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## The European Policy Regarding the Greek and Romanian Questions. Around the 1821 Revolution

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The 1821 events led to one of the most intense challenges for the Concert of Europe. The Great Powers were facing an unprecedented situation considering the Greek insurrection and how it and the Romanians' movement led by Tudor Vladimirescu affected the equilibrium of force and the destiny of "the sick man of Europe" (as the Ottoman Empire was called). At the time, the two mutinies drew the attention of the Great Powers because they generated tension throughout Europe on the one hand and because the issues they encompassed bore solutions for the continental peace on the other.

Is well known that at the Troppau conference (October-December 1820), Austria, Prussia and Russia agreed on the principle of intervention for fear the Naples revolution, perceived as part of a larger European problem, might generalize and turn into a revolutionary torrent.[1] Therefore, the diplomatic maneuver area was rather restricted.

The two movements were connected both openly and underground, as was much discussed by the historical literature. As many others, we consider that the Romanians' mutiny started as part of the Philiki Etaireia and then diverged and gradually progressed on its own, based on its needs which were not always similar to the Greek revolutionaries'. This separation was only natural, all the more so because, at the end of the 18th century, Rhigas'[2] projects and geo-political vision were not embraced by the Romanian elite preoccupied more and more by the idea of a political evolution in keeping with local values, interests, and traditions.

European diplomacy seems to have favored the Greek cause, even if both Romanian and Greek peoples were under Ottoman domination and shared the same fate. Especially as a result of Ottoman hostility against the 1821 insurgents, the Greeks were regarded as a modern nation under oppression waiting for a favorable context for their independence to be acknowledged, as a nation which lived up to the standard raised by their illustrious ancestors with heroic sacrifices. Their fate had become extremely imperative and required quick resolution. On the other hand, the Romanians did not manifest the same determination, which is why they lacked a well-defined identity in the Western perception and appeared to be just another population within the Ottoman Empire. As the Romanian cause was not officially recognized as a European issue, Moldavia and Wallachia were nothing but an instrument, pressure and, at the same time, compensations means in the great continental politics.[3]

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Priorities were definitely not the same for the Neohellenic and the Romanian elite. For the Greeks, independence was an openly-stated end, but the Romanian intelligentsia never took it into consideration for various reasons. They rather leaned towards a large autonomy within the Ottoman Empire and the former system of local rulers. The issue of independence was present in an autochthonous project addressed to Napoleon I in 1807, but as the international context was far from allowing radical change at the time, the idea was put aside for two decades. It was in fact a decision catalyzed by the attitude and interests of Russia, which would have never accepted an independent state as its direct neighbor.

We have already mentioned above that Romanian insurrection was closely connected to the Philiki Etaireia, as Tudor Vladimirescu had been initiated for a period of time just before the Hellenic insurrection broke out, most likely in 1820. In time, the two movements acquired distinct identities and, more importantly, different purposes. It is certain that the Philiki Etaireia leaders counted on Romanians' enthusiasm in the cause of escaping Ottoman oppression, but the practical errors in the field made the collaboration impossible. The excesses of some Philiki Etaireia groups, especially in Moldavia (robbing the population and churches in search for food , horses and guns), made the local elites regard this mouvement with great reserve, on top of its lack of energy, resources, external support and good leadership. These elites repeatedly assured the Porte and Russian Empire that Moldavia would not adhere to the mutiny of the Greek ”apostates”. They also insisted on the necessity of native rulers and to remove all the Greeks from public positions and monasteries. Moreover, the Etaireists' presence caused the Ottoman armies to enter Moldavia along with the violence inherent in such incursions, which eliminated any trace of sympathy.[4]

The invasion of the Principalities, the most obvious solution otherwise, had been long postponed by the Ottoman Empire because of the effortful mobilization system and especially for fear of Russian intervention. High Turkish authorities were convinced that both movements were secretly led by the Russian Empire[5] and often accused ”European deceit” and hidden agenda meant to weaken the Porte.

Thereupon, the movements were severely condemned in the correspondence of the foreign cabinets. In January 1821, at the Congress of Laibach, the Great Powers had criticized both insurrections in the Principalities, but later on the perception changed based on the Ottoman political errors and their violence against the Christians (particularly the Greeks) in the empire. The two insurrections, Greek and Romanian (and especially the first), eventually stopped being considered by the public opinions in the great European countries as illegitimate, dangerous movements because of the revolutionary actions, but as ”noble”, due to their purposes. As a consequence, the attitude of the Great Powers would significantly change later on.

The first power that displayed a more relaxed attitude was Russia, which the Ottomans had anticipated. On July 5th/18th, 1821, baron Stroganov, the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, sent a document to the Porte in which he stated that, due to Russia's position of protector of the Christians in the Ottoman Empire (including the Romanian Principalities) with which she was invested following the international treaties in Kuciuk

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Kainardji and Bucharest (1774 and 1812), the Tzar firmly denounced the violent actions taken against the Greeks and Turkish excessive measures against the two movements. Earlier in June, the Russian Empire had requested that the churches destroyed be restored, precise criteria to find the guilty be established, peace into the principalities be restored and Ottoman troops withdraw, which indicated a meaningful shift in attitude.

Unlike France, under quarantine and expecting to see how things go between the Philiki Etaireia and Tudor Vladimirescu and to understand Russia's interest and involvement, English diplomacy favored without reserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and condemned as illegal the Greek and Romanian movements. Both Ipsilanti and Vladimirescu were perceived as dangerous and their actions likely to trigger a Russian-Turkish conflict that could jeopardize the Ottoman authority in the area and the long-sought European force equilibrium.

Certainly, things were not black and white. For instance Strangford, the English ambassador in Constantinople, wrote on February 26th, 1821 that Tudor Vladimirescu's movement fought the phanariote administration exclusively and did not question the Ottoman authority. Charles Bogot, the English ambassador in Petersburg reported to Castlereagh on March 23rd/April 4th, 1821 that the two movements appear to be very different and that „the revolt of the Moldavians under Prince Ipsilanti must be distinguished from that wich has broken out in Wallachia under Vlodimirsky and wich, from everything wich is at present known, appears to have had a separate Origin, and in most respects a different object." The same diplomat thought that Vladimirescu's movement did not seem to reclaim independence: „to disclaim the authority of the Porte, or to endeavour to establish complete National Independence."

A year later, in March 1822, Strangfort sent Kock to Bucharest with the mission to fill out a questionnaire. Out of eight questions, the fifth (Quelle est l'opinion des gens les plus sensés parmi les boyards sur le résultat final de l'entreprise des grecs et de quel esprit supposerez-vous le peuple animé en général?) remained unanswered, Kock could not say for sure as the majority of the elite in Wallachia had taken refuge, but he considered, "without fear of being wrong", that the outcome is just one, especially since „en général le peuple et les boyards valaques qui haissent de bonne foi la nation grecque, désirent la totale extinction de cette nation."

In June 1821, a very analytical editorial published in "Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung" stated that Ipsilanti was perceived in the Principalities as being exclusively interested in the Greek cause, which made both Tudor Vladimirescu and the Serbian prince Miloş Obrenovici refuse to follow him. The European annalists easily understood that, in fact, Philiki Etaireia's purposes were contrary to Vladimirescu's, as his movement meant to banish the phanariotes and restore the former privileges of the Principalities.

The reality was, and even the cabinets of the Great Powers understood it, Etaireia's cause was completely separated from the Romanian movement. In parallel, as we mentioned before, the Greek issue started to be

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perceived by the European public opinion differently from the Romanian issue. By means of an unprecedented mobilization of the elites and through the heroic acts in 1821 and the following years, the modern Greeks managed to make themselves known, admired and supported at a time when the memory of the French revolution still gave monarchs chills. One more thing explains Europeans' affinity for Greece, and that is the Greek antiquity. From the interest in reviving Antiquity and removing Greece from the gray area between the bright West and the exotic lights of the East"[6]to the acceptance of the Greeks' political emancipation (as sole guarantee of classicism resurrection) there was just a step.

On the other hand, Romanians were late in this national awakening marathon, but, unlike the Greeks, they had to remove the obstacle of phanariote rulers first, a controversial and more and more criticized (both from inside and outside the country) intermediary between them and the Porte. Moreover, Romanians' taste for European civilization and values developed later, because direct contacts with Europe were very restricted even during the phanariote regime as compared to the Greeks who, by means of trade and mercenaries enrolled in the armies of the Great Powers and even study trips, but also due to their particular inner structure, had the chance to become acquainted to Europe sooner.

We must not neglect the part played by the Greek diaspora, with their intense promotion throughout Europe. This phenomenon touched its peak especially following the Kuciuk Kainardji peace, a sign of "magnificent promises for the future"[7] in itself. Numerous Greeks who migrated after 1774 and founded associations and commercial companies involved in the transit trade between East and the Central Europe supported financially the Greek national cause. The very members and agents of the Philiki Etaireia (two thirds of which were tradesmen and intellectuals) went everywhere in the West and the Greek world to make their people's wishes to carry out secular expectations known. Young disciples of Korais preached the principles of political enlightenment in European radical publications such as "Melissa", "Loghios Ermis" and "Kalliopi."[8]

Needless to say, the Romanians did not benefit from such useful instruments: a glorious past, known and praised by the entire civilized world, direct contact with Western cultural and civilization centers, powerful diaspora very active in Europe, not to mention large amounts of money for the national cause. Consequently, while the Greek movement echoed across the Western world, the situation of the Romanians in the Principalities had not drawn the attention of the great "European public." Even the philhellenes, open to more radical changes, ignored the situation of the Romanians, Bulgarians, Serbs who, in their view, should have united their forces to support the Greek cause.

Let us not forget that the Romanians have been "discovered" later. Without a glorious antiquity, they faced indifference and neglect and also the idea that "the Moldavians and the Wallachians were always half free,"[9] unlike the Greeks, who suffered a long time under Turkish oppression. For the time being, Europe was willing to issue solutions for the people of Greece, invoking the necessity to acknowledge her independ-

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ence and inclusion into the large European family, disregarding the other nations in the same area confronted with the same issues.

On the other hand, Romanians regrouped harder and less efficiently than the Greeks. At the end of the 18th century, the excesses of the phanariote regime forced Romanians in the Principalities to think of themselves as a nation and wonder what to do to stand among the civilized states of Europe.[10] Signs of sympathy would appear, especially from the French, only after the 1821 revolution was popularized and regarded as an attempt to end an unpopular regime and to establish a system in which Romanian individuality could flourish.

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[1] Capodistrias himself spoke firmly on that occasion for the neutralization of the ”revolutionary plague”. Cf. Zacharias N. Tsirpanlis, *Mémoires et rapports de Jean Capodistrias (1809-1822)*, „Balkan Studies” 19,1/1978, p. 27.

[2] We refer especially to the revolutionary proclamation clandestinely printed in Vienna at the end of the 18th century and addressed to the peoples in the Ottoman Empire: ΝΕΑ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΔΙΟΙΚΟΙΣΗΣ ΤΩΝ ΚΑΤΟΙΚΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΡΟΥΜΕΛΗΣ ΤΗΣ Μ.ΑΣΙΑΣ, ΤΩΝ ΜΕΣΟΓΕΙΩΝ ΝΗΣΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΒΛΑΧΟΜΠΟΓΔΑΝΙΑΣ. See Rigas Velestinlis, *Scrieri revoluţionare*, Bucharest, Omonia, 1999, Greek-Romanian bilingual edition.

[3] Chancellor Metternich's part was essential in keeping Romanians' cause outside European political debate. The same great Austrian politician was more sensitive to the Greek issue, which, he thought, required quick resolution; of course, he did not consider the independence of Greece, but the improvement of the situation of Pericles' descendants within the Ottoman Empire.

[4] In Wallachia though, where Vladimirescu's movement controlled politics, such hostile manifestations never occurred, another proof of the relations between the two insurgent actions.

[5] In fact, baron Stroganov, the Russian ambassador in Constantinoples, condemned the two movements, Etairist and Vladimirescu's, offering moral and military support for the restitution of order. But on February 27th/March 11th, 1821, chancellor Nesselrode was announced that this offer was not opportune because it generates unease and he was condemned for supporting the Greeks.

[6] Maria Todorova, *Balcanii şi Balcanismul* [Balkans and Balkanism], Bucharest, Humanitas, 2000, p. 127.

[7] G.G. Gervinus, *Insurrection et régeneration de la Grèce*, vol. 1, Paris, 1863, p. 38.

[8] Pashalis M. Kitromilides, *Iluminismul neoelen. Ideile politice şi sociale* [Neohellenic Enlightenment. Political and social ideas] Bucharest, Omonia, 2005, p. 380.

[9] The assertion belongs to Iuri Ivanovici Venelin, Bulgarian philologist and historian. Cf. Maria Todorova, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

[10] Cf. Andrei Pippidi, *Identitate etnoculturală în spaţiul românesc. Probleme de metodă* [Ethno-cultural identity in Romania. Methodology issues] in Al. Zub (ed.) *Identitate şi alteritate în spaţiul cultural românesc* [Identity and alterity in Romanian cultural space], Iaşi, 1996, p. 72.