

Howard's book won't suffice as the primary textbook for a general course on Middle Eastern history. Perhaps this is a symptom of the aforementioned larger trend in the scholarly community of overly aligning the history of the Middle East as a whole with the Ottoman Empire, leaving places such as Iran, the Caucasus, and the Maghreb on the margins. Yet, it also points to the one ironic flaw of this history of the Ottoman Empire as a broader work: it is too Ottoman. Readers may find it difficult to see how the empire fits into a larger early modern world in Howard's book. Where did the political and cultural frontiers of the empire lie? How did it compare to its neighbors in Muscovy or Isfahan and what connections and disruptions crafted its Mediterranean space? These questions inevitably emerge from its purposeful choice of a culturalist framework, but it is ultimately a minor complaint to an otherwise wonderful work that will serve the field well for years to come.

PASCAL FIRGES, *French Revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire: Diplomacy, Political Culture and the Limiting of Universal Revolution, 1792–1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Pp. 304. \$80.55 cloth. ISBN: 9780198759966

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In a season of centennials and bicentennials of catastrophic wars, 1815, ending the Napoleonic Wars has prompted a great deal of reflection on the nature and meaning of the era, considered by most as the birth of the global age in the twin revolutions of emancipation and constitutionalism. For historians of the Middle East, Napoleon's invasion of Egypt (1798) and subsequent events were once narrated as the quintessence of the great clash of European and Ottoman (read Muslim) civilizations and long stood as the marker of the beginning of the Turkish republican narrative, to the extent that it was argued that it prompted the reforms of Sultans Selim III (1789–1807) and Mahmud II (1807–39). One salutary effect of bicentennials such as these is that while new work occasionally reifies such narratives, time does “wound all heels,” as Groucho Marx once said.

So it has been with 1815. Europeanists have led the way in offering new interpretations of the age which includes Istanbul as a key player in the diplomatic wrangling of the early stages of France's challenge to Europe, especially 1789–1806. Pascal Firges gives us one exemplary example of it in his *French Revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire: Diplomacy, Political Culture and the Limiting of Universal Revolution, 1792–1798*. The subtitle says it all. This is a book that explores imperial French diplomacy at a moment of rebranding from imperial monarchy to republic, using the context of Istanbul to explore the inner workings of a Parisian exercise in convincing a skeptical expatriate community.

Pascal Firges is not an Ottomanist, as he readily acknowledges, but he is very generous in his wide reading of the available literature in translation and has made a considered effort to give the Ottoman officials in the book a voice as part of what he understands as converging processes of change in the age of revolutions. The work is dense, as studies in diplomacy often are, as the blur of detail around who said what to whom, with what intent and what impact, can mask the narrative of international events in favor of the rivalries of diplomatic representatives, their financial difficulties, and quarrels with local merchants in a difficult environment. Firges's deft take on the endless squabbling and jockeying for diplomatic notice by the Porte is both informative and amusing. His central intent is really to talk about the language and propaganda of the new nation and how it was reflected in the orders given to the republican representative to the Ottoman court and refracted by the expatriate French merchant community.

As has become apparent in new works on Ottoman diplomacy and foreign resident communities, Istanbul was a very demanding place to be a representative of even the most tenacious of allies, as France and the Ottomans had been since the 16th century. Pera, the district in Istanbul synonymous with the international community, was unique in staging a particular 18th-century diplomacy. Until 1793, no permanent Ottoman representatives were sent to Europe. The wars unfolding in Europe and the Mediterranean after the 1790s were reflected in the machinations of the representatives of opposing sides, a little Europe of diplomatic practice.

Hence Firges has captured a keyhole moment through which we can observe French Jacobins and monarchists strolling the streets of the city, while Istanbulites watched the unfolding of the delicacies of replacing a royalist ambassador (Choiseul-Gouffier) with the representative of the new republic, Citizen Descorches. It is a clever choice of a moment of transition and an adroit use of underutilized records. Sultan Selim the III, recently enthroned, was dealing with a defeated and bankrupt empire. Two wars with Russia had finally convinced the warmongers of the futility (impossibility rather) of further confrontations with Russia on the Danube. Amid the turmoil, Selim III's willful resistance to betraying France has long been noted and puzzled many. Only the opportunistic 1798 French invasion of Egypt left him no room for equivocation. Napoleon likened him to France's Louis XVI (1774–92), with whom the young Selim III corresponded, as recently explored by Aysel Yıldız (*Crisis and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire: The Downfall of a Sultan in the Age of Revolution*, London: I.B.Tauris, 2017).

The book is divided into three parts with three chapters each. Part 1 describes Ottoman–French relations for the 1792–98 period, pointing out why he chose Istanbul as being one of a few capitals where “diplomats representing the French revolutionary states, as well as their opponents (all the major powers of Europe) were present” (p. 15). We are given a clear picture of the impact of time on the diplomacy of the age: a dispatch could take six to seven weeks to reach Paris, similar to the time it took for dispatches to cross the Atlantic Ocean (p. 3). Even more interesting is the French mercantile, or Levantine community, which operated with legal autonomy of sorts based on the Capitulatory regime with the Ottomans. They remained deeply connected to the homeland and would have been aware, if belatedly, of the events unfolding in Paris. We are not talking about large numbers here, perhaps a few hundred families, but many had been in Istanbul for decades as the trade with the Orient had grown important to France as the 18th century progressed. Until 1792, when he defected to Russia, Ambassador Count Marie-Gabriel-Auguste de Choiseul-Gouffier, patronized by Marie Antoinette, remained in his post and oversaw the French military mission. Meanwhile, Marie Louis Descorches, whose credentials dated from December 1792, traveled incognito and did not arrive in Istanbul until early June 1793. Selim III's government requested Descorches continue his disguise to placate Austrian and Russian imprecations to refuse to recognize the new government, but Descorches found the city full of admiration for the French experiment up to and including the sultan who continued to rely on the French military mission for reform of his army. Selim III even allowed the French officers to wear the revolutionary cockades on their Ottoman-style uniforms.

What follows is a woeful tale of multiple representatives and abandonment by Paris, as Descorches pressed for a Franco–Ottoman alliance and the Ottomans, having sent an envoy to Paris, attempted mediation in the War of the First Coalition (pp. 74–77). Descorches moved into the embassy palace in Pera only in February 1795, though he was quickly replaced by his successor Raymond Verninac (1795–96) who did manage to achieve Ottoman recognition of the French Republic in May of 1795 and even a proposed defensive alliance which was ultimately rejected by the French Directory as conditions in the European military situation shifted (p. 80). Ultimately the attack on Egypt by Napoleon's fleet forced an Ottoman declaration of war on 2 September 1798 and the triple alliance with Russia (3 January 1799) and Britain (5 January 1799) (p. 90).

Chapters 4–6 are the meat of the matter here, posing questions about the impact of diplomatic practice on the reach of the revolutionary propaganda in a setting like Istanbul. The picture gets

complicated with the reign of terror (1793–94) and the machinations around foreign policy by the Committee of Public Safety in Paris, which had more pressing matters to attend to than the boxes of unopened correspondence from Istanbul (p. 96). Ottoman officials were forced to address questions around the wearing of the revolutionary hats and cockades, the creation of a Jacobin group (The Club of Constantinople), and the preservation of good relations with the merchant community, most of whom remained loyalist. Firges's clarity on the debates and the players is illuminating, exposing the universal contradictions of republicanism and despotic states (p. 112). His description of Descorches caught between using "vous" or "tu" (republican etiquette) in his dispatches to his superiors in Paris, while he continued with all the proper titles with his Ottoman interlocutors, made me laugh out loud (p. 123). Who knew that diplomatic records could be so amusing?

Part 3, Chapters 7–9, takes us into the French community in Istanbul where the collapse of trade and the declaration of war in 1798 may have been more consequential than revolutionary propaganda. Firges demonstrates that a new revolutionary culture did emerge, as the legal status of the new nation altered the old Capitulatory regime (1781) and ceremonies and symbols penetrated the social organizations of the French community. Of particular interest is the long list of revolutionary festivals in 1793 and 1794 with 100 to 200 attendees (p. 235), and the language of the toasts delivered at the festivals which reflects the shifting politics of Paris (pp. 236–38). Firges concludes that while a defensive alliance with the neutral Ottomans pre-1795 did not work, the revolutionary culture in the Istanbul French community arrived on "silent feet" rather than as a reign of terror.

I was disappointed, however, that Firges stopped in 1798 because an examination of the era from 1799 until the massive rebellion in Istanbul in 1807 would likely illuminate the continued influence (or not) of revolutionary politics and propaganda in Cairo and Istanbul, and the opening salvos of European intervention in the contemporary Middle East. That aside, this is a fine study with fascinating details which I have only hinted at briefly.

ADAM MESTYAN, *Arab Patriotism: The Ideology and Culture of Power in Late Ottoman Egypt* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2017). Pp. 368. \$45.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780691172644

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Adam Mestyan's *Arab Patriotism* is a chronicle of mid- to late-19th-century Egyptian political events as seen, predominantly, through musical theater. This narrative recasts 19th-century Egypt within the Ottoman imperial framework and polity by focusing on the creative patriotic expressions of both native Egyptian and expatriate cultural and intellectual elites. Thus, through discrete moments and events, this work chronologically examines local political discourses and alliances, Egyptian connectedness with Istanbul, and performative and intellectual productions.

The book opens with a discussion of patriotism as a means of mediating political power and Ottoman authority between Istanbul and the province of Cairo, and between the House of Ali and local Egyptian elites. Mestyan contends that both the Crimean War and hereditary governorship in the 1850s spurred the expression of a specifically Ottoman-Egyptian patriotism. This "local patriotism" appeared in both old and new Arabic media—poetry, military and other songs, theater (after the 1870s), and new language forms (pp. 21, 30–32, 43, 45, 78–79). Against the grain of nationalist narratives, Mestyan further shows that the local Muslim intelligentsia (such as Rifa'at