



French and British Policy and Culture in Egypt 1798-1841: The Reign of Muhammad Ali and the Eastern Crisis

by

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THESIS SUMMARY

British and French policy in the Eastern Crisis of 1839-1841 has traditionally been viewed through the lens of diplomatic history, without an attempt to bring Saidian analysis of the cultural contexts in which British and French policies were being made to bear on events. The cultural and diplomatic contexts surrounding the Eastern Crisis require a focus not just on the crisis itself, but on how British and French relationships with Egypt and the Ottoman Empire developed over the preceding decades. This thesis does this by focusing on the period from the French invasion of Egypt and its origins, under the French revolutionary regime, through to the crisis itself, as this whole period is important to the development of the differing cultural relationships of France and Britain to Egypt. This thesis aims to blend diplomatic history, with cultural history to examine the crisis and its origins. Through analysis of cultural texts such as travel histories and a focus on the cultural view of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire in France and Britain, this thesis will explore how French and British perceptions of the 'Orient' affected their policy decisions in the area.

Placing cultural imperialism and cultural narratives about Egypt within an analysis of French and British policy in the early nineteenth-century helps place policy choices in their proper context. It enables an examination of French and British views of Egypt in the early nineteenth-century and reveals important differences between British and French understandings of the nature of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. Far from all expressing the same orientalism, writers explored different positions, and argued for different policies based on different theories or views on the prospects for change in the Middle East.

To demonstrate this, the thesis scrutinises the tension between narratives of reform and despotism surrounding Muhammad Ali's regime. Muhammad Ali, the ruler of Egypt from 1805 until

his death in 1849, and his rule became central to British and French policy towards Egypt. Ali himself also focused on his relationship with Britain and France and in turn he attempted to shift narratives in Britain and France to be more positive towards him and his rule. Ali's actions, as well as some of the actions of the Ottoman Sultans and government during this period, help illustrate that regimes outside Europe actively attempted to shape the way their polities were represented in Europe. Whether during the Napoleonic period, the Greek War of Independence or during Muhammad Ali's challenge to the Ottoman Sultan, Anglo-French representations of Muhammad Ali, Egypt and the Ottoman Empire are shown to be changeable and malleable. As such, these views both enabled and restricted policy responses to Eastern developments.

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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INTRODUCTION

The Oriental crisis of 1839-1841 attracted the attention of all the great powers of Europe to the relationship between Muhammad Ali's Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. Yet the nature of this crisis, and in particular the cultural origins of British and French policy in the second Egyptian-Ottoman War of 1839-1841 have been underexplored by historians. Traditional histories of this period have seen these policies explained primarily through the diplomatic lens of the 'Eastern Question' or assumed that the reasons for British and French actions in this period were merely 'commercial, strategic, or colonial.'¹ While some writers, notably P. E. Caquet, have interpreted policy in individual parts of this period as culturally based, it is important to analyse how cultural perceptions of Egypt and Muhammad Ali as a ruler affected policy towards Egypt in both France and Britain during this entire period. France and Britain were the two primary European powers involved in Egyptian affairs throughout the nineteenth-century, competing for influence throughout the regimes of Muhammad Ali and his successors. During Muhammad Ali's reign, the question of the strength of the Ottoman Empire came to the forefront of European policy, and the European powers grappled with the question of whether they should support the Ottoman Empire in the face of a new potential power in the region.

Traditional histories have further posited that European reactions to the Egyptian-Ottoman War of 1839-1841 were based on strategic 'national interests,' that the great statesmen of Europe, including Palmerston and Metternich knew what to do to get the best result for their countries, and acted on those policies. These traditional histories posit that the statesmen were automatons, guided by some mystical essence of national interest that was objective. In reality, however, the factors

¹ P. E. Caquet, 'The Napoleonic Legend and the War Scare of 1840,' *The International History Review*, 35:4, 2013, pp.702-722. p.703.

guiding foreign and imperial policy were much more complex, with national interests largely decided by those in power, who based their decisions not just on ‘commercial, strategic, or colonial’ grounds.²

It is important to add cultural context to these diplomatically based histories, to show how cultural concerns and conflicts influenced society and thus policy in the nineteenth-century. As Miroslav Šedivý, a Czech historian, explains, ‘the history of international relations is not simply the result of only logical geopolitical and economic deliberations but also takes into account sympathies, aversions and even hatred.’³ Demonstrating what he means, Šedivý has posited that France’s foreign policy after 1815 was driven considerably by a public desire for a ‘foreign policy that would restore France’s “greatness and honour.”’⁴

Without jettisoning the gains of diplomatic and political history, this thesis explores the development of British and French policy towards Muhammad Ali, Egypt (and the Ottoman Empire) through a more cultural lens, providing a methodologically blended view of the period. This dual approach, applying diplomatic and cultural historical analysis to the period, offers a more detailed and nuanced sense of the context within which the decisions of policy makers operated during the two Egyptian-Ottoman wars, the French and British invasions of Egypt, and the Greek War of Independence. The genesis and assumptions of these policies, this thesis argues, can be traced to literature and cultural attitudes towards Egypt that emerged in the two countries (and elsewhere) during the period. This literature was part of a growing body of work emanating from

² Ibid., p.703.

³ Miroslav Šedivý, ‘Honour as a political-legal argument: The French July Monarchy, national dignity and Europe 1830–1840,’ *The Czech Historical Review*, 116:1, 2018, pp.86-111, p.87.

⁴ Ibid., p.89.

travellers who either incidentally published their travel diaries or deliberately set out to describe publicly the countries they visited. These works were in turn often inspired by works before them, as travellers would compare what they saw with earlier accounts, especially including those of Herodotus, an ancient Greek historian and Constantin François de Chassebœuf, comte de Volney, a French writer who travelled to Egypt in the 1780s. Much of this literature can be classified as part of the discursive tradition of ‘Orientalism’ which is explored later in this introduction and throughout the thesis.

The centring of cultural imperialism and cultural narratives about Egypt into the story of policy is the most important aspect of this thesis, which aims to illuminate the policy choices made by the governments of France and Britain towards Egypt against their cultural perceptions and discourses. The example of Egypt and Muhammad Ali in the early nineteenth-century reveals the multifaceted nature of British and French narratives about the Orient and its rulers. Rather than being consumed by an Orientalist monoculture, there were dissenting voices arguing for different policies based on different cultural and political assumptions. The difference in French and British policy in the Second Egyptian-Ottoman War is just one example of this, but this thesis also illuminates the different narratives that existed around Muhammad Ali throughout the expansionist period of his reign.

Theoretical Contexts

This thesis relies heavily on the theoretical context within which it is situated. The early nineteenth-century was part of a period of European imperial expansion, which saw Europeans travel to all parts of the globe, not always to formally take control of them. The informal part of European imperial expansion is most of what this thesis deals with. Linked to this informal imperialism,

Orientalism, the study of the Orient, was a burgeoning field in Europe. Orientalism was notionally just this study of the Orient, but Edward Said and others have posited that the field was really another aspect of European imperialism. According to this Saidian theory, instead of just undertaking an apolitical study of the Orient, Europeans were constructing a vision of the Orient. This construction of an Orient, related, but separate to the 'real' Orient can be seen to have led European policy down particular pathways and is important to this thesis. The following sections discuss Imperialism, Said's notion of Orientalism and how they interact within this thesis.

Imperialism

French and British policy and actions in Egypt in the early nineteenth-century need to be properly contextualised as an integral part of each country's imperial calculations. Egypt offers a unique case as it was also officially an imperial possession of the Ottoman Empire, even if Ottoman control was weak for much of the early nineteenth-century. The main form of imperialism exhibited in Egypt by France and Britain over the early nineteenth-century can be termed 'informal imperialism,'⁵ which can be differentiated from formal imperialism by the absence of formal instruments of control such as governors and armed garrisons. Informal imperialism relied on networks of traders, financiers, consuls, and others exercising their influence over local authorities.

Imperialism has traditionally been explained by three different types of theories: metrocentric, systemic, and pericentric.⁶ Metrocentric theories focus on factors within the metropole

⁵ John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade, *The Economic History Review*, 6:1, 1953, pp.1-15, p.1.

⁶ Michael W. Doyle, *Empires*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1986, p.145.

to explain imperialism, usually designating it as a fundamentally economic process.⁷ J. A. Hobson's seminal theory of imperialism, for example, holds that it was rooted in:

Overproduction in the sense of an excessive manufacturing plant, and surplus capital which could not find sound investments within the country, forced Great Britain, Germany, Holland, France, to place larger and larger portions of their economic resources outside the area of their present political domain, and then stimulate a policy of political expansion so as to take in the new areas.⁸

This economic line of thought was also taken up by Lenin, who characterised Imperialism as the 'highest stage of capitalism,' brought about by the development of monopoly capitalism in the metropole.⁹ D. K. Fieldhouse wrote scathingly that Hobson's attempted statistical justifications for his theories were no more than an 'intellectual conjuring trick,' and that he offered no real proof of a connection between imperial expansion and finance capital other than a decontextualized list of statistics.¹⁰ Fieldhouse's critique of these theories of imperialism goes further, encouraging historians to 'distrust all-embracing historical formulas,' especially in reference to imperialism, positing that the facts of post-1870 imperial expansion do not fit Lenin and Hobson's metropole-centred worldview, and finally arguing against the isolation of the post-1870 period of imperial expansion from other periods.¹¹ Eric Stokes similarly criticised these metrocentric theories of imperialism – both 'Marxist' and 'non-Marxist' – as presenting Africa as 'almost a blank map on which the Europeans were free to write their will,'¹² echoing criticisms of traditional Western histories of the Eastern Question.

⁷ Ibid., p.23.

⁸ J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, Unwin Hyman, London, 1988, p.80.

⁹ V. I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline*, Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1970, p.9.

¹⁰ D. K. Fieldhouse, "Imperialism: An Historiographical Revision," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 14:2, 1961, pp.187-209, p.190.

¹¹ Ibid., p.195.

¹² Eric Stokes, 'Imperialism and the Scramble for Africa: The New View,' in *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy*, edited by WM Roger Louis, New Viewpoints, New York, 1976, pp.173-196, p.175.

Fieldhouse argues his viewpoint on imperialism from a 'systemic' theoretical standing. Systemic theories explain imperialism as a process arising from the balance of power within Europe, and the desire of states to maintain and increase their power relative to other states, essentially presenting international relations as 'a battle of relative weight.'¹³ Fieldhouse characterised the phenomenon of nineteenth-century imperialism as 'the extension into the periphery of the political struggle in Europe,' the major powers could not expand within Europe, so they had to look for 'sources of diplomatic strength, prestige-giving accessions of territory, hope for future economic development' outside of Europe.¹⁴ Arguably open to Stokes' critique of those who failed to give serious attention to dynamics at the imperial periphery, Fieldhouse's analysis also focused on the later part of the nineteenth-century, primarily the Scramble for Africa. In this sense, as Doyle argues, Fieldhouse was typical of systemic theorists in that he largely ignored non-European dynamics as well as earlier manifestations of imperialism.¹⁵

In contrast, pericentric theories hold that the sources of imperialism are found in the peripheries, the actual sites of imperial control. Doyle holds Robinson and Gallagher as the main proponents of pericentric imperialism, and describes them as seeing imperialism 'as a process driven by pericentric pressures from the African, Asian, and Latin American peripheries.'¹⁶ Robinson and Gallagher believed that formal imperialism only manifested itself when the 'polities' of the peripheries 'fail to provide satisfactory conditions for commercial or strategic integration.'¹⁷

¹³ Doyle, *Empires*, p.27.

¹⁴ Fieldhouse, "Imperialism", p.206.

¹⁵ Doyle, *Empires*, p.146.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.147.

¹⁷ Gallagher and Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade,' p.6.

Focusing on informal imperialism, they pointed to the French experience in Tunisia and the British in Egypt as examples, arguing that as long as these sites were home to stable and pliant regimes for much of the nineteenth-century there was no need for formal imperial control. Once local actors rebelled, they reacted reluctantly to take formal control.¹⁸ In essence, informal imperialism was undertaken wherever possible throughout the early nineteenth-century as a way to achieve economic dominance of a place without engaging in the ‘expense of direct administration.’¹⁹

Many imperial theorists have dealt primarily with formal empire, especially after 1870, and have largely ignored the ‘informal’ imperial possessions of the powers, something Robinson and Gallagher likened to ‘judging the size and character of icebergs solely from the parts above the water-line.’²⁰ They are not alone, with Jesse Savage similarly focusing on ‘informal imperialism’ defined as ‘when an authority relation exists between two states but the subordinate state retains *de jure* authority,’ but also ‘indicators of informal empire must therefore demonstrate a persistent and institutionalized relationship of control by one state over another.’²¹

Despite the clear influence of this picture over an earlier generation of imperial studies, George Shepperson has correctly argued that Robinson and Gallagher went too far in their attempt to explain imperialism through a pericentric method, ignoring the at times obvious, economic motive, and criticising their theory as ‘almost as mechanical as the simpler models they are seeking

¹⁸ Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, ‘The Partition of Africa,’ in *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy*, edited by WM Roger Louis, New Viewpoints, New York, 1976, pp.73-127, p.75-76.

¹⁹ Timothy Parsons, *The British Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A World History Perspective*, Rowman and Littlefield, London, 1999, p.13.

²⁰ Gallagher and Robinson, ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade,’ p.1.

²¹ Jesse Dillon Savage, ‘The stability and breakdown of empire: European informal empire in China, the Ottoman Empire and Egypt,’ *European Journal of International Relations*, 17:2, 2010, pp.161-185, p.162.

so rightly to destroy.²² So too, Michael Doyle has suggested that any theory which only takes into account one of these three factors is inadequate for explaining imperialism.²³ Imperialism arose because of a combination of factors in the metropolises, peripheries, and the international system itself, and formal theories that attempt to explain all imperialism in all places via a single approach will inevitably not achieve their aims. Adopting Doyle's sensible definition of Empire as 'a system of interaction between two political entities, one of which, the dominant metropole, exerts political control over the internal and external policy ... of the other, the subordinate periphery',²⁴ it can be seen that formal control of territory is not necessary for an imperial relationship. Similarly, Karen Barkey has suggested that formal domination is not a necessary prerequisite for an imperial relationship, arguing that, 'empires are essentially relations of domination, of the periphery by the center, through various compacts with different local, regional elites whose relation to the core varies from full cooptation to different levels of local autonomy.'²⁵

As this introduction and the whole thesis make clear, in Egypt imperialism in both its informal and formal manifestations was certainly caused by a combination of factors, including the Anglo-French rivalry, cultural perceptions of Egypt, Egypt's internal situation, and the relative weakness of the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, this thesis explores French and British imperial policy in Egypt (primarily through the lens of how cultural perceptions of Egypt worked in diplomacy), in an attempt to understand how activities in and beliefs about the imperial periphery

²² George Shepperson, 'Africa, the Victorians and Imperialism,' in *Imperialism: The Robinson and Gallagher Controversy*, edited by WM Roger Louis, New Viewpoints, New York, 1976, pp.162-172, p.169.

²³ Doyle, *Empires*, p.160.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.19.

²⁵ Karen Barkey, 'A Perspective on Ottoman Decline' in *Hegemonic Decline: Present and Past*, Ed. Jonathan Friedman, Christopher Chase-Dunn, Routledge, New York, pp.121-134, p.121.

affected policy in the metropole, while not ignoring the role that systemic factors played in imperial policy at the time.

Applications of Imperial Theory in Egypt

Europe's first formal imperial experiment in Egypt consisted primarily of the French invasion of 1798 and the subsequent brief occupation. As shown in chapter one, this occupation had a variety of aims, ranging from anti-British strategic aims to beliefs about Egypt's past grandeur and France's ability to resurrect and enhance it, Britain and France remained largely intent on acquiring informal imperial influence in the Ottoman Empire, at least until later in the century.²⁶

After the failure of the French occupation, early nineteenth-century Egypt became an interesting and atypical site of informal imperialism. Crucially, Muhammad Ali's regime was not *de jure* independent in itself, being officially a 'tributary' state of the Ottoman Empire, but it did demonstrate *de facto* independence for much of the period, even becoming engaged in two direct military conflicts with the Ottoman Empire over the period. Operating in an environment of imperial control by the Ottoman Empire (itself exhibiting similar signs of being an informal imperial outpost of a variety of European Powers at times throughout the nineteenth-century), Ali's regime attempted to increase links with Europe in order to win more autonomy from Ottoman control, in the process strengthening Egypt's informal imperial bonds with France and Britain in particular, as well as helping to set in motion the events that would eventually lead to the formal British occupation of Egypt in 1882.²⁷ Exemplifying this was 'extraterritoriality,' according to Savage, one of

²⁶ Savage, 'The stability and breakdown of empire,' p.175.

²⁷ Savage, 'The stability and breakdown of empire,' p.177.

the most important features of an informal imperial relationship. In Egypt, some sort of extraterritoriality was extant in Egypt in the form of the ‘capitulations’ granted to European powers and merchants.²⁸

British policy towards the Ottoman Empire was also based largely on accruing informal control, according to Timothy Parsons:

The British aim was to erode the sovereignty of these venerable empires just enough to force their political and economic institutions to become more open. Too much interference threatened to produce political disintegration, economic instability, and a potentially dangerous power vacuum that might open the way for rival powers or force Britain to resort to costly formal annexation.²⁹

Parsons discusses how the British went about this as a one-way process of Britain imposing their ideals on foreign countries, as ‘British diplomats therefore hoped to strengthen these “rotten empires” by convincing them to adopt constitutions, free trade, industrial technology, and Western-style education’.³⁰ Savage too has commented that, ‘the legal institutions the Europeans and Ottomans had established guaranteed the economic benefits the Europeans sought without them having to assume extensive and costly forms of control.’³¹

The examples of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire explored in this thesis, will however reveal this to be an at least somewhat Eurocentric viewpoint. While many informal imperial reforms, especially commercial reforms, were imposed on the Ottoman Empire and Egypt by the European

²⁸ Ibid., p.176.

²⁹ Parsons, *The British Imperial Century*, p.26.

³⁰ Ibid., p.26.

³¹ Savage, ‘The stability and breakdown of empire,’ p.175.

powers, many of the other constitutional, industrial, and educational reforms, were driven by internal processes.³² These internal processes may have helped the European project of informal empire, but this does not mean that all Europeanising reforms were imposed from abroad.

Beyond the obvious reach of the reform process, France and Britain also made up for their lack of imperial power by mobilising cultural perceptions of Egypt to exert informal imperial power over modern Egypt and its past. ‘Egyptology’ and the removal of antiquities and artefacts from Egypt to museums in the metropolises helped establish this control. Particularly in France, Egyptology became ‘a particular institution of colonial power,’³³ that contributed to a sense of ownership of Egypt’s past, incorporating it into the grand history of their own civilisation, the source of science and the arts. As Jasanoff has pointed out, the *Description de l’Egypte* produced by the *savants* who accompanied the French occupation force in Egypt also fit snugly into this project making a cultural claim upon Egypt in its past: ‘in Egypt, the *Description* seemed to be saying, France presented the West with another part of its heritage, another ancient civilisation to study and collect.’³⁴

Savage posits that the situation of informal empire benefited both the elites in Egypt and the European powers.³⁵ On the one hand, the European powers and their agents and merchants desired stability in governance from the existing local authorities. As such, Britain and France tried to both bolster and influence local elites in an attempt to earn benefits for their agents and merchants. On

³² Archana Prakash, ‘Reappraising the French role in nineteenth-century Egyptian education,’ *Middle Eastern Studies*, 54:4, 2018, pp.537-554, p.537.

³³ Elliott Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities: Egyptology, Egyptomania, Egyptian Modernity*, Duke University Press, 2008, p.17.

³⁴ Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and Conquest in the East, 1750-1850*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2005, p.226.

³⁵ Savage, ‘The stability and breakdown of empire,’ p.176.

the other hand, informal European influence in Egypt could counterbalance the supposedly formal Ottoman imperial influence. By establishing his own independent methods of contact with Europe, Muhammad Ali could bypass formal Ottoman power structures and negotiate directly with the British and French governments. Ali also discussed issues with the French and British consuls, and was open about his desires, especially his desires to keep Britain and France on his side. Yet, this informal imperial influence did have its limits. Ali was not always cooperative with British and French desires, and his independent trade and economic policies were a long-time sticking point with France and Britain until after the second Egyptian-Ottoman war when his desire for independence was finally curtailed. Exchanges between the powers were always a tricky and delicate balance.

In assessing the nature of any imperial exchange, informal or formal, it is important to resist explanations that rely entirely on what the imperial power wanted and did. In the Egyptian and Ottoman case, despite the informal imperial pressures exerted on them, the Ottoman regime and Muhammad Ali both attempted to exert influence on the European powers to try to further their own aims. They saw themselves as using the informal imperial presence of these powers to their advantage, to try to remain independent or gain independence. For the Ottoman Empire, signing the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, while heavily influenced by the situation and the presence of Russian forces, was a choice. As Matthew Rendall points out in his article on Russian policy towards the Egyptian-Ottoman conflicts, it was the Sultan who first posited an offensive and defensive treaty that became the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, and had the Ottoman Empire not wanted to sign a treaty

on Russia's suggestion, it would have been able to use the presence of French and British naval forces nearby to resist Russian attempts at coercion.³⁶

So too, it was Muhammad Ali's attempts at Egyptian imperial expansion that brought about adverse reactions to his rule.³⁷ While previous negative reactions to Ali did not view him as a threat to European interests beyond his system of monopolies and his actions during the Greek crisis, Egyptian imperial expansion into Syria was seen as a threat to the very survival of the Ottoman Empire. Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot described the motives behind Ali's imperialism as two-fold. Ali desired to increase his economic base to help Egypt become self-sustainable, but he also wanted to increase his power and prestige, to help him gain independence and recognition from the European powers.³⁸ Marsot believes that it was here that Ali's policy became flawed, that by trying to increase his power and thus his ability to become independent, he drew negative European attention to his actions, which were then thwarted:

In one sense the *wali* was caught up in a vicious circle. In order to force a recognition of his independence from both Ottomans and Europeans alike, he must needs overstep his boundaries and acquire an empire, thereby earning Ottoman and European enmity which inhibited his quest for independence.³⁹

What happened in the Oriental crisis has long been known and broadly understood. However, the role culture played in British and French imperialism in Egypt, how it shaped their imperial desires and their actions has been underexplored. To understand this, cultural imperialism must be

³⁶ Matthew Rendall, Restraint or self-restraint of Russia: Nicholas I, the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, and the Vienna system, 1832-1841, *The International History Review*, March, 24:1, 2002, pp. 37-63, p.42-43.

³⁷ Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984, p.196.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.197.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.196.

explained and then placed alongside diplomatic history, to reveal the full picture of British and French imperial policy in Egypt.

Cultural Imperialism and Orientalism

European imperialism brought about the exchange of ideas, goods, and people between Europe and the rest of the world, and early nineteenth-century Egypt was no exception to this phenomenon.

European writers and merchants travelled to Egypt in ever greater numbers, and Egyptians began to travel the other way. This included Egyptians travelling with the French army returning to France after the withdrawal of French forces from Egypt in 1801, but expanded once Muhammad Ali's educational schemes began. If imperialism is an exchange, it is important to look at the cultural aspects of that exchange, what can be termed 'cultural imperialism' and its related concepts, such as 'Orientalism.' Culture, for Edward Said, was two linked but separate things. The first included:

...all those practices, like the arts of description, communication, and representation, that have relative autonomy from the economic, social, and political realms and that often exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aims is pleasure.⁴⁰

The second aspect of culture is 'a concept that includes a refining and elevating element, each society's reservoir of the best that has been known and thought, as Matthew Arnold put it in the 1860s.'⁴¹ This second dimension of culture was, for Said, fundamentally nationalist. Culture 'comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or the state; this differentiates "us" from "them."⁴² This self/other binary lies at the heart of his conceptualisation of Orientalism (discussed in detail below), whereby the East and the West are viewed as somehow intrinsically separate and

⁴⁰ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage Books, New York, 1994, p.xii.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.xiii.

⁴² *Ibid.*

different, with different shared cultural lineages. For Said, culture was inherently political, despite having been viewed historically as if it was a realm separate from the political.⁴³

While each European country had its own separate national culture, the idea of a universal European culture was nonetheless extant at the end of the eighteenth-century in both France, Britain, and elsewhere.⁴⁴ The 'West' such as it was, was defined against the 'East' or the 'Orient.' The two were constructed as fundamentally separate, geographically, politically, and religiously. Europeans travelled to the East to explore and understand it, and in this project came across peoples from whom they were 'previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures.'⁴⁵ Given the centrality of cultural production to national life, imperialism could not simply be a mechanism by which countries controlled other countries by force. Imperialism also affected and was affected by the cultural sphere.

This cultural imperialism was manifested through both scientific and non-scientific studies of non-European places. On the scientific side, Orientalists studied the Orient to attempt to further formal European knowledge of it. An example of such an Orientalist endeavour was the French *Description de l'Égypte* produced after the French invasion of Egypt and which aimed to describe the whole of Egypt. The natural environment, its past and present, the shape of the country, and its peoples were all included in this document which amounted to a 'scientific conquest of Egypt.'⁴⁶ Anne Godlewska has described the *Description* as 'one of the models for Western "scientific"'

⁴³ Ibid., p.xiv.

⁴⁴ Michael Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796-1814: Cultural Imperialism in a European Context?*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p.4.

⁴⁵ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Taylor & Francis, London, 2003, p.7.

⁴⁶ Anne Godlewska, 'Map, Text and Image. The Mentality of Enlightened Conquerors: A New Look at the Description de l'Égypte,' *Transactions of the British Institute of Geographers*, 20:1, 1995, pp.5-28, p.6.

imperialism,⁴⁷ but under Said's second definition of culture, it also fits as part of the Western institution of 'cultural imperialism.' As the following makes clear, the *Description* was part of a conscious effort by the French to link ancient Egypt with 'France and French culture.'⁴⁸ France, it was claimed, through its 'cultural superiority' had the right to study Egypt.⁴⁹

Anne McClintock has written that 'imperialism is not something that happened elsewhere a disagreeable fact of history external to Western identity. Rather, imperialism and the invention of race were fundamental aspects of Western, industrial modernity.'⁵⁰ Imperialism was, in this sense, central to culture in European states, central in how European states viewed themselves. France and Britain saw themselves as modern, thriving states, the very height of civilisation. If there is something at the forefront of progress, and modernity, this necessitates something being behind, and for France and Britain, one of those spheres that was lacking progress was the 'Orient.' Studies, like the *Description*, were central to the cultural imperial project of France.

On the less 'scientific' side, but still often presented as authoritative were travel writers. Travel writers were one of the most popular sources of European knowledge of places outside Europe. Many of them published celebrated and successful accounts that were referenced by later travel writers.⁵¹ These travel accounts 'were not simply benign products of the travelers' holidays, but became a way to document Egypt, to describe and explain it so that the country could be

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.7.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*, Routledge, New York, 1995, p.5.

⁵¹ Ferenc Toth, 'Les pays arabo-musulmans de l'Empire ottoman vus par un écrivain voyageur contemporain de Rousseau. Les Mémoires de François de Tott (1733-1793),' *Rousseau, les Lumières et le monde arabo-musulman. Du XVIIIe siècle aux printemps arabes*, Ed. Pascale Pellerin, Classiques Garnier, Paris, 2017, pp.67-84, p. 67.

'known,' and thus more easily ruled.⁵² Together, these scientific and popular accounts of the East constituted the West's understanding of the Orient.

Defining the East, however, was difficult. The Orient, according to Dominique-Georges-Frédéric Dufour de Pradt, the former archbishop of Mechelen and a prominent Russophobe, was 'a vast word, but a vague one, which is attached to many great things, but which designates nothing precise.'⁵³ The 'Oriental question' for de Pradt, was really a question of Europe. A question of Russia and the threat of Russian expansionism. He was not the only European who saw it in this lens.

François Guizot, the French statesman agreed:

Asia is now the theatre of ambitions and rivalries of the great European nations, and the Ottoman Empire is the door, the key of Asia. It is there, for the European and Christian world, an immense future, already visible, perhaps imminent.⁵⁴

The dominant text underlying most modern analysis of relationships between Europe and the 'Orient' remains Edward Said's *Orientalism*. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said explored the relationship between political power and knowledge in the 'field' of orientalism, and how this has helped shape the Occident's view of the 'Orient.' In effect, the Orient was 'romanticised and exoticised' by nineteenth-century artists, authors, and intellectuals,⁵⁵ which had the effect of 'exiling' the Orient

⁵² Lisa Bernasek, 'Unveiling the Orient, Unmasking Orientalism: Sophia Poole's *The Englishwoman in Egypt*,' in *Egyptian Encounters*, ed. Jason Thompson, American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2002, pp.50-79, p.50-51.

⁵³ Dominique-Georges-Frédéric Dufour de Pradt *Question de l'Orient Sous ses Rapports Généraux et Particuliers*, La Librarie de Roret, Paris, 1836, p.4. 'L'Orient ! voilà un mot bien vaste, mais bien vague, qui se rattache à beaucoup de choses fort grandes, mais qui n'en désigne aucune d'une manière précise.'

⁵⁴ François Guizot, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps*, Volume IV, Michel Lévy Frères, Paris, 1861, p.325. 'car l'Asie est maintenant le théâtre des ambitions et des rivalités des grandes nations européennes, et l'empire ottoman est le chemin, la porte, la clef de l'Asie. Il y a là, pour le monde européen et chrétien, un avenir immense, déjà visible, imminent peut-être.'

⁵⁵ Edmund Burke III, and David Prochaska, 'Rethinking the Historical Genealogy of Orientalism,' *History and Anthropology*, 18:2, 2007, pp.135-151, p.139.

‘into an irretrievable state of ‘otherness.’⁵⁶ Zachary Lockman concisely describes the argument posited by Said and others:

Orientalism as an intellectual enterprise was in significant ways linked to contemporary European colonialism and that the kind of knowledge Orientalism as a discipline tended to produce was often used to justify and further the exertion of European power over the Muslim world.⁵⁷

Said’s theory holds continued relevance to any study of the relationship between France, Egypt, and Britain from 1798-1841. Quite correctly, in *Orientalism* Said argued that the ‘keynote’ of the relationship between ‘West’ and ‘East’ was Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798; it was ‘the very model of a truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another,’ it ‘modernised’ ‘the Orient as a body of knowledge.’⁵⁸ This ‘knowledge’ gained of Egypt would cast a long shadow over future policies towards Egypt and would help Europeans in their self-proclaimed project of reviving Egypt, to take it away from the ostensible barbarism that had held it for centuries.⁵⁹ Whereas France saw itself as ‘the then highest point of human civilisation,’⁶⁰ Egypt was seen as a country in ruins, with a great past that was seen to be part of Europe’s past as well. Europeans disregarded modern Egypt, separating it from ancient Egypt through the discipline of Egyptology and what Elliot Colla has called the ‘invention of the Egyptian artefact.’⁶¹ Collecting and studying these artefacts became a substitute for the military ‘conquest’ of Egypt,⁶² and Egyptology and Egyptomania became

⁵⁶ Rana Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions: Europe’s Myths of Orient*, Pandora, London, 1994, p.6.

⁵⁷ Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004, p.88.

⁵⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York, 2004, p.42.

⁵⁹ In his introduction to the *Description de L’Egypte*, Jean-Baptiste-Joseph Fourier that ‘{Egypt} which has transmitted its knowledge to so many nations, is today plunged into barbarism.’ Said, *Orientalism*, p.85.

⁶⁰ Stuart Woolf, ‘French Civilisation and Ethnicity in the Napoleonic Empire,’ *Past & Present*, 124:1, 1989, pp.96-120, p.104.

⁶¹ Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, p.9.

⁶² Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.216.

intrinsically linked with the concept of Orientalism. As a Western branch of a 'science' Egyptology was opposed itself to the supposedly invalid, myth-based, knowledge the local Islamic populations had about the past of Egypt, and, as Colla terms it 'opened a breach between "modern Egypt" and "ancient Egypt," opposing them in a familiar orientalist binarism of East and West.'⁶³

Orientalism as a theory existed before the French invasion, and decidedly orientalist works, like Volney's *Voyages* were written prior to the French invasion. However, it expanded substantially after the French invasion of Egypt and the publication of the *Description de l'Égypte*. Significantly, the French word *orientaliste* appeared in the same year as the invasion.⁶⁴ Jasanoff's explanation of the invasion as 'a new kind of extra-European conquest' holds weight here again. The French invasion of Egypt was a fundamentally orientalist project, especially later, when the memory of the scientific 'achievements' of the expedition were given primacy over the military results. Indeed, the *Description* was described by Said in *Orientalism* as 'that great collective appropriation of one country by another.'⁶⁵

While it remains necessary to recognise how Orientalism has affected our understanding and relationship with the 'Orient,' it is important to note that the encounter between 'West' and 'East' was not entirely a 'fundamentally oppositional, one-sided affair,' as Said seemed to argue.⁶⁶ Artists have been seen as examples of people who managed to transcend the seemingly rigid cultural divide in some ways, both by John M. Mackenzie who wrote: 'the western arts in fact sought

⁶³ Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, p.101.

⁶⁴ Donald Malcom Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity From Napoleon to World War I*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002, p.32.

⁶⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, p.84.

⁶⁶ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire* p.7.

contamination at every turn, restlessly seeking renewal and reinvigoration through contacts with other traditions,⁶⁷ and Rana Kabbani, who stated: ‘such individuals contributed to an immense expansion of human knowledge, and were not handicapped by the perceptions they had inherited.’⁶⁸ Paul and Janet Starkey go further in stating that ‘the interplay of cultures in nineteenth-century Egypt was considerably more complex than Said’s simplistic ‘Orientalism’ paradigm would suggest.’⁶⁹ Dennis Porter too has stated that ‘there exist within Orientalism itself alternative and only partially silenced counter-hegemonic voices,’⁷⁰ voices that can sometimes be found in works that seem to ‘exemplify’ Said’s Orientalism.⁷¹

More broadly, Said’s argument that the Orient was also gendered feminine and thus passive in Western representations has also been aptly called into question, with Desmond Hosford positing that previous representations of the ‘Orient’ had cast it with a more ‘lethal sensuality’ shown especially in literary accounts of the story of Cleopatra of Egypt, rather than as a passive receptor to the ‘West’s’ desires.⁷² While during the eighteenth and nineteenth-century the declining threat of the Ottoman Empire as the primary ‘Oriental’ power relevant to Europe led to the shift into more passive representations of the feminine East, neither women nor the Orient were as ‘invariably passive and willingly subjugated’ as Said suggested.⁷³

⁶⁷ John M. Mackenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995, p.209.

⁶⁸ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p.12. Mackenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*.

⁶⁹ Paul and Janet Starkey, ‘Introduction,’ in *Travellers in Egypt* Ed. By Paul Starkey & Janet Starkey, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, London, 2001, pp.1-6, p.6.

⁷⁰ Dennis Porter, ‘Orientalism and its problems’ in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, edited by Williams, Patrick & Chrisman, Laura, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, p.153-154.

⁷¹ Dorothy Kelly, ‘Balzac’s Disorienting Orientalism: ‘Une Passion dans le desert,’” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 40:1/2, 2011/12, pp.1-17, p.1.

⁷² Desmond Hosford, ‘“Regnum Ruina”: Cleopatra and the Oriental Menace in Early French Tragedy,’ in *French Orientalism: Culture, Politics, and the Imagined Other*, edited by Desmond Hosford and Chong J. Wojtkowski, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, 2010, pp.23-47, p.23.

⁷³ Desmond Hosford, and Chong J. Wojtkowski, ‘Part I: Gendering the Orient,’ in *French Orientalism: Culture, Politics, and the Imagined Other*, edited by Hosford, Desmond, and Wojtkowski, Chong J., Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, 2010, pp.11-22, p.19.

Orientalism may not entirely have been a ‘fundamentally oppositional, one-sided affair,’ as Said claimed, nevertheless Orientalism did develop from an imbalanced cultural exchange,⁷⁴ even if many artists or writers exemplified some desire to transcend the oppositional relationship and learn more about the ‘Orient.’⁷⁵ Indeed, as the following makes clear, Muhammad Ali himself complicates the ‘simplistic ‘Orientalism’ paradigm,’ by exhibiting characteristics that Europeans considered traditionally ‘Oriental’ as well as more European characteristics. Views of Ali as a traditional despot fundamentally opposed to European interests were decidedly ‘Orientalist’ in the Saidian sense and were often brought about as part of a desire to present Ali as a specifically despotic force, when he was acting in opposition to Europe. The example of the Greek War of Independence shows how the narrative of Ali as a traditional Oriental despot was brought to the forefront by him acting against the perceived interests of Anglo-French liberals.

These complications of *Orientalism’s* central thesis are explored by David Cannadine in *Ornamentalism*. In *Ornamentalism* Cannadine explores how the British imperial project was, for a time, ‘built around the principles of replicating and supporting a hierarchical social structure modelled on, or likened to, and tied in with, that which it was thought existed (or had once existed) in Britain itself.’⁷⁶ The British, according to Cannadine, saw themselves as a hierarchical society, and also saw their empire as a hierarchical society. The British were at the top of this hierarchy, but were not separate to the societies outside of Britain, which were part of the same hierarchy.⁷⁷ According to Cannadine, ‘when the English first encountered the naïve peoples of North America, they did not

⁷⁴ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.7.

⁷⁵ Mackenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, p.209.

⁷⁶ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*, Penguin Books, London, 2002, p.13.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.5.

see them collectively as a race of inferior savages; on the contrary, they viewed them individually as fellow human beings.⁷⁸ Cannadine suggests that the imperial encounter was less striking, that the British, in his belief, were able to see the societies and people of the rest of the world in ways that taking *Orientalism* as a totalising thesis might have us believe they were unable to. Cannadine's thesis holds some validity when exploring British and French interactions with the Middle East. There are many instances explored throughout this thesis where writers did not use Orientalist discourses about the East. In a way, the French discourse about Muhammad Ali as an Egyptian Napoleon fits into Cannadine's definition of Ornamentalism. The French were seeking for a familiar explanation of what they saw in the figure of Muhammad Ali and describing him in a way that fit in with their own history. In this sense, Ali was extricated from his Oriental context and rendered, at least partly, French. British writers would also take this line at times, seeking to see examples of their own system in constitutional reforms attempted by both Ali and the various Sultans.

While criticisms of aspects of Said's thesis in *Orientalism* hold some validity, Said's work as a whole remains fundamental to any consideration of representations of the Orient. Histories written about the Ottoman Empire and Egypt throughout the nineteenth and earlier parts of the twentieth century reveal attitudes which would now be considered 'orientalism' in the Saidian sense. As historians rely on such written works, it is hard to come to an understanding of the past that does not in some way reflect the orientalism of the past. Faroqhi wrote of exactly this problem in

Approaching Ottoman History:

If primary sources are full of biases the extent of which we can never fully measure, the same is obviously true of present-day historiography as well. A reader of Edward Said's work may

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.6.

well come away with the melancholy reflection that present-day western culture is so ingrainedly racist and full of prejudices *vis-à-vis* whatever has been defined as the ‘other’, that any attempt to produce Middle Eastern history is doomed from the outset. Even if one is not willing to go that far, it is difficult to assume that we are getting anywhere near to ‘objective reality.’⁷⁹

Helpfully, Faroqi believes then that the role of scholars is to ‘engage in a dialogue’ and through that process ‘eliminate a multitude of naivetés and misconceptions.’⁸⁰ It is this approach that this thesis employs.

Travel Literature

Not all ‘Orientalism’ was a product of science or geographic expeditions. Ordinary travellers who wrote about their travels were also part of this European construction of the ‘Other’ in the ‘Orient.’ Europe’s supposedly advanced nature meant that for many in Europe, travel was ‘part of a vast programme of intellectual reconnaissance and political domination.’⁸¹ Travel to Egypt for these people was not just a matter of travelling through space, but also time. Of Greece, K.E. Fleming wrote:

Travel to Greece was not merely a matter of geography but also of chronology. The breathless students who viewed a visit to Greece as an essential part of their educational curricula were not primarily interested in “modern” Greece or even in its Byzantine predecessor. Rather, they regarded travel to Greece as a sort of anachronistic interactive exhibit.⁸²

⁷⁹ Suraiya Faroqi, *Approaching Ottoman History: An Introduction to the Sources*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p.30.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Peter Whitfield, *Travel: A Literary History*, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 2011, p.180.

⁸² K. E. Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte: Diplomacy and Orientalism in Ali Pasha’s Greece*, Princeton, New Jersey, 2014, p.10.

The same sentiments applied to Egypt as well. While Greece was the preeminent 'lost' classical civilisation for early nineteenth-century Europeans, Egypt occupied a similar place in the Enlightenment European worldview, as one of the roots of European civilisation, now trapped under the (mis)rule of an alien religion. Of Greece in the early nineteenth-century Romantic European imagination, Robert Eisner wrote: 'Nowhere was nostalgia more rife than among the ruins of an Empire.'⁸³ Greece, in comparison to Egypt, was more European and more central to the idea of Europe itself,⁸⁴ but the comparison is still apt.

Travel literature was an important source of European 'knowledge' about the orient and one of the fundamental building blocks of 'orientalism.' Travel writing was another side of the cultural-colonialism of Egypt, turning the country into a space for Europeans to observe from afar. The works of travel writers were an important part of this early Orientalist construction of the 'Orient,' and the travel writers' gaze was, as David Spurr has written, 'the active instrument of construction, order, and arrangement.'⁸⁵ Travelogues, alongside works like the *Description* helped construct a European Egypt through their 'commanding gaze' which conveyed 'a sense of mastery over the unknown and what is often perceived by the Western writer as strange and bizarre.'⁸⁶ Together, travel writing, journalism, and museum displays were the primary ways for Europeans back in Europe to consume Egypt, and as such their opinions proved influential in developing European attitudes to Egypt.

⁸³ Robert Eisner, *Travellers to an Antique Land: The History and Literature of Travel to Greece*, The University of Michigan press, Ann Arbor, 1990, p.100.

⁸⁴ Alexander Grammatikos, *British Romantic Literature and the Emerging Modern Greek Nation*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2018, p.11-12.

⁸⁵ David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing and Imperial Administration*, Duke University press, North Carolina, 1993, p.15.

⁸⁶ Spurr, *Rhetoric of Empire*, p.15.

Although *Orientalism* focuses almost exclusively on the period after the French invasion of Egypt, it is worth discussing earlier travellers' accounts prior to the invasion as well. These travellers' accounts, before and after 1798, were far from the impartial and wholly accurate representations of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire that the travellers and many Europeans believed them to be. European travellers to Egypt and the 'Orient' were, as Kabbani argues, 'seduced into seeing those aspects [they] expected to see,' and their 'descriptions served to elaborate upon those of previous travellers, sustaining as they did the same fictions.'⁸⁷ Asli Çirakman aptly describes an eighteenth-century 'feedback loop' of Orientalism, whereby travellers would read writings of past travellers and thinkers about the 'Orient':

In fact, relying on travel books as a repository of "facts" was becoming a general trend among the natural scientists and political thinkers of the eighteenth-century. Travelers provided a vast range of data in the fields of religion, morality, politics, and natural sciences that eventually led to the formulation of general principles and theories. Ironically, eighteenth-century travel accounts on the Ottoman Empire themselves increasingly relied on these theories and abstractions rather than on experience and observation for analysis. Contrary to the trend towards empiricism elsewhere, the theorist rather than the traveller provided the significant "facts" on the nature of Oriental societies.⁸⁸

Even as supposedly 'scientific' works about Egypt proliferated in the period after the French invasion and occupation, these works still reflected enduring European preconceptions about the places they were supposedly objectively describing.

⁸⁷ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p.25.

⁸⁸ Asli Çirakman, 'From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment's Unenlightened Image of the Turks,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 33:1, 2001, pp.49-68, p.57.

To take one example, when speaking of travel writers and Egypt, especially in the 1830s, the example of Edward William Lane looms large. For European audiences, Lane was able to both inhabit the Muslim space of Egypt, while retaining his ‘European power’ to describe the ‘Orient’ objectively.⁸⁹ Lane’s work, for Said is a ‘narrative structure overwhelmed by Orientalist restructuring and detail.’⁹⁰ Said devotes significant time to Lane’s *Modern Egyptians* in *Orientalism*, holding it up as a landmark ‘Orientalist’ work. Said’s reading of Lane has been criticised as a misreading by John Rodenbek in *Travellers in Egypt*, who accuses Said of an ‘intention to discredit’ Lane.⁹¹

Notwithstanding this dispute, Lane’s work is clearly an Orientalist work that influenced European opinions about Egypt, and not in a positive way with regards to its governance and its standing in relation to ‘civilisation.’ As this thesis shows, Lane’s was one of the most widely read British accounts of contemporary life in Egypt and its criticisms seriously affected British opinions of Egypt’s governance. The *Edinburgh Review* article about Lane’s book mentions the dual context in which these books were published, where Egypt was both a subject ‘of rational curious inquiry’ apart for modern European politics, as well as a ‘new military and political power.’⁹² The *Edinburgh Review* held that Lane’s work dealt with the former context almost exclusively, but the context within which it was published and his criticisms of Muhammad Ali, as a political figure, gave the book its political context. As Said argued, such works were wittingly or unwittingly part of the European cultural-imperial project in Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, and beyond.

⁸⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, p.160.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.161.

⁹¹ John Rodenbeck ‘Edward Said and Edward William Lane’, in *Travellers in Egypt* Ed. By Paul Starkey & Janet Starkey, Tauris Parke Paperbacks, London, 2001, pp.233-243, p.233.

⁹² *The Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal*, 1837, April 1, p.147.

Of course, nineteenth-century readers knew better than to take everything in travel accounts at face value. Travel writing was ‘considered to be a genre which combined the serious aspects of nonfiction and the frivolous nature of the novel.’⁹³ Nevertheless, some travel writers strive to make their accounts much more authoritative than others, and Lane was a writer who held his own ability to describe objectively, like Volney before him, in high regard. Using such travel accounts also necessitates being aware of what the travel writer thought they were capable of doing.

The chapters of this thesis explore the issue of travel writers and their construction of the Orient further. Through these chapters, the thesis shows the dense intertextuality of travel accounts. New descriptions and interactions with the Orient rehearsed old themes, offering a palimpsestic confirmation of the tropes of previous accounts, which the authors had carefully read to prepare themselves for what they might encounter. Through these accounts we can trace the construction of an orientalist worldview comprised of sedimentary layers of previous European perceptions of Egypt. The ‘feedback loop’ of Orientalism described earlier in this introduction was especially evident in these later accounts. Said described this process as follows:

For the Orient idioms become frequent, and these idioms took firm hold in European discourse. Beneath the idioms there was a layer of doctrine about the Orient; this doctrine was fashioned out of the experiences of many Europeans, all of them converging upon such essential aspects of the Orient as the Oriental character, Oriental despotism, Oriental sensuality, and the like.⁹⁴

⁹³ Bernasek, ‘Unveiling the Orient, Unmasking Orientalism,’ p.67.

⁹⁴ Said, *Orientalism*, p.203.

Over the century, travellers would mostly turn into what would now be termed ‘tourists’⁹⁵ but this thesis uses the term traveller to encompass all possible reasons for travel, including pleasure but also other purposes, such as the travel diaries of missionaries or wives of officials, people for whom the term ‘tourist’ is not exactly accurate.

As this thesis shows, the writings of these travellers often need to be read critically, yet they are more illuminating not in their descriptions of the places they travel to, but what those descriptions say about the cultural background and assumptions of the travellers.⁹⁶

Ottoman Decline and the Eastern Question

This thesis recognises that the Ottoman Empire was traditionally viewed as a strange outlier among the other Empires in the European system, unlike the other European states. As an imperial polity it largely predated the colonial empires of Western Europe or even Russia’s imperial expansion. Alan Mikhail and Christine M. Philliou have written about how this traditional view of the Ottoman Empire as fundamentally different to the other European empires has been successfully and, in the main, usefully challenged by scholars following the work of Said, but argue that the Ottoman Empire was nonetheless fundamentally different and unique, that is ‘*not* like any other Empire.’⁹⁷ Mikhail and Philliou call on historians to ‘preserve the specificities of the Ottoman historical experience while at the same time allowing the empire to be usefully engaged in comparative analysis.’⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Sarga Moussa, ‘Les premiers “touristes” en orient: Regards en mouvement et fantasmes d’immersion chez quelques écrivains romantiques.’ *Romanische Forschungen*, 106:1, Jan 1, 1994, pp.168-186, p.170.

⁹⁶ Bernasek, ‘Unveiling the Orient, Unmasking Orientalism,’ p.52.

⁹⁷ Alan Mikhail, & Christine M Philliou, ‘The Ottoman Empire and the Imperial Turn.’ *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 54:4, 2012, pp.721-745, p.743.

⁹⁸ Mikhail, & Philliou, ‘The Ottoman Empire and the Imperial Turn,’ p.744.

This specificity notwithstanding, one fallacious belief stemming from a reading of *Orientalism* is that European powers effectively dictated policy in the ‘Orient’ without reference to local power structures. It is important to recognize that this was not the case. A traditional reading of Ottoman actions in the Egyptian-Ottoman Wars can lead one to see a country flailing about waiting for a European saviour (or saviours) to save the Porte from certain destruction. More recent historical analysis, however, paints an Ottoman Empire actively working to save itself. Authors have successfully assailed what Ali Yaycioglu calls the ‘Gibbonian rise-and-decline narrative’ to the point where among historians the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire is no longer viewed simply as a moribund empire in a terminal decline.⁹⁹

When discussing a ‘decline’ it is useful to point out what the decline is from, what summit the declining entity reached before it began its decline. Jonathan Grant posits that historians have dated the beginning of the Ottoman decline from two separate points, the battle of Lepanto in 1571 or the Battle of Vienna in 1683.¹⁰⁰ Acutely, Grant questions the decline thesis, stating that it relies on comparisons that are ‘overly broad or inappropriate.’¹⁰¹ He argues that the decline thesis has been used to pass ‘moral judgments’ on the Ottoman Empire and the entirety of ‘Islamic Society,’ rather than accurately describing the situation at the time. Unfortunately, however, Grant continues on to propose an analysis focusing on the apparent decline of the Ottoman Empire due to the differentials between East and West in the diffusion of military technology.

⁹⁹ Ali Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2016, p.9.

¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Grant, ‘Rethinking the Ottoman “decline”: Military Technology Diffusion in the Ottoman Empire, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries,’ *Journal of World History*, 10:1, 1999, pp.179-201, p.179.

¹⁰¹ Grant, ‘Rethinking the Ottoman “decline,”’ p.180.

For his part, Gulumhan Huma Yildirim has identified three different versions of the decline narrative, one originating with Turkish nationalists, seeking to ‘justify their reforms or revolutions,’ another from ‘Marxian historiographies (old and new) that tended to posit the existence of failing or self-contradictory societies in contrast to progressive or socialist futures,’ and the third, somewhat vaguely blamed on the writings of ‘certain Ottoman intellectuals.’¹⁰² Adding detail to this latter category, Linda Darling traces the origin of the decline thesis to the ‘writings of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ottoman commentators, who depicted the post-Suleymanic period as an era of corruption and decay.’¹⁰³ By the late twentieth century, however, this decline narrative had been affecting almost everything ‘Western’ written about the Ottoman Empire. Suraiya Faroqhi, similarly points out that the decline narrative was transmitted from history to history, ‘established scholars are likely to have ingested the relevant misconceptions, so to speak, with their ‘mother’s milk.’¹⁰⁴

As Cemal Kafadar has shown, however, in the last three decades of the twentieth century, there was a dramatic shift away from the previously largely unquestioned decline narrative. ‘Since the 1970s, a flurry of books and articles have been published by specialists who question the validity of the decline paradigm both as a conceptual tool and as an accurate depiction of Ottoman realities.’¹⁰⁵ Kafadar believes that the decline narrative was used as a simple way to explain various factors of the Ottoman Empire:

¹⁰² Gulumhan Huma Yildirim, *Technology Transfer and Diffusion in the Context of Globalization: A Study of a Critical Decade in the Ottoman Empire through the Experiences of Henry Eckford, 1830-1840*, University of Massachusetts Boston, 2013, p.15.

¹⁰³ Linda Darling, Ottoman Fiscal Administration: Decline or Adaptation, *Journal of European Economic History*, 26:1, 1997, pp.157-179, p.157.

¹⁰⁴ Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History*, p.29.

¹⁰⁵ Cemal Kafadar, ‘The Question of Ottoman Decline,’ *Harvard Middle East and Islamic Review*, 1999, pp.30-75, p.32.

The construct of decline also serves as a linearizing and totalizing device in (a)historical narration and analysis. After a certain inevitable point, all elements of a given society (state, culture, economy, etc.) disintegrate. Every historical phenomenon or trend that the historian deems negative (inflation, stagnation, rebellion, passivity, etc.) is, if not explained, at least “put in its place” by the referential framework of a larger, ongoing, and all-encompassing decline.¹⁰⁶

As Kafadar demonstrates, the ‘decline’ narrative allows an overly easy explanation of many different historical phenomena.

Leslie Rogne Schumacher points out however that while modern historians may question the decline narrative, this holds little relevance to the views of Europeans at the time, for whom the decline narrative seemed appropriate.¹⁰⁷ As such, most European policy was based on the presumption that the Ottoman Empire had declined, at least relatively to other European powers. Kafadar too thinks the broad acceptance of the decline narrative at the time holds great relevance for historians, who must approach this period with the dominance of this narrative in mind:

It is impossible to dismiss the prolonged and intense discourse of Ottoman declinism as an epiphenomenon; rather, it calls for a cultural history that explores the myriad uses of the notion of decline by Ottoman and non-Ottoman observers in different contexts, to different ends, with different audiences and different meanings.¹⁰⁸

Cemal Kafadar here is calling for histories that constantly question why people at the time believed in the Ottoman ‘decline’ and how they formed those views. He calls for several ‘basic yet critical

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.34.

¹⁰⁷ Leslie Rogne Schumacher, ‘The Eastern Question as a Europe Question: Viewing the ascent of ‘Europe’ through the lens of Ottoman decline,’ *Journal of European Studies*, 44, 2014, pp.64-80, p.65.

¹⁰⁸ Kafadar, ‘The Question of Ottoman Decline,’ p.33.

questions' to be asked by historians; 'Decline of what? Decline for whom and in what sense? And where, for how long, and relative to what?'¹⁰⁹ The decline narrative, as shall be shown later in this thesis, was not quite universal in nineteenth-century writings on the Ottoman Empire, and there was debate about the extent of the decline, and whether or not it could be reversed or slowed by France and Britain.

Instructively, Matthew Kelly has marked out how 'declinist analyses' of Ottoman history are now largely out of fashion, warning historians to avoid lambasting previous histories as absurd and praising newer histories as necessarily 'more enlightened.'¹¹⁰ Historians, he argues, need to carefully read older histories that reflect 'past frameworks' to improve their current works.¹¹¹ It is this approach to the concept of decline that this thesis employs.

Because of the preponderance of the decline narrative, for Europeans, by the early nineteenth-century, the Ottoman Empire was no longer seen as the existential threat that had seen the 'Turk' portrayed as the most significant threat to European survival, but the scars of the 'Ottoman peril' remained in the European psyche.¹¹² The growing imbalance of power between Europe and the Ottoman Empire had led to a situation where the European powers were no longer concerned about the Ottoman Empire as a power of equal or greater stature. This power imbalance and growing European influence around the world led to European powers slowly chipping at the limits of Ottoman territory and trying to secure advantages for their merchants and traders in Ottoman territories.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Matthew Kelly, 'The Fall of Decline: the Decline Paradigm and its Lessons,' *Revue Ibla*, 201, 2008, pp.101-117, p.101.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Said, *Orientalism*, p.59.

The question of how to deal with this supposed Ottoman decline became what was called the 'Eastern Question.' Schumacher's definition of the 'Eastern Question' remains useful:

The 'Eastern Question' refers to the events and the complex set of dynamics related to Europe's experience of and stake in the decline in political, military and economic power and regional significance of the Ottoman Empire from the latter half of the eighteenth-century to the formation of modern Turkey in 1923.¹¹³

Obviously, this definition too presupposes that the Ottoman Empire was in 'decline,' but as that idea was the driving force behind European policy in the nineteenth-century it remains apt. For Britain and France, the Eastern Question was primarily a question of how to keep the Ottoman Empire functioning in some form, as they believed it to be a useful buffer against Russia. For Russia, it was a similarly useful buffer against the Western European powers. M. S. Anderson was essentially correct in writing that the Eastern Question was a situation of European powers '[striving] to neutralise each other's influence,' which 'succeeded in creating in the Near East a workable balance between themselves,'¹¹⁴ however, individual periods saw different motivations for policy rather than simply maintaining their own position in the balance of power. The era of the Egyptian-Ottoman Wars was one such period.

In addition, the Ottoman Empire itself and its actions have traditionally been set aside or left in the background during discussions of the Eastern Question. M Sukru Hanioglu takes issue with these traditional histories of the Eastern Question, saying that they have been limited to analysing the actions of the Great Powers towards the Ottoman Empire, and traditionally ignored internal

¹¹³ Schumacher, 'The Eastern Question as a Europe Question,' p.65.

¹¹⁴ M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations*, Macmillan, London, 1966, p.397.

factors within the Ottoman Empire as irrelevant.¹¹⁵ Efraim Karsh strongly agrees with this, accurately describing the Ottoman Empire as not ‘a passive spectator of European events’ doing ‘whatever it took to survive, be that skilfully pitting its enemies against one another or using European support to arrest, and if possible reverse, domestic disintegration and external decline.’¹¹⁶ Internally, Ottoman statesmen ‘perceived international rivalry as an insurance against the dismemberment and invasion of the Ottoman Empire by any single power,’¹¹⁷ and attempted to take actions to turn this to their advantage. Again, Ottoman policy during the Egyptian-Ottoman Wars exemplifies this view of the Ottoman Empire as an active, rather than a passive participant.

Treating the ‘Eastern Question’ or the concept of ‘Ottoman decline’ as a dry diplomatic issue rather than a debate that encompasses cultural views of the Ottoman Empire and the ‘Orient’ is a mistake. The diplomatic actions of the European powers were influenced by their specific cultural contexts, and this is an explanation that needs to be centred in any narrative attempting to explain why certain courses of action were taken or not taken. Policy was not made in a vacuum, and policymakers were not kept free from cultural considerations.

British and French Imperial Policy

As part of this project, it is important to examine how British and French imperial policy operated in the early nineteenth-century. Studies on British and French imperial policy in Egypt have remained largely focused on later periods, starting from the construction and opening of the Suez Canal as the

¹¹⁵ M. Sukru Hanioglu, ‘Review: Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East 1789-1923 by Efraim Karsh; Inari Karsh,’ *The American Historical Review*, 106:1, Feb. 2001, pp.296-297, p.296.

¹¹⁶ Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History*, Yale University press, New Haven, 2006, p.95.

¹¹⁷ Nazan Cicek, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Tauris Academic Studies, New York, 2010, p.129.

most grand example of informal imperialism, as well as the subsequent era of economic control and British occupation. The opening of the Suez Canal was traditionally seen as the singular event that brought Egypt into the British consciousness as a land that was required for the safety of the Indian possessions.¹¹⁸ Discussion of informal imperialism in Egypt, particularly, is largely limited to the period of direct financial control that preceded the British occupation.¹¹⁹

Ryan Forman, in *The Century of Egypt* has argued for the need to present imperialism of different countries in Egypt, specifically that of France, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire as linked and based largely on the same factors.¹²⁰ These factors, for Forman, can broadly be summarised as trade, Russia, and control over Arabs. By looking at policy through a cultural lens, however, we can expand upon this by adding another important factor: namely, cultural views.

Culture has remained a largely unexplored factor of imperial history even in the modern era. Zara Steiner rightly criticises international historians for focusing too much on 'hard data: archival sources, statistical tables, physical maps.'¹²¹ Steiner has called for more focus on interviews and other non-written sources, but the same theory can be applied to other cultural sources, and even to sources of non-policymakers in shaping foreign policy. One historian looking at the cultural aspect of imperialism, is Virginia Aksan, who has described British and French imperialism in the Ottoman

¹¹⁸ Ailise Bulfin, 'The Fiction of Gothic Egypt and British Imperial Paranoia: The Curse of the Suez Canal,' *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920*, 54:4, 2011, pp.411-443, p.411.

¹¹⁹ Maurus Reinkowski, 'Uncommunicative Communication: Competing Egyptian, Ottoman and British Imperial Ventures in 19th-Century Egypt,' *Die Welt des Islams*, 54:3/4, 2014, pp.399-422, p.400.

¹²⁰ Ryan Forman, *The Century of Egypt; The Entangled Imperial Relations of Britain, France, & the Ottoman Empire in Egypt from 1798 to 1882*, University of Worcester, Massachusetts, 2010, p.2.

¹²¹ Zara Steiner, 'On Writing International History: Chaps, Maps and Much More,' *International Affairs*, 73:3, 1997, pp.531-546, p.540.

Empire as driven by rivalries with Russia, trade, and a ‘civilizing mission.’¹²² John Gascoigne too believes that histories are now improving at reflecting cultural concerns on both sides of the imperial exchange.¹²³ Historians have slowly moved away from histories which centred entirely on the perspectives of the imperial power.¹²⁴

British imperialism during the early nineteenth-century has been examined extensively by historians because of the continued existence of a formal British Empire. Unlike France, Britain held large scale imperial possessions continually over the turn of the century. As such, British imperialism has been extensively covered and the origins and ideological underpinnings of the British imperial project are well studied.¹²⁵

Unlike British imperial policy, French informal imperial policy has remained largely unexamined during this era. The period from the end of Napoleon Bonaparte’s reign in 1815 until the end of Napoleon III’s reign in 1870 has been called the ‘*terra incognita*’ of ‘the history of French global ambitions.’¹²⁶ John Laffey’s study on the ‘roots of French imperialism in the nineteenth-century’ for example, barely mentions the period before 1850.¹²⁷ Todd posits that this lack of historical investigation of French global policy in this middle section of the nineteenth-century has led to the calcification of an assumption that French policy was more inward-looking during this

¹²² Virginia Aksan, ‘Locating the Ottomans in Napoleon’s World,’ in *Napoleon’s Empire: War, Culture and Society, 1750–1850* Ed. U Planert, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, pp.277-290, p.277.

¹²³ John Gascoigne, ‘The Expanding Historiography Of British Imperialism,’ *The Historical Journal*, 49:2, 2006, pp.577-592, p.578.

¹²⁴ Kingsley Martin, ‘The Development of British Imperialism,’ *Economica*, 12, 1924, pp.304-315, p.304.

¹²⁵ J. R. Ward, ‘The Industrial Revolution and British Imperialism, 1750-1850,’ *The Economic History Review*, 47:1, 1994, pp.44-65, p.44.

¹²⁶ David Todd, ‘A French Imperial Meridian, 1814-1870,’ *Past & Present*, 210:1, 2011, pp.155-186, p.155.

¹²⁷ John F. Laffey, ‘Roots of French Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Lyon,’ *French Historical Studies*, 6:1, 1969, pp.78-92.

period, helped along by the view of France as a country lurching through revolutions of varying degrees of success and severity, especially when compared to the more stable United Kingdom. France was however still a ‘military, economic, scientific, and cultural super-power’ in the mid-nineteenth-century.¹²⁸ Accordingly, in the history of French imperialism, the informal imperial policies of the restoration and July monarchy must be brought to the forefront. Especially important, according to Todd, is paying close attention to the largely unified aims of the two Western European Great Powers, France and Britain. Rather than being in near constant conflict as they were for more than a century leading up to 1815, France and Britain largely avoided conflict after 1815 and engaged in cooperation to end the struggle over Greek independence.¹²⁹ Todd posits that French (and British) imperial policy should be viewed as not competition but ‘a form of cooperative emulation.’¹³⁰ To be sure, both countries were engaged in a more friendly rivalry over power, influence, and culture in Egypt than the high stakes desire to control Egypt in the Napoleonic Wars. Nonetheless, French and British policy in Egypt during the two Egyptian-Ottoman Wars complicates this understanding.

Edward Shawcross expands upon the Todd position in *France, Mexico and Informal Empire in Latin America, 1820-1867*. According to Shawcross, historians have not only largely ignored informal empire in this period, thus rendering French imperial and foreign policy as ‘incoherent’ and limited, but have also ignored the ideological underpinnings and thought processes behind French informal imperialism.¹³¹ European imperialism in general, he argues, was based on ‘a particular vision of

¹²⁸ Todd, ‘A French Imperial Meridian,’ p.155.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.161.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Edward Shawcross, *France, Mexico and Informal Empire in Latin America, 1820-1867: Equilibrium in the New World*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, p.39-40.

European civilisation tied to Christianity and progress,¹³² a thought process that existed throughout France during the nineteenth-century. Indeed, French thinkers, such as the constitutional monarchist Francois Guizot thought that ‘wherever European and Christian civilisation establishes itself, there also France is bound to assume its place and exercise its own genius.’¹³³ In the minds of the French, as Muhammad Ali was helping to bring Egypt into the modern era, it would be only natural for Egypt to come closer to France, the most ‘advanced’ country. The fall of the European empires of the Americas also affected French thoughts on formal imperialism according to Shawcross:

In part, the conclusion that informal imperial relationships with overseas states could be preferable to colonial conquest and commercially more lucrative had been arrived at as a consequence of the independence of the former Spanish, British and Portuguese colonies in the Americas.¹³⁴

This is interesting, because the French invasion of Egypt in 1798 was also motivated, in part, by the French loss of their colonies in the Americas in the preceding decades. However, after that failure in Egypt French policy would largely shift to this informal imperial mode over the ensuing decades.

The one major formal imperial acquisition France made in the period between the fall of Napoleon I and the fall of Napoleon III was Algiers. This has traditionally been interpreted as an ‘accident’¹³⁵ and as something of an aberration as it appears to stand alone among French imperial decisions in this period. That the invasion was launched and prosecuted just weeks before Charles X

¹³² Ibid., p.40.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Rachel Eva Schley, *The Tyranny of Tolerance: France, Religion, and the Conquest of Algeria, 1830-1870*, UCLA, Los Angeles, 2015, p.40.

was deposed by the July Revolution has added to this perception of an action out of step with general French policy in this period. The invasion of Algeria, however, was not hastily planned in 1830, but was planned from 1827, and fits in with the general French focus on imperialism as a civilising force, what would later be dubbed the *mission civilisatrice* but which was already evident in the French invasion of Egypt.

Rachel Eva Schley has explicitly drawn a connection between Napoleon's early form of the *mission civilisatrice* in Egypt with the French invasion and colonisation of Algeria. Aimé-Marie-Gaspard, comte de Clermont-Tonnerre, the minister of war who planned the Restoration invasion of Algeria served Joseph Bonaparte, Napoleon's brother during the Napoleonic conflicts, and Schley believes he, in his Algerian scheme was 'certainly influenced' by Napoleon's 'emancipatory language of conquest.'¹³⁶ For her part, Jennifer Sessions has shown how the 'traditional periodization' of French imperialism is historically troubling and requires fundamental revision, arguing that 'imperial expansion transcended the regime changes of France's tumultuous nineteenth-century.'¹³⁷ The French invasion of Algeria shows the flaws in the two-stage model by showcasing a link between the earlier French empire, and the later French imperial projects.¹³⁸

Unlike the traditional theory of two separate phases of French imperialism, Margaret Majumdar identifies three separate stages of French imperialism under the various French Empires, with the first ending with Napoleon in 1815 and the second beginning with Algeria in 1830. Despite this apparent separation, Majumdar contends that the three separate periods had a 'strong element

¹³⁶ Ibid., p.37.

¹³⁷ Jennifer Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria*, Cornell University Press, 2011, p.4.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p.7.

of continuity.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, the separation of French imperialism into three distinct phases is historically troubling. The ideological underpinnings of the French invasion of Algeria, and even later French colonies can arguably be traced back to the ideological underpinnings of Napoleon's scientific and colonial projects in Egypt. Even if it was yet unnamed, the *mission civilisatrice* was at the root of its imperialism throughout the nineteenth-century, not just in the later periods, as Majumdar concedes.¹⁴⁰

The *mission civilisatrice* can be seen in French actions towards Egypt throughout the early nineteenth-century, even as France shifted through various non-Republican forms of government from Napoleonic dictatorship to Empire to Restoration Monarchy to a more liberal monarchy. Alice Conklin has established that under the French Republican ideals of civilization, 'to be civilized was to be free of specific forms of tyranny: those of the elements over humankind, of disease over health, of instinct over reason, of ignorance over knowledge, of men over women, and perhaps most importantly, of despotism over liberty.'¹⁴¹ Elements of this *mission civilisatrice*, so prominent in the third republic, can be seen in the French invasion of Egypt, in French support for Greek independence in the 1820s, and even in France's attitude to Muhammad Ali and Egypt after the French withdrawal in 1801. Ali was presented as a civilising, modernising force in Egypt, while France was also seen as systematically reducing the 'tyranny of ignorance over knowledge' through its systematic study of Egypt, conducted under Napoleon's occupation, and then published in the

¹³⁹ Margaret A. Majumdar, 'French Discourses of Empire' in *Postcoloniality: The French Dimension*, Berghahn Books, 2007, pp.1-32, p.1.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.23.

¹⁴¹ Alice L. Conklin, 'The Civilizing Mission' in *The French Republic History, Values, Debates*, Ed. By Edward Berenson, Vincent Duclert, Christophe Prochasson, Cornell University Press, 2011, pp.173-181, p.174.

following decades. The *mission civilisatrice*, just like French Republican ideals in general, survived monarchical reactions.

The supposed superiority of French culture and civilisation, the ‘heart’ of the *mission civilisatrice* was also there throughout the early nineteenth-century.¹⁴² Republic or not, the French considered themselves to be the true heirs of the great civilisations of antiquity. In their minds it was they who had revived ancient Egypt, and it was a Frenchman who decoded their long-forgotten language. It is perhaps the lack of detailed study of this period of French imperialism that has led the *mission civilisatrice* aspects of French informal imperialism in the Eastern Mediterranean under the restoration and July Monarchy to be ignored, but they were certainly present. An example of what can be termed *mission civilisatrice* thought can be seen in the French orientalist Caussin de Perceval’s discussion of a new French-Turkish vocabulary dictionary in the *Journal Asiatique* of 1832. In this, Caussin de Perceval discussed what he saw as the necessity of translating French works into other languages so they could be disseminated throughout the Ottoman Empire and further, but also the necessity of teaching the people of the Ottoman Empire French. France had a long affinity with the Ottoman Empire, according to Caussin de Perceval, and by 1832 this relationship was leading to cultural benefits for the ‘orient’:

From Egypt to Constantinople, young people are sent to us to learn our language and our arts. Our newspapers are read in Cairo and the capital of the Empire, a gazette written in Turkish and French has recently been founded in Constantinople by the government.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Majumdar, ‘French Discourses of Empire,’ p.27.

¹⁴³ *Nouveau Journal Asiatique ou Recueil de Memoires, d’Extraits et de Notices Relatifs a l’Histoire, a la Philosophie, aux Langues et a la Litterature des Peuples Orientaux*, Tome IX, 1832, L’Imprimerie Royale, Paris, p.74. ‘De l’Égypte et de Constantinople ; des jeunes gens sont envoyés parmi nous pour apprendre notre langue et nos arts. Nos journaux sont lus au Caire et dans la capitale de l’empire; une gazette rédigée en turc et en français vient même d’être fondée à Constantinople par le gouvernement’

Caussin de Perceval's writing exemplifies the view that France, especially among the Western powers, had much to teach the other people of the world, a view that Muhammad Ali at least somewhat shared.

As part of the French *mission civilisatrice*, scientific expeditions, like that of the French occupation of Egypt, were employed. This was not unique to Egypt, with French organisations such as the Geographical Society of Paris operating as imperialist arms of France, spreading French 'scientists' across the globe, mapping and researching areas, 'discovering' new places.¹⁴⁴ The Geographical Society drew not just from geographers but from the very elite of French society, and was patronised by Louis-Philippe himself by 1830.¹⁴⁵ The imperialist mission of the society filtered down from the higher levels.¹⁴⁶

Scientific missions cannot be discussed without discussing one of the precursors of the work of the Geographical Society, the *Description de l'Égypte*. The *Description*, produced from the work done by the French *savants* during the occupation of Egypt is an immensely important work that shaped the relationship between France and Egypt, and the cultural perceptions of Egypt in Europe and throughout the world. Anne Godlewska has called the *Description* 'one of the most appealing and remarkable published works ever to have come out of a European venture',¹⁴⁷ and it and other works, especially Vivant Denon's *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte pendant les campagnes du général Bonaparte*, produced by the *savants* had an 'extraordinary impact' on European receptions of Egyptian

¹⁴⁴ Maxine Powell Taylor, *Prologue to Imperialism: Scientific Expeditions during the July Monarchy*, University of Oklahoma, 1980, p.56.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.62.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.63.

¹⁴⁷ Anne Godlewska, 'Map, Text and Image,' p.7.

style in France, Britain, and elsewhere, especially as English translations appeared quickly, James Stevens Curl considers Denon's *Voyage* the beginning of the nineteenth-century 'Egyptian Revival' in European design.¹⁴⁸ The Egyptian Revival was strengthened during the nineteenth-century, especially with the publication over twenty years of the various volumes of the *Description*. The ready availability of Egyptian style items in France and Britain as well as the dramatic increase in written works produced about Egypt led to further cultural interest in Egypt as a place in both countries, changing attitudes and having an effect on policy.

The French invasion of Egypt in 1798 has traditionally been presented as a cultural 'expedition,' lending the venture more scientific connotations than if it were referred to as either an occupation or invasion. Despite Napoleon plainly stating the intention of his invasion and occupation was to 'threaten the commerce of India,'¹⁴⁹ many writers would basically ignore the eventual French military defeat and hail it as a stunning victory for French science and culture, Napoleon himself realised that 'the *Description* could repackage the disastrous military expedition as a cultural triumph.'¹⁵⁰

This thesis attempts to avoid the use of the term 'expedition' for the French invasion, because, as discussed in the first chapter, the invasion and subsequent occupation was foremost an imperial exercise rooted in Anglo-French imperial rivalry, and use of the term expedition can disguise that fact. Writers in the early nineteenth-century contributed to this, including M.A. Lebas, the engineer responsible for raising the Luxor Obelisk in Paris, who called the invasion a 'brilliant

¹⁴⁸ James Steven Curl, *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West*, Routledge, London, 2005, p.204.

¹⁴⁹ Ed. J.M. Thompson, *Napoleon's Letters*, J.M Dent and Sons, London, 1954, p.72.

¹⁵⁰ Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, p.32.

and rapid conquest,' completely ignoring the eventual military defeat.¹⁵¹ Even into the later stages of the twentieth century writers would underplay the extent of the French defeat in Egypt, claiming 'the French had been vanquished by disease, not by arms.'¹⁵² The eventual publishing of the *Description de l'Égypte* from work done during the French occupation fit nicely into this claim that the French cultural victory in Egypt eclipsed the scale of its military failure. As Jasanoff has argued, 'France asserted a stridently nationalist claim to Egypt, anchored in the ancient past, to help compensate for its failure to conquer the modern land.'¹⁵³ Later in France, the memory of Egypt would become tied into the memory of Napoleon, while the *Description* itself operated as an instrument for the 'glorification of Napoleon.'¹⁵⁴ So too, many French writers would also characterise Muhammad Ali as 'a sort of Oriental Bonaparte' further linking Egypt, Napoleon, and France.¹⁵⁵

Methodology

This thesis uses a variety of primary sources to illuminate the European cultural narratives around Egypt in the early nineteenth-century. As the above discussion makes clear, these primary sources all come with problems that have had to be addressed. Notwithstanding these difficulties, travel writings, news articles, and diplomatic reports form the backbone of the thesis.

¹⁵¹ M.A. Lebas, *L'Obélisque de Luxor. Histoire de sa translation à Paris*, Paris, 1839, p.1. 'La brillante et rapide conquête de l'Égypte'

¹⁵² Georges Spilmann, 'L'Influence française en Égypte de 1800 à 1850,' *Revue Historique de l'Armée*, 29 :3, 1973, pp.7-21, p.7.

¹⁵³ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.226.

¹⁵⁴ Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, p.230.

¹⁵⁵ Caquet, 'The Napoleonic Legend and the War Scare of 1840,' p.718.

Traditional histories have largely focused on the personal and public writings of the statesmen of the age, and this thesis does explore those in parts when it is necessary, but as this thesis is an attempt to explore the cultural narrative behind decision making, it also foregrounds what was happening culturally in the countries, particularly among decision makers. Focussing on the opinions of leaders, like Palmerston, is necessary here, in order both to explore how their views reflected the cultural understandings prevalent in their society and to illustrate how the orientalist culture within which they lived shaped their reactions to the crises in the Ottoman Empire.

Travel writings have been read critically, focussing on the lessons learned from Said's *Orientalism*. The cultural and imperial context of the writers is analysed closely, and most excerpts from travel writings used in this thesis have been applied to show how they shaped European perceptions of Egypt in their own ways, as well as to show how people could have vastly different views on the same situations. Mostly French and British writers have been used, due to the focus on those two countries, but popular travel accounts from other authors, like the American Sarah Haight and the Austrian Baroness Minutoli have been used to help illustrate the trans-European nature of many Orientalist narratives.

This thesis proceeds chronologically to demonstrate the cumulative effects of Orientalism and imperialism on the relationship between Britain and France on one hand and Egypt on the other from 1798-1841. The thesis begins with the origins of the French invasion of Egypt in 1798, led by Napoleon Bonaparte. Despite stated high-minded cultural aims and various schemes that had been suggested in France for decades, the main impetus for the invasion was in the strategic situation of 1798. The invasion undoubtedly had an effect on the course of Egypt and European involvement in the Middle East, it marked 'a new kind of extra-European conquest, legitimated by a

rhetoric of Western superiority, and harnessing institutions of knowledge and culture to the state.¹⁵⁶

While the primary rationale for the French invasion was to challenge British power in Egypt, the scientific expedition that accompanied the occupation force, the *Institut d’Egypte*, was the most important legacy of the invasion in Europe. The French invasion was intended as a colonial project, but their defeat at the hands of a combined Ottoman and British force ended France’s colonial aspirations in Egypt.

The second chapter will explore the period of Muhammad Ali’s rise to power and the British and French reaction. The British invasion of 1807 marked another direct European attempt to influence Egypt, but this invasion was much less successful than the French invasion, and did not intend to establish a formal colonial system in Egypt. It explores the early machinations of the British and French consuls in Egypt and their attempts to influence Muhammad Ali and explores early perceptions of his rule.

The third chapter explores the period from 1815 to the end of the Greek War of Independence. Muhammad Ali’s reluctance to get involved in the Greek War is revealed to be an example of both his autonomy from the Sultan and his desire to remain on good terms with the Ottoman Empire. His reluctance to become involved is shown to be proved right when the European powers entered the fray on the side of the Greeks. Chapter three also explores the first explosion of archaeological interest in Egypt and how the Greek War of Independence affected perceptions of Muhammad Ali and his rule.

¹⁵⁶ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.122-123.

The fourth chapter covers the first Egyptian-Ottoman War, when Muhammad Ali made his first attempt to gain control of Syria. It explores how European reactions to this incident were tinged by concerns about Russia, and their own attitudes to Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. This chapter begins the process of comparing views of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, and how they were viewed in reference to European ideas about 'civilisation' and 'modernisation.' 1830 also saw the French invasion of Algeria and the beginning of the July Monarchy, events that changed the outlook of French foreign policy, bringing about a rapprochement with Britain in the second case and the beginnings of a renewed colonialism in the former. In Britain, the first Egyptian-Ottoman war was marked largely by inaction, unlike the second, and the effects of that inaction will be explored largely in the fifth and final chapter.

The final chapter explores the 'climax' of Muhammad Ali's reign, in which the Ottoman Sultan, Mahmud II seems to have drawn Ali into an open rebellion to gain independence and hereditary control over Egypt and Syria, but resulted in Ali not gaining independence and only controlling hereditary Egypt. This chapter explores the crucial factors that resulted in British and French policy differing over this conflict, when for much of the 1830s they had been aligned in matters of foreign affairs. This chapter posits that the genesis of this difference lies not in differing national interests but in different cultural perceptions of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. In Britain, the idea that the Ottoman Empire could be reformed gained prominence, while in France, support for Muhammad Ali as a civilising and somewhat Napoleonic force was dominant.

CHAPTER 1: The French and British Encounter With Egypt Before Muhammad Ali

This chapter explores the interaction of late eighteenth-century orientalism and French policy that led to the French invasion of Egypt in 1798. The decision to invade Egypt was made by the revolutionary French government to threaten British power in the Mediterranean and their possessions in India, as part of the broader Anglo-French conflict that had been ongoing since the French Revolution. The French invasion was not just limited to this anti-British goal, however, it was shaped by the cultural context of France in Egypt, and several other commercial and civilisational motives. The invasion also intended to seize Egypt as a colony for France, to bolster the prestige of France and Napoleon by tying them to the supposed wisdom and glory of the ‘mysterious’ ancient Egyptians, as well as liberate ordinary Egyptians from the supposed ‘oriental despotism’ of the Mamluk regime and revive Egypt to its former, ancient greatness. The French invasion of Egypt, despite having these ‘secondary’ aims attached to it, was still primarily an anti-British operation, rooted in the past century of Anglo-French colonial, commercial, and imperial competition, as well as the contemporary conflict between revolutionary France and the United Kingdom.

Napoleon and the *Armée d'Orient* set off from Toulon on 19 May 1798 and arrived at Alexandria on July 1, 1798, stopping to seize Malta from its independent rulers, the former crusader knights the Knights of St John, on the way. A British fleet was tasked with intercepting the French but actually overtook Napoleon’s flotilla en route to Egypt. Admiral Lord Nelson’s ships left Alexandria under the assumption that the French had headed for Syria and so Napoleon’s forces fortuitously arrived just hours after the last British ship departed. Napoleon would remain in Egypt

for just over a year, returning to France to take power in August 1799, while most of his army remained until 1801. The French invasion was a military failure, despite its seeming initial success and lofty aims, as colourfully described by Owen Connelly:

the entire affair was a blunder, a waste, and accomplished nothing, militarily or in terms of the power balance. Of glory there was none, even the victories were over enemies with weapons so primitive and organisation so faulty as to be foredrawn¹

Regardless of the military failure:

it was an unexampled romantic adventure in the public's eye. It put Paris agog over Egypt and things Egyptian. It produced reports of victories over enemies conceived as exotic and mysterious, and thus formidable.²

In the French national memory, the invasion of Egypt was rebranded, and the scientific expedition was celebrated in France (and around the world), while the military failures were relegated to a secondary status, and the colonial project was left abandoned. The *Description de l'Égypte*, the 'great work' published after the return to France by the *Institut d'Égypte*, the collection of *savants* sent by France to claim knowledge and the heritage of Egypt for the glory of France, became celebrated, and French Egyptian policy shifted from a policy of formal control to the realm of informal imperialism.

Visions Of Egypt In Europe Before 1798

Modern French Egyptomania can arguably be first dated to Francis I (King of France from 1515 to 1547), who had a fascination with the culture of Ancient Egypt. Francis hosted Egyptian themed

¹ Owen Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns*, SR Books, Delaware, 1999, p. 51.

² *Ibid.*, p. 51.

masquerades, and was said to never go anywhere without a ‘quantity of mummy’ which he ‘consumed with rhubarb’ for its supposed medicinal properties.³ For Francis and many of his contemporaries in France and Europe, the fascination with Egypt, and hieroglyphs in particular ‘reflected a broader preoccupation with veiled truths.’⁴ Presenting oneself in costume as an Ancient Egyptian figure, as Francis and parts of his court did in masquerades, gave them ‘the ability to mystify, and through this, to cultivate superiority.’⁵ Due to the distance of time and its relative inaccessibility, Egypt was viewed as more mysterious than Ancient Rome or Greece, as well as more exotic, and thus held a different sort of appeal among Europeans. While Francis was holding his masquerades and eating the dead, a general European Renaissance of Egyptomania began with the rediscovery and recognition of the *Mensa Isiaca*, a supposedly Egyptian text acquired by a Cardinal after the Sack of Rome in 1527.⁶ The *Mensa Isiaca* itself was an example of a previous Roman wave of Egyptomania, filled with bogus hieroglyphics. It was likely a Roman imitation, an ‘Egyptianising’ object rather than a real Egyptian object. Egyptianising elements began to appear more and more in European styles, a preview of the explosion in Egyptian style that would engulf Europe after the French occupation of Egypt.

Mummies were perhaps the single Ancient Egyptian object that captured the most intense interest of upper-class Renaissance Europeans, and Francis I was certainly not alone in his fascination.⁷ Francis’ daughter-in-law Catherine de Medici sent an expedition to Saqqara, described as the ‘village of mummies’ by travellers, to obtain mummies for their supposed medicinal

³ Yassana Croizat-Glazer, ‘The Role of Ancient Egypt in Masquerades at the Court of François I^{er}’ *Renaissance Quarterly*, 66, 2013, pp.1206-1249, p.1216-1217.

⁴ *ibid.* p.1241.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1242.

⁶ Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, p.110.

⁷ Karl H. Dannenfeldt, ‘Egypt and Egyptian Antiquities in the Renaissance,’ *Studies in the Renaissance*, 6, 1959, pp.7-27 p.16.

properties.⁸ This belief was not without criticism at the time. Ambroise Paré, Barber and surgeon to multiple French Kings from 1552 until his death in 1590, wrote scathingly of the practice, and demonstrated awareness that some of the mummies sold as drugs were not in fact authentic ancient Egyptian mummies, but instead common criminals more freshly prepared.⁹ Lynn Parramore has argued that the European use of mummies as medicine took hold because they represented ‘the magical link between life and death,’ as well as symbolising ‘both the fecundity of the soil of Egypt and the barrenness of the sepulchres and deserts.’¹⁰ European interest in mummies held the same origins as their interest in Egyptian themed masquerades, the exciting and exotic mysticism that they saw in the desert country.

The Ottoman-Mamluk government of Egypt was opposed to the practice of exporting mummies to Europe for consumption, with popular opinion holding that ‘Christians are unworthy of eating their dead,’ but despite this official opposition their export continued.¹¹ Interest in mummies slowly shifted away from the use of them in ‘medicine,’ and towards a more archaeological fascination with them. In the seventeenth century, the French traveller Jean de Thevenot visited Saqqara, calling it the ‘village des Momies’ and describing in depth the visit to what he called a ‘mummy pit.’¹² Recording European interest in Egyptian artefacts that extended beyond mummies, Thevenot reported that there were two stone sarcophagi in the house of a ‘Monsieur Fouquet,’ as well as his own two, one of which was unfortunately broken while taking it back to

⁸ Gabriel Moshenska, ‘Unrolling Egyptian mummies in Nineteenth-Century Britain,’ *The British Journal for the History of Science*, 47:3, 2014, pp.451-477, p.455.

⁹ Dannenfeldt, ‘Egypt and Egyptian Antiquities in the Renaissance,’ p.18-19.

¹⁰ Lynn Parramore, *Reading the Sphinx: Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York, 2008, p.29.

¹¹ Dannenfeldt, ‘Egypt and Egyptian Antiquities in the Renaissance,’ p.19.

¹² D.F. Thevenot, *Relation d’Un Voyage Fait Au Levant*, Chez Lovis Billaine, Paris, 1665, p.257. ‘puis de momies’

France via Alexandria.¹³ In the eighteenth-century, Danish explorer Frederic Louis Norden followed Thevenot's footsteps and made Saqqara a stop on his travels through Egypt.¹⁴ While Thevenot and others who actually travelled to Egypt, seemed very sure of the idea that mummies were simply corpses of ancient Egyptians without any healing properties or magical powers, mummies still held a mystical attraction for many Europeans, an attraction that continued even into the twentieth century, with the famous 'curse' of Tutankhamen.

Another example of pre-1798 cultural interest in Egypt was the story of Cleopatra, who in Renaissance Europe was used to contrast the Rome of Octavius, founded on 'order' to the Alexandria of Cleopatra, founded on 'the bewildering power of sex.'¹⁵ In Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* for example, Mark Antony's downfall was brought about by Cleopatra. The Roman (Western) virtues of order, masculinity, and honour were corroded by the (Oriental) licentiousness of Alexandria.¹⁶ In *Antony and Cleopatra* as well as other plays Cleopatra was presented as a wily, seductive woman, a threat to the masculine representatives of the West.¹⁷ Cleopatra was the most obvious and visible 'Egyptian' to Renaissance audiences, and the renewed popularity of her story was a sign of growing European interest not only in Egypt but in the rest of the 'classical' world.

According to Paul and Janet Starkey, in a growing number of travelogues, 'European travellers formed a cultural image of modern Egypt as they wanted it to be rather than as it was in reality.'¹⁸ A 'dual' vision of Egypt emerged, the contemporary 'side was conceived in the minds of

¹³ Ibid., p.259.

¹⁴ Frederick Lewis Norden, *Travels in Egypt and Nubia*, Lockyer Davis & Charles Reymers, London, 1757, p.14.

¹⁵ Lucy Hughes-Hallett, *Cleopatra: Histories, Dreams and Distortions*, Bloomsbury, London, 1990, p.143.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.144.

¹⁷ Hosford, "'Regnorum Ruina'", p.25.

¹⁸ Starkey & Starkey, 'Introduction' p.7.

travellers in Egypt as well as Europeans in general as mysterious, exotic, unchanging, and ultimately inferior,' while the 'side which relates to ancient Egyptian civilization was described as fascinating, majestic and unmistakably civilized.'¹⁹ Travellers' accounts were the main source of general European knowledge on Egypt and the Middle East, and exerted enormous power over perceptions and policy. By the time of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, most European knowledge of Egypt was based on these travel reports from Thevenot, Norden, and even older sources like Herodotus' *Histories*. But by far the most influential traveller in late eighteenth-century France was Constantin François de Chassebœuf, comte de Volney. Volney was even reportedly the traveller most read by Napoléon himself. Volney's travel account *Voyages en Syrie et en Egypte* 'would play a crucial role in shaping French understandings of, and attitudes towards, the region for a generation,²⁰ and, according to Cook, 'did more than any other to inspire and shape the French invasion of Egypt in 1798.'²¹ Indeed, AJ O'Connor believes that Volney himself had first 'sown' the seed of the idea of invading Egypt in Napoleon's mind during a meeting on Corsica, and also exercised considerable influence over the Foreign Minister Talleyrand, another key person behind the French invasion, 'wintering' with him in Philadelphia in 1795-96.²²

In the introduction to his *Voyages*, Volney described his personal inspiration for visiting Egypt and Syria:

I wished the scene of my observations to be new, or at least brilliant. [...] Syria, especially, and Egypt, both with a view to what they once have been, and what they now are, appeared

¹⁹ Ibid., p.10.

²⁰ Alexander Cook, 'The Great Society of the Human Species': Volney and the Global Politics of Revolutionary France,' *Intellectual History Review*, 23:3, 2013, pp.309-328, p.312.

²¹ Ibid. p.313.

²² A. J. O'Connor 'Volney and the Egyptian Expedition,' *French Studies*, 4:3, 1950, pp.252-255, p.255.

to me a field equally adapted to those political and moral observations with which I wished to occupy my mind. ‘Those are the countries,’ said I, ‘in which the greater part of the opinions that govern us at this day have had their origin. In them, those religious ideas took their rise, which have operated so powerfully on our private and public manners, on our laws, and our social fate. It will be interesting, therefore, to be acquainted with the countries where they originated, the customs and manners which gave them birth, and the spirit and character of the nations from whom they have been received as sacred: to examine to what degree this spirit, these manners, and these customs, are altered or retained; to ascertain the influence of climate, the effects of the government, and the causes of the various habits and prejudices of these countries; in a word, to judge from their present state, what was their situation in former times.’²³

Volney wanted to understand the present state of Egypt and Syria so he could understand their shared past with Europe as well as understand the contemporary ideas that he believed originated in those countries. Volney’s interest was not, however, entirely historical. His next stated aim had much more relevance for the eventual French invasion:

On the other hand, considering the political circumstances of the Turkish Empire, for the last twenty years, and reflecting on their possible consequences, it appeared to me equally curious and useful to acquire correct notions of its internal government, in order to form a just estimate of its real power and resources.²⁴

In his own words, Volney made his contemporary aims clear. They were largely in line with the cultural aims of the later French invasion of Egypt, to know and understand Egypt better, to know

²³ M. C. F. Volney *Travels Through Syria and Egypt, Vol I*, GGJ and J. Robinson, London, 1788, p.ii-iii.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.iii.

how these once great countries, the source of ‘the opinions that govern us’ have fared since. Volney clarified further that he believed previous travellers had dealt with these issues inadequately:

Without possessing the language, it is impossible to appreciate either the genius or the character of a nation. [...] And without continuing a sufficient time, no traveller can form an accurate judgment, for the novelty of every thing around us naturally confounds and astonishes.²⁵

Here, Volney offered an early critique of travellers’ accounts, believing that to truly understand these countries one must spend more than a short time in those places. Volney of course was still not immune from some of the other pitfalls of travellers’ accounts.

It is no accident that Volney and other travellers were travelling at a time of European imperial and colonial expansion, and their travel writings would be an important part of this European expansion both in space but also in time.²⁶ While Egypt and the Ottoman Empire were not under direct European control, his *Voyages* would prove to be an instrument of imperialism.

After Napoleon returned to Paris in 1799, he gave a personal audience to Volney, praising his ‘talent for observation’ and ‘faithfulness,’ even believing he was ‘the only traveller who did not lie.’²⁷ Volney even stated during his description of Egypt, that ‘Were Egypt possessed by a nation friendly to the fine arts, discoveries might be made there, which would make us better acquainted with antiquity than any thing the rest of the world can afford us.’²⁸ He even believed this could come

²⁵ Ibid., p.iv-v.

²⁶ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p.134.

²⁷ Jean Gaulmier, *L’Idéologue Volney: 1757-1820 : contribution à l’histoire de l’orientalisme en France*, Slatkine Reprints, Genève, 1980, p.118. ‘Bonaparte a fait de grands compliments à Volney sur son Voyage d’Egypte et de Syrie. Il lui a dit qu’il était à peu près le seul des voyageurs qui n’eût pas menti, et qu’il avait su joindre au mérite de la fidélité, le plus grand talent d’observation.’

²⁸ Volney, *Travels*, p.285.

soon: 'To a period less remote, possibly than we imagine, we must defer the gratification of our wishes and our hopes.'²⁹ Nonetheless his personal friendly relations with Napoleon were brief, and possibly ended when Napoleon 'kicked Volney in the abdomen.'³⁰

Travellers' accounts such as Volney's were of course not the impartial and wholly accurate representations of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire that the travellers suggested and many Europeans believed them to be. European travellers to Egypt and the 'Orient' were, as Rana Kabbani has argued, 'seduced into seeing those aspects [they] expected to see,' their 'descriptions served to elaborate upon those of previous travellers, sustaining as they did the same fictions.'³¹ Asli Çirakman described this 'feedback loop' of Orientalism, whereby travellers would read writings of past travellers and thinkers about the 'Orient' that would then influence their own writings: Relying on travel books as a repository of "facts" was becoming a general trend among the natural scientists and political thinkers of the eighteenth-century. Travelers provided a vast range of data in the fields of religion, morality, politics, and natural sciences that eventually led to the formulation of general principles and theories. Ironically, eighteenth-century travel accounts on the Ottoman Empire themselves increasingly relied on these theories and abstractions rather than on experience and observation for analysis. Contrary to the trend towards empiricism elsewhere, the theorist rather than the traveller provided the significant "facts" on the nature of Oriental societies.³²

²⁹ Ibid., p.285-286.

³⁰ Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel 1550-1800*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Switzerland, 1995, p.286.

³¹ Kabbani, *Imperial Fictions*, p.25.

³² Çirakman, 'From Tyranny to Despotism,' p.57.

Thanks to this construction of the ‘Orient’ Europeans at the time developed a view of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt, that reflected their own fleeting observations and preconceptions, rather than the societies that were there. Volney was aware of the simplistic and problematic views many travellers had held on Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. He believed that the lack of time spent in the East and the novelty of these places to travellers left them too estranged, unfamiliar with customs, and too astounded by everything to give proper accounts. He nonetheless believed that his observations were based entirely on facts, stating in his introduction:

In my relation, I have endeavoured to maintain the spirit with which I conducted my researches into facts; that is, an impartial love of truth. I have restrained myself from indulging any sallies of the imagination, though I am no stranger to the power of such illusion over the generality of readers; but I am of opinion that travels belong to the department of history, and not that of romance.³³

Volney was aware that his *Voyages* would inform readers and shape their worldview, and believed that his book would do a useful job of that. He was, however, unaware of how his own preconceived notions about the ‘Orient’ were affecting his works. The view of the Orient constructed by Volney and his fellow writers would help contribute to the French decision to invade Egypt.

Ottoman Decline And Oriental Despotism

In 1798 Egypt was officially part of the Ottoman Empire, as it had been since its independent Mamluk rulers were defeated in the early sixteenth century. Historically Mamluks had been a military group consisting of purchased slave soldiers, who seized control of Egypt in 1250 (after the second

³³ Volney, *Travels*, p.vi.

of French King Louis IX's crusades), and remained politically dominant in Egypt even after the Ottoman takeover, when they ruled under Ottoman suzerainty. During this period, the French court took a positive view towards the Ottoman Empire as a useful counterweight to their continental rivals, the Habsburgs, and for trading opportunities to help the then flagging French economy.³⁴ The Egyptophile King Francis I sought these closer relations and this led to the first set of 'capitulations' that gave French merchants trading rights and privileges in the Ottoman Empire in 1536. Despite this military and economic cooperation, negative attitudes towards the Ottoman Empire were still predominant in French society and only hardened through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as the Ottoman Empire was viewed as slipping into a phase of decline.

What had been seen by some as 'the terrifying scourge on the frontiers of Eastern Europe' was gradually coming to be seen as a 'dead wall' blocking European imperial expansion,³⁵ and the decline of the Ottoman Empire became a political discussion point in France from at least the early seventeenth century. According to Henry Laurens, in the French view, 'the great period of Turkish expansion had now been replaced by one of European expansion.'³⁶ By 1798, the Ottoman Empire had already been forced into granting humiliating concessions after losing the 1768-1774 Russo-Ottoman War, and a general European concern for the immediate viability of the Ottoman Empire had emerged. The cession of navigation rights on the Black Sea to Russia after this conflict led other European powers to attempt to gain the same rights. While the Ottoman Empire resisted these attempts it was forced to cede some Balkan territory to Austria.³⁷

³⁴ De Lamar Jensen, 'The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy,' *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 16:4, 1985, pp.451-470, p.453.

³⁵ Filiz Turhan, *The Other Empire: British Romantic Writings about the Ottoman Empire*, Routledge, New York, 2003, p.3.

³⁶ Henry Laurens, *Les Origines Intellectuelles de L'Expédition d'Égypte : L'Orientalisme Islamisant en France (1698-1798)*, Editions ISIS, Paris, 1987, p.33. 'la grande période d'expansion turque à laquelle se substitue maintenant une expansion européenne.'

³⁷ Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, p.5.

The overwhelmingly negative European views of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the eighteenth-century were centred on ‘all the traditional disparaging Christian tropes regarding Islamic culture—its hypocrisy, baseness, and licentiousness.’³⁸ The Ottoman Empire was, for some French intellectuals, a prime example of ‘oriental despotism,’ one that could not continue to exist for much longer. For British intellectuals, it represented the ‘antithesis’ of the British Empire and all that it stood for.³⁹ Its ‘religious obscurantism’ was keeping military progress down, ensuring that a people once ‘geared to conquest’ had lost the ability to do so.⁴⁰ The apparent decline of the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth-century was seen not as a culmination of ‘historical, social, and political factors’ but as the result of ‘imagined ahistorical, fixed, and essential qualities of Turkish social and political life.’⁴¹ It was, in the view of Europeans, the end result of a system of ‘oriental despotism.’⁴²

The concept of despotism was more closely tied with the Ottoman Empire after Montesquieu defined it as an inherently ‘oriental’ form of government, and from then the term ‘suggested a static and slavish society, a backward and corrupt polity, with arbitrary and ferocious rulers governing servile and timid subjects.’⁴³ Montesquieu’s theory of ‘oriental despotism’ took over from earlier theories which held that the Ottoman Empire was merely a tyranny, a term that was not necessarily negative, unlike the term despotism.⁴⁴

³⁸ Thomas Kaiser, ‘The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture,’ *The Journal of Modern History*, 72:1, 2000, pp.6-34, p.8.

³⁹ Turhan, *The Other Empire*, p.29.

⁴⁰ Virginia Aksan, ‘Breaking the Spell of the Baron de Tott: Reframing the Question of Military Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1760-1830,’ *The International History Review*, 24:2, 2002, pp.253-277, p.269, 255.

⁴¹ Çirakman, ‘From Tyranny to Despotism,’ p.59.

⁴² Laurens, *Les Origines Intellectuelles de L’Expédition d’Égypte*, p.39.

⁴³ Çirakman, ‘From Tyranny to Despotism,’ p.56.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.48.

Crucially, however, Montesquieu's thoughts about Oriental Despotism were not wholly about the 'Orient' at all. Rather, they used the 'Orient' and its supposed decline to critique the direction in which he thought the French monarchy was moving in. He believed:

France was beginning to resemble some imagined caricature of Turkey, Persia, or China, complete with lavish and degraded courtiers, a thoroughly dependent aristocracy, the absence of all regulated law, a pervasive fear throughout, and a society from top to bottom in which individuals consecrate themselves to the search for sensual pleasure and material comfort.⁴⁵

The 'Orient,' a region that stretched east from the Ottoman Empire through very diverse states to China and Japan was painted with a broad brush by these Europeans, who viewed their own forms of government as superior. It was not only political writings like Montesquieu's that used depictions of the 'Orient' as a means of veiled criticism of their society. Many in the theatre and opera wrote plays using the Orient as a veil through which to criticise their own 'society and institutions,' and only in the late in the eighteenth-century did 'colonialist-orientalist' discourse about the Orient start to fully replace this self-critique as a reason for using it as a setting.⁴⁶

As a supposed system of government, 'Oriental' or 'Asiatic' despotism was seen as having the goal of giving its citizens peace and order, but only as a result of laws existing solely to 'prevent civil disorder and thus simply facilitate the "police" functions of the state.' Oriental despotisms ostensibly relied 'on customs ingrained in individuals from birth,' which led to these individuals

⁴⁵ Roger Boesche, *Theories of Tyranny from Plato to Arendt*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 1996, p.168, p.198.

⁴⁶ Darren Hodson, 'Changing French Orientalism: *Tarare* (1790) and the Question of Slavery,' *French Forum*, 36:2-3, 2011, pp. 19-39, p.20.

being dragged down to ‘uniformity and mediocrity.’⁴⁷ Oriental despotism was not just a governmental despotism for Montesquieu, it was a societal despotism,⁴⁸ one that was helped by the lack of a strong aristocracy to balance the power of the monarch. It was ‘a system which thrived where the political scenery consisted only in the king on the one hand, and an atomised mass of social nothings on the other.’⁴⁹ Despotism was also a result of the climate, according to Montesquieu.⁵⁰ A reason for the relative advancement of Europe compared to Asia was the existence of what Montesquieu termed ‘temperate zones.’ Asia had none, Europe however, was itself a ‘very extensive’ temperate zone.⁵¹ Of these details, Montesquieu relied on ‘the relations of travellers.’⁵²

Volney was influenced by Montesquieu’s theory of despotism, although he disputed Montesquieu’s climatic theory of the origins of this despotism. Volney thought that this climatic theory of despotism was overly harsh on the people of Egypt, and did not fit with what he had seen there. Volney saw the cause of despotism in Egypt as arising from a different, social source

Among us, the traces of ancient revolutions are becoming fainter every day; the foreign conquerors have assimilated with the conquered natives; and from this mixture has been formed one national body, all the members of which have the same interest. In Egypt, on the contrary, and throughout almost all Asia, the original inhabitants, enslaved by revolutions, the effects of which are still apparent, are become a pretty to foreign

⁴⁷ Boesche, *Theories of Tyranny from Plato to Arendt*, p.170-171.

⁴⁸ Franco Venturi, ‘Oriental Despotism,’ *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24:1, 1963, pp.133-142, p.134.

⁴⁹ Marian Sawer, *Marxism and the Question of the Asiatic Mode of Production*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1977, p.13.

⁵⁰ Charles de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu, *De L’Esprit des Lois*, Geneve, 1759, Book V, Chap XV, p.63.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Book XVII, Chap III, p.272. ‘En Europe, au contraie, la zone tempérée est très etendue

⁵² *Ibid.*

conquerors, who, mixing with the natives, have formed distinct parties, whose interests are directly opposite.⁵³

In Egypt, the ‘foreign conquerors’ were represented by the Mamluks, who, Volney maintained, governed on arbitrary principles and only for the benefit of themselves. ‘Sovereignty with them is not the difficult art of directing to one common object the various passions of a numerous society, but only the means of possessing more women, more toys, more horses, and slaves, and satisfying all their caprices.’⁵⁴

Regardless of their differences of the origins of despotism, Volney and Montesquieu agreed it was present in Egypt. For Volney ‘the spirit of the Turkish government is to ruin the labours of past ages, and destroy the hopes of future times, because the barbarity of ignorant despotism never considers tomorrow.’⁵⁵ According to Montesquieu, many non-European societies were not based on a system of honour, like those of Europe. Honour was the very antithesis of despotism, so much so that honour was ‘unknown in arbitrary governments, some of which have not even a proper word to express it.’⁵⁶ These societies were based not on ‘honour’ but on ‘fear.’⁵⁷ Not only the French saw the Ottoman Empire as a state which ‘represented despotism,’ British thinkers too believed that the Ottoman Empire’s ‘treatment of Greeks; the institution of the Harem; and the failure of the empire to modernise itself commercially and industrially’ made the Ottoman Empire an oriental despotism.⁵⁸

⁵³ Volney, *Travels*, p.196.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.186.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁵⁶ Montesquieu, *De L'Esprit des Loix*, Book III, Chap VIII, p.25. ‘L’honneur, inconnu aux États despotiques, où même souvent on n’a pas de mot pour l’exprimer’

⁵⁷ Saïd Amir Arjomand, ‘Coffeehouses, Guilds and Oriental Despotism. Government and Civil Society in Late 17th to Early 18th Century Istanbul and Isfahan, and as seen from Paris and London,’ *European Journal of Sociology*, 45:1, 2004, pp.23-42, p.27.

⁵⁸ Turhan, *The Other Empire*, p.3.

The belief that Egypt in the eighteenth-century was trapped under a repressive system of government affected French views of Egypt and its nominal rulers, the Ottoman Porte. Indeed, Henry Laurens identifies this belief in Oriental Despotism as a system as one of the major intellectual origins of the French invasion of Egypt.⁵⁹ Napoleon and his backers naively believed that the Egyptians would greet them as liberators from their Mamluk oppressors, and that the Ottoman Empire would not react negatively because they had already effectively ceded control to the Mamluks. The political situation in Egypt was viewed as chaotic; the authorities only irregularly paid the tribute demanded by the Ottoman Empire, and from the middle of the eighteenth-century it was effectively independently ruled by a series of Mamluk beys, viewed as corrupt and inefficient and contributing further to the chaos in Egypt.⁶⁰ A treaty the French signed with a group of leading Egyptian beys in 1785 was quickly rendered useless by a brief reassertion of Ottoman power in Egypt.⁶¹ Volney, helped spread this view in France and throughout Europe:

The Mamlouks have increased, become masters of all the riches and strength of the country, and, in short, gained such an ascendancy over the Ottomans, that the power of the latter is reduced almost to nothing.⁶²

By 1797, both Napoleon and Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand, the foreign minister of the Directory, believed that the fall of the Ottoman Empire was inevitable in their lifetimes, and as such, continuing the almost three century long period of quasi-alliance between France and the Ottoman

⁵⁹ Laurens, *Les Origines Intellectuelles de L'Expédition d'Égypte*, p.25.

⁶⁰ François Charles-Roux, *Les Origines de l'Expédition d'Égypte*, Librairie PLON, Paris, 1910, p.41-42.

⁶¹ Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt: A Study of Muhammad 'Ali*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1967, p.6.

⁶² Volney, *Travels*, p.69.

Empire was 'pointless.'⁶³ The French belief that there was a power vacuum in Egypt left by the supposedly crumbling, corrupt, and decadent Ottoman Empire further inspired Talleyrand, in his belief that an invasion of Egypt would be a simple, easy, and effective operation for France to undertake, and that the Ottoman Empire could be kept compliant simply by skilled negotiation.⁶⁴ Unfortunately for the French colonial planners, the Ottoman Empire was not nearly as willing to abandon Egypt as they believed.

The situation in the Ottoman Empire was, however, much more nuanced than the European narrative of an empire in decline held. There was broad agreement within the Ottoman Empire of a need to reform, perhaps even Europeanise, the Empire's governance and military after the defeat to Russia in 1774.⁶⁵ Sultan Selim III, who came to power in 1789, attempted to embark upon a program of reform. Selim III's 'New Order' or 'Nizam-i-Cedid' program was the first major attempt to 'Europeanise' many of the institutions of the Ottoman Empire, especially the Ottoman military.⁶⁶ Ottoman elites were definitely sensitive to the empire's declining strategic position relative to what could be considered the great powers of Europe.

The French, when making their decision to invade, also clearly misunderstood the different nature of the Ottoman Empire as a polity compared to the more centralised European states. The central government's relationship with its provinces had changed over the course of the Ottoman Empire. By the late eighteenth-century, many Ottoman provinces were ruled in what seemed like an independent manner to some European observers. This misconception was a product of the fact

⁶³ Philip Dwyer, *Napoleon: The Path to power, 1769-1799*, Bloomsbury, London, 2007, p.338.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.338-339.

⁶⁵ Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire*, p.38.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.40.

that the Ottoman state was run in a different manner to the traditional European states. As Ali Yaycioglu has made clear, however, the Ottoman Empire was a ‘conglomerate patchwork’ organisationally at the end of the eighteenth-century.⁶⁷ There was no automatic hereditary system of nobility, and the more far-flung regions of the Empire (like Egypt) were largely autonomous, kept in the Ottoman Empire through a ‘web of imperial and provincial elites.’⁶⁸ Yaycioglu has posited that the Ottoman Empire did not so much resemble its European contemporaries, but the Roman Empire, in that it

was not structured as a hierarchical relationship between a mother country (or “metropole”) and conquered and colonized distant lands and peoples. Rather, it resembled the Roman Empire, with a contiguous body and a center associated with the imperial capital, Istanbul.⁶⁹

The unfamiliar nature of the Ottoman Empire led French policymakers to underestimate the desire of its rulers to hold onto its constituent parts. The crumbling of the Ottoman Empire might have seemed like an inexorable process to many in Europe, but many in the Ottoman Empire were committed to fight against its dissolution, a policy that would meet with some success over the nineteenth-century.

Nonetheless, in France Egypt was presented as a land that had largely escaped the grasp of its nominal Ottoman suzerains by 1798. Volney described the ‘Present state of Egypt’ in his *Voyage* as one where the Ottoman Empire only had the smallest amount of control: ‘It is well known that the Porte still retains a Pasha, but this Pasha, confined and watched over in the castle of Cairo, is essentially the prisoner of the Mamlouks, rather than the substitute for the Sultan.’⁷⁰ The Mamluks

⁶⁷ Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire*, p.143.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.23.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.21.

⁷⁰ Volney, *Travels*, p.148.

only kept up the charade of Ottoman rule over them to avoid the possibility of reprisals: ‘The Beks, in their fear of provoking a violent reaction from the Divan, do not dare declare their independence. All continues in the name of the Sultan.’⁷¹ The Mamluks, however, were not paying the full tribute to the Sultan, taking all means possible to reduce the amount they had to pay.⁷² Other French writers concurred with Volney’s view that the Ottoman Empire was losing control of Egypt. The Baron de Tott, a Frenchman who travelled the Eastern Mediterranean in the 1750s and 60s was another prominent traveller who adopted this view.⁷³ The Ottoman Empire, according to de Tott, did not so much conquer Egypt as ‘capitulated with them.’⁷⁴ Sultan Selim, according to the Baron, came to an agreement where he appointed a Pasha to act as a “Governor-General” over the Beys, but as Ottoman power declined the shifting alliances of the Beys of Egypt had only caused the Ottomans to accumulate enemies in Egypt, and this had ‘reduced the Pachas to a mere title that the Mamelukes sometimes paid tribute to, but always keeping a close watch on.’⁷⁵ These characterisations of the governance of Egypt by Volney and de Tott emphasise Yaycioglu’s point about the Ottoman Empire being of a different nature to that of European states, with autonomous regions like Egypt still part of the Ottoman Empire and considered as its territory even if they seemed to be autonomous to European eyes.⁷⁶

There was no real attempt by the French policymakers to reckon with the reform efforts of the Ottoman Empire. The discourse surrounding reform of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt in 1798

⁷¹ Ibid., p.149.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Toth ‘Les Mémoires de François de Tott (1733-1793),’ p. 76.

⁷⁴ *Mémoires du Baron de Tott Quatrième Partie*, p.95. ‘Par l’examen des canons, ou code de Sultan Sélim, on doit présumer que ce Prince capitula avec les Mamelucs, plutôt qu’il ne conquit l’Egypte.’

⁷⁵ *Mémoires du Baron de Tott Quatrième Partie*, p.96. ‘ces fréquentes erreurs ont réduit les Pachas à un vain titre que les Mamelucs encensent quelquefois ; mais en retenant toujours dans une étroite prison celui qui en est revêtu.’

⁷⁶ Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire*, p.23.

on the contrary seemed to hold it as relatively impossible, or a process that could only be brought about from outside, through the French invasion of Egypt. European interest in the Ottoman Empire would shift from merely commercial exploitation to a fuller engagement with the Ottoman Empire as a state as the Ottoman Empire increased its openness to greater diplomatic relations with Europe. Crucially, the lack of engagement with the Ottoman Empire or local Egyptian authorities before the invasion was not something that would be repeated in later European dealings with Egypt, under Muhammad Ali or even during the British invasion of 1807.

For French policymakers in the late eighteenth-century the cultural allure of Egypt was matched by its strategic and economic potential. This was not the first time an invasion of Egypt had been considered in France. The French ambassador to Constantinople had already discussed the possibility of a canal between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea in 1586, and Louis XIV made overtures to the Ottoman Empire to open the port of Suez and the Red Sea to French commerce and ships in the seventeenth century.⁷⁷ In 1672 the German Philosopher Leibniz suggested the idea of a French invasion of Egypt to King Louis XIV, for the economic possibilities it offered, as well as to offer France an alternative target to the German-speaking principalities of Europe.⁷⁸ France was not the only country in Europe with notables advocating an invasion of Egypt. The Austrian writer Dominique Jauna suggested in a report to the Austrian Empress, Maria-Theresa that Egypt and Cyprus be conquered, not exclusively by Austria, but by all Christian rulers.⁷⁹ George Baldwin, the 'self-designated British representative in Egypt' suggested that the British invade in the 1770s, to thwart what he saw as the possibility of a French invasion, as well as gain the economic and strategic

⁷⁷ Charles-Roux, *Les Origines de l'Expédition d'Égypte*, p.20.

⁷⁸ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.130.

⁷⁹ Charles-Roux, *Les Origines de l'Expédition d'Égypte*, p.25.

benefits that came with the country.⁸⁰ Baldwin would later become the first official British consul in Egypt, while the French had had continuous representation in Egypt since the seventeenth century, clearly illustrating the different attitudes of the countries to Egypt in the late eighteenth-century.⁸¹ The Levant Company had some involvement in Egyptian affairs,⁸² but these were never extensive and the Levant Company regarded Egypt with 'apprehension' because of its lack of success by the late Eighteenth Century.⁸³ Disputes about who would receive the benefits from the through Egypt route to India between the Levant Company and the East India Company also helped discourage both companies from investing much effort in Egyptian trade.⁸⁴

Despite Britain's more modest levels of involvement in Egypt, the French were still worried about British influence in Egypt and the Levant.⁸⁵ The British, for their part, were not entirely uninterested in Egypt. In the 1770s, a scheme by several British merchants 'independent of the East Indian company' petitioned local Mamluk and Ethiopian authorities for permission to use the Red Sea and the Suez isthmus for the transportation of goods, but this was swiftly forbidden by the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁶ The Levant Company was wary of angering the Ottoman authorities so they largely abided by this firman.⁸⁷ Baldwin however, was operating independently of the Levant Company in Egypt in the late 1770s, and facilitated the now illegal trade via the Isthmus of Suez.⁸⁸

⁸⁰ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.128.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Despina Vlami, "Corporate Identity and Entrepreneurial Initiative: The Levant Company in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries." *The Journal of European Economic History*, 39:1, 2010, pp.67-99, p.76.

⁸³ R. J. Said, *George Baldwin and British interests in Egypt 1775 to 1798*, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, United Kingdom, 1968, p.14.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.23.

⁸⁵ *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel*, April 20 1798, p.3-4.

⁸⁶ Charles-Roux, *Les Origines de l'Expédition d'Égypte*, p.52-53. 'Des négociants, indépendants de la Compagnie anglaise des Indes'

⁸⁷ M.A. Anis, *Some aspects of british interest in egypt in the late 18th century (1775-1798)*, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, 1950, p.160.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.163.

The Levant Company itself largely avoided Egypt because of the supposedly ‘disturbed condition of the country,’⁸⁹ but Baldwin would manage to achieve the official title of consul in 1786, but his reign as official consul would only last until 1793 by which time France was clearly the more prominent European power in trade with Egypt.⁹⁰

The French Decision to Invade Egypt

By 1798, the idea of invading Egypt was much more prominent in France than in Austria or Britain. It had become one of ‘the most studied’ proposals of French expansion since Leibniz’s suggestion during the rule of Louis XIV in the seventeenth century.⁹¹ The French government even dispatched Baron François de Tott, a French nobleman who had experience in the Ottoman Empire, to study the feasibility of an invasion of Egypt in the 1770s.⁹² The main goal of the 1798 expedition, the strategic aim of threatening British power in the ‘east,’ was also a part of these proposals,⁹³ which, like the 1798 invasion also partly relied on Egypt as an economic and strategic possibility in and of itself, rather than exclusively to counter Britain and British influence in India. Even then, the influence of Britain on France’s Egyptian desires was evident; Egypt could act as a replacement for lost French colonies in the Americas, as well as help bolster France’s precarious position post-1763 in India. The anti-English aim became much more prominent during the Revolutionary Wars, as France and Britain fought, and France sought to threaten Britain’s overseas dominance. Napoleon’s desire to help the French-aligned ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore, the ‘Tipu Sultan’ in his struggle

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.164

⁹⁰ Said, *George Baldwin and British interests in Egypt 1775 to 1798*, p.3, p.234.

⁹¹ Charles-Roux, *Les Origines de l’Expédition d’Égypte*, p.1. ‘C’est au contraire un des projets les plus étudiés’

⁹² Aksan, ‘Military Reform in the Ottoman Empire,’ p.259, François Charles-Roux, ‘Le Projet Français de Conquête de l’Égypte sous le Règne de Louis XVI,’ in *Mémoires Présentés A L’Institut D’Égypte et Publiés sous les auspices de Sa Majesté Fouad I^{er}, Roi d’Égypte*, Vol IV, Cairo, 1929.

⁹³ Charles-Roux, ‘Le Projet Français de Conquête de l’Égypte sous le Règne de Louis XVI,’ p.9.

against the British in India was a significant part of his inspiration for the invasion of Egypt, and the ability to directly threaten the British in India alongside a powerful ally that had previously managed to hold his own against the might of the English was attractive to the French leadership.

In the situation France found itself in at the end of the eighteenth-century, invading Egypt as a way to attack British colonies in India was seen as much more likely to be successful than the proposed invasion of England, and Napoleon and Talleyrand were successful in managing to reassign the thirty thousand troops of the *Armée d'Angleterre* to the force that was sent to Egypt.⁹⁴

French historian François Charles-Roux wrote that:

The Egyptian expedition would probably not have been undertaken in 1798, if France had not been at war with England and the plan to descend on the coast of England had not been abandoned. But the idea of turning towards Egypt France's naval and military efforts perhaps would not have come to the minds of Talleyrand or Bonaparte if this idea had not, so to speak, already been in their minds⁹⁵

Napoleon himself came further around to the idea of a French invasion of Egypt in 1797, possibly because of a speech Talleyrand gave to the *Institut National* in July, an idea that they discussed further in correspondence.⁹⁶ Both Napoleon and Talleyrand were also likely inspired in this idea by Volney, as previously discussed. Napoleon discussed the concept with his 'generals and close associates almost every day' while still in Italy, and even sent a letter to the Directory advocating the taking of

⁹⁴ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.133.

⁹⁵ Charles-Roux, *Les Origines de l'Expédition d'Égypte*, p.341. 'L'expédition d'Égypte n'aurait probablement pas été entreprise en 1798, si la France n'avait pas été en guerre avec l'Angleterre et que le plan de descente sur les côtes anglaises n'eût pas été abandonné. Mais l'idée de détourner vers l'Égypte l'effort maritime et militaire de la France ne serait peut-être venue ni à l'esprit de Talleyrand, ni à celui de Bonaparte, si cette idée n'avait, pour ainsi dire, préexisté dans leur esprit.'

⁹⁶ Carl Ludwig Lokke, *France and the Colonial Question: A Study of Contemporary French Opinion 1763-1801*, AMS Press, New York, 1968, p.184-186.

Egypt as a way to bring about the ‘destruction’ of England.⁹⁷ Talleyrand’s speech to the *Institut* on July 3, 1797, a mere two weeks before he became the foreign minister, mentioned some of the previous French plans for the acquisition of Egypt, both military and diplomatic.⁹⁸ The long term and short term influences of French plans for an invasion of Egypt were on full display.

In late eighteenth-century Europe, Egypt was viewed as a land that was once great, a fertile cradle of civilisation, as well as a significant source of grain for the ancient Romans. Many French people believed that Egypt could be made prosperous again, under the guidance of France, and for the benefit of France, reaping the benefits of a renewed and fertile Egypt. Egypt was also to serve as a replacement for France’s lost American and Indian possessions, as well as France’s Caribbean colonies, which had been affected by the Revolution. From the early 1770s, growing criticism of the Atlantic slave trade in France had inspired many French people to rethink their current colonial system. Haiti (Saint-Domingue as it was then known) the most important French colony at the time of the French Revolution was embroiled in its own anti-slavery revolution at the time, meaning the French were more inclined to look elsewhere for colonies where they would not have to rely on imported slave labour. The entire French colonial enterprise was coming even further into question.⁹⁹ Perhaps France could colonise Africa, bringing prosperity to the local Africans without enslaving them and shipping them across the Atlantic by the tens of thousands?¹⁰⁰ These ideas of the ‘physiocrats’ were effectively advocating an early form of the ‘*mission civilisatrice*’ which would extensively influence French colonial and imperial policy more and more in the nineteenth-century.

⁹⁷ Dwyer, *Napoleon*, p.341.

⁹⁸ Charles-Roux, *Les Origines de l’Expédition d’Égypte*, p.294.

⁹⁹ Lokke, *France and the Colonial Question*, p.131.

¹⁰⁰ Pernill Røge, ‘La clef de commerce’ – The changing role of Africa in France’s Atlantic Empire ca. 1760-1797,’ *History of European Ideas*, 34:4, 2008, pp.431-443, p.436.

By the time Talleyrand became foreign minister, he was already convinced of the benefits of African colonies, and Britain was establishing sugar plantations in Sierra Leone.¹⁰¹ In 1798, French politician Joseph Eschassériaux presented a report to the Council of the Five Hundred (the French lower house under the Directory) that strongly advocated for a colony in Africa, for ‘philanthropic,’ ‘commercial,’ and ‘political’ reasons.¹⁰² Eschassériaux suggested Egypt as the best candidate, a place that France could ‘regenerate,’ and a place that was much more exciting in the French imagination than West Africa.¹⁰³

According to Eschassériaux’s report, the development of colonies was beneficial to the coloniser in more ways than just economics. ‘What was Europe before the discovery of the two Indies’ he asked the Council of the Five Hundred, but ‘a vast continent without industry and without art, without civilisation, drowned in the blood of religious wars, divided by the ambition of small Titans fighting over tatters.’¹⁰⁴ It was the discovery of new places and the establishment of colonies that brought Europe to what Eschassériaux thought was its current improved state. Egypt was thought to be a fertile place, able to provide economic benefits to an able ruling power, and Franco-Egyptian trade had been growing for almost three centuries. Eschassériaux also brought up potential grand projects that France could undertake in Egypt, including a canal at the isthmus of Suez and another leading from the Red Sea to the Nile.¹⁰⁵ Eschassériaux gave free rein to his excitement about the prospect of Egypt as a French colony

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.442.

¹⁰² *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel* April 20 1798, p.3.

¹⁰³ Lokke, *France and the Colonial Question*, p.242-244.

¹⁰⁴ *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel*, April 19 1798, p.3. ‘Qu’était l’Europe avant découverte des deux Indes ? un vaste continent sans industrie et sans arts, sans civilisation au-dedans, plongé dans le sang des guerres religieuses, déchiré par l’ambition des petits Titans qui s’en disputaient les lambeaux.’

¹⁰⁵ *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel*, April 20 1798, p.3.

What more wonderful enterprise for a nation which has already given liberty to Europe, freed America, that to regenerate in every sense a land which was the first home of civilisation, when barbarism covered the rest of the universe, and to return to their ancient cradle, science, industry, and the arts, to leave for the centuries the foundations of a new Thebes or another Memphis.¹⁰⁶

Eschassériaux also saw colonisation of Egypt as a way to resist British and Russian domination of commerce, and stop them from further penetrating into the Levant.¹⁰⁷ The combination of economic and strategic motives helped Talleyrand in his efforts to convince the directory, ‘the same expedition would give France a new colony and bring England to her knees.’¹⁰⁸

For Napoleon himself, the cultural allure of Egypt was certainly a factor, however small, in his personal designs on the country. Public opinion in Paris ‘likened Bonaparte to the greatest men of antiquity,’¹⁰⁹ and Napoleon himself believed that the proposed invasion of Egypt would further link him to Alexander the Great, who had also conquered Egypt while just twenty-nine years old.¹¹⁰ The proposal for a ‘scientific’ expedition to Egypt also appealed to Napoleon’s ‘sense of grandeur.’¹¹¹ It would allow Napoleon to ‘present himself as a kind of Cato or Cincinnatus – a general philosopher capable of abandoning the art of warfare for the world of letters and sciences.’¹¹² Napoleon recruited his one hundred and sixty savants to study Egypt, to help achieve this aim, and

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* ‘Quelle plus belle entreprise pour une nation qui a déjà donné la liberté à l’Europe, affranchi l’Amérique, de régénérer en tout sens une terre qui fut la première le foyer de la civilisation, lorsque la barbarie couvrait le reste de l’Univers, et de reporter à leur antique berceau, les sciences, l’industrie et les arts, de jeter dans les siècles les fondemens d’une nouvelle Thèbes ou d’une autre Memphis.’

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3-4.

¹⁰⁸ Lokke, *France and the Colonial Question*, p.191.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.187.

¹¹⁰ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.133.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.133.

¹¹² Dwyer, *Napoleon*, p.345.

even when the expedition became a military failure the success of the cultural and scientific aspects of the invasion force ensured that Napoleon's legacy was only embellished by his Egyptian adventure. The military expedition was also a new form of attempted imperial expansion. Previously (or at least since the end of the crusades) European nations had only haltingly expanded in the 'East' through trade companies and organisations granted government charters, but the invasion of Egypt 'initiated a new kind of extra-European conquest, legitimated by a rhetoric of Western superiority, and harnessing institutions of knowledge and culture to the state.'¹¹³

The French decision to invade Egypt in 1798 was influenced by a cultural view of Egypt as the birthplace of civilisation, a land that could be brought back to greatness, the economic view of Egypt as a rich and fertile land that could replace France's lost American and Indian colonies, the strategic view that Egypt offered a perfect place for control of trade with the far east and the ability to exert more influence to counter the British, especially in India, and the political view that it was a land without order, oppressed, and the people would gladly accept enlightenment by the French. The primary reason was the immediate belief that taking Egypt would enable the French to threaten India, the most important British colonial possession.

The French Invasion

The invasion itself began with success on land, however disaster at sea followed soon after. French forces quickly captured Cairo and most of Lower Egypt from the Mamluk chiefs that were in charge, winning the decisive Battle of the Pyramids within three weeks of landing at Alexandria, but in early August 1798, the British fleet under the command of Lord Nelson returned to Egypt and

¹¹³ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.122-123.

destroyed the French fleet in the battle of the Nile at Aboukir Bay. French forces were thus largely cut off from supplies and contact with France.

On arrival in Egypt, the French presented themselves not as another set of foreign occupiers taking over from the Ottoman Empire, but as liberators, saving common Egyptians from Mamluk oppression, barbarity, and depravity. The French naively disregarded the Ottoman Empire in their calculations, assuming it would not react negatively to their invasion of Egypt. Even the British press believed that Ottoman authorities would cooperate with French forces.¹¹⁴

The French issued a proclamation that was sent ahead of their troops, to ‘reassure’ the people of Egypt.¹¹⁵ The proclamation squarely positioned the French as liberators, exporting French revolutionary concepts such as ‘freedom and equality’ to the people of Egypt.¹¹⁶ The proclamation also noted the harsh conditions imposed on French merchants by the Mamluk rulers of Egypt. Napoleon’s proclamation promised the Egyptians that they would no longer be ruled over by the Mamluks. ‘the Mamluks are the very opposite of intellect and virtue. What distinguishes them from others that they should deserve to rule over Egypt by themselves [...] Previously there were in Egypt great cities, wide canals, and extensive commerce. Only the oppression and the greed of the Mamluks put an end to all this.’¹¹⁷ The anti-Mamluk nature of the proclamation harkens back to Volney and de Tott’s comments on their rule of Egypt featured earlier in this chapter. The French promised the Egyptians that under French rule they would be free to achieve ‘exalted stations’ and

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, July 30, 1798; pg. 2.

¹¹⁵ Ed. Jane Hathaway, *Al Jabarti’s History of Egypt*, Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009, p.179.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.180.

that ‘the learned, the virtuous, and the intelligent amount them with direct affairs.’¹¹⁸ The proclamation read as a document of national liberation, imposed by the French upon the Egyptian people. Yet it also promised that the French were not acting in opposition to the Ottoman empire, affirming that the French were still and had ‘always been’ ‘sincere friends of his Majesty the Ottoman sultan.’¹¹⁹

Napoleon obviously assumed the Egyptians would welcome this ‘bizarre mixture of French revolutionary vocabulary and Islamic political terms,’¹²⁰ but the Egyptian historian Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti was unconvinced, calling some of the Islamic elements of the text ‘a derangement of his mind,’ while heavily criticising the poor grammar of the French proclamation.¹²¹ The response to the proclamation was not wholly negative, it was well received in some areas, and historian Maya Jasanoff classifies it as being a ‘partial success.’¹²² The French also tried to placate the populace by celebrating festivals, both Egyptian and French, in a ‘crude attempt at creating a kind of Franco-Egyptian rapport.’¹²³

Jean-Marcel Humbert wrote that the ‘French arrived in Egypt knowing little about the country but with a host of clichés and preconceived ideas about an ancient civilization and its supposed mysteries.’¹²⁴ Letters from the French in Egypt certainly reveal their preconditioned

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.181

¹²⁰ Dwyer, *Napoleon*, p.367.

¹²¹ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.140.

¹²² Ibid., p.141.

¹²³ Dwyer, *Napoleon*, p.382.

¹²⁴ Jean-Marcel Humbert, ‘The Birth of Modern Egypt from Bonaparte’s Campaign to Muhammad ‘Ali’s Seizure of Power: A Historiographical Essay’ in *Napoleon’s Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, Ed. Ute Planert, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2015, pp.291-304, p.292.

opinions upon landing. One letter, from future French diplomat Pierre Amédée Jaubert, describes what he saw of Alexandria upon arrival:

The ruins of its former circuit announce that it was once a most extensive place, and might well contain the 300,000 people which historians have given it. But the despotism and stupor which followed that period, and the discovery of the route to India by the Cape of Good Hope, have successfully reduced it to the miserable state in which it now lies. It is a mere heap of ruins, where you see a paltry hovel of mud and straw stuck against the magnificent fragments of granite column! ¹²⁵

Another letter from an anonymous writer goes into similar detail:

This country, so much celebrated, is by no means worthy of the character it has obtained; the most savage and uncultivated spot in France is a thousand times more beautiful. Nothing on earth can be so gloomy, so wretched, and so unhealthy as Alexandria, the most commercial spot in Egypt!¹²⁶

This letter, included in the collection of *Intercepted Letters* published by the British was incomplete, but the available parts did not mention the ruins of Egypt, and the tone was harsh towards the campaign and the conditions of the country, only four weeks after arrival.

The French invasion of Egypt greatly expanded the number of ordinary European people who had travelled to Egypt. Collections like the *Intercepted Letters* enabled ordinary Europeans to access opinions of more ordinary Europeans than the largely rich travel writers who had previously written about Egypt. The *Intercepted Letters* showed a new perspective on Egypt, one where the

¹²⁵ *Copies of Original Letters from the French Army in Egypt: Part the First, consisting of those letters to the French Government, Intercepted by the British Fleet in the Mediterranean: Which have been published here by authority*, London, J Wright, Opposite Old Bond Street, Piccadilly, 1798, 10th Edition, p.22.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.108.

writers may not have set out with a grand plan to ‘describe’ the country. The growth of the newspaper press at the time also contributed to this sense of the invasion of Egypt as a popular event, one that was cared about not just because of the war but because of Egypt itself.

The French colonial project in Egypt was not limited to just getting the populace on their side. The very first tasks of the *Institut d’Egypte*, set out by Napoleon in the first meeting, included how to improve ovens used to make bread, how to make beer without hops, to assess whether or not gunpowder could be made in Egypt, and whether watermills or windmills would work better in Cairo.¹²⁷ These tasks of the *Institut* were part of the French colonial project of improvement in Egypt and showed that the French sought to establish a familiar and functioning infrastructure and to set up many of the comforts of home there.

In October, the French started to create their own civil administration in the country, but the taxes they levied on the Muslim population were seen as equivalent to the *jizya*, the tax which was only levied on non-Muslims. The French offended the Muslim Egyptian population in other ways as well. They wore green, the colour of the prophet Muhammad traditionally only worn by his descendants. Tensions boiled over on the twenty-first of October in a ‘genuinely popular’ and ‘overtly religious’ protest against the French and those deemed to be their allies.¹²⁸ The rioters attacked Christian and European residences throughout Cairo, but French retribution was swift and resulted in the ‘sacking and desecrating’ of the Grand Mosque of al-Azhar.¹²⁹ After this calamitous event the French attempted to return to a more conciliatory policy towards the locals, and Napoleon

¹²⁷ *La Décade Egyptienne, Journal Littéraire et d’Economie Politique*, Premier Volume, L’Imprimerie Nationale, Cairo, An VII, p.11-12.

¹²⁸ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.143.

¹²⁹ Dwyer, *Napoleon*, p.403.

re-established the *divan*, the previous governing council, and released a proclamation that Philip Dwyer has called ‘a mistaken attempt to control Egyptians through religion.’¹³⁰

The initial reaction in France to the invasion of Egypt was muted. Details of the invasion had been kept secret, known only to a select few before the French capture of Malta, although rumours did spread. The fleet’s destination was widely assumed to be Egypt within three weeks after its departure, at least according to the opposition press.¹³¹ Press reports of the campaign after it began were contradictory and confusing, due to the distance involved and the destruction of the French fleet at the Battle of the Nile soon after the beginning of the invasion, which gave the British complete control of the sea between France and Egypt. Couriers often took at least sixty days to reach Paris from Egypt, and could be lost or captured by the British.¹³² Nonetheless, such news as was received was often published first out of all the political news, and despite the limited availability of news, excitement for the invasion and occupation of Egypt seemed high. French newspapers were quick to publish rumours of grand French successes, before quietly retracting them months later, as when the *Clef du Cabinet* reported Napoleon’s forces as ‘within 85 leagues of Constantinople,’ over a month after they had withdrawn from the unsuccessful siege of Acre in 1799. The very same siege the *Clef du Cabinet* reported as having come to a successful conclusion in late April.¹³³ The *Clef du Cabinet* did not finally report that the French had retreated from Acre until after Napoleon had left Egypt.¹³⁴ Yet news on seemingly inconsequential matters was published,

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.407.

¹³¹ Ian Germani, ‘Where is General Bonaparte? Press Reports of Napoleon’s Expedition to Egypt,’ *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History: Selected Papers of the Annual Meeting XXIV*, 1997, pp.61-70, p.63.

¹³² The *Moniteur Universel* published a letter in its 29 Nivôse edition sent by a *savant* on 12 Brumaire, 77 days beforehand. ‘Politique: Egypte,’ *Gazette Nationale ou le Moniteur Universel*, Nivôse, 29 An VII .

¹³³ Germani, ‘Where is General Bonaparte?’, p.67.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.68.

even minor news, such as when Napoleon reportedly discovered how to make *eau de vie* from dates.¹³⁵

British reactions were also tainted by lack of information. On September 17 1798 the *Times* reported on a letter received from Constantinople that recounted a battle where the French had ... been surprised near Cairo by a numerous body of Tartars, who killed 8000 of them, and took 200 prisoners; and that an army of Mamelucks had marched against the remaining Republican troops.¹³⁶

This was of course, false. On July 30 1798 the *Times* published an article ‘On the Project of the French against Egypt?’, revealing a knowledge of earlier French plans against Egypt, discussing one in particular that was suggested under Louis XV. It outlined the benefits, ‘thus, that colony, or rather France herself would become the *entrepôt* of Europe, nay of the Universe.’¹³⁷ The *Times* believed (like the French) that the Ottoman Empire itself would support the invasion of Egypt, but noted that Egypt was fundamentally independent so Ottoman support would have no effect. The *Times* accurately predicted the French troubles in their attempts at outreach towards Egyptians:

The conqueror of Egypt would have to govern men, whose language, manners, and customs he is unacquainted with. Misunderstandings will therefore constantly produce troubles and disorder.¹³⁸

The *Times* was very pessimistic about French chances of success. Regardless of their earlier prediction of Ottoman support for the French invasion of Egypt, in August 1798 the *Times* reported with intense approval Ottoman preparations for war against France and Napoleon’s army:

¹³⁵ *Gazette Nationale ou le Moniteur Universal*, Ventôse 15, An VII.

¹³⁶ *The Times*, September 17 1798, p.2.

¹³⁷ *The Times*, July 30 1798, p.2.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2.

A war between the Turks and French, carried on with spirit and vigour, would be productive of the most beneficial consequences, and at all events completely intercept all communication between France and the countries occupied by Bonaparte.¹³⁹

Just over a week later the *Times* predicted easy success for Bonaparte in Egypt, believing the Mamluks to be weak, and the people of Egypt ‘eager to shake off the yoke of oppression.’¹⁴⁰

During the occupation substantial works written about Egypt were published in France. Louis de Laus de Boissy, a French playwright, published *Bonaparte au Caire ou Mémoires sur l’expédition de ce général en Égypte*, the memoirs of a *savant* in Egypt that ran to almost 200 pages, and included a one-act opera written by de Boissy that was described as ‘noteworthy’ by the *Moniteur Universel*.¹⁴¹ The English also published and translated French works on Egypt. In one case, the English published a book of letters ‘to the French government, intercepted by the British fleet in the Mediterranean’ and translated into English.¹⁴² The book was soon after translated into French and published in Paris, the original intended destination of the letters.¹⁴³ The breathless introduction to the volumes of intercepted letters had no doubts about how important the letters were:

Never did the public in this Country, never, perhaps, did the World, receive information more interesting and important than is communicated in these papers. Never was there a moment, in the affairs of this Country, or of the World, at which such information could have been received so opportunely.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ *The Times*, August 24 1798, p.3.

¹⁴⁰ *The Times*, September 1 1798, p.3.

¹⁴¹ *Gazette Nationale ou le Moniteur Universel*, Ventôse 6, An VII.

¹⁴² *Copies of Original Letters from the French Army in Egypt: Part the Third, consisting of those letters to the French Government, Intercepted by the British Fleet in the Mediterranean*, London, J Wright, 1800, 3rd Edition.

¹⁴³ *Gazette Nationale ou le Moniteur Universel*, Floreal 25, An VII, p.4.

¹⁴⁴ *Copies of Original Letters from the French Army in Egypt: Part the Third*, p.ii.

These letters were not, however, viewed as solely important for what they showed about Egypt. At the time of the publication of the third part in 1800, the British were much more concerned by Napoleon, who on his return to France from Egypt launched his coup of 18 Brumaire that installed him as First Consul of France.¹⁴⁵ The introduction to the first part, published in 1798, focused more on Egypt than Napoleon, remarking: ‘the Egyptian Expedition has awakened curiosity, and been the theme of much wonder, and applause, and error, and misrepresentation.’¹⁴⁶ Still, the annotations added to the letters focused on the actions and misdeeds of Napoleon Bonaparte, the ‘faithless calumniator.’¹⁴⁷

The French occupation of Egypt was ended by a joint invasion by both the Ottoman Empire and their new British allies in early 1801. Yet the failure of the French occupation of Egypt did not completely spell the end of the imperial project begun by Talleyrand and Napoleon. The French *savants* brought to study Egypt had done just that, subjecting Egypt to Western methods of knowledge, dividing ancient and modern Egypt into two almost wholly separate entities, replicating the ‘dual’ Egypt created by the travellers. The classical grandeur of Ancient Egypt was pedestalsed alongside Greece and Rome as one of the originators of European civilisation. Even before the lengthy *Description de l'Égypte* was published, other works from *savants* who joined the *Institut de l'Égypte* helped inspire this new wave of Egyptomania. Vivant Denon's *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte pendant les campagnes du general Bonaparte*, published soon after the failure of the invasion in 1802, had an ‘extraordinary impact’ on European receptions of Egyptian style in France, Britain, and elsewhere, especially as English translations appeared quickly, James Stevens Curl considers Denon's

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.vi.

¹⁴⁶ *Copies of Original Letters from the French Army in Egypt: Part the First*, p.iii.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.34.

Voyage the beginning of the nineteenth-century 'Egyptian Revival' in European design.¹⁴⁸ An explosion of interest in all things Egyptian themed began to sweep France and Britain, and the rest of the world during and after the French Occupation, an interest that would only intensify further during the following decades alongside the more systematic and 'scientific' excavation of Egyptian artefacts. While it largely took until after the end of the Napoleonic wars in the mid-1810s for Egypt to be subjected to the first phase of 'scientific' Western archaeological excavation, the French invasion did lead to some immediate important Egyptological works, like the *Description*, and discoveries, including the Rosetta Stone, although the Stone would not be fully deciphered and understood for another two decades.

As recounted in the introduction, the French invasion of Egypt was held up by Edward Said in *Orientalism* as 'the very model of a truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another,' it 'modernised' 'the Orient as a body of knowledge.'¹⁴⁹ The French invasion of Egypt brought more Europ[ea]ns into contact with Egypt before, some of whom were specifically tasked with studying and understanding the country for the benefit of the French. As a result, Egypt became a much more solid place in the European mind than it was before the invasion. The extent to which the French invasion of Egypt brought about new information on Egypt itself has been contested,¹⁵⁰ but the repackaging of the legacy of the French invasion and occupation as an endeavour that enhanced European knowledge of Egypt forms an important part of the story of 'Orientalism' in the early nineteenth-century.

¹⁴⁸ Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, p.204.

¹⁴⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, p.42.

¹⁵⁰ John von B. Rodenbeck, 'An Orientalist Monument Reconsidered' in *Egyptian Encounters*, edited by Jason Thompson, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2002, pp.90-132, p.100.

For Egypt itself the French invasion was a dramatic event, although one that has often been overstated as a complete break from the past. Many historians have credited the French invasion with ‘awakening’ Egypt, leading it down the path of modernisation that followed under the rule of Muhammad Ali. However, Muhammad Ali was not instituting entirely new reforms in Egypt.¹⁵¹ Several predecessors in the decades before the French invasion laid the groundwork for many of Muhammad Ali’s reforms, and the Ottoman Empire itself had already embarked on its first ‘Europeanisation’ program under Selim III’s ‘New Order.’ The French invasion of Egypt did not cause the insertion of radical new European ideas into the body of Egypt or the Ottoman Empire. It was part of a long process through which the Ottoman Empire and Egypt were further integrated, both willingly and unwillingly, into the European world. Helen Rivlin accurately summarised the effects of the French presence in Egypt: ‘the work of the French *savants* remains as a permanent tribute to French scholarship, but it must be recognised that the scholars’ greatest achievement was enlightening the West about Egypt rather than influencing the Egyptians.’¹⁵² The colonial project failed to colonise or uplift the modern Egyptians as the French had claimed they wanted to, but the scientific expedition successfully brought Egypt even further into the European imagination.

By the time of Republic Day on the twenty-first of September 1798, the Ottoman Empire had declared a jihad against France, in a blow to French attempts to present themselves as liberating the mostly Muslim population of Egypt.¹⁵³ The British saw an opportunity in this French miscalculation. The Times reported on the adverse reaction of the Ottoman Empire to French actions in Egypt in late August 1798, remarking that a war between the two ‘would be productive of

¹⁵¹ Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, p.31.

¹⁵² Helen Anne B. Rivlin, *The Agricultural Policy of Muhammad Ali in Egypt*, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, 1961, p.13.

¹⁵³ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.142.

the most beneficial circumstances.’¹⁵⁴ France had been the Ottoman Empire’s greatest supporter among the European nations for over two hundred years before the invasion of Egypt, and in return France had the most favoured position among European nations in the Ottoman Empire. The French invasion of Egypt had temporarily shattered this relationship and ushered in a brief period of cooperation between Russia, Britain, and the Ottoman Empire against the French, albeit one that would not last. The Franco-Ottoman relationship would, however, never again reach the position it held prior to the French invasion of Egypt.

The French invasion of Egypt restructured the relationship between France, Britain, and Egypt, bringing Egypt further into the consciousness of both countries. No longer would Egypt be seen as remote, and the excitement surrounding the scientific achievements would lead to more and more interest in Egypt. The Rosetta stone would further enable Europeans to study and ‘understand’ ancient Egypt in a way that had previously been impossible for them. Egypt itself would see further involvement from the two newly educated European powers of France and Britain, who would vie for influence and power in a post-French occupation country.

¹⁵⁴ *The Times*, August 24, 1798, pg. 3.

CHAPTER 2: The Rise of Muhammad Ali and French and British Egyptian Policy

The French withdrawal from Egypt in 1801 marked the end of France's formal colonial endeavour in the country, but it did not mark the end of European imperial involvement in Egypt. The following years in Egypt saw the rise of Muhammad Ali and a failed British invasion attempt. Anglo-French rivalry became one of the dominant political influences in Egypt during this period. Both countries feared that the other planned to invade and control Egypt. The consuls in Alexandria kept close watch on each other. British fears about French influence in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire and Britain's own strategic concerns would lead to the failed British invasion of 1807, in an attempt to support (the already dead) Elfi Bey, one of the most prominent mamluk chieftains, and his attempt to wrest back control of Egypt for the Mamluks. The French invasion did not presage a new era of invasions and attempts to take direct control of the lands of the Ottoman Empire, at least not yet. As Ian Coller wrote in his tome *Arab France*; rather than signalling more European formal imperial activity in the 'Arab world,' 'between 1801 and 1830 no European power moved aggressively into the Arab world: indeed, it was rather a period in which the centre of Ottoman power was seeking to repair the fabric of its own empire.'¹ Coller's statement ignores some of the complexity of the encounter between Europe and the Ottoman Empire in this period. Britain, for one, directly invaded Egypt in 1807, an aggressive move into Egypt, although one seemingly motivated by short term concerns as opposed to a long term move, and Britain, France, and Russia especially were all active in the arena of informal imperialism in the Ottoman Empire, including in Egypt.

¹ Ian Coller, *Arab France: Islam and the Making of Modern Europe, 1798-1831*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 2011, p.11.

The rise of Muhammad Ali also reconfigured the relationship between Egypt and Europe. Ali was, in general, eventually viewed as a strong figure of authority, bringing peace and, most importantly for European travellers, safety, to a previously seen as chaotic land. When he cooperated with European powers, he was viewed largely as an enlightened, modern ruler, however when he acted contrary to their perceived interests, he was often caricatured as a traditional Oriental Despot. French influence came to dominate in Muhammad Ali's regime, at least in part due to the close relationship that developed between Drovetti, the French vice-consul, and Ali. Ali was not content with just French support however, he constantly sought better relations with Britain, but the British consuls were not as positive towards him. British opinions of Muhammad Ali varied wildly, with even the consuls they appointed (in particular Ernest Missett) rapidly changing their opinions from positive to negative or vice versa. In three months in 1812 Missett went from complaining to the Foreign Office about the capricious will of a French influenced Viceroy, to praising Muhammad Ali for listening as well as his long-held devotion to England.

The Rise of Muhammad Ali in context

After cooperating with the British to expel the French from Egypt, the Ottoman Empire and France signed a peace treaty in 1802. France appointed Colonel Sebastiani, who had previously served the French in Egypt as consul after the French occupation, to Constantinople to be the French Empire's ambassador to the Porte. Sebastiani proved adept at his task, and despite the Empire signing a defensive alliance with Russia in 1805, by 1807 the Ottoman Empire was entangled in wars against two of France's enemies, Russia and Britain. The Ottoman Empire was not viewed as important to France on the same level as other European powers, however. As Franco-Russian relations were improving at the same time, a potential partition of the Ottoman Empire between the two was proposed, but eventually they agreed that the Ottoman Empire needed to be maintained,

excluding Wallachia and Moldavia, which would become Russian.² Part of Napoleon's reluctance to end the Ottoman Empire came from his 'naively mystical' belief that Constantinople was 'one of the keys, perhaps the greatest, to world power.'³

Selim III, the Europeanising Sultan of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the eighteenth-century, was overthrown in a coup in 1807, leading to a temporary reactionary revival under Mustafa IV, and this internal chaos in the heart of the Ottoman Empire helped Muhammad Ali consolidate his autonomy from the Sultan. Direct Ottoman power was thus largely absent from Egypt after the campaign to expel the French alongside the British.

Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali was born in Albania, one of his father's eleven children.⁴ He came to Egypt as part of the Ottoman Army that worked with the British to drive out the French after Napoleon's invasion. Ali remained in Egypt, and slowly worked to gain power, cooperating with and then dispatching rivals when they were no longer needed. The French, now ruled by Napoleon, supported Muhammad Ali from early on, primarily through their consul Bernardino Drovetti. French support of Ali can be seen from Drovetti's letters in early August 1805, when the firman confirming him as Viceroy arrived, when he wrote of the relative power of the Mamluks and Muhammad Ali: 'One thinks more of the Albanian Dynasty than the mameloukes, the former has more forces and is the true friend of the French.'⁵ By late September 1805, Drovetti was reporting

² Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, p.43.

³ Ibid., p.42.

⁴ Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.1.

⁵ 6CCC/18, p. 23 Drovetti, Alexandria, 5 Fructidor An XIII. 'On croit plus la Dynastie Albanaise que la Memeloukes. La Première a plus de force et ou la vrais amis des Français.'

further, positive contact with Muhammad Ali.⁶ Less than three months after Drovetti had complained in a report about the ever deteriorating situation in Cairo, he saw fit to celebrate Muhammad Ali's control, and reported that "The situation in Cairo improves day by day."⁷ After the British invasion force left Egypt after their misadventure in Alexandria, Muhammad Ali's power in Egypt was relatively secure.

Once in power, Muhammad Ali instituted reforms that brought the Egyptian economy further and further under his own control, by creating monopolies of industries and imports, which brought considerable wealth and more power to him and his family. Grain was Egypt's main cash crop at this stage, and Egypt's unique environment allowed it to produce considerable quantities.⁸ The war in Europe also dramatically increased European demand for Egyptian grain, leading to favourable economic conditions.⁹

Modern historians have called into question the traditional positing of the French invasion of Egypt and the ascension of Muhammad Ali as the two singular events that led to dramatic changes and the 'modernisation' of Egypt.¹⁰ Ehud Toledano described Ali's actions as working 'from within the old system using traditional patterns to reform it,' rather than completely changing the old

⁶ 6CCC/18, p. 40-42, Drovetti, Alexandria to le Ministre des Relations Exterieures, Jours Complmentaires An XIII.

⁷ 6CCC/18, p. 49, Drovetti, Alexandria to le Ministre des Relations Exterieures, Vendemiaire 28 An XIV. 'La situation du Caire s'ameliore de jour en jour.'

⁸ John Dunn, 'Egypt's Nineteenth-Century Armaments Industry,' *The Journal of Military History*, 61:2. April 1997, pp.231-254, p.234.

⁹ Kenneth M. Cuno, 'The Origins of Private Ownership of Land in Egypt: A Reappraisal,' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 12:3, November 1980, pp.245-275, p.256.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.246.

Mamluk system and implementing a wholly new one as the traditional interpretation of his rule holds.¹¹ Ali occupies a place as the ‘founder of modern Egypt,’ according to Khaled Fahmy:

In him Egyptians see the prototype of a national hero who, through determination and good work, attempted to resurrect his country from the brink of total collapse under the Ottomans and deliver her into the modern age.¹²

Ali himself supported this narrative that pitted him as a reformer and a moderniser against the crumbling edifice of the old Ottoman Empire. Marsot, whose *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* remains the seminal text on its subject, calls Ali ‘the last of the mamluks and the first of the new rulers at one and the same time.’¹³ Marsot believes that the traditional European interpretation of the early years of Ali’s reign as ‘chaotic’ belies the fundamental stability of ‘the lesser echelons of the administration.’ Marsot explains that the rapid change in who was in charge completely masked the similarities, and Ali ‘continued and expanded the trends of the eighteenth-century and modified them into those of the nineteenth-century.’¹⁴ Ali was not a completely new type of ruler in Egypt, but his innovations combined with technological and cultural developments in Egypt made him, to European eyes seem completely different to what came before.

Ali’s consolidation of power was helped by the failed British invasion of 1807 and the weakness of the Ottoman central government. The Mamluks had seen their grip on power shattered by the French invasion and were never able to recover. Their power was still strong enough to

¹¹ Ehud R Toledano, ‘Review Article: Mehmet Ali Pasa or Muhammad Ali Basha? An Historiographic Appraisal in the Wake of a Recent Book,’ *Middle Eastern Studies*, 21:4, 1985, pp.141-159, p.156.

¹² Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men*, p.14.

¹³ Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.74.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.73-74.

challenge Ali during his rise, but the Mamluk threat was essentially ended after the failed British invasion of 1807. The *Times* in 1811 described the European view of the Mamluks:

Egypt had ever been considered by the Mamelukes as their patrimony; and so deeply was this idea pressed upon their minds by long possession and undisturbed enjoyment, that they complained of the infringement of their rights, when, upon the evacuation of the English army, the Porte was reinstated in its original authority.¹⁵

The Mamluks were both a brave, warrior race, yet also barbarians for the Europeans. The *Times* further described the Mamluks as ‘equal in fraud’ to Muhammad Ali, which was very fraudulent indeed according to the *Times*. Muhammad Ali had decided by 1811 that he needed to once and for all end the remaining potential threat that the Mamluks posed to his rule in Egypt. Ali invited the Mamluks to his son’s investiture ceremony, where he planned for his soldiers to massacre them.¹⁶ The *Times* described these events in some detail several months later, relying on the papers of a ‘gentleman who was travelling in Egypt in the capacity of a travelling fellow of the University of Cambridge.’

The Pacha had revealed his intention to no one until this moment, when he ordered his infantry to line the walls which surrounded the Mamalukes, and to commence a heavy fire upon them; even his sons were still mixed with them, and for a time exposed to the same fate. The Mamalukes, cooped up in a narrow space, where their equestrian skill, and their dexterity in the use of the sabre, were unavailing, impeded by their own numbers, encumbered by their dresses of ceremony, and surrounded on all sides by an enemy superior

¹⁵ *The Times*, October 16 1811, p.3.

¹⁶ P. M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516-1922: A Political History*, Longmans, London, 1966, p.179.

in force and protected by his situation, made but a feeble resistance, and were soon compelled to surrender.¹⁷

The *Times* painted a picture of the noble but doomed Mamluks, led unknowingly to their fate by a misleading fraud of a ruler, Muhammad Ali: "They met their fate, it is said, with the most undaunted courage; regretted only that the cowardice of their adversaries had deprived them of an opportunity of displaying that bravery and skill."¹⁸ The massacre of the Mamluks was seen as a cruel act of a barbarous ruler. Writers would return to the action time and time again in future works as an example of Muhammad Ali's supposed cruelty.

British and French Policy towards Egypt – 1801-1807

French and British policy towards Egypt in the years immediately after the French withdrawal was primarily based on mutual fear of the other power gaining control of Egypt. The *Morning Chronicle* wrote in early 1804 of Egypt:

We have no interest in Egypt, but as its deliverers; we have no views, no attractions there, but to exclude from thence the French, and to enable the Porte to defend herself from a second invasion.¹⁹

The British believed that French control of Egypt threatened India, while the French believed that British control of Egypt threatened their ability to threaten India. Both parties saw the hand of the other behind all unfortunate events in Egypt during this time, even as they shared concern about the economic policies of Muhammad Ali.

¹⁷ *The Times*, October 16, 1811, p.3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Morning Chronicle*, July 9 1804.

French forces were forcibly evacuated from Egypt in 1801, two years after Napoleon himself had returned to France. British forces would not finally depart Egypt until 1803, after the treaty of Amiens in 1802 that brought a temporary halt to the war between the two powers. Napoleon's capture of Malta in 1798 helped sow the seeds of the resumption of the war, as Malta was no longer a neutral island, but one that both powers wished to control. British fears of a new French invasion of Egypt inspired by the report of Colonel Sebastiani advocated for such a course of action contributed to the British decision to return to war with France rather than evacuate Malta.

Sebastiani's Report

The Sebastiani report was written by a French military officer and diplomat, Horace Sebastiani, who was sent to Egypt to deal with the aftermath of the Treaty of Amiens, and to make sure the British were acting in accordance with its requirement for British forces to withdraw. On his return to France in 1803, Sebastiani met with the now First-Consul Napoleon, to present his plan for France to once again invade Egypt. His report to Napoleon was published in the *Moniteur Universel* on January 30, 1803, which heightened British fears of the French returning to Egypt. Sebastiani reported that the memory of Napoleon was alive and well in Egypt, and that he was held in esteem by the Pasha of the time, as well as the general population.²⁰ Cairo itself was said to have a great attachment to the French, and the Pasha of Cairo supposedly told Sebastiani: 'the stay of this great man (Napoleon) in Egypt was marked by benefits, and my country remembers that he was the benefactor, he was just and good.'²¹ Sebastiani went further:

²⁰ *Gazette Nationale ou le Moniteur Universel*, Pluviose 10, An XI, p.4.

²¹ *Ibid.* 'Le séjour de ce grand homme en Egypte, m'a-t-il dit, n'a été marqué que par des bienfaits, et ma patrie ne doit s'en ressouvenir qu'en le benissant; il était juste et bon.'

In Egypt, chiefs, merchants, the ulema, people, everyone loves to support the First Consul, everyone toasts his health. All news about him reverberates from Alexandria, or Damietta, to the Pyramids, to the grand cataracts, with a stunning rapidity.²²

Going through the strength of the soon to withdraw British, as well as the Turkish, and Mamluk forces in Egypt, Sebastiani declared that ‘six thousand French would suffice to conquer Egypt today.’²³ This report convinced the British that the French would soon launch another invasion of Egypt.

The English reaction to the publication of Sebastiani’s report was swift and angry. The *Times* of February 5 1803 reprinted a translation of nearly the entirety of Sebastiani’s report (‘the most important and curious particulars’).²⁴ An article on page three denounced the French, and Sebastiani in particular. Of his voyage, the *Times* said ‘while many of his details abound in considerable interest to the common Reader, they afford matter for serious speculation to the profound politician.’²⁵ Sebastiani was harsh towards England, and the *Times* did not ignore this: ‘he labours, in every instance, to cast odium and disgrace upon the English nation, and the English troops still in Egypt.’²⁶ Sebastiani, was not a reliable narrator, to the *Times*: ‘He has not evinced the cool and calculating mind of an official agent deeply skilled in diplomatic art, but unfortunately for his own veracity, he has betrayed the ardent and intemperate spirit of a partisan who hesitates at nothing to gratify the passions and caprice of his Master.’²⁷ Sebastiani’s account, that the Egyptians loved

²² Ibid. Én Egypte, chefs, commerçans, ulema, people, tout aime à s’entretenir du PREMIER CONSUL, tous font des vœux pour son bonheur. Toutes les Nouvelles qui le concernent se répèndent d’Alexandrie ou de Damiette, aux Pyramides, aux grandes Cataractes, avec une rapidité étonnante.’

²³ Ibid, p.5 ‘Six Mille Français suffraient aujourd’hui pour conquérir l’Egypte.’

²⁴ *The Times*, February 5 1803, p.1.

²⁵ Ibid, p.3.

²⁶ Ibid, p.1.

²⁷ Ibid, p.3.

Bonaparte, and would welcome him back, were questionable to the *Times*. The most important part of the Sebastiani report to the *Times* was Sebastiani's declaration that it would only take 6000 men for the French to take Egypt: 'After such a statement, can there be any necessity for comment or illustration?'²⁸ *Cobbett's Political Register* believed similarly, stating 'the re-occupation of Egypt is evidently the intention of Buonaparte.'²⁹

Cobbett believed at this time that the British must retain Egypt and must retain Malta to safeguard India:

Had we retained the Cape of Good Hope, the occupation of Egypt by France might have been of little consequence; but, with that important post also in her hands, she will, in a very little time, shake to its centre our much envied power in India.³⁰

Malta was viewed as the key to Egypt, someone calling themselves Ignotus wrote as much in a letter to *Cobbett's Political Register* in February 1805:

Suppose France were to compel the King of Naples to yield up the possession of Malta, it is natural to expect, that this act of violence, which could be evidently directed against Great Britain only, would be immediately followed by a descent in Egypt: for our defeat of her first attempt to reduce that country to a French colony was not accomplished in so rapid and triumphant a manner, as to render a second expedition hopeless.³¹

The British government agreed that Malta was essential to the defence of Egypt, especially if the French had actual plans to once again invade. Lord Hawkesbury, British Foreign Secretary in 1803, claimed that:

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ *Cobbett's Annual Register*: Vol III, London, 1803 p.185.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p.201.

a communication respecting an amicable arrangement as to the evacuation of Malta had actually been prepared, and was about to be sent to Lord Whitworth, when the attention of His Majesty's government was attracted by the official report of Colonel Sebastiani, which appeared in the *Moniteur* of the 30th of January.³²

For Lord Hawkesbury, a publication in the *Moniteur* carried the weight of an official government publication. "It is impossible for His Majesty to view this report in any other light than as an official publication."³³ Sebastiani's report was deeply disturbing to the British government: 'It discloses, moreover, views in the highest degree injurious to the interests of His Majesty's dominions, and directly repugnant to, and utterly inconsistent with, the spirit and letter of the treaty of peace.'³⁴ Bonaparte himself denied any French desire to again invade Egypt to the British ambassador, Lord Whitworth.

The British also feared that after the peace treaty between France and the Ottoman Empire, that they would resume their long-term alliance. Cobbett wrote in 1803:

The Turkish Empire appears to be, in some sort, taken possession of by the French. French engineers, alias Commercial Agents, have been stationed in all the sea ports, and, indeed, in all other places of defence.³⁵

Cobbett's fears were at least somewhat founded, Selim III, the Ottoman Sultan, had an affinity for France despite the French invasion of Egypt.³⁶ Sebastiani, the man who inspired the renewed fear of a French invasion of Egypt, had been sent to Istanbul to help get the Ottomans back on side.³⁷

³² Ibid., p.760.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p.761.

³⁵ Ibid., p.434.

³⁶ Yaycioglu, *Partners of the Empire*, p.180.

³⁷ Ibid., p.164.

British actions towards the Ottoman Empire, inspired by this fear of France, also lead to this renewal and strengthening of the Franco-Ottoman alliance in the first years of the nineteenth-century.³⁸

Elfi Bey's journey to Britain

While the dispute over Sebastiani's report in the *Moniteur* was ongoing in Europe, the last British forces in Egypt withdrew, two years after they and their Ottoman allies had compelled the French to abandon Egypt. Leaving Egypt alongside the British was the Mamluk Mohammed Bey al-Alfi, known as Elfi-Bey. Elfi Bey travelled to London to try to gain British support for his attempt to gain control of Egypt. The *Hull Packet* reported on his arrival in October 1803, giving a detailed description: 'He is styled by his suite his Excellency, a title which shews he is come upon a diplomatic mission. [...] His deportment is dignified and graceful.'³⁹ The long description provided of this unusual visitor shows the interest that was taken by the British in their emissary from the Mamelukes. The *Newcastle Courant* forewent the long description of the foreign visitor, but explained simply that 'he is said to have come hither with the express purpose of soliciting the interference of this country with the Porte, on behalf of the Mamelukes.'⁴⁰ Elfi Bey's arrival and residence in London caused quite a stir according to contemporary press accounts: 'The splendour of the Mameluke costume has drawn many Ladies to watch him at the windows,' the *Times* reported, and the gawking spectators speculated on who was inside:

A man with a dark countenance and curious head-dress appearing at the two pair of stairs window, one called him a mummy, others insisted on his being a sphynx. The dispute

³⁸ Ibid., p.172.

³⁹ *Hull Packet* October 18, 1803, p.3.

⁴⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, October 15, 1803, p.2.

became highly interesting, till it was at length agreed upon that he was no other than a live crocodile.⁴¹

Elfi was given the treatment of a distinguished visitor, he visited Greenwich Hospital and Greenwich Park, the London docks, and Blackwall,⁴² he was entertained by the Prince of Wales at Carlton House on November 17,⁴³ and visited the 'printing house of the Morning Chronicle' an event which inspired a poem.⁴⁴ Elfi's dinner with the Prince of Wales led to a discussion of the Prince's horses, which he said included 'an Egyptian horse, that is so wild and ungovernable, that he will dismount the best horseman in the Bey's retinue.' Unable to escape the challenge, and to prove what the *Newcastle Courant* called the 'very excellent equestrian powers of the Mamelukes,' Elfi promised a display for the Prince the next day. The *Courant* described the horse 'spotted like a leopard, and his eyes were so firey and enraged, as to indicate the greatest danger to any one who dared to mount him.' Elfi's principal officer, 'Mahomet Aga' took up the challenge, and 'made a spring, seized the reins, and in an instant vaulted on the back of the animal.' Aga's ability 'astonished' the Prince and his companions, showing him and the British audience the supposed abilities of the Mamluks.⁴⁵

Elfi was granted an audience with the King and Queen on December 18 1803, the *Times* reported that 'he was proud of expressing to their Majesties the inviolable attachment of all his party and adherents in Egypt; that he came to bear the homage of their respect to this nation,' as well as 'the happy deliverance of his country, by his Majesty's brave armies, from the cruelties and

⁴¹ *The Times*, October 17, 1803, p. 2.

⁴² *Newcastle Courant*, November 19, 1803.

⁴³ *Aberdeen Journal*, November 23, 1803.

⁴⁴ *Hampshire/Portsmouth Telegraph*, December 12, 1803.

⁴⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, November 19, 1803.

oppression of the French, whom they still regarded as their common enemy.⁴⁶ The French keenly watched British interactions with Elfi Bey, fearing that they were using him as a pawn to gain control over Egypt for themselves, and would potentially invade Egypt in support of him. When Elfi arrived in London, the *Moniteur Universel* reported on his reception: ‘Elfi-Bey, arrived lately from Gibraltar, has still yet to be introduced to the court, but the title of excellence has been given to him, and extraordinary honours have been bestowed upon him’⁴⁷ The British were aware of the French reaction to Elfi’s presence in London, and they thought it might serve as another pretext for a new French invasion. The *Morning Post* of 8 November 1803, as reported in the *Moniteur Universel*, declared that the ‘government has received a certain opinion That Bonaparte would send a considerable force to Egypt.’⁴⁸ Napoleon, according to the *Morning Post* ‘feared the influence of the Mamelukes, which he believes are favourable to the interests of [the British] cabinet, after the arrival of Elfi Bey in this country.’ The British would send several ships to reinforce their Mediterranean fleet to counter this threat.

The French Vice-Consul in Alexandria, Bernardino Drovetti, often wrote of English plots to support Elfi Bey, believing that they wished him to become the sole leader of Egypt, they were trying to ‘acquire, by the means of Elfi, direct influence in the government of this country.’⁴⁹ Drovetti believed that the people of Egypt agreed with his assessment of the situation, on 11 July 1804 he wrote

⁴⁶ *The Times* December 20, 1803, p.2.

⁴⁷ *Moniteur Universel* Brumaire 18 An XII, p.1. ‘Elfi-Bey, arrive dernièrement de Gibraltar, n’a pas encore été introduit à la cour, mais le titre d’excellence qu’on lui donne, et les honneurs extraordinaires don’t on le berce, manifestent sa mission diplomatique, et son caractere de plénipotentiaire.’

⁴⁸ *Moniteur Universel* Brumaire 29 An XII, p.1. ‘Le Gouvernement a reçu des avis certains que BONAPARTE avait le projet d’envoyer une force considerable en Egypte.’

⁴⁹ 6CCC/18, p.34, Drovetti, Alexandria, Fructidor 23 An XIII. ‘d’acquérir par la moyen de l’Elfi, une influence directe dans le Gouvernement de ce Pays.’

the English are hated. One sees that their Machiavellian policies have propagated the troubles, they have provided arms and aid to two parties but not enough to ensure the success of either.⁵⁰

A writer in the *Moniteur Universel* of July 1803 speculated that the English paranoia about a French invasion of Egypt was insincere, and was in fact a ruse, to justify British control over the Mediterranean: 'Not content to dominate the Channel, they also want to dominate the Mediterranean; and they see Malta as a means to fulfil this goal.'⁵¹ Misinformation was rife on both sides of the Channel.

An example of the scattered and sometimes misleading nature of European news about Egypt during the early nineteenth-century came in 1804, when the *Times* ran a story stating that Elfi Bey attempted to excite a revolution in Egypt in favour of the French, in which he completely failed. By his experiment, however, one very important point was satisfactorily established, that he is the only Bey attached to the French. It is further said, that when on his passage to England, he had actually embarked on board a vessel at Malta, to make his escape to Toulon, when he was seized and brought on shore by a party of British troops.⁵²

The *Morning Chronicle* carried a clarifying report in early July on the matter of Elfi's allegiance. A delay at Malta, and the intrigues of the French there 'betrayed him into some signs of impatience

⁵⁰ 6CCC/17, p.93 Drovetti, Alexandria to le Ministre des Relations Exterieures, Messidor 22 An XII. 'Les Anglaius soin détestés. On scait que leur politique Machiavélique a propagé les troubles ; qu'ils ont fourni des armes et des secours aux deux parties, mais pas assez pour assurer la prépondérance d'aucun.'

⁵¹ *Moniteur Universel*, Messidor 15 An XI, p.3. 'Non content de dominer dans la Manche, il veut aussi dominer dans la Méditerranée; et il ne voit que Malte pour remplir ce but.'

⁵² *Times*, June 21, 1804, p.3.

as well as mistrust,' but Lord Nelson and Sir Alexander Ball managed to assuage his concerns and allowed him to head to London for his 'hospitable and respectful reception.'⁵³

War Resumed and Invasion Scare

Far from being solely an anti-British operation, the British thought a new French invasion could serve as a way for the French, and Napoleon in particular, to regain lost glory, showing that the view of the French invasion differed in the two countries:

It was there that Bonaparte was disgraced, was humbled by the splendour of British triumphs, and there he will endeavour to try the glare of some new enterprise, to obliterate the remembrance of his mortifications.⁵⁴

In Britain, they saw themselves as having thoroughly defeated the French, while in France itself (thanks in part to Napoleon's political allies)⁵⁵ the invasion was remembered for the triumph of the battle of the Pyramids, as well as Napoleon's final defeat of British and Ottoman forces just before his escape.

The brief peace heralded by the Treaty of Amiens lasted barely more than a year, and Britain declared war on France again in May 1803. The British retained control of Malta, against the terms of the treaty of Amiens, to help safeguard Egypt and the Ottoman Empire against France. Despite continued British control of Malta, fears of a French invasion of Egypt continued. *Cobbett's Political Register* complained of British policy over the preceding two years: 'We have thrown Turkey into her

⁵³ *Morning Chronicle*, July 9, 1804.

⁵⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, July 9, 1804.

⁵⁵ Dwyer, *Napoleon: The Path to Power*, p.452.

arms, given her an entrance into the Black Sea, once more exposed the famed Seven Islands to her intrigues, and laid Egypt open to her invasions.⁵⁶

Charles Lock, who was appointed British consul in 1803 but died before reaching Egypt, also feared another possible French invasion of Egypt:

the defenceless state of Alexandria and of the whole maritime frontier of Egypt, with the intrigue of the French agents to pave the way for the reception of a French force by endeavouring to get adherents among the chiefs of the different parties, in which it is to be feared they have proved but too successful, call for the most urgent representations to the Porte on the subject.⁵⁷

Lock called for British troops to secure Alexandria and protect against the French. Lock was displeased that the Ottoman Empire was not responsive to his inquiries about cooperation against a potential French invasion of Egypt. Regardless, Lock, like the French in 1798, he believed that the Porte would accept any British move to secure Egypt 'apprised that it is already taken.'⁵⁸ Lock died in Malta on his way from Constantinople to Egypt, and was replaced by Ernest Missett, who would actually make it to his post. Missett was also a believer in the supposed French plot to invade Egypt, and thought the French primarily responsible for the ongoing 'chaos' that they saw in Egypt:

the successive revolutions in which Egypt has been involved since the evacuation of Alexandria by the British army, must be ascribed solely to the intrigues which the French government does to carry on in this country by its accredited or secret agents.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Cobbett's Annual Register: Vol III, 1803, p.756.

⁵⁷ The National Archives (TNA) FO 24/2, p. 77, Lock to Lord Harrowby, July 19 1804.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ FO 24/2, p. 105-106 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Lord Mulgrave, January 1 1806.

Britain's fears of a potential French invasion of Egypt were not subsiding. Their Egyptian policy was driven almost entirely by their fear of the French.

The distances involved and the trouble in getting news between the warring countries of France and Britain meant that news reports would often be sensationalised or unreliable. British worries about a second French invasion of Egypt were shown in an article that appeared in the *Times* on February 27 1805 based on one such false report. The 'universal sentiment' was that two French fleets that had left Toulon and Rochefort bound for Egypt, and Lord Nelson would once again move to intercept them.⁶⁰ Further reports from Paris supported this completely inaccurate belief of the *Times*, as 'a gentleman who left Paris on the 7th' of March 1805 said that the fleets were bound for different parts of Egypt.⁶¹ In July 1806 the *Times* reported sceptically on a potential French and Ottoman agreement that would see the French once again take control of Egypt.⁶²

Attitudes to Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali's rise to power took the course of several years, and he was not fully secure in his control of Egypt until 1811.⁶³ During this period, Britain and France were forced to react to the rise of this new leader in Egypt. Ali took advantage of the power vacuum caused by France's invasion and the anti-Mamluk policies that the French had taken while in control of Egypt.⁶⁴ Khaled Fahmy

⁶⁰ *Times*, February 27 1805, p.2.

⁶¹ *Times*, March 27, 1805, p.3.

⁶² *Times*, July 22, 1806, p.3.

⁶³ Khaled Fahmy, "The era of Mehmed Ali Pasha, 1805-1848", in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 2, ed. Martin Daly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, pp.139-180, p.140.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

presents Ali's ascent to power as almost accidental,⁶⁵ but he would cling to power for over 40 years after his official appointment as Wali in 1805.

France's agents in Egypt almost immediately began to support Ali. Drovetti's instructions to his agent in Cairo on May 16, 1805 told him to 'continue to cultivate the friendship of Muhammad Ali.'⁶⁶ The French had been working with Muhammad Ali for some time already. Drovetti engaged in talks on his behalf with Osman Bey in Alexandria in February 1805. Even while beginning to 'cultivate' this relationship with Muhammad Ali, Drovetti did not see all events in Egypt as positive 'the horizon of this unfortunate country continues to be cloudy, and the revolutionary clouds are accumulating in the capital.'⁶⁷ Soon after, Drovetti would write that Cairo was 'experiencing all the horrors of anarchy.'⁶⁸ Drovetti even said that he believed the misfortunes of Egypt to be so great, it seemed as if an 'evil spirit' was guiding the 'destiny' of Egypt.⁶⁹

The British, already backing their man, Elfi Bey, were much more negative towards Muhammad Ali. This did not mean that the British had no interactions with him. In September 1806, Missett wrote of peace talks he was facilitating between Ali and Elfi. Missett believed

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.144

⁶⁶ 6CCC/17, p.388, Extrait de la correspondance du S. Commissaire Drovetti avec le S. Mongin agent du Commissariat G. au Caire, Alexandria Floreal 26 An XIII. 'Continuez à cultiver l'amitié de Mohamad Aly'

⁶⁷ 6CCC/17, p.333, Drovetti, Alexandria to le Ministre des Relations Exterieures, Germinal 26, An XIII." L'horizon de ce malheureux paus s'ient encore de s'obscurir, et des nuages révolutionnaires s'accumulent sur sa capitale.'

⁶⁸ 6CCC/17, p.345, Drovetti, Alexandria to to le Ministre des Relations Exterieures, Floreal 15 An XIII. 'On dit qu cette capitale est en proie à toutes les horreurs de l'anarchie.'

⁶⁹ 6CCC/17, p.331, Drovetti, Alexandria, to le Ministre des Relations Exterieures, Germinal 21, An XIII. 'le mauvais genie qui préside aux destinées de l'Egypte.'

the popularity which would attach to the British name from my becoming instrumental to the restoration of tranquillity in this desolate province, could not but be favourable to the future views of His Majesty's Government in Egypt.⁷⁰

The British were not attached to Elfi Bey for his own sake, they supported him because they saw him as the best conduit for British control of Egypt. British forces had developed a good relationship with the Mamluks during their fight against the French in 1801.⁷¹ Even while facilitating peace negotiations, Missett was manoeuvring to keep Elfi's cavalry in lower Egypt, where it would prove more useful if the British did have to invade Egypt. Missett reacted with pleasure upon hearing of the supposed breakdown of the Franco-Ottoman relationship in late 1806, even while the peace talks between Ali and Elfi broke down because Ali saw Elfi Bey's demands as unreasonable. Missett believed this was merely a temporary step, and that Elfi Bey would moderate his demands to Muhammad Ali's liking.⁷²

Missett, like his unfortunate predecessor, Lock, saw reasons for optimism about the success of a potential British invasion. He wrote to the Foreign Office on January 1 1806 that the 'greatest part of the Albanians would voluntarily evacuate the country as soon as intelligence should have been conveyed to them of a British army landing at Alexandria.'⁷³ By May Missett reported that an uhlema in Alexandria has received a letter from Napoleon, no doubt a precursor to another French invasion. Missett explained to the uhlema that far from assisting Egypt, another French invasion

⁷⁰ FO 24/2, p. 134 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Charles Arbuthnot, September 29 1806.

⁷¹ Fahmy, "The era of Mehmed Ali Pasha, 1805-1848," p.142.

⁷² FO 24/2, p. 139 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Charles Arbuthnot, November 17 1806.

⁷³ FO 24/2, p. 108 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Lord Mulgrave, January 1 1806.

would merely ensure the French ruin Egypt further to supply their armies.⁷⁴ Of course, the British feared a French invasion because of the potential effects it could have on their Indian possessions, rather than for the sake of Egypt itself.

However, the opinion that a French invasion of Egypt was a threat to British control of India was not universal at the time. William Cobbett, writing in *Cobbett's Political Register* in July 1805 thought that Britain 'had no more interest than we had in the lands which [...] make part of the moon.'⁷⁵ Later, in June 1807, Cobbett again wrote scathingly of the idea that the British needed to stop the French from controlling Egypt to safeguard their Indian possessions:

There never has appeared any proof, that I know of, in support of the notion, that the French could, with a considerable force, reach India by land, from Egypt; and, upon the sea we are ready to meet them. That the French are capable of wonderful exertions nobody but John Bowles and his crew will now attempt to dent. I am not sure that they would be afraid to encounter the deserts of Arabia; but, I am as sure almost as I am of any thing, that they never could march, give them a century to do it in, forty thousand men to India. In short, it appears to me, that nothing could be more advantageous to England than an attempt, a serious attempt, on the part of France, to march an army to Hindostan.⁷⁶

On 31 March 1808, after the second British invasion had already failed, Humphrey Howorth, a Whig and a member of the then opposition took up the same line of questioning in the House of Commons:

⁷⁴ FO 24/2, p. 119 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Lord Mulgrave, May 16 1806.

⁷⁵ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol VIII, London, 1805, p.16.

⁷⁶ *Cobbett's Political Register*, Vol XI, London 1807, p.1083-1084.

My conviction is, that, if they had remained in undisturbed possession of Alexandria to the present day, they could not have invaded India from that quarter, nor did they ever intend it. They had no fleet or transports in the Red Sea, nor had they the means or materials for building ships there, or to find provisions or even fresh water at Suez, equal to so great an embarkation, and so long a voyage, of which the navigation for a fleet from Suez to the Indian sea is perhaps the most difficult and dangerous in the world. And even then, unless the French could obtain a naval superiority in the Indian seas, how could they possibly get to India from Egypt?⁷⁷

Regardless of these dissenting voices arguing against the idea that the French would even manage to get to India after taking Egypt, this was still a fear that was at the forefront of the minds of British policymakers.

The British Invasion of Egypt: 1807

The British invasion of Egypt began in March 1807, with a force of 5000 that the British believed would be able to march straight to Cairo without much opposition. The British however, had underestimated their opposition. The British believed Muhammad Ali would be too distracted fighting the Mamluks who were still resisting him, and that the British aligned Elfi Bey would be able to take control of Egypt with their backing. Elfi Bey was dead, however, and instead of wasting his energy against the Mamluks, Ali negotiated a truce with their remnants, and turned his full force against the British landing force. The British twice attempted to break out of Alexandria, but were twice defeated, and withdrew after six unsuccessful months.

⁷⁷ HC Deb March 31 1808 vol 10, cols 1296-1300.

Coverage of the British invasion of Egypt was much less excitable and breathless than coverage of the earlier French invasion. In June 1807 the *Times* reported scathingly on the British invasion: ‘this last Egyptian expedition is one of the most disastrous which has ever been sent forth from this country.’⁷⁸ The *Times* questioned how when 15,000 troops had defeated the French, 5,000 troops could not defeat a vastly inferior foe? ‘To what is this loss and degradation of character and honour to be attributed?’ asked the *Times*. The French took a much happier view of the English failure in Egypt. *The Times* reported on excerpts from the French papers in November 1807, which believed that the English invasion of Egypt as well as their other ‘failed’ attacks on Copenhagen, Buenos Aires, and Constantinople showed the ‘moral and military decline of England.’⁷⁹

The British launched their ‘unnecessary and unwise’⁸⁰ invasion of Egypt in early 1807 on the advice of Missett. Missett had given the surviving Mamluk leader, Shahin Bey, assurances that the British invasion would depose Muhammad Ali.⁸¹ British forces arrived off Alexandria on March 16 1807, and on the urging of Missett, who feared the ‘intrigues’ of the French consul could cause reinforcements to arrive quickly, landed the first of their troops within 24 hours, and Alexandria was surrendered by the March 21.⁸² During the invasion itself, Missett wrote a particularly enlightening letter from his post in Alexandria. In this missive, Missett states frankly what he (and the British in general) believed to be the problem with Muhammad Ali: his connection with the French. Ali, he wrote, ‘is in a great measure indebted for the situation he now fills to the intrigues, the encouragement and the advices of the agents of France.’⁸³ France itself was responsible for his rise,

⁷⁸ *The Times*, June 15, 1807, p.2.

⁷⁹ *The Times*, November 25, 1807, p.2.

⁸⁰ A. D. Harvey, ‘The Ministry of All the Talents: The Whigs in Office, February 1806 to March 1807,’ *The Historical Journal*, 15:4, December 1972, pp.619-648, p.637.

⁸¹ John Marlowe, *Anglo-Egyptian Relations 1800 to 1956*, Frank Cass & Co, London, 1965, p.33.

⁸² *Derby Mercury*, May 14 1807.

⁸³ TNA FO 24/3, p. 1 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to George Canning, June 12 1807.

and thus he was indebted to them. Regardless of this, Missett believed that Muhammad Ali was not yet a lost cause, he himself had developed a better relationship with Ali:

I afterward succeeded in raising in his mind a suspicion of the sincerity of the views of his supposed friends, and never had again reason to complain of his partiality for the French nation.⁸⁴

The British invasion would however disrupt this budding relationship between Missett (and the British) and Muhammad Ali. Missett, out of contact with Ali while in British-held Alexandria, expressed his worries to the Foreign Office:

I fear that the alliance now subsisting between France and the Porte, and more particularly the influence which the principal French agent must have gained over him since the late landing of the British troops in this country, will more firmly than ever bind him to the interests of the enemy.⁸⁵

Missett himself was largely responsible for the British invasion, providing reports to the British in favour of it, so it seems as if any break in the relationship between Ali and Britain can be rested largely on his shoulders.

Missett did see a route for the British to gain the support and trust of Muhammad Ali, but he thought it was unlikely it would be followed as 'it does not appear probable that His Majesty's Ministers would, on the restoration of peace between Great Britain and the Porte, adopt such a system of politics respecting Egypt.' Missett noted that 'It is true he has long wished to become

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ FO 24/3, p. 1-2 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to George Canning, June 12 1807.

independent of the Porte [...] and were we to assist him powerfully in the attainment of that goal, he might, perhaps be induced to break off all connection with France.⁸⁶

Missett believed at the time the best choice for Britain was to remain in Alexandria and force Ali to leave with his 'Albanians' and return Egypt to Mamluk rule:

Under these circumstances, and not doubting that His Majesty's government will deem it advisable to retain Alexandria, at least until a general peace takes place, it appears to me necessary that both Mahomet Ali and the Albanians should be compelled to evacuate this country and that the Mamlouk government should be reestablished.⁸⁷

The British hoped that the reestablishment of a Mamluk government in Egypt would lead to a pro-British government in Egypt, and widespread acclaim for the British among the Egyptian people: By that means, an end would be put to the civil warfare which has for many years desolated this once fertile land, trade and agriculture would once more flourish, the benefits thus conferred on the inhabitants would induce to us a preponderating influence; and in return for having restored them to their ancient rights and privileges, the Beys would, I have no doubt, willingly enter into an engagement to assist us in the defence of the country in case of an attack.⁸⁸ Missett was, like the French before the 1798 invasion, making orientalist assumptions that the Egyptians needed salvation to come from the outside, from European hands.

⁸⁶ FO 24/3, p. 2 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to George Canning, June 12 1807.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ FO 24/3, p. 2-3 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to George Canning, June 12 1807.

In another orientalist assumption, Missett believed, like the French before him, that the Ottoman Empire would be and should be grateful to the British for helping them with such a troublesome province:

From the period of the Albanians becoming masters of Cairo, the Porte has received no part of the revenues of Egypt; she has, long since, declared them rebels, and to her impotence alone are they indebted for the undisturbed possession of a country they have usurped. She could not, therefore, but be thankful to His Majesty for employing his troops in recovering for her such a province as this.⁸⁹

Missett believed that more troops were needed to take Cairo and oust Muhammad Ali, but the British did not send more troops and were forced to withdraw from Alexandria and Egypt in 1807.

The French press reacted scathingly to the British invasion of Egypt, and an early report on its progress found in the *Moniteur Universel* on June 12 1807 declared triumphally that ‘most of the Beys, as well as all the people have declared themselves for the Porte and for France.’⁹⁰ The invasion of Egypt by the British was seen in France as an anti-French act.⁹¹ Two weeks later, the *Moniteur Universel* reported on letters from Trieste and Livorno, relishing in the failure of the British to break out from Alexandria.⁹² General Alexander Mackenzie Fraser, the British general in charge of the operation, was reported to be sending the ‘Beys’ ‘great promises’ to ensure their cooperation, but there were no indications he had been successful in securing their support.⁹³ The English garrison in

⁸⁹ FO 24/3, p. 3 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to George Canning, June 12 1807.

⁹⁰ *Moniteur Universel*, June 12 1807, p.639. ‘La plus grande partie des beys, ainsi que tous les habitans se sont déclarés pour la Porte et la France.’

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² *Moniteur Universel*, June 25 1807, p.689.

⁹³ Ibid. ‘Le général anglais Fraser a envoyé aux beys divers agens chargés, à ce que l’on dit, de leur faire de grandes promesses, pour les engager à se réunir à lui ; mais rien ne semble annoncer que cette négociation puisse réussir.’

Alexandria was reported to be in a 'horrible situation, at the point of experiencing all the effects of famine.'⁹⁴

The British invasion had been relying on the support of the Mamluks to take control of Egypt, but the Mamluks were reported as saying they 'would not use Christians to fight Muslims.'⁹⁵ Ali offered the mamluks a share of governing Egypt in return for their cooperation, and they accepted and stopped fighting against Ali for the time being.⁹⁶ Popular opinion in Egypt, contrary to Missett's expectations, was strongly against the invading British, and the population of Rosetta rose up to help defeat one of the British attempts on the town.⁹⁷

The British invasion lasted only six months, and its effects on Egypt and Europe were not nearly as much as the French invasion's effects. The British invasion is now a largely forgotten episode in history, but it illuminates the core issues around both British and French policy towards Egypt in the early nineteenth-century, which is that both countries were acting more on fears of what they perceived the other country to be doing than the actual state of affairs.

One effect of the British invasion would be on Muhammad Ali's mindset. Marsot wrote that the British invasion 'set the groundwork for future trends' that will be seen throughout the rest of this thesis.⁹⁸ Most of these effects were located in Ali's mindset, awakening him to the power of Britain, especially their navy, despite giving him a 'permanent suspicion' of the island nation.⁹⁹ It

⁹⁴ *Moniteur Universel*, July 6 1807, p.753. 'la garnison d'Alexandrie se troubaît dans une situation affreuse, et sur le point d'éprouver toutes les horreurs de la famine.'

⁹⁵ Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.61.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.62

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.63

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

would inspire his attempts to build up a navy of his own, to be able to defend his coast from future foreign invasions, and it also awakened him to the British need for grain, one of the lesser reasons Marsot identified for the British invasion of Egypt.¹⁰⁰

After the British Invasion: 1807-1815

The period after the British invasion of 1807 was marked by consolidation of Muhammad Ali's reign. Britain and the Ottoman Empire signed a peace treaty in January 1809, after the alliance with France failed to yield results for the Ottoman Empire against Russia. British and French policy shifted from a desire to control Egypt to focusing on their economic interests and cultivating their relationships with Muhammad Ali. Both countries still feared that the other would influence and control Muhammad Ali. Despite their close cooperation, even the French worried that Ali would see the advantages of alignment with Britain to further his own commercial interests (which Ali did in fact see). On the other hand, once he was reestablished in his post, the British Consul Major Missett still saw Ali as under the sway of the French, but again believed he was making progress in changing Ali's opinions by 1812. Ali's monopolisation policies also proved a sore spot in relations between the European powers and his regime, as it ran counter to their attempts to expand their economic power in Egypt.

Missett would not manage to return to Egypt for almost four years after the British evacuation, leaving the British without a consul in Alexandria until July 1811. On Missett's return, he expressed hope that the British would be able to recover from their invasion, with it still clearly affecting relations four years later, he wrote to the Foreign Office:

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

the British name is still greatly respected in this country, and leads me to hope that we may, in time, recover some of that influence which we once possessed.¹⁰¹

Muhammad Ali however, posed an even greater problem than before to the British. Missett feared that he had become even more guided by the French:

I deeply regret to find that the present governor of Egypt respects none of the privileges granted to Englishmen, in virtue of our capitulations with the Porte.¹⁰²

Far from expressing hope of exploiting Muhammad Ali's desires for independence, Missett now believed they were very problematic towards British interests:

It would be in vain to apply for redress to the Porte, for, though he nominally acknowledges the authority of the sultan, he refuses to obey any orders from his highness that may stand in opposition to his own private interest.¹⁰³

Missett revealed to the Foreign Office his struggle with how to deal with 'the capricious will of the Viceroy,' saying that he was 'at a loss how to act.'¹⁰⁴ Missett claimed later, in September 1811, that relations had deteriorated further, again making reference to the negative attributes of Muhammad Ali, including his 'arbitrary disposition.'¹⁰⁵ Missett again called for the Royal Navy to be used to back up British interests in Egypt, to give force to his demands and requests.

On the other side, the French still feared British influence in Egypt, even after the failed invasion. In May 1811 Drovetti wrote to the French foreign ministry, fearing that Muhammad Ali 'desired an alliance with the English.'¹⁰⁶ Drovetti wrote that he thought Ali believed an alliance with

¹⁰¹ TNA FO 24/4, p. 4 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Culling Charles Smith, July 4 1811.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ FO 24/4, p. 4-5 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Culling Charles Smith, July 4 1811.

¹⁰⁴ FO 24/4, p. 5 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Culling Charles Smith, July 4 1811.

¹⁰⁵ FO 24/4, p. 8 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Culling Charles Smith, September 11 1811.

¹⁰⁶ 6CCC/18, p.293 Drovetti, Alexandria to Champagny Duc de Cadou, Minister of Foreign Affairs, May 6 1811. 'Je suis convaincu que le Pacha desire une alliance avec les anglais.'

the English would allow his commercial interests to be better protected. This was before Missett had even returned after evacuating Egypt alongside the British army. Drovetti informed the French government when Missett finally return in July 1811.¹⁰⁷ He provided a more detailed description in a later letter, 'his debarkation at Alexandria was a type of triumphal party,'¹⁰⁸ with nervousness Drovetti reported that with him Missett brought 'a very numerous party, and with considerable resources to make a great representation.'¹⁰⁹

Despite Drovetti's fears of an Anglo-Egyptian alliance, Missett's opinion remained negative towards Muhammad Ali through the end of 1811 and the beginning of 1812, especially complaining about his treatment of European merchants and himself, in September 1811. Particularly aggravating to Missett was an incident in which Muhammad Ali granted, then revoked the right to sell coffee to European and American merchants, Missett complained that 'in his commercial transactions Mahomet Ali often uses deceptions which would disgrace the lowest of mankind.'¹¹⁰ Missett was particularly critical of Muhammad Ali's policy of establishing monopolies: 'Not content with having turned into a monopoly for his own profit, every article of exportation, Mahomet Ali Pasha lays new, or additional duties on European imports.'¹¹¹ Missett complained that Ali was raising tariffs on products that had already been in the Ottoman Empire, 'as if this province were an independent state.'¹¹² Missett believed he could not reason with Ali, 'who publicly declares, that having conquered Egypt by the strength of his arm, he thinks himself at liberty to govern it as he pleases.'¹¹³ Ali's

¹⁰⁷ 6CCC/18, p.300, Drovetti, Alexandria, July 3 1811.

¹⁰⁸ 6CCC/18, p.302, Drovetti, Alexandria, Bulletin du 20 Juin au 20 Juillet 1811. 'Son débarquement à Alexandrie fut une espece de fête triomphale.'

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 'avec une suite très nombreuses et avec des ressources considerable pour établir une grande representation.'

¹¹⁰ FO 24/4, p. 12 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Stratford Canning, September 11 1811.

¹¹¹ FO 24/4, p. 10 Ernest Missett, Alexandria to Stratford Canning, September 11 1811.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

‘capriciousness’ in economic matters would continue to be a concern for both Britain and France over the rest of his reign.

After their failed invasion of 1807 the British remained somewhat paranoid about a French invasion of Egypt. *The Times* reported in January 1808 that a French army might march through Constantinople and Egypt en route to threaten English possessions in Bengal.¹¹⁴ And for their part, the French also still feared a British strike against Alexandria. In the *Moniteur*, an article claiming all was now calm in Egypt because Muhammad Ali had beaten the Beys, they said that the English were still the most feared, that they would once more be ‘tempted to strike’ Alexandria.¹¹⁵ Despite these lingering examples, fear of an invasion of Egypt by either power was much reduced after the failure of the British invasion, and no serious invasion scares happened after 1807.

Indeed, news reports from Egypt began to present a more and more stable picture of the country to European readers. When Egypt was mentioned, like in the *Moniteur* of December 3 1808, it was said to be ‘satisfactory,’¹¹⁶ or to be ‘enjoying the most perfect tranquillity.’¹¹⁷ News coverage shifted to following the campaigns of Muhammad Ali’s forces against the Wahabis, rather than events in Egypt itself, as Muhammad Ali’s reign proved stable to the European powers. The *Moniteur* of February 1, 1812 gave a promising update on the progress of the Egyptian forces, declaring it ‘very important’ and promising readers that they were ‘impatiently’ awaiting further news.¹¹⁸ In May 1812, the *Moniteur* reported that news of the taking of Medina had not yet been received, and that

¹¹⁴ *The Times*, January 14, 1808, p.2.

¹¹⁵ *Moniteur Universel*, August 14, 1808, p.897. ‘On craindrait plutôt en Egypte que les Anglais ne tentâssent quelque coup sur Alexandrie.’

¹¹⁶ *Moniteur Universel*, December 3, 1808, p.1331. ‘Les nouvelles d’Egypte continuent à être satisfaisantes.’

¹¹⁷ *Moniteur Universel*, December 9, 1808, p.1355. ‘L’Égypte continue de jouir de la plus parfait tranquillité.’

¹¹⁸ *Moniteur Universel*, February 1, 1812, p.125. ‘Ces Nouvelles sont très-importantes; aussi, nous en attendons, avec impatience, la confirmation du Caire.’

Egyptian forces awaited further reinforcements.¹¹⁹ Ali's regime was beginning to be seen as a stabilising force in Egypt, in both France and Britain. After surviving the British invasion and protecting himself against potential mamluk threats he was largely secure in his power.

Arguably, the period from 1801 to the final end of Napoleon's reign in France in 1815 was therefore characterised by a stabilisation in Egypt, and in European relations with Egypt. Muhammad Ali gained and consolidated power and resisted a British invasion attempt, while beginning his military actions outside Egypt with his attack on the Wahhabis in Arabia for his suzerain, the Ottoman Empire. After the 1807 British invasion, British and French policy in Egypt shifted from formal imperialism to informal imperialism. The next phase of European relations with Egypt would be marked by a further focus on cultural relations, as Drovetti and the newly appointed British consul-general Henry Salt began their collecting. With the renewed peace in Europe, more travellers would travel to Egypt and return to Europe with accounts of their journeys, and many of those accounts were published. European knowledge about Egypt was increasing, but much of this knowledge was tinged with Orientalism and took a culturally imperialist view of Egypt. The Greek War of Independence would put Muhammad Ali's Egypt into indirect and then direct conflict with both Britain and France.

¹¹⁹ *Moniteur Universel*, May 13, 1812, p.525.

CHAPTER 3: Egyptomania and Philhellenism – 1815-1828

By 1815, Muhammad Ali had been the ruler of Egypt for a decade. His rule was secure, he had survived the British invasion and defeated the remnants of the Mamluks who had controlled Egypt for centuries before the French invasion. He had begun to expand his influence outside Egypt, with his campaign against the Wahhabis in Arabia. France and Britain were finally at peace after over twenty years of near constant war, and rather than directly trying to invade Egypt they now solely tried to influence Muhammad Ali and the Ottoman Empire to try to maintain or gain power and influence in the region. Franco-British competition in Egypt was largely in the realm of culture and politics, and individuals associated with both countries (and others) competed to ‘uncover’ the ‘secrets’ of Ancient Egypt. Henry Salt and Bernardino Drovetti, the two longest-serving consuls for Britain and France respectively during this period, were both heavily involved in culture and politics, collecting antiquities and selling them to buyers back in Europe, as well as attempting to guide the policies of Muhammad Ali in directions more favourable to their home countries. Egyptomania continued to spread in France and Britain, and closer links between Egypt and Europe were enhanced and encouraged by more travellers, as well as Muhammad Ali’s desire for European goods, services, and expertise. Ali was now viewed as a modern leader by many in Europe, and while his commercial policies were looked upon scornfully, and attracted starkly negative comments in the French and British press, Ali’s rule was otherwise seen as surprisingly humane. In Henry Salt’s jaundiced view Ali, was ‘extraordinary for a Turk,’ despite being Albanian by birth.¹

¹ TNA FO 78/93, p. 74-77, Henry Salt to Joseph Planta, Cairo, May 6 1819.

Views like Salt's emphasise the dichotomy in representations of Ali, and his complicated place in early nineteenth-century European Orientalism. For some people, Ali was a good ruler, modernising Egypt, who provided stability. For others, he was simply another Oriental despot. Some views were more mixed, portraying him as a despot, but a despot who was advancing civilisation, or European interests. This variety of views held about Ali shows the diversity of European views about the Orient, and how even while European Orientalism was a strong force, there were counternarratives extant.

Despite the largely positive reception of Ali's rule in the 1810s, in the 1820s the Greek War of Independence cast a shadow over Egypt's relationship with France and Britain. Many Europeans were caught up in the 'philhellenic' frenzy and were anxious to see 'Greece' liberated from its Ottoman 'oppressors.' Many of these philhellenes initially looked towards Muhammad Ali as a potential saviour of the Greeks. They hoped that he would use the opportunity to free Egypt and the Greeks, two of the great civilisations of antiquity, from the bonds of Ottoman domination that had supposedly held them back for centuries. However, in the end Muhammad Ali chose to support the Ottoman Empire's campaign to crush the Greek rebels, which elicited a negative reaction in Europe. Although the Greek War of Independence did not cause a complete rupture in the relationship between Egypt and the European powers, however, the involvement of Ali's forces on the side of the Ottoman Empire did significantly affect public and political opinions of Muhammad Ali. By 1827 European opinions of Ali had shifted from largely viewing him as a positive, if flawed reformer to an image of him as a more traditional Oriental despot.

This chapter will explore how British and French cultural reactions to Egypt were shaped by the 'Egyptological' developments of the late 1810s and 1820s, how this interacted with Muhammad

Ali's rule, and how previously positive opinions of Muhammad Ali that had escaped the confines of Orientalist assumptions were disrupted by the Greek War of Independence, and Muhammad Ali's involvement in that conflict.

Muhammad Ali: From Pacha Liberal to tyrant conqueror?

Ernest Missett, the British Consul who had served in Egypt for over a decade, had suffered from medical problems for several years, and in 1815 the British government finally accepted one of his repeated requests to resign. His replacement, Henry Salt arrived in March 1816,² finding an Egypt changed for the better according to Missett:

Convinced, as I am, that were he [Muhammad Ali] to meet with a premature death, this country would again relapse into that state of revolution from which he drew it, and uncertain whether his successor would be disposed to maintain the amicable intercourse that has, for some years past, existed between England and Egypt, I cannot, without anxious concern contemplate Mahomet Ali's absence.³

Missett had initially held a negative opinion of Muhammad Ali, so his praise for Ali in this letter is a remarkable indication of how much he believed Ali had been beneficial to British interests.

It was not just Missett's opinion of Muhammad Ali that had evolved. Opinions throughout Britain had become much more positive. In 1816, the *Caledonian Mercury*, an Edinburgh newspaper, published reports from Egypt, which provided a contrast between what it deemed the 'superior stability of the present Government in Egypt,' to the 'constant and general anarchy' that was

² TNA FO 24/6, p. 107, Henry Salt, Alexandria, to John Philip Morier, Under Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, March 25, 1816.

³ FO 24/6, p. 7-8 Ernest Missett, Alexandria, to Edward Cooke, March 9 1815.

described by news reports and previous travellers, like Volney, whose 1787 *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte* was the most influential pre-Napoleonic text on Egypt. Newspapers reported on the ‘relations of amity’ between Britain and Egypt.⁴ Salt also shared positive thoughts about Ali with the Foreign Office, believing that his modernising programs were ‘extraordinary for a Turk.’⁵ The *Times* reported in July 1818 on his attempts to expand his contacts with Europe, and also his desire to make Egypt more like a modern European state. Ali was trying to convince European manufacturers and artists to head to Egypt to help him, and he also ‘subscribes for the periodical journals of Paris, and has lately given an order for about 600 volumes of French works.’⁶ The *Times* reported that because of this he was called the *Pacha Libéral* by the people of Paris. Even the sometime radical-leaning London paper *The Morning Chronicle* carried extracts from ‘the journal of a Gentleman who has just returned from Egypt’ in May 1823, which again painted a picture of Muhammad Ali as a modernising leader: ‘Nothing indeed can exceed the liberality and enterprize of the present Pasha,’ the ‘Gentleman’ wrote.⁷

French opinions of Ali were similarly positive. The government journal *Le Moniteur Universel* of September 12 1819 carried a letter from an unnamed voyager who had just arrived in Venice from Egypt, which painted a positive picture of Muhammad Ali and the effects of his reign on Egypt and the Egyptian people:

I think the regime established under the wise government of Vice-Roy Mahomet-Ali-Pacha, would stand up well to comparison with those of many other states. They enjoy in this fortunate climate all civil liberties: foreigners as well as strangers find in government all the

⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, January 4, 1816, p.2.

⁵ FO 78/93, p. 74-77, Henry Salt to Joseph Planta, Cairo, May 6 1819.

⁶ *The Times*, July 4 1818, p.2.

⁷ *Morning Chronicle*, May 21 1823, p.3.

security and every possible encouragement partnered with the most severe justice. Perfect tranquillity reigns everywhere: the roads are as safe as the towns: one no longer hears of other voyagers being raided or murdered, and it is the wise energy of Viceroy Mahomet-Ali-Pacha from which all this good comes. Agriculture is enriched by his protection, new cotton plantations, unknown seeds, cultivation of sugar, etc..⁸

The author continued to effusively praise Ali: ‘Mahomet is certainly a man who deserves a lot of merit. [...] I wish to you a long and happy life, O Mahomet-Ali-Pacha, as well as to your generous son, Ibrahim Pacha.’⁹ Ali’s Egypt had in a relatively short space of time advanced Egypt considerably, according to this writer. The liberal-leaning newspaper *Le Constitutionnel* praised Ali in March 1821, calling him ‘enterprising and well-educated’ who has ‘given a grand impulse of commerce and civilisation to his country.’¹⁰ Europeans and Egyptians were all safe in Egypt. It was Ali himself who had done this, according to the positive views of him in the press.

Another factor in the evolving reputation of Muhammad Ali was his commitments to ‘modernising’ reforms in Egypt. Most of these reforms, although traditionally seen as European-originated, like Ali’s education programs, were actually largely driven by Ali himself, with minimal

⁸ *Moniteur Universel*, September 12 1819, p.1200. ‘Je pense que le regime établi sous le gouvernement sage du vice-roi Mahomet-Ali-Pacha, peut soutenir avec avantage la comparaison de celui de beaucoup d’autres États. On jouit dans ce climat heureux de toute la liberté civile: l’étranger aussi bien que l’indigène trouve près du gouvernement, tous les secours et les encouragements possible joints à la plus sévère justice. Partout règne une parfait tranquillité: les routes sont aussi sûres que les villes: on n’entend plus parler comme autrefois de voyageurs pillés, assassinés, et c’est à la sage énergie du vice-roi Mahomet-Ali-Pacha que sont dus tous ces biens faits. L’agriculture s’est enrichie sous sa protection, de Nouvelles plantations de coton, de grains inconnes, de la culture du sucre, etc.;

⁹ *Ibid.* ‘Mahomet est certainement l’homme qui acquiert le plus grand mérite. [...] Je te souhaite une longue et heureuse vie, ô Mahomet-Ali-Pacha, ainsi qu’à ton généreux fils Ibrahim-Pacha !’

¹⁰ *Le Constitutionnel*, March 4 1821, p.1. ‘Le pacha est un homme entreprenant et instruit qui a donné un grand élan au commerce et à la civilisation de son pays.’

assistance from European powers in some cases.¹¹ Ali's actions in creating a 'modern state' or something approximating one were driven by his own observations and desires.¹²

Ali had escaped the traditional discursive bounds placed on non-Western rulers by European commentators and political functionaries. In contrast to previous rulers who had been seen as being tinged by what Western accounts considered an 'oriental despotism', Ali was now praised for his Western virtues, virtues like liberalism and 'enterprise.' But praise for Ali was not universal.

European Criticism of Ali

Despite the progress apparent to Europeans on some fronts, Ali did not receive universal praise in European circles. His European critics focused on two things in particular that affected his reputation in Europe: his commercial policies, and his continued allowance of slavery in Egypt. In 1819 a correspondent for the *Caledonian Mercury* was 'greatly shocked and distressed by attending the slave market' in Egypt and even wanted the famed anti-slavery campaigner William Wilberforce to convince Muhammad Ali to change his ways. The correspondent believed that the Pasha was a man 'who is very willing to listen to the English, and particularly, to stand well in the opinion of the Prince Regent.'¹³ This correspondent, and others, believed that Ali would yield to European pressure to end this slave trade if the Government tried hard enough. The same correspondent for the *Mercury* asked 'would it not be worth the trial in our Government to endeavour to induce the Pacha to commence at least a gradual abolition of this abominable traffic?'¹⁴

¹¹ Archana Prakash, 'Reappraising the French role in nineteenth-century Egyptian education,' p.537.

¹² Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.100.

¹³ *Caledonian Mercury*, April 22 1819.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Other travellers were less strident in their criticism of the slave trade in Egypt, while still noting its unpalatable nature. The Comte de Forbin, the director of the French national museums who visited Egypt in 1817 and 1818, wrote of the ‘melancholy grief’ of the slaves at a bazaar, and left some money for them, but did not write scathingly of the practice of slavery.¹⁵ Criticism of Muhammad Ali’s allowance of slavery would, however, intensify during the Greek War of Independence and intensified when Egyptian forces sold many captured Greeks into slavery, an act that was seen as even more outrageous than engaging in the African slave trade.

Ali’s commercial policies attracted even more criticism from British and French commentators. His monopolisation of Egypt’s production was the most egregious sin in their eyes. Even as news reports praised Egypt’s ‘flourishing condition’ and Muhammad Ali’s ‘desire for independence,’¹⁶ the same reports often criticised Muhammad Ali’s economic policies:

He has endeavoured to concentrate all the commerce of his country in his own hands; he forces the inhabitants to deliver up to him the produce of their fields and of their industry, at a very low price, which he again sells to merchants at double value. He has established commercial houses in the principle cities of Europe; but this system of commerce is too disadvantageous to foreign merchants to have it last long.¹⁷

The chief concern of these European merchants and consuls was that Ali was not doing enough to benefit the European merchants and gaining too much personally. A writer in the conservative French newspaper *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires* expressed this in 1821, believing that the

¹⁵ Count de Forbin, *Travels in Egypt: Being a Continuation of Travels in the Holy Land, in 1817-18*, Richard Phillips and Co, London, p.8.

¹⁶ *The Times*, February 4, 1818.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

prosperity of Egypt had ‘substantially declined’ under his reign, but he himself had acquired a great fortune.’¹⁸

Not all reports of Ali’s commercial policies painted them in a negative light, however, with the *Times* reporting in 1818 that Muhammad Ali had rescued several commercial ventures in Cairo and Alexandria from ruin by taking on their losses, conduct that the *Times* referred to as ‘admirable.’¹⁹

Despite such scattered positive reports, the general picture of commerce in Egypt was still presented as gloomy to the European reader. In 1820, consul Salt wrote from Cairo of what he saw as the worsening conditions for merchants in Egypt:

The affairs of this country continue to change for the worse, The Pasha, every day, becomes more eager in his commercial pursuits, and consequently rendering it more difficult for the European merchants to obtain their due share of the trade.²⁰

A lengthy article appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* on 27 December 1824 dedicated to the task of trying to ‘undeceive the commercial public, and do away in part the erroneous notions entertained of Egyptian commerce,’ by painting a negative picture of Ali’s commercial policies.²¹ The article’s complaint was that ‘there is no general export trade from Egypt; it centres in Muhamed Ali Pashaw (sic) himself; he is the export merchant-he monopolizes all the productions of the soil.’ Such a

¹⁸ *Journal des Débats politiques et littéraires*, March 31 1821, p.3-4. ‘La prospérité de l’Egypte a sensiblement décliné sous l’administration du gouverneur et vice-roi actuel Mehemed-Ali-Pacha ; mais il a acquis pour lui-même des richesses considérables par ses spéculations mercantiles.’

¹⁹ *The Times*, October 26, 1818, p.2.

²⁰ TNA FO 78/96, p. 17-19, Henry Salt to Joseph Planta, Cairo, June 30 1820.

²¹ *Morning Chronicle*, December 27, 1824, p.3.

policy, the article continued, was harmful to British interests: ‘nowhere, except in Egypt, has the commercial and enterprising spirit of our countrymen been so woefully (sic) crippled.’²²

Ali was further accused of continuing to ignore the capitulations that the British had negotiated with the Porte. For the British this dimension of his semi-independence from the Ottoman Empire disadvantaged the Europeans. In 1825, the *Times* took up this line of attack on Ali, arguing that ‘the export trade of Egypt is engrossed wholly by the Viceroy, who is in fact the monopoliser of all the productions of the soil.’²³ Indeed, the former British consul, Missett had been complaining about Muhammad Ali’s monopolisation policies prior to Salt, and British and French merchants still wanted to end them. Not only the British consuls criticised Ali’s commercial policies, the French consul, Drovetti also complained about Muhammad Ali’s commercial policies, and the French sent a delegation to Ali in 1821 to discuss removing obstacles to French commerce.²⁴

Ali’s commercial policies, particularly his monopolisation of trade displeased Europeans because they affected their own ability to make profits in Egypt. This reveals the limits of European informal imperialism in the Ottoman Empire. The French, British, and other European states had been signing treaties of ‘capitulations’ with the Ottoman Empire over the centuries preceding the French invasion of Egypt, which were designed to guarantee tariffs and extraterritorial rights for European traders in the areas controlled by the Ottoman Empire. The capitulations were an early manifestation of European economic imperialism,²⁵ and Ali’s supposed breach of them showed the

²² Ibid.

²³ *The Times*, May 27 1825, p. 4.

²⁴ 6CCC/21, p.74 Bernardino Drovetti, Alexandria, to The Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, July 21 1821.

²⁵ Savage, ‘The stability and breakdown of empire,’ p.176.

limits of European power over Egypt in this period. With France and Britain both unwilling to take military control of Egypt or even agitate strongly in favour of their merchants in Egypt Ali was largely free to follow his own economic policies, and seeking favour with the European powers in other ways, including through exploiting their cultural concerns.

Egyptomania: Travel Writers and Egyptologists

Ali's rule, and the stability it had brought was not the only thing on the mind of Europeans in regard to Egypt after the end of the Napoleonic wars. Egypt's ancient past was intensely interesting to European observers, and Ali cooperated with their desires to learn more about it. Egyptology and Egyptomania would come to greatly affect European views of Egypt. Accordingly, European competition in Egypt shifted not merely from the military and territorial realm to the financial/commercial realm, but also to the cultural realm. In some respects, the past of Egypt was prioritised in the European mind ahead of its present. The past was seen as better, more important, more relevant to Europeans as it was assumed to be part of their cultural heritage, while contemporary Egypt was, notwithstanding Ali's reforms, still seen as a comparatively backward state.

The French invasion of Egypt was not only the prime factor in spurring on early nineteenth-century Egyptomania and Egyptology, it also contributed significantly to the field of 'Orientalism.' French and British Imperialism shifted from the territorial realm to the cultural realm in Egypt. The prioritisation of Egypt's past over its present in the European mind was just one manifestation of Orientalism at this time. Orientalism was according to Said: 'the malformed creation of Western romantics, masochistic explorers, ardent imperialists, and text driven university dons,'²⁶ and the early

²⁶ Daniel Martin Varisco. *Reading Orientalism : Said and the Unsaid*, University of Washington Press, 2011, p.5.

nineteenth-century was a key time for these people to shape orientalism. These elites were the primary sources for what the average European would know about Egypt. Rather than seeing Egypt as a modern state, these orientalists presented Egypt as a land with a grand past and a dilapidated present – much like Greece at the same stage.

Orientalism, discussed in detail in the introduction, fundamentally impacted these European interactions with Egypt and Ali's regime. European travellers constantly compared what they saw in their present Egypt to the past, to what they had supposed it was like, or what they had read in ancient texts like those of Herodotus. While orientalism can be seen as implying that all these visions were inherently negative on early nineteenth-century Egypt, this was not always the case. Contemporary Egypt was not always seem as lacking in comparison to its past greatness, some travellers were quite positive about the state of Egypt and its people.

The following section describes the two streams of early nineteenth-century Egyptomania, travel writings and the obsession over Egyptian artefacts. Travel writings often contained several elements that greatly illuminate European interactions with Egypt in the early nineteenth-century. These include descriptions of Egypt against what they imagined it was in the past, descriptions of Ali himself, and descriptions of the situation of the country in general. These descriptions were in their own way like much less scientifically minded versions of the *Description de l'Égypte* produced from the work of the French *Institut d'Égypte*. All these writings contributed to the general European opinions of Egypt, its past, present, future, and its leader, Muhammad Ali.

Due in part to Ali's reign, the peace in Europe, and because of increasing global interconnectedness, Egypt was open to the citizens of Britain and France and the rest of Europe in a way it had not been before. The *Times*, in 1818, wrote of this phenomenon:

Formerly a man was said to have seen the world if he contrived to take a trip across the Channel; but at present our emigrating gentry would hold themselves cheap unless they had contrived to wander as far as Athens; and many even emulate the old Crusaders, though without an atom of religious enthusiasm, and become as intimate with Jerusalem as with Hastings or Brighton.²⁷

European visitors to Egypt described with wonder the sights of the ancient world and with some measure of regret the supposedly forlorn present. Some even believed the ancient sites so well known that they could dispense with a description altogether, like Thomas Leigh in his 1816 *Narrative*.²⁸ Some travellers, like James Bruce, who embarked on a quest for the source of the Nile in the late eighteenth-century expressed disappointment that Egypt did not live up to their expectations. The posthumously published narrative of his journey describes his arrival in Alexandria:

On the first view of the city, the mixture of old monuments, such as the *Column of Pompey*, with the high Moorish towers and steeples, raise the visitor's expectation of great ruins, but on entering the port these hopes are disappointed; the immense Herculean works of ancient times, now few in number, are all surrounded with ill constructed and imperfect buildings.²⁹

²⁷ *The Times*, August 26, 1818, p.3.

²⁸ Thomas Leigh, *Narrative of a Journey in Egypt and the Country Beyond the Cataracts*, John Murray, London, 1816, p.6.

²⁹ James Bruce, *Travels through part of Africa, Syria Egypt, and Arabia, into Abyssinia, to Discover the Source of the Nile*, W Lang, Glasgow, 1819, p.23.

This sense of disappointment on venturing to the home of one of the great civilisations of antiquity only to find it lacking was one manifestation of this warped European orientalist view of Egypt. These Europeans could not really travel back in time to see Ancient Egypt, they had to deal with Egypt as it was in their present, and they spoke of the past, that they had such a vivid idea of, with a sense of loss.

Another traveller, The Louvre director, the Comte de Forbin, was scathing towards the Alexandria he encountered, wondering how it had fallen from its past as one of the greatest cities of antiquity:

But what is modern Alexandria? Speaking pointedly and positively, it is a wretched place that only fills us with astonishment, by impressions of the past, and from which we turn with disgust, surveying what it is at present. At one time, two millions of inhabitants monopolized the commerce of the world; that conscious superiority is now lost in a contemptuous view of ashes and fragments.³⁰

For many of these travellers, it was not the modern Egypt they had come to see, but the ancient Egypt they were more familiar with, and they reacted negatively when they encountered the former.³¹

William Rae Wilson, whose travel narrative took on a decidedly more religious tone than many others, also shared this sense of disappointment in the present state of Alexandria with his readers: ‘no part of the old city can be described otherwise than as a mass of ruins, weeping, as it

³⁰ Count de Forbin, *Travels in Egypt*, p65.

³¹ Brian Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile: Tomb Robbers, Tourists, and Archaeologists in Egypt*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1978, p.57.

were, over fallen grandeur and the ravages of time.³² Robert Richardson, a British doctor, expressed similar disappointment on arriving in Alexandria. 'It is in rubbish'³³ he wrote, expressing dismay at how centuries of misrule had degraded this once great city:

In the days of its Grecian fame it was healthy and delightful; the banks of the Mareotis were planted with trees, laid out in gardens, intersected with walks, and watered by canals. ... All these have withered, and disappeared, from the scene.³⁴

The beautiful capital of Ptolemaic Egypt was just a shadow of its former self to these travellers. Muhammad Ali was trying his best to restore some grandeur to Alexandria, but was not close to success:

In vain has the present ruler opened one of its canals for trade; unless he can vanquish the drifting sand, restore the villages and cultivation along its banks, he is rolling the stone of Sisyphus.³⁵

Some travellers, however, despite initial impressions of Alexandria were not always entirely scathing towards modern Egypt. Richardson, for example, praised Cairo as one of the great cities of the world. On arriving, he wrote that he wished he could speak Arabic and Turkish so he could converse with the inhabitants:

O! for the gift of tongues is most fervently prayed by the traveller, who feels himself transported into the midst of grand Cairo, with an anxiety to know this boast of the Saracenic conquest, and to converse with the inhabitants of this wonderful city, celebrated as

³² William Rae Wilson, *Travels in Egypt and the Holy Land*, Second Edition, London, 1824, p.11-12.

³³ Robert Richardson, *Travels Along the Mediterranean and Parts Adjacent*, Vol II, T Cadell, London, 1822, p.13.

³⁴ Richardson, *Travels*, p.29.

³⁵ Ibid.

the largest, richest, and most populous in the universe. Greek and Latin to the dogs! Give me Arabic and Turkish.³⁶

Richardson here expressed the desire to understand the people of modern Cairo, which was not unusual for European travellers, but he expressed it as not only useful but eye-opening. His statements on the people of Cairo do not fit into what one would expect from a traditional nineteenth-century Orientalist traveller, and stand in contrast to his view of Alexandria. Cairo was not portrayed here by Richardson as a place that had declined from its past greatness, but as a place that was great in the present, a ‘wonderful city.’

While most of the early nineteenth-century European travellers to Egypt were well-off men or civil servants, others did not fit this mould. Many travellers brought their wives on their trips, like the Baron Minutoli. Anne Elwood, who travelled through Egypt with her husband in 1825 en route to India did not share the disappointment of her male peers with Alexandria. She shared the excitement of approaching Alexandria from the coast and seeing the great ‘Pompey’s pillar’ (actually built to commemorate Diocletian) from her ship.³⁷ After landing in Egypt she was delighted to view from Salt’s consular residence a variety of sites that she had only previously been able to read about.³⁸ She still described Alexandria as a declined city however, she and her husband walked to view ‘Cleopatra’s Needle’ and she described the trip:

We passed some fine shafts of granite, and over numerous heaps of rubbish and excavated mounds of earth, apparently the former foundations of the houses of ancient Alexandria. No traces of cultivation were to be seen, but desolation reigned around; and in an out of the

³⁶ Ibid., p.53.

³⁷ Mrs Colonel Ellwood, *Narrative of a Journey Overland From England by the Continent of Europe, Egypt, and the Red Sea to India*, Vol I, Henry Colburn, London, 1830, p.108.

³⁸ Ibid., p.112.

way, neglected spot, close to the sea-shore, where once the great ones of the earth held their fantastic revels, stood the obelisk³⁹

Seeing a great monument of antiquity, evidence of one of the great civilisations of old lying in a desolate field was quite typical of how Europeans framed their encounter with modern Egypt.

The encounter of these travellers with Egypt was shaped by their preconceptions, and some of these more recent preconceptions were born from works like the *Description de l'Égypte*. Said, in *Orientalism*, wrote at length about how the *Description de l'Égypte*, the product of the French *savants* which accompanied the military occupation of Egypt at the turn of the century was formative in early Orientalism. The *Description* was preceded by some travel narratives, like Volney's and Denon's *Voyages*, and contemporary with or succeeded by others like the many writers detailed in this chapter, but it was even more a product of enlightenment thinking than these personal travel narratives. While many of the travellers pledged objectivity, the *Description* was designed as a purely scientific description of Egypt as it had been and as it was then. Travellers to Egypt were essentially performing the same act as the *Description* and the *Savants*, but in more personal ways. Said wrote of the *Description*: "To save an event from oblivion is in the Orientalist's mind the equivalent of turning the Orient into a theatre for his representations of the Orient."⁴⁰

The travel writers of the post-Napoleonic war period in Egypt were not especially different from those who had visited the country earlier. Writers, like the Royal Navy commanders Charles Leonard Irby and James Mangles constantly referred to Volney, referring their readers to the

³⁹ Ibid., p.116.

⁴⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, p.86.

accuracy of his descriptions and correcting some slight omissions.⁴¹ Volney's late eighteenth-century travel writing was more critical and based in the Enlightenment tradition than the works of most previous travellers.⁴² Later travellers like those of the 1810s and 1820s would to some extent follow Volney's lead, but this was not universal. These travellers of the 1810s and 1820s are now largely forgotten, with the exception of Belzoni, who remains a towering figure in the history of Europe's cultural colonisation of ancient Egypt. Writers focusing on travel writing in Egypt like Anthony Sattin or editors like Paul and Janet Starkey have, however, largely focussed on later writers, after the development of steam travel, and once Muhammad Ali's efforts to gain independence had faltered. The role of travellers in the 1810s and 1820s in helping to construct a cultural imperialist view of Egypt has been largely underexplored. Even outside Egypt, travel writing theorists like Mary Louise Pratt have focused on later periods.

While neither France nor Britain sought to directly control Egypt at this time, that did not mean they did not exert some sort of colonial power over it. Variso has written of Orientalism and the 'Orient' that 'the East was a concern for the West on virtually every level: material, political, aesthetic, and spiritual.'⁴³ Writers about Egypt were largely concerned with the same themes. Some leant much more to one category than others, like Wilson, who was almost exclusively concerned with spirituality, and the roots of Christianity that he could see in Egypt, even down to the large 'fishes' in the Mediterranean. Some travellers, like the Frenchman Frederic Caillaud largely avoided discussion of the politics or culture of Egypt and focused entirely on his journey to find minerals

⁴¹ Charles Leonard Irby & James Mangles, *Travels in Egypt, Nubia, and Syria*, T White and Co, London, 1823.

⁴² Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Object*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1983, p.9.

⁴³ Varisco, *Reading Orientalism*, p31.

and lost trade routes in the Egyptian desert.⁴⁴ Regardless, all of the travel writers of the early nineteenth-century helped contribute to the growth of Orientalist tropes about life and society in Egypt.

The Birth of Egyptology

Travel writers were not the only manifestation of early nineteenth-century Egyptomania. Both Salt and Drovetti were heavily involved in the acquisition and discovery of antiquities. Their Swedish colleague was also participating in collecting artefacts, showing that this was not a phenomenon limited to the British and French.⁴⁵ Collecting of artefacts was not entirely based on political-imperial reasons or the desire for the glory of one's country. Both consuls, Salt and Drovetti sold artefacts they collected to museums in other countries. Much of Salt's most prominent collection ended up in Turin, which was neither French nor British. Collecting was also a matter of personal gain, for their own fame, money and glory rather than just for their country, even among the official agents of the country.

Beyond the public excitement for Egyptomania and Egyptian artefacts, Egyptology contributed to a subtle form of European intellectual hegemony over Egypt. With France and Britain unable or unwilling to directly control Egypt in the present, they could, at least, establish some control over Egypt's past. Modern European museums were being created and growing in number and prestige rapidly in the early nineteenth-century. Napoleon had already attempted a cultural imperial project when he looted many of the marvels of Italy and brought them back to

⁴⁴ Frederic Caillaud, *Travels in the Oasis of Thebes, and in the deserts situated east and west of the Thebaid, in the years 1815, 16, 17, and 18*, Edited by Jomard, Translated from the French, R Phillips and Co, London, 1822.

⁴⁵ 6CCC/20, p.248-249 Pillavoine, Alexandria, to The Minister-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Paris, June 19, 1820.

France prior to leading the French invasion of Egypt. The French *Institut d’Egypte* and the *Description* it produced were another example of this French cultural imperialism. Together, the *Description* and Egyptology were backed by the ‘myth of progress, the vision of European and especially French civilization as superior in every regard to the civilization of modern Egypt.’⁴⁶ Modern Europe, it was assumed, was superior to modern Egypt, and therefore had the ability to scientifically describe Egypt, and could learn more about Egypt than the Egyptians themselves could.

As discussed earlier, Egypt was seen to be a country in ruins, with a great past that was seen to be part of Europe’s past as well, Europeans disregarded modern Egypt in typical orientalist fashion, separating it from ancient Egypt through the discipline of Egyptology and what Elliot Colla has called the ‘invention of the Egyptian artefact.’⁴⁷ Collecting and studying these artefacts became in a way a substitute for ‘conquest’ of Egypt, as if Europeans could not control its present they could at least showcase its past,⁴⁸ and Egyptology and Egyptomania became intrinsically linked with the concept of Orientalism. Egyptology as a ‘science’ was ‘opposed’ to the supposedly invalid, myth-based, knowledge the local Islamic populations had about the past of Egypt, it “opened a breach between modern Egypt and ancient Egypt, opposing them in a familiar orientalist binarism of East and West.”⁴⁹

Newspapers back in Britain covered Salt’s collecting exploits.⁵⁰ Drovetti, like his English counterpart, was praised in the French press and was named a Knight of the Legion of Honour in

⁴⁶ Godlewska, ‘Map, Text and Image,’ p.8.

⁴⁷ Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, p.9.

⁴⁸ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.216.

⁴⁹ Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, p.101.

⁵⁰ *Times*, September 10, 1817, p.3.

July 1819, because of his service in Egypt, especially to the ‘sciences and the arts.’⁵¹ The press also carried reports of the Egyptological exploits of Salt’s associates, including the Italian Giovanni Battista Belzoni, perhaps the ‘greatest’ of the early nineteenth-century cultural imperialists, whose exploits were well covered.⁵² In 1819, the *Bristol Mercury* featured a series of features on Belzoni’s removal of antiquities from Egypt, praising him for the way he managed to outsmart the French and using ‘assistance solely of the native peasantry, without the aid of any machine’ managed to secure ‘Memnon’s Head’ which was displayed in the British Museum at the time of writing.⁵³

Belzoni worked closely with Henry Salt until he returned to England in 1820 and Salt’s secretary had even helped Belzoni make sketches of his discoveries.⁵⁴ When Belzoni returned to London in 1820 with a replica of a ‘famous sarcophagus of alabaster’ he was praised in the British press, a sign of the fame that he had achieved for his Egyptological work while working in Egypt.⁵⁵ Belzoni believed that it was ‘his duty to lay before the public an Account of his late Discoveries in Egypt’ and submitted an account to a publisher, which was eagerly awaited by the press.⁵⁶ When Belzoni’s book was published, the *Caledonian Mercury* reported that ‘it has excited great expectation, and will be read with avidity.’ The *Mercury* praised Belzoni, for while other travellers had commented on Egypt, its ‘history, manners, and external appearance’ no one had matched Belzoni’s ‘extent and variety of research beneath the surface, and in the discovery of the precious remains of antiquity.’⁵⁷ The *Freeman’s Journal* in Ireland also heavily praised Belzoni for his work in similar terms to the

⁵¹ *Le Moniteur Universel*, August 4, 1819, p.1049. ‘S. M. a voulue récompenser a-la-fois les services qu’il a rendus aux sciences et aux arts, pendant son séjour en Egypte.’

⁵² *Morning Chronicle*, October 8, 1818, p.3.

⁵³ *Bristol Mercury*, May 24, 1819.

⁵⁴ *Bristol Mercury*, January 25, 1819, Reid, *Whose Pharaohs*, p.39.

⁵⁵ *Caledonian Mercury*, April 3, 1820.

⁵⁶ *Morning Chronicle*, July 20, 1820.

⁵⁷ *Caledonian Mercury*, December 11, 1820.

Mercury, calling him ‘extraordinary’ and ‘indefatigable.’⁵⁸ Despite being Italian by birth, Belzoni was seen as working for the benefit of Britain as the *Freeman’s Journal* of Dublin demonstrated in January 1821:

As Belzoni is a stranger amongst us, and as we are to derive the advantage of possessing the fragments of art he has laid open, we trust he will receive that patronage to which his labours eminently entitle him; more particularly as some of our neighbours, the French, attempt to arrogate to themselves the honour of some of the discoveries which the travellers from the “Institute” received from Belzoni, for whose communications they have made this ungenerous return.⁵⁹

Antiquities became a source of national pride, and on the arrival of the ‘Alexander’ alabaster sarcophagus in late 1821, an article in *Trewman’s Exeter Flying Post* wrote:

It was the property of Mr. Salt, the British Consul, and was, we understand, the subject of competition by the agents of some foreign Powers. If the industry of our antiquaries should be at length turned from the frivolous and feeble pursuits which have, for so long a time, rendered the name of English antiquarianism obscure, a noble opportunity is offered in this monument and the other Egyptian memorials, for retrieving our national reputation in learned and productive research. [...] The attention of learned men abroad has been lately turned to this study, but on the Continent its materials are deficient. In England they are now abundant, and it will be little to our honour to leave the discovery of the secrets of science, the arts, mythology, and history, which those sculptures more than probably contain to the more fortunate industry and intelligence of strangers.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, January 11, 1821.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Trewman’s Exeter Flying Post*, October 4, 1821, p.3.

The arrival of the Alabaster Sarcophagus at the British Museum in October 1821 was an exciting event for the people of Britain in the state of Egyptomania. Newspapers around the country published long pieces describing it and its value to Britain.⁶¹ French newspapers also followed the progress of the Alabaster Sarcophagus.⁶²

Some of Belzoni's extractions would be exhibited at Bullock's Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly in 1821, in what the *Morning Chronicle* excitedly speculated would be 'a sight of the most perfect representation of an ancient monument that has ever been submitted to the inspection of the public.'⁶³ Excitement was high, according to news reports at the time.⁶⁴ The *Morning Chronicle* published more details of Belzoni's exhibition in its 28 April 1821 edition, warning readers that 'it would be impossible by any description, to give our Readers an idea of this curious work, which is a *fac simile* of the original, and which can only be duly appreciated by being seen.'⁶⁵ The article encouraged readers to go and see the exhibition, noting that 'it will require many hours for the spectators to go through the innumerable relics of antiquity that M. Belzoni has amassed.'⁶⁶ The *Derby Mercury* published a long review of what it called 'Belzoni's Tomb' in November 1821, and included a poem to commemorate it. 'The merit of this model, to lose sight for an instant of the original labour, is extraordinary, as the interest it excites must be profoundly felt.'⁶⁷ In a sign of the transnational nature of Egyptomania, Belzoni's 'Egyptian tomb' was also displayed in Paris and St

⁶¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, October 6, 1821, p.4.

⁶² *Le Constitutionnel*, August 5, 1821.

⁶³ *Morning Chronicle*, March 5, 1821.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, April 28, 1821.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Derby Mercury*, November 7, 1821, p.4.

Petersburg in the 1820s. The *Moniteur Universel* carried an advertisement for it on January 1 1825,⁶⁸ and the 1824 French travel guide '*Manuel de l'Etranger dans Paris*' described it as

an exact imitation in all of its parts of the tomb of an Egyptian King, that M. Belzoni discovered on his travels in Egypt, and from which he has made the most accurate designs and trimmings, and this copy conforms to all the specifications of the original.⁶⁹

Parisians could take in this representation of another culture for 2 fr 30 c.⁷⁰ Belzoni was celebrated in Paris too. There, his discoveries were seen as not only enriching Britain but enriching the world: 'thanks to him, we now finally know the ruins of Thebes and of the city of the dead.'⁷¹

The 'Dendera Zodiac' was another item that excited nationalist competition over antiquities. The zodiac, a star map displaying the constellations as they were during the late Ptolemaic era of Egypt, was transported to France in 1821 despite attempts by the British and others to claim it for themselves.⁷² For the French the Zodiac's arrival was another sign of the greatness of their 'expedition' to Egypt, an example of how Egypt and its past were now open to Europe in a way that it previously was not. The zodiac had featured prominently in Denon's *Voyages dans la Basse et la Haute Egypte*, and was 'located' by General Desaix while the country was under French Occupation, and so for the French it had "in a way become a national monument," and therefore be moved from Denderah to Paris.⁷³ The arrival of the Zodiac provided another opportunity to advertise the

⁶⁸ *Moniteur Universel*, January 1, 1825, p.4.

⁶⁹ C. Harmand, *Manuel de l'Etranger dans Paris pour 1824*, Paris, Chezz Hesse et Cie, 1824, p.296. 'C'est une imitation exacte en toutes ses parties du tombeau d'un roi égyptien, que M. Belzoni a découvert dans ses voyages en Egypte et dont il a pris les dessins et moulures les plus fidèles, d'après lesquels il a établi cette copie en tout conforme à ce monument antique.'

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ *Annales de la littérature et des arts*, Paris, 1820, p.113. 'Grâces à lui, nous connaissons enfin les ruines de Thèbes, de cette ville des morts...'

⁷² *Le Constitutionnel*, October 5, 1821, p.3, Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, pp.254-256.

⁷³ Fagan, *The Rape of the Nile*, p.253.

Description de l'Égypte for the publisher of the *Description*, Charles-Louis-Fleury Panckoucke.

Panckoucke wrote to *Le Constitutionnel* on October 29 1821 to advertise the *Description*, informing readers that an exact rendering of the Zodiac was one of the most important parts of the *Description*, and that he would insert this rendering in one of the next books published to satisfy the 'just impatience' of his subscribers.⁷⁴ The French had 'rescued' the zodiac 'from the barbarism of the Muslims.'⁷⁵

The *Times* even published articles on French acquisitions, reporting on a trip that the Director-general of the French Royal Museums, M. le Comte Forbin, made in 1818. On this trip he met with both the French Consul Drovetti and Henry Salt. According to the *Times* as a result of Forbin's trip 'the Museum of Paris is going to be enriched with some of the spoils of Thebes.'⁷⁶ These articles and the travel of 'Belzoni's Tomb' to Paris illustrate further the transnational nature of Egyptomania. Travellers to Egypt brought back artefacts and antiquities that continued to support the claim that ancient Egypt should rightfully be seen as part of the cultural heritage of Europe, and in that sense rightfully connected to it. The past of Egypt was becoming subsumed into the past of Europe, and as such was severed from the Muslim present of Egypt.

These examples of travel writing and Egyptology show the construction of contemporary and ancient Egypt in British and French minds, and how the place was viewed. Another important part of the cultural reception of Egypt in the 1810s and 1820s was the reception of its leader,

⁷⁴ *Le Constitutionnel*, October 29, 1821, p.3. 'Il a été découvert par les savans français, il en a été fait sur les lieux un dessin très exact par MM. Jollois et Devilliers, et ce dessin forme une des planches les plus importantes dans la Description de l'Égypte.'

⁷⁵ *Le Constitutionnel*, May 18, 1822, p.4. 'La description du magnifique temple de Denderah, dans lequel se trouvait le fameux planisphere que MM. Saulnier fils et le Lorrain ont enlevé à la barbarie des musulmans'

⁷⁶ *The Times*, May 11, 1818, p.2.

Muhammad Ali. Ali as a cultural figure shows the limits of European perceptions of leaders outside Europe, how Ali was positioned and varied between various European tropes. Ali, like Egypt itself, could be seen as both of Europe and of the Orient, a reformer and a despot by different people. Unlike Egypt itself, which had its ancient past subsumed into European history while the present was relegated to a role outside Egypt, Ali occupied an in-between position.

Ali: a Turk?

Despite competing with the grand past of Egypt, the ‘present’ of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, defied many of the traditional conceptions of an ‘Oriental’ ruler for Europeans. He increased education, invested in a modern military, and began many infrastructure projects.⁷⁷ This positive view of Ali as ‘extraordinary for a Turk’ in the words of Henry Salt ran counter to the traditional depictions of people in the Ottoman Empire as languishing under ‘oriental despotism.’ Oriental despotism, as outlined in the introduction and chapter one, was for many thinkers in Europe a necessary result of the ‘fixed qualities’ of ‘Turkish social and political life.’⁷⁸ Ali was for many Europeans, still a despot, and a ‘Turk,’ and thus an ‘Oriental despot.’ That Ali was not actually Turkish reveals the superficiality of European understandings of the politics and society of the ‘Orient.’

Ali was born an Albanian, and as K. E. Fleming has shown, can be compared profitably to another Albanian governor of an Ottoman Province namely Ali Pasha, the governor of Ioannina in Greece, who, if anything, was perceived as even more of a traditional Oriental despot than Ali.⁷⁹

Fleming has compellingly argued that Ali Pasha of Ioannina was wrongly cast in this ‘Oriental

⁷⁷ Ed. Hathaway, *Al Jabarti's History of Egypt*, p.192-193.

⁷⁸ Çirakman, ‘From Tyranny to Despotism,’ p.59.

⁷⁹ Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte*, p.23.

despot' role and was in fact a more complicated character. Initially Muhammad Ali of Egypt largely avoided being cast by Europeans as the traditional 'Oriental despot' and was often viewed as a new sort of Ottoman ruler, a reformer. The Greek war, however, affected this image of Ali and shifted the European view of him to the more traditional role of a cruel, Muslim despot. Fleming has shown that both Ali of Ioannina and Ali of Egypt were a 'new breed of Ottoman governor who looked to the West rather than to the Ottoman bureaucracy for aggrandizement and political gain.'⁸⁰

The lumping of the non-Turkish Ali into the general category of 'Turkish' by most Europeans of the time reveals something about these Europeans' views of the Ottoman Empire. Ali was still 'too much of a Turk in *petto*' in the words of R. R. Madden.⁸¹ 'Turk' had become a general designation for any Muslim in Ottoman territory during the Ottoman conquests, and centuries later Europeans were still employing these old descriptors.⁸² In *Lifting the Veil*, Anthony Sattin wrote of early nineteenth-century Egypt: 'Turks, Albanians and Egyptians – They seemed to merge into a single image of a cruel, depraved barbarian.'⁸³ Given such suppositions, there was no need to remove Ali from the category of Turk which he was placed into. He was an Ottoman ruler, he was Muslim and reigned under the auspices of the Sultan, so he was Turkish.

For Joseph Moyle Shearer, an officer in the British army during the Napoleonic Wars who later wrote a variety of anonymous travel books about his times in India, the Iberian Peninsula, and

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.23-24.

⁸¹ R. R. Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine in 1824, 1825, 1826 & 1827*, Whittaker, Treacher, and Co, London, 1833 p247-250.

⁸² Palmira Brummett, *Mapping the Ottomans: Sovereignty, Territory, and Identity in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p.2.

⁸³ Anthony Sattin, *Lifting the Veil: Two Centuries of Travelers, Traders and Tourists in Egypt*, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1988, p.28.

then Egypt and Italy, Ali was ‘a Turk, a very Turk.’⁸⁴ His actions were not the results of his own thoughts, according to Shearer, although Ali was a cunning man. His Turkishness was evident in the fact that ‘he is surrounded, flattered, and cajoled by a set of foreign adventurers, who put notions into his head, and words into his mouth, which pass for, and, in truth, become his own.’⁸⁵ Shearer thought that Ali was only viewed as something more than this in Europe because his policies protected ‘Franks’ in Egypt.

Not all were convinced that Ali was a ‘Turk.’ In the early 1820s the press picked up rumours that Ali was actually ‘born a Frenchman,’ and had a sister who had ascended to the rank of Sultanness after they were captured by a privateer in the Mediterranean.⁸⁶ As Turkishness stood in opposition to Europeanness, and such rumours reasoned that if Muhammad Ali was a good, modernising ruler of Egypt, it was perhaps because he was not even Turkish at all, but European. Ali could either be an ‘extraordinary Turk’ or perhaps not a Turk at all. For John Carne, the author of *Letters from the East*, he was not Turkish, but nonetheless suited to power in a Turkish place: ‘This prince is admirably fitted to rise to eminence in the Turkish empire. Of Greek extraction, possessed of great talents, a wily politician, yet daring and bloody in the execution of his plans’⁸⁷ For Carne, Ali was of the Turkish world but not a typical Turk. Ali was, Carne continued, a complicated man, one who could feel human emotions rather than just acting as an uncaring despot. Carne’s description of Ali reacting in wonder to a European ice machine showed a mixture of a human capacity for wonder and a somewhat childlike ‘Oriental’ streak:

⁸⁴ Joseph Moyle Shearer, *Scenes and Impressions in Egypt and in Italy*, Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1824, p.165-168.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ *Caledonian Mercury* January 5, 1822.

⁸⁷ John Carne, *Letters from the East Written During a Recent Tour Through Turkey, Egypt, Arabia, the Holy Land, Syria, and Greece*, Henry Colburn, London, 1826, 2nd Edition, p.70.

He longed for the luxury of eating ice: and there being no such thing in Egypt, Mr. Salt, the British Consul-general, sent to England for an apparatus for making it. The machine was conveyed, on its arrival, to the Pacha's palace, and the Nile water made use of for the purpose. Mahmoud Ali hung over the whole operation with intense curiosity, and when, after several disappointments, a large piece of real ice was produced, he took it eagerly in his hand, and danced round the room for joy like a child, and then ran into the harem to shew it to his wives and mistresses; and ever since he luxuriates upon it.⁸⁸

Other writers disagreed with these positive portrayals of Ali. Richard Robert Madden, an Irish abolitionist, argued in his collection of letters from his voyage through the Ottoman Empire that he published in 1826 that Europeans only viewed Ali as special because of the way he treated Europeans:

How the Pacha acquired so much fame with the Franks is to be attributed solely to the favour he has shown the Christian merchants. [...] His intercourse with Franks has indeed given him the show of civilization; his interest as a merchant has rendered the protection of the Franks a necessary duty [...] Because he is not wantonly cruel, like his ferocious son, because he only murders his guests when the policy of the state renders it expedient, because he talks of European customs with our travellers, when his affability is made subservient to his interests, Europeans are fascinated with his breeding; they are no longer mindful of the Beys; and more governments than one, in Christendom, put confidence in his faith.⁸⁹

For most travellers and Europeans, of course, this side of Ali and his rule would be all they saw. They cared only about his policies towards Europeans and their trade, rather than about native

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.70-71.

⁸⁹ Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine*, p247-250.

Egyptians for the most part the exception being concerns towards Egyptian slavery, with almost all travellers who came into contact with slaves in Egypt appalled.

Madden explained what being a Turk meant to him in a letter from Cairo he wrote in June 1826:

What is morality in England is not morality in Turkey; what would constitute a modest woman in London, would render her infamous in Constantinople; what would render a Mussulman a hero, would make a monster of a Briton; and what would confer the title of a saint on a Moslem, would take away the benefit of clergy from an Englishman.⁹⁰

This was not explicitly negative, for Madden. For many Europeans, this was just how the Ottoman Empire and its people were. 'A Field-Officer of Cavalry,' Sir Digby Mackworth, who wrote a travelogue was even more understanding of Ali's cruelty:

For all this accommodation and security we are indebted to the Pacha; who, though education, habits, and circumstances may have rendered him occasionally cruel, and even barbarously so in the eyes of the enlightened nations of Europe, must unquestionably be accounted, for a Turk, a great and extraordinary man.⁹¹

Ali's barbarousness and cruelty were uncontrollable factors of his life, such Orientalist arguments ran, unavoidable because of his circumstances and indeed his Turkish context.

Ali's bloody massacre of the Mamluks in 1811 was not forgotten by writers in the 1820s. Initial European reactions were of shock, lamenting this act of cruelty, and Europeans remained

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.338.

⁹¹ Sir Digby Mackworth, *Diary of a tour through southern India, Egypt, and Palestine, in the years 1821 and 1822. By a field-officer of cavalry*, J Hatchard and son, London, 1823, p.221.

appalled by it. Samuel Howe, in his 1828 *An Historical Sketch of the Greek Revolution* wrote that ‘this bloody act must ever remain a blot on the character of Mehemet Ali, and refute his claim to be called free of the treachery and cruelty of most Turkish leaders.’⁹² Other writers recalled the massacre as well but painted it in a different light. The translator for Baroness Minutoli’s travel writing criticised others for portraying the massacre as ‘an instance of sanguinary perfidy,’ they instead believed that it was a necessary evil to rid Egypt of the group that had ‘so long unjustly usurped and oppressed’ Egypt.⁹³ The Count de Forbin, who visited Egypt while he was the director of the Louvre called Ali’s massacre of the Mamluks the ‘most perfidious treachery’ but believed it was at least partially justified because the Mamluks were plotting against him.⁹⁴

Ali was not only seen to be struggling against his own Turkishness, but also the supposed negative qualities of Egyptians in general. Johann Martin Augustus Scholz, a professor of divinity at the University of Bonn, offered the following assessment of Ali’s abilities in his *Travels*:

Many of his endeavours to civilize Egypt and to extend her manufactories have indeed failed, because the natives are not fit for such employment [...] but still the endeavour is worthy of praise. The chief obstacle to the improvement of the country, under his government, is the despotism which characterises all his enterprises. He is unlimited master of the soil and all that it produces.⁹⁵

According to this view, Ali’s ‘Oriental’ despotism, as well as the nature of Egyptians, were the two factors that most prevented the progress of Egypt under his rule in Scholz’s opinion.

⁹² Samuel Gridley How, *An Historical Sketch of the Greek Revolution*, White, Gallaher & White, 1828, p. 163.

⁹³ Wolfradine von Minutoli, *Recollections of Egypt : by the Baroness von Minutoli*, Carey, Lea, and Carey, Philadelphia, 1827, p.ix.

⁹⁴ Count de Forbin, *Travels in Egypt*, p.21.

⁹⁵ Johann Martin Augustus Scholz, *Travels in the Countries Between Alexandria and Paraetonium*, Sir Richard Phillips & Company, London, 1822, p.40.

Criticism of Ali's supposed Turkishness was not universal, however. William Rae Wilson, the Scottish traveller concerned with religion, was quite positive towards Muhammad Ali, and believed that his rule and policy in Egypt could only be beneficial to Great Britain. Interestingly, he believed the British should pursue good relations with Ali not just for 'political and commercial interests' but also for the interests of the 'Antiquarian and Traveller.'⁹⁶ The *Times* reported on an article from the *Dumfries Courier* in November 1827 that told of a 'very intelligent naval gentleman' who had visited Egypt, and was 'personally acquainted' with Muhammad Ali. This man painted a very positive picture of Ali, in contrast to much of the discourse about Ali in 1826-1827:

That great and enterprising Chief is apparently about 60 years of age, and his presence, which befits his situation, is at once dignified and prepossessing. He is much easier of access than the majority of those who serve under him, and is fond of conversing with intelligent Franks. He understands the French and Italian languages, but requires and receives the aid of an interpreter when brought into contact with English gentlemen who are unacquainted with these tongues. He was born an Arab, and inured in his youth to manual labour, but merit such as his could not long be concealed, and his bravery in the field is, if possible, eclipsed by the tact he evinces in civil affairs. In developing the resources of a country naturally rich, but morally poor, he resembles Peter the Great himself, and we can easily believe that the Porte is jealous of his rapidly increasing wealth and power.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Wilson, *Travels in Egypt and the Holy Land*, p.36-37.

⁹⁷ *The Times*, November 2, 1827, p.3

Henry Salt still reported positive things about Muhammad Ali, in September 1826 he stated that Ali was dissatisfied with Ottoman handling of the Greek crisis and he had an anxious desire to serve the British government.⁹⁸

Even those with negative opinions of Ali often tempered their criticisms. Madden, the Irish abolitionist who was largely critical believed ‘Mohammed Ali has a great many good qualities; and what is bad in his character, arises rather from weakness than depravity.’⁹⁹ Like the earlier British consuls, Madden thought that taking advice from the French and Italians had led him astray: ‘He is, unfortunately, surrounded by a vile set of Frank advisers, the very scum of Genoa and Marseilles.’¹⁰⁰ Madden believed that Ali was moving away from Turkishness in some ways, his appetite and adeptness in commerce was a decidedly unTurkish quality: ‘His commercial turn, though, it has suppressed many of his Turkish prejudices.’¹⁰¹

Ali was becoming viewed as a moderniser of Egypt, a man who could bring it into line with the European powers, in some sense, or at least out of the ‘Oriental despotism’ in which it sat.¹⁰² The Greek War of Independence would soon see Ali’s desire to be viewed positively in Europe clash with his actions in support of the Ottoman Empire.

⁹⁸ TNA FO 78/147, p. 103-104 Henry Salt, Alexandria, ‘Minute of conversations held with His Highness Mahomet Ali Pasha, at Alexandria,’ September 30 1826.

⁹⁹ Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine*, p.344.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Eugene Vicomte de Guichen, *La Crise d’Orient de 1839 à 1841 et l’Europe*, Paris, 1921, p.5.

The Greek War and Muhammad Ali

Egyptian involvement in the Greek war of independence was limited at first, and Ali was reluctant to get involved in the conflict between his sovereign and the Greek rebels, but in 1824 Ali sent his son Ibrahim to lead Egyptian forces. Egyptian forces landed in the Peloponnese in 1825. Ibrahim led Egyptian forces successfully in several engagements with the Greeks, and soon he led his forces to meet up with Ottoman forces at Missolonghi, a city that had already resisted an Ottoman siege and was the site of Lord Byron's death. The resistance and fall of Missolonghi would be one of the events that further shocked European opinion, increasing the Philhellenic tide. Ali and Ibrahim would, however, eventually back down in the face of European intervention, with the last Egyptian forces leaving after the French expeditionary force arrived in 1828.

It took about a month for events in Greece to become known in France via the French press,¹⁰³ and during the early stages of the Greek War of Independence, Ali was praised for his conduct by many people in Europe, especially when contrasted to the Ottoman Porte. There was also some hope that Ali would break with the Ottoman Empire and help Greece to secure its independence as well as his own.

The hope that Ali would save the Greeks was strong, and news 'confirming' that he 'had an understanding' with the Greeks appeared in the *Caledonian Mercury* via France in August 1821.¹⁰⁴ Soon after, however, Egyptian fleets were reported to be cooperating with Ottoman forces against the Greeks.¹⁰⁵ Later still in 1821, the *Times* reported that Ali was, if not working in concert with the

¹⁰³ Jean Dimakis, *La Guerre de l'Indépendance Grecque vue Par La Presse Française (Période de 1821 À 1824)*, Institute For Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki, 1968, p.53.

¹⁰⁴ *Caledonian Mercury*, August 2, 1821.

¹⁰⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, August 4, 1821.

Greeks, at least on relatively friendly terms with them: ‘two of his vessels, loaded with grain, which the Greeks had captured, have been restored by order of the Admiralty at Hydra, on the first application of the Pacha.’¹⁰⁶ Ali was also reported to be raising ‘a considerable number of troops’ to protect the beleaguered Christians of Greece.¹⁰⁷ In October, however, Ali was reported to be taking an ‘animated part in support of the Porte,’ forbidding all trade between Egypt and Greece and threatening dire consequences for European merchants who transgressed this order.¹⁰⁸ With such a distance, and the excitement that the war caused, incorrect reports often made their way into the press, such as reports of a Greco-American treaty in 1822,¹⁰⁹ or the various reports about Muhammad Ali preparing to declare his support for the Greeks in the war.

The *Morning Chronicle* of 14 November 1821 carried an extract of a private letter from the ‘Paris Papers’ which carried a more nuanced opinion of Ali’s conduct during the early part of the crisis, akin to those shared by the British and French consuls. According to them, Ali was just someone who was doing what he was necessary to signal support for the Porte, but not going beyond that:

In consequence of pressing orders from the Grand Seignior, he was obliged to place part of his marine at the disposal of the Turkish Government, and that in consequence he was exempted from furnishing any troops. The Pacha, however, not only prevents the Greeks in Egypt from being maltreated, but affords them the most effectual protection.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ *The Times*, September 14 1821, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Aberdeen Journal*, October 17 1821, p.2.

¹⁰⁹ Dimakis, *La Guerre de l’Indépendance Grecque vue Par La Presse Française*, p.54.

¹¹⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, November 14 1821, p.2.

The writer continued: ‘Everything seems to imply that he will take the very first opportunity of rendering himself independent.’¹¹¹ French papers also carried reports of Ali’s sympathy to the Greeks, *Le Constitutionnel* reported on 27 August 1821, that Ali was ‘distancing himself from the Porte, and that he favours Greece.’¹¹² Proof of this ‘good understanding’ between the Greeks and Ali, was supposedly shown in the release of the two Egyptian boats captured by the Greeks at Hydra in 1821.¹¹³

Reports that Ali was secretly sympathetic to the Greek cause continued to be published in 1823 when the *Morning Chronicle* published a report from someone who had recently visited Egypt: All religions are equally protected, and the Musselmen are at present so reconciled to this system of tolerance, that even the Greeks live here not only tranquil, but well treated and honoured. According to every thing I have been able to learn, it appears certain, that the Viceroy sends in secret succours to the Greeks, and that they have several agents residing at his Court.¹¹⁴

The same writer stated that they had returned to Alexandria after five years away, and they found that:

Egypt has made immense progress in civilisation and prosperity. The judicious exertions of the Viceroy have been crowned with complete success, and the gratitude of the inhabitants for his clever and equal administration, is both animated and deserved [...] It may be affirmed, that in no country of Europe is individual security better guaranteed than here, and

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² *Le Constitutionnel*, August 27, 1821, p.2. ‘On comptait sur le pacha d’Egypte ; mais il paraît qu’il s’éloigne de la Porte, et qu’il favorise les Grècs.’

¹¹³ *Le Constitutionnel*, September 10, 1821.

¹¹⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, January 29, 1823, p.2.

therefore merchants from all parts, and particularly from the borders of the Mediterranean, come here, bringing with them their industry and their capitals.¹¹⁵

A letter in the same publication just a few months later, in May 1823 however declared that Muhammad Ali ‘shows great zeal in co-operating with the Porte, against the Greeks.’¹¹⁶ *Le Constitutionnel* similarly carried a report from the *Austrian Observer* that

the Egyptian Pacha, far from announcing his support for the Greeks, continues to provide support for the Porte. But he could change this position if the Morea and Acarnania become entirely under the control of the Greeks.¹¹⁷

Le Constitutionnel of 31 July 1821 praised Ali for granting asylum to Christians persecuted by the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁸ The same paper called Ali ‘the only wise and the only humane one of the Osmanlis,’¹¹⁹ again praising him for his kind treatment of Christians, and contrasting him to the rest of the Ottoman Empire.

In contrast to other Ottoman troops Ali’s troops were praised for their treatment of Christians early in the Greek Conflict, adding to his reputation in Europe as unusually humane for a ‘Turk’. The *Times* of 25 October 1822 carried an article on the occupation of Cyprus, contrasting the safety Ali’s troops provided to the massacres committed by other Ottoman forces:

The part of the island which is occupied by the troops of Mahomed Ali, Pacha of Egypt, alone enjoys tranquillity. Salih bey, who commands for the Pacha, makes his troops observe

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *Morning Chronicle*, May 21, 1823, p.3.

¹¹⁷ *Le Constitutionnel*, May 3, 1823, p.3. ‘le pacha d’ Egypte, loin de se prononcer en faveur des Grecs, fournit continuellement des secours à la Porte. Mais il ne peut cependant disconvenir que la Morée et l’Arcananie sont tout entières au pouvoir des Grecs.’

¹¹⁸ *Le Constitutionnel*, July 31, 1821, p.1.

¹¹⁹ *Le Constitutionnel*, September 16, 1821, p.2. ‘Le pacha d’Egypte, le seul sage et le seul humain des Osmanlis.’

the strictest discipline. If Mahomed Ali should withdraw his troops, as there is reason to fear, there would be no longer any security even for the Franks.¹²⁰

This *Times* report was based on a letter from the English consul to a relative in Germany. In this letter, the consul also expressed fears that Ali would be replaced by the Ottoman Empire, which opposed his humane treatment of Christians:

The part of Cyprus occupied by one of the commanders of Mahomed Ali, Pacha of Egypt, is tranquil; the Christians are protected there; accordingly, it is publicly said at Constantinople and here, that the Viceroy of Egypt is a renegade, a traitor, and that as soon as it can be done, he will have the merited fate of Ali, Pacha of Joannina.¹²¹

This letter was titled 'Alleged Barbarities of the Turks at Cyprus' by the *Newcastle Courant* on 2 November 1822, as it made its way further throughout Britain, providing more people with this view that Ali was treating Christians much more humanely than the rest of the Ottoman forces.¹²²

European Reactions to the Greek War of Independence

Philhellenism was related to Egyptomania in Europe. It came from, in part, the European fascination with their own past and the supposed roots of their 'civilisation.'¹²³ David Howarth described Philhellenism itself as 'misunderstanding increased to fantasy,' a fantasy based in the 'classical' education that was the norm in Europe at the time, where students would learn the 'language, philosophy and arts of ancient Greece.'¹²⁴ The conflict in Greece then took on not only a Christian against Muslim aspect, but a fight to revive classical Greece, a similar project to the

¹²⁰ *The Times*, October 25 1822, p. 2.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*.

¹²² *Newcastle Courant*, November 2 1822, p.2.

¹²³ David Howarth, *The Greek Adventure: Lord Byron and Other Eccentrics in the War of Independence*, Collins, London, 1976, p.69.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.69.

‘revival’ of Ancient Egypt. Philhellenism gained steam in France in 1824 and 1825, as the end of the crisis in Spain and Lord Byron’s death shifted the attention of the French government and French people towards the Greek cause.¹²⁵ The fall of Missolonghi to forces including those of Muhammad Ali’s son, Ibrahim, was another catalyst for growing attention on the fate of the Greek rebellion, inspiring paintings and poems.¹²⁶

Philhellenism, was, like Egyptomania, based on the European conception of their past. It was rooted in an imagined vision of the ancient Greeks, rather than the realities of modern Greeks. Many philhellènes who travelled to fight for the Greeks were disappointed in what they discovered, just as the Europeans who had travelled to Egypt had been. Philhellènes thought they were fighting for ‘Hellas,’ the ‘ancestral’ civilisation of all Europe.¹²⁷ The ‘idealized image of Greece’ that the Philhellènes held, was, however, just as mythical as the orientalist reimagining of Egypt.¹²⁸ This idealised image of Greece ‘like it used to be’ constituted the base of the philhellenic movement.¹²⁹ For Europeans, this ancient heritage of Greece, even more so than the ancient heritage of Egypt, was European, despite the fact that Greece was controlled by the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁰ This dichotomy, between ancient and modern Greece was even more ‘problematic’ for Europeans than the same Egyptian dichotomy, as ancient Greece was seen far more strongly as the singular basis for Western Civilisation.¹³¹

¹²⁵ William St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence*, Open Book Publishers, Cambridge, 2008, p.267.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.269.

¹²⁷ Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1982, p.5.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹²⁹ Anastasia Tsagkaraki, ‘Les Philhellènes français dans la lutte pour l’indépendance grecque (1821-1831),’ *Revue Historique Des Armes*, 2, 2016, pp.93-114, p.94

¹³⁰ Grammatikos, *British Romantic Literature and the Emerging Modern Greek Nation*, p.11.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

While Philhellenism became more of a force in France and the French government became more responsive to it, Egyptian involvement in the Greek conflict increased dramatically. Sultan Mahmud II, who became Sultan after the crises of 1807-1808, was worried about how Ottoman troops were faring, and demanded assistance from Muhammad Ali.¹³² Ali sent his son, Ibrahim and some 17,000 troops as well as ships to assist the Ottomans in the war. Egyptian involvement in the Greek War of Independence had caused many in Europe to feel as if 'all seemed lost' in the conflict.¹³³

Crucially, love for classical Greece was not the only thing that drove Europeans to support the Greek cause. The Greeks, despite centuries of living under Ottoman control, were still largely Orthodox Christian. Europeans and governments saw the conflict as one between Christian Greeks and Muslim Turks. Islam and Turkishness were once again positioned in opposition to Christianity and Europeanness. Liberals in France, despite their pronounced anti-clerical positions emphasised the Christianity of the Greeks and how it contrasted to the Islam of the Turks. For many, especially poorer and rural Greeks themselves, Christianity was more important than any great vision of the past in their involvement in the revolution. This Greek Orthodox Christianity was in some way antithetical to the view Philhellenes had of Classical Greece.¹³⁴ Both Christianity and Philhellenism would nonetheless play important roles in inspiring Europeans and eventually their governments to support the Greek cause.

¹³² Andrew McGregor, *A Military History of Modern Egypt*, Praeger Security International, Connecticut, 2006, p.91.

¹³³ Danys Barau 'La mobilisation des philhellènes en faveur de la Grèce, 1821-1829' in *Populations Réfugiées Du l' exil au retour*, Ed. by Luc Cambrézy, Véronique Lassailly-Jacob, Marseille: IRD Éditions, 2001, pp.37-75, p.40.

¹³⁴ Herzfeld, *Ours Once More*, p.20.

The Greek War of Independence became seen as a conflict not just between the Greeks and their Ottoman rulers, but a conflict between West and East, and, as part of that, European narratives about Greece began to downplay the ‘Eastern facets of the Greek world.’¹³⁵ In addition to this, European opinions about Egypt turned sharply negative as Egyptian forces became more involved in the conflict on the Ottoman side. Depictions of Muhammad Ali’s rule also turned sharply negative, the ‘Eastern facets’ of his rule and person emphasised over the modernising image he had previously enjoyed.

French and British Reactions to Egyptian Involvement

By 1826 Ali, like his son Ibrahim, was viewed far less positively in Europe and France. Continuing French support for Ali was viewed as reprehensible by some and the French government, led by the ultra-royalist Prime Minister Joseph de Villèle, attracted heavy criticism because they were seen as preferring Muhammad Ali’s Egyptian regime to the Christians of Greece. Joseph de Villèle and the ultra-royalists had gained the ascendancy in French politics in the early 1820s and had won a landslide victory in the election of 1824.

On 14 March 1826, the liberal-leaning (thus anti-government) newspaper *Le Constitutionnel* published an attack on the de Villèle government’s Egyptian and Turkish policy. Doctrinaire Pierre Paul Royer-Collard accused de Villèle of cooperating with the enemies of Christendom: ‘We have

¹³⁵ Grammatikos, *British Romantic Literature and the Emerging Modern Greek Nation*, p.13.

spoken often in the past of the frequent meetings that the agents of this implacable enemy of Christians (Muhammad Ali) have had with M. de Villèle.¹³⁶ *Le Constitutionnel* continued:

Everyone in Paris knows that French officers have gone to Egypt to organise the battalions destined to cover Greece in fire and blood, keeping their half-pay, and that on their return the services that they have rendered against the Christians will be counted towards their advancement by our Congregationalist ministry.¹³⁷

De Villèle defended the French government against the accusations of anti-Greek policy and French participation in the 'white slave trade.' He read a letter from the commander of the French squadron in the Eastern Mediterranean to the Chamber of Peers, denying the accusations that the French were insufficiently neutral and refusing to support the fleeing Greeks.¹³⁸

Later in March *Le Constitutionnel* was again scathing towards the government's Egyptian and Greek policy:

Those who defend the crescent have been encouraged by you. They receive their half-pay, and their service in the ranks of Ibrahim is seen as service for France. And those who go to Greece, do they receive the same favours? Alas! They fight for the cross, and you regard them as seditionaries, as the enemies of legitimacy!¹³⁹

¹³⁶ *Le Constitutionnel*, March 14, 1826, p.2. 'Nous avons parlé dans le temps des fréquentes conférences que les agents de cet ennemi implacable des chrétiens avaient eues avec M. de Villèle.'

¹³⁷ *Ibid.* 'Tout le monde sait à Paris que les officiers français qui sont allés en Egypte pour organiser les bataillons destinés à mettre la Grèce à feu et à sang, conservent en France leur demi-solde, et qu'à leur retour les services qu'ils auront rendus contre les chrétiens leur seront comptés pour leur advancement par notre ministère congrégant.'

¹³⁸ *Morning Chronicle*, July 11, 1826, p.2.

¹³⁹ *Le Constitutionnel*, March 27/28, 1826, p.1/2. 'Ceux qui défendent le croissant ont été encouragés par vous. Ils conservent leurs traitemens; leurs services dans les rangs d'Ibrahim leur comptent comme s'ils servaient en France. Et la même perspective? Hélas! Ils combattent pour la croix, et vous les regard comme des factieux, comme des ennemis de la légitimité.'

The French government's policy of neutrality was not neutrality at all according to *Le Constitutionnel*, it was 'Jesuitical neutrality' and 'unholy partiality,' to allow Muhammad Ali to build his ships in France while denying the same to the Greeks.¹⁴⁰ The ministers were refusing to stop the 'white slave trade,' they were standing by while the Egyptians and Ottomans took Greeks as slaves, and allowing them to be sold off. The Prime Minister was nothing more than a Turk: 'when one is as Turkish themselves as one can be, how can they not be a little partial to Turkey?' *Le Constitutionnel* asked.¹⁴¹ At issue especially was Joseph de Villèle's secret negotiations with Muhammad Ali, a scandal that was even reported in the British press as being damaging to his government.¹⁴² The French government had hoped to be able to hide or downplay its support for Ali, while being more outwardly open to the Greek cause.¹⁴³ The French government however received increasing requests for military support and even ships through the 1820s from Muhammad Ali, and de Villèle's government continued to grant them.

Le Courrier Français, a liberal newspaper like *Le Constitutionnel*, also took a hard line against what it saw as French support for Muhammad Ali against Greece. The *Morning Chronicle* carried an extract from it in April 1826, calling the French government's support a 'barbarous partiality for the Pacha of Egypt' and a 'secret alliance with the scourge of the Christians of the East.'¹⁴⁴ *L'Étoile*, a newspaper more aligned with Villèle's royalist government, saw no problem with French-built ships being used by Muhammad Ali to fight against the Greeks. In addition, the very people who were complaining about building ships for Egypt were the ones actually doing it, according to *L'Étoile*:

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 'cette neutralité est tout-à-fait jésuitique; c'est une partialité impie qui soulève contre vous tous les esprits généreux.'

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 'quand on est Turc soi-même autant au'on peut l'être, comment ne serait-on pas un peu partial pour la Turquie?'

¹⁴² *The Times*, April 1, 1826, p. 2.

¹⁴³ St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still be Free*, p.275.

¹⁴⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, April 24, 1826, p.2.

We live in peace with Egypt, there is no more reason to refuse to fulfil their orders which come to us from this country where commerce is entirely in the hands of its Pacha, than to forbid us from all purchases of cargo in the port of Alexandria, since the profits increase the treasure of the *satrap*, and with that gold a Muslim can just like anyone else place an order for boats in any workshop in the world, and even then, as is well known here, he counts among his contractors many Greeks and members of their committee.¹⁴⁵

Royalists and supporters of Villèle's government were not all in favour of selling ships to the Egyptians, François-Marie Agier, a royalist elected in the wave of 1824 and who would break definitively with the royalists over freedom of the press in 1827 spoke against the practice on 15 May 1826:

For a long time, the finest minds who think about the future, have not ceased to demand that we increase our shipping; but it is not for us that they make boats, it is for the Pacha of Egypt. In truth he pays for them [...] but humanity, morals, religion are they not their own requirements, the immutable laws which must come before everything. Is there a Christian who could have heard without a painful feeling, the president of the council speak of his regards for the pacha of Egypt, in a moment where millions of Christians might fall, or are close to falling under the fire of the infidels?¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ *L'Étoile*, April 18, 1826, p.4. 'Nous vivons en paix avec l'Égypte: il n'y aurait pas plus de raison à refuser de remplir les commandes qui nous viennent de ce pays don't le commerce est entièrement dans les mains de son Pacha, qu'à nous interdire tout achat de cargaison dans le port d'Alexandrie; puisque les bénéfices augmentent le trésor du *satrape*, et qu'avec de l'or un Musulman tout comme un autre peut faire metre des bâtimens sur tous les chantiers du monde, et même comme il est notoire ici, compter, parmi ses entrepreneurs, des Grecs et des membres de leur comité.'

¹⁴⁶ *L'Étoile*, May 17, 1826, p.3-4. 'Depuis long-temps, ajoute M. Agier, les bons esprits qui songent au lendemain, ne cessent de demander qu'on augmente notre marine ; mais ce n'est pas pour nous qu'on fait des vaisseaux, d'est pour le pacha d'Égypte, (Murmures). A la vérité il les paye, [...] mais l'humanité, la morale, la religion n'ont-elles pas leurs exigences, même leurs lois immuables qui doivent passer avant tout. Est-il un chrétien qui ait pu entendre, sans un sentiment pénible, M. le président du conseil parler d'égards pour le pacha d'Égypte, dans un moment ou des millions des chrétiens tombaient peut-être, ou étaient près de tomber sous le fer des infidèles.'

He continued, claiming that the common argument against helping the Greeks was that they were revolutionaries fighting against the established order, and thus must be crushed. Agier compared the Greeks to the French crusaders, Godefroy de Bouillon and the 'holy King' Saint Louis, who had led two ill-fated crusades.¹⁴⁷

Horace Sebastiani, formerly the French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire and now a member of the Chamber of Deputies aligned with the left, spoke strongly against French support for Ali:

It is under the eyes of the French ministry that all the boats that are in Marseilles are chartered for Ibrahim Pacha. It is under the eyes of the French ministry that French officers are sent to instruct and discipline Egyptian troops, and that firearms made in France are sent to crush the unfortunate and intrepid defenders of Missolonghi.¹⁴⁸

In addition to speeches from lawmakers and missives from newspapers, public outcry took on more active forms. In 1826, French Philhellenes attempted to destroy one of the frigates that was being built for Muhammad Ali's navy in Marseilles.¹⁴⁹ An unknown French lawyer and Philhellene supposedly fought a duel with an officer who had served in Muhammad Ali's military in 1827, the *Times* believed that the victory of the untrained lawyer was a victory for the 'righteous cause' of Greece.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ *Journal des Débats politiques et littéraires*, May 15, 1826, p.2.

¹⁴⁸ *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires*, Mar 26, 1826, p.2. 'C'est sous les yeux du ministère français que tous les batimens qui existent à Marseille sont nolisés pour le compte d'Ibrahim-Pacha.' C'est sous les yeux du ministère français que des officiers français ont été envoyés pour instruire et discipliner les troupes égyptiennes, et que des bouches à feu de fabrique françaises ont été expédiées pour foudroyer les maheureux et intrépides défenseurs de Missolonghi.'

¹⁴⁹ St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still be Free*, p.275.

¹⁵⁰ *Times*, March 8, 1827, p. 6.

In Britain, the *Times* also began to stridently attack Muhammad Ali for his actions in the Greek conflict:

The vigorous but heartless barbarian who reigns over Egypt, wages upon Greece a war of utter desolation. His cruelties are not to be named. To depopulate the country is his preliminary purpose, that he may colonize it with his own slaves; and captivity or murder, as best suits the convenience of the moment, is the instrument by which he depopulates. We rejoice in the confident expectation that this horrible system will very shortly, by the strong hand of this powerful Government, be put an end to.¹⁵¹

Letters to the *Times* from France also inspired anger at the French government. Two letters published on 27 April 1826 were ‘fitted to move the indignation of all Englishmen and Christians.’ The French government was taking an immoral and anti-Christian position: ‘It appears [...] that French neutrality with regard to the Turks and Greeks, means pretty much the same thing as French humanity in relation to the miserable Negroes.’ Just as the French government supported the African slave trade, it was helping in a new white slave trade. The *Times* further asked why if the French government was tacitly supporting the ‘Turks’ in the Greek war of independence, should the British sit by idly:

Is it a war, in the result of which-whether as a matter of national *interest* or sentiment, - a British Minister, with two eyes in his head, can venture to tell the country that he takes no concern? If not, we pursue the subject a little further, by demanding, whether a conflict, of which Greece is to be the prize, ought to be, with the acquiescence of this kingdom, carried on and decided by the troops and ships of France, and therefore according to French views and for French objects? [...] We beg to observe that a real neutrality on the part of France

¹⁵¹ *Times*, April 8, 1826, p. 2.

ought to be required by the British government, or England ought to meet her rival with equal weapons—satisfy her conscience with a nominal neutrality of the state itself, but remove all existing impediments to an adoption by the King’s subjects of whatever side they are will to espouse in the quarrel.’¹⁵²

Ibrahim Ali and the Greek War of Independence

With the foregrounding of the Hellenic and Christian nature of the struggle for Greek independence, consolidating European elite support behind the Greeks, the stage was now set for the struggle to find its villain. For many in Europe the villain of the conflict would turn out to be Ali’s son, Ibrahim Ali. While Ibrahim would not ascend to his position as the enemy of Greece and Christendom until he led Egyptian forces in the Morea, Europeans who visited Egypt in the earlier 1820s and 1810s had already reported on his supposed cruelty. Thomas Legh, who visited Egypt around 1812 had already heard negative things about Ibrahim: ‘He was a man of some talent, and had the reputation of excessive cruelty,’ but Leigh and his companions did not experience that side of Ibrahim: ‘he received us well, and we had every reason to be satisfied with his civility and attention.’¹⁵³ The mere mention of Ibrahim in a matter where some locals had accused Leigh’s party of a crime was said to have brought terror to the audience.¹⁵⁴ Belzoni, in his account of his ‘exploits’ in Egypt reported that Ibrahim was called ‘the terror of the people’ and recounted his harsh and seemingly arbitrary justice. One suspect was tied to the mouth of a cannon which was then fired, another pair, accused of killing a soldier, were roasted alive on a spit. Belzoni expressed some sort of

¹⁵² *Times*, April 27, 1826, p.2-3.

¹⁵³ Thomas Legh, *Narrative of a journey in Egypt and the country beyond the cataracts*, M. Thomas, Philadelphia, 1817, p.38.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.123.

astonishment that this man was the heir to Ali, who he seemed to respect.¹⁵⁵ The Baroness von Minutoli, who travelled through Egypt with her husband in the 1820s cast a different light on Ibrahim's justice. Ibrahim was responsible for clearing the countryside of robbers, and because there were so many of them, he had no choice but to resort to brutal measures: 'the security at present enjoyed is owing only to the son of the Pacha, who had been obliged to resort to very rigorous measures, by executing a great number of these wretches.'¹⁵⁶

During the Greek War of Independence, European authors built on these negative reports on the character of Ibrahim, and were even harsher towards him because his victims were now Christian Greeks, rather than Egyptians. Madden, the Irish abolitionist, was scathing towards Ibrahim:

He is so corpulent as to be unable to go any distance afoot, and possesses neither dignity of feature nor of figure. His eyes are small and twinkling, of that peculiar grey which Lord Byron supposes characteristic of cruelty; and the tout ensemble of his countenance is exceedingly vulgar. I was much disappointed at seeing him for the first time; people, somehow, expect to find a man, much talked of as a soldier, of more than ordinary stature.¹⁵⁷

Ibrahim was just a typical 'Oriental' to Madden. Madden also held negative opinions of Ali, but these were far exceeded by his description of Ali's son.

Perhaps the most illuminating account comes from Rev. Charles Swan in his book *Journal of a Voyage up the Mediterranean*. Swan recounted an audience with Ibrahim during his campaign in the

¹⁵⁵ Giovanni Battista Belzoni *Narrative of the operations and recent discoveries within the pyramids, temples, tombs, and excavations, in Egypt and Nubia* vol 1, John Murray, London, 1820, p.49.

¹⁵⁶ Minutoli, *Recollections*, p.102-103.

¹⁵⁷ Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine*, p.188.

Morea. Swan, on his journey as Chaplain of a British ship in the Eastern Mediterranean, took part in a prisoner exchange negotiation involving Ibrahim. Ibrahim presented himself as someone who cared about European opinions. According to Swan Ibrahim had asked ‘what would Europe say of a man who acted with so little firmness?’¹⁵⁸ Swan however, believed that Ibrahim’s protestations of respecting Great Britain were merely a mask.¹⁵⁹ Swan presented Ibrahim as a cruel man, willing to foolishly sacrifice his troops for little gain, because he could easily send for more from his father: ‘Mehemet Ali was training forty thousand men, and he [Ibrahim] was in daily expectation of a reinforcement of twelve thousand. If these were cut off he would have more; and he would persevere till the Greeks returned to their former state.’¹⁶⁰ Ibrahim complained that the support of the English for the Greeks was pointless, as they would lose eventually:

If the good people of England who are so fond of sending money to the Greeks would send it directly to *me* it would save them considerable trouble; eventually it all comes to my treasury. I have taken heaps of purses from the Greek soldiers filled with English sovereigns.¹⁶¹

Swan’s encounter with Ibrahim portrays him as an archetypal villain, a role that fit his side in the Greek War of Independence in the minds of many in Britain and France.

A second meeting with Ibrahim the next day, 16 September 1825, provided Swan with more insight into his character. Ibrahim was scathing towards the character of the Greeks, and claimed they would not fit into Europe:

¹⁵⁸ Rev. Charles Swan, *Journal of a Voyage up the Mediterranean*, Vol II, C & J Rivington, London, 1826, p.238.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.240.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.241.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Liberty ! Liberty ! What changes they ring upon this *liberty!* I prize liberty as another man, but the Greeks are not fit for it. If they had it, and were become an established government, they would be the scourge of Europe; they would respect neither the laws nor the usages of nations. Even in the zenith of their fame they were remarkable for their duplicity and civil dissensions; and they are the same people still.¹⁶²

Swan believed that Ibrahim was being too harsh on the Greeks, especially since he had done worse than he had accused them of:

His Highness, it seems to me had forgot or was ignorant of the cruelties of the Spanish inquisition—the conquest of Peru—the atrocities of the French Revolution; and more than all, of the inhuman butchery of the Greeks at Scio! But Turkish barbarity is almost an exhausted theme and Ibrahim may one day be reminded of what he seems to have lost all sight of!¹⁶³

Ibrahim again promised that the Greeks could not hope to resist the might of Egypt:

‘“The best thing for the Greeks,” continued the despot, would be an unconditional surrender. Let them return to their former condition. You know the extent of the population in Egypt: I will gain my object at whatever sacrifice; and I hope that a *good God will enable me to do so!*”¹⁶⁴

Ibrahim had become the villain in the Greek saga, a man who was almost comically cruel to European audiences, a man who in his callousness came to represent for Europeans a typical ‘Turk.’

¹⁶² Ibid., p.243-244.

¹⁶³ Ibid..244.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.244-245.

The Path to European Intervention

In June 1826, the *Times* published a letter from Lord Thomas Cochrane to Muhammad Ali.

Cochrane had served in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars, and had already served in the independence struggles of Chile and Brazil in South America. Cochrane was hired by the London Philhellenic Committee to lead a fleet to combat Ottoman Naval dominance. Cochrane's letter was part of the rising French and British public anger against Muhammad Ali in 1826 for his role in the Greek independence struggle. Anger in France was also rising over what was seen as French favouritism towards Muhammad Ali at the expense of the Christian Greeks. Reports of Greeks being sold into slavery when they were captured outraged many in France and Britain, including Lord Cochrane, who wrote:

It is true that the Christian world have not of late contended in arms with those of your faith, on points of religion; they have not, however, fallen into a state of apathy so great as to see unheeded the perpetration of those enormities which you are daily committing on their Christian brethren; a sentiment with which no feeling of animosity towards you, or towards your people, is combined, but on the contrary, a desire to render you every good service consistent with that duty, paramount to all others—namely, to wipe out the stain from the civilized world, of unfeelingly and inhumanly co-operating to exterminate, enslave, and transport to bondage a whole Christian people.¹⁶⁵

Cochrane was echoing others in decrying Ali's actions in the Greek conflict, and he encouraged Ali to end his involvement in the Greek conflict and focus his efforts on returning Egypt to its supposed former heights. Cochrane's letter is a sign of just how much European Philhellenes saw

¹⁶⁵ *Times*, June 23, 1826, p.3.

the Greek conflict as a war between Civilisation and Christianity against Barbarism and Islam, Muhammad Ali being a representation of the latter.

The idea of Cochrane, a private British citizen sailing off to support the Greek cause was not universally applauded. The *Glasgow Herald* feared Cochrane's adventure would have negative ramifications on British relations with the Ottoman Empire, taking an opposite tack to the *Times*:

Let the nation either declare war openly, or oblige every British subject to keep at peace. To connive at individuals entering into measures which may eventually lead the country into a war, is taking the highest prerogative which it possesses from the Crown, and placing it in the hands of every adventurer.¹⁶⁶

Two unnamed men 'deeply interested in Turkish and Egyptian affairs' petitioned the Foreign Minister, Stratford Canning, to stop Cochrane from intervening in the Greek struggle. The *Times* thought that these men had no right to oppose Cochrane, opining that:

Surely, of all persons, these should be the last to make a similar application; they are, no doubt, well calculated to teach the right hon. Gentleman the principles on which he should act.¹⁶⁷

Many speculated that the Cochrane letter was in fact a forgery, but the *Examiner* carried confirmation in early July, reporting that the letter was sent by Cochrane to a relation after setting sail for Greece.¹⁶⁸ Salt reported back to London complaining of Cochrane's entry into the fray in

¹⁶⁶ *Glasgow Herald*, June 26, 1826, p.2.

¹⁶⁷ *The Times*, June 29, 1826, p.3.

¹⁶⁸ *Examiner*, July 2, 1826, p.4.

August 1826, arguing that Cochrane's entry would threaten British commercial and strategic interests in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶⁹

For many Europeans agitating for an independent Greece, Muhammad Ali had missed a chance to declare Egypt independent under his rule, to support Greece, as well as to raise his standing in the eyes of Europe. The liberal French newspaper the *Courrier Français* said as much in 1827:

Allied with the Greeks, he could, by uniting the army and navy of the two countries, have prevented the Turks from undertaking anything against either Egypt or Greece. Turkey herself, weakened by the struggle, could not at that period resist the Greeks, left to themselves. Europe expected from him the civilization of Egypt, and that fine country looked to him for the establishment of a protecting and beneficent Government.¹⁷⁰

Salt still believed that the reason Ali had not yet declared independence was because Ali was waiting for the British to sanction his independence, and he thought at this time that the French had already accepted and encouraged the future independence of Ali's Egypt.¹⁷¹

Over the course of five years, including only two years of active involvement in the suppression of the Greek rebellion, Muhammad Ali had undergone a transformation in the eyes of Europe. He went from someone who was largely being seen as a positive force for Egypt, a moderniser whose main fault was that he was too controlling of Egypt's economy, to becoming an Oriental villain, responsible for massacring and enslaving Greeks.

¹⁶⁹ FO, p. 78/147 83-84, Henry Salt to Joseph Planta, Alexandria, August 4, 1826.

¹⁷⁰ *Morning Chronicle*, August 10, 1827, p.1.

¹⁷¹ FO 78/147, p. 111, Henry Salt, Alexandria, 'Minute of conversations held with His Highness Mahomet Ali Pasha, at Alexandria,' September 30, 1826.

The Resolution Of The Greek Crisis

By 1826, Emperor Nicholas I had become the ruler of Russia, after the death of his brother Alexander I, and Nicholas was keener on involving Russia directly in the Greek conflict than his predecessor. Russia and Britain both agreed at this point on the necessity of some European intervention to create a Greek state, and signed a 'protocol' to end the Greek conflict. This protocol called for an autonomous Greece under the auspices of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷² Article five guaranteed that neither party would seek territorial gain in resolving the Greek conflict, which satisfied the British as they did not want to see Russia further encroach upon the Mediterranean.¹⁷³ Russia and Britain were soon joined by France, which realised that they would be better served by being part of this attempt at a joint solution.¹⁷⁴

In July 1827, the French, British, and Russian governments agreed to the Treaty of London, calling for an end to the Greek conflict on the basis that it 'cause[d] fresh impediments to the commerce of the States of Europe' and was giving rise to piracy in the region.¹⁷⁵ In the treaty the three parties called for an autonomous Greece under the protection of the Ottoman Empire, a situation similar to that of Muhammad Ali's Egypt, in which Greece would be required to pay an annual tribute to the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁷² Correspondence with Russia Relative to the Affairs of Greece Previous to the Conclusion of the Treaty of July 6, 1827, House of Lords Papers, Correspondence, 314, 1863, Vol XXVII, p.35.

¹⁷³ St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still be Free*, p.315.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ Treaty for the pacification of Greece, between His Majesty, the most Christian King, and the Emperor of all the Russias. Signed at London, July 6, 1827, House of Commons Papers, 003, 1828, Vol XXVII, p.32.

Britain, France, and Russia finally intervened in the Greek War of Independence over six years after it had erupted. The British, French, and Russian fleets sent to try to stop hostilities after the Treaty of London was signed entered Navarino Bay where an Ottoman-Egyptian fleet was waiting. With the two navies in close contact, a minor skirmish erupted in part of the bay and soon both fleets were in battle. Navarino marked a turning point in the war, as Greek independence seemed to become inevitable. The French and British governments had yielded to public pressure to save the Greeks, and their own desires to maintain their positions in the Eastern Mediterranean balance of power. The new French liberal government was much less reluctant to get involved in the Greek cause, not fearing the consequences of a victory of a liberal political movement at all. They sent a French expeditionary force to Greece, which would eventually convince Ibrahim to accept his father, Muhammad Ali's, wishes and withdraw his forces.

Muhammad Ali was placed in a difficult position by the defeat of his fleet at Navarino. His naval power was greatly reduced, but his son, Ibrahim, still commanded a large force in the Morea and was reluctant to return home. The Porte desired to continue the war, Navarino not at all breaking its resolve. The British, believing Ali was already more reluctant to continue the Greek conflict because of its effects on his relations with Europe, sent Codrington to Alexandria to negotiate with him.

The *Caledonian Mercury* reported on the French papers of mid November 1827, and included a lengthy excerpt from the *Quotidienne*, which believed that the battle of Navarino was orchestrated by the British, in order to bring Greece under their power, and bring a rift between the French and Muhammad Ali:

Wherefore is France, in spite of the rank she holds in Europe, content to play a secondary part in the affair of Greece; and wherefore does this power, whose patience is so magnanimous towards the Bey of Algiers, show herself so inveterate against the Sultan, who has never offered her the slightest offence? In time, wherefore is it that this France, who keeps up friendly relations with the Pacha of Egypt, which has opened to him the dock-yards of Marseilles for the building of his vessels, proceeds to burn those same vessels, and expose the French to the fire of cannons taken from her own arsenals?¹⁷⁶

While the French were losers from the battle of Navarino, the English would gain according to the Royalist *Quotidienne*:

As to England, we may be sure beforehand, that she alone will gain by what has happened. There is no occurrence of which she does not know how to profit. [...] When Great Britain wants to paralyse the ambitious efforts of Russia, she supports the Turks; she even makes a coalition of Cabinets in their favour. [...] If, at a later period, the affairs of Greece change their complexion—if the naval forces of Alexandria and Constantinople join—England, who looks with a jealous eye upon this maritime power, instantly proclaims the treaty of the 6th of July, and by this stratagem causes France to join in the destruction of the fleet of Mehemet Ali, at whom she had begun to take umbrage. Soon, however, she will reconcile the Viceroy of Egypt, and appropriate to herself the commerce which the French carry on upon the banks of the Nile.

The *Quotidienne* continued in the same vein, recalling the ill-fated 1807 British invasion of Egypt:

Very few persons recollect that England attempted some years ago to cause this Pacha to be replaced by one of her creatures, Elphi Bey; [...] We have thus contributed to deliver

¹⁷⁶ *Caledonian Mercury*, November 22 1827, p.2.

England from the fear that the Pacha of Cairo, aided by France, or some other nation, might one day threaten its empire in India. This is at the present moment the most certain result of the battle of Navarin.¹⁷⁷

The *Quotidienne* saw this victory as also a blow for Muhammad Ali, a man who, despite his faults in carrying out the Greek conflict, would still have been a useful ally for France in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially against the British.

The reaction to the battle of Navarino in other quarters was much more positive than in the pages of the *Quotidienne*. The *Constitutionnel* hoped that Navarino was just the beginning, that it marked the end of threats to European merchants from the ‘barbarians’ of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire: ‘The brilliant and Christian victory of Navarino must be, it must be hoped, the prelude of events more considerable still to come.’¹⁷⁸ The *Constitutionnel* was excited for what the battle meant for the Greek cause:

The most immediate result of the victory of Navarino is the deliverance of the heroic Hellenes, the forces destined to swallow the rest of this Christian nation have been pulverised; Ibrahim no longer has the resources [...] For Greece, one can consider them as delivered forever from the Ottoman yoke; this definitive deliverance came to be irrevocably concluded at Navarino; And when history recalls the long line of misfortunes, the immense sacrifices of this nation of heroes has had to suffer to break their chains, to reconquer their fatherland.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ *Le Constitutionnel*, November 10, 1827, p.1.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. ‘Le résultat le plus imminent de la victoire de Navarin est la délivrance des héroïques Hellènes ; les forces destinées à engloutir les restes de cette nation chrétienne sont pulvérisées ; il ne reste plus à Ibrahim d’autres ressources

The *Constitutionnel* did wonder what Navarino would lead to: how would the Austrians react? But these concerns hardly dampened the excitement that allied victory in the battle of Navarino caused.

The *Journal des débats*, which had transformed from a conservative to liberal newspaper during the 1820s, also celebrated the victory at Navarino: ‘Victory! Greece is saved! Victory! The Philhellenic treaty was not an empty promise!’¹⁸⁰ For the *Journal des débats*, Navarino was not only a victory for the Greeks, it was a great victory for the liberal opposition in France: ‘the opposition, which agitated in vain for this holy alliance for five years, triumphed this time by the law and the arms.’ The *Journal des débats* tempered excitement by reminding its readers that there were still issues to sort out in the Greek conflict, including what Austria would do and the ‘bitterness of the Pacha of Egypt,’ but still the most important thing, was that ‘Greece is saved!’¹⁸¹

The *Times* did not react with the same unbridled joy as the Philhellene French papers, nor did it react with the regret and distaste of the *Quotidienne*:

If the valour displayed by our tars and allies was most honourable to the flags of their respective nations, the loss of life which they sustained, and which they were forced in self-defence to inflict, can be considered no otherwise than as a grievous though inevitable,

qu’une fuite impossible, [...] Pour la Grèce, on peut la considérer comme délivrée à jamais du joug ottoman ; sa délivrance définitive vient d’être irrévocablement conclue à Navarin ; et lorsque l’histoire recueillera la longue suite de malheurs, les immenses sacrifices que cette nation de héros a dû subir pour briser ses chaînes, pour reconquérir une patrie, pour se reposer.’

¹⁸⁰ *Journal des Débats politiques et littéraires*, November 9 1827, p.2. ‘Victoire ! la Grèce est sauvée ! Victoire ! le traité philhellène n’a pas été une promesse trompeuse.’

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.2. ‘L’opposition, qui sollicita en vain pendant cinq années cette alliance sainte, trimphe à la fois par les lois et par les arms.’ ‘La situation difficile de l’Autriche, les ressentimens du pacha d’Egypte, l’irritation religieuse et politique de la Porte sont, dans la guerre qui éclate, des complications don’t on ne peut calculer les résultats. Dans tous les cas, qu’une grande pensée nous console: la Grèce est sauvée!’

sacrifice to the attainment of objects equally recommended to the States of Europe by good policy, and urged upon them by every humane and Christian feeling.¹⁸²

The *Times* was excited, like the *Constitutionnel* in France, about what Navarino meant for an independent Greece: ‘the question relating to Greece and Turkey may now be regarded as, at least in substance, put at rest.’¹⁸³ Regardless of whether the Ottoman Empire and Egypt continued to resist the Allies, Greece would be independent, as they could not hope to stand against the Allied forces, ‘in either case, the object of the treaty of July 6 is attained.’¹⁸⁴

Contrary to the fears of some in France, Muhammad Ali did not react aggressively against the European powers because of the defeat at Navarino. He was reported in the European press as ‘not much surprised’ at the destruction of the combined Egypt-Ottoman fleet at the hands of the three European powers, and that it caused him to also redouble his efforts to force the Ottoman Empire to negotiate.¹⁸⁵ Muhammad Ali was frosty towards the European consuls in the immediate aftermath of the battle of Navarino, but the British consul reported no real adverse reaction:

The long apprehended crisis passed over without our tranquillity having for a moment been disturbed, or diminishing in any degree the public opinion of our perfect security in this province.¹⁸⁶

Ali’s reaction was perhaps a sign that he had, after all, not actually believed much in the Ottoman cause. Ali was more interested in his own power, and with his navy now lying at the bottom of the

¹⁸² *The Times*, November 12 1827, p. 2.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *The Times*, December 21, 1827, p. 2

¹⁸⁶ TNA FO 78/160, p. 352, John Barker, Alexandria, To His Excellency Sir Edward Codrington, November 28 1827.

sea because of his support of the Ottoman Empire, he could even less afford to get into an actual conflict with any European power.

A feared reaction against Christians also failed to materialise. Ali himself ‘displayed great magnanimity’ in his response, and that while receiving the report of the battle ‘he frequently stopped to exclaim aloud “I told them what would be the consequences; did they think they had to deal with Greeks?”’¹⁸⁷ The Consuls believed this was because of Ali’s reluctance to get involved in the Greek conflict in the first place. Ali also sought out the commander of the one European ship of war in Alexandria at the time:

For the express purpose of apprising him, that the total destruction of his Fleet, however he might deplore the event, had made no alteration in his friendly sentiments towards French subjects, and towards all Europeans residing in Turkey, who he should, whatever consequences might ensue, continue to look upon as entitled to his personal and special protection.¹⁸⁸

When the acting British Consul general, John Barker, was received by Ali on November 3, he reported being met with ‘more than usual politeness and distinction.’

He renewed then in the strongest terms the assurances, which he had solemnly given to the late Mr. Salt at Cairo, that in case of a war with the Porte, British subjects in Egypt should be safe in their persons and property.¹⁸⁹

Ali was quite candid to Barker, saying ‘I know well how to appreciate and to maintain the Reputation I have acquired for justice and liberality.’¹⁹⁰ Barker brought up the report that the ‘Grand

¹⁸⁷ FO 78/160, p. 353, John Barker, Alexandria To His Excellency Sir Edward Codrington, November 28 1827.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

Signor had declared, should his Fleet be destroyed, he would order a general Massacre of all the Christians in his dominions,' and in response Ali declared that such a thing would be abhorrent to him: 'such an act would be in direct opposition to the principles of the Mahomedan faith, and that "if the Grand signor should perpetrate the horrible deed, he could not look upon him as a Mussulman, but as an infidel."'”¹⁹¹ Ali was trying to excuse his actions as having been forced upon him by the Ottoman Empire, rather than an active choice he had himself made. Ali's desire was to keep the European powers in support of him, so that they would perhaps shift to seeing him as a force that could reform the Ottoman Empire. Barker astutely reported what he thought of Muhammad Ali's position:

The Vice Roy is evidently in a most delicate situation, he is probably waiting the course of events, which he hopes, in case of war, will present some conjuncture, of which he may, with his usual address, avail to secure the advantages of neutrality without incurring the weighty consequences of a rupture with the Porte.¹⁹²

Ali would soon incur the weighty consequences of a rupture with the Porte, when he decided to try to take what he believed the Ottoman Empire owed him for his efforts in the Greek conflict.

Others, however, thought Ali was simply a coward, afraid to break with the Ottoman Empire, and afraid to anger the European powers. Madden, the Irish abolitionist, believed Ali had missed his chance for independence, and that his European supporters were taken in by the face he presented to only Europeans:

If he were the hero his parasites proclaim him, why did he not seek his independence? If he were the liberal minded Moslem he is reputed, why did he waste his treasures in a war which

¹⁹¹ FO 78/160, p. 354, John Barker, Alexandria, To His Excellency Sir Edward Codrington, November 28 1827.

¹⁹² Ibid.

had nought to recommend it to him but Christian bloodshed? The reason is obvious and simple; it is because he is too much of a Turk in *petto* to cast off the allegiance he owes the successor of Mahomet. He endeavours to steer a middle course between the *giaours* and the Sultan; and, whenever his interests require him to be treacherous to the former, his moderation and his civilization will vanish into thin air.¹⁹³

Ali had proven himself untrustworthy to Madden. He would not align with European interests because he was too much of a Turk and a Muslim to betray his masters in the Ottoman Empire. For Madden, Ali was just another Oriental Despot.

Ali would soon withdraw his forces from the Greek conflict. In 1828, a squadron of ships blockaded Alexandria, and while they were there Ali avoided the city because he did not want to see the blockade.¹⁹⁴ In July 1828 Ali expressed a willingness to ‘retire from the Morea if he can find such a justification as will secure him against the anger of the Sultan.’¹⁹⁵ The French *Expédition de Morée* arrived in Greece in August 1828 and provided Ali with just such a justification. Ali accepted the tripartite demands for Egyptian forces to withdraw in September, the last Egyptian forces withdrew in October.¹⁹⁶

Egyptian involvement in the Greek War of Independence had caused a significant negative backlash against Muhammad Ali and his son Ibrahim in France and Britain, as philhellenes and others in both nations rallied for the freedom of the Christian Greeks from the Muslim Ottoman

¹⁹³ Madden, *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia and Palestine*, p247-250.

¹⁹⁴ TNA FO 78/170, p. 164-170, John Barker, Alexandria to the Earl of Dudley, Principal Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, May 17 1828.

¹⁹⁵ FO 78/170, p. 327-329, Edward Codrington, HMS Asia, Corfu to John Barker, July 26 1828.

¹⁹⁶ McGregor, *A Military History of Modern Egypt*, p.102.

Empire. Public pressure did not dramatically change the relationship of the European states with Egypt, however. While the battle of Navarino in 1827 destroyed many of Egypt's most modern ships, France and Britain were willing to treat Ali separately to the Ottoman Empire, brushing off the Orientalist tropes of the media reports and recognising that he was more reluctant to be involved in the Greek conflict. With the loss of Morea and the promise of its governorship for his son, as well as the promise of granting him rule over Syria, Ali soon decided to invade to acquire what he thought was his right.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Guichen, *La Crise d'Orient de 1839 à 1841 et l'Europe*, p.101.

CHAPTER 4: Britain, France, And Reactions To The First Egyptian-Ottoman War

British and French reactions to the first Egyptian-Ottoman War illustrated many aspects of the nineteenth-century relationship between Europe and the 'Orient.' This war, as a war between two 'Oriental' powers provides a useful counterexample to the Greek War of Independence in exploring European 'Orientalism' and how it shaped policy. The lack of an obvious compelling reason to differentiate the two belligerents like religion or 'Europeanness' has meant traditional historiography has largely held that European policy was based more on calculated strategic reasons than the romanticism that is recognised to have inspired the pro-Greek intervention. Yet examining the facts around French and British reactions to the situation in Syria reveals a more complicated picture. Narratives of progress, civilisation, and even 'Europeanness' deeply influenced European reactions to the First Egyptian-Ottoman War, rather than just the dry national interest concerns that have long been held to influence reactions.

The First Egyptian Ottoman War has been described as a 'prelude' to the second,¹ but it was a significant event in its own right. Muhammad Ali's aspirations for personal gain clashed against the Ottoman Empire military as well as against the policies of the European powers. European policymakers were sceptical of Ali's attempts to replace the seemingly moribund Ottoman Empire. At the same time, none of the European powers were actually willing to commit to expanding in the Middle East and Anatolia at this time, but all feared expansionism from the others which could possible disrupt the balance of power.

¹ P. E. Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, p.16.

The early 1830s saw the development of a long-standing Liberal-Conservative split in the European Great Powers, with the Western pair, France and Britain taking up more liberal policies in opposition to the Conservative policies of Russia, Austria, and Prussia. Russian and Austrian policy in this period was largely based on the idea of maintaining the Ottoman Empire, with leaders of both both fearing what would result from a total collapse (although happy to chip away at the edges). Britain and France were more conflicted. Policymakers in both recognised the rationale of maintaining the Ottoman Empire, but Muhammad Ali offered a reformist cultural allure to many in the two liberal powers that was hard to ignore. Britain, under the Foreign Policy leadership of Viscount Palmerston eventually settled on a policy based on supporting reform within the Ottoman Empire, while France took a more overtly pro-Ali line in the 1830s.

The conflict in Syria also shines a spotlight on many of the issues surrounding early nineteenth-century imperialism and Orientalism. The conflict was set against the background of several European powers attempting to exert or extend their informal imperial influence in the Ottoman Empire (largely Britain, France, and Russia), Muhammad Ali's Egypt trying to establish a formal imperial empire in the 'Middle East,' and the Ottoman Empire's attempt to maintain its imperial control over Muhammad Ali's Egypt. Syria in the 1830s was a place of overlapping imperialisms. European perceptions of the countries and leaders involved helped shape their policies in ways that have often been ignored in the historical literature. Orientalist writings about Muhammad Ali and Sultan Mehmed II of the Ottoman Empire helped influence European policymakers who by and large had no on-the-ground experience of the 'Middle East.' The 'Oriental mystique' of Ali drove opinions of him, both positive and negative, in the European capitals.² Rather

² Ibid., p.52.

than the great men of the European capitals driving changes and policies in the Middle East, the Middle East was at least somewhat driving foreign policy in the European capitals, as sovereigns and cabinets were forced to react to the situation that was thrust upon them without their planning. Initially European statesmen and consuls struggled to find explanations for the crisis in Syria that could be framed in European terms, rather than dealing with the situation as driven by the actions and desires of Muhammad Ali.

This chapter will explore perceptions of Ottoman reform in the early 1830s, alongside perceptions of Muhammad Ali's rule in the early 1830s, to try to situate British and French responses to the crisis in their proper cultural context. These responses, at least on the governmental side, were lacklustre, and British and French policymakers seemed more preoccupied by other concerns. Towards the end of the crisis, Russophobia came to dominate reactions in Britain and France, especially after Russia intervened on the side of the Ottoman Empire and signed the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi granting them a newly prominent role in the defence of the Ottoman Empire. Especially in Britain, the danger of Russian control of the Bosphorus and thus easier access to the Mediterranean was too much to bear. Russian intervention in the Ottoman Empire was a threatening development for the other European powers, which were already greatly concerned about Russia's encroachments into Ottoman territory over the previous century. Not unlike views of the Ottoman east, Russophobia as a concept was linked to European conceptions of the 'Orient' with Russia also seen as a 'mysterious' Eastern power. Unlike the Ottoman Empire, however, Russia was seen as growing in territory and stature. As such, it was viewed as far more dangerous than the Ottoman Empire. The growth of Russophobia among the British political class and indeed British society as a whole would, after the conclusion of the 1833 conflict, contrast with French

Egyptomania and pro-Ali movements and help bring about the more significant break in policy between France and Britain in the second Egyptian-Ottoman War.

Informal Imperialism, Orientalism, And Perceptions Of Reform

The 1830s did not herald a new era in depictions of the Orient. Rana Kabbani writes of the Orientalists of the 1830s and 1840s:

the Orient, then, is caught in a state of timelessness, crammed full of incidents remarkable for their curiosity or eroticism, hushed into silence by its own mysteries, incapable of self-expression, mute until the Western observer lends it his voice, It is the seraglio of the imagination disclosing itself, with its veiled women, its blind musicians, its black eunuchs, and jealous princes; it is the impossible other, the bourgeois drawing-room's secret foil.³

The Orient was still a sexually charged and dangerous place for Europeans, just like it had been when Shakespeare and Jodelle wrote their Cleopatra plays centuries earlier. Ironically, many of the painters who formed images of the Orient for European consumption did not actually visit the Orient before painting their works. Eugène Delacroix painted his *La Mort de Sardanapale* before visiting the Orient, inspired by one of Lord Byron's works.⁴ The Orientalism of the painters and writers was similar to the Orientalism of Napoleon and the Philhellenism of the Philhellenes that fought for Greek independence—the Orient, and the concept of Greece were 'silent, available to Europe for the realization of projects that involved but were never directly responsible to the native inhabitants.'⁵

³ Kabbani, *Imperial fictions*, p.73.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.75.

⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, p.94.

As discussed in previous chapters, by the early nineteenth-century, the Ottoman Empire was no longer seen as the existential threat that had seen the ‘Turk’ portrayed as the most significant threat to European survival, but the scars of the ostensible ‘Ottoman peril’ remained in the European psyche.⁶ The growing imbalance of power between Europe and the Ottoman Empire had led to a situation where the European powers were no longer worried about the Ottoman Empire as a power of equal or greater stature. Travellers to Egypt continued to impose their orientalist narratives on the country, and during the 1830s a picture starts to emerge of policy driven by writings about the East. Debate about reform and modernisation in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt would begin to be reflected by policy.

Other developments drove changes in the interaction between East and West. In a way, 1829 marked the beginning of a new era for Egypt. With the birth of steam ships in the early nineteenth-century, the East India Company began to look at Egypt as a better route to India than around the Cape. The ‘plan’ in ‘contemplation since 1824’ was finally tested in 1829.⁷ The first voyage between ‘Bombay and Suez’ was made in 1830.⁸ Regular steam communication with India via Egypt would come in the 1830s, but the first tests were proof that Egypt had entered an era of even more strategic worth for Britain. This meant that in the British mind that there was a heightened fear about Egypt being used by another power as a conduit for attacks on their Indian possessions. Thus, the British felt they had even more reason to keep other powers out of Egypt.

⁶ Ibid., p.59.

⁷ TNA FO 78/184, p. 121, John Barker To Robert Gordon, Ambassador Extraordinary & Minister Plenipotentiary to the Sublime Porte, Alexandria, May 23 1829.

⁸ Marlowe, *Anglo-Egyptian relations: 1800-1956*, p.43.

Thomas Waghorn, a British sailor, became perhaps the most important advocate of the Egyptian steamship route. He was allowed to embark on a test run through Egypt, with the belief that he would make it to India and back to England in three months. Waghorn believed the establishment of steam-ship communications with India was of ‘vast importance’ to both the British Government and the East India Company.⁹ Waghorn was explicit about the purpose of his particular travel diary. Rather than just being an ethnography or ‘description’, his was written explicitly to advocate for this new steamship communications and transport route.¹⁰

The ‘stability’ provided by Muhammad Ali’s governance for European travellers was seen as key to this potential British plan by Waghorn:¹¹

In conclusion, I am induced to think, that under Pacha Mahomed Ali’s government in Egypt, and also that of his presumptive successor Ibrahim (Pacha), the passage through Egypt and down the Red Sea is likely to remain uninterrupted, and were I journeying in the character of a special messenger, I should have no hesitation in again dispensing with the guard usually taken in other eastern countries on these occasions, having had none at any time when I passed through Egypt.¹²

This ‘stability’ provided by Ali in Egypt was one of the reasons that the British moved to adopt policy of informal imperialism towards Egypt at the time. Jesse Savage’s explanation of informal imperialism in the Ottoman Empire is exemplified here.¹³ Even the writers who believed Ali was particularly barbaric recognised the stability he had brought to Egypt.

⁹ Thomas Waghorn, *Particulars of an Overland Journey from London to Bombay* (London: Parbury, Allen, and Co., 1831, p.viii.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.9.

¹¹ Martin Anderson, ‘The development of British tourism in Egypt, 1815 to 1850,’ *Journal of Tourism History*, 4:3, 2012, pp.259-279, p.276.

¹² Waghorn, *Particulars of an Overland Journey from London to Bombay*, p.40.

¹³ Savage, *The stability and breakdown of empire*.

Despite British fears about Muhammad Ali, he continually expressed a willingness to accept British backing, and he had long spoken about the necessity of British support. He spoke to Henry Salt in 1826 of his 'anxious desire' to serve the British government.¹⁴ Ali again spoke of his desire for closeness with Britain after rejecting French overtures for a joint invasion of Algiers and what is now Libya, however the British continued to fear he was a French pawn. British fear of France had been a factor in British Egyptian policy for over half a century by the time the first Egyptian-Ottoman War erupted, going back to George Baldwin's scheme for an anti-French invasion of Egypt in the 1770s.¹⁵ This fear of France, driving British policy towards Ali would soon be joined by a British fear of Russia that would largely override the fear of France in Britain's reaction to Ali's invasion of Syria.

Character and Policies of Muhammad Ali

As previously discussed, Muhammad Ali existed both within and without traditional European perceptions of Oriental rulers. The views of British consul, George Barker, that Ali was weak and only holding his power through his control of the purse strings and fear firmly positioned Ali within traditional European understandings of Middle Eastern rulers, 'Oriental despotism.' The view of the 'Orient' as a place of self-aggrandizing despots was embedded deep in the assumptions of European leaders by this point. As discussed in Chapter One, 'Oriental despotism' was seen in Britain as something that was the 'antithesis' of their own forms of rule which they saw as quintessentially democratic and respectful of basic human rights throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

¹⁴ FO 78/147, p. 103-104 Henry Salt, Alexandria, 'Minute of conversations held with His Highness Mahomet Ali Pasha, at Alexandria,' September 30, 1826.

¹⁵ Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire*, p.128.

Oriental despotism, it was thought, was a ‘societal despotism,’ rooted not just in barbaric leadership but in an entirely barbaric societal system.¹⁶ Thus, for these European writers and thinkers, it would take truly great men to resist the traditional ‘despotic’ aspects of their society. Ali, as detailed previously, sat in a space of tension between ‘Oriental despotism’ and the ‘Enlightened West.’ On the one hand was the view that Ali was merely a traditional Oriental despot seeking power at ‘any cost,’¹⁷ and on the other side there was the other view of Ali as a progressive ruler, especially in France where he was seen as ‘a Francophile and progressive sovereign, inheritor and continuer of Bonaparte.’¹⁸

In *Orientalism*, Said characterised the European conception of the Orient as a sort of ‘theatrical stage’ on which figures appear ‘whose role it is to represent the larger whole from which they emanate.’¹⁹ For Europeans of the early 1830s, however, the larger than life figures of the Orient were Muhammad Ali and his son, Ibrahim, as well as the Sultan Mahmud II. The first two of these figures partially confounded and did not merely nourish the Orientalist European imagination. Ali could embody different things for different writers. For some, he acted strictly to type as an Oriental figure, while for others he broke the mould, rebuilding the Orient into something better.

Many writers who expressed positive views about Ali still reproduced criticisms of him that presented him as an Oriental despot. A source from the *Edinburgh Cabinet Library* published in the *Hull Packet and Humber Mercury* described his character ‘as intermingled with many good qualities, a

¹⁶ Venturi, ‘Oriental Despotism,’ p.134.

¹⁷ Sarga Moussa, *Images du pouvoir, pouvoirs de l'image. Horace Vernet juge de Méhémet-Ali*, Die Kunst des Dialogs / L'Art du dialogue. Sprache Literatur, Kunst im 19. Jahrhundert - Langue, littérature, art au XIXe siècle, p.3. ‘le pouvoir, à tout prix.’

¹⁸ Ibid., p.4. ‘Le problème est que cette vision, qui se veut démythifiante, recrée elle-même un autre mythe, celui du souverain Francophile et progressiste, héritier et continuateur de Bonaparte’

¹⁹ Said, *Orientalism*, p.63.

deep tincture of barbarism and fierceness.²⁰ A writer to the *Journal des Debats* in 1833, seeking to influence opinion in favour of Ali, admitted his despotism, but asked readers to focus on the progress made in Egypt.²¹ Ali's unique position as an 'enlightened Mahomedan Prince' allowed him to be able to regenerate Egypt according to a writer in the *Caledonian Mercury*:

No other Turkish Pacha, nor the Sultan himself, could accomplish so desirable a reform, much less could any European power succeed, as is shown by the example of the French at Algiers and on the Barbary coast, where the fanaticism of the natives poses insuperable obstacles.²²

Ali, and Egypt itself had become somewhat trapped between two different ideals. As Ian Coller, in *Arab France* wrote:

The idea of "Egypt" was ambivalently situated between these two forces, one side increasingly idealized as European and patriotic, and the other disparaged as Oriental and despotic.²³

Ali was, like the country he ruled, trapped between these two ideals. As, Daniel Martin Varisco makes clear in his critique of *Orientalism* Muhammad Ali was a figure who complicates Said's conception of Orientalism.²⁴

Jules Planat, in his *History of the Regeneration of Egypt* detailed what he saw as the great work Ali had done, but 'after all the work, the sacrifices of men and money, Egypt was still weak and burdened.'²⁵ Egypt was improved, but a work unfinished. For the British journalist James Augustus

²⁰ *The Hull Packet and Humber Mercury*, May 31, 1831.

²¹ *Journal des Debats*, January 23, 1833, p.2.

²² *Caledonian Mercury*, June 4, 1832.

²³ Coller, *Arab France*, p.131.

²⁴ Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid*, p.89.

²⁵ Jules Planat, *Histoire de la Regeneration de l'Égypte*, J Barbezat, Paris, 1830 p.182. 'Après tant de travaux, de sacrifices, d'hommes et d'argent, l'Égypte est toujours faible et obérée.'

St John, Ali was a tyrant, but he saw his project in more successful terms than Planat. In Augustus St John's book, titled *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, he described Ali as

A despot, destitute of the resources supplied by study, and an enlarged knowledge of mankind, relying solely on his own rude genius, has manifested the design, not merely to found a dynasty,--which in the East would be nothing new;-- but at the same time to regenerate and conduct into the tract of European civilisation, a people demoralised and degraded by a thousand years of political servitude.²⁶

Ali was keenly aware of his own lack of formal education, and that informed his passion for education of his sons and other Egyptians.²⁷

Ali also sent Egyptians to learn in France and brought Europeans to help establish his own native centres of power.²⁸ This exchange, sending students to learn in Europe and receiving Europeans to teach in Egypt helped cement an Orientalist dynamic. This is in a way reflective of how Orientalist narratives are constructed. In *Resisting Colonialist Discourse* Zawiah Yahya writes about how this cultural exchange helped cement Orientalism within the 'Orient':

this constituted world (the Orient), before a disjointed, anarchic mess, now made coherent and comprehensible, is then ironically given back as the western "gift of identity" to the East.²⁹

The French backers of Muhammad Ali's education schemes also saw them as a way to Westernise the Orient. Jomard, one of the editors of the *Description* and heavily involved in the French education

²⁶ James Augustus St John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali* vol 1, Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, London, vol 1, p.viii.

²⁷ Marsot, *Egypt in the reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.90.

²⁸ Prakash, 'Reappraising the French role in nineteenth-century Egyptian education,' p.537.

²⁹ Zawiah Yahya, *Resisting colonialist discourse*, Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia, 1994, p.23.

schemes aspired for *mission civilisatrice* aims desired ‘to establish a more formal French cultural imperialism over Egypt in order to usher that country into civilization.’³⁰ Ian Coller’s book *Arab France* explores this cultural exchange in detail.

For Coller, Ali’s efforts to send Egyptian youths to be educated in France were more than a simple attempt to provide them with an education better than those available in Egypt:

The École Égyptienne, then, constituted from the very beginning a political transaction. At least in part, the student mission represented an attempt by a powerful Egyptian leader to associate his nation with the discourses of political modernity in France. In return, certain parties in France hoped to advance their own careers by convincing the state of the influence to be gained by entertaining these students, who in the best light may be seen as emissaries of French culture, in the crudest as hostages to ensure Egypt’s alliance with French interests in Europe and beyond.³¹

As Coller notes, Ali’s desire for education was not just or even primarily a crude political manoeuvre. Ali believed strongly in the value of education, it was, according to Marsot the most important priority Ali had for his own sons. Ali’s interactions with his sons, detailed in Marsot’s *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, show a man heavily concerned with educating his children, using European tutors and European styles even within Egypt.³²

Ali’s educational schemes, while in a way exemplifying the Orientalist project as explored above, also in a way countered the traditional Oriental narrative. Ali, an Oriental ruler, was, largely of

³⁰ Prakash, ‘Reappraising the French role in nineteenth century Egyptian education,’ p.8.

³¹ Coller, *Arab France*, p.164.

³² Marsot, *Egypt in the reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.89-92.

his own volition, sending young Egyptian men to be educated in Europe. This was not an imposed education scheme, but one instituted by Ali himself. By educating his citizens Ali was breaking the traditional narrative of an Oriental despot keeping his subjects in his thrall because of their lack of education, Ali was demonstrating a capacity to change. This education, however, was undertaken in Western centres of power, not in Cairo itself, and the Western discourses learnt by the students would no doubt reinforce the cultural imperialist relationship between Europe and Egypt, helping to pedestalise Western knowledge above Eastern knowledge.

Muhammad Ali can even be seen as embodying many parts of the Orientalist project. Said, in talking about the 'Orientalist's conception of himself' defines this conception as the belief that an Orientalist was in their own view 'a hero rescuing the Orient from the obscurity, alienation, and strangeness which he himself had properly distinguished.'³³ While Said here was talking about the anthropological study of the Orient, Ali can still be seen as part of this Orientalist tradition of trying to restore the Orient. The Orientalists according to Said, believed they 'modernized, restored to the present' the Orient.³⁴ Ali, however, did not appear to have grand designs to restore Egypt to its great past, he was more concerned in aggrandising present Egypt, for his own benefit and power, and not for some Western conception of Egypt. Ali did however take note of this Western interest in his projects, Orientalism in Muhammad Ali's Egypt was not a one directional projection of European beliefs and values onto the Orient. It was encouraged and supported by Muhammad Ali, who saw European travellers, from the professional Orientalists to the amateur Orientalists as useful tools.³⁵ This was not exactly an intentional policy, but the initial travellers of the 1810s and 1820s reported

³³ Said, *Orientalism*, p.121.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Anderson, 'The development of British tourism in Egypt,' p.260.

back on how safe Egypt had become, under the 'enterprising' leader, Muhammad Ali, and so more travellers came to Egypt.³⁶

Ali's troops, at least in drills, were seen as formidable by European observers. The British consul observed of one regiment that arrived in Alexandria in June 1829:

They are a very fine body of men, well-armed, well dressed, supplied with good tents, in the highest discipline, and in every respect equal to the best European soldiers, except in experience and in the ability of their officers.³⁷

Ali had plans to raise an army of 'one hundred thousand strong,'³⁸ he stated to John Barker, the British consul.

Despite the supposed quality of his troops, Ali was still not confident in the ability of his Egyptian officers in managing his fleet themselves. Accordingly, he mentioned to Barker that he thought he could not 'dispense with European Naval Officers.'³⁹ Ali had previously mostly employed French officers, but Barker reported that he had soured on their abilities compared to those of British officers:

it is now apparent that the Viceroy has given a preference to English Sailors, and means henceforth to employ not only Officers of the British Navy, but also first-rate Seamen, such as masters' mates, boatswains, gunners, etc.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., p.261.

³⁷ FO 78/184, p. John Barker To Robert Gordon, Ambassador Extraordinary & Minister Plenipotentiary to the Sublime Porte, Alexandria June 23, 1829.

³⁸ FO 78/184, p. 171 John Barker to Vice Admiral Sir Pulteny Malcolm Commander in Chief of H.M. Naval Forces in the Mediterranean, Alexandria, July 8, 1829.

³⁹ TNA FO 78/202, p. 172, John Barker to The Right Honorable Viscount Palmerston, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, Alexandria, August 11, 1831.

⁴⁰ FO 78/202, p. 173, John Barker to Palmerston, Alexandria, August 11, 1831.

Ali employed a British Officer, Colonel William Light (notable for surveying Adelaide in South Australia), to return to England to find officers for his Navy.⁴¹ Ali clearly respected the British navy. He had visited the HMS Isis when it docked in Alexandria in October 1829,⁴² and had also sent his fourth son, Said, to serve as an Ensign in the Navy at the age of 13 ‘according to British custom.’⁴³

Ali also focused on improving his industrial base to be able to supply and maintain his army with modern equipment. Ali’s industrial and economic policies were a point of criticism for European observers, but Marsot holds that they were successful despite this.⁴⁴ European criticism was focused on Ali’s monopolies and protectionism, and creative ignorance of the capitulations signed between the Europeans and the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵ However, despite Ali’s control of trade and European displeasure with his policies, the importance of trade between Europe and Egypt only increased during Ali’s reign. Marsot describes this as ‘a shift in commercial orientation’ for Egypt, in which it was no longer part of a particularly Ottoman sphere of trade but now linked irreversibly in the European sphere of trade.⁴⁶ As trade between Egypt and Europe increased the relative importance of each side to each other increased. Ali, through his commercial policies, had tied himself irrevocably to the European powers, and needed their favour to continue to expand his power.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² FO 78/184, p. 243 John Barker to Robert Gordon, Ambassador Extraordinary & Minister Plenipotentiary to the Sublime Porte, Alexandria, October 19, 1829.

⁴³ Marsot, *Egypt in the reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.91.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.190.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.195.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.191.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Ali's reign occurred primarily during a period when the powers of Western Europe and America were industrialising, and because of their demand for raw materials, the 'poor' countries on the 'periphery' were subjected to 'deindustrialising forces.' In their 2015 article discussing the relative merits of Ali's industrial policies for Egypt, Laura Panza and Jeffrey G. Williamson established that Ali's policies, whilst controversial among Europeans, did have some positive effect on the industrialisation of Egypt.⁴⁸ Ali's establishment of a 'military-industrial complex' has been described as impressive.⁴⁹ Native Egyptian expertise was lacking, so Ali hired European soldiers and engineers to complete his projects. By 1833, over 15000 Egyptians would be employed at Muhammad Ali's arsenals.⁵⁰

Ali's regime began to extend its control over the lives of ordinary Egyptians. An 1830 ordinance restricted Egyptians to their native districts.⁵¹ This was a new form of control exercised by an Egyptian government. What separated Ali's regime from previous Egyptian governments was the continuity of its power. Previous governments had exercised control through more intermittent measures, but as Ali sought to create a powerful European style army, he had to take more and more control over the resources and 'productive capacity' of Egypt.⁵² One of the most significant legal reforms instituted by Muhammad Ali's government were the 1829 criminal codes, which broke with established Ottoman practice by specifying 'clear penalties for each offense.'⁵³ Mine Ener describes these laws as serving two distinct purposes, one outward facing, and one inward facing. Ali's laws

⁴⁸ Laura Panza, Jeffrey G. Williamson, 'Did Muhammad Ali foster industrialization in early nineteenth-century Egypt?', *The Economic History Review*, 68:1, 2015, pp.79-100, p.99.

⁴⁹ John P. Dunn, *Khedive Ismail's Army*, Routledge, London, 2005, p.3.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1991, p.55.

⁵² Ibid., p.56.

⁵³ Mine Ener, At the Crossroads of Empires: Policies toward the Poor in Early- to Mid-Nineteenth-Century Egypt, *Social Science History*, 26:2, 2002, pp.393-426, p.400.

and rule benefited Europeans by greatly increasing ‘public security’ in Egypt, serving to increase his standing in European capitals, while simultaneously imposing more systematic obligations on the populace,’ which helped secure his power: ‘they represented and symbolized the centrality of his power, demonstrating to the populace of Egypt that all punishments were derived from his omnipresent authority.’⁵⁴

The supposed modernity of Ali’s regime attracted praise from many quarters in Europe in the 1830s. The *Caledonian Mercury* saw its virtues as obvious when compared to other regimes in its region: ‘Whatever may be the defects of his Government, it is by contrasting the present state of things with the anarchy which formerly prevailed in Egypt (within the memory of the writer) that the Pacha’s system can be appreciated.’ Comparing it to the Ottoman Empire, the article continued ‘it must be confessed that his system has worked wonders, and it affords an earnest of what may be expected from him in the organisation of Syria.’⁵⁵

The *Examiner* even praised Ali’s regime for its liberality and the aspects of constitutional monarchy that Ali had supposedly introduced to Egypt:

The Pacha has made an approach to what we may even call the liberal in politics. He has selected leading men of the various provinces of Egypt, and brought them together to form a deliberative council or parliament at Grand Cairo. No doubt parliament men, who have the fear of the scimitar and bowstring before their eyes, will be careful to meddle with nothing but what is propounded to them, and will be guarded in the language which they employ; but still such a council may be of eminent service, both to the Pacha and to the people. The evils

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *Caledonian Mercury*, February 2, 1833, p.4.

of bad government more frequently result from ignorance than criminal intention, and even a Pacha may prefer beneficial measures when he has no strong passion to gratify by an opposite course. Such a council, therefore, to supply a Pacha with information of what is to his advantage may be a considerable blessing.⁵⁶

Sir Alexander Johnston of the Asiatic Society praised Ali in a speech recorded in the *Caledonian Mercury*. Ali was described as ‘one of our honorary members, a chief of clear and vigorous mind.’⁵⁷ Ali had ‘restored to Egypt [...] all the arts and sciences of Europe.’ He had also ‘emulated, as a patron of knowledge, the conduct of the most enlightened of the Caliphs of Bagdad, and has afforded, as a Mahomedan, a bright example for their imitation, to all the Mahomedan sovereigns in Europe, Africa, and Asia.’⁵⁸ This view of Ali as an energetic moderniser, embracing European ideals, beliefs and industry stood in contrast to the European view of the Ottoman Empire. As such, Muhammad Ali’s Egypt offers a useful counterpart to analyses of the Ottoman Empire that foreground an almost totalising Orientalism in writings dealing with the East, especially for the period of the 1820s and 1830s when Muhammad Ali embarked on an attempt at imperial expansion first within and then without the constraints of his formal imperial master.⁵⁹

The idea of the Ottoman Empire as a declining entity, one slipping away from its peak had fed into European policy for years. While the idea of the ‘sick man of Europe’ held sway in the latter parts of the nineteenth-century, this vision of the Ottoman Empire as a fundamentally flawed regime, not long for this world was extant considerably earlier than the ‘sick man’ trope. This conceptualisation of the Ottoman Empire has seeped into our modern understanding of the

⁵⁶ *The Examiner*, July 22, 1832.

⁵⁷ *Caledonian Mercury*, September 17, 1832.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Savage, ‘The stability and breakdown of empire,’ p.164.

Ottoman Empire, although these views have been challenged.⁶⁰ At the basic level this belief that the Ottoman Empire was so disconnected from its territories that it would not care, or even that it would approve, if they were invaded by a responsible European power drove some European policy (France in 1798 and Britain in 1807 in the case of Egypt) but was not founded on any reality. The Ottoman Empire did still care about what happened in Egypt and in both cases was able to excise the European threat to Egypt with assistance (from Britain in 1798 and from its vassal Muhammad Ali in 1807).

The Ottoman Empire had been not merely 'at the gates' of Europe for several centuries by 1830, but had been a European power since the late fifteenth century. But the 'Turks' were not viewed as European. Instead, they were viewed in many ways as fundamentally in opposition to 'Europeanness.'⁶¹ The Ottoman Empire had for centuries served as something that delineated the boundary of Europe it was the "other" in the distorting mirror of Europe's self-image.⁶² The Ottoman Empire was constantly compared to Europe, and as Europeans saw their societies as 'advancing' they started to see the Ottoman Empire as behind Europe in terms of progress. Through this process, by the early nineteenth-century, reform and modernisation became the prism through which 'Oriental' leaders were judged. Good 'Oriental' leaders would manage to reform and modernise their territories, they would institute European style bureaucracies, and European style armies, and most importantly would open their territories for European trade and commerce.

⁶⁰ Faroqhi, *Approaching Ottoman History* contains a useful background to readers on Ottoman historiography.

⁶¹ Rajko Mursic, 'On Symbolic Othering: 'The Turk' as a Threatening Other, in Bozidar Jezinec Ed., *Imagining the Turk*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2010, pp.17-26, p.19.

⁶² S. Woolf, 'Europe and its Historians,' *Contemporary European History*, 12:3, 2003, pp. 323-337, p. 330.

This expectation was exemplified by an article in the *Caledonian Mercury* in June 1832. In it, Muhammad Ali was compared favourable to other past leaders in the Ottoman Empire. Under Ottoman misrule, the article argued,

Syria and Palestine, like most of the provinces in Asia under Turkish sway, have for centuries been stationary in improvements; and from the fanatical prejudices of the people, have been nearly inaccessible to Europeans.⁶³

Just a short time ago Egypt was in the same situation, the article stated, however: ‘a total change has been effected by the genius and energy of one man, Mehmet Ali Pacha.’⁶⁴ Ali’s introduction of a European style military and European style education and governance had led to wholesale changes in Egypt. Egypt was, in some ways, now part of Europe:

By this enlightened system, the barriers of prejudice, which so long kept Egypt debased by ignorance, and at enmity with everything European, have been broken down, and Europeans of all nations can now traverse the whole country in their own dress, with as much safety as on an part of the continent.⁶⁵

Other supporters of the Ali regime were converted by what they saw as the power of his forces compared to the seeming decline of the Ottoman Empire. Alphonse de Lamartine, the French writer and politician who wrote a book of his voyages to the ‘Orient’ while the Egyptian-Ottoman War was ongoing portrayed an image of Ibrahim, Ali’s son, as a sort of ‘quasi-mythological hero,’ someone who ‘symbolised military power.’⁶⁶ Lamartine even compared Ibrahim to Napoleon, writing that he even exceeded the great French leader in some respects.⁶⁷ Lamartine also compared

⁶³ *Caledonian Mercury*, June 4, 1832, p.1.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Sarga Moussa, La figure d'Ibrahim dans le "Voyage en Orient" de Lamartine, *Écrire l'histoire*, 2011, pp.63-75, p.65. ‘Ibrahim est pour Lamartine une *figure*, à la fois symbole du pouvoir militaire et illustration de la capacité humaine à transformer politiquement le réel. Il accède, dans le *Voyage en Orient*, au statut de héros quasi mythique.’

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.6.

Ibrahim to Alexander the Great, believing that the three military conquerors of the ‘Orient’ all had ‘civilising missions’ in mind, and were great men who would help bring about a reunion of the Orient and the Occident.⁶⁸

British sources too still praised Ali, despite his rebellion against the Sultan. The *Caledonian Mercury* favoured a solution that retained Ali’s control over Syria. Ali, according to the article, could revive European influence in Syria, advancing the cause of civilisation. As such, Britain should support Muhammad Ali by accepting his control of Syria, while still a vassal under the Sultan.⁶⁹ A visitor to Cairo who wrote about Ali, John Madox, similarly praised his personality after meeting with him. ‘We were delighted with Mohammed’s affability and courtesy, and with the apparent absence of ostentation and parade.’⁷⁰

Ali was clearly not unaware of the need for European support and praise. Auguste Sakakini, a ‘translator’ in his service published a book titled ‘*On Egypt and on European intervention in the Affairs of the Orient*’ in Paris in 1833. According to Sakakini’s translation Egypt was ‘shaking off the shackles of barbarism, and shining the torch of civilisation in the Orient.’⁷¹ Sakakini became more direct about the purpose of his work later in the introduction: ‘I am trying to say, in these few pages, what is the situation in Egypt; that which the Vice-Roy can do, and what you must do for him.’⁷² Sakakini sought to firmly counter many of the Orientalist assumptions about the ‘uncivilisable’ East. On the contrary, for Sakakini, Islam was not an obstacle to progress, one merely had to look at history to

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.8.

⁶⁹ *Caledonian Mercury*, March 3, p.4.

⁷⁰ John Madox, *Excursions in the Holy Land, Egypt, Nubia, Syria, etc*, London, 1834, Vol. I, p.125.

⁷¹ Auguste Sakakini, *De l’Égypte et de l’intervention européenne dans les affaires d’Orient*, Paris, 1833, p.3. ‘S’il est un spectacle digne d’intérêt, c’est celui de l’Égypte secouant les langes de la barbarie’

⁷² Sakakini, *De l’Égypte.*, p.3. ‘J’essaierai de dire, dans ce peu de pages, quelle est la situation de l’Égypte ; ce que le Vice-Roi peut faire, et ce qu’on doit faire pour lui.’

see great centres of learning like Cairo and Baghdad, and how the Ottoman Empire brought order to its territories and built a powerful industry, and how Spain, ‘enriched, enlightened by the Arabs’ had helped bring the ‘West’ out of the ‘darkness of ignorance.’⁷³ Sakakini thought that all the progress he saw was entirely dependent on Ali: ‘nothing would be possible with the exercise of the most energetic authority.’⁷⁴

Comparisons between Ali and the Sultan often reflected positively on Ali’s reforming and modernising spirit compared to the backwardness of the Sultan. Thye comparison of James Augustus St John was particularly pointed:

To profess and undertake are easy, Selym, Ab-dul-Hamid, and Mahmood may justly, perhaps, obtain credit for similar projects; but the deplorable condition of the Turkish empire is a proof that their enterprises are simply entitled to the praise of well-meaning efforts, rendered ineffectual by their ignorance and want of genius.⁷⁵

But some resisted this impulse. David Urquhart, the pro-Ottoman agitator, saw them as both great men: ‘they are both endowed with great natural abilities;--they are both above the prejudices of their age and country;--they have both succeeded in extirpating the military oligarchies which oppressed Turkey and Egypt;--and they have both neglected and despised, although not in the same degree, the fundamental and admirable principles of the administration they direct.’⁷⁶ For Urquhart, the comparison even reflected favourably on Sultan Mahmud, due to the far more difficult situation he faced.

⁷³ Ibid., p.4. ‘L’Espagne, enrichie, éclairée par les Arabes, offrant des modèles de sociabilité et d’industrie lorsque tout l’Occident était encore plongé dans les ténèbres de l’ignorance.’

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.5. ‘Ce présent serait funeste, et en tout cas rien n’est possible sans l’exercice de l’autorité la plus énergique.’

⁷⁵ St John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, p.viii.

⁷⁶ David Urquhart, *The Sultan Mahmood and Mehemet Ali Pasha*, James Ridgway & Sons, London, 1835, p.15.

A writer, calling himself 'Marco Polo Junior' also wrote favourably of Ibrahim in *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, a British publication in 1833. Ibrahim, just a few short years after he had been declared a barbarian crushing the hapless Christian Greeks, was presented as the very model of a modern reformer. 'Marco Polo' wrote of Ibrahim:

He is without doubt a man of remarkable talents. His mind is alike subtle and energetic. He is totally free from prejudice, adopts your ideas with silent rapidity, and his career demonstrates his military genius. His ambition is unbounded; his admiration of European institutions and civilization great; but he avoids, with dexterity, shocking the feelings and prejudice of the Moslemin.⁷⁷

Ibrahim was not entirely enlightened, in his estimation, however, given that according to 'Marco Polo' he had a cruel and decadent streak. He was:

A great voluptuary; his indulgence, indeed, in every species of sensuality is unbounded. Although scarcely in the prime of life, his gross and immense bulk promises but a short term of existence, and indicates a man sinking under overwhelming disease, and incapable of exertion. His habits are sumptuous: he delights in magnificent palaces and fanciful gardens, and is curious in the number and the beauty of his Circassians; but his manners are perfectly European.⁷⁸

Ibrahim too, according to this description, was a man stuck between two worlds. The modernising, energetic European leaning leader, and the traditional, decadent, Oriental despot.

⁷⁷ 'Marco Polo Junior, 'Ibrahim Pacha, the Conqueror of Syria,' in *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, Part the First, Henry Colburn, London, 1833, p.154.

⁷⁸ *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, p.154.

The Franco-Egyptian Scheme to invade Algeria and Ali's British Overtures

In his reports to the Foreign Office and the Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Barker maintained his predecessor's suspicions of his French counterpart Drovetti, and reported to the British Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the Earl of Aberdeen when he departed 'ostensibly' for 'health reasons.'⁷⁹ Barker had however heard from sources that Drovetti's departure was more suspicious. He suspected that Drovetti had not left Egypt because of health reasons but because he had been charged with 'a special mission of great political importance.'⁸⁰ Barker accurately suspected, from Drovetti's statements, that he was returning to France to try to secure a potential joint Franco-Egyptian invasion of Algiers. While initially sceptical of whether this project could possibly succeed, Barker had become convinced of its viability and was thus worried that

Gigantic and even chimerical as this project appeared to my British intellect, when the French consul-General expatiated on the details of its execution, all obstacles vanished, whether those obstacles were contemplated as arising from the present embarrassed critical position of the Vice-Roy, or resulting from the opposition that was anticipated from the Powers, which were to be subdued. [...] On the question of the practicability of Monsieur de Drovetti's plan, whenever I could form a distinct conception of his eloquent and vehement harangues, I found the magick of the Name of Mehmed Ali was to be paramount to every requisite, and such was, in his intimation, the weight and influence of that Name in the Mahomedan Countries, which were to be invaded, that an aid in ships and troops from the French became a mere prudential and almost supererogatory measure to make success doubly sure.⁸¹

⁷⁹ FO 78/184, p. 204 John Barker to the Earl of Aberdeen, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Alexandria, August 18, 1829.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ FO 78/184, p. 205 August 18, 1829.

Barker reported to the British ambassador in Constantinople of a further mysterious French mission to Muhammad Ali in November 1829.⁸² Once again, the French, and Drovetti, were suspected of attempting to convince Ali to join in on Drovetti's plan for a joint Franco-Egyptian invasion of Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis. The mission would ostensibly bring these semi-independent states back under full control of the Ottoman Empire.⁸³ Barker correctly ascertained, however, that Ali would not commit to this mission under these terms, with 'well informed people' of the opinion 'that the Vice Roy will not be induced to do what is required of him.'⁸⁴

Barker submitted a long report to The Earl of Aberdeen, the Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on 8 March 1830, discussing Ali's response to the French plan. Ali told Barker how he had rejected the French plan because it would have threatened his relationship with the British, and because he needed their support, reasoning that 'with the English for my friends I can do every thing, without their friendship, I can do nothing.'⁸⁵ Despite this expression of Ali's supposed positive feelings for Britain Barker was not swayed, and nor was the British government. Palmerston, the foreign secretary for two separate periods that covered almost all of the 1830s was by 1832 resolutely pro-Ottoman. Marsot calls attention to the fact that, while Ali was consciously trying to keep Britain on his side, his expansionist attempts would still draw negative British attention, especially since the Ottoman Empire was too weak to resist British attempts to enhance their trade position by seeking further capitulations.⁸⁶

⁸² FO 78/184, p. 283 John Barker To Robert Gordon, Ambassador Extraordinary & Minister Plenipotentiary to the Sublime Porte, Alexandria, November 29, 1829.

⁸³ TNA FO 78/192, p. 91, John Barker To Robert Gordon, Ambassador Extraordinary & Minister Plenipotentiary to the Sublime Porte, Alexandria, February 22, 1830.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ FO 78/192, p. 109 John Barker to the Earl of Aberdeen, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Cairo, March 8, 1830.

⁸⁶ Marsot, *Egypt in the reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.219.

Ali's actions in dealing with the French over Algiers, including discussing the proposed expedition with the British, indicate his foreign policy priorities. He wanted both the French and British to support his rule, but could not afford either of them to be against him. Ali, through his advisor, Boghos, sought to discover whether the British would consent to him being in control of Algiers and the other proposed conquests. Boghos summarised the Egyptian position to John Barker as such:

The English can never consent to the French colonizing in Barbary. What government but that of Mohamed Ali can be established on the ruins of the Government of Algiers, which could afford a sufficient guarantee for the cessation of piracy? [...] Due to his unvarying policy of attaching himself to the English, observe how he has rejected the tempting offer of the French of being put by them in immediate possession of Algiers!⁸⁷

Boghos told Barker that Ali believed it was not the French who could give him what he wanted, only the English would be able to: 'through the French he knew it was unattainable, but through England it would be brought about as a natural consequence of his dependence on them.'⁸⁸

According to Marsot, however, it was European diplomatic manoeuvring that put an end to the joint Franco-Egyptian invasion of Algeria, not Ali's attempts to get the British onside.

The collapse of the Franco-Egyptian scheme for the invasion of Algiers led directly to two events that would reshape European and especially French interactions with the Middle East and North Africa. The restoration monarchy would decide to invade Algiers on their own, and Ali would

⁸⁷ FO 78/192, p. 251, John Barker to the Earl of Aberdeen, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Alexandria July 6 1830.

⁸⁸ FO 78/192, p. 252 John Barker to the Earl of Aberdeen, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Alexandria July 6 1830.

look instead to Syria, an area that would bring him into more direct competition with the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁹ Ali and Barker later discussed the news that the French had landed in Algiers, at Torre Chica (now Sidi Fredj). Ali believed that the British would not let the French remain long in Algiers.⁹⁰

Ali did not seem to believe Barker served as his best conduit to influence and power in the British government. He relied on British nationals more closely aligned with him to try to gain British support for his actions. He particularly relied on Samuel Briggs, who even served in an official capacity under Missett in the 1800s. Briggs had substantial business interests in Egypt and continued to agitate the British government for support of Ali's schemes.⁹¹ Briggs often argued the direct opposite points of Barker in his missives to the British government, believing that Ali was not reviled but in fact beloved by the people of his territory in Egypt and parts of the rest of the Ottoman Empire.⁹² In fact, according to Briggs, it would be in the interests of Britain to have an independent Egypt, supported by Britain, as a counter-weight to the seemingly Russian-controlled (after 1833) Ottoman Empire.⁹³

The Invasion of Algiers and the End of The Restoration

The French invasion of Algiers came during the death-throes of a regime. The Bourbon restoration, led by the conservative King Charles X sought to distract the French people from domestic

⁸⁹ Marsot, *Egypt in the reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.218-220.

⁹⁰ FO 78/192, p. 258 John Barker to the Earl of Aberdeen, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Alexandria July 8 1830.

⁹¹ Frederick Stanley Rodkey, The Attempts of Briggs and Company to Guide British Policy in the Levant in the Interest of Mehemet Ali Pasha, 1821-41, *The Journal of Modern History*, 5:3, 1933, pp.324-351, p.337.

⁹² Ibid., p.341.

⁹³ Ibid.

difficulties by seizing Algiers, on the pretext of an insult to the French consul, and to supposedly stop piracy that had been largely endemic in the region. The invasion of Algiers had its immediate origin in a report presented by the French Minister of War in 1827, which argued that the piracy endemic to the Western Mediterranean had become too much for the French to bear, and that they were ‘in the midst of a real war with Algiers’ anyway, and so an invasion was the best way to bring this conflict to a satisfactory conclusion.⁹⁴ The invasion of Algiers, according to the minister of war’s report, would be undertaken in a manner similar to Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798.⁹⁵ Regardless of the long-term influences on France’s invasion of Algeria, the historical consensus remains that the ‘primary aim was to rally support for a tottering regime at home.’⁹⁶

The Bourbon Monarchy had been buffeted by a surge of liberalism, especially in the parliamentary sphere, in the late 1820s. Republicans, revolutionaries and Bonapartistes did not disappear after 1815, but instead sought a ‘working compromise’ with the Bourbon regime.⁹⁷ The ‘liberals’ of France were vociferously nationalist, but were not the only nationalists in France. Liberalism, while traditionally viewed as based largely on the French merchant and industrial classes. However the *bourgeoisie*, was not the only social segment supporting French liberalism. Indeed, due to the dominance of the landowning classes among the French electorate, and especially those eligible to actually run for office, liberalism was arguably a movement of wealthy landowners as well.⁹⁸ Despite right-wing attempts to manipulate the political process, changing electoral laws and

⁹⁴ Schley, *Tyranny of Tolerance* p.33.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.34.

⁹⁶ Sessions, *By Sword and Plow*, p.1.

⁹⁷ Pamela Pilbeam, The Growth of Liberalism and the Crisis of the Bourbon Restoration, 1827-1830, *The Historical Journal*, 25:2, 1982, pp.351-366, p.352.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.357.

reducing the number of eligible voters, liberals still managed to win a majority in parliament in 1827 and a further majority in 1830.

King Charles X however, ignored parliament and appointed an 'ultra' ministry, full of members of the most conservative factions. This was seen by liberals as an attack on the parliamentary system, as the Prime Minister, the prince de Polignac was directly opposed to the now liberal majority.⁹⁹ Charles X had effectively politicized the monarchy. By appointing a ministry that did not have the support of the parliament, the choice became a direct one between 'monarchy or republic.'¹⁰⁰ Yet another election was called and the liberal faction maintained their majority, but Charles X reacted with his fateful four ordinances, which restricted the franchise further, banned liberal newspapers. He then called for new elections.¹⁰¹

The reaction to these edicts was swift and caught the government unprepared. Resistance spread beyond typical liberals and soon the lower classes were rioting against the government. The new regime in France, called the July Monarchy because it was established after the July Revolution, was a 'serious attempt to combine monarchy with liberal governing institutions modelled after England.'¹⁰² Rather than battling against the liberal elements in the press, business, and elsewhere in French society, the July Monarchy under Louis-Phillippe publicly embraced this liberalism and the Charter of 1830 enshrined freedom of the press.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.363.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.365.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Jo Burr Margadant, 'Gender, Vice, and the Political Imaginary in Postrevolutionary France: Reinterpreting the Failure of the July Monarchy, 1830-1848,' *The American Historical Review*, 104:5, 1999, pp.1461-1496, p.1463.

¹⁰³ Irene Collins, 'The Government and the Press in France during the Reign of Louis-Phillippe,' *The English Historical Review*, 69:271, 1954, pp.262-282, p.262.

Roger Bullen has described French policy in the immediate aftermath of the July Revolution as ‘dominated by the search for an agreement with another power.’¹⁰⁴ France was still in a weakened position internationally after the fall of the French Empire in 1814-1815, and the more liberal leaning United Kingdom was a natural fit for the post-July France. Not all French leaders believed that a purely ideological alliance with the United Kingdom what France required, however with some ‘opportunists’ like Talleyrand more pragmatically believing that the United Kingdom, regardless of ideology, gave France the best hope of returning to great power status.¹⁰⁵ For his part, Palmerston, the British foreign secretary, did not favour a strong alliance with France, and instead pursued an ‘entente’ with more limited commitments.¹⁰⁶

Before the July Revolution however, the British reaction to the French invasion of Algeria was ‘muted’,¹⁰⁷ however, the newly liberal regime in France appears to have further mollified British opposition to the French occupation of Algiers.¹⁰⁸ Discussion in Britain revolved entirely about what the occupation meant for British strategic interests, with little focus on any sort of moral or other interests that would drive a popular reaction.¹⁰⁹ The British, in fact, generally accepted the French invasion, with most negative reactions focusing on the fact the French did it of their own accord, rather than acting in concert with the other European powers. Algeria was seen as not strategically important to Britain, as they already had more than enough possessions to maintain their control of the Mediterranean, and the British, like everyone else, saw the invasion as a last-ditch attempt by the

¹⁰⁴ Roger Bullen, ‘France and the Problem of Intervention in Spain, 1834-1836,’ *The Historical Journal*, 20:2, 1977, pp.363-393, p.363.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.365.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.366.

¹⁰⁷ Alex Middleton, ‘French Algeria in British Imperial Thought, 1830-70,’ *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History*, 16:1, 2015, pp.1-15, p.4.

¹⁰⁸ J. E. Swain, ‘The Occupation of Algiers in 1830: A Study in Anglo-French Diplomacy,’ *Political Science Quarterly*, 48:3, 1933, pp.359-366, p.365.

¹⁰⁹ Middleton, ‘French Algeria in British Imperial Thought,’ p.4.

government of Charles X to retain its position. As Alex Middleton has argued, the reaction to the invasion bordered on ‘condescension’ because the British were already secure in their belief that they were the only imperial power of note in the region.¹¹⁰

Beyond Algeria, other issues were also weighing on the minds of the statesmen of Europe at the time. The independence of Belgium had come with the involvement of French forces, much to the chagrin of the other European powers which still believed that France threatened to return to their expansionist ways under Napoleon. France alone wanted to see an independent Belgium, but the other European powers feared this independent, Catholic, partly French-speaking state would then be immediately absorbed by its much larger Catholic, French-speaking neighbour. After some diplomatic wrangling, Belgium would gain its independence, largely thanks to British and French support.

The two liberal powers, Britain and France, would move closer in foreign affairs. The British reaction to Russia’s ‘victory’ in the Ottoman Empire and the French reaction to the Münchengrätz Convention of 1833 gave each a reason to seek closer relations with the other.¹¹¹ The 1830s, even more than the preceding decade, saw Europe ‘increasingly become riven by the tug-of-war between Liberalism and Reaction.’¹¹² While the continental foreign policies of Britain and France moved further into alignment, their reaction to the situation in Syria would still provide a source of tension.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.5.

¹¹¹ F. R. Bridge & Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System 1815-1914*, Pearson Longman, London, 2005, p.93.

¹¹² Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.3.

Ali's Preparations For War

In Egypt, Muhammad Ali was drifting further from the Ottoman sphere. In October 1829, Ali again denied a request from the Ottoman Empire to return the ships that had been in Egypt since limping away from the Battle of Navarino. This refusal puzzled John Barker,¹¹³ and sparked rumours about Ali's intentions in Europe. In Britain, *The Hull Packet and Humber Mercury* reported that Ali had already informed the Sultan that he would eventually seek his independence. The *Hull Packet* considered the news likely but nonetheless cautiously labelled it an 'unauthenticated report.'¹¹⁴ Rumours of Egyptian independence had swirled in European papers for years at this stage, especially through the early years of the Greek War of Independence. Independence was a 'long-cherished goal' of Muhammad Ali, going back to the very start of his reign.¹¹⁵

Barker reported Ali's continued attempts to get him onside, to try to push British policy in a pro-Egyptian direction: 'It is not glory' Ali argued, 'that I aim at, I shall fight for the independence and honour of my country and Religion'. Barker saw this statement from Ali as 'half in jest, half in earnest,' that Ali was trying to convince him that Egypt's preparations were defensive, not offensive, and that Ali would not launch a campaign for independence, but would only accept war if he was forced to. Ali was indicating to Barker that he wanted the European powers to accept any potential action he took in Syria as necessary and retaliative, rather than aggressive and an attempt to usurp the position of the Sultan in the Ottoman Empire.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ FO 78/184, p. 263 John Barker to Sir Robert Gordon, Alexandria, October 22, 1829.

¹¹⁴ *The Hull Packet and Humber Mercury*, October 27, 1829.

¹¹⁵ Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.197.

¹¹⁶ FO 78/184, p. 200 John Barker To Robert Gordon, Ambassador Extraordinary & Minister Plenipotentiary to the Sublime Porte, Alexandria, August 7, 1829.

Despite Ali's lack of success of Ali's in convincing Barker and Britain of the worthiness of his cause, he persisted in his preparations for his Syrian invasion. According to Barker's continued reports, Ali was 'preparing the minds of the people of Egypt for an eventual rupture with the Porte.'¹¹⁷ Ali continued this 'preparation' for a war with the Ottoman Empire throughout 1830, in May he gave a speech that Barker believed could be interpreted as 'raising the standard of rebellion.'¹¹⁸

During this period, Ali continued his attempts to keep the European powers on side as well. He told Barker, 'but should the Sultan attack me, you, Franks, must not take it amiss if I then turn my arms into Syria.'¹¹⁹ Barker talked with Ali's chief advisor Boghos in June 1830, and Boghos discussed the supposed 'duplicity' of Barker's predecessor, Salt, and the French Consul General, Drovetti. Boghos expressed to Barker the supposed thoughts of Ali; that Egypt and the British should cooperate on issues relating to the Ottoman Empire. Boghos talked about 'the mutual necessity of cooperating together for the salvation of the Ottoman Empire.'¹²⁰ Ali and Boghos' arguments were, however, still not particularly persuasive to Barker or his superiors.

In 1831, after the distraction of Algiers had passed, Muhammad Ali returned to focusing on his 'warlike preparations' against Syria, and the Ottoman Empire. In early April 1831, a sickly

¹¹⁷ FO 78/192, p. 120, John Barker to the Earl of Aberdeen, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Alexandria, March 26, 1830.

¹¹⁸ FO 78/192, p. 179, John Barker to His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir R. Gordon, Ambassador Extraordinary, May 28, 1830.

¹¹⁹ FO 78/192, p. 190, John Barker to H.E The Right Honorable Sir R. Gordon, GCB HM Ambassador and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Sublime Porte, Alexandria, June 3, 1830.

¹²⁰ FO 78/192, p. 211 John Barker to the Earl of Aberdeen, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Alexandria, June 22, 1830.

Ibrahim Pacha arrived at Alexandria to help supervise preparations.¹²¹ Thousands were at work in the Alexandria, helping to prepare and enhance Muhammad Ali's navy, including the 'Mehmed Ali' a 110 gun ship. Another ship, supposedly destined to be the largest ship in the world was being built to provide an even greater Flagship for Ali's navy. Barker saw Ali's preparations, and the Ottoman attempts to stave them off through a visit of the Capitan Pasha as a prelude for an Egyptian attempt to capture Acre.¹²² In May 1831, every ship in Ali's navy was ordered to be ready to sail in nine days.¹²³ By May 27 Barker was reporting:

[The] destination is not yet positively known, but nobody entertains any doubt that it will cooperate with an army, that is to march from Cairo, for the purpose of reducing the fortress of St John d'Acre; and adding the Pachalick, together with the Pachalick of Damascus, to the Dependencies of Egypt.¹²⁴

According to Barker, Ali had long wanted to expand his Egyptian holdings into Syria:

This expansion of the territories of his Vice-Royalty having been long a favourite and avowed object of his ambition, the Public infer that the Porte has at length been induced to accede to his wishes by the Vice-roy, on his part, agreeing to the demand of his aid in reducing the rebel Pacha of Bagdad.¹²⁵

¹²¹ FO 78/202, p. 95 John Barker to His Excellency Vice Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Naval Forces in the Mediterranean, Alexandria April 8, 1831.

¹²² FO 78/202, p. 96 John Barker to Sir Pulteney Malcom, Alexandria, April 8, 1831.

¹²³ FO 78/202, p. 110 John Barker to His Excellency Vice Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Naval Forces in the Mediterranean, Alexandria Alexandria May 21, 1821.

¹²⁴ FO 78/202, p. 116 John Barker to His Excellency Vice Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Naval Forces in the Mediterranean, Alexandria May 27, 1831,

¹²⁵ FO 78/202, p. 117 John Barker to Sir Pulteney Malcom, Alexandria May 27, 1831.

Ali had obviously cultivated the impression that the Ottoman Empire approved of his expedition, but Barker was less sure. He concluded his letter to Vice Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm expressing scepticism of Ali's claims:

In the supposition that the public have divined the true cause of these warlike movements, there still remains a very important questions to decide, 'Is the vice-roy acting with, or without sanction of the Porte?'¹²⁶

Ali's 'warlike preparations' continued through June, as he anxiously awaited permission from the Sultan to act:

The Vice-roy has evidently not lost hopes of prevailing upon the Sultan to annex to his Vice-royalty the Pachalicks of Syria, but whether, being disappointed in that expectation, he will ultimately determine to seize those provinces without the Porte's sanction remains to be seen.¹²⁷

Reports of the expedition's abandonment swirled for the next month, but on August 10 1831 Barker reported positively that 'the expedition against St Jean d'Acre, which had been abandoned, is certainly again in contemplation.'¹²⁸ Public opinion, according to Barker, still thought the expedition would be sanctioned by the Ottoman Sultan, but he had learned, through conversations between his staff and Ali's staff, that Ali was strongly considering 'the conquest of that province of the Turkish Empire, not with the sanction of the Porte, but in open defiance of the Sultan.'¹²⁹ Barker believed that Ali and his councillor, Boghos, were trying to ascertain from the British what exactly they would do if Ali unilaterally took it upon himself to seize Syria.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ FO 78/202, p. 140 John Barker to His Excellency Vice Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Naval Forces in the Mediterranean, Alexandria June 18, 1831.

¹²⁸ FO 78/202, p. 168 John Barker to The Right Honorable Viscount Palmerston, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, Alexandria, August 10, 1831.

¹²⁹ FO 78/202, p. 168-169, John Barker to Palmerston, Alexandria, August 10, 1831.

¹³⁰ FO 78/202, p. 169 John Barker to Palmerston, Alexandria, August 10, 1831.

A cholera outbreak in Egypt, which affected Cairo and all the major cities of the Nile Delta region delayed Ali's planned invasion of Syria. Around 900 soldiers stationed in Alexandria perished in the outbreak, and a similar number on the fleet, according to Barker.¹³¹ In addition to this, one of Ali's 'finest corvettes' was shipwrecked in September 1831 in fine weather, and the captain publicly executed, supposedly on the charge of failing to 'do his utmost' to rescue ill sailors aboard.¹³² The fleet was, on October 6 when Barker wrote his dispatch once again preparing to head to Acre. Barker believed that the expedition 'was on the point of expedition' before being disrupted by the cholera outbreak of August and September 1831.¹³³ The cholera outbreak attracted attention in the European press because of how serious it was: 'Egypt is ruined for a long time' the *Journal des Débats* reported in November 1831.¹³⁴

Ali Launches His Attack

By October 6, news had arrived from Cairo that the army there would 'soon march into [Syria].'¹³⁵ By this point, it was finally clear to Barker that the Ottoman Empire was not sanctioning Ali's expansionism, but that Ali hoped, and Barker expected, that once Egyptian control of Syria was a *fait accompli*, the Sultan would be forced to accept the new reality and grant Egypt control over Syria:

Nor is it now any longer concealed by His Highness' Court, that Mehmed Ali is invading Syria without the sanction of the Sultan, yet on becoming master of the Fortress of St Jean d'Acre, Palestine, and Damascus, he will probably continue to make large of large sums of

¹³¹ FO 78/202, p. 289 John Barker to His Excellency Vice Admiral The Honorable Sir Henry Hotham, Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Naval Forces in the Mediterranean, Alexandria, October 6, 1831.

¹³² FO 78/202, p. 290 John Barker to Sir Henry Hotham, Alexandria, October 6, 1831.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ *Journal des Débats*, November 10, 1831, p.1. 'L'Egypte est ruinée pour long-temps'

¹³⁵ FO 78/202, p. 290 John Barker to Sir Henry Hotham, Alexandria, October 6, 1831.

money for a legal Possession, and if we may judge from past similar Events in this Empire, the Porte will then condescend to grant him the usual Firmans – commanding the People to recognise his authority as a legitimate emanation from the Sultan.¹³⁶

Ali was relying on the apparent weakness of the Ottoman Empire and the relative stability provided his government in Egypt to convince the European powers that his rule would be beneficial to them in Syria. He couched his aims in terms short of independence, to ensure that they were more comfortable with his aims. He was, he said, trying to help the Ottoman Empire maintain their power and control of Syria, and if he benefited from the situation then that was just a happy coincidence. If the Ottoman Empire opposed him however he would be forced to oppose them further.

The Egyptian army marched from Cairo in October 1831, finally setting in motion the Egyptian invasion of Syria after months of preparation, false starts, and rumours.¹³⁷ The fleet remained in Alexandria into November, as the army was expected to take around a month to reach Haifa, near Acre. Ali's son, Ibrahim Pacha, left Alexandria on the flagship, the 100 gun 'Mehmed Ali' on November 6 and the rest of Ali's fleet followed in the next three days.¹³⁸ The Sultan sent a representative to Alexandria, who arrived on November 4, two days before Ibrahim left, but his protestations did not prevent the Egyptian force from continuing on its mission of conquest.¹³⁹ In Paris, the *Journal des Débats* reported on the opening of hostilities:

Before breaching the frontier of Syria, the Pacha united a large parliament, and he gave them a long speech about how the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim Religion were approaching

¹³⁶ FO 78/202, p. 290-291 John Barker to Sir Henry Hotham, Alexandria, October 6, 1831.

¹³⁷ Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.222.

¹³⁸ FO 78/202, p. 309 John Barker to His Excellency Vice Admiral The Honorable Sir Henry Hotham, Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Naval Forces in the Mediterranean Rosetta, November 19, 1831.

¹³⁹ FO 78/202, p. 311 John Barker to Sir Henry Hotham, Rosetta, November 19, 1831.

their ruin, under the current Sultan, who in ten years, through his mistakes, had lost Moldavia, Wallachia, Greece, and many beautiful provinces in Asia and Africa.¹⁴⁰

Ali, keenly aware of European opinion, was again trying to prevent himself as a moderniser, seeking to arrest the decay of the Ottoman Empire.

A writer in the liberal French newspaper *Le Constitutionnel* seemed confused by the news of war between Ali and the Ottoman Empire in January 1833, asking ‘what future awaits Egypt’s government by Méhèmet, which will attack the walls of Saint Jean d’Acre, with vessels constructed in Alexandria by a French engineer?’¹⁴¹ *Le Constitutionnel* refused to believe Ali would stop there, predicting that Ali ‘will plant his Egyptian flags on the walls of Damascus and Jerusalem, and he will throw off the yoke of the Porte.’¹⁴² The primary threat of Ali’s revolt to the French was its potential detrimental on commerce. As one article noted, ‘the interests of our commerce in the Orient exist; we cannot risk letting these events affect our merchants in the middle of this conflict.’¹⁴³ Stability, as noted by Savage especially, was a key concern for Europeans in the Middle East during this age of informal imperialism, and Ali’s invasion of Syria was an obvious threat to stability.

This initial French reaction is at odds with what has been characterised as a specifically positive French reaction to Muhammad Ali. The war in Syria was initially seen as a ‘sad

¹⁴⁰ *Journal des Débats*, January 9, 1832, p.1. ‘Avant de passer la frontière de la Syrie, le pacha réunit un divan nombreux, et lui exposa dans un long discours, que l’empire ottoman et la religion de Mahomet s’approchaient de leur ruine, sous le sultan actuel, qui en dix ans, par ses fautes, avait perdu la Moldavie, la Valachie, la Grèce, et tant de belles provinces en Asie et en Afrique.’

¹⁴¹ *Le Constitutionnel*, January 13, 1832, p.1. A quel avenir est réservée l’Egypte gouvernée par Méhèmet, qui bientôt ira battre les murs de Saint-Jean-d’Acre, avec des vaisseaux de haut-bord construits à Alexandrie, par un ingénieur français ?

¹⁴² *Ibid.* ‘Il ira planter ses bayracs égyptiens sur les remparts de Damas et de Jérusalem ; et s’il s’affranchit du joug de la Porte.’

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* ‘Les intérêts de notre commerce en Orient l’exigent ; nous ne pouvons laisser au hasard des événements notre navigation marchande au milieu de ce conflit.’

circumstance' by the French press.¹⁴⁴ By November 1832 the *Journal des Débats* was reporting that the only option left for the Porte was 'foreign intervention' as negotiations were not proving fruitful. To the *Journal des Débats*, Syria represented a different proposition to Egypt for Ali and his brand of governance:

Its inhabitants are not, like those of Egypt, soft and used to slavery; they are on the contrary rebellious and factious, always at war with Turkish despotism, a despotism soft in comparison with that of Muhammad Ali.¹⁴⁵

This reaction by the *Journal des Débats* showcases the two competing views of 'Oriental' society that were prevalent in European views of the conflict. The French reactions, at least among the liberal press of Paris, were not dissimilar to British reactions. While Ali's rule was praised as progressive, writers looked askance at his invasion of Syria because it brought too much uncertainty to the future of the Ottoman Empire.

News reached Alexandria in December that the siege of Acre had begun, and it was optimistically and publicly reported that the city would soon fall to Ibrahim's forces.¹⁴⁶ The rumours Barker had heard about the Egyptian army's progress were less positive; the army was apparently plagued by problems on its march from Cairo, stemming from insufficient forage for the horses and other animals, and desertion. The plan, as Barker had heard from his sources was for Egyptian forces to take Acre, in the 'unfavourable season' to prevent Ottoman forces from relieving the besieged fortress, and to then capture Jerusalem and Damascus. After this stage, it was anticipated

¹⁴⁴ *Journal des Débats*, November 1, 1832, p.1. 'Au milieu de ces tristes circonstances'

¹⁴⁵ *Journal des Débats*, January 15, 1833, p.1. 'Ses habitans ne sont pas, comme ceux de l'Egypte, mous et façonnés à l'esclavage; ce sont au contraire des populations inquietes, factieuses, toujours en guerre avec le despotisme turc, despotisme doux en comparaison de celui de Mehemt-Ali.'

¹⁴⁶ FO 78/202, p. 331 John Barker to His Excellency JM Mandeville, His Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary to the Porte, Alexandria, December 10, 1831.

by the Egyptian court that ‘Ali’s authority shall be fully established throughout the two Pashalicks’ and that the Porte would have no choice but to recognise him as the legitimate authority. The plan was similar to that he had used to gain control over Egypt in 1806.¹⁴⁷

Reports back in Europe initially viewed Ali’s chances negatively, thanks to struggles outside Acre. Indeed it seemed possible to the British and French that Ali’s Syria adventure could lead to the collapse of his regime.¹⁴⁸ In Constantinople, they thought similarly. Ibrahim’s troops were thought to be short of munitions, and that failing to capture Acre quickly would have demoralised them.¹⁴⁹ Not all commentators were pessimistic, however, with one writer in the *Caledonian Mercury* arguing that Ali was just the man to fix Syria:

That fine and interesting country may remain for another century disorganized, and inaccessible to the commerce and civilization of Europe, unless its energies and resources are called into action by an enlightened Mohammedan Prince, such as Mehmet Ali Pacha, who has given proofs to the world, in the regeneration of Egypt, of what he is capable of performing.¹⁵⁰

The *Caledonian Mercury* called on the leaders of Europe to recognise the benefits that Egyptian control of Syria would bring to them, just as they could already see the benefits of Ali’s rule in Egypt.

The situation did not look positive for the Ottoman Empire, but the *Journal des Débats* did not believe all was lost:

¹⁴⁷ FO 78/202, p. 333 John Barker to JM Mandeville, December 10, 1831.

¹⁴⁸ *Journal des Débats*, March 4, 1832.

¹⁴⁹ *Journal des Débats*, July 7, 1832.

¹⁵⁰ *Caledonian Mercury*, June 4, 1832.

Without doubt, there exist today in the Ottoman Empire causes of enfeeblement separate to Ibrahim's expedition; but here we have examined the facts, and the issue is far from being decided in favour of Egypt. We await the next news with a vivid curiosity.¹⁵¹

A man who 'perfectly knows the affairs of Egypt' wrote a letter to the *Journal des Débats* which they published on January 23, 1833. This man stated he was trying to correct misconceptions about the aims of Egypt:

There is talk of the destruction of the Empire, but this is in Constantinople, it is in our capitals of Europe, and not in Alexandria. A project so foolish has not come into the mind of the most valiant swordsman at the head of the army of Egypt.¹⁵²

Egypt, according to this writer and one string of European thought was at the head of a project to revive the moribund Ottoman Empire.

To Barker, Ali expressed that his motivation was a 'variety of personal insults' to him from Abdullah Pasha, ruler of Acre, but Barker believed that the real motivation was instead 'the Viceroy's unbounded ambition.'¹⁵³ Ali now thought of himself as 'his sovereign's equal' rather than a vassal, and had insinuated that 'if the Sultan should oppose the extension of his viceroyalty to the Province of Syria, by force of arms, he will march to the capital.'¹⁵⁴ By January 1832, Ali's threats to the Ottoman Empire were more direct and forceful, and the British government was trying to follow the situation closely. Barker was unable to inform the government of much new information on the

¹⁵¹ *Journal des Débats*, January 15, 1833, p.1. 'Sans doute, il existe aujourd'hui pour la Porte-Ottomane des causes d'affaiblissement étrangères à l'expédition d'Ibrahim ; mais ici nous n'avons voulu examiner que des faits, et la question est loin encore de nous paraître décidée en faveur de l'Égypte. Nous attendons les premières nouvelles avec une vive curiosité.'

¹⁵² *Journal des Débats*, January 23, 1833, p.2. 'une homme qui connaît parfaitement les affaires de l'Égypte' [...] 'On parle de la destruction de l'empire, mais c'est à Constantinople, c'est dans nos capitales d'Europe, et non à Alexandrie. Un projet si insensé n'est pas venu à l'esprit même du plus vaillant homme d'épée de l'armée d'Égypte'

¹⁵³ FO 78/202, p. 333 John Barker to JM Mandeville, December 10, 1831.

¹⁵⁴ FO 78/202, p. 333-334 John Barker to JM Mandeville, December 10, 1831.

situation in Syria, but he was more able to give them a view into the mindset of Muhammad Ali. Ali aimed ‘at nothing less than the overthrow of the Throne of His Sovereign.’¹⁵⁵ His immediate strategic aim, however, was to unite the Arabic speaking parts of the Ottoman Empire under his rule. He believed he could achieve this in three years.¹⁵⁶ Barker believed that Ali was greatly overestimating himself and his power, however, and were he to get into a direct conflict with the full might of the Ottoman Empire he would likely find himself on the losing end:

Mehmed Ali, very much underrates that influence in Egypt, that so far from having partisans in this Province, his downfall would be hailed as a blessing by all classes—by every individual whether native, or European, except for the few whose well being depends immediately on his successful usurpation.¹⁵⁷

Barker believed that even those who depended on Ali could be bribed to support the Porte, and that, given enough money, essentially everyone in his employ would be induced to rise against Ali.¹⁵⁸

Barker recommended that the three unnamed Great Powers who had the greatest interest in the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire would have to unite to place power behind this scheme of bribery.¹⁵⁹ Barker’s view that only Ali had benefited from Egypt’s rule would later be shared by Palmerston, who wrote in 1838 that ‘Mehmet Ali has divided the population of Egypt into two classes the Rich and the Poor. The rich class consists of Mehemet Ali himself singly and alone: the poor class of all the other inhabitants of Egypt.’¹⁶⁰ Marsot agreed with Barker’s perceptions of Egyptian society as intensely stratified, dominated only by Ali’s families and allies.

¹⁵⁵ TNA FO 78/213, p. 16, John Barker to Sir Stratford Canning, His Majesty’s Ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Alexandria, January 8, 1832.

¹⁵⁶ FO 78/213, p. 17, John Barker to Sir Stratford Canning, Alexandria, January 8, 1832.

¹⁵⁷ FO 78/213, p. 18, John Barker to Sir Stratford Canning, Alexandria, January 8, 1832.

¹⁵⁸ FO 78/213, p. 19, John Barker to Sir Stratford Canning, Alexandria, January 8, 1832.

¹⁵⁹ FO 78/213, p. 19, John Barker to Sir Stratford Canning, Alexandria, January 8, 1832.

¹⁶⁰ C. K. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830-1841: Britain, the liberal movement, and the Eastern question*, Vol I, G. Bell, London, 1951, p.275.

Perceptions of Ali and the Ottoman Empire During the Conflict

Ali's project in Syria was seen by some as having come at a great cost for what he had done in Egypt. The *Morning Chronicle's* correspondent had heard from 'several gentlemen' that Egypt and Syria were both in a 'deplorable' situation:

Mehemed Ali has sacrificed the one in order to create an army, and has sucked it so dry, that it has neither population nor culture; and his hopeful son is beginning to play the same game in the newly acquired provinces, dragging forth every shilling they possess, and exhausting all their resources for the purpose of adding to his own army and fleet.¹⁶¹

To others, Ali was an expansionist despot, with the *Morning Chronicle's* correspondent opining: 'the project of the Viceroy of Egypt is the most simple possible. He says, "I will amass such a force, no matter thought I destroy my own territory, as will enable me to overrun others. I will subsequently enrich Egypt with the wealth which I acquire."' ¹⁶² The portrayal of Ali here as a self-aggrandizing despot calls to mind earlier descriptions of Ibrahim and Ali during the Greek war of independence, where they were portrayed as typical Oriental despots.

The European focus on the relative merits of Muhammad Ali's Egyptian regime and Mahmud II's Ottoman regime does not mean that the Ottoman Empire was sliding passively towards decay. The Sultan, Mahmud II, attempted to reform the Ottoman Empire into a more modern, European state. The dissolution of the Janissaries in 1826 was viewed as a major step, and among many European supporters of 'Turkey' came to represent the Sultan's commitment to

¹⁶¹ *Morning Chronicle*, August 22, 1832.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

reform, and the removal of a major institutional obstacle to reform.¹⁶³ English foreign policy, under Palmerston, would come to be based on the fact that Sultan Mahmud II too was a 'genuine reforming sovereign.'¹⁶⁴

Donald Quataert has described the Ottoman Empire's nineteenth-century as a contrast between a decline in 'the relative international position' of the Ottoman Empire and the 'Ottoman state structure' which 'not only survived but flourished.'¹⁶⁵ In general, for the European powers, retention of the existing Ottoman state was more beneficial for them economically and strategically, as all European powers thought a general war would result from its collapse. They could strengthen their already strong informal imperial influence in the Empire through its centralisation.¹⁶⁶

Accordingly, the Western European desire for reform in the Ottoman Empire was strong. David Urquhart, a proponent of British support for the Ottoman Empire against Egypt and Russia said as much in his book directly addressed to King William IV: "Turkey cannot remain stationary: Greece and Egypt have entered a career of competition with her replete with great and important consequences."¹⁶⁷

The contrary view that was expressed in many quarters was that the Ottoman Empire was beyond salvation, even through reform. One French writer expressed this view thus:

¹⁶³ G. H. Bolsover, 'David Urquhart and the Eastern Question, 1833-37: A Study in Publicity and Diplomacy,' *The Journal of Modern History*, 8:4, 1936, pp.444-467, p.445.

¹⁶⁴ Harold Temperley, 'British Policy towards Parliamentary Rule and Constitutionalism in Turkey (1830-1914),' *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, 4:2, 1933, pp.156-191, p.158.

¹⁶⁵ Donald Quataert, 'Part IV The Age of Reforms, 1812-1914, in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire: 1300-1914*, Ed. By Halil Inalcik & Donald Quataert, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp.759-944, p.761.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.761-762.

¹⁶⁷ David Urquhart, *Turkey and its Resources*, Saunders and Otley, London, 1833, p.121.

Nothing can be done to save the Ottoman Empire. Its decadence does not date only from the era of the rebellion of the Egyptian Pacha; it has been dying, for more than a century, from the vices of its organisation, from the progress of Europe, from the aggression of its neighbour, and the Egyptian Pacha has only accelerated its agony.¹⁶⁸

For these Europeans, and even those who believed the Ottoman Empire could be saved, the Ottoman Empire, which ‘was held in the imagination as a remarkable example of power and grandeur, this empire that we are used to regarding as immobile amongst all the changes of Europe and Asia,¹⁶⁹ seemed as if it was on the verge of falling.

The incompetence of Ottoman rule was frequently raised by writers advocating pro-Muhammad Ali positions. Perhaps the bluntest assessment came from *The Examiner* of February 3 1833: ‘The Sultan, as compared with the Pacha, is a very stupid tyrant.’¹⁷⁰ That said, the same writer for *The Examiner* was not even particularly positive about Muhammad Ali, arguing that ‘in all his attempted improvements, the Sultan has been a very distant follower of the Pacha: and the Pacha himself may be said to have been the very rude instrument of second rate European adventurers.’¹⁷¹ For writers such as the author of this piece in *The Examiner*, the fall of the Ottoman Empire would be no great loss to humanity, and Ali, flawed as he was, would prove much superior.

¹⁶⁸ Ksawery Bronikowski, *Projet de Démembrement de la Turquie Européenne et Du Rétablissement de l'Indépendance de la Pologne*, Imprimerie de la Chevardiere, Paris, 1833, p.9. ‘Toute porte à prévoir que rien ne peut déjà plus sauver l’empire ottoman. Sa decadence ne date pas seulement de l’époque de la rebellion du pacha d’Egypte ; il meurt, depuis plus d’un siècle, des vices de son organisation, de progrès de l’Europe, de l’agrandissement subit de son voisin, et le pacha d’Egypte ne fait qu’accélérer son agonie.’

¹⁶⁹ *Journal des Débats*, January 25, 1833, p.1. ‘L’empire turc, qui conserve dans les imaginations un caractère remarquable de puissance et de grandeur, cet empire que nous sommes habitués à regarder comme immobile au milieu de tous les changemens de l’Europe et de l’Asie’

¹⁷⁰ *The Examiner*, February 3, 1833.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

For the *Journal des Débats* the Ottoman Empire, ‘was a camp more than a state, an invasion more than a government.’¹⁷² It had, the *Journal* argued been through two eras, ‘one of power and growth, and the other of feebleness and decadence.’¹⁷³ Since the successful defence of Vienna, the Ottoman Empire had receded in power and strength, until the most recent events, of the war of Greek independence and the Egyptian rebellion.¹⁷⁴ The situation in the Orient, for the *Journal des Débats*, was of world-changing importance, and the politics of Europe had to wait for it to be resolved.¹⁷⁵ The *Examiner*, calling attention to the issue somewhat earlier, concurred. In its estimation, the situation was: ‘deserving of great attention from the magnitude of the territories at stake, and from the almost incalculable extent of the effects which may be expected to result, if one of the parties should prove the conqueror.’¹⁷⁶

The *Caledonian Mercury* stated that while ‘the occupation of Syria by the Pacha of Egypt may, at first sight, appear to the casual observer, of little moment to British interests’ it was actually extremely important.¹⁷⁷ In fact, here the *Caledonian Mercury* argued contrary to other British opinions, that Ali controlling Syria would be of benefit to England:

This will be at once obvious if the undisturbed possession of India be of importance to England, and the erection of an efficient barrier against the further encroachments of Russia on the side of Persia and Turkish Armenia be desirable, when it is considered that from the inland position of those countries, no European army could find access to shield them from

¹⁷² *Journal des Débats*, January 25, 1833, p.1. ‘Ce qui atteste bien que l’empire des Ottomans a été un camp plus qu’un Etat, et une invasion plus qu’un gouvernement’

¹⁷³ Ibid. ‘c’est la manière précise et tranchée dont son histoire se partage en deux périodes, l’une de puissance et d’agrandissement, l’autre de faiblesse et de décadence’

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ *The Examiner*, July 22, 1832.

¹⁷⁷ *Caledonian Mercury*, March 2, 1833.

their too formidable neighbour.—It is in such a conjecture that the organization of the physical and financial resources of Syria by a man of genius and energy like Mehmet Ali, Pacha of Egypt, would be appreciated; for none by a Mahomedan Prince of established character would be equal to an undertaking of such magnitude and importance.¹⁷⁸

Ali, according to this view, had the ingredients to replace the Ottoman Empire and rebuild it to its former glory.

The French newspaper, *Journal Des Débats* discussed the prospects for Ottoman reform in its January 24 1833 edition. The *Journal* called Sultan Mahmud II a ‘reckless reformer.’¹⁷⁹ His changes to the Ottoman Army especially meant he ‘seems to have taken pleasure in undermining the bases of his power with his own hands.’¹⁸⁰ Some of this was not his fault, his reforms, that the *Journal* thought were ‘hostile, in their nature to the religious ideas of his people’ were accompanied by ‘disastrous circumstances.’¹⁸¹ For the *Journal des Débats*, Muhammad Ali was a luckier reformer, less hamstrung by external circumstances.¹⁸² But the *Journal* did not know what would come if he managed to succeed in his aims.

The *Caledonian Mercury* similarly recognised the Sultan’s attempts at reform, and the impediments that had limited their effectiveness:

The Sultan, since the overthrow of the Janissaries (who were opposed to all innovations) has himself evinced a disposition to introduce many improvements among his subjects; but from

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ *Journal des Débats*, January 24, 1833, p.1. ‘Réformateur plus téméraire qu’habile’

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. ‘Le Sultan actuel semble avoir pris Plaisir à saper de ses propres mains les bases de sa puissance.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. ‘Ses projets de régénération hostiles, dans leur essence, aux idées religieuses de ses peuples, ont été accompagnées jusqu’à ce jour de circonstances désastreuses.’

¹⁸² Ibid.

the strong prejudices of the Turks in the capital, as well as in the provinces, very little progress has yet been made.¹⁸³

Rather than engage in conflict, the Porte, according to the *Mercury* should act in concert with Muhammad Ali:

Could the Porte be persuaded to follow up the enlightened views of the Pacha of Egypt, and act in concert with him, a few years would call into action the dormant resources of that once celebrated region, and restore the Ottoman Empire to its former rank in the scale of nations.¹⁸⁴

For the Western European powers, however, the situation in Syria would soon go beyond a struggle between two 'Oriental' powers, and would involve one of the great European powers, Russia. The presence of Russian troops in the Ottoman capital, Constantinople, and later the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi would see the Egyptian-Ottoman conflict interpreted through the lens of of Russophobia, which would, especially in Britain, overtake the decidedly mixed Orientalist reactions to the conflict.

Francophobia and Russophobia

Ali's invasion of Syria inspired fear in European capitals that other European powers were secretly behind his actions. Barker expressed this idea clearly in a letter he sent on February 14, 1832, to Sir Stratford Canning, the British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire:

¹⁸³ *Caledonian Mercury*, June 4, 1832.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Contemplating the probability of the impending rupture between the Sultan, and the Pacha of Egypt, becoming, in a protracted conflict, a question, like that of Greece, in which the principal Governments of Europe, may find themselves compelled to interfere, and become again entangled in an endless labyrinth of *la haute diplomacie*, I beg leave to call your Excellency's attention to the circumstances, by which my suspicion has been excited, that Mehmed Ali, disappointed in the result of his overtures of March 1830, to his Majesty's government, has thrown himself into the arms of the French, and that, in furtherance of some political interests, arising out of their plans of Colonization in Africa, or other more general policy, they have listened to his proposals.¹⁸⁵

Barker feared that Ali was moving further into the French camp once more, after Ali had made his attempts to get the English onside in March 1830. The French consul, according to Barker, was in near daily discussions with Ali. This was 'more than ordinary official intercourse' between Ali and the French consul.¹⁸⁶ Barker continued to report to Stratford Canning his suspicions that France was behind Ali's schemes. After the arrival of one messenger on a Greek merchant ship in February 1832, Barker reported that the French consul was in conference with Ali and his principal advisor, Boghos, doubtless about the situation in Syria.¹⁸⁷

Other British writers, less in tune with Ali's court, were also concerned about the outsized influence of France in Egypt. The 'prominent pro-Ottoman and Russophobe' David Urquhart

¹⁸⁵ FO 78/213, p. 68, John Barker to His Excellency the Right Hon Sir Stratford Canning, His Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary to the Sublime Porte Alexandria, February 14, 1832.

¹⁸⁶ FO 78/213, p. 69 Barker to Stratford Canning, Alexandria, February 14, 1832.

¹⁸⁷ FO 78/213, February 23, 1832, 109

suggested it was a result of the seeming British ascendancy elsewhere in the Eastern

Mediterranean.¹⁸⁸ Of course Egypt was where France turned to, according to Urquhart:

Egypt, the spot of her predilections, the theatre of the glory of Napoleon, the arena fertilized by the blood of France, the darling objects of so many statesmen, the focus of so many schemes, was free from foreign connexion, was united under a powerful, an ambitious, and a half independent prince, who was glad to accept the patronage France was eager to bestow.¹⁸⁹

The *Caledonian Mercury* hoped for successful British support for the Ottoman Empire by December 1832, believing that Ali would not stop after just taking Syria. The recent empowerment of Egypt in the region would also cause ill effects for the new Greek kingdom, it was argued, and cause the growth in French influence:

The interests of England even would be compromised, as France has great influence with the Pacha of Egypt, whose victories and conquests would only turn to the advantage of the French.¹⁹⁰

The British saw their traditional foes as responsible for the situation in Syria, either in fact or in spirit. This view reached the top of the foreign policy apparatus in Britain. Palmerston, as the man in charge of British foreign policy responses thought that the French were still behind Muhammad Ali's advances in Syria. The situation in Syria was a multifaceted problem according to this British line of thinking: 'the real sources of danger, therefore, were the Sultan's connections with Russia and

¹⁸⁸ Cemil Aydin, *Modern Muslim Cosmopolitanism Between the Logics of Race and Empire* in Dine Gusejnova, Ed. *Cosmopolitanism in Conflict: Imperial Encounters from the Seven Years' War to the Cold War*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2018, pp.113-145, p.133.

¹⁸⁹ Urquhart, *Turkey and its Resources*, p.224.

¹⁹⁰ *Caledonian Mercury*, December 8, 1832.

Mehemet Ali's with France.¹⁹¹ Jules Planat agreed with the British writers in a way, he thought Ali was hated by the British for his friendship with France.¹⁹²

Urquhart did not believe France directly responsible for the war in Syria, but he thought that France was indirectly responsible. But Ali, according to Urquhart, had exceeded the French plan and had gone too far:

That France had a hand in exciting Mehemet Ali to direct revolt, is an idea not for a moment to be entertained; but it can scarcely admit a shadow of doubt that, but for France, Mehemet Ali never would have revolted. [...] The interest of France was, that Mehemet Ali should be independent of Turkey so far only as to be dependent on her, so that her influence might predominate in Egypt, and that her possession of Algiers might be utilized.¹⁹³

For Urquhart, however, the real danger lay elsewhere. It was not France that stood to benefit from France's devious schemes, but Russia:

It must be exceedingly mortifying to France, at this moment, to find, as I am fully convinced she does, all her plans rendered abortive, and the fruits of her labours transferred to Russia, for, of course, it is Mehemet Ali's interest now, not indeed to seek the protection of Russia, but to concert measures with her for the weakening of the authority of the sultan, and for the dismemberment both of Turkey and of Persia.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ David Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography*, Yale University Press, Yale, 2011, p.178.

¹⁹² Planat, *Regeneration*, p.186.

¹⁹³ Urquhart, *Turkey and its Resources*, p.226-227.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.228.

It was not a Franco-Egyptian axis that needed to be feared now, but a much more dangerous Russo-Egyptian axis. The *Caledonian Mercury* agreed with Urquhart's assessment in March 1833, arguing that:

It is the general opinion in the Levant that the present hostilities between the Sultan and Pacha of Egypt are fomented by Russia, the deadly enemy of both, but whose sway is predominant at Constantinople through dread of her arms. Her complaisance in recalling the Russian Consular Agent from Alexandria is indicative of her feeling, though it cost her no sacrifice, since she has no trade with Egypt, and considers that country as her rival in the corn trade of the Black Sea to the ports of the Mediterranean. It must be obvious to all that Russia has a direct interest in prolonging this contest, since, as long as it continues, it must weaken both and pave the way to Russian dominion.¹⁹⁵

Fears of a Russo-Egyptian alliance were a manifestation of British Russophobia, but Russia was not seeking to actually destroy the Ottoman Empire at the time.¹⁹⁶ Nevertheless the French press echoed this British Russophobia. Reports swirled as early as April 1832 that Russia was taking advantage of the situation to the detriment of France. Reports from the Augsburg Gazette carried in the *Journal des Débats* in that month states that Russian troops were on the move across their frontiers, and that 'many people think that Russia has opted to support the Ottoman Empire against Egypt to help stop French influence.'¹⁹⁷ In January 1833, when news of the Ottoman defeat at Konya reached the European capitals, it sparked a flurry of discussion on what the situation in the Ottoman Empire could mean for the futures of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and the European powers. *Le National* of January 22 1833 carried a report that the Russian general Murawieff had arrived in the Ottoman

¹⁹⁵ *Caledonian Mercury*, March 3, 1832, p.4.

¹⁹⁶ Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.17.

¹⁹⁷ *Journal des Débats*, April 28, 1832, p.1. 'Enfin, quelques personnes pensent que la Russie s'occupe à soutenir la Porte contre l'Égypte, pour paralyser l'influence française sur ce pays.'

capital, with a proposal for Russian support against Egypt.¹⁹⁸ At this stage, according to *Le National* the Sultan still hoped to ‘defeat the rebels with his own forces.’¹⁹⁹ Armand Carrel, one of the editors of the republican leaning *Le National* published the paper’s response to the news of the potential Ottoman-Russian alliance on January 25, 1833. Russia, according to Carrel, had taken advantage of the situation, while France and Britain just watched and waited and did nothing.²⁰⁰

Egyptian control of Syria had not always been anathema to British interests, according to the relative policy makers. Stratford Canning, the chief British representative to the Ottoman Empire for much of the period from 1825-1832, wrote to his brother in 1826 wondering whether Ali could be granted territory in Syria in exchange for staying out of the Greek conflict.²⁰¹

Some writers, however, saw the Egyptian-Ottoman war not as an opportunity for Russia, but simply as a magnificent blow struck against the Sultan’s Oriental despotism and in particular, the ambitions of Russia. A writer, under the pseudonym O.P.Q., wrote to the editor of the *Morning Chronicle* ecstatic with glee as to what a supposed Egyptian victory could mean:

The success of the Pacha of Egypt might, if fully felt, understood, and followed out, lead to the [...] defeat of RUSSIAN AMBITION, and RUSSIAN CUPIDITY in the MOREA—to the circumscribing of Russian territory to more just and proportionate limits—to the freedom of the Black Sea—to the permanent liberty of the Mediteranean—to the moral and political, religious and intellectual emancipation of the North of Africa—to the opening of the long-desired communication by the Red Sea to the burning, golden, Indies—and to

¹⁹⁸ *Le National*, January 22, 1833, p.1.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* ‘pour le moment il avait encore l’espoir de vaincre les rebelles avec ses propres forces’

²⁰⁰ *Le National*, January 25, 1833, p.1.

²⁰¹ Alfred Stern, ‘Colonel Cradock’s Missions to Egypt,’ *The English Historical Review*, 15:58, 1900, pp.277-287, p.278

the arrest of that retrograde and darkening movement and system of the Court of St. Petersburg, which, like a moral nightshade, would blight and destroy all that came under the influence of its poison and touch.²⁰²

O.P.Q., actually John Wilks II, a former member of parliament and fraudster, then resident in France, speculated that the focus of modern foreign policy on money would lead to the British missing the opportunity of this great project:

The question is not even asked in these times, in these days of pounds shillings and pence stock-jobbing policy, whether such events as are now passing in the East may be made subservient to the interests of humanity, to the spread of civilization, to the extension of education and Christianity, to the opening up of communications between Asia and Europe, to the amelioration of the condition of the whole African continent, and to the establishment of those channels of commerce, which may in their turn become so useful to the Schoolmaster and the Divine, the Politician and the Philosopher; but let the sole question which is now put—aye, and the full question which was put yesterday at the Chamber of Deputies, when first the intelligence of the success of Ibrahim Pacha was made known, was this—“*Well, and What effect do you suppose this news will produce at the Bourse? Will the Funds go up or down?*”²⁰³

Wilks believed that the situation in Belgium and the situation in Syria provided the perfect opportunity for the ‘liberal’ states of Western Europe to confront what they saw as the evils emanating from Russia. Russia was still the enemy, but the situation in the ‘East’ provided an opportunity to put an end to the threat of Russia and to the decay of the Ottoman Empire in one fell swoop.

²⁰² *Morning Chronicle*, January 25, 1833.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

Auguste Sakakini saw a similar opportunity to that identified by Wilks. A strong and powerful Egypt, a 'regenerated' Egypt would be a far more effective stop on Russian power than the decaying Ottoman Empire. 'Egypt, already emancipated by civilisation, still more by victory, must remain independent and follow the course of her glorious destiny.'²⁰⁴

The history of both the first and second Egyptian-Ottoman Wars, and indeed of the whole 'Eastern Question' in general has had to be rescued from the traditional dry diplomatic histories that posit the outcomes as the result of diplomats working behind closed doors to tilt the world to their advantage. Traditional (largely British) histories of the 'Eastern Crisis' and its precursor have focused on the genius of Palmerston. In 1929 Frederick Stanley Rodkey for example positions Palmerston (and Stratford Canning too) as visionaries, able to see past the conventional wisdom that the Ottoman Empire was a moribund and unreformable blight on the borders of Europe, seeing past this Orientalist narrative and finding the Ottoman Empire worthy and capable of 'rejuvenation.'²⁰⁵ Rodkey does at least note Palmerston's initial scepticism of the worth of rescuing the Ottoman Empire. Palmerston's initial reaction to Canning's dire warnings about the consequences of an Egyptian-Ottoman War amounted to essentially 'why bother?'

We rescued Egypt once for Turkey, we acquired or supposed that we acquired influence in the Divan. What was the beneficial result? Certainly no progress for the civilization or reform nor any such improvement of Turkish resources as is here contemplated.'²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Sakakani, *De l'Égypte*, p.19. 'L'Égypte, déjà émancipée par la civilisation, encore plus que par la Victoire, doit donc rester indépendante et poursuivre le cours de ses glorieuses destinées.'

²⁰⁵ Frederick Stanley Rodkey, 'Lord Palmerston and the Rejuvenation of Turkey, 1830-41,' *The Journal of Modern History*, 1:4, 1929, pp.570-593, p.571.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.572.

Inaction, such as Palmerston expressed in his early sentiments towards the situation in Syria would, however, become roundly criticised by both French and British sources during the course of the war.

The result of the first Egyptian-Ottoman War convinced the British that the Ottoman Empire required support, especially after the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, signed between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire. This treaty guaranteed Russian support for the Ottoman Empire, and allowed Russia a right of interference in Ottoman affairs, a situation that was absolutely not in the interests and desires of the British government. British fears of Russia had not reached nearly the levels they would at times in the later nineteenth-century, when the ‘Great Game’ in Western Asia led to erratic decision making motivated largely by irrational fears, but the British still did not wish to see the Russian Empire move into the Eastern Mediterranean, an area which the British were considering more important and integral to their commerce by the year. The French and Austrians were also greatly concerned by the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, for Austria it reaffirmed their commitment to the Ottoman Empire’s survival, while French opposition makes their support for Egypt in the second-Egyptian-Ottoman war an even more confusing policy when policies are assumed to be based on some objective national interest. As Matthew Rendall has written of the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi:

When Russian warships entered the Bosphorus in 1833, to leave five months later with a Russo-Ottoman treaty of alliance, the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, they helped turn the British foreign secretary, Viscount Palmerston, into a Russophobe.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Rendall, ‘Restraint or self-restraint of Russia,’ p.37.

Rodkey, writing several decades earlier, took the same line on Palmerston. Palmerston, he wrote, 'revealed very little concern for the welfare of Turkey' before Russia threatened to overwhelm the Ottoman Empire's independence.²⁰⁸ Caquet complicates this slightly, showing that Palmerston had undergone his pro-Ottoman shift in late 1832, prior to the crucial public uproar in Britain and France of early 1833 and the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi.²⁰⁹ Key, according to Caquet, was the influence of Stratford Canning, who had been in Constantinople for conferences on Greece, and argued to Palmerston in favour of the necessity of Ottoman integrity to Britain. Caquet's conclusion, that 'interest in the health and merits of the Ottoman Empire as a political body acted as an equal factor, alongside fear or jealousy of Russia, in convincing the Whig policymakers to become at last supporters of Turkey.'²¹⁰

Palmerston's commitment to the Ottoman Empire faltered after their embrace of Russia in the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi. He wrote to Stratford Canning, then in Spain, on 24 May 1833:

I regret that we did not determine in October to side with the Sultan and put an end to the contest; and we should probably have then been in time to do so. Now that the Sultan has thrown himself so completely into the arms of Russia, and now that it seems so evident that it is Mehemet and the whole Turkish people on one side, and Mahmoud and the Russian garrison on the other, one's view of the matter begins to alter, and one begins to doubt whether England and France ought not rather to try to make something out of the Egyptian,

²⁰⁸ Rodkey, 'Lord Palmerston and the Rejuvenation of Turkey, 1830-41,' p.571.

²⁰⁹ Caquet, *The Liberal Movement*, p.22.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

as an element of future resistance to the undisguised, though most emphatically disclaimed, ambitious intentions of Russia.²¹¹

Palmerston, in this letter to Stratford Canning, also brings up the prospect that British inaction led to Russia gaining its preeminent position in the Ottoman Empire. Far from being a visionary genius, the 'great' British Foreign Secretary had been swept along by events and other actors.

The British lack of response to Ali's March 1830 overtures were also an oversight that allowed the situation to escape any semblance of control from London. Traditional historians like Rodkey or Webster present this as a sort of oversight, where Palmerston was just so little concerned with the situation in the Ottoman Empire that British policy was swept along by events.²¹² CW Crawley agrees, adding that the final British decision on the Ottoman-Egyptian war 'was made too late to be effective.'²¹³

Russophobia became even more deeply ingrained in British foreign policy at the time. Lord Ponsonby, who was sent to replace Stratford Canning in Constantinople sent his thoughts to Palmerston from Naples:

I have little doubt of the Russians having encouraged the Pasha, underhand, and that confusion in Turkey is their game, through which they may obtain either the immense advantage of becoming the protector of the Sultan or those other advantages which I need not specify. I suspect Russian money has been employed in creating influence in the seraglio

²¹¹ PP/GC/CA/259 Copy of a letter from Henry John Temple, third Viscount Palmerston, to Sir S. Canning, regarding the policy of the British government on Spain, Portugal, Belgium and the Ottoman- Egyptian war; and news of Ireland and the coercion bill, May 24 1833.

²¹² Rodkey, 'Lord Palmerston and the Rejuvenation of Turkey, 1830-41,' p.570-571.

²¹³ C. W. Crawley, 'Anglo-Russian Relations 1815-40,' *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, 3:1, 1929, pp.47-73, p.57.

and I know that some time ago (I cannot tell the date), Halil Pasha, who is married to the Sultan's sister, avowed himself friendly to the policy of the Sultan's looking to the Emperor Nicolas alone for protection, Nicolas being, he said, the only sovereign on whose generosity the Sultan could depend and the person to whom he owed his throne.²¹⁴

To Ponsonby, Russia was behind Muhammad Ali's expansionist designs (a position on which he disagreed with the 'Man on the Spot' John Barker, who thought it was a French plot) in order to gain control of the Ottoman Empire. What Ponsonby, Barker, and others did not glean from this situation was that not all things that happened in the Ottoman Empire needed the blessing of a European power. Muhammad Ali and the Ottoman Empire could act independently of European powers being conspiratorially involved with one of them.

Press reactions to the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi in France and Britain expressed outrage towards the situation. Hünkâr İskelesi had 'placed Turkey in the hands of the Bear' according to the 'private correspondence of a morning paper' carried in the *Morning Chronicle*. The Sultan, according to this correspondence believed he was left with no other course of action than to sign the treaty with Russia:

But the Sultan replied that he had a right to make an alliance of friendship with any power he pleased, and it suited the situation of his country at present to cultivate a good understanding with Russia. I am told it was also hinted in an unofficial shape that Russia was the only nation of all those to whom the Sultan applied in his extremity who came forward to assist him; and it was asked where were France and England when Ibrahim Pacha, with a

²¹⁴ PP/GC/PO/133 Letter from Lord Ponsonby to Henry John Temple, third Viscount Palmerston, concerning his travelling to Constantinople and need for instructions, the military capabilities of Mehemet Ali and Ibrahim Pasha, and the Russian schemes to benefit from the confusion in Turkey, January 10, 1833.

victorious army was within five days' march of the capital. It was further stated that England was supposed to have abandoned this country altogether, having left it without an Ambassador for so long a period, and not having any fleet in the Levant; and it was dropped that France had so openly manifested her intentions in favour of the Viceroy of Egypt, that the Sultan could not place any reliance on the professions of her Ambassador, whose very correspondence, published at Alexandria, betrayed the policy of his Cabinet.²¹⁵

The treaty was, the article continued, a great victory for Russia: 'Constantinople should be rung in the ears of our Ministers every hour in the day; for if once Russia is allowed to be domesticated there, which she all but is, she will have that want supplied which has hitherto held her ambition in check.'²¹⁶ The correspondent was not fearful of Russia's potential route to India, but feared for the effects of Russian control of Constantinople on 'British commerce,' for 'it is becoming more valuable every year.'²¹⁷

For the republican French newspaper *Le National* the Russo-Ottoman treaty was also disastrous. An 'offensive and defence alliance' like the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi was something that neither France nor Britain could overlook. If war broke out between Russia and either Western European power, their commerce in the Ottoman Empire would now be completely cut off.²¹⁸ *Le National* believed the only prudent path to take was to form an alliance with Egypt against the Ottoman Empire and their new masters in Russia: 'to fight against Russian influence in the Orient, France, in particular, has only one path to take: it is to form an alliance with Egypt like that which

²¹⁵ *Morning Chronicle*, August 22, 1833.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Le National*, August 21, 1833, p.1. 'Un traité d'alliance offensive et défensive'

the Porte has formed with Russia.²¹⁹ *Le National* believed it might however be too late for France to take such a policy effectively, as Muhammad Ali's dynasty had achieved all they had wanted: 'they have reunited under his sword all the provinces of Asia-Minor that are predominately of the Arab race, according to the project announced by Ibrahim-Pacha at the siege of Saint-Jean-d'Acre.'²²⁰

A speech given by Richard Lalor Shiel, an Irish member of the House of Commons in March 1834 exemplifies criticism of British and French inaction in stopping Russia taking advantage of the crisis in Syria. According to Shiel it was easy 'to anticipate the victory of Egyptian discipline over Turkish disorganization. Was it not most strange that at this period we had no Ambassador at Constantinople? There was no Ambassador from the English or French Governments.'²²¹ Even worse, an Ottoman plea for British aid had fallen on deaf ears: 'Naval aid was all that was asked. It was obvious that it would have been sufficient to deter Ibrahim from advancing.'²²² British inaction was the key that led directly to Russian action:

The emperor Nicholas, after England had refused her assistance, had sent General Mauravieff to Constantinople, with a letter, written in the language of fraternal endearment, to the Sultan, offering fleets and troops. This proposition was not at first acceded to, but on the 2nd of February, 1833, he applied for this sinister aid.²²³

Shiel doubted that Russia would accept merely stopping the advance of Ibrahim's army on Constantinople. He then obliquely accused Palmerston of turning the Ottoman Empire into a second Poland through his inaction. There was no excuse for English cowardice in the face of

²¹⁹ Ibid. 'Pour lutter dans l'Orient contre l'influence russe, la France, en son particulier, n'a plus qu'un parti à prendre: c'est de former avec l'Egypte une alliance correspondante à celle que la Porte a formée avec la Russie.'

²²⁰ Ibid. 'Elle a réuni sous son sceptre toutes les provinces de l'Asie-Mineure où prédomine la race arabe, selon le projet énoncé par Ibrahim-Pacha au siege de Saint-Jean-d'Acre.'

²²¹ HC Deb 17 March 1834 vol 22 cc306-49.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

Russian expansionism. 'Our fleet could blow the Russian navy from the seas; England was yet a match for the Northern Autocrat; and there was might enough left in her arm to lay low the colossus by which the Hellespont was bestrid.' Russia, for Shiel, was a dangerous foe that had comprehensively outplayed Palmerston and Britain. The 'triumph' of Russia in the Ottoman Empire was even a result of British (Palmerstonian specifically) reluctance.²²⁴ Urquhart agreed with Shiel. Palmerston and the British government had roundly failed the test provided by Muhammad Ali:

The Sultan, it is objected, is Russian. If he is so, it is the fault of England. We will not say that it is not in the nature of things that he should be Russian; but we say that facts prove the contrary. To whom did he apply for succour? Was it not to England? Russian succour and Russian protection were forced upon him as a consequence of our refusal.²²⁵

Despite criticism of their inaction, France and Britain or at least their representatives in the Ottoman Empire were crucial to securing the eventual, unsatisfying peace between Ali's Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. Documents submitted to the House of Commons in 1839 relating to the agreement make this clear. John Henry Mandeville and the French admiral Roussin acted as intermediaries between the Sultan's court and Ibrahim in Anatolia.²²⁶ Regardless of this eventual role of France and Britain, their earlier inaction had clearly enhanced Russia's position and let the situation spiral out of control. 'In all these transactions we hear nothing of an English agent, or of an English force, of English diplomacy, or English ships,' lamented the *Times* the day before news of

²²⁴ Bridge & Bullen, *Great Powers and the European States System*, p.92.

²²⁵ Urquhart, *Mehemet and Mahmoud*, p.18-19.

²²⁶ Parliament. House of Commons (1839), Papers relating to the arrangement made between the Porte and Mehemet Ali, in 1833, (207, 50:L.299).

the peace agreement reached London.²²⁷ On the announcement of peace, the *Times* continued its lamentations about Britain and France having seemingly been caught by surprise:

To judge from the absence of French and English ambassadors at the Porte, and from the official silence maintained on the subject by the Governments connected with the Mediterranean, one would have supposed that the battle of Koniah was the first event of the war, and that this *denouement* of an extraordinary drama came upon Western Europe with all the surprise of novelty. [...] The Egyptian expedition did not spring up in a night, like OVID's serpents from the mud of the Nile; it was in preparation for more than a year, the SULTAN having shown an alarming distrust of his Viceroy ever since the termination of the Greek arrangement. About the 15th of October, 1831, the cholera, which had decimated the expeditionary army, disappeared, and the expedition sailed from Alexandria on the 20th of the same month.²²⁸

Britain was now reduced to the status of the third power in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt after the events of 1831-1833 for the *Times*. Britain could have achieved a position equal or greater to the French in Egypt if only they had been proactive.

While the French, for the last 20 years, under their different dynasties and various administrations, have cultivated a friendly intercourse with Egypt,--have supplied the Viceroy with ships, with officers, with physicians, with machinery, and with artisans, we have thought ourselves obliged to proscribe all confidential or diplomatic communication, though its advantages would have been reciprocal, and though we have been solicited with more earnestness than our neighbours to enter into the views of the Pacha.²²⁹

²²⁷ *The Times*, May 6, 1833, p.2.

²²⁸ *The Times*, May 7, 1833, p.5.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

The *Times* in these articles displayed an excellent understanding of the situation in Syria. Barker had been warning the British government and foreign service of Ali's plots for months before he sent Ibrahim into Syria, but the British government had simply not responded. Ali had been expressing pro-British views himself and through Boghos for years by 1831 yet the British refused to respond in kind. Any triumph of the French in Ali's court was, after 1815, largely Britain's own fault.

According to Bridge and Bullen, contrary to Western European paranoia, Russia's aim was instead to 'maintain the *status quo*.'²³⁰ Muhammad Ali's attack on his nominal sovereign was seen as 'part of the revolutionary upsurge which had already disturbed Europe.'²³¹ In addition, the Tsar had received a recommendation from a committee that 'it was in Russia's interest to support Turkey until such time as her collapse could be fully exploited by Russia.'²³² The final reason for Russian support of the Ottoman Empire was that Muhammad Ali represented a modernising 'reforming' leader, and thus the Tsar and his policymakers feared that if he gained full control of the Ottoman Empire, he would lead it on a course of reform and renewal.²³³ Ali's success caused Russia to reconsider their policy of non-intervention in the Ottoman Empire, which would result in the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi.²³⁴ The treaty represented a Russian attempt to save the Ottoman Empire and win some advantages for itself, and not a Russian attempt to completely subsume the Ottoman Empire as many in Britain and France feared. The Russian government was not ready for such an adventure, especially when it would have faced opposition from all the other European powers. Russia however, had succeeded in another of their aims with the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi. Rendall

²³⁰ Bridge & Bullen, *Great Powers and the European States System*, p.93.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p.92.

²³² *Ibid.*, p.93

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Alexander Bitis, *The Russian Army And The Eastern Question, 1821-34*, London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom, 2000.

described Russian policy towards the Ottoman Empire as ‘pursuit of a protectorate,’²³⁵ which it seemed the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi was a successful step on the road towards.

Russophobia was not just based on commercial and strategic concerns. With the growth of ‘liberalism’ as a political force in Europe, the British state became the central avatar of this new system, opposed in a significant sense to the old autocracies of Eastern Europe. Russophobia ‘combined a hatred of absolutism with a deep-rooted belief that Russia was an expansionist and aggressive power.’²³⁶ In contrast to England’s traditional rivalry with France, MS Anderson brings up the important note that Britain’s new Russian rival was ‘remote, strange and little-known.’²³⁷ Russia, in a way, was more like Egypt and the Ottoman Empire than France, especially now that France had become a fellow constitutional monarchy of sorts. Russia had developed a reputation for ‘ignorance and barbarity’ in nineteenth-century Britain.²³⁸ The development of the relationship between Britain and Russia even closely tracks the development of European relationships with Egypt.²³⁹ The particular situation of post-Napoleonic Europe helped feed British Russophobia.²⁴⁰

Regardless of the origins of Russophobia, Russian intervention forced the other European powers to properly respond to the situation. Through the intervention of the powers, Ali was not pushed back to his former territory of just Egypt. He was left in control of Syria and Crete but not the parts of Anatolia that he had conquered, an arrangement that left him unsatisfied. Further displeasing for Ali was the lack of a guarantee against Ottoman invasion of his territory, rejected by

²³⁵ Rendall, ‘Restraint or self-restraint of Russia,’ p.44.

²³⁶ Bridge & Bullen, *Great Powers and the European States System*, p.96.

²³⁷ Anderson, *The Eastern Question*, p.86.

²³⁸ Eric Kleist, *European or Oriental? British perceptions of Russia in the nineteenth century*, Georgia State University, Georgia, 2003, p.43.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.45.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.84.

the British government because Palmerston did not want to further restrict the abilities of the Ottoman Empire to perhaps reassert its control over its former territories.²⁴¹

The shift from Orientalist responses to the crisis in Syria to Russophobic responses was swift. Concerns about informal imperial competition with Russia, or even formal imperial competition with Russia eclipsed concerns about the relative despotism or barbarism of Muhammad Ali's Egypt and Sultan Mahmud II's Ottoman Empire. In Britain, this would lead to Palmerston taking a much more strident interest in the next Egyptian-Ottoman War, in part because he accepted the cultural rationale for Ottoman reform, and in part because of his fear of Russia. Britain's policy would calcify in favour of the Ottoman Empire, and they would not again stand back while the Ottoman Empire seemed to be under serious threat. French policy, on the other hand, would become even more pro-Ali in the face of the second crisis.

²⁴¹ Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.230.

CHAPTER 5: The Second Egyptian-Ottoman War

The First Egyptian-Ottoman war yielded a solution that neither Egypt nor the Ottoman Empire was satisfied with. Syria was controlled by Egypt, but Ali did not secure his independence or the hereditary control of Egypt for his children. The British and French in Europe were also left alarmed by the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi between Russia and the Ottoman Empire that seemed to push the Ottoman Empire almost into a client-state relationship under Russian guidance. With both combatants left unsatisfied by their spoils it seemed likely that the peace would only be temporary.

Within Britain and France, the two 'liberal' European powers, debate raged about which of the Ottoman Empire or Egypt, if either, they should support if conflict broke out again. Within Britain, Palmerston and the Whigs (who were in power for most of the 1830s) came to believe in the prospects of Ottoman reform, and thus believed that supporting the longstanding power in the region, the Ottoman Empire, offered them the best chance of furthering their perceived national interests. This belief in Ottoman reform also coincided with Britain's strategic interests. For many in Britain, a weak Ottoman Empire was seen as much more malleable and controllable than an expansionist Russia or other European power. It was better for Britain to have the Ottoman Empire retain control over the Dardanelles, to keep a buffer on Russian expansion into the Mediterranean. The prospects of Ottoman reform offered a moral framework for Palmerston and others who supported this policy to argue in favour of what was seen as a despotic and oriental state remaining extant.

Other liberals in Britain were sceptical of support for the Ottoman Empire, as they saw Egypt as a place with greater potential to 'civilise' the region. 'Is Turkey more civilized or better

governed than Egypt?,'¹ asked the *Caledonian Mercury* in 1834, asking the question at the heart of the moral battle over Eastern Policy. Taking this question as a starting point, this chapter will explore how varying versions of Orientalist ideas fed into British and French policy making during the heart of the crisis.

The 'Eastern Question,' the name given to the argument on how European powers would deal with the decline and potential end of the Ottoman Empire, has traditionally been seen as a strategic question where European powers decided on their policy for purely strategic reasons. Ignored by such diplomatic historical frameworks, however, is the question of how European statesmen came to these strategic ideals. As chapter one has made clear, the 'Orient' that was in the mind of the European statesmen of the 1830s was a constructed 'Orient,' shaped through decades and centuries of political philosophies and studies of the supposedly strange and different Islamic east. The most consistent tenet of 1830s European orientalism was that the Ottoman Empire was a state in decline, and in need of either reform or a swift and merciful disintegration. Far from merely a strategic issue, the 'Eastern Question' needs to be viewed as a discussion centred around differing European Orientalist views of Ottoman and Egyptian governance, views that shaped the British and French understanding of their respective national interests.

Decision makers and the public in France, Britain, and elsewhere were far from objective viewers of the situation in the East. Their views had been greatly influenced by the influx of literature about the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Muhammad Ali. Travellers published books about their journeys in Turkey and Egypt and sent back widely varying descriptions of the people and

¹ *Caledonian Mercury*, January 9, 1834.

places. Interested parties wrote into newspapers and the popular press to try to influence opinions. Europeans were not unbiased decision makers who had a full grasp of the facts. Palmerston claimed he opposed Ali largely because of Russian expansion, but his letters reveal a man hopeful for the future of the Ottoman Empire and disdainful of Muhammad Ali.²

The 1830s is an interesting case study in the practical effects of Orientalism on European policy, and how Orientalism was used to justify policy, or even countered in attempts to justify policy. This chapter will explore how these orientalist writings on Egypt and the Ottoman Empire affected British and French policy in the second Egyptian-Ottoman war, and especially the role that views of relative levels of civilization and prospects of reform had in shaping the British decision to support the Ottoman Empire, and how France's separate strain of Orientalism, which was tied into French concepts of revolution and their own history led to France's support for Muhammad Ali's Egypt.

The treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi

Signed at the end of the First Ottoman-Egyptian War, the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi added new fuel to the fire of the Ottoman decline narrative. The Ottoman Empire now seemed to many to have become a Russian vassal state. A left-wing French deputy, Eusebe Salvetre expressed this view to the Chamber of Deputies in March 1836. The Ottoman Empire had been 'a long term ally of France, our faithful and inseparable ally,' but 'under circumstances I can not even try to explain or excuse,

² Karl Marx, *The Story of the Life of Lord Palmerston*, Swan Sonnenschein, 1899.

they were separated from us and fell under the protection of Russia.’ The Ottoman Empire was now ‘diminished, enfeebled, reduced, to a state of vassalage.’³

Selvetre’s view was echoed in Britain, where Palmerston’s handling of the First Ottoman-Egyptian War was widely criticised. One nineteenth-century Palmerston biographer claimed that ‘false economy’ had led to the ‘abandonment’ of the Ottoman Empire. ‘Our economical reformers had been gratified. Our ministers had been praised for their carefulness of the public money. We had saved two millions. We had lost Turkey.’⁴

Even those that didn’t think French and British policy was wilful abandonment of the Ottoman Empire still believed it was foolish. Michael J. Quin, an Irish author, believed that the situation in Belgium had distracted British and French policymakers away from the situation in the east. He also considered Hünkâr İskelesi to be an outrage. Quin despaired that ‘it left the field of the East open to the autocrat.’⁵ The treaty was effectively an attack on the rest of Europe: ‘Every hour it exists, inflicts, in my judgment, an outrage on the law, and what is higher than the law, the honour of all other nations.’⁶ Russia had a right that the other European powers did not have, they could send their ships through the Dardanelles at will. For those like Quin this was an absolute outrage. The Sultan controlling the Dardanelles was one thing, for Quin that was fine because the Sultan ‘was an

³ *Journal des Débats*, March 10, 1836, p.2. ‘D’un autre côté, vous savez quell est le sort de l’Empire ottoman, cet empire qui avait été si long-temps l’allié de la France, notre allié fidèle et inseparable: des circonstances que je n’essaierai ni d’expliquer ni d’excuser, l’ont séparé de nous pour la jeter sous la protection de la Russie; ells l’ont abaissé, affaibli, réduit, dans le present, à un état de vassalité, qu’un état encore plus humiliant peut remplacer dans l’avenir.’

⁴ Thomas Macknight, *Thirty years of Foreign Policy: A History of the Secretaryships of The Earl of Aberdeen and Viscount Palmerston*, Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman, London, 1855, p.176.

⁵ Michael J. Quin, *A Steam Voyage down the Danube With Sketches of Hungary, Wallachia, Servia, Turkey, &c*, Theodore Foster, New York, 1836, p.188.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.193.

old ally of ours, and not possessed of any formidable power.⁷ Russia, however, was a different beast, one that endangered the ‘liberties and the peace of Europe.’⁸ Britain could more easily guide or control the whims of a weaker power in control of the Dardanelles.

Urquhart, like Quin a pro-Ottoman Russophobe, more explicitly blamed British incompetence or unawareness for the treaty: ‘To whom did he apply for succour? Was it not to England? Russian succour and Russia protection were forced upon him as a consequence of our refusal.’⁹ Another pro-Ottoman writer in Britain, William Cargill also criticised Palmerston and England’s inaction in the earlier crisis: ‘Was not this the time—eight years ago—for England to interpose.’¹⁰

This was the time when one word from the British Cabinet would have destroyed the possibility of any danger to the Sultan from Mehemet Ali, and the still greater danger to him (and to Europe) of Russian “protection.”¹¹

Britain had abandoned the Ottoman Empire in its time of need, according to the pro-Ottomanists.

The *Journal des débats* in Paris largely agreed with Urquhart’s view of the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi.¹² The Dardanelles, under Ottoman control, were ‘indifferent and neutral. They served no force and no one’ according to the *Journal des débats*.¹³ The treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi changed this, and now a ‘powerful and ambitious’ empire was at the gates and threatening the power balance of

⁷ Ibid., p.196

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Urquhart, *The Sultan Mahmoud, and Mehemet Ali Pasha*, p.19.

¹⁰ William Cargill, *Mehemet Ali, Lord Palmerston, Russia, and France*, John Reid and Co, London, 1840, p.19.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *Journal des Débats*, July 18, 1835, p.1.

¹³ Ibid. ‘Tant que les Dardanelles étaient turques, elles étaient indifférentes et neutres. Elles ne servaient à la force de personne.’

Europe.¹⁴ Russia threatened the commerce so beloved by Britain according to the *Journal des débats*, and for France, Russia threatened its liberal institutions.¹⁵ This article by the *Journal des débats* exemplifies the different in perception between the Ottoman Empire and Russia in the Western European capitals. While the Ottoman Empire was seen as not powerful enough to be a threat, Russia was seen as a potential existential threat to both the Western European powers.

Despite the contemporary British and French view of an Ottoman state forced into submission against its will to save itself from certain defeat persisting into mainstream scholarship, more recent scholarship suggests that this was a Eurocentric view that needs revision. Serkin Demirbas has posited that the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi was part of a ‘secret plan’ by the Ottoman Sultan to attract British support in the future. ‘Ottoman documents reveal that the Sultan did not make this treaty in a desperate mood or as a last solution with no alternative’ according to Demirbas.¹⁶ This is consistent with Sultan Mahmud II’s manoeuvring in 1839 to attempt to gain the support of the European powers against Muhammad Ali. Mahmud II, like Ali, clearly believed that support of the European powers was essential to maintain his power and attempted to find ways to enhance that support. British, French, and even Russian policy was largely reactive during the ‘Eastern Question’ of the 1830s, the driving actors were in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire.

Regardless of what the reality was, the perception of the Ottoman Empire as a state in decline, and especially the fear that another state would be able to seize control of its carcass was driving European policy in the 1830s. In Britain, as covered in the previous chapter, the first

¹⁴ Ibid. ‘Un empire immense, un empire puissant et ambitieux’

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Serkin Demirbas, ‘A New Perspective on the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi-Mahmud II’s Use of International Diplomacy to Resolve the Mehmet Ali Problem,’ *Eskisehir Osmangazi Universitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Vol 17:2, 2016, pp.1-16, p.2.

Ottoman-Egyptian war marked a ‘turning point’ in British policy, as Palmerston, Stratford Canning, and other British foreign policy policymakers became convinced that ‘Ottoman integrity was a key British interest.’¹⁷ The two factors behind this approach were, according to Caquet, ‘interest in the health and merits of the Ottoman Empire as a political body’ and ‘fear or jealousy of Russia.’¹⁸ This ‘interest in the health and merits of the Ottoman Empire as a political body’ led to an intense interest in the prospects of Ottoman reform in Britain. If the Ottoman Empire could be reformed into a modern, effective state it could more effectively resist Russian expansion, according to these British policymakers. The following section of this chapter covers the public debate over the prospects of Ottoman reform, mostly in Britain.

Ottoman Reform Believers

Despite the perception that the Ottoman Empire was viewed as a state in decline almost universally in the nineteenth-century,¹⁹ there were those in Europe who thought otherwise. Admittedly, those who believed in the prospects of meaningful Ottoman reform often came from a position of Russophobia, but its adherents were sincere and even included Lord Palmerston. Crucially, British policy in the ‘Eastern Question’ gradually came to be based upon the beliefs of these believers in Ottoman reform.

One of the most prominent British writers on the ‘Eastern Question’ in the 1830s was David Urquhart. Urquhart has been extensively discussed in the previous chapter, but his writings continued to be extremely influential through the 1830s and into the second Egyptian-Ottoman

¹⁷ Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.22.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Jérôme Louis, *La question d’Orient sous Louis-Philippe*. Histoire. Ecole pratique des hautes études - EPHE PARIS, Paris, 2004, p.73.

War. Urquhart believed that the struggle between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire would leave one the victor and end the prospects of the other entirely: ‘The two cannot co-exist’ he wrote in *Mahmoud and Mehemet*, his pro-Ottoman book of 1835.²⁰ Urquhart believed that absent European intervention, Ali was the one who would be crushed because he had overextended Egypt’s limited resources, but he feared the intervention of other European powers. The first war had just been a prelude for Urquhart:

Mehemet Ali and Mahmoud have ceased to struggle, from exhaustion alone. The relations between them, at the moment, are those of hostility. They lie, like two gladiators, on the arena, at rest, because neither has strength to reach and dispatch the other.²¹

Urquhart felt firmly that both Muhammad Ali and Sultan Mahmud II were ‘great men’ given where they had come from, ‘they are both above the prejudices of their age and country’ he wrote.²² Unlike Mitchell, discussed in the previous chapter, who thought that Ali was simply an unremarkable despot, Urquhart’s opposition to Egypt came from a strong position of Russophobia. For Urquhart, Ali was a ‘luckier’ reformer than the Sultan, and despite his ability to reform Egypt, ruling the Ottoman Empire would be a different challenge, one which was beyond Ali.²³

It was Urquhart’s opinions that took hold among the British Whigs and people in general. Caquet has written of Urquhart:

David Urquhart was Turkey’s early, indeed its ceaseless advocate. He was the spark that ignited the programme of Turkish reform as endorsed by Palmerston and Ponsonby along contemporary Whig-Liberal political views, and his books, starting with *Turkey and its*

²⁰ Urquhart, *The Sultan Mahmoud, and Mehemet Ali Pasha*, p.11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

²² *Ibid.*, p.16.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.17.

resources, were both seminal and an invaluable key to contemporary foreign office thinking about the country. From the outset, Urquhart's plans for Turkey were suffused with a gradualism anchored in legitimacy and tradition that was quintessentially British in inspiration and that contrasted with the sweeping, Cartesian French model incarnated by Mehemet Ali.²⁴

Urquhart's opinion on the Russian threat and Turkish reform gained prominence in Britain in 1835 after his publication of *England, France, Russia, and Turkey*, when it was supported by large segments of the press in Britain and even France.²⁵ Urquhart claimed a national craze in support of the Ottoman Empire.²⁶

Urquhart seems to have come around to his pro-Ottoman position while residing in the Ottoman Empire on a diplomatic assignment. Interestingly he came to Turkey with preconceived notions about 'Turks' and the 'Orient' that he seems to have shed within a year or two of his arrival.²⁷ In fact, Urquhart seemed genuinely impressed by the reforms he saw as underway in the Ottoman Empire. Urquhart offers an interesting counter-example to the typical Orientalist experience of a visit to the 'Orient' merely reinforcing one's already extant views. In important ways, Urquhart's narratives did replicate the assumptions of other aspects of Orientalism. Urquhart was advocating for extensive British political involvement in the Ottoman Empire, furthering British informal imperialism, to protect Britain's imperial interests in India. Nonetheless, he did so from a

²⁴ Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.106.

²⁵ Bolsover, 'David Urquhart and the Eastern Question, 1833-37,' p.454-455.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.458-459.

²⁷ Margaret Lamb, 'The Making of a Russophobe: David Urquhart - The Formative Years, 1825-1835,' *The International History Review*, 3:3, 1981, pp.330-357, p.333-357.

position that went well beyond a hackneyed reiteration of the tropes of the ‘Oriental despotism’ motif.

Urquhart was not the only believer in the prospects of Ottoman reform. Michael Quin was similarly sceptical of the narrative of Ottoman decline and similarly Russophobic. He believed that the Russians had ulterior motives for spreading the idea that the Ottoman Empire was declining. Even if the Ottoman Empire was declining or in a state of backwardness, for Quin, Russian intervention would hardly increase the civilisation of the Ottoman Empire.²⁸ Russia was hardly more civilised than the Ottoman Empire, according to Quin. The people of Russia were ‘fifty million of boors,’ ‘men degraded even beneath the lines of ordinary barbarism.’²⁹ For Quin, the Ottoman Empire was in fact more civilised than Russia. Quin’s views fit into the strain of European Russophobia that posited that Russia was essentially another ‘Oriental despotism,’ as bad or even worse than the Ottoman Empire it threatened.³⁰ Compared to Russia, Quin was hopeful about the Ottoman Empire’s prospects. Islam was ostensibly on the decline, the population was beginning to shun the use of opium, and people were ventilating their houses.³¹ The Sultan was making an effort to expand public education, and, according to Quin, the *Ottoman Moniteur* further showed the existence of progress in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire had a great chance of making further progress with internal stability, but for that to happen Russian pressure on the Ottoman Empire had to be strongly resisted.

²⁸ Quin, *A Steam Voyage down the Danube*, p.197.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.198.

³⁰ James Brown, ‘A Stereotype, Wrapped in a Cliché, inside a Caricature: Russian Foreign policy and Orientalism,’ *Politics* 30:3, 2010, pp.149-159, p.153.

³¹ Quin, *A Steam Voyage down the Danube.*, p.203.

William Cargill was another British writer who went even further in his defence of ‘Turkey’ and condemnation of Russia. He strongly believed that the Ottoman Empire protected commerce and business, and that its internal administration was beneficial. The Ottoman Empire, for Cargill, was a nation that respected other nations and their rights. By contrast, Russia was ‘a nation in every respect the reverse of this.’³² Russia’s ‘policy is directed solely and unceasingly to external conquest.’³³ Russia was a dangerous and expansionist power that was becoming ever more dangerous and expansionist:

From a petty province, with no seaport but Archangel, a century has seen her stretch her dominion to Sweden and Riga in the north, and to Astrachan and Georgia on the south and east—from a population of 15,000,000 to one of 70 millions—covering with blood and desolation the mightiest kingdoms and the fairest provinces, for the purpose of augmenting her ever-growing dominions. From the grasp of her robber-hand no people is in safety, except those which have the strength to resist her.³⁴

Even further, Russia had harsh and ‘prohibitive’ commercial regulations, something Urquhart also expressed in his Glasgow speech.³⁵

Despite this rapacious expansion, Cargill believed Russia was weak:

This overgrown empire is, notwithstanding, the most vulnerable in the world, and the most easily arrested in its projects of aggression, because it has risen to greatness by assaulting and trampling on the rights of men.³⁶

³² Cargill, *Mehemet Ali, Lord Palmerston, Russia, and France*, p.6.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p.7.

³⁶ Ibid.

The expansionist and exceedingly large nature of Russia was what unsettled Britain's Russophobes the most. Lord Dudley Stuart spoke in the House of Commons on the subject in 1836, drawing attention to the sheer size of Russia, the sheer size of its troops, and its continued expansion. Lord Stuart even specifically brought up how the struggles of the Ottoman Empire were enhancing Russia:

The right bank of the Danube was abandoned by the Turks. Greece, dismembered from the Turkish Empire, was subject to the influence of Russia, Egypt was but an agent of Russia, and the strength of Persia was so impaired that it was only preserved by the timely interposition of this country.³⁷

The Dardanelles, for Lord Stuart, were key for Russia, and at all costs they had to be stopped from acquiring them. He further blamed Russia for Navarino and the rupturing of France and Britain from their support of the Ottoman Empire.

Lord Stuart echoed Cargill's comments about the relative merits of Russia and the Ottoman Empire's commercial policies: 'Russia was most inimical to us; while Turkey, on the contrary, admitted our productions with no duty, or with a nominal duty.'³⁸ For Stuart, Russia taking control of the Ottoman Empire would not only enhance Russia and cripple Britain's trade, but it would also inevitably lead to a Russia takeover of Persia, and from Persia Russia could directly threaten Britain's interests in India. Russia's perceived threat to Britain's commercial and strategic interests was clearly playing into the Russophobic narrative in Britain. Russia was a threat to British interests, and was as such cast as more foreign and less British. The Ottoman Empire, which was perceived as essential to

³⁷ HC Deb 19 February 1836 vol 31 cc614-69.

³⁸ Ibid.

these strategic and commercial interests, was being cast as more British, or attempting to become more British in the same vein.

Barlow Hoy agreed with Lord Stuart, that Britain had been mistaken to pursue Greek independence, as it had only served to empower Russia:

He could not approve of the policy pursued by England towards Turkey. They had no more right to assist in the separation of Greece from Turkey, than Turkey would have to separate Ireland from England. The battle of Navarino was most injurious and disgraceful to England, and proved highly advantageous to Russia, No country in Europe was worse treated than Turkey. They had to contend at the same time against European Alliance, against the Pacha of Egypt, and against Servia.³⁹

Not only was Britain's inaction in the 1833 crisis excoriated by pro-Ottomanists, but now Britain's action (however unintentional) during the Greek War of independence was attacked as having increased the power of Russia.

Anti-Ottomanists in Britain

Not all opinions in Britain were in favour of the Ottoman Empire and the Sultan. Rather than the Ottoman Empire slowing its decline, according to the anti-Ottomanists, it was perhaps even accelerating. Exemplifying this view was an extract from the 'the private correspondent of the temps' that was printed in the September 25 1834 edition of the *Morning Chronicle* painted the Sultan as a hapless fool, his attempts at reform having failed before they had even taken root. The Ottoman Empire was becoming more mired in discontent and corruption than ever before:

³⁹ Ibid.

Thus the forced innovations of Mahmoud, far from having procured an amelioration, have exhausted all the national energy; and his blind obedience to the suggestions of the Russian Cabinet, far from re-establishing order, has only led the way and accelerated a general dissolution.⁴⁰

William Rathbone Greg, the author of *Sketches of Greece and Turkey* took a similarly dim view of Ottoman governance. The Ottoman system was ‘particularly calculated to foster its weakness, and generate its own decay.’⁴¹ The lack of a strong central government and the essential ‘selling’ of pashaliks to the highest bidder was reminiscent of the system that led to the downfall of the Roman Empire. Even worse, according to Greg, was the lack of a system of hereditary nobility. There was nothing between the Sultan and the people, to moderate both. ‘All the institutions of the Ottomans’, Greg wrote, ‘whether of religion, society, or government, seem to be formed upon a system of non-improvement. Like those of China, they have undergone no alteration of amendment since their first establishment.’⁴² Here Greg echoed prevailing European views regarding the arrested development of states under Oriental despotism. Tying the Ottoman Empire’s ostensible lack of change to that of China, effectively linked the two prime ‘Oriental’ states of the Near and Far East together, declaring them as exhibiting the same flaw. The idea of a ‘fundamentally lifeless Asia’ that needed European intervention in order to be regenerated was a staple of Orientalist discourse.⁴³ Indeed, Greg writes that Ottoman institutions had been the rival of any in Europe just ‘a few centuries ago’ and ‘had they advanced as others have advanced, they might still have been formidable.’⁴⁴ The Ottoman Empire,

⁴⁰ *The Morning Chronicle*, September 25, 1834.

⁴¹ William Rathbone Greg, *Sketches in Greece and Turkey: With the Present Condition and Future Prospects of the Turkish Empire*, Ridgway, London, 1833, p.246.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.248.

⁴³ Said, *Orientalism*, p.154.

⁴⁴ Greg, *Sketches in Greece and Turkey*, p.248.

however, had been afflicted by ‘the character of unchangeable permanence.’⁴⁵ Without explicitly mentioning Oriental despotism, Greg’s depiction of Ottoman society and of the Turks themselves fits neatly into Montesquieu’s depiction of Oriental despotism, discussed in chapter one, suggesting ‘a static and slavish society, a backward and corrupt polity, with arbitrary and ferocious rulers governing servile and timid subjects.’ For Greg, the ‘Turks’ were servile and timid; ‘as indolent as savages,’ imbued entirely with ‘laziness,’ and ‘averse to all exercise.’⁴⁶ Even worse, Greg opined, they did not seem to think:

“Sir,” said a gentleman to me, as we walked through the streets of Adrianople, and remarked upon the utter listlessness and inactivity of every one we met,—“ a Turk, sir, is little better than an oyster!”⁴⁷

Greg wrote vigorously in this vein, devoting several pages to the lack of intelligence of Turks. Although he did reserve some mild praise for Sultan Mahmoud II, it was strongly tempered with broader criticisms of Oriental despots:

Mahmoud is persevering, vigorous, and decided, as his suppression of the Janissaries amply testifies. But he is rapacious, severe, and sanguinary, and the terror of all his wealthy and powerful subjects. He contrives, like all the Ottoman emperors, to squeeze out every farthing of superfluous wealth from all public officers.⁴⁸

In many ways, Greg’s description of Mahmoud echoes other descriptions of Muhammad Ali, in their mixture of comments regarding his apparent forward-thinking progressiveness more than balanced by an underlying Oriental barbarism.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.249.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.250.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.257.

Greg believed that the Ottoman Empire was on its last legs, and that ‘the tardy and feeble efforts which have of late been made, are utterly inadequate to renovate a state of such advanced decrepitude.’⁴⁹ The fall of the Ottoman Empire, he argued, would be a happy result, not something to be avoided. Curiously, Greg did not even mention the possibility that Russia would benefit. Instead he was focused entirely on the ineptitude of the Ottoman government, society and people. He praised Ali, and openly hoped that he would be the one to bring about the end of Ottoman ‘ineptitude:

The Pacha of Egypt has openly thrown off his allegiance, and Syria is already in his hands. I cannot for a moment doubt that his final success will be the signal for the total dismemberment of the Ottoman dominions; an event which it will be impossible to regret. A wiser and more auspicious government will, it may be hoped, succeed.⁵⁰

Exempting Egypt’s Ali from the otherwise all pervasive corruption of the East, Greg’s description of the Ottoman Empire remained unerringly in the Orientalist mode:

That vast extent of favoured and fertile territory, which has so long been withered up under the blight of despotism, when relieved from the nightmare of oppression, will rapidly develop its rich and manifold resources; population will spring forward in the race of increase with an elasticity unknown for ages; the wealth and happiness of Europe and the Levant will be augmented by a vast and varied commerce, of which no human eye can see the extent or termination; and smiling provinces, and a happy people, will succeed to that “barbarous anarchic despotism.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.264-265.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.265.

⁵¹ Ibid., p.265-266.

Despotism was the enemy of civilisation for European liberals, for whom, to be civilized was ‘to be free of specific forms of tyranny: those of the elements over humankind, of disease over health, of instinct over reason, of ignorance over knowledge, of men over women, and perhaps most importantly, of despotism over liberty.’⁵² The entirety of the Orient was seen through this lens of civilisation, and the governance of Turkey and Egypt was certainly no exception. This was not unique to Britain. Indeed thinkers in France had, as discussed earlier, developed a similar theory of Oriental despotism, as Jérôme Louis has made clear.⁵³

French Opinions

In general, French opinions more closely followed those of Greg’s than Urquhart’s. French policy was based not on a belief in the potential of Ottoman reform but instead in a belief in the potential of Muhammad Ali’s rule in Egypt. François Guizot, a French statesman who was ambassador to Britain during the height of the crisis in 1840 saw France as occupying a different position to Britain:

England and Austria had a simple and fixed idea; they only wanted to maintain the Ottoman Empire and defend it against its enemies. Russia also had only one idea, less simple, but equally exclusive and constant; it wanted to maintain the Ottoman Empire without strengthening it so they could dominate and protect it. [...] The policy of France was complicated and different; it wanted to serve both the Sultan and the Pasha, maintain the Ottoman Empire and grow Egypt. The Porte found itself in the presence of two true allies, a hypocritical protector and a friend with a shared heart.⁵⁴

⁵² Conklin, ‘The Civilizing Mission’, p.174.

⁵³ Louis, *La question d’Orient sous Louis-Philippe.*, p.11.

⁵⁴ François Guizot, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de mon temps*, Vol IV, Michel Lévy Frères, Paris, 1862, p.43-44.

‘L’Angleterre et l’Autriche avaient une idée simple et fixe ; elles ne s’inquiétaient que de maintenir l’empire ottoman et de

Guizot thought he knew what was at the heart of France's favourable position towards Egypt. He considered the stated strategic reasons and considered them lacking. Instead, he believed that France's Egyptian policy was rooted in cultural concerns:

The policy of France, in that question, came from our brilliant expedition of 1798 in Egypt, from the renown of our generals, our soldiers, our savants, from the memories and the impressions that remain of their exploits and their works, from the spirit of imagination, not from the calculations of security and equilibrium.⁵⁵

Guizot's great insight was to note the role that cultural memory can played in policy, overriding what people traditionally viewed as the more pragmatic grounds for policy decisions.

The cultural memory of Napoleon's invasion and occupation of Egypt directly carried through to influence French policy in Egypt in a way that was noted even at the time. The man most in charge of the legacy of Napoleon's occupation, Edme-Francois Jomard, the editor of the *Description de l'Égypte*, was a strong advocate in support of the 'civilising' potential of Muhammad Ali. Before Ali, Jomard wrote: 'no one could ignore that the former government of Egypt was the most despotic and the most violent that existed.' The authority of the Sultan and even the 'Pacha' was essentially non-existent, with underlings running rampant. Ali put an end to this 'chaos' and brought stability to the country when he took power in 1805 and 1806.⁵⁶ Jomard reserved particular praise

le défendre contre ses ennemis. La Russie aussi n'avait qu'une idée, moins simple, mais également exclusive et constante ; elle voulat maintenir l'empire ottoman sans l'affermir et le dominer et le protégeant. [...] La politique de la France était compliquée et alternative ; elle voulat servir à la fois le sultan et le pacha, maintenir l'empire ottoman et grandir l'égypte. La Porte se trouvait en présence de deux alliés véritables, d'un protecteur hypocrite et d'un ami dont le cœur était partagé.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p.44. 'la politique de la France, dans cette question, a pris sa source dans notre brillante expédition de 1798 en Égypte, dans le renom de nos généraux, de nos soldats, de nos savants, dans les souvenirs et les impressions qui sont restés de leurs exploits et de leurs travaux, dans des élans d'imagination, non dans des calculs de sécurité et d'équilibre'

⁵⁶ Edme François Jomard, *Coup d'Oeil Impartial sur l'état present de l'Égypte, Comparé à Sa Situation Antérieure*, Imprimerie de Béthune et Plon, Paris, 1836, p.20.

for Egypt's new education infrastructure. This was the area where Ali's true genius would be most felt, according to Jomard. For France, in particular, the education of Egypt would be beneficial, because of the effects of French education, 'the French name is honoured on the banks of the Nile, the French language is taught in public schools, and Egyptians go to France for their studies, and bring others with them.'⁵⁷

Egypt was not, however, a finished project, Jomard believed. It was necessary, he argued, even in his positive pamphlet to 'report impartially the bad along with the good.'⁵⁸ Jomard was hopeful that Egypt would survive the supposed Ottoman threats to its progress, although it would take more time, he thought, to remove the negative effects brought about by the Ottoman conquest and the 'religion of the sword,' Islam.⁵⁹ Accordingly, Europe needed to support Egypt and not the Ottoman Empire; not to give in to the 'blind hate' for Ali among some in the upper echelons of the Ottoman court, which if they got their way would 'put an end to Egypt's progress, and reverse the foundations created for civilization.'⁶⁰

The difference in French and British reactions to the situation in the Ottoman Empire can be traced back to the difference in French and British reactions to Egypt prior to Napoleon's invasion. The first chapter of this thesis explained that the French decision to invade Egypt came from specific French cultural concerns as well as from France's strategic desires to attack British imperial power outside Egypt. The French invasion of Egypt was a specific event that further tied

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.50-51. 'Le nom français est en honneur sur les rives du Nil; la langue française y est enseignée publiquement, et les Égyptiens qui ont vu la France y sont recherchés, consultés; on se presse autour d'eux.'

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.51. 'Il est regrettable d'avoir à placer des ombres à ce tableau du progrès de l'Égypte, mais c'est un devoir de signaler avec impartialité le mal à côté du bien'

⁵⁹ Ibid. 'la religion du sabre'

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.54. 'dans leur aveugle haine, ils frapperont l'Égypte elle-même et la puniront de son progrès, en renversant les établissemens créés pour la civilisation.'

the two countries together in French (and some Egyptian) minds in a way that Britain's 1807 invasion did not do. The French *Institut* furthered this cultural link through the publication of the *Description*. Jomard's introductions played a big part in further linking the two countries, and Ali's schemes for education of young Egyptians helped cement the link from the Egyptian side.

The Ottoman Empire on the other hand was portrayed in France largely as a moribund state, led by incompetents who were unable to stop the decline, or who were perhaps even exacerbating it. Jean Girardeau was decidedly harsh in his discussion of Mahmud II in his *Souvenirs de voyage historiques et anecdotiques*, attacking him for the massacre of the Janissaries and his monetary policy.⁶¹ The Turks had become 'fearful and submissive' after their defeats by the Egyptians and their 'shameful' treaty with Russia.⁶²

Ksawery Bronikowski, a Polish independence fighter who lived in France, also took an anti-Ottoman line. Bronikowski thought the recent events in the Ottoman Empire, including the defeat by Egypt and the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, proved that its demise was imminent. Bronikowski, like most observers, thought the rot inside the empire was older than the immediate crisis: 'its decadence does not only date to the era of the rebellion of the pacha of Egypt, it has been dying, for more than a century, of its vices, its organization, of the progress of Europe, of the aggrandizement of its neighbour, and the pacha of Egypt has not accelerated its agony.'⁶³

⁶¹ Jean Girardeau, *L'Italie, la Sicile, Malte, la Grèce, l'Archipel, les îles Ioniennes et la Turquie : souvenirs de voyage historiques et anecdotiques*, Paris, 1835, p.329.

⁶² Ibid., p.330-331. 'crantifs et soumis'

⁶³ Bronikowski, *Projet de Démembrement de la Turquie Européenne et de rétablissement de l'Indépendance de la Pologne*, p.9. 'Sa décadence ne date pas seulement de l'époque de la rébellion du pacha d'Égypte ; il meurt, depuis plus d'un siècle, des vices de son organisation, des progrès de l'Europe, de l'agrandissement subit de son voisin, et le pacha d'Égypte ne fait qu'accélérer son agonie.'

While support for Ottoman reform as the correct course of action was broadly higher in Britain than in France, both pro-Ottoman and pro-Ali opinions existed on both sides of the channel. Supporters of both the Porte and the Pasha argued that their chosen side was the one most capable of reform, the one with the greatest ‘modernising’ potential. Support for Muhammad Ali was based on a perception of Ali as a reformer, a perception that mirrored pro-Ottoman opinions of the Sultan. PE Caquet has described the French view of the Ottoman-Egyptian struggle as ‘a matter of civilization’ with the Egyptians being the civilising force and the Ottomans the backwards power.⁶⁴ This view was also prevalent among the British minority that were supporters of Ali, as exemplified by Waghorn and Thurburn later in this section.

Ali remained a complicated semi-oriental figure in the accounts of those writing in France and Britain. His household was described in the July 14 1834 edition of the *Morning Chronicle*, painting a picture of a traditional ‘Oriental despot’ waited on by eunuchs and a large harem.⁶⁵ Partisans of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt in the ‘Eastern Question’ would often point to their own vastly different preconceptions of Egyptian governance. There was plenty of literature to support both sides of the debate, as visitors to Egypt and writers about Egypt voiced wildly different opinions on whether or not Ali was a good ruler in the European sense. There was no European unity in constructing a narrative about Muhammad Ali, Egypt, or the Ottoman Empire in the 1830s. The example of Muhammad Ali shows the fractured nature of European Orientalism, as Europeans struggled to come to terms with the supposedly mysterious ‘Orient.’

⁶⁴ Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.35.

⁶⁵ *The Morning Chronicle*, July 14, 1834.

For his part, Muhammad Ali was keenly aware of the situation in Europe. He was also cognisant of the fact that he needed European support to achieve his aims. He had reportedly already subscribed to Parisian newspapers in the 1810s,⁶⁶ and was well known for interacting with his European visitors. PE Caquet believes that this awareness was turned around to the extent that Muhammad Ali set out about realising a plan to propagandize in Europe.⁶⁷ Ali embraced his image as a moderniser, joining the *Société de Géographie*. Indeed, his reputation as a moderniser proved problematic for the pro-Ottoman Whigs in Britain, as ‘the cabinet could neither offend radical opinion-leaders nor be seen to be defending barbarity and stagnation against progress.’⁶⁸

One of the most strident British pro-Egypt agitators was Thomas Waghorn, the chief advocate of the through-Egypt route to India. Waghorn published a pamphlet, ‘Egypt as it is in 1837’, in order to make the British parliament feel ‘some sort of sympathy for Egypt; instead of that indifference to her interests which permits her to be sacrificed to the bolstering up of Turkey.’⁶⁹ The ‘Turkish Empire’ had been doomed in 1832, according to Waghorn, and it was only saved by English, French, and Russian intervention. Egypt had won independence in 1832, but was only kept in its present ‘tributary state’ ‘by the consent of England.’⁷⁰ Waghorn was firmly one of Ali’s most prominent European advocates, as Caquet has noted.⁷¹ ‘Knowledge has gone on progressing in Egypt,’ Waghorn noted, ‘on a most wonderful and rapid scale, during the last thirty years, and solely from the master mind of its present chief.’ Waghorn further believed that negative opinions about

⁶⁶ *The Times*, July 4, 1818, p.2.

⁶⁷ Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.76-77

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.78.

⁶⁹ Thomas Waghorn, *Egypt as it is in 1837*, Smith, Elder and Co, London, 1837, preface.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.10-11

⁷¹ Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.78.

Ali stemmed from a lack of knowledge, these people, according to Waghorn, believed 'Ali is little better than one of its former tyrannical Beys.'⁷² For Waghorn, the support for the Ottoman Empire was strange and perplexing:

With regard to Turkey, I would ask,--has not the bolstering up of that country been, for the last forty years, a constant subject of perplexity in our state policy? Is it consistent with the present improved situation of Egypt that she should be sacrificed to that object? Our government may go on supporting the impotent and fallen state of Turkey; but my opinion is, that the better policy would have been to let her take her own course.⁷³

Strategically, Waghorn also argued that the Ottoman Empire was already lost to Russia, that it was not salvageable. For Waghorn, the British had one sensible choice available, namely to support Ali.⁷⁴

Who can pretend to maintain that it is for the real interest of Egypt, that it should remain, and be forced by England to remain, in alliance with all that is ignorant, brutal, and destructive? Now Egypt yearns for European civilization, and gives pledges for its future prosperity, by basing all its hopes of wealth, power, and greatness, upon the produce of its own soil.⁷⁵

In its own way, Waghorn's praise for Egypt and criticism of the Ottoman Empire replicates the Orientalist dichotomy presented by other defenders of Ali in Europe. Ali's Egypt was trying to escape centuries of misrule, according to this theory, and to become a modern, Europeanised state, to reclaim its place among the great nations of the world: 'why is Egypt, with the connivance of the European cabinets, thus impeded in her work of civilization, by the Satanic system of Turkish

⁷² Waghorn, *Egypt as it is in 1837*, pp.13-14

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.16

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.17

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.20

misrule?⁷⁶ In contrast to Egypt, Waghorn argued, the Ottoman Empire had declined beyond the point of redemption.

Waghorn even managed to tie in his passion for modern steam travel as one of the benefits of potential British support for Ali: 'I know that on the future stability of the Egyptian power, our rapid steam operations between England and India will have wholly to depend.'⁷⁷ Not only would supporting Egypt have benefits for civilization in Egypt, a noble goal in its own right according to Waghorn, but it would greatly improve Britain's standing in India, and especially its ability to defend it.⁷⁸ It was time for Britain to abandon the Ottoman Empire to its fate:

Our governments have assisted and upheld the interests of Turkey till she is fallen so low that it is impossible to reestablish her in power as a nation; let us, therefore, study our true welfare, and take the lead in permitting Egypt to establish herself as an independent state.⁷⁹

Aside from his major published works, Waghorn retained a position of some influence in the British press on Egyptian affairs. He had letters published regularly in the *Morning Chronicle*, helping to paint a largely positive picture of Egypt and Ali personally. In a letter published September 19, 1837, and dated August 24 at Cairo, Waghorn praised Ali's education policies and religious liberalism, asking 'when will the imbecile Sultan imitate Mohamed Ali, and permit Christian education in that besotted country?'⁸⁰ Waghorn, through these letters, gave *Morning Chronicle* readers an insight into life in Egypt, as well as, information about the importance of the through-Egypt route to India. Waghorn's next letter, penned on September 18 and published in the *Morning Chronicle* on October 10, 1837, was

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.21.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.22.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ *The Morning Chronicle*, September 19, 1837.

perhaps even greater in its acclaim of Ali. Ali was again praised for a specific act of religious tolerance, allowing a woman to keep her possessions after converting to Christianity from Islam. Waghorn reported Ali as saying: 'he knew of no difference with respect to religion.'⁸¹ According to Waghorn's September letter, Ali had also freed all the women of his harem who had not borne children, prompting Waghorn to ask: 'Is not this man worthy the appellation of the regenerator of Egypt?'⁸²

The *Morning Chronicle* added a note in front of Waghorn's letter, dated November 15, that was published in its December 12 1837 issue. The *Chronicle* reminded its readers (and its 'French contemporaries') that Waghorn's opinions and those of the *Chronicle's* other correspondents were not those of the paper itself. The *Chronicle* did, however, advise its readers that because of Waghorn's success in expediting mail to India, his opinions should be read.⁸³ This Waghorn letter was even more strident and directly political than his previous letters: 'Again, as Turkey falls away from us [...] ought we not to depend wholly upon Egypt as our firm ally, which Mahomet Ali would gladly be,' asked Waghorn.⁸⁴ Britain's Egyptian policy was short-sighted, according to Waghorn. Britain had to support the progressive, more European-minded leader to guarantee their position. Supporting Ali would be a 'bold and masterly stroke of policy.'⁸⁵

The *Morning Chronicle* would routinely criticise the message contained in Waghorn's letters. On July 14, 1838, for example, it publicly distanced itself from him, writing 'with very few

⁸¹ *The Morning Chronicle*, October 10, 1837.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ *The Morning Chronicle*, December 12, 1837.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

communications that find their way into our columns should we be more anxious to disavow identity of opinions than with those of Mr. Waghorn. We considered it enough to accompany his letters with the antidote of the signature attached to them⁸⁶ Waghorn's most outrageous opinions in his letters, according to the *Chronicle* were his attacks on Colonel Campbell, the Consul-General in Egypt. The *Chronicle* was a largely pro-Whig newspaper, and Waghorn's policies were out of step with the Whig Foreign Secretary, Palmerston, which was why the *Chronicle* cautioned its readers against paying too much attention to its own correspondent.

The French press also occasionally picked up on Waghorn's letters as part of British opinion. *La Presse* used one of Waghorn's 1839 letters to illustrate the supposed 'hate that England nourishes against Mehemet-Ali.'⁸⁷ *La Presse* used Waghorn's letter on the subject of potential disruptions to the through-Egypt route to India to illustrate what they saw as a conspiracy on the part of the British government against Egypt and in favour of the Ottoman Empire. British policy would itself be to blame if the through-Egypt route was closed to Britain, because British policy in the '*question d'Orient*' had 'instead of calming Mahmoud, strove to agitate him against the pacha of Egypt.'⁸⁸

La Presse saw the question of the through-Egypt route as linked with the 'Orient question,' and published a long letter on the subject from the former surgeon of Muhammad Ali, M. Labat.⁸⁹ Labat's letter was emblematic of the typical French position on Egypt and Muhammad Ali, linking France and Egypt right from the start by opening his letter with the statement: 'French political and

⁸⁶ *The Morning Chronicle*, July 14, 1838.

⁸⁷ *La Presse*, November 1, 1839, p.1. 'Nous trouvons dans le *Times* le secret, fort connu d'ailleurs, de la haine que l'Angleterre nourrit contre Mehemet-Ali.'

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 'Mais depuis long-temps, la diplomatie anglaise, au lieu de calmer Mahmoud, s'efforçait de l'irriter contre le pacha d'Egypte.'

⁸⁹ *La Presse*, November 4, 1839, p.1.

commercial interests are intimately linked with those of Egypt.⁹⁰ Labat's letter constantly harked back to both Napoleon's invasion of Egypt and Ancient Egypt, comparing both with Muhammad Ali and linking the three separate strands of Egyptian 'greatness' together. Alexander had conquered Egypt, after Syria, Napoleon conquered Egypt and barely failed in his conquest of Syria, and now Ali had taken control of Egypt, Syria and Arabia, and would have stood at the precipice of control of the whole Ottoman Empire, 'if the policy of Europe did not put an obstacle in his path.'⁹¹

In Britain, however, the *Times* took a hard line against Ali at times, like in 1834 where it deplored his treatment of the people of Crete. The *Times* called to attention the separation of Greece and Crete as ridiculous, as the 'unfortunate Candiotes' were 'indisputably Greeks.'⁹²

Why should Christian Crete be transferred as an appendage to unbelieving Egypt, to be sacked and outraged at the pleasure of scornful masters, whose sole superiority over the mass of barbarians subjugated by them consists in their more advanced perception of the means of employing brute force to the ends of domineering and rapacious tyranny?⁹³

The *Times* hoped Britain and France would help end Egyptian control of Crete, 'to secure for them hereafter, if not an admission into the community of the rest of Greece, at least some permanent mitigation of the dreadful despotism by which they have hitherto been afflicted under the Egyptian conqueror.'⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Ibid. 'Les intérêts politiques et commerciaux de la France sont si intimement liés à ceux de l'Égypte'

⁹¹ Ibid. 'si la politique de l'Europe n'y eût mis obstacle.'

⁹² *The Times*, January 28, 1834, p.2.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

The *Times* also criticised Ali and Ibrahim's handling of Syria, in its January 24, 1835 issue. The Egyptian administration was, it said, deploying 'excessive harshness,' and neither the Egyptians nor the Sultan had asked 'whether the Syrians would prefer the dominion of the Sultan, to which they had been accustomed, to that of Mehemet Ali, who had suddenly become ambitious to establish his own over them.'⁹⁵ Ali's rule over Syria was based entirely on violence and coercion, according to the *Times*. The paper seemed to actively hope the Ottoman Empire would retake Syria, through force if necessary, to liberate the Syrians. The *Times* also took Ali's European supporters to task in July 1835 when yet another allegation of misrule in Syria emerged:

The Egyptian Viceroy must now be content to stand exposed, and without moral defence; for every honest man retires from such polluted scenes with indignation in his heart, and every advocate he had in Europe blushes at a retrospection of his own delusion.⁹⁶

The *Times* was calling out the pro-Egyptian partisans it saw as responsible for downplaying the misdeeds of the 'Egyptian Viceroy.'

The *Times* also published a letter from an individual writing under the pseudonym of 'Veritas' in November 1835 again calling to attention the situation in Syria: 'During the years that Syria has been under the control of the invaders, this wretched country has never known repose; but it has been a constant scene of suffering—a theatre of human woe, in which pillage and violence of all sorts (and without distinction of sex) have kept pace with the torrents of human blood their infliction necessarily caused.'⁹⁷ The situation in Syria was attracting the same sort of humanitarian

⁹⁵ *The Times*, January 24, 1835, p.4.

⁹⁶ *The Times*, July 14, 1835, p.2.

⁹⁷ *The Times*, November 7, 1835, p.7.

rhetoric that had come about due to the situation in Greece. The European governments shared the blame for not ending this, according to 'Veritas':

It signifies little to humanity whether all these evils are the result of Mehemet Ali's despotism, or of the system of his administration: the result is before the world, and it is a crying shame, the odium of which rests upon Europe, particularly upon her two great constitutional Governments!⁹⁸

France and Britain held special blame, Veritas continued, given that France and Britain intervened for the sake of Belgium, but had not done so for Syria. Britain had France should intervene against Egypt for the sake of the Syrians and the sake of the Ottoman Empire.⁹⁹ By February 1836, however, the *Times* was reporting that Ali had taken steps to address the situation in Syria, at the urging of the British government. In a surprising upbeat assessment, the *Times* wrote that, 'Mehemet Alli will readily yield to all the reasonable demands of England'.¹⁰⁰

In this situation in Syria, as well as in Crete, Ali exhibited a willingness to react to European criticism of his governance. In February 1834, he tried to assuage the concerns of a British traveller who spoke to him about alleged atrocities in Crete.¹⁰¹ Ali attempted to explain to the British traveller that he was forced to order executions, but that he had a 'desire to treat the people with mercy,' and that the discord was the fault of the meddling of other powers.¹⁰² In the same interview, Ali spoke, as he had to various consuls-general previously of his desire to work with France and Britain. He spoke about the evil schemes of Austria and Russia, and how their disagreements over

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ *The Times*, February 26, 1836, p.6.

¹⁰¹ *The Times*, April 21, 1834, p.3.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Constantinople would in all likelihood come to naught, but if Austria and Russia sought to move on the city, he would be ready to stand with England and France against them.¹⁰³

French opinions were still largely in favour of Ali, despite the supposed effects of his rule in Crete and Syria. Despite this, opposition existed, exemplified by Eusèbe de Salle, a French doctor and Orientalist who served as an interpreter during the French invasion of Algiers and later as a professor of Arabic in Marseilles. For de Salle, Egypt was a site of French glory and even to some extent a French place. De Salle recalled not just Napoleon's invasion, but the much earlier invasion of Louis IX. For de Salle, landing in Egypt immediately brought to mind 'the brilliant and ephemeral conquest of our fathers under Saint Louis, and of our brothers under Bonaparte.'¹⁰⁴

De Salle immediately saw evidence of progress from the previous administration upon landing.¹⁰⁵ He took a somewhat negative view of Muhammad Ali, praising him as a 'logical' leader and also supporting his efforts in education, despite thinking they might be quashed by 'Muslim prejudices.'¹⁰⁶ Ali was wise, de Salle opined, in that he knew how to manipulate European public opinion; understanding that 'the newspaper was the most powerful governmental machine.'¹⁰⁷ This according with Caquet's sense that Ali knew the way to get liberal European opinion on side.¹⁰⁸ De Salle saw this for himself, noting Ali's fondness for promoting achievements in things fashionable to Europeans and for his propagandistic meetings with travellers and consuls. Ali was, he argued,

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Eusèbe de Salle, *Pérégrinations en Orient : Ou Voyage Pittoresque, Historique et Politique en Egypte, Nubie, Syrie, Turquie, Grèce, Pendant Les Années 1837-38-39*, Paris, 1840, Vol 1, p.1. 'La brillante et éphémère conquête de nos pères sous saint Louis, de nos frères sous Bonaparte.'

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.2.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.36.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.57. 'Mohammed-Aly est véritablement un homme sagace, car il a vu que le journal était la plus puissante machine gouvernemental.'

¹⁰⁸ Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.78.

performing for a European audience, trying to attract European, especially British and French, support.¹⁰⁹

Despite such obvious shrewdness, Ali was, for de Salle, just another Turkish despot, ‘a Turk who has not ceased to believe in Turkish government.’ Notwithstanding his progressive veneer, the thing ‘he desired most in the world’ was to become Sultan, and everything he did was to achieve this aim. He had mastered one thing that made people think he was a ‘great man’ of the Orient, and that was the power of ‘seducing’ men.¹¹⁰ Ali, for de Salle, was not a great man because the Orient could not create great men. ‘One can recognise a proportion of absurdity and childishness in the brand of all the men of genius,’ de Salle wrote, ‘particularly when these men are invested with despotic power.’¹¹¹

Another Frenchman not particularly enamoured of Ali was Marin Scipion. For Scipion, what Ali was would be obvious to anyone who properly studied him: ‘A Tartar foolishly enamoured with foreign wars.’¹¹² Ali ‘believed that civilisation consisted of building great armies, no matter through what means or which resources.’¹¹³ As such, he was mismanaging the potential of Egypt with his lust for conquest. If Ali was truly a great ruler he would have been improving the lot of his people, rather than focusing on external adventures. In addition, Scipion believed that France’s ‘alliance’

¹⁰⁹ de Salle, *Pérégrinations en Orient*, p.57.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.58-59. ‘Mohammed-Aly est un Turc qui n’a pas cessé de croire le gouvernement turc’

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.49. ‘on s’aperçoit qu’il y a une proportion obligée d’enfantillage et d’absurdité dans le cerveau de tous les hommes de génie, particulièrement quand ces hommes sont investis d’un pouvoir despotique.’

¹¹² Marin Scipion, *Conduite de la France envers la Turquie*, Grimbert et Dorez, Paris, 1840, p.8. ‘Quiconque l’a vu, l’a étudié, ne trouve en lui qu’un Tartare sottement épris des dehors belliqueux’

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.8-9. ‘Il croit que la civilisation consister à mettre sur pied de grandes armées, n’importe par quel moyens et avec quelles ressources’

with Ali was a mistake, believing that ‘France cannot legitimate with any pretext this monstrous alliance with Muhammad Ali, the alliance of July France with a degrading despotism.’¹¹⁴

In contrast to de Salle and Scipion, the French architect Hector Horeau provided an excellent encapsulation of the dominant French view of the civilising influence of Muhammad Ali in his *Panorama of Egypt and Nubia*. Horeau sketched a picture of Ali, astride a horse, alongside his son, Ibrahim, and ‘Soliman Pacha,’ a Frenchman who had attained high rank in Ali’s army. Ali had, Horeau argued in Orientalist tones, ‘pulled Egypt out of the nothingness in which it languished,’ and while he may have used means ‘repugnant to our European civilization’ he was ‘constrained by circumstances.’¹¹⁵ Horeau did detailed the negatives of Ali’s policies, his taxation and oppression of the people of Egypt, and his system of monopolies, however Horeau thought it would be seen in the future, after the war with the Ottoman Empire was over, whether or not Ali would be a true civilization builder in Egypt.

This dichotomy of views of Muhammad Ali was recognised at the time by the *Morning Chronicle*. In its review of James Augustus St John’s *Egypt and Mohammed Ali* it called attention to the two ‘extremes,’ the ‘*colour de rose*’ view that paints him as a ‘thoroughly enlightened reformer,’ and the other view that sees him only ‘as a tyrannical despot,’ interested only in his own profit.¹¹⁶ Charles Rochefort Scott, a British military officer gave perhaps the most useful explanation of what he saw as the two positions in the 1830s:

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp.12-13. ‘Nous avons prouvé que la France ne peut légitimer sous aucun prétexte sa monstrueuse alliance avec Méhémet-Ali, l’alliance de la France de Juillet avec un dégradant despotisme’

¹¹⁵ Hector Horeau, *Panorama d’Egypte et de Nubie Avec un Portrait de Méhémet Ali et un texte orné de vignettes*, Paris, 1841, p.1.

¹¹⁶ *The Morning Chronicle*, Tuesday, August 26, 1834.

By some, the changes which have of late years been effected in that country are spoken of in the most exalted terms of praise; by others, they are condemned as mere innovations, tending to no possible good : and, whilst the former maintain that, touched by Promethean fire, Egypt has started into a new life of civilization, the latter describe it as a country plunged in the lowest depths of misery, and governed by the most revolting tyranny.¹¹⁷

Scott of course positioned himself as being able to see through the two contrary positions, and to take up an enlightened middle ground. Egypt was ‘making rapid advances towards civilization’ but was still far from an ‘enlightened nation’ according to Scott. Ali was a ‘despot’ to be sure, but not a ‘sanguinary tyrant.’¹¹⁸

Scott paints a view of Ali that is more positive than the strict neutrality he aimed at in his introduction. On his impression of Alexandria from the sea, he wrote: ‘one cannot but be impressed, even before landing, with a favourable opinion of this extraordinary man.’¹¹⁹ He even came down in favour of Ibrahim Ali, after noting the ‘differences in opinion’ that writers held of Muhammad Ali’s son.¹²⁰ Recognising the ‘atrocities’ that Ibrahim committed in Syria, Scott explained them away as trying to bring law to a ‘set of lawless bandits.’ Indeed, Ibrahim was perhaps not violent enough for Scott who opined in bloodcurdling tones that ‘if the whole population of Palestine had been cut off by “one fell swoop” of the despotic sword of the “ferocious Ibrahim”—great as would have been the loss of human life, it would have been a gain to civilization.’¹²¹ Ali was a flawed man in Scott’s estimation, but perhaps the only leader that could successfully Europeanise Egypt at the time. The

¹¹⁷ Charles Rochefort Scott, *Rambles in Egypt and Candia*, Henry Colburn, London 1837, vol 1, p.vi.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.vii.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹²⁰ Scott, *Rambles in Egypt and Candia*, vol 2, p.140.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.142.

people of Egypt, according to Scott, largely praised Ali, excepting ‘the Turks.’¹²² His account likened Ali to a gardener, utilising a ‘cautious system of weeding’ to remove the ‘many evils’ that plagued the country, but not risk destroying ‘the good seed that has already shot up.’¹²³ Egypt’s government had progressed to the point where it was ‘efficient without being tyrannical.’¹²⁴

Another of the most prominent pro-Ali agitators in Britain was R Thurburn, a partner of Briggs & Co., and later the British Consul in Alexandria. Thurburn, even before he was a consul, was in direct communication with Palmerston and the highest levels of the British foreign service, sending them a memorandum on the state of Egypt. The memorandum expressed dismay, supposedly from Ali himself that people were linking him to the Russians. It said that Ali knew that aligning himself to the Russians would be ‘an act of imbecility.’ Thurburn agreed, saying he had expressed similar sentiments to Palmerston previously, that Ali could ‘never be the friend of Russia unless forced to become so by the policy of England towards him.’¹²⁵ Thurburn reiterated Ali’s stated aim of a close relationship with the British government, and attempted to convince Palmerston of Ali’s commitment to ‘releasing the Turkish empire from the thralldom of Russia.’¹²⁶ He also professed to being alarmed at the attempts made by Ali’s ‘personal enemies’ or ‘the agents of Russia’ to harm his reputation in Britain.¹²⁷

This more formal channel of influence between Ali and the British government was another of Ali’s channels for influencing European attitudes and policy. Thurburn was a partner in Briggs

¹²² Ibid., p.144.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.153.

¹²⁵ TNA FO 78/295, p. 377, Memorandum on Egypt and Syria Submitted to the Right Honorable Viscount Palmerston.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ FO 78/295, p. 378, Memorandum on Egypt and Syria Submitted to the Right Honorable Viscount Palmerston.

and Company, a British company that operated extensively in Egypt, and that had developed close links with Muhammad Ali. Ali was keen to acquire influence in Britain and, denied the right to send official permanent diplomatic representatives, he attempted to use merchants to act as a conduit between himself and the British government, in addition to the official British consuls in Egypt.¹²⁸ Thurburn thought those that believed the Sultan's authority could be re-established over Egypt were misguided: 'the supposed influence of the Sultan, as head of the Mahometan faith, to which a kind of magic effect is ascribed, has long ceased to exist.'¹²⁹ Thurburn believed too that the Sultan's misguided attempts at 'innovation' 'without regard for the prejudices of the people' had completely removed any prospect of there being popular support for the Sultan. Even if Ottoman authority could be re-established, it would not last long, according to Thurburn. Expanding on his belief that the Ottoman reforms were misguided, Thurburn stated that they were destroying 'the only principle of national union in Turkey—religion.'¹³⁰ Ali, on the contrary, respected the religion of his people and thus had adopted 'the only wise course to be pursued with a nation in so low a state of civilisation' by initiating reforms gradually, focusing on laying the groundwork for further reforms through education. Thurburn defended Ali and Ibrahim's record in Syria, believing they had established a 'degree of security hitherto unknown in the Turkish dominion.'¹³¹

Thurburn closed his letter by imploring Palmerston to accept Ali's position as master of Egypt and Syria, with Ali promising to respect the wishes of Britain to not expand beyond that point. 'The desire invariably manifested by the Pasha to preserve the friendship of GB is,'

¹²⁸ Rodkey, 'The Attempts of Briggs and Company to Guide British Policy in the Levant in the Interest of Mehemet Ali Pasha, 1821-41,' p.325.

¹²⁹ FO 78/295, p. 378 Memorandum on Egypt and Syria Submitted to the Right Honorable Viscount Palmerston.

¹³⁰ FO 78/295, p. 379 Memorandum on Egypt and Syria Submitted to the Right Honorable Viscount Palmerston.

¹³¹ Ibid.

Thurnburn wrote, ‘a sufficient pledge that he will not expose himself to its displeasure by any unprovoked encroachment on the Sultan’s territory.’¹³² With this in mind, Britain should work to make the Sultan accept the status quo, rather than push for a return to the previous situation. ‘It only remains for HM’s Gov to reconcile the Sultan to the existing state of things and to obtain from him such securities for its maintenance.’¹³³

Prior to this October memorandum, Thurnburn and Briggs had, in July 1836, met personally with Palmerston and attempted to convince him of the sagacity of aligning with Muhammad Ali.¹³⁴ This 1836 effort to change British policy in a pro-Ali direction was unsuccessful, but Briggs and Thurnburn would try once again in 1838 and throughout the Second Egyptian Ottoman-War. Crucially, however, Thurnburn and Briggs shared with their fellow Ali-partisan Waghorn a specific financial interest in Egypt, and in cooperating with Ali. For his part, Ali explicitly encouraged Briggs & Co in their attempts to woo Palmerston away from his pro-Ottoman policy.¹³⁵

Richard Robert Madden, already discussed in chapter four, also published a book analysing the character of Ali and Egypt in 1841. In it, he showed some sympathy to Ali, but believed he had at least partially wasted his potential. Madden praised Ali for his religious tolerance, and his sense of justice, but believed that Ali should have focused inwardly, rather than on expansionism, complaining that ‘he has wasted his treasure in foreign wars, and none of his conquests have any appearance of permanency.’¹³⁶ Ali’s internal policy was also flawed in his estimation. A page after

¹³² FO 78/295, p. 380 Memorandum on Egypt and Syria Submitted to the Right Honorable Viscount Palmerston.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Rodkey, "The Attempts of Briggs and Company to Guide British Policy in the Levant in the Interest of Mehemet Ali Pasha, 1821-41," p.343.

¹³⁵ Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.22.

¹³⁶ Richard Robert Madden, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali: illustrative of the condition of his slaves and subjects*, London, Hamilton, Adams, 1841, pp.19-20.

praising his sense of justice, Madden roundly criticised Ali's management of Egypt. According to Madden, Ali's rule was vicious:

During the five-and-thirty years he has reigned over Egypt, he has wonderfully augmented the produce of the soil; and the people of his country are not only diminished in numbers, but impoverished and deteriorated in their condition. When he took possession of the government, the people were oppressed by their improvident rulers; but the removal of the Beys only paved the way for an organized system of well-regulated rapacity, such as the people of Egypt, all the periods of their misery and slavery, had never groaned under; and the government of the Beys, even when the country, by the badness of their rule, was most insecure for strangers, was a mild one for the people when compared by them, as it now is, with that of Mohammed Ali.¹³⁷

In addition, Ali had been led astray by European advisors, who used him for their own purposes. Most of the reforms that Ali had brought about had benefited foreign travellers. They had made Egypt safe for foreigners, but at the cost of the local people. For Madden, this was extremely unjust:

It may be as unjustifiable for a European to form a notion of their merits or demerits by any European standard, as it would be unfair to draw inferences of an enlightened policy, according to our ideas of it, from the security that is obtained by means that in our eyes are barbarous and unjust.¹³⁸

Despite being afflicted by 'French parasites', Ali was, for Madden, 'a lucky accident in the land of mis-rule' for the French, who called him "the Napoleon of the East."¹³⁹ These French 'sycophants' and their influence over Ali were 'deleterious to Egypt,' and some of them, including Clot Bey

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.20.

¹³⁸ Ibid., pp.21,26.

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp.36, 47, 53.

recklessly advocated 'hostility to England.' As such, the French in Egypt were the enemies of peace.¹⁴⁰ So too, the French press was a negative influence on Egypt, and Madden believed that the English press, if it became popular in Egypt, could help liberate the country and modify Ali's thinking.¹⁴¹

The abovementioned Clot Bey was Muhammad Ali's surgeon and one of the most prominent pro-Ali French writers, who carried great influence in Muhammad Ali's court and also published influential works on Egypt for a largely French audience. Clot Bey, who Madden had criticised for supposedly poisoning the mind of Ali against the British, called Ali 'a man of superior genius' who had 'received the wisdom of France.'¹⁴² For Clot Bey the Eastern question was the 'most important question of foreign policy' of the time. It was, he believed, in essence a question of civilisation and its spread in the 'orient.'¹⁴³ For him, the French had begun this reinvigoration of civilisation through Napoleon's invasion of Egypt.¹⁴⁴ France had 'opened the path' for Ali by removing the Mamluks.¹⁴⁵ France had then helped Ali through his early years through the sage advice of its consuls. If Ali's regime was brutal and oppressive, it was in the interests of advancing civilisation. According to Clot Bey, it was not the masses that advanced civilisation, it was 'great individuals' who imposed it by 'conflict and violence.'¹⁴⁶ If the Ottoman Empire was trying to reform, it was only out of 'rivalry' with Muhammad Ali, a crude attempt to imitate his successes.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp.57, 71.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.81.

¹⁴² Antoine Barthélemy Clot Bey, *Aperçu général sur l'Égypte*, Meline, Cans et Campagne, Bruxelles, 1840, Vol 1, p.iii. 'Après la malheureuse issue de cette expédition, un homme d'un génie supérieur receueillit l'héritage de la France.'

¹⁴³ Clot Bey, *Aperçu général sur l'Égypte*, vol 2, p.160. 'la plus grande question de politique extérieure'

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p.165.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.165. 'Mais c'e'tait Napoléon, c'était la France qui lui avaient frayé le chemin.'

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.167. 'Ce ne sont jamais les peuples qui font les civilisations, ce sont ges grandes individualités qui les imposent Presque toujours par la lute et par la violence.'

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p.168.

Clot Bey was later extremely explicit about what he saw as the effects of Napoleon on Egypt. He even supposedly foresaw the rise to power of Ali:

It can be said with truth that France and Napoleon are the causes of the civilising movement which is manifesting in our time in the Orient, and that Muhammad Ali has cultivated in Egypt the seeds that were left by the great man who prepared and prophesied his ascension.¹⁴⁸

Ali was, under this reading, a man not responsible for his own success, but instead merely a product of European excellence, and particularly French excellence. Incapable of producing its own saviours, it needed French guidance to be saved and restored. Ali was merely reaping the benefits of Napoleon's intervention in Egyptian history.

While Clot Bey supported Ali, the writer of one of the other most influential works on Egypt in the 1830s, Edward Lane, was much less enamoured with Ali. Lane's 'seminal' nineteenth-century British book on Egypt, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* was published in 1835. The book was regarded as so thorough and complete that someone remarked to the editor to the fifth edition: 'whenever I thought I had discovered, in Cairo, something that must surely have been omitted, I invariably found my new fact already recorded.'¹⁴⁹ The *Edinburgh Review* also praised Lane's work in a review in April 1837:

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 'On peut donc dire avec vérité que la France et Napoléon sont les causes du mouvement civilisateur qui s'est manifesté de notre temps en Orient, et que Méhémet-Ali a cultivé en Égypte les germes qui y avaient été jetés par le grand homme qui a préparé et prophétisé son élévation.'

¹⁴⁹ Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs Of The Modern Egyptians*, 5th edition, John Murray, London, 1860, p.ix.

Mr Lane's work is not the hasty or superficial production of a passing traveller, whose impressions are suddenly caught and carelessly recorded; who merely glances at the surface of things, and generalizes from casual or hurried observations.¹⁵⁰

Lane had spent years in the country and his evident knowledge of Arabic gave his work extra credibility for the *Edinburgh Review*: 'Excepting Burckhardt, he is the only European who seems to have thoroughly understood the character of the Arabs.'¹⁵¹

In his introduction, Lane stated his reasoning for writing his work. Previous writings about Egypt were lacking, he stated, in that they did not cover the people of Egypt well enough. As such, his task was to alleviate this gap with his own knowledge.¹⁵² Lane had intended to publish a more straightforward 'description of Egypt' like so many others, but publishing problems prevented him from achieving this goal.¹⁵³

Lane's work was not particularly positive about Ali, although he admitted that he considered Ali to be 'severe' rather than 'wantonly cruel.'¹⁵⁴ Of the regional governors he wrote: 'most of the governors of provinces and districts carry their oppression far beyond the limits to which they are authorized to proceed by the Basha.'¹⁵⁵ Ali's economic policies, however, went beyond the pale:

The present Basha has increased his revenue to this amount by most oppressive measures. He has dispossessed of their lands almost all the private proprietors throughout Egypt, allotting to each, as a partial compensation, a pension for life, proportioned to the extent and

¹⁵⁰ *The Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal*, April 11837, p.147.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.148.

¹⁵² Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs Of The Modern Egyptians*, p.xi.

¹⁵³ Jason Thompson, 'Edward William Lane's "Description of Egypt",' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 28:4, 1996, pp. 565-583.

¹⁵⁴ Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs Of The Modern Egyptians*, p.139

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.163

quality of the land which belonged to him. The farmer has, therefore, nothing to leave his children but his hut, and perhaps a few cattle and some small savings.¹⁵⁶

Lane also criticised Ali for the white slave trade, particularly the enslavement of Europeans that had occurred during the Greek crisis: 'Most of the white female slaves who were in Egypt during my first visit to this country were Greeks.'¹⁵⁷

Representations of Egypt in the 1830s were clearly split along pro and anti-Ali lines, just as representations of the Ottoman Empire were split between believers in reform and those who saw the Ottoman Empire as essentially irredeemable. The split in opinion that was expressed by writers also reflected the split between French and British policy during the Second Egyptian-Ottoman War. Crucially, however, the split demonstrated that the depiction of both Ali and the Ottoman Sultan was a product of the political proclivities of the writer. Whereas the leader of the opposing power was represented as an Oriental despot in terms that clearly justify Said's understanding of Orientalism, the leader of the allied power, whether Egyptian or Ottoman, offered space for the depiction of a progressive, reformist ruler. Still Orientalist in its assumption that progressive meant European, such favourable depictions nonetheless complicate totalising understandings of Orientalising discourse as a way of understanding the eastern Other.

Palmerston, Guizot, and Thiers

Palmerston's policy, especially in the second Egyptian-Ottoman War has been seen as the work of a man 'motivated almost solely by British interests.'¹⁵⁸ While Palmerston was acting in accordance with

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.163-164

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p.234

¹⁵⁸ Abdulaziz Mohammed Al-Rabghi, *British Policy Towards Egypt From 1833 To 1882*, Claremont Graduate School, 1986, p.1

his perceptions of Britain's 'national interests' it is worth examining how this belief in Britain's national interests came about, and how perceptions of Ottoman reform helped him to believe that the Ottoman Empire was reformable and sustainable.

Palmerston's stated reason for opposing Ali's independence was outlined explicitly in his correspondence to Lord Granville in Paris in June 1838:

The Cabinet yesterday agreed that it would not do to let Mehemet Ali declare himself independent, and separate Egypt and Syria from the Turkish empire. They see that the consequence of such a declaration on his part must be either immediately or at no distant time conflict between him and the Sultan. That in such conflict the Turkish troops would probably be defeated; that then the Russians would fly to the aid of the Sultan, and a Russian garrison would occupy Constantinople and the Dardanelles; and once in possession of those points, the Russians would never quit them.¹⁵⁹

Palmerston, in this and other letters to Granville, expressed his hope that the French would join with the British in any actions they took to support the Sultan against Ali. An Anglo-French agreement would see the conflict off without seeing any actual conflict, hoped Palmerston. He professed to being 'convinced that such a convention as I describe would save Turkey, and preserve the peace of Europe, by its mere moral effect, and without our being called to act upon it.'¹⁶⁰ His strident opposition to giving Ali any part of Syria as a hereditary possession would prove an unbridgeable point of difference with the French government.

¹⁵⁹ Henry Lynton Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston: With Selections from his Correspondence*, Vol 3, Ed. Evelyn Ashley, Richard Bentley & Son, London, 1874, p.267.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.268.

Palmerston gained his knowledge of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt in the same way as most of his compatriots, namely reading the works of others with ‘first-hand knowledge.’ As foreign secretary, Palmerston, however, had access to a more direct and more politically involved range of sources than most writers. Henry Bulwer, who wrote a largely positive biography of Palmerston, was one of Palmerston’s foreign office sources in the ‘east.’ Bulwer offered an economic justification for support of the Ottoman Empire against Egypt, relating advice from Ponsonby, the British ambassador, that the Sultan would support a commercial treaty because it would weaken Ali’s power.¹⁶¹

In a letter to Palmerston, Bulwer advocated giving Ali hereditary control of Egypt:

As long as Mehemet has nothing certain to lose or to bequeath, we cannot count upon his content and tranquillity; but give him the one and the other, and it is more than probable that in his old age he would prefer a smaller sum in his pocket to a larger one staked on the great gambling-table of war. Confined to the government of Egypt, also, and secure of its possession, his attention would be concentrated on peaceful pursuits, and most of the enormities he commits would cease from the cessation of their cause.¹⁶²

Bulwer also offered his assessment of Ali’s policy to Palmerston, reiterating his view that Ali would be assuaged by hereditary rule of Egypt:

His present object is to disquiet and alarm the great Powers as to the fear of war, without actually doing anything that can provoke their hostilities. (Some of the tribute due, I understand to have been lately paid.) In this manner he trusts to persuade us that it is better

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p.263.

¹⁶² Ibid., p.277-278.

to do something that will settle and keep him permanently quiet, than to leave him in his present disposition.¹⁶³

Palmerston's reply to Bulwer offers a key insight into his views of the Ottoman Empire by the end of the 1830s: 'It will last our time if we try to prop it up, and not to pull it down.' He also predicted that the Ottoman Empire was inherently more stable than Muhammad Ali's regime, which was comparatively a 'creation of yesterday.' In response to Bulwer's claim that no Sultan would be able to govern Egypt effectively after Ali's reign, Palmerston strongly disagreed in a letter dated September 22, 1838. The Ottoman Empire only needed 'a little addition of order, organization, and force' and Egypt 'a little less of sagacity, vigour of intellect, and administrative capacity' and Syria would surely return to the Sultan's realms, according to Palmerston.¹⁶⁴ Palmerston thought Ali had been lucky to ascend to his present situation, but now, at seventy years old, had little time left, and basing 'a system of future policy in the East' upon Ali at this point would be 'to be built on sand.'¹⁶⁵ In this missive, Palmerston also outlined his clear hopes for the Ottoman Empire, and his derision for the narrative of 'decay' that existed in Europe: 'I am inclined to suspect that those who say that the Turkish empire is rapidly going from bad to worse ought rather to say that the other countries of Europe are year by year becoming better acquainted with the manifest and manifold defects of the organization of Turkey.'¹⁶⁶ For Palmerston, those defects were in the process of being addressed, and knowledge of these defects by Europeans would further help sustain the Ottoman Empire:

But I should be disposed to think that, for some years past, the foundations at least of improvement have been laid; and it is certain that the daily increasing intercourse between

¹⁶³ Ibid., p.282-283.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp.285-286.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.286.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p.287.

Turkey and the other countries of Europe must in a few years, if peace can be preserved, throw much light upon the defects and weaknesses of the Turkish system, and lead to various improvements therein.¹⁶⁷

Bulwer agreed with Palmerston that greater 'knowledge' of the Ottoman Empire was likely the principal cause of European belief in the decline narrative:

When Turkey was a barbaric power, with its flowing robes and latticed windows, it existed as a romantic mystery, which no one thought of inquiring into; when it became more or less Europeanized, people put on their spectacles and began to criticise it with European eyes, and to judge it by European notions; and it may almost be said that what superficial observers pointed at as symptoms of deterioration were proofs of improvement.¹⁶⁸

Seeking to head off disaster, Palmerston personally cautioned the Ottoman diplomat, Ahmed Fethi Pasha, that the Sultan should avoid attacking Ali directly. By September 1838, Palmerston believed that Egypt was now stronger than the Ottoman Empire and that only European diplomatic action could keep the Ottoman Empire afloat until it was powerful enough to resist Egypt on its own.¹⁶⁹

Palmerston also saw in the weakness of the Ottoman Empire an opportunity to dismantle the treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, by superseding it with a new treaty involving all the European powers.¹⁷⁰

In contrast to his relatively positive views of the Ottoman Empire, Palmerston did not believe Ali was an enlightened modern leader. His dispatch of August 1 1839 to Frederick Lamb, Lord Beauvale, the British ambassador in Vienna revealed what he thought of Ali's government. He

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.288.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p.287-288.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.281.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.282.

was subjecting the Syrians to ‘many and severe oppressions.’¹⁷¹ In a different dispatch of the same date to Lord Beauvale, Palmerston did nonetheless praise Ali’s intelligence. Ali was a ‘shrewd and sagacious’ man, he commented, one who would not take risks, and would not risk defying the five powers as he would surely lose.¹⁷² Palmerston and the British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Lord Ponsonby, both concurred on Ali’s character. Ali was a ‘rebel’ and a ‘robber’ for Palmerston, while for Ponsonby he was a typical example of Turkish ‘barbarism’ and despotism.¹⁷³ An apparent obsession with ‘etiquette’ is another potential source of Palmerston’s view on Egypt compared to the Ottoman Empire. In a letter to Lord Holland in 1836 he expressed this view, of the Eastern Question as a matter of sovereign against subject very clearly: ‘the Sultan *is* the sovereign & Mehemet Ali *is* the subject; and it is impossible to deny the *right* of the Sultan.’¹⁷⁴

Palmerston’s view of Ali and his Egypt as a typical example of Oriental despotism would clearly influence his thinking on the Eastern Question. He never considered a more positive policy towards Ali, and ultimately he became the primary guiding force for Britain’s response to the ‘Eastern Question’ during the Second Ottoman Egyptian War.

The situation in France differed to that in Britain, according to François Guizot, who was the French ambassador to Britain during the crisis. Guizot decidedly did not believe in Ottoman reform: ‘as for the Ottoman Empire, I am far from contesting its decline, it is evident.’¹⁷⁵ In his

¹⁷¹ No. 173 Viscount Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, August 1, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, Part I, TR Harrison, London, 1841, p.224.

¹⁷² No. 174 Viscount Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, August 1, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.225.

¹⁷³ Charles R. Middleton, ‘Palmerston, Ponsonby and Mehemet Ali: Some Observations on Ambassadorial Independence in the East, 1838-40,’ *East European Quarterly* 15:4, 1981, pp.409-424, p.412.

¹⁷⁴ Brown, *Palmerston*, p.214.

¹⁷⁵ François Guizot, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de mon temps*, Vol IV, p.327. ‘Quant à l’empire ottoman, je suis loin de contester son déclin ; il est évident.’

estimation, this did not mean that the Ottoman Empire would crumble immediately, indeed it could take centuries to finally fall, but the evidence was undeniable. Guizot continually referred to the 'decline' of the Ottoman Empire as 'natural' in the undated speech he included in his *Mémoires*. Guizot thought that it was the inexorable destiny of the Ottoman Empire that it would be replaced by new, independent states, regardless of whether or not the European powers interfered. Guizot was an Ottoman defeatist, likening the Danubian principalities, Greece, and Egypt to 'stones naturally falling off an edifice.'¹⁷⁶ The rise of Egypt was then a confluence of the natural decline of the Ottoman Empire and the inspiration of the French invasion, culminating in the supposed 'genius' of Muhammad Ali. The French invasion of 1798 had set an example for Egypt, Guizot said, but it was the 'natural dismemberment' of the Ottoman Empire and the 'genius and powerful will of one man.'¹⁷⁷ That man was, of course, Muhammad Ali.

The one reason Guizot felt concern about the potential demise of the Ottoman Empire was its potential effect on the European balance of power. If the Ottoman Empire fell because of European interference, that would be a cause for great concern.¹⁷⁸ In contrast, when the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire was happening from within, 'by the natural course of fate' these new nations deserved to 'take their place in the family of states.' Eventually, according to Guizot, these new states would take the place of the Ottoman Empire in the 'European equilibrium.'¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p.328. 'Comment l'empire ottoman a-t-il Presque perdu les Principautés danubiennes, puis tout à fait la Grèce, puis déjà à moitié l'Égypte? Ce sont, permettez-moi cette expression, ce sont des pierres qui sont tombées naturellement de l'edifice.'

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p.329-330. 'Sans doute, par notre expedition de 1798, par les exemples et les triomphes de l'armée française et de son Glorieux chef, nous sommes pour quelque chose dans l'apparition de cette puissance nouvelle; ell n'est pourtant pas de notre fait; c'est là aussi un démembrement naturel de l'empire ottoman, tenté et Presque accompli par le genie et la puissante volonté d'un homme.'

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p.330-331. 'et quand, par la force des choses, par le cours naturel des faits, qulque démembrement s'opère, qulque province se détache de cet empire en décadence, favoriser la transformation de cette province en une souveraineté nouvelle et indépendante qui prenne place dans la famille des États, et qui serve un jour au nouvel équilibre européen.'

Adolphe Thiers, the French Prime Minister in 1840, was both pro-Ali and pro-English in his outlook. Like Palmerston, Thiers strongly wanted to keep Russia away from Constantinople, and he spoke out in favour of the English alliance for this reason.¹⁸¹ Thiers however did not share Palmerston's views on Muhammad Ali or the Ottoman Empire. Thiers believed that the Ottoman Empire needed to 'look at Egypt and Syria like it looked at Greece,' that is, as independent states.¹⁸² Thiers was more intensely pro-Egypt than Guizot, who would succeed him as leader of the French government when the King dismissed Thiers over his refusal to seek peace.¹⁸³

In addition to their pro-Ali policies, Thiers was following broad precepts of French foreign policy under the July Monarchy, a policy based on defending France's national honour.¹⁸⁴ Egypt, and Muhammad Ali, had become an integral French national interest, not out of strategic concerns, but out of cultural memory and this concept of honour.¹⁸⁵ Thiers' predecessor, Soult had strived to maintain the alliance with Britain, the '*Entente cordiale*' but Thiers was much more nationalist, and willing to take risks for the honour of France.¹⁸⁶ Thiers was not alone in seeing Egypt as a vital French interest because of an imagined sense of honour or dignity. The *Siècle* wrote in June 1839:

¹⁸¹ Guichen, *La Crise d'Orient*, p.241.

¹⁸² Ibid., p.242 'Aujourd'hui, l'Europe ne sera tranquille que lorsque la Turquie aura pris son parti à l'égard de l'Egypte et de la Syrie comme à l'égard de la Grèce.'

¹⁸³ Ibid., p.x, Abigail Mellen, *Adolphe Thiers: The Making of a Conservative Liberal*, Proquest Dissertations Publishing, 1991, p.149.

¹⁸⁴ Šedivý, 'Honour as a political-legal argument,' p.102.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.103-104. Louis, *La question d'Orient sous Louis-Philippe*, p.138.

¹⁸⁶ Louis, *La question d'Orient sous Louis-Philippe*, p.224.

The Eastern Question is for us a vital question, the future of our national dignity, our commercial fortunes and our European position all depend on the manner in which this question is resolved.¹⁸⁷

Much more than the Ottoman Empire was seen in Britain as a British interest, Egypt was seen as a French interest in France. This French attitude baffled statesmen in the rest of Europe, with Metternich believing Thiers was attempting to be another Napoleon.¹⁸⁸

The Second Egyptian-Ottoman War

The situation in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire would come to a head in the summer of 1839. After a sustained period of rumoured independence plots and rebellions from Muhammad Ali, Sultan, Mahmud II essentially dragged Ali into a war. During the war, Palmerston remained resolutely pro-Ottoman, while French policy shifted from amenable and readily interested in joint action to maintain the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, to an almost war-footing in favour of Muhammad Ali and his heirs gaining hereditary rule of not only Egypt but also Syria.

The official British Foreign Office narrative of the ‘Turkish and Egyptian Question’ states that the British became aware that Muhammad Ali was intending to declare his independence in June 1838, via Lord Granville, the ambassador to France at the time.¹⁸⁹ The dispatch, from the French Consul-General in Egypt, M. Cochelet, stated positively that Ali was intent on this line of independence, Ali had told Cochelet:

¹⁸⁷ Guichen, *La Crise d’Orient*, p.44. ‘la question d’Orient est pour nous une question vitale ; notre avenir de dignité nationale, de fortune commerciale et de position européenne y est engagé et dépend de la manière dont cette question sera résolue...’

¹⁸⁸ Louis, *La question d’Orient sous Louis-Philippe*, p.224.

¹⁸⁹ TNA FO 78/472, p. 138 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

that having expended large sums in the improvement and civilization of his territory, and being unwilling that the inheritance would not pass to his children, he had resolved at all riches to declare himself independent.¹⁹⁰

Ali was so intent on this measure that he had remarked to the Austrian consul that ‘neither the blockade of his ports by the squadrons of France and England, nor the invasion of his territory by the Russians should deter him.’¹⁹¹ This development was obviously alarming to Britain, as the British under Palmerston were now strongly in favour of maintaining the Ottoman Empire as a viable regional power, and it was feared that Egyptian independence could end any hope of its survival.¹⁹²

The initial French reaction, expressed by Count Molé, the French Prime Minister, to Lord Granville was that ‘France and England should act in concert.’¹⁹³ At this time Molé was in favour of a harsh response from Britain and France to any possible act towards independence of Ali, including the blockade that Ali professed not to fear. Molé expressed to Granville his belief that the Ottoman Porte would act in accordance with Russia, and that this was the real danger of Egyptian independence.¹⁹⁴

Despite these British and French fears of Russia moving to benefit from the situation, Russia did not desire the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. The Russian Consul-General in Egypt also supported the concept of a united front, this time adding Austria and Russia to the Western European powers.¹⁹⁵ The European concert ‘must unite in making the strongest repudiations to

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Fahmy, ‘The Era of Mehmed Ali Pasha,’ p.174.

¹⁹³ FO 78/472, p. 138 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ FO 78/472, p. 139 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

Mehemet Ali, in order to deter him from his proposed course.¹⁹⁶ By June 1838, France, Britain, and Russia were united on this point. Molé, according to Granville, informed the Russian Charge d’Affaires that ‘the views of France on that point were in accordance with those of Russia.’¹⁹⁷ Molé subsequently instructed Cochelet that he was to ‘use his utmost exertions’ to prevent Ali from engaging his plan to announce his independence. Molé was convinced that Russia was happy with the present situation and did not want Ali to disrupt the tentative peace in the Ottoman Empire by declaring independence, but still feared Russia taking advantage of the situation if Ali did make his move.¹⁹⁸ The French government seemed to the British to be committed to this course of cooperation with Britain in mid-1838.¹⁹⁹

Ali was aware that he needed the support of the French and British governments to ensure his independence. He said as much to Cochelet, in a conversation relayed to Granville by Molé in June 1838, Ali would ‘wait a sufficient time to ascertain the disposition of the French and English Governments to settle amicably by mediation with the Sultan the question of his independence.’²⁰⁰ Ali expressed to Colonel Campbell, the British Consul, that it was ‘not his intention to surpass the frontiers of Syria, or to commit any aggression on the Porte.’²⁰¹ Ali’s military forces were, at least according to Ali, entirely defensive in nature.

Colonel Campbell and the Russian Consul, Count Medeu, both agreed at this stage that Ali would ‘seize the first favourable moment’ to rid himself of the control of the Porte and declare his

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ FO 78/472, p. 151 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²⁰⁰ FO 78/472, p. 140,141 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²⁰¹ FO 78/472, p. 142 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

independence.²⁰² Campbell complained that Cochelet was not cooperating with him in 1838, but Molé informed Granville that Cochelet had been instructed to cooperate with Campbell on this point.²⁰³ Ali, in late May 1838, accepted Campbell's request that he delay any movements until England's reaction could be ascertained.²⁰⁴ Campbell shared his opinions on Ali's calculations with the British government:

Colonel Campbell is persuaded that the Pacha will persevere in his resolution: the Pacha calculates upon the opposition of France and England to the advance of a Russian Army into Asia Minor, or failing that opposition, to his being able to rouse the Mussulman population against the Russians, which Colonel Campbell considers it probably that he might do.²⁰⁵

Ali's too shared his thoughts with Campbell, 'England did not appear to understand his position, and how impossible it was for him to leave his family unprovided for.'²⁰⁶ Ali's desires did not seem so grandiose to himself. He claimed to have no intention of replacing the Ottoman Empire, as some historians have claimed,²⁰⁷ but merely was intent on carving out a state for him and his successors to rule.²⁰⁸

The European powers were also troubled by the fact that this was, in essence, a domestic matter for the Ottoman Empire. The Foreign Office archive demonstrates that Lord Palmerston believed, at least officially, that this was 'a purely domestic matter between the Sultan and Mehemet

²⁰² FO 78/472, p. 143 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ FO 78/472, p. 144 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ FO 78/472, p. 156 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²⁰⁷ Louis, *La question d'Orient sous Louis-Philippe*, p.72.

²⁰⁸ Fahmy, 'The era of Muhammad Ali Pasha,' p.172.

Ali, in which foreign powers are not entitled to interfere uninvited.²⁰⁹ There was, as ever, a fear of impropriety in dealing with Muhammad Ali's Egypt separately from the Ottoman Empire, despite the fact that the British had been previously willing to deal with Ali as a separate entity during the Greek War of Independence. Even if they were not willing to deal with Ali as an independent entity, the British still warned the Ottoman Empire to take a cautious approach. They attempted to convince the Sultan not to take the initiative against Ali. Lord Ponsonby, the British ambassador to the Porte and a man described by Guizot as 'passionately against Muhammad Ali and inclined to blame him for all wrongs,'²¹⁰ 'recommended most strongly' that the Sultan avoid an aggressive course of action.²¹¹ Ponsonby wrote to Palmerston of his attempts to dissuade the Sultan, but they would be to no avail. Palmerston informed Ponsonby that he was to tell the Sultan that Britain would assist the Ottoman Empire if it was attacked, but if it was the aggressor, it would 'be a different question.'²¹² Metternich in Austria took a similar line towards the Sultan:

If the approach of the Turkish Army to the Syrian frontier led to a violation of the established *status quo*, the Turkish government must not be surprised if those powers withdrew their countenance from the Sultan, and abandoned the Empire to its fate.²¹³

In reaction to the policies of the European powers, Rechid Pasha, the Ottoman Ambassador in London assured Palmerston in April 1839 that 'peace appears to be henceforth secured for this year.'²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ FO 78/472, p. 151 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²¹⁰ Guizot, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps*, Vol IV p.332-333. 'Enfin l'ambassadeur d'Angleterre à Constantinople, lord Ponsonby lui-même, si passionné contre Méhémet-Ali et toujours si enclin à rejeter sur lui tous les torts'

²¹¹ No. 3 'Lord Ponsonby to Viscount Palmerston,' *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.3.

²¹² No. 7, 'Viscount Palmerston to Lord Ponsonby, March 15, 1839,' *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.4.

²¹³ No. 10 'Mr. Milbanke to Viscount Palmerston, March 28, 1839,' *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.5.

²¹⁴ No. 21. Rechid Pasha to Viscount Palmerston, April 27, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.10.

Peace was not secured for the year, however, and the Ottoman army crossed the border to retake Syria. Colonel Campbell wrote to Palmerston from Alexandria in May 1839, outlining the situation:

As to Mehemet Ali, I can assert confidently, that it never was his intention to be the active aggressor, nor to pass the frontiers of Syria, nor to attack the Sultan's forces; and I am borne out in this view of the subject, not only by the positive declarations of Mehemet Ali, but also by the opinions of the Consuls-General of the Great Powers.

Ali was aware that he could not attack the Ottoman Empire and keep the great powers on side. The Ottoman Empire was aware of this as well, and had unsuccessfully attempted to provoke a reaction from Ibrahim Ali, leading the Egyptian forces in Syria.²¹⁵

The Ottoman Government explained itself in a message sent to Ponsonby in April 1839. According to this Ottoman missive, Ali was 'ruining' the countries which he ruled, 'he reduces the inhabitants to misery.'²¹⁶ The Ottoman Empire had to take 'measures of defence' against Ali, to restore their territory. The Sultan called on the great powers to give his government the 'deference which governments owe to one another.'²¹⁷ The Sultan had to send his troops into Syria to force Ali to 'acknowledge and perform the duties which are imposed on him.' The Sultan asked in the note, 'what is to be done, when there no longer remains any security with respect to a man devoured up by ambition and greediness, who has conceived perfidious plans?'²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Fahmy, 'The era of Muhammad Ali Pasha,' p.172.

²¹⁶ Inclosure in No. 37. Reponse du Sultan aux communications qui lui ont ete faites au sujet de Mehemet Ali; communiquee par son Excellence le Mousteshar Nouri Effendi, a son Excellence Lord Ponsonby, April 28, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.22-23.

²¹⁷ Inclosure in No. 37, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.23.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

The Sultan attempted to force the European great powers into a position where they could choose to support him or let the course of events play themselves out, as Metternich and Ponsoby had threatened. Ali, however, was still seeking a moderate course of action. He communicated a willingness to renounce his demands for independence in exchange for hereditary succession to the French Consul-General.²¹⁹ The European powers still seemed set on concerted action. Marshall Soult, having replaced Molé as prime minister in 1839, informed Granville that he believed the situation could only be settled by ‘the concurrence of all the Great Powers of Europe.’²²⁰ Palmerston’s letter (sent June 25, 1839, unknowingly the day after the Battle of Nezib) to the admiralty illuminates the problem he saw of averting war between the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. The problem, as Palmerston saw it, was largely with the Ottoman Empire. As a British ally, however, Palmerston believed Britain had less recourse to threaten them with any sort of military action. The British admiral in charge would have to rely solely on ‘persuasion’ to attempt to dissuade the Ottoman Army.²²¹ Admiral Stopford would essentially have to inform the ‘Turkish Commander’ that war was foolish and he could easily be defeated.²²² On the other hand, Stopford was free, due to the nature of Egyptian communication with Syria largely being by sea, to essentially blockade the Egyptian forces in Syria to enforce Britain’s will.²²³ The instructions to the French admiral from the French government were similar, but also mentioned the possibility of interrupting Ottoman naval communications with Syria.²²⁴ Here a small difference between British and French policy was already

²¹⁹ No. 54. Extract of a despatch from the Consul-General of France in Egypt. (Communicated by Baron de Bourqueney.), May 15, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.54.

²²⁰ No. 60. Earl Granville to discount Palmerston, June 17, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.77.

²²¹ No. 69. Viscount Palmerston to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, June 25, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.91.

²²² No. 69, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.92.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ No. 75. Instructions to the French Admiral in the Levant. (Communicated By M. de Bourqueney, June 29.), June 26, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.103.

discernible. The French were more willing to directly confront the Ottoman Empire to not risk the situation spiralling out of control, but the British were unwilling to take such a step.

Palmerston in this letter to the admiralty seems to have backed down from the stated position that the Ottoman Empire could be left to its own devices in a war with Egypt if it were the aggressor. If the Ottoman army 'suffered a great defeat' 'measures of extreme vigour might become necessary [...] to save the Turkish Empire.'²²⁵ This was what the Ottoman Empire had hoped; that despite threats from Britain and Austria, the great powers would not let it fall, and would back it should the time come. In addition, Palmerston expressed his faith in cooperation between the British and French governments in this matter:

The most perfect understanding has been established between the British and French Governments [...] The interest of the two countries in these affairs are the same, their views and objects are identical, and their measures will be uniform.²²⁶

Palmerston's fear, however, was still that the Russian Government would use the situation to further expand its influence in the Ottoman Empire, possibly effectively occupying the capital. Should this occur, the British fleet was instructed to 'proceed to Constantinople.' Palmerston left it up to Stopford's discretion whether he would force this in the event of opposition.²²⁷

In Syria, Ibrahim Ali was in contact with European diplomatic representatives. He told the British Pro-Consul in Damascus, Mr. Werry, his thoughts of the situation. The Ottoman force was

²²⁵ No. 69, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.92.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.93.

²²⁷ No. 70. Viscount Palmerston to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, June 25, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.94.

weaker than his, he confidently asserted. He blamed the European powers for the present situation, they had not done enough to restrain the Ottoman Empire:

'I shall protest,' his Highness said laughing, 'against the Ambassadors at Constantinople, for allowing the Sultan's troops to enter my territory;' and added, laughing, 'You say that there is no war, how can it be credited? You Franks are the cause that the Sultan's forces now are crossing my territory, by—your 'continuing to remain quiet;' 'you must not act;' 'they will not attack you,' and so forth. But what can be done now; there is no remedy. Had you left us without tying us down, the Sultan's troops would never have dared to cross and enter in any way our territory.'²²⁸

From Egypt, Colonel Campbell was reporting to the British government that Ali seemed keen for war, once it seemed war was what would happen. Campbell however seemed to think that it was the Ottoman Empire that initiated hostilities once they began. He urged collective action from the powers to solve the situation.²²⁹

Ibrahim was forced to wait until he received permission from his father to attack the Ottoman forces that were attempting to provoke him.²³⁰ Eventually, Ibrahim received permission and crushed the Ottoman forces at the battle of Nezib in June 1839. According to Lord Beauvale in Vienna: 'it is called a battle, but in fact there was none, the whole Turkish army having run away as soon as the cannonade grew hot.'²³¹ Nezib would inspire a profound reaction in the European capitals, a fear of what would happen next, as the leaders and diplomatic services struggled to

²²⁸ No. 77. Colonel Campbell to Viscount Palmerston, May 28, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.105.

²²⁹ Inclosure 3 in No. 80. Colonel Campbell to Viscount Ponsonby, June 6, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.115.

²³⁰ Andrew McGregor, *A Military History of Modern Egypt: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Ramadan War*, Praeger Security International, London, 2006, p.115.

²³¹ No. 150. Lord Beauvale to Viscount Palmerston, July 17, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.191

contain the situation.²³² The Sultan, Mahmud II died just a week after the battle of Nezib, and was succeeded by his young son, Abdülmecid. Campbell both praised and criticised the Sultan's conduct in a letter to Ponsonby sent in July 1839:

I fully concur [...] that the late Sultan was far before the age in which he lived; and had his energies been better direct, he might have contributed more successfully towards the reconstruction of the Turkish Empire. But the feeling of revenge towards Mehemet Ali that predominated in all his actions, has, I fear, inflicted more evils on that Empire than many years of wise government can remedy.²³³

The war, for Campbell, one of the observers on the spot and one of Palmerston's sources for information, was 'much more the character of a personal than a national quarrel.'²³⁴

Once conflict was renewed in 1839, the official British position was that it could give Mehemet Ali no claim to greater favour from the Powers, especially as the battle was fought in defiance of their remonstrances, his army being the assailant, and the field of action beyond the Syrian frontiers.²³⁵ The British government here took the view that it was not the Ottoman Army's entry into Syria that was the main cause of the battle, but instead that the Egyptians chose to engage the Ottoman Army. This was obviously what the Ottoman Empire wanted, even if they did not desire the complete destruction of their forces at Nezib. Indeed, the official British account of the 'crisis' stated that 'the battle only gave additional force to the considerations which led the Powers to consider the evacuation of Syria by Mehemet Ali essential

²³² Guichen, *La Crise d'Orient de 1839 à 1841 et l'Europe*, p.85.

²³³ Inclosure 2 in No. 194. Colonel Campbell to Viscount Ponsonby, July 16, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.253.

²³⁴ Inclosure 2 in No. 194, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.254.

²³⁵ FO 78/472, p. 1 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

for the maintenance of the Turkish Empire, and the preservation of peace in Europe'.²³⁶ The British reaction was precisely as Mahmud II had hoped. The Egyptians were also painted as the aggressor by the Russian government.²³⁷ Ali had been at pains to resist this confrontation, fearing the reaction it would provoke from the European powers,²³⁸ however, the Sultan had disingenuously professed his desire to avoid confrontation, and the narrative presented to the Russian ambassador was that the Egyptian army advanced first:

The advance of the Turkish forces, was occasioned by the advance of the Egyptians, and that so far from wishing to provoke hostilities, the Sultan was disposed to forget and forgive, if Mehemet Ali would abstain from giving such cause of offence.²³⁹

Despite threats of leaving the Ottoman Empire to its fate, Britain and the conservative powers made the narrative fit their strategic ends, so they could safely save the Ottoman Empire.

Ali had insisted to European diplomatic representatives that 'it was false to assert that the Egyptian troops had assumed any other than a purely defensive attitude.'²⁴⁰ Ali had pledged that his troops would not attack Ottoman troops unless they were themselves attacked, but that should Ottoman forces attack, his troops would not hesitate to seize territory and only relinquish it when 'hereditary succession was secured to him.'²⁴¹ By this point Ali was 70 years old, not a young man, and he wanted to secure Egypt as a hereditary possession of his family's, rather than remain a pachalik to be granted on the whim of the Sultan. Despite the grand victory at Nezib, Ali was by this stage trapped in a difficult situation. He was unwilling to surrender Syria, while trying to ignore as

²³⁶ FO 78/472, p. 113 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²³⁷ FO 78/472, p. 196 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²³⁸ Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali*, p.241.

²³⁹ FO 78/472, p. 196-197 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²⁴⁰ FO 78/472, p. 197 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²⁴¹ FO 78/472, p. 198 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

best as possible the Ottoman forces that had now crossed the Euphrates, because any response on the part of Egypt could very well be seen by the European powers as an act of aggression towards the Ottoman Empire, which all of the five powers except possibly France would obviously support. Ali was seemingly willing to trade Syria for hereditary succession in Egypt, but the Ottoman Empire was unwilling to enter into negotiations proposed by Ali.²⁴² Nonetheless, once Ibrahim's army defeated the Ottoman force at the battle of Nezib, however, Ali was reportedly in 'a state of great exultation.'²⁴³ Ali then suddenly seemed to be set on not only hereditary possession of Egypt itself, but also Syria and the parts of Arabia he controlled. Ali did promise to the European consuls that he would not make war even if his demands were not granted, but that he would simply 'maintain [him]self in [his] present position.'²⁴⁴

The European powers at this time, however, all seemed united in their attempt to bring the situation to a conclusion that was more favourable to the Ottoman Empire. Palmerston wrote in June 1839 that there was 'a general concurrence of opinion' within the great powers. Austria, France, and Britain further agreed that 'the present relative position of the Sultan and the Pasha is incompatible with the safety of the Turkish Empire, and with the peace of Europe.'²⁴⁵ The *Morning Chronicle's* correspondent in Constantinople echoed the official British line. Because the fate of the Ottoman Empire was at stake. The Ottoman Empire was 'prostrate at the feet of the conqueror.'²⁴⁶ The European powers needed to intervene to save it:

²⁴² FO 78/472, p. 199 Turkey and Egypt Narratives and Abstracts.

²⁴³ Inclosure 5 in No. 191. Resume succinct de deux entretiens qui ont eu lieu entre le Pacha d'Egypte et les Consuls- Gener aux des Quatre Grandes Cours, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.248.

²⁴⁴ Inclosure 5 in No. 191, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.248.

²⁴⁵ No. 81. Viscount Palmerston to Lord Beauvale, June 28, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.118.

²⁴⁶ *The Morning Chronicle*, August 8, 1839.

Had the Sultan been victorious, as I have so often said, no interference, of course, would have been necessary or justifiable; the quarrel was one with his own basal, and no nation could question his right to engage in it. By his defeat, however, and the consequent *casus foederis* of the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, the features of the case are entirely changed, and the necessity of intervention now becomes absolute.²⁴⁷

The *Morning Chronicle's* correspondent was fearful of what France would do. They believed France desired the independence of Egypt, and that the results of this policy would be disastrous to all but France. England, the article insisted, had to hold on to 'the perfect integrity of the Ottoman empire.'²⁴⁸

The French cabinet, under Marshall Soult was divided on action in August 1839. *Le Constitutionnel* reported that there was a difference of opinion on whether or not to send troops in the event that Russia intervened under the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi.²⁴⁹ Russia at this time was still the predominant consideration, as Marshal Soult communicated to the Baron de Bourqueney, the French ambassador to London:

The principal, the true object of this concert, for England as well as for France, as also for Austria, although she does not so openly proclaim it, is to keep Russia within bounds.²⁵⁰

Soult believed that the cooperation of the powers would be enough to restrain Ali, as long as they did not 'wound his pride and ambition too deeply.'²⁵¹ *Le Constitutionnel* also worried about the malign influence of Russia:

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ *Le Constitutionnel*, August 8, 1839.

²⁵⁰ No. 158. The Duc de Dalmatie to the Baron de Bourqueney, July 26, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.199.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p.200.

For those who are up to date with the affairs of the Orient, the hand of Russia is behind all that has happened at Constantinople. These treasons, these revolts, have been prepared for a long time.²⁵²

Ali, in pursuing his 'ambitions' was 'serving as the instrument of Russia' while *Le Constitutionnel* believed that it was in his own interests to 'reinforce, by all the resources at his disposal, the throne of the young Sultan.' Constantinople could not be lost to Russia.²⁵³

Le Constitutionnel continued this line into August, and regardless of *The Morning Chronicle's* fears, it seemed like French policy was not decisively in favour of the independence of Egypt at this stage. *Le Constitutionnel* called for concerted European action to save the Ottoman Empire, and contrary to seeing a special French interest in the crisis, *Le Constitutionnel* believed that France had no special interest in the Orient, at least compared to the other great powers.²⁵⁴ By far France's greatest interest was the preservation of European peace, according to *Le Constitutionnel*. Marshal Soult agreed, informing the French Consul-General in Egypt that the Ottoman Empire's maintenance was essential for the 'balance of power' in Europe, and for that reason Muhammad Ali must be reined in.²⁵⁵

The *Journal des Débats* took a more pro-Ali line. The Ottoman Empire was decaying and a spectre of its former self, the *Journal des Débats* declared on July 27, 1839. Ibrahim was not the aggressor, contrary to what the English newspapers reported. The *Journal des Débats* wanted to see Ali

²⁵² *Le Constitutionnel*, July 28, 1839, p.1. Pour les personnes qui sont au courant des affaires d'Orient, la main de la Russie est dans tout ce qui passe à Constantinople. Ces trahisons, ces révoltes, ont été dès long-temps préparées.'

²⁵³ Ibid. 'Meheme, en poursuivant le but de sa royale ambition, a servi les intérêts de la Russie, il a ébrulé jusque dans ses fondemens la puissante ottoman. Une fois son but atteint, son proper intérêt l'oblige à fortifier, de toutes les ressources don't il dispose, le trône du jeune Sultan'

²⁵⁴ *Le Constitutionnel*, August 5, 1839.

²⁵⁵ *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.250.

given control of Syria, as they believed he had both the wisdom to rule it well and the respect of the Arabs who lived there. A strong Egypt would then be able to help the Ottoman Empire resist the malign Russian influence that had seemingly forced the Ottoman Empire into its foolishly renewed conflict with Ali's Egyptian forces.²⁵⁶ This situation would lead to the best situation for the 'Oriental people to be able to develop and progress their civilisation, without abdicating their national independence.'²⁵⁷

Guizot reveals, in his memoir that his opinions were similar to those of the *Journal des Débats*. Ali had, according to Guizot, won a victory in Syria, he was providing better governance than the Sultan. The people, according to Guizot, were safer. Guizot, in his recollections, obviously regretted that the French did not move earlier to secure a more favourable peace for Muhammad Ali, as he said it would have led to better outcomes for the people of Syria.²⁵⁸ Marshal Soult, however, continued with his policy of seeking coordinated action with the other European powers and the five European powers signed a note in July 1839 committing to joint action, a treaty that would become problematic to French attempts to take a more pro-Ali position as the crisis advanced.²⁵⁹

The first signs of official dissent were occurring in August 1839, when the French government disagreed with the proposed British orders to the admirals in the Eastern Mediterranean, on account of wishing to avoid at all costs a situation where the French fleet was forced to destroy the Egyptian fleet. Marshal Soult's government had determined that 'the

²⁵⁶ *Journal des Débats*, July 27, 1839, p.1-2.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2. 'les peuples orientaux peuvent développer les progrès de leur civilisation, sans rien abdiquer de leur indépendance nationale.'

²⁵⁸ Guizot, *Memoires Pour Servir A L'histoire He Mon Temps*, Vol IV, p.354-355.

²⁵⁹ François le Goff, *The Life Of Louis Adolphe Thiers*, Trans. Theodore Stanton, GP Putnam's Sons, New York, 1879, p.103.

destruction of the Egyptian fleet by France would raise a clamour in this country, fatal to the existence of a Ministry under whose orders it had been effected.²⁶⁰ The French government, still under Soult seemed to believe the threat of actual war had been ended with the defection of the Ottoman fleet to Egypt and the defeat of the Ottoman army at Nezib.²⁶¹

The *Journal des Débats* published a long screed by Saint-Marc Girardin, a liberal and member of the parliament, on August 17, 1839. Girardin called for a position more generous than leaving Ali as an ‘ordinary pasha’ but falling short of handing Ali full control of the Ottoman Empire. For Girardin, France had to ‘support Turkey at Constantinople, and defend Egypt at Vienna.’²⁶² Girardin was advocating that France act alone from the other four powers, and if they declared in favour of the Ottoman Empire at the Vienna conference, France should declare in favour of Egypt.²⁶³ *Le Constitutionnel* found this concept strange, and believed that joint action would yield better results, and not leave France as ‘one against four.’²⁶⁴ The *Journal des Débats*, however, was far more willing to see France confront the other European powers than *Le Constitutionnel*, its fellow liberal paper.²⁶⁵ *Le Constitutionnel* was by no means against Ali, arguing that France had to act to protect in some measure Ali’s interests, because France had a responsibility to ensure ‘that the work of civilization undertaken by Muhammad Ali did not perish.’²⁶⁶

²⁶⁰ No. 210. Earl Granville to Viscount Palmerston, August 9, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.273.

²⁶¹ No. 219. The Due de Dalmatie to the Baron de Bourqueney, August 6, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.285.

²⁶² *Journal des Débats*, August 17, 1839, p.1. ‘Et voilà pourquoi il me semble que nous devons soutenir la Turquie à Constantinople et défendre l’Egypte à Vienne’

²⁶³ *Le Constitutionnel*, August 18, 1839, p.1.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.* ‘Nous serons seuls contre quatre.’

²⁶⁵ *Journal des Débats*, August 28, 1839, p.1.

²⁶⁶ *Le Constitutionnel*, August 20, 1839, p.1. ‘La France est la patronne de l’Egypte, en ce sens qu’il est toujours entré dans ses vues que l’oeuvre de civilisation entreprise par Mehemet ne périt pas’

Bulwer communicated his pessimism about French cooperation to Palmerston on August 26, 1839.²⁶⁷ There were supposedly significant elements in the French cabinet pushing for a much more pro-Ali line.²⁶⁸ French policy was moving from one that seemed dedicated to opposing Russia to supporting Muhammad Ali, as outlined in the ‘one against four’ that Girardin advocated. Palmerston discussed this issue with Sebastiani, now the French ambassador to Britain in September 1839, indicating a British willingness to attempt to find a solution to the Ottoman-Egyptian conflict without French help.²⁶⁹

French policy was now firming in support of Ali’s claim for hereditary control of Egypt and also of Syria, with Soult remarking to the Russian ambassador to France that ‘it follows, that if he [Ali] perseveres in the pretension of retaining hereditarily all that he now possesses, we think that it will be prudent policy to grant it to him.’²⁷⁰ Months of harried diplomacy would follow from this French break with the other powers. In particular, Palmerston, and thus Britain, was unwilling to give Ali all of Syria as France demanded.

The War in 1840

The rebellion in Syria complicated matters for Ali. The 1840 rebellion which lasted from May-July was led by Maronite Christians, and the suppression of this rebellion hardened much of European opinion against Ali. False rumours that Ali planned to exterminate the Maronite Christians spread

²⁶⁷ No. 253. Mr. Bulwer to Viscount Palmerston, August 26, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.321.

²⁶⁸ No. 270. Mr. Bulwer to Viscount Palmerston, August 30, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.355-356.

²⁶⁹ No. 281. Viscount Palmerston to Mr. Bulwer, September 10, 1839, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.366-367.

²⁷⁰ Inclosure in No. 292. Extract of a despatch from the Count P. Medem to Count Nesselrode, reporting a conversation with Marshal Soult, *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant*, p.378.

from Europeans in Alexandria back to the European capitals through diplomatic channels.²⁷¹ The British press took the British government to task for the rebellion, seemingly believing Palmerston and Posonby were behind it. The people of Syria were the victims first of oppressive Egyptian rule, and then the rebellion, instigated by the British, according to the *Times*.²⁷² The revolt of the people in Syria was part of the Ottoman plan to remove Ali from the region, however, and not a European plot.²⁷³

The *Times*, in this article of July 27, 1840, questioned whether there was any meaningful difference for the people of Syria between Ottoman and Egypt rule. The *Times* criticised Posonby and Palmerston for what they saw as fomenting ineffectual revolt in Syria, adopting a bizarre course of action that was likely to fail.²⁷⁴ In the paper's view, instead of supporting a policy that seemed to only exist because Palmerston willed it ('without the support of approval of one sane statesman in Great Britain'), Britain should cooperate with the 'policy of united France:'

Any settlement of the Eastern question which should be effected by the sincere cooperation of France and England would be more satisfactory, certainly more secure, than any which should have only the sanction of one power to protect it from the jealousy and hostility of the other.²⁷⁵

The *Morning Chronicle* suggested, however, that England cooperate with the other three European powers and not France. Ali being given Syria would lead to the end of the Ottoman Empire, according to the *Chronicle*, and that would lead to a 'general war.' French policy was dangerous and

²⁷¹ Miroslav Šedivý, Metternich and the Syrian Question: 1840–1841, *Austrian History Yearbook*, 41, 2010, pp.88-116, p.91.

²⁷² *The Times*, July 27, 1840, p.4.

²⁷³ Fahmy, 'The era of Mehmed Ali Pasha,' p.172.

²⁷⁴ *The Times*, July 27, 1840, p.4.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

‘reprehensible.’²⁷⁶ The French press was stoking dangerous thoughts and ideas, according to the *Morning Chronicle*:

We regret to see in the journals of our neighbours speculations calculated to familiarize the minds of men with a policy which would lay the foundation for incessant war and bloodshed; and we fear these wicked projects find but too much countenance among our neighbours.²⁷⁷

Thiers came to power in France in March 1840 as President of the Council of Ministers, and Guizot also replaced Sebastiani in London around the same time. Contrary to British fears, the idea of the Anglo-French alliance had not totally fallen out of favour in France. Thiers, like Soult before him strove to maintain the alliance.²⁷⁸ For his part, Palmerston was still personally in favour of a joint solution to the crisis.²⁷⁹ Nonetheless, the ascension of Thiers to power did change attitudes in France and Britain, and despite Thiers’ attempts to keep the British on his side, British policy was too different from French policy for that to be practicable. Accordingly, a choice arose between Muhammad Ali and the maintenance of the Anglo-French *entente*, and Ali was winning in the court of public opinion.²⁸⁰

Palmerston was clearly annoyed with French conduct during the Eastern Crisis. Unable to force their views on the other powers, France, through 1840, was deliberately trying to delay the action of the four powers, according to Palmerston:

²⁷⁶ *The London Examiner*, September 6, 1840.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Guichen, *La Crise d'Orient de 1839 à 1841 et l'Europe*, p.241.

²⁷⁹ Charles R. Middleton, ‘Cabinet Decision Making at the Accession of Queen Victoria: The Crisis of the East 1839-1840,’ *The Journal of Modern History*, 51:2, 1979, pp.D1085-D1117, p.D1089.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Louis, *La question d'Orient sous Louis-Philippe*, p.212.

The great object of France, in fact, then was to gain time, because if operations were not begun in Syria before the end of October, they could not commence till the next spring; and if the French Government could, by negotiation, have spun matters out till the time of year when orders sent from hence would not have reached the coast of Syria in time for operations in 1840, they reckoned for certain, that before the spring of 1841, something or other would happen to enable them to divide the four powers, and to patch up an arrangement that would have left Mehemet Ali in possession of Syria and a pressing candidate for nominal independence under the protection of France. This calculation of the French Government was perfectly well-founded, and it was the signal frustration of such national expectations that excited such uncontrollable fury from one end of France to the other.²⁸¹

The *Examiner* shared Palmerston's frustrations with French conduct in January 1840. France could not resist the wishes of the rest of Europe, but it would try. The *Examiner* feared what French opinion could lead to, it could 'create a bad and angry feeling between the countries.'²⁸² In the paper's opinion, France had created a mess by attempting to 'dictate and carry its own wishes against those of united Europe.'²⁸³

To Lord John Russell, the leader of the house and a powerful member of Melbourne's cabinet, Palmerston sent the hawkish message that he considered the decision in the Eastern crisis to be 'whether England is to remain a Substantive Power, or is to declare herself a Dependency of

²⁸¹ Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, p.432-433.

²⁸² *The Examiner*, January 5, 1840, p.4.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

France.²⁸⁴ The Lord William Russell shared similar sentiments: 'If the four Powers had allowed France and an old tyrannical Pacha to brow-beat them, old England had better have shut up shop, and ceased to be a Nation.'²⁸⁵ The crisis was creating a rift in what had been a stable and productive alliance between the two liberal powers of Western Europe.

Russell was not entirely with Palmerston on the 'Eastern Crisis.' He believed the convention of 15 July was necessary to constrain both France and Russia, and that even without France it would succeed in this aim:

My belief is that if we had not signed the treaty of July 15 France would have bullied and crowded, and her reluctance to make any offer at all to settle matters in the East would have left her and Russia at liberty either to Divide or to fight for the spoils of Turkey; and I cannot see how we could then have regained the position we should have lost. Nothing but the absence of any fair proposal made me agree to the treaty.²⁸⁶

Russell wavered in his commitment to the convention of July 15, and Palmerston chided him in a letter:

If we are to give up a Policy to which the government is publicly pledged and Engagements recorded in Treaties, whenever the newspapers of France may choose to threaten us with war, where is to be the ultimate Limit of our Submission.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ John Russell and G. P. Gooch, 'The Eastern Crisis of 1840. Extracts from the Unpublished Papers of Lord John Russell,' *The Cambridge Historical Journal*, 1:2, 1924, pp.170-177, p.171.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.171.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.172.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.175.

The idea that France would stand alone against the rest of Europe and be able to win, or that France would even try in the end seemed ridiculous to Palmerston, and he was unwilling to give into Thiers' bluffing.²⁸⁸

It was largely the work of Palmerston that British policy was so anti-Ali compared to France, or even Austria and Prussia. Russell wrote to Lord Landsowne, the Lord President of the Council, saying that: 'Palmerston does not like the Pacha to have any part of Syria'.²⁸⁹ Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister, expressed some doubts of Palmerston's chosen policy to the Queen throughout 1840, which the Queen recorded in her diaries. 'Palmerston is all for coercing Mahomet Ali, but others in the Cabinet take quite the contrary view.'²⁹⁰ Lord Melbourne remarked that 'feeling is for Mehemet Ali' and the Queen expressed concern that the 'Turks' were 'too backward and unintelligent' to remain independent.²⁹¹ Palmerston's policy also was criticised from a familiar place, as Joseph Hume took him to task in Parliament again for aligning with Russia against France. Hume thought Thiers was right, and that it seemed just for Ali to be granted not only Egypt but Syria as a hereditary possession.²⁹² The *Charter*, a short-lived Chartist newspaper also criticised the conduct of Palmerston and his fellow 'Whig-imbeciles'.²⁹³

According to the official French line, the Ottoman Empire was 'decadent' and thus, for France, there was a 'necessity to favour in the Orient the creation of another Muslim power strong

²⁸⁸ Louis, *La question d'Orient sous Louis-Philippe*, p.224.

²⁸⁹ Russell & Gooch, 'The Eastern Crisis of 1840,' p.176.

²⁹⁰ RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W) March 12 1840 (Princess Beatrice's copies).

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² HC Deb 01 June 1840 vol 54 cc779-89.

²⁹³ *Charter*, February 16, 1840, p.8.

enough to be an obstacle to the development of Russian influence.²⁹⁴ In this view, Russia was a nefarious player in the region. According to Thiers' preferred narrative, Russia wanted the Ottoman Empire to be its own protectorate, but when the Ottoman Army was comprehensively defeated at the battle of Nezib, Russia agreed to joint action to save the Ottoman Empire and to save face.²⁹⁵ Russia, above all, wanted to oppose Muhammad Ali. The French position at this point was 'hereditary Egypt and hereditary Syria, plus possession of Candia for life' for Muhammad Ali and his successors.²⁹⁶ For Thiers and the French cabinet, Ali was 'victorious, victorious without having been the aggressor.' Ali was 'only stopped by the voice of Europe.'²⁹⁷ Thiers was not alone in demanding hereditary Syria for Ali. His predecessor, Soult also demanded the same, while the British position remained 'hereditary Egypt and south Syria except for Acre.'²⁹⁸ The national fever in France for Ali was a truly national affair, sweeping up all the political classes, and rival newspapers praised rival politicians for pro-Ali sentiments and speeches.²⁹⁹ Thiers presented the British and French positions as irreconcilable, 'England only wanted for the Pacha hereditary Egypt.'³⁰⁰ The British, according to Thiers, convinced Austria and Prussia to take a more anti-Ali line than they initially indicated to France.³⁰¹ Russia was more reasonable than Britain on the issue of hereditary possession of Syria for Ali, according to Thiers.³⁰² Guizot also describes British intractability on the issue of hereditary Syria in his memoirs.³⁰³

²⁹⁴ M. Calmon, *Discours Parlementaires de M. Thiers*, Volume V, Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1879, p.149. 'Préoccupée, en présence de la décadence de l'empire turc, de la nécessité de favoriser en Orient la création d'une autre puissance musulmane assez forte pour faire obstacle au développement de l'influence moscovite'

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p.166.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., p.169. 'Ainsi la France voulait l'Égypte héréditaire et la Syrie héréditaire, et la possession viagère de l'île de Candie.'

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 'Il était victorieux, victorieux sans avoir été agresseur; il ne s'était arrêté qu'à la voix de l'Europe.'

²⁹⁸ Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.24.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p.32-33.

³⁰⁰ Calmon, *Discours Parlementaires de M. Thiers*, Vol V, p.170. 'l'Angleterre, qui ne voulait donner que l'Égypte héréditaire.'

³⁰¹ Ibid., p.170.

³⁰² Ibid., p.174.

³⁰³ Guizot, *Mémoires Pour Servir A L'histoire De Mon Temps*, Vol V, p.28.

Traditional English historiography has largely taken French policy to task for being ‘duplicitous’ during the Egyptian-Ottoman War of 1839-1841.³⁰⁴ However this appears to come largely from taking a Palmerstonian view of the situation. All French political leaders were in favour of Ali, and taking action in concert, France’s desired course of action was simply to leave Ali in control of Syria. French policy can hardly be described as duplicitous just because it confused Palmerston.

Regardless of Britain’s desires, France and Thiers were immovable on the issue of hereditary possession of Syria, and were not party to the Treaty of 15 July, which offered Ali hereditary control of both Egypt and the southern portion of Syria, under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire. Palmerston, in July 1840 shared his plan for how to get Ali to accept this ultimatum of the four powers:

We mean to compel Mehemet Ali to evacuate all Syria, except a southern bit between the sea, Lake Tiberias, the Jordan, and the Dead Sea, and bounded to the north by a line drawn from the Mediterranean just above the fortress of Acre to Lake Tiberias. We mean to give him ten days to accept this offer, Egypt to be held by hereditary tenure, and the end of Syria for his life. If he does not accept this in ten days, then we shall offer him Egypt by hereditary tenure, without the lower part of Syria; and if he does not in ten days more accept that, then he will not have Egypt by hereditary tenure; and if he resists, he must abide the issue of events.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Sedivy, Honour, p.103, Middleton, *Cabinet Decision Making*, p.D1089.

³⁰⁵ Bulwer, *The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston*, vol 3 p.40-41.

Palmerston was under no illusions about the French reaction to Britain's decision to act with Russia, Prussia, and Austria and without France, admitting that "Thiers and Guizot are very angry, of course, because they had persuaded themselves that the English Cabinet never would be induced to separate itself from France on this question."³⁰⁶ The British Cabinet was not entirely in agreement with Palmerston's views, but he won the policy battle by threatening to resign, and through the begrudging support of Lord John Russell.³⁰⁷

Palmerston became increasingly antagonistic towards France and Thiers during the course of the crisis. In fact, Lord Melbourne believed that Palmerston was encouraging the press to take an anti-French stance, and that this was further angering Thiers and France.³⁰⁸ Melbourne was right, Palmerston's intransigence was enraging the French. Thiers was annoyed because he was an admitted 'partisan of the English alliance.'³⁰⁹ Yet, in this case, Thiers could clearly see that England was working against what he understood to be the interests of France. 'England is strongly and stubbornly against the Vice Roy,' he told the parliament.³¹⁰ Thiers assured the chamber of deputies that Ali was strong enough to resist the four parties, that he did not believe they would be able to dislodge him from Egypt or even Syria.³¹¹ The English, however, would seek to foment revolt in Syria, which would be the real threat.

The French press also directed their scorn at Palmerston. *Le Constitutionnel* predicted dire results from the treaty: 'The Ottoman Empire will lose its rich capital, the villages of Syria will be

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p.42-43.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., vol 3, p.43; Russell and Gooch, 'The Eastern Crisis of 1840,' p.170.

³⁰⁸ RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W) September 3, 1840 (Princess Beatrice's copies).

³⁰⁹ *Discours Parlementaires de M. Thiers*, Vol V p.177. 'partisan de l'alliance anglaise'

³¹⁰ Ibid., p.198. 'L'Angleterre est fort obstinée contre le vice-roi.'

³¹¹ Ibid., p.199.

lost to Mehemet-Ali, and Egypt, which he has gloriously transformed, will be returned to the rank of a common pachalick.³¹² Palmerston's conduct was not based on any firm foundation according to *Le Constitutionnel*, which argued that 'he did not want the Porte and Egypt to come to an amicable arrangement. That solution did not fit with his politics. He was indignant at the airs of independence that the Pacha had assumed.³¹³ Ali had, through the right of conquest, won himself Syria, and the Taurus mountains provided a natural border.³¹⁴ Ali, if granted hereditary sovereignty over Syria and Egypt, would become the 'most loyal vassal of the Sultan.'³¹⁵

The *Times* took note of the French reaction to the Convention, noting that the Paris papers of July 28 1840 were 'chiefly taken up with vituperation of this country, and with calls for "war upon perfidious England."³¹⁶ The French papers were almost universally up in arms about this issue, noted the *Times*. The *Times* brought attention to the most remarkable piece, said to be by Thiers himself, on the front page of *Le Constitutionnel*. *Le Constitutionnel* blamed Russia for the Anglo-French split on this issue, 'Russia conceived the thought that they would benefit from this discord, and through the Brunow propositions, they had the skill to appeal to the English desire for Egypt.'³¹⁷ A skilled English government would have been able to see through this flimsy plot, but for the writer, the English cabinet did not have 'good sense.' Palmerston was a fool on this account, and almost the only English minister 'to which these propositions seemed acceptable.'³¹⁸ In the angry, nationalistic

³¹² *Le Constitutionnel*, July 27, 1840, p.1. 'L'empire ottoman perdra sa riche capitale, soit mais les bourgades de la Syrie seront arrachées à Mehemet-Ali, et l'Egypte qu'il a si glorieusement transformée, retombera au rang d'un pachalick vulgaire.'

³¹³ *Ibid.* 'Lord Palmerston revient à ses anciens errements: il ne veut pas que la Porte et l'Egypte s'arrangent à l'amiable. Cette solution ne convient pas à sa politique. Il s'indigne des airs d'indépendance que s'arrogent le pacha.'

³¹⁴ *Le Constitutionnel*, July 28, 1840, p.1.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1. 'Enfin, Mehemet, investi de la souveraineté héréditaire, devenait le plus fidèle vassal du sultan.'

³¹⁶ *The Times*, July 30, 1840, p.4.

³¹⁷ *Le Constitutionnel*, July 28, 1840, p.1. 'La Russie conçut la pensée de tirer parti de ce désaccord, et par les propositions Brunow, elle eut l'habileté de tenter l'ambition des Anglais sur l'Egypte.'

³¹⁸ *Ibid.* 'Lord Palmerston fut `peur près le seul ministre anglais auquel ces propositions parussent acceptables.'

French narrative, Palmerston, and thus England, had gifted Russia Constantinople. To the French, Palmerston was a fool, and persuaded his colleagues that ‘the events in Syria had enfeebled Egypt.’³¹⁹ The governments that signed the convention were thus duped into believing that Ali ‘would not resist.’³²⁰ France was alone in resisting ‘this illusion.’ And thus, ‘France is isolated,’ but France was also ‘still inviolably attached to the policy of neutrality, to the policy of peace.’³²¹

Caquet holds that this French cry for war was a French revolutionary cry for war. It was not based on typical ideas of national interest except in a sort of national interest in revolution, in French national identity and France’s liberal idealism.³²² All of these were also the ideals of Thiers as a leader, and it is arguable that Thiers was more than most preoccupied with the grandeur and spirit of France. Illustrating this is the speech he gave at the funeral of Marshal Nicolas Joseph Maison, a man who served in the French military during the revolutionary wars where he lamented France’s lost glory:

Of all the grandeur of the Revolutionary period, what remains to us? Nothing of that national grandeur which spread from the plains of Italy to those of Holland; but the moral grandeur of its memories, which lives imperishably in history, which will inflame future generations, and make them worthy of the past; this grandeur has come down to us intact. Let us preserve it as the most precious heritage.³²³

³¹⁹ Ibid. Il a persuadé à ses collègues que les événements de Syrie affaiblissaient l’Égypte.’

³²⁰ Ibid. ‘Les Cabinets signataires du traité ont agi sous l’impression de cette idée ou de cette espérance que Mehemet-Ali ne résisterait pas.’

³²¹ Ibid. ‘Voilà donc la France isolée. Cela est grave. Mais cela l’est pour tout le monde. Ce n’est pas elle que cet isolement doit le plus inquiéter. Elle est restée inviolablement attachée à la politique de la neutralité, à la politique de la paix.’

³²² Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.213-214.

³²³ le Goff, *The Life Of Louis Adolphe Thiers*, p.97.

Thiers wanted a grand, active France, where French citizens were patriotic. His thought was summarised in Francois Le Goff's very pro-Thiers *The Life of Louis Adolphe Thiers*:

First, that patriotism was a very important virtue for France, and that along with patriotism there should be foresight ; and secondly, that it was the bounden duty of every government regardful of its mission, to always keep alive the military spirit —not the spirit of conquest—that France might be always ready for emergencies.³²⁴

The uproar over Ali and British intransigence in France was not an uproar for further conquest but an uproar for revolutionary liberalism.³²⁵ It was consistent with the French desire to encourage liberalism not just for Ali and Egypt but for many of the other oppressed nations of Europe.

In France, the press remained outraged at Palmerston and the treaty. *Le Constitutionnel* commented on the English papers on September 6, 1840, regarding many of them with scorn. The *Morning Chronicle* and *Morning-Advertiser* were excoriated for supporting Palmerston's 'dangerous alliance with Russia.'³²⁶ There was a sense in France that the treaty of London was concluded out of a sense of 'hatred' towards France.³²⁷

Not all of France was caught up in a fever for Muhammad Ali. Despite widespread public pressure, the King of France was reportedly not as moved by the cry for war as his ministers. He was 'a man very much puzzled' Lord Melbourne told the Queen. Even in August 1840, after the July

³²⁴ Ibid., p.96.

³²⁵ Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, p.215.

³²⁶ *Le Constitutionnel*, September 6, 1840, p.1. 'sa dangereuse alliance avec la Russie.'

³²⁷ Adolphe d'Angeville, *La Verite sur la question d'Orient et sur M. Thiers*, 1841, p.iii

Treaty had been concluded without France, Lord Melbourne had a sense that France would be required for any sensible outcome of the crisis.³²⁸

So too, *La Presse*, a conservative paper was even more squarely against Thiers and his ministry's conduct, and published a review on August 1 1841 discussing the possible negative effects of their conduct if they had not been swept out. The Ottoman Empire would have been destroyed, and Egypt too. France would have lost much, but happily the situation was resolved, and Ali was still free to improve Egypt.³²⁹ *La Presse* was sceptical of the Thiers government's position that 'the cause of Muhammad Ali is the cause of France.'³³⁰ *La Presse* was sceptical of the basis of the government's beliefs, arguing that Syria was separated from Egypt by a desert that was difficult to cross. Additionally, Syria was more European than Egyptian. Ali's invasion had disrupted what was a civilised place, it was the 'rejuvenation of despotism, it was the regeneration of barbarism.'³³¹ It would be absurd for France to go for war for Muhammad Ali, to follow a 'diplomacy more Egyptian than French,' to go to war 'in the name of France and with the blood of France under the yoke of a Muslim Pacha.'³³² *La Presse* recalled the Greek conflict, where Ibrahim Ali was the enemy of all Europe, and how France was celebrated for fighting him in Greece just 15 years ago.

La Presse also shows that the 'Eastern question' was still not a question of simple diplomacy but a question of the supposed cause of civilisation in France. Most of its arguments were not based on policy arguments of national interests but on the putative civilisational level of the parties in the

³²⁸ RA VIC/MAIN/QVJ (W) August 18 1840 (Princess Beatrice's copies).

³²⁹ *La Presse*, August 2, 1841.

³³⁰ *La Presse*, August 24, 1840, p.2. 'La cause de Mehemet-Ali en Syrie est la cause de la France, vous dit le ministère. La cause de Mehemet-Ali en Syrie est celle de la France ?...'

³³¹ Ibid. 'l'invasion de Mehemet; c'était pour elle la rajeunissement du despotisme, la recrudescence de la barbarie.'

³³² Ibid. 'cette diplomatie plus égyptienne que française.' 'Et voilà le peuple, le peuple tout français de Coeur, sur lequel vous voulez sceller, au nom de la France et dans le sang de la France, le joug d'un pacha musulman!'

Levant. In fact, the cause of civilisation had been foregrounded as being intrinsic to the national interests of the European powers. The ‘Eastern Question’ became a ‘Western Question’ in the words of David Katz, as policies in the East reflected internal ideals in Europe.³³³ The *mission civilisatrice* explicitly advocated by later French colonialism is an example of this civilisation as national interest.

The End of the Crisis

British forces bombarded Beirut in September 1840, and the situation became increasingly tense through until October, when Thiers addressed a note to Palmerston containing France’s position at this time. It was, according to the *Hull Packet* extremely bellicose.³³⁴ The note made its way to the press, and was seen as astounding by the British. Thiers remained outraged at the treaty of 15th July, angered at the conduct of the four powers (and especially Palmerston) at excluding France supposedly without French knowledge.³³⁵ Thiers claimed that seizing Syria from Ali would not deliver the territory to the Ottoman Empire but to ‘anarchy.’ The *Times* commented on the note that it published, excoriating Thiers for his bellicose attitude, and hoping that saner heads would prevail. The *Times* put its faith in the King and the chamber to save France, hoping that this combination would save France from ‘the grip of a sly and sordid adventurer, backed though he be by 100,000 madmen.’³³⁶ The *Morning Chronicle* attacked Thiers as well for ‘the hectoring tone, the utter recklessness in plunging into war, the readiness to sacrifice the peace of Europe.’³³⁷

³³³ David S Katz, *The Shaping of Turkey in the British Imagination, 1776–1923*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, p.249.

³³⁴ *Hull Packet*, October 16, 1840, p.4.

³³⁵ *The Times*, October 13, 1840.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

³³⁷ *Morning Chronicle*, October 15, 1840, p.2.

The French cabinet resigned on October 22 1840, no longer having the support of the King for its policy of risking war for the sake of Muhammad Ali.³³⁸ *Le Constitutionnel* defended the Thiers cabinet, believing that it had been defeated by ‘a policy sacrificed to fear.’³³⁹ The new session of the Chamber of Deputies opened on November 5, 1840, and *Le Constitutionnel* reviewed the proceedings. ‘Has it satisfied all the demands of national honour? We regret to say it, but that is not the general impression’.³⁴⁰ *Le Constitutionnel* did not agree with the new more pacific opinions of the October 29 cabinet that seemed to abandon Muhammad Ali to the fate that would be imposed on him by the four powers.³⁴¹ Nevertheless, the *Journal des débats* was more positive to the new government, hoping that it would maintain a more peaceable policy, that the threats and ‘bellicose phrases’ would come to an end.³⁴²

The second Egyptian-Ottoman War and the discourse surrounding and leading up to it offers a case study in the extents and limits of Orientalist discourse. In both Britain and France, there was public debate about reform in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. This discourse showed how the categorisations of Oriental despot and modernising reformer could differ depending on perspective, and the interests of the categoriser. To some, it seemed evident that Muhammad Ali was another Oriental despot, while to others his reforming and modernising zeal would pave the way to a potentially much greater future for the east. In the case of Palmerston and Britain, we can see how a belief in the reforming possibilities of the Ottoman Empire and the evils of Muhammad

³³⁸ *Le Constitutionnel*, October 23, 1840, *The Times*, October 26, 1840, *Caledonian Mercury*, October 26, 1840.

³³⁹ *Le Constitutionnel*, October 23, 1840. ‘Nous défendons, ces jours derniers, ce matin encore, le Cabinet du 1^{er} mars, contre le parti qui soutient sa politique a sacrifié à la peur.’

³⁴⁰ *Le Constitutionnel*, November 6, 1840, p.1. ‘M. Guizot, chargé de la rédaction du discours, a-t-il satisfait par son œuvre à toutes les exigences de l’honneur national ? C’est `regret que nous le disons, mais telle n’a pas été l’impression générale.’

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *Journal des débats*, November 6, 1840, p.2. ‘phrases belliqueuses.’

Ali led to a strident opposition to French demands that Ali receive hereditary rule of Syria. In the French case, we can see how the decades since the French invasion and even before had fed into a French belief that Ali was a revolutionary force capable of reforming the Orient, and that despite the possible effects on the Ottoman Empire, he had to be supported. These opinions on Ali, the Ottoman Empire, and the Orient were not universal, and varied within countries. The differences in opinion between France and Britain help illuminate the complex and evolving relationship between Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth-century, and the growing informal imperial influence and control exerted by European powers through notions like 'reform' and 'civilisation.'

CONCLUSION

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.¹

Shelley's *Ozymandias* exemplifies the European Orientalist vision of Egypt. For poets such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, Egypt, and Greece were 'antique lands.' Outside of the ruins, there was nothing of worth. An Egypt that still contained memories of its earlier greatness, monuments to its past glories that, upon visiting, or even hearing about, reminded Europeans of what was once there. *Ozymandias* as a poem was based on Shelley's knowledge of some of the foundational texts of Orientalism, namely Volney's *Voyage* and Denon's *Voyage*.² Ancient Egypt is represented in the poem by a great statue, that now consisted of 'two vast and trunkless legs of stone' with a 'shattered visage' 'half sunk' in the sand nearby. Modern Egypt, in Shelley's poem, is depicted as 'boundless and bare.'

It was this supposedly 'boundless and bare' Egypt that Napoleon invaded in 1798. Europeans in the early nineteenth-century saw their own civilisations(s) as the peak of human development, but they traced their lineage in general from an ancient line of civilisation, including Rome, and Greece, but also Egypt. In doing so, Europeans were effectively consuming history 'in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility,' which Anne McClintock calls 'panoptical time.'³ To the thinkers of Europe, Egypt had fallen into ruin under the rule of various non-

¹ Percy Bysshe Shelley 'Ozymandias' in *Miscellaneous and Posthumous Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, William Benbow, London, 1826, p.100.

² John Rodenbeck, 'Travelers from an Antique Land: Shelley's Inspiration for "Ozymandias,"' *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 24, pp.121-148, p.123.

³ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p.36.

European, Muslim rulers. Whether from environmental or cultural factors, the rulers of Egypt and the rest of the Ottoman Empire were incapable of maintaining or restoring these countries to greatness. 'Oriental despotism' was seen as keeping these countries down, and in Europe, there was debate about if and how they could be restored to greatness.

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 marked a decidedly new (for Enlightenment-era Europeans) way of interacting with Egypt. Direct involvement in Egypt by a European power had not occurred since the crusades, and this invasion and occupation led to a heightened interest in Egypt in the capitals of Europe. Egyptologists and travellers began to head to Egypt in greater numbers than before. No longer were the only Europeans in Egypt scattered merchants, or the occasional adventurer. Egyptian style architecture exploded in popularity, Egyptian artefacts filled the museums of Europe, Egypt was accessible in a way it had never been before. Even ordinary people in London and Paris could now see striking visual representations of ancient Egypt by the 1820s. Travel literature flooded the printing presses, as writers published accounts of their journeys and the sights that they had seen. These writings often carried tropes that reflected Western assumptions about the Orient and its rulers.

This new accessibility of Egypt, both modern Egypt through travel and ancient Egypt through museums, coincided with the rise of Muhammad Ali. Ali exploited the rise of Europeans' travel and Egyptomania, granting meetings with travellers, eager to impress the British and French audiences he needed to support him and his continued independence. Ali strived to be seen as more than a traditional 'Oriental despot' in his country and achieved that with varying degrees of success. Ali, as detailed in this thesis, was clearly aware of European events and opinion, and was aware that European perceptions of his regime mattered. Ali exploited the new wave of travellers to Egypt for

his own ends, granting audiences to many writers to present himself as a modernising force, a force that European regimes could work with. At times however, events such as the Greek War of Independence would see his reputation tarnished in Europe, as the military operations led by his son were seen as a violent Muslim attack against Christian Greeks. More generally, however, Ali came to be seen as some sort of moderniser, a Europeaniser, and in France the heir to Napoleon's civilising project in Egypt.

These views of Ali as a reformist ruler clashed with other concerns of the time, particularly Russophobia, which predisposed the British and the French towards a general foreign policy of maintaining the position of the Ottoman Empire as a bulwark against Russian expansionism. The threat of a general European war, should the Ottoman Empire have collapsed, galvanised the leaders of Britain and France into supporting the Ottoman sultan. Traditionally, this foreign policy position has been seen as the result of simply balancing strategic interests, as the statesmen of Europe reacted to a series of material facts about the situation. These statesmen however were also reacting to cultural attitudes and assumptions regarding the Orient and the potential for reform there. The Ottoman Empire's genuine attempts to reform meant that British statesmen were able to deploy the language of civilisational struggle when they mounted their opposition to the rise of Muhammad Ali, whereas the French were able to deploy the same language to oppose Britain's attempts to marginalise Ali.

These two views showed the extent and the limits of European Orientalism. Ali existed in a space within and without Orientalism. To some, his reforming nature saw him described as squarely European, so much so that one theory posited him as a Frenchman. Others saw only the crueller aspects of his policy, and the human toll of his public works and military projects. As the issue of

the rise of Muhamad Ali demonstrates, the 'Eastern Question' was not just a question of foreign and imperial policy, of men in the halls of state making strategic decisions. It was also a question of culture and of deploying European understandings of the East to strategic ends. It was a question of Orientalism that reflected the 'civilisational' concerns in Europe. These civilisational concerns reflected how Europeans had come to understand the world and Europe's place within it. For them, the Orient was an ancient land, where once great empires had stood. Now there was the declining Ottoman Empire, and Egypt. The peoples of these lands were supposedly trapped under despotism, but whether it was primarily the Egyptians or Ottoman subjects trapped under the yoke of despotism was a matter of dispute. Both the British and the French thought that these lands needed to be improved, reformed, and returned to some version of greatness. As such, some French and British thinkers appraised the rulers of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt according to their sense of the impact of their respective lines of reform. If the institutions of the Ottoman Empire or Egypt could be transformed to reflect the institutions of France or Britain, with wise guidance and support they could once again flourish as countries.

British and French visions of reform and the Orient as it was in the early nineteenth-century were shown through the writings of travellers and theorists about the Orient. This thesis has explored a variety of such writers, showing a diversity of views among both British and French thinkers about the Orient. The complexity and varieties of many of these views show that within European Orientalism there was great capacity for seemingly similar views of the Orient, as a largely moribund place ruled by despots, led to differing views of individual places and rulers within it. European writers were generally guided by preconceptions of the Orient,⁴ but even these

⁴ Çirakman, 'From Tyranny to Despotism,' p.57.

preconceptions led them to different conclusions. This thesis has tracked how in France and Britain different visions of Muhammad Ali and the Ottoman Empire came to dominate the minds of policy makers. This split in France and Britain between support for Ali and support for the Ottoman Empire reflects their own histories too. France supported the country that Napoleon had visited, the country that Napoleon had attempted to turn into a French colony. Egypt was, for France, a sight of French glory, despite their defeat in the war. For the British, however, there was no particularly memory of a British Egypt. The two British invasions of Egypt in the first decade of the eighteenth-century were decidedly less romanticised than the French invasion of 1798, the first only mentioned as a success in removing the French from Egypt, the second largely forgotten as an abject failure. The rise of Muhammad Ali led to further British fears of French domination in Egypt. Ali, from the first days of his rule was close with the French consul, Bernardino Drovetti, and this closeness was viewed with suspicion by Britain. The seeds of the two liberal European powers' differing policies in the Second Egyptian-Ottoman War were sown in part in these early days of Ali's rule, but only in part. The difference would take until the 1830s to calcify, in part because of this Napoleonic French romanticism towards Ali, in part because Palmerston and many of his fellow Whigs saw a potentially recognisable constitutionalism in the reforms of Sultan Mahmud II, and in part because the Ottoman Empire was seen as a key strategic concern for the British, key to keep the Russians out of the Mediterranean, and key to keeping India safe.

Despite this difference, Ali remained an attractive option to many in Britain. Ali's supposedly stable government provided obvious benefits for Europeans in terms of trade and security for travellers. Yet Ali was also resistant to European efforts to expand trade, much more so than his nominal sovereigns in Istanbul. For the French, civilisational concerns overrode any economic advantage that could be derived from a more pliant ruler of Egypt, one who implemented

the capitulations to their fullest extent. To British policymakers, however, with no Napoleonic-romantic attachment to Egypt, Ali was simply a less attractive option than the Ottoman Empire, which they saw as attempting to reform, and to improve.

Britain and France may have misunderstood the nature of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, led astray by a reliance on Orientalist tropes, as Said suggests. However this misunderstanding was productive in a sense, in that it led the two powers to view their foreign and imperial policy options in the east as reflecting a struggle between civilisation and despotism, progress and stasis, the future and the past. Importantly however, whereas France saw Muhammad Ali as the civilised moderniser, for Britain, this role was to be played by the Ottoman Sultan. The two eastern powers could at once represent different things to different people in Paris and London, showing how Orientalist discourses reflected and helped shape the interests of people in power, and showing how those people were able to resist Orientalist discourses in some cases, to suit their own interests.

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