

The Notes of Aristote Neophytos on the Macedonian Question in August 1908

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Abstract

This research presents an article written by Aristote Neophytos in August 1908 that focuses on his proposed strategy for the Greek State to protect the national identity of the Greek element within the Ottoman Empire and to address the Macedonian Question. Neophytos alludes to the Russian expansive policy against the Ottoman Empire, indicating that Russia is its sole enemy. His analysis of the racial struggle between Slavs and Greeks in Russia during the Berlin Treaty period follows. He concludes that the Greeks lost their national identity due to the Pan-Slavic Russian policy and their shared religion with the Slavs. The Macedonian Question serves as the focal point of his arguments. Taking the international context into account, he argues that Greece can expect limited territorial gains if it follows the Bulgarian policy aiming at the dismemberment of Macedonia. In addition, the Greeks would lose their national identity in Ottoman lands seized by the Slavs. He is confident that the Greeks and Armenians should help the Muslims to resurrect the Ottoman Empire. Obtaining a common Ottoman identity within a liberal constitutional State would be their shield against Pan-Slavic objectives. His recommended course of action is to defend the Empire's integration against Russian pro-Bulgarian plans and to reassess the potential for future annexation of Macedonia. This study also aims to present a review of literature on the political issues that influenced his arguments, to address specific related questions, and to evaluate the degree to which his views are consistent with bibliographical findings by presenting the correlated topics of European, Ottoman, and Greek politics, relations, and alliances.

Keywords: Aristote Neophytos, Macedonian question, Ottoman Empire, Pan-Slavism, Slavic versus Greek Racial struggle, Russian Pro-Bulgarian policy, Second Constitutional Monarchy, Ottomanism.

1. Introduction

The Ottoman Empire's gradual political and economic decline resulting from the wars against its traditional enemies, Russia and Austria, gave rise to the Eastern Question during the 18th and 19th centuries (Worringer, 2004; Macfie, 2014; Fursov, 2018). On the other hand, Russia's ascent to prominence in Europe was evidenced in the early 18th century by its successful wars against the Ottomans and Peter the Great's modernization efforts (Gábor, 2011). Subsequently, Russia presented itself as a new humanitarian power, seeking to free all adherents of the Orthodox faith from the Ottoman Empire (Laskaris, 1978; Klose, 2021). At the same time, the Great Powers of Western Europe tried to protect the Ottoman Empire from Russian aggrandizements but also competed for dominance over its European, Asian, and African territories due to the perception

that it was in a state of terminal decline (Davison, 1976; Silvera, 2000; Frary & Kozelsky, 2014; Vovchenko, 2016a; Ozavci, 2021). The Ottoman Empire became even more unstable during the 19th century, also referred to as the age of nationalism, due to the uprisings in the multiethnic Ottoman Balkans, beginning with the Serbian one in 1804 (Meriage, 1978; Jankovic, 1988; Djokić, 2023), but primarily due to the Greek War of Independence (1821-1829). After the Battle of Navarino in 1827 and the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829, the Ottoman Empire, in the Treaties of Adrianople (modern-day Edirne) (1829) and Constantinople (1832), recognized Greece as the first sovereign Balkan nation (Stavrianos, 1958; Bitis, 2006; Biondich, 2011; Anscombe, 2012).

- Aristote Neophytos presented his proposed strategy to protect the national identity of the Greek element within the Ottoman Empire and address the Macedonian Question in August 1908.
- Russia is the sole enemy of the Ottoman Empire due to its expansive policy.
- Russia's Pan-Slavic policy threatens the national identity of the Greek element of the Russian and Ottoman Empires due to the shared religion with the Slavs.
- The cooperation of the Greeks and Armenians with the Muslims is required to resurrect the Ottoman Empire. Obtaining a common Ottoman identity in a liberal constitutional State is essential to maintaining their national identity.
- The international context does not favor an aggressive Greek policy in Macedonia.
- His recommended course of action is to defend the Empire's integration against Russian pro-Bulgarian plans and to reassess the potential for future annexation of Macedonia.

The notion of Hellenism at the time, portrayed in Greek pamphlets and newspaper articles, generally considered that an Orthodox Balkan confederation among the four primary nations of Oriental Christianity (Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians, and Romanians) would solve the Eastern Question by allocating territory to each of these nations based on historical customs, ethnographic factors, and geographic considerations. Thus, in the first half of the 19th century, Greek intellectual discourses viewed the South Slavs as allies fighting to overthrow the Turkish Yoke (Skordos, 2018). In 1867, Russia supported Bulgaria and Serbia in forming a State named Yugoslavia, which would include Thrace and Macedonia within the Bulgarian section. Although the Serbians agreed, they refrained from signing (Stavrianos, 1964). Bulgarian efforts to create a Slavic Federation or a Danubian Federation of Slavs, with Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Thrace forming one component, ended unsuccessfully in 1877 due to the Russo-Turkish War (Naxidou, 2014).

Since the latter part of the 19th century, the Ottoman vilayets (provinces) of Kosova (Skopje), Manastir, and Selanik (Salonika) had collectively been referred to as Macedonia (Wilkinson, 1951; Andriotis, 1960; Ljuljanovic, 2022). Rivalry over Macedonia was initially evident in the field of religion. The Rum millet shielded the Orthodox Christian community of the Ottoman Empire. Given that it contained Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians, Aromanians, Romanians, Albanians, and Arabs, it was diverse. However, the Greeks held all prominent positions in the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the millet head, and enjoyed a hegemonic position. Due to the mounting Russian diplomatic pressure on the Porte, the Patriarchate recognized the autocephaly of the Serbian Church in 1831. The ecclesiastical crisis, following the schism of the Greek Church in 1833, was settled in 1845 when the Ecumenical Patriarchate accepted its autocephaly. Finally, the declaration of the autonomous Bulgarian Church in the 1850s and the Ottoman government's recognition of the Exarchate in 1870 further curtailed the Patriarchate's authority over the Slav populations (Psilos, 2000; Stamatopoulos, 2006; Grigoriadis, 2018; Crockett, 2020). Thus, many Orthodox Christian subjects and communities in Ottoman Macedonia had to identify as Greek or Bulgarian (Zürcher, 2019).

The Balkan or Great Eastern Crisis was the most significant issue in the East after the Crimean War. It started in Herzegovina in the spring of 1875. Riots quickly spread to other Ottoman territories, including Bosnia, Bulgaria in April (the Batak massacre), and eventually Serbia-Montenegro in June 1876 (Walicki, 1989; Saab, 1991; Stojanovic, 2008). The initial Russian philhellenism shifted towards supporting the revolution of the Balkan Slavs. Russian policy aimed to demonstrate the Russo-Bulgarian historical relations through their common Slav ethnogenesis (Panov, 2019). Russia's primary goals in the Balkans were to bolster its geopolitical position, acquire control over the South Slavs, and gain access to ports on the Black Sea and the Straits (Anderson, 1966). The Ottoman Empire disregarded the imposed measures by the Great Powers at the Constantinople Conference in 1876-1877 to protect the Bulgarian population. Russia achieved its Balkan goals in the ensuing final Russo-Turkish War (1877), which was fought to defend Slavic Christians and, more importantly, Bulgarian interests (Crockett, 2020). The Russian and Ottoman Empires signed the Treaty of San Stefano on March 3rd, 1878. It settled the Eastern Question in Russia's interests and guaranteed its Pan-Slavic aspirations. As a result, Macedonia was merged into the newly formed, sizable, self-governing Bulgaria, while Romania, Serbia, and Montenegro gained independence (Levine, 1914; Hionidis, 2002; Dialla, 2012; Lars & Skordos, 2019).

However, on July 13th, 1878, the Tsar was compelled to accept the revised provisions of the Treaty of Berlin. The European Powers' response, including Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Britain, was predicated on their anticipation that Bulgaria would become a Russian satellite. Subsequently, the alliance between Russia and Germany/Austria-Hungary temporarily collapsed due to their significant conflicts of interest in the Balkans (Shafer, 1989; Ković, 2011). As a result, the Ottoman Empire regained its sovereignty over Macedonia, and a Bulgarian Principality emerged under Ottoman rule. The administrations of Bulgaria and Austria-Hungary preserved the Ottoman Empire's rule over Eastern Rumelia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, respectively. Ultimately, the Treaty mentioned the rights of all Christians living in the Ottoman Empire and granted Great Britain temporary control over Cyprus and autonomy over Crete (Forbes et al., 1915; Seton-Watson, 2004; Erickson, 2006).

The Greek aspiration for an Eastern Hellenic Empire comprising all Balkan Orthodox populations ended with the emergence of the Bulgarian Principality. Trans-ethnic Christian solidarity gradually changed to an Ottoman-Greek one due to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church's autocephaly and the Eastern Crisis. Pan-Slavism elevated Bulgarians to the top of the Greek enemy list. Thus, the Greek government refrained from endorsing any Balkan uprisings from 1875 to 1878. It also declined the offer to join Russia and the Slavs in the last Russo-Turkish War, aiming not to enter jeopardy or increase Slav gains, and due to British neutrality (Kofos, 1985; Iliadis, 2019). Following extensive discussions with the Ottoman State under the auspices of the Great Powers, Thessaly was granted to Greece in 1881 under the terms of the Constantinople Convention. The Ottomans conquered Thessaly during the 1897 Greco-Turkish War but withdrew afterward (Katsikas, 2021).

The final Russo-Turkish War and the Ottoman Empire's humiliation in the Treaty of Berlin provided Sultan Abdülhamid II an excuse to impose an autocratic rule. He suspended the Ottoman parliament on February 14th, 1878, halted all modernizing initiatives, and abolished the Ottoman Constitution, which had been drafted by a group of journalists and bureaucrats known as the New (Young) Ottomans and issued on December 23rd, 1876, by imperial decree (Herzog & Malek, 2016). However, the notion of constitutionalism reappeared with the rise of the Young Turks in the 1890s, and it eventually became a mass movement amid the Hamidian massacres of 1895-1896 (Kaynar, 2017; Golbasi, 2018; Suny, 2018).

Immediately upon Macedonia's return to the Ottoman Empire, irredentism among the Serbs, Greeks, and primarily Bulgarians was exacerbated by the Ottoman Empire's continued decline. The original educational and religious conflict between followers of the Bulgarian

Exarchate and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople gave rise to the rival ethnicities' Struggle in Macedonia (Clogg, 1992). The literature considers the Macedonian Question as a subtopic of the Eastern Question. It referred to the claims of the three Balkan States (Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia) in the southern Ottoman Balkans (Hupchick & Cox, 2001; Gerd, 2014; Heraclides, 2021). With the rise of nationalism, Macedonia's diverse population, languages, and religions proved to be the most significant political issue the late Ottoman State had to address (Fortna et al., 2013). The Macedonian Struggle encompassed social, political, and cultural disputes. It ended with a protracted and brutal armed struggle of guerrilla groups, mainly engaging Greeks and Bulgarians, as well as Serbians, Aromanians, and Albanians (Vovchenko, 2016b; Özkan, 2022). The armed conflicts began after the creation of the secret Bulgarian organization IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) in Thessaloniki in 1893 and mainly after the terrorist bombings and the Ilinden uprising in 1903, which heightened the national sentiments of the Greeks. They peaked in 1904-1908 and ended with the Balkan Wars (Vakalopoulos, 1999). In 1904, Austria, Russia, and other European nations imposed reforms on the Ottoman Empire to prevent the carnage in Macedonia. The European Great Powers, except Germany, banded together in 1905 to demand further changes, and they later invaded the Ottoman islands of Lemnos and Lesbos (Lesvos) to force the Empire into recession (Zürcher, 2019). Austria-Hungary also supported the Aromanian-Romanian movement, which culminated in the recognition of Aromanians as a distinct millet in May 1905 (Stamatiadou, 2011). The reign of anarchy, which had tormented the land with rapine, fire, and bloodshed, had left the entire province of Macedonia in utter despair and gloom (Marder, 2004). The atrocities committed by the guerrilla corps, as well as those of the Ottoman army and irregular Ottoman troops against civilians, were horrifying (Akmeşe, 2005). Following the Young Turk Revolution, there were a few low-intensity clashes. However, they eventually culminated in the two Balkan wars and World War I (Vlachos, 1935; Vakalopoulos, 1988; Lynch, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to convey Neophytos' views and ideas, together with one of his August 1908 essays. This essay presents his arguments regarding the Greek side's strategy during the rise of the Second Constitutional period in the Ottoman Empire. It justifies his primary thesis for resolving the Macedonian Question, considering the international context, which should center on maintaining the Greek national identity within the Ottoman Empire. Finally, the paper reviews the expansive and Pan-Slavic Russian pro-Bulgarian policy, the policy of the Great Powers during the Berlin Treaty period, and the contemporary political challenges that have inspired his thinking.

2. Material

Aristote Neophytos was born in Kerassunde on July 27th, 1859. His father, Nohut (meaning chickpea)-oğlu (meaning son) Yorgi (George), son of Sava, as evidenced in an Ottoman register record document of the Kerassunde Ottoman Greeks (Fig. 1), was also born in Kerassunde in 1834 (Balci, 2024). Nohutoğlu Yorgi was included among the most significant Black Sea notables by welfare and reputation in the 1880 list, authored by Sırrı Paşa, Vali of Trabzon, as 'Servet ve haysiyetçe birinci derecededir Nohutoğlu Yorgi Ağa' (Yüksel, 2013). He was a merchant selling hazelnuts, iron, and wheat and was a member of the Kerassunde Council by 1908 (Balci, 2012).

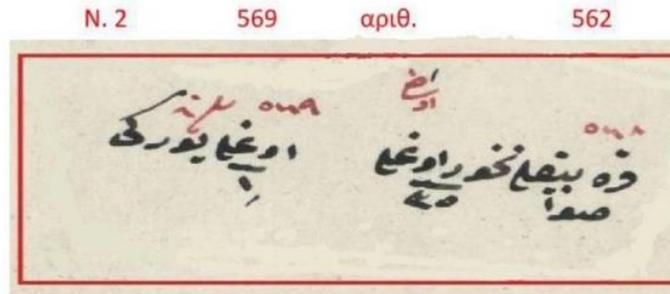


Figure 1: Ottoman record of inheritance distribution (in Turkish ‘Nüfus Defteri’) of Giresun Rum about Nohutoğlu Sava and his son Yorgi. It indicates that Nohutoğlu Sava, having a black mustache, was 35 years old in 1834 and had a middle-class financial standing (in Turkish ‘Evasıt’) (Balci, 2024).

After graduating from the Athens University School of Law, Neophytos earned a postgraduate degree in London and a PhD from the University of Paris. He also graduated from the Anthropological School of Paris. Then, he participated in founding the first Greek Anthropological Museum in Athens in 1886. The *Revue Médico-Pharmaceutique* praised his anthropological publications (Néophytos, 1890; Néophytos, 1891) in its 1891 issue (Sferopoulos, 2020). ‘Neophytos Aristote, Scholar at Kerassunde’ was listed as a member of the Greek Philological Association (Hellenic Literary Society) of Constantinople in 1895 with an election year of 1889 (EFSK, 1895). He is listed as the Kerassunde collaborator of the French Chamber of Constantinople Commerce, which was established on October 6th, 1884, in the 1899 issue of the *Revue Commerciale du Levant* (Eldem et al., 2017). He was one of the most prominent intellectuals of Pontus. His book ‘The Constitutions of the European States-The Kerassunde’ was published in two volumes in Trebizond by The Serasi Typography in 1909 for the benefit of the Kerassunde Hellenic Association ‘The Argonauts’ (Fig. 2, 3) (DVDTH).



Figure 2: Aristote Neophytos signs his photograph on the inside front cover of his book.

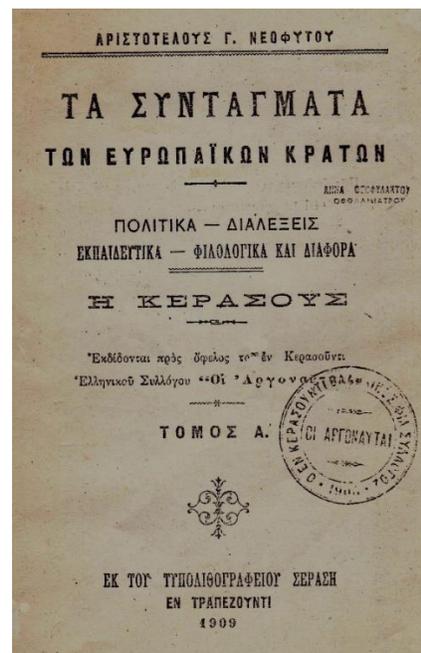


Figure 3: The cover of his book.

Neophytos wrote a wide range of articles for the Greek press of Constantinople. He was the sole politician to advise the Young Turks through his writings against joining the Central Powers in the First World War, arguing that they had no chance of winning a protracted war. He based his view on the lack of raw materials and know-how for the development of a heavy war industry. His views infuriated the Turk organization ‘Committee of Union and Progress’, but they proved correct. His writings peaked in the second half of 1908 and the first months of 1909, influenced by the interests of the Greek element of the Ottoman Empire, the Macedonian Struggle, the Ottoman Constitution, the political environment of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, the ideology of Ottomanism, and the international context. In his articles, he examines the social and political issues surrounding the coexistence of numerous ethnic groups in the Ottoman Empire. He suggests that European standards serve as the foundation for the solution. He searches for ways to infuse the multiethnic people of the Empire with a common Ottoman identity, aiming to create democratic bonds between the society and the State. He employs empathy and common sense to all human beings regardless of ethnicity, race, language, or creed. He also emphasizes the critical need to update the educational system. Considering that era’s restricted communication resources, his extensive understanding of the global situation is astounding. The Athens newspaper ‘Τὸ Κρότος’ reproduced most of his writings. His wife, Sophia, was the granddaughter of Georgios Karaiskakis, the supreme military commander of the Greek War of Independence. Neophytos was sentenced to death in absentia by the Amasya Independence Court in 1921 (Boeckh & Rutar, 2016; PontosWorld, 2017; Sferopoulos, 2020).

This study aims to present his article entitled: ‘The Cooperation of Muslims, Armenians, and Greeks for the Revival of the Ottoman State’. It was published on the 20th and 21st of August 1908, in the Constantinople newspaper ‘Πρωΐα’ (Fig. 4).

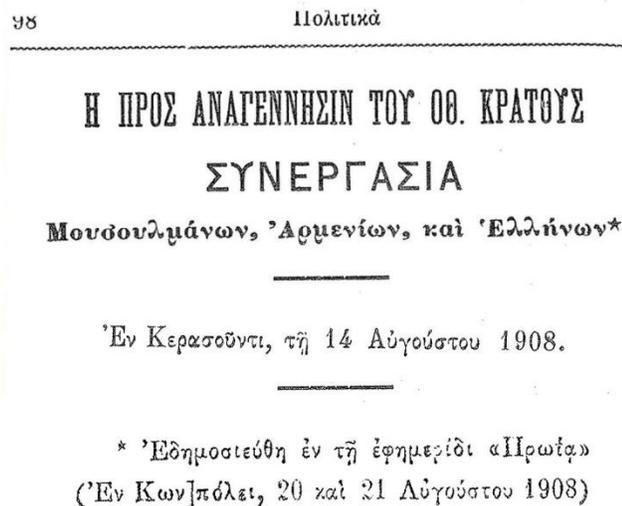


Figure 4: The heading (top) and ending (middle and bottom) of his article.

Neophytos begins the first portion by encouraging the Ottoman Empire’s Muslims, Armenians, and Greeks to honestly assess the factors that require their cooperation and the anticipated advantages. He uses the French adage: ‘Good accounting makes good friends’. He cites Otto von Bismarck, who, approximately thirty years ago, declared that he would not sacrifice even a Pomeranian grenadier’s bones for the Eastern Question. He reiterates his previously stated opinion that sentimentality and generosity have no political significance. He goes on to explain that for the many ethnic groups of the Empire to form a true and lasting alliance, they must have a common enemy, similar interests, and a shared goal. He is aware that Muslims hope for the revival, stability, progress, and prosperity of the Ottoman State.

He adds that Pan-Slavism is the sole obstacle preventing them from accomplishing this aim. He uses the rational and convincing arguments made by Dostoevsky, one of Russia's greatest writers, in the wake of the most recent Russo-Turkish War, to show that the Russian ideal and ultimate objective is the succession of the Byzantine Empire. Dostoevsky argued that the conquest of Constantinople and the reign over the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the head of Orthodoxy, was the only way to guarantee Russia's survival. As a result, the Tsar would become the sole leader of Orthodoxy, fulfilling the so-called testament of Peter the Great and the ultimate goal of the century-long Russian strategy.

He claims that due to the common faith, the Greek element of the Empire, the largest after the Muslim one, would be assimilated into any Ottoman land conquered by the Slavs, adding that the same risk also concerned the Armenians, despite the minor theological distinctions between their religion and that of the Slavs. He describes his experience after spending five years on the Black and Azov Sea coasts, which Greek settlers have inhabited for centuries. He points out that as a result of the Russification campaign, the Greek community there had lost their national identity, and their anti-Greek sentiments were even more intense than those of the Russians. He does not doubt that the next generation of the recent Greek settlers would become Russified. To support his argument, he quotes Asianologist Ármín Vámbéry, who had described Russia as a drop of oil that falls on paper and gradually spreads slowly but inescapably to cover the entire surface.

He is confident that the high risk of assimilation of the Greek element of the Ottoman Empire by the Slavs, which jeopardizes its national existence in a dismembered Empire, puts it in greater peril than the Muslim element is. He bases this argument on the fact that Muslims, in contrast to Christians, do not face the risk of losing their national identity, which encompasses their language and religion, as well as their desire to regain their territory in the future. He concludes that Greeks and Armenians are more obliged than Muslims to struggle for a powerful, vibrant, prosperous, and privileged Turkey that would be willing and able to preserve its national existence and the freedom and prosperity of all its residents.

In the article's second part, he dismisses opposite views, without naming them, published by the Athens press, by characterizing them as fanciful and impractical. He attributes these ideas to a complete ignorance of the international context. He also refers to the Greek culture and civilization, which provided the language to the Byzantine Empire. The latter never considered any effort to integrate other ethnic groups, although some of them converted to Christianity. He stresses that the Greek population in Asia Minor has always been vital in illuminating other cultures without discounting them. Yet, the national feelings of the Balkan ethnic groups, such as the Bulgarians and the Serbs, were infused and reinforced by the noble and free Greek spirit. He concludes that Hellenism is steadfast in its devotion to human freedom and its history, traditions, and goals.

Referring to the Macedonian Question, he states that Greece has to choose between two options. If Greece treats it in a way akin to Bulgaria, it would lead to the quick division of the rebel areas. He suggests treating it differently, helping to restore the Ottoman State and its integrity. In the first option, he does not doubt that even the most beneficial land allocation would grant Bulgaria, Serbia, and Albania access to most Greek-inhabited lands in Macedonia and north Epirus. Because of their shared religion, the Slavs would quickly assimilate the Greek element. He recommends that Greece should further consider that Greeks are significantly more adept than Slavs in the daily grind and have the advantage of progressing in peace under a liberal constitutional Ottoman State. He is confident that the dismemberment of Macedonia would leave Greece with little territorial gains. However, the worst-case scenario of the first option would be the assimilation of the Greeks residing in the areas left out to the Slavs. He concludes that Greece has every reason to choose the second option and should put off its hopes for a better and more extensive share in the future.

In his concluding paragraph, he reiterates that the sincere cooperation between Greeks, Armenians, and Muslims is essential to the recovery and fortification of the Ottoman State. Conversely, actions against their peaceful coexistence would be hostile to the State and its citizens. He firmly believes that the only way to demonstrate that they are worthy of their recently acquired constitutional liberties and rights, governing their State among the great European ones, is by living in peace, upholding the rule of law, and stopping riots. Furthermore, he is adamant that any foreign intervention would result in a destructive and catastrophic collapse. Finally, he hopes his ideas will spread across the Ottoman press, at the recommendation of the pioneers of the recent Ottoman Renaissance, and that his Muslim fellow citizens will embrace them.

3. Methodology

Neophytos refers to several distinct, more or less obvious political topics. The latter are:

- (1) The Russian expansive policy against the Ottoman Empire;
- (2) The Russian Pan-Slavism and the Greeks;
- (3) The policy of the Great Powers in the Berlin Treaty period; and
- (4) The ascent of the Second Constitutional period.

The ‘Literature review’ section will address these topics. The ensuing ‘Discussion’ will address the two main questions emerging from his essay. The former concerns Neophytos’ messages, and the latter deals with the timing of his intervention. This section will also consider his views in light of the bibliographical findings and will try to summarize his ideas and criticisms.

4. Literature review

4.1 *The Russian expansive policy against the Ottoman Empire*

Tsar Ivan III the Great (reign 1462-1505) asserted major symbolic claims to the Christian Byzantine legacy by adopting the double-headed eagle for Russia and marrying Princess Sophia Paleologue, the niece of the last Byzantine Emperor, in 1472. However, Ivan III, Ivan IV (the ‘Terrible’), and their immediate successors had no aggressive plans against the Ottoman Empire and maintained a friendly policy with it (Levine, 1914; Phillips, 2012). Peter the Great, Tsar and Emperor of all Russia (reign 1721-1725), was the first to raise Balkan Slav issues in European affairs. However, his expansionist approach focused on the north rather than the south. On the other hand, the philosopher Voltaire was well aware of Catherine the Great’s (reign 1762-1796) secret wish. The latter was evident by his playful request to visit her someday in Constantinople, the Russian future capital (Levine, 1914; Prousis, 1994). Russia freed the Crimean Khanate after a series of conflicts with the Ottoman Empire since 1768, which were resolved by the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji (1774). The Treaty gave the Ministers of the Russian Imperial Court the power to weigh the repercussions should Turkey have failed to uphold its commitment to safeguard Christianity and churches (Jelavich, 2004; Phillips, 2012).

The Greeks gained more political and social power due to the Russian victories in 1788-1792, which also created the foundation for their cultural supremacy over other Orthodox groups. These wins brought about significant economic growth for the bourgeois elements that emerged on the Greek peninsula (Stamatopoulos, 2006).

The Russian victories led to expansion over the Ottoman Balkans and Caucasus. However, the Black Sea had no use without Constantinople, the Bosphorus, and the Dardanelles (Lieven, 2003). Fearing that Russia would dominate the Mediterranean with its navy and seize control of the land route to the Indian Subcontinent, Britain and France intervened militarily on behalf of the Ottomans in 1853 when Russia destroyed the Ottoman fleet at Sinop (Stone, 2006). Having lost the Crimean War (1853-1856), Russia had to abandon its plans to seize Constantinople and dominate the Straits. In the following Treaty of Paris, it also renounced its right to defend the Ottoman Christians. Consequently, Christians in the Near East and the Balkans sought protection in Western Europe (Phillips, 2012; Gerd, 2014).

Russian policy centered on establishing a Greater Bulgaria, a sizable South Slavic State in the Balkans, as a foundation for Russian interests. However, capturing the Straits remained the primary Russian political objective, with views diverging solely on how to accomplish it. During the Great Eastern Crisis, Dostoevsky (1821-1881) argued that 'Constantinople must one day be ours'. Great Britain was the sole opponent of Russian aspirations after the 1870s. The final action made by the Russian Imperial government was the secret Constantinople Agreement of March 1915, which guaranteed continued war support for the Allies in exchange for Constantinople and the northern shore of Anatolia (Phillips, 2012; Gerd, 2014).

4.2 The Russian Pan-Slavism and the Greeks

The Russian policy, since Tsar Ivan III, had referred to Moscow as the 'Third Rome', the genuine home of Christianity, after 'Two Romes' fell, with no chance for a fourth or of someone replacing the Christian Tsardom. As a result, Moscow appeared as the legitimate heir to the succession of both Rome and Constantinople (Jelavich, 2004; Florofski, 2019). 'Incipient' signs of Pan-Slavism became evident after the Treaty of Bakhchisarai, also known as the Treaty of Radzin, which concluded the victorious Russian war against the Ottoman Empire from 1676 to January 3rd, 1681 (O'Brien, 1953). Following the French Revolution, nationalist consciousness surged among the Slavs of Europe (Levine, 1914). Alexander I (reign 1801-1825) was the only Russian Emperor who planned to unify Slavs into a State or Federation of the Slavic Nations (Guins, 1949). The secret society 'United Slavs' appeared in Southern Russia in 1818. The Slavophile movement was an intellectual debate supporting the removal of Western influences from Russia. It followed discussions concerning the ancestry of the Russian people and appeared to give rise to Pan-Slavism in the 1830s. Since then, Pan-Slavism has replaced the label 'Slavophile'. However, these ideas had no political influence during the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855) (Levine, 1914; Stein, 1976; Hughes, 2000). Modern Pan-Slavism emerged between 1830 and 1840 to free the Slavs from the Austrian and Turkish yoke. Proclaiming themselves as the future leaders of Europe, Slav-speaking intellectuals contended that Slav vernaculars were dialects of a common Slavic language and that Slavs were a single nation, notwithstanding other distinctions. However, in the First Slav Congress in Prague in 1848, the Balkan Slavs rejected Pan-Slavism, considering it an extension of Russian nationalism. Furthermore, the idea of a Pan-Slav Federation headed by Russia was not considered (Kohn, 1960; Stergar, 2017; Zafeiridis, 2020).

The Greek national aspirations could no longer rely on the Russian Tsar after the devastating failures of the Crimean War and those of the insurrections in Thessaly, Epirus, and Macedonia during 1854, the Anglo-French occupation of Piraeus to force Greek neutrality, and the Great Cretan Revolution of 1866-1869 (Todorova, 1984). Pan-Slavism sought to control Hellenism through armed bands (Komitata), spies, money, teachers, priests, etc. with assistance from the Russian Empire through funds, diplomats, agents, and propagandists, according to the Prime Minister Epameinondas Deligiorgis, who advocated for Helleno-Ottomanism in 1865 (Iliadis, 2019). Greek international obligations and interests necessitated neutrality and a policy of friendship and cooperation with the Ottoman Empire after the Bosnian Revolt. To maintain

peace and enhance the quality of life for Ottoman Christians, the new Sultan Murad V (1876) supported liberal and progressive reforms. That period was critical for the distinct racial and ethnic divide, despite the common religion, between the Greeks and Bulgarians (Kofos, 1985; Valavanidou, 2015; Iliadis, 2019; Darkadaki, 2024).

The Pan-Slavists prevailed when Alexander II (reign 1855-1881) declared War against Turkey on April 24th, 1877 (Levine, 1914). He stated that the Russian nation was ready to make new sacrifices to relieve the suffering of the Christians in the Balkan Peninsula. Reflecting on the time, Dostoevsky added, 'It is the Russian people who marched to war' (Boudet, 2014). However, Bismarck's subsequent disclosure of the private discussions and Russia's agreement at the Berlin Congress to give Austria, the Slavs' worst adversary, control over the Slavic territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrated the reverse (Levine, 1914).

'Greeks are the natural and most powerful opponent of Pan-Slavism' according to the 1878 article by *The Times* correspondent in Athens, which presented Pan-Slavism as the most dangerous enemy of Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and the other Balkan states (Phillips, 2012). The 1878-1879 reports of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Educational Committee were disappointing. According to their records, the Slavic policy in Thrace and Macedonia resembled the Greek mythological sea monster Charybdis, which threatened to consume everything Greek and violently, terroristically, and deceitfully detach the most vital parts from Hellenism (Giannakopoulos, 1998). The Greek policy and press presented Bulgaria as the most formidable and evil foe, especially after the declaration of the union between Eastern Rumelia and the Principality of Bulgaria in September 1885. Bulgarians also denounced Greek policy as wicked (Naxidou, 2014; Naxidou, 2016).

During the 19th century, Russia granted citizenship to Christian Greeks, primarily from Pontus, hiding its Pan-Slavic policy under the guise of humanitarianism. Any Orthodox Greek who had spent some time living in Russia was allowed to apply for Russian citizenship. Thus, Greeks sought the ability to maintain their Orthodox faith and safety from persecution, massacres, and the arbitrary actions of Turkish local administrations (Vogli, 2012). One of the harsh assimilation strategies the Russian government employed to Russify them was the Russification of their names. In addition, any Greeks or Armenians with Ottoman citizenship living in Russia would be considered a potential enemy by Russian authorities because they would be serving in the rival Ottoman army (Papadopoulos, 2012). The literature claims that Pan-Slavism, with Bulgaria as its agent, was behind the Balkan Wars of the 19th century, altering the nature of the Eastern Question as a conflict between Islam and Christianity. Neo-Slavism, the most recent iteration of Russian Pan-Slavism, had politico-economic roots in the Balkans and lasted from 1908 to 1914 (Levine, 1914).

Crucial contributors to the development of Greek anti-Slavism before the Balkan Wars included the Crimean War, the founding of the Bulgarian Exarchate and the ensuing schism (1872), the declaration of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church as the nation's official religion (1895), the Greco-Turkish War (1897), and the Ilinden Uprising (1903) (Ματᾶλας, 2003; Iliadis, 2019). Russian foreign policy from Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, and Alexander I to the last reigning Emperor Nicholas II, opposed the Greek 'Megali Idea' since it aimed to retain Constantinople for Russia (Gounaris & Christopoulos, 2019). Furthermore, Russian Balkan policy endangered primary Greek interests because it focused on the Slavic assimilation of the Greek element of the Russian and Ottoman Empires. It also solely handed Bulgaria the lands Greece claimed from those that Russia had gained from the Ottoman Empire. The long-standing cordial ties of Greece with Russia, its patron nation, inevitably ended (Gerd, 2014; Heraclides & Dialla, 2015). Anti-Slavic sentiments among Greeks further intensified as a result of the vicious, savage, and destructive actions of the Bulgarian Komitadji against the Greek Orthodox civilians of Macedonia during the Macedonian Struggle, the Balkan, and the World Wars. Bulgaria allied with

Germany in all these wars, blaming Russia for its lost dream of hegemony in the Balkans (Levine, 1914; Bulgarian Atrocities in Macedonia, 1919; Cook, 2001; Levene, 2018).

4.3 The policy of the Great Powers in the Berlin Treaty period

4.3.1 The German policy

From 1870 until his overthrow by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1890, Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor, maintained peace in Europe based on a balanced degree of power (Brandenburg, 1927; Albrecht-Carrié, 1958). Bismarck secured Germany's primary financial and military participation, even though he refrained from establishing a powerful naval and colonial Empire to avoid provoking Britain. Wilhelm II's assertive foreign policy had the opposite effect (Crankshaw, 1981; Steinberg, 2011). Without directly involving Germany, Bismarck sought to lessen regional tensions between his two principal allies, Russia and Austria-Hungary, in the Balkans (Zerner, 1968; Farmer & Stiles, 2015). Bismarck used his well-known aphorism, quoted by Neophytos, 'Not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier', to define the German Balkan policy in the Congress of Berlin (Weithmann, 1995). He concluded the League (Union) of the Three Emperors with the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires from 1873 to 1878 and from 1881 to 1887, the Triple Alliance with Austria-Hungary and Italy in 1882, encompassing Britain but not France, and the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia in 1887 (Langer, 1956). Wilhelm II, the final German Emperor, Kaiser, and King of Prussia, assumed principal command of German policy following Bismarck's dismissal. The ties with Russia broke, and a rival Franco-Russian alliance was formed (Mommsen, 1990).

The only foundation for the friendly collaboration between the Ottomans and the Germans was Wilhelm II's relationship and mutual respect for Abdülhamid II, also referred to as the Red or Bloodthirsty Sultan. Wilhelm II swore to defend and guard the Muslim world and the Prophet's green flag on November 8th, 1898, in Damascus, under the shadow of the great Saladin (referring to the tomb of Salah al-Din, Sultan of Egypt and Syria), according to Rosa Luxemburg. Wilhelm II also declared, 'Three hundred million Mohammedans know the German Emperor is their best friend' (Lyons & Jackson, 1982; Motadel, 2014).

4.3.2 The British policy

Russophobia spread throughout Western Europe and Great Britain before the Crimean War due to Russia's power, separateness, inaccessibility, and domestic policy. Since Britain and Russia nearly went to war over the destiny of Constantinople and the entire Ottoman Empire, Anglophobia consequently grew throughout Russia (Kohn, 1960; Phillips, 2012). During the Balkan Crisis, the British government maintained a neutral stance until the Treaty of San Stefano, which confirmed the worst British fears of Russian dominance in the Balkan Peninsula. At the same time, it neglected the territorial claims of the Greek Kingdom. The humiliating annulment of the Russian victory over the Ottoman Empire resulted from British Prime Minister Disraeli's threat to declare war on Russia at the Berlin Congress if it did not return Macedonia, the most strategically significant area of the Balkans, to the Ottoman Empire (Taylor, 1954; Kovic, 2010; Reed, 2016). However, the Anglo-Russian Entente in 1907 turned a former British opponent into a new ally (Williams, 1966; Klein, 1971). As a result, the doctrine of the Foreign Office, which advocated preserving the integrity of the Ottoman Empire as a means of halting Russian advance into Constantinople and the Straits, was called into doubt (Edwards, 1954; Ahmad, 1966; Unal, 1996; Milios, 2023). Almost a month before the Young Turk Revolution, on June 9th-10th, 1908, in Reval (present-day Tallinn), Russia and Great Britain decided to meddle in the Ottoman Balkans. They intended to implement reforms and set up an independent regime headed by a Christian governor. Considering that Macedonia had only been kept out of Bulgaria, under Russian

protection, by Britain, this Anglo-Russian deal was an absolute nightmare for the Ottoman Empire (Zürcher, 2019). Relations between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire dramatically improved due to the Young Turks' external strategy and Germany's declining influence on the Sublime Porte. The Young Turk revolution saved Britain from demanding reforms in the Macedonian combustible political issue and facing comparable risks to its standing in Egypt and India from the resurgence of liberal Muslim sentiments (Ahmad, 1966). Furthermore, Young Turks were particularly enraged at Russia for its pro-Bulgarian policy in Macedonia, as well as at Austria-Hungary and its ally Germany for meddling in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Only Great Britain's reputation remained unharmed because it tried to localize the problems and support Turkey by advising the Porte against going to war (Ahmad, 1966).

4.3.3 *The alliances*

The formation of the European Powers into the Triple Entente (Great Britain, France, and Russia) and the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy), as well as their competing interests in the Balkans and Near East, caused Europe to shudder in 1908-1909, fearing a general war (Beyens, 2015).

4.4 *The ascent of the Second Constitutional period*

Between 1789 and 1908, the 'Ottoman international system' disintegrated, necessitating substantial changes to the State (Alloul & Martykánová, 2021; Balcı & Kardaş, 2023). The French Revolution's modernist concepts impacted the Ottoman political scene in a plethora of ways, including the Greek War of Independence (Erdem, 2005; Firges, 2019; Moiras, 2025). Sultan Selim III (reign 1789-1807) initiated the Western modernity reform of the Ottoman Empire (Shaw, 1971). Socioeconomic modernization led to the rapid strengthening of the military and bureaucratic apparatus of the Empire (Karpát, 1972; Gábor, 2011; Bouquet, 2016; Gomori, 2023). On the night of July 23rd-24th, 1908, the government in Constantinople capitulated to the Young Turk Revolution (July 3rd-23rd, 1908) that challenged Sultan Abdulhamid II's absolutism (Hunt, 2015). The Committee of Union and Progress, the most effective and popular of the Young Turks' covert organizations, forced the Sultan to reinstate the Ottoman Constitution of 1876, convene a new session of parliament (on July 23rd, 1908), and usher in the Second Constitutional Era, a period marked by significant political instability (Ergil & Rhodes, 1974; Hanioglu, 2008). All non-Muslims and ethnic groups were granted civil equality and religious freedom in the Ottoman Empire thanks to the revolutionary political reforms implemented in the second half of 1908. A whirlwind of joy, bell ringing, and displays of brotherhood between Muslims and Christians followed. In the towns and cities of the Empire, crowds of people occupied the streets; armed bands in the Balkans and Armenian organizations in Anatolia descended the mountains to celebrate (Miller, 1966; Zürcher, 2019). Celebrations rocked the city of Salonika, the epicenter of the great revolutionary movement. The latter had originated in Salonika as a Masonic lodge of Italian allegiance, named Macedonia Risorta (Resurrected), in 1864 (Nankivell, 1939; Arslan & Ozen, 2005). Rather than being called *giaur* or *giaour* (*gawur/gavour*, meaning infidel or disloyal), the Greeks would now be called *Rum* (Romans, but not Yunnan, Ionians, or Greeks). The Greek communities throughout the Ottoman Empire founded theaters, libraries, music ensembles, political and cultural societies, newspapers, and periodicals (Halide Edib, 1930; Allen, 1969; Ergil, 1975). Therefore, it is most likely that Neophytos constructed Kerassunde's Modern Theatre, which was active in 1909, during that period (Fig. 5). He also founded the Kerassunde Greek Literature Club (*Rum Edebiyat Kulübü*) in 1908 (Sferopoulos, 2020).

The Young Turk Movement was greeted with enormous sympathy and delight by the Great Powers, except Germany, which had close ties with the Sultan (Quataert, 1979; Miller & Kagan, 1997; Psilos, 2000). The Young Turks advocated that only the Muslim populations embodied the true soul of the Ottoman nation (Gingeras, 2016). They considered the Turks as 'primus inter pares' (Doygun, 2022). Their goals included strengthening the State, defending Muslim rights, uniting Ottoman society, and redeeming the Empire, primarily Macedonia, from European control (Anagnostopoulou, 1998; Zürcher, 2019). Thus, in their quest for greater independence, they decided to support a more active British involvement since it had a weaker foothold in the Empire than Germany and France (Ahmad, 1966). Using the slogan 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Justice', the Young Turks won a substantial majority in the November and December 1908 elections, ensuring representation of all ethnic groups in the parliament despite the widespread electoral fraud that resulted in the election of far fewer Greek Parliament members than were proportionate to the population (Asikoglou, 2021).



Figure 5: The view of the Modern Kerassunde Theatre (compact arrow) and Neophytos' mansion (dotted arrow) from the intersection of Gazi and Sokakbaşı streets (left view from Google Maps). They were built with their courtyards next to each other. The entrance of the mansion was facing the theatre (right view) (Sferopoulos, 2020).

As a result, the Young Turk Movement led to a revival of Ottomanism, and Young Turks appeared as the ideological successors of the Young Ottomans (Ahmad, 1966). Before the Ottoman Empire's First Constitutional Era, the ideology of Ottomanism had emerged as a social and political response to the separatist movements. It established a single Ottoman citizenship and guaranteed complete legal equality for all the Empire's diverse subjects, irrespective of their linguistic, religious, racial, or ethnic background (Hanioğlu, 1995; Moroni, 2010). The introduction of Western concepts into Ottoman society following the establishment of newspapers in the 19th century significantly promoted 'Ottomanness' (Göçek, 1996; Jones, 1996).

Together with the offer to adopt a new faith in Ottomanism and the new constitutional privileges, the Ottoman Greeks celebrated and coexisted with the Turks as equal citizens living in a shared fatherland. Nonetheless, they remained neutral and refused to support any side in this Ottoman conflict. It was not until late June that the Greek Foreign Ministry realized the Young Turks' ability to implement their objectives. All consular authorities were instructed to remain loyal to the dominant authority while closely monitoring the Young Turks' activities

(Panayotopoulos, 1980a). The official relations between Greece and Turkey underwent a significant upswing with the exchange of official visits and the publication of Greek newspapers in Constantinople (Veremis, 1997). The Young Turks, who claimed to be revolutionists themselves and to be feeling the Macedonian rebels as brothers, succeeded in obtaining the surrender of all of them and offered them celebratory amnesty (Nankivell, 1939).

Joy gradually gave way to heated arguments over the ensuing months because Armenians, Greeks, and Turks all had different ideas about what liberty meant (Zürcher, 2019). Meanwhile, political and ideological lines divided the Young Turks. The Liberal Wing (Ottoman Freedom Party) under Sabahaddin Bey's leadership favored decentralization and granting autonomy to ethnic and religious minorities. Nonetheless, 'Unionists' favored Turkish supremacy in politics and central power (Lewis, 1968). The Greek consular officials' meddling in the election process enraged the Unionists. The latter strengthened the Committee's authoritarian and centralist faction (Μπούρα, 1983).

The events of October 5th, 1908, signaled the possibility of foreign intervention and were seen as precursors to World War I. These included the Bosnian or First Balkan Crisis, in which Austria-Hungary announced its intention to annex the two Slav provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Bulgarian declaration of independence from Turkish authority (Langer, 1956). In addition, the Cretans unilaterally proclaimed their union with Greece on October 17th, 1908 (Ion, 1910). The Young Turks perceived these events as aggression by European powers and treason by certain Ottoman populations. They felt that the first had to be opposed and the second suppressed (Ergil, 1975).

The Committee of Union and Progress's plans quickly enraged the non-Muslim subjects with the universal military service legislation of 1909 and the closing of many Christian schools to Ottomanize the non-Muslim population of the Empire. Events that hindered liberty and shattered feelings of fraternity included the Sultan's counter coup on March 31st, 1909, the temporary reconciliation between Bulgarians and Greeks in Macedonia in the fall of 1910, and the Ottoman-Italian War of 1911. These ultimately led to a unique European historical event where such high aspirations collapsed so swiftly (Marder, 2004).

5. Discussion

This study seeks to answer the following two questions:

5.1 *What are Neophytos' messages?*

There are two key messages in the first section of his article. The former addresses the Muslim people and the Ottoman State, stating that Russia is their only enemy because of its long-term expansionist plans to inherit the Byzantine Empire. Historical evidence supports his claims. The latter addresses the Greek authorities, stating that the Greek inhabitants of the Russian and Ottoman Empires face a grave threat from Pan-Slavism. Historical evidence supports his perspective on the racial struggle between Greeks and Slavs during the 19th century. He also recalls his personal experience of the Greeks' Russification on the northern coast of the Black Sea during the Berlin Treaty period. Aristote Neophytos and his sister Parthenopi (Fig. 6) had both obtained Russian citizenship.

It would be prudent to consider both of his key messages as introductory to his article's primary thesis, which is addressed in the second section and relates to Greece's approach to the Macedonian Question.



Figure 6: Parthenopi Neophytou, Pontus, late 19th century.

In the first section, Neophytos also highlights the differences between Slavs and non-Slav Christians of the Empire. He attempts to demonstrate that the interests of the non-Slav Christians, whether Greek or Armenian, were on par with those of the Muslim subjects during the Second Constitutional period. In addition, he emphasizes how detrimental the Russian imperialistic and Pan-Slavic policy was to the interests of the Ottoman Empire and its people, both Muslims and non-Slav Christians. This view might also serve as a warning to the Greek State, encouraging it to endorse these viewpoints by securing official or public acknowledgment of the intimate relationship between the Greek element's interests and the integrity of the Empire.

Debates on the necessary political orientation, whether eastward or westward, have existed since the founding of the Greek State. Russia's defeat by the Ottomans, Britain, France, and Sardinia in the Crimean War reinforced the initial claims that reforming the Ottoman State was the only option for the Greek race to survive and thrive. Thus, the primary goal of Hellenism turned to the cultural transformation of the Ottoman Empire into a new Hellenic one (Renieris, 2007). Neophytos supports this strategy.

In the second section, Neophytos criticizes other views, without naming them, published in the Athens press. To assess his opposition, we examined the literature on newspaper articles from the main Ottoman Greek press centers in Constantinople and Smyrna. These articles suggested the Ottoman press to avoid arguing with the Greek Kingdom's newspapers. They stressed that spreading rumors, combined with the nationalist fervor of the Athens press, only undermined the 'fraternal' and 'harmonic' cohabitation in the Empire. Thus, the existence of two distinct hubs for the Greek-Orthodox people in Constantinople and Athens is evident, proving the dualism of the Modern Greek identity. By highlighting their native Anatolian origin, the Ottoman Greeks envisioned and demonstrated themselves as an integral component of the Empire. In addition, the higher the level of imperial integration, the more the Ottoman Greek community acquired distinct characteristics from the Greeks of Greece. As a result, the construction of the Ottoman identity for the Greek Orthodox community differed from the 'Megali idea' irredentist project, which was declared a priority of the Greek policy (Fujinami, 2007; Exertzoglou, 2018; Gioftsios, 2018).

His allusions to the writers' ignorance of European politics and relations issues, as well as the non-assimilating Greek strategy throughout the ages, indicate two potential options. These views most likely referred to those favoring immediate military action or provoking unrest in Macedonia. However, other theories on how the Ottoman Empire would gradually transform into a new Byzantium, Eastern Federation, or Eastern Empire, with Greeks gradually gaining dominant political power, cannot be excluded.

Neophytos rejected the views presented in the Athens press as unrealistic and illogical in light of the existing unique circumstances in the Ottoman Empire and the international context. He is definite that no assimilating policies, potentially considering the Slav or even the Ottoman populations, could ever be considered by Hellenism. The Greek messages to the Europeans had long ago been that Hellenism and Pan-Slavism were mutually exclusive, with their shared Orthodox religion being purely incidental, that they had to decide whether they would support freedom through Greece or despotism through Russia and Bulgaria, and, finally, that Greece and Hellenism were the only powers to cooperate to promote civilization and freedom (Iliadis, 2019).

This study will only present a few proofs regarding the Bulgarian issue. Until 1840, the Bulgarians had no schools, so they attended the Greek ones. These schools educated the first generation of Bulgarian intellectuals without attempting to Hellenize them. 'Greek' denoted the well-educated and affluent person; 'Bulgarian' denoted the rude and illiterate by that time. The Greek hierarchs learned the Bulgarian language and used it in the churches for the Slavonic Orthodox Christian audience. The younger Bulgarian generations sought access to classical Greek and Byzantine literature through the Greek language (Sfetas, 2001). Bulgarians, like other populations in the Ottoman Empire, were attracted by the 'Greekness', referring to the prestige of education and knowledge in conjunction with wealth and power. Nationalism and patriotism entered the Bulgarian context thanks to educational relations with the Greeks (Daskalova, 2017). In the early 1860s, Greek and Bulgarian national animosities initially surfaced, competing to create 'national' churches and schools (Iliadis, 2019). Thus, language, apart from faith, became increasingly important in forming a political identity among the Ottoman Empire's citizens due to the advent of printing and the press (Samara, 2007). Eventually, the nationalist parties prevailed, and the intellectuals rising to prominence in the Bulgarian national movement adopted the Slavic Russian culture (Sfetas, 2001).

The literature also supports Neophytos' claims that Byzantine-Greek culture, which thrived in Asia Minor during the Middle Ages, was the most potent barrier to protecting the civilized world. Thanks to Hellenism's valiant resistance to the 'Asiatic waves of barbarism', the West acquired from Byzantine Hellenism the elements that have been the foundation of Western civilization (Dieterich, 1918).

The literature further stresses his allusion to the historical continuity of the Greek language. Before the War of Independence, language played a crucial role in creating the Greek national consciousness and identity from the disparate Rum millet peoples (Mackridge, 2009). The Second Revolutionary Constitution added the language to Orthodox Christianity as a primary requirement for Greek identity. The language then proved the primary element of Greek State nationalism (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2010). In the mid-19th century, the Greek language was the sole criterion used to determine the cohesion of Greek civilization through the ages. Greek historians, such as Konstantinos Papanigopoulos, incorporated the Greek language and culture into a three-thousand-year-old, unified, indivisible, and continuous history. These opinions substantially contradicted Jacob Philipp Fallmerayer's 1830 concerns that the Greek nation would be drawn into Pan-Slavism due to the annihilation and replacement of Greeks by Slavic tribes (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2002; Hionodis, 2020). Additionally, Philhellenism in Europe opened up enormous new prospects for political and scholarly research (Tolias, 2016).

On the other hand, views that the paramount aim of Hellenism was to transform the Ottoman Empire into a Hellenic one, occupying it culturally, had been articulated before the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate (Iliadis, 2019). These views returned after the Young Turk's Revolution. A covert group known as the Organization or Society of Constantinople promoted cooperation and communication among Ottoman Empire citizens. It occurred in 1908 with support from Greek diplomats. After the October elections, it was in constant contact with the 24 Greek parliamentarians of the Ottoman Empire. The aim of Hellenism, being the dominant force within a single Greek-Ottoman Empire, was articulated and demonstrated to be feasible for the first time. The military officer Athanasios Souliotis (using the nom de guerre Nikolaidis) and the diplomat Ion Dragoumis were proponents of an Eastern Federation with a Greek-Turkish core (Mazis & Stavrou, 2022). Both opposed the Bulgarian presence in Macedonia, having lived through the 1897 defeat and the 1903 bombings in Thessaloniki by the Bulgarian group 'Gemidji' (Sea-Wolves), which targeted the Ottoman Bank, the French steamship 'Guadalquivir' departing to Constantinople, and other sites (Veremis, 1997; Gounaris, 1997). The Organization had invested significantly in the partnership of Prince Sabahaddin and Ion Dragoumis, as they were the primary advocates of the ideal of the peaceful coexistence between Greeks and Turks (Tsitselikis, 2012; Karabicak, 2014; Kypraios, 2015; Valavanidou, 2015). It was just one utopia among many that resulted from the prevailing optimism (Panayotopoulos, 1980b).

His essay's primary thesis concerned the Greek strategy required to address the Macedonian Question. Two key sections refer to his recommended approach. The former proposes defending through a friendly policy the integrity of the Ottoman Empire against Russian pro-Bulgarian plans. The latter considers pursuing Greek national aspirations in Macedonia, Thrace, and Epirus in a safer moment.

Notably, these opinions aligned with the recent official Greek policy; the Greek government summoned all of the officers back from Macedonia by the end of July, claiming they had no authority to continue the Macedonian Struggle. In addition, the present Greek State policy of friendship with the Ottoman Empire aligned with the British policy, which favored the status quo in the Balkans for the time being. However, Bulgarian and Aromanian nationalists launched a series of attacks against Greek civilians in August, after the Greek partisans had evacuated Macedonia, under the frequently unconcerned gaze of the Young Turk's Committees (Dakin, 1993; Psilos, 2000). Another message to the Greek authorities was that the necessity for a Greek intervention in Macedonia could again arise soon. Thus, it would be prudent to consider that the policy of neutrality would be best associated with preparations, as they would equip the nation for future success if and when circumstances would be appropriate for military action.

In his concluding paragraph, he makes a final allusion to the catastrophic consequences of foreign meddling in the Empire. Although a general precaution, it presumably focuses on the Greek side. He contends that, having recently ushered in the crucial Second Constitutional period for the Ottoman State, any Greek intervention in Macedonian conflicts or even against nationalistic provocations was erroneous. It was conceivable that any Greek territorial gains in Macedonia could induce a harsh response from the Turkish authorities. It was also likely that the Great Powers would oblige Greek forces to immediate withdrawal, as they had previously asked Greece to recall its army after invading Thessaly in January 1878 (Kofos, 1985). However, his statement could also address a Russian intervention. A new Russo-Turkish war would be disastrous for Hellenism since a Russian victory would draw the Greeks into Pan-Slavism, while an Ottoman triumph would lead to a new Christian massacre.

Finally, he expresses his hope that the Muslim element of the Empire will comprehend and embrace his viewpoints. His effort focused on reversing the widespread belief in the Ottoman Empire that all Christians were disloyal and traitors, given the ethnic conflicts between Christian Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, or Aromanian guerrilla corps in Macedonia and the revolutionary actions of Armenian nationalists in Anatolia (Akmeşe, 2005). That might also interpret a message

to the Ottoman populace and State that the nationalistic atrocities committed against the Orthodox Greek civilians by the Bulgarian komitadji sparked the Greek intervention in Macedonia.

5.2 Why did he choose to intervene at that time?

Greece remained a passive Balkan minority throughout the Berlin Treaty period, which permitted the Great Powers, especially Britain, to dictate its policies. The country gained new confidence from its successful participation in the Macedonian Struggle. It influenced plans to annex Greek-speaking regions and broaden Greek influence in Ottoman Macedonia and Epirus. Furthermore, expectations for a favorable outcome of a Greek military intervention in Macedonia increased because of the turmoil that followed the revolutionary march of the 3rd Turkish Army Corps from Macedonia to Constantinople in July 1908 (Phillips, 2012).

Neophytos wrote this article on August 14th, three weeks after Sultan Abdulhamid II gave in to the Young Turks' threats that the army and peoples of Rumeli (European Turkey) would march towards the capital and depose him (Ergil, 1975). He realized that Greek territorial claims in Macedonia were currently unjustified due to substantial changes within the Ottoman context. The political environment of the Ottoman Empire before the Young Turk Revolution fostered a system of terrorism, corruption, and espionage that had long nourished revolutionary movements among its numerous ethnic groups. Now, however, there were optimistic expectations that this system would shift from an absolute bureaucratic autocracy like Russia, where the Emperor made all decisions, to a liberal constitutional monarchy with a national parliament akin to Britain, 'The mother of parliaments' (Ahmad, 1966; Marder, 2004).

Furthermore, no one could presume that any territorial gains achieved by Greece, if any, would ever be ratified by Britain, Germany, and their allies. It would be a horrible utopia to believe that Wilhelm II would ever consent to the concession of Macedonia to Greece. From the perspective of Great Britain, now the new Russian ally, it was also unlikely. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was the Ottomans' worst nightmare, as was previously indicated. This agreement could be even worse for Greek irredentism and hopes of northern expansion. Neophytos counsels against continuing the Greek armed liberation struggle in Macedonia. He considers maintaining good relations with the Ottomans as the only strategic move under the circumstances. He is definite that the official Greek policy was obliged to avoid provoking unrest and to support the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. It would be disastrous for Greek interests if Russia used the continuous unrest as an excuse to persuade Britain to hand Macedonia to the Bulgarian administration.

A failed Greek revolt in Macedonia would also be disastrous. Known as the 'Unfortunate War' or 'Black '97', the brief Greco-Turkish War of 1897 left lingering memories of the humiliating Greek defeat (Pikros, 1977). Furthermore, any suspected or actual nationalistic Greek activity in Macedonia could lead to a violent Ottoman response against the Greek communities in Asia Minor, Pontus, and Macedonia.

In conclusion, this study may shed some light on Neophytos' historical, legal, and political acumen. The relevant literature supports all of his assertions. The interests of the Greek element of the Ottoman Empire, the Macedonian Struggle, the Ottoman Constitution, the political environment of the Second Constitutional Monarchy, the ideology of Ottomanism, and the international context influenced his thoughts and attitudes. His opinions are cautious rather than impulsive. From the Greek perspective, he argues that protecting the national character of the Greek element of the Ottoman Empire, especially in Macedonia, should take precedence. He is definite that, for the time being, this is only achievable through the peaceful and harmonic coalition of the 'three main components' of the Empire: Turkish, Greek, and Armenian. He sees

Russia as the common enemy of the Ottoman State and its Muslim and non-Slavic Christian populations due to its expansive and Pan-Slavic ambitions. He recommends that irredentist activities in Macedonia by the Greek State and independent parties cease, with an emphasis on maintaining the Ottoman Empire's integrity. However, the nation should also be ready to consider annexing Macedonia in the future. He concludes that a policy of peaceful neutrality 'with preparations' would be the only strategic move beneficial for Greece and Hellenism, chosen only under the unique circumstances in the Ottoman Empire and the European context.

6. Conclusion

Neophytos was convinced in August 1908 that upholding the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was acceptable and necessary to defend the national identity of the Greek element against the expansive pan-Slavic Russian policy. The solution he sought, concerning the political and social issue of the subjects' cooperation, irrespective of their ethnicity or religion, was to revitalize the Ottoman Empire. He examined how they would all identify as Ottoman citizens to establish a powerful political state and maintain law and order. His approach was based on common sense, requiring compassion for all. He was confident that European norms were the best way to resolve such a dispute. He made it clear that the interests of the Greek subjects of the Empire and the defense of their Greek national identity should guide official Greek State decisions, especially in light of the recent critical circumstances that had led to the transformation of the Ottoman Empire into a liberal constitutional democracy. He believed that the interests of Hellenism and Greece did not currently support the dismemberment of Macedonia. The main contention of his article was that Greece should defend the Ottoman Empire's integrity as opposed to Russia's pro-Bulgarian stance. At the same time, it should be ready to annex Macedonia under more favorable circumstances.

Notes

(1) The author refers to Neophytos as Aristote rather than Aristotle by the author's name he cited in his articles.

(2) N. K. S. is an orthopaedic surgeon in the 2nd Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 'G. Gennimatas' Hospital, Thessaloniki.

(3) N. K. S. is a distant relative of Aristote G. Neophytos through his sister Parthenopi, her daughter Marika G. Kampouroglou, and her son Konstantinos N. Sfairopoulos, the author's father.

(4) N. K. S. is the author of the book entitled 'Ο Διπλός Ξεριζωμός από τον Πόντο και τη Ρωσία' published in 2020, in Greek.

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