

“Liberal Imperialism”: British Policy in Egypt, 1893-1894

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Abstract

Essentially, liberalism contradicts imperialism; but in diplomacy and *Realpolitik* liberals rarely stand against imperial enterprises. Such is the case of the British Liberal Party during the late nineteenth century. Focused on Lord Rosebery's policy towards Egypt under Gladstone's last ministry, this thesis argues that, as far as foreign policy was concerned, the Liberals in the early 1890s discarded their “outdated” beliefs in rationalism and pacifism, and assumed an attitude not different from that of their political opponents—the Conservatives. This article examines the political atmosphere in 1893, when Lord Rosebery and Abbas Hilmi II took office as the British Foreign Secretary and the new khedive respectively, and the so-called Abbas' Coup in 1893 and the Frontier Incident in 1894, to show how “Liberal Imperialism” developed and the British occupation of Egypt became “permanent,” in spite of strong Liberal idealist opposition. In conclusion, the author points out the British policy of “Liberal Imperialism” in dealing with the Egyptian question, the Liberal Party was losing touch with liberalism and becoming more “conservative,” and that while achieving more popularity with the British public in this way, the Liberal Party grievously alienated its fundamentalist supporters, which detracted from its merit and worth as an independent political group.

Key Words: Gladstone, Rosebery, Cromer, Abbas' Coup,
Frontier Incident