

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-mašriyya 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 Cattaui, *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, *Şeyhü'l-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 Çengelöğlü 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, *Kavalalı*, 37; Pierre Crabitès, *Ibrahim of Egypt* (London: George Routledge & Son, 1935), 136.

¹⁰⁵ Altundağ, *Kavalalı*, 57.

¹⁰⁶ BOA TS.M.A.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 Abû ‘İzz al-Dîn, *Ibrâhîm Bâsha*, 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.

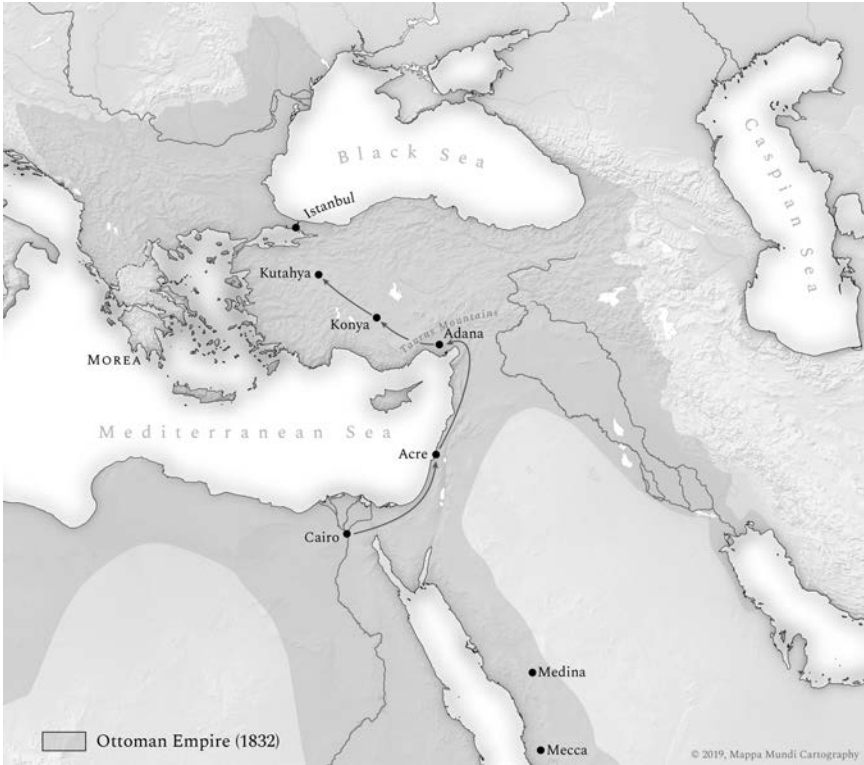
¹²⁰ BOA C.AS 56/2610; BOA C.AS 944/40987; BOA C.DH 1/3, n.d.; BOA HAT 355/19957, n.d.; Altundağ, *Kavalalı*, 61, 62.

¹²¹ René Cattaui, *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 artilleries 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 Namık 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 Lûtfi Efendi, *Vakanüvis Ahmet Lûtfi 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.