
*Enlightenment and Revolution: The Making of Modern Greece* ventures to reconstruct the history of Modern Greek political thought during the era of the Enlightenment. This was the first encounter of the ideas of Western modernity with the oldest European intellectual tradition and, thus, the earliest moment of transmission of the political, philosophical and moral ideas of the West beyond the northwest core of the Enlightenment. In a sense, this encounter could be seen as the beginning of globalisation of the ‘Western’ ideas and values. But Kitromilides had yet another motivation in studying the social and political thought of the Neohellenic Enlightenment. He wanted to explore the sources of authoritarianism in Greek society – keep in mind that he began graduate school during the Greek military junta in 1972. Many scholars and analysts have blamed Greece’s weak institutions and political instability upon the Ottoman past, but Kitromilides emphasises the inchoate, fragmented and mediated encounter of Greek society with modern liberal ideas. With this work Kitromilides has taken a field of research, heretofore dominated by literary history approaches, and transformed it by examining it through the prism of political theory and the history of political thought.

Following an Introduction to the American Edition, there is a masterfully written *Prologue* that situates the work in the literature and unpacks the political meaning of the Enlightenment. Then the author turns to the hardest to follow but most rewarding chapter in my view, Chapter 1, entitled ‘The Long Road to Enlightenment’. In this chapter the reader is introduced to relatively unknown figures from the contemporary perspective. One finds conflicted personalities with simultaneous loyalties to the Ottoman Sultan and an emerging cosmopolitan identity: priests who wanted to reform religious education and jeopardised their life in the process and social elites that were ambivalent about the ideological transformations taking place and were trying to adapt to them. This chapter sets the stage and explains the significance of the founding of new schools, the circulation of new ideas and the formation of a literate imagined community of Greeks across the various ‘Enlightenment hubs’ that existed at the time. Together with the following two chapters on historiography and geographical thought, respectively, they build the context for the examination of the evolution of political thought. In the rest of the book, the role and political ideas of Evgenios Voulgaris, Nikiforos Theotokis, Iosipos Moisiodax, Rhigas Velestinis, Adamantios Korais and the anonymous author of *Hellenic
Nomarchy are expertly illuminated. Each chapter is rewarding in multiple ways: as a history and as a revisionist narrative, simultaneously.

From the point of view of nationalism studies, it is important to note that the author does not fall prey to the notorious practice of methodological nationalism or anachronism. He is carefully choosing terms and conveys the complex and premodern conditions that were dominant in the late Ottoman Empire. Moreover, Kitromilides’ narrative is not teleological either. Often times, we are faced with linear narratives whose goal seems to be to justify – or glorify – a certain historical trajectory. His account, by contrast, is grounded in a rich social analysis that tries to recover the historicity of intellectual phenomena. Methodologically his writing is akin to Elie Kedourie’s Nationalism and Quentin Skinner’s The Foundations of Modern Political Thought. He conducts a thorough historical sociology focusing not only on the ‘heroes’ of the Neohellenic Enlightenment but also on the social establishment of the time and its reactions to educational and political innovations; and, at the same time, investigating a wide range of counterfactuals for an initially religiously defined community of Greek-speaking people in an expansive Greek world, which ultimately – with the decisive intervention by scholars like Adamantios Korais – became a modern nation living in a clearly delimited nation-state. For example, one is left wondering what the fate of political liberalism would have been if the initial Greek kingdom included the cities in Northern Greece and Western Asia Minor where the Enlightenment had taken root or if the Bavarian dynasty attempted to industrialise the newly established kingdom.

Kitromilides’ book is a required reading for anyone that wants to understand the making of Modern Greece. He both challenges the narrative of the unbreakable continuity of the Greek nation and criticises the superficial contempt for the Orthodox Church while pointing at the importance of the continuity of the Greek language and literary tradition. Thus, he provides us with the necessary knowledge to comprehend the antecedents of the Greek War of Independence and sets the stage for appreciating John Petropulos’ Politics and Statecraft in the Kingdom of Greece 1833–1843 and George Th. Mavrogordatos’ Stillborn Republic: Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922–1936. The three works constitute the major landmarks of scholarship for understanding the nature of Greek politics and together help us make sense of the ideological and social foundations of the post-World War II era in Greece.

This book is the most authoritative attempt to capture the dialogue between the core, the intervening periphery and Greek thinkers over the collision of Enlightenment ideas and local traditions of the Greek cultural world. Published for the first time in Greek in 1996, this edition is bibliographically updated, but the structure and theoretical framework remained intact barring the incorporation of Jonathan Israel’s trilogy on the Enlightenment. Kitromilides contrasts the American tradition of liberalism to highlight the discontinuities and failures of Greek liberalism. After all, ‘understanding the reception and fate of the Enlightenment in Greek culture and politics holds the key to the understanding of contemporary Greece and its prospects’ (6).
But *Enlightenment and Revolution* is not merely a contribution to the scholarship on the Greek Enlightenment; it is also a genuine contribution to our understanding of the Enlightenment itself. For instance, reading the chapter on ‘The Long Road to Enlightenment’ allows one to appreciate the social conditions and difficulties within which unsettling ideas enunciated by, among others, John Locke or Francis Bacon had to operate in continental Europe. Moreover, one could read the book as a masterful ‘impact evaluation’ of these ideas, but also of events such as the French Revolution or the Napoleonic Wars, across space. Avoiding teleology, embracing historical contingency and opting for a ‘non-linear dialectic’, Kitromilides demonstrates both the direct and mediated causal impact of the ideas of the Enlightenment in the Greek world.

Kitromilides wrote this book with post-Junta Greece in mind. He wants the reader to focus on the incomplete incubation of liberal ideas in Greece; to highlight the stillborn character of the Greek Enlightenment. The historical synthesis that emerged immediately after the Greek War of Independence was the answer to an intense confrontation between various proponents of the Enlightenment – secular, focusing on *reason* and inspired by revolutionary classicism rather than the Christian tradition – and social forces defending the Greek Orthodox Church – Christian virtues, emphasising *revelation* and preserving the Byzantine tradition. This synthesis was never fully at ease with the political liberalism of the small circle of Greek Enlightenment figures but took shape into what the author calls ‘an illiberal irredentist nationalism’ (337) as a result of structural constraints, in particular ‘a traditional, religiously oriented, and largely non-literate peasant society’ (338). In fact, many of the salient social cleavages in contemporary Greek politics can be traced back to these–intellectual and physical battles of the early nineteenth century if not earlier. All in all, the ‘premature political modernization’, as defined in Samuel Huntington’s *Political Order in Changing Societies*, led to the distortion of state institutions, giving rise to multiple military coups, entrenched patronage relations and a fragmented society that struggles to make the passage to modernity. *Enlightenment and Revolution* puts the failure of political liberalism in Greece at the epicentre of any attempt to explain Greece’s troubles–old and current alike.

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