

**Religious and Ethnic Motivations for the Philhellenic Movement During the Greek  
Revolution**

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Beyond the bright days of philosophy, science, math, and military valor, more contemporary Greek history is largely unknown to the public outside of academia in Western nations. To the Greeks however, every moment, from ancient Mycenae to the recent debt crisis, is a central part of the national identity, none perhaps more so than the 1821 Revolution. In this war, the first unified Greek nation in history gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish nation that had conquered Hellas<sup>1</sup> and her islands after taking the Byzantine capital of Constantinople in 1453. For such a significant moment in the history of Greece, why is it that this war is seldom taught or heard of in much of the West, especially given the fact that Classical Greek history, politics, and philosophy have remained a core part of western education for centuries? Interestingly, during the time of the Revolution itself, the West was acutely aware of the dynamic happenings in Greece. The Greek Revolution was a subject of great debates, powerful sympathies, and in a few cases, even direct military intervention by European nations and the United States. Great Britain, France, and Russia all contributed to the Greek war effort directly. The United States came close, but eventually resolved to remain uninvolved, preferring an isolationist foreign policy. This did not stop private American citizens and organizations from contributing to Greek independence with money, supplies, and in some cases, fighters and doctors. In fact, there were volunteers from all over Europe and the Americas fighting with the Greeks.

These powers, private individuals and groups, and many more across the world deeply identified with the Greek struggle and still recognized Greece as a foundation for their governmental structure, philosophical beliefs, and education, as a result of the Enlightenment Period. The Enlightenment saw a revaluing of texts from the Classical Greek era and a

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<sup>1</sup> The term Hellas is the Latinized version of the Greek word for Greece, Ἑλλάς. It is from this word that the word 'hellenic' comes from, which is important considering the nature of this work as an exploration of philhellenism.

rediscovery of democracy as more and more thinkers like Locke and Rousseau began to value the individual over monarchs. People who resonated with and supported the Greeks for these reasons were a part of the spreading philhellenic movement, as their writings, art, and debates would hearken all the way back to Ancient Greek thought for justification. Just as important, however, was the fact that the Greeks were white Europeans. Not only were they white Europeans, they were Christians, and under the yoke of an Islamic power. International philhellenes supported the Greeks not just because of Greece's cultural significance, but many viewed the Greek Revolution as a new holy war, wherein oppressed Christians were rising up to strike down their savage heathen masters from the East. While some scholars have dismissed the religious and ethnic factors as irrelevant compared to the Greek cultural significance, I argue that these factors were at least as important to philhellenes as the cultural one. To demonstrate the importance of ethnic and religious affiliation for international philhellenic support of the Greek revolutionaries, I analyze artwork and poetry created by international philhellenes that frequently portrayed the Turks were frequently shown as brutish savages, while depicting the Greeks as righteous and faithful. I examine publications from western governments and influential citizenry to demonstrate similar themes and thoughts in the political realm.

Some scholars contend that the philhellenic philosophical sympathies were the only reason why the West supported Greece. An article from 1927 by Edward Mead Earle suggests that the racial and religious components to western support for the Greek Revolution were negligible compared to the cultural sympathies of philhellenic thought. He points out that the Serbian Revolution had been fought a few years prior, and pockets of fighting continued in Serbia throughout the duration of the Greek Revolution. Yet the Serbians had failed to garner the type of support from the US and the European powers that the Greek Revolution had, despite the

fact that the Serbians were also white Christians revolting against the Ottomans.<sup>2</sup> Most powers either ignored it completely or expressed support for the Ottomans, preferring a maintaining of the status quo for peace's sake. Earle credits all of the western support for Greece to cultural philhellenism, as it is the only tangible difference between the Serbian and Greek wars in the eyes of the western spectators.

It must be remembered, however, that the Serbians are Slavic, and Slavs were seen in those days as a lesser race. They were lumped together with the other non-German, Latin, and Anglo races, such as Turks, Poles, Arabs etc. Joseph Roucek notes that "from about 1820 to 1880 there was a constant flow of immigrants from Europe... classified as 'Old Immigrants,' [they] were primarily Northern Europeans; they tended to be Protestant in religion and to resemble in other cultural aspects the dominant national pattern."<sup>3</sup> The Slavs, though they had white skin, were drastically different in culture and religion. The Slavs had been pagan longer than the German, French, and British regions of Europe, converting in the 10th century with Vladimir the Great. Slavic territories had also been occupied by Mongols in the Dark Ages, and later the Ottomans, limiting Slavic influence in and exposure to the Western world. Slavic thought and philosophy had also not been acknowledged very much, if at all, during the Enlightenment, whereas Ancient Greek contribution was prized and celebrated. The Greeks would also eventually be seen in the United States as belonging to these lesser races, but that would happen when they began immigrating to America in large numbers during the late 19th

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<sup>2</sup>Edward Mead Earle, "American Interest in the Greek Cause, 1821-1827," *The American Historical Review* 33, no. 1 (1927): 44-63. doi:10.2307/1838110.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph S. Roucek, "The Image of the Slav in U.S. History and in Immigration Policy," *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 28, no. 1 (1969): 29-48, [www.jstor.org/stable/3485555](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3485555).

and into the 20th centuries.<sup>4</sup> During the time of the revolution, however, their race was valued and admired.

As other sources used in this research will demonstrate, the Greeks were a race that was celebrated and admired in the decades leading up to and during the revolution. These sources, such as statesman Webster's 1822 speech and the responses to it, and philhellenic poetry demonstrate an irrefutable air of respect for the Greeks as an ethnic group. There are of course exceptions to this rule, but during the era of revolutions in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Greeks were highly respected as a race that lived up to the legacy of the Greeks of old. In his study, *Hellenes & Hellions*, Alexander Karanikas takes note of dozens of plays composed in the United States with plots and characters based on the idea of a modern free Greece, some of these plays predated the actual revolution by a few years, while others were written during or after.<sup>5</sup> The abundance of these plays shows that the plight of the Greek was a popular theme in the States, and Karanikas notes that Isaac Goldberg wrote in review of one of these plays that "the characters are 'virtually Americans, and Greece itself is described in terms but slightly altered from the famous line of the virginal Star Spangled Banner.'"<sup>6</sup> While Goldberg intended this as a criticism of the lack of a distinct Greek identity in the characters, this provides a valuable insight as to the perceptions of the Greeks as a race. If American playwrights depicted Greek characters almost exactly as they would American characters, this is a clear demonstration of the fact that Greeks were seen as a race equal to Anglo-Saxon whites.

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<sup>4</sup> For further reading on this, please see Roediger's *Working Toward Whiteness* (New York: Basic Books, 2005). For a comprehensive early 20th century perspective on Greek immigration and the Greeks as a race, see Henry Pratt Fairchild's *Greek Immigration to the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911). This work in particular claims that the modern Greek is nothing like his ancestors, as a result of centuries of interbreeding with Turks, Arabs, and other Oriental and African races.

<sup>5</sup> Alexander Karanikas, *Hellenes & Hellions: Modern Greek Characters in American Literature* (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1981), 7-8.

<sup>6</sup> Isaac Goldberg, as quoted in Karanikas, *Hellenes & Hellions*, 8.

Samuel Gridley Howe, an American doctor who sailed to Greece to aid in the Greek war effort wrote extensively on his experiences and his opinions of Greece and its people upon his return. He admits that they have some flaws, in that they are prone to taking advantage of travelers by extorting money from them, and that Greeks from various regions can have a variety of negative traits such as greed, hypocrisy, rudeness, cruelty, and fickleness depending on the area they hail from.<sup>7</sup> He believed they learned and adapted this nature after centuries of cruelty

**Sehr grewliche/erschöckliche / vorvnerhörte / warhafftige Neue zeitung/was für grausame Tyranny der Moskowiter/ an den Gefangenen/ hinweggeführten Christen auß Lysland/ beydes an Mannen vnd Frauen/ vnd Frauen vnd Kleinen Kindern/ begrebet/ vnd was täglich schadens er ihnen in irem Land zufüget. Dey neben angezeygt / in was grosser fahr vnd not die Lysländer stehen. Allen Christen zur warnung/ vnd beserung ihres Sündelichen lebens/ auß Lysland geschriben / vnd in Druck verfertiget.**



Zu Nürnberg bey Georg Keyserlein. M. D. L. X. I.

A publication from Nuremberg on the Livonian war. Russian soldiers shoot hanging civilian women. Image from Russian Universe by Sergey Armeyskov.

barbarous, and uncultured, not unlike the Turks and other non-white races. This is a common theme in the Western sphere regarding Slavs, and goes back several centuries before this specific point in history. A printing from 1561 Nuremberg, then in the Holy Roman Empire, depicts

endured from the Turks however, and could not speak highly enough of the Greek race. He writes that he was “surprised at finding *so much* national spirit, and *so much* virtue among them,” and that he waited “confidently for the day, when they will show themselves worthy of their glorious descent”.<sup>8</sup> He must have already had a positive view of Greeks racially if he was willing to sail across the world and put his own life in danger to aid their fight and heal their wounded. His experiences during the war only served to strengthen his ideas of the contemporary noble Greeks.

Meanwhile, Slavs were looked down on as savage,

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Gridley Howe, *An Historical Sketch of the Greek Revolution* (New York, 18280), xxii-xxiii.

<sup>8</sup> Howe, *An Historical Sketch of the Greek Revolution* (New York, 1828), vi.

Russians as murderous and evil. The image shows Russian soldiers during the Livonian War, which was still raging at the time, firing arrows into already hanged women for sport. Their corpses are suspended above a mass grave full of what appears to be children. The Nuremberg publication responsible for this depiction obviously did not think the Russians to be a very civilized group if they so easily accepted that they were carrying out acts of cruelty such as these.

During the time of the American Revolution, an American named John Ledyard undertook a journey from Paris, through several European cities, Russia, Siberia, and Asia, hoping to find a continuous path to the Americas. He recorded his journey and his observations. He recorded that

The nice gradation by which I pass from civilization to incivilization appears in everything; in manners, dress, language; and particularly that remarkable and important circumstance, *colour*... I think the same of *feature*. I see here the large mouth, the thick lip, the broad flat nose, as well as in Africa. I see also in the same village as great a difference of complexion- from the fair hair, fair skin, and white eyes, to the olive, the black jetty hair and eyes... I have frequently observed in Russian villages, obscure and dirty, mean and poor, that women... paint their faces, both red and white... The contour of their manners is Asiatic, and not European.<sup>9</sup>

Larry Wolff notes that Ledyard's "gradation" "was essential to the Enlightenment's construction of Eastern Europe" and that "the markings on his graded ruler of civilization were those of the itinerary he had sketched in Paris: to Brussels, Cologne, Berlin, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kamchatka... from west to east, from civilization to incivilization. Manners were first on the list of factors that measured the degree of civilization, but Ledyard added emphasis to the other factors of 'Colour' and 'Feature,' the variables of race."<sup>10</sup> Ledyard believed that the further east he traveled, the more barbaric and less civilized the peoples he

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<sup>9</sup> John Ledyard, *Travels and Adventures of John Ledyard; Comprising his Voyage with Capt. Cook's Third and Last Expedition; His Journey on Foot 1300 Miles Round the Gulf of Bothnia to St. Petersburg; His Adventures and Residence in Siberia; and his Exploratory Mission to Africa* (London: R. Bentley Booksellers, 1834), 264.

<sup>10</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 345-346.

encountered became. He had recorded these thoughts and observations in the 1790s, and the words quoted above were reprinted in 1834 in London, suggesting that these ideas had seen a resurgence in popularity abroad, or at least that they had remained influential.

After the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West in 476 CE, the Eastern Roman Empire, which encompassed Greece, Anatolia, Egypt, the Levant, and parts of North Africa, continued for another thousand years. The Eastern Roman Empire, which would later be referred to by historians as the Byzantine Empire, was dealt its mortal blow after centuries of warfare and hardship in 1453, when the Turkish Ottoman Empire took the capital city of Constantinople after a two month siege. The Greek islands and mainland would soon follow.

The Ottomans were similar to other Islamic states of the Middle Ages in their stance on religious minorities. Pagans were expelled, converted, or killed, but Christians and Jews were recognized as worshippers of the same God and allowed to live amongst Muslims, albeit as second class citizens. These citizens were barred from holding offices, did not have the same rights as Muslim citizens, and had to pay extra taxes. They also had to contribute to a system of military recruitment system known as *devshirme*. In this system, a government official would travel to Christian villages and neighborhoods, and forcibly take boys from the local families to be trained for the Janissary Corps, the personal guards and elite infantry of the Sultan himself. These boys were taught Muslim theology and complete loyalty to the Sultan. Initially, this policy was carried out ruthlessly, with orders such as that from Sultan Mehmed III in 1601 which stated: “The infidel parents or anybody else who resists the surrender of their janissary sons are to be hanged at once in front of their house-gate, their blood being considered of no importance whatsoever.”<sup>11</sup> This cruel system had all but died out by the time of the Greek Revolution, and

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<sup>11</sup> David Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence* (Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 2001), 11.

many Christian families during the time it was practiced saw it as a way for their children to escape a life of poverty and earn some glory and a reputation. Still, historian David Brewer notes that it was the “capricious inhumanity of the system that was forever associated in Greek minds with the centuries of Turkish rule.”<sup>12</sup>

Religious persecution was also a pressing concern among Greeks. The Sultanate allowed the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese to continue to function, and even extended it some power that it had not had during the Byzantine era,<sup>13</sup> but at the expense of the Archdiocese' independence. Priests and officials that did not carry out the will of the government were removed.<sup>14</sup> The Sultan used the church as a tool to keep his Christian subjects in line. It was also common practice for someone wishing to advance through the ranks in the church to have to bribe an Ottoman official for support first, often leading to extortion, as officials would require higher and higher bids from competing priests for offices within the church. Ancient churches, such as Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, were converted to mosques, and church-heads increasingly fell under the influence of the state, similar to the situation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the twentieth century. Historian Molly Greene states “patriarchs had to struggle hard to impose their authority on and maintain the loyalty of bishops, who, often as not, considered their primary allegiance to be to the sultan rather than to the patriarch.”<sup>15</sup> High officials in the church were often loyal to the Ottoman Porte first, and the church second.

It was the taxing that really drove the Greeks to war though. Greek peasantry often worked as tenant farmers on land owned by an Ottoman aristocrat and had to pay tithes in

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<sup>12</sup> Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> The Byzantine emperor ruled a mostly religiously homogeneous population (there were Muslims and Jews, but the emperor directly oversaw them) and thus did not have to use a separate authoritative entity to manage religious minorities.

<sup>14</sup> Merry Weisner-Hanks, *Early Modern Europe 1450-1789* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 428.

<sup>15</sup> Molly Greene, *Minorities in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), 4.

addition to the non-Muslim head tax. These taxes progressively increased throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, eventually resulting in entire village populations relocating to areas where tithing rates were not as steep.<sup>16</sup> This would lead to areas with incredibly low populations, and even more exploitation of the remaining people to keep tax income coming in.

Following the Enlightenment era, the Philhellenic attitude began to manifest itself in the academic and political world. There was a renewed focus on Ancient Greek texts and a widespread idealizing of Greek democracy as being the best and most humanitarian way to run a society, as compared to more absolutist monarchies of early modern Europe. The Enlightenment and the philhellenic movement led to an era of revolutions across the globe as more and more people saw that one person had too much power in their nation and wanted to give more to the citizenry. These movements had a resounding impact all the way into today, as revolutions are still cropping up for the very same reasons. Post-Enlightenment thinkers saw a piece of themselves in the democracy and philosophy of Ancient Greece, so had a deep and emotional response when learning of the state of modern Greece.

Following the initial uprisings in the Peloponnese in 1821, the Turks put pressure on the leader of Greek Orthodox Christians, Patriarch Grigorios of Constantinople to do everything in his power to bring those of his flock back under his control. In an article from *The Religious Intelligencer*, a Christian publication from Connecticut that ran for several years during the early 19th century, Grigorios “solemnly proclaimed... the curse and ban of the Church against all the Greeks who attempted to withdraw from the Turkish yoke,” and “had (probably by compulsion) made use of the Holy Gospel to impress upon the Greeks that their Turkish Governors were appointed by God.”<sup>17</sup> Despite his efforts, the attacks on Ottoman forces continued, and the

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<sup>16</sup> Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> Nathan Whiting, “Greece,” *The Religious Intelligencer* (New Haven, Connecticut: 1821), 148.

Ottoman authorities had him executed in April of 1821 on Easter Sunday. According to the *Intelligencer*, Turkish soldiers seized Grigorios and other clergy under him, as well as members of his congregation in or on their way to the chapel, imprisoning or killing them.<sup>18</sup> Grigorios was hanged on the front gate of the church that served as the headquarters of all of Greek Orthodoxy, which remains welded shut to this day in remembrance. His body remained there for three days, before it was given to the Jews of the city, who (likely under duress) dragged it through the streets and threw it into the sea.<sup>19</sup>

The Protestant West generally viewed Orthodox Christianity as superstitious and backwards, yet American publications treat Gregorios with respect and his death with such solemnity. A Scottish theologian wrote in 1845 that the Greek Church was “sunk in idolatrous error and superstition” and “exhibits little to gratify the mind of him who is enlightened by the oracles of God.”<sup>20</sup> Despite these sentiments on Orthodoxy in the West, the *Intelligencer* uses strong words such as “deplorable” and “murder” to illustrate the moral failure on the part of the Turks, words like “venerable” to describe the Patriarch, and goes on to say “it is certain that this execution will excite the utmost desperation among the Christians throughout Greece.”<sup>21</sup> This American Protestant work recognized the vast importance of the Patriarch of Constantinople to the Church of the East and expressed sympathy toward the Greeks as fellow Christians, while condemning the Turks as murderous infidels.

The Russians, which shared a similar Orthodox Christian religion, were unsurprisingly enraged by this as well. After the execution, Kapodistrias, a Greek who served Russia as Foreign

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<sup>18</sup> Whiting, “Greece.” *The Religious Intelligencer*, 148.

<sup>19</sup> Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence*, 104-105.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Dewe, *The Church: Or A Comprehensive View of the Doctrines, Constitution, Government, and Ordinances of the Church and the Leading Denominations into which it is Divided* (Glasgow, Scotland: Macgregor, Polson, & Company, 1845), 836.

<sup>21</sup> Whiting, “Greece,” *The Religious Intelligencer*, 148.

Minister, wrote an ultimatum to the Ottomans on behalf of Tsar Alexander. In it, “The Turks were accused of insulting the Orthodox faith, proscribing Russia’s fellow Christians, breaking Russo-Turkish treaties, and ““threatening to disturb the peace that Europe has bought at so great a sacrifice.””<sup>22</sup> In this ultimatum, Russia claimed to have more support from the Christian nations of the West and said that unless their demands were met, they would go to war on behalf of the Greeks. The Tsar, upon finding out that the body of the patriarch had been recovered by a Greek vessel and had been taken to Odessa, ordered a funeral ceremony “conducted with every elaboration of ritual and every mark of respect.”<sup>23</sup>

One of the bloodiest events of the war that perhaps earned Greece the most sympathy from the West was the Massacre of Chios in 1822. Rebels from the nearby island of Samos traveled to Chios to gather support. While most Chians were not inclined to support the revolution, as Chios was then a wealthy trading port within the Ottoman Empire and had no reason to worsen relations with their Turkish lords, a few did and proceeded to attack Ottoman strongholds on the island. Chios is only a few mere miles from the Turkish mainland- the Turkish coast can easily be seen from the eastern half of the island- and so the Ottomans were quick and ruthless in their response. About 40,000 Ottoman troops landed on the island, with orders to raze the towns and kill every child under three years old, every male over twelve, and every woman over forty unless she were to convert to Islam. Brewer writes that the original population of the island had been roughly 100-120 thousand, and after the massacres there were about eighteen to twenty thousand remaining, the difference all slain, sold into slavery, or

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<sup>22</sup> Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence*, 107.

<sup>23</sup> Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence*, 106.



Recovered remains of Chians killed at Nea Moni. Photo taken by author at Nea Moni, Chios in 2019.

escaped. Some estimates even put the number of survivors as low as two thousand.<sup>24</sup> The island would never fully recover from these events, its status as a Mediterranean trading power that it had enjoyed since the Classical Age ruined. People hiding in monasteries were put to the sword, the monasteries

looted and burned. Nea Moni, the most famous monastery on Chios, has recovered bones from the massacre that took place there and displays them today in solemn remembrance. Entire villages were destroyed or abandoned in the bloodshed.

International outrage over the massacre was immense. Theophilus Prousis, in a study of the Russian response to the Greek struggle writes “The name of Chios became familiar to the world at large as a result of the vengeance exacted by the Turks. The incident gave fresh impetus to the wave of European philhellenism.”<sup>25</sup> One of the most famous examples of philhellenic response to the Chios Massacres is the painting *Scenes From the Massacre of Chios*. Painted in 1824 by renowned French artist Eugene Delacroix, it shows a bleak scene that uses dark colors to illustrate a frightened and dangerous mood. On the right, a mounted Turkish soldier callously

<sup>24</sup> Brewer, *The Greek War of Independence*, 165.

<sup>25</sup> Theophilus Prousis, “Russian Philorthodox Relief During The Greek War Of Independence”, *History Faculty Publications* (United States: University of North Florida, 1985), 39.

looks down on islanders who reach up to him, begging for mercy. Around him, a claustrophobic scene of sick, dead, and wounded Greeks unfolds as children scream and reach for their dead parents and Greeks cast thousand-yard stares into the distance, accepting whatever comes next.

The only discernible difference between the Greeks and the Turks in this work is in their



attire, wherein the Turks wear

Turbans and uniforms as

distinguishment from the mostly

naked Greeks. While it is arguable

that this shows that the French did

not put as much emphasis on race as

other European countries and the

United States, this painting is still

very powerfully and emotionally

charged, and gives an insight into how

the French viewed this tragedy.<sup>26</sup> The

Turks are shown as inhuman and

A copy of *Scenes From the Massacre at Chios*, displayed on Chios in the islands Byzantine Museum. The painting had been taken down in 2009 as part of a program to improve Turkish relations, but was put back up after complaints from the public. Photo taken by author at Byzantine Museum of Chios, 2019.

monstrous, completely indifferent to the suffering at hand, while the Greeks, shown naked and in

agony, are innocents. This is a common propagandizing strategy, and has been done countless

times throughout history. Showing the enemy as inhuman and incapable of emotion is an

excellent way of getting an audience ready and willing to fight them, especially when this enemy

is not of the same race. The painting was displayed with some of Delacroix's other works in a

<sup>26</sup> Some sources say that some critics of the work even claimed that it was pro-Turkish. While Delacroix was a philhellene and expressed this with his work, this criticism shows that the French were especially outraged by the massacre and would lash out at anything they perceived as possibly anti-Greek or pro-Ottoman.

gallery in Paris. This painting is unlike other works of this period in France, in that it lacks a clear hero or celebrates a glorious moment. It only shows the suffering of innocents at the hands of their tormentors, and for this reason, it was heavily criticized in France as being pro-Turkish, or at least anti-Greek, as it showed no promise of salvation or deliverance for the Greeks. There was no hopeful message of impending victory or justice to be found, only despair, and this angered many French critics.<sup>27</sup>

American and British poets wrote numerous works in response to the Massacre as well, sharing the same sentiments, and appealing to the greater calling of Christianity to support Greece. One poem, published in 1834 by Lydia Huntley Sigourney called “The Martyr of Scio” follows a family that is confronted by an Ottoman soldier looking for loot.<sup>28</sup> The soldier orders the man of the family to hand over his treasures, and he responds “My birthright was the faith/ of Jesus Christ, which thou hast stolen away/ With hollow words...”. The Turk responds ““The faith of the Moslem, or the saber stroke,/ Chose thee, young Greek!”” The man chooses death and is slain in front of his family. This is another obvious portrayal of the Muslim Turk as savage murderers and reminder to the audience that the Greeks are fellow Christians under the rule of these oppressive Ottomans.

Another poem from the same collection written by an anonymous Englishman and published in 1822 simply called “Scio” is rife with Christian references and portrayal of Turks as savages.<sup>29</sup> One portion reads “Barbarian hands have smote thee [Chios]- In the/ hour/ Of peace

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<sup>27</sup> The Open University, “Delacroix- Classic or Romantic?,” *3.7 Massacre of Chios- A Critical Stir*.

<sup>28</sup> Lydia Sigourney, “The Martyr of Scio”, *Poems* (Philadelphia, USA: 1834), 154-56, in *Greek Revolution and the American Muse: A Collection of Philhellenic Poetry 1821-1828*, ed. Alexander Papas and Marios Bryon Raizis (Thessaloniki, Greece: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1972), 116-118. The word “Scio” is the Genoese way of saying Chios. The Genoese had occupied the island for centuries prior to the Ottomans taking it.

<sup>29</sup> Anonymous, “Scio”, *The Salem Gazette* XXXVI, No. 70 (London, September 10, 1822), in *Greek Revolution and the American Muse: A Collection of Philhellenic Poetry 1821-1828*, ed. Alexander Papas and Marios Bryon Raizis (Thessaloniki, Greece: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1972), 122-123.

their rushing wrath swept o'er the land." This poet plainly calls the Turks barbarians. Another verse referencing the suffering of the people of Chios reads, "This England saw, and felt not!- Christian/ land! / She saw the cross dishonor'd and the fires/ Of Christian temples quench'd in Christian/ blood; / And yet she felt not! Or her only thought/ Was how to cruch, by secret, cruel arts, / The spirit calling for revenge in Greece!" Great Britain had not yet gotten involved when this poem was written. The British government, though it sympathized with the Greeks, initially favored peace and maintaining the status quo of power in Europe. Pressure from various philhellenic groups, populace, and officials would eventually bring Britain into the war, but this was unbeknownst to the poet. For this, the outraged poet accuses the crown of seeking to stamp out "The spirit calling for revenge in Greece," and for failing to live up to the Christian name by the transgressions of the Ottomans go unpunished. The poem goes on to remark on how lamentable England has become, that it has not leapt to the aid of Greece following the destruction of the Christians of Chios.

There are several other examples of poetry following these themes that are not in reference to the Chios Massacre or any other specific events, but are still purposed as rallying calls to action for a western audience. In 1827, a poet who fittingly refers to himself as Leonidas published a poem titled "Ode- The Cause of Greece."<sup>30</sup> In it are several lines that refer to looting Muslim territory, and the last two lines of it read "Greece shall soon feel her wasting strength renew'd/ And deep in Moslem blood our hands shall be imbued." This poem clearly illustrates a deep animosity for Islam and a desire to exact vengeance for the suffering of the Christians of Greece. Yet another poem by an anonymous author entitled "Greece" is loaded with Christian

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<sup>30</sup> Leonidas, "Ode-The Cause of Greece," *The Album, and Ladies' Weekly Gazette*, I, No. 35 (Philadelphia: January 31, 1827), 8, in *Greek Revolution and the American Muse: A Collection of Philhellenic Poetry 1821-1828*, ed. Alexander Papas and Marios Bryon Raizis (Thessaloniki, Greece: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1972), 21.

references, calls to action against Islam, and even directly references the Crusades!<sup>31</sup> “Thou whose lion prince of yore, / Led to war the mighty men, / Who on Palestina’s shore, / Smote the turban’d Saracen: / Oh! If Mindful of your name, / Ne’er you wish one blot to light/ On your stainless wreath of fame, / Charge upon the Islamite.” The poet directly appeals to those of Anglo heritage in Britain and America by reminding them of the legendary English ruler King Richard the Lionheart and his Holy Crusade in Jerusalem. This reminder serves to hearken back to the days when men from England and all over Europe waged war in the name of Christ, and the poet hopes that this will serve to motivate the still Christian men of the Christendom to fight the same (only in regards to faith and a few cultural aspects) enemy that Richard fought centuries ago, that they might live up to the memory of their ancestors and not dishonor their name by letting their sacrifices go in vain.

Philhellenic politicians also expressed support whenever possible, and some even tried to get their nations directly involved in the war effort. One of the most unsung nations that did not end up getting involved was Haiti. Haiti had recently earned her own independence from France, and was unfortunately experiencing economic hardship due to a lack of trade partners, as none of the European powers nor the US wanted to have a new nation that was run by former slaves as a trading partner. This did not concern the Greeks however, who desperately needed the support and looked everywhere they could for it. A group of Greeks in Paris seeking international support wrote to Jean-Pierre Boyer, the then president of Haiti, asking for his aid. Boyer sent them a response letter in 1822. E.G Sideris, who studied this letter and published an English translation along with his own analysis, writes that these Greeks saw inspiration for their own

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<sup>31</sup> Anonymous, “Greece”, *The Philadelphia Monthly Magazine*, I (January 15, 1828), in *Greek Revolution and the American Muse: A Collection of Philhellenic Poetry 1821-1828*, ed. Alexander Papas and Marios Bryon Raizis (Thessaloniki, Greece: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1972), 31-33.

cause in the successful Haitian revolt, wherein oppressed slaves discarded their chains and threw their masters off of their land.<sup>32</sup> It remains unclear how race factored into the Greeks' calculation in requesting Haitian support, but it is a question that deserves further consideration and scrutiny beyond the confines of this paper. However, the oppression that the Haitians endured before obtaining their own independence may have resonated with the Greeks and their own suffering at the hands of the Ottomans.

In the letter, Boyer writes

Wishing to Heavens to protect the descendants of Leonidas, we thought to assist these brave warriors, if not with military forces and ammunition, at least with money... But events that have occurred and imposed financial restrictions onto our country absorbed the entire budget, including the part that could be disposed by our administration...If the circumstances, as we wish, improve again, then we shall honorably assist you, the sons of Hellas, to the best of our abilities.<sup>33</sup>

Boyer fills his letter with moving allusion to the glory of the past of Greece, but his appeal to the heavens should not be overlooked. Haiti, still having a very French culture despite just earning their independence from France, remained heavily Catholic and willing to fight for their fellow Christians in Greece had they the funds to do so. Later on in the letter, Boyer also refers to the recipients of his letter as "Citizens" of Greece, implying recognition of Greek sovereignty and technically making Haiti the first nation to recognize the state of Greece. Today, according to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Relations between Greece and Haiti are strong despite the geographical distance, as...Haiti was the first government of an independent state that recognised Greece's liberation from Ottoman rule in 1821."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> E.G Sideris, A.A Konsta, "A Letter from Jean-Pierre Boyer to Greek Revolutionaries," *Journal of Haitian Studies*, Vol. 11, No.1 (Spring 2005), 167-171.

<sup>33</sup> Jean Pierre Boyer, "LIBERTE (The Flag) Egalite," (Haiti, 1822), in E.G Sideris, A.A Konsta, "A Letter from Jean-Pierre Boyer to Greek Revolutionaries," *Journal of Haitian Studies*, Vol. 11, No.1 (Spring 2005), 167-171.

<sup>34</sup> Hellenic Republic, "Haiti," *Bilateral Relations* (Athens, Greece: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019) <https://www.mfa.gr/en/blog/greece-bilateral-relations/haiti/>.

The United States government came close to intervening in the war, thanks to campaigning from sympathetic philhellenic politicians. Daniel Webster, a congressman representing Massachusetts, delivered a speech to Congress in 1824, calling for the United States to contribute economic and military aid to Greece, by first sending an agent to survey the situation and determining how best to help. Having won American independence only a few decades prior, and fighting the Ottomans in the Barbary Wars very recently, it was not out of the realm of possibility that the United States government might send assistance to an area rife with cultural and trade implications. In his speech, Webster states that the dominion of the Ottoman Empire over Greece is complete, and incompatible with the western concept of conquest. To illustrate this, he claims that a western conquest would not

imply a never-ending bondage imposed upon the conquered, a perpetual mark, and opprobrious distinction between them and their masters; a bitter and unending persecution of their religion; an habitual violation of the rights of person and property, and unrestrained indulgence towards them, of every passion which belongs to the character of a barbarous soldiery. Yet, such is the fate of Greece.<sup>35</sup>

There is an (unintended) element of irony in Webster's statement, as future United States conquests would look strikingly similar to this, not to mention the treatment of slaves in the United States which modeled many of these conditions, but for now it is important to note that he describes Ottoman rule not only as unjust, but also "barbarous."

Webster goes on to express a disdain for Islam when he states "the religious and civil code of the [Ottoman] state, being both fixed in the Alcoran [Koran], and equally the object of an ignorant and furious faith, have been found equally incapable of change." He follows this up by saying that this is a direct cause of Christian suffering within the empire, and that the suffering felt by the Greek Christians is the worst of all of the injustices of the world, because the Greeks

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<sup>35</sup> Daniel Webster, *Mr. Webster's Speech on the Greek Revolution* (Washington DC: John S. Meehan, 1824), 29.

are a superior and enlightened people ruled by barbarians.<sup>36</sup> Webster wanted the United States to intervene because there were fellow Christians and members of what he saw as a higher race being governed by Muslim Turkish barbarians.

The day after Webster delivered his speech, Charles Adams recorded his response in his personal diary. Adams did not record much by way of his own thoughts regarding the Greek Revolution, and instead took note of the debates going on within the Congressional session. Overall, Adams records the tone and mood of these congressmen as sympathetic and generous in regards to the Greeks; however, this does not mean they wished to intervene in the revolution. The United States was still largely isolationist at this point in history, at least regarding its foreign policy with Europe, and it shows in the debates recorded by Adams. According to Adams, Congressman Joel Poinsett of South Carolina spoke, and he was of an isolationist mind. He did not want to intervene, favoring as little activity in Europe as possible so as not to attract the attention of colonial powers. He held a tremendous amount of sympathy for the Greeks and an animosity for Turks though, which is shown when he says “It is impossible to contemplate the contest between the Greeks and the Turks... without feeling the strongest indignation at the barbarous atrocities committed by the infidel oppressor, and the deepest interest in the cause of a brave people, struggling alone, against fearful odds, to shake off the yoke of despotism.”<sup>37</sup> After Poinsett spoke, Adams records that Congressman Randolph rose to speak for the first time in two years, and said that a previous suggestion to support independence movements in South America instead of Greece would be “as dangerous to the peace of this country as any steps across the Atlantic. We should not look out of our own home and not waste our strength in affairs with

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<sup>36</sup> Webster, *Mr. Webster's Speech*, 30.

<sup>37</sup> Senator Poinsett speaking on the Greek Revolution, *The Greek Cause*, HR, 18th Congress, 1st Session, *Annals of Congress* (January, 1824), 110.

foreign nations.”<sup>38</sup> These congressmen saw attracting any attention from Europe as a danger, perhaps rightfully so as the War of 1812 had only been concluded a few years prior, and at enormous cost in money and lives to the United States. With that in mind, he opposed American intervention in Greece despite being able to sympathize with the Greek cause. However, they were still passionately moved by the struggle of the white Christian Greek.

To the 1820s western world, the Greek Revolution was much more about the central identities of Christian and Muslim, and European and Turk than it was about Ancient Greece. These fundamental differences of culture and appearance were what served to differentiate this war from other post-Enlightenment revolutions of this era. Few of these wars had such a bloody proclivity for the targeting and mass-killing of civilian populations, because most of these wars were between peoples of a similar demographic composition, racially and religiously. The Greek Revolution was born from centuries of religious and racial resentment, which served to drive a wedge between two ethnicities that still exists today. The revolution did nothing to address this fundamental problem of identity, as evidenced by the following two centuries of warfare and tension that Greece and Turkey still share. Even today, these two countries are bitter rivals, but fortunately, this rivalry mainly exists among the governments and nationalists of each country. Most ordinary Greeks and Turks get along fine with one another, and even do business regularly. That being said, the two have recently come close to war, with Turkish intrusion on Greek waters and airspace, and the Greeks harboring fugitives from the Turkish coup of 2016. Recent Turkish aggression in the Middle East is also serving to raise suspicion in Greece and the Balkans. If Turkey continues with military action in Syria, a prominent Russian ally, there is a risk of NATO being dragged into conflict against Russia and her allies. These tensions have contributed to the

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<sup>38</sup> Charles Adams, “Tuesday 20th,” *Diary of Charles Francis Adams*, Vol. 1, (Washington, 1824).

overall uneasiness between the nations of the Christian West and the Muslim East.

Understanding the roots of this bitter resentment that they have for each other is crucial for bridging the gap in the future, and someday, these two peoples can exist in a mutually beneficial state of peace and prosperity.

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