

Globalizing a Civil War:
How the American Civil War Shaped Egypt and Its Relationship with
the United States

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INTRODUCTION

“The barbarism of the [U.S.] South, while destroying itself, may in the providence of God to be working out the regeneration...of Egypt.”¹

On July 9, 1862, the Ottoman Viceroy of Egypt, Muhammad Sa‘id Pasha, arrived in Manchester where he was met with a warm welcome. During his visit, conversations centered on one topic: cotton. In fact, Sa‘id Pasha was graciously thanked for his ongoing efforts to encourage extensive cotton cultivation in Egypt. The president of the Cotton Supply Association in Manchester expressed his belief that Egypt had the capacity to produce a vastly greater number of bales of high-quality cotton than had already been exported to England in the past year. After his return to Egypt, Sa‘id Pasha continued to improve and extend cotton cultivation throughout his nation, hoping to achieve his goal of increasing production by at least 50 percent.² His aspirations were driven by a distant civil war in the United States.

When the U.S. Civil War began in 1861, it shattered the world’s supply of cotton, as the North blockaded the South, preventing cotton exports from the world’s leading source. The British textile industry, made possible through the labor of slaves in America, had been the world’s most important manufacturing industry. Therefore, a new source of cotton had to be found, highlighted by the desperate desire for the British to please Sa‘id Pasha and convince him to increase cotton production in Egypt during his visit to England. Egypt was able to take advantage of the global repercussions engendered as a result of the American Civil War, and very quickly, its economy was transformed to revolve around the cotton commodity. This thesis tells the story of the Egyptian cotton boom, illustrating how the spark of a distant war resulted in

¹ “The Future Supply of Cotton,” *The North American Review* Vol. XCVIII (April 1864): 487.

² Edward Mead Earle, “Egyptian Cotton and the American Civil War,” *Political Science Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1926): 531-532.

the momentous transformation of Egyptian society. In addition to these significant global implications of the war, the American Civil War also left Americans uncertain and anxious about the influence they had over Egyptians, forcing them to navigate cautiously in their interactions with the Egyptian government. These American insecurities due to a war back home highlight the unique place the United States, as a fairly new nation, held in the global stage during the 19th century. Thus, analyzing the immediate effects of the American Civil War on what was occurring in Egypt illuminates two key findings: the cotton famine resulting from the war was central to the development of Egypt, and Americans in Egypt were preoccupied with making sure their reputation among Egyptians was not tarnished.

The literature on cotton in Egypt is vast, as scholars of Egyptian history have discussed the production of the commodity as a key factor in Egypt's attempt at modernization and ultimate fate of colonization. Timothy Mitchell's scholarship, for instance, has mapped how the British interest in cotton reframed colonization from the physical control of a place to the "capturing of bodies." According to Mitchell, in the 19th century, Egypt experienced a transformation in the extent that the state was directly involved in the cultivation of cotton: "The method was no longer simply to take a share of what was produced and exchanged, but to enter into the process of production."³ Influenced by European powers, the Egyptians wanted to bring greater order and control to their country by implementing systems to coerce the rural populations into producing cotton for European consumption.⁴ This incorporation of Western systems of hierarchy and force eventually led to the British colonization of Egypt in 1882. While the emergence of Egypt as a significant producer of cotton remains central in this narrative, Mitchell does not address the role the U.S. Civil War had in it.

³ Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 42.

⁴ *Ibid*, 47.

Other historians have mentioned the significance of the Civil War and the subsequent cotton boom, but they have only been stated as minor details within a much larger, complex history.⁵ Roger Owen and Sven Beckert are two of the few historians who have devoted research to the Civil War's effect on Egypt. In *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820-1914*, Owen provides a history of cotton in Egypt, beginning with the time of Muhammad Ali, Sa'id Pasha's father. Within his history, the American Civil War represents a significant turning point. Owen argues that the changes that had been occurring in the agricultural sector of the economy leading up to 1861 made Egypt a new viable source of cotton once the war broke out.⁶ As the price of cotton continued to rise, more Egyptian land was devoted solely to the cotton crop.

Beckert's *Empire of Cotton* provides a similar narrative. However, he does so within a global history of the cotton commodity, which he argues was at the center of modern capitalism. Thus, Egypt is not the focus of the book. Instead, Beckert explains how cotton had created a global web of various actors. Egypt emerged as an important state in the network when the American Civil War began. Conscious of the global effects of the U.S. Civil War, Sa'id Pasha made efforts to transform his own vast amounts of land into cotton farms. He was hoping that this would allow him to fulfill the modernizing project that his father Muhammad Ali had started about forty years before.⁷

From the works of Owen and Beckert, it is clear that the American Civil War helped transform the economy of Egypt and its role in the global economy. Yet, the historiography of American influence in Egypt is extremely limited, as Americans themselves have not been seen as important characters within the history of Egypt, unlike the British colonizers. American

⁵ See *Modern Egypt: The Formation of a Nation State* and *The History of Modern Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak*.

⁶ Roger E. Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820-1914: A Study in Trade and Development* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1969), 92.

⁷ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014), 256.

interests in the Middle East at this point in history have been seen as lacking the same political drive as the Europeans present in the region. However, comparing the United States to other foreign powers with a more determined presence in the Middle East like Britain results in the erasure of the meaningful interactions that were in fact occurring between Egyptians and Americans from decades before the outbreak of the Civil War. When these interactions are given attention, it becomes clear that the United States and Egypt actually had a strong, positive relationship at this time.

One of the few works that has explored the American presence in Egypt is Cassandra Vivian's *Americans in Egypt, 1770-1915*. Driven by the idea that the voices of Americans have been left out of the story of modern Egypt, Vivian argues that Americans have had a significant presence in Egypt and can provide new insight into Egyptian events and affairs. By focusing in on the Civil War, I have accepted Vivian's challenge by illuminating how the American perspective sheds new light on nature of U.S. and Egyptian relations at the time of the cotton boom. The works of Owen, Beckert, and Vivian serve as a foundation for my thesis, but I go beyond their work to explore the immediate effects of the Civil War on the Unionists' influence in Egypt.

This, in turn, exposes the insecurities and defensiveness of Unionists in Egypt due to a war back home. I reveal how these economically-driven insecurities affected the way in which Unionists interacted with the Egyptian people, using the British presence in Egypt as a point of comparison. While the Union navigated its relationship with Egypt cautiously, the British more forcefully exerted their power over the Egyptians. This also had to do with the fact that Britain had a longer history of influence in Egypt, as shown by Mitchell's work. Sensitive to these different power dynamics, the Egyptians were more receptive to Americans in their country than

the presence of the British. Moreover, the United States had only recently achieved independence, so Egyptians could relate to Americans in their shared struggles.

Recognizing the different relationships the United States and Britain had with Egypt deepens our understanding of the common narrative of how Egypt came to be colonized by the British, the more assertive of the two Western powers. By revealing the strong presence of Americans in Egypt, this thesis suggests that a different fate for the Egyptians could have easily been imagined in the 19th century. It was not inevitable that the British would emerge as the colonizers of Egypt. Instead, the American Civil War disrupted the dynamics of the strong relationship between the United States and Egypt and forced Americans to turn their attention back home, while other European powers' interest in Egypt as a source of cotton peaked.

The thesis is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 uses both American and British consular records to illustrate the economic transformation that occurred in Egypt as a result of the American Civil War. The chapter relies on quantitative evidence, such as cotton prices and the amount of cotton exported from Egypt. It also discusses efforts being made in Egypt to take advantage of the global shock experienced as a result of the trade blockade in the U.S. South. Chapter 1 represents the extent to which the American Civil War and Egypt have been discussed together in academic scholarship.

Chapter 2 lays out the foundation of the American-Egyptian relationship during the 19th century. This chapter serves to challenge the idea that Americans were not engaging in meaningful interactions with Egyptians. While current literature says the United States had no foreign policy towards the Middle East during the 19th century, this thesis challenges that idea by pointing to more informal interactions between the United States and Egypt. In fact, it was because their relationship was not political in nature that it became so strong. These informal

interactions included religious missions and the protégé system, which allowed foreigners to seek American protection.

Chapter 3 looks at how Unionists in Egypt viewed the war that was occurring back home. There are a number of interesting references to the Civil War in the letters from the U.S. consular office in Alexandria. For example, in many of his letters, the U.S. General Consul William S. Thayer appears to be reassuring the U.S. government that the war has not tarnished the reputation of the United States abroad. In one letter, he states, "...the efforts of the enemies of our government at home have not as yet destroyed its influence abroad."⁸ The fact that these mentions of the war come up in some exchanges that are completely unrelated to cotton suggests that the Unionists were concerned with how they were perceived by the Egyptians.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I compare the American-Egyptian relationship with the British-Egyptian relationship, shedding light on why Egypt was ultimately colonized by England. The Unionists appeared much more cautious in how they navigated their relationships with the Egyptians, as they were unsure of how much influence they had over the locals. As a result, the Egyptians were more comfortable with the Unionists. Threatened by the presence of Americans in Egypt and the good relations between the two countries, the British attempted to push the Americans out of Egypt and establish unbridled authority.⁹ This explains why a significant amount of the British consular records discuss the debt and malpractices of the Egyptian government, highlighting Britain's desire to justify why it had to become the sole super power in control of Egyptian affairs as a colonizer as early as the 1860s. Ultimately, the British succeeded and began occupying Egypt in 1882. Thus, this thesis adds a new dimension to the story of the

⁸ W. S. Thayer, U.S Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 5, August 26, 1861; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

⁹ Mohamed El-Bendary, *The Egyptian Press and Coverage of Local and International Events* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 106.

British colonization of Egypt by including the United States in the narrative. This chapter uses consular records from the period between 1861 and 1865 to foreshadow how colonization would play out.

While American and British consular records from Egypt constitute the majority of my primary sources, I also utilize American news articles about Egyptian cotton from the time of the Civil War. Furthermore, I employ numerous papers from the Library of Congress belonging to Thayer, which provide more informal insight into Egypt during the Civil War, as he was the U.S. Consul General from 1861 to 1864. By bringing American and British records on Egypt together and providing a comparative analysis of what was being discussed in each of the records, I am able to offer a new reading of Egypt in the 19th century and its relationship to the West. This contributes to recent efforts that reexamine the American Civil War through the lens of globalization, while also informing research on U.S. and Egyptian relations.

CHAPTER 1: A COTTON BOOM, 1861-1865

Just a few months prior to the outbreak of the American Civil War, the London Shipping Gazette published an article titled “The Danger to Cotton.” The article begins with an unsettling question: “Is this great fabric of commerce to be destroyed by the threatened disunion?”¹⁰ With the looming threat of war in the United States, the rest of the world was looking intently to see how it would unfold, as a shock to the cotton supply would disrupt the entire global economy. After a short discussion of American politics, the article ends with a call to “foster in every way the produce of our Colonies and all foreign countries, in order that we may be in a position to guard ourselves from such a calamity as a short supply of so important a staple from the States.”¹¹ Egypt emerged as one of the countries the world turned to for a potential new source of cotton, and the Egyptian government was determined to take advantage of this particular moment in history. By 1863, William Thayer, the U.S. Consul General in Egypt from 1861 to 1864, was convinced that Egyptian cotton planters would “furnish their full quota to supply the necessities of the world.”¹²

Before looking at how cotton emerged as a global commodity, the state of Egypt at this time must be understood. The story begins with Muhammad Ali, the self-declared Khedive or Viceroy, of Egypt and Sudan, who rose to power in 1805. Although, he was a governor of the Ottoman Empire, he was highly autonomous and powerful, and he was determined to transform Egypt into a significant regional power, as the Ottoman Empire was declining. While detaching Egypt from the Ottomans, Muhammad Ali engaged in extensive modernizing efforts and is often

¹⁰ “The Danger to Cotton,” January 28, 1861, from the London Shipping Gazette, The New York Times Archives.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² W. S. Thayer, U.S Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 31, March 5, 1863; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

viewed as the father of modern Egypt. He was able to nationalize all lands by imposing high taxes on farmers in the current system of production, who had only had to pay a set land tax to the state previously. These farmers had made up a privileged agrarian class, so Muhammad Ali did not want their high position to be a threat to his power. As farmers were unable to pay these new increased taxes, their lands began to be confiscated.¹³ He then distributed land to peasants and made himself “the sole landowner and only merchant in this country.”¹⁴ Peasants now had to work harder, which gave them incentive to have more children, who could be used for labor on the fields.¹⁵ This resulted in a significant rise in population, as mentioned by Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. in *Modern Egypt*; by 1880, the population reached 7.8 million, which was almost twice as many Egyptians as in 1800.¹⁶

According to historian P. J Vatikiotis, by 1820, Muhammad Ali was prepared to transform the whole foundation of the Egyptian economy: “He was now ready to intensify the cultivation of a highly marketable cash crop, for which Egyptian conditions were most favourable.”¹⁷ The crop that Vatikiotis is referring to is none other than cotton. Muhammad Ali not only increased production of cotton but also expanded Egypt’s textile industry, resulting in great sums of revenue to be used for his other modernizing efforts like building a strong army. He also developed systems of communication and transportation that could be used to facilitate foreign trade.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the European Powers were proponents of economic specialization, “whereby a country like Egypt became the supplier of agricultural raw materials, mainly cotton,

¹³ P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991): 50-55.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 52.

¹⁵ Arthur Goldschmidt Jr., *Modern Egypt: The Formation of a Nation State* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004): 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt*, 60.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 61.

for the industrial expansion of British textiles and related manufacturing enterprises.”¹⁹ In fact, in his 1841 memoir on cotton in Egypt, George Gliddon already predicted European capitalists would enter Egypt and induce the fellaheen, or peasants, to cultivate cotton, making cotton one of the greatest staples of Egypt.²⁰ Thus, already decades before the outbreak of the American Civil War, cotton was the central commodity to Egypt’s development. It is necessary to note that both Vatikiotis and Goldschmidt, in their broad histories of modern Egypt, only discuss cotton to the extent that has been described here. In fact, Vatikiotis does not even mention the Civil War in his narrative.

Only a few historians have identified the American Civil War as a critical moment in Egypt’s history. Roger Owen wrote an entire history on cotton in Egypt, which has a chapter devoted to the cotton boom experienced as a result of the war. Following the outbreak of the war, Owen notes that Muhammad Ali’s son and later governor of Egypt, Sa‘id Pasha, was actively “importing machinery and improving methods of cultivation,” illustrating that the Egyptian government was well aware of the global shock that had occurred as a result of internal American affairs.²¹ In addition to the government, the fellaheen were also conscious of what was occurring in the United States. Mr. Haywood, the Secretary of the Manchester Cotton Supply Association visited Egypt in 1861 to convince the Egyptian government to focus on the cultivation of cotton, as it was “believed that the crop in Egypt could be increased ten fold, if the government would render its aid.”²² According to William Thayer, the U.S. Consul General in Egypt from 1861 to 1864, the commercial houses in Alexandria were sending agents into the

¹⁹ Ibid, 62.

²⁰ George R. Gliddon, *A Memoir of the Cotton of Egypt* (London: James Madden & Co, 1841): 41.

²¹ Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy*, 95.

²² W. S. Thayer, U.S Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 4, July 20, 1861; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

interior of Egypt to buy cotton in advance of the harvest, but they were faced with difficulty: “But so well understood is the condition of the cotton-growing region in the U.S. even by the poorest fellahs (peasants) that it is difficult to persuade them to sell on terms which heretofore they would have been delighted to accept.”²³ In other words, even the peasants were prepared to take advantage of the tough situation the Europeans found themselves in as a result of the war.

In *Empire of Cotton*, Sven Beckert explains how the global empire of cotton was built on the crisis of the American Civil War.²⁴ The panic in Europe that resulted from the outbreak of war was not immediate, as cotton imports over the years preceding the war had been very high. However, it was not long before “dwindling supplies and rising prices began to paralyze production.”²⁵ The importance of cotton at this point in history is exemplified by the fact that in just England, “the livelihood of between one-fifth and one-fourth of all people was based upon the industry, one-tenth of all British capital was invested in it, and close to one-half of all exports consisted of cotton yard and cloth.”²⁶ In a New York Times article published just before the outbreak of war, the question of finding a new source of cotton is discussed:

“They may go to Africa, where Cotton grows spontaneously, and labor is the cost of the corn or rice that support it, -- to India and China, where untold millions of it may be raised, at wages of two or three pennies a day; they may go to Australia, to Asia Minor, Egypt, the West Indies, and elsewhere, and now they will go there, and inaugurate a system of production that will render them independent of a people, who have madly attempted the overthrow of a Government that had every claim to their loyalty and veneration. By secession the Gulf States have already inflicted upon that supremacy which the monopoly of Cotton would give them, a blow far more severe than could possibly have followed any policy which their enemies could adopt.”²⁷

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 242.

²⁵ Ibid, 247.

²⁶ Sven Beckert, “Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing in Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War,” *American Historical Review* 109, no. 5 (2004): 1408.

²⁷ “The Effect of Secession on the Production of Cotton,” February 9, 1861, The New York Times Archives.

While the world did have a number of options, the problem was that it would take years to develop production at the level needed to replace American exports of cotton. The London Herald addressed this issue in their unsettling article titled “American the Only Reliable Source.” The article acknowledges that many countries were capable of producing high-quality cotton, but that “immense capital must be sunk, communications opened, factories established – a vast commercial organization created” before this cotton could actualize.²⁸ The desperation many people felt because of a distant war that was occurring within the borders of the United States was very clear, despite efforts to quell anxieties by pointing to other potential sources of cotton:

“Our wants are pressing and immediate – so instant, that they must be met by cotton already grown and gathered, if they are to be met at all; so urgent, that those who practically feel them, and those, who sympathize with the sufferings of their countrymen, can scarce find patience to endure the heartless levity and presumptuous ignorance of a journal which pronounces ex cathedra that there is no real suffering to be apprehended...”²⁹

While the supply of cotton coming from the U.S. South was based on a shaky foundation, a system of slavery, the world had generally not bothered to develop viable alternative systems of cotton production elsewhere. However, the United States had made active efforts to obtain intelligence about Egyptian cotton at least 25 years before the outbreak of war.³⁰ In fact, Gliddon’s memoir on cotton in Egypt developed out of an order from the U.S. government to fill in some of the blanks regarding the worldwide cotton economy. Once the war began, Thayer met regularly with the Viceroy to discuss the production of cotton in Egypt. During the war, the U.S. government was even more inclined to promote cotton production elsewhere as to show the basis

²⁸ “American the Only Reliable Source,” November 16, 1861, from the London Herald, The New York Times Archives.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ricky-Dale Calhoun, “Seeds of Destruction: The Globalization of Cotton as a Result of the American Civil War,” PhD diss., Kansas State University, 2012, 246.

of the South's bid for independence was unfounded.³¹ The production of Egyptian cotton could represent a shift away from the monopoly of cotton cultivated in the American South through a system of slavery to a new "free labor" cotton produced in areas across the globe.³² Suddenly, the world was much smaller, and new global networks of cotton production could be created.

Egypt transformed its entire agricultural system in response to the Civil War from a rather diverse self-sufficient economy to a one-crop nation completely dependent on thriving trade.³³ In fact, according to the work of historian Edward Mead Earle, if the Civil War had not occurred, "it would have taken Egyptian cotton a half-century to achieve the position it had secured by 1865."³⁴ The tables included at the end of this chapter highlight this argument. Table 1 demonstrates that Egypt had always been producing cotton. The years 1861 and 1862, the early years of the Civil War, did not experience a huge increase in the amount of cotton exports. However, the total value of the cotton exports during these years is what is significant. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate how in a matter of only four years, quantities of cotton exported increased tremendously. In 1863, the Viceroy visited Asiut in Upper Egypt and was thrilled with what he saw: "Both sides of the river, which is just now at its highest point, were covered with cotton grounds, -- not of large dimensions but in parcels of an acre, and half an acre, indicating that every peasant was occupying himself with growing the plant which [had] showered such riches in the country."³⁵ It is clear that after the outbreak of the Civil War, Egypt shifted all of its attention to the cultivation of cotton. In 1861, the Viceroy had said that he could not force the

³¹ Beckert, *Empire of Cotton*, 264.

³² *Ibid*, 272.

³³ Edward Mead Earl, "Egyptian Cotton and the American Civil War," *Political Science Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1926): 521.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 521-522.

³⁵ Robert Colquhoun, British Consul General in Egypt, to Earl Russell K.G., British Foreign Secretary, No. 137, September 10, 1863; Foreign Office and predecessor: Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence before 1906, Ottoman Empire; FO 78/1755; TNA.

fellaheen to produce more cotton; they would only do so if it were profitable to do so.³⁶ Thus, it did not take long for all levels of the Egyptian population to realize the profits that could materialize out of extensive cotton production.

In order to fully understand how intertwined Egyptian success was with the internal affairs of the United States, it is helpful to look at what happened to Egypt after the war. When the war ended, U.S. Consul General in Egypt Charles Hale (1864-1870) reported back to the State Department that the resulting drop in cotton prices had created “a financial crisis” in Egypt.³⁷ At this point, there was fear that the fellaheen would be unable to pay back the European capitalists, who had given them advances. While this chapter has explored how the American Civil War manipulated Egyptian affairs, the following chapters will look specifically at how the war affected the relationship between the United States and Egypt. First, an analysis of the relationship between the two nations prior to the war must be examined.

³⁶ W. S. Thayer, U.S Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, August 28, 1861; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

³⁷ Charles Hale, U.S Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 32, June 14, 1865; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

TABLE 1: Amount of Cotton Exported in Pounds from the Port of Alexandria (1821 to 1862)³⁸

	England	France	Austria	Other Countries	Total Exported	Value in Dollars
1821	23,265	20,394	25,938	23,859	93,456	15,104
1831	5,761,998	4,456,188	7,757,739	504,900	18,480,825	1,960,084
1841	7,221,258	8,135,325	3,800,610	-----	16,187,193	2,700,0xx
1851	16,675,362	6,871,491	14,313,024	199,584	38,059,461	3,444,90x
1852	38,255,184	10,857,132	16,786,341	444,114	66,342,771	6,705,64x
1854	26,541,999	9,417,969	10,911,780	638,847	47,312,595	3,823,7xx
1855	26,790,885	10,716,552	13,900,788	159,489	51,567,714	4,687,9xx
1858	30,446,559	10,246,500	10,741,104	-----	51,434,163	5,455,135
1859	32,420,025	9,768,528	7,758,828	12,474	49,959,855	5,567,095
1860	30,814,047	7,751,898	4,066,920	77,220	42,710,085	4,863,943
1861	39,100,248	14,763,276	5,133,744	26,532	59,023,800	7,154,400
1862	52,341,300	14,152,149	3,676,860	71,577	70,241,886	19,511,497

Note: Some of the numbers in the last column were cut off in the microfilm. Also, these numbers were recorded in cantars, but I converted them to pounds using the conversion factor one cantar is equivalent to 99 pounds.

³⁸ Table A: "Custom House Table: Showing Amount of Cotton Exported from the Port of Alexandria from the Year 1821 to 1862, Inclusive," Appendix to Despatch, W. S. Thayer, U.S Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 31, March 5, 1863; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

TABLE 2: Total Exports of Cotton From Egypt in Pounds (1861-1864)³⁹

1861	60,000,000
1862	82,000,000
1863	128,700,000
1864	173,604,500

TABLE 3: Value of the Total Cotton Exports From Egypt in Dollars (1861-1865)⁴⁰

1861	7,154,400
1862	24,603,300
1863	46,782,450
1864	74,213,500

³⁹ Charles Hale, U.S Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 18, February 24, 1865; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2: THE AMERICAN PRESENCE IN EGYPT

On the Fourth of July in 1861, all 15 consulates in Alexandria raised their flags in celebration of the historic day of American independence. As was done every year, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Egyptian government visited the U.S. Consul General to Alexandria, William Thayer, in honor of the special occasion. During his visit, the Minister “expressed his wishes for the permanence of our Union,” while also noting the “hopelessness of the cause of its domestic enemies.” The celebrations ended with a dinner hosted by the Vice Consul, which was attended by many “distinguished residents of the city.” Thayer was the only American national present at this “patriotic dinner.”⁴¹ Overall, Thayer believed the day was “enthusiastically commemorated.”⁴²

It may come as a surprise that the Fourth of July was celebrated in a country as distant and removed from the United States as Egypt. However, in reality, the two countries had a strong relationship during the 19th century, and there was a significant American presence in Egypt. A day to honor America’s independence from Great Britain, the Fourth of July represents a point of commonality between the United States and Egypt, as Egypt would also soon be fighting against British colonization. Sympathetic to the independence effort, the United States would support Egypt in its struggle against British imperialism.

During the 1860s, Alexandria was akin to a European city, given its very diverse population. The range of people residing in Egypt at this time is exemplified by the fact that almost everyone spoke three or four languages. Thayer noted, “It is the easiest thing in the world

⁴¹ W. S. Thayer, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, to S.S. Thayer, July 4, 1861; William Sydney Thayer Papers, 1835-1901, Box 1, Folder VII; Manuscript Division, LOC; 17.

⁴² W. S. Thayer, U.S Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 4, July 21, 1861; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

to pick up a knowledge of languages here.”⁴³ When Muhammad Ali united the country in 1805 following Napoleon’s invasion, Egypt experienced an influx of visitors. While “monks, traders, explorers, invaders, and geographers” had been present in Egypt for centuries before, these were a new type of visitors, who were welcomed to bring their expertise to transform Egyptian society and would subsequently infiltrate Egyptian society to a greater extent than Egypt’s earlier visitors.⁴⁴ These foreigners “would explore, examine, dissect, and delve into ancient, medieval, modern Egypt with an unending curiosity and an unbelievable intrusion into every aspect of Egyptian life.”⁴⁵ Although not often discussed because of their lack of formal foreign policy towards the Middle East at this time, Americans were included among these visitors and had meaningful interactions with Egyptians. In fact, some of these exchanges between the American and Egyptian people even had a political basis. This chapter highlights how American involvement in Egyptian society during the 19th century created a strong foundation for the relationship between the United States and Egypt.

In order to understand Americans’ presence in Egypt, it is helpful to look at the United States’ larger interests in the Middle East and Africa during this period, as well as its relationship with the Ottoman Empire, of which Egypt was a vassal. The United States’ history as a British colony resulted in a unique relationship between Arabs and Americans during the 19th century, one that was much more positive than one would imagine given the state of the relationship today or the palpable cultural and religious differences then. While many European powers were concerned with the Eastern Question, which dealt with the implications of the impending demise of the Ottoman Empire because of the strategic location of the Middle East, the United States did

⁴³ W.S. Thayer to S.S. Thayer, July 4, 1861; 14.

⁴⁴ Cassandra Vivian, *Americans in Egypt, 1770-1915: Explorers, Consuls, Travelers, Soldiers, Missionaries, Writers and Scientists* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012): 5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

not yet have a strategic stake in the region. Instead, American interests in the Arab world were primarily “cultural, philanthropic, and commercial.”⁴⁶ The Americans were much more focused on themselves and building their own nation, rather than imposing power over the Arabs. As a result, the Ottomans viewed the United States much more favorably than other Western powers and even saw it as “a possible source of assistance for economic development.”⁴⁷

While no real U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East existed until after World War I, the United Colonies did express interest in developing trade relations with the Ottoman Empire as early as 1774 during the Continental Congress.⁴⁸ However, this formal trade did not actualize until the signing of the 1830 Ottoman-American trade treaty because of earlier limits placed on the United States as it attempted to enter the world of trade. Having just achieved independence, the United States was still figuring out how to trade between states at the turn of the 19th century. The extent of U.S. foreign trade consisted of secret missions that politicians used “to test the waters of international trade,” despite George Washington’s emphasis on non-intervention.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the United States was subjugated to the Levant Company, which meant it had to give allegiance and a tariff to the British, “[extending] the colonial yoke recently tossed aside by the Revolutionary War and [adding] salt to an already festering wound.”⁵⁰ The Levant Company was a British joint venture company created during the late Elizabethan period that “had the monopoly on trade in the eastern edge of the Mediterranean, so that other countries wanting to trade with the Ottoman Empire had to do so through the Company.”⁵¹ The United States refused to pay a tariff to the British, even though it meant losing the privilege of trading with the

⁴⁶ John A. DeNovo, *American Interests in the Middle East Policy, 1900-1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 7.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 95.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 242.

Ottoman Empire. Therefore, while engaging in international trade was an important goal of the United States, this trade was tied up with American efforts to reinforce its status as an independent nation.

The United States was also preoccupied with its affairs in the Barbary States, which served to discourage faith in free trade. Algeria, Tunis, and Tripoli had been extorting ransoms from foreign ships along the Barbary Coast. As a colony of the British Empire, American vessels were given protection. However, with its now independent status, the United States had to determine how to protect its vessels in the Mediterranean not only from the Barbary corsairs but also the British and French, who were just as likely to attack American vessels.⁵² The European governments agreed to pay tribute to the Barbary States to avoid their subjects from being taken as slaves. American merchants were a prime target for attack, given the weak U.S. navy, and as a result, “the promises of free trade were imperiled,” according to historian Frederick C. Leiner.⁵³ The United States was left with “powerless outrage,” as it was forced to follow traditional European practices of making significantly large payments to the Barbary States until it developed a resilient navy.⁵⁴ The helplessness of Americans navigating the Barbary Coast is exemplified by an American in Lisbon who spoke in regards to Americans facing captivity along the coast in 1794: “God have mercy upon our poor countrymen. I now see no other alternative but [renewed] war with the English or humbly begging them to take us under their protection again as subjects or slaves.”⁵⁵ The desperation in this statement highlights just how recently the United States had achieved independence.

⁵² Ibid, 40.

⁵³ Frederick C. Leiner, *The End of Barbary Terror: America's 1815 War Against the Pirates of North Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 4.

⁵⁵ Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 121.

It was not until Thomas Jefferson was elected president that the United States began to shift from paying tribute to using force.⁵⁶ Jefferson's policy of force contradicts the historiography that argues the United States did not take an aggressive stance on foreign affairs until World War I and suggests that Americans were politically involved in the Middle East region. Nonetheless, the example of the Barbary States serves to illustrate that the United States was in as much of a transitional phase during the beginning of the 19th century as Egypt, which was undergoing a process of modernization under Muhammad Ali. These dual transitions gave the United States and Egypt something in common.

Another example of American-Middle Eastern interactions during the 19th century was religious missionaries, who were present in Egypt in significant numbers. In his book *Faith Misplaced*, Ussama Makdisi argues that the initial interaction between American missionaries and Arabs was what allowed the Arabs "to draw a picture of the United States as a benevolent great power that was neither imperialist nor covetous of the resources or lands of the Ottoman Empire."⁵⁷ Missionaries represented the first face of America for Arabs, so they were significant in building the foundations of American-Arab relations.⁵⁸ Pliny Fisk and Levi Parson, who worked for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, were the first American missionaries who aimed to reclaim the lands of the Bible from "a withering infidel grasp."⁵⁹ They believed they had an obligation to evangelize as many countries as possible.⁶⁰ Although Fisk and Parson represented an American organization, the Arabs associated them with England. At this point in history, the affairs of the United States were too distant from the Ottoman

⁵⁶ Vivian, *Americans in Egypt*, 43.

⁵⁷ Ussama Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced: The Broken Promise of U.S.-Arab Relations: 1820-2001* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010): 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

Empire, so Arabs only knew of Americans in a vague context. The Barbary conflicts were the first interaction between the Ottoman Empire and the United States, but they were insignificant to most Arabs, so no term had been developed to refer to the Americans.⁶¹ While Arabs had strong perceptions of Europe because of centuries of prior trade and conflict, their ideas of America were developed out of these missionaries, which created an image of “a benevolent America”: “It was of great significance that the Arab perception of America would initially and most comprehensively be created by ardent missionaries and their descendants, not by sailors, merchants, or soldiers.”⁶²

Through their religious missions, Americans infiltrated into Arab society without assimilating in the least. In fact, “the missionaries felt more American than ever in their Arab surroundings,” “[idealizing] America while setting down roots in foreign soil.”⁶³ When Thayer arrived in Egypt in 1861, he emphasized that the only other Americans there were missionaries, illustrating how central the religious mission was to American involvement in the Middle East. To the Arabs, these missionaries represented America.⁶⁴ The presence of these missionaries in the Arab world gave Americans in the region a huge sense of security. When the Ottoman Empire’s power began to decline, it began to make reforms as a means of adapting to an age of Western hegemony. These changes encroached into the Islamic foundation of the region, and by 1839, imperial rulers were making strong efforts to declare that they would treat all their subjects equally regardless of their religions. According to Makdisi, “this was a momentous and

⁶¹ Ibid, 26.

⁶² Ibid, 56.

⁶³ Ibid, 38.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 44.

revolutionary ideological transformation” for the Islamic Empire, and it confirmed the status of American missionaries as protected Americans.⁶⁵

In the context of American missionaries in Egypt more specifically, there is evidence that American missionaries were successful in their endeavors and even superior to the British missionaries. According to Thayer, in 1861, American missionaries had almost 400 students, as well as a number of societies for religious worship. Thayer argued that their success was rooted in “their thorough acquaintance with the language and character of the people, and in the fact that they give secular education equally to those who accept and those who refuse the teaching of Christianity.”⁶⁶ He believed the credit was due to the United States for encouraging such a principle and having the only missionaries that had any marked success in gaining converts among the Egyptian population.

While it may appear unreliable to assess the achievements of American missionaries from Thayer, he based his claims on what English residents living in Egypt had told him. According to Thayer, these residents “[deplored] the comparative inefficiency of missionary enterprises which, though supported by lavish contributions from Great Britain, did not pursue the sensible plan of our own philanthropic countrymen.”⁶⁷ Furthermore, it is clear that the American missionaries were successful and viewed favorably because Sa‘id Pasha gifted them with “a large and handsome government building,” whose estate valued 25,000 dollars.⁶⁸ This gift, according to Thayer, “[testified] to the respect felt for the American name by the Government of Egypt.”⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Ibid, 42-43.

⁶⁶ W. S. Thayer, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 12, November 26, 1861; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ W. S. Thayer, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 17, March 13, 1862; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

It is important to note that these missionaries often had official diplomatic support from the State Department, which suggests that the U.S. policy of non-intervention did not extend into cultural affairs.⁷⁰ The United States still held sentiments of superiority and believed it had beneficial ideologies to impose on the Arabs. While American-Arab relations were largely positive at this point in history, they should not be romanticized. Makdisi argues that American missionaries promoted “a notion of gradual racial improvement and progress,” as they believed that Islam was a backward religion.⁷¹ However, they did so in a way, as shown above, that “attracted rather than repelled Arabs to their point of view.”⁷² Although the Arabs trusted the Americans, there is clear evidence in the foundations of the U.S. missions that the U.S. policy of non-intervention would not hold for a long period of time, hence Makdisi’s argument that Arab faith in the Americans was misplaced.

Since American citizens were engaging in a range of activities in the Middle East, the United States had to offer them protection abroad. The State Department created a network of diplomatic and consular agents in the Middle East. In his book *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939*, John A. DeNovo argues American diplomats engaged in “rather tame and routine” activity, in comparison to their European counterparts, who viewed “the Middle East as a major arena in the contest for power and position.”⁷³ In Egypt, the Viceroy was technically not allowed to conduct diplomatic relations with foreign countries because of an autonomy agreement with the Ottoman Empire. However, foreign nations, including the United States, had “maintained a façade of respect for Ottoman sovereignty,” and all the consuls general

⁷⁰ DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East*, 8.

⁷¹ Makdisi, *Faith Misplaced*, 48.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East*, 19.

were also given the title of diplomatic agent.⁷⁴ The United States government treated Egypt as a “de facto independent nation,” exemplified by the fact that “Egypt was listed under a separate heading from the Ottoman Dominions in *Commercial Relations of the United States* in the mid-1850s.”⁷⁵ Just like the United States had been attempting to separate itself from the rope of England, Egypt was also attempting to brand itself as distinct from the Ottomans.

In Egypt, the story of the U.S. consulate begins with John Gliddon. In 1832, Gliddon, who had been living as a trader in Alexandria, was appointed as a consular agent in Egypt for the United States. The British attempted to block his appointment, as Gliddon was a British subject. Just as with the Levant Company, Britain wanted Gliddon “to pledge allegiance to England and thereby subjugate the United States to it in Egypt.”⁷⁶ However, the British efforts failed because of the 1830 trade treaty that had established the United States as a permanent trading partner of the Ottoman Empire. John Gliddon eventually moved up from a consular agent, the lowest diplomatic position, to a consul, after an American spy in Egypt informed the U.S. government that other foreign powers in Egypt had consuls general, not mere consular agents. While consular agents informed their governments of what was happening in Egypt, consuls had added responsibilities, including dealing with the commercial interests of their countries, aiding their citizens who were living in or visiting foreign places, and supervising consular agents. After a country had multiple offices across different cities of a single country, a consul general was appointed to be in charge of all the offices.⁷⁷

The first U.S. Consul General of Egypt, Daniel Smith McCauley, was appointed in 1848. In a letter describing the appointment of McCauley, the Secretary of State James Buchanan said,

⁷⁴ Calhoun, “Seeds of Destruction,” 250.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 250-251.

⁷⁶ Vivian, *Americans in Egypt*, 97.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 97-98.

“It is of great importance that we should cultivate the most friendly political relations with the Pasha.”⁷⁸ He goes on to say that he chose McCauley, who had been a consul to Tripoli, because of his experience with the people of the Barbary Coast.⁷⁹ This letter sheds light on the importance the United States placed on developing a strong relationship with Egypt. It is significant that Buchanan explicitly stated that McCauley’s mission would be “both consular and political.”⁸⁰ Thus, although historiography has not focused on this aspect of American-Egyptian relations, there was a clear political basis to the relationship as early as the 19th century.

After McCauley, Edwin De Leon was appointed U.S. Consul General in 1853 and served until 1861. De Leon’s time as Consul General has not been studied much, but the major event that occurred during his posting was the introduction of the American Mission in Egypt. The Mission had already been present in Damascus, and one of its members was convinced “that Egypt was a strategic country, its people in great need, and political conditions in Egypt propitious to the beginning of new enterprise in Christian endeavor.”⁸¹ Thayer followed De Leon.

The reception that Thayer was given when he first arrived in Egypt is testament to the value the Viceroy put on his relationship with the United States. In a letter to his sister, Thayer shared details of his arrival in Egypt, emphasizing the uniqueness of his reception: “Everybody admits that mine was an uncommonly good one and that the Pacha laid himself out to render special honor to our Government.”⁸² When Thayer arrived, Sa‘id Pasha was 120 miles away

⁷⁸ Jasper Yeates Brinton, *The American Effort in Egypt: A Chapter in Diplomatic History in the Nineteenth Century* (Alexandria: Impr. Du Commerce, 1972), 34.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁸² W.S. Thayer to S.S. Thayer, July 4, 1861; 8.

from Alexandria but returned immediately after receiving a telegraph that said Thayer wanted to meet with him.

Thayer noted that the Viceroy's behavior was uncommon, as it usually took up to two weeks to prepare a reception. It was also unusual for the Viceroy to go to Thayer, instead of having Thayer come to him. The elements of the reception itself further showcase the exceptionality in how Thayer was treated. For example, Thayer was taken to Sa'id Pasha in an extravagant state carriage, followed by double the number of janissaries that would normally be present for such an occasion. Upon meeting Sa'id Pasha, Thayer made a short remark about his duties in Egypt, to which Sa'id Pasha responded he "hoped that his relations with the United States would prove as agreeable hereafter as they had been in the past."⁸³ Later that afternoon, the Minister of Foreign Affairs told Thayer that the Viceroy was pleased with their meeting and had spoken of Thayer with praise.⁸⁴

Thayer not only experienced an unusually warm greeting from the Viceroy but also from Secretary of State William H. Seward, who sent Thayer a letter, "a little out of the common run of despatches," approving of his conduct during the reception.⁸⁵ It is clear that "the friendly feeling towards the United States manifested by His Highness" was significant to the United States.⁸⁶ When Thayer told Sa'id Pasha about this letter, Sa'id Pasha expressed "that he hoped he should continue to deserve the good opinion" of the U.S. government, as well as Thayer.⁸⁷ These warm exchanges between the United States and Egypt suggest the two countries already had a strong foundation to their relationship and were determined to maintain it.

⁸³ Ibid, 10.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 8-20.

⁸⁵ W. S. Thayer, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, diary entry, September 10, 1861; William Sydney Thayer Papers, 1835-1901, Box 1, Folder VII; Manuscript Division, LOC; 63.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ W. S. Thayer, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, diary entry, September 23, 1861; William Sydney Thayer Papers, 1835-1901, Box 1, Folder VII; Manuscript Division, LOC; 79.

This strong relationship was no secret to people residing in Egypt. The extensive American protégé system that existed in Egypt reveals the faith non-Americans had in the United States. In his piece “Jurisdictional Borderlands,” Ziad Fahmy explores protégés under the American flag. A protégé referred to a non-American who was given protection by the United States. This was a feature of the capitulatory legal system, dating back to the 1500s, which gave Europeans living within the Ottoman Empire certain rights and privileges. One of the rights that emerged was to be able to be judged by one’s own country for crimes committed in an Ottoman territory. Because some European residents did not have consular representation, they were able to seek asylum from another country’s consulate, becoming a protégé of that country.⁸⁸ As a result, each consulate functioned like “its own independent state, complete with separate legal institutions.”⁸⁹ Fahmy notes that there were not many American citizens in Egypt at this time, but a large number of foreigners sought American protection. He also says, “Because the United States was a relatively small power with limited economic and colonial ambitions in North Africa, its consular correspondence was more focused on protégés and less on the grander machinations of colonial great power rivalries.”⁹⁰

While Fahmy does not go so far as to say this, it seems foreigners believed they could trust the United States for protection, as they saw stability in the American-Egyptian relationship, given the dynamics of the relationship that have been laid out in this chapter thus far. The amount of faith foreigners in Egypt had in Americans is exemplified by their willingness to extend their support to the United States during the Civil War. For example, in one of his dispatches, Thayer briefly mentioned that a number of Greeks and Italians that were residents in

⁸⁸ Vivian, *Americans in Egypt*, 147.

⁸⁹ Ziad Fahmy, “Jurisdictional Borderlands: Extraterritoriality and ‘Legal Chameleons’ in Precolonial Alexandria, 1840-1870,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 2 (2013): 317.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 308.

Alexandria wanted to enlist in the military service of the Union during the Civil War.⁹¹ Furthermore, in 1864, Acting U.S. Consul General in Egypt F. Dainese said that he delivered a speech to the American protégés for the Fourth of July, in which he “alluded to the increased sacrifices of our people at home in their efforts to support the Union under whose glorious flag we are enjoying quiet in this distant land.”⁹² According to Dainese, this remark elicited interest among the protégés, and they decided to collect donations to give to widows and orphans of those who died in the defense of the country. In both these instances, the desire for foreigners, who would have been interacting with Americans in Egypt, to aid the Union, suggests that they not only respected the Union’s efforts back home but also in Egypt.

The State Department was cautious about granting protégé status and attempted to discourage the consuls general from doing so numerous times. However, the consuls general always defended the protégé system, most likely because of “illicit economic advantage” they were gaining, according to Fahmy.⁹³ When the American Civil War broke out in 1861, consuls general had a new justification for upholding the protégé system because the war made Americans much more concerned about what their reputation was abroad. For example, in a letter to the State Department, U.S. Consul General Charles Hale said, “But if at the same time we had dismissed a number of protégés who had been accepted, recognizing and protected by my predecessors, for a long series of years, I knew it would be reported to every European Government that we felt ourselves too weak in the midst of our war at home, to maintain our responsibilities here.”⁹⁴ This statement is revealing for two reasons. First, it sheds light on the

⁹¹ Thayer to Seward, No. 4, July 20, 1861.

⁹² F. Dainese, Acting U.S. Consul General in Egypt, to S. P. Chase, Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, July 11, 1864; United States Consular Records for Cairo, Egypt, 1834-1941 (Volume 006); Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, 1788 – ca. 1991, RG 84; NACP.

⁹³ Fahmy, “Jurisdictional Borderlands,” 319.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 317-318.

insecurities the U.S. government had because of the Civil War. Hale knew very well that tapping in to this insecurity by “conveniently [linking] the continuation of a capitulatory system to the promotion of American diplomatic prestige” would allow him to get what he wanted: a preservation of the protégé system.⁹⁵ Second, Hale’s statement brings up the question of why Alexandrians wanted to be protégés of the United States, which was experiencing a war and could cut off its responsibilities toward its protégés at any point. Protégés were well aware of the affairs that were happening in the United States, exemplified by their “patriotic gestures” during national crises and national holidays.⁹⁶ Clearly, there was reason to believe that the United States would maintain a strong, active presence in Egypt, regardless of its war back home.

The limits that were placed on the United States by its recent history of colonization allowed it to develop a strong relationship with Egypt. At this point in history, it was not obvious that the British would gain control over Egypt. While there was clear competition between the different European nations present in Egypt, the United States had created a secure foundation for its relationship with Egypt and thus represented a viable force to eventually exert power over the nation. The future of Egypt was uncertain and would only continue to be so as the American Civil War began to disrupt the entire global economy.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 318.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3: AMERICANS INSECURE ABOUT A WAR BACK HOME

In March 1849, Daniel S. McCauley began his post as the first U.S. Consul General in Egypt. In his third dispatch to the State Department, McCauley stated his concerns about how he thought he would be received in Egypt: “I was led to apprehend, that, I might, be received as the representation of a secondary power for I regret to say that absorbed as they are here with their European relations they have apparently overlooked the ruling importance and position of America in the scale of nations and which they have yet to learn to appreciate.”⁹⁷ Americans were not just worried about how they were viewed in Egypt; they were equally insecure about the place of their nation on the world stage. McCauley stated that these apprehensions were probably passed along to the Egyptian government because his presentation ended up being “attended with all the dignity, state, and ceremony, of the first class agents and Consuls General, of the most favored nations.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, McCauley used the dispatch to provide an explanation of why he accepted presents, or “public insignia,” from the Viceroy.⁹⁹ He said that he had had trouble accepting gifts from the Egyptian government because it went against the U.S. Constitution. Yet, after great deliberation, he ultimately accepted them because he did not think the Egyptians would understand his reason for refusing them. By rejecting the gifts offered to him by the Egyptian government, it would appear “that, the first, diplomatic agent of the American Government to this country would have been looked upon as the agent of a second or third rate power by the subordinate authorities and the public.”¹⁰⁰ Clearly, McCauley’s primary

⁹⁷ D. S. McCauley, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, to James Buchanan, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 3, March 22, 1849; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 2); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

objective was to place the United States at equal footing with the other foreign powers present in Egypt.

McCauley's concerns laid out in this dispatch, that were ultimately quelled by the Egyptians, are central to this chapter. Given that McCauley was the first U.S. Consul General in Egypt, his worries were not unfounded. However, these concerns continued even up until the time of the American Civil War. This chapter looks at examples that showcase American insecurities regarding their status in Egypt. In doing so, it becomes clear that the United States was anxious about its status on the global stage. These anxieties were ubiquitous in the interactions between Americans and Egyptians, and Egyptians were constantly seen reassuring the United States that they were in fact viewed as a significant power in Egypt. When the American Civil War broke out, these American insecurities became even more prevalent.

In August 1861, Thayer wrote to the State Department about the question of religious tolerance in Egypt in regards to Faris el-Hakim, an agent of the American missionaries. Faris was employed to distribute Bibles and religious publications. Although not technically an American protégé in Egypt, Faris, an accomplished Syrian physician, previously had this privilege in Syria. According to Thayer's dispatch, Faris was bastinadoed, a harsh method of punishment that involved whipping the sole's of one bare feet, and mistreated at the Court of the Qadi of Asiut and then imprisoned. As soon as Thayer learned of this incident, he wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, demanding an investigation into this case as well as "announcing that [Thayer] should expect appropriate satisfaction for the barbarous outrage committed."¹⁰¹

The details leading up to Faris' imprisonment revolve around a Christian woman, who had been compelled to convert to Islam. She wanted to return to her original Christian faith and

¹⁰¹ W. S. Thayer, U.S Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 5, August 26, 1861; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

had turned to Faris for help, as he was known for his argumentative skills. Faris was employed as her attorney, “complying with the usual formalities required to enable her to enjoy in peace her new religion.” According to Thayer, Faris strictly adhered to the laws of Egypt as well as the Firman of the late Sultan, which guaranteed religious tolerance. However, Thayer noted that Asiut’s remote nature and its population of “bigoted Mussulmans” made it difficult to enforce toleration.¹⁰²

When Faris appeared in court, he was met with “prominent Muslim citizens of Asiut who...were evidently disposed to raise a tumult.” The Muslims of Asiut had learned of the new Sultan, Abdülaziz (1861-1876), “who was generally believed to be an unrelenting enemy of religious freedom and under whose reign they expected unlimited license to exterminate the odious heresy of Christianity.” Abdülaziz represented a significant shift from the previous Sultan, who was known for his tolerant efforts aimed at integrating Ottoman society, so these Muslims felt justified in their harsh actions against Faris. Without even explaining his case, Faris was ordered to sit on the ground and was “tortured in the most inhuman manner until he swooned away from his sufferings.” After being brutally beaten, he was dragged by a mob, which was encouraged by the Qadi and Mufti, to the criminal cell of the prison. He was released in the evening but only because he was reported to be dying. He was imprisoned again the next day after waking up but shortly freed because of the order of the Moudir, who condemned the brutal actions taken against Faris. The severity of the abuse Faris experienced was highlighted by his doctor, who said his wounds were “of a very serious character,” and it was “probable that his health is permanently impaired.”¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

When Thayer sought punishment for those who assaulted Faris, the Minister of Foreign Affairs told him he was unsure if his request would be granted because Faris was not formally an American protégé. However, to Thayer, this was not a matter of “diplomatic technicalities”; rather, it was about “the dubious principles of justice and common cause.” When Thayer met with Sa‘id Pasha to discuss the incident, the conversation began with Thayer answering questions about the “national struggle for the maintenance of the United States Government.”¹⁰⁴ Sa‘id Pasha knew how urgently Thayer wanted to speak about what happened to Faris, so it is interesting that he would start the conversation with inquiries about the American Civil War and only move on when Thayer changed the subject. It is also telling that Thayer felt the need to report this seemingly minute detail about his discussion with the Viceroy back to the State Department.

Thayer went on to share the importance of the Faris case with Sa‘id Pasha: “My government and millions of people throughout the world would await his decision with interest. Not only the numerous and influential religious associations of Christendom, but the friends of civilization everywhere would hold this to be a test-question as to the progress of just government and religious toleration in Egypt.” Thayer’s reference to the missionaries highlights the great clout the religious associations had in Egyptian society. Sa‘id Pasha responded by explaining how difficult it is to enforce the doctrine of toleration, acknowledging that what happened to Faris because of “the peculiar opinions and ways of the people” in Upper Egypt was unjust. Ultimately, Sa‘id Pasha followed Thayer’s suggestions and fined and imprisoned the thirteen men involved in the attacks against Faris. “The admirable decision of the Vice Roy in this affair is warmly approved by all classes, except of course the most bigoted portions of his native subjects,” according to Thayer. Throughout his dispatch, Thayer made it evident that the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

case of Faris was of global importance, as it represented a threat to justice everywhere. Given the general consensus on this matter, the claim Thayer made at the closing of his dispatch appears unwarranted: “I trust it will not be deemed unbecoming also to remark that the success of this consulate in disposing the Vice Roy to his praiseworthy course will perhaps be taken as a sign that the efforts of the enemies of our government at home have not as yet destroyed its influence abroad.”¹⁰⁵ He made a similar claim in a personal letter to a family member: “And that I was able to get so much in a case like this shows that the influence of the Govt. abroad is not seriously weakened by rebellion at home.”¹⁰⁶ However, Thayer went one step further in this letter by adding that “no Consul General of a second class or third class power” could have triumphed to the same extent.¹⁰⁷ Thayer’s desire to compare the status of the United States to the statuses of other countries in Egypt not only highlights Thayer’s desire to toot his own horn as a diplomat back home but also the insecurities Americans had about their global standing.

In a letter to American missionaries in Egypt, Thayer urged them to acknowledge the large role the U.S. government had in making Sa‘id Pasha adopt a policy of religious tolerance. While making the same claim about the strength of American influence abroad, Thayer adds that the honored flag of the United States “is still, as it always has been, the potent symbol alike of civil and of religious freedom.”¹⁰⁸ From its foundation of eliminating British control, the United States was known as a nation that underscored individual freedoms. Americans had been trying to distinguish themselves on the world stage as a nation that protected civil and religious liberty. It was clear to Thayer that this was a moment that could underscore American political

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ W. S. Thayer, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, to J. B. Thayer, August 31, 1861; William Sydney Thayer Papers, 1835-1901, Box 1, Folder VII; Manuscript Division, LOC; 47.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 47-48.

¹⁰⁸ W. S. Thayer, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, to Reverend Messers. Lansing, Hogg, and Ewing, American missionaries, September 27, 1861; William Sydney Thayer Papers, 1835-1901, Box 1, Folder VII; Manuscript Division, LOC; 86.

credentials in that regard and help the United States brand itself as the protector of these freedoms.

After reading Thayer's letters regarding the Faris case, it is not surprising that Sa'id Pasha punished the men that assaulted Faris; the attacks were condemned by most. Yet Thayer still felt the need to make these strong claims about the reputation of the United States. These remarks suggest that the United States was unsure of its reputation abroad and was in need of constant reassurance that it was still held in high respect. The fact that an issue of religious tolerance ultimately turned into a discussion on the effects of the Civil War abroad highlights what the primary concerns of the United States were at this time. They were very much preoccupied with a war back home, and the Egyptians were very well aware of this. It is likely that Sa'id Pasha brought up the Civil War during his conversation with Thayer because he knew this would give him some leverage by reminding Thayer that the internal affairs of the United States were messy but Egypt still remained a sincere friend of the Union nonetheless. The example of the Faris incident may seem minor in this larger narrative on the effects of the Civil War on American-Egyptian relations, but it was actually one of the few major incidents that Thayer reported to the State Department during his posting as Consul General. He also discussed the case in his diary and letters he sent home, which were generally reserved for personal details of his life in Egypt. Thus, the fact that a case so important in its own right was somehow related to the Civil War is significant. While Americans were trying to promote themselves as a nation on the world stage that was characterized by its protection of civil and religious liberty, as illustrated by their response to the Faris incident, there was an irony in that they were facing a civil war at home over those very issues. The American Civil War threatened to undermine the

American brand abroad, so it makes sense that Thayer would enmesh the Faris incident within the war.

Furthermore, President Abraham Lincoln even sent a letter to Sa‘id Pasha regarding his “liberal, enlightened and energetic proceedings” on the Faris case.¹⁰⁹ Lincoln noted that the actions the Viceroy took “will be regarded as a new and unmistakable proof, equally of Your Highness’ friendship for the United States, and of the firmness, integrity, and wisdom, with which the Government of Your Highness is conducted.”¹¹⁰ Lincoln’s letter reinforces the idea that the United States was not just concerned with the larger issue of religious tolerance but instead also concerned with whether or not the Egyptian government would take the advice of the Americans seriously. The reaction of Lincoln, as well as of Thayer in his dispatches and personal letters, suggests that the United States was surprised at the extent that they were able to influence the Egyptian government to take a particular course of action. However, in his response to Lincoln’s letter, Sa‘id Pasha made clear that he had “executed the rule which [he had] always endeavored to follow.”¹¹¹ This brings up the question of how much influence the United States in particular had in this matter. Regardless, what is important here is the role the Americans perceived they had, which, as been shown thus far, was significant. Therefore, the Civil War can be understood as an event that brought out the insecurities of a nation that was already grappling with the fact that it was a rather new nation in comparison to the European superpowers it was competing with abroad.

It was not unusual for exchanges between Thayer and Sa‘id Pasha to center on the Civil War. For example, Thayer wrote about a particular conversation in his diary, in which Sa‘id

¹⁰⁹ Abraham Lincoln, U.S. President, to Muhammad Sa‘id Pasha, Viceroy, October 12, 1861; William Sydney Thayer Papers, 1835-1901, Box 1, Folder VII; Manuscript Division, LOC; 127.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Muhammad Sa‘id Pasha, Viceroy, to Abraham Lincoln, U.S. President, November 21, 1861; William Sydney Thayer Papers, 1835-1901, Box 1, Folder VII; Manuscript Division, LOC; 131.

Pasha stated that journals were mostly reserved for discussing American affairs. The fact that newspapers around the world were concerned with the Civil War illustrates the global repercussions of the war. In this exchange with Thayer, Sa' id Pasha said the blockade of the Southern ports of the United States had brought good fortune to his country, as there was an increased demand for Egyptian cotton. Thayer replied that there was no one else he would have wanted to gain more from the blockade than Egypt, highlighting the genuine desire both the United States and Egypt had for the other to succeed.

Sa' id Pasha went on to ask how the United States was progressing back home, expressing his support that “he did not doubt the triumph of our Government, which was sustained by the great body of our people.”¹¹² When sharing this conversation with the State Department, Thayer highlighted what it meant to receive such an opinion from Sa' id Pasha, the son of the celebrated Muhammad Ali: “The Vice Roy...may speak with hereditary authority on questions of this kind. It was very plain from the tone of his remarks, that our government has lost none of its prestige, his estimation.”¹¹³ By noting that Sa' id Pasha and his predecessors had experience in war, Thayer gave credibility to the Viceroy and his opinion on the impending success of the United States.

The dialogue between the U.S. Consul General and the Viceroy shifted to a discussion about slavery, which both Thayer and Sa' id Pasha had to navigate through carefully given the different conceptions of slavery between the two countries. The slave trade from sub-Saharan Africa to Egypt was ancient, but it experienced significant growth during the Egyptian cotton boom. Encouraged by the prospect of profit from cotton production, many rural notables

¹¹² W. S. Thayer, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, diary entry, November 8, 1861; William Sydney Thayer Papers, 1835-1901, Box 1, Folder VII; Manuscript Division, LOC; 117-118.

¹¹³ W. S. Thayer, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, November 13, 1861; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

acquired slaves for the first time during the 1860s.¹¹⁴ Thayer reassured the Viceroy that he was not making a claim of morality regarding slavery but instead “that it was not an element of strength in war to the community where it existed.”¹¹⁵ Sa‘id Pasha agreed with this statement and began to remark on how Egyptian slavery was different from slavery in America: “The slaves were domestic, not field labourers, were very well treated, and were often married to some of their master’s families.”¹¹⁶ While the Egyptian system of slavery was not as extensive or brutal as that of the United States, his statement is still a misrepresentation of Egyptians slaves. Thayer would have been well aware that Sa‘id Pasha was sugarcoating Egyptian slavery, especially because the British and French empires had been communicating their outright criticism of the system for years. The need for both sides to justify their own country’s practices as an attempt to avoid offending each other suggests both Thayer and Sa‘id Pasha were interested in maintaining the strong relationship between their two countries. For Thayer to go out of his way to express his position of neutrality on the topic of Egyptian slaves highlights the United States’ inability to make strong criticisms, like the British and French were doing, because of its current place in the global stage. The United States was still building its reputation abroad, so it had much more at stake.

In another example, Thayer contentedly reported back to the State Department that the captain of the port of Alexandria was now going “to exclude all vessels bearing an unrecognized flag from the harbors of Egypt,” evidence “that the Vice Roy of Egypt [had] again shown his good will to the United States.”¹¹⁷ This decision of the Viceroy was a result of Thayer meeting

¹¹⁴ Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno, *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in 19th-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2011), 11.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Thayer to Seward, November 13, 1861.

with him to express his concerns just 10 days prior to this dispatch being sent. During this meeting, Sa‘id Pasha “assured [Thayer] that no privateer in the service of the domestic enemies of the United States [would] be allowed to be fitted out, or to be bring its prizes in any port of his dominions.”¹¹⁸ It is not only significant that the Viceroy directed the captain of Alexandria to follow these orders but also significant that the Viceroy developed this position so quickly after Thayer expressed his worries.

After sharing this good news with the State Department, in the same dispatch, Thayer went on to boast about the status of American manufacturers who were acquiring Egyptian cotton. He said that the American manufacturers were “placed on an equal footing with those of Great Britain.”¹¹⁹ Thayer had mentioned his concerns about the status of the Manchester Association to the Viceroy’s Secretary, Nubar Bey, who wrote a note to Thayer on behalf of the Viceroy regarding the matter. In this note, the Secretary said, “His Highness has charged me to inform you, Monsieur, that what he has said for any association which may be formed in England for the above mentioned purpose, he says equally to any which your countrymen may organize.”¹²⁰ Again, the Viceroy is seen immediately reassuring the United States about concerns on its status in Egypt. In fact, in addition to this note, the Viceroy also reiterated his assurance to Thayer in person, “saying that he had never intended to exclude [U.S.] compatriots from an equal share in the privileges accorded to the capitalists of Great Britain.”¹²¹

Overall, the examples in this chapter reveal that the United States was treading carefully in its interactions with Egypt during the Civil War. The constant reassurance the American government needed not only sheds light on its insecurities but also the value the United States

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

placed on its relationship with Egypt. As highlighted in Chapter 1, Americans had a strong presence in Egypt prior to the war. In fact, according to the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, American tourists usually made up 75 percent of the total number of pleasure travelers in Egypt.¹²² Such a large number of Americans would not have visited Egypt if they were not welcomed and treated well. However, American emissaries continued to worry about the impact of the war back home on their standing, despite the constant willingness for the Egyptian government to provide reassurance to the United States. The less than self-assured Americans explored in this chapter can be juxtaposed with the British, who were conscious of the power they had over Egyptians in their interactions.

¹²² W. S. Thayer, U.S. Consul General in Egypt, to W. H. Seward, U.S. Secretary of State, No. 13, January 18, 1862; Despatches From U.S. Consuls in Alexandria, Egypt, 1853-1873 (microfilm T45, roll 3); General Records of the Department of State, RG 59; NACP.

CHAPTER 4: THE ROAD TO COLONIZATION

The British Consul General in Egypt, Robert Colquhoun (1859-1870), wrote to the British Foreign Secretary Earl Russell K.G. in April 1864, expressing the unsatisfactory state of Egypt. However, he did not give many details on his concerns, as he did “not wish, my Lord, to drift into unfriendly relations at present with the government, however much I see in their conduct, that may appear to me, to be regrettable.”¹²³ In this dispatch, Colquhoun stated that he thought it was wise to avoid pointing out minor problems the British had with the ways of the Egyptian government because he did not want to thwart the issues of greater importance that were at hand. Colquhoun believed that expressing British concerns to the Viceroy would “have the effect of alienating [the Viceroy] from us and perhaps give him an anti-English prejudice.”¹²⁴ Colquhoun’s remarks suggest that the British, just like the Americans, were cautious in their interactions with Egyptians. However, their motives for doing so were very different.

The Americans were anxious about how the Civil War affected the Egyptians’ perception of the United States because they were insecure about their reputation, as shown in the previous chapter. On the contrary, Colquhoun repeatedly voiced Britain’s perceived dominance over the Egyptians in consular dispatches, illustrating that he was not concerned about Britain’s reputation but instead ensuring that the British did not overstep their boundaries in providing advice to the Egyptian government. In the same dispatch mentioned above, Colquhoun noted that Isma‘il, the successor of Sa‘id Pasha, had “many defects,” which could prove detrimental to him

¹²³ Robert Colquhoun, British Consul General in Egypt, to Earl Russell K.G., British Foreign Secretary, No. 47, April 19, 1864; Foreign Office and predecessor: Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence before 1906, Ottoman Empire; FO 78/1818; TNA.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

among his own people, as well as among Europeans.¹²⁵ Colquhoun said that Isma‘il inherited a government that was in this condition because of “the reckless imprudence of his uncle.”¹²⁶

These unrelenting descriptions appeared regularly throughout the British consular records. As was shown in the analysis of the American consular records, Thayer was more concerned with reducing American anxieties about the reputation of the United States than proving the incompetence of Egyptian society. That is not to say that Americans did not hold the same opinions of the Egyptian people, but rather at this moment in time, the United States had different concerns. It is the United States’ turn inward to internal affairs, combined with Britain’s heightened interest in Egypt because of its cotton cultivation, that made British colonization a more likely fate for Egypt.

Although it has not been explicitly stated enough in literature on Egypt, the American Civil War was central to the story of the British colonization of Egypt. Goldschmidt Jr. is one of the few historians to hint at this idea. In *Modern Egypt*, Goldschmidt Jr. describes how Egypt’s economy was thriving during the Civil War because Egypt was able to sell cotton to Europe at inflated prices. As a result of Egypt’s success during its cotton boom, “bankers and other moneylenders flocked around Isma‘il, trying to lure him into various public and private investments.”¹²⁷ Isma‘il became caught up in expensive projects to expand and modernize his country, which were funded by significant foreign loans obtained without Ottoman permission. Eventually, Egypt’s debt skyrocketed, and once the Civil War ended and the U.S. South could sell cotton to Europe again, “tax revenues fell, and the terms demanded by foreign bankers for loans became more stringent.”¹²⁸ The Egyptian state debt had risen from about 3.5 million

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Goldschmidt Jr., *Modern Egypt*, 34.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 35.

pounds, at the time of Sa‘id Pasha’s death, to about 100 million pounds at the end of Isma‘il’s rule in 1879.¹²⁹ While Britain had a number of interests in Egypt, one of its main justifications for colonizing Egypt was the need to put the Egyptian government’s finances in order: “If the Egyptian government could not repay its debts, British subjects would be among the first to suffer.”¹³⁰

Goldschmidt argues that if any European power should have taken over the Egyptian government, it should have been the French because they had done the most to westernize Egypt. However, the British “opposed a unilateral French occupation and control over Egypt,” as Egypt’s strategic location remained of great importance to the British.¹³¹ Ultimately, the British emerged successful, and in 1882, they occupied Egypt. The rest of this chapter highlights examples from the years 1861 and 1865 that illustrate Britain’s confidence in its power over Egypt, which can be directly juxtaposed with the examples from American records presented in the previous chapter. These examples foreshadow the British occupation of Egypt, as they suggest that the British had already been expressing a strong desire to become the dominant power in control of Egypt from the time of the American Civil War.

Henry H. Calvert, the British Vice Consul in Egypt (1856-1882), sent a telling letter to Colquhoun on his opinions about the state of affairs at Cairo in 1861. Within this note, Calvert spoke on an array of topics, including “the reckless conduct of the Viceroy” and the financial crisis Egypt was already experiencing during this time.¹³² When discussing “the state of the Police in the Districts,” Calvert mentioned that the farther away a place was from European

¹²⁹ Alexander Scholch, *Egypt for the Egyptians!: The Socio-Political Crisis in Egypt, 1878-1882* (London: Ithaca Press, 1981), 43.

¹³⁰ Goldschmidt Jr., *Modern Egypt*, 51.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹³² Henry H. Calvert, British Vice Consul in Egypt, to Robert Colquhoun, British Consul General in Egypt, “Remarks on the present state of Egypt,” attached in note from Colquhoun to Earl Russell K.G., British Foreign Secretary, no. 112, November 11, 1861; Foreign Office and predecessor: Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence before 1906, Ottoman Empire; FO 78/1591; TNA.

influence, the less likely efforts would be made “to satisfy European ideals of government.”¹³³ In making this statement, Calvert highlights what the goal of England was in Egypt. The British wanted to transform Egypt into a European country.

Evelyn Baring, the First Earl of Cromer and the British Consul General in Egypt during British occupation, later articulated this same aim in his book *Modern Egypt*: “What Europeans mean when they talk of Egyptian self-government is that the Egyptians, far from being allowed to follow the bent of their own unreformed propensities, should only be permitted to govern themselves after the fashion in which Europeans think they ought to be governed.”¹³⁴ Although the British believed they were “the mainspring of this country’s power and wealth,” it is no surprise that Egyptians would be angered by the attempts at British control.¹³⁵ In fact, Colquhoun said that Isma‘il told his friend, “The people of Egypt must see in the government a hand of iron without unnecessarily feeling its pressure.”¹³⁶ The British would completely disregard this Egyptian expectation of government. When the British occupied Egypt, they repeatedly said that their military occupation would not last a long time; instead, they would solely put Egypt’s finances back in order and then leave.¹³⁷ However, Egypt did not achieve independence from England until 1922. As the British introduced new European reforms in Egypt, without acknowledging the particularities of Egyptian society, the more reforms that became necessary.¹³⁸ The subsequent examples illustrate how the actions of the British during the 1860s

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ The Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916), 526.

¹³⁵ Robert Colquhoun, British Consul General in Egypt, to Earl Russell K.G., British Foreign Secretary, No. 19, August 2, 1864; Foreign Office and predecessor: Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence before 1906, Ottoman Empire; FO 78/1819; TNA.

¹³⁶ Calvert to Colquhoun, “Remarks on the present state of Egypt,” no. 112, November 11, 1861; Foreign Office and predecessor: Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence before 1906, Ottoman Empire; FO 78/1591; TNA.

¹³⁷ Goldschmidt Jr., *Modern Egypt*, 48.

¹³⁸ Maurus Reinkowski, “Uncommunicative Communication: Competing Egyptian, Ottoman, and British Imperial Ventures in 19th-Century Egypt,” *Die Welt des Islams* 54, no. 3/4 (2014): 408.

foreshadowed that they would overstep this line in their power and begin to place too much pressure on Egyptian society.

In 1863, Isma‘il visited Beni Suef, where he learned that the native population was too busy with the work of clearing canals that they were unable to work on the railway, something they had been doing for years. Colquhoun took this opportunity to tell Isma‘il that he should bring in foreign capital for these purposes, even though Colquhoun already knew Isma‘il would not be a supporter given the views of the Viceroy’s predecessors. Isma‘il’s concern with bringing in foreign capital rested in the idea that he did not want his “railways, in any manner, [to] fall in the hands of foreigners.”¹³⁹ Colquhoun went on to tell Isma‘il how to revise the current lines, as they were “in a very deplorable state, according to Colquhoun.”¹⁴⁰ While Isma‘il told Colquhoun that he would give the issue serious consideration, Colquhoun added an interesting aside when describing this exchange in a dispatch to the Foreign Secretary: “The fact is, [Isma‘il} wishes to do everything, and see to everything, himself; he knows how deficient he is in men in whom he can trust, all his actions being overlooked by the wretched clique he still has about him, -- men utterly incapable themselves, and resolved to keep from him all who might disinterestedly do him good service.”¹⁴¹ This exchange is telling for two reasons. First, it illustrates the position of superiority Colquhoun is coming from to be able to give this advice that he already knows is unwanted. Second, Isma‘il’s unwillingness to seek help suggests his lack of trust in the British. While Colquhoun said there are people who would be ready to disinterestedly help the Viceroy and his government, it is clear that Colquhoun is acting on behalf of the British government, which has its own self-interests of building its power in the East.

¹³⁹ Robert Colquhoun, British Consul General in Egypt, to Earl Russell K.G., British Foreign Secretary, No. 135, September 10, 1863; Foreign Office and predecessor: Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence before 1906, Ottoman Empire; FO 78/1755; TNA.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

This example can be compared with an exchange between Isma‘il and Americans that Mohamed El-Bendary mentions in his work. Isma‘il sought assistance from the U.S. military in building a strong Egyptian army. Between 1869 and 1882, 55 U.S. soldiers trained Egyptian soldiers and served in their army, as a means of helping Isma‘il achieve independence from the Ottomans. When the U.S. soldiers first arrived in Egypt, Isma‘il gave them a warm welcome: “I welcome you gentlemen in my country and say to you with complete trust that it was your experience in the last War with the states in America and you showing no ambition to intervene in Egyptian affairs that drove me to seek Americans for this proposed service.”¹⁴² In his statement, it is clear that Isma‘il was alluding to the European powers, like England, who were attempting to exert their control over Egypt. The fact that Egypt wanted help from the United States in a matter of such importance, obtaining independence, suggests that Egyptians felt they could trust the Americans. Isma‘il’s desired policies of self-sufficiency did not extend to the United States, as he did not see its influence as encroaching on Egyptian sovereignty. Given the United States’ own history, it was sympathetic to Egypt’s attempts to break away from the Ottomans and become an independent nation. El-Bendary notes that it angered the British and French that the Egyptian government was turning to the United States for help. As a result, both England and France attempted “to force the Americans out of Egypt,” and they emerged successful when Isma‘il “was thrown in debt.”¹⁴³ From El-Bendary’s reading, the British and French were responsible for the unfortunate financial circumstances during Isma‘il’s reign.

The commotion surrounding the Suez Canal during the 1860s is another example that is testament to the recurrence of England acting in its own self-interest in issues pertaining to Egypt. The Suez Canal Company, created by Ferdinand de Lesseps, a French man, was a

¹⁴² El-Bendary, *The Egyptian Press and Coverage of Local and International Events*, 105.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 106.

financial company set up to build and operate a canal between the Red Sea and Mediterranean in 1858.¹⁴⁴ From the outset of the company, the British opposed the canal. According to a *New York Times* article published in 1863, England feared this project would transform Egypt into a French province and overthrow the Anglo-Oriental Empire.¹⁴⁵ The term Anglo-Oriental Empire is significant because it reveals the British desire to extend its control across the East. While the United States also wanted to have influence in different countries, there was not this same goal of building an American empire at this point in time. It is noteworthy that this term was used in an American source, *The New York Times*, because it suggests that the imperial project of the British was very clear to the rest of the world, likely including Egypt. The French had always been a perceived threat to the British in Egypt, as it occupied “a rather privileged position in Egypt, not only as a result of the long presence of Frenchmen as advisers in the court of Muhammad Ali, but also because of Isma‘il’s own preference for their advice.”¹⁴⁶ Thus, the French represented a potential obstruction to British imperial interests.

England rested their opposition of the canal on the fact that the Egyptian government was making grants of land, a supposed “infringement on the suzerainty of the Sultan,” and that forced labor was being used.¹⁴⁷ The article argued that these claims were rooted in hypocrisy, as the English had created a railway from Alexandria to Suez using forced labor and land received through a grant. The English were also involved in the construction of the railway that connected the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf, which utilized land grants made by the Sultan: “We have never heard that England became panic-stricken because of lands being transferred, and forced labor employed in these instances. But if it was proper for the Pasha and

¹⁴⁴ Sarah Searight, “‘A Dismal But Profitable Ditch’: The Suez Canal Then and Now,” *Asian Affairs* 47, no. 1 (2016): 96.

¹⁴⁵ “England and the Suez Canal Company,” September 6, 1863, The New York Times Archives.

¹⁴⁶ Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt*, 77.

¹⁴⁷ “England and the Suez Canal Company,” The New York Times Archives.

the Sultan to grant land to English capitalists, and to permit the employment of forced labor on English railways, why should it be so heinous an offence to be equally liberal to the ‘Universal Suez Canal Company?’”¹⁴⁸

The British successfully thwarted the project, as Napoleon of France admitted that the British objections were well founded; he declared that the forced labor system had to end and that the land appropriated by the Suez Canal Company had to be restored to the Egyptian government.¹⁴⁹ England’s commitment to obstructing a commercial company whose project would create large-scale benefits across the globe highlights its imperial motives: “It is plain, indeed, that the influence of England is now supreme in Turkey and its dependencies, and that the fact and intrigues of her diplomats have completely vanquished their French rivals, and baffled all their schemes for the extension of French authority in the East.”¹⁵⁰ Again, there is a clear indication from an American source of England’s ambition to become the strongest foreign power in the East. While the Americans were occupied with a war back home, England was immersed in the Eastern Question. Eventually, England would emerge as the biggest shareholder of the Suez Canal Company in 1875 when it bought Egypt’s shares, and the Suez Canal, because of its route to India, would represent a major incentive to occupy Egypt.

The fact that the United States was conscious of British efforts to create an Anglo-Oriental Empire is critical to the narrative told in this thesis. The American insecurities raised in the last chapter should be understood against the backdrop of these imperial objectives of the British. The United States knew it was not on the same level in the global stage as England. Therefore, we can understand Thayer’s attempts at quelling American anxieties as representative

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ “English Influence in the Orient.---The Suez Canal,” April 17, 1864, The New York Times Archives.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

of the United States trying to maneuver around the likely outcome of the British occupation of Egypt.

Just before the end of the Civil War, Colquhoun wrote a letter to the Foreign Secretary about the “severe commercial crisis” in Egypt.¹⁵¹ Colquhoun emphasized that Egypt’s specialization in cotton had led to this crisis: “The fact is, my Lord, that the last three years have so raised the country, owing to the war in America that all prudence has been banished and speculation approaching to gambling has pervaded not only our mercantile community, but every cotton grower, from the highest proprietor in the land, to the lowest fellah, who neglected the cultivation of his beans and Indian corn to rear cotton.”¹⁵² It is interesting that Colquhoun did not just blame the Egyptians for the current state of their nation and acknowledged the role British capitalists played in bringing them there. However, this vulnerable situation the Egyptians now found themselves in would become perfect justification for the British to have an even stronger intervention into Egyptian society and eventually become its colonizer. From this chapter, it is clear that England had no real interest in helping Egypt; the British cared more about building their empire, which Egypt would be beneficial to given its strategic location. When speaking of Egyptian resistance against British occupation, Vatikiotis noted, “Perhaps Britain’s cardinal mistake and therefore predicament lay in her perpetuation of a vague justification for her presence and an ambivalent basis for her position in Egypt.”¹⁵³ According to Vatikiotis, England had no real plan of action in Egypt except to extend its own power. This chapter has shown evidence prior to 1882 that exemplified this significant, but vague British aim.

¹⁵¹ Robert Colquhoun, British Consul General in Egypt, to Earl Russell K.G., British Foreign Secretary, No. 11, April 22, 1865; Foreign Office and predecessor: Political and Other Departments: General Correspondence before 1906, Ottoman Empire; FO 78/1885; TNA.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt*, 178.

By the end of the Civil War, the British colonization of Egypt, although not a foreordained outcome, was a very clear possibility to the rest of the world, including the United States.

CONCLUSION

“Today, no matter where within the United States they happen to live, Americans mark July 4, 1776, as the moment their history as an independent nation began. What we sometimes forget – though people at the time knew it – is that the United States could not become the nation that Americans imagined without the consent of other nations and people.”¹⁵⁴

When the American Civil War broke out, the world turned to places like Egypt, driven by a need for cotton. Egypt responded to the distant war immediately and took advantage of the global shortage of this valuable commodity. The cotton boom that Egypt experienced is testament to the global nature of the American Civil War. While the United States was of course also interested in finding a new source of cotton, it had unique anxieties given the state of the country back home. These insecurities were strikingly apparent in the interactions between Americans and Egyptians.

Throughout this thesis, we have seen Americans developing and maintaining a brand for itself abroad. As a rather new nation, the United States was navigating the global stage cautiously, as illustrated by the particular case of its relationship with Egypt. Although the United States, in comparison to the other more established Western powers, was more preoccupied with looking inwards to develop a strong national foundation, it was not removed from the rest of the world. If the United States wanted to succeed as a nation, it had to gain the approval of the global community, causing the country’s internal affairs to be tied up in its interactions with foreign powers, as has been shown by the example of the American Civil War.

The work of Eliga Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth*, broadens the understanding of the way in which the United States was attempting to gain legitimacy in the global community

¹⁵⁴ Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth*, 2.

after achieving independence from England in 1776. In his book, Gould focuses on the United States' relations with European countries specifically and how the United States could not become the nation it imagined until it proved to these countries that it was "treaty-worthy." The narrative I have laid out here fits into Gould's story but demonstrates that it can be applied more broadly. The United States not only sought European recognition; it needed to prove to the rest of the world that it was on equal standing with European countries. Throughout his dispatches to the U.S. State Department, we see Thayer proudly reassuring the U.S. government that the United States was in fact held at the same level in Egypt as countries like Britain. The very fact that Thayer had to devote a substantial portion of his letters to pacifying the concerns of Americans highlights that the United States was still grappling with issues of legitimacy late into the 19th century. According to Gould, Americans could only begin to make a history that the rest of the world was willing to let them make.¹⁵⁵ In the context of this thesis, it would have been clear to the Americans, at some point, that Britain would ultimately colonize Egypt. Gould's point holds significance because the United States had to situate itself in a way that it could still maintain some power abroad despite the inevitable.

Given this narrative, it is surprising that a century later, the United States would emerge victorious and be able to take control of the Middle East. From a modern perspective, it is difficult to imagine a time in which the United States was not the most dominant, confident foreign power in the Middle East, as today its power remains largely uncontested in the region. In scholarship, so much attention has been given to discussing more contemporary relations between the United States and the Middle East that pre-20th century relations have been largely dismissed. However, this thesis has shown the value of looking further back in history and opens up the possibility for further research on American-Middle Eastern relations.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

This thesis has not only situated the narrative on the American presence in the Middle East earlier than prevailing scholarship but has also suggested that the foundation of the American-Middle Eastern relationship was not as fraught as one would assume given current affairs. By centering on the particular event of the American Civil War, this paper has shown how a single event can have far-reaching repercussions. In studying these global implications more thoroughly, we can begin to realize the complex relationships that existed between countries, like that of the United States and Egypt during the 19th century.

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