

# Introduction

## The Ottoman Jihad, the German Jihad and the Sacralization of War

*Erik-Jan Zürcher*

In 2014–2015 Jihad was everywhere. When the Iraqi imam Ibrahim Awwad Ibrahim al-Badri proclaimed himself “Caliph of all Muslims” under the name Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in July 2014 in a sermon recorded at the al-Nuri mosque in Mosul, he constantly referred to Jihad and called on all Muslims to join his “Islamic State” (IS). Later he announced that he was leading a Jihad that would lead to the conquest of Rome and Spain. When tens of thousands of volunteers joined the Islamic State from the Middle East, but also from Europe, America and Australia, these volunteers were called Mujahideen by themselves and Jihadis by international media. Jihadi quickly became a household word, and even a nickname, in the Western world, as in the case of the British Muslim Muhammad Emwazi, who became known as “Jihadi John” when he appeared in recordings showing the ritual slaughter of prisoners of the Islamic State.

Of course, both Baghdadi’s proclamation of the Caliphate and his declaration of Jihad were contested. Governments and religious authorities throughout the Arab world denounced Jihad as being contrary to Sharia. They pointed out that a Jihad could not be directed against other Muslims. In the West, political leaders like Prime Minister David Cameron in the U.K. and President Barack Obama in the U.S. declared (without any serious argument) that “Islam was a religion of peace” and that IS was “barbaric” and Baghdadi’s Jihad “unIslamic.”

This kind of argument had also been a feature of the last time a Caliph officially declared a Jihad. As it happened, this took place almost exactly a century before al-Baghdadi climbed the stairs of the minbar of the great mosque in Mosul. It is with that Jihad, the one proclaimed by the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph Mehmed V Reshad in November 1914, that this volume is concerned.

The Ottoman declaration of Jihad was controversial from the start. The Ottoman Empire had concluded a secret defensive alliance with the German Empire on 2 August 1914 and had mobilized shortly thereafter.

Until late October the Ottoman political leadership had maintained an armed neutrality, hoping that Germany would win the war before it became necessary actually to join the fighting. After the German defeat on the Marne in mid-September it was clear that the war on the western front would not be won quickly and German pressure on the Ottomans to join the war effort increased.<sup>1</sup> By late October the Young Turk leaders in Constantinople gave in and an Ottoman naval squadron was ordered to attack Russian naval installations in the Black Sea. Even though this was a deliberate provocation designed to bring about war with Russia and its allies, the Ottoman government officially maintained that it had been under attack and that its navy surprised Russian ships that were mining the northern entrance to the Bosphorus. This was a blatant lie, but the war was presented to the Ottoman population as having been imposed on a country committed to maintaining peace. This was important, and not only in terms of propaganda. It was directly relevant to the nature of a possible Jihad, as broad consensus had grown among Muslim scholars that in an offensive Jihad, in other words: when the Islamic state was trying to enlarge the *Dar al-Islam* (Abode of Islam) at the expense of the *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of War), the duty to fight was a communal one (*farz al-kifâya*), which could be devolved on a part of the Islamic community such as the army. If, on the other hand, the Islamic state was under attack, fighting was seen as an individual duty (*farz al-'ayn*) and it was incumbent on every single Muslim to make a contribution.<sup>2</sup>

A month after the naval attack that led to the Russian declaration of war (followed by those of France, Britain, Serbia and Montenegro), the Ottoman sultan proclaimed a Jihad. This proclamation was followed by a supporting legal opinion, a *fatwa*, from the highest religious authority, the Sheykh ul-Islam and by a proclamation to the army and navy by the sultan and his war minister, Enver Pasha. In all of these statements, the Jihad was justified with the argument that the Islamic state (the Ottoman Empire) and the Muslim community had come under unprovoked attack from Russia, France and Britain. The proclamation and the fatwa primarily targeted the Muslim subjects of France, Britain and Russia in their colonies, calling upon them to resist their oppressors. The fatwa also defined joining the fight against the Islamic (Ottoman) state as a grave sin that would carry the severest penalty in the hereafter for any Muslim who did so.

Of course, the Jihad declaration caused debate within the Islamic world. It was rejected by religious authorities in the different Entente colonies and in British-occupied Egypt and either rejected or quietly ignored by important players in the Ottoman periphery, such as the Idrisids in Asir and the Hashemite Sharif of Mekka. It also immediately

gave rise to a heated academic debate in Europe. The trigger of this debate was the article, or rather manifesto, published by the famous Leiden scholar Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje in January 1915 and entitled “Heilige Oorlog Made in Germany”<sup>3</sup> (Holy War Made in Germany). As Leon Buskens shows in this volume, the article was a vitriolic attack on Snouck’s German colleagues (who before the war had also been close friends), whom he accused of being the instigators of the Ottoman Jihad proclamation. In Snouck’s eyes calling for Jihad was a totally irresponsible appeal to an essentially mediaeval concept that threatened to undo the attempts to bring Muslim peoples into the modern world by reconciling their personal faith with the demands of the legal-rational state and secular society. As we see in Buskens’s chapter, Snouck felt so deeply about this issue because he had personally invested most of his professional life, both as an academic and as a colonial policy advisor, in this programme.

Snouck’s article was immediately translated into English as “Holy War Made in Germany” and gained wide currency in the countries of the Entente as well as in the United States, and it has regained prominence in academic debates in the last thirty years under the impact of the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978.<sup>4</sup> A hundred years after its first publication it is still being debated, and for that reason alone it is very fitting that the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society sponsored a two-day conference on Jihad in World War I in November, 2014 and that Leiden University Press is publishing the proceedings in 2015, the centenary of the appearance of “Heilige Oorlog Made in Germany.”

Snouck’s main criticism of his German colleagues was that they had allowed their nationalist fervour to override their academic integrity. The dispute, as Buskens shows, was not about putting academic knowledge to political use *per se* but about the *kind* of political use to which it was put. In Snouck’s eyes, both the World War itself and the idea of instrumentalizing religion for the war effort were abhorrent. The German Islam scholars for their part were hurt and surprised by the attack by their friend, as they saw patriotism as their first duty, something that transcended academic considerations. They were German citizens first and academics second, and saw nothing wrong in making their expertise available for the war effort, just as Snouck himself had made his expertise available to the Dutch colonial authorities in the East Indies.

If Snouck had been a citizen of one of the belligerent states rather than an inhabitant of neutral Holland, he would probably have been less surprised or incensed by the attempts to sacralize the war through the proclamation of Jihad. Sacralization of war was everywhere in 1914–1915. As Mehmet Beşikçi informs us in his chapter in this volume, there is

a growing literature on the various uses of religion for mobilization in Europe in World War I and the recent study by Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War*,<sup>5</sup> has the issue as its central theme. For those of us who have become used to seeing World War I primarily as a tragic, useless and, if we are to believe Christopher Clark in his celebrated *Sleepwalkers*,<sup>6</sup> avoidable waste of human life, it comes as a surprise to see that religious leaders in all of the belligerent countries embraced and sacralized the war. The precise way in which this happened differed from country to country. In Russia, the state and the official Orthodox Church were deeply entwined, as were the Habsburg monarchy and the Catholic Church. But in Great Britain, Germany, and even in the French Third Republic with its militant laicism, the vast majority of religious leaders identified with the war and proclaimed service to the fatherland a religious duty. Only the Vatican under Pope Benedict xv consistently advocated peace, but that was of course also the only institution not functioning within a national or imperial state and the only one primarily having supra-national status.

In Germany, the attitude of the leading religious figures, both in the Lutheran Church and in academia, was an extreme example of the sacralization of war. As Jenkins argues,<sup>7</sup> this attitude should be understood as a paradoxical legacy of the liberal theology that German theologians and church historians had done more than anyone else to develop in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The hallmarks of this theology had been textual criticism and historicism which led to an understanding of the Bible as just one expression of God's plan, anchored in a specific time and place. While liberating in many ways, this understanding had also opened the door to an understanding of the German nation as God's new chosen people and of the Wilhelmine empire as God's kingdom on earth, with a civilizing and Christian mission in this world. It is this legacy that explains why 29 German church leaders and theology professors signed a manifesto in September 1914 (when the Battle of the Marne was still raging) that is in some ways reminiscent of the Ottoman proclamation of Jihad two months later. In this "Aufruf Deutscher Kirchenmänner und Professoren und die evangelischen Christen im Ausland" (Call of German Ecclesiastic Leaders and Professors to Evangelical Christians Abroad) which was directed primarily at Anglo-Saxon Protestants, Germany was depicted as a peaceful country that had come under unprovoked attack and a Christian nation that had to defend itself against "Asiatic barbarism." Germany had every right to ask for God's succour for its people and its emperor. In other texts prominent theologians declared loyalty to the throne to be as important as following the gospels.

To sum up: sacralization of the war, both to legitimize it for public opinion at home and abroad and to mobilize the population was ubiquitous. Every belligerent state engaged in it, but the religio-patriotic fervour was particularly strong among the Protestant German elite, which may help to explain why Snouck's German colleagues may have had few qualms about supporting or even instigating the proclamation of Jihad.

The Ottoman Jihad thus fits a wider pattern in which states appealed to coreligionists at home and abroad to support their war effort, but as the only Muslim power and indeed the only independent Islamic state involved in the conflict, the position of the Ottomans was at the same time unique, and the Ottoman efforts to sacralize their war also deserve to be examined on their own. This is what this book attempts to do. The structure of the collection is such that there are contributions on the role of the Germans (including the controversy started by Snouck Hurgronje), on that of the Ottomans (in terms both of the Jihad policy and of its effects), and on that of their adversaries, both Arab and British. In other words: the organizing principle is basically that of the different actors in the conflict and this is intentional, as one of the aims of the organizers of the conference (and the editor of this volume) has been to give agency to Middle Eastern actors where the academic debate, perhaps as a result of Snouck's influence, has been focused almost exclusively on the German role.

The chapter structure will be self-evident to the reader of the book. It is, however, also possible to discern a number of recurrent themes that transcend the actor-based approach that underlies it. In what follows I should like to discuss four of these themes, by trying to answer four questions on the basis of a "cross-reading" of the different chapters.

## **Was Snouck Right and Was the Jihad "Made in Germany"?**

The first theme obviously is the one that is directly connected with Snouck Hurgronje's famous manifesto: was the Jihad indeed a German invention, or did it have authentic Ottoman roots? Different authors in this volume seem to give different answers to this question, but I think they may not necessarily be contradictory.

As Tilman Lüdke shows, some German politicians dreamed about the effects of a German-inspired campaign to stir up the Muslims in the colonial possessions of Britain and France to compensate for the relative lack of success of German imperial expansion overseas. He quotes the liberal political Friedrich Naumann, who as early as 1889 stated that in the

case of a world war “the caliph of Constantinople will once more uplift the standard of Holy War. The sick man will raise himself for the last time to cry aloud to Egypt, to Sudan, to East Africa, Persia, Afghanistan and India: ‘War against England!’”

This was when Bismarck was still at the helm of German foreign policy and before the more aggressive and adventurist foreign policy of Emperor Wilhelm II had started. During the latter’s reign the idea seems to have gained more currency. Max von Oppenheim (who would play a crucial role in 1914) discussed Pan-Islamism with Sultan Abdülhamid during his first travels in the Middle East in 1895 and the Kaiser very publicly identified himself with the fantasies about Germany’s ability to mobilize the Muslims during his 1898 visit to Damascus and Jerusalem. Famously, he declared himself to be the friend of the 300 million Muslims of the world during his visit to the mausoleum of Saladin in Damascus. By 1914 speculation about the possibilities of instrumentalizing the Muslims for the German war effort was widespread enough for the German foreign ministry to ask Oppenheim to come up with a memorandum on the issue, which he duly produced under the title of “Die Revolutionierung der islamischen Gebiete unserer Feinde” (Bringing about a Revolution in the Muslim Territories of our Enemies), the document that would form the basis for the work of the Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient (Intelligence Office for the East) and which is discussed in the contributions by Lüdke and Gussone.

In Istanbul, meanwhile, the vice-commander in chief and war minister Enver Pasha seems to have had doubts about the advisability of a Jihad declaration in a situation in which the empire was so visibly linked to European Christian allies, preferring a call by the Sultan to Muslims in the colonies of the Entente instead, but his chief of the general staff, the German General Bronsart von Schellendorf was strongly in favour.

All of this seems to support the thesis that the declaration of Jihad was primarily the result of German policies. On the other hand we learn from Mustafa Aksakal in his contribution that “the concept of Jihad occupied a quotidian place in the Ottoman cultural register.” He clearly demonstrates that Snouck was wrong when he supposed that Jihad was essentially a mediaeval practice that had no place in the modern Muslim world. The Ottoman government officially declared Jihad six times between 1768 and 1922. Even though it is equally true, as Şükrü Hanioglu writes in his chapter, that the Ottomans seem largely to have abandoned the practice after the Tanzimat – and accordingly refrained from proclaiming a Jihad in 1853 (the Crimean War), 1877 (the Russo-Turkish War), 1911 (the Italian invasion of Tripolitania) and 1912 (the Balkan War) – Jihad remained an important and emotive concept that

was widely used in exhortations to soldiers and press publications. Jihad was part of the Ottoman political vernacular. The fact that the Ottomans officially declared Jihad in six cases and refrained from doing so in four others can perhaps be explained by their desire to gain European support – this was evident in 1853 and 1877, and also in 1911–1912, but not in the very short Greek war of 1897. There is little doubt, however, that on a grassroots level, the concept played a role even in those wars when Jihad was not officially declared.

Hanioglu's chapter seems to offer a way to reconcile the two positions. He argues that, while on the one hand the Ottomans went along with the unrealistic expectations of the Germans and declared a Jihad that aimed at triggering uprisings in India, North Africa and Central Asia, on the other hand they also promoted Jihad to achieve purely Ottoman policy objectives, notably the galvanizing of the Arab and Kurdish populations of the empire. In the case of the Arabs of southern Iraq, who had been going over to the Shia in large numbers in the preceding decades, the carefully tailored Ottoman Jihad campaign specifically aimed at this community seems to have been quite successful. The leading Shi'i mujtahids of Najaf and Kerbela all supported it emphatically and it caused the British serious problems during their attempts to fan out northwards from occupied Basra. In the Arab peninsula the Ottoman Jihad campaign was much less successful, and remarkably the only major local player to support it was also a Shi'i, the Zaydi Imam Yahya in the Yemen.

The conclusion would seem to be that on the one hand the Jihad proclamation was the product of German strategic thinking, but on the other hand an appeal to Jihad was indeed part of the existing "toolbox" of the Ottoman state, even in the early twentieth century. Ottomans and Germans both used it, but with different aims and expectations. These different aims were closely connected to the different audiences the proclamation, or rather proclamations, were aimed at.

## Who Was the Proclamation of Jihad Aimed At?

As Oppenheim's memorandum makes very clear, the Germans intended the Jihad proclamation as a weapon against the Entente. The aim was to incite Muslims in the colonies of France and Great Britain and in the imperial possessions of Russia in the Caucasus and Central Asia to revolt, thereby forcing these countries to divert military resources from the European fronts, or at the very least preventing them from bringing colonial troops over to Europe. The strategic decisions of 1914, opposed by General Otto Liman von Sanders (the head of the German military

mission) but wholeheartedly supported by Bronsart von Schellendorf, Enver and Cemal, can be understood only in this context. The incursion of relatively small contingents of Ottoman troops into north western Persia, the attempt to open up the road to the Caucasus by encircling and defeating the Russian army at Sarıkamış in December and the attack on the Suez Canal in February were all based on the premise that these actions would encourage local Muslims to rise in revolt. The concept of the Suez Canal campaign in particular was predicated on the assumption of a simultaneous rising in Egypt. Logistically the movement of 30.000 soldiers through the heart of the Sinai desert was an impressive achievement, but it was clear from the start that this force was far too weak to cross the canal and threaten the British position in Egypt on its own.

At the same time Şükrü Hanioglu's and Mehmet Beşikçi's contributions both show that the Jihad proclamation was also important for *internal* use within the Ottoman Empire. As discussed earlier, Hanioglu focuses on the attempts to use Jihad rhetoric to rally the Shi'i Arabs of Iraq and to counter Russian agitation among the Kurdish tribes. But of course the vast majority of the Ottoman conscript army was raised among the peasants of Anatolia, and Beşikçi demonstrates that the use of religion, and particularly of a rhetoric of Jihad, was a military necessity as "Islamic themes and symbols constituted a common language which the Ottoman state could draw on when motivating the masses" at a time when patriotism (Ottoman or Turkish) was still the preserve of an educated elite.

The proclamation of the Jihad thus addressed different internal and external audiences and the actual documents published in November 1914 reflect this. The original fatwa signed by 29 leading ulema stated that it was the duty of every Muslim to defend the Islamic state that was under attack, and the emphasis of the document is very much on rallying the Muslim subjects of France, Britain and Russia. In the Sultan's proclamation to the army and navy, as one would expect, the emphasis is on the need for the soldiers to be ready to sacrifice themselves in the defence of Islam.

## How Was the Message of Jihad Mediated?

Of course, proclaiming a Jihad in itself was not enough. The message had to reach the population. In very different ways a number of the contributions to this volume draw our attention to ways in which the message of Jihad was mediated.

The start of the mediation process was the solemn proclamation of the fatwa, first to a select group of high dignitaries by the Şeyhülislam (chief of the ulema), and then to the population at large through a solemn public reading at the Fatih mosque by the fetva emini (the keeper of the fatwas), and to the army and navy through proclamations of the sultan and the minister of war.

Public meetings were an important means of communication. As Hanioglu shows, the Shi'i clergy in Iraq used it very effectively to raise the population. Nicole van Os produces evidence that in 1914 women as well as men were involved in these public meetings, something that would have been unthinkable ten years earlier.

The message was spread more widely through posters carrying a simplified text of the fatwa in more everyday language than that of the original. As we know also from other occasions (the constitutional revolution of 1908, the boycotts of 1908, 1909 and 1912, the mobilizations of 1912 and 1914) posters were an effective means of communication even though the vast majority of the Ottoman population was illiterate. Those who could read would explain the posters to those who could not. Still, posters were an urban phenomenon and in the countryside where 80 per cent of the population lived, the state relied primarily on oral communication by imams and village elders, as Mehmet Beşikçi shows in this volume.

As everywhere else, in the Ottoman Empire too, World War I was an era of censorship and propaganda. Journalism and literature were harnessed to the war effort, even if they were of necessity less effective tools than in societies with a high rate of literacy and large-circulation newspapers and journals. Erol Köroğlu describes how Islamic motifs, and the theme of holy war, played a substantial role in the early phase of the war (1914–1915) but became much less important later on, when hopes of a successful Jihad had dwindled. In the poetry that Köroğlu reviews, references to Islam and to Turkishness (and Turkish nationalism) were closely entwined, and this is something of a recurrent theme in the chapters of this book. In the Ottoman Empire of the early twentieth century the concept of the “nation” in its modern European sense had entered the vocabulary of the urban elite, but national identity was primarily defined in religious terms.<sup>8</sup> Religion thus became an ethnic marker defining the boundaries of the nation. At the same time, the instrumentalization of religion by the modernizing and centralizing state (from Mahmud II, through Abdülhamid II to the Young Turks) had led to a different form of nationalization of Islam. The Ottoman Empire had always supported an official Islam that propagated ideas about the interdependence of state and religion and turned these into

a hegemonic state ideology, but with the growth of the modern and centralized state in the late nineteenth century, state control over religion had increased markedly and Islam had been turned into an effective tool for legitimization and mobilization in the service of the empire.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, the German Jihad propaganda also relied on mediation. The German propaganda effort coordinated by the Nachrichtenstelle primarily worked through two sets of communities: Muslim prisoners of war and political refugees from the Entente colonies. In his analysis of the Halbmondlager (Half Moon Camp), the POW camp constructed in Wünsdorf south of Berlin to hold Muslim prisoners of war from the British and French armies, Martin Gussone shows to what lengths the German authorities went to portray Germany as a friend of Islam and to recruit Muslim POWs as volunteers. The newspaper *al-Jihad*, produced by the Nachrichtenstelle in a number of different languages, was distributed here and at the sister camp in Zossen that was destined for Muslim POWs from the Tsarist army. The message was conveyed even more forcefully, and dramatically, by the purpose-built and German-designed mosque erected in the camp. Gussone shows that, in line with the worldwide Jihadist ambitions of the German Empire, this mosque deliberately incorporated stylistic elements from a range of Islamic civilizations. Its programme of calligraphic inscriptions included belligerent texts like Sura 47, verse 8 from the Koran, which, according to Gussone, “should be interpreted as a call to the prisoners of war to join the Jihad.”

Refugees from the colonial possessions of the Entente were courted in an effort to spread the message of Jihad, but they proved to be a problematic asset for the Germans, not only because they worked in relative isolation and the Entente was on high alert in countries like Egypt and Algeria, but also because they were motivated by nationalism rather than by any idea of a global Islamic movement led from Constantinople. Their agendas coincided with that of the Germans and Ottomans only in that they had shared enemies. Networks of agents were created in North Africa, Central Asia and South Asia, but they were not strong enough seriously to threaten the position of the Entente. After the war, during his exile in Berlin, Enver Pasha would try to use these networks to build his “General Revolutionary Organisation of the Muslim World” (Umum Alemlî İslâm İhtilal Teşkilatı), but this attempt at creating a “Green International” also failed.

Mediation was not by words, written or spoken, alone. As the abovementioned example of the mosque in the Half Moon Camp in Wünsdorf shows, architecture was also used to convey an ideological message. Hans Theunissen shows how Cemal Pasha commissioned both major restorations and new buildings in Damascus during his three

years as governor of Syria (1914–1917). The building works had a triple message: laying out a new broad and straight avenue that served as an axis connecting the old city centre to the Hejaz railway station, with modern buildings in “national” style, conveyed a message of modernity and state power; restoring the main classical Ottoman building complex, the Selimiye, emphasized the Ottoman character of Damascus and Syria; the clearing of the area surrounding the Umayyad mosque and Saladin’s mausoleum, as well as the plans for the refurbishment of the latter, linked the Ottoman state of 1914 emphatically to a glorious Islamic past.

## **Was the Proclamation of Jihad a Failure?**

It has become almost a commonplace in the historiography of the Middle East in World War I to say that the German-inspired call to Jihad was a complete failure, and it is an indisputable fact that neither mass desertions of Muslim soldiers in the British, French and Russian armies nor large-scale uprisings in their imperial possessions took place. But the contributions to this volume show that this negative assessment has to be nuanced.

As Hanioglu, Aksakal and Beşikçi, and in a sense also van Os, demonstrate, side by side with the German-inspired Jihad campaign aimed at foreign Muslim populations, there was an authentically Ottoman effort to mobilize and motivate the Ottoman population on the basis of religious arguments and symbols, among which the concept of Jihad was important. This kind of religiously based mobilization had a long history and it was deeply embedded in the historical consciousness of the Ottoman state and the Muslim parts of its population (over 80 per cent by 1914). This Jihad was quite effective. Not only was it possible for an emphatically Sunni state like the Ottoman Empire to gain the support of the Shi’i minority, and for a Turkish-dominated state to motivate other ethnic groups like Kurds, Arabs and Circassians, it also played a considerable role in maintaining morale in the Ottoman army.

It is certainly true that enormous numbers of soldiers deserted from the Ottoman army, specifically in 1917–1918, when conditions in the army became almost unbearable. By 1918 the army was undermanned and undersupplied, and faced with vastly superior British manpower and equipment it could manage an orderly retreat at best. But ultimately, the Ottoman Empire – just like Austro-Hungary – lost the war because Germany lost the war, and the fact that its army, composed overwhelmingly of illiterate Muslim villagers, managed to fight off the onslaught of three of the world’s greatest powers for four years, shortly after it had

been defeated by four small Balkan States in a matter of weeks, was a sensational performance. The offensive actions at Sarıkamış and at the Suez Canal were over-ambitious failures, but defensively the performance at Gallipoli, Kut al-Amara and twice at Gaza was much better than expected. That the Ottoman army proved so strong on the defensive is something that cannot be understood without taking into account the religious motivation of the soldiers, which contributed significantly to maintaining morale. In other words: the Jihad, and more generally reference to religion, certainly helped to mobilize and motivate Ottoman society, and it could be argued that the authentic *Ottoman* Jihad described by Aksakal and Haniöglu was a success and that, on the other hand, the more ambitious *German* one was not.

The Arabs, both within the empire and outside, were the prime target of the Ottoman-German Jihad propaganda, as millions of them lived in the vulnerable borderlands of the empire in the south and under French, Italian and British rule in close proximity to the empire. How did they react? This is the question addressed primarily in the contributions by Umar Ryad, Joshua Teitelbaum and Şükrü Haniöglu to this volume.

The remarkable success of the separate campaign targeting the Shi'is of Iraq described by Haniöglu has already been discussed above. Among the Sunni Arabs of the Mashreq and the Arabian peninsula the propaganda had less tangible results. It is true that in the more densely populated and centrally controlled areas of Syria and Palestine the leading Arab families generally stayed loyal to the Ottoman throne until the end, even if some of their members favoured the idea of decentralization. But in the borderlands of the empire, in the areas where the Ottomans had less direct control and had to rely on persuasion and negotiation, the results were less good. The major players of the Arabian peninsula, the Rashidis in the Northern Najd, Ibn Saud to the south, the Hashemites in Mekka, the Idrisids in Asir and Imam Yahya in Yemen all acted on the basis of their own interests, with the Rashidis and Imam Yahya supporting the Ottomans, Ibn Saud maintaining neutrality and the Idrisids and Sharif Huseyn opting for collaboration with Britain. It was the rebellion of the Sharif of Mecca that caused the Ottomans the most headaches, and not just because of its military potential (which was rather limited). As Joshua Teitelbaum shows, the Sharif with British help established a propaganda campaign built on religious argument and he stopped only just short of claiming the caliphate for himself (as he would do in 1924). What rendered his argument effective was the systematic distinction between the empire and caliphate on the one hand and the ruling Committee of Union and Progress on the other,

he depicting the latter as consisting of both unbelievers and Turkish nationalists, who lacked legitimacy and had nothing to offer to Muslims and Arabs.

The one instance where the Jihad, or at least strong religious motivation, may be said to have played a role in supporting the Ottoman war effort in the Arab peninsula did not concern the Arabs. It was the defence of Medina. The beleaguered Ottoman garrison managed to hold on to the city even after it had become an isolated outpost, under the command of a general, Fahrettin Pasha, who had publicly vowed to the Prophet Muhammad that he would never desert him. The tenacity of the Ottoman resistance at Medina, which actually extended beyond the armistice of 30 October 1918, certainly owed something to religious motivation. In that sense it is an extreme example of the strong defensive performance of the Ottoman army referred to above and of the effectiveness of the “Ottoman” Jihad.

As far as the effect of the Jihad proclamation on Arabs outside the empire is concerned, the position of one of the leading Arab intellectuals of his age, Ahmed Rida, as analysed by Umar Ryad in this volume, is illustrative. Rida was a Shi'i Muslim from southern Lebanon, who had become a leading member of the movement for Arab cultural revival with a reputation also in the larger Muslim world. In 1914 he lived in Egypt, and winning over someone like Rida would have been essential if the call for Jihad was to be effective among Arabs abroad. But he was not won over. Essentially Rida saw the war as a power struggle between European states whose conflict was imported into the Middle East. He was not swayed by the Jihad propaganda and assessed the events primarily, even almost exclusively, in terms of the chances they might offer for the establishment of an independent Arab state. For this purpose, he came to see the British as the best hope. Interestingly, his opinion on both the Jihad and World War I in general seems to have come closest to that of Snouck: he deplored the way the “civilised” world of Europe had used its knowledge to produce mass violence and death and he saw the Jihad proclamation as just a cynical cover-up for a materialistic war.

All in all there are plenty of reasons to assess the “German” Jihad aimed at raising the global Muslim community, the *Umma*, against the Entente a failure, but of course such an assessment profits from the benefit of hindsight. In 1914 it was not at all clear that it could not work.

Oppenheim, who authored the key programmatic text of the German Jihad effort, was not someone who had dreamt up these ideas in a study in Berlin. He had lived in Egypt for 15 years before the war, so his assessment that there was deep-rooted resentment against British rule there was based on personal observation and countless conversations

with Egyptians. He was mistaken in thinking the resentment could be translated into active support for the Ottoman caliph, but the potential for rebellion was certainly there, as the immediate post-war period would show. The British took the danger seriously enough to deport quite a few Egyptian nationalists and suspected Ottoman agents to Malta and elsewhere.

In this respect, Ahmad al-Rawi's discussion of John Buchan's *Green-mantle* is interesting, because it shows that as late as the first years of World War I (the book appeared in 1916) a senior figure in British intelligence actually shared the expectations of Max von Oppenheim as far as the mobilizing potential of Islam was concerned. Buchan's book is full of references to a "great stirring in Islam" and the "dried grasses" that "would catch fire if you used the flint and steel of their religion." In an indirect way he seems to express disagreement with Snouck Hurgronje. Where Snouck starts his manifesto by reporting a conversation with a progressive, intellectual Turkish gentleman who condemned religious fanaticism and war (a Turkish equivalent of Ahmad Rida), Buchan's character Sir Walter, a senior British official, is made to say "The ordinary man again will answer that Islam in Turkey is becoming a back number, and that Krupp guns are the new gods. ... Yet – I don't know. I don't quite believe in Islam becoming a back number. ... The Syrian army is as fanatical as the hordes of the Mahdi."

What this shows is that by 1914 fear of a worldwide Jihad was widespread, and that therefore the German hope that it could be an effective weapon did not seem so far-fetched. It was when the Ottomans and Germans actively tried to play the Jihad card that it proved of little practical value, at least in its southern borderlands and beyond the borders. Perhaps it is true to say, as Sultan Abdülhamid did in his memoirs (whose authenticity is doubtful), that "the threat of Jihad was more powerful than Jihad itself."

That is, of course, as true today as it was when the Sultan said it (if he said it). The call for Jihad issued by the "Caliph" Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has had some success. His Islamic State has conquered a number of provincial towns in Syria and Iraq and one major city (Mosul). It has been able to attract thousands of volunteers from all over the world, volunteers who have quite often exercised extreme and demonstrative violence, but, shocking as this may be, this is not what ultimately fuels the fear of Jihad in the western world. It is the uncertainty about the degree of support for the Jihad among the large Muslim communities in European and American countries, the feeling of living on a volcano (a metaphor used by al-Baghdadi himself), that creates fear and that makes the call for Jihad effective. By the same token, a clear rejection of the

Jihad by the large majority of the Muslims in the Western world would show up Abu Bakr's Jihad as an empty threat, just as much as the actual proclamation of Jihad by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed v ultimately deprived the Ottomans of a powerful weapon, the *threat* of a worldwide Muslim rebellion, in World War I.

## Notes

- 1 Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914. The Ottoman Empire and the First World War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, chapter 5.
- 2 For the history of the concept and practice of Jihad see Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History. Doctrines and Practice*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006 [translation of *Le jihad: origines, interprétations, combats*, Paris: Téraèdre, 2004].
- 3 Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, "Heilige Oorlog Made in Germany," *De Gids* 79/1 (1915), 115–147.
- 4 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon, 1978.
- 5 Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War. How World War I Became a Religious Crusade*, New York: HarperOne, 2014.
- 6 Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914*, London: Allan Lane, 2012.
- 7 Jenkins, Op. Cit., 74–85.
- 8 Erik Jan Zürcher, "Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908–1938," in Kemal H. Karpat (ed.), *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, 150–179.
- 9 Sultan Abdülhamid's ban on the import of non-Ottoman Korans is a particularly striking example. Cf: Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Importance of Being Secular: Islam in the Service of the National and Pre-National State," in: C. Kerslake, K. Öktem en P. Robins (ed.), *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity. Conflict and Change in the Twentieth Century*, Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010, 55–68.

