

**Anglo-Hellenic Experience since 1821: Chronologies,
Connections and Contexts**

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When the School extended to me the flattering invitation to give this lecture I quickly accepted for two reasons. The first is that I like being in Athens. The second is that I love archives. Years ago a friend described himself to me as an ‘archive-junkie’, an alarming-sounding condition the symptoms of which I immediately recognized in myself. I still suffer from the condition but then so historians should. The history books which survive are almost invariably those hacked from the archival record. In the archive-light, supposedly global historiographical milieu often prevalent today, a seminar in praise of archives with their telling *minutiae* is much to be welcomed as an antidote to our times. But human and local detail also needs contexts and frameworks to make sense of it. I hope there will

be something of both in what I have to say tonight.

By Anglo-Hellenic in my title what I mean is the overlap between the British presence in the eastern Mediterranean and Greek-majority societies; that is, not just the modern Greek polity itself, but also largely Greek societies occasionally coming under British oversight. In my treatment, the British Ionian Protectorate after 1817 and British-occupied Cyprus after 1878 will therefore feature – other places and themes (literary or anthropological, for example) would require another speaker. In covering even the selected ground I am hardly the ideal person. I am by no means a scholarly Hellenist. But then Greek Studies is not only for the Hellenists. Indeed, if such Studies are not only to thrive outside Greece, if they are to be – in a recent call by Professor Paschalis Kitromilides – canonized in European historiography, then the history of modern as well as ancient Greece must engage more than ever with overlapping hinterlands and hyphenate with them. This is anyway something that Hellenic themes are almost uniquely equipped to do, and is

being done all the time.

We all have our own curiously hyphenated interests. Mine is that of a British Empire historian whose interests migrated via colonial Cyprus to wider aspects of Anglo-Hellenic interactions. This may seem an unlikely journey, but is not as mad as it sounds. As Roderick Beaton remarks in the excellent history of this School we launched earlier today the British presence in Greek lands often had a colonial ‘feel’, and sometimes was colonial in fact and form. King George II of Greece only had his tongue partly in his cheek when he told the British Ambassador in 1935 that Greece itself ‘should be taken over by your civil service and run as a British colony’ (though his ‘run as’ rather than ‘made into’ was, perhaps, a critical nuance). Some years later in 1955, as Evanthis Hatzivassilou has recorded, a senior British Embassy official in Athens lamented that ‘the idea we are king-makers here dies hard’. Maybe in Anglo-Americanized form that suspicion has never completely died. The ‘mythology’ of cabals and conspiracies hatched in the Hotel Grand Bretagne

are even now too recent in Greek experience to disappear entirely.

Of course there are pitfalls and simplifications in any treatment of Greece as a 'colonial' or even quasi-colonial entity with regard to Britain or indeed any other northern European power. Making such an attempt is not the main thrust of this presentation. Nevertheless, a critical asymmetry of power within the Anglo-Greek relationship is a basic component of the analysis, and one way this manifested itself may be worked into our background. Here an analogy can usefully be made with Ottoman Turkey from the 1820s and 1830s. Even though Turkey retained a large Empire even after the formation of an independent Greece, that country is often loosely described as having become 'colonized' by Europeans in general and the British in particular during the rest of the nineteenth century. Yet Ottoman Sultans did have one recourse in seeking to dilute and control external penetration. This was by playing off one Western Power against another. Sultan Abdul Hamid carried

this to a fine art from the 1870s. He was successful for a very long period, and world – let alone European history – might have been very different had the Turkish Revolution of 1908 not interrupted the experiment (though Kemal Ataturk resurrected it later). Yet this strategy was never within the reach of independent Greece. Although it is probably true to say that the ‘Protected’ Greece of 1832 ceased to be purely dependent (with all its language of domination by foreign ‘hats’) by the 1850s and 1860s, it was never able thereafter to obtain the sort of leverage required to play off the French, say, against the British with the cool calculation that typified Hamidian statecraft. This is one vital sense in which Greece remained, if not quite ‘colonial’, then exposed and permeable to the intrusions of more powerful outsiders.

Approaching my topic as a colonial historian also leads me naturally towards a comparative Mediterranean perspective. The British stake in the Greek-speaking world was just part of a wider so-called ‘Mastery in the Mediterranean’. ts relevant to

observe here that in the ever-growing historiography of ‘Britain Overseas’ the Mediterranean has got lost. The recent multivolume Oxford History of the British Empire, in contrast to the older Cambridge History of the British Empire, scarcely deals at all with the Mediterranean as such. This trend continues. An article in the current *English Historical Review* has the jaunty title of ‘The Sea is Swinging into View: Modern Maritime History in a Globalized World’. The Mediterranean, however, remarkably does not swing into view at all, apart from a glancing footnote reference to the work of Fernand Braudel. There are frequent references to the Atlantic, a reflection, perhaps, of the exaggerated mid-Atlanticism in British academia. There is a historiographical deficit here to make, up, and focussing on Anglo-Hellenic relationships may help.

As in any relationship, ambivalence and paradox must be to the fore, as it was from the Revolutionary outbreak in Ottoman Greek lands after 1821. This was somewhat camouflaged by the Byronic myth, though Byron’s own ditherings on Cephalonia

before crossing over to his fate at Missolonghi were suggestive. Its scarcely novel to observe that the British always preferred their Greece Ancient to Modern, and the Duke of Wellington famously regretted the Battle of Navarino – supposedly saving the Revolution from extinction - almost as soon as news of it arrived in London. The shifting undercurrents can be illustrated by that doyen of Britain’s Eastern diplomacy, Stratford Canning. Moved to tears by the sight of starving Greeks on his way to Poros in 1828, already by 1832 –passing through Athens on his way to Constantinople – Canning had become scathing as to the political aims of these ‘new’ and ambitious Hellenes. Such cycles of sympathy, irritation, alienation were to be constantly repeated, and naturally had mirror images in the attitudes and preferences of the Greeks themselves.

Behind British uncertainties lay confusion as to the identity of Greece and Greeks. That the classical Hellenes themselves planted the great tree of European civilization was scarcely in dispute. But the British could not entirely make up their mind

whether the ‘modern’ Greeks belonged to West or to the East; and although this ambivalence could be almost endlessly illustrated with regard to the nineteenth century, and has been so in the extensive literature on Victorian travel writing, the suggestive thing is that it continued well into and indeed through the twentieth century. There is a telling pattern whereby Greece usually had some epithet applied to it denoting inherently Western proclivities when the country posed no problems, but became indubitably Eastern whenever it did. In the crisis of early 1941, when the Greek leaders seemed to jib at following urgent British advice on how best to respond to Hitler’s Balkan incursion, Anthony Eden remarked that the Greek contributions were ‘like the haggling of an oriental bazaar’ – the phrase said more about Eden than it did about the Greeks concerned. Quasi-oriental impulses could be transposed onto the land itself as well as the people. At the time of the Suez crisis in 1956, when Greek pilots helped to keep Canal traffic flowing against British wishes, it was remarked in the Embassy in Athens that the crisis itself had revealed ‘cracks in the façade’ of Greece, so that both

its political and physical climate were ‘not quite Europe, nor Asia, nor Africa’. A tendency to think in these terms was even more entrenched in British discourse about Cyprus, where point and counterpoint between a Cypriot insistence on Hellenic ideals and British reiteration that Cypriot Orthodox Christians were not really Greek at all but (like the Maltese) a bit of a mix in provenance, had come to define the missing of minds in that superficially colonial island.

Alternating polarities characterized the British institution which always had the most to do with Greece: that is, the Mediterranean Fleet – in a period when if there was anything holding the Mediterranean together as a region, the British Fleet was it. There are multiple histories of modern Greece, or aspects thereof, to be excavated from the Admiralty records at Kew and those of the Maritime National Museum in Greenwich. Whatever Wellington’s regrets about Navarino, British navalism and Greek statehood went together. During the early years of the Kingdom after 1832 the Royal Navy was often a more effective

guarantor of stability in coastal regions than the Greek police itself. The Royal Navy and Marines prevented Athens from falling into complete chaos during the Revolution of 1862, though protecting the gold hoard in the Bank of Greece was also then high on the agenda. On those great occasions when the territory of Greece was enlarged with British blessing, the Navy provided an essential part of the capstone. A large part of the Mediterranean Fleet was in Corfu harbour when the Ionians were ceded to Greece in June 1864; and a British squadron lay off Rhodes when the Dodecanese were formally transferred in 1948. Liberation on such occasions, admittedly, could take many forms. It was said after the British departure from Corfu that respectable women in local society, at last free from the unwanted attentions of Jolly Jack Tar, were free to walk the great Esplanade in the evening for the first time for forty years.

The Greek Navy itself was scarcely a British creation, since the Greeks knew a thing or two about ships, but its development always bore a British imprint. After all, one of the heroes of the

naval struggle against the Ottomans was Captain Abney Hastings, ex-RN, and in George Finlay's opinion the one figure in that drama to have a real touch of greatness. Thereafter the story of the Greek Navy was often punctuated with British Missions, though the advice proffered was not always welcome or indeed taken (when such a Mission came to Athens in 1910 it found the Greeks 'decidedly opposed to everything English'). If, in Winston Churchill's language, British and British Empire troops later 'shared the ordeal' of Greeks on land in April-May 1941, Greek ships and sailors shared the grievous ordeal of the Royal Navy in the evacuations by sea that followed, especially from Crete. Britain's naval suprema of the Second World War, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, was deeply versed in Greek affairs – he could hardly not be, living much of the time in Alexandria, and often in Greek company; and it was fitting that when he took the surrender of the Italian Fleet in the Grand Harbour of Valletta in September 1943 he insisted that a Greek warship be given a proud place in the receiving line. For the Greeks involved, memories of October 1940 must have made

this very sweet.

But if the Royal Navy helped breathe life into, sustain, occasionally enlarge, and dignify Greek statehood, it also threatened, constrained and sometimes punished Greece and Greeks. During the 1820s British warships sternly patrolled any influx of refugees or revolutionary Hellenic propaganda into the Ionian Protectorate. Greek ports were blockaded by the British fleet in 1850, 1886 and 1916, and the same would have happened in 1922 had the threat of the Greek Government to occupy Constantinople ever been carried out. Had the Greek naval mutineers in Alexandria in 1944 not surrendered, the Royal Navy was primed to fire on Allied sailors and ships in a manner painfully reminiscent of what had happened to the French naval squadron at Mers-el-Kebir during July 1940. Because fragments of history often end in farce, as late as 1958 a suggestion surfaced in Whitehall that if any Greek warship passed near the Cypriot coastline, the vessel should be promptly attacked. Fortunately before this could happen it was pointed out

that one NATO fleet firing on another NATO fleet might not be a good idea. In sum, over time, the Royal Navy was the key instrument by which the British hoped to shape and protect their 'ideal' Greece, but it was also used to rap Greeks on the knuckles when they veered off in unpredictable directions.

A monarchical thread in Anglo-Hellenism ran in parallel with the naval. The first occupant of the modern Greek throne, the Bavarian Otho, arrived in the capital of Nauplion on board HMS Madagascar in January 1833. There is a lovely picture of the event in the Benaki Museum. Although Lord Palmerston as British premier later said that elevating Otho was the worst thing he ever did, Otho and his anglophobic Queen were still allowed to escape on a British warship some thirty years later. The ensuing Glücksberg dynasty was much more specifically British-made than its predecessor. The young Danish Prince William of Slesvig-Holstein, King George I of Greece as he became, was handpicked for that role when he attended the wedding of his younger sister; Alexandra, to the Prince of Wales

in 1863. Thereafter Queen Victoria maintained a close interest in her Danish-Greek relatives by marriage, about which there is much material in the Windsor archive. Whenever anti-dynastic feeling appeared in Athens (as in 1885, 1897 and 1909) Victoria and then Edward VII were quick to insist that British warships rush to Phaleron Bay, just in case an emergency exit became necessary. As a result Greek royals enjoyed more insurance than their Balkan counterparts, especially Serbian, though that did not save George I, after sixty years on the throne, from assassination in October 1912; those, like me with a liking for pedantic parallels may be interested that HMS Hampshire, the British vessel accompanying George's body on the journey back to Athens, was the same one which in January 1916 foundered off Orkney with Lord Kitchener aboard.

Constantine I's neutrality after August 1914 marked a very serious disjunction in Anglo-Greek royalism, as it did in political relations generally. Those relations famously recovered under Eleutherios Venizelos after 1917, only to progressively

fall apart again after that King's return to Greece in December 1920. But when from the mid-1930s, amidst a gathering Mediterranean crisis, Anglo-Greek necessities against common threats began to reappear, monarchy provided an automatic lever. Mussolini sneered that George II went back to Greece as King in 1935 as, in effect, 'British High Commissioner'. George II's British orientation was important in filling the gap on Metaxas' sudden death in 1941, and after the Cretan denouement was reinforced by the time he spent in 'British Cairo' – that deeply inward, increasingly out-of-touch milieu evoked in Artemis Cooper's book *Cairo in the War*. Getting George back onto his throne in Athens at the end of the war became one of Churchill's most cherished goals for reasons we shall touch on later, eventually achieved with a good deal of sleight of hand. The final *de facto* flourish of this dynastic interweaving, also with a naval trimming, came with the marriage of the young Princess Elizabeth in 1947 to Phillip Mountbatten, Philip himself having been born in the Palace built for British Lord High Commissioners in Corfu (one of the

telling traits of our topic tonight is that the threads are usually cross-stitched together). It was another British-ruled island, Cyprus, however, which ironically helped to erode this longstanding royal link. All the pleas of King Paul and even more those of Queen Frederika to their British connections over Cyprus in the 1950s were rebutted, often curtly. Indeed, when Cyprus became independent in August 1960, it was one of those rare cases when no personal representative of the sovereign was present. Nor did Queen Elizabeth attend the marriage of King Constantine II to his Danish bride in 1968, though virtually all other European crowned heads did so. After his own flight from Greece, the second Constantine never received the British support to return, or even to think about returning, most notably in 1974, that had been given at different periods to George II – the Glucksberg plug was in effect pulled. Still, Constantine today lives in London's West End, proving the general historical truth that Greek politicians take their exiles, like Constantine Karamanlis, in Paris, where there are lively political conversations to be had, and Greek royals in the British capital,

where high society is much more congenial.

We should say something as to *why* monarchy played such a central role in British attempts to manage ('Protect' according to the conventions of 1832) a polity that was at once so dependent and yet so maddeningly resistant to being *guided*. From the 1830s onwards the British tried to work around Athenian politics, but they could never really get inside it, or even work out whatever was going on. The British had their favourites, like Mavrocordatos in the 1840s (brought urgently from Constantinople in a British warship to stem the upheaval of 1843), Charilaos Trikoupes who dominated so much Greek politics from the 1870s through to the 1890s (his Athenian nickname 'The Englishman' appropriate for somebody brought up in London, and so frequently in the home of the Liberal statesman Lord John Russell as to be considered virtually one of the family) and Eleutherios Venizelos, who provided Lloyd George with one of the two binding political friendships in his ministerial life (the other was with the Zionist Chaim

Weizmann). But none of these reassuring figures stopped the British being confused by successive vibrations in the Greek political world, and never more so than in wartimes, such as 1915-16 when Greece spurned the bait of Cyprus to join the Entente partners, and at the various critical junctures after 1940 we have already alluded to. An Anglophile monarchy, in short, provided the only really reliable and knowable point of reference, an anchor in unknown waters, to which the British might cleave in tempestuous times.

In discussing institutional contexts in Anglo-Hellenic experience, British relations with Greek Churches was clearly vital. In a nicely characteristic anecdote, Kallistos Ware recounts in his chapter in *Scholars, Travels, Archives* how he enquired at dinner on first arriving in this School during 1954 where the local Orthodox Church might be, and met only the blank answer from his fellow diners that they had no idea but that ‘There’s a place down the road that keeps ringing bells...’ But in those instances where the British had a serious

engagement with modern Greek affairs, they had not only to know where the place ringing the bells was, but how to keep on terms with the chief bell-ringers. This was certainly true in the case of the Ionian Islands, where in the 1820s and 1830s British soldiers had an accustomed place on the most important day in the year for Corfu Town when St. Spyridon's relic was processed through the streets. Orthodox hierarchy and British representatives in Greek contexts had their mutual suspicions, but there was usually a lot to bind them together, with clear residues of the *millet*, Ottoman-style. Although some Englishmen recoiled instinctively from the forms of Greek religiosity – this was true of General Sir Garnet Wolsley, sent to occupy Cyprus in 1878, who confessed to a horror of Orthodox priests – others found it absolutely to their taste. Visiting a Corfiote monastery in 1858 and meeting a priest showing severe marks of deprivation and self-punishment, Gladstone, a self-flagellator himself, wrote admiringly that 'I have not in the Latin countries seen any monastery like this' (the put-down, of course, was to Rome, something Orthodox and

Anglicans often do happily together). It is very striking how in a range of different *sorts* of crises, crises when law and order hung in the balance, the British were often reduced to running to the place where the bells rang, and most notably to Archbishops, for help. In the considerable tension in Corfu during the weeks climaxing in the session of June 2 1864, the then British High Commissioner left the real job of governing the population to the Archbishop. In the even greater tension prevailing in Heraklion after the massacre of September 1898, the local British military commander relied on the Archbishop of Crete to keep some semblance of calm. It is therefore not surprising that in December 1944 Churchill, having come to Athens himself, and been reluctantly persuaded that the King could not be reinstated just yet, swiftly settled on Archbishop Damaskinos as Regent instead. Any comment on this sub-theme has to end with Cyprus. If – without discussing here the rights, wrongs and complications – there was one factor making a messy end to British rule in that island all too likely, it was that the British relationship with the Church of Cyprus had long been highly

fragile. Whatever Makarios III's failings, it is unlikely that anyone in that post would have chosen to co-operate with the British as Greek Archbishops had done in Corfu or Crete at vital moments, or as Damaskinos did as Regent of Greece. These ecclesiastical aspects of Anglo-Hellenic relationships are under-researched, and in Britain – which is what I know more about - such repositories as those of Lambeth Palace Library have much rich material waiting to be exploited.

Let us pass from institutions to the psychology of Anglo-Hellenic relationships. Here there is one trait – or complex of traits – which crop up repeatedly. These pivot on expectation, gratitude, disappointment ('deception' in a special Victorian meaning) and ultimately misunderstanding. Such connected phenomena also sprang from revolutionary tissue. George Finlay wrote with regard to the nominal Anglo-Irish commander of the revolutionary forces, Sir Richard Church:

Both Church and the Greeks misunderstood one another.

The Greeks expected Church to prove a Wellington, with a military chest supported from the British Treasury [Spain]. Church expected the Greeks to execute his strategy like regiments of guards. Experience might have taught him another lesson.

Such lessons, on both sides, were simply repeated and relearned thereafter. Lord Palmerston – for whom as a young politician Greece was, he said, ‘an emotional word’ – in office wanted the young Greek Kingdom of the 1830s and 1840s to provide the prototype of a parliamentary and anglicized polity in the eastern Mediterranean. When it did not – the revolution of 1843 in Athens seemingly took a Francophile turn – he got very emotional in a petulant sense where Greece was concerned. The result was the famous Don Pacifico affair in 1850, and the bruising intervention of the British Fleet in Piraeus. Apocryphally at least, once upon a time every English schoolboy and schoolgirl used to know about Palmerston’s

famous speech on Greek affairs in the House of Commons during June 1850, climaxing in his declaration ('Civis Romanus Sum') on the efficacy of the strong arm of England abroad. That the classic evocation of mid-Victorian British power overseas was made on a Greek issue gives an added twist to our concerns this evening.

Like Churchill later, Palmerston could never quite give up on Greece, and as we have seen when opportunity arose inserted a new dynasty. By transferring the Ionians Islands King George was even given an advance payment for services rendered. The service was for Greece to play the part of 'a model kingdom in the East' (by 1864 the country was lurching further eastwards in the ideology of the British Mediterranean world). But the now ailing Palmerston was disappointed once more. George soon married a Romanoff, and Greece allegedly stirred up trouble in Crete very much against British wishes. The twentieth century witnessed similar cycles of hopes, models, expectations and proffered, but perhaps deadly, gifts, all confounded together –

British and Greek ‘gifts’ to each other might indeed provide a useful metaphor for the relationship. Lloyd George after 1916, and really from 1912, also wanted Greece to be a kind of model state – by then a model strategic state – in the East, and he and others encouraged Greek troops to land in Smyrna in May 1919; who let down whom thereafter may be much debated, but the taste left in everybody’s mouth was not pleasant, as Michael Llewellyn Smith’s brilliant book on the subject. has lastingly portrayed. Later on Great Britain, in her own eyes, sought to ‘save’ Greece in 1941, and again in late 1944, but sometimes felt she got little gratitude in return; though, for many Greeks, if that was saving, then it was better to keep your salvation to yourself. Greece, of course, had not been saved from wartime occupation and its associated deprivations conjured up by Mark Mazower’s *Hitler’s Greece*. This, too, had psychological as well as material effects in Anglo-Hellenic context. A woman at Allied Headquarters in Algiers (more sensitive to these matters maybe than her male military counterparts) remarked in April 1944 on ‘the predicament of people whose countries have been

overrun by the Germans. We English can never understand that', going on to remark that when meeting French, Poles, Greeks and other nationalities in the wartime Mediterranean they were always polite and cheerful, but seemed to hide more acute feelings. The most important disjunctures in these relationships were often concealed, for both conscious and unconscious reasons.

Psychological complexity, with ebbs and flows of expectant hopes and sharp disillusionments, had a particular role in the history of Cyprus following British occupation. From very early on in that occupation rumours periodically swept Cypriot towns that the British were about to give the island to Greece. This happened when Gladstone came back to power in 1880, only for a swift correction to follow. A pattern was set, and Greek-Cypriot expectation on the one hand, and British determination to 'undeceive' any such anticipation on the other, became thereafter a central motif in the mental battle over aspirations to Cypriot enosis or political concessions that might open up such

a vista. Whenever serving Governors went home for talks at the Colonial Office, or new Governors arrived, a familiar cycle played itself out. 'The [Greek-Cypriot] newspapers continue to say what a fine fellow I am...they feel sure I shall give self-government to the Cypriots' a newly-installed Governor told his mother in a letter during August 1939 'When they know what I am going to recommend...they will be furious'. They always were furious, and became more so as time went on. The British, for their part, could never quite bring themselves to meet Greek-Cypriot hopes, not only because of likely offence given to Turkish-Cypriots, but because they felt that the Greeks would use any concession to make the lives of colonial administrators even more dismal than they already were. It must be admitted that their fears were not baseless. In this missing of minds the Second World War made no real difference. Few if any Mediterranean locations, in fact, had, materially, as good a war as Cyprus. The civilian population did not go without food, get fought over, or have life made very unpleasant. In Malta, by contrast, the British and the local population experienced a kind

of enforced bonding in the ordeal of siege, intensive bombardment and acute hunger – so much so that the Maltese gave up whatever Italianitá still existed among them; just as – though somewhat differently – residual Spanish identity leached from Gibraltar. In Cyprus there was no such wartime *discontinuity* and although of course many Cypriots served in the British Armed Forces, at a political level the gulf remained as wide as ever inside the island. Even in that brief period after the fall of Crete, when an invasion of Cyprus appeared a real possibility, British planning for special operations explicitly ruled out recruiting and arming Greek-Cypriot partisans because (as with the Zionists) you could not really be sure who the guns might end up being used against. There was in all of this a deep psychological fault or flaw in Anglo-Cypriot exchanges only to be compounded by post-war conditions in ways there is no need to discuss further here.

Given all that we have said so far, it is perhaps surprising that philhellenism did not die a death amongst the British long

before, and a belief in English liberalism did not expire amongst the Greeks. In fact they did die, repeatedly, but they kept getting new lives with updated rationales. As one British commentator put it at the end of the 1860s, ‘the old philhellenism is dead, and nothing can bring it back’. Certainly the old Byronic dream of Greece, a regenerated, westernized Greece, drenched in English poetics, passed away. But a new philhellenism arose in British public discourse in which Greece was assigned the role, not of regenerator, but as a convenient and passive receptacle – a Gladstone bag, you might say – into which those bits of European Turkey which the Great Powers did not actually want for themselves might be stuffed. Had Turkey imploded in the 1870s or 1880s, this philhellenism would have waxed to general enthusiasm. But Sultan Abdul Hamid played a long and skilful hand at imperial decline. He played it so long that by early 1900s British philhellenes were getting rapidly overtaken by advocates of Bulgaria in the envisioning of a new Balkans; the phenomenon of political, or geo-political, philhellenism looked on its last legs. The wars of

1912-13, and after 1914 on a far larger scale, however, shifted the furniture once more, and impressed the British really for the first time with Greece's *military* capability.

That capability assumed a fresh relevance when it came to wondering how the British might keep hold of the new empire in the Near East which Ottoman collapse put at British disposal. This was where in Lloyd George's fertile imagination the Greeks and the Zionists loomed large as sturdy auxiliaries. As some Greeks warned, this was asking too much of Greece, and could only lead to nemesis, as it did in Asia Minor in 1922; and the same – biting off more than they could chew - would have happened sooner or later to the Zionists without the unexpectedly contingent effects of Fascism and Holocaust in Europe. Without going further, we can see that there was never one philhellenism, but many varieties, shaped by changing circumstances, and the unpicking of them is a subject with lots of potential for future archival research.

When, we should then ask, did the philhellenism described in this presentation die, really and truly. An essence certainly disappeared amidst the upheavals of 1922. The stories, true or false, of Greeks in 1941 shouting at the retreating British ‘Come back soon’ as they scuttled away cannot hide that something was extinguished then as well. But, suggestively, Greece was one place that the British were absolutely determined to get back to at the end of Second World War, and Churchill was willing to trade in the rest of the Balkans with Stalin to get a clear run at it. Indeed it looked as if a traditional Anglo-Russian competition for Mediterranean mastery was re-emerging, with the Americans before long headed homewards as in 1919-20, and the French with no more than a walk-on role. In this vision of the future an Anglo-Greek tie was vital, and so Churchill bent himself to the task. In fact the small force the British sent to Greece in 1944, like the one they had sent in 1941, gave the lie to Churchill’s hubris – or ‘playing high’, as he put it. This was obvious even to senior British commanders. Air Marshal Slessor commented during the Athens disturbances of the ‘Decemvriana’

The days when HHG could send a cruiser to Constantinople or wherever it might be, without a by your leave to anyone, are dead whether we like it or not.

This had been becoming true for many years, but it is notable that Greek events after 1945 played a key part in making it inescapable, and by 1947 a hand-over to the Americans began. The shedding of a Greek burden was one of the conveniences of the Cold War for Britain. But it also provided a cover for a change of auxiliaries in the eastern Mediterranean, since the value put on Greece was rapidly plummeting, and the premium put on Turkey rising. Indeed, Turkish – like Spanish – neutrality was forgotten and forgiven almost as soon as the war itself was over. ‘Besides’ Churchill remarked in August 1945, by then no longer Prime Minister ‘except for the unhappy lapse of the last war [meaning the 1914-18] we have always been friends with Turkey’, and by 1950, when the last British military policeman

left Greece, a range of factors – not least the Palestinian debacle – meant that active cooperation with Turkey was becoming more of a British priority than it had been for decades. Here we come to the Cypriot paradox that the leaders of the movement for union with Greece lurched after 1951 towards a physical phase of the campaign – a campaign ultimately dependent on shocking the British back towards the ‘traditional framework of Anglo-Greek friendship’ – just when that framework was breaking up. In this regard Colonel Grivas and his circle, as uninstructed in international affairs as they were in Greek politics, made a radical error as to who the real beneficiaries of violence in Cyprus might then prove to be.

Why, then, had the British and the Greeks for so many years cleaved together, however erratically and with repeated mutual disillusionments? E.H. Carr, latterly a distinguished historian of Bolshevik affairs, wrote during 1937 in his Cust Lecture

For Great Britain, the Mediterranean is, in its final

analysis, a problem of the way in, the way through and the way out. If you consider the steps by which Great Britain became a Mediterranean Power, you will find that her policy has always been dominated by this question of entrances and exits.

For the British, Greece and the surrounding archipelago was always an entrance and an exit, as well as a place of observation onto the Black Sea, Asia Minor, the Levant and the Balkans, those interiors where warships could not really bring effective power to bear. It could also be a place of last resort *in extremis*. Hitler once mused that if Rommel ever swept into Alexandria, the British fleet – or what was left of it after Crete – would simply scarp and hide itself in the Greek islands, from where they would not be easy to winkle out. Anglo-Hellenism was therefore one thread amongst others running through a deep-seated British instinct to cling to the periphery of Europe, either in the cold of the Baltic (where Nelson lost his arm) or more especially in its warm south (where he lost his eye), part of

Europe and able to affect its outcomes, and yet not too close to its often dangerous heart.

Conversely, why did Greeks instinctively veer towards the British? For the most part, because there were no alternatives, or the alternatives which existed either disappeared or proved unsatisfactory. For many Greeks from the 1830s the ideal alignment was with Holy Orthodox Russia, but this Russia increasingly went off in pan-Slav directions antithetical to Hellenic interests. Greeks often looked to France, with a Philhellenic tradition as rich as Great Britain, and indeed French models often did shape Greek legal and educational institutions; but at crucial junctures French support had a distressing tendency to go missing where Greek aspirations were concerned, as at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. From the 1890s the possibility began to be glimpsed in Athens of dispensing with unreliable Powers, and teaming up instead with local Balkan Christian partners to gorge on the Ottoman carcass. But such a line-up proved elusive, transiently worked a dream in

1912, but became very unstable to say the least in 1913, and apart from a fleeting appearance in the 1930s a Balkan combination never re-entered the frame again. The British and the Greeks invariably fell short of each other's expectations, but circumstances sooner or later usually effected an overlap between the two countries. Such a powerful synergy occurred in 1940-41, when, for all the differences and disasters we have mentioned, Greece's 'national intoxication' against the Italians met the spirit of the Blitz pervading Britain's determination to stay in the ring against Germany. And although what happened thereafter in the end witnessed the evaporation of much of what we have been talking about tonight, there are still countless legacies and renewals of the connection. One writer remarks of the British in regard to Cyprus now that they constitute a sort of 'indigenous foreigner', certainly foreign, but deeply embedded in various ways, some desirable, some perhaps not – ways, too, in which a paler version of an old cycle whereby Anglophobia and what Voltaire once derided as 'Anglomania' follow each other, just as philhellenism and what has been called

‘mishellenism’ are also organically and cyclically related. The history and continuing work of this School is situated in such a complicated milieu, and future Annual Archive Lectures will on occasions surely throw more light and understanding on the themes I have tried to evoke this evening.