The Ottoman Diplomatic Relations between Religious Legitimacy and Real Politics in the XVI. Century

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Abstract

This article analyzes the conduct of the foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire and its compatibility with state ideology in the sixteenth century. It attempts to point out different ways the Ottomans used religious or political discourse to justify different policies. In particular, it focuses on the ways the Ottoman Empire dealt with the Habsburg and Safavid Empires, which exemplified two ideologically different struggles for the Ottoman Empire. It compares how chronicles and official documents responded to particular events, to understand how they prescribed and projected foreign relations differently. This study contends that on the one hand, religious ideology shaped and regulated Ottoman external relations, but on the other the Ottoman Empire also reconfigured religious ideology about *jihad* and developed new ideological arguments for political expediency, to relieve tension between the ideology and the reality.

Keywords: Religious ideology, legitimacy, jihad, the early modern period, Süleyman I.

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XVI. Asırda Dini Meşruiyet ile Reel Politik Arasında Osmanlı Dış İlişkileri

Öz

Bu çalışma, XVI. asırda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun dış politikasının gidişatını ve devlet ideolojisi ile uyumluluğunu incelemekte ve Osmanlıların farklı politikalarını haklı çıkarmak için ne tür dini veya siyasi söylem kullandıklarını anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Söz konusu çalışma, özellikle, ideolojik olarak Osmanlılar için iki farklı mücadeleyi örnekleyen Habsburg ve Safevi İmparatorlukları ile Osmanlı İmparatorluğu arasındaki ilişkilere odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, aynı zamanda, Osmanlı kroniklerinin ve resmi belgelerinin belirli olaylara nasıl tepki verdiklerini ve dış ilişkileri nasıl farklı şekilde yansıttıklarını incelemektedir. Ayrıca, bu çalışma, bir yandan dini ideolojinin Osmanlı dış ilişkilerini nasıl şekillendirdiğini ve düzenlediğini, ancak diğer yandan Osmanlı Devleti'nin ideoloji ile gerçeklik arasındaki gerilimi azaltmak için dini ideolojiyi nasıl yeniden yapılandırdığını ve yeni ideolojik argümanlar geliştirdiğini analiz etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dini ideoloji, meşruiyet, cihâd, erken modern dönem, I. Süleyman.

Introduction[1]

The Ottoman Empire emerged as a *ghazi* principality on the western frontier and focused on waging wars against the non-Muslims, first, the Byzantine Empire, and then other Christian Kingdoms.[2] Along with this territorial expansion, circumstances forced the Ottomans to struggle with the Muslim principalities in Anatolia and other Muslim states. The Ottoman Empire attempted to place all its wars within the margin of the idea of *jihad*. Yet, the idea that the Ottoman Empire produced a single, static Islamic ideology and determined its external relations according to this principle is to oversimplify the Ottomans' engagement with

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1   This article was created based on the author's master's thesis: "Between Religious Ideology and Reality: The Legitimacy of the Ottoman Foreign Policy in the Early Modern Period (1481-1566)," the University of Arizona, 2013.

2   The nature of *ghaza* at the beginning of the Ottoman Empire is one of the most controversial issues in Ottoman studies. Trying to answer what the main motives of the early Ottoman conquests were, Paul Wittek talks about how *ghaza* ideology became the most important factor in the emergence of the Ottoman dynasty. See Paul Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1938. However, criticizing the notion of *ghaza* ideology, Rudi Paul Lindner points out that Central Asian tradition/religion (nomadism) was the main parameter in the formation of the Ottoman State. See Rudi Paul Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia*, Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1983. Fuad Köprülü also emphasizes the significance of the Turkish ethnic identity for the foundation of the Ottoman dynasty rather than religious ideology. See Fuad Köprülü, *The Origin of the Ottoman Empire*, trans. Gary Leiser, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1992. Trying to make a balance, Halil İnalcık talks about both the significance of religious ideology and organizational innovation in the Ottoman Empire. See Halil İnalcık, "The Question of the Emergence of the Ottoman State", *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, II, 1980, p. 71-79. Yet, Colin Imber argues that Ottomanists have no evidence for such claims as *ghaza* ideology or Central Asian nomadic culture, since our knowledge about the early Ottoman era originated from fifteenth-century writings, which are not truthful. Colin Imber, "The Ottoman Dynastic Myth", *Turcica*, 19, 1987, p. 7-27. Other scholars offer alternative explanations. For example, Heath Lowry states that the founders of the Ottoman State were neither zealot Muslim believers nor tolerant and considerate rulers; rather, their positions should be comprehended within the circumstances that shaped their world. See Heath Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2003. Linda Darling also points out that the function of *ghaza* gradually evolved in Ottoman military activities in answer to specific conditions so that depending on the advancement of the conquests, the Ottoman sultans created different usages of *ghaza*. See Linda T. Darling, "Reformulating the Gazi Narrative: When was the Ottoman State a Gazi State?", *Turcica*, 43, 2011, p. 13-53. Besides, Cemal Kafadar discusses how the early Ottoman rulers were flexibly attached to the idea of *ghaza* so that the Ottomans included Christian warriors in *ghaza* activities and allowed conquered people to keep their faith. See Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 52-53, 58-59.

other states and ignore different cases in Ottoman history. Instead, this article suggests that the ideological position of the rival powers, as well as political circumstances at home, affected the attitude of the Ottoman rulers, and the Ottoman Empire produced distinct political mechanisms to deal with each particular ideological crisis. This fact negates the idea of the static binary position of Muslims versus non-Muslims.

This study contends that, on the one hand, religious ideology, specifically the idea of war and peace, would regulate Ottoman diplomatic relations; on the other hand, the Ottoman State could interpret the idea of war and peace differently to relieve tension between the religious ideology and political expediency. First, this article deals with literature about Ottoman external relations and then examines how the Ottoman Empire dealt with the Habsburg and Safavid Empires in the sixteenth century (1526-1555).[3]

Literature Review

Some scholars believe that the Ottoman Empire was a *shariah* state and its external relations were based on the traditional dichotomy of *dar al-harb* (the abode of war) and *dar al-Islam* (the abode of Islam). They cite evidence that the Ottoman Empire implemented an aggressive and expansionist policy against non-Muslim states.[4] For example, Bernard Lewis argues that the Ottoman Empire acted on fulfilling the mission of holy war (*jihad*) against non-Muslims from the very beginning; the holy mission was to bring religion and civilization to the Christian lands beyond the northern and western frontiers.[5] To conquer a legendary

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3   This article basically focuses on Süleyman I's major military expeditions in the eastern and western frontiers, since the Ottomans competed with the Habsburgs and Safavids for the ideas of universal kingship and the caliphate of the whole Muslim world during this time. See Hüseyin Yılmaz, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2018; Tijana Krstic, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 2011; Tijana Krstic, "State and Religion, "Sunnitization" and "Confessionalism" in Süleyman's Time", *The Battle for Central Europe,* ed. Pál Fodor, Leiden, Brill, 2019, p. 65-91. For the general survey of Suleyman I's reign, see Özlem Kumrular, *Muhteşem Süleyman*, İstanbul, Timaş Yayınları, 2017.

4   See Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1982, p. 17-57; Thomas Naff, "The Ottoman Empire and the European States System", *The Expansion of International Society,* ed. Hedley Bull - Adam Watson, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1984, p. 143-169; Matthew Smith Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy 1450-1919*, London, Longman, 1993, p. 1-71.

5   Lewis, *Muslim Discovery of Europe*, p. 29.

city, called *Kızıl Elma*, the Red Apple,-- identified at different times with various Christian cities including Constantinople, Buda, and later, Vienna and Rome-- was the end of *jihad* and the final triumph of Islam.[6] Thomas Naff similarly states that the religion of Islam prescribes that, until the idea of a universal empire with a single Islamic community and law was realized, the world might be separated into two distinct domains: *dar al-Islam*, the abode of Islam, in which Islamic law was carried out, and *dar al-harb*, the abode of war, in which infidels resided beyond the authority of Islamic law. *Jihad* against those infidels should be conducted so that this universal idea would be realized.[7] The Ottoman Empire was deeply bound to such a worldview and framed its struggles with the non-Muslim European states and their ideas through the notion of holy war.[8]

Making a similar argument, Matthew Smith Anderson also holds that the Islamic worldview profoundly affected and shaped the Ottoman Empire's political structure. This world perspective imposed a sharp dividing line between Islamdom and the outside infidel world, and the Muslims could not cross this line.[9] The relations between those distinct realms should constantly be in actual, or at least potential, antagonism. To extend the Islamic domain overseen by true believers, at the expense of the domains ruled by infidel authorities, was the responsibility of the ruling sultan.[10] As a result, these intellectuals believe that the religious ideology unquestionably determined Ottoman external relations. In their view, the Ottomans were always hostile to Christian Europe and tried to expand Islamdom at the expense of non-Muslim lands. However, the external relations of the Ottoman Empire contained different layers and dimensions, rather than a simplified, over-generalized, and distinct division and enmity between the Muslim and non-Muslim world.

In contrast, other scholars hold that the Ottoman Empire conducted its foreign policy based on pragmatism and rationality rather than religious causes. In her significant book, *Empire of Difference*, Karen Barkey downplays the role of Islam and portrays the Ottoman rulers as 'rational leaders' in a modern sense.[11] She argues that even though Islam was regarded as the religion of the empire, it was subservient to *raison d'état*. In her view, the Ottoman sultans purposely ma-

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6   *A.g.e.*, p. 32.

7   Naff, *"*The Ottoman Empire and the European States System", p. 144.

8   *A.g.e.*

9   Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy 1450-1919*, p. 71.

10   *A.g.e.*

11   Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 104-108.

nipulated the religion and used the various Islamic discourses to receive support from one religious group without marginalizing other groups.[12]

Nuri Yurdusev also claims that it is not possible to describe the Ottoman Empire as a *shariah* or orthodox Islamic state.[13] According to him, the diverse practices of the Ottoman Empire could not be explained within the structure of a single religious custom, because the Ottoman sultans were pragmatic rulers that acted in light of political expediency (the requirements of realpolitik in modern terminology). Furthermore, Yurdusev discusses many examples of Ottoman external policy that show how the Ottoman Empire did not firmly obey what the *ghaza* or *jihad* thesis prescribed.[14]

Accordingly, emphasizing the flexibility of Ottoman external policy, these two scholars hold that the Ottoman Empire manipulated Islamic rules for its own sake, and the state determined its policy based on real situations and political conjunctions. Yet, those claims are quite simplistic and not sufficient to illuminate the complex relations between the state, Islamic ideology, and politics.

As a result, this study attempts to bring these two approaches together, since the experience of the Ottoman Empire in foreign relations reflected both pragmatism and religious mindedness. Not only did the *shariah* regulate Ottoman external relations, but the Ottoman Empire also sometimes promoted different understandings of Islamic principles for the sake of political expediency.

External *Jihad* against Christian Kingdoms

The Ottoman Empire carried out the mission of *jihad* against the Christian powers for centuries. After its conquest of the holy Muslim cities (Mecca and Medina) and other central Muslim lands, the Ottoman Empire became the protector of Muslims; therefore, as a great Islamic entity, the Ottoman Empire was

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12 *A.g.e.*

13 A. Nuri Yurdusev, "The Ottoman Attitude toward Diplomacy", *Ottoman Diplomacy Conventional or Unconventional?*, ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 13-16.

14 *A.g.e.;* Analyzing Ottoman-Habsburg relations in the sixteenth century, Gabor Agoston also talks about how the Ottoman foreign policy rationally included both "pragmatism" and "flexibility." See Gabor Agoston, "Information, Ideology, and Limits of Imperial Policy: Ottoman Grand Strategy in the Context of Ottoman-Habsburg Rivalry", *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire,* ed. Virginia H. Aksan - Daniel Goffman, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 75-103. For the criticism of the notion of Ottoman pragmatism, see Murat Dağlı, "The Limits of Ottoman Pragmatism", *History and Theory*, 52, 2013, p. 194-213.

expected to implement the task of *jihad*.[15] This part presents how the Ottomans struggled with the Hungarian Kingdom and the Habsburg Empire in the sixteenth century.[16]

The Battle of Mohacs in 1526

In terms of *jihad* activity and religious mission, the battle of Mohacs in 1526 against the Hungarian Kingdom represented a significant step for Süleyman I. At the battle of Mohacs, the Ottoman Empire won a decisive victory against the Hungarian Kingdom; King Louis II was killed during the battle, and most of the Hungarian territory with its capital was annexed by the Ottoman Empire. After the conquest of Hungary in 1526, the Ottoman sultan granted Hungarian sove-reignty to John Zapolya (King Yanos) the previous Voivode of Transylvania, as a tribute.[17] Although what was expected from a Muslim sultan/caliph and what Islamic ideology demanded was to integrate those lands directly into the domain of Islam, the Ottoman sultan did not desire that. Süleyman I justified this action by stating that the Hungarian territory was quite distant from the central Islamic land, and it was, therefore, difficult to control. Accordingly, it was a preferable stance to bestow it in vassalage, even to a Christian, and to exact *kharaj* from it.[18]

For this military expedition, the Ottoman Empire invested heavily in its holy mission. Süleyman I claimed that the combat with unbelievers and punishment of infidels was a religious obligation.[19] He also argued that fighting for the religious cause was the tradition of his ancestors and previous sultans. Parallel to that, he stated that he attempted *jihad* to obey the religious command, and waged a war

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15   Colin Imber, "Ideals and Legitimization in Early Ottoman History", *Süleyman the Magnificent and His Age: The Ottoman Empire in the Early Modern World*, ed. I. Metin Kunt - Christine Woodhead, London, Longman, 1995, p. 150-152.

16   In this part, I do not deal with the Ottoman-Habsburg rivalry on the Mediterranean Sea in the early modern period. For this subject, see Molly Greene, "The Ottomans in the Mediterra-nean", *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire,* ed. Virginia H. Aksan - Daniel Goffman, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 104-116; Emrah Safa Gür-kan, *Sultanın Casusları: 16. Yüzyılda İstihbarat, Sabotaj ve Rüşvet Ağları*, İstanbul, Kronik Kitap, 2019, p. 37-63.

17   Pál Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire: The Ottomans in Central Europa - a Failed Attempt at Universal Monarchy (1390-1566)*, Budapest, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Re-search Centre for the Humanities, 2016, p. 77-80.

18   M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu ve Bizimle İlgili Diğer Belgeler", *Belgeler,* V-VIII, no. 9-12, 1968-1971, p. 67.

19   Feridun Bey, *Mecmûa-yı Münşeâtü's-Selâtîn Cild 1*, İstanbul, Takvimhâne-i Âmire, 1848, p. 547.

against the Hungarians, a rebellious infidel community that had gone astray and did not recognize the prophet of Islam.[20]

Küçük Nişancı (d. 1571) does not talk about any reason for this campaign whereas Koca Nişancı (d. 1567) briefly articulates that after the fall of Rodos, the *ghazi* Sultan aimed at conquering Hungary.[21] Lütfî Paşa (d. 1562-1563), however, states that after the loss of Rodos and Belgrade, the Christian European leaders, with the papal approval, urged the Hungarian King to make an ally to repel the Ottomans from the Christian lands. After hearing about this alliance, Süleyman I decided to set up a new *ghaza* against them.[22] Kemâlpaşazâde (d. 1534) judged the battle of Mohacs as the greatest *jihad*, (*cihâd-ı ekber /gazâ-yı ekber*).[23] To prove how significant this holy war was, he presented the extent to which the Ottoman Empire prepared for this *jihad* and the justifying conditions in the Kingdom of Hungary. According to him, the King of Hungary was an important figure among infidel powers, and his ungodly army with a huge number of soldiers and arms was a pioneer in the abode of disbelief (*dâru'l-küfr*). In Kemâlpaşazâde's claim, the Hungarian land was annexed to the abode of Islam when they started to pay *kharaj* to the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Bayezid I. After the Ottoman defeat against Timur at the Battle of Ankara in 1402, the Hungarians violated this covenant and their land turned into the abode of disbelief.[24] Furthermore, King Louis II asked the Polish and Czech kings, who were distinguished in the abode of war, to help him against the Ottomans in the Battle of Mohacs. In term of Ottomans, Kemâlpaşazâde talks about how Süleyman I prepared the holy warriors (*gâziyân u mücâhidîn*) well for *jihad* against the cursed Hungarian king and how he aimed to demolish the Kingdom of Hungary.[25]

However, Kemalpaşazâde does not ignore other causes for the Ottomans' aggressive actions against the Hungarians. He reports that the French king appe-

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20 *A.g.e.*

21 Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, İstanbul, Matbaa-yı Âmire, 1873, p. 220; Funda Demirtaş, "Celâl-Zâde Mustafa Çelebi, Tabakâtü'l-Memâlik ve Derecâtü'l-Mesâlik", (Yayımlanmamış Doktora Tezi), Erciyes Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Erciyes, 2009, p. 176.

22 Lütfî Paşa, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân: 961 Senesine Kadar Vukuâttan Bâhistir*, İstanbul, Matbaâ-yi Âmire, 1925, p. 319-320.

23 Kemâlpaşazâde, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân: X. Defter,* ed. Şefaettin Severcan, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1996, p. 195. I could not make references to Kemâlpaşazâde's *Tevârîh* for the post-Mohacs period since his chronicle does not cover Suleyman I's later military campaigns.

24 *A.g.e.,* p. 201-206.

25 *A.g.e.*

aled to the Ottoman court for aid in its conflict with the Spanish and Hungarian Kingdoms. The Ottomans agreed on aiding the French against their enemies. The great military expedition to Hungary meant the manifestation of this favor to the French.[26] On this point, it is significant that Kemâlpaşazâde, who was a Muslim jurist and Şeyhülislâm, did not regard this alliance as improper in terms of religious ideology and did not criticize the empire for that action. In *Târîh-i Âl-i Osman*, Matrakçı Nasuh also talks about how the Ottoman Sultan decided to make a *ghaza* against the Hungarians to help the French King in his struggle with the Habsburg Empire.[27] After all, even though the Ottoman chronicles briefly mention the alliance with the French Kingdom, they heavily circulated the notion of *jihad* at the battle of Mohacs to generate a perception that the Ottoman dynasty struggled for religious causes.

The Siege of Vienna in 1529 and the 'German' Campaign (Alaman Seferi) in 1532

Another important *ghaza* activity of Süleyman I against the Christians took place in 1529. After the Austrian King, Ferdinand (d. 1564), laid claim to Hungarian territory, and annexed Buda in 1529, the Hungarian King Yanos, had to abandon the city and sent an embassy to the Ottoman court for aid. The Ottoman Empire replied in the affirmative.[28]

For the reason that caused the Ottoman military campaign in 1529, Küçük Nişancı talks about the Habsburgs' invasion of Buda whereas Matrakçı Nasuh and Koca Nişancı mention the sultan's aim to create a new *ghaza* not only to repel Ferdinand's army from Buda but also to protect people for the sake of Islam.[29] Lütfî Paşa presents a dialog that supposedly occurred when Süleyman I met with King Yanos. This dialog crucially demonstrates how Muslims and non-Muslims defined and interacted with each other. The Ottoman sultan questioned the vassal king about why the king joined the Ottoman army, even though his religion was different from the sultan's religion, and both sides showed a lack of mutual amity

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26 *A.g.e.,* p. 218-222.

27 Matrakçı Nasuh, *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân: (Osmanlı Tarihi 699-968/1299-1561),* haz. Göker İnan, ed. Erhan Afyoncu, İstanbul, Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2019, p. 347.

28 Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 74-75.

29 Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, p. 224; Matrakçı Nasuh, *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 356; Demirtaş, "Celâl-Zâde Mustafa Çelebi, Tabakâtü'l-Memâlik ve Derecâtü'l-Mesâlik", p. 251.

and friendship.[30] Showing his respect and obedience, the Christian king responded that the sultan had innumerable subjects, both Muslims and non-Muslims, and the king himself was one of those subjects. If the sultan could save the Hungarian sovereignty from the Habsburgs and bestow it on him, the king would promise to recognize Ottoman authority and pay a substantial amount of *kharaj*. Süleyman I expressed his aim to fulfill the king's expectations.[31] This dialog would exemplify how the Ottoman Empire engaged with specific conditions of the western frontier while taking religious ideology into account.

Although the siege of Vienna and its consequences in 1529 were regarded as a sign of the end of the Muslim Empire's advance in the western frontier and a turning point in Muslim relations with non-Muslims, the Ottomans did not view it as a manifestation of a great *ghaza*. Rather both the official account and chronicles prefer to explain the expedition within various political parameters, specifically to protect the Ottoman political interests in the western frontier and show its support of the Ottoman vassal in Hungary. This rhetoric might result from the fact that the siege of Vienna failed, and the Ottomans did not accomplish a great conquest of a place that belonged to Christendom.

After the failure of the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529, Süleyman I created a further military campaign (*Alaman Seferi*) against the Habsburg Empire and acquired some Habsburg fortresses on the western frontier in 1532. However, the Ottoman sources are not very informative about the causes of this campaign. For example, Matrakçı Nasuh explains that the Habsburg Emperor (Charles V)'s declaration of himself as a universal emperor (*sâhib kıran*) provoked Süleyman I to further military action in 1532.[32] Lütfî Paşa and Koca Nişancı state that after Ferdinand's aggressive military attitudes toward Hungary, Süleyman I attacked the Habsburg land. However, as Ferdinand did not dare to face the Ottoman army in a pitched battle, Süleyman I moved back to the Ottoman capital.[33] Küçük Nişancı only talks about the sultan›s aim to make a new *ghaza* against the Habsburgs.[34] As a result, the Ottoman sources are not elaborative about the last two Ottoman military campaigns, since the Ottomans were regarded not to be very successful in those campaigns as expected.

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30 Lütfî Paşa, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 336.

31 *A.g.e.*

32 Matrakçı Nasuh, *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 357-358.

33 Lütfî Paşa, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 342-343; Demirtaş, "Celâl-Zâde Mustafa Çelebi, Tabakâtü'l-Memâlik ve Derecâtü'l-Mesâlik", p. 287-288.

34 Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, p. 225-226.

The Military Campaigns in 1541 and 1543

Süleyman I's *ghaza* activities in the western frontier continued in the 1540s. When King Yanos died in 1541, his son, Istefan (Zsigmond Janos), acceded to the Hungarian throne. Due to his young age, his authority was not very strong over the kingdom. To take advantage of this circumstance, Ferdinand made a military campaign on Hungary, and his huge army with heavy arms besieged Buda. Whereupon, Sultan Süleyman I, with his mighty force, advanced toward Hungary to respond to the Habsburgs' aggressive action.[35]

Ultimately, Süleyman I won the battle over the Habsburg army and regained Buda in 1541 declaring that it was a decisive victory against the enemy of true religion.[36] After the war, the Ottoman forces captured and decapitated numerous Habsburg soldiers. At this time, Süleyman I found it necessary to turn the Hungarian domain into the abode of Islam since he realized that owing to his young age, the new vassal Istefan was not capable of ruling this territory. The sultan commanded that big churches in Buda be converted to mosques. He performed the Friday prayer with his holy warriors (*guzât*) and high state officials (*erkân-ı devlet*). The Friday sermon (*hutbe*) was read on the behalf of the sultan. Also, the Sultan appointed a judge (*kadı*) and commander of the castle (*dizdâr*) for the capital, Buda.[37]

During the campaign, the Ottoman Empire again turned to religious rhetoric, and strongly emphasized its religious mission against unbelievers. Süleyman I defined Ferdinand as an infidel (*kâfir*), ungodly (*bi-dîn*), malevolent (*sâhib-i kin*), and corrupt (*müfsid*). The Sultan also proclaimed that the Austrian king was persistent in showing his hostility and aversion to the Muslim people (*ehl-i İslâm*).[38] In opposition to the Christian king, Süleyman I positioned himself and his activity within the border of true faith. The Sultan claimed that he arranged this *ghaza* for the cause of Allah in obedience to the requirements in the holy book and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. He also maintained that his purpose was to expand the true religion and humiliate heretics and unbelievers.[39] In parallel with the Ottoman official discourses, the Ottoman chronicles circulate the notion of holy war as well.[40]

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35 Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman*, p. 109-111.

36 Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu", p. 66-70.

37 *A.g.e.*

38 Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu", p. 66-70.

39 *A.g.e.*

40 Lütfî Paşa, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 386; Demirtaş, "Celâl-Zâde Mustafa Çelebi, Ta-

After the Habsburg forces attacked the Hungarian Kingdom and besieged Buda in 1543, the Ottoman Empire once again planned a new military campaign to respond to this aggressive action and stop the Habsburg king's advance on the western frontier. Accordingly, the Ottoman army seized important strongholds such as Estergon (Esztergom) and İstolni Belgrad (Székesfehérvár) on the Hungarian border.[41]

The Ottomans resorted to strong language to place the aggressors in an illegitimate position so that the counter-attack would become more acceptable. The Ottoman sultan stated that the ungodly (*bi-dîn*) and unclean *(pelîd)* Ferdinand insisted on tyranny, and always assaulted Muslim towns and people on the frontier.[42] For Lütfî Paşa and Matrakçı Nasuh, what lay behind the Ottoman military expedition in 1543 was an alliance between Austria, Germany, and Spain against the Ottoman forces in Hungary whereas for Koca Nişancı, the Habsburgs' continuous assaults on Hungary caused Süleyman I's *ghaza* activity in 1543.[43] For Küçük Nişancı, the main reason for the military campaign in 1543 was to conquer some fortresses in the western frontier.[44]

As a result, the Ottoman official record and the chronicles declared these military operations as a holy campaign since with the Ottomans' success in these campaigns against the non-Muslim power, the conquered domains converted into Islamic places, and were annexed into Islamdom. Also, the projection of these expeditions as a sacred mission was remarkable in terms of the Ottoman sultan's prestige, because they formed the last victorious *ghaza* activities of Süleyman I against non-Muslims.

Alliances and Peace Agreements with Non-Muslims

Even though the Ottoman Empire presented itself as a champion of *ghaza* against the infidels, and attempted to expand Islamdom as the leader of the Islamic world, it did not disregard either concluding peace agreements with non-Muslim powers or collaborating with them against a common enemy. This position ne-

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bakâtü'l-Memâlik ve Derecâtü'l-Mesâlik", p. 466; Matrakçı Nasuh, *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 386; Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, p. 236.

41 Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman*, p. 112-114; Fodor, *The Unbearable Weight of Empire*, p. 98.

42 Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu", p. 64-66.

43 Lütfî Paşa, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 414; Matrakçı Nasuh, *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 393; Demirtaş, "Celâl-Zâde Mustafa Çelebi, Tabakâtü'l-Memâlik ve Derecâtü'l-Mesâlik", p. 472-473.

44 Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, p. 237.

gates the idea of a sharp boundary between the Islamic and Christian worlds. In the following section, I examine under what terms the Ottomans created alliances and peace pacts with non-Muslims, and what sort of perceptions/discourses the Ottomans produced to justify these activities.

Peace Agreements with the Habsburgs

Ottoman history included not only continuous holy wars waged by the Muslim Empire against infidel powers but also peace negotiations and safe conduct. The control of Hungarian sovereignty caused great tension between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs. The successful campaign of the Ottoman Empire (*Alaman Seferi*) in 1532 intimidated the Habsburgs, and they offered a peace pact. It was affirmed by the Ottomans in 1533. The pact was concluded as an *aman,* safe conduct, unilaterally given by the Ottoman Empire.[45]

The language of peace diplomacy was different, since the Christian kings were not mentioned with pejorative religious titles in the peace agreement of 1533, as they were during *ghaza* times.[46] Rather, Ferdinand was depicted as the honor of the great Christian rulers (*iftihâr-i umerâi'l-izâmi'l-Îseviyye*) and the chosen of the noble people within the community of Christianity (*muhtâru'l-küberâi'l-fihâm fî'l-milleti'l-mesîhiyye*). Similarly, Ferdinand was regarded as the son of the sultan. This idea emphasized friendship between both sides on the one

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45 İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanli Tarihi: II. Cilt: Istanbul'un Fethinden Kanunî Sultan Süleyman'in Ölümüne Kadar*, Ankara, T. T. K. Basimevi, 1949, p. 336. Along with *jihad*, *aman* (assurance of safety) is another Islamic concept that the Ottomans applied in foreign relations. According to the *fiqh* documents, if a Muslim were to grant *aman* to an unbeliever or a group of people, or the residents of a city, no Muslims would be allowed to engage them in a fight. If a *mustamin* (foreigner) was to violate any conditions of *aman*, the assurance would be canceled. The imam also could cancel *aman* given to another state, if Muslims' interests demanded that action. In practice, the Ottomans attempted to conform to *fiqh* rules while granting *amans* to non-Muslims. The Şeyhülislam was consulted when new *amans* were offered. The precondition of giving *aman* to a non-Muslim was that the non-Muslim should apply for it to the Ottoman State with the assurance of friendship and peace. In return for the privileges conceded, reciprocal advantages were expected. If those privileges failed to materialize, the sultan could claim that the precondition of peace and friendship had been violated. In granting an *aman*, the Ottomans expected to gain political advantages from the applicant state and to protect the economic and financial interests of the Empire. In particular, the determining factors to grant an *aman* to foreign states were to acquire a political ally within Christendom, to obtain scarce goods and raw materials such as cloth and steel, or to increase customs revenues. Halil İnalcık, "Imtiyâzât, ii-The Ottoman Empire", *EI²*, III, 1971, p. 1179-1189.

46 The conditions of the peace agreement were recorded in the letter sent by grand vizier İbrahim Paşa to the Habsburg Emperor Charles V in 1533. Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu", p. 114-116.

hand and the lower status of the Habsburg king on the other hand.[47] Furthermore, as a part of the peace agreement, Ferdinand agreed to give a fixed yearly tribute to the Ottoman sultan for the minor part of the Hungarian territory he controlled. After the request of the Habsburgs, the peace agreement was renewed with similar conditions for five years in 1547 and eight years in 1562.[48]

Analysis of the *mühimme* registers also reveals positive stances of the Ottomans towards the Habsburg dynasty. For example, the Ottoman Empire respected the authority of the Habsburg king and mentioned him as the King of Austria (*Nemçe Kralı*) during peacetime. In another instance, the Ottoman sultan ordered the ruler of Erdel (Transylvania) to hand back the fortresses seized from the Habsburgs as a requirement of the treaty in 1564, and not to violate the treaty by assaulting any Habsburg territories or strongholds.[49]

The Ottoman chronicles mostly do not refer to the Ottoman peace pacts. For example, Koca Nişancı, Matrakçı Nasuh, and Lütfî Paşa do not mention the peace agreement with the Habsburg in 1533 whereas Küçük Nişancı briefly talks about it saying that Austrian and German kings sought peace for three years while the Ottoman was returning from the last successful Habsburg campaign.[50]

Accordingly, the projection of the continuous warfare of the Ottomans with the Christian powers was not the case, and the idea of *jihad* was not the only term that formed the Ottoman mentality in the external relations with non-Muslims. The Ottomans also had a peace agenda. They flexibly held peace negotiations, and concluded peace pacts with the Habsburg Empire, which was regarded as an arch-rival, and constituted the ideological opposition. The peace terms covered political matters rather than religious affairs. This fact was mainly disregarded by the Ottoman chronicles because it was not compatible with the imperial ideology and imagination of the Ottomans formulated by the educated elite.

Alliance with the French and other Non-Muslim Powers

The reign of Süleyman I also witnessed diplomatic initiatives and an alliance between the Ottoman Empire and the French Kingdom against the House of Habsburg. The French King, Francis I, asked for Ottoman aid after he lost the battle of Pavia in 1525 against the Habsburg King, Charles V, and was in prison

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47 *A.g.e.*

48 Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanli Tarihi: II. Cilt*, p. 340, 342.

49 Hacı Osman Yıldırım, *6 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri: (972 / 1564 - 1565) 1*, Ankara, T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 1995, p. 433.

50 Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, p. 226-227.

as a result of the defeat. The Ottoman sultan replied in the affirmative, and help for the French king constituted the main cause for the military campaign toward Hungary in 1526.[51]

Afterward, the diplomatic relations and collaboration between the Ottomans and the French intensified. The Ottoman Empire started to supply naval support to the French Kingdom and both Ottoman and French naval forces carried out various operations against the Habsburgs in the Mediterranean. In this instance, the Ottomans changed their negative tone in their discourse against non-Muslim powers, since they resorted to very neutral language and rhetoric in the diplomatic correspondence with the French. This correspondence did not cover religious themes whatsoever, contrary to the custom that the Ottoman official letters generally included a eulogy to the religion of Islam, the God, and the prophet of Islam. Süleyman I indicated that their relations were based on amity and fellowship (*dostluk ve muhabbet*), and this friendship was definite and eternal (*müekked u müebbed*). Specifically, the sultan referred to the Habsburg king with non-religious terms calling Charles V an enemy (*düşman u 'adüvv*) instead of words affiliated with the religion such as unbeliever (*kâfir*) or infidel (*müşrik*).[52]

The mutual enemy brought together different states with their distinct religious ideologies and worldviews, as in the case of the Ottoman-French alliance. The Ottoman sultan openly expressed his wishes for the accomplishment of mutual campaigns against the House of Habsburg. In various letters, he wished that may their allies (*dostlarımız*) be victorious and pleased (*mansûr u mesrûr*) whereas may their foes (*düşmanlarımız*) be devastated and defeated (*müdemmer u makhûr*).[53] In particular, after the French King, Francis I offered a joint military operation against Italy, the Ottoman Sultan started a military campaign against this country in 1537.

The Ottoman Empire adopted quite a flexible policy to maintain its collaboration with the French Kingdom. For example, when the French informed the Ottomans that the French had initiated negotiations with the Habsburgs to eliminate hostility between them and to relieve suffering among the Christian groups, the Ottomans did not show any unfavorable attitude but demanded that the French continue their friendship with the Ottoman Empire.[54]

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51   Kemâlpaşazâde, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân: X. defter*, p. 218.

52   Feridun Bey, *Mecmûa-yı Münşeâtü's-Selâtîn, Cild 2*, İstanbul, Takvimhâne-i Âmire, 1848, p. 409-410.

53   *A.g.e.*

54   Feridun Bey, *Mecmûa-yı Münşeâtü's-Selâtîn, Cild 2*, p. 411-412. For the overview of the Ot-

Furthermore, the Ottoman Empire attempted to strengthen this alliance by joining other Christian powers, which constituted its religious and ideological opposition. After renewing the peace agreement with the Venetians in 1540, the Ottomans forced them to terminate their relations with the House of Habsburg, to act together with the French Kingdom.[55] In response, the Venetians asserted that the way they developed their relationships with the French was based on amity and fellowship. Yet, the Venetians informed the Ottomans that they had to be on good terms with the Habsburgs due to their potential threat; however, they stopped giving warriors and supplying military materials to them.[56] Also, it is remarkable to see that the Ottoman Empire declared to the Christian rulers that allies of the French were natural allies of the Ottomans as well; therefore, the Ottomans were ready to provide *aman* and protection for them.[57]

Consequently, the Ottoman Empire mostly declared its aggressive actions against the Christian powers as a *jihad* activity to acquire legal footing since these foreign sovereigns were differentiated from the Ottomans in terms of religion and worldview. The Ottoman chronicles paralleled and buttressed this official stance of the Ottomans, and depicted that the Ottomans kept waging the holy war until the realization of the universal Muslim Empire. In reality, the Ottoman external relations were based on diverse factors. The religious cause was one of them, but not the only one. Also, Ottoman foreign relations witnessed not only ongoing struggles with the Christian rulers but also friendships and peaceful times. The Ottoman rhetoric and approach towards non-Muslims were not fixed. Based on the political climate, the Ottomans' attitudes and discourses changed. In hostile situations, the Ottomans applied religious terms to describe their rivals in a negative sense, whereas they preferred using positive and respectful language in times of peace and collaboration with non-Muslims.

Internal Jihad against the Shi'ite (*Kızılbaş*) Safavids

The struggle with the Safavid Empire formed a new and different stage for the legitimacy of Ottoman external relations. In the classical age (1300-1600), the most legitimate and prestigious position for the Ottoman Empire was to implement holy war against the Christian rulers and to glorify the word of the God

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toman-French alliance, see Halil İnalcık, *Osmanlı ve Avrupa: Osmanlı Devleti'nin Avrupa Tarihindeki Yeri*, İstanbul, Kronik Kitap, 2020, p. 197-210.

55   M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Vesikalar Külliyatında Kanuni Sultan Süleyman Devri Belgeleri", *Belgeler* I, no. 2, 1964, p. 132-133.

56   *A.g.e.*

57   Feridun Bey, *Mecmûa-yı Münşeâtü's-Selâtîn, Cild 2*, p. 413-414.

(î'lâ-yı kelimetullâh) in the Islamic world.[58] The Safavid Empire emerged from a Shi'ite messianic movement at the end of the fifteenth century declaring Twelver Shi'ism as the official sect of the state. These sectarian politics threatened the Ottomans' eastern frontier and deeply affected the religious mentality of the Ottoman Empire. Along with its Islamic nature, the Ottomans started to put stress on its Sunni (orthodox) character and claim responsibility for the protection of the Sunni Muslims.[59]

During the reign of Süleyman I, the Ottoman Empire abandoned strong enmity toward the Safavid dynasty and developed a different political vision. That might have resulted from the fact that the Ottoman Empire destroyed not only the political power but also to a large extent the spiritual and religious authority of Şah İsmail at the battle of Çaldıran in 1514. This firmly secured its domain on the eastern frontier along with Suleyman I's focus on the western frontier. In the same vein, this political environment brought about a change in the Ottomans' political discourse, which did not resort to ideological or religious argumentation as much as in the time of Selim I's reign.[60]

Süleyman I, for example, sent an official letter to Şah Tahmasb (d. 1576) to urge him to build good relations with the Ottomans when he acceded to the Safavid throne in 1524. In this letter, Süleyman I did not refer to the Safavids' heretical beliefs and wrongdoings. Rather, the content was political, since he reminded Şah Tahmasb how the heretical community (tâife-yi mülhidîn) had been destroyed by the holy warriors (gâziyân) before, by which the Ottoman Sultan

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58 Ahmet Yaşar Ocak, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Zındıklar ve Mülhidler yahut Dairenin Dışına Çıkanlar (15.-17. Yüzyıllar)*, İstanbul, Timaş Yayınları, 2016, p. 141-149.

59 *A.g.e.*

60 For the survey of the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry, see Adel Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Şafavid Conflict (906-962 / 1500-1555)*, Berlin, Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983; Şehabettin Tekindağ, "Yeni Kaynak ve Vesikaların Işığı Altında Yavuz Sultan Selim'in İran Seferi", *Tarih Dergisi*, 17/22, 1968, p. 53-55; Rıza Yıldırım, *Aleviliğin Doğuşu: Kızılbaş Sufiliğinin Toplumsal ve Siyasal Temelleri (1300-1501)*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2017; Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash-Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community*, Edinburg, Edinburg University Press, 2021; Vefa Erginbaş, *Ottoman Sunnism: New Perspectives*, Edinburg, Edinburg University Press, 2019; Nabil al-Tikriti, "Kalam in the Service of State: Apostasy and the Defining of Ottoman Islamic Identity", *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power,* ed. Hakan T. Karateke - Maurus Reinkowski, Leiden, Brill, 2005; Abdurrahman Atçıl, "The Safavid Threat and Juristic Authority in the Ottoman Empire during the 16th Century", *International Journal of Middle East Studies,* 49/2, 2017, p. 295-314.

would have meant the Battle of Çaldıran.[61] Süleyman I concluded his letter by warning that if the Şah would not show his obedience to the Ottomans, the Safavid dynasty would be annihilated.[62]

The Campaign of Two Iraqs (*Sefer-i Irakeyn*) in 1534-1535[63]

Şah Tahmasp was young when he acceded to the Safavid throne in 1524. Around the 1530s, he managed to take entire control of the Safavid State and began a policy of aggression at the Ottoman-Safavid frontier. After the Safavids captured Baghdad in 1532, and the governor of Bitlis in Eastern Anatolia accepted Safavid authority, the Ottoman Empire decided to launch a military expedition against the Safavids in 1533. The Ottoman army first subjugated Tabriz, the capital of the Safavids, without encountering any resistance.[64] Then, the Ottoman forces advanced into the Iranian domain to fight Şah Tahmasb. Yet, the Şah dared not meet the Ottomans in a pitched battle because of the superiority of the Ottoman army. Therefore, the Ottomans went towards Iraq-i Arab and captured Baghdad in 1535.[65]

Official correspondence with other states during the Campaign of Two Iraqs reflects the ideological conflict between the Ottomans and Safavids. For example, in a letter sent to the Venetians, Grand Vizier İbrahim Paşa (d. 1536) exalted the four rightly-guided Caliphs along with the Prophet.[66] This was not the Ottoman tradition, but it showed the Ottoman awareness of the difference in religious ideology between the Sunni Islamic Caliphate and the Shi'ite concept of Imamate. In keeping with the Sunni tradition, the Ottoman Empire venerated the first four caliphs, whereas the Safavids denied the authority of the first three caliphs, and thought that the leadership of the Muslim community belonged to the twelve Imams after the Prophet.[67]

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61 Feridun Bey, *Mecmûa-yı Münşeâtü's-Selâtîn, Cild 2*, p. 541-542.

62 *A.g.e.*

63 The Ottoman army first under the command of the grand vizier, İbrahim Paşa, attacked Safavid Iraq, and then Süleyman I himself joined the Ottoman forces and advanced into Baghdad in 1534. That is the reason why the campaign was named *Sefer-i Irakeyn* (Campaign of Two Iraqs).

64 Rhoads Murphey, "Suleyman's Eastern Policy", *Süleymân the Second [i.e., the First] and His Time,* ed. Halil İnalcık - Cemal Kafadar, İstanbul, Isis Press, 1993, p. 229-234.

65 *A.g.e.*

66 Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu", p. 54.

67 Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman*, p. 100.

Süleyman I also sent a letter to the French King to inform him about the stages of the Safavid campaign. Süleyman I mentioned that he embarked on an expedition toward the Iranian domain (*acem mülkine sefer idüb*) without referring to *ghaza* or *jihad*. Although Süleyman I described the Safavid ruler with disparaging terms such as the defeated redhead (*kızılbaş-ı magh*û*r*) and failed king (şâh-ı mahzûl), he did not declare him a heretic or unbeliever.[68]

Even though the Ottoman chronicles do not introduce this military expedition as a manifestation of *ghaza* or *jihad*, they talk about religious and ideological motives for the Ottoman offensive. For instance, Koca Nişancı points out that with the campaign of Irakeyn, the Ottoman sultan wanted to create a counterattack against the shah's aggressive military actions that caused chaos and *fitnah* in the Iraq frontier.[69] Matrakçı Nasuh informs his readers that Süleyman I acted to punish the Iranian Şah who was going astray from the true religion and creating religious dissension.[70] Küçük Nişancı also states that Süleyman I wanted to eliminate the group of cursed heretics (*gürûh-i melâhide-yi la'*în) since the Safavids supported the heretical Shi'ite beliefs, unlike the true Sunni tradition.[71] Besides, Lütfî Paşa talks about a sultanic decree addressing Şah Tahmasb that if he gives up his heretical Shi'ite belief and obeys the Ottoman Sultan, he would rejoice in this world and afterlife; otherwise, he would utterly regret it.[72] As a result, the Ottoman chronicles present the Campaign of Two Iraqs within the context of religious and ideological conflict without talking about *ghaza*-jihad rhetoric.

The conquest of Iraq-i Arab, particularly Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid dynasty, was significant for Ottoman ideology and legitimacy. When the Safavid forces seized the Iraqi territory before, they ravaged the tombs of important Sunni figures in Baghdad such as Imam Abu Hanifa (d. 767), the founder of the Hanafi School, and famous Sufi Abd al-Qadir Gilani (d. 1166). Since the Hanafi School was the official sect of the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman Sultan, after the conquest, ordered the shrine of Abu Hanifa to be cleaned and rebuilt.[73] With that action, the Ottoman Empire may have been displaying how they protected Sunni Islam and its legacy against the Safavid dynasty and their Shi'ite identity.

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68 Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu", p. 111-112.
69 Demirtaş, "Celâl-Zâde Mustafa Çelebi, Tabakâtü'l-Memâlik ve Derecâtü'l-Mesâlik", p. 337.
70 Matrakçı Nasuh, *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 360.
71 Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, p. 227-228.
72 Lütfî Paşa, *Tevârîh-i Âli Osmân*, p. 352.
73 Matrakçı Nasuh, *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 366-367.

In the same vein, the Ottoman Sultan visited the tomb of Imam Ali in Najaf and Imam Hossain in Karbala.[74] Although the Shi'ite community followed and venerated the Shi'ite Imams to the utmost, the Ottomans showed respect especially for the first Shi'ite Imams as well, and reclaimed them for Sunni Islam, since Imam Ali and Imam Hossain were among *al-sahabah*, the companions of the Prophet.

The Iranian Campaign in 1548

When Şah Tahmasb seized the Şirvan dynasty's domain in the Caucasus region in 1538, which previously belonged to the Safavid sovereignty, the Şah appointed his brother, Elkas Mirza as the governor of Şirvan. After a period, Elkas Mirza started to act independently and lost the Şah's trust. The Şah sent a military unit, which defeated Elkas Mirza's forces in 1547. As a result, Elkas Mirza together with his contingent asked the Ottoman Sultan for refuge. He was warmly welcomed by Süleyman I.[75]

After Elkas Mirza showed his obedience to the Ottoman Sultan, he was honored and given various gifts by Ottoman officials. In a *fetihnâme*, Süleyman I referred to him as "His Excellency the Owner of the Emirate (*cenâb-ı imâret maâb*) Şah Elkas".[76] During the imperial council, Elkas Mirza suggested a mutual military campaign against Şah Tahmasb and assured that the Ottoman Sultan would be able to annex all his conquests in the Iranian territory. Süleyman I accepted this offer and prepared for a huge military campaign. The sultan sent Elkas Mirza with a separate military contingent, headed by Ulema Paşa, governor of Erzurum.[77] The proposal of Elkas Mirza and the Ottomans' desire not to lose such a great opportunity, constituted one of the main causes for the Ottoman incursion against the Safavid Empire in 1548.

The cooperation of the Ottomans with Elkas Mirza demonstrates to what extent Ottoman foreign relations were based on political expediency as well as ideological or religious parameters. Also, it shows that the tension between the Ottoman and Safavid dynasties was political as much as religious or sectarian. Elkas Mirza was a Kızılbaş, and likely to have Shi'ite beliefs, yet the Ottomans did not question or problematize his beliefs as long as he was obedient to the Ottoman Empire. As a result, mutual interest brought the Ottomans and a Safavid ruler together to act against a common enemy.

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74 Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu", p. 112.

75 Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman*, p. 116-117.

76 Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu", p. 59.

77 Şahin, *Empire, and Power in the Reign of Süleyman*, p. 118.

During the campaign, claiming that Şah Tahmasb held gigantic palaces and huge treasures in such cities as Isfahan, Qum, and Kashan in Iran, Elkas Mirza demanded permission from the Ottoman Sultan to loot these territories and acquire plenty of spoils.[78] As a result of his pillage, he presented precious gifts and invaluable goods to the Ottoman Sultan. After that, Süleyman I ordered Elkas Mirza to retreat to Baghdad, but he did not obey the sultan's command since he suspected a plot on the part of the Ottoman officials. In the end, Şah Tahmasb captured and imprisoned him.[79]

Generally, the Ottoman chronicles are positive about Elkas Mirza's cooperation with the Ottoman Empire. For example, Lütfî Paşa tells how Süleyman I trusted him, and afterward how the Ottoman officials provoked Süleyman I against him, and as a result, their mutual campaign failed.[80] Matrakçı Nasuh narrates a significant story that after Elkas Mirza was appointed as a governor of Şirvan, he denounced the Shi'ite identity and appointed a Sunni qadi to rule over Şirvan, in which case Şah Tahmasb tried to punish his brother. Afterward, Elkas Mirza had to leave Şirvan and sought refuge in the Ottoman court.[81] Küçük Nişancı also states that Elkas Mirza converted to Sunni Islam before coming to the Ottoman capital.[82] But Koca Nişancı was quite cautious and prejudiced about Elkas Mirza because of his Safavid-Shi'ite background. He states that when Elkas Mirza arrived in Iraq during the campaign, he attempted to visit the tombs of Shi'ite Imams and converted back to the Shi'ite faith.[83]

The prejudice of the chronicles about the Safavids' religious background emerged as the cause of this incursion. They mostly explained this Ottoman military operation as an outcome of the religious clash with the Safavid dynasty. For example, Küçük Nişancı argues that Süleyman I was always prepared to wage a holy war against the Safavids to dispel heresy and dissent.[84] Similarly, Matrakçı Nasuh claims that the Ottoman sultan desired to annihilate all of those unbelievers not obeying the Islamic *shariah* and causing *fitnah*.[85]

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78 *A.g.e.*

79 *A.g.e.*

80 Lütfî Paşa, *Tevârîh-i Âli Osmân*, p. 443.

81 Matrakçı Nasuh, *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 419-427.

82 Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, p. 240.

83 Demirtaş, "Celâl-Zâde Mustafa Çelebi, Tabakâtü'l-Memâlik ve Derecâtü'l-Mesâlik", p. 522.

84 Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, p. 240.

85 Matrakçı Nasuh, *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 428-429.

In the *fetihnâme* dispatched to the Venetians, Süleyman I used strong language and ideological polemic about this expedition. He asserted that the Safavid dynasty seized Iranian territory with oppression and tyranny, misguided the people, and disturbed the legitimate order. The Sultan stated that expelling their corruption and subduing them was among his religious responsibilities (*vâcibât*).[86] After that, Süleyman I describes how the Ottoman army (*asker-i İslam ve gâzîler*) pillaged the lands up to the city of Tabriz in the eastern frontier and massacred numerous heretical and antagonist Kızılbaş (*melâhide vü muânide*).[87]

Consequently, the attitude of the Ottoman Empire toward the Safavids during the reign of Süleyman I was not statically hostile, the Ottomans developed a new policy. Even though the official rhetoric and the discourses of the chronicles sometimes reflect the Ottoman-Safavid rivalry as a sort of religious conflict, such events as the cooperation with Elkas Mirza show how the Ottomans had peaceful relations with Shi'ite members when the political atmosphere required.

The "Last" Iranian Campaign and Peace of Amasya in 1555

In 1553 while the Ottoman forces were busy with the western frontier, the Safavid army attacked the various strongholds and advanced on the eastern frontier. The Ottoman Sultan decided to conduct a new campaign against the Safavids.[88] Koca Nişancı only talks about the Safavids' continuous hostility toward the Ottomans[89] whereas Lütfî Paşa states that after Şah Tahmasb challenged the Ottoman authority and sent unacceptable letters to the Ottoman court, Suleyman I decided to punish his aggressive action.[90] Yet, the ongoing political struggle between the Ottoman and Safavid dynasties mostly appeared within ideological discourses in chronicles. For instance, Küçük Nişancı explains that aiming at annihilating the heretics (*melâhide*) in the eastern frontier, Süleyman I decided to create a new military campaign.[91] Matrakçı Nasuh also says that Süleyman I wanted to destroy the heretical şah (*şâh-ı gümrâh*) and his followers (*Kızılbaş-ı nikbet intiâş*) with his military campaign in 1553.[92]

At the end of this expedition, the Ottoman army had to return after pillaging certain strongholds in the Iranian frontier, since Şah Tahmasb did not directly

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86   Gökbilgin, "Venedik Devlet Arşivindeki Türkçe Belgeler Koleksiyonu", p. 57-59.

87   *A.g.e.*

88   Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman*, p. 128-129.

89   Demirtaş, "Celâl-Zâde Mustafa Çelebi, Tabakâtü'l-Memâlik ve Derecâtü'l-Mesâlik", p. 585.

90   Lütfî Paşa, *Tevârîh-i Âli Osmân*, p. 452.

91   Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, p. 345.

92   *Rüstem Paşa Tarihi Olarak Bilinen Târîh-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 468.

confront the Ottoman forces. Afterward, a peace campaign was initiated by Şah Tahmasb. Küçük Nişancı briefly states that Şah Tahmasb sent envoys to the Ottoman military camps recognizing the Ottoman authority and seeking peace.[93]

Religious controversy surfaced during the peace negotiations as well. Both sides emphasized their ideological positions. The fact that Şah Tahmasb referred to the Twelve Imams together with the Prophet at the beginning of his correspondence to the Ottoman Sultan shows the extent to which the Safavid dynasty stressed Shi'ite beliefs. Also, Şah Tahmasb claimed that a possible peace agreement could induce not only the spiritual and worldly well-being of the Muslims (*saâdet-i dîn ü* dünyâ), but also the contentment of God, his Prophet, and the Twelve Imams.[94]

It is significant to examine how the Ottoman Sultan was portrayed in the letter. Şah Tahmasb admitted the religious and worldly authority of Süleyman I and his religious mission. The Şah called the sultan the protector of Islam against the distortion of unbelievers and hypocrites (*hâmi-i havza-i dîn an makâyid al-kuffâr wa al-munâfiqîn / hârisu nâmûs al-sharîah*) and the guardian of the gates of Islam and the Muslims (*hâfizu thugûr al-Islam wa al-muslimîn*).[95] In the same vein, the Şah confirmed the claim of the Ottomans to the caliphate and named Süleyman I as the custodian of two holy cities with all sincerity (*al-khâdim bi-vufûr al-ikhlâs fî al-haramayn al-sharîfayn*), and the strengthener of the building of the great caliphate (*mumahhidu bunyân al-khilâfah al-uzmâ*).[96]

Parallel to that, Süleyman I addressed the Şah with favorable language/attitude and did not argue about their religious beliefs in his response. The sultan referred solely to the status of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs.[97] He remarked that with the favor of the Prophet, his companions, and the first four caliphs, the sultan worked for the welfare of Muslims and public order; therefore, the sultan stated his acceptance of the peace offering (*muvâlât u musâfahât talebi*). In particular, the Ottoman Sultan demanded that the Safavid dynasty stop cursing both the companions of the prophet and the rightly guided caliphs (*ashâb-ı güzîn ve*

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93 Küçük Nişancı, *Târîh-i Nişancı*, p. 248.

94 Feridun Bey, *Mecmûa-yı Münşeâtü's-Selâtîn, Cild 2*, p. 622.

95 *A.g.e.,* p. 621.

96 *A.g.e.,* p. 622.

97 Feridun Bey claims that this response was issued to declare the invalidity of the sect of *rafidah* (*mezheb-i rafzın butlânı*). Yet, it was not the case since the sultan created this response to inform the Safavids about the conclusion of the peace negotiations even though he indicated certain religious controversies. See Feridun Bey, *Mecmûa-yı Münşeâtü's-Selâtîn, Cild 2*, p. 463.

hulefâ-yi mühtedîn) and respect them as a condition of the peace agreements. The Safavid envoy, afterward, informed him of the acceptance of this condition by the Safavid Şah.[98]

On the other side, the Safavids requested the Ottoman Empire to allow Iranian subjects, who were likely to be Shi'ite Muslims, to visit the holy house of Allah (*baytullâh al-harâm*), the sacred city (*madîna-i musharrafa-i mukarramah*) and other holy places. The Ottoman Sultan declared that the pilgrims and visitors could freely and safely travel to holy places.[99] This point indicates that the Ottomans did not perceive the Shi'ite followers strictly as unbelievers and non-Muslims.

As a consequence, the peace agreement opened a new stage in Ottoman-Safavid relations. The Safavid dynasty recognized Ottoman authority whereas the Ottoman Empire quit anti-Shi'ite propaganda along with the emphasis on its Sunni characteristics, and started to use more positive discourse about the Safavids. Also, the Ottoman Empire acknowledged the Shi'ite group as part of the Muslim community.

As a result, the attitude of the Ottomans toward the Safavid dynasty and its supporters was not monolithic. The Sunni sensitivity of the Ottoman Empire affected its policies against the Safavids. After politically eliminating the Safavid threat with the idea of *takfîr*, the Ottomans changed their policy and regarded the followers of the Safavids as within the borders of Islam. Such points as the collaboration with Elkas Mirza and the Peace Treaty of Amasya together with more respectful language exemplify and attest to the multiform Ottoman perception of and conduct toward the non-Sunni groups.

Conclusion

Ottoman engagements with Christian states in the western frontier went beyond the dichotomy of Muslim and non-Muslim. The Ottoman Empire had multiple forms of diplomacy in its relations with non-Muslims. The Ottomans entered into various conflicts with European states with the sanctification of the holy war; however, they did not hesitate to make an alliance with Christian powers against a common enemy. The Ottoman Empire also dealt with the Shi'ite Safavid Empire and placed its struggle within the frame of a holy war. The Ottoman Empire stressed its Sunni identity and declared the Safavids and their supporters to be heretics (*takfîr*). The control of space also became a part of ideological warfare between

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98   *A.g.e.,* p. 464.

99   *A.g.e.*

the Ottoman and Safavid dynasties. The visitation of the Ottoman sultan to the shrines of Shi'ite Imams particularly exemplified this aspect of warfare. However, this attitude was not consistent, since the chronicles reflected the inconsistency of Ottoman engagement with the Safavids. In peaceful times, the Ottomans revealed a positive attitude toward the Safavids, used positive language about them, and regarded the Shi'ite members as a part of the Muslim community.

The period that framed the timeline of the article coincided with the triumph of Ottoman power. Along with the decline of Ottoman supremacy and the emergence of modern diplomacy, the Ottoman Empire had to deal with different circumstances in international relations. It would be significant to explore questions about how the Ottoman Empire acted within these new political dynamics and whether the Ottoman Empire's conduct of international relations in this later period followed a similar or different pattern from its early modern practices.

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