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Nationalism and Minorities in the Ottoman Balkans: Greek Discourses on the Eastern Crisis (1875–1878)

Christos Iliadis

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NATIONALISM AND MINORITIES IN THE OTTOMAN BALKANS: GREEK DISCOURSES ON THE EASTERN CRISIS (1875–1878)

Christos Iliadis

Abstract: This article focuses on how the Eastern Crisis of 1875–1878 and the Slavic revolts were interpreted in Greece, given its national aspirations and its relationship with the Orthodox people of the Balkans. The analysis draws on the Athenian press and parliamentary minutes of the time, and rather than focusing on the diplomatic developments follows instead the social discourses on and dominant interpretations of the Slavs and Bulgarians after the Balkan uprisings as well as the dilemmas faced by Greece. It explores a moment in the discursive shift, which introduced an ethno-racial language within the Greek kingdom that began to replace the portrayal of Hellenism as an ecumenical ideology with one of a more exclusive and nationalistic character. It thus shows how the events sharpened the division between Hellenism and Slavism.

This article focuses on Greek public discourses on the Eastern Crisis, from 1875 to 1878, as manifested in the parliament and press. In particular, emphasis is placed on how the Balkan revolts and the European pro-Slavic movement, which emerged after the massacre in the Bulgarian city of Batak, were interpreted in Greece, especially in light of its own irredentist aspirations in Ottoman areas with Orthodox populations. This contribution is, therefore, concerned with the following questions: what was the Greek reaction, as mirrored in public responses, to pan-European sympathy for the southern Slavs after the Batak massacre? What were the effects of the Eastern Crisis on Greek irredentist politics? Did the Eastern Crisis alter Greek discourses on the other Balkan nations? In answering these questions, this study will shed light on a crucial moment in the emergence of national antagonisms between the Greeks and Bulgarians regarding the future of Ottoman territories with mixed populations, such as Macedonia and Thrace.[1]

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[1] Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995; Anastasia Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat,*

The multiple ways the Eastern Crisis – and in particular the revolts of the Balkan nations – were interpreted in Greece in relation to the country's irredentist aspirations have not been sufficiently examined. The same applies to the effects of the 1875–1878 period on the intensification of national antagonism among the Orthodox population of the Ottoman Empire – especially that between the Greeks and Bulgarians. The majority of existing literature focuses on the diplomatic consequences of the Batak massacre and subsequent developments over the course of the Eastern Crisis, especially regarding the Great Powers.[2] More particularly, on the question of the origin of Greek anti-Slavic and anti-Bulgarian discourses, most studies refer to the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 or the Crimean War in 1856, with the Eastern Crisis relegated – surprisingly – to only a few sentences, if at all.[3]

Of course, certain studies do recognise the importance of the Eastern Crisis in establishing the antagonism between the Greek and Bulgarian national projects; however, they generally do not explore in detail Greek discourses on the Slavs, or they only fully explore their diplomatic results.[4] There are also studies that examine the Athenian press and parliamentary minutes – material similar

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Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870–1990, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997; Victor Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Question*, Westport: Praeger, 2002.

[2] John A. Marriott, *The Eastern Question: A Historical Study in European Diplomacy*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1956; Evangelos Kofos, *Greece and the Eastern Crisis, 1875–1878*, Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1975; A. L. Macfie, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923*, London: Longman, 1996; Alexis Heraclides and Ada Dialla, "Intervention in the Bulgarian Atrocities", chap. 6 in *Historizing Humanitarian Intervention: The Long Nineteenth Century*, Athens: Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, 2015, pp. 175–230.

[3] For example, Lucian N. Leustean, *Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-century Southeastern Europe*, New York: Fordham, 2014; Paraskevas Matalas, *Έθνος και Ορθοδοξία: Οι περιπέτειες μιας σχέσης. Από το 'Ελλαδικό' στο Βουλγαρικό σχίσμα* [Nation and Orthodoxy. Adventures of a relationship: from the "Greek" to the Bulgarian schism], Rethymno: Crete University Press, 2002, p. 163; Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*, p. 78; Roudometof, *Collective Memory*, p. 139; Christina Koulouri, *Ιστορία και Γεωγραφία στα Ελληνικά Σχολεία (1834–1914)* [History and geography in Greek schools, 1834–1914], Athens: Historical Archive of Greek Youth, 1988; Spyridon Ploumidis, "Symbiosis and Friction in Multiethnic Plovdiv/Philippoupolis: The Case of the Greek Orthodox and the Bulgarians (1878–1906)", PhD diss., King's College London (University of London), 2004.

[4] Yannis N. Yannoulopoulos, *"Η ευγενής μας τύφλωσης..." Εξωτερική Πολιτική και "Εθνικά Θέματα" από το 1897 έως τη Μικρασιατική Καταστροφή* ["Our national blindness…" Foreign policy and 'national issues" from 1897 to the Asia Minor Catastrophe], Athens: Vivliorama, 2003, pp. 61–62; Ada Dialla, "Russian Nationalism and the Eastern Question: The Case of Panslavism (1856–1878)", *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 24–25 (2008–2009),

to that examined here – in order to account for Greek interpretations of the Balkan nations; however, these do not explore in detail the period after the Batak massacre and the discussions and debates that this entailed. Basil C. Gounaris, for example, studies representations and stereotypes of the Balkan nations in the Greek press of the time, but he treats the period from the Crimean War (1856) to the Berlin Treaty (1878) as a homogenous one, without sufficiently examining details of the transformations, shifts and changes in the Greek approach to the Slavs and Panslavism.[5]

In light of the above, this article argues that, when sufficiently examined, details of the impact of the Batak massacre – and of the Eastern Crisis in general – help us to better understand the growth of anti-Slavism in Greece and the establishment of a Greco-Bulgarian national antagonism over the Orthodox subjects of the empire – especially in the Macedonia region. The same can be said regarding public interpretations within Greece of the events in Batak and the Eastern Crisis.

My claim is not that the Eastern Crisis gave birth to the ideology of anti-Slavism in Greece, or that anti-Slavism can be traced to a single moment of emergence. As has already been argued in the literature, the Crimean War was certainly a crucial factor in generating Greek anti-Slavism, and other periods and events were also important for its full development, including the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate, the Greco-Turkish War (1897), the Ilinden Uprising (1903) and the Balkan Wars.[6] The argument here is that this period is also important for further disrupting the relations between the Greeks and the Slavic nations. In order to shed light on the impact of the crisis, this article uses material drawn from the proceedings of the Greek parliament and from the Athenian press at the time.[7] The focus is not on confidential exchanges between diplomats or on certain events, but on the various ways the Eastern Crisis was

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p. 101; Heraclides and Dialla, "Intervention in the Bulgarian Atrocities"; Kofos, *Greece and the Eastern Crisis*.

[5] Basil C. Gounaris, *Τα Βαλκάνια των Ελλήνων* [The Balkans of the Greeks], Athens: Epikentro, 2007, pp. 375–382.

[6] Matalas, *Έθνος και Ορθοδοξία* [Nation and Orthodoxy]; Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*; Roudometof, *Collective Memory*.

[7] Unless differently stated, press articles studied here are the editorials. At that time, newspapers published in the Greek kingdom rarely included other opinion pieces except editorials. On the other hand, the available diplomatic exchanges between the Greek foreign ministry and the Greek consulates (available at http://arxeio.mfa.gr/portal/) are not extensive and they usually include no more than the translation of articles from European newspapers. See, for example files, 1876, aak/B, 1876, aak/E, 1866, 99/1a; 1876, 1bg; 1876, 37 and 1877, aak/D6. For an account of the diplomatic developments during the crisis, see Heraclides and Dialla, "Intervention in the Bulgarian Atrocities", pp. 175–230.

interpreted in public; of what were seen as *problems* for a variety of actors, how they arose, which of them became significant, and how political dichotomies and antagonisms were constructed.[8]

Hellenism and Slavism before the Eastern Crisis

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Orthodox *millet* started to crumble. National ideals gradually replaced the influence of the clergy and the domination of the Orthodox Patriarchate, creating an ethnic antagonism between the newly emerging nations and their state institutions in a struggle for the hearts and minds of the Balkan people. Greek and Bulgarian national antagonisms within Orthodox communities were the first to emerge, and their competition for the establishment of "national" churches and schools had already started in the early 1860s.[9]

The Crimean War (1853–1856) resulted in a new phase of internal division concerning the eastward or westward direction of the Greek nation, with a strengthening of the eastward camp. The war boosted pro-Russian irredentism in Greece, and its Greek supporters saw the Russian Empire as pursuing the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in favour of the interests of its Orthodox communities. On the other side, the Western powers – especially Britain – cooperated with the Ottomans, and their Greek supporters were in favour of a "cultural" – as opposed to a military – victory for the Greek nation, through the Hellenisation of the empire.[10] However, the Russian failure and Ottoman victory in the war brought disappointment. As a result, new voices defending the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and condemning Russian expansionism emerged. In a characteristic example, Constantinos Dossios, formerly a prominent Russophile, changed sides, arguing in a leaflet published in 1854 under the title "Ελληνισμός ή Ρωσσισμός?" (Hellenism or Russianism?) that the only way the Greek race could survive and prosper was through the reform of the Ottoman state.[11]

The rise of the Bulgarian issue in the middle of the nineteenth century affected the Greek pro-Russian and pro-Western camps in different ways. For those who

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[8] For the theoretical framework followed here, see Michael Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, London: Penguin, 1984, pp. 83–84. Also, for the role of "disruption" and the dislocation of identities, Ernesto Laclau, *New Reflections on The Revolution of Our Time*, London: Verso, 1990, pp. 61–64.

[9] Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*, p. 81; Leustean, *Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism*, introduction.

[10] Matalas, *Έθνος και Ορθοδοξία* [Nation and Orthodoxy], p. 118.

[11] Vangelis Kechriotis, "Markos Renieris: What is Greece? West or East?", in *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945)*, vol. 2, ed. Balázs Trencsényi and

saw Russia as the protector of Orthodoxy, Slavic national movements were viewed as a Western–Catholic plot to divide the Orthodox people. In time, however, the concept of Bulgarian autonomy came to be accepted within the framework of a more general fraternity among the Orthodox peoples. For the pro-Western camp, the paramount aim was to reform and Hellenise the Ottoman Empire by occupying it culturally, thus transforming it into a new Hellenic empire. For advocates of this view, Orthodox Slavs were considered backward and in need of Hellenisation. Thus, the Bulgarian national and ecclesiastical movements and Panslavism became the main enemies of this strain of Greek nationalism.[12]

In 1870, the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate, through its separation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the schism that followed (1872) signalled the first important clash between Greek and Bulgarian nationalisms, rather than solely manifesting as a dispute over religious doctrines. The exarchate was celebrated as an early victory of Bulgarian nationalism over Greek nationalism and served as a useful instrument in Bulgarian efforts to establish and expand their national community and influence among the Orthodox Christian populations of the empire.[13] The Bulgarian issue gave rise to a redefinition of the relationship between Hellenism and Orthodoxy. With the establishment of their national church and the schism from the patriarchate, Bulgarians seemed in Greek eyes to have transformed from brothers into enemies of Hellenism, which was now seen by many in Greece as a shield against Slavic expansionism. The schism, together with the Eastern Crisis, resulted in a revision of the catalogue of perceived enemies of the Greeks, with the Bulgarians rising to the very top of the list.[14]

The Eastern Crisis and the Greek Dilemma

The powerful explosion of the national liberation movement in Bulgaria in April 1876, and the wars for the independence of Serbia and Montenegro from the Ottoman Empire which began shortly thereafter, marked the beginning of a

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Michal Kopeček, Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007, p. 310. For the implications of the war on the relations between the Greeks and Slavs, also Elli Skopetea, *Το "πρότυπο Βασίλειο" και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα* [The "model kingdom" and the Great Idea], Athens: Politipo, 1988, pp. 325–346. For Skopetea, anti-Slavism operated during the Eastern Crisis for Greece in a double way: "as an excuse for non-intervention and as a slogan for action" (pp. 334–335).

[12] Matalas, *Έθνος και Ορθοδοξία* [Nation and Orthodoxy], pp. 204–209.

[13] L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans, 1815–1914*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963, pp. 366–372; Danforth, *Macedonian Conflict*, p. 58.

[14] Matalas, *Έθνος και Ορθοδοξία* [Nation and Orthodoxy], p. 343; Dialla, "Russian Nationalism", pp. 101 and 104.

new stage in the so-called Eastern Crisis. The crisis had begun with uprisings in Herzegovina and Bosnia in July 1875 but was deepened by the bestial suppression of the April Uprising in Bulgaria – the Batak massacre in particular – and the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78.[15] The atrocities committed by Ottoman irregulars against Bulgarian civilians in May 1876 provoked an international outcry and had a significant impact on the recognition of autonomous Bulgaria in 1878. According to reports of the period, almost 5,000 peasants lost their lives during the Batak massacre alone, and some sources estimate that up to 30,000 Bulgarians were killed – with over a hundred towns and villages destroyed, burnt and looted – during the entire course of the Bulgarian horrors.[16]

In recent years, the prevailing account of events in Batak has been challenged.[17] At the time, however, reports on the atrocities generated strong pro-Bulgarian sentiment among the European public and within diplomatic circles. According to Leften Stavrianos, "a storm of moral indignation swept over Europe and especially England".[18] In Britain, public condemnation of the Batak massacre was widespread. Gladstone's pamphlet, which agitated for the expulsion of the Ottomans from Europe, sold 200,000 copies within a month and did more than any other publication of the century to demolish pro-Ottoman sentiment in Britain. Gladstone demanded autonomy for Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire so that they might be freed from the oppression of Ottoman administrators and soldiers. In Russia, news of the massacres also evoked a wave of sympathy and support for the Bulgarian people.[19] The Bulgarian horrors,

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[15] Macfie, *Eastern Question*, pp. 34–45; Symeon Damianov, "European Diplomacy and the Eastern Crisis up to the Beginning of the Russo-Turkish War", in *Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870s*, ed. Béla Király and Gale Stokes, New York: Atlantic, 1985, p. 61.

[16] Damianov, "European Diplomacy", pp. 51–53.

[17] Baleva and Brunnbauer challenged dominant interpretations of the events, arguing that the number of victims had been greatly exaggerated and claiming that the representation of the massacre is typical of all Balkan nations' narratives about their heroic struggles for liberation. These allegations created an emotionally charged, negative reaction within academic and other circles in Bulgaria. Ulf Brunnbauer and Martina Baleva (eds.), *Batak ein bulgarischer Erinnerungsort/Batak kato mjasto na pametta*, Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, 2007.

[18] Stavrianos, *The Balkans, 1815–1914*, p. 66.

[19] Marriott, *Eastern Question*, pp. 329–332; M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923*, London: Macmillan, 1966, p. 184; W. E. Gladstone, *Lessons in Massacre; Or the Conduct of the Turkish Government in and About Bulgaria Since May, 1876*, London: Murray, 1877. For a more recent account on the Russian reaction, see James Peter Phillips, "The Eastern Crisis, 1875–1878, in British and Russian Press and Society", PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 2012. On the way the events contributed to the emergence of the policies of humanitarianism in Britain, see Georgios Giannakopoulos, "A British International

so-called at the time, helped to precipitate the intervention of foreign powers, which, in turn, led to the creation of the first autonomous Bulgarian principality in 1878. The crisis of 1875–78 also brought about the recognition of both Serbia and Romania as independent states, and it transferred Bosnia and Herzegovina to *de facto* Habsburg rule. Nevertheless, it did not meet all the demands of the Balkan nationalities. These demands now began to conflict with one another.[20]

For the Greeks, the Eastern Crisis of 1875–78 occurred at an inopportune moment. Having experienced destructive setbacks in the 1850s (Crimean War insurrections) and 1860s (Cretan Revolution), Greeks had chosen to pursue a strategy of peaceful coexistence with the Ottoman Empire. This coexistence seemed at the time to serve the long-term interests of Hellenism. Military confrontation was seen as problematic for a variety of reasons, as it meant aligning Greece with the Russian scheme for the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, as well as striking up alliances with the Balkan Slavs. Many Greeks strongly questioned the wisdom of placing Greek national aspirations under the wing of the Russian tsar.[21]

For the reasons outlined above, the Greek government did not support any of the Balkan revolts of the 1875–78 period, maintaining instead a neutral stance. This position was favoured by the king, who retained an influential role in foreign affairs. In keeping with the position, the Koumoundouros government declined to offer the assistance requested by the Serbs after their revolt in 1876.[22] A similar approach was demonstrated by the response of the short-lived Deligeorgis government to the demands by private initiatives of Greek patriots for insurrectionary preparations.[23]

However, despite both official neutrality and a growing anti-Slavism, news of the Balkan revolts prompted intense public debates and a political conflict within Greece about the best policy towards the revolts, relations with the Slavs and the future of the relationship between *Hellenism* and *Panslavism*. The Eastern

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Humanitarianism? Humanitarian Interventions in Eastern Europe (1875–1906), *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 34/2 (2016), pp. 299–320.

[20] Stavrianos, *The Balkans, 1815–1914*, p. 64; Anderson, *Eastern Question*, pp. 217–218.

[21] Evangelos Kofos, "Greek Insurrectionary Preparations, 1876–1878", in Király and Stokes, *Insurrections, Wars, and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870s*, pp. 181–198.

[22] Alexandros Koumoundouros (1815–1883) served as prime minister multiple times. With brief interruptions, he retained his position from 27 October 1875 to 15 March 1882. John S. Koliopoulos and Thanos M. Veremis, *Modern Greece: A History Since 1821*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 44–56.

[23] Douglas Dakin, *Η Ενοποίηση της Ελλάδας, 1770–1923* [*The Unification of Greece, 1770–1923*], trans. Athanasios Xanthopoulos, Athens: MIET, 2012, p. 186.

Crisis also engendered political instability in the small Greek kingdom, and in the space of three years, the office of prime minister changed hands seven times. The end of this period saw the traditional Greek struggle against Ottoman rule increasingly giving way to a contest for predominance over the Slavs; a contest that turned into an undeclared war lasting for almost 30 years.[24]

The Bosnian Revolt and the Greek Dilemma

News of the uprising in Herzegovina was not particularly welcomed in Greece. The country was unprepared militarily, its relations with Russia were strained and a Slavic solution to the Eastern Question, at that moment, could only mean the postponement of Hellenic aspirations. For that reason, Prime Minister Trikoupis declared that the only road for Greece was a policy of friendship and cooperation with the Ottoman Empire.[25]

The outbreak of the revolt immediately revealed the main points of convergence and divergence in Greek public discourses. Very quickly, the Greek dilemma had become obvious: "is [Hellas] going to remain uninvolved, or will it help the Serbs […]?" as *Ταχυδρόμος* put it in its editorial.[26] For the majority, this dilemma had a single answer: neutrality was the best way to serve the interests of Hellenism. As *Ταχυδρόμος* continued, "Greece has no intention of getting involved in affairs alien to its beliefs and interests, remembering the well-known events in Crete […] the general feeling in Greece supports neutrality" (17 August 1875). Another paper, *Η Ώρα*[27] also encouraged "strict neutrality" and implied that everybody in Greece shared a similar opinion: that "every Greek is aware of Greece's international obligations and of its interest; that is, to maintain and develop good relations with Anatolia […] and to cooperate with it in advancing the Orient" (11 November 1875). The view that it was in the interests of the Greeks to remain neutral and develop peaceful relations with the Ottomans was also found in the pages of *Αυγή* (19 July 1875).[28]

Despite convergence on the general Greek strategy and in reflecting the official position, there was divergence within the Greek press on the precise

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[24] Kofos, *Greece and the Eastern Crisis*, pp. 259–260; Danforth, *Macedonian Conflict*; Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*.

[25] Kofos, *Greece and the Eastern Crisis*, pp. 43–45.

[26] *Ταχυδρόμος* (17 August 1875). All translations from Greek texts are by the author.

[27] *Η Ώρα* (1875–1888) was published by the political party of Harilaos Trikoupis, leader of the opposition.

[28] *Αυγή* (1857–1876) was royalist during the first years of its publication but became more neutral after 1864: Kostas Mayer, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Τύπου: Τόμος Α' (1790–1900)* [History of the Greek press, vol. 1. 1790–1900], Athens: Dimopoulos, 1957, p. 79.

attitude towards the revolts. For some, like *Η Ώρα*, which at the same time was calling for neutrality, the revolts were welcomed as "a major incident in the history of Eastern Europe […] as one of the most important incidents in contemporary European history", because of the crisis they introduced into the Ottoman Empire. The paper, therefore, expressed its "sympathy towards those fighting to overcome repression". However for others, like *Αυγή*, there were important reasons to remain "indifferent" to the struggle. The failure of past revolts – such as the Cretan Revolution – showed that involvement in independence struggles could simply exhaust Greek strength without actually harming the Ottoman Empire. There was also a fear that a wider Slav revolt would be detrimental to Greek interests: "if this evil expands in Bulgaria, it is not only the power of the Ottomans that will be in danger, but also that of the Greek clergy". For *Αυγή*, "the Greek and Slavic races" were distinct, which meant that it was "impossible for any Greek government to show any sympathy for the Slav movement".[29]

The beginning of the Eastern Crisis, therefore, once again posed a problem for the strategy of Hellenism: that of choosing sides and deciding whether to follow a policy of provoking unrest – and, at the same time, assisting the Slavic struggle – as a means of pursuing independence for the Greek Orthodox populations of the empire, or whether to wait instead for a safer moment to pursue Greek national aspirations. There was little disagreement that the best option was to wait. There was, however, considerable disagreement on two consequent matters. The first was on how – militarily or diplomatically – to be prepared for such a future opportunity. The other, which was the more important in the long term, had to do with how the Slav revolts should be understood: were they, in the grand scheme of things, fortunate events for Hellenism – but events which had simply come at a bad moment – or did they pose a threat?

The Batak Massacre: Hope and Disappointment

The Bulgarian Uprising and the massacre that followed in May 1876 underlined the above problem – the difficulty of choosing sides – in a more pressing manner. The events were interpreted in Greece as proof of an urgent need to prepare militarily for a possible future encounter. While the events of May did not alter the Greek policy of neutrality, they put it under pressure. International solidarity with the victims of the massacre – and by association, sympathy for the Bulgarian Uprising – strengthened those in Greece who argued for an Orthodox coalition with the Balkan nations. The events of the Bulgarian Uprising, therefore, boosted

[29] *Αυγή* (19 July 1875 and 22 August 1875).

public debate on which strategy Hellenism should follow, and was a cause of unrest in many Greek cities.[30]

After the Bulgarian Uprising, several newspapers claimed that the Koumoundouros government – which was perceived as Russophile – now faced a dilemma on whether to shift its policy from neutrality to intervention. Pro-government papers such as *Άγγελος* argued that Greece did not need to start a war against the Ottomans; it would be enough for the Greek interests if "the Greek people of Turkey participate in the struggle [against the Ottomans], in order to create new troubles for the Porte".[31]

Rumours of Greek government support for an uprising of the Ottoman Greeks, as well as international pressure, obliged Athens to declare in June that it would not get involved in the uprisings and would not change its friendly policy towards the empire, "maintaining strict neutrality in its dispute with the Slavs". However, on the day of these declarations, popular leaders of the famous *Komitata* (armed bands) from the areas of Epirus, Thessaly and Crete met in Athens to discuss the possibilities of a synchronised uprising. These activities cast doubt on the government's official neutrality. Reports on an initiative by the general secretary of the interior ministry to investigate the possibility of a revolt in Epirus compounded these doubts.[32]

News of the Batak massacre created several expectations in Greece: firstly it was thought that Europe would not only favour the Bulgarians and the Slavs, but that support would be given to all Christian subjects of the empire. Ottoman treatment of the Greeks in Crete, Epirus, Thessaly and Macedonia was considered to be the same as, if not worse than, the treatment of Slavs in Bulgaria and other places. In this vein, according to the Greek press, the "massacre and atrocities by the barbarian hordes in Bulgaria justifiably raised distress and sympathy […] But did not other Christians suffer similarly? […] It is expected that attention by England and Russia will include all Christians of the Orient who have the same, if not more, rights than the Slavs do."[33]

The non-realisation of this expectation led to frustration and put a lot of pressure on those who favoured continued neutrality, empowering instead the supporters of the Great Idea. Gladstone's pamphlet on the Bulgarian horrors –

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[30] Dakin, *Ενοποίηση της Ελλάδας* [*Unification of Greece*], p. 198; Kofos, "Greek Insurrectionary", pp. 181–183.

[31] *Άγγελος* (15 May 1876).

[32] *Αλήθεια* (29 June 1876 and 29 July 1876).

[33] *Αλήθεια* (11 November 1876). *Αλήθεια* (1865–1882) was opposed to Koumoundouros' government and supported the opposition. Mayer, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Τύπου* [History of the Greek press], pp. 114–115.

reproduced extensively in the Greek press – disappointed its Greek readers by failing to mention the Greeks at all. As *Αλήθεια* reported, "while it [the pamphlet] deals with the troubles in the north and is in favour of the just claims of the Slavs, it abandons Christians in the south who are also subjected to crimes by the bashi-bazouks and the Circassians" (18 November 1876). The same article questioned whether an uprising was the only way: "is it only Christian blood that affects European sentiments? Is it only the use of revolutionary action that has become the means to achieve claims of justice?" (18 November 1876). This disappointment in September 1876 brought unrest to the Greek capital. Rallies were organised to lobby the Koumoundouros government to intervene or for the prime minister's resignation. At the biggest of all, held on 20 September at the ancient rock of Pnyka, almost 8,000 people gathered to hear speeches by well-respected university professors, politicians and others. The crowd adopted a resolution that welcomed European sympathy for the Christians of the empire; however, it protested the exclusion of the Greeks and urged the government to defend the rights of Ottoman Greeks while preparing the army for potential engagement. In reply, Koumoundouros declared that he "was working hard" on preparations, but that he could not deal with all the inefficiencies of previous governments. Over the following weeks, the government introduced a series of new laws, preparing the army and the administration for a future intervention.[34]

A policy of neutrality alongside military preparations was not unanimously accepted in Greece. These preparations required vast increases in taxation and new international loans, boosting both the public and private debt. Thus, for many the burden was too heavy, while the reasons given for increased military spending were too vague. For example, *Αλήθεια* (23 September 1876) argued that military preparations had no short-term effect and action was needed immediately. For others, such military preparation could not solely be defensive and might be perceived by other countries as representing a threat of aggressive attack. Finally, for others, the coup in Istanbul that replaced Sultan Abdul Aziz with Murat in May 1876 undermined the urgency of such preparations: the new sultan was reported to be a supporter of "liberal and progressive reforms" and peace could be secured while the lives of Ottoman Christians improved without any need for revolts.[35]

Despite debates like these, both pro-government and royalist newspapers ultimately argued in favour of military preparations. Government supporters believed the Great Powers, including Russia, were more likely to support the

[34] *Αλήθεια* (21 September and 23 September 1876).

[35] *Αλήθεια* (12 July 1876) and *Η Ώρα* (24 May 1876).

status quo than to challenge Ottoman dominance in the Balkans. They claimed, therefore, that military preparation was the best response at this time, as they hoped that it would equip the nation for future success when circumstances were more appropriate for action. For royalist media, such as *Ελληνικός Λαός*, a policy of preparation was the only option, since it was the king who had imposed on Koumoundouros the policy of strict neutrality in concert with preparations. However, it strongly criticised the Koumoundouros government for bad economic policy, corruption and unnecessary expenses that undermined the case for military preparations.[36]

The Bulgarian Uprising and Batak massacre left Greece in a quandary about choosing sides. Despite the fact that Bulgarian nationalism had already been construed as an enemy by many inside Greece after the schism of 1872, European interest in the Slavs – greatly increased by the events in Batak – reopened the dilemma: would the uprising in the Balkans benefit or undermine the Hellenic project? This question, which remained pressing for a considerable time, shows that the "Bulgarian schism" some years before had not brought definite closure to the dilemma. The discussions in the Greek parliament that followed these events better highlight the multiple interpretations and give us a deeper understanding of the attitudes towards the Slavic revolts.

Hellenism and Panslavism: Traces of Anti-Slavism in the Greek Parliament

The Batak massacre and its possible implications for Greek policy were discussed in the Greek parliament, but not as widely as some would have expected. The issue was only seriously discussed during the debate on the 1877 budget, in November 1876. In this discussion, which focused on the possible consequences of the massacre for the Greek cause, one can also see the contemporary attitudes that would dominate the debate on the relationship between Hellenism and Slavism.

Koumoundouros (who assumed the premiership in October 1875) defended the policy of neutrality in a series of interventions. He also (mostly) indirectly gave his own account of the approach towards the Slavs by introducing ethnic and racial categories to distinguish the Greeks from those revolting against the Ottomans. For him, despite the "honest sadness for the misfortune the massacre brought for our co-religionists, the question was not a Greek question neither internally nor externally". He concluded, therefore, that no change was needed in the Greek strategy towards the Balkan uprisings. Greece should remain neutral and, at the same time, be prepared for the potential defence of

[36] *Άγγελος* (18 July 1876) and *Ο Ελληνικός Λαός* (25 September 1876).

the Greeks of the empire and a later struggle for their own independence, as the Slavs had done.[37]

He went one step further than the above distinction, introducing not only an ethnic divide, but also a *racial* one. As he stated in parliament, the Greek response to the revolts should be to defend "the interests *of our brothers of the same blood",* in order to assist them when the time was appropriate to claim independence, like the Slavs of the Ottoman Empire were doing.[38]

Despite being considered a Russophile and Slavophile, Koumoundouros introduced a sharp distinction based on both an ethnic and racial divide, separating what was "Greek" from what was not. In that way, he made clear that religion (Orthodoxy) was not as important as ethnicity and race in determining what was relevant to the Greek kingdom and what was not. In other words, the victims of the massacre were not only seen as co-members of the Orthodox *millet* of the Ottoman Empire, but as members of a different ethnic and racial group.

Koumoundouros' ethno-racial approach was accompanied by a clarification that Greece had its own *national* interests and should focus on them. These interests were limited to defending the rights of the *Greeks* specifically, rather than Orthodox subjects in general. The prime minister described Greece's aim as being to "convince Europe that Hellas prepares and takes action as an independent nation and according to its own interest". In this vein, the success of his government lay in the fact that "Europeans trust[ed] Greece"; for him, this was the key factor permitting Greece to promote its policy in the Balkans. This would mean that when an international conference discussed the fate of the Orient, Greece would be able to seek what it considered to be "the right thing", which is to say self-determination for regions with a predominately Greek population.[39]

An obvious problem with the above stance was the fact that in European diplomacy at the time, the Greek issue seemed virtually non-existent. Even Gladstone had failed to mention the Ottoman Greeks in his famous denunciation of the Ottoman oppression of its subjects. For Koumoundouros, then, the overlooking of the Greek Orthodox populations by European statesmen gave the Greek government two options: one was to support Greek uprisings in the Ottoman territories; the other was to hope for a European

[37] *Εφημερίς των Συζητήσεων* (30 October 1876), p. 126.

[38] Ibid., p. 128. Emphasis added.

[39] Ibid., pp. 128–130.

conference that would settle the issues of all Orthodox minorities[40] in the empire, Greeks included:

> let's not fool ourselves: there is no Greek question [for Europe] and such questions are not laid out on paper. To raise a Greek question, we should have agreed to create unrest in Ottoman territories; Sirs, it is not wise for anyone to prompt his brothers to create unrest if he cannot guarantee the result and provide aid especially since we have not taken any decision to participate.[41]

It thus became clear that the government favoured the second option. The foreign minister, Alexandros Kontostavlos, further elaborated on the need for a policy of neutrality. In response to an enquiry by the opposition – why was Greece not encouraging the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire to revolt as the Slavs had done, in order to take advantage of the timing and the present difficulties faced by the Ottomans? – his reply was that such a policy would draw Greece into war: the Ottomans could be expected to react violently, as they had done in Bulgaria. Neutrality was beneficial to Greece, in the same way that Serbia, Romania and Montenegro had benefited from remaining neutral during the Cretan Uprising and the Crimean War.[42]

There is no doubt that the policy of neutrality aligned Greece with those who defended the status quo, and consequently with the interests of the Ottoman Empire. For that reason, despite the definition of the Greek policy as one "of neutrality with preparations", Greece – at least according to its prime minister – was also following "a policy of friendship" with its neighbours in Anatolia. Friendship, however, did not necessarily require total cooperation with Ottoman interests. The desire to internally reform the empire and *Hellenise* it from within remained squarely on the table. As Kontostavlos declared to parliament, "Greece is alone", signalling another period – after that of Koumoundouros' government – of comparative Greek isolation. The effort made by the Great Powers to restore peace in the Balkans – thereby signalling their preference for the restoration

[40] For the use of the term "minorities" referring to the religious communities constituting the Orthodox Millet during the late nineteenth century, see Aron Rodrigue, "Reflections on *Millets* and Minorities: Ottoman Legacies", in *Turkey between Nationalism and Globalization*, ed. Riva Kastoryano, London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 36–46; Molly Greene, *Minorities in the Ottoman Empire*, London: Markus Wiener, 2005; Dimitris Stamatopoulos, "From Millets to Minorities in the 19th-Century Ottoman Empire: An Ambiguous Modernization", in *Citizenship in Historical Perspective*, ed. Steven G. Ellis, Guðmundur Hálfdanarson and Ann Katherine Isaacs, Pisa: Edizioni Plus/Pisa University Press, 2006.

[41] *Εφημερίς των Συζητήσεων* (30 October 1876), p. 128.

[42] *Εφημερίς των Συζητήσεων* (30 October 1876), p. 170.

of the status quo – indicated to Kontostavlos that Greece should be ready to potentially act against those powers as well. As he clearly stated: "if we want to try something directly or indirectly against the Ottomans, we know that we need no ally. We further mean by this that not only do we not want European powers as allies, but we may even want them as our enemies."[43]

The above statements show the extent to which the Eastern Crisis remained an issue of considerable ambivalence within Greece. On the one hand, the government favoured friendship with the Ottomans and the preservation of the status quo, at least in the short term. Friendship aligned Greek policy with British policy. However, on the other hand, one might argue that Greece expected to gain an advantage from the Slavic unrest and hoped to pursue its own claims within a diplomatic procedure that would redraw the borders of the Ottoman Empire. From this perspective, independence for the Slavs also seemed to promote the Greek cause, as the Great Powers were unlikely to leave Greece (whom they viewed with "trust") out of a future redefinition of territory. In this light, Greece's decision to maintain good relations with the Ottomans was a solely strategic move, chosen only under very particular circumstances; it did not necessarily entail a general anti-Slavic stance. Even declarations that Greece was "alone" could be seen as a means of distancing the country from the Western powers. Indeed, as Koumoundouros, at least once, explicitly told parliament, "the only rescue [for the Orient] will come if all the people of the Orient unite as brothers".[44]

If the government was trying to achieve a difficult balance between friendship with the Ottomans and their own hope of gain resulting from the Slavic uprising, for the opposition things were much clearer. For Deligeorgis, the head of the second party, the Slavs posed a clear threat to Hellenism, as the two had fundamentally antagonistic interests. The impact of this view was significant, as Deligeorgis represented the royalist view and was a supporter of British influence. As he put it, in a characteristically expressive manner,

> The Slavic race took up arms one-and-a-half years ago to seek its independence. Their aim is to go beyond Haemus to Thrace and Adrianople [Edirne], and in Macedonia to reach Serres. Their struggle is holy! There is nothing for which to blame them; they are an admirable nation because they move fast towards progress and glory; they have imagination, planning and grand aims. But Hellenism is an identical nation, with identical interests.[45]

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[43] *Εφημερίς των Συζητήσεων* (30 October 1876), p. 128 and 4 November 1876, p. 167.

[44] *Εφημερίς των Συζητήσεων* (5 November 1876), p. 189.

[45] *Εφημερίς των Συζητήσεων* (1 November 1876), p. 120. Haemus is a Balkan mountain range in the eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula that separates the central Balkans from the

As seen from the above, Deligeorgis echoed Koumoundouros by introducing a racial dimension to separate the Greeks from the Slavs, in order to underscore that religious affinity was no longer decisive. For Deligeorgis, the aims of the Slavs endangered the interests of Hellenism, and the two national movements were antagonistic to each other. As he declared in another formulation, "[Panslavism] wants to occupy [territories] while threatening political stability; it also wishes to dominate Hellenism in the Orient. It tries to divide the people of the Orient using money, spies, teachers, priests, armed bands [*Komitata*] and the like." In a similar spirit, the opposition MP Gerasimos Zochios – soon to become naval minister in the Deligeorgis government – declared that, "we are at war in the Orient with both the Turks and the Slavs". Deligeorgis was still more critical of the underlying principle of Greek policy – "peace abroad and order inside the country", which is to say the policy of neutrality – which he made clear in parliament: "neutrality assists those who are at war, but it does not help the neutral party to gain any rights". He also questioned whether "in the fight between the Slavic race and the Turks, there are any interests for the Greeks". This approach called for a redefinition of Greek policy, from that of neutrality to one of intervention in pursuit of the interests of the Greek Orthodox communities of the empire.[46]

Finally, for Harilaos Trikoupis – who served briefly as prime minister in 1875 and would take office six more times before 1894 – the political landscape was also clear in this regard: Hellenism and Panslavism were mutually exclusive forces, their shared Orthodox religion being purely incidental. For Trikoupis, the revolution in Herzegovina and the massacre in Batak had changed the character of the Eastern Question. The main consequence of these events became "the abandonment of Philhellenism" in Europe and its replacement by other ideas (Panslavism in particular). In Trikoupis' eyes, this European shift towards Panslavism "harmed Hellenism". He therefore called on the government to revise its approach, according to which the Balkan uprisings were "internal problems of the Ottoman Empire". The Greek government, Trikoupis said, needed to become more interventionist in the course of preparing the military and protecting the Ottoman Greeks.[47]

We can see that the main opposition clearly aligned itself against the Balkan revolts and their outcome, interpreting them as opposed to the interests of

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Aegean Sea. "To go beyond Haemus" means to expand south, towards the Aegean Sea into what is today Greek Macedonia and Thrace. Dakin, *Ενοποίηση της Ελλάδας* [*Unification of Greece*], pp. 197–198.

[46] *Εφημερίς των Συζητήσεων* (5 November 1876), p. 194.

[47] *Εφημερίς των Συζητήσεων* (5 November 1876), pp. 196–197.

Hellenism. Opposition leaders, unlike the government, clearly characterised Panslavism as posing a threat to Greek interests. However, despite this difference in how the government and the opposition perceived the Slavic revolts, the divide between the so-called Russophile Koumoundouros government and the opposition was not as clear as is generally assumed. Nation and race had prevailed over religion for all major political leaders, in spite of their differences in political orientation. Hellenism and Slavism were mutually exclusive, and Greek nationalistic discourse predominated, both among the forces within Greece that had formerly believed in the coalition of all Orthodox people, and among those who saw Hellenism as a force with the potential to spiritually occupy the Ottoman Empire.

Sharpening the Frontiers: Hellenism and Panslavism in the Greek Press

As the Eastern Crisis deepened in 1877 – following the failure of the Istanbul Conference in late 1876 and an impending Russo-Turkish war – political disputes within Greece over which approach to take towards the Slavic uprisings intensified. The royalist press exerted pressure on Koumoundouros' government, accusing the prime minister of "dependency on the interests of Panslavism" and of defending Slavic and Russian interests instead of those of Hellenism. The prime minister was further accused of failing to bring the rights of the Ottoman Greeks to the attention of the international community, so as to antagonise the Slavic cause in European diplomacy. Opposition papers argued that Greek policy should turn to the West, which was simultaneously the royal position and that of Deligeorgis' party.[48]

Indications in the spring of 1877 that a war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire was drawing closer increased concerns for the fate of Hellenism; the Slavs appeared to have taken the upper hand in the Orient. Many newspapers in the Greek kingdom began to openly proclaim their fear of Panslavism, something that was not obvious in previous years. For example, *Ελληνικός Λαός* warned that in the event of a Russian victory over the Ottomans "we will get drawn in by Slavism". But the opposing scenario – an Ottoman win – was also terrifying, at least to the same title, on the basis that it would lead to a massacre of the Christians. The paper therefore called for intervention, but not directly on the part of the Greek state: "it is Hellenism that has to take action and not Greece or the Greek state". In accordance with its editorial line, the prospect of Hellenism taking action referred to various non-governmental initiatives by the Greeks in Ottoman-controlled areas.[49]

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[48] *Αλήθεια* (21 January 1877 and 29 January 1877). Also, *Ο Ελληνικός Λαός* (15 January 1877).
[49] *Ο Ελληνικός Λαός* (7 May 1877).

The royalist newspaper *Εθνοφύλαξ* was prominent in raising awareness of the Panslavist threat.[50] During the summer of 1877, a series of articles discussed the Greek role in the Eastern Crisis and the relationship between Hellenism and Slavism. For the editor, what was at stake during the Eastern Crisis was whether ancient Greece would reemerge as a "civilising genius" or whether Bulgarian "despotism" would dominate instead. The paper described both the Greeks and the Slavs as the "inheritors" of the empire. However, they represented conflicting doctrines on how to exact this inheritance. Panslavism was assisted by the Russian Empire through its funds, diplomats, agents and propagandists. On the other hand, Hellenism was presumed to operate through spiritual means, like the work of teachers and associations that promoted Greek culture. For the paper, these two battles were irreconcilable: they could "not ally together; it is not possible to ally together".[51]

In this way, Greece was presented as seeking justice for historical reasons; Greece was also the only nation that could take responsibility for "freedom and regeneration of the Orient". Greece was described as the "spirit of civilisation", a "spirit of freedom and a constitutional state […] where no right is suppressed and no voice is silenced". On the contrary, Russia – which was presented as the political force behind the Panslavist movement – was seen as a force of occupation, which embodied a "spirit of assimilation and of fanaticism". In a similar way, Bulgarians and "the other eastern people", who were identified by *Εθνοφύλαξ* with Russia, were pictured as vehicles of despotism, as "semi-barbarians and uneducated in the majority".[52]

Of course, the above descriptions and dichotomies were not merely aimed at the internal audience in Greece, but primarily at Europeans. *Εθνοφύλαξ* transferred the ultimate burden of decision-making to the European powers, who were encouraged to decide whether they would support freedom through Greece, or despotism through Russia and Bulgaria: "In Bulgaria there is a battle between two versions of despotism, while the whole world is waiting for the light of freedom to come," as the main article stated. On the other hand, Greece and Hellenism were pictured as having long been forces that opposed "national and religious proselytism", and it was with such forces that European powers needed to cooperate in order to promote "civilisation and freedom".[53]

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[50] *Εθνοφύλαξ* (1865–1880) was also a strong opponent of Koumoundouros. See Mager, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Τύπου* [History of the Greek press], pp. 91–92.

[51] *Εθνοφύλαξ* (18 July 1877 and 14 August 1877).

[52] *Εθνοφύλαξ* (8 August 1877 and 22 August 1877).

[53] *Εθνοφύλαξ* (20 August 1877).

As for the Slavic uprising and the Greek position, according to *Εθνοφύλαξ*, it was the Panslavist ideology that had undergirded all uprising movements in the Balkans and was consequently trying to take control of the Eastern Question and create feelings of animosity between the Slavs and the Greeks. Panslavists were seen as attempting to engage Greece in the crisis in order to expose it to danger and increase their own gains: "in many ways Panslavism tried to push Greece into the battle in order to take advantage of its losses and put its future in danger". This was why the slogan of the Greek nation was, according to *Εθνοφύλαξ*, "no Greek blood in favour of Slavic interests!"[54] This innovation explicitly reintroduced race into the public discourse, as Koumoundouros had done in parliament several months before, in October 1876. All of these opinions led to the same conclusion: Greece had no other option but to remain neutral, observe ongoing developments and prepare for a possible future intervention. Both the Greek state and Hellenism in general, it was emphasised, should not be drawn into the conflict.

Developments in the Eastern Crisis and the shift of European interest towards the Christian Slavs of the Ottoman Empire affected Greek public discourses on the Slavic movement. Hellenism seemed to be restricted by two frontiers: the first was Ottoman domination, the status quo, and European diplomacy; the second was the Slavic independence movement and its Russian support. It seemed that throughout the Eastern Crisis, the more the Christian Slavs managed to achieve autonomy and independence, the more threatened the Greeks felt. This growing perception of the threat posed to Hellenism further extended the political frontier that the Greeks were introducing into their relationship with the Slavs. National and racial elements were both added to the discourses of politicians and the press, increasing the political antagonism between the competing national projects. The use of ethno-racial language within the Greek kingdom certainly affected the Greeks of the empire. After 1876 there was a more forceful intervention by both state and private institutions in the fight against Bulgarian nationalism and the exarchate, and a renewed battle to promote the Greek national project.[55]

The Eastern Crisis and Greek-Bulgarian National Antagonism

The end of the Russo-Turkish War in early 1878 left a bitter aftertaste in Greece: the Slavs seemed to have won out in every respect. The peace treaty signed in San Stefano (19 February/3 March 1878) established "Greater Bulgaria", which

[54] *Εθνοφύλαξ* (24 August 1877 and 28 August 1877).

[55] Dakin, *Ενοποίηση της Ελλάδας* [*Unification of Greece*], pp. 196–200.

included territories with large Greek Orthodox populations, such as Macedonia and Thrace. When the final terms of the treaty became publicly known, large rallies were organised in the Greek capital, with disappointed demonstrators demanding war as a means to defend the rights of Greeks abroad. In January, the unrest reached a critical apex when a mob tried to storm the residence of the prime minister. Five people were killed and several wounded after being shot by the army, and the government collapsed.[56] Some days later, the Greek army marched into Thessaly, not with the stated intention to declare war on the Ottomans, but ostensibly in order to "guarantee the security of the Greeks". The Greek army was immediately obliged to withdraw by the Great Powers.[57] Unrest also spread among the Greeks of the empire. Throughout the whole spring of 1878, clashes between armed Greek bands and Ottoman soldiers took place in Crete, Thessaly and Epirus. Less than one week after the final signing of the Treaty of San Stefano, an armed uprising began in Thessaly, which resulted in the establishment of a so-called Provisional Administration of Domokos Province. Moreover, Greek associations from Macedonia and Thrace sent letters to the European governments complaining about the delineation of the borders of Bulgaria in the treaty.[58]

The Slavic revolts, and especially the Bulgarian Uprising, had a significant impact in the Ottoman Balkan territories, such as Macedonia, where antagonism between the Greek and Bulgarian national projects reached a high point. Much of the Slavic-speaking population, who had followed the Bulgarian Exarchate against the Ecumenical Patriarchate, now shifted back to the former, fearing Ottoman reprisals.[59] Greek diplomats in the area did not truly remain neutral; they unofficially intervened in order to assist this

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[56] *Αλήθεια* (16 January 1878); *Ο Έλλην* (18 January 1878).

[57] *Η Ώρα* (22 January 1878). The intervention was met with delight by both the Greek press and public opinion, but the army withdrew some days later, as the Greek government was – according to the foreign minister – "obliged" to do so. *Αλήθεια* (30 January 1878).

[58] It was reported that there were 8,000 armed civilians in total who moved against the Ottomans: of them, 6,000 were in the great plain of Thessaly, and 2,000 in the mountains to the west. *Η Ώρα* (11 March 1878 and 3 April 1878).

[59] Roudometof, *Collective Memory*, p. 5. For example, by the end of the summer of 1876, 45 out of the 47 villages in the region of Nevrokopi, Drama sanjak, in southeastern Macedonia, which had previously followed the exarchate, now declared their support for the patriarchate. Kyriakos Lykourinos, "Η διείσδυση της Βουλγαρικής εθνικής κίνησης στην περιοχή της Δράμας και η αντιμετώπιση της από το Ελληνικό υποπροξενείο Καβάλας κατά την περίοδο της 'Ανατολικής Κρίσης' (1875–1878)" [Infiltration of the Bulgarian national movement in the Drama area, and its confrontation by the Greek sub-consulate of Kavala during the 'Eastern Crisis' (1875–1878)], in *Η Δράμα και η περιοχή της: Ιστορία*

movement. One example of the growing degree of intervention to assist the Greek national cause became apparent in the operation of the sub-consulate of Kavala. Since 1876, the sub-consulate had dealt almost exclusively with Greek trade issues in the Ottoman Empire. After 1876, however, a significant portion of its workload became concerned with confronting the Bulgarian national movement in southeastern Macedonia. In order to do so, the sub-consulate established a network of informants and collaborators. The local consuls tried to include the bishops of the patriarchate in these efforts. By the summer of 1876, the consuls redoubled their efforts to recruit the bishops, and gave them specific recommendations on how to deal with particular Bulgarian agents.[60]

This example shows that it was a crucial time for the consulates in sensitive areas to start acting as centres of Greek irredentist efforts. Official institutions began to work in close cooperation with Greek community schools, Orthodox churches, cultural associations and other initiatives to promote the Greek national myth and ethnically convert the locals, opposing the Bulgarian, Serbian and other similar institutions as antagonistic to their cause.[61] Through the Greek–Bulgarian national antagonism, education in the Ottoman Empire became closely linked to irredentist politics. The antagonism that emerged between the Greek and Bulgarian national projects in the southern Balkans encouraged the application of similar policies on both sides, which in turn functioned as central elements of their foreign policies.[62]

The end of the Eastern Crisis – marked by the Treaty of Berlin in July 1878, which superseded that of San Stefano – ushered in a new status quo to the Balkans. It recognised *de jure* independence for Bulgaria – albeit with less generous borders than those proposed at San Stefano – and for Serbia, Romania and Montenegro.

και πολιτισμός [Drama and its region: history and civilisation], Drama: Municipality of Drama, 2013, pp. 567–605.

[60] Lykourinos, "Η διείσδυση" [Infiltration], p. 518; Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*, p. 117.

[61] Konstantinos A. Vakalopoulos, *Modern History of Macedonia (1830–1912),* Thessaloniki: Barbounakis, 1988, pp. 179–180; Lykourinos, "Η διείσδυση" [Infiltration], pp. 579–580. As Kitromilides argues, the way the Greek state promoted national ideology in the Balkan area during the nineteenth century can be viewed as one of the characteristic examples of the role of the state in the promotion of national ideology in the area. Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans", *European History Quarterly* 19/2 (1989), pp. 160 and 163–177.

[62] Eleni B. Belia, *Εκπαίδευση και αλυτρωτική πολιτική: Η περίπτωση της Θράκης, 1856–1912* [Education and irredentist policies: the case of Thrace, 1856–1912], Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1995, p. 126; Vakalopoulos, *Modern History*, p. 161; Barbara Jelavič, *History of the Balkans*, vol. 2, *Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 89.

The treaty also signalled a defining moment for Greek national aspirations – in much the same way as the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate had also been – as for the first time other nations besides Greece were recognised as independent. Nonetheless, the new treaty did not meet all of the demands of the Balkan nationalities. These demands now conflicted violently with one another, auguring a new stage in the national struggle.[63] The recognition of Bulgarian independence put an end to the Greek dream of a Hellenic empire and of a Greek state that would include all the Christian Orthodox population of the Balkans. At the same time, it renewed and intensified the antagonism between the Greek and Bulgarian kingdoms for the Ottoman Balkan territories. There, Christian communities continued to fight for the domination of one or the other's national project and ecclesiastical doctrine. The expanding exarchate, together with the self-governing Bulgarian territories, provided the institutional framework for Bulgarian propaganda in contested areas; similarly, the Greek Church and the Greek state provided the necessary framework for the establishment of Greek propaganda.

Conclusion

Revolts by newly emerging Balkan nations and European support for the Christian Slavs after the Batak massacre were interpreted in different ways within Greece. Despite official neutrality during the revolts, public debates and political struggles took the form of a nationalistic discourse that did not always perceive Hellenism as an ecumenical idea that could include all the Orthodox people of the Balkans. Public discourses in the press and parliament manifest how an exclusivist rhetoric that differentiated the Greeks from the Slavs on both ethnic and racial terms was produced and reproduced. This was the case even for the Koumoundouros government, which was often perceived to have been working in pursuit of an Orthodox coalition under the protection of Russia.

The Slavic revolts marked the collapse of the pro-Russian strategy and a rise in anti-Slavic sentiments in Greece. Alignment with the Ottomans in order to address the Slavic threat emerged as the only option. Hellenism and Slavism were presented as mutually exclusive by many commentators. This view was advanced within Greece both by those who advocated a coalition of all Orthodox people, and by those who saw Hellenism as a force that could spiritually occupy the Ottoman Empire. The introduction of a more ethno-racial language within the Greek kingdom certainly affected the Greeks of the empire and the operations of the various institutions that promoted Greek national ideas.

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[63] L. S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, London: Hurst, 2000, pp. 468–469. Anderson, *Eastern Question*, pp. 217–218.

Underscoring the importance of the 1875–78 period does not necessarily imply that the ideology of anti-Slavism in Greece was a product of the Eastern Crisis. What has been emphasised is that this was a crucial period with respect to the introduction of a clear distinction, on both an ethnic and a racial basis, between the Greeks and other Balkan nations. Discussions both in the Greek parliament and Athenian press show how the events were interpreted inside the Greek kingdom in a way that divisions between "us" and "others" were constructed and highlighted.

The Eastern Crisis left deep divisions in the relationship between the Greeks and other nations of the southern Balkans, especially the Bulgarians. The process of the nation-states' emergence through their separation from the Ottoman Empire brought them into antagonism with one another, over both the succession of territories and the cultural and religious particularities of their populations. Emerging national projects constructed the imperial universality of the Ottoman Empire as an *other* from which national particularities had to separate. However, the emerging particularities of the nation-states led to antagonistic relations with one another as well. For the Greeks, Bulgarian nationalism was to become the primary antagonistic *other* during this period. In the aftermath of the crisis, Bulgarian and Greek nationalisms occupied opposing positions and built competing national projects. This competition reached its peak in the form of an armed struggle a few decades later, and its traces were felt through a large part of the twentieth century.

Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Athens