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Aftershocks of the First World War in the Nile Valley

The First World War brought about a temporary reversal in the relations between imperial metropolises and colonial possessions because imperial metropolises revealed a certain weakness and needed help of countries under their rule; as a result the colonial subjection was shaken. The case of the Nile Valley is very interesting from this point of view: there was successively a growing British request, an Egyptian reaction at the end of the war and soon after a counter reaction of British authorities southwards.

We'll try to understand the evolution of the Nile Valley resulting from the First World War by having an overview of this territory. It is highly relevant to adopt this global vision and to overtake the states divisions in this study because of the tightened links between Egypt and the Sudan. They have a common history which starts in the XIXth century. The Sudan was born thanks to the Egyptian conquest begun by Muhammad Alî in the 1820's. The Egyptians set up an administration and, as a result, allowed the unification of small kingdoms and principalities divided in the olden days. In 1882 Egypt was occupied by the English soldiers and approximatively at the same time a rebellion led the Mahdi, Muhammad Ahmad ibn Abd Allâh, broke out in the Sudan against the Egyptian power. Under the pressure of the British and faced with several defeats, the Khedive had no choice but to evacuate the Sudan. Sixteen years later general Kitchener launched the Anglo-Egyptian troops to reconquer the Sudan. It is then the beginning of the English presence in the southern part of the Nile Valley, but under an Anglo-Egyptian condominium over the Sudan. Owing to this specific situation, the English hoped to get rid of the Egyptians in this area¹. The First World War makes fundamental changes in the Anglo-Egypto-Sudanese relations.

We'll study the impact of WWI on Egypt and the Sudan which determined the Egypt's claim for independence as soon as the military conflict ended. Its consequences will then be evoked namely the British will to protect the Sudan from nationalist contagion.

The fracture of the First World War

The Nile Valley wasn't a battlefield during the First World War. There were a few military confrontations but only on the areas bordering the Nile Valley. The purpose of this study is not to focus on military campaigns of WWI in the Middle East. There are several recent publications on this subject². However, it is important to put forward the major transformations that occurred in Egypt and in the Sudan during this period. The war had implications for the British policy and people coped with them.

Egypt was a key point for the British because of the Suez Canal, the easiest and quickest way to connect the different parts of the Empire. The waterway was attacked twice by Ottoman troops led by Djamel Pasha, the first time in February 1915 and the second time in August 1916. However each time the Ottoman army failed in its attempt to smash British defences. As from the end of 1914, the Canal defence system was organized. In particular a large part of the area was flooded and warships deployed. The troops were also reinforced to safeguard the security of the region, then in preparation of the operations in the Dardanelles

¹ A-C de Gayffier-Bonneville, "La rivalité anglo-égyptienne au Soudan: les enjeux de la décolonisation", *Relations internationales*, 133, hiver 2008, p. 71-73.

² For example, K. Coates Ulrichsen, *The First World War in the Middle East*, London, Hurst Publishers, 2014 ; J. E. Kitchen, *The British Imperial Army in the Middle East. Morale and Military Identity in the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns, 1916-1918*, London, Bloomsbury, 2014.

and later towards Salonica and Palestine³. As soon as the war began, the professional soldiers had to leave Egypt to return to Great Britain and then go to the western front, but on September 1914, the East Lancashire Territorial Division arrived in Egypt, soon followed by thousands of soldiers from the dominions, New Zealand and Australia, and from India. There were about 100,000 men facing the expeditionary Ottoman force in February 1915. Djamel Pasha thought they would be no more than 20,000. He hoped also that the Egyptians would rebel against British authorities as Ottoman troops approached⁴ but the massive influx of imperial troops prevented Egyptian agitation.

On the western frontier also, Egypt was attacked after the entry of Italy into the war on the side of the Entente⁵. Some Sanûssî, driven by Nuri Bey, an Ottoman officer and brother of the Turkish minister of war Enver Pasha, led a raid on British positions in November 1915, which caused a withdrawal of the British troops. Sayyid Ahmad al-Charîf al-Sanûssî, the Sanûssî leader who was still at war with Italians in Cyrenaica even after the signature of the Ouchy Treaty in 1912, relayed the call for *jihâd* in July and got the support of Bedouins and some Egyptian soldiers. Faced with this situation, the British commander in Egypt set up a Western Frontier Force without delay. The Ottoman high command's plan whose main goal was to "sow alarm and confusion" through the Egyptian territory, "tying down as many British soldiers as possible in the process"⁶ worked well. In December a counteroffensive was launched and was reinforced after the evacuation of Gallipoli. Indeed, there were a growing number of imperial forces in Egypt after this campaign. In February 1916, the Ottoman force of Nuri Bey and Jafar al-Askarî was defeated. The main danger was gone even if the Sanûssî still agitated the oasis of the Western Desert. One by one from March 1916 to February 1917, the oasis towns were reconquered.

Further south, the British decided to conquest Darfur. This area wasn't incorporated in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan in 1898 but left in the hands of a grandson of Sultan Muhammad al-Fadl, Alî Dinar, against payment of an annual levy. The British agent and consul-general in Egypt Lord Cromer had feared unrest and difficulties in the administration of this remote territory. Alî Dinar was an independent ruler with the title of Sultan. At the beginning of the First World War, the Sudan government worried about Alî Dinar's degree of loyalty to the British and in 1915 a series of letters sent by Alî Dinar raised doubts. He first expressed his grievances against the Sudan government to Sayyid Alî al-Mirghanî. Then he criticized the British for the political developments taking place in Egypt with the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war, namely the proclamation of the British protectorate and the deposition of the Khedive. In this second letter he warned the Governor-general that he would repulse any aggression against Darfur⁷. In May, he contacted Shaykh Alî al-Tum of the Kababish and suggested rising up against the infidel British regime. For the Governor-general of the Sudan, Sir Reginald Wingate, "there is no doubt whatsoever A.D. has absorbed the Turco-German poison"⁸. Indeed, Enver tried to make contact with Alî Dinar by letter inviting him to join the war. This letter arrived in Al-Fashir after the beginning of the British campaign waged against

³ M. J. Mortlock, *The Egyptian Expeditionary Force in the World War I. A History of the British Led Campaigns in Egypt, Palestine and Syria*, Jefferson, McFarland, 2011 ; D. R. Woodward, *Hell in the Holy Land: World War I in the Middle East*, Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2006.

⁴ O. Moreau, *La Turquie dans la Grande Guerre. De l'Empire ottoman à la République de Turquie*, Ed. Soteca 14/18, 2016, p.181-182.

⁵ S. Hadaway, *Pyramids and Fleshpots. The Egyptian, Senussi and Eastern Mediterranean Campaigns, 1914-1916*, London, Spellmount, 2014 ; J. Slight, "British Understanding of the Sanussiyya Sufi Order's *Jihad* against Egypt, 1915-1917", *The Round Table*, 103,2, 2014, p.233-242.

⁶ E. Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans. The Great War in the Middle East, 1914-1920*, Allen Lane, 2015, p.250.

⁷ M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile. The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1898-1934*, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.175.

⁸ Sudan Archive, University of Durham Library [SAD], 196/1 Wingate to FitzGerald, 28 July 1915, quoted by M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.177.

Alî Dinar. Given the situation in Cyrenaica at the end of the year, Wingate⁹ had taken the decision of a military intervention. The risk of a general loss of confidence in the British by the Arab tribes was too high. The gathering of some horsemen and camel-drivers at the request of Alî Dinar at the beginning of February 1916 at Jabal Hilla was exploited as a pretext to let the invading force operate. Lord Kitchener who had been in charge of the Nile Valley as British agent and consul-general between 1911 and 1914¹⁰ and then had joined the government as secretary of state for war was directly informed by Wingate of the situation and of his intention to advance on Al-Fashir as quickly as possible. The authorization soon came from London. On 23rd May 1916, Darfur was under the Sudan government authority. Alî Dinar had fled the day before¹¹.

The British authorities then had to organize the new administration of Darfur. The main lines had been drawn even before the end of the conquest. They are very interesting to report because they already give an account of the British general thinking concerning the Sudan. On the one hand, we can see that the British wanted to exclude as far as possible the Egyptians from Darfur's administration or to be more exact to prevent them from joining this structure. The international circumstances of the Sudan's conquest in 1898 had compelled the British to set up a condominium over the Sudan with the Egyptians but they would have liked to reduce the Egyptian influence over the Sudan. To justify the project of administrative organization of Darfur, Wingate told the high commissioner in Cairo, Sir Henry MacMahon, that "the employment of Egyptians had 'tended to weaken rather than to strengthen' the administration and to 'impair the relations between the British (Christian) chiefs and the Native (Muslim) population'¹²". On the other hand, due to lack of available officials, the proposal was made to "leave the power of the existing sheikhs, 'shartais', 'meliks' and 'salatin' over their people¹³". These men "would have to be appointed officially". The new administration would lean on the existing structures of local power. This was a local bringing into play of the Native Administration or the policy of Indirect Rule before the choice to implement it in the Sudan as a whole after 1924.

Military speaking the British coped with challenges. But in other fields, especially in Egypt, they showed signs of hesitation, clumsiness and weakness. The charge d'affaires appointed to replace Lord Kitchener proved he wasn't up to the task, from the French consul's point of view¹⁴. He didn't easily manage the beginning of the war nor the German and Austrian presence in Egypt. The British also gave the impression of hesitating as to settling the question of Egypt's status. They had occupied Egypt since 1882 and no treaty had been signed to justify or to surround their presence in the Nile Valley. Egypt was an Ottoman province but the Ottoman Empire had joined Germany and the Austrian-Hungarian Empire in the war against the Triple Entente. On 18th December 1914, more than one month after the Ottoman Empire entered the war Britain declared a protectorate over Egypt. During this month the British put pressure on the Egyptian politicians to obtain their cooperation. A

⁹ For the life of Sir Reginald Wingate, see M. W. Daly, *The Sirdar: Sir Reginald Wingate and the British Empire in the Middle East*, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1997.

¹⁰ G. H. Cassar, *Kitchener as Proconsul of Egypt, 1911-1914*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

¹¹ J. Slight, "British Perceptions and Responses to Sultan Ali Dinar of Darfur, 1915-1916", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 38, 2, June 2010, p.237-260.

¹² British National Archives [NA], FO141/426/1006 Wingate to MacMahon, 23 March 1916, quoted by M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.190.

¹³ SAD 127/3 MacMichael, "Memorandum. Concerning the future status of Darfur", Symes to MacMichael, 29 September 1915, quoted by M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.189.

¹⁴ « M. Milne Cheetham, qui fait l'intérim de lord Kitchener, n'a pas l'autorité dont il serait désirable de voir actuellement investi le Représentant britannique » wrote Defrance, French Consul in Egypt, first in August 1914 and again in October. French Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives [FMFAA] file 1563, Defrance n°352, 31 august 1914 ; n°394, 16 October 1914 ; n°399, 22 October 1914.

protectorate couldn't work without a minimum of political participation of local leaders. They tried to force political concessions from the British, but were finally unsuccessful. Therefore the new legal status of protectorate wasn't defended by the Egyptian politicians. It was also a source of concern in the Egyptian population because Egypt was detached from Ottoman Empire permanently. The French Consul in Egypt noted:

“Les Egyptiens ont le sentiment que leur pays se détache en quelque sorte de l’Islam, qu’il devient un Etat européen, presque chrétien et ils ne comprennent pas comment leur nouveau souverain, musulman et égyptien cependant, peut être investi du pouvoir par l’Angleterre, et non pas par une autorité musulmane comme le Khalife¹⁵”.

As the war dragged on, the protectorate was compared to a deterioration of the conditions of Egypt's occupation by the United Kingdom. The British garrison in August 1914 had 5 000 men but one year later, the imperial troops were 70,000 and more than 100,000 in December 1916 settled between Alexandria, Cairo and the Suez Canal. This huge concentration of men had to be fed, accommodated and equipped. One of the first measures taken by the authorities was the ban on exporting food then there was the obligation to replace a part of cotton in the fields by food crops¹⁶. It was a shortfall for the country and at the same time prices of consumer commodities rose sharply. Some profiteers took advantage of this situation but for the majority, especially the *fallâh*, the lower classes or the unemployed, the living conditions worsened. Furthermore, there were requisitions. Abbas Hilmi, the former khedive, deposed in 1914, explained: Egypt “supplied food, fodder, ropes, tents, labourers, the Service Corps, the donkeys and the camels, for the burning deserts¹⁷”. The Egyptian young men weren't recruited into the fighting forces. It was a promise of the Commander of the Force in Egypt, General Maxwell who had said, as soon as the war with the Ottoman Empire began, that England would shoulder the burden of the war without the help of the Egyptians. He wanted to avoid conflicting loyalties¹⁸. From 1915 there were recruitments in the *Egyptian Labour Corps* (ELC) in order to help lay lines of communication. For example the railroad was doubled between Zagazig and Ismailia, a water pipe of 200 miles with 17 stages was set up across the Sinai Desert from the banks of the Nile to the Palestine frontier¹⁹. Through ELC, several thousand Egyptians went to Palestine, Mesopotamia and even France²⁰. In June 1917, there were almost 186,000 “volunteers”. The work was hard and the pay low but there were some benefits regarding food²¹. The recruitment was voluntary at the beginning but became forced²². The *Camel Transport Corp* was an outgrowth of the ELC and also needed men. It rallied a total of 28 305 drivers and attendants in June 1917. It gathered 17 companies of 2 000 camels²³.

¹⁵ FMFAA, vol 1564, Defrance, n°457, Le Caire 23 décembre 1914.

“Egyptian have the feeling that their country breaks off Islam, that it becomes a European State, almost Christian and they don't understand how their new sovereign, though Muslim and Egyptian, may be given his power by England and not by a Muslim authority as the Calif.”

¹⁶ On 9th September 1917, a decree forbids planting with cotton more than a third of a piece of ground where food grains could grow. FMFAA, Note sur la situation économique et politique de l’Egypte, sous-direction d’Afrique, 29 mars 1919.

¹⁷ Abbas Hilmi, khédive d’Egypte, *Mémoires d’un souverain*, Le Caire, CEDEJ, 1996, p.215.

¹⁸ FMFAA, file 1564, Defrance, n°150, Cairo, 7 November 1914.

¹⁹ David L. Bullock, *Allenby's War. The Palestine Arabian Campaigns 1916-1918*, Blanford Press, 1988, p.28-29.

²⁰ I. Amin Ghali, *L’Egypte nationaliste et libérale. De Moustapha Kamel à Saad Zaghloul (1892-1927)*, La Haye, Martinus Nijhoff, 1969, p.144.

²¹ David L. Bullock, *Allenby's War*, p.23.

²² P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt from Muhammad Ali to Mubarak*, 4th ed, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991, p.254.

²³ David L. Bullock, *Allenby's War*, p.23, 26-27.

During the war years, Egyptians didn't express their growing discontent but some laments said: "My village, my village, the military authorities took my son!" or "Sorry Wingate, our country falls into ruins. You seized camels and donkeys without compensation. Oh men, have mercy on us"²⁴. The British presence wasn't really felt in the countryside until the war; it wasn't a real burden as until the First World War even Egypt had changed positively but the war's heavy demands, the worsening economic situation and the behavior of the imperial troops which could be very vulgar or licentious changed the feelings of most classes of the Egyptian population. Alcohol and fights ruined the prestige of the British and their Empire. The malaise became general, the nationalist ideas were no longer defended only by a small group of intellectuals, they spread. Henceforth the feeling of alienation from Britain was shared by country people. The anger swelled. The British authorities were conscious of this evolution because in May 1917 carrying of firearms was prohibited.

The unpopularity of the British occupation was put down to the protectorate. At the end of the war, the Egyptians claimed the independence of their country.

In the Sudan, the situation was different. The Sudan was quite far from the main battlefields. There was no need to accommodate some imperial troops; instead some practical problems occurred due to the departure of several officers and officials who chose to go back to England. There were neither requisitions nor recruitments of labour. There were also no supply difficulties. But the British authorities were in dread of an uprising, owing to the Ottoman Caliph's call for *jihâd*. Wingate also didn't have confidence in the loyalty of the Egyptian army, in particular the young officers. He warned Lord Cromer saying: "one must remember that many of them have Turkish blood in their veins and are connected with Turkish families. The majority of the younger officers, who come from the Cairo schools, which are the home of Nationalist propaganda and anti-English, and, in some cases, pro-Turkish ideas, were, I knew, the dangerous element"²⁵. Measures were taken to ward off the threat. Thus, the citizens of the enemy counties were hunted. Even Slatin Pasha, an Austrian national, who has been the director of Intelligence in the Sudan until 1914 wasn't authorized to come back to the Sudan once war had been declared²⁶.

The most remarkable measure taken to counter a resistance movement consisted in obtaining the support of the leading Sudanese, especially the leaders of popular Islam. It was a complete turnaround of the British religious policy in the Sudan. Until then the administration had fostered "orthodox" Islam supervised by *ulama*. In August 1915, almost 500 religious leaders, shaykhs of *sufi* orders and tribes signed *The Sudan Book of loyalty*, in which they declared their full support for Britain and its allies²⁷. Among them, there was Sayyid Abd al-Rahmân, the posthumous son of the *Mahdi*²⁸. Mahdism had retained its popularity, despite its defeat in 1898, so it seemed important to Wingate to better manage relations with the leader of this religious movement. Sayyid Abd al-Rahmân was restored to the Sudan political life owing to the First World War.

The second element we can notice about the impact of the war in the Sudan is the way Wingate considered it. For him, the war could have been a chance to achieve the separation of the Sudan from Egypt. Wingate explained to the Foreign Office very soon after the declaration of the protectorate that the change of Egypt's status "makes the Sudan more

²⁴ I. Amin Ghali, *L'Egypte nationaliste et libérale*, p.148.

²⁵ SAD 192/2, Wingate to Cromer, 27 November 1914, quoted by M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.159.

²⁶ R. Hill, *Slatin Pasha*, London, Oxford University Press, 1965, p.118-142.

²⁷ G. Warburg, *Islam, Sectarianism and Politics in Sudan since the Mahdiyya*, London, Hurst and Co, 2003, p.77.

²⁸ He was born three weeks after his father's death.

British than ever and I am inclined to think that the time is not far distant when it may be possible to have a Sudan Army²⁹". A Sudan army would mean the evacuation of the Egyptian army out of the Sudan and then the end of Egyptian presence. For Wingate, the second chance was the nomination of MacMahon as high commissioner. This latter came from the Indian administration and discovered the Nile Valley. Thus Wingate thought that he could easily convince MacMahon of the validity of his opinion with regards to the future of the Sudan. He didn't hesitate to explain "that Sudanese loyalty during the war was based, in part, on the assurance that they would 'never again be governed from Egypt'³⁰". In spite of these efforts, and even when Wingate became high commissioner in Cairo in January 1917, nothing had happened as far as the Sudan was concerned during the war.

After the war, Egypt's claim for independence

On 13th November 1918, three members of the Legislative Assembly which had been prorogued at the beginning of the war met the high commissioner and requested that they be permitted to go to London and present Egyptian demand. "Complete independence is the supreme and unique goal of all Egyptians" they told Sir Wingate. This claim was supported by the speeches and promises made during the war: English commitment to grant independence to the Arabs of the peninsula, who were in the eyes of the Egyptian people, less developed than they were; President Wilson's speech which recognized the right of peoples to self-determination as the new pattern of international relations; also the Franco-British statement on Ottoman territories released on 7th November 1918. The British government refused to receive a delegation and to debate Egypt's rights. For Saad Zaghlûl, it was very important to seem like the representative of the nation's will to make him heard by the British authorities. To do so he doubled his representativeness as deputy with a call throughout the country for a popular backing. All over the country, petitions were sent in support of the delegation, *al-Wafd al-misrî*, newly created by Zaghlûl and his fellows. There were about 100,000 signatures. Nevertheless the British authorities kept on refusing, they even refused the Egyptian government's demand to be received in London. Disappointed, the Prime Minister chose to resign. He thought he had proved his loyalty enough during the war. Faced with a growing nationalist agitation, the British decided to arrest and exile the main leaders of the *Wafd*. They used strong-arm tactics but this launched a series of demonstrations, massive strikes and acts of sabotage and assassination attempts. For the French consul in Alexandria the British authorities had chosen badly. The right way would have been "to give these men obvious satisfaction" and he explained his view:

"Rougdi (sic) notamment a fait toutes ses études à Montpellier et à Paris. Brillant étudiant, il a conservé le meilleur souvenir de ses années d'étudiant, c'est un joyeux compagnon. Il n'y avait qu'à inviter l'ambassade d'Angleterre à distraire fortement ces messieurs. Beaucoup de champagne et quelques vertus facile (sic) auraient déjà calmé les ardeurs politiques. A Londres avec quelques titres de Sir et décorations, beaucoup de bonnes paroles on aurait eu facilement raison de leur humeur combattive. On a préféré la manière forte. Je persiste à croire que c'est une erreur. Aujourd'hui c'est le pays tout entier qui est en effervescence³¹".

²⁹ SAD 192/3 Wingate to Herbert, 23 December 1914, quoted by M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.155.

³⁰ NA The papers of Lord Kitchener 30/57/47 Wingate to MacMahon 2 June 1915, quoted by M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.155.

³¹ FMFAA 1918-1929 Egypt file 12 p.51, Consulat de France à Alexandrie, 19 March 1919.

"Rougdi made his studies in Montpellier and Paris. Brilliant student, he kept the best memories of his student years, he is a happy fellow. Embassy of England should have distracted the attention of these gentlemen. Lot of champagne and women of easy virtues would have calmed their political keenness. In London, few titles,

This was somewhat cynical advice but French diplomats generally agreed on the fact that repression was an error³².

What struck the contemporaries most was the unanimity of the Egyptian population in its commitment. Before the First World War, there had already been the expression of nationalist request like “immediate evacuation without condition³³” and the constitution of nationalist parties but only a small part of the population was concerned by this question. However in 1906 after the Dinshawai Incident, and in 1908 when Mustafâ Kâmil a passionate nationalist leader died, the Egyptians had shown a deep sense of community. The Egyptian jurist and reformer Qasim Amin said he felt on these two occasions Egypt’s heart pounding³⁴. That was exactly the feeling Mustafâ Kâmil hoped to awaken in Egypt, but it had been short lived. On 20th February 1910, the Prime Minister, Boutros Ghali, a Coptic, was murdered and this assassination aroused sensitivity about identity and brought about political tension. Lord Kitchener was then appointed in Egypt and was commissioned to restore order in the country. The nationalists were prosecuted: about 12,000 people were arrested and 300 deported³⁵. Kitchener maintained strict control over political actions for three years then the war years were rather quiet so the nationalist upsurge of 1919 was unexpected. The call launched by the *Wafd* and the circulation of petitions were a good way to involve the people in the struggle for independence.

The country was prompted by a tremendous patriotic fervour. There was no longer division, neither social nor religious. The French journal *Revue des Deux Mondes* explained to its readers:

“Ouvriers et fellahs font cause commune avec les étudiants. Les coptes s’unissent aux musulmans. C’est une révolte générale.³⁶”

Even the women joined in the movement and left their confinement in March 1919 to protest against the British violence and repression. The unanimity of the early days and the determination didn’t weaken in spite of casualties³⁷.

There was some questioning about the real nature of the Egyptian movement: some French diplomats wondered if it had something to do with bolshevism. Others feared an agitation created and manipulated by the Germans³⁸. The *Manchester Guardian* published two articles on the Egyptian uprising in April 1919³⁹. They called into question the British policy in Egypt during the war: the enlistment, the requisitions and the censorship: “the policy of silence and disinformation has been brought to such an extent in Egypt that no one in England can understand them”.

In April 1919, the US delegation in Paris issued a statement recognizing the British protectorate over Egypt and in May, the protectorate was included in the Treaty of Versailles, article 147. For the British authorities the stake in Egypt wasn’t the same anymore; from now on the protectorate was embodied in an international agreement. The Egyptian nationalist leaders had been released a few days before and authorized to go to Europe and especially to

decorations and fine words would have wept out their combativeness. Strong measures have been preferred. I continue to believe it is a mistake. Today, the whole country is in turmoil.”

³² A-C de Gayffier-Bonneville, « Regards coloniaux croisés : la France et l’indépendance égyptienne (1919-1922) », *Relations internationales*, à paraître 2017.

³³ It was the slogan of the Nationalist Party founded by Mustafâ Kâmil in 1907.

³⁴ A. Hourani, *La pensée arabe et l’Occident*, Paris, Naufal, 1991, p.209.

³⁵ R. Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East. Money, Power and War, 1902-1922*, New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 1995, p.79.

³⁶ M. Pernot, « L’inquiétude de l’Orient », *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 juin 1926, p.776.

“Workers and fellahs make common cause with students. Copts unite with Muslims. It is a general revolt.”

³⁷ 800 dead and 3600 wounded among the Egyptians according to British authority.

³⁸ FMFAA, 1918-1929 Egypt file 12, p.76 Lefebvre-Portalis to Pichon, n°68, March 1919.

³⁹ 10 and 12 April 1919. Quoted in French in M. Sabry, *La Révolution égyptienne*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1919, p.6-7, 11, 17.

Versailles where the Peace Conference was being held. They were very disappointed by this news. Violence decreased in Egypt but the Egyptians didn't give up. They began a new approach with the slogan of non-cooperation. The Prime Minister resigned. Once again Egypt didn't have a government. To out way the political crisis it was decided in London to send a commission to examine the causes of the disorders and to report "on the form of Constitution which, under the Protectorate, will be the best calculated to promote its peace and prosperity, the progressive development of self-governing institutions and the protection of foreign interests⁴⁰". There was no question of responding to demands for independence.

The Milner Mission was boycotted by almost all the Egyptians, who implemented the watch-word spread by the *Wafd*. It was a clear refusal to discuss the continuation of the protectorate. Lord Milner and his colleagues were very impressed by this consensus. Back in London, they undertook informal discussions with Saad Zaghlûl and outlined with him a draft version of a treaty between Britain and Egypt which would have become independent.

In February 1921, the report of the mission was published. For Lord Milner, the aspirations of the Egyptian nationalism couldn't be smothered⁴¹ even if in his opinion, this feeling was only shared by a minority. The report suggested that the protectorate was no longer suitable and a treaty should be concluded between the two countries in order to safeguard United Kingdom's "special interests".

The two delegations didn't reach an agreement. Once again the Prime Minister resigned and Egypt was without government at the end of 1921. The recognition of independence was an essential prerequisite for any new Prime Minister. Hoping to restore order and to resume negotiations, the British exiled Zaghlûl and his fellows for the second time but it led to a renewal of tension: strikes, demonstrations, riots and terrorism.

On 28th February 1922 the high commissioner issued a unilateral Declaration of Independence. Egypt became "an independent sovereign State" but "certain matters in which the interests and obligations of the British Empire are especially involved⁴²" were "reserved to the discretion of His Majesty's Government"⁴³. Consequently the British soldiers stayed in Egypt pending the conclusion of an agreement. The high commissioner Field Marshall Viscount Allenby had pressured the British government to obtain this outcome because he thought it was the only way to restore order. Other factors also came into play: at this time Great Britain faced major postwar economic difficulties and colonial tensions such as the Irish war of independence or agitation in India. In this context, Egypt wasn't a priority for London.

To protect the Sudan from nationalist contagion by separating the Sudan from Egypt

The events which were happening in Egypt were followed in the Sudan not only by the Egyptians. In April 1919 when the Revolution in Egypt was so violent Sudanese notables took sides in this conflict; they congratulated Great Britain for its victory in the war and expressed their wishes to see the British domination continuing. Moreover some clubs were founded by young educated Sudanese where political issues were discussed at the end of the

⁴⁰ Quoted by A. Goldschmidt Jr., *Modern Egypt. The Formation of a Nation State*, Boulder/Oxford, Westview Press, 2004, p.70.

⁴¹ « Le gouvernement d'un pays en état d'hostilité aiguë qui nous accuse de déloyauté et mauvaise foi devient une tâche difficile et répugnante à la fois pour ceux qui en ont la charge et pour le peuple anglais qui en a la responsabilité ». Translated and quoted by I. Amin Ghali, *L'Égypte nationaliste et libérale. De Moustafa Kamil à Saad Zaghloul (1892-1927)*, La Haye, Martinus Nijhoff, 1969, p.191.

⁴² Foreign Office Circular to British Diplomatic missions, 15 March 1922 in J.C. Hurewitz; *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, a documentary record*, Princeton, NJ, Van Nostrand, 1956, p.103.

⁴³ Allenby's Declaration to Egypt, 28 February 1922, in J.C. Hurewitz; *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, p.102.

war. A nationalist feeling aroused among them and the British officials were inclined to see the Egyptian hands behind this awaking of nationalist aspirations.

The Sudan Government already had a negative image of the Egyptians in the Sudan, although their role was limited and they occupied mainly low-level positions in the administration⁴⁴. Even the way the Egyptian Army in the Sudan remained quiet for the three years of agitation in Egypt was interpreted as proof of cowardice from the Egyptian soldiers⁴⁵. The Egyptian Revolution convinced the British authorities that the idea which had already been expressed of separating the Sudan from Egypt and removing Egyptians from the country⁴⁶ had to be followed. On not less than two occasions before Egypt obtained its independence, British political leaders had already expressed this view. In October 1920 after the break down of negotiations between Milner and Zaghûl, Lord Curzon Foreign Secretary wrote that “the complete political and military independence of the Sudan” was “the ulterior object which British interest” demanded⁴⁷. The Milner report recommended in February 1921 an “independent development” for the Sudan. In this regard, plans for an Egyptian evacuation were drawn up⁴⁸. In particular, the possibility of creating a Sudan military force as a substitute for the Egyptian army based in the Sudan was examined. This force would allow the links with Egypt to be broken in two ways, the Egyptian soldiers wouldn’t have any more reason to stay in the Sudan and more symbolically, the Sudanese battalions could be released from swearing allegiance to the king of Egypt⁴⁹.

The Sudan, which was one of points reserved to British discretion in the Declaration of Independence, soon became a controversial point between independent Egypt and Great Britain. The British began hostilities: in the Egyptian draft constitution, they vetoed firmly the article on the title of the King. Lord Allenby gave an absolute refusal to the formula “King of Egypt and the Sudan”⁵⁰ and was prepared to depose of the monarch if he didn’t comply with it. Few months later, Saad Zaghûl Prime Minister since January 1924, claimed that the Sudan belonged to Egypt. The British Government answered that they wouldn’t abandon it. The British were then determined to take the first opportunity to seize the Sudanese administration alone and remove the bulk of the Egyptian people settled in the Sudan.

On 19th November 1924, the assassination of Sir Lee Stack, Governor general of the Sudan and Sirdar - namely commander in chief - of the Egyptian army, by Egyptian extremists in Cairo was the long-sought occasion. Allenby carried out the “coup⁵¹” by serving an ultimatum which demanded inter alia the withdrawal of all Egyptian officers and army units from the Sudan within 24 hours. Almost all the Egyptians left the Sudan; it wasn’t the end of the Condominium which looked like an empty shell except for the financial point of view because the Egyptian Government kept on providing the Sudanese Revenue Department

⁴⁴ Here it is the vision of a French diplomat in 1918: “Par gouvernement soudanais il faut entendre gouvernement britannique. Le gouvernement du sultan d’Egypte est demeuré ce que le qualifiait le général Gordon une fiction. Il serait aujourd’hui même plus exact de dire : au Sudan (sic) égyptien il n’est qu’une fiction fantomale (en rouge dans le texte)”. FMFAA, 1918-1929 Egypt file 12, p.83.

⁴⁵ M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.269.

⁴⁶ A-C de Gayffier-Bonneville, “L’unité de la vallée du Nil : les Egyptiens et le Soudan 1898-1956 », *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue canadienne des études africaines*, 49:1, p.112-113.

⁴⁷ M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.300.

⁴⁸ M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.307.

⁴⁹ Vezzadini, Elena. « Une ‘Elite Exclue’. Les Militaires Soudanais Entre Ordre Et Révolte Au Soudan Colonial Britannique (1900-1924). » In *Maintenir L’ordre Colonial. Afrique et Madagascar, XIXe-XXe Siècles*. Edited by Jean-Pierre Bat and Nicolas Curtin, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012 ; Johnson, D H. “Sudanese Military Slavery From the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century.” In *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour*. Edited by Leonie J. Archer, London, Routledge, 1988, p.142-156.

⁵⁰ British National Archives, FO371/7738 E12207/1/16 Allenby to Curzon, 30 October 1922.

⁵¹ The expression is borrowed from M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.311.

with an annual subvention. This British policy contributed to the fracture of the Nile Valley thirty years later because Egypt and the Sudan developed separately from this time.

The colonial order in the Nile Valley was temporarily perturbed by the First World War and its immediate economic consequence. The British reestablished their domination. Egypt granted its sovereignty, but it was incomplete: the independence was *trompe-l'oeil*. The means of British to exercise a real influence were less visible and direct. They went through the new organization of powers. The establishment of constitutional monarchy arose, in part, under the British pressure. By this institutional architecture, political competition has been fostered. Thus the high commissioner kept a major role in the new Egyptian political game: he became an arbiter between the king, his followers and the *Wafd* which would have preferred another division of powers, namely a sovereign with very limited powers - a king who reigns but doesn't govern⁵². As high commissioner, or ambassador after the signature of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in 1936, the representative of the United Kingdom had an important part to play until 1945 and the Labour victory in England. Eventually, the First World War helped to reshape the forms of domination.

As for the Sudan, the British achieved their ends: the expression of Egyptian national sentiment gave them the opportunity to shatter the unity of the Nile Valley. This policy was indeed another way of regaining control over this area.

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⁵² A-C. de Gayffier-Bonneville, « L'arbre sans racines : la Constitution égyptienne de 1923 » In *Les architectures constitutionnelles des régimes politiques arabes. De l'autoritarisme à la démocratisation*, Edited by N. Bernard-Maugiron and J-N. Ferrié, *Egypte/Monde arabe* 2/3^e série, Le Caire, CEDEJ, 2005, p.37-43.