**Muhammad Ali, 1805-48**

After the French left Egypt, an Ottoman army remained in the country. The Ottoman government was determined to prevent a revival of Mamluk power and autonomy and to bring Egypt under the control of the central government. The Ottomans appointed Khusraw Pasha as viceroy. Hostilities occasionally broke out between his forces and those of the Mamluks who had established themselves in Upper Egypt.

By 1803 it was apparent that a third party had emerged in the struggle for power in Egypt. This was the Albanian contingent of Ottoman forces that had come in 1801 to fight against the French. Muhammad Ali, who had arrived in Egypt as a junior commander in the Albanian forces, had by 1803 risen to commander. In just two short years, he would become the Ottoman viceroy in Egypt.

Muhammad Ali, who has been called the "father of modern Egypt," was able to attain control of Egypt because of his own leadership abilities and political shrewdness but also because the country seemed to be slipping into anarchy. The urban notables and the ulama believed that Muhammad Ali was the only leader capable of bringing order and security to the country. The Ottoman government, however, aware of the threat Muhammad Ali represented to the central authority, attempted to get rid of him by making him governor of the Hijaz. Eventually, the Ottomans capitulated to Egyptian pressure, and in June 1805, they appointed Muhammad Ali governor of Egypt.

Between 1805 and 1811, Muhammad Ali consolidated his position in Egypt by defeating the Mamluks and bringing Upper Egypt under his control. Finally, in March 1811, Muhammad Ali had sixty-four Mamluks, including twenty-four beys, assassinated in the citadel. From then on, Muhammad Ali was the sole ruler of Egypt. Muhammad Ali represented the successful continuation of policies begun by the Mamluk Ali Bey al Kabir. Like Ali Bey, Muhammad Ali had great ambitions. He, too, wanted to detach Egypt from the Ottoman Empire, and he realized that to do so Egypt had to be strong economically and militarily.

Muhammad Ali's development strategy was based on agriculture. He expanded the area under cultivation and planted crops specifically for export, such as long-staple cotton, rice, indigo, and sugarcane. The surplus income from agricultural production was used for public works, such as irrigation, canals, dams, and barrages, and to finance industrial development and the military. The development plans hinged on the state's gaining a monopoly over the country's agricultural resources. In practical terms, this meant the peasants were told what crops to plant, in what quantity, and over what area. The government bought directly from the peasants and sold directly to the buyer, cutting out the intermediaries or merchants.

Muhammad Ali was also committed to the industrial development of Egypt. The government set up modern factories for weaving cotton, jute, silk, and wool. Workers were drafted into factories to weave on government looms. Factories for sugar, indigo, glass, and tanning were set up with the assistance of foreign advisers and imported machinery. Industries employed about 4 percent of the population, or between 180,000 and 200,000 persons fifteen years of age and over. The textile industry was protected by embargoes imposed by the government to prohibit the import of the cheap British textiles that had flooded the Egyptian market. Commercial activities were geared toward the establishment of foreign trade monopolies and an attempt to acquire a favorable balance of trade.

The historian Marsot has argued that Britain became determined to check Muhammad Ali because a strong Egypt represented a threat to Britain's economic and strategic interests. Economically, British interests would be served as long as Egypt continued to produce raw cotton for the textile mills of Lancashire and to import finished goods from Britain. Thus, the British and also the French were particularly angered by the Egyptian monopolies even though Britain and France engaged in such trade practices as high tariffs and embargoes to protect their own economies. Strategically, Britain wanted to maintain access to the overland route through Egypt to India, a vital link in the line of imperial communications. Britain was worried not only about the establishment of a united, militarily strong state straddling the eastern Mediterranean but also about Muhammad Ali's close ties to France.

It was at this time that Lord Palmerston, the British minister of foreign affairs, established the British policy, which lasted until the outbreak of World War I, of preserving the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Britain preferred a weakened but intact Ottoman Empire that would grant it the strategic and commercial advantages it needed to maintain its influence in the region. Thus, Muhammad Ali's invasion of Syria in 1831 and his attempt to break away from the Ottoman Empire jeopardized British policy and its military and commercial interests in the Middle East and India. The Egyptian invasion of Syria was provoked ostensibly by the sultan's refusal to give Syria and Morea (Peloponnesus) to Muhammad Ali in return for his assistance in opposing the Greek war for independence in the late 1820s. This resulted in Turkey and Egypt being forced out of the eastern Mediterranean by the destruction of their combined naval strength at Navarino on the southern coast of Greece.

When Egyptian forces invaded and occupied Syria and came within sight of Istanbul, the great powers (Britain, France, Austria, Russia, and Prussia) allied themselves with the Ottoman government to drive the Egyptian forces out of Syria. A British fleet bombarded Beirut in September 1840, and an Anglo-Turkish force landed, causing uprisings against the Egyptian forces. Acre fell in November, and a British naval force anchored off Alexandria. The Egyptian army was forced to retreat to Egypt, and Muhammad Ali was obliged to accede to British demands. According to the Treaty of 1841, Muhammad Ali was stripped of all the conquered territory except Sudan but was granted the hereditary governorship of Egypt for life, with succession going to the eldest male in the family. Muhammad Ali was also compelled to agree to the Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1838, which established "free trade" in Egypt. This meant that Muhammad Ali was forced to abandon his monopolies and establish new tariffs that were favorable to imports. Thus, Egypt was unable to control the flood of cheap manufactured imports that decimated local industries.

Muhammad Ali continued to rule Egypt after his defeat in Syria. He became increasingly senile toward the end of his rule and his eldest son, Ibrahim, petitioned the Ottoman government to be appointed governor because of his father's inability to rule. Ibrahim was gravely ill of tuberculosis, however, and ruled for only six months, from July to November 1848. Muhammad Ali died in August 1849.

Source: U.S. Library of Congress