

BYZANTINE DREAM OF ATHENIAN POLITICIANS (XIX-XX CENTURIES)

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Abstract

The political elite of the Kingdom of Greece interpreted the Eastern Question in a specific manner, i.e., as an expectation of collecting territories considered to be Greek in one state. This perception, conceptualized in the Megale Idea, had its goals, methods and opponents. It was the guideline of Greek foreign policy the whole 19th century until 1922 and had at least two attempts of its revival later.

Keywords: Balkan studies, Modern Greek Studies, Megale Idea, Greek-Turkish Relations, Eastern Question

The Eastern Question since it emerged in the European affairs in the 18th century was associated with the future of the European provinces of the weakening Ottoman Empire. The first nation-states in the Balkans appeared in the first half of the 19th century as a result of the early approaches to solve the Eastern Question. Certainly, the main players of the game were the most powerful European countries, the so-called *great powers*. So, the process of nation-state building in the Balkans was not an independent one, but was closely related to their interests and international conflicts in general.

An enrichment of the political map of Europe by the Kingdom of Greece seems to be the result of an attempt to cure *the sick man of Europe*¹ amputating one of his limbs. The detailed research, however, shows the case was more complicated. The Greek War of Independence played a great role in achieving political freedom and the role of the great powers was not little either. Finally, Greek national state appeared: small and poor, but with huge ambitions; formally independent, but informally a plaything of the great powers.

All these circumstances deeply influenced ideologies and mentalities of the newborn state and determined specific perception of the Eastern Question. However, favorable conditions for this specific perception had come into being much earlier than the Greek independent state appeared. The époque of the Enlightenment in Greek lands (middle 18th century – 1821) encouraged growing of national consciousness among the Greeks and prepared necessary instruments for shaping an ethnocentric discourse. The Enlightenment stimulated mental secularization of Greeks, replacing traditional religious identity of Rum (Orthodox) population of the Ottoman Empire by new, national one. The political vocabulary of the époque was enriched with the terms *ἔθνος* (nation) and *Ἕλληνες* (ethnic Greeks), which previously had been associated with pagan tradition. Greek Enlightenment formulated the conception of Greek national identity and worked out its principle criteria:

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¹ The phrase is attributed to Tsar Nicholas I.

γλώσσα (Greek language), θρησκεία (Orthodoxy) and παιδεία (education). These three institutions became main tools for generating new ethnocentric discourse instead of traditional, religious one.

The ethnocentric discourse formed the basis for the Greek state ideology and, later, a foreign-policy doctrine. The official ideology of the Kingdom of Greece, associated with the Megale Idea, began to clarify at the end of the 1830s though the term itself was expressed in 1844. The events related to the Greek-Turkish negotiations on bilateral commercial agreement, on the one hand, and new aggravation of the Eastern Question – the Eastern crisis of 1839-1841, on the other hand, might be seen as an indicator of the relevant trends.

Traditional economic links between Greece and the Ottoman Empire were cut off as a result of a successful War of Independence. Greece desperately needed a commercial treaty with its former master and enemy. So, the Greek minister Zographos was negotiating this subject in 1839-1840. Finally, the agreement was signed. Its articles were quite acceptable for Greece, but the Greeks wanted more than that. Consequently, the treaty was not ratified by Greece and Zographos' house was pelted with stones². In the meanwhile, the Eastern Crisis of 1839-1841 went into high gear. It demonstrated progressive weakness of the Ottoman Empire and its growing dependence on the European great powers³. That was what Greek hopes on further territorial extension and economic bonuses at the expense of the Ottoman Empire were based on. To achieve these goals Greeks tried to use a model that had shown itself to good advantage during the Greek War of Independence: the rebellion in the limitrophe provinces of the Ottoman Empire strengthened with the great powers' support. So Athens stimulated brigandage in the limitrophe provinces. Volunteers from Greece easily crossed the border with Turkey, and the Greek officers were sent to form and lead the detachments of rebels. Athens was waiting for an immediate interference of the great powers, but this time it was in vain.

These events demonstrated perception of the Eastern Question by the Greek political elite: the weakening Ottoman Empire must neither be cut into small parts in form of nation-states for the other Balkan peoples, nor divided between the great powers. It must be joined to Greece and that was one of the meanings of national revival for Greeks.

By that time the époque of romanticism began in Greece. Transfer of the capital of the state from Nafplio to Athens, creation of the special language of *katharevousa*, and the architectural aspect of the growing city of Athens showed imperial ambitions of Greek political elite⁴. The term *Megale Idea* was officially mentioned for the first time in the middle of 1840s⁵ and gradually conceptualized

² For details see: Ольга Петрунина, *Греческая нация и государство в XVIII-XX вв.*, Москва: КДУ, 2010, с. 307-308.

³ About Greece and this Eastern Crisis see: John A. Petropoulos, *Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece, 1833-1843*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, p.344 ff.

⁴ See: Αλέξης Πολίτης, *Ρομαντικά χρόνια. Ιδεολογίες και Νοοτροπίες στην Ελλάδα του 1830-1880*, Αθήνα: Εταιρεία μελέτης Νέου Ελληνισμού - Μνήμων, 1993.

⁵ *Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις της Τρίτης Σεπτεμβρίου Εθνικής των Ελλήνων Συνελεύσεως*, Αθήνα: Ποντίκι, 1993. σ.190-194.

as a state ideology. It was not a mere coincidence that Colettis declared the idea of the Great Greece the same year when Garashanin formulated the idea of the Great Serbia. Greece and Serbia were the earliest independent nation-states in the Balkans that had seceded from the Ottoman Empire.

The starting point of the Megale Idea was an idea of decline of the Greek nation during the previous époque. There was no consensus when that decline had begun. The time of Ottoman domination was unanimously considered decadent, but some authors included Byzantine time and even the Roman époque (from 146 B.C.) into the decadent period too. In the époque of decline the Greeks lived under political, cultural and religious pressure. So, the Greek nation had to carry out a task of national revival.

Political revival meant building an independent powerful state, including all the Greeks and all the lands, considered to be historically Greek. Cultural revival stipulated purifying national culture of all alien elements and returning it to the leading positions in Europe (concept of *metalambathevisis*). Finally, religious revival meant creating an independent Church. Later some intellectuals (Giannopoulos, Heretis, Sikelianos) understood this point in a different manner: they rejected Christianity in general and returned to pagan tradition.

In 1840-1850s the Megale Idea as an idea of national revival of the Greek nation was very popular with Greeks. That was one of the most important factors that guaranteed electoral victory to Colettis (1844, 1847). It formed the basis for creating the Greek foreign-policy doctrine then. This doctrine concentrated only upon one aspect of Greek national revival, i.e., territorial extension of the Greek state at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. Though Greek political leaders adopted a European world-view and therefore conceived Byzantium as a dark period of Greek history, in effect they wanted to recreate a Christian Greek empire within former Byzantine borders. Hope of recreating Byzantium was cherished by Greek people as well as by politicians. Prophecies about the forthcoming revival of Byzantium became more and more popular with Greeks in 1830-1840s⁶. The beginning of the Crimean war concurred with the culmination of their expectations: in 1853 it was 400 years since Constantinople had fallen while the prophecies spoke about a 400-year yoke. All Greece was waiting for the decisive events.

Even the king Othon was *megaloideatis* (an adherent of the Megale Idea). Some contemporaries thought that the government successfully used the Megale Idea⁷ to refocus people's attention from internal problems to an external enemy. The king clearly demonstrated his position during the Mousouros' incident⁸. At the beginning of 1847 a diplomatic representative of the Ottoman Empire in Greece Constantinos Mousouros (ethnic Greek) refused to issue a visa to the queen Amalia's adjutant Tzamis Karatasos because of his participation in a detachment of insurgents in the Ottoman Empire during the former Eastern

⁶ For details see: Ольга Петрунина, *Греческая нация и государство в XVIII-XX вв.*, Москва: КДУ, 2010, с. 294-303.

⁷ Νικόλαος Δραγούμης, *Ιστορική Αναμνήσεις, Τ. Β'*, Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Ερμής, 1973, σ. 116.

⁸ See: *Τα κατά Μουσσούρον ή η Ελληνοτουρκική διαφορά*, Αθήνα, 1848.

crisis. The next day there was a state reception in Palace, where the king openly insulted Mousourous. This action had grave consequences: diplomatic relations between Greece and the Ottoman Empire were broken off. The affair was coming to a new war, which was prevented through the mediation of the Russian and British diplomacy. The conflict could be finally resolved only after the death of Colettis in September 1847, but Greece had to apologize. Great Britain and France knew about these expectancies of the king Othon and his environment, so during the Crimean war they did their best to prevent the involvement of Greece into the war, up to occupation of its capital. To encourage an antiiothonian campaign political opposition later used this humiliation of Greece. The king was accused of violation of national interests. New generation of politicians, which had no experience in all the difficulties of the War of Independence, aspired to more active foreign policy. So, Othon was dethroned.

Even in 1840s we can see two main trends that later became two methods of the Megale Idea: an active one, i.e., the method of “the armed struggle” that meant outward expansion, and a passive one, i.e., the method of “the organic work” that meant internal reforms. The outward expansion method was the main stream of Greek foreign policy until the catastrophe of 1922. Each period it had concrete goals: in 1840-1870s they were Thessaly and Epirus; in 1890-1900s – Macedonia and Crete; during World War I and after it – Constantinople, Asia Minor and Athos. We can see that Greeks claimed exclusively the territories of the Ottoman Empire and never showed any interest in other lands with Greek population such as South Italy or North Africa (Egypt).

The Megale Idea as a foreign-policy doctrine was developed within the active method during the years of Colettis’ administration. It was formulated in so-called *Mavrocordatos’ memorandum* in 1848⁹. This document advanced a thesis of diachronic and geographic unity of the Greek nation and grounded the priorities of Greek foreign policy on it. The first one was the consolidation of all the Greek lands in one state, notably in the Kingdom of Greece. The second one was power politics to make Greece a full member of international community. To achieve these strategic goals Greece had to fulfill two main tactical tasks. The first one was the annexation of some Ottoman provinces – Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia and Crete. There was no possibility of joining Constantinople and the other Greek lands because at that moment Greece was too weak both for conquering and then retaining them. The second task was to weaken the Ottoman Empire and the Sultan’s power. To fulfill these tasks two basic tools could be used – an armed force and a diplomatic protection of the great powers. The European governments often attend to public opinion, so it should be influenced through a local press. As far as Greek army was weak and small, partisan detachments should be used. Greeks already had best practices in partisan warfare during wartime and in forming secret societies in times of peace. The memorandum also proposed spreading the right propaganda among the Greeks of the limitrophe provinces.

⁹ Published in: Νικόλαος Δραγούμης, *Ιστορικοί Αναμνήσεις. Τ. Β΄*, Αθήνα: Εκδοτική Ερμής, 1973, σ. 117-129.

It should be noted that in this memorandum we could already find rudiments of the organic work method. As a tool for successful foreign policy Mavrocordatos regarded solving some internal problems such as: reconciliation of the conflict between Church of Greece and Constantinople Patriarchy; promotion of trade by signing a commercial treaty with the Ottoman Empire; increase and re-equipment of the army and navy, improving officers' professional skills. Some of these tasks were soon fulfilled. Relations between Church of Greece and Constantinople Patriarchy were arranged already before the Crimean war. At the beginning of the war diplomatic relations between Greece and the Ottoman Empire were cut off but very soon they were restored. So long-expected commercial treaty was signed in 1855 and was in force until 1897. It was of great significance both for Greece and for Greek population of the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand, according to this treatment Greece was given economic possibilities in the Ottoman Empire equal to those of other European countries, it was included into capitulations regime. On the other hand, this treaty improved the development of Greek population and its economic growth within the Ottoman Empire.

Ex facte the organic work method is not associated with the Megale Idea, but in fact it is. It was usually used in periods when active policy was impossible. In the 19th century the most exciting period for both trends was the 1870-1890s, when two parties dominated in the Greek political life. The first one was a party of Coumoundouros – Deligianis. It represented the strata of rich landowners, financial and commercial business. The second one was the Fifth party of Tricoupis, which represented the industrial bourgeoisie, intellectuals and prosperous peasantry¹⁰. In the 1870s – early 1880s both parties tried to accommodate themselves to political situation, they adjusted their programs to rapidly changing circumstances. At that time the way of “the organic work” was preferable. Internal reforms of Tricoupis, Coumoundouros and later Theotokis aimed at building a strong and really independent state. At the same time they opened up necessary facilities for further territorial extension. Only the international crises of 1877-78 and 1885-1886 provided the opportunities for realizing the way of “the armed struggle”. But from the late 1880s both parties passed on to well-defined guidelines: Tricoupis is identified with the way of “the organic work”, meanwhile Deligianis with the way of “the armed struggle”. The implementation of their programs was not effective. On the one hand, Tricoupis' economic reforms badly damaged the finances of the Kingdom of Greece and led it to bankruptcy. On the other hand, the Greek-Turkish war of 1897, provoked by Deligianis and his government, was shamefully lost.

But the defeat of 1897 did not inflict any damage on the Megale Idea. On the contrary its popularity increased. At the beginning of the 20th century it influenced the Struggle in Macedonia with such figures as Ion Dragoumis and Germanos Caravangelis. Later (until the 1930s) Venizelos became the

¹⁰ Κατερίνα Γαρδίκια-Αλεξανδροπούλου, «Η ελληνική κοινωνία την εποχή του Χ. Τρικούπη», *Όψεις της ελληνικής κοινωνίας του 19ου αιώνα*, Αθήνα: Εστία, 1984. σ. 177-191.

main bearer of the Megale Idea. For a small period he was a partisan of “the organic work” method. Support of the army officers gave Venizelos a chance to put through his large-scale program of reforms. In fact, Tricoupis has already intended the implemented by Venizelos measures. By that time, however, the “organic work” method became old-fashioned. Already in 1912 Greece became a participant of an armed conflict in the Balkans. Two Balkan wars deprived the Ottoman Empire of almost all its possessions in Europe and at the same time rewarded Greece with new vast acquisitions. The Kingdom of Greece joined South Epirus, 40 % of Macedonia, Crete and some other islands. It was a great success of the Megale Idea. Since that point the Eastern Question has entered a new stage: some Ottoman provinces were no more an object of its neighbors’ longing desires, but the very existence of the decrepit Empire now was in doubt.

For the next five years, following the events on the international scene, Venizelos had to concentrate on the foreign policy. In 1917 he resumed the reforms planned earlier, without missing an opportunity to get new territories. The Sevres Treaty (1920) granting Constantinople and a part of Asia Minor to the Greeks was the last success of Venizelos on the way of the actualization of the Megale Idea as a program of the outward expansion. But the liberals lost the 1920 parliamentary elections. The new government of Protopapadakis organized a military expedition (1920-1922) to protect Greek population of Asia Minor and satisfy the claims of Greece in accordance with the conditions of the Sevres Treaty. The defeat of this expedition called “the catastrophe of Asia Minor” tremendously affected all the future of Hellenism. The Greeks not only lost their presence in Asia Minor, but also had to give up the hope of further acquiring those territories. An exchange of populations’ agreement was an important term of the peace treaty with Turkey (1923). After this ethno-territorial demarcation Greece could not use any more the principle of unyoking the co-ethnics as a fundamental of its foreign policy. The Megale Idea as a foreign-policy doctrine met its Waterloo.

Though the Megale Idea was very popular with Greeks in the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, it was not accepted unanimously. There was another idea, i.e., of gradual transformation of the Ottoman Empire that had its adherents too. It was based on an old hope of Christianization of the Muslim Empire. It is known since the first years after the fall of Constantinople, when Gennadius Scholarius had accepted his election as patriarch with hope that he could convert the sultan. This hope proved to be vain, but the idea to Christianize the Empire did not disappear. It was reborn in the 18th century, when the Phanariots were firmly integrated into the Ottoman ruling class. At that time the idea of Christianization assumed an ethnic color and turned into the idea of Hellenization of the Empire. A hundred years later, when the Tanzimat reforms considerably enhanced the well being of the Greek population of the Empire, this idea seemed to become reality. Moreover, there was a difference between self-consciousness of the Greeks of the Kingdom of Greece and their Ottoman compatriots. The first ones perceived themselves as *Greeks* and *Hel-*

ladites, namely descendants of the ancient Hellenes and inhabitants of Greece (Hellas). The other ones called themselves *Romni* and thought that they were first of all successors of Byzantium (New Roman Empire). Their faith in further Hellenization of the Empire contradicted with the idea of the Great Greece. At the same time Greeks wanted to destroy the Ottoman Empire and build the Great Greece on its ruins, *Romni* tried to save and modify it. This idea was familiar to the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Greece too. A religious philosopher Apostolos Makrakis promoted it in the middle of the 19th century. Earlier he had lived in Constantinople and then moved to Greece where he acquired a lot of partisans¹¹.

Later some Greek politicians accepted this idea too. One of its most considerable partisans was Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis. He was a career officer and a diplomat too. He became a notable figure because of his activities during the Struggle for Macedonia (1904-1908). When Greek consul in Thessalonica Lambros Koromilas founded the Greek secret society called Organization in that city, Nikolaidis became its top manager. It is well known that the Organization tried to neutralize the Slav element in Macedonia and prepare accession of this province to Greece¹². So all the activities of the Greek agents on Macedonia might be seen as a valuable contribution to the implementation of the Megale Idea. However, personal views of Nikolaidis were far from that. In fact, he was an enemy of the Megale Idea in its Athenian interpretation. As we can see from the brochure with the same name that he published in 1908 and his diary¹³, he had his own Megale Idea. It was the idea of revival of Byzantium in place of the Ottoman Empire by its Hellenization from inside. He considered the foreign policy of Athens incorrect. The outward expansion could result in acquiring some important territories, but Greece could not expect unification of all Greek lands in the Kingdom of Greece because of the other contenders – the great powers and the other Balkan states. The Hellenization of the Ottoman Empire could solve the problem. Some other Greek politicians, e.g. Nikolaidis' friend and collaborator Ion Dragoumis and his father, shared these views¹⁴. These expectancies became popular especially after the Young Turk revolution. Except Nikolaidis' conception there was another variant of transformation of the Ottoman Empire: some Greeks discussed an idea of a dualistic Greek-Turkish Empire with the capital in Constantinople such as Austria-Hungary¹⁵.

After the Young Turk revolution the Struggle for Macedonia had finished, but Nikolaidis started realization of his conception in Constantinople. There in 1908 he set up the Organization of Constantinople similar to the one in Thessa-

¹¹ John Nicolopoulos, "From Agathangelos to the Megale Idea: Russia and the Emergence of Modern Greek Nationalism", *Balkan Studies*, Vol. 26,1, Thessalonica, 1985, p. 54-55.

¹² Douglas Dakin, *The Greek struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913*, Thessaloniki: Society for Macedonian Studies – Institute for Balkan Studies, 1966, p. 198-220.

¹³ Αθανάσιος Σουλιώτης-Νικολαΐδης, *Ημερολόγιον του Πρώτου Βαλκανικού Πολέμου*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Εταιρεία Μακεδονικών Σπουδών – Ίδρυμα μελετών Χερσονήσου του Αίμου, 1962.

¹⁴ Douglas Dakin, *The Greek struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913*, Thessaloniki: Society for Macedonian Studies – Institute for Balkan Studies, 1966, p. 382-383.

¹⁵ Απόστολος Αλεξανδρής, *Πολιτικά αναμνήσεις*, Πάτρα, 1940, σ. 19.

lonica. Besides that he decided to use legal forms of struggle and cooperated with Greek political organization – Political Union of Greeks in Constantinople. After the beginning of World War I Greek organizations in Constantinople were destroyed by Turks. All hope of Hellenization of the Empire was lost. After the Kemalist revolution it became clear that it was lost forever.

The Megale Idea reached its culmination during the Balkan Wars and the final stage of World War I. Greece had made the largest accretion of its territory then. But in 1922 a hard blow destroyed the Megale Idea in its traditional form and determined the fate of the Greek and Turkish states for the next century. After Lausanne Treaty (1923) and especially after Greek-Turkish Treatment (1930) Greeks could not expect any territorial extension. Even Venizelos, one of the greatest adherents of the Megale Idea, had to turn to the “organic work” method but now without any perspective of the Great Greece. After reflecting upon causes and effects of the catastrophe in Asia Minor, Greeks had to admit that the Megale Idea in its traditional form, that we call a geographic¹⁶ one, had no perspective. So they had to think over another state ideology and foreign-policy doctrine.

The interwar period gave us the first results of this intellectual work: a regenerated Megale Idea in a new – civilizational – form. This new hypostasis of the Megale Idea was a product of Metaxas’ regime characterized as paternalistic benevolent dictatorship of the New Right¹⁷. The dictator himself had formulated his perception of the Megale Idea in “*Epilog to 70 articles*”, which concluded his polemics with Venizelos on pages of *Kathimerini* (Oct. 1934 – Jan. 1935). There he estimated the old Megale Idea as an aspiration for revival of Byzantium as a Greek national empire. As the aim of this form of the Megale Idea was consolidation of all Greek lands in one state, Metaxas called it territorial¹⁸. It was a national liberation ideology of Greek people in the 19th century and it proved itself progressive and creative until the beginning of the next century. Due to the Megale Idea the Greeks had managed to create their own independent state as a result of the War of Independence. Later they expanded it considerably by annexing Thessaly, Macedonia, Crete and Ionian Islands. Though with the lapse of time the Megale Idea began to decay because of baneful influence of western ideologies on Greek society. So it lost its authenticity and was used as a trump card in political games. The other cause of its failure was an element of self-destruction contained in the Megale Idea itself: “our mistake is that we considered possible to get all the Greek nation into one state as the other nations have done it”¹⁹.

¹⁶ We owe D.Tsakonas this term: Δημήτριος Τσάκωνας, *Ελληνικότητα*, Αθήνα: Ελληνικά γράμματα, 1962, σ. 85.

¹⁷ Constantine Sarandis, “The Ideology and Character of the Metaxas Regime”, *The Metaxas Dictatorship: Aspects of Greece, 1936-1940*. Athens: Hellenic Foundation for Defence and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), 1993, p. 167.

¹⁸ Ιωάννης Μεταξάς, *Η ιστορία του Εθνικού Διχασμού (και της μικρασιατικής καταστροφής)*. Αθήνα, 1935. σ. 380-382.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*. Σ. 382.

Metaxas in his reasoning proceeded from perception of the Greek nation as unique and original, bearing no resemblance to other European nations. To consolidate their nations modern Europeans invented some new ideologies like liberalism, fascism or communism. But while the other European nations were born over the last three centuries, the Greek one was much older. It had enriched the humanity with two great civilizations – Ancient Greek and Byzantine ones. They were both based on the same fundamental principle, namely cultural unity. As for a united state, the ancient Greeks never had one, while the Byzantine Empire was a result of specific medieval conditions. In this context Metaxas spoke about the *Third Greek civilization*²⁰. It had to follow the Ancient Greek and Byzantine ones and to be based upon super-ethnic cultural unity. But first of all an internal problem of the Greek nation had to be solved, that is one of the ethnic schism known as confrontation of venizelism and antivenizelism. Its main cause was a large-scale expansion of Greece without adequate measures to ensure socio-political homogenization of populations. Therefore, the matter of schism was a contradiction between the old Helladites and the Greeks of the newly acquired lands, who later joined refugees from Kemalist Turkey.

This form of the Megale Idea neither wanted territorial extension of Greece, nor confined itself to the “organic work”. Modern Greeks must fulfill their historical mission: to be a leader of other peoples as it was in previous époques. This point could be reached by establishing cultural, economic and political influence of Greece in other countries. The idea did not concern large and powerful states such as Germany or France, but had as its objective first of all neighboring Balkan states, then Near East and South Africa. Their peoples were closely related to the Greek world from at least Byzantine time²¹. It was necessary to reestablish Greek influence in these regions for creating strong and powerful Greece. Done, it would open new opportunities for Greek economy and guarantee stability to the main body of new civilization, namely the Greek state. The Metaxas’ theory could become a state ideology though not so advanced as the old Megale Idea, but it did not manage to evolve into a long-time foreign-policy doctrine because of short lifetime of the regime. We could see it in action when World War II began. A successful mobilization of human, military and economic resources guaranteed a long-time successful resistance to Italian intervention. It was a unique example of half a year resistance to fascist aggression that demonstrated a small and weak Balkan country.

The period of Fascist occupation and subsequent civil wars gave no chances to any form of the Megale Idea. But when a relative stability was attained, an opportunity for its revival appeared. The idea of strong Greece became more and more popular with different social strata, first of all, army officers.

²⁰ Metaxas expressed his views in his speeches and diary published many years after his death: Ιωάννης Μεταξάς, *Το προσωπικό του ημερολόγιο*, Τ. 1 – 4, Αθήνα: Ίκαρος, 1964.

²¹ A contemporary of Metaxas historian P.Karolidis considered Christian peoples of Near East to be descendants of the ancient Greeks of Hellenistic and earlier (even Minoan) époques. See: Παύλος Καρολίδης, *Σύγχρονος ιστορία των Ελλήνων και των λοιπών λαών της Ανατολής. Από 1821 μέχρι 1921*. Τ.1-3. Εν Αθήναις, 1922-1923.

The escalation of the Cyprus question and the internal political crisis stimulated their consolidation. The interpretation of the Cyprus question in Greece was based on traditional for the Megale Idea perception of Greece as a state including all Greek lands. But the succession of events did not legitimize these expectations and entailed deterioration of relations between the king and the parliament. Colonels' dictatorship took the place of parliamentary democracy and this new regime created its own vision of strong and great Greece²². The ideology of this regime had a revolutionary form and tried to connect itself with historical revolution of 1821. As far as revolution of 1821 had a national revival as its object, it was a key point of Colonels' regime ideology. An old Masonic symbol of Phoenix, which was commonly used by Philiki Etaireia during the War of Independence, now was reborn as a symbol of national revival of Greece. This new ideology had much in common with Metaxas' one. There were only two main differences: use of revolutionary entourage and involvement of the Orthodox Church in its implementation.

At the same time one more variant of the Megale Idea was brought forward. It was created by I.Romanides²³ and G.Metallinos²⁴ and improved in the following decades. We call it *Romeic theory*. It was based on an original historical and philosophical conception. It postulated that there was no need of creating any new Greek civilization because the old one had not been destroyed. With the Roman conquest it had acquired a new quality: it became formally Roman, informally Greek and got more other peoples involved in it. Greek civilization was single and continuous from the prehistoric period up to modern times. Both modern Greeks were the same as ancient ones and Modern Greek civilization that already exists is the same as Ancient and Byzantine. Even the Ottomans did not destroy it. The problem is not to create a new civilization, but to purify the existing one from every alien element. The decline of Greek-Roman (Romeic) civilization began under the Ottoman domination with spreading of West European world-view and culture. It was destructive for Greek traditional values, culture and education. So Greeks began to lose their uniqueness and

²² The Colonels paid great attention to propaganda of their ideology, so there is no lack in sources. The most important one is multivolume collected speeches of the dictatorship's leader G.Papadopoulos: Γεώργιος Παπαδόπουλος, *Το πιστεύω μας. Τ. 1-7*, Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Γενικής Διεύθυνσης Τύπου, 1968-72. The following are very useful too: Γεώργιος Γεωργαλάς, *Η ιδεολογία της Επανάστασης*, Αθήνα, 1971; Θεοφύλακτος Παπακωνσταντίνου, *Πολιτική αγωγή*, Αθήνα: Καμπανάς, 1970.

²³ I.Romanides expressed some points of this theory in his essays and monographs in 1950-1980s, especially in: Ιωάννης Ρωμανίδης, *Η Δογματική και Συμβολική Θεολογία της Ορθόδοξης Καθολικής Εκκλησίας*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Εκδόσεις Πουρνάρα, 1973; Του ιδίου, *Ρωμηοσύνη - Ρωμανία - Ρούμελη*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Εκδόσεις Πουρνάρα, 1975; Ioannes Romanides, *Franks, Romans, Feudalism and Doctrine, an interplay between Theology and Society*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1981. The most complete edition of his ideas is: Ιωάννης Ρωμανίδης, *Ρωμηοσύνη - Ρωμανία - Ρούμελη*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Εκδόσεις Πουρνάρα, 2002.

²⁴ G.Metallinos added some new details to Romanides' conception. His main works on the topic are: Γεώργιος Μεταλληνός, *Τουρκοκρατία: οι Έλληνες στην Οθωμανική αυτοκρατορία*, Αθήνα: Ακρίτας, 1998; Του ιδίου, *Εκκλησία και πολιτεία στην ορθόδοξη παράδοση*, Αθήνα: Αρμός, 2000; Του ιδίου, *Φωτομαχικά - Αντιφωτομαχικά. Το φως του Παναγίου Τάφου στον διάλογο Διαφωτισμού - Ορθοδοξίας*, Αθήνα: Κάτοπτρο - Ιστορητής, 2001.

national character and to transform into imitators of European culture. One more original point of the Romeic theory says that the Greeks were not unique exponents of their civilization. There was a Greek *Kulturkreis*, to which other Orthodox peoples belonged. It began to disintegrate as a result of growing national consciousness of the Orthodox population in the Balkans and then in Near East. Greeks themselves were initiators of this process. Hostility of the European countries to Orthodoxy and the Greekness was another factor that significantly contributed to it. But Greek civilization was not completely destroyed, so it might be regenerated. The Romeic model of national revival concerned political aspects more than cultural ones. Regenerated Romeic civilization was conceived as a kind of voluntary federation including all the peoples that were formerly its members. Relations between them would be the same, i.e., Greeks would play the leading role meanwhile all the members would have common Romeic consciousness instead of their national one. The internal constitution of this civilization-state would be rather different from modern European realities. The authors of the Romeic theory refused the principle of separation of powers fundamental in modern political science and suggested the restoration of Byzantine principle of symphony of powers. So the Orthodox Church would play a great role in this construction. The long-run prospects of its evolution would involve the Western Europe and revive of the Great Roman Empire. The Romeic oecumene would include the USA and Australia too. Though the Romeic theory was well constructed and had a theoretical ground, it had little in common with real political life.

Finally, we can say that the Eastern Question has been of the utmost importance for Greece from its very beginning up to nowadays. It influenced Greek political, economic and cultural life as well as its foreign policy to a great extent. For Greeks the future of the Ottoman Empire was closely connected with the destiny of their own state. The idea of the Great Greece, the Megale Idea, that became a state ideology, interpreted the Eastern Question in a favorable for Greeks manner. The weakening Ottoman Empire became an object of expansion for the growing Greek state with building of the Great Greece within the Byzantine borders as the ultimate goal. Both methods of its implementation, the "armed struggle" and the "organic work", pointed towards this long-run objective. Meanwhile the Ottoman Greeks hoped to regenerate Byzantium in a different way, i.e., by Hellenization of the Ottoman Empire. The Megale Idea as a foreign-policy doctrine failed in 1922, but it has been repeatedly reborn as a theoretic construction with two attempts to ground a new state ideology on it.

Öz

Atinalı Politikacıların Bizans Rüyası (XIX-XX. Yüzyıllar)

Yunan Krallığı'nın siyasi eliti Doğu Sorunu'nu kendilerine göre yorumladı ve Yunan saydıkları toprakların tek bir devlet çatısı altında birleşmesi beklentisine girdiler. Megalo İdea'da kavramsallaştırılan bu algı kendi amaçları, yöntemleri ve karşıtlıklara sahipti. Aynı zamanda 19. yüzyıl boyunca 1922'ye kadar Yunan dış politikasının belirleyici unsuru oldu ve daha sonra bu ideali yeniden canlandırmak için iki defa girişimde bulundu.

Anahtar kelimeler: Balkan çalışmaları, Modern Yunan çalışmaları, Megalo İdea, Yunan-Türk ilişkileri, Doğu Sorunu

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