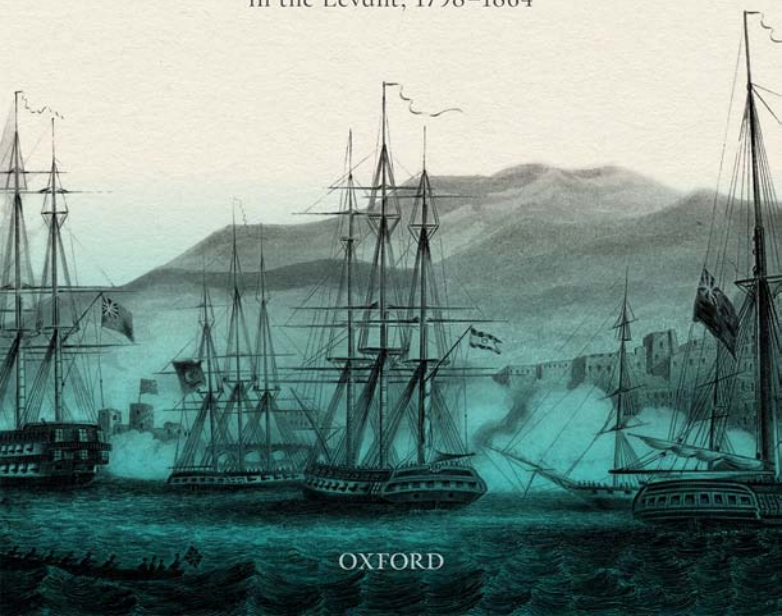


O Z A N O Z A V C I

DANGEROUS
GIFTS

Imperialism, Security, and Civil Wars
in the Levant, 1798–1864



OXFORD

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*Imperialism, Security, and Civil Wars
in the Levant, 1798–1864*

OZAN OZAVCI

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For my students

Foreword

Almost six years ago, when I embarked upon this book project, the preliminary concept I had in mind was very different from the end result. My plan was to write a comprehensive micro-history of the international commission that was dispatched to Ottoman Syria after the violent summer of 1860. Along the way—and, I must confess, not soon after I began the project—a set of questions struck me, upended the book's structure, and resulted in an enormous review of my intentions: by what right, I wondered, did the so-called European Great Powers claim the responsibility to supply security in the Levant in the long nineteenth century even when the sovereign authority was opposed to their intervention? On what legal grounds? How did it all begin?

At first, I thought of explaining these in a long background chapter before I delved into the history of the commission. But this didn't quite work. The more I read the fascinating existing literature on the several episodes that formed the prehistory of 1860, the more questions I was left with about these events, about their connections with one another, their micro-global nuances, and the historical, political, legal, and economic continuities. The ambitious endeavour to address them almost organically led me to a massive restructuring of the manuscript half-way through the project.

What was supposed to be a book about the years 1860–62 thus turned into a study of nearly a century of European Great Power interventionism in the Levant, and the reception and implications of these acts, as well as persistent patterns, and cultures of security. My task then became writing a history that hinges together the existing literature, filling the gaps as far as I was able—a book that highlights the long-standing vectors, overt or covert, previously noticed or unnoticed, but without losing sight of the ideas, ideals, emotions, and observations of several historical figures whose lives and biographical experience have usually remained un- or under-explored in previous studies.

Yet, in doing so, my aim has hardly been to write another Saidian, anti-Orientalist or post-Orientalist book. Instead, I have endeavoured to uphold a third narrative that goes beyond both Orientalism and its (corrective) rejection, beyond the likes of both Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami and Edward Said. This narrative embraces the complexity of the historical reality through in-depth and multi-archival research to offer a more substantiative and less impressionistic analysis of interventionism and violence in the Levant.

The very same consideration led me to propose a new paradigm, and to use security as a driving force of political and social change, rather than producing

another history of westernization, modernization, or secularization of the (Ottoman) Middle Eastern societies after their ‘encounter with the West’. Since the spatial scope of the book is limited to the eastern Mediterranean coasts, and since I devote only very limited space to the events that simultaneously transpired in areas including Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula, I have decided to use the term ‘the Levant’ as the geographical focus of the book, even though the region that became a theatre of interventions covered in the book has come to be known as ‘the Middle East’ as of the early twentieth century.

Dangerous Gifts came into being as part of a larger project funded by the European Research Council (ERC), ‘Securing Europe, Fighting Its Enemies’. Thanks to this, I have been able to cooperate with several brilliant scholars. One of them, the prime investigator of the project, Beatrice de Graaf, read the draft chapters of the book and made most useful comments. With her patience and encouragement, with the occasional lunch and dinner meetings she organized, she has been a source of immense moral support. Constantin Ardeleanu, Erik de Lange, Annelotte Jensen, Wouter Klem, Melle Lyklema, Trineke Palm, Joep Schenk, and Jossie Til-Duijsters as assiduously read my draft chapters and offered insightful comments. Susanne Keesman has been of great help in guiding me through the bureaucratic minutiae of the project as well as helping me to settle in the Netherlands. Myrthe van Groningen and Andrea Dörr kindly helped me to sort out copyright and other practical issues in the final stages of the project. Erik Goosman designed the appealing maps used in this book.

The ERC funding has also allowed me to enlist the support of a number of research assistants whose linguistic and/or logistical reach brought to my consideration primary and secondary sources in several languages and from numerous archives, which I would not otherwise have been able to make use of. Markus Wegewitz, Dominik Loibner, and Theresa Herzog supplied me with materials from archives and libraries in Berlin and Vienna, working with the challenging *Kurrentschrift*, taking notes, and translating their notes from German into English. Elena Linkova found and dispatched sources from the archives and libraries in Moscow and St Petersburg. Zienab al-Bakry and Tarek Sabra provided assistance with locating, taking notes, and translating Arabic primary (mostly archival) and secondary materials from Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. Filiz Yazıcıoğlu has been tremendously generous in offering her support. Not only did she hasten to the Ottoman archives and Islamic Research Institute in Istanbul and send me copies of an archival material or a book whenever I needed her urgent help. She also helped me ‘decipher’ some of the more intricate Ottoman texts. I am indebted to Pavlos Kardoulakis for taking copies of archival materials in Britain and France for my use.

The task of freeing the manuscript from my linguistic mistakes was skilfully taken up by Alastair Paynter.

Selim Deringil, Jonathan Conlin, and Jonathan Parry have read the draft manuscript and provided me with excellent feedback. I was lucky to find Selçuk Dursun (abi) within reach whenever I needed his support with the transliteration of subtle Ottoman sources.

My editors at Oxford University Press, especially Stephanie Ireland, believed in the project from the beginning. Together with Katie Bishop and Cathryn Steele, she displayed an impressive degree of professionalism in arranging for timely peer reviews and putting together the contract. Stephanie, Katie, and Cathryn have patiently responded to my endless questions and inquiries during the various stages of this publication journey. My copy-editor Sarah Barret was admirably diligent, while Saravanan Anandan has been a model professional during the production of the book.

Devoting nearly six years of my life to researching and writing a historical book has been a demanding endeavour, to say the least, which sometimes entailed a hermit-like-life style, spending weeks in archives, and sacrifices of sorts, especially on the part of those I love. My dearest family and friends have tirelessly supported me all along even when I disappeared from their lives for extended periods of time. They have shown an indefatigable faith in me and the project, which has been my main source of motivation and energy. Esther Meininghaus has also helped me with the transliteration of Arabic sources, while patiently listening to me for hours rambling about the contents of the book. Julia Kozak has assisted me with the transliteration of Russian sources, and uncomplainingly read all draft chapters, telling her honest opinion even when I wouldn't like it. I am grateful to all of them for their endless patience, support, and, above all, for their presence.

Grateful I am also to all the truly helpful archivists and librarians I met during research, and my numerous colleagues and students, whose names I unfortunately cannot list in the little space I have here. I can, however, say that I have been privileged to have the opportunity to discuss the very questions I asked myself while writing the book—not only with expert scholars but also with my students, hundreds of them, from all walks of life and literally from all over the world, during the teaching of several course modules. Nearer the completion of the project, I shared with my students the draft chapters of the manuscript, and fine-tuned its contents and tone following their suggestions. They even conducted research into the various subjects covered in the book as part of their assignments, which introduced me to new literature and primary sources that I had not been aware of.

'I like reading stories,' one of my students at Utrecht once told me, not soulless scientific analyses. Among the several challenges in writing a book on entangled histories, the most difficult one has been to develop out of a fiendishly complex story a narrative that is both intelligible and captivating for readers. They should be the judge of the extent to which I succeed in this.

In short, *Dangerous Gifts* has been the result of a tireless team effort. The fact that my name appears as its single author ought not to outshine the degree of collaborative labour which allowed it to materialize. Without my research team, without the support of my colleagues, without my family and friends, and without my students, this book could not have seen the light of the day. I dedicate it to these unseen co-creators.

Utrecht
November 2020

Ozan Ozavci

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Note on Transliteration

Arabic names, words, and titles are transliterated according to the system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Russian names, words, and titles are transliterated according to the GOST 7.79-2000 system. Modern and Ottoman Turkish names, words, position, and titles are kept in their original or used with Ottoman transliteration. Paşa instead of pasha or pacha, *wali* instead of *wali*, *Şeyhülislam* instead of Sheikh-ul Islam, etc.

Introduction

Justice is a balance set up among mankind.

Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*¹

Two months after his arrival in Ottoman Syria in September 1860, the Prussian bureaucrat Johann Ludwig Guido von Rehfues (1818–97) and his colleagues set off on a hauntingly memorable journey to Damascus.² Leaving Beirut early in the morning, they rode first up Mount Lebanon. From all the heights to which their path took them, they could see the smoke-stained rubble of once flourishing villages in the countryside.³ The picturesque hills did not hide the grim fact that a civil war had struck there half a year earlier. It was the last day of November and the men on horseback were representatives of the European Powers at the commission they had been tasked with setting up: Pierre Jean Adolphe de Weckbecker (1808–71) was the Austrian plenipotentiary, Leon Philippe Béclard (1819–64) the French, and Evgenii Petrovic Novikow (1826–1903) represented Russia. Since he was unwell, the British commissioner, Frederick Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood, 1st Marquess of Dufferin and Ava (1826–1902), had stayed in Beirut.

The five commissioners had been dispatched to Syria for what was arguably a ‘humanitarian’ mission to investigate the origins of violence, monitor the retribution and indemnification processes, and reorganize the country’s administration. They were the first men to establish an international security institution in the Levant.⁴ After crossing the plains of the Bekaa valley and overcoming the challenges of the Anti-Lebanon Mountains, the companions made their entrance into Damascus behind an Ottoman imperial cavalry unit on 1 December. The streets

¹ Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, vol. 2, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 145.

² In 1860, the term ‘Syria’, or *Bilad al-Sham*, referred to the area that encompasses present-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine: Bruce Masters, ‘Syria’, in *Encyclopaedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Bruce Masters and Gábor Ágoston (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 550.

³ Johann Ludwig Guido von Rehfues to Alexander Gustav Adolph Freiherr von Schleinitz, 2 Dec. 1860, GStA, III. HA Mda, I Nr. 7568, f. 385.

⁴ By the term ‘Levant’ I refer here not only to the Arab *mashriq* but to the region along the eastern Mediterranean coasts of the late Ottoman Empire that stretched from Alexandria in Egypt to Izmir/Smyrna, the Straits that connect to the Black Sea, the eastern Greek coasts, and their hinterland. The term ‘Levantine’ will be used to denote the inhabitants of these spaces. For a recent study on the concept of ‘Levant’, see Rana Issa and Einar Wigen, ‘Levantine Chronotopes: Prisms for Entangled Histories’, *Contemporary Levant* 5(1) (2020): 1–12.

were filled with a compact crowd attracted by the curious sight.⁵ When they arrived at their residence, Rehfues immediately went to the Christian quarter to see for himself the town's condition. During the course of half a day, he conducted a thorough investigation, and visited the locations at which the killings had taken place in July, which resembled, in his words, 'persecutions in the earliest time of the Christian calendar'. He frequently halted in his journey, and only a strong desire to observe the tragic scenes for himself gave him the strength to carry on. Although five months had passed since the events, and the bodies of those murdered had been taken away or at the very least covered with rubble, the manifold remaining traces still painted a disturbing picture of what had happened there. In the hours he spent at the site, it was as if Rehfues had witnessed the horror for himself. The next day, he wrote in a dispatch to Berlin that he would never forget what he had seen in Damascus.⁶

In the lands the European commissioners rode past during those two days, more than 10,000 people had perished and tens of thousands had been displaced between late May and early July 1860. The worst violent outburst in late Ottoman Syria, the Druze–Maronite civil war, later sparked the killing of around 3,000 Damascene Christians on 9–10 July.⁷ The news alarmed European capitals, attracted immense public attention, and provoked fury and consternation on the part of the Ottoman government. Even though Sultan Abdülmecid I appointed Fuad Paşa (1814–69), one of his eminent ministers, as special envoy to suppress the 'disturbances' and establish order and tranquillity in the country, the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Sublime Porte⁸ would not be enough to prevent the dispatch of a French expeditionary army to 'aid the Sultan' in protecting the Christian populations.⁹ Nor would they suffice to avoid the establishment of an international commission which, Ottoman ministers believed, infringed the sovereignty of their empire.

The 1860 intervention was only one of many European interventions in the Levant in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Starting with Napoleon Bonaparte's occupation of Egypt in 1798, the self-defined five Great Powers (in alphabetical order, Austria, Britain, France, Prussia, and Russia) had previously assumed responsibility, either individually or collectively, for supplying security in the region. They had staged hitherto unprecedented military occupations 'for the benefit of the locals'. They had drawn lines, partitioned lands, and imposed rules,

⁵ Leon Béclard to Antoine Thouvenel, 12 Dec. 1860, AMAE 50MD/139.

⁶ Rehfues to Schleinitz, 2 Dec. 1860, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7568, 385.

⁷ On the Damascene events, see Eugene L. Rogan, 'Sectarianism and Social Conflict in Damascus: The 1860 Events Reconsidered', *Arabica* 51(4) (Oct. 2004): 493–511.

⁸ 'The Sublime Porte' or *Bâb-ı Âli* ('the Porte') is a term used by European and Ottoman agents as of the late 18th c. to refer to the Ottoman imperial ministries.

⁹ R. Edwards, *La Syrie, 1840–1860. Histoire, politique, administration, population, religions et mœurs, événements de 1860 d'après des actes officiels et des documents authentiques* (Paris: Amyot, 1862), 164.

laws, administrative systems, and treaties on the locals, usually against their will. They had also ventured on the first so-called ‘humanitarian’ interventions in history, before establishing as-yet-unknown international security institutions, such as the commission on Syria that Rehfues and his companions were tasked with setting up.¹⁰

My book is about these eighteenth- and nineteenth-century foreign interventions in the Levant—their making, theatres, reception, and repercussions. It traces the genealogy of these unique practices of recent history, asking how it all began—how, from the late eighteenth century, the threat perceptions and interests of the Western Powers and Levantine inhabitants became interwoven, and how and why historical actors, both imperial and peripheral,¹¹ European and Levantine, unwarily grappled with a vicious and intricate paradox there: an ever-increasing demand for security despite its increasing supply.¹²

After each major European Great Power intervention, i.e. the use of force or pressure by one or more dominant states ‘to interfere with and exert power over the affairs of a weaker sovereign entity’, eastern Mediterranean coasts were further destabilized and became vulnerable to civil wars.¹³ First, the strife in Ottoman Egypt (1802–11) that followed the French occupation of 1798–1801 and overlapped with the British intervention of 1801–3; then, following the 1827 Navarino interference, the civil war between the paşa of Egypt, Mehmed Ali, and the Sublime Porte that engulfed the entire Ottoman world (1832–41); and, finally, the hostilities between the Druze and Maronites (1841–60) in Ottoman Syria between the Quadruple Alliance’s intervention in 1840 and the 1860 armed intervention. All these outbreaks of violence had diverse and compound origins rooted in numerous, *predominantly domestic*, factors. Yet, at the same time, they were all fuelled by international dynamics, connections, and interactions, and were then quelled almost always through the filter of global imperial interests.

*

There is already a rich and diverse literature on the historical episodes considered in this book. The French invasion of Egypt in 1798, the so-called ‘humanitarian’

¹⁰ For discussions of what makes these interventions in the Ottoman Empire ‘humanitarian’, see esp. Gary J. Bass, *Freedom’s Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Random House, 2008); Alexis Heraclides and Ada Dialla, *Humanitarian Intervention in the Long Nineteenth Century: Setting the Precedent* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); and Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire (1815–1914)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹¹ I use the term ‘periphery’ as a structural metaphor to demarcate the hierarchical, asymmetrical, and exploitative nature of both the Ottoman and global imperial systems, whereby the main beneficiaries of the asymmetries were the imperial centres (metropolises).

¹² On the notion of ‘security paradox’, see Christopher Daase, ‘On Paradox and Pathologies: A Cultural Approach to Security’, in *Transformations of Security Studies: Dialogues, Diversity and Discipline*, ed. Gabi Schlag, Julian Junk, and Christopher Daase (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 86.

¹³ On the definition of ‘foreign intervention’, see Elizabeth Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa: From the Cold War to the War on Terror* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3.

interventions in the Ottoman Empire, the conflict between Mehmed Ali Paşa and the Sublime Porte, and the crises in Ottoman Lebanon have all been analysed in numerous fascinating studies.¹⁴ Here I will hinge together, and critically augment and complement, this diverse literature, rather than examining each episode in isolation and omitting their immediate links or the long-standing vectors that connected these episodes.¹⁵ Nor will my focus be on Western perceptions and conceptions of security only.

As Davide Rodogno, one of the leading authorities on the history of humanitarianism, candidly admits, no book in the rich literature on ‘humanitarian’ interventions in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire has historicized the experience of the ‘target state’.¹⁶ The lives, ideas, emotions and threat perceptions, and interests of Levantines themselves have rarely been mentioned or specifically foregrounded in historical analyses of security, with the exception of a few studies that focus on violence in the region episodically.¹⁷ Here I will look to fill these gaps. Without attributing to the so-called peripheral Levantine actors the sole role of ‘bargaining chips’, ‘junior partners in the power game’, or ‘trouble-makers’, I will pay particular attention to the part that the local actors played in enabling interventionism and in the production of violence in the Levant.¹⁸

¹⁴ See esp. Juan Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Gilbert Sinoue, *Le Dernier Pharaon. Méhémet Ali (1770–1849)* (Paris: Pygmalion Gerard Watelet, 1997); Caroline Gaultier-Kurhan, *Méhémet Ali et la France 1805–1849. Histoire singulière du Napoléon de l'Orient* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2005); Marsot A. L. Al-Sayyid, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Vernon J. Puryear, *International Economics and Diplomacy in the Near East: A Study of British Commercial Policy in the Levant, 1834–1853* (Stanford, CA: Archon, 1969); Letitia W. Ufford, *The Pasha: How Mehemet Ali Defied the West, 1839–1841* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007); Kamal S. Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965); Leila T. Fawaz, *An Occasion for War* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994); Caesar E. Farah, *The Politics of Interventionism in Ottoman Lebanon, 1830–61* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000); Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History and Violence in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Yann Bouyrat, *Devoir d'intervenir. L'intervention humanitaire de la France au Liban, 1860* (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2013).

¹⁵ The few exceptions are: Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789–1923* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923: A Study in International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966); Alexander L. Macfie, *The Eastern Question 1774–1923* (Harlow: Longman, 2013).

¹⁶ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 2–3. For two recent studies that form, to an extent, the exception here, see Will Smiley, ‘War Without War: The Battle of Navarino, the Ottoman Empire and the Pacific Blockade’, *Journal of the History of International Law* 18(1) (2016): 42–69, and Hakan Erdem, ‘Do Not Think of the Greeks as Agricultural Labourers’: Ottoman Responses to the Greek War of Independence’, in *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*, ed. Thalia Dragonas and Faruk Birtek (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 67–84.

¹⁷ Makdisi, *Culture*; Farah, *Politics*. Moreover, owing to the abundance of Great Power interventions in civil wars in the global south since the Second World War, a rich social-scientific literature has long examined how foreign meddling has extended the duration of civil wars and increase the intensity of violence. Some of these studies build their arguments on 19th-c. cases without specifying which cases these were. See e.g. Dylan Balci-Lindsay, Andrew J. Enterline, and Kyle A. Joyce, ‘Third-Party Intervention and the Civil War Process’, *Journal of Peace Research* 45(3) (2008): 345–63.

¹⁸ Pinar Bilgin, ‘The “Western-Centrism” of Security Studies: “Blind Spot” or Constitutive Practice?’, *Security Dialogue* 41 (2010): 617; Bahgat Korany, ‘Strategic Studies and the Third World:

My argument is that Great Power interventions in the nineteenth-century Levant need to be considered not only in reference to their immediate causes, theatres, and implications. It is essential to take into account the continuity that European *and* Levantine actors saw in regional affairs from the late eighteenth century through until at least the mid-nineteenth. There is a need to foreground the persistent patterns or ‘cultures of security’ within which violence was generated and sustained, and how imperialism—the practices, ideologies, and systems of building or sustaining empire¹⁹—and security—defined in this book broadly as ‘the anticipated state of being unharmed in the future’²⁰—acted as organizing principles of international relations. Here I will place the European and Levantine quests for security in a wider historical context as the driving forces of an entangled history, which offers us new ways to construe the vicious cycles of Great Power interventions and civil wars that enveloped the Levant. This analysis helps us discern the complexity of the situation the historical actors were embroiled in, and identify who spoke authoritatively about security at the time, what the threat and interest perceptions of the diverse historical actors were, which discursive practices they adopted, who were the net beneficiaries and, where applicable, who paid for security—that is, whose financial responsibility it was ultimately.

Historicizing the Eastern Question

In the eighteenth and long nineteenth centuries, one of the persistent paradigms that causally linked the Great Power interventions in the Levant was ‘the Eastern Question’. A near-perfect historical embodiment of the otherwise abstract and ambivalent imperialism–security nexus, the Eastern Question originated with endeavours in the eighteenth century to deal with the alleged decadence of the Ottoman Empire.²¹ Like all security issues, it turned ‘its eye exclusively to the

A Critical Evaluation’, *International Social Science Journal* 38(4) (1986): 547–62; Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, ‘The Postcolonial Moment in Security Studies’, *Review of International Studies* 32 (2006): 343–4.

¹⁹ I define the term ‘empire’, relying on the admirable work of Burbank and Cooper, as ‘large political units, expansionist or with a memory of power extended over space, polities that maintain distinction and hierarchy as they [strive to] incorporate new people’. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 8. For a slightly adjusted definition, see Jennifer Pitts, ‘Political Theory of Empire and Imperialism’, *Annual Review of Political Science* 13 (2010): 213.

²⁰ Beatrice de Graaf and Cornel Zwierlein, ‘Historicizing Security: Entering the Conspiracy Dispositive’, *Historical Social Research* 38(1) (2013): 52.

²¹ Recently, historians have invited us to invoke social-scientific theories, such as securitization theory, i.e. the identification of issues as security threats in order to convince an audience (the decision-makers) to take extraordinary measures against these perceived threats, while historicizing security. De Graaf and Cornel Zwierlein, ‘Historicizing Security’, 49. However, the narrow focus of securitization theory on legitimacy—and for that matter on the nation states and the polities better equipped to voice

future'.²² According to the mainstream narrative, the major European empires perceived a shared, existential threat in the dreadful prospect of the dominance of one or another of the Great Powers over the strategic, prize morsels of the Ottoman Empire (such as the Straits or the Suez area, the transportation routes to India and Central Asia). They believed that such a geostrategic advantage obtained by one European empire might adversely affect the balance of power among them and threaten the existence of the others.

Historically speaking, the Eastern Question emerged in a period that coincided with the independence of the Americas and the shift of global colonial competition to Asia. It was then, in the nineteenth century, that the Levant became a strategically crucial gateway for the new and now vitally important colonies that supplied Europe with resources and markets, which sustained their economies and permitted political stability in the metropolises. In connection to this, global capitalism increasingly expanded into the Levant—now a strategically and economically central region—where it met with the local owners for profit.

The interlocking of geostrategic and economic undercurrents generated new questions. These included the need for overseas empires to preserve international commerce, ensuring the uneven flow of capital, goods, and resources, and securing the newly acquired territory and property, as well as integrating the sometimes reluctant, or even resistant, local populations into the new economic and financial structures, from a position of power and hierarchy. At the same time, growing Christian missionary activity engendered problems with respect to the protection of denominational agents and establishments. They were increasingly viewed by Levantines, regardless of the religious inclinations of the latter, as both threats to local cultures and instruments for moral empowerment.

In fact, the capitulations—the legal agreements with the Ottoman Empire that granted commercial and legal privileges to European subjects—had allowed the European Powers to interfere in legal security issues in the Ottoman world since the sixteenth century.²³ But these were usually limited to individual experiences. And even though France and Russia had assumed the responsibility of protecting

their threat perceptions and to persuade their audience—brings into serious question its applicability in imperial historical contexts. Benedikt Stuchtey and Andrea Wiegeshoff, '(In-)Securities across European Empires and Beyond', *Journal of Modern European History* 16(3) (2018): 325–6.

²² De Graaf and Zwierlein, 'Historicising', 52.

²³ For insightful overviews of capitulations and extraterritoriality in the Ottoman Empire, see Edhem Eldem, 'Capitulations and Western Trade: Western Trade in the Ottoman Empire. Questions, Issues and Sources', in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 281–335; Umut Özsü, 'Ottoman Empire', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of International Law*, ed. Bardo Fassbender and Anne Peters (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 446; and his 'The Ottoman Empire, the Origins of Extraterritoriality, and International Legal Theory', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Theory of International Law*, ed. Florian Hoffmann and Anne Orford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 123–37; also see Turan Kayaoğlu, *Legal Imperialism: Sovereignty and Extraterritoriality in Japan, the Ottoman Empire and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

the Catholic and Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman sultans since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, these long remained merely rhetorical gestures. They appeared to serve more to bolster affective ties than to actually produce concrete actions.

What changed in the late eighteenth and particularly the nineteenth century was that, as Buzan and Lawson have shown, with the global transformation that resulted from the uneven and combined development of societies worldwide, unprecedented differentials in the modes of political, economic, military, and technological power gradually emerged between a small group of so-called 'leading-edge' European empires and the rest.²⁴ These disparities were time and again proved by easy victories won by the superordinates in wars and through territorial annexations and uneven commercial treaties. They engendered the creation of new hierarchies in world politics whereby internationalized controversies were almost exclusively addressed with the interference of the dominant Powers.²⁵

It was in the age of global transformation and the emergence of hierarchies that generations of European and Levantine actors (statesmen, bureaucrats, diplomats, military and naval officers, secret agents, journalists, merchants, missionaries, bankers, feudal or oligarchical lords, etc.) established new transimperial networks amid the shared threat posed by the Eastern Question. These agents looked to further their common interests in maintaining the Ottoman Empire or procuring benefits from her alleged weakness, if not total destruction. To these ends, they mobilized their resources (armies, navies, weapons, technologies, norms, funds, etc.) across, between, and beyond imperial borders.²⁶ They developed diverse, sometimes unprecedented repertoires of power: military occupations conducted for the 'benefit of the locals', the so-called 'humanitarian' interventions, slow evacuation of occupying armies, surrogate or proxy wars, pacific naval blockades, the establishment of international and extraterritorial security institutions, transimperially mediated local administrative structures, partitions by international agreements or treaties, or the dispatch of military, naval, and civilian advisers, etc. These discursive practices²⁷ were (self-)justified by means of the deployment of

²⁴ Barry Buzan and George Lawson, *The Global Transformation: History, Modernity and the Making of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²⁵ Hierarchy is considered here as a 'system through which actors are organized into vertical relations of super- and subordination': Ayşe Zarakol, 'Theorising Hierarchies: An Introduction', in *Hierarchies in World Politics* ed. Ayşe Zarakol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1.

²⁶ Daniel Hedinger and Nadin Hee, 'Transimperial History: Connectivity, Cooperation and Competition', *Journal of Modern European History* 16(4) (2018): 432.

²⁷ The concept of 'discourse' is used here to refer to linguistic and non-linguistic practices, 'a system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings' and materialized in concrete practices and rituals: Jutta Welde, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gasterson, and Raymond Duvall, 'Introduction: Constructing Insecurity', in *Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities and the Production of Danger*, ed. Jutta Welde, Mark Laffey, Hugh Gasterson, and Raymond Duvall (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 16.

new sets of religiously imbued and Enlightenment norms and principles from which a positivist and universalized international law was spawned.²⁸ In due course, they turned into recurring behavioural patterns or the *modus operandi* of security in the Levant.²⁹ A transimperial security culture was thus woven spontaneously around the Eastern Question.

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The French invasion of Egypt was an opening moment of this culture of security. In the beginning, particularly during the global Coalition Wars (1792–1815), the unfolding repertoires of power were characterized by rivalry among the major European and Ottoman empires. For example, the inter-imperial (1798–1801) and proxy (1802–11) wars in Ottoman Egypt were the direct fruits of the Anglo-French/Ottoman struggle for domination along the eastern Mediterranean coasts.

In the 1810s, however, inter-imperial competition in the Levant went through an early metamorphosis. When the Coalition Wars came to a definitive end, during the peace talks at Paris, Vienna, and later at Aix-la-Chapelle between 1814 and 1818, the (then self-defined) European Great Powers fostered an understanding of security as a public good that could be obtained most effectively through cooperation.³⁰ Based on an adaptation of the idea of a ‘balance of power’ to meet the the postwar realities of Europe, they forged an exclusive system, the Concert of Europe, to supervise first European and then global affairs, by means of mediation among themselves and in order to inhibit any return to the horrors of a European total war.³¹ They endorsed collective action and conference diplomacy, and upheld new principles and codes of conduct such as non-intervention in each other’s affairs or the necessity of approval by the Great Powers for territorial changes.³² Each time the Eastern Question pressed on the

²⁸ On the imperialist origins of international law, see Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Gerry Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²⁹ For an astute yet West-centric description of the notion of security culture as a tool for studying interventions, see Mary Kaldor and Sabine Selchow, ‘From Military to “Security Interventions”: An Alternative Approach to Contemporary Interventions’, *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 4(1) (May 2015): 1–12.

³⁰ Patrick Cottrell, *The Evolution and Legitimacy of International Security Institutions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 68–9. See also Matthias Schulz, *Normen und Praxis. Das europäische Konzert der Grossmächte als Sicherheitsrat, 1815–1860* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2009).

³¹ Louise Richardson, ‘The Concert of Europe and Security Management in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Imperfect Unions: Security Institutions over Time and Space*, ed. Helga Haftendorn, Robert Keohane, and Celeste Wallender (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 51; Jennifer Mitzen, *Power in Concert: The Nineteenth Century Origins of Global Governance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 30; Maartje Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals: Great Power Politics, 1815–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 40–41.

³² Michael Jarret, *The Congress of Vienna and its Legacy: War and Great Power Diplomacy after Napoleon* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 362; Eric D. Weitz, ‘From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Forced Deportations, and Civilizing Mission’, *American Historical Review* 113(5) (Dec. 2008): 1313–43; Paul W. Schroeder, ‘Did the Vienna

international agenda—such as the Greek crisis (1821–32), the Egyptian question (1832–41), the Syrian question (1841–64), and the Russo-Ottoman wars (1828–9 and 1853–6)—ministerial and ambassadorial conferences were convened (or, at least, proposed) with the ultimate purpose of preventing the Powers from stepping on each other’s toes or fighting with one another in the Levant, as elsewhere in the world.

Thenceforth, the major European Powers came to consider cooperation as the ultimate instrument for containing the potentially destructive implications of their enduring competition. Put another way, convergence among the Powers (the evolution towards strategic cooperation) proved not to be the binary opposite of divergence (their differing interests and rivalries), but its logical completion: the only means to ensure European security while maximizing global imperial interests was to act together, making concessions for a greater good.

While the emergence of the Eastern Question in the late eighteenth century and the French invasion of Egypt symbolized a new beginning and intensified inter-imperial rivalries in the Levant until the early twentieth century, the Vienna order held these rivalries in check by urging concerted action among the Powers. It thus changed the nature of European dialogue to a considerable extent. In most cases, the new international order reined in bellicose unilateral action. But, as we will see in this book time and again, it also facilitated interventions by the Great Powers by means of placing them on a quasi-legal platform, the Concert of Europe.

This became a pattern in nearly every episode of the Eastern Question. Along the way, like most security issues, the Eastern Question itself took on different meanings at different historical moments.³³ It was never a static paradigm.³⁴ In the late eighteenth century, even before the term was coined, it pertained mostly to (inhibiting) the Russian plans for the partition of the Ottoman Empire and, after the 1789 revolution, French expansionism in the Levant. In the 1810s, it was a matter of placing the sultan’s empire under the guarantee of European public law in order to address Russo-Ottoman differences.³⁵ In the 1820s, it referred to the diplomatic quandary over the ‘Greek crisis’. A decade later, it was about

Settlement Rest on a Balance of Power?, *American Historical Review* 97(3) (June 1992): 683–706; Brian E. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Beatrice de Graaf, Brian Vick and Ido De Haan, *Securing Europe After Napoleon: 1815 and the New European Security Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), ‘Introduction’; esp. Beatrice de Graaf, *Fighting Terror after Napoleon: How Europe Became Secure after 1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

³³ Lucia Zedner, ‘The Concept of Security: An Agenda for Comparative Analysis’, *Legal Studies* 1 (153) (2003): 154.

³⁴ This has been shown in recent scholarship; Macfie, *The Eastern Question*; Lucien J. Frary and Mara Kozelsky, ‘Introduction’, in *Russian–Ottoman Borderlands: The Eastern Question Reconsidered*, ed. Lucien J. Frary and Mara Kozelsky (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).

³⁵ In the 1810s, the so-called ‘Polish question’ was also discussed under the heading of the Eastern Question. Hüseyin Yılmaz, ‘The Eastern Question and the Ottoman Empire: The Genesis of the Near and Middle East in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Is There a Middle East? The Evolution of a Geopolitical Concept*, ed. Michael E. Bonine (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 12.

suppressing a civil war in the Ottoman world that had enabled Russia to establish dominant control over the Porte. And then, in the 1840s, it was repurposed as an issue of ‘civilization’ to be dealt with globally.

The French author, conservative politician, and prominent advocate of democracy Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 1840–41 that the events unfolding in Asia from India to the Black Sea were demonstrating the disorganization, depopulation, and anarchy of the East, where ‘societies are shaken’ and ‘religions are weakened’. ‘Civilized’ Europe had to remain dominant and active in the name of humanity. It had to ‘puncture, envelop, and tame the fallen beast that was Asia’.³⁶ It had to consider the Eastern Question not as a divisive factor among the Powers, but as one that united them in a condominium.

From 1840–41 onward, as far as supplying security in the Levant was concerned, the position and influence of the Powers steadily grew stronger. Despite the Crimean War of 1853–6, which undermined the Concert of Europe, they came together and collectively intervened again in Syria in 1860. Yet, in all this, the agency of the Levantine actors was in fact far more central than has been documented to this day.

Silence, Civil Wars, and Lives

Behind the Eastern Question lay an imagined bifurcation between East and West which viewed the oriental world as a homogeneous entity, the ‘weak’ and ‘uncivilized’ ‘other’, in a state of degradation. The East was repeatedly likened to a ‘woman’ and ‘the flesh’, while the ‘civilized’ West was the ‘superior’ and abler man, possessed with ‘the spirit . . . of industry and science’.³⁷

As is well known, Edward Said was one of the first to point out this dichotomy and underscore the ‘agency’ problem. He discussed how ‘the Oriental woman’ in Western literature, who in fact represented the entire East, ‘never spoke of herself, . . . never represented her emotions, presence, or history . . . [F]oreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and [dominant], [the Western actors] spoke for and represented her.’³⁸ This epistemic exclusion or the ‘Oriental silence’ has permeated much of the literature on the Eastern Question.

³⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Œuvres et discours politiques*, vol. 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 270, 280, 315.

³⁷ Pamela Pilbeam, *Saint-Simonians in the Nineteenth Century France* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 108–9.

³⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 14. Said’s postulations on ‘silence’ have been picked up by the social scientific literature on security. See esp. Lene Hansen, ‘The Little Mermaid’s Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29(2) (2000): 285–306; Sarah Bertrand, ‘Can the Subaltern Securitize? Postcolonial Perspectives on Securitization Theory and Its Critics’, *European Journal of International Security* 3(3) (2018): 281–99.

Owing in part to logistical and linguistic barriers, but mostly to the belief that the Eastern Question was a ‘European question’ (a belief upheld even by some late Ottoman writers as well as contemporary historians today³⁹), scholarship has usually concentrated on the Western ‘great men’, how they dealt with the predicament of the Ottoman Empire, piloted her reforms, and resolved her diplomatic quandaries, usually leaving little (if any) space in their analysis for the discursive practices of the so-called ‘Eastern’ actors, their internal struggles, ambitions, emotions, insecurities, or agency in the widest sense.⁴⁰

My point here is that it is not entirely possible—in fact it is a parochial endeavour—to attempt to historicize and construe the Eastern Question without taking into account the other side of the coin and placing European and (in our case) Levantine conceptions and practices of security within the same analytical framework with a contrapuntal awareness.⁴¹ It is now time to reconceptualize the ‘most complicated . . . and dangerous question’⁴² in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century international politics as an inherently intersubjective constellation that formed through at least four relational dynamics: (i) diplomatic and strategic affairs among the Great Powers of the time in their attempts to deal with the alleged weakness of the Ottoman Empire, (ii) the interest relations of the European powers with the Levantines (as well as with the peoples of the Balkans, the Arabian peninsula, Mesopotamia, eastern Anatolia, and the Caucasus), (iii) the intra-imperial power struggles in both Europe and the Ottoman dominions (amongst the imperial elites or between Levantine actors), and, finally, (iv) intersectoral relations or the interplay between strategic, legal, economic, financial, religious, or cultural factors—that is, how one sector affected the other(s) during the decision-making processes. Omitting—or at least not acknowledging—the existence of one or more of these relational dynamics tends to limit our historical understanding; it results in the production of incomplete histories of how the Eastern Question persisted well into the twentieth century.

³⁹ There is only one study in the English language that places emphasis on the ‘apologetic and defensive’ Ottoman perspective on the Eastern Question in the late 19th c.: Nazan Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

⁴⁰ Anderson, *The Eastern Question*; Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830–1841: Britain, the Liberal Movement and the Eastern Question* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969); Albert Sorel, *La Question d’Orient au XVIIIe siècle. Le partage de la Pologne et le traité de Kâinardj* (Paris: Plon, 1902); Edouard Driault, *La Question d’Orient, depuis ses origines jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1905). More recently, Miroslav Šedivý, *Metternich, the Great Powers and the Eastern Question* (Pilsen: TYPOS, 2013).

⁴¹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 50; Geeta Chowdry, ‘Edward Said and Contrapuntal Reading: Implications for Critical Intervention in International Relations’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 36(1) (2007): 101–16; David Bartine, ‘The Contrapuntal Humanism of Edward Said’, *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 17(1) (2015): 59–85; Pinar Bilgin, ‘“Contrapuntal Reading” as a Method, an Ethos, and a Metaphor for Global IR’, *International Studies Review* (2016): 1–13.

⁴² P. W. Schroeder, ‘The 19th-Century International System: Changes in the Structure’, *World Politics* 39(1) (Oct. 1986): 6.

It is true that European imperial elites often strove to secure their interests by (to borrow once more from Said) looking at the distant realities of the Levant and the global 'East', 'subordinating them in their gaze', constructing the regional histories 'from their own point of view', and considering 'its people as subjects whose fate could be decided by what the imperial decision-makers thought was best for them'.⁴³ Europeans usually imagined the East through an 'imperial gaze', which looked at but usually failed (or chose not) to *see* the people gazed at; which assumed that the power, licence, and responsibility to supply security lay with them.⁴⁴

In reality, however, the situation was much more intricate than Said's account. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the threat perceptions, interests, and discursive practices of the European Powers and local inhabitants of the Levant continuously interacted, transformed each other, and became interwoven in the fabric of the Eastern Question. The Eastern Question was not simply a quandary that European decision-makers imagined, formulated, and dealt with on their own. It also formed a central threat and, on occasion, a well-established trope for Levantines to manipulate.

Ottoman imperial authorities and subject peoples recognized the military, economic, and technological power differentials between Europe and the rest. They also shared the belief that the Ottoman Empire was in decline. They pondered how to deal with her alleged weakness, or how to transmute decline into diplomatic leverage. In doing so, they unmistakably acknowledged the 'European' undertones of the question—how the destruction of the Ottoman Empire might lead to a general war in the world—and tried to adapt inter-imperial competition and cooperation among the Powers to their own ends—at times by inviting the Powers to intervene, at other times by fending off their attempts to intrude.

All the while, like all other major empires of the time, the Sublime Porte was caught in a state of ontological insecurity.⁴⁵ Distressed after tragic defeats in battles, territorial losses, domestic riots, and the grim financial situation of their empire, Ottoman ministers looked to define the place of the sultan's dominions in the overall global imperial order 'of which their empire formed a part and upon which [her] fate depended' now.⁴⁶ They gradually accepted European public law. They tried to reform their armies, bureaucracies, and laws, and (as we will see) revised their empire's underlying philosophical vocabularies of security such as the 'circle of justice'. Despite their initial rejection during the Congress of Vienna

⁴³ Edward Said, 'Blind Imperial Arrogance', *Los Angeles Times*, 20 July 2003.

⁴⁴ E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking at the Other: Feminism, Fame and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 61–73.

⁴⁵ In using the notion 'ontological insecurity', I draw inspiration from Ayşe Zarakol's article 'States and Ontological Security: A Historical Rethinking', *Cooperation and Conflict* 52(1) (2017): 48–68. The term is defined here as questioning 'a consistent sense of self... affirmed by others'.

⁴⁶ Feroze A. K. Yasamee, 'European Equilibrium or Asiatic Balance of Power? The Ottoman Search for Security in the Aftermath of the Congress of Berlin', in *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 and the Treaty of Berlin*, ed. Peter Sluglett and Hakan Yavuz (Salt Lake City: Utah University Press, 2011), 61.

(1814–15) of proposals to protect the sultan's European dominions by European public law, just over a decade later the Ottoman Empire even looked to become a member of the Concert of Europe herself.

Even though numerous orientalist stereotypes regularly featured in the publications of the day as well as in the correspondence of historical actors in Europe, it was the Porte's agents who were the first to describe the sultan's empire in 1833 as 'sick' and in need of foreign 'medicine', not Tsar Nicholas I, who is known to be the first to call the Ottoman Empire the 'Sick Man of Europe'. In the late 1830s and early 1840s, Ottoman ministers adopted European discursive practices such as the bifurcating language of 'civilization', drawing demarcation lines with their own 'other', inaugurating what later commentators have termed 'Ottoman Orientalism' in the critical moments of the Eastern Question—in the first place, to enlist Great Power interventions, not to fend them off.⁴⁷ Shortly afterwards, however, the same ministers came to use the very same vocabulary to put an end to the inexorable interference of the Great Powers.

The peripheral actors in the Levant (the so-called peripheries of the periphery) such as the Mamluks of Egypt, the Greeks, the Syrians, or the Lebanese, for their part played an active role in the formation or sustenance of transimperial networks and affective ties with European Powers. Ever since the French invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the British intervention in 1801, they came to realize that ensuring their security or advancing their political, economic, and religious interests depended on aligning their interests with those of the Powers. While looking to acquire at least partial independence and respite from the draining domination of their Ottoman overlords, they therefore repeatedly resorted to European support.

The asymmetric 'chains of influences' (to cite an early nineteenth-century actor) between European empires and the Levantine subject peoples created new channels for the supply of security by means of the transfer of intelligence, ammunition, provisions, or even manpower.⁴⁸ At the same time, these 'chains' paved the way for the intensification of *existing* domestic political, economic, and/or religious (sectarian) conflicts, and their conversion into the first proxy wars in the history of the Levant. More often than not, the peripheral actors became the prime agents of the Eastern Question, while their lives were radically altered by it.

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This study is, then, an 'entangled history' (*histoire croisée*) of European interventions in the Levant in the age of the Eastern Question. It focuses on 'empirical intercrossings', and documents the complex histories of the imperialist and peripheral quests for security and how they inflamed a vicious cycle of civil wars in the region.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ussama Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism', *American Historical Review* 107(3) (June, 2002): 768–96.

⁴⁸ Major General Stuart to Lord Hobart, 28 Feb. 1803, in *LPM* vol. 1, 388.

⁴⁹ Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity', *History and Theory* 45 (Feb. 2006): 30–50, at 30.

I must note at the outset that the episodes of violence in question here are categorized as ‘civil wars’ not simply in the interest of sculpting them into an easily intelligible or overgeneralized description.⁵⁰ My purpose here is to emphasize the simultaneously domestic and global nature of violence in the Levant. Otherwise, as the British historian David Armitage has shown, there has never been a time ‘when [the definition of civil wars] was settled to everyone’s satisfaction or when it could be used without question or contention’.⁵¹ ‘[T]o call a war “civil” is to acknowledge the familiarity of the enemies as members of the same community: not foreigners but fellow citizens.’ It is ‘a form of framing’.⁵²

It is true that the same conflicts—say, the Greek crisis of the 1820s or the clash of Mehmed Ali, the paşa of Egypt, with the Sublime Porte in 1832–41—can be viewed as rebellion, revolutions, independence wars, or civil wars depending on the perceptions of the beholder or the political motives of the narrator. My framing of these episodes of violence as civil wars results from a desire to avoid the reconstruction of their histories from either a state-centric (imperial) or anti-state-centric (peripheral) perspective, but rather to blend these two in one narrative, with the belief that the notion of civil war does not carry a ‘moral connotation’ and does not ‘signal siding with one party to the conflict’.⁵³

The episodes in question here were physically violent conflicts between ‘competing social orders’, which historical actors (i.e. contemporaries) labelled civil wars. During each conflict, the physical fighting took place between the subjects/citizens of *one* polity (the Ottoman Empire) and *within* its boundaries. And the parties were politically organized and fought for the monopoly of physical force in a given region, if not the entire country, but not necessarily to overthrow the existing government or its regime.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ As an under-theorized concept, social-scientific definitions of the notion of civil war often suffer from various subjectivities and randomness. According to Gersovitz and Kriger, for example, a civil war is ‘a politically organised, large-scale, sustained, physically violent conflict that occurs within a country principally among large/numerically important groups of its inhabitants or citizens over the monopoly of physical force’: Mark Gersovitz and Norma Kriger, ‘What Is a Civil War? A Critical Review of its Definition and (Econometric) Consequences’, *World Bank Research Observer* 28(2) (Aug. 2013): 160–61. But what ‘large-scale’ or ‘numerically important’ refers to here remains rather ambiguous. In another, frequently cited study, Sambanis deals with this ambiguity to some extent, offering a more quantitative description: a conflict is a civil war, he writes, when it is in ‘an independent state with a population of at least 500,000’, where ‘in the start year there are at least 500 to 1000 deaths’, and where there is an ‘effective resistance’ against the government ‘as represented by at least 100 deaths inflicted’: Nicholas Sambanis, ‘What Is Civil War? Conceptual and Empirical Complexities of an Operational Definition’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(6) (2004): 814–58. For a 19th-c. historian, quantifications of this kind seem arbitrary, since they make the definition of civil wars more obscure given both the absence of numerical data in hand and the demographical differences between past and present.

⁵¹ David Armitage, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 12.

⁵² *Ibid.* 13.

⁵³ Adam Backzo, Gilles Dorosnoro, and Arthur Quesnay, *Civil War in Syria: Mobilization and Competing Social Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 18. Although the notions of ‘conflict’ and ‘war’ and particularly ‘civil war’ can denote different categories, I will use them interchangeably here, especially in view of the fact that the quantitative classifications offered in social-scientific literature are often inapplicable in historical cases in which the number of casualties is often unknown or difficult to confirm. For an excellent

The reason for making *these* episodes of violence the centre of analysis—their number could usefully be augmented given the broad and contested definition of civil wars and the composite context of the Ottoman world—is fourfold. First, they were the earliest examples of inter-imperialized civil wars in the late Ottoman Levant. As Backzo, Dorronsoro, and Quesnay observe, ‘the effects of the international system on civil war[s] can be difficult to isolate for a single case, but they become visible when civil wars are examined in series.’⁵⁵ Therefore, second, the aim is to determine the international and global dynamics of these cases by serially contextualizing them. Third, they all followed Great Power interventions and were in a partial cause-and-effect relationship with each other, taking place in the same geographical area (i.e. eastern Mediterranean coasts of the Ottoman Empire), which allows us to consider the continuities between them in relation to the strategic, legal, economic, financial, and religious specificities of the region. And finally, besides geography, these wars were tied together by the lives, ideas, beliefs, and ideals of a number of Levantine and (to a lesser degree) European individuals who lived through them and forged networks and cultures of security at the time. The stories of these historical actors—who range from a lonely sultan to a Caucasian slave, from a swashbuckling gangster to a leading feudal family in Lebanon or international commissioners sent to Syria—serve as an analytical window to ‘see through life’ the connections between what may otherwise be considered as separate episodes of violence taking place in different historical epochs.⁵⁶ As ‘connected singularities’, they not only highlight the degree of the complexity of such historical entanglements, but also serve as facilitators that deem these complex histories more intelligible and even relatable.⁵⁷

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The book is divided into three parts which follow a loose chronological order. Part I, ‘*Avant le mot*’, discusses in three chapters the beginnings of Great Power

social-scientific overview of the notions of conflict, war, small war, and civil war, see Jolle Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

⁵⁵ Backzo et al., *Civil War in Syria*, 14.

⁵⁶ Alice Kessler-Harris, ‘Why Biography?’, *American Historical Review* 114(3) (June 2009): 625–30, at 626.

⁵⁷ In this respect, this book unintentionally follows the ‘biographical turn’ in Middle Eastern historiography, following the compelling works of Philliou, Fortna, and Sajdi: Christine M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Benjamin C. Fortna, *The Circassian: A Life of Eşref Bey, Late Ottoman Insurgent and Special Agent* (London: C. Hurst, 2016); Dana Sajdi, *The Barber of Damascus: Nouveau Literacy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Levant* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013). For a very insightful review of these books, see Metin Atmaca, ‘Biography, Global Microhistory, and the Ottoman Empire in World History’, *Journal of World History* 30(1) (2019): 1–8. This being said, in using life stories as a narrative tool to render complex histories more intelligible, I have found inspiration in the work of Robert Nemes, *Another Hungary: The Nineteenth-Century Provinces in Eight Lives* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016). I would like to thank Christian de Vito and Laura Almagor for inspiring me to think of life stories as connectors between diverse singularities. For a nuanced discussion of the notion of ‘connected singularities,’ see Christian de Vito, ‘History Without Scale: The Micro-Spatial Perspective’, *Past & Present*, Supplement 14 (2019): 348–72.

interventions in the eighteenth century under the shadow of the unfolding Eastern Question. It considers the origins of the French invasion of Egypt in 1798 in relation to changing perceptions of the Ottoman Empire in the European imagination as a source of danger (Chapter 1). It discusses how the occupation was received in the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul and how the Napoleonic wars affected Ottoman conceptions of security under Selim III (Chapter 2), before explaining the outbreak of a tripartite civil war in Egypt in 1802–11 that followed the 1798 expedition (Chapter 3).

Part II, ‘The Invention of the Eastern Question’, places under scrutiny the implications of the formation of the Vienna Order in Europe for the Levant at the time when the term ‘Eastern Question’ was coined and gradually became prevalent in international political parlance. It considers the attempts in Vienna and Istanbul in 1814–15 to guarantee the territorial integrity of the sultan’s empire under European public law, and, how, after this attempt failed, the European Powers intervened in the Greek ‘crisis’ in 1827 (Chapter 4). This is followed by an analysis of the influence of the 1827 intervention over the outbreak of another, larger-scale civil war in the Ottoman world, between Cairo and Istanbul (Chapter 5). It charts how this civil war was temporarily quelled by the active intervention of Russia in 1833 and the establishment of her dominant influence in Istanbul (Chapter 6). It continues with the Porte’s efforts to enlist Great Power support to its cause against Cairo and to end Russian control over its politics by means of domestic reform, such as the proclamation of the Gülhane Edict in 1839 and signing free trade treaties with European powers (Chapter 7). The second part concludes with the 1840 intervention of the Quadruple Alliance (Austria, Britain, Prussia, and Russia), which consisted of instigating a rebellion in Mount Lebanon and launching a military mission in Syria, with the purpose of definitively suppressing Egyptian objectives, though at the risk of a general European war (Chapter 8).

In Part III, ‘The Mountain’, the book shifts its perspective from high politics in the imperial metropolises to Mount Lebanon, which during the 1840 intervention became the epicentre of the Eastern Question. Concentrating on the Jumblatts, a Druze family that had lived through wars and violence in the Levant for centuries, it considers how the intervention changed the lives of the Lebanese themselves. It evaluates the beginnings of class and sectarian violence in Ottoman Lebanon during the early decades of the century (Chapter 9). This final part of the book then details inter-imperial competition in the mountain and the Ottoman efforts to reform, both of which brought the Eastern Question within the feudal manors. The competition provoked a new cycle of civil wars in 1841, 1842, and 1845, years which witnessed legal and administrative interventions from the Great Powers (Chapter 10), and a particularly brutal episode in 1860 (Chapter 11), which, after a

very fierce diplomatic and propaganda tug of war (Chapter 12), prompted another armed intervention that was accompanied by an international commission on Syria (Chapter 13). The book ends as it began, with the experience of the commissioners, of Rehfues and his companions, and how their work embodied the forging of a new culture of security, before concluding with the implications of the genealogy of Great Power interventions in the Levant: what do the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ordeals tell us about the region and the world today?

PART I
AVANT LE MOT

1

Crossing the Mediterranean

In the spring of 1798, the French port town of Toulon was unusually busy. Tens of thousands of soldiers, sailors, physicians, cartographers, engineers, and savants that had gathered there in April and early May were now making their final preparations for France's next major military expedition.¹ Few of them, however, knew their destination.² The secret had been masterfully kept by their young general, the Corsican Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821), in order to protect his forces from an enemy assault. He knew that the British navy, commanded by Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758–1805), was patrolling the Mediterranean so as to locate and devastate French ships.

In the town, and indeed across all Europe, rumours spread around as to what the target of the expedition would be. Many believed that the French army would turn west and then sail toward Britain for an unexpected offensive. Some claimed they would occupy Portugal. But when experts of Arab culture and language were summoned to the port days before the expedition, rumours that it would sail for Egypt became prevalent.³ They were right.

Having lost her toehold in the south of India at Pondicherry to the British, France was looking to deal, in the words of Bonaparte, 'the surest and most palpable blow' on 'perfidious Albion'.⁴ Even though her ultimate object was to attack Britain and thus knock out France's archenemy, a more realistic option for now could be to cut her 'jugular vein'.⁵ Contact had been established with anti-British Persian and Indian elites such as Feth Ali and Tipoo Sultan of Mysore with the aim of forging allegiances.⁶ To complement these machinations France would seize a proper eastern Mediterranean naval base (Malta) and then occupy Egypt.⁷

¹ Alexander Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 74.

² Vivant Denon, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt, in Company with Several Divisions of the French army, during the Campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte in that country*, trans. Arthur Aitkin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 30.

³ Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt*, 1.

⁴ Alain Silvera, 'Egypt and the French Revolution, 1798–1801', *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 269(257) (1982): 307.

⁵ Robert T. Harrison, *Britain and the Middle East, 1619–1971* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 26.

⁶ Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt*, 11.

⁷ M. Jacques Bainville, 'L'Expédition française', in *Précis de l'histoire de l'Égypte. L'Égypte ottomane, l'expédition française en Égypte et le règne de Mohamed-Aly (1517–1849)*, vol. 3, ed. Etienne Combe, Jacques Bainville, Edouard Driault (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1933), 131–6; Edward Ingram, *Commitment to Empire: Prophecies of the Great Game in Asia, 1797–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 42–52; Pascal Firges, *French Revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire*:

Thus had Bonaparte and foreign minister Charles Maurice de Talleyrand (1754–1838) planned since the previous year, and their scheme for an expedition was approved by the Directory regime in March 1798. It was now time to bring the plan to fruition.

On 19 May, when the French Army of the Orient set sail across the ‘indigo Mediterranean’ for the unknowns awaiting them in the Levant, the 54000 or so men at sea ‘eroticised an Orient’ they imagined to be stunning yet corrupt and backward.⁸ They were spellbound by the allegedly grandiose importance of their mission. On the day of their departure, Bonaparte told his men that the eyes of Europe were on them, and that the conquests they were about to undertake would have a colossal effect on the ‘civilization and commerce of the world’.⁹



Map 1. The French expedition to Egypt

That the expedition did not go as planned is well known. Three years after they landed in Alexandria in July 1798, the French army was driven out from Egypt by joint Anglo-Ottoman forces and the resistance of the local inhabitants. Yet the expedition did indeed have a transformative impact on Ottoman, Egyptian, and European politics and commerce in several ways.

Not that it succeeded in ‘civilizing the Levant’ or inaugurated a period of capitalist and bureaucratic modernity in the Middle East. These orientalist

Diplomacy, Political Culture and the Limiting of Universal Revolution, 1792–1798 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 89.

⁸ Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt*, 8, 10–11.

⁹ ‘Au soldats de terre et de mer de l’armée de la Méditerranée’, 10 May 1798, in *Correspondance de Napoléon Ier*, vol. 4 (Paris: Impériale Première, 1860), 129; Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt*, 11. Bonaparte’s men found out that the final destination of the expedition was Egypt only after the conquest of Malta.

postulations have long been unravelled by the revisionist literature.¹⁰ What changed in 1798 is not limited to the well-known fact that the Levant was drawn into the cortex of global imperial rivalry and an Anglo-French competition for economic and strategic domination in this part of the world began, or to the fact that the foundations for the scientific study of the Orient were laid out.

As we will see, the invasion also epitomized a discursive practice whereby European Great Powers of the time looked to supply security beyond their imperial territories (in the Levant) by military expeditions, allegedly for the benefit of the locals even if against the will of the regional sovereigns—in this case, the Ottoman imperial rulers.¹¹ The architects of the 1798 occupation, Bonaparte and Talleyrand, portrayed their expedition as one for the benefit of Selim III. It was not a hostile invasion, they argued, but a ‘*grand service*’ to the sultan. Talleyrand even planned a visit to Istanbul to convince the Ottoman authorities of the good will of

¹⁰ See e.g. Peter Gran, *Islamic Roots of Capitalism: Egypt, 1760–1840* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998). I would like to thank Isa Blumi for drawing my attention to this source.

¹¹ After the Crusades, perhaps no other Western occupation in the Levant has attracted as much scholarly attention as the French expedition to Egypt in 1798. Many volumes have been produced on the subject, some even emerging before French forces evacuated the Levant in 1801. Louis-Alexandre Berthier, *Relation des campagnes du General Bonaparte en Égypte et en Syrie* (Paris: P. Didot l’aîné, 1800); *Copies of Original Letters from the Army of General Bonaparte in Egypt: Intercepted by the Fleet under the Command of Admiral Lord Nelson* (London: J. Wright, 1798); Shmuel Moreh, ‘Reputed Autographs of ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti and Related Problems’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 28 (1965): 524–40; Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, ‘A Comparative Study of ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti and Niqla al-Turk’, in *Eighteenth-Century Egypt: The Arabic Manuscript Sources*, ed. Daniel Creelius (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1991), 115–26; cf. Darrelly Dykstra, ‘The French Occupation of Egypt, 1798–1801’, in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 2: *Modern Egypt from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 113–14. Detailed analyses have been made on the military aspects of the expedition. E.g. Clément Étienne de La Jonquière, *L’Expédition d’Égypte*, 5 vols (Paris, 1899–1907); cf. Dykstra, ‘The French Occupation’, 114. Bonaparte’s character and adventures during his Oriental odyssey have been placed under analysis in a plethora of work. Percival G. Elgood, *Bonaparte’s Adventure in Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931); François Charles-Roux, *Bonaparte, gouverneur d’Égypte* (Paris: Plon, 1936); and J. Christopher Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); cf. Dykstra, ‘The French Occupation’, 115. More recently, Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt*; Irena A. Bierman (ed.), *Napoleon in Egypt* (Los Angeles, CA: Ithaca Press, 2003). Dykstra explains that Arab scholars have more recently reconstructed the history of the expedition as the first example of Western imperialist encroachment and the heroic domestic (Arab) resistance to it. E.g. Muhammad Qindil al-Baqli, *Abtatal-muqawamab al-sha’abiyah li-l-hamla al-faransiya fi misr* (Cairo: n.d.); ‘Abd al-Aziz al-Shinawi, ‘Umar makram: batal al muqawamab al-sha’biyyah (Cairo, 1967); ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Hafiz Dunya, *al-Shahid muhammad kurayyim* (Cairo, n.d.); Muhammad Faraj, *al-Nidal al-sha’bi diddal Hamla al-faransiyya* (Cairo, 1963); cf. Dykstra, ‘The French Occupation’, 115. European nationalist literature has likewise wrought its own heroic stories out of the expedition—the stories of Admiral Nelson, General Kleber, Admiral Sidney Smith: see Christopher Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt* (Tucson, AZ: Fireship Press, 2009); Christopher Lloyd, *The Nile Campaign: Bonaparte and Nelson in Egypt* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973). And a number of studies have detailed the expedition’s political, economic, and intellectual origins: François Charles-Roux, *Les Origines de l’expédition de l’Égypte* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1910); and *Le projet français de conquête de l’Égypte sous le règne de Louis XVI* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire, 1929); ‘France, Égypte et Mer Rouge de 1715 à 1798’, *Cahiers d’histoire égyptienne* 3 (1951): 117–95.

France, and to reassure them that the aim of the expedition was only to overthrow the Mamluks who menaced the sultan's authority in Egypt.¹²

In reality, the 1798 expedition was the outcome of a diverse set of geostrategic, political, economic, and financial determinants that constituted the Eastern Question of the time. This chapter will consider these constituent determinants, before turning in the following two chapters to the repercussions of this first major European imperial intervention in the Levant—the repercussions that Talleyrand and Bonaparte failed to see or, perhaps, chose to ignore. What did the Eastern Question pertain to before the nineteenth century then? And how did 1798 relate to it? I will examine these two questions first.

Defining the 'Eastern Question'

Since its conquest of south-eastern European territories in the fourteenth century, the dynasty of Osman Bey, later styled the Ottoman Empire, became a chief source of danger and invulnerability in the political imagination of her western neighbours.¹³ The Ottomans remained so for at least three centuries thanks to the relative military prowess which rested on their effective management of human and economic resources across a territory that stretched from Hungary and the Crimea in the north to Yemen in the south, and from Algiers and Tunis in the west to Iraq in the east, and because of their continuous expansionism and drive for universal empire.¹⁴

The epic rivalry between the Ottoman Empire, on the one hand, and Spain, Venice, and the Habsburg Empire, on the other, in the Mediterranean as well as in the Balkans fostered in the sixteenth century alone the publication of more than 3,500 titles in Europe about the 'Turks'—a literature also known as 'Turcica'.¹⁵ In this literature, the Ottoman imperial system was often depicted as a 'menace' to European peace and order, and as the 'Islamic other', the 'oriental' being associated with dread, danger, and atrocities while at the same time

¹² Bonaparte to Citoyen Talleyrand, Ambassadeur à Constantinople, 11 Dec. 1798, *Correspondance* V, 203. See also Silvera, 'Egypt and the French Revolution', 313.

¹³ For excellent analyses, see Noel Malcolm, *Useful Enemies: Islam and the Ottoman Empire in Western Political Thought, 1450–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 68, 70, 72, and Selim Deringil, 'The Turks and "Europe": The Argument from History', *Middle Eastern Studies* 43(5) (Sept. 2007): 709–23.

¹⁴ Gábor Ágoston, 'The Ottoman Empire and Europe', in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350–1750*, vol. 2: *Cultures and Power*, ed. Hamish Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 626.

¹⁵ Ibid. See also Asli Çırakman, *From the 'Terror of the World' to the 'Sick Man of Europe': European Images of Ottoman Empire and Society from the Sixteenth Century to the Nineteenth* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); Alain Grosrichard, *The Sultan's Court: European Fantasies of the East* (New York: Verso, 1998).

peripheralized as ‘exotic, unchanging and acted upon by the Powers of ruling authorities in Europe’.¹⁶

In reality, there was hardly a ‘cultural iron curtain’ between the Ottoman world and its western neighbours.¹⁷ Their relations were always characterized by complex diplomatic, commercial, and economic liaisons and exchanges.¹⁸ Despite religious demarcations, and in spite of the beliefs upheld by such figures as Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus that the ‘Turks’ were ‘the sheer wrath of God’ towards Christians, the Ottomans continually participated in inter-imperial cooperation with their Christian neighbours in politics, commerce, and even military campaigns.¹⁹ And they were ‘actively engaged with and in [the emerging European state] system’ all the while as a balancer, with their alliances and support for the rivals of the Habsburgs.²⁰ In other words, the sultans’ empire was part and parcel of European strategic and security considerations from the beginning.

In Europe, in fact, the term ‘security’ did not become an organizing principle of international thought until the early decades of the nineteenth century. Derived from the Latin term *securus* (*sine* ‘without’, *cura* ‘worry’), its early usage in the Roman context—*animi securitas*—referred to peace of mind and stability in the inner conditions of the state.²¹ Over centuries new meanings were attached to ‘security’ in both a moral and a political sense. It was associated with indolence in early Christianity, in the Middle Ages, and also by Reformers such as Calvin, and with peace and order under the Holy Roman and Habsburg empires which postured ‘as protecting shields for Christians’ and enabled the delivery of ‘imperial goods’.²²

¹⁶ Daniel Goffman, *The Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5. See also Edhem Eldem, ‘Istanbul: From Imperial to Peripheralized Capital’, in *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul*, ed. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 138.

¹⁷ Halil İnalçık, ‘The Meaning of Legacy: The Ottoman Case’, in *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. L. Carl Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 21–3; Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Suraiya N. Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Ian Coller, ‘East of Enlightenment: Regulating Cosmopolitanism between Istanbul and Paris in the Eighteenth Century’, *Journal of World History* 21(3) (2010): 447–70; John-Paul A. Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities: Information Flows in Istanbul, London, and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); cf. Farges, *French Revolutionaries*, 4.

¹⁸ Agoston, ‘The Ottoman Empire’, 626. İnalçık argues us that ‘the idea of a Europe unified on the basis of Christian ideology and a holy war against the Ottomans’ was likewise ‘either a myth or an effort to exploit public opinion in Europe in order to legitimize the policies of the individual states’: İnalçık, ‘The Meaning of Legacy’, 21. See also K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant, 1204–1571*, 4 vols (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1976), 84.

¹⁹ Malcolm, *Useful Enemies*, 81.

²⁰ A. Nuri Yurdusev, ‘The Middle East Encounter with the Expansion of European International Society’, in *International Society and the Middle East: English School Theory at the Regional Level*, ed. Barry Buzan and Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 71, 73, 74.

²¹ Ole Waever, ‘Security: A Conceptual History for International Relations’ (MS, Copenhagen, 2012), 24–5.

²² *Ibid.* 33–5.

The Ottomans were both ‘the alien other’ to be guarded against and at the same time a major determinant in the strategic calculations of princes and kings. In the sixteenth century, Francis I of France acknowledged the sultan’s empire as ‘the only force to prevent the emerging states of Europe from being transformed into a Europe-wide empire by Charles V’, while the English Queen Elizabeth I considered that ‘the sultan could balance the Habsburgs in the East and consequently relieve Spanish pressure upon England’, even arguing that ‘Protestantism and Islam were equally hostile to “idolatry”’.²³

The Ottoman sultans, for their part, keenly sought to influence their western neighbours’ politics according to the interests of their empire, with the belief that the European balance of power, which at the time meant the prevention of Habsburg domination of its Protestant rivals, was ‘useful and perhaps sometimes essential’ to maintaining their political sway.²⁴ In this period, what would later prove to be a major source of weakness for the Ottoman Empire, the capitulations, were introduced as commercial and legal privileges granted to European merchants in Ottoman lands and seas. They ‘began their career’, to cite Özsu, ‘as instruments of Ottoman, not European, imperialism’.²⁵ Ottoman officials made a conscious effort to hamper the dominance of one state in Levantine trade by favouring rival nations, pitting one Italian state against the other, and the British and the Dutch against the French.²⁶ With the capitulations, they also looked to tie the major Powers of Europe to the political interests of the sultans.

All these dynamics gradually changed with the turn of the eighteenth century. The equilibrium of military power that characterized the sultan’s relations with his western neighbours was unsettled. A pivotal factor here was the rise of the Romanovs in the northeast, but at play more decisively were a complex set of domestic and international developments, such as (if I may simplify a little) the detrimental socioeconomic repercussions of the swollen number of Ottoman soldiers in peacetime, the dwindling economic importance of the sultan’s lands after the discovery of the Americas, the advance of political, economic, military, and technological modes of power in Europe largely thanks to new geographical

²³ Ibid. 73; Herbert Butterfield, ‘The Balance of Power’, in *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, ed. Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966), 143; Roderic H. Davison, ‘Ottoman Diplomacy and its Legacy’, in *Imperial Legacy*, 174–99; Roderic H. Davison, ‘The Westernization of the Ottoman Diplomacy in the Nineteenth Century’, in *National and International Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Edward Ingram (London: Frank Cass, 1986), 54–65; Deringil, ‘The Turks’, 709.

²⁴ G. R. Berridge, ‘Diplomatic Integration with Europe before Selim III’, in *Ottoman Diplomacy: Conventional or Unconventional*, ed. A. Nuri Yurdusev (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 114; Yurdusev, ‘The Middle East Encounter’, 72–3.

²⁵ Özsu, ‘Ottoman Empire’, 446.

²⁶ On Ottoman imperialism through capitulations, see esp. Halil İnalçık, *The Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Halil İnalçık, ‘The Turkish Impact on the Development of Modern Europe’, in *The Ottoman State and its Place in World History*, ed. Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 51–8.

discoveries and the triangular (African slave) trade, and subsequently the uneven and combined development of societies all over the globe which adversely affected the Ottoman world.²⁷ Historians tend to agree that after the failed siege of Vienna in 1683 the Ottoman military defeats at the hands of the armies of the Holy League (Russia, Austria, Sweden), the conclusion of the Peace of Carlowitz (1699), and the almost incessant loss of lands thereafter reflected a shift from balance to imbalance of power in the Ottoman Empire's relations with her western neighbours.²⁸

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At the turn of the eighteenth century, the emergence and expansion of the Romanovs into Ottoman dominions pressured Istanbul to follow a more defensive policy. The sultans gradually and grudgingly adhered to European norms and notions in international law. According to Rifa'at Abbou-El-Haj, the negotiated agreements of 1699 and 1700 between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy League 'implied in their territorial delimitations at least two modern principles of international law: acceptance of a political boundary and adherence to the concept of the inviolability of the territory of a sovereign state.'²⁹ A Venetian participant in the peace negotiations, Cavaliere Carlo Ruzzini, similarly noted: 'It certainly was an object of admiration of the world as well as a rare case in the memory of history to see the Turks willing to submit to negotiation as equals with others and to tolerate the slow formalities of that method.'³⁰ From then on, observing the military discipline and technological advances of their western rivals, the Ottoman elites admitted the importance of peace in their relations and acted in

²⁷ For sociological analyses on the subject, see e.g. Kerem Nişancıoğlu, 'Combination as "Foreign Policy": The Intersocietal Origins of the Ottoman Empire', in *Historical Sociology and World History: Uneven and Combined Development over the Longue Durée*, ed. Alexander Anievas and Kamran Matin (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 73–92; in the same volume, Jamie Allison, 'Revisiting the Transformation of the Nineteenth Century and the "Eastern Question": Uneven and Combined Development and the Ottoman Steppe', 93–110. Even though a large body of work since the 18th c. has argued that the power differentials between the Ottoman Empire and its Western neighbours resulted mainly from an alleged 'Ottoman decline', this argument has recently been called into serious question. Revisionist scholars have drawn attention to the repercussions for the sultan's empire of global uneven and combined development and the need to evaluate Ottoman power in juxtaposition to her rivals, yet not simply as an organic unit in the Ibn Haldunian sense that rises, stagnates, and declines in isolation from its international environment. E.g. Cemal Kafadar, 'The Question of Ottoman Decline', *Harvard Middle East and Islamic Review* 4(1–2) (1999): 30–75; Jonathan Grant, 'Rethinking the Ottoman Decline: Military Technology Diffusion in the Ottoman Empire, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', *Journal of World History* 10(1) (1999): 179–201; Caroline Finkel, "'The Treacherous Cleverness of Hindsight": Myths of Ottoman Decay', in *Re-Orienting the Renaissance: Cultural Exchange with the East*, ed. Gerald M. Maclean (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 148–74.

²⁸ Fikret Adanır, 'Turkey's Entry into the Concert of Europe', *European Review* 13(3) (2005): 397; Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), 24.

²⁹ R. A. Abou-El-Haj, 'The Formal Closure of the Ottoman Frontier in Europe: 1699–1703', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89 (1969): 467–75, at 468; also see his 'Ottoman Attitudes toward Peace Making: The Karlowitz Case', *Der Islam* 51 (1974): 131–7; Adanır, 'Turkey's Entry', 397.

³⁰ Abou-El-Haj, 'Ottoman Attitudes', 131.

accordance with the norms of *jus publicum Europeanum*. They would accept for the first time ‘a Christian power as a mediator’ and ‘a neutral ground as the location of negotiations’ in the early eighteenth century.³¹

At this juncture, the ‘Turk’ was still symbolic of danger in the European imagination.³² This was no longer because of the military might they possessed, however, but rather because of the alleged lack thereof. In 1715, an Austrian envoy in Istanbul would (a little exaggeratedly) report that the empire of the sultan had become so weak that ‘a Habsburg army could march with ease to the Ottoman capital, and expel the Turks from Europe altogether’.³³ One might, at least *prima facie*, conclude that the purported predicament of the Ottomans meant a reduced threat for Austria at their southeastern borders. However, an altogether different picture dictated European political considerations thence.

The fact that Russia contemplated the perceived feebleness of the Porte as an opportunity ‘first to expand to the Black Sea, then into the Balkans, and finally to Constantinople’ engendered for the courts of Europe, and—due to her geographical proximity—especially for Vienna, a new source of threat from the 1760s.³⁴ Afterwards, the fate of the Ottoman Empire became a matter of haggling among the major Powers for sustaining the European balance of power, which now came to mean also the prevention of Russian aggrandizements in the south or simply her control over the Straits and the prized parts of the Levant and Asia Minor.

The Romanovs’ policy with respect to their southern neighbours changed incongruously in accordance with the predilections of each monarch that came to the throne.³⁵ Even though under Tsar Peter I (r. 1682–1725) an ‘eternal peace’ had been proclaimed between St Petersburg and Istanbul, during the reign of Anna Ioannovna (r. 1730–40), the idea of complete destruction of the Ottoman Empire gained traction among Russian military officers and rulers. When Catherine II (r. 1762–95) ascended to the throne, she saw that the future of her empire lay in the political and economic initiatives to be taken in the south.³⁶ The annexation of the Crimea became a major security objective, both to suppress the

³¹ Adanır, ‘Turkey’s Entry’, 398–9; Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

³² Çirakman, *From the ‘Terror of the World’*.

³³ Karl A. Roider, Jr, *Austria’s Eastern Question* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 4–5.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 47–8, 194.

³⁵ Alexander Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question: Army, Government, and Society, 1815–1833* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 19–26.

³⁶ L. A. Nikiforov, *Vneshnyaya Politika Rossii v Poslednie Godi Severnoj Vojny* (Moscow: Nishtadtskij Mir, 1959); V. P. Lyscov, *Persidskij Pohod Petra I* (Moscow: n.p., 1950); A. K. Bajov, *Russkaya Armiya v Tsarstvovanie Imperatricy Anny Ioannovny: Vojna Rossii s Turciej, V, 1736–1739* (St Petersburg: n.p., 1906), 199. For a recent account of Catherine’s southern policy, see Kelly O’Neill, *Claiming Crimea: A History of Catherine the Great’s Southern Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

endless raids of the Crimean Tatars and to gain a foothold at the Black Sea.³⁷ During her reign, border disputes in the Balkans, Ottoman opposition to the partition of Poland, and the situation of the Crimea prompted two major wars with the Sublime Porte in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The first of these wars, in 1768–74, saw Russian engagements in the eastern Mediterranean coasts—our focal region in this book—in order to foment Mamluk and Druze revolts against the Ottoman sultan. However, Russia's interests lay mainly at the northern Black Sea, and her ephemeral engagement in Egypt and Syria barely created a global shift of political attention at the time. The signing of the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty of peace in 1774, by contrast, did. With this treaty, Russia obtained several ports on the Black Sea, the right of free navigation for her merchant marine in the Straits and the Mediterranean, favourable commercial concessions for merchants, and 'the right to make representations at the Porte on behalf of the Orthodox Christian subjects of the sultan'.³⁸ The Crimea was granted the status of an independent khanate, which Russia could now easily influence.

The 1774 treaty is usually considered in historical literature as the beginning of the 'Eastern Question', though the term was possibly never used by the historical actors in the late eighteenth century.³⁹ It is true that the new Russian foothold on the shores of the Black Sea was viewed by her western neighbours, and particularly by the Habsburgs, with dread, as a tragedy for Sultan Abdülhamid I (1725–89), but also as a danger for European peace. The treaty's provisions, as Johann Amadeus von Thugut (1736–1818), the Austrian internuncio in Istanbul wrote, contained 'a grim portent for the future'. With their ports in the Black Sea, the Russians could now launch 'an amphibious assault' directly at Istanbul, bringing 20,000 men in about 36 hours or even less, and end the Ottoman Empire before the news of occupation reached Vienna, the nearest major European capital.⁴⁰ The risk of destabilizing the power balance among major European Powers was more present than ever. This was why Thugut would conclude that that the treaty was a terrible blow not merely to the sultan's empire but 'to the rest of the world'.⁴¹

For Austria, the existence of a weaker Ottoman Empire as a southeastern neighbour was welcome; but a strong Russia would threaten Austrian interests even more gravely.⁴² The difficulty for the Court of Vienna lay in the fact that it

³⁷ E. I. Druzhinina, *Kyuchuk-Kajnardzhiskij Mir 1774 goda* (Moscow: Ego Podgotovka i Zaklyuchenie, 1955), 65, 66; S. F. Oreshkova, 'Osmanskaya imperiya i Rossiya v svete ih geopoliticheskogo razgraničeniya', *Voprosy istorii. Ezheimesyachnyj zhurnal* 3 (2005): 40.

³⁸ Adanır, 'Turkey's Entry', 401. See also Roderick H. Davison, "'Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility': The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered', *Slavic Review* 35 (1976): 463–83; Brian L. Davies, *The Russo-Turkish War, 1768–1774: Catherine II And The Ottoman Empire* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

³⁹ Anderson, *The Eastern Question*; Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question*.

⁴⁰ Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question*, 152.

⁴¹ Thugut to Kaunitz, 3 Sept. 1774; cf. Roider, *Austria's Eastern Question*, 152.

⁴² *Ibid.* 154.

was too risky to fight the Romanovs for the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Yet at the same time the Habsburg rulers were aware that, if Austria formed an alliance with the Romanovs and joined the partition of the sultan's empire, they could gain a strategic advantage over their Prussian rivals in the north, which could spark a war with the latter.

This persistent dilemma formed the underlying element of what Roider calls Austria's emerging 'Eastern Question' during the course of the eighteenth century. It soon became a question for the other major Powers to grapple with too: would European Powers fight with each other for the destruction of the allegedly precarious Ottoman Empire or collaborate in her partition and establish new, more dangerous neighbourhoods with powerful rivals, as happened after the partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795? Or would they neutralize the threat by preventing the fall of the empire so that no European power could seize her most prized domains and upset the European balance? How could all major European Powers enjoy the same commercial privileges, given that the Russian merchants had now acquired a privileged status? The Ottoman Empire came to be seen at this juncture as an object of these strategic and economic considerations, as the 'acted upon' whose fate was to be decided by European imperial rulers who drastically lacked knowledge of her realities.

The Austrian response to these questions was to maintain the Ottoman territorial status quo as much as possible, and contain Russian aggression toward Istanbul. This could be obtained, not by confronting the Romanovs, but rather in forming reluctant alliances *against* the Ottomans to hold in check Russian aggrandizement.⁴³ For example, in 1782 the Austrian King Joseph II accepted Empress Catherine II's infamous 'Greek Project', i.e. the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of a new Greek empire in her place, with a capital at 'Constantinople' and her grandson, Constantin, as the emperor. But Joseph II vacillated, desiring the involvement of France. When the plan failed after disagreements between the two Powers concerning their policy over Prussia, the Austrian king was not overly disappointed.⁴⁴

The formula of cooperation to compromise belligerent competition was implemented time and again, set a precedent for European inter-imperial politics in the nineteenth century, and formed the core of the nascent transimperial security culture that grew around the Eastern Question. The latter was hardly ever a monolithic question. It came with multiple propositions, sub-questions, and risks that some were ready to take and others dared not. In each historical moment, it not only maintained pseudo-divisions between the so-called European world and the Ottoman Empire, but also engendered the emergence of rival camps among the ruling elites of the major Powers in Europe with respect to how to

⁴³ Ibid. 161.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 162, 164.

tackle it. These differences of opinions were fundamental in understanding the policies and key decisions of the Powers towards the Ottomans in the late eighteenth century. They were fundamental also in understanding why France decided to invade Egypt in 1798, and how it was framed as a 'service' to the Ottoman sultan.

France and the Ottoman Empire

Franco-Ottoman relations in the eighteenth century were oftentimes characterized by mutual succour and warm gestures.⁴⁵ In 1739, for instance, after the sultan's disastrous war with Russia, the ambassador of France, the Marquis L. S. Villeneuve (1675–1745), acted as an intermediary in concluding peace with not too unfavourable conditions for Istanbul. The Ottoman administration had then considered him almost a saviour, and agreed to grant France new capitulations in 1740 that made the latter the Porte's 'most favoured nation'.⁴⁶ In 1768, it was France that had encouraged Sultan Mustafa III to declare war on Russia in order to have a say in the Polish question.⁴⁷ And in 1774, after the signing of the humiliating Küçük Kaynarca Treaty, the Ottoman ministers had received the support of Paris in slowing down the implementation of the treaty's stipulations.⁴⁸

Yet it was also then, around the time of the 1774 Treaty, as major European Powers came to believe more firmly in the inability of the Ottoman Empire to defend herself against a strong European military, two opposing political groups emerged within France, each putting forward diametrically opposite policies on how best to deal with the perceived feebleness of the sultan's empire. The so-called '*clan interventionniste*' gathered around the *Secrétaire d'État de la Marine* and advocated abandoning the Ottoman Empire and sharing her lands with Russia and Austria, with France's share consisting mainly of Egypt.⁴⁹

Previously, Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642) and the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) had both advocated the geopolitical and strategic importance of establishing a strong French influence in Egypt, calling the latter 'the Netherlands of the East' due to its strategic location as a maritime

⁴⁵ İsmail Soysal, *Fransız İhtilali ve Türk-Fransız Diplomasi Münasebetleri (1789–1802)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1987), 9–22; Orville T. Murphy, *Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes: French Diplomacy in the Age of Revolution, 1719–1787* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 54.

⁴⁶ Oreshkova, 'Osmanskaya imperiya i Rossiya', 39; Özsu, 'Ottoman Empire', 434.

⁴⁷ Murphy, *Comte de Vergennes*, 151–61; Munro Price, *Preserving the Monarchy: The Comte de Vergennes, 1774–1787* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8.

⁴⁸ Rodier, *Austria's Eastern Question*, 152.

⁴⁹ Pascal W. Firges, 'Gunners for the Sultan: French Revolutionary Efforts to Modernize the Ottoman Military', in *Well-Connected Domains: Towards an Entangled Ottoman History*, ed. Pascal Firges, Christian Roth, Tobias P. Graf, and Gülay Tulasoğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 180.

centre. Yet their suggestions had not been taken up by French strategists.⁵⁰ The idea had been resuscitated in the mid-eighteenth century with the reports of the two foreign ministers René Louis d'Argenson (1744–7) and especially Étienne-François (duc) de Choiseul (1758–70), both of whom stressed the economic importance of annexing this rich country.

The appeals for an invasion of Egypt found inspiration partly amid the mounting food crises and economic and financial suffering in the south of France and in part in the strategic considerations of Paris. As the historian Peter Gran rightly argues, 'France became increasingly interested in Egypt as a source of grain, especially to supply the region of Marseille', in times of poor harvests, inflation, and grain crises.⁵¹ Yet at the same time, following the expansion of the Austrians and Russians into the borders of the eastern Mediterranean, and especially after the 1774 treaty, the European balance was close to being unsettled. Britain had managed to compensate for the loss of its thirteen colonies in the Americas by the conquest of India. And the diplomatic attention in Europe was recentring on a region that stretched from Poland to Egypt, with the Ottoman Empire remaining in between.⁵² France had to make her own move now.

The 1774 pamphlet written by the leader of the interventionists, the first clerk of the Ministry of the Navy, Jean-Charles-Nicolas Amé de Saint-Didier (1740–81), underscored that the French should occupy Egypt to conserve her trade in the Levant.⁵³ Another outspoken member of the group was the famous Franco-Hungarian military officer François baron de Tott (1733–93), who had served under the authority of Sultan Mustafa III, reforming the Ottoman military during the 1768–74 war.⁵⁴ After the war, disgruntled by the lack of gratitude shown to him by the Ottomans, he had become a 'prophet of the impending disintegration of the Ottoman Empire'. In 1777, de Tott was appointed as inspector general of the Levant, and after his trips to Egypt and Syria, he produced a report in 1779 which laid the basis of a project of the occupation Egypt. 'Can we not', he asked, 'see with certainty the imminent destruction of the Turkish Empire in Europe?' He supplied the answer himself: 'No event was ever announced by any more

⁵⁰ *Mémoire de Leibniz à Louis XIV, sur la conquête de l'Égypte*, ed. M. de Hoffmans (Paris, 1840); Albert Andal, *Louis XIV et l'Égypte* (Paris, 1889); Charles-Roux, *Les Origines*, 22; Jacques Frémeux, *La France et l'Islam depuis 1789* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991); Virginia Aksan, 'Choiseul-Gouffier at the Porte, 1784–1792', *Studies in Ottoman Diplomatic History* 4 (1990): 17–34; Ferenc Toth, 'Un Hongrois en Égypte avant Napoléon. La Mission secrète du baron de Tott', *Revue historique des armées* 270 (2013): 14.

⁵¹ Gran, *Islamic*, liv, 7–10, 15.

⁵² Henry Laurens, *Les Origines intellectuelles de l'expédition d'Égypte* (Istanbul: ISIS Yayınçılık, 1987), 174.

⁵³ Charles-Roux, *Le Projet français*, 18.

⁵⁴ Charles-Roux, *Les Origines*, 61–5; Virginia Aksan, 'Breaking the Spell of the Baron de Tott: Reframing the Question of Military Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1760–1830', *International History Review* 24(2) (June 2002): 253–77.

certain signs, and never more interested in the political views of France and the interest of her commerce.⁵⁵

The interventionists' schemes were also inspired by the Austrian Emperor Joseph II. During his trip to France in 1777, and then later in 1783 (to speak about Catherine II's 'Greek Project' scheme), in fear of a Russian threat after the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, the Austrian emperor aimed to recruit France to the plan by twice proposing the occupation of Egypt, the richest province of the Ottoman Empire, to French authorities. However, Charles Gravier de Vergennes (1719–87), the minister of foreign affairs (1774–87) and a former ambassador to Istanbul (1755–68), stood in the way of the plan on both occasions.⁵⁶

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Vergennes was the leading figure of the second group which opposed intervention in the Ottoman Empire and her dismemberment.⁵⁷ In fact, he himself also believed that the Ottoman Empire was in a state of decline. He also knew that French trade in the Levant needed to be conserved, especially in view of the fact that, after the successive wars fought in the Americas, the Bourbon monarchy was under serious fiscal pressure. Yet the solution he proposed diverged from that of the interventionists. He argued for strengthening the sultan's empire by employing 'all possible means to dispose [the Ottomans] to seek salvation in the study of science and particularly military art'.⁵⁸

In 1783, when Vergennes opposed French involvement in the 'Greek Project', to lure him, Joseph II offered him Egypt. 'Egypt!' the Frenchman exclaimed. 'We would not accept those Muslims if you gave them to us. France neither wants nor needs new conquests.' If Austria annexed Ottoman territory to maintain the power equilibrium with Russia, he continued, then Prussia would want to grasp something to maintain 'the equilibrium with Austria, and so on ad infinitum. The stability of Europe would be completely undermined by such a chain reaction.'⁵⁹

Vergennes moreover argued that with the partition of the Ottoman Empire, Russian control over her lands and the accompanying uncertainty it would bring

⁵⁵ Bibliothèque municipale de Versailles, série Mss L. 277 (Lebaudy Mss 4 120), *Inspection générale des Échelles du Levant et de Barbarie faite de l'ordre de Sa Majesté par Monsieur le Baron de Tott, tome I* f. 2–4; cf. Toth, 'Un Hongrois', 3. See also Christophe Farnaud, 'Culture et politique. La Mission secrète du baron de Tott au Levant (1776–1779)' (Mémoire de maîtrise, université de Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV), 1988), 86–8.

⁵⁶ 'Réflexions sur l'empire ottomane', 1793, AMAE MD 15/154.

⁵⁷ Munro, *Preserving the Monarchy*, 195; Murphy, *Comte de Vergennes*, 339; Jean-François Labourdette, *Vergennes. Ministre principal du Louis XVI* (Paris: Desjonquères, 1990), 87–8.

⁵⁸ Pierre Duparc, *Recueil des instructions aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France*, vol. 29 (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1969), 475–8.

⁵⁹ Robert Salomon, *La Politique orientale de Vergennes* (Crimea: Les Presses Modernes, 1935), 179–89, 194–5.

stood against the commercial interests of France.⁶⁰ Indeed, on the eve of the French Revolution of 1789, there were more than 80 French commercial companies operating in the Ottoman territories thanks to the capitulatory privileges that had been granted to France in the sixteenth century and that had been revised in 1673 and 1740.⁶¹ He would not want to jeopardize their future by immense political changes. Economic considerations, not strategic ones alone, had always been and would continue to be an integral component of the Eastern Question. Although this may seem obvious, as we will see in this book, their weight was actually greater in decision-making processes than has been shown in the literature to this day.

Under the influence and guidance of Vergennes, the French policy homed in on the preservation of the Ottoman Empire. In this period, France sent military advisers and instructors to Istanbul to teach at the Imperial Academy of Naval Engineering, which, as we will see in Chapter 2, created politically influential synergies between French and Ottoman officers and mathematicians.⁶² The French also strove to prevent further Russian aggrandisement at the expense of the Ottoman Empire.

But, in the second half of the 1780s, Vergennes's hand was weakened by the news from Egypt, where the local Mamluk beys Ibrahim and Murad, forming an understanding with Britain, reportedly harassed French merchants, confiscating or destroying their properties.⁶³ The foreign minister was showered with petitions by merchants for French intervention, especially when the harvest in the autumn of 1788 was 'disastrously short', and the grain shortage became critical.⁶⁴ Even though his pressure on the Porte to take action against the Mamluk beys received a positive response, and in 1786 Sultan Abdülhamid I sent his grand admiral to Cairo on a punitive mission, the 'interventionists' could never make sense of his tenacity. At the death of Vergennes in 1787, Constantin François de Chassebœuf (1757–1820), another outspoken interventionist known for his famous travelogue on Egypt and Syria under the pseudonym Volney, wrote: 'By a bizarre prevention, [Vergennes] tried to stifle anything that might be detrimental to the Ottomans. I said a bizarre intervention, because it was without foundation... a bad policy, because the menaces... of the authority do not prevent the truth from reaching the light of day...'⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Gouffier to Vergennes, 10 Jan. 1785, AMAE CP Turquie 172; Gouffier to Montmorin 10 May 1787, AMAE CP Turquie 175; cf. Soysal, *Fransız İhtilali*, 39. See also Orville T. Murphy, 'Louis XVI and the Pattern and Costs of a Policy Dilemma: Russia and the Eastern Question, 1787–1788', *Consortium on Revolutionary Europe 1750–1850: Proceedings* 16 (1986): 264–74.

⁶¹ Gouffier to Montmorin, 19 Sept. 1787, AMAE CP Turquie 176. For the Franco-Ottoman relations at the time, see M. Le Comte de Saint-Priest, *Mémoires sur l'ambassade de France en Turquie* (Paris: Librairie de la Société Asiatique, 1877).

⁶² Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 122; Firges, 'Gunnery for the Sultan', 173.

⁶³ See Ch. 3 for more detail.

⁶⁴ Gran, *Islamic Roots*, 8.

⁶⁵ C. F. Volney, *Considérations sur la guerre actuelle des Turcs* (London (i.e. Paris), 1788), 9.

Two camps—one interventionist, the other conservationist—thus emerged in Paris with respect to how to tackle the alleged decadence of the Ottoman Empire. In the end, the death of Vergennes paved the way not only for his opponents, but also for the war that he had long worked to foil—the one between Empress Catherine II, who had taken advantage of the 1783 uprising in the Crimea and intervened to annex it, and Sultan Abdülhamid I, who had striven to prevent her intervention. For one last time in her history, Austria joined Russia against the Ottoman Sublime Porte. The French king Louis XVI then decided not to upset relations with his ally and brother-in-law, Joseph II. As Vergennes was no longer in the picture, France withdrew her military advisers from Istanbul.⁶⁶

The dominance of the interventionists in Paris was short-lived: only two years later, the French Revolution of 1789 occurred and a new situation emerged after the revolutionaries gained power. New alliances formed in Europe, including one between Prussia and the Ottoman Empire (1790). Austria and Russia needed to reposition their armies at the eastern borders of republican France and in the soon-to-be-partitioned Poland. Only months before the outbreak of the War of the First Coalition in April 1792, peace treaties were concluded between Istanbul and Vienna in Sistova in August 1791 and then between St Petersburg and Istanbul in Iasi in January 1792.⁶⁷ But not before Austria and Russia ventured on one last, and successful, offensive that gave them the upper hand in the peace negotiations.

The Porte recognized the Russian annexation of the Crimea, which led many contemporary Russian strategists to believe that the tsar's empire had now reached convenient geographical boundaries that no longer entailed expansionism toward the south.⁶⁸ But, as we will see in Chapter 2, in Istanbul, losing the Crimea to Russia left the Ottoman rulers with an immense desire for revenge on Russia with the support of France. To this end, the Porte hoped to form an alliance with Paris and act together in the long run. But French diplomacy would turn in a very different direction by the end of the decade.

Preparation for the Egyptian Expedition

In fact, there was ample ground for the establishment of a solid Franco-Ottoman alliance in the early 1790s. One immediate effect of the French Revolution of 1789 on Franco-Ottoman relations was a new episode of rapprochement.⁶⁹ In the early

⁶⁶ Firges, 'Gunners for the Sultan', 174.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 172. See also Karl A. Roider, Jr, *Baron Thugut and Austria's Response to the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 262–92.

⁶⁸ Bitis, *Russia*, 21–2.

⁶⁹ Kemal Beydilli, 'III. Selim: Aydınlanmış Hükümdar', in *Nizam-ı Kadim'den Nizam-ı Cedid'e III. Selim ve Dönemi*, ed. Seyfi Kenan (Istanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 45–6.

1790s, and more specifically in 1793, a large number of French military instructors, technicians, architects, artillery experts, caulkers, and carpenters moved to Istanbul to help Sultan Selim III's reform programme that was under way in the Ottoman imperial capital.⁷⁰ Some of these specialists had been made redundant during the revolutionary fervour in France and were looking for jobs elsewhere. Others were deliberately sent by the new French regime to aid the sultan, help him build a new fleet, improve city fortresses, and train his 'New Order' army.⁷¹

With a letter dated 17 September 1795, the young Corsican Bonaparte also applied for a position in Istanbul to tutor the new Ottoman army—the very soldiers that his men would fight half a decade later. But his application was turned down, as the French government preferred to use his outstanding skills for the more immediate interests of the Republic.⁷²

In the mid-1790s, Istanbul became a microcosm of European wars, where the diplomats of belligerent states in the ambassadorial district competed with each other to gain the favour of the sultan against their enemies. The French diplomats enjoyed greater sympathy and interest from the Ottoman cabinet in part due to Sultan Selim III's admiration for France and partly because the enemy of the Porte's enemy (Russia) was seen as a greater friend than others. For its part, the new republican regime in Paris looked to form closer diplomatic relations with Istanbul because France was diplomatically isolated in the world. Twenty of the 23 French foreign legations were terminated between early 1792 and late 1793, and her diplomatic representation was confined to the Ottoman Empire, Switzerland and the United States.⁷³

This was why, the Republic's first mission to the Porte had in view the establishment of both defensive and offensive alliances with Sultan Selim III.⁷⁴ Due to the persistence of the Austro-Russian threat, which the sultan hoped to thwart with the support of friendly Powers like France, a powerful ally could well serve the security of the Ottoman Empire also. But at the same time, having just signed peace treaties with Austria and Russia, the sultan was reluctant to be drawn into European wars. In 1795, therefore, the Ottoman Empire declared neutrality for the first time in her history, continuing the passive, non-belligerent policy that she had employed for decades but this time looking to guarantee it by international public law.

Selim III re-evaluated his policy in May 1796 when Austria and Russia signed a new alliance treaty earlier in the same year.⁷⁵ France had come up with new, highly

⁷⁰ See Ch. 2. ⁷¹ Firges, 'Gunners', 176. ⁷² Soysal, *Fransız İhtilali*, 162.

⁷³ Firges, *French Revolutionaries*, 1, 20. ⁷⁴ Firges, 'Gunners', 174.

⁷⁵ Soysal, *Fransız İhtilali*, 127, 132; E. de Marcère, *Une ambassade à Constantinople. La Politique orientale de la Révolution française II* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1927); Fatih Yeşil, 'III. Selim Döneminde Bir Osmanlı Bürokrati: Ebubekir Ratib Efendi' (master's thesis, Hacettepe University, Ankara, 2002), 212–13; cf. Kahraman Şakul, 'An Ottoman Global Moment: War of Second Coalition in the Levant', (doctoral thesis, Georgetown University, 2009), 58.

favourable terms for the sultan's empire. It would be a purely defensive alliance. The Porte would not be liable to intervene in the war between France and Britain, while 'in case of an attack on Ottoman territory, France would either send an army of 30,000 men, or eight ships of the line and twelve frigates, or a corresponding amount of subsidies.'⁷⁶ In return, France would be granted further commercial advantages, including trade in the Black Sea, that would upend the privileged standing of the Russian merchants.⁷⁷

However, when, in Paris, the Directory regime took power, it decided not to ratify the treaty on the grounds that war with Russia would be too costly while France would receive no support in the fight against Britain. The drift between the courts of Paris and Istanbul began at this point. The new foreign minister, Charles-François Delacroix (1795–7) found 'neither equality nor reciprocity' in such a treaty, just as France had proved her military strength and turned into an expansionist power in Europe.⁷⁸

The successive victories France obtained against the first Coalition in this period had led to an adjustment of her policies toward the Porte. After the signing of the Peace of Campo Formio in October 1797, France turned the Low Countries, a large portion of northern Italy, and the Adriatic outpost of Corfu into client states. In the following months, she overran the Papal States, Switzerland and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in quick succession. And thanks to the alliance with Spain, the Directory had, with the exception of Portugal, managed to isolate Britain. In early 1798, the French leadership came to a crossroads: should they make use of Britain's isolation, adopt a strictly continental policy and acquire further gains in Europe? Or should they pursue a colonial policy with an overseas expedition?

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Pivotal in the resolution of this question was the return of Charles Talleyrand from exile in England and America in late 1796, and his appointment as the new foreign minister in July 1797.⁷⁹ Even though all members of the Directory ruled out the 'colonial policy' because the French navy was too weak to cope with a potential British naval offensive, the new foreign minister considered overseas expansion the solution to domestic disorder. As the former bishop of Autun, Talleyrand was himself a product of the ancien régime. He favoured order, restraint, and balance in Europe, and to this end envisaged an Anglo-French entente that would seal peace and security in Europe.

⁷⁶ Firges, 'Gunners for the Sultan', 179. ⁷⁷ Marcère, *Une ambassade*, 263.

⁷⁸ Firges, 'Gunners', 179–80. See also Bailey Stone, *Reinterpreting the French Revolution: A Global-Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 219–20, 232.

⁷⁹ Philip G. Dwyer, *Talleyrand* (Harlow: Longman, 2002), 60–61.

Any excessive expansion in the continent beyond the natural limits of France, he believed, would endanger the European equipoise. He also argued that the colonies were ‘the only real and permanent sources of power’, and that, with ‘mutual territorial and colonial concessions’, a compromise could be obtained with Britain. He wanted moderation and peace, and credulously maintained that both Britain and the Sublime Porte could be persuaded to approve France’s next démarche: the invasion of Egypt.

Inspired by the ideas of the interventionist duc de Choiseul, who had previously suggested the cession of Egypt to France by the Porte, Talleyrand pointed out in a widely popularized speech in July 1797 (later published under the title *Essai sur les avantages à retirer de colonies nouvelles dans les circonstances présentes*) that Egypt was a most suitable country for such colonial expansion.⁸⁰ Since 1793, the political isolation of France had led to her exclusion from world trade. The south of France was dependent on Egyptian wheat, but, due to a domestic recession, the French merchants were unable to pay the costs of trade. In the mid-1790s, as the Mamluk beys Murad and Ibrahim returned to Cairo and controlled the customs of the country, and when they pillaged the supplies of the indebted French merchants’ supplies, pressuring them out of the wheat trade, an active lobbying campaign had begun once again for the French invasion of Egypt.⁸¹

The campaign was led by prominent merchant Charles Magellon, who returned to Paris in 1795, and addressed to Talleyrand a memorandum (*Mémoire sur l’Égypte*) in which he detailed the agricultural opportunities for France in Egypt.⁸² At first, M. Dubois-Thainville was sent to Egypt to settle differences with Mamluk Murad and Ibrahim Beys, but the mission yielded no results. The French merchants’ alert that the British were negotiating trade and transit privileges with the Mamluks against French interests raised eyebrows in the Directory.⁸³ The lobby of merchants and diplomats confirmed that an expedition to Egypt was now a matter of ever greater necessity.⁸⁴

At the same time, since late summer 1797, after his success in Italy, General Bonaparte had been indulging in dreams of expanding his victories in the ‘Orient’. He then began an eager correspondence with Talleyrand. Influenced since his youth by the rich interventionist literature in favour of the occupation of Egypt, Bonaparte too was persuaded that the dissolution of the sultan’s empire was

⁸⁰ Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, *Essai sur les avantages à retirer de colonies nouvelles dans les circonstances présentes* (Paris: chez Baudoin, Imprimeur de l’Institut National, 1797), 14.

⁸¹ See Ch. 3.

⁸² Gran, *Islamic Roots*, 10. See also Isa Blumi, *Foundations of Modernity: Human Agency and the Imperial State* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 22–4.

⁸³ David Kimche, ‘The Opening of the Red Sea to British Ships in the Late Eighteenth Century’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, 7(1) (Jan. 1972): 63–71; Silvera, ‘Egypt and the French Revolution’, 309.

⁸⁴ Gran, *Islamic Roots*, 10.

near.⁸⁵ In August–September 1797, when he spoke of the plan to invade Egypt for the first time, he appeared to view the expedition as part of the greater idea that was the partition of the ‘declining’ Ottoman Empire.⁸⁶

After the French annexation of the Ionian Islands, he believed that France had to play a more proactive role in the Ottoman world. He made contacts with dissenting Ottoman paşas (such as Ali Paşa of Janina) for potential future collaboration.⁸⁷ The situation of that vast empire, he asserted, ‘puts us under the obligation of thinking early to take steps to preserve our commerce in the Levant’.⁸⁸

What withheld France from acting straightaway was the fact that Louis Marie de La Révellière-Lépeaux (1753–1824), the powerful leader of the Directory regime in Paris, was still unconvinced. He was in favour of a direct attack on their immediate enemies (Britain), finding it difficult to fathom why France should weaken her armies, risk the disappearance of her last vessels, and break off relations with the Porte.⁸⁹

It remained for Talleyrand, therefore, to persuade the Directory to defer the planned attack on Britain and focus instead on an expedition to Egypt. In an unsolicited report sent in January 1798, the French foreign minister argued that their armies would be warmly received in Egypt for emancipating the local inhabitants from the yoke of the Mamluks. And the Porte would be convinced with a special mission that would show French dexterity in solving the Mamluk problem. In another report in February, Talleyrand wrote that the French occupation of Ottoman Egypt could be justified in relation to the partitions of Poland, which had been endorsed by Britain and the other European Powers.⁹⁰ Years later he added with hindsight in his memoirs that France was seeking compensation then, even if it was at the Porte’s expense. She was seeking only to redress the European balance.⁹¹

As their correspondence in late 1797 and early 1798 suggests, Talleyrand and Bonaparte saw multiple benefits in the expedition plan. By capturing Egypt, the Republic would control the shortest transportation and communication routes between the British mainland and India. They would cut the ‘jugular vein’ of the British Empire. The invasion would enhance the commercial relations between France and the Levant, which had become more significant for the Republic. The

⁸⁵ Bonaparte reportedly read Volney’s travelogues in the Levant. C. F. de Volney, *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie pendant les années 1783, 174 & 1785* (Paris: Volland, 1787); Bainville, ‘L’Expédition française’, 136; Thomas Kaiser, ‘The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture’, *Journal of Modern History* 72(1) (2000): 18–22; Christopher Herold, *Bonaparte in Egypt* (New York: Pen & Sword Books, 1962), 16.

⁸⁶ Philipp G. Dwyer, *Napoleon: The Path to Power, 1769–1799* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 338; Bonaparte to Talleyrand, 16 Aug. and 13 Sept. 1797, in Charles-Roux, *Les Origines*, 297, 298, 300.

⁸⁷ Mikaberidze, *Napoleonic Wars*, 73. ⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Michel Poniatowski, *Talleyrand et le Directoire* (Paris: Librairie académique Perrin, 1982), 446.

⁹⁰ Bonaparte to Talleyrand, 16 Aug. and 13 Sept. 1797, in Charles-Roux, *Les Origines*, 300.

⁹¹ Duc de Broglie (ed.), *Mémoires du prince de Talleyrand*, vol 1. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1891), 259.

occupation of Italy, Albania, and the Ionian Islands in 1797 had made it a neighbour of the Ottoman Empire. Invading Egypt would enable the dismissal of the Mamluk beys, who, the Directory thought, were hampering French trade and risking domestic stability, as the south of France was in the brink of starvation due to poor harvests, and the Republic was isolated from world trade. Moreover, Talleyrand and Bonaparte wrote to each other that the invasion would permit the internal development of Egypt, since the toiling yet docile *fellahin* (Egyptian peasants) would finally be freed from the Mamluk yoke. France would bring 'civilization' and prosperity, they believed.⁹² In return, she would gain a new key colony, with resources that could replace St Dominique and the Antilles in the rivalry with Britain.⁹³

Perhaps most importantly, the occupation of Egypt would be the centrepiece for the realization of a dream shared by Talleyrand and Bonaparte: the transformation of the Mediterranean into a French lake through satellite republics as a colonial zone as well as a buffer against the British navy.⁹⁴ The overarching idea of the expedition plan was to wither away the threats posed by Britain to the global imperial interests of France.⁹⁵ In Bonaparte's view 'a descent upon Egypt' was the only means for attaining French dominance over the Mediterranean.⁹⁶ To Talleyrand, '[o]nce the French controlled the ports of Italy, Corfu, Malta and Alexandria', their objective would be obtained.⁹⁷ This would endow France not only with greater leverage in the competition against Britain. With a foothold in the Ionian Islands and North Africa, it would also give her a firmer grip on the future of the Ottoman Empire. Paris would be able to open 'a route to India via the Red Sea, and [recover] Pondicherry and other French possessions on the Corromandel and Malabar coasts'.⁹⁸ Egypt, as a colony, would replace the products of the West Indies and, as a route, give France the commerce of India—'for everything in commerce resides in time, and time would give us five trips against three by the ordinary road'.⁹⁹

Like Vergennes, Talleyrand believed that the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire was near. Again, like Vergennes, he was against any radical move that would break apart European balance for the spoils of the 'Turkish empire'. But, unlike Vergennes, he called for moderation in aggression, seeking the middle way between the realist ideas of the interventionists, who focused on the strategic and

⁹² Charles-Roux, *Les Origines*, 327–8.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 2, 303. See also Gaultier-Kurhan, *Méhémet Ali*, 19; *Mémoires du maréchal Marmont, duc de Raguse de 1792 à 1841*, vol. 1 (Paris: Halle, 1857), 350; M. le Cte Boulay de la Meurthe, *La Directoire et l'expédition d'Égypte* (Paris: Victor Palme, 1880), 12–13.

⁹⁴ Talleyrand, *Essai*, 14.

⁹⁵ Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 179.

⁹⁶ Silvera, 'Egypt', 310.

⁹⁷ Marcère, *Une ambassade*, 357.

⁹⁸ Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt*, 14.

⁹⁹ Talleyrand to Bonaparte, 23 Sept. 1797; cf. Charles-Roux, *Les Origines*, 304.

economic benefits, and the postulations of the opponents of the expedition—previously Vergennes and his entourage and now the Directory, however different their reckonings were. He himself could see the risks of a war with the Porte and the participation of other powers in this war in the event that the expedition went through. This was why, as he wrote to Bonaparte in September 1797 after reading the latter's ambitions in the East, he presented the expedition as one 'for the [Sublime] Porte', and against what he believed to be the chronic Russian and British intrigues in this 'unfortunate country'. It would be '[u]n si grand service rendu aux Turcs'.¹⁰⁰

Talleyrand saw great benefits for Selim III and the indigenous *fellahin* in the French occupation of Egypt, and persuaded himself that the sultan knew about British and Russian intrigues, that the Mamluks were a menace to his own rule as much as to the French trade, and that Selim would appreciate such a pre-emptive assault by a friendly and strong ally 'to keep the province from falling into enemy hands'.¹⁰¹ He framed the plan as a gift from France to Selim. He even suggested going to Istanbul himself to talk to the sultan and explain to him the reasons of the expedition when it was already under way.

In the end, Talleyrand's moderate aggressionism received endorsement, and on 5 March 1798, when the Directory regime confirmed the expedition plan, Bonaparte was instructed to 'maintain, as much as it is in his powers to maintain good understanding with the [sultan]'.¹⁰² As Cole correctly puts it, Talleyrand became the first, 'but by no means the last, Western politician to overestimate the gratitude that would be generated among a Middle Eastern people by a foreign military occupation'.¹⁰³ As a matter of fact, the French plan was not received with appreciation in Istanbul at all. When the news of the expedition broke in the Ottoman imperial capital, Sultan Selim III burst into anger in the Topkapı Palace.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 303. Emphasis mine. ¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² *Instructions pour Bonaparte*, 12 Apr. 1798, in Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la révolution française*, vol. 5 (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1904), 301; also in Firges, *French Revolutionaries*, 90.

¹⁰³ Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt*, 14.

2

The Circle of Justice and the Napoleonic Wars

What implications did the French expedition to Egypt in 1798 have for the wider Ottoman world? In the rich literature on the history of Bonaparte's enterprise, this question has usually received little attention.¹ This is unfortunate, because taking into account how Sultan Selim III and his ministers perceived and reacted to the French venture enables us to see the limits of the French imperial vision and knowledge of the 'Orient' as well as the workings of the diverse relational dynamics that constituted the unfolding Eastern Question.

We discussed in Chapter 1 the eighteenth-century inter-imperial dynamics among the European Powers to some extent, as well as the intra-elite debates in France with respect to how to deal with the alleged febleness of the Ottoman Empire. Here we will switch our focus to the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. After the humiliating defeats at the hands of Romanovs and Habsburgs since the late seventeenth century, and the mounting domestic unrest in different areas of their empire, the Ottoman sultans and their ministers and advisers also came to believe that their empire was decadent. How to deal with her alleged febleness was first and foremost an Ottoman question.

The Ottoman response to this was an attempt to revive their empire by means of reforms that would ensure the efficacy of her guiding principle, the 'circle of justice' (*daire-i adalet*). The ruling elites in Istanbul differed among themselves as to how to do this. Yet by the 1790s they realized that the success of domestic reform required redefining the position of their empire in the world, warranting her standing among the major European Powers, and reconstructing her identity as an eternal polity—not one doomed to fall.

Consequently, Ottoman ministers altered both the tone and nature of their diplomacy with their European neighbours. The sultan's empire sprang up in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries not only as a stationary object, as traditional, Europe-centric analyses of the unfolding Eastern Question would have

¹ The few exceptions are Enver Z. Karal, *Fransa-Mısır ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu (1797-1802)* (Istanbul: Milli Mecmua Basımevi, 1938); Faruk Bilici, *L'expédition d'Égypte, Alexandrie et les Ottomans. L'Autre Histoire* (Paris: Boccard, 2017); T. Y. Kobishanov, 'Dzhihad-Neveryushhim, Soyuz-Neverynym. Vysokaya Porta v Pervye Mesyacy Posle Francuzskogo Vtorzheniya v Egipet', *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta Vostokovedenie* 13(2) (2010): 1-19; Şakul, 'Global'.

us believe.² The Porte actively sought to define the empire's standing in the global imperial (dis)order of the time while at the same time looking to regenerate her by means of an ambitious reform programme. Yet realization of one was dependent on the attainment of the other. The years surrounding the French expedition to Egypt in 1798, its run-up and aftermath, were a vivid testament to this.

The Circle of Justice

Nine years before France's venture in Egypt began, a new sultan, Selim III (1761–1808), had ascended the throne in Istanbul in April 1789 to great expectations. Many wished that he would be the next *cihangir*, or the 'warrior-conqueror' sultan, who could finally upend the misfortunes of the 'Well-Protected Domains', as the Ottomans called their empire. As a matter of fact, Selim was different, but arguably too different to possess the qualities of a 'conqueror sultan'. His social graces, lenience, aversion to violence, and intellectualism—traits that characterized few other sultans—have led historians to describe him as an exceptional monarch, and an 'enlightened' ruler.³ He was perhaps many things, but a warrior he was not.

Selim's singular features are usually attributed to his unusual upbringing as a young *şehzade* (prince). Before his birth no heir had been born for the Ottoman dynasty for 36 years. During the eighteenth century, the imperial palace had been struck by epidemic illnesses (mainly smallpox) which had claimed the life of two of his cousins. Since his childhood, he had therefore been seen by the inhabitants of the Topkapı Palace as the rescuer of the dynasty.

After his father, Mustafa III, passed away in 1774, the young *şehzade* was brought up with great care, which sometimes entailed breaches of palace customs. In Ottoman political culture, *şehzades* remained in seclusion in their room in the imperial palace until their rise to power, in order to preclude any dynasty conflicts. However, his uncle Sultan Abdülhamid I, who had himself been locked in for 40 years, permitted Selim a degree of freedom, letting the *şehzade* spend time outside his room. Moreover, contrary to the customary practices, his mother, Mihrişah Sultan, was allowed to remain with him in the Topkapı Palace after his father died.

These not only provided Selim with emotional support and a fine education but also let him be in touch with prominent Ottoman bureaucrats and men of letters of his time who informed him about the politics of the empire as well as the wider world. He found the opportunity to nurture interest in poetry (writing poems under the pseudonym *İlhâmi*), and in oriental and western music, as well as in the Islamic arts of *hat* and *ta'lik*. He attended parties with European diplomats in

² See the Introduction for a discussion of the literature.

³ Beydilli, 'III. Selim', 27. See also Aysel Yıldız, "'Louis the XVI of the Turks": The Character of a Sultan', *Middle Eastern Studies* 50(2) (2014): 272–90.



Figure 1. Selim III's childhood. Topkapı Palace Museum, 17/117

Pera and the Belgrade forests, a practice he continued after ascending to the throne. His time of liberty came to an abrupt end in 1785, when his name was implicated in a conspiracy against his uncle and he was consequently placed in confinement. But he was given limited freedom again once his innocence was proven the following year.⁴

As of 1786, with the help of the French ambassador Marie-Gabriel-Florent-August de Choiseul-Gouffier (1752–1817), the seasoned Ottoman statesman

⁴ Beydilli, 'III. Selim', 29; see also *Ahmed Cevdet Paşa Tarihi*, vol. 4 (İstanbul 1309 [1891]), 270–71.

Ebübekir Râtib Efendi (1750–99), and his butler, Ishak Efendi, Selim began to exchange letters with the French King Louis XVI on statecraft, the arts of war, and social and political institutions.⁵ His chief aim in these exchanges was to acquire for his empire in the long run a reliable ally in her rivalry against Russia, which he hinted at many times.⁶ He once told Choiseul-Gouffier, perhaps with great naivety, that in face of an enemy such as Russia, he would ‘always be friendly to [his] friends and even-handed with [his] enemies, and with the help of God the Exalted, [he] would conform all [his] acts to this principle.’⁷ Yet his correspondence with the French king became as much a source of frustration as inspiration for the *şehzade*. He was offended when he sensed a patronizing tone in the king’s letters. He begrudged the lack of any mention of a potential alliance between the Porte and Paris. He was even more resentful against Louis XVI’s obvious advice to wage war against Russia only if and after he reformed his empire and especially improved his military.⁸ The *şehzade* drafted a reply that showed his discontent: ‘Do you think I am a child . . . a blindfolded falcon in a cage?’ alluding to his life of seclusion.⁹

This exchange of letters had no considerable adverse effect on his admiration for Louis XVI though. It instead increased his willingness to ascend the throne at once. By the time he was crowned, Selim had become most eager to reform his military, form alliances against his Habsburg and Romanov rivals, and reconquer the territories that the Porte had lost during the eighteenth century, especially the Crimea.¹⁰ Yet, in 1789, he had to make a choice first: would he end the ongoing war with Russian and Austria and start the reforms he wanted to undertake? Or would he just continue the war?

The loss of the Crimea was vital for the defence of Istanbul and the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire, as it signified the fall of an important buffer region between Russia and the imperial capital. And since in Ottoman political tradition, as well as in Qur’anic teaching, Muslims were not to abandon their territorial possessions to the ‘infidels’, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the fighting continued. In 1790, Selim wrote to his commanders that until the capture of the Crimea, no true peace was to be concluded with Russia.¹¹ But his military power would not suffice for this, and he would in the end surrender more lands. Embittered by losing the Crimea and further posts along the Black Sea shores,

⁵ Kemal Beydilli, ‘Şehzade Elçisi Safiye Sultanzade İshak Bey’, *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3 (1999): 73–81; Salih Münir Paşa, *Louis XVI et Sultan Selim III* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1912); Yıldız, ‘The Character’, 277; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, ‘Selim III’un Veliâht İken Fransa Kralı Lui XVI ile Muhabereleri’, *Belleter* 2(5–6) (1938): 191–2.

⁶ Yıldız, ‘The Character’, 280.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Beydilli, ‘III. Selim’, 30.

⁹ Yıldız, ‘The Character’, 281.

¹⁰ From Choiseul-Gouffier to Vergennes, 10 July 1786, AMAE CP Turquie 174; cf. Yıldız, ‘The Character’, 272; Şakul, ‘Global’, 9–10. Ali Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 19.

¹¹ Enver Ziya Karal, *Selim III’ün Hat-ti Hümayunları, Nizam-ı Cedit, 1789–1807* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988), 43.

Selim dedicated his 18-year reign to ensuring the ‘security’ (*emniyet*) of his empire against the Russian threat in the Black Sea.¹² It was this quest for security that would cost him first his throne, and then his life.

*

In the end the utmost duty of an Ottoman sultan was to maintain domestic order and tranquillity, and shield his empire from external threats. Since the founding decades of their five-centuries-old imperial system, the Ottoman elites had considered the ‘Well-Protected Domains’ as ‘a walled fortress giving protection from [alien] attack’ and bringing security (*hifz-u hirâset*) to lands and seas as well as to the variety of subjects with an ‘ever-victorious army’ in the timeless struggle between *dâr-ul harb* (the territories of war) and *dâr-ul Islam* (the territories of Islam).¹³

In late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century parlance, besides *emniyet*, the terms *asayiş* (order, public tranquillity, repose), *te'min* (protection), and *nizam* (order) were used interchangeably to refer to the maintenance of state and public security within the walls of the ‘Well-Protected Domains’.¹⁴ These could be obtained by way of the enforcement of law which was based on a dual system that harmonized the sultanic laws (*kanun*) with the Islamic law (*shari'a*, according to the Hanafi school of law) and the operations of social control that were directed at the identification and neutralization of perceived threats (such as dissent and revolts) and their suppression.¹⁵ For all these purposes the Porte, like other states, utilized police and counterintelligence operations.¹⁶ In the imperial capital and major

¹² Ibid. 36–7.

¹³ My heartfelt thanks to Colin Imber, who drew my attention to the notion of *hifz-u hirâset* as a premodern counterpart of ‘security’ in Ottoman political thought: Colin Imber to Ozan Ozavci, e-mail correspondence dated 9 Nov. 2017. There is considerable need for a study on early Islamic as well as early Ottoman conceptions of security, which is beyond our scope here. A quick catalogue search in the Ottoman imperial and the Topkapı Palace archives suggests that the word *emniyet*, the contemporary counterpart of security, freedom from fear, safety, or the police in the Turkish language, appears in archival documents in as early as the 1550s. It appears usually within the phrase ‘*emniyet ve selamet*’ (security and peace).

¹⁴ Maurus Reinkowski, ‘The State’s Security and the Subject’s Prosperity: Notions of Order in Ottoman Bureaucratic Correspondence (19th Century)’, in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 200. See also Engin Akarlı, ‘*Maslaha* from “Common Good” to “Raison d’État” in the Experience of Istanbul Artisans, 1730–1840’ in *Hoca Allame puits de science: Essays in Honour of Kemal H. Karpat*, ed. Kaan Durukan, Robert Zens, and Akile Durukan Zorlu (Istanbul: Isis, 2010), 63–79.

¹⁵ While the sultanic laws were generated through legislation issued by the sultans, the Islamic laws ‘served as the sole base for adjudicating issues concerning individual rights, family law, inheritance, commerce, and the rights of foreign subjects’. The highest judiciary authorities issued *fatwas* that invested the sultans ‘with authority to legislate based on the principle of protecting the public interest’. See Colin Imber, *Ebu’s-Su’ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 622; M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Short History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 18.

¹⁶ Karen Barkey, ‘In Different Times: Scheduling and Social Control in the Ottoman Empire, 1550 to 1650’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38(3) (1996): 460–83; Dejanirah Couto, ‘Spying in the Ottoman Empire: Sixteenth-Century Encrypted Correspondence’, in *Cultural Exchange in Early*

towns, the Janissaries—an army unit that originated from a small section of war captives in the fourteenth century and then gradually became the backbone of the Ottoman military—served as ‘guardians of the city, responsible for . . . policing order’ along with other units in the imperial army such as the navy, *cebeciler* (armourers), and *topçular* (gunners).¹⁷ In the countryside, imperial order was usually entrusted to beneficiary office-holders, who were responsible for collecting taxes from administrative units assigned to them (*timar* or *zeamet*), though, paradoxically enough, bandits were sometimes also used as intermediaries to supply imperial security.¹⁸ Here there was limited policing, with the exception of the immediate surroundings of *sipahi* cavalries and military garrisons.¹⁹ Local *kadis* appointed by the ulema (Islamic clerics) were in charge of judicial affairs. *Zimmîs* (non-Muslim believers of the Book) were placed under imperial protection with special contracts (*zimmet* and *aman*).

In the event that the *zimmîs* violated the *zimmî* pact by rebelling against the sultans, they were declared *harbîs* (enemies) that waged (at least in theory) an attack on the imperial state.²⁰ The *zimmîs* were accommodated by imperial decrees on taxation and criminal law, which formed the basis of its *millet* system—a system of self-management for *zimmîs* by their own religious authorities who undertook the tasks, amidst others, of education, religious justice, and social security.²¹ The rights of foreign residents or travellers (*müstemins*) were secured through capitulations, which, as of the sixteenth century, granted them *aman* (safe conduct), *ahdnames*, and *berats*, i.e. ‘privileges of residence on or safe passage through Ottoman territory, made immune from the jurisdiction of

Modern Europe, vol. 3: *Correspondence and Cultural Exchange in Europe, 1400–1700*, ed. Francisco Bethencourt and Florike Egmond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 274–312; Francis Dvornik, *Origins of Intelligence Services: The Ancient Near East, Persia, Greece, Rome, Byzantium, the Arab Muslim Empires, the Mongol Empire, China, Muscovy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1974); Fatih Yeşil, ‘The Transformation of the Ottoman Diplomatic Mind: The Emergence of the Licences Espionage’, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 101 (2011): 467–79; Betül Başaran, *Selim III, Social Control and Policing in Istanbul at the End of the Eighteenth Century: Between Crisis and Order* (Leiden, Boston: E. J. Brill, 2014).

¹⁷ Cemal Kafadar, *Kim var imiş biz burada yog iken* (Istanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2009), 29–37; Gülay Yılmaz, ‘Blurred Boundaries Between Soldiers and Civilians: Artisan Janissaries in Seventeenth Century Istanbul’, in *Bread from the Lion’s Mouth: Artisans Struggling for a Livelihood in Ottoman Cities*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 175–93; cf. Ali Yayıoğlu, ‘Guarding Traditions and Laws—Disciplining Bodies and Souls: Tradition, Religion and Science in the Age of Ottoman Reform’, *Modern Asian Studies* 52(5) (Sept. 2018): 1549; see also Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare 1500–1700* (London: University College London Press, 1999), 16–17. On the military units that were in charge of the public order and policing until the 1820s, see Ramazan Fındıklı, ‘Osmanlı Devleti’nde Güvenlik ve Polis’, in *Osmanlı*, vol. 6, ed. Güler Eren, Kemal Çiçek, and Cem Oğuz (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), 295–300.

¹⁸ Yayıoğlu, *Partners*, 25. For an inspiring study, see Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralisation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

¹⁹ Douglas A. Howard, *A History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 59–60.

²⁰ Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow: Pearson, 2007), 299.

²¹ Yayıoğlu, *Partners*, 24–5.

Islamic courts, and provided with the benefit of tax exemptions and low customs duties'.²²

In a similar vein to earlier Islamic empires, the guiding principle (or the standard doctrine) of Ottoman imperial governance was 'the circle of justice'.²³ This was 'an ancient concept of justice in which the [ruler] at the top of society was seen as dependent on the peasants at the bottom; they could only provide him revenue if he provided them justice.' It was portrayed in eight sentences that cyclically lead to one another, and are found in the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Sirr al-Asrār* or *Secretum Secretorum* (The Secret of Secrets), which was reproduced by the Arab scholar Abu Yahya Ibn al'Batriq in the tenth century:

The world is a garden for the state to master
 The state is power supported by the law
 The law is policy administered by the king
 The king is a shepherd supported by the army
 The army are assistants provided for by taxation
 Taxation is sustenance gathered by subjects
 Subjects are slaves provided for by justice
 Justice is that by which the rectitude of the world subsists.²⁴

In Ibn al'Batriq's edition, these sentences are used repeatedly in different variations and attributed not only to Aristotle but also to the Sassanid ruler Ardashir, the Persian king Anushirvan, the fourth caliph, 'Ali ibn Ali Talib, and the Muslim conqueror of Egypt 'Amr ibn al-Al, which suggests that a variety of earlier sources referred to the circle of justice.²⁵ The concept evolved through a fusion of ancient Persian, Greek, Roman, Indian, and Islamic readings over centuries, and became a fundamental element of Ottoman political thought well into the nineteenth century.²⁶

²² Nasim Sousa, *The Capitulatory Regime of Turkey: Its History, Origin, and Nature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1933), 70–86; Özsu, 'Ottoman Empire', 431, 446; Yurdusev, 'The Middle East', 74.

²³ Halil İnalçık, *Osmanlı'da Devlet, Adalet ve Hukuk* (Istanbul: Eren Yayınları, 2005); Linda T. Darling, 'Islamic Empires, the Ottoman Empire and the Circle of Justice', in *Constitutional Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (Oxford: Hart, 2008), 12–32.

²⁴ Thomas W. Lentz and Glenn D. Lowry, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century* (Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989), 12.

²⁵ Linda T. Darling, 'Medieval Egyptian Society and the Concept of the Circle of Justice', *Mamluk Studies Review* 10(2) (2006): 2. For more on *Sirr al-Asrār*, see Mahmoud Manzalaoui, 'The Pseudo-Aristotelian "Kitab *Sirr al-Asrār*": Facts and Problems', *Oriens* 23/24 (1974): 147–257.

²⁶ For historical analyses of the term, see Linda T. Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2013), and 'Islamic Empires'; Jennifer A. London, 'The Circle of Justice', *History of Political Thought* 32(3) (autumn 2011): 425–47. For the different uses of the 'circle of justice' in Ottoman political thought, see Marinos Sariyannis, *Ottoman Political Thought Up to the Tanzimat: A Concise History* (Rethymno: Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Institute for Mediterranean Studies, 2015), 32, 39 n. 27, 40, 41, 55, 139, 178.

The ‘circle of justice’ emphasized the interdependence of ruler and subjects, drawing an undeviating link between security, legitimacy, and prosperity.²⁷ Justice, in this sense, referred not only to lawfulness but also to ‘peace, protection, good organization and a functional infrastructure’. It meant harmony between the different spheres of society: the rulers, the army, the treasury, and peasants, artisans, and merchants. It also formed the basis of Ottoman security culture, the underlying philosophy of which was the fact that security could be obtained most effectively through the path of *nizam* (harmonious order) and *maslaha*, i.e. maintaining order by means of negotiations, accommodating demands, and collective engagement between the diverse components of the empire.²⁸

Prosperity (*rahat, istirahat, refah*) was considered to be the ‘immediate outcome and positive product’ of security. When this ideal order of ‘security *cum* prosperity’ was upset by ‘the negative events’ or ‘evildoers’, *nizâm-ı memleket* (the order of the country), *temin-i asayiş* (the maintenance of security), or *temin-i ibadullah* (the protection of the servants of God) were to be obtained first by *istimalet* (persuasion, coaxing) or—when it suited better the interests of the state—by the principle of oblivion (*ma madaa* or ‘let bygones be bygones’). The last resort was to *tehdid* (threat), *terhib* (intimidation), or *kuvve-i cebriyye* (compulsory force).²⁹ As Abou el-Haj summarizes, ‘the proper order of the [Ottoman] world is predicated upon all knowing their place and function and remaining in it, exhibiting no further ambition or aspiration for social mobility.’³⁰

During the era of Selim III, imperial decrees were replete with the notions of maintaining security and order (*nizâm-ı memleket, temin-i asayiş*), protecting the servants of God (*temin-i ibadullah*), and purging (*tathir*) the empire of mischief and deceitful behaviour (*fesad, fitna, tezvirat*). This was partly because Selim’s ascendancy to the throne in 1789 overlapped with a period of increasing

²⁷ As an 11th-c. author wrote about Fatimi rule in Egypt, ‘The people are so secure under the Sultan’s reign that no one fears his agents, and they rely on him neither to inflict injustice nor to have designs on anyone’s property . . . The security and welfare of the people of Egypt have reached a point that the drapers, moneychangers, and jewelers do not even lock their shops—they only lower a net across the front, and no one tampers with anything.’ Nasir-i Khusraw, *Naser-e Khosraw’s Book of Travels (safaratnama)*, trans. W. M. Thackston Jr (New York: SUNY University Press, 1986), 55–57; cf. Darling, ‘The Circle of Justice’, 4.

²⁸ Darling, ‘Islamic Empires’, 19. In the writings of such writers as Ahmedi (c.1334–1413), Kinalızade Ali Çelebi (c.1510–72), and Koçi Bey (d. 1650), and the latter two’s *nasihatnames* (advice literature) that idealized the ancient order, the ‘circle of justice’ became a tool to pinpoint the weak chains of governance. Anne F. Broadbridge, ‘Royal Authority, Justice, and Order in Society: The Influence of Ibn Khaldun on the Writings of al-Maqr|z| and Ibn Taghr|bird|’, *Mamluk Studies Review* 7(2) (2003): 231–45, at 233; Cornell H. Fleischer, ‘Royal Authority, Dynastic Cyclism and “Ibn Khaldûnism” in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Letters’, *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 18 (1983): 198–219. On the notion of *maslaha*, see Engin D. Akarlı, ‘The Ruler and Law Making in the Ottoman Empire’, in *Law and Empire: Ideas, Practices, Actors*, ed. Jeroen Duindam, Jill D. Harries, Caroline Humfressand, and Hurvitz Nimrod (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 87–109.

²⁹ Maurus Reinkowski, ‘“Let Bygones Be Bygones”: An Ottoman Order to Forget’, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 93 (2003): 191–209.

³⁰ Rifaat Abou-el-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, 16th to 18th Centuries* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1991), 32.

domestic social and fiscal crises.³¹ His empire was still enduring the devastating consequences of the 1768–74 wars. The heavy military defeats suffered on the front, the annexation of the Crimea by Russia, and the large debt incurred due to war indemnity had increasingly weakened social stability by the 1790s.

In the major Ottoman towns, including the imperial capital, the worrisome ‘food shortages, unemployment, increasing prices and psychological costs of relentless wars, fires and epidemics and unprecedented urban uprisings’ were jeopardizing imperial political legitimacy. In order to dissolve the domestic threats to the ‘Well-Protected Domains’ and ‘exert direct control over the inhabitants’, Selim III took authoritarian measures for social regulation, control, and surveillance.³² A new language of ‘disciplining society’ (*terbiye*) came to be employed by the Ottoman bureaucrats.³³

The central chains of the ‘circle of justice’ and the main instrument for internal and external security in the Ottoman Empire were the army and taxation. Selim III well knew that the undisciplined behaviour of the Janissary forces, which formed the backbone both of the army and police and of the corps of firemen, was also the vulnerable point of his Well-Protected Domains. The Ottoman army had suffered excruciating setbacks at the hands of outnumbered enemy armies in the last wars with Austria and Russia in the 1790s, when the Janissary forces had refused to join the expeditions, fled the army even before reaching the battlefield, or gone on strike during the fighting.³⁴

Historians have shown that due to the uncontrolled inflation in the number of residual soldiers after the wars with Austria, Spain, and Venice in the west, and with Persia in the east, and the fiscal crises these had brought about since the seventeenth century, the Janissaries had gradually been incorporated into ‘the general urban public and artisanal organizations’ besides their main profession as soldiers. By virtue of their connections with the Islamic Bektaşî religious orders, they had developed an immense social base by the late eighteenth century and had gained an unwavering social prestige. More than once in the past they had prevented reformist statesmen ‘from openly articulating the possible abolition of the corps’ and the establishment of more advanced army units within the Ottoman military.³⁵ When necessary, they had violently overthrown the sultans.

³¹ Yaycıoğlu, *Partners of the Empire*, 19.

³² Başaran, *Social Control*, 4; see also Tülay Artan, ‘From Charismatic Leadership to Collective Rule: Gender Problems of Legalism and Political Legitimation in the Ottoman Empire’, in *Histoire économique et sociale de l’empire ottoman et de la Turquie (1326–1960). Actes du sixième congrès international tenu à Aix-en-Provence du 1er au 4 juillet 1992* (Paris: Peeters, 1995), 572; H. T. Karateke, ‘Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate: A Framework for Historical Analysis’, in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, ed. H. T. Karateke and M. Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 13–52.

³³ Başaran, *Social Control*, 218. ³⁴ Ágoston, ‘The Ottoman Empire’, 630.

³⁵ Yaycıoğlu, ‘Guarding Traditions’, 1567; Frederic Hitzel, ‘Une voie de pénétration des idées révolutionnaires. Les militaires français, Istanbul’, in *Mélanges offerts à Louis Bazin par ses disciples, collègues et amis*, ed. Jean-Louis Bacque-Grammont and Louis Bazin (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1992), 88.

As Ali Yaycıoğlu tells us, despite their role as ‘the guardians of the city... some young commoners who claimed Janissary status gathered together in amorphous paramilitary groups and unruly gangs and were often viewed as rowdy riffraff by other city dwellers’.³⁶

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Against this precarious backdrop, Selim III initiated an ambitious agenda of military and bureaucratic reform in the 1790s.³⁷ At his enthronement, the sultan gathered a grand *şura* (a consultative assembly) to deliberate on a new reform programme.³⁸ He then asked 22 of the ulema and scribal corps in the Sublime Porte, as well as two foreign advisers, to pen *layihas* (pamphlets) for him on how to undertake new reforms.³⁹ Some of these recommended actions that no other sultan before him had dared to take. In the end, Selim III’s became the last yet most comprehensive of a series of reform attempts made in the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century.⁴⁰

Here I must underscore again: Ottoman statesmen and writers also believed that their empire was in decline, lacking the moral and institutional strength of her heyday in previous centuries. Ensuring the circle of justice and reforming their military were therefore of paramount importance to prevent one or another major European Power of the time, and particularly Russia, from embarrassing the Porte, and, worse, existentially threatening the Ottoman Empire and ending her existence. For them, and for a few other statesmen in Europe such as Vergennes, the alleged frailty of the Ottoman Empire prompted but one question: how to revive her?⁴¹

Past experience with military transformation was worrisome. For example, after the annexation of the Crimea by Russia, the military reform programme that Selim’s uncle, Sultan Abdülhamid I, and Grand Vizier Halil Hamid Paşa had initiated was actively opposed by the Janissaries.⁴² It was eventually dropped by the half-hearted sultan.⁴³ In his *layiha* to Selim, the prominent Ottoman Armenian Catholic dragoman, Ignatius Mouradgea d’Ohsson (Muradcan Tosunyan) (1740–1807), therefore advised that once the sultan and his entourage entered

³⁶ Kafadar, *Kim var*, 29–37; Yaycıoğlu, ‘Guarding Traditions’, 1549.

³⁷ Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 87. ³⁸ Yaycıoğlu, *Partners*, 32.

³⁹ Ethan L. Menchinger, *The First of the Modern Ottomans: The Intellectual History of Ahmed Vasif* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 165; Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 72–4.

⁴⁰ Mehmed Mert Sunar, ‘Ocak-ı Amire’den Ocak-ı Mülğâ’ya Doğru. Nizam-ı Cedid Reformları Karşısında Yeniçeriler’, in *Nizam-ı Kadim’den Nizam-ı Cedid’e III. Selim ve Dönemi*, ed. Seyfi Kenan (Istanbul: ISAM Yayınları, 2010), 498.

⁴¹ For an insightful analysis of the Eastern Question as an attempt ‘to recover’ the Ottoman Empire, see Malcolm E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East* (London: Longman, 1987), Ch. 2.

⁴² Avigdor Levy, ‘Military Reform and the Problem of Centralization in the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 18 (1982): 227–49, at 239.

⁴³ Thomas Caff, ‘Reform and the Conduct of Ottoman Diplomacy in the Reign of Selim III, 1789–1807’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 83(3) (Aug.–Sept. 1963): 295.

into the path of reform there could be no room for hesitancy: the process of innovation and reform would have to be irreversible.⁴⁴ As was the case with most other pamphlets, he also proposed inviting European military officers to establish new military schools and train Ottoman units. Other writers such as Mehmed Hakkı (1747–1811) called for the training of pious soldiers, of good morals, educated and armed with a sound knowledge of their religion, all in accordance with the science of war.⁴⁵ Mehmed Emin Behiç (d. 1809) viewed society as an integral part of the reform programme, and suggested the establishment of tighter social controls with regular censuses, passport controls, and the dispatch of spies to monitor, control, and discipline the urban space.⁴⁶

Almost all advisers to the sultan considered the new armies in Europe (often referring to the Russian example) as a model, and admitted that imitating the victorious infidels—their new equipment, discipline, and training—while simultaneously restoring ancient laws, revised as necessary, and adhering to the shari'a, was the way to survive.⁴⁷ The Ottoman reform programme thus simultaneously looked to past experience that had once ensured the glory of the empire *and* to the future with a new understanding of irreversible temporality. In line with the 'circle of justice', Selim III believed that the path of reform had to be an all-inclusive one; governmental affairs were interlinked like 'the wheels of a watch', and in order for the reforms to be successful they had to involve a wide range of social, political, and economic affairs.⁴⁸ Elaborated under his rule from the early 1790s and through until the 1800s, his reform scheme brought about the establishment of new military, fiscal, and administrative institutions that trained and staffed military units, created funds for these by means of taxation of a large amount of goods, and operated these funds within state bureaucracy that was established concurrently.

These at once incited public opposition, especially from the Janissaries. Such opposition was countered, at least at first, by an alliance, albeit loose, of dynastic and military/bureaucratic elites. They involved Selim's childhood friend and brother-in-law Grand Admiral Küçük Hüseyin Paşa and his wife, Esma Sultan, who were predisposed to revolutionary France, and Selim's mother, Mihrişah Sultan (Valide Sultan), and her steward, Yusuf Agha, who was known to be pro-Russian. They received the support of the navy and some rural notables. Most importantly, they were inspired and backed by a transimperial Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi network—a Sunni–Sufi order 'organised around charismatic sheikhs, doctrines and rituals' with a wide range of followers that dispersed from 'India and

⁴⁴ BOA HH 13309, 9 Jan. 1793; cf. Kemal Beydilli, 'Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson (Muradcan Tosunyan)', *Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 13 (1983–4): 261.

⁴⁵ Yayıncıoğlu, *Partners*, 33.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 36.

⁴⁷ Virginia H. Aksan, 'Ottoman Political Writing, 1768–1808', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25(1) (Feb. 1993): 63.

⁴⁸ *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 146–8; Sunar, 'Ocak', 499.

Central Asia to the Balkans' since the early fifteenth century.⁴⁹ This is to say that Selim's reform programme was neither purely a westward movement nor a modernist-secular drive against conservative-Islamist resistance, as it is often portrayed. Instead, at its source was an amalgam of orthodox Islamist (Naqshbandi) ambitions and Western methods.⁵⁰

Another driving force of the sultan's programme was the Imperial Academy of Naval Engineering. Established in 1776 by Abdülhamid I, it had become a contact zone for European (predominantly French) engineers sent by the French foreign minister Vergennes (see Chapter 1) and local mathematicians and engineers. Through the academy, the belief became increasingly widespread among the Ottoman *kalemiye* (bureaucratic administration) that matching the military power of the foreign neighbours entailed appropriating the sciences in military technology. Moreover, observations made during the wars against Austria and Russia, notably concerning the enemy's military discipline and war strategies, resulted in the desire to establish European-style armies. In 1793, the Naval Engineering Academy was renamed the Imperial Academy of Military Engineering. French trainers were brought in, and new military units manned by Russian renegades—later joined by Austrian war captives, Turkish peasants, and Anatolian tribesmen—were formed.⁵¹ These new units were called the army of the 'New Order', or the *Nizâm-ı Cedid*, a phrase that has since been used to refer to the set of military and fiscal reforms introduced under Selim.

The New Order army was designed to differ from earlier military units as a well-drilled, morally and militarily disciplined and dynamic army that acted together 'as part of a large, impersonal war machine, rather than as individual fighters graced with valour, courage and good reputation'.⁵² They wore European-style uniforms and used advanced equipment.⁵³ The number of men that formed these new units amounted to 2,536, with 27 officers in 1797, and some 9,263 with again 27 officers in 1801. By 1806, the numbers rose to 22,685 men and 1,590 officers.⁵⁴ A new engineering school was opened in 1795 and a printing house was established within its premises in 1797.

With the purpose of regulating the resources that were made available by internal borrowing and that were channelled to fund the 'New Order' army, a new treasury with new management mechanisms was created. Heavy taxes were

⁴⁹ Yaycıoğlu, *Partners*, 41–2; Yaycıoğlu, 'Guardians', 1584.

⁵⁰ Kahraman Şakul, 'Nizam-ı Cedid Düşüncesinde Batılılaşma ve İslami Modernleşme', *Divan* 19 (Feb. 2005): 120; Aysel Yıldız, *Crisis and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire: The Downfall of a Sultan in the Age of Revolution* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 137–42, 204–9; see also Yaycıoğlu, 'Guardians', 1589–90.

⁵¹ Stanford J. Shaw, 'The Origins of Military Reform: The Nizam-ı Cedid Army of Sultan Selim III', *Journal of Modern History* 37(3) (Sept. 1965): 291–306, at 293; see also Stanford J. Shaw, 'The Nizam-ı Cedid Army under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1809', *Oriens* 18/19 (1965/6): 170.

⁵² Yaycıoğlu, *Partners*, 38–9.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 37, 41; Şakul, 'Global', 12; Beydilli, 'III. Selim', 38.

⁵⁴ Yaycıoğlu, *Partners*, 37.

levied on a variety of goods by the *İrade-i Cedid Hazinesi* (the New Treasury) including alcoholic beverages and grains, sparking public discontent.⁵⁵ And finally, an empire-wide mercantilist (economic protection) policy was enforced to upend what the Ottoman ministers believed to be European commercial ‘misdemeanours’ that led to ‘a steady fiscal haemorrhage for the Ottoman state’.⁵⁶

The problem here was that protectionism and the implementation of new customs tariffs on imports and exports without the consent of the European Powers was a violation of the existing capitulatory agreements. The sultan’s ministers considered financial independence to be the ultimate means for the survival of their empire and their reform programme. This, however, went against the grain of their European interlocutors, which interlocked imperial domestic reform with defining the position of the ‘Well-Protected Domains’ in the global imperial (dis)order of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

With the new military and fiscal reforms inspired by transimperial epistemic (European/local engineers and mathematicians) and religious (Naqshbandi-Mujaddid) networks, and with the diplomatic alliances he formed (even if these did not last long due to peace obtained between Prussia and Austria, and between Sweden and Russia), Selim III began his reign with proactive and, at least initially, decisive measures. Domestically, however, his campaign did not go as smoothly. On the one hand, revolts that sprang up due to diverse aspirations of local notables in Anatolia, the Arab provinces, and the Balkans—especially the Pasvanoğlu uprising (with links to the Janissaries, who largely frowned upon the New Order)—frustrated the reform programme, diverting resources and energy.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the training of the new army without adequate instructors and funding proved much more difficult, the resulting clumsy and occasionally unsuccessful practices provoking ridicule from foreign observers.⁵⁸ While dealing with these, the sultan’s aim was to keep his empire away from the European wars until he rebuilt his army and navy. However, he would not be able to maintain the Porte’s neutrality. The French expedition to Egypt in 1798 unexpectedly drew the Ottoman Empire into the Napoleonic Wars.

The Sultan’s Bafflement

Throughout the 1790s, Selim III’s agents closely monitored political developments in revolutionary France and war-torn Europe. While still at war with Austria and

⁵⁵ For inflation in Istanbul, see Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 446.

⁵⁶ Liston to Abbot, 23 July 1794, NLS MS 5579; Yaycıoğlu, ‘Guarding’, 1567–8; Fatih Yeşil, ‘İstanbul’un İfaşesinde Nizam-ı Cedid. Zahir Nezaletinin Kuruluşu ve İşleyişi (1793–1839)’, *Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi* 15 (2004): 113–42.

⁵⁷ Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 211.

⁵⁸ Robert Ainslie to Foreign Office, 21 May 1794, TNA FO 78/15.

Russia, they looked to take advantage of the system of balance of power in Europe and therefore forged alliances with Protestant northern European countries that rivalled the Habsburgs and the Romanovs. It was then that Ebûbekir Râtib Efendi, Selim's mentor and the envoy to Vienna, advised expanding the 'circle of justice' with an additional sentence on inter-imperial affairs. A disciplined army, he wrote, was impossible without a fairly administered financial system. For this,

loyal ministers and responsible civil servants were indispensable. Such imperial servants could only raise large state revenues without justice if the people at large were prosperous and content. Contentment rested on the security provided by a foreign alliance and an alliance would not be available to the state unless it had a disciplined, respected army.⁵⁹

Yet, when the War of the First Coalition (1792–7) broke out, the Porte was divided over which policy to follow. Francophile Grand Vizier İzzet Mehmed Paşa (r. 1794–8), Şeyhülislam Dürrî-zâde Arif Efendi, and Grand Admiral Küçük Hüseyin Paşa believed that an alliance with France could help the sultan retain the lost territories of his empire.⁶⁰ The anti-French and more conservative Mihrişah Sultan and her steward, Yusuf, by contrast suggested not forging alliances in order not to be sucked into European rivalries. After the failed defensive alliance talks with France in 1795–6 (see Chapter 1), the sultan preferred to wait and see, channelling his funds to the more urgent New Order programme. At the same time, under the leadership of Mehmed Raşid Efendi (1753–1798), Selim's able and experienced Reisülküttâb (or Reis Efendi, the equivalent of minister of foreign affairs in the Ottoman Empire), the foundations of a new Ottoman diplomacy were laid on realist and rationalist principles.⁶¹

The Porte put an end to its unilateralist policy and established permanent embassies in European capitals for the first time in Ottoman history—initially in London in 1793, and then in Vienna, Berlin, and Paris in 1795—to collect intelligence with respect to the European Powers' military policies and observe their administrative, political, and economic institutions.⁶² As the chronicler

⁵⁹ Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 95–8; Enver Z. Karal, 'Ebu Bekir Ratib Efendi'nin 'Nizam-ı Cedid' İslahatında Rolü', in *Türk Tarih Kongresi Ankara 12–17 Nisan 1956. Kongreye sunulan tebliğler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1960), 347–55; Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman Encounters*, vol 1., 78.

⁶⁰ Frederick Hitzel, 'Les Relations franco-turques a la veille de l'expédition', in *La Campagne d'Égypte, 1798–1801. Mythes et réalités*, ed. Paul Nirot (Paris: In Forma, 1998), 43–4.

⁶¹ For account of Ottoman diplomacy prior to Selim III, see Berridge, 'Diplomatic Integration'; Güneş Işıksel, 'II. Selim'den III. Selim'e Osmanlı Diplomasisi: Birkaç Saptama', in *Nizam-ı Kadim'den Nizam-ı Cedid'e III. Selim ve Dönemi*, 43–55; Mehmed A. Yalçınkaya, 'Türk Diplomasisinin Modernleşmesinde Reisülküttâb Mehmed Raşid Efendi'nin Rolü', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 21 (2001): 115.

⁶² Şakul, 'Global', 13, 41; Beydilli, 'III. Selim', 46. By contrast, the first residential ambassador of France had arrived in Istanbul in 1535, the British in 1583, and the Dutch in 1612: *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 88, 231, 257; see also Şakul, 'Nizam-ı Cedid', 124.

Cevdet Paşa writes, from an Ottoman perspective, European diplomacy in the times of the European wars was considered to be devoid of any ethical principles.⁶³ Indeed, in his pamphlet to the sultan, Mehmed Emin Behiç described politics (*politika*) as ‘a European term that in our times means to act through trickery and deceit...’ He contrasted Ottoman political philosophy with ‘European politicking’, concluding that while one was ‘ethical’, the other ‘no better than... [a] ruse’.⁶⁴

This was perceived as a continuing threat to Istanbul. Ottoman ministers apprehensively observed the partition of Poland for the third time in 1795. In 1797 Venice, despite not being at war with France, was split between Paris and Vienna. The Porte was vexed, considering the fate of Poland and particularly Venice as a conspiracy against a neutral actor.⁶⁵ Questions lingered in the minds of the sultan and his ministers: would the ‘Well-Protected Domains’ be the next prey of European imperial encroachments? In 1797, the inhabitants of Topkapı Palace were on tenterhooks. With France’s annexation of the Ionian Islands, another powerful neighbour had emerged on the western coasts. Reports multiplied concerning the agitation of revolutionary ideas by French agents in the Balkan provinces and hidden support to the rebellious Pasvanoğlu family.⁶⁶ The belief that France was transforming from a friend to a foe steadily became prevalent in Istanbul.⁶⁷

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At this moment, Selim III’s first response to the mounting threats signifies the implications of the unfolding Eastern Question to him, i.e. his empire’s precarious status vis-à-vis the other major European Powers as a polity whose identity and durability was under question. Yet, to reiterate, the Ottoman Empire was not merely a passive object here. Conscious of his empire’s insecure standing in Europe, Selim III looked to reconstruct her identity as a continuous polity—one not doomed to end in the same fashion as Poland and Venice, but one that could reverse her misfortunes with her reformed military and bureaucracy.

To this end, the sultan asked his trusted bureaucrats to pen a series of pamphlets to introduce, legitimize, and propagate his reform programme. A dozen were prepared in the late 1790s, some just before the French expedition to Egypt began. The pamphlets aimed, on the one hand, to gain domestic popular support for the sultan’s programme by explaining its rationale and underscoring its urgency, given that it was above all the people that carried the burden of the heavy taxes it occasioned. On the other hand, the pamphlets were conceived to function as a

⁶³ Şakul, ‘Global’, 49. ⁶⁴ Menchinger, *The First of the Modern Ottomans*, 189.

⁶⁵ BOA HAT 229/12769; BOA HAT 172/7388, and esp. BOA HAT 171/7310.

⁶⁶ Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 58–9, 63; Kobishanov, ‘Dzhihad’, 5.

⁶⁷ See e.g. Fatih Yeşil, ‘Looking at the French Revolution through Ottoman Eyes: Ebubekir Ratib Efendi’s Observations’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 70(2) (2007): 283–304.

notice to the potentially aggressive European audience, a single message that the ‘Well-Protected Domains’ were not as weak as depicted in biased European accounts and that the Ottoman imperial military was rapidly growing stronger. For example, Mahmud Raif noted in his pamphlet that ‘The current state of the Ottoman Empire’s [military] forces and its revenues is largely unknown in almost the whole of Europe; there is no work which gives a correct notion of it’, before detailing the futures of the innovations, complete with embellished (sometimes exaggerated) notes on the condition of the Ottoman military.⁶⁸ This was why a majority of the pamphlets were printed only in French and were allocated to European bureaucrats immediately after printing.⁶⁹

The sultan thus looked to ensure, against the threats posed by Russia, Austria, and now also France, his empire’s ontological security by having her position affirmed among the militarily strong Powers of Europe.⁷⁰ But the plans made in Istanbul would not suffice to halt the French, nor any other aggressive power at the time.

Warnings poured into Istanbul. Seyyid Ali Efendi (1757–1809), the sultan’s ambassador in Paris from 1797, cautioned the Porte about the aims of the French revolutionaries, identifying the latter with *fesad-u fitne* (malice and sedition).⁷¹ Reports from Russian agents implied that France was planning an expedition to Egypt—St Petersburg was one of the first capitals to identify the French target—though Russian agents also suspected, albeit falsely, that there might be a deal between Paris and Istanbul.⁷² According to them, France would pay a large sum of money to the sultan, sell some islands taken from the Venetians, and there would be free export of grain from Egypt to Istanbul.⁷³ Ottoman agents in Vienna and Morea likewise sent reports of a possible French attack.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Mahmoud Rayf Efendi, *Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l’empire ottoman* (Constantinople: n.p., 1798), 4. For an analysis of the pamphlet, see Kemal Beydilli ve İlhan Şahin, *Mahmud Raif Efendi’nin Nizam-ı Cedide Dair Eseri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001).

⁶⁹ Eg. there was only one Turkish (original) version of Mahmud Raif Efendi’s *Nümune-i Menazım-i Cedid-i Selim Hani* (1798). It was translated into French (*Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l’empire ottoman*) immediately; 200 copies were distributed among European diplomats. Şakul, ‘Nizam-ı Cedid Düşüncesinde Batıllaşma’, 122, 125–9.

⁷⁰ On ontological security and its application to historical analyses, see esp. Jennifer Mitzen, ‘Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma’, *European Journal of International Relations* 12(3) (2006): 342–70; Ayşe Zarakol, ‘States and Ontological Security’; Martin J. Bayly, ‘Imperial Ontological (In)Security: “Buffer States”, IR, and the Case of Anglo-Afghan Relations, 1808–1878’, *European Journal of International Relations* 2(4) (2014): 816–40.

⁷¹ BOA HAT 142/5882, 10 Apr. 1798; cf. Şakul, ‘Global’, 61–2.

⁷² Report of Simolin, 13/24 Apr. 1798, AVPRI, f. 93, o. 93/6, d. 525, ll. 104–5.

⁷³ Ibid. 21 May/1 June 1798, AVPRI, f. 93, o. 93/6, d. 525, ll. 130–31. These were indeed ideas that Talleyrand had entertained to persuade the Porte but possibly not communicated to Istanbul.

⁷⁴ Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi: Nizam-ı Cedid ve Tanzimat Devirleri, 1789–1856* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983), 28. Reports of nationalist and revolutionary agitation by French agents in Greece and the Balkans abounded in Istanbul: *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 280–81.

As a result, Grand Vizier İzzet Mehmed Paşa asked Seyyid Ali Efendi to make new inquiries in Paris. The latter's reports temporarily mitigated Ottoman anxieties, as he summarized all the rumours in France and concluded in April 1798, with reservations, that the French activity in Toulon was aimed at an expedition to Britain, not to the Ottoman territories.⁷⁵ The grand vizier nonetheless noted on the margins of one of these reports that the Porte had to remain alert and act with caution.⁷⁶

Seyyid Ali Efendi was perplexed in late April when the French press claimed that the destination of the expedition would be Egypt. At the Grand Vizier's orders, he immediately asked Talleyrand to share with him, not the exact 'secret' destination of the expedition as such, but just whether it was in Ottoman lands or not. Talleyrand denied this, ambiguously stating that the republic was neither at war with the sultan's empire nor had any wish to start a war against it. Thanks to diplomatic secrecy in Paris, even after the French navy invaded Malta in late May, Ottoman strategists did not know where Bonaparte would head next.⁷⁷

On 19 June, the grand vizier summoned the French chargé d'affaires in Istanbul, Pierre-Jean-Marie Ruffin (1742–1824), only to receive his assurances that the Directory government would by no means accept General Bonaparte's rumoured plans in Egypt, given the historical amity and alliance, commercial relations, and centuries-long peace that had existed between France and the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁸ Ruffin could not, however, state that the rumours in newspapers and diplomatic circles as to the French occupation of Egypt were false. Even so, if Bonaparte indeed aimed to invade Egypt, he said, it would be only for the punishment of the Mamluks and to cut off Britain from India. It would be a friendly act toward the Porte, not a hostile one.⁷⁹ Nevertheless the grand vizier took the precaution of sending an agent, Ahmed Erib Efendi, to fortify Egyptian shores against a potential attack.⁸⁰ But he was too late. Before his arrival, French flags had been already raised in Alexandria.

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First, in late June, a Greek ship had seen a French naval force of 400 vessels approach the coast of Egypt. The Greek captain then rapidly sailed to the north, and informed the Ottoman authorities in Rhodes.⁸¹ When Selim and his entourage received the news (soon after a second dispatch informed them that French troops had landed in Egypt on 1 July 1798), they did not feel shocked, as is portrayed in the literature.⁸² Nor did they think that French aggression was simply

⁷⁵ Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 62; Kemal Beydilli, 'Seyyid Ali Efendi', *IA*, 45–7.

⁷⁶ Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 62–3. ⁷⁷ Kobishanov, 'Dzhihad', 8.

⁷⁸ M. Bianchi, *Notice historique sur M. Ruffin* (Paris: Dondey-Dupré, 1825), 14–15; Karal, *Osmanlı*, 28.

⁷⁹ *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 320–23; Şakul, 'Global', 78.

⁸⁰ *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 291; Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 70. ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁸² For a recent example, see Menchinger, *The First of the Modern Ottomans*, 188.

a stab in the back.⁸³ But aggression from a friendly nation was of course painful, provoking consternation and fury.

Seyyid Ali Efendi, for his part, was still unaware of subsequent developments, as Talleyrand continued to insist that Bonaparte had no other instructions than the occupation of Malta. In August, the Ottoman ambassador reported to Istanbul that there was not much to worry about even after France had already invaded Alexandria. ‘What a donkey!’ exclaimed the disgruntled sultan after reading his agent’s misinformed intelligence.⁸⁴

Soon after the details of the occupation were dispatched from Cairo, an imperial *firman* was prepared in Istanbul and sent out for circulation in all provinces of the empire. ‘One of the French commanders, the general named Bonaparte’, it read,

some time ago appeared in the Mediterranean with a large fleet... [On] the seventeenth day of the month of Muharrem [July 2], [he] suddenly attacked Alexandria... penetrating it, seized it by force... he detained the Muslims and non-Muslim traders of my Sublime Empire, and even sequestered the ships of the Ottoman traders—although no notice had been received from the Republic regarding the break-up of the peace existing between my Sublime Empire and the French.⁸⁵

Fearing that the Republic would attack other areas of his empire, and knowing that his military and navy would be overpowered by the aggressor’s army, Selim III did not hurry to declare war.⁸⁶ His peevish and embittered orders and poems written at the time, as well as the tone of his letters to co-religionist sultans, were evidence enough of his anger.⁸⁷ Grand Vizier İzzet Mehmed Paşa and Şeyhülislam Dürri-zâde Arif Efendi were sacked and exiled for failing to foresee the occupation, and for their pro-French inclinations. But, in fact, with this, Selim also aimed to obtain the support of the disgruntled Janissaries and the *ulema* (religious leaders) by appointing Yusuf Ziyauddin Paşa (d. 1819), a prominent conservative, as the new grand vizier, and the allegedly reactionary Ömer Hulusi Efendi as the new *şeyhülislam*.⁸⁸

The New Order programme was then halted. Preparations for war began.⁸⁹ The French consul, Ruffin, was arrested and imprisoned in the Yedikule dungeon.

⁸³ Şakul, ‘Global Moment’, 50.

⁸⁴ Soysal, *Fransız İhtilali*, 242; Karal, *Hat-ti Hümayunlar*, 179.

⁸⁵ Joseph Cabra, ‘Quelques firmans concernant les relations franco-turques lors de l’expédition de Bonaparte en Égypte (1798–1799)’, in *Cahiers de la Société asiatique* vol. 10 (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1947); cf. Gaultier-Kurhan, *Méhémet Ali*, 19.

⁸⁶ Hatt-ı Hümayun 1214, TSA 1173/13/478/26. See also Henri Dehérain, *La vie de Pierre Ruffin, orientaliste et diplomate, 1742–1824* (Paris: Geuthner, 1929), 138–9.

⁸⁷ Karal, *Osmanlı*, 29.

⁸⁸ *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 351–5.

⁸⁹ [?] to Johann Amadeus Franz de Paula Freiherr von Thugut (Vienna), 25 July 1798, HHStA StAbt Türkei VII 40.

Islamic communities (the *umma*) and all *vilayets* and *sanjaks* along the coasts of the Mediterranean were asked to prepare for a potential French attack, to aid the Porte, and to welcome the British navy in the event of its arrival in their ports.⁹⁰ New, more energetic governors were appointed to Morea and Cyprus as a defensive measure.⁹¹ The Barbary corsairs in Algiers were ordered to cut the connections of the French navy with its mainland, though the latter did not comply with this order. And dispatches were sent out to Bekir Paşa, the governor of Cairo, to rally the population for jihad against France.⁹² Selim III ordered the governor and the Mamluk beys not to cede to the 'rogue infidels' even 'a handful of Egyptian sand'.⁹³

Letters were sent also to Morocco and India, to Sultan Moulay Suleyman (r. 1792–1822) and the Tipoo Sultan of Mysore in India, Feth Ali, who at that time had troubled relations with the British and was cooperating with France.⁹⁴ Selim's letter to India luridly portrays the sultan's emotions. He described the French invasion of Egypt as an act of 'treachery and deceit, notwithstanding the observance of long subsisting friendship'. The 'infidels' had in view 'subduing all Muslims in the world so as to erase the name of Muhammad's religion and nation from the world', as well as dispatching troops to India through Suez

wherever they had roamed, they had violated the international law, preying on dominions, killing people, and pillaging like bandits... The Frenchmen were such plunderers and liars that they even overran the dominions of the Pope... [Venice] professed neutrality and friendship towards France to no avail... [and their] government... was now erased from the surface of the earth.

The letter concluded by advising Feth Ali not to engage in an alliance with France, and to inform the Porte of his grievances against Britain 'so that [the sultan] would remove them to Ali's satisfaction'.⁹⁵

When the news that the British fleet commanded by Admiral Nelson had destroyed the entire French fleet at Abu Qir on 1 August 1798 arrived in Istanbul, Selim was delighted. But he still remained diffident in making alliances with the European Powers, including Britain, due largely to his distrust of them.

⁹⁰ Firman of the declaration of Jihad, 18 July 1798, BOA A.DVNSNMH.d 9/1. Moreover, a firman was sent to Tunis to arrest the French consul and dragoman, BOA AE.SSLM.III 3/343.

⁹¹ Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 86–7.

⁹² BOA C.DH 7764/3806, cf. Yüksel Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ Koca Hüseyin Paşa* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2013), 14.

⁹³ Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 88.

⁹⁴ Letter dispatched to Mevla Ismail bin Mevla Muhammad, the hakim of Morocco, 19 Jan. 1799, BOA A.DVNSNMH.d 9/395; letter dispatched to Mevla Suleyman, the hakim of Morocco, 14 Sept. 1798, BOA A.DVNSNMH.d 9/386; letter dispatched to Tipu Sahib, ruler of the kingdom of Mysore, 12 Dec. 1798, BOA A.DVNSNMH.d 9/388.

⁹⁵ Hikmet Bayur, 'Maysor Sultanı Tipu ile Osmanlı Padişahlarından I. Abdülhamid ve III. Selim Arasındaki Mektuplaşma', *Bellefen* 12(47) (1948): 643–50; cf. Şakul, 'Global Moment', 4.

He decided to wait and see the results of the initial measures taken by his forces before making an alliance with the eager Britain and Russia. He was unsure about both, especially about Russia, the age-old enemy of his empire. He had been hoping to join forces with France against Russia only a few years ago. Now he found himself having to decide whether to open the Straits to the fleet of the Romanovs for an alliance against France. 'My vizier,' he wrote in a note, 'we should gain time like this... I am [normally] very brave in such acts, however, I cannot dare [to act this time].'⁹⁶ The entry of the Porte into an alliance with either nation was unprecedented, and its call for an alliance with the foreign powers could expose the internal decrepitude of his empire. As one of his ministers told the sultan, this could prove to be the 'most dangerous' threat to the 'Well-Protected Domains'.⁹⁷

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France repeatedly implied to the Porte that the occupation targeted the enemies of the Ottoman state. Bonaparte's army was a friendly power to both the Porte and the religion of Islam. This, his agents claimed, was evidenced by the release of Muslim prisoners from Malta and the tolerance shown to the Egyptian population after the occupation, though a revolt had broken out in Cairo on 21 October and some 2,000 inhabitants and 300 French had died.⁹⁸ Before his arrest, the French consul, Ruffin, had even shared with the Ottoman authorities the instructions of the Directory to Bonaparte by which the latter was ordered to maintain good relations with the sultan.⁹⁹ Ruffin maintained that once the Mamluks were destroyed 'the darkened Ottoman moon would rise like the sun' in Egypt.¹⁰⁰

But all in vain. For Selim and his agents, the French aggression was unacceptable. Seyyid Ali Efendi told Talleyrand in Paris that it would be only a territorial violation if revolts emerged in Marseille and the Porte intervened without the permission of Paris. The sultan officially declared war on France on 25 September 1798 after much hesitation—due in part to the insinuations of the pro-French party in his court, and to the relative weakness of his army before the French—and only after the news of the destruction of the French fleet by the British reached Istanbul in mid-August.

Eight days later he sent a note to the representatives of the European Powers, in which he explained his position: even though the Ottoman Empire and France had entertained friendship for centuries, and the Porte continued this friendship even after the French Revolution when France was isolated by other Powers, the French had reciprocated with hostility. Bonaparte had sent agents to incite revolts in Ottoman provinces after occupying Italy, and even though the Directory regime

⁹⁶ BOA HAT 34/1682.

⁹⁷ Kobishanov, 'Dzhihad', 15–16.

⁹⁸ Mikaberidze, *Napoleonic Wars*, 77.

⁹⁹ Ruffin to MAE, 2 Aug. 1798, AMAE CP 198.

¹⁰⁰ Kobishanov, 'Dzhihad', 16.

promised the Porte that Napoleon's policy would be terminated, further piratical (*korsan*) action was undertaken with the occupation of Egypt. The note concluded that the plan of France was 'overturning the world order, destroying customs of nations and peoples, staging a coup in the government regimes of all well-organized Powers... [F]or the order and security of not only the [Ottoman Empire] but perhaps all European states, ... it is obvious that the elimination of the tyrannical [French] rulers whose [only job] is malice and sedition [*fitne ve fesad*] is necessary.' The Porte was therefore hoping for the friendly Powers' immediate succour, 'both explicit and implicit'.¹⁰¹

As will be detailed in the next chapter, Britain had already acted against French aggression in the Levant as it threatened her connections with India, which had to be shielded for the security of the British Empire. Under Tsar Paul I, Russia had once again reversed her policy from the 'Greek Project' to an 'Ottoman project' which provided for the preservation of the sultan's empire within the orbit of Russian influence.¹⁰² The tsar now desired to sweep the French off the Balkans and the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰³

In early September, with the permission of the sultan, a Russian squadron under the command of Vice Admiral F. F. Ushakov crossed the Straits, which was a first-time sight for the Istanbulite population and which commenced a decades-long dilemma that would occupy international diplomacy over the passage rights of warships in these strategically key routes.¹⁰⁴ Following the success of the joint Russo-Ottoman campaign in the Aegean Sea, the sultan felt more assured of the necessity for cooperation.

Consequently, Selim III signed alliance treaties with Russia on 23 December 1798 and Britain on 5 January 1799 (both for a duration of eight years) as well as with the Sicilian kingdoms.¹⁰⁵ These were the Porte's first alliance with both empires in history, and took place when the Ottoman Empire effectively started the War of the Second Coalition.

While Russo-Ottoman forces immediately captured the Ionian Islands from the French, the news of the successful defence of St. Jean d'Acre by Ahmed al-Jazzar Paşa with British and Russian naval aid were received in the Topkapı Palace with great excitement. The 'unbeatable' armies of Bonaparte had been defeated for the first time by the Anglo-Russian-assisted Ottoman forces since the beginning of the expedition. But this was an ephemeral victory. After the failed siege in Acre,

¹⁰¹ *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 412; Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 96–7; Kobishanov, 'Dzhihad', 19.

¹⁰² T. Y. Kobishanov, 'Politika Rossii na Blizhnem Vostoke v Gody 'Ekspedicii Napoleona Bonaparta v Egipet i Siriyu (1798–1801)', *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta Vostokovedenie* 13(1) (2010): 4.

¹⁰³ Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 99–101.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 102; J.C. Hurewitz, 'Russia and the Turkish Straits: A Reevaluation of the Origins of the Problem', *World Politics* 14(4) (July 1962): 605–32.

¹⁰⁵ BOA A.DVNSNMH.d 9/493, n.d.; Karal, *Osmanlı*, 30–36. For the sultan's *hümâyun* to Yusuf Ziya Paşa, 17 Sept. 1799, TSA 1173/29/478/42; Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 96–7.

Bonaparte routed the landing Ottoman forces and captured their artillery and ammunition, a tremendous dent to the morale of Selim and his men. Then, the French general secretly quit the Levant in 1799: the British leaked false news in the Levant of French defeats in Italy and the Rhine through fake newspapers, prompting Bonaparte to head back to Europe to fight for his *patrie*.¹⁰⁶

Soon after General Kleber took over the French command at the end of 1800, French forces managed to establish control in all major Egyptian towns.¹⁰⁷ And, in late 1799, due to his differences with Britain regarding the dispatch of Russian troops to Egypt and frustration resulting from military setbacks, Tsar Paul withdrew from the war with France, though he strove to prevent either Paris or London establishing a dominant influence in the Levant through his agents in Istanbul.¹⁰⁸

These new developments made Britain the only major ally of the Porte fighting against the French at the time. The British parliament had approved the dispatch of land forces to reinforce the Ottoman resistance against France in Egypt. However, Ottoman authorities, and particularly Selim, were disinclined to see the British troops in Ottoman lands. The sultan instead suggested their installation in the Mediterranean islands and the restriction of their departure for Egypt subject to Ottoman authorization.¹⁰⁹

According to Thomas Bruce, earl of Elgin (1766–1841) and the British ambassador to Istanbul, Ottoman reluctance stemmed from its rulers' jealousy and desire to 'assume the appearance' in Egypt so as not to leave a hazardous impression in the minds of their own subjects, 'but also in view of guarding against any claim we might be inclined to assert, or any step we might take towards establishing ourselves in Egypt on the expulsion of the French'.¹¹⁰ Lord Elgin was partially correct. Selim III was indeed suspicious of British objectives, and feared that the British troops might never leave Egypt once they had landed.¹¹¹ The sultan was moreover reluctant to cover the substantial expenses that would be incurred by the British expedition.¹¹²

Meanwhile, peace talks in Paris between Seyyid Ali Efendi, Talleyrand, and Bonaparte were under way. In February 1800, the two architects of the French expedition continued to tout their policy as a favour to the sultan. Talleyrand told Seyyid Ali that they were unhappy with the state of war that Paris and Istanbul were 'dragged into', and that they would leave Egypt only after French interests in the Levant were secured.¹¹³ He asked Seyyid Ali to ensure that Britain and Russia would not invade Egypt after the French occupation. Bonaparte, for his part, looked to come out on top. 'The Porte followed a false path,' he complained; '[i]t cooperated with its enemies and formed an alliance against its friend . . . Our aim is

¹⁰⁶ BOA HAT 226/12584.

¹⁰⁷ Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 118–19.

¹⁰⁸ Schroeder, *The Transformation*, 202–9; Kobishanov, 'Politika Rossi', 10–18.

¹⁰⁹ BOA C.HR 23/1120, 7 Jan. 1800.

¹¹⁰ Lord Elgin to Baron Grenville, 9 Feb. 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 2.

¹¹¹ BOA HAT 34/1682.

¹¹² BOA C.HR 102/5076.

¹¹³ Karal, *Fransa-Mısır*, 130.

not to keep Egypt. In fact we never intended to occupy it.' Puzzled by these words, the Ottoman agent Seyyid Ali responded that the only path to peace between the Porte and the republic was the latter's unconditional evacuation from Egypt. But the differences were too sharp between the French and Ottoman statesmen. News of the assassination of Kleber in Cairo in June 1800 heightened tensions during the talks in August and September, which came to a dead end for the time being.¹¹⁴

Seeing that peace with France was difficult to obtain, and that the Ottoman armed forces were proving incapable of driving the French army out of Egypt, first Reisülküttâb Atif Efendi and then the new grand vizier, Yusuf Paşa, and finally Sultan Selim III reluctantly accepted the involvement of British land troops in the expedition. They were assured by Lord Elgin as to the goodwill of Britain in landing her troops in Egypt. In September 1800, British preparations began. And in the spring of 1801, 20,000 British and Ottoman forces landed in Abu Qir. Britain also brought some 15,000 men from India through the Red Sea. And finally, the Ottoman imperial army of some 60,000 men under the command of Grand Vizier Yusuf Paşa arrived from Syria.

Detached from the motherland by the Anglo-Ottoman blockade, and overpowered by the arrival of these armies in waves, the French forces in Egypt were compelled to surrender. They did so on 27 June (Cairo) and 2 September 1801 (Alexandria) respectively. The one condition that French commanders set out was that French savants were to be permitted to send (in secret) their significant hoard of antiquities to France. It was accepted, with the exception of the Rosetta stone, which was then transported to London the same year.¹¹⁵

The inter-imperial war in Egypt was thus brought to an end. This was the last colonial war Britain and France ever fought with each other. It resulted in the first alliance between London and Istanbul, and also in the least likely one, between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The Straits were opened to Russian warships in this peculiar context, and from then on until 1936, it became a matter of disputes among the international actors.

For Selim, the French expedition was a wake-up call. He saw that the line between friends and enemies was too thin and could easily be transgressed amid the European politics of the time. He was baffled. Where would his empire locate herself now in this chaotic system? He knew better than ever, though, that there was an absolute need to hasten the 'New Order' programme and to acquire more concrete results. The new army, still limited in number, had not proved entirely efficient in Egypt. He had sacked his pro-reform ministers during the war in order to mobilize the Janissaries. And France had withdrawn her officers who had been training the Ottoman army. One year into the war, he had also pardoned all rebellious local notables, including the Pasvanoğlu family in the Balkans, and had

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 131–2.

¹¹⁵ Silvera, 'Egypt and the French Revolution', 314.

even promoted them, to ensure domestic stability during the inter-imperial war. Yet the example of the Pasvanoğlus, as an Ottoman Greek observer wrote at the time, set the stage for future disorder, as ‘many started to follow his example, dissatisfied with [the New Order]’.¹¹⁶

The Wrecked Victory

News of the victory in Egypt was greeted with huge celebrations in Istanbul. Dazzling fireworks illuminated the skies of the imperial capital at night, and a certain Selim Efendi, a man of British origin, flew a hot air balloon during the day to entertain the city’s inhabitants.¹¹⁷ The triumph was recounted to the Istanbulites as an epic story of courage and bravery, a great success of Ottoman troops against the more advanced French forces in the battlefield. It was received with astonishment, inspiring awe among the population.

All this gave Selim III’s reform programme new momentum. He now aimed to enlarge his ‘New Order’ army by involving soldiers beyond Anatolia. His next move was recruitment in Rumelia, where a majority of the Janissaries were originally from. Yet his plans at once aroused doubt and suspicion among the opponents of the ‘New Order’ movement, and most prominently among the Janissaries, who were worried about the future of their units.¹¹⁸ The financial pressures wrought by the war against France had led to an increase in food prices and thus to public resentment. Observing this, Selim held back and put a temporary hold to recruitments, thus offering some relief against the rising tides of discontent.

In the next half-decade, the opponents of the ‘New Order’ programme gained greater strength in the face of the unfolding international developments. In fact, after the evacuation of the French forces from Egypt, the relationship between France and the Ottoman Empire had swiftly normalized. During the peace negotiations in 1801, Bonaparte assured Selim:

[the] expedition from Egypt was not made with hostile views against the Ottoman Empire. But finally God wanted it to serve as a pretext for the rupture of the two nations, to convince us, on both sides, that our real interest is union and peace. Here we are brought back. If Your Highness shares the feelings which animate the French government, the past will be forever forgotten, and a solid peace, a mutually advantageous trade, will consolidate the prosperity of [both] nations.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Philliou, *Biography*, 68. ¹¹⁷ Beydilli, ‘III. Selim’, 47.

¹¹⁸ Sunar, ‘Ocak-1 Amire’den’, 511.

¹¹⁹ Bonaparte to Selim III, 11 Oct. 1801, in Baron I. de Testa, *Recueil des traités de la Porte Ottomane avec les puissances étrangères*, vol. 1 (Paris: Amyot, 1864), 502.

One month after receiving this ‘friendly message’, the Sublime Porte decided to accept a preliminary peace agreement in Paris, which unconditionally restored Egypt to Ottoman control.

The Franco-Ottoman deal was sealed with a peace treaty of 25 June 1802, three months after Britain and France concluded peace with the Treaty of Amiens on 27 March. An important point here, usually omitted in the literature, is the fact that after the French occupation of Egypt the customs tariffs between the Ottoman Empire, on the one hand, and France and Britain, on the other, were re-regulated for a period of seven years (to be renewed again). The second and third articles of both treaties stipulated that the capitulations of whatever description that had existed prior to the war were renewed in their fullest extent. The free navigation of the Black Sea was ensured to France with the same rights, privileges and prerogatives that she had enjoyed on the other coasts of the Ottoman Empire before the war.¹²⁰ These, in effect, launched a period that saw the gradual opening up of the Ottoman Empire to European trade by the 1860s, though, as will be discussed in the following chapters, the commercial agreements were only selectively implemented by the Ottoman authorities during and after the Napoleonic Wars.

One reason why Selim III succumbed to these economic concessions was the fact that he was feeling threatened by the continuous presence of 80,000 Russian soldiers in the Balkan borders with the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, as we will see in Chapter 3, despite the stipulations of the Treaty of Amiens, by the end of 1802 British forces had still not evacuated Egypt, which, Selim had feared, could turn into a permanent occupation.¹²¹ Colonel Horace François Bastien Sébastiani de La Porta (1771–1851), who had been dispatched by Bonaparte to Istanbul to complete the peace negotiations and mend relations with the Porte in 1802, reported back that the ‘Turks detested’ the Russians and the British; ‘If the Porte succeeds in delivering the British out of Egypt, and if peace brings her closer to France, she will surrender herself entirely to us, but until then Britain will dominate her.’¹²²

Sébastieniani had a point. When it had become clear in 1800 that the French forces could be driven out of Egypt only with the help of the British forces, Britain had come to exercise immense controlling influence over the Porte through her ambassador Lord Elgin. But now the Porte was in need of French aid to drive the British out of Egypt. At this hour of struggle for influence over Istanbul between Britain and France—and, as we will see in the next chapter, of the struggle between British and Ottoman agents on the spot as to how to secure Cairo and its environs—the Anglo-French peace was shattered by the outbreak of a new episode

¹²⁰ [Downing Street] to Arbuthnot, 1804, NLS MS 5625/29.

¹²¹ Romain Rainero, ‘Napoléon et la grande stratégie diplomatique en Orient. La première mission d’Horace Sébastiani dans l’empire ottoman (1801–1802)’, *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 57(1) (1998): 289–305; ‘Rapport du Colonel Sébastiani sur sa mission à Constantinople en date du . . . 1802’, in Testa, *Recueil*, vol. 1, 508.

¹²² *Ibid.* 508–9.

of Napoleonic Wars. London and Saint Petersburg joined the third coalition against France.

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During the War of the Third Coalition (1803–6), Selim III pursued the same policy he had tried to follow in the 1790s. He wanted to isolate his empire from European wars and channel his funds towards domestic reform. Yet he again could not. In the mid-1800s the Ottoman imperial capital once more became a microcosm of European rivalries, ‘teeming with European diplomats vying to win the Ottomans over to their cause’.¹²³ The sultan was urged to make a decision as to whose side he would take in the European wars.

Bonaparte personally wrote to Selim III in January 1805: ‘If Russia has an army of 15,000 men at Corfu, do you believe that it is directed against me? Armed vessels have the habit of hastening to Constantinople. Your dynasty is about to descend into oblivion . . . Trust only your true friend—France.’¹²⁴ Throughout the year, the Corsican piled pressure onto the Porte through Halet Efendi (1761–1822), the sultan’s agent in Paris.¹²⁵ Halet found himself on the receiving end of repeated threats from the French emperor as to the forging of an alliance between Paris and Istanbul or the complete break-off of their relations.¹²⁶ In November 1805, when the French ruler sent an ultimatum to Istanbul and no positive response came from Selim, Bonaparte pulled his agent from the Ottoman imperial capital.¹²⁷

The Porte was unwilling to form an alliance with France at that point, mostly because he believed that the Russian threat was more immediate and imminent. With his greater number of soldiers at Ottoman borders, Tsar Alexander I was in a far better position to attack the ‘Well-Protected Domains’. Moreover, a leading member of the French camp in his entourage, Küçük Hüseyin Paşa, had passed away in 1803. Finally, mounting Serbian nationalist activities in the Balkans could be more easily confined, Selim believed, if he could cut Russian support to their co-religionists. Accordingly, he decided to throw in his lot with St Petersburg and London.¹²⁸ A defensive alliance treaty was signed with St Petersburg on 23 September 1805.¹²⁹

¹²³ Karsh and Karsh, *Empires*, 12.

¹²⁴ Napoleon to Selim, 30 Jan. 1805, in *Correspondance de Napoléon I, publiée par ordre de l'empereur Napoléon III* (Paris: Henri Plon, 1858–1870), vol. 10, no. 8298; cf. Karsh and Karsh, *Empires*, 11.

¹²⁵ See Ch. 4 for more on Halet’s experience in Paris and its repercussions.

¹²⁶ Enver Z. Karal, *Halet Efendi'nin Paris Büyükelçiliği* (Istanbul: İstanbul Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1940), 71–7.

¹²⁷ Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 332–3.

¹²⁸ D’Italinsky to Czatoryski, 30 Nov. 1805, *VPR* vol. 2, 640–42.

¹²⁹ Beydilli, ‘III. Selim’, 49.

With this treaty, Selim III agreed on cooperating with the Triple Alliance against France by authorizing the free passage of their ships from the Straits, and by backing Russian efforts to involve other neutral states in the alliance.¹³⁰ And with the leverage he entertained, he managed to reject the Russian demands to include articles permitting Russia to intervene on behalf of the Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Empire, mitigating, to an extent, the pressures on Istanbul that had been engendered by the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty of 1774.

This procured Selim with temporary security from the Russian threat.¹³¹ But Bonaparte did not give up. Getting the Straits closed to Russian ships and exerting influence over the Balkans to counterbalance Russia was of paramount importance to his war strategy. After his victories over the armies of Russia and Austria at Ulm (17 October) and Austerlitz (2 December), he made a new move. He included in the Treaty of Vienna on 15 December 1805 an article with which France obtained a guarantee of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire from the Berlin court.¹³² All the while, he continued to decry Russia to the Ottoman authorities as the greatest threat to the Porte's territorial integrity.

Impressed by Bonaparte's victories and flattered by his willingness to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, in early 1806 Selim's policy again gradually turned toward France. There was certainly a strong degree of opportunism in the sultan's move. As the Russian ambassador, the Chevalier d'Italinsky, reported to St Petersburg from Istanbul, this resulted from the constant anxiety in the Topkapı Palace especially after the French territorial increments and the latter's return to the Ottoman borders in the Balkans as a dangerous neighbour.¹³³ 'The Sublime Porte', d'Italinsky wrote, 'fears that in case of its refusal, Bonaparte may undertake an invasion [in its territories].'¹³⁴

The Russian agents were anxious. Foreign Minister Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770–1861) ordered d'Italinsky to do everything possible to fully expose Bonaparte's 'subtle duplicity, explaining to the Porte that it has nothing to fear from Russia, while it could expect anything from the French'.

Could it not be possible to finally get the Ottoman Ministry to understand that the manner of action of the imperial court from the time of the conclusion of the Treaty of Iasi [of 1792] must completely dissipate all doubts about his intentions... that exactly [Russia], along with Britain, saved the Ottoman Empire during the invasion in Egypt... that precisely [Russia's] constant concern contributed mostly to its preservation to this day... that exactly [Russia] will always be truly interested in its integrity, while Bonaparte thinks only about

¹³⁰ Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 334.

¹³¹ Karal, *Halet*, 80–82.

¹³² BOA HAT 1284/49818; 'Nota poslannika v Konstantinopole A.Ja. Italinskogo tureckomu pravitel'stvu', 4 Feb. 1806, *VPR* vol. 3, 37–8.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

profit at its expense? After all, if we assume that Russia has intentions that are dangerous for the Porte, who could prevent it from carrying them out?¹³⁵

According to Czartoryski, Bonaparte's territorial acquisitions and his direct and indirect control over the continent had given him such dominance that no state would dare to go against him or even cause him displeasure. Russia and Britain therefore had to act together immediately; and if one of the central pieces of their joint policy was Prussia in the north, the other had to be the Ottoman Empire in the south.¹³⁶

France or Russia? With whom would Selim side? His final decision was dictated by Bonaparte's new pledges in December 1805. The French chargé d'affaires in Istanbul, Ruffin, promised the sultan that France would help Selim regain the Crimea from Russia. This was the most exciting pledge the emperor could offer the sultan. Restoring the Crimea to his rule had been Selim's ultimate goal ever since he had ascended to the throne. He could meet that great expectation of his people. He could be the conqueror they hoped he would be.

As a result, in February, Selim recognized Bonaparte as emperor.¹³⁷ And after the French victory at Jena in October 1806, he felt reassured about which side to take.¹³⁸ On the advice of Bonaparte's special envoy to Istanbul, Sebastiani, he did not ratify the alliance treaty with Russia.¹³⁹ Instead he appointed a pro-French hospodar in the Danubian principalities, withdrawing the Phanariotes (Ottoman Greek subjects working in the service of the Porte) that Russia favoured. He did not renew the existing alliance with Britain, closed the Straits to foreign war ships, and declared the neutrality of his empire in the European war. These acts sufficed for Tsar Alexander I to order his units already stationed on the Ottoman borders to invade the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia in November 1806. One month later, Selim III declared war on Russia.

Within the space of a few months the Porte thus shifted from cooperation to war with the Triple Alliance. Consequently, through her ambassador to Istanbul, Charles Arbuthnot (1767–1850), Britain constantly pressured the sultan to revert his position once more and declare war on France.¹⁴⁰ Arbuthnot believed that Selim III was more afraid of the British imperial fleet than of the French soldiers stationed in the Balkans. This is why, as a last-ditch effort, a British squadron under the command of Admiral General John Thomas Duckworth (1748–1817) entered the Dardanelles, destroyed the Ottoman ships that tried to stop it, and

¹³⁵ Ibid. ¹³⁶ Czartoryski to S. R. Vorontsov, 14 Feb. 1806, *VPR* vol. 2, 44–7.

¹³⁷ 'Nota poslannika v Konstantinopole A.Ja. Italinskogo tureckomu pravitel'stvu', 4 Feb. 1806, *VPR* vol. 3, 37–8.

¹³⁸ Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 352. ¹³⁹ Yaycıoğlu, *Partners*, 43.

¹⁴⁰ Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 335; Fatih Yeşil, 'İstanbul Önlerinde Bir İngiliz Filosu', in *Nizam-ı Kadim'den Nizam-ı Cedid'e III. Selim ve Dönemi*, 404–5.

blockaded Istanbul on 20 February 1807.¹⁴¹ However, suspecting that his ships could be trapped in the Straits if the Dardanelles were fortified before his return, Admiral Duckworth lifted the blockade after ten days.

*

For Selim, despite the revolution in France and the ideological differences with the French rulers, this scheme of inter-imperial politics was probably how things should have been in the first place, given his admiration for France since his childhood and his desire to regain the Crimea from Russia. The truth was that it was impossible to control the chaos of politics at the time, as abrupt changes were taking place in the blink of an eye. And one of these would hit the sultan at home.

The departure of the British fleet from Istanbul prompted great jubilation in the imperial capital in early March 1807. But the ten-day blockade had also incited immense horror, panic, and tragedy.¹⁴² Never before had Istanbul been subject to such a blockade. Never before had its population seen a hostile navy at their shores since the city fell under Ottoman rule in 1453. That tens of thousands had been recruited and were preparing near the walls of the city for the expedition against Russia in the Balkans at the time of the blockade provoked tumult, drought, and massive inflation. Domestic anger was directed against the ruling elites and more so against the new institutions and the expenses incurred by the 'New Order' army. The city seethed with false rumours that the British fleet had arrived in fact to bombard the Janissary barracks.¹⁴³

This was the crucial moment. The opponents of the 'New Order', and international and domestic foes of Selim's reign, had already started coalescing: Russian ambassador d'Italinsky had begun to support their cause openly as a reaction to Selim's inclination toward France. The pro-Russian Phanariotes, having lost their posts when Selim appointed pro-French hospodars in the Balkans, joined them. The idea of dethroning Selim and replacing him with his older nephew, *Şehzade* Mustafa, with Russian and Phanariot funds grew stronger among the powerful families in Istanbul and prevailing conservative figures such as the janissary agha Ibrahim Hilmi (1747–1825) and scholar Mehmed Ataullah Efendi (1770–1826).¹⁴⁴

The opportune time for this coalition arrived when Selim III's popularity further faded among the inhabitants of the capital. The news of Wahhabi attacks on the Holy Lands and the British invasion of Egypt reached concurrently in March 1807 and demoralized the imperial capital.¹⁴⁵ Soon after the sultan's army left for the expedition against Russia on 12 April, Istanbul found itself in tumult. Led by an auxiliary Janissary unit under the leadership of Kabakçı Mustafa, a

¹⁴¹ Yeşil, 'İstanbul Önlerinde', 408–9; Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 358–9.

¹⁴² Beydilli, 'III. Selim', 50.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 375.

¹⁴⁵ See Ch. 3.

revolt broke out. Between 25 and 29 May, the fighting claimed the lives of a few dozen people including one of the prominent advocates of the 'New Order', Mahmud Raif Efendi.¹⁴⁶ Anxious to stop violence at once, Selim accepted the demands of the rioters without resistance, suspended the 'New Order' institutions, and in the end agreed to his dethronement. He returned to a life of seclusion in his room in the Topkapı Palace 18 years after his rise to power. While descending from the throne, he told his nephew Mustafa (1779–1808):

I wanted the happiness of my subjects. However, I irritated the people that I love and to whom I wanted to give back their glorious past. Since they do not want me any more and I cannot do anything for their happiness, I quit the throne without any grief and I sincerely congratulate you on your ascendance.¹⁴⁷

But the fall of Selim III did not bring tranquillity to the empire: Istanbul was shaken by another shock soon after the new Sultan, Mustafa IV, ascended to the throne in June 1807. Rumours of a secret agreement made between Bonaparte and Alexander I (7 July) emanated from Tilsit.¹⁴⁸ The two rulers who had once each pressured the Porte to join the war on their side against the other had made peace, and were now discussing the partition of the Ottoman Empire.

The rumours were true. Bonaparte and Alexander had discussed but, in the end, could not agree on the details of the partition, as the French emperor wanted Austria to be involved in the sharing of the spoils of the sultan's empire, and denied the tsar's annexation of Istanbul and the Straits.¹⁴⁹ Even then, Bonaparte accepted the end of his alliance with the Porte and pressured Istanbul to make peace with Russia.¹⁵⁰

Defeated by French armies in Friedland in June, Alexander I, for his part, agreed to recognize French conquests and hand back Wallachia and Moldavia to the Porte, though this agreement never took effect. In the event that the Porte did not agree peace with Russia, the two rulers established, France would join the war against the Ottoman Empire and her European provinces would be shared between Paris and St Petersburg as colonies, 'leaving only Istanbul and Rumelian provinces to the sultan'.¹⁵⁰

Diplomatically cornered, the Porte agreed to sign an armistice with Russia with French mediation.¹⁵¹ But, as distrust and lack of coordination tarnished the

¹⁴⁶ Yaycıoğlu, *Partners*, 43. For a French observation on the 1807–8 events, see Antoine Juchereau de Saint-Denys, *Révolutions de Constantinople en 1807 et 1808, précédées d'observations générales sur l'état actuel de l'Empire Ottoman* (Paris: Brissot-Thivars, 1819); see also Ali Yaycıoğlu, 'Révolutions de Constantinople: France and the Ottoman World in the Age of Revolutions', in *French Mediterranean: Transnational and Imperial Histories*, ed. Patricia M. E. Lorchin and Todd Shephard (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 21–51, at 41–3.

¹⁴⁷ Juchereau, *Révolutions de Constantinople*, 139; cf. Yaycıoğlu, 'Révolutions de Constantinople', 42.

¹⁴⁸ BOA HAT 1367/54128.

¹⁴⁹ Bitis, *Russia*, 27.

¹⁵⁰ Karsh and Karsh, *Empires*, 14.

¹⁵¹ BOA HAT 170/7254.

Franco-Russian alliance shortly thereafter, the war between St Petersburg and Istanbul continued intermittently until 1812. It came to an end only after another exhausting turn in European wars, when Bonaparte began his march on Russia with his *Grande Armée*, as we will see in Chapter 4.

Amidst this immense web of ambiguity, quicksilver alliances, chaos, and insecurity in international politics, and while the war with Russia was still under way, Istanbul could hardly enjoy domestic stability. Fourteen months after Selim III's dethronement, another coup d'état took place in the imperial capital.

The proponents of the 'New Order' who had managed to survive the 1807 revolt combined forces with the local nobility under the leadership of Alemdar Mustafa Paşa (1765–1808) of Ruschuk. The latter had successfully fought against the Russians in the Balkans, and with the winds in his sails, he was ready to march to Istanbul, restore Selim III to his throne, and restart the 'New Order' programme.

In July 1807, Alemdar Paşa's forces overwhelmed the Janissaries, managing to seize political power shortly afterwards. On the 28th day of the month, the Paşa arrived in Istanbul with 15,000 men. After routing all resistance on his way, he entered the Topkapı Palace, burst open the grand doors of the palace, and then proceeded past the *Babüssaade* (the Gate of Felicity). There before his eyes he found a corpse placed on a mattress on the sofa next to the copper fireplace, just under the pale pink rose decorations inscribed amidst the golden motifs on the ceiling. It was none other than the star-crossed Selim, strangled at the order of his nephew Mustafa.¹⁵² The other heir, Mahmud (1785–1839), whom Selim had always favoured more, escaped the tragic fate of his uncle by hiding in the bathroom. The same day, Alemdar placed Mahmud on the throne as the new sultan, where he remained for 31 years.

Selim III's death marked the end of a period of volatile inter-imperial relations and the first efforts at comprehensive reforms in the Ottoman world. During no other sultan's reign was the Ottoman Empire engaged in wars and alliances with almost all major European Powers in such quick succession. Though Selim wished to avoid war in order to address the main social ills of his empire, and to guarantee the security of the 'Well Protected Domains' by ensuring the circle of justice, the Porte's involvement in the Coalition Wars, by actually starting the second one in 1798, dealt a huge blow to his plans.

Thereafter, the reign of Selim became an era of unmanageable imperial anxieties. He had learned that alliances with European Powers no longer truly meant lasting security for his empire. Admiration for the military achievements of his Western neighbours, need for their technology and know-how, and distrust of their foreign policies were all enmeshed in his quest for security. These left the

¹⁵² Beydilli, 'III. Selim', 54; *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 8, 308; Ottokar Freiherrn von Schlechta-Wssehrd, *Die Revolutionen von Constantinopel in den Jahren 1807 und 1808* (Vienna: Gerold, 1882), 72. On the details and various accounts of the death of Selim, see esp. Aysel Danacı-Yıldız, 'III. Selim'in Katilleri', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 31 (2008): 55–92.

sultan in a continuous yet self-defeating cycle of haste and hesitation in grappling with political issues in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The heightened insecurities during the Napoleonic Wars continued to inform Ottoman policies for several decades. When Selim's nephew Mahmud II ascended to the throne in 1807, the latter consciously avoided forming alliances with any European Power, or entrusting his empire to European public law. This lasting cynicism became a central feature of political decisions taken by the Porte especially when the Powers offered it to become a part of the Vienna system in 1815 at the end of the Napoleonic wars.¹⁵³

The 1798 expedition not only left the sultan with an acute sense of loneliness in inter-imperial politics. It also launched a history of 'good-willed' occupations and interventions in the Ottoman periphery, laying the seeds of a new, transimperial culture of security, wherein the Powers thenceforth saw it justifiable to intervene in the Levant with the purpose of supplying security and by employing previously unexamined instruments and tactics beyond their imperial borders, and often against the will of the Porte. Talleyrand and Bonaparte believed that their invasion of Egypt was for a just cause as the local actors in the Levant were hampering both French commercial interests and the Ottoman political authority.

Yet they failed to see, or chose to ignore, that Selim had his own plan, one for obtaining security in his 'Well-Protected Domains'. Forging alliances had by the turn of the century become an integral feature of the 'circle of justice', with the reform of the military and maintenance of the continuity of the empire being important prerequisites for this. This was the Ottoman disposition toward the evolving Eastern Question of the time. However, the proponents of the 'New Order' movement could not overcome the domestic and global hurdles they confronted in order to realize their plan.

As Fernand Braudel has argued, the Mediterranean was not a wall or a barrier that divided the societies around it, but a bridge, a contact zone connecting peoples.¹⁵⁴ The crossing of the Mediterranean by French, British and Ottoman forces indeed brought their policies and security considerations as well as those of local actors in Egypt into the same equation at the turn of the nineteenth century. Be it a service for the sultan, as Talleyrand thought, or an element of the partition plan, as Bonaparte envisaged, the 1798 expedition also revived divisions and animosities on the ground, and interlocked local insecurities and hostilities with global imperial calculations. In Istanbul, it hit Selim III's plans for guaranteeing the security for his empire by bolstering the circle of justice, and marked the first steps of a decades' long process of the opening up of the Levant to European trade. In Egypt, it left behind a malicious civil war.

¹⁵³ Ozan Ozavci, 'A Priceless Grace? The Congress of Vienna of 1815, the Ottoman Empire and Historicizing the Eastern Question', *English Historical Review* (forthcoming).

¹⁵⁴ Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1949).

3

The Chase in the Desert

Empires and Civil War in Egypt, 1801–1812

When Selim III declared jihad against France in September 1798, vizierial letters were sent out from Istanbul all across the Ottoman Empire. In the course of the war, the sultan's subjects were repeatedly called to arms 'to unite and drive out the French invader'. All governors, district rulers, aghas, and other local chieftains were instructed 'to raise a volunteer force of [irregular troops, the *başıbozüks*], and to send it to join the fleet of the [*Kaptan-ı Deryâ* (Grand Admiral) Küçük Hüseyin Paşa] which was to convoy an expedition to [Abu Qir]'.¹ After receiving one of these letters, Ibrahim Agha, *Çorbacı* (Chorbaji²) of Kavala, a small town on the coast of the northern Aegean, followed the orders by summoning some 300 desperadoes from the district.³ This was an invaluable opportunity, he thought, to also rid himself of his swashbuckling nephew, Mehmed Ali (1770–1849).⁴

About 30 years old at the time, Mehmed Ali was the heir to a tobacco business and the leader of a small gang whose unruly conduct had on occasion undermined the authority of his uncle.⁵ The only survivor among his ten siblings (for reasons unknown), he was a blond, grey/hazel-eyed, hot-headed, and ambitious young man of around 5 ft 6 in. in height.⁶ Because his business did not seem to offer much prospect of an easy livelihood, he was effortlessly persuaded to join the Ottoman forces as second in command of the Albanian *başıbozüks*, leaving behind his wife, Emine Hanım, and five children.⁷

This was the beginning of an adventure, which soon became a career that played a decisive role in two different episodes of the inter-imperial crises in the

¹ Cabra, 'Quelques firmans'.

² A middle-rank Janissary leader.

³ D. A. Cameron, *Egypt in the Nineteenth Century or Mehemet Ali and His Successors Until the British Occupation in 1882* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1898), 41; Nicolai N. Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya i Egipet Iz zapisok N.N. Murav'eva (Karskago) 1832 i 1833 godov v chetyrex tomax, s Geograficheskim slovarem i kartinami*, vol 1 (Moscow: Tipografiya A.I. Mamontova i K. Bolshaya Dmitrovka, 1869), 20.

⁴ Cameron, *Egypt*, 41; Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Meş'alesi*, 5.

⁵ Khaled Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali: From Ottoman Governor to Ruler of Egypt* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 8.

⁶ Sinoue, *Méhémet Ali*, 24; Marsot, *Egypt*, 28. While Mehmed Ali is widely known to be a Sunni, his ethnic origins (some claim that he was of Kurdish origin) are less clear.

⁷ Cameron, *Egypt*, 41; S. Abū 'Izz al-Dīn, *Ibrāhīm Basha fī Süriyya* (Beirut, 1929), 2–3; Şinasi Altundağ, *Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Paşa İsyanı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1945), 22–3.

nineteenth century. One of these is relatively well known. After Mehmed Ali became the paşa of Egypt and transformed the dominions under his rule into an *imperium in imperio*, he launched a civil war against Istanbul in the 1830s that marked a turning point in the history of the Eastern Question. This episode will be considered in the Part II of this book.

There was yet another occasion when Mehmed Ali became a key actor of the Great Power interventions in the Levant. A tripartite civil war broke out in Egypt in the immediate aftermath of the French invasion of 1798–1801. It was then, under the shadow of inter-imperial rivalries between Britain, France, and the Ottoman Empire, that Mehmed Ali, once a junior soldier, emerged as a main character in the diplomatic scuffle. He managed to rise to power in Egypt before entertaining the dream of founding an independent empire of his own. Along the way, he made skilful use of local interests, insecurities, and the chaos of the civil war that was fought between the British-backed Mamluk beys of Egypt and the Ottoman forces. The fighting eventually saw the appearance of the Albanian units under Mehmed Ali's command as a third belligerent party in their own right. It was Mehmed Ali who obtained the succour of France for the Albanians' cause, in one of the many moments in his career when he strove, successfully, to jockey inter-imperial differences and wars in his favour.

The civil war in Egypt in 1801–12 was not only an early example of the coalescing of global imperial struggles and local animosities; it was also one of the earliest instances of surrogate wars in the Levant. What follows pertains to this civil war and its constitutive role in imperialism in the Levant—the imperialism of both British and French, and of both the Ottoman Empire and, in due course, Mehmed Ali.

I will begin the chapter with a discussion of the nature of politics and the economy in Ottoman Egypt before the French occupation in order to better explain how the country became a contact zone for inter-imperial rivalries that engendered a new civil war there in the 1800s. After this, I will narrate how Mehmed Ali acquired power during the fighting, and why the peculiar circumstances of violence in the 1800s affected the later phases of the Eastern Question.

Ottoman Egypt before the Eastern Question

Until the mid-nineteenth century a 'chaotic pluralism' characterized the Ottoman administrative structure in the imperial periphery.⁸ Complex networks of large and micro-regions, households of various sizes, garrisons and settlements

⁸ In fact, the same holds true for most empires in history; see Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*; Buzan and Lawson, *The Global Transformation*, 131.

parcelled out imperial authority and administrative decision-making to a wide range of local intermediaries who were linked to the central administration in a variety of forms. That is, the imperial capital fostered multivalent control over the politics, economy, finance, and administrations of the regions under its jurisdiction. The sultans' authority and political sway was tighter in Asia Minor, large parts of Greater Syria (Bilâd al-Sham) and Rumelia. But it remained weaker, if not entirely nominal, in other provinces and posts. Basra, Baghdad, Kurdistan, Yemen, and Hedjaz in Mesopotamia and the Arab peninsula, Algiers and Tunis in North Africa, and Wallachia, Moldavia, and Bosnia in the Balkans were all autonomous areas to varying degrees, linked to the imperial capital mainly by way of the payment of tributes and the supply of men in times of war.⁹

Egypt was one of these less-controlled provinces. But it was the largest and richest of all, and therefore the most important, distributing a great agricultural bounty—including rice, wheat, sugar, and coffee—to other regions of the empire.¹⁰ Moreover, due to its geographical proximity to the Holy Lands of Mecca and Medina, it was of vital strategic significance for the caliphate and the unity of Muslims worldwide. It gained salience in European inter-imperial competition as of the eighteenth century, when it came to supply grains and cotton to European markets. The Napoleonic Wars and the 1798 French expedition magnified its strategic and economic prominence. The tripartite civil war that ensued was an immediate result of this increased importance.

*

Among the main political agents in Egypt in the run-up to the 1798 expedition were the Mamluk beys. In many respects, their experience set an example for Mehmed Ali, who looked to obtain and consolidate his power in the country as of the 1800s. Their experience also reveals why Ottoman Egypt was hardly free from civil wars and violence before it became an epicentre of global imperial rivalries, and what changed in 1798.

It is difficult to clearly identify who the Mamluks were. Neither ethnically nor religiously nor class-wise can we neatly place them in one unambiguous category. They came from all vicinities—the Ottoman Empire, Europe, the Caucasus, and Africa—and constituted different classes depending on their social mobility. Only by over-generalizing can we say that the Mamluks were slave soldiers that had ruled Egypt under their sultanate prior to its conquest by the Ottoman Sultan Selim II in 1517. Theirs was a drastically singular system, wherein authority was

⁹ Yaycioğlu, *Partners*, 20.

¹⁰ Daniel Crecelius, 'Egypt in the Eighteenth Century', in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 59–86, at 59; Jane Hathaway, 'The Military Household in Ottoman Egypt', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27(1) (Feb. 1995): 39–52, at 39.

passed not from the head of the household to his children but to one of his slaves or ex-slave protégés, under the motto ‘Kingship has no progeny’.¹¹

When the Ottomans conquered Egypt, the Mamluk system was not disbanded. The major households of Egypt were ruled by one Mamluk after another. The system even swelled with the influx of new slaves from the Caucasus, Greece, Sudan, as well as Europe.¹² Although the Ottoman governor of the country and senior officials such as the *kadı* (the chief judge) were appointed by Istanbul as of the early sixteenth century, the central administration simultaneously placed several leading local figures, usually with Mamluk backgrounds, into key administrative positions (with the title ‘bey’) such as sub-provincial governorships, pilgrimage commanders, or treasurers to hold in check the power of its own governors who might aspire to acquire further autonomy from Istanbul.¹³ The Mamluks’ influence in the Ottoman Empire thus continued. An ahistorical account by a nineteenth-century French diplomat suggests that Mamluk rule was a military oligarchy, supported by the *ulemas* (religious leaders), the Ottoman Janissaries, Arab Bedouins, and Coptic writers who constituted the financial caste of Egypt. According to this account, the whole policy of the beys consisted in an understanding that there was no power that could subjugate them in Cairo.¹⁴

The Mamluks’ understanding was partially underpinned by the polymorphous household organization in the country. Theirs was one of the two main groups of households alongside those of the governors or senior officials sent by the Ottoman imperial government.¹⁵ A third group emerged over time as the Janissaries (*ocaklı*) established an economic-security network by offering protection (*himaye*) to local artisans and merchants in Cairo and the Bedouins in the countryside, which procured for them large streams of revenue—a strategy that Mehmed Ali would also follow after his arrival in Cairo. The Janissaries eventually

¹¹ Bruce Masters, ‘Semi-Autonomous Forces in the Arab Provinces’, in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 3: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 197; Cihan Y. Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 5.

¹² Hathaway, ‘The Military Household’, 39; Gran, *Islamic Roots*, 15–17.

¹³ Selda Güler, ‘Mısır’ın Son Memluk Beyleri (1801–1806)’, *Cumhuriyet Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 11(22) (fall 2015): 232.

¹⁴ ‘Extrait d’un rapport à l’E. le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères’, 10 July 1822, AMAE Papiers Desages, 60PAAP/39/158.

¹⁵ The complexities of the Egyptian household system are beyond the scope of this book and have already been detailed in Jane Hathaway’s groundbreaking book *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdaglis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Hathaway warns us that the use of the term ‘Mamluk households’, which is common in the literature, is somewhat misleading. On the subject, see also D. Daniel Creelius, *The Roots of Modern Egypt: A Study of the Regimes of ‘Ali Bey al-Kabir and Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab, 1760–1775* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1981); Michael Winter, ‘Turks, Arabs, and Mamluks in the Army of Ottoman Egypt’, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 72 (1980): 97–122; Stanford J. Shaw, *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt, 1517–1798* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962); Gabriel Piterberg, ‘The Formation of an Ottoman Egyptian Elite in the 18th Century’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22(3) (Aug. 1990): 275–89.

became involved in the lucrative coffee trade by controlling the supervision of the Suez customs. Their financial strength allowed them to leave their barracks and buy houses and slaves (or hire free-born Muslims) to form their own households.¹⁶

Since the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul aimed to establish a balance between these households and not permit one or the other to hold sway over Egypt, which would otherwise threaten the imperial authority, they sometimes dispatched agents to support the weaker households against the more powerful ones. This early Ottoman imperialism had always been an integral element of the politics of insecurity in Egypt. Partly as a result of imperial interferences and partly due to incessant reciprocal rivalries and jealousies among or within the major households, social stability in Egypt was frequently jeopardized.¹⁷

To reiterate, just like Mount Lebanon, which we will discuss in Part III, Egypt witnessed periodic civil wars of sorts before it became a focal point of the Eastern Question. In 1711, a multi-partite war broke out because of the resentments between the Mamluk beys and the Janissaries and the sudden decline of the coffee trade which jeopardized the local economy. The civil war saw rapidly formed and sundered alliances, and the assassination of several leading figures of the households.¹⁸ After the combat, the financial dominance of the Janissaries steadily dwindled, while the household factionalism between the local grandees continued and further exhausted the Mamluks.

Only three decades later, when the Kazdağlı family, with Mamluk background, emerged as the new rulers (*shaykhs al-balad*), was partial political and fiscal stability introduced in the country.¹⁹ Trade both within the Ottoman Empire and (especially) with European states flourished. Between 1747 and 1754, under the leadership of Ibrahim Kethüda, the Kazdağlı household professed obedience toward Istanbul, delivering its obligations to the empire, i.e. receiving Ottoman officials, dispatching requested troops to fight in imperial wars, sending the yearly pilgrim caravans (*haramayn*) with money and crops, and shipping tributes and supplies to Istanbul on a regular basis.²⁰

Ibrahim Kethüda's Mamluk successor, Bulutkaptan 'Ali Bey, however, aspired to independence during his dominant leadership in 1760–66 and then again from 1767 to 1772.²¹ Of either Russian or Georgian origin, Bulutkaptan looked to resurrect the Mamluk sultanate and build his own empire in alliance with St Petersburg, the sultan's major enemy at the time.²² Some 60 years prior to

¹⁶ Crecelius, 'Egypt', 63.

¹⁷ Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 11; Jane Hathaway, 'The Household: An Alternative Framework for the Military Society of Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Egypt', *Oriente Moderno* 18(7) (1999): 55–66.

¹⁸ Crecelius, 'Egypt', 70–73.

¹⁹ Ibid. 73; Hathaway, *Politics of Households*, 88–108.

²⁰ Crecelius, 'Egypt', 78.

²¹ Ibid. 59.

²² See also Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, 17. Selda Güner, 'Mısır'da Asi bir Memluk: Bulutkaptan Ali Bey (El-Kebir) (1768/9–1773)', *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 53(1) (2013): 155–82, at 166, 168, 170, 173–5. See also E. I. Druzhinina, *Kjuchuk-Kajnardzhiskij mir*

Mehmed Ali, he attempted to invade Palestine and Syria without the authorization of the sultan.²³ To this end, he recruited mercenaries, and in order to be able to fund his army, he enfeebled the Janissary corps by controlling the customs of Alexandria, Rosetta, Damietta, and Suez. Moreover, he surrounded himself with a group of Egyptian and foreign Christian advisers to build his trade, and assured European merchants of his protection, while at the same time levying high taxes on them.²⁴

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It was at this point that the local economic organization of Egypt became increasingly connected with world trade, and its gradual integration into global capitalist networks commenced. Bulutkaptan lifted the Ottoman ban on European shipping north of Jeddah (to protect Mecca and Medina) which had been in force since the ousting of the Portuguese from the Red Sea in the sixteenth century.²⁵ This was highly satisfying for the British actors present, particularly the Levant Company agent and future British consul George Baldwin (1742–1826), who had great faith in the potential of the Red Sea trade, and believed its development would give Bulutkaptan a vested interest in helping maintain the Suez route as a vital line of British communications with India.²⁶

In 1770, Bulutkaptan invaded Mecca and got himself ordained by the sharif of Mecca with the title ‘Sultan of Egypt’, and ‘Commander of the Two Seas’.²⁷ But his reign did not last long. During his Syrian campaign in 1771–2, when his brother-in-law Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dahab turned against him on the grounds that he had handed the governance of Egypt to the Christians and turned against Sultan Mustafa III, Bulutkaptan fled from Cairo and then died from wounds inflicted at the time of his failed effort to retake the town in 1773.²⁸ As the new dominant figure in Cairo, Muhammad al-Dahab immediately renounced the alliance with Russia, declared his obedience to the sultan, and remitted sums owed to the imperial capital that ‘Ali Bey had denied.

With the latter’s death in 1775, the days of relative peace, stability, and prosperity came to an end in Egypt, and factionalism resurfaced between al-Dahab’s Mamluks, Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey. The country swiftly slid into chaos. Both of Georgian origin and enjoying Russian support in secret while Catherine II was entertaining her ‘Greek project’ (see Chapter 1), Murad and Ibrahim deposed the pašas appointed by Istanbul in 1780, 1783, and 1784; they

1774 g. (Moscow: n.p., 1955); Stanford J. Shaw, *Ottoman Egypt in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 4–5; S. K. Lusignan, *A History of the Revolt of Aly Bey against the Ottoman Porte* (London: James Phillips, 1783), 146–7; Gabriel Guemard, *Les Réformes en Égypte (d’Ali-Bey El Kebir a Méhémet Ali) (1760–1848)* (Cairo: Paul Barbey, 1936), 64–5.

²³ Crecelius, ‘Egypt’, 78.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 80.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 68.

²⁶ George Baldwin, *Political Recollections Relative to Egypt* (London: W. Bulmer & Co., 1802), 183–6, 203–6; Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman Encounters*, vol. 1, 85–6.

²⁷ Kimche, ‘The Opening of the Red Sea’, 66.

²⁸ Crecelius, ‘Egypt’, 80–1.

withheld tributes and food supplies from the imperial capital, and demanded extraordinary taxes from the farmers. These overlapped with the food and financial crises in France. As the French merchants were unable to pay their debts to Murad and Ibrahim, the beys harassed them, and then threatened to destroy their houses and churches. They eventually tore down the *Couvent de Prés de la Terre Sainte* (1786). This was the last straw for the French merchants, who then appealed to their central government for help, ominously arguing that if the sultan could not resolve their problem, their own governments should do it.²⁹

Even after the eleven-month Ottoman punitive campaign under the command of Grand Admiral Hasan Paşa in 1786–7, the Mamluk beys could not be completely subjugated.³⁰ True, they were driven out of Cairo. Their belongings were confiscated, and Ismail Bey, another Mamluk loyal to the Porte, was appointed as the new *shaykh al-balad*.³¹ Hasan Paşa even reimposed the ban on Red Sea trade, before he was recalled to the imperial capital after another war with Russia broke loose. But, while leaving Egypt, to ensure regional security during the fight against Russia, the Ottoman Grand Admiral made a compromise with Murad and Ibrahim, pardoning them for their previous misdemeanours, appointing both as sub-provincial rulers in the Upper Egypt, and accepting their vows to serve the sultan and guarantee the security of the *hajj* routes to Mecca on his behalf.³²

This ephemeral solution proved insufficient when Ismail died of plague in 1791, and Murad and Ibrahim returned back to Cairo, interpreting the events as ‘intimation from heaven to break their bounds’.³³ The two made their submission to the Porte, which was duly accepted. But then, they resumed their former conduct by withholding payment of tributes to the imperial capital and forcing European as well as Muslim merchants, local guild members, and farmers to pay heavy taxes. Anarchy in Cairo, coupled with a disastrous plague epidemic, would lead to emigration and a large number of deaths, leading to a population decline by nearly 40,000.³⁴

Even before the War of the First Coalition began in Europe in 1793, France and Britain had already been engaged in open commercial competition over control of the Suez lines. Despite their thin political influence, they both laboured to persuade the Mamluk beys to offer their merchants concessions. British Consul Baldwin made several overtures to keep Red Sea trade on a fixed tariff (his plan

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ BOA A. DVNS. MSR. MHM. d., no. 10:163, 77; cf. Ali Karahan, ‘Kaptan-ı Derya Cezayirli Gazi Hasan Paşa’nın Mısır Seferi’, *MUTAD* 4(1) (2017): 75–85, at 78; *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 3, 302.

³¹ BOA, HAT, no. 1318, 1320; TSM A. E. 425/10, cf. Karahan, ‘Cezayirli’, 80; *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 3, 320–22.

³² Güler, ‘Son Memluk Beyleri’, 232–3; also see Necmi Ülker, ‘XVIII. Yüzyılda Mısır ve Cezayirli Gazi Hasan Paşa’nın Mısır Seferi’, *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* 9 (1994): 1–30; Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 12.

³³ BOA HAT 16/718; G. Baldwin (Alexandria) to Liston, 30 Oct. 1794, NLS MS 5580/35.

³⁴ André Raymond, *Cairo*, trans. Willard Wood (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 202–25.

was to accord 3 per cent to the Porte and 6 per cent to the beys). The aforementioned 1795 French mission to Egypt (see Chapter 1), led by a special agent, M. Dubois-Thainville, aimed at a similar settlement with Murad and Ibrahim. Dubois-Thainville asked for steady provision of grain from Egypt to the agrarian crisis-struck south of France, a pardon for indebted French merchants, and their regular passage by Suez to the East Indies.³⁵ But, amid rivalry and conflicts with each other, the Mamluk beys rejected these demands.

Three years later, when the French Army of the Orient set sail for the Levant, Ottoman Egypt had thus already been distressed for decades by instability, civil wars, and the Mamluks' quest for dominance at the expense of the Ottoman imperial authority. This was why the architects of the expedition considered their mission to be a noble one, which would bring stability and order in Egypt. But the harsh realities on the ground would hardly overlap with expectations in the metropole.

Useful Allies, Dangerous Enemies

After the French forces landed in Alexandria in July 1798, they overcame the naval defences of the town without much effort.³⁶ By 24 July, they had seized Rosetta, routed the Mamluk forces that had mustered to halt the French advance at Shubrakhit and Imbaba at the so-called Battle of the Pyramids (21 July), and finally entered Cairo. Plunder and pillaging then began in this commercial centre until Bonaparte himself arrived, established order, and declared that he was the friend of the local population, 'playing the role of a Muslim Sultan'. For this, he was even styled as 'Ali Bonaparte'.³⁷

However, even after the French gained control of all major towns and despite all their propaganda, annihilating the Mamluks proved impossible. Ibrahim Bey fled to Palestine, seeking shelter under the powerful Ottoman governor, Ahmed al-Jazzar Paşa. Murad Bey and his Mamluks retreated to Upper Egypt, a pursuit force under the command of General Louis-Charles-Antoine Desaix (1768–1800) behind them.³⁸ Murad managed to outrun Desaix, as the latter was much distracted by the developments of the following weeks: the destruction of Bonaparte's fleet by the British, the Anglo-Ottoman blockade, popular uprisings in Cairo in summer and October, and the failure of Bonaparte's southern Syria campaign. All these gave Murad Bey the space and freedom to hold longer.

³⁵ Liston to Baldwin, 8 Aug. 1795, NLS MS 5582/90.

³⁶ Dykstra, 'The French Occupation', 122.

³⁷ Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt*, 125–6.

³⁸ For Hijaz's support of Murad Bey, see Mordechai Abir, 'Relations between the Government of India and the Shariff of Mecca during the French Invasion of Egypt, 1798–1801', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1965): 33–4; Dykstra, 'The French Occupation of Egypt', 122.

Following Bonaparte's departure from Egypt in late 1799, the new commander of the French forces, General Kleber, made a compromise with the Mamluk bey, realizing that the Mamluks were the lesser of his enemies. Kleber recognized Murad's power in Upper Egypt as the governor of Said in return for his cooperation in retaining French control in the Delta against local opposition. About one and a half years after landing in Egypt, the French would thus come to depend on one of the Mamluk beys whose violations, amongst other reasons, had led them to undertake the expedition to the Levant in the first place.³⁹ An alliance was accordingly formed between the enemies.

But it did not last long. The arrival of Anglo-Ottoman forces one by one dealt heavy blows to the Franco-Mamluk alliance.⁴⁰ By mid-1801, after the French surrendered and the inter-imperial war drew to an end, the Mamluks were in difficulties. Due to unremitting fighting and plague, their population had sharply declined, from 10,000–12,000 before the French expedition to some 1,200.⁴¹ The French authorities had previously confiscated their lands and properties and cut out their returns. Customs revenues were no longer under their control. The days of affluence and luxury were gone. The beys were financially enfeebled.⁴²

When he returned from Palestine in September 1801, Ibrahim Bey was looking much older and physically weaker. He would tell a French agent that all he had known for a long time was 'hunger, thirst, told, fatigue and deserts.'⁴³ It was at this nadir that the beys, caught in the destructive current of war and poverty, found and grasped another imperial hand—that of Britain—which presented itself unexpectedly and helped the beys overturn their bad fortune at least momentarily.

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British policy concerning the political affairs of the Ottoman Empire in the course of the eighteenth century was in large measure confined to 'commercial relations, rather than abstract political ties'. London's diplomacy, heavily dictated by the Levant Company as well as the British imperial agents in Istanbul and Bombay, aimed at sustaining 'peaceful relations through participation of Ottoman conventions of gift-giving, ceremonial, and petitioning'.⁴⁴ In 1794, when Robert Liston (1742–1836) was posted to Istanbul as the new ambassador, he would report to

³⁹ Ibid. 129; Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt*, 186.

⁴⁰ Edward Ingram, 'Geopolitics of the First British Expedition to Egypt, III: The Red Sea Campaign 1800–1', *Middle Eastern Studies* 31(1) (Jan. 1995): 146–69; Laurens et al., *L'Expédition*, 317.

⁴¹ Elgin to Reis Efendi, 20 June 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 27; Marsot, *Muhammad Ali*, 38; Dykstra, 'French Occupation', 136.

⁴² Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 275.

⁴³ Lesseps to Talleyrand, 19 Aug. 1803, *LE* 63.

⁴⁴ Michael Talbot, *British-Ottoman Relations, 1661–1807: Commerce and Diplomatic Practice in Eighteenth-Century Istanbul* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 212. For a new and well-researched analysis of British policy in the Ottoman Middle East, see Jonathan Parry, *Promised Lands: Britain and the Ottoman Middle East* (Princeton University Press, forthcoming).

London that 'it was only at the moment of a threatened or an existing rupture with its neighbours that [the Ottoman Empire] deserved the notice of the rest of Europe... I hesitate whether I ought to trouble you with the account of anything that passes at Constantinople.'⁴⁵

British apathy concerning the political affairs of the Levant was abruptly shaken by the French expedition to Egypt in 1798. For London, securing Egypt meant shielding the transportation and communication routes to India.⁴⁶ As global colonial rivalry had shifted from the Americas to Asia in the eighteenth century, the French expedition made it even more apparent that the Ottoman Empire, in general, and Egypt, in particular, were essential for the resources and the markets that sustained the British Empire.⁴⁷

While fighting with the French was under way in 1801, there was still no set British policy on how to secure Egypt against another French attack after the war. In the absence of steamship lines and a telegraph system, which would be introduced to Egypt only in 1854, it took at least two months to receive instructions from London or Paris to Egypt, and weeks from Istanbul or Bombay. This meant that the imperial agents on the ground possessed a degree of liberty in making decisions and taking action, sometimes in the heat of the moment and in accordance with the immediate requirements of the time, which could on occasion go against the first choices of their seniors in their imperial capitals.

The shape of British policy in Egypt in 1801 was a graphic example of this. It took form with a pragmatic promise at first. More than a century before the infamous 1915 McMahon–Hussein correspondence with which Britain pledged to the Arab populations of the 'Middle East' the carving of an Arab Kingdom out of the Ottoman Empire, the commander of British troops in Egypt, Major General John Hely-Hutchinson (1757–1832), guaranteed the Mamluk beys British protection in return for their support during his offensive against the numerically superior French troops at Rahmanie.

Hely-Hutchinson's promise is documented in a letter dispatched in early May 1801. This was a letter of condolence: Murad Bey had just died and was succeeded by his Mamluk, Osman Bey Bardisi. The major general wrote that, 'together with their great local knowledge' the Mamluks would have been of 'utmost utility to [his forces],' and that he had 'received orders from the King to procure your friendship and alliance, and to do for your advantage everything in my power. You well know that when an English[man] speaks in the name of His King his word is sacred.' Hely-Hutchinson thus offered Osman Bey his protection 'in the most

⁴⁵ Robert Liston to Sir W. Hamilton, 17 Nov. 1794, NLS MS 5579/45.

⁴⁶ G. Baldwin (Alexandria) to Liston, 30 Oct. 1794, NLS MS 5580/35.

⁴⁷ Edward Ingram, 'Geopolitics of the First British Expedition to Egypt, I: The Cabinet Crisis of September 1800', *Middle Eastern Studies* 30(3) (July 1994): 435–60. Also see, Parry, *Promised Lands*, Introduction.

solemn manner, and you well know that the English Nation is pious towards God, and just towards Man.⁴⁸

The problem was that in fact Hely-Hutchinson had no explicit orders from the king, nor from the Foreign Office or Lord Elgin, the British ambassador to Istanbul. The last official letter Hely-Hutchinson had got possession of on the subject of British policy towards the Mamluks was dated 23 December 1800. It was from the under-secretary at the ministry of war, William Huskisson (1770–1830), to Sir Ralph Abercromby (1734–1801), whose correspondence had included a statement that ‘everything ought to be done to reconcile [the Mamluks] to the British Government’. Hely-Hutchinson wrote to Lord Elgin that he had considered this to be an ‘instruction’. He knew well, though, that it was not.

A few months later Hely-Hutchinson confessed that the Mamluk question caused him under ‘very serious embarrassments’, but reasoned that ‘under all the circumstances of the case, even admitting that I had no instructions at all’, he himself had to take on the responsibility of promising the Mamluks amnesty and protection. ‘In short,’ he claimed, ‘it was my duty to have done anything which would have prevented them [from] throwing themselves into the hands of the French’, because he was aware ‘what useful allies or what dangerous enemies’ the Mamluks could become.⁴⁹ According to Hely-Hutchinson, ensuring stability in Egypt and thus repulsing another French campaign depended on supporting the Mamluks.⁵⁰

After receiving Hely-Hutchinson’s promise, even though the beys did not immediately leave their alliance with France and instead followed a wait-and-see policy in the course of the fighting in Egypt, they did provide assistance to the major-general, and after each British victory, their policy gradually shifted toward Britain. Hardly any correspondence took place thereafter between the British agents and the Mamluks, however, in which the latter did not remind the king’s men of their promises of protection.

What transpired in the following years is in many respects comparable to the questions that pertain to proxy relations in the contemporary Middle East, enmeshed in civil war. To what extent are the promises delivered to local inhabitants by the imperial men on the spot tangible and credible? How do the imperial and local actors form ‘special relationships’ in the first place? When do they outgrow each other, and how?

A pragmatic promise by Hely-Hutchinson had in the first place prompted a special tie between Britain and the Mamluks in 1801. Would the connection with the Mamluks still need to be sustained after the war? Opinions differed among British statesmen and officers with respect to this question. As the leading man on

⁴⁸ Hutchinson to Osman bey el Bardissi, 5 May 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 9.

⁴⁹ Hutchinson to Elgin, 25 June 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 40–42.

⁵⁰ Hutchinson to Robert Hobart, 2 June 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 17.

the spot, Hely-Hutchinson still believed that the British policy should opt for an alliance with the Mamluks, not the 'Turks'.⁵¹

His opinion had great weight, but various alternative plans were discussed by British agents in London, Istanbul, and Alexandria, some of which went as far as to suggest keeping Egypt for the British Empire 'upon the principle [of security] which the French had adopted' or destroying Egypt by inundation in the event that it would be impracticable for Britain to keep that country. Another option was to leave an armed force behind in Egypt, destroy the Mamluks, and secure the country on behalf of the sultan in return for commercial privileges.⁵²

The quandary here was that Britain's broader strategic and commercial interests relied on not losing the sultan to any French cause, while the Mamluk presence in Egypt as surrogates against France was of vital importance for the security of India.⁵³ In the end, the Addington cabinet pursued a *via media* wherein neither the Porte nor the Mamluk beys would be offended. Reversing neither of her previous policies, Britain opted for the ambitious and precarious agenda of reconciling the interests of the Mamluks and the Sublime Porte. Her defence system would build on leaving a British military contingent behind in Alexandria until a stable order was established in the country between Mamluk and Ottoman forces, all the while influencing the Mamluks to become attached to the British, as well as loyal to the Porte.⁵⁴

The plan was ambitious because the Mamluk beys were extremely reluctant and therefore cautious regarding the re-establishment of an Ottoman rule. They distrusted the good faith of their (at least nominal) overlords.⁵⁵ But through a patient policy, Hely-Hutchinson managed to secure the word of Osman Bey that, to curry favour with the sultan, he and other beys would increase the tribute to the Porte, accept the maintenance of Ottoman garrisons in the ports and towns, and recognize the paşa sent by Istanbul as the governor of the country.⁵⁶ He persuaded them by pointing to the 'most friendly nature' of Ottoman Grand Admiral Küçük Hüseyin Paşa's approach towards the Mamluks during the battles against the French, and making it clear to them that, although Britain was 'very much interested in them, she could never recognise them except as subjects of the Porte'.⁵⁷

Simultaneously in both Istanbul and Egypt, the British agents asked the Ottoman ministers to trust the Mamluk beys, pardon their previous misdeeds, and permit their return to their pre-occupation properties on the grounds that

⁵¹ Hutchinson to Henry Dundas (Minister of War), 3 Apr. 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 5.

⁵² J. J. Morier to George Hammond (Undersecretary of State), 7 July 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 30.

⁵³ Robert Banks Jenkinson (Lord Hawkesbury) (Minister of Foreign Affairs) to Elgin, 19 May 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 12.

⁵⁴ Elgin to Hutchinson, 20 Aug. 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 59.

⁵⁵ 'Déclaration adressée par les Beys d'Égypte au Gouvernement ottoman', *LPM* vol. 1, 145.

⁵⁶ Hutchinson to Hobart, 21 Sept. 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 80.

⁵⁷ Hutchinson to Osman bey el Bardissi, 5 May 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 9; Hutchinson to Reis Efendi, 23 July 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 39.

their conduct had been meritorious during the ousting of the enemy.⁵⁸ In late July 1801, Hely-Hutchinson wrote to the Porte that it was ‘absolutely necessary to rely on the strength and local knowledge of the Mamluks’ in face of a likely recurring attack by the French.⁵⁹

The British plan was precarious because it did not sit well with Ottoman imperial policy at the end of the war. It did not take into account that Sultan Selim III and his agents might have followed a pragmatic and tentative policy towards the Mamluks before the French were driven out.⁶⁰ The lenience of Grand Admiral Küçük Hüseyin Paşa and Grand Vizier Yusuf Ziya Paşa towards the beys had stemmed from the latter’s ‘usefulness’ during the war more than from anything else. This was why, in their verbal communications with British agents, the Ottoman paşas had agreed to return the beys’ properties.

But this was before the grand vizier’s army entered Egypt, besieged Cairo in September 1801, and made a preliminary peace with France the following month. It was before Selim III wrote to Yusuf Ziya that control over Egypt (*Mısır’ın zabtı*) could be obtained not only by driving out the French but also by entirely eliminating (*külliyen def*) the Mamluks whose offences the French had pointed to as an excuse for their expedition.⁶¹ If the beys remained in Egypt, the sultan believed, it would be impossible to establish the planned order (*mathup olan nizâm*), and the situation of the country could turn out to be much worse than before.⁶²

At Selim III’s orders, the grand vizier and the grand admiral annulled all pardons to the Mamluk beys.⁶³ They then mischievously arrested some of the leading Mamluk leaders, trapping them at private receptions in Cairo and Abu Qir on 22 October 1801, as a punishment for their ‘notoriously known’ misconduct before the French occupation.⁶⁴ Four of the resisting beys were killed during an attempt to flee.⁶⁵

Matters then came to a head between Ottoman and British agents. When he heard the news of the arrest of the beys, Hely-Hutchinson was enraged. What the Ottoman authorities had done violated his promises to the Mamluks and the pledges of the Ottoman paşas to him. He therefore immediately (23 October) demanded from the grand admiral and grand vizier the delivery to him of the beys, both dead and alive, and warned them to ‘prepare for defence’ otherwise. Only after he marched a detachment of cavalry and four pieces of

⁵⁸ Elgin to Reis Efendi, 20 June 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 27.

⁵⁹ Hutchinson to Reis Efendi, 23 July 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 39.

⁶⁰ BOA HAT 3457; 6501, cf. Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 21–2; also see Karal, ‘İngiltere’nin Akdeniz Hakimiyeti Hakkında vesikalar’, 130; cf. Karal, *Selim III’ün Hat-ı Hümayunları*, 142.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 141.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Shaw, *Selim III*, 277.

⁶⁴ BOA HAT 3457; İzzet Hasan Efendi, *Ziyânâme, Sadrazam Yusuf Ziya Paşa’nın Napolyon’a Karşı Mısır Seferi* (1798–1802), ed. M. İlkin Erkutun (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınevi, 2009), 236; cf. Güner, ‘Mısır’ın’, 239; BOA HAT 3457, 6501. See also Yüksel Çelik, ‘III. Selim Devrinde Mısır’da Osmanlı-İngiliz Rekabeti (1798–1807)’, in *Nizam-ı Kadim’den Nizam-ı Cedid’e III. Selim ve Dönemi*, ed. Seyfi Kenan (Istanbul: ISAM Yayınları, 2010), 354–5.

⁶⁵ BOA HAT 157/6537, 26 Oct. 1801; Çelik, ‘Mısır’da’, 355.

artillery to the Ottoman grand admiral's tent did the latter agree to return to the British the living Mamluk beys and the corpses of those killed.⁶⁶ As Küçük Hüseyin Paşa reported to Istanbul, the allies, Britain and the Ottoman Empire, were now 'in a position of war'.⁶⁷

Hely-Hutchinson believed that British military presence in Egypt procured him a legitimate right to have a say on how order should be established in the country because, in the end, without British assistance, the sultan's forces could hardly retake Egypt from France. But for the Ottoman authorities, Hely-Hutchinson's move was nothing but a breach of their sovereign rights, no matter what had brought the British forces to Egypt in the first place and what role they had played in driving out the French. Hely-Hutchinson's stance epitomized the self-granted right of Great Powers to intervene in the affairs of the Ottoman Levant. As we will see in the following chapters, this became a recurring discursive practice, and one of the key features of the unfolding culture of transimperial security in the decades to come.

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When the grand admiral's report on Hely-Hutchinson's actions arrived in Istanbul, the Porte immediately sent a protest to Lord Elgin. The British ambassador assured the Ottoman authorities that Britain would by no means interfere with the domestic affairs of Egypt, and sent instructions to Hely-Hutchinson to this effect.⁶⁸ But before these instructions arrived in Egypt, he had kept up the pressure in the field, this time on the grand vizier, who then also delivered the Mamluks under his arrest to the British. For protection, the beys were dispatched to Alexandria, where the British garrisons were stationed.

Sultan Selim III was exasperated by the embarrassment caused by all that had transpired in his dominions. He was angry that his own men, including his childhood friend Küçük Hüseyin Paşa, had been humiliated by British agents and prevented from taking measures against the Mamluks. With these sentiments he sent a letter to King George III in November 1801, explaining the offences of the Mamluk beys in the past and why an amnesty could not have been granted to them.⁶⁹ He pointed to the fact that the orders of the Ottoman governors had been completely ignored or opposed by the Mamluk beys in the previous decades and that, despite the promises the beys had delivered during the Ottoman punitive missions in the 1780s, they did not make 'the slightest scruple to elude execution'. Selim III also reminded the king of the 'atrocities and injustices' the Mamluks had committed towards Egyptian inhabitants and merchants, as well as the 'incalculable vexations against the Franks against the spirit of the Imperial Capitulations'.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Hutchinson to Hobart, 24 Dec. 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 159.

⁶⁷ BOA HAT 157/6537.

⁶⁸ *Selim III'ün Hattı Hümayunları*, 146.

⁶⁹ BOA HAT 3602; cf. Çelik, 'Mısır'da', 355.

⁷⁰ Selim III to Roi d'Angleterre, 23 Nov. 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 136.

King George III responded about three months later, assuring the sultan that it had never been Britain's goal to interfere in the internal affairs of Egypt, 'except in as far as respects the fulfilment of engagements which may have been contracted in Our Name'.⁷¹ Britain had had enough of differences with the Porte because of Hely-Hutchinson, and Lord Elgin was therefore ordered to remove the British officer from Egypt. The order was duly put in motion and Hutchinson was relocated due to his 'declining health'.⁷²

A few weeks after the British major general left Egypt on 7 November, he wrote to Lord (Robert) Hobart (1760–1854), secretary of state for war and colonies, that his demeanour might have been wrong but that something vigorous had to be done 'in order to distinguish our conduct from the cruel policy and faithless duplicity at all times adopted by those barbarians, the Turks'.⁷³ He was satisfied with his mission, and believed that he had ensured the much-needed succour of the Mamluks by protecting them from suppression by the Ottomans. He had kept his promise.

The Tripartite Civil War

This was how the actions of the men of the spot became as pivotal as decisions taken in the imperial metropolises in the formative years of the transimperial security culture in the Levant. Hely-Hutchinson's departure from Egypt in November 1801 did not end Anglo-Ottoman rivalry, but only marked the beginning of new tensions. At about the same time, the grand admiral and the grand vizier also returned to their capital, in November and December respectively. From that point on, the politics in Egypt was left largely in the hands of those lower-rank imperial officers who remained.

Hüsrev Efendi, who had landed in 1800 and fought against the French as the chamberlain of the grand admiral, was one of these officers. He had been promoted as the paşa of Cairo on 16 September 1801.⁷⁴ With a small garrison of 6,000–10,000 undisciplined Janissaries and an Albanian contingent of irregulars, each of whom loathed the other, his instruction was to subordinate the beys in early 1802.⁷⁵ It was then that the Albanian 'swashbuckler' Mehmed Ali came to

⁷¹ King George III to Sultan Selim, n.d., *LPM* vol. 1, 217–18.

⁷² Hutchinson to Hobart, 21 Sept. 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 80.

⁷³ Hutchinson to Hobart, 24 Dec. 1801, *LPM* vol. 1, 159.

⁷⁴ On the French evacuation of Egypt and the subsequent talks about its procedures, see Küçük Hüseyin Paşa to Sultan Selim III, 29 Z 1214, TSA 1951/1/481/38. On the appointment of Hüsrev, BOA HAT 6781; cf. Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 22; *Selim III'ün Hattı Hümayunları*, 140, 145, 146.

⁷⁵ Al-Jabarti writes that the Albanians 'looked down on the Janissaries and regarded them with contempt, in spite of the fact that the Janissaries held a high opinion of themselves and looked on themselves as the mainstay of the empire, viewing the Albanians as their servants, their soldiers, and their subordinates': *'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti's History of Egypt. 'Aja'ib al-athâr fi 'l-Tarajim wa 'l-Akhhâr*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Moshe Perlmann, vols 3–4, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994),

serve under Hüsrev's rule as a *serçeşme*, or second in command, of the Albanian contingent.⁷⁶ As we will see in the following chapters, the two men would grow to become lifelong enemies, and their enmity would existentially threaten both the Ottoman Empire and European peace.

But, as yet, they were junior actors, tasked with establishing Ottoman authority in Egypt. For this, Hüsrev invited the Mamluk beys to submit to his rule of their own will in peace and quietness. But the beys rejected this.⁷⁷ He was then authorized to give the Mamluk beys *raay* (pardon) and *aman* (security, safe conduct) if they devoted themselves to the sultan and retired from Egypt to another region in the empire with a handsome pension.⁷⁸ However, uncertain about their future elsewhere in the empire, the beys again rejected the offer, choosing to remain in the one place they considered home.⁷⁹

In the meantime, Hüsrev sent his forces, the Albanians under Mehmed Ali and the Janissaries, to chase after the beys. The two chief Mamluk beys, Ibrahim and Osman Bardisi, later joined by a third prominent figure, Muhammad Alfi, retired to Djizze to shield themselves from Ottoman attacks. They repeatedly reminded British authorities of 'the sacred and solemn' promises Hely-Hutchinson had made on behalf of the king.⁸⁰ They complained that Britain could hardly keep the Mamluks out of danger while their properties were still in the hands of the Ottomans.

Violence ensued. In early 1803, a British agent reported from Alexandria that Lower Egypt on the left bank of the Nile was plunged into 'the miseries of a civil war' wherein Ottoman forces under Hüsrev Paşa were subjected to embarrassing defeats by their Mamluk counterparts.⁸¹ Neither the Ottoman imperial army nor the French had been able to fully eliminate the Mamluks by force before. Now the Janissaries and Mehmed Ali's Albanian troops were unable to match the speed, local knowledge, and power of the skilful Mamluk cavalries either. The beys continually received assistance from the British forces still stationed in Alexandria, in the shape of ammunition. The king's army had also made contacts

376. On the number of soldiers, Atilla Çetin, *Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Paşa'nın Mısır Valiliği. Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre* (Istanbul: Fatih Ofset, 1998), 25.

⁷⁶ Major Stuart (Alexandria) to Hüsrev Paşa, 16 Dec. 1802, AMAE CP Turquie 205/307; Major Stuart to Hüsrev Paşa, 13 Feb. 1803, AMAE CP Turquie 205/422; Major Stuart to Hüsrev Paşa, 26 Feb. 1803, AMAE CP Turquie 205/450; Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Meş'elesi*, 6.

⁷⁷ BOA TD.AVD. 53/25, 113; BOA C.DH 17108, 13–14 Feb. 1802; BOA C.ML 2466; BOA C.ML 2933; cf. Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 25; Al-Jabarti, '*Aja'ib al-Athâr*', vols 3–4, 244; Marsot, *Egypt*, 38.

⁷⁸ BOA HAT 3619; Çelik, '*Mısır'da*', 358.

⁷⁹ BOA HAT 3604; *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 7, 155; *Netayic-ul Vuku'at*, vol. 4, 85; Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 27; John D. Grainger, *The Amiens Truce: Britain and Bonaparte, 1801–1803* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 160, 169.

⁸⁰ Ibrahim Bey and Osman Bey to General Stuart (written in the morning of their departure from Gizeh), 25 Jan. 1802, *LPM* vol. 1, 172–4.

⁸¹ Major General Stuart to Lord Hobart, 28 Feb. 1803, *LPM* vol. 1, 386.

with Arab Bedouin tribes, and swayed them, in return for handsome financial rewards, to support the beys militarily.⁸²

Even though Egypt had witnessed several episodes of violence and civil war before, this one was different in that Britain (and eventually France) also had a stake, and Britain's imperial quest for security was outsourced to the local actors. It is true that Russia had previously also backed the Mamluk beys in their endeavours to gain independence from the Porte in the 1770s. But Empress Catherine II had supplied succour in the hope of weakening the Ottoman Empire from within and then dismembering it. What was different in 1803 was that the British authorities on the spot were of the belief that their endeavour to protect the Mamluks was actually in the interests of the sultan albeit against his will.

They remained loyal to their policy of reconciling the Ottoman authorities and the Mamluks. Even though in the Treaty of Amiens signed between France and Britain in March 1802, an article had stipulated that Britain would evacuate her forces from Egypt within six months, as the months passed, London showed no intention of complying with the agreement for fear of the return of the French to Egypt.⁸³ Its 4,500 men in Alexandria, the so-called 'emporium and key of Egypt', would not leave without first ensuring the security of the Mamluks.⁸⁴

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The delayed or slow evacuation of the British forces paved the way for France to once again become involved in the affairs of Ottoman Egypt.⁸⁵ It turned what was initially 'the Mamluk question' into an 1800s version of 'the Eastern Question on the spot'.⁸⁶ The Sublime Porte welcomed French endeavours to help them urge the British towards evacuation.⁸⁷ But eyebrows in Istanbul were raised when the French agents wanted to mediate between the Ottoman authorities and the Mamluks against the sultan's orders.

Colonel Sebastiani, who had been sent to Egypt specifically for this purpose in the autumn of 1802, could not obtain Hüsrev's permission on the grounds that it was now the policy of the sultan not to involve foreign actors in the internal affairs

⁸² BOA HAT 3454-A, 3619, 3638-A; cf. Çelik, 'Mısır'da', 362.

⁸³ Grainger, *The Amiens Truce*, 160.

⁸⁴ Ronald T. Ridley, *Napoleon's Proconsul in Egypt: The Life and Times of Bernardino Drovetti* (London: Rubicon Press, 1998), 24–7.

⁸⁵ Karol Sorby, 'The Struggle between Great Britain and France to Influence the Character of Government in Egypt', *Asian and African Studies* 22 (1986): 161–89.

⁸⁶ 'Rapport de chef de brigade Horace Sebastiani', n.d., *LE 3*; Édouard Driault, 'Mohamed-Ali et Ibrahim', in *Précis de l'histoire de d'Égypte. L'Égypte Ottomane, l'Expédition Française en Égypte et le Règne de Mohamed-Aly (1517–1849)*, vol. 3 (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire, 1933), 202; Jeremy Black, *From Louis XIV to Napoleon: The Fate of a Great Power* (London: Routledge, 1999), 183.

⁸⁷ Henry Laurens, 'L'Égypte en 1802. Un rapport inédit de Sébastiani', *Annales Islamologiques* 23 (1987): 99–116, at 100.

of Egypt.⁸⁸ Yet the French agent insisted, arguing that since commerce in Egypt had been interrupted due to the ongoing hostilities between the Mamluk beys and Ottoman troops, it had become an important issue for many nations, including France. It was by order of the first consul that he had to go to see the beys, and if the paşa continued to obstruct Sebastiani's mission, it would mean 'coldness between the Sublime Porte and the French Republic' and disrespect to Bonaparte.⁸⁹

Even though Hüsrev rebuffed Sebastiani's demand, the latter still got in touch with the Mamluk beys by circulating among their partisans brochures that said Bonaparte was their friend, and as their friend would exercise influence in their favour at the Porte.⁹⁰ He went on to promise the beys that, unlike their sour involvement with the British, the Mamluks could trust France to adhere to her engagements.⁹¹

In his return to Paris, the report Sebastiani presented to Bonaparte was possibly the most important component of his mission. He described the appalling situation of war-torn Egypt as an opportunity to seize the country. His remarks about the attachment of certain Arab leaders in the Levant to Bonaparte alerted both London and Istanbul.⁹² Bonaparte added a note in the margins of Sebastiani's report: that some 6,000 men would suffice to recapture Egypt. The note was pivotal in making the British authorities believe that the Corsican was planning another expedition to the Levant. They anxiously pondered when France would start this second expedition. Bonaparte never did. But British apprehension sufficed to trigger panic.

It also expedited an Anglo-Ottoman agreement over the future of the Mamluks in Egypt. The new scheme, drawn up by Ottoman Grand Vizier Yusuf Paşa in early 1803, would permit the Mamluk beys to remain in Egypt but only in a designated sub-province in Upper Egypt, Aswan, that consisted of islands upon the Nile and a narrow strip between the western banks of the rivers and the desert.⁹³ The British agents believed that this would secure for the Mamluks a safe haven. Soon after, on 11 March 1803, the evacuation of their troops from Alexandria began.⁹⁴

The Mamluk beys Osman, Mohammad Alfi, and Ibrahim were tremendously disheartened by their relocation to Aswan and the British evacuation of troops. Nobody had asked their opinion of the region allocated to them. They believed that Aswan could barely afford them means of support, and were dismayed at now being left on their own. Even though they began their march to Aswan in April 1803, their responses to the situation differed.⁹⁵

⁸⁸ Hüsrev Paşa to Talleyrand, 6 Nov. 1802, *LE* 26–7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ 'Protocole résumé de la conférence tenue entre Housrew Pacha et Colonel Sebastiani', n.d., *LPM* vol. 1, 376–8.

⁹¹ Stuart to Hobart, 20 Jan. 1803, *LPM* vol. 1, 379–80.

⁹² Laurent, 'Un rapport', 113–14.

⁹³ Grand Vizier to Stuart, 19 Jan. 1803, *LPM* vol. 1, 373–4.

⁹⁴ BOA HAT 6845, 3525, 6537-C, 6571; cf. Çelik, *Şeyhü'l-Vüzerâ*, 36–7.

⁹⁵ General Stuart (Malta) to Major General Brownrigg, 6 Apr. 1803, *LPM* vol. 1, 396.



Map 2. Egypt

Osman and Ibrahim felt tempted by a rapprochement with France. But the third bey, Mohammad Alfi, a rival of Osman, saw greater value in maintaining the alliance with Britain. He even requested to be sent to London as a ‘representative’ of the Mamluks, making large provisional remittances for this. British authorities agreed, considering it a way to open and cultivate a ‘chain of influence’ and cement Britain’s future influence in Egypt. Because Alfi was popular amongst both Mamluks and Arabs, one argued, ‘he may be a forcible instrument in the hands of [Britain]... to counteract any projects of the French to build a rival interest with those parties on their disappointment at our departure.’⁹⁶

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In May 1803, two months after the British evacuation of Alexandria, the War of the Third Coalition broke out in Europe. The Great Power wars steadily coalesced

⁹⁶ Major General Stuart to Lord Hobart, 28 Mar. 1803, *LPM* vol. 1, 388.

with the civil war in Egypt. As Europe descended into violence, the Mamluk beys, Osman and Ibrahim, were on their way to Aswan, and Alfi to London. An unexpected development in the Ottoman camp in April–May 1803 enabled the return of Osman and Ibrahim to Cairo a few months later.

What occasioned this was a dispute over the Albanian contingent's due payments in the Ottoman camp. As a result of governor Hüsrev Paşa's desire to disband their regiments and send the desperadoes back to Rumelia, the Albanians revolted against the paşa, and insurrections took place in Cairo on 29 April and 2 May against his despised, repressive rule.⁹⁷ Hüsrev was forced to desert the city, and posted himself to Mansoura.⁹⁸

Just when the Albanians took control, a fresh wave of plunder and fighting began between the Janissaries and the Albanian contingents. The commander of the Albanian troops, Tahir Paşa, was killed by two Janissary aghas, Musa and Ismail.⁹⁹ Mehmed Ali, together with the aghas Omer and Ahmed, then came to the forefront as leaders of the Albanian detachments. In order to match the military strength of the Ottoman authorities, they invited the Mamluk beys, Osman and Ibrahim, to Cairo. The Mamluks eagerly accepted the invitation and the gates of Cairo were once again opened to them.¹⁰⁰

This unexpected Mamluk–Albanian alliance ensured the suppression of the Janissaries and ended the bloodbath, helped bring temporary order and security, and allowed the resumption of ordinary business in the city.¹⁰¹ The beys then established full control over Egypt for the first time since 1798—but for the last time ever. They collected large sums of money from the Cairene, captured Hüsrev, brought him back to Cairo as a captive, entered Rosetta and subdued Fort Lesbe.¹⁰²

In the meanwhile, the Albanian commander Mehmed Ali came to shine amid the limelight of politics and became immensely popular among the inhabitants. As his biographer tells us, Mehmed Ali was a man who had mastered 'the art of staging spectacles and of influencing audiences'.¹⁰³ Making a 'show of benevolence and friendship' to the local population—for example, taking their side during times of heavy taxation or rapidly enforcing security for the local businesses in times of turbulence—he quickly established key alliances with local religious

⁹⁷ Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 1, 18; *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 7, 216–17; BOA HAT 3592; cf. Çetin, *Kavalah*, 35.

⁹⁸ Major Missett to Lord Hobart, 4 May 1803, *LPM* vol. 2, 13–14; L. E. Caffé, agent de la République française, to Ministre des Relations Extérieures, 5 May 1803, AMAE CP Turquie 206; BOA HAT 86/3523; Güler, 'Mısır'ın', 249; Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 17; Brune to Talleyrand, 10 June 1803, AMAE CP Turquie 206.

⁹⁹ Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athâr*, vols 3–4, 376–8, 382; Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes'alesi*, 7; BOA HAT 3655, 3534, 2605; Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes'alesi*, 6–7; Missett to Hobart, 2 June 1803, *LPM* vol. 2, 20.

¹⁰¹ Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athâr*, vols 3–4, 383.

¹⁰² Lesseps to Talleyrand, 9 July 1803, *LE* 55–7; BOA HAT 83/3447-P, 18 Aug. 1803; cf. Güler, 'Mısır'ın', 252; Missett to Hobart, 8 July 1803, *LPM* vol. 2, 23–4.

¹⁰³ Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 8–9.

leaders and leading merchants.¹⁰⁴ Alongside the Albanian troops, he thus found his greatest power base in his amicable relations with the elites of Cairo. This tour de force helped him craft a place for himself among the locals, and ‘then to impose his will on both the Mamluks and the [Porte]’.¹⁰⁵

Mehmed Ali also managed to make use of inter-imperial rivalries at this moment. At first, however, he erred on the side of caution since he had not enough power to wield for any political gain as yet, and both British and French agents were looking to win the Mamluks to their cause. To be clear, ‘winning the Mamluks’ meant no more than exercising influence over their policies in favour of British or French imperial interests. But the Anglo-French involvements did affect the course of the civil war significantly.

After the departure of the British troops, Major Ernest Missett remained and represented British interests, reporting on the military situation in Egypt. He was mesmerized by the achievements of the Mamluk beys.¹⁰⁶ Even though he had been instructed to conciliate between the Mamluks and the Porte, he considered Mamluk control over Cairo as a precious opportunity to achieve security for both Egypt and Britain, and gave the beys advice on where and how to fortify against the likely return of the French.¹⁰⁷ By the summer of 1803, he had managed to gain considerable influence over Ibrahim Bey.¹⁰⁸

France counteracted by sending two agents, Bernardino Drovetti (1776–1852) and Mathieu de Lesseps (1771–1832—the father of Ferdinand de Lesseps, the future developer of the Suez Canal project), as French consul and vice-consul.¹⁰⁹ They were ordered to establish connections with local actors and break Anglo-Mamluk ties. Talleyrand warned his agents that, even though the British troops had left Egypt, ‘the continuity of her relations with the [Mamluk] beys, whose rebellion against the Ottoman Porte she had supported, the reception she gave to [Alfi Bey] in London, can convince the [Sublime Porte] that [Britain] does not look at the affairs of the Levant as fully completed for her.’¹¹⁰

In the following months, surrogate alliances were formed and dissolved between British and French agents and Mamluk beys at bewildering speed.¹¹¹ In the end, while Britain procured the support of both Osman and Ibrahim, the inter-imperial competition concerning winning over the Mamluks imparted to the beys a great degree of confidence that fate had brought Egypt under their rule. With the same confidence, when the sultan sent a new governor, Ahmed Paşa, to assert authority in Cairo, calling for *maslaha*, the beys defied him, signifying that their

¹⁰⁴ Al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib al-athār*, vols 3–4, 435. ¹⁰⁵ Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 21.

¹⁰⁶ Ridley, *Drovetti*, 26. ¹⁰⁷ Lesseps to Talleyrand, 9 July 1803, *LE* 55–7.

¹⁰⁸ Vice Consul Petrucci (a Maltese gentleman and British agent at Rosetta) to Missett, 13 Aug. 1803, *LPM* vol. 2, 30.

¹⁰⁹ Ridley, *Drovetti*, 26. ¹¹⁰ Talleyrand to Brune, 28 May 1803, *LE*, 50.

¹¹¹ Lesseps to Talleyrand, 20 June 1803, *LE*, 51; Missett to Hobart, 28 Oct. 1803 (received 29 Feb. 1804), *LPM* vol. 2, 47–8.

only resolution was to submit to 'no form of government but that which existed when Egypt was invaded by the French'.¹¹² They then even killed Ahmed during a skirmish in early 1804.¹¹³

Mamluk control over Egypt lasted until early 1804. On 14 February, when Alfi Bey returned from London, the Mamluks were weakened from within. This was because, after spending less than a year abroad, most of that time in Malta under quarantine, Alfi had come back with bitter feelings towards Britain.¹¹⁴ Despite the receptions organized in his honour in London, he could not get over the treatment he had received during the quarantine. Nor could he have obtained any political guarantees from the king's government.

As soon as Osman and Ibrahim (both sympathizing with Britain now) heard about the return of Alfi, they began their preparations for an attack on him before he was able to threaten their authority. Alfi possessed considerable lands and had great influence over the local population, which was imperilling Osman and Ibrahim's authority over their followers.¹¹⁵

The beys were then immediately embroiled in personal rivalries, hatred and a struggle for power, which irreversibly debilitated their authority in the country.¹¹⁶ Their need for funds led them to stop recognizing the capitulatory agreements and to pressure foreign merchants and consuls to summon some 150 purses. Refusal of this demand led to violent threats.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the arrears of the Albanian troops, and perhaps most importantly the difficulties faced by the inhabitants of Cairo, prompted the beys' loss of popularity and authority.

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It was then that the interests of the Albanians, the Cairene population, and the French converged. And the one man that benefited the most from this proved to be young Mehmed Ali. He obtained French support to get himself pardoned before the Porte and help drive the British-backed Mamluks out of Cairo, thus freeing the local population from their reign of terror.¹¹⁸ In February 1804, he approached the French vice-consul, Lesseps 'under the promise of secrecy', and told him that, as soon as the Albanian troops received some money, they would 'make a splash' that would put them back in the good graces of the Porte and destroy the Mamluks. 'How', he downheartedly asked, 'can we count

¹¹² Missett to Hobart, 30 July 1803, *LPM* vol. 2, 27.

¹¹³ BOA HAT 11/983; BOA HAT 11/984, cf. Çelik, *Şeyhü'l-Vüzerâ*, 51, 52, 58; Lesseps to Drovetti, 22, 25 Jan. 1804; Lesseps to Talleyrand, 7 Feb. 1804, Douin, *LE*, 147, 148, 155; Missett to Hobart, 4 Feb. 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 97.

¹¹⁴ BOA HAT 84, 3450-E; cf. Selda Güner, 'Londra'da bir Memlûk Beyi. Muhammed Bey Elfi (Ekim-Aralık 1803)', *Akademik Bakış* 9(17) (winter 2015): 53.

¹¹⁵ Çetin, *Kavalalı*, 73.

¹¹⁶ Fahmy, 'The Era of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha', 143-4.

¹¹⁷ Missett (Cairo) to Hobart, 11 Feb. 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 102; Lesseps to Talleyrand, 23 Feb. 1804, *LE*, 173.

¹¹⁸ Lesseps (Alexandria) to Talleyrand, 23 Feb. 1804, *LE*, 172.

on [the Mamluk beys]? They are guilty of the most atrocious perfidy against their brother[s], their comrade[s], and their friend[s] and we, their natural enemies, what are we to expect?¹¹⁹

British agents followed Mehmed Ali's move anxiously. According to Missett, the Albanian sergeant devoted himself to the French cause at this point. Having rebelled against the Porte, the Albanian feared that his offence would never be forgiven and that even if he were permitted to return to his country, some secret measures might afterward be taken to destroy him and his family.¹²⁰ Lesseps played on this insecurity to promote a revolution to drive out the Mamluk beys. He promised Mehmed Ali the sum of £30,000 for this purpose.¹²¹

Just as the British agent anticipated, in March 1804 Mehmed Ali used his cordial relations with the Cairene religious and commercial elites again and stood with them during mass protests against the heavy *firda* tax which had been imposed by Osman Bardisi.¹²² On 11 March, Albanian forces attacked Bardisi's house declaring that they would seize all the Mamluks they met but respect the inhabitants and their property. The next evening the Mamluk beys abandoned the city. The citadel was delivered to Mehmed Ali, who at once established public order and tranquillity.¹²³ As a show of good will against the Porte, he released Hüsrev Paşa from captivity, declaring him the governor of Egypt once again.

Hence the control of Cairo passed from the Mamluks back to the Ottoman authorities. Lesseps was delighted. He reported to Talleyrand that 'the tyrannical and vexatious regime of the [Mamluk] beys came to an end', and that the British, 'our fiercest enemies', were utterly disappointed by the downfall of their agents, through whom they had hoped to obtain 'a great preponderance in Egypt'.¹²⁴ For his part, Missett complained that Osman Bey, against his repeated advice, continued his rapacity, which brought the demise of his rule in Cairo after a reign of some eleven months.¹²⁵ He did expect the beys to return, however, since they were still in command of a considerable number of men.

Indeed, not long after, Osman and Ibrahim pitched their tents near Cairo, cutting off its supplies from Upper Egypt and thus doubling grain prices.¹²⁶ They had received intelligence that some of the Albanian soldiers were dissatisfied with Mehmed Ali's declaration of Hüsrev as governor, and insisted on the Ottoman paşa's leaving Cairo at an hour's notice. In his stead, they invited Hurşid, the

¹¹⁹ Lesseps to Talleyrand, 5 Mar. 1804, *LE*, 179.

¹²⁰ Missett (Alexandria) to Hobart, 12 Mar. 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 119.

¹²¹ Missett to Hobart, 29 Mar. 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 143–4; Missett to Hobart, 13 May 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 154–5.

¹²² Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athār*, vols 3–4, 435–40.

¹²³ Missett to Lord Hobart, 18 Mar. 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 136–8; Lesseps to [MAE], 16 Mar. 1804, *LE* 189.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* ¹²⁵ Missett to Lord Hobart, 18 Mar. 1804, *LPM*, vol. 2, 136–8.

¹²⁶ Missett to Straton, 4 Apr. 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 145; Lesseps to Talleyrand, 9 Apr. 1804, *LE* 198.

kaymakam of Alexandria, to come and assume the reins of government in the country. If Albanian differences turned into conflict, the Mamluks would attack.

Aware of this threat, Mehmed Ali did not oppose the demands of the Albanian soldiers and asked Hüsrev to quit the capital. The latter duly proceeded to Rosetta, where he awaited the orders of the Porte concerning him, hoping that he would be restored to the governorship of Cairo through the mediation of Mehmed Ali.¹²⁷ He kept an active correspondence with the Albanian through the channel of his interpreter, a Greek called Stephanaky (Boghorides) (1775–1859).¹²⁸

This curious turn of events in the spring of 1804 unexpectedly brought Mehmed Ali and Hüsrev into the same camp once more, but again only for a very short time. In mid-March, when the Porte announced its decision and appointed Hurşid as the new governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali complied and left Hüsrev completely out of the picture. The latter at first left off for Alexandria and then went to Rhodes on 15 June 1804, still hoping to return to Cairo as governor.¹²⁹ But, as we will see in Chapter 5, he would come back to Egypt only 21 years later, as the grand admiral or *Kaptan-ı Deryâ* of the imperial navy—an appointment which would prompt renewed rivalry and war with Mehmed Ali as well as a new episode of the Eastern Question.

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With popular support behind him, Mehmed Ali became the *de facto* ruler of Cairo. His influence on the Ottoman governor, Hurşid, was immense. The latter had neither money nor troops, and thus found himself ‘in the hands of [Mehmed Ali]’. Lesseps was content that the paşa was ‘virtually a prisoner’ of the Albanians, who had further been tied to the French.¹³⁰ Hurşid was made ‘perfectly useful’ for France’s interests.¹³¹

What altered the situation thence was the fact that, by the second half of 1804, Mehmed Ali, once the swashbuckling nephew of the Çorbacı İbrahim Agha of Kavala, was dreaming ever more earnestly of becoming the ruler of Egypt. As the French consul Drovetti, one of his close associates at the time, reported, the Albanian wished to reach his aim ‘without firing a shot . . . : all his households feel [this] Machiavellian man, and begin to make me believe that he really has more good meaning than the Turks have in general. He wants to seize authority by the favour of the sheikhs and the people.’¹³² The French consul believed that ‘[the] Albanian has more character and would probably be less sensitive to the advice

¹²⁷ Missett to Hobart, 29 Mar. 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 143–4.

¹²⁸ Missett to Hobart, 16 June 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 165. For his future political career, see Philliou, *Biography*.

¹²⁹ Güler, ‘Mısır’ın Son Memluk Beyleri’, 253; Al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib al-athâr*, vols 3–4, 440–41; Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 21–2; Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 65; Murav’ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 1, 21.

¹³⁰ Lesseps to Brune, 25 Apr. 1804, *LE* 210.

¹³¹ Brune to Talleyrand, 10 Apr. 1804, *AMAE CP Turquie* 208/31.

¹³² Drovetti to Mengin, 16 May 1805, *MAPC*, 25.

and the means of seduction of our enemies'. With Mehmed Ali's seizure of power, it would be possible for France to regulate the destiny of Egypt at the discretion of the Republic.¹³³

In August 1804 Mehmed Ali sent his nephew to Istanbul with large sums of money to raise troops and prevail on the ministers at the Porte to favour his uncle, while he himself was confronting the Mamluks in the deserts around Cairo.¹³⁴ Even though, with Hurşid's efforts, Mehmed Ali was at first appointed as the paşa of Jeddah by Sultan Selim III, this order was rescinded soon afterwards and he was named the new governor of Cairo on 9 July 1805, with the popular support of the Cairene population who showered the Ottoman imperial agents with gifts for months.¹³⁵ Caught in the middle of European wars, the sultan wanted order established in Egypt as swiftly as possible. The rising Wahhabi threat in Hedjaz was embarrassing the empire in the holy lands, and risking his reputation. It was the task of the paşa of Egypt to counter this threat.¹³⁶

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Even after Mehmed Ali's rise to power, the conflict with the Mamluk beys did not come to an end. The beys used their British connections to pressure the Porte to replace Mehmed Ali with another paşa. And indeed, the Porte appointed him as the governor of Salonika and Kavala in 1806, but the decision was rescinded once again when the Cairene population, mainly the merchants and the ulema, again stood behind Mehmed Ali.¹³⁷

Now the major obstacle to his full control over Egypt was posed only by the Mamluks. '[S]o long as no suitable establishment is provided for the Mamluks,' Missett reported to London, 'the political conclusions of Egypt will never cease.'¹³⁸ This was why, in late 1806, when Osman Bey Bardissi passed away, and Alfî Bey's Mamluks felt deserted him due to his mistreatment of the sheikhs under his command, the paşa took the opportunity to prepare a major expedition, 'the most formidable ever planned in Egypt since the days of the Great [Bulutkaptan] Ali Bey', to be led by himself, which prompted one last chase in the desert.¹³⁹ In early February 1807, Alfî Bey also passed away, and the intra-elite

¹³³ Drovetti to Parandier, 22 May 1805, *MAPC*, 29; Lesseps to Talleyrand, 12 Oct. 1804, *LE* 243; Missett to Hobart, 10 Aug. 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 177–8.

¹³⁴ Lesseps to Talleyrand, 12 Oct. 1804, *LE* 243; Missett to Hobart, 10 Aug. 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 177–8.

¹³⁵ Missett to Camden, 4 and 29 Apr. 1805, *LPM* vol. 2, 219, 221; Al-Jabarti, '*Aja'ib al-athâr*, vols 3–4, 450; Cevdet Küçük, 'Hurşid Ahmed Paşa', *IA*, 395; Drovetti to Parandier, 15 May 1805, *MAPC*, 21; Extrait de la correspondance de l'agent du Commissariat général au Caire, 23 Apr. 1805, *MAPC*, 15; Drovetti to Parandier, 6 June 1805, *MAPC*, 41; Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 1, 22; BOA HAT 39/1969.

¹³⁶ Küçük, 'Hurşid Ahmed Paşa', 395–6; Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes'alesi*, 7; Parandier to Talleyrand, 7 July 1805, *AMAE CP Turquie* 210/62; BOA HAT 36/1836.

¹³⁷ Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes'alesi*, 8; BOA TS.MA.e 656/47, 25 Rajab 1221/26 Sept. 1806.

¹³⁸ Missett to Camden, 29 Aug. 1805, *LPM* vol. 2, 237–8.

¹³⁹ Missett to W. Windham, 27 Dec. 1806, *LPM* vol. 2, 324.

struggles among his Mamluks further weakened them to the extent that they now barely menaced the paşa's rule.¹⁴⁰

One month later, Britain, now in war with the Ottoman Empire (See Ch. 2), invaded Alexandria.¹⁴¹ According to Robert T. Harrison, their aim was to revive the Mamluk influence to secure British interests.¹⁴² Parry, by contrast, argues that the sole objective was to control Alexandria.¹⁴³ Regardless of the real British intentions, the campaign culminated in a fiasco. Mehmed Ali had a streak of luck. Just as he was about to flee to Syria to protect himself from a British offensive, news broke that local forces had managed to stop the British forces in Rosetta with an ambush, allowing Mehmed Ali to claim victory.¹⁴⁴

After this last major threat to Mehmed Ali's rule, Mamluk influence over the politics of Egypt was decisively purged in 1811, when the paşa employed a ruse against the remaining 25 Mamluk leaders. Just when hostilities were calmed and relative peace was obtained in the country, after an invitation to an official ceremony in Cairo, a large number of the Mamluk beys were entrapped and massacred at the Citadel at his orders.¹⁴⁵ Thus the age of the Mamluks was ended by Mehmed Ali—a goal that several Ottoman paşas and French commanders, including Bonaparte himself, had all failed to obtain. And thus the paşa's 43-year reign in Egypt began, in great adversity and terror, amidst inter-imperial rivalries and wars, and with the antipathy of Istanbul.

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The civil war in Egypt in the 1800s had several implications. Aside from the economic, political, and moral suffering the local Egyptians had to endure, it revealed how European imperial Powers looked to exercise influence in the Levant by making use of the existing divides and conflicts among the Levantine inhabitants rather than by creating new ones. European involvement further complicated the already very complex situation on the spot. The heightened turmoil in Egypt left Mehmed Ali, the triumphant figure of all the unrest, with an almost irrepressible sense of insecurity. The peculiar conditions through which he rose to power made his reign a tremendously precarious one from the very beginning.

This is why, as early as 1806, he aspired to found his own independent empire and even shared these aspirations with foreign agents.¹⁴⁶ There were clear signs, the Egyptian historian Khaled Fahmy writes, that Mehmed Ali had made up his

¹⁴⁰ Missett to Arbuthnot, 3 Feb. 1807, *LPM* vol. 2, 333.

¹⁴¹ Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 1, 22–3. ¹⁴² Harrison, *Britain*, 33.

¹⁴³ Parry, *Promised Lands*, Ch. 2. ¹⁴⁴ Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 31.

¹⁴⁵ A. S. Norov, *Puteshestvie po Egiptu i Nubii v 1834–1835 g.* (St Petersburg: n.p., 1840), 107–8; Fred Lawson, *The Social Origins of Egyptian Expansionism during the Muhammad 'Ali Period* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 3.

¹⁴⁶ Ridley, *Drovetti*, 44; Missett to Lord Mulgrave, 1 Jan. 1806, *LPM* vol. 2, 251–4.

mind about remaining in Egypt for good by that point.¹⁴⁷ He built a family tomb in Cairo in 1808. The following year, he brought his spouse Emine Hanım and entire harem from Kavala—a rare practice in the Ottoman Empire for temporary governorship appointments. And eventually, he brought his extended family, hired them in key positions, and created his own Turkish-speaking loyal elite in Cairo that ensured his grip on administrative power.¹⁴⁸

When the paşa transformed the entire country into a formidable political, economic and military power in the Ottoman Levant, Arabia and Sudan over the next two decades, and when he turned against Sultan Mahmud II and Hüsrev Paşa and thus instigated a civil war in the 1830s (see Chapter 5), he had in view the maintenance of his rule and security of his family, more so than the interests of the people of Egypt. Nor did he desire to ‘open their eyes’ or ensure their liberation and independence from the ‘Ottoman yoke’, as is usually stated in Arab nationalist literature.¹⁴⁹ His was an elitist rule that worked for the favour of a power coalition he had formed with the local ulema and major Cairene merchants. The paşa thence sought to achieve his goal of independence through a peculiar imperialism from below, and by means of expansion within and around the Ottoman Empire.

His motivation prompted him to cultivate positive relations with the major European Powers and especially Britain, rather than France. In 1808, he proposed a secret treaty to the East India Company that would ensure British commerce in the Levant and the Red Sea with reduced tariffs. In return, he asked for British protection during wars between the European Powers and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵⁰ During the latter phase of the Napoleonic Wars, he became the principal supplier of grain to the British garrisons in the Mediterranean during their great need, paying for it in advance, and taking it away expeditiously.¹⁵¹

In 1811, when the paşa found among the property of the slaughtered Mamluk beys some letters which led him to believe that Drovetti, not having found Mehmed Ali sufficiently devoted to the cause of France, had entered into an intrigue with his inveterate enemies for the purpose of deposing him, he reproached the Frenchman for his perfidy. At about the same time, he told the British agents in Cairo that the interests of Britain were equal to his own. The Wahhabi sect was daily increasing in numbers and enthusiasm, and might soon become dangerous to the British possessions in India: ‘If the King of England be inclined to cultivate my friendship, he may rely upon me, more than upon a Viceroy of his own, for me these people will obey, but a Christian never.’¹⁵²

At the most crucial hour of the Napoleonic Wars, as Bonaparte gathered his *Grande Armée*, preparing for an offensive on Russia, the young Stratford Canning,

¹⁴⁷ Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 39.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 19–20.

¹⁵⁰ Ridley, *Drovetti*, 48, 51.

¹⁵¹ C. W. Thompson to Culling Charles Smith, 3 Aug. 1811, NLS MS 5626/67.

¹⁵² Ibid.

the British Minister Plenipotentiary in Istanbul, advised Arthur Wellesley (1769–1852), the future Duke of Wellington, that Britain should make a firm bid for the support of the paşa, since the latter was biased in favour of Britain. It could, he claimed, be time for London to benefit from his ‘promising talents and friendly disposition,’ thus ‘establishing our interests [in Egypt] on some permanent basis.’¹⁵³

Wellesley favoured the idea of treating Mehmed Ali as an independent ruler, ‘offering him guarantees against French vengeance if he agreed to obstruct a further Napoleonic thrust towards India.’ Britain would be able to finally form a protective buffer for the security of her eastern commerce. Mehmed Ali was pleased with such an offer. But, embroiled in war in Europe, almost no action was taken after by London. When Canning was replaced by Robert Liston as the ambassador to Istanbul in 1812, the British plan was dropped.¹⁵⁴

Mehmed Ali was then left to his own devices at the end of the Napoleonic wars. He fully concentrated on establishing his full authority over Egypt, taking control of the Bedouin Arabs, reconquering the holy place of Islamism (Hedjaz), laying down to law for the Wahhabis, destroying the aspirations of the Janissaries to assume a role in local trade and the ulemas to have greater political influence, and putting an end to the embezzlement of the Coptic writers.¹⁵⁵

While his achievement in the Hedjaz was celebrated in Istanbul, the Porte’s agents became increasingly alert to Mehmed Ali’s ambitions for independence and the incorporation of Syria into his dominions.¹⁵⁶ A report (*takrir*) penned by Halil Hamid Paşazade Arif Bey, the *kadı* of Egypt, on 22 December 1812, for instance, warned the sultan against Mehmed Ali’s ulterior motives. According to Arif Bey, despite being ‘a very shrewd man’, the paşa was at the same time very ‘rapacious and insatiable’ and, while serving the empire, he also wanted to acquire Syria as a natural buffer against Istanbul and establish hereditary rule, which would allow his sons Tosun and Ibrahim to succeed him.¹⁵⁷

This was why in the 1810s the paşa demanded the Porte confer the rule of Syria upon him in order to facilitate the suppression of the Wahhabis. This was also why he inquired as to whether Egypt could be accorded the semi-autonomous status of Barbary Regency that Algiers and Tunis enjoyed. With these measures, he would be able to manage his own foreign policy and keep Egypt neutral from the potential wars the Ottoman Empire would be involved with the

¹⁵³ Stratford to Wellesley, 15 Mar. 1811, TNA FO 78/73; cf. Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman*, vol. 1, 156.

¹⁵⁴ See Ch. 4.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Extrait d’un rapport à l’E. le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères’, 10 July 1822, AMAE Papiers Desages 60PAAP/39/158.

¹⁵⁶ Drovetti to MAE, 28 Nov. 1810, in Driault, *Mohamed Ali et Napoleon*, 93–4; Abū ‘Izz al-Dīn, *Ibrāhīm Bāsha*, 32–4; Altundağ, *Kavalalı*, 30–31; Mansel, *Levant*, 75; Fahmy, ‘The Era of Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha’, 165.

¹⁵⁷ BOA TS.MA.E 381/7, n.d.

Great Powers.¹⁵⁸ Fears of war and another Great Power invasion remained in Mehmed Ali's Egypt until at least 1815.¹⁵⁹

In the end, even though Egypt did not end up as a satellite of the Republic or a part of the French informal empire, as had been envisaged by Talleyrand and Bonaparte prior to the 1798 expedition, the Mamluk beys, whose actions had undermined French trade, were eliminated for good by Mehmed Ali. The order and stability in Egypt were sufficient enough for the security of the British Empire. The Sublime Porte, for its part, was watchful, vigilantly observing the next move of the paşa.

After the Napoleonic Wars, the economic, military and political relations between Paris and Cairo grew ever stronger to the point of near dependency. Two decades later, when a new episode of the Eastern Question unfolded with Mehmed Ali at its epicentre, Franco-Egyptians connections weighed immensely on inter-imperial diplomacy (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8). But then again, by that point, and especially after the Congress of Vienna, cards were redealt and a new inter-imperial order was established in Europe with the utmost purpose of ensuring continental peace and security and preventing a return to the horrors and unbound chaos of the Napoleonic wars—the transimperial security culture in the Levant gained new features then.

What were these new features? What implications did the new inter-imperial order have for the rest of the world? How did it affect the nature of Great Power interventions and their reception in the Levant? How did Mehmed Ali's ambitions affect this new order? And how did the Powers and the Porte tackle his ambitions in the following decades? We will turn to these questions in the second part of the book.

¹⁵⁸ Mehmed Ali to Necib Efendi (Istanbul), 25 Nov.1810, DWQ Abdin no. 54; Mehmed Ali to Necib, 11 Jan. 1811, DWQ Bahr Barra no. 16; Unknown to Mehmed Ali, 6 Aug. 1815, DWQ Bahr Barra, Files (4), no. 66.

¹⁵⁹ Liston to Castlereagh, 10 Jan. 1815, NLS MS 5629/1.

PART II

THE INVENTION OF THE EASTERN
QUESTION

4

A New Era?

The Vienna Order and the Ottoman World

One of the most recognizable images of Napoleon Bonaparte's French empire was *Le Sacre de Napoléon* (The Coronation of Napoleon). Completed in 1807, Jacques-Louis David's painting immortalized the induction and coronation of the Corsican and his first wife Josephine as emperor and empress at Notre-Dame de Paris on 2 December 1804. Since its first exhibition, the painting has been considered 'a transparently masterminded piece of modern propaganda', where many prominent French men and women, ranging from Napoleon's mother, Maria Letizia Ramolino, to Charles Talleyrand and Joseph Bonaparte, were portrayed in the cathedral even when some of them did not actually attend the ceremony. *Le Sacre* symbolized the unity and strength of France.¹

Of all figures that appear in the painting, one man markedly differs from the others with his turban and dark beard. He fixes his curious gaze on the emperor, standing at the very back of the throng. He was the Ottoman ambassador to Paris, Mehmed Said Halet Efendi (1761–1822). Originally from the Crimea, Halet was in the second year of his four-year Paris embassy when the coronation took place. As a French correspondent once described him, he was a 'very tall and very beautiful figure', and known to his Ottoman associates to be a proud and stubborn man.²

During his French sojourn that lasted until 1806, perplexed by the chaotic international politics and fickle alliances of the time, Halet grew immensely antipathetic to European ways of diplomacy, finding them 'vulgar' and 'unwholesome'.³ His reports from Paris suggest that he found French politicians to be sorely lacking in the courtesies of statesmanship. Yet he also harboured a degree of gratitude to them, as they helped him cover the expenses of his embassy when the Porte was unable to supply funds, having been preoccupied with the financially draining New Order programme in the 1800s.⁴

¹ Todd B. Porterfield and Susan L. Siegfried, *Staging Empire: Napoleon, Ingres, and David* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 4; see also Jean Tulard, *Le Sacre de l'empereur Napoléon: Histoire et légende* (Paris: Fayard, 2004).

² George Grosjean, 'La politique orientale de Napoléon. L'ambassade de France à Constantinople (1803–1805) (I)', *La revue hebdomadaire. Romans, histoire, voyages* 9(48) (27 Oct. 1900): 525–42, at 526.

³ Karal, *Halet*, 33.

⁴ *Ibid.* 90. The New Order programme is discussed in Ch. 2.

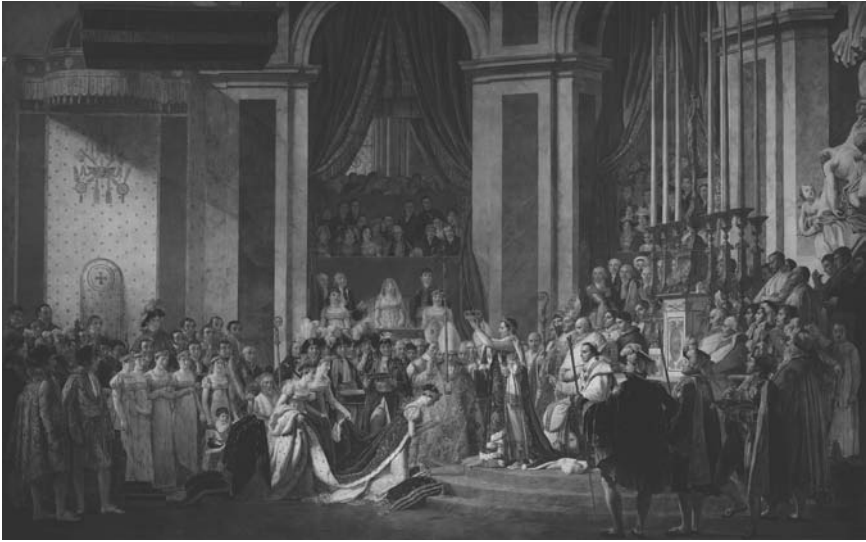


Figure 2. Jacques-Louis David's *Le Sacre de Napoléon*

As we will see in the following pages, less than a decade after his return to Istanbul, Halet emerged as the most formidable man in the Ottoman imperial capital. He established a powerful network and patronage contacts with Janissary aghas and Greek Phanariots as well as with regional leaders such as Mehmed Ali of Egypt, Ali Paşa of Janina, and the hospodars of Wallachia and Moldavia, who provided him with funds, intelligence, and an immense political influence.⁵ Halet's power sometimes surpassed even that of young Sultan Mahmud II. His rapacious authority and harsh response to threats, his network and scheming ways of preserving his power, and the tragic end of his life would lead historians to consider him as a 'statesman turned villain.'⁶

The career and political influence of Halet Efendi in the Ottoman world are of great significance for our purposes here because during his heyday in the Topkapı Palace, the 1810s, the 'Eastern Question' took on a new meaning in international relations. Aiming to put a definitive end to the global Napoleonic Wars, while the 'Western' question of the future of Latin America and the 'Northern' question of Scandinavia were deliberated by the self-defined Great Powers and the so-called second-rank European polities during and after the Paris peace negotiations and the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15, the disputes over Poland and the European dominions of the Ottoman Empire together constituted 'the Eastern Question'.

The 1810s were a momentous period also because a new inter-imperial order was forged in Europe then. First, at the Vienna apartment of the Austrian foreign

⁵ Philliou, *Biography*, 72–3.

⁶ *Ibid.* xxiii.

minister Prince Klemens Wenzel Lothar Nepomuk von Metternich-Winneburg (1773–1859), and then during the peace negotiations in Paris in March and May 1814, the leading empires—Austria, Britain, Prussia, Russia, and later France—came to officially style themselves as a separate category, ‘the Great Powers’, and introduced new hierarchies into international politics on the continent. Nearly a century before the formation of the League of Nations, the five claimed managerial responsibilities to form an exclusive security system, the Congress or Vienna system, which aimed at precluding a return to the horrors of the Napoleonic Wars that had devastated Europe in the past three decades.

The Powers fostered an understanding of security as a public good that could be obtained most effectively by means of cooperation among themselves. They agreed to upholding a series of norms and principles ‘to serve as a code of conduct ... rules of behaviour to regulate the competition among them, and ... a set of procedures designed to maintain order’.⁷ Conference diplomacy, in place of inter-imperial wars, became the means to deal with crises, and ambassadorial conferences were organized with a previously unseen frequency in order to manage Europe’s immediate issues.

The Allied Council Meetings in Paris (1815–18), and the congresses in Aix-la-Chapelle (1818), Troppau (1820), Laibach (1821), and Verona (1822), were all convened with an arguably conservative yet explicitly anti-revolutionary spirit, having in view the establishment of peace on the continent. The five Powers espoused the idea of non-intervention in each other’s affairs, self-restraint in place of encroachments and aggression, and consultation with each other instead of unilateral action, constant assurances, and pacific intent in lieu of overt revisionism and violence. As of the mid-1820s the Vienna system was refashioned as an international order, i.e. the Vienna Order, under supervision of the Concert of Europe—the exclusive, elite club of the Great Powers.⁸

The question that concerns us here is the implications of this new episode ensuring peace and security in Europe especially in the rest of the world. Did it mean the beginning of a new era in the Levant also? As early as 1814, the issue of where in the post-Napoleonic world the Ottoman Empire, and for that matter the Levant, would be positioned occupied the minds of the statesmen that represented the Great Powers *and* the Sublime Porte. The sultan’s empire had dangerously strained relations with her Romanov neighbours on the eve of the Vienna Congress, and both certain Ottoman ministers and Austrian and British diplomats saw great value in involving the Porte’s differences with Russia in the ongoing peace negotiations in Paris and Vienna.

⁷ Richardson, ‘The Concert of Europe’, 51; Mitzen, *Power in Concert*, 30; Cottrell, *The Evolution*, 68–9; Abbenhuis, *Neutrals*, 40–41; Jarrett, *The Congress*, 361–2; De Graaf, *Fighting Terror*, Introduction.

⁸ Eckart Conze, ‘Historicising a Security Culture: Peace, Security and the Vienna System in History and Politics, 1815- to Present’, in *Securing Europe*, 44–5.

But, due to a variety of factors, largely originating from the diplomatic choices made by Halet Efendi and his entourage, this plan never materialized. And then the Ottoman Empire came into close contact with the Concert of Europe a decade later, during the Navarino incident of 1827, when Russia, Britain, and France intervened and destroyed an Egypto-Ottoman fleet so as to secure European commercial interests and aid the Greeks in their war of independence. This event has been considered as one of the earliest instances of humanitarian interventions in history.⁹ It also proved to be an early moment of the Vienna Order which signified that the changing dynamics of the relationship between the Concert of Europe and the Ottoman Empire prevented neither Great Power advances in the Levant, nor inter-imperial competition, nor diplomatic encroachments or military/naval interventions.

The Eastern Question in the 1810s

Policies pursued by Russia with respect to the sultan's empire and the Porte's responses to them became a major determinant in the sculpting of the Eastern Question in the early decades of the Vienna Order. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Catherine II's 'Greek Project' had been replaced by an 'Ottoman Project' under Emperor Paul I.¹⁰ This was a victory of the moderates in the St Petersburg court—moderates such as Victor P. Kochubei (1768–1834), a former ambassador to Istanbul, and the diplomat Nikita P. Panin (1770–1837), over hardline statesmen such as Catherine II's lover Pyotr V. Zavadovsky (1739–1812) and Foreign Minister Fyodor V. Rostopchin (1763–1826) who favoured 'direct territorial conquests, the division of Ottoman possessions, support for separatists and liberation movements'.¹¹

The moderates called for preserving the Ottoman Empire as a 'weak neighbour' under the orbit of Russian influence. Their strategy was considered to be more beneficial for Russia than Empress Catherine II's late eighteenth-century project of total dismemberment.¹² After the palace coup and assassination of Emperor Paul in March 1801, his son Alexander I adopted the same moderate policy, considering the sultan's empire as a barbarian state 'whose weakness and bad rule

⁹ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 63–90.

¹⁰ Kobishanov, 'Politika Rossii', 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 4–5.

¹² On the weak neighbour policy, see Report of Dashkov, 4 Sept. 1829, *VPR* vol. 2/8, 292; Protocol of the Extraordinary Committee, 4 Sept. 1829, *ibid.* 278; Bitis, *Russia*, 359–60; P. A. Iovskij, *Poslednyaya vojna s Turcieyu, zaklyuchayushhaya v sebe kampaniyu 1828 i 1829 godov v evropejskoj i aziatskoj Turcii i na kavkaze*, vol. 1 (St Petersburg: Tipografiya Depart. Narod. Prosveshch., 1830); N. I. Ushakov, *Istoriya voennykh dejstvii v aziatskoj Turcii v 1828 i 1829 godax*, vol. 1 (St Petersburg: Tipografiya Eduarda Pratsa, 1836); N. A. Lukyanovich, *Opisanie tureckoj vojny 1828 1829 godov*, vol. 1 (St Petersburg: Tipografiya Eduarda Pratsa, 1844).

are a precious guarantee of [Russian] security'.¹³ His pursuit of this policy proved to be volatile, however, due to continuous tensions between the courts of St Petersburg and Istanbul.

One of the moments when Russo-Ottoman relations were heavily damaged was the 1806–12 war that had begun (as we saw in Chapter 2) when Sultan Selim III opted to throw in his lot with Napoleon Bonaparte, recognizing him as the emperor of France and even appointing pro-French hospodars in the Balkans, which immensely antagonized Tsar Alexander I. In 1807, at Tilsit, the tsar even negotiated with Bonaparte the plans for the partition of the sultan's empire.

The Russo-Ottoman fighting continued intermittently, and came to an end only when Bonaparte recruited a massive *Grande Armée* of 600,000 men and made alliances and agreements with Berlin and Vienna for military support and the passage of his forces during his Russian campaign. The tsar was isolated, racing in vain to make counter-alliances. Seeing that Prussia and Austria were not standing in Napoleon's way, Alexander I looked to end the war with the Ottoman Empire. The peace was sealed with the Treaty of Bucharest in May 1812, which was ratified in July, despite the new sultan Mahmud II's belief that he could have wrought more from the Russian anxieties.¹⁴

As I have detailed elsewhere, the Treaty of Bucharest secured for Russia the mouths of the Danube and Bessarabia, setting the Pruth river as the border with the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵ In return, the tsar agreed to evacuate all areas in the Balkans and the Caucasus that his army had occupied during the war. However, the treaty was hastily prepared, and therefore laden with clumsy phrases and open-ended articles. It left unaddressed at least two issues that became fundamental for Russo-Ottoman relations in the following years: first, Russia's claim for the protection of the Ottoman Serbians and her demands for autonomy for them, and, second, despite the stipulations of the 1812 treaty, the fact that Russia left her troops in the Phasis Valley in the Transcaucasia and wanted to legitimize this with a secret article, which Mahmud II categorically rejected. When Russian forces failed to abandon the Caucasus due to the region's strategic importance against a potential Persian or Ottoman attack, Mahmud II declared that 'Russia must evacuate the district in question otherwise there must be war'. When the tsar refused to capitulate, the dispute took a turn for the worse.¹⁶

This was one of the most critical conundrums for European politics, because the Russo-Ottoman war would handicap Russian success against Bonaparte by diverting Russian resources, and would prolong the Napoleonic Wars. Since her

¹³ Kobishanov, 'Politika Rossii', 19–20.

¹⁴ F. Ismail, 'The Making of the Treaty of Bucharest, 1811–12', *Middle Eastern Studies* 15(2) (May 1979): 180–87; Liston to Castlereagh, 13 July 1812, NLS MS 5672, f. 9.

¹⁵ Ozavci, 'A Priceless Grace?'

¹⁶ Liston to the Duke of Wellington, 25 Mar. 1815, TNA FO 139/26/40.

immediate interests were at stake, Britain had supervised the Bucharest talks and peace through her special envoy, Stratford Canning. As differences between Istanbul and St Petersburg manifested themselves again in 1812, and when the sultan accused Canning of making his plenipotentiary Mehmed Galib Efendi (1763–1829) sign a treaty that was arguably unfavourable to the Porte, the young British diplomat was called back. In his place the foreign secretary appointed the seasoned Robert Liston, a shrewd diplomat who had left a positive influence over the Ottoman ministers during his first Istanbul embassy in 1794–5.¹⁷

Liston's mission was to secure the precarious peace between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The much-tarnished Anglo-Ottoman relations had been mended by the 1809 Treaty of Dardanelles. British authorities now saw themselves capable of affecting the diplomatic choices in Istanbul. In 1809, they had dictated the closure of the Straits to foreign warships and obtained commercial privileges (fixing customs tariffs on certain products) from the sultan in return for a defensive alliance against France.¹⁸ Having obtained her goals in the 'Orient', Britain would now lead a pacific policy in the Ottoman Empire, hoping to preserve the status quo at almost every turn until the late nineteenth century.

Shortly after his arrival in Istanbul, it became Liston's 'fixed opinion' on the Russo-Ottoman dispute that the only means to produce a cordial understanding between the two empires was 'the renunciation on the part of the [Russian] emperor of all projects of external acquisition or encroachment'.¹⁹ The British diplomat closely followed the discontent of the sultan when the Porte made several futile remonstrances concerning the evacuation of the Russian troops from the Caucasus. Mahmud II was convinced that Alexander I was playing a long game: the tsar was leaving the border disputes with the Porte unresolved with the purpose of deploying them in the future as a pretext for a new Russian offensive in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Yet the sultan was not entirely sure as to the course of action he should take.

The advice his ministers offered him was mixed because they were divided on the subject. One group, led by the moderate and Anglophile Reisülküttâb Mehmed Galib Paşa, called for moderation and peace. The signatory of the Treaty of Bucharest, Galib advised that the sultan should treat foreign courts, and particularly Russia, with 'perfect civility and attention', and search for means to find common and conciliatory ground instead of escalating tensions. In February 1814, he asked Liston to bring the Russo-Ottoman dispute to the attention of the Allied ministers during the peace talks to be held in Paris and Vienna. He suggested its

¹⁷ Ozavci, 'A Priceless Grace?'

¹⁸ Sir Robert Adair, GCB, *The Negotiations for the Peace of the Dardanelles in 1808–1809: With Dispatches and Official Documents*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1845).

¹⁹ Liston to Castlereagh, 12 Nov. 1812, NLS MS 5627, f. 57.

resolution be in favour of the Porte.²⁰ That is, the idea of involving the Ottoman Empire in the Paris and Vienna peace settlements came initially from an Ottoman statesman.

The former ambassador to Paris and now president of the imperial council, Halet Efendi was the leader of the other group which leaned toward France. He was willing 'to foster the causes of the present and future quarrels with Russia'.²¹ This faction insisted that only with 'a principled policy' and 'firm resolution and an uninterrupted perseverance in the same system' of making no concessions against Russia could the 'dignity and high destinies of the Ottoman Empire' be maintained.²²

In early May 1814, when the news of Bonaparte's removal from power in Paris arrived in Istanbul, the moderate Galib Paşa emerged as the sultan's favourite due to his anti-French tendencies and cautious diplomacy. But a cabinet crisis followed and at a most unexpected moment Halet's party managed to prevail in the imperial administration.²³

Halet had realised that his political existence was at stake. He therefore master-minded a scheme and hastened to pen a memorandum to the sultan (together with Halil Efendi, the president of the conferences) that was calculated to gain advantage from the temper of the sultan. In this memorandum, Halet accused Galib of having signed the last, disadvantageous peace with Russia in Bucharest in 1812, providing the sultan with 'treacherous information' and imitating 'the manners of the Franks', organizing 'noisy entertainment with dancing and music', carrying 'his imitation of Christian ministers so far as to appear at the office until after the third hour of the day (11 o'clock), neglecting thus the management of the most urgent business of the State'. Halet moreover stated that the affairs of France were far from settled, and criticized Galib's advice to the sultan that the Porte needed prudence in its relations with Russia.²⁴ According to Liston, as a consequence of these insinuations, and due to his 'bigoted prejudices', the sultan dismissed Galib from his position and sent him into exile.

Thus Halet's hardline, pro-French faction gained the upper hand in the Ottoman cabinet just when the Napoleonic wars came to an end with Bonaparte's defeat (at least for the time being), and just when a new European order was being forged under the guidance of the victorious major Powers, particularly Britain and Russia. It was then that Halet preferred to follow a policy diametrically opposite to Galib's scheme of involving the sultan's empire in the

²⁰ Liston to Castlereagh, 26 Feb. 1814, TNA FO 78/82/25.

²¹ Liston to Castlereagh, 27 Mar. 1813, NLS MS 5627, f. 99.

²² Liston to Castlereagh, 25 June 1814, NLS MS 5628, f. 30. On Halet, see also Süheyla Yenidünya Gürgen, *Devletin Kâhyası, Sultanın Efendisi. Mehmed Said Halet Efendi* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2018).

²³ Liston to Castlereagh, 11 May 1814, TNA FO 78/82.

²⁴ On Halet's influence in the Topkapı Palace, see *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 5, 2525–7; Liston to Castlereagh, 10 June 1814, TNA FO 78/82.

ongoing peace negotiations in Paris and Vienna, which resulted in the Ottoman Empire's exclusion from the Vienna order at her will.

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As the historian Mark Jarrett tells us, in 1814, Britain and Austria had 'achieved their primary territorial objectives' in Europe: Belgium was incorporated in the new Kingdom of the Netherlands, as Britain wished, Austria had established control over northern Italy, and the German Federation provided a stable German core to central Europe. Now the two courts looked 'to preserve the existing balance (or more properly, distribution) of power on the Continent'. By contrast, Prussia, Russia, and especially France emerged as 'acquisitive powers', looking to extend or consolidate their territories and spheres of influence. The aspirations of latter three put an increasing strain on the stability of the postwar order.²⁵

Among these aspirations was the Russian plan to extend control 'across the flat plains of Europe by taking the lion's share of Poland in the west and by establishing a sphere of influence over the part of the Ottoman Empire to the south'.²⁶ To hold these objectives in check and contain Russian in the east, in July 1814, the British foreign minister, Lord Castlereagh, and Prince Metternich drew up a plan. They designed to invite the Ottoman cabinet to send a minister, 'of respectable rank and character', to Vienna, perhaps 'not to sit in the congress... but to be within reach of the assembly to give explanations if required—to watch over the interests of his country'.²⁷ The Russo-Ottoman disputes could naturally become an object of discussion at Vienna. The Ottoman world's tranquillity and independence were '[closely] connected with a system of general and permanent peace' which would be the ultimate object of the congress. The existence of a senior Ottoman minister at Vienna would lead the Powers to 'pay sufficient attention to this subject' and the Porte to advocate its interests, where necessary.²⁸

As results, an official invitation was sent to the Porte via Liston. The Porte responded only four months later, in November 1814, when the Congress of Vienna had just begun. The response was negative. The sultan would not send a senior minister to Vienna.

Historians usually argue that this stemmed from the Porte's lack of interest in European politics or from the absence of qualified men to represent its interests in Vienna. But, in reality, the Porte's decision was influenced by a number of factors. First, Halet was of the belief that the peace in Europe was hardly settled, and that it would not be wise to leave the fate of the empire in the hands of the European Powers. Halet's hardline faction associated European politics with amorality and

²⁵ Jarrett, *Congress*, 156. ²⁶ *Ibid.* 360.

²⁷ *Ibid.* For the Ottoman Turkish version of the document, see BOA TS.MA.e 243/16, 6 July 1814. For the Austrian account, Metternich to Stürmer, Vienna, 6 Oct. 1814, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 10; cf. Šedivý, *Metternich*, 39–40.

²⁸ Liston to Castlereagh, 25 July 1814, TNA FO 78/82/72.

deceit, and harboured an insatiable distrust of the Quadruple Alliance due to the agonizing experiences of the recent past whereby their empire, they believed, had repeatedly been a victim of European treachery. Moreover, the role accorded to the Ottomans in the anticipated protocol at Vienna as an observant, and thus a 'third-rank' or even lower-placed country—in the Ottoman version of the document, this was noted as *karardadeye rızazade* (the consenter to decisions)—was virtually unacceptable, if not offensive, to the sultan, who considered his empire as the last eternal state of the Islamic world and in no way inferior to her western neighbours.²⁹ The four-month silence was in fact a cultural response that went unnoticed by European diplomats.³⁰

Despite the Porte's negative response, Metternich still promised the Ottoman chargé d'affaires in Vienna, Yanko Mavroyeni, that 'without waiting for a[nother] formal invitation,' he would do all he could during the congress for 'the entire satisfaction of the Porte' in its dispute with Russia.³¹ He wanted to avoid giving Tsar Alexander I a free hand in the Balkans, and therefore lost no time in keeping his word. In early January 1815, he talked Castlereagh and Talleyrand into guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the European dominions of the sultan's empire. In February, before his departure from Vienna, Castlereagh held conversations with Tsar Alexander I to persuade him to offer security guarantees to the Porte.

The British foreign secretary succeeded in his last mission at Vienna by presenting a proposition to the tsar to ensure 'the conservation and integrity of the Turkish empire' as an inducement to coax the Porte 'to facilitate a more liberal commercial intercourse for the nations of Europe in the Black Sea'.³² This was a barter: security for freer trade. Alexander I saw in this an opportunity for both gaining economic advantages after the draining wars and demonstrating his commitment to the unfolding 'Great Union' in Europe. Accordingly, he agreed to the proposal.³³

The proposition was delivered again by Liston. The British diplomat's letter to the Ottoman cabinet stated that a new system of union and peace was unfolding in Europe, and that for it 'to be complete, the general security would also have to embrace the integrity of the Ottoman dominions'. The sovereigns of Europe, including Tsar Alexander, the letter continued, were ready to give this extension of the guarantee of the sultan's empire, leaving the disputes with Russia to the

²⁹ BOA HAT 956/41003.

³⁰ Ozavci, 'A Priceless Grace?'

³¹ Gentz to Caradja, 7 Nov. 1814, *DI* vol. 1, 119.

³² Castlereagh to Liston, 14 Feb. 1815, AVPRI f. 133, o. 468, d. 2303, l. 356.

³³ Gentz to Caradja, III, 24 Feb. 1815, *DI* vol. 1, 143; BOA HAT 961/41197; 'Rapport du Chargé d'affaires de la Porte à Vienne, sur son entretien avec le Prince de Metternich', 17 Feb. 1815, AVPRI f. 133, o. 468, d. 2303, l. 295 Nesselrode to D'Italinsky, 26 Apr. 1815, *VPR*, vol. 2/8, 284–5; cf. Ozavci, 'A Priceless Grace?' It is unclear, however, whether these were his actual motivations or whether he had other ulterior motives.

mediation of 'the three friendly Powers, Austria, France and Britain'.³⁴ Liston also added a clause demanding the liberalization of the commerce in all Ottoman coasts, not only in the Black Sea.³⁵

Many European statesmen and diplomats—Castlereagh, Metternich, Alexander I, Liston, and the Chevalier d'Italinsky, the Russian ambassador to Istanbul—considered this proposal as an 'invaluable favour' or a 'priceless grace' (*безценную милость*) to the Ottoman Empire.³⁶ It would save the sultan from the embarrassment of another military defeat at the hands of Russia by guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the sultan's European dominions.³⁷ But the Porte saw the proposal in a different light.

After receiving the proposal, the Halet-led Ottoman cabinet—which included Reisülküttâb Mehmed Seyid, the new Şeyhülislam Seyyid Mehmed Zeynelabiddin Efendi, Halet's butler Mustafa Efendi, and Hüsnü Bey, the defterdar Mehmed Emin Rauf Bey, as well as the viziers of Zahiré, Tophane, and Darbhane—held two council meetings in March 1815.³⁸ On the 30th day of the month, they decided to refuse the Powers' proposal because of their suspicion concerning the goodwill of the Powers, given the Porte's deplorable experience with them in past decades during the wars with Russia (1786–92, 1806–12), the French invasion of Egypt (1798–1801), the slow British evacuation from Alexandria (1802–3), the British blockade of Istanbul (1807), and the secret Franco-Russian talks at Tilsit (1807) for the partition of the Well-Protected Domains. They feared that the proposal could be a Russian ploy to prolong the border disputes until the affairs of Europe was settled and thus maintain Russian troops in the Caucasus.³⁹ Moreover, the fact that the proposal was bundled together with the issue of capitulatory/commercial privileges was something that caught Sultan Mahmud II's attention from the outset, and led him to ask his men to be wary.⁴⁰

On the basis of these considerations, a majority of the Ottoman ministers at first thought to respond with another prolonged 'silence'. But then they agreed to inform Liston that the dispute between the Porte and Russia could be resolved only with the evacuation of Russian troops from the Caucasian borders and by adherence to the 1812 Treaty.⁴¹ Their 'civil rejection', as Liston put it in his report to Castlereagh, received almost no reaction from the leaders of the Powers because just before the Porte's response arrived in early April 1815, the news of Napoleon Bonaparte's escape from Elba had broken, shaking the entire continent and dragging the European Powers back into war.

³⁴ BOA HAT 956/41005; 'Raport Italinskogo ob audiencii Taleirana', 15 Mar. 1815, AVPRI f. 133, o. 468, d. 2303, ll. 311–13.

³⁵ Ozavci, 'A Priceless Grace?'

³⁶ D'Italinsky to St Petersburg, 25 Mar. 1815, AVPRI f. 133, o. 468, d. 2303, l. 356.

³⁷ Liston to Castlereagh, 10 Mar. 1815, TNA FO 178/84/60.

³⁸ BOA HAT 956/41003; 'Küçük Hurşid Ahmed Paşa', *İA*, 396. See also Liston to Castlereagh, 10 Apr. 1815, TNA FO 178/84/66.

³⁹ BOA HAT 956/41003.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* BOA HAT 956/41006.

⁴¹ BOA HAT 956/41003.

Liston poignantly wrote that the revival of war in Europe further strengthened Ottoman ministers in their decision.⁴² Figures like Friedrich von Gentz, the confidant of Prince Metternich and the secretary of the Congress of Vienna, wrote that his hope was the involvement of the Ottoman Empire, as a ‘great power’, in the Vienna system, if necessary ‘despite her own protests’, because it was an object of ‘the highest importance for the general security, and for the stability of the peace of Europe’. But his attempts to impress the European leaders in Paris in November, during the talks after Bonaparte’s ultimate defeat and before the second Treaty of Paris, remained fruitless.⁴³

No other substantial negotiation took place in 1815 on the subject of Ottoman involvement in the Vienna Order. Sultan Mahmud II’s empire thus isolated itself from the new international order purposefully—a resolution induced not simply by irrationality and prejudice or lack of awareness of what was transpiring in Europe, but arguably more by their distasteful experience with the major European Powers in the recent past.

In the eyes of Ottoman ministers, and particularly Halet Efendi, both the invitation to the Congress of Vienna in 1814 and the proposal in 1815 teemed with problems and threats: being accorded a lower-rank status at the congress, being a ‘consenter to decisions’, the bundling of the proposal with the issue of commercial privileges, and their suspicion that it was part of a ploy, particularly on the part of the Russians. To them, 1815 did not mark a new era in their relations with their western and northern neighbours. Perhaps the inter-imperial wars were over in Europe, perhaps peace and order were now definitively established there. But the memory of wartime diplomacy associated with ‘trickery’ and ‘politicking’ was still fresh in Istanbul, and it continued to guide the isolationist diplomacy of the sultan and Halet in the coming years.

A ‘Humanitarian’ Intervention: Navarino 1827

What effects did the non-involvement of the Ottoman Empire in the Vienna Order have for the Levant? According to the British historian Edward Ingram, even though the new order in Europe was based on respecting the international treaties of Vienna and continued cooperation, it hinged on violence and violation of law elsewhere in the world. He argues that the European Powers ‘did not fight one another, [but] they fought everybody else—if only to show them that they had not lost the knack’; ‘Only by accepting the narrow, exclusively Christian,

⁴² Liston to Wellington, 4 Apr. 1815, TNA FO 178/84/69.

⁴³ Gentz to Caradja, 1 Jan. 1816, *DI* vol. 1, 198–9. For a detailed and excellent analysis of the Allied Council meetings in Paris, see Beatrice de Graaf, *Tegen de terreur. Hoe Europa veilig werd na Napoleon* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2018).

definition of Europe and the colonialist assumption that war with outsiders ([o]thers) is not war, may one treat the Vienna [Order] as a period of peace between the European Powers.’ The relations of the Concert of Europe with the Ottoman Empire were likewise characterized by violence, which manifested itself in this specific case in five different ways: occupation, armed intervention between the imperial authorities and the provinces, sponsorship of armed rebellion, negotiation backed by threat, and partition.⁴⁴

True as these arguments may be in part, the situation was in fact much more complex and nuanced. On the one hand, the Vienna Order helped prevent, albeit with partial success, the major European Powers that formed the Concert of Europe from engaging in *single-handed* interventions and occupations in the Levant.⁴⁵ Their engagements there now required an audience to legitimize and validate such practices, which bridled any unilateralism.⁴⁶ Ironically, the required audience was often none other than the very same Powers—the political decision-makers and, eventually, public opinion.

Yet, at the same time, the Vienna Order accommodated and even enabled cross-border interventions, surrogate wars, asymmetrical, political interpretations of international law, pacific blockades, and other arguably bellicose acts and violence of the pre-1815 world—to the extent that these did not harm European peace and order in toto but *not* to the extent that it prevented bellicose imperialism elsewhere in the world. In other words, the major difference between the pre- and post-1815 world remained limited to the Powers’ willingness not to overtly step on each other’s toes. They eschewed another total war in Europe during their quest for colonies and endeavours to open up new markets for free trade elsewhere.

Moreover, their understanding of security as a public good obtained through cooperation led to lasting efforts among the larger and smaller powers to facilitate concerted action. Just as with Russo-Austrian relations in the ‘Eastern Question’ of the eighteenth century (see Chapter 1), convergence, or upgrading toward political and military (naval) collaboration, stemmed from the divergence of the Powers’ perception of threats and interests. As explained in the introduction of this book, from this point onwards, Great Power cooperation in the nineteenth century proved to be the logical completion and a vital requisite of competition among them—not simply and not always its binary opposite.

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An important and defining early example of the Janus-like nature of the Vienna Order was the involvement of the Great Powers in the so-called ‘Greek crisis’ of 1821–32. From a Greek viewpoint, this was a revolutionary war of independence

⁴⁴ Ingram, ‘Bellicism’, 214. ⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 206, 211.

⁴⁶ Richardson, ‘The Concert of Europe’, 51.

against the Ottoman sultan. To the Porte, it was a mischievous uprising (*Rum fesadi*) supported by Russia. In the end, it sparked what was fashioned as the first 'humanitarian' intervention in the Ottoman Empire, and attested to the symbiotic relationship at the time between imperial competition and cooperation.

An intellectual revival or self-awareness amongst Ottoman Greek subjects was the major cause of what transpired in the 1820s. For several decades, prominent writers and activists like Adamántios Korais (1748–1833) and Rigas Velestinlis (1757–98) had acted to represent ideas and emotions for Greek emancipation from Ottoman 'barbarism and tyranny'—some of them suggesting the foundation of a Greek-speaking democratic republic with a population composed of both Christians and Muslims, and calling for peaceful coexistence under a more liberal regime.⁴⁷

The aspirations of the Greek intelligentsia found a concrete political movement in the Philiki Hetairia (the Friendly Society). Founded in Odessa in 1814, the Hetairia carried the torch of the Greek independence struggle. It recruited members from both Ottoman and Russian empires amongst prominent hospodars as well as Russian Greek officers. During the Congress of Vienna in 1815, its members made resolute attempts to place their cause before the Powers, as the 'civilized Christians of Europe' against the 'barbaric Turks'. While these endeavours constituted one of the earliest moments of the adoption of the Enlightenment idea of civilization⁴⁸ in the Ottoman world, they yielded no results.

In 1821, the movement initiated a military campaign under the young Russian Greek General Alexandros Ypsilantis (1792–1828), who marched with a regiment past Russian borders into Moldova and Wallachia, making use of the fact that the Ottoman forces were engaged in a conflict with Ali Paşa of Janina. The subsequent Greek efforts at the Congresses of Laubach and Verona in 1821 and 1822 expanded the meaning of the Eastern Question with a new dimension besides Russo-Ottoman differences regarding commerce in the Black Sea and the Danubian Principalities.⁴⁹ But, in the opening years of the 1820s, Greek attempts to obtain Great Power support remained again unheeded. European statesmen regarded the revolutionary aspirations of the Hetairia in a similar light to those of the Carbonari in Italy, i.e. as a threat to the monarchies.

To reiterate, the Vienna system and the ensuing Vienna Order were anti-revolutionary from their inception, and in the eyes of Great Power leaders, there was little to endorse and much to oppose in the ambitions of the Greek movement. Prince Metternich, for instance, saw no difference between the revolution against Ferdinand, the king of Naples, and a revolution against Sultan Mahmud II.⁵⁰ Tsar

⁴⁷ Frary, *Russia*, 28; George Finlay, *History of the Greek Revolution*, vol. 1 (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1861), 172–203; Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman*, vol. 1, 290.

⁴⁸ For more on this notion, see Ch. 7.

⁴⁹ Gentz to Caradja, 6 Dec. 1822, *DI* vol. 2, 148–50.

⁵⁰ Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman*, vol. 1, 195; Šedivý, *Metternich*, 83, 117–18.

Alexander I and his foreign minister, Ionnes Antonios Capodistrias (1776–1831), who would become the first leader of the autonomous Greece in 1828, publicly denounced the Hetairia and allowed the sultan's armies into the Danubian Principalities to suppress Greek forces in 1821. The British ambassador to Istanbul, Percy Clinton Smythe, 6th Viscount Strangford (1780–1855), communicated to the Porte that, at Verona, the 'Greek affair' was announced as an Ottoman domestic affair.⁵¹ George Canning, who succeeded Lord Castlereagh as foreign minister after the latter's suicide in 1822, accepted that—as fighting spread from Moldavia and Wallachia to the Morea, and 10,000–20,000 Muslim (and some Jewish) civilians, including women and children, were killed and scores were sold into slavery—Greek belligerence had become a 'fact'.⁵² The Powers even recognized 'the Ottoman government's right to repress the revolt using arbitrary, indiscriminate and violent retaliation against innocent civilians who paid the price of the actions committed elsewhere by other Ottoman Christians'.⁵³ All these factors defined the initial stance of the Concert toward the 'Greek crisis'—an almost unblemished policy of non-interference and neutrality.

But this changed in a few years' time, as we will see, especially when Russia came to pursue a more active policy to bring the 'Greek affair' into the political agenda of the Concert. The shift in Russian policy confirmed for the Porte that what transpired from 1821 onwards was the sequel of a strategy, the continuation of 'the long game' that Tsar Alexander I had been playing since the troubled Treaty of Bucharest of 1812. In the estimation of Ottoman ministers, the Russo-Ottoman disputes over the Caucasus and the Balkans had been put on hold in 1812–4 due to the Napoleonic wars. But once the European peace was definitively settled, the Russian authorities would return back to an expansionist policy. Mahmud II and his ministers were persuaded that Tsar Alexander I and Capodistrias were the masterminds of the Greek 'mischief' (*fesad*).⁵⁴ British Ambassador Strangford implicitly confirmed this, insinuating that 'a certain friendly power' was supplying 'quite illegal assistance' to the Greeks.⁵⁵

The Ottoman persuasion did not originate merely from strategic estimates. In the late 1810s and 1820s, the Porte seized a large number of 'secret documents' from arrested Greek messengers. The information gathered pointed to Russia as the whisperer behind the rising independence ambitions among the Greeks. In April 1820, for instance, intelligence had discovered that a very numerous association had formed among the Christian subjects of the Porte in the Morea, Albania, and the neighbouring provinces with a view to the liberation and

⁵¹ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 64–5; *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 5, 2997.

⁵² On the Greek violence, see Heraclides and Dially, *Humanitarian*, 108; Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 65; Bass, *Freedom's Battle*, 56–7; Douglas Dakin, *The Greek Struggle for Independence, 1821–33* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 59.

⁵³ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 67.

⁵⁴ Heraclides and Dially, *Humanitarian*, 108.

⁵⁵ Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman*, vol. 1, 309.

independence of those countries. A great number of the inhabitants of the Ionian Islands had joined the confederacy and demonstrated great zeal in support of it since the visit to Corfu by Capodistrias, the Russian foreign minister. Several informants, including British consuls and the conspirators themselves, had disclosed to the Ottoman cabinet that the overarching plan was to seize the Ottoman fleet and then occupy Istanbul by means of an uprising of the city's Orthodox population.⁵⁶ These were in line with the declaration of Ypsilantis, who called for the resurrection of the Byzantine Empire with 'Constantinople' as its capital.⁵⁷ According to these reports, the plan was countenanced and supported by Tsar Alexander I.⁵⁸

The news of the Greek *démarche* therefore did not come entirely as a surprise to the sultan.⁵⁹ Confronted with the severity of the threat, he reacted ferociously, using religious language in order to mobilize the reluctant and undisciplined Janissaries, and declared the Greek struggle to be a 'war on Islam'.⁶⁰ Moreover, since the Ottoman elites were persuaded that the revolt in the Balkans was part of a wider conspiracy and that a revolution among the Istanbulite Christians was likely to transpire, the Muslim populace was called to arms and provided with pistols, while the armoury of the Greeks and Armenians was confiscated.⁶¹ Orders were sent to detect the 'riff-raff' Greeks and Armenians and send them away to Anatolian provinces.⁶²

Still the most powerful man in Istanbul, Halet was coldly furious. He felt betrayed when he realized that some of the Phanariotes with whom he worked closely had links with the Hetairia.⁶³ In March and April 1821 more than 60 of these were executed for acting as 'terrorist conspirators'—and as a deterrent to the Greek populace.⁶⁴ Among them was Kostaki Muruzi, a close associate of Halet and a dragoman of the Ottoman imperial council. Patriarch Gregorios was dismissed from his position and replaced by the Bulgarian Archbishop Eugenios, and then hanged (not as the patriarch but as a man who abused his previous post as patriarch) together with several senior bishops who had been (arguably falsely) suspected of endorsing the Greek movement.⁶⁵

In March 1822, the Ottoman imperial council was called to decide upon the punishment of the Orthodox Christians involved in the 'rebellion'. Despite the divisions within the cabinet, at Halet's demand, the new *Şeyhülislam*

⁵⁶ Dakin, *Greek*, 41–9; Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman*, vol. 1, 200. ⁵⁷ BOA HAT 1317/51338.

⁵⁸ *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 5, 2726–7; Liston to Castlereagh, 25 Apr. 1820, NLS MS 5636, f. 69.

⁵⁹ BOA/HAT 45685. For a study that asserts the opposite, see Şükrü Ilıcak, 'The Revolt of Alexander Ipsilantis and the Fate of the Fanariots in Ottoman Documents', in *The Greek Revolution of 1821: A European Event*, ed. Petros Piziniaris (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 2011), 225.

⁶⁰ BOA C.Dh. 3650; cf. Philliou, *Biography*, 85. ⁶¹ BOA HAT 1084/44138; 1294/50258.

⁶² BOA HAT 525/25687; 1316/51330. ⁶³ Yenidünya, *Halet Efendi*, 245.

⁶⁴ Philliou, *Biography*, 88.

⁶⁵ Heraclides and Dialla, *Humanitarian*, 108; Philliou, *Biography*, 89.

Abdulvehhab Efendi issued a fatwa that announced that the residents of rebellious Greek towns and villages that refused to submit had 'forfeited their status as loyal non-Muslim subjects under Islamic law, and were therefore liable to be killed or sold into slavery'. Repressive measures were to be taken; in the interest of order 'against a background of law of war under Islam', the 'rebellious' (*isyancı*) Greeks lost their *zimmî* status and became *harbîs*.⁶⁶

Within a space of a few weeks, the Ottoman Empire became an inferno for her Greek subjects, while in the Morea, the killing of Ottoman Muslims and their enslavement also continued, and diverse Greek forces turned against each other, instigating a civil war within civil war. Şeyhülislam's fatwa unleashed furious mobs in the streets of the imperial capital and other towns with significant Greek populations, such as İzmir (Smyrna) and Ayvalık (Kydonies), and the Aegean islands, where several thousands were subject to gruesome violence, killings, or slavery. Numerous Janissaries and opportunist soldiers procured immense gains from pillage, plunder, and the slave trade, victimizing even the pardoned *reaya* (non-Muslim) villages.

Seeing that the repression of the Greek 'rebellion' was out of control, the Porte issued *firman*s and another fatwa. It denounced the misdeeds as a breach of Islam and declared them illegal.⁶⁷ Divisions within the Ottoman cabinet then became even sharper. As Strangford reported, Reisülküttâb Mehmed Sadik Efendi and Canib Efendi, both from the moderate camp, were strongly inclined to show mercy. They made 'every effort to oppose the sanguinary counsels of Halet...'⁶⁸ Yet, in mid-1822, 'the barbarous system of terrorism which Halet Efendi pursues' prevailed.⁶⁹

The Greek crisis had put Halet under immense pressure. The Phanariot families, who had been acting as hospodars in Wallachia and Moldavia and providing Halet with funds to pay off the Janissaries, had now been dismissed from their posts.⁷⁰ One of his major sources of income was thus denied. Furthermore, in the past few years, the fact that he had had differences of opinion with Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt with respect to the administration of Syria prompted the latter to stop sending Halet gifts and funds to secure his post.⁷¹ In 1822, the Janissaries, who had their own professions in Istanbul as boatmen, firemen, butchers, etc. (see Chapter 2), were recruited against their wishes and sent to Greece to fight the 'rebels'. When the news of Janissary losses was received from Greece, causing great consternation among the populace, Halet emerged as a

⁶⁶ Ibid. 85–6; İsmail H. Danişmend, *Osmanlı Devlet Erkani, Sadr-i-azamlar (vezir-i-a'zamlar), şeyh-ül-islamlar, kapdan-ı-deryalar, baş-defterdarlar, reis-ül-kitablar* (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınevi, 1971), 152; Erdem, 'Ottoman Responses', 68–9.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 70–71.

⁶⁸ Strangford to Castlereagh, 25 May 1822, TNA FO 78/108; cf. Theophilus C. Prousis, 'British Embassy Reports on the Greek Uprising in 1821–22: War of Independence or War of Religion?', *History Faculty Publications* 21 (2011): 214.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Philliou, *Biography*, 73.

⁷¹ *Tarih-i Cedvet*, vol. 5, 2898.

scapegoat. Now he could not pay off their aghas. Complaints against him became rampant among the Janissaries, whose leaders submitted petitions to the sultan for Halet's removal.⁷²

This was an invaluable moment for Mahmud II to rid himself of Halet, who had for a decade established a network in the empire that had undermined the dynasty's authority. Knowing that the latter's power base (the Janissaries and the Phanariotes) were no longer behind him, the sultan dismissed Halet from his post in October 1822, and exiled him to Konya. On the day of his arrival there in early November 1822, Halet was executed. When his corpse was returned to Istanbul and exhibited in the court in December, a note attached to his nose read that,

[b]ecause of the guile and machinations in which [he] took part . . . many people have been ruined by him . . . [A] hypocrite in his words and actions, he behaved, on the surface, like a faithful man, but, deep down, he sought nothing but to advance his personal interests, and without . . . dissolving this perversity which had become familiar to him, he dared to commit, against the supreme will, many actions analogous to his character . . .⁷³

Thus came the end of the Halet Efendi era in Istanbul—an era that saw the Porte's refusal to participate in the Vienna system, Ottoman isolationism in inter-imperial relations, and the rise and brutal suppression of the Greeks.

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Were the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul correct in believing that Russia had a hand in the Greek 'uprising' all the while? Available sources and recent scholarship have shown that Tsar Alexander I was opposed to any revolutionary movement, and did not endorse the Greek *démarche* in the beginning. It was only 'certain independently-minded front-line [Russian] commanders in the south' who had personal links with the leaders of the Greek movement that were aware of the revolution and possibly aided it.⁷⁴ Ypsilantis's written appeals to the tsar and Capodistrias for an aid in their *démarche* were received negatively. The Russian Greek general was even dismissed from the imperial army.⁷⁵ In 1821, the tsar's agents expressed their 'disinterestedness in the Greek affairs' to the Porte; and in 1822, at the Congress of Verona, they would do the same before the other Powers' plenipotentiaries.⁷⁶

⁷² 'Affairs of Turkey', *The Times*, 17 Dec. 1822.

⁷³ Memorandum 6 Dec. 1822, TNA FO 78/111; cf. Philliou, *Biography*, 92; Yenidünya, *Halet Efendi*, 258.

⁷⁴ Bitis, *Russia*, 102. ⁷⁵ Frary, *Russia*, 30.

⁷⁶ 'Note présentée par le Ministre du Russie (Stroganoff) a la Sublime Porte', 6 July 1821, AMAE MD Turquie 45/9; 'Déclaration du Plenpt [*sic*] Russe à insérer au protocole des conférences qui avaient été ouvertes a Vienna sur les affaires d'Orient', Nov. 1822, AMAE MD Turquie 45/12.

Yet a shift occurred in Alexander I's attitude toward the crisis in conjunction with the inimical Ottoman response. The tsar's offence at the Sublime Porte's public accusations of him as the instigator of the 'rebellion', the deliberate Ottoman disruptions over Russian trade in the Black Sea, and, most importantly, the killing of a large number of Greek co-religionists by the Ottomans all led the Russian ambassador, Baron Sergey Stroganoff (1794–1882), to protest to the Porte and immediately leave Istanbul, breaking off the diplomatic relations between the two courts in 1822.⁷⁷ Under the growing influence of the interventionists in his entourage, such as Capodistrias, who insistently reminded the tsar of Russia's right—as acquired by the 1774 Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca—as the protector of the Orthodox subjects of the sultan, the tsar reviewed and reversed his policy.⁷⁸

The fact that in the island of Chios alone tens of thousands of Christians had been killed or enslaved in the spring of 1822 spurred great agitation amongst the philhellenes in other European metropolises. In London and Paris, committees were established to provide funding for the Greek movement, and public campaigns were initiated. In the following years, several pro-Greek pamphlets were written (31 in French, 37 in German, and 12 in English). 'Foreign fighters' left for Greece from France, Prussia, Switzerland, Hungary, and the Netherlands for religious and political reasons. Impressive artworks produced included Eugène Delacroix's *Scènes des massacres de Scio*, portraying the massacres of Greeks by 'evil barbarians'. Lord Byron's poems and the story of his eventual participation in the Greek war himself, his unfortunate death in Missolonghi in 1824 from a fatal illness, J. M. W. Turner's watercolour study illustrating Byron's *The Giaour*, as well as daily newspaper reports, all led to the generation of a new influence, public opinion, which propelled the Great Power governments in a more interventionist direction.⁷⁹

In 1827, the Powers undertook their first joint armed 'humanitarian' (as they called it at the time) intervention in the Levant partly as a consequence of these pressures from the public. It is debatable, though, whether humanitarian concerns, shared perceptions of threats, or their willingness to cooperate were the main motivations behind the intervention. Another factor was the mounting piracy in the Mediterranean during the crisis which obstructed European trade. The Powers found in this a common threat and also a justificatory pretext for legal intervention. But, in the end, multilateral intervention was more a consequence of Great Power suspicions (of each other) and competition, and less a result of their willingness to cooperate.

⁷⁷ 'Halet Effendi's Threat', *The Times*, 20 Sept. 1822.

⁷⁸ Patricia K. Grimsted, *The Foreign Ministers of Alexander I: Political Attitudes and the Conduct of Russian Diplomacy, 1801–1825* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 26; Grand Vizier to Nesselrode, 27 June 1821, AMAE MD Turquie 45/7.

⁷⁹ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 75–8.

In 1824, when Alexander I came up with the idea of the creation of three semi-autonomous principalities in Greece under the sultan's authority, yet also under the protection of the Powers, he was vetoed by the other Powers, who feared that Russia could use the scheme to establish a naval base in Greece.⁸⁰ Metternich was uneasy with intervention in favour of a revolutionary group. Consequently, throughout the crisis he followed a consistent policy of non-intervention, remaining loyal to the anti-revolutionary spirit of the Vienna Order. He called for respect for the Ottoman sultan's sovereignty (and the monarchy).⁸¹ Prussia faithfully supported his cause. But Britain changed her position in 1825.

Rodogno has shown that London was left with an inconvenient choice between allying with the Porte against Russia or joining St Petersburg in its plan for intervention.⁸² The British opted for the latter under public pressure as well as out of fear of a unilateral Russian action.⁸³ Especially after the sultan turned to the aid of Mehmed Ali Paşa, the latter's son Ibrahim launched a strong and conclusive campaign,⁸⁴ and when the news of the two sieges of Missolonghi broke, religious sentiments came to hold a stronger sway over the state of affairs in Britain.

In 1825, the tsar's ambassador to London, Christopher Lieven, made a shrewd move by revealing a document, the so-called 'barbarization project' of the sultan, whereby the entire Christian population was allegedly to be swapped with Egyptian Muslims. With this, he achieved his goal of heightening interest in the Greek crisis in the British parliament.⁸⁵ This became the last straw determining London's gradual change of policy, and its agreement on cooperating with Russia in the Greek crisis—a vivid example of how sentiments, be it religious or humanitarian, and commercial interests helped tip the scales when rational strategic considerations caused hesitation.

Time and again, such religious and commercial sensitivities served as lubricant for the sluggish Great Power and Ottoman diplomatic machinery to proceed with respect to the Eastern Question in the nineteenth century. This being said, London also had in mind a carefully designed plan. In fact, it was almost exactly the same strategy as Austria had followed in the late eighteenth century when dealing with the Eastern Question of the time. In the late eighteenth century, Austria had acted together with St Petersburg to contain the Russian aggrandizement over the sultan's empire. Now, Britain was doing the same: she was cooperating with Russia to hold the tsar's designs in check.

What political scientist Korina Kagan argues is therefore true. Anglo-Russian cooperation was more than 'an occasion for high-level great power security

⁸⁰ 'Mémoire sur la pacification de la Grèce', 9 Jan. 1824, VPR vol. 2/5, 1982, 308–14.

⁸¹ Metternich's policy is detailed in Šedivý, *Metternich*, 133–216.

⁸² Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 78–81.

⁸³ Bass, *Freedom's Battle*, 128.

⁸⁴ See Ch. 5.

⁸⁵ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 79.

cooperation'.⁸⁶ Britain's involvement in the Greek crisis resulted from a reckoning of the influence of the philhellenes, the mounting piracy that haunted British commerce, and, finally, due to the strategic, humanitarian, and religious stimuli.⁸⁷ For Russia, the Greek crisis tended to be more a pretext for exerting greater influence in the politics of the Balkans and for finally putting to an end the disputes with the Porte over the Caucasus. This we can deduce from several instances.

For example, when Alexander I passed away in December 1825 and was succeeded by his brother Nicholas I, the new tsar would at first falter on the Greek crisis and even tell the duke of Wellington, who had been in St Petersburg for his coronation, that 'his quarrel with the Porte was not about the Greeks but for his own just rights under treaties which the Porte had violated', alluding to the Treaty of Bucharest of 1812.⁸⁸ And in April 1826, when St Petersburg sent an ultimatum to Istanbul demanding that the latter withdraw its troops from Wallachia and dispatch plenipotentiaries to Akkerman to finalize the border disputes pending since the Treaty of Bucharest, it did not mention the Greek crisis once.⁸⁹

A new question follows from this: why then did Russia want to act together with Britain (and later France) during the Greek crisis? One may argue that it was more because of Tsar Nicholas I's need to legitimize his plan to regain possession of the disputed lands in the Caucasus and the Balkans. A unilateral action on the part of Russia could isolate her and upset even European peace. But a joint intervention could provide her with a leeway to solve disputes with the Porte in the tsar's favour. In short, he showed his commitment to the Vienna Order to obtain his long-due imperial goals. The Greek crisis thus provided him with a heaven-sent leverage over ongoing Russo-Ottoman disputes.

On 4 April 1826, when the tsar signed with Britain the Protocol of St Petersburg in the name of 'the principles of religion, justice and humanity', the situation and security of the Greeks were actually his lesser concern. True, with the protocol, an offer was made to the Porte and the Greeks for the mediation of Britain and Russia between them. The objective was framed as the pacification of the Levant, security of European commerce, and the creation of an autonomous Greece under Ottoman suzerainty.⁹⁰ Even France was eventually involved as a mediator, as she looked to redefine her rank among the Great Powers (considering herself as second-rank among the other four), anxious not to be left out and leave the future

⁸⁶ Korina Kagan, 'The Myth of the European Concert: The Realist-Institutionalist Debate and Great Power Behavior in the Eastern Question, 1821–41', *Security Studies* 7(2) (1997): 1–57, at 25.

⁸⁷ On the Austrian policy in the 18th c., see Ch. 1.

⁸⁸ Bass, *Freedom's Battle*, 129.

⁸⁹ Nesselrode to Nicholas I, 16 Feb. 1826, *VPR* vol. 2/6, 1985, 393–400.

⁹⁰ Šedivý, *Metternich*, 150; Bass, *Freedom's Battle*, 130, 135.

of Greece to the dominant influence of either Russia or Britain.⁹¹ Yet all these were also means for the tsar to gain the majority among the Concert of Europe—the very audience before which he had to justify his acts.

Less noted in the literature is that the tripartite agreement immensely piled on the pressure on the Porte. An unsigned document (possibly the Russian ultimatum) written in Istanbul on 26 April 1826 suggests that the tsar was urging Istanbul to begin negotiations over the disputed lands in the Balkans and the Caucasus by 17 May. The document read that ‘the system of alliance’ between the Great Powers that had come into existence in 1815 (alluding to the Vienna System) had received ‘a double blow [in] the last five years’ and was ‘exposed as being shaken to its foundations by the troubles which desolate a part of European Turkey and by the [differences] between the Sublime Porte and the Imperial Court of Russia’. From crisis to crisis, things had come to the point where ‘a fixed and precise state of things must necessarily and immediately take the place of the uncertainties which hitherto held in suspense the resolutions of the Allied Courts’. It was no longer a question of ‘gaining time... of partial measures’. Now there was ‘no space for bargaining because the resources of diplomacy were exhausted—the good offices of the Allied Courts are useless... at Petersburg... for Russia has the right, the will and the strength to deal with it alone...’ If the Porte replied negatively to Russia’s demands, ‘the Russian resolution is taken—she will do what dictates her honour, rights and interests. The resolutions of the Allied Courts are also taken... they will confine themselves to deploring the inefficiency of their efforts to save the Ottoman Empire.’⁹²

To Sultan Mahmud II, the St Petersburg Protocol and the ensuing Russian pressures were a huge source of humiliation. Against the imminent Russian threat, he had only one alternative, war—one that would almost certainly culminate with a devastating defeat for him given the military revolution under way in Istanbul.⁹³ Consequently, on 25 July 1826 he accepted the recommencement of negotiations over the disputed lands in the Balkans and the Caucasus.⁹⁴

The talks began in Akkerman between Count Vorontsov and the Ottoman plenipotentiaries Hadi and İffet Efendis. They broke off several times.⁹⁵ In the end, Mahmud II conceded only when Vorontsov secretly promised Hadi and İffet that should the sultan evacuate the Danubian Principalities entirely and settle the dispute frontier in Transcaucasia, ‘the Greek question would simply die of neglect’.⁹⁶ The Ottoman delegates were authorized to sign the Akkerman Convention

⁹¹ Nesselrode to Nicholas I, 16 Feb. 1826, *VPR* vol. 2/6, 393–400; Desages to Baron, 21 Aug. 1825, AMAE Papiers Desages 60PAAP/6/128; Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 81.

⁹² BOA HR.SYS 1676/2. ⁹³ See Ch. 5.

⁹⁴ Stats-Sekretar’ K.B. Nessel’rode poverennomu v delax v Konstantinopole M. Y. Minchaki. Moskva, 15(27) Aug. 1826, *VPR* vol. 2/6, 576–9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* ⁹⁶ *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 2998; Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman*, vol. 1, 302.

on 7 October 1826, surrendering the territories that the Porte had stubbornly claimed since 1812.⁹⁷

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After Akkerman, the Greek question did not die of neglect. This time the British cabinet, facing continuous domestic pressure, remained dedicated to resolving the affairs of Greece by means of Great Power mediation. British diplomats in Istanbul, joined by the French and now less devoted Russian agents, continued for another year to urge the Porte to agree on Greek suzerainty, much to the frustration of the sultan. The ‘stern, relentless spirit of a fanatic despotism’ in Istanbul would prevent the Porte from yielding, British ambassador Stratford Canning complained. He did not seem to be aware that what was at stake for Mahmud II was now a matter of not making any more concessions to the Russians after the Akkerman Convention.⁹⁸ Moreover, thanks to the support of Mehmed Ali Paşa, by mid-1827 Ottoman forces had largely contained the Greek revolutionaries, and fights amongst the Greek factions had intensified, to the detriment of their national movement.

This became the moment of intervention. With the initiative of the prime minister, George Canning (1779–1827), on 6 July 1827, Britain, France, and Russia held a series of ambassadorial meetings and then signed the Convention of London ‘in the name of the most holy and undivided Trinity’ on the basis of ‘the invitation of [the Greeks] to the conflict’, ‘self-preservation based on the threat to the stability of Europe and impediments to the maritime commerce caused by . . . acts of piracy’, and ‘sentiments of humanity’. Despite the Porte’s refusal, they agreed on the establishment of an autonomous Greece paying tribute under Ottoman suzerainty.

The legal intervention was officially justified by framing it as an endeavour to ensure the safety of British, Russian, and French imperial subjects by the supply of ‘commercial security’ in the Levant against ‘piracy and war’—though ‘to give to the Greeks a more secure and definite existence under the Ottoman Porte’ was also another major, albeit unofficial, objective.⁹⁹ France suggested an additional arrangement for a general guarantee of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, but, their eyes being fixated on the border disputes in the Balkans and the Caucasus, the Russian plenipotentiaries rejected it.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Selim Aslantaş, ‘Osmanlı-Rus İlişkilerinden Bir Kesit. 1826 Akkerman Andlaşması’nın “Müzakereleri”’, *Uluslararası İlişkiler* 9(36) (Winter 2013): 149–69, at 163–4.

⁹⁸ S. Canning to G. Canning, 24 Apr. 1827 TNA FO 78/153; cf. Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman*, vol. 1, 304.

⁹⁹ Viktorija Jakimovksa, ‘Uneasy Neutrality: Britain and the Greek War of Independence (1821–1832)’, in *International Law in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Inge van Hulle and Randall Lesaffer (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 65; the Earl of Dudley to the Prince of Lieven, 6 Mar. 1828, PRAG, 35–7.

¹⁰⁰ Dakin, *Greek*, 182.

The Triple Alliance then presented to the Porte an overdetermined ultimatum in August 1827. It asserted that 'a new refusal, an evasive or insufficient answer, or a complete silence on [the Porte's] part would put the cabinets of the Allies in the necessity of taking measures which they would judge to be most effectual' to put an end to the state of things that were incompatible with 'the interests of the Porte', as well as 'the security of commerce and the general and perfect tranquillity of Europe'.¹⁰¹

To Metternich, the ultimatum was a miserable violation of international law (he would point to the double standard when the tsar rejected Great Power mediation in the Polish question), and the Convention of London was nothing but 'an act of open hostility'.¹⁰² The Austrian chancellor was dismayed by the fact that 'a treaty arranged among the five Great Powers concerning the settlement of the internal affairs of a sixth country, without a previous request and the cooperation of that country... [w]as an irregular, dangerous and inadmissible form of proceeding'.¹⁰³ He further argued that after Akkerman, neither two, three, nor five Great Powers would be able to convince Mahmud II.¹⁰⁴ He had a point, but there was almost nothing he could do at this juncture. Britain, Russia, and now also France had already dug their heels in. Canning deliberately neglected him.¹⁰⁵

If Metternich's Prussian-backed opposition to intervention all along produced any effect, it was the fact that, given the legal and political questions it would arise, the three intervening Powers had to frame the ultimatum conscientiously. This is why their note included the statement that, even though they might take military measures in the interests of the security of their commerce and for European peace, they would want to do so without 'disturb[ing] their friendly relations' with the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Reisülküttâb Pertev Efendi was puzzled: 'Hostility! Friendship! What a confusion of terms in all this! Can you explain to me how water and fire... can exist together?... If it is a declaration of war that you have to make to us, say so.'¹⁰⁶ The Porte immediately rejected the ultimatum, maintaining that it was not 'afraid of [European] naval squadrons'. It was a violation of Law of Nations.¹⁰⁷ For the Triple Alliance, this meant that all diplomatic resources

¹⁰¹ 'Première Déclaration à la Porte Ottomane', PRAG, 5; Stratford to Dudley, 19 Aug. 1827, TNA FO 78/155, cf. Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman*, vol. 1, 309–10.

¹⁰² Metternich to Ottenfels, Vienna, 20 June 1827, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 29; cf. Šedivý, *Metternich*, 179–80.

¹⁰³ Metternich to Zichy, Vienna, 31 Jan. 1827, HHStA, StK, Preussen 125; cf. Šedivý, *Metternich*, 177.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 179. ¹⁰⁵ Dakin, *Greek*, 182.

¹⁰⁶ UK Government, Constantinople Protocols 1830 (n. 79), 126; TNA FO 352/15B, cf. Smiley, 'War Without War', 61; also in Stratford to Dudley, 21 Aug. 1827, TNA FO 78/155.

¹⁰⁷ RGIA, f. 846, op. 16, e. 4479, l. 184; cf. J. V. Petrunina, *Social'no-ekonomicheskoe i politicheskoe razvitie Egipta v period pravleniya Muhammeda Ali v rossijskoj obshhestvenno-politicheskoy mysli XIX v.* (Moscow: Prometej, 2008), 262; also in 'Manifesto of the Sublime Porte', PRAG, 1046; cf. Jakimovksa, 'Uneasy Neutrality', 67.

had now been exhausted. In October 1827, the fleets of Russia, Britain, and France were ordered to blockade the Otto-Egyptian fleet in Navarino Bay.¹⁰⁸

As Will Smiley has adeptly shown, the practice of ‘pacific blockade’ while at peace—a term that was actually coined in hindsight in 1849—was a ‘new legal form of force’ or a new type of (symbolic) violence, to add to Ingram’s aforementioned list, employed by the Powers in the nineteenth century. Navarino was one of the earliest examples of this coercive instrument in the Levant.¹⁰⁹ With the pacific blockade of Navarino in 1827, the Powers ‘prohibit[ed] the Sublime [Ottoman] State from moving about in its own territory’ without actually declaring war on the Porte.

Given this unacceptable offence for Sultan Mahmud II, after accidental shots were purportedly fired from an Ottoman frigate, a general naval battle began between 89 Ottoman-Egyptian and 24 allied ships on 20 October.¹¹⁰ The disparity in the modes of military-technological power was so stark that in a few hours, ‘a great many [of the Otto-Egyptian ships] have blown up and several have been sunk’, the British Admiral Edward Codrington reported from the spot. The Navarino harbour was ‘covered with wrecks’.¹¹¹ Thousands of Ottoman and a dozen European sailors died.¹¹²

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The Porte immediately announced a protest calling for the immediate cessation of aggression and demanding indemnities for the damages inflicted on the Ottoman navy.¹¹³ But the ambassadors of the three Powers in Istanbul responded negatively and then left the Ottoman imperial capital—though not before the Porte had given them a hard time in granting guarantees of safe passage. At the end of November, the sultan declared the Akkerman Convention null, and on 20 December 1827, he gathered his assembly and ordered the arsenals to prepare for the long-expected yet dreaded war against Russia. Orders were sent to all provinces to call upon Muslims to defend their laws and religion.¹¹⁴ Russian commerce in the Black Sea was deliberately fettered by Ottoman authorities.

As 6,000 French troops were dispatched to the Morea to protect the Greek population and supervise the evacuation of the Ottoman-Egyptian forces, on 26 April 1828 Russia officially declared war on the Ottoman Empire on the grounds

¹⁰⁸ ‘Instructions to be addressed to the Admirals commanding the Squadrons of the three Powers in the Mediterranean’, PRAG, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Smiley, ‘War Without War’, 56.

¹¹⁰ Ottoman sources claim that the first shot was not fired by the Ottoman fleet. *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 2999; BOA HAT 945/40700.

¹¹¹ Codrington to Stratford, 16 and 20 Oct. 1827 FO 78/157; Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman*, vol. 1, 315.

¹¹² Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 83.

¹¹³ M. le Général Guilleminot to M. le Baron de Damas, 11 Nov. 1827, PRAG, 18–19; also in Jakjimovska, ‘Uneasy’, 61–2.

¹¹⁴ *Le Moniteur*, 3 Dec. 1827; *The Times*, 6 Dec. 1827.

that the Porte did not fulfil the requirements of the Akkerman agreement and had restricted Russian commerce. The Russo-Ottoman war at once alerted European statesmen and diplomats, as Russia separated herself from the Concert and did not consult the other Powers, taking an independent decision despite prior cautions.¹¹⁵

The news of Russian victories that arrived after each battle in the Balkans and the Caucasus led many to believe that the Ottoman Empire was falling. The British prime minister, the duke of Wellington, observed that ‘the tranquillity of the world’ was gone.¹¹⁶ He questioned whether a Greek empire could be established, while the French prime minister and foreign minister, Jules August Armand Marie de Polignac (1780–1847) drew up more concrete plans for the dismemberment of the sultan’s dominions and the establishment of a Christian state in Constantinople with the Dutch king, William I, as its new ruler.¹¹⁷

Even though Russian strategists at first endorsed the French plan, when the Russo-Ottoman war (which lasted more than a year) culminated with an embarrassing defeat for the sultan and the signing of the Treaty of Edirne (Adrianople) on 14 September 1829, they reviewed their position.¹¹⁸ Alexander I preferred to return to the ‘weak neighbour’ policy. The peace treaty had ensured the Ottoman payment of indemnities to Russia, the establishment of autonomous administrative structures in Moldavia and Wallachia, and free passage for commercial vessels through the Straits. More importantly, it was agreed that the disputed frontiers in the Balkans and the Caucasus should be conferred on the tsar, and Russian commerce in the Black Sea would be ‘fully liberalized’.¹¹⁹ Russia had got all she hoped for now, and was in a commercially advantageous position in the Levant.

In addition to these, Sultan Mahmud II reluctantly recognized Greece as a tributary state, following the stipulations of the London Agreement of the Triple Alliance dated 22 March 1829.¹²⁰ This paved the way for the full independence of Greece in 1832, after long, delayed negotiations due largely to the differences of opinions among Britain, France, and Russia over the regime and whom to appoint as the leader of Greece.¹²¹

The Navarino intervention and the Great Power supervision of the foundation of an independent Greek state signalled a hesitant turn away in European politics from the anti-revolutionary proclivities of the Vienna Order. Britain, France, and

¹¹⁵ The Earl of Dudley to the Prince of Lieven, 6 Mar. 1828, PRAG, 53–5; see also Katalin Schrek, ‘The Effects of Russia’s Balkan Aspirations on the British Diplomacy in St Petersburg: The Treaty of Adrianople and Its Consequences (1829–1832)’, in *(Re)Discovering the Sources of Bulgarian and Hungarian History*, ed. Penka Peykovska and Gabor Demeter (Sofia: n.p., 2015), 22–37.

¹¹⁶ Dakin, *Greek*, 274; Macfie, *Eastern Question*, 12.

¹¹⁷ Puryear, *France and the Levant*, 77–9.

¹¹⁸ BOA TS.MA.e 709/66.

¹¹⁹ BOA HR.SYS 1187/2. Also in Şerafeddin Turan, ‘1829 Edirne Andlaşması’, *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih–Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 9(1–2) (1951): 111–51, at 125.

¹²⁰ Frary, *Russia*, 43–5.

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 46–53.

Russia all strove to manage their strategic differences, economic interests, and public pressures (religious sentiments), as well as Ottoman/Greek differences. In the end, even though neither the leaders of the Triple Alliance nor the Concert of Europe as a whole had a unified position and policy with respect to the Eastern Question at the time, and even though Austria and Prussia urged non-intervention on the others, Russia, Britain, and France drove each other towards an intervention, albeit reluctantly so.

With the countries following suit in an attempt to prevent one another from establishing dominant control over the emerging Greek state, the legal and strategic quagmire led the Triple Alliance into a rabbit hole. They did manage to place the intervention on legal ground by highlighting that its ultimate object was ‘commercial security’. But the subsequent Russo-Ottoman war, and the territorial gains and commercial privileges St Petersburg consequently obtained from the Porte, only hampered the solidity of the Concert of Europe serving as a centrifugal dynamic.¹²²

In the end, the Greek revolutionaries emerged victorious, having obtained their ultimate objectives—indépendence—even though they were given a lesser voice in the selection of the regime and even the leader of their new independent polity. The Ottoman Empire, for her part, remained on the receiving end of violence, having lost her fleet. She was partitioned by the Powers and then by Russia, and she unwillingly liberalized foreign trade in her dominions. Twelve years after the Congress of Vienna, in a new encounter with the Concert of Europe, Sultan Mahmud II and his ministers thus realized that the dynamics of Euro-Ottoman relations were now different under the Vienna Order. In late 1828, they even made an untimely attempt to get their empire ‘approved and recognized as an integral part of the European political system’, though this was considered unfeasible due to Russian opposition as well as the growing belief that the sultan’s empire was disintegrating.¹²³ In the eyes of Ottoman ministers, a new era in inter-imperial politics had begun—not in 1815, but in 1827.

Counterfactually speaking, can one argue that the Porte paid dearly for the decisions it had taken during the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15? By refusing to become a part of the Vienna System at the time under Halet Efendi’s sway, did it jeopardize the territorial integrity of the sultan’s European dominions, which, as of 1829, saw the emergence of new polities, (semi-)independent kingdoms, and republics in Greece, Moldavia, Wallachia, and then Serbia?

The answer needs to be tentative: the Vienna Order formed in the 1810s barely put an end to Great Power encroachments and the policy of supplying security in the Levant in search of their own strategic, economic, and (to a lesser degree) religious interests. True, the transimperial security culture woven around the

¹²² Ingram, ‘Bellicism as Boomerang’, 215; Frary, *Russia*, 39.

¹²³ Ottenfels to Metternich, 10 Dec. 1828, HHStA, StA, Türkei, VI, 34; cf. Šedivý, *Metternich*, 44–5.

Eastern Question did undergo a transformation in order to hold aggression in check and foster cooperation among the Powers. And true, if the Porte accepted the Powers' proposal in February and March 1815, it could place the territorial integrity of the sultan's European dominions under the guarantee of international public law. But, as was proved time and again in the course of the century, before and after Vienna, international law tended to be applied unevenly when it came to the Eastern Question or the periphery of Europe.

According to Ingram, the partition of the Ottoman Empire by the creation of Greece illustrated 'the reciprocal relationship between equilibrium in [Europe] and bellicism in the [its] periphery'.¹²⁴ The Ottoman Empire might have 'paid the price for the Concert of Europe's stability', as the Powers 'recognized [her] rebel subjects as belligerents, sank [her] fleet, invaded, annexed and partitioned [her] territory'. And, with their bellicism, the Powers stored up problems for the future: 'the states that savaged [the Ottoman Empire] would one day turn on one another.'¹²⁵

Ingram calls this the boomerang effect of the bellicism of the Vienna order. I argue instead that it was a paradox that formed the core of the transimperial security culture that preceded this order. The imprudent European *supply of security* in a foreign territory, whereby the more pressing interests of the Powers were heeded above all, tended to engender fresh vulnerabilities in the Levant as well as further *demand for security* in Europe. An infamous historical episode provides us with an excellent example of this paradox: the war between Cairo and Istanbul in the 1830s that followed the Navarino intervention and the independence of Greece, that almost ended the Ottoman Empire, and that engendered a Great Power crisis, testing the Vienna Order to its foundations.

¹²⁴ Ingram, 'Bellicism as Boomerang', 215.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Old Enemies

Cairo, Istanbul, and the Civil War of 1832–1833

On 16 June 1804, when the Ottoman imperial frigate *Zevi'l-'Ukûl* (The Sagacious) set sail from the port of Alexandria, on board was an anxious man. It was Hüsrev Mehmed Paşa, the former governor of Cairo. As we saw in Chapter 3, he had had a harrowing experience in Ottoman Egypt in the three years that preceded his departure. He had been ousted from power by rebellious Albanian soldiers, captured by the Mamluk beys, and then imprisoned in Cairo until days before he left that bountiful country.¹ Yet, despite his many disappointments, because he believed that he could still overcome the tragedies he had gone through, Hüsrev harboured hopes of returning to settle in the citadel as the paşa of Cairo. He therefore decided to go no further than Rhodes, and impatiently awaited news from his correspondents—the interpreter Stephanaki (Boghorides) and lieutenant Mehmed Ali. The two were in Egypt making contacts for Hüsrev's restitution.² Or so Hüsrev believed.

The news he expected never came. After waiting a few months in Rhodes, now even more disillusioned and crestfallen, he gave up, and then left for the Balkans to take up a new post. The next year, when he found out that Mehmed Ali had been appointed the paşa of Cairo, he probably felt even more resentful. Yet all he could do was swallow his pride and move on.

In the following decades, while Mehmed Ali was preoccupied with building his *imperium in imperio*, Hüsrev became one of the most influential political figures in Istanbul, responsible for the security of the imperial state, first as grand admiral and then as *serasker* (the Ottoman equivalent of the ministry of war), and finally as grand vizier. The pursuit in the Levantine deserts in which Mehmed Ali and Hüsrev had been engaged in the 1800s was not the last time their paths crossed. Their rivalry simmered in parallel with their budding influence in Ottoman politics, and boiled over into an entrenched hostility.

As we have seen in the previous pages, intra-elite rivalries were among the major relational dynamics of the Eastern Question in the nineteenth century. This book considers many examples of such struggles—including those between the French interventionists and anti-interventionists (Chapter 1), the pro-French,

¹ See Ch. 3.

² Missett to Hobart, 16 June 1804, *LPM* vol. 2, 165.

pro-Russian, or Anglophile Ottoman ministers (Chapters 2 and 4), and the proponents of the ‘Greek’ and ‘Ottoman’ projects in St Petersburg (Chapter 4). In the following pages, we will see many other cases. Yet few of these rivalries rested on personal acrimonies and grudges, and endured through time and circumstances in the same manner as the rivalry between Mehmed Ali and Hüsrev. Decades after their first encounter in Egypt in 1801, during the so-called Greek and Eastern crises in the mid-1820s and then in 1832–41, the two men became the central actors in the violence and civil wars that severely battered the sultan’s empire, led to her partition, and jeopardized the Vienna Order, almost causing it to crumble.

The present chapter concerns this rivalry. My aim here is to discuss the decisive role emotions played in strategic decision-making processes in the Levant. By accentuating the previously unrecorded nuances of the story of Mehmed Ali and Hüsrev, I will also look to demonstrate the links between the crisis in Greece (1821–32), the French invasion of Algiers (1830), and the empire-wide civil war between Cairo and Istanbul that struck the Ottoman world (1831–41) and swiftly became a transimperial crisis.

Hüsrev and Mehmed Ali

Hüsrev was originally from the Caucasus. Born in 1769 to an Abaza family, he was brought to Istanbul in his childhood by slave traders. There he was sold for 2500 *kuruş* to Said Ağa, the *çavuşbaşı* (chief bailiff) of the imperial palace.³ He thus entered the most revered and powerful household in the Ottoman world through his new master, whose main duty was to assist the Reis Efendi and supervise foreign visitors of the sultan. Said Ağa enrolled Hüsrev at an early age in the palace school, *Enderun-i Hümayun*. Like many others who were products of the Ottoman *gulam* system, through which young slaves were trained for senior military and bureaucratic positions, Hüsrev spent his adolescence within the palace and acquired there the education, skills, and experience—as well as important connections—that helped him climb the ladder of imperial bureaucracy. Unlike many, he managed to make it to the top.

Following his education, he became the chamberlain of Küçük Hüseyin Ağa (1757–1803), who, as we have seen in Chapter 2, was the brother-in-law of Selim III and an influential figure in the New Order movement. When Küçük Hüseyin was appointed as the grand admiral in 1792, Hüsrev laboured with him to renovate of the Ottoman navy. In this period he closely observed the training of Selim III’s ‘New Order’ army. He accompanied the grand admiral to Egypt to fight

³ Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 6–7.

the French in 1801. And, he received the title of paşa the next year when he was appointed governor of Cairo.⁴

After his departure from Alexandria in 1804, following his unrewarding wait in Rhodes, Hüsrev served in Salonika and Bosnia as governor.⁵ He fought against the Russians during the 1806–12 war.⁶ And then, due to his successful achievements and his connections in Istanbul, on 31 December 1811, he was promoted as the *kaptan-ı deryâ* or the grand admiral of the Ottoman Empire.⁷ In Cairo, the news of Hüsrev's rise was unwelcome for Mehmed Ali, which indicates the degree of dislike between the two men at this hour.⁸

Hüsrev spent the following seven years largely at sea, usually fighting against Mediterranean pirates (*izbanduts*) but also in order to keep himself away from the rein of the hardliner Halet.⁹ In 1818, before the Greek crisis arose, due to his moderate leanings, Hüsrev was dismissed by Halet from his post as grand admiral and sent to Trabzon and Erzurum to deal with the quarrels with Persia.¹⁰ He returned back to Istanbul only four years later, after Halet's fall. On 8 December 1822, the sultan appointed the Caucasian as grand admiral for the second time, and entrusted him with the difficult task of quashing the Greek 'rebellion'.¹¹ Just as Halet had vanished from the picture, however, Hüsrev would find himself having to deal with another, older rival during his Greek campaign: Mehmed Ali.

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Since the mid-1800s, the life of Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt had proceeded in a remarkably different direction from that of Hüsrev. While the latter steadily became a major actor in the imperial palace, drawing closer and closer to Mahmud II, Mehmed Ali grew politically distant from the sultan. From the early 1810s on, he turned Cairo and its environs 'into a centre of an expansive empire'¹² Turning the Napoleonic Wars in his favour, and isolated from the frenzy of European fighting, he sold grain to Austria, Britain, and Prussia, and reformed the Egyptian administration. He tightened central control, reduced corruption in the local bureaucracy, conducted cadastral surveys to man his army and systematized his labour resource, abolished the tax farming system (*iltizam*), and cancelled the immunities on agricultural land belonging to mosques and pious foundations (*awqaf*).¹³

⁴ Ibid. 7–8. ⁵ Ibid. 68. ⁶ Ibid. 79–80.

⁷ BOA C.BH. 3236, 8118; cf. Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 91; İnalçık, 'Hüsrev Paşa', *IA*, 610.

⁸ Drovetti to MAE, Bulletin de février 1812, in Driault, *Mohamed Ali et Napoléon*, 168–9.

⁹ See Ch. 4. ¹⁰ *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 5, 2628. ¹¹ Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 192.

¹² Fahmy, 'Muhammad 'Ali', 139; see also Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931); Guy Fargette, *Méhémet Ali. Le Fondateur de l'Égypte moderne* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996).

¹³ Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 9; Muhammed H. Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question, 1831–1841: The Expansionist Policy of Mehmed Ali Paşa in Syria and Asia Minor and the Reaction of the Sublime Porte* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1998), 39–40; Marsot, *Egypt*, 142; Rivlin, 54–125; Reuven Aharoni, *The Pasha's Bedouin: Tribes and State in the Egypt of Mehmed Ali, 1805–1848* (London: Routledge, 2007), 120.

Most importantly, he established a coalition with rich local merchants, incorporated their business into the government's machinery, and, aside from forced industrialization, introduced 'a wide-ranging policy of monopolies whereby staple goods as well as cash crops were to be sold only to government warehouses and at prices fixed by [the paşa]'. The profits of Egypt rose from 8 million francs in 1805 to 50 million francs in 1821. Thanks to the booming trade, the number of European trading houses increased from 12 in the 1800s to 66 in the 1820s. While there had been barely 150 foreigners operating in Egypt before, their number rose to over 15,000 in a few decades.¹⁴

The paşa's financial strength procured him ready cash to undertake unique infrastructural projects (such as the digging of the Rahmanieh and Mahmudiye canals) and the establishment of several factories, schools, and hospitals that were mainly in the service of his military.¹⁵ It also enabled the formation of a modern conscription-based army and navy—Mehmed Ali's own 'New Order'.¹⁶

In 1819, Joseph-Anthelme Sève (1788–1860), a French colonel who had served in the French army in Egypt and who converted to Islam and gave himself the name Suleyman, was employed to train the paşa's army in the French style.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Mehmed Ali began to purchase ammunition from the European Powers, despite the disapproval of the Porte.¹⁸ Although his renovation experiment did not prove effective immediately, the new army was put to a successful test in Sudan, where he acquired new territories and slaves, including the gold-rich regions of Sennar.¹⁹

Thus by the time the 'Greek crisis' broke, Mehmed Ali had placed Egypt fully under his control, and aspired to expand his dominions with the army that had become the most disciplined and efficient in the Ottoman world. He continued to entertain the dream of founding his own independent empire. Yet to his interlocutors he usually appeared undecided about how to achieve this.

The news of the developments in the Morea, Danubian Principalities, and the Greek islands in 1821 were therefore doubly intriguing to Mehmed Ali. At first, he sympathized with the revolutionary Greeks, providing the runaways with shelter and enrolling the sailors in his navy.²⁰ But then, he was moved by the reports of

¹⁴ 'Mémoire sur l'état de l'Égypte sous la domination de Mohammed Ali', Oct. 1824, AMAE Papiers Desages, 60PAAP/4.

¹⁵ Ibid.; see also Mansel, *Levant*, 59; Dodwell, *Muhammad Ali*, 30–31; Z. Y. Hershlag, *Introduction to the Modern Economic History of the Middle East* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 80; Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 10.

¹⁶ Ibid. 46; Puryear, *France and the Levant*, 43.

¹⁷ Aimé Vingtrinier, *Soliman-Pacha. Colonel Sève, généralissime des armées égyptiennes ou Histoire des guerres de l'Égypte de 1820 à 1860* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1886).

¹⁸ BOA HAT 678/33080, n.d.

¹⁹ Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes'alesi*, 9. For more detail, see Edouard Driault, *La Formation de l'empire de Mohamed Aly de l'Arabie au Soudan (1814–1823)* (Cairo: Société royale de géographie d'Égypte, 1928).

²⁰ *Sanktpeterburgskie vedomosti*, 16 Aug. 1821, no. 65 and 1 Nov. 1821, no. 87.

the massacres of the Muslims by Greek revolutionary militias. He changed his position, and began to send military advice to Istanbul through his agent (*Mısır kapı kethüdası*) Muhammad Necib Efendi (?–1851), who at the time also served the sultan's vizier responsible for the gunpowder factories.²¹

In May 1821, when the Porte asked his help to suppress the 'disturbance' in Crete with Egypt's fleet (as the sultan was unwilling to send the imperial navy to the Mediterranean for fear of a possible major Orthodox uprising in Istanbul and a Russian attack in the Black Sea), Mehmed Ali responded with reluctance.²² But when the sultan promised him the administration of Crete and Cyprus, he followed orders and sent 7,000 men to control the island swiftly.²³

The paths of Mehmed Ali and Hüsrev crossed one more time three years later when the latter could have obtained little success in suppressing the Greek 'rebels' except on a few less important occasions in Kea, Syros, and Lesbos.²⁴ As the Janissaries under Hüsrev's command had once again proved inefficient, Mahmud II set out to disband them and begin the training of new troops. His plans were coming to fruition slowly and deliberately in the imperial capital. He could not disturb the progress. This was why the sultan decided to ask for the military assistance of Mehmed Ali. The latter's more disciplined and advanced troops had effectively accomplished difficult missions before, especially in Crete. They could now help crush the 'rebellion' in the Morea.

But, again, Mehmed Ali was hesitant. A campaign to Greece would mean new costs on top of those already incurred during the Crete campaign.²⁵ Moreover, his agents were reporting to him the public fury that the news from Greece was creating in Europe.²⁶ When the sultan promised the paşa that he would 'provide him with all the tools of fighting and supplies and that he would receive all the necessary powers to enable him to successfully complete the operation', Mehmed Ali agreed to send his son Ibrahim, together with the Egyptian fleet and some 17,000 men, to Greece.²⁷ He did not do so, however, without demanding the governorship of the Morea for Ibrahim. Believing that he had enough leverage to demand more, on 19 April 1824 he also asked for Ibrahim's appointment as grand admiral, in place of Hüsrev, for at least one year, so that all power would be concentrated in one man. It would facilitate his campaign, allow the paşa to

²¹ BOA HAT 38237-A; 38018; see also Çelik, *Şeyhü'l-Vüzerâ*, 200.

²² Muhammed Necib Efendi to Mehmed Ali, 17 May 1821, DWQ Bahr Barra 7/100.

²³ Muhammed Necib Efendi to Mehmed Ali, 2 July 1822, DWQ Bahr Barra 8/48; *Sanktpeterburgskie vedomosti*, 28 Apr. 1822, no. 40.

²⁴ Çelik, *Şeyhü'l-Vüzerâ*, 193–203. For Sultan Mahmud II's disappointment with Hüsrev's mission and Hüsrev's apologetic response, see BOA HAT 37767.

²⁵ Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 157.

²⁶ Ibid.; *Sanktpeterburgskie vedomosti*, 25 Apr. 1824, no. 34.

²⁷ Jamâl 'Ubayd, *Qissat al-ihtilâl Muḥammad 'Alî li-l-yunân* (Cairo: Al-Hay'at al-'âma al-maṣriyya li-l-kitâb, 1990), 611–12; Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, 128; *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 12, 98; BOA HAT. 38781-C, 88781-B; cf. Çelik, *Şeyhü'l-Vüzerâ*, 199, 201, 203.

distance an old rival, Hüsrev, from power, and put the Ottoman imperial navy and military under Ibrahim's command.²⁸

But granting the command of the imperial navy to a man the sultan hardly trusted (he knew about Mehmed Ali's aspirations)²⁹ was simply too large a risk to take. Instead, Mahmud II kept Ibrahim as the governor of Morea, separated Ibrahim and Hüsrev's spheres of action, and ordered both not to interfere with each other in their bicephalous mission.³⁰ And to keep Mehmed Ali in the campaign, he made another pledge: control over Syria. This was an irresistible offer for the paşa, who, as we will see below, desperately needed the riches of Syria for his domestic and external security.

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Mehmed Ali, his son Ibrahim, and Hüsrev began their joint campaign cautiously. They were aware that their history could be a recipe for friction. They also knew that they could not let it get on the way of their sensitive mission. After the initial success in subduing the Greek units, when Hüsrev and Ibrahim met in September 1824 whilst sheltering from the storm in the port of Bodrum, the reports to Istanbul heralded that the two paşas treated each other like 'father and son'.³¹ Sultan Mahmud II was elated, wishfully thinking that this could be the beginning of a union between the two.³²

The next year, Hüsrev was even ordered to go to Alexandria for the reparation of his navy and to carry reinforcements for Ibrahim. He thus returned to Egypt on 7 August 1825, 21 years after he had left. His old nemesis, Mehmed Ali, was away at sea when the grand admiral arrived, which was why he could see him only eight days later.

Uncertain about how he would be received in Mehmed Ali's Egypt, during those eight days Hüsrev was nervous, and policed his sailors very strictly. He did not wish to disembark before the return of the governor, and the same motive prevented him from agreeing to receive the visits of consuls and other persons who, in such circumstances, would present themselves to him. As soon as Mehmed Ali arrived on the morning of 15 August, he accepted Hüsrev's visit. All onlookers were concerned about how their meeting would go. But, despite all the odds, the grand admiral received a very warm welcome on the first day.

When his guest arrived, Mehmed Ali went down to the stairs in front of his palace and hugged Hüsrev. The two 'kissed each other affectionately'.³³ Mehmed Ali gave way to his guest, and then they disappeared into his palace. After a long

²⁸ BOA HAT 39506; cf. Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 205; *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 2894. ²⁹ See Ch. 3.

³⁰ BOA C.DH. 83/4140; BOA C.AS. 1/40, n.d. For the firman of the sultan, see BOA TS.MA.e 721/36.

³¹ BOA HAT 900/39546; BOA TS.MA.e 721/8; cf. Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 214.

³² *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 2901–2.

³³ Drovetti to Baron de Damas, 20 Aug. 1825, in Édouard Driault, *L'Expédition de Crète et de Morée (1823–1828). Correspondance des consuls de France en Égypte et en Crète* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1930), 72.

exchange of courtesies, they had a confidential talk for several hours in the friendliest manner. During their conversation, Mehmed Ali called Hüsrev *paşa karındaşım* (my paşa brother), told him that he owed everything he possessed to the sultan, gave the grand admiral a generous amount of cash and valuable gifts, and, immediately afterwards, wrote to the Porte to express his gratitude for having seen Hüsrev Paşa again.³⁴

Hüsrev acted in kind, thanking Mehmed Ali for his services to the sultan. The paşa of Egypt then ordered his men to supply the Ottoman fleet abundantly with all the food and ammunition it required.³⁵ In an act of benevolence and courtesy, Mehmed Ali also gave Hüsrev his own palace in which to spend the night, while he established himself in that of his son, Ibrahim Paşa.³⁶ All these treatments led observers to make an early conclusion that ‘these two most powerful men of the Ottoman Empire’, ‘the old enemies’, had now made peace with one another.³⁷

However, their meetings in the following weeks proved to be less genial. Mehmed Ali complained to Hüsrev about the ineptitude of the Ottoman navy—of which the latter was in charge—in overwhelming the Greeks, due mainly to the lack of courage shown by its commanders.³⁸ He also expressed his discontent with Hüsrev’s failure in shoring up Ibrahim’s efforts on the ground. Perhaps to soften the blow, he promised the grand admiral that he would do everything in his power to reinforce the Ottoman navy.

It is true that Hüsrev had more than once shied away from direct confrontation with the ‘Greek rebels’ with the aim of protecting the fleet, which had occluded Ibrahim’s efforts on the ground.³⁹ Embarrassed at having been scolded in front of his own men in Alexandria, the grand admiral was nevertheless in no position to provoke Mehmed Ali, for he knew that it could create an intra-imperial crisis just when the sultan was in dire need of the Egyptian army. It would probably not be wrong to assume that he left Egypt with bitter feelings for the second time, taking with him some 12,000 *jihadiyye* infantry and cavalrymen that would fight under the command of Ibrahim in the forthcoming Missolonghi mission.⁴⁰

Hüsrev’s relations with Ibrahim Paşa abruptly turned sour thereafter.⁴¹ The treasurer of the Rumelian army, Hüsni Bey, who had been secretly commissioned by the sultan to ensure amicable relations between the grand admiral and Ibrahim Paşa, reported that, even though the two paşas appeared to be on good terms, deep

³⁴ BOA HAT 38248; 38363, cf. Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 224–5. ³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Drovetti to Baron de Damas, 20 Aug. 1825; cf. Driault, *L’Expédition*, 72–3.

³⁷ De Livron to Ministre des Finances et Président du Conseil, 12 Oct. 1825; cf. Driault, *L’Expédition*, 91.

³⁸ BOA HAT 39953. Also in Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 226.

³⁹ *Tarih-i Cedvet*, vol. 6, 2916–17.

⁴⁰ BOA HAT 639/31467; 857/38261.

⁴¹ Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes’esi*, 11; Drovetti to Collège Impérial à Saint Pétersbourg, 25 May 1826, in René Cattani, *Le Règne de Mohamed Ali d’après les archives russes en Égypte*, vol. 1: *Rapports consulaires de 1819 à 1833* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire, 1931), 66–67.

down they hated each other and mediation between the two had now become impossible.⁴²

As the preparations began for the decisive mission to Missolonghi, reports sent to Istanbul contained hints of the degree of distrust, animosity, and hesitant collaboration of the two.⁴³ The first Missolonghi siege by Ottoman forces failed partly due to lack of coordination with Ibrahim's men. When the latter seized this unbreachable castle during the second siege in 1826, his soldiers' macabre brutality towards the Greek inhabitants sprang partly from the belief that they would not receive succour from Hüsrev's forces.

The capture of Missolonghi was a momentous achievement on the part of the Ottomans, nearly ensuring their complete control of the Greek 'rebellion'. But the differences between Ibrahim and Hüsrev became sharper afterwards. At the celebrations in Istanbul, they explicitly accused each other of misconduct during their campaign.⁴⁴

Mehmed Ali was peeved by the news, and instantly asked Mahmud II to dismiss the grand admiral from his position, threatening to withdraw his troops from Greece otherwise.⁴⁵ The sultan was focused on his secret plans to abolish the Janissaries. Since he was heavily reliant on the strength of the Egyptian army in the Greek campaign, he conceded to Mehmed Ali's demands and, initially, called Hüsrev back to Istanbul in June 1826. When Mehmed Ali sent another dispatch, insisting on the dismissal of his nemesis in January 1827, Mahmud II relieved Hüsrev of his position as grand admiral in early February.⁴⁶

The rancour between the two antagonists thus revived during the Greek campaign. To Mehmed Ali, Hüsrev was not only an old rival whose presence in the imperial capital hindered his interests. Their animosity was also an ostensible instrument and sometimes a cover for justifying Mehmed Ali's various political manoeuvres and demands from Istanbul. Hüsrev, on his part, was the more circumspect of the two. Unlike his nemesis, the latter had never been in possession of a rich and semi-autonomous province.⁴⁷ He was instead charged with roles in regions that were more directly controllable by the imperial centre. He had to act with tenacity in order to survive and rise amidst the intrigues and rivalries that characterized Ottoman bureaucracy. This demanded, above all, proximity to the sultan and other strong men in the palace. His ability to manoeuvre in the long-lasting political chess game he played with Mehmed Ali was therefore more limited. He was far from being a mere pawn, though. For now, he was more like a

⁴² BOA HAT 37933; cf. Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 236–7.

⁴³ On the dispatch of food supplies and cavalry from Egypt, BOA HAT 621/30709; on the differences of opinion between Ibrahim and Reşid about the siege of Missolonghi castle, see BOA HAT 857/38261; *Moskovskie vedomosti*, 24 Feb. 1826, no. 16.

⁴⁴ *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 6, 2918–22.

⁴⁵ Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes'elesi*, 11; BOA TS.MA.e 721/36; Fahmy, 'The Era of Muhammad 'Ali', 158; Mehmed Ali to Grand Vizier, 5 Ramazan 1241; cf. Dodwell, *The Founder*, 85.

⁴⁶ Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 235–49.

⁴⁷ This is mentioned also in Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*.

knight: calculating, underhand, and more difficult to foresee. This was why he avoided overt conflicts and often presented himself as the underdog or the downtrodden.⁴⁸

It paid off. As Mehmed Ali rose as a major threat to the authority of the sultan in the early 1830s, Hüsrev, with the help of his cautious attitude, emerged in the imperial capital as ‘a symbol of anxiety and outrage against the governor of Egypt’, as a mouthpiece of the Sublime Porte, and as one of the masterminds of imperial security.⁴⁹ But, even when he eventually became a highly influential figure in the Ottoman world, he often refrained from the political limelight. Instead, he preferred to pull the strings from behind the curtains.

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When Hüsrev was recalled to the imperial capital and relieved of his post of grand admiral at Mehmed Ali’s insistence in 1826–7, a military and social revolution was under way in Istanbul.⁵⁰ Since the elimination of Halet Efendi, Sultan Mahmud II had initiated the training of a new and modern army, the *eşkinici* troops, in the same spirit as that of the New Order troops of Selim III. The sultan suspected and anticipated that this could prompt the jealousy of the Janissary aghas, whom the Ottoman leadership viewed at the time as ‘the enemies of the state’ and ‘the infidel traitors, parading in the disguise of Muslims’.⁵¹

In point of fact, on 12 June 1826, the first drill of the *eşkinici* troops with their blue, European-style uniforms in Istanbul agitated the Janissary leaders. Feeling compromised, two days later the latter staged a revolt. The streets of Istanbul witnessed bloody fighting similar to 1807 when Selim III had been dethroned. But his nephew Mahmud II was prepared. With his artilleries he arranged the bombardment of the Janissary barracks, and by 16 June 1826, he managed to disband the Janissary units for good, which went down in history as the ‘Auspicious Event’ (*Vâkâ-yî Hayriye*).⁵²

The Janissary network was so widespread that thousands were investigated, banished, or arrested thereafter. Those who declared themselves loyal to the sultan were pardoned and incorporated into the new troops. Some went underground, only to reappear again in a few years’ time during the uprisings in Bosnia.⁵³

Considered by the proponents and sympathizers of the ‘New Order’ as a harmful cudgel in the ‘circle of justice’ and among most ardent defenders of

⁴⁸ Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 249.

⁴⁹ Ibid.; İnalçık, ‘Hüsrev Paşa’.

⁵⁰ Virginia Aksan, ‘Ottoman Military and Social Transformations, 1826–28: Engagement and Resistance in a Moment of Global Imperialism’, in *Empires and Autonomy: Moments in the History of Globalization*, ed. Stephen Streeter, John Weaver, and William D. Coleman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 61–78, at 61.

⁵¹ Howard Reed, ‘The Destruction of the Janissaries by Mahmud II in June 1826’ (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1951), 245.

⁵² Aksan, ‘Ottoman Military’, 61.

⁵³ Stratford Canning to George Canning, 12 Aug. 1826, TNA FO 78/144; cf. Cunningham, *Anglo-Ottoman*, vol. 1, 293.

economic protectionism, the Janissaries were at last eliminated. Sultan Mahmud II could finally establish his absolute authority, which almost nobody could dare oppose, except for an amorphous body of women, mostly wives and daughters of the crushed Janissaries, who in August 1826 protested in the streets of Istanbul against the terror that had gripped the imperial capital.⁵⁴

The Auspicious Event was one of the milestones of the transformation of Ottoman security culture, as the backbone of the circle of justice underwent a radical change. Mahmud II continued his military reform programme by establishing the *Âsâkir-i Mansure-i Muhammediye* (The Victorious Army of Muhammad), a new modern army of the empire. He even asked Mehmed Ali to send his French instructors to Istanbul to help him train his new army. But the paşa of Egypt astutely chose not to cooperate, suspecting that the new imperial order might check the power of his own military.⁵⁵ In dire need of men who would help him in running this most important of imperial projects, Mahmud II found in Hüsrev an old and reliable associate who had acquired first-hand observations of the roll call, drill, firearm practices, and training of European armies during the campaign against the French in 1801.

Hüsrev saw in this an invaluable opportunity. When he heard the news of the abolition of the Janissaries, he immediately formed a fruitful collaboration with a French former sergeant named Gaillard (first name unknown) in practising an advanced European drill method with select men in the navy near İzmir (Smyrna). He then told the sultan of his method and secured an invitation in 1827 to introduce the so-called ‘drill of Hüsrev’ (*tâlim-i Hüsrev*) to the infantry of *Âsâkir-i Mansure* in Istanbul.⁵⁶ The same year, aged 58, he was appointed as the *serasker* of Anatolia (commander in chief of the imperial army or a near equivalent of the minister of war), a post in which he remained for nine years.⁵⁷

During the catastrophic war with Russia in 1828–9, which Hüsrev had been adamantly opposed to in the first place, the new, yet raw, infantry (many of whom were in their early teens) that he had trained displayed an encouraging level of discipline. This added to his credibility in the imperial capital. Due to the sultan’s reliance on the army under Hüsrev’s control, the *serasker* became such an influential figure at the end of the 1820s that the prominent Turkish historian Halil İnalcık claims that he could get grand viziers replaced one after the other in quick succession.⁵⁸ In more than one account, European observers described him as the second most influential figure in Istanbul after the sultan.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Ibid. 294.

⁵⁵ Gültekin Yıldız, ‘Üniformalı Padişah: II. Mahmud’, in *II. Mahmud. Yeniden Yapılanma Sürecinde İstanbul*, ed. Coşkun Yılmaz (Istanbul: Avrupa Kültür Başkenti, 2010), 105–6; Aksan, ‘Military and Social’, 71; Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 266.

⁵⁶ Yıldız, ‘Üniformalı’, 106, 108; Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 271.

⁵⁷ Murav’ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 1, 71.

⁵⁸ İnalcık, ‘Hüsrev Paşa’, 43.

⁵⁹ Murav’ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 1, 13–14; Helmuth von Moltke, *Moltke’nin Türkiye Mektupları*, trans. Hayrullah Örs (Istanbul: Remiz Kitabevi, 1995), 32; Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 334.

Indeed, bar a short break in 1836-37, Sultan Mahmud II trusted Hüsrev's skills, character, network, and influence until the last hours of his life.⁶⁰ In turn, Hüsrev remained loyal to him all along. When important political decisions were made in Istanbul, Hüsrev, as 'the man who knew everything that was going on in the imperial capital', sat at the sultan's council, gave him advice and looked to guide him—mostly with success.⁶¹

In the first years of his tenure as the *serasker*, he played a pioneering role in reorganizing the security mechanisms of the imperial state, convening censuses (1827, 1830, 1831), redesigning military costumes, opening medical schools and new hospitals, rearranging the finances of the military, introducing universal conscription and the reserve system (national militia), and building new networks with provincial power brokers which re-empowered notable local families—all of which marked, after the *Sened-i İttifak* of 1808, a new episode in Ottoman military history.⁶²

In rebuilding and controlling the security apparatus of the empire, Hüsrev paid particular attention to installing his own men in key positions in the military as well as in the civilian bureaucracy.⁶³ The *serasker* was nothing if not a diligent educator and trainer. As a contemporary resident in Istanbul in the 1830s wrote, he had been 'for thirty years . . . constantly engaged in buying children in Georgia and Circassia, to educate them for different offices'.⁶⁴ Indeed, Hüsrev created a private school in his mansion in Bahçekapı, where he provided his own slaves, more than 100 of them, with education through private tutors in parallel to that supplied at the Palace School.⁶⁵ Since he had no biological children himself, he saw his slaves as his own children, calling them 'oğullarım' (my sons).⁶⁶ He sent some of them to Paris to supplement their education and acquire a perfect command of French. He then procured 'his sons' positions in the palace, the Porte, and the military, thus laying the basis of the creation of a numerous and hitherto unseen network that provided him with a power base and allowed his protégés to rise over time to the most senior ranks: Reşid Mehmed became grand vizier in 1829.

⁶⁰ See Ch. 7. ⁶¹ Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 1, 15.

⁶² Military historians can trace these reforms through Hüsrev's personal library, today preserved at the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul and filled with books that helped shape the Ottoman grand strategy and the most detailed accounts of military thinking and plans of his period. See Veysel Şimşek, 'The Grand Strategy of the Ottoman Empire, 1826-1841' (PhD thesis, McMaster University, 2015), 13, 108, 135, 137, 158, 175, 179, 237; Gültekin Yıldız, *Neferin Adı Yok. Zorunlu Askerliğe Geçiş Sürecinde Osmanlı Devleti'ne Siyaset, Ordu ve Toplum (1826-1839)* (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2009), 254-7.

⁶³ Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 1, 14; Carl V. Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 73-104.

⁶⁴ Robert Walsh, *A Residence at Constantinople During a Period Including the Commencement, Progress and Termination of the Greek and Turkish Revolutions*, vol. 2 (London: Wesley & Davis, 1836), 523 (appendix 7); cf. Philliou, *Biography*, 98.

⁶⁵ Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 415.

⁶⁶ Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 1, 14.

Akif (1787–1845) was appointed as Reis Efendi (foreign minister), and Halil Rifat (1795–1856) as grand admiral.⁶⁷

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The rise of Hüsrev in Istanbul was a major threat to Mehmed Ali and his aspirations in Cairo. The dangerous spark between these most powerful men in the Ottoman Empire eventually blazed into a civil war as Greece gained first her autonomy and then independence from the Porte. In fact, the rivalry between the two men was hardly the sole cause of the ensuing violence. Their emotions served only as accelerators of the political commotion that resulted from a series of developments and irreversibly tarnished relations between Cairo and Istanbul: the efforts of the agents of the intervening Triple Alliance to separate Mehmed Ali from the sultan during the ‘Greek crisis’, the Navarino incident, and the planned participation of Mehmed Ali in a French-led occupation campaign in North Africa despite the Porte’s disapprobation. Ties were cut loose one by one after each of these developments.

As early as 1826, the agents of the Triple Alliance, particularly those of Britain and France, were instilling the paşa of Egypt with the idea of withdrawing his troops from Greece to end the ‘Greek crisis’ in hopes of preventing a unilateral Russian intervention at the time. Mehmed Ali’s dream of an independent empire was known to British and French agents. In the 1810s, he had talked of it with them and even received endorsement, although this eventually faded (see Chapter 3). In November 1826, when he received the new British consul, John Barker (1771–1849) at his palace, he would tell him in a half-hour monologue, as he did with many other foreign visitors, the story of his childhood and his rise from ‘humble origins’, ‘step-by-step’, to the post of Egyptian governor: his successes, his suppression of the Wahhabis, his conquest of Sudan, and his worth to the sultan. ‘[N]ow here I am,’ he would conclude, ‘I never had a master.’⁶⁸ Barker was hardly baffled. He knew that this was an opportunity for Britain to separate Mehmed Ali from the sultan during the fight in Greece, and to gain greater influence in Cairo. The British consul took it.

In point of fact, the French agents in Egypt had been working towards the very same ends at the time, and if anything, this sparked a hidden competition between the two empires. Since the early 1820s, thanks to the energetic policies of the French consul Drovetti, France had followed an active policy of strengthening of Egypt ‘within well-defined limits’. Drovetti had envisaged that close connections between France and Egypt could allow France to use the Egyptian navy ‘in the future to balance more nearly her naval inferiority to Great Britain in the

⁶⁷ Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 417–27.

⁶⁸ Barker to Joseph Planta, 25 Nov. 1826, in John Barker, *Syria and Egypt Under the Last Five Sultans of Turkey*, vol. 2 (London: Samuel Tinsley, 1876), 46–8; also in Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men*, xix.

Near East'.⁶⁹ Moreover, the commercial relations between the two countries, the volume of which had grown from 2 million francs in 1816 to 12 million in 1827, had inspired French agents to look for options for the 'expansion of the French influence in Egypt' again.⁷⁰

France accordingly provided assistance in educational, health, agricultural, and industrial reform in Egypt. Egyptian students were dispatched to Paris, silk factories were opened by mostly French entrepreneurs. French officers were sent to Cairo for the formation, organization, and instruction of the paşa's officer corps.⁷¹ In 1823 and 1824 a group of French middle-rank officers and two generals, Pierre François-Xavier Boyer (1772–1851) and Pierre Gaston Henri de Livron (1770–1831), were placed in Mehmed Ali's service for this reason.⁷² The paşa received rifles and other ammunition from France, as well as financial support.⁷³

Mehmed Ali knew that a military force on which he could always rely was the only way to keep the Egyptian *fellahin* in submission and realize his ambitions in the future. The French officers led the paşa's new projects with their expert knowledge of the art and mechanics of war.⁷⁴ In 1825, Jules Planat opened a staff college, which was followed by the establishment of a cavalry school by Noël Varin. To accompany the cavalry education, a veterinary school and hospital were also established at Rosetta under Pierre Harmont.⁷⁵

French influence was so paramount in the mid-1820s that, in his private conversations with General Boyer, Mehmed Ali could express to him his future plans of independence in the hope of obtaining French support. In 1826, he presciently indicated that Tsar Nicholas I would declare war on the Porte, after which the paşa himself would move into Syria and occupy Damascus and Acre, and not stop until he had reached the Tigris and Euphrates.⁷⁶ Then he unambiguously professed that he wanted to found his own empire because he considered the Ottoman Empire a 'phantom'. He had sent his agents 'everywhere to prepare the way for his new démarche'.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ Puryear, *France and the Levant*, 42.

⁷⁰ Damas to M. le Barre, 9 Oct. 1824, AMAE Papiers Desages 60PAAP/3/161; La Ferroyans to Mimaut, 28 Feb. 1828, AMAE Alexandrie 23; cf. Puryear, *France and the Levant*, 53.

⁷¹ Drovetti to Pierre Balthalon, 16 Apr. and 16 June 1822, 4 Apr. 1823, in *Lettres de Bernardino Drovetti, consul de France à Alexandrie (1803–1830)*, prepared by Sylvie Guichard (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 2003), 406, 413, 442; Georges Douin, *Une mission militaire française auprès de Mohamed Aly. Correspondance des Généraux Belliard et Boyer* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1923), xx–xxi; Fahmy, 'The Era of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha', 154; Puryear, *France and the Levant*, 43. For one of the best accounts of reform in Mehmed Ali's Egypt in the 1820s, see Ridley, *Drovetti*, 208–47.

⁷² Boyer to Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, 1 Nov. 1824, AM Papiers Boyer Pierre François Xavier, GDI 7 YD 630; Douin, *Une mission*, xxi; Puryear, *France and the Levant*, 43; Ridley, *Drovetti*, 236–7.

⁷³ 'Mémoire sur l'état de l'Égypte sous la domination de Mohammed Ali', Oct. 1824, AMAE Papiers Desages, 60PAAP/4.

⁷⁴ Jules Planat, *Histoire de la régénération de l'Égypte* (Paris: J. Barbezat, 1830), 25.

⁷⁵ For details, see Pierre Harmont, *L'Égypte sous Méhémet-Ali* (Paris: Leautey & Lecointe, 1845), 27; Fahmy, 'The Era of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha', 160.

⁷⁶ Douin, *Une mission*, 79–80; also in Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 38.

⁷⁷ Puryear, *France and the Levant*, 47–8.

The French response to the paşa was ambivalent. General Auguste Daniel Belliard (1769–1832), a member of the Chamber of Peers who had served in Egypt during the 1798–1801 expedition and had suggested the dispatch of Boyer in the first place, asked the latter to treat this ‘question of highest interest... verbally and with the greatest circumspection’.⁷⁸ The available archival sources suggest that the French government declined to take part in Mehmed Ali’s project at an official level, while leaving the officers on the ground free in their conduct. Drovetti was strictly instructed to pay extreme attention to avoiding rumours that the officers were sent to aid the paşa’s declaration of independence from the Porte.⁷⁹

This and what followed reveal that French involvement in Mehmed Ali’s plans was minimal in the beginning. We can deduct this also from the fact that, in the second half of 1826, the paşa’s relations with the French officers in Egypt were seriously tarnished due to quarrels among the French officers caught by personal animosities. While France was engaged in talks for a potential Great Power intervention in Greece, Boyer’s opponents such as General Gaudin started rumours of a potential French invasion of Egypt orchestrated by General Boyer, a self-described philhellene. As soon as these rumours reached Mehmed Ali, the paşa decided to sack the French officers, and even requested new ones from Britain. Boyer consequently left Egypt in September 1826.⁸⁰

The paşa then looked to obtain the support of Britain in the realization of his goals, as had been the case in the early 1810s. He believed that the British succour would thwart a major threat to his planned expansion toward the Persian Gulf. It would secure protection for Egypt when he defected from the Ottoman Empire. But the Navarino incident in October 1827 pushed the paşa’s back against the wall, because, as we have seen in Chapter 4, the very Powers that he looked to collaborate with against the sultan annihilated his navy in Greece.

The news was shocking to Mehmed Ali. And this was not simply because of his material loss or because the Powers had destroyed the Ottoman-Egyptian navies without declaring war on the sultan. Despite his calls to proceed with a ‘lighter’ diplomacy against the Triple Alliance, Mahmud II had remained stubborn against the Powers’ demands, and even after Navarino, the sultan ordered Ibrahim Paşa not to abandon his mission.⁸¹ What had transpired since 1826—the Triple Alliance’s involvement in the Greek crisis, and their demands for autonomy for Greece in the interests of ‘commercial security’ and with ‘humanitarian sentiments’—were all unprecedented and puzzling to Mehmed Ali. The paşa also realized that a new international order was unfolding. He concluded that there

⁷⁸ Ibid. 44. ⁷⁹ MAE to Drovetti, 8 Nov. 1825, in Douin, *Une mission*, 6.

⁸⁰ Ridley, *Drovetti*, 241–2.

⁸¹ DWQ Bahr Barra 12/18, 10 Nov. 1827; cf. Fahmy, ‘The Era of Mohammad ‘Ali Pasha’, 159.

was no good reason—and would be no beneficial result—for him to confront the Powers.

Unlike the sultan, he signed a convention with the Triple Alliance (9 August 1828) without the approval of the Porte, and ensured the secure withdrawal of his son.⁸² To him, this was the end of the ‘Greek crisis’. He did not evacuate Crete, keeping control until 1841. He asked the sultan to grant him Syria as a reward for his success and also indemnity for his loss. But Mahmud II rebuffed his request.

Hence came the moment of truth and the point of no return for the paşa. Appalled by the sultan’s response, Mehmed Ali considered his experience in Greece, Mahmud II’s refusal to leave Syria to his control, and the rise of Hüsrev in Istanbul as valid excuses for expanding his power base and dominions within the Ottoman Empire in the following years. From the end of the 1820s on, he looked to seize every opportunity for expansion and independence that presented itself.

‘The Civil War of Islamism’

For Mehmed Ali, an opportunity for expansion towards the sultan’s north African suzerainties—Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers—manifested itself unexpectedly, when the French approached him in 1829–30 with a plan that he was more than ready to agree upon. Since 1827, King Charles X’s navy had been blockading Algiers. The dey Hüseyin (1765–1838) and the French consul Pierre Derval (1758–1830) had come to loggerheads over the arrears in repayment of the loans contracted by French merchants (Bacri and Busnach) and the alleged piratical acts of the Barbary corsairs and privateering against the European maritime Powers. In a heated moment, when the dey infamously hit Derval with his flywhisk, the differences had turned into a diplomatic crisis and engendered the naval mission.⁸³

Even though, the French prime minister and foreign minister Jules de Polignac had toyed with grandiose designs for the total dismemberment of the sultan’s empire and redrawing the map of Europe during the Russo-Ottoman war of 1828–9, after the war, he reviewed his designs and set to pursue a more forceful diplomacy in Algiers.⁸⁴ At about the same moment, the consul of France in Cairo, Bernardino Drovetti, proposed to him an occupation project, which Polignac immediately upheld.

⁸² Mehmed Ali to Sheikh Efendi, 11 Dec. 1827, DWQ Dafatir Mu’ayya Turki 31/61; Petrunina, *Social’no*, 268–9.

⁸³ Georges Douin, *Mohamed Aly et l’expédition d’Alger (1829–1830)* (Cairo: Société royale de géographie d’Égypte, 1930), i–ii. For an insightful and nuanced account, see de Lange, ‘Menacing Tides’, ch. 4.

⁸⁴ See Ch. 4.

The so-called Drovetti plan pertained to the conquest of Algiers (as well as Tripoli and Tunis), not by King Charles X, but by the French-backed armies of Mehmed Ali. Just like Talleyrand and Bonaparte in 1798, Drovetti saw in his plan several rewards for France. Aside from regaining the prestige of the monarchy, it would help repair Franco-Egyptian relations, which had been deeply tainted after the Boyer–Gaudin dispute (1826) and the Navarino incident (1827). It could put a conclusive end to the alleged piratical acts of the Barbary corsairs and win back prominence and influence for France both in Europe, for thwarting the common piracy threat, and in the Mediterranean, by means of reforging an alliance with the most powerful actor on southern shores. France would gain strategically crucial outposts.⁸⁵ The plan would also avoid antagonizing the local Muslims, as the occupation would be directed by a subject of the sultan, his co-religionist, the paşa of Egypt. It would justify the act before the eyes of both the Sublime Porte and the Concert of Europe by purportedly preserving Ottoman territorial integrity. Finally, it would be less expensive for France and provoke less jealousy on the part of Britain, the other major European Power in the Mediterranean.

Drovetti persuaded Mehmed Ali without much effort. The latter even signed a bill with France.⁸⁶ But then, in the spirit of collective action and multilateralism in the European inter-imperial diplomacy of the time, Polignac presented the plan to the other European Powers whose commerce was hampered by piracy in the Mediterranean. While he received the endorsement of Russia and Prussia, Austria and Britain remained hesitant, arguing that the plan lacked legitimacy.⁸⁷

Even though the sultan's rule over the Barbary states was merely nominal, they were still under his jurisdiction. This was why the French had to obtain his consent before launching their campaign. Drovetti believed that the plan could be touted to the Porte by either carrots or sticks, i.e. by means offering the Porte 'an annual tribute of four million francs, [which would] duplicat[e] the amount paid by Egypt', or, in case of the Porte's censure, by threatening the Ottoman cabinet that, otherwise, 'France would [still] conquer Algeria and Egypt would take Syria'.⁸⁸ In the end, Drovetti gauged, Istanbul could be made to believe that it would attain more benefits from the proposed campaign than from the status quo.

As had been the case with Talleyrand and Bonaparte in 1798, Drovetti and Polignac made exactly the same hefty miscalculation by considering or framing their plan as a favour to the sultan. When the French ambassador to Istanbul,

⁸⁵ 'Aperçu de la situation politique de l'Égypte en 1828 et 1829 par Mr de Coehorn, attaché aux Ministre des affaires étrangères', [n.d.], CADLC, 17MD/19, fp. 107–120; cf. de Lange, 'Menacing Tides', 224.

⁸⁶ See also Ercüment Kuran, *Cezayir'in Fransızlar Tarafından İşgali Karşısında Osmanlı Siyaseti (1827–1847)* (Istanbul: Yenilik Basımevi, 1957), 21; Jean Serres, *La Politique turque en Afrique du Nord sous la Monarchie de Juillet* (Paris: Geuthner, 1925), 82–3.

⁸⁷ Kuran, *Cezayir*, 21–3; Mimaüt to Prince de Polignac, 26 June 1830, AMAE CP Égypte II, f. 46–51; cf. Gaultier-Kurhan, *Méhémet Ali*, 150.

⁸⁸ Puryear, *France and the Levant*, 112–13, 115.

Armand Charles Guillemot (1774–1840), officially informed the Ottoman Reisülküttâb Pertev Efendi of his government's proposal on 1 December 1829, he was met with a categorical rejection.⁸⁹ Under the counsels of Serasker Hüsrev Paşa, the Porte had previously decided upon not directly interfering in the differences between the dey and the French agents.⁹⁰ But, in their view, the French plan was ludicrous. It had crossed the line, especially for the sultan and Hüsrev, to whom approving the expansion of Mehmed Ali in the Maghreb was nothing short of impossible.

The sultan's *hümâyuns* and the Porte's dispatches to the paşa of Egypt in the following days reveal the reasoning of Ottoman officialdom. In the eyes of the Ottoman agents, Franco-Algerian animosity had grown out of 'trivial issues'. Even though *Garp Ocakları* (the western hearths), as the Maghreb provinces were called in Ottoman parlance, were semi-autonomous entities that had been running their own foreign diplomacy with other states for decades, Algiers was still under the jurisdiction of the sultan; and, even though France and the Porte were friendly powers, French aggression in Ottoman territories could not be ignored.⁹¹

Hüsrev found the plan unrealistic: in his view, the dispatch of 40,000 Egyptian troops all the way to Algiers in summer was impossible to realize.⁹² He instead suggested dispatching an Ottoman official (the sultan nominated Çengeloğlu Tahir Paşa, a sailor of Algerian origin) for the friendly mediation of the problems between France and the dey. But when Tahir was duly dispatched, he was prevented from entering Algiers by the admirals of the French fleet who had blockaded the town.

After failing to obtain the consent of the Porte, Polignac turned to his European audience. Adhering to the transimperial security culture of the time, he made a last-ditch effort to convene a multilateral conference for intervention in Algiers to obtain the sanction of the Concert of Europe. As had happened during the Greek crisis, a joint, majority decision within the Concert could help overcome the opposition of the Porte. Russia and Prussia once again supported him. But the French minister was met by the demands of Lord Aberdeen for a written assurance that Charles X's armies would evacuate Algiers immediately after the definitive destruction of piracy and the absolute abolition of Christian slavery.⁹³

Polignac did not capitulate to these demands.⁹⁴ He had already obtained the support of the majority within the Concert. Moreover, he was still counting on Mehmed Ali. For this reason, he made the paşa another offer, according to which the latter would occupy Tripoli and Tunis, while the French army would invade Algiers. But he refrained from promising Mehmed Ali protection from any

⁸⁹ BOA i.DUIT 139/3, 23 Feb. 1830. See also Kuran, *Cezayir*, 18–19.

⁹⁰ Ibid. 16.

⁹¹ BOA A.VKN 1/9, 21 June 1830; BOA i.DUIT 138/76 28 June 1829.

⁹² BOA A.VKN 1/9.

⁹³ For selected British and French correspondence on the subject, see Testa, *Recueil*, vol. 1, 445–67.

⁹⁴ Edgard Le Marchand, *L'Europe et La Conquête d'Alger* (Paris: Perrin, 1913), 184.

potential British assault during the course of the campaign. The paşa then refused this second offer, unwilling to throw the caution to the wind. In the end, having Russo-Prussian support behind her, and, despite British and Ottoman protests, France invaded Algiers by herself in June 1830.

Since the Congress of Vienna of 1814–5, this was the second major Great Power intervention in the dominions of Sultan Mahmud II allegedly undertaken in his favour. It soon turned into a lasting occupation. The diplomatic efforts of the Porte's agents in the following months did not suffice to drive the French out of Algiers. Especially after the fall of King Charles X and the establishment of the July Monarchy in Paris, and when liberals entered office in London, the cordial relations between the two European courts undermined the Porte's hand, and exposed its diplomatic (as well as military and naval) weakness.

Austria and Britain did not consider the French invasion of Algiers as a pressing enough reason to risk a war between the Great Powers.⁹⁵ Even after the Porte declared its commitment to eliminating the piracy of the Barbary corsairs and facilitating European commerce in the Mediterranean in return for the restitution of Algiers under its authority (13 May 1831), the Franco-Ottoman negotiations bore no results.⁹⁶ Instead, as we will see, they provided France with an edge in the talks over the 'Eastern' crisis that would soon break.

The Drovetti plan never materialized, but Mehmed Ali's commitment to it disclosed both to Istanbul and the Powers that he was ready to cut ties with the Porte already in 1829–30. As France invaded Algiers, the paşa prepared to launch his campaign on Syria. He knew now that he had to pursue a far-sighted diplomacy, attract at least one of the Powers to his side, and avoid any infamy if he ever wanted to realize his dream of expansion and independence. As for Sultan Mahmud II and Hüsrev, the Drovetti plan, especially Mehmed Ali's involvement in the French designs without their sanction, proved a source of immense vexation.⁹⁷

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Mehmed Ali's desire to expand, and his eager involvement in the Drovetti plan, did not originate purely from personal ambition. Although he had placed Egypt, Crete, Hejaz, most of Yemen, Eastern Arabia, and part of the Sudan under his rule by 1830, his authority had been under strain. His experiment with building a new empire through the monopoly system, heavy taxation, and *corvée* labour had foisted huge burdens onto the shoulders of the underprivileged classes, namely, the producers and the *fellahin*.

Toward the end of the 1820s, the limitations imposed by this militarist rule on the impoverished agricultural producers—such as keeping them from selling their goods in local markets or from exchanging them for staples—and the increase in

⁹⁵ Šedivý, *Metternich*, 426–7.

⁹⁶ Kuran, *Cezayir*, 33.

⁹⁷ See BOA i.DUIT 138/76; 138/76; 139/1–11; BOA TS.MA.e 730/9; BOA HAT 1322/51647A.

the number of agricultural workers made them prey to grave economic miseries and gave rise to conditions of rural disorder. Poverty and discontent became dangerously widespread and—especially in times of poor harvests—family flights, small-scale revolts and rebellions (whereby the paşa's silos were burnt), and brigandage and piracy over the Nile were sporadically witnessed.⁹⁸

To address these problems, Mehmed Ali had established asylums for the poor, village jails, and state-sponsored mosques. But these were not enough. He believed that a more efficient way of relieving the mounting tensions was to acquire adjacent territories with rich resources that would buttress production and preserve foodstuff in the countryside, instead of selling these goods in foreign markets.⁹⁹ When the French approached him in 1829, he had immediately turned his eyes to North Africa for this reason. But when that scheme failed, he returned to his original plan.

Bilâd al-Sham, or Syria, was always situated at the apex of his territorial ambitions.¹⁰⁰ The paşa believed that the natural borders of Egypt were not in Suez but in the Taurus mountains, which sharply divided Asia Minor from the shores of the eastern Mediterranean. Syria, as a buffer between Istanbul and Cairo, was crucial for the security of Egypt and consequently for Mehmed Ali's reign.¹⁰¹ The paşa held that the invasion could offer a respite from domestic problems through Syria's rich resources in grain, wood, coal, iron ore, horses, silk, labour, and more luxurious manufactured goods such as woollen and silk clothes.¹⁰² By controlling Syria, he would be able to patrol the major commercial routes of the Red Sea and the eastern Mediterranean, which were often subject to Bedouin attacks. The catastrophic Greek campaign persuaded him that it was his right to control Syria. In the end, the sultan had pledged this to him in return for his services in the Morea.

Circumstances for making a move on Syria came together in Mehmed Ali's favour in 1831 perhaps more conveniently than he could have possibly imagined. The Powers were embroiled in problems both domestic (revolution) and diplomatic (in Portugal, Belgium, etc.). The Porte was busy quelling the 'disturbances' in Bosnia. And a domestic dispute arose between him and Abdullah, the paşa of Sidon (Acre), which Mehmed Ali used as a ruse to start his campaign.¹⁰³

When 6,000 Egyptian peasants fled to Syria to escape taxes and *corvée* labour under Mehmed Ali's rule, Abdullah had refused to send them back on the grounds that they were free to move between two provinces of the empire. According to

⁹⁸ Boyer (Cairo) to Belliard, 10 May 1826, in Georges Douin, *Une mission militaire française auprès de Mohamed Aly. Correspondance des Généraux Belliard et Boyer* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1923), 119; Lawson, *Egyptian Expansionism*, 119–23.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 123. ¹⁰⁰ Puryear, *France and the Levant*, 147; Altundağ, *Kavalalı*, 36.

¹⁰¹ Lawson, *Egyptian Expansionism*, 1.

¹⁰² Ibid. 138–40; Altundağ, *Kavalalı*, 36–7; Fahmy, 'The Era of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha', 166.

¹⁰³ BOA HAT 357/19977 D, 24 Dec. 1831.

Mehmed Ali, the paşa of Sidon also had unpaid dues to Cairo, and was suspending the sale of silkworm eggs to Egypt in 1831 even though this was important for Mehmed Ali's silk production plans.¹⁰⁴ He found in—and wrought from—these unresolved issues ample reasons to direct his forces onto Acre.

The Porte was aware of Mehmed Ali's plans over Syria. But even then, it regarded the dispute only as a temporary regional problem at first. It therefore sent an agent, Mustafa Nazif Efendi, to Cairo to persuade Mehmed Ali to end his hostility toward Abdullah Paşa. It pledged to Mehmed Ali that Abdullah would no longer disturb his stronghold in Egypt and also warned that a potential conflict in the region would upset the pilgrimage routes.¹⁰⁵

Moreover, to contain the paşa's aggression, Mahmud II addressed a signed letter to him. In vaguely lenient but foreboding words, the sultan told Mehmed Ali:

There is no need to express the marvelling [feelings] [I have harboured] for you [for a long time], and your past services have not been forgotten... Perhaps it cannot be denied that at this moment there are several things that have been forgiven or turned a blind eye to by my [Sublime Empire], [and] if one is fair, one has to be thankful [for this]... [O]bserving odd conduct on your part baffles me.

The sultan then asked Mehmed Ali to listen to his message with '[an] open heart and justice'. As long as the paşa remained loyal to him, 'there is no possibility that I will regard you with [doubtful eyes]. Now you know what you need [to do]...'¹⁰⁶

Despite all these attempts at pacification, Mehmed Ali continued preparations for the *démarche*, replying to Mahmud II that he was doing homage to the empire by confronting Abdullah. The paşa gave assurances also to the agents of Britain and France, asserting that he had liberal ideas and that the Great Powers would find in his plan 'a happy application of the principle of non-intervention'.¹⁰⁷ He argued that his control over Syria would ensure the security of the Persian Gulf, and therefore the interests of Britain. He also guaranteed the status of Christians and foreign nationals, justifying his plan as a move that would reinforce the hand of the sultan against Russia (with whom the sultan had fought as recently as 1828–9) with a strong army of 120,000 men in his service.¹⁰⁸

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The Egyptian army had already been mobilized for months due to the previously concocted Algiers campaign. It began its march to the north on 2 November 1831, under the command of Mehmed Ali's son Ibrahim Paşa and his French

¹⁰⁴ Altundağ, *Kavalah*, 37; Pierre Crabitès, *Ibrahim of Egypt* (London: George Routledge & Son, 1935), 136.

¹⁰⁵ Altundağ, *Kavalah*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ BOA TS.MA.E 861/15/1.

¹⁰⁷ Mimaut to Sebastiani, 19 May 1831, AMAE Egypte 2; cf. Puryear, *France and the Levant*, 150–51.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

aides-de-camp.¹⁰⁹ Days later Jaffa was captured.¹¹⁰ The next month Ibrahim besieged Sidon (Acre) but was confronted with stiff resistance.¹¹¹ The siege lasted six months. Only on 27 May 1832, when Abdullah had only 400 (out of 6,000) soldiers left, did Ibrahim manage to seize the castle that Bonaparte had failed to occupy in 1799. Abdullah was captured and sent to Egypt.

The Egyptian armies then went on to control other Syrian towns, which required much less effort—indeed, in some cases, almost none at all.¹¹² This was thanks to the fact that Mehmed Ali had sent his agents before the campaign to propagate the notion that the objective of his occupation was to free them from the economic difficulties that had reigned in the country and from the suppression of Abdullah.¹¹³ Ibrahim immediately enforced Egyptian rule in the controlled territories by introducing (as had been promised to the agents of the Powers) further rights to non-Muslims and exempting the pilgrims to Jerusalem from taxes, with the aim of gaining the sympathy of both locals and international actors.¹¹⁴ Mehmed Ali, Ibrahim, and the French officers under their command styled their campaign as one of ‘liberating’ the Syrians from Abdullah, and they were indeed celebrated by a majority of the Syrians as ‘saviours’ in several of the places that they captured.

But after a series of meetings in Istanbul held with the sultan and his council at Hüsrev’s house in Emirgan, Mehmed Ali and Ibrahim were declared *asi* (rebels) and *hain* (traitors) by an imperial fatwa, and their official positions as the governors of Egypt, Jeddah, and Crete were indefinitely deferred on 3 March 1832.¹¹⁵ Mahmud II dithered as to what other action to take against the paşa. It was Hüsrev’s decisiveness that dictated the Porte’s next moves.

As we have seen, since his departure from Alexandria in 1804, Hüsrev had harboured antipathy towards Mehmed Ali. In 1824, the paşa of Egypt had tried to depose him from his post as grand admiral. In 1826, Mehmed Ali had humiliated him before his men. And in 1827, he was sacked from his post as grand admiral following the Albanian paşa’s demands. Having worked on the renovation of the Ottoman imperial army over the past years, Hüsrev felt that this could be the time for him to twist Mehmed Ali’s arm and, with a military stroke, eliminate his old enemy from imperial politics for good. This was why Hüsrev would clamour for war during the council meetings in Istanbul.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Altundağ, *Kavalalı*, 37–8, 53; Fahmy, ‘The Era of Muhammad ‘Ali’, 166; Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes’alesi*, 11–12.

¹¹⁰ ‘Narrative of the Events of the Turco-Egyptian War in the years 1831, 1832 and 1833’, 4 Mar. 1834, TNA FO 78/472/1.

¹¹¹ Dukakinzâde Feridun, ‘Türk Ordusunun Eski Seferlerinden Nezîp 1831–1840 Seferleri’, *Askerî Mecmua* 83 (1931): 1–50, at 14.

¹¹² BOA HAT. 356/19977-D, 24 Dec. 1831.

¹¹³ Abū ‘Izz al-Dīn, *Ibrāhīm Bāsha*, 116, 57–8; Altundağ, *Kavalalı*, 38.

¹¹⁴ Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question*, 71.

¹¹⁵ Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes’alesi*, 12; BOA HAT, 356/19977-D, 24 Dec. 1831.

¹¹⁶ Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 333, 341.

This was also why, when Mehmed Ali sent to Istanbul proposals for an accommodation with the sultan for his restitution to Egypt as well as for obtaining the rule of the provinces of Tripoli, Sidon and Damascus, he was denied. Imperial armies commenced their preparations and the *Şeyhülislam* issued a fatwa endorsing war against Mehmed Ali Paşa and his son Ibrahim.¹¹⁷ This act was intended to win over Muslim public opinion in Syria, as well as elsewhere in the empire, and to rally support for the cause of the sultan.

Mehmed Ali retaliated by way of obtaining a declaration from the local clergy in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina announcing their support for the paşa's campaign. Egyptian agents had been sent all around the Arabic and Turkish-speaking domains of the empire, circulating vitriolic accusations that the sultan and his men had submitted to the mercy of the Russians in 1829, and that Mehmed Ali was the voice and representative of true Muslims. Moreover, Ibrahim declared the re-establishment of the Janissary hearths in Syria against the sultan. Before their armies clashed on the battlefield, a propaganda war had begun. Contemporary French commentators such as MM. De Cadalvène et E. Barrault consequently described the contest as the 'civil war of Islamism'.¹¹⁸

In the interim, the Ottoman imperial fleet was sent out to observe Egyptian movements, while Mehmed Paşa, the governor of Aleppo, and Aga Hüseyin Paşa, the governor of Adrianople, were dispatched to Syria to halt the Egyptian army.¹¹⁹ But Ibrahim routed the troops of the sultan in Homs and Aleppo on 8 and 29 July 1832 respectively.¹²⁰

Having thus conquered Syria and shown his military superiority over the Ottoman imperial armies, Mehmed Ali sent another peace proposal to the Porte in August.¹²¹ But it was again turned down, with a declaration that a compact could not subsist between a rebel and his legitimate sovereign.¹²² The paşa then announced that there was nothing left for him but to advance to Istanbul.¹²³ In a short time, Ibrahim captured Antakya, Adana, and Tarsus, and defeated Ottoman forces at the gateway of Belen.¹²⁴ He thus crossed the Taurus mountains and

¹¹⁷ BOA C.AS 56/2610, 944/40987; BOA HAT 360/20081.

¹¹⁸ MM. De Cadalvène et E. Barrault, *Histoire de la guerre de Mehmed-Ali contre la Porte Ottomane en Syrie et en Asie Mineure (1831-1833). Ouvrage enrichi de cartes, de plans et de documents officiels* (Paris: Arthur Bertrand, 1837), 1-2.

¹¹⁹ BOA C.AS 393/16233; BOA AE.SMHD.II 16 May 1832.

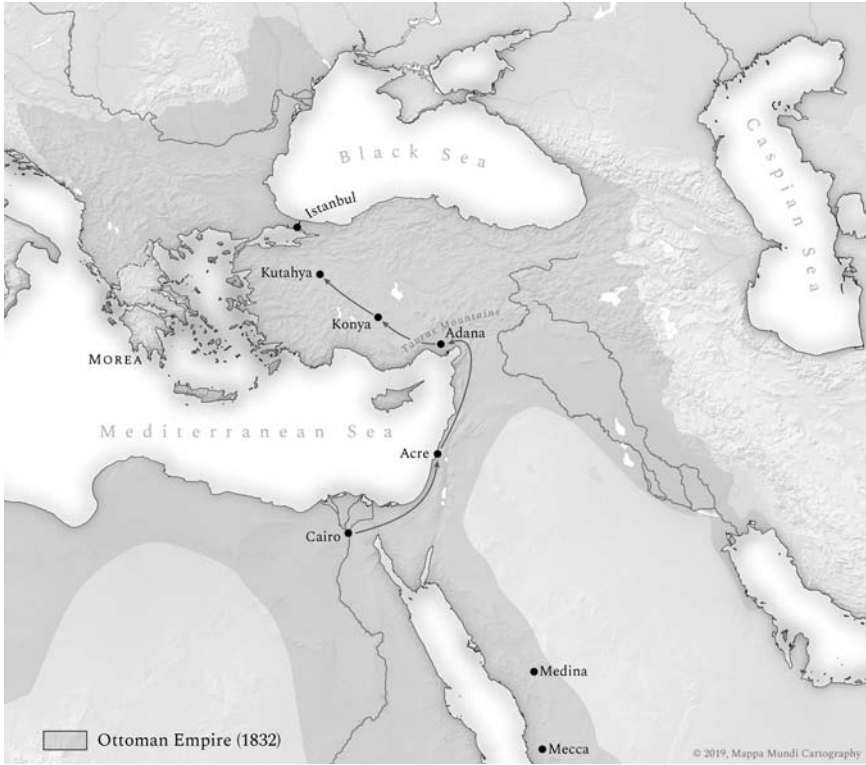
¹²⁰ BOA C.AS 56/2610; BOA C.AS 944/40987; BOA C.DH 1/3, n.d.; BOA HAT 355/19957, n.d.; Altundağ, *Kavalalı*, 61, 62.

¹²¹ René Cattau, *Le Règne de Mohamed Ali d'après les archives russes en Égypte* (Cairo: Imprimerie de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, pour la Société royale de géographie d'Égypte, 1931), 553.

¹²² Dispatch from Barker, 13 Oct. 1832, TNA FO 78/472, f. 7.

¹²³ Dispatch from Barker, 20 Sept. 1832, TNA FO 78/472, f. 7.

¹²⁴ BOA HAT 362/20117C; HAT 362/20117D; BOA HH. 19812; cf. Salih Kış, 'Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa'nın Anadolu Harekâtı ve Konya Muharebesi', *Selçuk Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 23 (2010): 145-158, at 148.



Map 3. Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor

arrived in Konya, in the heart of Anatolia, on 27 November.¹²⁵ There, on 21 December, his army of about 30,000 men and 36 artillery pieces was to confront the Ottoman imperial army of 65,000 men. The latter was under the command of Grand Vizier Reşid Mehmed Paşa (1780–1836), one of Hüsrev’s sons.

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Reşid Mehmed had suppressed a major ‘uprising’ under the leadership of Mustafa Paşa Busatli (backed by Mehmed Ali) in Bosnia as recently as the end of 1831.¹²⁶ En route to Istanbul, he wrote a soothing letter to the sultan in which he argued that the Ottoman navy was capable of overpowering that of Egypt but nonetheless, through an alliance with Britain, whose fleet could cut the supply lines of Ibrahim, security in the seas could be improved. Furthermore, with the participation of the

¹²⁵ BOA HAT 347/19733.

¹²⁶ Murav’ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 1, 11, 123. For a detailed analysis of the uprising, see Fatma Sel Turhan, *The Ottoman Empire and the Bosnian Uprising: Janissaries, Modernisation and Rebellion in the Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

Albanian and Bosnian contingents that he had secured, the army of Ibrahim Paşa could well be dragged down.¹²⁷

This was why, in April 1832, Ottoman officialdom made an unprecedented move, seeking an alliance with a foreign power against one of the sultan's vassals. The former British ambassador to Istanbul, Stratford Canning, had just returned to Istanbul to conclude negotiations over issues concerning the new Greek kingdom. During the talks, first Reis Efendi Akif Paşa and then the sultan himself directly proposed an alliance between Britain and the Ottoman Empire, while Serasker Hüsrev pleaded for assistance, 'naval not military, since the army was strong enough while the fleet was not to be trusted'.¹²⁸

Mahmud II and Hüsrev had chosen Britain because they were aware of France's special relations with Egypt and the Algiers crisis was still looming. They did not trust Russia. They knew that Austria was logistically unable to offer such aid, and Prussia was more or less completely indifferent to Eastern affairs. They found in Britain an actor keen to maintain the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire as well as one with the naval strength that they needed.

Without making any commitments, Canning promised to communicate the proposal to London.¹²⁹ As the news of the defeat of the Ottoman armies of Hüseyin and Mehmed broke in early August 1832, in order to hasten the process of securing an alliance, the anxious sultan sent his agents Yanko Mavroyeni and Namik Paşa to London.¹³⁰ But there was no time to wait for the British. Mahmud II and Hüsrev therefore decided to become masters of their own destiny. The *serasker* mustered an army in Karahisar, appointed the optimistic Grand Vizier Reşid as the *serdar-ı ekrem* (commander-in-chief) of the imperial army, and dispatched him to confront Ibrahim in Konya.¹³¹

Reşid Paşa's army arrived on the plains of Akşehir, only eight hours away from Konya, on 18 December 1832.¹³² The fighting began the next morning in bewildering fog on a hilly battlefield. Due to the inclement weather, the visibility range dropped at times to only about 50 metres. At night, it became almost impossible to distinguish Reşid's regiments from those of Ibrahim.

Since the Ottoman imperial army outnumbered their opponents, it was initially able to push the Egyptians back and obtain a slight advantage on the flanks by the time the fighting ended at midnight. There were around 700 casualties in total

¹²⁷ BOA TS.MA.E 457/13.

¹²⁸ Webster, *Palmerston*, 280.

¹²⁹ Canning to Palmerston, 9 Aug. 1832, TNA FO 78/211/285. See also Palmerston to Mandeville, 5 Dec. 1832, TNA FO 78/212; cf. Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian*, 83.

¹³⁰ A. Nuri Sinaplı, *Mehmet Namık Paşa* (Istanbul: Yenilik Basımevi, 1987), 24; cf. Kutluoğlu, 'Egypt', 85; Webster, *Palmerston*, 282.

¹³¹ Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 2, 118; Mustafa Nuri Paşa, *Netayicül Vukuat*, vol. 4, 90; Kış, 'Konya Muharebesi', 151.

¹³² Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi, *Vakanüvis Ahmet Lûtfî Efendi Tarihi*, vols 4 and 5 (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1999), 736; BOA HAT 20376-B.

(500 Ottomans and 200 Egyptians).¹³³ Both armies then pulled back, to continue the battle the next day. But the course of the war changed before dawn broke.

The night of 21 December was one of panic and chaos on the Ottoman front. The news was disquieting. As it happened, earlier in the evening, before the fighting was over, Grand Vizier Reşid Mehmed Paşa had noticed that the left wing of his army was losing ground. He had then ridden towards them to put his men in order but, in the fog, he had mistaken an Egyptian cavalry unit for an Ottoman corps and gone among them. He had then fallen into the hands of the Bedouins.¹³⁴

When tongues began to wag later at night and the rumour spread, the Albanian and Bosnian mercenaries that Reşid Mehmed had brought from the Balkans immediately fled from the line of defence.¹³⁵ The attacks of the dispirited and demoralized Ottoman army the next days only further scattered it. This was a total victory for Ibrahim Paşa. He wrote to his father: 'We can [now] advance as far as [Istanbul] and depose the Sultan quickly and without difficulty.'¹³⁶ Indeed, the road to the imperial capital was wide open to him, and the grand vizier was in his hands.

The future of the empire was uncertain when Ibrahim Paşa began his march toward Istanbul on 20 January 1833.¹³⁷ The sultan was all ears, waiting for news from London. In fact, King William IV (1765-1837), Prime Minister Charles Grey (1764-1845), Foreign Secretary Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston (1784-1865), and Stratford Canning were all in favour of sending naval succour to the Porte. Canning even insisted, with a memorandum dated 19 December, that Britain should support the Porte, 'either alone or in concert with any of her allies, not leaving the sultan's independence to chance'. He presciently warned that 'to leave the Turkish Empire to itself was to leave it to its enemies; the sultan faced the alternative of abandoning his throne entirely or of turning Egypt, Syria and the regions of the Persian frontier over to Mehme[d] Ali.'¹³⁸

But the Tories in general, and the duke of Wellington in particular, were of the belief that even though preserving the Ottoman Empire was of immense significance for European peace and security, it had to be ensured by a collective act of European Powers. The Tories' fierce opposition to the Grey cabinet with regards to the crises in Portugal and Holland led the government to follow a policy of delay with respect to the affairs of the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁹ London was disinclined

¹³³ Kış, 'Konya', 152-3; Kutluoğlu, 'Egypt', 82.

¹³⁴ BOA HH 20076 A, 14 Jan. 1833; 19747, 18 Jan. 1833; cf. Kutluoğlu, 'Egypt', 81.

¹³⁵ BOA HH, no. 20036-E, 25 Dec. 1832; cf. Kış, 'Konya', 154.

¹³⁶ Ibrahim to Mehmed Ali, 28 Dec. 1832, DWQ Abdin; cf. Crabitès, *Ibrahim*, 160.

¹³⁷ BOA HAT 351/19824A.

¹³⁸ Webster, *Palmerston*, 282; S. Canning, 'Memorandum on the Turco-Egyptian Question', 19 Dec. 1832, TNA FO 78/211, f. 337.

¹³⁹ Webster, *Palmerston*, 282-3.

to commit to a single-handed intervention in the Ottoman world, so as not to upset the Concert of Europe or arouse the hostility of France.

The Powers were so preoccupied with domestic and more immediate diplomatic issues that the Concert appeared to be in no position to mobilize for a joint action. When French observers called the Ottoman crisis 'the civil war of Islamism', the term possibly also implied the European distance and indifference to the fight between two Ottoman, Muslim centres of the empire, Cairo and Istanbul, that, unlike Greece, did not require any such intervention since European interests were not directly jeopardized. Not yet.

The British cabinet replied accordingly that, 'embarking in naval operations in the North Sea, and on the coast of Holland' while 'under the necessity of keeping up another naval force on the coast of Portugal' meant that the Ottoman request for naval assistance could not be fulfilled by London at the time. The Grey cabinet instead offered mediation with Mehmed Ali, made its final assessment on 27 January 1833, and officially communicated it to the Porte on 7 March.¹⁴⁰

Seven years later, Palmerston would express deep regret for this decision:

no British Cabinet at any period of the history of England ever made so great a mistake in regard to foreign affairs as did the Cabinet of Lord Grey [...] Our refusal at that time has been the cause of more danger to the peace of Europe, to the balance of power and to the interest of England than perhaps any one determination ever before produced.¹⁴¹

This was because the moment the news arrived from London, as Ibrahim's armies were approaching Istanbul, to the aid of the sultan and Hüsrev came the least likely of all European Powers: Russia. The civil war in the Ottoman world immediately gained a transimperial character, and prompted a Europe-wide crisis, bringing the Powers to the brink of war more than once. In all this, as we will see, Hüsrev Paşa, his animosity toward Mehmed Ali, and his fear of falling into the hands of Ibrahim played a pivotal role.

¹⁴⁰ Kutluoğlu, 'Egypt', 86; Webster, *Palmerston*, 283.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 284.

6

The Russian Peace in the Levant

Britain's decision not to supply naval support to the Sublime Porte against Mehmed Ali in January 1833 created a golden opportunity for Russia. Since 1829, St Petersburg had set its Ottoman policy straight. As the 1828–9 Russo-Ottoman war was nearing an end, Russian strategists saw greater benefit in placing the sultan's dominions under their orbit of influence than in dismembering his empire *in toto*. To this end, an offer of alliance had been made to the Porte in June 1829 before the war officially ended, whereby Russian agents had argued that 'for the Sultan's long-term security it was more beneficial to be in a firm and constant alliance with Russia'.¹ But the Porte's plenipotentiary, Serasker Hüsrev Paşa, had rebuffed the offer at the time, considering Russia the cause of the catastrophes the sultan had lately suffered from.²

Days before the Treaty of Edirne (Adrianople) was signed on 14 September, Tsar Nicholas I assembled an extraordinary committee to decide upon the Russian strategy. The members of the committee included Kochubei, one of the architects of the 'weak neighbour policy', Count Nesselrode, and D. V. Dashkov, Russia's most prominent expert on 'Turkey'.³ They agreed to continue the 'Ottoman project' of the 1800s with the belief that the advantages of maintaining the sultan's dominions in Europe were greater than the inconveniences it presented.⁴ Their underlying understanding was that a weak neighbour like the Ottoman Empire would never pose an existential threat to Russia and, if Russia could not control the Straits by annexing them, which could prompt a Great Power war, she could ensure her security by ascertaining the closure of the Straits to foreign warships by establishing dominant influence over the sultan.

The tsar signed the 1829 Treaty in part to lay the ground for such influence in the near future.⁵ As the Russian historian Alexander Bitis writes, 'through its strategic annexations and extension of Russia's commercial and political rights[,] the treaty . . . served to weaken the Ottoman Empire while preserving its existence'

¹ Krasovskii to Diebitsch, 1 Aug. 1829, RGVIA, f. VUA, d. 4722, ll. 87–8; cf. Bitis, *Russia*, 350.

² Nesselrode to I. I. Dibichu, 6 Nov. 1829, *VPR* vol. 2/8, 397–8; General-Lieutenant A. F. Orloff to I. I. Dibichu, 2 Feb. 1830, *VPR* vol. 2/8, 451.

³ Bitis, *Russia*, 358.

⁴ Report of Dashkov, 4 Sept. 1829, *VPR* vol. 2/8 (1995), 292; 'Protocol of the Extraordinary Committee', 4 Sept. 1829, *VPR* vol. 2/8, 278. Also in Bitis, *Russia*, 359–60; Robert J. Kerner, 'Russia's New Policy in the Near East and After the Treaty of Adrianople', *Cambridge Historical Journal* 5(3) (1937): 280–90.

⁵ Nesselrode to Butenev, 12 Dec. 1830, *VPR* vol. 17, 175–88.

and making Ottoman authorities believe that it was a generous agreement, as Nicholas I could have actually obtained more territories than he did.⁶ The same policy guided the Russian strategists to endorse the French occupation of Algiers in 1830 the following year.⁷ By the same token, when the British prime minister, the duke of Wellington, made repeated offers 'for a collective guarantee of the Ottoman Empire' during the 'Greek negotiations' in 1830–32, Russia, despite being committed to her preservation, would not agree with the principle of conserving her territorial integrity entirely.⁸

By 1832, it had become St Petersburg's ultimate goal in the Levant to maintain its privileged hold over the Porte rather than agreeing to the collective European guarantees and to barter away those cherished bits of the 'eastern' empire, such as the Straits and the Caucasus, that served its own interests. This posed a threat to the solidity of the Concert of Europe and the continuation of peace in the continent. But it did not lead to an immediate inter-imperial crisis, since Russian diplomatic rhetoric continued to endorse concerted action while the other Powers were preoccupied with the rising tide of revolutions at home or more immediate diplomatic problems that manifested themselves in Belgium, Portugal, and Algiers, among others.

Only in February 1833, as Ibrahim's armies were marching on Istanbul, when the Porte accepted the Russian offer of military aid and the first Russian squadrons arrived in the Bosphorus, and especially when a defensive alliance treaty was signed between Tsar Nicholas I and Sultan Mahmud II in July, did Russian ambitions in the Levant prompt a major furore in Europe. Distress that the European balance of power could be upset brought the Powers to the brink of war in the summer of 1833 for the first time since the Napoleonic Wars. What follows is a discussion of this new episode of the Eastern Question, when the war between Cairo and Istanbul and the rivalry between Mehmed Ali and Hüsrev turned into a transimperial quandary.

The Russian Intervention: 'We Have Been Sick, You the Medicines'

One month before the Ottoman imperial army was defeated by Ibrahim Paşa in the plains of Konya in December 1832, Russian foreign minister Count Nesselrode announced that Russia would be willing to offer military aid to the Sublime Porte if needed.⁹ Russian strategists were concerned that Mehmed Ali's Islamist propaganda campaign in Asia Minor could spark revolts in the Caucasian towns under their control that were predominantly populated by Muslims ready to defy their

⁶ Bitis, *Russia*, 361.

⁷ See Ch. 5.

⁸ Bitis, *Russia*, 466.

⁹ Anderson, *Eastern Question*, 80–81; Bitis, *Russia*, 467–8.

new, 'infidel' Russian overlords. They also looked to avert a potential Egyptian campaign in the Caucasus. In the end, a weaker Ottoman Empire was preferable for the security of Russia than a stronger and better organized empire under Mehmed Ali as their southern neighbours.¹⁰

Accordingly, Tsar Nicholas I instructed his agents to inform the Ottoman ministers that Russian naval and military assistance would be supplied only upon the request of Sultan Mahmud II.¹¹ The Russian ambassador to Istanbul, Apollinari P. Butenev, made an official proposal on the day of the sultan's defeat at Konya (21 December 1832) while a mission was sent to Istanbul to explain the importance the tsar attached to the crisis. Presided over by Lieutenant General Nicolai N. Murav'ev-Karskii (1794–1866), a Russian commander and traveller, who had participated in the Russo-Ottoman war of 1828–9 and who became one of the first chronologists of the crisis, the Russian agents re-articulated their plan: Tsar Nicholas I would demand that Mehmed Ali return his army to Egypt immediately, and send the message that in the case of refusal, the paşa would find in Russia 'an enemy of the revolt' and she would launch military operations against him.¹²

On the receiving end of this proposal were Serasker Hüsrev Paşa and Reisülküttâb Akif Efendi (Hüsrev's protégé). The two men had negotiated with the Russians the peace settlement following the 1828–9 war, and had at the time given the impression to Count Nesselrode that they were 'the bitter enemies of Russia'. Since then, Russian agents had been actively looking to break the anti-Russian sentiment in Istanbul and make personal acquaintance with 'the most influential people' around the sultan, 'in particular, with Serasker Hüsrev [Paşa]'.¹³ Without overestimating the significance of the 'confidential relations' with key Ottoman ministers, they strove 'to... control and from time to time direct the actions of [the Ottoman imperial council through them.]'¹⁴

In November 1832, Serasker Hüsrev Paşa was opposed to accepting the Russian proposal. As an observer reported, at one imperial council meeting he had so insistently pleaded with the sultan that he had thrown himself at the feet of Mahmud II and, 'in the name of the whole *Divan* [imperial council]', striven to show him the perils of welcoming to Istanbul their hereditary enemies.¹⁵ But, according to Murav'ev, by 18 December 1832 the serasker had altered his position

¹⁰ Bitis, *Russia*, 468. ¹¹ Altundağ, *Kavalah*, 96.

¹² 'Mémorandum confidentiel', 18 Dec. 1832, BOA HR.SYS 1847/1/1; Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 3, 390; *Severnaya pchela*, 23 Jan. 1833; cf. Petrunina, *Social'no*, 304; F. S. Rodkey, *The Turco-Egyptian Question in the Relations of England, France and Russia, 1832–41* (Urbana: University of Illinois-Urbana, 1925), 15–16.

¹³ Nesselrode to I. I. Dibichu, 6 Nov. 1829, *VPR* vol. 2/8, 398.

¹⁴ K. V. Nesselrode to A. P. Butenev, 12 Dec. 1830, *VPR* vol. 17, 185–8.

¹⁵ George Douin, *La Mission de Baron de Boislecomte. L'Égypte et la Syrie en 1833* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1927), xvi; Pierre Crabitès, *Ibrahim of Egypt* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1935), 164.

diametrically, and became eager to reach a settlement against his old rival Mehmed Ali. 'The [serasker] could not contain his happiness' upon hearing the tsar's official offer of aid, the Russian lieutenant general reported. After the news of defeat at Konya, Hüsrev became more trustful of the 'honest intentions of Russia' and listened to Murav'ev's plans with greater interest, even discussing the number of artillery units needed.¹⁶ He wanted Murav'ev to explain the Russian plans to the sultan as soon as possible.¹⁷ When the sultan dithered about Russian aid, the serasker sought to allay his fears, secretly despising Mahmud II's 'timidness and indecisiveness'. After the sultan decided first to wait for news from Britain in early January, he asked Murav'ev not to 'delay [his] trip to Alexandria' and to pass Mehmed Ali Russia's message.¹⁸

Murav'ev's mission to Egypt began and ended with hostile remarks and threats. After his arrival on 13 January, the Russian lieutenant general made known to Mehmed Ali that Russia would not permit the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, and demanded that the paşa of Egypt 'cease the hostilities and recognise the supreme power of the Sultan'. 'Well,' Mehmed Ali replied,

I will have one thousand very good troops to oppose the [Russians], the entire Muslim population [in Asia Minor] will become my reserve; I have a fleet that is not at all afraid of the Russians, and with the first news of the Russian involvement a terrible uprising in Constantinople will destroy the Sultan and the dynasty.

But when Murav'ev did not hold back, instead responding in kind, Mehmed Ali dithered. At their second meeting on 16 January, the paşa promised that Ibrahim would not march on Istanbul and would refrain from dismembering the sultan's empire.¹⁹

In the meantime, the sultan was trying obtain a settlement with Mehmed Ali, and sent Halil Rifat Paşa (1795–1856), another protégé of Hüsrev, and the young *amedci* (receiver) Mustafa Reşid Bey (1800–58) to Alexandria at the end of January 1833. These intra-imperial endeavours and negotiations proved to be no less hostile. The Ottoman delegation handed Mehmed Ali the sultan's message that 'he had no grounds to complain about [his] lack of security', that the paşa's provincial governorship of Egypt, Crete, and Jeddah as well as Sidon and Tripoli would be reinstated, but that he would not be granted the whole of Syria nor the timber rich regions on the outskirts of the Taurus mountains.²⁰ For all these

¹⁶ Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 3, 49, 53, 56.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 26

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 26, 192.

¹⁹ BOA TS.MA.e 547/1; Petrunina, *Social'no*, 304–5; T. V. Eremeeva, 'Zaklyuchitel'nyj etap egipetskogo krizisa 1831–1833 gg. i velikie derzhavy', *Uchenye zapiski po novoj i novejshej istorii* 2 (1956): 515.

²⁰ Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian*, 96–7.

proposals to take effect, the paşa had to release Grand Vizier Reşid Mehmed Paşa from captivity.²¹

Mehmed Ali listened to these demands with unease. Having emerged victorious in three battles against Ottoman imperial armies, he believed that he was entitled to more. He replied that, unless the Porte granted him the whole of Syria and Adana as well as Mersin and the ports of Silifke and Alaiye, his men would march first toward Bursa and then Istanbul, so that he could obtain his goals by force.²² The sultan's delegates were overwhelmed by this shocking answer, but could do nothing except write back to Istanbul for further instructions. Halil Rifat was asked to stay in Alexandria to continue the negotiations, while Mustafa Reşid was called back to the imperial capital, where, as we will see in the following pages, he would become a key figure in resolving the crisis.²³

In the meantime, Ibrahim's army was still closing in on Istanbul.²⁴ On 2 February, he arrived in Kütahya, now only 200 miles away from the imperial capital.²⁵ He sent to his father asking permission to advance toward Istanbul to acquire further concessions from the sultan:

as long as Sultan Mahmud, that evil genius, remains on the throne no permanent peace or definite arrangement of our conflict is possible... It is imperative that we return to our original intention and dethrone that pernicious man and replace him with the Crown Prince... [W]e should act so promptly that Europe will be unable to forestall our designs...²⁶

But on 3 February Ibrahim received orders from his father to halt the army wherever he stationed next.²⁷ Mehmed Ali kept his word to Murav'ev out of fear of Russian intervention.

In Istanbul, unaware what the paşa's next move might be, the sultan's anxieties had also grown and then turned into panic on 2 February—the very day the news of Ibrahim's arrival in Kütahya overlapped with the news from London that Britain would not come to his aid. Mahmud II was on tenterhooks. Despite his continual hesitation, he listened to Hüsrev's advice, and then expeditiously asked Reisülküttâb Akif Paşa to formally apply to Russia for eight warships and 30,000 men.²⁸ Russian Ambassador Butenev accepted the Ottoman request instantly.²⁹

²¹ BOA HAT 369/20364-A; Barker to Mandeville, 17 Jan. 1833, TNA FO 78/221; Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian*, 88.

²² Ali Fuad, 'Mısır Valisi Mehmed Ali Paşa', *Türk Tarih Encümeni Mecmuası* 19(96) (1928): 85–7.

²³ Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit Paşa*, 52–3.

²⁴ Douin, *Boislecote*, xxvii.

²⁵ BOA 351/19824 A; Fatih Gencer, 'Hünkar İskeleyi Antlaşması'nı Hazırlayan Koşullar', *Tarih Okulu Dergisi* 8(22) (2015): 135–60, at 140.

²⁶ Ibrahim to Mehmed Ali, 20 Jan. 1833; cf. Crabitès, *Ibrahim*, 152.

²⁷ BOA TS.MA.e 547/1

²⁸ Bitis, *Russia*, 470.

²⁹ Nicolai N. Murav'ev-Karskij, *Russkie na Bosfore v 1833 godu* (Moscow: 1869), 20.

Hence the sultan agreed to the intervention of his age-old Romanov rival in his fight against one of his vassals. This was a huge relief for Serasker Hüsrev Paşa. He had now found the means to protect himself from the threat of Mehmed Ali. By early February 1833, he started to convene hospitable and friendly dinners at his mansion for the Russian mission, giving them valuable gifts to express his gratitude to them.³⁰ He would even entertain the idea of commanding Russian troops.³¹ He was actively involved with the decision of where to camp them, which, Murav'ev writes, was mainly because 'it would stroke his ego, not because of lack of trust'.³² In the coffee-houses of Istanbul, informants were exchanging 'gossip that Hüsrev Paşa . . . had proposed turning Istanbul over' to Russia so that he and others in the government would be able to 'rest easy'.³³

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The cause of Hüsrev's relief swiftly became a source of international anxieties. British and French statesmen were uncertain about the tsar's real intentions. Was he trying to capture Istanbul while pretending to aid the sultan, or was he only looking to turn the Ottoman Empire into a Russian vassal? As soon as the news of the Russo-Ottoman agreement broke in Paris, French officialdom looked to capitalize their influence over Egypt, not Istanbul, due to the Franco-Ottoman disputes over Algiers. The French chargé d'affaires in Istanbul, baron de Varennes, sent to Ibrahim demanding he halt his march beyond Kütahya. But Ibrahim refused, writing that he could act only according to the orders of his father.

France then made another move and appointed a new ambassador, Admiral Albin-Rein Roussin (1781–1854), to Istanbul to mediate peace between Istanbul and Cairo. At his arrival in the imperial capital (17 February), the admiral immediately requested a meeting with Reis Efendi Akif, believing that he and Hüsrev would be ready to solicit French help. The two Ottoman ministers secretly conveyed to Roussin that they would agree to renounce Russian assistance on condition that the French agents could guarantee a peace with Mehmed Ali on the sultan's terms.³⁴

But, the next morning, Roussin woke up to a dreadful sight. In the Bosphorus, under his window at the Palais de France, were four *vaisseaux de ligne* and four frigates. The first Russian squadron had already arrived. 'Jamais,' the French ambassador wrote that evening, 'jamais sensation plus pénible n'assaillit mon cœur et mon esprit'.³⁵ He knew that he had to rally support among the representatives of the four Powers in Istanbul to find ways to expel the Russian warships. However, as he wrote later, there was not much hope:

³⁰ Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 3, 177; Campbell to Palmerston, 31 Mar. 1833, TNA FO 78/122.

³¹ Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 3, 181. Hüsrev to Murav'ev, 3 May 1833, in Appendix, Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 3, 272.

³² Murav'ev-Karskij, *Turciya*, vol. 3, 184.

³³ BOA C.Dh. 12037; cf. Philliou, *Biography*, 107.

³⁴ Douin, *Boislecote*, xxii; Crabitès, *Ibrahim*, 169.

³⁵ Douin, *Boislecote*, xxiii.

I cast my eyes around me. I saw in the envoy of Britain a feeling similar to stupor, but nonetheless the will to associate himself with all that could prevent the Russian intervention. In all the other legations, absolute reserve, and in some, particularly the Austrian and Prussian, obvious malevolence towards us.³⁶

As I will explain below, ideological and strategic differences had by this point divided the Powers into camps, making concerted action among them hardly possible. Roussin then acted on his own, requesting Reis Efendi to contact the Russian ambassador Butenev so that Russian naval and military assistance would be withdrawn. Reis Efendi duly approached Butenev and received a tentatively positive response from the Russian agent. At once, the French diplomat threatened Mehmed Ali (22 February) that this situation gravely compromised the general peace, Europe's principal need, that Ibrahim must retire from Kütahya, and that Mehmed Ali must accept the conditions of the sultan. Otherwise France would withdraw all her officers in Egypt.³⁷ But Mehmed Ali rebuffed him, stating that he 'preferred a glorious death to ignominy'.³⁸

For his part, after finding out that Roussin was behind the Porte's demand for the withdrawal of Russian troops, Butenev, despite initial approval, changed the Russian response to Reis Efendi, arguing that until Mehmed Ali retreated beyond the Taurus mountains, the tsar's squadrons would not leave Istanbul.³⁹ In order to allay Anglo-French fears, the Russian agents communicated to 'the principal courts of Europe' an explanation that they had adopted determinations in the interests of the sultan 'at the request of the Sublime Porte', and then inserted in the newspapers of St Petersburg an official article in which they gave 'the Powers of Europe a pledge of the loyalty of [the tsar's] policy by frankly manifesting [their] resolution as a contribution to the preservation of the Ottoman Empire'. The tsar reassured the other powers that Russian troops would turn back as soon as the threat to the sultan disappeared. This, the tsar considered, was a testimony of 'his sincere solicitude' and a response to those who questioned 'the disinterestedness of [the Russian] cabinet'.⁴⁰

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All these developments only pushed the Porte further into the arms of Russia, and filled Mehmed Ali's sails with wind. The paşa of Egypt tried to influence the course of inter-imperial diplomacy by manipulating the presence of the Russian squadrons in Istanbul to his advantage. He told the representatives of Britain and France in Alexandria how he was aware—through his agents in the Ottoman imperial council who daily reported him the developments from Istanbul—that Hüseyin

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid. xxiv–xxv; Crabitès, *Ibrahim*, 170.

³⁸ Ibid. 172.

³⁹ Matthew Rendall, 'Restraint or Self-Restraint of Russia: Nicholas I, The Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, and the Vienna System, 1832–41', *International History Review* 24(1) (Mar. 2002): 40.

⁴⁰ 'Extrait d'une dépêche confidentielle de M. le comte Nesselrode à M. de Boutenief en date du 21 février 1833', BOA HR.SYS 1847/1/6.

and his entourage had been bought off by the Russians. By inviting their fleet into the Bosphorus, he claimed, Hüsrev, his 'great enemy', had 'shamefully deceived him', and gained time through Halil Rifat, who was keeping him busy with a peace proposal in Egypt.

Mehmed Ali suggested that London and Paris should support him against the alliance between Hüsrev and the Russians, for in so doing they would be giving 'the best support to the Ottoman Empire [against Russia] which no person could be more anxious to uphold than himself'. The paşa further stated that he had never had the idea of throwing off the sultan, and independence had 'never entered into his mind'. His only aim was 'to give the sultan support... to realize the desire of the whole [Muslim community] who call on him to free the government and the nation from the shameful servitude imposed on them by their natural enemies, the Russians'.⁴¹ He was bluffing. But the cabinets in Paris and London, as well as Vienna, all refused an alliance with Mehmed Ali against Russia and Hüsrev, seeing no reason to jeopardize European peace over Egypt.

Thereupon Mehmed Ali sent an ultimatum to Istanbul to accept his demands within ten days, while granting his son Ibrahim full authority to sign the peace under his terms.⁴² And he told the European agents in Egypt that a forward movement by Ibrahim could cause the Turkish fleet and what was left of the army, as well as the populace of the capital, to depose the sultan and to place his son on the throne, and 'above all [achieve] the exclusion of his enemy [Hüsrev]'.⁴³

On 11 March, Hüsrev retaliated by asking Murav'ev whether Russia could send 25,000–30,000 troops to the capital to counter the armies of Ibrahim, before Ibrahim arrived in Istanbul.⁴⁴ Although the Russians were willing to send their troops and preparations had long begun, it was impossible for all the Russian forces to arrive before Ibrahim could do so. The Porte was conscious of the risk of panic that the news of Ibrahim's march could generate in the imperial capital. Since it did not want the negotiations to be coloured by an Egyptian advance, *amedci* Mustafa Reşid Bey was sent to Kütahya to start and complete negotiations with Ibrahim immediately. He was ordered to make a settlement, giving up Damascus and Aleppo if necessary, but saving Adana at the least.⁴⁵

On 4 April, the day a small Russian regiment set foot in Istanbul, Reşid Bey arrived in Kütahya to start talks with Ibrahim. When he realized that Ibrahim insisted on keeping the whole of Syria as well as Adana and Mersin, and fearing that the commander could, on a whim, decide to march on Istanbul in the event of an obstinate disagreement, he agreed on 17 April to give up Adana to Egypt in

⁴¹ Campbell to Palmerston, 31 Mar. 1833, TNA FO 78/122.

⁴² Bitis, *Russia*, 472; Douin, *Boislecote*, xxxvi.

⁴³ Campbell to Palmerston, 1 Apr. 1833, TNA FO 78/122, f. 33.

⁴⁴ N. N. Murav'ev to Chernyshev, 12 Mar. 1833, RGVIA, fond VUA, d. 5304, f. 31–5; cf. Bitis, *Russia*, 473.

⁴⁵ BOA HH 20345, n.d.; cf. Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian*, 98.

return for keeping Mersin and Silifke. But the sultan was outraged by Reşid's unauthorized action. He adamantly opposed conferring the timber-rich town of Adana upon Mehmed Ali, for he knew that the paşa wanted this in order to build battleships. The deal collapsed.⁴⁶

Thence began a new round of Anglo-French pressure on the Porte and the paşa to make an agreement each on the terms of the other. The two powers hoped to get this done immediately, for they wanted to countermand the landing of Russian soldiers in the Ottoman capital, the second group (4,500 soldiers) of which was scheduled to arrive on 23 April.⁴⁷ Colonel Campbell and Charles-Joseph-Edmond Baron de Boisilecomte, the British and French agents in Egypt, received identical instructions from their ambassadors in Istanbul to convince the paşa.

Mehmed Ali did not waver, determined to protect his reign, his family, and thus his burgeoning imperium. He argued that the security of all he had was dependent upon obtaining that natural defence line of Egypt, the Taurus mountains, and the timber-rich province of Adana.⁴⁸ He told Boisilecomte on 12 May that he would desist from his demand for Adana only under one condition: the European powers 'should confirm by their guarantee a peace' in his terms and ensure the security of his reign.⁴⁹

The French agent replied that it was impossible to suggest an explicit guarantee to a subject against his sovereign.⁵⁰ When the paşa reminded him of the guarantees granted to the Greeks and the Belgians, Boisilecomte responded that the case was different: '[T]he peace that these two peoples concluded with their former rulers declare them independent.' Their negotiations took place between two equal parties. The paşa then asked, 'Why am I not independent?' and replied himself,

You know, it is out of deference to the Powers. Do you believe that without the due respect I had for the intentions of the Powers, I would still be in the condition of a subject? Well, that respect I had for your advice the Greeks did not have, neither did the Belgians, and you rewarded them by guaranteeing their independence and you punish me by refusing to guarantee my security.⁵¹

Mehmed Ali considered his position no different from that of the Greeks and the Belgians. But in the eyes of the powers, his was a revolutionary movement that was upsetting European stability by threatening the existence of the Ottoman Empire as a whole, and, unlike the case of Greece of the 1820s, there were neither humanitarian, nor religious, nor strategic or commercial security issues at stake

⁴⁶ Boisilecomte to MAE, 11, 12, 14 May 1833; Douin, *Boisilecomte*, 32–4.

⁴⁷ Petrunina, *Social'no*, 309–10.

⁴⁸ Boisilecomte to MAE, 5 May 1833, in Douin, *Boisilecomte*, 8–9.

⁴⁹ Boisilecomte to MAE, 12 May 1833, in Douin, *Boisilecomte*, 40; see also Campbell to Palmerston, 13 May 1833, TNA FO 78/227; cf. Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian*, 104.

⁵⁰ Boisilecomte to MAE, 12 May 1833, in Douin, *Boisilecomte*, 40.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

for the Powers to intervene on his behalf. By contrast, Britain's transportation and communication routes to India were now at risk of falling under the indirect domination of Russia and France.

The paşa was accordingly strong-armed. The British foreign secretary, Lord Palmerston, ordered the British navy to blockade Alexandria and cut Ibrahim's communication with Egypt. France buttressed this move by sending her own ships to the Levant. Upon hearing these orders, the paşa gave in. He agreed to abandon Adana and sent his orders to Ibrahim to withdraw his men on 8 May.⁵² But he was fortunate to avoid a formal commitment, because Mahmud II had also caved and agreed further concessions just before the paşa's orders arrived in Kütahya. The sultan could no longer have tolerated the risk of an Egyptian attack on Istanbul. Having observed that he had to make a choice between abandoning Adana or starting military preparations against the Egyptian army, Mahmud II decided that the former was the lesser of two dangers. Russia, he thought, was hardly to be trusted and France often changed her position.⁵³ He therefore accepted the abandonment of Adana and declared with a *firman* an amnesty for Ibrahim only two days before Mehmed Ali made his decision.

Sultan Mahmud II never found out about the paşa's almost simultaneous surrender. As Palmerston wrote to his agents, the question was finally settled, and no one would want to disturb it.⁵⁴ On 6 May, Ibrahim was appointed as the *muhassıl* of Adana and restored as the paşa of Jeddah and Habesh, while the provinces of Egypt, Crete, Damascus, Tripoli, Sayda, and Aleppo as well as the *sancaks* of Jerusalem and Nablus were conferred upon Mehmed Ali.⁵⁵ The civil war in the Ottoman world was thus halted with the naval and diplomatic interference of the Powers.

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The 'convention' of Kütahya was only a verbal truce, with no written assurances, signatures, or ratifications on the part of either party.⁵⁶ An ephemeral solution for the sultan's distress, it left the Powers and the Porte with a question still unresolved. What would now happen to the Russian warships and soldiers that had been stationed in Istanbul? The answer Palmerston came up with was to curb the self-centred actions of Russia, and invigorate the Concert of Europe against this perilous episode of the Eastern Question.

In fact, this was precisely when the term 'Eastern Question' became prevalent in both European and Ottoman parlance. Following the pattern laid out by the Vienna Order, at the end of May 1833 the British foreign secretary proposed a

⁵² Campbell to Palmerston, 9 May 1833, TNA FO 78/227; cf. Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian*, 103.

⁵³ BOA HH 20346, n.d.; cf. Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian*, 102–3.

⁵⁴ Palmerston to Campbell, 1 June 1833, TNA FO 78/226/27.

⁵⁵ BOA HAT 362/20211B; BOA TS.MA.e 712/19.

⁵⁶ Muhammed H. Kutluoğlu, '1833 Kütahya Antlaşmasının Yeni Bir Değerlendirmesi', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 17 (1997): 265–87, at 285.

convention among the powers where they would pledge themselves to the support of the sultan. However, the Austrian and Russian agents in London, Philip von Neumann (1781–1851) and Christopher Lieven (1774–1839), were not given authorization by their governments to enter into such an arrangement.⁵⁷

The Concert was in dissonance. Russian policy had undermined the commitment to multilateral action—even though the Russian agents would have phrased it differently. The diplomacy pursued by the Ottoman elites—Hüsrev and his men—in the spring of 1833 was one of the chief causes of Russian unilateralism. Before the verbal truce at Kütahya, Hüsrev had become more and more eager to make concessions in return for Russian guarantees, and had approached Butenev for the signing of an offensive and defensive alliance.⁵⁸ St Petersburg instantly seized the opportunity once again.

Count Aleksey F. Orlov (1786–1861), whom Nesselrode had dispatched to Istanbul in late April as an extraordinary envoy to discuss with the Porte the future of Russian troops, received the news of the Ottoman proposal of alliance on his way. His mission gained a new quality then. Orlov was ordered to begin and conclude the negotiations immediately after his arrival (6 May).⁵⁹

Russia was disinclined to give away her dominant position in Istanbul, the centrepiece of her ‘weak neighbour’ policy. This was why Orlov was instructed to oppose any suggestion for collective intervention.⁶⁰ Tsar Nicholas I and Nesselrode saw in the Ottoman offer of alliance an invaluable opportunity to secure the Black Sea and the south of Russia, especially in view of the fact that British and French squadrons were cruising the Mediterranean, alarmed by the Russo-Ottoman rapprochement.

During the negotiations, Orlov made sure that the Ottoman representatives, Hüsrev and Akif, kept the contents and existence of negotiations secret from foreign ambassadors, and promised that Tsar Nicholas I would forgo half of his pecuniary claims from the sultan arising from the 1829 war, and would evacuate Silistria. Moreover, learning from Hüsrev that Mahmud II was reluctant concerning an alliance with Russia, the tsar himself wrote a private letter to the sultan, stating that ‘it was reserved for his genius to see in Russia a true friend and a serviceable and faithful ally’.

In return, during the talks in early May, the Porte’s plenipotentiaries, Akif Paşa and *Hekimbaşı* (chief of medicine) Mustafa Behçet Efendi (1774–1834), would express the Porte’s willingness to enter into an alliance, stating that:

We feel some relief when we see that our disasters have served to expose, to the face of the world, the high benevolence of the [Russian Emperor] . . . We have been the

⁵⁷ Sir F. Lamb (Vienna) to Ponsonby, 30 May 1833, BLM MS 60474, f. 14.

⁵⁸ Altundağ, *Kavalalı*, 150–51.

⁵⁹ BOA TS.MA.e 547/2–3; C. de Freycinet, *La Question d’Égypte* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1905), 27.

⁶⁰ Rendall, ‘Restraint’, 41.

sick, you the medicines... [S]o that the cure becomes complete, we [ensure that] justice and good order reign at our home... [We] tell you with great frankness [that] the Representatives of His Imperial Majesty can henceforth be considered as the ministers, the sincere advisers of the S[ublime] Porte herself...⁶¹

This was probably the first time the impression of the Ottoman Empire as 'a sick man' was uttered, not by Russian but Ottoman agents themselves, possibly by Behçet Efendi. It also attested how Ottoman officialdom called in Russia in the management of a threat (Egypt) within their empire, though it is true that in demanding an alliance treaty they also had in view the immediate evacuation of Russian troops from Istanbul.

At the end of June, the plenipotentiaries of the two empires reached agreement over the details of the alliance. Russia promised to evacuate Istanbul once the treaty was signed, and only the wording of the document remained to be completed. Orlov and Hüsrev added the final touches, and on 8 July 1833 the two put their signatures on the Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty at Hüsrev's mansion. This was a *defensive* mutual assistance treaty for eight years, with a renewal option. Its object was the security of the two empires 'against every species of attack'. Russia and the Ottoman Empire would engage to arrange all matters, without exception, which could affect their tranquillity and security, and for that purpose afford each other effective succour and assistance. Most importantly, a secret clause stipulated the closure of the Dardanelles to all foreign battleships in times of war in return for relieving the sultan of the obligation to supply military aid.⁶²

Although historians have previously suggested otherwise, the Porte did not resist the treaty with Russia, and was not in fact coerced into signing it.⁶³ It is true that Orlov used the presence of Russian troops in Istanbul to his advantage, having only to point his finger at the squadrons in the Bosphorus to obtain leverage.⁶⁴ But, despite the sultan's reluctance, it was through Hüsrev's initiative, eagerness, and desire for revenge, that the Porte *wished* to enter into an alliance, both offensive and defensive, with the tsar. The Ottoman *serasker* had to contend with a defensive agreement alone, since Nicholas I considered it more advantageous and useful for Russia, 'given France's and England's present alliance'. It would help him 'tie Austria more tightly than ever to [his] interests', by guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁵ And it would procure Russia a unique advantage for intervention in the Levant in the future,

⁶¹ 'Résumé d'une conférence de M. l'envoyé Bouténeff avec le Reis Effendi et l'Hekim Bachi, médecin en chef et ministre des conférences, Bestchef Effendi, tenue dans la maison de ce dernier à Bebeck le 13/23 mai 1833', AVPRI f. 181/2, l. 5.

⁶² 'Traduction de l'acte de ratification du Traite patent', BOA HR.SYS 1847/1/18; 'Traduction de l'acte de ratification de l'article séparé et secret', BOA HR.SYS 1847/1/18; *British and Foreign State Papers*, vol. 10 (London: James Ridgway & Sons, 1836), 1176; Bitis, *Russia*, 475.

⁶³ Rendall, 'Restraint', 43.

⁶⁴ Orlov to Kiselev, 27 June/9 July 1833; cf. Rendall, 'Restraint', 43.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 46.

‘the first and strongest . . . whether considering the preservation of the Ottoman Empire possible, or at last recognizing its dissolution inevitable’.⁶⁶

Hence the fears, ambitions, and policies of the sultan, Hüsrev Paşa, and the tsar coalesced, and guaranteed a Russian peace in the Levant. Ibrahim’s troops had already begun evacuating Asia Minor in early May, and retreated back to Urfa. Russian troops left Istanbul days after the signing of the Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty in July. But the Russian peace in the Levant immediately jeopardized order and security in Europe, prompting a diplomatic crisis and the threat of war. It also emphasized the cracks within the Concert of Europe, testing both its functionality and durability.

Preaching to the Winds: The Disconcert of Europe and the Diplomatic Impasse

Only days after the signing of the Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty, its secret clause was leaked to the British and French agents by anti-Russian Ottoman ministers (possibly by the Anglophile Pertev Efendi). In London and Paris, the secret clause was considered sensational and controversial.⁶⁷ British and French statesmen believed that Russia had trapped the Porte into signing the treaty, and thus placed the sultan’s empire under her protectorate. The secret clause had given the tsar a strategic advantage with a geographical and natural defence system, as he now had control over the Dardanelles, which were very difficult for naval ships to sail through from the Aegean Sea thanks to the strong northerly winds.⁶⁸ As a result, preventing the ratification of the treaty became a matter of preserving the balance of power in Europe. Seeing that their attempts could lead to aggression, Tsar Nicholas I started drawing up plans for war.⁶⁹

The risk of war was now indeed very high. Palmerston looked to avert it first by persuading the Porte. To this end, he instructed Lord John Ponsonby (1770–1855), his new ambassador to Istanbul, to remind the Ottoman ministers that, when ‘a sovereign trusted for his security to the military support of a neighbouring Power stronger than himself’, it would be obvious that he acquired such protection ‘at the price of his independence’ Furthermore, ‘[s]uch a state of things’ would destroy the respect of the foreign powers for the sovereign, ‘weakens the affection of his subjects, exposing him thereby to danger from their insurrection and tends to the loss of his crown as the consequence of the sacrifice of his

⁶⁶ Nesselrode to Orlov, 8/20 May 1833, cf. Rendall, ‘Restraint’, 46.

⁶⁷ Lamb to Ponsonby, 15 Aug. 1833, BLM Beauvale Papers, Add. MS 60474/20.

⁶⁸ William R. Polk, *The Opening of South Lebanon, 1788–1840: A Study of the Impact of the West on the Middle East* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 194.

⁶⁹ Palmerston to Bligh, 9 Aug. 1833, BLM Add. MS 41285, f. 79; *ibid.* f. 60, Palmerston to Bligh, 19 July 1833; see also Bitis, *Russia*, 475, 478

independence'. Hence, in forming alliances and developing policies, any sovereign had to follow a careful and well-calculated triple policy of preserving its independence while acknowledging the sentiments of its citizens and the reactions of other major global actors. This was why, Palmerston concluded, the Porte had to pay attention to the fact that the Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty was produced for Russian and not for Ottoman goals. The Porte was advised not to ratify it. If it ratified the treaty, Russia would become 'the umpire between the sultan and his subjects, would exercise a species of Protectorate over Turkey, and the [s]ultan would be bound to adopt the quarrels of Russia'.⁷⁰

Palmerston was not aware that this was what the Ottoman ministers, Hüsrev and Akif Paşas, wanted, at least in part, in the spring of 1833. Before the foreign secretary's instructions reached Lord Ponsonby, Ottoman Reis Efendi Akif, now known as a Russophile, announced the ratification of the treaty on 26 August. The Porte's decision was met with immediate protests. Ponsonby even threatened that 'if the stipulations of that treaty should hereafter lead to the armed interference of Russia in the internal affairs of Turkey, the British government [would] hold itself at liberty to act upon such an occasion'.⁷¹ But Reis Efendi sent a negative and detailed response, declaring that the Porte would not enter into any discussion with respect to such protests because it would be 'without object, and must be without result'. The Ottoman court sought only the tranquillity of the sultan's dominions, and as an independent power, it had the right to enter into alliance with any other state, especially when such an alliance was not directed against any power—the alliance was made through the mutual desire of both parties.⁷²

When the tsar ratified the treaty on 29 October, similar protests, denouncing the action, were delivered to his court.⁷³ Russian foreign minister Count Nesselrode responded that the treaty did not impair the interests of any powers whatever, and asked: 'How can the other Powers declare they do not recognize its validity unless they aim at the destruction of [the Ottoman Empire] the preservation of which is the aim of the treaty?' The treaty was concluded in a 'peaceful and conservative spirit', and 'has indeed introduced a change in the relations of union and confidence in which the Porte will find a guarantee for her stability and if need be means of defence'.⁷⁴

The Russian disavowal of the Anglo-French protests engendered deep antagonism among the powers. Palmerston ordered his ambassador in St Petersburg,

⁷⁰ Palmerston to Ponsonby, 7 Aug. 1833, TNA FO 78/472/42.

⁷¹ Ponsonby to [the Porte], 26 Aug. 1833, BOA HAT 1166/4123; also in BOA TS.MA.e 578/34.

⁷² Dispatches by Ponsonby (Istanbul), 15 and 24 Sept. 1833, in 'Proceedings in Turco-Egyptian Question', TNA FO 78/472, f. 46, 48.

⁷³ Dispatch by Bligh (St Petersburg), 2 Nov. 1833, in 'Proceedings in Turco-Egyptian Question', TNA FO 78/472, f. 49.

⁷⁴ Dispatch by Bligh (St Petersburg), 4 Nov. 1833, in 'Proceedings in Turco-Egyptian Question', TNA FO 78/472, f. 50.

John Duncan Bligh (1798–1872), to stress to tsarist authorities that the ‘real independence’ of the Ottoman Empire had to be regarded as ‘an indispensable condition’.⁷⁵ And, from that point on, it became his object and a centrepiece of his eastern policy to prevent Russia from ‘pushing her advantages farther’, and depriving her ‘of what she has gained’ in the Levant.⁷⁶ Under the ministries of Maréchal Étienne Maurice Gérard (1773–1852) and Jean-de-Dieu Soult (1769–1851), France consistently supported the British policy, though they also hoped to accommodate Sultan Mahmud II in a new understanding, which would procure for the paşa of Egypt hereditary rights in the provinces he ruled.⁷⁷

Britain and France thus positioned themselves sternly against the 1833 treaty and Russia. But, against the two, St Petersburg made new diplomatic moves that bolstered her position. One of these was to assure Austria of her peaceful intentions. Its success is affirmed by Metternich’s note to his agents in the summer of 1833 that where Ottoman affairs were concerned, the courts of Vienna and St Petersburg ‘want the same thing, and they want it in the same way’.⁷⁸ The Austrian chancellor was of the belief that the 1833 treaty’s real object was the protection of Odessa, and to that end, not to open the Bosphorus to Russian ships of war, but to close the Dardanelles against British warships.⁷⁹

On 18 September, Metternich agreed to adopt a ‘principle of union’ with Russia in his eastern policy. This resulted in the famous 1833 pact in Munchengratz in the presence of King Francis I and Tsar Nicholas I. A month later Prussia joined the conservative Holy Alliance, which positioned her against the revolutionary aspirations of Mehmed Ali as the three powers agreed to support the sultan against the paşa, and to act together should the sultan’s empire disintegrate.⁸⁰

With the support of the conservative Austria and Prussia, the liberal camp of Britain and France would not be able to diplomatically twist the arm of the tsar into annulling the treaty and giving up his advantages in the Levant. A diplomatic impasse ensued. The powers were grouped into camps, each seeking to weaken the other, and toying with the idea of war. A Great Power intervention in the Levant—this time a unilateral one—thus generated division in Europe and prompted fears of war. As Lord Beauvale, the British ambassador to Vienna,

⁷⁵ Dispatch to Bligh, 6 Dec. 1833, in ‘Proceedings in Turco-Egyptian Question’, TNA FO 78/472, f. 52.

⁷⁶ Palmerston to Ponsonby, 6 Dec. 1833, in ‘Proceedings in Turco-Egyptian Question’, TNA FO 78/472, f. 58.

⁷⁷ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 13.

⁷⁸ Metternich to Ficquelmont, 10 July 1833; cf. Šedivý, *Metternich*, 538.

⁷⁹ Lamb to Ponsonby, 2 Sept. 1833, Beauvale Papers, BL, Add. MS 60474, f. 22; also in Šedivý, *Metternich*, 537–8.

⁸⁰ For the details of this union, see esp. Miroslav Šedivý, ‘From Adrianople to Munchengratz: Metternich, Russia, and the Eastern Question 1829–33’, *International History Review* 33(2) (2011): 205–33.

poignantly wrote, the circumstances could 'set... Europe on fire' again at any minute.⁸¹

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None of the individual Great Powers, or their liberal and conservative camps for that matter, could dare to make any other one-sided move now. They dreaded the destabilizing effect of aggression on the sensitive 'Eastern Question'. They knew well that neither Sultan Mahmud II himself nor Mehmed Ali was entirely satisfied with the terms of the Kütahya truce to which the two had reluctantly agreed. True, Egyptian armies had withdrawn and the imminent danger of the fall of the sultan's empire had passed for the time being. But what was obtained in Kütahya was merely a verbal agreement and the status of Mehmed Ali could be revoked by the sultan whenever he pleased.⁸²

As a result, the paşa of Egypt kept making military preparations, building ships, and fortifying the defiles in the Taurus mountains. In fact, he did not give up his ultimate ambition to build his own, independent empire or at least obtain hereditary possession of his territories to ensure the security of his family, though he was reminded by the Russian agents not to entertain such dreams time and again.⁸³

Tensions between Cairo and Istanbul became critical when the sultan demanded from the paşa a sum of 50 million piastres for arrears of tribute clearing the war indemnities along with the payment of annual tributes starting from the Mohammedan year 1250 (May 1834). Mehmed Ali refused to pay arrears for a battle he had actually won. He deferred the payment of the tributes, fearing that the sum would be used against him and for military investment. He moreover demanded from the sultan the dismissal of Hüsrev, his arch-enemy, from the post of *serasker* as a condition for the recommencement of the payments. He even sent a letter to Valide Sultan, the mother of Mahmud II, to try and effect this, but to no avail. The stubborn paşa then ordered his regiments to remain in Urfa, and continued his effective occupation much to the irritation of the sultan. Finally, the sourness and caprice of Mahmud II was aggravated when the paşa did not follow the tradition of deputing a member of his own family to be present at the wedding of the sultan's daughter, as a sign of respect.⁸⁴

For the hot-headed Sultan Mahmud II, the Kütahya truce was only a temporary measure to save the day. After the military and diplomatic defeats in 1832 and 1833, the Porte had begun summoning a new army. Serasker Hüsrev Paşa's plan was to bring in European officers to train and discipline the soldiers until the imperial army matched the might of Egyptian forces. In the meantime, the eastern

⁸¹ Lamb to Ponsonby, 30 Sept. 1833, Beauvale Papers, BL, Add. MS 60474, f. 23.

⁸² Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian*, 109.

⁸³ Vice Chancellor to M. Duhamel, 31 Dec. 1834, BOA HR.SYS 1847/1/7.

⁸⁴ BOA HAT 351/19816A.

army of the empire would oversee an insurrection that broke out in Syria in May 1834 against the authority of Mehmed Ali as a consequence of heavy taxation and unwelcome conscription.⁸⁵ The Ottoman imperial council resolved to supply military support to the dissenting Syrians and send the imperial fleet to the eastern Mediterranean to cooperate in the prospective attack upon Mehmed Ali.⁸⁶

The Porte hoped that Russia would assist it in the operation, and immediately enquired about it. The sultan's ministers had good reason for this belief because, since the Russian intervention in the crisis with Egypt in April 1833 and especially after the Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty, relations between Istanbul and St Petersburg had improved remarkably. The tsar had specifically ordered his agents in Istanbul to keep the sultan content by all means possible.⁸⁷ In December 1833, he signed a convention with the Porte in St Petersburg, in which, as he promised before the July 1833 treaty, he made concessions with regard to the indemnities of the 1828–9 war in favour of the sultan, and agreed on the evacuation of Russian forces from Silistra and the semi-autonomous provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia.⁸⁸ He thus looked to tie the Porte even more tightly to his plan, and to strengthen the hand of pro-Russian Ottoman ministers in Istanbul.

However, in July 1834, Butenev responded unfavourably to the Ottoman inquiry regarding potential Russian assistance in the sultan's offensive against Mehmed Ali. The Russian ambassador told the Reisülküttâb that if the Porte attacked Mehmed Ali, it would be the aggressor. The Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty concerned purely defensive engagements, and would therefore not bind Russia to assist the Ottoman Empire on this occasion. It was true that the Russo-Ottoman alliance was merely of a defensive nature, according to the 1833 treaty. Yet Russian policy was also founded on the understanding that the existence of Mehmed Ali as a threat would lead the Porte to 'look more and more for rapprochement with Russia and only further strengthen our legitimate influence in the East'.⁸⁹

The sultan did not take the Russian response well, wondering ever more strongly now whether his alliance with Russia was a mistake. But he did not know how to free his rule from Russian influence while the threat of Mehmed Ali was still imminent. To find an answer to this dilemma, he secretly approached the British ambassador, Ponsonby, through an agent (Stephanaky Boghorides, prince of Samos), and expressed his anxiety that 'the rivalry existing in the Ottoman Empire serves the purposes of Russia by disorganising [his] government . . . wasting its resources and exciting [his] fears which make him look to Russia for

⁸⁵ Dispatch by Ponsonby, 16 Aug. 1834, in 'Proceedings in Turco-Egyptian Question', TNA FO 78/472, f. 95. See Ch. 9 for more on the uprisings in Syria.

⁸⁶ BOA HAT 9674. ⁸⁷ Nesselrode to Boutenieff, 20 July 1833, BOA HR.SYS 1847/1/27.

⁸⁸ Dispatch by Bligh, 24 Feb. 1834 TNA FO 78/472, f. 81; also see Hayreddin Pınar, 'Ahmed Fevzi Paşa'nın Petersburg Seyahati ve Petersburg Anlaşması', *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 29 (2003): 179–89.

⁸⁹ A. O. Duhamel, *Avtobiografiya Aleksandra Osipovicha Dyugamelya* (Moscow: Univ. Tip., 1885), 71; Dispatch by Ponsonby, 20 Aug. 1834, TNA FO 78/472, f. 99.

protection'.⁹⁰ He then inquired whether Britain would side with him in a planned attempt at 'compelling [Mehmed Ali] to retire within proper bounds and thus liberate the [s]ultan from the alarms which have been the cause of his alliance with Russia'.⁹¹

Although the British ambassador was pleased with Mahmud II's approach, he replied that Britain would not attack Mehmed Ali without special cause of offence. The London cabinet was of course willing to see the Porte freed from Russian domination as swiftly as possible, but since France was opposed to a recurrence of war between the Porte and the paşa, and because the Russian attitude in such a scenario was unpredictable, Britain would avoid any 'action against the clock'.⁹² To Foreign Secretary Palmerston, it was 'of utmost importance to the interests of [Britain], and to the preservation of the balance of power [and peace] in Europe, that the Turkish Empire should be maintained in its integrity and independence', but risking a war with Russia initiated by Britain for this purpose would be at best a counterproductive move.⁹³

Palmerston was still looking to reinvigorate the Concert of Europe. Reading the reports of Lord Beauvale from Vienna, he was encouraged. Beauvale described the Austrian court's reservations about the tsar's real intentions, and concluded that Metternich now suspected that the policy of Russia towards the Porte was 'to weaken and to degrade the [s]ultan, and to avail herself of every opportunity of aggrandizement by progressive acquisitions of portions of the Turkish territory'. The Austrian chancellor would be ready to send auxiliary troops if a danger similar to the 1832–3 crisis menaced the Ottoman Empire, for he deplored the thought of a return of Russian troops to Istanbul and would do everything in his power to prevent it.

Even though, by the end of 1834, Metternich still had some trust in St Petersburg, he was likewise of the belief that the best way to handle the 'Eastern Question' of the time was to return to the Vienna system of 1815–22 and to undertake a concerted action at least by a majority of the powers. The intra-European disagreements and divergences, the powers' polarization, and the prioritization of their own interests were only perpetuating, if not exacerbating, the problems of the Ottoman Empire. 'The political rivalry of the Powers', he told Lord Beauvale, 'exercised... a fatal influence on the position of the sultan by exposing him to a variety of influences... [T]he security which [the powers'] rivalry afforded against schemes of partition was but negative, whereas the union of the Three Powers against one... would be positive.'⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Dispatch by Ponsonby, 15 Sept. 1834, TNA FO 78/472, f. 105. ⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² 'Instructions pour M. Lapiere, premier drogman de l'ambassade de France', 2 Sept. 1834; 'Rapport à Son Excellence Reis Effendi', 4 Sept. 1834; Ponsonby to Reis Efendi, 23 Nov. 1834; Roussin (Therapia) to Reis Effendi, 20 Nov. 1834, in BOA HR.SYS 933/1, f. 42, 48, 53, 56.

⁹³ Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian*, 111. ⁹⁴ Dispatch by Lamb, 2 Nov. 1834, TNA FO 78/472, f. 126.

At the end of 1834, the powers were still in a diplomatic logjam. The hardline unilateralist camp in St Petersburg, or the so-called *ruskaia partia* (Russian faction), was still strong and fixated on the possibility of war. But Metternich and Palmerston saw a solution elsewhere. As had been the case in 1815, Austria and Britain conceived of a joint Great Power action regarding the Ottoman Empire in line with the transimperial security culture of the time.⁹⁵ In 1815, their object had been to prevent a Russo-Ottoman war by warranting the sultan's European dominions under European public law. In 1834, the 'Eastern Question' pertained to preserving Ottoman territorial integrity against domestic threats such as Mehmed Ali's aspirations and containing the advantageous, dominant position Russia had acquired for herself.

Only concerted action could put an end to the Russian tutelage over the Porte and the embarrassment of the sultan, whose sovereignty and authority had now been jeopardized both externally (St Petersburg) and from within (Cairo). It was perhaps militarily impossible or too dangerous to *push* Russia out of Istanbul by way of force. But it could be possible to *pull* St Petersburg back into the security system in Europe and thus prevent the renewal of the 1833 Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty that would expire in 1841. The question remained: how could Palmerston and Metternich persuade the tsar to give up his privileged position in the Levant now?

⁹⁵ See Ch. 4.

An Unusual Quest for Revenge

Civilization, Commerce, and Reform

The literature on the latter phase of the Eastern crisis in the 1830s usually concentrates on the policy of one or more of the leaders of the European Great Powers—including Lord Palmerston, Prince Metternich, Count Nesselrode, and Adolphe Thiers. Many fascinating studies have detailed the efforts of these ‘great men’ to ensure order in Europe and the Levant, how they piloted bureaucratic and military reforms in Istanbul and then brought an end to the crisis by means of their shrewd diplomacy, commitment, or opposition to the Concert of Europe.¹

In this chapter I will place the emphasis elsewhere, with a prosopographical approach to the experience of the Ottoman statesman and diplomat Mustafa Reşid (1800–1858). He was possibly the first non-European figure to place an almost unwavering trust in the Vienna Order, or at least the late 1830s version of it. Unlike the young Mahmud II and Halet Efendi (see Chapter 4), Reşid espoused the collective intervention of the Powers in Ottoman domestic affairs. It was under his influence, even if not through his sole agency, that the idea of ‘civilization’ was adopted in Ottoman official lexicology, Ottoman markets were further opened to the global capitalist economy, and the Gülhane Edict of 1839, which pledged to guarantee the life, security, and property of all Ottoman subjects, was promulgated. And it was during his heyday in Istanbul that the future territorial integrity of the sultan’s empire was subsumed under the guarantee of the Concert of Europe, and the policy of Russia with respect to the sultan’s empire was overturned.

All these overlapped with a moment when the Eastern Question was repurposed as a question of civilization as much as a constellation of strategic, legal, commercial, and religious concerns. The ideology and diplomacy of Mustafa Reşid and his intra-elite struggle against Russophile ministers in Istanbul became a feature of this transformation as decisive and determinative as the ideologies and diplomacy of the aforementioned European statesmen and Mehmed Ali Paşa.

Of course, one ought not to overemphasize the role of a single political figure in the policy-making processes of an empire and the European Great Powers. Yet the story of Mustafa Reşid tells us much about those processes themselves, and how

¹ Webster, *Palmerston*; Šedivý, *Metternich*; Caquet, *The Orient*; François Charles-Roux, *Thiers et Méhémet-Ali* (Paris: Plon, 1951).

Ottoman statesmen, especially those who lived and worked in Europe, usually found themselves torn between two worlds—one (Europe) that would appear to them as the champion of values such as ‘humanity’ and ‘civilization’ and thus initially mesmerize their ‘oriental’ observers, before prioritizing its immediate interests at every critical turn, usually at the expense of these values; the other (Ottoman) bogged down in fatal interpersonal rivalries and struggles for office in the Sublime Porte, and thus suffering the absence of coherent, consistent, and stable policies and individual security. Along with his like-minded European and Ottoman associates, Mustafa Reşid became a connector between these two worlds hoping to remedy the issues that existentially threatened the sultan’s empire and brought the European Great Powers to the brink of war in the 1830s and later in 1840.

Civilization

Mustafa Reşid was a man with relatively humble origins. Born in Istanbul in 1800, he was the son of a bookkeeper of the revenue records of Sultan Bayezid’s imperial mosque. He received his early education partly from his father and intermittently at neighbourhood schools in Davudpaşa. When his father passed away in 1810, his education was temporarily halted, which restricted his knowledge of Arabic and Persian, the benchmarks of Ottoman high culture. Thereupon he was taken under the protection of his sister’s husband, Seyyid Ali Paşa of Isparta, a prominent military statesman in the Ottoman world.

When Seyyid Ali became grand vizier in 1820–21, Reşid worked as his *mühürdar* (sealer). He thus started his career in the Sublime Porte in the highest office at the age of 20. He was eventually employed at *Divan Kalemî* and wrote all the official letters of the grand viziers. In this capacity he served in the army with the new Grand Vizier Selim Paşa, who commanded Ottoman forces at the beginning of the Russo-Ottoman war of 1828–9. Reşid also acted as the chief clerk in the peace negotiations with the Russians in Edirne in 1829.²

His writings from the front to Istanbul, and his plain yet powerful language, attracted the attention of Sultan Mahmud II. On his return, the sultan specifically asked to have Reşid in his audience, and commended his work before advising him to learn French so that he could involve him in his diplomatic corps.³ The young man was then placed at *âmedi kalemî*, which was one of the most important offices in the Sublime Porte because it was there that the official reports of the government to the sultan were produced. There, thanks to his progressive ideas, Reşid came into close contact with Pertev Efendi (1785–1837), *kâhya bey* or the

² BOA HAT 676/33010.

³ Cavit Baysun, *Mustafa Reşit Paşa* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1940), 3.

minister for civil (internal) affairs, and a disciple of the Anglophile Galib Paşa, who had advocated a moderate and conciliatory policy toward the Great Powers in the 1810s. Pertev showed particular interest in Mustafa Reşid's career.⁴ In 1830, he took him as his second scribe to Egypt in a mission to Cairo. And until his tragic death in 1837, in parallel with his own growing influence in the Topkapı Palace, he played a considerable role in Reşid's rise as one of the most prominent statesmen of his time.

During the 1830 visit to Egypt, Reşid's potential was noticed by Mehmed Ali Paşa also. The latter asked for him to stay in Cairo and join his staff. But Reşid refused this offer. As mentioned in the previous chapter, three years later, in January 1833, Reşid was again sent to Egypt—this time to make an arrangement with Mehmed Ali during the 1832–3 crisis. During these unfriendly negotiations, he reportedly became a bitter enemy of the paşa. As Ottoman chronicler Mehmed Selahaddin narrates, during the talks at Mehmed Ali's palace in Cairo, Reşid was so shocked and shaken by the paşa's adamant refusal of the demands of the sultan that at the most heated moment of one of the meetings, he would ask to be excused, leave the room, and cry in anger, disappointment, and an intense desire for revenge that came to fill his heart from then on.⁵

Not that his entire career was devoted solely to this quest for revenge. But along the way his cause changed his world-view and the trajectory of his life, and arguably the course and culture of Ottoman politics and security, as he ascended to the highest offices. He went through unique learning experiences during his years of diplomatic missions in Paris and London, where he perhaps too uncritically observed the state of politics in Europe and adopted some of the ideas and ideals of European international political and economic thought, for better and worse.

Mustafa Reşid wanted the Porte to move past the petty issues in which it was caught up, which every now and then threatened both his career and his life. For example, when, in April 1833, as the negotiator of the sultan at Kütahya, Mustafa Reşid agreed to give up Adana to Mehmed Ali without informing the sultan, the furious Mahmud II ordered his execution.⁶ It was only by the efforts of intermediaries that the sultan's rage was tamed and his order rescinded.⁷

Such were the conditions under which Ottoman bureaucrats and statesmen led their lives and performed their duties. Gaining the favour of the sultan could at once allow them to swiftly climb the ladder of the bureaucracy and obtain immense affluence and invaluable mansions by the Bosphorus. Losing his favour

⁴ Bayram Kodaman, *Les Ambassades de Moustapha Rechid Pacha à Paris* (Ankara: Société turque d'histoire, 1991), 26.

⁵ Mehmet Selahattin, *Bir Türk Diplomatin Evrâk-ı Siyasiyesi* (Istanbul: Alem Matbaası, 1306 [1888]), 15; Reşat Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit Paşa ve Tanzimat* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1954), 52.

⁶ Baysun, *Mustafa Reşit*, 4.

⁷ Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 21.

or angering him might well result in immediate poverty, if not death. Six years later, the Gülhane Edict, which Mustafa Reşid would himself read out and which arguably heralded the *Tanzimat* (reordering) era in the Ottoman Empire, looked to put an end to this vicious system, guaranteeing the property, life, and security of all Ottoman subjects, and particularly the sultan's ministers—introducing a version of the rule of law (*shari'a*), albeit imperfectly.

After evading death in 1833, Mustafa Reşid remained jobless for a while. He stayed in Istanbul, observed the functioning of the state apparatus, investigated the weakness of Ottoman institutions, and studied Great Power politics. And then, in June 1834, possibly through Pertev's influence, he was sent to Paris as the new chargé d'affaires of the Ottoman Empire. Reşid formed the core of the Ottoman diplomatic corps in Europe in the 1830s together with a certain Nuri Efendi, who was concurrently dispatched to London. The public announcement made at the time suggests that the two diplomats' task was to mend tarnished relations with France and Britain. In fact, their main objective was to obtain compensation for the Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty.⁸ At the same time, Ottoman agents were ordered to gather intelligence on the Eastern crisis and the aforementioned diplomatic deadlock in which the major Powers, the Porte, and Mehmed Ali were embroiled.

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'Small in size, yet big enough without being obese', a contemporary French writer wrote, Mustafa Reşid Efendi was a 'quite lively, even active' man with a 'clever feel'. His moustache was cut in a brush, and his thick eyebrows slightly hid eyes 'endowed with a great depth'.⁹ European statesmen and diplomats who met Mustafa Reşid in person usually became fond of him. According to Metternich, the Ottoman diplomat was 'extraordinarily intelligent, incorruptible and devoted to his native country with a sincere wish to regenerate it'.¹⁰ Ponsonby would introduce him to Palmerston as 'a statesman of high calibre'.¹¹ An 1839 French memorandum would describe Reşid as a patriotic man, 'fine, circumspect and prudent'.¹²

For his part, Mustafa Reşid's perception of European politics and statesmen was mixed, at least at first. In the summer of 1834, when he set for Paris, he was discovering a new world that he had previously observed from afar or through his correspondence with diplomats in Istanbul. In the next few years, he saw and talked with all key European political figures, along with whom he would play a pioneering role in resolving the inter-imperial deadlock over the Eastern Crisis.

⁸ 'L'envoi de Rechid-Bey en France', *Moniteur Turc*, 8 July 1834; Roussin to [MAE, Paris], 9 June 1834, AMAE CP Turquie 268/304; Roussin to Le Comte, 8 July 1834, AMAE CP Turquie 268/345.

⁹ M. Destrilhes (pseud.), *Confidences sur la Turquie* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1855), 37.

¹⁰ Šedivý, *Metternich*. 927.

¹¹ Ponsonby to Palmerston, 19 Dec. 1933, TNA FO 75/125; cf. Bailey, *Reform*, 181.

¹² 'Renseignements sur les hommes et les choses en Turquie', 27 July 1839, AMAE CP Turquie 38/191.

The first major European statesman that Reşid met was Metternich. He saw the Austrian chancellor en route to Paris, and received from him the latest updates on the abovementioned ideological divergence among the Powers as well as Austria's support toward the Porte. Metternich informed the young Ottoman diplomat of the conservative principles upon which Austria's policy was based. 'Egyptian affairs', he told Reşid, were 'only a revolt' of Mehmed Ali against his legitimate sovereign. '[W]hatever may be [the] causes [of this revolt] . . . it is the Viceroy that is in the wrong', and Austria was 'ready to defend the integrity of the Ottoman Empire', while Britain and France were not to be trusted.¹³

Pleased to hear of Austrian support but also perplexed at the chancellor's insinuations against the liberal camp, Reşid arrived in Paris in the morning of 14 September 1834, and installed himself at the Hôtel d'Artois in Rue Lafitte. Eight days later he made his first appearance before the French king, Louis Philippe, to whom he presented a letter of cordiality from Sultan Mahmud II. Reşid could not speak French well at the time.¹⁴ During his short conversation with the king, the queen, and their sons, he expressed his desire, through his interpreter M. Cor, to be able to converse with them in French soon.¹⁵

During his first Paris sojourn, he immediately began to learn the lingua franca of the time from a certain Mademoiselle N., an opera singer in Paris, and mastered it in less than five years. Concurrently, he studied European culture and international politics in depth.¹⁶ For now, his plan was to cautiously dip his foot into the vast waters of European diplomacy, research French statesmen and politicians, understand the intentions of the French government on the issues of Algiers and Egypt, and examine French public opinion, before deciding on his next steps. His dispatches to Istanbul from Paris show the young Ottoman diplomat coming to recognize the importance of the European equilibrium and the Concert for the interest of the sultan's empire in these early months of his Paris mission. And it was then that he came to adopt the idea of 'civilization' that was gaining traction in French political thought.¹⁷ It would be this idea that eventually formed the nucleus of his international political thought, guided Ottoman diplomacy, and even shaped imperial security culture in the following decades.

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The notion of 'civilization', in the abstract, metaphysical sense, was not a European invention per se. From ancient Chinese, Greek, Mexican, or Islamic

¹³ Cavit Baysun, 'Mustafa Reşit Paşa'nın Paris ve Londra Sefaretleri Esnasındaki Siyasî Yazıları', *Tarih Vesikaları* 1(1) (1941): 33-4; Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 55, 109.

¹⁴ BOA HAT 714/34088A.

¹⁵ 'Traduction du discours que doit tenir Moustapha Rechid Bey Effendi à l'audience du Roi', 22 Sept. 1834, AMAE CP 269/170.

¹⁶ BOA HAT 714/34101.

¹⁷ Tuncer Baykara, 'Mustafa Reşid Paşa'nın Medeniyet Anlayışı', in *Mustafa Reşid Paşa ve Dönemi Semineri Bildiriler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1985), 49.

societies to the nineteenth-century global overseas empires, the belief that the world was inhabited by both civilized and barbaric peoples had pervaded history. Yet the term itself was coined and systematically invoked in international political thought after the French and Scottish Enlightenments in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Previously used as a term of jurisprudence, in his 1757 work *L'Ami des hommes*, the French author Victor Riquetti, marquis de Mirabeau (1715–89), came to infuse it with new and diverse connotations such as ‘the softening of manners, the education of spirits, the development of politeness, the culture of arts and sciences, the rise of trade and industry, [and] the acquisition of material amenities and luxury’.¹⁸ A decade later, in 1767, the Scottish writer Adam Ferguson employed the word ‘civilization’ in the English language for the first time.¹⁹

The idea took hold as a systematic political instrument only after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and more precisely in the 1830s, in the context of a new wave of colonial competition worldwide. In fact, in the course of the nineteenth century there was hardly any agreement over what the word actually meant. Such terms gained new meanings at the hands of statesmen and later historians, sociologists, and anthropologists, who interpreted them across a large spectrum. As Duncan Bell tells us, in the case of ‘civilization’, this spectrum involved

dominant understandings of religion found in a society, levels of technological sophistication, ascribed racial properties, economic dynamism, the structure of legal and political institutions, posited gender roles and perceptions of individual moral and intellectual capacity, or some combination of these.²⁰

Yet, despite its manifold uses, the notion of ‘civilization’ gradually became a political tool to underpin the justification of empire and the acquisition of new colonies before other global Powers, in order to avoid inter-imperial aggression. Moreover, it legitimized the idea of aiding ‘the “immature” people of the world reach maturity’ through such methods as colonization, the establishment of protectorates, and cross-border ‘humanitarian’ interventions.²¹

Especially against the backdrop of colonial competition among the European Powers, ‘civilization’ was conceived as a process—a civilizing process—that

¹⁸ Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilisation: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 26–7; Michel Bruneau, ‘Civilisation(s). Pertinence ou résilience d’un terme ou d’un concept en géographie?’, *Annales de géographie* 674(4) (2010): 615–37, at 619; Krishan Kumar, ‘The Return of Civilization—and of Arnold Toynbee?’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56 (4) (Oct. 2014): 815–43, 820.

¹⁹ Bowden, *The Empire of Civilisation*, 31.

²⁰ Duncan Bell, ‘Empire and Imperialism’, in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth Century Political Thought*, ed. Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 867.

²¹ *Ibid.*

societies worldwide were to go through in different stages, following in the footprints of European societies to reach the level of enlightenment (the term was eventually replaced with the words ‘progress’ and ‘modernity’) in place of barbarism and savagery. In the new age of imperial expansion, European statesmen, international lawyers, and military and naval commanders all employed the concept for their respective ends. Empire and imperialism came to be seen as a moral right, duty, and objective, and as a code of intelligibility and conduct to universalize international law, which grew out of legal positivism.²² Normatively speaking, civilization became one of the master themes of the century, and the ‘dominant ideological and mental framework for interpreting, [transforming] and ordering international relations’.²³

The idea of civilization has usually been studied in the English-language literature of international and imperial history to discern how ‘European’ and then Western Powers justified their empire and violence in imperial (colonial) contact zones.²⁴ Considerably less attention has been paid to the fact that the so-called non-Western ruling elites also utilized the idea to underpin their empires. While Suzuki has explained Japan’s attempts to securitize the imperial civilized identity to legitimize her expansion into Taiwan and China in the late nineteenth century, Makdisi and Deringil have recently shown that the bifurcation of the ‘civilized’ and the ‘savage’ also played a considerable role in Ottoman imperialism and Orientalism.²⁵

Deringil aptly explains the entry of the term into the Ottoman context as a ‘survival tactic’, while the Kosovan historian Isa Blumi demonstrates that Ottoman official elites embraced an orientalist attitude toward their periphery to influence at least ‘two very distinctive sets of rhetorical battles’ that were fought between the competing voices within Great Powers that advocated for or against the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, as well as between expansionist imperialist discourses, both Ottoman and European, overseas.²⁶

Both Deringil and Blumi consider these ‘tactics’ and ‘rhetorical battles’ with special reference to the late nineteenth-century history of imperialism. In a similar

²² Anghie, *International Law*, 4; Bell, ‘Empire’, 867.

²³ Jürgen Osterhammel, ‘Approaches to Global History and the Question of the “Civilizing Mission”’, *Global History and Maritime Asia Working and Discussion Paper Series*, Working Paper no. 3, http://www.geocities.jp/akitashigeru/PDF/DiscussionPaper2006_01_14Osterhammel.pdf (last accessed 12 Sept. 2017), 16–17.

²⁴ Bowden, *The Empire of Civilisation*.

²⁵ Shogo Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire: China and Japan’s Encounter with European International Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Makdisi, ‘Ottoman Orientalism’; ‘Rethinking Ottoman Imperialism: Modernity, Violence and the Cultural Logic of Ottoman Reform’, in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber (Würzburg: Ergon in Kommission, 2002), 29–48; Selim Deringil, ‘“They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery”: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45(2) (Apr. 2003): 311–42.

²⁶ Isa Blumi, ‘Reorientating European Imperialism: How Ottomanism Went Global’, *Die Welt des Islams* 56 (2016): 316.

vein to Türesay's recent article, I will extend the chronology further and contend that the Ottoman idea of civilization and, as a derivative of this, orientalism can in fact be traced at least as far back as the 1830s.²⁷ Yet I will argue that, here, Mustafa Reşid's experience was pivotal.

As far as has been established, even though previously the Greek revolutionaries had used the term in international diplomacy in the 1810s, the vocabulary of civilization (*medeniyet*) was naturalized in Ottoman Turkish political lexicology, first in an editorial of the official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* (The Chronicle of Events), and then with Reşid's letters from Paris to Istanbul in the 1830s about the same time the notion became rampant in French political thought. By the 1850s, *medeniyetçilik* (civilizationism) emerged as a semi-official ideology of the Ottoman Empire. The ruling elites in Istanbul, mostly protégés of Mustafa Reşid, then came to believe that avoiding being on the receiving end of foreign intervention and European encroachment required classifying their empire as one of 'the civilized' societies of the world, or at least pretending that it was so (see Chapter 11).²⁸ In the beginning, however, the adoption of the nineteenth-century idea of civilization in Ottoman political thought did not result simply from the desire to fend off European encroachments into domestic politics. The historical reality was quite the contrary.

While living in Paris in 1834, Mustafa Reşid found himself in an intellectual and political milieu where the idea of 'civilization' was widely absorbed into French liberal and positivist thought, especially since the publication of François Guizot's 1828–9 lectures at Sorbonne on the history of European civilization.²⁹ Guizot argued for the existence of a universal civilization progressing across a unilinear timeline, a civilization of those who led and those who followed, and of the global role European empires ought to play, civilizing others as the spearhead of progress. An unmistakable position of superiority was thus attributed to Europe, while Asia, which was usually considered to be the 'cradle of civilisation', was associated with decadence and barbarity. It was excluded from the field of civilization 'by identifying it with a glorious past, but dead'.³⁰

The one exception to this stark split between the 'civilized' West and the 'barbaric' East manifested itself in French liberal and Saint-Simonian thought of the 1830s in the heroic achievements of Mehmed Ali. I must note that the politics

²⁷ Özgür Türesay, 'The Ottoman Empire Seen Through the Lens of Postcolonial Studies: Recent Historiographical Turn', *Revue d'histoire modern et contemporaine* 60(3) (2013): 127–45.

²⁸ Gökhan Çetinsaya, 'Kalemiye'den Mülkiye'ye Tanzimat Zihniyeti', in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasal Düşünce 1. Tanzimatın Birikimi ve Meşrutiyet*, ed. Tanıl Bora and Murat Gültekinil (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), 55–6; Fuat Andıç and Süphan Andıç, *The Last of the Ottoman Grandees: The Life and the Political Testament of Âli Paşa* (Istanbul: ISIS Press, 1996), 35.

²⁹ Franck Laurent, 'Penser l'Europe avec l'histoire. La notion de civilisation européenne sous la Restauration et la Monarchie de Juillet', *Romantisme* 104 (1999): 53–68, at 53.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

of the July Monarchy, which had been formed after the 1830 revolution, encouraged the romantic admiration of the Napoleonic legend, even though, before 1848, the legend ‘did not channel into Bonapartism’.³¹ This is important to remember because, although there had been for many years a growing political and economic interest in Egypt, during the first decade of the July Monarchy, Mehmed Ali came to be identified in France with Bonaparte and what he stood for.

As Caquet writes, this was partially because the paşa’s ‘personal trajectory was marvellously suited to the Romantic age... Like Bonaparte, the Pa[s]a had first been a soldier; like Bonaparte, he was a charismatic figure; like Bonaparte, he was identified with a new regime’ which he had established in Egypt, ‘tearing it from its centuries-old bandages’.³² Like Bonaparte, he attempted to conquer Syria. Bonaparte had failed to capture the castle of St Jean d’Acre from Jazzar Paşa in 1799, whereas Mehmed Ali would control this unattainable castle (see Chapter 5), which attracted admiration and sympathy in France and revived memories of the Napoleonic campaign.³³

What mattered also was the role French agents played in the modernization of the Egyptian army and the valiant accounts of French commanders such as Colonel Sèves, once a junior officer in the *Grande Armée* and now the second-in-command of the Egyptian army in Syria.³⁴ All subsequent news of Mehmed Ali’s glorious victories over the sultan, who in French eyes represented the ancien régime, were thus greeted by many in France with enthusiasm.

Mehmed Ali played his part in honing French sentiments. In Alexandria, banquets and parties were given to celebrate the July Monarchy.³⁵ While awaiting the Ottoman imperial army in Konya in December 1832, his son Ibrahim played *La Marseillaise* to increase the morale of his army. Moreover, the paşa subsidized French journals to propagandize on behalf of his campaign, portraying him as an eastern counterpart of Bonaparte. He would boast of having been born in the same year as Bonaparte (though, according to his biographer, he was actually born in 1770–71, not 1769).³⁶ And he dispatched the three obelisks to New York, London, and Paris to paint Egypt as a distinct entity from the rest of the Ottoman and wider Islamic world—as a unique civilization, that of the pharaohs, that needed to be considered differently. Here was the extension of the propaganda war that he had waged against Istanbul in the 1830s. And it worked. Mehmed Ali was perceived, at least in French thought, as an exceptional figure, beyond the uncivilized peoples of the East.

³¹ Stanley Mellon, ‘The July Monarchy and the Napoleonic Myth’, *Yale French Studies* 26 (1960): 70–78, at 71.

³² Lucien Davéziés, ‘Mohammed-Ali-Pacha’, *La Revue des deux mondes* (Sept. 1835): 443; cf. P. E. Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839–41* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 52. See also Gaultier-Kurhan, *Méhémet Ali*, 39–40.

³³ Cadalvène and Barrault, *Histoire*, 1–2.

³⁴ Caquet, *The Orient*, 53.

³⁵ Jerome Louis, *La Question d’Orient sous Louis-Philippe* (Paris: SPM Lettrage, 2015), 39.

³⁶ Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 2.

For Mustafa Reşid, observing in Paris the ‘Egyptian extravaganza’ that revolved around the persona of Mehmed Ali, and encountering there the idea of ‘civilisation’ was at once a source of immense frustration and inspiration. He was appalled to witness the association of Egypt with advancement in France while the Ottoman Empire at large was scorned. Consequently, he settled on a less cautious and more dynamic policy, fighting his own narrative battle to unravel the ‘mis-perceptions’ of Mehmed Ali and Egypt in Paris. He repeatedly maintained to his French interlocutors, such as the prime minister, Maréchal Étienne Maurice Gérard (1773–1852), General Armand Charles Guilleminot (1774–1840), the former ambassador to Istanbul, and Émile Desages (1793–1850), the French *président du conseil*, that Sultan Mahmud II and the Porte were the real, unique mediums of ‘civilization’ in the east. As he once put it, unlike Cairo, Istanbul had remained unwaveringly loyal to ‘civilization’, which Mustafa Reşid defined in a dispatch in the moral and political sense as ‘the principles of the cultivation of people and the execution of order’. Espousing a unilinear conception of time in a similar vein to Guizot, he argued that progress in Istanbul was perhaps slow but stable, and that it was the real guarantee of the unity of the Islamic world.³⁷ According to Reşid, the sultan desired to undertake new reforms with the purpose of ensuring the prosperity of the Ottoman population, regardless of their religion and race.³⁸

In November 1834, the Ottoman diplomat wrote to the French foreign ministry about the intended ‘improvements and reform in the administration of the [Ottoman] Empire’, which had been ‘tirelessly’ under way with the purpose of the development of ‘*des principes feronds de la civilisation*’,³⁹ and which would take further effect by means of the establishment of post offices, roads, and a straight line of railway between ‘Scutari to Nicomedia, over eighteen leagues in length, with post houses’. The ‘imperial will’ was to render all these advantages ‘common to the other parts of the Empire’.⁴⁰

In this new narrative, Mustafa Reşid despised Mehmed Ali and his Egypt as the ‘other’. He knew that Mehmed Ali was playing the field to make use of the differences among the Powers, and possibly attract France and Britain to his cause against the Russian-backed sultan.⁴¹ Stunned and distressed, Reşid wrote back to Istanbul, perhaps too bluntly, that he found the plans of Mehmed Ali ‘inappropriate’ even for ‘an ignoble old man’, and that he took these as a sign of the fact that the paşa had now become ‘senile’ and ‘doddered’. In his interviews

³⁷ Cavit Baysun, ‘Mustafa Reşit Paşa’nın Paris ve Londra Sefareterli Esnasındaki Siyasî Yazıları’, *Tarih Vesikaları* 1(4) (1941): 283–296, at 291; Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 69.

³⁸ Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 115–16. ³⁹ The asterisk is in the original text.

⁴⁰ ‘Mémorandum adressé au Ministre des Affaires Etrangères par l’Envoyé Ottoman le 25 novembre 1834 après son entrevue avec M. Desages, le 24 du même mois’, AMAE CP 269/270.

⁴¹ Mavroyeni to [Istanbul], 28 Oct. 1834, BOA HR SYS 1910/47; Ponsonby to Reis Efendi, 23 Nov. 1834, BOA HR.SYS 933/1/53.

with French statesmen and bureaucrats, the Ottoman chargé d'affaires maintained that after Mehmed Ali 'pegged out' (*geberdikten sonra*), the troubled situation of his rule (referring to the ongoing anti-Egyptian revolts in Syria) would worsen under the leadership of his son Ibrahim Paşa, who was 'morally weak' and incapable.⁴²

Mustafa Reşid's rhetorical bifurcation here between the allegedly unsteady and untrustworthy politics of Mehmed Ali and his son Ibrahim, on the one hand, and the unwavering but slow progress of the Porte, on the other, was possibly the earliest case of the notion of 'civilization' being adopted as a distinct line of demarcation between Istanbul and its periphery. Even though the idea of 'exteriority' had already been used to distinguish the imperial capital and the provinces, with the introduction of the notion of the civilization into the political lexicon, this idea was incorporated into a new formula.⁴³

This was a milestone in the history of Ottoman orientalism.⁴⁴ Mustafa Reşid's rhetorical turn, which has up to now remained unexplored in literature on Ottoman orientalism, was a hybrid product of the propaganda battle between Cairo and Istanbul and his encounter with the French (Guizotian) idea of civilization in Paris.

This situation displays remarkable parallels to the fact that, in the late 1790s and the 1800s, at the request of Sultan Selim III, Ottoman statesmen had written several pamphlets on the military strength of their empire in the French language and to a European audience, in order to ensure their empire's (ontological) security by positioning it among the powerful actors of the global order.⁴⁵ As of the mid-1830s, the notion of civilization was adopted, and became a major rhetorical frame for Ottoman statesmen, by and large with the same purpose. The resolve was to situate Istanbul among the civilized imperial Powers, not simply by way of highlighting its military strength, and not as yet to fend off foreign encroachments, but instead, in this particular moment, to obtain Great Power support, or at least to sever French endorsement of Mehmed Ali. While at the turn of the century the Ottoman statesmen had sought to influence European policy-makers, in the 1830s they also had to address European public opinion.⁴⁶

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By the end of 1834, Reşid's one and only political achievement in Paris was directly linked to this objective. He managed to gain for the Ottoman cause

⁴² Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 69.

⁴³ On the notion of exteriority, see Marc Aymes, 'Provincialiser l'empire. Chypre et la Méditerranée ottomane au XIXe siècle', *Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales* 6 (2007): 1313–44, at 1317.

⁴⁴ Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism', 769.

⁴⁵ See Ch. 2.

⁴⁶ On the semantic history of the notion of 'civilization' (*medeniyet*) in the Ottoman world, see Tuncer Baykara, *Osmanlılarda Medeniyet Kavramı* (Istanbul: IQ Yayıncılık, 2007).

writers like Jean-Marie Jouannin and Serge Evans, who published articles attempting to unravel the pro-Mehmed Ali propaganda in the French press.⁴⁷ And when the Ottoman chargé d'affaires felt persuaded that his presence in France was no longer necessary, he requested of the Porte on 9 November 1834 that he might return to Istanbul.⁴⁸ He left Paris in early 1835, having met Austrian and French statesmen, studied the European international system, and familiarized himself with the idea of 'civilization'.

Upon his arrival in the imperial capital in April 1835, Mustafa Reşid was granted an audience with the sultan and his son Abdülmecid, to whom he detailed the situation of politics in France as well as international relations in Europe more widely. Even though Mustafa Reşid's mission to Paris was hardly a diplomatic success, Mahmud II was fascinated by the knowledge his young diplomat amassed. He thereupon ordered the latter's reappointment to Paris at the rank of ambassador.⁴⁹ The sultan furthermore asked Mustafa Reşid to write a *mazbata* (report) about possible measures to be taken to deal with the issues of Algiers and Egypt. The whereabouts of this report is today unknown, as is the details of its content. But we do know from a *hümâyün* that the sultan was pleased with Mustafa Reşid's suggestions, as he praised his new ambassador for his diligence and devotion.⁵⁰

It is usually assumed that the report called for a series of new reforms aimed at strengthening the empire internally, as a means to present the Ottoman Empire as among the 'civilized' nations of the world and obtain international support against Mehmed Ali.⁵¹ This is because, less than half a year later, a new period of bureaucratic reforms began in the Ottoman Empire, first with the reorganization of the ministries along European lines—the Reisülküttâb became the foreign minister (*hariciye nazırı*), for instance—and later the various *defterdars* (provincial treasurers) were gathered under the ministry of finance (*maliye nezareti*).⁵² All these were in effect the beginning of a new *Tanzimat* (reordering) era in the Ottoman Empire, even though the official declaration would have to wait another four years.

While the new reforms were under way in Istanbul, Mustafa Reşid set off for his first Paris embassy in October 1835; the next year he was swapped with Nuri Efendi, the ambassador to London, due to the latter's health problems in the British climate. But Reşid could obtain almost no diplomatic success in either of the two capitals except perhaps improving relations with Britain that had been tarnished due to the infamous 'Churchill affair' in 1836.⁵³ He was disappointed by

⁴⁷ Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 77–9; Mavroyeni to [the Porte], 14 Apr. 1835, BOA HR. SYS 1911/8.

⁴⁸ BOA HAT 832/37550; also in Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 66–7; Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 111.

⁴⁹ BOA HR.SFR.3 1/1.

⁵⁰ Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 72.

⁵¹ Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 69.

⁵² Ali Akyıldız, *Tanzimat Dönemi Osmanlı Merkez Teşkilatında Reform (1836–1856)* (Istanbul: Eren Yayınçılık, 1993), 26.

⁵³ Baysun, *Tanzimat*, 728, 730; Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 80, 83. The Churchill crisis emerged out of an accident, when a British subject, William Churchill, accidentally killed an Ottoman subject during a hunting party and the Ottoman authorities arrested him. Lord Ponsoby's insistent demand for the

Palmerston's unwillingness to help the Porte's cause on the Algiers issue for fear of upsetting London's French allies. Reşid reminded him, and was at pains to report back to Istanbul, that the Powers had formed an alliance during the 'Greek mischief' (*Yunan fesadı*) in the 1820s to prevent bloodshed in the name of humanity. Now in Algiers, while blood was being shed for unjust reasons (referring to the French invasion of Algiers and the anti-colonial war the Algerian inhabitants had waged against France), they were doing nothing: 'the European states are not caring about the sins committed in Algiers, . . . [is it] because they do not see [the Muslims] as humans?'⁵⁴

This was precisely the confusion that most Ottoman statesmen, less prejudiced against the liberal European Powers and more eager to develop cordial relations with them, grappled with. Yet they almost never had any other choice but turn for aid to the same Powers they suspected. The prospects of obtaining Great Power support for the sultan's designs against Mehmed Ali were grim in Europe. Dominated by Russophiles, the political situation in Istanbul was even more dangerous for Reşid.

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The intra-elite struggles at home took a new turn while he was in London. First, Serasker Hüsrev was dismissed from his post in November 1836 due, allegedly, to his old age but in fact because of his quarrels with his former protégé Akif and Said Paşa, who had become the sultan's sons-in-law.⁵⁵ Hüsrev's dismissal meant a schism in the Russophile camp among the Ottoman ministers. Russian representatives in Istanbul considered Hüsrev to be the most trustworthy figure, but now the signatory of the Hünkâr Iskelesi Treaty of 1833 was no longer at the centre of power.⁵⁶

Making use of the weakening of the Russophiles, when Pertev managed to have his protégé, Mustafa Reşid, appointed as the new foreign minister on 13 June 1837, the Russian ambassador to Istanbul, Butenev, interpreted the news as a sign of the sultan's desire to break free from the tsar's influence. In Russian eyes, during his embassies in Paris and London, Reşid had become the 'main vehicle' for pro-British policies. The reforms initiated at his suggestion in 1835–6 were clear indicators of this new orientation.⁵⁷

release of Churchill resulted in Ottoman foreign minister Akif Paşa's resignation. But the Russophile camp in Istanbul, as well as the sultan, resented the British attitude at the time, which fanned hostilities between pro-British and pro-Russian Ottoman ministers.

⁵⁴ Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 83.

⁵⁵ Pisani to Ponsonby, 2 Nov. 1836, DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E483/4F/1; Pisani to Ponsonby, 15 Nov. 1836, DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E483/4F/9.

⁵⁶ Maria N. Todorova, *Angliya, Rossiya i Tanzimat* (Moscow: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1983), 130; Carter V. Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 75.

⁵⁷ Butenev to Nesselrode, 18 Nov. 1835, AVPRI, f. Kantselyariya, d. 47, ll. 253–7; cf. Todorova, *Rossiya*, 130–31.

The hidden rivalry between the arguably pro-British and pro-Russian factions, one led by Pertev and the other by Akif and Said Paşas, thereupon broke open and turned into a ruthless struggle and intrigue.⁵⁸ It resulted in Pertev's dismissal from the cabinet for purportedly having been involved in an attempt to assassinate the sultan, which was in fact a ploy of Akif Paşa, who then seized his post as the interior minister. Listening to Akif's insinuations, Mahmud II eventually had Pertev and his associates executed in Edirne without mercy in November 1837.⁵⁹

Just about the time his patron Pertev's life was taken, Reşid was approaching the Balkans on his way to Istanbul to take up his new post. He was devastated by the news.⁶⁰ His mentor was no more, and in Istanbul there awaited a powerful network of Russian agents and pro-Russian ministers, Akif and Said Paşas, amongst others. Reşid's life, not to mention his entire political career, was now in danger. He was not sure how the sultan would receive him, as his European mission had not procured his empire any gains and, above all, Pertev was his patron.

But not long after his arrival Mustafa Reşid was relieved to realize that, despite the execution of Pertev, Mahmud II still had little sympathy for Russia and for that matter, pro-Russian policies, and he was still fond of the new foreign minister. As a matter of fact, despite all opposition, Reşid was elevated to the rank of paşa in January 1838. He then formed in Istanbul a most unlikely inter-elite alliance against the Russophiles Said, Akif, and Halil Rifat. One such ally was the latter two's 'father', Hüsrev, whom they had sidelined in 1836.⁶¹ Rıza Efendi, another figure favoured by the sultan and his mother, Valide Sultan, also joined Reşid's camp.

With the momentum of his return and new alliances, Mustafa Reşid secretly communicated with the sultan, almost on a daily basis, all his concerns about the imperial state through an agent called Mustafa Kani Bey, who had been specifically appointed by Mahmud II for this purpose.⁶² The shift in his position of power can be discerned also in the dispatches of foreign diplomats such as Lord Ponsonby, who, at the beginning, found Mustafa Reşid to be a man 'timid and afraid of Russia'. But, shortly after, he changed his tone: 'There is no other man [than Reşid] capable of conducting at all to the taste of the Sultan a large part of the affairs of the Government.'⁶³

By the spring of 1838, Mustafa Reşid's sway in the Sublime Porte was supreme. The sultan promised him new measures that would ensure the security of the life, liberty, and property of Ottoman subjects, which would allow, first and above all, relatively more freedom for Ottoman statesmen to perform their duties. And then

⁵⁸ 'Note by Ponsonby', 12 June 1837, DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E631/49.

⁵⁹ Findley, *Ottoman*, 76; 'Pertev Mehmed Said Paşa', IA, 235. ⁶⁰ Selahaddin, *Evrak*, 19.

⁶¹ Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 336–43. ⁶² Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 100.

⁶³ Webster, *Palmerston*, 536.

he led the passage of a series of reforms including the establishment of new bureaucratic bodies such as *Meclis-i Vâlâ'yi Ahkâm-i Adliye* (the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances) and *Dar-i Şurâ-yi Bâb-i Âli* (the Consultative Assembly of the Sublime Porte) in March 1838. Hüsrev was named the head of the *Meclis-i Vâlâ*. It consisted of five members who were tasked with preparing the laws and regulations that would enable the reforms which the sultan then called 'tanzimat-i hayriyye' (auspicious reforms), as well as editing the mandates drafted by *Dar-i Şurâ-yi Bâb-i Âli*, which, at Mustafa Reşid's request, were gathered twice a week in the presence of the grand vizier, serasker, grand admiral, and the foreign minister himself.⁶⁴ Moreover, a motion was passed for the preparation of a penal code. After obtaining a fatwa from the *şeyhülislam*, a new system for quarantines (an international sanitary council) and passports was introduced in order to bolster imperial security (*maslahatı kavileştirmek için*) and health provision in a time of cholera epidemics.⁶⁵ These were accompanied by a commission that was established to oversee all political economic matters as well as issues linked to agriculture, commerce, and industry such as the causes of the empire's trade deficit.⁶⁶

It is true that Mustafa Reşid was one of the masterminds of these reforms, and his ideas were shaped in large measure by the European example: their state mechanisms, permanent embassies, the handling of the interior and external affairs of the empire in different state departments, or the importance of the non-arbitrary appointment or dismissal of the members of the imperial councils.⁶⁷ At the same time, the Ottoman reform movement of the late 1830s was in many senses the resurgence of the hybrid temperament of the New Order of Selim III, which had been an amalgam of European-inspired ideals and the teachings of the Sunni-Orthodox Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi school.⁶⁸ Figures like Hüsrev, Pertev, and the future Valide Sultan Bezm-i Alem were all linked to the Naqshbandi school, or at least to the proponents of the New Order, such as Küçük Hüseyin Paşa (Selim III's right hand and the prominent grand admiral), and his wife, Esmâ Sultan (Selim III's sister).⁶⁹ Moreover, figures like Sadık Rifat Paşa, the sultan's ambassador to Vienna, supported the movement by sending reports on European institutions and advising on the means of reform.⁷⁰

The Russian-backed adversaries of this hybrid camp such as Halil Rifat and Akif Paşas, for their part, were *not* opponents of reform. Their disagreement was

⁶⁴ Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 102.

⁶⁵ Ahmet Dönmez, *Osmanlı Modernleşmesinde İngiliz Etkisi: Diplomasi ve Reform (1833-1841)* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2014), 220.

⁶⁶ 'Memorandum on the Commission to Lord Ponsonby', n.d., DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E631/88.

⁶⁷ Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 104, 107. ⁶⁸ See Ch. 2.

⁶⁹ Butrus Abu-Manneh, 'The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript', *Die Welt des Islams* 34(2) (Nov. 1994): 184-7.

⁷⁰ Seyit B. Uğurlu and Mehmet Demirtaş, 'Mehmet Sadık Rifat Paşa ve Tanzimat', *History Studies* 2(1) (2010): 44-64.

instead mainly over the means and content of the programme. As the Russian agents in Istanbul observed, they preferred more independent and indigenous reforms in the Ottoman Empire, instead of the replication of ideas and institutions from Europe, which could prove hazardous and inefficient in the sultan's dominions.⁷¹

Mahmud II listened to the demands of both groups. He endorsed Mustafa Reşid's vision. But he did not grant the foreign minister unlimited liberty in his scheme. For instance, since Reşid aimed to recruit to the Ottoman cause the support of European public opinion and of Ottoman subjects, both Muslim and non-Muslim, in 1838 he requested the announcement of an edict to herald the new reforms. A pilot region was even chosen, in the environs of Bursa, for the implementation of new institutional and political reforms. But, due in part to Russophile ministers' insinuations that such an edict would lead to the curbing of his absolute power, and in part because he felt uncertain whether he was making too many concessions to Reşid, the sultan decided against the plan.⁷² The promulgation of the edict would have to wait for another year.

Commerce and Security: A *Capo d'Opera*?

All these bureaucratic changes overlapped with Anglo-Ottoman negotiations over the opening up of the sultan's dominions to free trade. As noted previously, a major relational dynamic of the Eastern Question was the intersection between the economic, financial, legal, strategic, and religious calculations of the various agents. The expansion of global capitalism was one of the major determinants of European diplomatic and military interventions in the Levant.

In 1815, Sultan Mahmud II had rejected the Great Powers' guarantees over his European dominions partially because commercial issues (liberalizing commerce in the Ottoman shores) had been tied to the Powers' proposal, which had baffled and intimidated him. In the mid-1830s, the security-for-liberal-commerce dilemma would again be brought to the attention of his ministers. By then, free trade had become a more pressing concern for western European empires, especially for Britain and France, who needed to find new markets for their manufactured goods in the age of the industrial revolution. Central European economies were protected by high customs tariffs. This would lead British merchants to search for new markets in Asia, particularly in the Ottoman and Chinese empires.

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Under normal circumstances the age-old capitulatory agreements with the Ottoman Empire would allow British merchants to sell their goods in the sultan's dominions with a degree of liberty. Import and export tariffs had been fixed at

⁷¹ Todorova, *Rossiya*, 129, 130, 131, 134.

⁷² Dönmez, *İngiliz Etkisi*, 221.

3 per cent by the agreements of 1800, 1805, 1809 and 1820. But the customs duties British merchants paid in reality were 12 per cent or higher, as was the case with oil (35 per cent), opium (48 per cent), or silk (35 per cent).⁷³

This was why British merchants complained that these were irregularly applied, as in each case a merchant could be asked by the Ottoman authorities for different sums for the same product, while the same rule applied to states differently. They believed that there was great ambiguity due to variable charges made for permissions to trade in the interior too.⁷⁴

Another problem was the fact that international trade in the Ottoman Empire had previously been limited to ports because of religious prejudices as well as logistical difficulties. The existing capitulatory agreements had been designed in accordance with these customs. The growing tendency towards foreign commerce with the interior of the empire had led the Porte's authorities to levy extra duties, and to exercise prohibitions as well as monopolies that were granted for the producers to sell at fanciful prices of the sole manufacturers as venders.⁷⁵ This was why, as early as 1833, Palmerston had asked Ponsonby to remind the sultan that monopolies were 'injurious to the Industry of both Nations, and in the end detrimental to the financial interests of the Porte'.⁷⁶

Moreover, British merchants were in a disadvantageous position in comparison to Russian traders in the Levant after the 1829 Treaty of Edirne. Palmerston and his agents believed that it was legitimate to ask for the same (i.e. establishing 'a general system of certainty... to the foreign trade'), as well as a European union entitled to enjoy special privileges such as those accorded to Russia, whose merchants paid fixed duties by treaties. This new system would be introduced in place of a 'perpetual and secret struggle to obtain such privileges amongst the European nations'.⁷⁷

Finally, there was the issue of unequal customs duties levied by British authorities: 'for every £100 of English goods sold in Turkey, the Porte exacted but £3 in custom duties, whereas English duties on Turkish products of equal value amount to £60'.⁷⁸ This was why the Porte was also willing to review the customs tariffs on certain products; it was actually the sultan's agents that had taken the initiative, not Britain, in the commencement of negotiations over the tariffs in 1834, as the previous agreements were now expiring.⁷⁹

⁷³ Henry L. Bulwer to Henry U. Addington, 26 May 1843, NRO Henry Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/18/1-20, 561X9. See also Bailey, *British Policy*, 120-21.

⁷⁴ Henry L. Bulwer to Henry U. Addington, 26 May 1843, NRO Henry Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/18/1-20, 561X9.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Palmerston to Ponsonby, 6 Dec. 1833, TNA FO 78/220/22; cf. Bailey, *British Policy*, 121.

⁷⁷ Henry L. Bulwer to Henry U. Addington, 26 May 1843, NRO Henry Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/18.

⁷⁸ David Urquhart, 'Turkey and its Resources', 92; cf. Bailey, 119-20.

⁷⁹ Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İngiliz İktisadi Münasebetleri (1580-1838)* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974), 92.

At first, the talks proceeded at a rather slow pace. This was due to the stark differences of interest as well as the urgency of the Porte's 'Egyptian crisis'. In 1835, Palmerston hinted to Nuri Efendi in London that these commercial and political issues could well be connected. With the abolition of the monopolies in the Ottoman Empire, '[a]n increase of the commercial intercourse between the subjects of the two states must tend necessarily to strengthen the political union between the two governments'.⁸⁰ But his hint did not prompt any concrete results.

In October 1836, the British agents prepared a draft agreement for the consideration of the Porte. Ponsonby had little hope; in his view, the Porte would reject 'with extraordinary perseverance' the abolition of monopolies, especially given that, amidst the crisis with Egypt, it was in a state of emergency and mobilization, and expensive military reform had for some time been under way, while war with Mehmed Ali was only a matter of time.⁸¹ All these, together with the desire to make up the losses arising from the depreciated Ottoman currency, added up to an urgent need for funds.⁸² It was no time to make commercial concessions that could adversely affect the Ottoman treasury.⁸³

In May and July 1837, Ponsonby again dolefully wrote, 'the Porte feels the shackles imposed upon it by the [commercial] conventions that exist', referring to the 1829 agreement with Russia. Obtaining the consent of Istanbul was 'almost impossible'.⁸⁴ Additionally, Russophile ministers were concomitantly pressuring the sultan against an Anglo-Ottoman agreement, still exercising a profound influence over the cabinet. Russia would not want the Porte to enter into an agreement with Britain which would upset the Russian merchants' advantageous position in the Levant.

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What eased the gridlocked Anglo-Ottoman negotiations was a bold political move on the part of Mehmed Ali of Egypt. Spurred by his preoccupation with Druze revolts and distress caused by the existence of an Ottoman imperial army of 50,000 men in his borders, the paşa's military preparations were continuing at full speed.⁸⁵ Yet they were draining Egypt's sources and prompting domestic discontent, embroiling the paşa's country in a vicious cycle.

⁸⁰ Palmerston to Nuri, 23 Oct. 1835, TNA FO 195/122; cf. Bailey, *British Policy*, 127.

⁸¹ Frederick Pisani to Ponsonby, 14 Oct. 1836, DUR Ponsonby Papers, GRE/E483/45.

⁸² Bailey, *British Policy*, 122. In 1828, the British sterling was quoted in Istanbul at 60 piastres, while in 1832 it rose to 100. Charles Issawi, 'Notes on the Negotiations Leading to the Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention of 1838', in *Mémorial Ömer Lutfi Barkan* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1980), 119–134, at 119–20.

⁸³ See also 'Objections which Pisani believed the Porte would make to certain clauses in the commercial treaty proposed by Britain', 26 Dec. 1836, DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E483.

⁸⁴ Ponsonby to Palmerston, 9 May 1837; cf. Bailey, *British Policy*, 122; Denise Le Marchant [Office of Committee of Privy Council for Trade, Whitehall] to Bulwer, 20 July 1837, NRO Henry Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/17.

⁸⁵ See Ch. 9.

In early 1838, encouraged by a number of French and British merchants and travellers such as Thomas Waghorn and John Bowring, who, during a visit to Egypt, made Mehmed Ali believe that Britain would not object to his independence, the paşa looked to break this cycle by voicing once more the idea of separation from the sultan.⁸⁶ In March, he hinted confidentially at his idea to the French consul-general, Adrien-Louis Cochelet (1788–1858)—a sign of his trust in France; then, in May 1838, he publicly announced his intention to gain independence to the representatives of all four Powers (Austria, Britain, France, and Russia), stating that ‘he was now an old man’, and could never ‘consent that all that which he has been toiling for, and all [his] useful and costly establishments founded . . . at an enormous expense [would] revert to the Porte and to be lost at his death . . . I have worked fifty-two years to achieve what I am today.’⁸⁷ He had a family as well as ‘a thousand adopted children’ for whom he took the place of father, and he felt that all his labours would merely have been for the Porte, while his own children and family would be exposed to want and perhaps even to be put to death: ‘I cannot quit this life without securing their future.’⁸⁸

In this kairoitic moment, just as Mehmed Ali declared his intention to win independence, Ponsonby used the anxieties in Istanbul to his advantage, arguing that an Anglo-Ottoman commercial agreement could be ‘a means . . . to destroy the power of [Mehmed Ali] by destroying monopolies’ upon which the latter’s economic system was founded.⁸⁹ In addition, the British ambassador gave reason for Mustafa Reşid to believe that the commercial agreement could be followed by a political alliance.⁹⁰

After these remarks, and only then, was the Ottoman foreign minister cajoled. He naively believed, and suggested to the sultan, that the abolition of the monopolies would not only draw Britain closer to the Porte and upset Mehmed Ali’s economic system but would also win the support of the sultan’s non-Muslim subjects who were usually occupied with commerce, revitalize Ottoman agriculture, and thus in the long run procure greater financial benefits despite the expected immediate losses to the imperial treasury.⁹¹ Its benefits would be greater than what the sultan feared he might lose.

The British agents, Lord Ponsonby and the chief negotiator, Henry Bulwer, were aware of the potentially detrimental effects the planned agreements would cause for the Ottoman economy. They therefore suggested that the Porte ought not to be left in complete ‘financial embarrassment’. They did not resist the

⁸⁶ Dodwell, *Egypt*, 170; Webster, *Palmerston*, vol. 2, 607; Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian*, 124–5.

⁸⁷ Campbell to Palmerston, 25 May 1838, TNA FO 78/342-II; cf. Kutluoğlu, *Egyptian Question*, 126.

⁸⁸ Comte Medem to Nesselrode, 17 July 1838, BOA HR SYS 933/1/185.

⁸⁹ Notes by Ponsonby, 11 Apr. 1838, DUR Ponsonby Papers, GRE/E631/75; Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İngiliz*, 100–101.

⁹⁰ Ponsonby to Cor, 8 Nov. 1838, DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E149/9.

⁹¹ BOA HAT 51905-B, 46365; cf. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İngiliz*, 103.

proposal of the Ottoman plenipotentiaries Nuri Efendi and Mustafa Kani Bey to raise export duties for certain goods from 3 per cent to 12 per cent, and import duties from 3 per cent to 5 per cent.⁹²

Despite the last-ditch attempts of Halil Rifat and Akif Paşas, who, according to Ponsonby, were ‘indoctrinated by the Russians’, to prevent the signing of the agreement, after further last-minute negotiations and British assurances to the sultan, Mahmud II was persuaded to sign the treaty.⁹³ When the news reached London, Palmerston was delighted. He wrote to Bulwer that the 1838 convention was a ‘*capo d’opera*’ and would be ratified without reserve.⁹⁴ British merchants were equally content with the efforts made and the final agreement, which opened up new markets.⁹⁵ A Prussian observer wrote to Palmerston that it might ‘very likely prove the most important feature of European policy since 1815’.⁹⁶ The treaty was ratified by Queen Victoria on 8 October 1838 and by the reluctant sultan in early November.⁹⁷

The Baltalimani Convention of 1838 was arguably the fourth major step toward the liberalization of the Ottoman economy in the nineteenth century. The first had been the new capitulatory treaties that had been revised every seven years since the 1800s; the second the abolition of the Janissary corps in 1826, ‘of the urban guildsmen on the military payroll that were the strongest advocates of protectionism’; and the third, the Treaty of Edirne (1829) when (as already noted) Russia had obtained from the Porte specific rights for her merchants.⁹⁸ Now, in 1838, most local monopolies were also abolished and extraordinary duties on exports in the Ottoman Empire—which had, until the 1830s, supplied invaluable fiscal revenue for the sultan’s treasury in times of crisis—were eliminated. In the following years, commercial conventions on similar terms were signed with other European Powers, including France (6 April 1839), Spain (2 March 1840), the Netherlands (14 March 1840), Prussia (22 October 1840), Denmark (1 May

⁹² Britain accepted these, however, in lieu of internal transit fees (the extra levies charged on British merchants) from which the foreign merchants were now exempted, thus gaining an advantage over domestic competition; Ponsonby to Palmerston, 25 July 1838, NRO Henry Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/17; Fred van Hartesveldt, ‘Henry Bulwer and the Convention of Balta Liman’, *Proceedings and Papers of the Georgia Association of Historians* 6 (1985): 56–63, at 60.

⁹³ ‘Note on Halil Pasha’s attempt to influence the Sultan against Reschid Pasha and the Commercial Convention’, DUR Ponsonby Papers, GRE/E631/84, n.d.; Bulwer to Addington, 26 May 1843, NRO Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/18.

⁹⁴ Palmerston to Bulwer, 13 Sept. 1838; NRO Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/17.

⁹⁵ ‘Address to Ponsonby signed by thirteen merchants in Constantinople expressing appreciation of the recent Commercial Convention’, 9 Oct. 1838, DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E631/79.

⁹⁶ ‘Memorandum by Augustus Jochmus for Palmerston on the situation in the east following the commercial treaty with Turkey and seeking employment in the areas especially in a military capacity’, 20 Nov. 1838, GRE/E346.

⁹⁷ Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İngiliz*, 109; *The Times*, 19 Dec. 1838; BOA TS.MA.e 597/29.

⁹⁸ Şevket Pamuk and Jeffrey G. Williamson, ‘Ottoman De-Industrialization 1800–1913: Assessing the Shock, Its Impact and the Response’, National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper no. 14763 (2009), 4.

1841), and Portugal (20 March 1843).⁹⁹ The Ottoman government's authority to impose unilateral tariffs in service of the goal of a higher and more protective structure was thus curbed until the First World War.¹⁰⁰

The short-term consequences of the opening up of the Ottoman economy were arguably negligible, as the treaties were not implemented by the Porte immediately, though over time it did procure an advantage to the European merchants over domestic competition and caused frustration for Mehmed Ali, while local industries under protection were dissolved one by one.¹⁰¹ But, in the end, with the 1838 treaty, the Porte did give London what it had hoped for its merchants and commerce. The question was whether London would act in kind and provide the sultan with military support against Mehmed Ali through a political alliance without offending Russia. This was precisely the question to which Mustafa Reşid hoped to find the answer when he left for London the day after the convention was signed.¹⁰²

'We Are Still Called Barbarians!'

The Ottoman foreign minister's talks with Palmerston in London did result in the draft of an agreement. But Britain would not want to participate in an offensive alliance with the Porte so as not to tarnish the 'constitutional alliance' with France nor to offend Russia. Palmerston was still committed to the Vienna order and would not wish to bind himself to a long bilateral alliance treaty with Istanbul which, he believed, went against the principles of the Concert of Europe.¹⁰³

Instead, the British foreign secretary proposed tacit assistance—support for the rejuvenation of the sultan's empire against Mehmed Ali by the sending of military and naval advisers that would help renovate the Ottoman forces. He believed it was in the interests of Britain that the sultan should be strong, and it was evident that he would be stronger with Syria and Egypt than without them.

Palmerston looked to justify his support of the sultan by arguing that the Ottoman Empire was not 'crumbling to pieces'. He was possibly the first European statesman to oppose the idea of 'Ottoman decline':

I must question that there is any process of decay going on in the Turkish Empire. [T]hose 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

⁹⁹ Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-İngiliz*, 114–17.

¹⁰⁰ Reşat Kasaba, 'Treaties and Friendships: British Imperialism, the Ottoman Empire, and China in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of World History* 4(2) (1993): 218.

¹⁰¹ Şevket Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire and European Capitalism, 1820–1913: Trade, Investment and Production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 20; Pamuk and Williamson, 'Ottoman De-industrialization', 4.

¹⁰² BOA HAT 950/40829C.

¹⁰³ Baysun, *Mustafa Reşid*, 10; Bailey, *British Policy*, 176.

becoming better acquainted with the manifest and manifold defects of the organisation of Turkey...

Still, Palmerston kept his options open, writing later: 'on the principle of "That I can do when all I have is gone" we can think of a confederation when unity [of the Ottoman Empire] shall have been proved to be impossible.'¹⁰⁴

A defensive alliance was the most the British foreign secretary could offer Mustafa Reşid. But the latter needed more from Palmerston. He knew that it would not satisfy the sultan in Istanbul, especially after the concessions made with the 1838 commercial treaty.¹⁰⁵ Russian pressure on the Ottoman imperial capital was mounting daily, and Mustafa Reşid's mission had already caused anxiety in St Petersburg. Nesselrode had instructed Butenev to point out to the sultan the serious inconveniences triggered by the actions of Mustafa Reşid. St Petersburg was particularly riled by the information received from Austria that the Ottoman foreign minister had told British and French agents that after his return to Istanbul, the Porte would not extend the Hünkâr Iskelesi Treaty.¹⁰⁶

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It is unknown whether this was true. But, even if not, Reşid's policy proved inadequate to the sultan. Mahmud II was anxious. The state of uncertainty had for years exhausted his resources and health. On 6 April 1839, he decided against the signature of a defensive alliance with Britain.¹⁰⁷ The foreign minister was ordered to return back to Istanbul. With or without foreign assistance, it was the hour for battle, not fruitless negotiations. As a major conflict in Kurdistan had finally been suppressed and as the military had been mobilized and disciplined under Hafız Paşa and his able advisers, such as the Prussian field marshal Helmuth von Moltke the Elder (1800–1891), the conviction (introduced again by Hüsrev) arose that Mehmed Ali's forces stationed in Urfa could this time be defeated and pushed back to Egypt.¹⁰⁸

Mahmud II subsequently ordered Hafız Paşa to commence hostilities on 17 April. The imperial army of 150,000 men crossed the Euphrates, invaded northern Syria, and met the outposts of the Egyptian army of Ibrahim Paşa near Nizib. The fighting took place on the 29 June. The first discharge of the Egyptian artillery, when more than 1,000 Ottoman soldiers were cut down, caused such panic that the sultan's army almost immediately took to its heels. His units having been scattered, Hafız Paşa pulled back, accepting defeat.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Palmerston to Bulwer, 22 Sept. 1838, NRO Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/17.

¹⁰⁵ BOA HAT 829/37498E.

¹⁰⁶ Todorova, *Rossiya*, 132, nn. 161, 162.

¹⁰⁷ Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 128.

¹⁰⁸ Ponsonby to Cor, 8 Nov. 1838, DUR Ponsonby Papers, GRE/E149.

¹⁰⁹ A. Pisani to Bulwer, 9 July 1839, NRO Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/17.

It was the fourth time that Mahmud II's imperial armies had been overwhelmed by Egyptian forces in seven years. But the sultan never heard the news. Before the two armies clashed, he had fallen very ill. His tuberculosis was in its second stage. Very lately, perhaps under the strain of recent developments, the threatening nature of his disease had been made manifest. His physicians had declared that if the fever 'which came on every severing was not subdued, he could not live much above a month'. On 21 June, he was seen in public for the last time, on horseback on his way to a mosque close by his residence at Çamlıca (where he had been sent for respite), but he was 'quite *méconnaissable*, so emaciated, so pale, so weak that he could hardly keep his seat'.¹¹⁰ From then onwards he had not been able to leave his room, and his symptoms were alarming. On the morning of 1 July 1839, just before the news of the battle reached Istanbul, Mahmud II passed away, having spent the greatest part of his last night conversing with his 16-year-old son, Abdülmecid, who was to succeed him, and with Hüsrev, whom he recommended the young *şehzade* consider as 'his father and adviser'.¹¹¹

After Mahmud's death, however, Hüsrev claimed more than this.¹¹² The next day, during Abdülmecid's ascendance to the throne, in possibly the single most inopportune moment in late Ottoman bureaucratic history, he seized the seal of the grand vizierate from the hands of Rauf Paşa (the present grand vizier) and appointed himself the most powerful man in the empire after the sultan. His opponents, including his former protégés-turned-enemies, and particularly Grand Admiral Ahmed Fevzi, were all alarmed by this hitherto unheard-of action by the 70-year-old. Fearing the loss of his post and life under Hüsrev's rule, the grand admiral immediately fled with the imperial fleet to Rhodes, and thence to Alexandria, seeking shelter with Mehmed Ali.¹¹³ Thus the Porte lost a battle, its sultan, and the imperial fleet—all within one week.

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What would the young Sultan Abdülmecid and his cabinet do now? Authority had now passed back to the hands of old Hüsrev, and Mustafa Reşid was still in Europe. The new grand vizier's first action was to invite the representatives of the five Great Powers to a conference on 3 July and to communicate to them that the new sultan wanted to maintain peace.¹¹⁴ At the same time, a letter—signed by Hüsrev but written on behalf of the sultan—was sent to Mehmed Ali that promised the pardon of the paşa and guaranteed him the hereditary rule of

¹¹⁰ A. Pisani to Bulwer, 25 June 1839, NRO Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/17.

¹¹¹ A. Pisani to Bulwer, 9 July 1839, NRO Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/17.

¹¹² Çelik, *Şeyhül-Vüzerâ*, 354–5. ¹¹³ BOA HR.SYS 933/7; BOA HAT 1239/48178.

¹¹⁴ Palmerston to Bligh, 3 July 1839, BLM Beauvale Papers MS 60475/16.

Egypt, if he returned Syria, and ‘under the condition of fulfilling entirely the duties of submission and obedience’.¹¹⁵

Two weeks later, however, Mehmed Ali, despite recognizing Abdülmecid as sultan and caliph, refused to return Syria to the Porte and demanded de facto hereditary rights over all provinces he ruled.¹¹⁶ He also strongly demanded the dismissal of Hüsrev from the post of grand vizier, since he was ‘detested by the whole nation and for whom all means are admissible for achieving his objective, including a knife and poison’.¹¹⁷ As soon as Hüsrev was dismissed, Mehmed Ali would make peace, send the Ottoman fleet back to Istanbul, and he would even go himself on a steamship to pay homage to the sultan.¹¹⁸

This was what had transpired in early 1833 all over again. The road to Istanbul was once again open for Ibrahim’s army. Mehmed Ali was again asking for the dismissal of Hüsrev. The Ottoman sultan, albeit a different one, was again disinclined to accept this request. And the Porte again found itself having to turn to the aid of the Powers against a vassal.

What was different this time was that the five Great Powers could finally act in concert—at least in the beginning. On the day Mehmed Ali’s response reached the palace, despite all their other differences, the representatives of the five Powers in Istanbul jointly signed a note to the sultan urging him to suspend any definitive action without their agreement.¹¹⁹ Six days later, on 27 July, they signed another note declaring their commitment to the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁰

This was the first time since the Congress of Vienna of 1815 that the Powers had taken a common stance with respect to the Eastern Question. How had the impasse between them been overcome? What happened to the ideological divides, Russia’s ‘weak neighbour’ policy, and the distrust among the Powers? Before answering these questions at some length in the next chapter, I should like to highlight the agency of Mustafa Reşid as one of the enablers of the multilateral intervention of the Great Powers that took effect not only by means of inter-imperial diplomacy but also through domestic reform and, eventually, the instigation of an uprising in Syria.

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Mustafa Reşid was in London when Sultan Mahmud II died and the Battle of Nizib was fought. He found out the news on 17 July 1839 after returning to Paris

¹¹⁵ ‘Traduction de la copie d’une lettre écrite par le Grand Vizier to Méhémet Ali Pacha’, 8 July 1839, AMAE Papiers Desages, 60PAAP/37.

¹¹⁶ (Ambassadeur, Therapia) to M. le Maréchal, 22 July 1839, AMAE Papiers Desages, 60PAAP/37, f. 46.

¹¹⁷ Laurien to Stürmer, 16 July 1839, HHStA, Türkei VI, 69; cf. Šedivý, *Metternich*, 743.

¹¹⁸ Roussin to Desages, 26 July 1839, AMAE Papiers Desages, 60PAAP/37, f. 47.

¹¹⁹ Collective Note, 21 July 1839, AMAE Papiers Desages, 60PAAP/37, f. 49.

¹²⁰ Collective Note, 28 July 1839, AMAE Papiers Desages, 60PAAP/37, f. 48.

and settling into his residence at 1 Rue des Champs-Élysées.¹²¹ In fact the news did not upset him at all. Instead, he believed that now was the opportunity to put an end to the crisis, as we can deduce from an informal memorandum to the French foreign ministry which he drafted in his native language (its date is unknown, but it appears to have been written after he found out about the death of Mahmud, and was translated by P. Desgranges on 22 July). In it he underscored his 'great hopes' and desire for European involvement in the crisis in the Ottoman Empire, and explained how this should take place.¹²²

The memorandum began with a forthright and self-critical portrayal of the wider ills of Ottoman governance. Mustafa Reşid wrote that the Janissaries had been a major cause of the maladministration of Ottoman public affairs, and that since their abolition in 1826, opportunities to introduce new reforms had been wasted by the 'intolerable tyranny' of Mahmud II, as well as by domestic and external intrigues that prevented the higher levels of administration from undertaking any measures for the good of the empire. The discontent of the Ottoman people was not, as was believed in Europe, 'a result of their lack of disposition to civilisation', nor from any other cause arising from fanaticism.

According to Mustafa Reşid, 'the Egyptian question' was an accidental product of the wider ills of the Ottoman imperial system. It had in the past decade further weakened the empire by exhausting her resources. However, it had resulted merely from the personal hostility between Mahmud II and Mehmed Ali, and since the former was now gone and the latter ready to give up the grudges of the past, it should now be very easy for Istanbul and Cairo to be reconciled, he maintained. Amidst all these domestic and international hurdles, progress had been almost impossible. Now was the time for comprehensive reforms that would prevent the Porte from suffering similar miseries. If new institutions could be formed and governed 'with wisdom and discernment', each would bring 'the real advantages of an immutably established system'. Tyranny would diminish and the subjects' affection for the imperial government would increase: 'the populations [would] rally with all the strength of their heart to useful and beneficent innovations.'

For Mustafa Reşid, Mahmud II's death was an opportunity to effect a break from this vicious past. But he was concerned that the sultan's young successor was still surrounded by those men of the ancient system—domestic (Russophile) and

¹²¹ Jouanin to MAE, 17 July 1839, AMAE CP Turquie 38/128.

¹²² 'Traduction d'un mémorandum par Moustapha Reschid Pacha', in 'Notes sur l'état de la Turquie traduites par M. Desgranges', 22 July 1839, AMAE CP Turquie 38/133; also in AMAE MD Turquie 45/40; Desgranges to Desages, 19 July 1839, AMAE CP Turquie 38/129. Turgut Subaşı has recently published an article about the memorandum, including in its appendix the full text (in French), in which he rightly points out that it has been almost entirely overlooked in the literature of the Eastern Question. However, he asserts that the memorandum was written to Palmerston in August. Turgut Subaşı, 'Anglo-Ottoman Relations in the Nineteenth Century: Mustafa Reşid Paşa's Memorandum to Palmerston, 11 August 1839', *International Journal of Human Sciences* 8(1) (2011): 1731–46.

foreign (Russian) individuals who were ready to stage any intrigue to sustain their interests, and who would thus keep alive the ancient system of tyranny which had arbitrarily claimed the lives of people like his mentor, Pertev Paşa.

This was why the intervention and tutelage of the European Powers was needed. The foreign minister knew that external interventions would be ‘contrary to the respective rights of nations’, and ‘the blind submission of Muslims to the laws of the Qur’an and their recognised fanaticism’ would not fail to make them ‘repel all proposals dictated by the European Powers’. Yet at the same time he believed that these could be ‘countered by guaranteeing that the intervention and thus infringement of the respective rights of nations would have as its object no action harmful to the strength and prosperity of the Ottoman subjects, and that such interventions would not exceed administrative suggestions’.

Therefore, the proposals ought to be made to the Porte ‘not by a single nation, but an alliance of all the Great Powers’. It would warrant, by adherence to the principle of European equilibrium, that such an intervention would not act as ‘an antecedent to unilateral interventions in the future’. Finally, Mustafa Reşid suggested that the Powers should pay great attention to two things when making proposals for intervention to the Porte: first, they should not violate the teachings of the Qur’an, so that the conservative and reactionary powers would not categorically oppose them; second, proposals for reform of the Ottoman councils should be made not in the name of ‘liberty’ but in the name of ‘the security of life and fortune’, so that the agents of those Powers with absolute governments would not strive to hinder them.¹²³

With these words, one of the sultan’s ministers was for the first time explicitly calling for the Powers to intervene collectively, defining the nature and limits of their intervention, and observing the benefits of joint intervention for both Europe and the Ottoman Empire. His was also a call not to leave the destinies of the empire to the will of Russia again, and for support for the reforms which he wanted to undertake.

We will possibly never know whether Mustafa Reşid wrote this memorandum by himself or received any aid from his European correspondents, such as Canning or Guilleminot. Either way, the most important point for our purposes is the role he attached to security as a driving force. He made it clear that the support of the Great Powers should be framed very carefully—‘security’ had to be the keyword, not ‘liberty’. His memorandum and subsequent actions would irreversibly merge local discursive practices in the Levant with a culture of transimperial security in the following months.

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¹²³ Ibid.

About ten days later, on 27 July, the Ottoman foreign minister wrote from Paris to Grand Vizier Hüsrev, asking him not to hurry in taking any action against Mehmed Ali. He explained that the Powers not only wanted an arrangement between the Porte and Egypt, but also stronger measures which would in future secure the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire: 'so we must do nothing...but wait for the Concert of their combined wills. Waiting brings no danger.' Mehmed Ali would not be able to do more than the Powers permitted him. 'All that I see in Europe proves to me that all the governments...have the will to support the equilibrium of Europe by the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire.' Therefore, '[l]et us not act on our own, let the field of negotiations be entirely free, and let us give up to the Powers, for they are better than us.' According to Mustafa Reşid, what the Porte had to do for now was 'not to shock [Mehmed Ali]', but 'to be nice for the form...nothing for the substance, and to refer to the European arbitration'.¹²⁴

The Ottoman foreign minister had realized that the European notes of July 1839 stemmed from their immediate urge to prevent the fall of the empire rather than the resolution of their ideological and strategic differences. But he was then left puzzled after his conversations with King Louis Philippe and the prime minister and foreign minister, Admiral Soult, in late July 1839. The French had endorsed the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. But at the same time, their policy toward Algiers had switched from temporary occupation to colonization. As I will elaborate in the next chapter, sympathy for Mehmed Ali in France was still steering the course of French policy—in fact, the French government asked the Porte to grant Mehmed Ali the hereditary rights of the provinces that were currently under his rule.

As a result, after spending three weeks in Paris, Mustafa Reşid did not proceed to Istanbul as he had initially planned. Instead, he decided to go to London first to ensure British support. There, on 11 August, he presented his July memorandum to Palmerston also. Mustafa Reşid believed that the key to the solution of the 'Egyptian crisis' lay in London, and in the resolution of its differences with Russia.

But, despite his advice to Hüsrev, he did not just wait to see if the Powers would resolve their differences in 1839. He was worried that a shift was unfolding in French policy: 'A powerful party of [French] philanthropy and liberals', he penitently wrote to Hüsrev before leaving Paris, 'pronounces against us despite all our reforms.' Despite all administrative reorganization, all pledges delivered, and all commercial concessions made in the past decade or so, '[w]e are still called Barbarians [by the French public]'.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Mustafa Reşid Paşa to Grand Vizier, 27 July 1839, AMAE CP Turquie 38/212, cited also in Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 130–31.

¹²⁵ Mustafa Reşid Paşa to Grand Vizier, 27 July 1839, AMAE CP Turkey 38/212.

In September 1839, immediately after he returned to Istanbul, the Ottoman foreign minister invited young Sultan Abdülmecid, together with the grand vizier, to consider the promulgation of an edict. The edict would herald a set of new empire-wide reforms, and help prove the Porte's civility to the French in particular. That is, Mustafa Reşid and his network in Istanbul set out to take their own steps—no longer militarily, nor by provoking Mehmed Ali—but by way of reforms and regeneration, an idea often attributed to Palmerston, though a party of Ottoman ministers themselves had upheld it since the late eighteenth century.

To reiterate, Mustafa Reşid thought that the promulgation of a new series of reforms would seal the Porte's commitment to 'civilization' in the eyes of the European Powers and particularly those of French liberal public opinion. At the same time, it would buttress the sentimental attachment of Ottoman subjects to the sultan against Mehmed Ali's power and popularity. Of particular importance were places like Syria, which had been the focal point of the differences between Istanbul and Cairo for some time and where uprisings against Egypt had been taking place intermittently since 1834.

After weeks of confidential negotiations at the imperial councils, the script of the edict had finally been drafted and agreed upon in early November. Mustafa Reşid was nervous about how it would be received by the wider public and the ulema, knowing that its content was 'far beyond anyone's expectation'.¹²⁶ On the evening of 2 November, just hours before he would read out the edict, he told his steward Salih Bey, 'Tomorrow I will be in great danger and I have little hope that I will be alive [by the end of the day].'¹²⁷

On 3 November, Reşid went to the kiosk of the Gülhane Park in Istanbul where the proclamation was to be delivered. At 11 o'clock in the morning the protocol began. He received the red ceremonial book from Grand Vizier Hüseyin. He then ascended a pulpit, standing under a gold awning. Before him were numerous bureaucrats, European and Ottoman diplomatic corps, and the Istanbul population. The sultan was watching behind a curtain at his stand. The foreign minister waited five minutes for the signal of the court astrologer, and then read out the script in an audible, expressive tone: 'All the world knows that . . . countries not governed by the laws of the shari'a cannot survive,' he began.¹²⁸

But in the last one hundred and fifty years . . . the sacred shari'a was not obeyed nor were the beneficent regulations followed [by the Ottoman state]; consequently, [its] former strength and prosperity have changed into weakness and poverty . . . [W]e deem it necessary and important . . . to introduce new legislation

¹²⁶ Pisani to Bulwer, 17 Nov. 1839, NRO Bulwer Papers BUL 1/17.

¹²⁷ Baysun, *Mustafa Reşit*, 12.

¹²⁸ Caquet, *The Orient*, 93. For the English translation of the script, Bailey, *British Policy*, 277.

to achieve effective administration of the Ottoman Government and Provinces. Thus, the principles of the requisite legislation are three: (i) the guarantees promising to our subjects perfect security [*emniyet-i kâmile*] for life, honour and property; (ii) a regular system of assessing taxation; (iii) an equally regular system for the conscription of requisite troops and the duration of their service.¹²⁹

The edict had great textual similarities to his July memorandum. Often labelled as the Ottoman social contract, it spoke to an Ottoman as well as European audience. It accentuated the security of Ottoman subjects and pledged a guarantee allowing Ottoman statesmen to perform their duties partially emancipated from the unchecked acts of the sultan.¹³⁰ It was a declaration of the rule of law in the sultan's empire.¹³¹

A British agent in Istanbul wrote that 'the announcement of this great measure . . . has been received with the greatest exultation by all classes and sects in the several provinces of all [the] Turkish empire in which it has been promulgated'.¹³² This was partly because, as the historian Butrus Abu-Manneh accurately claims, the edict could not be attributed exclusively to the European-oriented ideas of Mustafa Reşid or 'to his initiative'.¹³³ In fact, it was the product of a coalition formed by Hüsrev Paşa, Sultan Abdülmecid, his mother, Valide Sultan Bezm-i Alem, the Şeyhülislam Mustafa Ashim Efendi, and their Naqshbandi-Mujadidi network. This is comparable to the New Order movement of the 1790s and 1800s and its ideals. A resident of Istanbul for decades, the dragoman Pisani rightly noted, 'the ulema had prepared something of this kind for the adoption of Selim III but the [1807] revolution took place before the plan could be carried into effect'.¹³⁴

Abu-Manneh traces the wording of the edict to an *irade* issued by Sultan Abdülmecid on 17 July 1839 that had already set out, in different language, the security of the 'property, soul, dwelling and place' of Ottoman subjects. Although this observation certainly has merit, it is questionable whether Hüsrev and other proponents of the 'New Order', who in 1838 had urged Mahmud II for similar reforms guaranteeing the security of life, property, and honour, could have

¹²⁹ J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record, 1535–1914*, vol. 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), 268–70.

¹³⁰ Ariel Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 41–3.

¹³¹ Selim Deringil, *Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 33–4.

¹³² Pisani to Bulwer, 17 Nov. 1839, NRO Bulwer Papers BUL 1/17.

¹³³ Abu-Manneh, 'The Islamic Roots', 193. This is discussed also in Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923* (London: John Murray, 2005), 449.

¹³⁴ Pisani to Bulwer, 6 Nov. 1839, NRO Bulwer Papers BUL 1/17.

influenced the young Abdülmecid—a significant point that remains unaddressed in Abu-Manneh's account.

Moreover, Abu-Manneh seeks the ideological origins of the rescript in the medieval writings of the Islamic scholar Ghazali, who writes of the relationship between justice, security, and prosperity.¹³⁵ Yet when one examines the continuity of Ottoman political discourses and the more immediate political-ideological context from the late 1790s to 1839, it is possibly more persuasive to argue that the Gülhane Edict was a late 1830s adaptation of the 'circle of justice' and the philosophy of security-with-prosperity that had been upheld by the 'New Order' coalition. It was an understanding of governance that predates Ghazali.¹³⁶

The 1839 edict reads:

[i]f there is an absence of security as to one's property, everyone remains insensible to the voice of the Prince and the country; no one interests himself in the progress of the public good...If, on the contrary, the citizen keeps possession in all confidence of all his goods...he feels daily growing and doubling in his heart not only his love for the Prince and country, but also his devotion to his native land. These feelings become in him the source of the most praiseworthy actions.¹³⁷

This cyclical understanding of just governance, which formed the underlying philosophy of Ottoman security culture, and which created an undeviating link between peasants, merchants, soldiers, bureaucrats, diplomats, and the sultan, was bolstered by the Gülhane Edict.¹³⁸ Among its major objectives was the reform of the entire taxation system of the empire, while ensuring security by means of introducing rights and liberties and regular conscription.

Yet the edict delivered more than this. As Abu-Manneh claims, it went further, requiring the sultan and the ulema to pledge to take an oath not to act contrary to its stipulations—something that went beyond the *irade* of the sultan and the petitions of previous imperial councils. With this unprecedented aspect, the edict checked the arbitrary political decisions of the sovereign and the ulema. It was possibly what frightened Mustafa Reşid the most, because it threatened the authority of the sultan as well as the influence of the ulema. Even though the edict was by no means a constitution, nor a bill of rights, it aimed, as Reşid later wrote elsewhere, to put an end to the fatal state of affairs the Porte was in, but not 'to restrict the sovereign authority of the Sultan'. It had in view the improvement of the imperial conditions 'by sound reason and even by the precepts of Islamism'.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Abu-Manneh, 'The Islamic Roots', 190, 196. ¹³⁶ See Ch. 2.

¹³⁷ Hurewitz, *Diplomacy*, 114. ¹³⁸ Darling, *Social Justice*, 161–2.

¹³⁹ 'Traduction d'un mémoire sur la situation actuelle de l'Empire Ottoman', attached to Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 10 Mar. (N472E), HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; cf. Miroslav Šedivý, 'Metternich and Mustafa Reshid Pasha's Fall in 1841', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 39(2)

Finally, the Gülhane Edict spoke to a European audience by invoking the idea of civilization. One can discern this in the explicit emphasis on equality between ‘the Muslim and non-Muslims subjects’ who would enjoy, ‘without exception’, imperial concessions, and in the pledge that everyone participating in the imperial council would ‘express his ideas and give his advice freely’. Reşid associated ‘civilization’ with granting non-Muslims the same liberties and rights enjoyed by Muslim subjects of the sultan.¹⁴⁰ A major difference between his July memorandum and the edict was that ‘liberty’ and ‘security’ were considered synergistic concepts, not as two opposite ends of the arc of a pendulum between which Ottoman governance should oscillate.¹⁴¹

As will be clearer in the following pages, the idea of ‘civilization’ was implanted with this edict as one of the building blocks which bridged European and Ottoman quests for security, and signified the transimperial quality of the civil war in the sultan’s domains.¹⁴² Two days after reading out the edict, relieved of his fears for his life, Mustafa Reşid wrote to Palmerston, expressing his hope that ‘the friendly Powers will appreciate the good that must result from these institutions in the interests of humanity and the Ottoman Empire, and that they will see in them a new motive for strengthening the bonds which will unite them with Turkey’.¹⁴³

Amongst the statesmen of the Great Powers and the public, there was a mixed reception. To Palmerston, the edict was ‘a grand Stroke of Policy, & it is producing great effect on public feeling both here & in France. I have never despaired of seeing Turkey rear her head again as a substantial element in the Balance of Power.’¹⁴⁴ Russian Ambassador Butenev’s first report on the ceremony hastily depicted it as a ‘theatrical act’. It was ‘unexpected for people as well as diplomats . . .’ He could not fathom ‘the secrecy and mystery of the ceremony as well as the total lack of prior knowledge of the diplomats about it’. But he was the first to underline the links between the edict and the reforms of Mahmud II, showing how in some respects one was the continuation of the other. Butenev presciently noted that it would herald a new era in Ottoman history.¹⁴⁵

The French press bestowed praise upon the edict and the ceremony, though the liberal, pro-Mehmed Ali *Le Siècle* also raised suspicions about its potential

(2012): 259–82, at 282. On the religious origins of the edict, also see Frederick F. Anscombe, ‘Islam and the Age of Ottoman Reform’, *Past and Present* 211 (2010): 160–89.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Exposé fait par Rechid Pacha à M. Desgranges’, 21 Sept. 1841, AMAE MD Turquie, 44; cf. Kodaman, ‘Paris Sefirlikleri’, 73.

¹⁴¹ For an article that argues otherwise, see Ersel Aydınli, ‘The Turkish Pendulum between Globalization and Security: From the Late Ottoman Era to the 1930s’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 40(3) (2004): 102–33.

¹⁴² Hurewitz, *Diplomacy*, 114.

¹⁴³ Reshid Pacha to M. Le Vicomte, 5 Nov. 1839, DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E506.

¹⁴⁴ Palmerston to Ponsonby, 2 Dec. 1839; cf. Caquet, *The Orient*, 113.

¹⁴⁵ Butenev to Nesselrode, 5 Nov. 1839, AVPRI f. Kantselyariya, d. 47, ll. 302–15; cf. Todorova, *Rossiya*, 132–3.

effectiveness in an ‘oriental empire’.¹⁴⁶ At the same time, French intelligence correctly identified the edict’s general objectives as being to rally the people’s support against Mehmed Ali and to attract the attention of European public opinion, and noted that Mustafa Reşid’s immediate goal, as he once told to M. Desgranges, was to make it clear that the true trajectory of ‘civilization did not point to Egypt but Constantinople’.¹⁴⁷

The edict did fulfil its immediate purposes. ‘It is a fact’, one British agent wrote, ‘that the first intelligence of it which reached [Mehmed Ali] upset him more than anything we did.’¹⁴⁸ As we will see, it was also used as a wildcard in pressuring France to change her policy with respect to Mehmed Ali in the coming months. It was presented as a main point of reference in rallying the Syrian population against Egypt a year later.¹⁴⁹ Consequently, it paved the way for the joint European intervention that Mustafa Reşid had long hoped would take place.

With the edict, the Ottoman foreign minister and his associates—Valide Sultan, Hüsrev, Rıza, Sadık Rifat, et al.—managed to weave together legal reform, security, and liberty in order to obtain the support of the Powers. The Porte’s key agents would no longer oversimplify by framing their empire as the ‘patient’ in need of European ‘medicine’, but would instead depict it as an active figure in the game of civilization. This was why, only days after the edict’s proclamation, Mustafa Reşid made a bid to involve the Porte in ‘the European confederation’ by means of Baron Stürmer, the Austrian internuncio to Istanbul.¹⁵⁰

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The effects of the Gülhane proclamation on Mehmed Ali’s ambitions can be discerned in his immediate response to it—an unexpected move. In early 1840, he sent a letter to his old enemy Hüsrev, now the grand vizier, through his handmaiden Zehra Hanım. He announced that he had given up his claims over Hüsrev’s dismissal. But on everything else he made no concessions: the Porte would always have in him and his sons ‘faithful and devoted servants’ together with ‘a considerable force in Arabia’ which was always ready to cooperate in support of the state and religion, provided that the Taurus mountains were left to him. His only objective was ‘to acquire a good name in future history’. The paşa underlined that the imperial fleet still belonged to the sultan and would be returned to him. Yet the persistent refusal to leave the Taurus mountains to Egypt prevented him from doing so. He added that the Porte was ‘playing the game of those Powers’ in seeking refuge at their hands, while the very same

¹⁴⁶ Caquet, *The Orient*, 117.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Lettre de M. Desgranges sur l’état de la Turquie’, 17 Nov. 1839, AMAE MD Turquie 45/43.

¹⁴⁸ Pisani to Bulwer, 27 Dec. 1839, NRO Bulwer Papers BUL 1/17.

¹⁴⁹ See Ch. 8.

¹⁵⁰ Stürmer to Metternich, 6 Nov. 1839, HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 71; cf. Šedivý, *Metternich*, 45.

Powers were in fact aiming to weaken it 'to facilitate in due season the project so long entertained by them: [the partition of the Ottoman Empire]'.¹⁵¹

If this be so, rather than fall in five years with shame and ignominy, how much preferable is it to fall at once, while the name and religious enthusiasm of Islam yet exists. To this I have made up my mind, and cease not night and day in pushing on my warlike preparations.¹⁵¹

The paşa hoped for the resolution of the crisis by an agreement between Istanbul and Cairo, but not with inter-imperial meddling.

Hüsrev rejected Mehmed Ali's proposal. With the support of the four Powers behind him, despite the defeat at Nizib, he believed he now had the upper hand against his rival. He therefore wrote in his response to Mehmed Ali that the sultan's only desire was to forgive his enemies and restore peace, and establish concord among all his subjects. The Taurus mountains offered an important natural fortress for Istanbul as much as they did for Cairo. They were essential for imperial security. And it had become impossible for the Porte to follow a different path from that which 'we have feared so far'—seeking refuge in the intervention of the Powers. 'What were we supposed to do in this situation? Could we reasonably refuse the support we have been so generously offered by the Christian Powers?' the Grand Vizier wrote in the draft letter, before crossing out these sentences. Instead, he wrote, '[W]e are waiting with perfect security' for the events that the future would bring, and the preparations for war that Mehmed Ali spoke of did not frighten him.¹⁵²

This was the last (written) dialogue on the subject between the two men. Despite Hüsrev's reliance on the support of the Powers, there was in fact still no prospect of a Great Power intervention at this hour. The risk of an invasion of Istanbul by Ibrahim was still imminent. And until the spring of 1840, no action was taken by the Powers. Only then did Reşid and then the Austrian ambassador to London, Baron Neuman, take the initiative. Together with Nuri Efendi, the Ottoman ambassador, Neuman penned a letter addressed to the representatives of the Powers. The two reminded of the July 1839 note and criticized the Concert of Europe for its lack of action.¹⁵³

Seeing that the dangerous relations between Hüsrev and Mehmed Ali continued unabated even after their secret correspondence (leaked to Mustafa Reşid

¹⁵¹ Mehmed Ali to Hüsrev, 23 Feb. 1840, DUR Ponsonby Papers, GRE/320.

¹⁵² Grand Vizier to Mehmet Ali, Moharrem 1256 [Mar. 1840], BOA HR.SYS 933/1/249.

¹⁵³ Rechid to Nuri Efendi, 27 Feb. 1840, DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E444/25; Nuri Efendi to Palmerston, 7 Apr. 1840, BOA HR.SYS 934/1; Nouri Efendi to Palmerston, 18 May 1840, DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E444; Webster, *Palmerston*, 678–9; 'Extrait des nouvelles confidentielles par M. Chevalier Cordoba (Spanish chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople)', Jan. 1840, DUR Ponsonby Papers, GRE/E150.

by Ponsonby, who then got it published in European press), and in the absence of Great Power action, the Ottoman foreign minister, for his part, looked to prevent any forward move on the part of the paşa. He took the reins into his hands and got Hüsrev dismissed from his position on 8 June, lest Mehmed Ali should use his personal enmity as a pretext for aggression again.¹⁵⁴ When Hüsrev struggled to force his way back into office, he was linked to a bribery scandal and then sent into exile in Tekirdağ.¹⁵⁵

Malicious as it may seem, Reşid's plan did the trick. Mehmed Ali was elated by the news of Hüsrev's dismissal. He saw a new chance for a bilateral settlement with the Porte and sent his first secretary, Sami Bey, with an official proposal for an arrangement. Even though the continuation of the talks produced no settlement, it gained Mustafa Reşid time. He himself was preparing a new proposal in mid-July 1840, agreeing to confer Egypt on Mehmed Ali with hereditary possession, and southern Syria with partial hereditary rights.¹⁵⁶ But before his proposal was communicated, the long-expected news came from London. The four Powers—Austria, Britain, Prussia, and even Russia—and the Porte's representative, Şekib Efendi, had finally agreed on an intervention plan.

Mustafa Reşid immediately dropped his scheme. His unusual quest to overwhelm Mehmed Ali's ambitions by means of painting the Ottoman centre as the civilized face of the East, making commercial concessions to wring an alliance from Britain, penning memoranda to legitimize and enable the multilateral intervention of the Concert of Europe, and helping to initiate bureaucratic and administrative reforms, was finally producing concrete results. For the Ottoman foreign minister, this was the hour of revenge.

¹⁵⁴ BOA HR.SYS 933/2; Roussin to Desages, 8 June 1840, AMAE 50MD/45/70.

¹⁵⁵ Çelik, *Şeyhü'l-Vüzerâ*, 375–85.

¹⁵⁶ Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 135; Šedivý, *Metternich*, 796–7, n. 121.

Return of the Ashes

The Concert of Europe and the 1840 Intervention

Le retour des cendres, or the repatriation of the ashes of Napoleon Bonaparte from Saint Helen to Paris, was a masterpiece of myth-making.¹ Amidst lavish ceremonies in every city, the late emperor's coffin passed through in the autumn of 1840. The event attracted enormous local interest and filled the hearts of many onlookers with what Bonapartists claimed Napoleon stood for: pride and the glory of France. In Normandy alone, during the six days his coffin was exhibited at the frigate *La Belle Poule*, more than 60,000 people came to accord respect to the memory of the late emperor. An abundance of patriotic artistic works—paintings, songs, poems, and lithographs—exposed the emotional intensity of the day, while endless newsprints recurrently portrayed Napoleon as a prince, or even the Christ.²

This patriotic pageant was as much about renewing the prestige of the July Monarchy as about paying respect to Bonaparte. France was embroiled in dangerously strained relations with Britain and her allies. War over their conflicting interests in the Levant, or the Eastern Question, was once again at the door. Orders had been given for the mass conscription of the army and an expensive fortification of Paris was under way. Public sentiment had to be whetted.

Only seven years had passed since France and Britain had revived their 'constitutional alliance' against Russia. As we saw in Chapter 6, after the signing of the Russo-Ottoman Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty in July 1833, St Petersburg had won a dominant influence over the Levant, which went against the interests of both London and Paris. In the previous year, in July 1839, when the so-called 'Second Eastern Crisis' had just broken loose with the renewal of hostilities between Sultan Mahmud II and Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt, the two liberal powers had again taken a common stance regarding the territorial integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire. But a few months later, France chose to pursue a non-interventionist policy tacitly supporting Mehmed Ali, while the other four

¹ See e.g. Jean-Marcel Humbert, *Napoléon aux Invalides. 1840, le retour des Cendres* (Paris: Musée de l'Armée, 1990); Henri Gaubert, *Le Tombeau de l'empereur. Son tombeau*, vol. 2 (Paris: Acad. Napoléon, 1951).

² See Avner Ben-Amos, *Funeral, Politics and Memory in Modern France, 1789–1996* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 73, and Michael Paul Driskel, *As Befits Legend: Building the Tomb of Napoleon, 1840–1861* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1993).

Powers—Austria, Britain, Prussia, and Russia—and the Porte strove to keep the paşa at bay, forcing him to evacuate Syria.

This was how the allies, London and Paris, became foes; and the foes, Britain and Russia, became allies within a space of a few months. And this was why it took nearly a year for the Concert of Europe to intervene in the civil war in the Ottoman world. Diplomatically isolated by the other Great Powers, the French officialdom would use the return of Bonaparte's ashes as an inspiring moment for national esteem and social mobilization. Yet it was also then that many French writers and statesmen came to cast doubt on both the policy in the Levant and the implications of the Eastern Question for France. Could there be an alternative, more peaceful way of appraising the Eastern Question that would still enable European dominance over the Ottoman Empire but bring serenity and calm at home, instead of war?

The Quadruple Alliance and France

In late 1838, it was highly unlikely for Britain and Russia to form a common front with respect to the Eastern Question. Anglo-Russian relations had been dangerously strained since the Hünkâr Iskelesi Treaty of 1833. Policy-makers in London and St Petersburg had become increasingly persuaded that the European empire which held sway over the Levant would prevail in Asia and Europe.³ The 'lion' and the 'bear' had come to loggerheads in Asia, while the Vixen affair—the capture of a British schooner by the Russians in the eastern Black Sea—threatened to turn this confrontation into an inter-imperial war.⁴

In June 1838, Tsar Nicholas I was determined to pursue a unilateral policy toward the Ottoman Empire, maintaining that, due to his empire's geographical proximity and direct interests, the Eastern Question was his private affair and not to be interfered with by the other Powers.⁵ For Russia, collective action by the Powers was acceptable only insofar as the Powers collaborated in supplying assistance to the Porte with the purpose of upholding the status quo that was in Russia's favour both strategically and commercially.⁶

Yet at the same time it was a ghastly prospect for Nesselrode to see Russia isolated by the other four Powers in the Levant. For this reason, in late 1838, when Palmerston and Metternich came up with the idea of convening an ambassadorial conference in Vienna specifically on the Eastern Question, fearing that the meeting would materialize the alignment of the four Powers against Russia, he

³ Harold N. Ingle, *Nesselrode and the Russian Rapprochement with Britain, 1836–1844* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 95.

⁴ *Ibid.* 63–95.

⁵ Šedivý, *Metternich*, 752.

⁶ Ingle, *Nesselrode*, 103.

declined to participate.⁷ He was fortunate that the contest between Metternich and Palmerston over leadership of the conference, the scepticism harboured by the other Powers when Britain unilaterally signed the commercial convention with the Porte (August 1838), and finally Palmerston's desire to link the 'Egyptian crisis' with the subject of the Straits, would lead France and Austria to lose sympathy with the idea of a conference.

The collective note of the Powers in July 1839 (see Chapter 7) was a decentralised act undertaken at the initiative of the European ministers in Istanbul without orders from their capitals. It was acceptable for Russia not as 'a move toward a conference', but only as an offer of the 'good offices' of the Powers 'to mediate a direct settlement, not to resolve' the crisis between Istanbul and Cairo.⁸

After August 1839, however, the policy of St Petersburg unmistakably changed due to a number of factors. The risk of Russia's isolation by the other four Powers remained. The reign of Mustafa Reşid and the pro-British camp in Istanbul deemed the renewal of the Otto-Russian defensive alliance much less likely. Furthermore, Russia had lost her privileged commercial position in the Levant after the commercial treaties signed between the Porte and several European Powers. Instead of standing alone for a cause that seemed unlikely to materialize, Nesselrode recommended Tsar Nicholas I change policy and take the lead in collective action. With this, Russia could feed two birds with one seed: accentuate the differences between the French and British cabinets with respect to Egypt, thus isolating France instead, and ensure an agreement among the Powers for the closure of the Straits which would warrant her security.⁹

The tsar agreed to this plan and, as Ingle tells us, demonstrated his adherence to the new policy by dismissing the members of the patriotic *ruskaaia partiaa* (Russian party), including the commander-in-chief, General Rosen, and N. N. Murav'ev, a lead actor of his unilateralist diplomacy in 1832–3 (see Chapter 6). He then sent Baron Ernest Philipp Brunnow (1797–1875)—a member of the *nemetskaia partiaa* (German party), which had a pro-European orientation—to London. The new Russian policy was bent on building on the joint note of July 1839 and obtaining a settlement among the Powers, and particularly with Britain, over the 'Eastern Crisis'.

Brunnow was the right person for this mission. He was known to be fond of the 'European family', and strongly opposed to the nationalist policies of the *ruskaaia partiaa*. Having sat at the Congresses of Laibach and Verona, he was one of the few remaining figures of 'the Vienna system generation'. He shared the beliefs and understanding of the men of 1815–22 that 'the interests of the whole represented a "higher order" of national unity that was threatened by war and revolution'.¹⁰ He poignantly admitted that 'the entire European political system was completely

⁷ Ibid. 104, 108.

⁸ Ibid. 112.

⁹ Rendall, 'Restraint', 53.

¹⁰ Ingle, *Nesselrode*, 122–3.

upset,' and 'Europe was divided into two camps' when the Whig ministers 'submitted to the public opinion that was opposed to the true interests of the community' and allied with the French government so as to remain in office.¹¹ But now, as he set off for the British capital, he had high hopes for the renewal of the Vienna Order and the Concert of Europe.

In London, Brunnow found what he had hoped for.¹² Despite all his scepticism over Russia, Palmerston welcomed the Russian diplomat's unexpected offers. Russia would allow the Hünkâr Iskelesi Treaty to expire in 1841 if Britain agreed to guarantee the closure of the Straits and 'the existence and repose' of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, St Petersburg would be 'pleased to exchange [the 1833 Treaty] for a concerted guarantee'.¹³ To Russian agents, Britain was squared. For his part, Palmerston considered his policy toward Russia a success at last, and from the end of 1839 onward, together with the Austrian and Prussian ambassadors, he held several conferences in London to decide on the policy of the Concert towards the Levant.

The 'Eastern Question' thenceforward no longer meant ending (or preserving) Russian dominance over the Porte but aimed to address the differences between Cairo and Istanbul. However, the shift in French policy in autumn 1839 as to how to tackle these differences complicated matters. A new crisis among the Powers had arisen.

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As we saw in the previous chapter, after the Battle of Nizib (June 1839), France had declared her commitment to the territorial integrity of the Porte despite her ongoing occupation of Algiers. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Admiral Soult even agreed with London to give instructions to their combined squadrons in the Mediterranean to use coercive measures with Mehmed Ali, prevent his army from marching onto Istanbul, and cease hostilities. But this was the most French ministers wished to adhere to. In lieu of any further intervention on the part of the Powers, they called for a speedy arrangement between 'the Turk and the Turk', alluding to the sultan and the Turkish-speaking Mehmed Ali.¹⁴ If the French representative attended the ambassadorial meetings, the ministers in Paris feared, the other four Powers could corner them into accepting the pro-sultan and anti-Mehmed Ali decisions taken by the majority.

As observed by the French *président du conseil*, Emile Desages, who acted like a spider at the centre of his country's diplomatic web of correspondence, the French were more Egyptian in their orientation than any other Power. This was in part thanks to Mehmed Ali's active propaganda campaign in the French press which, as mentioned earlier, depicted him as the Napoleon of the East, in part because the

¹¹ Ibid. 123–4.

¹² BOA HR.SYS 1947/43.

¹³ Ingle, *Nesselrode*, 124.

¹⁴ Desages to Cochelet, 27 Sept. 1839; cf. Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 26.

paşa was seen, from an ideological point of view, as a revolutionary civilizer in opposition to the ancient system represented by Istanbul, and in part (though to a lesser extent) because of the economic links between France and Egypt.¹⁵ If a settlement could be obtained without the involvement of the Powers, Mehmed Ali could attain a better deal. The collective note of 27 July 1839 therefore became a source of resentment in Paris as soon as news of it broke. It was criticized particularly by such figures as Adolphe Thiers, the *ex-président du conseil*, as an act of ‘inconsiderate precipitation’.¹⁶

From the autumn of 1839, France’s policy was geared towards overt support of Mehmed Ali, as evidenced from the fact that the Soult government asked the Porte to allow Mehmed Ali to at least keep Syria in return for giving up his demands for Hüsvrev’s dismissal, for Crete, and for provinces other than Egypt. But this move outraged both Ottoman and British authorities. ‘The conduct of the French is disgusting,’ Lord Ponsonby wrote from Istanbul to Lord Beauvale in October. ‘It is hard to say what is her most characteristic feature; falsehood, vanity, insolence or folly.’¹⁷

Just as Russian strategists had hoped, the relations in the Anglo-French liberal camp then took a critical turn, which delayed the Powers in taking joint action. After Adolphe Thiers’s rise to power as prime minister and foreign minister on 1 March 1840, French diplomacy began to challenge the Great Power intervention in the Eastern Crisis more firmly.¹⁸

Before coming to office, in January 1840, Thiers had boldly declared in a parliamentary speech, ‘The cause of Mehmet Ali in Syria is the cause of France.’¹⁹ As prime minister and foreign minister, his line of action developed in parallel to this statement, and consisted, first, of excluding France ‘from waging war for the cause of Mehmed Ali, or to risk, for this cause, a general war... but [he] did not publicly lay a limit to the support’. Then, he meant ‘to endeavour to postpone and, if possible, prevent the agreement of the other Powers without France by trying to obtain from them a lowering of their demands. Then, he intended to nibble at Mehmed Ali’s claims and reduce them to proportions that could be admitted by the Powers. And finally, to ask the paşa to leave the crisis to France.’²⁰ With these aims in view, in London, the recently appointed ambassador François Guizot was ordered to obtain the support of Francophile ministers and deputies, while in Istanbul, ambassador Charles Édouard Pontois (1792–1871) would look to persuade Mustafa Reşid to accept a settlement with Mehmed Ali, and the paşa of Egypt would be pressured to make concessions.²¹

¹⁵ Ibid. 22. ¹⁶ Ibid. 21.

¹⁷ Ponsonby to Beauvale, 9 Oct. 1839, BLM Lord Beauvale Papers MS 60475/54.

¹⁸ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 31; BOA HR.SYS 965/8.

¹⁹ Alphonse de Lamartine, *La Question d’Orient. Discours et articles politiques (1834–1861)* (Paris: André Versaille, 2011), 77.

²⁰ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 53.

²¹ Ibid.

As a result of Thiers' policy, Palmerston found himself in a fierce struggle against Francophile politicians like Lord Calderon and Lord Holland in the Melbourne cabinet.²² Their liberal cabinet had been formed, in the first place, thanks to a promise of good relations with France. The Francophiles were ill-disposed to give the entente with France for the Levant. Their opposition had paralysed Palmerston's initiative to spearhead a joint intervention.

Only with news of violence in Syria did the foreign secretary find a way to break the diplomatic resistance of France and strong-arm his Francophile opponents in London. As will be detailed in the following chapters, the Druze and Maronites of Mount Lebanon had risen against Mehmed Ali's rule in May 1840. Since the Battle of Nizib, the permanent state of emergency and mobilization and the resulting enforced conscription and heavy taxation had united the peoples of Lebanon, both Christian and Muslim, Maronite and Druze, against Mehmed Ali.²³ To Palmerston, this was a priceless opportunity.

The devil in the detail here is the fact that the French were the historical protectors of the Maronites, the Catholic Christians of Lebanon, who had now risen against the French-backed Mehmed Ali. The paşa of Egypt's brutal suppression of the Maronites left France in a quandary, and tarnished Mehmed Ali's 'civilized' image in Paris. The news of violence, or, 'horrors committed by the [Egyptian] soldiers', that arrived in Paris would lead Thiers, despite all his support of Mehmed Ali, to question 'if it was worthwhile to agitate the world for a Barbarian', as he put it.²⁴

On the other side of the Channel, Palmerston wrote to Ponsonby: 'I will fairly own that till this insurrection broke out I did not clearly see my way as to the means by which we could drive Mehemet [Ali] out of Syria.'²⁵ In early July, he managed to break the opposition of Clarendon, Holland, and Melbourne, after threatening the prime minister that he would resign from his post. As the news from Syria garnered public support to Palmerston's cause and fearing that the foreign secretary's resignation would dissolve the cabinet, Melbourne caved.²⁶

Palmerston made one final effort to rein in France, by reminding Thiers of his false cause and arguing that Mehmed Ali was 'nothing but an ignorant barbarian', and that he was 'look[ing] upon his boasted civilisation as the arrantest humbug.'²⁷ As it became clear that all doors for an Anglo-French settlement were closed, a week later, on 15 July, leaving French Ambassador Guizot in the dark, the British foreign secretary led the meetings in London that resulted in the signing of the Convention for the Pacification of the Levant by the representatives of the four Powers and the Ottoman plenipotentiary Şekib Efendi.

²² Webster, *Palmerston*, 689.

²³ See Ch. 10 for the details.

²⁴ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 123.

²⁵ Webster, *Palmerston*, 689.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 690.

²⁷ Temperley, *Near East*, 89; Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 303.

With the convention, the four Powers and the Porte agreed that Mehmed Ali would be given hereditary rule in Egypt as well as the fortress of Acre (Sidon), provided that he accepted this proposal within ten days. Otherwise, the offer of Acre would be withdrawn by the sultan. If he refused the second offer, then the future of Egypt would be decided by the sultan and the signatories of the convention. To ensure Mehmed Ali's submission to the sultan, a secret protocol was signed to assume the right to coerce the paşa by force if necessary. Moreover, the signatories agreed that, in times of peace, the Straits were to be closed in accordance with the ancient rights of the sultan, thus ending one dispute, for the time being, that had been central to the Eastern Question since at least the French invasion of Egypt in 1798.²⁸ Thus were laid the ground rules for the first joint Great Power intervention in the Levant with the consent and active participation of the Porte.

The 1840 Intervention

When the news of the London convention reached Cairo on 20 July, Mehmed Ali was enraged, 'very vocal, not at all downcast'. He anxiously declared that he was going to order Ibrahim to invade Asia Minor. The French consul, Adrien-Louis Cochelet (1788–1858), tried to calm him, telling him that such an offensive measure would be catastrophic for Egypt. France would then have to side with the other Powers in subduing him, which would result in the paşa's ultimate defeat.²⁹

Ironically, the news of the convention was not received any more calmly in Paris. King Louis Philippe was just as incensed.³⁰ He directed his anger at the Austrians and the Prussians, believing that they were the weakest links of the chain: 'You want war: you will have it, and if necessary, I will muzzle the tiger [of revolution]. It knows me, and I know how to play with it. We shall see if it respects you as it respects me.'³¹

The French king used one of the shared fears of the European monarchs—revolution—against another—total war in Europe—to turn the Quadruple Alliance from taking offensive action without consulting France, thus fuelling a new crisis in the Rhine. Liberal and revolutionary French journals instantly began to call for war, one writing that 'if the government is arming, it is right to do so',³² and the other forewarning: 'we are on the verge of war.'³³

Adolphe Thiers was likewise indignant at the news, calling the convention 'an injurious procedure' against France, because it was isolated on an issue on which it

²⁸ Sergey Goryanof, *Rus Arşiv Belgelerine Göre Boğazlar ve Şark Meselesi* (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2006), 110, 112–13.

²⁹ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 92–3. ³⁰ BOA TS.MA.e 419/6; Caquet, *The Orient*, 212.

³¹ *Ibid.* ³² *Journal des Débats*, 31 July 1840; cf. Caquet, *The Orient*, 213.

³³ *Le National*, 28 July 1840; cf. Caquet, *The Orient*, 213.

should have been the first to be consulted, as the ‘first power in the Mediterranean basin’.³⁴ But he had utterly misread—or at least wrongly framed—the situation. It was precisely because of the fearful prospect of the French becoming the first power in the Mediterranean after the occupation of Algiers, and the establishment of dominant influence over Tunis, Egypt, and now Syria up to the Taurus mountains, that the other four Powers, particularly Britain, were looking to take a more independent course of action from Paris.

From the moment Thiers heard of the convention, he endeavoured to frustrate it. He believed that its ‘failure of coercive action’ would drive the four Powers ‘back to France to solve the Eastern Question’.³⁵ He strove to end the uprising in Syria first, as it would deprive the Quadruple Alliance and the Porte of vital clout, and save France and Mehmed Ali from great embarrassment. Even though Ibrahim Paşa had put down the uprising by July 1840, in August it bubbled up again in different parts of Mount Lebanon.

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The renewal of the Lebanese uprising was to a considerable degree the work of the British dragoman Richard Wood (1806–1900), who had been dispatched from Istanbul to Beirut by Mustafa Reşid and Ponsonby in early July 1840. They invested Wood in an official capacity with the responsibility for ‘the regulation and settlement of the actual affairs of Mount Lebanon’.³⁶ Having lived in Syria on and off since 1832, and since he could speak the native languages (both Turkish and Arabic), Wood was familiar with local realities and sensitivities in the Levant. He was confident that the Lebanese would be well disposed to receive his aid.³⁷ In fact, they had already collectively reached out to the British authorities ‘to rescue them from the destruction with which Mehmet Ali threaten[s] them now’.³⁸

At first, Wood kept a low profile and made contact with key figures in the mountain. Then, after the London Convention, he orchestrated the Lebanese movement, along with Ottoman agents such as Tahir Bey, as well as the Russian consul in Beirut, Konstantin Mikhailovich Bazili (1809–84).³⁹ They circulated several proclamations which promised the Lebanese the restitution of their ancient privileges as well as the introduction of new rights—equality between

³⁴ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 98. ³⁵ *Ibid.* 104–9.

³⁶ Ramazan Ata, ‘Osmanlı Kaynaklarına Göre 1839–1841 arası Osmanlı Mısır İlişkileri ve Düvel-i Muazzama’ (PhD thesis, Ankara University, 2011), 178; *RWEC*, 7, 20; G. H. Bolsover, ‘Lord Ponsonby and the Eastern Question, 1833–39’, *Slavonic and East European Review* 13(37) (July 1934): 98–118, at 104; ‘Richard Wood Statement of Services’, 8 Aug. 1846, SAMECO Richard Wood Papers, Box 7.

³⁷ Ponsonby to Wood, 28 June 1840; Wood to Ponsonby, 3 July 1840, *RWEC*, 146–7.

³⁸ ‘English translation of letter from the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon to Ponsonby asking for British aid against Mehemet Ali’, DUR Ponsonby Papers, GRE/E606.

³⁹ K. M. Bazili, *Siriya i Palestina pod tureckim pravitel'stvom v istoricheskom i politicheskom otnosheniyax* (Moscow: Izd-vo vostochnoi lit-ry, 1962), 177. On the transfer of the Russian consulate from Jaffa to Beirut, Butenev to Nesselrode, 13 Nov. 1839, AVPRI f. 149, o. 502/1, d. 397, ll. 1–3, 20–29. See also ‘Copie d’un rapport du Consul Basili à M. l’Envoyé de Bouténéf en date de Yaffa le 8/20 Septembre 1839’, AVPRI f. 149, o. 502/1, d. 397, ll. 20–29.

Muslims and non-Muslims, as heralded by the Gülhane Edict of 1839—if they directed their obedience to the sultan. They announced that the British fleet was ordered to help the Syrians, and the Porte's arms and ammunition supplies were on their way.⁴⁰ Wood himself helped distribute 84,000 muskets to the inhabitants. A new insurrection duly erupted.

Yet it did not break Mehmed Ali's resistance. At the end of July 1840, when Mustafa Reşid officially communicated to the paşa the 15 July Convention, the latter refused to accept its conditions.⁴¹ In his calculation, the likelihood of a Great Power intervention in Syria was very small because it would be an invitation for a general war in Europe—France being on the one side, and the remaining four Powers on the other—a risk the Powers would not take for the East. However, when the paşa received intelligence of Anglo-Austrian fleet movements toward the eastern Mediterranean, he sent an agent to Istanbul hoping for bilateral conciliation within the Ottoman Empire, declaring that he would agree to abandon Acre. This time Mustafa Reşid refused to settle, believing that he had the unconditional support of the Powers behind him now, and that he could eliminate Mehmed Ali for good.

In early September 1840, after an imperial council meeting, the Ottoman foreign minister did what he had determined to do and got Mehmed Ali removed as governor of Egypt. In his place, İzzet Mehmed Paşa was nominated as the governor of Acre and Egypt.⁴² Shortly after, Mustafa Reşid sent an announcement to the representatives of the Powers, declaring that since Mehmed Ali did not consent to the pacific proposals of the signatories of the July 1840 Convention, it had become necessary to withdraw him from Egypt and, as a prelude to coercive measures, to proceed to a rigorous blockade of all the ports of Egypt and Syria by means of the Ottoman and Allied squadrons.⁴³

From mid-August onward, the military support pledged to the Lebanese began to arrive. The Syrian coasts were blockaded by 19 British, 7 Ottoman, and 4 Austrian ships.⁴⁴ Around 5,380 Ottoman soldiers landed, along with 232 cannons, under the command of the *serasker* and interim governor İzzet Mehmed Paşa, while the Prussian co-commander of the expedition, General Augustus Giacomo Jochmus (1808–81) marched with 22,000 men (some of them British, under the command of Colonel Hugh Rose).⁴⁵

⁴⁰ 'Richard Wood Statement of Services', 8 Aug. 1846, SAMECO Richard Wood Papers, Box 7.

⁴¹ Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 142. ⁴² Ibid. 143.

⁴³ Moustapha Reschid, 'Traduction d'une note officielle concernant le bloc de l'Égypte et de la Syrie', 16 Sept. 1840, AMAE Papiers Desages 60PAAP/37/87.

⁴⁴ Mansel, *Levant*, 95. On 16 Sept. Egypt was also blockaded, and the consuls of the four Powers left Alexandria. 'Secret Memorandum by Lieutenant-General Augustus Jochmus on the war in Syria', 12 May 1841, DUR Ponsonby Papers, GRE/E346.

⁴⁵ Defter II, 67-b. Richard Wood, Statement of Services, 8 Aug. 1846, SAMECO, Richard Wood Papers, Box 7.

Thiers tried to impede the intervention by dispatching to Mount Lebanon the Lazarist abbot Étienne, who had considerable influence over the local Lebanese Christians, in order to ‘calm angry hearts’ and convey ‘promises of guarantees and concessions’ on the part of Mehmed Ali. Thiers moreover sent the young Count Alexandre Colonna Walewski (1810–68) to Cairo and Istanbul to arrange for a bilateral settlement. The latter suggested that the paşa give the inhabitants of Lebanon certain guarantees, ‘under the superior guarantee of France’, perhaps through a Gülhane Edict of his own, to counter the influence of the agents of the other Powers on the spot.⁴⁶ The paşa of Egypt followed this suggestion, and promised the Lebanese the return of their ancient privileges and the introduction of new liberties.⁴⁷ But it was too little, too late.

The bombardment of Beirut by the Quadruple Alliance and the Ottoman ships began on 6 September. In Paris, the news reverberated through ‘every French heart’.⁴⁸ The country having been ‘seriously armed’, and the fortification of Paris intensified, newspapers considered that ‘[t]he answer to the question “Are we to have peace or war?” was more doubtful than ever’.⁴⁹ The *Courrier de Rouen* was the most daring: ‘war, immediate war, is the only means of conserving our honour.’⁵⁰

In mid-September, the republican poet Edgar Quinet (1803–75) wrote that ‘[a] coalition similar to that of 1815 was formed against France in 1840’, just as the ashes of Napoleon had set for Paris and just when France was once again about to confront a Quadruple Alliance. ‘[The ashes] are approaching; they are going to enter the port. The earth quivers. Who do you think will, in the name of all, receive the first and greet these spoils?’⁵¹

Despite all the emotional intensity of the time, Thiers knew that France was not ready for war: ‘Our navy is excellent but not large enough; she would win the first battle and lose the last.’⁵² Nonetheless, he did not withdraw his support for Mehmed Ali’s cause. Principled as his policy might have been, it cost him his ministry in the end.

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The disagreement between France and the four Powers (and the Porte) terminated only when the moderates who were against war prevailed in Paris. Amidst the chauvinistic ceremonials, private intimidation, public displays of military power, and heedless war songs, one such moderate was the conservative French writer, poet, and parliamentarian Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869). He had travelled in the Levant, in Egypt and Syria in 1832–3, and had some knowledge of the

⁴⁶ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 108–9.

⁴⁷ Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men*, 303.

⁴⁸ Cunningham, *RWEC*, 20.

⁴⁹ ‘Paris’, *Journal des débats*, 13 Sept. 1840; see also ‘Eastern Affairs’, *The Times*, 14 Sept. 1840.

⁵⁰ Caquet, *The Orient*, 213.

⁵¹ Edgar Quinet, *1815 et 1840* (Paris: Paulin, 1840), 6–8.

⁵² Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 231.

region. Like most Saint-Simonians and liberals in France, he too thought highly of Mehmed Ali, at least in July 1839, as ‘the missionary of civilisation in the east’ who resuscitated Arabia.⁵³ Yet in 1840, amid the heated warmongering, he adopted a calmer voice, and called his countryman to serenity, peace, and reason.

Aside from his parliamentary speeches, in four articles titled ‘La Question d’Orient, la guerre, le ministère’, written in late August, Lamartine severely criticized Thiers and his line of action. He rejected the idea that the cause of Mehmed Ali was the cause of France, reminding his audience that the Syrians, and ‘most importantly the Maronites, a healthy, vigorous, Catholic population’, viewed the rule of Mehmed Ali ‘with horror’, and were fighting for freedom from his ‘despotism, the upsurge in barbarism’.⁵⁴ Lamartine argued that Mehmed Ali’s cause did not constitute ‘a very holy cause to be served, a very vital interest to be defended, a very immense result to be obtained’ for France, whose entry into war against the Quadruple Alliance and the sultan would be ‘monstrous’ and ‘treason’.⁵⁵ He invited Thiers to resign, and suggested the formation of ‘a more consistent and more cautious cabinet [for] the very difficult task of rectifying the situation and putting France back in her place’, among the ranks of the Concert of Europe from which she had been excluded.⁵⁶

What distinguished Lamartine from many other moderates was his remarks on the Eastern Question (*la question d’Orient*). This question had been interpreted erroneously, he argued. It should have been seen, not as a source of conflict, but as an opportunity for profitable political and economic gains for Europe. It could furnish France with an excuse for peace and the establishment of lasting alliances, thus guaranteeing her future in the European balance system. Each of the three Powers—Britain, Russia, and Austria—had vital interests in the Eastern Question. Russia had a desire to expand toward Istanbul. Britain’s interests rested on communication with India. Finally, Austria strove to preserve her interests on the Danube. ‘France’, Lamartine argued, ‘had only an interest in the balance and freedom of the seas.’⁵⁷

The French writer further maintained that, instead of antagonizing Britain and Russia, France could follow a more conciliatory and cooperative policy and seek the establishment of ‘a general protectorate of the West over the East’.⁵⁸ This protectorate would respect the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, but it would be:

⁵³ Lamartine, *La Question*, 151.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 189.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 188.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 186.

⁵⁷ Lamartine, *Vues, discours et articles sur la question d’Orient* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1840), 19. Also cited in Andrew Arsan, ‘“There Is, in the Heart of Asia, . . . an Entirely French Population”: France, Mount Lebanon and the Workings of Affective Empire in the Mediterranean, 1839–1920’, in *French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories*, ed. Patricia M. E. Lorcin and Todd Shepard (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 76–100.

⁵⁸ Lamartine, *Vues*, 71.

[a] special protectorate of each of the four Great Powers over the four great divisions of the [Ottoman] empire which interest them most immediately. The Black Sea and its mouth to the Russian protectorate; the shores of the Adriatic to the Austrian protectorate; the centre of Asia Minor, Rhodes, Cyprus, Syria and the Euphrates to the protectorate of France; finally, Egypt and the passage of Suez to the protectorate of England.

Lamartine called this ‘negative patriotism’, and argued that it ought to prevail over ‘malicious and jealous contests’ among the Powers. A general peace and broad and lasting equilibrium in Europe ought to be built on the equitable and loyal distribution of interests to the satisfaction of *all*. It entailed ‘the union of the East and the West’, joined together by the knot of politics and commerce in a free Mediterranean which would guarantee the peace of the world, linking Europe to Asia—a dream, Lamartine added, that he shared with Talleyrand and Napoleon, ‘those two dreamers!’⁵⁹ France’s global position could be bolstered by this ‘new European political system’.

Lamartine’s account of the Eastern Question and call for peace signified a key aspect of the ongoing crisis for at least two reasons. On the one hand, more generally speaking, he invited the French and the other Great Powers to extend to other parts of the world the system of balance and equilibrium they had established in Europe—in this specific case the Ottoman Empire. This would preserve the territorial integrity of the sultan’s domains and thus eliminate a major threat to European peace, while at the same time peacefully securing the interests of European Powers. In other words, he sought to reconcile what might at first sight seem to be two opposites: the expansionist motives of Napoleon with the pacific nature of the Vienna Order. He invited the Powers to repurpose the Eastern Question as an instrument of condominium, not dangerous competition, still an enabler of Great Power intervention in the east, but not a trigger of war among them.

The other paramount implication of Lamartine’s account was more urgent. He, and those statesmen and writers who thought alike, helped stop the emotional slide to war. All the sabre-rattling proved in the end to be intolerable for Louis-Philippe I. He could no longer risk international war, nor allow revolutionary propaganda that might spawn unrest in the country. He listened to the moderates: ‘Nothing in the world will force me into [war],’ he declared, swallowing his earlier words on releasing ‘the tiger of the revolution’. The reversal of his policy meant vetoing Adolphe Thiers’s conduct and forcing the prime minister and foreign minister to announce his resignation on 22 October.⁶⁰ One week later, he

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ M. [François] Guizot, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de mon temps*, vol. 5 (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1862), 404.

appointed in Thiers's place another moderate, conservative, and Anglophile figure, François Guizot, the very man who had popularized the idea of civilization in France. Guizot was of the belief that 'the question of Syria was not a legitimate war case,' and guided Paris to a more pacific policy thereafter.⁶¹

On hearing the news, the agents of the Quadruple Alliance and the Porte were elated. The Ottoman chargé d'affaires Yanko Mavroyeni communicated the news from Paris to Foreign Minister Mustafa Reşid: 'the demission of Thiers, who has confused matters both in France and abroad with his revolutionary principles, will be favourable for the maintenance of peace.'⁶² This signified the complete diplomatic isolation of Mehmed Ali, and meant only one thing—the ultimate, diplomatic victory belonged to the sultan. Palmerston and Metternich became the men of the hour in Europe. Now they could mediate between Cairo and Istanbul for an almost unhindered settlement. But, in the Ottoman Empire, a different fate awaited Mustafa Reşid.

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When the castle of Acre, one of the Egyptian strongholds, was unexpectedly surrendered to the Allied forces on 3 November, Mehmed Ali ordered Ibrahim Paşa to evacuate Syria.⁶³ The Egyptian armed resistance was now broken on the ground. The diplomatic resistance persisted. The talks between the signatories of the July 1840 Convention and Mehmed Ali over the terms of the settlement with the sultan continued for five months. All the while, Mehmed Ali continued to ask for hereditary rights at the least, and played all his trump cards, seeking, on the one hand, to overthrow the victorious cabinet in Istanbul and, on the other, looking to use Druze chiefs as an instrument to suppress the uprisings in Syria.⁶⁴

Mustafa Reşid was stubbornly opposed to Mehmed Ali's restoration as the paşa of Egypt. But by early March 1841, he had lost his popularity and credibility in the eyes of the sultan. When the fiscal results of the new tax system under the *Tanzimat* had proven to be disastrous, a group allegedly linked to Mehmed Ali, his steward Necib Paşa, as well as Valide Sultan and her agent, Rıza, found ample opportunity to oppose Mustafa Reşid and the Gülhane Edict even though the latter two had endorsed it at first. The Ottoman foreign minister was declared the culprit. It was he who had spearheaded the tax reforms and the signing of the recent commercial treaties with the European Powers, which were considered the main causes of the treasury's woes.

Cornered by this newly formed camp, Mustafa Reşid wrote a secret memoir to Metternich in a frantic effort to ask for the Powers' aid. Things had changed since

⁶¹ Ibid. 390; Alfred Schlicht, 'La France et le Liban dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle. Influences occidentales dans l'histoire orientale', *Francia* 11 (1984): 459–507, at 499.

⁶² Mavroyeni to Reşid Paşa, 3 Nov. 1840, BOA HR.SYS 965/35.

⁶³ Wood to Ponsonby, 4 Nov. 1840, *RWEC*, 180–81. ⁶⁴ See Ch. 10.

1839, Reşid complained, due to the cessation of the critical position adopted by the young Sultan Abdülmecid against the ancient order, as well as the sultan's proclivity 'little by little to do anything that comes to his mind without reflection and without consulting anyone'. The new institutions of the *Tanzimat* were not thriving, and there was a tendency to return to the old regime. Mustafa Reşid was concerned that his post and life were at stake. He warned that the return to the old system might lead to the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, whose eventual disintegration could result in a European war. Therefore, in the last days of his ministry, he called for the Powers to actively intervene in the domestic politics of the Porte, if necessary by anchoring warships in the Bosphorus against the ulema and the fanatical statesmen 'for a decade or so' until the new system consolidated.⁶⁵

But no such aid came from the agents of the Powers, who possibly had difficulty fathoming the foreign minister's unexpected call. On 29 March 1841, Mustafa Reşid was dismissed by the sultan, while the negotiations with Mehmed Ali were still under way. A British agent reported that this happened after an imperial council meeting at which Reşid told the *müftü* (the chief ulema) to keep the preaching of the *şer-i şerif* (holy justice according to the prescriptions of the Qur'an) out of the code of commerce. Blasphemy was committed, and the extraordinary disturbance in the assembly led, first, to the *müftü* and the *kazasker* resigning—a course from which they were then dissuaded with great difficulty by Rıza and Said Paşas. The same evening Grand Vizier Rauf spoke to the sultan in the name of the ministers against the conduct of Reşid. Infuriated by the news and long alarmed by the foreign minister's popularity, Abdülmecid I made up his mind.⁶⁶

Mustafa Reşid was thereupon appointed as ambassador to Paris. His dismissal from office eliminated the last major obstacle to an Ottoman–Egyptian agreement with the mediation of the Powers. After a series of ambassadorial meetings, a deal was finally made in London in May 1841.⁶⁷ Mehmed Ali's gain was limited: he was granted hereditary rights, and the sultan appointed Necib, Mehmed Ali's agent in Istanbul, as the paşa of Damascus. But the agreement restrained Mehmed Ali's military to 20,000 men, and fixed a tribute to be paid by the paşa to the sultan annually.⁶⁸ If Mehmed Ali or any of his descendants were to break the conditions, the hereditary government from Egypt would be subject to revocation.⁶⁹

Moreover, Mehmed Ali agreed to recognize, 'without reservation, that all the treaties and all the laws of the Empire will have to apply to Egypt as to any other

⁶⁵ 'Traduction d'un mémoire sur la situation actuelle de l'Empire Ottoman', attached to Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 10 Mar. (N472E), HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; cf. Šedivý, 'Mustafa Reşid', 282.

⁶⁶ 'Note on the fall of Reschid', n.d., DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E506. See also Šedivý, 'Mustafa Reşid Pasha's Fall'.

⁶⁷ BOA HR.SYS 936/1.

⁶⁸ BOA HR.SYS 936/2.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

province of this empire', which secured for Britain and other European Powers the privileges of the commercial agreements signed with the Porte since 1838. The paşa would comply with the orders addressed to him by the Porte to regulate the system of the levy and the construction of warships in Egypt. He would also place his land and naval forces under the rule of the sultan. That is, he would entirely submit to the authority of Istanbul, while at the same time giving up the Taurus mountains, Crete, and Syria.⁷⁰

The aspirations of the paşa of Egypt, despite the French support he received until October 1840, were thus quelled by the Quadruple Alliance and the Porte. It was neither Hüsrev nor Mustafa Reşid alone that haunted the paşa's dreams, but a fluid coalition that the two initiated though they were both excluded from this coalition eventually. Mustafa Reşid played an Eastern version of the 'civilization' game with Mehmed Ali to enlist the intervention of the Powers on behalf of the sultan, not to fend off their encroachments. Yet it was Sultan Abdülmecid I who made the final deal with Mehmed Ali for the stability of his empire.

All these events overlapped with a moment when the idea of civilization was being used more explicitly and vocally in European international thought to justify interventions, wars, and colonization in the East. While Britain fought China by herself in 1839–41 and together with France in 1856–60 in the two Opium Wars, or when the French looked to suppress the resistance of the Algerians from the late 1830s onwards, the term 'civilization' frequently appeared in diplomatic correspondence, parliamentary speeches, and public writings as a way to underpin empire and imperial violence.⁷¹

In the Levant, too, in 1840–41, during the intervention of the Powers and the Porte in Syria, it served as an instrument to silence France, end her support of 'the barbarism' of Mehmed Ali, and endorse the cause of the sultan. After the Navarino intervention of 1827, a new discursive practice thus fully fed into the transimperial culture of security, owing to the fact that the Eastern Question came to be seen as a question of whether to establish a joint, 'peaceful' protectorate of the West over the East. Then began a new history of concerted, co-interventionism in the East, whereby the Powers considered intervention a 'right' and a 'duty', not an 'untoward event'. From then on, the weight of the Concert's influence over the politics of the Levant dramatically increased.

With the end of the so-called second 'Eastern crisis' and the 1840–1 intervention, peace was perhaps settled in the wider Ottoman world, the dynasty of Osman and the family of Mehmed Ali were protected by inter-imperial agreements, and the threats to the Vienna Order were finally thwarted. The paşa of Egypt would tell

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Andrew Phillips, 'Saving Civilization from Empire: Belligerency, Pacificism and the Two Faces of Civilization during the Second Opium War', *European Journal of International Relations* 18(5) (Oct. 2011): 5–27.

his European correspondents in Alexandria that the Eastern Question was now 'radically terminated'.⁷² But in Syria, and particularly Mount Lebanon, which was the centre of the hostilities in the first place, violence erupted immediately after the British, Prussian, and Ottoman expeditionary forces left the country. The European Great Powers intervened once again in the name of 'civilization' and 'humanity', and in order to address the never-ending Eastern Question. The Levant descended into a new cycle of inter-imperialized civil wars.

⁷² BOA HR.SYS 936/1/118.

PART III
THE MOUNTAIN

9

Beginnings

Mount Lebanon before 1840

Syrians!

Great Britain, Austria, Russia and Prussia in conjunction with the Sultan have decided that the Rule of Mehemet Ali shall cease in Syria and I have been sent here with an advanced squadron to assist you in throwing off the yoke of the Pashas of Egypt.

Syrians!

You know that a Hatt-i Scheriff has been issued by the Sultan securing the life and property of his subjects which is in full operation throughout the Turkish territories in addition to which the Allied Powers have engaged to recommend to the sultan to make an arrangement to render your condition happy and prosperous . . .

Inhabitants of Lebanon!

I call upon you to rise and throw off the oppressive yoke under which you are groaning. Troops, arms and ammunition are daily expected from Constantinople . . .¹

In August 1840, when the British squadron the *Powerful* anchored off Beirut, its seasoned captain, Commodore Charles Napier, circulated this proclamation to incite a rebellion against French-backed Egypt.² As we saw in the previous chapter, the Lebanese, particularly the Maronite peasantry, responded to these calls positively, and gave their sweat and blood to fight against Mehmed Ali's armies. Their struggle helped break the diplomatic resistance of Paris and Cairo against the Quadruple Alliance and the Porte, leaving no manoeuvring space for France except war or compliance with the demands of the allies. Their efforts immensely contributed to ending the diplomatic deadlock of the time. They enabled the 1840 intervention, helping to suppress Mehmed Ali's imperialist ambitions and to restore Syria to the sultan's authority in the hope of a better future for themselves.

¹ Copy of Proclamation, 14 Aug. 1840, BLM Napier Papers, Add MS 40036/46.

² Commodore Sir Charles Napier, K.C.B., *The War in Syria*, vol. 1 (London: John W. Parker, 1842), 15–18; Ponsoby to Wood, 28 June 1840; Wood to Ponsoby, 3 July 1840, *RWEC*, 146–7.

In the third and final part of the book, we will discuss their experience: the implications and effects of the 1840 intervention on the ground, what it meant for the Lebanese, how it was received, and what role it played in the outbreak of a new cycle of civil wars in 1841, 1842, 1845 and finally—and most tragically—in 1860.

It is true that much has already been published on the civil wars in Mount Lebanon, their complex origins, theatres, and repercussions.³ Fascinating as these studies are, they have usually built their narratives and employed analytical grids within the framework of an abstract—and sometimes ambiguous—notion of modernity that gradually threatened the existing modes of (feudal) politics and the economy in Lebanon, and produced sectarianism as a cultural response to uncertainties about future. With a few exceptions (e.g. Caesar Farah's incredibly detailed *Politics of Interventionism*), these studies have rarely kept in view the transformative role of persistent vectors, such as the Eastern Question, which made violence in Lebanon more complex and enduring, and more difficult to contain. In these studies, the Eastern Question has usually been considered as an 'age-old', intangible, and static component, a European, inter-imperial quandary only. Its inter-sectoral qualities, and the responses of the Porte and the Lebanese themselves to it, have received much less attention.

Here, I will consider Great Power interventions, the quest for security, and civil wars in Lebanon through a micro-spatial lens, by historicizing the Eastern Question as a constellation of factors. I will try to explain how the Eastern Question reached Mount Lebanon, extending into the manors of the feudal lords, or the so-called *muqatadjis*, that had for centuries formed the nucleus of the Lebanese society in Greater Syria. And I will seek to elaborate how it was played out by diplomatic (strategic), legal, religious, and economic agents—how

³ Aside from the aforementioned works of Fawaz, Farah, and Makdisi, the studies published on the wars include (in chronological order), Henry Churchill, *Mount Lebanon: A Ten Years' Residence from 1842 to 1852, Describing the Manners, Customs and Religion of its Inhabitants with a Full & Correct Account of the Druse Religion and Containing Historical Records of the Mountain Tribes from Personal Intercourse with Their Chiefs and Other Authentic Sources*, 2 vols (London: Saunders & Otley, 1853); Tayyib M. Gökbilgin, '1840'tan 1861'e kadar Cebel-i Lübnan Meselesi ve Dürziler', *Belleten* 10 (1951): 641–703; Abdul al Razzaq al Bitâr, *Haliyyât al-bashâr fi târih al-qarn al-thâlih ashâr*, 3 vols (Damascus: 1961, 1963); Kamal S. Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965); Haluk Ülman, *1860–1861 Suriye Buhranı. Osmanlı Diplomasisinden Bir Örnek Olay* (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1966); Ilya F. Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711–1845* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968); Dominique Chevallier, *La Société au Mont Liban à l'époque de la révolution industrielle en Europe* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1971); Michel Chebli, *Une histoire du Liban à l'époque des émirs (1635–1841)* (Beirut: Librairie Orientale, 1984); Mikhail Mishqa, *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage, and Plunder: The History of the Lebanon in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988); Karam Rizk, *Le Mont-Liban au XIXe siècle de l'émirat au Mutasarrifiya. Tenants et aboutissants du Grand-Liban* (Kaslik-Liban: Bibliothèque de l'Université Saint-Esprit, 1994); Samir Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence in Lebanon: A History of the Internationalization of Communal Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Yann Bouyrat, *La France et les Maronites du Mont-Liban. Naissance d'une relation privilégiée (1831–1861)* (Paris: Geuthner, 2013); Dima de Clerck, Carla Edde, Naila Kaidbey, and Souad Slim (eds), *1860. Histoires et mémoires d'un conflit* (Beirut: Presses de l'Ifpo, 2015).

resources, men, ammunition, funds, plans, and ideals were daily mobilized from imperial hubs into the mountain, not only from Istanbul or Cairo but, from around 1840, also from the capitals of the five Great Powers and other European states.

Using fresh archival and secondary sources, I will show that transimperial security culture thrived in Lebanon through the *already existing* sectarian and class divides and tensions that had been brought about in part by new streams of egalitarian and capitalist ideas and aspirations, the rise of new classes and class consciousness, as well as quest for political power in the mountain. I will thus differ from the revisionist scholarship on the history of Lebanon which considers sectarian disaggregation as a post-1840 phenomenon and a product of imperial interventionism—a ‘storm’ created by European and Ottoman imperial agents.

Since fleshing out these points requires an understanding of the nuances of politics and society in Mount Lebanon in the decades preceding the 1840 intervention, it is important to first discuss the pre-1840 history of Lebanon and the beginnings of class conflict and sectarianism there. I will do so by following the story of a leading feudal family, the Druze Jumblatts, which will enable us to make better sense of the composite Lebanese experience of change before and after 1840.

The story of the Jumblatts is useful not only because the family lived through war and peace, violence and security in Syria for centuries, nor because their history furnishes us with a more intelligible and economical narrative amidst all the complexity and diverse factors that fanned violence and civil wars. The Jumblatts were also one of the richest (if not *the* richest) and most influential families in the country, in whose lands the Maronites and Druze had lived side by side in harmony for decades. It was in these very lands, and in a few others, that internecine and inter-imperialized violence erupted in the nineteenth century.

The Land of the *Muqatadjis*

In Bilād al-Sham or Greater Syria, there had been almost no direct Ottoman political control since Sultan Selim II had conquered the country in 1516. This situation lasted until the mid-nineteenth century. The decentralized administration permitted hereditary rule by politically and economically powerful families as long as they submitted to the authority of the imperial centre.⁴ In return for enjoying relative autonomy, these families were made responsible for taxation and security and for keeping the region within the Ottoman fold, which required them to attune themselves to the incessant demands of the imperial centre while

⁴ ‘Abd-al Qādir al-Azm (ed.), *Al-Usra al-'Azmiya* (Damascus: Matba'at al-Inshā, 1960), 25ff.; cf. Hanioglu, *Late Ottoman*, 15.

responding to the requests of local elites and the population. The one major imprint of the Ottoman sultans on this system of vernacular politics was to divide Syria into three *vilayets* (provinces): Tripoli, Aleppo, and Damascus.⁵ Later, in 1660, a fourth *vilayet* in Sidon was established in order to exercise *nezaret* or superintendence over the others, mainly to check the activities of potentially dissenting Lebanese gentry.

The main duty of the Ottoman *valis* (governors) of the four *vilayets* was to ensure submission to the imperial capital and the sending of revenues. Yet, just like Bulutkaptan Ali and Mehmed Ali of Egypt,⁶ they occasionally aspired to greater autonomy, or even independence. Each time local notables accumulated sufficient power to pose a threat to the central authority of the Porte, the sultans would turn either to nearby governors or to rival notables and reward them with greater authority to create a power balance in the region—or, if this failed, an imperial army would be dispatched to restore Ottoman rule. In a similar vein, each time the local gentry rose against their Ottoman overlords (*valis*) as a result of heavy taxation, the irregularities of the tax system, or excessive demands for military aid, the governors would appeal to the same method of pitting these gentries against one another to subjugate the local elites under imperial authority, as was the case in Ottoman Egypt.⁷

The Jumblatts were one of the notable families in Syria, with their leaders holding the post of the paşa (*vali*) of Aleppo at the start of the seventeenth century. Of Kurdish (Ayyubi) descent and, after conversion from Sunni Islam, followers of the Druze doctrine,⁸ in the first decade of the seventeenth century, the relations between the Jumblatt paşas and their Ottoman overlords became strained when Hüseyin Jumblatt Paşa refused to send reinforcements to the sultan's Persian campaign. Following his execution, his nephew Ali Paşa aspired to found an independent state in Aleppo and Adana. In 1607, the sultan's military inflicted a heavy blow on the army of Ali Paşa. Some members of the family, scattered and much reduced both in number and in property, sought refuge in Mount Lebanon. The Lebanese grand emir at the time, Fakr'eddin II (1572–1635) of the Druze Ma'n family, warmly welcomed the Jumblatts, most notably Jumblatt b. Said and his son Rabah.⁹ The Jumblatts were then settled in the Shuf region, and a new episode began in the history of the family.

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⁵ Salibi, *Lebanon*, 16.

⁶ See Chs 3 and 5.

⁷ See Ch. 4.

⁸ An Islamic sect that sprang from Isma'ili beliefs in the 11th c., the Druze adhere to a gnostic and esoteric version of Shiism that combines Islamic teachings with Hellenistic, Iranian, and other Eastern pre-Islamic religious traditions. Kais M. Firro, *A History of the Druzes* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1992); Nejla N. Abu 'Izz al-Din, *The Druzes: A New Study of their History, Faith and Society* (Boston: E. J. Brill, 1993).

⁹ Abu 'Izz al-din, *The Druzes*, 209. Hazran tells us that Ali Paşa likewise sought refuge at first in Beirut. He then went to Istanbul, and was pardoned by the sultan and appointed as *beylerbeyi* in Hungary. He was either executed by local authorities in 1610 or died of natural causes in 1611, while his family is said to have been killed or enslaved. Yusri Hazran, 'How Elites Can Maintain their Power in the Middle East: The Junblat Family as a Case Study', *Middle Eastern Studies* 51(3) (2015): 346.

Mount Lebanon was a semi-autonomous region in Syria with its own unique structure of order, which lasted until 1842.¹⁰ Under Ottoman rule, it was administered by the local grand emirs, of the Ma'n family until 1697 and, from then on, of the Sunni Muslim Shihabs, whose main duty was to mediate the interests of local inhabitants and those of the Ottoman overlords to whom they paid a yearly tribute.¹¹ With the exception of Ahmed Paşa al-Jazzar (1722–1804), the paşa of Sidon who reigned between 1775 and 1804, Ottoman *valis* intervened in the internal affairs of the mountain only when the grand emir became too aspirational, when the taxes were not remitted, or when the local gentry became troublesome in official eyes.¹²

The inhabitants of Mount Lebanon lived in a patriarchal system of social hierarchy, with emirs at the top of the pyramid and hakims and sheikhs of various ranks below them. This hereditary feudal order was based on kinship and prestige, wherein the principal values held by society honoured the traditions of the ancestors.¹³ In this system, after the family of the great emirs (the Druze Yemenites and Arslans, and the 'Abu l'Lamas who eventually converted to the Maronite religion), and the second-rank emirs (the Shi'ite sheikhs of the Himadah house and the Muzhir house), came the Jumblatts, along with the eight grand sheikh families of the special class (*al-mashayikh al-kibar*), the 'sheikh of the sheikhs'. The latter were granted *muqatas*—lands of various sizes leased to them by the sultan—in 1711, and were therefore known as *muqatadjis* or fief-holders. Five of these great sheikhs were Druze (the Jumblatts, the Imads [Yazbakis], Abu Nakads, Talhuqs, and Abd al-Maliks) located in the south of the country, and three were Maronites (the Khazins, Hubayshes, and Dahdahs) that resided in the north.

Like most other Lebanese chiefs, the Jumblatts were mainly occupied with the cultivation of silk, mulberries, olive trees, and vines in their *muqatas*. They were responsible for the productivity, justice, and security of these lands, collecting and remitting taxes, policing, presenting a yearly tribute to the grand emir, and contributing armed men for his purposes.¹⁴ They enjoyed the privilege of partial exemption from taxes, keeping a percentage of the tax that they collected as a fee. And they cohabited with other gentry which had no ascribed status, such as clergy and small landowners, as well as with peasants, commoners (*'ammiyyah*) in rural areas, and artisans in urban centres.¹⁵

¹⁰ Farah, *Politics*, xviii; Schlicht, 'La France', 496.

¹¹ Chebli, *Une histoire*, 59; Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 16.

¹³ Harik, *Politics*, 71.

¹⁴ John Bowring, *Report on the Commercial Statistics of Syria, Great Britain, Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1840), 102; Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence*, 65; Harik, *Politics*, 41.

¹⁵ Caesar Farah, 'The Road to Intervention', *Papers on Lebanon* 13 (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1992), 10.

¹² Makdisi, *Culture*, 37.

In *Tarih-i Cevdet*, the Ottoman chronicler Ahmet Cevdet Paşa writes that at the turn of the nineteenth century the population of Mount Lebanon was 217,000, the majority of which (121,000) consisted of Catholic Maronites. Other sects that lived in the mountain were the Greek Orthodox and Catholics (47,000), Druze (30,000), Shi'ite Metuwalis (11,500), Sunni Muslims (6,500), and Jews (1,000).¹⁶

Even though the Maronite majority was concentrated in the north of the mountain, some peasants eventually moved to the south to work in the Druze and Greek Orthodox *muqatas* at the invitation of the *muqatadjis*, including the Jumblatts, who needed their labour power. In rare cases Druze peasants also worked under Maronite *muqatadjis*. The ethno-religious diversity and the limitations imposed on the Christians, such as dress codes and the heavy poll tax (*haraç*) due to their exemption from military service, did not disturb social accord. In this system, legitimacy relied on personal allegiance: it was 'more a function of . . . loyalty between protector and protégé than an attribute of coercion and impersonal authority'.¹⁷ Mutually dependent, the Christian peasants and their Druze or Muslim chiefs usually lived in harmony. This situation gradually changed, however, after the turn of the nineteenth century.

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During their early days in Mount Lebanon, the Jumblatts wielded almost no political influence and possessed very few estates. A turning point in their story came in 1711, when Jumblatt b. Said's nephew Ali b. Rabah married a daughter of Sheikh Qablan Tanukh, the leader of one of the most established feudal families. After the sheikh passed away in 1712 with no male descendants, all his property was inherited by Ali b. Rabah. Thereafter the Jumblatts became one of the richest families in the mountain, and stepped into the limelight of Lebanese politics.¹⁸

In the eighteenth century, the family featured in the archetypical feud between the *muqatadjis*, rallying behind them several families (Druze and some Maronite), against their rivals, the 'Imad family and their Yazbaki faction. The differences between the two factions, over having their Shihab candidate nominated as the grand emir, turned into more serious hostilities and occasional skirmishes.¹⁹ In the end, with the support of the paşa of Sidon, the Jumblatts managed to get Bashir II Shihab, the son of a Maronite convert, proclaimed as the new grand emir.

This was another crucial turning point in the family history. Dubbed the 'Red Emir' because of his red beard and his shrill and brutal methods of oppressing his opponents, Bashir II eliminated the Jumblatts' rivals one by one. He reduced dynastic and inter-factional quarrels to a minimum, using great force and thus bringing into subservience the major *muqatadjis* who he believed menaced tranquillity in the country. These were mostly Druze: the Arslans, Talhuqs, 'Imads,

¹⁶ *Tarih-i Cevdet*, vol. 1, 275.

¹⁷ Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence*, 65.

¹⁸ Salibi, *Lebanon*, 9–10. Harik, *Politics*, 50.

¹⁹ BOA C.M.L. 40/1802, h. 29.1.1174; Salibi, *Lebanon*, 11–12; Harik, *Politics*, 46–7.

‘Abd al-Maliks, and Nakads. These families belonged to the Yazbaki faction. Especially the Nakads were among the major protagonists of the civil wars later in the 1840s.²⁰

To be sure, the grand emir’s intentions in suppressing these Druze families did not initially have any sectarian motivation, i.e. ‘deliberate mobilization of religious identities for political and social purposes’.²¹ In fact, he forged a military alliance with his namesake, Sheikh Bashir, the head of the Jumblatt family since 1792. The suppression of rival families empowered the Jumblatts and made them the most influential Druze *muqatadjis*.²² But it also upset the traditional *‘muqata* system in which the overlords of the mountain, the grand emirs, ‘had no right to inflict personal injury in punishing a feudal lord’.²³

Bashir II killed many *muqatadjis* and confiscated their property, although custom ‘specified other means of punishment such as exile or destruction of property’.²⁴ He was arguably the first to violate this centuries-long tradition, which overturned the balance of power and the culture of recognition among the families. To Bashir II, oppression was a necessary evil. Even though he brought stability to a region of continuous factional conflicts, his methods also contributed substantially to the defilement of the *‘muqata* system.²⁵ It was during his reign that the seeds of class and sectarian violence were sown, the first shoots of which marked the beginning of sectarianism in Mount Lebanon.

A plethora of factors enflamed sectarian inclinations in the mountain. Among these were the ascendancy of the Maronites, as a result of their demographic boom, their material enrichment as the foremost Lebanese silk producers, the gradual empowerment of the Maronite church, and the weakening of the Druze due to inter-factional fighting.²⁶ Since the capitulatory agreements of the sixteenth century, France had cultivated interests in Syria and acted as the protector of the Maronite Church, while Roman Catholic missionaries such as the Franciscans, Jesuits, and Lazarists had advised the Maronite patriarchs.²⁷ In the late eighteenth century, besides the Maronite college that had been established in Rome in 1584, new Catholic schools were opened in Lebanon. They helped spread literacy and educated generations of Maronite *‘ammiiyyah* (commoners) who later took up positions as scribes, clerks, and household agents in the service of the notables, both Maronite and Druze *muqatadjis*, including the Jumblatts.

²⁰ For a detailed account of the Nakad family, see Naila S. Kaidbey, ‘Shihab–Druze Discord in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of a Powerful Druze family—the Abu Nakad’, accessed 20 Jan. 2019, https://www.academia.edu/9864172/Shihab-Druze_Discord_in_the_19th_Century_The_Case_of_a_Powerful_Druze_family_The_Abu_Nakad.

²¹ Makdisi, *Culture*.

²² Thomas Philipp, *Acre: The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 78–9; Harik, *Politics*, 39.

²³ *Ibid.* 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Firro, *Druzes*, 54–5; Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence*, 68–71.

²⁶ Hazran, ‘Junblat’, 349.

²⁷ Salibi, *Lebanon*, 12.

The clergy acted as one of the channels which maintained the French name in the country, but also imported egalitarian ideas which posed a threat to the *'muqata* system.²⁸ Thanks to new interpretations of reform, the church gradually decoupled itself from the *muqatadjis* (Khazins, Hubayshes, and Dahdahs) who had long acted as patriarchs, supplied protection, formed the higher echelon of its hierarchy, and levied taxes on the clergy during the first two decades of the nineteenth century.²⁹ It freed itself from these taxes, which allowed it to amass considerable cultivable land. Moreover, instead of relying on the *muqatadjis*, the clergy came to receive physical protection from Grand Emir Bashir II, a Maronite himself with clerical advisers behind his throne.

All these modifications were pivotal in the forging of a communal consciousness among the Maronites under the influence of modern, egalitarian ideas, transmitted through the French-inspired clergy.³⁰ Already in 1807, Maronite *nazirs* (responsibles) were appointed in place of the *muqatadjis* for tax collection in the Khazins' Kisrawan district.³¹ Inspired by the erudite Bishop Joseph Istfan (1759–1823), the peasantry was introduced to the system of *vekils* (representatives) who raised the concerns of each Christian village they represented and, concurrently, manifested the transformation in the political perspective of the commoners. A shift occurred in the *'muqatas*, albeit largely incomplete, from personal and kinship-based allegiance to ties based on communal (initially class/peasant and eventually sectarian) and public interest. That is, in Mount Lebanon, class and sectarian consciousness formed virtually simultaneously in the early nineteenth century.

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A peasant rebellion that broke out in Kisrawan in 1819–20 on the initiative of Bishop Istfan was a catalyst of the shift. It displayed the dual nature of the emergent communal-based allegiance of the Maronite peasantry. Burdened by the tax demands of the grand emir (who, in turn, had been hard pressed by the Ottoman governor of Sidon, who had doubled the tribute due), the peasants rebelled. On the one hand, as a religious sect (Maronites), they demanded to be 'treated at least on equal terms with the Druzes', because the latter, under the leadership of Bashir Jumblatt, had refused to pay extra tributes to the grand emir, who had then not dared to challenge them.³² On the other hand, the peasantry had acted as a financially and politically oppressed class that rose against the control of the *muqatadjis*. They invited their co-religionists, the Maronite peasants, in the southern districts controlled by the Druze *muqatadjis*, to join them in rebelling against their chiefs. But the Jumblatts' Maronite tenants responded negatively to

²⁸ Churchill, *Mount Lebanon*, 89–90.

²⁹ Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence*, 72–3.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 74; Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 18.

³¹ Firro, *Druzes*, 54.

³² Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence*, 77–8.

such calls, as they did not have to pay the extra levies imposed on their northern co-religionists.

While, in the Maronite north, a dual communal consciousness grew chiefly through the medium of the clergy and from below, in the south of Lebanon, the Druze sectarian identity took a political form. The difference was that the latter was forged from above and mainly through the agency of the Jumblatts, especially when they turned against Grand Emir Bashir Shihab II in the mid-1820s.

In fact, the Jumblatt chief had helped the grand emir suppress the peasants' rebellion and kill its prime movers in 1821. Thereafter, however, the two figures had become rivals and engaged in a struggle for power. Bashir Jumblatt frowned upon his namesake grand emir's desire to consolidate his power by corroding the *'muqata* system. At the same time, he strove to unite the Druze under him.³³ Against the demographic rise of the Maronites, Jumblatt resettled hundreds of Druze families between the eastern Mediterranean coasts and Hawran, the stronghold of the Druze.³⁴ He harboured hopes to 'attain the highest authority of the Mountain', taking over from Bashir II the sub-governorship of the Druze.³⁵

The rivalry between the two Bashirs turned into hostility in 1822 in the context of a complex altercation between the Ottoman governors of Damascus and Sidon, when Jumblatt sided with the paşa of Damascus and Bashir II with the paşa of Sidon.³⁶ As the sultan endorsed the former's cause, Bashir II found himself in a perilous position and went into self-exile in Cairo. There Mehmed Ali Paşa received him warmly. Having set his eyes on an invasion of Syria, the paşa of Egypt first resolved the differences between the pašas of Damascus and Sidon, and then made a secret pact with Bashir II. As the grand emir set out for Lebanon, Mehmed Ali told him 'we will meet again... [O]ur meeting [will take place] in Syria', indicating his intentions of occupation.³⁷

This was the point at which Lebanon was drawn into Mehmed Ali's sphere of influence. From then on, the paşa supported the grand emir's policies. When the latter found out that the Jumblatts had schemed with the Sunni Shihabs against

³³ Firro, *Druzes*, 57; Hazran, 'The Junblat', 352; Abu-Shaqra, *al-Harakāt*, 15.

³⁴ But Jumblatt's policies were hardly inimical to the Maronites. He concomitantly accorded the Maronite peasants new lands in his district in Mukhtara, and even contributed to the construction of a monastery for which Pope Pius VII sent him a letter of gratitude. Hazran, 'The Junblat', 352.

³⁵ Henri Guys, *Beyrouth et le Liban. Relations d'un séjour de plusieurs années dans ce pays*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar Lahad Khater, 1985 [1850]), 79; 'Note relative à la victoire du pacha d'Acre et de l'émir Béchir sur les Druzes, 7 Feb. 1825, AMAE Papiers Desages 60PAAP/34/146.

³⁶ Hasan Damietta to Mehmed Ali Paşa, 21 July 1822, DWQ Bahr Barra Files (8). N. 53; Abdullah Paşa to Mehmed Ali Paşa, 5 Aug. 1822, DWQ Bahr Barra Files (8). N. 54; Muhammad Necib Efendi to Mehmed Ali Paşa, 2 July 1822, DWQ Bahr Barra Files (8). N. 48; 'Abdullah Abi 'Abdullah, *Tārīkh al-muarīn wa-masīhī al-sharq 'abr al-'usur III* (Dar Malaqāt, 1997), 218.

³⁷ 'Amil Khury and 'Adil Sulayman, *al-Siyasāt al-duwaliyyaa fi-l-sharq al-arabi II* (Beirut: Dār al-nashr li-l-iyāsa wa-l-nashr, 1960), 95; BOA HAT 384/20615; 384/20627.

him in order to control Lebanon, and the mountain subsequently descended into civil war, the paşa of Egypt unreservedly supported Bashir II.³⁸

Against this alliance, Bashir Jumblatt rallied the support of several families that included all the grand emir's nemeses—Muslim Shihabs, some Maronite sheikhs from Kisrawan, Orthodox Christians, and even the Yazbakis and their Druze peasants, who harboured personal animosity towards the grand emir or were charmed by the Jumblatts' lucrative gifts. Some 14,000 Druze were enlisted against the grand emir's troops. The latter consisted largely of Maronite peasantry but were also backed by Mehmed Ali (and through him the paşa of Sidon) and some Druze sheikhs.³⁹ This inaugurated a wider and more perilous period of Shihab–Jumblatt rivalry in the mountain that was to last at least until 1861.

Even though it might at first sight seem to be a cross-sectarian conflict, religious slogans were adopted to mobilize men and rouse the soldiers among the Druze in the Jumblatt camp as well as among the Maronites on the grand emir's side.⁴⁰ Religious identities *were* mobilized for political purposes. In the end, despite their numerical superiority and all the sectarian exaltation, the Jumblatts could not hold in Samqaniyya against the Mehmed Ali-backed army of Bashir II in early 1825. After several weeks of pursuit in the snow, the Druze leaders, including Bashir Jumblatt, were captured. The latter was then strangled in Sidon.⁴¹ His palace and assets in Mukhtara were destroyed, and the family's lands confiscated.⁴²

The Jumblatts' fall is often considered as one of the milestones of the open-ended sectarian political struggle in Mount Lebanon. According to the Lebanese historian Kamal Salibi, the Druze never forgot Bashir II's treatment of them, even though the grand emir had crushed the Jumblatts not because they were Druze but because he saw them as dangerous political opponents. The Druze would thereafter cease to cooperate wholeheartedly in the affairs of the emirate, instead awaiting an opportunity for revenge.⁴³ The American scholar Leila Fawaz argues: 'the death of [Sheikh Jumblatt]...introduced sectarianism into Lebanese politics.'⁴⁴

It is not entirely correct to confine the origins of sectarian violence in Lebanon to one single event. The rise of sectarianism in the mountain was a complex process that, for the moment, included the growing communal consciousness of the Maronites through the burgeoning clergy and the peasantry, as well as the

³⁸ BOA HAT 386/20670; 386/20671; 386/20672; 386/20676; Mehmed Ali Paşa to Abdullah Paşa, 4 Feb. 1824, DWQ Bahr Barra Files (22). N. 40; BOA HAT 387/20678; Haydar, *Lubnan*, 723; cf. Harik, *Politics*, 224.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 226–7.

⁴⁰ 'Note relative à la victoire du pacha d'Acre et de l'émir Béchir sur les Druzes', 7 Feb. 1825, AMAE Papiers Desages 60PAAP/34/146; Firro, *Druzes*, 58; Mishaqa, *Murder*, 94.

⁴¹ BOA HAT 1231/47990; see also HAT 1229/47938; Salibi, *Lebanon*, 47; Firro, *Druzes*, 61.

⁴² For the details of the fighting, see BOA HAT 668/32604; 1231/47987; 1231/47988; 1231/47989; Hariki, *Politics*, 226, 235; Polk, *Opening*, 84.

⁴³ Salibi, *Lebanon*, 27.

⁴⁴ Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 19.

Jumblatts' bid for leadership in the mountain which provoked a fierce and deadly rivalry with the Maronite grand emir, Bashir II.⁴⁵ It unfolded at a time—before 1840 and in the first decades of the nineteenth century—when the old *'muqata* system and the allegiances between the lords and peasants had been somewhat tarnished by egalitarian ideas circulating among the clergy and the commoners. The influence of the once-powerful *muqatadjis* was now reduced to the administration of their peasants, 'though in a precarious manner unlike the past', and without any significant influence over the grand emir which they had previously enjoyed.⁴⁶

As for the Jumblatts, after their suppression by the Egyptian-backed Bashir II, the remaining family members fled to the Hawran plains—a Druze-dominated region in the south-east. There they sought shelter, keeping a low profile until a new opportunity arose for them to return to their lands in Mukhtara. That opportunity manifested itself when Mehmed Ali's daring Syrian campaign began in 1831.

When the Egyptians Came

After Grand Emir Bashir II eliminated the Jumblatts and established his absolute authority in Lebanon in 1825 with the support of Mehmed Ali, he sent news to Cairo, thanking the paşa and declaring his 'continued compliance with [Mehmed Ali's] orders'.⁴⁷ Six years later, when Mehmed Ali sent his army and navy to Syria and asked for Bashir II's assistance, however, the latter was at first hesitant. He was uncertain how to react to a conflict between Istanbul and Cairo, fearful of being jammed between their political differences.

Bashir II made his mind up only after receiving a furious letter from the paşa of Egypt, who asked him to support the Egyptian army in its campaign—otherwise 'my great love for you will change and... I will send five regiments of *Jihadis* to [Mount Lebanon] and I will destroy it'.⁴⁸ Mehmed Ali did more than threaten Bashir II, though, pledged also that he would help Bashir II 'cut out the Druze' for good this time.⁴⁹ The grand emir then sent his son to aid the Egyptian campaign, and remained loyal to Mehmed Ali until he was dismissed from power in 1840.

⁴⁵ Perusing the archival documents of the Maronite church, Harik concludes that the Maronite clergy were vigorously seeking 'to sever political and social relations between the Maronites and the Druze', which meant 'not only the separation of the two communities but also the rejection of the *iqta* tie [the *'ammiyyah*] between the Maronite subject and the Druze lords, or between the Druze subject and his Maronite lord.' Harik, *Politics*, 241–2.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 231; Firro, *Druzes*, 61–2; see also M. Michaud and M. Poujoulat, *Correspondance d'Orient*, vol. 4 (Paris: Ducollet, 1834), 341–2.

⁴⁷ Amir Bashir al-Shihabi to Mehmed Ali Paşa, 5 Sept. 1825, DWQ Bahr Barra Files (10) N. 1.

⁴⁸ Polk, *Opening*, 96.

⁴⁹ Mehmed Ali Paşa to Amir Bashir al-Shihabi, 6 Sept. 1831, DWQ Dafatir Mu'ayya Turki Files (40), N. 766.

For the Jumblatts, and other Druze sheikhs—Abu Nakads, Talhuqs, and Abd ‘al Maliks—all of whom had been defeated at least once by Bashir II, the civil war between Istanbul and Cairo was the moment for revenge and the opportunity to return home. As the news of Mehmed Ali’s *démarche* reached them, they sent each other secret messages deciding to declare their allegiance to the sultan. With what resources remained in their hands from the fighting in previous decades, they joined the Ottoman imperial army.⁵⁰ The Ottoman authorities reinstated Numan Jumblatt, Bashir’s elder son, as the sheikh of the sheikhs in the mountain, as a measure against ‘the clear evidence of the treachery of [Bashir II] toward the Supreme State’, alluding to his alliance with Mehmed Ali.⁵¹

However, the hopes of the Jumblatts and the other Druze sheikhs were shattered when Ibrahim’s army defeated Ottoman forces in Homs and Konya.⁵² Sheikh Numan Jumblatt then ran away to Asia Minor, together with the fleeing Ottoman regiments. The Porte settled him first in Bursa and then Karahisar-i Sahib (modern day Afyon), though neither the local population nor the sheikh himself was happy with this new arrangement, the former finding it too expensive to host him, the latter asking for resettlement in more developed İzmir (Smyrna) or Rumelian provinces of the empire.⁵³ Numan stayed in Western Anatolia until 1839. The remainder of his family continued a silent residence in Aleppo and the Shuf region, while some fled back to Hawran.

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After the war between Istanbul and Cairo was arrested by the Kütahya truce of May 1833, Mehmed Ali’s son Ibrahim Paşa became fully engaged in the administrative reorganization of Syrian provinces, which were almost entirely excluded from the internal policy of the Ottoman government.⁵⁴ In the beginning, the Syrian population, and particularly the Christians, showed enthusiasm for the arrival of the Egyptians.

The French-backed Egyptian rulers of Syria knew that they needed domestic collaboration in their campaign. They therefore followed a very active policy of positive public relations with generous payments for supplies provided by locals to their army, ordered their men to avoid plunder, and sought to generate friendly relations with the wider populace, particularly the ‘rich local inhabitants’,

⁵⁰ Polk, *Opening*, 97. Hammud Abu Nakad’s plan to join the Ottoman forces failed, however, as his correspondence with the Ottoman paşas was intercepted by Bashir II: Firro, *Druzes*, 62. In his chronicle, Amir Haidar Shihab notes that the Druzes and Christians were engaged in limited fighting in Deir al-Qamar before the Ottoman and Egyptian forces confronted one another: Polk, *Opening*, 136.

⁵¹ BOA HAT 354/19898; 908/39773; Polk, *Opening*, 99–100, 103; Hazran, ‘Junblat’, 352; Firro, *Druzes*, 62.

⁵² See Ch. 5. Sebahattin Samur, *İbrahim Paşa Yönetimi Altında Suriye* (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1995), 29.

⁵³ BOA HAT 696/33505; 1231/47997.

⁵⁴ Petrunina, *Social’no*, 314.

introducing themselves as the liberators of Syrians from the oppressor Ottoman paşas.⁵⁵ They promised to lower taxes and exempt the locals from conscription, and made active efforts to improve the condition of the Christians.⁵⁶

As the Russian traveller Lieutenant-General P. P. Lvov and Consul Bazili observed, non-Muslims were admitted to the administrative bodies such as city councils (*majlis al-shura*) as well as in judicial functions and the tax offices.⁵⁷ In Lebanon, representatives (*vekils*) were appointed for each village according to their dominant denomination, and a main court, comprising three judges allocated with respect to their sects (two Maronites and one Druze), was established—a measure usually and mistakenly attributed by the revisionist literature to the post-*Tanzimat* restoration politics of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁸

Ferdinand Perrier, a French aide-de-camp in the Egyptian army in Syria, wrote that ‘all [the] humiliating distinctions’ held against the Christians in the past—such as only being permitted to dress in certain colours and fabrics, or not being allowed to ride horses—were abolished, ‘as Muslims and non-Muslim believers were declared equal’.⁵⁹ These all proved to be crucial changes which dovetailed with growing egalitarian sentiments among the Maronite clergy and peasantry. But they also engendered the institutionalization of sectarian politics.

Furthermore, the implementation of modern Egyptian state apparatus warranted broader public security. The sanitary system was improved. Freedom of movement was facilitated through the introduction of government orders to enter towns.⁶⁰ The Bedouin threat was checked and roads were secured.⁶¹ Thanks to these measures, Beirut transformed from a backwater town into one of the Levant’s major commercial ports, with a brisk increase in the volume of trade in the 1830s.⁶² Equally importantly, under Mehmed Ali’s protection, local merchants, mostly consisting of Christian families, ‘began to coalesce into a powerful class of their own’, which (as we will see) would within a few decades significantly

⁵⁵ P. P. Lvov, *Siriya, Livan i Palestina v opisaniyax rossijskix puteshestvennikov, konsul’skix i voennyx obzorax pervoj poloviny XIX veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), 214; Petrunina, *Social’no*, 316; Edward Hogg, *Visit to Alexandria, Damascus and Jerusalem during the Successful Campaigns of Ibrahim Pasha*, vol. 1 (London: Saunders & Otley, 1835), 193.

⁵⁶ Samur, *Ibrahim*, 49.

⁵⁷ Lvov, *Siriya*, 214; Bazili, *Siriya*, 126; Petrunina, *Social’no*, 319.

⁵⁸ Lvov, *Siriya*, 214; Petrunina, *Social’no*, 317–18; Latifa M. Salem, *Al-Ḥukm al-maṣri fi al-shām 1831–1841* (Cairo: Madbouli, 1990), 84–5.

⁵⁹ Ferdinand Perrier, *La Syrie sous le gouvernement de Méhémet-Ali jusqu’en 1840* (Paris: Bertrand, 1842), 108.

⁶⁰ Polk, *Opening*, 112–13.

⁶¹ Samur, *Ibrahim*, 49. For Mehmed Ali Paşa’s control over the Bedouins and the hajj routes, see Aharoni, *The Pasha’s Bedouin*.

⁶² Toufouf Abou-Hodeib, ‘Quarantine and Trade: The Case of Beirut, 1831–40’, *International Journal of Maritime History* 19(2) (Dec. 2007): 233; ‘Commercial Report’, 16 Nov. 1835, TNA FO 78/264. See also Charles Issawi, ‘British Trade and the Rise of Beirut, 1830–1860’, *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 8(1) (Jan. 1977): 92, 94. As Issawi tells us, ‘the total number of ships entering [Beirut] rose from 341 in 1835 to ... 680 in 1838.’

challenge the authority of the *muqatadjis* and the feudal order, alongside the Christian peasantry and the clergy.⁶³ In the latter half of the 1830s, new consulates were opened in Beirut by Britain, Belgium, the United States, and Russia, to oversee growing commercial relations as well as to protect the interests of their co-religionists.⁶⁴

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Once a hero and liberator of the Syrians, Mehmed Ali and his son Ibrahim turned into tyrants in the eyes of the locals within just a few years. Because of the continuous risk of war with Istanbul in the mid-1830s and the need for resources from Syria, they began to levy troops in coastal Lebanon, disarm the mountaineers and particularly the Druze to prevent an Ottoman-backed uprising, monopolize silk production (which was the main local industry), and impose the heavy *firda* taxes on all males regardless of their religion.⁶⁵ The locals were further aggravated by the imposition of *corvée* labour, the deforestation carried out to provide timber for the Egyptian navy, and the increase in prices due to the presence of a high number of troops.⁶⁶

All these prompted resistance against the Egyptian rule. The Druze risings in Palestine, Tripoli, and the region of Latakia in 1834 were quelled only when Mehmed Ali ordered, in the interests of ‘politics and humanity’, the suspension of conscription among the Druze.⁶⁷ But, due to fears of war with Istanbul, it was reimposed in 1837, and new revolts broke out in Hawran at the end of the year. A region traditionally inhabited by the Druze, the population of Hawran swelled in the 1830s with the arrival of their co-religionists who had fled the mountain or Palestine to avoid Egyptian oppression. During the 1837–8 uprising, Druze forces achieved successive victories against the Egyptian units.⁶⁸ According to Firro, the sense of Druze communal solidarity grew stronger at the time.⁶⁹

This was another major moment in Lebanon where religious identities were used for political ends. Adamant Druze resistance led Ibrahim Paşa to ask for

⁶³ Abou-Hodeib, ‘Quarantine and Trade’, 241–2; Kirsten Alff, ‘The Business of Property: Levantine Joint-Stock Companies, Land, Law, and Capitalist Development around the Mediterranean, 1850–1925’ (doctoral thesis, Stanford University, 2019), 56.

⁶⁴ M. Baron to Minister AE, 10 Oct. 1838, DIPLOBEL 940/38/9; Butenev to Nesselrode, 13 Nov. 1839, AVPRI, f. 149, o. 502/1, d. 397, ll. 1–3.

⁶⁵ Perrier, *Syrie*, 359; Farah, ‘Road to Intervention’, 12–13.

⁶⁶ Bashir II to Hannah Bahri, 7 June 1835, DWQ Abdin File No. 251, D.N. 104; Ibrahim Paşa to Mehmed Ali Paşa, 7 June 1835, DWQ Abdin Files (251), D.N. 100; Mehmed Ali Paşa to Ibrahim Paşa, 6 June 1835, DWQ Abdin Files (251), D.N. 51; Ibrahim Paşa to Mehmed Ali Paşa, 25 May 1835, DWQ Abdin Files (251), D.N. 64; Polk, *Opening*, 123–4, 156–9; Makdisi, *Culture*, 53; Mishaqa, *Murder*, 121; Henry Churchill, *The Druzes and the Maronites under the Turkish Rule from 1840 to 1860* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1862), 31.

⁶⁷ On Mehmed Ali’s order, Mehmed Ali Paşa to Ibrahim Paşa, 15 June 1835, DWQ Abdin Files (212), D.N. 76. For an Ottoman report written on the origin of the uprising, see BOA i.MTZ.(05) 3/91. See also Firro, *Druzes*, 68–9.

⁶⁸ BOA HAT 380/20555; Alexandre Deval to Comte Mole, 16 May 1838, DDC 218.

⁶⁹ Firro, *Druzes*, 66–78.

reinforcements from Bashir II. The latter took the reins into his own hands and in 1837 campaigned hard, with extensive use of sectarian vocabulary. The grand emir not only enlisted Maronite peasants against their former overlords but also expelled all the Druze working in his palace, and issued proclamations that those who joined the insurgents would be subject to harsh punishments including the destruction of their houses and villages.⁷⁰

By June 1838, about 15,000 Maronites fully equipped for war were ready to fight under Bashir II.⁷¹ Even though some historians argue that the Christians did not fight the Druze out of religious zeal,⁷² before the fighting began Bashir II had sent a letter to 'all the Christian soldiers on Mount Lebanon', thanking them for their 'love and obedience' to the Egyptian government, and announcing that Ibrahim Paşa distributed arms 'in order to defend your property and to manifest your pride against your enemy, the community of the heretical Druzes, who deny the prophets'.⁷³

The country then descended once more into terror. The Druze forces were overwhelmed during major encounters over the summer, at least 1,000 of them being slaughtered by Bashir's men in the post of Bardah.⁷⁴ What makes this second major Druze rising against Egyptian rule so important is that some of the Druze *muqatadjis* fought with, and were suppressed by, their former Maronite tenants, which aggravated tensions between certain members of the two sects.⁷⁵

The sectarian disaggregation among Lebanese society grew stronger still in 1840, ironically at a point when the Maronite peasantry, Maronite Khazin sheikhs, and the Druze chiefs had in May once more formed a pragmatic alliance with each other to rise against Ibrahim Paşa and Bashir II.⁷⁶ What had drawn them together was the common threats they suffered from: unremitting conscription, *corvée* labour, and heavy taxation.⁷⁷ They made a covenant in Antelias to act as one. However, when some of the Druze sheikhs dropped out of the league because Bashir II promised them the legal possession of the lands in the Kisrawan region, the Maronite peasantry became immensely resentful of the 'betrayal' of the Druzes.⁷⁸ They nonetheless persevered, surrounding Beirut and attacking the

⁷⁰ Ibrahim Paşa to Muhammad Serif Paşa, 28 Feb. 1838, DWQ Abdin Files (255), D.N. 346; Firro, *Druzes*, 73.

⁷¹ On Mehmed Ali's order, Mehmed Ali Paşa to Ibrahim Paşa 15 June 1835, DWQ Abdin Files (212), D.N. 76. On the origin of the uprising, see BOA i.MTZ.(05) 3/91; Firro, *Druzes*, 68–9.

⁷² Makdisi, *Culture*, 55.

⁷³ Firro, *Druzes*, 80–81; Chafseand to Secretary of State (Washington, DC), 30 Sept. 1838, NARA R59/T367.

⁷⁴ Mahmud Bey to the Governor of Beirut, 5 July 1838, DWQ Abdin Files (256), D.N. 67; Alexandre Deval to Comte Mole, 16 May 1838, Deval to Mole, 20 Sept. 1838, DDC, 224–5; BOA HAT 380/20555; BOA 374/20428; Firro, *Druzes*, 74–5; Wood to Ponsonby, 14 Oct. 1839, RWEC, 136.

⁷⁵ Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 21.

⁷⁶ Khalaf, *Civil and Uncivil Violence*, 70, 79–85.

⁷⁷ Defter III, 102- a, b; 'Abdullah, *Tarikh*, 242–4.

⁷⁸ Farah, 'The Road to Intervention', 13–14; Harik, *Politics*, 246.

town every day, exchanging fire with the regulars within the town before retiring again.⁷⁹ In the end, the rebellion was brutally quelled in July 1840.

As noted in the previous chapter, this moment of defeat and desperation for the Lebanese—more precisely, Maronite peasants—coincided with the London Convention of 15 July. British, Ottoman, Russian, and eventually Austrian and Prussian agents daily arrived in Lebanon to end the rule of Mehmed Ali and Ibrahim there. From then on, Mount Lebanon became the epicentre of inter-imperial cooperation and competition.

In conclusion, a serious blow had already been dealt to the old *'muqata* system in Lebanon before the 1840 intervention. The pre-1840 era had seen fierce inter-familial (Jumblatt/Yazbaki, and more importantly, Druze Jumblatt/Maronite Shihab) animosities, the suppression of the *muqatadjis* by Bashir II, the rise of egalitarian ideas among the Maronite clergy and peasantry, their claims to property, the establishment of new representative institutions, Druze aspirations for autonomy led by the Jumblatts, fierce religious conflict, and the formation of quasi-sectarian councils. Sectarianism and class consciousness emerged in Ottoman Lebanon during Bashir II's rule, not after he was discredited in October 1840 by the agents of the Great Powers.⁸⁰ I will beg to differ from Makdisi here: 'the conditions for a sectarian storm' had already been created before the Powers arrived.⁸¹ In reality, it was the existing crevice in the social order that provided European and Ottoman imperial actors with channels for influence, interference, and control, and with unique opportunities to sustain their interests. What the imperial agents did was to hasten the movement of the storm clouds towards each other, and magnify the intensity of the impact, as the age of the Eastern Question began in Mount Lebanon.

⁷⁹ Chafseand to Secretary of State, 24 June 1840, NARA R59/T367.

⁸⁰ Ponsoy to Wood, 2 Sept. 1840, RWEC, 159.

⁸¹ Makdisi, *The Age of Coexistence*, 64.

The Age of the Eastern Question

A few months after the Ottoman defeat in the Battle of Nizib (June 1839), the Ottoman grand vizier Hüsrev Paşa dispatched the two heads of the Jumblatt family, Numan and Said, from Asia Minor to Egypt. A few other Druze *muqattajis*, Qasim al-Kadi and Yusuf Abu Nakad were to accompany the Jumblatts. Hüsrev's was a tactical move to destabilize Mount Lebanon, as he asked his old nemesis Mehmed Ali to procure for the Druze the restoration of their property in the mountain. The grand vizier expected that that it would deal a blow to Cairo's relations with Grand Emir Bashir II.¹

Since the European Great Powers had just declared their support of the Porte, and Mehmed Ali was anxious to solve the dispute with Istanbul before 'foreign involvement', the paşa of Egypt accepted Hüsrev's request. He did not immediately send the Druze sheikhs to Lebanon, though. He knew that the grand emir would refuse to return the property of his Jumblatt rivals. What Mehmed Ali did instead was keep Numan and Said in Egypt and grant them an allowance of £170 per annum, with the purpose of attaching the Jumblatt brothers to his interest. His plan was to use them at the right time.²

Mehmed Ali dispatched the Druze chiefs back to Mount Lebanon only one year later, when the intervention of the Quadruple Alliance and the Porte began in August 1840 and proved disastrous to him. He endowed Numan and Said with military command, money, and decorations, and tasked them with consolidating the south of Lebanon, where, according to Mehmed Ali, the Maronites were 'the fiercest of [all] the Maronites'. He pledged to them the restitution of their ancient privileges and rights as well as their traditional role as the rulers of the mountain.³ It was with these expectations that the Jumblatt leaders bade their farewell to him in late 1840 and set out for home after nearly ten years of exile. But, once back in Mount Lebanon, they did not find peace and quiet. The mountain was embroiled in inter-imperial rivalries, and struggles for liberties and privileges. It was already ripe for civil war.

¹ L'Ambassade de France à Constantinople to Desages, 7 July 1840, AMAE PAAP37/77.

² Rose to Aberdeen, 22 June 1841, TNA FO 226/26, f. 112; Mishahaq, *Murder*, 224.

³ Bashir al-Qasim to Wood, 18 Nov. 1840, RWEC, 182–3.

‘The Old Days Have Passed’: The Civil War of 1841 and its Aftermath

When Numan and Said arrived in the mountain in late January or early February, they observed that British influence was paramount there. Especially since the Ottoman *serasker* and interim governor İzzet Paşa left Syria in November 1840 after accidentally shooting himself in the leg, the British dragoman Wood had emerged as the most influential figure. He had been endowed with wide authorities by the Porte, and then he had successfully orchestrated the Lebanese revolt since the summer of 1840. A contemporary French author compared the British dragoman to ‘a vizier speaking with the authority of the Qu’ran’.⁴ The French consul in Beirut, the comte de Meloizes, grudgingly wrote that Wood was the ‘de facto governor general of Syria’.⁵ Wood himself was proud that ‘the country may be said to have been administered by us [the British]’.⁶

He had deposed Grand Emir Bashir II the previous October and sent him into exile due to the Shihab leader’s loyalty to Mehmed Ali and reluctance to cooperate with the Quadruple Alliance. The new grand emir, Bashir Qasim Shihab, was regarded by many as an instrument of Wood’s control.⁷ To the Jumblatts, Bashir II’s deposition from power was good news. But they were wary of Wood’s dominant position. They believed that Wood was a Catholic, and therefore a Maronite sympathizer. That he had procured a decoration from the Ottoman sultan for the Maronite patriarch Hubaysh and direct representation before the Porte in Istanbul were testaments to this, they assumed.⁸ Moreover, they sensed that Wood was politically and emotionally distant from the *muqatadjis*.

Only in the latter sense were they correct, however. In fact, Wood was brought up by his family as a Protestant.⁹ But he was indeed opposed to feudal rule in Mount Lebanon. He had collaborated with the Christian peasants during the 1840 intervention, and had pledged to them at the time that with the Gülhane Edict of 1839, their liberties, property, and security, both as Christians and peasants, would be placed under the guarantee of the imperial state. The British dragoman knew that the peasants had clung to this hope ever since, while fighting tooth and nail against Mehmed Ali’s armies. And now, they eagerly waited for the promises to be kept.

The quandary was that, even theoretically, guaranteeing the peasants’ liberties by law was at odds with the restitution of the feudal privilege of the *muqatadjis*,

⁴ Bouyrat, *La France*, 283.

⁵ Meloizes to Guizot, 26 Feb. 1841, AMAE CPC Beirut, vol. 2; cf. Bouyrat, *La France*, 283.

⁶ Wood to Ponsonby, 17 Feb. 1841, RWEC, 213.

⁷ Steindl Diary, 8 Oct. 1840, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei VI 76; Stürmer to Metternich, 21 Oct. 1840, HHStA, StAbt, Türkei VI 76.

⁸ Defter IV, p. 67 a–b. Also in Ata, ‘Osmanlı’, 179; Rose to Palmerston, 22 June 1841, TNA FO 226/26/112.

⁹ Grenville Withers to Wood, 7 April 1842, SAMECO Box 5, File 1.

who expected that their properties would be fully restored to them. This was why Wood considered the return of former lands of the *muqatadjis* to them by feudal right to be 'impossible'. It would undermine the authority of the sultan since it was 'diametrically opposed' to the liberties introduced in the Gülhane Edict. He sided with the peasants, even if not with the Maronite church, considering the *muqatadjis* as 'little tyrants' who were inclined to oppress the 'poor peasants' at their '*muqatas*. To Wood, the establishment of full security in the mountain entailed the peasants' protection from the ills of the old order.¹⁰

Due to the suspicions the Jumblatts harboured toward Wood, even though he de facto ruled the mountain, once Numan Jumblatt returned to the mountain, he immediately went to see Niven Moore, the British consul in Beirut (and Wood's brother-in-law). The Jumblatt leader sought to obtain by 'feudal right' the possession of the Jumblatts' former landed property that had been confiscated in 1825.¹¹ This had been promised to them by both Hüsrev Paşa in Istanbul and Mehmed Ali in Cairo. Moore gave him only a tentative answer, lacking any authority and any clear views on the matter.

Shortly afterwards, though, it became clear that the Jumblatts' property in the Shuf region had been confiscated by the imperial treasury (not by Bashir II), and it was returned to them by law. The family then resettled in their residence in Mukhtara and retained control of most of their former *muqatas*. They immediately became the richest family in Mount Lebanon once again, only to realize that, as with most other Druze sheikhs reinstated to their lands, the quality of their relations with their Maronite tenants had changed.¹²

After more than a decade of absence of their overlords, the Maronite peasantry had grown accustomed to direct rule and the protection of a Maronite Shihabi emir against the *muqatadjis*.¹³ Now more vocal political actors, with the support of the Church behind them, they held on tightly to the religious rights and liberties that had been introduced first during the Egyptian interregnum and then pledged by the Gülhane Edict of 1839. They were therefore unhappy with the return of the Jumblatts and other Druze sheikhs in exile. They complained to Patriarch Hubaysh about 'the harsh treatment they were receiving from their lords', and the obnoxious attitude of the Druze officers whom the *muqatadjis*, including the Jumblatts, had appointed to collect taxes.¹⁴ The patriarch's attempts to intervene in the *muqatas* on behalf of the peasants became a recipe for crisis.

¹⁰ Wood to Huseyin Paşa, 22 Feb. 1841, *RWEC*, 218–19.

¹¹ Wood to Ponsonby, 24 Feb. 1841, *RWEC*, 222–3; Harik, *Politics*, 253; Hazran, 'Janblat', 353.

¹² Rose to Palmerston, 22 June 1841, TNA FO 226/26/112; 'Rapport de Bourée sur les événements du Liban', n.d.; 'Tableau des familles druzes classées en raison de leur importance et de leur influence', AMAE 50MD/43/12–15.

¹³ Harik, *Politics*, 251–3.

¹⁴ Hubaysh Papers, MS 5812, 8215, and 3522; cf. Harik, *Politics*, 253–4.

Observing these tensions as early as February 1841, Wood presciently reported that a 'partial civil war' might erupt in Lebanon 'sooner or later' as a natural outcome of 'the effervescence that had existed for years in the minds of the people, of the [feudal] tyranny and oppression under which they suffered, of smothered and angry feelings, and of the [peasantry's] sudden emancipation from slavery'.¹⁵ He listed seven material causes that could stir up hostilities:

firstly, the [Muslim] population began to evince a disposition to assume their ancient superiority over the Christians. Secondly, the Christians of the different persuasions revived old religious animosities and controversies among themselves. Thirdly, the Druses betrayed their secret intention of separating themselves from the Maronites whose supremacy over them is a matter of national vexation to them, fourthly, the [*muqatadjis*] or Lords of the Manor of every denomination insisted upon having restored to them their feudal rights over the peasantry, fifthly, the peasantry said they would resist it and claimed the equal participation of rights granted to them by the [*Tanzimat*], which promise made them take up arms to expel the enemy [in 1840]. Sixthly, the Sheikhs reproduced their old family feuds... and, seventhly, the Arabs of the [d]esert commenced their encroachments and their predatory excursions on the borders. Added to the above the French [government] began to intrigue more openly.¹⁶

These emotional and material factors illustrate the degree of convolution in the politics of Lebanon. And each of these merits serious attention in analyses of the origins of the civil wars in the 1840s and later in 1860.¹⁷

The land disputes, however, were of pivotal importance, as by the end of the year they had sharpened all other differences into violence. As early as the first months of 1841, as Makdisi tells us, Mount Lebanon buzzed with questions over which land belonged to whom, and how to 'reconceptualize' these lands and the people that dwelt on them.¹⁸ Not all Druze *muqatadjis* were as fortunate as the Jumblatts in terms of retaining possession of their pre-1831 lands. Particularly in the environs of the silk-rich Deir al-Qamar, the land issue became very strained because the Nakads were not allowed by Grand Emir Bashir Qasim Shihab to return to their former *muqatas*, possibly at the direction of Wood.¹⁹ Furthermore, the Maronite inhabitants of these *muqatas* adamantly refused to submit to the authority of their former 'Druze' masters. They would agree only to

¹⁵ Wood to Ponsonby, 17 Feb. 1841, *RWEC*, 213–14. ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ However, due to limitations of space, I will not delve into all of these dynamics in my discussion here. For a truly thorough and comprehensive study that details the origins of conflict with a multi-level analysis, see Farah, *Politics*, esp. ch. 4.

¹⁸ Makdisi, *Culture*, 67.

¹⁹ The grand emir based his argument on the grounds that these *muqatas* had been confiscated by Bashir II in the 1810s and had become a Shihab belonging according to the Ottoman law.

a Maronite sheikh as an overseer of the region. The Nakads were thereupon settled in 'Baiy, where they worked to turn the situation in their favour.²⁰

From the outset, a degree of sectarian mistrust, reminiscent of pre-1840 politics, was discernible in the mountain. So was the weakening of old feudal ties. Seeing that the differences and resentments amongst the mountaineers were critical and had to be urgently addressed, Wood encouraged the establishment of a mixed consultative council (*divan*), which duly assembled in May 1841.²¹ In a similar vein to the council established under Egyptian rule in the 1830s, this new *Tanzimat* council consisted of members to be elected by the patriarchs of the Christian churches (Maronite, Greek Catholic, and Greek Orthodox), by the Druze, Turkish (Sunni), and Metuwali (Shi'ite) law (one each), by the people of the five districts of Mount Lebanon (one each), as well as by a president to be appointed by the grand emir.

The mixed composition of the council—sectarian and ethnic as well as regional—reflected the mixed solution that Wood strove to introduce in the country under the inspiration of the Gülhane Edict. He wanted to prevent the return of the ancient feudal system that had characterized pre-1831 Lebanese politics by means of introducing a new model whereby the council would protect the liberties of peasants without completely excluding the *muqatadjis* from political decision-making processes and maintaining their status as elites.

However, a majority of the Druze feudal lords, and in fact also the Maronites *muqatadjis*, cleaved to their class instincts, and felt ill-disposed to permit the curbing of their powers through the institution of a superior authority (the council) that would intervene in the 'internal' problems of their *muqatas*. The Jumblatts sought to block the assembly of the council by suggesting an increase in the number of Druze representatives. Issues remained unaddressed. Bitter sentiments lingered. Small-scale skirmishes even took place in the disputed lands of Deir al-Qamar region between the Maronite peasants and the Druze Nakad sheikhs in the spring of 1841.²² With hindsight, one might say that these were the rolls of thunder before the storm.

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The prime movers and victims of the violence that would soon ensue were almost entirely Lebanese, mainly the Maronites, the Druze, and the Greek Orthodox. But like the Mamluks and Albanians of the 1800s in Ottoman Egypt,²³ these local actors also looked to grasp the hands of European and Ottoman imperial agents in the overwhelmingly rapid stream of events while navigating their direction in the

²⁰ Bourée to Guizot, 19 Aug. 1841, DDC vol. 6, 423; Harik, *Politics*, 253.

²¹ 'Memorandum from Wood to Emir Bashir for forming provisional regulations for the government of Mt Lebanon', 11 Feb. 1841, SAMECO Box 4.

²² Farah, *Politics*, 91–7. ²³ See Ch. 3.

confused tide of their time. Unlike all the previous civil wars fought in the mountain, violence in 1841 and after proved to be of an inter-imperial character.

In fact, already in the 1830s, when Lebanon had turned into a major commercial centre with increasing missionary activity under the relatively more stable Egyptian rule, the country had become an arena for sectarian/inter-imperial competition among the European Powers. For instance, when the Russian general consulate in Jaffa had been moved to Beirut, 'this market of the whole of Syria', one of St Petersburg's specific aims was to 'supervise the intrigues of [the Maronites against the Orthodox] and to take timely action [against them]'.²⁴

In 1839, during their anti-Egyptian rebellion in Hawran, the Druze had sought the guardianship of Britain against French-backed Egypt 'with perfect conviction that they would enjoy the same protection and privileges as [Britain's] other Colonies[,] particularly India...'²⁵ In return, British authorities agreed that they would 'obtain for [the Druze] the best security that hereafter they shall not be disturbed in the free enjoyment of their own institutions & liberty & security for their persons and property'.²⁶ Just like the Mamluks in the 1800s, the Druze would repeatedly remind the British of this promise.

In the early 1840s, Mount Lebanon was subsumed in the transimperial security culture. The Powers continuously and directly intervened in its domestic affairs. They held ambassadorial and consular conferences in Istanbul and Syria at the time, so that they could act in accord with each other, perpetuating their interests while cushioning their rivalries. Controversial as it might sound, this European co-imperialism aimed to establish a 'benevolent' Western protectorate over the East to supervise the 'half-civilized' mountain-dwellers to civilization—something that Alphonse de Lamartine had argued for in 1840.²⁷ But, at the same time, the agents of the interfering Powers, and particularly Britain and France, were engaged in ardent competition, in a geostrategic struggle that aimed to restrain each other from becoming the paramount power in the Levant—a status that France had previously experienced alone and that Britain was currently enjoying. They did not want to allow any actor control of the lucrative silk industry of the mountain. Nor did they wish to permit any religious establishment to dominate the field of missionary activity.

All these demarcated the age of the Eastern Question in Lebanon. As Arsan explained better than anyone, for French thinkers and politicians, in the geostrategic sense, the Eastern Question,

²⁴ Butenev to Nesselrode, 13 Nov. 1839, AVPRI, f. 149, o. 502/1, d. 397, ll. 1–3; 'O peremeshhenii Konsul'stva iz Jaffy v Bejrut. Na podlinnike Sobstvennoy Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva rukoyu napisano. Byt' po semu', 30 Dec. 1830, AVPRI f. 149, o. 502/1, d. 397, ll. 41–5.

²⁵ Wood to Ponsonby, 14 Oct. 1839, RWEC, 136.

²⁶ Ponsonby to Wood, 17 Oct. 1839, RWEC, 138.

²⁷ N. Moore to [?], 31 May 1844, AMAE 50MD/43/94. For Lamartine's arguments, see Ch. 8.

was never... simply [a concern to strengthen France's position in the Mediterranean and to consolidate its hold over Algeria]. Nor was it primarily about maintaining the continental balance of power, though such concerns were undoubtedly of great consequence. Rather, their eyes were trained upon the Mediterranean—upon securing French supremacy upon its waves and around its shores and on preventing Britain from establishing its own hold on the middle sea. Mount Lebanon, that distant outpost of France, served an important function in such strategic calculations.²⁸

Lamartine wrote in 1838 that Syria at large could be the 'Ancona of the East'—a crucial port for French preponderance in the Mediterranean within a 'European system of alliance' that could be attached to Paris by means of local co-religionists who 'offered themselves to France'.²⁹

But France had found herself in an awkward and humiliating position since August 1840, when the Maronites, her historical protégés and local co-religionists, revolted against the French-sponsored Mehmed Ali and the latter had ferociously suppressed them. Accordingly, Franco-Maronite relations had been enfeebled, and then threatened, by the Austrian schemes to establish special relations with the Maronites with a view to assuming the historical role of France.³⁰

This was why the Guizot government took a more assertive line of action in 1841, and energetically toiled to reconfigure the Syrian order.³¹ They developed a fourfold programme with which France (i) reinforced her military presence on the spot, promising to dispatch a naval ship (which arrived only in September 1841), as some 1,500 British troops were still stationed in the Lebanon;³² (ii) initiated a diplomatic dispositive by the appointment of fixed, experienced, and well-paid diplomats particularly in the key towns of Tripoli, Sayda, Jaffa, and Caiffa; (iii) launched a triple offensive in London, Istanbul, and Beirut to pressure for the removal of Austrian and British troops from Syria as a precondition for the return of France to the Concert of Europe.³³ For this, French agents strongly advised Ottoman officials to preserve their independence from London. And (iv) France supplied credit to poor Maronite families and ecclesiastical institutions, who had suffered materially during the revolt against Mehmed Ali, and provided gifts for the propagation of religion and scholarships for education at French schools.³⁴

Day by day, the '*muqatas* of the Lebanese feudal lords were drawn into the Eastern Question. Receiving the eager succour of French agents, the Maronite

²⁸ Arsan, 'Mount Lebanon', 80–81.

²⁹ Lamartine, *La Question*, 234.

³⁰ 'Note sur les influences étrangères et la politique turque au Liban', 28 Dec. 1841, *DDC* vol. 6, 66.

³¹ 'Notes diverses relatives au Liban, 1840–63', n.d., par L. de Amandy, *AMAE* 50MD/138/327.

³² Bouyrat, *La France*, 286–7.

³³ Baron de Bourqueney to Guizot, 11 Mar. 1841, *AMAE* CP Angleterre 657; cf. Bouyrat, *La France*, 287.

³⁴ Bourée to Guizot, 18 Apr. 1841, *AMAE* CPC Beirut, vol. 2; cf. Bouyrat, *La France*, 287.

peasantry grew in confidence and found the courage to stand against their Druze overlords. Figures like bishop Tobia 'Awn (1803–71), a hardline Maronite clergyman openly devoted to the French cause, encouraged the peasants to stand for their rights. The Maronite Church had in view the continuing rule of the Maronite Shihab family, maintaining their own influence over the country, and cementing a Maronite community (*'imariyah*)—ideals that coalesced with French imperial objectives over time.

These Franco-Maronite affective ties adversely affected the peasants' personal bonds of loyalty with the Druze *muqatadjis*, tarnished as they already were. The Jumblatts were alarmed. Numan believed that the Maronites were now considering the French, the Greek Orthodox, the Russians, and the Greek Catholics, the Austrians, 'as their protectors', and the Druze were in need of one. It was necessary, above all, to maintain landlord–tenant ties and to secure the family's authority and prestige in relation to their *muqatas*. In May 1841, during an interview with Colonel Hugh Rose, who was in command of the British contingent in Lebanon at the time and who would soon become the British consul in Beirut (Wood was on his way to Istanbul at the time to advise on the future of Syria and peace talks with Mehmed Ali), Numan maintained that his family had 'now more money than [they] required and that, all he wished for now was good government and order, which would ensure him the possession of his large property'.

In Numan's view, the most effective way to secure his wealth was the 'maintenance of British connection with Syria and the education of his countrymen'. He professed that 'he himself and his people as far as he could influence them would be ready to be guided in [their] conduct by the wishes of Her Majesty's Government'. Following the model of the Catholic Jesuits, Franciscans, and Lazarists, Numan proposed setting up a college run by the British (Protestants) where his countrymen could be educated. He was ready to give Rose substantial proof of his sincerity and confidence in the British government. 'I am going to ask you to forward my request to Viscount Palmerston to permit my youngest brother Ismail to be educated in England.' He added: '[W]hen I give my brother, I give my soul.'³⁵

This was how a special relationship formed between Britain and the Jumblatts and the Druze under their sway, while Wood was away. As in 1803, when the Mamluk Alfi Bey had himself set out for London to obtain British protection, Numan sent his brother with the same purpose in 1841. Palmerston approved the dispatch of Ismail Jumblatt, Numan's brother, to London for education but not without stressing that the relationship between Britain and the Druze be based on an understanding that this link would be used to strengthen the connection of the

³⁵ Rose to Palmerston, 22 June 1841, TNA FO 226/26, f. 107.

Druze with the sovereign authority, the sultan. Britain would only use her influence in Istanbul in favour of the Druze—the very promise the British authorities had delivered to the Mamluks in 1801.³⁶

Ismail spent two years in London, mostly melancholic and homesick, and decided to return home after his instructor, Mr Pain, attempted to convert him to Protestantism. Back in Mount Lebanon, it remained for Rose to follow orders and put the Druze in touch with the Protestant (mostly American) missionaries operating in Lebanon.³⁷ Numan invited the latter to offer education to make ‘our children better than their parents’ as they were ‘alive to our own imperfections’, so that ‘our children should not inherit them by seeking the aid of those [Protestant missionaries] who had the means of raising us in the seal of civilisation’.³⁸ Shortly after, missionaries were sent also from Britain to open schools with a view to evangelizing the Druze.³⁹ Protestant–Druze activity concerned the Maronite clergy as well as the Catholic missionaries. The religious hue of the inter-imperial competition in the mountain became ever more apparent from then on.⁴⁰

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To underline once again, the Eastern Question was an intersubjective and diachronic process, and as much an Ottoman question as a European one. Besides the ambitions of the Great Powers and the interests of the Lebanese, the ambivalent policies of the Porte to restore its imperial domination in its periphery constituted a major factor that shaped the tragic course of events on the way to the civil war in Mount Lebanon in September 1841.

In the first three months of the year, ruling elites in Istanbul continuously welcomed advice from their allies in Vienna, Berlin, St Petersburg, and London on the new order to be established in Syria. The sultan’s cabinet had been keen to discuss how to conduct the reforms there. But, after the fall of the cabinet of Grand Vizier Rauf and Foreign Minister Mustafa Reşid in March 1841,⁴¹ imperial authority passed into the hands of more conservative figures, a group of reluctant reformists.

The new grand vizier, İzzet Mehmet, the former serasker who had led the Lebanon campaign in 1840, and his men followed a policy which sat uneasily with the form and formula of the *Tanzimat*.⁴² They laboured to reverse some of the *Tanzimat* reforms such as the abolition of the tax-farming system, the system of direct tax collection, and the reduction of the powers of the governors. The new ministers called for caution and

³⁶ Firro, *Druzes*, 85. ³⁷ BOA HR.SFR.3 4/67/1, May 1843.

³⁸ ‘Numan’s Testament’, in Rose to Aberdeen, 7 Dec. 1841, SAMECO Box 5, File 1. In fact, a great proportion of the higher class among the Druze were literate at the time. Bird to Anderson, 17 Oct. 1834, ABCFM vol. 1, Syria, 118/45.

³⁹ Rose to Palmerston, 7 Sept. 1841, TNA FO 78/486/86 ; cf. Rizk, *Mont Liban*, 108.

⁴⁰ Rose to Aberdeen, 7 Dec. 1841, SAMECO Box 5, File 1; Will Thomson, ‘Report on the Political Institutions of Lebanon and their Probable Influence on the Prosperity of the Mission’, 6 Apr. 1844, ABCFM vol. 1, Syria, 118/33.

⁴¹ See Ch. 8.

⁴² BOA A.DVN.MHM 2/21; also in Farah, *Politics*, 52–3.

greater watchfulness in the implementation of other reforms.⁴³ Their policy was also bent on resisting Great Power interference in Ottoman domestic politics in Lebanon, hoping to preserve the sovereignty of their empire.

Ironically, in early April 1841, only days after Reşid's fall, before the news broke in Syria, the provisions of the Gülhane Edict of 1839 were read out before the local gentry and European consuls in Beirut. But, a few weeks later, two conservative paşas with notoriously anti-Reşid sentiments, Selim and Necib, were dispatched to Syria as the paşas of Sidon and Damascus respectively.

The onlookers found Necib's appointment in particular to be 'absurd' because he had served as an agent of Mehmed Ali of Egypt in Istanbul for nearly three decades, and was known to be a man 'with retrograde ideas'. Just over a year after his appointment, the European consuls believed that they could better understand his appointment when Necib allegedly 'frankly admit[ted]' that it was a consequence of the desire 'to neutralise the pernicious effects of the system of Reşid Paşa, [i.e. the *Tanzimat*]... that the main members of the [Ottoman imperial council] intended to make Syria the house of Islamism and thus bring about the fall, piece by piece' of Reşid's scheme.⁴⁴

This did not simply mean that the two paşas were against reform of any kind, as reports of European historical actors would have us believe. Recent scholarship has already demonstrated the futility of the binary divisions between reformist and anti-reformist paşas in analysing the contestations within the Ottoman bureaucracy.⁴⁵ Selim and Necib were conservative reformists, with strong reservations concerning Reşid's project, which they believed was a product of European interference. Despite their lack of tact and an empty treasury, they sought to establish a direct, centralized Muslim authority in the country through administrative reform and the presence of a new *Arabistan* army with around 25,000 men, though they were never able to enlist more than 10,000. With their initiatives and following their reports, the seat of Sidon was moved to Beirut. The grand emirate of Mount Lebanon was subordinated to the governor of Sidon, while previously it had reported directly to the Porte.⁴⁶

However, in almost each of their moves, the two paşas antagonized the European consuls.⁴⁷ And with each European interference, in the form of advice or complaint, the Ottoman governors felt more and more aggrieved.⁴⁸ The paşas were then caught up in an unpleasant feud with European authorities about the lingering presence of British troops as well as the purportedly 'Islamist' policies of

⁴³ İnalçık, *Tanzimat*, 19–20.

⁴⁴ 'Memorandum of what has been obtained of the Sublime Porte for the Syrians', by R. Wood, 9 Aug. 1841, TNA FO 881/2983/5; Bourée to Guizot, 26 Mar. 1842, DDC vol. 6, 107.

⁴⁵ Olivier Bouquet, 'Is It Time to Stop Speaking about Ottoman Modernisation?', in Marc Aymes, Benjamin Gourisse, and Elise Masicard (eds), *Order and Compromise: Government Practices in Turkey from the Late Ottoman Empire to the Early 21st Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 62–3.

⁴⁶ BOA i.DH. 40/1867.

⁴⁷ BOA i.HR. 11/552.

⁴⁸ BOA i.HR. 11/526; BOA HR.MKT. 1/17.

Necib, who, Rose argued, consciously fomented troubles in the country in order to destabilize Syria, while the negotiations of the Porte and the Powers with Mehmed Ali, Necib's alleged master, were still under way.⁴⁹

Necib rejected such accusations. Nonetheless his presence and arguably anti-Christian policies, with an unofficial, quasi-paramilitary unit under his command (led by the Druze Shibli al-Aryan) dragged the country closer to violence.⁵⁰ To check Necib's actions, Wood was appointed as British consul to Damascus in October 1841. Wood then fought a bitter, secret war with Necib until the paşa was removed from office in early 1842.⁵¹

All this is to say that the European Powers' quest for sway in the Levant overlapped, at least at first, with the Porte's 'conservative turn' and quest for independence more than with the (non-)introduction of the *Tanzimat* reforms in Lebanon. The council of representatives in the mountain, for instance, was unable to convene due to domestic opposition. The change of the cabinet in Istanbul created confusion and fear on the part of the non-Muslim Lebanese and drove them closer to their co-religionists among the Powers, while the Syrian Muslims found in this a baffled hope. The Druze, for their part, and especially the Jumblatts, tried to win over the Porte's conservative paşas, while simultaneously fostering 'special relations' with British agents.

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It was at this hour that war came. There is no single, linear explanation as to why violence broke loose in Mount Lebanon in September 1841. As we have seen, compound, intertwined factors fed into the complex realities of the country: the interests and threat perceptions of the different sects, classes, missionaries and empires whose agents were daily operating and interacting with each other on the spot. Violence was therefore the catastrophic 'emergent property'⁵² of a fluid constellation—the sudden frenzy that accompanied an unflinching collapse into enmity.

The mountain-dwellers spent the summer of 1841 attempting to take a collective position against the Porte with regards to the heavy new taxes imposed by the Istanbul government in violation of what had been promised during the 1840 intervention. Just when the Lebanese needed unity and cooperation the most, acrimonious sentiments poured forth. Their assemblies for the reduction of taxes were overshadowed by the embittered Nakads' call for the election of a

⁴⁹ Rose to Palmerston, 24 July 1841, TNA FO 226/26/121; Memorandum of what has been obtained of the Sublime Porte for the Syrians, signed by R. Wood, 9 Aug. 1841, TNA FO 881/2983/5. For Ottoman-Egyptian negotiations in 1841, see Ch. 8.

⁵⁰ Wood to Mustafa Paşa, 2 Feb. 1842, BOA HR.SYS 912/1.

⁵¹ BOA i.HR. 11/537; Caesar Farah, 'Necip Pasha and the British in Syria 1841–1842', *Archivium Ottomanicum* 2 (1970): 115–53.

⁵² On the notion of 'emergent property' and the use of complexity theory in conflict analysis, see Diana Hendrick, 'Complexity Theory and Conflict Transformation: An Exploration of Potential and Implications' (University of Bradford Working Paper 17, 2009), 6, 33, 34, 39.

non-Shihab grand emir.⁵³ The Porte's agents and the Lebanese agreed on a common tax scheme in early September, with the mediation of Wood. But the stage for violence had already been set.

The civil war began on 13 September 1841 in Deir al-Qamar, the very region where unresolved land disputes between the Druze Nakad family and the Maronite peasants had been under way. A small quarrel between Maronite and Nakad hunters quickly snowballed into fighting and pillaging, and then spread from Deir al-Qamar to other villages, though the most violent scenes transpired, it was reported, in this district. The main perpetrators were Druze and Maronite peasants, as well as impoverished sheikhs who had been unable to retain their lands in the ancient system.

The Jumblatts, and a number of other leading Druze and Maronite families, at first sought to placate them, convening meetings with Maronite Patriarch Hubaysh and other leading clergy of the mountain. Numan sent his brother Said to the villages in the 'war zones' to calm the atmosphere, where he swore 'to severely punish the guilty'.⁵⁴ Numan himself went to Grand Emir Bashir Qasim to 'concert measures against his Druze co-religionists', because the Maronites had by that point heavily overwhelmed their co-belligerents and there were cries for vengeance.⁵⁵ But, in the end, the Jumblatts joined the fighting when a mob of Druze peasants turned up at their residence, criticized their pacifist position, insistently called for their support in compelling the Maronites to return the 'murderers' of their families, and threatened to kill Numan otherwise.

Rose reported that Numan was known to be a man 'certainly . . . not cruel', and ready to show 'humanity and liberality' to the Christians, as he reportedly avoided pillaging their property and had been seen 'holding an old Christian [villager] in each hand and asking for peace' amidst all the violence. That said, as Numan himself explained after the fighting was over, he had also grown antipathetic to the 'Maronite party', since the clergy had been looking to 'greatly curtail' the feudal rights of the Druze sheikhs and when 'the Patriarch illegally and secretly endeavoured to do away with [them]', taunting them 'continually with our savageness'.⁵⁶

Numan's 17-year old Said, on the other hand, was described as a 'wild boy . . . with a good deal of courage' and 'guilty . . . of great cruelty' during the clash.⁵⁷ In November 1841, with the involvement of the Jumblatts, the Druze gained a significant advantage over the Maronites. The combat later spread to the Shuwfayat region, the Greek Orthodox–Druze district, as the Orthodox community, 'suspicious of the Maronites and resentful of their numerical superiority', supported their Druze neighbours against the Maronites.⁵⁸

⁵³ Farah, *Politics*, 67; Rose to Palmerston, 28 May 1841, TNA FO 226/26/78; Rose to Palmerston, 6 June 1841, TNA FO 226/26/104.

⁵⁴ J. Conti to Bourée, 22 Sept. 1841, DDC vol. 6, 448. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ 'Numan's Testament', in Rose to Aberdeen, 7 Dec. 1841, SAMECO Box 5, File 1.

⁵⁷ Rose [?] to Foreign Secretary, 6 May 1842, TNA FO 226/24/36. ⁵⁸ Salibi, *Lebanon*, 51.

The theatre of war in Lebanon and the stance of the Powers and the Porte illustrate how the Eastern Question played out on the spot. In the initial phases of combat in October, when Maronites (the French protégés) held an advantage over the Druze (the British protégés), the French consul, Nicolas Prosper Bourée, ignored Colonel Rose's calls to ride together to Deir al-Qamar and persuade the mountain-dwellers 'to stop bloodshed for the sake of humanity'.⁵⁹ But then, when the Druze gained control at the end of November, the roles reversed. Bourée's calls for joint action were dismissed by 'the senior British officers [with] an unusual reserve'.⁶⁰ After Necib Paşa's irregular (paramilitary) Druze army arrived, adding to the miseries of the Christian victims of the war, the French agents described the grim situation and lack of cooperation between the Powers as 'a blatant abandonment of the rights of justice and humanity'.⁶¹ Bourée even suggested an armed European intervention in Syria, but Rose objected, reckoning that such an intervention could jeopardize Britain's advantageous position in Lebanon.⁶²

The consuls of the five European Great Powers acted together only after Grand Emir Bashir Qasim, a Catholic Maronite, was captured and tortured by Nakad sheikhs in December. The consuls believed that Ottoman authorities purposely refrained from intervening and stopping the violence, and disarmed the Christians in certain districts.⁶³ The Ottoman paşas, for their part, accused the European agents of triggering violence for their immediate interests and denied accusations of indifference.⁶⁴

A war of blame thus started while violence was still ongoing. Anxious that the Powers might intervene again, the Porte invested *serasker* Mustafa Nuri Paşa, another conservative figure, with extraordinary powers, and dispatched him to Syria to suppress the fighting. But, before his arrival, by the end of December, the war had ended—with 1,460 casualties (the majority of these were the Druze, and 390 Maronites), tens of villages and the silk and mulberry harvests pillaged, and over 4,000 houses burnt down. The material cost was estimated at half a million pounds.⁶⁵

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As soon as Mustafa Paşa landed in Beirut, the Ottoman *serasker* found himself on the receiving end of the narrative war. According to the inhabitants of the mountain, both Maronite and Druze, what had happened in the autumn had been a renewal of ancient quarrels (referring to the 1820s and 1830s) and a continuation of existing blood feuds and vendettas (*kan davası*).⁶⁶ Both the

⁵⁹ Bouyrat, *La France*, 302; Bourée to Guizot, 22 Oct. 1841, *DDC* vol. 7, 34.

⁶⁰ Bourée to Guizot, 28 Nov. 1841, *DDC* vol. 7, 52.

⁶¹ Pontois to Guizot, 23 Nov. 1841, AMAE CP Turquie 284; cf. Bouyrat, *La France*, 310.

⁶² *Ibid.* 309.

⁶³ 'Les consuls généraux des cinq puissances a Beyrouth à S.E. Selim Pacha, seraskier de Syrie et gouverneur de Sayda', 30 Nov. 1841, *DDC* vol. 7, 54.

⁶⁴ BOA i.MSM 75/2152.

⁶⁵ Rizk, *Mont Liban*, 110–11.

⁶⁶ Gökbilgin, 'Cebel', 649.

Maronites and the Druze were discontent with the rule of Bashir Qasim III. The Druze wanted a replacement and declared that they would approve any Muslim, including a Turkish paşa, to be the new ruler of the mountain in place of a Maronite. The Maronites, on the other hand, suggested a Shihab grand emir, even if not necessarily the current grand emir, Bashir Qasim III, who was unpopular among a majority of their coreligionists due to his lack of charisma and poor health. In their view, there was nobody other than the Shihabs who could maintain order in the mountain except the pro-Egyptian Amir Arslan.⁶⁷

Mustafa Paşa's mission signified the position of the Porte and the Ottoman authorities' eagerness to impose their direct rule in Lebanon. Only by this means, the *serasker* believed, could the allegedly irreconcilable demands of the mountain-dwellers be transcended, the mutual blaming between Maronites and the Druze brought to an end, and the 'provocations of European consuls'—which, in his view, stirred up violence among the Lebanese in the first place—be fended off.

As a result, Mustafa resolved, at the demand of both parties, to remove Bashir Qasim Shihab from his post as grand emir due to his ineffectiveness. He sent the latter into exile in Istanbul (13 January 1842).⁶⁸ Two days later, while European diplomats and most of those on the mountain were expecting the appointment of another Shihab as the new grand emir, the *serasker* proclaimed Ömer Paşa—alias Michel Lattas, an Ottoman officer of Austro-Hungarian (Croatian) origin—as the interim governor of Mount Lebanon for his experience in dealing with similar 'disturbances' in the Balkans.⁶⁹

According to Mustafa, with the dispatch of a few warships that would blockade the coasts of Beirut and Sidon to prevent 'foreign aid' (*ecnebi yardımı*) and a number of Albanian soldiers—albeit notorious for their unruliness—as well as with the disarmament of the mountaineers and the payment of indemnities to the Christians (for 1840 rebellion and the 1841 civil war), order and tranquillity could be brought to Lebanon.⁷⁰

The new Istanbul regime thus brought down its fist on the mountain, and ended the centuries-long Shihab era, and the age of the grand emirs in Lebanon. It came as a bombshell to many—the Maronites, the European consuls, and particularly the French, who were the historical protectors of the Maronites and the main European beneficiary of Shihab rule. The French ambassador to Istanbul, François-Adolphe Bourqueney, objected that this was a counteroffensive for the Porte to establish direct rule, and a patient 'anti-European', and 'anti-reformist' conspiracy run by the conservative cabinet to neutralize the 1839 Edict.⁷¹ The

⁶⁷ Ibid. 649–50. ⁶⁸ BOA A.DVN.10/84/1.

⁶⁹ BOA HR.SFR.3 3/63; BOA HR.SFR.3 3/64; Nesselrode to Titov, 22 Mar. 1843, BOA HR.SYS 912/1/48; Harik, *Politics*, 266.

⁷⁰ Gökbilgin, 'Cebel', 650.

⁷¹ Boyrat, *La France*, 315.

other European ambassadors did not react as strongly in the beginning, giving Ömer, the interim governor, the benefit of the doubt.

However, from the very beginning, it proved almost impossible for Ömer to assert his authority over the Christians and gain the trust of the Powers' agents, due to his lack of refinement and magnanimity. His immediate actions instantly riled everyone. In line with his religious inclinations, he circulated petitions for the expulsion of British (Protestant) missionaries from Lebanon and removed a number of Christian officials from office. He returned the sequestered lands of those Druze sheikhs, such as the Nakads of Deir al-Qamar, who had been deprived of their lands under Bashir Qasim's rule and who were known by the European consuls to be guilty of inhumane crimes during the 1841 civil war. And he renounced his direct authority over the *'muqatas* of the leading Druze houses such as the Jumblatts. All these were seen as signs of his overt anti-Christianism and endorsement of the Druze. The Maronite clergy and peasantry claimed that, in order to justify his actions, Ömer had urged local Christians to sign petitions in favour of his rule, threatening them with exclusion from the payment of indemnities to be made by the Druze for the losses in 1841.⁷²

If anything, what transpired under Ömer's rule was the complete opposite of the system pledged by the 1839 Edict. Like Grand Vizier İzzet and Mustafa Paşa, Ömer's main concern was not to enact reforms, but to establish order and sovereignty in Syria by using Islam as a rhetorical tool and eliminating any foreign interference and local allegiance to the European empires. In this specific sense, the French agents were not entirely wrong in suspecting the Porte's intentions, and neither were the Lebanese Christians in worrying for their future.

The latter sent petition after petition to Istanbul over the following months to complain about their treatment by Ömer. In response, the Porte dispatched a commissioner (the former governor of Morea, Selim Bey) to observe for himself Ömer's rule. Along with him, ulemas were sent to Syria in March and April 1842 to convert the Druze to Sunni Islam (with the purpose of recruiting them in the army in due course) or at least to discipline them. And then Ömer began to urge the Druze to make their due indemnity payments to the Maronites, who had asked for a much higher amount anticipating that it would later be reduced. All these alienated the Druze within just three months of Ömer coming to power. Now exasperated by the demands for payment of what they considered unjust indemnities (also because it was the Maronites, they believed, that had started the war), the Druze also turned against Ottoman rule, refused to obey the orders of the interim governor, and ignored his calls for the payment of any tax.⁷³

⁷² BOA HR.SFR.3 2/8; Rose to Canning, 30 July 1842, BOA HR.SYS 912/1/64; Wood to Ponsonby, 4 May 1842, SAMECO Box 5, File 1; Bouyrat, *La France*, 312–13.

⁷³ Farah, *Politics*, 218–26; Gökbilgin, 'Cebel', 653–4; Bourée to Guizot, 7 May 1842, DDC vol. 7, 128; [?] to Reverend Clark, 16 Mar. 1870, ABCFM vol. 6, Syria, 291/368.

Ömer responded to Druze disobedience by arresting their leaders during an invitation to his palace. After the civil war, Numan Jumblatt had retired himself from all worldly affairs and devoted his life to religion and spiritualism. His younger brother, Said, assumed the leadership of the family. On 7 April 1842, the latter rode to the paşa's residence along with Arslan, Nakad, Talhuq, and Al-Malik sheikhs. When they descended from their horses, on a signal given by Ömer, the great gates of the palace were shut, its meidan was filled with the paşa's troops, and 'the Dru[z]e chiefs were taken like mice in a trap'.⁷⁴ A few days later Numan, despite his retirement, and other Druze chiefs were also detained for having refused to pay indemnities to the Christians.⁷⁵ Hoping to save their sheikhs, the Druze mobilized but were swiftly crushed by the Ottoman forces.

In the past, such imperial repression would have allowed the Porte to maintain its rule and ensure the payment of tributes until the locals wielded enough power to disobey the sultans again. But now, after its successive defeats at the hands of Mehmed Ali, and after the restoration of its rule in Syria with the aid of the Powers and the 1840 intervention, the standing of Istanbul before local eyes had been weakened. Ömer's inept policies had damaged even more the trust of the Lebanese, Druze or Christian, in the Porte.

More importantly, now the Lebanese felt the support of the European Powers behind them. The sultan's agents and intermediaries no longer had the monopoly over security and violence in the country. The European consuls in Beirut, Tripoli, Latakia, and Damascus considered it appropriate to repeatedly complain that Mustafa and Ömer Paşas were not 'consulting' them before taking decisions over the future of the mountain. For their part, those living on the mountain looked to the European actors on the spot for protection. Numan Jumblatt asked for British help to obtain release from detention.⁷⁶ The French consul in Beirut, Bourée, mediated between the Druze and the Maronites to foster a coalition against the Porte, conjure the patriarch to 'forget past quarrels and agree to a renewal of the Maronite-Druze union', and put an end to the common ruin. And he succeeded for the time being.⁷⁷

The Jumblatts were eager to join forces with the Maronites. They even promised to accept the restoration of Shihabi rule and the compensation of the losses incurred during the 1841 conflict.⁷⁸ Ömer Paşa's method of rule created so much consternation and opposition that, in the end, the consuls of the Powers also set aside their competition, and agreed to request from the Ottoman authorities the demission of Ömer and the re-establishment of Shihab rule under Bashir II or Bashir Qasim.

⁷⁴ 'Syria', *The Times*, 14 May 1842; Bourée to Guizot, 7 Apr. 1842, *DDC* vol. 7, 36.

⁷⁵ Rose to Canning, 10 Apr. 1842, TNA FO 226/29.

⁷⁶ Rose to Canning, 6 May 1842, TNA FO 226/24/36.

⁷⁷ Bourée to Guizot, 7 May 1842, *DDC* vol. 7, 128.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

But Mustafa Paşa turned down these claims on the grounds that under the Shihabs, Lebanon had become a site of violence and terror. Their return would be ‘against humanity’.⁷⁹ The direct rule Mustafa established in Lebanon was a triumph of conservative ministers. But it proved short-lasting. A hitherto unseen diplomatic intervention in the mountain terminated it before the year had ended.

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In February 1842, the Powers came up with a plan for the administrative reorganization of the Lebanon in lieu of the Porte’s scheme for direct rule. It originated from one of the few representatives of the so-called Congress system generation still around: Prince Metternich. His idea was to cut Mount Lebanon in half along



Map 4. Lebanon

⁷⁹ Bourée to Guizot, 26 Apr. 1842, *DCC* vol. 7, 38.

geographical lines. Taking the Damascus–Beirut road as the dividing border, the north, inhabited by the Maronites, would be ruled by a Maronite *kaymakam* (district governor); the south, albeit a demographically more mixed region with Druze, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, Maronite, and Metuwali inhabitants, would be placed under the authority of a Druze. The two *kaymakams* would report to a Shihab grand emir.

The premise of Metternich's idea was that Maronite and Druze inhabitants of Lebanon were practically incapable of coexistence.⁸⁰ In the European imperial gaze, one way to prevent further violence between them was to separate these people administratively. Even though the Porte exhibited a similar degree of imperialist scorn towards the Lebanese, from the outset the sultan's men objected to the plan, because, on the one hand, they strove to avoid another European diplomatic intervention in their empire's domestic affairs. On the other, they considered the plan far-fetched due to the mixed population of the southern part of the country. It was impossible to separate these 'hostile' populations from one another. The Lebanese, for their part, hardly welcomed Metternich's plan because of its ambiguous nature, which did not at all address their immediate differences with respect to rights, privileges, and property.

However, the five European Powers persevered in the implementation of the plan, conceiving of their role as a buffer between the 'Sunni Islamist' policies of the Porte's agents and their co-religionists (the Lebanese Christians) and protégés (the Druze) in need of protection. Throughout 1842, at several ambassadorial conferences convened in Istanbul, the plan was discussed and repeatedly proposed to Ottoman ministers. When the Porte resisted accepting it, Metternich reminded the former of the imperative of reinstating the Shihabs as the ruler of the mountain so as to be able to 'have the satisfaction of...Europe...By this means, and by this means only, the Sublime Porte will be spared very great *embarrassment*.' He alluded to—nay, admonished the Porte with a threat of—potential armed intervention that would overrule the sultan's authority in the Levant.⁸¹ Ten days later, the Russian foreign minister, Nesselrode, used the very same language—the 1840 intervention was a friendly 'assistance' to the sultan and the Lebanese.⁸² According to Nesselrode, the sacrifices made at the time would justify another intervention on the part of the Powers, which 'could not remain indifferent to the prosperity or the ruin of [the Syrian] populations'.⁸³

European pressure on the Porte mounted every month. At the ambassadorial conference of 27 May 1842, the Ottoman foreign minister, Sarim Efendi, was reminded that '[b]y delaying in fulfilling the wishes of the Powers, the Sublime Porte gains nothing... but instead exposes itself... to dangers which from one day

⁸⁰ N. Moore to [?], 31 May 1844, AMAE 50MD/43/94.

⁸¹ Stürmer to Testa, 10 Mar. 1842, BOA HR. SYS 912/2/33. Emphasis mine.

⁸² Nesselrode to Titow, 22 Mar. 1842, BOA HR. SYS 912/2/48. ⁸³ Ibid.

to the next can become real...'⁸⁴ When Sarim argued against Metternich's idea, maintaining that partition was 'impracticable because the Druzes and the Maronites live mixed together in the same villages', it was pointed out to him that 'this mixture only occurred in two or three districts, but that the greater portion of the Druzes and of the Maronites inhabit separate districts'.⁸⁵ Despite his repeated protests, Sarim was silenced.

What is important here is not simply how the Powers kept the Porte at bay, but that the exchanges between the Powers' agents and the Porte, and the Lebanese rejection of Metternich's plan, were a quintessential example of the dialogical yet nonetheless top-down, hierarchical, and transimperial patterns of supplying security in the Levant at the time. Despite all their differences, virtually none of the Lebanese peoples accepted the partition of the mountain nor the single-handed reterritorialization—a practice that would be frequently repeated in the twentieth-century Middle East with comparably disastrous results.⁸⁶

The reports of European consuls in Syria who were better acquainted with local experiences expose the blatancy of Metternich's plan. The British consul in Damascus, Richard Wood, insightfully explained in early May 1842 that the division of authority in Mount Lebanon was 'likely to lead to future contests for supremacy between [the Druze and the Maronites], and consequently to bloodshed and disorder'. He explained that the plan was 'scarcely practicable'; its accomplishment would be very difficult because of 'the pretended feudal rights of the Druze and Christian chiefs over some of the *muqatas* or districts', which had in effect become obsolete. Moreover, there were Christian feudal lords with mostly Druze tenants. '[T]o the south, the Lords of the manor are mostly Druzes, but a great portion of the peasants are Christians. In both cases many of the peasants have landed property and hold tenements which it cannot be expected they will either abandon or transfer.'⁸⁷

In response, the British ambassador to Istanbul, Stratford Canning, acknowledged that there were some '*difficulties of detail*' in the application of the plan but these 'nonetheless should not stop the adoption of a measure in other respects satisfactory'—a tragic testament to how decisions over the future of the people who lived their own realities in the distant (Levant) were made in the metropolises.⁸⁸

To be fair, leaving aside the Powers' desire to immediately resolve the Lebanese issue, beneath the blatancy of European imperial actions were several other pressing concerns. Imperial anxieties had been whipped up by news from different

⁸⁴ M. Titow to M. George Kirico, 3 June 1842, BOA HR. SYS 912/2/59.

⁸⁵ Conference at Constantinople 29 May 1842, SAMECO Box 5, File 1.

⁸⁶ Rose to Canning, 30 July 1842, BOA HR. SYS 912/2/64; Rose to Aberdeen, 25 July 1842; SAMECO Box 5, File 1.

⁸⁷ Wood to Canning, 4 May 1842, SAMECO Box 5, File 1.

⁸⁸ Canning to Pisani, 26 Aug. 1842, BOA HR. SYS 912/2/79. Emphasis mine. See also Makdisi, *Culture*, 78–9; Said, 'Blind Arrogance'.

parts of Syria and especially from Lebanon with regards to the mounting 'Islamism' of the İzzet Paşa government and the conduct of the unruly Albanian regiments. That the Ottoman Albanians were involved in excesses, plundered churches, assaulted priests, and abused consuls in different, but mainly Christian, parts of the country led the Powers to compel the sultan's agents in Istanbul, London, and Vienna to agree to Metternich's plan. The Porte's diplomats in Europe, Âli Efendi and Akif Bey, daily reported back and warned Istanbul of the possibility of an armed intervention.⁸⁹

In the end, the Porte's defiance was broken down on account of three factors. The first was the cabinet change in August 1842, when the hardline conservative İzzet Paşa was replaced by the moderate conservative Rauf Paşa as grand vizier. The second was the eruption of Druze resistance led by Shibli al-Aryan, who attacked Ömer's palace and embarrassed the paşa in a smaller-scale civil war. Thirdly, there was the emergence of conflicts on the Serbian and Wallachia borders. The French ambassador, Bourqueney, advised the Porte that it would be to its benefit to make sacrifices in Lebanon for the resolution of the crisis in the Balkans in the sultan's favour.⁹⁰

The Ottoman ministers stepped back, choosing the lesser of two evils, as they saw it. Still they would not accept a Shihab ruler. They suspected that the mixed areas would pose serious problems for the stability of Lebanon. But they gradually agreed, from October 1842 onward, first, to partition the country into Maronite and Druze sub-governorships (*kaymakamlık*), and sent the able and moderate Esad Paşa as the new governor of Sidon to oversee the new system; then, to recall unruly Albanian troops; then, to dismiss Ömer, restore the plundered property of the Maronites; finally, to concede the ancient privileges of the Lebanese with respect to religion (free exercise of worship) and taxation.⁹¹

After a series of conferences in Istanbul over the next two months, the representatives of the Powers and the Porte agreed on the dual-*kaymakamlık* system. With the new system, each *kaymakam* would come from a senior Maronite or Druze families, and would report to the Ottoman governor in Sayda. The fate of the mixed areas in the south were to be considered by the men on the spot, Esad and the European consuls. The Powers accepted the Porte's one major condition: the Shihabs were excluded from the Lebanese administration.

Ottoman Foreign Minister Sarim Efendi announced the final decision of the Porte in favour of the new system on 7 December 1842. His statement included his

deepest regret that this question has given rise to so many discussions and talks over the past year... The Sublime Porte moved nonetheless by the feelings of

⁸⁹ Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 431; Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 174–5.

⁹⁰ Gökbilgin, 'Cebel', 657–8.

⁹¹ Rose to Aberdeen, 27 Sept. 1842, Aberdeen to Canning, 24 Oct. 1842, SAMECO Box 5, File 1.

respect . . . to the five Powers, its dearest friends and allies, [and] preferred to arrive at the solution of a very delicate question, which was at the same time one of its internal affairs, by complying with [the Powers'] wishes rather than to refuse [them],

because they tended 'only to the same object: the re-establishment of good order in the Mountain'.⁹² Sarim was worried not only about the plan's ill-designed foundations but also about having to concede to the Powers' collective domination, which could pave the way for similar interference in the future.⁹³ Canning consoled him:

Any feeling of regret which could mingle with that of [your] satisfaction because of certain doubts that [the Porte] seems to have conceived for the future, is effaced by the conviction that the success, as well as the execution, of the measure will depend mainly on the Porte itself.⁹⁴

It was now all in the Porte's hands to successfully implement a plan it had fervently opposed. Russian Ambassador Butenev similarly assured Sarim that all the measures taken could 'certainly not fail' to ensure the maintenance of tranquillity and well-being of Lebanon.⁹⁵ But, as we will see below, they did fail—immensely.

As a local scribe, Husayn Abu al-Hassan of Zahle, wrote in c.1842, Mount Lebanon would never be the same again. 'The old days' of the *muqatadjis*, the peaceful coexistence of the Maronites and the Druze in their manors, had 'now passed'. A new era was coming 'like racing clouds'.⁹⁶

The Racing Clouds: The Stand-Off and the Civil War of 1845

If the persistent discrepancy between the policies adopted in the European metropolises and their reception and flawed implementation in the Levant was one of the defining characteristics of transimperial security culture in the nineteenth century, another was the fact that this culture reproduced insecurities both for the Levantines and, often indirectly, for the European imperial actors themselves. However much goodwill it might have embodied, Metternich's dual-*kaymakamlık* plan, or the diplomatic intervention of 1842, did not appease the

⁹² Sarim Effendi to Baron de Bourqueney, 7 Dec. 1842, AMAE CP 133/286.

⁹³ Boutenieff to Hamjiery, 18 Nov. 1842, BOA HR. SYS 912/2/80; Canning to Sarim, 14 Dec. 1842, BOA HR. SYS 912/2/44.

⁹⁴ Ibid. ⁹⁵ Boutenieff to Sarim Efendi, 15 Dec. 1842, BOA HR. SYS 912/2/4.

⁹⁶ Isa Iskandar al Ma'luf, *Tarikh Madinat Zahlah* (Zahlah: Matba'at Zahlah al Fatat, 1911), 203; cf. Harik, *Politics*, 48.

various communities in the mountain. All practices in the name of security and order were undertaken in such an injudicious manner that in the end they proved ever more troublesome for local peace. They complicated existing problems, created new ones, and kindled inter-imperial rivalries, both among the Powers and between the Powers and the Porte.

After the arrival of the sultan's moderate agent Esad Paşa, the Jumblatt brothers Said and Numan were released from prison in November 1842. The two had harboured hopes of being chosen the *kaymakam* of the 'Druze country' in the belief that they were the strongest family in the mountain, both economically and in terms of their manpower. But Numan and Said were caught in a disagreement with each other over sharing their four *'muqatas*, which created a lasting schism within the family.⁹⁷ This tarnished their reliability, particularly that of the hot-headed 19-year-old Said.

In January 1843, Esad Paşa put the Metternich plan into action even though the official announcements were made in March. Ömer was dismissed, the Maronite Amir Haydar Abu'l Lama was appointed by Esad, and the Druze emir, Ahmed Arslan, was elected by the Druze as the *kaymakams* of their respective districts in the Maronite north and the Druze south.⁹⁸ The new *kaymakams* were nominated in concord with the hierarchical system of the ancient feudal order. The Abu'l Lama and Arslan families were both *hakim* families which came just after the Shihabs in the feudal hierarchy pyramid, which signified that Metternich's plan was, to a degree, an elitist attempt to accommodate the ancient feudal order. However, the incongruity between the ancient and the new prevented its proper implementation.

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As had been predicted by both Ottoman and European agents on the spot, the main problem with the plan was the mixed districts that fell under the authority of the Druze *kaymakam*. The moderate Esad Paşa, European consuls, the *kaymakams* Haydar and Ahmed, the *muqatadjis*, the Maronite clergy, and the Christian peasants had to work out what to do with the administration of those predominantly Maronite (or Christian) mixed villages, in such regions as Deir al-Qamar (where the 1841 civil war had begun) or the Shuf, the heart of the Jumblatts' *'muqatas*.

The plan had left unaddressed the exact questions that they were now bound to answer—would the mountain be divided along 'geographical lines'? This would mean that the mixed villages in the south would remain under the jurisdiction of the Druze *kaymakam*. Or would the division be made along 'sectarian lines'? Then the Maronite *kaymakam* in the north, Amir Haydar, would be responsible for the Maronites in the south, which would violate the ancient rights of the Druze feudal

⁹⁷ Gökbilgin, 'Cebel', 670.

⁹⁸ BOA HR.SFR.3 4/34.

chiefs over their *'muqatas'*.⁹⁹ All these questions sparked new debates, brought forth new categories like 'minorities' into the political lexicon of Syria, and then spiralled into violence again.¹⁰⁰

Backed by the British consul, Rose, and Said Jumblatt, Esad believed that the involvement of the Maronite *kaymakam* in the affairs of the Maronites in the southern part of the country (or 'the sectarian rule', as they put it) was 'impracticable' because the double authority would become a source of continued ill will due to its violation of the rights of the Druze.¹⁰¹ It was therefore not in keeping with the 'beneficial and healing' measure that 'the Powers intended' to introduce. They advocated division along 'geographical', not 'sectarian', lines, and proposed securing the rights and property of the 'Christian minorities' of the south by means of Christian *vekils* (representatives) that would be elected by them.¹⁰² These *vekils* would represent their interests before the *muqatadjis* and, in case of disagreements, or in the event that the Druze lords violated their rights and freedoms, would bring issues to the attention of the Ottoman governor in Sidon. Moreover, a Turkish garrison of the Ottoman *paşa* would be stationed in the problematic Deir al-Qamar region to inhibit any unlawful behaviour and violence. The Christians of the mixed villages in the 'Druze country' would thus be placed under the double guarantee of the *vekils* and the *paşa* of Sidon. If they should still feel insecure, voluntary emigration to the northern part of the country would be facilitated with reimbursement as well as by the supply of lands and houses of equal value to those they owned in the south.¹⁰³

Even though the partition plan was imposed from above in 1842, those on the mountain itself were eventually listened to by the imperial agents between 1843 and 1845. At the numerous meetings held between Ottoman authorities, European consuls, and Christian and Druze deputies, a majority of the Druze adamantly rejected 'sectarian rule', but reluctantly agreed on the *vekil* system.¹⁰⁴ The Maronite Church kept perfect silence until a final decision over the mixed districts was made in late 1844. The Maronite peasantry, for their part, more than once agreed on having *vekils* and celebrated the option of emigration at the meetings, but then as many times changed their opinion later, declaring that, for their tranquillity and security, '[n]othing will do but one Governor, a Shihab, for both Christians and Druzes'.¹⁰⁵

Esad and Rose at first could not fathom the Maronite peasantry's wavering. But ultimately they became convinced that a 'wicked scheme' was under way against the plan. The Shihabites, those supporters of the ex-Bashir II, the exiled 'Red

⁹⁹ Farah, *Politics*, 256–87. ¹⁰⁰ Makdisi, *Culture*, 80.

¹⁰¹ Rose to Aberdeen, 6 May 1843, CRAS 14. ¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Rose to Canning, 30 Apr. 1843; Rose to Aberdeen, 6 May 1843; Rose to Canning, 15 Feb., 3 Mar., 1 Oct. 1844, CRAS 14, 17, 34, 40, 94.

¹⁰⁴ Rizk, *Mont Liban*, 114. ¹⁰⁵ Rose to Aberdeen, 6 May 1843, CRAS 34.

Emir', now residing in Istanbul, were plotting his return to the mountain.¹⁰⁶ According to Rose, the 'Shihab party' prompted the Christians in the mixed regions to reject all guarantees Esad proposed, threatening violent assault against their fellow townsmen.¹⁰⁷

More than a year passed in this state. In early 1844, Esad grew exasperated by the lack of progress and admitted in despair the unworkability of both plans. He hinted to the European consuls the necessity of re-establishing direct Ottoman rule, but was met with categorical rejection. He then expressed to the Porte his desire to resign.¹⁰⁸ This was an expression of self-criticism during a moment of defeat over the Porte's helpless subordination to the Powers' 'ill will'.

For his part, Rose was equally embittered. He lamented that Metternich's plan was 'foiled...by insubordination of the subjects towards the Sovereign'. He candidly asked, if the inhabitants were so stubbornly opposed,

do not then any moral obligations which induced the Powers to interfere in the government of Mount Lebanon at once cease? ... Can the Great Powers creditably further interfere? ... Is it fitting that the [Powers] should be occupied for two or three years, more perhaps, in endeavouring to conciliate the jarring interests and the never-ending hatreds of a semi-barbarous peasantry of a foreign country given up to intrigue and uncharitable partisanship?¹⁰⁹

Rose's questions signalled the uncertainty as to when and why the Powers could and should intervene, as to whether the legitimacy of interferences lay in the benefits procured for the locals, and as to the willingness of the locals to obtain such benefits by way of foreign aid.

Rose further lamented that the same Christians were now signing petitions for the return of Bashir II and Bashir Qasim, about whose rule they had bitterly complained not long before. But what he did not see was that Christian peasants had not opposed the plan merely under pressure from the Shihabites. Their hopes and expectations as Christians and as peasants had been repeatedly shattered since the time of the Egyptian interregnum, when partial liberties had been introduced to non-Muslims, and especially since the 1840 intervention, during which the aforementioned promises of religious and class rights under the auspices of the Gülhane Edict of 1839 had been delivered by British and Ottoman imperial agents. There was now a haunting sense of insecurity amidst the unpredictability of the obscure intra- and inter-imperial politics. These Christian peasants were troubled by the Porte's 'Islamist' policies under conservative paşas, the Powers' quest for influence through their co-religionists and proxies, the non-payment of the indemnities of the 1841 civil war by the Druze, and the fact both Christian and

¹⁰⁶ Rose to Canning, 23 Mar. 1844, CRAS 44.

¹⁰⁷ Rose to Canning, 3 May 1844, CRAS 52.

¹⁰⁸ Gökbilgin, 'Cebel', 669–71.

¹⁰⁹ Rose to Canning, 25 Mar. 1844, CRAS 46–8.

Druze *muqatadjis* were claiming the restoration of their ancient rights, pointing to the same points of references and with the same degree of confidence in the justness of their cause. Finally, they had hardly received any security at all, with their houses burnt, property pillaged, and people killed. It was this immense distrust that brought about their eventual reluctance to agree to Metternich's plan.

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In 1844, the Maronite peasantry once more found a helping hand in France. Since the dreadful experience of the 1841 civil war that had resulted in part from his revisionist policies in the Levant, the French prime and foreign minister, Guizot, had been 'very reserved' about interfering in Lebanese politics again. But now, seeing that Metternich's plan could not be fully implemented, and that the Porte was imposing a patched-together plan on the Christians in the mixed districts, he identified a leeway for just interference and began to openly advocate for the restoration of the Shihabs.¹¹⁰

Guizot's apprehension was that, although France was associated with the other Powers in Lebanon, her position as the protector of the Maronites was 'peculiar'.¹¹¹ Paris had to act because it was her historical duty, but, of course, a more tangible motivation lay in the fact that the return of the Shihabites would place France's political power in the Levant on its former footing.

To be sure, the French minister followed a more cautious policy with respect to the Eastern Question this time, careful to proceed in concert with the other Powers. He approached Metternich and the British foreign minister, Lord Aberdeen, for a joint agreement for the return of the Shihabs, while demanding from the Porte the immediate implementation of the indemnities of the 1841 war.¹¹² Ambassadorial conferences began again in Istanbul to decide upon the future of Mount Lebanon. Metternich received the French suggestion positively. London, on the other hand, opposed the withdrawal of the plan, as it would go against the interests of the Druze. A Catholic/non-Catholic schism unfolded among the Powers when Russia and Prussia sided with Britain, albeit with much less enthusiasm.¹¹³

Soon after the Porte announced its final decision to implement the *vekil* system in the mixed villages in November 1844, encouraged by France, the Maronite Patriarch Hubaysh broke his silence and announced his opposition to the plan to side with the Christian peasantry.¹¹⁴ In fact, the hardline bishop Tobia 'Awn had already begun campaigning for the Shihab cause.

¹¹⁰ Guizot to Bourqueney, 13 Apr. 1844, AMAE CP Turquie 291; cf. Bouyrat, *La France*, 341.

¹¹¹ Bouyrat, *La France*, 342; Rose to Aberdeen, 3 Nov. 1844, TNA FO 226/90/65.

¹¹² Desages to Bourqueney, 18 Dec. 1844, AMAE 60PAAP/37/106.

¹¹³ Rose to Aberdeen, 3 Nov. 1844, TNA FO 226/90/65.

¹¹⁴ Rose to Aberdeen, 30 Nov. 1844, CRAS, 111–12.

Moreover, Archbishop Nicholas Murad, vicar apostolic to Rome representing the Maronites in Europe, had been lobbying for the same cause in Istanbul and Paris.¹¹⁵ In 1842, he had in his letters to Guizot and Desages portrayed the importance of the restoration of the Shihabs as a means of liberating the oppressed Christians from the yoke of the Porte.¹¹⁶ In 1844, he changed his strategy and wrote a pamphlet on Maronite–French relations for the attention of the French authorities in which he depicted the Druze as an idolatrous sect. He suggested France, as their ‘protectors’, could not remain indifferent to the ‘pains’ of the Maronites, whose ‘devotion to France’ was ‘well known’.¹¹⁷ He appealed to French hearts, inaugurating a new literature that looked to forge emotional bonds between Mount Lebanon and France. Moreover, the Lazarist, Capuchin, and Franciscan missionaries, many of whom were French subjects, assiduously propagated French influence among the peasantry through their schools and activities, assuring the peasants that ‘because we are in the Levant, we are under France’.¹¹⁸

These endeavours spawned a great deal of concern on the part of the Porte.¹¹⁹ The sultan’s agents in Paris and London, the former foreign minister, Mustafa Reşid Paşa, and his protégé, Âli Efendi, fretted that the policy France had adopted ‘for the Eastern Question . . . is a serious and dangerous mistake’.¹²⁰ Mustafa Reşid called Guizot and his agents to reconcile their policies with Britain: their differences were not only weakening the Ottoman Empire but also paving the way for Russian interferences in the Balkans, which could potentially have a boomerang effect and threaten European peace.¹²¹ Differences endured, however, until violence broke out in the mountain once more in April 1845.

The Porte’s role was not negligible in the eventual eruption of violence either. It failed to meet French and local demands, as the restitutions of the 1841 war could not be agreed upon among the mountain-dwellers even after a mixed commission consisting of imperial, Christian, and Druze delegates was established specifically for this task. To bolster the position of the sovereign, Grand Admiral Halil Paşa was sent to Beirut with eight warships in a show of authority and power in April 1844, and the exasperated Esad was replaced with the conservative Vecihi Paşa in April 1845.¹²² But the sultan’s men could not establish their authority over the Lebanese.¹²³ This became all the more difficult when Rıza Paşa, another hardline conservative, became grand vizier, and showed great antagonism to

¹¹⁵ Bouyrat, *La France*, 342.

¹¹⁶ Nicolas Murad to Desages, 27 Sept. 1842, AMAE 60PAAP/41/365.

¹¹⁷ Nicholas Murad, *Notice historique sur l’origine de la nation Maronite et sur ses rapports avec la France, sur la nation Druze et sur les diverses populations du Mont Liban* (Paris: Adrien le Claire, 1844), 3, 20, 32, 34, 35.

¹¹⁸ Moore to Rose, 4 Dec. 1844, TNA FO 226/20/62.

¹¹⁹ Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 182.

¹²⁰ ‘Notes sur la condition des Rayas sur le Ministre de Riza Pacha, conversation entre Rechid Pacha et M. Ali’, 29 Feb. 1844, AMAE MD Turquie 45/59.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*; Kaynar, *Mustafa Reşit*, 63–6; Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 184.

¹²² BOA i.MSM. 44/1143.

¹²³ BOA C.DH. 110/5494/2/1, 27 June 1844.

Anglo-French intervention and little sensitivity to the demands of the sultan's non-Sunni subjects.¹²⁴

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By the spring of 1845, Franco-Austrian (Catholic) diplomatic initiatives for the return of Bashir II had been repeatedly blocked by the Porte, Britain, Russia, and Prussia. The Christian (Maronite) peasantry of the mixed villages rallied behind the Shihabites and resolved to fight. Secret committees were formed. Plans to attack mixed villages in Deir al-Qamar and the Jumblatts' lands were made. Some 11,000 soldiers were assembled. Funds, even those donated by the French and the Austrians for relief for the 1841 war, were channelled for ammunition. French flags were purchased from the French consul to Beirut, Eugène Poujade, for a taxed price. These were all orchestrated from Istanbul by Bashir II Shihab. The mountain was humming with rumours of French ships bringing troops—a rumour that Poujade purposely started—to aid the Maronites.¹²⁵

In response, the Druze *muqatadjis* also began their preparations for war. Under the leadership of the Jumblatts, they held secret meetings at Mukhtara, and agreed to forget their past (Jumblatt–Yazbaki) feuds and act together to fend off the aspirations of the peasantry and the Shihab.¹²⁶ What would transpire soon was not a fully fledged sectarian civil war: the Maronite *muqatadjis* remained neutral, in the belief that the toppling of the Druze lords would make them the next target.¹²⁷

The showdown began during the end of April and beginning of May 1845, just after the Ottoman grand admiral had sailed back to the imperial capital.¹²⁸ Maronite peasants attacked first the two Shufs that were under Jumblatt rule, and then the *muqata* of the Nakads in Deir al-Qamar. They burned 13 villages in a few hours. With French flags hoisted in their hands and promises of French military support in their minds, they declared that 'one or the other must leave the country; we cannot exist together; it must end in war; [either] they, the Druzes, or we must be destroyed and leave the country.'¹²⁹

Acting as one with the other Druze chiefs, Said Jumblatt declared his allegiance to the sultan and ordered his men to rise up and fall upon the Christians.¹³⁰ This was a war of 'supremacy', a war of 'extermination', the Maronite patriarch told European consuls, not a common war.¹³¹ It quickly spilled over 18 different sites. And, as had happened in 1841 and would happen again in 1860, thanks to their numerical superiority, the Maronites gained the upper hand at first and then,

¹²⁴ 'Notes sur la condition des Rayas sur le Ministre de Riza Pacha, conversation entre Rehid Pacha et M. Ali', 29 Feb. 1844, AMAE MD Turquie 45/59.

¹²⁵ Farah, *Politics*, 375–7.

¹²⁶ Ibid. 376; BOA HR.MKT 3/73/2/1.

¹²⁷ Farah, *Politics*, 376.

¹²⁸ Thomson to Anderson, 7 June 1845, ABCFM vol. 3, Syria 176/14.

¹²⁹ Rose to Canning, 30 July 1845 TNA FO 226/20/82; see also Farah, *Politics*, 381.

¹³⁰ Rose to Aberdeen, 12 June 1845, TNA FO 78/619/39.

¹³¹ Rose to Aberdeen, 8 June 1845, TNA FO 78/619/37.

lacking the discipline and stamina which their opponents possessed in abundance, they were repelled from the Druze districts, and pushed back to the Maronite north.

When the Druze offensive on the Christians began, the Maronite Church, the French, and the Austrian agents accused Ottoman forces of supporting the Druze, blocking the Maronites' routes when they were on an offensive, receiving a certain part of the Christian plunder by the Druze, and even participating in the Druze's 'great cruelty'. The European consuls collectively called Governor Vecihi to suppress the violence.¹³² Yet, Ottoman sources suggest otherwise. According to these, in many instances, Ottoman forces had stopped massacres in villages by intervening at the last minute, although they were 'unable' to prevent the violence due to lack of men and sources, Ottoman commanders and Vecihi claimed.¹³³ They also maintained that they endeavoured to discipline both sects (*terbiyelerine kalkışıldığı gibi*) despite the conflicting demands of the British and French consuls.¹³⁴

Discerning whose account was true(r) is an almost impossible task. But what matters here is the fact that inter-imperial rivalries persisted even during the clashes, and worked against the order and tranquillity of the mountain. After a month of fighting, around 1,500–3,000 people, including a French priest and an Ottoman sergeant, had perished. A large majority of the casualties were Druze (double the Maronites). Some 5000–10,000 houses were burnt or pillaged.¹³⁵ Violence was suppressed at the end of May 1845 with the arrival of Ottoman reinforcements, and the efforts of Vecihi and Rose, the elders of the mountain, and those clergy of all sects who were intent on peace. But tensions lingered.

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When the violence was over, with the purpose of preventing the recurrence of war, Bashir II Shihab was transferred from Istanbul to Safranbolu, whence his influence over the mountain would be greatly curtailed. In the meanwhile, Vecihi Paşa looked to settle peace between the Lebanese sects (*taifeteyn araları bulunduktan*) the 'Ottoman way'.¹³⁶ In his meetings with the delegates from the mountain, he blamed European diplomats for their 'mischievous interference' and urged the Druze and the Maronites to cooperate with the Ottoman authorities, rely on Ottoman troops alone for security and protection instead of their own arms, and avoid any conspiratorial activities with the consuls. He also followed the old

¹³² Copy of letter by Hugh Rose, L. D. Wildenbruck, C. Basily, Eugene Poujade, and George Lausella to Vecihi Pasha, 17 May 1845, TNA FO 78/619/44.

¹³³ Farah, *Politics*, 385–92; Rose to Canning, 17 May 1845, TNA FO 78/619/44.

¹³⁴ BOA A.MKT.MHM. 1/73/24, 25 June 1845.

¹³⁵ Farah, *Politics*, 398.

¹³⁶ BOA A.MKT.MHM. 1/73/2, 1 July 1845.

tradition of oblivion, inviting the Lebanese to 'forgive and forget' what had happened (*mazi mâ mazi demek*).¹³⁷

When Shihabite agitation continued after the war, signalling the importance attached to the Lebanon and recognizing the inter-imperial nature of the conflict, the Porte sent its foreign minister, Mustafa Şekib Efendi, to Beirut in July 1845 as extraordinary envoy for the administrative reorganization of the country and to establish order and tranquillity.¹³⁸ Şekib's decisions were guided by the new, moderate imperial cabinet that had risen after the fall of the staunch conservative Rıza Paşa due to the unsettled affairs in Syria and the Balkans, and as a result of palace intrigues in Istanbul.¹³⁹ In his place, Mustafa Reşid Paşa, the ambassador to Paris, was appointed as the new grand vizier.¹⁴⁰

The return of Mustafa Reşid to Ottoman government is of considerable importance for at least two reasons. First, as we have seen in the second part of this book, Reşid was the very man that had spearheaded the economic and (together with Hüsrev) diplomatic opening of the Ottoman Empire to freer trade and foreign interventions, showing an unwavering trust in the Vienna order. But the experience in Lebanon, which had been a battleground for the Porte to fight for its sovereign authority since 1840, had shown to him that, once allowed, the Powers' interference in the politics of the Levant could not be contained—a lesson that he had learned too late. Before Reşid left Paris for his new post in Istanbul, he therefore reminded Guizot that in order to 'secure peace' in Mount Lebanon, European consuls had to 'cease their interference in the internal affairs' of the empire.¹⁴¹

Second, together with Sultan Abdülmecid and a generation of Naqshbandi–Mujaddidi network, he had initiated the proclamation of the Gülhane Edict and the early *Tanzimat* reforms, some of which had been withdrawn, if not reversed, by the hardline Anglophobic conservatives since 1841. It was after his return to Istanbul, and through Şekib Efendi, that the propositions of the Gülhane Edict were finally, albeit imperfectly, projected onto Lebanon, which had by now become an intricate contact zone of colonial ambitions, conservative Ottoman imperialism, class and sectarian differences, financial disputes, and enduring familial hostilities, such as that between the Shihabs and the Jumblatts.

Although Şekib had come from Istanbul with a plan in hand, he adjusted it in conjunction with local realities while also keeping in view, to a degree, the erstwhile promises of rights to be accorded to the Christians and peasantry and the pledges of privileges to be restored to the *muqatadjis*—both resulting from the

¹³⁷ BOA A.MKT.MHM. 1/73/15, 30 June 1845; see also Farah, *Politics*, 401.

¹³⁸ BOA i.MSM. 45/1155.

¹³⁹ BOA A.MKT.MHM 1/73.

¹⁴⁰ 'Explications sur la chute de Riza Pacha et celle de son collègue Saffet Pacha', par le Docteur Barrachin, Apôtre de l'émancipation des Chrétiens et des Israelites d'Orient (Athens: Imprimerie de N. Angelidis, 1845), AMAE 50MD/45/66, 2, 17.

¹⁴¹ Farah, *Politics*, 424.

1840 intervention. The end product, *Règlements de Şekib Efendi*, setting out the new administrative structure, proved accordingly to be a very composite system.

Announced on 15 October 1845, the new regulations preserved the dual-*kaymakamlık* arrangement along geographical lines in order to mute any Shihabite initiative, and refrained from tactlessly imposing direct Ottoman rule—although Russia and Austria were now endorsing this option (Metternich had changed his mind for the third time)—so as not to provoke Great Power pressures, as had happened in 1842.¹⁴²

Şekib established tribunals in each district with an equal number of representatives and judges from each sect in the problematic mixed south.¹⁴³ The *vekils* represented the Christians in the mixed districts. Moreover, a *müdür* (responsible official) was appointed for each sub-district to respond to the *kaymakams* who would respond to the governor of Sayda. Finally, the Ottoman foreign minister designated the Deir al-Qamar region as a neutral zone, appointing a military officer to supervise its affairs. With the purpose of ensuring the workability of these regulations, he issued a general pardon to those who were not involved in deliberate murders or engaged in acts of plunder, allocated the Christians 10,000 purses for losses incurred during the 1841 civil war, and strictly ordered the two *kaymakams* to avoid seeking European protection at any time and intervening with each other's districts. These measures were complemented by an arduous process of disarmament in the mountain.

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This was the *Tanzimat* order—an amalgam of the Ottoman principle of the 'circle of justice' (Chapter 1), Islamic teachings, and the idea of 'civilization' (Chapter 7)—that paradoxically placed the purportedly 'uncivilized' *muqatadjis* at the heart of the new Lebanese social order, securing (as it had promised) their property. It allocated to the feudal lords the central tasks of policing (security) and tax collection. After the war, both Said and Numan aided the Porte's agents during the punishment of the those who had committed crimes during the civil war and in the settlement of the Maronite–Druze disputes, while communicating to the Porte's agents the Druze demands for 'security and order' (*asayiş ve istirahatimiz*) in place of 'disturbances' (*uygunsuzluklar*).¹⁴⁴

The *Tanzimat* order succeeded in certain respects. No major sectarian or *muqatadji*–peasant conflict broke out again until 1858. The unsettled tax issues of the country (those living on the mountain had not paid any tax to Istanbul since the restoration) were resolved by an able commissioner (Mehmed Emin Efendi)

¹⁴² Ibid. 425–7.

¹⁴³ One exemption was made here. Unlike the other sects, the Metuwalis did not have a judge of their own. The Sunni Muslim judge was to attend to their affairs.

¹⁴⁴ BOA A.MKT.MHM. 1/73/16.

sent by the Porte to Lebanon in 1848, to the satisfaction of the locals.¹⁴⁵ With the tax receipts, the Porte's agents could arrange for the payment of indemnities in three instalments, which were completed in 1848. Rose reported the same year that the system worked 'fine', the tribunals were assembling, and taxes were being distributed justly.¹⁴⁶

It was, however, a remarkably imperfect order from the outset, as it clipped the wings of the *muqatadjis* by imposing new administrative bodies on them. At the same time, it confined the peasantry under the authority of the *muqatadjis* from which they had been struggling to break free. Ottoman agents in Lebanon had poorly implemented those liberties introduced for non-Muslims intended to strengthen their loyalty to the sultan (such as the entitlement to testify in courts). No less importantly, as Metternich warned Mustafa Reşid in 1845, the Anglo-French rivalry on the spot, which 'posed an immediate threat' to peace in Mount Lebanon, could not be entirely calmed.¹⁴⁷

This was due largely to the fact that the prime and foreign minister, Guizot, was under immense pressure in the French chamber. The Catholic party and the French conservatives—both in correspondence with the Maronite clergy and the Shihabites—pleaded with him to implement a more dynamic policy in Lebanon, not to yield to Şekib's regulations for the (French) protection of the Maronites, and to uphold the strategic interests of France in the Mediterranean.

Besides this, the Lebanese campaign of forging affective ties with France, which Archbishop Murad had started in 1842, continued during the latter half of the 1840s. In 1847, for example, Bishop Abdullah al-Bustani (1819–83) wrote an emotional plea to 'the women of France,' as mothers, asking them to 'save us from our enemies,' and reminding them that 'our blood mixed with yours is none other than your blood... Our children are your children...'¹⁴⁸ The Shihabites in Paris blamed the 'Turks' and the Druze for their ruin, depicting a grim picture of the realities of the '*muqatas* of the Druze chiefs, especially the Jumblatts.'¹⁴⁹

In response to these pressures, Guizot sent a commission to Lebanon, which the Porte authorized with the sole purpose of inhibiting France from further agitation. The detailed report on the state of the country prepared by this commission claimed that the allegations of the Shihab and Catholic party were baseless, and 'accredited Ottoman officials with just intentions'. After Amin Shihab, the son of Bashir II, for whose return France had campaigned, converted to Sunni Islam, the Eastern Question began to lose prominence in Guizot's foreign policy.¹⁵⁰

According to Puryear, this became even more the case when, during Tsar Nicholas I's visit to London in June 1844, the British and Russian authorities

¹⁴⁵ Farah, *Politics*, 476–7. ¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 489.

¹⁴⁷ Guizot to Bourqueney, 27 June 1845, BOA HR. TO. 189/20/2. See also Farah, *Politics*, 456.

¹⁴⁸ Abdallah Boustani, *Lettre de Mgr l'Archevêque de Saida* (Paris, 1847), 2–6, 23–4; cf. Arsan, 'Mount Lebanon', 84–5.

¹⁴⁹ Farah, *Politics*, 488–9. ¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 488.

agreed on a common pacific policy towards Syria to facilitate peace in the sultan's empire. As Russia declared her support for Britain in the Anglo-French dispute over Tahiti, Guizot did not see much value in standing for the Maronite cause, a stance that could harm France's global interests.¹⁵¹ Finally, the 1848 revolutions in Europe and the political turmoil in France before the coup d'état of 1851 would render the Eastern Question of secondary importance in Paris for now.

In conclusion, it was during the five-year period between the summers of 1840 and 1845 that the Eastern Question came to inform local realities as much as it was shaped by the agency of the Lebanese. An Ottoman document dated 1847 states that, by the mid-1840s, Lebanon had 'turned into a battlefield' (*meydan-ı ma'reke*) for the rival imperial states, and formed the 'central tier' (*merkez tabakası*) of British and French foreign policies.¹⁵² Indeed, in this period France's revisionist motivations were repeatedly countered by the British-led Quadruple Alliance; and the war for dominant influence in the Levant, which the Powers had not dared to fight among themselves in 1840, was fought on the ground through their local co-religionists and proxies.¹⁵³

The Porte's 'conservative turn' in March 1841 and its subsequent efforts to stave off Great Power interventions rendered the situation in Mount Lebanon all the more complex. The pledges made during the 1840 intervention were not kept, and the promises of the Gülhane Edict were poorly implemented—if they were implemented at all—until 1845. The series of disastrous civil wars in late 1841, 1842, and finally 1845, the abolition of the ancient grand emirate and the introduction of a new dual-*kaymakamlık* system were all the emergent features of a complex set of problems and ambitions. These included the pursuit of imperial influence by various powers, existing and mounting sectarian and class differences among the Lebanese, and the peasants' claims for egalitarian rights which were arguably irreconcilable with the feudal privileges demanded by the *muqatadjis*. All these problems were compacted together in the mountain, bursting out in successive explosions of violence.

Mount Lebanon saw relative (even if not permanent) peace only after 1845, when Russia and Britain formed a common pact for the stability of Syria and France pulled back her active support to the Shihabites. The Porte, for its part, decided under Mustafa Reşid to pursue a pacific policy towards the Powers from then on, hoping to keep their consuls in Beirut content (*hoşnut tutulması*) by means of goodwill (*sûret-i hasene*).¹⁵⁴ The following fifteen years witnessed a rapid bounce back from total chaos to considerable economic prosperity in the mountain. Yet the same period also proved to be a new gestation phase for the most disastrous civil war in Lebanon in the nineteenth century.

¹⁵¹ Vernon J. Puryear, *England, Russia, and the Straits Question, 1844–1865* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1931), 40–44.

¹⁵² BOA HR.SYS 1527/50/1/1, 20 May 1847.

¹⁵³ See Ch. 8.

¹⁵⁴ BOA HR.SYS 1527/50/1/1, 20 May 1847.

11

The Two Wars

Crimea and Mount Lebanon

During Tsar Nicholas I's visit to London in June 1844, Russia and Britain not only agreed on taking a common position against France. They also reached a secret verbal agreement over the Eastern Question. The tsar and the British prime minister, Robert Peel, concurred that the sultan's empire was very weak, 'a dying man', as the former said. They decided to cooperate in maintaining her. But 'if in future it became evident that [the Ottoman Empire] could no longer be maintained', the courts of London and St Petersburg would act in concert to draft a preliminary understanding 'on the details of the partition' along with Austria. They purposefully excluded France from the plan because of the tsar's personal dislike of King Louis-Philippe, as well as Russia's policy of separating Britain from France, and their disapproval of the ongoing revisionist aspirations of the Guizot government in the Levant at the time.¹

One issue remained vague, unaddressed and therefore open to different interpretations between the two courts in the coming years, however. How would one determine the impossibility of maintaining the Ottoman Empire and the time of her partition? On what principles and legal grounds? British and Russian statesmen held contrasting views with respect to these questions. And their differences became one of the most pressing reasons why they were dragged into war a decade later, in 1854–6—the so-called Crimean War, which was actually fought from the Baltic to the East Asia and the Pacific.²

The first inter-imperial war amongst the Great Powers since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the Crimean War shook the world, devastating peoples, economies, and finances. Some historians argue that it symbolized the destruction of the Concert of Europe.³ In the following pages I will offer an alternative assessment, and discuss that the Concert continued to exist even after the Crimean War. That being said, the peace established on the heels of the war was delicate, and continued to test peace in Europe and the Levant. Like the

¹ Puryear, *England, Russia*, 40, 51.

² Clive Ponting, *The Crimean War* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2004), 5.

³ Paul W. Schroeder, *Austria, Great Britain, and the Crimean War: The Destruction of the European Concert* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972); Charles Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 237.

aftershocks of a disastrous earthquake, its aftermath witnessed further Great Power wars, civil strife, and rebellions.

The precarious climate that emerged at the time dovetailed with existing and newly emerging tensions in Mount Lebanon. These snowballed into further fighting on the mountain during the summer of 1860—a much more devastating conflict, with a death toll around three to five times greater than the civil wars of 1841 and 1845 combined. Here we will consider the global and local dynamics that led once again to violence in Ottoman Lebanon, starting with the new implications of the Eastern Question in the 1850s that prompted the Crimean War, and their unsettling effects in the Levant.

The Crimean War and a Perilous Peace

After the Gülhane Edict of 1839, the Ottoman Sublime Porte's policies of centralization on taxation, codification, and conscription missed their mark. Coupled with growing economic discrepancies between non-Muslims and Muslims, they provoked continuous instability in the Ottoman Empire in the short run. Tax revolts in Akdağ, Niş, Vidin, and Canik were accompanied by violence in Syria at large (Lebanon, Aleppo, Damascus), Mosul, Nablus, Jeddah, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Crete. Moreover, the incessant border quarrels with Persia and Greece and the uncontrollable issue of paper money *kaim* (introduced in 1839), the trade deficit, and the poor financial performance of the Porte after the commercial agreements of 1838–41 cast dark clouds over the future of the sultan's empire. Adding to these the international politics of the post-1848 revolutions and the tensions over Ottoman Palestine and the Balkans in the run up to the Crimean War of 1853–6, the Eastern Question steadily became a popular theme again for strategists, international lawyers, military men, journalists, and intellectuals in the early 1850s.

During the 1848 revolutions in Europe (including the Balkan dominions of the sultan's empire), Tsar Nicholas I, with his conservative disposition and in his role as 'the gendarme of Europe', supplied military aid to suppress the revolutionaries in the Austrian and Ottoman Balkans. The next year, however, with the strong backing of the liberal British and French governments, Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid Paşa's rejection to return to Austria a number of Polish and Hungarian revolutionaries who sought refuge in the sultan's empire met with Austrian and Russian protests.⁴ St Petersburg threatened to remove the Principalities

⁴ Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853–1856)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 46; BOA i.DUİT 147/1; cf. Bayram Bayraktar, 'Osmanlı Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Devletler Hukuku Açısından 19. Yüzyılda Osmanlı'ya Sığınan Lehistan ve Macar Mültecileri Hakkında Düşünceler', *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 19(39) (2019): 759–78, at 773.

from the sultan's jurisdiction.⁵ Britain sent a squadron in October 1849 into the Dardanelles as a sign of commitment to the defence of Istanbul. Since this constituted a violation of the stipulations of the inter-imperial Straits agreement of 1841 (see Chapter 8), a crisis was immediately provoked among the Powers.⁶ It culminated with a British apology and the withdrawal of her squadrons in January 1850. But the event served as a 'dress rehearsal' for what was to come a few years later.⁷

At about the same time a squabble took place between the French Catholic and Orthodox Churches over the sanctuaries in Judaea in Ottoman Palestine. What had begun as an inter-church conflict in 1847 turned into an inter-imperial crisis by 1852, especially when Napoleon III, Bonaparte's nephew, declared himself emperor following a coup d'état. With the purpose of reasserting the greatness of France as well as satisfying his Catholic supporters, Napoleon III sought a resolution to the sanctuary dispute on the basis of the capitulatory agreements. But Tsar Nicholas I opposed French officialdom's scheme, reminding France of the 1774 Russo-Ottoman treaty that had granted Russia the protection of the Orthodox in the Ottoman Empire.⁸

As results, the Porte delegated commissions (one consisted of a Greek, a Catholic, and an Armenian, the other, Muslim ulema) to investigate the matter. Faced with persistent exhortations on the part of French and Russian agents, Sultan Abdülmejid I changed his mind more than once.⁹ France even sent a frigate, the *Charlemagne*, to the Bosphorus in order to obtain a satisfactory decision from the sultan, and staged a demonstration with six battleships and six frigates just off Tripoli.¹⁰

The personal animosity and ideological difference between Nicholas I and Napoleon III—the tsar detested the latter's ascendancy and refused to recognize him as emperor—intensified the strain among the Powers. Public debates began between the foreign ministers of France and Russia.¹¹ Against the Anglo-French pact, Russian officialdom believed that they had Austria in their pocket.¹² In the late 1840s, the tsar had aided the court of Vienna in the suppression of the revolutionary threat. In 1852, the dispute between Austria and the Porte over Montenegro garnered the support of St Petersburg as the latter attempted to tie

⁵ David M. Goldfrank. *The Origins of the Crimean War* (Harlow: Longman, 1994), 69–70.

⁶ Puryear, *England, Russia*, 149, 153.

⁷ Goldfrank, *Origins*, 70–71.

⁸ See Ch. 1.

⁹ Puryear, *England, Russia*, 197, 222; Goldfrank, *Origins*, 80–84.

¹⁰ Frémeaux, *La Question*, 101–2; Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals*, 69–70; Badem, *The Crimean War*, 66; Goldfrank, *Origins*, 94.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 125.

¹² On Austro-Russian relations in the 1850s, see B. Unckel, *Österreich und der Krimkrieg. Studien zur Politik der Donaumonarchie in den Jahren 1852–1856* (Lübeck: Matthiesen, 1969), and E. V. Sirotkina, 'Vostochnyj Vopros, Krymskaya Vojna i Konec "Svyashennogo Al'yansa" v Avstrijsko-Rossijskix Otnosheniyax', *Izvestiya Saratovskogo Universiteta. Novaya seriya. Seriya: Istoriya. Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya* 18 (1) (2018): 77–83.

together the differences in the Balkans with the disputes in Palestine in order to gain diplomatic leverage.¹³

Even though Austro-Ottoman friction over Montenegro ended in early 1853, the Russo-Ottoman altercation lingered after St Petersburg persisted in its demands for a *sened* (bill) for a virtual protectorate over the Greek Christian subjects of the sultan, which would be extended to the holy sites in Palestine.¹⁴ In part under French pressure, but also on the grounds that authorizing Russia to provide such protection would legally open the path for further Russian interventions subsequently, the Porte stubbornly rejected the Russian demand. The tsar then mobilized his troops in the Danubian Principalities and embarked upon naval operations in the Black Sea.¹⁵

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The Eastern Question returned to the agenda of inter-imperial politics in the early 1850s in this context, amid the rising tides of war, revolutions, a coup d'état, rebellions in the Ottoman Empire, and religious competition. Tsar Nicholas I refashioned it as a question not of the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire but of her 'peaceful' partition among the Powers, as Russia and Britain had secretly agreed upon in 1844.¹⁶ Since the Congress of Vienna of 1814–15, the inter-imperial order had been based on a conservative and anti-revolutionary understanding of the preservation of stability in Europe and its periphery. Now, in the early 1850s, the sultan's empire came to be considered by revisionists as a fundamental threat to European peace and security.

For a decade, a number of pamphlets, journal articles, and opinion pieces were published with the same title, 'The Eastern Question'. There was a familiar theme: '[T]he Asiatic Turkish race, fortunately or unfortunately, has evinced an utter incompetency for . . . a fundamental and internal civilisation,' one such piece read. 'The Turks' did not have a place among 'the civilized nations of Europe'.¹⁷

By the same token, in his talks with the British ambassador, George Hamilton Seymour, in January 1853, Tsar Nicholas I infamously referred to the Ottoman Empire as 'the sick man of Europe', doomed to die.¹⁸ In line with the 1844 secret agreement, he suggested that, before the sick man died, Britain and Russia ought to take precautions.¹⁹ The next day he shared with Seymour concrete plans of

¹³ Richmond, *Canning*, 239–40. The Austro-Ottoman crisis resulted from the slow evacuation of Ottoman troops from Montenegro following the successful suppression of a riot there.

¹⁴ Bernadotte E. Schmidt, 'The Diplomatic Preliminaries of the Crimean War', *American Historical Review* 25(1) (1919): 36–67, at 37–8.

¹⁵ Bilal Şimşir, 'Kırım Savaşı Arifesinde Mustafa Reşid Paşa'nın Yazışmaları', in *Mustafa Reşid Paşa ve Dönemi*, 77–83.

¹⁶ Anait Surenovna Akop'janc, 'Vostochnyj Vopros v Geopolitike Rossii', *Interesko Geo-Sibir* (2015): 44–8, at 45.

¹⁷ Anonymous, *Hints on the Solution of the Eastern Question by One Who Has Resided in the Levant*, (London: R. Clarke, 1853), 19; Frémaux, *La Question*, 101.

¹⁸ Ibid. ¹⁹ Şimşir, 'Kırım Savaşı', 78.

partition, offering London control over Cyprus and Egypt.²⁰ But the Aberdeen cabinet in London was not prepared to accept such a scheme—in fact, they were entirely opposed to it. They wanted to preserve the sultan's empire even if this had now become a much more taxing endeavour for Britain.²¹

The tsar also shared his plans for the partition of the Ottoman Empire with the Austrian king, Franz Joseph.²² Grateful as he was for the Russian policing and diplomatic assistance in 1848 and 1852–3, Franz Joseph also followed a conservative inter-imperial policy in line with Metternich's diplomatic policy since the 1810s, which meant keeping the Ottoman Empire intact. Subsequently, in the slipstream of the transimperial security culture of the time, a series of ambassadorial conferences were held in Vienna in 1853 under the initiative of Britain and Austria and with the purpose of remedying Russo-Ottoman disputes and restraining the tsar from following any such scheme he had proposed. Notes were presented to both courts for the settlement of a lasting peace: for the Porte to acknowledge Russian protection of the Greek Orthodox and for Russia to evacuate the Danubian principalities. But both the Porte and Russia were disinclined to accept these terms, and came up with their incompatible counter-proposals.²³ The logjam was followed by belligerent acts in the Black Sea. In September 1853, the Russian fleet destroyed the Ottoman port of Sinop.²⁴ On 5 October, the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia.²⁵

Over the next five months the attempts to obtain a settlement between the two cabinets during ambassadorial meetings in Vienna yielded no results. In the end, seeing that there was no prospect for a peaceful settlement, Britain responded positively to the adventurous Napoleon III's calls to enter the Black Sea with British fleets that were already stationed in Istanbul.²⁶ At the end of March 1854, the Russo-Ottoman war became a Great Power war.²⁷ Britain and France formed a costly alliance with the Porte 'for the maintenance of [the Ottoman Empire] and [the] general equilibrium of Europe'.²⁸

The Crimean War was not simply a disruption of the transimperial security culture of the time nor the destruction of the Concert of Europe, as has been previously argued.²⁹ Aside from calculations of strategic gain and prestige, it was fought mainly for the preservation of the existing patterns of security, self-restraint among the Powers, multilateral action (towards the Porte), and the

²⁰ Goldfrank, *Origins*, 127. ²¹ Puryear, *England, Russia*, 206–15.

²² BOA i.HR 21231/17.

²³ BOA i.HR 21220/6/8 and 21231/17; cf. *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Kırım Savaşı (1853–6)* (Ankara: T. C. Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2006), 35–41; Puryear, *England, Russia*, 296–8; E. V. Tarle, *Krymskaya Vojna*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Yurayt, 2018), 147–92.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 296–333. ²⁵ BOA HR.SYS 903/2/37–9; cf. *Osmanlı Belgelerinde*, 57–69.

²⁶ Puryear, *England, Russia*, 301; Şimşir, 'Kırım Savaşı', 87–9.

²⁷ Schmidt, 'The Diplomatic Preliminaries', 38–9.

²⁸ Hugh McKinnon Wood, 'The Treaty of Paris and Turkey's Status in International Law', *The American Journal of International Law* 37(2) (April 1943): 262–74, at 265.

²⁹ Schroeder, *The Destruction*.

maintenance of the European balance of power by ensuring the Ottoman territorial integrity.

More than 900,000 people died during the next two years. Military victories and Austrian support of the Anglo-French–Ottoman alliance became decisive in forcing Russia's back against the wall. Paramount too was the Porte's declaration of an edict on 18 February 1856 which facilitated the subsequent Paris Peace Treaty of 30 March 1856 and hastened the termination of the war. But both the Ottoman edict and the Paris peace unintendedly gave rise to new perils, jeopardizing the stability of Europe and the Levant—particularly in Mount Lebanon.

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The *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of February 1856, also known as the *Islahat Fermanı* (Reform Edict), was above all a diplomatic response to wring favourable terms from the upcoming peace negotiations between Russia and the Ottoman Empire. It is usually considered the second major official document in the Ottoman *Tanzimat* era (1839–76) after the *Gülhane Edict* of 1839. The contexts of the production of the two edicts were similar in many respects. Both were promulgated in times of transimperial crisis. Both made arguably liberal pledges to an Ottoman as well as a European audience. In 1839, the Porte's object was to attract foreign support against one of its vassals. In 1856, it looked to obtain an agreement with Russia in a way that would prevent St Petersburg from future intervention in its domestic affairs with respect to Greek Christians. Moreover, the 1856 edict complemented the 1839 edict in perpetuating the Porte's commitment to the ambiguous principle of 'civilization'.

Yet, unlike 1839, the 1856 edict was not drafted by Ottoman statesmen alone. It was not 'home-grown'.³⁰ Instead, a commission comprising British ambassador Stratford Canning, French ambassador Édouard Antoine Thouvenel (1818–66), and the Austrian internuncio to the Porte, Anton von Prokesch-Osten (1795–1876), Prince Callimachi, an Ottoman Greek representing the Greek Orthodox subjects of the sultan, as well as Grand Vizier Mehmed Emin Âli Paşa and the foreign minister, Fuad Paşa, discussed its content and drafted it.

The latter two were both protégés of Mustafa Reşid. Born in the same year (1815), Âli and Fuad had followed the same educational path through the Translation Bureau (*Tercüme Odası*), where they mastered French, before serving the Ottoman foreign ministry in Paris, London, Vienna, and St Petersburg as second-tier bureaucrats under Reşid's supervision. Their relations with their patron were tarnished when Âli accepted appointment as grand vizier in place of Reşid in 1855. Even then, they both furthered Reşid's pro-liberal Europe policies and considered it their ultimate end to make the sultan's empire a

³⁰ Deringil, *Conversion*, 66.

member of the Concert of Europe, to guarantee her security and territorial integrity against European, and especially Russian, aggressions.³¹

By this point, the Great Powers had come to police almost the entire world 'from a position of assumed cultural, material and legal superiority', having engaged in wars and interventions in different parts of the world from China and Siam to the Americas.³² They had granted themselves the authority to intervene in the political affairs of so-called 'less civilized' polities as a special right and responsibility and an instrument of global order maintenance or order transformation. The so-called standard of civilization thus served as a licence for the political, legal, and armed interventions of the European Powers.³³

The principle of 'civilization', now the over-arching theme and grand narrative of international political thought, was also adopted by the Ottoman ministers Âli and Fuad Paşas.³⁴ By the mid-1850s, the two embraced *medeniyetçilik* (civilizationism) as an ideology for reforming and securing the Ottoman Empire. While in the 1830s Mustafa Reşid had upheld the notion as a discursive apparatus to garner the support of the Powers against the Porte's 'uncivilized' Egyptian 'other' (see Chapter 7), Âli and Fuad utilized the notion as a discursive practice with the purpose of avoiding being on the receiving end of Great Power interventions, subordination, or informal rule. For this purpose, they thought, the sultan's empire had to be elevated to the level of 'the civilized', or at least she had to 'pretend' to be one.³⁵

Their appeal to 'civilizationism' was a distinctly opportunistic, power-oriented, and imperialist policy. They were mesmerized by the military, economic, technological, and political achievements of the European Powers. In a similar vein to Japan, instead of steadfastly resisting the perils of the new global order, or rebelling against the insecurities it posed for less privileged peoples, the Ottoman ministers preferred to change their empire's standing in the global imperial order. For Japan, the matter became one of ensuring the civilized identity of their empire by means of expansionism.³⁶ For the Porte, at least for now, it was a matter of becoming a member of the Concert of Europe or the Family of Nations.

While preparing the Reform Edict together with British, French, and Austrian ambassadors and Prince Callamachi, the eyes of Âli and Fuad were trained on the specific objective of marking the civilized character of the Porte.³⁷ The edict

³¹ For more detailed accounts of the lives of the two Ottoman ministers, see Rasim Marz, *Ali Pascha—Europas vergessener Staatsman* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2016); Yılmaz Öztuna, *Ali Paşa* (Ankara: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 1988); Fuad Andıç and Suphan Andıç, *Sadrızam Ali Paşa. Hayatı, Zamanı ve Vasiyetnamesi* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 2000); Fuad Andıç and Suphan Andıç, *Kırım Savaşı, Ali Paşa ve Paris Antlaşması* (Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 2002); Engin D. Akarlı, *Belgelerle Tanzimat. Osmanlı Sadrazamlarından Ali ve Fuad Paşaların Siyasi Vasiyetnameleri* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1978).

³² Simpson, *Great Powers*, 5.

³³ Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*; Bell, 'Empire and Imperialism', 867–8; Anghie, *Imperialism*, 4.

³⁴ Osterhammel, 'Approaches to Global History', 12.

³⁵ Çetinsaya, 'Kalemiye'den', 55–6.

³⁶ Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*.

³⁷ BOA i.HR 129/6534.

accordingly echoed and extended the guarantees and rights that had been pledged in the 1839 Gülhane Edict, even though these pledges had remained largely unfulfilled. Yet the subtext of 1856 differed immensely from its antecedent.

The sacred shari'a law, the Qur'an, and ancient laws and glories were not mentioned in the new edict.³⁸ This symbolized the elimination of the centuries-long hierarchy between the Muslim and non-Muslim populations of the empire. Nor was there any direct correlation to the 'circle of justice' in the script. In 1856, instead of the principle of security-with-prosperity, an egalitarian ethos was accentuated, i.e. equality 'without distinction of classes and of religion' and 'in matters of military service, in the administration of justice, in taxation, in admission to civil and military schools, in public employment, and in social respect' such as forms of dress and the erection of new buildings.³⁹ The 1856 edict pledged to make it 'lawful for foreigners to possess landed property in [the sultan's] dominion, conforming themselves to the laws and police regulations... after arrangements have been come to with Foreign Powers', an act that took effect only in the late 1860s. Taxes were 'to be levied under the same denomination from all the subjects of my Empire'.⁴⁰ The sultan promised:

Every Christian or other non-Mussulman community shall be bound, within a fixed period, and with the concurrence of a Commission composed ad hoc of members of its own body, to proceed... to examine into its actual immunities and privileges, and to discuss and submit to my Sublime Porte the reforms required by the progress of civilisation and of the age.⁴¹

With its bold, forward-looking European language and clearly formulated plan of action, the 1856 Edict aimed to consolidate the allegiance of non-Muslim subjects of the sultan.

Seen together, all these proposals stemmed, in part, from the desire to thwart revisionist (Russian) schemes for the partition of the sultan's empire, and to serve as an all-encompassing guarantee that Russia had wanted to obtain from the Porte for the protection of the Greek Orthodox since 1853. It aimed to take away from St Petersburg the right to play any part in Ottoman reform, and to present the tsar with a *fait accompli* at the Paris Peace Conference.⁴²

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In the latter sense, and almost in this sense only, the edict yielded the intended results. Having suffered heavy defeats and humiliation at the hands of the allies, Russia, under her new tsar, Alexander II (Nicholas I died of pneumonia in 1855),

³⁸ Davison, *Reform*, 54–5.

³⁹ 'Firman and Hat-i Humayun [*sic*] Sultan of Turkey', in Bailey, *British Diplomacy*, 287, appendix 6; emphasis mine. See also Davison, *Reform*, 55.

⁴⁰ 'Firman and Hat-i Humayun', 290.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 287.

⁴² Davison, *Reform*, 58–9.

was already inclined to peace. The Porte's declaration of a reform edict left the court of St Petersburg with little diplomatic margin during the peace talks in Paris in 1856. Consequently, Alexander II subscribed with great reluctance to the neutrality of the Black Sea. He also complied with the establishment of a river commission to ensure free navigation and security for the Danube, and to address any difference among the riparian states as well as countries like Britain and France which traded in high volume with the region.⁴³ And he agreed on the autonomy of Moldavia, Wallachia, and Serbia, while restoring to the sultan the prewar territories that had been lost during the fighting.⁴⁴

The Paris Conference of 1856 materialized what the Vienna Congress of 1814–15 had aspired to obtain with respect to the Eastern Question. In 1815, the Powers had been unable to guarantee the territorial integrity of the European dominions of the sultan's empire under European public law as a result of the Porte's unrelenting dismissal of their propositions.⁴⁵ But, in 1856, the court of Istanbul was more than willing for such a transimperial guarantee. In fact, as already mentioned, under Âli and Fuad its efforts had been bent on being 'admitted to the Concert of Europe' which would seal their empire's right to exist.⁴⁶

The seventh article of the resulting Treaty of Paris, which Grand Vizier Âli Paşa himself proposed, accordingly spelled out that the signatories of the treaty 'declare the Sublime Porte admitted to *participate in the advantages* of the Public Law and System (Concert) of Europe'.⁴⁷ They would respect 'the Independence and Territorial Integrity of the Ottoman Empire, jointly guarantee the strict observance of this commitment, and will therefore consider any act [tending to its violation] as a matter of general interest'.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the ninth article explicitly referred to the sultan's Reform Edict of 18 February, stipulating that the latter's communication to the signatories of the treaty 'cannot in any case, give to the said powers the right to interfere, either collectively or separately, in the relations of His Majesty the Sultan with his subjects nor in the internal administration of his empire'.⁴⁹

The signing of the Treaty of Paris, and its ratification a month later, meant that Russo-Ottoman differences in the Black Sea, the Balkans, and the Caucasus, which had haunted generations of Ottoman sultans and risked European peace since the eighteenth century, and which had formed the crux of the many crises relating to the Eastern Question, were now brought under the jurisdiction of European public

⁴³ For a recent, well-researched, and beautifully written study, see Constantin Ardeleanu, *The European Commission of the Danube, 1856–1948: An Experiment in International Administration* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

⁴⁴ T. W. Riker, 'The Concert of Europe and Moldavia in 1857', *English Historical Review* 42 (1927): 227–44; H. Temperley, 'The Treaty of Paris of 1856 and Its Execution', *Journal of Modern History* 4 (1932), pt 1: 405–7.

⁴⁵ See Ch. 4. ⁴⁶ Ali Pasha, *Political Testament*, 35.

⁴⁷ Wood, 'The Treaty of Paris', 262–3; emphasis mine.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 263.

⁴⁹ Davison, *Reform*, 413.

law. The Ottoman Empire had already de facto been an integral feature of the European security system.⁵⁰ Now her territorial integrity was guaranteed de jure. Whether she was placed on an equal footing with the other five Great Powers was deliberately left ambiguous (especially in Article 7).⁵¹

Irrespective of this ambiguity, to Ottoman statesmen the Treaty of Paris was the realization of an ultimate objective. The so-called Christian provinces of their empire had now been officially withdrawn from Russian protection. This meant not only the annulment of the 1774 Kaynarca Treaty but also, in the eyes of the Ottoman ministers, an end to the ambiguity of their empire's position in the global imperial order. Âli Paşa, the Ottoman plenipotentiary who affixed his signature to the treaty in Paris, wrote in his political testament that, in 1856, the Porte had become 'a member of the family of great nations who respect each other's rights'.⁵² When the news from Paris arrived in Istanbul, Sultan Abdülmecid I jubilantly and prematurely declared his hope that 'my Empire, henceforth a member of the great family of Europe, will prove to the entire universe that it is worthy of a prominent place in the concert of civilised nations'.⁵³

Many historical actors argued that the Eastern Question was permanently resolved at one blow by placing the Ottoman Empire under the guarantee of European public law. One hour after the treaty was signed at the French ministry of foreign affairs at 1 p.m. on 30 March, the prefect of police in Paris announced the news, stating that 'the peace of Europe' was placed 'upon a firm and durable basis...in settling the Eastern Question'.⁵⁴ The argument that the Eastern Question had been 'definitively settled' repeatedly appeared in the publications of the day.⁵⁵ The treaty was considered proof of the strength of international law in Europe, as the two major antagonists of the tsar, Britain and France, had become allies with Austria and thus confined a permanent threat. Recent scholarly studies have likewise claimed, 'After 1856, the Eastern Question receded in European diplomacy for decades'.⁵⁶ However, as Temperley rightly argues, there would be 'more danger of [a total European] war after, than before, the peace was signed'.⁵⁷ Equally perilously, there would be more instability in the Ottoman Empire immediately after the 1856 edict was promulgated than before.

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The adverse results of the Paris Peace and the 1856 edict in the sultan's dominions and Europe and the endurance of the Eastern Question resulted from a number of factors. For one, the proclamation of the 1856 edict incited graver schisms among

⁵⁰ Palabıyık, 'The Emergence', 247.

⁵¹ Wood, 'The Treaty of Paris', 274.

⁵² Ali Pasha, *Political Testament*, 35.

⁵³ Edhem Eldem, 'Ottoman Financial Integration with Europe: Foreign Loans, the Ottoman Bank and the Ottoman Public Debt', *European Review* 13(3) (2005): 431–45, at 432.

⁵⁴ 'Conclusion of Peace', *The Times*, 31 Mar. 1856, 9.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*; *Le Moniteur*, 1 Apr. 1856.

⁵⁶ Mitzen, *Power in Concert*, 210–11.

⁵⁷ Temperley, 'Treaty of Paris', 387.

the elites in Istanbul and insecurity in the wider empire. The manner in which it had been drafted, with the direct involvement of European diplomats and its language purified of Islamic nuances, was considered a disgrace to Ottoman dignity and sovereignty not only by the hardline conservatives but even by more moderate figures like Mustafa Reşid Paşa himself.⁵⁸ This intensified the struggle between Âli and Fuad Paşas, on the one hand, and conservative, pro-Russian statesmen such as Rıza Paşa, on the other.

Secondly, at the hands of ultra-conservative and sometimes incompetent governors, virtually all of whom condemned the edict, the reforms pledged were hardly implemented to any satisfaction in several provinces. The rights and liberties granted to Christian subjects prompted a religious backlash, widespread antagonism, and outrage on the part of a considerable portion of the Muslim population, who viewed the edict as an encroachment on their laws, regulations, and religious privileges.⁵⁹ All the while, Christian subjects of the sultan remained dissatisfied with new reforms because, despite the rights granted to them, aside from their poor (or non-)implementation, they were still made subject to heavy new taxes for exemption from military service, which they detested.⁶⁰ The four years between 1856 and 1860 witnessed a series of Christian rebellions and 'disturbances' in Crete, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Albania, and Montenegro, and Muslim outrages against Christians in Syria (Nablus, Gaza, Aleppo, and Damascus) and Jeddah, where 19 individuals, including the British and French consuls, were killed in 1858.⁶¹

Thirdly, the Paris peace did not bring to an end—in fact, by contrast, it even inspired—imperial revisionism in Europe. Even though France and Russia had been belligerents during the war, the postwar settlement paved the way for their rapprochement.⁶² Tsar Alexander II was anxious to revise the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris with respect to the Balkans and the Black Sea. And his revisionism sat well with Napoleon III's ambitions to redraw the map of Europe.⁶³

The French emperor's victories during the Crimean War had boosted his prestige, and set him on a similarly revisionist, if not expansionist, course of foreign policy. During the war he had developed new schemes to reinvigorate France's naval capability and shift the borders of Europe eastwards by appropriating much of Belgium, Savoy, and the Rhineland, and by creating loose federal

⁵⁸ Davison, *Reform*, 57–8.

⁵⁹ 'Memo on the Province of Tripoli par M. Blanche', 18 Apr. 1857, AMAE Corr. Consulaire Beyrouth, 42CCC/7/178.

⁶⁰ Farah, *Politics*, 499–519.

⁶¹ BOA HR.TO. 232/17; 231/7; Farah, *Politics*, 525–6; Thouvenel to Fuad Pacha, 29 Dec. 1859, AMAE 133CP/343/15.

⁶² S. Gorianov, 'Les Étapes de l'alliance franco-russe (1853–1861)', *Revue de Paris* 19(1) (1912): 1–29; 19(3): 529–44; 19(4): 755–76; Temperley, 'Treaty of Paris', 387.

⁶³ François Charles-Roux, *Alexandre II, Gortchakoff et Napoléon III* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1913), 179–80.

structures in Italy and Germany over which to exercise informal influence. An idea entertained by the emperor at the time was the establishment of an Arab kingdom in the Levant under the Algerian leader Abd al-Qader (1808–83).⁶⁴

In 1858, however, Napoleon III limited his ambitions to Italy. He endorsed the Sardinian cause with the aim of establishing an Italian confederation, under the presidency of the pope, that would free northern Italy from Austrian rule.⁶⁵ His aggressive policy resulted in a battle with the Austrians in Piedmont, while Britain was embroiled in rebellions and battles in Asia—the Great Mutiny in India (1857) and the second Opium War in China (1856–60)—to sustain her colonial interests.⁶⁶ France thus positioned herself once more as a competitor to Britain (despite their joint mission in China), while French policy seemed ‘designed not just to achieve parity with Britain but actively to subjugate Britain to the French political will’.⁶⁷

Napoleon III brought Austria to heel at the Conference of Villafranca in 1859. A few months later, in the spring of 1860, when he signed a treaty with the prime minister of Piedmont–Sardinia, the count of Cavour, to annex Nice and Savoy, eyebrows were again raised in London and Berlin for fear of an adventurous expansion by France.⁶⁸ Having anticipated such disquiet, Napoleon III made secret pacts with Alexander II on 25 September 1857 (verbally) and 3 March 1859 (officially) with respect to Austria. The two emperors also agreed to act in concert over the Eastern Question and to adopt a common stance in the event of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁹ That is, Russia revived her 1844 agreement with Britain, which had fallen by the wayside in 1853. But now, St Petersburg replaced London for the France of Napoleon III as the other party, a party which, unlike British cabinets, welcomed the revisionist dispositions of the Russian tsars and the establishment of a European protectorate over the Christian subjects of the sultan.⁷⁰

In 1859 and early 1860, Russian strategists were prepared for the disintegration of the sultan’s empire and devised material schemes for establishing a confederation of small Christian states in the Balkans—proclaiming Istanbul (Constantinople) a free city—in a similar vein to Napoleon III’s designs in Italy.⁷¹ Since the foreign minister, Gorchakov, knew that Italy, not the Eastern Question, was France’s prior

⁶⁴ Abd al Qader was the leader of the Algerian resistance movement against French colonial occupation in the 1830s and 1840s. When the resistance was suppressed, he left for Bursa and, in 1858, for Damascus. Michele Raccagni, ‘The French Economic Interests in the Ottoman Empire’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 11(3) (1980): 339–67, at 346.

⁶⁵ Brown, ‘Palmerston’, 693.

⁶⁶ James F. McMillan, *Napoleon III* (Harlow: Longman, 1991), 84–92.

⁶⁷ Brown, ‘Palmerston’, 693.

⁶⁸ Persigny to Thouvenel, 10 May 1860, AMAE 8CP/717/4.

⁶⁹ Charles-Roux, *Alexandre II*, 214, 219, 239, 245, 300.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 237.

⁷¹ Kiselev to Gorchakov, 25 Apr. 1860, AVPRI, f. Kantselyariya, d. 149, l. 246; cf. M. T. Panchenkova, *Politika Francii na Blizhnem Vostoke i Syrijskaya Ekspeditsiya, 1860–1861 gg.* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Nauka, 1966), 36.

concern at this point, he decided on a patient policy.⁷² When his diplomats approached France, the message they were instructed to deliver attested that the courts of Paris and St Petersburg had to act in alliance ‘in the event of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire’, but this did not require an immediate resolution. France could ‘introduce points on which to agree’ and to which ‘the Russian government would respond with complete frankness.’⁷³

Simultaneously, Gorchakov endeavoured to bring the border disputes in Montenegro and the situation of the Christians in Bulgaria, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Greece to the agenda of the Powers, as they were all ‘intolerable’ for Russia. He was aware that his calls to redraw the map of the Balkans would be met by Austro-British opposition. He therefore proposed to Paris and Berlin the creation of a union (*soyuz*) between Russia, Prussia, and France, against whom ‘Britain and Austria will be powerless’.⁷⁴

The French foreign minister, Thouvenel, who had only recently arrived from Istanbul to take up his new post in February 1860, reacted positively to the Russian proposal in general, though he noted, just like Gorchakov, that they would be in ‘no hurry’ to set out the specific points of the projected agreement, and that there should be ‘no rush for the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire’.⁷⁵ According to Thouvenel, the sultan’s empire was an anomaly and would ‘fall herself as a consequence of internal contradictions’.⁷⁶

But Prussia did not affirm the proposal for the ‘separation of the Christian provinces from the Ottoman Empire’ by a triple alliance.⁷⁷ A relatively silent actor in the politics of the Eastern Question since the late eighteenth century, usually following the other Powers, Berlin suddenly emerged as one of the key players in 1860–61. Its position also signified the persistence of the Concert of Europe after the Crimean War.

When Gorchakov hinted at the idea to his ambassador, the Prussian foreign minister, Baron Schleinitz, instead suggested a collective approach to the Eastern Question, which ‘should naturally involve the Ottoman Empire as well’. He warned his Russian correspondents that the British would oppose the Russian approach.⁷⁸ The Austrian foreign minister, Count Rechberg, was pleased with the

⁷² Kiselev to Gorchakov, 27 June 1860, AVPRI, f. Kantselyariya, d. 149, l. 362; cf. Panchenkova, *Syrijskaya Ekspediciya*, 36.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Kiselev to Gorchakov, 12 June 1860, AVPRI, f. Kantselyariya, d. 150, l. 42–3; cf. Panchenkova, *Syrijskaya Ekspediciya*, 37; Charles-Roux, *Alexandre II*, 288–9.

⁷⁵ Lynn M. Case, *Édouard Thouvenel et la diplomatie du Second Empire*, trans. Guillaume de Bertier de Savigny (Paris: A. Pedone, 1976), 72–102.

⁷⁶ Kiselev to Gorchakov, 30 June 1860, AVPRI, f. Kantselyariya, d. 150, ll. 246; cf. Panchenkova, *Syrijskaya Ekspediciya*, 37.

⁷⁷ Alexander Gustav Adolph Freiherr von Schleinitz to [Otto von Bismarck-Schönhausen], 15 May 1860, GStA I HA Rep 81 Petersburg nach 1807, I Nr. 206 Bd 2.

⁷⁸ Schleinitz to Albrecht Graf von Bernstorff, 13 May 1860, GStA I HA Rep 81, f. 249–51; Panchenkova, *Syrijskaya Ekspediciya*, 36.

Prussian response. The courts of Berlin and Vienna concurred that 'the Russian plan approaches the Eastern Question from a wrong angle'.⁷⁹

Gorchakov's proposal and the positions of Prussia and Austria were testaments to how bellicose nationalism and inter-imperial cooperation went hand in hand during the nineteenth century. Divergence among the Powers again produced cooperation and a series of ambassadorial meetings in St Petersburg in May 1860. While a campaign of systematic recrimination began in Russian newspapers 'hostile to Turkey' at the time, at the negotiation table Gorchakov suggested the dispatch of an inquiry commission to Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸⁰ The commission would be composed of an Ottoman committee and the respective consuls of the five Powers. The Powers consented to this; but the Porte rejected the scheme.

In the eyes of the sultan's ministers, the 'discontent' in the Balkans had in fact existed 'rather in appearance than in reality', and any complaints had been 'inspired by ulterior motives' of foreign (Russian) agents who produced 'completely inaccurate' reports.⁸¹ When the proposal of the establishment of a mixed commission to inquire into an Ottoman domestic problem in the Balkans reached him, Foreign Minister Fuad Paşa complained that the suggestion plainly was a 'strange idea . . . to annihilate both the sovereignty of the sultan and the independence of his Empire, and to take a step closer to violate her integrity'.⁸² Little did he know then that less than two months later he would preside over an international commission of exactly the same nature in Syria.⁸³

Fuad presciently feared that great complications awaited the Porte, as Russia looked to 'tear our allies apart from the Treaty of Paris and make us give up our sovereignty'.⁸⁴ He believed that Britain had to interpose the full weight of her influence to prevent a Franco-Russian accord, though he suspected that France might still not like to separate from Britain for Russia, and her economic and financial interests would not permit the bold decision of disintegrating the sultan's empire.

This was precisely what Prussian and Austrian statesmen also wished to believe. However, when, at the end of May 1860, rebellions broke out in Ottoman Montenegro and Herzegovina and a civil war erupted in Ottoman Syria simultaneously, and, in July, when Thouvenel began to brainstorm with Prussian and Russian agents 'several alternatives for the separation of the Ottoman Empire into . . . smaller entities', Prussia and Austria came to share Fuad's fears.⁸⁵ Trying to make sense of what was actually happening, Prussian diplomats

⁷⁹ Georg Freiherr von Werthern-Beichlingen to Alexander Gustav Adolph Freiherr von Schleinitz, Vienna, 16 May 1860, GStA I HA Rep 81 Petersburg nach 1807, I Nr. 207.

⁸⁰ Dervich Pasha (St Petersburg) to Fuad Pasha, 16 Feb. 1860, *ODD* 34.

⁸¹ Fuad Pasha to Musurus (London), 30 May 1860, *ODD* 61.

⁸² Fuad Pasha to Musurus (London), 16 May 1860, *ODD* 40.

⁸⁴ Fuad Pasha to Musurus (London), 16 May 1860, *ODD* 40.

⁸³ See Ch. 13.

⁸⁵ Robert Heinrich Ludwig Graf von der Goltz to Alexander Gustav Adolph Freiherr von Schleinitz, Paris, 27 July 1860, GStA III. HA Mda I. Nr. 7303, f. 100.

found consolation only in the fact that the French were still very 'vague' and did not seem to have as yet a clear plan.⁸⁶ But they were not sure. Were the events concurrently transpiring in the Balkans and Syria a ploy, a conspiracy, and did they represent the immediate theatres of a larger scheme? That they did not know.

Anno 1860: The Civil War in Mount Lebanon

This was an impossible puzzle. As we have seen in the previous chapter, in the 1840s the correlation between the Eastern Question and the origins of violence in Lebanon were evident. The French enterprises to retain her anterior standing in the Levant through Mehmed Ali and Bashir Shihab II, and attempts by the other Powers, and especially Britain, to maintain their stronghold in Syria had sustained the Eastern Question in the country, in fact, well into the '*muqatas* of the local feudal lords. In 1860, the origins of the civil war were equally complex.

Even though Ottoman officialdom and European writers such as Karl Marx were persuaded that the concurrent outbreak of violence in the Balkans and Syria was a ploy, France's eastern policy appeared to be less defined, oscillating between idealistic ambitions, economic considerations, and strategic realities.⁸⁷ The narratives of various historical actors concerning the influence of Ottoman and European imperial agents on the ensuing violence were so diverse and contradictory, and the archival evidence so thin, that, from an empirical point of view, we can make only tentative assumptions concerning any direct correlation between the Franco-Russian schemes and the war in Lebanon.

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By the 1850s, Ottoman Lebanon had become a very different world from that of the previous decades, having been transformed from a war zone into a commercial centre. As noted in previous chapters, its economic boom had begun during the Egyptian interregnum. Especially after the signing of the 1838–41 commercial treaties between the Sublime Porte and the European Powers, and following the restoration of Syria to the sultan's rule in 1841, all monopolies were abolished in the eastern Mediterranean, and import tariffs were reduced and fixed as in other parts of the empire, prompting even more economic growth.

When order was largely restored in 1845, the volume of trade in Lebanon increased exponentially, and the social and economic landscape of the country rapidly metamorphosed. Gregory M. Wortabet, a Protestant Levantine born in Beirut, who had been travelling in Britain and United States for his religious mission since the early 1830s, was mesmerized by the transformation of his homeland upon his return in 1854. He found that the difference between the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See Ch. 12.

small town he had left behind and the thriving Beirut he had just arrived in was like ‘midday and midnight’.⁸⁸ Its wealth could be seen in shops and stores well-endowed with European and American goods. The oriental feel of a few decades before had been replaced by ‘a European air of business’. Lebanese Christians had risen, Wortabet noted not so impartially in his memoirs, from ‘ignorance, poverty and degradation to knowledge, wealth and refinement’.⁸⁹ He poured scorn on the native Muslims, who, in contrast, and ‘in face of the rising intelligence of their Christian fellow-citizens, are in the same status quo they were fifty years ago’.⁹⁰

According to Wortabet, the great lever that enabled the material progress of non-Muslims in Syria was missionary labour, and the ensuing influence of the Europeans who arrived after the missionaries had opened the doors. In reality, the driving forces of change were much more diverse. For one, there were material factors such as technical developments in the domain of transportation (especially the introduction of regular steamship routes from 1835 onwards, a mode of transport which was faster, more reliable, and allowed the carriage of heavy weight cargo), the opening of new banks and arrival of new creditors, and ‘the rapid extension of credit and the growing use of the system of purchase’.⁹¹ During the decades Wortabet had been away, Lebanon had become a major producer of silk and supplier for global industry following the great drop in cocoon production in France. This had led to a rapid increase in international prices, which meant instant prosperity for the Lebanese. Several spinning factories were established by mostly French and Lebanese entrepreneurs.⁹² The economic growth was accompanied by a demographic boom: by 1860, the Maronite population in Mount Lebanon rose to 200,000 people, while the Druze population numbered about 100,000.⁹³

In these transitional years, approximately 30 local merchants—predominantly Greek Orthodox and few Catholics—which included the famous Sursuq, Misk, Tabet, Debbas, Khury, Sayyur, Bustrus, and Tuenis families, prospered and coalesced into a class that ‘dominated Lebanese trade and finance’ with the ‘shared goal of capital accumulation’.⁹⁴ As Kirsten Alff aptly demonstrates in her work, they did not simply ‘mimic Western capitalist models’, but developed their own transregional and transimperial networks, established joint-stock companies, and forged mutually beneficial links with their European business partners in

⁸⁸ Gregory M. Wortabet, *Syria and the Syrians; or Turkey in the dependencies*, vol. 1 (London: J. Maaden, 1856), 36.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 43. ⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 33.

⁹¹ Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800–1914* (London: Methuen, 1981), 88–90.

⁹² As Owen details, ‘the price of an oke of new cocoons rose from an average of 12 piasters in 1848 to over 20 piasters in the early 1850s and to a high of 45 piasters in 1857’: *ibid.* 155.

⁹³ ‘For the monthly convert: Civil War on Mount Lebanon, Missionary House’, 1 Aug. 1860, ABCFM v. 6 291/105.

⁹⁴ Alff, ‘Levantine’, 81, 92; Issawi, ‘British Trade’, 98–9.

Manchester, Liverpool, London, Marseilles, and Lyon, such as George Peter Lascaridi, Michael Spartali, Paul Cababe, and Louis Desgrand.⁹⁵ They constituted the 'hinge' between 'the world market and large-scale commerce and banking on the one hand and small-scale peasant and artisan production on the other'.⁹⁶ They thus played a crucial role as intermediaries who knew local markets, who spoke local languages and were familiar with local practices, and who could therefore more easily 'enforce contracts', collect debts or 'find retail outlets'.⁹⁷ While 'corner [ing] the silk market', they used the revenues they harvested to 'extend credit to peasants in return for a percentage of their agricultural yield' as of the 1850s, thus creating new dependencies in the hinterland.⁹⁸

Besides the transregional networks they had formed, the success of Christian merchants was underpinned also by the age-old *berat* system, i.e. capitulatory legal privileges granted to the employees of the European consuls as dragoman, which placed the latter under foreign jurisdiction and exempted them from paying the taxes levied on Ottoman subjects according to commercial agreements. As contemporaries observed, these local Christian merchants 'bought' *berats* (licences) to enjoy such privileges and acquire legal security or protection from the European consuls overnight, and changed them with the same ease.⁹⁹ In very rare cases, when the consuls were reluctant to grant *berats*, merchants would use their connections in the European metropolises for facilitation.¹⁰⁰ In 1845–6, despite the Porte's decrees on disarmament in Lebanon, *berat*-holders in Juniah continued arms trade for a certain period, as the Porte's agents could not bring them to the court for their 'misdoings'.¹⁰¹

A still worse consequence of the morally polluted and economically defiled *berat* system was that the *berat*-holders' evasion of the charges of the state increased the liability of the others.¹⁰² Acrimonious sentiment grew on the part of disadvantaged Muslim merchants and artisans as their commercial activity was confined more and more to the interior.¹⁰³ The uneven competition intensified de-industrialization among the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire that had begun in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. For example, the number of cotton handicrafts significantly declined between the 1820s and 1870s in Aleppo and Damascus.¹⁰⁴ Violence broke out in both of these towns more than once in the

⁹⁵ Outrey to Thouvenel, 23 Apr. 1862, AMAE 42CCC/7/318; Issawi, 'British Trade'; Fawaz, *Merchants*.

⁹⁶ Owen, *Middle East*, 88.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Alff, 'Levantine', 94.

⁹⁹ Edwards, *La Syrie*, 79.

¹⁰⁰ Outrey to Thouvenel, 23 Apr. 1862, AMAE 42CCC/7/318.

¹⁰¹ Beyrouth to Brussels, 1 Feb. 1846, DIPLOBEL Turquie, 1839–1846 4117/1/22; BOA HR. SYS 2927/72; BOA A.MKT. 36/41.

¹⁰² Edwards, *La Syrie*, 81–2.

¹⁰³ Owen, *Middle East*, 99.

¹⁰⁴ Pamuk and Williamson, 'Ottoman De-industrialization', 10–11. For a counter argument, see Orhan Kurmuş, 'The 1838 Treaty of Commerce Re-examined', *Économie et sociétés dans l'empire ottoman*, ed. J.-L. Bacque-Grammont and Paul Dumont (Paris: CNRS, 1983), 411–17.

1850s and in 1860, as an expression of ‘resistance to the new order in terms of Islamic ideology’—though tax issues, the Porte’s conscription policies, the unrest of the thousands of Janissaries who had remained in these towns (particularly Aleppo) after the abolition of their hearths in 1826, and increasing anti-Christian sentiments also contributed.¹⁰⁵ Thousands were left dead, 3,400 in Aleppo alone in 1850.¹⁰⁶

In Lebanon, social tensions manifested themselves under comparable circumstances, though the country was unique in many respects. Silk factories that were situated largely in the so-called Druze district, and particularly in Deir al-Qamar, rendered the mixed south one of the wealthiest districts and the economic capital of the country. Thanks to brisk economic activity and emigration, the population of Christian peasants significantly increased in Deir al-Qamar and Zahle.

The socioeconomic division between Druze and Christian peasants then became more noticeable. Christian peasants were employed in silk-spinning mills that were run by the new Lebanese Christian as well as European (again, chiefly French) entrepreneurs. These peasants attained economic status and strength over time, as they were supplied with working capital by Christian bankers and merchants.¹⁰⁷ In due course, they even began to lend to other groups, such as the struggling *muqatadjis*, who had once been their overlords, as well as the two *kaymakams* of the mountain.¹⁰⁸ The indigenous Christian owners were distressed by the inability of the weaker Druze sheikhs (both in status and wealth) to pay their debts. The dissonance between ancient feudal privileges and economic status became so striking a feature in social relations in the 1850s that several petitions were dispatched to the Ottoman authorities by the Christian cultivators in the mixed districts, requesting the exclusion of their villages from the jurisdiction of the Druze chiefs.¹⁰⁹

In addition, the emerging middle classes, Christian merchants, creditors, and the economically ascendant peasantry slowly started to purchase lands, and called on ‘state intervention to control production and distribution’, demanding from the Porte cadastral surveys and censuses to ‘identify whom to tax and how much’.¹¹⁰ For fear of unveiling any irregularity that might have emerged, and of the future undertaking of tax collection by the Porte itself, the *muqatadjis* resisted

¹⁰⁵ Huri İslamoğlu-İnan, ‘Introduction: “Oriental Despotism”’, in *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy*, ed. Huri İslamoğlu-İnan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 22; Bruce Masters, ‘The 1850 Events in Aleppo: An Aftershock of Syria’s Incorporation into the Capitalist World System’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 22(1) (Feb. 1990): 3–20; Rogan, ‘Sectarianism’; Abdul-Karim Rafeq, ‘The Impact of Europe on a Traditional Economy: The Case of Damascus, 1840–1870’, in *Économie et sociétés*, 420–21.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 161.

¹⁰⁷ Firro, *Druzes*, 103, 115–17.

¹⁰⁸ Moore to Alison, 6 Jan. 1858, TNA FO 195/656/2.

¹⁰⁹ Owen, *Middle East*, 161.

¹¹⁰ Alff, ‘Levantine’, 92.

such demands. In the late 1840s and early 1850s, the Druze Jumblatts spearheaded the opposition that blocked the cadastral survey project of the Porte.¹¹¹

Finally, after the Porte introduced a new conscription policy that made the Druze liable for military service while allowing Christians to buy themselves out, Lebanon and Hawran found themselves embroiled in more strife in 1852–3.¹¹² Nearly 5,000 Druze were brutally suppressed by Ottoman imperial forces. But it was not merely political resistance that had burst and faded. It also marked the point when the Druze began to cling more firmly to their traditional way of life against the political and economic transformation of the mountain in the 1850s. As Firro tells us, they ‘increasingly enclosed themselves within their sectarian particularism’, considering their mounting impoverishment, Christian immigration, and the rise of new landowner classes as ‘an invasion of their territory.’¹¹³ They vowed to retaliate. And in 1860 they did.

*

Historical scholarship has long demonstrated that local actors were the prime agents of change in the late 1850s and in 1860 before the civil war broke out in Mount Lebanon.¹¹⁴ The widely accepted narrative points to a continuum between the 1856 Reform Edict and the subsequent violence. As the narrative goes, seeing that the edict had promised both religious and class equality and that the Maronite peasants were not represented in the northern Maronite district, unlike the Christian peasants of the Druze-governed mixed districts of the south, a sporadic peasants’ uprising broke out in the Kisrawan against the Maronite Khazin sheikhs in 1858.¹¹⁵ Led by Tanyus Shahin, a muleteer from Rayfun, the rebels demanded ‘rule of law’, ‘equality’ with their sheikhs both in political terms (representation) and also in the abolition of extra levies (for holiday, marriage, etc.), and taxation and land distribution in accordance with the 1856 Edict and the individualistic premises of the sultan’s 1858 Land Code.¹¹⁶

The Kisrawanite peasants styled themselves as the *jahala* (the ignorant), manipulated ‘a well-established trope of the “ignorant” commoner’, and used it as an excuse for the ‘indecencies’ they committed. They kidnapped the family members of the northern *muqatadjis*, and staged mysterious, fear-inducing murders.¹¹⁷ On their shoulders they carried weapons amassed since the Egyptian interregnum and especially since the Crimean War. In a short period

¹¹¹ De Lesseps to de Hitte, 5 Aug. 1850, DDC 373; Firro, *Druzes*, 107.

¹¹² Evelessesie to Lhuys, 29 May 1854, AMAE 42CCC/7/11. ¹¹³ Firro, *Druze*, 115–16.

¹¹⁴ Makdisi, *Culture*; Fawaz, *An Occasion*; Farah, *Politics*. ¹¹⁵ Makdisi, *Culture*, 96, 98, 99.

¹¹⁶ Attila Aytakin, ‘Peasant Protest in the Late Ottoman Empire: Moral Economy, Revolt, and the *Tanzimat* Reforms’, *International Review of Social History* 57(2) (2012): 206, 214; Attila Aytakin, ‘Agrarian Relations, Property and Law: An Analysis of the Land Code of 1858 in the Ottoman Empire’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 45(6) (2009): 935–51; M. Macit Kenanoğlu, ‘1858 Arazi Kanunnamesi ve Uygulanması’, *Türk Hukuk Tarihi Araştırmaları* 1 (spring 2006): 107–38; Makdisi, *Culture*, 101.

¹¹⁷ Makdisi, *Culture*, 100.

they not only managed to force the Khazin sheikhs out of their *'muqatas* and thus uproot a notable family—an unprecedented incident, as Makdisi underscores. They also declared a republic (*jumhurriyyah*) in early 1859, organized their villages instead of looting the Khazin property, elected representatives and a spokesperson (Shahin), 'set up tribunals', and 'distributed harvests and provisions... in the name of the common people'. The commoners became the prime movers of change thanks to a 'subaltern understanding of the [1856 Edict]'.¹¹⁸ When the Kisrawanite peasants came to stage irregular attacks on Shiite villages and attempted to get the Maronite peasants in the mixed districts of the mountain to rise against the *muqatadjis*, Lebanon came to the brink of yet more large-scale violence.¹¹⁹

What transpired between 1858 and 1860 was at first a class conflict. When Maronite peasants rallied behind Shahin and against the Khazin sheikhs, the *muqatadjis*, both Christian and Druze, made a 'compact to be one hand... to discipline the [disrespectful peasants]'.¹²⁰ Another, less mentioned factor in the translation of the dissention into a civil war was the formation of a capitalist-clergy alliance in Beirut under the name of the Young Men's League, also known as the Beirut Committee. According to its members who secretly met with Charles Schefer, the French professor of oriental languages who joined the French expeditionary troops in 1860, the committee was led by the aforementioned bishop, Tobia 'Awn, and prominent Protestant bishop and writer Butrus al-Bustani. Its executive members allegedly involved Naum Kicano, Assad Tabet, and Micheal Fargialla.¹²¹ They established a secret network with some 23 members in the hinterland which belonged to the leading merchant, banker, artisan, and clergy families of Lebanon.¹²² They sided with the peasants' anti-*muqatadji* campaign because they considered the feudal *muqatadjis* to be primordial obstacles to free

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 105. ¹¹⁹ Ibid. 111. ¹²⁰ Ibid. 114.

¹²¹ 'Letter from a writer settled for the last 20 years in the country, and is well acquainted with the various tribes which inhabit the mountain, 30 June 1860', *The Times*, 21 July 1860, 10. On the role of Bustani, see also Abū Shaqrā, *Al-Harakāt*, 108.

¹²² Schefer to Le Ministre, 30 Nov. 1860, AMAE Papiers Charles Schefer, Mission du Liban 161PAAP/3a/264; Hajjar, *L'Europe*, vol. 3, 1292. In Schefer's report the names of the committee members in the districts outside Beirut are listed thus (in French transliteration): Esaad Eldjaounieh (Greek Catholic), Hassan Id (Maronite), Amoun Youssef (Maronite), Chakin Aga (Maronite), Gabriel Mechakka (Greek Catholic) in Deir al-Qamar and Messagip; Sheikhs Bashir El Khory, who was the *qadi* and Maronite judge of the Shuwafiyat council in Jund and Kachmaya; Mansour Maouchy [*sic*] in Djezzin; Youssef Elmubbeikykh (Greek Catholic) in Toffah; Khattar Nadi al-Boustani, cousin of Butros al-Boustani (Maronite) in Kharrouf; Nedjin Abou Shakra (Maronite) in Shuf; Youssef El Khoury (Maronite) and Faris Shakkour (Greek Catholique) in Arkoub; Abdulah Nassour (Greek Orthodox) in the two districts of the Gharb; Abbas el Halou (Maronite), Khalil Neffa (Greek Orthodox) in the Beirut coasts (*sahil*); Chadjan 'Awn, the bother-in-law of Tobia 'Awn in Chabbar; Abou Hatem (Maronite) and Hanna El Khoury (Greek Orthodox) in Metn; Abdullah Museelliem (Maronite), Nassif Djeddoun (Greek Catholic) in Zahle and its environs; Masoud Ferah (Maronite) in the west of Beqaa; and Emir Medjid Qasim Shihab, the grandson of Bashir II and Emir Haydar, representing the interests of the Shihab family.

trade and commercial enterprise as well as to buying and selling of property.¹²³ Moreover, a number of committee members were unable to claim the large sums they had loaned to the *muqatadjis*, who would flee to the mountains to avoid arrest and punishment.¹²⁴ After the 1857 recession in Europe and the mounting financial crisis in the Levant, the repayment of such due loans had become a greater source of anxiety for them.¹²⁵

The clerical members of the committee, for their part, acted as the patrons of the peasants and represented their interests against the *muqatadjis*, as had been the case at least since the beginning of the century. The delegates of the committee told French agents that, in the beginning, there were in fact two groups within their committee, one Greek and the other predominantly Maronite, both of which received 'the support of patriarchs and bishops', and both of which aimed, for the moment, 'to... deal with the interests of the Christians in the [silk-rich] mixed districts'.¹²⁶

What is unclear is whether the committee looked to support the peasants before or after the 1858 rebellion began, and whether they aimed to instigate violence in the mountain when their members assembled together. Hurşid Paşa, the Ottoman governor of Sayda, repeatedly notified Istanbul that the principal aim of the Beirut committee was to provoke war under 'instructions from a European Consulate, namely the French'. Russian agents on the ground likewise reported that, 'supported by French influence', the committee sought to 'release their co-religionists' in the silk-rich mixed districts besieged by the Druze.¹²⁷

However, other archival evidence and secondary sources suggest that the French consul to Beirut, the comte de Bentivoglio, was dazed by the outbreak of violence in 1860 and that he, as well as Tobia 'Awn, had expended much effort to prevent the Druze–Maronite skirmish at Beit Miri in August 1859. Bentivoglio's correspondence with his seniors in Paris and Bishop Tobia's letters to the Maronite patriarch usually displayed a pacific tone that looked to prevent violence rather than provoke it. Even then, several contemporary observers pointed out that throughout late 1859 and early 1860, the Beirut Committee clandestinely furnished the peasants with money, arms (up to 14,000 muskets), and ammunition smuggled by Maronite bankers in Beirut, and organized the inhabitants of the mountain for a potential fully fledged war.¹²⁸

¹²³ Schefer to Le Ministre, 30 Nov. 1860, AMAE Papiers Charles Schefer, Mission du Liban 161PAAP/3a/264; Joseph, 'Material Origins', 157–8; Owen, *Middle East*, 161; Alff, 'Levantine', 92–5.

¹²⁴ 'Kopiya raporta general'nogo konsula Rossii v Bejrute', 3 June 1860, AVPRI f. 133. Kantselyariya, o. 469, l. 258; Owen, *Middle East*, 162, 165.

¹²⁵ See Ch. 13.

¹²⁶ Schefer to Le Ministre, 30 Nov. 1860, AMAE Papiers Charles Schefer, Mission du Liban 161PAAP/3a/264.

¹²⁷ Russian General Consul in Beirut to Lobanov, 1 July 1860, AVPRI f. 133, o. 469, l. 380–82.

¹²⁸ Edwards, *La Syrie*, 133–4; 'The Civil War in Syria', *The Times*, 21 July 1860, 10; Wood to Dufferin, 30 May 1861, PRONI D 1071/H/C/3/49/3; cf. Makdisi, *Culture*, 215; Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 56.

Quickly and spontaneously, the Maronite purchase of arms, and rumours and innuendo that the Christians of the south had united with Shahin (though, in fact, the southern villagers were disinclined to join Shahin's army) and that the French fleet was on its way to support the Maronites, gave the conflict a religious colouring. In the spring of 1860, as with the Kisrawan uprising of 1858, mysterious and gruesome murders began to take place in the southern, mixed districts of the mountain under Druze jurisprudence. These instilled great fear, and were understood as acts directed against entire religious groups. They thus provoked reciprocal incidents of sectarian violence between Christians and Druze.¹²⁹ The *muqatadjis* of both sects tried to disperse the clouds of war, attempting in vain to calm their peasantry. But a series of trivial quarrels between Druze and Maronite commoners sufficed for the mountain to spin out of control once again.¹³⁰

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In May 1860, hoisting French flags in the hope of garnering Emperor Napoleon III's sympathy and preventing French authorities from backing their traditional Khazin associates, Tanyus Shahin's so-called Kisrawan army marched toward the Jumblatts' *muqatas* in the south.¹³¹ The Druze *muqatadjis* then sent for help to Hawran—their traditional sectarian base—with the aim of quelling a potential rebellion in their lands, as they had done in the 1820s, and also of fending off another latent attempt to exterminate their sect, as had been the case in the 1840s.¹³² A large number of their brethren marched to their relief immediately, and the confrontation quickly spiralled into a full-blown class/sectarian civil war from May to June, which was fought in several locations and lasted for about a month.

More than 10,000 inhabitants perished this time. Drove of people, approximately 80,000 of them, fled their homes and streamed towards the coast or Damascus for refuge. Hundreds of villages were burnt and pillaged, and properties and harvests were ravaged. As had happened in 1841 and 1845, because of their numerical superiority the Maronites had the upper hand at first. They 'set the houses of the Druses [*sic*] on fire wherever possible'. On 20 June, Mount Lebanon was likened by the Prussian consul, Theodore Weber, to 'a sea of flames at night . . . covered with a cloud of black smoke during daytime'.¹³³

Soon after Druze reinforcements arrived from Hawran under the leadership of a certain Ismail al-Attrash, their more disciplined armies took control in the south

¹²⁹ Theodor Weber to Robert Heinrich Ludwig Graf von der Goltz, Beirut, 26 May 1860, GStA I. HA Rep 81 XI Nr. 66, f. 1.

¹³⁰ Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 45; Husayn Ghadban Abū Shaqrā (narrator) and Yūsuf Khaṭṭār Abū Shaqrā (author), *Al-Ḥarakāt fī Lubnān Ilā Ahd al-mutaṣarrifīn* (Beirut: Maba'at al-itihad, 1953), 99–131.

¹³¹ Makdisi, *Culture*, 101–2.

¹³² *Ibid.* 117–18.

¹³³ Weber to Robert Heinrich Ludwig Graf von der Goltz, Beirut, 3 June 1860, GStA, I. HA Rep 81 XI Nr. 66 E, f. 7.

and anti-Lebanon, sweeping through all the villages in their route inhabited by the Maronites and some Greek Orthodox in Hasbaya, Rashaya, and Zahle, amongst others.¹³⁴ Some of the most tragic scenes unfolded in Deir al-Qamar.¹³⁵

The properties of non-Muslim merchants, the silk factories of the French, Maronites, and Greek Orthodox, and the premises of the Catholic missionaries (Jesuits, Franciscans, and Lazarists) were all attacked, pillaged, or looted. Maronite and Orthodox priests and monks, and even some Muslim Shihab emirs, were killed because of their families' alleged links to the Beirut Committee. The Anglo-Druze special relations which had existed since the early 1840s allowed Protestant (American or British) missionaries to remain untouched in Mount Lebanon, though 11 Protestants could not escape the wrath of the Hawran Druze in anti-Lebanon.¹³⁶ An anonymous observer reported that, as soon as it became clear that the Druze had taken control of the war, executive members of the Beirut Committee, such as Naum Kicano and a certain M. Naqqash, both bankers in Beirut, fled the country, taking with them their assets and 'leaving shareholders and creditors to whistle'.¹³⁷

This was not a total war of religions nor of whole communities. All the while, Maronites and Druze, Christians and Muslims provided refuge and safety for each other in their houses and properties. The true heroes and heroines of the civil war were the helping hands. For example, Naife Jumblatt, the sister of Said Jumblatt (one of the protagonists of the previous chapter about whom we will see more below), saved a large number of Maronite women, children, and some men, bringing them to Mukhtara to the family residence.¹³⁸ Qasim Abu Nakad, another prominent *muqatadji*, conducted the women and children fleeing from Deir al-Qamar to the coast, in the neighbourhood of Sidon.¹³⁹

In the end, the 1860 civil war almost irrecoverably upset all that had remained from the ancient order of things in Lebanon, the *muqatadji*-tenant bonds of loyalty, the harmonious coexistence between the Maronites and the Druze, and the relative autonomy of the feudal system. Again, before the fighting was over, a narrative war began over the origins of the war, its instigators, and its perpetrators.

¹³⁴ 'Prilozhenie Kopyia otnoheniya G. Statskogo sovetnika Bergera k G-nu Komandiru fregata *Il'ja Muromec*', 22 June 1860, AVPRI f. 133, o. 469, l. 460; Al Bitar, *Haliyyāt* vol 1. 261; Abū Shaqrā, *Al-Harakāt*, 119–20.

¹³⁵ Weber to Schleinitz, Beirut, 23 June 1860, GStA, I. HA Rep 81 XI Nr. 66 E, f. 25; 'Détails sur les massacres à Deir-el-Camar', n.d., AVPRI f. 133, o. 469, l. 460.

¹³⁶ 'For the monthly convert: Civil War On Mount Lebanon, Missionary House', 1 Aug. 1860, ABCFM v. 6 291/105.

¹³⁷ 'Letter from a writer settled for the last 20 years in the country, and is well acquainted with the various tribes which inhabit the mountain, 30 June 1860', *The Times*, 21 July 1860, 10. This, I believe, needs to be read with a grain of salt, as it might as well be a pro-Druze statement putting the blame for the origins of violence on the so-called 'Christian party'.

¹³⁸ Brant to Bulwer, 30 June 1860, TNA FO 78/1557; 'Kopyia raporta general'nogo konsula v Bejrute', 7 June 1860, AVPRI f. 133, o. 469, l. 2602.

¹³⁹ 'The Civil War in Syria', *The Times*, 21 July 1860, 10.

The Khazin sheikhs who had been chased out from their *'muqatas* by the Maronite peasants in 1858 blamed the Maronite bishop, Tobia 'Awn, and Patriarch Bulus Masad for inciting the peasantry to a rebellion.¹⁴⁰ Tobia 'Awn suspected that '[f]oreign hands' had been at work when the rebellion in Kisrawan began. He later blamed the Ottoman authorities for inertia as the rebellion turned into a civil war and the Druze gained the upper hand in the combat.¹⁴¹ Druze eyewitnesses laid the blame at the door of the French, who, according to one account, stirred up the Druze–Maronite conflict in order to find an excuse for occupation.¹⁴²

European consuls virtually unanimously believed that Hurşid Paşa, the Ottoman governor of Sayda, deliberately refrained from crushing the rebellion in Kisrawan and did almost nothing to quell the Druze–Maronite violence in 1860 because of anti-Christian sentiments. Seeing that Ottoman paşas disarmed the Maronites, and that their troops were sometimes involved in pillaging and looting, the Prussian consul to Beirut, Theodore Weber, claimed that 'the outbreak of a full scale civil war between the Druses [*sic*] and the Maronites . . . was incited especially by the actions of Churchid [*sic*] Pasha'.¹⁴³ Another Prussian agent wrote that the Druze were 'the stick to beat the Christians in the hand of someone high above'.¹⁴⁴ These views were shared by some local onlookers.¹⁴⁵

For his part, Hurşid Paşa complained that he did not have enough men and resources at his disposal to suppress either the rebellion or the 1860 war, especially after the imperial Arabistan army stationed in Damascus was ordered to leave Syria by the minister of war, Rıza Paşa, in May–June 1858 in order to quell the uprisings in Bosnia and Herzegovina, prompting a void which had been filled by the *başıbozüks* and other irregular corps recruited from the natives.¹⁴⁶ Hurşid simply could not fathom that an egalitarian movement had sprung out of the 'ignorant' Maronite peasantry interpreting the 1856 edict in their favour, and tactlessly described the Kisrawan rebellion as 'sedition'.¹⁴⁷ And, as noted above, he accused the Beirut Committee (with French schemers behind them) of instigating the civil war in 1860.

Again, what matters for our purpose here is not which of these historical, imperial actors' accounts were more accurate, but the fact that each of them had an unwavering belief that the Lebanese were mere tools manipulated for the

¹⁴⁰ Makdisi, *Culture*, 102.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 112.

¹⁴² Abū Shaqrā, *Al-Ḥarakāt*, 99–100. This book was written and published decades later, and it is likely that the argument of its author is a post hoc interpretation.

¹⁴³ Theodor Weber to Robert Heinrich Ludwig Graf von der Goltz, Beirut, 3 June 1860, GStA I. HA Rep 81 XI Nr. 66 E, f. 1.

¹⁴⁴ Johann Gottfried Wetzstein to Theodor Weber, Damascus, 18 June 1860, GStA I. HA Rep 81, XI Nr. 66 E, f. 15.

¹⁴⁵ Muhammad Kurd 'Alī, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām*, vol 3 (Damascus: al-Maṭba 'ah al-Ḥadithah, 1925–8), 79.

¹⁴⁶ Rizk, *Mont Liban*, 224; Gökbilgin, 'Cebel', 689–90.

¹⁴⁷ Makdisi, *Culture*, 143–4.

perpetuation of one or another empire's interests—the almost unanimous presumption that violence escalated on account of the locals' gullible, credulous, and 'uncivilized' nature. It requires little effort to discern a bewildering apathy on the part of European and Ottoman agents towards the Kisrawanite peasants' quest for egalitarianism, the new middle class's attempts to secure its economic and financial interests, and the desire of the *muqatadjis* and Christians of the mixed districts to preserve their politically or economically propitious status. Yet, as we will see in the following chapters, the narrative war took place less to obtain a veritable truth about the origins of the war and more to determine the next action the Powers and the Porte ought to take to bring order to Lebanon.

The reaction of the imperial metropolises from late June onwards reveals more of whether the fact that simultaneous revolts broke out in the Balkans and Syria just when the Russian agents were looking to persuade the French and the Prussians for the partition of the Ottoman Empire was simply a coincidence, or whether it was a strategic move. The imperial responses also illustrate the obstinacy and limitations of the Concert of Europe after the Crimean War, and to what degree the persistence of the Eastern Question determined the future of Mount Lebanon.

An Untimely Return of the Eastern Question?

Before the news of violence in Mount Lebanon broke in early June 1860, European public opinion was preoccupied with the issues of the unification of Germany, the war in Italy, the Balkan crisis, and the Arrow (Opium) War in China. The first reports of the civil war in the mountain that described Maronite superiority over the Druze aroused little interest.¹ But, when the course of the conflict reversed and the reports began to depict the sanguinary disturbances as ‘massacres’ of Christians by ‘Muslim fanatics’ in early July, religious sentiment was excited. Lebanese affairs provoked immense feeling, receiving much greater coverage from then on.²

In the absence of telegram lines in Syria and Asia Minor, news of an event in Lebanon would normally reach the European and Ottoman metropolises between one week to ten days later, depending on the schedule of the steamships. More often than not, this would mean discrepancies between the actions on the ground and the information at hand in the metropolises. For instance, in late June 1860, by the time the news of massacres in Lebanon reached Europe, fighting in the mountain had largely come to an end.³ After the arrival of several Ottoman army corps under the command of prominent officers and admirals (including General Ismail Kmetty, Mahmud Paşa, and Mustafa Naili Paşa), Mount Lebanon had become more tranquil. Moreover, the fact that four French battleships, one Russian frigate, and a British corvette had visibly anchored off Beirut to oversee the situation had instilled a degree of fear in the belligerents and a sense of security among the victimized inhabitants.⁴

¹ Julia Hauser, *German Religious Women in Late Ottoman Beirut: Competing Missions* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 52.

² E.g. in Spain the two major newspapers, the liberal leftist *La Discusión* and the absolutist *La Esperanza*, began to cover the Lebanese ‘atrocities’ in early July, when the Druze gained the upper hand in the civil war. *La Discusión*, 7, 12, 18, 19, 29, 31 July, 1 Aug. 1860; *La Esperanza*, 10, 13, 16, 21, 24 July 1860. I should like to thank Rebeca Gonzalez-Rolfe and Elvira María González Salmón for drawing my attention to these sources.

³ ‘Kopiya raporta General’nogo konsula Rossii v Bejrute Lobanovu-Rostovskomu’, 15 July 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 472–9.

⁴ Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 101; Peter Akos, ‘L’Intervention et l’activité du General Kmetty au Liban, 1860–62’, in *Mélanges serpentini*, ed. Laszlo J. Nagy (Szeged: Universite de Szeged, 2014), 105–17; *La Patrie*, 7 July 1860; La Roncière to La Baronne de La Roncière Le Noury, 5 July 1860, in *Correspondance*

Unaware of the situation, in Paris, the French foreign minister, Édouard A. Thouvenel, proposed to the courts of the four Powers an intervention in the Lebanese civil war in the shape of the dispatch of an international commission and a European expeditionary army. He appealed with an emotional vocabulary, arguing that theirs was a responsibility towards humanity.⁵ He maintained that, in line with the beliefs of the majority of the European public, the Great Powers had to act urgently and decisively.

Even though Thouvenel's call received endorsement on the part of, first, Russia and then Austria, Prussia, and Britain, the Porte objected to the intervention plan. Ottoman ministers believed that, following the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris, the European Powers ought to respect the territorial integrity of the sultan's dominions as well as the internal affairs of his empire. They suspected that the Powers' eagerness to intervene stemmed from a foreign ploy. In their view, violence in Lebanon was part of a grand scheme that would serve as a pretext for Russian and French interventions in the Balkans and the Levant and help them realize their revisionist ambitions. A tug of war then began, when pro-interventionist Powers and Ottoman elites looked to influence European public opinion by means of funding newspapers and active lobbying. Britain increasingly suspected the real intentions of France and Russia, and more than once changed her position over the intervention.

The discursive practices employed by the Powers and the Porte in the 40 days between the arrival of the news of Christian 'massacres' from Mount Lebanon and the final decision of whether or not to send European troops to the Levant constituted a unique episode of the Eastern Question, which suddenly returned to the centre stage of inter-imperial diplomacy. The incongruence between time (the transmission of the news) and space (local realities) revealed one of the blind spots of the imperial gaze in the nineteenth century. The legal, commercial, religious, and strategic undertones of the intervention plan and the counter-intervention propaganda not only testified to the intersectoral aspects of the Eastern Question. Seen together, they also demonstrated how 'humanitarian' the ensuing intervention actually was.

Responsibility Towards Humanity: Thouvenel's Démarche

Having spent four years in Istanbul in times of grave political and financial crises for the Ottoman ministers, French Foreign Minister Thouvenel was well versed in the Eastern Question. In 1860, hearing the news from Lebanon, he was very

intime de l'amiral de La Roncière Le Noury avec sa femme et sa fille (1855–1871), ed. Joseph L'Hopital and Louis de Saint-Blancard (Paris: Champion, 1928–9), 228.

⁵ Circulaire de Thouvenel, Paris, 6 July 1860, AMAE CP Angleterre, 717/194.

sceptical about the Porte's competence and the local Ottoman authorities' willingness to safeguard Christians. He became even more assured of his suspicions after receiving intelligence that local Ottoman armed forces, having received no salary for several months, had done little to protect the Christians in Mount Lebanon, and had, in certain places, engaged in pillage themselves.⁶ He therefore ardently campaigned for an armed intervention.

Besides, the French minister saw in military intervention multiple political, material, and moral gains. Since France was traditionally the protector of the Maronites in the Levant, she could consolidate her influence over them by being actively involved in their safeguarding. Secondly, even though before 1840 British subjects had been able to go to the Levant only with French passports, and their ships with French flags, London had managed to take the lead in commercial imports in the region in several sectors, and France could now seek ways to return to the status quo ante 1840.⁷ Thirdly, it would be a good opportunity to divert public attention from France's recent annexation of Savoy and Nice while interfering in Italian affairs. The Catholic right, which had despised the interference in Italy, would be silenced, and popular support, much shaken since the annexation of Savoy, would be retained. Fourthly, the construction of the Isthmus of Suez was under way, which rendered Mount Lebanon doubly important for geostrategic reasons.⁸ Fifthly, the crisis between the Druze and Maronites had heavily damaged cocoon production in Syria, which had led to a crisis in the French textile industry, and this could be rectified.⁹ Finally, France could regain the prestige she had lost in the Levant since the 1840 intervention, and by this means realize the dream of Bonaparte and Talleyrand by turning the Mediterranean into a French lake.

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Thouvenel was an international lawyer by formation. He knew well the legal complications of the intervention arising from the Treaty of Paris, and was familiar with the legal doctrines of the time that upheld the principle of non-interventionism. The latter had been brought to the fore by the jurists of international law following the Monroe Doctrine of 1823.¹⁰ As the Oxford don

⁶ Lavalette to Thouvenel, 13 June 1860, AMAE CP Turquie 345/49; Lavalette to Thouvenel, 25 July 1860, AMAE CP Turquie 345/333.

⁷ [French Consulate in Beirut] to Lhuys, 29 May 1854, AMAE 42CCC/7/11; Marcel Émerit, 'La Crise syrienne et l'expansion économique française en 1860', *Revue historique* 207(2) (1953): 211–32, at 212–13.

⁸ *Ibid.* 217–21; see also Karl Marx, 'Events in Syria, Session of the British Parliament, the State of British Commerce', in *Karl Marx and Frederic Engels: Collected Works*, vol. 17, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), 429.

⁹ 'Note sur les causes de l'évacuation de la Syrie par la France', n.d., AMAE Mémoires Turquie, 50MD/122/145; Bentivoglio to Thouvenel, 1 Aug. 1860, AMAE 42CCC July 18241.

¹⁰ Ann Van Wynen Thomas and A. J. Thomas, Jr, *Non-intervention: The Law and its Import in the Americas* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1956), 14.

Montague Bernard maintained in 1860, non-interventionism was considered a cardinal condition for the continuation of the system of states, because it had:

[a] direct tendency to produce mischiefs worse than it removes... It destroys national self-respect and self-reliance. It interrupts the natural process by which political institutions are matures through the ripening of political ideas and habits. What it plants does not take root; what it establishes does not endure.¹¹

On a theoretical level, the problem was whether there was a rule that could admit interventions in the interests of humanity.

In his recent works, the Swiss scholar Davide Rodogno has aptly shown that the exception was intervention in ‘the barbaric East’, which instinctively created a ground for justification for the European powers. ‘The vast majority of European scholars either assumed that intervention [in the Ottoman Empire] was... permissible’, because it was often seen as a barbaric or semi-civilized country ‘whose sovereignty was neither fully recognised nor respected’.¹² Intervention was thus justified on ‘moral and political grounds’, and in legal discussions over the question of intervention in the Ottoman Empire, the terms ‘civilization’, ‘humanity’, and ‘humanitarian’ were emotionally exploited to galvanize public support, in which selectiveness rather than universality prevailed and through which interventions were legalized.¹³

As importantly, Christian rhetoric was simultaneously adopted as a coda to tip the scales when attempts at intervention were barred. This was partly why and how European scholars and statesmen often overlooked the fact that ‘equality before the law and religious freedom in their own states, let alone colonies, did not exist’, and that the French rule in Algeria was ‘a far more intolerant, discriminating and despotic one’.¹⁴ All these factors rendered the peripheral experience of international law dramatically different from the experience of the Great Powers in the mid-nineteenth century.

Thouvenel managed to garner the support of European public opinion at large. In early July, the news from the Levant had stirred up ‘deep feelings’ in Paris.¹⁵

¹¹ Montague Bernard, *On the Principle of Non-intervention: A Lecture Delivered in the Hall of All Souls College* (Oxford: J. H. & J. Parker, 1860), 9–10. Eliav Lieblich underscores that much of Bernard’s reasoning contended with the rejection of consent as a ‘justification for intervention’. ‘First, he rejected the legality of forward-looking intervention treaties... which are concluded in advance for the maintenance of a particular dynasty or of particular institutions.’ He went on to deal with the issue of ad hoc intervention requested by a legitimate sovereign, which, he believed, could not exist since ‘there was no such thing in international law... as a legitimate ruler’: Eliav Lieblich, ‘International Law and Civil Wars: Intervention and Consent’ (doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 2012), 244.

¹² Davide Rodogno, ‘European Legal Doctrines on Intervention and the Status of the Ottoman Empire within the “Family of Nations” Throughout the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of the History of International Law* 18 (2016): 5–41, at 6, 11. For similar arguments, see Simpson, *Great Powers*, 244.

¹³ Rodogno, ‘European Legal Doctrines’, 36.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 8–9. ¹⁵ *Le Moniteur*, 17 July 1860.

French public opinion was almost unified in its attitude towards the incidents in Syria. *Le Moniteur*, the official organ of the empire, and government-funded papers such as *Le Constitutionnel*, *La Patrie*, and *Le Pays*, as well as opposition and progressive papers including *Le Siècle* and *Les Débats*, and Catholic newspapers, particularly *L'Ami de la religion*, made spirited pleas for active European interference to suppress the 'massacres'.¹⁶ Their publications teemed with references to a 'war of humanity' and 'Christian civilization' against 'barbarism'.

On July 10, Paulin Limayrac of *La Patrie* wrote: 'la France est toujours la nation des Croisades.'¹⁷ 'Christian Europe and especially France' would stop the Druze, who appeared as 'the last and odious representatives of Eastern barbarism'.¹⁸ *Le Moniteur* announced that the massacres of Christians provoked in French public opinion 'a painful emotion' of commiseration for the victims and indignation against 'their barbarous murderers'.¹⁹ French military intervention had to take place, the moderately liberal *Journal des Débats* wrote, 'for our honour, for our legitimate interests and for the rest of the world'.²⁰ These arguments were boosted by the distorted and exaggerated description of events in Lebanon, where for example Maronite women were said to have been 'bathed in their children's blood before being burnt by the Muslims', while several petitions from the Maronites of Lebanon, demanding military intervention by French troops 'to protect them', were presented to the parliament by Catholic deputies.²¹

The deeply emotional atmosphere made the Eastern Question of primary importance to Emperor Napoleon III, whose attention had been previously been fixed primarily on Italy.²² Thouvenel was given authorization to speak with Russian and Prussian agents about possible scenarios involving the partition of the Ottoman Empire.²³ Pamphlets were published to determine the course of action France ought to follow. For example, conservative historian Adolphe de Lescure suggested dealing with the 'unexpected and painful awakening of the Eastern Question' by means of a unilateral intervention instead of letting the Concert of Europe, 'that disparate association, which stifle all generous initiatives' and prevent France from 'the Mediterranean rule' to which she was 'predestined'.²⁴ But Thouvenel remained committed to multilateral action, as it was

¹⁶ Roger Bellet, *Presse et journalisme sous le Second Empire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967), 46.

¹⁷ *La Patrie*, 10 July 1860.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Le Moniteur*, 17 July 1860.

²⁰ Bouyrat, *Devoir d'intervenir*, 120.

²¹ Davide Rodogno, "The "Principles of Humanity" and the European Powers' Intervention in Ottoman Lebanon and Syria in 1860–61", in *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, ed. Brendan Simms and D. J. B. Trim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 166–7.

²² Panchenkova, *Politika Francii*, 36.

²³ Robert Heinrich Ludwig Graf von der Goltz to Alexander Gustav Adolph Freiherr von Schleinitz, 27 July 1860, Paris, GStA III. Ha MdA I. Nr. 7303, f. 100–103.

²⁴ Mathurin François Adolphe de Lescure, *La Nouvelle Question d'Orient* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1860), 5, 13, 27.

practically impossible to gain support of the majority of the Powers, given that Prussia was disinclined to join Russia and France in a scheme of the partition.²⁵

When the foreign minister circulated his plan to the imperial metropolises, he received the instant support of Russia. The correspondent of *The Times* reported on 15 July that there was but 'one voice, one cry' in Russia: 'We must succour the Christians, exterminate their barbarous oppressors, revenge religion and outraged humanity, finish with the Turks and drive them out of Europe.'²⁶ But no other response came from the other metropolises. They all laid low for the moment.

Their silence was broken when a new series of tragic news was received from Damascus, just hours away from Mount Lebanon. On 9–10 July, a Muslim group led by impoverished artisans, shopkeepers, and local notables that allegedly included Mustafa Bey al-Hawasim Rashid Agha and Al-Sayyif Mahmud al-Rikabi, was joined by the Druze of anti-Lebanon and Hawran who chased after the runaway Maronite refugees, and attacked Bab Tuma, the Christian district of the town.²⁷ More than 3,000 people were killed. Christian properties, including those of the French and American consuls, were pillaged and looted. It was also reported that the American consul, Mikhail Mishaqa (1800–88) was wounded, and the Dutch Consul S. A. Cutsi (Coetzee or Contzi²⁸) was 'murdered'.²⁹

Consular and journalistic reports suggested that the Ottoman governor of Damascus, Ahmed Paşa, another allegedly conservative and anti-Christian figure, and the troops under his command, did nothing to end the violence. Instead they joined the perpetrators in pillaging.³⁰ Hundreds of Damascene Christians took refuge in the mansion of a respected inhabitant, Abd al-Qader the Algerian. Once these events had ended on 10 July, the Christians under his protection began to stream into Beirut every day, in bands of 200 or 300 and escorted by Ottoman soldiers, the sight of whom brought great fear to Lebanon.³¹

The news of the Damascene massacres immediately rekindled religious hysteria in Europe. *Le Constitutionnel* wrote that Muslim fanatics were no longer respecting the rights of humanity.³² The Cabinet of Vienna instantly responded to

²⁵ See Ch. 11. ²⁶ 'Foreign Intelligence', *The Times*, 25 July 1860, 10.

²⁷ Al-Bitār, *Ḥaliyyāt*, vol. 1, 263–5; Ibrahim 'Urbaylī, *Mudhakarāt Ibrahim 'Urbaylī* (1913), 155–6; Rogan, 'Sectarianism'; Kamal S. Salibi, 'The 1860 Upheaval in Damascus as seen by al-Sayyif Muhammad Abu'l-Su'ud al-Hasibi, Notable and Later Naqib al-Ashraf of the City', in *Beginnings of Modernisation in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 185–204; Abdul-Karim Rafeq, 'New Light on the 1860 Riots in Ottoman Damascus', *Die Welt des Islams* XXVIII(1/4) (1988): 412–430.

²⁸ The name of the Dutch consul appears in different forms in Dutch newspapers and parliamentary meetings. But in the two letters I was able to see he signs his name as 'Cutsi'.

²⁹ 'Per Telegraaf', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 16 July 1860. I would like to thank Bert-Jan van Slooten for this source. 'The Massacres at Damascus', *The Freeman's Journal*, 3 Aug. 1860; BOA HR.SYS 1520/3/107; Van Camet (Smyrna) to W. E. Frecken (Beirut), 20 July 1860, HNA 2.05.32.213.05.32.31/9.

³⁰ Johann Gottfried Wetzstein (Damascus) to Theodor Weber, 16 July 1860, GStA I. Ha Rep 81 XI Nr. 66, f. 95–8. See also Kurd 'Alī, *Khiṭāṭ*, vol. 3, 84.

³¹ Sami Kuri, *Une histoire du Liban à travers les archives des jésuites, 1816–1845* (Beirut: Dar el-Marcheq, 1986), 270.

³² *Le Constitutionnel*, 19 July 1860.

Thouvenel's proposal, agreeing to endorse France to stop the course of 'excesses' and prevent the recurrence of such 'atrocities'.³³ On 20 July, it assented to the French proposals, but, because the cabinet did not want to leave Venice without troops, Austria preferred not to send her forces to Syria.³⁴ In Berlin, Foreign Minister Baron Alexander von Schleinitz expressed his agreement with Thouvenel's sentiments about acting in the 'interests of humanity', though Prussia herself could not contribute to the expeditionary forces because of material obstacles.³⁵

Only the British cabinet remained hesitant over Thouvenel's proposal. In fact, as soon as the first news of 'Lebanese massacres' received in London and even before the French proposals were dispatched, the immediate reaction of Sir John Russell, the British foreign secretary, was no different from his French counterpart. The facts spoke for themselves, he believed: the issue was 'a question of humanity'. He told Jean Fialin, duc de Persigny, the French ambassador to London, that he desired an accord between the British and French governments concerning the situation in Syria.³⁶

However, Russell found Thouvenel's proposition of military intervention 'too serious and even dangerous'.³⁷ He dithered, reminded Persigny that the sultan had already sent new battalions, and (as we will see) had also sent his foreign minister, Fuad Paşa, to Syria. But Persigny assured him of the 'disinterestedness' of the French plan, and that Britain would assume 'a terrible responsibility' if she declined the proposal. The news of the Damascene massacres, during which the Dutch consul had allegedly been murdered, and the persistence of the violence, proved a strong enough impetus for the British cabinet to subsequently endorse the plan. Britain agreed, but not without guaranteeing to confine the French expedition by means of a convention that would limit the size of the expeditionary army, set temporal limits to the intervention, and involve the Porte's signature.

Orders were then sent to Marseilles and Toulon to make ready at once for the transport of the French troops. General Charles-Marie-Napoléon de Beaufort d'Hautpoul (1804–90), who was reporting from Nice and the Savoy border at the time and who had served in the 1830 campaign in Algiers as well as under Ibrahim Paşa in Syria in 1834–7, was appointed as the commander of the French expeditionary army.³⁸ Thouvenel even drafted a convention for the Powers.³⁹ But just before the embarkation day (24 July), a counter-order to suspend military

³³ De Moustier to Thouvenel, 14 July 1860, AMAE CP Autriche 477/216.

³⁴ De Moustier to Thouvenel, 20 July 1860, AMAE CP Autriche 477/242.

³⁵ Auvergne to Thouvenel, 12 July 1860, AMAE CP Prusse 336/252; Auvergne to Paris, 21 July 1860, AMAE CP Prusse 336/280.

³⁶ Persigny to Thouvenel, [13?] July 1860, AMAE CP Ang 717/193.

³⁷ Persigny to Thouvenel, 18 July 1860, AMAE CP Ang 717/226.

³⁸ Papiers de personne, Beaufort d'Hautpoul, AMAE 393QO/281.

³⁹ Thouvenel to Lavalette, 21 July 1860, AMAE CP Turquie 133/345/297.

preparations was suddenly submitted.⁴⁰ ‘Something must have occurred since yesterday to occasion the counter-order,’ *The Times* reported in confusion.⁴¹

Against Intervention: Propaganda and Diplomacy

What happened was that once the news of Thouvenel’s enterprise reached Istanbul, the Porte’s agents in Paris, Berlin, Brussels, Vienna, Turin, and London (but, due to poor relations with Russia, not in St Petersburg) had embarked on a vigorous lobbying campaign to stop the intervention.⁴² They had achieved their ends for the time being.

As noted above, in the eyes of the sultan’s ministers, events in the Levant were considered to be machinations on the part of Russia and France. As early as 1859, intelligence had conveyed that some Arabs (Algerians) with French passports who were connected with Abd al-Qader had arrived at Syria ostensibly looking for settlement but had immediately caused disturbances.⁴³ In the eyes of Ottoman ministers, this intelligence fitted well with Emperor Napoleon III’s 1858 schemes for carving out from the Ottoman Empire an Arab kingdom under Abd al-Qader’s rule. The ambassador in Paris, Ahmed Vefik, wrote that it followed ‘from all the facts... that the Franco- Russian entente’, which the Porte had been closely following since 1859, was not ‘unrelated to the deplorable events’. He had gathered intelligence himself and suspected that the command of the French expeditionary force to be dispatched to the Levant purportedly to suppress violence in Mount Lebanon and Damascus would be extended to Abd al-Qader in Damascus, which would be placed under the latter’s authority in due course.⁴⁴

Given all these, the Porte believed that it was not coincidental that two ‘disturbances’ occurred in the Balkans and Syria simultaneously. Nor was it that the Kisrawan army of Tanyus Shahin had hoisted French flags during their rebellion.⁴⁵ Nor the fact that the ‘French-backed’ Maronites had prepared for the war for a year and had attacked the Druze first.⁴⁶

Faced with the crises in the Balkans and the Levant, the sultan’s ministers acted with alacrity. In early June, Grand Vizier Kibrıslı Mehmed Paşa had departed for Herzegovina for inspection and punishment of the culpable there. And in early

⁴⁰ Russell to Bulwer, 24 July 1860, TNA FO 195/659/26.

⁴¹ ‘Foreign Intelligence. France’, *The Times*, 26 July 1860.

⁴² Aristarchi Bey (Berlin) to Fuad Paşa, 11 July 1860, ODD 90; Musurus (London) to Safvet Efendi, 12 July 1860, ODD 91; Rüstem Bey (Turin) to Safvet Efendi, 12 July 1860, ODD 94.

⁴³ BOA HR.SYS 1528/23.

⁴⁴ Ahmed Vefik to Musurus, 20 July 1860, BOA HR.SFR.3 52/3/11.

⁴⁵ According to Ussama Makdisi, the flags had been used to undercut traditional French support of the Maronite Khazin sheikhs whose property the Maronite peasantry had seized: Makdisi, *Culture*, 101–2.

⁴⁶ Ahmed Vefik to Musurus, 20 July 1860, BOA HR.SFR.3 52/3/11.

July, after negotiations with the Powers' agents in Istanbul, the foreign minister, Fuad Paşa, was appointed as extraordinary envoy invested with special administrative and military powers to establish full order and tranquillity in Syria.⁴⁷

A man with considerable international stature, charisma, and a good knowledge of the French language and of European diplomatic habits, as well as a famous wit, Fuad's appointment was received with satisfaction and approval on the part of the Powers. At his disposal an army of 16,000 men, supplies of grains, and funds for reparations and indemnities that emptied the imperial treasury, he left for Syria on 12 July and landed five days later.⁴⁸ His object was to show the world that the Ottomans could handle this domestic 'disturbance' on their own.⁴⁹ However, while Fuad was still on his way to Beirut, the emerging news of the Damascene massacres undermined the full effect of the sultan's move.

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In mid-July, the French proposals for an armed intervention had transformed the suspicions of the Ottoman ministers over foreign 'machinations' into an inexorable conviction.⁵⁰ While an active propaganda campaign for intervention was under way in Europe, Ottoman diplomats complained to European statesmen about the level of exaggeration in the press about the events in Lebanon and the constant calls for a crusade against Islam. They strove to explain that Ottoman Lebanon had been administratively reorganized in 1842 under pressure from the Powers.⁵¹ They reminded their interlocutors that the Porte had been forced to send its troops previously stationed in Syria to the borders of Montenegro and Serbia, and that their absence had prevented them from stopping the 'carnage' in Mount Lebanon.

They also placed blame on the 'barbarism' of the Syrians. By this means, they tried to separate and distance 'civilized' Istanbul from its 'uncivilized' periphery in order to avoid any responsibility. Equally importantly, they warned that if European (Christian) troops landed in Syria under the pretext of ensuring the security of the Christians, in the rest of Asia, Christians of other cities would inevitably find themselves exposed to dangers: '[t]roublemakers would inevitably spill into the interior life in the name of religious vengeance.' However, if the Porte took the same measures against Muslims, no such vengeance would occur.⁵² In

⁴⁷ BOA HR.SFR.3 53/12/4.

⁴⁸ Lavaletta to Thouvenel, 20 June 1860, AMAE CP Turquie 345/98; Abro Sahak Efendi to Cabouly Efendi, 17 July 1860, *ODD* 97; Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 106.

⁴⁹ Aali Pasha to Musurus, 14 July 1860, BOA HR.SFR.3 53/4/2.

⁵⁰ Aristarchi Bey to Fuad Pasha, 11 July 1860, *ODD* 90.

⁵¹ Rüstem Bey (Turin) to Safvet, 12 July 1860, *ODD* 70; Aristarchi Bey to FP, 18 July 1860, *ODD* 82.

⁵² Cabouly to Musurus, 18 July 1860, *ODD* 80; Aristarchi Bey to FP, 18 July 1860, *ODD* 82; Musurus to Palmerston, 18 July 1860; Musurus to Safvet, 19 July 1860, BOA HR.SYS.3. 52/3; Ahmed Vefik to Musurus, 15 July 1860, BOA HR.SFR.3 52/3/3; Musurus to Ahmed Vefik, 18 July 1860, BOA HR.SFR.3 52/3/4; Diran Bey to Safvet, 19 July 1860, BOA 1520/3/232; Ahmed Vefik to Musurus, 20 July 1860, BOA HR.SFR.3 52/3/4.

addition to these, Sultan Abdülmecid I himself sent letters to French Emperor Napoleon III (July 16) and Queen Victoria (20 July) to give assurances that he would employ all means in his power to re-establish order and security and to punish the guilty severely.⁵³

These Ottoman efforts were disregarded in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, and St Petersburg. In these capitals the unwavering belief was that the sultan's men were liable for the 'atrocities' in Syria due to their inertia. Only in London did Ambassador Musurus Bey find a ready ear to Ottoman concerns.⁵⁴ This was because Britain had only reluctantly agreed on the proposed armed intervention in the first place. Both Russell and Palmerston had found the Porte's counter-arguments plausible, and they were both suspicious of French intentions.

Since 1840, the status quo in the Levant had been in favour of British economic and political interests.⁵⁵ Palmerston and Russell were concerned that, with this expedition, France might upset the status quo by suppressing the Druze, the so-called perpetrators of the massacres, with whom Britain had forged a special relationship since 1841.⁵⁶ Moreover, particularly after Palmerston returned to office in 1859, Britain had played up Anglo-French rivalry to justify her high level of military expenditure, and had been seeking to regain an independent voice in international affairs.⁵⁷ In 1860, France, traditionally seen as a rival, was perceived by London as a great threat given her naval expansion under Napoleon III.⁵⁸ While the Cobden-Chevalier free trade treaty of January 1860 had ameliorated relations and led Palmerston to reluctantly acquiesce to French annexation of Savoy and Nice, French expansionism led Queen Victoria to complain angrily that the French were 'the universal disturbers of the world'.⁵⁹

In addition to these strategic considerations, the British cabinet kept in mind the warnings of cautious public voices in Britain. In the House of Lords, the conservative politician Sir James Ferguson recommended caution in dealing with Syrian affairs, because the Druze-Maronite quarrel there had 'very little to do with religion', but had arisen from racial differences, and had been fomented by French

⁵³ 'The East', *The Times*, 21 July 1860, 9; Cowley to Russell, 20 July 1860, TNA FO 195/659/12.

⁵⁴ Musurus to Safvet, 20 July 1860, BOA HR.SYS 1520/3/323; Russell to Cowley, 23 July 1860, TNA FO 195/659/22.

⁵⁵ Musurus to Fuad Pasha, 5 Apr. 1860, *ODD* 35. In 1860, imports into Britain from the Ottoman Empire had risen from the previous year and amounted to £2,682,058, while exports to the Ottoman Empire, including Syria and Palestine, equalled on average TL4,668,346 per annum.

⁵⁶ See Ch. 10.

⁵⁷ David Brown, 'Palmerston and Anglo-French Relations, 1846-1865', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 17 (4) (2006): 675-692, 683.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 681.

⁵⁹ Queen Victoria to the King of the Belgians, 8 May 1860, in *The Letters of Queen Victoria: A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence between the Years 1837 and 1861*, ed. A. C. Benson and Viscount Esher, 3 vols (London: John Murray, repr. 1908), vol. 3, 386, 399.

and Russian agents.⁶⁰ The German intellectual Karl Marx, resident in London at the time, similarly argued that Russia and France deliberately sought to bring about a politico-religious row—the former on the Dalmatian, the latter on the Syrian coast, ‘both movements supporting each other, since the troubles in Montenegro and the Herzegovina compelled the Porte to withdraw almost the whole Turkish army stationed in Syria, so as to leave the arena open to the high-pitched antagonism of the barbarous clans of the Lebanon.’⁶¹ The London newspaper *The Globe*, which was close to the Whigs, suggested that the British ought not too easily ‘lend their ear to the denunciations against Turkey’, and should thoroughly consider the ‘indirect foreign influences’ in the outbreak of violence before causing ‘injustice to the Porte’ by putting the responsibility for tragic events onto Istanbul.⁶²

All these diplomatic efforts, lobbying, public warnings, and political calculations—and, perhaps most importantly, the arrival of the news of a truce made between the Maronites and the Druze on 21 July—led Palmerston to decide to wait and see.⁶³ It was then that Britain asked France to defer or abandon the plan to dispatch troops, using the argument that news of violence had stopped since the Damascene massacres and sending troops to Syria at this point would degrade the sultan’s dignity.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, Russell gave Musurus 14 days to assess the results of Fuad’s measures on the ground.⁶⁵

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When Thouvenel heard the news that the British had reversed their decision, he was enraged. The information of a Maronite–Druze truce had not reached him. He could not accept Russell’s reasoning. But he did what he had to do. He put the embarkation in Toulon on hold so as not to strain relations with Britain. France reacted immediately, though, by the publication of an open letter on 25 July signed by Emperor Napoleon III.

In this open letter, the emperor first tried to soothe British anxieties about Italian affairs and the French invasion of Savoy and Nice, explaining why he had intervened, and that his actions in central Italy were bound by the Treaty of Villafranca. He then turned to the Eastern Question, and stressed that when his ambassador, Charles marquis La valette, had travelled to Istanbul in early 1860, the instructions the emperor had given him were confined to using every effort to

⁶⁰ BOA HR.SYS 1520/3. ⁶¹ Marx, ‘Events in Syria’, 429.

⁶² *The Globe*, 11 July 1860; cf. *Journal des débats*, 12 July 1860.

⁶³ Persigny to Thouvenel, 22 July 1860, AMAE CP Ang 717/243; Lavalette to Thouvenel, 25 July 1860 AMAE CP 133/345/333. In fact, Thouvenel was right. The residents of Deir al-Qamar had refused to comply with the truce.

⁶⁴ Persigny to Thouvenel, 22 July 1860, AMAE CP Ang 717/244; Cowley to Russell, 22 July 1860, TNA FO 195/659/18.

⁶⁵ Musurus to Safvet Efendi, 20 July 1860, *ODD* 110.

maintain the status quo. 'The interest of France is that Turkey should live as long as possible.' The emperor further argued that, if he instantly proposed an expedition to Syria during the civil war, it was because 'my feelings were those of the people which has put me at its head, and the intelligence from Syria transported me with indignation. My first thought, nevertheless, was to come to an understanding with England. What other interest than that of humanity could induce me to send troops into that country?'

He concluded by noting that, as 'an honest man', he would very much wish to be obliged to undertake the Syrian expedition, and in any case not to undertake it alone. First, this was because it would be a great expense, and secondly, because 'I fear that this intervention may involve the Eastern Question'; on the other hand, he did not see how he could resist public opinion in his country, which would never understand that 'we could leave unpunished, not only the massacre of Christians' but 'the burning of our consulates, the insult to our flag, and the pillage of the monasteries which were under our protection'.⁶⁶

In the interim, *Le Constitutionnel*, which was close to Thouvenel, published pieces that echoed Lamartine's pacific arguments during the 1840 crisis almost word for word.⁶⁷ The Eastern Question should not entail the division of Europe, it maintained; on the contrary, it should unite the European Powers in the defence of interests and principles which imposed the same obligations on 'all Christian states'.⁶⁸

While in public Thouvenel sought, with positive messages, to prevent an international crisis between France and Britain, in private, he did not hold back in his audience with Henry Wellesley (1804–84), earl of Cowley, the British ambassador to Paris.⁶⁹ As an Italian witness details, in a 'violent' discussion, Thouvenel shared with Wellesley the latest correspondence from Syria which reported the disastrous state of affairs as late as 12 July, when the Damascene massacres, the alleged murder of the Dutch consul, the situation of the refugees, and the state of the premises of foreign consuls were reported.⁷⁰ He then strongly instructed the British ambassador to announce to his government that he would address a circular to all platforms telling them that Christians had been slaughtered in Syria, that all the Powers had agreed to stop this horrible slaughter, but that only the British cabinet had opposed this action.

Responsibility for a probable recurrence of violence was too great a risk for Britain to take. It was beyond her control. France had given public and private

⁶⁶ 'The Policy of the Emperor Napoleon Towards England', *The Times*, 1 Aug. 1860, 9.

⁶⁷ See Ch. 8. ⁶⁸ *Le Constitutionnel*, 25 July 1860.

⁶⁹ Pollone to Cavour, Paris, 25 July 1860, Carteggio Cavour-Nigra, IV, 104–5; cf. Lynn M. Case, *Edouard Thouvenel et la diplomatie du Second Empire*, trans. Guillaume de Bertier de Savigny (Paris: A. Pedone, 1976), 339.

⁷⁰ Cowley to Russell, 22 July 1860, TNA FO 195/659/28.

assurances, the intervention would be bound by a convention, the (albeit dated) news of disastrous massacres was still arriving, the majority of the public were calling for military intervention, and there was still no concrete news as to the achievements of Fuad Paşa in establishing order in Syria—though it was practically impossible to receive news due to the absence of telegraph lines in Syria at the time. The day after Lord Wellesley withdrew from Thouvenel's audience and reported the content of the interview to Russell, the British cabinet caved.⁷¹ The French ambassador triumphantly reported from London that Russell was willing to approve the dispatch of troops on the condition that they would act under the requisition of Fuad Paşa.⁷² Thouvenel had won the tug of war.

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The five European Powers thus agreed on a concerted action in Syria. Since, aside from France, it was not logistically possible for the other Powers to supply troops, Paris would take over the responsibility—a fact well known by Thouvenel since the beginning. Preparations in Marseille and Toulon began once again. Only two things stood in the way now. First, the Powers had to reach agreement over the wording of the convention in order to set temporal limits to the expedition and decide on the number of troops and the rules in the field; second, they had to obtain the consent of the Porte for the armed intervention.

Thouvenel wasted no time in organizing a conference in Paris for the preparation of the convention. It began on 25 July, and, in accordance with Russell's suggestions, the Ottoman ambassador to Paris, Ahmed Vefik Paşa, was also invited to the gathering, along with the ambassadors of the five Powers.⁷³ Ahmed Vefik received no instructions from Istanbul until the end of the month because the Porte aimed to delay the expedition of French forces as much as possible, in the interim allowing Fuad Paşa enough time to establish full order and tranquillity in Syria, which would render the intervention redundant.⁷⁴

All the while the French ambassador in Istanbul had been urging Âli Paşa for the Porte's consent. 'With a tone of conviction and despair', Âli repeated to Lavalette, a Christian intervention would only destabilize the entire Ottoman Empire.⁷⁵ On 21 July, the Ottoman Council of Ministers categorically refused armed intervention. On 22 July, Lavalette went to see Sultan Abdülmeceid I, whom he found 'pale, nervous, agitated, silent' due to the political and (equally important) financial distress of his empire. In a friendly interview, the French ambassador gave his assurances as to Napoleon III's affectionate feelings for the sultan, and managed to obtain the sultan's promise to urge his ministers to consider the

⁷¹ Pollone to Cavour, Paris, 25 July 1860, Carteggio Cavour-Nigra, IV, 104–5; cf. Case, *Thouvenel*, 339.

⁷² Persigny to Thouvenel, 25 July 1860, AMAE CP Angleterre 717/268.

⁷³ Cowley to Russell, 26 July 1860, TNA FO195/659/31.

⁷⁴ Lavalette to Thouvenel, 25 July 1860, AMAE CP Turquie 345/333.

⁷⁵ Lavalette to Thouvenel, 24 July 1860, AMAE CP Turquie 345/303.

matter again. After the meeting the sultan called Âli Paşa, and the next day (23 July), the latter informed France's agents in Istanbul that the Porte would agree to the intervention if France accepted the responsibility of the dangers that might result from sending troops to Syria, and if the troops disembarked and camped in the vicinity of Beirut only, and acted on the directions of Fuad Paşa. Lavalette refused these conditions.⁷⁶

What changed the Porte's position five days later, and first allowed Ahmed Vefik to begin negotiations in Paris and finally submit to the Powers' plan, was a defining feature of the Eastern Question and the transimperial security culture woven around it. True, under the continuous pressure of Lavalette and Bulwer, Sultan Abdülmecid was both anxious and angry. But, as we will see, he also felt cornered: he needed the Powers' guarantees over the ongoing loan negotiations between the Porte and the European financial houses to remedy the disastrous financial situation of his empire.⁷⁷

To Ottoman ministers, the situation was a choice between the hammer and the anvil. They believed that Russia was 'trying to establish a [link] between the acts committed by the Druze and the alleged grievances of the provinces of Rumelia [the Balkans]', and that she was pursuing an 'invasive intention in intervening'.⁷⁸ Yet Ottoman officialdom came to uphold what Prussian Foreign Minister Baron Schleinitz advised them to do at the time. It could be to the Porte's 'advantage that any European intervention has the character of collective action. It is only the isolated intervention that would pose serious dangers'—the very idea that had been propounded by Mustafa Reşid some 21 years earlier.⁷⁹ If the Porte agreed to collective intervention led by France in Syria, it could prevent another intervention in the Balkans.

As a result, on 29 July, Âli Paşa gave his explicit, if reluctant, consent to the dispatch of the troops 'to give her Allies a proof of [the Ottoman Empire's] confidence, and her loyal desire to suppress the disorders which she deplors more than anyone else'. In consenting to the armed intervention, the Porte looked to show its good faith and commitment to 'the Concert of Europe of which it saw itself a member'. At the same time, it aimed to save face by avoiding diplomatic embarrassment.⁸⁰

On the day of the Porte's assent, Thouvenel's *Le Constitutionnel* elatedly wrote: 'Turkey herself, henceforth admitted into the great family of European states, must forget that she has been for centuries the personification of Mussulman fanaticism, for she has now promised to take part in the signal chastisement

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ MAE to [?], 28 July 1860, AMAE Corr. Ang. 8CP/717/278; Lavalette to Thouvenel, 1 Aug. 1860, AMAE CP Turquie 346/7.

⁷⁸ Aristarchi to Fuad Pacha, 28 July 1860, ODD 128; Diran Bey to Safvet, 2 Aug. 1860, ODD 133.

⁷⁹ Aristarchi to Fuad Pacha, 28 July 1860, ODD 128.

⁸⁰ Musurus to Russell, 30 July 1860, TNA FO 195/659/45.

demanded by humanity and Christian civilisation.⁸¹ Ministers in Istanbul must have been puzzled. Had the Porte not been admitted into the family of nations in 1856?

After the Porte's consent had been obtained, the stipulations of the convention were carefully revised in Paris in such a manner as to remove all that might have provoked the susceptibilities of Ottoman ministers, or that might have even indirectly attacked the sovereign independence of the sultan and tarnish his dignity. As the Porte feared, Russia made a last-minute move and suggested the insertion of an additional clause that would enable similar interventions in other regions of the sultan's empire.⁸² But the other Powers, including France, immediately rejected the clause, from which we might be able to infer the absence of a fully fledged Franco-Russian entente at this hour.⁸³ On the last day of July and in early August, the Powers agreed to sign two protocols with respect to the intervention.

In the first, the juridical legitimacy of the intervention was placed in the Treaty of Paris of 1856, Article IX of which guaranteed the rights of Ottoman Christians—the intervention was vindicated with the argument that in Syria these rights had been violated. The second protocol (signed in September) set the conditions of the intervention.⁸⁴ The expedition was limited to a period of six months and 12,000 men, half of whom would be provided by the French. If more men were needed, the Great Powers would decide with the Porte on which countries among them would provide troops (Article II). Upon arriving in Syria, the expedition's commander would contact Fuad Paşa, with the aim of taking all measures necessary to occupy the positions that would allow the execution of the mission (Article III). In the meantime, the British, Austrian, French, Prussian, and Russian rulers would allow sufficient naval forces to monitor the Syrian coast so as to ensure its tranquillity (Article IV). The expedition would remain in Syria for no more than six months, and troops would only camp on the coasts—only one or two regiments would march into Damascus. And the expeditionary army's subsistence and supplies would be covered by the Ottoman government, despite its depleted treasury, so far as it was able.⁸⁵

To conclude, in 1840, it was Foreign Secretary Palmerston's Britain that had spearheaded an intervention in the Levant to put an end to Mehmed Ali's reign in Syria, and it was only France among the Powers that had opposed the intervention. In 1860, the roles were reversed. Now prime minister, Palmerston hesitated over whether France had ulterior motives that included the ascendancy of Britain in Syria since the 1840s. In both cases, the agency of the Porte proved pivotal. It

⁸¹ *Le Constitutionnel*, 31 July 1860. ⁸² Diran Bey to Safvet Efendi, 2 Aug. 1860, ODD 133.

⁸³ Thouvenel to Montebello, 30 July 1860, AMAE CP 112/221/277; Montebello to Thouvenel, 31 July 1860, AMAE CP 112/221/278; Thouvenel to Montebello, 1 Aug. 1860, AMAE CP 112/221/279; Montebello to Thouvenel, 1 Aug. 1860, AMAE CP 112/221/290.

⁸⁴ 'Copy of the Convention of September 5, 1860', TNA FO 93/110/16a.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

had previously enlisted the Powers' intervention through commercial agreements, by the 1839 reform edict, and by helping incite a rebellion in Lebanon. In 1860, Ottoman ministers vigorously opposed European intervention by running their own propaganda campaign, and delayed it as long as they could. But both in 1840 and in 1860, the very same game of assuming European public sentiments and gaining the consent of a majority of the Powers determined what course of action ought to be taken.

In July 1860 the news of the Damascene massacres and the alleged murder of the Dutch consul would make it impossible for the hesitant British authorities to hold out any longer. This being said, even though the Dutch government, after heated debate in parliament, had decided to send three frigates to Lebanon, and issued protests to the Porte against the 'murder' of their consul, it became clear only after the decision of the intervention was taken that M. Cutsi (Coetzee) was actually alive.⁸⁶ As he wrote in a letter dated 20 July, when the 'frantic' crowds had arrived at his house during the mayhem, he had secretly taken shelter in his neighbour Muslim Huseyin Agha's house, together with his eldest son, and had hidden in the chimney for three days, before sheltering in Abd al-Qader's mansion along with other European ministers.⁸⁷ That his murder was false news received no mention in diplomatic correspondence among the Powers in early August.

By then, differences between the European Powers and the Porte had been addressed and the agreement on the intervention had already been reached, despite the lingering resentment of the sultan and his ministers. With the dispatch of French troops and an international commission to Syria in August and September respectively, the diplomatic struggle that had begun in the metropolises continued through incessant tensions over the limits of French military action and the European commissioners' right to interfere with Fuad Paşa's mission. Soon after the departure of French troops from Toulon, *The Times* dolefully reported, 'The Eastern Question has returned at a considerably less interval than most of our periodical difficulties.'⁸⁸ A new tussle at once began on the spot over how to return the sense of security in Syria.

⁸⁶ *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant*, no. 196, 17 July 1860; I should like to thank Bert-Jan van Slooten and Huub Mool for drawing my attention to this source.

⁸⁷ M. Cutsi (Damascus) to W. E. Fercken (Beirut), 20 July 1860, HNA 2.05.32.213.05.32.31/9.

⁸⁸ *The Times*, 16 Aug. 1860.

13

Returning the Sense of Security

The International Commission on Syria

Here they were again. In Toulon. Sixty-two years after Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign to Egypt,¹ in August 1860 the French port town was once again busy for an expedition to the Levant. Its destination was well known this time: Syria. On the 6th day of the month, Bonaparte's nephew Napoleon III addressed the 6,000 soldiers before him with a familiarly heroic language. In 1798, Bonaparte had reminded his men of the colossal importance of their mission for the world's commerce and civilization. Now, Napoleon III declared that his soldiers were going to make 'the rights of justice and humanity triumph'.²

As in 1798, the French mission was framed as an 'aid' to the Ottoman sultan.³ We have seen in the previous pages that, in both cases, the ultimate objective of the expeditions was to secure French interests in the Levant. It was to imprint a French mark on the Eastern Question, and help realize the dream of Talleyrand and Bonaparte by establishing a zone of influence on the western coasts of Syria in addition to direct or informal control over the Mediterranean shores of Algiers, Tunis, Nice, and Egypt.⁴

We have also seen how times and the meaning of the Eastern Question, and for that matter, the cultures of security in Europe and the Levant, had since changed—how they interacted with each other, transformed one another, and then intercrossed. Unlike 1798, the mission of Napoleon III's men was not a single-handed intervention. The French army was acting on behalf of the other four major European Great Powers and with the consent of the sultan, however reluctant the latter had been.⁵ Unlike 1798, the French army in 1860 was accompanied by an international commission that consisted of the delegates of each major European Power, as well as the Ottoman Empire.

¹ See Ch. 1. ² Edwards, *La Syrie*, 196–7; also in Fawaz, *An Occasion for War*, 115.

³ 'Note sur les causes de l'évacuation de la Syrie par la France, 1860–61', AMAE MD Turquie 50/122/145.

⁴ For an in-depth study on French informal empire in the 19th c., see David Todd, *Velvet Empire: French Informal Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021).

⁵ See Ch. 12.

The first international security institution established in what we call today 'the Middle East', the commission consisted of those very men on horseback with whose observations in Syria this book began: Rehfues, Béclard, Novikow, Weckbecker, and Dufferin, alongside the Ottoman foreign minister, Fuad Paşa. I will conclude the book with their experience, going into some depth as to how their mission took shape on the ground—their attempts to hold in check the operation of the French troops while labouring to find ways to prevent the recurrence of violence, monitoring the relief, retribution, and reparation processes, and proposing new administrative models in Mount Lebanon. I will explain here how their work epitomized the emergence of a transimperial culture of security in the Levant, whereby the Powers had now a greater say in the supply of security than ever.

Presided over by the Ottoman foreign minister, the international commission sought to address issues in Syria in 50 meetings that were held in Beirut, Damascus, and Istanbul until 1862. The commissioners received an influx of instructions from their capitals which repeatedly placed imperial objectives, suspicions, and their conflicting threat perceptions and interests on the agenda while addressing the security problems in Syria. The men on the ground, or the professional agents of security, were thus torn between local realities and the expectations of their superiors in the metropolises. The retribution, repayment of indemnities, and administrative reorganization processes were inevitably politicized, and bolted the fate of security in Syria onto the reconciliation of imperial interests. The commission became a contact zone of inter-imperial competition as much as cooperation, of hidden war as much as 'universal peace'. It became an in-between imperial space, where security was uttered, discussed, and idiosyncratically turned into policy.

Reluctant Imperialists

With the arrival of the last European commissioner, Rehfues, from Istanbul to Beirut on 27 September 1860, Lebanon became a hub for European and Ottoman imperial agents. There was Fuad Paşa, his aides-de-camp, the Ottoman administrators, and approximately 20,000 soldiers at his disposal, General Beaufort and his 6,000 French men, the European commissioners and their delegation, and the European diplomatic corps already situated in Beirut. They shared intelligence, plans, and ideas with each other, all harbouring the single aim of establishing order and tranquillity in the country, while at the same time sustaining the interests of their respective empires.

Fuad Paşa's mission pertained above all to maintaining the dignity of the sultan, mitigating the stigma of the negotiations for an armed intervention and also making the world see the 'civilized face' of the Ottoman world that was able to

'cope with' the 'savage other' within.⁶ This was why some of the most able men in Istanbul had been appointed as his aides-de-camp: Halim Paşa had been the president of the council of war, Armenian Abro Sahak Efendi, the director of French correspondence at the foreign ministry, and the Syrian Catholic Franco Nasri Efendi, had been serving as the director of the disputed claims bureau, prior to their appointment into Fuad Paşa's mission.⁷ Before they set out for Syria, the Ottoman foreign minister had told George Outrey, the French dragoman in Istanbul, that he was determined, even at the peril of his life, to 'wipe out the stain which rests upon the honour of humanity'.⁸

After his arrival in Beirut on 17 July 1860, moved by the sad spectacle of so much misery and tragedy, the paşa took immediate measures for the provision of relief as well as the repression of the 'disturbances'.⁹ A mixed (Muslim and non-Muslim) commission was founded under the presidency of Abro Efendi to distribute relief for the wounded and poor Maronites who lost their houses.¹⁰ Together with Franco Nasri, Abro was also appointed to the reparations commission that would determine the claims of the foreigners for compensations and interests for their losses during the disorders. The paşa then detained the suspects and set up two extraordinary tribunals in Beirut and Mukhtara for their swift trial, alongside a military tribunal. By early August, 400 in total had been arrested, while many of the allegedly 'worst guilty' Druze *muqatadjis* fled to Hawran or anti-Lebanon.¹¹

Among those arrested by order of the paşa and sentenced to death by the military tribunal were senior figures, including the governor of Damascus and the commander of the army, Ahmet Paşa, and several officers of Ottoman regiments.¹² The governor of Sayda Hurşid was detained and awaited a trial by the extraordinary tribunals that looked into civil affairs. The Ottoman delegation from Istanbul was dismayed by the conduct of their agents on the ground. By

⁶ Deringil, 'They Live', 318; Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism', 781.

⁷ Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 106.

⁸ James L. Farley, *The Massacres in Syria* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1861), 96; Edwards, *La Syrie*, 165.

⁹ Abro (Beirut) to Cabouly, 23 July 1860, BOA HR.SYS.3 54/95.

¹⁰ Abro and Franco Cussa Efendi to Cabouly, 18 July 1860, BOA HR.SYS.3 54/81; Abro (Beirut) to Cabouly, 21 July 1860, BOA HR.SYS.3 54/93; Abro (Beirut) to Cabouly, 23 July 1860, ODD 114. To prevent abuses, Abro reported, they classified the people as (i) sick and wounded to be placed in a military hospital, over which the Ottoman commission would exercise surveillance, (ii) widows and orphans who would be received by the Lazarists of the city, and (iii) people who had left their villages for fear of massacres but who had not suffered losses in the Druze–Maronite conflict. These would be maintained temporarily until they were redirected to their homes. As refugees hailed from nearby towns and villages, Abro's relief commission provided bread, candles, and, when there was insufficient food, piastres to the poor—11,803 of them on 23 July 1860.

¹¹ Abro to Cabouly, 28 July 1860, BOA HR.SYS.3 54/106; Dufferin to Bulwer, 1 Oct. 1860, TNA FO 195/656/22.

¹² Yūsuf Al-Dibs, *Tārīkh Sūriyah*, vol. 18 (Beirut: al-Maṭba'ah al-'Umūmiyah, 1893–1905), 192; Al Bitar, *Ḥaliyyāt*, vol. 1, 267–8; vol. 3 (1963), 1326; Kurd 'Alī, *Khīṭaṭ III*, 92.

the failure to stop the Damascene massacres, Abro wrote, Ahmed Paşa had signed an invitation for foreign troops to go to Syria and therefore deserved to be hanged, while Hurşid Paşa, 'by the dark, inert anti-Christian conduct', deserved at least forced labour.¹³ He complained: 'How long will the general governors [continue to] undermine the Empire?'¹⁴

Fuad's punitive mission to Damascus saw the adoption of strict retribution measures that included mass executions (21 August saw the execution of 172 Muslim Damascenes¹⁵) as well as the evacuation of Muslim houses for the use of the Christians victimized by the massacres. Abro Efendi reported that all these punishments had a very positive effect on the local Christians: 'Tranquillity reigned' and the forces available were 'sufficient to deal with any eventuality [of violence]'—which was unlikely. In Aleppo, everything was 'peaceful'. In Jerusalem, imperial authorities were 'in control of the situation'. So, Abro wrote, 'I come back to the same question: what will the French division do [here]?'¹⁶

For his part, Fuad Paşa was equally 'disapproving of the hasty decision of the European Powers.' He had been 'quite confident of showing Europe that... without external interference, [the Porte] could energetically act against the rebels, exerting most rigorous and impartial justice'. As he told a Russian agent in Syria, foreign intervention appeared to him 'completely untimely'.¹⁷

After French troops arrived in Beirut in mid-August, he therefore laboured to forestall General Beaufort's mission, limiting it to the reconstruction of French silk factories in Deir al-Qamar and the construction of roads (Beirut–Damascus) as well as the supply of aid to those in need.¹⁸ Only a small contingent out of the 6,000 French troops were allowed to go into the hinterland and Damascus. All these measures deeply frustrated the French general, who had arrived in the Levant with the expectation of defending 'all the noble and great causes... in the name of civilised Europe'.¹⁹

The meagre communication between Fuad and Beaufort, usually saturated with misunderstandings, added fuel to Beaufort's frustration. For example, at his arrival in Lebanon, the French general was very eager to immediately undertake a joint Franco-Ottoman campaign against the Druze *muqatadjis* in order to expel them 'from mixed districts and to draw a new line of demarcation between the two races, [the Maronites and the Druze]', and thus bring the Christian refugees on the coast back to their homes. When his proposals met with Fuad's reluctance and caution, he became more annoyed.²⁰ He reported back to Paris his suspicions that

¹³ Rehfües to Schleinitz, 18 Oct. 1860, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7569, 125; Abro (Beirut) to Cabouly, 23 July 1860, BOA HR.SYS.3 54/95; Bitar, *Haliyyât*, vol. 1, 168.

¹⁴ Abro to Cabouly, 28 July 1860, BOA HR.SYS.3 54/106.

¹⁵ Salibi, 'Upheaval', 200.

¹⁶ Abro to Cabouly, 6 Aug. 1860, BOA HR.SYS.3 54/110.

¹⁷ 'Kopiya s doneseniya G.k.a. Makeeva', 21 July 1860, AVPRI f. 133, Kantselyariya, o. 459, e. 42, ll. 591–4.

¹⁸ Beaufort to Randon, 23 Sept. 1860, AMV, V.G4/5/8.

¹⁹ Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 120.

²⁰ 'Rapport de Novikow', no. 4, 8/20 Sept. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 37, l. 39.

Fuad was knowingly protecting the Druze. But Fuad's strategy was to confine the French. The paşa wrote to Istanbul the same day that, if they attacked the Druzes and started waging war on them all at once, it would be impossible to hold the French even if they were otherwise occupied. But if he could find the best way to seize 'the guilty chiefs of the Druze by address, and to make them accept the compensation and the domicile of the Christians, it would be possible to bring about a good result in this way'.²¹

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Fuad Paşa's relation with the European commissioners was equally problematic in the beginning. It took a long time for them to establish effective communication. The paşa was at first disinclined to cooperate with the commissioners. 'Apart from personal vanity', Fuad wrote, he found it 'very surprising' that the Ottoman foreign minister was made 'the member of a commission having the same quality as [European] secretaries and consuls'. He not only detested the lack of diplomatic courtesy and considered it an insult, but also lamented that since he was at the centre of all civil and military matters in Syria, it would be impossible for him to add a new duty to his existing ones and make time to preside over the commissioners.²²

It is true that all European plenipotentiaries in the commission were second-tier bureaucrats. The first one named to the commission, the British plenipotentiary Dufferin, had previously served as attaché to Lord John Russell's mission to Vienna to end the Crimean War; he proved to be an excellent orator and a promising young diplomat, as justified by his appointment to the delicate mission to Syria. Despite his previous short visits to Istanbul, Egypt, Syria, and other parts of the empire, his experience of the Levant was limited to hunting along the Nile.²³

Dufferin's appointment was followed on 11 August by that of the Russian commissioner, Novikow.²⁴ Having received his education in Slavic dialects at Moscow University, the Russian plenipotentiary had mainly worked on Balkan affairs.²⁵ He had also served as a trainee and clerk in the Asian Department of the Russian ministry of foreign affairs and, at his appointment, was secretary at the Istanbul embassy.²⁶

²¹ 'Copie d'un rapport de S.E. Fuad Pacha en date du 28 Safer 1277', BOA HR.SFR.3 52/3, 14 Sept. 1860.

²² Ibid.

²³ Musurus to Safvet, 2 Aug. 1860, ODD 132; Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 195; Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall, *The Life of the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1905), 93; Andrew Gailey, *The Lost Imperialist: Lord Dufferin, Memory and Mythmaking in an Age of Celebrity* (London: John Murray, 2016).

²⁴ Montebello to Thouvenel, 11 Aug. 1860, AMAE CP Russie 222/9; Lavalette to Thouvenel, 17 Aug. 1860, AMAE CP Turquie 346/131.

²⁵ Y. S. Kartsov, *Za Kulisami Diplomatii* (Petrograd: Tipografiya «T-va gaz. Svet», 1915), 12–13.

²⁶ E. P. Novikow to M. P. Pogodin, 22 Dec. 1871, RGB f. 231/II, K. 22, e. 44, ll. 1-ob; *Al'manax sovremennyx russkix gosudarstvennyx deyatelej* (St Petersburg: Tip. Isidora Gol'dberga, 1897), 49;

Before he was dispatched to Syria on 16 August, the French commissioner Leon Béclard's only involvement in the Levant consisted of two years as attaché at the French consulate in İzmir (Smyrna) (1844–6) and five months as consul general in Alexandria (1860).²⁷ Similarly, the Prussian commissioner, Guido von Rehfues, had had experience in the Levant only since March 1859, when he was appointed as legation secretary in Istanbul.²⁸ Of all the commissioners, it was only Pierre Weckbecker, who had been Austrian consul general in Beirut since 1856, that had any real familiarity with and understanding of the complexities of Lebanese politics.²⁹

The principal idea behind the establishment of an international security institution in Syria was to develop an 'objective' strategy to address the key issues that had dragged the country into violence and war. With the exception of Weckbecker, the European commissioners were all appointed from outside Lebanon for this very reason: to make their institution 'as independent of ideas, preconceptions and local prejudices as possible', because European consuls residing in the field tended to 'wind up more or less being influenced' by their local experience.³⁰

However, aside from Weckbecker, all four commissioners held their own presumptions and prejudices before their arrival. Just like General Beaufort, looking at Lebanon with a hubristic, imperial gaze, they rarely, if ever, got off their high horse, and harboured a firm belief in the grandiose importance of their missions and responsibilities. They all considered the Lebanese to be semi- or uncivilized barbarians, and insistently included this among the causes of the violence. Again, bar Weckbecker, they all unceasingly suspected that an Ottoman ploy was the main cause of the civil war. In the succeeding months these prejudices and assumptions informed the policies and behaviours of the commissioners while they followed their identical instructions to: (i) investigate the origins and cause of the 'outbreak and massacres', (ii) see that the guilty were punished, (iii) inquire into and advise on 'the best means of preventing a renewal

K. A. Dzikov, *Vostochnyj vopros v istoriosofskoj koncepcii K.N. Leont'eva* (St Petersburg: Aleteiya, 2006), 9, 36.

²⁷ *Annuaire diplomatique de l'empire français pour l'année 1865* (Paris: Veuve Berger-Levrault, 1865), 192–3; Léon Béclard, 'Papiers de personnel de MAE', AMAE 233/PAAP4.

²⁸ Johann Ludwig Guido von Rehfues to Alexander Gustav Adolph Freiherr von Schleinitz, 26 Aug. 1859, and Robert Heinrich Ludwig Graf von der Goltz to Alexander Gustav Adolph Freiherr von Schleinitz, 22 Sept. 1860, AA PA Nr. 11,881; Dietmar Grypa, *Der diplomatische Dienst des Königreichs Preußen (1815–1866). Institutioneller Aufbau und soziale Zusammensetzung* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2008), 244f., 292 n. 277, 413, 422, 429, 436, 468, 477, 479, 594; Thouvenel to Béclard, 31 Aug. 1860, BOA HR.SYS.3 54/215.

²⁹ Rudolf Agstner and Elmar Samsinger (eds), *Österreich in Istanbul: K. (u.) K. Präsenz im Osmanischen Reich* (Vienna: LIT, 2010), 50; Robert-Tarek Fischer, *Österreich im Nahen Osten. Die Großmachtspolitik der Habsburgermonarchie im Arabischen Orient 1633–1918* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2006), 162–4.

³⁰ Lobanov to Gorchakov, 16/28 Aug. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 601–3.

of the late bloody scenes, and of ameliorating the government of Syria', and (iv) monitor the indemnification and reparations processes.³¹

The commissioners' lack of familiarity with local realities and the time-consuming obligation to discover those realities was at odds with the demand for the swift completion of their tasks. They had to be quick not only to ensure security in the mountain but also to prevent the prolongation of the French expedition which, as we have seen, had been limited to six months by the conventions of August and September 1860. The risk of its evolution into an occupation and even annexation (as had happened in Nice and Savoy early in the year) was ever-present, despite the assurances of Emperor Napoleon III and the conventions, and because of the immense distrust that both European and Ottoman statesmen harboured toward him.

Also paradoxical was the expectation that the commissioners were to act as a single, European, Christian unit. They were expected to be 'closely united with one another . . . to deliberate on the means of ensuring the well-being of Christians on solid foundations . . . for the dignity of the Commission as well as for the success of its work' under the gaze of the Ottoman authorities and for the prestige of 'identical and collective action by Europe . . . in the eyes of the people of Syria'.³² They should carefully avoid 'any personal rivalry, any struggle for dominance', and their action should be 'guided solely by the general interest, which so rightly considers the fate of all Christians in the Ottoman Empire'.³³ This meant protracted negotiations among the commissioners on almost every subject in order to reach a common position.

Another difficulty here was the fact that the commissioners appeared reluctant to make any concessions detracting from their immediate national interests. As candidly expressed by the Russian commissioner Novikow, none of them 'wanted to believe in [the] final character' of the expectations from them outlined in the collective brief.³⁴ In fact, aside from the collective brief, each of the commissioners received separate orders from their seniors. Dufferin's was one of preservation of the status quo. Russell wrote to him that the chief object of the Commission would be

to obtain security for the future peace of Syria. But internal peace cannot be obtained without a speedy, pure and impartial administration of justice . . . [Y]ou

³¹ Russell to Cowley, 9 Aug. 1860, TNA PRO 30/22/104; Joseph Hajjar, *L'Europe et les destinées du Proche-Orient II. Napoléon et ses visées orientales 1848–1870*, vol. 3 (Damascus: Dar Tlass, 1988), 1303.

³² Lobanov to Gorchakov, 16/28 Aug. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 601–3.

³³ 'Copie d'une instruction spéciale au Commissaire Impérial en Syrie', 25 Aug. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 666–71.

³⁴ 'Kopiya raporta Komissara Rossijskoj imperii v Sirii, gosudarstvennogo sovetnika Novikova', 11/23 Sept. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 736–9.

will always bear in mind that no territorial acquisition, no exclusive influence, no separate commercial advantage is sought by Her Majesty's Government, nor should be acquired by any of the Great Powers,

alluding particularly to France.³⁵ Thouvenel warned Bécларd to pay extra attention to the situation of the French nationals and protégés in the payment of reparations, while Novikow was instructed to support whichever plan for the potential reorganization of Mount Lebanon would give Orthodox Christians a separate political standing, equal in importance to that of the Maronites and the Druze.³⁶ And Rehfués was ordered to

act under the premises that the Sublime Porte itself bears no guilt in the events in the Lebanon (although the Ottoman local agents might)... [His] main goal... should be justice for the Christian victims of the massacres and addressing the systematic grievances the Christians have in their dealings with the local Ottoman authorities.³⁷

With these diverse instructions in their pockets, during the numerous formal and informal meetings they held in the following two years, despite usually remaining 'calm in appearance', the commissioners felt the immense gravity of their national and religious responsibilities.³⁸ Fluid and separate alliances were formed and dissolved between them on each separate issue. They did succeed in many cases in forming a common front against Fuad Paşa, who began to attend the meetings, irregularly, only from late October. But a struggle for influence characterized the commissioners' work all along. The more they discovered about the histories, customs, habits, ideals, and emotions of the inhabitants and the Ottoman authorities, the more they began to feel the weight of the glaring discrepancies between local realities and global imperial anxieties. How they strove to sustain the momentum of the meetings, I will attempt to demonstrate in thematic rather than purely chronological order, explaining the hurdles that the commissioners repeatedly confronted in different domains.

³⁵ Lord John Russell to Lord Dufferin, 30 July 1860, TNA FO 195/659/42.

³⁶ Thouvenel to Bécларd, 16 and 31 Aug. 1860, AMAE MD 138, f. 157 and 213; Lobanov to Gorchakov, 16/28 Aug. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 601–3. 'Copie d'une instruction spéciale au Commissaire Impérial en Syrie', 25 Aug. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 666–71.

³⁷ Schleinitz to Rehfués, 30 Aug. 1860, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7569, f. 11–14.

³⁸ Dufferin was replaced by Colonel A. J. Fraser in July 1861; and Rehfués by the Prussian consul in Beirut, Heinrich Ludwig Theodor Weber, in Jan. 1862. Foreign Office to Colonel Fraser, 10 July 1861, TNA FO 78/1706; Theodor Weber to Albrecht Graf von Bernstorff, 30 Jan. 1861, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7572, f. 130; Abro to Cabouly, 30 Apr. 1861, ODD 336.

Securing Hearts: Relief and Reparations

In the summer of 1860, as the violence in Mount Lebanon and Damascus was being subdued, Syria was replete with grim scenes. Thousands were sick. Children were dying with alarming rapidity in the hot climate. Epidemics were spreading in overcrowded hospitals amongst 'the half-fed, half-clothed and half-sheltered multitudes'.³⁹ The immediate provision of relief proved to be the most pressing of all the issues that the commissioners faced on their arrival in the country.

In fact, their work only paralleled the relief efforts that had already begun in an orderly and systematic manner before the European commission was formed. In addition to the Ottoman committees set up by that Abro and Franco in July and August 1860, various religious missions that had been operating in Syria since the 1820s had been the first to take up the task of offering relief. The Lazarists and their female counterpart, *Filles de la Charité*, the Jesuits and their protégés, *Sœurs de Saint-Josep de l'Apparition*, the Church of Scotland, and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) had all established committees for the distribution of alms, with the support of their respective consulates.⁴⁰ The Protestant missions later merged under the Anglo-American Relief Committee (AARF). The Austrian, Greek, and Russian consulates instituted their own committees for the same purpose. And French troops under General Beaufort provided both funds and manpower for the reconstruction of damaged roads and buildings.

The relief committees collected donations from the United States and Europe and from Muslim notables in the Ottoman Empire.⁴¹ They distributed bread daily, provided houses and tents for shelter, operated hospitals for the sick, and opened soup kitchens for nursing mothers. They also published several appeals for aid, describing the gloomy situation in the Levant. '[U]nless better food, clothing, and medical care are provided,' the AARF announced in one of its pleas, 'the victims of disease will ere long outnumber those of the sword.'⁴² Another appeal in October 1860 read:

The poor sick are sleeping by the thousand on the earth or the stone floors, with nothing to cover them, and are dying by hundreds from dysentery. Do not relax

³⁹ 'Anglo-American Relief Committee Statement ordered to be printed for circulation in England and America', signed by Niven Moore, 23 Aug. 1860, ABCFM v. 6. Mission to Syria, 1860–1871, v. 1. [291], 102.

⁴⁰ Hauser, *German*, 61–2; Sami Kuri, *Une histoire du Liban à travers les archives des jésuites, 1846–1862* (Beirut: Dar el-Marcheq, 1986), 286; BOA HR.SFR.3 50/22/3.

⁴¹ 'Operations of the Anglo-American Relief Committee and its Auxiliaries', 4 Nov. 1860, GStA I. HA Rep 81, XI Nr. 66, f. 169. On the limits of the altruism of the missions, see Hauser, *German*, 58.

⁴² 'Anglo-American Relief Committee Statement ordered to be printed for circulation in England and America', signed by Niven Moore, 23 Aug. 1860, ABCFM v. 6. Mission to Syria, 1860–1871, v. 1. [291], 102.

your efforts to help these miserable people. They cannot get their bread from burnt stones and plundered fields and orchards.⁴³

Circulars travelled fast among the various establishments calling for the expansion of 'the loins' of their charities, for their 'abundant alms' to 'cross [...] the seas' and bring 'a precious alleviation to miseries whose heart-breaking tales have deeply moved anyone who has retained some feelings of humanity and religion'.⁴⁴

In their first gatherings in October 1860, held in the absence of Fuad Paşa, the European commissioners considered how to make the workings of these various committees most effective and unanimously agreed on the third meeting to coordinate them according to need, regardless of the specific confession for which they were established.⁴⁵ A central aid committee was then formed to coordinate international efforts. However, the commission's influence remained thin.

This was because, even though several missions cooperated with each other transferring funds in between them time and again, as the German historian Julia Hauser tells us, 'Internal divisions [of the commission] were mirrored in the field of charity'.⁴⁶ The 'vigorous competition between missions' that had existed for decades continued even after the civil war. Violence in Syria was regarded by both Protestant (American, British and Prussian) and Catholic (predominantly French and Austria) missions as a 'major chance for consolidating their influence, as a prime opportunity for mission work', whereby '[c]hildren were [considered to be] a particularly promising target group, given their alleged malleability'.⁴⁷ They wished to build better schools in better buildings (mansions) for the orphans. They even toyed with the idea of mass exportation of children to Europe to secure them for their missions.⁴⁸ But the competition amongst them made the centralization of relief impossible.

Existing forms of cooperative action among the different denominations were also undercut in due course. For example, the AARF, which, alongside the *Sœurs de Saint-Josep*, was one of the most active charities, received the support of Prussia in the beginning and thus coalesced into a tripartite Protestant alliance.⁴⁹ The Prussian consul in Beirut, Weber, described it as 'one of the rare cases of a multinational-cooperation'.⁵⁰ A few months later, however, nationalist sentiments came into play: the Prussian agents worked to increase their own influence on the

⁴³ 'The Syrian Massacres: A Second Appeal for the Syrian Sufferers', New York, 22 Oct. 1860, ABCFM v. 6. Mission to Syria, 1860–1871, v. 1. [291], 106.

⁴⁴ 'Monseigneur L'Évêque de Coutances et d'Avranches (Niederbronn) aux clergé et fidèles de notre diocèse', 9 Aug. 1860, BNFM E-2400, no. 76.

⁴⁵ Weckbecker to Rechberg, 21 Oct. 1860, AT-OeStA/HHStA PA XXXVIII 134–5, 9.

⁴⁶ Hauser, *German*, 61. ⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 76. ⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 20, 58.

⁴⁹ 'Anglo-American Relief Committee Statement ordered to be printed for circulation in England and America', signed by Niven Moore, 23 Aug. 1860, ABCFM v. 6. Mission to Syria, 1860–1871, v. 1. [291], 102; 'Operations of the Anglo-American Relief Committee and its Auxiliaries', 4 Nov. 1860, GStA I. HA Rep 81, XI Nr. 66, f. 169.

⁵⁰ Weber to Schleinitz, 13 Jan. 1861, GStA I. HA Rep 81, XI Nr. 66, f. 54–5.

ground by means of charity, and decided to establish a separate ‘German committee’ in January 1861.⁵¹

Who the net beneficiaries of these policies were, and if, and to what extent, the donors sought to influence political and administrative decision-making processes on the spot, is difficult to establish. The absence of primary sources and therefore of studies which reconstruct the histories of religious missions from the perspective of the local Levantines constrains our insight into this question, and certainly necessitates further research. Even then, regardless of competition among missions, in an emergency that was so unexpected, pressing, and overwhelming for the men and women on the spot, the quest for ‘humanitarian relief’ in 1860 proved to be a partial success—all the more so because meeting the needs of thousands required a large and steady flow of funds. Proactive fund-raising campaigns in New York, London, Paris, and other major metropolises almost all over the world, in collaboration with major philanthropist families such as the Rothschilds and the Montefiores, helped to allay the disquiet and to meet needs.⁵²

For the almost bankrupt Sublime Porte, which was also liable to pay indemnities and reparations to the Lebanese and foreign victims of the war for justice through compensation, the only way to go forward and to address local expectations was to obtain loans from the very same metropolises. That would turn out to be an entirely different story.

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The fact was that, financially speaking, in early 1860, before the civil war in Syria and the events in Montenegro erupted, the Ottoman treasury had been under immense strain. A few months after his arrival in Syria, the funds at Fuad’s disposal had been exhausted by heavy spending on the relief of the victims. Since the Porte could not supply any more funds, the paşa and the commissioners found themselves confronted with the issue of raising money for restoring the infrastructure and for the relief of the displaced Christian refugees in November 1860.

In the eighth meeting of the commission in Beirut, after giving an account of the needs of the Syrians and the means of providing for them, Fuad explained that the only way to obtain the money the Porte needed to add onto its budget, which amounted nearly to 100 million piastres (£775,000) (while the estimated total amount needed for reparations was 250 million piastres), would be to secure a new loan with the assistance of the Powers.⁵³ But his proposal was declared inadmissible by the European commissioners.

⁵¹ Wolz to M. J. Bosgiovich, 31 Dec. 1860, BOA HR.MKT 363/47. See also Hauser, *German*, 63.

⁵² Abigail Green, *Moses Montefiore* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 290–91; ‘The Syrian Relief Fund’, *New York Times*, 23 Aug. 1860, 4; ‘British Syrian Relief Fund’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 Dec. 1860, 5.

⁵³ Rehfues to Schleinitz, 3 Nov. 1860, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7569, f. 218–20; Lavalette to Thouvenel, 4 Dec. 1860 AMAE CP 133/347/313.

The Prussian commissioner, Rehfuës, suggested that the sum necessary for the restoration of the Christians could be taken from the Muslims of Damascus and Sayda as well as from the Druze, by way of an extraordinary tax. Dufferin intervened on behalf of the Druze, and opposed any such extra taxation.⁵⁴ In order to induce his government to take the same position, he 'launched against the Maronites the most bitter diatribes', sending to Istanbul exaggerated numbers of the losses incurred by the Christians during the war.⁵⁵ Following incessant pressure by the commissioners, and the intervention of Dufferin, Fuad Paşa agreed to demand only some 12.5 million piastres from the Damascene Muslims.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, the lands sequestered from the Druze *muqatadjis* were leased to the Christian peasants on a two-year contract.

What interests us here the most is not how much was paid to whom, but who paid for security in the end, and how. As we have seen, the economic suffering that the Syrian Muslims had been subjected to since the incorporation of the Levant into the global capitalist economy were one of many causes of violence that had erupted in Mount Lebanon and Damascus as well as in other parts of Syria and the Ottoman Empire in the 1850s and 1860s. Yet, rightly or wrongly, the fact that the same people were now taxed for the rehabilitation of their belligerents constituted another paradox, provoked bitterness, and once more heightened insecurities. Uncontrollable waves of refugees went on to emigrate to the coasts (*sahil*) from Damascus.⁵⁷ Thousands looked for opportunities to travel even further—to Egypt, Europe, and the Americas.⁵⁸

In the meantime, mixed (Muslim and Christian) inspection committees were established and tasked with listing the victims (namely, the Christian subjects, foreign residents in Syria, and religious institutions and establishments) and assessing the economic damage in order to decide upon collective and individual reparations and property compensation. But their work became more and more complex because of the absence of funds at the disposal of Fuad Paşa, as well as the inconsistent (and therefore often bloated and implausible) demands of the Syrians and foreign residents for reparations, as well as interference by the European commissioners and consuls in the name of justice via compensation.⁵⁹ Only in May 1862, at the last, fiftieth gathering, could the commissioners reach an

⁵⁴ 'Résumé des rapports de M. Nowikow', No. 25, 23 Oct./4 Nov. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, d. 37, ll. 245–6.

⁵⁵ Rizk, *Mont-Liban*, 332.

⁵⁶ 'Résumé des rapports de M. Nowikow', No. 25, 23 Oct./4 Nov. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, d. 37, ll. 245–6; 'Otryvki iz raporta komissara Rossii v Sirii', 3/15 April 1861, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 37, l. 431.

⁵⁷ 'Otryvki iz raporta komissara Rossii v Sirii', 3/15 Apr. 1861, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 37, l. 431.

⁵⁸ Rizk, *Mont-Liban*, 336.

⁵⁹ Farah, *Politics*, 635.

agreement.⁶⁰ But what was decided upon was only a limited and symbolic solution.⁶¹

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It might be fitting to pause here in our discussion of the international commission, and consider the broader financial and economic situation in the Levant at the time. This will enable us to understand why the reparation payments made in the end were only symbolic. It will also allow us to see that the 1860 civil war coincided with a 'financial turn' in the Eastern Question, and not accidentally.

There were several reasons for the poor condition of Ottoman finances at the time. These included the mounting trade deficits accrued since the commercial agreements of the late 1830s, the extraordinary and high volume of expenditures incurred by the Crimean War, the floating internal and external debts (the Porte had contracted the first foreign loans in its history during and after the Crimean War in 1854, 1855, and 1858), the global financial crisis that broke out in Western markets in 1857 (which prevented the repayment of tranches of previous loans), the conspicuously extravagant and unprofitable spending of the palace, and, perhaps most importantly, the excessive issue of Ottoman *kaimes* (paper money), which could not be retrieved for long. All these factors had resulted in an economy unable to keep imperial finances afloat, not to mention the payment of reparations for victims of the civil war in Syria.⁶² In 1860, the total debt of the Ottoman Empire was estimated at 774 million francs (Fr. 310 million external and Fr. 237 million domestic debt, for the most part to the Galata bankers), which amounted to approximately £30.5 million and 390 million Ottoman piasters.⁶³

In mid-July 1860, days after Fuad Paşa's departure for Syria, Ottoman correspondence revealed that 'the recent misfortunes of Syria are threatening new and considerable expenses to [the Porte] ... We absolutely need a loan of £5–6 million.' Even though Ottoman ministers were ready to 'offer the most warranted

⁶⁰ The distribution to the Ottoman subjects (individuals) amounted to a sum of 25.5 million piastres (23.93 million was to be paid to the Christians, 1 million to the Druze, 500,000 to the Metuwalis, and 70,000 to the Muslims), while 1,088,009 piastres was to be paid to the religious establishments (436,000 to the Franciscans, 49,000 to the Capucins, 202,000 to the Jesuits, and 400,000 to the Lazarists) and 5.2 million piastres to foreign residents in Syria. BOA HR.SYS 914/5/63–67.

⁶¹ Rizk, *Mont-Liban*, 338.

⁶² A financial commission had been established during the Crimean War to help the Porte repay the loans it had contracted in 1855–6 by changing the tax base and tax collection methods. In June 1860, it was named as *Conseil Supérieur des Trésors*. The council consisted of French, British, and Austrian delegates MM. Falconnet and Lackenbach and the marquis de Ploëuc, alongside Mehmed Rüşdü Paşa, Fuad Paşa, and Hasib Paşa. Sublime Porte, MAE Bureau de Presse, 17 Aug. 1859, BOA HR.SFR.4 30/40/4; Falconnet to Bulwer, 24 Jan. 1860, NRO Bulwer Papers, BUL 1/221/1–40, 567X8; Lobanov to Gorchakov, 19/31 July 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 535–8; A. Du Velay, *Essai sur l'histoire financière de la Turquie depuis le règne du sultan Mahmoud II jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Arthur Rousseau, 1903), 156–7.

⁶³ Velay, *Essai*, 154; André Autheman, *La Banque impériale ottomane* (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1996), 18.

guarantees' to secure the loan, talks with the Rothschild, Bischofsheim, and Goldsmith financial houses would yield no favourable results. The grim situation of the treasury and the policies of the Porte had led to a severe loss of credit-worthiness. Now it was able to access loan offers from European syndicates only on considerably harsher terms compared to the previous loans contracted in 1855–6.⁶⁴

In the slipstream of monetary distress, the Eastern Question took a 'financial turn'. It was the French and British governments that had acted as guarantors of the 1854 and 1855 loans that the Porte now appeared unable to pay back. A large portion of the Ottoman bills of exchange had been bought by French and British investors. The financial survival of the Porte was now both a European and Ottoman concern; French and British statesmen therefore considered it in their 'best interests to help [the Ottoman Empire] extend her sad existence'.⁶⁵

Yet the Eastern Question, as I have argued time and again in this book, was almost never a one-way dilemma. In a similar vein, Ottoman ministers recognized their dependence on the British and French governments, which was (as already noted) one of the reasons for their consent to the Great Power intervention in Syria. In early August, the interim grand vizier, Âli Paşa, admitted that the realization of a new loan relied 'absolutely on the benevolent offices of Britain and France'.⁶⁶

In fact, in late 1860 a way out of this dilemma was found. After failing to contract loans with several European syndicates, the sultan's government had managed to secure a deal with Jules Mirès, the French financier and director-general of the combined treasury of the French railway companies, in November.⁶⁷ However, this deal dragged the Ottoman finances into an even graver crisis by the end of 1861.⁶⁸

The first draw-down of the loan, which amounted in total to £16 million with a record low issue rate (53.75 per cent) and high interest (14 per cent), was to be made on 1 June 1861.⁶⁹ But on 18 February, Mirès was arrested in Paris on charges of *escroquerie* (swindling). This dealt a severe blow to the Porte.⁷⁰ It was not only because with this deal its treasury would have been significantly relieved of internal floating debts. The loan would also have alleviated the markets and reduced the circulation of bills of exchange. The failure of the deal sparked a crisis in Istanbul as well as in Britain and France, whose nationals were holders of

⁶⁴ Musurus to [Sublime Porte], 15 Aug. 1860, BOA HR.SFR.3 53/10/3, Musurus [?] to M. Rodocanachi, 16 Aug. 1860 BOA HR.SFR.3 53/10/5; Eldem, 'Stability', 435–6.

⁶⁵ Lavalette to Thouvenel, 20 June 1860, AMAE CP 133/345/86.

⁶⁶ Aali Pasha to Bulwer, 28 Aug. 1860, BOA HR.SFR.3 53/10/6.

⁶⁷ Aali to Musurus, 7 Nov. 1860, BOA HR.SFR.3 55/5.

⁶⁸ Edhem Eldem, 'Ottoman Financial Integration with Europe: Foreign Loans, the Ottoman Bank and the Ottoman Public Debt', *European Review* 13(3) (2005): 431–45, 436.

⁶⁹ Velay, *Essai*, 158–9.

⁷⁰ 'Matters at Paris', *New York Times*, 13 Mar. 1861, 2.

most of the existing Ottoman bills of exchange.⁷¹ While several major commercial houses dealing with the Levant (e.g. Ede, Rodochanachi, Hava, and Baltazzi) filed for bankruptcy, real panic seized the Galata bankers in Istanbul, and the value of the Ottoman currency dropped by two-thirds. One pound British sterling was quoted to 129 Ottoman piastres in January 1861. By May, this exceeded 200 piastres.⁷²

Due to its lack of creditworthiness, it was now almost completely impossible for the Porte to seek any immediate relief in the markets of Paris and London with a new loan. In this grim context, the grand vizier, Âli Paşa, sent a desperate memorandum to the British and French authorities, stressing that the further fall of the commercial houses of the Levant 'would cause such disruption and increase the distress of the Ottoman Treasury... that the Eastern Question [*la question d'Orient*], which we hope to reduce, could, as a fatal consequence of this catastrophe, be posed immediately'. The Porte asked for the 'moral support' of Paris and London in drafting financial reforms, achieving its borrowing, and liquidating the existing circulation, which was 'the sole cause of the crisis which threatens the greatest misfortunes of the merchants of the Levant, the French and British interests adhering to it, and what is more serious still, perhaps the future of the political order'.⁷³

Intending to obtain at least a portion of the Mirès loan deal and acquire 'the moral support' of Europe in their quest for financial survival, Ottoman ministers also made an unprecedented concession in the customs tariff negotiations with the European empires, which (as already noted) had been periodically held since the 1800s and which had restarted in 1857. They agreed on the immediate reduction of average export duties by 4 per cent (from 12 to 8 per cent) and then to their further reduction at the rate of 1 per cent per year for the next eight years, after which only a nominal duty would be levied.⁷⁴

This was a vital milestone. Even though the liberalization and opening up of the Ottoman Empire to 'free trade' is usually associated with the 1838–41 commercial agreements signed with the European Powers, what had in fact happened at the time was only a reregulation of tariffs and the abolition of monopolies. Ottoman economic liberalization was made nearly complete after the Crimean War, with the land reform of 1858 (that allowed international banks control the property) and finally with the agreements of 1861. The first of these, the Kanlıca Commercial Treaty, was signed with France on 29 April 1861, which was followed by similar agreements with all major European Powers in the following months.⁷⁵

⁷¹ The main inspiration of Émile Zola's best-selling book *L'Argent* originates from this financial crisis in 1861.

⁷² Velay, *Essai*, 164–5. ⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Mr Foster and Lord Hobart, *Report on the Financial Condition of Turkey* (London: Harrison & Sons, 1862), 14.

⁷⁵ Pamuk, *The Ottoman Empire*, 113.

With these concessions, the Porte could obtain only a small payment from the Mirès deal (Fr. 32 million francs; approximately £1.2 million) in return. But it did little more than pay lip service to the complaints of the rising middle classes all over the empire, which included the merchants and bankers operating in Lebanon.⁷⁶

In Lebanon too, especially after the bankruptcies of the commercial houses of Marseille and Istanbul in the spring of 1861, commercial transactions were almost entirely interrupted. European and local traders withdrew all their capital from the banks in Beirut, and immense pressure was put on the international commissioners for the swift resolution of the ongoing retributive proceedings and administrative reform talks, which, it was believed, would enable economic recovery.⁷⁷ As we will see, during the following months the influence of traders and bankers on the result of these proceedings would be profound.

As for the indemnities and reparation payments to the Christians of Lebanon and Damascus, they began only after 1863, and only when a new loan was contracted between the Porte and its newly established state bank, the Imperial Ottoman Bank, which was in fact an Anglo-French enterprise.⁷⁸ The indemnities were compensated also by the issue of long-term interest-bearing bonds to the Lebanese.⁷⁹ In need of ready money, some of the poorer locals immediately sold the bonds for a very small price. Moreover, due to the loss of the value of the piastre, most of the claimants received much less than the actual cost of the damage.

Symbolic as the reparation payments truly may have been, they still represented the enforcing power of an inter-imperial condominium in the Levant. In reality, it was with the aid of the French syndicates' lucrative loan deals to the inhabitants in 1861–2 that the local (silk) economy was rescued. Moreover, out of the £250,000 (42.5 million Ottoman piastres) supplied by foreign donors, a considerable amount was spent on the revitalization of the silk industry.⁸⁰ Thanks to the work of the French troops in the mixed districts that helped rebuild many factories, and the increase in the price of silk in international markets after the shortage of cotton as a result of the civil war in North America, merchants and peasants were able to procure immense profits from silk production as of the early

⁷⁶ Autheman, *Banque impériale*, 20. Because the amount produced after the Mirès deal was very small, neither the litigation of the floating debt nor the withdrawal of the kaimes from circulation became possible. Under the weight of indemnities and relief in Lebanon and the expenses of the campaigns in the Balkans and the Levant, more paper money was issued, which increased the kaime's depreciation and disrupted transactions, since the traders refused to accept kaimes in payment. By the time the amount of the indemnity payments for the Lebanese was agreed upon in May 1862, the Ottoman currency had devalued immensely.

⁷⁷ Bentivoglio to Thouvenel, 5 May 1861, AMAE Papiers Thouvenel, 233PAAP/5/16.

⁷⁸ Edhem Eldem, *A History of the Ottoman Bank* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Historical Research Centre, 1999).

⁷⁹ Spagnolo, *France*, 82.

⁸⁰ Bentivoglio to Thouvenel, 6 July 1861, AMAE 42CCC/7/272.

1860s.⁸¹ Equally importantly, the economic recovery of Lebanon was facilitated by the elimination of the political privileges of the *muqatadjis* by means of retributive justice and administrative reform.

The Scapegoats? Retributive Justice and *Règlement Organique*

The *muqatadjis* of Lebanon had long been considered, by the coalition of a rising middle class, merchants, bankers, and their European associates as well as the Christian (Maronite, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholic) clergy, as barriers to commercial enterprise and the acquisition of land. In 1861, when the *muqatadjis* were put on trial, along with hundreds of Druze peasants, and when the dual-*kaymakamlık* system was scrapped, the common front of this rising middle-class coalition played a significant role.

European 'traders and industrialists of all nationalities', local merchants, and clergy repeatedly submitted pleas to the commissioners for 'prompt and energetic solutions' to the distress of Lebanon.⁸² They argued:

if the intervention of Europe has provided temporary security by stopping the massacres, no satisfactory measure has been taken again to erase the traces and to conjure the return . . . [T]he unfortunate victims have so far received only illusory promises of compensation. Most of the culprits are still awaiting the punishment that justice and the public opinion demands. The question of reorganization, an absolute condition for a better future, does not seem to have been resolved, even in principle.⁸³

These petitions accentuated the fact that the interests of commerce were 'intimately linked to the re-establishment of order', while 'the delay in payment of compensation due to Christians and foreigners, have long since stopped business . . .'⁸⁴ They symbolized the point at which the imperialism of free trade (i.e. the dominant influence of commercial spirit) and the imperialism of security represented by the international commission overlapped, and turned into a transformative power in their own right.

The retributive justice and administrative reorganization in Mount Lebanon in 1860–64 needs to be considered against this background. Remarkably similar

⁸¹ Owen, *Middle East*, 165; Ulecaly to Outrey, 2 July 1863, AMAE 42CCC/7/403.

⁸² Gortschakoff to Kisselew (Paris), 2 May 1861, AMAE 112CP/224; Bentivoglio to Thouvenel, 20 Apr. 1861, AMAE 42CCC/7/263; Rehfués to Schleinitz, 9 Apr. 1861, GStA III. HA Mda, I Nr. 7571, f. 78–80; Rehfués to Schleinitz, 17 Apr. 1861, GStA III. HA Mda, I Nr. 7571, f. 98–9.

⁸³ 'Copie de la lettre accompagnant la révision de l'adresse par les délégués du Commerce (Beyrouth)', 10 Apr. 1861, AMAE 42CCC/7/266.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

patterns were followed during both. In both, the imperial agents' endeavours focused on protecting the interests of their protégés and co-religionists as well as the rising middle class. In both, the European commissioners displayed an immense distrust of the existing systems. In both, pronouncements by men on the spot were largely overruled by statesmen in the metropolises, who then made the final decisions. After both, it was the *muqatadjis*' privileges that were stripped in the face of imperial ambitions, as they were unanimously considered the source of the existing order's ills. The causes of violence in 1860 were sought in the ancient feudal system. The new middle class, merchants and bankers of Lebanon, and their European associates emerged as the net beneficiaries of both.

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During the judicial proceedings, the European commissioners loyally adhered to their specific instructions that 'the punishment must especially reach those that had an official character'.⁸⁵ They were convinced that Fuad Paşa and the judges who served in the extraordinary and military tribunals knowingly protected Ottoman officials and officers during their trials, and deliberately laid the blame at the door of the 'uncivilized' Lebanese and Damascene Muslims rather than of their own imperial officials and officers, to deny their own responsibility.⁸⁶

For these reasons, even though the European plenipotentiaries appeared to have had very little knowledge of the Ottoman penal code in use, they endeavoured to intervene in legal proceedings in the belief that they would render them 'really useful and effectual'. They candidly recognized the 'great delicacy for a body foreign to the state to demand the liberty of . . . interfering with the action of a sovereign Tribunal'. Nonetheless they demanded the right to supply supplementary questions to the courts and prevent the quashing of any evidence discreditable to the Ottoman officers and bureaucrats. This, they argued, would 'satisfy . . . Europe'.⁸⁷

As a consequence of their continuous pestering, the financial distress of the Porte, and Fuad Paşa's unwavering desire to demonstrate his attachment to the 'public conscience of the civilised world', the European commissioners managed to get the Ottoman extraordinary envoy's permission to attend the courts, purely to monitor the legal proceedings, not to participate.⁸⁸ In due course, the paşa agreed on the publication of the minutes of the extraordinary trials, and even granted the commissioners the opportunity to express their 'advisory opinions'

⁸⁵ 'Copie d'une instruction spéciale au Commissaire Impérial en Syrie en date du 25 août 1860', AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 666–71.

⁸⁶ Rehfués to Schleinitz, 29 Sept. 1860, GStA III. HA Mda, I Nr. 7569, f. 33–6; 'Rapport de Novikow', 6 Sept. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 37, l. 39.

⁸⁷ Dufferin to Bulwer, 26 Oct. 1860, TNA FO 195/656.

⁸⁸ BOA IMM. 935/1, 24 Jan. 1861; cf. Makdisi, *Culture*, 154.

before the final verdicts on the culpable were made by the extraordinary tribunals.⁸⁹

It would be untrue to argue that the influence of European diplomats over the procedures was merely negative. They detected several irregularities in judicial proceedings, such as the employment of certain Ottoman officials as judges even though their names had been linked to pillaging or to the summary punishment (execution) of people of low social standing in Damascus.⁹⁰ They managed to 'correct' some of these appointments.⁹¹ But, concurrently, the commissioners took almost diametrically opposite positions among themselves with respect to the punishment of the Druze, which complicated matters and, for better or worse, prolonged the retributive justice procedures.

In the beginning, the British commissioner, Dufferin, validated the punishment of the Druze *muqatadjis* in general, and Said Jumblatt, their leading figure, in particular. After returning from exile upon Fuad's summons, when Said requested to see Dufferin to ask his protection, the latter refused to see the Druze sheikh on the grounds that 'he would not associate with common bandits'.⁹² However, when the British commissioner received express orders from London 'to save [Jumblatt] whatever the costs', on account of the special relations that had existed between the British and the Druze since the 1840s,⁹³ he immediately changed his position. Together with Niven Moore, the British consul in Beirut, he eagerly committed himself to clearing Said and the other Druze of responsibility, striving to shield them from any self-interested quest for imperial justice.

The French commissioner, Béclard, General Beaufort, and the Russian commissioner, Novikow, by contrast, pressed Ottoman authorities for summary punishment for the Druze 'atrocities' against the Orthodox and Catholic Christians of the mountain. As early as September 1860, even before the commission began its official meetings, Fuad Paşa's fulminating decree, by which the ranks and titles of the recalcitrant Druze *muqatadjis* were abolished, their property was sequestered, and the Druze *kaymakamlık* in the south was temporarily divided into four military circles, was celebrated by Russian and French agents. They considered these to be 'dexterous' acts against 'the persecutors of Christians'.⁹⁴ However, the British agents Dufferin and Moore questioned any ill intention, i.e. whether the confiscation of the property of such figures as Said

⁸⁹ Rehfuës to Schleinitz, 15 Oct. 1860, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7569, 111fs–121fs.

⁹⁰ The European commissioners argued that a certain Hüsnü Bey, a judge of the extraordinary tribunal in Beirut, was 'biased' and unfit for service, as he had participated in the events in Baalbek he was investigating and was suspected of robbing a church there. Rehfuës to Schleinitz, 18 and 20 Oct. 1860, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7569, f. 125, 131–6.

⁹¹ 'Résumé des rapports de M. Nowikow', 23 Oct./4 Nov. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 37, ll. 245–6; Lobanov to Gorchakov, 11/23 Oct. 1860, AVPRI, f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 778–9.

⁹² Rehfuës to Schleinitz, 28 Oct. 1860, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7569, f. 179.

⁹³ See Ch. 10.

⁹⁴ 'Kopiya raporta Komissara Rossijskoj imperii v Sirii', 11/23 Sept. 1860, AVPRI, f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 42, ll. 736–9.

Jumblatt, 'a person of immense possessions', was considered an 'acceptable accession to Fuad Pasha's military chest'.⁹⁵ These rifts continued until the cases against the Druze *muqatadjis* were definitively closed in 1864.

The subsequent trial of Said Jumblatt shows how the protection of European and Ottoman imperial interests was intimately tied to questions of life or death for the mountain's inhabitants. The Ottoman authorities' readiness to throw the Druze *muqatadjis* before the world public as the culprits of the violence in order to mitigate Ottoman (ir)responsibility during the civil war, British attempts to prevent this to maintain their chains of influence with the Lebanese, and French pursuit of their summary punishment in order to bolster the position of the Maronites, all brought the Eastern Question into the courtroom in Beirut.

Not that no investigation was held into the Jumblatt case. Quite the contrary: divergence of imperial concerns and rancorous competition among the Powers meant that the case was more fastidiously tackled than it could possibly have been otherwise. Said was interrogated in several sessions of the extraordinary tribunals—albeit with a strongly prejudiced and hostile tone on the part of the Ottoman judges. He was allowed to name witnesses, both Muslim (Sunni and Druze) and Christian. Inspection committees were sent to Sayda, Djizzin, and Mukhtara, where he was claimed to have been involved in violence. Dufferin even made an effort to demand additional procedural safeguards for Said Jumblatt such as granting him access to a counsel, but Fuad Paşa denied this because the involvement of defence lawyers was not an Ottoman practice.⁹⁶ And in some sessions of the trial, even though he was allowed in merely as an observer, the British delegate Niven Moore more than once interrupted the interrogation, arguing that the nature of the questions directed to Jumblatt was unacceptable and that the minutes had been recorded improperly.

Said Jumblatt was also listened to. He pleaded his innocence, claiming that he had nothing to do with the murder of the Christians in Deir al-Qamar and Mukhtara and that he protected the Christians 'whenever and wherever possible'. As a matter of fact, Muslim and some Christian defence witnesses refrained from incriminating him. But, apart from Dufferin, the European commissioners suspected that Jumblatt had protected some of the Christians in order to obtain those witnesses, while he had acted with 'even more anger on the Christians in neighbouring communities'.⁹⁷

As the Prussian commissioner reported back to Berlin, British endeavours to protect the Druze prompted 'bad blood inside the European Commission'.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Dufferin to Bulwer, 26 Oct. 1860, TNA FO 195/656.

⁹⁶ Benjamin E. Brockman-Hawe, 'Constructing Humanity's Justice: Accountability for "Crimes Against Humanity" in the Wake of the Syria Crisis of 1860', in *Historical Origins of International Criminal Law*, ed. Morten Bergsmo, Cheah Wui Ling, Song Tianying, and Yi Ping, vol. 3 (Brussels: Torkel Opsahl, 2015), 219.

⁹⁷ Weckbecker to Rechberg, 25 Oct. 1860, HHStA PA XXXVIII 134–5/10.

⁹⁸ Rehfues to Schleinitz, 7 Nov. 1860, GStA, III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7569, f. 230–38.

Dufferin suggested—possibly rightly so—that the least culpable position in the hierarchy of crimes against Christians had to be reserved for the Druze, whose excesses proceeded from a civil war into which they had been incited by their Christian antagonists ‘very much against their will’.⁹⁹ But then, when other Christian defence witnesses almost unanimously attributed to Jumblatt ‘all the misfortunes of the Mountain, which he would have had . . . the power to prevent, had he wanted it’, testifying to his involvement in the ‘massacres’, almost all the commissioners were certain that capital punishment awaited Said.¹⁰⁰

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In February 1861, the decision taken by the extraordinary tribunals was as expected. Said Jumblatt and all the major Druze *muqatadjis* and sheikhs who had returned to the mountain from exile in September 1860 after Fuad Paşa’s summons—Hussein Talhuq, Karam Abu Nakad, Asad Hamad—were sentenced to death for their rebellious behaviour, ‘dereliction of their dut[ies] and responsibility[ies] to restrain and control [their] followers’, while hundreds (Druze and Sunni) were sentenced to temporary deportation to Crete and Libya.¹⁰¹ Of all the major Druze *muqatadjis*, only Yusuf Abd al-Malik was acquitted after French silk spinners’ favourable testimonies of him for protecting their property during the civil war.¹⁰² The Ottoman governor of Sayda, Hurşid Paşa, was sentenced to life imprisonment.

When these pronouncements were brought to the attention of the European commissioners for their ‘advice’ before the final verdicts were made, the commission held drawn-out sessions to reach a collective opinion. But their long deliberations yielded no such result. Even though each commissioner had attended the same sessions, read the same minutes, and interviewed the same people, their viewpoints differed irreconcilably. To arrive at a common position as ‘European’ commissioners, they agreed to make their decision by open vote.

Dufferin tried to reduce the responsibility of Said Jumblatt and the Druze, pointing out that there was not sufficient evidence to sentence them to capital punishment. Béclard followed French imperial policy. He condemned to death all the chiefs, all the heads of ‘a plot’, both Ottoman and Druze. More experienced in the affairs of Lebanon, the Austrian commissioner, Weckbecker, thought it a necessity to acquit everyone, given the ‘extenuating circumstances contained in the trials and in the [political] situation itself’. It then came down to the votes of the Prussian and Russian commissioners, Rehfues and Novikow. The manner in

⁹⁹ ‘Substance of an Interpellation addressed by Dufferin to Fuad Pasha at the 8th Meeting of the European Commission’, 10 Nov. 1860, TNA FO 195/657.

¹⁰⁰ Weckbecker to Rechberg, 25 Oct. 1860, HHStA PA XXXVIII 134–5/10.

¹⁰¹ Makdisi, *Culture*, 154.

¹⁰² Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 185.

which they made up their minds illustrated the decisive role of religious sensitivities in inter-imperial decision-making.

Both Rehfués and Novikow admitted that the interrogations during the trials, ‘far from clarifying the judge’s conscience’, cast them ‘into a strange perplexity’. Yet they both considered that ‘rightly or wrongly, the unanimous [Christian] public voice imputes to [Said Jumblatt] all the disasters [in Lebanon]. His acquittal would be interpreted by the Christian population of the country as contempt for justice, and his condemnation to any other punishment than the death penalty may not seem sufficient.’ In the end, while formulating their opinion, they weighed ‘in the scales of justice and the interests of the Christian cause in this country’, and decided in favour of the death penalty, since Said Bey Jumblatt had ‘incurred the most serious responsibility in the evens of 1860’ by distributing war ammunition to the Druze, organizing the massacres of Hasbaya, and acting as the occult leader of a ‘great league which [had] linked the Druze of [Hawran] to those of Lebanon against the Christians’.¹⁰³ Novikow, however, admitted that he was not entirely sure. There was no clear evidence other than the testimonies of the Christians, among whom were Bishop Tobia ‘Awn, members of the Beirut committee, and peasants of the mixed districts as well as Kisrawan.¹⁰⁴

What is striking about the judicial proceedings of the time is not only the fact that the European commissioners, five foreign men with no legal or official authority, had a say in the final verdict. It was also the fact that not one Christian actor—neither the peasants’ leader Tanyus Shahin nor any member of the Beirut committee, Tobia ‘Awn, nor any other Christian clergy, middle-class or peasant actors who had been involved in the civil war—was brought to trial in 1860–61, other than to testifying against their Druze belligerents.¹⁰⁵ Despite

¹⁰³ Novikow to Gorchakov, 12/25 Feb. 1861, and ‘Instrukcii i glava pro Dzhemblata’, AVPRI, f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 16, ll. 251–6, 257–70.

¹⁰⁴ As for Hurşid Paşa, the governor of Sayda, with the exception of Weckbecker, all commissioners asked for the increase of his sentence to capital punishment. At the 17th meeting of the commission, when Béclard inquired into the decision on Hurşid, Fuad replied that the Ottoman penal code decreed the death penalty only against the provocateurs of the disturbances or those who quarrelled personally. This was the case for the Druze, he added, while the Ottoman authorities were immune to such an accusation: Novikow to Gorkachov, 22 Dec./3 Jan. 1861, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 17, ll. 96–9. According to Fuad, the sentence of Hurşid was the harshest possible, ‘a sentence which in the penal code of the Empire comes immediately after that of death’, while the capital punishment of Ahmed Paşa, after he was stripped of his rank, resulted from his role as military commander and trial by the military tribunal: Fuad Pacha to Musurus Bey, 10 Mar. 1861, ODD 306–7. The commissioners interpreted this as a ‘deficit of the Turkish system of justice’, though legal practices in Britain and France (the Ottoman penal code was inspired by the French penal code) were analogously hierarchical, bent on protecting imperial agents before the subjects. Rehfués to Goltz, 7 Mar. 1861, GStA I. HA Rep 81 XI Nr. 66.

¹⁰⁵ Farah, *Politics*, 616, 619–36. In fact, Novikow demanded that the Beirut Committee members should also be put on trial for their role in the civil war. However, after several talks with Bishop Tobia and having studied a memorandum addressed by the latter to the commissioners, Novikow withdrew his demand. Rehfués suspected that there had never been a Beirut committee—that it was ‘a myth’—and was surprised that Weckbecker spoke of it ‘as a factual entity’. Rehfués to Schleinitz, 15 Oct. 1860, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7569, f. 95–110.

Dufferin's attempts to shield their interests, the Druze *muqatadjis* truly became the scapegoats of a civil war which, as we saw in Chapter 11, actually had complex origins and which they did not instigate.¹⁰⁶

Then again, the purpose of the retributive and judicial proceedings appeared more to protect the Ottoman agents, assuage European public opinion, and thus put an end to the French expedition than to genuinely bring the culprits into justice. This was why, when B  clard pressed Fuad for the immediate execution of the sentences, the pa  a seemed more than ready.¹⁰⁷ But, when Dufferin asked him for its postponement, the pa  a again did not refuse, leaving the final decision to Istanbul. Lip service was paid on both occasions. In the end, with the exception of a majority of the deportations, none of the sentences on the Druze *ex-muqatadjis* were carried out on the orders of the Porte. Thanks to British endeavours, all death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment in May 1861.¹⁰⁸

If matters had been left to Fuad, he would have been inclined to invoke that old Ottoman adage of oblivion, 'Let bygones be bygones' (*mazi m   mazi demek*), and declare an amnesty at the time, as he told Dufferin. In fact, the July 1860 truce had been settled between the Druze and Maronites with the mediation of Hur  id Pa  a on the basis of this very principle.¹⁰⁹ But, despite Dufferin's backing, since the lands of the Druze *muqatadjis* had already been leased to the Christians and as a result of the other commissioners' contrary expectations, Fuad would not have been able to enforce the Ottoman tradition, which attested to the subsuming of Ottoman practices of security—in this case, through retribution—within a transimperial system.

The fact is that the subsuming in question was never a complete process, and never would be. It may be true that the Porte's agents attempted to satisfy European statesmen, bureaucrats, and public opinion by swift punishment of the Druze; but they exercised their own authority by means of amending the verdicts. During his second grand vizierate (c.1863–6), Fuad Pa  a obtained a pardon from the sultan for local Lebanese elites who had been under detention or in exile. His cabinet announced an amnesty for the Druze *ex-muqatadjis* at the end of 1864, maintaining that since '[the Porte's] efforts to remove the traces of [the] misfortunes [in Syria] have been rightly appreciated by Europe, and... thanks to the current organisation of Syria', and as the Druze 'submitted to the laws of the Empire', they had solicited the sultan's pardon.¹¹⁰ The *ex-muqatadjis*

¹⁰⁶ On the punishment of the Druze, and their targeting as scapegoats of the civil war, see also Farah, *Politics*, 630–2; Makdisi, *Culture*, 153, 157.

¹⁰⁷ Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 185.

¹⁰⁸ MAE (Istanbul) to Musurus, 15 Apr. 1861, BOA HR.SFR.3 57/27/1; Aali to Musurus, 15 May 1861, BOA HR.SFR.3 57/27/4. Just before he was moved to house arrest due to his illness, Said Jumblatt died from tuberculosis, on 11 May 1861: Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 185, 188.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 186, 192; Spagnolo, *France*, 31.

¹¹⁰ Aali to Musurus, 20 Dec. 1864; 'Report of the Governor of Damascus', n.d.; Aali to Musurus, 11 June 1865, BOA HR.SFR.3 96/17. The deported Druze were repatriated 'only as long as their stay in

were thus spared at the end of these long struggles—but not without having been first stripped of their ancient rights and privileges.

*

The reorganization of the administrative structure of Mount Lebanon was also preceded by a momentary and transitional resolution. At negotiations held among the commissioners from November 1860, French agents rooted for the pre-1840 order whereby the Maronites would be reinstated as the rulers of the mountain through the pro-France Shihab family.¹¹¹ The French commissioner, Béclard, incorrectly argued that the misfortunes of Lebanon had begun with the partition of the mountain in 1842, and could now be ended definitively by a return to the status quo ante. He suggested that Amir Medjid, the grandson of the former emir, Bashir II Shihab, should take power. Bishop Tobia 'Awn and the foreign merchant families, such as the Spartalis, actively campaigned in favour of this plan.¹¹²

British agents rejected the French proposition. Dufferin claimed that Béclard and General Beaufort wanted to drive the Druze from the mountain at the point of the bayonet, or to frighten them out of their homes through the instrumentality of the Christians so that the latter could appropriate their villages. When French agents made a pitch for the Christian settlement in the evacuated Druze houses on the grounds of necessity and retributive justice, and when Fuad conceded, Dufferin fervidly complained: 'How speciously the plea of humanity can be used to assist the accomplishment of a political purpose.'¹¹³ According to the Russian commissioner, Novikow, the struggle for influence between France and Britain became a 'source of evil' during the reorganization of Lebanon, 'which did not allow the application of a radical remedy'.¹¹⁴

Despite these differences, the commissioners quickly agreed upon the need to undo the 1842/5 partition plan, concluding that it had been a cause of violence in 1860. This time the Porte's agents, Fuad and Abro, endeavoured to maintain the existing order. To them, preserving the status quo was a question of sovereignty, though paradoxically the very order that they were advocating had been dictated to the Porte by the Powers in 1842 (as we saw in Chapter 10).¹¹⁵

their native country did not offer any concern for public rest'. Those sentenced to punishments for degradation, such as Hussein Talhuq, were not granted amnesty. Kaola Talhouk to Henry Bulwer, 5 Apr. 1865, NRO BUL 1/318/1-52, 569X7.

¹¹¹ See Ch. 10. Estfues to Schleinitz, 16 Nov. 1860, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7569, f. 276-9.

¹¹² 'Otryvok iz raporta komissara Rossii v Sirii', 9/21 Apr. 1861, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 17, l. 441.

¹¹³ Dufferin to Bulwer, 3 Nov. 1860, TNA FO195/657. General Beaufort, for his part, voiced the criticism 'Dufferin est anglais avant tout', for the latter always stated that the commission had to treat the Druze only with equity. Beaufort to Thouvenel, 21 Dec. 1860, AMAE Papiers Thouvenel 233PAAP/43.

¹¹⁴ Novikov to Gorchakov, 15/27 Dec. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 17, ll. 51-9.

¹¹⁵ MAE (Istanbul) to Musurus, 9 Jan. 1861, BOA HR.SFR/3 56/4; Lavalette to Thouvenel, 28 Nov. 1860, AMAE 133CP/347/292; 'Extrait de rapports du commissaire russe en Syrie', 3/15 Nov. 1860, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, d. 37, ll. 296-7.

Several administrative models were proposed, discussed, and then jettisoned, both officially and at a private level, during the first five months of 1861. Eager to prevent the prolongation of the French expedition, whose tenure would expire in February 1861, Dufferin was the first to draw up a detailed plan that was officially discussed. According to the British commissioner, the civil war had demonstrated that Christians should no longer be subjugated to Druze supremacy: 'But if the Druze cannot govern Christians, certainly Christians must not govern the Druze.' His January 1861 proposal was for the organization of the whole of Syria, not just Lebanon, under an Ottoman governor-general (he had Fuad Paşa in mind) who would be appointed by the Porte in conjunction with the Great Powers, and who would be relatively independent from the 'blackmail' of Istanbul.¹¹⁶ Mount Lebanon would be one of the provinces under the paşa's strict control.

Dufferin believed that his plan would automatically solve the indemnity question. By carving out a vice-royalty in Greater Syria along the lines of Egypt or the Danubian principalities, a loan of £6 million secured against Syrian revenues could be easily contracted after enacting a series of administrative, judicial, and financial reforms under the supervision of the Powers.¹¹⁷ European capitalists would be desirous to invest in the agricultural and industrial fields.¹¹⁸ The idea was endorsed by Rehfuës, Novikow, the Greek Orthodox clergy, and a group of businessmen in Beirut and Damascus which included the merchant Nicholas Medaur, who declared bankruptcy after the war.¹¹⁹

However, even though the Sublime Porte was impatient for the evacuation of French forces from Syria, the plan was unacceptable to Istanbul. The interim grand vizier, Âli Paşa, was dismayed that such a scheme for the semi-independence of Syria had come from British diplomats, whose traditional policy had aimed to preserve the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Alluding to the Great Mutiny in India in 1857, Âli wrote to the London ambassador that Britain also

had, not long ago, similar disasters to deplore and to be reproached in her positions of East India. No one has ever thought of accusing the British administration of negligence or incapacity. Like us, she was surprised by the events, and like us, she fulfilled her duty by inflicting severe punishments on the perpetrators of the crimes committed.¹²⁰

The Porte categorically rejected Dufferin's plan, given that the protocol of the intervention had allowed the commission to discuss the reorganization of Lebanon only, and the plan surpassed its geographical and political span.

¹¹⁶ Dufferin to Bulwer, 4 Nov. 1860, TNA FO 195/657.

¹¹⁷ MAE (Istanbul) to Musurus, 15 Jan. 1861, BOA HR.SFR/3 56/4/7.

¹¹⁸ Rizk, *Mont Liban*, 331.

¹¹⁹ Rehfuës to Schleinitz, 20 Nov. 1860, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7569, f. 303–6.

¹²⁰ Aali to Musurus, 22 Jan. 1861, BOA HR.SFR/3 56/4/10.

In February, when the six-month duration of the French mandate set by the August 1860 convention was nearing its expiration, the prospect for an agreement over the administrative scheme looked very grim. Worse, in January the Druze of Hawran staged an unexpected attack on several villages in anti-Lebanon to obtain the release of their co-religionists.¹²¹ The French foreign minister, Thouvenel, used these to his advantage. He first mobilized foreign merchants and bankers in Lebanon to submit a petition for the prolongation of the French expedition (the British merchants refused to sign it).¹²² He then convened a conference in Paris to the same end, where he managed to obtain the consent of the Powers for a mandate for another three months, arguing that military intervention was the only guarantee of security for Christians and for much-needed confidence in Syria.¹²³ He succeeded.

The prolongation of the French military intervention hastened the efforts of the commissioners to achieve administrative reform, as they hoped to prevent the further extension of the mandate. It also led to further concessions on the part of the Porte. One month later, in March 1861, Fuad Paşa was involved in the preparation of a new plan with British and Russian commissioners. They initialled a scheme through which 47 articles were delivered allowing for separate Druze, Maronite and Orthodox *kaymakams*, and a Greek Catholic *mudiriya* in Zahla. These *kaymakams* would all be placed under the jurisdiction of the governor-general of Sidon. An accord between a majority of European and Ottoman agents appeared to have finally been achieved.¹²⁴ Rehfués and Weckbecker endorsed the triple-*kaymakamlık* plan. But the French commissioner, Béclard, opposed it, because the scheme reduced Maronite influence. He then began to advocate the first plan proposed by Dufferin, which could have ushered in the establishment of a regime similar to the status quo ante 1840 or permitted the French-backed Algerian Abd al-Qader come to power as the viceroy.

We must emphasize here that the French position with respect to administrative reorganization overlapped with the demands of the so-called Beirut Committee, which, as we saw in Chapter 11, was a coalition of Christian merchants, bankers, and clergy. As the delegates of the Beirut Committee told the French interpreter Schefer in November 1860, their plan was to 'deliver Syria from the yoke of the Turks and obtain their expulsion by all possible means'. And this could be done by demanding from European governments 'a prince of royal Catholic blood, who would govern under the guarantee of the five Great Powers'. Alternatively, a member of the family of Mehmed Âli Paşa of Egypt,

¹²¹ Fawaz, *An Occasion*, 185.

¹²² Bentivoglio to Thouvenel, 11 Feb. and 22 Apr. 1861, AMAE Papiers Thouvenel 233PAAP/5/10 and 14.

¹²³ Montebello to Thouvenel, 26 Feb. 1861, AMAE 112CP/223/116.

¹²⁴ Novikov to Gorchakov, 7/19 Mar. 1861, AVPRI f. 133 (Kantselyariya), o. 469, e. 17, ll. 356–60.

ideally Halim Paşa, could be appointed as the new ruler. But, either way, Mount Lebanon had to form, the delegates told the French dragoman,

a separate government . . . whose jurisdiction would extend as at the time of Amir Fakhreddin . . . The Christians of the Lebanon would be ready, when the time comes, to buy this independence at the cost of the most considerable pecuniary sacrifices. We will live in dust like snakes, if necessary, to be free . . . but we will never agree to fall back under Turkish domination. We are entirely devoted to France . . . we will die for her . . .

According to Schefer, if the wishes of the committee were granted or the independence of Syria or Mount Lebanon were imposed by the Powers on the Sublime Porte, the Christians intended to request the extension of the French mandate in order to establish, 'under her protection, the foundation of a solid and sustainable organization'.¹²⁵ Keeping these considerations in view, the step-by-step approach followed by France oscillated between an endorsement of Dufferin's single-governor plan, instead of the triple-*kaymakamlık* project that would enable Abd al-Qader's vice-royalty in Syria, and the instalment of a Catholic or pro-French, ideally Shihab, governor in Lebanon.

But Béclard lacked both the skill and the charisma to attract the other commissioners to the options France endorsed. This was why, by the end of March, when he was entirely isolated in the commission, Thouvenel stepped up, took up the reins, and did all he could to secure the adoption of a scheme in line with French interests. While his agents on the spot began a new campaign of petitions for a final prolongation of Beaufort's expedition, he pointed out the disadvantages of the triple-*kaymakamlık* scheme to his Austrian, British, Russian, and Prussian counterparts with a series of circulars dated 26 March and 2 and 4 April 1861. He argued that it would require relocating almost half the population of the mountain. The return of the Shihabs would be a more plausible and efficient solution. Since the majority of the region consisted of Christians, he maintained, a single Christian governor should have ruled the mountain.¹²⁶

Thouvenel's diplomatic move brought results in Berlin and Vienna. The Prussian and Austrian commissioners were instructed by their seniors to change their position regarding the new scheme a few weeks later. They abandoned the idea of the continuation of the partition (triple-*kaymakamlık*) system.¹²⁷ But the change of votes in the commission produced a perfect stalemate between the

¹²⁵ Schefer to Le Ministre, 30 Nov. 1860, AMAE Papiers Charles Schefer, Mission du Liban 161PAAP/3a/264.

¹²⁶ 'Thouvenel à représentants à Londres, Vienne, Saint-Petersbourg, et Berlin', 26 Mar., 2 and 4 Apr. 1861, DDC 115, 117, 125; Flahaut to Thouvenel, 4 Jan. 1861, AMAE 8CP/719/320.

¹²⁷ Rehfuës to Schleinitz, 22 Apr. 1861, GStA III. HA Mda, I Nr. 7571, f. 112–15.

French, Prussian, and Austrian commissioners, on the one hand, and the British, Ottoman, and Russian, on the other.¹²⁸

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The fate of administrative reform and security in Syria was thus tied to the reconciliation of imperial interests. Fuad Paşa and Dufferin were hard pressed for time. The French troops' term was nearing to an end (the end of May 1860). Under pressure from foreign and local merchants, who collectively petitioned for immediate measures for the punishment of the culprits and the reorganization of Lebanon, they drew up a new draft constitution (1 May 1860) of 16 articles abolishing the dual-*kaymakamlık* system, but not permitting the return of the Shihabs either. They left the question of governorship open.¹²⁹ And in mid-May the commissioners were called to Istanbul for an ambassadorial conference, to be held at the end of the month and early June, to finally decide upon the new form of administration.¹³⁰

About ten days before the transport ships to evacuate French troops anchored off Beirut, the essentials of the new regime were debated in the Ottoman imperial capital at two conferences, as well as in all imperial metropolises where immense lobbying activity occurred. Especially in St Petersburg, the Franco-Russian talks proved to be fierce. When Russia appeared inclined to follow the line of Dufferin and Fuad, the French agent in St Petersburg, Louis Napoléon Lannes, the duke of Montebello (1801–74), urged the foreign minister, Gorchakov, to endorse the French demand for the appointment of a Lebanese Christian governor, insistently reminding him of 'the agreement that we had promised to establish between us, especially on the question relating to the East'. When Montebello linked the issue of the administrative reorganization of Lebanon to '[the French] conduct in the Montenegro case', the Russian foreign minister capitulated 'in accordance with [the Tsar's] desire to maintain an intimate understanding with France in the East as elsewhere'.¹³¹

But the courts of Paris and St Petersburg could not obtain the consent of the other Powers and the sultan for the appointment of a Lebanese Christian governor. After a debilitating diplomatic give-and-take among the Powers and the Porte, on 9 June 1861 a new semi-constitutional document, *Règlement et protocole relatifs à la réorganisation du Mont Liban*, was finally signed.¹³² The *Règlement* guaranteed the immediate departure of French troops, and inaugurated a semi-autonomous administrative system unique in the Ottoman Empire: the

¹²⁸ John P. Spagnolo, *France and Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1977), 37.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* 39. ¹³⁰ Spagnolo, 'Constitutional Change', 31.

¹³¹ Thouvenel to Montebello, 23 and 24 May 1861, AMAE 112CP/224/50, 51, 55; Montebello to Thouvenel, 26 May 1861, AMAE 112CP/224/83; Thouvenel to Montebello, 3 June 1861, AMAE 112CP/224/119; Spagnolo, *France*, 40.

¹³² Case, *Thouvenel*, 348.

Mutasarrifat regime. The resulting agreement over the future of Lebanon was considered by its architects to be most likely to prevent the domination of one power (including the Porte) over the country, and to preserve, at least nominally, the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire—a fundamental question for European security.

The *Règlement* was a consociational system that aimed at once to stifle local actors' antagonisms towards each other and, as much as possible, to accommodate their demands. As France advocated, Mount Lebanon was placed under the authority of a Christian governor. But, contrary to French expectations, the governor was to be appointed by the Porte, and he would not be Lebanese. The sect of the governor was deliberately left vague so that France, Britain, and Russia could retain men of their religion or protégés as the new overseers of the mountain. The governor was granted extensive powers for a term of three years (extended to five in 1864). A mixed administrative council was formed for the governor to consult and for the Lebanese to voice their concerns. It consisted of two representatives of each of the six sects (Article II)—which failed to satisfy the Maronites, as their numerical superiority was not reflected in proportional representation.

The mountain was divided into six districts (*arrondissements*) with a sub-governor (*müdüir*) appointed by the governor from the 'dominant sect, either by virtue of number or by virtue of territorial possessions' (Article III), and each village was to elect its sheikhs following its sect.¹³³ By this means, the Druze and the Greek Orthodox were permitted to sustain a degree of influence in areas where they were in possession of lands, as they usually acted as sub-governors or sheikhs. Yet their influence was held in check with mixed judiciary councils in each district (Article VII). A mixed gendarmerie, to be composed of soldiers of different sects, was also established for the security of the mountain, which had previously been the preserve of the *muqatadjis*. At the same time, the mountain's inhabitants were exempted from military recruitment in the service of the sultan, while the annual tax that the Porte could impose on the mountain was limited to 3,500 bourses, with the potential to be increased to 7,000 with the approval of the Powers. These granted Mount Lebanon a degree of autonomy.

The consociational *Mutasarrifat* regime tallied, at least on paper, with the egalitarian ethos of the 1856 Reform Edict. Its *Règlement* declared all inhabitants equal before the law, heeding the demands of the Christian peasantry. Moreover, all feudal privileges, notably those granted to the *muqatadjis*, were definitively abolished (Article VI). This unburdened the prosperity of the new middle classes, merchants and bankers, as well as the silk-rich peasantry, as it cleared the way for the institution of a regular system of land registration, tax collection, and

¹³³ 'Règlement organique pour l'administration du Liban', Pera, 9 June 1861, TNA FO 881/2983.

cultivation, which the rising capitalist class had been demanding since the 1850s.¹³⁴ Finally, even though Beirut was not involved in the new *Mutasarrifat* regime, all commercial (as well as civil) matters between a subject or protégé of one of the foreign Powers and an inhabitant of the mountain were placed under the jurisdiction of the commercial tribunals in Beirut (Article X), which permitted foreign merchants to bring their Levantine debtors to court.¹³⁵

The *Règlement* could not be fully implemented for at least six years—and even then, what was arguably thoroughly implemented was a substantially amended version of it. Discontent, political dissension, vengeful and violent sentiments, as well as inter-imperial quests for influence in the mountain lingered throughout this period. Paradoxically, in the end it was the persistence of the challenges to the system, not their absence, that ensured stability and peace in the mountain.

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On 18 July 1861, Garabed Artin Davud Paşa (1816–73) was installed as the new governor or *mutasarrif* of Mount Lebanon, with the consent of the Powers.¹³⁶ Davud was an Armenian Catholic from Istanbul, educated at French missionary schools in İzmir (Smyrna). He studied law in Germany, and could speak perfect Armenian, French, German, Turkish, and, to a lesser degree, Arabic.¹³⁷ With all these qualities, and especially because of his non-Muslim origins, he personified the new image of the *Tanzimat* paşas in the Ottoman Empire—indeed, he was to be the first non-Muslim Ottoman minister after his tenure in Lebanon ended in 1868.

Upon his arrival in Beirut, intending to alleviate the resentments and grievances of the mountain's inhabitants and inspire them to peace and harmony, Davud announced that his task 'had to do with the future, not with the past', inviting his audience to cooperate with him.¹³⁸ But neither the Druze nor the Maronites in general were happy with the essentials of the *Mutasarrifat* regime or, for that matter, with Davud's appointment.

The blow was severe to the Druze chiefs in the mountain. The appointment of a single Christian governor and the abolition of the Druze *kaymakamlık* were grievous.¹³⁹ The Druze of Hawran engaged in a fierce struggle with the Ottoman authorities in 1861–4 to avoid the payment of penal taxes and imprisonment. Their brethren in Mount Lebanon were for the moment more concerned with

¹³⁴ See Ch. 11.

¹³⁵ 'Règlement organique pour l'administration du Liban', Pera, 9 June 1861, TNA FO 881/2983.

¹³⁶ Al-Dibs, *Tārīkh*, vol. 18, 193.

¹³⁷ Musa Kılıç, 'Bir Ermeni Bürokratın Portresi. Vezaret Rütbesine Ulaşan İlk Gayrimüslim Karabet Artin Davud Paşa', in *Tarihte Türkler ve Ermeniler. Merkez Taşrada Ermeniler, Nüfus ve Göç* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 34; Süleyman Uygun, *Osmanlı Lübnanı'nda Değişim ve İç Çatışma. Maruni Asi Yusuf Bey Kerem (1823–1889)* (Ankara: Gece Kitaplığı, 2017), 154.

¹³⁸ Fraser to Bulwer, 27 July 1861, TNA FO 78/1708.

¹³⁹ Ibid.; Kuri, *Une histoire*, 306.

procuring an amnesty for their chiefs and recovering their former lands.¹⁴⁰ Many of them succeeded in the end thanks to the pressure of the British authorities, yet disputes within families, particularly among the Jumblatts over land inheritance, drastically reduced their influence in local politics.¹⁴¹

The Maronite reaction to the new regime was equally stark. During his ceremony of inauguration at Deir al-Qamar, Davud Paşa was greeted 'by the scream for blood' and 'for the banishment of the whole Druze race' by the Maronite victims of the war, mostly women, who 'held up the bones and skulls of the slain and walked towards him'.¹⁴² The Maronite peasants in the north were not allowed to keep what they had seized from the Khazin sheikhs in Kisrawan in 1858–9.¹⁴³ For their part, the clergy were severely disheartened by the departure of the French expeditionary forces, and by the fact that an outsider had been installed as governor over their candidates. Assuaging their frustration was the hope that the new regime was only an interim solution that France had agreed upon to gain time for the restitution of Lebanese Christian rule in the near future.¹⁴⁴ Only the Greek Orthodox were content with the new system and the appointment of a co-religionist as governor.¹⁴⁵

Until their departure in the summer of 1862, the European commissioners closely monitored Davud's rule, his measures, his relations with the locals, and his objectives. And until the very end of their tenure, they continued to quarrel among themselves on a variety of issues that ranged from such trivial subjects as the procedure of Davud's inauguration ceremony to the endeavours to influence the governor in the nomination of district governors.¹⁴⁶ Rehfués complained that 'right next to the local intrigues [to undercut Davud Paşa's position], the French and English agents pulled out all the stops to facilitate the appointment[s] in their interests'.¹⁴⁷

By 'local intrigues', the Prussian commissioner was not only alluding to the general discontent among the mountain's inhabitants. The major challenge to the new regime was Yusuf Bey Karam, a secondary Maronite sheikh from the north, who denounced the authority of the 'outsider' Davud Paşa.¹⁴⁸ Even though Davud appointed him as district governor in Jazzin and offered him the command of the regional army to gain him over, Karam resigned from the post and rejected Davud's offer so as not to become 'subservient' to the governor and the

¹⁴⁰ Firro, *The Druzes*, 141–2.

¹⁴¹ BOA A.MKT.MHM 277/62/2/1; G. Jackson Eldridge to Bulwer, 10 July 1863, NRO BUL 1/357/1–18, 570X5.

¹⁴² Fraser to Bulwer, 27/7/61, TNA FO 78/1708.

¹⁴³ Owen, *The Middle East*, 164–5.

¹⁴⁴ Spagnolo, *France*, 56; Rehfués to Schleinitz, 25 July 1861, GStA GStA III. HA Mda, I Nr. 7571, f. 233.

¹⁴⁵ Rehfués to Schleinitz, 18 Aug. 1861, GStA III. HA Mda, I Nr. 7571, f. 248.

¹⁴⁶ Rehfués to Schleinitz, 19 Aug. 1861, GStA III. HA Mda, I Nr. 7571, f. 207–10.

¹⁴⁷ Rehfués to Schleinitz, 20 Sept. 1861, GStA III. HA Mda, I Nr. 7571, f. 297.

¹⁴⁸ Uygun, *Yusuf Bey*, 156–7.

Powers.¹⁴⁹ In November 1861, he mobilized a militia of 1,200 men to urge Davud to rescind the appointment of sub-governors in the northern district.¹⁵⁰

The point that concerns us here is not how Davud Paşa quelled Karam's dissidence and arranged for his exile to Istanbul and Egypt in 1862–4. It is instead how he responded to the challenges to the system and, by the same token, how he amended the system in due course. On the one hand, the new governor succeeded in limiting the interference of the European commissioners in his task.¹⁵¹ On the other, he consulted, obtained the support of, and acted together with figures like Bishops Tobia 'Awn and Butrus al-Bustani of the Beirut Committee, the French consuls in Lebanon, Bentivoglio and Outrey (who was looking to install Amir Mecid, a Shihab, as sub-governor in the north, to whom Karam opposed), and Fuad Paşa (until his departure in late 1861).¹⁵² Furthermore, Davud tried to revive the influence of the Jumblatts to counter Karam's act of defiance, which gained him the endorsement of British agents.¹⁵³

The European commissioners were thus brushed aside while a very loose common front was formed against the major dissident of the new regime. In dealing with perilous epidemic illnesses, sanitary problems, financial distress, and, now, Karam's opposition to the interests of all, and while implementing projects for the construction of lighthouses and a telegraph line, and building the Damascus–Beirut road, Davud capitalized on the shared threats posed to the ex-belligerents—imperial and local, European and Ottoman.¹⁵⁴ A mixed gendarmerie force that consisted, on 1 January 1864, of 194 men (122 Maronite, 43 Druze, 16 Greek catholic, 5 Greek Orthodox, 1 Sunni, 5 Protestants, and 2 Latins) was enlisted under the supervision of French Captain Fain, while several British engineers and surgeons were employed to counterbalance the French in the governor's services.¹⁵⁵

Hindsight suggests that, seen together, all these developments did not just help establish a steadier transportation and communicational infrastructure in Mount Lebanon, rendering it more secure physically. Together with the economic boom after the rapid recovery of the silk industry, they also laid the ground for gradual yet substantial amendments to the *Règlement* in 1862 and 1864 which transmuted

¹⁴⁹ Spagnolo, *France*, 62.

¹⁵⁰ BOA A.MKT. UM. 523/71, 16 Nov. 1861; cf. Uygun, *Yusuf Bey*, 161.

¹⁵¹ Rehfués to Schleinitz, 25 Oct. 1861, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7571, f. 362.

¹⁵² Spagnolo, *France*, 61, 63; Bentivoglio to Thouvenel, 20 Nov. 1861, AMAE 42CCC/7/302.

¹⁵³ Rehfués to Schleinitz, 19 Aug. 1861, GStA III. HA MdA, I Nr. 7571, f. 257–7; Spagnolo, *France*, 70.

¹⁵⁴ BOA i.HR 180/9954; 187/10437. See also Engin Akarlı, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1920* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 38–9.

¹⁵⁵ Two members of the Shihab family commanded these forces. Max Outrey to MAE, 12 Dec. 1863, AMAE 50MD/122/424; Capitaine Fain to MAE, 3 Sept. 1864, AMAE 50MD/122/423; Fain to MAE, 26 Dec. 1863, AMAE 50MD/122/426; Eldridge (Beirut) to Bulwer, 19 Sept. 1863, NRO BUL 1/357/1–18, 570X5.

previously destructive social differences into a protective power (against the dissidents and other threats) and fostered rapport among the Lebanese.¹⁵⁶

To a certain extent the amendments weakened sectarianism and favoured proportional representation and secularization by way of (i) dividing the northern Maronite district into two and, by this means, (ii) increasing the number of Maronite representatives in the council without allowing them the majority, (iii) eliminating the election of village sheikhs by sect, (iv) introducing 'territorial representation to the previous sectarian distribution of seats', and (v) expanding the authority of the governor who could appoint the district judges directly, which diminished the influence of the clergy.¹⁵⁷ As the French diplomat Ernest de Bonnières de Wierre (1825–1909) observed, 'This was an important achievement which should be conducive to bringing the races and religious allegiances together, and consequently hastening the time when the Lebanese populations will understand their true interest is to live together in harmony under the government of a single Christian leader.'¹⁵⁸

The legal particularities of these amendments have been aptly explained by the British historian John P. Spagnolo.¹⁵⁹ But much recent, arguably more analytic scholarship on violence in mid-nineteenth century Lebanon has tended to omit his account, training their analysis on the 1861 *Règlement* only and ending their narratives with it. This is unfortunate because these particularities were of paramount importance for attesting the limits of the perspectives and achievement of the European and Ottoman commissioners on Syria, and those of the statesmen and diplomats in the imperial metropolises. As already noted, the original version of the 1861 *Règlement* aimed at *preventing* the political or religious domination of any one imperial power or sect in the mountain. Yet the persistence of the challenges to the new system, and the experience of Davud Paşa and his Lebanese associates, engendered a legal transposition in the version revised in 1864. The particulars were important also because they embodied a pivotal shift from a cautious attitude of *preventing* domination and potential violence by means of partitioning or separating the Lebanese to a more 'take-charge' mindset *enabling* their peaceful coexistence.

It is true that there were several more immediate and pragmatic factors that allowed for stability in Mount Lebanon in mid-1860s, especially after Yusuf Karam's lingering aspirations were subdued and he was sent into exile once again in 1867. Davud's cordial relations with the French diplomats in the country and with the leaders of the so-called Beirut Committee, Tobia 'Awn and Butrus al-

¹⁵⁶ 'Règlement organique du Liban. Projet de nouvelle rédaction par Daoud Pacha, 1863', AMAE 50MD/122/474.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.; Aali to Musurus, 4/10/64 BOA HR.SFR.3. 95/33; Spagnolo, *France*, 89–91.

¹⁵⁸ De Bonnières de Wierre to Drouyn de Lhuys, 14 Sept. 1865, AMAE CP Turquie 363; cf. Spagnolo, *France*, 91.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

Bustani, led to the abandonment of any radical revisionist inclination on the part of France or the Shihabites.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the distress and suffering of war, and the punishment to which they had been (partially) subjected, stifled feudal and Druze ambitions. The Ottoman authorities, Fuad and Âli Paşas, accepted the new regime in Lebanon, and admitted that it was the most practical way to prevent future interventionism in the Levant as well as in the Balkans. Some historians argue that the inspiration of the new provincial law in 1864 (the *Vilayet Kanunnamesi*) originated in large part from the Lebanese model.¹⁶¹ But equally significant was the fact that, after 1860, the mountain's inhabitants learned the hard way, and gradually adopted, modified, and interpreted into their world-views a more inclusive understanding of peace and security.

The Lebanese elite came to argue that peace and security could be guaranteed most effectively through subduing blind, ancient prejudices (*al-ghardh*) between the peoples of Lebanon, which had 'left behind destruction and peril and squandered the land's wealth and its families'. The maintenance of order and tranquility depended on upholding *al-jinsiyya*, as a source of attachment to kinship, and bolstering Arab qualities such as *al-adab* (sophisticated habits, good behaviour), which referred to an amalgam of *al-akhlaq* (morals) and *al-ta'lim* (education). It entailed synthesizing these qualities with a uniquely and locally defined idea of civilization—one that '[stems from within (inner self)] and extends to society', '[aims for] development', 'puts everyone on an equal footing', and '[endorses] concord among [the people] as individuals and groups'.¹⁶²

Aside from administrative reforms that enabled coexistence and economic recovery which lasted until the 1880s, this proto-nationalist intellectual and emotional momentum in Lebanon forged by the peace-minded local Lebanese—partly by dint of their interactions with imperial agents, but largely by way of their own, tragic learning experience—ensured what the Turkish historian Engin Akarlı aptly calls 'the long peace' in the mountain in the decades to come.¹⁶³ It was these reconceptualized peripheral relational dynamics guaranteed by the 1864 version of the *Règlement* that helped gradually return the sense of security and withstood future challenges to stability, more so than the presence of the French expeditionary forces or the investigations and top-down decisions made by the international commissioners in 1860–62 through an unhindered imperialist hubris.

¹⁶⁰ Eldridge to Bulwer, 22 Aug. 1863, NRO BUL 1/357/1–18, 570X5.

¹⁶¹ Cenk Reyhan, 'Cebel-i Lübnan Vilayet Nizamnamesi', *Memleket Siyaset Yönetim* 1 (2006): 171–81.

¹⁶² Jens Hanssen, 'Toward a Conceptual History of *Nafir Suriyya*', in Butrus al-Bustani, *The Clarion of Syria: A Patriot's Call Against the Civil War of 1860*, introduced and trans. Jens Hanssen and Hicham Safeddine (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 49–52, 68, 82–3, 124–5, 128–9.

¹⁶³ Akarlı, *Long Peace*. Also see, Carol Hakim, *The Origins of Lebanese National Idea: 1840-1920* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2013), 149–158.

Epilogue

‘... acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time ... let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.’

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*¹

Thus it all began. The first Great Power interventions in the Levant that were purportedly undertaken for the benefit of local inhabitants came into being in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the age of the Eastern Question. Ever since then they have become a frequent reality, and have fatefully aggravated many of the calamities that have struck the region. Even though each armed, legal, and administrative intervention considered in this book had diverse specific properties unique to its immediate context, I will conclude by making a few general remarks before pondering what these historical ordeals tell us about the Levant and the wider world today.

First of all, the historical actors, both European and Levantine, saw a continuity in the affairs of the region from at least the late eighteenth century. For nearly 150 years, the patchwork Eastern Question hinged together their threat perceptions and interests, forging a transimperial security culture in the Levant. Like most security issues, the Eastern Question was a dynamic and intersubjective process. Historical actors attributed different meanings and functions to it in different moments. And its intersubjective character helped the Great Powers manipulate it as a trope and authorized their interventionism.

After decades-long discussions in the eighteenth century, French strategists decided to pursue a proactive revisionist policy vis-à-vis the alleged weakness of the Ottoman Empire, largely as a result of the initiatives of the young General Bonaparte and Foreign Minister Talleyrand. Circumstances combined for the two in the late 1790s, when French power and influence in Europe was at its peak. When the interests of French merchants indebted to the Mamluk beys in Egypt were jeopardized, the merchants’ lobbying as well as the idea of obtaining new colonies, and turning the Mediterranean into a ‘French lake’ and thus into a buffer zone against the menacing might of the British navy, led to a radical move. France invaded Egypt in 1798.

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. David Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 60.

In the course of the long nineteenth century, the French Eastern Question took shape under the long shadow of these economic and strategic reckonings and the dreams of Bonaparte and Talleyrand. Moreover, the defeats during the Coalition Wars in 1801 and later in 1815 rendered the Eastern Question a matter of national prestige for the government in Paris. One reason for the French to join the Navarino intervention in 1827 was to assert their empire's position in the international order as a Great Power. The same desire also weighed during the intervention in Algiers in 1830. Yet the quest for prestige and glory in France became most evident in 1840, when the Thiers government almost went to war with the other four Powers and the Ottoman Empire over the Eastern Question, and then between 1841 and the 1860s, when France sought to reassert her religious and commercial influence in the Levant—something that French statesmen believed they had lost to Britain. This was one of the major reasons for the foreign minister, Thouvenel, to spearhead the 1860 intervention in Syria.

For Britain, having established dominant control in India after the Seven Years War (1756–63), and particularly after the loss of the American colonies in the late eighteenth century, the Levant became doubly important as a centre of commercial activity as well as a strategic gateway to her colonies in Asia. The British fought against the French in Egypt in 1801 with the purpose of securing these very interests—their commerce, transportation and communication routes, and India. Their troops did not evacuate Egypt on the date set by the treaties after the war, as Britain looked to leverage her presence in diplomatic talks with the Porte on the future administration of this bountiful country. They provided support for the Mamluk beys when a civil war broke out between Ottoman authorities and the beys, even attempting to invade Egypt in 1807 to secure India.

Yet, after the 1809 Treaty with the Porte, British authorities took a more defined position and assigned to themselves the responsibility of ensuring the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire—a responsibility that they did not renounce until the 1870s. Together with Austria, they looked to place the sultan's empire under the guarantee of European public law at the Congress of Vienna in 1814–5—but to no avail. The Navarino intervention, which the duke of Wellington eventually called an 'untoward event', was a hiccup in this history when Britain joined Russia and France so that she might check the potential ambitions of Tsar Nicholas I to turn Greece into a satellite state, but also because of domestic pressures. After Navarino, and especially from the late 1830s, the British strove to strengthen the sultan's army and navy to prevent the informal domination of the Ottoman world by any of the other Powers, and to ensure tranquillity and order in the Levant. The very same motive prompted them to lead the 1840 intervention with the Quadruple Alliance and the Porte, quelling the ambitions of Mehmed Ali, the paşa of Egypt. It was again the same motive that would make British authorities so wary of the 1860 French plan for an intervention in Lebanon.

The Russian policy with respect to the Eastern Question oscillated between an eager revisionism (c.1762–95, 1807–12, 1824–9, 1849–64), which was more than ever bent on the idea of (and even concrete plans for) total dismemberment of the sultan's empire, and a preservationist (from the 1800s, 'weak neighbour') policy (c.1796–1806, 1812–23, 1829–49) which looked to keep the Ottoman Empire intact but still weak, lest she grow into a threat in the southern borders of Russia again. In the 1820s, Russian involvement in the Greek crisis was less about obtaining guarantees for her co-religionists and more about dissolving in Russia's favour the lingering territorial disputes with the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and the Caucasus, which duly happened first at Akkerman (1826) and then with the Treaty of Edirne (1829). Four years later, in 1833, when Tsar Nicholas I intervened in the civil war between Cairo and Istanbul and signed a defensive treaty with Ottoman ministers, his aim was to establish a dominant Russian influence in Istanbul, reinforcing the 'weak neighbour' policy. At the end of the decade Russia abandoned her privileged position so as not to be isolated in the Concert of Europe, but also after seeing that anti-Russian Ottoman ministers had gained the upper hand in Istanbul and the prolongation of an alliance treaty with the Porte had thus become less likely. The tsar's return to a revisionist policy in the 1850s resulted largely from a precocious quest for glory in competition with the aspirations of Emperor Napoleon III of France.

For Austria, the Eastern Question largely concerned containing Russian expansionism towards the Mediterranean as well as in her backyard, the Balkans. Yet the court in Vienna hardly ever followed this policy by confronting the Russians, aiming instead to cooperate with them—in the eighteenth century by way of forming alliances against the Ottomans, and in the nineteenth, by guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the sultan's empire by means of European public law. Austria failed to achieve this diplomatic objective in 1815 during the Congress of Vienna, but finally reached her goal with the Treaty of Paris in 1856. Austrian officialdom involved itself in armed intervention only when the Porte sought the assistance of the Powers or, at least, consented to it. This being said, Austria played a leading role in the legal and administrative interventions of the 1840s and 1850s with the aim of reviving the Ottoman Empire rather than partitioning it.

Prussia became a more vocal actor only after a new international (Vienna) order was established by way of the Concert of Europe in the 1810s and 1820s. The Great Powers strove to promote new sets of norms and codes to govern their behaviour such as moderation, restraint, and cooperation in order to minimize their differences and thereafter prevent another total war. However, it is important to note that the Vienna Order did not bar colonial expansionism or informal imperialism elsewhere in the world. It even licensed the five Powers to assume managerial responsibility over the 'weak other' and of 'governing the world'.²

² Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin Press, 2012).

By the same token, their competition in the Levant never came to an end. The Powers did endorse joint action from the 1810s onwards, the Russo-Ottoman war of 1828–9, Russian intervention in 1833, and the Crimean War of the 1850s being the only exceptions. Again, from then on, forming a majority within the Concert became of vital importance in inter-imperial decision-making processes. This was how Prussia occasionally emerged in a unique position with respect to the Levant. For instance, in the late 1850s, when Russia and France were considering the idea of dismembering the Ottoman Empire, they sought the support of the cabinet in Berlin in order to strong-arm Britain and Austria in a likely conflict of interests. But the Prussians remained loyal to conservative principles where the Eastern Question was concerned. They persistently followed the policy of not getting involved in any major revisionist scheme, and of maintaining the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire.

The Eastern Question developed out of and endured through these differing and dynamic European perceptions, and truly became the most ‘complicated and dangerous question’ of international politics during the long nineteenth century.³ Yet the alleged weakness of the Ottoman Empire—or, in European parlance, her ‘disorder’, the ‘barbarities’, ‘massacres’, ‘atrocities’, ‘piracy’, ‘religious fanaticism’, and the ‘irregularities’ that occurred in the sultan’s dominions—also provided the Powers, either individually or collectively, with quasi-legal pretexts to ensure security or licence to intervene as the so-called ‘civilized’ superior authorities.

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Secondly, it is important to add that the Eastern Question was not a European question alone, as existing literature, and even some late Ottoman writers, would have us believe. Besides the reckoning among the major Powers, the situation persisted through other relational dynamics, such as the interactions of Ottoman imperial agents and subject peoples among themselves and with European actors. In other words, the Eastern Question was also an Ottoman question—a question of how to deal with their empire’s alleged weakness, and her precarious characterization among the other major European Powers as one whose identity and durability was disputed.

As the military and technological power differentials between the Ottomans’ western and northern neighbours and their ‘Well-Protected Domains’ became more evident in the eighteenth century, imperial agents in Istanbul shared the belief that their empire was in decline. They found themselves in everlasting ontological insecurity. The British historian F. A. K. Yasamee suggests that it became ‘just as important for Ottoman statesmen to assess the nature and dynamics of the overall international system of which their empire formed a

³ Schroeder, ‘The 19th-Century International System’, 6.

part and upon which its fate depended'.⁴ The Ottomans proactively responded to this evolving system by having the position of their empire affirmed among the militarily strong powers of Europe in the 1790s. For this reason, they undertook wholesale reforms, in an attempt to revive the underlying philosophies of security (such as 'the circle of justice'). They employed propaganda, through pamphlets written for European audiences. And they initiated alliance-seeking diplomatic endeavours. However, when the sultan's empire became engulfed in the Coalition Wars after the French expedition to Egypt in 1798, reform attempts were greatly jeopardized and ontological insecurities were heightened. The hardliners in Istanbul gained greater power, and the subsequent policy of isolation led to an Ottoman rejection of involvement in the Vienna Order in 1815.

Ottoman isolationism did not last long. A series of developments unfortunate for the Porte—the 1827 Navarino 'catastrophe', humiliating defeat in the Russian–Ottoman war of 1828–9, the French invasion of Algiers in 1830, the independence or semi-autonomy of Greece, Samos, Wallachia, Moldavia, and Serbia in the early 1830s, and most importantly Mehmed Ali's imperial dreams—all prompted the Ottoman authorities to pursue a more dynamic strategy. By the 1830s, reforms had picked up their pace, while Ottoman statesmen altered their diplomatic parlance. Observing that the notion of civilization was gaining traction in European international thought, they came to frame their empire among the civilized nations of the world, first, to enlist Great Power assistance in the ongoing civil war against Cairo (1832–41) and then, from 1841–2 onwards, to fend off foreign intrusions into their affairs. They created their own 'uncivilized others', and habitually blamed the instability of their empire on the latter's 'misguided' ambitions. The *Gülhane Edict* was a late 1830s adaptation of the 'circle of justice' married with the idea of 'civilization'.

In the 1850s, *medeniyetçilik* (civilizationism) prevailed. It was upheld as an ideology for reforming and, more opportunistically, for securing the Ottoman Empire by making it a member of the Concert of Europe, an objective finally attained in 1856. Yet the political and economic path to obtaining this end—the Crimean War—was so dangerous that in the immediate aftermath of the Treaty of Paris, the empire was more destabilized than ever, with incessant uprisings, rebellions, and even the imminent risk of partition at the hands of the revisionist Great Powers. The principles of guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire by means of European public law and respecting the sultan's relations with his subject peoples, both articulated in 1856, did not translate into practice as smoothly as Ottoman and European preservationist statesmen had hoped.

⁴ Yasamee, 'The Ottoman Search for Security', 61.

The French-led 1860 intervention in Syria therefore not only meant for the Porte a violation of the Treaty of Paris, but also rekindled the sense of insecurity at a time when the Porte had become almost entirely dependent on European loans. The Ottoman government reluctantly consented to the intervention in the end, and equally grudgingly cooperated with the European agents on the ground, which led to the formation of a unique administrative structure in Lebanon, the *Mutasarrifat* regime.

An official declaration in November 1916 attests that the Ottoman ontological insecurity persisted until the very end of the empire. Two years into the First World War and the abolition of the capitulations, after negotiation with its allies, the German and Austrian governments, the Sublime Porte lurched toward a historical showdown with its enemies—Britain, France, and Russia—with a note of defiance.⁵ Dated 1 November 1916, and published the next day in the semi-official organ *Hilal* (The Crescent),⁶ the Porte's note proclaimed that the imperial Ottoman government had been led, during the events of the nineteenth century, to sign in various circumstances two important treaties with the European Great Powers, the Treaty of Paris of 1856 and the Treaty of Berlin of 1878.

The first established a state of affairs, a balance which the latter destroyed in very great part, but both were misunderstood by the very signatory Powers who violated their engagements, either openly or covertly, so as to obtain the execution of the clauses unfavourable to the Ottoman Empire, [but] they did not care about those which were stipulated to [the empire's] advantage; [they were] much more opposed to [these clauses] without discontinuity.⁷

The two treaties (the note continued) had stipulated commitments to respect the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, and excluded all interference in the relations between the imperial government and its subjects. But such commitments had not prevented the French government from exercising an armed intervention in Ottoman Syria in 1860 and from demanding the establishment of a new local regime. The co-signatory Powers had associated diplomatically with this act in order not to 'leave France free in her designs', fearing the latter could have annexationist aims. The Ottoman government would then grant Lebanon 'an organization of purely administrative and limited autonomy which gave a certain interference to the Great Powers'. Nor did the legal

⁵ Ambassade Impériale Ottomane (Berlin) to the Minister, 14 Oct. 1916; H. Abro to Munir Bey, 15 Oct. 1916, BOA HR.HMS.ISO 65/12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, note dated 14 Oct. 1916; Abram Isaac Elkus (Constantinople) to Secretary of State, 6 Nov. 1916, NARA RG/M363, 'Relating to Political Rel. between Turkey and other states', 1910–29.

⁷ *Hilal*, 2 Nov. 1916; cf. Abram Isaac Elkus (Constantinople) to Secretary of State, 6 November 1916, NARA RG/M363, Relating to Political Rel. between Turkey and other states, 1910–29.

commitments with regards to respecting Ottoman independence and territorial integrity hinder

the French government from occupying Tunis [1881] and establish a protectorate over this dependence of the Empire; nor did it prevent the British Government from occupying Egypt [1882] and to establish there her effective domination, nor from making a series of encroachments of Ottoman sovereignty south of the Yemen at Nedjid, in Kuwait, in El Qatar as well as in the Persian Gulf, nor did these same provisions inconvenience the four Governments who are now at war with Turkey in modifying by force the status of the island Crete and in creating there a new situation in flagrant contradiction with the integrity which they had undertaken to respect.⁸

On account of all these legal violations, the Ottoman ministers maintained, the Porte would no longer consider the provisions of the treaties of Paris and Berlin as binding on its part, and would abolish the special status of the *Mutasarrifat* system in Lebanon.⁹ The note ended with a bold statement: the Ottoman Empire ‘definitely abandons her somewhat subordinate position under the collective guardianship of the Great Powers which some of the latter are interested in maintaining. She therefore enters the group of European Powers with all the rights and prerogatives on an entirely independent government.’¹⁰

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The 1916 note not only signals Ottoman historical resentments and her desire to redefine her position in the global imperial order as a government which enjoyed ‘all the rights and prerogatives’ of the group of European Powers, and thus end her sense of exclusion and subjugation. It also indicates how international law was perceived and experienced inversely by the so-called ‘peripheral’ historical actors in the long nineteenth century. This brings us to the third concluding remark, which concerns the intersectoral relational dynamics or the sectoral continuum that the historical actors saw in the affairs of the Levant.

The sequence of armed, legal, and administrative interventions ought not to be traced only in relation to the strategic calculations of the Powers and the Levantines. Emancipating the Eastern Question from this constricted arena, and heeding at least the legal, economic, financial, and religious factors through an

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Hilal*, 2 Nov. 1916; cf. Abram Isaac Elkus (Constantinople) to Secretary of State, 6 Nov. 1916, NARA RG/M363, ‘Relating to Political Rel. between Turkey and other states’, 1910–29.

¹⁰ Emphasis mine. The Ottoman demands in relation to the *Mutasarrifat* regime were duly accepted by the German authorities one week later—although the German foreign minister, Arthur Zimmermann, commented on 11 Nov. that the treaties of Paris and Berlin were concluded between a large number of Powers and the Porte needed the consent of all of them. Hakki Pasha to M. Zimmerman, n.d., BOA.HR.HMS.ISO 65/14/4.

intersectoral kaleidoscope, allows us to see in a new light the complexity with which the intervening actors were confronted. For instance, we must take into account French indebtedness to Egypt in the late eighteenth century, in order better to understand the origins of the 1798 intervention—a factor that is usually omitted in the literature. For the same reason, without documenting the doomful Ottoman experience with international law especially during the Coalition Wars (1793–1815), we cannot explain why Ottoman statesmen refused to send a representative to the Congress of Vienna in 1814 when the Powers invited them to do so. Again, without recognizing that the Powers' proposal of guaranteeing the European dominions of the sultan under European public law was combined with demands to reregulate the customs tariffs in order to liberalize trade in the Ottoman dominions, we cannot explain why the sultan's ministers turned the Powers down once again in March 1815.

It is well known that the 1838 commercial agreements between the European Powers (starting with Britain) and the Porte, which reduced the import tariffs to the Powers' advantage and abolished monopolies, permitted Istanbul to enlist the support of the Powers in its civil war against Cairo (1832–41) the following year. Much less chronicled are the 1861–2 commercial conventions, which were the last of the periodical customs tariff negotiations between the Porte and the Powers. The latter stipulated the reduction of the average export duties by 1% per year until only a nominal duty would be levied over eight years. In the midst of an unprecedented financial crisis at the time, the Porte was able to secure, in exchange for this monumental concession, only a small loan. These economic and financial developments following the Crimean War signified a financial turn in the Eastern Question. The survival and revival of the Ottoman Empire was no longer a strategic question, and did not simply concern her prized possessions. At stake also were the interests of European lenders and owners of Ottoman bonds.

The list of intersectoral relational dynamics can be usefully extended by pointing out the use of religion as an instrument for mobilizing people, forming (transimperial) networks, or as a factor to tip the scales when strategic and economic considerations produced an impasse. The latter was exemplified by Britain's dithering in the 1820s as to whether she should join Russia in interfering in the Greek crisis, or when the international commissioners on Syria had to give their final advice concerning the verdict on the Druze feudal lords during the retributive justice proceedings, with extremely scarce evidence and information. On both occasions, Christian sentiments unblocked and facilitated the decision-making processes.

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The fourth and last general conclusion pertains to the repercussions of Great Power interventions for the subject peoples of the Levant. It would be a gross exaggeration to claim that the armed, legal, and administrative interventions of

the Great Powers were the chief cause of the civil wars that the local actors suffered through in the period covered in this book. A 'before and after' analysis suggests that circumstances for violence had pieced together and pre-dated these interventions and the civil strifes that erupted in Egypt (1801–11), Greece (1821–7), the wider Ottoman world (1832–41), and Lebanon (1841–60). The interventions tended to intensify and perpetuate violence in a manner that required further interventions, subsequently plunging the region into a violent vortex.

Egypt had already been in partial anarchy before the French intervention in 1798, and had witnessed comparable civil wars amongst local and Ottoman imperial actors due largely to their struggles to control the lucrative customs taxes and regions of the country. The Greek independence movement had already been growing through kinetic intellectual, emotional, and political momentum. 'Uprisings' of sorts were not a new occurrence in the 1820s, though the eventual, collective support of the Great Powers to the Greeks was. Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt launched his own struggle for independence not because he had been advised to do so by British and French agents, but because he wanted to secure his reign and the future of his family by means of control of the Taurus Mountains and Syria. The 1827 Navarino intervention and the 1830 French invasion of Algiers (a project he was involved in initially) signalled to him that the time had come to realize his ambitions. But none of these forced him into his Syrian *démarche*. And finally, the Lebanese had already fought with one another over sectarian and class issues before the *Gülhane* Edict of 1839, which marked a new epoch in Ottoman imperialism, and before the 1840 intervention of the Quadruple Alliance and the Porte which launched a (semi-)colonial contest in the country.

To argue otherwise, and trace the origins of civil wars merely to imperialist ambitions, reforms and Great Power interventions, would be to give too much credit to imperial agents and too little agency to the aspirations of local actors. For this reason, the popular, recently reiterated postulation that 'European and Ottoman imperial actors created the conditions for a sectarian storm [in Ottoman Lebanon]' appears to be misdirected.¹¹ New archival evidence suggests that the rise of egalitarian ideas among the Maronite clergy and peasantry, their claims for property in the opening decades of the nineteenth century, the establishment of new representative institutions at the time, Druze aspirations for autonomy, the religious/class conflicts of 1820s and 1830s, and the establishment of quasi-sectarian councils in the early 1830s had already forged a degree of sectarian and class consciousness and sparked violence before the *Tanzimat* reforms and the Eastern Question reached Lebanon.

¹¹ Makdisi, *The Age of Coexistence*, 64.

Such popular beliefs are not only historically specious but also potentially perilous, for they unintentionally underpin the ‘paranoia-turned-myth of imperialism’ as the main cause of all tragedies in what has been called ‘the Middle East’—the Levant, Mesopotamia, parts of North Africa, Persia, and Arabia—since the 1900s.¹² Indeed, the aspirations to expand and sustain empires or to exert a dominant influence indisputably and incalculably fuelled the miseries of the region. It is well documented that the European and Ottoman imperial authorities dispatched armed forces, annexed or partitioned territories, perpetrated genocides, created new polities, and suppressed local voices during the (post)imperial and (post)colonial histories of these regions. And it is evident that Western and regional imperial agents have never ceased to interfere with and influence Middle Eastern politics.

Yet the local actors, both subjects/citizens and states, have never been the ‘gullible objects’ or ‘bargaining chips’ merely in need of foreign aid. Nor has the region been passive grass, so to speak, trampled by the elephants wrestling above. Quite the contrary: in the nineteenth century, in the age of the Eastern Question, local actors were always the prime agents of oligarchical, strategic, class, and sectarian violence during the aforementioned civil wars. Even though it is true that, amongst others, the British promised the Mamluk beys protection ‘in the most solemn manner’, the Russians to the Porte, and the French to Mehmed Ali and the Maronites before turning their back on their Levantine interlocutors, it was as much through local agency that Great Power interferences were procured, that the civil wars in question were transimperialized, and that Levantine actors became conscious proxies.

Again, what I mean by this is not the fact that the local actors have simply to be attributed the role of troublemakers. What I suggest here is a need to inquire how violence prevailed and how it could have been quelled, first and foremost, in the rational and emotional positions that the local actors adopted towards each other. An early example of this is the collective resistance of the Egyptians in the 1800s. Shattered by years of inter-imperial wars and anarchy, a wide coalition formed by Cairene merchants, ulama, and the fellahin brought Mehmed Ali to power, and kept him there, despite British opposition and Ottoman reluctance, helping to subsequently end the strife in the country.

¹² For the origins of the term ‘Middle East’, see Alfred Thayer Mahan, ‘The Persian Gulf and International Relations’, *National Review* 40 (Sept. 1902): 39; T. E. Gordon, ‘The Problems of the Middle East’, *The Nineteenth Century* 37 (Mar. 1900): 413; Clayton R. Koppes, ‘Captain Mahan, General Gordon, and the Origins of the Term “Middle East”’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 12(1) (1976): 95–8. This ‘paranoia-turned-myth’ is manipulated time and again in contemporary politics. For example, the Kurdish question in Turkey has long remained unaddressed and even undisputed, mainly because the nationalist official narrative has tended to view it as a by-product of (British, American, and Russian) imperialist designs, heedless of the democratic aspirations of the Kurds, while Kurdish politicians have insistently sought foreign material and political assistance in obtaining their ends, although such efforts have usually proved counterproductive as they have only bolstered exclusionary Turkish nationalism.

Another example is the fact that peace in Lebanon endured from the 1860s until the First World War even though the Eastern Question was not definitively settled and inter-imperial competition had not come to an end. In fact, as of the late 1870s, during the so-called era of high imperialism, when the annexationist nibbling of the Ottoman territories became rampant, and especially after the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, Lebanon played host to a contest for domination between the Hamidian, conservative Ottoman paşas who tried to establish a more direct rule, and French agents looking to bolster their regional influence.¹³ The inter-imperial struggle again became religiously tinged, and even overlapped with the decline of the silk industry (as at the time silk prices were dampened by increasing supply from Japan and China).¹⁴ Yet, due in part to a change in political attitudes towards sectarian and class differences since the early 1860s, and in part because of the appalling memory of the recent conflicts and the improved security apparatus, local response to the difficulties proved to be more pacific, and tended to emigration rather than violence.¹⁵

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The early history of Great Power interventions in the Levant provides us with important lessons. To borrow from the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), these lessons constitute ‘the classical set of examples for the interpretation of our entire culture and its development. [They are] the means for understanding ourselves, a means for regulating our age—and thereby a means for overcoming it.’¹⁶ Taking into account the temporal and sectoral continuum that historical actors saw in the affairs of the Levant in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries enables us to discern and apprehend that the degree of complexity of regional affairs at the time was even greater than has been previously recognized. This complexity repeatedly left the historical actors uncertain as to how to act, react, secure their interests, and ward off perceived threats.

We must recall the British consul Colonel Rose’s bemusement in 1844, and his questions as to when the moral obligations that induced the Great Powers to interfere in the governance of another state began and ended; whether the Great Powers could creditably further interfere if the locals, albeit only some of them, were opposed to their political schemes; and whether it was fitting that the Powers should be occupied in endeavouring to conciliate the jarring interests and the

¹³ Akarlı, *The Long Peace*, 41–57.

¹⁴ Andrew Arsan, *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa* (London: Hurst, 2014), 33.

¹⁵ Ibid. 30; Makdisi, *The Age of Coexistence*, 64–74; Hakim, *Lebanese*, 149–158. For a skilful analysis of the Lebanese emigration, see also Akram F. Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Struggle between Science and Wisdom* (1875); cf. Nandita B. Mellamphy, *The Three Stigmata of Friedrich Nietzsche: Political Physiology in the Age of Nihilism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 125.

animosities of locals in a foreign country.¹⁷ These questions constitute the core of the discussions over foreign interventions today that tend to overlook ‘what imperialism has done and what orientalism continues to do’.¹⁸

The experience amassed in the period between the late eighteenth century and the early 1860s served as a model or inspiration for generations. For example, as early as 1866–9, when another Great Power intervention took place in Ottoman Crete, the ‘Lebanese solution’, as a contemporary put it, was implemented and a consociational administrative system inspired by the *Règlement organique* of Lebanon was introduced in Crete with the mediation of the Powers.¹⁹

In the early twentieth century, the 1860 intervention was considered a potential prototype when, in 1912–14, the five Great Powers intervened again in the Armenian–Kurdish civil war in eastern Anatolia.²⁰ But the February 1914 settlement was never set in motion, as the First World War broke out. The following year, when hundreds of thousands of Armenians perished as Ottoman authorities ‘dared to annihilate the existence of [the] entire [Armenian] nation’ of the empire, to cite the Ottoman minister of finance, Mehmed Cavid Bey, British diplomats explicitly turned to the 1860 model, and discussed a plan to stop the ‘Armenian massacres’ in the same fashion as the intervention in Syria, i.e. by persuading the Ottoman authorities to end the massacres.²¹ But they quickly withdrew the idea of ‘taking inspiration from 1860’ from the agenda, and decided to ‘provide the parallel to that by defeating the Turks, not by writing to them’.²²

Historical actors repeatedly turned to early instances of foreign interventions to make sense of and grapple with the bewildering realities of the Levant. Yet, despite their insufficient grasp of these realities, limiting the Eastern Question to a strategic dilemma and ignoring the intricacies of local politics ‘as questions of detail’ to be addressed eventually, they foolhardily carried on staging interventions that went to such lengths as carving out new, inorganic mandates or (semi-) independent states out of the Ottoman Empire in the 1910s.

As the Eastern Question was arguably terminated with the fall of Osman’s dynasty just before the Lausanne Conference in 1922–3, what we may term as its successor in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the Middle Eastern Question, has likewise proved to be a very long list of much more fragmented yet still interconnected issues and questions, cutting across time and sectors:

¹⁷ Rose to Canning, 25 Mar. 1844, CRAS 46–8.

¹⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), xvi–xvii; cf. Jessica Whyte, ‘“Always on Top”? The “Responsibility to Protect” and the Persistence of Colonialism’, in *The Postcolonial World*, ed. Jyotsna G. Singh and David D. Kim (London: Routledge, 2016), 311.

¹⁹ Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, 126.

²⁰ Ozan Ozavci, ‘Honour and Shame: The Diaries of a Unionist and the “Armenian Question”’, in *The End of the Ottomans: The Genocide of 1915 and the Politics of Turkish Nationalism*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser, Margaret L. Anderson, Seyhan Bayraktar, and Thomas Schmutz (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 193–220.

²¹ Ozavci, ‘Honour’, 213.

²² ‘Massacre of Armenians by Turks’, 28 Apr. 1915, TNA FO 371/2488/51010.

demographic engineering, population exchanges, insecurity in the mandate states, violent independence struggles and their brutal suppression, oil (and other energy) competition, the Arab–Israeli controversy, sectarianism, (militarist) authoritarianism, etc. A new superpower rivalry during the Cold War in the global north provoked new interventions, further political instability and violence, and further quests for power and influence among the global powers like the United States, Russia, and (to a lesser extent) the European Union and China, as well as among the historically, strategically, economically, and/or religiously motivated aspirant regional powers such as Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.

The actors on the stage have changed and increased in number since the nineteenth century. Empires have collapsed. Time and space have been compressed to an unprecedented degree thanks to technological advances. But, with its institutionalized hierarchies and repertoires of power that have persisted through the changing pecking order of international security institutions, cross-border interventions (now usually through remote warfare, with missiles and drones), proxy wars, the manipulation of civil wars, (neo-)liberal advances, and an international law with neo-imperialist and unequal undertones, the pattern has remained. In this specific sense, we today share with actors of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a common, counterproductive culture of security. We are their contemporaries.

Remember the discussion in the run-up to the United States-led occupation of Iraq in 2003. The ambitions of the neo-conservative administration in Washington, DC, the ‘altruistic’ and ‘noble’ role self-tailored by the United States as a transformative global power and the latter’s appeal to coercion to achieve its security objectives, were likewise regarded by many, including the neo-conservatives themselves, as properly imperialistic.²³ Even though the British prime minister, Tony Blair, would, four months into the occupation, state before the US Congress that ‘a study of history provides so little instruction for our present day’, Middle East experts, even proponents of war, would turn to the recent past in an attempt to justify the intervention.²⁴ Among them was the late Fouad Ajami, the American-Lebanese Middle East expert, and one of the most popular and influential proponents of the Iraqi war to reportedly advise neo-conservative leaders in Washington, DC.

Before the intervention, Ajami wrote that the British Empire’s moment in Iraq had come after the First World War when she was economically exhausted, and

²³ See e.g. Michael Cox, ‘Empire, Imperialism and the Bush Doctrine’, *Review of International Studies* 30(4) (Oct. 2004): 585–608; Caroline Daniel, ‘Bush’s Imperial Presidency’, *Financial Times*, 5 July 2006; Richard N. Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 553, n. 61. For a critique of this categorization, see Daniel H. Nexon and Thomas Wright, ‘What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate’, *Political Science Review* 101(2) (May 2007): 253–71.

²⁴ Louise Kettle, *Learning from the History of British Interventions in the Middle East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 1.

had therefore failed.²⁵ It was now the United States' moment in Iraq and its driving motivation (that 'imperial burden') should have been 'modernising the Arab world', above and beyond toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein.²⁶ Three years into the war, in 2006, Ajami argued that since the war was an effort to decapitate the despotic, sclerotic, and lethal regime of Saddam Hussein, which 'would have lasted a thousand years' had the occupation not happened, it was a legitimate 'imperial mission,' 'a *foreigner's gift*' to the Iraqi inhabitants.²⁷ It was a 'noble war', the outcome of which would 'determine whether it is a noble success or a noble failure'.²⁸

Given the death toll during and after the war, the descent of Iraq into further disastrous strife since the mid-2000s, and the economic losses incurred because of the intervention, hindsight suggests that it is quite evident whether the 2003 occupation and the subsequent military and naval missions in Iraq have been a success or failure. Even so, foreign armed interventions in the Middle East continue in an equally foolhardy fashion. Almost every Middle Eastern society, especially Syria, Yemen, Libya, and to a lesser extent Lebanon, Turkey, and Palestine, is engulfed in internationalized civil wars or political and economic tragedies.²⁹ The political actors, both Western and regional, keep tossing their resources into the infinite complexities of the region, at the expense of exhausting their economies and polities and provoking even greater misfortune on the ground.

Seen from the perspective of the last two centuries, we can conclude that they do so with a haughtiness and pomposity akin to that of their imperial forebears in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Just as Ajami and the neo-conservatives depicted the 2003 invasion of Iraq as a 'foreigner's gift', despite their 'push-and-pull' factors, each historical intervention covered in this book was, almost without exception, also initiated by their entrepreneurs under the façades of 'disinterested' 'service', 'aid', 'favour', 'priceless grace', or 'friendly assistance' to the Levantine inhabitants. Needless to say, the discourse of noble disinterestedness was always a beguiling delusion. In reality, each of these interventions was formed through manifold layers of threat perceptions and interests which I have tried to peel away in this book. The immense historical and global complexities of the

²⁵ In Aug. 2002, Ajami was cited by then US Vice President Dick Cheney on how Iraqi inhabitants would welcome the Americans, in the aftermath of the expedition, with kites and boom boxes. L. Carl Brown, 'The Dream Palace of the Empire: Is Iraq a "Noble Failure"?' *New York Times*, 12 Sept. 2006.

²⁶ Fouad Ajami, 'Iraq and the Arabs' Future', *Foreign Affairs* (Jan./Feb. 2003), accessed 20 Mar. 2018: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2003-01-01/iraq-and-arabs-future>

²⁷ Brown, 'Dream Palace'; Fouad Ajami, *The Foreigner's Gift: The Americans, the Arabs and the Iraqis in Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2006). Emphasis mine.

²⁸ Brown, 'Dream Palace'.

²⁹ For a detailed study of the inter-connectivity of civil wars in the Middle East in the 2010s, see William Harris, *Quicksilver War: Syria, Iraq and the Spiral of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). For a global outlook on the civil war in Yemen, read esp. Isa Blumi, *Destroying Yemen: What Chaos in Arabia Tells Us about the World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

region, and the political and diplomatic incapacity to deal with them holistically, were precisely why, as is the case today, Great Power interventions tended to bring to the nineteenth-century Levant only further vulnerability and insecurity through heightened antagonisms, new rivalries, and contentions. However goodwilled they might have been, the repercussions of these 'gifts' proved to be nothing but detrimental and dangerous.

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ABCFM	American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions Archives, Cambridge, Massachusetts
ALSI	Archives jésuites de Beyrouth
AM	Archives militaires, Service historique de la défense, Vincennes
AMAE	Archives Ministère des affaires étrangères et du développement international, La Courneuve, Paris
ANF	Archives nationales de France, Paris
AVPRI	Arxiv vneshnej politiki Rossijskoj imperii (Foreign Policy Archive of Imperial Russia), Moscow
BLM	British Library Manuscripts, London
BNFM	Bibliothèque nationale française, manuscrits, Paris
BOA	Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Ottoman State Archives), Istanbul
CADN	Centre des archives diplomatiques de Nantes
CRAS	<i>Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of Syria, Presented to Both Houses of Parliament, by Command of Her Majesty</i>
DDC	Documents diplomatiques et consulaires relatifs à l'histoire du Liban, et de pays du Proche-Orient du XVIIe siècle à nos jours, Documents recueillis sous l'égide de l'émir Maurice Chehab directeur général des antiquités du Liban, Beirut, ed. Adel Ismail
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DIPLOBEL	Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives), Brussels
DUR	Durham University Special Collections, Lord Ponsonby Papers
DWQ	Dār al Wathā'iq al Qawmiyya (Egyptian National Archives), Cairo
GStA	Geheimes Staatsarchiv preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin
HHStA	Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna
HmHL	Harvard Manuscripts, Houghton Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts
HNA	Nationaal Archief (Dutch National Archives), The Hague
IA	Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (Encyclopedia of Islam)

- HmHL Harvard Manuscripts, Houghton Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts
LE *L'Égypte de 1802 à 1804*, ed. George Douin
 LMA London Metropolitan Archives
LPM *L'Angleterre et l'Égypte. La politique Mameluk*, ed. George Douin and E. C. Fawtier-Jones, 2 vols
MAPC *Mohamed Ali, Pacha du Caire*, ed. Georges Douin
 NARA United States National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC
 NLS National Library of Scotland, Robert Liston Papers, Edinburgh
 NRO Norfolk Record Office, Henry Bulwer Papers, Norwich
 OBC Oxford, Balliol College
ODD *Ottoman Diplomatic Documents on 'The Eastern Question'*, vol. 4: *Reforms and Foreign Intervention: Rumeli and Syria (1859–1862)*, ed. Sinan Kunalalp
 ÖN Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna
PRAG *Papers Relative to the Affairs of Greece, 1826–1832*
 RGIA Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj istoričeskij arxiv (Russian State History Archive), St Petersburg
 RGVIA Rossijskij gosudarstvennyj voenno-istoričeskij arxiv (Russian State Military History Archive), Moscow
RWEC *The Early Correspondence of Richard Wood, 1831–1841*, ed. A. B. Cunningham
 SAMECO St Antony's College, Middle East Centre Archives, Richard Wood Papers, Oxford
 TNA The National Archives, Kew, London
 TSMA Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Arşivi (Topkapı Palace Museum Archives), Istanbul
VPR *Vneshnyaya politika Rossii XIX i nachala XX veka. Dokumenty rossijskogo Ministerstva inostrannyx del.* (Russian Foreign Policy Nineteenth until Early Twentieth Century. Documents of Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

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