ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ISSN: 1304-7310 (Print) | 1304-7175 (Online) http://www.uidergisi.com.tr

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To cite this article: Clemens Hoffmann, "Delimiting Europe: Greek State Formation as Border Making", *Uluslararasi Iliskiler*, Vol. 20, No 77, 2023, pp. 51-69, DOI: 10.33458/uidergisi.1233983

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.33458/uidergisi.1233983

Submitted: 16 February 2022
Last Revision: 15 December 2022
Published Online: 17 January 2023
Printed Version: 31 March 2023

Uluslararası İlişkiler – International Relations
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ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER | INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Volume 20, Number 77, 2023, p. 51-69
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Delimiting Europe: Greek State Formation as Border Making

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ABSTRACT

When the Greek prime minister admired Delacroix' famous painting 'The Battle of Chios' in the Louvre Museum during a state visit to France in 2021, this was meaningful in more than one way. Not only did he and French president Macron celebrate the second centenary of the 1821 "Greek Revolution." They also reaffirmed their 200-year-old geopolitical alliance in the Eastern Mediterranean. An alliance between two countries that see themselves as the birthplace of European civilisation. Then, as now, celebrating their Europeanness went beyond artistic depictions and symbolisms. The creation of a White European space by virtue of a concrete struggle against an Oriental other, thus, delimited not only the Greco-Ottoman, but also Europe's South-eastern borders. What IR has come to understand as the 'spatial turn', a return to emphasising the (un)making of borders and space, took, and takes, place in the Aegean. Looking back at the significance of the Greek War of Independence, this article reveals that, much like the violence in Delacroix' painting, this formation of inter-national modernity, far from merely being a civilisational achievement, was bloody and genocidal. The painting's conventional Orientalist understanding sees a white European people massacred by an Oriental occupying force. A careful re-historicisation of the Greek independence struggle reveals, however, that it had highly specific social and geopolitical origins that cannot be reduced to a spreading European Enlightenment. An alliance between local social forces gave rise to a struggle that was consolidated by mass violence. The international invention on behalf of Greece didn't represent a shift towards a liberal international order giving rise to a reborn Athenian Republic. It represented a compromise between otherwise divided conservative dynasties imposing their designs on the young state. Finally, the article will argue that this historical episode embodies a continuing social process of European border making.

Keywords: International Historical Sociology, Greece, Ottoman Empire, Geopolitics, Social Banditry

Research Article | Received: 16 February 2022, Last Revision: 15 December 2022, Accepted: 09 January 2023

Defending Europe's Frontier? The Making of the European Space

> *We must progress as much as possible in the direction of Constantinople and India. … We must hasten the downfall of Persia, push on to the Persian Gulf, if possible re-establish the ancient commercialities with the Levant through Syria, and force our way into the Indies, which are the storehouses of the world. Once there, we can dispense with English gold.*
>
> *The Testament of Peter the Great, Article 9*

By 2022, Europe's borders in the Mediterranean have turned into a veritable fortress. The so-called 'refugee deal' with Turkey signals this as much as the European Union's (EU) own 'Frontex' border force working in tandem with the Greek coast guard to 'push back' the undesired 'Wretched of the Earth' attempting the dangerous crossing across the Aegean

and Evros River.[1] This human tragedy evolves under the eyes of a European public that is increasingly divided between liberal and left-wing cosmopolitans welcoming refugees and those who, in the classic depiction of Oswald Spengler, fear the 'Decline of the West'.[2] External and internal borders and boundaries generate this physical, but also ideological European space with Greece (and Cyprus) seen as civilisational frontiers. The making of the relational spaces of the 'Occident/Orient' and 'East/West' distinctions goes far beyond discourse though. Defining these borders in concrete, geophysical locations implies a daily violent struggle for life and death for many people from the Global South. It also implies the making of the border between two contemporary nation-states, Turkey and Greece. And while a lot has been said about the relationship of those 'Frenemies'[3] within NATO and the context of the EU accession process,[4] their relational trajectories are frequently taken for granted. The naturalisation of these two states (one 200 years old, the other 100), and with them the still contested border between them, overlooks how the continuous process of nation- and border-making is the historical rule, rather than the exception.[5] It also overlooks how the making of modern Europe, and even the making of modern international relations, is tied to the War of Greek Independence. So, while the historical significance of this war is drowned out by 1648 and other 'foundational myths'[6] of modern International Relations (IR), its history is frequently taken off the shelve of a rather superficial Greek nationalist (and the European Philhellenes') historiography. This understands this secessionist independence struggle as ideologically aligned with the French and American Revolutions. Enlightenment hits the Balkans in the form of a reborn Athenian Republic, embodying the values of democracy and freedom, thus, demarcating European 'high' civilisation to the East. Emphasising its significance, but very much reiterating the Enlightenment narrative, an eminent Balkan historian even argues that Greece gave rise to the entire global system of nation-states.[7]

This article seeks to rectify this story of making Europe and the place of Greece within it. It will do so by taking the 'Spatial Turn' in IR seriously and revisiting the origins of the making of the modern European space and its borders. Mobilising an international historical sociology of state formation, it will re-interpret the social process of making Greece. This will show, first, that then as now, the alliance, celebration and formation of a European consciousness

1 European Anti-Fraud Office, OLAF. *CASE No OC/2021/0451/A1 Final Report*, Brussels, 2022 https://cdn.prod.www.spiegel.de/media/00847a5e-8604-45dc-a0fe-37d920056673/Directorate_A_redacted-2.pdf (Accessed 15 September 2022).

2 Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (abridged version), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991.

3 The long history of the two, mutually defined nation-states is the subject matter of this article. While current relations between the modern republics of Greece and Turkey are strained, they have gone through various cycles of friendship and confrontation, starting with the two modern founders, Mustafa Kemal Pasha Atatürk and Eleftherios Kyriakou Venizelos, who shared mutual respect and even friendship. See: Leonidas Karakatsanis, *Turkish-Greek relations: Rapprochement, Civil Society and the Politics of Friendship*. London, Routledge, 2014.

4 Sait Akşit, "Turkey's Transatlantic Relations, Eastern Mediterranean, and the Changing Nature of Turkish-Greek Disputes", Eda Kuşku Sönmez and Çiğdem Üstün (eds.), *Turkey's Changing Transatlantic Relations*, Lanham, Lexington, 2021, p. 191–216.

5 Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty. Organized Hypocrisy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999.

6 Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, London, Verso, 2003.

7 Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe*, London, Penguin, 2021.

took place in the Aegean Sea and in relation to a clearly defined geopolitical referent: The Ottoman Empire and Turkey. It will reveal, second, that then as now, the process of defining this space was violent and marred with mass casualties. The re-historicisation of border-making will show, third, that a delicate balance of local social forces, from local bandits to a transnational trading class, was unsettled by a variety of social developments in reaction to Ottoman weakness, rather than merely the spread of European revolutionary ideals. Most central to this social process was, however, the large-scale intervention by European powers, which eventually secured Greek independence. The article will argue that Greece was born out of a compromise between otherwise highly divided conservative dynasties, rather than the symbol of an emerging liberal order. And it will show, finally, that the newly created Kingdom of Greece, neither became a re-born Athenian Republic, nor the frontier against the 'Ottoman steppe' the European Philhellenes had imagined. This will finally demonstrate that nation and border formation remain ongoing social, more than finite legal processes. This suggests that IR should pay greater attention to the non-linearity and historical specificity of border (un) making as one of its core constitutive categories.

IR and the Social Production of Borders

After the end of the Cold War, the discussion on borders moved away from the 'hard' physical fortification of two opposing blocs to a more critical understanding. This new approach investigated processes of their historical (un)making and how new, 'softer' borders were maintained discursively, rather than by walls and guns. Globalisation was, after all, seen as synonymous with transcending national boundaries, though some chose to erect new 'civilizational' borders in their place. 'Otherisation' now took place in language, or socio-economically between the Global North and the Global South, within an otherwise universal globalised space. Part and parcel of these new critical approaches was the tradition of Historical Sociology of International Relations (HSIR), which focused on the historical making of territory and space, emphasising geopolitical competition, or the emergence of capitalism as the core 'drivers' of modernity.[8] While improving the realist 'static' understanding of sovereignty, one major omission of this literature was the question of political identities. The process of 'nation-making', while tied to state-making 'as organised crime',[9] was left unstudied and simply seen as a function of those new 'survival units' once they came into being. In fact, the origins of ethno-linguistically homogeneous identities and 'imagined communities'[10] were mostly left understudied by IR more generally. But as these critical approaches emphasise, the making of states and identities alike is a historically dynamic process, rather than a 'natural', timeless, or universal order. And the same is true for borders.

8 Stephen Hobden and John M. Hobson (eds.), *Historical Sociology of International Relations,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

9 Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime", Ernesto Castaneda and Cathy Lisa Schneider (eds.), *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics, and Social Change*, London, Routledge. 2017, p. 121-139.

10 Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* London, Verso, 2006.

Notwithstanding this seeming banality, the process of linear border making remained similarly underspecified and mostly just assumed.[11] However, if borders, broadly conceived, alongside nations and territory, are part of IR's core categories, and few doubt that they are, they are just as important to historicise. Here, borders are not just thought of as either discourse or fixed physical demarcations. Rather, the article mobilises the tradition of HSIR to understand them as historically specific, situated social processes, which are constantly made and unmade. And the process of Europe's southeastern delimitation remains an ongoing and dynamic process. Social, physical, violent, discursive, local, national, regional, and global all at once.

And while Greece remains a focal point of this process, it isn't necessarily the sole place where "bordering Europe" takes place. Like other such places, notably Ukraine, Greece continuously shifts from being located at the core of Europe's civilisational heritage, to being an oriental outlier. The various forms of re-orientalising Greece throughout Europe's debt crisis shows its dynamic positioning.[12] Despite the 'Age of Globalisation' predicting their total transcendence, physical borders never quite disappeared. In many ways, they're making a comeback from Belarus to the Spanish enclave of Ceuta.

By 2022 the heydays of globalisation are truly over and we're facing a variety of new forms of divisions. Fences, walls, tear gas, rubber bullets and, above all, the stormy waters of the Mediterranean themselves now separate a realm where the rule of law applies, and rights are granted[13] vis-à-vis the necropolitical realm of refugee migration.[14] Post-colonial theory illustrates not only how this border regime fits into global hierarchies and inequalities, as reflected and reproduced in language and global political practice, but also how these racialised practices of differentiation manifest themselves in the European Union's policies towards refugees in the Mediterranean in particular.[15] These border practices separate not only the 'Occident' from the 'Orient', but also the global north and its protected wealth from its non-Western (former) colonial subjects in the global south. This border regime has now become a central function of the EU's foreign policy, epitomised, above all in the EU-Turkey and EU-Libya refugee deals (interestingly both bordering Greece).[16]

11 Kerry Goettlich and J. Branch, "Borders and Boundaries: Making Visible What Divides", Benjamin de Carvalho, Julia Costa Lopez and Halvard Leira (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Historical International Relations*, London, Routledge, 2021, p. 267-276; Kerry Goettlich, "The Rise of Linear Borders in World Politics", *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 25, No 1, 2018, p. 203-228.

12 Anna Carastathis, "Is Hellenism an Orientalism? Reflections on the Boundaries of 'Europe' in an Age of Austerity", *Australian Critical Race & Whiteness Studies*, Vol. 10, No 1, 2014.

13 Katja Franko, "'See no Evil': towards an Analytics of Europe's Legal Borderlands", *European Law Open*, Vol. 1, No 1, 2022, p. 131-134.

14 Sara Dehm, "International Law at the Border: Refugee Deaths, the Necropolitical State and Sovereign Accountability", Shane Chalmers and Sundhya Pahuja (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of International Law and the Humanities*, London, Routledge, 2021, p. 341-356.

15 Ali Bilgic, *Rethinking Security in the Age of Migration: Trust and emancipation in Europe*, London, Routledge, 2013.

16 Elodie Thevenin, "Between Human Rights and Security Concerns: Politicisation of EU-Turkey and EU-Libya Agreements on Migration in National Parliaments", *European Security*, Vol. 30, No 3, 2021, p. 464-484.

Celebrating 200 years of Greek emancipation from its 'Oriental yoke' and from its much-denied Ottoman heritage cannot be seen in isolation from this project. Greek state formation played (and plays) a central role for European self-idealisation. Re-imagining Greece, the cradle of European civilisation and democracy was, paradoxically led by a Europe in full reactionary mode. The idealised 'Dream Nation'[17], eventually headed by a Bavarian prince, while confronting an absolutist and colonial Ottoman power, became part of the violent process of colonial and racial differentiation of Europe itself. Paradoxically, the reformist Ottoman Empire, then still run by many of its Christian and Jewish minority populations,[18] even joined Europe's racist inter-imperialist rivalries, formalising its rule of Africa and the Middle East.[19] Simultaneously, 'modern' Greece, having successfully seceded, became central to the process of Europe differentiating its inside from its outside.[20] The following will explain the historical process of how this differentiation occurred socially, before returning to the question of how this history is part of the wider process of border making so integral to IR.

Nationalism from Outside? The Origins of Greek Nationalism

By the nineteenth century, Europe was made up of clearly defined, mostly neo-Absolutist states that had emerged from the rubble of Revolution and Napoleonic expansions. Britain, France and Russia were preoccupied with their respective imperial expansions, while Austria and Prussia, alongside smaller European powers were mostly looking to restore and reform authoritarian power. The Ottoman Empire itself faced multiple challenges, mostly from Russia, but also from its own vassals, as well as within the very centre of power in Istanbul from the Janissary corps.[21] While the latter could be defeated in an 'Auspicious Event', various internal socio-economic crises and external challenges had set in motion an Ottoman military reform process, or Nizam-ı Cedid as early as 1808, culminating, eventually in the larger reforms known as the Tanzimat.[22]

Towards this background of a conservative international environment, keen on restoration and a Sublime Porte, addressing various challenges through reform, emerged the Greek War of Independence. From the first hostilities to the full establishment of a recognised Kingdom in 1832, the story of Greek nation and state formation remains complex. Most conventional accounts speak of a 'national' revolution against the 'Ottoman Yoke' ending four hundred years of alien rule over a continuously Greek heartland. Apart from the ethno-linguistic composition of the early nineteenth century Balkans being far from homogenous and clearly demarcated,

17 Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream Nation*, Redwood, CA, Stanford University Press, 2021.

18 Serif Mardin, *Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1962, p. 122.

19 Selim Deringil, "'They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery': the Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-colonial Debate", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 45, No 2, 2003, p. 311-342.

20 Decolonize Hellas. *Our Thinking*, 2020, https://decolonizehellas.org/en/out-thinking/ (Accessed 15 June 2022).

21 Cemal Kafadar, "Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman Istanbul: Rebels without a Cause?", Baki Tezcan and Karl K. Barbir (eds.), *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz*, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2007.

22 Stanford J. Shaw, and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 1, Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280-1808*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976.

the process of revolt itself remains somewhat understudied. How should, in Mazower's words, "a bunch of unruly and quarrelsome chieftains who had been united by few things stronger than their loathing for the idea of a regular army"[23] be convinced to fight for the common cause of a nation-state?

Here and elsewhere, a general sense of social crisis and struggle can reveal more about the dynamics of secession than a sudden ideological penetration. The early nineteenth century saw deteriorating conditions of the peasantry in the Morea. Prior to this crisis, the Ottoman *tımar* (fief) system had prevented various forms of overexploitation.[24] As opposed to European feudalism, land could only be leased from the Sultan, but never owned. With crisis and loss of imperial authority, these protective layers for the peasantry were removed and exploitation increased.[25] These conditions on the ground were co-determined by a manifold of 'external' dimensions, starting from the Ottoman state going through crisis and reform, the Vienna system and, not least, global developments, increasingly characterised by colonial expansions, which put the Ottoman Empire under economic and geopolitical pressure.[26] Thus, instead of a strictly binary inside/outside distinction, geopolitical relations appear to be structured rather like a Matryoshka doll, or an onion, with multiple layers of social interactions and contradictions, none of them reducible to the 'logic' of the layer above, yet at the same time incomprehensible without looking at the onion as a whole.

One of these 'layers' is conventionally viewed as the idea of an ideological penetration through an influential liberal European Enlightenment which had prepared the intellectual ground for 'national liberation'. In the Greek case, this was engineered by the Philiki Etaria, or Friendly Society. This was the organisation most credited with having masterminded the Greek insurrection against the Ottomans. These protagonists of the so-called Greek Enlightenment had their social origins in an exile Greek community, the so-called Heterochthons, who had gained their views mainly through French education. In the liberation paradigm it is this proto-bourgeois class which had "acted as the catalyst which started the whole revolutionary process and gave it direction".[27] Linking a recovered "Hellenic antiquity with the dissemination of European intellectual, scientific and technological developments, ideals and values"[28] was attractive to the Philhellenes in Enlightened Absolutist European dynasties and the City of London alike. However, closer to home, they threatened the position of Dragomans (translators at the Porte), the clergy and those notables that were part of the Ottoman ruling class through the *Millet* system, which granted religious communities a certain degree of autonomy, especially in family law and, crucially, education.[29] This only partial convergence of a material interest

23 Mark Mazower, "Revolutionary Reckonings: Greek Independence, 1821 and the Historians", *TLS Times Literary Supplement*, 6156, 2021, p. 12.

24 Wayne S. Vucinich, "The Nature of Balkan Society under Ottoman Rule", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 21, No 4, 1962, p. 601.

25 Leften Stavros Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, London, Hurst&Co, 2000 [1958].

26 Şevket Pamuk and J. G. Williamson, "Ottoman de-industrialization, 1800–1913: Assessing the Magnitude, Impact, and Response", *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 64, 2011, p. 159-184.

27 Nicos P. Mouzelis, *Modern Greece: Facets of Underdevelopment*, London, Macmillan, 1978, p. 12-13.

28 Umut Özkirimli, and Spyros A. Sofos. *Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey*, London, Hurst, 2008, p. 23.

29 K. Barkey, and G. Gavrilis, "The Ottoman Millet System: Non-territorial Autonomy and its Contemporary Legacy", *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 15, No 1, 2016, p. 24-42.

in the revolt was met with an only partial literacy in the Greek language itself. Most chieftains were illiterate, using village boys as translators, while most of the population's native language wasn't Greek, but Albanian.[30]

So, one must assume that the impact was much more marginal than is conventionally assumed. The Friendly Society had of course helped proliferate Greek language education. It very much laid the seeds for a future success, through the opening of schools. Interestingly this occurred mostly with Ottoman blessing, which left these questions to the *Millet*. Equally, there is no systemic socio-economic transformation on record. Industrialisation or even rural capitalism were still decades away. What did occur was an increase in maritime trade and a relative decline of agriculture, which was, however, no novelty, nor specific to the Morea. In short, no meaningful capitalist transformation took place until many years after the secession and there was no immediately identifiable class of workers that could become revolutionaries. If anything, the Ottoman Empire de-industrialised under the pressure of expanding colonial markets, especially Britain. Indeed, 'the Greeks', if understood as a social formation, almost seem to have appeared out of nowhere.

But something must have happened. Greek nationalism was, after all, successful. Here the role of a Black Sea exile mercantile class and nobility in Russian and other European courts' services cannot be overstated.[31] The 'export' of this ideology to the Greek homeland to-be was initially unsuccessful because it lacked a native social base. Nationalism's source of strength was neither the Enlightenment nor capitalist development, but a coalition of bandits (Klefts), Armatoloi and local notables (primates), concerned with retaining, or re-establishing their bases of social power. The 'social fuel' of the secession, bandits and landless peasants on the one side and the clergy on the other, were respectively "too poor, too religious, and too well-integrated into the Ottoman society"[32] to respond to the call to arms by European intellectuals. Their motivation was a different one. And those were the changing local conditions, which were simultaneously caused by Ottoman decline and reforms in response to this decline. Above all, landed regimes, rates of exploitation and taxation changed – sometimes at the expense of traditional power structures, but sometimes also simply increasing the level of surplus extraction. Beyond these initial motivations, it was the extreme violence depicted by Delaxroix's Massacre of Chios, which turned the initially only partial forms of resistance into a consolidated fighting force. Ironically, the very Napoleonic trained Egyptian forces that were mostly responsible for the atrocities would later turn against their paymaster in Istanbul. So, despite their devastating losses, how did the wide range of unconsolidated Greek forces, lacking a common language or social background, manage to carve out a nation, as well as, eventually, a nation-state?

30 Mazower, "Revolutionary Reckonings", p. 13.

31 Gelinda Harlaftis, "Mapping the Greek Maritime Diaspora from the Early Eighteenth to the Late Twentieth Centuries", Ina Baghdiantz; McCabe, Gelina; Harlaftis, Minoglou and Ioanna Pepelasis (eds.), *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History*, Oxford, Berg, 2005.

32 Resit Kasaba, "The Enlightenment, Greek Civilization and the Ottoman Empire: Reflections on Thomas Hope's Anastasius", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 16, No 1, p.2003, p. 2.

Troubled Waters: The International and the Greek Question

For an answer to this question, we need to return to the international. Though not as a study of dynastic diplomacy, but one of the social relations that gave rise to the relational foreign policies of the Great Powers at the time. For it was indeed "…outside intervention [which] was to be more influential in determining the final outcome than were the actions of the Greek leaders themselves".[33] But how so?

Most importantly, it is within this 'Great Power' dimension that we can see a significant transformation in the long nineteenth century. Paul Schroeder calls this a diminished 'logic' of intra-European colonial/territorial competition and an increase in the cooperative, normative elements of this order.[34] The Vienna Settlement ended the Napoleonic conquest of most of Europe which itself was premeditated by the French Revolution. It left Europe with an inter-dynastic order that had not so much avoided change, but channelled it – at least intermittently – into various forms of dynastic Enlightenment. And this period gained fame as one of the most successful periods of international governance, inducing a 100 Year Peace, to be broken only by the 'Galloping Gertie' leading to the First World War.[35]

This Eurocentric institutionalist interpretation of the Vienna era was also influential in the historiography of the Eastern Question. The post-Napoleonic inter-state system is frequently deployed by IR theorists and international historians alike as the prime example for an international 'order' deserving of its name, successfully disciplining all its members. Building consensus on how to deal with the Greek question may even have been a strong symbol of a 'consensus-led' international order,[36] which illustrates the high significance of Greek state formation for the making of modern IR.

As elsewhere in IR, however, two fundamentally opposing views on this consensus exist. While Schroeder and others interpret the concert, and the way it reacted to the Greek struggle,[37] as a consensual, conscious creation of an internationally agreed normative institutional order, a realist view interprets Vienna as a period of remarkable, but only relative stability, which was not consciously or normatively created but fundamentally based on the conditions of anarchy, self-help and – within this competition – a functioning balance of power mechanism. Marxists, in turn, would add that this was owed mainly to Britain's desire to keep Europe peaceful and access to the Empire stable and unrivalled. And here of course the Ottoman Empire was of the utmost geostrategic importance. Deviating from these accounts, the following will detail how a compromise to preserve, rather than dismember Ottoman power came into being historically,

33 Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920*, Washington, University of Washington Press, 1977, p. 38.

34 Paul Schroeder, "Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No 1, 1994, p. 108-148.

35 Paul Schroeder, "World War I as Galloping Gertie: A Reply to Joachim Remak", *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 44, No 2, 1972, p. 319-344.

36 Paul Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763-1848*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1994; Paul Schroeder, "Containment Nineteenth-Century Style: How Russia was restrained", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 82, No 1, 1983, p. 1 - 18.

37 Hudson Meadwell, "Secession, States and International Society", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No 3, 1999, p. 371-387.

defying both a liberal and realist logic. Rather than assuming an outside-in logic, it will detail how this related to the various post/Ottoman participants in the war on the ground.

Reemphasising the historical specificity of this conjuncture, this article argues that the geopolitical environment of the Greek Question was characterized first and foremost by the continued fear of Romanov Imperialism and the British balancing policy trying to curtail them. Prior to Vienna, Catherine the Great's expansionist agenda intended to seize the opportunity of Britain's preoccupation with the American War of Independence to enlarge her grip on Eastern Europe – and the Middle East. In this spirit, "the project of driving the Turks out of the Balkans was the kind of affair that appealed to Catherine's vanity".[38] Contrary to the realist conclusion about the structurally aggressive nature of Russia across time and space, it is argued that Russian designs on the Balkans and the Middle East were not caused by a timeless 'logic' of maximising power (or territory), but was owed to the specificity of Russia's own geopolitical predicament forcing new forms of social reproduction focussed around the Black Sea as the main artery towards warm water access (much like today's conflict is arguably caused by the continuing crisis of a post-Soviet Russian resource based crisis of reproduction). And while this implied an interest in the geopolitical order in the Balkans, the compromise outcome of 1821 was not entirely conducive to Russia's own interest. Britain, in turn, traditionally concerned with maintaining Ottoman territorial integrity, supported the Greek struggle only reluctantly and to balance Russian influence, the strong financial and political backing by British (and American) Philhellenists notwithstanding.

The result was a multi-national intervention at Navarino 1827 and the 1932 Treaty of Constantinople, establishing the Kingdom of Greece. However, rather than a 'humanitarian intervention' to save the Greeks from 'Oriental savagery', or, for that matter, the birthplace of a modern liberal international order, these were the outcome of a systemic compromise between the Great Powers. No normative consensus about legitimising national self-determination as a new principle of international order existed. Neither was there a consensus about 'carving up' the Ottoman Empire, as the Russo-British-Austrian intervention to save the Sultan from Egyptian challenges would later demonstrate.[39] What Greek independence represented was the least common denominator of competing Great Power interests in the light of changed realities on the ground. So, while the Concert did work to maintain order amidst the advent of nationalism, the emergence of Greece was born out of a compromise that neither settled the future of Greece, the Ottomans, or their rivalries.

And this international compromise left its mark on the young Greek state. The War of Independence had certainly engendered a consolidated Greek consciousness. However, the infant Greek political landscape reflected the divergent geopolitical interest which had guaranteed independence with the Russian, English and French parties constituting the cornerstones of the first multi-party system of the first Greek polity. International recognition was formally granted through the London Conference which established an independent Greek state under the guarantee of the three powers. However, rather than stabilising a reborn

38 Hugh Ragsdale, "Russian Foreign Policy, 1725–1815", Dominic Lieven (ed.), *Cambridge History of Russia - Volume II Imperial Russia 1689-1917*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 512.

39 Pierre E. Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41*, Cham, Palgrave Mcmillan, 2016.

Athenian Republic, Greece was turned into a Kingdom. In line with international convention, a European monarch had to be chosen as a head of state "as a concession to the conservative temper of the Concert of Europe".[40] While in principle sympathetic to the Greeks, having been under the influence of Philhellenism, supporting revolt and upheaval clashed with the reactionary spirit of the time. So, more than a 'concession' it was the *conditio sine qua non* of Greek independence. This contradiction ran through all Great Powers at the time, including Greece's closest ally, Russia, which had refused direct military support. This reluctance to help the Orthodox brothers reflected the Tsar's reactionary position in particular.[41] At a time when Nicholas decisively won another war against the Ottomans in 1829, this time triggered by the unwise closure of the Straits to Russian shipping, he sought a settlement with the Ottomans in Greece and, later, against Muhammad Ali of Egypt - even though he would have had a strong motive, the military capacity as well as a golden opportunity to gain full control over the Straits on this occasion.[42] To Schroeder, Russian foreign policy after 1815 is therefore best described as "conservative, legalistic, anti-revolutionary, and oriented toward peace and great-power cooperation" whereas, with regards to the Eastern Question, Russia "more than once came to Turkey's aid to save it from other enemies".[43]

Not dissimilar to the domestic situation, the international arena appears to have been less than favourable for the Greek struggle. Even generally liberal and pro-Hellenic Western European statesmen at the time complained about the Greek revolt as a major disturbance of the newly established order. Amongst others, the Duke of Wellington, "was prompted to complain that 'there never was such a humbug as the Greek affair altogether'".[44] From the outset "the rulers of Europe responded to the news of the Greek Revolution with marked disfavour". Even the Tsar, like Britain, France, Prussia and Austria "tried to ignore the Greeks and hoped that the Sultan could snuff out the revolt".[45] Ottoman preservation, in turn, was almost a logical extension of British Blue Water policy in the Eastern Mediterranean securing trade routes through the Levant towards India. Nevertheless, due to a rise in classical humanistic education and in direct contravention to this kind of Realpolitik thinking, the British public and elites were privately very sympathetic to the Greek cause, but suspected that an autonomous Greece would, after Serbia, become yet another Russian foothold in the region.

In sum, the international environment at the time did not seem to favour the Greek cause and the unity on the matter seemed to confirm the operability of the Metternichean system. The conservative and reactionary forces of post-Napoleonic Europe were opposed to revolution in general, even though, coincidentally, it was precisely the most conservative of forces, i.e. the Austrian and Russian spearheads of the reaction, that could have gained

40 John A. Petropulos, *Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece 1833-1843*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 50.

41 Meadwell, "Secession, States and International Society", p. 172.

42 Robert J. Kerner, "Russia's New Policy in the Near East after the Peace of Adrianople; Including the Text of the Protocol of 16 September 1829", *Cambridge Historical Journal*, Vol. 5, No 3, 1938, p. 280-290.

43 Schroeder, "Containment Nineteenth-Century Style", p. 4.

44 Richard Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 56.

45 Petropolous, "Politics as Statecraft", p. 43.

most from weakening the Sultan. Yet, Russia, even in the light of the brutal execution of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople on Easter Monday 1821, did not move beyond the emission of a brief note of protest, despite growing internal pressure to intervene. Austria, on the other hand, had previously taken an active part in suppressing the revolt by extraditing one of the eminent intellectuals of the Greek Enlightenment, Rigas Velestinlis, to the Porte in 1798. He was duly executed on transfer to Istanbul in Belgrade on June 24 of the same year. According to the institutionalist reading of this period, the reluctance to get involved in the Greek affair was not only owed to the prevailing reactionary and anti-revolutionary spirit but was also due to the 'consensus' about Ottoman territorial preservation as the best possible geopolitical order of the region. The Great Powers, despite their intentions to honour their conservative spirit, eventually had to react to the realities on the ground, which the Greek struggle had fundamentally altered.

This reality was characterised by the rapid formation of an anti-Ottoman 'Greek' identity, which hadn't been consolidated prior to the war. Especially the very violence, unleashed by 'modernised' Egyptian forces on the battlefield,[46] had worked as a catalyst in this regard. Under the impression of Greek endurance and remarkable military success against the odds, European anti-independence and pro-Ottoman foreign policies started to crumble. With the war continuing, British finance also became increasingly exposed to the Greek struggle. The need to recover war loans naturally increased the desirability of a Greek success. Geo-strategically, the fear of a direct Russian intervention became more pertinent as more atrocities and massacres were committed against the Orthodox population. British fears about the crisis becoming uncontrollable were further fuelled by the death of the troubled, yet calm, Alexander I, who was already hard pressed to contain his hawkish administration. An escalation seemed to be on the cards when Alexander died of an alleged suicide and his more proactive and more conservative brother Nicholas I took power in 1826. Faced with a potentially much more assertive Russia, growing public concern and a large debt owed by the revolutionaries, Britain as well as Austria could not afford to stand by idly.

Contrary to popular perception, the rationale for intervention was less grounded in humanitarian grounds, or the Philhellenism so popular with large parts of the European elites, including bankers, aristocrats, but also the educated American public,[47] than in a geopolitical quagmire.[48] "[Canning] simply feared that Russia might take unilateral action against the Ottoman Empire"… whilst at the same time Russia saw herself similarly under pressure to compete with British influence: "Russia could not afford to let England, already its great rival in the Near East, win the popularity and hence the influence which it had traditionally exercised among the Greeks".[49] Inter-state competition, in a proto-realist manner, had generated a swift

46 Khaled Fahmy, and Ḵālid Maḥmūd Fahmī, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 55.

47 William Saint-Claire, *That Greece Might Still be Free - The Philhellenes in the War of Independence*, Cambridge, Open Book Publishers, 1972.

48 Evangelos Konstantinou, *Die Rezeption der Antike und der europäische Philhellenismus*, Frankfurt/Main, Peter Lang, 1998.

49 Petropolous, "Politics as Statecraft", p. 45.

policy change from reactionary status quo policies to a heightened competition and eventual cooperation, favouring the Greek war effort, though not without constraining its outcome to a conservative monarchy, rather than a revolutionary republic.

So, rather than this being a humanitarian intervention, or indeed the start of a new age of national self-determination, the Great Power's preoccupation was not so much to favour either of the two conflicting sides in the Greek War of Independence, but simply to stabilize the region so important to both – the Straits for Russia and the routes to India for Britain. Now, however, "Greco-Turkish naval hostilities disrupted trade in the eastern Mediterranean and thereby affected the British, French, Austrians and Russians" alike.[50] Then as now, "Russian Black Sea grain trade and British and French commercial interests in the Levant had suffered considerably on account of the hostilities".[51] Unlike today, Russia agreed that the prevailing common desire was to re-instate stability in the region in general.

Considering these developments, Greek Independence, whilst not initially favoured by Great Power dynamics, was, once the dynamic of secession appeared too disruptive, the chosen modus for stabilisation. Britain, keen to avoid another Russian protectorate like Walachia and Moldavia and later Serbia, sought Greek neutrality, full independence, and joint protection by four powers. "For Wellington, fearing after the Treaty of Adrianople[52] that a tributary Greek state might, like the Danubian Principalities, fall increasingly under Russian influence, was inclined to favour the idea of a fully sovereign Greece".[53] 'Independence' in this case, thus meant independence from Ottoman rule as well as from the exclusive control of any single one of the Great Powers. However, it did not mean independence from the joint control of Russia, France and Britain.[54] Conversely, the thus far mainly British preoccupation with sustaining the Sultan's reign in the Balkans and the Middle East was increasingly shared by the Tsar, as long as the Porte remained under his thumb.

With interests converging, cooperation between Britain and Russia on the Greek Question intensified. The matter of the Straits was as existential to Nicholas as much as the trade routes to India were to Britain. Both increasingly feared either a more formidable ruler to replace the Sultan, or, worse, a chaotic collapse of the Empire. For the Tsar a military or even just commercial penetration of the Black Sea by European Powers seemed increasingly likely. So, Ottoman preservation remained the rationale for both. Indeed, Russo-Turkish relations experienced even a form of détente after the signing of the 1826 Akkerman Convention establishing Russian influence in the Principalities and Serbia. Even though the Russian victory over the Ottoman forces at Adrianople (Edirne) in 1829 was unambiguous and brought Russian artillery within the range of the Topkapi Palace, Nicholas deliberately stopped the advance of his far superior troops, pursuing what Schroeder called an 'inactive hegemony'.[55]

50 Ibid, p. 44.

51 Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, p. 62.

52 Ending the Russo-Turkish War which brought the Ottoman Empire close to a complete subjugation to Russian forces, the 1829 Treaty of Adrianople conceded yet more Ottoman territories, especially in the Caucasus and Bessarabia to the Tsar.

53 Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, p. 66.

54 Petropolous, "Politics as Statecraft", p. 48.

55 Schroeder, "The Transformation of European politics", p. 663.

And indeed, a more formidable ruler appeared on the horizon. Mohammad Ali Pasha, the Egyptian leader of Albanian descent, who had inadvertently fanned the flames of nationalism by unleashing the horrors of modern warfare on Greek (or, rather Christian) civilians, started to challenge the Sultan himself. Disgruntled over the lack of spoils from the war against the Greeks and fully aware of the Egyptian military superiority over the regular Ottoman forces after observing their performance on the battlefield as an ally, Ali set out on a campaign against his overlord that brought him and his son Ibrahim within sight of the Bosporus twice. During the Battle of Konya on December 21, 1832, Ibrahim virtually destroyed the main Ottoman army after a long and successful campaign through Syria. Complacent about the balance of power in the region with Russia apparently appeased and saturated under Nicholas I., the Ottoman plea for help fell on deaf ears in London and Paris. Not so in St Petersburg, however. In what appeared to be a major reshuffling of alliances, Russia rushed to preserve the Sultan's rule over the Straits against his rebellious, and likely more powerful, vassal. The Russian navy moored almost its entire Black Sea fleet in the Bosporus in February 1833 in exchange for full Russian navigation rights through the Straits. This also obliged the Porte to deny access to any potential enemy of the Tsar, effectively forming a highly exceptional bilateral defensive alliance which was signed on July 8, 1833, in the Treaty of *Hünkâr İskelesi*. This treaty, proverbially speaking, put the fox in charge of the henhouse, by turning the entire Ottoman Empire, in Lord Palmerston's words, effectively into a Russian protectorate.[56]

As opposed to bringing the Ottoman Empire into the Russian imperialist orbit, this potentially life-threatening situation turned out to widen the Porte's scope of action far beyond the expulsion of the Egypto-Albanian challenger. The Tsar's unexpected and cunning support sent shockwaves through the European capitals. Russian domination of the Ottoman Empire, if not by direct military occupation, but through quasi-hegemonic indirect control, was nothing short of a nightmare scenario for France, but even more so for Britain. Prior to *Hünkâr İskelesi*, Palmerstone had all but given up on the Sultan's ability to provide the sort of order Britain had in mind when supporting the Pax Ottomanica. In other words, the continuous military defeats, and internal challenges to the Porte's rule prior to the exceptional Ottoman-Russian rapprochement meant that Britain had started considering alternative solutions to the Eastern Question. Not even the Egyptian challenge to the Sultan's sovereignty, which jeopardized Britain's vital India trading routes more than the Greek War of Independence, changed this laissez-fair approach. This, however, changed rapidly once it became clear that the alternative to idleness would be Russian vigour. It was, therefore, the spectre of Russian hegemony in southeastern Europe as well as the Middle East that revived the pre-eminent policy of Ottoman preservation. Even though Muhammad Ali's campaign had comprehensively crippled the Porte militarily, financially as well as psychologically, the Tsar's ostensible opportunism had forced the British back to preserving Ottoman territorial integrity. In concrete terms, the British awakening to Russia's real ambitions had two effects. First, it caused a shift from supporting Greek 'suzerainty' (copying the Serb model of a tributary relation to the Sultan with Russian guarantees), to the full-scale independence eventually granted in the London Protocol. This way, Greece could be kept away from Russian influence. Secondly, it made

56 Fikret Adanir, "Turkey's Entry into the Concert of Europe", *European Review*, Vol. 13, No 3, 2005, p. 395-417.

Britain more committed to the Porte again, so that when Egyptian forces closed in on Istanbul for the second time in 1839, an Austro-British naval intervention with Russian and reluctant French support, restored Ottoman rule. Third, this put to rest, for the time being, any support for the Megali Idea, or the expansion of Greece and hampered support for all other emerging Balkan nationalisms.

The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854, ostensibly over the guardianship over the Holy Land, under the same supposedly restrained Nicholas I finally put an end to the idea of a détente and confirmed the unaltered, but also unalterable Russian position based on free passage through the Straits. This argument is also not diminished by the Tsar's temporary acknowledgment of European balance of power realities. Russian geopolitical designs were almost immutable since they originated in a specific strategy of socio-economic reproduction dependent on profits from Black Sea trade (ironically one of the pillars of Greek independence) and Ukrainian corn production. And the Straits, along with the Ukrainian Corn trade remain a contentious issue in Russo-Turkish relations and world politics more generally to this day. Despite being regulated in the Montreux Convention, it still leaves Turkey – and Greece – at the crossroads of global IR.

Conclusion: The Geopolitical Making of Greece – and Europe

But where does this story about the geo-political balances that favoured the emergence of Greece leave us? What can be argued based on this abridged historical account is that the Greek modern state wasn't a brainchild of the Enlightenment or capitalism. It wasn't, by design, a renaissance of Athens, or the beginning of a new international order based on the right to self-determination. It was the historically specific result of local and international social forces. Local social grievances and an international power struggle generated the condition of possibility for independent Greece to emerge. By no means is this meant to diminish to role of local Greek agency. Without the grievances caused by a change in the *tımar* system, itself an expression of Ottoman weakness, the will to organise at the local, but also transnational level, the Greek insurrection is inconceivable. It is nevertheless important to emphasise that agency didn't necessarily emerge from a liberal, nationalist, Hellenic Enlightenment conviction. Rather, it was the specific constellation of forces on the ground with outside help, from Odessa to London. The outcome of two mutually defined nations and associated states, exchanging their respective 'populations', rests in the mass violence, unleashed by Mohammed Ali Pasha's modernised army. These forces, once unleashed, were not only helped, but also curtailed by the international, most notably Britain and Russia. And while the young state couldn't have succeeded militarily without the help at Navarino, it was nevertheless quickly constrained in its republican ambitions by a conservative Concert of Europe.

But even if Greek independence doesn't usher in a new international order as Mazower and others have us believe, it remains nevertheless a highly significant and thus far undervalued episode for the history of IR. For it is here, in the long and winded process of Greek state formation that Europe's border, its inside and outside, is created, both discursively through Philhellenism, but also simultaneously physically. The contingencies in this process, as

demonstrated in this account, cannot be understood as a process of naturalising a pre-given order – or one of modernising international politics by creating homogenous nation-states. While the geopolitical dimension was decisive, the cooperation that led to the creation of Greece was not based on a normative consensus but the result of a collective management of the post-Napoleonic international. And the Kingdom of Greece of 1832 was the least common denominator. To avoid falling into the trap of Eurocentrism, the role not only of the Porte, but also, specifically of Mohammed Ali of Egypt and his rise as a formidable internal challenger to the Sultan's authority has been emphasised here.

In other words, what led to the success of the Greek revolt was a Great Power contestation fuelled by fears of Russian dominance and chaos and surprise by Egypt's Albanian leader, rather than a wilful support of a nationalist struggle, let alone a conviction of Hellenic republicanism. After all, Europe was busy restoring post-revolutionary Absolutist rule. European Philhellenism was much more than just a spontaneous expression of sympathy with the Greek heroism trying to overthrow an 'Asiatic Despot'. Cultivating Hellenism both at home and abroad was central to generating an "idealized vision of a reunified and reintegrated European civilization that would include its Greek progenitor",[57] but remain under the authoritarian thumb of absolutist 'Enlightened' control. It is, therefore, better understood as absolutist crisis management, than an early form of liberal internationalism. The international response to the Greek Question and the generation of the modern European border in the Aegean must be understood as the unintended outcome of these dialectical social and geopolitical struggles between Ottoman transformation, Egyptian modernisation, Russian expansion, and British imperial balance of power policy. Struggles between situated agents have specific outcomes that cannot be reduced to an overarching modernist rationale imposing itself in an all-determining fashion. And as much as there was one dominant force in the process, it was, paradoxically, conservative dynastic power preservation.

The Greek struggle, with all its symbolism is, nevertheless, a central building block of the European Enlightenment's self-imagination as a humanitarian force. This re-imagining of the Athenian Republic was, inevitably, based on mythologising the social reality on the ground. A closer look has revealed that the social forces behind the Greek War of Independence were all but unitary. It has also demonstrated that it was all but liberal in character. And while the Philhellenic financiers in the City of London may well have thought of themselves as liberals in the widest sense, the same cannot be said about their colonial projects, which Greece cannot be abstracted from. The geopolitical conjuncture that gave birth to Greece was shaped by powers that were all but progressive. In fact, Philhellenism became part and parcel of their reactionary project. Finally, the state that eventually emerged was of course a Kingdom presided over by a Bavarian prince, who was still a minor. This was the compromise candidate by Europe's ruling dynasties. The, thus, idealised vision of a 'Hellenic' society that developed throughout the past two hundred years was ultimately built on exclusion, not only of 'Turks', but of all non-white, non-Christian populations. So, while we shouldn't understand Greek state formation as abstract from local agents, we also mustn't forget Ottoman agency in the process. "'Can the ottoman speak?" as Mazower put

57 Kasaba, "The Enlightenment, Greek Civilization and the Ottoman Empire".

it, "would be a reasonable question of the generations of historians who simply ignored the entire imperial dimension of the conflict".[58]

It should also be noted, though, that the purpose of this article is not to single out Greek state formation as an anomaly. The making of modern Greece, while highly significant to this day, follows similar histories of other European nation-states. It is the article's purpose, however, to shed light on the geopolitical process of making Europe's Eastern border and the central role the Greek War of Independence. The process of Greek-Ottoman border making also illustrates the central role of (modernised) violence, setting in motion what can be understood as a process of physical otherisation. While much of the IR literature has focused on this process as a discursive practice, mass physical violence, understood as a historical and social process, not just military events, has received only scant attention in the literature on nation-making. Yet it is precisely this complex, but also contingent process that demonstrates the historical contingency of Europe's borders. And in a tragic way, this practice is maintained in the Turkey-EU refugee deal. The almost daily shocking accounts of anti-migrant violence by Turkish, Greek and EU Frontex border forces maintain this historically conditioned border regime. And in the case of Cyprus and the Aegean, this border even remains directly contested between the two regional NATO powers. This leaves us with the call for greater attention to the historical and social processes that make and unmake borders as everyday practice. First, because this process is constitutive of international relations. And second, because it is conceptually constitutive of the ontological core of the discipline of Inter-National Relations.

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58 Mazower, "Revolutionary Reckonings", p. 13.

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