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The Importance of being George: Constitutionalism and Kingship in Greece of the 1860's and early 70's

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Abstract:

The focus on this paper is the political history of Greece in the immediate aftermath of the ousting of the kingdom's first monarch, King Otto von Wittelsbach, and on to the first years of rule of his successor, King George I. After narrating the events that led to the installation of the new king, it specifically examines his cohabitation, inspired as he was by supposedly democratic ideals, with the fresh constitution of 1864; the challenges that the political and cultural landscape in

the country presented for him, and the way he chose to respond in the first decade of his rule.

Key words:

Greece, King Otto, King George, Constitution of 1864, Constitutional monarchy, European history.

Resum:

Aquest article està centrat en la història política de Grècia des de la destitució del primer monarca del regne, Otto von Wittelsbach, fins els primers anys de govern del seu successor, el rei George I. Després d'explicar els fets que van conduir

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a la instal·lació del nou rei, s'examina específicament la seva coexistència, inspirada en ideals suposadament democràtics (amb la nova constitució de 1864), els reptes que se li presentaven en el panorama polític i cultural del país, així

com la seva actuació durant la primera dècada del seu regnat.

Paraules Clau:

Grècia, Rei Otto, Rei George, constitució de 1864, monarquia constitucional, història d'Europa

Introduction

As the political geography of the Balkan peninsula was reshaped in the middle and throughout the second half of the 19th century, the modern Greek state constitutes the first to successfully claim independence from the Ottoman empire. It followed a path of evolution which, while in many respects has similar characteristics with the other nation-states that arose during this period, also stands out with a series of idiosyncratic features and episodes, that ensured a very distinct way of initiation of the Greek people as a political subject to the modern era. I shall present the specifics in relation to one particular phase of this development, which revolves around the installation of the country's second monarch and respectively, the coining of the second constitution, which proved to be the longest lasting and possibly most-celebrated, among the constitutional arrangements of the modern Greek state.

The modern Greek state was established in 1830, after almost a decade of warfare against the Ottomans. The War of Independence was virtually concluded with the alliance of the three great powers of Europe at the time, Britain, France and Russia, on Greece's side, and the undersigning by them of the Treaty of London, which established the war-torn nation into an independent kingdom two years later. Bavarian-born Otto von Wittelsbach was created first king of Greece, and ruled the country for exactly 30 years. His reign is divided into two main periods, a period where he ruled as an absolute monarch, initially with the aid of an equally Bavarian regency, and a second one which begins with the bloodless revolt of 1843, leading to the establishment of the first constitution of the modern state a year later.

By the constitution of 1844, the monarch retained essential control of the political system, which is thus categorized as 'constitutional monarchy'. In the long thirty years of Otto's reign

a lot of modern Greece's basic institutions and infrastructure were set, modern Greek neoclassicism and romanticism successively flourished, while the nation and the king himself fell in the infatuation and consecutively reaped the seeds of irredentist nationalist entanglement –most profoundly with Greece's short and unfortunate Crimean adventure in 1854. While, in his reign, modern Greece was essentially founded, this was yet not enough to ensure the loyalty of his people or the trust of the great powers. Therefore, forfeiting ultimately both, he was compelled to abdicate in a rebellion that sprang in Athens while he and his consort were touring the Peloponnese in October of 1862, and returned to Bavaria aboard a British warship. Thomas Gallant has –perhaps too harshly- summarized his reign by saying that he was 'neither ruthless enough to be feared, nor compassionate enough to be loved, nor competent enough to be respected'².

My focus in this paper is on the period that begins in the immediate aftermath of Otto's ousting (the aftermath of which development is examined in the first part of this paper), when a provisional government assumed power, convening an extraordinary National Assembly that was, in conjunction with the Guaranteeing powers, supposed to draft a new constitution and find the new prince that would rule the land. As we shall see, the pursuit concluded with the selection of the second son of the heir to the Danish throne, Prince William George, as the new occupant of the throne –who would rule for fifty years and establish a dynasty that reigned for almost a century. Therefore, the second part of the paper discusses his election. His elevation to the throne was followed by the sanctioning of the new constitution of 1864, which remained in effect for half a century –and, with only small modifications, until the second half of the 20th century. The new constitution, which turned Greece from a 'constitutional monarchy' to a 'democracy with a king', was drafted as a result of an unwaning liberal tradition that had, either clandestinely or as political and intellectual mainstream, thrived in the country ever since the War of Independence; it was accordingly hailed as one of the most progressive ones of its time³. We shall be looking into the new constitution in the third section of this paper. The first period of polity under the new constitutional arrangement extends until 1875 –when the king assents to the principle that the leader who should be asked by him to form a government should command the parliamentary majority, thus setting the stage for the more mature phase of parliamentary democracy in nineteenth century Greece. In the fourth section I am looking into

² Thomas W. Gallant, *Modern Greece/From the War of Independence to the present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 67.

³ Nikos Alivizatos, *The Constitution and its enemies in Modern Greek History, 1800-2010* [*Το Σύνταγμα και οι εχθροί του στην Νεότερη Ελληνική Ιστορία, 1800-2010*] (Athens: Polis Publications, 2011), 118.

specifically the first years after the constitution's coming into effect, before that development. During that period, Greece showed to be ruled by a combination of novel progressive ideas, put enthusiastically into practice by a committed set of ideologues, on the basis of a vivid local discourse of assimilation, with idiosyncratic features and constitutionally-unorthodox behaviors shaped by the overt realities of the country's history and post-Ottoman social and political culture.

My argument, is that, what may justifiably be viewed as the beginning of a period of success for modern Greek nation-building during the early reign of King George, rather than stemming solely from the adoption of advanced versions of political architecture, was predicated on a tight equilibrium of the agencies' constant interplay with the law of the land, the imperatives of the cultural context, and the ever-changing public demands and expectations. It is thus a thriving, but to be sure, *sui generis* liberalism that dominates this kingdom of the European periphery; the functionality of which was on constant reliance on the performance of the actors especially the king.

The state after Otto's departure

The initial euphoria after the overthrow of Otto, was soon followed by a chaotic state that left the country in a picture nearly as grim as that it had presented prior to the Bavarians' arrival over thirty years earlier. 'Order was everywhere disturbed, and brigandage spread to the borders of the capital', while the perpetrators of the ousting were only interested in 'their own unbridled governing'⁴. Anti-Ottonic newspaper 'Palingenessia' wrote a year later about those first 'kingless' months that 'our souls were clouded by the heavy thoughts of whether we would prove able to retain the very heritage of independence which our fathers surrendered to us', and recalled the widespread plea for 'God to pity this miserable people, which is being pushed towards the abyss'⁵.

Equally, the perception about Greece in the western courts, parliaments and attentive public opinion aggravated the situation. As Walter Christmas said, in his biography of King George, 'having been stripped from all their romantic glow, the Greeks now seemed in the eyes of

⁴ Epameinondas Kyriakides, *Ιστορία του Σύγχρονου Ελληνισμού από της ιδρύσεως του Βασιλείου της Ελλάδος μέχρι των ημερών μας, 1832-1892*, [History of Modern Hellenism from the institution of the Kingdom of Greece to our days, 1832-1892] (Athens: Royal Publishing House of N.Inglessis, 1892), 191-195

⁵ *Palingenessia* (Athens), 1st January, 1864.

Europe as a half-civilized, unreliable and rebellious tribe, that could be as difficult placed on the road of reform as their old-time despots, the Ottomans⁶. This picture is best summarized by the description of the 'Press' of Vienna at the time of the movement that ousted Otto, which wrote that 'a significant amount of time has passed since they were victorious [in the war of independence], Europe gave them a king, they acquired a constitution, yet those half-castes inhabiting the Peloponnese and the islands of the Aegean, even after the passing of thirty years of patience and diplomatic protection [by Europe] have neither formed an orderly state, nor proved worthy of liberty; they have not fulfilled the expectations of the world'⁷.

What the European courts feared in relation to Greece, was that her prevailing political culture seemed to be characterised by a mentality which American ambassador to Athens Charles Tuckerman had described as 'those elastic ideas of popular liberty which are the essence of Greek nationality'⁸. A writer of the time claimed that 'Greece, drowning by egalitarianism, is constantly shaken and revolting, and with every minor excuse has ready and handy in her arms the red cap of the Jacobine'⁹. This mentality consisted in an absence of a popular culture endorsing hierarchical structures as that inherited in western Europe by feudal society, and the concurrent prominence, already since the neo-Hellenic Enlightenment of the 18th century, of an intellectual discourse which was inspired by the most vivid ideas about republicanism and human rights. The tradition of local government during the Ottoman centuries had accentuated ideas of liberty, and indeed an egalitarian mindset insufficiently stressing discipline. Such a canvas of political culture was complemented in many respects by the impact of the Eastern Church, and its non-Paulean approach to human behaviour.

All in all, Greece presented a picture of a culture dominated by a disorderly individualism, and all of the above features pointed to the modern Greek's apparent disinclination to be properly ruled by the standards of nineteenth century monarchical Europe. Sir Francis Elliot, later British ambassador in Athens, declared that the attacks on royal authority which he witnessed were symptomatic of a country 'where liberty is confounded with license, and disrespect for

⁶ Walter Christmas, *Η ζωή του Βασιλέως Γεωργίου των Ελλήνων/ 24 Δεκεμβρίου 1845-18 Μαρτίου 1913*, [*The life of King George I of the Hellenes/ 24 December 1845-18 March 1913*] (Athens: Stemma publications, 2018, first published in New York: McBride, Nast & Company, 1914), 48.

⁷ See: *Aion* (Athens), 26th February, 1863.

⁸ Charles K. Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today* (New York: G.P Putnam & Sons, 1872), 136.

⁹ Demetrios Vernardakis, *Καποδίστριας και Όθων* [*Capodistrias and Othon*] (Athens: Galaxias Publications, 1967; first published by 'Nea Imera' Publishing House, Trieste, 1875), 103.

authority mistaken for independence'¹⁰. Tuckerman again observed, in that regard, that 'by instinct the people of Greece are democratic; by circumstances they are royalists'¹¹.

However, we should note that despite their unruly nature, not all of the sensitivities and expectations of the Greeks regarding the regime they would acquire were far-fetched or unreasonable. For instance, that the new rule should not explicitly represent an arrangement dictated by the protective powers alone, that it should not rely on the presence of a foreign army, that sovereignty of the Greeks should be respected both on a rhetorical level and –to the degree that this was realistically possible- in practice; in short, that the new ruler would acknowledge 'the chief wish of his people, which is that Greece shall govern Greece'¹². When it came to the new monarch, it appeared a unanimous demand that this principle should be reflected in his proclamation as 'King of Greeks' –instead of 'of Greece', that seemed 'of feudal origin and contrasting the history and the scent of the Greek monarchical notion, which is one of a popular monarchy, indeed more reliant on the popular base than any monarchy in Europe'¹³. Next to these, we should not fail to notice the anticipation that the new ruler would do more than Otto to align himself with the local religious culture and establish an Orthodox dynasty –a matter which had become the focal point of constitutional debate during Otto's reign. We should add that, as a result of the Ottonic precedent, popular opinion took particularly heed of the possibility that the Greek throne would be once more occupied by a Catholic. Prevelakis says that the Greek public was 'unanimous in its aversion to any German Prince, and though it was ready to overlook the 40th article of the constitution in favor of a British Protestant, it was not in the least inclined to accept any Roman Catholic'¹⁴.

It therefore does not come as a surprise that the Greek throne remained unfilled for a period that seemed to continue indefinitely. Regarding, first of all, the issue of who was responsible to make the selection, the resolution voted by the provisional government in October of 1862 named no side as a proxy to indicate the right candidate –unlike the arrangement of 1832. It became clear however that the treaty of 1832 remained in force in all that concerned the relation

¹⁰ Hugo Vickers, *Alice/Princess Andrew of Greece* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2000), 76.

¹¹ Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 103.

¹² Vernardakis, *Καποδίστριας και Όθων*, 108.

¹³ *Aion* (Athens), 24th October, 1862.

It should be noted that, as the title 'King of Greeks' stumbled on Ottoman objections due to its irredentist connotations, the compromise of the title 'King of the Hellenes' was finally opted.

¹⁴ Eleutherios Prevelakis, *British policy towards the change of dynasty in Greece, 1862-1863* (Athens: 1953), 56.

of Greek independence to the protecting powers, and that these powers were not willing to allow a free rein on this. British diplomacy was careful to show throughout that it respected Greek sensitivities on the matter. The treaty of 1832 ruled that the candidate prince for the Greek throne should not '*be connected with*' any of the three courts of Britain, Russia or France. Taken literally, this would practically mean that every royal offspring in Europe was excluded. Therefore, it became clear that who would be considered and who wouldn't was a matter of interpretation of the particular clause, –with most prominent the rather loose interpretation that it denoted 'the prince whose candidacy is not *approved* by one of the powers'¹⁵.

At the end of 1862, British foreign policy signals implicitly but clearly encouraged the scenario of Alfred, Duke of Saxe Coburg Gotha (and later Duke of Edinburgh), Queen Victoria's second son, as most appropriate for this position. Alfred's name had been circulating for a while already before Otto was overthrown, despite the fact that the British government seems to never have really destined him for the Greek throne (let alone his mother's dismay at the possibility¹⁶), and the resuscitation of his candidacy acquired enormous popular support in the country. Holland and Makrides explain that 'precisely because the name of Alfred was already circulating when the new revolution occurred, it became a rallying point for those who saw both safety and advantage if they could 'place their future destinies under the direction of the greatest constitutional power in the world'...'¹⁷. He soon became 'the desired candidate of the overwhelming majority of the Greeks', with 'icons of him circulating in all cities, and marches in favour of his candidacy taking place in Athens'¹⁸, and with support for him being equally strong in the Greek communities outside the kingdom's borders¹⁹. Van Der Kiste describes the climate in Athens: 'Portraits of the Prince were carried through the streets of Athens, accompanied by cheers from those who expected him to arrive among them as their sovereign almost immediately. Peaceful demonstrations outside the British legation in Athens repeatedly called his name, and the crowds would not leave until the Ambassador came out to address them personally. In Liverpool a meeting of the Greek community unanimously supported a

¹⁵ See, for the debate on the matter: Nicholaos Kaltchas, *Introduction to the Constitutional History of Greece* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 118-124.

¹⁶ According to Holland and Makrides, the Queen was 'determined that her second son 'must not and shall not' wear the tarnished crown of Greece'; see: Robert Holland & Diana Makrides, *The British and the Hellenes/ Struggles for Mastery in the Eastern Mediterranean 1850-1960* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 60.

¹⁷ Holland & Makrides, *The British and the Hellenes*, 60.

¹⁸ Kyriakides, *Ιστορία του Σύγχρονου Ελληνισμού*, 204.

¹⁹ Kyriakides mentions that the name of Alfred as the right candidate for the Greek throne was first heard in Istanbul (*Ιστορία του Σύγχρονου Ελληνισμού*, vol.II, 3).

motion nominating him as the next king of Greece'²⁰. 'He had become 'our Alfred', or 'Alfredakis', and for the humble ones, who could not easily pronounce his name, 'the son of the widow", Prevelakis observes²¹.

Popular pressure was persuasive enough, in some respect, as the 'Times' reported on 1st November, that 'the choice of Prince Alfred for the Greek throne is regarded as certain'²²; while seeing the potential increase of Russian influence which the alternatives signified, Palmerston also argued that Alfred 'ought to accept the throne'²³. Sir Henry Elliot, representing Britain at the Porte, wishing to give democratic legitimacy to Greece's bid for Alfred, seems to have been the first to advise the Greek provisional government to hold a plebiscite on the matter, which it did, and which Alfred won by a landslide. Alfred had 'an absolute hold of Greek minds', he reported back to his government²⁴. Growing Greek insistence on the matter made the other two powers, and especially Russia, to consider seriously for the first time the prospect –and of course to veto it on the basis of the conditions of the Treaty of 1832. Britain accepted this, on the agreement that Russia would equally withdraw her support from her chosen candidate – Nicholas, Duke of Leuchtenberg, a relative of the Russian imperial family and an Orthodox himself. However, continuing Greek enthusiasm for Alfred seemed to be de facto placing the vacant throne of Greece, as it were, 'in Britain's special keeping'²⁵.

The afore-mentioned princes were by no means the only candidates, as every political faction in the capital promoted their champion, while at the same time, nearly every European court and government was also cautiously tempted to at least consider the benefits from filling the Greek throne with an offspring of its own. Following public declining of the offer by the two strongest candidacies, the throne was proposed to widowed and childless King Ferdinand of Portugal; and following him, to Ernest, Duke of Sax-Coburg Gotha, a liberal prince whose candidacy was again supported by Britain, and who already before accession indicated as possible heir his grandson Louis-Philippe, who in turn appeared willing to accept the Orthodox creed. This satisfied the Russian side as well, and news of him approaching acceptance in early

²⁰ John Van Der Kiste, *Kings of the Hellenes: The Greek Kings 1863-1974* (Sutton Publishing House, 1994), 4.

²¹ Prevelakis, *British policy towards the change of dynasty in Greece*, 56.

²² See: Van Der Kiste, *Kings of the Hellenes*, 4.

²³ See: Prevelakis, *British policy towards the change of dynasty in Greece*, 73.

²⁴ Holland and Makrides, *The British and the Hellenes*, 63.

²⁵ See: Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 107.

1863 'made brighter the face of the town', as it was reported in the Athenian press²⁶—only to cause further frustration when his ultimate refusal was made known a little later.

Subsequently, an endless list of more or less prestigious royal names paraded either as ideas discussed or as actual proposals to fill the vacancy—which nonetheless remained: Henri d'Orleans, Duke of Aumale²⁷; the Duke of Oldenburg; Italian princes Amadeus, Duke of Aosta, and Alexander Gonzaga of Mantua²⁸; Prince Napoleon Bonaparte; Oscar of Sweden; Henry of Netherlands; Belgian prince Philip, Count of Flanders; German princes Nikolaus Wilhelm of Nassau²⁹; Alexander of Hessen-Darmstadt; Henry of Leiningen; William of Baden (proposed by St.Petersburg and again vetoed by Britain); August of Coburg (the Queen's suggestion, boycotted as well by the fact that his parents would not permit their son to adopt the Orthodox faith); Leopold Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (who, as Prevelakis says, again 'in any case did not want his children to be brought up in the Orthodox faith'³⁰), and Waldemar of Holstein Augustenburg; Austrian Ferdinand-Maximilian; the Prince of Carignano; the Count of Lenanze; as well as a few more. A later Greek historian describes the picture best, as follows: '[After Ernst's denial] the Greek crown was carried around Europe auctioned by Britain, offered to the male offsprings of every single German court, and similarly rejected by all of those starving princes'³¹. Holland and Makrides say, 'a French candidacy for the Hellenic crown began garnering support around the Duc d'Aumale, and thereafter other names were successively thrown into the ring—varieties of German and Italian princelings, whose very obscurity and ties of blood and marriage boded ill. It was the manner in which Palmerston and Russell started to hawk the Greek throne around the minor royal courts of Europe like a cheap trinket which first imported an air of vulgarity into the matter, never to dissipate thereafter'³².

²⁶ *Pandora* (Athens), 1st February, 1863, p.536.

²⁷ Henri d'Orleans was supported as a candidate by Voulgaris, the politician who had been Otto's arch-enemy and conspirator against him, and also by Alexandros Rizos-Rangaves, who controlled the newspaper 'Eunomia'. On the negotiations of Palmerston with him, see also: *Athina* (Athens), 7th March, 1863. He ultimately declined the offer because his son was not willing to convert to the Orthodox creed, and because he perceived the stance of Britain towards him as hostile. His candidacy was in any case vetoed by Napoleon III, who did not wish to see on the Greek throne any prince from the House of Orleans; (see: Van Der Kiste, *Kings of the Hellenes*, 5).

²⁸ The name of the latter being circulated as a runner up in Athens during late February of 1863; see: *Athina* (Athens), 25th February, 1863.

²⁹ On Palmerston's negotiations with him see: *Athina* (Athens), February 25, 1863.

³⁰ Prevelakis, *British policy towards the change of dynasty in Greece*, 132.

³¹ Kyriakides, *Ιστορία του Σύγχρονου Ελληνισμού*, p.233.

³² Holland and Makrides, *The British and the Hellenes*, 64

The ill-fated proposals led some at St.Petersburg and Athens to turn to the ousted Bavarian royal house and examine whether it continued to hold any interest in the throne of Greece –but again there could not be found a single member of the Wittelsbachs who would consider refuting Catholicism. Even more surprisingly for the codes of nineteenth century Europe, others in Britain as well as in Greece began inquiring for a non-royal-born candidate –with William Gladstone, considered one of the most philhellenes of British politicians, being the most prominent name in this list (vehemently supported by George Finlay). Of course, neither did he ever seriously contemplate sacrificing his political career in Britain for the seat of Otto. 'There has never been a throne as hard to fill as the Greek one', a journalist in the French 'L'Univers illustré' periodical observed during those long months³³. Disinclination to occupy the Greek throne is comprehensible in the light of all mentioned about the picture which the country presented at the time. We can however understand the mode of thinking of those candidates by the words of Austrian Count Rechberg, who wrote about the refusal of Habsburg Archduke Maximilian to consider the option: 'to anyone unacquainted with Greece the throne of the Hellenic kingdom might have many charms, but he [Maximilian] had visited the country and studied it, and...was astonished King Otho could entertain the thought of returning to Athens and that His Majesty was not thankful to have left the country forever'³⁴.

As the European powers softened the requirements and yet no man appeared willing to assume the role after nearly a semester since Otto had left the country, Greek frustration turned to exasperation over the continuing state of anarchy and the unlikely prospects for its reversal. This exacerbation was reflected in the Athenian press: 'Many are shocked by the fact that while the kingdom of Greece is already there, no royal offspring rushes to it', 'Pandora' asks, and suggests that 'the good God of Greece listens, but should we be more obedient the prince will hurry as well'³⁵. Newspaper 'Athina' also observes that 'there is, it seems, a sort of a tacit entente between all the princes of Europe not to accept the Greek throne'³⁶. This increasing disappointment lead some in Athens to propose –very half-heartedly and as a greatest

³³ See: *Pandora* (Athens), 1st February, 1863, p.585.

³⁴ D. Dawson, 'The Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian and the Crown of Greece, 1863'. *The English Historical Review*, vol.37, no.145 (January 1922), 112.

³⁵ *Pandora* (Athens), 15th January, 1863, p.510.

³⁶ *Athina* (Athens), 4th February, 1863.

misfortune and decadence- discussing the prospects of a republic³⁷. In a bitter and half-serious tone, indicative of the prevalent frustration, 'Aion' recommends that Greeks should consider proposing the crown of a united Greco-Ottoman kingdom to a prince of the Ottoman dynasty –should he accept to be baptised Orthodox Christian³⁸. What was in Greece a mood of pessimism and disenchantment, in Europe at times acquires a sarcastic connotation; –thus the 'Times' proposed that only an English High Commissioner can assume the duty to install order in Greece, just as it happened in India³⁹.

Habemus Rex

Just as all sides despaired over the Greek problem, the mind of some concerned with this subject in Britain went to a prince whose young age had prevented them to seriously consider him earlier as a candidate. It was at the marriage of the Prince of Wales in early 1863 with the daughter of Prince Christian, heir to the Danish throne, that 'Lord John Russell discovered the second son of Prince Christian in the uniform of a midshipman, and suggested his name as a successor of Otho'⁴⁰. 'If Waldemar [of Holstein Augustenburg] declines, perhaps Prince whatever his name is of Denmark, the second son of Prince Christian would be our best candidate', Palmerston wrote to his foreign minister⁴¹; while talk about him amongst Greeks seems to have started in March in the Greek community in London⁴², soon to spread to Athens. In Greek public debate his name as a candidate was first circulated in mid-February of 1863⁴³, when a telegram from the Foreign Office to Elliot, discussing the negotiations pertaining to his election, was leaked to the press⁴⁴. 'William', Prevelakis says, 'indeed had many points in his favor. He was neither German, nor Catholic, nor was he excluded by any treaty. Above all he was considered to be intelligent and to show much promise'⁴⁵. Apparently, William was, to the surprise of many (and certainly against the wishes of his parents, who did all in their power to

³⁷ See: *Athena* (Athens), 4th February, 1863. Holland and Makrides also note that the British were aware of the fact that, as the Athenian treasury was getting empty, 'the revolution was likely to take a radical, perhaps a republican, turn' (*The British and the Hellenes*, 65).

³⁸ *Aion* (Athens), 3rd November, 1862.

³⁹ *Aion* (Athens), 3rd November, 1862.

⁴⁰ Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 107.

⁴¹ See: L.S. Stavrianos, *Balkan Federation/ A History of the Movement Toward Balkan Unity in Modern Times*, (Archon Books, Hamden, CT, 1964), 295.

⁴² Followed by the chairman of the committee of the holders of Greek bonds from the War of Independence; see: Prevelakis, *British policy towards the change of dynasty in Greece*, 133.

⁴³ See: *Athina* (Athens), 15th February, 1863.

⁴⁴ See: *Athina* (Athens), 14th March, 1863.

⁴⁵ Prevelakis, *British policy towards the change of dynasty in Greece*, 134.

weaken the prospect) very willing to give away princely life in the Scandinavian monarchical world in order to take the challenge of installing his own dynasty in a feeble statelet in the south⁴⁶. Therefore, all parties participating in the debate put aside whatever objections each could raise about the qualifications of the new candidate and endorsed his selection swiftly. The man taking the challenge had been found, and this was 'news that filled the hearts of everyone with joy and delight', 'immediately giving to the capital a celebrating face'⁴⁷, according to the reports.

One thing constantly underscored was that, the prince to be appointed was 'raised and educated in a liberal and constitutional environment', was 'intelligent and perceptive', and thus 'with his arrival Greece will acquire the king it wished for and was not fortunate to have so far'⁴⁸. Prince William changed just as fast his name to George, the name of the most popular saint of the Greek Church⁴⁹, and was officially acclaimed King by the National Assembly on the 30th March 1863. To avoid a repetition of the precedent of a regency, the Assembly also declared him to be of age at the time he would rise to the throne. Expressing the jubilant mood, newspaper 'Elpis' declared: 'the most yearning wish of the nation has been fulfilled! Greece already has a King, a constitutional King'; 'let us come together and reconcile, let us cast off all oblique thoughts, and with our hearts open and filled of great hopes let us anticipate the safe arrival of the new Monarchy, which alone can revitalize the land through her presence'⁵⁰. The jubilant mood lasted, the newspaper 'Eunomia' wrote, in late May, 'People of Greece, celebrate! Your trials have ended and your prayers have been heard! The dangers Greece was facing belong to the past, the earth is no longer trembling under our feet; the earthquake passed without the edifice of the state falling apart. The throne was saved! Already the shadow of the Crown is suffused all over the country, protecting the Laws...'⁵¹. George arrived, at last, in October of the same year, 'to an ecstatic welcome'⁵².

⁴⁶ See: Dakin Douglas, *Η Ενοποίηση της Ελλάδας, 1770-1923* [*The Unification of Greece, 1770-1923*] (London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1972), 145.

⁴⁷ Kyriakides, *Ιστορία του Σύγχρονου Ελληνισμού*, 234.

⁴⁸ *Palingenessia* (Athens), 12th March, 1863.

⁴⁹ Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 107.

⁵⁰ *Elpis* (Athens), 22nd & 29th March, 1863.

⁵¹ *Eunomia* (Athens), 24th May, 1863.

⁵² Holland and Makrides, *The British and the Hellenes*, 71.

As was the case with Otto, the young age of the new monarch was both an asset and a liability for the rule commencing and its prospects –an asset because it alone allowed for the hope that the new prince would come to relate to his people and their culture in a more profound fashion; and a drawback for, as the precedent of Otto blatantly proved, youth does not allow skill and prestige to mature to the degree necessary for a task as demanding as that undertaken. In the context of the Greek kingdom of the 1860's, might was needed at least as much as rights and constitution, and the idea of a teen reigning would mean leaving the window open for many to hope that they could actually exercise authority (in fact the prince, although without a regency, arrived in Athens accompanied by his uncle, Prince John, and a Danish courtier and former Minister of finance, Count Sponneck, who Prince Christian had designated to assist his son in establishing himself in Greece). Just as importantly, youthful age would mean that the candidate chosen would not have acquired a solid education, which would be a useful source of inspiration in government; and William of Denmark was certainly no exception –as his education was 'rather poor'⁵³.

Yet, as we shall see, after an initial period where he appeared dazzled and indeed 'intellectually young for his age'⁵⁴, the new king eventually displayed a determination, ability to adjust, and personal discipline that surprised many. Based on a personal acquaintance with him, Tuckerman writes: 'he possesses mental capacity which was not a distinguishing characteristic of Otho; and he is without the perverseness of disposition which, when united to a weak mind, is sure to work mischief to the state'⁵⁵, these qualities added to the more personal features of his appearance and character also contributing to his popularity⁵⁶. The touch of Nordic austerity in the character of George was of course alien to the temperament of the Greeks and their expectation for a monarchical 'father-figure', and this was a detail not missed by many, who contrasted the new monarch's detachment to the excessive emotionalism of his romantic

⁵³ Van Der Kiste, *Kings of the Hellenes*, 6. He explains that, as 'the honour [of naming Christian formally as heir of Denmark, in 1852] brought no corresponding increase of income to the family, education was a luxury that Prince and Princess Christian could hardly afford for their children'; (ibid, p.7).

⁵⁴ See: Dontas, *Greece and the Great Powers*, 13; referring to George's profile at the time of his arrival.

⁵⁵ Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 108.

⁵⁶ *Palingenessia* (Athens) writes of his 'sweet face, gentle manners and affability to all' that have 'made him most popular to his people' (see: 20th May, 1864); whereas Tuckerman adds that he was 'honest, frank and unaffected; a Saxon nature, which disarms suspicion and invites confidence', 'simple in tastes and genial in disposition', a personality with overall 'nothing haughty or exigent' (Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 27).

predecessor⁵⁷. Epitomizing this criticism, Gounaris says that 'it was obvious that King George of the Hellenes was neither a poet nor a hard worker. He was admired as a constitutional monarch, a virtue in short supply in Balkan palaces –but then, after all, how much of a virtue was constitutionalism in a Balkan sovereign?'⁵⁸. Notwithstanding this, the king used his straight-forward and detached character to rise above circumstances and retain his prestige –a fact which proved especially helpful at times of crisis or ambiguity.

King and Constitution

Before arrival, the concrete arrangements of his reign had been previously sealed in the Treaty of July 1863, signed by the Greek state and the three protecting powers. In that treaty the commitment of all sides for the 'monarchical, independent and constitutional' Greek state was reiterated, and George was proclaimed, in accordance with national desire and the resolution of the Assembly in the preceding March, 'King of Hellenes', instead of 'King of Greece'⁵⁹, which as stated, served the purpose of denoting the 'nation' as the source of his power, and not any transcendental or otherwise unaccountable authority. Further to this, every effort was made to show that the constitution was superior and independent to the king's authority. For one, he would have to sign it in order to indicate his agreement with it, *not* to sanction it –for that matter, as the National Assembly had been convened with the purpose of electing a constitutional king, it was considered preferable that the constitution be drafted and put into effect before his arrival. As this did not become possible –due to endless procrastinations in the deliberations, George took an oath at the constitution after it was voted, and the National Assembly was dissolved by the order of its President –not the monarch (who had not summoned it in the first place). That is, the constitution was not the product of a compact between a Sovereign and a nation, but an instrument of government devised by a Sovereign people that defined the status and powers of the Crown as merely one of the several agencies of the state.

The emphasis on popular sovereignty was seconded in George's own initial declaration to the Assembly, two days following his arrival, where he stated that 'I am ascending to the throne

⁵⁷ Vernardakis wrote in retrospect, at the end of George's first decade of rule, that 'everything suffered by the Greek nation ever since the eviction of Otto to the present is a natural consequence of that eviction, of the fact that the affectionate and fatherly monarch has gone'; see: Vernardakis, *Καποδίστριας και Όθων*, 96.

⁵⁸ Gounaris; in: Roderick Beaton, David Ricks (eds), *The Making of Modern Greece* (Ashgate, 2009), 143.

⁵⁹ See: Dontas, *Greece and the Great Powers*, 2 (footnote no.2). The expression 'by God' in the royal title was also removed, to the satisfaction of the supporters of a democratic monarchy; see: *Pandora*, 15th November, 1863, p.470.

where your vote has placed me'⁶⁰. We should note that the emphasis on the notion of election, 'so that the future king of Greece would appear as the spontaneous act of the nation', as Prevelakis explains, was particularly stressed by the French legation in Athens –and inspired by the precedent of Bonapartism of the Second Empire⁶¹.

In harmony with his people's expectations, George's elevation to power in Greece was also not escorted by the presence of a foreign military force, that would 'disgust the national sentiment'⁶², or for that matter, by any offence to national pride which outright and overt intervention of any kind by a third party would signify. Indeed, the ensuing initial satisfaction sufficed to bring about a pause to anarchy. In a country with such an unruly past and lack of monarchical tradition, the first months after George's arrival seemed indeed to breathe in a spirit of orderliness and optimism which had been nearly forgotten in the country. It ultimately confirmed the indispensability of monarchical reign at the time, 'he who observes these things from a philosophical perspective can not but admire, as if he was seeing something supernatural and superhuman sent down from Heaven through the mercy of God. This illustrates the equal-to-Divine nature of the monarchical institution, which wise Euripides and other poets have pointed to, 'Pandora' claims at that occasion, in a historical article with presentist connotations, about 'the appropriate polity for the Greeks'⁶³. The anti-Ottonic revolution, therefore, firmly democratic in its spirit, paradoxically re-affirmed at the end the indispensability of the monarchy as a unifying and stabilizing force.

We should at this point make reference to the basic provisions that made the Constitutional arrangement of 1864 so pioneering for Greek –and indeed European standards of the time. First, in Greece as well as in the main European powers of the time, there seemed to be an ongoing battle between the liberal proponents of constitutional democracy and the conservative forces that supported limitations on popular sovereignty. Indeed, designing the new polity in Greece, seemed a field of battle where these two sides would encounter each other. In the Greek case, the constitutional arrangement of 1864 was a clear victory for liberal proponents. Boosted by the success of the anti-Ottonic struggle, a whole generation of citizens that had been nurtured

⁶⁰ *Athina* (Athens), 21st October 1863.

⁶¹ See: Prevelakis, *British policy towards the change of dynasty in Greece*, 138.

⁶² Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 108.

⁶³ *Pandora* (Athens), 1st November, 1864, p.374.

with very uncompromising republican ideas, had its like-minded representatives constituting a majority in the National Assembly. Furthermore, as it became known during the deliberations about the new constitution that the Ionian Islands would be handed shortly to the kingdom, the 84 representatives of the Ionian parliament, who were consistently radical in their liberalism, were convened as equals in Athens to participate in the process thus further strengthening the uncompromising ideological profile of the body. Therefore, although individual aspirations and calculations were not absent, there was in general a profound unanimity as to the liberal and democratic character of the new Constitution⁶⁴.

In the final document, it was first of all, as said, clearly stated that 'all powers are derived from the nation and are exercised in the manner prescribed by the Constitution' (Article XXI). It also provided for universal suffrage of all men above the age of 21 –despite, for that matter, British reservations and insistence that the right to vote should be somehow connected to property. British pressure was ultimately ignored (with only the electoral law –which specified constitutional provisions- including reference to some connection of voting to property, which however was so vague that in practice didn't mean anything). The tenure of each parliament could not exceed four years, while the king could dissolve it earlier only with the consent of all the members of the Cabinet. Elections should be held at the latest two months after the dissolution, and the new parliament should be assembled not later than three months after the dissolution of the preceding one. The King's powers were listed –among them, he could still appoint the prime minister and the government, and grant or withhold assent of laws-; however, overall, he could 'exercise no other powers than those explicitly conferred upon him by the constitution and the special laws made in pursuance thereto'⁶⁵. The 'Upper house', the Senate, provided by the Ottonic constitution and used as a means for the monarch to retain leverage over legislature, was abolished –deemed as 'unacceptably aristocratic'⁶⁶. Civil rights, as well as the privacy of correspondence were guaranteed, as was the freedom of the press (leading to 68 nation-wide newspapers circulating until the end of the 60's, most on a daily basis); while justice was not stemming from the king but from the judges which he appointed. Confiscation of property by the state was abolished, and torture banned. Just as importantly, the Crown was not a part of the process of amending the constitution –which could only be initiated and

⁶⁴ See: Alivizatos, *The Constitution and its enemies*, 115.

⁶⁵ See: Article XLIV of the Constitution; in: Kaltchas, *Introduction to the Constitutional History*, 135.

⁶⁶ See: Alivizatos, *The Constitution and its enemies*, 120.

completed by the Parliament. Once again, this was thought to prove that the monarchy was subordinate to the National will and had derivative authority.

Overall, this was a constitution which was praised and compared in liberal standards to those established in Denmark in 1849, or in Belgium in 1831 –for many, being further on the progressive side than these. No less a contemporary than Walter Christmas characterised the Greek constitution as 'unparalleled for its liberalism, in both European and American states'⁶⁷, while Tuckerman also observed that it ultimately made Greece 'the freest of the constitutional monarchies' of the time⁶⁸. All in all, 'the Constitution of 1864 was clearly in the vanguard of European constitutionalism. Indeed, Greece fulfilled the era's definition of democracy quite comprehensively'⁶⁹. William Miller writes that 'through the Constitution of 1864, Greece entrusts upon an almighty Parliament the functioning of a full democracy', adding that 'no country in Europe demonstrated such an unobstructed function of parliamentarism as Greece between 1864 and 1910'⁷⁰.

From theory to practice: Implementation of the new Constitution and the King

In assuming his formal duties, George made clear his intentions with relation to the major dilemmas about the kingdom's orientation and ideological choices; and these were, in accordance with the expectations set forth by the European powers that had selected him. In his enthronement speech, he set out in a clear and concise manner the doctrine of domestic development that presupposed avoidance of international trouble, as the guiding principle of his reign: 'My aim is to turn Greece into a *model kingdom* in the East'⁷¹; the words of the royal

⁶⁷ Christmas, *Η ζωή του Βασιλέως Γεωργίου*, 52.

⁶⁸ Tuckerman's conclusion; in: Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 98.

⁶⁹ Tassopoulos, in: Anna Frangoudaki, Caglar Keyder (eds), *Ways to Modernity in Greece and Turkey/Encounters with Europe, 1850-1950* (I.B.Tauris, 2007), 17.

⁷⁰ William Miller, *History of the Greek People, 1821-1921* [*Ιστορία του Ελληνικού λαού, 1821-1921*] (Typos Press, Athens, 1924), 88.

We should however also note the perspective of the historians, as K.Kostis, who view the wave of democratization of the Greek society in the 1860's 'not as a product of liberal thought or certain civil constitutional demands, but of the need not to exclude any of the elite groups from the political game'; see: Kostas Kostis, «*Τα κακομαθημένα παιδιά της Ιστορίας*» : *Η διαμόρφωση του νεοελληνικού κράτους, 18^{ος}-21^{ος} αιώνας* [*Les enfants gâtés de l'histoire*]: *The construction of the modern Greek state, 18th-21st century*] (Athens: Polis, 2013), 272. Kostis argues that, by adopting an extremely liberal, 'all the political groups that participated in this process were satisfied... In a political environment where no group could prevail over the others, universal suffrage was the principal mechanism that allowed participation in authority to all of them, without restrictions and exclusions'; (ibid, 353). From this point of view, '1864 was nothing else than the triumph of the local oligarchy, the fruition of the Struggle of Independence as dreamed by its leaders'; (ibid).

⁷¹ See: *Pandora* (Athens), 1st November, 1864, p.415.

declaration became, then onwards, the epitome of the thesis alternative to the irredentist 'Great Idea' –which, as it had been conceived and practiced until Crimea, 'had entered, along with Otto, a period of trial'⁷². 'Model kingdom' stood for the prioritization of effective organization of the state and material advancement. As the President of the National Assembly underscored in his first address to the King, 'having You as our head, the virtuous prince, we shall from now on boldly walk on the path of moral and material advancement, which irreversibly leads to the prosperity of nations, and the strengthening and true glory of the thrones'⁷³. Skopetea describes the difference, saying that in the beginning of the 1860's 'those in authority cease to evoke the 'Great Idea' in the self-evident manner of the past' and in the new landscape 'irredentist politics are simply one of the two options available [instead of viewed as the manifest destiny], with an equally legitimate alternative solution –the policy of domestic development'⁷⁴. The simultaneous peaceful expansion of borders through the 'donation' of the Ionian Islands to Greece by Britain, which increased public joy in Athens, strengthened the appeal of this more prudent national stance. 'The unification was an ex machina confirmation of the rightfulness of the policy of internal development of the kingdom', indicating that 'the 'model kingdom' did not mean a resignation from the fulfilment of national goals, but rather a verification of the importance of European consent', Skopetea again explains⁷⁵. Therefore, constitutionalism, detachment from irredentism as a priority in the everyday political agenda, and British predominance among the protective powers, were the main themes that set the ideological tone at the time of inauguration of the new dynasty.

The carefully-selected profile, which the monarch presented from the day of his establishment in his new realm, was in fact coupled by an ever-apparent effort to exhibit the same reflexes in policy during the first years of his reign –trying thus to maximize 'the advantage of the experience of the former [Otto], and avoid the rocks on which the Bavarian Prince went to pieces'⁷⁶. George thus tried to deliver on the basic political hopes accompanying his selection. Owing to his insistence alone (he issued an ultimatum with which he asked the political leaders to conclude deliberations, or face the consequences of his abdication), the many fractions of

⁷² Elli Skopetea, *To 'Πρότυπο Βασίλειο' και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα/ Όψεις του εθνικού προβλήματος στην Ελλάδα, 1830-1880* [*Model Kingdom and the Great Idea: Aspects of the National Question in Greece, 1830-1880*] (Athens: Polytypo Publications, 1988), 288.

⁷³ See: *Athina* (Athens), 21st October, 1863.

⁷⁴ Skopetea, *To 'Πρότυπο Βασίλειο' και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα*, 352.

⁷⁵ Skopetea, *To 'Πρότυπο Βασίλειο' και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα*, 294.

⁷⁶ Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 108.

the Greek party system overcame their endless bickering and sanctioned the new constitution of 1864⁷⁷.

Despite the first seeds of the king's benign intentions though, the realities of the kingdom's politics attenuated democratic optimism, and exposed the vulnerabilities of the polity. The weakest link in the chain of Greek political life at the early 1860's was still the political parties that were in the course of developing from the protomorphic state of earlier days (albeit very slowly). Ideological lines were unclear and differences in politics were blurred by personal ambition, patronage and intrigue. When it came to everyday governing, Gallant says, 'since there were no set voting blocs, the government had to cobble together a majority vote every time it wanted to pass a law. There was constant horse-trading in order to obtain votes that not only made governing a delicate balance act, but also fuelled the perception that the entire system was corrupt. Political leaders had to constantly juggle a variety of demands in order to keep their fragile coalitions together'⁷⁸. Therefore, personalities, rivalries and friendships were as important as constantly alternating foreign protection –and certainly more than ideology- in the politics of the day, while political opportunism thrived. In any case, the four main parties in the domestic political scene in the late Ottonic and early post-Ottonic period were not a lot more than flexible personal coalitions, certainly not delineated across the dividing lines of actual differences of political principles⁷⁹. As it may be easily realized, this was not a political system which was ready to accept a standard framework of operation and norms, but rather one always prepared to test its limits and evade them; with its constituent parts keen at any moment to question the legitimacy of both its operation and design, when they found that the balance of power at any given time did not favour them.

Therefore, although proud of their democracy, Greeks in the immediate post-Ottonic era exhibited little skill in running it. Elections were corrupt most of the time (with the government conducting them usually winning); the illiterate electorate were at the mercy of brigands; and threat of violence remained lurking. In this context, and as no side was able to prevail upon the

⁷⁷ See: Miller, *History of the Greek People*, 87.

⁷⁸ Thomas W. Gallant, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, 1768 to 1913/ The Long Nineteenth century* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 149.

⁷⁹ According to Dakin, in internal issues 'they were torn over trivial issues', while in foreign policy they all similarly espoused the 'Great Idea', with differences over the appropriate strategy for its fulfilment; (see: Dakin, *The Unification of Greece*, 154).

will of the others, the norm was very short-lived minority governments –indeed, the king appointed 18 different cabinets in the period until 1875, while in the same period elections were called seven times.

In the early period following George's arrival, the potential of the participants in the political system to indulge in its deconstruction was outstandingly revealed through their opposition to the figure that was functioning as the king's principal advisor –that is, the pre-mentioned Count Sponeck. The impertinence which, although trying to avoid it, he was thought by the political environment to display –an impression assisted by what was apparently an abrupt temper-, and the free rein he seemed to have in Greek affairs in total disregard of the king (whom in open irony he called 'le jeune homme')⁸⁰, brought memories of the Bavarian regency, and before long ended up escalating to turmoil, further aggravating the anarchy of the political system. Thus Sponeck's conduct, and ultimately his presence, was elevated to the central matter in a political terrain that found itself once again at the boundaries of anti-dynastic revolution. 'Our state of affairs is sad, it is deplorable, it is hopeless', newspaper 'Palingenessia' declared, reminding the days of early 1863. 'We have laws, and we have constitution, and we have kingship, but in reality we have nothing'⁸¹, the newspaper –and former champion of the new monarchy- continues; while others were even less cautious to express their concerns, suggesting that 'it would be best if he [George] departed for his country, leaving the Greeks to take care of their own matters'⁸². By the time that the king chose to take power in his own hands and release Sponeck⁸³, inflated anticipations of the new era which the new Monarchy would bring in national affairs had waned, and popular opinion was looking back to the best of Otto's days with nostalgia –to such a degree that in fact, Otto, from Bamberg, fed hopes for imminent return.

Following Sponeck's removal, the potential appeared for the constitution to be properly enforced and function without intermediates; this, however, ultimately only manifested that the king's former advisor and the role he had assumed were symptoms and not causes of the problematic features of the Greek political system. Indeed, the king himself 'was fully

⁸⁰ See: Dontas, *Greece and the Great Powers*, 32

⁸¹ *Palingenessia* (Athens), 1st February, 1864.

⁸² *Palingenessia* quotes remarks at the British press; see: *Palingenessia* (Athens), 30th May, 1864.

⁸³ Dontas says that until then young George was least fond of him, 'at times finding him detestable; but being afraid of him, he usually obeyed without protest' (Dontas, *Greece and the Great Powers*, 13).

determined to play the role of constitutional monarch'; he believed that 'strict adherence to constitutional principles encouraged native political talent, and helped to ensure the gradual development of a political world in an emergent nation which had been independent for a mere thirty years or so'⁸⁴. Alas his willingness was not enough to make the designed system work and bring about stability. It was not until the late 1870's when, owing to the rise of a new class of political leadership, socio-economic change that facilitated the crystallization of two poles in the partisan system, and the pressure of Britain for more stable and longer-serving governments, the immersion of the king in the existing political system in ways that tested the limits of the constitution could be restrained.

For most of the first period of George's rule though, as Douglas Dakin has said, the central challenge to be tackled was for 'a steady alliance of political forces to be found and preserved on a national climax'⁸⁵, something which seemed nearly impossible with the parties being as 'undisciplined and even irresponsible' as they were most of the time⁸⁶. Therefore governments were extremely fragile, and elections rarely resulted in parliamentary majorities; so that indeed, despite the operating democratic framework, it was 'not always obvious which one of the parliament's fractions represented the will of the nation'⁸⁷. The burden of filling the gap fell upon the king, whose presence was the sole fixed piece in the political mosaic, and who was in charge of keeping the political system functioning at least on a basic level. As Kostis says, 'this function of royal authority proved itself as clearly necessary already in the period of the interregnum which followed the fall of Otto. The civil war that was unleashed allowed no space of doubt about the balancing role that the monarchical institution played and would continue to play in Greece until the First World War'⁸⁸. Indeed, until 1875 'the regulatory role of the king was decisive, and around him lined up the various groups that competed for authority, which in any case showed very limited sensitivity for democratic rights and processes'⁸⁹. In order to prevent government and administration from completely derailing and ensure that foreign policy would remain in accordance with the prerequisites set by the western European powers, he had to regularly pick prime ministers among the main political leaders on the basis

⁸⁴ Van Der Kiste, *Kings of the Hellenes*, 20.

⁸⁵ Dakin, *The Unification of Greece*, 121.

⁸⁶ See: Dontas, *Greece and the Great Powers*, 47.

⁸⁷ Dakin, *The Unification of Greece*, 158.

⁸⁸ Kostis, «Τα κακομαθημένα παιδιά της Ιστορίας», 273

⁸⁹ Kostis, «Τα κακομαθημένα παιδιά της Ιστορίας», 356.

of his own criteria and estimations. In performing this role, Dakin points, it is natural that he 'would be subjected to pressure from foreign representatives as well as courtiers, and that he could also not remain unaffected by the tense political atmosphere in Athens –the newspapers, the rumours and the public demonstrations'⁹⁰.

It therefore does not come as a surprise that, in this landscape, 'he was constantly exposed to the accusations against him by individuals from all sides of the political spectrum that he ignored the constitution and chose prime ministers that did not express the nation'⁹¹. However, there didn't seem to be at any point any other alternative than chaos –a dilemma which the king, through his threats to resign, and hence reminding the political leaders of their unpreparedness for self-government as that had been exhibited in the brief kingless intervals of the recent past, made sure was highlighted⁹². Therefore, the exercise of the royal prerogatives at the limits of the constitution remained an indispensable part of the functioning political system in Greece, for the rest of the decade, and indeed for the whole period until the end of the 1870's. As Tassopoulos points, 'the dualist parliamentary system, where the confidence of both the king and parliament are required for the government to stay in power (Orleanisme), lasted in Greece from 1864 to 1875'⁹³.

Overall, there seems to be a consensus that George appears on the whole to have 'reigned by parliamentary methods'⁹⁴, and when he was forced to act otherwise, 'regretted this situation' and in fact always chose 'to exhaust all means and respond to the duties of a constitutional monarch'⁹⁵. As Tassopoulos again says, 'the argument is not that things were running properly...However, the fact is that parliamentary institutions established, developed and preserved their role as effective generators of political legitimacy and governmental authority'⁹⁶. That is to say, the political turmoil, and the king's role in presiding over it, did not alter the fact of the democratic political pedagogy which Greek society attained under the

⁹⁰ Dakin, *The Unification of Greece*, 218-9.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Dontas says that 'the young sovereign had early borrowed a leaf out of the book of king Leopold I of Belgium by letting his subjects clearly understand that he always 'kept a portmanteau ready packed' and was prepared to leave at any moment, if ever it was evident that they desired to be rid of him'; Dontas, *Greece and the Great Powers*, 25, footnote 1.

⁹³ In: Frangoudaki &Keyder (eds), *Ways to Modernity in Greece and Turkey*, 17.

⁹⁴ Dontas, *Greece and the Great Powers*, 55, footnote 1. She adds that 'only on two occasions, 1866 and 1873, did he act in defiance of the deputies'.

⁹⁵ Dakin's conclusion on George's profile; Dakin, *The Unification of Greece*, 164.

⁹⁶ In: Frangoudaki &Keyder (eds), *Ways to Modernity in Greece and Turkey*, 19.

operation of the new constitution. At the end, Kostis says, 'the political volatility of those years was nothing more than the aggregation of the political rivalries of the age... It was nothing more than crises of adjustment, a phenomenon equivalent to that which we encounter in the French Third Republic'⁹⁷.

Conclusion

George's intervening with politics remained a contentious and sensitive point, ripe for anti-monarchical demagoguery, fuelled by a variety of other pretexts throughout his reign⁹⁸. This discourse that challenged the 'naturalness' of monarchical order, undermined the stabilizing impact that the king was supposed to bring on the wider social and political system⁹⁹, and, whenever highlighted, stressed the feeble analogies between European monarchy, transplanted in Greece after liberation, and local history. Indeed, the prospects of the monarchical institution in modern Greece, and indeed of the proper functioning of a constitutional regime, seemed tied not to any Hobbesian explanation about their indispensability, but on the prudence of its representatives and their success in adding, through their performance, 'popular support that is required by the fragile construction of our [monarchical] polity', -as the publisher of conservative 'Aion' put it¹⁰⁰.

Overall, the Greek crown appeared, during most of George's reign as well, no less thorny than what it was before his arrival. It soon became commonplace, within the kingdom as well as in the European capitals, that 'despite the fact that he does not at all act like Otto,... his position in Greece is far from permanent', and his realm, encountering such an endless list of grievances and exhibiting disinclination for orderly rule, was 'one of the most unfortunate in Europe'¹⁰¹. It was very commonly-presumed (in Europe as well as inside the kingdom), at the beginning of his reign as well as at various subsequent instances during its course, that the prospect of George ending his career in Greece in a way similar to Otto was very likely –hence the expectation of Palmerston and Russell that 'the poor unfortunate king of the Hellenes' would

⁹⁷ Kostis, «Τα κακομαθημένα παιδιά της Ιστορίας», 361-362.

⁹⁸ See: Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 111-2.

⁹⁹ Which was broader and more instrumental than may be realized at once; for example, *Palingenessia* writes, at the instance of the royal family's prolonged vacation in Corfu at 1869, that any such extended absence of the king from Athens 'undeniably brings about a narcosis in both small-scale trade and industry'; *Palingenessia* (Athens), 7th April, 1869

¹⁰⁰ *Aion* (Athens), 10th June, 1869.

¹⁰¹ See: *Palingenessia* quoting reports in the British press about the situation in Greece; *Palingenessia* (Athens), 30th May, 1864).

not long remain on the saddle'¹⁰². A person no less close to him than his sister, the Princess of Wales, aware of this picture, was apparently 'caused great anxiety about her brother, who she was so anxious he should never have accepted his present position'¹⁰³.

Nonetheless, or maybe precisely because the picture was such, the admirable feature of George's reign was the manner in which he managed to sail in these waters and around the reefs reasserting, after each instance of crisis or challenge, his position in the domestic balance of power as an option with no alternative. In an environment of uncertainty, and of 'never ceasing antagonisms of political parties and political complains' most often extending to the throne, he remained at all times 'self-reliant, independent in views and action, and without the personal ambition which is regardless of the step it takes for its accomplishment'¹⁰⁴. He thus appeared as someone who could 'feel the popular pulse, try to keep touch with it', and respond and adjust to it at all times¹⁰⁵. As Kolliopoulos and Veremis point, in their conclusive remarks on their chapter on the new dynasty, 'King George I proved himself a better politician than King Otho, and was able to better manipulate politicians than his predecessor'¹⁰⁶. He was therefore able to deliver a separate phase in the venture of modern Greek nation-building, consolidating and developing the major themes which had been formulated during the preceding era. His first decade of rule is thus indeed characteristic of this process.

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¹⁰² See: Holland and Makrides, *The British and the Hellenes*, 75.

¹⁰³ Van Der Kiste, *Kings of the Hellenes*, 22.

¹⁰⁴ Again, from Tuckerman's dithyrambic, but no less fair portrayal of George; Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 105.

¹⁰⁵ Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today*, 105.

¹⁰⁶ John S.Kolliopoulos & Thanos M.Veremis, *Modern Greece/ A History since 1821* (Willey-Blackwell, 2010), 45.

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