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Ada Dialla, Η Ρωσική Αυτοκρατορία και ο ελληνικός κόσμος: Τοπικές, ευρωπαϊκές και παγκόσμιες ιστορίες στην Εποχή των Επαναστάσεων, [The Russian Empire and the Greek world: Local, European and Global Histories in the Age of Revolutions]

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Ada Dialla,
Η ΡΩΣΙΚΗ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΙΑ ΚΑΙ Ο ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΣ ΚΟΣΜΟΣ: ΤΟΠΙΚΕΣ, ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΓΚΟΣΜΙΕΣ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΕΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΕΠΟΧΗ ΤΩΝ ΕΠΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΕΩΝ,
[The Russian Empire and the Greek world: Local, European and Global Histories in the Age of Revolutions],
Athens: Alexandria, 2023, 327 pages.

The intricate and polymorphous connections shared between Greece and the Land of the Volga have never failed to captivate the intellectual curiosity of historians immersed in the study of Balkan history. The former paved the way for national movements to envision their liberation while the latter, a Eurasian power persistently traversing the boundaries between solidarity and lofty calculation, served as the principal force which counterbalanced Ottoman autocracy – but was also not averse to nurturing illusions on the true extent of its commitment towards its "subjugated brethren".

The spirit of this homodoxic kinship – already precariously sustained under the vicissitudes of Great Power rivalries in the nascent Kingdom of Greece – would be ruptured by a new movement which began to crystallise in the mid-nineteenth century, even though its seeds had already been planted in the early 1800s when the Russian foreign minister, Adam Czartoryski, outlined his vision of a Euro-Slavic federation. Grounded not merely on religious bonds but also on linguistic and cultural affinities, Pan-Slavism profoundly magnified its radiance in the Balkan peninsula when the Bulgarian Exarchate was established by *firman* in 1870. National aspirations would be kindled anew under the high patronage of Saint Petersburg – coupled with expansionist visions which conflicted with the territorial project of the Greek state. Hitherto perceived as reflexive, Russia's half-imaginary devotion to the restoration of Byzantium would thenceforward be fractured, superseded by the more pragmatic goal of controlling the Straits and gaining access to the Aegean via Bulgaria – which it would not hesitate to support in its long scramble for territory south of the Haemus.

On this basis, it becomes clear that the period on which Ada Dialla's work is focused constitutes a high point of Greek influence in Russia and, conversely, of the allure of the "Northern Bear" in Greek social and political life. Its zenith would be reached at the height of the Crimean War, while its nadir would take place three-quarters of a century later, as the Comintern pronounced itself in favour of an "autonomous and independent Macedonia and Thrace". Dialla constructs

a compelling narrative of the diplomatic discussions which preceded the 1821 Revolution. Yet it is much more than a history of the relations between Greeks and the Russian Empire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As its subtitle suggests, her chief goal is to revisit major events of the time from a broader lens, connected with global historical perspectives, exploring the ways in which language is employed in international affairs and the extent to which they impact their development.

The book is subdivided into three parts. Dialla begins in the first by employing Mary Louise Pratt's concept of a "contact zone" to describe the Mediterranean and to chart the evolution of Russia's presence there and its growing perception by subjugated and repressed peoples as a liberating force vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire. The Russo-Ottoman War of 1768–1774 marked the beginning of the protracted unravelling of Ottoman authority in Eurasia. By way of the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji, Russia would thereafter manage to dominate the Black Sea, expand its commercial interests and establish itself as a powerful presence in the Mediterranean, where it would join the Great Powers in vying for influence in, among other places, the Aegean, the Ionian Islands and the Peloponnese. Over the next decade, the prospect of Greek liberation would transform from a diversionary tactic to a strategic, if not visionary goal voiced by a string of tzars, from Catherine the Great to Alexander II. The Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815) would once again impact on the power reconfiguration in the region, further enhancing the diplomatic and military reach of Saint Petersburg as a guarantor of Europe's security framework. The Greek Orthodox factor would ascend to a central position in European geopolitics, wherein pivotal figures like the Corfiot diplomat and statesman Ioannis Kapodistrias (1776–1831) would play a defining role.

The second segment focuses on the years between 1815 and 1821, as a period which marked the birth of the modern world and the concomitant development of a vocabulary which articulated the concerns of the Great Powers with their new legitimising narratives. In order to be disassociated from the Jacobinism and the political perils it might generate, the meaning of terms like human rights, nation, citizenship, humanism, constitutionalism and sovereignty shifted, on the basis of a new framework that underpinned international law. Minorities were perceived as entities to be defended and supported, opening the way for humanitarian interventions. This impacted directly on the arguments employed to justify the Greek struggle as a national fight waged in the name of the Christian community of Europe against enslavement by the Muslims.

In the final part, the book addresses the ways in which the insurgents were perceived but also how they described themselves in the early days of the 1821 Revolution. This coincided with the aforementioned critical juncture in European diplomatic affairs, which saw the establishment of novel vocabulary associated with the modern era, centring on humanitarian values and practices. The concepts of sovereignty, nation, race and *millets* were also probed as well as their applicability in the case of insurrectionary movements that

took on civil war characteristics.Dialla contends that international perceptions of the revolution were deliberately crafted using the language of the new status quo, reframing it in religious and cultural terms as a national revolutionary fight for independence over illegitimate, tyrannical rule. By virtue of this, the discourses employed by the Greek revolutionaries, and more broadly the philhellenic rhetoric of their international supporters, merged seamlessly with the language of humanism and humanitarian values.

Faced with the Sublime Porte's anti-Russian proclamations after the outbreak of the revolution, Alexander I, a firm believer in the centrality of the Concert of Europe, would not escalate the conflict despite the growing pro-Orthodox sentiments of the public opinion he faced. He likened the uprising to Russia's emergence from Mongol domination, dismissing any intimation that it was inspired by liberal or Western Enlightenment principles. It would take seven more years before his successor, Nicholas I, would wage war against the Ottoman Empire, as his foreign minister, Count Nesselrode, would point out the absence of any conventions committing Russia to adopt a particular position on the Eastern Question. Amplifying the claim put forth by Richard Stites, who emphasises the crucial role of the international factor in the Greek Revolution's successful outcome, Dialla underscores the less visible battles that helped to shift Great Power diplomacy on the Greek Question.

In the same vein, the book stresses the key part played by Kapodistrias in forging this transnational discourse along with other like-minded Greeks such as Alexandru Sturdza, Ignatios of Hungary-Wallachia and Alexandros Mavrokordatos. The discussion also includes the religious traditionalists who had helped to consolidate this current within the political and military establishment and advocated for Russian dynastic succession in Constantinople. Composed chiefly of diplomats, who included Pozzo di Borgo, Christoph von Lieven, Yuri Golovkin and Grigori Stroganov, they collectively formed what would become known as the War Party. This was a vestigial but clearly discernible remnant of the spirit of the Decembrist uprising a few years earlier which has received renewed scholarly attention in the last few years. Still, its effect on Russian foreign policy would not be overpowering, as attested to by the outcome of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828–1829.. The Treaty of Adrianople would lead to the recognition of Greek autonomy but fall short of granting it independence or even of expanding its territorial gains to the degree envisaged at the time by the Greek revolutionaries and their supporters in Russia.

In her latest work, Dialla makes an invaluable contribution to the bibliography on the Greek Revolution, providing a comprehensive and insightful resource for researchers. It demonstrates the pivotal role played by Russia in the transnational intellectual and political struggle to define the 1821 Revolution to the world at large. These efforts would give an impetus to the promotion of nationhood as a right that was neither inimical nor dissonant to the imperialist security system of Europe that was under construction. Established on a cornucopia of archival scrutiny

and drawing from novel polycentric approaches to revolutions, by encompassing the expanse from the New World to the Old World and from Lebanon to Russia, her work weaves a captivating chronicle of the Greek Revolution's success.

Exploring the connection between public rhetoric and diplomatic language and the extent of their influence on the development of a new discursive framework for Europe's collective security in the post-Napoleonic era, the work under review reveals the fundamentally transnational nature of the struggle, which unfolded in defiance of the traditional dichotomies between the local and the international, the imperial and the national, the "Enlightened" West and the "primitive" East. At the same time, Dialla's study indicates how Kapodistrias and his circle were instrumental in helping the Greek revolutionary leadership articulate its distinctive voice as it strove to declare and assert its national identity in the hostile post-Napoleonic environment, succeeding it dissociating it from the much-anathematised revolts in Italy and the Iberian Peninsula.

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