

Greece in the Balkans

Greece in the Balkans:
Memory, Conflict and Exchange

Edited by

Othon Anastasakis, Dimitar Bechev
and Nicholas Vrousalis

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P U B L I S H I N G

Greece in the Balkans: Memory, Conflict and Exchange,
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PREFACE

Greece's relationship with its Balkan neighbors follows diverse paths throughout the last two centuries. Such paths that were initially determined by the blueprint of an ecumenical enlightenment and the vision of the "Conquering Orthodox Balkan Merchant" side-tracked into the divergent routes of new nation-states. The Greek state and its leaders inherited, or appropriated, a cultural heritage that was once available to all the Balkan people. They mistook this pre-modern ecumene as the civilising privilege of the Greek state in the Balkan Peninsula.

It was not long however, before it became apparent that emerging nation states competed for territory and influence and that state-building included exclusive cultural, as well as administrative masonry. The administrators of Greece, nevertheless, persisted in their hope of a federation with the Serbs and Bulgarians, even after their separate national agendas became known. The Greek-Bulgarian rift began in 1870 when the Ottoman Sultan recognised the autonomy of the Bulgarian Exarchate Church, breaking all links with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. As the struggle for Ottoman Macedonia peaked so did Greek – Bulgarian relations decline. The Bulgarians that once appeared in Greek texts as "brave, honest and industrious" were transformed in 1882 into "unclean, barbarous, and pestilent". By 1897 a scholar from Arahova in Central Greece, Georgios Kremos, saw no common interest between Greece and its northern neighbors. It was clear to the Greeks that Russian- inspired Pan-Slavism, encouraged the Serbs and the Bulgarians in their irredentist claims, but excluded Greece. Albania therefore became the last hope of Greeks that still, nurtured dreams of federations, brotherhoods and dual monarchies in the Balkans. That hope also declined when it became clear that Italy and Austria had agreed on the creation of an independent Albania.

The Balkan Wars of 1912-13 was the last attempt of Balkan cooperation in the battlefield. Even before the wars were over the allies broke ranks and turned against each other. Some would close ranks again in the Pact of 1934 (Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey) leaving out Bulgaria and Albania, in an attempt to uphold the regional status quo and protect themselves from a predatory Fascist regime. The Balkan Pact did not provide a protective mechanism against external threats and therefore

could not prevent one after another of its signatories to abandon the fold and seek security in bilateral treaties with European powers.

Wartime cleavages and post-war blocks, excluded any possibility of Balkan multilateralism. Tito's break with Stalin however, allowed for the rapprochement of Yugoslavia with the two non-Communist states in the region, Greece and Turkey. In 1953 a trilateral Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in Ankara, was followed by a military alliance in Bled in 1954. The subsequent see –saw of improvement and deterioration in Yugoslav-Soviet relations reflected on Greek – Yugoslav relations in an inversely proportional way. East-West détente in the seventies encouraged the beginning of bilateral relations between Balkan states. Greece and Albania resumed diplomatic relations in 1971 and after 1974 Konstantinos Karamanlis, the then Prime Minister of Greece, embarked in a full scale attempt to restore relations with his communist neighbors. Karamanlis' 1979 visit to Moscow was well-timed for a significant breakthrough in Balkan multilateralism. Bulgarian Communist leader Todor Zhivkov's agreement no doubt reflected the outcome of a Greek-Soviet rapprochement. Despite its slow progress, inter-Balkan cooperation constituted a hope for multilateralism until the outbreak of the Yugoslav bloodbath. Since 1991 that Balkan states have looked outside the region for advice and support. Regional multilateralism gave way to bilateral (and multilateral) relations with the EU, NATO and various western states.

In our global world, states and societies coexist in different stages of development. Far from having attained uniformity, pre-modern, modern and post-modern political communities and entities live side by side. If pre-modernity is characterised by devotion to religion and transcendental imperatives, modernity is about centralised nation-states and their secular priorities. Post-modernity is best represented by supranational organizations such as the EU, underwritten by multiculturalism and transnationalism.

The coexistence and tensions between ideas, institutions and people of different time-wraps is a challenging subject for our tolerant and syncretic culture. Jules Verne and H.G. Wells depicted the perils that ensue when people of different periods meet. Facing technologies that defy the conventional mindset, or travelling with a time machine in alien environments, produce circumstances of tension that are difficult to reconcile.

What in the EU distinguishes post-modern from modern society, is the former's quest for pluralism, decentralization of state power and symbiotic, rather than confrontational security policies. The more wealth is the outcome of a technical innovation rather than the produce of the earth (agricultural and mineral), the less the state depends on territorial

aggrandisement to achieve power and riches. Our societies are on the whole less bellicose and irredentist than those of our fathers.

Greece's relations with its northern neighbours are heading towards the post-modern European level of pluralism and post-national synergies, yet in some limited cases, they still remain hostages to the exclusionary values of nation-state modernity and inter-state competition. In the current age of multiculturalism and movement of people, goods and services, the new battle is among the ideas of inclusion, regional cooperation and extrovert development, and the ideas of exclusion, regional competition and introvert, anachronistic approach. This has been the on-going story in the relationship of Greece with its northern neighbours since her independence and it is only hoped that the post-modern European environment will control the excesses of this struggle.

Thanos Veremis
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June 2009

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We would hope that this book constitutes a significant addition not only to the understanding of modern Greece but to an inter-disciplinary, comparative and transnational understanding of the complex relationship between Greeks and their other Balkan neighbours.

INTRODUCTION

GREECE AND ITS NORTHERN NEIGHBOURS: CONFLICTS AND MUTUAL INFLUENCES

OTHON ANASTASAKIS, DIMITAR BECHEV
AND NICHOLAS VROUSALIS

Modern Greece has always had an ambiguous relationship with its neighbours to the north, shaped in equal measure by attraction and enmity. Historically, Greek people were not simply confined to what we know today as Greece but were spread throughout the Balkans, Anatolia and the Black Sea coast. Likewise, present-day Greece was—and still is—home to hundreds of thousands of people who either originate or have affiliations with ethnic groups and states beyond Greek territorial or geographical confines. For the Greeks, the Balkan region has been, on the one hand, a natural and familiar outlet for economic or cultural exchange and, on the other, a space of competing national interests and antagonisms. Both before and after independence was achieved in 1830, the country's elites saw the Balkans, in particular, as culturally close to Greece and saw their nation as part of a larger community in South East Europe. This feeling of closeness was especially concerned with the non-Greek-speaking Orthodox populations of the Ottoman lands (the southern Slavs, the Albanians, the Aromanians, the Gagauz etc.) and the Danubian Principalities. Those of whom lived in the southern parts of the Balkan peninsula were even considered as potential subjects of the expanding Hellenic Kingdom, following the “Megali Idea” (Great Idea), inaugurated by the Greek leader (of Aromanian origin), Ioannis Kolettis. Political ambitions matched, to some extent, realities of Greek political and economic presence across the Balkans. Greek merchants were established across South East Europe, even in geographically remote points such as the Moldavian ports on the Danube. Along with Ottoman Turkish, Greek was the language of business and commerce in many urban settlements south of the Balkan range, as well as throughout the Ottoman-controlled

Black Sea. Greek-speaking intellectuals served as one of the major channels through which a number of ideas, associated chiefly with the Enlightenment, entered the Balkan hinterland. During the century of the Megali Idea and Greek irredentism (19th century), the Balkans was also the space for a Greek “civilising mission” through the propagation and dissemination of Greek-language schooling and Orthodox religion. Up until the Bulgarian challenge following the Crimean War (1853-56), the Greeks had chosen to believe that they were best suited to lead the rest of the Orthodox Christians in the Balkans. The 19th century Greek state provided an early example for the nationalist movements in neighbouring lands, though these often were equally hostile to the political power of the Ottoman rulers and to the Greek spiritual influences championed by the episcopate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople.

During the second half of the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century, a period of gradual Ottoman disintegration and the establishment of new states in the Balkans, Greek nationalism was often at odds with other emerging national projects. In many cases, there were moments of fierce antagonism, foreign occupation and involvement in different international camps. But this period also saw a common effort to oust the Ottomans, during the first Balkan Wars pursued by Greece together with Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro. There were similar instances of regional unity, through cooperation initiated by some Balkan countries in the 1930s through a series of intergovernmental conferences and the establishment of the Balkan Entente. All in all, Greece and the other Balkan states emerging from the ashes of the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires pursued a pattern alternating between conflict and cooperation.

In the interwar period, the Balkans was central to Greece’s foreign political, economic and cultural agenda. It was marked by its concerted effort to consolidate recent territorial acquisitions in Epirus, Macedonia and Western Thrace, and to manage the massive exchange and expulsions of population with Turkey and Bulgaria in the 1920s. Though the perception of a “threat from the North” was salient in the 1920s and 1930s, it was the early Cold War years that cemented the separation of Greece from the rest of South East Europe. The country’s incorporation into the Western camp resulted in radically different political alignments compared with other Balkan countries. The stillborn Second Balkan Entente, which incorporated Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia in the mid-1950s, did not narrow the gap. Isolation was to affect Greece’s post-war development in both positive and negative ways. From a positive perspective, Greece’s inclusion in the capitalist world brought about a greater degree of economic freedom and, later, prosperity compared to its neighbours to the

north. From a negative perspective, the ideological divide and the Greek Civil War of 1946-49 left a shadow over subsequent generations and divided Greek society into irreconcilable camps up until the 1970s. Consecutive right-wing governments vigorously preserved the idea of the “threat from the north” in popular consciousness, for it blended the rhetoric of global ideological rivalry, the bitter legacy of the Second World War and the Civil War, as well as the traumatic memories of the last Ottoman decades, marked by nationalism-fuelled struggles over Greece’s northern frontier. Enmeshed in the institutions of the West, such as NATO, and, after 1981, the European Community, Greece drifted apart from its communist neighbours in the Balkans. This dissociation was also reflected in the academic and popular writings in its contemporary politics and society. Greece was internally recast as a southern European country, perceived in conjunction with Portugal, Spain and Italy, and only rarely by reference to its more remote, Balkan past. The chasm between Greece and the Balkans was partly mended by a reengagement with the neighbourhood, effected at the level of foreign policy, which started during the last years of the military junta and came to prominence with Constantine Karamanlis and Andreas Papandreu’s administrations in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively. While it signalled a period of rapprochement with Sofia, Bucharest and Belgrade, this new diplomatic course did not contribute to substantially deeper economic and societal ties as Greece’s agenda at the time was driven, in the main, by the opportunities and challenges of European integration.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Greece rediscovered the Balkans in the 1990s with the end of the Cold War. The demise of communist rule throughout the region was seen as a mixture of recurring threats from the past and new opportunities for reconciliation in the context of a more united Europe. In Greece, the break up of Yugoslavia fuelled overblown fears of a putative Muslim axis (dominated by Turkey) and of irredentism orchestrated by the erstwhile Socialist Republic of Macedonia. It also conjured the ghosts of nationalist competition and territorial revisionism. The Macedonian Question, in particular, came to haunt the country’s foreign policy in the region while stirring up domestic passions. Greece’s recalcitrance over the name of the new state in the 1990s, coupled with its sympathies for Belgrade and the Bosnian Serbs, often complicated the country’s relationship with the West. Greece kept on reminding itself and the world that it was more stable democratically, more prosperous economically and a more advanced member of international organisations, compared with its northern neighbours, while in reality it was also apprehensive over its new regional identity. Greek

fears were further amplified by the sense of encirclement by its regional rival, Turkey, which established good political and military links with a number of governments in post-communist South East Europe over the early 1990s. Moreover, for the first time, Greece, traditionally a country of emigration to Western Europe, North America and Australia, experienced a mass influx of immigrants from the north, particularly from neighbouring Albania. During the 1990s, the share of immigrants rose to about one-tenth of the population, challenging the hitherto homogenous vision of Greek society.

The momentous changes in the Balkans during the 1990s presented great opportunities for Greece. Although a small and marginal player in the context of the European Union, the country had substantial economic influence in the Balkans, with a GDP greater than that of all post-communist countries in South East Europe combined. It became a chief source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and a major trading partner for the region. Greek companies in sectors such as banking, food processing, manufacturing, retail and telecommunications established large-scale operations in Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Its local significance increased in line with growth in its political and economic clout. The reformist government of Costas Simitis in the late 1990s brought Greek foreign policy in the Balkans more into step with the rising levels of regional economic interdependence. This was in conformity with the liberal and pro-European orientation of a new generation of Greek policymakers, commonly manifested in domestic affairs through Simitis' philosophy of *eksynchronismos* (modernisation). A new approach towards the Balkans was visible in Greece's support for the EU integration of Romania and Bulgaria, as well as for extending membership possibilities to Western Balkan countries, culminating in the Greek Presidency of the Council of Ministers during the first half of 2003 and the Thessaloniki commitment to the European integration of the Balkans. It was also reflected in Greek involvement in a plethora of multilateral institutions and initiatives operating in the Balkans, such as the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP). Reengagement was also facilitated by a slow process of Greek-Turkish rapprochement after 1999, which aimed at putting to rest the earlier policy of competition in the two countries' shared neighbourhood, thus centring around a new Greek strategy aimed at Turkish membership in the European Union (EU).

The class of new strategies paid off by placing the country at the centre of a new dynamic and developing region and somewhat enhanced its role as one of the intermediaries in the process of Europeanisation of the

countries in question. The Balkan enlargement also brings Greece closer to strategically important areas such as the Black Sea and the Caucasus, offering new economic opportunities in fields such as energy transit and infrastructure development. That is not to state that we are entering an era of a liberal paradise where relations between neighbours are harmonious and any past memories of conflict and competition have been totally eradicated. Indeed, the Macedonian issue continues to haunt Greece's foreign policy and affects the country's relationship not only with its northern neighbour but with NATO, the EU and the United States. Moreover, the closeness of Albania, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia with the United States means that Greece has ceased to be the only important NATO member and strategic ally of the United States in South East Europe. Similarly, Kosovo's independence is another souring point where Greece tries not to disrupt its relationship with Serbia, postponing the recognition of the new country. As long as there are pockets of instability in the Balkans—in Kosovo, Bosnia or FYR Macedonia—there will also be potential for competition among the states in the region. Finally, the economic crisis of the end of the first decade of the new century is bound to affect economic relations between neighbours, to decrease investment in the region and to push towards more introvert, protectionist and nationalistic preferences and choices.

At the same time, the new environment in the Balkans is also that of multilateralism, regionalism and European integration. And it has to be said that despite some of the mistakes in Greece's foreign policy in the last two decades, the country and its elites have been strong advocates of this new approach and of the integration of the Balkans in Europe. As it happens, the Thessaloniki Summit of June 2003 constitutes the most important European push for the integration of the Western Balkans in the EU to date. It has been the culmination of a long journey starting with the independence of the Greek state in the early 19th century, which had ups and downs. On the one hand, wars, conflicts and violent populations exchanges, recriminations and bitter memories and a forceful division from the bipolar cold war environment; on the other, co-existence, economic cooperation, regional initiatives and cultural exchanges which kept the "brothers and cousins" of the region dependent on one another in the knowledge that what divides them also binds them together.

Overview of the chapters

This volume addresses the nature of Greece's interaction with its Balkan neighbours from the perspective of a variety of disciplines and themes: political and diplomatic history, sociology and economics, the study of culture, religion and identity formation. It discusses particular historical instances of the relationship between Greece and the Balkans reflecting on its complex, multi-faceted, and often contradictory, nature. In all of the above themes and areas of regional interaction, Greece has been wavering between risk and challenge, inclusion and exclusion, opportunity and threat.

The book follows a chronological and thematic rationale in the way its parts and chapters are divided. The first part discusses nationalism, identity and religion, all of which were particularly important in the formation of the new independent state during the first decades after Greece's independence. Developments in these areas affected the relationship between Greeks and its northern neighbours in the context of a disintegrating Ottoman Empire and subsequent formation of new independent states, the latter pursuing a similar process of nation-building and identity formation. Historically, religious matters were at the centre of Greek-Balkan relations. The independence of the Greek state, and the subsequent process of nation-building, raised significant questions regarding the tangled relationship between Greekness and Orthodoxy. Kostas Pnevmatikos looks at the proclamation of the autocephalous Hellenic Church and the attempts to "nationalise" Orthodox universalism. In fact, following independence the question of the autocephalous of the Greek Church from the Ecumenical Patriarchate became one of the most contested issues among supporters and adversaries of such independence. The ensuing crisis raised important questions concerning the relations between Church and State (an issue which continues to haunt Greek politics and society well into the current 21st century, in step with the process of European integration and the multiculturalisation of the Greek society). Religious issues had important repercussions in the strained relationship between Greeks and Bulgarians, exacerbated by the foundation of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 as a national Orthodox church in the Ottoman Empire. The issue is discussed by George Michalopoulos, who focuses on reactions the Bulgarian move provoked in Greece and in the wider Hellenic world. Michalopoulos argues that the debate was principally about the definition of Greek national identity—and the role of religion in such a definition, in particular—rather than a theological debate over doctrine. In a similar vein, Galia Valtchinova

expounds on a case study of Greek-Bulgarian relations in the town of Stanimaka (today Assenovgrad) in southern Bulgaria at the start of 20th century. Geographically close to several important sites of worship, Stanimaka was a highly symbolic place for the history of the Balkan Hellenism, as well as for the Bulgarian national revival. Since the mid-19th century, Bulgarian-Greek competition in the area of church affiliation and education took multiple forms at the local level. It culminated in the anti-Greek acts and pogroms of 1906, partly instigated by Bulgarian activists from Ottoman Macedonia. Valtchinova's paper studies the role of women, united through various religious and social practices and bonds, in times of civil and ethnic strife. It looks at the religious visions and miracles, construed as a distinctive Orthodox cultural idiom, and argues about their role as both a symbolic medium that facilitates social processes and a vehicle for religious nationalism.

The issue of identity colours the contribution of Georgios Kritikos, which provides a social anthropological interpretation of the religious identification of Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, as well as in the Greek state. He investigates the place of religious identity and belief in the organisation of social life within the Empire, as well as its contribution to the settlement and integration of Greek Orthodox refugees in Greece. Kritikos analyses the role of Orthodoxy as a link or a site of competition between different populations and offers plausible answers to the question of why religious identification remained so strong even after the refugees' settlement in the semi-secular environment of the Greek state. The last chapter in this part deals with cultural relations. Jovanka Djordjević discusses the vicissitudes of Serb-Greek literary relations at four different junctures spanning across the 19th and 20th centuries, and the extent to which these reflected the political and strategic calculations at the time.

The second part of the book discusses moments of co-existence and competition, regional and bilateral diplomacy and detente. It starts with a study of a typical Balkan space, one of the most important economic, cultural and geostrategic centres in the region, Thessaloniki. In his paper, Shai Srougo focuses on the city's role as a conduit between the Mediterranean, the Balkan hinterland and central Europe, whose size and influence increased massively in the late Ottoman era. However, the upheavals of the early 20th century—the two Balkan Wars, the First World War and the debacle in Asia Minor in 1922—severed major links with the Balkans and resulted in Thessaloniki's demise as a port and as a place of exchange between cultures, religions and ethnic groups. This paper is a very interesting study of the dramatic changes that took place in Thessaloniki over such a short period of time which witnessed significant

domestic and international changes and shows how vulnerable the city always was to international influences and international circumstances. Thessaloniki, more than many other places in the Balkans, is the microcosm of the transition from the multinational empire environment to the national context, as well as the regional conflicts and co-existence between peoples, ethnic groups, and economic and social interests.

From this bottom-up perspective, this part continues with a top-down approach to region-building in Prevelakis' chapter on pan-Balkan diplomatic initiatives in the inter-war period. He argues that Greece's approach to the region in the 1930s oscillated between multilateral cooperation, on the one hand, and the pursuit of defensive alignments, on the other. Illustrative of this ambivalent dynamic are the attempts at Balkan cooperation, which, while fostering reconciliation, were in tune with the efforts to preserve the Versailles *status quo* in the Balkans and elsewhere in Europe. It also reflected Venizelos' policy of bilateral rapprochement with Greece's northern neighbours. Prevelakis focuses particularly on the case of the Balkan Entente, an endeavour to build a multilateral body, which proved defunct by the late 1930s. The Entente highlights and addresses the fact that Greek policymakers perceived the alliance as a key strategic decision to create a regional framework free from the Great Powers' influence.

The next chapter takes us to the midst of the Cold War environment which separated Greece from its northern neighbours, while inducing antagonism and military competition from the outside South East Europe. During such difficult times, however, the region's leaders tried, more often than not, to avoid mutual confrontation. Hence the selective attempts by Greece to reengage with its neighbours during the Cold War. Indeed, by the 1970s, ideological rifts mattered less than converging national interests, so much so that Greece reengaged with its neighbours while under a military junta. Alexandros Nafpliotis studies the colonels' regime, which re-established diplomatic relations with Albania, one of Europe's most hardline communist dictatorships, after a freeze lasting more than 30 years. Nafpliotis argues that economic cooperation and strategic calculations trumped the logic of ideological rivalries and extreme ideological enemies, such as Enver Hoxha in Tirana and the military the junta in Athens, chose to explore paths of cooperation.

But it is the post-communist period which has invited most of the recent analyses of Greece's engagement within the region and is the period addressed in the third part of the book. Aristotle Tziampiris discusses one of the most controversial issues of Greek foreign policy: the name of Macedonia. Tziampiris identifies a series of mistakes in Greek foreign

policy since the 1990s, but also sees a movement from a confrontational to a more Europeanised approach over the period between 1991 and today. Indeed, as Tziampiris shows, political relations between Greece and its neighbours started with a certain scepticism and risk, but developed gradually in the context of Europeanisation and normalisation.

Despite certain political drawbacks, one of the most interesting developments in Greece's relations with its neighbours was the speed with which the business community entered the Balkan post-communist space. Vassilis Monastiriotes and Achilleas Tsamis investigate the tensions between state-driven economic relations and private sector development, and discuss the limits of a long-term governmental economic strategy in the Balkans, which have affected Greece's potential to engage effectively with the region. Finally, Elena Georgieva and Fan Wu offer a case study of Greek economic involvement in the Balkans by analysing one particular aspect of Greek foreign direct investment in post-communist Bulgaria. The authors examine the different challenges faced by Greek entrepreneurs operating in Bulgaria, and the risks emanating from the lack of efficient institutions in both countries, but especially in Bulgaria, partly as a result of limited exposure to the market economy. Compared to other foreign investors, Greeks are found to be less discouraged by local obstacles due to cultural proximity and historical familiarity with Bulgarian enterprise. Across the post-communist Balkans, Greek entrepreneurs did not have much choice but to compete and engage with neighbouring states from the early years of their transition to a market economy. As a result, economic relations advanced faster, despite enduring political problems.

Another striking development following the collapse of communism and the movement of people across borders was the dramatic surge of refugees who moved to Greece due to its more stable political system and better economic prospects. Michail and Tsioumis in their paper examine how Greece—with an immigrant population of almost 10% of the total population today—has started losing her traditional character as a “monoethnic” and “monolingual” nation-state on which her nationalists have worked so hard for the last century. It looks at the way that the flows of people in pursuit of work have pluralised the cultural and ethnic composition of Greece, thus shattering the illusion of homogeneity and closure on which the modern nation, as imagined community, was founded. Thus, new concepts like “multiculturalism”, “multiethnicity”, “multilingualism”, “pluralism” and “transnationalism” have emerged in the Greek domestic discourse. However, the movement of people has been both ways, and the opening of borders meant that increasing numbers of Greeks would visit their northern neighbours where markets were cheaper

and tourist destinations very attractive. Dimitra Kofti presents the results of her social anthropological research on Greek tourism in the towns of south-west Bulgaria. She documents the Greek tourists' attitudes and perceptions, including their self-characterisation as European, usually in contrast to the locals. The author argues that although geographical and territorial borders are static, they are surrounded by dynamic symbolic frontiers and processes whose extent and force varies with economic and pecuniary power. She argues that the collective crossing over the Greco-Bulgarian border partly reflects the Greeks' xenophobia but also a reversal of feelings of inferiority and internal anxiety.

The thirteen chapters that follow, original contributions in the main by young scholars, reflect the diversity of the multifaceted relationship between Greece and its Balkan neighbours over the past two hundred years. They thereby shed refreshing light on its persistent attributes of opportunity and risk, attraction and enmity, exchange and exclusion, through exploration of historical, anthropological, literary, political and economic perspectives.

PART I:
NATION-BUILDING, RELIGION
AND IDENTITY

CHAPTER ONE

RELIGION AND NATIONALISM
IN THE ERA OF AFTOKEFALA:
THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE ORTHODOX
ECUMENISM*

KOSTAS PNEVMATIKOS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the disintegration of the Orthodox “commonwealth” and the weakening of the patriarchal claims of ecumenicalism vis-à-vis the spread of nationalistic ideas in the Balkans. The study is structured around two basic axes: namely, the 1833 Declaration of Independence of the Greek Church, which can be considered as a definite confirmation of the de facto ecclesiastical rupture which had already taken place after the years of the Greek Revolution and, secondarily, the crisis of the Bulgarian Exarchate of the 1870s. These are the most characteristic secessions from the Church of Constantinople, which led to the formation of the corresponding national churches.

The first section of the paper is concerned with fluctuations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople’s power vis-à-vis the development of nationalism in the Balkans. This matter is unambiguously related to the decrease of the ecumenical patriarch’s territorial jurisdiction, power and prestige. The prehistory of the rift between the patriarchate and the Greek and non-Greek speaking populations of the Balkans, as well as the events leading up to it, are of major significance. The main question to be settled is: was the turbulence that followed the secession of the churches of Greece and Bulgaria from the Patriarchate’s control in the 19th century

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connected with the expansion of the nationalistic ideology in the Balkans—and, if so, in what way?

The second section of the paper deals mainly with this issue. It focuses on some aspects of the interrelation between Orthodoxy and nationalism, and attempts to examine certain attributes of the interaction between the two ideologies. Particular attention is given to the predominance and/or influence of nationalism on traditional ideas, such as the Orthodox universality. This interaction, whether it generates alignment and coincidence or interesting paradoxes, necessitates a constant alternation of political and religious argumentation within the rhetorical framework of the two ideological systems.

The prehistory: the breakaway tendencies and the turbulence of the 19th century

The extinction of the power of the Byzantine emperor in 1453 also meant the expansion of the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople in the region of the Balkan Peninsula, where, at that time, he did not wield his ecclesiastical power. For the Patriarch, the Ottoman administration provided the Orthodox Church, represented by the Patriarchate of Constantinople, with the certainty that the Orthodox populations would not come under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Church, which aspired to the expulsion of Ottomans from Europe. Moreover, via the Orthodox Church, the Ottoman sultan arrogated to himself Byzantium's imperial glory and, simultaneously, kept the Christian population more effectively under his control. The Ottoman state was very successful in this attempt; it arranged the non-Muslim subjects of the empire into groups according to their religious faith (*millet*).¹

For the Ottomans, any possible difference between Greek and non-Greek Christians was inconceivable.² That is why the Slavic metropolitan sees soon came under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople: I refer to the Patriarchate of Tŭrnovo (Veliko Tŭrnovo, Тŭрново), which according to George Arnakis is “sometimes called ‘the National Church of

¹ For the relations of the Ottomans with the Greek and Slavic populations of the Balkans, see P. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1977), 251-266. For the *millet* system, see *ibid.*, 277-282.

² For the consequences of the Ottomans' “incapacity” to distinguish the various groups in their empire according to non-religious criteria, see V. Georgiadou, “From the Status of ‘Accord’ to the Reality of Secular Subjection” (in Greek), *Theoria & Koinonia* no. 3 (December 1990): 77-96.

Bulgaria”³ and to the archdioceses or patriarchates of Ohrid and Peć, Bulgarian and Serbian respectively.⁴ The patriarchate of Trnovo had already been recognised by the ecumenical Patriarch in 1235; however, it was suspended in 1396 after the conquest of the last Bulgarian kingdom by the Ottomans. The Serbian archdiocese of Peć had been raised into a patriarchate by Stefan Dušan in 1346. The Patriarchate of Peć can be considered as a successor to the Patriarchate of Skopje, which had been suppressed in 1459. It was re-established in 1557. In 1766 that patriarchate was suppressed and its primate functioned as the national leader of Serbs, thus facilitating their emancipation from the ecumenical patriarchate.⁵

Both these patriarchates maintained their preferential rank up to 1766-67. According to some Greek historians (e.g. Chasiotis), the suspension was due to administrative and economic reasons and not to patriarchal efforts to consolidate the dominant position of the Greek element.⁶ Equally possible as a reason for the suspension seems to be the fact that the Turks preferred to converse with only one ecclesiastical authority, which had its seat in Constantinople, the administrative centre of the empire, a fact that allowed them to exert a more direct control over it.⁷ In any case the predominance of the Greek element—a predominance that was terminated

³ G. Arnakis, “The Role of Religion in the Development of Balkan Nationalism,” in *The Balkans in Transition. Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Charles and Barbara Jelavich, (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 127; I. Chasiotis, *From the Recuperation to the Boost of the Genos: the Orthodox Church and the Formation of Modern Greek Political Ideology during Ottoman Domination* (in Greek) (Thessaloniki: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 1999), 28.

⁴ The archbishop of Ohrid was titled the shepherd of Bulgarians, but in reality, all archbishops were of Greek ethnicity. Greek, rather than Slavonic, was also the language of liturgy. It was therefore not a national institution in the sense that the Peć Patriarchate might have been.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 29-30; For the suppression of the two archdioceses, whose provinces were subsumed under the Patriarchate of Constantinople, see P. Konortas, *Ottoman Views on the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Berat-Documents Referring to the Primates of the Great Church (17th to the Beginning of 20th Century)* (in Greek) (Athens: Alexandria, 1998), 217-227.

⁶ Chasiotis, *From the Recuperation*, 30-31. Konortas mentions that from the end of the 17th and during the 18th century, the Greek element of Constantinople flourished. Konortas, *Ottoman Views*, 367.

⁷ Moreover, the Turks suspected the Serbs of treacherous actions, especially during the war with Austria (1737-39). Arnakis, “The Role of Religion”, 128.