

Egypt's age of reform



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Muhammad Ali Pasha, or Mehmet Ali PaÅŸa, was the ruler of Egypt for 43 years (1805 to 1848). He is regarded in history as the founder of modern Egypt. Muhammad Ali was born to an Albanian family in Kavala which is modern day Greece. He worked first in the tobacco industry as a merchant until he became part of the Ottoman army. He first came to Egypt with the army to rid the country of the French expedition. After successfully liberating Egypt in 1801, Muhammad Ali started to gain interest in ruling Egypt. He made efforts to reach the power in Egypt until he successfully did in 1805 (. Throughout his rule, Mohammed Ali introduced many reforms of all kinds in order to achieve his goal which was to turn Egypt into a modern country. Although he was not a pure Egyptian, Mohammed Ali ruled Egypt with love and determination to make it an independent country. He was a true visionary; his efforts of reform indeed were successful in creating a period of renaissance that benefited Egypt in numerous ways. He was able to strengthen, unify, and most importantly modernize Egypt in a period of 43 years.

What encouraged Muhammad Ali to insist on reforming Egypt were two reasons. First he felt that it is a country that had such a rich history and civilization, deserved to be modernized and independent. The second reason was that Egypt had a strategic geographical location that he felt had the potential of making it one of the most advanced countries.

Mohammed Ali's reforms did not only focus on one area, but rather on numerous fields which included the military, agriculture, industry, and education. All in which took Egypt steps further ahead and transformed it

from being an ordinary state run under the rule of the Ottoman Empire into being an independent country and one of the most developed countries outside of Europe. His main goal was to build a strong army. However, the shortage of revenue was a major obstacle that hindered him from achieving his goal. As a result, he extended the government's control onto all of Egypt's resources in order to enable him to plan and manage a way to generate more revenue that would enable him to carry on his reform plans. Furthermore, Muhammad Ali realized that if he was to build a strong army, he had not only to focus on Egypt's military sector, but also on all the other sectors in order to establish a powerful economy.

Military Reforms

Muhammad Ali's military reforms were very smart and served Egypt's interest. He realized that the army was not strong enough. Its main weakness was that its soldiers were a mixture between Turks, Albanians, and Mamluks and therefore, there was no sense of nationalism or unity. He also realized that the European armies were more advanced since they were using modern weaponry and techniques whereas his army was not which posed a threat to Egypt's security. As a result, Ali was determined to create a new army. He had made several attempts to build a new army. His first attempt on August 1815 was to appoint Egyptian farmers however, together both Albanians and men of religion opposed him and threatened his life which caused Ali create another plan. His second attempt was to appoint Sudanese men, yet his plan also failed primarily due to the fact that Sudanese soldiers had no feeling of nationalism towards Egypt and therefore, were not driven to join the army and protect Egypt. His third and

final attempt in 1820 was to once more appoint Egyptian Muslim farmers. This attempt succeeded yet it was strongly opposed by the Turkish aristocrats who feared that by giving Egyptians power in the army that they would use it against the Ottomans (Ø§Ù,, Ù...ØÙ...Ø`ÙŠ, 59). It was also opposed by the farmers themselves since they did not find any benefits to them being part of the army (ØØ³ÙŠÙ†, 142). However, according to Mouriez in his book *Modern Egypt from 1840 to 1857* he states that the farmers quickly got used to their new lives as part of the army and were proud to be the army men of Muhammad Ali since they found that the title was prestigious (Ø§Ù,, Ù...ØÙ...Ø`ÙŠ, 59). In a period of 10 years the army reached a total number of 130, 000 soldiers which was a relatively large number considering that the population of Egypt as a whole was about 3. 5 million (Ø§Ù,, Ø´Ù,, Ù,, 125).

In order to train the army, Mohammed Ali used the aid of a French colonel Seve who was later known as Suleiman Pasha after he converted to Islam (Ø§Ù,, Ø´Ù,, Ù,, 125). Although he was French, Suleiman Pasha played a huge role into modernizing the army. Mohammed Ali had great hopes in him and trusted that he would be able to make the Egyptian army similar to those armies of Europe. Under the control of Suleiman Pasha, the army moved to Aswan as a location for training. For a period of three years the army was placed under constant training that was aimed at organizing, strengthen, and unifying the soldiers as one (Ø§Ù,, Ù...ØÙ...Ø`ÙŠ, 62).

In addition to training the army Mohammed Ali also sent military missions to Europe. This indicates that as a ruler he was not only planning short term

goals for Egypt, but also long-term one that would benefit Egypt for more years to come.

What is admirable about Muhammad Ali's techniques in reforming the army was that he was not ashamed to admit that he wanted to imitate the army of his enemy. In my opinion it was smart of him to seek help from European experts to train the Egyptian army.

Industrial Reforms

Although Muhammad Ali used the aid of European states, his plan was to use it only for a short period of time. In other words he was clever in seeking foreign help in order to build Egypt, yet the beauty in his plan was how he managed to transform Egypt from a dependent country to an independent country.

One of Mohammed Ali's main goals was to limit import substitution in Egypt. He wanted to manufacture his own weapons for the Egyptian army and stop depending on European states for aid. However, Muhammad Ali could not have industrialized Egypt without the helping hand of Europe at first. His plan was to import machinery and experts from Europe. Then he would imitate the machinery by building similar ones in Egypt under the supervision of the European experts who trained the Egyptian labor (Ø§Ù,, Ø`Ù,, Ù,, 75).

One of the most successful industries was the military industry. The reason to why he decided on establishing a military industry in particular was because he usually faced two problems when importing weapons from

Europe. First, Egypt did not always have enough money to buy weaponry and secondly, was because often some European countries refused to export their weaponry to Egypt. As a result, Muhammad Ali was determined to make Egypt rely on its own production (Ø§Ù,, Ø´Ù,, Ù,, 75). He established the first arsenal in 1816 to produce cannons and munitions. He also established arsenals in Alexandria, Cairo, Rosetta, and Bulaq to produce arms and naval ships. Not only was Egypt now manufacturing to meet its needs, but also it was manufacturing at very high quality (Owen, 71).

In addition to the military industry, Muhammad Ali established textile factories starting from the year 1815 to further decrease Egypt's import bill and to compete against the finished goods coming from India. He would supply the raw materials from Egypt's local production of cotton and whenever the factories faced a shortage of raw materials, Muhammad Ali would order that more land be cultivated to produce more output (Ø§Ù,, Ø´Ù,, Ù,, 75).

Moreover, Muhammad Ali established factories for the production of silk starting from the year 1816 with the first factory in Khoronfish. In addition, there was the establishment of 3 factories for the production of sugar in 1818, and a factory for leather (Ø§Ù,, Ø´Ù,, Ù,, 75).

Agricultural Reforms

Moving to the agricultural reforms, it is clear that Muhammad Ali relied less on European aid and more on the efforts of the government and the locals. Although the reforms might have seemed harsh, yet Egypt would have never been strong without the implementation of Muhammad Ali's policies.

In order to transform the agricultural sector into a more modern one and in order to increase Egypt's revenue coming from this sector, Mohammed Ali had to go through several steps in order to achieve his ultimate goal. First, he ended the Iltizam system in Egypt since he realized that a large part of Egypt's land tax was going to the Multazims instead of the government (Ø§Ù,, Ø´Ù,, Ù,, 98). He first abolished the Iltizam system in 1812 in Upper Egypt and then in 1814 abolished it in Lower Egypt. In order to replace the Multazims, Mohammed Ali appointed Coptic clerks as the ones responsible to collect the tax. In addition, he used the village sheikhs to perform surveillance among the tax collection in order for him to ensure that the taxes reach the government (Owen, 65).

Moreover, Muhammed Ali introduced new crops for cultivation. One of the most important crops that were introduced is long staple cotton in 1821. Farmers cultivated long staple cotton intensively. In fact, the government itself encouraged farmers to cultivate it by giving them animals on credit, and cotton seeds for free. In addition, the government distributed cotton gins and presses in villages and used the help of experts from Syria and Anatolia to aid the farmers in the cultivation of the crops. As a result, there was a large increase in Egypt's revenue. Almost 33% of revenue coming to Egypt came from cotton, which allowed the government to fund the expansion of its army (Owen, 66-67). Egypt's cotton was highly demanded by French and British textile factories. In addition their output increased tremendously in six years from 944 cantars in 1821 to 34, 300 cantars

In addition, Muhammad Ali introduced a new system to the agricultural sector which is known as the Monopoly system. Under the Monopoly system,

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Muhammad Ali considered himself as the owner of all the land of Egypt. He nationalized all land in Egypt and banned the private trade of numerous crops.

Under the Monopoly system, Muhammed Ali divided the land among the farmers so that each farmer would get from 3 to 5 feddans to cultivate and gave away 4% of the total area of land in each village to the village sheikhs. As long as each farmer paid the land tax, they had the freedom to choose the crops that they were going to cultivate. After the crops were cultivated, the farmers were responsible to hand in all their output to the government. The government would then buy the crops from the farmers at a price lower than the international price and sell it in the international market at the international price. As a result, the money that Egypt would make out of this monopoly would go to the industrial sector in order to achieve the goals of having an industrial sector that was strong enough to compete on its own both locally and on an international level (ØØ³ÛŠÛ†, 156). As a result Mohammed Ali had complete control of 95% of Egypt's exports. Meanwhile, he only controlled 1/3 of the total imports of Egypt. The reason why he did not have much control over Egypt's imports was due to the pressure of European states on the Ottoman government set a law in 1820 that allowed foreign merchants to export goods to the Ottoman Empire was an import rate of 3% only. Therefore, despite the fact that Muhammad Ali wanted to protect Egypt's local production, he could not go against the laws that the Ottoman empire had set on the importation of European goods (Ø§Û,, Ø´Û,, Û,, 72).

In addition, Mohammed Ali increased the area of cultivated land by 164960 feddans. However, in order to increase this area, he had to carry irrigational projects. He ordered the digging of new canals and the clearing of old ones in order to ensure that there was a constant supply of water reaching the lands. Some of the most famous canals of that time and that are still found today are Mahmudiya Canal, the Delta Barrage, and Al Anater Al Khayreia (ØšÙ,, Ø´Ù,, Ù,, 72).

Moreover, the government confiscated all the Waqf land since its owners could not proof that their land was in fact Waqf.

As a result of Muhammad Ali's efforts to transform the agricultural sector, Egypt's revenue increased tremendously. Since more land was being cultivated, there was more production. More production meant an increase in exportation, and finally this led to an increase in revenue. Although many could argue that the monopoly system is not a democratic system and therefore, one should not be praised for applying it, in Egypt's case applying the monopoly system was the most ideal solution for increasing revenue. However, only because Muhammad Ali was not driven by greed did this system work. However, if it was someone other than Muhammad Ali then there would have been a chance that the money surplus would have gone to waste.

Educational Reforms

The educational sector is by far the sector that benefited Egypt the most on the long run. In my opinion, if Muhammad Ali was not a believer in education

then no matter how much he tried to reform the military, industrial, or agricultural sectors Egypt would have still remained insignificant.

Mohammed Ali, highly believed in the value of education. Although, he was illiterate until he reached his forties, Mohammed Ali encouraged Egyptians to read and educate themselves. In fact, Abdel-Rahman Al-Jabarti, an Egyptian historian, mentioned in his chronicle *Aja'ib al-athar fil tarajim wal-akhbar*, that Mohammed Ali admired and was taken by the intelligence and receptivity of learning that was evident in Egyptians. In fact, he tells a story of a man named Hussein Jalabi Ajwa, an Egyptian who "invented a device for grinding rice." When his invention was shown to Mohammed Ali, Ali was very impressed and concluded that Egyptians were in fact smart and therefore, deserved to have schools for education (El Gemeiy).

Before Mohammed Ali's efforts for reform in the educational sector, education in Egypt was limited to religious studies and Islamic law. Moreover, before his reign Egypt reached a very low state in education. A primary reason to why it reached this stage was due to the fact that the Ottomans did not possess any sort of valuable knowledge that they could pass on. In fact the Ottomans were weak in Arabic which resulted in Turkish becoming the main language (عربي، لغة...عربي...عربي). However, seeing European states advance using their modern sciences drove Mohammed Ali to transfer knowledge from the West to the East. His admiration of the European method of education made Mohammed Ali more determined to introduce modern education first time to Egypt. Moreover, he felt that Egypt needed employees who were well trained and specialized; in addition he

realized that it needed well trained army officers. As a result, Muhammad Ali introduced a new system of education in hopes that it will elevate Egyptians.

The main reason to why Muhammad Ali wanted to introduce a better education was because he felt that by having one it would create a strong backbone for the Egyptian army since the army needed to be updated with the “ modern military methods” (El Gemeiy). In addition, it needed doctors, translators, teachers, engineers and specialized experts in many different fields in order for it to be considered a strong army (El Gemeiy). As a result, Muhammed Ali was keen on introducing secular education. Instead of establishing an educational system that started with primary schools, Mohammed Ali first established specialized schools and then moved to the establishment of middle and primary schools. His plan was to establish specialized institutes, bring foreign instructors to teach, send educational missions to Europe, and finally translated European books into Turkish and Arabic (Ø§Ù,, Ù...ØÙ...Ø`ÙŠ).

The process of reforming the educational sector was long, yet it benefited Egypt greatly. During the first stage from the year 1811 to 1836, 67 new schools were introduced in Egypt. Although, all schools were run under the control of the department of Military, each school had its own unique system, meaning that each school created its own rules.

One of the most important schools that were established during his reign was the school of Medicine. This school was established in 1827 in an area called Abu Zaabal. Its main goal was to graduate doctors who could work for the Egyptian army. The school grew to be very prestigious. Later in 1830 the

School of Pharmacology was established followed by the School of Obstetrics which was established a year later together with the school of Veterinary Medicine. The schools proved to be a great success. In fact they graduated 420 doctors and pharmacists that worked for the army afterwards (El Gemeily). In 1837 the school of medicine was relocated in Cairo and was built by Ahmed Al-Aini. It was later known as Qasr Al-Aini.

Furthermore, Muhammed Ali established agricultural colleges. Al-Darsakhana al-malakiya (The Royal Academy), established in the year 1830, was the first agricultural college to be introduced. Not only did it teach agricultural sciences, but also taught Arabic and Farsi. Later in 1833, an agricultural college in Shubra Al Kheima was established. Another college that was established in 1836 was in Nabruh in which its instructors were made up of the Egyptian student body who went on missions to Europe (ØØ³ÙŠÙ†, 162).

One of the first schools he established was Al Mohandes Khana (School of Engineering) which was created in 1816. The government imported all the machinery and tools needed for the school from England. In addition, he made its education for free and gave the students a monthly salary. Later in 1834 he created another similar engineering school in Bolak (ØØ³ÙŠÙ†, 162).

Moreover, a proof that Muhammed Ali was sincere in his goal of translating Western knowledge to the East, was the establishment of Al Alson Academy, an institute that .

Several military schools were established during the reign of Muhammad Ali. The Artillery Academy, the Cavalry Academy, was established in 1831. Their aim was to graduate a labor force that would be useful for the Egyptian

army. Furthermore, a naval academy was established under Muhammad Ali. This academy proved to be very successful to an extent that its naval fleet equaled that of the Ottoman Empire not only in size, but also in strength and skill (El Gemeiy).

During the period between the years 1836-1841, Muhammed Ali realized that more order should be placed in the educational sector. Therefore, he established Diwan al-madaris (the Department of Schools) to take over the educational sector instead of the Department of Military. Was established in order to organize and take control of the educational sector in Egypt. During this stage the establishment of preparatory schools took place.

As was mentioned previously, Mohammed Ali was keen on sending educational mission to Europe. He realized that by sending students to Europe would open these students to a more modern way of thinking so that when they come back to Egypt they can implement what they have seen in Europe.

The missions involved all educational fields meaning that students were sent to study military sciences, agriculture, engineering, mathematics, medicine, and many other fields of study. The total number of students sent on these missions added up to 319 students.

In my opinion, the educational sector was the sector that received the most beneficial reforms. If it was not for Muhammad Ali, then this sector would have probably remained stagnant. It would have been nearly impossible to modernize and evolve Egypt without having an educational sector.

To conclude, Mohammed Ali's reforms were aimed at elevating Egypt as a whole. Although his main goal was to create a strong army, Muhammad Ali understood that in order to achieve his goal he has to build a strong economy as well. Many might oppose him for using the aid of European countries especially since he played a role in ending the French Expedition in Egypt, however, in my opinion I find that his plan was ideal. The main reason why is because by doing so Muhammad Ali proves that he is a smart ruler who would do anything to bring his country further ahead. Furthermore, even though he was not purely Egyptian, Muhammad Ali ruled with love for Egypt. As a result, not only did he carry out his policies to achieve short-term goals, but also he established long-term goals that would make Egypt a modern country that was not just a state under the Ottoman Empire. As a result of all the reforms Egypt ended up with more local production, more exports, limited imports, better education, and a stronger army.