3

The Chase in the Desert

Empires and Civil War in Egypt, 1801–1812

When Selim III declared jihad against France in September 1798, vizieral 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 *başıbozuks*], 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* (Chorbaji[2]) 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 *başıbozuks*, 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 Mes'elesi*, 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 Sūriyya* (Beirut, 1929), 2–3; Şinasi Altundağ, *Kavalalı Mehmed Ali Paşa İsyanı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1945), 22–3.

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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.

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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] Yaycıoğlu, *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. Faroqhi (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 Crecelius, *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 ʿAli 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, *Şeyhü'l-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-Kajnardzhijskij 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 paşas 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; TSMA 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, *Şeyhü'l-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 Talbott, *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 (*matlup 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, *Şeyhü'l-Vüzerâ*, 21–2; also see Karal, 'İngiltere'nin Akdeniz Hakimiyeti Hakkında vesikalar', 130; cf. Karal, *Selim III'ün Hat-tı Hümâyunları*, 142.

[61] Ibid. 141. [62] Ibid. [63] Shaw, *Selim III*, 277.

[64] BOA HAT 3457; İzzet Hasan Efendi, *Ziyâname, 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 metropoles 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, *Şeyhü'l-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-athār fi 'l-Tarajim wa 'l-Akhbār*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Moshe Perlmann, vols 3–4, (Stuttgard: 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 Mes'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, *Şeyhü'l-Vüzerâ*, 25; Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-Athār*, 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, *Şeyhü'l-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 Britian 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]

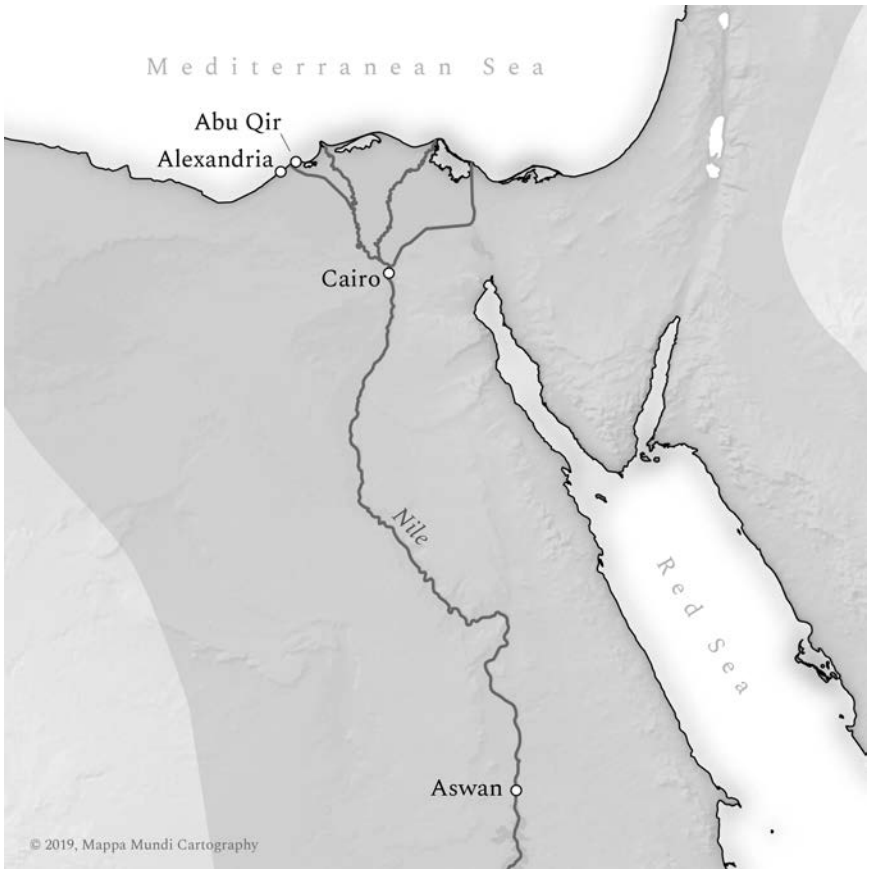
Even though Hüsrev rebuffed Sebastiani's demand, the latter still got in touch with the Mamluk beys by circulating among their partisans brochures that said Bonaparte was their friend, and as their friend would exercise influence in their favour at the Porte.[90] He went on to promise the beys that, 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] Bonarparte 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, *Kavalalı*, 35.

[98] Major Missett to Lord Hobart, 4 May 1803, *LPM* vol. 2, 13–14; L. E. Caffe, 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-athār*, vols 3–4, 376–8, 382; Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes'elesi*, 7; BOA HAT 3655, 3534, 2605; Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 18.

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

[101] Al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athār*, 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; Misset 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 Elfî (Ekim-Aralık 1803)', *Akademik Bakış* 9(17) (winter 2015): 53.

[115] Çetin, *Kavalalı*, 73.

[116] Fahmy, 'The Era of Muhhammad '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-athār*, vols 3–4, 440–41; Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali*, 21–2; Çelik, *Şeyhü'l-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 Alfi 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, Alfi 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-athār*, 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'elesi*, 7; Parandier to Talleyrand, 7 July 1805, AMAE CP Turquie 210/62; BOA HAT 36/1836.

[137] Raif and Ahmed, *Mısır Mes'elesi*, 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 paṣa'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 paṣa 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 paṣas and French commanders, including Bonaparte himself, had all failed to obtain. And thus the paṣa'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 á 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.