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## Creating a Nation in Adversity: Advent of Egyptian Nationalism in British Occupation

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CREATING A NATION IN ADVERSITY: ADVENT OF EGYPTIAN  
NATIONALISM IN BRITISH OCCUPATION

By

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Bachelor of Science in Education

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2006

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the

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## **ABSTRACT**

Nationalism is the process through which the groupings of ethnicity, nationhood, and statehood successfully merge into a nation-state. This study seeks to identify the cause of nationalism in Egypt and its characteristics.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Ottoman and French Egypt: Myths of a weakened nation .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Ottoman Egypt .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Muhammad Ali: modernization vs nationalism.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Nationalism vs. modernization .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Chapter 3: British Occupation and Dinshaway.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Dinshaway .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Conclusions .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Vita.....</b>	<b>63</b>

## Introduction

Nationalism has become, for many, the most powerful political force in the world. It is a political and social construct that is a phenomenon of the last two centuries that continues to evolve today as both a creative and destructive force; “the past is its inspiration, the future its aim. Between, it creates and destroys, all in equal measure.”<sup>1</sup> Nationalism is the grouping of ethnicity, nationhood and the state. It is the combination of the legal concept of the state and the exercise of its political rights with the legitimacy added of a common culture and history. It is the reason why dynastic states have turned into nation-states and destroyed the world-system of traditional imperialism. Empires such as the Dutch, Russian/Soviet, and the British have dwindled away or died because of its influence.

There is need in the modern age for political unity within a landscape of cultural diversity that still makes nationalism a force to be reckoned with today. The past century has seen a steady rise in both the number of nation-states and new nationalist movements within existing states. Events such as Balkan independence, home rule in Ireland, the emergence of the Republic of Southern Sudan and the re-emergence of strong nationalist feeling in Egypt with the toppling of President Mubarak in Egypt, among others, provide scholars with a rich amount of material to grapple with. The dramatic continuation of Egyptian nationalism, in particular, holds the world enraptured.

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<sup>1</sup> Harris, Erika. *Nationalism: theories and cases*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 3.

Nationalism is not simply the manifestation of an independent or modern country that declares independence or the end of authoritarianism. It occurs when a group of people that consider themselves to be part of a community of parity and shared interests. Arthur Goldschmidt states in his "*Brief History of Egypt*," that the definition of nationalism includes the idea that "the rights of citizenship should be enjoyed by all peoples who lived in Egypt. These nationalists refuted all foreign charges of xenophobia or religious fanaticism"<sup>2</sup> But then the question arises: who or what group is responsible for Egyptian escalation of nationalist feelings? When were the first noteworthy and significant steps towards this goal? How does Egypt fit into these nationalist molds?

The nation of Egypt eludes a rigid definition. Geographically, Egypt is the land bridge between Asia and Africa, but defies grouping with either. Culturally, it is a Middle Eastern country with a Muslim and Arab majority. Furthermore, Egypt is a leading state in the wider region of the Arab and Muslim world. However, Egypt is often considered to be in a category all of its own by Egyptians and outsiders alike. Over two thousand years separates its modern age from the ancient Egyptian empire that includes a history riddled with attack, invasion, and conquest. The Hyksos, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Ottomans, French and the British, among even more, all have a history of invasion and conquest involving Egypt that placed the region under the rule of outsiders.

Yet Egypt maintained a well-defined border, unlike its compromised neighbors, that evolved into the nation-state of today. This study seeks to identify what made Egypt

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<sup>2</sup> Goldschmidt, A., Johnson, A. J., & Salmoni, B. A. (2005). *Re-envisioning Egypt 1919-1952*. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 95.



into a nation-state, the events and characteristics manifested to create an Egyptian nationalism identity. It will lay out the Egyptian narrative of imperialism that eventually led to the creation of an 'Egypt for Egyptians' nationalism that culminated in the Dinshaway Incident of 1906. Identified already as the spark of anti-British feeling in Egypt, this study claims that Dinshaway was synonymous with beginning of nationalism in Egypt as well.

Why study Egyptian nationalism? It was a nationalist movement that recalled its Pharaonic past that gave Egypt its prestige and singular character, separating it from other states in the region. The Egyptian case is studied thoroughly as a result because of Egypt's prevalence in Middle Eastern history and its unique colonial history compared to its neighbors.<sup>3</sup> Combined with the resurgence of a nationalist spirit that has continued since the Revolution of January 25 has muddied the waters of what constitutes and spurs nationalist movements.

To begin a study such as this it is necessary to first define the theories of nationalism. Historians and political scientists struggle over the meaning, origin, and integral elements of nationalism. Most theories fall broadly into two categories, although a continuum between them exists. The question that dominated nationalist narratives is when did the nation come into existence? Most historians believe that either nations were always in existence in some form or they are invented modern constructs. Authors such as Erika Harris and Anthony Smith believe that current scholarship is too binary and argue that different schools of thought explain different nationalist narratives. Ernest

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<sup>3</sup> Egypt as a unique colony refers to the unofficial and meandering policy of the British : 1882-1914.

Gellner also belongs to this grey area by stating, “That some nations possess genuine ancient navels, some have navels invented for them by their own nationalist propaganda and some are all together navel less.”<sup>4</sup> The first category, the atavistic theory, holds that nationalism is a natural occurring phenomenon. The nation is always in existence, regardless of the contemporary state of historical affairs. Prior to the launching of an active nationalist movement, the nation is merely “sleeping” and waiting for the appropriate conditions to awaken from its primordial slumber and rise to its nation-state form.

The atavistic or primordial school of thought is perhaps the most recognizable and most easily understandable to Western visitors to Egypt. Wherever one turns one sees the reminder that Egypt was once a powerful empire. A hearkening to a Golden Age is threaded throughout- the currency, roadways, and monuments that present images of the pyramids, pharaohs and hieroglyphics. This romantic view has proven dangerous as it over-simplifies a complex history. As Edward Said noted, this viewpoint is a way of ‘othering’ Egypt as something to be collected, rather than viewing it as a living entity.<sup>5</sup> In his landmark work, he argued that a long tradition of romanticized images of Asia and the Middle East in Western culture had served as an implicit justification for European and American colonial and imperial ambitions.<sup>6</sup> Orientalism, as he termed

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<sup>4</sup> Gellner, E. (1997). *Nationalism*. Washington Square, N.Y.: New York University Press, 96.

<sup>5</sup> Jasanoff, M. (2005). *Edge of empire: lives, culture, and conquest in the East, 1750-1850*. New York: Knopf, 64.

<sup>6</sup>Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 3.

it, was the instrument of imperialism designed to secure colonization, and documented by Said, Jansanoff, and Macfie, among others.<sup>7</sup>

A piece of art standing in bustling Cairo today illustrates well this study's viewpoint on atavism in the nationalist narrative. A granite statue commissioned to commemorate the triumph of nationalism in Egypt named "Egypt Awakening" depicts a standing woman with a hand resting on a sphinx, a symbol illustrating Egypt's Pharaonic past. However, another aspect of this statue shows that Egypt has other historical narratives to offer. The woman standing next to the sphinx has her hand on the sphinx as if she was being supported by it. She wears a simple chador, symbolizing the Muslim majority that marks modern Egypt. She lifts the veil from her face showing the self-determination of Egypt while celebrating women's ascension in the new nationalist age. Atavism is a foundation instead of a line of continuity.

It is the stance of this thesis that nationalism uses atavism or antiquity as a foundation or adhesive for a nationalist narrative, but is a modern construct. Modernist thought as represented by Immanuel Wallerstein, states that nationalism is an inevitable product of the new world system as ushered in by European colonial powers. Instead of an Egypt awakening to a glorious past that needs to be restored, Egyptian nationalism is an immersion in Enlightenment ideology and thereby a product of modernity. In contrast, Liah Greenfeld views modernity because of nationalism itself. Either way, modernism and nationalism are irrevocably linked in these theoretical perspectives.

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<sup>7</sup> Macfie, A. L. (2000). *Orientalism: a reader*. New York: New York University Press.

Chapter 1 will attempt to explain the reasons for European imperialism in Egypt and the myths created to justify it. Indeed, the rise of travel by Europeans to the Orient during their own nationalist evolution demonstrated a romantic view of Egypt that was, in their view, no longer in existence. Sir Henry Blount went to Egypt to find remnants of the past rather than looking at the present, “because Egypt is held to have been the fountain of all science...therefore I did hope to find some spark of those cinders not yet put out.”<sup>8</sup> He and other Orientalist travelers, including Napoleon blamed the state of Egypt on political and religious factors, rather than economic.<sup>9</sup> This study will highlight this fallacy.

The year of Napoleon’s invasion, 1798, is the earmarked year used by historians as the advent of the modern Middle East.<sup>10</sup> This is due to Napoleon’s importation of the French Revolution’s Enlightenment ideology about egalitarianism and the beginning of European imperialism in the Middle East. Napoleon cloaked his invasion by declaring Egypt liberated and that it was no longer under the Ottoman yoke; “I came only to restore your rights from the hand of the oppressors and I am more of a servant of God, may He be praised and exulted, than the mamluks.”<sup>11</sup> However, he did not declare an Egypt for

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<sup>8</sup> MacLean, G. M. (2004). *The rise of oriental travel: English visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Bell, G. L., & Bell, F. E. (1927). *The letters of Gertrude Bell*. New York: Boni and Liveright.

Lane, E. W. (1973). *An account of the manners and customs of the modern Egyptians* (5th (standard) ed.). New York: Dover Publications.

<sup>10</sup> This date is under scholarly debate, however, because it uses a European imperialist date on Middle Eastern history. See Peter Gran’s *Beyond Eurocentrism; A New View of Modern World History*.

<sup>11</sup> Jabartī-Al & Hathaway, J. (2009). *Al-Jabartī’s history of Egypt*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 180.

Egyptians, rather an Egypt for Napoleon. Is it a true importation of modernity when it is not sincere? Juan Cole's work on Napoleon's invasion contrasts the views of the French versus Abd al-Rahman Al-Jabarti, a Cairean patrician, and chronicler: "The French remembered joyous Muslim throngs celebrating their liberation from the beylicate during the day. Al-Jabarti was skeptical of Napoleon from the beginning- mocking the Arabic mistakes of the pamphlet and noting that French Revolution aims were French in nature, and not meant to be truly egalitarian and global.<sup>12</sup> Al Jabarti remembered a resentful populace, its wealth plundered and women raped, forced to act normally during the day and retreating to their homes in the evening to brood."<sup>13</sup> If this was the importation of Enlightenment ideology to Egypt, it was superficial and temporary, at best.

The oscillating pattern of Egypt's modern history gives frustration to those attempting to trace it. Previous historiography by various authors have chosen Muhammad Ali as the father of nationalism in Egypt; however, more refined research highlighted in Chapter 2 seems to point to later periods of time and to other people that led to the creation of Egyptian nationalism. Muhammad Ali and the dynasty he created was not legitimate Egyptian rulers, but rather an independent Albanian dynasty ruling Egypt in place of direct Ottoman rule. Their modernizing reforms benefited the Muhammad Ali family, not Egyptians themselves. Modernization did indeed come with Muhammad Ali, but not nationalism. These are not synonymous terms.

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<sup>12</sup> Jabartī, Al & Hathaway, J. (2009). *Al-Jabartī's history of Egypt*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 204.

<sup>13</sup> Cole, J. R. (2007). *Napoleon's Egypt: invading the Middle East*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 114.

Chapter 3 sees the beginning of nationalism in Egypt as education, literacy and a robust press were tools used to fill this gap and are integral components, identified by such authors as Benedict Anderson. A special role is given to the educated and self-interested elites that manufacture a national identity constructed for challenging the current power. Benedict Anderson sees nationalism as a construct of the imagination, that “it invents nations where they do not exist, an imagined sovereignty” unto itself. This study asserts that nationalism was a weapon used to combat imperialism or as asserted by Tom Nairn, as a means of catching up to industrialized, modern states.<sup>14</sup> When imperialism came to Egypt, it begged the question to be asked, “‘how did we fall behind the West’ and ‘how do we compensate for this gap?’

It is the argument of this study that Egyptian nationalism is a product of modernity in that it was a reaction against European imperialism and the need to compensate for the ascendancy of the West. Although others rebelled against European intervention, such as during the Urabi Revolt, it was not until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that revolt was a unified event with the interests of all Egyptians at heart. This was done by enfranchising all citizens, including women and non-Muslims as members of an Egyptian cause. A nationalist spirit was created by promoting a literary public who read from a burgeoning Egyptian press. This culminated in Egyptian nationalism in the aftermath of the Dinshaway incident. Egyptians read about the tyranny of the British in Egypt’s countryside and the nation united for the first time in a nationalist surge of outrage against the British Occupation.

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<sup>14</sup> Nairn, T. (1997). *Faces of nationalism: Janus revisited*. London: Verso.

It is the hope of this study to use translated Egyptian primary sources such as the chronicles of Al-Jabarti and the writings of the first nationalists, especially periodicals and speeches advocating the role of women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to emphasize Egyptian views of European imperialism, their reactions and/or solutions. These periodicals show the origins of the intellectual class that became so integral to the nationalist narrative. Several secondary sources such as Cole, Gershoni and Jankowski are key in helping isolate characteristics of Egyptian nationalism, especially the role of the press and education and its empirical data in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Through an examination of the details of foreign domination of Ottoman, French and British authorities along with analysis of the historiography, this thesis will attempt to isolate critical moments or turning points that contributed to the development of nationalistic thought and pinpoint key events or people that brought it to the forefront of the public consciousness. In so doing, I will argue that the roots of nationalism were forged out of the British Occupation of Egypt, inspired by the Dinshaway Incident, rather than in the reign of Muhammad Ali's Westernizing reforms earlier in the nineteenth century. By comparing the eras of imperialism in Egypt, the advent of Egyptian nationalism and its oscillations with alternative ideologies such as Islamism and Pan-Arabism, I will follow the thread of how nationalism was and was not part of the narrative of Egyptian history in the modern era.

## CHAPTER 1

### OTTOMAN AND FRENCH EGYPT: MYTHS OF A WEAKENED NATION

As part of the Ottoman Empire's expansion, Sultan Selim I successfully fought a series of battles that expanded his rule around the Mediterranean including Syria, the Levant and concluding with the capture of the Nile Valley by 1517. This lightning campaign, which culminated in an anti-climatic hour-long battle before the walls of the city of Cairo, gave the Ottoman Sultan complete power over the domains of the former Mamluk Sultanate, including the holy cities of Islam. Leaving a garrison of 5,000 soldiers and a governor in place, Selim turned his attention elsewhere. However, in a reoccurring pattern, what was easily conquered was difficult to retain. Some authors stated that Mamluk households, the slave soldiers of the Sultan, began to evolve from a Turkish to Egyptian culture of aristocracy<sup>15</sup> and thus Egypt became somewhat autonomous. Various revolts and uprisings would materialize against the sultan throughout the Ottoman era, to differing degrees of success. The most recognized of these, the Ottoman governor of Egypt, Ahmad Pasha, led the rebellion of 1524. However, the viewpoint that the Mamluks created an Egypt with self-rule is an easy trap to fall into. It needs to be noted that this short lived rebellion was purely economic in nature and that no Egyptian home rule ideology seems to be in place.<sup>16</sup> Replicating the Ottoman system on a more autonomous scale does not make for a self-determining Egypt.

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<sup>15</sup> Philipp, T., & Haarmann, U. (1998). *The Mamluks in Egyptian politics and society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 105.

<sup>16</sup> Philipp, T., & Haarmann, U. (1998). *The Mamluks in Egyptian politics and society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 94.



Egypt, the “breadbasket of the Nile” gave the Ottomans many advantages, it also carried with it new responsibilities and concerns. In a pattern akin to what was seen in Roman times, the governorship of Egypt included a small term in office, sometimes only several months before replacement.<sup>17</sup> This would prevent an Ottoman governor from becoming familiar enough with the province to gain autonomy, at least in theory.

Historians have mistakenly characterized Egypt of the late medieval period as a backwater region. Egypt did face many setbacks, most of them dealt with external factors. The Black Death of the fourteenth century annihilated as much as 40 percent of the population. Such numbers existed in other affected areas, such as Western Europe, but the impact of the plagues on the rural economy of Egypt seemed to have been drastically different and worse. As Stuart Borsch noted in his comparative study, “the same disease that left many of Western Europe’s survivors in a better economic position devastated Egypt.”<sup>18</sup> Borsch points out that the main cause for this was the same reason that explained the region’s earlier prosperity, which was the land ownership system under the Mamluks. Increased political competition and factional strife in the Mamluk system led to rapid changes in the currency, a rise in prices and rent and a drop in wages.<sup>19</sup> By the time the Ottomans turned Egypt in to a province in 1517, the plague had left it depleted of its population.

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<sup>17</sup> Hathaway, J. (1997). *The politics of households in Ottoman Egypt: the rise of the Qazdağlis*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Borsch, S. J. (2005). *The Black Death in Egypt and England a comparative study*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Borsch, S. J. (2005). *The Black Death in Egypt and England a comparative study*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 113.

This depletion was further exasperated by the later French invasion of Egypt of 1798-1801. Disappointment at the lack of evidence of Egypt's Pharaonic past, combined with the 'othering' of the Muslim Arabs offered justification for imperialist invasion. The French found Egypt to be too empty. A Roman census had calculated a population of 7-8 million. Where was the growth? The Muslim Ottomans must therefore, be responsible for depopulating Egypt. This false assumption created justification for the French invasion. European colonialism would be better for Middle Easterners. This census has been proven false recently however; the Roman numbers were drastically over exaggerated.<sup>20</sup>

Recently evidence has found that proves Egypt's resources and geographical location were jewels to be prized. Privilege came with ruling Egypt, as the governor of Egypt was responsible for equipping pilgrimage caravans with grain during the Hajj. He also had the honor of providing the *kiswa*<sup>21</sup> every year in a tradition that continues into present times.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, by most accounts, Egypt rose to become not only a key Ottoman province, but also one of the wealthiest, alongside the Anatolia and Balkan provinces.<sup>23</sup>

Egypt was the center of a Mediterranean-Red Sea trade route of highly prized commodities such as spices and sugar. Cairo itself became a conduit of information and resources. Resources such as coffee from Yemen and timber from Anatolia during the

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<sup>20</sup> Cole, J. R. (2007). *Napoleon's Egypt: invading the Middle East*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 73.

<sup>21</sup> The coverlet of the Ka'ba that is replaced every year for the Hajj

<sup>22</sup> Hathaway, J. (1997). *The politics of households in Ottoman Egypt: the rise of the Qazdağlis*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Fahmy, K. (1997). *All the pasha's men: Mehmed Ali, his army, and the making of modern Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 46.

Ottoman Age of Exploration used Cairo and Alexandria as trade hubs.<sup>24</sup> The remnants of this trade are found at the famed Khan el-Khalili bazarre. Although the Portuguese would develop independent routes to exploit the Spice Trade independent of Egypt, Cairo would continue to be a hub long after the Age of Exploration had been initiated. After the collapse of both the Portuguese and Ottoman exploits in the Indian Ocean, Cairo would continue to be prosperous in trade, given its proximity to Suez and the land bridge to Asia.<sup>25</sup>

The eighteenth century was peppered with multiple rebellions, assassinations, and ever-changing leadership among the region's elites. The Mamluk provincial leaders asserted a level of control in Egypt in 1773 and were in almost constant conflict with rival Bedouin factions, Ottoman regime's governors sent from Istanbul and each other. As Jane Hathaway notes, "each group eyed the accumulation of wealth by the other with suspicion."<sup>26</sup> The competing Mamluk factions grew too large and were in constant competition for Egypt's resources.

Furthermore, this century had been a disaster economically for the country, with annual Nile floodwaters often too low and bringing in their wake-drought, and urban over-taxation by the Mamluks. Compounding the situation, new sources in the Atlantic had undermined Egypt's coffee trade. Thus, when Napoleon turned his eye towards Asia,

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<sup>24</sup> Casale, G. (2010). *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 201.

<sup>25</sup> Casale, G. (2010). *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 118.

<sup>26</sup>Hathaway, J. (1997). *The politics of households in Ottoman Egypt: the rise of the Qazdağlis*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 32.

in 1798, he saw Egypt as an easy stepping-stone to India. The lack of internal unity would make Egypt vulnerable to a surprise attack.

The end of the eighteenth century saw a world in convulsion. Nationalism that had created a patriotic king in Britain and an independent country in the United States evolved into a violent upheaval in France. The French Enlightenment had spread throughout Europe and sowed the seeds of nationalism had stagnated at home. The upheavals associated with the Enlightenment accelerated into a bloody revolution that almost destroyed France's autonomy. By the time of Napoleon Bonaparte's accession to power, the Directory had replaced the radical Jacobin revolutionaries. Loss of territory and prestige made France once again a belligerent in world affairs and "the French saw their Directory form of government not as a national peculiarity but as a model for other countries, which would be imposed by force if necessary."<sup>27</sup> This thirst for imperial conquest was accelerated by the existence of a British and French conflict that had existed off and on since the Norman conquest of 1066. France and Britain were the global powers of the day, deadlocked in a struggle for dominance. Britain was the dominant at sea and France had the largest army in Europe. The only way to break the tie was in overseas acquisition.<sup>28</sup>

Egypt became the regional focus of this initial process of acquisition for both Britain and France. The loss of Saint-Domingue in the 1790s created a need to find

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<sup>27</sup> Cole, J. R. (2007). *Napoleon's Egypt: invading the Middle East*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 19.

<sup>28</sup> Jasanoff, M. (2005). *Edge of empire: lives, culture, and conquest in the East, 1750-1850*. New York: Knopf.

Colley, L. (1992). *Britons: forging the nation, 1707-1837*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

another sugar colony for France. In addition, travel via Egypt was the shortest route to India and Southeast Asia for further colonization and trade for France, which could also impede Britain's ambitions. Furthermore, Charles Maurice Talleyrand, the orchestrator of the forthcoming Consulate government, saw an ending to conventional slavery and searched for another source of productivity. A successful overseas campaign could also quell unrest at home as well. An invasion of Egypt was orchestrated to solve France's diplomatic and internal problems, not to deliver liberty to oppressed Egyptians.

Egypt in 1798 was a land of turmoil. The end of the eighteenth century had posed serious challenges to the Middle East. The Ottoman Empire was in almost constant state of war with Austria or Russia. Selim III sent an army to Egypt two years prior to install a new governor in hopes to address a threat of an alliance between Catherine the Great and the Mamluk beys.<sup>29</sup> In Istanbul, a new sultan, Selim III created a series of reforms would later shake the Ottoman Empire to its core.<sup>30</sup>

Corresponding with political turmoil, there were serious challenges to the orthodox Sunni Islam. It was threatened on several fronts. The Shiite Qajar state in Iran threatened Islam in northern India. To the Sunni sect that dominates most of the Middle East, including Egypt, this was a rise in a heretic power and intensified sectarianism in the region. The ultra-fundamentalist sect, the Wahhabis, brought internal conflicts in Islam to a head. They would eventually conquer most of Arabia, including Mecca and

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<sup>29</sup> Bey is an Ottoman-Turkish title for chieftain

<sup>30</sup> Cleveland, W. L. (2004). *A history of the modern Middle East* (3rd ed.). Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 63.

Medina, stripping holy sites of their opulence, even the tomb of Muhammad. Historian C.A. Bayly and contemporary Al-Jabarti noted the suffering of Islamic society as “pious merchants were suffering hardship; the old military nobilities were apparently in decay, the artisan class impoverished.”<sup>31</sup>

The populace responded in several forms. A call for a revival in Islam was one response. Mysticism was one such path to revival. A new wave of Sufi revivalism took place throughout the Ottoman world, especially Cairo.<sup>32</sup> Some political entities sought to modernize along Western lines, such as Selim III, but Egypt was unable to seek prosperity and stability while the era of the great household rivalries continued to wrack Egypt. Competition between Ibrahim and Isma’l Bey, created “stress, rising prices...and continued strife. Extortions and acts of tyranny committed by the amirs followed one another.”<sup>33</sup>

Thus, when Napoleon arrived, Egypt was poorly equipped to resist a foreign invasion. The attack of Alexandria was met with little resistance as gunpowder and fortifications were practically non-existent. Alexandria was doing poorly economically for the abovementioned reasons, but also because a majority of the city was not connected to the Nile due to a change in its course. Defense works were in disrepair and the cavalry mustered to defend the city could not break through the heavy French

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<sup>31</sup> Bayly, C. A. (1989). *Imperial meridian: the British empire and the world, 1780-1830*. London: Longman, 181.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Jabartī, Al & Hathaway, J. (2009). *Al-Jabartī's history of Egypt*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 147.

infantry. The Egyptian amirs thus withdrew to regroup and fight at a more defensible position before Cairo, following their misconception that the French were inept in land battle.<sup>34</sup>

Napoleon quickly proclaimed his intentions in Egypt to the populace in Alexandria. He dispensed the aforementioned pamphlet in Arabic asserting that the French were not invading, but liberating the Egyptians from despotic Ottoman rule. Liberty and fraternity were his watchwords, not imperialism, and dominance. Along with proclaiming Republican ideals, Napoleon also asserted his respect for Islam and the prophet Muhammad. He allowed the Muslim clerics, the *ulama* to remain armed if they wish and allowed them and Coptic Christians to have the highest government positions.

When the Egyptian Expedition of Napoleon met the Mamluk army at the Battle of the Pyramids, this fragmentation was obvious in the results: 300 French casualties versus 3,000 Mamluk casualties. This sound defeat was more than evidence of Mamluk weakness, but an overall technology gap, a gap hastily narrowed by Muhammad Ali in the next decade. The French army's technological advances rivaled those of competitive European armies, much less Egypt. Advances in infantry strategy, artillery range, and firepower made quick work of the Mamluks' cavalry based army. Their infantry consisted of untrained and poorly armed men that lacked experience. Leadership was in short supply because of the civil wars had decreased the number of amirs.

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<sup>34</sup> Jabartī, Al & Hathaway, J. (2009). *Al-Jabartī's history of Egypt*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 179.

After securing Cairo, Napoleon reasserted his claim to the title of liberator. He declared that he wanted to build a republic in Egypt. It was doubtful that he wanted Egypt to have the same blueprint as what he had done in Italy and Switzerland, which were satellite or daughter republic that would be subservient to France and the Directory. Here the European subjects of the expanding French empire were put under French control after Napoleon's victories and "enjoyed an unprecedented degree of local democracy and freedom of the press, though at the price of subordination to a foreign power and of being cleaned out of treasure and objects de'art."<sup>35</sup> However, what Napoleon needed from Egypt was much more intrusive, so much more drastic action was needed.

Napoleon took things a step further by declaring that not only did he have respect for the religion of Islam, but also that he had converted to Islam personally. These assertions made his invasion valid in his eyes and would hopefully gain the much-needed support of the Egyptian populace. Some Egyptians did believe his assertions when he celebrated Muhammad's birthday and allowed Islamic religious freedom. Napoleon would later reflect in exile that he likened himself to be another Alexander in Egypt, a liberator against foreign dominion. Like Alexander, he likened himself to embracing the religion of the Egyptians, in this case Islam in place of Egyptian polytheistic cult. He even asserted that he intended to make the Hajj, if he would have been able to remain in Egypt. However, most historians hold that Napoleon's conversion was superficial, although Napoleon's appointed governor, Menou, seemed to be more genuine in his conversion by marrying a Muslim woman and changing his name to Abdallah.

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<sup>35</sup> Cole, J. R. (2007). *Napoleon's Egypt: invading the Middle East*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 20.



Napoleon's memoirs written in exile at St. Helena reveal his ridicule of Menou for taking this hasty step before conquest was complete.<sup>36</sup>

Still, many Egyptians were skeptical, seeing all of the occupying French as putting forth a façade for political reasons.<sup>37</sup> The urban Egyptians of Cairo and Alexandria saw Napoleon as simply replacing one amir with another, using the *ulama* and Coptic Christians in the bureaucracy to collect taxes for the French instead of the Ottoman-Egyptians. The first "European" attempt to occupy Egypt since the Crusades was dictated more by French domestic concerns of replenishing commodities and foreign concerns of heading off the British. As Goldschmidt noted, "any benefit to Egypt would be purely accidental."<sup>38</sup>

Napoleon also tried to implement changes in administration and judicial law that included a classic, Enlightenment based form of nationalism, but it seemed to have had a boomerang effect. In many ways "Egypt succeeded up to a point in 'Orientalising' the French."<sup>39</sup> The French had trouble in encouraging the adoption of their culture by Egyptians even as they superficially adapted to the host culture by smoking hookah, drinking Turkish coffee, and adopting traditional dress. Some soldiers even voluntarily converted to Islam. Some may have done this for superficial reasons, but genuine

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<sup>36</sup> Gourgaud, G., & Latimer, E. W. (1903). *Talks of Napoleon at St. Helena with General Baron Gourgaud, together with the journal kept by Gourgaud on their journey from Waterloo to St. Helena*; . Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 65.

<sup>37</sup> Watson, W. E. (2003). *Tricolor and crescent: France and the Islamic world*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Goldschmidt, A. (1988). *Modern Egypt: the formation of a nation-state*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 394.

<sup>39</sup> Dwyer, P. G. (2008). *Napoleon: the path to power*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 394.

conversion did occur. Juan Cole asserts, “For a handful, disoriented by the Revolution’s anti-clericalism and by the culture shock in the Middle East, adopting Islam was a way of authorizing a pious sensibility and of connecting with their new home.”<sup>40</sup> This shows how a European, Enlightenment form of nationalism that had swept France was not embraced in Egypt by direct and forcible importation. The ideals of the French leadership were not compatible with the reality of an unprepared ground. Instead of creating a daughter or satellite republic of France, “Egyptianizing” the French was much less grounded in force and perhaps more successful because of the lack of a concerted effort. This showed the resilience of Egyptian culture.

While appearing to accept some cultural norms of Egyptian society, Napoleon brought changes to Egyptian administration and introduced Egyptian to European political ideology. He also commissioned building projects such as causeways and watermills that had a positive impact on the Egyptian population. Keep in mind though that Napoleon’s Egypt was merely to benefit Napoleon and subsequently France. Improvements were made to increase productivity and profit for the Empire. Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt was the first and most overt imperial conquest in the modern period of world history, part of an effort to collect an empire.<sup>41</sup>

The appearance of plague in Alexandria and an anti-French rebellion in October 1798 shattered the façade of liberation. Napoleon subsequently took a more hardened line on the occupation. Although the French hastened political and social changes that would

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<sup>40</sup> Cole, J. R. (2007). *Napoleon's Egypt: invading the Middle East*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 135.

<sup>41</sup> Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 42.

seem positive to an Enlightened Europe, the French occupation became more repressive than that of the Mamluks. Napoleon's primary goal of using Egypt as a conduit to India was also falling by the wayside. By the time of Napoleon's decisive defeat at the Battle of the Nile with the British, he was already reconsidering his plans for the Orient.<sup>42</sup> Continued Egyptian resistance to French forces and culture may be seen as a form of proto-nationalism. Certain characteristics of Westernization and modernization had begun to appear, yet with the withdrawal of the French, Egyptians failed to develop a unified voice for autonomy for their own population. Traditionally, the *ulama* and the Christian Coptic sect held important posts, but had not developed any type of political control or hegemony with the artisan and the *fellahin*. There was not a clear ability for the factions in Egypt to develop an autonomous Egypt, an "Egypt for Egyptians."

With the victory of the allied forces of the British and Ottomans in 1801, an Ottoman governor was once again in charge of Egyptian affairs. Ottoman power was not unable to fill the vacuum was created by the absence of a strong leader in the wake of Napoleon's departure. Ottoman power was unable to fill it due to the slow deterioration in power that had begun from within the Empire. A necessity for strong local authority throughout the Empire had created an atmosphere of a culture of notables.<sup>43</sup> A late Ottoman trend of a hierarchy of Western-educated middle class professionals, they "employed the intellectual tools of modernism in the "...project of figuring out

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<sup>42</sup> Dwyer, P. G. (2008). *Napoleon: the path to power*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 394.

<sup>43</sup> Dwyer, P. G. (20082007). *Napoleon: the path to power*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 42.

relationships with the West”<sup>44</sup> as a tool of reform for the metropole. Damascus, Aleppo, and Acre simultaneously became somewhat independently ruled. Likewise, this pattern continued to evolve in the province of Egypt in the form of Muhammad Ali.

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<sup>44</sup> Watenpaugh, K. D. (2006). *Being modern in the Middle East: revolution, nationalism, colonialism, and the Arab middle class*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 225.

## CHAPTER 2

### MUHAMMAD ALI: MODERNIATION VS NATIONALISM

A Macedonian born Albanian named Muhammad Ali was sent to restore Ottoman control over Egypt but saw instead an opportunity to seize power for himself. Muhammad Ali did not seem to have the typical tools necessary for a leadership role in Egypt. He was from a merchant class family, illiterate and could only speak Albanian and Turkish fluently. He never mastered Arabic, despite this being Egypt's predominant language. What he lacked in education, however, he more than made up with his shrewdness and his ability to manipulate others.

There were only two contenders for power in play at the time, the Ottoman governor, and the Mamluks factions. The governor of Egypt at the time, Khusrev Pasha was the legitimate Ottoman ruler of Egypt. However, he was widely viewed a bad administrator whose unreasonable taxes had undercut any local support, including one that imposed a burden that was equal to three years rent.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, he did not pay the Egyptian army for five months. He made Egypt ripe for the picking by Muhammad Ali as a result.

He used the growing hostility of the army to incite a revolt against the Ottoman administration of Khusrev Pasha and assert his own. He did not proclaim his dominance initially, but instead made sure that the public demanded it. Al-Jabarti's account asserts that Muhammad Ali's careful manipulation turned the Egyptians to his cause. Ali used

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<sup>45</sup> Marsot, A. L. (1984). *Egypt in the reign of Muhammad Ali*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 38.

allies in Egypt, among the local administrators, including those loyal to the Mamluks, for his own purposes until they were no longer of use to him. One such alliance was with Bardissi Bey, whom he made a pact of loyalty. When Istanbul appointed a new governor, Muhammad Ali and Mamluk forces surrounded the governor and forced him out of Cairo. Al-Jabarti added that Ali remained in the background of these events and only stepped out of the shadows to oppose a new tax that he had helped create. The unknowing populace saw Ali as a hero and Bardissi as the tyrant.

This was part of the drawn-out ascendancy of Muhammad Ali to rule over the region. Egypt, coming off the heels of the agricultural and financial crisis of the eighteenth century could not bear the Mamluk beys and Ali's forces of power. After the incident with Bardissi, Muhammad Ali's Albanian troops began to attack the Mamluk beys. The Egyptian populace supported Muhammad Ali for different reasons. The *ulama* saw him as a restoration to peace and order, a return to prosperity after decades of civil strife. They did not see him as an Egyptian liberator, but the lesser of two evils. The artisans and the masses saw a strong leader that seemed to defend the population from exploitation. Yet the war against the beys was not fully decided until Ali hatched an assassination plot in 1811.

From 1805 to 1848, Ali tirelessly worked to continue the consolidation of his position. Six years after his accession to power, Ali was able to do away with the one threat that could have potentially challenged his authority. The Citadel in Cairo came to be the location of the purge of his only remaining internal competition, the Mamluks. Using the celebration of his son's successful military campaign as a guise, Ali invited a

majority of the leaders to his palace at the Citadel where he was able to trap and massacre them. This eliminated the majority of the Mamluk leaders in Egypt, thus clenching Muhammad Ali's supremacy. Ali was able to wipe out many of the remaining Mamluks left in the country after the massacre. Al-Jabarti's account showed that Ali was not simply trying to get rid of a political enemy, but to rid Egypt of prominent Egyptians. He states that Ali's officers

“Lived near these amirs...outwardly showing friendship and affection while their hearts were filled with hatred and malice, not only for them but also for all the Arabic speaking populace. When this happened (the massacre) they quickly set out to fulfill their desires ...and took their revenge.”<sup>46</sup>

With this, the age of the Ottoman-Egyptians had ended as “Ali finally destroyed the remnants of the system that had provided the dominant class for Egypt for almost seven centuries.”<sup>47</sup> A new era, not ruled by Ottoman or Egyptian notables, but an independent Georgian dynasty would begin with the growing independence of the governorship of Muhammad Ali. He would placate European envoys, the Sultan or the Egyptians when it was in his favor, but ruled solely for his benefit.

An example of Ali's mollification of potential adversaries was his superficial loyalty to the sultan. He campaigned at the behest of the sultan, including against the Wahhabi Bedouin rebels around the holy cities of the Arabian Peninsula and his contribution of a naval fleet against a European confederation. Meanwhile, the Ottomans had much larger issues to contend with than a marginally loyal governor of Egypt. The

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<sup>46</sup>Jabarti-Al & Hathaway, J. (2009). *Al-Jabarti's history of Egypt*. Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 288.

<sup>47</sup> Philipp, T., & Haarmann, U. (1998). *The Mamluks in Egyptian politics and society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 128.

sultan at the time, Selim III, had no means to oppose Ali as he was experiencing armed revolt against his own throne that had been provoked by his military and bureaucratic reforms.

Ali had attained a level of solidarity that not seen in decades in Egypt. In fifteen years, he was able to do what no other Ottoman governor was able to do; consolidate the economy of Egypt, gain substantial amounts of wealth and retain the governorship for the longest tenure yet seen. His centralization of the economy caused a need for a growing bureaucracy such as the creation of the departments of the navy, army, agriculture and the state archives along with the opening of naval school. All of this led to modernization and educational institutions whose founding had been long overdue. Muhammad Ali summoned a French finance expert on how to modernize Egypt to gain parity with Europe. In 1837, Ali summarized many of his reforms and changes in a decree called the *Siyasatname* that would be the basis of Egyptian government to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>48</sup> Centralization and increased control of the economy advanced agricultural activity by improving irrigation that led to a vast increase of cash crops such as cotton. Annual revenue increased from 8 million francs in 1805 to 50 million francs in 1821.<sup>49</sup>

His unquenchable drive for profit through increased trade and militarization led to the invasion of the Sudan in 1820. This campaign served two practical purposes: the first of these was to conquer the remaining Mamluks and other Arab tribes in southern Egypt

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<sup>48</sup> Hanna, N. (1995). *The State and its servants: administration in Egypt from Ottoman times to the present*. Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo Press, 75.

<sup>49</sup> Fahmy, K. (1997). *All the pasha's men: Mehmed Ali, his army, and the making of modern Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 10.



and the Sudan, the second reason was to keep his quarrelsome Albanian troops occupied.<sup>50</sup> Traditionally Egyptians considered the peoples of the Sudan to be inferior to them. This would lead to an increased slave trade along with a slave army of 30,000 Sudanese. As a result, Egyptian peasants were able to return to agricultural production.

Despite the obvious authoritarianism of Muhammad Ali, many historians see his conquests as the start of Egyptian nationalism. Some historians have even taken this title a step further by equating modernization with nationalism. Ali has been proclaimed the founder of modern Egypt<sup>51</sup>, and consequently the creator of a nationalist movement in the sense that the modern institutions he appropriated begat nationalism. Although a considerable amount of modernization did occur under Ali, his brutal methods of reform did not invoke nationalist ideology in any way. His sole interest was in the obtainment of wealth and a new dynasty. His reforms bolstered the status of a select few and compounded the misfortunes of Egyptian farmers. By making taxes purposefully too high for most to pay, he was able to confiscate the property of most farmers. His reorganization of the government was personalist in nature, not nationalist, as his activities run contrary to an established definition of nationalism.<sup>52</sup> Nationalism is a grassroots movement in which local inhabitants identify with a political entity in the belief that the nation takes primary importance. Nationalism usually entails an upheaval

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<sup>50</sup> Fahmy, K. (1997). *All the pasha's men: Mehmed Ali, his army, and the making of modern Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 40.

<sup>51</sup> Dodwell, H. (1967). *The founder of modern Egypt; a study of Muhammad'Ali*. Cambridge [Eng.: University Press.

<sup>52</sup> Hanna, N. (1995). *The State and its servants: administration in Egypt from Ottoman times to the present*. Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo Press, 78.

of the existing, sometimes foreign authorities and replacing them with an autonomous state.

In contrast, the regime of Muhammad Ali bore no resemblance to any of this. He instead refined and expanded an existing system of government based on older models. His location and continued membership in the Ottoman Empire did not allow for radical changes in governing. Local support was gained and lost according to his ability to assure stability and prosperity, not legitimacy. The ““Albanian adventurer”” was a successful leader in Egypt, not because of his support for the Egyptian population, but because he was the first Ottoman to tie Egypt into modern economic institutions for the sake of augmenting his own power and wealth.

Modernization does not necessarily usher in nationalism and personal ambition and expansion does not necessitate a desire to bring about independence and a beginning for a particular people and place. Other historians have tempered Muhammad Ali’s desire for independence with other Ottoman leaders such as Amir Bashir of Lebanon or Davud Pasha of Baghdad who had also seized the opportunity to gain some level of autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. Ehud Toledano suggested that Ali’s movements were not of self-rule at all, but part of the larger theatre of civil strife that was occurring throughout the empire, with the chief difference being that Ali had achieved far more success than most of his contemporaries.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Dodwell, H. (1931). *The founder of modern Egypt; a study of Muhammad ‘Ali*. Cambridge [Eng.: University Press, 43.

Although chiefly concerned with internal affairs, Ali kept one eye on European progress and intrusion. Ali became suspicious of European intervention when the British occupied Alexandria as a 'precautionary measure' when Napoleon escaped his initial exile from Elba in February 1815. In truth, they suspected each other. The British suspected Ali because of hostile movements that were possibly aiming to overthrow the Ottomans. An upset of the balance of power and Egyptian autonomy from the Ottomans would have led to a disruption of the passage to India and rise of any successful Egyptian industry could have taken markets away from the British. With Ali's campaign in Syria, the British bombarded the Egyptian forces there, but Ali only retreated after the guarantee of a Muhammad Ali's dynastic rule over the province in the London Treaty of 1840. By the time of Ali's death, Egypt's place among nations had indeed improved; however, independence for a new nation in the sense of a well-developed nationalist feeling had not occurred. Indeed, British interference in the region's affairs was curbed by a promise of an independent, Ottoman dynasty of Muhammad Ali's descendants. This satisfied Ali's aspirations for himself concerning Egypt. A despotic ruler who could not stave off British interference in regional affairs is not an ideal candidate for the founder of nationalism in Egypt.

The building of the Suez Canal became the primary rationale for continued European activity in Egypt. Foreshadowed by Napoleon's scientific expedition, a survey of Suez would reveal an ancient, half-completed canal at the site, and led to contemplation of a modern canal that while abandoned by Napoleon, was not Europeans as a whole.

Ferdinand de Lesseps, although French, seemed to believe the idea he sold to Muhammad Ali's successor, Sa'id which was that the canal would be an international waterway, a benevolent symbol of international unity and a chance for Egypt to gain its rightful place of prominence in the contemporary world. Indeed, the Suez Canal would become the crowning engineering project of the nineteenth century. However, the project would contribute to growing tensions between France and Britain with Egypt, with perhaps the most prerogative, caught in the middle. France initially was most interested in the Canal and invested more than ninety percent of the funds to build it. British reluctance to contribute, led by Lord Palmerston, would lead to an investment of only 20 million francs versus the French's 200 million. Combined with new cotton revenues from shortages created by the United States Civil War and a use of Egyptian conscript labor, the canal was eventually finished by Sa'id's nephew, Isma'il.

The new Khedive, Isma'il initiated a number of additional projects such as building the Egyptian Museum, widening roads, and building railroads. While aesthetically pleasing, Isma'il's projects were considered wasteful and soon outpaced his budget and helped to bring his country to the edge of bankruptcy. At the beginning of his administration, he had profits from European purchased cotton to drive his ambitions, but external factors again would intervene. A world- wide economic depression was ushered in after the Panic of 1873 and this hurt the banks that Isma'il had counted on for continued loans. Also, Isma'il was forced to pay for the land surrounding the Suez Canal, paying 130 million francs for the rights to land already considered a part of Egypt prior to

construction. Debts incurred since the time of the Crimean War<sup>54</sup> had driven the Ottomans to the brink of insolvency as well. Although, these events were completely outside of the khedive's control, his frivolous expenditures compounded problems as the national debt reached bankruptcy levels.

His drive for parity with Europe would also compromise Egypt's autonomy through the employment of British officials and soldier-explorers to restructure Egyptian administration and build new outposts. Simultaneously, the Ottoman Empire was on the brink of insolvency, which would push Egypt even more closely to the edge. By this point, Britain's policy towards Egypt and the Suez Canal had changed dramatically. The Indian Revolution of 1857<sup>55</sup> that had almost succeeded in wresting the jewel of the British Empire from its clutches changed the dynamic. This made Britain's leaders aware that the use and control of the Suez Canal could assure control over its Indian colony by slashing travel time by one third. With the treasury at the brink of bankruptcy, Isma'il had no choice but to sell Egypt's shares of the Suez Canal to a now eager British Empire in 1875.

Additional loans from Britain and France failed to end the financial crisis; therefore, Isma'il was forced to appoint advisors from the two countries to his cabinet. Though the French still held a majority of the shares, the economic situation on the continent led to a forced decree on the Khedive in 1876 to "establish a special Treasury

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<sup>54</sup> Fought between 1853-1856 between Russia and an alliance of Britain, France and the Ottomans. Encouraged Greek revolt against Ottoman rule

<sup>55</sup> There is historical disagreement on a title for this event. It is also referred to as the Indian Revolt, Rebellion, Mutiny or the First Indian Revolution.

charged with the regular service of the public debt, and to appoint to its management foreign Commissioners”<sup>56</sup> in a European controlled Public Debt Administration.<sup>57</sup>

Although Muhammad Ali had used European experts for advice, this had not compromised his autonomy in any way. With each of his successors, however, European “advice” would become policy without consultation with the khedive. Isma‘il who was quoted to have said “my country is no longer in Africa; we are now a part of Europe” had ironically prophesied his own deposition from the office by 1879 for this policy.

Nationalistic thought began with the loss of faith in Ottoman leadership. The newly enthroned Khedive Tawfiq felt torn between appeasing aggressive British advisers and a growing indigenous Egyptian resistance to their interference. He felt that the Europeans were the safer choice of the two to preserve his own position, but he became a mere pawn, adding to the Egyptian disgust with their government. This fed into a growing nationalist sentiment for political reasons, but it also took on a religious overtones as it was considered against Islamic law for Tawfiq to as presiding khedive, thanks to a *fatwa*<sup>58</sup> issued stating that the khedive should be deposed for being a traitor to his religion.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Khater, A. F. (2004). *Sources in the history of the modern Middle East*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 52.

<sup>57</sup> Primarily sponsored by France and Britain. Italy was pushed out from an earlier draft.

<sup>58</sup> In the Islamic faith, a fatwa is a juristic ruling concerning Islamic law issued by the ulama, Islamic scholars

<sup>59</sup> Mayer, T. (1988). *The changing past: Egyptian historiography of the Urabi revolt, 1882-1983*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 6.

## CHAPTER 3

### BRITISH OCCUPATION: ORIGIN OF EGYPTIAN NATIONALISM AT DINSHAWAY

With the setting sun of Ottoman domination came the dawn of the British Empire. The occupation of Egypt, by the British was a result of a wider crisis, otherwise known as the Eastern Question. The Ottoman Empire was slowly falling apart at the seams. Suspicion and revolt met attempts at modernization and reform. Notoriously labeled as the “sick man of Europe,” the Ottomans were clearly an empire in decline by this point, while the British Empire’s star was rising. What made the inevitable clash between the empires eventually come about was the publication and subsequent popularity of the *Bulgarian Horrors* tract by William Gladstone.<sup>60</sup> Gladstone was out of power at the time,<sup>61</sup> but was able to use news of Turkish persecution of Bulgarian Christians to drive British involvement in relieving the burden of the Ottomans in the Near East. Blocking Disraeli from allying himself any longer with the Turks in the international arena, the news of the deaths of thousands of Christians began a new dialogue. Events such as this subsequently drove British policy about “the Eastern Question.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Gladstone, W. E. (1876). *Bulgarian horrors and Russia in Turkistan with other tracts by the Right Hon. W.E. Gladstone ...* Leipzig: B. Tauchnitz

<sup>61</sup> Liberal Prime Minister of Britain in four interrupted terms: 1868-1894

<sup>62</sup> See Watson, R. W. (1972). *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern question*  
and Bass, G. J. (2008). *Freedom's battle: the origins of humanitarian intervention.*

The rotating Prime Ministers of Great Britain, Gladstone and Disraeli, were representative of the two differing viewpoints toward Egypt as a solution to the Eastern Question. During the tenure of Prime Minister Gladstone, foreign policy was more concerned about empire distractions in Ireland rather than in the Middle East, and was not inclined to interfere in this autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire. Disraeli opted for a more overt imperial policy- bolstered by a new rationale: humanitarianism. Historians have tried to reconcile these paradoxical subjects of humanitarianism and imperialism with much debated success.<sup>63</sup>

The most obvious reason for imperialism in Egypt was the protection of the Suez Canal that ensured reliable communication between Britain and its various spheres of influence. The British were hesitant in creating a formal occupation of Egypt until 1882. Two events lead the British to this conclusion: the first being the 1857 Indian Rebellion that proved to be an extraordinary crisis for the British. Although Britain had managed to quell the majority of the rebellion within a year, the Empire had suffered a jolt to the complacency and self-confidence it had previously enjoyed. It became painfully obvious to the British that accessibility to India was vital. The jewel of the British Empire had come precariously close to slipping out of its grasp. Britain would now view Egypt and the consequent Suez Canal as the new crucial way to hold on to its Asian territories. India was the lens through which they surveyed the needs of the Empire.

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<sup>63</sup> Bass, G. J. (2008). *Freedom's battle: the origins of humanitarian intervention*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.



“An alliance of discontent”<sup>64</sup> manifested itself in the Urabi Revolt of 1881. Ahmad Uribe’s story was one of potential and frustration at the khedive’s government. From the beginning of Urabi’s career, his intention was to rise through the ranks quickly to a high position. Even though he knew he would make more money serving as a clerk, he petitioned to become a soldier at 50 piasters a month, in the hopes of advancement. Urabi was a successful soldier, becoming a lieutenant- colonel by the age of twenty. This rapid rise was cut short when Isma‘il became khedive after the death of his father. Urabi asserted that Isma‘il was anti-Egyptian in his policies; claiming that everything was being placed back into the hands of the Turks while Egyptians in the army were denied protection and high level promotions. During this time, disastrous military campaigns furthered Urabi's views on the poor condition of the Egyptian government. He noted in his interview that when he saw a state of oppression issuing from the new government, he began to take an interest in politics.

Urabi credited two sources for the building of his political ideology and motivations: the political ideologist and reform leader Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and the book, “Life of Bonaparte.” In creating a memoir in his interview with Wilfred Blunt,<sup>65</sup> Urabi did not go into detail on particularly influenced him from al-Afghani, but noted that he associated with al-Afghani’s disciples. He also noted how reading Napoleon's biography influenced his views. He recognized that the French were not a superior people

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<sup>64</sup> Darwin, J. (2008). *After Tamerlane: the global history of empire since 1405*. New York: Bloomsbury Press,71.

<sup>65</sup> Blunt, W. S., & ‘Urābī, A. (1967/1922). *Secret history of the English occupation of Egypt; being a personal narrative of events..* New York: H. Fertig.

but better drilled and organized. A reform in Egypt's military was more on Urabi's mind, instead of self-rule.

Urabi came to feel that Egyptians was hindered, not so much by European intrusion as by the khedive's mismanagement of the army. Drastic action became necessary when he and several of his comrades were blamed for a protest that obviously did not involve them. This is when his thoughts changed to planned action: to get rid of khedival rule completely.<sup>66</sup>

Amid a combination of a national debt of 93 million pounds and half the government revenues were used for paying off foreign debt, the first nationalist uprising sprung forth. As the military was the only one with any power to defy the government, a member of every military department joined the revolutionary movement led by Urabi, along with a group of dissatisfied army officers between 1881-1882. Urabi forced Tawfiq to appoint a completely new cabinet and to improve working conditions and pay for soldiers. What came with this new constitution under Urabi were the first signs of a true nationalist movement in Egypt. Goldstein stated that “the Egyptian people--landlords and peasants, professionals and government clerks, Christians and Muslims--hailed Urabi as the nation’s savior” as elections and the first legislative session were held.<sup>67</sup>

As these events occurred, a united British and French note voiced to Tawfiq their support for replacing the current prime minister with the revolt’s choice and Urabi

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<sup>66</sup> Blunt, W. S., & ‘Urābī, A. (1967,1922). *Secret history of the English occupation of Egypt; being a personal narrative of events..* New York: H. Fertig, 65.

<sup>67</sup> Goldschmidt, A. (1988). *Modern Egypt: the formation of a nation-state.* Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 86.

becoming the new minister of war. Urabi was unable to consolidate power as he quickly lost any local support. Urabi also failed to gain control of the government or even the military. False rumors, partisanship, and conspiracy prevailed up to the Battle of Tel-el-Kebir in September 1882. Betrayal sealed Urabi's defeat when the commander of the British forces in Egypt, Lord Wolseley received the Egyptian battle plans. Acting for the khedive, Abu Sultan convinced many members of the army to betray Urabi. Others remained loyal, but made fatal strategic mistakes such as overextending of the line of defense.

Support quickly evaporated from Urabi after his defeat and subsequent arrest. He was found guilty at his trial, but his death sentence was commuted to exile in Sri Lanka. From his trial testimony and his interview with Wilfred Blunt, Urabi painted a picture of noble goals that involved creating an Egyptian republic. However, discrepancies seem to abound when his recollections are compared with contemporaries' accounts that Urabi changed the order of events on different occasions in his testimony or altered the truth all together.<sup>68</sup>

During the resulting British occupation, Urabi became vilified, not glorified. Even the consequential early nationalists, including Mustafa Kamil were not favorable to Urabi, blaming him for intensified European control over the country and criticized what they considered to be Urabi's extremism.<sup>69</sup> Challenges to this historiography did not

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<sup>68</sup> See Blunt, W. S., & 'Urābī, A. (1967,1922). *Secret history of the English occupation of Egypt; being a personal narrative of events* and Broadley, A. M. (1884). *How we defended Arabi and his friends A story of Egypt and the Egyptians*.

<sup>69</sup> Mayer, T. (1988). *The changing past: Egyptian historiography of the Urabi revolt, 1882-1983*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 7.

appear until a reexamination of the issues took place during the centennial anniversary by historians at Cairo University and the Ain Sham groups. The Urabi Revolt was the fruition of the frustrations of the native Egyptian elite. Because of its lack of support by the Egyptian peasantry and a delayed nationalist rallying cry, it ended swiftly with the British occupation eased by Egyptian collaborators and the indecision and weakness of the khedive.

Questions are asked of what degree or scope can the Urabi revolt be carried out. Claims of Islamism inspired by Al-Afghani, hope of a Pan-Arab solidarity or parliamentary over executive intentions, among others have been claimed to be the touchstone of the Urabi revolt. However, what many historians in recent times have been able to agree upon was that “it was a complete, comprehensive, and popular and revolution.’ It was the first popular revolution in Egypt and, indeed, ‘in the entire Third World.’”<sup>70</sup>

Since the British and French governments did not regard Egypt as a sovereign, they considered this revolt, whose slogan was “Egypt for the Egyptians” as a dangerous prelude to anarchy. It seemed as if only an invasion could save Egypt from the rash actions its own people. However, the bombardment in June 1882 of the combined French and British fleet at Alexandria did not have the desired effect. The attempt to coerce Urabi and his supporters to back down did not come to fruition; instead, it galvanized the populace for a short period behind their champion. Interestingly, Darwin’s archival

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<sup>70</sup> Mayer, T. (1988). *The changing past: Egyptian historiography of the Urabi revolt, 1882-1983*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press 63.

research suggests that the British did not have designs on Egypt until after this event.<sup>71</sup>

However, once hostilities had broken out, the vote for war came swiftly from Parliament, despite the hesitance of Prime Minister Gladstone.

According to the Dufferin report that supported colonization, after a year's worth of occupation, it was assessed that a constitutional government would collapse into chaos in Egypt. As a result, this "temporary occupation," as it was termed in 1882, would go on for seventy-two years. However, despite its unofficial status, the British would pay dearly for the occupation that had blocked France and Germany from obtaining advantage in Egypt. In the Congress of Berlin in 1884, the British would defer to Germany to carve up the "cartographer's dream" of Africa. Pacifying European appetites, Britain would be left alone to colonize Egypt and "preserve the fiction of Egyptian autonomy."<sup>72</sup> There is debate among historians at the tactics and strategies of Britain in Egypt.<sup>73</sup>

Egyptian nationalism began with the modernization of Egypt and the intervention of Europe into Egyptian affairs. While the death of Sa'id was the last hope, in the views of some, of Egypt becoming a successful state within the context of the Muhammad Ali dynasty and the Ottoman Empire-the Egyptian elite saw the rule of Sai'd as a betrayal to Egyptians, as he filled government positions, including military ones with Circassians

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<sup>71</sup> Darwin, J. (2008). *After Tamerlane: the global history of empire since 1405*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 72.

<sup>72</sup> Darwin, J. (2008). *After Tamerlane: the global history of empire since 1405*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 78.

<sup>73</sup> See Darwin, J. (2009). *The empire project: the rise and fall of the British world-system, 1830-1970* and Fieldhouse, D. K. (2006). *Western imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958*

and Albanians. At this point, Egyptian nationalism existed only in the minds of those who were disappointed in the khedivate or were part of new, educated elite that became immersed in Western ideals of self-rule, equality, and fraternity within a cohesive political state.

Over the course of the first two decades of the twentieth century, an emphasis emerged on defining Egypt and Egyptians on the part of this new intelligentsia. An increasing literary public “came to conceive Egypt less as a geographical entity and more as a biography of a people.”<sup>74</sup> Yet these people represented a fraction of Egypt’s population. Juan Cole calculated that the total newspaper population readership was at the very least, 72,000.<sup>75</sup> These journalists lamented the peasantry’s ignorance and backwardness and searched for ways of incorporating all Egyptians into their nationalist program.

Almost simultaneously, a revolution of another kind was occurring in the south of Sudan. Sudan’s narrative of colonization had many parallels with Egypt. Sudan had been considered Egyptian property “by right and by nature”<sup>76</sup> since the Old Kingdom. It had become a hardened part of Egyptian culture by the mid nineteenth century by Muhammad Ali. This paradox showing “the existence of colonialist tendencies in the

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<sup>74</sup> Gasper, M. E. (2009). *The power of representation: publics, peasants, and Islam in Egypt*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 180.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>76</sup> Powell, E. T. (2003). *A different shade of colonialism Egypt, Great Britain, and the mastery of the Sudan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 5.

colonized...a country that was both object and subject”<sup>77</sup> has been at times ignored by historians. With true imperialist overtones, Egypt distanced itself from Sudan with racism and language dissonance; the land of the blacks versus the land of the Arabs, Islam versus animalistic, classical versus colloquial Arabic, would validate Egypt as being the better of the Sudanese.

The successful Mahdist<sup>78</sup> rebellion in Sudan against the 60-year Egyptian colonization would add insult to injury as the Egyptians lost part of its own sovereignty in the south. A man who claimed to be the Mahdi, a kind of savior in Islam, was able to form a short-lived rebellion and theocracy in the Sudan before again being occupied by the British and Egyptians. The loss of prestige and autonomy in the khedive was an opportune time for rebellion. This caused both movements (Urabi’s and the Mahdist) to find “their opportunity in the power-vacuum by the disappearance of ...autocracy.”<sup>79</sup>

The colonization of Sudan had been an affirmation of the glorious, ancient identity of Egypt. This would ossify Egyptian nationalism. As stated by Uzoigwe in *Britain and the Conquest of Africa*, the “upper Nile was believed to be inextricably linked with Egypt, territorially and politically.”<sup>80</sup> Albeit with shades of colonialism from the perspective of the Sudan, this would help spur Egyptian nationalism, the *hubb al-watan*,

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<sup>77</sup> Powell, E. T. (2003). *A different shade of colonialism Egypt, Great Britain, and the mastery of the Sudan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 62.

<sup>78</sup> Mahdi- an Islamic messianic figure

<sup>79</sup> Holt, P. M. (1961). *A modern history of the Sudan, from the Funj Sultanate to the present day..* New York: Grove Press, 76.

<sup>80</sup>Uzoigwe, G. N. (1974). *Britain and the conquest of Africa; the age of Salisbury*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 229.

or ‘love of country.’ As stated by Eve Powell, “Egyptian society was bound to the South both by memories of conquest and by increasing sensitivity to its own vulnerability to Western Europe.”<sup>81</sup> The Sudan should be viewed as a safety valve of a frontier to Egypt until the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, 1899-1955. Britain again asserted control over supposed Egyptian sovereignty in a haphazard way. This would become a cause of disagreement between Britain and Egypt until independence. The Sudanese paradox appears in Egyptian nationalist literature, theatre and the press as an Egyptian right of sovereignty.

This study points to the Dinshaway incident of 1906 as the true catalyst for Egyptian nationalism, instead of the earlier Urabi Revolt. This was the event that combined the peasant class with the intelligentsia’s program of nationalism into a truly Egyptian narrative and identity. What started as a pigeon hunt for a group of British soldiers led to an altercation with local Egyptians. The soldiers arbitrarily decided to hunt where they wished, despite protestations of landowners. The argument led to an altercation leaving one soldier dead. The British set up a special tribunal where fifty-two villagers were charged with first-degree murder. British authorities delivered swift retribution on what they considered a revolt by executing four Egyptians and sentencing many more to hard labor without representation or a jury.

Shock waves reverberated across Egypt. It seemed as if the entire peasant class was considered a threat to British rule. The naked use of blunt force against Egyptian peasant was the catalyst needed to link the intelligentsia class with the peasant class.

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<sup>81</sup> Powell, E. T. (2003). *A different shade of colonialism Egypt, Great Britain, and the mastery of the Sudan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 43.



Prior to this, it was problematic to create a collective identity for both groups. The educated classes previously separated themselves by adopting European dress and liberal ideals and felt that they were justified to govern their own country. The peasant classes had been more loyal to the concept of the Islamic *umma*. This event helped converge the two classes into allegiance to the Egyptian *watan* or native land,<sup>82</sup> a collective identity acquired an Egyptian nationalism form. The Dinshaway incident now united the two major groups in Egypt, the intelligentsia and the *fellahin*. All Egyptians, be they Copts, Jews, or Muslims began to unite and work together in parity for their cause, a single community of an Egyptian nation.

Egypt saw a growth of political organizations and widely circulated newspapers. Lutfi al-Sayyid became the spokesman for the People's Party who reminded Egyptians of their worth of self-rule. The National Party and *al-Liwa* demanded immediate British evacuation and glorified folk ballads about the peasants of the Egyptian Delta that personified the events at Dinshaway. One song included the lines: "They fell upon Dinshaway/And spared neither man nor his brother/Slowly they hanged the one and flogged the other."<sup>83</sup> A nationalist story was created out of a peasant tragedy.

Assertion of being Egyptian now included all members in a nationalist cause. It also created a role for women, along with the peasants.<sup>84</sup> In *Anis al-Jalis*, an Egyptian

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<sup>82</sup> Gershoni, I., & Jankowski, J. P. (1987). *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs: the search for Egyptian nationhood, 1900-1930*. New York: Oxford University Press, 20.

<sup>83</sup> Cleveland, W. L. (2004). *A history of the modern Middle East* (3rd ed.). Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 108.

<sup>84</sup> See Khater, A. F. (2004). *Sources in the history of the modern Middle East's Vision of Women and the Role in Society, 1899 and Nazira Zein al-Din, an Egyptian feminist, 1928*.

magazine (1899) asserted that “women-however they and their roles were defined-were essential for the constructions of a modern society and nation.”<sup>85</sup> Nationalism meant a rapidly evolving society with social and cultural institutions being redefined.

Intellectuals and elites since Al-Afghani had been arguing about the reconciling of Islam and modernity. For many women, especially the elite ones, they saw nationalism and modernity as an opportunity for women to assert their liberties while helping to create a new nation.

A year after Dinshaway, Bahithat al-Badiya lectured at an Umma Party conference. During her speech, she laid out a program of social reform that to be implemented with Egyptian independence. Education, decorum and economic rights would not deteriorate their Islamic state, but would create strong compatriots; “let them (the men) show us what they want. We are ready to follow their views on condition that (they do not do injustice to us nor trespass on our rights.”<sup>86</sup> She also cautioned against the elites tendency towards becoming Europeanized, a habit that separated Egyptians before Dinshaway.

Mustafa Kamil founded the Egyptian Nationalist Party in the same year as al-Badiya’s speech. He pointed to Dinshaway as the beginning of Egyptian nationalism and a call to end British occupation.<sup>87</sup> The educated elite of Egypt began to claim that

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<sup>85</sup> Khater, A. F. (2004). *Sources in the history of the modern Middle East*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 70.

<sup>86</sup> Badran, M., & Cooke, M. (1990). *Opening the gates: a century of Arab feminist writing*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 237.

<sup>87</sup> Fahmy, Z. (2011). *Ordinary Egyptians: creating the modern nation through popular culture*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 92.

Egypt's sovereignty belonged in the hands of the Egyptians themselves and not in the hands of the British or even as part of a Pan-Islam conglomeration.

Kamil demanded the quick withdrawal of all British forces from Egypt and he wrote an open letter to the British people in a French magazine, *Le Figaro*, explaining the Dinshaway incident and its connection to British ideals. To him, Egypt was ready to be an independent country that was Westernized to a point of being acceptable, even comparable to British ideals. Kamil used this letter to appeal to the British citizenry's own values: nationalism, humanitarianism, and democracy.

This letter shows how the Dinshaway incident was a turning point for Egyptian nationalism in that Egyptians' recognized that their way to acceptance in the modern world was through accessing the Enlightenment ideals of justice, equality, and liberty. Egypt may gain liberty through education, reform. No longer did Egyptian intelligentsia look to reform of the old system or a return to an earlier Islamic state, but instead looked to a constitution and Western civilization in general for answers.

Kamil recognized also how this event could galvanize Egyptians against occupation. He remarked how this injustice by the British occupation forces had turned a nation against the occupation.

An appeal to British ideals of nationalism and humanitarianism peppers Kamil's letters to a European audience. He sought to point out to the British public, which he knows could hold the British political leadership accountable in England, the hypocritical methods being employed in Egypt. Kamil pointed out the British foreign policy of humanitarianism was being ignored in Egypt. When British imperialists claimed that

Egypt was more prosperous as a colony, Kamil retorted, “The chains of slavery are still chains, whether they be forged of gold or of iron.”<sup>88</sup>

Kamil also asserts to the British public of the certainty of Egyptian capability to self-rule. Moreover, that they were ready to earn the respect of the nations, to continue the standard of civilization that they had once held in ancient times. He points out that the Egyptian society knows that the way to independence and modernization was through Western civilization. Kamil was not burning bridges with the British public in revenge; rather he is appearing to galvanize relations for an easier transition to an independent Egypt.

The following decades saw a slowly building resentment towards the British Occupation that was fumbling its way from financial supervision to outright military oppression. The anger initially felt towards Tawfiq for being a traitor to his country by opening the door to British occupation was refocused on the British themselves. As Copts and Muslims, male and female alike, a blossoming press was educating Egyptians on nationalist ideals and reforms. With the Dinshaway Incident, the Egyptian peasantry was initiated into Egyptian nationalism, and a broad-based nationalist movement in Egypt suddenly seemed possible.

When Gorst becomes the new Consul-General in 1908, he recognized this unity as a threat and quickly worked at exploiting division between Copts and Muslims<sup>89</sup> in his

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<sup>88</sup> Cleveland, W. L. (2004). *A history of the modern Middle East* (4th ed.). Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 107.

<sup>89</sup> *Coptic Kongress: Reply of the executive committee of the .... to the article in Sir Eldon Gorst's report for 1910 entitled "The Copts"*. (1911). Cairo.

attempt to slow down the progress of nationalists. However, public debate over these issues was cut short by the outbreak of the Great War in 1914. Britain declared martial law in Egypt to protect the Suez Canal and deposed Khedive Abbas II for his more malleable uncle, Husayn Kamil. Egypt was declared a protectorate of Britain and under colonial rule.<sup>90</sup>

The end of the façade of Ottoman control brought nationalism into sharper focus as the Pan-Islamic program represented by the Ottoman Empire was extinguished. At the end of the war, Egypt was spared the arbitrary agreements of Versailles by keeping its borders intact. Their Arab neighbors to the East were subjected to the pledges and the counter-pledges of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. National self-determination was supposed to be the theme of the Versailles Peace Conference of 1918, but the Allied powers “chose to apply the principle only when it furthered their own interests or coincided with their sympathies.”<sup>91</sup> Egyptian nationalists, headed by Sa’d Zaghlul, attempted to attend the peace conference, encouraged by the Wilsonian Fourteen Points. In November of 1918, seven prominent Egyptians led by Zaghlul formed a delegation, or *wafd*. They asserted the right to have an Egyptian representative at the peace conference. The High Commissioner denied their request, so Zaghlul brought his petition to the Egyptian people. The Wafd Party

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<sup>90</sup> Cleveland, W. L. (2004). *A history of the modern Middle East* (3rd ed.). Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 109.

<sup>91</sup> Cleveland, W. L. (2004). *A history of the modern Middle East* (3rd ed.). Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 164.

capitalized on the nationalist sentiment by travelling throughout the country, taking their demands to the Egyptian people, enfranchising them, and creating popular support.

The British responded by exiling four of the leaders to Malta in March 1919. This unleashed the pent-up emotions of the Egyptian people. Demonstrations turned into riots. Peasant and worker, women and men took to the streets against the perceived abuse of rights of citizens. Student demonstrations in Cairo from law and religious schools, women demonstrations spoke strongly of their autonomy and assertion of rights.<sup>92</sup> Strikes and violence against British outposts in the country showed a nation on the move. The revolutionary Sayyid Qutb, who was a child of Upper Egypt at the time, recalled the singular spirit of the time:

“When the trumpet blew for the great Egyptian revolution, the principal stood before the assembled students and delivered a patriotic speech. He delivered them (speeches) in meeting halls and mosques, where the spirit of the sacred revolution was breathed into...even if it was a small boy like him who was hardly more than ten years old.”<sup>93</sup>

The Revolution of 1919 was a protest against the rights of Egyptians, who recognized that Egypt was an independent nation, albeit under British rule. Finally, General Allenby, the new British high commissioner allowed Zaghlul to attend the Peace Conference as national representatives. Negotiations dragged on for two years on the role of Britain in Egypt’s future. The deadlock was finally broken by a unilateral declaration of independence in 1922. The British, however, demanded several provisions. One

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<sup>92</sup> Baron, B. (2005). *Egypt as a woman: nationalism, gender, and politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 75.

<sup>93</sup> Qutb, S., Calvert, J., & Shepard, W. E. (2004). *A child from the village*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 96.

provision declared that the British government remained responsible for the defense of Egypt against foreign interference or aggression, meaning a de facto control over Egyptian foreign policy. Once again, the British had imposed their will on the Egyptian people.

As censorship by the British would lead Kamil and others into exile, Egyptian women took the reins of the nationalist press.<sup>94</sup> The British did not consider Egyptian women to be a threat and ignored their writings, even as they increased in number. Some had direct nationalist agendas, while others propagated issues that were more domestic in nature.

The inter-war period in Egypt was a time of identity crisis. Despite earning nominal independence from Britain, Egypt was not prepared for the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, its Muslim counterpart, or the economic challenges it would face. There was a struggle to find a cohesive identity among the population after forty years of European occupation. However, the elite attempted to create viable political and government organs and to create a nation-state. The urban and rural masses had difficulty reconciling the new government's methods of governing and elections with the reality of local strongmen as their true leaders.<sup>95</sup> William Cleveland noted, "These disaffected elements of the population began to seek practical solutions to their economic and sustenance for their spiritual needs by joining organizations that operated outside the

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<sup>94</sup> Gershoni, I., & Jankowski, J. P. (1987). *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs: the search for Egyptian nationhood, 1900-1930*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>95</sup> Mahfouz, N., & Moosa, M. (1995). *The early novels of Naguib Mahfouz: images of modern Egypt*. Gainesville, FL (Univ. Press of Florida).

structured party system.”<sup>96</sup> The world depression hit the susceptible new government at a very inopportune time, coupled with the temporary intervention of the British during the Second World War.

Egyptian nationalism joined other currents to cope with these struggles. Gershoni and Jankowski assert that Egyptian nationalism was the only dialogue until the inter-war period.<sup>97</sup> However, the creation of an anti-imperialist community across the nationalist movements was grouped in Islamism and Pan-Arabism, along with Egyptian nationalism. All of these ideologies were attempting to answer why the Muslim world had fallen behind the West. Islamism was once such answer. Islamism was the political and religious ideology that all Islamic countries should be one unified entity. The subjugation of most of the Muslim world under colonial prompted many to defend and create a new construct of a modernist, Islamic state. Many scholars consider Jamal al-Din Al-Afghani as the foremost Islamic political activist of the nineteenth century and the father of modern pan-Islamic political movements. He was convinced that modernism, science, and religion could co-exist in harmony. In a letter to the Oriental scholar, Ernest Renan, he wrote, “I cannot keep from hoping that Muhammadan society will succeed someday in breaking its bonds and marching resolutely in the path of civilization after the manner of

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<sup>96</sup> Cleveland, W. L. (2004). *A history of the modern Middle East* (3rd ed.). Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 199.

<sup>97</sup> Gershoni, I., & Jankowski, J. P. (1995). *Redefining the Egyptian nation, 1930-1945* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 25.



Western society.”<sup>98</sup> However, al-Afghani died under suspicious circumstances in 1897 before pan-Islam solidified in the Middle East.

Pan-Islamism in its modernist construct did not die with Al-Afghani or his disciples, but became re-energized during the 1920s and 30s. Pan-Islamism’s political body in Egypt, created during the inter-war period was the Muslim Brotherhood. Hassan al-Banna’, a rural Egyptian founded the organization in 1928. His knowledge of the Arab conquests of the seventh century was the inspiration for pan-Islamic reunification across European imposed lines. The lightning campaigns of the early Islamic period, defeats of European powers, the center of trade in Egypt, and the powers held by a caliph must have intoxicating to attempt to achieve again. In the growing identity crisis in the Egyptian interwar period, al-Banna sought a solution for Egypt’s troubles by looking at its Islamic “Golden Age” and called for a return to piety and virtue. These attributes are very much in line with Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* attributes of aligning history to match one’s goals and to create a myth of continuous hegemony.

Ethnic unity in the form of pan-Arabism was argued to be a foundation for a single state also. It is an awareness of shared Arabic heritage as propagated by such thinkers as Sati al-Husri and Michael Aflaq. A hallmark of pan-Arabism is the belief that separate Arab nations were strictly an imperialist construct to keep Arabs weak.<sup>99</sup> Aflaq formed the Ba’ath Party in 1940 in Syria to develop close cooperation, and even

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<sup>98</sup> Keddie, N. R., & Algar, H. (1983). *An Islamic response to imperialism: political and religious writings of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Din al-Afghani*". Berkeley: University of California Press, 182.

<sup>99</sup> Dawisha, A. I. (2003). *Arab nationalism in the twentieth century: from triumph to despair*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 72.

solidarity between Arab nations. A Christian himself, Aflaq asserted that Arabism was the overarching characteristic of the region, with the teaching of Muhammad as its contribution to humanity. Although the Ba'ath Party would take hold only in the Syrian and Iraqi governments, its ideology was resonant in Egypt as well, a nation with a significant Christian population.

A *coup d'état* in 1952-53 answered the question of what direction Egypt's nationalism would take. The Free Officers Revolution led by Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir created a republic based on a regional nationalism that favored a "new political elite seeking to build their own bases of local power."<sup>100</sup> While consolidating his power, Nasir did not want to become entangled in an alliance with other nations, Arab or otherwise. The Ba'ath Party was ruling Syria by this point, but was grappling with communist-inspired factions for power. The growing threat of a Syrian communist takeover greatly concerned Nasser. Syrian government officials warned Nasir that unless Egypt would step in, there would be a Syrian communist takeover.

Nasir assented to a confederation between Egypt and Syria, the United Arab Republic (UAR), but only on conditions that would be favorable to Egypt. Egyptian officials had the highest positions of power. A 600-member assembly had a 2:1 ratio in favor of Egypt. A disbanding of all political parties would outlaw the Ba'ath Party in Syria and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. This rid Nasir of political competitors and

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<sup>100</sup> Cleveland, W. L. (2004). *A history of the modern Middle East* (3rd ed.). Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 237

allowed him to nationalize the press, making it simply a mouthpiece. Nevertheless, pan-Arabism did indeed create a new nation, however temporarily.

Considered the high-water mark of pan-Arabism in modern Middle Eastern history, the UAR only lasted until 1961. Nasir's leadership focused on "external challenges to his leadership of the Pan-Arab movement."<sup>101</sup> Pan-Arabism was dismissed as a political tool after the defeat of Arab forces in the 1967 war against Israel. The UAR was considered a threat to the kingdom of Jordan and Iraq while Bedouin tribes received funds from Saudi Arabia to discourage loyalty to the confederation. Pan-Arabism proved to be as equally divisive as unifying. Nasir himself, the hero of pan-Arabism used the UAR for his own political gains and the advancement of Egypt. A biographer of Nasir, Joel Gordon notes, "Ironically, as Egypt became more 'Egyptian', outside pressures for it to become more 'Arab' increased."<sup>102</sup> Perhaps Egyptian nationalism was not subsumed at all, but paralleled the Pan-Arab ascendancy of the 1950s and 60s. It became apparent once more with the disillusionment that followed disappointment with the UAR and the Six Day War. Perhaps these contested nationalisms will receive a verdict with the surge of hope and enthusiasm that marks Egypt's nationalism today.

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<sup>101</sup> Cleveland, W. L. (2004). *A history of the modern Middle East* (3rd ed.). Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 343.

<sup>102</sup> Gordon, J. (2006). *Nasser: hero of the Arab nation*. Oxford: Oneworld, 135.

## Conclusion

The absence, followed by growing presence nationalism is a thread that can be followed throughout the three eras of Ottoman, khedivial and British occupation of Egypt. Nationalism cannot be projected back upon Ottoman rule over in Egypt, Muhammad Ali's modernization projects or French occupation. British colonialism and the advent of nationalism on a global scale prepared the ground for an Egyptian nationalistic ideology. Urabi was not a nationalist, but the resulting British Occupation created a nationalist feeling. Urabi's revolution showed promise, but bore no fruit. The creation of an Egyptian educated elite brought nationalism to the Egyptian dialogue. The Dinshaway Incident brought nationalism to the forefront as a cohesive for *all* Egyptians. A creation of an Egyptian elite and reading class, nationalism became the conduit of change that was so apparently needed in the wake of Dinshaway. The Dinshaway Incident made nationalism an answer for Egypt's problems and created the unity necessary for the success of the Revolution of 1919. Egypt thus transitioned from culturally diversified communities to a unified, mass society tdedicated to the exercise of its political rights and autonomy. Egypt may be now reaping the fruits of toil and labor began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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