A FRESH LOOK AT MAHMUD II’S PURPOSE IN CALLING RUSSIAN TROOPS TO ISTANBUL IN 1833

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Abstract

Sometimes the accepted version of some historic events needs a new perspective. One such event is Sultan Mahmud II’s summoning of Russian troops to Istanbul, capital city of the Ottoman Empire, in 1833. So far, this matter has only been related through the European archives, which has bred some historical prejudices. The most obvious way to overcome this is by consulting the Ottoman records. These documents Mahmud’s instructions to his diplomats and their reports, and illustrate very well the Ottoman diplomatic effort during the Mehmet Ali Problem. This article aims to examine in detail what Mahmud II really intended by inviting the Russians to the Ottoman lands.

Keywords: Mahmud II, Ottoman Diplomacy, Mehmet Ali Problem, Anglo-Ottoman Relations, Ottoman Diplomats

II. Mahmud’un Rus Askeri Birliklerini 1833 Yılında İstanbul’a Çağırma Amacına Yeni Bir Bakış

Özet

Geçmişten beri kabul edile gelen bazı tarihsel hadiselerin bazen yeni bir bakış açısıyla değerlendirilmeye ihtiyacı vardır. Bu tarz olaylardan birisi de Sultan II. Mahmud’un Rus askeri birliklerini 1833 yılında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nun başkenti İstanbul’a davet etmesidir. Bu hadise şimdiye kadar yalnızca Avrupa arşivleri kullanılarak anlatılmıştır, bu durum ise bir tarihsel önyargıları beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu tarz önyargıların üstesinden gelmenin en kolay yolu ise bu hadise ile ilgili Osmanlı kayıtlarına başvurmak olarak gözükmektedir. II. Mahmud’un diplomatlarına talimatlarından ve bu diplomatların Sultanlarına yolladıkları...

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** II. Mahmud, Osmanlı Diplomasisi, Mehmet Ali Sorunu, İngiltere-Osmanlı İlişkileri, Osmanlı Diplomatları

**Introduction**

Although from the Ottoman point of view Mehmet Ali was a rebel khedive who had been implementing reforms in Egypt since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and who now hoped to challenge the authority of the Sultan; according to some historians he was the founder of Modern Egypt. Fahmy writes on this subject that the majority of Nationalist Egyptian historians evaluate Mehmet Ali’s period in Egypt as a period in which Egypt attempted to free herself from her pre-modern and feudal structure in the Ottoman Era, and started to rise in order to take part in a modern and capitalist Europe with Mehmet Ali’s Administration. These Egyptian historians assert that Mehmet Ali was a national hero, who struggled to save Egypt, which had long been under Ottoman control, from collapse, and carry it through to the modern age with his hard work and determination. However, as will be seen in the following parts of this article, Mahmud II and his statesmen thought differently about this Ottoman administrator and from Istanbul’s point of view he was just a rebel governor, one who was to bring a vast amount of strife to the Ottoman Empire. This led to difficulties not only for the Ottoman Empire but for the European powers. Therefore, each of European powers would have had different plans during the Mehmet Ali Problem. The trouble was not limited to one incident, but it erupted twice. The first began in 1831 and was finished by the Treaty of Kütahya on 14 May 1833. The second incident began in 1839 and was finished by the Convention of London on 15 July 1840.

In 1832, the Ottomans were confronted by one of the biggest problems they had ever encountered in their long history. Sultan Mahmud II, ruler of the Ottoman Empire, employed governors to administer various districts in his

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lands, and one of them; Mehmet Ali; had amassed an army and rebelled against his sovereign. He had been holding the governorship of one of the most important and fertile territories in the Ottoman Empire since 1805, almost from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Having resolved Egypt’s internal issues he then worked on improving his territory’s economy, military strength and administration, until they were superior in strength to the rest of the country. Mehmet Ali started to extend his boundaries when he felt himself ready he instigated riots against the Sultan and the Ottoman Central Government under some pretext of concocted ‘problems’. After a couple of unexpectedly rapid victories against Mahmud’s army, this domestic issue within the Ottoman Empire suddenly attained the status of an international problem. At this stage, it should be acknowledged that the period of time from the battle of Konya to the resolution of the Mehmet Ali problem with the Convention of London, 15 July 1840, has already been extensively examined from the European perspective in English historical literature. According to the general attitude within this widely accepted account of events, Mahmud II and his statesmen were passive actors in the process, and did almost nothing apart from watch the diplomatic developments in their territories unfold. Such a view, infused as it is with ‘Orientalist’ assumptions, represents the attitudes of the European statesmen of the time, and, in the absence of the view from the Turkish side of the hill, have tended to hold the field.

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6 There are many learned international scholars who have studied this period. Perhaps the most significant of these are: F. S. Rodkey, F. E. Bailey, G. H. Bolsover, R. L. Baker, C. Webster, M. Vereté, V. J. Puryear and H. W. V. Temperley. However, it is necessary to caution readers about these historians’ stance. There are two distinct problems, in my view, occurring with their studies. The first is their orientalist narration. This is a subjective attitude caused by prejudices and biases about the East. This writing bias can be observed in Michael Warr’s work A Biography of Stratford Canning, Mainly His Career in Turkey, Oxford: Alden Pres, 1989; When he examines events of the period, such as Greek Independence, he only looks at the matter from the Greeks’ point of view, using emotive language to accuse Mahmud II and the Ottomans of wrongdoing. Another example is found in the works of Bailey. Although it is unfair to label this historian as totally Orientalist, it might be agreed that his work was not immune to the Orientalism so prevalent in the Western world. His chapter titled ‘Palmerston and Turkish Reform 1834-1839’ reviews the Ottoman Empire’s period of reform and its efforts to gain support with orientalist bias. For example, after the author covers the many reforms made by Sultan Mahmud II, he opines that these reforms were only superficial...
Serkan Demirbaş

measures. Moreover, he states that the Sultan had no overall plan in this reform period, so his reforms were simply patching up the old system and very far from being able to offer real solutions. In another example: Bailey alleges that the reforms made by Mahmud II were inadequate and failed, but backs up his opinion with the views and observations of an obscure French Marshall. This French Marshall observed the reforms in the period of Mahmud II but it can be understood from his words given below that his opinions are very unbalanced. For example, Bailey quotes from the Marshall that “Formerly the abuses were greater than at present, and exactions more frequent, but Christians alone were then the victims of these evils, for until the destruction of the Janissaries, the Turks preserved their power and retained their wealth; but now they are joint sufferers with the other inhabitants, living in equal wretchedness and degradation.” F. E. Bailey, British Policy and the Turkish Reform Movement, New York, 1970; Bailey also quotes from the Orientalist McCulloch: “Nothing, however would contribute so much to its (i.e. commerce) extension, as the establishment of order and tranquillity throughout the country. But this, we fear, is beyond the ability of the Ottoman government. The abuses which have reduced the empire to its present state of degradation seem to be inherent in the structure of Turkish society, and to be in harmony with the habits and prejudices of the people. And if such be the case, that reform, which is so much to be wished for, must come from without, and not from within.” Clearly, these sentences have many biased expressions against the Ottoman nation. Another example on this topic can be given from Webster. In the Ottoman documents is a letter from Palmerston to Mahmud II praising Nuri Effendi, the Ottoman Ambassador in London. Palmerston says: “I also want to add a point about Nuri Effendi’s great efforts in London. He has done his utmost to increase the value of both his Sultan and his country in the eyes of the British Public. I would like to declare that I am sure he will strive as well to defend and protect his Sultan’s and his country’s rights in the presence of the French” BOA, HAT., 1172/46412-A; Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), (The Original Name of the Ottoman Archives which is in Istanbul and involves all the Ottoman Documents from 1299 to 1923, and the Turkish abbreviation will be used in the article). However, Webster’s account of the same ambassador: “Nourri Pasha, had no French and Palmerston found him an “oaf” on whom he could make no impression.” is very different. In best orientalist fashion, Palmerston wrote: “Nourri is a greasy stupid old Turk, without an idea in his head” “A perfect nullity with whom it is impossible to get on at all. He is like a Turk in a melodrama on the stage: one of Bluebeard’s attendants.” Sir Charles Webster, The Foreign Policy of Palmerston: 1830-1841, London, 1951.

We have here a perfect vignette of British orientalism in practice. On the one hand Palmerston uses the most effusive possible praise when writing to the Ottomans, as he thought it what they liked, but in private he revealed the contempt which marked his true attitude, and that of so many other Westerners, to the ‘Turks’. Such attitudes all feed into a widespread underestimation of the Sultan’s diplomacy and policies; which is why the story from the Ottoman archives needs to be told. At the very least it counters the view that ‘greasy Turks’ were too ‘stupid’ to even have a policy. Perhaps the British were just too arrogant to encompass what it was.

As a matter of fact, Mahmud II and his statesmen’s diplomatic struggle is a neglected topic amongst Turkish historians too. For instance, although Muhammed H. Kutluoğlu examined the period of 1831-1841 in the context of Egyptian Question, he did not mention anything about Namık Pasha, Nuri Effendi, or Mustafa Reşid Pasha, or the Ottoman diplomats’ reports; nor did he discuss the significance of Mahmud’s orders to these diplomats. The question arises, how could we know what the Ottomans did to diplomatically resolve the problem,
A Fresh Look at Mahmud II’s Purpose in Calling Russian Troops to Istanbul in 1833

For this reason this article will examine the first events, just after the defeat of the Central Government’s Army against the Egyptian Army, from the point of view of Mahmud’s deliberate and purposeful diplomatic manoeuvres and through these, his self-evident plan, which was to change the diplomatic atmosphere in Europe with respect to Mehmet Ali problem to one that was in favour of assisting the Ottoman Empire. This includes the efforts of his most capable diplomats’ in various European cities, particularly London, to implement their sovereign’s plan. We have studied this period from this point of view because the story that unfolded upon examination of

without examining these indispensable materials? Kutluoğlu also mentioned almost nothing about the vital events directly related to the Mehmet Ali Problem, such as the treaty of Unkia Skelesii, the Euphrates Project, and the treaty of Balta Limani.

There are other Turkish historians, who studied the period; however, they too failed to scrutinize the Ottoman diplomatic struggle such as Şinasi Altundağ, have confined their studies to the chronology of the historical events marking the struggle between the Sultan and his vassal governor, and reflected upon its impact in the international arena. Some of them, such as Sevim Ünal, have examined Palmerston’s and his ambassadors’ diplomatic efforts based on the Foreign Office documents, as has been done in the English literature, and yet others, such as Mübahat Kütükoğlu, have investigated the problem based on its economic effects on Anglo-Ottoman economic relations. However, it could rightly be said that none of them have considered Mahmud and his statesmen’s intensive diplomatic endeavours between 1833 and 1839. As a result of this approach to the era, the Turkish scholars have looked at Mahmud’s relations with Russia, Britain, and the other European powers from an almost orientalist perspective, just as the European scholars have done.

The second problem with the literature is an ‘indirect’ orientalist attitude. This means that many scholars with no prejudices against Mahmud II and the Ottomans can end up mentioning almost nothing about Mahmud II and his diplomatic struggles from failure to refer to the Ottoman Archives. Consequently, only the European side of the story is ever told. For example, Webster asserted that solving the Mehmet Ali Problem was solely Palmerston’s success:

“The triumph of Palmerston in 1840 was perhaps the greatest which he ever won in his long connection with foreign affairs... This result was obtained because Palmerston sought ends which in the long run even those who opposed him saw were necessary. The time was not ripe for dissolution of the Ottoman Empire which would almost certainly have occurred if Palmerston had not had his way. This failure of Mahmud’s final fling at his vassal, so disastrous in its results, would have deprived the Porte permanently of the rule of all the Aran-speaking lands, including the Holy Places, unless it had been rescued by European, mainly British, action.”

Another of this kind of historian is Namık Sinan Turhan. In his book, İmparatorluk ve Demokrasi, He asserts differently than the international scholars and attributes the solution to the Mehmet Ali Problem as the Russian Tsar, Nicholas I’s success. The reason for this error is the same; not using the Ottoman documents, Mahmud II’s orders to his diplomats and their reports about the diplomatic developments in Europe. There are many examples of orientalism in the literature but these will suffice for now.
this topic with use of the original Ottoman documents, revealed that Mahmud II and his diplomats made vigorous efforts to resolve their enormous problem, Mehmet Ali, by using diplomatic means, and this was clearly an historical fact which has never been examined in detail from the Ottoman point of view. Furthermore, the Turkish and English studies thus far have been surprisingly remiss, as seen in their neglect of the Ottoman diplomatic effort in this period. Thus this study is an attempt to read the period, particularly in the context of calling the Russians to the Bosporus, from the much-neglected Ottoman perspective, based on the hitherto overlooked Ottoman documents.

The Beginning of the Mehmet Ali Problem

“Whoever could have Egypt, he can have India as well” said Napoleon in one of his letters in 1798.7 These words clearly summarize Egypt’s importance. During the French-Ottoman War in Egypt, Mehmet Ali observed the differences between the Ottoman and French Armies and later, when he became the governor of Egypt, he quickly modernised his army by bringing military experts from France. The most famous of these was “Captain Seves” also known as Süleyman Pasha.8 He would later serve Mehmet Ali during the war with the Ottomans. France, which supported Mehmet Ali, and was in competition with England in the Mediterranean, was pleased to see a strong army in Egypt. Knowing of the British interests in India, France hoped to use Mehmet Ali against Britain.9 Mehmet Ali, also aware of Britain’s interests, aimed to use his knowledge to gain favour with England. According to Vereté, Barker, the British Consul-General in Egypt, told Palmerston “The pasha had made to His Majesty’s government for intimate relations and protection, to which no clear reply was ever given.” However, Palmerston refused this request. Vereté continues:

“Palmerston thought that the Turkish sovereign might raise the question of British aid against his revolted pasha. If this were to happen, the secretary of state allowed the ambassador “to say no more... than to assure him [the sultan] of our general wishes to maintain and uphold him as an

8 Fahmy, Pasamın Adamları, p.79.
ancient ally and old friend and as an important element in the balance of power in Europe."

Because of Mehmet Ali’s desire for Egypt’s autonomy, he began modernizing and Westernizing right from the beginning of his administration, to strengthen Egypt and ultimately challenge the Sultan’s authority. The threat of the French Army had taught him that economic, political and military reforms were necessary. As a matter of fact he was an ordinary soldier of the Ottoman army when he came to the Egypt; however he became the strongest man of these lands in a very short time due to his intelligence, politics and cunning character. However, acquiring this strong position was not that easy because Mehmet Ali struggled with many complex problems until he became the governor of the Egypt. He didn’t stop at simply modernizing the army but also acquired monopolies on important goods as well, thereby strengthening Egypt’s economic position. Webster quotes Palmerston as saying:

“But Mehmet also established many state monopolies and fixed prices so as to secure huge profit to himself. “The fact is”, wrote Palmerston in 1838, “that Mehmet Ali has divided the population of Egypt into two classes the Rich and the Poor. The rich class consists of Mehmet Ali himself singly and alone: the poor class of all the other inhabitants of Egypt.”

The reforms made Egypt stronger; and when Mehmet Ali was sure his army was strong enough, he rebelled against the Sultan. One Ottoman document asserts the public of Egypt had begun to see Mehmet Ali as a new Sultan. Mehmet Ali also wanted Syria under his administration, because he was planning to establish his own Empire. Altundağ quotes a report from French ambassador Drovetti that, even in 1811, after Mehmet Ali had defeated...

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14 Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston*, p.275.
his enemies, he had begun to dream of an independent Egypt. Barker also reported of Mehmet Ali that:

“he has at length thrown off the veil which has hitherto but half concealed his ultimate object and publicly declared that that object is to dethrone the Sultan Mahmoud and to put the son of the Sultan in his place.”

From this it can be seen that Mehmet Ali initiated rebellion in the Ottoman Empire, making him and the Sultan adversaries. This led to a war which would create a new phase in the Eastern Question, and strain the sensitive balance of power in Europe as the Great Powers struggled to gain control over the Ottoman lands.

The Sultan had promised to give Mehmet Ali the governorship of Syria and Crete as a reward for his support during the Greek rebellion. Despite this favour, in the Russian-Ottoman war at the end of the 1820s he did not send his army to help the Sultan. This was because he had wanted to be commander-in-chief of Anatolia, and for his son, Ibrahim Pasha, to be commander-in-chief of Rumelia, and the Sultan had refused to grant this. Mehmet Ali also wanted to capture Syria and therefore he already begun to make some plans over this place. However, Mahmud knew Syria’s proximity to Egypt would give Mehmet Ali even greater economic and military strength. Consequently, the Sultan did not want to make Mehmet Ali governor of Syria, so he only gave him governorship of Crete. Another reason for this antipathy between Mahmud and Mehmet Ali was because some Ottoman government officials were jealous of Mehmet Ali’s successful reforms in Egypt, and occasionally told lies about him to the Sultan.

After all of these developments, in 1831, the strained relationship between the Sultan and Mehmet Ali led to open rebellion. Mehmet Ali assigned his son, İbrahim Pasha, to attack Syria in the autumn of 1831. İbrahim was a clever and capable Commander with great ambitions like his father. However, while Mehmet Ali only wanted to establish an Egyptian

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16 Altundağ, Mısır Meselesi, p. 30.
17 Webster, The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, p. 278.
20 Karal, Osmanlı Tarihi, p. 129.
Empire, İbrahim Pasha’s ambitions ran to establishing an empire across the entire Arabic world. Nevertheless, he always obeyed his father’s orders because he was not as established a statesman as Mehmed Ali.

Mehmed Ali Pasha’s rebellion started when his army attacked the Ottoman Army in Syria in the autumn of 1831. The first serious battle between the Sultan’s army and Mehmed Ali’s army occurred on 14 April 1832. This battle did not last very long, but it was clear that the Egyptian Army was better prepared than the Ottoman Army. After the Syrian public realised this difference between the armies’ strength, they began to support İbrahim Pasha. Next, the Egyptian army marched swiftly into the Ottoman lands. It occupied Akka on 27 May; Damascus on 16 June; and Aleppo on 15 July 1832. After these, Istanbul officially declared that Mehmet Ali and his son İbrahim Pasha were dismissed from their duties as they were rebels. This was most alarming for the Sultan and also for the European Powers. Mahmud II began to think that he should have taken the threat more seriously. So he sent a new army with Hussein Pasha as its Commander, but on 29 July 1832, this army also was defeated by İbrahim Pasha at Hums, and almost destroyed. With this victory, the Egyptian Army moved toward Anatolia, and the Ottoman government decided to send its last and biggest army to Konya, a city in middle of Anatolia. As Mahmud II prepared to send his military forces against İbrahim Pasha, he knew this was the last chance the Ottomans had to stop İbrahim Pasha and his army. This final battle, in which the Egyptian army defeated the Ottomans, occurred at Konya on 21 December 1832. However, before this vital battle, Mahmud II realised the weakness of his army, and started to seek a diplomatic solution to overcome the problem while incurring minimal damage to the Empire. One of the most significant signs that the Sultan was seeking a diplomatic solution to the Mehmet Ali problem was his sending of Namık Pasha to London, to negotiate for an Anglo-Ottoman military alliance before the last battle with Mehmet Ali’s

23 Altundağ, Misir Meselesi, p. 60.
25 Karal, Osmanlı Tarihi, p. 130, Altundağ, Misir Meselesi, p. 61.
26 BOA, HAT., 72/20117, 29 Z.1248.
army in Konya. This demarche is very important because it illustrates well that deciding to seek another power’s cooperation against the enemy before a battle is very different to asking in desperation as a last solution afterwards. On the contrary, this assignment of Namık Pasha’s shows that Sultan Mahmud II had already started to seek a way to overcome this crisis much earlier than the last battle in Konya.

**Mahmud II and his Diplomatic Efforts**

Consequently, the mission and visit of Namık Pasha should be examined in detail to properly understand the Sultan’s diplomatic approach. A full airing of this material is vital since Namık Pasha’s mission, his reports, and the Sultan’s return instructions have been either ignored, or downplayed in all the English historical accounts. However, as an example of Ottoman diplomatic endeavours during hard times, this correspondence between the Sultan and the Pasha should be analyzed extensively. But such correspondence is only one component of the wider perspective. When all the pieces are assembled, the big picture becomes clear. This big picture is that of Ottoman diplomatic capability and it is in respect of this ability that this study, by using the Ottoman documents, will try to reveal what the Ottomans did diplomatically to overcome the first negative effects of the big loss against Mehmet Ali.

The narrative thus begins with the instructions given to the Pasha by the Sultan. As mentioned above, Mahmud II appointed Namık Pasha to his mission before the great battle in Konya on 21 December 1832. The most important thing to note here is the precise instructions given by the Sultan. These are important because they are based on the primary sources, which will help us to understand the diplomacy of the Ottomans at that time.

First of all, a significant feature is the instruction’s style of discourse. This style is not that of a powerless Empire. Mahmud II gave orders to Namik Pasha that if the Pasha was unsuccessful in his quest to form a military alliance with Britain, this failure would damage the Ottoman image in the diplomatic arena. Therefore, in the case of a British rejection of the military alliance against Mehmet Ali, the Pasha should at least negotiate for some British military support in the form of mariners, ammunition and military officers. This order shows very well that the Sultan was still concerned about

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the Ottoman’s diplomatic image, despite all the difficulties and defeats from Mehmet Ali. However, the importance of making a military alliance against Mehmet Ali was again impressed upon Namık Pasha, and the first and most important aim of this mission was the creation of the Anglo-Ottoman alliance. Despite acknowledging the possibility that the British might reject the Ottoman request, the document suggests that the Sultan was optimistic about the chances of an alliance; in this he turned out to be wrong. Mahmud II was calculating the geo-politics of the Near East; what he had not taken into account was the internal politics of the Whig Government of Lord Grey.

Namık Pasha arrived in London in early December, 1832, and was accorded a warm welcome from senior politics and King William IV; he was even invited to the Palace for three days. Palmerston accompanied the Pasha to the Palace: the third day was the Queen’s birthday, but there was not enough time for a long delay because Ibrahim Pasha was moving quickly across Anatolia, and the Sultan was impatient to learn the outcome of Namık Pasha’s meetings. However, despite all Namık Pasha’s efforts, Britain had other problems, such as the Belgian and Portuguese problem, which required the full resources of the British navy; the Government was also fully-occupied with the Reform Bill debates; consequently the British Cabinet refused the Sultan’s request. At that time, the British public was insufficiently alert to the importance the Ottoman lands held for British interests. Although the Cabinet had turned down his proposal, Namık Pasha still had something important to indicate to the Sultan so he sent a critically important report from London in December. He therein opined that leaving London would be the most suitable course of action because there was nothing further he could do in London at that time. But, from his report on his final conversation with Palmerston, it was evident that the Foreign Secretary was not happy with the Cabinet’s decision. Palmerston had confided that he regretted that the British Cabinet could not lend military assistance to the Empire at that time. Namık Pasha had asked him to keep the Cabinet’s decision secret and not inform any other European Powers since news of this decision would spur the rebel governor and his supporters on in their destructive efforts against central

29 BOA, HAT., 1265/48980-A, 29.Z.1248.
30 BOA, HAT., 833/37560-K, 08.L.1248.
31 BOA, HAT., 367/20280, 29.Z.1248.
32 BOA, HAT., 833/37560-M, 10.L.1248.
government. Additionally, Namık Pasha requested that Palmerston conceal his departure from London for the same reason.\textsuperscript{33} It is clear that the Sultan was still hoping that bluff, and the possibility of a British alliance would have an effect of Mehmet Ali; it would only be when this hope, too, failed, that there would be a resort to Russia. What the Ottoman documents reveal is the lengths to which the Sultan was willing to go to try to secure a diplomatic resolution to the crisis. Even if the British would not lend immediate military aid, it was possible that their diplomatic assistance might be useful.

The Pasha, although disappointed with the British decision, still left the door open for future cooperation by emphasising that he appreciated the friendship and hospitality which he had been shown. It was clear that the British appreciated the importance of the Ottoman Empire, and that they saw Mehmet Ali as a threat to both Empires; but it would only be when the Ottomans had failed to deal with the threat that the British would realise that they had underestimated the size of the threat. The British expressed their support for the Sultan in his struggle and they agreed with Namık Pasha about coercing the other European Powers over hostilities against Mehmet Ali. Namık Pasha also stated that Palmerston expressed in reply that he was in agreement with the decision that the Pasha should go to Istanbul immediately and report to the Sultan about all his negotiations in London, and assured him that his departure from London would be kept secret.\textsuperscript{34} It seems that although the Foreign Minister was not yet strong enough to induce the Cabinet to send military support to the Sultan, he did want to show goodwill to Mahmud II through Namık Pasha in order to not to cut all ties with the Ottoman Empire. Within this context, Palmerston stressed that he considered the Ottoman Empire as an ally, and as such he desired the prosperity and smooth running of the country. At the same time he would like her enemies to despair and he would not allow any other European Powers to exacerbate the problem by assisting Mehmet Ali. He lastly stated that although the Cabinet had not made the decision to strike a military alliance with the Empire yet, it did not mean it would be impossible in any circumstance. An alliance might well be possible in the advent of more favourable circumstances.\textsuperscript{35} Palmerston clearly wanted to leave the road open for closer Anglo-Ottoman cooperation, and did not

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
want the Cabinet’s decision to close it; but, like the Ottomans, he had underestimated the military power of the Pasha of Egypt.

Although they had refused the alliance, three different official letters were sent to Istanbul by three different British authorities. The first one was written by the King William IV himself, in person. In this letter, William IV stated that “he and his public regarded the Sultan’s offer highly, but owing to some difficult problems which Britain had to contend with at that time, unfortunately, this offer could not currently be accepted”. The King continued by saying, “However, this unavoidable rejection did not mean that Britain did not care about this problem of the Ottomans’. Quite the contrary, he had appointed Colonel Campbell, who was on duty in Colombia as a diplomatic agent, to admonish Mehmet Ali rigorously if he were to break negotiations (which had started a short time ago in Kütahya after the battle of Konya) and dared to rebel again. Also, the King added that Namık Pasha had performed his mission admirably, but, as mentioned, conditions in Britain were currently unfavourable for supporting the Sultan against his rebel governor.

The second and the third letters were written by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister. These letters were similar to the King’s letter. Just like his, they unfortunately had to convey that Britain was unable to help the Ottomans, however the Sultan could be sure that the British politicians were fully aware the importance of the Ottoman Empire for Britain and in the eventuality of any possibility of attack by Mehmet Ali’s army on Istanbul, they would not allow the Ottoman Empire to fall into decay. All of this suggested two things to Mahmud II: that the British would do nothing at this juncture; but that they might yet be driven into the alliance – although that might take a dangerous and difficult line of diplomacy, one which would astonish the Sultan’s own advisers with its audacity.

Sir Charles Webster summed up the Foreign Secretary’s position well:

“Palmerston was more prescient than his colleagues, but his own conviction was not sufficiently strong, his influence in the Cabinet not yet sufficiently powerful to obtain the necessary action. From the weakness of these months came a whole series of difficult problems.”

36 BOA, HAT., 72/20392, 29.Z.1250.
37 BOA, HAT., 72/20392-A, 29.Z.1250.
38 BOA, HAT., 72/20392-A, 29.Z.1250.
39 Webster, The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, p. 273.
Mahmud II’s Diplomatic Manoeuvres

These difficult problems appeared much earlier for Britain than Palmerston had expected, and were in two stages. The first one was the Sultan’s calling the Russian naval power to the Bosporus. Calling Russian military power to the Ottoman lands was a surprise development for all parties to the problem – even for the Ottoman statesmen – since the last war and truce between these two regional powers had only just been made three years prior to this invitation to the Russian army. In fact, hostility between these two powers in the region had been going on for centuries. As Rodkey mentioned; “Russia, since the time of Peter the Great, had been the traditional enemy of Turkey”.40 Because of this hostility, nobody was expecting this surprise move from the Sultan.

It is easy to see the move for a Russian intervention as a sign of Mahmud’s plight, and there is no denying that he needed help badly; but he never saw the resort to Russia as an end in itself, but rather as a means to his initial end – a British alliance. In order to fully understand the reason why the Sultan called the Russian army to Istanbul, the orders of the Sultan and the reports of the Ottoman statesmen and also the historical developments of the period must be examined in detail.

Mahmud II never abandoned the idea of getting the British on his side; he simply tried to find a better way of getting them there. He was extremely reluctant to accept Russian help. Goryanof,41 showed that, when the Sultan agreed to talk to General Muravyov, the special officer of the Tsar, about Russian military help, the Sultan was initially unwilling to accept it – despite the news of Mehmet’s victory at Konya. At this point Mahmud II was still awaiting the good news from Namık Pasha in London, and he was still hopeful of an Anglo-Ottoman military alliance. It would only be when it became clear that the British could not help him – either militarily or diplomatically, that Mahmud II would accept Russian help; and even then, only because he thought it would force the British to revise their attitude.

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Dönmez mentioned that Mahmud II tried to use the Russian Military trump in order to prod the British and French public into action against Mehmet Ali.  

Mahmud’s plan, audacious as it was, caused a deal of opposition from his advisers. The Minister of Defence spearheaded this opposition party. Namık Pasha, in his last meeting with Palmerston in London, had given this opposition in the Empire as a reason for the necessity of an immediate Anglo-Ottoman military alliance because, according to the Pasha, the Minister of Defence openly opposed Russian military power in Istanbul, and in addition to this the other ministers were extremely perturbed by it. General Muravyov was surprised at the request from the Sultan, because his first offer of Russian military help against Mehmet Ali had just been rejected. As a matter of fact, when the Ottoman documents, which will be examined separately in the following parts of this study, are analysed, it is clear that the Sultan’s opinion about an alliance with Britain did not change but now his aim was to manoeuvre diplomatically to turn anti-Ottoman Britain public and government in a pro-Ottoman direction. In order to do this, he chose to remind them of the importance of the Ottoman Empire in terms of British self-interests. Historical conditions left only one way for the Sultan to succeed in this reminding, and this was to frighten the British Public about India, the biggest possession at that time for Britain, by using Russia as a weapon. Thereupon, the Russian Navy, which contained nine warships under the command of Admiral Lazaref, arrived in the Bosporus on 8th of February 1833. As Mahmud II had anticipated, the move produced immediate alarm in Britain.

**How Mahmud II’s Diplomatic Tactics Affect Western Powers**

Palmerston suddenly wanted to meet with Namık Pasha, who was about to leave London, to discuss this surprise development. Namık Pasha’s report

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44 When analysing Mahmud’s appointments his diplomats (Namık Pasha, Mustafa Reşid Pasha, Nuri Effendi, Fethi Pasha) to London between 1833 and 1838 and his orders to them, it would be realised that Mahmud’s only aim was to make an alliance with Britain. To see these kinds of appointments and orders look at these documents: BOA, *HAT.*, 1190/46879 001 (29.Z.1251); 368/20339 (29.Z.1248); 1174/46430-C (05.M.1250); 1180/46612-C (27.§.1252); 1172/46412-A (29.Z.1252); 1186/46759 (29.Z.1251); 1173/46414-D (08.C.1250).

45 Goryanof, ibid, p. 88.
informed the Sultan that they met in the second half of February, 1833. Palmerston stated that he had received an official letter from Istanbul which said that Orlov, who had just appointed by the Tsar to solve the problem on behalf of the Russians, had met with Ibrahim Pasha, who was in Konya with his army at that moment. When Orlov related his mission and the instructions of the Tsar about an immediate peace agreement, the Pasha said that he was under his father’s authority and awaiting for his orders. He also stated that he wanted to make peace with the Sultan and so did his father, a governor of the Sultan’s, so his army would be at the service of the Sultan. It was an interesting explanation which might be due to two reasons. Either he was trying to gain time, or the sight of the Russian warships in Istanbul worried Ibrahim Pasha as well. Since the situation turned out like this, it seems that Mahmud II was killing two birds with one stone by using the Russian navy in the Bosphorus as a trump against both the British public and Mehmet Ali. Ibrahim Pasha added that he had just sent a letter to Istanbul for permission to move his army to Bursa, which was very close to Istanbul, since there was a food shortage in Konya so his soldiers were suffering difficult conditions there. After including all this information in the letter to Palmerston, this insolent behaviour from Ibrahim Pasha and the dangerous results for the Empire that could be anticipated if the army moved to Bursa, along with the refusal of the British Cabinet to co-operate were given as the reasons for calling the Russian Army to the Bosphorus. This is compelling evidence revealing the Sultan’s plan, which still aimed to make an alliance with Britain by alarming them with the presence of Russian power in the region. Clearly, the Sultan was indicating to Palmerston that if Britain accepted the alliance he would not need to call the Russian Navy. Then, as if Namık Pasha had been waiting for this moment, after Palmerston’s words, he again put his request for joint military action against Ibrahim Pasha’s army. However, Palmerston only replied that they had sent Colonel Campbell to Alexandria to negotiate with Mehmet Ali and they were still waiting for his news. The problem was that despite realising the dangers to be apprehended from Russia getting a stranglehold on the Sultan, Palmerston still had no military forces he could use; he also wondered whether it would actually be necessary.

46 BOA, HAT, 833/37560-K, 08.L.1248.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
Palmerston’s views on Mehmet Ali were at one with those of the Sultan, and he clearly saw the dangers of an Ottoman/Russian alliance:

“I am convinced that it is for the general interest of Europe that Mehmet should derive as little benefit as possible from his conquest and the less he gets in Syria, the better- & for this reason, because if he gets much then the Sultan is thrown permanently into the hands of Russia.”

However, nobody, including Palmerston, was aware that calling the Russian army was a part of an overall strategy and the Sultan had already started to seek ways of getting rid of the Russians.

As a further repercussion, this arrival of the Russian Navy woke up the two sleeping giants, France and Britain. In response, Namık Pasha sent a report from London which indicated that Britain and France had started to cooperate over the removal of the Russian Navy from the Bosporus. It was an interesting development because up until the Russian Navy was seen in the Bosporus, Britain and France were rivals in the Mediterranean. The Sultan’s plan seems to transform the two competitors into two allies given the rivalry between France and Britain in the Near East, it would prove more difficult than Mahmud II had anticipated creating an anti-Russian coalition, and this would not happen until long after his death; but his instinct was not wrong. This situation shows that calling the Russian Navy not only influenced Mehmet Ali but also caused some significant changes in the European diplomatic arena. Brown analysed the reasons for the transformation of Britain’s relations with France succinctly in his book about Palmerston. According to him Palmerston initially attempted to converge with Metternich of Austria, over the Mehmet Ali Problem. However, over time, he began to doubt the sincerity of Metternich’s intentions with regard to the Ottoman Empire.

In reality, the Sultan and the Ottoman statesmen disapproved of this cooperation, since France had been supporting Mehmet Ali for a long time. They also remembered the French occupation of Algeria in 1830. There was somebody else who did not like French cooperation with Britain as well - Metternich, the famous Foreign Minister of the Austrian Empire. There is an

50 BOA, HAT., 362/20132, 29.Z.1248.
51 BOA, HAT., 1171/46344, 29.Z.1248.
52 David Brown, ibid., pp. 178-180.
interesting Ottoman document about this topic. It is interesting since it explains many details of Austrian-Ottoman relations related to the Mehmet Ali Problem. The document indicates that the chief translator of the Austrian Empire came to the Foreign Minister of the Ottoman Empire and explained that he had received a letter from Metternich. Metternich stated in the letter that a French official from the French Foreign Ministry met Palmerston and negotiated with him about the Anglo-French cooperation on the Mehmet Ali problem. However, Metternich ordered the ambassador in London to recommend Namık Pasha to be firm in insisting on only British military help. Metternich was suggesting to the Ottomans that France should not be incorporated in the problem and they should only trust Britain. He also even mentioned that he sent a Colonel, (the Ottoman document says his name was Birukes) just as Britain had sent Colonel Campbell, and he was to act with Campbell. But Palmerston, who did not trust the Austrian, could not be sure about Metternich’s good intentions. He was in a dilemma whether to join forces with Metternich to solve the Mehmet Ali problem. Part of him was optimistic and another part pessimistic. David Brown describes two different sides of Palmerston’s thinking well in his book about him. Part of him wanted very much to cooperate with the Austrian Empire to solve the Eastern problem. According to Brown, Palmerston was worried about the support the French were giving to Mehmet Ali and about the latest intimacy between the Ottomans and the Russians owing to the Sultan’s call. Therefore, primarily, the solution, to Palmerston, seemed to be to cooperate with Metternich. As mentioned above through the Ottoman document, Metternich at first responded in a positive way towards this desire of Palmerston’s and suggested to Namık Pasha that he insist upon British military help. Meanwhile, whilst this complicated diplomatic interaction was going on there was a surprise development. The French prime minister announced to the Austrian ambassador in Paris that they had a satisfactory solution for the Ottomans and he asked whether the Austrian Empire would like to join them or not. The ambassador responded that he did not have any instructions pertaining to this topic so he would need to write and ask the opinion of his government. This

53 BOA, HAT., 1199/47070, 29.Z.1248.
54 Ibid.
55 Brown, ibid., p. 178.
56 BOA, HAT., 1199/47070, 29.Z.1248.
announcement of France’s has not been mentioned in the standard historical literature on this subject. Afterwards, Metternich indicated to France that he kept informed from his ambassador, and first he needed to learn what this solution of France’s was, and then he could make a decision. It seems that this was an attempt by Metternich to divert France, since at the same time he also suggested secretly to the Ottoman diplomats that they should not openly reject the French offer at first, and only after a while they should explain the negative answer to this offer.\(^{57}\)

The British and the French had not expected the Sultan to call in the Russians. The Russians were the hereditary enemy of the Ottoman Empire, and the presence of the Russian Navy in the region was an extremely dangerous situation in terms of British interests in India and French power in the Mediterranean. In fact, neither was any Ottoman statesmen expecting it, as the Russians were the biggest enemy in the majority of Muslims’ view.\(^{58}\)

**British Panic over Russian Military Presence in İstanbul**

The British public was in a state of panic after the Russian Fleet was seen in the Bosporus. Although the British side had been in a passive position since the beginning of the Mehmet Ali Problem, when the Russian military power were seen in the Bosporus the British started to take the action.\(^{58}\) The Sultan’s plan seemed to be working. The most important indicator of this was William IV’s actions. When the Russian warships arrived, Namık Pasha was still in London. When the Pasha went to the Palace for the last time, the King told the Pasha that he did not approve of any Ottoman-Russian alliance because there was no benefit for the Ottomans in associating with the Russians and also the Russian Empire was an enemy both to the Ottoman Empire and to Britain. Moreover, according to the King, Russia’s only aim was to find a route to India, a British country.\(^{59}\) Interestingly, the King did not mention anything about India when he first met Namık Pasha. This shows that the Russian danger reminded the King of the vital importance of the Ottoman Empire to Britain and the British Public.

\(^{57}\) Ibid.


\(^{59}\) Altundağ, ibid., pp. 247-248.
Namık Pasha was a shrewd ambassador. He replied to the King that he was very well aware that the Russian Empire had been a great enemy of the Ottoman Empire for a long time, but when the Tsar first offered the Sultan Russian help against Mehmet Ali, the Sultan had not accepted this offer and instead sent his ambassador to London for the Anglo-Ottoman military alliance. According to the Pasha, this was strong evidence of the Sultan’s enduring trust in Britain. Nevertheless, when Britain rejected this offer from the Sultan, only then was the proposal of the Tsar accepted. The Pasha was attempting to show the great mistake the British Cabinet made in their rejection, by using the Russian danger to illustrate British advantages. As a matter of fact, there could have been no better time than that one to play the trump card for the military alliance.

However, despite all the efforts of Britain and France, the Russian warships remained in the Bosporus for a further four months. After a while, the Sultan requested 30,000 soldiers, 6000 cavalry, and 110 troops of cannon from the Tsar, in addition to the Russian warships, because he was not pleased with Britain’s continuing position after his surprise diplomatic manoeuvre. From the Ottomans’ point of view, the only action of British politicians was merely to pontificate without taking any decisive action. Mahmud II stated that he did not just want to hear words about this problem; something had to be done, and until Ibrahim Pasha went back to Egypt, the Russian army would stay in Istanbul. The reason for the Sultan’s dissatisfaction was that despite all the Ottoman diplomats’ efforts to strike a military alliance with Britain using the Russian trump; it seems that Palmerston could not be convinced of the necessity for full support of the Ottomans in the time it took between the Russian military landing and the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi. This treaty was to be the biggest manoeuvre Mahmud II made in order to realise his goal of an Anglo-Ottoman military alliance. It would be only when the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi was revealed that Palmerston would realise the depth of the defeat British interests had suffered; he would spend many years trying to put right what he later saw as his greatest mistake. As Baker put it:

60 Altundağ, ibid., p. 248.
61 BOA, HAT., 362/20132, 29.Z.1248.
62 BOA, HAT., 367/20289, 29.Z.1248.
“The truth seems to be that the swift succession of events in the Near East caught Palmerston preoccupied, unprepared, and belated. There is a thinly veiled admission of this in the sentence, ‘Preparations, however, have been made, and are still making, to enable H.M. Gov’t. to deal with future circumstances according to the view which may be taken of the exigencies of the moment’.”

Meanwhile, news of the Russian warships in the Bosporus had the same impact on the French public as it did upon the British public, so France retreated somewhat from supporting Mehmet Ali, as had been their practice since the beginning of his rebellion. This impact is seen in an Ottoman document wherein it was stated that the French Ambassador came to the Sultan and the Russian Ambassador to say how he was sorry about the French support to Mehmet Ali that had been given from the outset. It was also stated in the same document that this apology from the French ambassador was natural because France would never dare to challenge to the Russian army which had 400,000 soldiers. As can be understood from this statement, the Sultan also was attempting to utilise his ‘Russian trump’ diplomatically against his other enemies.

In point of fact, the appearance of the Russian army in İstanbul did enhance the French and British efforts to induce Mehmet Ali to recall his army from Anatolia back to Egypt. Baron Roussin, who had been assigned to this mission in February, acted on behalf of France, and as mentioned above, Colonel Campbell acted on behalf of Britain, in prevailing upon Mehmet Ali. On this topic, The Foreign Minister of the Ottoman Empire met the British Ambassador, Ponsonby. Ponsonby from the outset indicated that Britain desired the maintenance of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. He told the Minister that in order to support this policy, Britain had assigned Colonel Campbell with only one mission; which was the persuasion of Mehmet Ali to re-acknowledge his subservience to the central government, Istanbul. After these words, Ponsonby asked whether the Russian warships would leave the Bosporus or not. In response to the question the Minister stated that it was certain that the Russian warships would leave Istanbul soon.

64 BOA, HAT., 369/20346, 29.Z.1248.
65 Karal, Osmanlı Tarihi, p. 135.
66 BOA,HAT., 365/20198, 29.Z.1248.
however, they did not know if the weather conditions were suitable for their leaving at that moment or not.\textsuperscript{67} These words seem to indicate that the Minister was trying to gain some time. The Sultan was probably pursuing the progress of his plan and waiting for diplomatic conditions to take shape in favour of the Empire. Only then he would expel the Russian trump from Istanbul, if, of course, he could.

Moreover, the Minister mentioned to Ponsonby, in the same meeting, about how aggressively the French Ambassador, Roussin, had behaved over the Russian warships. Interestingly, he was stating that the Russian fleet staying in Istanbul any longer was a matter of dishonour for France; presumably this was the justification for his undiplomatic behaviour. Roussin’s rather aggressive attitude prompted the Minister to express his concerns over any possible action he might subsequently take, which might upset the diplomatic balance in the region. He was worried about French policies related to the Mehmet Ali problem because the French diplomats had gone so far as to make threats in a situation intended for negotiation.\textsuperscript{68} As can be seen in one Ottoman Document, the French diplomats threatened the Ottoman statesmen that they would continue to support Mehmet Ali and moreover encourage the expansion of the boundaries of Greece (which country had just gained independence from the Ottoman Empire) if the Ottoman Empire were to continue to allow the Russian warships to stay in the Bosphorus.\textsuperscript{69} Concerning this, the Minister requested Ponsonby to talk to Roussin in order to discourage him from further aggressive behaviour which ran contrary to the rules of diplomacy. Ponsonby agreed to fulfil this request from the Minister.\textsuperscript{70} All these documents are evidence that the Ottoman statesmen were trying to resolve to problem in a diplomatic way by following the Sultan’s instructions. Sometimes they attempted to use Britain against France, as happened in this example, sometimes they tried to use Russia against all the powers in this diplomatic struggle including Mehmet Ali. In fact, they had to, since the Empire was in very difficult circumstances both economically and militarily and therefore the sole and exclusive remedy for the Empire seemed to be to use diplomacy. When considered from this point

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{69} BOA, HAT., 365/20168, 29.Z.1248.
\textsuperscript{70} BOA, HAT., 365/20198, 29.Z.1248.
of view the Ottoman diplomats’ level of capability in using diplomacy would shape the Empire’s destiny. Indeed, the Ottomans had successfully coexisted with the other powers in the region since the second half of the fourteenth century, and this had increased their diplomatic skills but they only had not needed to use this ability because of their strong economic and military position. In other words they had used their strong economic and military system to maintain their position with other powers in the region for centuries but this time, in the nineteenth century, they were urgently in need of diplomacy to maintain the territorial integrity of the Empire. Diplomacy was needed to preclude the extravagances of the French diplomats. In spite of the assent of Ponsonby in warning Roussin, the Sultan was cautious and ordered to the Ottoman statesmen that,

“although it is clear that France would not do anything to the detriment of Ottoman interests, French diplomacy in Istanbul should be pursued very carefully to avoid the eventuality of the French acting in accordance with their stated policies.”

As well as these measures taken on account of France, the Sultan and his officials also sought to thoroughly consider every diplomatic angle. So the Foreign Minister gave orders to the other diplomats of the Empire that they should be careful to not to cut all ties with France.

Meanwhile, the Tsar mobilized against pressure from the French over the Ottomans. He appointed Orlov instead of Butenef to Istanbul as an ambassador. Orlov was endowed with massive authority. Mavroyani, the Ottoman lieutenant ambassador to Vienna, reported from London that he met with Delyot, the Russian ambassador to London, in Buckingham Palace. The ambassador indicated that Butenef was very young to be directing the Russian Navy and army in Istanbul so the Tsar appointed Orlov, who departed from Petersburg on 9 April 1833, with special authority to set the things right in Istanbul. He also mentioned that this appointment was a goodwill gesture from the Tsar to the Sultan and so he hoped that the Sultan and the Ottoman statesmen would be pleased with this effort of the Tsar’s. Goryanof stated,

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71 BOA, HAT., 365/20168, 29.Z.1248.
72 Ibid.
73 BOA, HAT., 350/19814, 29.Z.1248.
on the instructions of the Tsar that Orlov had been charged with preventing the French from applying pressure in Istanbul.\textsuperscript{74}

As has already been covered previously, the Sultan’s plan had started to work because after the appearance of the Russian warships and soldiers, King William IV had begun to be more concerned about the Mehmet Ali Problem because of the British interests in the region. The King negotiated with Mavroyani over this on the same day he met with the Russian ambassador in the Palace. William IV asked his opinions about whether there was a possibility of the Sultan and Mehmet Ali reaching an agreement. The lieutenant ambassador answered that he was sure that Mehmet Ali would accept the Sultan’s conditions since he had already yielded more than he had expected. Mavroyani also informed the King that he would send a report to Istanbul about his negotiations in the Palace. When the King heard this, he wanted him to indicate to the Sultan that there was no need to continue Orlov’s mission any more. Furthermore, he appointed Admiral Malcolm as Commander to the British Navy presence in the Mediterranean and more importantly, gave orders that he was to act in favour of the Ottoman interests. In addition to this, the King stated that Colonel Campbell reported to him from Alexandria that he met with Mehmet Ali, and the Pasha had given him a warm welcome. He relayed to Mehmet Ali the King’s instructions about ending this rebellion against the Sultan immediately and reaccepting his sovereignty. In response the Pasha interestingly stated that as a matter of fact he had never thought to step outside of the sovereignty of the Sultan and had always accepted him as his patron.\textsuperscript{75} Mehmet Ali was either mocking both the King and the Sultan or was overcome with fear as a result of the Russian military presence in Istanbul and the British and French diplomatic pressure.

The same Britain which had done nothing except murmur some placatory words when Namık Pasha asked for a military alliance at the most critical juncture, was now volunteering to assist the Ottomans. When analysing this alteration of the British policies related to the Ottomans in the light of the main argument of this article, the reason for this change seems to be due to the emotions stirred in the British public about the British interests in the region by the Sultan with his risky plan of calling Russian military power to the Bosporus. Moreover, this alteration took place very rapidly, as

\textsuperscript{74} Goryanof, ibid., p. 89.

\textsuperscript{75} BOA, HAT., 350/19814, 29.Z.1248.
the reversal of policy had taken only two months to occur, from February to April. The meeting in the Palace was an important sign, and serves as an excellent example of this transformation in British policies towards the Ottoman Empire because all the British politicians Mavroyani had met in the Palace had changed their minds in respect to the Ottomans and now leaned towards sending military help. The most important of these were, William IV, The Prime Minister Lord Grey, and the Foreign Minister Palmerston. These people were now giving their positive opinions about aiding the Ottoman Empire against her enemies in the region and they were taking a position most emphatically in favour of the Ottomans, contrary to the February meetings with Namık Pasha. In this respect, the King announced that;

“when considering the words of Mehmet Ali, spoken to Colonel Campbell, there was no need for Russian military power to stay in Istanbul anymore and therefore it will be our auspicial decision to resend the Russians from the Ottoman lands because if the Sultan does not do it, this situation will be a point of contention among the powers in the region and this would damage the Ottoman interests.”

After these words, the King addressed a vital topic which was to be on the agenda of the Anglo-Ottoman relationship in the following decades. He expressed that;

“The Sultan should make required reforms in the finance and administration system immediately after making an agreement with Mehmet Ali. Otherwise, without these vital reforms, I am afraid to express that the Ottoman Empire will very soon be fragmentized by Russia and other enemies of the Empire.”

These words of the King are quite interesting because the Sultan and his best statesman and diplomat Mustafa Reşid would determine their policies concerning the system’s finance and administration reforms. That means the door, which was opened by the Sultan’s Russian ‘trump’ against the British public to better facilitate a military alliance, had turned in time into an administrative and financial cooperation in order to maintain the Empire and also allow it to escape from Russian influence in Istanbul. This cooperation and reform program would be actualised with the Treaty of Balta Limani,

76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
1838, for the finance system and with the rescript of Gülhane, 1839, for the administrative system. All these reforms were connected to the improvement in the Anglo-Ottoman relationship with the Sultan’s and his statesmen’s efforts to win over the King and his statesmen to their side in view of the Mehmet Ali Problem. Thus, it would be fair to say that these reform programmes, aimed at releasing the Empire from the difficulties with Western methods, could be viewed as being a further level of the Unkiar Skelessi operation.

The other important character among the British politicians, who had changed their opinions about the Ottoman Empire with the emergent Russian danger in Istanbul, was the Prime Minister, Lord Grey. He was in the palace on that day and he too talked to Mavroyani about the Mehmet Ali problem. Like the King, he too stated that he was sure Mehmet Ali was content with his concessions from the Sultan in the Kütahya negotiations. Therefore, he would like to express in private that the Russian Navy, (which was, according to the Prime Minister, currently doing some research related to defence strategies in the Mediterranean Straits), should leave the Ottoman lands immediately, since any delay over this necessary decision would cause French hostility which was bound to damage the Empire. In this respect he added that he would like to assure the Sultan that the British government did not want any conflict between the Ottoman Empire and France since they would like to be beneficial to the Empire.\(^79\) Lord Grey was not satisfied with only these words to show his government’s inclination to aid the Ottomans against Mehmet Ali and the Russian danger in Istanbul and he added, in order to reassure the Sultan that the new commander to the British Navy Power in the Mediterranean, Admiral Malcolm, would depart from Malta tomorrow. This British Navy Power would act on behalf of Ottoman interests and wherever it needed to go for these interests, for example, to Alexandria or to anywhere in the Mediterranean it would go.\(^80\) When analysing the Prime Minister’s words, no evidence could be as strong as these to support the main argument of this study; that the Sultan’s plan had started to work since the head of the British government indicated that the British Navy power - which only fifty days ago had no time to be interested in Ottoman problems - would act on behalf of Ottoman interests.

\(^{79}\) BOA, \textit{HAT}., 350/19814, 29.Z.1248.
\(^{80}\) Ibid.
Moreover, Lord Grey relayed this development to Colonel Campbell, who was negotiating with Mehmet Ali in Alexandria at that time, and the Colonel reported from Egypt that Mehmet Ali did not expect the British government to support the Sultan. When he heard that the British government had decided in favour of the Ottoman central government, the Pasha was extremely surprised since he was aware of the rejection from the British government in February. On the other hand he was not aware of Mahmud II’s capacity for diplomacy. After all these declarations from the British, the Ottoman ambassador Mavroyani, who could see the big change now in the political atmosphere in London concerning the Sultan’s request, stated to the Prime Minister that he agreed that there was no need for the Russian military power to stay in the Ottoman lands now. According to Mavroyani, Russian departure would mean France would relax the pressure in Istanbul, and when he witnessed that the final decision of the British Cabinet was in support the Sultan, Mehmet Ali would be content with the rights the Sultan conceded to him in the Kü tahya Negotiations.

Meanwhile, Palmerston joined in the general disapprobation over the arrival of the Russian warships. As mentioned above, he had sent Campbell to the Egypt to negotiate with Mehmet Ali and induce him to recall his army to the Egypt. When the Sultan saw that his plan had started to work, he ordered to the Ottoman Foreign Minister to negotiate with the Russians diplomats to move the Russian warships to Süzebulu, away from the Bosporus. The Sultan’s plan was working because apprehension from both Britain and France about the Russian Power in Istanbul had been increasing daily. As a result of this they strengthened their cooperation to end the Mehmet Ali Problem with a minimum of damage to their benefits in the region. France stopped encouraging and supporting the Pasha and the British Public began to realise the real importance of the Ottoman Empire for British interests. In spite of the change in these two powers’ policies against Mehmet Ali, the Sultan had been keeping his eye on both the powers. He ordered his ministers to meet with both the ambassadors, Roussin and Ponsonby, to understand the background and the level of this cooperation.

81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 BOA, HAT., 362/20132, 29.Z.1248.
84 BOA, HAT., 362/20109, 29.Z.1248.
In addition to this, he heard from his officials that when the British translator, Pizani, met with the Ottoman Foreign Minister, he mentioned two different arguments. According to one of them, Mehmet Ali was a rebel, but according to another one, if his struggle was for the Egyptian people it could not be considered as a rebellion.\textsuperscript{85} Pizani’s words made the Sultan very angry and he ordered that Ponsonby’s opinion should be sought about this statement. Mahmud II was also wondering what the reason for this explanation was, when Britain had formerly appeared to be completely opposed to the rebel Governor. On account of this statement, the foreign minister should ask quite frankly what the final position of both powers in the Anglo-French cooperation against Mehmet Ali was when he met with the ambassadors.\textsuperscript{86} The Sultan’s concern can be seen in how very careful he was about his plan and how no eventuality which might damage it was overlooked even if it was only the statement of an ordinary translator.

At the same time, as mentioned above, the Sultan ordered his ministers to ask the Russian diplomats to move the Russian warships to Süzebolu. However, he was still extremely cautious over the diplomatic balance and so he suggested that they should use very tactful language in this negotiation with Russia.\textsuperscript{87} Thereupon, the Foreign Minister met with Orlov and General Muravyov at his house.\textsuperscript{88} First, the Minister made mention of how pleased the Sultan was to have the Tsar’s support by sending his warships and soldiers to İstanbul, then tactfully went on to ask if Orlov would move to the Russian warships to Süzebolu. The Minister made this request on the Sultan’s orders, because the political atmosphere in London related to his Empire had started to change and the Sultan was relying on these latest developments in the British political agenda. However, the Russian diplomats did not want to relinquish their presence in Istanbul that easily since they had been trying to reach this position for almost two centuries. In response, the ambassador stated that Mehmet Ali had not recalled his army to the Egypt and therefore the problem had not yet been resolved. For this reason he was wondering why the Sultan wanted the Russian warships moved from the Bosporus. After these words, the Foreign Minister responded that there were many reasons for this

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} BOA, \textit{HAT.}, 362/20132, 29.Z.1248.
\textsuperscript{88} BOA, \textit{HAT.}, 350/19814, 29.Z.1248.
demand. The first was that the Russian support had effectively intimidated Mehmet Ali and he had ordered his son to stop his army in Kütahya. The second was that all the efforts of General Muryanef, Colonel Campbell and Ambassador Roussin, all negotiating with Mehmet Ali face to face in Alexandria, seemed to have had an impact on the Pasha. When he had mentioned these points, the Minister concluded that as a result of all these factors the resolution of the problem seemed to be close at hand. He said this because even as he was speaking to the Russian Ambassador and General, Reşid Pasha, who had been assigned by the Sultan to resolve the problem as soon as possible, was negotiating with Ibrahim Pasha in Kütahya.

Meanwhile, negotiations had been proceeding in Kütahya. Mustafa Reşid, who would be vital character in the Anglo-Ottoman relationship in the following years, was conducting negotiations on behalf of the Sultan, with Ibrahim Pasha doing the same on behalf of his father, Mehmet Ali Pasha. After many heated debates about Adana, which was a critically important city for both sides, eventually, the treaty of Kütahya was made between the Sultan and his rebel governor Mehmet Ali, and signed on 14 May 1833. This treaty’s articles did not seem to satisfy either side. The reason for this was that the Sultan did not want to give away the governorship of Adana but was forced to do so because of the diplomatic conditions. However, the Sultan mentioned in an Ottoman document that although the governorship of Adana was given to Mehmet Ali as the lesser of two evils; due to the possibility of a change in Russian policy over the Mehmet Ali problem and also the ‘apostate nature’ of France, this did not mean that the problem was over, far from it, this problem would present itself in a completely different way in the near future.

The reason for Mehmet Ali’s dissatisfaction was that he felt he was missing a big opportunity for his army to gain ground towards the capital city of the Empire, İstanbul. In fact, the Pasha was so close to reaching this goal since his army was in Kütahya (a city very close to Istanbul, almost three hundred kilometres), when the treaty of Kütahya was signed, but the Sultan’s diplomatic manoeuvre of calling the Russian army to Istanbul had changed Mehmet Ali’s policies just as it had changed British and French policies. Because of all of these reasons, this treaty only remained in force temporarily, and it seemed the Sultan and the Pasha would again clash sometime soon.

89 Ibid.
90 BOA, HAT., 369/20346, 29.Z.1248.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the Mehmet Ali Problem led to a new era in Anglo-Ottoman relations in a positive way, something which would continue for the next four decades until the Congress of Berlin (1878). When the European historical literature has examined this period it views it as a result of the diplomatic struggle of the European powers in the Ottoman lands. However, the Ottoman diplomatic efforts in this struggle in her own lands have so far been neglected. In particular calling the Russian Army to the Bosporus and the Treaty of Hünkar İskesesi have never been examined either by European or Turkish scholars as Mahmud II’s diplomatic plan to solve the Mehmet Ali Problem, a problem which could have almost demolished his Empire. However, when analysing the Ottoman documents in detail, the main aim of the Sultan was to forge a military alliance with Britain, even at the moment he seemed to want an alliance with Russia. This study has endeavoured to reveal this risky plan of the Sultan’s based on the Ottoman documents. In fact, calling the Russian Army to Istanbul was only one part of the overall scheme. As a matter of fact, this new period in Anglo-Ottoman relations had just started with the appearance of the Russian Army in Istanbul. The following developments would take place in record time unprecedented in history, in only six years. These developments can be sorted historically thus: the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, 1833; the Euphrates Project, which was to be vital for British politicians to understand alternative possibilities with regard to how to reach India via a different route other than the Cape of Good Hope; the treaty of Balta Limani, 1838, which would yield many profits and privileges for Britain in her treaty with the East; and lastly the Rescript of Gülhane, 1839, the biggest reform programme in the Empire up to that time, in conformity with Western, particularly British, principles.
A Fresh Look at Mahmud II’s Purpose in Calling Russian Troops to İstanbul in 1833

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⁹¹ The file number and document of each document used in the article. Those who wish to refer to these Otoman Documents may find them in the Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi in Istanbul.
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[378]