

From Crete to London: A Case Study of British Influence in the 19th-Century Ottoman Empire Summary

In my book I tried to open a new perspective in the field of foreign policy by examining the exercise of the British foreign policy and power in a region of British interest, namely the Ottoman Crete, but this time by the lower levels of the consular authority during the middle 19th century. On a second basis, I attempted to demonstrate the divergences and convergences between the consular and the official policy on the island and the extent which the first one could affect the second. In the introduction, I explain the reason of choosing Crete, as a region to explore how the consuls could balance their personal interests and sensibilities with the exercise of their duties, since the island constituted a place of strategic importance that combined a growing insurrectionary political climate with the commercial opportunities which could provide the agricultural economy of the island.

Since the late 20th century, in the historiographical debates of British imperialism regarding the portrayal of the imperial experience from the metropole and the periphery, there have been studies about networks of power and information from the periphery to the center and vice versa. There have also been historians who have conducted serious research on the connections of the British officials with the local element. However, these studies have been undertaken mainly for places of official colonial rule, such as India. What I consider as originality in my research is the use of a similar viewpoint in the field of the foreign and not colonial policy or in other words in a place of the British informal empire, if someone accepts the term given by Gallagher and Robinson.

In my study the different stories of four consular officials who violated or exceeded their duties are illustrated. In the beginning of my research, I did not expect the discovery of four different ways and motivations behind the violation and exceedance of consular duties. This achievement would not have been accomplished without the combination of the official correspondence and the local archives during the research process. What I also aim to capture is the impact of their consular behaviour not only on the consular district of Crete, but also out of the borders of the island, such as the cases of Dickson, Sandwith and Ongley.

What I always had in mind during my research process and the source analysis was to ask myself whether the consuls were aware of the violation or the exceedance of their consular duties. In some cases, such as this of Calocherino the answer was obvious. However, in other ones, such as Ongley, the tracing of the limits of the consular conducts was a more difficult process. For this reason, there was a need for a closer reading of the sources, in order to come up with more specific answers. For example, I had to pay attention to adjectives the consuls used for the characterisations and the descriptions, as well as, the words they used for the excuse of their actions. Moreover, during the reading process of the consular correspondence I understood that I always had to remember what they had written before, because there were some times when I was exposed to contradictions in the consular letters, as a result of an attempt to justify their policy. During periods of

immersing myself in the study of the sources, I tried not to forget that everything written by the personalities involved in my research was written not with the purpose of being studied by me, but in order to satisfy needs of that time (as it easy to fall into this trap).

These cases of the four consular officials were initially analysed individually in chapters, two, three and four. The reason for the separate illustration of their stories was to showcase the different types of exceedance and violation of their authority, together with the different motivations behind their actions. In these stories, I attempted to display the two kinds of power that every consul possessed and how they used it: that is the power he received as a representative of a powerful state and second the power he gained as part of the local community by the local networks he had built. I also proceeded to comparisons among the four cases in terms of motivation, local and European impact of their actions, but also in relation to the exploitation of these two kinds of power. After the presentation and the comparison of the consular cases, there was a need to place the four stories in a wider framework. This is the purpose of the fifth and sixth chapter, where the stories are connected and united in a macro-history where more personalities participate.

In this broader context, I aimed to give a picture of the consul far from the concept of a representative of a nation and show how the limits of the “national” element (i.e., a consul as a representative of a nation) were sometimes exceeded when intermingled with the local element. In the same context, I tried by uniting the stories, to make a drawing of the networks where the consuls participate and how they were formulated and changed depending on local parameters, many times far from the developments of the European diplomacy and show how the consular networks acted as a prerequisite not only for the efficient exercise of the consular duties, but also the opportunities they provided to these consular officials for autonomous action and the service of their personal interests. The analysis in the consular networks also depicted how consular commercial activities also affected consular conduct and misconducts and also how business could have an effect on the consular activities during an insurrectionary political climate, as a result of the growing national aspiration. In the same broader framework, I tried to illustrate the perceptions presented in the final chapter. In order to achieve the goal of this chapter, I understood that I must raise the question of “What each side anticipated from the other”. In the beginning of my research I did not expect to end up with this kind of classification, which was a result of the answers given to this question by the study of the archives.

It is a fact that under the influence of new theories and methodologies there have been studies in the field of British imperialism which focused on parameters, such as cultural ones, the connection between knowledge and power, the use of language and the construction of collective identities. Again, such tools of research have been implemented in geographical cases of official colonial rule. There have been such studies for the regions of the Eastern Mediterranean where the British dominated, for example the Ionian Island and Egypt. However, there have not been so much focus on cases of British officials who served in a region of the British informal empire. In regions of the eastern Mediterranean without official British domination, there were constructions of collective identities, but mainly from travellers and captains who stayed for a short period. In the sixth chapter I

tried to exploit the traditional sources, that is the consular letters, in this new methodological way, without disdaining the previous approaches of political and economic history. This brought results, such as a different construction of identities of the locals by the British consuls and the exploitation of traditions and the local ways of thinking, unknown from the British officials, with the purpose of restoration of peace and material prosperity.

In general, occasioned by the consular policies of H.M.'s officials, the study shed light on further parameters. One of them was the legacy of the Egyptian occupation of Crete which remained almost two decades after the end of Mehmet Ali's rule on the island. I tried to explain how the Egyptian rule together with its legacy formed such a stable provincial authority with long standing officials which gave room for the creation of such powerful networks. Moreover, it was the years of the Egyptian occupation which provided the opportunity and laid the foundations for the establishment of the first powerful mercantile families of British citizenship. These families formed an essential element of Cretan cosmopolitanism and were also the key components of the networks where consuls interacted. It also put on display a period of coexistence of reforms with two different origins which was attempted to be implemented on the island and how these two roads of modernisation interacted on the island: that is a supposedly equality among Ottoman subjects, with origins from Istanbul, and a second one which put more emphasis on infrastructure and urban modernisation, with origin from Alexandria.

During the greater part of the book, I also tried to highlight the development of the relation of the British consul with the governor of the island, as a type of relation of co-governance of the island. It was explained, how this relation was initially, based on personal bonds which was also related with the Egyptian legacy. However, the gradual professionalisation of British consular service together with the increase of the British interference in the internal governance of the Ottoman Empire resulted in the gradual supervision of the governors by the British consuls. This increased the political power of the consuls over the Ottoman governors, but left little room for the creation of so close personal friendships between the two parts. In the development of this relation, more consuls were taken into consideration, apart from Ongley, Dickson and Sandwith, such as consul Barbar and Guarracino. For the study of this relation, it was also important to pay attention to the language and the words which the British consuls used.

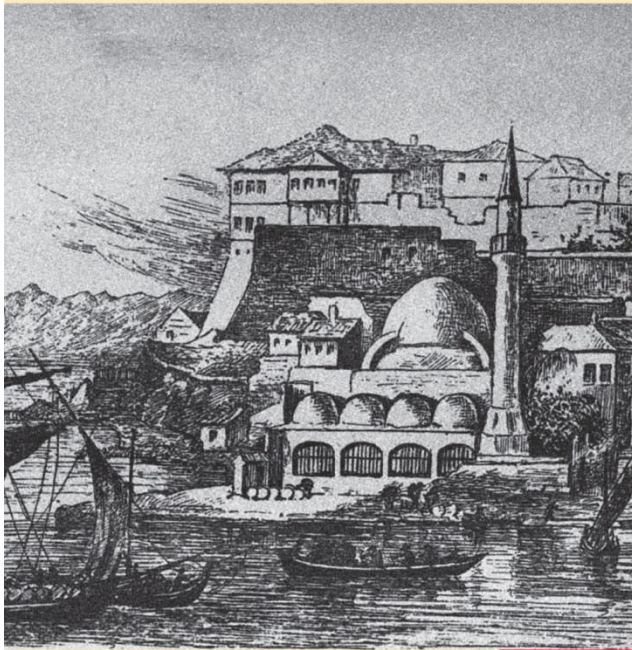
In the book, I also highlighted the importance of the periods of tranquility on the island, first as periods of great importance for the study of the consular actions, due to a more relaxed sense of inspection, which the consuls enjoyed and the appropriate social circumstances they provided for the formation of their networks and the development of their own micropolicies. Second, because, when a period of crisis arrived, the pre-existed and established relations and networks were sometimes strengthened and evolved into a common attitude towards the main political affair of the society, that is the Cretan Question. The story of the European Consuls in the period of Ongley, but also the story of Calocherino, showed that when a new uprising erupted, the interaction between the consuls had to do, to a large extent, with deeper reasons, originated in a previous period of tranquillity and therefore, the alliances or rivalries that each consul and vice-consul had developed during peacetime, were also exploited during each crisis.

In the study it was also significant to highlight the lack of the Ottoman central administration which left room for the development of the local networks, micro-policies and consular interventions either with the purpose of serving personal interests, such as in the case of Ongley or with the intention of implementing the official British policy, such as in the case of Sandwith.

During, the study of the British consular service in the island the study of the development of the idea of union of Crete with Greece is inevitable, due to the idea of an autonomous constitution under British protection. Thus, I had to present first how and why this national aspiration of union was gradually transformed into an orientation towards the British protection by a part of the local population and also to analyse different perceptions of this prospect.

At last, I would like to mention that I do not consider my study as a mere piece of research on diplomatic history or a mere investigation on decision making from below. The current viewpoint of my research did not leave room to omit aspects of social and economic history. Therefore, I think that there is no need to include my study in a specific field, such as diplomatic, or imperial history, as I view it also as a study on social, economic, local, Greek, Ottoman and Mediterranean history.

Regarding the prospect of future research, I think the study could act as a triggering factor for future research on consular districts or to initiate comparisons among consular districts. A comparative study among consular conducts in different consular districts in the Ottoman Empire would shed more light on this bottom-up approach. What also appears interesting is the research on how the same consul acted on different consular districts of the Eastern Mediterranean. At last, as I mention to the conclusion, comparisons of consular behaviours in different regions of the British informal empire, such as Latin America and Ottoman Empire may appear more vital.



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in the 19th century Ottoman Empire

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