

## MEDIAEVAL ORIGINS OF MODERN GREEK NATIONALISM\*

Modern Greek historians consider the capture of Constantinople by the Westerners of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 A. D. as a convenient, even an appropriate point either for ending their historical account of the Eastern Roman Empire — Byzantium — or for beginning their historical narrative of modern Hellenism.<sup>1</sup> In justifying this approach, they note that several symptoms of the neo-Hellenic as against the Roman Byzantine spirit become visible after that event. They suggest that modern Greek nationalism starts dawning after 1204 among the successor kingdoms of the Byzantine Empire, in the Despotat of Epirus and the Kingdom or “Empire” of Nicaea, especially; that this dawn is dimmed temporarily after Michael VIII Palaeologus recaptures Constantinople in 1261 and tries to reestablish the semblance of the old empire; and that new rays of neo-Hellenism radiate mainly from the Despotat of Morea in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, to be extinguished by the capture of Constantinople in 1453 by the Osmanli Turks and their conquest of the Peloponnese a few years later. Eventually a new dawn of nationalist light pierces the dark ages of the “Tourkokratia,” presaging the glorious sunrise of nationalism that occurs in the times of Rhigas Velestinlis and Adamantios Korais at the turn of the century.

In this paper, an attempt will be made to test the above views about the origins of modern Hellenic nationalism in the period 1204-1453 against modern concepts about the emergence of nationalism drawn from the realms of political science and sociology. The hypotheses put forward may serve to orient historians of the period toward areas of further research for the purpose

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1. A. E. Vacalopoulos, *History of Modern Hellenism* (in Greek), vol. I, (Thessaloniki, 1961), pp. 43-44, in discussing this matter refers to S. Zambelios, C. Paparrhigopoulos, C. Amantos, and J. Voyatzidis.

of proving or disproving these hypotheses and for purposes of historical explanation and methodic history writing. As for the feedback from this further research and research in other historical areas, it may help clarify the problem of nationalism for the benefit of political scientists and sociologists as well, by providing data useful for comparative political analysis.

Nationalism, according to most students of this political and sociological phenomenon, first rose in western Europe toward the end of the eighteenth century, with Rousseau and Herder as its prophets. It received a dynamic impetus from the American and especially the French revolution, which inaugurated the "age of nationalism," and was accompanied by democracy and industrialization.<sup>2</sup> Nationalism has been defined as "a state of mind permeating the large majority of a people and claiming to permeate all its members. It recognizes the nation-state as the ideal form of political organization and the nationality as the source of all creative cultural energy and of economic well-being. The supreme loyalty of man is therefore due to his nationality, as his own life is supposedly rooted in and made possible by its welfare."<sup>3</sup> As for a "nationality," this is a group of "people who speak either the same language or closely related dialects, with the same customs, and who cherish common historical traditions, and who constitute, or think they constitute a distinct cultural society."<sup>4</sup> From western Europe and United States,

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2. H. Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1961), pp. vii and 3. This book was first published in 1944.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17. C. J. Hayes, *Essays on Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1962), p. 6, defined nationalism as "a condition of mind among members of a nationality, perhaps already possessed of a national state, a state of mind in which loyalty to the ideal or the fact of one's national state is superior to all other loyalties and of which in one's nationality and belief in its intrinsic excellence and its 'mission' are integral parts." According to a more recent definition, "the nation is a community of people who feel that they belong together in the double sense that they share deeply significant elements of a common heritage and that they have a common destiny for the future," R. Emerson, *From Empire to Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 95. Certain biologists stress the factor of territory as one of the deeply significant elements and use the term "biological nation" as "a social group containing at least two mature males which holds as an exclusive possession a continuous area of space, which isolates itself from others of its kind through outward antagonism, and which through joint defense of its social territory achieves leadership, cooperation, and a capacity for concerted action," R. Ardrey, *The Territorial Imperative* (New York: Atheneum Press, 1966), p. 191. A looser type of community is the *noyau* which "implies a primitive evolutionary step toward societies characterized by mutual aid," *ibid.*, p. 167.

4. Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 5. Kohn, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14, emphasizes common descent, language, territory, political entity, customs and traditions, and religion as objective features of a nationality. K. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (Cambridge, Mass.: M. I. Press),

this "ideology" or secular religion spread eastward and westward, undermining first the Spanish colonial empire in the Americas, and then the Austrian and Ottoman multinational empires, eventually extinguishing both in World War I; contributing to the secession of certain nationalities from the Russian Empire, likewise during World War I; and finally, since World War II, hastening the process of decolonization which is still going on in our times.

Partisans of such a school of thought about the origins and growth of nationalism in the world are hardly likely to agree with the proposition that the roots of neo-Hellenic nationalism are to be found in the late Middle Ages, as several modern Greek historians maintain. For how could Greek nationalism antedate a social and political phenomenon that first developed in the eighteenth century West? Indeed, they dismiss as "isolated germs" of nationalism similar phenomena appearing in the mediaeval or even the Renaissance West.<sup>5</sup> Marxist historians are likely to share this scepticism, unless they manage to perceive signs of the development of a bourgeois class during the years of morcellation and disintegration of the Byzantine Empire, as one of them, a Greek, does indeed.<sup>6</sup> For Marxists believe that nationalism is part of the ideological superstructure of that particular class, and that the bourgeoisie is the bearer of that ideology.

Were one, on the other hand, to approach the problem from the sociological viewpoint, which is far less historically-oriented than the previously mentioned politico-historical school of thought or the dialectical materialism of Marxists, it would be easier to accept the views of those modern Greek

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p. 71, gives, on the other hand, a functional definition of nationality. Membership in a people, he writes, essentially consists in a wide complementarity of social communication. It consists in the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group than with outsiders.

5. Kohn, for instance, sees "a first brief flowering" and isolated germs" of nationalism in fifteenth century France but notes that this "new sentiment did not reach the masses," *op. cit.*, p. 112. In Italy, he writes, Petrarch and Cola di Rienzo were forerunners of modern nationalism" but their sentiments "were confined to a narrow circle of literary men" and the people and ruling groups were indifferent to these sentiments, *ibid.*, pp. 98, 100. He terms Machiavelli likewise a "forerunner of Italian nationalism," *ibid.*, p. 121. With regard to Brinta during the Renaissance, he writes that "nationalism remained confined to a small educated class who read the ancient authors," *ibid.*, p. 168. In Ireland, he observes, the first effort to found the Irish nation in the sixteenth century failed because of the backwardness of the people, *ibid.*, p. 466. Unlike Kantorowicz (see note 21 below), Kohn emphasizes the factor of humanism in the development of nationalism in the West.

6. I. Kordatos, *History of Modern Greece* (In Greek), vol. 1 (Athens: Publications of the Twentieth Century, 1957), pp. 16-19 (on nationalism in general, following Stalin's definition), 21-23, and 28.

historians who perceive the beginnings of Greek nationalism in the period between 1204 and 1453. Thus, Max Weber has noted that ethnic groups share the same language and customs and may also entertain a subjective belief in their common descent, regardless of whether an objective blood relationship exists or not.<sup>7</sup> In the Byzantine biotope during our specific historical period documentary materials clearly disclose that such beliefs and attitudes were emerging. These centered around the question of the *genos*, the common descent of the group, and involved the rehabilitation of the term "Hellene" which, since the fourth century A. D. had acquired a highly pejorative connotation, because it was considered synonymous with "pagan," therefore, non-Christian.<sup>8</sup> These attitudes are colored with a feeling of pride based on a belief in a common descent from the ancient Hellenes, without any regard as to whether an objective blood relationship existed with the ancient Greeks. The objectivity of this relationship was a question that was to exercise historians much later, since Jakob Ph. Fallmerayer raised it early in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, by writing that the modern Greeks were not descended from the ancient Greeks but really were of Slav stock, thus not only stimulating new historical research and controversies but also inflaming national passions among the Greeks.<sup>9</sup> And, quite recently this matter again became a matter of muted controversy.<sup>10</sup> For political scientists or sociologists, however, this question is irrelevant because political beliefs, whether objectively right or wrong, may serve as motives of political behavior and action, of very potent action, too, as witness the Aryan myths of Arthur de Gobineau and of Hitler, the apotheosis of the proletariat by Marx and Lenin, "Manifest Destiny," the "White Man's Burden," or various democratic credos, such as Wilson's or Franklin D. Roosevelt's.

It can be argued, of course, that Weber's definition is on a too high a level of abstraction to be meaningful in dealing with specific historical cases

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7. M. Weber, "Ethnic Groups," in T. Parsons, E. Shils, D. Naegle, J. R. Pitts, eds., *Theories of Society* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1965), p. 306.

8. Vacalopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

9. J. P. Fallmerayer, *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (Stuttgart Tübingen, 1830). C. Paparrhigopoulos, in his first publication, *On the Colonization of the Peloponnese by Certain Slavic Tribes* (In Greek, 1843), sought to refute Fallmerayer's theory. For the furor created, see the book by the first U. S. Minister to Greece, C. K. Tuckerman, *The Greeks of Today* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1878) p. 130.

10. R. Jenkins, *Byzantium and Byzantinism* (University of Cincinnati, 1963). The Greek response is to be found in G. G. Arnakis, "Byzantium and Greece," *Balkan Studies*, vol. IV, 1963, 379-400.

and that the thoughts a king of Nicaea expressed in a letter to the Pope, for instance, or of a judge in Mistra in a memorial to the Byzantine Emperor, had the scantest of political effects on group political behavior. The problem's complexity becomes even clearer if we try to test the political and social situation prevailing in the territories of the morcellated and disintegrating Byzantine Empire between 1204 and 1453 against the set of seven uniformities a contemporary political scientist has perceived in analysing the growth of nation.<sup>11</sup>

As a political scientist primarily, I am not prepared to answer with any degree of certainty the question of whether all these uniformities are observable or not in the period 1204-1453 of the disintegrating Byzantine realm. However, it seems that whereas most, if not all these uniformities were clearly evident in the waning years of the "Tourkokratia" and converged to give birth to the modern Greek nation state, a number of these uniformities are conspicuously absent from the period under study; the presence of others may be the subject of serious controversy, and only the last two uniformities can be observed in this period, with these tending to coincide with the Weberian approach to nationalism. During the two and a half centuries between 1204 and 1453, for example, subsistence agriculture certainly was not transformed into a process of producing for sale in the market. And, basic communications grids certainly did not grow during this period. On the contrary, the previously existing communications grids were dislocated and had even broken down. And, although people from the rural areas often took refuge in the cities because of the great insecurity that prevailed in the countryside, it can hardly be said that "social mobilization of the rural population in areas of denser settlement . . ." occurred during this period. Did some towns grow between 1204-1453 in the territories that were part of the Byzantine

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11. K. Deutsch, "The Growth of Nations: some recurrent patterns of political and social integration," *World Politics*, vol. 5, no. 2 (January 1953), pp. 172-173 (cited hereafter as Deutsch, *World Politics*). These uniformities are the following: 1) The shift from subsistence agriculture to exchange economies. 2) The social mobilization of rural populations in core areas of denser settlement and more intensive exchange. 3) The growth of towns, and the growth of social mobility within them and within town and country. 4) The growth of basic communications grids, linking important rivers, towns, and trade routes in a flow of transport, travel, and migration. 5) The differential accumulation and concentration of capital and skills, and sometimes of social institutions, and their "lift pump" effect on other areas and populations, with the successive entry of different social strata into the nationalistic phase. 6) The rise of the concept of "interest" for both individuals and groups in unequal but fluid situations, and the growth of individual self-awareness of one's predispositions to join a particular group united by language and communications habits.

Empire? Thessaloniki flourished for a while,<sup>12</sup> but this seems to have been an exception. The population of Constantinople, at any rate, declined to such an extent that the proud double walls of the “queen of cities” enclosed merely a number of disjunct villages when Mehmet II, Fatih, entered into the city in 1453.<sup>13</sup> And few and far between were phenomena that might be termed as “a concentration of capital and skills.”

On the other hand, the concept of “interest” especially among individuals — George Gemistos, the “first neo-Hellene,”<sup>14</sup> for instance — did arise in what were most “fluid” if not stormy times of that period. And “self awareness and awareness of one’s predisposition to join a particular group united by language and communications habits” did grow among certain exceptional individuals. And, among these exceptional personalities, ethnic awareness, as documents show, did awaken during these times of stress. “We are Hellenes . . .”, wrote Georgios Gemistos in his famous memorial to Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus in 1418.<sup>15</sup> And new group symbols, the two headed eagle of the Nicaean Kings, for example, were created<sup>16</sup> and efforts were exerted, again by a few outstanding personalities, to mobilize the people.

The problem now boils down to the specific question: is one warranted in applying the term “nationalism” to certain intellectual elite phenomena of the period 1204-1453, when five of the above uniformities that are regarded as basic features of the process of the growth of nationalism are either most dubiously present or totally absent? Application of the majority rule would lead to a negative answer. An affirmative reply, on the other hand, would go against rules of reason. It would also run counter to the theories of certain writers on nationalism who emphasize the mass basis of this social

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12. O. Tafrali, *Thessalonique au quatorzième siècle* (Paris: Geuther, 1912). S. Runciman, *The Fall of Constantinople* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 15, maintains that it was in Thessaloniki that intellectuals such as Nicholas Kabasilas started the fashion of calling themselves “Hellenes” instead of Romaioi, in contrast to Vacalopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68, who believes that this term emerges already in the early thirteenth century in Nicaea.

13. Runciman, *op. cit.*, p.

14. D. A. Zakythinos, *Le Despotat grec de Morée, II* (Athens, 1953), pp. 350-351.

15. Deutsch, *World Politics*, p. 184, observes that in ages of “rapid changes in traditional social contexts tend to be ages of increasing self-doubt and self-awareness for the individuals who live in them. The questions: Who am I? Whom do I resemble? In whom can I trust? are asked with a new urgency, and need more than a traditional answer.” In the Byzantine realm during 1204-1453 there were indeed rapid changes even if these were not changes in traditional social contexts.

16. Vacalopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

and political phenomenon.<sup>17</sup> And it would lead us back again to Max Weber's somewhat too abstract definition.

A way out would be to apply a different term than "nationalism" to denote the intellectual phenomena such as those that fall under the last two of the above mentioned "uniformities," when these exist alone. Since similar phenomena are to be found in the historical development of other peoples, such a procedure does not seem to me unwarranted. It is therefore submitted that for such a class of sociopolitical phenomena that are related to, but not identical with nationalism, as this is usually understood, a suitable term might be "proto-nationalism."<sup>18</sup> This term does not exclude the possibility of a process of development toward nationalism with its set of the earlier-mentioned uniformities. And it suggests that before nationalism becomes fully developed it may pass through an earlier stage that has certain specific characteristics.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, this term does not imply the inevitability of such a development, and it allows us to make a distinction between two phenomena, without, at the same time, ignoring their similarities. Thus, protonationalism and nationalism would be two distinct species of the genus "ethnocentrism," a term introduced by the American sociologist William Graham Sumner.<sup>20</sup>

From the viewpoint of the political scientist and theorist, protonationalism would be related to the process of the disintegration of empires and their replacement by smaller territorial political units. In the West, it is evident in the disintegration of the idea of the *universitas christiana* based on the concord between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, and in the emergence of a sentiment of supreme loyalty not to the *dominus*, the feudal

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17. See above, Kohn's definition of nationalism as well as note 5.

18. Deutsch, *World Politics*, p. 180, in discussing the concept of self-interest, writes that "already the non-national or proto-national institutions of the city-state and the princely state the notion of group interests and interests of state, and all these notions of national, state, or city interests imply in turn the interests of individuals."

19. Deutsch, *ibid.*, p. 192, suggests that nations are not exclusively the product of the modern period and of Western civilization, while he rejects, equally correctly, the view that nations are the natural and universal form of social organization for mankind. The West, in his view, may have gone much farther on a road which all the world's great civilizations, to some extent, have traveled.

20. W. G. Sumner, *Folkways* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1940), pp. 13-15. This group feeling has also been called "consciousness of kind" by F. H. Giddings; the "we-feeling" by C. H. Cooley; and "syngenism" by E. Gumplowicz, see G. P. Murdock, "Ethnocentrism," *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. V (New York: MacMillan Company, 1935), pp. 613-614.

lord, as had been the case in the earlier Middle Ages, but to the *patria*, the *communis patria* indeed, i. e. to the entire territory of the new political units that were being set up in western Europe.<sup>21</sup> As is well known, the controversy between the king of France, Philip IV the Fair, and Pope Boniface VIII during 1296-1303 promoted this disintegration of the *universitas christiana*, and it has been pointed out that the outcome of this controversy was that the theory of papal imperialism was decisively defeated by "the national cohesion of the French kingdom."<sup>22</sup> In a conflict with a different foe, England, during the Hundred Years' War, a similar phenomenon was to reappear in France and was embodied in the person of Joan of Arc.

In the Christian East, protonationalism became manifest even earlier than in the West. It clearly appeared around the time when the Crusaders captured Constantinople in 1204, when the territories of the Byzantine empire were split into various Latin and Byzantine kingdoms, while the Serbian and Bulgarian kingdoms were thriving in the Balkans and the Seljuk Turk principality of Rum was encroaching on Byzantium's territories in Anatolia. If this protonationalism did not develop to the same extent as it did in the West, this was because it was snuffed out in the fifteenth century by a new universalism and a new imperialism, that of the Osmanli Turks and of Islam resurgent, which welded into a single territorial political unit the previously existing system of warring states.

In our own times, in an international environment that greatly differs from that of the European Middle Ages, protonationalism is visible among certain peoples of Africa and Asia who have acquired or are in the process of acquiring statehood, even though they are still at a level of political, economic and social development in which the earlier mentioned "uniformities"

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21. E. H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 246-247.

22. G. H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (New York: Henry Holt, 1950), p. 265. Kantorowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-237, likewise sees the emergence in the times of Philip the Fair of the concept of *patria* as meaning the whole realm, so that the territorial monarchy of France was strong enough to proclaim itself the *communis patria* of all its subjects. And he sees the development of a similar terminology in England at approximately the same period. Moreover, in his analysis, he holds that the new territorial concept of *patria* developed as a secularized offshoot of the Christian tradition, in which the term primarily applied to Jerusalem —the *regnum Christi regis*— and was synonymous with the Kingdom of Heaven (*ibid.*, p. 236). At a certain moment in history, as he puts it, the state appeared as a *corpus mysticum* comparable to the church. Humanistic influence, in his view, became effective only after not before, the idea of *patria* had taken shape and "had been ethicized by both theology and jurisprudence" (*ibid.*, p. 249).



required for the development of nationalism are conspicuously absent. In brief, protonationalism would be connected with the process of state building, with the birth of sovereign states in world history, of states, namely, in which *rex in regno suo est imperator regni sui*.<sup>23</sup> Usually it first leads to modern state absolutism, with sovereignty constitutionally residing in the monarch, not in the people, as it is supposed to reside in the nation-state which is based on nationalism pure and simple. In states emerging from colonial status, it leads to various types of dictatorship, in spite of a *mimesis* of modern constitutional forms.

From the viewpoint of the sociologist, on the other hand, protonationalism like nationalism, is largely a function of intergroup dissensus, and is stimulated by intergroup conflict.<sup>24</sup> And from the viewpoint of certain modern ethologists it would constitute the conscious expression of that open instinct of territory common to certain birds, fish, rodents, or primates.<sup>25</sup> In our specific case, the following Byzantine territorial political units existed during the whole or part of the period 1204-1453:

1. The Despotat of Epirus
2. The "Empire" of Nicaea
3. The "Empire" of Trebizond
4. The re-established empire in Constantinople
5. The Despotat of Morea

These Byzantine political units were intensively embroiled in military con-

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23. Sabine, *op. cit.*, p. 270. He refers to C. N. S. Woolf, *Bartolus of Sassoferrato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), especially Chapter III, for the origin of this dictum. However, for the two schools of thought on the meaning of this dictum, see G. Post, "Two Notes on Nationalism in the Middle Ages," *Traditio*, vol. IX, 1953, p. 297. According to one school of thought, to which Woolf subscribes, this dictum meant, at least until the late thirteenth century, that the king within his realm was superior to all others but was, nonetheless, subject to the emperor, whereas according to the other school of thought, this dictum implied the king's complete independence of the emperor. In Post's view by the mid-thirteenth century the kingdom independence of the empire had emerged, and with it the idea of a common fatherland and common birthplace of all the king's subjects. He is incorrect, however, in concluding that this territorial political unit was "a nation in fact if not yet in name," *ibid.*, p. 320. For, by this time, the *rex* was *imperator in regno suo*, i. e. sovereign, not the people, and the latter were the king's subjects, not nationals.

24. See above, note 5. In the case of France, it was conflict with England that stimulated the "early germs" of nationalism. In the case of England, it was conflict with the Pope during the reign of Henry VIII that generated similar phenomena of early British nationalism. In the case of Ireland, it was conflict with Protestant England that engendered the first symptoms of Irish nationalism. And from the conflict with Spain, Dutch nationalism emerged.

25. E. g. Ardrey, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

flicts with the following non Byzantine territorial political units, some of which had been set up before the Crusaders' capture of Constantinople in 1204:

1. The Latin states set up on territory that formerly was part of the Byzantine Empire
2. The Serbian and Bulgarian States
3. The Seljuk principality of Rum in Anatolia
4. The Osmanli Turkish state

Occasionally, too, conflict occurred between the Byzantine successor states themselves. Thus, before Michael VIII Palaeologus, king of Nicaea, recaptured Constantinople in 1261 his kingdom had been involved in conflict with the Despotat of Epirus. Both states had the same goal: the recapture of Constantinople from the Latins — a goal which, a modern Greek historian observes,<sup>26</sup> foreshadowed the "Megali Idea" that inspired modern Greeks with a sense of mission, until the Turkish forces under Kemal Ataturk defeated the Greek Army in Anatolia in 1922. Besides, the Despotat of Epirus sought to assert the independence of its archbishops from the Patriarchate at Nicaea and this led to conflicts similar to those that disturbed the relations between Emperor and Pope in the West.<sup>27</sup>

In these conflicts, a social mobilization for specific military purpose did fitfully occur, because the leaders of these Byzantine successor kingdoms did not have sufficient financial resources for hiring mercenaries to fight, but often tried to mobilize the local elements as fighting forces, by appealing to their ingroup territorial attitudes against the outgroups. For instance, the founder of the Nicaean kingdom, Theodore I Lascaris (1204-1211) is reported to have transformed the peaceful inhabitants of his realm into valiant fighters and to have harangued the people in assemblies convoked through their community leaders.<sup>28</sup>

Because at the outset of the period 1204-1453 the main foes of the Byzantine successor kingdoms were the Latin states, and above all, the Latin "Empire" of Constantinople, the religio-political antagonism which earlier had culminated in the schism between Constantinople and Rome in 1054 and had been greatly strengthened by the Crusades and the Crusaders' intrusion

26. Vacalopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61. The Despots of Epirus, Vacalopoulos observes, tried to avoid asking the Patriarchate of Nicaea for archbishops and bishops, and this occasionally disturbed the relations between the two states. For its part, the Patriarchate of Nicaea sought to maintain the unity of its authority.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

into Byzantine territories,<sup>29</sup> strongly colored the hostile outgroup attitudes of both sides. However, because of the religious aspect of the conflict, proto-nationalism in Eastern Christendom focused mainly on the question of the bonds that united persons into one people, on the question of the identity and common descent, of the *genos*, in contrast to developments in the West, in France for instance, where protonationalism, though likewise generated by conflict with the Papacy, seemed to focus mainly on the question of the *communis patria*, namely on the question of the bonds that united people to a territory. "Between *ourselves* and *them* an immense chasm of difference exists, and *we* are non-tangent in views, and *we* diametrically differ" (emphasis added), writes the Byzantine historian Nicetas Chomiates (d. c. 1213) with regard to the Latins<sup>30</sup> in a passage that is pervaded by the "we" versus "they" attitude which the Latin intrusion into Byzantine territories had aroused among the Byzantines.

In the resultant self-search for expressing a group identity, next to the term "Roman" the term "Hellene" re-emerged from the disrepute in which it had fallen in the times when, as already mentioned, Christianity, not yet schism-rent, regarded it as synonymous with "pagan." And, on its side, Rome used the term "Greek" in a somewhat pejorative sense in its dialogue and dispute with Constantinople, or at least considered that the term "Roman" was not deserved by the people of the Eastern Empire.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the son-in-law

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29. S. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 103, observes that "the intrusion and colonization of the Crusaders in the Eastern lands" were the main cause of the difficulties that arose between the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Papacy. On p. 128, he notes that the Second Crusade showed to the Byzantines that the Westerners were "even more savage, unruly, and unreliable" than previously realized. And on p. 166, he states that the Second and Third Crusades "increased the antipathy between the Byzantine citizen and the ordinary soldier and pilgrim." The schism, he writes on p. 168, "was based on mutual dislike between the peoples of Eastern and Western Christendom, a dislike that arose out of the political events of the eleventh and twelfth centuries . . . The Crusades were the causes of the breach, not the petty vituperation between Michael Cerularius and Cardinal Humbert."

30. Nicetas Choniates, *Historia* (Bonn: 1835), *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, vol. 23, pp. 391-392.

31. In 962 Otto I in the West became emperor and sought to restore the notion of a Roman Empire in the West and in 968 Pope John XII recommending an ambassador of Otto I to the Emperor of Constantinople called the latter "Emperor of the Greeks" which was an insult to him since he thought of himself as Emperor of the Romans, F. Dvornik, *Byzantium and the Roman Primacy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), p. 126. This was an issue that contributed to the difficulties of healing the schism between the Eastern and Western churches.

and successor of Theodore I Lascaris, John III Ducas Vatatzis (1222-1254) did not maintain he was a Roman and deny he was a Hellene when replying to a letter from Pope Gregory IX who, evidently on the basis of the spurious *donatio Constantini* which, as is well known, had served as an important papal argument in the dispute between Pope and Emperor in the West, had asserted that the Byzantine rulers had no right to the title of "Basileus and Autokrator of the Romans" but were merely kings of the Greeks. Wrote the Nicaean king, he was proud of the good words the Pope had to say about the Hellenes, namely, that "wisdom reigns among their *genos* and that from their *genos* wisdom had flourished and spread to others . . ." He could not understand, however, why the Pope had ignored or passed over in silence the fact that Constantine the Great had bequeathed "the worldly kingdom" to the *genos* of the Hellenes and that the lot of succeeding him had fallen "to our *genos* and we are his inheritors and successors."<sup>32</sup> As in the West, in the fourteenth century, political conflict caused by the Papal pretensions to Roman universalism and even to secular power contributed to the emergence of protonationalism and of the sovereign state.

No doubt further research would shed light on the connection between Hellenic protonationalism that appeared during this period and the whole religio-political conflict between Constantinople and Rome that preceded it since the ninth century, and led to the schism of 1054. Suffice it to mention here that after 1204 Theodore II Lascaris (1254-1258), the successor of the previously mentioned Emperor of Nicaea, appears to be a great admirer of the ancient Greeks. He called his "Empire" "Hellenic." In building an army, he wanted not Turkish, Italian, Bulgarian or Serb soldiers, but Greeks, because he felt that only on such an army he could rely.<sup>33</sup> He was proud of the great feats of "Hellenic valiance" among his soldiers fighting the Bulgars. He preferred ancient Greek to the ecclesiastical Greek language and admitted he was none too familiar with biblical citations. He admired the ancient monuments of Pergamon and he considered that his capital was superior to ancient Athens as a center of civilization. At the same time, he pessimistically predicted that philosophy would leave the shore of Greece and find asylum among the "barbarians" of the West, whose progress he noted with anxiety.<sup>34</sup> In him is observable that "awakening of ethnic awareness" students of nation-

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32. Vacalopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

33. D. J. Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 35, note 13.

34. Vacalopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-70.

alism consider as one of the features in the growth of nationalism and of a nation. Acknowledgment of belonging to the *genos* of the Hellenes also had the advantage, as indicated above, of making it possible to label the out-group as "barbarians," according to the ancient Greek saying that all non-Greeks are barbarians.

When Michael VIII Palaeologus (1234-1282) recaptured Constantinople from the Latins in 1261 thus realizing the "Megali Idea" — to be anachronistic — of the Nicaean kingdom, Hellenic proto-nationalism subsided in the East Roman atmosphere of the great city, whose inhabitants were called Romans, according to one Byzantine writer at least.<sup>35</sup> The following century, however, it soon resurged, when the Osmanli Turks replaced the Latins as the principal foe. As well known, the appearance of this formidable new enemy triggered four new efforts at reconciliation with the Papacy<sup>36</sup> and, under Emperor John VIII Palaeologus (1391-1448), "Basileus and Autokrator of the Romans," these efforts culminated in the Council of Florence in 1439 where the union of the two churches were agreed upon, on terms favorable to the Papacy. By the end of the fourteenth century, while Popes, Western kings, Latin rulers in the East, and Western travellers used more frequently than ever before the terms *Graecia*, *Graeci*, and the neo-Latin word *Grieu* or the mediaeval French *Grifon* in referring to Christian East and its inhabitants,<sup>37</sup>

35. N. V. Tomadakis, *Joseph Vryennios and Crete toward 1400* (in Greek) (Athens: Vayonakis, 1947), p. 72.

36. The first effort was made by Andronic III (1328-1341) who sent the archimandrite Barlaam to Pope Benedict XII (1334-1342) in Avignon, in 1339. The second was made by John V Palaeologos (1341-1391) in demarches to Popes Innocent VI (1352-1362) and Urban V (1362-1370). The third was made by John VIII Palaeologus (1425-1448) in a demarche with Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447). It led to the Councils of Ferrara (1438) and Florence (1439). The fourth was made by Constantine XII Palaeologus (1449-1453), when a Council in Constantinople rejected the union of the churches agreed upon at the Council of Florence. Since then, the Roman Catholic Church sought to achieve union by proselytism. Before 1204, in the twelfth century, the Comnenian emperors John, Alexis, and Manuel, in attempts to heal the schism, showed themselves ready to accept union, provided the Pope recognized the Byzantine emperor as the only true Roman emperor. The Popes, however, were unwilling to accept this condition, because they were inspired by the Gregorian idea of the superiority of the spiritual over the temporal power and wished to maintain domination over the Empire, both East and West, as well as over the Latin principalities of the East. The Byzantine clergy and population, on their side, opposed the attempts of the Byzantine emperors to achieve union, because they had learned to hate the Latins, as a result of their experience with the Crusaders, F. Dvornik, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-155. In the thirteenth century, Michael VIII Palaeologus also sought to promote union, to create a common political front against Charles of Anjou.

37. Vacalopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 77. For *Grifon*, F. Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française* (Paris: V. Vieweg, 1880-1892).

persisting in their attitude of denying the right of the Byzantine Emperors to regard themselves as legitimate successors of Constantine the Great,<sup>38</sup> the elites in the Byzantine territories tended more and more to call themselves "Hellenes" and to consider themselves as belonging to the *genos* of Hellenes,<sup>39</sup> while the Osmanli Turks called them Rum — Romans. Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus (1350-1425) who, like his predecessors, was loth to deny himself the prestigious title of "Basileus and Autokrator of the Romans," told the Thessalonians on one occasion that they were descendants of both the Romans and the Greeks, or as an anonymous writer put it, "Romellines."<sup>40</sup> There are indications, too, that high officials of the Eastern Orthodox Church, who in principle were opposed to the process of Hellenization that smacked of neopaganism, exploited, nevertheless, for their own purpose this development, if it helped them argue against union with the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>41</sup> And several literary works reveal a strong pride in Hellenism, while in mosaics and frescoes of what has been termed the Palaeologan proto-renaissance, classical stylistic elements appear.<sup>42</sup>

Hellenic protonationalism flourished until the fall of Constantinople in 1453. It was particularly in evidence in the Palaeologan state-building efforts centering not in Constantinople but in Mistra, the capital of the Despotat of Morea, which found itself in ceaseless conflict with the Latin principality of Achaea and its various baronies that existed likewise in the Peloponnese.<sup>43</sup> And it was embodied in three outstanding personalities: Georgios Gemistos Plethon (c. 1370-1452); Cardinal Bessarion (c. 1403-1472); and Constantine XI Palaeologus (1403-1453), the last "Basileus and Autokrator of the Romans."

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38. Pope Urban IV, for example, referred to Michael VIII Palaeologus as Emperor of the Greeks as did Pope Nicholas III, Geanakoplos, *op. cit.*, 166 and 312.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77. Vacalopoulos observes that the word *genos* starts now to appear in the vocabulary of the emperors and the intellectuals. So does Tomadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 153. Vacalopoulos notes that although the Eastern Church was one of the main bearers of the Roman tradition and therefore hesitant with regard to the term "Hellene" or even opposed to its use, nonetheless, because of its inflexibility toward the Roman Catholic church, contributed to favorable conditions for the formation of the neo-Hellenic nation. Joseph Vryennios, an opponent of the church union on the papal terms, though using the term "Hellene" as synonymous with "gentile" as in the New Testament, expresses, nevertheless, pride in the Hellenic nation as being the devoutest *genos* of all and closest to God. The cradle of the *genos* he adds is Constantinople, Tomadakis, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

42. O. Demus, *Die Entstehung des Paläologenstils in der Malerei* (Munich: 1958), p. 59.

43. Vacalopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

Gemistos, a Constantinopolitan official who settled in Mistra around 1414, reinvigorated the cult of ancient Greece that was already evident in the "Empire" of Nicaea in the twelfth century. It is, thus, not astonishing that in the conflict with the Osmanli Turks he identified his *genos* with that of the ancient Greeks and the foe with the ancient Persians. Nor is it astounding that within his *genos* his neopaganism — secularism concealed behind a classical Greek facade — stirred up opposition in the church in Constantinople which was to brand him a new Julian. <sup>44</sup>

The secularism of this neo-Platonic philosopher is clearly revealed in the well known memorials he addressed to Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus and to his brother, Theodore Palaeologus, Despot of Morea. These documents testify to his intense interest in building up the state, if that state was to cope with the Osmanli danger that threatened its very existence from without, while grave political, economic, and social problems threatened it from within. Emphasizing in his famous memorial of 1418 to Emperor Manuel II, that "we are Hellenes . . . as both our language and culture testify," and that the Peloponnese had been the cradle of the Greeks, together with the European peninsula further north and the outlying islands, he urged upon the monarch several radical measures in domestic policy which, he hoped, would save the state from extinction and would enable it to defend itself against the external foe and to recover the territorial patrimony of the Byzantine Empire. <sup>45</sup>

It is, however, beyond the scope of this paper to deal either with all the political advice Gemistos gave to Manuel or Theodore for establishing good government which, to use modern terms, would promote greater political and social cohesion in the body politic, or with his severe critique of contemporary economic and social conditions in the Peloponnese. It should be emphasized, however, that Gemistos, for dealing with the military problem, to which he attached enormous importance, advocated the establishment of an army composed of local inhabitants who, like Plato's "guardians," would be tax-exempt and exclusively dedicated to the fulfillment of their military duties. <sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the question should be raised: did any substantial middle class actually exist in the Peloponnese at the times Gemistos wrote, to be able to play the important role he ascribed to members of this class in his proposals for better government? If the answer is negative, then his advice would be

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44. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176.

utopian and merely a reiteration of the Aristotelian views about the beneficial role of the middle class in maintaining a stable constitution and government.<sup>47</sup> And the theory of the Greek Marxist historian about the reasons for the appearance of Greek nationalism during this period<sup>48</sup> would be incorrect, at least in terms of Marxist theory, and its proponent would be guilty of small state chauvinism!

A pupil of Gemistos, Bessarion, our second protonationalist of this period, – or should he be called “genocentric”? – was imbued with the same pride in the *genos* and the same reforming zeal as his master. However, he was more of a Renaissance Westerner than Gemistos, and unlike the sage of Mistra, who in his declining years seems to have taken refuge in neo-Platonic mysticism and polytheistic theology,<sup>49</sup> this Archbishop of Nicaea and partisan of union between the two churches, took refuge in Italy, becoming Cardinal of Tusculum in the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Bessarion’s protonationalism was more forward looking than the ethnocentrism of Gemistos. It had a distinctive practical and modern flavor.<sup>50</sup> Bessarion was the prototype of the Greek, who, though living in the West, always maintained a lively interest in the fortunes of the *genos* and sought to promote these fortunes. In his famous memorial of c. 1444 to the Despot of Morea, Constantine Palaeologus, he expressed enthusiasm over the building of the wall at the Isthmus of Corinth, which Gemistos also favored, and he urged the Despot to establish the same military organization his master had outlined earlier. Such a military force, Bessarion maintained, would be inspired by a high morale that would restore “the ancient nobility of soul” of the people. The Peloponnesians were brawny and brave. They should be trained in the art of war like the ancient Lacedaemonians. Under Constantine they would emulate the deeds of the Spartans, would free the enslaved Greek territories in Europe, and then, under their leader acting like another Agesilaus, they would cross over into Asia and recover the glorious patrimony which had been lost to the Osmanli Turks. Internally, on the other hand, Constantine, like a new Solon, or Lycurgus, or Numa Pompilius, should promulgate new laws adapted to the new political and social needs. The city-states of ancient Greece as well as the states of contemporary Italy would be good models to follow. In this document, Bessarion reveals his profound faith in the virtues and abilities of the

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47. Aristotle, *Politics*.

48. See above, note 6.

49. Vacalopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 237.



Hellenic people as well as his optimism in their future. He was certain, he wrote, that the Hellenic *genos* would be at Constantine's side. For its part, the *genos* needed a leader like Constantine to lead them.<sup>51</sup>

Historians, it seems, are not agreed on the extent to which Constantine Palaeologus implemented in the Peloponnese the various measures urged upon him by Bessarion.<sup>52</sup> At any rate, the Despot was an able military leader and sought to reorganize the military and political administration of his Peloponnesian realm; ousted the Franks from the Morea; built, as already mentioned, the Isthmus wall, to protect his territories from the Osmanli foe; campaigned beyond this wall, in Attica and Boeotia, capturing Thebes. Finally, however, the Osmanlis drove him back; broke through his Maginot Line in 1446; wreaked destruction on the Peloponnese; and forced him to pay tribute to the Sultan.<sup>53</sup>

In 1448, when John VIII Palaeologus "Basileus and Autocrator of the Romans" died, Constantine succeeded him. After being crowned in the Metropolis of Mistra, he arrived in Constantinople early in January of the following year, to be welcomed by some members of the capital's elite as "Basileus of the Hellenes." Pope Nicholas V urged him to implement the agreement on union reached in Florence by Constantine's predecessor, and blamed the schism of Photius for the decline of the "great and glorious Greek nation."<sup>54</sup> As well known, however, the last effort for union failed.

By this time, the term "Hellene" appears more frequently than ever before in contemporary documents and histories. Partisans of the union of the Eastern and Western Churches, at the risk of being charged with paganism by their opponents, were particularly partial to this term<sup>55</sup> which accorded with the Papal views. However, even the opponents of union, for whom the

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51. *Ibid.*, pp. 230 ff.

52. *Ibid.*, p 230, note 1.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 239-241.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 242, 244, 248.

55. Thus, John Argyropoulos, a partisan of union with the Western Church welcomed Constantine XII as "autokrator of the Hellenes," and mourned his predecessor John VIII as king of Hellas; and another partisan of union, Michael Apostolis, used the term "Hellene," being charged with paganism by his antiunionist opponents for doing so, *ibid.*, pp. 242, 244-245. And earlier, toward the end of the fourteenth century, Demetrios Kydones, a convert to Roman Catholicism who translated into Greek works of St. Augustine, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas Aquinas and argued that the reason for the decline and enslavement of the *genos* was the Photian schism, compared the Despot of Mistra, Manuel Cantacuzenus, to the Athenian general Iphicrates and congratulated Manuel II Palaeologus for having transformed the Thessalonians into Marathonomachs, *ibid.*, pp. 149-150, 167.

Emperor still remained "Basileus and Autokrator of the Romans," began accepting the term "Hellene" as synonymous with Roman<sup>56</sup> — a small triumph for the Papal viewpoint. And, as well known, even to this day, "Romios" and "Hellene" are synonymous in the Modern Greek vernacular.

Thus, when on Tuesday, May 29, 1453 the Osmanli Turks poured into the "queen of cities" whose wall they had breached with their cannon, and Constantine met his death in the street battles that ensued in the new Rome which the homonymous Roman Emperor had founded in 330 A. D., even the people remembered him in their folklore as "Basileus of the Hellenes."<sup>57</sup> And around him grew myths that sustained the neo-Hellenic protonationalism which had been born in the period 1204-1453 and which was to be gradually transformed into nationalism proper toward the end of the eighteenth century, under the impact of several internal and external factors which have been analyzed elsewhere.<sup>58</sup>

To sum up the main points of this paper:

Religiopolitical disputes between Western and Eastern Christendom stimulated in the latter a new feeling of ethnic pride, with the rulers of Byzantium choosing a secular argument for justifying the legitimacy of their title of Emperor of the Romans, at the risk of being considered pagans by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In other words, what we would call today an ideological dispute in world politics, constituted a factor of great significance in arousing awareness of the *genos* among the rulers and the elite of Byzantium, and in stimulating the appearance of certain phenomena that resemble, but are not identical with nationalism, as this is usually understood.

Second, in terms of actual physical conflict, as contrasted to ideological disputes, the intrusion of the Roman Catholic Crusaders into the Byzantine biotope and their contacts with the populations of these territories acted as an additional stimulus for such phenomena not only among the Byzantine elite, as had been mainly the case until then, but also among these populations.

Third, in responding to the challenge of the Roman Catholic Crusaders' intrusion, the Byzantine rulers and elite of the period 1204-1453 A. D., sought to stimulate among their subjects still further their ethnic awareness of the *genos*, in order to mobilize them first against the Latins and then against the

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56. For instance, the opponents of the unionists Joseph Vryennios and George Scholarios (later Patriarch Gennadios), *ibid.*, pp. 246-247. For Vryennios, see also note 41.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 273.

58. S. G. Xydis, "Modern Greek Nationalism," in *Eastern European Nationalism*, I. Lederer and P. Sugar, eds., (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1968).

Osmanli Turks. The members of the Byzantine elite who favored the Emperor's efforts to achieve reconciliation with Rome had special reasons to promote this Hellenization process. They had to show that to be called a "Hellenene" was something to be proud of. Their opponents hesitatingly followed suit.

As for the thesis of this paper in terms of political science, this consists of the assertion that the above mentioned sociopolitical phenomena in the East between 1204-1453 that resemble but are not identical with the phenomenon of nationalism, constitute a distinct class, together with similar phenomena that are observable not only in the mediaeval West and the Renaissance, but also in the history of the emergent nations that are achieving statehood in our times. If these phenomena form a separate class, they should not be cavalierly dismissed. They merit a separate name. And as a name, the term "protonationalism," is here proposed.

Protonationalism, I submit, shares with nationalism its secular character which first made its appearance in both East and West with the revival of the ideas and art forms of Greece and Rome, with the re-evaluation of Plato as against Aristotle. And just like nationalism, protonationalism features a strong sense of pride in belonging to one's own territorial political group and in having common ancestors, and is generated from conflict between territorial groups. Unlike nationalism, however, it centers mainly around the sovereign ruler and his immediate entourage. It does not seep downward and permeate a majority of the people. A perceptive Greek historian had termed this phenomenon as "nationalism from above."<sup>59</sup> As such, protonationalism is ethnocentrism connected with state-building, with the emergence of the secular "sovereign" state. Nationalism, on the other hand, is connected with the emergence of the nation and of the nation-state. It is based on broad mass participation and depends on a tighter communications grid than does protonationalism. It focuses on a collective entity, which is the source of sovereignty. Among other factors, the spread of literacy intensified communications and broadened the base of ethnocentrism. Printed books, replacing the manuscript roll and codex made possible this spread of literacy. Epigrammatically, therefore, protonationalism might be called ethnocentrism in the pre-Gutenbergian age. Nationalism, on the other hand, might be defined as ethnocentrism in the age of the printed word.

What the post-Gutenbergian age has in store for nationalism, is a matter on which Professor MacLuhan should be consulted. In our age, the spread

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59. Vacalopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

of nationalism does not depend merely on the printed but also on the heard word, through the radio, as witness Arab nationalism and the influence of Cairo Radio in the Arab world. Thanks to these new mass media, national awareness can be spread among large segments of a people, *even* in the absence of a large educated and literate mid-elite or middle class.<sup>60</sup>

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60. W. J. Foltz, "Building the Newest Nations," in K. Deutsch ed., *Nation Building* (New York: Atherton Press, 1966), pp. 118-119.