



Greek National Schism, 1917

Topic A: Ensuring Defense in the Midst of the National Schism by Choosing an Alliance in WWI

Topic B: Returning the Country to Normalcy and Concluding the Domestic Conflict

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Topic A: Ensuring Defense in the Midst of the National Schism by Choosing an Alliance in WWI

Background:

Greece became an independent nation after a decade-long struggle with the Ottoman Empire ending in 1830. While gaining an independent nation, Greece still did not control surrounding territory home to Greek citizens, with Greeks outside of Greece outnumbering those inside four to one. This gave birth to the “Megali Idea”, or the “Great Idea”; the theory that Greece should control the territory they had under the Byzantine Empire and that all ethnic Greeks ought to be united into a single state. These territories like Cyprus and West Anatolia had been under Turkish rule since the fall of the Ottoman Empire and contained a great majority of Greeks. This theory would control a great deal of Greek foreign policy throughout its modern history.

The intention to enforce the Megali idea led to high tension with neighboring states, especially the Ottomans. This would cause concern amongst citizens, and discontent with King Otto’s rule would cause him to create the country's first constitution since independence, the Greek Constitution of 1844. This created a bicameral parliament with the Senate and Assembly. As most parliamentary positions were given to higher ranking military officials, the government took more aggressive military stances in Eastern Europe. After the reign of King George I, The Greek Constitution of 1864 was established, which created a single chamber parliament with the removal of the senate, and limited the power of the king limiting his powers to the ones listed in the constitution.

Current Situation:

Venizelos has been elected the Greek Prime Minister and his rivalry with the monarchy and specifically Constantine has divided the country. The physical separation of the two governments across the country with Venizelos setting up his own provisional government in Thessaloniki, as well as a lack of an ability to work together has halted any governmental progress. With most of the Greek people siding with Venizelos, and the monarchy and high ranking officials siding with Constantine, the only thing the Greek people have in common is the desire to reinstate the Megali idea to restore Greece to its former glory. The majority of Venizelos supporters disliked Constantine mainly due to his tendency to sympathize with German ideology and leaders, causing potential to lose a part of Greek culture in their society. With lack of governmental cooperation, this leaves the country open to attacks from enemies like the Ottoman empire as well as unallied during the great war. With each side ruling the others actions as illegitimate this causes the citizens to question who holds the majority of the power.

Questions to consider:

1. Which side should be supported in the disagreement?
2. How should the monarchy and parliament be reunited?
3. What will a unified government look like?

Topic B: Returning the Country to Normalcy and Concluding the Domestic Conflict**Background**

The current modern Greek military traces its beginnings to the war for independence, created by the provisional Greek government. With little money, the funding for the military fell apart until 1824, where it was reestablished. Soon after a conscription was created, and the military gained a drastic rise in troops, creating a stable Greek military for the first time since its independence. This provided a major upgrade from the militia groups and rebel soldiers used to defeat the Ottomans. The Greeks could now rely on themselves to maintain autonomy instead of relying on aid and troops from its allies in Britain and France. Because the military was under the control of the French, it was full of French influence which helped the military with the needed experience to be effective. Around this time the Greek navy was created. Their navy would be crucial going forward as Greece is a peninsula surrounded by the Mediterranean sea. This would ensure the defense of Greece from naval attacks as well as establish it as the only nation in the Balkan region with a functional navy.

These military changes would prove helpful as Greece joined the Balkan League as its alliance in the Balkan War. While fighting battles on two fronts, Greece emerged victorious, helping the nation gain alliances with Bulgaria and Serbia. This alliance would dissolve in the second Balkan War, as they occupied Macedonia causing a break in the alliance. The Greek Navy was able to capture many islands in the Mediterranean and defeat the Ottoman naval fleet. While the war had come to an end, the Treaty of London failed to meet the needs of both sides, leading to everlasting tension in the region, specifically over Macedonia. The Balkan Wars were extremely important in shaping Greece as it nearly doubled in size and paved the way for political disagreement to follow.

Current Situation:

The Great War has broken out across Europe and the Greek state is divided on which side to join. The Triple Entente requested an alliance first, offering protection and West Anatolia to the Greeks. Venizelos and many of the low-ranking military officials in Greece are in support of taking this offer. However, due to Constantine's pro German stance, he decided to wait for a counteroffer from the central powers. This offer came with the offer of allegiance and Cyprus. Constantine's wife, Queen Sofia, was a sister to the German leader Kaiser Wilhelm II, and he felt a strong connection to German ideals and values, although due to pressure from the parliament he did not take the offer. This pressure came from the treaty that was made with Serbia where Greece had offered to protect them in case of invasion, and Venizelos felt as if that should be honored. With the monarchy and religious leaders supporting the central powers, and the parliament and soldiers supporting the triple entente, the country is at a standstill and the people are angry as they feel like winning the war is the last way for them to gain back the land of the Byzantine empire and honor the Megali idea.

Questions to Consider:

1. How can Greece best reconstruct their government?
2. Should Greece realize the Megali Idea?
3. Would the execution of the Megali Idea benefit national unity?

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