



Lucien J. Frary. *Russia and the Making of Modern Greek Identity, 1821-1844.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. xii + 296 pp. \$100.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-873377-5.

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What happens when the dust of an ethnoreligious secession settles? In the Greek case, most contemporary European commentators as well as modern scholars were more interested in the heroism of Lord Byron and other defenders of Missolonghi or the spectacular victory of the British, French, and Russian squadrons over the Egyptian-Ottoman navy at Navarino.

Lucien Frary's book fills this important gap and focuses precisely on how those three great powers continued to shape the politics and culture of the nascent Greek kingdom, examining how pro-Russian segments interacted with Russian diplomats and local supporters of England and France. In terms of conceptualization and the wealth of published and archival sources, this book stands out in comparison with earlier studies of this topic by John Petropoulos and Olga Misiurevich.[1]

For example, based on his meticulous research, the author sheds light on the murky Philorthodox conspiracy allegedly concocted in 1839-40 to foster uprisings against the sultan among Ottoman Greeks and to force the conversion of King Othon I from Catholicism (or to replace him with an Orthodox prince). Having found no trace of Russian involvement, Frary concludes that the whole affair had been most likely masterminded by the Anglophiles to unseat the Rus-

sophiles from their government posts and to tarnish the Russian image in Greek society (and, sadly, in much of Greek historiography). The author rightly stresses that in the European context of post-Revolutionary restoration the Russian diplomats did their best to discourage irredentism but had little control over those who published and acted upon the oracular prophecies of impending Russian liberation of the remaining Orthodox Christians from the Ottoman Muslim yoke. In spite of that, Greek nationalist activists and the population at large would not lose such hopes at least until after the Crimean War.

As for actual Russian policies, the author's argument centers on the transfer of Nicholas I's official nationality to Greece. Thus, the *Aion* newspaper as the chief organ of the "Russian Party" promoted "Religion, Fatherland, and King" (p. 66). Shared Orthodoxy was the main source of Russia's influence as well as its paramount concern. Imperial Russia's imprint on the Greek church is obvious to this day, as it is still effectively part of the state machinery with priests, monks, and prelates on the government payroll.

To promote "the Byzantine fusion of church and state" (p. 125), Nicholas I sent an ecclesiastical mission to strengthen the Greek Russophiles in their ultimately successful struggle against the spread of Protestant education and publications.

That mission would add a unique dimension to Russian leverage not available to the other great power embassies. Even the Westernizing Greek and Bavarian officials who established the independent Greek church defended its controversial design with a reference to the Petrine model.

The problem that Nicholas I and his Greek supporters had with the newly created Greek church was not so much its structure but willful unilateral separation from the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The resulting schism had become so entrenched that even the Russophile cabinet between 1837 and 1840 was not able to significantly expedite the reconciliation process. It would take two decades for the Archbishopric of Athens to receive recognition of its canonical autocephalous status by the mother church in 1850.

That Orthodox victory, according to Frary, made it easier for Russian statesmen to swallow the “Constitutional Revolution of 1843.” Although led mostly by local Russophiles, it imposed limits on the Greek absolute monarchy in a clear violation of the Official Nationality principles. However reluctant, official Russian backing of this and other subsequent parliamentary arrangements in Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria could suggest at the most basic level political expediency or, more interestingly, the primacy of Orthodoxy over autocracy in the mind of Nicholas I and his bureaucrats. Testing this kind of cultural interpretation could be a subject of another study. Another promising article or book project would be to explore whether the Greeks consciously adopted the established Russian tradition of more or less constitutional palace coups. In Russia, this ended with the Decembrist uprising of 1825 but it flourished in Greece from 1843 well into the twentieth century.

One drawback is the absence of Greek archival sources, which is understandable given the much-needed Russian focus. While the archive of the Greek Holy Synod is difficult to access, the archives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense are relatively user-friendly.

The book consists of six chapters. The first two, “Russia and the Movement for Greek Independence” and “From Anarchy to Absolutism,” examine Russia’s role in the tortuous process of the creation of new national institutions that transitioned the country from a presidential republic to an absolutist kingdom. Chapters 3 and 4, “Autocephaly and Facets of Orthodoxy” and “The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission and the Defense of Orthodoxy,” focus on the ecclesiastical aspects of Russian foreign policy and of Greek cultural identity. The last two, “Secret Societies, Armed Rebellions, and Oracular Prophecies” and “Absolutism under Siege,” delve into the turmoil in Greece and in the Ottoman border provinces like Crete that produced the Revolution of 1843.

Overall, Frary’s book is an important contribution to the study of Russia’s relations with the Balkans as the region was entering the post-Ottoman age. Based on the imaginative use of diplomatic and church papers, the author illustrates important cultural dimensions of foreign policy not confined to the study of a few leading bureaucrats. As such, the book should also be of interest to political scientists interested in postconflict stabilization of successful secessionist states. Even though post-Ottoman Greece found itself a protectorate of three great powers, it managed to avoid becoming their pawn.

Note

[1]. John A. Petropoulos, *Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece, 1833–43* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968); and O. E. Petrunina (Misiurevich), *Stanovlenie natsional’nogo gosudarstva v Gretsii: “Russkaia partiia” v 1837–44* (Moscow: MGU, 1997).

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