

## **Short overview of the evolution of Modern Greek state**

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Greece could be an heir of the Byzantine Empire. History often identifies Greece with Byzantium. Unfortunately, the speedy reinforcement of the Ottoman Empire caused Ottomans to become the heirs of Byzantium, and Greece disappeared from the political map. From 1453 till 1821 the territory, which is now called the Hellenic Republic, represented one of the provinces of the Ottoman Empire and Greece as a political unit did not exist.

In 1821 the national liberation movement of Greece, with the guidance of Theodoros Kolokotronis, arranged the revolution against the Ottoman Empire and gained victory. Since that time Greece began fighting to re-establish unity and a state system.<sup>1</sup>

The Greek Revolution was organized in Greece as well as abroad. Greek emigrants were actively involved in the national liberation struggle. At that time Greece had gained all the criteria which are necessary for the formation of a people as a nation. Greece surpassed its conqueror state in economical-cultural development. Peasants were the main force of the revolution, though they were still strengthened by rich and powerful maritime-commercial bourgeoisie and national intelligentsia. They were the ideological leaders of the revolution.<sup>2</sup>

In 1815 a secret association under the name “Philiki Eteria” (i.e. friendly union) was established. Its center was in Odessa and the leaders were Nickolaos Skufas, Emanuil Xantos and Athanasios Tsakalov. In 1820, the association was led by Major General of the Russian Army Aleksandre Ipsilantis. He was from a notable Greek family. In the case of gaining freedom, he was considered the leader of the new Greece.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nikos G. Svoronos, *Review of modern History of Greece*, Themelio 1992, pg. 68-70

<sup>2</sup> Donadze, V., *Newest History of Asian and African States*, I Vol . Tbilisi State University 1968

<sup>3</sup> Richard Clogg, *A concise history of Greece 1770-2000*, second edition, pg. 55-57

The Greek Revolution was followed by a great international resonance. This event enraptured Russian and European societies. It was the first broad revolt against the Ottoman Empire. Greeks were ideologically supported by Russian and European intellectuals A. Griboedov, A. Pushkin, and V. Hugo. A famous British poet Lord George Byron went to Greece to assist in the national liberation struggle of the Greek people. He sacrificed himself in this struggle. The poet died of malaria in a siege on the town of Messolonghi. Greece was rendered important assistance by England, France and Russia (they were the Great Powers). These countries created a coalition against Turkey. On October 20, 1827 the coalition troops annihilated the navies of Turkey and her ally Egypt in the gulf of Navarino. They forced Turkey to announce the sovereignty of Greece.<sup>4</sup>

On April 14, 1827 Ioannis Kapodistria was appointed as a head of the newly-created autonomous republic of Greece. He was a representative of Kerkirian (Korfusian) Graf's family. In 1816-1822 he served as the minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire.

We have mentioned above that "Philiki Eteria" offered the leader's post to Aleksandre Ipsilantis, but previously this post was offered to Kapodistria. "Philiki Eteria" made such a decision because Ioannis Kapodistria refused their offer. He thought that the revolution would not be finished successfully. He also advised the leaders of this organization to wait until the war of Russia and Turkey would restart. Greeks could make use of this and in the given case Turkey would have little chance to suppress revolution. But when Ioannis Kapodistria saw that Greeks were ready for revolution, he left his post in the residence of the Emperors of Russia and he came to Greece. It was his thanks to him that Russia, England and France gave active support to the national liberation movement of Greece. Kapodistria utilized his post as the minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia in order to gain support from the progressive countries of those times which held antagonistic sentiments towards the Ottoman Empire and encouraged any action against it. Kapodistria managed to channel moral support into practical, military and economic assistance.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the fact that the national liberation movement of Greece began in 1821, it ended with minimal results. On July 6, 1827 an agreement was signed among England, France, Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Greece in London. On the basis of this agreement, Greece gained autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. The

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<sup>4</sup> Donadze, V., *The Newest History of Asian and African States*, I Vol. Tbilisi State University 1968

<sup>5</sup> Spiros K. Kalogeropoulos Stratis, *Issues of International Relations*, Papazisis, Athens 1977, pg. 258265

autonomous Hellenic republic included its southern territories, the Peloponnesus and the Aegean Sea islands. The city Navplio was declared as its capital.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of Kapodistria's great services, his rivals appeared. On October 9, 1831 Kapodistria was killed by Konstantinos and his son Georgios Mavromikhalis. The reason behind Kapodistria's murder was his interior policies. The Greek feudal lords, possessing influence at the time of the Ottomans' supremacy, could not adapt to his reforms. Besides, he was considered a pro-Russian politician in England and France. Based on these two factors his reforms were considered a dictatorship, and understandably so. When Kapodistria was appointed as a leader, there was great anarchy in Greece. Organized systems of defense, education, jurisdiction or economics did not exist.<sup>7</sup> All these required someone to enforce strict rules. Kapodistria made enemies among the leaders of the Revolution because he brought his relatives and friends into government. He also used strictness in order to resolve the problems of newly -created Greece. Finally, he was killed by his compatriots.

Thus the first architect of Greece was doomed to death by his people. Kapodistria had been in the government for only four years, but he managed to form the basic elements of the state. The foundation of the Military School of Evelpides, Agricultural School in Tirintha and orphanage in Egina is connected to the name of Kapodistria. Kapodistria's reforms were based on patriotism and not on the directions of powerful countries.

As was mentioned above, Kapodistria was considered a pro-Russian politician, which is why England and France tried to neutralize him. Concerning this, in 1830, even during the life of Kapodistria, England managed and reached an agreement about the restoration of Greece in the form of a sovereign, independent but monarchic state.

In 1832 King Otto Von Wittelsbach became the head of the kingdom of Greece. He was of European origin. He was the second son of King Ludvig (Ludoviko) I of Bavaria. This decision was made because it would be easy for England and France, but not for Russia, to lead him. King Otto arrived in Greece in 1833, at which time he was seventeen years old. In 1834 Otto transferred the capital from Navplion to Athens.

Since then Greece has suffered much internal misrule. At the time of King Otto's rule, several revolts were organized and suppressed. These revolts aimed to overthrow the King's authority. Various political parties opposed King Otto and at

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Clogg, *A concise history of Greece 1770-2000*, second edition, pg.66

<sup>7</sup> Spiros K. Kalogropoulos Stratis *Issues of International Relations*, Papazisis, Athens 1977, pg.258

last, in 1862, he was exiled from Greece.<sup>8</sup> He was replaced by another European monarch Georgios I, a member of the Royal Family of Denmark (Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg and Louise of Hesse-Kassel). This alteration of the government was caused by the struggle among France, England and Russia. They permanently controlled Greek politics and were correspondingly reacting. All of these countries tried to strengthen their influence in Greece in order to spread their power over the Balkans as well. Sir Edmund Lyons, the Ambassador of England to Greece in 1841, said: “The real free Greece would be nonsense. Greece may become English or Russian, and because she would not be Russian she must become English.”<sup>9</sup>

Hence, after the re-establishment of Greece, it represented an area of division among powerful states. Since its formation, Greece expanded its territory and gradually restored its territorial integrity. Greece reached all these by means of a wise political course. It always profited by the struggle of powerful states and made use of the situation for its welfare. Greece managed to do so because the Ottoman Empire was weakened and could not resist the empire’s collapse.

Despite strong international support, it took a long time for Greece to restore its territorial integrity, placate its internal political struggles and integrate democratic institutions. These struggles continued for over one and a half centuries (the whole nineteenth century and half of the twentieth century), and they gave Greece much experience as it learned how to create democratic institutions and restore territorial integrity. The establishment of the present political map of Greece is based on four conventions:

- London Convention (1830), when Peloponnesus (South Greece) and Aegean Sea Islands were transferred to the possession of Greece;
- Another London Convention (1864) when the Ionian Islands and Thessaly were transferred to the possession of Greece;
- As result of Balkan war in 1913 Macedonia, Crete and the north Islands of the Aegean Sea were transferred to the possession of Greece;
- In 1923 west Thrace was incorporated by Greece;
- The Paris Agreement on February 10, 1947, at which time the political map of Greece was finally formed and the country gained possession of the Dodecanese Islands of the south Aegean Sea from Italy. After World War I these islands were

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<sup>8</sup> Clogg, R., *A concise history of Greece 1770-2000*, second edition, pg. 79

<sup>9</sup> Clogg, R., *A concise history of Greece 1770-2000*, second edition, pg. 77

in the possession of various countries: Italy, England, and Germany. At the given moment they were occupied by Italian troops who had been deployed there after World War II.<sup>10</sup>

In 1922, when Greece fought to restore territorial unity, it received many refugees from Asia Minor.

In 1917 with the request of England, Greece began fighting in World War I on the side of "Entente." According to that promise she would gain the zone of Smyrna. This promise was fulfilled. On the basis of the agreement of Serves (1920) the abovementioned territory and east Thrace were transferred to the possession of Greece with the mandate of rule. After this, Greece, with the purpose of defense, moved one of her military divisions to Smyrna. Turkey could not conciliate to this and began a partisan struggle. In partisans' persecution, the Greek division turned into a military expedition, which had not been its purpose. In 1920 on the basis of the London Agreement, the Smirna region and east Thrace were given to Greece. The Greeks' wish almost came true. They had to return only Constantinople and several islands. But this situation did not continue for a long time. In 1922 the revolutionary group came into the authority of Turkey. They managed to get a partial benefit from the Agreements of Serves and London 1920. In 1922 Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), who arranged a revolt against the Sultan and overthrew his authority, led the Turkish Troops' intervention in the Smyrna region. There befell a tragedy: more than 600,000 Greek people were killed there and the remaining Greeks (1,100,000 people) migrated to Greece. In Greek history, this tragedy is called "The Catastrophe of Mikrasia."

Greece endured much internal political crisis. In 1967 the Royal Authority was overthrown and power was taken by "Hunda" i.e. military government. In 1974 "Hunda" was overthrown and the political Parties came to the government. Greece also suffered civil wars: in 1946-1949 there was a war between the troops of the authority and the democratic forces under the submission of the Communist Party, and in 1973 – between the royal authority and the military authority. In spite of all these Greece orientated itself toward western institutions and gained success. In 1951 it became a member of NATO and in 1981 a member of the European Union. Here we should mention that at that time, Greece was considered an economically underdeveloped country, but from 1950 to 1980 the country saw incredible economic growth. This development did a great deal for the economical stability of Greece.

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<sup>10</sup> Clogg, R., *A concise history of Greece 1770-2000*, second edition, pg. 308-309

Greece managed to establish political-economical stability and the unity of the territory only after 153 years of independence. For a century and a half, Greek people have fought for the foundation of democratic institutions in their country.

#### References and Notes

1. Richard Clogg, *A concise history of Greece 1770-2000*, second edition
2. Nikos G. Svoronos, *Review of modern History of Greece*, Themelio, 1992.
3. Donadze, V., *Newest History of Asian and African States*, I Vol. Tbilisi State University, 1968.
4. Spiros K. Kalogeropoulos Stratis *Issues of International Relations*, Papazisis, Athens 1977.

#### Summary

##### **Short overview of the evolution of Modern Greek state**

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In the article "Short overview of the evolution of Modern Greek state," the author describes and analyzes the historical path of Greece, from the national liberation movement to its integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. The article briefly but clearly describes the process of the Greek national liberation movement. The author highlights the Greek nation's fight to strengthen independence and democracy.

**Key words:** Greece, political evolution, national liberation movement, Greek independence