ask God for protection from deceit, in both words and deeds, and victory for Islam and the Muslims. Muḥammad Kāzīm al-Ṭabāṭabā’ī [28 November 1916].”
- 60 For instance, in early 1915, the Germans paid a large sum and obtained a fatwā to be used in Southern Iraq and Iran from four leading mujtahids in Karbala. See Ende, “Iraq in the World War I: The Turks, the Germans and the Shi‘ite Mujtahids’ Call for Jihād”, *Proceedings of the Ninth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabistes et Islamisants*, pp. 56–77.