

## **The Impact of Mohammed Ali's Territorial Expansionism on British Diplomacy (1805-1840)**

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### **Abstract**

The political history of modern Egypt goes back to the French campaign of 1798. In that year, Napoleon Bonaparte, an ambitious General, undertook a military expedition to Egypt with the target of striking at Britain's vital trade in India. Though the Napoleonic expedition was a military failure, it revealed the strategic importance of Egypt to Britain. The French occupation of Egypt (1798-1801) undermined the socio-economic conditions of the country and left a political vacuum. In the struggle for power that followed Egypt witnessed a period of anarchy and disorder (1801-1805). The winner in that struggle for power was an energetic and determined leader, Mohammed Ali. Of an Albanian origin, Mohammed Ali created an Egyptian nation-state and founded a ruling dynasty that remained in power until 1952. During his reign (1805-1848), drastic reforms were introduced and military operations in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea were undertaken that threatened the stability of the region and provoked the antagonism of the west mainly Britain the most concerned of safeguarding its commerce in India. Hence, this paper tends to find answers to a couple of questions: How did Britain react towards the territorial expansionism of Mohammed Ali in the Middle East region? Would it tolerate such an exercise of power in a strategic region where British commercial interests were in jeopardy? If not, what policy did Britain adopt to curb the military appetite of Mohammed Ali?

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In 1517 Selim I invaded Egypt and brought it under Turkish rule. The country's long established subordination to

the Ottoman Empire proved to be detrimental resulting in economic decadence and cultural setback. The French campaign of 1798, however, marked a turning point in the political history of Egypt characterized by a sudden awakening of the Egyptian mind after centuries of ignorance and indolence. With the departure of the French in 1801, Egypt witnessed a chaotic period. The French occupation (1798-1801), though short in period, affected profoundly the social mechanism of the country and left a political vacuum. Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, an Egyptian chronicler, pointed out: « *La vie était devenue insupportable, cherté des objets de première nécessité, importations nulles, communications impossibles...la panique était générale* » (Cited in Tomiche 1977: 87). The Mamluks, the old oligarchy, entered in a desperate struggle for power to restore the status quo. They were divided into two conflicting factions; one supporting the British and the other colliding with the Ottoman Empire. In March 1803, following the signing of the Peace of Amiens, the British troops withdrew from Egypt. Article XIX of the treaty stipulated that: '*The present definitive treaty of Peace is declared common to the Sublime Ottoman Porte, the ally of his Britannic Majesty; and the Sublime Porte shall be invited to transmit its act of accession as soon as possible*' (The Treaty of Amiens March 25, 1802). The Ottoman Empire, determined to re-establish its supremacy over its province, nominated a Turkish commander as governor of Egypt with a military regiment. The army that was installed in Cairo with the mission of setting up law and order, made the situation worse. The unrestrained soldiers exploited the vulnerable population by taking all what they wanted, provoking popular wrath and anger (Lutfi-Al Syyid Marsot 2007: 62).

Fed up with the misrule of the Turkish nominee and the abusive behaviour of the army, the population of Cairo revolted in May 1805. The *ulama*, the religious class that had grown in influence since the time of Napoleon Bonaparte, raised Mohammed Ali, an ambitious Albanian commander, to power (Lutfi al Syyid - Marsot 2007: 61). Mohammed Ali had entered Egypt in 1801 as second in command of an

Albanian army dispatched by the Sublime Porte to fight the French following an Anglo-Turkish alliance. He realized the rising influence of the popular movement and was keen to consolidate his relation with the movement's representative, Omar Makrim. Then, relying on his loyal Albanian soldiers, he exploited the existing friction between the Ottomans and the Mamluks, by supporting one against the other to finally and successfully eliminate them for his own benefit (Tomiche 1977: 87). Two months after the revolt, the Sublime Porte yielded to the demands of the population by deposing Khurshid Pasha and confirming Mohammed Ali as the new governor of Egypt with the title of wali. The stage was set up for a man who would alter the political course of modern Egypt.

Under Mohammed Ali's rule (1805-1848), the deep-rooted Mamluk society was wiped out. In 1811, the Egyptian viceroy capriciously invited Mamluk princes to a banquet at the Saladin's Citadel in Cairo and mercilessly massacred 300 of them (Oliver and Atmore 1996: 31). Those who were lucky enough to escape the massacre were in due course pursued up the Upper Egypt and brutally razed. Thus, the long six centuries chapter of Mamluk power in Egypt came to a dreadful conclusion (Fahmy 1998:147). On the footsteps of Napoleon Bonaparte, Mohammed Ali had the grandiose dream of carving out for himself an oriental empire in the Middle East. His military adventures in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea resulted, though for a while, in the foundation of a large empire including the Arabian Peninsula, Eastern Sudan, Syria and parts of Greece. Yet, how did the Great Powers of the century, Britain, France and Russia, react towards the expansionist policy of Mohammed Ali? Would Britain, the most concerned of safeguarding the route to India, tolerate such an exercise of power? If not, what policy did British diplomacy adopt to curb the territorial ambitions of Mohammed Ali in the Middle East and thereby guarantee the safety of British commercial interests in the Indian sub-continent?

## I- Military Operations in the Red Sea Region

The story of Mohammed Ali's military adventure all began in El Hejaz, where the sultan Mahmud II (r.1808-1839) urged him to crush a movement of insurrection led by the Wahabbis against his religious authority. Wahabbism was a puritanical Muslim sect that had emerged among the Bedouin tribes of the Arabian Desert. The founder, Mohammed Ibn Abd El Wahhab, advocated a revival of the original principles of Islam, denying the spiritual sovereignty of the Ottoman sultan, the Servitor of the Two Sanctuaries (Holt 1969: 179). His fanatical adherents, the Wahabbis, preached his doctrine with the sword of El Sàud. They inflicted a severe damage on the financial prosperity of the Ottoman Empire by intercepting pilgrim caravans to Mecca and subverting vital commercial routes; the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf (Ahmed Ibrahim 1998: 199).

Mohammed Ali replied to his master's call by dispatching a military force led by his son Tousan Pasha that chased the Wahhabis from El Hejaz. In September 1813, Mohammed Ali in person undertook a military expedition to Jiddah with the target of maintaining Egyptian position there. His first move was the appointment of his own nominee as Sherif of Mecca in the place of Ghalib who was sent to Cairo as prisoner (Ahmed Ibrahim 2007: 201). From his position in El Hijaz, Mohammed Ali undertook military campaigns against the southern Wahhabis. In 1814 the Egyptian army inflicted a serious defeat on Wahhabi forces led by Amir Faysal Ibn Saud. Eventually, the Egyptians advanced south towards Yemen, yet, in 1815, urged by external troubles, the Egyptian viceroy had to postpone his plan of capturing Yemen and returned home (Ahmed Ibrahim 1998: 201).

The fire of Wahhabism would not die down. After the death of Emir Saud, his son Abdullah succeeded him and led the standard of revolt. Thus war in the Arabian Peninsula was resumed. For two years (1816-1818), Ibrahim Pasha, the viceroy's right hand son, led brilliant military operations in

the Arabian Desert capturing the Wahhabis' strong standpoints. He crushed the Wahabbis in Najd, intercepted Amir Abdullah and captured the capital Dari'yya after a six month siege (Ahmed Ibrahim 1998:201). By this time, the war was brought to a conclusion, and Abdullah Ibn Sàud was sent to Constantinople where he was publicly sentenced. One important impact of Mohammed Ali's operations in the Red Sea was seen in the revival of commerce in which Britain had a great interest. Commercial ties with the Indian sub-continent were inaugurated through the Red Sea overland route, while Jidda became a focal commercial town linking Bombay and Cairo (Oliver and Atmore 1996: 31). In his article 'The Egyptian Empire' Ahmed Hassan Ibrahim claimed that Mohammed Ali's obedience to his master was mainly due to political incentives. According to him, the delicate political atmosphere at that time was not in favour of defiance; as Britain and France, the great powers of the century, were committed to preserving the political entity of the Ottoman Empire (Ahmed Ibrahim 1998: 200).

The war in the Arabian Desert was exorbitant in terms of men and money, the fact that pushed Mohammed Ali to divert his attention towards the Sudan in search of gold and slaves. Yet one may note that the viceroy's ultimate objective behind the Sudanese enterprise was slaves. 'The end of all our effort and this expense is to procure Negroes', he told his commander in the Sudan (Cited in Liffe, 1995: 165). In 1821 an Egyptian expedition of 4,000 men, led by the viceroy's son Ismail Kamil Pasha, advanced up the Nile, defeating the Mamluks who had fled Egypt and made their headquarters at Dongola (McGregor 2006: 68). In another military intervention, the Funj capital at Sennar was seized, the sultan overthrown and an Egyptian governor was installed at the new Egyptian-Sudanese capital of Khartoum. By occupying the Sudan, Mohammed Ali brought under his control one of the main sources of the lucrative sub-Saharan slave trade and thereby boosted the foundation of an African empire that was to be enlarged by his grand-son Khedive Ismail (r.1863-1879) (Ahmed Ibrahim 2007: 201).

Mohammed Ali's plan to conscript Sudanese slaves was a fiasco; about 30,000 Sudanese recruits perished in the Egyptian climate (Lliffe 1995: 165). As an alternative and starting from 1823, the Egyptian wali drafted involuntary Egyptian peasants for the organization of his new army. The new army was organized according to a well-developed European approach and put under the supervision of Sulayman Pasha (Colonel Sève), an ex-French commander. The military conscription of the Egyptian fellahin gave Mohammed Ali a considerable number of men but at the price of a brutal system of acquisition that consequently disrupted agriculture. Fahmy observed that the new army was culturally alienated: 'while Arabic-speaking peasants formed the main body of the soldiery' and hence denied the right to rise beyond the rank of captain, 'their commanders were Turkish speaking', enjoying all the privileges (Fahmy 1998: 155). The military discrimination and ethnic segregation exercised among the Egyptian army would result half a century later in the Orabi Revolt of 1881; a turning point in the history of modern Egypt.

Being a man of vision, Mohammed Ali had strong conviction that a modern army required a sustaining technology. For that purpose, officers and technical professionals were brought from Europe and military and technical schools were founded. Educational missions were sent abroad especially to France, to acquire knowledge and be updated with the new technology in diverse fields. Navy, artillery and infantry were given high priority the fact that advocated the setting up of factories and engineering schools with a European staff (Stanford.J, Shaw. Ezel, Kural.Shaw 2002: 11). From 1829 to 1833, the Alexandria Arsenal was built by the French engineer, Le Febure de Cerisy, who commanded the Navy War Academy as well. In the sanitary field, a medical training to instruct the native doctors was provided under the supervision of the French doctor Clot Bey. It is worth saying that the interaction between Egyptian soldiers and European tutors was fruitful resulting in the

translation of many European manuscripts into Turkish and Arabic (Oliver and Atmore 1996: 36).

At home, Mohammed Ali adopted a mercantilist policy. He embarked first upon an agrarian reform; he abolished the system of iltizam and collected taxes directly from peasants. Then he confiscated the property of the old Mamluk oligarchy. The land property moved to the state which employed peasants to cultivate specific crops and sell the harvest to the government. Affaf Lutfi al-Sayyid stated that: 'The fellah was told what to plant, when to plant, and he had to sell it to the government at fixed prices' (Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot 2007: 69). Dams and canals for land irrigation were erected, while long staple cotton, indigo, and sugar were introduced as export crops. In the administrative field, the viceroy instituted a new hierarchy topped by Turks while the Egyptians occupied the lower position. An organism of administrative departments was set up following which six ministers came into existence: Interior, Public Instruction, War, Finance, Foreign Affairs and Commerce and Navy' (Vatikiotis 1980: 63). Mohammed Ali exercised a system of centralization by establishing a hierarchy of local representatives (omdehs) and provincial governors. The following table illustrates how administrative organism functioned:

Table: The Reformed Structure of Provincial Administration under Muhammad Ali

Viceroy Administrator of Cairo diwan or inspector general ( mufattish umum) Provincial governor (mudir al-mudiriya) Department head (ma'mur al ma'muriya) District chief (nazir al-qism) Sub-district head (hakim al-khutt)				↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
Village mayor (shaykh al-balad)	Tax collector (sarraf)	Supervisor of agricultural lands (khawli)	Administrator of a number of villages (qa'im maqam)	

**Source: (cited in Hunter 1984: 19)**

During the reign of Mohammed Ali, Egypt sought access and openness to foreign markets; hence, reviving the trade sector. Professor Hiroshi Kato observed that Egypt's five largest partners during that era were Turkey (accounting for 46, 8% of export and 33, 2 % of import), Tuscany (17, 8% and 11, 6%), Britain (8, 1 % and 13, 5 %), and France (5, 8%



and 11, 3%)<sup>1</sup>. To protect the interests of European traders, new non-Muslim courts were instituted. Moreover, Mohammed Ali worked on securing the overland routes, expanding his commercial activities with the neighbouring regions; Libya, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Syria, and Arabia. Yet, Egypt's modernizing revolution provoked the anxiety of Sultan Mahmud II. Despite the fact that the vassal did his best to prove his loyalty and allegiance to his overlord, Mahmud II remained skeptical. As the viceroy's implicit target was the establishment of an oriental empire that would eventually displace and substitute the crumbling Ottoman Empire (Fahmy 1998: 157).

## II- Clashes in the Mediterranean

In 1821, driven by a spirit of independence and led by the Greek prince Alexander Ypsilanti (1792-1828), the Greeks revolted against the Ottoman Empire (1821–32). The Greek revolt against Turkish rule was the spontaneous protest of a people who preserved their language, religion and cultural identity despite their integration into the Ottoman Empire. The Greek elite were aware of their cultural heritage and hence contributed in the rise of national self-consciousness (Kinder and Hilgemann 1995: 45). Among the distinguished figures in the Greek nationalist movement was the writer Rhigas Pheraios (1757-1798). Nurtured by the French Revolution with its ideology of justice, fraternity and equality and driven by ethnocentric emotions, Rhigas Pheraios published revolutionary pamphlets. In 1798, he was arrested and sentenced to death by the Ottoman authorities. Among his revolutionary poems, 'the War Hymn' poem that reads in part:

« Allons, enfants des Hellènes, -le  
temps de gloire est arrivé. – Souliotes

<sup>1</sup> - **Discussion: Compiling Statistics in Egypt** by Hiroshi

Kato.<http://www.ier.hitu.ac.jp/COE/Japanese/Newsletter/No.2.english/katoue.htm>.

et Mainotes, lions renommés- jusques  
à quand dormirez – vous  
tranquillement dans vos cavernes...-  
Macédoniens, élancez – vous comme  
des bêtes fauves- Versez tous à la fois  
le sang des tyrans... - Oiseaux marins  
d'Hydra et de Psara, - il est temps  
d'entendre la voix de la patrie...>>  
(Cited in Isaac, Alba et Pouthas 1957:  
395).

In 1814, Greek revolutionaries founded the secret society of Philiki Hetairia. Financed by exiled wealthy Greeks abroad and under the auspices of Russia, the Hetairia society planned insurgencies in strategic places; the Peloponnese, Istanbul, Moldavia and Wallachia. The rebellion initially flared up in the Morea and spread like fire across the other parts of the Aegean islands (McGregor 2008: 86). In January 1822, the first National Assembly at Epidaurus declared Greek independence. A constitution was drafted and a flag was produced with Alexander Mavrocodatos as the first president of the Greek nation (McGregor 2008: 89).

The Europeans showed compassion to the Greeks for the simple reason that they were Christians while the Turks were Muslims. Yet, on the political scene, the great powers were in two minds; whether to sustain the Greeks in their struggle for independence or not. Induced by Lord Castlereagh (1769 – 1822), Secretary of State for British foreign affairs, the Austrian Chancellor Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859) convinced Tsar Alexander I of Russia (r.1801–1825) to remain neutral towards the Greek cause (Briggs 1959: 358). According to Castlereagh, the preservation of the Ottoman Empire's integrity was crucial for the balance of power in Europe. In 1824, Russia proposed the foundation of three independent Greek principalities. The Russian proposal, interpreted by the British as a way to undermine the Ottoman Empire and set up “Russian client states”, (Cited in Bridge

and Bullen 1983: 45) was welcome neither by the Greeks nor by the great powers.

Being unable to deal with the rebellion, in 1824, the Sultan Mahmoud II (r.1808–39) requested the military help of his subordinate Mohammed Ali bestowing the Ottoman dependencies of Morea and Syria. In February 1825, an Egyptian expedition of 17,000 troops was dispatched to Greece led by the viceroy's son, Ibrahim Pasha (Stanford J, Shaw and Ezel Kural, Shaw 2002:18). Ibrahim pasha crushed the rebels in the Island of Crete and effectively repressed them in the Morea. By the summer of 1827, Greece was brought under Turco-Egyptian control. At this stage, it became compulsory for Russia, Britain and France to defend their interests in the Eastern Mediterranean by driving Mohammed Ali out of Greece. For France and Britain, the traditional rivals, the Mediterranean was a gateway to the lucrative Indian sub-continent as it was a strategic passage for Russia in the Black Sea (Oliver and Anthony 1996: 44). On July 6, 1827, the three powers concluded the treaty of London, agreeing on a joint intervention. The treaty reads in part:

In the Name of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity, His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, His Majesty the King of France and Navarre, and His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russians, penetrated with the necessity of putting an end to the sanguinary struggle which, while it abandons the Greek Provinces and the Islands of the Archipelago to all the disorders of anarchy, daily causes fresh impediments to the commerce of the States of Europe, and gives opportunity for acts of Piracy which not only expose the subjects of the High Contracting Parties to grievous losses, but also render necessary measures which are

burthensome for their observation and suppression; His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and His Majesty the King of France and Navarre, having moreover received from the Greeks an earnest invitation to interpose their Mediation with the Ottoman Porte; and, together with His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russians, being animated with the desire of putting a stop to the effusion of blood, and of preventing the evils of every kind which the continuance of such a state of affairs may produce; They have resolved to combine their efforts, and to regulate the operation thereof, by a formal Treaty, for the object of re-establishing peace between the contending parties, by means of an arrangement called for, no less by sentiments of humanity, than by interests for the tranquility of Europe (Treaty between Great Britain, France, and Russia, for the Pacification of Greece. (london) July 6, 1827).

In the Eastern Mediterranean, the Allies navy blockaded the Dardanelles and the Morea to deprive the Turco-Egyptian troops of ammunition and provisions. The European presence annoyed Mohammed Ali who urged his master to acknowledge Greek independence. In a desperate letter to his agent in Istanbul the Egyptian viceroy wrote: ' We have to realize that we cannot stand in front of them, and the only possible outcome will be sinking the entire fleet and causing the death of up to thirty or forty thousand men...It is true that God has ordered us in His Book to stand up to the enemy and to spare no effort in confronting him. This, however, necessitates a thorough knowledge of the art of war. Unfortunately, my dear friend, although we are men of war...The Europeans are ahead of us and have already put

their theories of war in practice. (Then, he added) Here I am at a loss: shall I grieve at the calamity of the Ottoman State or at my own lost effort. I am most sorrowful and anguished' (Cited in Fahmy 1998: 159).

### Expansion of Egypt under Muḥammad Alī



**Source: Egypt - Muhammad Ali and his Successors (1805-1882).** Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/180382/Egypt/129498/Muhammad-Ali-and-his-successors-1805-82>

At the naval Battle of Navarino (October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1827), the Allies fleet, led by the British Admiral, Sir Edward Cordington (1770–1851) shattered the Ottoman-Egyptian squadron within a few hours. The casualties were significant; about 57 Ottoman and Egyptian ships were burnt and 8000

men lost their lives. (Stanford J, Shaw and Ezel, Kural Shaw 2002: 30). The Allies lost only 172 men and no ships were destroyed (McGregor 2006: 99). The Battle of Navarino was of a tremendous importance. It served as a milestone in European encroachment on Ottoman issues; inaugurating the way for the partition of the Empire that subsequently became known as the Eastern Question.

Following the cataclysmic defeat of the Egyptian fleet in the maritime mêlée of Navarino, Mohammed Ali wanted compensation from the Sultan by yielding the governorship of Syria. In his turn, Mahmoud II turned down Mohammed Ali's claim and a war between master and vassal flared up. In 1831 Ibrahim Pasha, the viceroy's son undertook a military expedition to Syria, capturing the strategic cities of Gaza, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Haifa and Acre as he advanced; an expedition much similar to Bonaparte's of 1799. In March 1832 Mahmoud II formally declared war on Mohammed Ali. A Turkish force, led by Agha Huseyn, marched to Syria however it was seriously crushed in two military confrontations; one at Homs and the other at Belen. Mohammed Ali ordered his son to slow down; he was on tenterhooks waiting for a peaceful settlement through European arbitration. When diplomatic efforts proved to be fruitless, Ibrahim Pasha led his armed forces and seized Konya on November 21. The sultan appealed to the British for assistance; however Britain was preoccupied with troubles at home and abroad. In despair, the sultan implored the help of his foe Tsar Nicholas I of Russia (1825 –1855). He once whispered : « au risque d'être étouffé plus tard, un homme qui se noie s'accroche même à un serpent » (Cited in Isaac, Alba et Pouthas 1957 :448).

On his side, Tsar Nicholas I intervened in favour of the Ottoman Empire, 'the sick man', to prevent the establishment of a powerful new Middle Eastern state that would annihilate Russian encroachment in Asia. The Russian support of the Ottoman Empire annoyed both France and Britain who decided to intervene to settle down the eastern crisis by

diplomatic means. From its part, France sent Admiral Roussin (1781-1854) to Constantinople as ambassador of the French Republic. At the same time, Britain sent Patrick Campbell (1779-1857) as new British consul in Egypt to achieve a peaceful settlement with Mohammed Ali. Both powers persuaded the Egyptian wali to accept an arrangement that would guarantee his governorship of Syria. Yet Ibrahim resumed his march and captured Kutahya on February 2, 1833. The Russians rushed to deal with the issue obliging the Sultan to sign the Hunkiar Iskelesi treaty (July 1833). The treaty provided a Russian commitment to defend the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire but, in a secret clause, it guaranteed an exclusive access of Russian ships to the Sea of Marmara, excluding all other foreign ships (Fahmy 1998: 173). The treaty meant, according to the historians Arthur Golschmidt and Lawrence Davidson, that 'the fox would guard the henhouse!' (Golschmidt and Davidson 2006: 178). The conclusion of the Hunkiar Iskelesi infuriated British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston (1830-1834) for this meant that the 'Russian Ambassador becomes the chief cabinet advisor to the sultan' (Cited in Strang 1961: 119). He was further enraged by Mohammed Ali's commercial monopolies, which collided with the *Laissez-faire* principle that served British economy (Lutfi Sayyid 2007: 75). Palmerston thus turned to the Ottoman sultan and assured him of British support against his troublesome vassal.

To resolve the Egyptian crisis by tactful means, Britain and France compelled the sultan to cede Syria to Mohammed Ali with the exception of Cilicia; on the other hand, they menaced the viceroy by imposing a maritime embargo if he did not submit to their resolutions. Yet Mohammed Ali, assured by the steady and successful march of his son Ibrahim, went defiant claiming also Cilicia, and menacing to make his way to the capital Istanbul itself if the sultan refused his claims. (Stanford J, Shaw and Ezel, Kural Shaw 2002:34). In gloom and doom, the sultan agreed to grant Mohammed Ali his claims on the condition of the retreat of the Egyptian army. In addition, he asked Russian assistance to protect Istanbul from

a sudden Egyptian assault. The presence of a defensive Russian force curbed Ibrahim's military appetite. The outcome was the conclusion of the Treaty of Kutahya on March 29, 1833, following which Ibrahim was granted the governorship of Damascus, Aleppo and Cidde, whereas Mohammed Ali was confirmed as governor of Egypt and Crete in exchange for an annual duty of £150,000 (Armajani and Ricks 1970: 178). The Egyptian army respectively pulled out of Asia Minor. It is interesting to note that the diplomatic efforts of the British Foreign Secretary were fruitful as Britain and the Ottoman Empire concluded five years after the Egyptian crisis the commercial treaty of Balta Liman (August 1838) which expanded Britain's capitulatory privileges and limited to 9% its import traffics on British manufactures (Goldschmith and Davidson 2006: 178). The treaty of Balta Liman stated for the abolition of monopolies set up by Mohammed Ali in Egypt deemed advantageous for France who had cultivated good relations with the Egyptian wali. The second article stipulated that: 'The subjects of Her Britannic Majesty, or their agents, shall be permitted to purchase, at all places in the Ottoman Dominions, all articles, without any exception whatsoever, the produce, growth, or manufacture of the said Dominions; and the Sublime Porte formally engages to abolish all monopolies of agricultural produce... ; and any attempt to compel the subjects of Her Britannic Majesty to receive such Permits from the local Governors, shall be considered as an infraction of Treaties, and the Sublime Porte shall immediately punish with severity Viziers and other Officers who shall have been guilty of such misconduct...'(Convention of Commerce - Balta Liman: August 16, 1838).

In 1839, Mohammed Ali and the Sultan renewed their hostilities. This time, it was the Sultan who declared war on his vassal in an attempt to regain what he had lost. The Turks made their way to Syria but were decisively overwhelmed by the army of Ibrahim Pasha at the battle of Nizip. Matters deteriorated when Sultan Mahmoud II perished from Tuberculosis shortly after. At this stage, the European powers



intruded to rescue what remained of the Ottoman Empire from disintegration. Through its intervention, Britain aimed at safeguarding the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire and annihilating the expansion of Mohammed Ali whom it considered as “an ignorant barbarian” (Briggs 1959: 354). On the other hand, France sustained Mohammed Ali deemed as ‘*un nouvel Alexandre*’ and the eventual ‘founder of a new Francophile Arab empire in the Middle East’ (Briggs 1959: 354). French backing of Mohammed Ali sickly worried Britain, the fact that urged Palmerston to seek Anglo-Austrian cooperation in the Middle East. The British Prime Minister had a good conviction that Britain and Austria could work together to solve the Near Eastern crisis despite their political differences. He once said that: ‘we have no eternal allies and no permanent enemies. Our interests are eternal and those interests it is our duty to follow’ (Cited in Briggs 1959: 352). Metternich cheerfully accepted Palmerston’s offer; yet the wind did not blow in his favour. In September 1839, Nicholas I sent Baron Brunow, Russian diplomat, to London in search of Anglo-Russian collaboration for the resolution of the Eastern crisis. Hence the Austrian dream of diplomatic arbitration in the Eastern Question was shattered.

In July 1840, Palmerston called for a conference in London. ‘The convention for the pacification of the Levant’ concluded by Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia, gave the Pasha an ultimatum to withdraw from Syria, Adana, Crete, and Arabia. If he refused to submit the powers would intervene militarily. At this stage, the French government of Thiers refused to cooperate with the four powers and declared overtly that the intimidation of Mohammed Ali in the Middle East would lead to a war on the Rhine. The French press wrote: « *La France doit se souvenir que, même étant seule, elle a tenu tête à l’Europe*’... ‘*L’Europe est bien faible contre nous. Elle peut essayer de jouer avec nous le terrible jeu de la guerre. Nous jouerons avec elle le formidable jeu des revolutions.*» (Cited in Isaac, Alba et Pouthas 1957:451). In fact due to the Conference of London, the Anglo-French entente, which made the French Prime Minister Thiers (1836,

1840), declare in March 1840 that 'Britain is our natural ally and in the East our necessary ally', broke down (Cited in Briggs 1959: 354).

Backed by France, the Egyptian viceroy remained stubbornly disobedient, the matter that pushed Palmerston to react swiftly in the Middle East. On November 4, An Anglo-Austrian fleet launched an offensive attack on Acre driving the Egyptian army out of Syria. The French king Louis Philippe (1830–1848) eventually abandoned Thiers and opted for a new ministry that advocated order and stability in the Middle East. By December the Egyptian viceroy accepted with bitterness the London Conference terms. The conference granted Mohammed Ali and his dynasty the hereditary right to govern Egypt and the Sudan; yet Egypt remained part of the Ottoman Empire and had to pay an annual duty to the Sublime Porte. In addition, it restricted the number of the Egyptian army to 18,000 troops (Fahmy 1998: 175). With this conference, Mohammed Ali's toil and strive to establish an oriental empire that would inherit the crumbling Ottoman Empire vanished like a beautiful dream.

To sum up, during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, British foreign policy was directed towards safeguarding the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire; a policy that collided with Mohammed Ali's desire of carving out an empire in the Middle East. Britain did not hesitate to use its diplomatic means to guarantee the safety of the lucrative route to India via the Red Sea region. Hence, Mohammed Ali seemed a potential threat to British interests the fact that drove Britain to eliminate him from the political scene and to restrict his authority to the rule of Egypt and the Sudan. Nevertheless, Mohammed Ali with his charismatic character and clean mind succeeded to restrict to great extent Egypt's long established subordination to the Ottoman Empire. He was an innovator and pioneer in different fields making from Egypt 'a modern nation- state'. Professor Yunan Labib Rizk (1933–2008) pointed out: 'There is absolutely no disputing the fact that Mohammed Ali was a blessing from God to

Egypt. He was a reformer in religion and in the secular World. Egypt, in his age, flourished until it became the paradise and the beacon of the Orient'. (Al Ahram Weekly Online: 11 - 17 August 2005 Issue No. 755 Chronicles.)

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