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The war that changed the Greek world

Sunday, 9 October 1831, was much like any other one for the inhabitants of Greece's capital city of Nafplion. But events that day would change the course of the nascent country's future irrevocably. Ioannis Kapodistrias, independent Greece's first president, rose early in the morning and decided to attend Mass at the church of Agios Spiridonos, in spite of his servants' and bodyguards' admonition that he should remain home. After he passed the mosque across the street from the church and turned to enter Agios Spiridonos, he encountered a small group of people waiting to welcome him. Konstantinos and Yiorgios Mavromichalis, the brother and son of Petrobey Mavromichalis, one of the most prominent leaders of the Greek rebellion, stepped forward as if to greet him. Suddenly Konstantinos drew his pistol and fired; the bullet missed its mark and struck the church wall, where the hole it made is still visible today. Leaping forward, yataghan in hand, he stabbed the president in the stomach just as his nephew put a bullet into the president's head (Fig. 3.1). Seconds later one of Kapodistrias's bodyguards shot and wounded Konstantinos. The enraged mob fell upon him and beat him to death. His lifeless body was dragged to Sintagma Square where it was strung up and defiled, until some men took it down and threw it into the sea. Yiorgios Mavromichalis eluded capture and hid in the house of the French resident, Baron Rouen, who promptly turned him in. His trial by court martial was brief and the verdict never in doubt. On 22 October, unrepentant, he was executed for his crime.

Kapodistrias's assassination aptly captures many of the aspects of the seminal event discussed in this chapter, that being the Balkan-wide insurrection that began in 1821 and resulted in the creation of the first independent Greek state in 1828. First, like many of those who would play prominent roles in the rebellion, he came from the diaspora. A nobleman from the island of Corfu, he was an Ionian Greek who had spent most of his adult life either in Russia or



Figure 3.1 The assassination of Ioannis Kapodistrias © Kerkyra Municipal Library.

elsewhere in Western Europe. Indeed, when he arrived in the country as its first president, it was the first time he had ever been in continental Greece. Outsiders, like him, were critical to the revolution. His background captures another essential element of the War of Independence: it was a European, perhaps even a global event. Second, his death is representative of another prominent aspect of the Greek rebellion: that it was a conflict beset from the onset by internecine fighting amongst the Greek leadership. Kapodistrias was only another in the long list of victims of Greek civil discord, and he would not be the last. Finally, his Russian background captures another critical aspect of the rebellion, and that was that the war entangled the European Great Powers in the affairs of Southeastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire. By so doing, it continued and greatly deepened an engagement that would only end with World War I.

The road to revolution

The significance of the Greek War of Independence transcends the bounds of Greece and Greek history.¹ It not only changed the fundamental fabric of the Greek world, but its impact was felt from Russia to Latin America. First and foremost, of course, the war led to the

creation for the first time in history of an independent Greek nation-state. Next, it was the first successful secessionist uprising by a subject population against an imperial power since the American Revolution of 1776. It provided a model for later nationalist struggles elsewhere in Europe and in the Americas. The conflict was the first real test of the conservative Concert of Europe that emerged out of the Great Power Congress of Vienna in 1816. Finally, the Greek War of Independence had a profound impact on the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, arguably it was the most important event in the history of the empire since the reign of Suleiman the Lawgiver. At first, because the struggle quickly took on a pointedly religious dimension – Christians versus Muslims – the war strengthened the position of the Islamic establishment. However, in dealing with the rebellion, Mahmud II and his supporters had to initiate radical reforms, such as the abolition of the Janissaries, which changed the fundamental fabric of the empire. The era of Ottoman reform really begins with the Greek War of Independence. Because of it, ‘the Ottoman Empire was ready as it never had been to accept modernity together with its nation-state building tools’ (Erdem 2005: 67). The Ottoman move towards modernity had a profound impact on its people, including the huge Greek population that remained in the empire even after the creation of the independent Greek state. The Greek War of Independence, then, was an event of transcendent importance.

The question we need to ask now is why did this secessionist insurrection begin in 1821 and why did it take on the eventual form that it did? Why was it successful? In order for a revolution to take place, three critical factors have to be in place. First, there have to be ideas that challenge the status quo and that provide an alternative vision to current realities. As we have seen, the Enlightenment had done just this. It provided a body of ideas about freedom, justice, equality before the law, and fundamental civil liberties that resonated amongst many subjects of the Ottoman Empire, both Christian and Muslim. Second, there has to be a leadership cadre that can disseminate these ideas to the wider population and that can mobilise mass support to initiate change. Third, there has to be mass discontent with the current situation. We can call these ‘structural factors’ and all of them have to be in place for a successful revolution to occur. As we will see in this chapter, all three of them developed in Ottoman Europe during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. But we still need to explain why the rebellion began in 1821.

And to do this we need to examine specific events that occurred during the 1810s that resulted in the outbreak of revolution in the spring of that year. The first step on the road to revolution took place, not in Greece, but in Serbia.

Serbian revolt – national or local?

One of the key developments in the move toward nationalist revolutions and the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire in Europe were the rebellions in Serbia between 1805 and 1815 (Malešević 2012). Serbs had served in an Austrian irregular unit called the Frieccorps during the 1790s war. Since Serbia was now the frontier between the empire and Austria, and since Serbs were now subjects on both sides of the border, Selim III found it expedient to accede to the calls from Serbian leaders for certain reforms. Among the privileges accorded to the Serbs was the right to collect their own taxes and to bear arms and form militias. Also the Porte granted them certain land rights and protections from abusive officials. Lastly, the balance of power at the local level was shifted through the formation of local Christian councils that dealt with internal matters and that liaised with the Porte's officials. Thus Serbians obtained greater local autonomy and influence in government. The problem was that the central authorities in Istanbul could issue proclamations and make promises, but because of decentralisation they were frequently unable to enforce them fully. The key problem in the Paşalık of Serbia was the Janissaries. Here, as elsewhere, they had gone rogue. As in the Morea, they were operating like a Mafia-style organisation and racket, providing 'protection' at a price – usually of course it was protection from them. They held entire villages hostage and even took over entire estates. Both Christian knezes (the Serbian term for kocabaşis) and Ottoman officials saw them as a grave menace to peace and security.

The Janissaries had fled when the city fell to the Austrians in the previous war. When the city was reclaimed as part of the Treaty of Jassy, Selim ordered that the Janissaries not be allowed back. But they had a powerful ally closer to the scene whom they called on for support. Osman Paşvanoğlu, Ayan and Paşa of Vidin, saw an opportunity to increase his power and influence beyond the boundaries of his own province by supporting the Janissaries in their bid to return to Belgrade. Together early in 1797 they struck. The central government appointed Hadji Mustapha Paşa as Valisi of Belgrade

because of his background as an Orthodox convert to Islam, and because of his willingness to work with the Serb knezes to implement the new reforms. As one of his reforms, Hadji Mustapha Paşa ordered all Serb men to arm themselves with a long musket, two pistols and a yataghan or to incur a fine and suffer a beating. He needed armed men, even if they were Christian (Zens 2004: 160). Together, this new Serb militia and the Ottoman garrison repulsed the Janissary attack on the city and indeed were driving them back to Vidin when outside factors intervened.

In 1798, as we discussed in the last chapter, Napoleon invaded the Ottoman Empire. Faced with the might of the French army, the empire had to mobilise a huge force. This had two important implications for Serbia. First, the Porte had to shift forces from the Danubian frontier, along which there was no threat because Austria was also at war with France, and this meant depleting the garrison of Belgrade. Second, Selim needed Paşvanoğlu's help. The master of Vidin controlled supplies and men that Selim needed for the war in Egypt. Part of the price of Osman's help was the restoration of the Janissaries. After Hadji Mustapha was assassinated, they took control of the city and by 1802 they were threatening the countryside as well. Serbian volunteers began to rally around a wealthy pig merchant from Shumadija, Karageorge Petrovich.

By 1804, Karageorge had created a militia of close to 30,000 armed men. Sensing that their position was becoming more precarious, the Janissary leadership decided on a pre-emptive strike. They would decapitate the Serbian forces by assassinating the leadership. In a coordinated attack numerous knezes were slaughtered, precipitating a crisis that demanded Istanbul's immediate attention. An imperial firman ordered the Ottoman governor to cooperate with Christian Serbs and a fatwa from Şeyhülislam made it acceptable for Ottoman forces to wage war and confiscate the property of the Janissaries, fellow Muslims.² All went well and within a relatively short span of time, they defeated the Janissaries.

With their common enemy vanquished, divisions developed between the Serbian leadership and Ottoman authorities. The Serbs presented the Porte with a proposal to grant them greater local autonomy. As the negotiations foundered, the Serbs looked north for an ally. Russia, however, was allied with the Ottomans and did not want to jeopardise that alliance over Serbia. Open conflict erupted between Ottoman forces and the Serb militia. While successful initially against the forces of numerous Rumelian ayan, the Serb

rebellion was eventually suppressed. A number of developments accounted for this failure. First, the war between the two empires that started in 1806 meant that even though Russia supported the Serbs in spirit, they could do little more. Then, Paşvanoğlu died in 1807 and the Ottomans reasserted control of Vidin and its resources. Nonetheless, limited Serbian home rule was included in the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812. Serbs were to enjoy an autonomous status, much like the Aegean islanders; they could collect their own taxes and pay tribute to the Porte; and the empire was to deploy only a limited number of troops in Belgrade and elsewhere. Neither side had any intention of implementing this clause and when Napoleon invaded Russia, all bets were off. Russia's preoccupation with the French left the Ottomans with a free hand and they crushed the Serbian revolt. By 1813, then, the province had been restored to Ottoman control.

A new leader of the Serb cause emerged at this time: Miloš Obrenović. His rivalry with Karageorge made him an acceptable choice as leader of the Serbs. Ottoman re-occupation had not gone well. Many of the newly recruited levend troops from western Rumelia and Albania committed atrocities and looting. Ottoman authorities tried to mediate but the situation spun out of control. In April 1815 the insurrection began anew. Obrenović was very much the diplomat, assuring the Porte that this was not a revolution against the sultan but rather a protest against governmental abuses. He also went on a diplomatic mission to seek assistance from the Great Powers, high-level representatives of which were meeting in Vienna. He met frequently with Ioannis Kapdistrias, one of Russia's delegation and an Ionian Greek, and on two occasions he even had an audience with the Austrian emperor Francis. The affairs of the Ottoman Empire and the Serbian situation were discussed at Vienna but none of the powers, including Russia, was prepared to take action. Nonetheless, the message emanating from Vienna was clear: that the balance of power in Europe had to be maintained, that the French Revolution's legacy had to be suppressed, and that peace and stability were to be the order of the day. Serbs would get no help but the Ottomans had to tread lightly in dealing with them. In the autumn of 1815 they compromised. The Paşalık of Belgrade would become a semi-autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire and organised largely along the lines set out in Article 8 of the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest (Anti 2007).

The Serbian insurrection and its settlement had important ramifications for future developments in Ottoman Europe (Gounaris

2007). First, they led to the establishment of yet another semi-autonomous territory in the empire, in which Christians largely ruled themselves. It may not have been large in size but it was significant because it showed others that home rule was possible and that the partitioning of the empire was feasible. Second, the new Serbian principality was strategically located at the crossroads of the Balkans and Europe: at its centre was Belgrade, the gateway to Europe on the Danube; it bordered Austria and the Danubian Principalities, and it was relatively close to Russia. In short, Serbia further entangled the Great Powers in Ottoman Balkan affairs. Third, there was now a well-armed and battle-hardened Christian militia in the region that could potentially provide the vanguard for a larger insurrection. And lastly, it stood as an example. Other groups asked themselves, if the Serbs could gain self-rule, why not us? In regard to this last point, as important as Serbian semi-autonomy was as a beacon of hope, it paled in comparison to what happened at approximately the same time on a group of islands off of the coast of Greece. The creation of the independent United States of the Ionian Islands had far-reaching consequences for Greeks everywhere.

The Ionian factor

According to popular legend, when plotting his Mediterranean campaign Napoleon observed that capturing the Ionian Islands would make him a master of the Mediterranean.³ After his whirlwind defeat of the Austrian forces in northern Italy, Napoleon's France obtained the islands with the Treaty of Leoben on 18 April 1797. Shortly thereafter, French forces under the leadership of General Antoine Gentili seized the islands, and the Treaty of Campo Formio, which signalled the demise of the Serenissima Republic of Venice, then formalised that occupation. The French Revolution came to the islands along with the Gallic army. Liberated Ionians planted trees of liberty and adopted other symbols of the French Revolution. The aristocracy was abolished and the Golden Book in which their names had been inscribed was burnt. The French installed a popular, liberal and democratic government based on the French revolutionary constitution of 1795. Factional squabbles between competing aristocratic parties jockeying for power resulted in intrigue and violence. Sectional fighting plagued the islanders for the next twenty years, as they were passed back and forth between the Great Powers. The French held the islands until 1799 when a joint Ottoman-Russian

expeditionary force drove them out. The arrangement agreed to by Russia and the Porte was that the islands were to be an independent state paying tribute to the Ottoman Empire and under Russian military protection. Thus, an independent Greek state appeared for the first time in history: the Septinsular Republic.

The new state was a democracy dominated by the aristocracy. As an independent state, the republic conducted its own foreign policy, largely shaped by a brilliant young Ionian aristocrat named Ioannis Kapodistrias, raised an army that Russia trained, and developed a flourishing commercial economy. Though independent, it was also very much under Russian influence. When the short-lived alliance between the Ottomans and the Russians collapsed and war erupted (in 1806), the Septinsular Republic fell completely under Russian control until the Treaty of Tilsit ceded the islands back to Bonaparte in 1807. The islands' strategic importance led the British to launch a military expedition against the French forces on the islands in 1809. There had previously been fighting between pro-British Ionians and the French, but the landing of British forces elevated the conflict to a new and higher level. French resistance on all of the islands except for Kerkira proved limited. By October 1809, Zakynthos had fallen; within a matter of three months, the others followed suit. Only the garrison on Kerkira stood firm, and did so until shortly after Napoleon's abdication in 1814. At this point, Britain forces occupied all of the islands (Pagratis 2011; 2012).

The question of what to do with the islands was debated by the Great Powers at the Congress of Vienna. Because of their strategic location, each of the major powers was reticent about letting any one of the others annex them completely. The tempestuous events that had engulfed the islands after the French takeover showed that the rambunctious Greeks could not be accorded home rule. After much deliberation, on 5 November 1815 a solution was arrived at: the islands were to be granted independence within the framework of Great Power-guaranteed protection. The islands were, thus, united into a single independent state, called the United States of the Ionian Islands. Basing their argument primarily on the grounds that their forces had liberated the islands and that they still had troops on the ground, Great Britain sought and obtained an agreement that placed the islands under the protection of the British crown. How heavy or light Britain's protective hand would be was an issue left open. All that the treaty stipulated was that a lord high commissioner would be appointed by the king to coordinate Anglo-Greek affairs.

Soon after the establishment of the protectorate, a constitution was promulgated that set up the system of self-rule. Modelled on the charter of the Septinsular Republic, the islands had a limited democracy with enfranchisement based on age and wealth, as was access to political institutions such as the senate. Much power, however, was reserved for the British. The Lord High Commissioner commanded the British military forces that garrisoned the islands for their protection, had veto power over the Ionian Senate, appointed the members of Executive Council of State, and he and his representative wielded control over the islands' mercantile, commercial and foreign affairs. Ionians were citizens of the United States of the Ionian Islands, but as subjects of the British crown they also enjoyed a special status internationally. Most important, however, was the fact that for the second time in just over a decade, the Ionian Islands were an independent Greek state (Gallant 2001).

Ionian independence was a critically important event at the time. At the most basic level it showed that obtaining independence was possible. Greeks on the mainland looked across the narrow straits and saw a self-governing Hellenic state. Just as importantly perhaps, they now understood that the Great Powers were not averse to further partitioning of the Ottoman Empire and to establishing new countries out of its ruins. Ionian independence had practical as well as symbolic significance. By the late 1810s Ionian islanders had created a diaspora that stretched across Europe and the Mediterranean. Given that they had been part of Venice's empire for hundreds of years, not surprisingly there were close connections between them and Italy and the Western Mediterranean. During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Ionian diaspora expanded into Russia, both as immigrants and as temporary workers involved in maritime commerce. In short, Ionians were everywhere.

Just as impressive as the diaspora's areal extent was the depth to which Ionians had integrated into their adopted homelands. Ionians like Destunis and Kapodistrias walked the corridors of power in St Petersburg, for example, as diplomats and politicians. The government of the Septinsular Republic created a dense network of consular offices across the Mediterranean and especially in the Ottoman Empire; when the republic fell, most of those men stayed on in their posts but now as representatives of the Russian Empire. Ionian islanders, therefore, were in a key position to help shape developments in the area. In sum, the islands stood as a symbolic beacon of the possibility of Greek independence. Ionians, many of whom were

ardent supporters of that cause, were in positions where they could help to make that happen, and when the rebellion broke out, Ionians like Vlad (Ioannis) Vlassopoulos, the Russian consul in Patras, were in the revolutionary vanguard. Lastly, the islands themselves acted as a conduit through which lawyers, guns and money could pass in support of the movements for Greek independence.

Secret societies

There could be no Greek insurrection without an organisation to lead it, and one emerged in the 1810s. The European 'age of revolution' was also the era of secret societies (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 2010). Revolution is impossible without leadership and since revolt is treasonous, men dedicated to the cause had to operate in secret. All across Europe such organisations appeared. In Italy, there was the Carbonari and in Russia, the Decembrists, for example. Liberal movements to resist the conservative counter-revolution's attempt to restore the *ancien régime* in the aftermath of the French Revolution and Napoleon flourished everywhere. Diaspora Greeks were members of some of them, as well as forming their own national liberation groups. And there were many of these, though most never amounted to much. Two, however, did: the Philomouso Etaireia and the Philiki Etaireia.

The Philomouso Etaireia (Society of the Friends of the Muses) was a philanthropic and educational organisation established in Vienna in 1814. The organisation soon founded branches in almost every major European city, but especially important were those in Russia. The society gathered funds to build schools and other educational and cultural establishments in Ottoman Greece and to support Greek students studying at European universities. In this regard, it resembled similar societies in places like Odessa and Taganrog. What was special about the Friends of the Muses in Russia was that it enjoyed the support of many of the most powerful and wealthy Greeks in the empire. Kapodistrias, Strudza and Destunis, for example, all actively worked on the society's behalf. While not an explicitly political organisation, the Society had the goal of fostering Greek liberation through education. They believed that by elevating the moral character of the Greek population through the study of Classical texts and ecclesiastical writings, Greece would eventually be liberated with Russian assistance. Liberation for them was a long-term goal that would come gradually and without violent revolution

(Prousis 1994: 14–18; Panagiotopoulos 2003: 11–12; Panagiotopoulos 2011: 104–5).

The Philiki Etaireia, or 'Friendly Society', became the most important Greek revolutionary organisation and, while it shared the Society of the Muses' goal of Greek independence, it differed completely in regard to means and methods. Its goal was to foment a violent revolution against the Ottoman Empire. Emmanouil Xanthos, Nicholaos Skoufas and Athanasios Tsakalov, three merchants from different regions of the Ottoman Empire, founded the Philiki Etaireia in 1814 in Odessa. Xanthos was initially the driving force behind the organisation. Though based in Odessa, because of his olive oil business he travelled widely in the Balkans. One of his trips took him to the island of Lefkada, one of the Ionian islands. The ideas of the French Revolution had taken root there during the period of French rule. Not only did Xanthos become stirred by the notions of liberty and freedom while staying on the island, but he was also introduced to the murky world of secret societies when he was enrolled into the island's Free Masons' lodge. Like many members of the diaspora communities, Xanthos believed that liberation for the Greeks would be achieved through the actions of the major Western European powers. The Concert of Europe crafted by Klemens von Metternich at the Congress of Vienna dashed any such hopes. The conservative crowned heads of Europe combined to maintain the status quo, and that policy extended even to relations with the Ottoman Empire. The Philiki Etaireia was established when it became clear that if freedom was to be attained, the Greeks and the other Christians in the Balkans would have to do it themselves.

If the Friendly Society was to have any chance of success it would have to appeal to a wide spectrum of Balkan Christians (Greeks, Serbs, Romanians, Bulgarians and Albanians) and would have to recruit as members as many prominent men as possible, and it would have to do so in secret. Accordingly, it modelled itself on similar secret societies that some of its members were familiar with. There was a central committee of twelve men, the Apostles, and one of their most important tasks was to recruit in their assigned region as many wealthy and powerful men as possible. After this move, the organisation's membership expanded rapidly both in size and in geographical scope. Influential men both inside and outside of the Ottoman Empire joined.

Organisationally, the membership was divided hierarchically into

four civil ranks and two military ranks. The ranks were based on wealth and responsibilities. In order to maintain secrecy, only members from the highest ranks knew the identities of members from outside of their immediate cell. This compartmentalisation meant that, unlike other such groups, the Philiki Etaireia was able both to attract a substantial membership and to elude detection and suppression. The organisation brought together men from many levels of society – merchants, professionals, kocabaşis, clergymen, armatole and bandit captains, and many prominent Phanariots, like the Greek-Russian military officer Alexander Ipsilantis, the society's supreme leader, and hospodar Michailis Soutzos, joined. Very large numbers of Greeks in the Russian consular service became ardent members. Ionian islanders were especially active and because of the Ionian diaspora, they were particularly successful in getting recruits. The society, however, never really became a mass movement in the truest sense of the term; according to the surviving membership lists very few peasants, shepherds or workers were members.

The Philiki Etaireia was, nonetheless, the largest secret society and it provided an organisational base for the dissemination of revolutionary ideas and for coordinated action. But there was a very significant downside to its large size. Along with size came diversity of aims, ambitions and viewpoints. Ideologically, except for the goal of liberation from Ottoman rule, little else connected the membership. Some prominent leaders envisioned a new Byzantine Empire, based on a Greek theocratic monarchy; others fervently wanted to create a multi-ethnic secular republic founded on the principles of the French Revolution and based on the visions that Rigas had delineated. These fissures would only emerge after the actual onset of hostilities. Initially at least, because of its size and the number of important leaders whom it counted as members, the Philiki Etaireia had emerged as a Balkan-wide revolutionary organisation. By 1820, all of the pieces were in place for a Christian uprising in the Balkans. Only a spark was required to set ablaze the conflagration of war.

Tepedelenli Ali Paşa

The precipitating factor in the Greek rebellion was the civil war between Tepedelenli Ali Paşa, Yanya Valisis, against his master, Sultan Mahmud II. In a cultural landscape littered with larger-than-life characters, Tepedelenli Ali Paşa stands out. An enormous man with enormous appetites, the so-called 'Lion' or 'Diamond' of

Ioannina, left a lasting imprint on the history of Greece and the Balkans. Finding the historical Ali is not easy. Westerners, travellers and historians alike, have projected onto him their darkest Orientalist fantasies, portraying him as the quintessential Oriental despot (Fleming 1999). In Greek historiography he is portrayed as a brutal and merciless ogre who exploited and debased his Christian subjects. He was the murderer of innocent Greek men and the defiler of their helpless women. Cruel, tyrannical and bloodthirsty, Ali was truly a monster. Or was he? Both the Greek and the Western images of Ali are fantastic and inaccurate. Placed in their proper historical context, an examination of the voluminous material that survives from his archives along with Ottoman and Russian sources shows that in most respects Ali was not especially different from any other Balkan ayan. What made him special was that he was more successful at Ottoman power politics than most of his contemporaries.

Two things contributed heavily to his success and his longevity. First was his flexibility and adaptability. While he himself, of course, was a Muslim, representing a Muslim state, Ali surrounded himself with qualified and competent men regardless of their faith. Most of his closest advisors were Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians and his preferred language, even in his private life, was Greek. His top military commanders were men like the Muslim Omar Vryonis from Berat and the Greek Odysseus Androutsos. He rewarded and promoted men based on their performance, not their religion, and he punished or crushed anyone in his way equally. Second, he never sought to translate his provincial power into a position at court and so he never got caught up in the political intrigues that swirled through the corridors of power in Istanbul. Ministerial careers at court tended to be brief and to end badly for the office holder. Instead, Ali was content to build his own central-western Balkan domain within the empire. He organised and ran his province well; under him Epiros and Ioannina flourished economically and culturally. His province had the best road network in the Balkans, in spite of it being one of the most mountainous. He monopolised the tax farm for the province, making sure to send Istanbul its cut while retaining a lion's share for himself. He thus amassed an enormous personal fortune, including over 1,000 *çiftlik*s (private estates), 250,000 flocks, and a cash reserve that the Porte estimated at 500,000,000 piasters (US\$ 23,450,000,000) at the time of his death.⁴

Militarily, he never failed to provide levend troops when the empire went to war or to impose the war requisition taxes. In

exchange for this support and because of the fact that he could muster at least 40,000 well-trained men, Selim III and then Mahmud II largely turned a blind eye as he expanded his power base across the Balkans. Those ayan or kocabaşis who would not accept his terms of alliance (submission) were crushed; those that did were rewarded. He used his wealth and influence to get his sons appointed as beys and even as valisi of the Morea. His arrogance and his power grew apace. During the Napoleonic Wars, he conducted unilateral foreign policy that on more than one occasion clashed with Istanbul's wishes. By the mid-1810s, petitioners from all faiths were appealing to Ali and not to the sultan to resolve their grievances.⁵ So powerful had he become that he threatened the role of the emperor as the ultimate dispenser of eydalet (justice), a role at the heart of Ottoman imperial legitimacy. By 1820, Mahmud II and his close advisor, Mehmet Sayyid Halet Efendi, had managed to curb the power or to eliminate Balkan ayan who resisted the centre's attempt to impose its will, that is, to reverse decentralisation. It was now Ali's turn.

Using as a pretext a personal feud that had developed between Ali and Ismail Paşa, bey of Serres, Mahmud ordered Ali to appear before the Divan in Istanbul to give an account of his actions. He had until 1 June 1820 to comply with this directive. Ali knew it was a meeting from which he would not return. He thus refused to obey a direct order from his sovereign and so was declared an outlaw. Ismail Paşa was given authority to muster an army, levy a war tax and then to subdue the Lion of Ioannina. He was the wrong man for the job, having had negligible experience leading men in battle and commanding little respect from the other Balkan ayan. So, he made scant progress against Ali.

In the winter of 1820–1, he was relieved of his command and Hurşid Paşa, the Valisi of the Morea, was promoted to the rank of Serasker (commander-in-chief) of Rumeli, given a war-chest of one million piasters (US\$ 20,000,000), and the authority to levy levend troops from no less than thirteen paşas. Hurşid was a formidable opponent. He had commanded the army that ended the Serbian rebellion, and before that he had performed outstandingly during the 1806–12 war with Russia. Also, having previously been grand vizier (1812–15), he knew how things worked in Istanbul and had valuable allies (and opponents) at court. Ayan formerly attached to Ali switched sides; military commanders like Omar Vryonis and Androutsos, along with their men, were persuaded by Hurşid's largess to join his army. Hurşid Paşa's elevation to commander of

the army sent to defeat Ali had three important consequences. First, it assured the outcome: Ali would fall within a year. Second, the imposition of the war requisition tax on an already destitute and desperate peasantry elevated the level of mass discontent in the region to a new high. Paying the war tax was for many farmers and shepherds a life or death issue. Third, the mobilisation of so many warriors depleted the garrison forces along the Danubian frontier and in the Morea. Ali's war had presented the Philiki Etaireia with an opportunity. The time for planning was over; now was the time for action.

Ali Paşa had known of the existence of the Philiki Etaireia for some time. Indeed, some of his key advisors were high-ranking members of it. Recognising the need to forge alliances against the coming storm, Ali negotiated pacts with warrior groups like the Souliotes and various Albanian bandit gangs, and he made overtures to the leadership of the Etaireia. Each side saw an opportunity to achieve its objectives by cooperating with the other. There was also deep mutual distrust. The winter of 1820–1 was a busy time. Hurşid Paşa was gathering arms and mobilising his forces. Ali was bracing for the onslaught, promising much to his erstwhile allies, hoping thereby to retain their loyalty. The leadership of the Etaireia was endeavouring as best it could to coordinate the activities of agents and Apostles scattered across all of Southeastern Europe in an attempt to initiate a Balkan-wide uprising. Everything came together in the spring of 1821 for the Millet-i Rom to rise as one and to topple the Osmanli dynasty that had 'oppressed' it for 400 years.

1821: So it begins

From the start, the insurrectionary civil war that became the Greek War of Independence was a complicated and often messy affair. Later nationalist historiographies portray it as a far more coherent and coordinated event than it really was. In the spring of 1820, Alexander Ipsilantis became the supreme commander of the Philiki Etaireia. His selection signified two things; first, as he was a prominent member of the Russian military establishment with connections to the monarchy, it suggested that Russia would support the cause. Second, as a battle-hardened commander, it indicated that a military initiative might be in the offing (for a good, recent synopsis of Ipsilantis's career, see Stites 2014: 186–239). By this time, the society had acquired a large and diverse membership, which had

its advantages and disadvantages. Of course, having more members, and especially wealthy and powerful ones, was a plus; but on the other hand, more leaders meant a greater diversity of aims and aspirations. Though the various leaders were in contact with one another, coordination was difficult because of poor communication, fear of capture, mutual distrust and conflicting goals. Nonetheless, over the course of 1820, a plan was taking shape.

Tepedelenli Ali Paşa's revolt changed everything. An Ottoman civil war would now be raging in the heart of the Balkans. The empire had to mobilise resources from officials and ayan throughout the Balkans in order to confront the renegade paşa, and this had to be done at time when Mahmud II and his grand vizier Halet Efendi had to worry about the loyalty of the Janissaries in Istanbul and the growing threat of war with the Shi'ite Qajar dynasty of Persia. By the end of summer, Ali had repulsed the initial attacks against him and he would, therefore, live to fight another day. Soon winter arrived and closed the Pindus mountain passes, thus giving him time to prepare his next year's campaign. This development along with the elevation of Hurşid Paşa to the position of commander-in-chief presented the Etaireia with a golden opportunity. At a meeting in the Bessarabian town of Ismail in November they formed their plan. Since Hurşid Paşa would undoubtedly bring the best of his troops from the Morea to fight Ali Paşa, it would be the ideal place to launch the insurrection. So, they decided that Ipsilantis and a small group of advisors would make their way to Trieste and from there to the Peloponnesos, where they would take up leadership of the revolt. But their plans soon changed.

In December, Alexander Soutzos, Hospodar of Wallachia, became deathly ill. Scion of a very prominent Phanariot family, he had occupied key positions in the Ottoman government for over twenty years. For many of those he was Hospodar of either Moldavia or Wallachia. He knew of the Etaireia and was not a supporter. His colleague across the border in Moldavia, Michalis Soutzos was, and he had pledged his personal forces to the Etaireists. With Moldavia, the Ottoman province bordering Russia, secure and with a power vacuum forming in Wallachia, the Danubian Principalities now seemed a better choice of where to raise the banner of revolt. Their decision was made easier due to the fact that there was already present in the Principalities armed units ready to fight.

One force, under the command of Tudor (Theodore) Vladimirescu, was especially important. He was a military captain who had

commanded a Romanian irregular force on behalf of the Russians during the 1806–12 war. Not only was he a battle-hardened commander, but he was also a Russian subject and a member of the *Etaireia*. A Greek warlord operating in southern Moldavia, Yiorgakis Olimbios, also had a substantial force under his command and he committed it to the cause. Finally, the *Etaireist* leadership remained firmly convinced that Milos Oberenoviç would bring Serbia and its massive militia into the fray. So, they decided to jump on the coat-tails of Ali's war. Assuming that the bulk of the Ottoman forces would be arrayed against Ioannina in the next campaigning season, they would foment rebellions by Christians in three regions – first, in the Danubian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, then in the Peloponnesos and finally in Istanbul.

An uprising in the Peloponnesos was crucial. Its remoteness from the centre of the empire, the very high ratio of Christian to Muslims inhabitants, the number of powerful Greek *kocabaşis* resident there, and the considerable number of armed bands elevated the chances of the rebellion there being successful. It could then provide the rump of a Greek-Christian state. Riots in the streets of Constantinople would bring the rebellion right to the sultan's doorstep and this could perhaps trigger his overthrow – similar unrest had certainly led to the demise of more than one of his ancestors. In any case, the streets of the city would run red with blood, forcing the Orthodox patriarch to support the movement and, perhaps most importantly of all, compelling Russia to enter the fray on their behalf. The northern front, then, was the key.

The war in the north

On 31 January 1821, Alexander Soutzos died and his death triggered insurrection. Vladimirescu immediately issued a proclamation calling on the people of Wallachia to take up arms and join his rebellion. But against whom? Not the sultan. Tudor made it crystal clear in his proclamation, and he reinforced it in a letter that he sent to the Porte, that his revolt was not against the Osmanli dynasty or Islam. Instead he was calling on Wallachians to overthrow the oppressive regimes of the Greek Phanariots and the Romanian Boyars. The avaricious hospodars and their dependents had grown rich fleecing the province, while the land-owning boyars were bleeding the peasants dry. There has been much debate over what exactly Tudor's real intentions were. As a member of the *Philiki Etaireia*, he should have been calling

for insurrection in the name of independence and freedom from the Ottoman *ancien régime* and not for the overthrow of the Phanariots, many of whom were fellow Etaireists. Was he cynically using the Etaireia as a springboard to catapult himself into power as prince of Romania after driving out the Romanian and Greek ruling class? Or was his proclamation a pretext, a way to get Romanian peasants, who would not otherwise do so, to join the fight for Greek-led independence (Tappe 1973: 139–40; Ilicak 2009: 327–90)? What is clear is that with his declaration open hostilities in Wallachia commenced. Rebellion in Moldavia would soon follow.

The early morning fog on the Pruth River was pierced by a ferryboat crossing from the Russian to the Ottoman side. It was 6 March 1821 and Alexander Ipsilantis, along with twenty of his closest advisors, was invading the Ottoman Empire. Resplendent in his general's uniform, the one-armed leader of the Philiki Etaireia disembarked from the ferry and set off for the Moldavian capital of Jassy. Upon arrival he met with hospodar Michailis Soutzos, who agreed to give him his support, placing his household guard under the general's command. Ipsilantis made it known that 70,000 Russians would soon be crossing the border. He issued his own proclamation, calling on everyone to join him and that with the assistance of a 'tremendous power', they would soon be free (Tappe 1973: 141; Ilicak 2009: 324).

Greek, Serbian, Albanian, Bulgarian and even some Romanian militiamen answered the call. Nicholas Ipsilantis, Alexander's younger brother, arrived from Russia with 800 infantrymen and engineers dressed in their black Russian uniforms (Ilicak 2009: 323). A few days later 1,200 members of the recently disbanded Greek militia of Odessa joined them. Then, Colonel Yiorgos Kantakouzinas appeared at the head of the Sacred Band, a special force made up of Greek students from the military academies in Odessa, Taganrog and Mariupol. A sizable force was taking shape, but everyone knew that it was not enough to take on the mighty Islamic Empire. And so all eyes turned to the city of Leibach (modern Ljubljana in Serbia) where the leaders of Europe, including Tsar Alexander I, were meeting to discuss how they would deal with the rebellion that had broken out in Italy. What would Russia do and how would the Ottomans respond?

The answer came on 17 March and it was unequivocal. In dispatches to Russian diplomatic missions across the region, Alexander I made it crystal clear that he denounced the insurrection in the

strongest terms. Vladimirescu was acting without Russian support and contrary to Russia's interests. He declared him a bandit, whom he stripped of his status as a Russian subject. At this juncture, Alexander had not yet learned of Ipsilantis's activities. When he did, however, he immediately issued a similar dispatch in which he denounced the violation of Ottoman space by Ipsilantis and his men and disavowed the insurrection. Underscoring that no Russian military aid would be forthcoming, three battalions of the Army of New Russia left for Italy, where they were to join with Austria in putting down the Italian uprising, and two others were sent to seal the border with the Ottoman Empire.

Yet, according to Lord Strangford, British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, the Porte was willing to give Russia the benefit of the doubt, but they were still suspicious (Prousis 2010: 52). Their conviction that Russia was behind the uprising would only become firmer. The other development that shaped Ottoman perception of the insurrection was the massacre of the Muslim populations of Jassy and Galati, suggesting that this was not merely a protest against Ottoman misrule but was in fact a war of religion. And, if this was a war of Orthodoxy versus Islam, then how could Russia not become involved in its capacity as protector of Orthodox Christendom? To allay this fear, Gregory V, the Ecumenical Patriarch and Milletbaşı of the Millet-i Rom, excommunicated anyone who joined or supported the insurrection. Russia and the church had, thus, forsaken the rebels in the north.

After the Russian denunciation, things went from bad to worse for the rebellion in the Principalities. Milos Obrenović announced that Serbia repudiated the uprising and would have nothing to do with it. Without the prospect of Russian assistance, rifts developed among the leadership of the rebellion, especially between Vladimirescu and Ipsilantis. By mid-April, the situation was becoming tenuous and perilous. Michalis Soutzos abandoned the cause and fled to Russia, and he was not the only one who was looking to get out. Because right around that time Russia agreed to allow the Ottoman army to invade Moldavia and Wallachia.

On 13 May, three divisions crossed the Danube, two entered Moldavia and one marched on Wallachia. Within a matter of weeks the Ottoman army had recaptured all of the major cities, including Bucharest. Faced now with impossible odds, various insurrectionary leaders looked to escape. Vladimirescu opened negotiations with the Porte and when this was discovered, Ipsilantis had him executed. The

reason given was that he had violated his oath of membership to the Philiki Etaireia. The Etaireist army was isolated and trapped. The end came on 19 June when the Ottomans crushed it at the Battle of Dragatsani Bridge. Ipsilantis fled into Austria, where he was captured, imprisoned and died. His forces scattered. Some managed to escape back into Russia. Others remained in Moldavia, but by the end of summer they too were wiped out. The fighting in the north was at an end. The insurrection, however, was not.

The Morea in flames

Probably the most iconic image of the War of Independence is the scene of Bishop Germanos, the Metropolitan of Patras, raising the banner of revolution at the Monastery of Agia Lavra near Kalavryta. He is surrounded by many of the heroes of the movement as they swear an oath to achieve liberty or death. The day was supposedly 25 March (5 April on the Julian calendar) and so that date is still celebrated as Independence Day. The only problem is that the event never happened, and indeed, very little of note occurred on the twenty-fifth. It was the case, however, that a number of crucial, short- and long-term developments came together in late March and early April that led to uprisings first in the Morea and then all across Ottoman Europe, the Aegean Islands, Asia Minor and the Levant. The Morea and central Greece were, for a number of reasons, always the most propitious areas for a successful insurrection.

First, Christians outnumbered Muslims by a ratio of six to one. Moreover, the vast majority of the Muslim population was geographically concentrated in the towns. If the Christian population, or even a substantial portion of it, revolted, then the Muslim population would find itself outnumbered and isolated. Also, the Muslim population was split between those who were descendants of Greek converts and more recent immigrants, mostly from Albania. And there was no love lost between the two, with many Greek Muslims quite willing to acquiesce to the removal of the Albanians. Second, there was in place a leadership cadre (the Mora ayanlari consisting of kocabaşis and Muslim ayan) and an organisational structure (the councils of kocabaşis) that could lead a rebellion. Third, over the previous forty to fifty years, landholdings had become concentrated among a relatively small group of Christian and Muslim landowners and this meant that the preponderance of Greek Christian peasants had to eke out a living as best they could,

combining sharecropping and other activities. The result was widespread and endemic poverty. Fourth, there were large numbers of men-at-arms who belonged to gangs, many of whom had experience fighting in militias during the Napoleonic Wars.

In the years just before 1821, a number of specific events or developments in the Morea made the time ripe for rebellion. 1816 and 1820 were lean years for farmers; three consecutive bad crops compounded by the global depression that Europe experienced after the end of the Napoleonic Wars drove the already destitute peasantry to the brink. The imposition of the war requisition tax of 1820 pushed many over the edge. Not surprising given that, according to one estimate, the total tax burden on Christian peasants in the Morea increased by 261.5 per cent between 1820 and 1821 (Stathis 2007: 178, note 4).⁶

At a time when many were hungry and some even starving, they were also being asked to pay more to the state. Their anger was palpable and their rage made many ready to rebel. So too were the wealthy. The latter part of the 1810s saw power politics in the Peloponnesos become much more deadly. The jockeying for ascendancy among Mora ayanlari and between them and the Ottoman establishment became more intense. Three kocabaşis factions in particular were in the eye of the storm. The Deliyiannis family and its supporters had achieved a paramount position by the early 1810s, only to find themselves locked in a struggle with their rivals, the Londos faction and the Perroukas faction. During the course of the decade, prominent members of each group were executed by order of a Mora valisis who backed one or the other factions. A compromise agreed to between the leading kocabaşis families in 1816 abated the internecine fighting somewhat, but this was a fragile peace (Stamatopoulos 2007; Pylia 2007; Fotopoulos 2005: 253–344; Pizanias 2003: 42–6).⁷ Into this maelstrom, a new and potentially destabilising element was introduced: the Philiki Etaireia.

During 1819 and 1820, the society had been very active recruiting members in the Morea, and though notables never constituted more than a fraction of its membership, their participation was vital (Pizanias 2009b: 35). Gregoris 'Papaflessas' Dikaios was especially active in helping to organise and coordinate the society's activities in the region. The Mora ayanlari found themselves in a difficult situation. Joining the society, let alone participating in an insurrection, carried with it potentially great rewards but also entailed lethal

risks. Matters came to a head at a meeting convened by Papaflessas in Vostitsa in February 1821. It was the moment when the leaders of the great families had to make their intentions known. As one of the Perroukas brothers wrote: 'The kocabaşis from Kalavryta [Zaiamis], [Andreas] Londos from Vostitsa and Kanellos [Deliyiannis] from Karytaina, uncritically agreed with the orders of Papaflessa, and thoughtlessly began the recruitment of fighters, which brought the situation to this point [i.e., rebellion]' (cited in Stamtopoulos 2007: 160–1). By the spring of 1821 all of the factors necessary for successful insurrection were in place. One last development would lead to open rebellion.

In February as Hurşid Paşa was preparing to lead his troops north against Tepedelenli Ali Paşa and having heard rumours about possible riots or other forms of unrest, he issued an ultimatum to the heads of all of the major Christian Mora ayanlari that either they or one of their sons were to present themselves to Mehmed Salih, the kaimmakam (acting governor), to be held as hostages to vouchsafe their good conduct. The deadline was the Orthodox Feast of the Annunciation (25 March). Anyone who failed to do so would be proclaimed an outlaw, forfeiting his life and his property. Coupled with this demand was an imperial edict that all non-Muslims were to surrender their firearms to the nearest Ottoman garrison. Any Christian found in possession of a gun would be considered a criminal and would be executed. Now was the critical moment and men faced a fateful decision: compliance or insurrection. Most chose the latter.

Three days after the ultimatum lapsed, Petrobey Mavromihalis and the Messenian Senate issued a proclamation written by Alexandros Mavrogordatos that served as the Greek declaration of independence:

The insupportable yoke of Ottoman tyranny has weighed down for over a century the unhappy Greeks of the Peloponnesos. So excessive had its rigours become, that its fainting victims had scarcely strength enough to utter groans. In this state, deprived of all our rights, we have unanimously resolved to take up arms against our tyrants ... Our mouths are opened; heretofore silent, or employed only in addressing useless supplications to our tormentors, they now celebrate a deliverance which we have sworn to accomplish, or else to perish. We invoke therefore the aid of all civilised nations of Europe, that we may the more promptly attain to the goal of a just and sacred enterprise, reconquer our rights, and regenerate our unfortunate

people. Greece, our mother, was the lamp that illuminated you; on this ground she reckons on your philanthropy. Arms, money, and counsel, are what she expects from you. We promise you her lively gratitude, which she will prove by deeds in more prosperous times. (Gordon 1832, vol. 1: 183)

Copies translated into all of the major European languages were delivered to the consular officers of the Great Powers in Patras for immediate transmittal to their respective governments. This declaration of insurrection only formalised an existing state of affairs. Over the previous weeks there had been sporadic episodes of violence. In Messenia, for example, a group of peasants attacked an Ottoman tax collector and his entourage. Formalisation, however, was important because it established a clear and unambiguous line between those who affirmed their loyalty to the Ottoman state and those who did not.

Rebellion spread like wildfire across the Peloponnesos. In the countryside, gangs of armed peasants attacked the estates of wealthy ayan, many of whom evacuated their properties and, along with other Muslims, they endeavored to make their way to an Ottoman-controlled fort. In some cases, Greeks whom they employed as their guards deserted, while in others, they actually assaulted their former bosses. The main focus of the rebels, however, was the fortresses and the Ottoman garrisons. Petrobey Mavromichalis and his men, for example, took the city of Kalamata and attacked the garrisons at Modoni and Koroni. Bishop Germanos at the head of a large contingent of Achaian peasants marched on Patras. Theodoros Kolokotronis led a sizable force of veteran fighters against the capital city of Tripolis (Alexander 2010). Within weeks, the Morean countryside had been cleansed of Muslims and Jews who either fled or were slaughtered and every Ottoman garrison (Nafplion, Monemvasia, Acrocorinth and Mistras) was under siege. Only Yussuf Bey, Ayan of Corinth, and his force of about 1,000 men remained at large, engaging Greek insurgents in Achaia and the Corinthia. By the middle of April, the Greek rebels had secured most of the Morea.

Why was the insurrection in the Morea so much more successful than the one in the Danubian Principalities, for example? Some factors, like the skewed ratio of Christians to Muslims, have already been mentioned. The one that I think was most important, however, was the greater preponderance of people who joined the insurrection. Why was this? First we have to appreciate that different people

participated or not for different reasons. Some, especially amongst the business, merchant and educated classes, were motivated by nationalism and liberal ideals. Others saw a chance to advance themselves materially and politically. But the key question is why did so many peasants take up arms and slaughter their former landlords and neighbours? Few of them even knew of, let alone espoused, the ideas of the Enlightenment. A clue can be found in the peasant language of rebellion. When they marched on Patras, Achaian peasants chanted as their war cry 'Freedom, freedom in the name of Christ' (Ελευθερία, ελευθερία διά πίσι Χριστού) (Stefanini 1829: 50). Freedom to them, I suspect, was not some abstract ideal relating to civil liberties and rights but rather freedom from oppression and exploitation by landlords and tax collectors. Equally important was the second part of their chant: in the name of Christ. To them this was a religious struggle. As Marios Hatzopoulos (2009; 2011) has shown, peasant understandings of the pre-war developments were grounded in folktales, omens and prophecies. What motivated the peasants to rebel were bread, land and religion (Theotokas and Kotaridis 2006: 29–40). And so in the Morea it was a mass revolt and not just the rising of a few notables and their gangs.

Soon the rebellion spread across the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean as community after community decided to join the cause. By mid-April most of the Greek and Albanian Christian villages of Boiotia and Attica had risen, soon followed by those in western Greece (Aitolia and Akarnania). In June, Greek Athenians rose up and besieged the Ottoman garrison on the Acropolis. The Aegean islands, beginning with Hydra, Poros and Spetses were not far behind. Greeks on Cyprus and Crete attacked Ottoman forces and Muslim civilians (Andriotis 2003). To the north, the banner of rebellion was unfurled in Thessaly and Macedonia. To be sure, there were Greek communities that decided not to rebel. On the rich and prosperous island of Chios, the Orthodox leadership denounced the rebellion and pledged their loyalty to the Ottoman government. The collective leadership on the Catholic islands of the Cyclades, such as Tinos, Syros, Thera and others, did so as well. Nonetheless, by the summer of 1821 the Ottoman government was confronted with insurrections from the Danubian region in the north to Crete in the south, and from the Adriatic Sea in the west to the shores of the Levant in the east. As well as having to deal with the civil war against Tepedelenli Ali Paşa and an invasion by Persia along its eastern frontier, the empire faced widespread insurrection in its heartland.

The empire responded vigorously, and in many areas effectively, to these challenges. The Greek uprisings in areas such as Thessaly and Macedonia, where the Ottomans had sizable military forces, were easily put down. As we have already seen, by the end of summer the insurrection in the north had been completely crushed. While fighting persisted slightly longer, the rebellions on Crete and Cyprus were also largely extinguished. The same could have happened in the Morea and central Greece but for the actions of Odysseus Androutsos and a few other Rumelian *armatole* captains. Soon after intelligence about the uprising in the Peloponnesos reached him, Hürşid Paşa dispatched Omar Vryonis, an Albanian *ayan* and former military captain to Tepedelenli Ali Paşa, with 6,000 infantry and 300 cavalry to relieve the besieged garrisons and to suppress the uprisings. Leaving his base in the city of Lamia on 23 April, Vryonis drove a Greek rebel force from the Alamana Bridge on the River Sprechios, thus opening the road down the east coast of central Greece to Boiotia and then Attica. However, he did not want to proceed southward through the famous pass of Thermopylae without first securing his right flank from ambushes, and so he marched his army to the upland basin on the west side of Mount Kallidromo. There at a *khan* (or inn) near the village of Gravia he encountered Androutsos. Though badly outnumbered, the Rumelian captain inflicted enough damage on the Ottoman force to compel Vryonis to retreat to Lamia and to regroup. Later that summer (25 August), he marched south once more and yet again he was repulsed. Greek forces laid a carefully designed ambush in the narrow pass of Vassilika and scored a stunning victory. Vryonis had no choice but to retreat, and with the end of the campaigning season coming soon, another assault on the rebels would have to wait. By the end of 1821, the Greek insurrection that erupted all across the Ottoman Empire had been largely suppressed. The Danubian Principalities had been secured. The rebels in Rumelia were routed. Tepedelenli Ali Paşa was hanging on for dear life. Due to the heroic efforts of a few warlords and their men, however, central Greece and the Peloponnesos remained in rebel hands. The leadership of the rebellion there now had time to consolidate its gains, establish a functioning government and prepare for the assault that would surely come in 1822.

Ottoman response

How did the Ottomans perceive the events of 1821 and how did they act on their perceptions?⁸ Based on Ottoman archival materials it is clear that their initial responses to the news that Ipsilantis had invaded the empire and then to the news that members of the Millet-i Rom all across the empire were rising up in rebellion were: (1) shock and surprise and (2) a firm belief that Russia was behind the whole thing. It appears that the central government in Istanbul knew very little about the incipient rebellion, and it had learned about it only at the last minute. Two weeks before Ipsilantis invaded the Danubian Principalities, the Ottoman authorities captured a man named Aristides Papas. He was a messenger bringing Milos Obrenović of Serbia dispatches from Ipsilantis. Under torture, he revealed even more about the planned uprising. Based on information extracted from Papas, the Porte learned about 'a very secret plot ... that had been in the making for many years to rise the Greeks up in order to trample upon the Muslims' (Ilicak 2009: 322; the quote is taken from a report to the government based on Papas's interrogation). But it appears that they knew little else beyond this.

So, if the uprisings were the surprise, then who was revolting was the shock. That it was the Greeks, and specifically the Phanariots, who were leading the rebellions especially infuriated the Ottoman leadership. That Phanariots were in charge seemed obvious. The Ipsilantis brothers and other Greek members of the Russian military were Phanariots. As was Michalis Soutsos, Hospodar of Moldavia. The Phanariot conspiracy, in their view, reached into the very heart of the Ottoman government. Theodoris Negris, for example, a dragoman in the Porte, was on a ship bound for Paris where he was to take up the position of Ottoman ambassador when the rebellion broke out. That Negris broke off his journey and declared for the uprising was positive proof of just how high the Phanariot conspiracy went. This led Mahmud II and his advisors to believe that the insurrectionists aimed at seizing Istanbul itself.

The Ottomans viewed the Greeks in general and the Phanariots in particular as the chosen people amongst infidels. Phanariots and kocabaşıs had, in their view, flourished through their participation in shared governance. Greeks occupied key and powerful positions in government, a policy that in the past had raised the ire of many Muslims. So the Ottoman perception of the rebellion in April 1821 was that it was a Phanariot-led uprising and that 'the aim of the

infidels was to inflame the peaceful reaya and, God forbid, to annihilate all Muslims' (Ilicak 2009: 328; the passage comes from an imperial firman to the governors of all of the Ottoman provinces). The Ottomans, then, viewed the events of spring 1821 as both an attempted coup d'état and a religious war.

The Ottoman state's initial responses were shaped by this perception. First, the government issued an imperial firman commanding all Muslims to arm themselves and ordering all members of the Millet-i Rom to disarm. Guided by Shariat law, the Şeyhülislam promulgated a Fatwa stating that any Christians who joined the rebellion violated that Dimmi pact and so could be killed with impunity, their property confiscated and their families enslaved. Since it was nearly impossible to know who did or did not support the revolution, any Greek became fair game. And the violence against Greeks, especially in Istanbul and Smyrna, only increased as news of the slaughter of Muslims in the Principalities and in the Morea became known. Examples, such as this one recorded by an eye-witness in Istanbul, became commonplace:

An unfortunate Greek had ventured out to a baccul, or huckster's shop, for some article, and was hastily returning, when he met a Turk who was walking just before me. The Greek pressed himself up to the wall as close as possible to let him pass, when the Turk, deliberately drawing his yataghan, pinned him to the place where he stood. The poor man fell dead on his face, and his assassin walked over his body, and, wiping his bloody yataghan, entered a coffeehouse, where I afterwards saw him quietly smoking his chibouk. (Walsh 1836: 306; for an account of the violence in Smyrna, see Prousis 1992)

Not knowing which Greeks it could trust, the government trusted none. This was especially true for Phanariots and the leadership of the Orthodox Church. The Ecumenical Patriarch and Millet-başı of the Rom, Gregory V, was brutally executed on Easter Sunday, 22 April 1821, even though he excommunicated the rebels (Fig. 3.2). The reasons were, first, as leader of the Orthodox Church and head of the Orthodox community, he was responsible for ensuring that his flock remained subservient to the state, and in this he failed. That he was detected helping prominent Phanariots escape to Russia and that he was from Karytainia, one of the centres of the rebellion in the Morea, only elevated suspicions about his loyalty. So, like other high-ranking Ottoman officials, including the Grand Vizier Benderli Ali Paşa and Mahmud's closest advisor Halet Efendi, who failed in their jobs, he paid for his failure with his life.⁹



Figure 3.2 The execution of Patriarch Gregorios V in 1821 © Von Hess 1836, Wikimedia Commons.

April and May witnessed a pogrom against Greeks in Istanbul. In some cases, the people executed were implicated in the rebellion, but in most, they were not. The Greeks were caught in a no-win situation: if they stayed in the city, they were open to attack. If they tried to escape and were captured, then this proved that they supported the insurrection, and so faced execution or exile. Hundreds of prominent Greek politicians and clergymen were killed and thousands more were exiled to towns in central and southern Anatolia. By the end of summer, however, Ottoman policy changed. Only Greeks who were openly in revolt were targeted; any others who averred their loyalty to the state had their rights restored, including their right to life, own property, and to be free from enslavement. Partly this change in

policy was due to the collapse of the Danubian rebellion and the suppression of the insurrections everywhere except the Morea and the islands, and partly it was due to pressure exerted by European powers, especially Russia.

In no uncertain terms, Alexander I denounced Ipsilantis's invasion and the Greek rebellion. Yet, Mahmud and his advisors still harboured deep suspicions that Russia was the hidden hand behind both. There was just too much circumstantial evidence of Russian involvement for them to think otherwise. The Russian army, for example, clearly seemed to be actively supporting the rebels. Most of the officers in Ipsilantis's army had served or were still serving in it and maintained close relations with their comrades. Indeed, Ipsilantis himself, and presumably others as well, did not resign his commission but instead sought and was granted a two years' leave of absence (Bitis 2006: 99). The rebel army in the Principalities was dressed in Russian uniforms and fought with Russian arms. According to one source, Papas, the captured courier discussed above, the general staff of the Russian Second Army in Bessarabia were advising Ipsilantis and were present when he gave him the dispatches (Bitis 2006: 22–4). That he was able to muster men and arms in Odessa and then to march freely across New Russia indicated to the Ottomans that Russian civilian officials, at best, turned a blind eye to these activities and, at worst, condoned them. In other parts of the empire where revolts took place, Greeks in the Russian consular service played leading roles. Surely, Ottoman leaders surmised, St Petersburg must know of these activities and yet did nothing to stop them. Then, lastly, there was the fact the authorities in New Russia continued to allow refugees, including known rebel supporters like Michalis Soutsos, to enter Russia and refused to extradite them when asked.

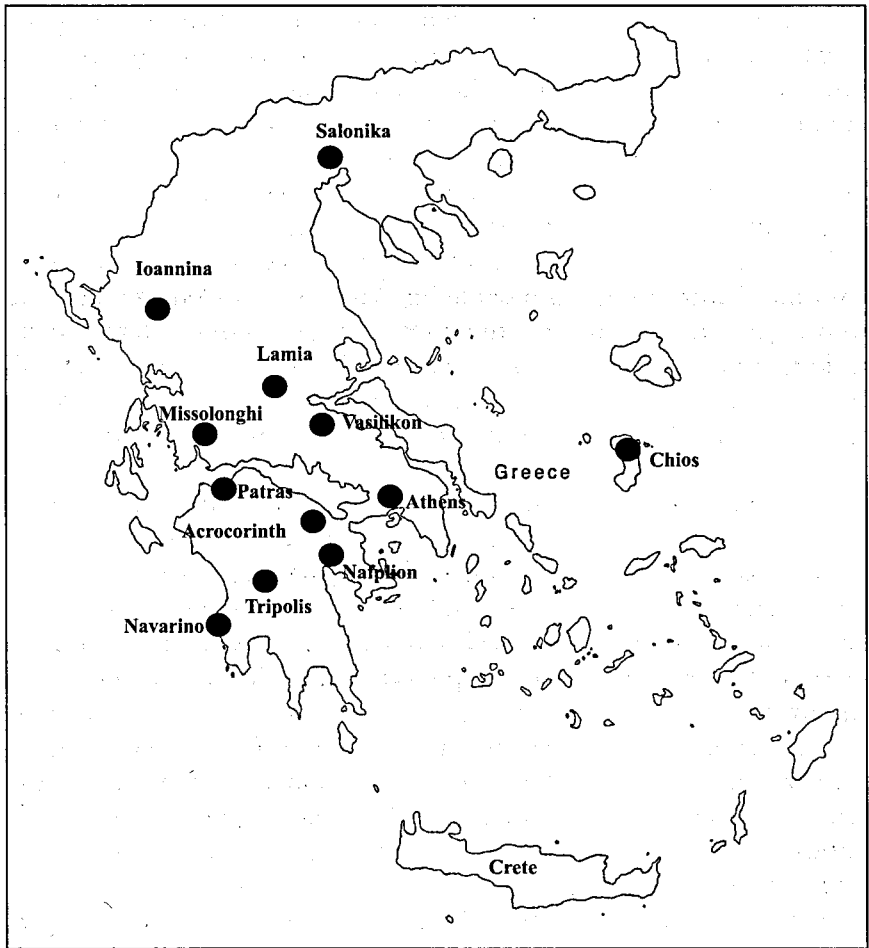
The Ottomans were correct in believing that key Russian institutions, like the church and the military, and the Russian people supported the Greeks. It was the court of St Petersburg that was out of touch. But that soon changed. The official Russian policy as determined by the Tsar and the Foreign Ministry moved closer to the view held by its people. Two developments led to this policy shift. The first was the executions of hundreds of members of the Orthodox Church hierarchy. These killings, as well as the other evidence that this was becoming a religious conflict, compelled the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church to lobby the Tsar to intervene in support of their co-religionists. The other was the

heightening tensions over the issue of whether or not the Ottomans could seize and search Russian vessels in Ottoman waters to determine if they were conveying rebels seeking to escape or carrying contraband supplies destined for the rebel forces. In the summer of 1821 these two issues almost led to another Ottoman-Russian war, which, of course, was what the Philiki Etaireia wanted all long. But that did not happen. The two sides reached a testy compromise, something that was made easier when Mahmud altered his policy regarding who could be persecuted. This uneasy Ottoman-Russian accommodation meant that the Greek rebels were on their own to face the empire's wrath in 1822.

The critical years

The fateful year of 1821 ended with the Greek rebellion against the Osmali dynasty hanging on by a thread and 1822 did not start well. In February Hurşid Paşa captured and beheaded Tepedelenli Ali Paşa. With that war over, Hurşid could turn his attention to affairs in the south. But political opponents in Istanbul accused him of stealing part of Ali's fortune and so he was ousted, and in fact committed suicide, and a new man was put in charge: Mehmed Dramali Paşa. He was from a prominent Thracian ayan family and he was one of Hurşid's commanders in the war against Tepedelenli Ali Paşa. From his base in Yanya he planned the summer campaign that would end the Greek rebellion. He would command one army that would march down the east coast of Greece through Boiotia and Attica, relieving the Ottoman garrisons along the way. Then, he would cross the Isthmus and rescue the men trapped in the impregnable fortress of Acrocorinth. From there he could launch an assault on Nafplion, where the Ottoman forces were still trapped in the fortress of Pelamydes, and where the leadership of the Greek rebel state was located. While he was doing this, Omar Vryonis, his second in command, was to lead a force down the west side of Greece and then, after capturing the fort at Messolonghi, he was to cross the channel and retake Patras. The two armies would then converge on Tripolis. Dramali was confident that the rebellion would be over by the autumn, and in this, he was completely wrong (Map 3.1).

At the head of a force of 12,000 infantry, 600 regular cavalry and 200 deli cavalry (light armed skirmishers), Dramali left Larissa in early July. Initially the plan worked perfectly. He was able to seize control of the coastal and inland roads by either driving off the Greek forces



Map 3.1 Key sites during the War of Independence.

or negotiating a peaceful settlement. His forces swept across the plains of Boiotia and he bypassed Athens in the belief that others would soon relieve it. Quickly marching southward, he took the Isthmus and marched on Corinth, driving off the Greek rebel forces. By 17 July, he secured Acrocorinth as his base of operations. In addition, he was now joined by local ayan like Yusuf Hali Bey of Corinth and their men who had been fighting in Patras. Giving his troops only a brief rest, one week later Dramali crossed the mountains that separate the Corinthia and the Argolid and marched on Nafplion. Believing that the Greeks would surrender, flee or fight and lose, he planned on a very quick campaign. Consequently, he did

not outfit his army adequately with supplies. This he did over the objections of Yusuf Hali Bey and other locals who warned him that once he crossed the mountains he would be dangerously exposed and could be easily cut off from his base of operations. They cautioned him to wait until the Ottoman fleet arrived in the Corinthian Gulf, because it could support his efforts from the sea and could keep his forces supplied. Their advice fell on deaf ears.

Marching through the narrow defiles, his forces entered the Argolid. While doing so he made his most serious mistake: he failed to post guards to protect the mountain passes. Contrary to his expectation, the Greeks would not face him in battle on the plain. Instead, they divided their forces into three groups. One, under Dimitrios Ipsilantis marched south and encamped at the Mills on the coast road. Kolokotronis mobilised a sizable force in the mountains on the western side of the plain, and Papaflessa and Nikitas Stamatelopoulos concentrated their men in the mountains to the east of the plain. A deadly trap was forming. Greek peasants burnt their crops and spoiled their wells before taking refuge in the city. Dramali could neither compel the Greek troops to give battle nor could he take the city by force. As his supplies dwindled, he had no choice but to retreat.

On 8 August he walked into the trap. The Greeks had blocked the Dervanaki pass and arrayed their men on the heights above the narrow road through the mountains. It was a slaughter. Dramali and about 800 men made it out alive. Dramali committed suicide rather than face disgrace and what was left of his army fled north, harassed by rebel forces along the way. Eastern Greece and the Morea were now secure.

So too was the west. Alexander Mavrogordatos at the head of a force consisting of Greek bands and Western mercenaries confronted Vryonis and his army at place called Peta, near the city of Arta. Vryonis won a Pyrrhic victory. Though he won the battle and slaughtered most of the Western mercenaries, he lost both men and time. The former was less important than the latter because it gave him too little time to compel the fortress at Messolonghi to surrender before winter set in and threaten his supply line. Consequently, he had to lift the siege and return to Ioannina.

1822 witnessed two other major developments that had a profound impact on the revolution. The first of these was a series of naval victories. Before the rebellion, Greeks were an essential element of the Ottoman fleet. Most of the ship captains and many of the

sailors were Greek islanders. When the rebellion broke out, large numbers of them deserted and a few captains even commandeered their ships. Wealthy Greek merchants placed their vessels at the service of the rebel navy. In 1822, the Greeks scored a number of notable victories. The most important of these took place near the island of Tenedos, where Captain Konstantinos Kanaris sank the flagship of the Ottoman fleet. With their successes at sea, the Greeks ensured that supplies and war materials could reach the rebel army on land, while at the same time impairing the empire's ability to relieve its besieged troops in the Morea. In response, Mahmud invited Barbary corsairs to enter the war with the promise of riches from plunder and slave trading. The war at sea, of course, disrupted commerce in the Eastern Mediterranean and, as we shall see, this became a concern for European powers, especially Great Britain. Another event in 1822 captured Europe's attention: the massacre of the Greeks of Chios.

Chios was one of the wealthiest and most prosperous Greek islands. It owed its prosperity to its monopoly on the production of mastic, to being home to numerous successful commercial firms, and to its strategic location. The island was one of those places that was so important that the Ottoman state granted it special concessions, and in this case, one of those was home rule. When the rebellion erupted, the Greek leadership, both secular and sacred, declared against it and affirmed the islanders' continued loyalty to the state. Mahmud demanded and received approximately 100 hostages, most of them from the island's most prominent families. The Chian leadership may have spoken for the community collectively but not for all of its members. Many Chians supported the rebellion; some, like Adamantios Korais, did so from afar with their pens, while others closer to home took up arms. There was still unrest in the Eastern Aegean and it centred on the nearby island of Samos. A rebel contingent plundered a number of villages on the coast of Asia Minor and even attacked the Muslim quarter in the town of Chios, looting and burning houses there. So a force was dispatched to deal with it. As an eyewitness recalled, he

saw a colossal Armada advancing, with its bloody standard [the red Ottoman flag] beckoning to us in the breeze. Seven ships of the line stood before us like monsters of the deep. Twenty-six frigates and corvettes accompanied by smaller craft and innumerable boats, rolled towards us like a gilded tide of devastation. (Castanis 2002 [1851]: 26)

Thirsting for revenge for the mass killings of Muslims, Kara Ali's troops stormed the island. By the time they were finished as many as perhaps 100,000 people lay dead or in the hands of slave traders. News of the massacre quickly spread far and wide, prompting cries of outrage from the governments of Europe. The fact that the Grand Vizier and the Şeyhülislam vehemently denounced the killings and even executed Kara Ali mattered little (Aksan 2007: 292). Some members of the British parliament called for military intervention and the position of the war party in St Petersburg became even stronger. The massacre on Chios did more to generate popular support for the Greek rebellion than anything else. Nonetheless, the official policy of the Great Powers remained non-intervention throughout 1822 and 1823 (Rodogno 2012: 66–72 on the British and French responses and Prousis 1994: 61–2). Their view continued to be that the war was a conflict between a sovereign state and a group of disgruntled subjects. If the insurrection was to result in independence, then the Greeks needed to establish a state of their own.

Impaired governance

As we have seen, Greeks had been actively participating in local governance for a long time; the important point here is 'local'. At the time of the revolution, there did not exist any institutional structures that bound together the elites from each locality or region. This intense localism, combined with the fact that many of the kocabaşis participating in the rebellion had been political rivals, made forging a united revolutionary leadership extremely difficult. Cleavages regarding the political goals of the war existed among the Greek rebel leadership from the start, and the rifts only became deeper and more diverse as Greeks from the diaspora, from the disbanded court of Tepedelenli Ali Paşa, and from the Phanariot community of Istanbul arrived in the Peloponnesos. As Douglas Dakin has noted:

The [indigenous] Greek upper classes wanted Ottoman society without the Turks, the military classes [kapoi and armatoli] wanted to carve out for themselves so many independent satrapies and become miniature Ali Paşas [sic], while the lower orders simply desired to improve their lot, escape taxation, to own and increase the size of their plots and to move up the social scale. (Dakin 1973: 78)

In addition, there were the Greeks of the diaspora who flocked to the 'motherland' with heads filled with republican ideologies and dreams

of a resurrected democratic past. Keeping these competing and disparate interests together proved one of the greatest challenges of the war.

All parties agreed on a few issues. That political victory, in the form of independence, required Great Power intervention was one. Another was that they had yet to face the full might of the Ottoman Empire, and that they had to take advantage of the Porte's indecisiveness. A third was that they needed desperately and quickly money and arms. As we have seen, a cold wind blew from St Petersburg, and in the context of the ongoing political unrest in Portugal, Spain, Piedmont, Naples, and Belgium, the governments of London, Paris, and Vienna were equally unsympathetic to the Greek cause. The maintenance of the status quo and the concert of Europe were paramount. In order to garner the support of the Western powers, the Greek leadership had to declare unilaterally their independence and promulgate a constitution creating a government, which could then open negotiations with the Great Powers. All the while they had to cast their cause not as a national struggle based on liberal principles, which would have won them few supporters in post-Napoleonic Europe, but as a religious conflict between an oppressed Christian population and their Islamic oppressors.

Shortly after the insurrection began, the Maniate chieftain Petrobey Mavromichalis convened a congress in Kalamata to draft a constitution and establish a government. Representing almost exclusively the Peloponnesian kocabaşis, the congress created a senate, called the Messenian Senate (Μεσσηνιακή Σύγκλητος) and elected Petrobey as president. Neither enjoyed much legitimacy anywhere else in Greece. The kapetanoi and men doing the fighting felt that they had been cheated out of power. Dimitris Ipsilantis, brother of Alexander, claimed that he spoke for the Philiki Etaireia and refused to accept the writ of the new government. Finally, as other areas of Greece became liberated the leadership there formed their own ruling councils. In the northern Peloponnesos there was the Achaian Directorate (Αχαϊκόν Διευθυντήριον), while in Greece north of the Isthmus there were the Organisation of Western Greece (Οργανισμός της Δυτικής Χέρσου Ελλάδος) and the Legal Command of Eastern Greece (Νομική Δίαταξεις της Ανατολικής Χέρσου Ελλάδος) (Papageorgiou 2003: 67–8). Each of these adopted their own constitution and organisation. If the revolution was to have any chance of success, this fragmentation of political leadership had to be remedied.

To deal with this unacceptable situation a National Congress at

which all parties would be represented was convened in Epidavros in December 1821. After weeks of intense debate, Alexandros Mavrokordatos, Theodoros Negris, and an Italian lawyer, Vincenzo Gallina, presented the assembly with a provisional constitution, roughly modelled on the French constitution of 1795, which the delegates passed. The new Greek state was to be a democratic republic founded on the principles of civil liberties and equality for all. Moreover, it was explicitly an Orthodox Christian nation-state. As the preamble states, it is 'the Hellenic (Greek) nation' [το Ελληνικόν Έθνος] that has risen against 'the terrible Ottoman dynasty' and that now declared the existence of its own independent state. But who belonged to the nation and the state?

Religion was certainly a critical element. The very first article of the constitution specified that 'the official religion in the Greek state is the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ' but that other religions would be tolerated. The fact that almost the entire Muslim and Jewish populations had already been expunged from the territory of the new state made this a moot point, meaning that this clause was only really applicable to the Catholic islanders. Article Two defined who belonged to the body politic. According to Section 1 of Article Two: 'All indigenous inhabitants of the state of Greece who believe in Christ are Greeks, and they enjoy all political rights without distinction.' In this formulation, then, Greekness was defined by residence and religion.

A second clause provided for the inclusion of those who had come to territory of Greece and now resided there. This definition of citizenship proved problematic as the territories under the control of the provisional administration continued to change, meaning that one moment a person could be 'indigenous' but not at the next. Moreover, Christians of various 'ethnicities' – such as Albanian, Vlach and Serbian – resided in the 'liberated' territories and were participating in the rebellion, and so by this definition they were Greeks. The criteria for Greek citizenship remained problematic for decades to come.

The provisional charter also specified the organisational structure of the government. The former Ottoman kazas were reframed as eparchies (counties) and each eparchy was to elect a senator. The senate had legislative powers and the authority to elect five of its members to constitute the executive branch. The term of the senate was one year. The executive appointed the heads of the eight ministries, none of whom could be senators. Mavrokordatos was

elected as the first president. The new government's main goals were to mobilise the peasantry and prosecute the war, press the Greeks' appeal for assistance from the West, and end the factional squabbling. It succeeded somewhat with the first but failed utterly with the others.

A Second National Congress was called in April 1823 to modify the constitution and elect a new government. The Peloponnesians, and especially the military captains, dominated this session. The new charter revised the structural organisation of the government and modified the power and procedures of some of its branches. It also changed the citizenship criteria, introducing language. The new formula gave Greek nationality and citizenship rights to non-native Christians residing in areas that had joined the insurrection so long as their mother tongue was Greek and so long as they expressed their desire to become a Greek citizen in front of a revolutionary government authority. But this formula was also problematic. There were people in groups in the liberated territories, some of whom played prominent roles, for whom Greek was not their mother tongue. This definition also raised serious problems with respect to people who continued to reside in the Ottoman Empire but who considered themselves to be ethnically Greek. And so the problem of defining who belonged to the Greek nation and who was entitled to citizenship rights in the new state remained problematic.

As to the political consequences of the second National Congress, Morean kocabaşis and military captains dominated the new government with Petrobey as president and Kolokotronis as his vice-president. The virtual exclusion of leaders from western and central Greece and of Western-orientated diaspora Greeks doomed this national government as well. Unity was absent even within the provisional national government. Frustrated by the actions of members of the executive council, who were not military men, Kolokotronis seized and imprisoned them. Open conflict between factions in the government erupted soon thereafter. This lack of political unity was to prove very costly.¹⁰

1824 marked a pivotal point in the war. Financially, the situation was becoming dire and so, in order to sustain the war effort, the provisional government contracted hefty loans from the London financial market (Chatziioannou 2013: 33–55, see especially 44–5; a second loan was contracted in 1825, and this marked the beginning of the Greek indebtedness). Militarily, the gains of the previous three years soon began to slip away and were finally lost as various factions

turned on one another in what became ironically a civil war within a civil war. What were the causes of these divisions and who constituted the various factions? The first and largest group, of course, was the common people. The peasants who had initially joined in the fighting lost their enthusiasm as the war dragged on. They had not signed on to serve garrison duty besieging walled towns, especially not while land was lying free for the taking back home. Many returned to their farms and villages to reap the immediate benefits of the departure of Ottoman landlords. The first of these was land. Muslim proprietors or the Ottoman state owned the majority of the land and with the forced departure of the former and political separation from the latter, plentiful land was available for the taking. Families occupied evacuated land as squatters. But this set them on a collision course with the Provisional Administration, which claimed that deserted Ottoman land belonged to the state as national land. These properties were, after all, one of the few material resources that the revolutionary government had at its disposal.

Another source of tension between the peasantry and the state was taxes. One of the major sources of discontent amongst the rural population had been the high level of Ottoman taxes. Even though now taxes were an expression of the social contract between equal citizens and their state and not exactions forced on them as oppressed subjects, and even though the overall tax burden was substantially lower than it had been under the Ottoman Empire, many peasants still resented the new levies and contested paying them. Compounding the tax issue was the fact that the peasantry bore the burden of feeding the revolutionary military, whether they wanted to or not. The sources report numerous episodes where armed gangs of Greek fighters descended on a village and 'requisitioned', that is, seized, food and animals. The result of these developments was that the peasantry deeply distrusted the revolutionary state and many withdrew from hostilities (Bozikis 2011).

This left the fighting to be done by the bands of irregulars, former bandits and *armatoles*. While they could be an effective guerrilla fighting force, they were ill suited for sustained, disciplined military campaigns; they owed their allegiance to their captain; and they were largely interested in pay and booty. After the Jewish and Muslim populations had been driven out of the war zones and their properties plundered, there was no one else left to loot and get booty from – except fellow Greeks or ships at sea. This meant that the men who constituted the rebel military expected to be paid by the

revolutionary state. Pay for the fighters placed an enormous fiscal burden on the Provisional Administration, and one that it often could not bear. Warriors looked to their captains to get them their pay and this obviously created great tensions between the military leadership and the government. When monies were not forthcoming, some captains gladly accepted Ottoman piastres and switched sides. This meant that one day's allies became the next day's enemies.

Politically, the tensions between the Peloponnesian faction and the one made up of islanders, diaspora Greeks, and men from central Greece increased to the point where the revolutionary government fractured. The faction that was technically the lawful government based on the Second National Assembly and led by Mavromichalis and Kolokotronis relocated the capital to Tripolis. This led to Koundouriotis and Mavrokordatos and their group declaring that they constituted the only legal government of liberated Greece. Civil war erupted, further jeopardising the future of the revolution. Captains loyal to one faction fought against those attached to others, refraining a pattern of behaviour that had plagued the region from the 1770s onwards. This internecine conflict cost Greece some of its best military leaders, like Odysseus Androutsos who was betrayed by his closest friend. The civil war put in jeopardy all of the gains of the previous three years. Internationally, however, for a variety of reasons, in 1824 the Greek cause became far more visible and took on a new importance in the diplomatic deliberations of the Great Powers. One of the great ironies of the war was that success was achieved at a time when the Greeks were in fact losing on almost all fronts because of self-inflicted wounds.

Philhellenism

On 5 January 1824, Lord Byron arrived in liberated Greece. He had been on the scene for some time, residing on the British-protected Ionian Islands. But his actual arrival on Greek soil was rife with both practical and symbolic importance. The Greek War of Independence touched a chord in Western Europe and North America in ways that none of the other post-Napoleonic liberal revolutions did. Imbued with a feeling of Romanticism, Christian humanitarianism and a burgeoning sense of neoclassicism, men such as Lord Byron found a 'noble cause' in the Greek struggle against the Ottoman Empire (Beaton 2013 is the best account of Byron's activities in Greece). Philhellenes, as these men and women came to be called, were a very

mixed lot but all together they played a critical role in the war (Droulia 2003; Klein 2000; Komis 2003).

One of the earliest and most important groups of Philhellenes was made up of military men. Almost all of these were soldiers who had fought in national armies during the conflicts that had raged from the mid-1790s and who were left without a war since the demise of Napoleon (Rodriguez 2009). Some came out of an admiration for the Greeks and others for more complicated reasons. The case of Nikolai Raiko captures the sentiments that motivated many. He was a Russian military officer who went to Greece to fight in 1822. After having distinguished himself many times in battle, he stayed in Greece after independence and was rewarded by President Kapodistrias, who made him military governor of Patras. After returning to Russia later in life, he explained that he joined the rebellion because of the 'the news of the feats [of my] coreligionists' and by 'a sense of national honor to aid the Greeks' (Prousis 1994: 52). His sentiments of religion and honour were widely shared by many. Another group of fighters who flocked to the Greek cause were revolutionaries whose own movements had been suppressed in their own country, such as the many men who belonged to the Italian Carbonari movement (Pecout 2004). Foreign freemasons supported the cause through groups such as *Les Enfants Adoptifs de Sparte et d'Athènes* which brought together French, Italian, Swiss and German freemasons (Rizopoulos and Rizopoulos 2008: 211). Then, of course, there were mercenaries who joined the Greek side for money. Foreign Philhellene soldiers played an important part in the war, especially after 1825.

Romanticism and Christian humanitarianism motivated many idealistic European and American young men either to go to Greece and to join the conflict or to remain at home supporting the Greeks by raising money and by lobbying with their respective governments. Romanticism's glorification of ancient Greek culture easily elided into eager support for the oppressed, 'enslaved' and debased contemporary Greeks. Leading Romantic artists and writers, such as Lord Byron in England and Alexander Pushkin in Russia, lent their names, gave money, and, in some cases, their lives, in support of the Greek cause (Güthenke 2008; Beaton 2013; Prousis 1994: 84–157). Their vision was shared by countless university students who had been reared on the Classics and who had embraced liberalism. Disillusioned by the stifling intellectual environment of conservative counter-revolutionary Europe, they saw in the Greek uprising a great

and noble cause: to repay the debt that the West owed to the Greeks. As Rufus Anderson, an American evangelical Philhellene put it:

The names of the learned Greeks are embalmed in history who ... brought the philosophy and literature of their forefathers into Italy [the West]. A like renown awaits the benevolent pious men, who shall take the lead in carrying back to Greece the improvements of Western Europe and America. (Anderson 1832: 23; for more examples of American views on the revolution, see Hatzidimitriou 1999)

Anderson epitomises the other dimension of Philhellenism: religion and Christian humanitarianism. The Greek rebellion was to these people both a religious war, pitting enlightened Christianity against 'barbaric' Islam, as well as an epochal clash of civilisations. Philhellenic organisations such as the British London Committee (founded in 1823), the French Comité Grec (1825), and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions were responsible for raising monies to support the insurgents, bringing the conflict to the attention of the wider world, and for keeping it there until the Great Powers could be cajoled into intervening. But would that intervention come in time to save the revolution?

The empire strikes back

By the end of 1824, it was clear to Mahmud II and his inner circle that a new approach was needed to crush the Greek insurrection. The sultan remained as wedded as ever to the plan to destroy the Greek rebellion by 'fire and sword', but it had become painfully obvious that the old-style military, based on Janissaries, deli cavalry, and irregulars, was obsolete and ineffective (Aksan 2009). A complete overhaul of the war machine was required but this would take time and money, and he was running short of both. Moreover, he knew from hard experience and from the example of what happened to his predecessor, Selim III, that reforming the military, especially the Janissaries, was a venture fraught with danger. He had for a long time harboured a desire to modernise the Ottoman army by introducing Western military organisation, weapons and tactics. But the persistence of conflicts in various regions of the empire, the Danubian Principalities, Greece and Persia for example, and the ongoing possibility of war with Russia rendered this almost impossible until 1824. Consequently, before he could reform his military, he needed help

confronting the Greeks and so Mahmud II had to strike a bargain with the only ruler who possessed a Western-style army that could help do this, and that was Mehmet Ali of Egypt.

Though nominally his vassal, Mehmet Ali was for all intents and purposes a ruler in his own right. As discussed previously, Mehmet Ali was an Albanian from Kavala who capitalised on the opportunity created by Napoleon's invasion of Egypt to obtain the position of Viceroy of Egypt and by 1811 he had consolidated his grip on this exceptionally important province. He instituted numerous reforms that bolstered Egypt's rural economy and, based on its export trade in sugar, wheat and cotton, the province flourished. Mehmet Ali deployed state revenues to build up his military. He established the first Western-style conscript army in the Near East: the Fellahin Army. Equipped with Western arms, including bayonet-mounted muskets, and trained by French advisors to fight in closed ranks, Ali's army became a formidable force (Aksan 2007: 306–13). At the same time, he also upgraded the Egyptian fleet. Mehmet Ali had already assisted his master by suppressing the insurrections on Crete and Cyprus and at this crisis moment Mahmud needed his assistance once again (Andriotis 2003).

The Egyptian viceroy's participation in crushing the rebellion was not based on any major objection to the Greek cause. Many Greeks in Alexandria and elsewhere in Egypt belonged to the Philiki Etaireia, and indeed some were even members of his government. Moreover, almost all of his economic advisors were Greek merchants and he knew that most of them supported the rebellion. Some even pleaded with him to stay neutral, but to no avail. Mehmet Ali's opportunism got the better of him. So, he listened to Mahmud's offer and they struck a bargain. In exchange for the formal cessation of Crete and Cyprus to his control and the appointment of his son, Ibrahim Paşa, as governor of the Peloponnesos, Mehmet Ali would unleash his army and navy against the Greeks. Rumour had it that the Morea was to be cleansed of Christian Greeks and colonised by Muslim Egyptians. As Mehmet Ali himself put it, with the addition of these territories, he would become 'the most important man in the Ottoman Empire' (Fahmy 1997: 38). Shortly after the agreement had been reached, Mahmud introduced measures to reform the Janissary army and to create a new one manned by troops trained in the European manner. Janissaries, especially those in Istanbul, resisted and threatened to topple the monarchy. But Mahmud struck first. In an event known as the 'Auspicious Incident', on 16 June 1826, the

Janissary Corps was abolished and thousands of Janissaries were executed (Aksan 2007: 313–42; 2009; Levy 1971). The creation of a new Western-style army called ‘The Trained Triumphant Soldiers of Muhammad’ commenced. While the reform of the Ottoman military was taking place, the war to crush the Greek rebellion continued with Ibrahim and his Egyptians playing the leading role.¹¹

In 1825, the empire struck back. Having secured the sea-lanes between Egypt and Crete and using the great island as his base, Ibrahim Paşa launched his assault on the Morea. He headed a formidable force, consisting of 10,000 regular infantry, 1,000 cavalry, 3,000 irregulars, 180 field artillery pieces, 25 warships, and 100 supply ships. On 24 February, his armada landed at Methoni in Messenia. Within a week, his men had secured a beachhead and captured the fortress of Neokastro. If they could take the Greek stronghold of Old Navarino, then they would have a base of operations from which they could threaten the entire Peloponnesos.

The Greeks paid heavily at this point for the disastrous civil war. The power struggle ended with Koundouriotis’s faction victorious and so it mobilised a strike force to confront Ibrahim. Some of Greece’s best commanders, like Giogrios Karaiskakis, Kitsos Tzavellas and Konstantinos Botsaris, confronted the Egyptians. Missing were other leading captains, like Theodoros Kolokotronis who was in prison facing a charge of treason, and their men, whose participation might have swung the contest Greece’s way. The revolutionary army gallantly defended Old Navarino but to no avail, and it fell on 23 May. Ibrahim quickly dispatched a force to seize the major roadways into the interior of the peninsula. At a place called Maniaki, Papaflessa and 3,000 men tried to stop them, and failed (1 June 1825). Without a pause, the Egyptian forces cut a swathe through the Morea, destroying villages and enslaving thousands of people as they went along, and in a matter of weeks, they had retaken Tripolis.

Kolokotronis and other leaders were released from custody, as everyone was desperately needed if the revolution was to survive. Ibrahim struck out in two directions. First, he marched on the capital of the Provisional Administration in Nafplion. A vastly outnumbered contingent of Greek and Philhellene troops led by Ioannis Makriyannis inflicted on him a stinging defeat at the Battle of the Mills. Nafplion was saved, but the same cannot be said for the city of Argos, which Ibrahim completely destroyed. The Egyptian army then marched into the mountainous interior of Arkadia where



Figure 3.3 Greek Herakles and the dragons, artist unknown. The baby Herakles killing the two 'dragons' sent to murder him. This lithography is an allegory on the Greek situation after the Egyptian invasion.

Kolokotronis has amassed a force of about 10,000 men, but more importantly, Ibrahim wanted to destroy the water-powered gunpowder mills at Dimitsana. After this highly successful campaign, Ibrahim retired to his base at Methoni to resupply his army in preparation for a new campaign in the spring of 1826. The war was going no better in central Greece.

The new Ottoman Serasker of Rumeli was a battle-hardened veteran, Reşid Mehmed Paşa, and he reprised the same strategy that had been adopted in 1821 and 1822, namely a two-pronged invasion. As the cartoon (Fig. 3.3) aptly shows, like the baby Herakles, the infant Greek revolution faced two dragons, an Ottoman one from the north and an Egyptian one from the south. The mythical hero slew his foes: would the Greeks do the same?

Forces totalling almost 35,000 men were divided into two contingents; the larger branch, led by Reşid Mehmed Paşa, marched down the Ioannina-Arta corridor in the west, the other made its way through Boiotia to Attica and then to the Isthmus. Having seized the initiative, he marched his army through the mountain passes of Epiros and descended into Aitolia and then Akarnania, leaving a path of destruction in his wake. His target was the fortress at Missolonghi. Whoever occupied this strategic location controlled the mouth of the Gulf of Corinth and the gateway into the Peloponnesos. By late April, his forces had laid siege to the city, whose population had burgeoned with troops sent to reinforce the garrison and with refugees. Through the summer of 1825, the contest continued with the Greek defenders repulsing Ottoman attacks and even launching some successful sorties. What saved the city, however, was Greek control of the sea, allowing Admiral Miaoulis to keep it supplied with food and war materials. In the autumn, Karaiskakis, probably the Greeks' best commander, arrived with reinforcements and was able to harass Reşid's forces from the rear.

Fortunes changed in December. First, Miaoulis and the fleet departed, meaning that Missolonghi would not be resupplied. Second, Ibrahim captured Patras and then crossed the gulf and joined Reşid. The city was now blockaded by land and sea, and repeated attempts by Karaiskakis and other Greek commanders failed to break through the Ottoman lines. By April conditions inside the fort were grim. The food supplies were exhausted, and that included all of the city's cats and dogs. Starvation was imminent. A desperate plan was hatched. On the night of 22/23 April, Karaiskakis would attack the Ottoman camp from the rear. This would be the signal for every able-bodied person in the fort who could carry a weapon to rush out and try to break through the Ottoman lines. Few made it. The old, the young and the infirm remained in the city to face the consequences. Thousands took refuge in the central armoury and committed mass suicide by igniting the gunpowder stores. Thousands more were captured and the lucky ones were sold into bondage; the heads of over 2,000 others were staked on the fort's walls.

The fall of Missolonghi was a catastrophe militarily but a victory symbolically. Much like the Alamo in American history, the self-sacrifice of the people of Missolonghi breathed new fire into the hearts of many. The defeat became a rallying cry for renewed resistance. Just as importantly the event resonated widely and loudly outside of Greece. News of the slaughter and the heroism of the



Figure 3.4 *Combat devant Missolonghi 1826* © Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, France. Popular lithograph published in Western Europe by Philhellenes in order to raise awareness of the plight of the Greeks fighting in the revolution.

Greeks spread across Europe and to the US. Artists such as Eugene Delacroix painted evocative and moving depictions of the events. More importantly a torrent of lithographs and drawings appeared in mass circulation periodicals (Fig. 3.4). Songs and even operas were composed, extolling the sacrifices of the Greeks and denouncing the barbarism of the ‘Turk’. People in Europe sang songs about Missolonghi and even ate their meals on plates and dishes illustrated with scenes from the siege. Missolonghi did more to mobilise mass support for the Greek cause than any other event in the war. But would that be enough to sway the governments of Europe to intervene before it was too late?

After Missolonghi, matters went from bad to worse. Reşid resupplied his army and marched eastward. He took the cities of Boiotia and in summer laid siege to the Greek forces on the Acropolis of Athens. In a last chance gamble to keep the revolution alive, a National Assembly was convened to try and restore unified leadership. A new provisional government was formed that appealed for aid from Europe. It also deployed whatever monies were left in the coffers to purchase supplies and to hire experienced fighters like Sir Richard Church and Lord Thomas Cochrane. The new leadership rallied the remaining rebel forces to try and save Athens. On this last

point, they were unsuccessful. Led by Makriyannis, the besieged put up a valiant defence but numerous attempts to break through the Ottoman lines failed. In one of these attempts, Karaiskakis was slain, depriving the revolution of its best general.

Political unity proved to be short-lived, and civil discord hampered the war effort once again. After almost a year's siege, Athens fell in 1827 and with its capture, Reşid restored Ottoman control over all of central Greece. Out-gunned, out-manned, and running desperately short of money and supplies because of the horrendous devastation wreaked in the countryside by Ibrahim's army of occupation, the situation was becoming grim for the Greeks and especially for one group of people – women.

The burden of the war increasingly fell most heavily on Greek women. In contemporary Greek popular culture, the women best remembered from the war are heroic figures like Laskarina Bouboulina and Manto Mavrogenous, who actually took part in the fighting (Angelomatis-Tsougarakis 2008). But far more prevalent were the thousands of nameless women who had to deal with the myriad challenges that the war presented. Women, no less than men, bear the burdens of war but this is especially the case in civil wars, like the Greek War of Independence, where the battlefield and the homefront occupy the same space. Women whose husbands, brothers and sons were off fighting had to take over the job of running the farm, undertaking all of the jobs usually done by men. And as war needs consumed ever more resources from the countryside, it was women as household managers who had to devise ways to keep their families fed. Increasingly, this was becoming harder to do. Poverty and destitution spread across the region and affected thousands.

Women also had to confront the physical ravages of war. Thousands of women were brutalised and raped by Ottoman troops, and sad to say, occasionally by Greek fighters as well. When villages were captured, the men were often executed and it was the women and children who were left to face the horror of slavery. Tens of thousands were sold in the slave markets of Istanbul, Smyrna and Alexandria; some were ransomed back by relatives but institutionally, because of the poor financial state of the Greek revolutionary government, outsiders had to step in, like the Austrian emissary at Messenia who ransomed thousands of women and children (Frank 2012: 427, note 63) or the American missionary Jonathan Miller who helped to redeem scores of people (Miller 1828: 73–4; 1974

[1829]).¹² These were the fortunate few; the majority of women remained enslaved for the rest of their lives. In sum, the war was wreaking terrible havoc on Greeks in the war zone, and by the end of 1827, the fate of the uprising itself hung in the balance. What had started as a Balkan-wide conflagration was quickly being reduced to a series of brushfires. If not for the intervention of the Great Powers, the rebellion would have been extinguished that year.

Great Power reaction

Great Power interest in the Greek rebellion can only be understood in the context of the conservative counter-revolution exemplified by Metternich's concert of Europe. Stability and maintenance of the status quo were the order of the day, but eventually the disruption to each of the powers' economic interests, as well as their mutual distrust, led them to intervene in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Greek revolution caused serious damage to the economic interests of all of the Great Powers and the US. This disruption in trade and commerce, alongside the growing tide of Philhellenism, increased the pressure on the Western governments to do something about the war. The persistent tensions and clashes between the Porte and Russia, however, meant that any Russian-led initiative to settle the Greek Question had little chance of success. Consequently, over time Great Britain came to play the leading role in the search for a solution.

Even though the British government had been unsupportive of the rebellion at the start, many prominent political figures personally were sympathetic to the cause. Also, the widespread philhellenic sentiment of the British people created a climate supportive of British intervention. In the summer of 1825, the Greek government passed an 'Act of Submission.' In this petition, the Greeks agreed to place themselves under the protection of His Majesty's government and they accorded Britain the right to select a ruler for the Greek state. Even though Prime Minister George Canning rejected the petition, many Members of Parliament, including some in his own party, pushed for acceptance. The Provisional Administration sent a similar petition to Russia and so the door was cracked for more direct Great Power involvement. It swung open wide with the death of Tsar Alexander I in December and his replacement by the much more ambitious Nicholas I early in 1826.

The new Tsar's more aggressive stance toward the Ottoman Empire and his more open sympathy to the Greeks increased the risk

of a Russo-Ottoman war that could lead to greater Russian influence in the region. To forestall this happening, Canning sent the Duke of Wellington to Russia to open negotiations (Cowles 1990). The result of these talks was the Anglo-Russian Protocol of 4 April 1826, in which they proposed that Greece become an autonomous state within the empire, that it pay a tribute to the Porte, and that its ruler be designated by the sultan. In short, it would resemble the Serb Principality. In return, Mahmud II was to withdraw his troops.

A number of developments protracted the negotiations somewhat. First, the war was going so well militarily that Mahmud II hoped to make the negotiations moot by reconquering Greece before he faced an ultimatum. Second, Canning died and his successor, the Duke of Wellington, had the Greek Question much lower on his foreign policy agenda. On the plus side for the Greeks, however, the Third National Assembly on 11 April 1827 elected Ioannis Kapodistrias as the new president of Greece. Because he enjoyed much greater credibility with the Western powers and in fact resided in Geneva, he was a more effective advocate for the Greek position. In addition, Nicholas I was becoming ever more impatient with the lack of action and the reactionary Charles X began to push for greater French involvement in the region. The result of these developments was the Treaty of London signed by Great Britain, the Russian Empire and France. This agreement reiterated many of the key aspects of the April Protocol, but it also called for an immediate armistice, set a time limit for compliance, promised Great Power protection during the armistice and authorised the dispatching of a joint fleet to guarantee the peace.

A combined French, Russian and British armada under the command of British Admiral Edward Codrington assembled in the Eastern Mediterranean. He was a distinguished naval officer and an ardent supporter of the Greek cause and a member of the London Philhellenic Committee. Consequently, in dealing with the two sides he was anything but even-handed. When it became clear that Ibrahim was refusing to adhere to the terms of the armistice, on 20 October 1827 the allied fleet sailed into Navarino Bay trapping the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet. When the captain of HMS Dartmouth tacked too close to an Ottoman ship, its commander, believing that he was about to be attacked, ordered his men to prepare fireships. Seeing this, the British officer thought that he was about to be attacked and so pre-emptively opened fire.

The battle that decided the war thus commenced. The allied fleet

consisted of twenty-seven ships armed with 1,324 guns and they faced eighty-nine ships with 2,240 guns. In spite of being badly outnumbered, as verbal accounts state and as underwater archaeology confirms, it was no conquest. Sixty Ottoman or Egyptian vessels were sunk at no cost to the allies (Papatheodorou, Geraga and Ferentinos 2005).

The defeat at Navarino severed the lifeline to Egypt that sustained Ibrahim's expedition. He now paid the price for his scorched earth policy. He determined to fight on, but a devastated Morea could not sustain his army.

Ibrahim's ... troops were sick and starving; consequently some regiments had revolted, some had deserted and tried to make their way to Rumelia by land, killing and stealing on their way. The rest were reduced to eating animals which had died, and even eating pigs. (Marsot 1984: 217)

He held out for almost a year, making periodic forays into the interior. Under an agreement negotiated between Mehmet Ali and Codrington, in October 1829 Ibrahim evacuated to Egypt what was left of his once mighty force. The Great Powers were now deeply entangled in the Greek Question, and though they had not intended it, it was on the side of the revolution, and this was especially the case with Russia.

The Russo-Ottoman War

In Istanbul, Mahmud II was both infuriated and humiliated. Outraged, he demanded that the allied fleet be withdrawn after its unprovoked act of war and that the empire be compensated for the loss of its ships. He directed his ire primarily at Russia. Ever since Ipsilantis's invasion, tensions ran high between the two empires, threatening war on a number of occasions. The autumn of 1826 was one of those moments. War was averted through negotiations that led to the signing of the Akkerman Convention. Because of turmoil inside the empire, and especially the destruction of the Janissaries earlier that year, the Porte was in a weak bargaining position and so had to accept unfavourable terms regarding the disposition of Serbia and the Danubian Principalities. Russian participation in the Battle of Navarino was the last straw.

On 20 December 1827 Mahmud II declared Jihad against the Russian Empire. The Russian 'infidels', the declaration of war

proclaimed, sought nothing less than the destruction of the 'Sublime State of Muhammad' (the Ottoman Empire) and the 'eradication of the Muslim millet from the face of the earth' (cited in Aksan 2007: 343–4). As protector of the realm and defender of the faith, Mahmud II had no choice but to fight.

The Russo-Ottoman War lasted until September 1829 and it was fought on two fronts: the Caucasus and the Danube frontier. Reşid Paşa was promoted to serasker of the army of the Danube, which contained the majority of the new Western-style army called the *Asakir-i Mansure*.¹³ He faced the brunt of the Russian forces and, through 1828 and into 1829, his forces held the line. Both sides suffered heavy casualties, more from disease and dysentery than from wounds suffered in combat. In the east, the Ottomans fought a mostly defensive campaign in the mountainous regions of the central Caucasus. Fortunes changed in the summer of 1829. Russian forces broke through the Danube defence line, marched through Bulgaria and in mid-August captured the city of Edirne. The vanguard of the Russian army was now only sixty miles from Istanbul. With his capital in a state of panic, Mahmud II had to acquiesce to Russia's demands.

On 14 September 1829, Russia and the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Adrianople/Edirne. The terms of the treaty were harsh. The Ottomans: (1) Ceded territory along the Danube and in Georgia, (2) Opened the Dardanelles to all commercial vessels, (3) Guaranteed Serbia autonomy, (4) Gave greater autonomy to Moldavia and Wallachia, (5) Agreed to pay a massive war indemnity, (6) Accepted Greek autonomy. This last clause merely ratified a situation that already existed. From early 1828 onwards, there was an autonomous Greek state and it was under new leadership.

The Kapodistrian regime

In the summer of 1827, the Third National Assembly elected Ioannis Kapodistrias president of the fledgling state. When he disembarked at Nafplion on 8 January 1828, it was the first time he had ever set foot in revolutionary Greece. As we have seen, Kapodistrias had enjoyed a long and fruitful career in the foreign service of the Russian Empire, at one point holding the rank of Privy Councilor to Tsar Alexander I. Greek nationalists, including the *Philliki Etaireia*, had long wooed Kapodistrias but he did not join them, though both of his brothers did. When Ipsilantis launched his invasion and started the rebellion,

Kapodistrias spoke out against it, expressing his belief that the time for action was not right. As the horrors of the war became evident, he used his position to encourage Russian intervention for humanitarian reasons. This led to his departure from the Russian Foreign Service. He relocated to Geneva and devoted himself to keeping the Greek Question alive in European political circles.

For a variety of reasons, then, he seemed an ideal choice for president at that crucial moment in 1827 when the Powers were still equivocating on what action to take and still deliberating on the fate of Greece. First, he was not associated with any of the existing factions and so was not caught up in the highly charged political vendettas that the civil war had created and which continued to hamstring every effort at creating a united government. Second, he was an accomplished diplomat and so had credibility with the foreign offices of the Great Powers. This did not mean that he was baggage-free. The French and British feared that he would tilt toward St Petersburg and make Greece a Russian satellite. And there were those in Greece who harboured reservations about him. But all told, he was the best man for the job. Nonetheless, in the end, his tenure proved to be as short as it was turbulent (Loukos 2003; Papageorgiou 2011).

Kapodistrias faced numerous formidable challenges. First, the Ottoman Empire had not given up hopes of still carrying the day. Indeed, even after the war with Russia began, Mahmud II continued to press the hard line even though some of his advisors were now telling him that the best course of action would be to seek 'peace at any price in the name of saving the remaining part of the Empire' (Sheremet 1992: 46). He remained committed to suppressing what the Porte continued to call the 'bandit revolution'. Though greatly reduced in number and in quality, Ottoman forces nonetheless still occupied much of central Greece, including the towns of Boiotia, Athens and Missolonghi. In addition, for the first nine months of his tenure, Ibrahim and the remnants of the Egyptian army were still on the loose in the Peloponnesos. Greece under Kapodistrias, then, remained a country at war, and it was a struggle that had to be fought under very unfavourable conditions.

Much of Greece lay in ruins and the rural economy had ground to a halt. A humanitarian catastrophe was also underway. Tens of thousands of people were homeless and penurious, many facing starvation (Komis 2003). Lastly, the state was deeply in debt and its coffers empty. But, because the Great Powers were deliberating what the boundaries of autonomous Greece would be, it was imperative



Figure 3.5 The new Greek army (1829) © Pierre Peytier. By the late 1820s, the Greek government had created a small army modelled on Western European forces. This painting by the French artist, Pierre Peytier, depicts an officer and some enlisted men in the new army.

that Greek forces liberate as much territory as possible so as to have a stronger claim on them at the negotiating table. To continue the war, Greece needed a Western-style army and so he took steps to create one (Fig. 3.5). In this task they were assisted by a French expeditionary force that arrived in August. Its task was to execute the removal of Ibrahim and his army from the Peloponnesos, and not to fight against Ottoman forces. Nonetheless, its arrival freed up Greek troops that could be deployed elsewhere (Saitas 2003).

In the spring of 1829, they launched attacks all across central Greece. Agostino Kapodistrias, the president's brother, and Richard Church led the forces in the west; Kitsos Tzavellas those in central Greece, and Ipsilantis those in the east. They were successful everywhere. In a moment fraught with symbolism, on 8 May 1829, the Greek army retook the fortress at Missolonghi. Then, in what turned into the last battle of the war, in late September, Greeks defeated

an Ottoman force at Peta. Appropriately enough, Ipsilantis commanded them and so finished what his brother had started.

Besides the war, Kapodistrias faced other challenges at home and abroad. He proved once again to be a fine diplomat, ably representing Greek interests at the Great Power conference on Poros in August 1828, which drafted the broad outlines of a settlement. The recommendations of the Poros group provided the framework for the London Protocol of 3 February that declared Greece to be an independent state that would be ruled by an absolute, hereditary monarch. To fulfil this role, the Powers approached Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. Though he was the widowed son-in-law of King George IV of Great Britain, he was acceptable to Russia and France. In April 1830, he agreed to become king of Greece, only one month later to change his mind. While the issue of the monarchy remained open, Kapodistrias continued to preside over independent Greece.

Domestically, he introduced many reforms aimed at solving some of Greece's most pressing problems. He promulgated legislation for land distribution, awarding grants of land to some, providing loans for the purchase of state lands, and awarding legal recognition to lands usurped during the first days of the war. New taxes were imposed. He created a new system of education, founding schools based on the British Lancastrian model. He built hospitals and orphanages to care for the casualties of war. Local administration was radically reformed, shifting the balance of power from the local community to the central state. In short, within the space of a relatively span of short time and during an ongoing war, Kapodistrias tried to mould revolutionary Greece into a 'modern' Western polity.

By temperament, Kapodistrias was ill-suited to play the role of mediator and conciliator; tired of having to barter with indigenous Greek power brokers, he opted instead to rule through a council of his appointees, most of whom were Greeks from the diaspora. His decision to suspend the constitution, disband the legislature and to rule by executive degree cost Kapodistrias a great deal of support, and split Greece's political class into two factions, one that continued to support him and another that wanted the restoration of constitutional rule (Papageorgiou 2011). This schism between Kapodistrians and Constitutionalists would have a lasting impact on Greek politics. In addition, his policies and his personality made him enemies.

In some regions of the country, the leadership even refused to recognise his authority. Petrobey Mavromichalis was one of them, opposing the president's policies and leading a boycott of paying

taxes. Finally, in January 1831, Kapodistrias had him arrested and imprisoned on the charge of treason. Once again, civil war was in the offing. The merchants and captains from the islands, who had borne the war at sea and in doing so incurred heavy financial losses, sought financial compensation. When Kapodistrias denied their demands, they threatened to secede from Greece. In August 1831, Greece witnessed the terrible sight of the revolution's two finest admirals, Kanaris and Miaoulis, fighting one another. Internal discord was threatening to tear the new country apart and, in the end, led to the president's brutal slaying.

'Brother, put your flocks in safety. The President, our father, has been murdered' (cited in Woodhouse 1973: 502). This unnamed shepherd was spot-on with his warning to his friend to hide his sheep and goats. Kapodistrias's assassination plunged the country once again into civil war, and this time the fratricidal fighting was even more horrendous and destructive than before. One could aptly refer to the years between the president's death and the arrival of King Otho as the period of anarchy.

After ten years of fierce fighting against their Ottoman masters and amongst themselves, the Greeks of central and southern Greece had achieved independence. But the new state's future was uncertain. Beset by deep internal divisions and, after the president's assassination, without a viable government, its fate hung in the balance. Kapodistrias perhaps captured the situation best when he concluded that 'Greece is now in the hands of God, and the Great Powers'. Great Britain, France and Russia would decide on the new state's borders and they had already selected its new king: Otho of Bavaria.

Notes

1. A wave of new scholarship is fundamentally revising our understanding of the Greek rebellion and its wider significance. Here are some examples of the type of revisionist work that has appeared over the last few years: Erdem 2005; 2007; Lekas 2008; Loukos 2008; Michailidis 2010; Rodriguez 2009; Theotokas and Kotaridis 2006; 2009; Veremis and Koliopoulos 2010; Vogli 2011. Of special importance are the two collections of essays edited by Pizantias (2009a; 2011a).
2. His ruling, however, did not go unchallenged. Numerous muftis spoke out against it as a violation of Sharia law, and a cleric under Paşyanoglou in Vidin even issued his own fatwa countermanding the one from Istanbul.

3. The Ionian Islands are Kerkira (Corfu), Paxos, Lefkas, Ithaka, Kefalonia, Zakynthos and Kythera.
4. Anscombe 2006: 95 discusses Ali's landed possessions. The monetary figure seems outrageously high and was probably inflated by Hurşid Paşa's enemies, who accused him of keeping part of Ali's fortune after the Lion of Ioannina was defeated. In 1837 one piaster equalled US\$ 4.69 in today's currency.
5. People from the nearby sanjak of Karafeyre (modern Greek Veroia) appealed to Ali to adjudicate a dispute. In his ruling, he employed the style and formulas of imperial, sultanic decrees (Anastasopoulos 2006: 28, note 8). Any of the sultan's subjects could present him with a petition of grievance and it was the ruler's duty to address it; this practice was critical to the relationship between the monarchy and its subjects.
6. This figure seems exceptionally high, but even if it is an exaggeration, the conclusion that taxes went up substantially seems obviously correct.
7. The agreement reached between the Deliyiannis, Londos and Perroukas factions was called the *Synyposchetikon*, in English the 'Compromissum', on 1 April 1816, and it constituted a truce of sorts: Stamatopoulos 2007: 152.
8. Only recently have scholars begun to explore the rich materials in the Ottoman archives in Istanbul in order to study the Ottoman response to the Greek rebellion. The results of their work are already providing us with new insights, see Erdem 2005; 2011; Ilicak 2009; Kitromilides and Ilicak 2010; Laiou 2009; 2011; Loukos 2007; 2008; Theotokas and Kotiaridis 2011.
9. For the rest of the decade, the divan only appointed ethnic Bulgarian clerics to the position of Patriarch, an indication of how completely they distrusted the Greeks.
10. On the constitutions and citizenship: Alivisatos 2003; 2011: 40–52; Anastasiades 1982; Michailidis 2010; Papageorgiou 2003; Rotzokos 2011a; Theodoridis 2003; Vogli 2007; 2009; 2011.
11. The best accounts of Ibrahim's expedition are Yiannopoulos 2003 and Sakellariou 2012.
12. On Ottoman slavery generally, see Toledano (1982; 1998); Erdem (1996: 126–7 and 2005: 70) discusses the issue of slavery ransoming during the war and Zilfi (2012: 123) notes that some Greek women enslaved in Egypt refused repatriation to independent Greece, presumably out of shame.
13. For detailed discussion of the war, see Aksan 2007: 343–61; Bitis 2006: 274–348.