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Reactions to the Ottoman Jihad *fatwa* in the British Empire, 1914-18

John Slight

This chapter examines the multiple reactions to the Ottoman jihad *fatwa* across the British Empire. It begins in Mecca, Islam's holiest city, where thousands of pilgrims gather every year, moves outwards across the Middle East, and then considers territories in Britain's empire that had substantial Muslim populations.¹ This geographical canvas demonstrates how the relationship between Islam and imperialism meant that the war in the Middle East had repercussions far beyond the contested boundaries of this region.² This broad scope also serves to bring into view a rich kaleidoscope of Muslim perspectives from Africa and Asia. Islam and Islamic religious authority was not an abstract monolith; Islam was, and is, made a living faith by the actions of millions of individual Muslims.

Much existing scholarship argues that the Ottoman jihad proclamation had little impact.³ Yet this conclusion of failure, as Eugene Rogan has pointed out, is often measured according to the aims of those behind the jihad proclamation, which was to incite diverse Muslim populations to rebellion against the Allied powers. This meant that cases of actual rebellion and mutiny, which kept Allied officials 'alert to the threat of jihad' throughout the war, have often been overlooked.⁴ In fact, there were some areas where the call to jihad had a marked effect, most notably within the Ottoman Empire itself, among Ottoman soldiers as a tool for mobilisation, and the success of the proclamation among Shi'a Muslims in southern Iraq against the British.⁵ Hew Strachan has argued that, when reviewing the threat of jihad, it is too easy to criticise the British and French for 'taking too seriously a threat that never became substantial'.⁶ Examining the reception of the jihad in the British empire, this chapter argues that in order to gain a greater understanding of the wide reach and relative failure of the jihad among

¹ On the significance of Britain as a ruler of Muslim populations across Africa and Asia, see J. Slight, *The British Empire and the Hajj*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 1-8.

² On the invention of the 'Middle East', see D. Foliard, *Dislocating the Orient: British Maps and the Making of the Middle East, 1854-1921*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017; J. Renton, 'Changing Languages of Empire and the Orient: Britain and the Invention of the Middle East, 1917-1918', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 2007, 645-67.

³ There are numerous studies, but see, for example, D.M. McKale, *War by Revolution: Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of World War I*, Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1998; W.L. Cleveland, 'The Role of Islam as Political Ideology in the First World War', in E. Ingram (ed.), *National and international Politics in the Middle East*, London: Cass, 1985, pp. 84-101.

However, as Jacob Landau has argued, assessing the impact of the jihad and related propaganda is difficult; J. Landau, *Pan-Islam: History and Politics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990, p. 120.

⁴ E. Rogan, 'Rival Jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East, 1914-1918', *Journal of the British Academy*, Vol. 4, 2016, 8.

⁵ See E.-J. Zürcher (ed.), *Jihad and Islam in World War I*, Leiden: Brill, 2016, especially the following contributions: E.-J. Zürcher, 'Introduction: The Ottoman Jihad, the German Jihad and the Sacralisation of War', pp. 13-28; M. Aksakal, 'The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad', pp. 53-70; M. Besikci, 'Domestic Aspects of the Ottoman Jihad', pp. 95-116; M. Sukru Hanoglu, 'Ottoman Jihad or Jihads: The Ottoman Shi'i, the Successful One', pp. 117-34. Also see W.J. Berridge and S. al-Aboody, 'The Battle of Shai'ba, 1915: Ottomanism, British Imperialism and Shia Religious Activism During the Mesopotamian Campaign', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2017, 630-51.

⁶ H. Strachan, *The First World War, Volume I: To Arms*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 703.

Muslims in multiple regions, it is necessary to examine the local circumstances in each territory that mitigated against the jihad, and pay attention to how these interlinked with broader imperial structures.

One important reason why local Muslim political and religious leaders rejected the jihad was the ‘unprecedented global counterpropaganda exercise’ undertaken by the British against the proclamation.⁷ This aimed to discredit the jihad by presenting it as being masterminded by Christian Germany, with the Ottomans as mere ciphers. This campaign was intra-imperial in its scope and methods: officials from Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt, India and Malaya extensively communicated with each other. The campaign involved discussions with Muslim leaders such as the Nizam of Hyderabad, who subsequently played key roles in publicly rejecting the proclamation. A closer analysis of this multi-layered response from British imperial territories supports Cemil Aydin’s argument that the Ottoman and German ‘conviction that [...] Muslims would rebel against Christian rulers reflected a simplistic sense of pan-Islamic identity in the imperial world [...] what the Germans and the Ottomans discovered was that the British [...] had in fact provided leadership worthy of [Muslim] loyalty’.⁸ Jihad did not have a universal appeal among Muslims, and its proclamation did not guarantee an unthinking positive response from those whose faith was Islam.

Despite pre-war examples of religious solidarity with the Ottomans from Muslims across Africa and Asia, notably over the Balkan (1911-13) and Libyan (1911-12) Wars, such solidarity was absent when it came to the 1914 call to jihad.⁹ Although there was undoubted sentiment and reverence for the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph across diverse Muslim societies, this did not extend to taking up arms against extant imperial rulers. Pragmatism trumped religion for many Muslims, for reasons that varied according to their local political situations and histories. In this case, the Sultan-Caliph did not possess a religious authority in practice in a way German and Ottoman officials assumed in theory, as the jihad’s legitimacy was questioned by many Muslim figures on the ground. This questioning, in turn, bolstered the religious authority of local leaders in their communities. Sheer geographical distance from the Ottoman Empire also played a role in some cases. Beyond the Sultan-Caliph and the fate of the Ottomans, the main religious concern for many Muslims when the Ottoman Empire entered the war was what would happen to the Holy Places of Islam, Mecca and Medina? This exercised them more than rejecting Christian imperial rule through armed resistance inspired by the call to jihad.

While there are many complex factors behind the outbreak of conflicts, they ultimately begin from an idea: that taking up arms is the most suitable solution to a particular set of problems. This was one of the reasons behind the proclamation of jihad in 1914, that recourse to jihad would unleash a series of uprisings across the Allied empires. This chapter makes a fresh contribution to the field of global intellectual history from the perspective of imperial and Islamic history, examining the history of a

⁷ T. Harper, ‘Singapore, 1915, and the Birth of the Asian Underground’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 6, 2013, 1789; C. Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: a Global Intellectual History*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017, p. 117.

⁸ Aydin, *Idea of the Muslim World*, pp. 116-17.

⁹ The seminal work is Landau, *Pan-Islam*; two important works on Indian pan-Islam are A. Özcan, *Pan-Islamism: Indian Muslims, the Ottomans and Britain, 1877-1924*, Leiden: Brill, 1997; B. Akcapar, *People’s Mission to the Ottoman Empire: M.A. Ansari and the Indian Medical Mission, 1912-1913*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014.

particular idea – the jihad proclamation – as it left Istanbul and circulated among Muslims across Africa and Asia.¹⁰ As Hew Strachan has argued, ‘Islam was a powerful means of spreading the message’.¹¹ The ‘global turn’ in intellectual history has often neglected analysing religious ideas and texts, especially from outside the Christian tradition, perhaps because these topics have traditionally been the preserve of religious historians and Islamic studies specialists.¹² Furthermore, the chapter contributes to new directions in imperial history that focus on lateral connections and intra-imperial frameworks; the response to the jihad animated such links that were further strengthened throughout the war, and after the war’s conclusion.¹³ The chapter nuances existing understandings about pan-Islamism during the First World War, and illustrates that while concepts such as a jihad proclaimed by the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph had a broad reach, its failure can be best explained by attention to local conditions, charting how these interlinked with regional, transnational, and imperial contexts. Finally, this study reinforces interpretations of the First World War as both an imperial and a global conflict, and the important role that religion played in the war.¹⁴ The Ottoman call to jihad is a rich topic for investigation precisely because it straddles numerous fields of historical scholarship and a wide geographical area.

The Ottoman jihad was proclaimed on 14 November 1914 in Istanbul. It was announced by the *Shaykh al-Islam*, the highest-ranking religious scholar (*ulama*) in the Ottoman Empire, and took the form of a *fatwa*, a learned interpretation of Islamic law. It exhorted Muslims who were subjects of Britain, Russia, and France to rise up against their colonial overlords in support of the Ottoman war effort. The *fatwa* took the form of questions and answers, the questions asked by the Sultan-Caliph and answered, all in the affirmative, by the *Shaykh al-Islam*.¹⁵ The first question affirmed the duty of Muslims to engage in jihad when ‘enemies attack the Islamic world and seize and pillage Islamic countries’. The second question asserted that because Britain, France, and Russia were at war with the Ottomans and intent on ‘annihilating the exalted light of Islam’ it was incumbent on Muslims ruled by these powers to engage in jihad against them. The third question made clear that Muslims who did not take up the jihad would receive divine punishment. The fourth question condemned those fighting and murdering Muslims to burn in eternal hellfire. The last question said it was a great sin

¹⁰ On the field of global intellectual history, see S. Moyn and A. Sartori (eds.), *Global Intellectual History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2013; the editorial statement for the *Journal of Global Intellectual History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2016; S. Gänger and Su Lin Lewis, ‘A World of Ideas: New Pathways in Global Intellectual History, c. 1880–1930’, *Modern Intellectual History*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2013, 347-51. For how this can be applied to Islamic history, see Aydin, *Idea of the Muslim World*.

¹¹ Strachan, *First World War*, p. 704.

¹² See the journal *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* published by Brill.

¹³ S.J. Potter and J. Saha. ‘Global History, Imperial History and Connected Histories of Empire’, *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2015; T.R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008; A. Lester, ‘Imperial Circuits and Networks: Geographies of the British Empire’, *History Compass*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2006, 124-41; T. Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand’s Colonial Past*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2002.

¹⁴ The central work is Strachan, *First World War*; see also H. Strachan, ‘The First World War as a Global War’, *First World War Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2010, 3-14. On religion and the war, see P. Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Changed Religion For Ever*, London: Lion Books, 2014; but there is still a lack of studies on non-Christian experiences.

¹⁵ Ottoman Sultan-Caliph Mohammed V (1909-18), put in power by the Young Turks in 1909 after they deposed Abdulhamid II, was nicknamed *irade makina*, rubber stamp.

to fight against Germany and Austria as they were Ottoman allies, a significant point that weakened the validity of the proclamation in the eyes of many Muslims.¹⁶

The reasons why the jihad was proclaimed have been the subject of much debate. *The Times* of London echoed a contemporary view commonly held by many detractors of the Central Powers: ‘The Turk cannot preach a Holy War when he has exchanged the Fez for a Prussian *Pickelhaube* [...] Islam, as a whole, has not the slightest intention of becoming a pliant tool for the furtherance of German ambition.’¹⁷ To be sure, one component of German plans was to use the jihad to ‘set the East ablaze’, thereby diverting Allied troops away from the European fronts.¹⁸ But Mustafa Aksakal and Mehmet Besikci have convincingly challenged prevailing interpretations among scholars about the centrality of Germany’s role in conceiving the jihad. The jihad was also designed for domestic consumption within the Ottoman Empire. Imams used the proclamation as a tool for military recruitment. Jihad was seen as a military necessity to maintain the religious motivation and morale of Ottoman soldiers, which perhaps contributed to their defensive resilience in multiple campaigns. Jihad was used instrumentally, wherever it was thought to benefit the interests of the empire.¹⁹ This instrumentalisation of jihad during the war, by all the belligerent powers, was an important factor that accounted for both its success and failure in diverse settings.

The Middle East

Mecca attracted pilgrims from around the world every year for the Hajj. During this period, a large proportion of these pilgrims came from territories under various forms of British control. Mecca was therefore an ideal location from which to publicise the jihad proclamation, and it had an effect among some pilgrims. Several hundred Indian pilgrims joined the Ottoman forces after the jihad was announced. Pilgrims who returned to India in the second half of November and December 1914 were searched by police as they disembarked at the Bombay docks. Around thirty ‘inflammatory leaflets’ were found during one search. Muslim employees in Bombay’s Pilgrim Department informed their British employers that illiterate pilgrims kept these tracts because they believed they were excerpts from the Qur’an.²⁰ This detail highlights a key issue in how the jihad was transmitted: given the high level of illiteracy during the period, it was essential to have people who could verbally communicate the meaning of the message to illiterate Muslims.

¹⁶ Translation of Ottoman *fatwa* in R. Peters, *Islam and Colonialism: The Doctrine of Jihad in Modern History*, The Hague: Mouton, 1979, pp. 90-99; G. Lewis, ‘The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad in 1914’, *Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1975, 157.

¹⁷ ‘Turkey as a Combatant’, *The Times*, 31 October 1914, p. 9. See also the important contemporary example of C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Jihad Made in Germany*, London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1915; G.P. Abbott, ‘A Revolt of Islam?’, *Quarterly Review*, Vol. 223, 1915. More recent examinations of the jihad’s genesis are T. Lüdke, *Jihad Made in Germany: Ottoman and German Propaganda and Intelligence Operations in the First World War*, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005; Aksakal, ‘The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad’.

¹⁸ McKale, *War by Revolution*; Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany*; Strachan, *First World War*.

¹⁹ Aksakal, ‘The Ottoman Proclamation of Jihad’; Besikci, ‘Domestic Aspects of the Ottoman Jihad’.

²⁰ Bombay Police report for second half of November 1914 and Bombay Political Report, 16 December 1914, in *The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty*, File 4265/1914 Part 2, L/PS/10/519, IOR, BL.

There were also symbolic actions that sought to bolster the jihad's credibility in light of the Ottoman alliance with Christian Germany. British intelligence agents reported that German consular officials had participated in the proclamation of the jihad at the Umayyad mosque in Damascus. Such actions were 'calculated to give the impression that the German government's representatives were either Moslem or well on the way to becoming so'.²¹ Literate Muslims were the targets of numerous Ottoman propaganda texts that incorporated the jihad proclamation in order to amplify its appeal. One example is an Arabic pamphlet produced in Syria, presumably intended for distribution in South Asia and North Africa. It said India and the countries of North Africa were 'slaves' because they were under Christian rule. Islam's 'degraded' condition was because Muslims were not following the path set by Prophet Muhammad. It was every Muslim's duty in these places to swear to kill four unbelievers. The time was now right to 'expel' unbelievers from Muslim territories; this would be 'easy', because for every unbeliever there were 5-6,000 Muslims in these colonies, and Britain and France were in a 'collapsed' state. Beyond this colourful text there were practical suggestions: 'every private individual can fight with deadly weapons' and Muslims should 'arm small raiding parties'. Religious exhortation was blended with nationalist sentiment: 'Algeria for the Algerians! India for the Indian Muslims! Egypt for the Egyptians!'²²

For the Ottomans, a receptive response to the jihad in Egypt, leading to an anti-British rebellion, was seen as highly desirable. Egypt, a former Ottoman province occupied by Britain in 1882 and hastily turned into a protectorate on 19 December 1914, was firmly in the sights of the Ottoman Army, who wanted to wrest control of the Suez Canal from Britain, breaking its key imperial artery.²³ In order for the jihad to be effective, it required influential public figures to back it. The position of one of the leading Arabic-speaking intellectuals, Rashid Rida, is instructive. Rida was a Shi'i Muslim from southern Lebanon, who was a leading member of the Arab *al-nahda* (renaissance). In 1914, Rida was living in Egypt. Winning over a figure like Rida to the cause would have given the jihad's prospects an important boost, but Rida was unconvinced. In the pages of his respected journal, *al-Manar* (*The Lighthouse*), Rida's writings show that he viewed the war as a European power struggle that had spilled over into the Middle East. He responded to events in the region in terms of the chances they offered for an independent Arab state. To achieve this goal, he saw the British as the best hope. This was not a mainstream view, given the widespread anti-British sentiment in Egypt, but has to be understood in the context of Rida's Greater Syrian background.²⁴

In the realm of religious authority, many leading *ulama* rejected the call for jihad. While this was presented on theological grounds, political calculations also played a part. The imposition of martial law and a surge in British imperial troop numbers from the end of 1914 dampened the attractiveness of rebellion.²⁵ The likely

²¹ McMahon to Grey, 24 November 1914, *The War: German Attempts to Fan Islamic Feeling*, 1915, P 4180/1915, L/PS/11/99, IOR, BL.

²² Arabic pamphlet distributed in Syria, not dated, *The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty*, File 4265/1914 Part 2, L/PS/10/519, IOR, BL.

²³ K.C. Ulrichsen, *The First World War in the Middle East*, London: Hurst, 2014, pp. 99-105.

²⁴ U. Ryad, 'A German "Illusive Love": Rashid Rida's Perceptions of the First World War in the Muslim World', in Zürcher, *Jihad and Islam*, 305-28; E. Tauber, 'Rashid Rida's Political Attitudes During World War I', *The Muslim World*, Vol. 85, Nos. 1-2, 1995, 107-22.

²⁵ Ulrichsen, *First World War*, pp. 99-105.

consequence of a rebellion, in concert with a successful Ottoman attack on Egypt, would have been Egypt's re-absorption into the Ottoman empire. By 1914, Egyptian nationalist sentiment among intellectuals and religious figures was such that many preferred to try to win Egypt for the Egyptians rather than effect a return to the Ottoman fold. It was not only Egyptians whom the Ottomans tried to win over in Egypt. Indian Muslim troops defending the Suez Canal were aware of the jihad proclamation, and there were some desertions from Indian Muslim battalions stationed there.²⁶ However, as was the case with both Egyptian and Indian Muslims, local reactions to the jihad, combined with British policies, largely blunted its impact.

South Asia and Singapore

In 1914, India had the largest Muslim population in the world of some 63 million, and a third of India's army were Muslim; if the Ottoman jihad had found a fertile reception in India, it would have posed a significant challenge to imperial rule and Britain's global military deployments. Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India, reacted to the initial Ottoman entry into the war at the beginning of November 1914 by stating that India was part of the *dar al-Islam* (house of Islam), which meant Muslims were obligated to not oppose their rulers; that Muslims in India were free to practice their religion; and that Britain's main concern in light of the wartime situation was the safety and security of Mecca and Medina, Islam's Holy Cities. Hardinge had been considering the British Raj's response to such a scenario since the outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914. He issued a circular to Indian Muslim princes outlining the probability that the Sultan-Caliph would call Indian Muslims to a jihad if the Ottoman empire entered the war, and that if this occurred, the princes should publicly 'declare England's cause is right and just and why the Caliph's appeal should be disregarded'.²⁷ The role of Indian Muslim princely rulers was seen as vital, and the Nizam of Hyderabad's declaration was widely circulated, given his status as ruler of the largest Muslim princely state in India. There were tangible benefits to making such proclamations, in the Nizam's case his elevation to 'premier' Indian Muslim prince.²⁸ While the stance taken by these major Muslim figures undoubtedly carried weight, it was reactions at a more local level across India that were equally significant and warrant greater attention.

Public meetings of Muslims occurred across India which affirmed Muslim loyalty towards Britain and rejected the Ottoman entry into the war and subsequent jihad. British officials and Indian Muslim leaders and notables orchestrated some of these, but many were convened spontaneously. These meetings often resulted in a public declaration that was published and also circulated verbally, which appears to have set off a snowball effect across India. Given the language of these declarations, which in many cases repeated the public proclamations of leading Muslim figures such as the Aga Khan, their spontaneity is perhaps doubtful, although their sincerity is a more open question.²⁹ The responses from several thousand locations across the sub-continent, preserved in over 1,200 pages of files in the India Office archives, show a remarkable geographical spread across India.³⁰ The range of groups represented in

²⁶ Slight, *Empire and the Hajj*, p. 172.

²⁷ Özcan, *Pan-Islam*, pp. 176-79.

²⁸ Özcan, *Pan-Islam*, pp. 176-79.

²⁹ Rogan, 'Rival Jihads', 7.

³⁰ Documents in The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, Parts 1 and 2, L/PS/10/518 and 519, IOR, BL. Ceylon's small Muslim community published its own resolution of loyalty in the *Ceylon*

these loyalty documents is also striking, from mosque congregations to the Headmaster and students of the Government School and the Islam Match Manufacturing Company, both in Ahmedabad, the All India Muslim Ladies Conference in Allahabad, and the Muslim employees of the Burma Mines Company.³¹ This phenomenon was not restricted to British India or the British Empire, and occurred in the French Empire as well. In December 1914, the *Revue du Monde Musulman* published a series of loyalty addresses by Muslim leaders and religious scholars aimed at French Muslim subjects, that specifically protested against ‘the proclamation of holy war at the instigation of the Germans’.³²

A recurrent theme in these declarations stressed Muslim loyalty to the British Crown because of ‘religious freedom’ under British rule, supported in some cases by *fatawa* from local *ulama*. The Nawab of Rampur proclaimed to his subjects that during wartime it was important for them to realise “the numerous blessings of peace” they had enjoyed as result of British rule. Scholars at the Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh cited examples of *hadiths* where Prophet Muhammad said that his followers should be obedient and loyal to a government that tolerated the performance of its subjects’ religious duties.³³ These declarations directly refuted the assertion in the second question of the jihad *fatwa* that accused the Allies of repressing Islam in their colonies.

A further prominent theme was the view that the Ottomans proclaimed the jihad because they had ‘fallen prey to the evil influences and machinations’ of Germany, perhaps vital in dampening its religious legitimacy. Among educated Indian Muslims in particular there was a keen awareness of Germany and Kaiser Wilhelm II’s record towards Islam, which further dulled the call to jihad when it came. A commentator in the *Islamic Mail* wrote of how ‘we in India always believed Kaiser to be an inveterate enemy of Islam and no Muslim will ever forget the words he spoke in addressing African missionaries to wipe out Islam which he said was the deadliest enemy of the Christian faith’.³⁴ Rafiuddin Ahmad, a member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly, tabled a resolution in December 1914 that further castigated German sensitivity towards religion in general: ‘Can the experience of last few weeks lead us to expect that Germany would respect in any degrees the religious susceptibility of any community? The wholesale destruction of sacred edifices in Belgium and France [Louvain and Reims] is a full answer to this question, the true interests of Islam are safer in the hand of the Allies rather than under the heel of military despotism.’³⁵ The Nawab of Dujana’s statement was more damning about the consequences of Ottoman actions: ‘no sane Mohamedan will have now anything to do with her.’³⁶ Ottoman credibility and prestige

Government Gazette. Some officials were sceptical of these loyalty statements given the sheer volume of them: ‘Too many publications of indications of Mohammedan loyalty rather suggest that that loyalty has been regarded as doubtful.’ Margin note, 10 December 1914, CO323/644, TNA.

³¹ The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Parts 1 and 2, L/PS/10/518 and 519, IOR, BL.

³² War Office to Colonial Office, 2 June 1916, CO323/719, TNA.

³³ Nawab of Rampur to Government of India, 4 November 1914, Proclamation from Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh, to Government of India, 10 November 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 1, L/PS/10/518, IOR, BL.

³⁴ *Islamic Mail*, 11 October 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 1, L/PS/10/518, IOR, BL.

³⁵ Resolution passed by the Bombay Legislative Assembly, 8 December 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 2, L/PS/10/519, IOR, BL.

³⁶ Statement of Nawab of Dujana State, Punjab, 6 January 1915, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 1, L/PS/10/518, IOR, BL.

among a number of Indian Muslims were severely damaged by association with their German ally. The jihad was seen as invalid.

A British policy that played a vitally important role in countering the jihad was Indian Viceroy Hardinge's declaration on 2 December 1914 that Mecca and Medina, the Holy Cities of Islam, would be immune from military action by British forces and would be guaranteed independence after the war. Originally conceived by an Indian Muslim civil servant, one official wrote it was 'a trump card' in the British counter-propaganda campaign to the jihad.³⁷ Virtually every subsequent expression of loyalty cites this assurance from the Viceroy before going on to denounce the Ottoman jihad, asserting that the war was not a religious one, and therefore concluding the Sultan-Caliph was wrong to proclaim jihad. The safety of the Holy Places was a key concern of Indian Muslims throughout the war.

Indian Muslims were far from a monolithic group, and a wide variety of non-Sunni Muslims also rejected the jihad for theological and political reasons based on their historic and current circumstances. Several Shi'a declarations of loyalty stated that jihad was forbidden in their interpretation of Islam, based on their understanding that the Mahdi, the hidden twelfth Imam in their tradition, was the only figure qualified to make such a declaration.³⁸ The leader of the Ahmadiyya community, Mahmud Ahmad, wrote that loyalty to the government was a condition of initiation into his sect, and that the founder of the Ahmadis, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, had set out that the Ottoman Sultan held no religious capacity at all.³⁹ The Aga Khan, spiritual head of the Ismaili Muslims who lived in South Asia and across the world, wrote: 'I order all those who follow me to be loyal to King-Emperor [...] since my grandfather came to India there has always been sincere attachment and friendship with the British Raj.' This had widespread consequences in places far removed from the war. Ten Indian Ismailis walked into the British Consulate in Lourenço Marques in Portuguese East Africa to deliver a letter of loyalty, and Indian Ismailis from northern Madagascar also delivered a similar letter to the British consulate in Antananarivo.⁴⁰ While it was always unlikely these minority groups would have supported the jihad, their solid rejection of it illustrates how such a reaction enjoyed a wide purchase among the various interpretations of Islam practised among Indian Muslims in South Asia and the Indian diaspora.

A number of Indian Muslim writers argued that they were not bound to obey what the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph ordered them to do. Some drew analogies to the English break with the Catholic Church and Pope in Rome. Others rejected the validity of the Ottoman Caliphate, claiming that the true Caliphate ended after the first four Rightly Guided Caliphs in AD 661.⁴¹ Muslim scholars at Aligarh debated the validity

³⁷ Margin Note, P 4947, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 1, L/PS/10/518, IOR, BL.

³⁸ J. Jones, *Shi'a Islam in Colonial India: Religion, Community and Sectarianism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 165 and 176.

³⁹ Declaration by Mahmud Ahmad, 10 November 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 2, L/PS/10/519, IOR, BL.

⁴⁰ British Consul, Madagascar to Foreign Office, 27 November 1914, enclosing proclamation from Aga Khan, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 1, L/PS/10/518, IOR, BL.

⁴¹ Letter from Sayyid D.H. Ahmad, *Statesman*, 10 November 1914; Editorial, *Statesman*, 7 November 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 1, L/PS/10/518, IOR, BL.

of the Sultan's claim to be regarded as Caliph.⁴² Leading Muslim religious scholar Abdul Bari, no friend of the British, said that while Indian Muslims' souls were bound to the Caliph, they should be ready to sacrifice their bodies for the Raj.⁴³ Reactions to the jihad brought out in some cases a growing notion of Indian Muslims' priorities as being the Indian nation rather than the wider Muslim *umma*; one wrote of how Indian Muslims had to look after their own interests and take care of 'Islam in their own country'.⁴⁴ All these responses combined to produce a set of compelling reasons why the jihad did not deserve support, despite widespread sympathy for the Ottomans.

These views were not unanimous, and there were expressions of support for the jihad, which drew harsh responses from the authorities. A fakir named Wajid Ali Shaykh said in public in a small town in Bihar that Muslims should join the Ottomans and Germans. Promptly arrested, then released on bail, he was subsequently judged as 'of unsound mind' and 'committed to jail for medical observation'.⁴⁵ The authorities in Bihar were also on the trail of one Ismail Linton, a British convert to Islam who had been a civil engineer employed by the government but dismissed because of his religious conversion. He was suspected of being an Ottoman spy and circulating jihad propaganda texts. The files do not record whether Linton was tracked down by officialdom.⁴⁶ These cases are noteworthy in that they are presented in the official record as unusual, deviations from a consensus that rejected the jihad and supported the British.

Perhaps the best summation of what might tentatively be called a consensus among Indian Muslims was a notice from Delhi's leading *ulama*: 'the best course for Indian Muslims is to sit patiently and calmly and pray to God that hostilities may subside.' An editorial in the leading pan-Islamic paper *The Comrade*, critical of British rule and sympathetic to the Ottomans, said that as long as the Holy Places were 'free from hostile menace', Indian Muslims should support Britain against the Ottomans.⁴⁷ These were resigned views of a situation that few had wished for.

In assessing the sincerity of these responses, and how far they were a pragmatic, expedient response to political realities in India, several facts are important. There was a powerful folk memory of British savagery in suppressing the 1857 Rebellion. Since the 1870s, leading Muslim figures such as Syed Ahmad Khan and, more recently, organisations such as the Muslim League, had repeatedly advised loyalty to Britain as the best way of improving Muslims' position in India. A revolt inspired by Islam would have probably resulted in the majority Hindu population turning on Indian Muslims. Finally, although there were some Muslims in the various Indian revolutionary

⁴² Report on Muslim feeling in the first half of December 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 2, L/PS/10/519, IOR, BL.

⁴³ Statement by Abdul Bari, undated, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 1, L/PS/10/518, IOR, BL.

⁴⁴ 'Mr M. Haque's Appeal', *The Englishman*, Calcutta, 5 November 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 1, L/PS/10/518, IOR, BL.

⁴⁵ Report from Bihar and Orissa, 2 December 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 2, L/PS/10/519, IOR, BL.

⁴⁶ Report from Bihar and Orissa, 2 December 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 2, L/PS/10/519, IOR, BL.

⁴⁷ Özcan, *Pan-Islam*, p. 178; 'Editorial', *Comrade*, 7 November 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 2, L/PS/10/519, IOR, BL.

organisations active in this period, Muslims were in no position to revolt – they were unprepared and had no disciplined armed force.⁴⁸

Indian Muslims who did form a disciplined armed force were those in the Indian Army, and the mutiny of the 5th Light Infantry on 15 February 1915 in Singapore was initially seen by some as evidence of how far the jihad proclamation had travelled. The regiment was entirely Muslim, and for two days the British lost control of their island fortress. Once the mutiny was crushed, 202 men were convicted, and forty-three were executed. But a report into the incident found no evidence of any concerted conspiracy, nor any Ottoman or German connection. The revolt was attributed to the unit's indiscipline, divisions among British and Indian officers, and the British commander's failings.⁴⁹

However, as Tim Harper has persuasively argued, there was more to this event than the official report found. Letters home from Indian troops in Singapore showed common tropes of jihad propaganda: 'And the war is increasing day by day. There is no decrease. Germany has become Mohammedan. His name has been given as Haji Mohammed William Kaiser German. And his daughter has been married to the eldest prince of the Sultan of Turkey.'⁵⁰ An Indian preacher at Kampong Java Mosque, Nur Alam Shah, venerated as a Sufi teacher by some of the Indian Muslim soldiers, promised the arrival of a German warship and prayed 'for the victory of Islam and the return of Islamic power'. Shah hid mutineers, disguised them in Malay clothes and chided them for not bringing him arms for a general rising. Shah was one of the men executed by the British.⁵¹

The views of men like Shah who aided the mutineers did not emerge in a vacuum. Malay newspapers, such as *Neracha*, extensively reported on the Balkan Wars and encouraged support for the Ottomans in Malaya. *Neracha* was widely read and an important determinant of literate Malay public opinion. Although it stopped publication after the First World War began, as a result of Britain cutting off news sources reporting on the war against the Ottomans, its ideas had percolated through literate Malay society.⁵² Furthermore, from December 1914 the Ottoman consulate in Jakarta had become the centre for disseminating jihad material in South and South-East Asia.⁵³ While there is no evidence that those involved in the Singapore Mutiny cited the Ottoman jihad, this event does attest to how in specific localities there were some who were prepared to oppose British imperial rule for religious reasons. And when, in a place like Singapore, far from the front lines, anti-British armed action occurred, men who supported it broke cover and showed their hand. These figures were in stark contrast to the Malay Sultans, who, like their Indian peers, issued similar proclamations of loyalty and rejection of the Ottoman jihad, with the Sultan of Kelantan ordering prayers in his Sultanate's mosques for a British victory in the war.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Özcan, *Pan-Islam*, p. 182.

⁴⁹ Harper, 'Singapore, 1915', 1784-85; Aydin, *Idea of the Muslim World*, p. 115.

⁵⁰ Harper, 'Singapore, 1915', 1789.

⁵¹ Harper, 'Singapore, 1915', 1790.

⁵² M. Redzuan Othman, 'The Ottoman's War with the Europeans (1912-1914): A Paradigm Shift in the Development of Malay Political Thought', *Jebat*, Vol. 23, 1995, 89-96.

⁵³ Sukru Hanoglu, 'Ottoman Jihad or Jihads', p. 122.

⁵⁴ Sultan of Kelantan to British Adviser, Kota Baru, 11 February 1915, Addresses of Loyalty from the Sultans of Johore, Selangor, Perak, Kedah, Trengganu and Brunei, CO323/701, TNA.

Oman and Somaliland

On the western side of the Indian Ocean, the case of the British quasi-protectorate of Oman demonstrates how the Ottoman jihad assumed an explanatory power in relation to wartime events in the Sultanate. Since May 1913, there had been a rebellion by the Imam of the Ibadis and tribes who supported him against the British-supported Sultan Taimur, who ruled Muscat and the coast. The rebels opposed Taimur's reliance on British military protection, and agreements that he signed with Britain to suppress the arms trade and slavery.⁵⁵ The Ibadī movement, which pre-dates the beginning of Shi'a Islam and the emergence of the four main Sunni schools of law, arose from opposition to the third Rightly Guided Caliph Uthman. Significantly, Ibadis do not believe that there should be one Caliph for all Muslims. After some early successes, the rebels decided to attempt to capture the Omani capital Muscat, thinking that the British position was weak, given the manpower demands of the war. On 11 January 1915 the Imam's forces and rebel tribes, some 3,000 men strong, attacked the British Indian Army line outside Muscat and were resoundingly defeated.⁵⁶

Both Sultan Taimur and British officials believed the attack had been instigated by enemy jihad propaganda, although the reports do not align with the timings of the Ottoman jihad. From July to October 1914, German agents from Dar es-Salaam and Bahrain had apparently 'actively engaged' with the rebels. In June 1914 two German agents from Dar es-Salaam had visited the Imam, and in July 1914 Ottoman emissaries from Basra and Istanbul had stayed in Muscat in order to 'disseminate German propaganda'.⁵⁷ Sultan Taimur informed the British that a number of Omanis were working for the Germans and were in contact with the Imam's forces.⁵⁸ German propaganda was disseminated to Oman from German East Africa. Imperial official Gertrude Bell wrote from Iraq in a despatch that 'evidence of extensive intrigue by German agents in the interior was not wanting. It was generally believed by the tribes that the Germans were victorious, that the Kaiser had embraced Islam, and that the moment was propitious for driving the Sultan and the English from the country'.⁵⁹ However, no concrete evidence to support this assertion appears in any of the extant British files. The British report on the attack on Muscat cited the 'idea of it [the rebellion] being a religious war' as an aggravating cause, with the background of the Ottoman entry into the war as helping to 'stimulate' the Imam's followers.⁶⁰ In March 1917, three Ottoman agents from Yemen arrived in Oman 'trying to stir up the Omanis to attack the British'. However, these calls fell on deaf ears, probably because of the military defeat suffered in January 1915.⁶¹

⁵⁵ R. el-Solh (ed.), *Sultanate of Oman, 1918-1939*, Reading: Ithaca, 2000, pp. 7-9.

⁵⁶ *Administration Report of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the year 1914*, Chapter VIII, Maskat Agency, p.41, IOR/R/15/1/711, BL.

⁵⁷ Lieutenant-Colonel R.A.E. Benn, Political Agent and Consul, Muscat to Foreign Secretary to Government of India, 25 January 1915, enclosing Report from Benn to Knox, Resident, Bushire, 25 January 1915, FO371/2416, TNA.

⁵⁸ el-Solh, *Sultanate of Oman*, p. 9.

⁵⁹ G. Bell, *The Arab War*, London: Golden Cockerel Press, 1940, p. 17. Reprint of original dispatch, 'The Rebellion against the Sultan of Muscat', in *Arab Bulletin*, 26 October 1916. Bell probably got the information on tribal attitudes to Germany from Benn's report, cited above.

⁶⁰ Report from Benn to Knox, FO371/2416, TNA.

⁶¹ *Administration Report of the Persian Gulf Political Residency for the year 1918*, Chapter VIII, Maskat Agency, p.47, R/15/1/712, IOR, BL.

The belief held by Sultan Taimur and British officials that the attack on Muscat was inspired by the Ottoman jihad was probably due to its timing, less than two months after it was proclaimed in Istanbul. Jihad propaganda was probably circulating in Oman. But the assessments of Taimur and the British downplayed the very local aims of the rebellion, which consisted of demands including lifting the ban on arms purchases, allowances for tribal chiefs, removing corrupt officials, and a ban on alcohol and tobacco sales.⁶² The decision to attack Muscat may have been prompted by an assessment that Britain's military situation in Oman was weaker given the demands of the war, so this was a propitious time to remove Taimur, but it was not down to a dogmatic adherence to the Ottoman jihad.

Southwards across the Arabian Sea, the case of British Somaliland offers an instructive parallel to Oman. Local circumstances did interlink with the wider wartime and imperial context, yet not to the extent that an already existing jihad was subsumed into the wider Ottoman war effort.⁶³ British intelligence in Sudan reported that Muhammad Abdullah Hassan, called the 'Mad Mullah' by British officials, was 'being incited to action by Turkish emissaries from Abyssinia'. The report said that there was an Ottoman envoy in Hassan's retinue, and Hassan would fly the Ottoman flag from his fort once he marched on Berbera, the capital of British Somaliland. British officials were convinced that Hassan had taken up the Ottoman call for jihad. In fact, Hassan appealed to the Ottoman commander at Lahej in Yemen for help in his campaigns, and an agreement signed by Hassan's representative put his followers under Ottoman protection - theoretically.⁶⁴ A document in the British Colonial Office archives that circulated in the Somali hinterland repeated the Ottoman jihad proclamation and added that Somalis should join Hassan. The Somali leader did entertain a certain veneration for the Ottoman Sultan, as seen in his panegyric poem:

And he [Hassan] turns to his dear friend
Taking refuge with that pillar of religion
Sultan of every victory
Who lashes unbelievers
Breaks their power⁶⁵

Although Hassan had limited contact with the Ottomans and regarded the Ottoman Sultan as a religious figurehead, it had little impact on his movement.

Hassan's jihad had its own local context. He had been carrying out his jihad since 1899 under the aegis of the *Salihyya* order, founded by Muhammad Salih in Mecca in the late nineteenth century. This was part of a cluster of 'neo-Sufi' orders,

⁶² Mentioned in a Report from British Agent Muscat to Cox, Basra, 28 September 1915, R/15/6/46, IOR, BL.

⁶³ Lieutenant-Colonel G.H. Summers, 'Somaliland', in C. Lucas (ed.), *The Empire at War, Volume 4: Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925, pp. 565-70. A group of Ogaden Somalis proclaimed their loyalty to Britain but then attacked a government post at Serenli and murdered the officer in charge, CO323/719, TNA.

⁶⁴ Aw Jaamac Cumar Ciise, *Taariikhdiid Daraawishta iyo Sayid Maxamad Cabdulle Xasan*, Mogadishu: Wasaaradda Hiddaha iyo Tacliinta Sare, Akadeemiyaha Dhaqanka, 1976, pp. 241-45, quoted in S.S. Samatar, *Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 134.

⁶⁵ Quoted from *Somaliya*, Vol. 3, 1967, 28-29, in B.G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p. 192.

influenced by the Islamic revival and reform movement, which preached a return to a purer form of the faith. Hassan's mission was a struggle against the supposedly lax religious practices of Somalis and to revive their 'Islamic spirit'.⁶⁶ Hassan, an agent of a Sufi order with the agenda of reviving a purer Islam, used the traditional religious strategy of jihad as a response to Christian rule and 'impure' Islam as practised in Somalia. The Ottoman jihad was irrelevant to the Somali religious landscape, and Hassan's links with the Ottomans were short-term tactical moves that had no practical results for either party.

Africa

The African case studies examined here provide further significant evidence of how far the jihad proclamation travelled, its varied effects on Muslim populations, the intra-imperial nature of the British response, and the local circumstances under which the vast majority of Muslims, with some exceptions, rejected the Ottoman jihad. Sudan's Governor-General Sir Reginald Wingate paid close attention to colonial policies towards Muslims in other British imperial territories, and was often in close correspondence with the leaders of British colonies with Muslim populations. Consequently, after learning of Indian Viceroy Hardinge's work gathering statements of support from Indian Muslim leaders, he copied this policy in Sudan. After Britain and the Ottomans went to war, Wingate gathered together Muslim notables in Khartoum and stressed Britain's friendliness towards Islam. He was under no illusion about the appeal of the Ottoman jihad, as he believed that the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph 'was held in the highest veneration' by the Sudanese.⁶⁷ Sudan's important religious figures rallied around the British. For example, Sayyid al-Mirghani, whose lineage could be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad, made a public statement that the jihad 'was against the interests of Muslims'.⁶⁸ The Sudanese Muslim politico-religious elite's rejection of the Ottoman jihad has to be seen in a broader context. Since Britain's conquest of Sudan in 1896-99, British policy had been to co-opt what they termed 'orthodox Islam', which included the *ulama*, and Sufi orders, such as the Mahdi's own Samaniyya order, into imperial administrative structures.⁶⁹ Despite the relative fragility of British rule, the recent memory of the brutal British conquest among Sudanese, British policies towards religious figures, and the political calculations of important Sudanese religious figures, combined to mitigate against the Ottoman call to jihad.

Further west, however, British concerns over the Ottoman jihad led to a dramatically different response: the invasion of Darfur in May 1916, the subsequent overthrow and death of its Sultan Ali Dinar, and Darfur's formal annexation to Sudan. At the end of 1914, Ali Dinar refused to pay his usual annual tribute to Khartoum. This coincided with the Ottoman jihad proclamation, and from summer 1915, Wingate had developed the conviction that Ali Dinar was part of a plot engineered by the Sanussiyya Sufi order, the Ottomans and Germany to invade Sudan – an assessment never verified

⁶⁶ A. Sheikh-Abdi, *Divine Madness: Mohammed Abdullah Hassan (1856-1920)*, London: Zed Books, 1993, p. 58.

⁶⁷ Wingate to Hardinge, 13 November 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 1, L/PS/10/518, IOR, BL.

⁶⁸ Wingate to Hardinge, 13 November 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 1, L/PS/10/518, IOR, BL.

⁶⁹ M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1934*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 121-23 and 164-65.

in multiple intelligence reports. This conviction was exacerbated by Wingate's insecurity about Britain's ability to hold Sudan, given the small size of the military force there, and his own personal desire for a military campaign that would be his personal contribution to the wider war effort. Wingate and his senior officials had internally decided on military action before Ali Dinar did in fact declare a jihad. The Ottoman leader Enver Pasha sent a letter to Ali Dinar inviting him to join the Ottoman jihad, but, significantly, this only reached the Sultan one year after it was written, by which point Ali Dinar had declared his own jihad. While an invasion force was assembled, British intelligence noted there were no war preparations among Ali Dinar's army.⁷⁰

When the British invaded Darfur, the Sultan's jihad had little effect on Darfuris; the Sultan's army was divided, and only a few hundred soldiers supported the Sultan. The civilian population was more pre-occupied with daily life than attacking the British. Wingate and British officials in Sudan misunderstood Ali Dinar's motivations and were wrong about his association with the Ottoman jihad. Ali Dinar was consistently hostile to foreigners, Muslim and non-Muslim. His jihad was a projection of piety, designed to reject Christian suzerainty over Darfur. Motivated by what he saw as his religious duty to resist the British, there were also political motives for his defiance; like the Imam in Oman, he thought the British were pre-occupied because of the wider war. British intelligence officials searched in vain among the documents in the Sultan's palace at El-Fasher for any evidence that linked his jihad to the Ottoman one.⁷¹ In the final analysis, the Ottoman call to jihad may have had some catalysing effect on Ali Dinar, but any concrete evidence was lost in the fog of war and propaganda.

Moving southwards, the local context of German colonialism in East Africa created a distinct set of reactions to the Ottoman jihad. German bases in East Africa enabled the dissemination of propaganda containing the jihad proclamation, although this was often intercepted in Uganda on its way to Sudan, French West Africa, the Belgian Congo, and Darfur.⁷² Those involved in distributing this propaganda did so for various reasons; the ex-Sultan of Zanzibar, Sayyid Khalifa, wished to rule Zanzibar again, and non-Muslim Greek traders were paid to act as messengers. The jihad propaganda was in Arabic and Swahili, signed by the Governor of German East Africa, Heinrich Schnee, and Sayyid Khalifa. In 1915 and 1916, printed proclamations with Green Flags were dispatched to French West Africa, Darfur, and Italian Eritrea. The proclamations said that the jihad required of all believers was active resistance to the Allies, and promised the establishment of an Islamic empire under German protection.⁷³

The circulation of these texts did not go unmet by Britain and its Muslim allies. The Sultan of Zanzibar, in his proclamation of loyalty aimed at Muslims on the East African mainland, reiterated how Britain was a 'great friend and protector of Islam [...] Great Britain is the greatest Mohamedan power in the world and her care for Moslems and our faith has never failed' and warned against people believing 'lies' spread by

⁷⁰ J. Slight, 'British Perceptions and Responses to Sultan Ali Dinar of Darfur, 1915-16', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 2010, 237-60.

⁷¹ Slight, 'British Perceptions'.

⁷² Landau, *Pan-Islam*, pp. 140-42.

⁷³ Landau, *Pan-Islam*, pp. 140-42.

Germany. The Sultan pointed to Germany's record in East Africa, how they entered mosques with their shoes on and were scornful of Muslims. He stated that over 70,000 Muslim soldiers were fighting for Britain and the only hope for Islam was a British victory. To bolster his proclamation, the Sultan cited Sayyid al-Mirghani and the Egyptian Shaykh Yusuf al-Hindi's proclamations of loyalty and rejection of the jihad. The Sultan's letter was widely distributed in British colonies across Africa, and read out in villages by local leaders.⁷⁴ The Sultan acted for pragmatic reasons as well; he had no wish to be deposed if any rebellion dislodged British rule. Again, local circumstances were important, with the Sultan's proclamation using specific examples from German rule in East Africa to argue that people should reject the call to jihad.

Around Lake Nyasa in south-central Africa, there was a more protracted campaign on both sides over the jihad. In July 1915, a man called Ndelemani was captured on the Portuguese shore of Lake Nyasa, with dynamite sticks, fuses, a Green Flag with a Red Crescent, English silver, and a letter from Count Falkenstein, a German officer in the East Africa campaign, to a Muslim religious leader in the colony, *Mwalimu* (teacher) Issa Chikoka, urging him to join the jihad by attacking the British during Ramadan. Falkenstein's letter said those fighting for Britain would be struck with the curse of God. Ndelemani was tried and shot in front of key Muslim figures in Nyasaland. Officials in the colony warned the incident was a close-run thing, given the high status of the letter's intended recipient. However, this assumes Chikoka would have been receptive to the exhortation, which is open to question. The incident heightened colonial suspicion of Muslims in Nyasaland. One British official toured the eastern shore of Lake Nyasa, reminding people of Ndelemani's fate. In the process, he caught Muhammad Ali, an Arab from Aden, distributing jihad propaganda, and promptly expelled him. In 1916, British forces captured German East African administrative records dated from 1913 in the town of Moshi. The documents apparently showed the antipathy of the German administration to Islam, with proposals for policies such as the prohibition of circumcision and the encouragement of pig-breeding in Muslim areas. These were forwarded to British officials across eastern Africa who were ordered to tell local leaders about them.⁷⁵ There were multiple propaganda and counter-propaganda campaigns based around this material until the end of the war.⁷⁶ While none of these events resulted in a jihad in this area, it is notable that they continued throughout the war's duration.

This chapter's final example of reactions to the Ottoman jihad comes from West Africa. Nigeria had the largest number of Muslim subjects in a British African territory. Arabic letters calling for jihad in the Sultan-Caliph's name were found in mosques in northern Nigeria, although it is more likely that these came from northern Africa rather than directly from Istanbul.⁷⁷ Lord Lugard, Governor-General of Nigeria during the war, had been in correspondence with Wingate and Hardinge, and instituted a similar counter-propaganda campaign to the jihad as in India and Sudan. Lugard had the Aga

⁷⁴ Proclamation by the Sultan of Zanzibar, 2 March 1915, *The War: Muslim Feeling: Expressions of Loyalty*, File 4265/1914 Part 2, L/PS/10/519, IOR, BL.

⁷⁵ One example from many is from Malindi, British East Africa, 21 September 1916, CO323/703, TNA.

⁷⁶ R.C. Greenstein, 'The Nyasaland Government's Policy Towards African Muslims 1900-1925', in R.J. Macdonald (ed.), *From Nyasaland to Malawi: Studies in Colonial History*, Nairobi: East African Publishing, 1975, pp. 160-66.

⁷⁷ A. Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, London: Longman, 1979, p. 149.

Khan's public declaration of loyalty translated into Arabic and distributed across northern Nigeria, which stated: 'Turkey has now disastrously shown herself to be a tool in German hands.'⁷⁸ Lugard reported that letters of loyalty had come in from all the northern Nigerian Muslim emirates as well as the small Muslim communities in southern Nigeria, and from diaspora communities such as Tripolitarians living in Lagos. The Emir of Bornu made an important theological point in his letter of loyalty when he stated: 'We the people of Bornu, are of the school of ibn Malik [the Maliki *fiqh*, school of jurisprudence] and we know that our country is *dar al-Islam* and not *dar al-Harb* (house of war), we are free to worship in our own way and our religion is not interfered with.' Crucially, this made the Ottoman jihad invalid to adherents of the Maliki school of law, which meant the majority of Nigerian Muslims.⁷⁹ In nearby Sierra Leone, Muslims sent a letter to the Governor of Sierra Leone after a meeting that also rejected the Ottoman action on theological grounds, 'unjustified neither by the Koran or Hadith, which regulate the deeds and actions of all true Muslims. We therefore cannot view the war [...] in the light of jihad.'⁸⁰ The Ottoman Sultan-Caliph had little religious authority in Nigeria, as the only Caliph who mattered to Nigerian Muslims was the Sultan-Caliph of Sokoto. The fact that Islam was far from monolithic, and contained a rich diversity of interpretations on a huge number of topics, again saw the Ottoman jihad's effectiveness swiftly diminished in West Africa.

Beyond this theological interpretation, it was unlikely that most Nigerian Muslims would have taken up the call for two pragmatic reasons. Firstly, the structure of imperial rule (later formulated as indirect rule by Lugard) had created a 'community of interests' between Muslim emirs and the British.⁸¹ These rulers had much to lose, especially in terms of power and wealth, and little to gain by resisting British rule. For some emirs the calculus was particularly clear, as German agents in neighbouring Cameroon had promised all to restore all emirs who had been deposed by the British.⁸² Secondly, there was the brutal examples of the recent British conquest of Northern Nigeria, the ruthless suppression of resistance to British rule, and, significantly, the response of Lord Lugard to a Mahdist revolt in 1906. To suppress the revolt, and act as a deterrent to future revolts, Lugard ordered the annihilation of the Nigerian village of Satiru in 1906, which saw 6,000 villagers massacred, with prisoners summarily beheaded and their heads stuck on poles.⁸³ Like the cases of Sudan and India, although British rule in some respects was fragile and open to contestation, the often recent memories of British conquest or brutal suppression of revolt meant that deciding whether to resist British rule was a judgement that required serious consideration. Despite this, there were numerous small-scale uprisings during the war. But these arose from resistance to the imposition of various British administrative practices rather than adherence to the Ottoman jihad.⁸⁴

⁷⁸ Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, p. 141.

⁷⁹ Lord Lugard to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 31 December 1914, The War: Muslim Feeling; Expressions of Loyalty, File 4265/1914 Part 2, L/PS/10/519, IOR, BL.

⁸⁰ Representative of Sierra Leone Muslims to Governor of Sierra Leone, undated, L/PS/11/85/P4676, IOR, BL.

⁸¹ Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, p. 139; A. Osuntokun, 'Nigeria's Colonial Government and the Islamic Insurgency in French West Africa, 1914-1918', *Cahiers d'Études des Africaines*, Vol. 15, No. 57, 1975, 86.

⁸² Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, p. 143.

⁸³ B. Vandervort, *Wars of Imperial Conquest in Africa, 1830-1914*, London: UCL Press, 2006, p. 187.

⁸⁴ Osuntokun, *Nigeria*, p. 144; A. Osuntokun, 'Disaffection and revolts in Nigeria during the First World War, 1914-1918', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1971, 171-92.

Conclusion

The Ottoman call to jihad failed to resonate with the majority of Muslims in the British Empire, given their local circumstances – religious and political alike. For all the evidence and scholarship on pan-Islam, in the case of the Ottoman jihad, most Muslims in Africa and Asia were not persuaded by what was, in effect, a call for concerted armed action in religious solidarity with the Ottomans. The pragmatic reactions of many Muslims, combined with British counter-propaganda operations, were largely effective in stifling the jihad's impact in the British Empire. Nevertheless, this chapter has shown that the call to jihad had a very wide reach, from the Sahel to the lakes of east-central Africa, to the Nile Valley and the mountains in Oman, to the Gangetic plain and the port cities of Peninsular Malaya. A recurrent feature among rejections of the jihad was that it was invalid or simply illegitimate, due to the perceived influence of Germany behind it. If the Ottoman jihad proclamation had managed to escape this fatal association, and was phrased in a different way, it may have been possible for it to garner more followers. Any idea, however evocative and potentially powerful in the abstract, can only survive and thrive in the lived contexts in which it circulates. It was arguably this lack of insight among those who concocted the 1914 Ottoman call to jihad, combined with the possession of such insight by those who countered it – British and Muslim alike – which meant it was an idea that ultimately did not alter the course of the First World War, in the Middle East and beyond.