Revelations of Muhammad Ali’s Reform for Egyptian National Governance

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Abstract: This paper conducts an in-depth study on Muhammad Ali’s reform which plays an important role in the history of Egypt or even the whole Middle East, and holds that the reform may reveal the following features: 1) Only by opening up and keeping up with the times can ancient civilizations thrive; 2) Without the unity of the state and the centralization of power, reforms can never be implemented, nor can development be achieved; 3) Economic revitalization is the cornerstone of reforms and development; 4) Development of culture and education lays the foundations for the sustainable political, economic and other development, even the national rejuvenation; 5) Personal dictatorship and external expansion always hamper the positive trend of reform.

Key Words: Muhammad Ali; Egyptian Politics; National Governance; Arab Countries

In 1798, Napoleon invaded Egypt and opened the door of Egypt; this allowed the European powers to share the country. Facing the growing national crisis, the new landlords - merchant groups, with

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Muhammad Ali (1769~1849) as the representative, thrived. They eliminated the warlords all over the country, strengthened the centralization with an iron fist, and created a unified nation-state in Egypt. They then implemented reform and opened up Egypt and promoted economic and cultural development, making the ancient civilization which had stagnated for a long time to take a big step forward.

There have been many articles analyzing the roots, background, process, achievements, meanings, consequences and other aspects of Muhammad Ali’s reforms. This article does not aim to elaborate on this further, but will focus on some of the important foundations these reforms have left for future generations, to allow us to use a broader historical perspective to observe the development of the situation in Egypt, including the chaos in Egypt today.

**Contribution One: Only by Opening up and Keeping up with the Times Can Ancient Civilizations Thrive**

The most important revelation Muhammad Ali’s reform left for the future generations is that one nation--no matter how old and how great a civilization it was, will stagnate and eventually collapse if it adopts a closed-door policy. Only by opening up and advancing with the times can it be prosperous.

At the end of 18th century, Egypt still nominally belonged to the Ottoman Empire, but was in fact under the rule of the Mamluk feudal military group. Mamluk’s closed-door policy and the feudal autocratic rule devastated Egyptian civilization. While in the north shore of the Mediterranean, Europe was making rapid progress driven by successive waves such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenments, the Bourgeois Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, in the south
shore of the Mediterranean, Egypt still remained closed-door and lifeless, stuck in medieval ignorance. French scholar C. F. Volney, who had personally traveled to Egypt, said: “political chaos, social decay and stagnation of knowledge made the last 25 years of the 18th century the most tragic period of the entire history of Egypt.” (Lacouuer, J. & Lacouuer, S., 1959). In such a situation, Napoleon led the French expeditionary force to invade Egypt and ended its isolated state.

However, Napoleon’s purpose of opening the door of Egypt was just to make it a vassal of France. This passive opening up under foreign occupation is impossible to really bless the people of Egypt with the fruits of liberation and victory. On the occasion of national crisis, the majority of the Egyptian people were in urgent need of knowledgeable and enterprising individuals to lead them against aggression, to end the civil strife, to reform and open up, and to revitalize the country. It is in this troubled time that Muhammad Ali entered the stage of Egyptian history. In 1799, Ali took part in the war against France as a mid-level officer. Because he was powerful and reputed to build credit, he was promoted step by step and became the commander of the main force of the Ottoman army stationed in Egypt – the Albanian Legion. In 1805, using the army force, Ali seized power in chaos and became the Governor of Egypt. After getting rid of the foreign invaders, Ali immediately seized the golden opportunity when Egypt was opened by Napoleon and made efforts to open the door of Egypt wider to catch up with the rapid pace of development of advanced countries in Europe. Thus, from the beginning, Muhammad Ali’s reforms had distinctive characteristics of opening up and advancing with the times.

Ali first followed the political system of Europe and the United States, establishing the Cabinet and Advisory Council. He called the Cabinet the State Cabinet Meeting, which oversaw seven departments:
trade, diplomacy, education, industry, finance, internal affairs, as well as the army and the navy. The daily work of the State Cabinet Meeting was presided over by the vice-governor, but ministers were all dismissed and appointed by Ali personally and major decisions were also decided by Ali himself. The Advisory Council, which was composed of government officials, religious scholars, noblemen, gentry and other personalities, met once a year to review proposals of all aspects.

In the development of industrial and agricultural production, Ali attached great importance to the introduction of technology from Western European countries by purchasing equipment, hiring experts and absorbing funds. At the time, experts from Europe and the United States came to assume positions as consultants in Egypt in factories, schools and in the military. As Ali could closely follow the advanced development level of Europe and America, the Egyptian national industry had a high technical level and a rapid pace of development from the start-up period. Under the guidance of foreign experts, shipbuilding, textiles, paper, glass, sugar, oil, printing, food processing, leather processing and other industries were developing rapidly, among which the fastest growing industries were shipbuilding and textiles. As some European officials who had visited the Alexandria Shipyard described, the shipyard produced warships with hundreds of artilleries, which were as good as the latest-produced European and American warships. In order to improve agricultural productivity, Ali imported pumps from Europe, turning the irrigation only during flood periods into perennial irrigation in the Nile Delta, and crops from one harvest a year to three harvests annually. Ali also introduced a number of new crop varieties. Making use of the rapidly developing need of raw materials in the European textile industry, he organized people to cultivate high-quality long fiber cotton and exported it to Britain in 1821 which soon became
popular. Then Egyptian cotton exports had multiplied by 200 times in the next three years (Kirk, G., 1959: 81).

The development of industry and agriculture in Egypt contributed greatly to the prosperity of business and foreign trade. To promote business and trade, and to restore its trading station status in Europe, Asia and Africa in the past, Muhammad Ali started massive construction projects to develop land and sea transportation and took measures to reform the monetary system. As a result, Cairo and other cities flourished because of the increasingly active commercial activities, Alexandria once again became the trading center of the Eastern Mediterranean. Thousands of foreign businessmen and business officials became residents of the city. In 1800, Egypt’s foreign trade totaled only 269,000 Egyptian pounds, in 1823 it rose to 2,111,400, and, in 1838, the number reached as high as 3.5 million Egyptian pounds (Issawi, C., 1966: 363).

As for culture and education, Muhammad Ali came to power facing an important decision: whether to strictly limit the input of Western ideas and culture or to introduce and learn the Western thoughts and culture? Many dignitaries and religious elders regarded Western influence as scourges and advocated the restoration of seclusion in cultural policies. After careful consideration, Ali recognized that to promote the reforms and revitalize Egypt, the advanced culture and technology of the West had to be introduced. In order to equip his revitalization plan with professional and technical cadres, Ali not only hired foreign experts to give lectures and teach technology in Egypt, but he also sent a large number of Egyptian youths to Europe to study. In 1813, the first group of Egyptian youths went to France and Italy to study military. In 1826, 44 students were dispatched to Europe to learn military, politics, medicine, biology, chemistry, agriculture, art and archeology. By the 1830s, there were
over 300 Egyptian students studying in European countries, many of whom held important positions in the military sector after returning to Egypt.

As Ali insisted on implementing open policy and advancing with the times, Egypt became the first country in the Asian-African region to embark on the road of modernization in the early 19th century. This explains why Karl Marx praised Egypt under Ali’s governance as “the only viable part in the Ottoman Empire.” (Marx, K., 1965: 231).

**Contribution Two: National Unity and Centralization are the Guarantee of Reform and Development**

Another important contribution left to later generations from the reforms led by Muhammad Ali is the lesson that without national unity and centralization, neither reforms nor development can be carried out.

When Muhammad Ali emerged as a leader, Egypt was in a place where warlordism and fragmentation prevailed. The leaders of Mamluk often battled with each other for power and properties which had brought continuous civil wars and endless turmoil to the country. At the same time, the elders of the religion exploited the great disorder to grab large amounts of land and properties which helped them enlarge their power and thus started to intervene in important domestic affairs. Ali knew that not until the forces of the elders of the religion and Mamluks were suppressed, national unity fulfilled, and centralism strengthened could reforms be carried out and development be propelled.

After mastering numerous lands, housing and properties, the elders of the religion gradually became feudal lords who were both extravagant and immoral. They separated themselves from affairs
related to religion and traditional social responsibility, which discontented the masses so much that it created a favorable opportunity for Ali to combat the hierarchy of the elders. In June 1809, he issued a decree stipulating that all religious property could no longer be tax-exempt and the elders must hand their religious property management certificate documents to the government for inspection within 40 days or their right for management would be eliminated. This resulted in both panic and loss of religious property originally mastered by those elders due to the irregularity or absence of proper documents. Omar Makram and some other leading elders underestimated the situation, for they thought they could force Ali to eliminate this decree by inciting people to riot. However, only few of them did so and most of the masses supported Ali’s measure (Anīs, M., 1980: 58-59). Ali took this favorable opportunity to immediately dismiss Makram as the leader of the elders. After that, many influential elders changed sides to support Ali and in turn Ali coopted them through money and clerical positions. As the elders’ forces went downhill, they represented no threat to Ali anymore.

Indeed, Muhammad Ali’s biggest concern was the intertwined forces of Mamluk. First of all, he capitalized on the contradiction between Anglophile and Francophile factions inside the Mamluk to weaken its power. In February 1804, Ellef, leader of the Anglophile faction marched towards Cairo with the support of Britain, attempting to seize the control of Egypt. Ali supported Balticy, leader of the Francophile, to attack Ellef and crashed the conspiracy of the Anglophile at one stroke. Then, Ali took advantage of the dissatisfaction of the people to overthrow Egypt Viceroy Balticy’s reign. On March 7, 1804, people in Cairo crowded onto the streets, opposing exorbitant taxes and levies ordered by the Mamluk authority and some even attacked the viceroy’s palace. At this critical moment,
Ali intervened in the conflict with the backing of the army and declared his support for the Cairo people, resulting in the complete collapse of the reign of Balticy. Under the support and love of the masses, Ali took office as Egypt’s new Viceroy the following year. On March 1, 1811, Ali invited the dignitaries and aristocrats, including all the important leaders of the Mamluk, to the Citadel of Saladin to attend the grand ceremony and banquet. During the ceremony, with the order from Ali, warriors ambushed the leaders of the Mamluk of all ranks and killed them and their attendants, whose number totaled 470. After that, Ali ordered the tracking down and arrested hundreds of key members of the Mamluk and executed them all. Thus the Mamluk forces that had rampaged for several hundred years were eradicated.

After achieving the goal of national unity, which had not been seen for several hundred years, Ali took a series of measures to eliminate the after-effect resulting from the longtime split and fragmentation. Especially, he thoroughly reformed the administrative system so as to establish a new highly centralized system. As mentioned before, Egypt emulated the West and thus a cabinet and an advisory council were set up. Ali ordered at the same time that the 16 administrative regions, which were divided during the French occupation, should be merged into 7 provinces where the governor was appointed and dismissed directly by the central government. A province consisted of three levels of administrative bodies, county, township and village. In each village, there were a village chief, a land surveyor, tax collectors, plenipotentiaries and other full-time officials. This kind of top-down set of administrative network which was both strict and complete ensured the implementation of policies and laws from the central government and thus enabled reforms in various fields carried out by Ali to rapidly show remarkable achievements.
Finding Three: Economic Revitalization is the Basis for Reform and Development

Another important revelation left by Muhammad Ali’s policy is that economic reform and development is the foundation of revitalization. In order to achieve his goal of establishing a stronger Egypt, Muhammad Ali implemented a large-scale reform program, the core of which is to take a series of measures to promote economic revitalization in Egypt.

In such backward agricultural country as Egypt, the success of the economic reforms depended mainly on agricultural production. Ali first radically changed the old land and tax system in order to improve the farmers’ enthusiasm for production and the national financial income. For a long time, Mamluk leaders owned the lands that nominally belonged to the state and levied land taxes, most of which they pocketed. Until the end of the 18th century, the tax authority had evolved into a hereditary right, and the tax contractors had actually become landowners. As has been previously mentioned, Ali abolished the tax exemption enjoyed by the religious estates in June 1809 and confiscated a number of religious properties. After the 1811 massacre of the Citadel of Saladin, Ali nationalized the lands of which the Mamluk feudal lords raised taxes. In 1814, Ali announced the complete abolition of the tax imposition. Through this series of measures the government controlled most of the arable land of Egypt, and rapidly distributed massive lands to landless farmers. Three to five feddans were assigned to each farmer in general. Meanwhile, Ali merged the original exactions into a single land tax, the amount of which was to be determined according to the merits of the lands. Due

① 1 feddan equals about 6.3 mu.
to the standardization of weights and measures and the implementation of the national land measure, the actual land area on which taxes were paid to the state greatly increased. Therefore, the burden on the farmers was reduced, and the state tax was increased, which greatly improved the farmers’ enthusiasm for production and national financial income.

Ali immediately took a series of auxiliary measures to assist agricultural development. He organized forces to facilitate irrigation, dredge the old ditches, dig new canals and reinforce the construction of various types of dams, among which the Mahmoudiyah Canal built in 1820 that led water of the Nile River to go through Alexandria and the rivers in the area and achieved the expansion of cultivated area of several million feddans. It is estimated that the total area of arable land in Egypt had thus expanded by about 2 million feddans. Indeed, Ali paid attention to digging deep riverbeds and introduced pumps from Europe, which greatly improved the efficiency of land use in the Nile Delta. Another important measure was to increase crop species and develop cash crops, especially cotton production. He seized the opportunity of the urgent demand for cotton in Europe to cultivate high-quality long fiber cotton, which was exported to Britain. The Egyptian cotton production then increased by several hundred times. Ali also established a set of institutions to manage agricultural production, centralized the control of the species and area of local crop plantations, implemented national policies on important crops and provided seeds, livestock, tools and loans for poor farmers. Because of these measures, the living conditions of the Egyptian farmers were improved and the enthusiasm for production was raised. Egypt’s rural productivity was therefore restored and developed, and substantial growth was achieved in agricultural production. The Egyptian population also increased to 4.5 million in 1847 (Marlowe, J., 1954: 50).
Ali limited private handicraft production and developed government-run factories, striving to establish Egypt’s own national industries. Therefore, Egypt’s national industry boasted a high level of technology and a faster pace in the start-up period. Ali attached great importance to the development of military industry, building it from scratch and from small to large, the pace of whose development was astonishing. Nitrate factories, gunpowder mills, gun manufacturers and shipyards were established. The weapons produced were great in both numbers and quality. Other industries also developed rapidly; in particular, the textile industry witnessed the fastest growth. Nearly 30 cotton mills had been established by 1829.

Due to the rapid economic development, not only could the agricultural and industrial products meet domestic needs, but they were also exported in large quantities, which in turn brought about the prosperity of commerce and foreign trade, making Egypt once again the trade hub of Europe, Asia and Africa. During this period, the Egyptian treasury income also soared: 158,000 Egyptian pounds in 1798, 1,502,000 Egyptian pounds in 1818, over 2,420,000 Egyptian pounds in 1833 and almost 3 million Egyptian pounds in 1842 (Issawi, C., 1966: 405). Thus, Ali’s reforms and development strategies had a solid economic foundation.

**Finding Four: The Development of Culture and Education Is a Prerequisite for the Rejuvenation of the Nation**

While implementing political and economic reforms, Muhammad Ali took a series of reformative measures in culture and education. The reforming process of Ali proved that the development of culture and education is a prerequisite for sustainable political and economic
development of the nation and even the revitalization of the nation. This is also an important message for future generations.

Before Napoleon invaded Egypt and opened up the country, cultural development of this ancient civilization had stagnated for a long time. Higher education was limited to the studies of Islamic theology and law, while primary education included nothing more than reciting the *Holy Koran*; books were so rare that only a handful of religious scholars could read or write. A large proportion of the population was illiterate, including many Mamluk leaders. The world-famous historical relics, such as the Pyramids, which were out of repair for ages, were breaking and collapsing.

As soon as Ali came to power, he started to make important decisions. Instead of strictly limiting the input of Western ideas and culture, Egypt introduced and learned from Western ideas, culture and technology, while making great efforts in developing national culture and education. He made use of an Arabic printing machine brought by Napoleon, and founded the first printing house in Egypt – the Prague Printing House. Prior to this, Egyptian manuscripts were mostly handwritten and contained many mistakes, which were not spread widely. After the establishment of printing houses, famous works began to come out and spread more widely. As a result, the studies and works of scholars and researchers were further promoted. Under the rule of Ali, many famous scholars emerged.

Ali also founded a language institution to train a group of talented interpreters, who translated large numbers of books from Western languages covering military, technology, politics, and culture into Arabic and Turkish. The first group of books translated into Arabic included French military regulations, the Napoleonic Code, among other latest masterpieces of the Western bourgeois. Ali also
founded the first Arabic newspaper in Egypt, Egypt Chronicles, which reported major events both at home and abroad.

Ali also paid special attention to universal education. He established a complete secular education system outside the religious education system centered at the Al-Azhar Mosque, including a large number of primary schools, secondary schools, higher institutions, as well as tutorial schools serving ordinary people. The rapid development of printing and publishing businesses provided adequate textbooks for this educational system, hence enabling ordinary people to acquire all kinds of popular books (Anīs, M., 1980: 72).

As mentioned earlier, Ali recruited many foreign experts to give lectures; he also imported technology to Egypt, while sending a large number of Egyptian youths to study overseas. This created favorable conditions for ideas, culture, technology and human resources for reform and development.

It is particularly worth mentioning that Ali adored the Napoleonic way of managing the Army, and decided to found a new army following the French model. He appointed French officer Colonel Sève as his military adviser, and also invited many military instructors from France, Italy, Spain and other countries, running all sorts of military academies, such as schools for officers, schools for military advisors, infantry schools, cavalry schools and artillery schools, training a number of new-type officers. In particular, he focused on founding a strong navy. Egypt had established the Mediterranean Fleet and the Red Sea Fleet, with 32 warships and 20,000 navy officers and sailors by the 1930s. Meanwhile, the Egyptian land force expanded rapidly and had more than 200,000 soldiers.

These measures resulted in the prosperity of the Egyptian culture, education and academics, unseen hitherto in Egyptian history, the
improvement of the national character, and great advancement towards national rejuvenation.

Revelation Five: Dictatorship and Expansion is the Fundamental Reason for the Failure of Reform

Muhammad Ali’s reforms did not affect the foundations of the feudal system. His dictatorship and expansionism, which exerted a reverse effect on the positive trend of reforms, coupled with the containment and besiege by the European powers from outside Egypt, finally smothered Ali’s reforms. This is also a lesson worth bearing in mind by the future generations.

Ali established a highly centralized system. He held all powers, with almost no constraints, which enabled him to do as he pleased. The result, of course, was that any wrong decisions on his part would bring enormous losses to the country. Ali had always been longing to establish a huge empire that would dominate the Near East, and as the reform strengthened the power of Egypt, its scale of expansion also gradually upgraded. From 1811 onward, Ali launched a series of foreign wars, which lasted for about 30 years and consumed Egypt huge human and financial resources, gradually ruining the achievement of the reform.

In the second half of the 18th Century, the Saudi family rose in power in the Arabian Peninsula, gradually merging with the Wahhabi Sect, almost gaining control over the whole Arabian Peninsula, including the holy sites of Mecca and Medina. In September 1811, Ali sent the army to the Arabian Peninsula and had a fierce seesaw battle with the Wahhabs led by the Saudis, who even took brutal measures against the rebels, including shutting off water supply, cutting down trees, burning provisions and killing civilians. After a ten-year battle,
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the Egyptian army, though, took control over the Arabian Peninsula, losing hundreds of thousands of lives in the process. Ali then expanded southward to Sudan. In 1820, Ali sent troops to Sudan and dominated most parts of it, but many small tribes in Sudan opposed continued resistance. Ali’s son Ishmael was burned to death during a night attack launched by the Sudanese tribal chiefs against the Egyptian army. In retaliation, Ali ordered the massacre of 5,000 innocent civilians (Shibecka, M., 1973: 11). Not until 1824 did the Egyptian Army succeed in suppressing the massive resistance movements. Although Ali advanced the territory of Egypt 6,000 km to the south, he also suffered yet another heavy burden.

In 1821, the Greeks took up arms against the Ottoman Empire and launched their struggle for independence. Sultan Mahmud II was forced to turn to Egypt. In July 1824, Ali sent 20,000 soldiers and a large fleet across the sea to Greece. By 1827, Athens, the ancient capital of Greece, also fell into the hands of the Turkish-Egyptian army. At this time, the international situation had changed. Britain, France and Russia, which were originally fighting openly and secretly on the Greek issue, formed a temporary alliance and decided to aid Greece and fight against Turkey. On October 20, 1827, the three-power allied fleet raided and destroyed the Turkish-Egyptian fleet. The Egyptian Navy that Ali took great pains in establishing suffered a heavy blow in the sea battle; basically, the Mediterranean fleet was almost completely wiped out. The invasion of Greece cost Ali 200 ships and 30,000 soldiers and marines, thus destroying the very achievements he made through industrial development and the formation of the new army.

The setbacks in Greece did not make Ali abandon his ambition to dominate the Eastern Mediterranean, but rather motivated him to carry out new expansions to make up for the loss caused by the
expedition to Greece. Syria is located astride three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa. Its important strategic location and rich natural resources made it come repeatedly under Egypt’s control throughout history. In October 1831, Ali sent 30,000 soldiers to Syria which marked that his expansions clashed with the Ottoman Empire directly. In the war, the fighting capacity of the new Egyptian army set up in the reform was far stronger than that of the Ottoman army. The Ottoman Army was easily routed, and the Egyptian army quickly occupied Jerusalem and other important cities. In July 1832, the Egyptian army invaded Turkey, with only three days’ march from the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Mahmud II was driven into a corner and had no choice but to surrender to Ali and search for peace. Until then, Ali not only had earned de facto independence for Egypt, but had also basically realized the goal of establishing a large empire across North Africa and West Asia. However, the foreign wars aimed at expanding the dynasty demonstrated precisely the feudal property of Ali’s reform.

The endless foreign wars made the urban poor Egyptian peasants lose their meager benefits obtained in the early reign of Ali. The situation was deteriorating. In order to shift increasingly heavy financial burden on the lower people, Ali did everything possible to increase the amount and types of taxes. In Egypt, the land tax was increasing every year. In 1814 the lowest tax per feddan of land was only about 5 piastres, and by 1837 it reached 38 piastres. From the beginning of 1822, spawned tax started to be levied, the amount of which equaled 1/12th of an individual’s annual income, namely the income of one month, and the maximum is 500 piastres.\(^\text{2}\) while the

\(^1\) Herein refers to “Greater Syria” in the history, including today’s Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan.
\(^2\) Piastre is a fractional currency in Egypt. 1 Egyptian pound = 1.04 CNY. 100
minimum 15 piastres. Non-Muslims had to pay another 8-10 piastres (Lu, T. & Peng, K., 1995: 39-42). Later, more and more miscellaneous taxes were collected, date palm tree tax, boat tax, income tax, market entry tax, fishing tax, livestock tax, hotel tax, etc. Ali was keen on massive construction projects in the country and the occupied territories, which led to a serious shortage of labor resources in Egypt. To solve this problem, the government frequently forced farmers to construct roads, build palaces and even build military projects. Farmers were increasingly burdened with duties getting heavier each day. With continued foreign wars, Egypt’s manpower had already been drained. The government dispatched troops to round up young men to enroll as soldiers. The passive resistance gradually evolved into an armed uprising. In 1832, the Egyptian army mutiny occurred in Hejaz. In 1834, the Egyptian people held a large-scale uprising against the government, while in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Arabia, Sudan and other areas, successive uprisings against the occupation by the Egyptians were common. Because of the impact of the revolt, Ali’s reform program was difficult to sustain.

In the spring of 1839, under the instigation of the United Kingdom, the Ottoman Sultan announced campaign against Ali. The second Egyptian–Ottoman War broke out. Although the Egyptian troops once had an advantage militarily, European powers decided to join forces to contain Egypt, worrying that Egypt might get so powerful that it would lead to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In such a situation, Ali had no choice but to surrender and agree to all conditions set by the Ottoman Empire and other powers. A few months later, the Egyptian army stationed in Syria and the Arabian Peninsula withdrew to Egypt, which marked the crumbling of the

piastre = 1 Egyptian pound = 1000 Millieme.
empire by Ali. Egypt was once again reduced to a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire, and began to become a semi-colony of European powers. Since the 1838 Treaty of Commerce started to be implemented in Egypt, the strict monopoly in industry, agriculture, commerce, foreign trade and other areas under Ali’s regime were gradually repealed. As a result, on the one hand, cheap foreign goods, especially British goods flooded the Egyptian market. On the other hand, the Egyptian agricultural products and other raw materials were purchased at a low price by European businessmen and exported out of Egypt (Na, Z., 1963: 83). In this way, Egyptian national industry, which was painstakingly built up through economic reforms by Ali, was quickly dismantled. The Egyptian textile industry which once was booming rapidly shrank. Alexandria Shipyard was turned into a dilapidated repair workshop. In rural Egypt, continuous wars, famine and various exactions rendered large tracts of farmland barren. Ali’s regime introduced the contract system in 1840, to contract large number of land to the nobility, costing the majority of farmers the small allotments they obtained in the early reign of Ali. Thus, the Egyptian rural productivity was severely damaged again. By the late 1840s, Ali’s reforms had actually died.

The intervention of great powers in Egypt and the ultimate failure of Ali’s reforms demonstrate that despite the favorable conditions created by the strong economic impact of capitalism in Western Europe for Ali to come to power and initiate his reforms, the colonial powers did not want a politically independent and economically strong Egyptian Empire which would not be subject to their control to appear in the hub of Eurasia and Africa. For such a country would replace the Ottoman Empire and become a new obstacle to the expansion of the colonial powers. This is the true external reasons why it was difficult for Ali’s reforms to succeed, impossible for Egypt to
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revive. Of course, after all, the external reasons reflect internal factors, the authoritarian and expansionist property of the feudal Ali dynasty is the root cause of premature failure of Ali’s reforms.

References


