

Return of the Ashes

The Concert of Europe and the 1840 Intervention

Le retour des cendres, or the repatriation of the ashes of Napoleon Bonaparte from Saint Helen to Paris, was a masterpiece of myth-making.¹ Amidst lavish ceremonies in every city, the late emperor's coffin passed through in the autumn of 1840. The event attracted enormous local interest and filled the hearts of many onlookers with what Bonapartists claimed Napoleon stood for: pride and the glory of France. In Normandy alone, during the six days his coffin was exhibited at the frigate *La Belle Poule*, more than 60,000 people came to accord respect to the memory of the late emperor. An abundance of patriotic artistic works—paintings, songs, poems, and lithographs—exposed the emotional intensity of the day, while endless newsprints recurrently portrayed Napoleon as a prince, or even the Christ.²

This patriotic pageant was as much about renewing the prestige of the July Monarchy as about paying respect to Bonaparte. France was embroiled in dangerously strained relations with Britain and her allies. War over their conflicting interests in the Levant, or the Eastern Question, was once again at the door. Orders had been given for the mass conscription of the army and an expensive fortification of Paris was under way. Public sentiment had to be whetted.

Only seven years had passed since France and Britain had revived their 'constitutional alliance' against Russia. As we saw in Chapter 6, after the signing of the Russo-Ottoman Hünkâr İskelesi Treaty in July 1833, St Petersburg had won a dominant influence over the Levant, which went against the interests of both London and Paris. In the previous year, in July 1839, when the so-called 'Second Eastern Crisis' had just broken loose with the renewal of hostilities between Sultan Mahmud II and Mehmed Ali Paşa of Egypt, the two liberal powers had again taken a common stance regarding the territorial integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire. But a few months later, France chose to pursue a non-interventionist policy tacitly supporting Mehmed Ali, while the other four

¹ See e.g. Jean-Marcel Humbert, *Napoléon aux Invalides. 1840, le retour des Cendres* (Paris: Musée de l'Armée, 1990); Henri Gaubert, *Le Tombeau de l'empereur. Son tombeau*, vol. 2 (Paris: Acad. Napoléon, 1951).

² See Avner Ben-Amos, *Funeral, Politics and Memory in Modern France, 1789–1996* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 73, and Michael Paul Driskel, *As Befits Legend: Building the Tomb of Napoleon, 1840–1861* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1993).

Powers—Austria, Britain, Prussia, and Russia—and the Porte strove to keep the paşa at bay, forcing him to evacuate Syria.

This was how the allies, London and Paris, became foes; and the foes, Britain and Russia, became allies within a space of a few months. And this was why it took nearly a year for the Concert of Europe to intervene in the civil war in the Ottoman world. Diplomatically isolated by the other Great Powers, the French officialdom would use the return of Bonaparte's ashes as an inspiring moment for national esteem and social mobilization. Yet it was also then that many French writers and statesmen came to cast doubt on both the policy in the Levant and the implications of the Eastern Question for France. Could there be an alternative, more peaceful way of appraising the Eastern Question that would still enable European dominance over the Ottoman Empire but bring serenity and calm at home, instead of war?

The Quadruple Alliance and France

In late 1838, it was highly unlikely for Britain and Russia to form a common front with respect to the Eastern Question. Anglo-Russian relations had been dangerously strained since the Hünkâr Iskelesi Treaty of 1833. Policy-makers in London and St Petersburg had become increasingly persuaded that the European empire which held sway over the Levant would prevail in Asia and Europe.³ The 'lion' and the 'bear' had come to loggerheads in Asia, while the Vixen affair—the capture of a British schooner by the Russians in the eastern Black Sea—threatened to turn this confrontation into an inter-imperial war.⁴

In June 1838, Tsar Nicholas I was determined to pursue a unilateral policy toward the Ottoman Empire, maintaining that, due to his empire's geographical proximity and direct interests, the Eastern Question was his private affair and not to be interfered with by the other Powers.⁵ For Russia, collective action by the Powers was acceptable only insofar as the Powers collaborated in supplying assistance to the Porte with the purpose of upholding the status quo that was in Russia's favour both strategically and commercially.⁶

Yet at the same time it was a ghastly prospect for Nesselrode to see Russia isolated by the other four Powers in the Levant. For this reason, in late 1838, when Palmerston and Metternich came up with the idea of convening an ambassadorial conference in Vienna specifically on the Eastern Question, fearing that the meeting would materialize the alignment of the four Powers against Russia, he

³ Harold N. Ingle, *Nesselrode and the Russian Rapprochement with Britain, 1836–1844* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 95.

⁴ *Ibid.* 63–95.

⁵ Sedivý, *Metternich*, 752.

⁶ Ingle, *Nesselrode*, 103.

declined to participate.⁷ He was fortunate that the contest between Metternich and Palmerston over leadership of the conference, the scepticism harboured by the other Powers when Britain unilaterally signed the commercial convention with the Porte (August 1838), and finally Palmerston's desire to link the 'Egyptian crisis' with the subject of the Straits, would lead France and Austria to lose sympathy with the idea of a conference.

The collective note of the Powers in July 1839 (see Chapter 7) was a decentralised act undertaken at the initiative of the European ministers in Istanbul without orders from their capitals. It was acceptable for Russia not as 'a move toward a conference', but only as an offer of the 'good offices' of the Powers 'to mediate a direct settlement, not to resolve' the crisis between Istanbul and Cairo.⁸

After August 1839, however, the policy of St Petersburg unmistakably changed due to a number of factors. The risk of Russia's isolation by the other four Powers remained. The reign of Mustafa Reşid and the pro-British camp in Istanbul deemed the renewal of the Otto-Russian defensive alliance much less likely. Furthermore, Russia had lost her privileged commercial position in the Levant after the commercial treaties signed between the Porte and several European Powers. Instead of standing alone for a cause that seemed unlikely to materialize, Nesselrode recommended Tsar Nicholas I change policy and take the lead in collective action. With this, Russia could feed two birds with one seed: accentuate the differences between the French and British cabinets with respect to Egypt, thus isolating France instead, and ensure an agreement among the Powers for the closure of the Straits which would warrant her security.⁹

The tsar agreed to this plan and, as Ingle tells us, demonstrated his adherence to the new policy by dismissing the members of the patriotic *ruskaaia partiaa* (Russian party), including the commander-in-chief, General Rosen, and N. N. Murav'ev, a lead actor of his unilateralist diplomacy in 1832–3 (see Chapter 6). He then sent Baron Ernest Philipp Brunnow (1797–1875)—a member of the *nemetskaia partiaa* (German party), which had a pro-European orientation—to London. The new Russian policy was bent on building on the joint note of July 1839 and obtaining a settlement among the Powers, and particularly with Britain, over the 'Eastern Crisis'.

Brunnow was the right person for this mission. He was known to be fond of the 'European family', and strongly opposed to the nationalist policies of the *ruskaaia partiaa*. Having sat at the Congresses of Laibach and Verona, he was one of the few remaining figures of 'the Vienna system generation'. He shared the beliefs and understanding of the men of 1815–22 that 'the interests of the whole represented a "higher order" of national unity that was threatened by war and revolution'.¹⁰ He poignantly admitted that 'the entire European political system was completely

⁷ Ibid. 104, 108.

⁸ Ibid. 112.

⁹ Rendall, 'Restraint', 53.

¹⁰ Ingle, *Nesselrode*, 122–3.

upset,' and 'Europe was divided into two camps' when the Whig ministers 'submitted to the public opinion that was opposed to the true interests of the community' and allied with the French government so as to remain in office.¹¹ But now, as he set off for the British capital, he had high hopes for the renewal of the Vienna Order and the Concert of Europe.

In London, Brunnow found what he had hoped for.¹² Despite all his scepticism over Russia, Palmerston welcomed the Russian diplomat's unexpected offers. Russia would allow the Hünkâr Iskelesi Treaty to expire in 1841 if Britain agreed to guarantee the closure of the Straits and 'the existence and repose' of the Ottoman Empire. In other words, St Petersburg would be 'pleased to exchange [the 1833 Treaty] for a concerted guarantee'.¹³ To Russian agents, Britain was squared. For his part, Palmerston considered his policy toward Russia a success at last, and from the end of 1839 onward, together with the Austrian and Prussian ambassadors, he held several conferences in London to decide on the policy of the Concert towards the Levant.

The 'Eastern Question' thenceforward no longer meant ending (or preserving) Russian dominance over the Porte but aimed to address the differences between Cairo and Istanbul. However, the shift in French policy in autumn 1839 as to how to tackle these differences complicated matters. A new crisis among the Powers had arisen.

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As we saw in the previous chapter, after the Battle of Nizib (June 1839), France had declared her commitment to the territorial integrity of the Porte despite her ongoing occupation of Algiers. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Admiral Soult even agreed with London to give instructions to their combined squadrons in the Mediterranean to use coercive measures with Mehmed Ali, prevent his army from marching onto Istanbul, and cease hostilities. But this was the most French ministers wished to adhere to. In lieu of any further intervention on the part of the Powers, they called for a speedy arrangement between 'the Turk and the Turk', alluding to the sultan and the Turkish-speaking Mehmed Ali.¹⁴ If the French representative attended the ambassadorial meetings, the ministers in Paris feared, the other four Powers could corner them into accepting the pro-sultan and anti-Mehmed Ali decisions taken by the majority.

As observed by the French *président du conseil*, Emile Desages, who acted like a spider at the centre of his country's diplomatic web of correspondence, the French were more Egyptian in their orientation than any other Power. This was in part thanks to Mehmed Ali's active propaganda campaign in the French press which, as mentioned earlier, depicted him as the Napoleon of the East, in part because the

¹¹ Ibid. 123–4.

¹² BOA HR.SYS 1947/43.

¹³ Ingle, *Nesselrode*, 124.

¹⁴ Desages to Cochelet, 27 Sept. 1839; cf. Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 26.

paşa was seen, from an ideological point of view, as a revolutionary civilizer in opposition to the ancient system represented by Istanbul, and in part (though to a lesser extent) because of the economic links between France and Egypt.¹⁵ If a settlement could be obtained without the involvement of the Powers, Mehmed Ali could attain a better deal. The collective note of 27 July 1839 therefore became a source of resentment in Paris as soon as news of it broke. It was criticized particularly by such figures as Adolphe Thiers, the *ex-président du conseil*, as an act of ‘inconsiderate precipitation’.¹⁶

From the autumn of 1839, France’s policy was geared towards overt support of Mehmed Ali, as evidenced from the fact that the Soult government asked the Porte to allow Mehmed Ali to at least keep Syria in return for giving up his demands for Hüsrev’s dismissal, for Crete, and for provinces other than Egypt. But this move outraged both Ottoman and British authorities. ‘The conduct of the French is disgusting,’ Lord Ponsonby wrote from Istanbul to Lord Beauvale in October. ‘It is hard to say what is her most characteristic feature; falsehood, vanity, insolence or folly.’¹⁷

Just as Russian strategists had hoped, the relations in the Anglo-French liberal camp then took a critical turn, which delayed the Powers in taking joint action. After Adolphe Thiers’s rise to power as prime minister and foreign minister on 1 March 1840, French diplomacy began to challenge the Great Power intervention in the Eastern Crisis more firmly.¹⁸

Before coming to office, in January 1840, Thiers had boldly declared in a parliamentary speech, ‘The cause of Mehmet Ali in Syria is the cause of France.’¹⁹ As prime minister and foreign minister, his line of action developed in parallel to this statement, and consisted, first, of excluding France ‘from waging war for the cause of Mehmed Ali, or to risk, for this cause, a general war... but [he] did not publicly lay a limit to the support’. Then, he meant ‘to endeavour to postpone and, if possible, prevent the agreement of the other Powers without France by trying to obtain from them a lowering of their demands. Then, he intended to nibble at Mehmed Ali’s claims and reduce them to proportions that could be admitted by the Powers. And finally, to ask the paşa to leave the crisis to France.’²⁰ With these aims in view, in London, the recently appointed ambassador François Guizot was ordered to obtain the support of Francophile ministers and deputies, while in Istanbul, ambassador Charles Édouard Pontois (1792–1871) would look to persuade Mustafa Reşid to accept a settlement with Mehmed Ali, and the paşa of Egypt would be pressured to make concessions.²¹

¹⁵ Ibid. 22. ¹⁶ Ibid. 21.

¹⁷ Ponsonby to Beauvale, 9 Oct. 1839, BLM Lord Beauvale Papers MS 60475/54.

¹⁸ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 31; BOA HR.SYS 965/8.

¹⁹ Alphonse de Lamartine, *La Question d’Orient. Discours et articles politiques (1834–1861)* (Paris: André Versaille, 2011), 77.

²⁰ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 53.

²¹ Ibid.

As a result of Thiers' policy, Palmerston found himself in a fierce struggle against Francophile politicians like Lord Calderon and Lord Holland in the Melbourne cabinet.²² Their liberal cabinet had been formed, in the first place, thanks to a promise of good relations with France. The Francophiles were ill-disposed to give the entente with France for the Levant. Their opposition had paralysed Palmerston's initiative to spearhead a joint intervention.

Only with news of violence in Syria did the foreign secretary find a way to break the diplomatic resistance of France and strong-arm his Francophile opponents in London. As will be detailed in the following chapters, the Druze and Maronites of Mount Lebanon had risen against Mehmed Ali's rule in May 1840. Since the Battle of Nizib, the permanent state of emergency and mobilization and the resulting enforced conscription and heavy taxation had united the peoples of Lebanon, both Christian and Muslim, Maronite and Druze, against Mehmed Ali.²³ To Palmerston, this was a priceless opportunity.

The devil in the detail here is the fact that the French were the historical protectors of the Maronites, the Catholic Christians of Lebanon, who had now risen against the French-backed Mehmed Ali. The paşa of Egypt's brutal suppression of the Maronites left France in a quandary, and tarnished Mehmed Ali's 'civilized' image in Paris. The news of violence, or, 'horrors committed by the [Egyptian] soldiers', that arrived in Paris would lead Thiers, despite all his support of Mehmed Ali, to question 'if it was worthwhile to agitate the world for a Barbarian', as he put it.²⁴

On the other side of the Channel, Palmerston wrote to Ponsonby: 'I will fairly own that till this insurrection broke out I did not clearly see my way as to the means by which we could drive Mehemet [Ali] out of Syria.'²⁵ In early July, he managed to break the opposition of Clarendon, Holland, and Melbourne, after threatening the prime minister that he would resign from his post. As the news from Syria garnered public support to Palmerston's cause and fearing that the foreign secretary's resignation would dissolve the cabinet, Melbourne caved.²⁶

Palmerston made one final effort to rein in France, by reminding Thiers of his false cause and arguing that Mehmed Ali was 'nothing but an ignorant barbarian', and that he was 'look[ing] upon his boasted civilisation as the arrantest humbug.'²⁷ As it became clear that all doors for an Anglo-French settlement were closed, a week later, on 15 July, leaving French Ambassador Guizot in the dark, the British foreign secretary led the meetings in London that resulted in the signing of the Convention for the Pacification of the Levant by the representatives of the four Powers and the Ottoman plenipotentiary Şekib Efendi.

²² Webster, *Palmerston*, 689.

²³ See Ch. 10 for the details.

²⁴ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 123.

²⁵ Webster, *Palmerston*, 689.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 690.

²⁷ Temperley, *Near East*, 89; Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 303.

With the convention, the four Powers and the Porte agreed that Mehmed Ali would be given hereditary rule in Egypt as well as the fortress of Acre (Sidon), provided that he accepted this proposal within ten days. Otherwise, the offer of Acre would be withdrawn by the sultan. If he refused the second offer, then the future of Egypt would be decided by the sultan and the signatories of the convention. To ensure Mehmed Ali's submission to the sultan, a secret protocol was signed to assume the right to coerce the paşa by force if necessary. Moreover, the signatories agreed that, in times of peace, the Straits were to be closed in accordance with the ancient rights of the sultan, thus ending one dispute, for the time being, that had been central to the Eastern Question since at least the French invasion of Egypt in 1798.²⁸ Thus were laid the ground rules for the first joint Great Power intervention in the Levant with the consent and active participation of the Porte.

The 1840 Intervention

When the news of the London convention reached Cairo on 20 July, Mehmed Ali was enraged, 'very vocal, not at all downcast'. He anxiously declared that he was going to order Ibrahim to invade Asia Minor. The French consul, Adrien-Louis Cochelet (1788–1858), tried to calm him, telling him that such an offensive measure would be catastrophic for Egypt. France would then have to side with the other Powers in subduing him, which would result in the paşa's ultimate defeat.²⁹

Ironically, the news of the convention was not received any more calmly in Paris. King Louis Philippe was just as incensed.³⁰ He directed his anger at the Austrians and the Prussians, believing that they were the weakest links of the chain: 'You want war: you will have it, and if necessary, I will muzzle the tiger [of revolution]. It knows me, and I know how to play with it. We shall see if it respects you as it respects me.'³¹

The French king used one of the shared fears of the European monarchs—revolution—against another—total war in Europe—to turn the Quadruple Alliance from taking offensive action without consulting France, thus fuelling a new crisis in the Rhine. Liberal and revolutionary French journals instantly began to call for war, one writing that 'if the government is arming, it is right to do so',³² and the other forewarning: 'we are on the verge of war.'³³

Adolphe Thiers was likewise indignant at the news, calling the convention 'an injurious procedure' against France, because it was isolated on an issue on which it

²⁸ Sergey Goryanof, *Rus Arşiv Belgelerine Göre Boğazlar ve Şark Meselesi* (Istanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat, 2006), 110, 112–13.

²⁹ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 92–3. ³⁰ BOA TS.MA.e 419/6; Caquet, *The Orient*, 212.

³¹ *Ibid.* ³² *Journal des Débats*, 31 July 1840; cf. Caquet, *The Orient*, 213.

³³ *Le National*, 28 July 1840; cf. Caquet, *The Orient*, 213.

should have been the first to be consulted, as the ‘first power in the Mediterranean basin’.³⁴ But he had utterly misread—or at least wrongly framed—the situation. It was precisely because of the fearful prospect of the French becoming the first power in the Mediterranean after the occupation of Algiers, and the establishment of dominant influence over Tunis, Egypt, and now Syria up to the Taurus mountains, that the other four Powers, particularly Britain, were looking to take a more independent course of action from Paris.

From the moment Thiers heard of the convention, he endeavoured to frustrate it. He believed that its ‘failure of coercive action’ would drive the four Powers ‘back to France to solve the Eastern Question’.³⁵ He strove to end the uprising in Syria first, as it would deprive the Quadruple Alliance and the Porte of vital clout, and save France and Mehmed Ali from great embarrassment. Even though Ibrahim Paşa had put down the uprising by July 1840, in August it bubbled up again in different parts of Mount Lebanon.

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The renewal of the Lebanese uprising was to a considerable degree the work of the British dragoman Richard Wood (1806–1900), who had been dispatched from Istanbul to Beirut by Mustafa Reşid and Ponsonby in early July 1840. They invested Wood in an official capacity with the responsibility for ‘the regulation and settlement of the actual affairs of Mount Lebanon’.³⁶ Having lived in Syria on and off since 1832, and since he could speak the native languages (both Turkish and Arabic), Wood was familiar with local realities and sensitivities in the Levant. He was confident that the Lebanese would be well disposed to receive his aid.³⁷ In fact, they had already collectively reached out to the British authorities ‘to rescue them from the destruction with which Mehmet Ali threaten[s] them now’.³⁸

At first, Wood kept a low profile and made contact with key figures in the mountain. Then, after the London Convention, he orchestrated the Lebanese movement, along with Ottoman agents such as Tahir Bey, as well as the Russian consul in Beirut, Konstantin Mikhailovich Bazili (1809–84).³⁹ They circulated several proclamations which promised the Lebanese the restitution of their ancient privileges as well as the introduction of new rights—equality between

³⁴ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 98. ³⁵ *Ibid.* 104–9.

³⁶ Ramazan Ata, ‘Osmanlı Kaynaklarına Göre 1839–1841 arası Osmanlı Mısır İlişkileri ve Düvel-i Muazzama’ (PhD thesis, Ankara University, 2011), 178; *RWEC*, 7, 20; G. H. Bolsover, ‘Lord Ponsonby and the Eastern Question, 1833–39’, *Slavonic and East European Review* 13(37) (July 1934): 98–118, at 104; ‘Richard Wood Statement of Services’, 8 Aug. 1846, SAMECO Richard Wood Papers, Box 7.

³⁷ Ponsonby to Wood, 28 June 1840; Wood to Ponsonby, 3 July 1840, *RWEC*, 146–7.

³⁸ ‘English translation of letter from the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon to Ponsonby asking for British aid against Mehemet Ali’, DUR Ponsonby Papers, GRE/E606.

³⁹ K. M. Bazili, *Siriya i Palestina pod tureckim pravitel'stvom v istoricheskom i politicheskom otnosheniyax* (Moscow: Izd-vo vostochnoi lit-ry, 1962), 177. On the transfer of the Russian consulate from Jaffa to Beirut, Butenev to Nesselrode, 13 Nov. 1839, AVPRI f. 149, o. 502/1, d. 397, ll. 1–3, 20–29. See also ‘Copie d’un rapport du Consul Basili à M. l’Envoyé de Bouténéf en date de Yaffa le 8/20 Septembre 1839’, AVPRI f. 149, o. 502/1, d. 397, ll. 20–29.

Muslims and non-Muslims, as heralded by the Gülhane Edict of 1839—if they directed their obedience to the sultan. They announced that the British fleet was ordered to help the Syrians, and the Porte's arms and ammunition supplies were on their way.⁴⁰ Wood himself helped distribute 84,000 muskets to the inhabitants. A new insurrection duly erupted.

Yet it did not break Mehmed Ali's resistance. At the end of July 1840, when Mustafa Reşid officially communicated to the paşa the 15 July Convention, the latter refused to accept its conditions.⁴¹ In his calculation, the likelihood of a Great Power intervention in Syria was very small because it would be an invitation for a general war in Europe—France being on the one side, and the remaining four Powers on the other—a risk the Powers would not take for the East. However, when the paşa received intelligence of Anglo-Austrian fleet movements toward the eastern Mediterranean, he sent an agent to Istanbul hoping for bilateral conciliation within the Ottoman Empire, declaring that he would agree to abandon Acre. This time Mustafa Reşid refused to settle, believing that he had the unconditional support of the Powers behind him now, and that he could eliminate Mehmed Ali for good.

In early September 1840, after an imperial council meeting, the Ottoman foreign minister did what he had determined to do and got Mehmed Ali removed as governor of Egypt. In his place, İzzet Mehmed Paşa was nominated as the governor of Acre and Egypt.⁴² Shortly after, Mustafa Reşid sent an announcement to the representatives of the Powers, declaring that since Mehmed Ali did not consent to the pacific proposals of the signatories of the July 1840 Convention, it had become necessary to withdraw him from Egypt and, as a prelude to coercive measures, to proceed to a rigorous blockade of all the ports of Egypt and Syria by means of the Ottoman and Allied squadrons.⁴³

From mid-August onward, the military support pledged to the Lebanese began to arrive. The Syrian coasts were blockaded by 19 British, 7 Ottoman, and 4 Austrian ships.⁴⁴ Around 5,380 Ottoman soldiers landed, along with 232 cannons, under the command of the *serasker* and interim governor İzzet Mehmed Paşa, while the Prussian co-commander of the expedition, General Augustus Giacomo Jochmus (1808–81) marched with 22,000 men (some of them British, under the command of Colonel Hugh Rose).⁴⁵

⁴⁰ 'Richard Wood Statement of Services', 8 Aug. 1846, SAMECO Richard Wood Papers, Box 7.

⁴¹ Kodaman, *Les Ambassades*, 142. ⁴² Ibid. 143.

⁴³ Moustapha Reschid, 'Traduction d'une note officielle concernant le bloc de l'Égypte et de la Syrie', 16 Sept. 1840, AMAE Papiers Desages 60PAAP/37/87.

⁴⁴ Mansel, *Levant*, 95. On 16 Sept. Egypt was also blockaded, and the consuls of the four Powers left Alexandria. 'Secret Memorandum by Lieutenant-General Augustus Jochmus on the war in Syria', 12 May 1841, DUR Ponsonby Papers, GRE/E346.

⁴⁵ Defter II, 67-b. Richard Wood, Statement of Services, 8 Aug. 1846, SAMECO, Richard Wood Papers, Box 7.

Thiers tried to impede the intervention by dispatching to Mount Lebanon the Lazarist abbot Étienne, who had considerable influence over the local Lebanese Christians, in order to ‘calm angry hearts’ and convey ‘promises of guarantees and concessions’ on the part of Mehmed Ali. Thiers moreover sent the young Count Alexandre Colonna Walewski (1810–68) to Cairo and Istanbul to arrange for a bilateral settlement. The latter suggested that the paşa give the inhabitants of Lebanon certain guarantees, ‘under the superior guarantee of France’, perhaps through a Gülhane Edict of his own, to counter the influence of the agents of the other Powers on the spot.⁴⁶ The paşa of Egypt followed this suggestion, and promised the Lebanese the return of their ancient privileges and the introduction of new liberties.⁴⁷ But it was too little, too late.

The bombardment of Beirut by the Quadruple Alliance and the Ottoman ships began on 6 September. In Paris, the news reverberated through ‘every French heart’.⁴⁸ The country having been ‘seriously armed’, and the fortification of Paris intensified, newspapers considered that ‘[t]he answer to the question “Are we to have peace or war?” was more doubtful than ever’.⁴⁹ The *Courrier de Rouen* was the most daring: ‘war, immediate war, is the only means of conserving our honour.’⁵⁰

In mid-September, the republican poet Edgar Quinet (1803–75) wrote that ‘[a] coalition similar to that of 1815 was formed against France in 1840’, just as the ashes of Napoleon had set for Paris and just when France was once again about to confront a Quadruple Alliance. ‘[The ashes] are approaching; they are going to enter the port. The earth quivers. Who do you think will, in the name of all, receive the first and greet these spoils?’⁵¹

Despite all the emotional intensity of the time, Thiers knew that France was not ready for war: ‘Our navy is excellent but not large enough; she would win the first battle and lose the last.’⁵² Nonetheless, he did not withdraw his support for Mehmed Ali’s cause. Principled as his policy might have been, it cost him his ministry in the end.

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The disagreement between France and the four Powers (and the Porte) terminated only when the moderates who were against war prevailed in Paris. Amidst the chauvinistic ceremonials, private intimidation, public displays of military power, and heedless war songs, one such moderate was the conservative French writer, poet, and parliamentarian Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869). He had travelled in the Levant, in Egypt and Syria in 1832–3, and had some knowledge of the

⁴⁶ Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 108–9.

⁴⁷ Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men*, 303.

⁴⁸ Cunningham, *RWEC*, 20.

⁴⁹ ‘Paris’, *Journal des débats*, 13 Sept. 1840; see also ‘Eastern Affairs’, *The Times*, 14 Sept. 1840.

⁵⁰ Caquet, *The Orient*, 213.

⁵¹ Edgar Quinet, *1815 et 1840* (Paris: Paulin, 1840), 6–8.

⁵² Charles-Roux, *Thiers*, 231.

region. Like most Saint-Simonians and liberals in France, he too thought highly of Mehmed Ali, at least in July 1839, as ‘the missionary of civilisation in the east’ who resuscitated Arabia.⁵³ Yet in 1840, amid the heated warmongering, he adopted a calmer voice, and called his countryman to serenity, peace, and reason.

Aside from his parliamentary speeches, in four articles titled ‘La Question d’Orient, la guerre, le ministère’, written in late August, Lamartine severely criticized Thiers and his line of action. He rejected the idea that the cause of Mehmed Ali was the cause of France, reminding his audience that the Syrians, and ‘most importantly the Maronites, a healthy, vigorous, Catholic population’, viewed the rule of Mehmed Ali ‘with horror’, and were fighting for freedom from his ‘despotism, the upsurge in barbarism’.⁵⁴ Lamartine argued that Mehmed Ali’s cause did not constitute ‘a very holy cause to be served, a very vital interest to be defended, a very immense result to be obtained’ for France, whose entry into war against the Quadruple Alliance and the sultan would be ‘monstrous’ and ‘treason’.⁵⁵ He invited Thiers to resign, and suggested the formation of ‘a more consistent and more cautious cabinet [for] the very difficult task of rectifying the situation and putting France back in her place’, among the ranks of the Concert of Europe from which she had been excluded.⁵⁶

What distinguished Lamartine from many other moderates was his remarks on the Eastern Question (*la question d’Orient*). This question had been interpreted erroneously, he argued. It should have been seen, not as a source of conflict, but as an opportunity for profitable political and economic gains for Europe. It could furnish France with an excuse for peace and the establishment of lasting alliances, thus guaranteeing her future in the European balance system. Each of the three Powers—Britain, Russia, and Austria—had vital interests in the Eastern Question. Russia had a desire to expand toward Istanbul. Britain’s interests rested on communication with India. Finally, Austria strove to preserve her interests on the Danube. ‘France’, Lamartine argued, ‘had only an interest in the balance and freedom of the seas.’⁵⁷

The French writer further maintained that, instead of antagonizing Britain and Russia, France could follow a more conciliatory and cooperative policy and seek the establishment of ‘a general protectorate of the West over the East’.⁵⁸ This protectorate would respect the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, but it would be:

⁵³ Lamartine, *La Question*, 151.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 189.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 188.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 186.

⁵⁷ Lamartine, *Vues, discours et articles sur la question d’Orient* (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1840), 19. Also cited in Andrew Arsan, ‘“There Is, in the Heart of Asia, . . . an Entirely French Population”: France, Mount Lebanon and the Workings of Affective Empire in the Mediterranean, 1839–1920’, in *French Mediterraneans: Transnational and Imperial Histories*, ed. Patricia M. E. Lorcin and Todd Shepard (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 76–100.

⁵⁸ Lamartine, *Vues*, 71.

[a] special protectorate of each of the four Great Powers over the four great divisions of the [Ottoman] empire which interest them most immediately. The Black Sea and its mouth to the Russian protectorate; the shores of the Adriatic to the Austrian protectorate; the centre of Asia Minor, Rhodes, Cyprus, Syria and the Euphrates to the protectorate of France; finally, Egypt and the passage of Suez to the protectorate of England.

Lamartine called this ‘negative patriotism’, and argued that it ought to prevail over ‘malicious and jealous contests’ among the Powers. A general peace and broad and lasting equilibrium in Europe ought to be built on the equitable and loyal distribution of interests to the satisfaction of *all*. It entailed ‘the union of the East and the West’, joined together by the knot of politics and commerce in a free Mediterranean which would guarantee the peace of the world, linking Europe to Asia—a dream, Lamartine added, that he shared with Talleyrand and Napoleon, ‘those two dreamers!’⁵⁹ France’s global position could be bolstered by this ‘new European political system’.

Lamartine’s account of the Eastern Question and call for peace signified a key aspect of the ongoing crisis for at least two reasons. On the one hand, more generally speaking, he invited the French and the other Great Powers to extend to other parts of the world the system of balance and equilibrium they had established in Europe—in this specific case the Ottoman Empire. This would preserve the territorial integrity of the sultan’s domains and thus eliminate a major threat to European peace, while at the same time peacefully securing the interests of European Powers. In other words, he sought to reconcile what might at first sight seem to be two opposites: the expansionist motives of Napoleon with the pacific nature of the Vienna Order. He invited the Powers to repurpose the Eastern Question as an instrument of condominium, not dangerous competition, still an enabler of Great Power intervention in the east, but not a trigger of war among them.

The other paramount implication of Lamartine’s account was more urgent. He, and those statesmen and writers who thought alike, helped stop the emotional slide to war. All the sabre-rattling proved in the end to be intolerable for Louis-Philippe I. He could no longer risk international war, nor allow revolutionary propaganda that might spawn unrest in the country. He listened to the moderates: ‘Nothing in the world will force me into [war],’ he declared, swallowing his earlier words on releasing ‘the tiger of the revolution’. The reversal of his policy meant vetoing Adolphe Thiers’s conduct and forcing the prime minister and foreign minister to announce his resignation on 22 October.⁶⁰ One week later, he

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ M. [François] Guizot, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de mon temps*, vol. 5 (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1862), 404.

appointed in Thiers's place another moderate, conservative, and Anglophile figure, François Guizot, the very man who had popularized the idea of civilization in France. Guizot was of the belief that 'the question of Syria was not a legitimate war case,' and guided Paris to a more pacific policy thereafter.⁶¹

On hearing the news, the agents of the Quadruple Alliance and the Porte were elated. The Ottoman chargé d'affaires Yanko Mavroyeni communicated the news from Paris to Foreign Minister Mustafa Reşid: 'the demission of Thiers, who has confused matters both in France and abroad with his revolutionary principles, will be favourable for the maintenance of peace.'⁶² This signified the complete diplomatic isolation of Mehmed Ali, and meant only one thing—the ultimate, diplomatic victory belonged to the sultan. Palmerston and Metternich became the men of the hour in Europe. Now they could mediate between Cairo and Istanbul for an almost unhindered settlement. But, in the Ottoman Empire, a different fate awaited Mustafa Reşid.

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When the castle of Acre, one of the Egyptian strongholds, was unexpectedly surrendered to the Allied forces on 3 November, Mehmed Ali ordered Ibrahim Paşa to evacuate Syria.⁶³ The Egyptian armed resistance was now broken on the ground. The diplomatic resistance persisted. The talks between the signatories of the July 1840 Convention and Mehmed Ali over the terms of the settlement with the sultan continued for five months. All the while, Mehmed Ali continued to ask for hereditary rights at the least, and played all his trump cards, seeking, on the one hand, to overthrow the victorious cabinet in Istanbul and, on the other, looking to use Druze chiefs as an instrument to suppress the uprisings in Syria.⁶⁴

Mustafa Reşid was stubbornly opposed to Mehmed Ali's restoration as the paşa of Egypt. But by early March 1841, he had lost his popularity and credibility in the eyes of the sultan. When the fiscal results of the new tax system under the *Tanzimat* had proven to be disastrous, a group allegedly linked to Mehmed Ali, his steward Necib Paşa, as well as Valide Sultan and her agent, Rıza, found ample opportunity to oppose Mustafa Reşid and the Gülhane Edict even though the latter two had endorsed it at first. The Ottoman foreign minister was declared the culprit. It was he who had spearheaded the tax reforms and the signing of the recent commercial treaties with the European Powers, which were considered the main causes of the treasury's woes.

Cornered by this newly formed camp, Mustafa Reşid wrote a secret memoir to Metternich in a frantic effort to ask for the Powers' aid. Things had changed since

⁶¹ Ibid. 390; Alfred Schlicht, 'La France et le Liban dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle. Influences occidentales dans l'histoire orientale', *Francia* 11 (1984): 459–507, at 499.

⁶² Mavroyeni to Reşid Paşa, 3 Nov. 1840, BOA HR.SYS 965/35.

⁶³ Wood to Ponsonby, 4 Nov. 1840, *RWEC*, 180–81. ⁶⁴ See Ch. 10.

1839, Reşid complained, due to the cessation of the critical position adopted by the young Sultan Abdülmecid against the ancient order, as well as the sultan's proclivity 'little by little to do anything that comes to his mind without reflection and without consulting anyone'. The new institutions of the *Tanzimat* were not thriving, and there was a tendency to return to the old regime. Mustafa Reşid was concerned that his post and life were at stake. He warned that the return to the old system might lead to the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, whose eventual disintegration could result in a European war. Therefore, in the last days of his ministry, he called for the Powers to actively intervene in the domestic politics of the Porte, if necessary by anchoring warships in the Bosphorus against the ulema and the fanatical statesmen 'for a decade or so' until the new system consolidated.⁶⁵

But no such aid came from the agents of the Powers, who possibly had difficulty fathoming the foreign minister's unexpected call. On 29 March 1841, Mustafa Reşid was dismissed by the sultan, while the negotiations with Mehmed Ali were still under way. A British agent reported that this happened after an imperial council meeting at which Reşid told the *müftü* (the chief ulema) to keep the preaching of the *şer-i şerif* (holy justice according to the prescriptions of the Qur'an) out of the code of commerce. Blasphemy was committed, and the extraordinary disturbance in the assembly led, first, to the *müftü* and the *kazasker* resigning—a course from which they were then dissuaded with great difficulty by Rıza and Said Paşas. The same evening Grand Vizier Rauf spoke to the sultan in the name of the ministers against the conduct of Reşid. Infuriated by the news and long alarmed by the foreign minister's popularity, Abdülmecid I made up his mind.⁶⁶

Mustafa Reşid was thereupon appointed as ambassador to Paris. His dismissal from office eliminated the last major obstacle to an Ottoman–Egyptian agreement with the mediation of the Powers. After a series of ambassadorial meetings, a deal was finally made in London in May 1841.⁶⁷ Mehmed Ali's gain was limited: he was granted hereditary rights, and the sultan appointed Necib, Mehmed Ali's agent in Istanbul, as the paşa of Damascus. But the agreement restrained Mehmed Ali's military to 20,000 men, and fixed a tribute to be paid by the paşa to the sultan annually.⁶⁸ If Mehmed Ali or any of his descendants were to break the conditions, the hereditary government from Egypt would be subject to revocation.⁶⁹

Moreover, Mehmed Ali agreed to recognize, 'without reservation, that all the treaties and all the laws of the Empire will have to apply to Egypt as to any other

⁶⁵ 'Traduction d'un mémoire sur la situation actuelle de l'Empire Ottoman', attached to Stürmer to Metternich, Constantinople, 10 Mar. (N472E), HHStA, StA, Türkei VI, 80; cf. Šedivý, 'Mustafa Reşid', 282.

⁶⁶ 'Note on the fall of Reschid', n.d., DUR Ponsonby Papers GRE/E506. See also Šedivý, 'Mustafa Reşid Pasha's Fall'.

⁶⁷ BOA HR.SYS 936/1.

⁶⁸ BOA HR.SYS 936/2.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

province of this empire', which secured for Britain and other European Powers the privileges of the commercial agreements signed with the Porte since 1838. The paşa would comply with the orders addressed to him by the Porte to regulate the system of the levy and the construction of warships in Egypt. He would also place his land and naval forces under the rule of the sultan. That is, he would entirely submit to the authority of Istanbul, while at the same time giving up the Taurus mountains, Crete, and Syria.⁷⁰

The aspirations of the paşa of Egypt, despite the French support he received until October 1840, were thus quelled by the Quadruple Alliance and the Porte. It was neither Hüsrev nor Mustafa Reşid alone that haunted the paşa's dreams, but a fluid coalition that the two initiated though they were both excluded from this coalition eventually. Mustafa Reşid played an Eastern version of the 'civilization' game with Mehmed Ali to enlist the intervention of the Powers on behalf of the sultan, not to fend off their encroachments. Yet it was Sultan Abdülmecid I who made the final deal with Mehmed Ali for the stability of his empire.

All these events overlapped with a moment when the idea of civilization was being used more explicitly and vocally in European international thought to justify interventions, wars, and colonization in the East. While Britain fought China by herself in 1839–41 and together with France in 1856–60 in the two Opium Wars, or when the French looked to suppress the resistance of the Algerians from the late 1830s onwards, the term 'civilization' frequently appeared in diplomatic correspondence, parliamentary speeches, and public writings as a way to underpin empire and imperial violence.⁷¹

In the Levant, too, in 1840–41, during the intervention of the Powers and the Porte in Syria, it served as an instrument to silence France, end her support of 'the barbarism' of Mehmed Ali, and endorse the cause of the sultan. After the Navarino intervention of 1827, a new discursive practice thus fully fed into the transimperial culture of security, owing to the fact that the Eastern Question came to be seen as a question of whether to establish a joint, 'peaceful' protectorate of the West over the East. Then began a new history of concerted, co-interventionism in the East, whereby the Powers considered intervention a 'right' and a 'duty', not an 'untoward event'. From then on, the weight of the Concert's influence over the politics of the Levant dramatically increased.

With the end of the so-called second 'Eastern crisis' and the 1840–1 intervention, peace was perhaps settled in the wider Ottoman world, the dynasty of Osman and the family of Mehmed Ali were protected by inter-imperial agreements, and the threats to the Vienna Order were finally thwarted. The paşa of Egypt would tell

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Andrew Phillips, 'Saving Civilization from Empire: Belligerency, Pacificism and the Two Faces of Civilization during the Second Opium War', *European Journal of International Relations* 18(5) (Oct. 2011): 5–27.

his European correspondents in Alexandria that the Eastern Question was now 'radically terminated'.⁷² But in Syria, and particularly Mount Lebanon, which was the centre of the hostilities in the first place, violence erupted immediately after the British, Prussian, and Ottoman expeditionary forces left the country. The European Great Powers intervened once again in the name of 'civilization' and 'humanity', and in order to address the never-ending Eastern Question. The Levant descended into a new cycle of inter-imperialized civil wars.

⁷² BOA HR.SYS 936/1/118.