
Professor Psomiades maintains in this study that the “last phase” of the Eastern Question was largely resolved in the 1920’s through the more or less general merging of the ethnological limits of Hellenism with the frontiers of the Greek state. This coalescence was realized through the forced transfer of over a million Greek Christians from Anatolia and eastern Thrace to Greece and of a smaller number of Turks and other Muslims from politically Greek territories to Turkey. Although in part inspired by the flights of peoples during and after the Balkan wars of 1912-1913, the population transfers of the 1920’s were largely a consequence of the Greco-Turkish war to determine the respective boundaries of Greek and Turkish power and of the Treaty of Lausanne (signed and ratified in 1923), which brought that war to an official end. The almost simultaneous convention for the exchange of Greek and Turkish populations was part of a larger whole of population exchange agreements. Such accords were initiated in 1919 and included arrangements between Bulgaria and Greece and Bulgaria and Turkey as well as between Greece and Turkey.

Psomiades begins his examination of Greco-Turkish diplomatic relations with a useful short introduction to two rival imperial ideas—Byzantine and Ottoman. He also provides a brief discussion of great-power rivalries in the eastern Mediterranean and Near East during the early 1920’s. The major shortcoming of the introductory pages stems from his failure to make a clear distinction between the Megali Idea (“Great Idea”) as an imperial aspiration and Hellenism as a purely national movement. There is, however, a fairly obvious reason for this neglect: Greek leaders themselves rarely made such a distinction. The discrimination could appropriately be made only if the author set up certain typological constructs or Weberian “ideal types.” This he has not done.

One of the primary weaknesses of the study thus derives from the author’s reluctance to engage in political theory or in theoretical analysis of any kind. He could have compensated for this by writing a historian’s kind of diplomatic history, namely, a detailed study of public opinion, of the pressures of diverse interest groups, and of the actions and declarations of statesmen. He has written instead an old-fashioned kind of study in diplomatic relations.

Lest our statements be construed as an indictment, we should quickly add that the book provides a concise description and good analysis of Greco-Turkish relations in the 1920’s. Especially well handled in one of the ten chapters are the precarious relationships which were engendered between Turkey and the Ecumenical Patriarchate (in Constantinople, or Istanbul) by the Greco-Turkish conflicts of the 1920’s. Psomiades correctly emphasizes the main ultimate result of this strife: the extension of the geographic base of the ecclesiastical authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to other lands, especially distant ones in the New World, where Orthodox Christians today form important small minorities.

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Throughout the inter-war years the problem of the Free City of Danzig played a central role in Germany's revisionist Eastern policy. Danzig was a German city, and for Germans its loss seemed to be a flagrant violation of the fourteen points. The insistence that Danzig be returned to the Reich was a constant theme of German foreign policy. The "Free City" solution was from the outset an uneasy compromise between Poland's need to have access to the sea, and the German insistence that should Danzig become an integral part of Poland the principle of self determination, to which the Entente paid lip service, would be a mere mockery. In the discussions over Danzig the British were concerned that the city could well provoke German revanche, whereas the French seemed solely concerned to weaken Germany, regardless of the possible consequences. A compromise was suggested by the British, and supported by the United States that Danzig should become a "Free City" under the League. It seemed to be an attractive compromise, for the new Poland would consist solely of Polish territory and yet have full use of the port. But this attempt to square the circle was from the very beginning doomed to failure. 96% of the Danzigers were German and they wanted to remain German. The Poles made it equally clear that they intended to make Danzig a Polish city.

At first it seemed that Germany held most of the trump cards. During the Russo-Polish war Danzig dockers refused to unload Polish war material, and although Britain and France intervened and demanded that the goods be handled, the Polish war effort was considerably weakened by the strike. Danzig seemed to be a particularly favourable spot to apply pressure for the revision of the Versailles settlement. Links between Danzig and Germany were systematically strengthened. Massive loans from the Reichsbank put Danzig heavily in Germany's debt. Civil servants were practically all recruited in Germany. Germany also agreed to subsidise government pensions to Danzigers, in spite of reservations that this could set a precedent that Germany could ill afford if all those about to lose their German citizenship were to receive pension payments from the German government. Yet although Danzig seemed firmly tied to the Reich economically, administratively and culturally it soon became apparent that the city's survival rested in the last resort on the good will of Poland. If Danzig's hinterland was closed, if Polish traffic was diverted from the port and if Polish contracts were withdrawn the city would face near ruin. The crisis of 1923 over Danzig's sovereign status and that of 1925 on the postal services proved that German confidence was unfounded and that Poland could apply measures that showed all too clearly the weakness of Germany's position.

The Stresemann era saw a more active and ingenious policy towards Danzig. After Locarno and Germany's entry into the League Germany could bring increased pressure to bear. Thus within the League Germany was able to secure the appointment of Cosima Wagner's grandson Count Manfredi Gravina as High Commissioner in Danzig, and prevent the re-appointment of the pro-Polish Hamel. But even Stresemann was unable to solve the basic problem of German policy towards Danzig. As Luther said in 1925, the peaceful revision of the Eastern borders of Germany could not be achieved without the cooperation of the Poles. The Poles naturally enough showed as little desire to cooperate as did the Germans. By building up Gdynia as a rival port to Danzig, the Free City's position was further weakened. Polish policy in Gdynia was remarkably successful, and although Danzig was to gain a number of moral victories over Poland its economy relentlessly declined. By January 1933 many influential Danzigers were seriously contemplating political surrender to Poland as the only hope for economic survival. It was Hitler who temporarily reversed