IMPERIALISM

Algeria, Egypt, Mount Lebanon
chapter 6 A : notes by denis bašić
Imperialism vs. Colonialism

According to Ronald Robinson, “**Imperialism** ... is a process whereby agents of an expending society gain **inordinate influence or control over the vitals of a weaker society** by ... diplomacy, ideological suasion, conquest and rule, or by planting colonies of its own peoples abroad.”

Thus, “Imperialism” is a broader term than the term “**Colonialism**.” The latter term puts stress on creating colonies by transferring the population from the core area of the imperialist power.
Wherever European Imperialists set foot, they left behind market economies and the framework for modern states.
European Imperialism was carried out in two ways:

1. **By economic penetration** carried out through investments, loans, and the creation of spheres of interests. (The concessions extracted from the Persian government are a good example of this method of imperialism.)

2. **By diplomatic coercion** through which Europeans acquired capitulatory rights or forced treaties favorable to their interests on weaker states. (The treaty of Balta Liman an example of this imperialistic method.)
Three kinds of Imperialism

- **Colonialism** - the case of Algeria
- **Conquest** - the case of Egypt
- **Imposition of special administrative zones** - the case of Mount Lebanon
ALGERIA
A Settler Plantation Colony

Entering Algiers 1830
Algeria

Had been virtually autonomous within the Ottoman Empire before the French sent their fleet to Algeria in 1830.

It was ruled by the locally chosen governors called deys.

The system of deys was instituted in 1671. 29 deys ruled Algeria until the French conquest when 14 of them were assassinated.
According to Gelvin, for most of the Ottoman period, the main source of local revenue came from piracy.

The deys had revenues from larceny (the ransoming of captives) and from the sale of protection to European governments and merchants. More often than not they seem to have cooperated with pirates.

By the end of the 18th century, however, Mediterranean piracy had seen better days.

Not only had European states become quite adept at projecting their power onto the sea, they had become increasingly intolerant of what was, in effect, an extortion racket practiced by pirates and their North African sponsors.
The Fly-Whisk Incident

According to the French version, Dey Hussein (1765-1838), the local ruler of Algeria, unprovokedly hit the French Consul Pierre Duval three times in the face with his fly-swatter during an audience in April 1827, bringing down the government's ire and the invasion three years later.
However, the Algerian side is more revealing. After the Revolution of 1789, France was in turmoil and facing economic ruin. The government had tremendous difficulty feeding the population and approached the Dey of Algiers for his help in providing wheat.

Later, while in Egypt (1798), French forces bought Algerian grain again with the promise of later payment.

A little later they again asked the Dey for his help, this time in the form of an interest free loan of 1 million francs. By 1815 France’s debt for the Algerian wheat supplies had reached 18 million francs.

Furthermore, in 1819 a special commission set up in Paris reduced the debt unilaterally to 7 million francs. Eventually the Dey asked for immediate repayment and the withdrawal of the French Consul to Algeria.
He received no reply other than a demand for compensation for alleged acts of hostility by the Algerian Navy towards French ships. (Actually, Algiers had been attacked on several occasions).

During the famous reception held on a national holiday in April 1827, Dey Hussein asked Consul Duval why his government had not answered his letters.

Duval replied, “My government has many other things to do than to write to a man like you” and insulted him. Whereupon the Dey asked him to leave, but Duval stood his ground in an insolent fashion.

Extremely annoyed, the Dey is then said to have made an impatient gesture with the fan he used to swat away flies.

Ironically, many years later, the Algerian authorities decided - as many other ex-colonies have done to taunt their former masters - to give the name of the dey to a part of Algiers, thus, Hussein Dey.
On 31 January 1830, an expedition commanded by Admiral Duperre and General de Bourmont was set up to punish the Dey and get rid of the pirates. The expedition, including 350 vessels and 35,000 men, left Toulon on 25 May. On 13 June, the French fleet reached Algiers. On 5 July, 1830 Hussein capitulated.

The Dey was asked to apologize with no avail. Next year, Envoy La Bretonnière could not receive any apologies and his vessel was targeted by the Dey's cannons.
Algerians feel that the French had been preparing the invasion for many years and indeed Napoleon I in 1808 had drawn up plans that were to be used in the attack on Sidi Ferruch in 1830.

On June 14, 1830, more than 600 French ships landed 37,000 men on the shores of Sidi Ferruch adjoining the town of Algiers.

It was at this time that French and Spanish settlers acquired their name - Pieds noir - black feet, reputedly from the color of Army boots.
On July 5, 1830 the Dey was forced to surrender and a treaty was signed guaranteeing the respect of property and religion.

By February 1831, 4,500 civilian settlers had moved in and were working the land.

On December 18, 1832, the French army attacked the Mosque of Djemaa Kechawah in the Casbah and transformed it into a cathedral.

Algeria became officially annexed to France on July 22, 1834.

There were 3 million Algerians when France invaded in 1830.

20 years after, the population had fallen to 2 million.

By 1867-68, it had fallen by 600,000 due to famine.
Process of Colonization

In the beginning, the French government used Algeria as a convenient place to dump political dissidents.

During the 19th century the rural population of Southern Europe grew faster than its resources base creating a wide-scale impoverishment.

French, Italians, and Spanish moved to Algeria.

In addition to impoverished peasants, workers and artisans from Southern Europe were drawn to Algeria by the lure of employment.
Money flooded into those companies that promoted ventures associated with the colonial economies, such as the construction of ports, roads, telegraph lines, and the like.

The Algerian rail system dates from 1857. It was constructed around the same time as the rail system in European France.

These projects allowed colonizers to open up new areas of Algeria for cash cropping, speed crops to European markets, and maintain control over far reaches of the country side.
By the outbreak of World War I there were approximately 700,000 European settlers in Algeria, the vast majority of whom had actually been born there.

They, rather than the almost 5,000,000 Muslim inhabitants of the territory, controlled both, political and economic institutions.
To accommodate these settlers and attract European capital to Algeria, the French government seized religious endowments, lands owned by the dey, pasture lands used by nomads, and abandoned urban property.

Lands became the property of European speculators and entrepreneurs who consolidated them into large plantations for the cultivation of crops bound for the export market - grain, cotton, tobacco, even flowers.

During 1870s, when the wine industry in France was virtually decimated by a parasite that attacked the roots of grapevines, European entrepreneurs in Algeria began expanding grape cultivation. By 1914, 1/3 of Algerian exports was wine.
The expansion of plantation system squeezed out European settlers with small land holdings.

At the same time, plantation owners hired the indigenous inhabitants of Algeria to work for low wages as seasonal laborers.

Overall, French colonialism in Algeria encouraged the spread of market relations, disrupted rural life, and increased the population of towns and cities.
The French colonialism resembled other colonialism inasmuch as the French justified their activities by claiming that they brought civilization to the benighted natives.

At the same time, European settlers and their descendants had access to rights of citizenship that no Muslim Algerian could hope to attain.

The differentiation between European French citizens and Algerians on the basis of race or language or religion made the emergence of Algerian nationalism likely.
Discrimination

- Sectarianism in Algeria was induced by the French discriminatory policies.

- For instance, in 1870 the French government issued the Cremieux Decree, which granted the French citizenship to the 40,000 Jews of Algeria.

- The Algerian Muslims were not given such privileges that created a separation between the two communities.

- In 1934, incited by Nazi propaganda, elements from the Muslim community in the Algerian city of Constantine engaged in anti-Jewish riots and killed about two dozen Jews.
ALGERIANS IN FRANCE

- **During WWI**, some 76,000 Algerians were sent to France to substitute for the French industrial workers who were conscripted and sent to war.

- **By 1950**, their number had swelled to over 600,000.

- **Another 173,000 Algerians fought in the French army during WWI** (about 25,000 died).

- **A number of Algerian workers in France joined trade unions, communist organizations, and emigrant societies.**
During 1920s, groups of emigrant workers in France and former emigrant workers in Algeria began to form associations that demanded Algerian independence.

Between 1954 and 1962, under the leadership of F.L.N. (Front de Liberation National - The National liberation front) fought an extremely bloody war for Algerian independence from France in which over 1,000,000 Algerians died.

The F.L.N. rules Algeria to this day. Its rule has hardly been unchallenged. In 1992, when the F.L.N. annulled the results of elections it had lost to its Islamist opponents, Algeria once again descended into war.
Ali Belhadj (1956-)

Ali Belhadj, one of the contemporary leaders of Islamist movement in Algeria, states the following about democracy:

“Beware of those who pretend that the concept of democracy exists in Islam ... democracy is Kofr (blasphemy)... There is no democracy, because the sole source of power is Allah through the Qur'an and not the people. If people vote against the law of God, this is nothing but blasphemy. In this case, one must kill these non-believers for the good reason that they want to substitute their authority to the authority of God.”
ALGERIA AND MIDDLE EAST

History of Algeria is important when studying Middle East for a number of reasons

- French administrators trained in Algeria provided expertise for the French in other parts of the Middle East, including Lebanon and Syria, which the French came to control after WWI.

- Algeria also provided the model for a second, less-successful attempt to implant a settler-plantation colony in the Middle East - Palestine.

- During 1950s and 1960s, the Algerian independence struggle became both a rallying point and a model for other revolutionary struggles throughout the world.
Baron Edmund de Rothschild

- The French financier and philanthropist, financed settler plantation colonies in Palestine beginning in 1882.

- Rothschild’s plan called for European Jews to emigrate to Palestine and establish and oversee plantations for cultivation of citrus, almonds and particularly grapes for wine.

- By 1900, Rothschild abandoned his unsuccessful project and within a few years about 2/3 of the Jewish agricultural workers left Palestine.

- Although Jewish immigration to Palestine would expand over the course of the next century, the attempt to establish a plantation system in Palestine that would integrate Jewish and Arab labor was never attempted again.
Egypt

Bankruptcy and Occupation
chapter 6 b: notes by Denis Bašić

November 16, 1869 - Grand Opening of the Suez Canal
If Algeria represents an example of imperialism as colonization, Egypt represents a different example of imperialism:

IMPERIALISM AS OCCUPATION
The story of how the British ended up in occupation of Egypt begins, once again, with cotton. With the increase in the demand of Egyptian cotton, so too its price rose, so that the export value rose from 16 million dollars in 1862 to 56 million in 1864.

However, after the American Civil War (1861-1865) the price of cotton collapsed. A second jolt of the cotton market came a few years later with the onset of the depression of 1873.

The Egyptian government expected the price of cotton to remain high, had borrowed heavily to finance the internal improvements and, on more than one occasion, extravagance.
Like his grand-father, Mehmed ‘Ali, Khedive Ismail was also a very ambitious man who had a goal to modernize Egypt and make it a significant power in the region.

During his reign, an additional 506,000 hectares were brought under cultivation, representing a sizable increase in both production and income.
To service the cotton crop, which was the basis of Egypt's prosperity, roads, bridges, railways, harbors, and telegraph lines had to be constructed. **During 16 years of Ismail's reign, 112 canals 13,440 kilometers long were dug, 400 bridges were built, 480 kilometers of railroad lines were laid, and 8,000 kilometers of telegraph lines were erected.**

How much did all of this cost?

The Egyptian national debt was about 7 million British pounds at Ismail's accession in 1863. In 1876, his creditors informed him that he owes them 91 million pounds. In 1879 the debt had swelled to 100 million British pounds. The interest charges on the debt amounted to 5 million a year.

Was all of this money spent on the mentioned projects?
Well, Khedive Ismail had been heavily criticized for his notoriously extravagant lifestyle.

He was a French student who wanted to turn Cairo into a “Paris on the Nile.” He invested a great amount of money into luxurious buildings and boulevards, parks and operas especially in Cairo, but also in Alexandria.

Here are some examples of the buildings he had build.
Paris on the Nile was built by Khedive Ismail with the help of his master builder and Minister of Public Works, Ali Mubarak. Like the architectural style, the money used was European. The loans would eventually steal the common Egyptian's freedom and give it to the great banking empires of the west.
Right: Zamalek, Muhammad Mazhar Street, the gate of the Greater Cairo Library

Left: In Zamalek, the Greater Cairo Library on Muhammad Mazhar Street
Many of the buildings that the Italians built during this period drew upon the Renaissance buildings of Italy with ground floors of heavy stone facing or its equivalent in plaster, and an upper story with Tuscan columns or Ionic plasters and pedimented windows. Others, such as Ernesto Vercucci Bey and Mario Rossi used the Italian Gothic style in buildings such as Villa Tawfik in Zamalek, which is now a Helwan University building.
However, it should be noted that the Italians were also responsible for many renovations of great Islamic monuments in Cairo, and in doing so, they also drew from Islamic motifs in some of their later building projects. Antonio Lasciac, who came from Trieste, was responsible for many of downtown Cairo's most beautiful buildings. These include the Squares and Khedival Buildings that were designed during his early career in Egypt. They follow classical and baroque lines, but his later works, such as the Trieste Insurance Building and Bank Misr, show clear Islamic or neo-Moorish influences.
Considerable use of the French baroque style was also applied to building projects in downtown Cairo, and later Garden City and al-Daher. These often had delicate balconies with extensive wrought iron work and ornate cantilevers, marble steps and entrances, molded windows and door surrounds with distinctive French touches.

Right: 31 Beirut Street in Heliopolis, designed by Antoine Bach

Left: Zamalek, Shagarat al-Durr Street, the Villa Tawfiq, now Helwan University Faculty of Music
Left: An Iron gate in Munira on Dar al-Ulum Street

Right: An Iron gate at 24 Saray al-Gazira in Zamalek
Right: Fuad Sirag al-Din Palace on the corner of Nabata and Ahmad Pasha Streets in Garden City

Left: 7 Salah al-Din Street in Heliopolis
Ismail’s special contribution to the European look of Cairo was the wooden **Opera House** on the Model of **La Scala of Milan** located on Ezbekiya built by the Italian Pietro Avoscani and symbolically facing the western side of the city and the **Theatre National de Comedie**. The Opera House was put up in five months in 1868 by **gangs of forced labor**, so that it could be ready for the Verdi opera, created with the aid of Egyptologist Jean-François Champollion.

**Abdeen palace**

Alas, the costumes for the opera were not ready for the opening of the Suez Canal, so Rigoletto was instead performed. Though this old Opera House is gone, its Lebanese wood burnt away, towards its end it was hardly useful, for it had **The Great Entrance Hall of Abdeen Palace**, almost no wings and little dressing room space, and the orchestra and its conductor had to walk down the main aisle to reach the pit. Yet it was indeed plush, with its harem boxes fronted with silken screens, loges scrolled in gilt, and hangings of crimson and gold brocade.
Ismail Pasha, the khedive of Egypt, commissioned the opera Aïda from Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal (1869.) However, as stated, the opera was not performed at that occasion. The opera had its premiere at the Cairo Opera House on December 24, 1871.
Soon, Cairo was recognized as a delightful city with amenities that often surpassed many of those in America and Europe. Ali Mubarak’s master plan for the new western part of the city created wide streets and squares similar to Haussmann’s Paris. Clot Bey Street, named after Dr. Antoine Clot, Napoleon’s physician and founder of Egypt’s first medical school of European style, linked the new Cairo train station at Bab al-Hadid to the main commercial square, al-Ataba al-Ahadora.

Ataba eventually contained Cairo’s post office, fire stations, several elegant hotels, arcaded commercial buildings and the city’s central food market. When trams were introduced to the city, Ataba Square became the hub of Cairo’s modern public transportation system.
On some free land overlooking the Ezbekiya Gardens, the Duke of Sutherland built the new Khedive Club, a copy it was said of the best London clubs of its day. It was under local royal patronage and its chairman was the British consul, who was then the highest British diplomatic official in Egypt.
In 1870, Ismail brought gas to the city, and it was replaced by electricity in 1898, making Cairo one of the earliest cities in the world to use electricity. Though running water would come later, Ismail also put down a number of well paved carriage roads throughout the city, and in 1872 he had a new iron bridge built over the Nile from Kasr el Nil to Gezira Island by a French firm.

Later, in 1933, the Gezira Bridge would be replaced by the Qasr al-Nile Bridge
Unfortunately, the cotton boom of the 1860s was short lived, though Ismail lavishly went about his business and sometimes it seemed that the money he spent on his beloved city came from a bottomless pit, but in fact it came from the blood of Egypt's people, paid for by high taxation of everyone and everything. In the end, he and the Egyptian people would lose it to the banking houses of Europe.

He was apparently lacking in his knowledge of finance, and the European bankers would lavish upon him huge loans, but with stiff terms. For example, in one instance, Rothschilds loaned Ismail, through the state, 8.5 million pounds sterling against some 435,000 acres of the richest agricultural land in the world, but the proceeds he received after various deductions amounted to only 4.36 million pounds.
During the eleven year period surrounding Ismail's efforts to turn Cairo into a Paris on the Nile, he was loaned some 68 million pounds sterling, from various European bankers, of which only 48 million actually reached his hands, and in the end, he was forced to sell his share in the Suez Canal to the British for four million pounds. In a very short time, that would be the annual revenue of the canal in shipping tolls.

In 1879, Britain and France did what they had been waiting to do for some time, taking over Egypt's finances with two comptroller generals, one British and one Frenchman. Then, on June 19th, 1879, the Europeans took another extraordinary step, when the British and French consuls generals called on him at Abdeen Palace and instructed the khedive to abdicate. He had little other choice but to do so, for he could not even call on popular support since the people were now so burdened by the misery of his taxes that they hated him and were glad to see him go.
This agency set up by the Europeans to oversee Egyptian finances and to repay the debt was called Caisse de la Dette (the Debt Cashier).

The Caisse administrators overtook the control of over 50% of Egyptian revenues.

According to the 1880 Law of Liquidation, the Caisse controlled all net revenues from railroads, the telegraph, and the port of Alexandria, customs, import taxes on tobacco, and all tax revenues from four Egyptian provinces. Later, the Caisse demanded the reinstatement of taxes on land that had previously been exempted.

These Caisse’s actions infuriated a cross-section of the Egyptian population.
The ‘Urabi Revolt of 1881

- The British cut the military spending, reduced the size of the Egyptian army, and placed British officers in positions of command.

- The colonel Ahmad ‘Urabi (1841-1911) started a rebellion against the British.

- This jeopardized the British position in the Eastern Mediterranean and therefore the British route to India.

- As a result, THE BRITISH OCCUPIED EGYPT IN 1882.

- The occupation lasted, in one form or another, until 1956.
Bombing of Alexandria in 1882
The Mosque of al-Abbas al-Mursi - Alexandria
By 1908, the British controlled all government ministries, but one: the ministry that oversaw religious affairs and endowments.

Egyptians held only 28% of high government posts.

By the end of WWI, Egypt had only 68 publicly financed schools.

Spending on education took up no more than 1% of the government's budget.
MOUNT LEBANON
MILITARY AND POLITICAL INTERVENTION

Beirut and Mount Lebanon
European imperialism in the Middle East did not only take forms of colonization and occupation, but of political intervention, too.

European powers also supervised the administrative organization of Mount Lebanon and guaranteed its autonomy.

European states intervened into the politics of Mount Lebanon (allegedly) to put an end to sectarian-interreligious conflict that pit Maronite Christians against their Muslim and Druze neighbors.

This sectarian strife can be traced back to the transformation of the Middle Eastern societies that took place in the nineteenth century.

Why did the conflict happen?
The enriched local Christian (and Jewish) merchants enjoyed special privileges of the Berat holders issued to them by the European consulates.

Berat holders were covered by the capitulatory agreements. In other words, these subjects of the sultan who happened to be the members of the minority groups obtained the same access to the commercial and legal rights the empire had accorded to the merchants of the European states.

Because they paid lower customs duties and received tax breaks, they were often more prosperous than their Muslim competitors.
BY THE TURN OF THE 19TH CENTURY THE AUSTRIANS HAD GRANTED THE CONSULAR RECOGNITION TO 200,000 OTTOMAN SUBJECTS.

AROUND THE SAME TIME, THE RUSSIANS RECOGNIZED AN ADDITIONAL 120,000. (GREEKS - RUSSIAN INTERPRETERS)

1% OF THE OTTOMAN SUBJECTS WERE GRANTED THE BERATLI STATUS BY EITHER AUSTRIANS OR RUSSIANS.


HOWEVER, ECONOMIC JEALOUSY ALONE DOES NOT EXPLAIN WHY THE MUSLIM-MINORITIES TENSION WOULD ARISE IN THE 19TH CENTURY.
After the TANZIMAT REFORMS, local notables, clergymen, and even commoners knew that they would gain support from European states and concessions from an Ottoman government if they presented their claims in the name of one or the other “downtrodden” community.

By stating that their religious communities were special social units with special interests, they created political subjects of them.

Consequently, these religious communities became competitors in the political arena.
Transforming conflicts

In 1858, a dispute between Maronite peasants and Maronite landlords in Mount Lebanon soon transmuted into a rebellion of Maronite peasants against Druze landlords.

In the Eastern Mediterranean, Muslims angered by the raising economic and political status of Christians on their costs, attacked them in Damascus, Aleppo, and Nablus.

In Damascus alone between 5,000 and 10,000 Christians were massacred and European consulates burned. Other massacres occurred in Aleppo, Syria and Nablus, Palestine.

To protect their Maronite clients, the French landed a force in Beirut.

In 1861, at the conference in Istanbul, the European powers imposed a solution on the Ottoman government requesting Autonomy for Mount Lebanon under the protection of all European powers acting in concert.
Mutasarrifiya - Special Administrative District

Mount Lebanon got a non-Lebanese Ottoman Christian governor who was assisted by an elected representative council made of: 4 Marionite, 3 Druze, 2 Greek Orthodox Christians, 1 Greek Catholic, 1 Sunni Muslim, and 1 Shi’a Muslim. (Based on the relative size of each community.)

This System of Proportional Representation exists until today in Lebanon.
NATIONAL PACT

Three years before the official independence, with the NATIONAL PACT of 1943, Lebanese Muslim and Christian leaders decided:

- that the president, prime minister, and the speaker of the lower house of the parliament would be a maronite, a Sunni, and a Shi’a respectively;

- that the lower house would be divided between Christians and Muslims in a ratio 6:5;

- and that even the cabinet posts will be distributed according to the representational formula based on the census of 1932 (And so even in 1990).

In 1989, towards the end of the 15-year civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990), the representational formula was amended. New formula divides the seats in the lower house 1:1. This happened at the time when the Lebanese Muslims outnumbered the Christians. [Currently, Muslim 54% (27% Sunni, 27% Shia), Christian 40.5% (includes 21% Maronite Catholic, 8% Greek Orthodox, 5% Greek Catholic, 6.5% other Christian), Druze 5.6%, very small numbers of Jews, Baha'is, Buddhists, Hindus, and Mormons.]