Russia's Mediterranean Moment:

Constellations of Sovereignty and the Making of a Region, 1770–1830*

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In 1788 Russia's Admiralty College published an atlas containing fifty-eight hand-drawn maps of the Aegean Sea and its islands, bays, and harbors, in different scales and perspectives – a memento of the first time Russian ships entered the Mediterranean. Known as the *Atlas of the Archipelago*, the volume's dedication exalted "the conquest of the Archipelago" by Russian naval forces, which opened the sea to navigation under the Russian flag "to the very gates of Istanbul."[1] A product of the First Archipelago Expedition of the 1768–1774 Russian-Ottoman War, in which five squadrons loaded with land forces and artillery sailed from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, the *Atlas* included views of dozens of islands that had entered under Russian protection and whose populations were claimed as subjects of Empress Catherine the Great.[2]

The *Atlas* was a physical accompaniment to a web of "ideological constructions" that had gripped the Russian court since the 1760s: a turn to Hellenistic and ancient-world motifs across a literary spectrum that amounted to nothing short of a "logical *tour de force* [that] fundamentally changed the thinking about Russia's historical role and destiny."[3] Through the science of cartography and an imperial mindset the islands assembled therein had been conquered by Russian forces, and the waters between them symbolically marked by the appearance of the Russian flag.[4] Had it not been for Sweden's declaration of war on Russia, which in 1788 detained the Baltic squadron in the northern seas, in the 1787-1791 Russian-

Ottoman War the Russian navy would have reestablished a Russian protectorate in the Eastern Mediterranean. The *Atlas* was reprinted in the heat of the Napoleonic Wars, with an expanded view of the Mediterranean, to guide Russian forces from the coasts of France to the Adriatic Sea.[5] A new frontispiece referenced the improbable 1798 alliance between the Russian and Ottoman empires, forged to block French expansion in the region. A joint fleet captured a group of islands in the Adriatic Sea, forming the Septinsular Republic – Russia's second protectorate in the Eastern Mediterranean.[6]

The discrete set of charts in the *Atlas of the Archipelago* represented, and in 1798 – extended, the Russian Mediterranean. Publishing its own maps, based on Russian hydrographic knowledge, imprinted with Russian names and locations of note, the Russian Admiralty effaced what it had previously recognized as Ottoman seas and marked them as Russia's own. Indifferent to political boundaries and historical, cultural, or geographic groupings, the *Atlas* proclaimed the waters from the western edge of the Peloponnese peninsula to the distant shores of Anatolia as a single space in the Russian imperial and maritime imagination.

Where the *Atlas of the Archipelago* presented the Russian Mediterranean as a flat constant, captured with ornate flourishes to captivate and flatter the empire's elite, this article lays out the contentious battles over Russian sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire's maritime domains that modulated Russian presence in the region and thereby varied the shapes – constellations – of Russian sovereignty over the course of several decades. In contrast to the *Atlas's* singular depiction of the region, the Russian Empire's Mediterranean shifted from territorial constellations of island groups to diverse configurations of smaller legally-protected units – ships, consulates, and individuals – each formed with a special regard for European legal conventions. After an overview that examines the Mediterranean not as a satellite region, but as part of Russia's imperial framework, this article proceeds by arguing

that the territorial constellations of the Russian Mediterranean were formed through the extension of Russia's governing practices from its contiguous empire to its overseas protectorates and surrounding waters. The subsequent sections investigate constitutive elements of the Russian Mediterranean, in order of increasing uncertainty regarding their Russian belonging. Although they conjured the Russian Mediterranean in different shapes, scales, and legal forms, these constellations shared two common traits: their creation supplanted Ottoman control over swathes of land and sea, and their legitimacy relied on ambiguous relationships forged between representatives of the Russian Empire and the local population. The legal claims to the Russian Mediterranean rested on these fabricated subjects, whose interests and rights were secured and protected in this imagined region.

The Russian Mediterranean

Russia's Mediterranean Moment spanned the momentous decades of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, 1770 to 1830, which included four Russian-Ottoman wars, the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and an unprecedented Russian-Ottoman alliance. Owing to a fortuitous confluence of factors – the reinvigoration of the Russian navy under Catherine II that combined an interest in exploration with new forms of finance and credit;[7] the changing politics inside the Ottoman Empire;[8] and shifting dynamics of southeastern Europe, including the decline of Venice[9] – Russian ships sailed to the Mediterranean Sea and placed a new set of possibilities in the imperial elite's sights. This half-century was distinctly marked by the Russian Empire's strong and visible presence in the Mediterranean Sea, when the range of possibilities for the empire's future in the region appeared (to its own elite as well as to envious and anxious observers) to be the widest. Indeed, this period, often seen as a pre-history to Russia's role in the formation of national governments in the Balkans and the religious trajectory in Russian foreign policy, established Russia as an actor in the Mediterranean. The subsequent anxiety about Russian interests in

the region only goes to show that Russia's entry into the Mediterranean did not go unnoticed; it challenged, overturned, shaped, taxed, and structured the politics, commerce, and laws of the region.

This article describes the formation of what I call the Russian Mediterranean, not a region that was ever labelled as such on any map, but a capacious appellation that embraces the ambiguity of the Russian Empire's tenure in the Levantine, Aegean, Adriatic and Ionian seas, across the Aegean islands and Balkan Peninsula, and along the Syrian shores.[10] Wars that repeatedly brought Russian forces into this region were also opportunities to realize a political and strategic goal: a Russian port in the Mediterranean Sea.[11] When circumstances permitted, arriving Russian forces occupied Mediterranean locales to satisfy immediate strategic goals, but nevertheless conceived of them as Russian political entities: the Archipelago Principality (1770–1774), Septinsular Republic (1800–1807), "Russian Albania" (1806–1807) became the ephemeral products of this imperial imaginary.[12] In the nineteenth century, particularly after Russia gave up its territorial strongholds, the law became a tool to defend smaller units of Russian sovereignty in the Mediterranean region: ships, consulates, people. New constellations of sovereignty emerged in the legal battles surrounding the use of the Russian flag in the Eastern Mediterranean, a right carved out and defended through legal means. A ship's flag, an indicator of its nationality, stood for more than just travel permissions, economic privileges, and deference in international waters; in numerous ways, ships were read as "representatives of municipal legal authorities – vectors of law thrusting into ocean space," and their treatment reflected an empire's international standing.[13] In the Russian Mediterranean, Russian sovereignty shifted from claims to physical dominions to asserting protection for imperial Russian institutions, but both resided in persons and groups operating in the Eastern Mediterranean with the imprimatur of the Russian state's authority. As the time-lapse narrative of this article shows, the Russian Mediterranean was not a static

geopolitical construction, but one of changing configurations. That its parameters – territories, waters, subjects – were not always visible or obvious to all observers in the region was part of its ephemeral quality.

This term – Russian Mediterranean – captures phenomena that have been described by generations of scholars. Seen through the prism of great-power politics, the Russian Mediterranean might be the region where many observed Russia's "interference" in the guise of a "guardian of religious independence of Christians in Turkey"; of "involvement in and penetration of the Balkan Peninsula," formed as a consequence of Russian "over-confidence" and "expansion in the East."[14] It seems apt to describe the latticework of Russia's bilateral ties with representatives of semi-autonomous regions and provinces, captured by historians as prehistories of nation-states that gained independence over the course of the nineteenth century, as constituting a Russian Mediterranean. These formal and informal connections often developed concurrently, just as their outcomes were often linked.[15] Another scholarly trend has sought to capture the simultaneity of policies and interactions across semi-autonomous provinces, city-states, and principalities by thinking of them as borderlands, or frontiers – as zones of conflict in wartime and contestation in peacetime.[16] But such contact zones, as I argue, were not exclusively zones of violence, nor did they exist solely on land. Russian-Ottoman conflicts spilled out along the maritime frontier, and the physical and symbolic space of the sea contributed to the strength of each of the two empires as much as the inhabitants of its islands.[17] The diversity, marginality, contestation, and violence of the lands situated between imperial centers characterized the maritime spaces as well, a dimension that the Russian Mediterranean captures. In fact, the thalassic reference reminds us not only that imperial rivalries and clashes happened at sea just as they did on land; it calls attention to the primacy of naval institutions in Russia's activities in the region. Not only was the sea an equally important space to observe the extension of Russian imperial power, but it

was in fact naval commanders who reached beyond their military directives to act as the imperial force in the region.[18] In the decades around the turn of the nineteenth century, maritime navigation and rights at sea were at the forefront of Russian interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

To speak of a Russian Mediterranean in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries brings to mind Russian Empress Catherine the Great's frequently-cited but never actualized "Greek Project" – a grandiose vision of the conquest of significant swathes of Ottoman territory, Orthodox control of Constantinople, and the creation of one or more independent kingdoms from the Ottoman Empire's European provinces – relayed in a few letters to Habsburg Emperor Joseph II in 1781 and 1782.[19] Cemented by specious evidence that included the name of Catherine's second grandson born in 1779 (Constantine), Russia's Orthodox Christian faith, and court gossip,[20] in the nineteenth century this symbolic, geopolitical fantasy became another way to stoke Russophobia across Europe and incite presumptions about Russian intentions vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire that sat at the heart of the so-called Eastern Question.[21] Compared to the alarmist and single-minded tale woven by foreign ministers and pamphleteers about Russian activities in the region, the reality of Russia's entry into the Mediterranean was less sinister. This article steps away from the conjectures of diplomats concerned with Russia's interjections and the European balance of power towards a discussion of the "imperial repertoires," to borrow Burbank and Cooper's familiar term, that comprised many of the Russian Empire's activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkan Peninsula.[22] It highlights the spontaneity of Russian activities in response to local politics, eschewing the presumption of predetermined geopolitical goals. Where grand narratives remain at the state level, I locate the agency of individual actors and intermediaries whose actions sometimes ran counter to the official stance in St. Petersburg. Finally, on the basis of extensive archival materials, this article looks at Russian interactions

with the inhabitants of the Eastern Mediterranean to show the inherent uncertainty of the Russian imperial project in the region.

The creation of a Russian layer of influence in the Eastern Mediterranean coincided with empire-building on the Eurasian landmass. By the late eighteenth century, parallel processes of indirect rule, construction of defensive lines, and in-migration of new settlers cast the shadow of the Russian Empire across Siberia and the Steppe. New peoples and territories entered the empire as a consequence of the Partitions of Poland (1772–1795) and the annexation of the Grand Duchy of Finland (1809), leaving the imperial elite to draw on earlier experiences of the Baltic provinces to incorporate the land administratively while preserving privileges and elements of governmental autonomy for the elite classes. The imperial project extended to the south as well. The 1783 annexation of the khanate of Crimea set off a decades-long process to incorporate people, territory, and coastline into the Russian Empire. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the first moves in the conquest of the Caucasus were made with the annexation of Georgia, which led to one protracted war after another alongside other efforts to subdue the local population. This article shows these elements – administrative rationalization, legal structure, taxes, military recruitment, mapping and land surveyance – were part of the Russian Empire's practice in the Eastern Mediterranean as well. Despite these similarities, the Russian polities of the Eastern Mediterranean were never long-lasting; the few attempts to secure a Russian overseas base shifted to a different mechanism of extending power.[23]

While some aspects of Mediterranean rule carried over from the contiguous empire, the Mediterranean was nevertheless a distinctive region for Russian activity. Like the empire's other peripheries, it played a unique role in the self-representation and imagination of the imperial elite. Similar to the western borderlands in the acquisitions of Poland and Finland, culturally and geographically, these Mediterranean projects placed Russia squarely

within Europe. In contrast to Alaska, Russia's other overseas region under the purview of the navy with overtly colonial nomenclature and bold comparisons to Columbus, in the Mediterranean, the Russians mined the cultural resources of antiquity to represent what Richard Wortman has called the "European myth."[24] In fact, the overt poetic, literary and symbolic imaginary surrounding Russian incursions into the region styled the Russian Empire as the savior of Europe – even if what Russians were saving and from whom varied with each war.[25]

In other ways, too, the Russian Mediterranean brought its own historical particularities to the Russian Empire: like the Åland islands in the Baltic, a strategically important location that entered the Russian Empire along with the rest of Finland in 1809, Russian protectorates in the Mediterranean were in striking distance of the capital of a rival empire; unlike the Åland islands, the Mediterranean islands were far more difficult for the imperial Russian navy to defend. Like the distant islands and territories of the North Pacific, the Mediterranean islands had human and agricultural resources for the empire to harvest; unlike the North Pacific, the Mediterranean islands were intended to be under Russian protection and tutelage, but not explicitly deprived of self-governance in the medium-to-long term.[26] Where governance of the North Pacific territories took on the brutal and exploitative nature of European colonialism, the forms of governance introduced in the Mediterranean took into account historical precedents in the region. And while the Russian Empire's direct rule over Mediterranean territories was ephemeral, the cultural footprint it left behind cast a shadow over the political affairs of the region into the twentieth century.

In a way, the formation of the Russian Mediterranean as a region played out in reverse of the common narrative of imperial expansion. Polities were formed and temporarily viewed through the flexible and adaptable framework of the Russian Empire. However, imperial integration, as numerous historians of Russia's borderlands have shown, is a long, delicate,

historically contingent process.[27] Instead of incorporating these polities into its political and administrative structure, by the end of first decade of the nineteenth century the Russian Empire dissolved and ceded them to other imperial powers. Historical contingencies that adjoined regions and borderlands to empires just as easily broke them up into separate entities. The brief lives of Russia's Eastern Mediterranean polities remind us that imperial compacts were neither linear nor unidirectional; the fragility and historical contingency of the Russian Empire is even more glaring in light of these short-lived efforts to extend the Russian Empire to the Eastern Mediterranean. Instead, the Russian Empire saw its influence shift towards advocacy for the empire's rights in international and foreign spaces. Shifting control from provinces and administrative units to smaller spaces and persons did nothing to change the impression that Russia's influence in the Mediterranean was growing with every decade, creating anxieties among other imperial powers, with tangible political repercussions.

Nested Normative Orders

Russia's conquest and formation of political entities out of groups of islands was neither predetermined nor prescribed, but rather reflective of local politics. While other regions occupied in the Russian-Ottoman wars, namely Moldavia and Wallachia, had an aristocratic class with concrete ideas about rights and privileges and experience in self-rule, Russia's first Mediterranean formation – the Archipelago Principality – had no concrete set of rights to resurrect under Russian protection.[28] When Russian forces introduced new political and legal realities, these were imposed on preexisting political, social, and legal – that is, normative – orders. But these were not uniform across the different islands that became Russian exclaves in a contested region. The Russian Empire's political and legal structures drew on existing arrangements, resurrected old orders, and sometimes replaced them. In some instances, the leaders of Russia's occupying forces showed a striking regard for the political infrastructure, governance, and administration of political, social, and

economic life in the Mediterranean territories. To resolve individual legal questions, local authorities looked for solutions in any number of sources: law of nations, Russian law, local customary law, canon law – a phenomenon described in the scholarly literature as legal pluralism.[29] In Russian understanding, different sources of law existed in a hierarchy, a nested legal arrangement confined to particular institutions and authorities across different islands, and the waters in between them. In itemizing the hierarchy of nine kinds of law by which people were governed, the Procurator-General Aleksandr Viazemskii stated that human reason lay in knowing which was called for to decide a given issue.[30] This section examines the new forms of Russian legal authority introduced to the Mediterranean that shifted political, social, economic, and military contests in the region into the arena of jurisprudence. I highlight three fundamental instruments that created a legal framework for the Russian Mediterranean: written constitutions that legally constructed the territorial entities, admiralty courts that underpinned Russian sovereignty in the waters between the islands, and oaths of subjecthood that populated these spaces with Russian subjects.

The language and structure of law are a particularly useful prism to understand both how Russia adjoined new territories and used legal instruments to govern them.[31] In contrast to traditional narratives, this approach emphasizes the practical experience of governance of these territories over diplomatic horse trading at Great Power conferences. Instead of negotiating, the Russian Empire sought to secure these territories by invoking international norms and the language of empire. Formative documents were the first steps taken to extend Russian sovereignty to the Mediterranean polities, in the legal terminology that was intelligible to other powers in the region. Like admiralty courts that most clearly reflected the nuanced Russian interpretation of European maritime laws and conventions, Mediterranean constitutions hinted at the nested legal orders in the Russian Mediterranean.

Within a broader historiography that meticulously documents how the Russian Empire and its successor states ruled the Eurasian space through law, concerns about Russian constitutionalism – a question Richard Wortman accurately recast as the relationship between the monarch and the law – remain at the center.[32] While written constitutions were *à la mode* at the end of the eighteenth and in the early nineteenth century, they were still one of a variety of legal instruments that included manifestoes, charters, *grammoty*, and rescripts that granted status and privileges to different social groups, sometimes extending concessions to entire territories that were incorporated into the Russian Empire.[33] While historians have read the written constitutions granted by Alexander I to the empire's western borderlands in the nineteenth century as a test of the form's applicability to the rest of Russia by a tsar predisposed to domestic reform,[34] in the Mediterranean we might see them as a particular application of the empire's long and veritable tradition of governance through law at a moment in time when this form commanded interest and debate among Russia's elite.[35] Indeed, historians have disputed whether the term constitution necessarily implied the liberal, progressive forms of government created by the French and American revolutions. Russian usage at the turn of the nineteenth century meant something else.[36]

In the Mediterranean, this seemingly novel form of a written blueprint of government spelled out the basic order of a society and relationship between various classes, in fashionable and regionally-appropriate terminology. The Russian idea of governance was so intimately linked to confirming and guaranteeing the islands' established social order that the political design for the Archipelago Principality (1770–1774), which was formed during the 1768–1774 Russian-Ottoman war, was tucked away in a long letter guaranteeing concessions to the local clergy. In between assurances that churches would be exempt from taxes and that clergy would retain their privileged status, the decorated Russian admiral Grigorii Spiridov,

the senior-most Russian naval officer in the Aegean Sea, outlined a plan for an independent polity, to be set up under Russian tutelage.[37]

Instructions from St. Petersburg offered little guidance beyond "uniting the Greek provinces into a single unified body," loosely following the example of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, yet Spiridov's letter touched on all basic functions of government.[38] One of the oldest officers in the navy, Spiridov had cut his teeth in the Caspian Sea flotilla that was part of Russia's colonial administration over seaside provinces wrested from Safavid Iran in 1723. For the Mediterranean polity, he proposed a cluster of self-governing islands, each of which would be led either by elected deputies or an archduke, overseeing a chancellery that handled each island's civic affairs. In keeping with his guarantees to the islands' clergy, a separate religious consistory would oversee spiritual affairs. Deputies from the islands would represent the islands' affairs in a governing senate, which would oversee disputes between the civil and religious chancelleries and "govern in favor of its people." To keep the peace, enforce laws, and provide protection, each island would raise a small armed militia, for the safety of the island and to deploy to other islands as necessary, although for the time being the principality would remain under the protection of the Russian Empire's navy and arms. Spiridov's plan also addressed the question of finances with a provision for all government servants to receive salaries to cover their expenses, allowing them to serve impartially and not take bribes. Another foundational document of eighteen points outlining the main duties of the local authorities was later distributed by Pavel Nesterov, who was by then in charge of the islands.[39] During an initial period – presumably until the end of the ongoing war – the islands would remain under the protection of the Russian Empire; however, the Russian proposals were vague on Russia's future relationship with the islands.

It was this political vision for the Archipelago Principality that the first of the three documents for the governance of the Septinsular Republic in the early nineteenth century, the

1799 Ushakov plan, later came to resemble. Composed with the input of (or by) representatives of the islands, the plan promised to restore Venetian-era privileges to the nobility, while incorporating the middle-class townspeople into institutions of government.[40] Members of this second class would be eligible to serve in the governing councils and as judges. Like the Archipelago Principality, the Ionian Republic took each main island as the basic administrative unit. The governing senate's powers included approving the laws of the constituent islands of the republic, overseeing each island's treasury and incomes, nominating representatives to represent the republic in the courts of St. Petersburg and Constantinople, appointing and overseeing military commanders on each of the islands. Additionally, the plan enshrined privileges such as protection of private property and naming Greek the language of all court proceedings.[41] Continuity between the polities resided in the population as well. Keen observers of the 1770 uprising, the islands later became places of refuge for combatants from the Peloponnese.[42]

However, despite these promises, the Septinsular Republic's political structure and international status were decided by Russian and Ottoman representatives in Constantinople, with minimal input from hand-picked island delegates. Of the three forms of rule on the table, the Russian preference for structuring the polity as an "aristocratic constitutional republic" modeled on Ragusa was eventually accepted by the Ottoman ministers. Consequently, the Republic of the Seven Islands received the same political, civil, and commercial rights as the Ragusan republic, including self-governance. Its tribute to the Ottoman Porte in the amount of 10,000 piasters was owed once every three years.[43] While this article is concerned with the Ionian Republic as a Russian imperial project, we should not overlook the marks of Ottoman stewardship in the republic's existence. In addition to tribute, Ottoman suzerainty was symbolized in the red border on the republic's flag and consecrated in trading privileges for Ionian merchants.[44] In fact, only with the sultan's agreement was the Ushakov plan turned

into the first official constitution of the newly created polity. (Several more constitutional projects followed from different interest groups, containing varying visions for the social and political order of the Ionian islands.[45]) These constitutions laid the foundation for island governance when the republic was surrendered to the French in 1807, and then formally taken under British protection in 1815.[46]

The constitutional projects were concerned with more than just the internal governance of the polities they created; they contained clues as to how these islands were situated in the Russian imperial and international order. Despite promises of their eventual independence, there was no question that in the short term they were conceived of as Russian strongholds. While their respective constitutions envisioned disparate islands as singular administrative units to be governed by a central elected representative body, each political arrangement retained Russian imperial oversight over the state. In the Archipelago Principality, the head of Russian forces or his proxy was empowered to guide the individual island chancelleries (which also had local leaders) and carry out the function of the Senate until Russian forces left and the Archipelago Principality gained independence.[47] In some instances, island elders also appealed to these figures to intervene in matters that were considered local jurisdiction because local leaders abused their powers or seemed not to know "Russian laws."[48] In the Septinsular Republic, not only did any adopted constitution require approval of the Russian emperor and the Ottoman sultan, but the Russian representative overseeing the republic's affairs and local interests, Giorgio Mocenigo, was, as Konstantina Zanou put it, "vested with almost dictatorial powers."[49] Mocenigo instigated internal reforms that amounted to greater Russian control in local affairs. Future arrangements with constitutional principalities closer to St. Petersburg followed suit with official ministerial titles for petty despots of this sort, Governor-General of Finland and the

tsar's plenipotentiary in the Kingdom of Poland.[50] In the Russian political order, there was no contradiction of imperial oversight over a republic.

Yet, while there was an obvious tension in the degree of imperial oversight inscribed in the arrangements and the decisions of imperial governors, it was also at times surprising where they drew the line of Russian control. Consider the question of flags which would be used by the newly-established principalities – a matter of some significance, as we shall see below. With the exception of ships taken into the Russian navy with all appropriate paperwork, ships in the Mediterranean, including merchants from Russian-occupied islands, were not entitled to use the Russian flag. The expectation was that they would sail under their own Greek flags.[51] Much to Spiridov's annoyance, this expectation was often flouted by the Russian islands' merchants, who raised Russian flags instead.[52] By contrast, citizens of the Septinsular Republic actively made use of their own flag, which provided valuable neutrality amidst the Napoleonic Wars.[53]

The existence of individual flags implies the polities had a degree of independence in conducting foreign policy. Indeed, the Ragusan model also allowed for the Republic of the Seven Islands to carry on its own foreign policy, and the scant correspondence guiding the creation of the Archipelago Principality implied that the unified body of Greek islands would be able to appeal to Europe on its own behalf. However, in practice, the Russian government precluded this at every turn. Spiridov, who felt that the financial burdens of empire in the Mediterranean were too great, rather than continuing to pay for the defense of the islands or ports suggested selling an island or two to the French or the British.[54] In the Ionian case, citing the impoverishment of the state treasury, the Russian foreign minister informed Mocenigo that the Republic's finances would not allow for diplomatic agents abroad or for foreign agents to be established in Corfu.[55] For much the same reasons of fiscal austerity, Mocenigo was further instructed to decline France's appointment of a trading agent on the

islands' behalf in Marseilles and to use the Russian consular representatives instead.[56] Over a longer timeframe, one can imagine such contradictions would have added up to the kinds of constitutional battles that took place in Poland and Finland.[57]

The arrival of Russian forces in the Eastern Mediterranean also challenged Ottoman imperial authority at sea.[58] At first, Russian commanders were cautious. Arriving in traditional Ottoman waters, Russian forces continued to tread carefully before imposing Russian laws in the Mediterranean, heeding Catherine II's warning that "because the Russian flag had not previously been seen in [Mediterranean] waters it [was] that much more important to respect the established order."[59] It was not just the Ottoman prohibition on navigation and passage of Russian ships in Ottoman seas that dictated caution and limited the geographical reach of Russian law; Russia's own unfamiliarity with these far-away waters conditioned such an approach. Orders and instructions issued to Russian vessels geographically circumscribed the waters where Russian-flagged ships could cruise. The 1787 *Rules for Privateers*, for instance, restricted privateers to the Eastern Mediterranean, and warned them to engage only vessels traveling to the Aegean and the Levant, not those sailing westward.[60] Efforts to avoid impropriety were partially linked with an even stronger desire to avoid upsetting the established Mediterranean order, not giving other Mediterranean powers – particularly France – a reason to dispatch warships to protect their trade.[61] Even once groups of islands became Russian protectorates, it was the islands, not the waters around or between them, that were understood to be Russian: in their internal correspondence the Russian commanders referred to the islanders as "our Greeks," but the space in between the islands as "enemy waters."[62] Little of the imperial imagination that encompassed new lands and their subjects extended to waters that in so many ways shaped local lives. While the Russian Empire developed its laws and policies for maritime spaces, deference to Ottoman rule persisted.

But soon, from their constitutionally-framed, lawfully-formulated strongholds, Russian naval commanders began to govern the waters around and between their island constellations. From Russia's first arrival in the Eastern Mediterranean, Aleksei Orlov proclaimed to European powers skeptical of Russian presence in the Mediterranean, that it was his intention to impose order and eradicate the piracy that plagued the region. In May 1772, he pronounced these efforts successful.[63] Orlov claimed that the mere presence of Russian naval forces eradicated piracy, but Russian admiralty courts in the Mediterranean likewise served the case of justice by putting the pirates that plagued the Archipelago on trial.[64] As maritime cases cropped up, the expedition leaders leaned on the Naval Statute (*Morskoi ustav*) introduced by Peter the Great and their interpretations of the maritime legal conventions of the law of nations. They appealed to the same maritime laws that enabled early modern empires to claim control over coastlines and adjacent marine resources, to tar with the brush of piracy villainous predators on maritime commerce and condemn them to punishment or death, to protect their colonial trade and overseas resources, and to turn legalized maritime violence into a lucrative commercial enterprise.[65] In addition to first-hand experience with admiralty commissions convened in previous wars, naval officials received guidance on these conventions in their lengthy instructions and further correspondence with the government in St. Petersburg. The heads of the foreign ministry, where such treatises on international law were acquired and translated, offered glosses on ticklish legal questions that came to their attention. Ambassadors and consuls also weighed in with legal opinions.[66] There was nothing unusual about imperial claims to bring order to a region that was seemingly devoid of law, except that for the Russian Empire it was the first instance of making these claims in international waters.

Believing they served the needs of the local population, Russian commanders recruited auxiliaries and privateers from among them to help with the war efforts and to

secure commercial navigation in the region. In a legal system that relied on the European vision of international order and political organization, Russia' legal claims to island-republics also went a long way towards legitimately expanding the empire's legal reach across the Eastern Mediterranean. When Russian-flagged privateers caused trouble, elites tasked with overseeing and auditing their activities delved deep into Russian and international law to interpret, amend, and adapt it as necessary to suit Russia's purposes.[67] It was with this Mediterranean context in mind that Russia's Prize Law of 1806, which made capturing ships and their cargoes far more lucrative for naval officers, was implemented.[68] Between privateer raids, Fedor Ushakov's capture of the French-held Ionian islands, and the Russian squadrons operating in the Mediterranean, prize commissions cleared millions of rubles. In this way, the two functions of law that framed Russia's presence in the Mediterranean were closely connected, not only due to the legal valence of geographic features, but specifically because the legal arguments encountered in Russian admiralty courts rested on Russian presence in the region.[69]

In a notable confluence, the legal forms and law-based practices used to declare and define the territories of the Russian Mediterranean resonated with global patterns and trends of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Conditioned by the same intellectual currents that fostered similar polities and legal concerns elsewhere, law played a dual role in Russia's Mediterranean holdings: as a mechanism of securing Russian power over the islands, waters, and peoples, and as an organizing principle that situated them in both the international order and the Russian imperial order.[70] Following models of familiar and accepted Russian and international practices, Russia's legal reach was administered and structured through an array of legal instruments: constitutions, public rituals, writs and letters of marque, and admiralty courts.[71] Turning to these legal instruments was as much a sign of the prevalence of these ideas in Russian political thought as it was a conscious signal to make

Russia's presence legible and palatable to the international community and other participants in local power struggles.[72] Russian monarchs remained conscious of the perception and response to their actions by other European powers.[73] The ambiguity of Russia's position in these territories persisted through another legal uncertainty: on one hand, Russia's presence was met with the approbation of part of the local population; on the other hand, the threat of coercion and conquest always loomed in the background. Unresolved, this tension manifested itself in the policies that were instituted to govern the Russian Mediterranean.

Ambiguities of Protection

Newly-affirmed Russian subjects moved within island configurations, along straits and shipping lanes, forming constellations of Russian sovereignty all on their own. The previous section dissected the control of Russia's imperial forces in the Mediterranean. This section probes the rhetoric of protection under which those polities were formed, for the Russian mythology of establishing its Mediterranean protectorates rested on narratives of liberation. Arriving Russian forces made alliances with select groups, to the exclusion of others, and despite common perceptions (and the Russians' own assumptions) allegiance to the Russian Empire did not divide nearly along religious lines.[74] In fact, the notion of protection remained unclear even to the naval officers themselves.

Russia's first imperial polity formed in the 1768–1774 war, the Archipelago Principality, was also the first to straddle the tension of voluntary compact and coercion. On the heels of Russia's momentous destruction of the Ottoman fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean's Çeşme Bay in 1770, the head of Russian armed forces Count Aleksei Orlov proclaimed himself in charge of the Archipelago and conqueror of the islands in the Aegean Sea, adding the phrase "Head of the Archipelago" to his list of military and honorary titles. In late autumn 1770, he ordered all the islands of the Aegean Sea to obey the orders of Admiral Grigorii Spirodov, whom he left in charge upon his departure for Tuscany. Those that did not

comply would be "punished without mercy."[75] By the time of Orlov's proclamation, the Russian commanders of the First Archipelago Expedition had already received petitions from the elders of the islands of Skopelos and Agios Efstratos, asking for Russian protection.[76] However, it was far from clear whether other islands would follow suit and formally ally themselves with the Russian forces, or even submit to Spiridov's orders. From the moment of its arrival in the Aegean Sea, the Russian fleet received a mixed reception: the denizens of Lemnos resisted the Russian siege of the island at all costs, while others reportedly provided welcome receptions and offered gifts of produce and cattle without hearing of payment.[77] The dwellers of the Aegean islands, like the Russian leadership itself, were split on the question of Russian presence and the nature of their relationship with the Russian forces for the remainder of the war and even after.

The Russian leadership itself was of two minds on how to admit the islands under Russian rule. The leader of the expedition's squadrons and Orlov's proxy as Head of the Archipelago, Grigorii Spiridov, and the officer first appointed as "governor of the islands," Ivan Voinovich, openly disagreed on this very question. In a written appeal to fourteen islands dated January 1771, Spiridov urged them to "publicly reject Ottoman sovereignty" and enter under the protection of the Russian Empire.[78] Spiridov's appeal and offer made the rounds, and within six months, thirty-one islands in the Aegean Sea formally entered under Russian protection.[79] For Spiridov, entry under Russian protection required a public performance by the elders of each island: the formal renunciation of Ottoman sovereignty accompanied by an oath of allegiance to Russia, a common ritual in the Russian Empire that carried legal significance.[80] However, Voinovich questioned whether overt acceptance of the islands into the imperial fold was the best way to ensure the safety of the local inhabitants. His reading of Russia's relationship with the islands was far less rosy: he described them as "subdued by force." But he also worried that the very public act of rejecting Ottoman

subjecthood and pledging allegiance to Russia would decimate what small amount of provisions were coming into the Archipelago and place Her Imperial Majesty's subjects at greater risk of Ottoman retribution (his concern was that there would not be enough provisions in the Archipelago to sustain both the fleet and the local population).[81] While Spiridov likely wanted to avoid any chance that the islanders protected by Russian force would be tempted to play both sides (he went so far as to argue that the newly-affirmed Russian subjects should have no communication or written correspondence with the Ottomans), Voinovich thought this was precisely the strategy that would allow ships loaded with victuals to enter the Aegean Sea, supplying both the fleet and the local population.[82] Ultimately, the symbolic conquest of the islands triumphed; Voinovich's proposition was disregarded and he was soon reassigned from his duties as governor.

The Russian "liberation by conquest" paradigm reemerged in the next political manifestation of the Russian Mediterranean: the Septinsular Republic. Following an unprecedented treaty of alliance signed in 1798, a joint Russian-Ottoman naval force wrested control of the seven Ionian Islands from Napoleonic France. Worried that they did not have a sufficient number of ground troops to hold Corfu, arriving Russian forces called on Ionians to rebel: to imprison French troops and confiscate French possessions in cooperation with the Russian forces.[83] Russian political overtures to the Ionian islanders promised them a return of their Venice-era privileges – a promise that roused other former Venetian lands, namely, the cities of formerly-Venetian Albania, to ask for Russian protection as well.[84] All the while, Fedor Ushakov, the head of the joint Russian-Ottoman squadron, instructed his officers to inform the local populations that if they did not coordinate and assist Russian efforts to liberate them – from the wicked French, for their own good – then they would descend on the island and use force to bend them to their will. In a note to the officer sent to take the island of Kythira, Ushakov wrote: "…inform the islanders, that if they will not carry out our wishes,

for their own good, in that case we will direct the entire fleet to you, descend on the island, and compel them by force to carry them out."[85] Although Russian commanders often believed they were acting in the islanders' best interest or at their request, the threat of force was never far behind.

Once the Ionian government was formed, the republic's Russian-backed official called on Russia's naval forces to maintain a presence near the islands. Citing social and political unrest, Mocenigo claimed powers over the naval forces and retained them in the islands to support the newly established government. He instructed them to remain in a state of battle-preparedness and to sail around the islands in a visible demonstration of force.[86] By the end of 1803, Mocenigo's pretexts for detaining the squadron changed to the impending fear of French invasion.[87] When the Russian-Ottoman war of 1806 broke out, the Ionian Senate cited Russian military presence and protection from external threats as reasons for refusing the sultan's demands to break ties with one of its protectors.[88]

Nowhere was the threat of coercion more explicit than with the Russian efforts to resolve supply and manpower problems by drawing on the resources in the Eastern Mediterranean. During the 1768 Russian-Ottoman war Russian forces employed familiar imperial tactics: surveying the human and economic resources of the Aegean archipelago. The commanders sent ten-point questionnaires to the islands to assess the size of the population, agricultural resources, and economic potential of each island.[89] On the basis of this survey, the leadership decided to collect one-tenth of each island's harvest in cash or in kind from all islands under Russian protection, buying all other necessary provisions. Spiridov instructed his officers to buy or take all the provisions they needed by the right of war from all islands, stating that the islands would be compensated upon entering Russian protection.[90]

Yet, we might need to read between the lines of these instances of coercion. Sources relay to us the willingness with which some denizens of the Archipelago provided food and provisions to the Russian forces, but these accounts also recognized that the locals did so at their own peril. Stepan Khmetevskii, who kept a journal during the 1769 expedition, reported the caution with which some of the islanders would supply the forces. For fear of Ottoman retribution, locals urged the Russians to act as if they were taking their livestock by force. Collaborating with the Russian forces or offering any assistance carried a brutal death sentence.[91] According to Khmetevskii, Greek merchants were even reluctant to bring grain to islands known to have been occupied by Russian forces, although, ironically, trading with other settlements in the region made these merchants' cargo liable to be confiscated under Russia's laws of maritime warfare.[92] In the 1787 war, the Russian privateer Lambros Katsonis similarly threatened local merchants that what they would not provide voluntarily, he would confiscate by the right of war.[93] On the other hand, merchants who gave Katsonis or his captains money, loans, or supplies received a passport that allegedly protected them from further searches or seizures by Russian-flagged privateers for the remainder of that war. Believing Katsonis to be an agent of the Russian government, merchants accepted his letters of credit for produce and livestock.[94] At the most rudimentary level, Russian protection offered the legal fiction for islanders that their contribution to Russian forces was voluntary, or part of the social compact between a sovereign and subjects. Ultimately, the narrative of liberation set up a paradox between the legal forms of rule described above and the means by which these were achieved.

An Archipelago of Sovereignty

By 1815, the deliberations at the Congress of Vienna had foreclosed the possibility for Russia to reestablish a protectorate over the Ionian Islands, or indeed, any other part of the Eastern Mediterranean.[95] Nevertheless, Russian presence in the region, drawing on decades

of practice and legal precedent rooted in the law of nations and Russian-Ottoman treaties, reconstituted itself in new and different forms. In the previous sections we saw that by formalizing its territorial holdings the Russian Empire gained legal standing in the region, positioned maritime spaces in the Russian imperial order, and saw the role of legal claims in international structures of power. The Archipelago Principality and the Septinsular Republic – two constellations of Russian sovereignty in the Eastern Mediterranean – were constructed through the laws of occupation in wartime and rested on territorial claims to the islands as well as voluntary compacts with their residents. This section shifts the emphasis to another manifestation of Russian presence and influence in the region that was emerging and gaining visibility: the ever-shifting scatterplot of Russian ships. Alongside the web of legal networks that sustained their activity in the region, these vessels were the foundation of a Russian presence that was as visible as the earlier territorial holdings. The activities of these ships' crews, consuls, and other subjects in the region elaborated upon Russian legal practices in foreign and international waters established decades earlier in pursuance of commercial and imperial goals. These practices were channeled through consular networks and the legal framework of capitulation agreements (Russian-Ottoman treaties modelled on privileges granted by the Ottoman sultan to European states), which became the mainstays of Russia's continued participation in the legal environment of the Mediterranean. As Russia's territorial presence in the Mediterranean receded, a new importance was placed on securing the rights of navigation and commerce for Russian ships.

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, Russian politics in the Eastern Mediterranean were no longer concerned with attracting subjects and influence through territorial acquisitions at the expense of Constantinople. Whereas most of Russian activity in the Levant in the first decades of the nineteenth century was governed by what Alexander Bitis described as "force of circumstance" – a mix of political tactics without a clear

overarching strategy – there was an understanding among the ruling elite that pursuing any policy of territorial expansion, especially an explicit course of action that would give Russia control over the Black Sea Straits, would result in a major European conflict.[96] These considerations likewise led to the decision to keep the Russian army from marching on Constantinople with the intent to take the city at the end of the 1828–1829 Russian-Ottoman war, in lieu of which the government opted for a weakened Ottoman Empire ensured by the 1829 Treaty of Adrianople.[97] In these decades, Russia's presence in the region was felt through prolific commercial networks that connected the south of the empire that abutted the Black Sea to the Eastern Mediterranean. Despite the turbulent background of the Greek Revolution in 1821 and the gruesome violence that followed, at the official level, the political, religious, and social anxieties of both empires played out through the politics of commerce and navigation.[98] Articulations of Russian policy insisted on its legalistic and peaceful character, repeated in remonstrances to the Ottoman Porte and in internal communiqués.[99] Russia's eventual declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire in 1828 – a war long awaited after the beginning of the Greek Revolution and made more likely by the 1827 Battle of Navarino – was made using the language of breach of contract, citing a litany of violations of Russian-Ottoman treaties by the Sublime Porte.[100] The language reflected none of the humanitarian concerns that underpinned much of the reaction of Russian society to the Greek Revolution and the atrocities throughout the conflict which were reported by eyewitnesses, many of whom were government officials stationed in the region.[101]

Four interlinked elements – consuls, treaties, ships, and protégés – worked together to support a litigious framework within which Russian consuls pressed maritime and shipping concerns on behalf of Russian subjects and protégés. Consuls were the conduits, whose interest in the issues at hand and involvement in the disputes shaped the evolution of these legal debates between 1774 and 1828. They acted on the basis of bilateral treaties between

the Russian and Ottoman empires, the backbone of the legal framework between the two polities; violations of these agreements were cited as cause for war on more than one occasion.[102] While Russian-Ottoman contacts go back centuries, the 1774 Treaty of Küçük-Kaynarca opened a new dimension in the relationship. Modelled on French and British capitulations, these treaties gave Russian merchants the right to trade in the Ottoman Empire on favorable terms, navigate through Ottoman waters including the Black Sea straits, appoint Ottoman subjects as protégés, and receive extraterritorial protection from the Ottoman legal system.[103] The reach and legal protection offered by these legal agreements extends the archipelago metaphor to describe the diffuse nodes of Russian sovereignty within Ottoman domains that these treaties now covered. Throughout the nineteenth century, they were recast in new spatial arrangements and transformed over time as privileges were repealed, as new rights were asserted, and as reiterated claims grew into new treaty guarantees.[104] The privileges and concessions afforded to the imperial Russian flag stood at the center of many complaints of individual infractions and accusations of treaty violation, thrusting the question of who benefited from these flag protections into the center of the discord. These concerns were not merely theoretical; they contained very practical consequences for maritime sovereignty in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Ships

In the Russian interpretation, Russian-Ottoman treaties of the 1770s and 1780s gave the Russian Empire the right to grant permission to merchants of allied and friendly states to use the Russian flag so long as they were not Ottoman subjects. These privileges were extended to foreign entrepreneurs both through Russian initiative and at their request; subjects and citizens of Mediterranean municipalities and republics wrote to the Commerce College requesting permission to raise the Russian flag. Catherine II was quick to bestow rights to navigate under the Russian flag to Neapolitan subjects, offering merchants who

traded with Kherson, Feodosia, and Sevastopol the privilege for ease of passage to and across the Black Sea.[105] By the 1820s, merchants applying for permission to raise the Russian flag cited numerous political and economic advantages that the Russian flag brought. It was the privileges negotiated by the Russian Empire for its merchants as well as Russia's neutrality in particular conflicts that made the Russian flag the flag of convenience for Mediterranean trade. Subjects of the Papal States based in Ancona stressed their desire to navigate under the Russian flag to avoid extensive attacks by the Barbary corsairs, and noted that it was in the Russian interest to grant such a request because it was the only way they would be able to continue trading with Russian ports. Some noted the Russian flag was preferable because British consular officers charged too much for the Ionian flag.[106] Spanish merchants wanted to use the Russian flag to avoid Latin American privateers.[107] Requests even came from northern European states such as Sweden and Denmark.[108] Such wide-ranging requests and stories consumed the Russian consular apparatus with clarifications of who was legally entitled to the imperial tricolor.

Sailing under a Russian flag, ships were enveloped with the rights and honor of the Russian state that had received these concessions from the Ottoman government, and the inviolability of these rights – as guaranteed by Russian-Ottoman agreements – now became a primary concern for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Russian flag was, as one ambassador stated in a protest over a public incident of desecration, "a symbol of sacred immunity" that had been "trampled upon."[109] Closely aligned with the embassy's chronicle of Ottoman violations was the question of whom these protestations benefited. The legal haranguing over who was entitled to raise the Russian flag became a fundamental concern for Russian consulates in the region in its own right. But this myopic focus on flag permissions obscured the bigger development: that Russian openness to lending the imperial flag to Mediterranean merchants presented a challenge to Ottoman sovereignty, as securing greater

protection in greater numbers for Russian ships encroached on the Porte's ability to oversee and govern its subjects.[110]

The Greek-owned merchant marine played an important role in the Greek revolution, yet the technicalities of how rebellious ships could keep up commercial activities or transport arms and troops through Ottoman waters have been overlooked.[111] To the extent that Ottoman Christians sailed under a Russian flag in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, it was against government policy. Although it is commonly held that *beratli* – subjects of the Ottoman Empire who held privileged positions as intermediaries between the Russian and Ottoman empires – had the right to fly the Russian flag on their merchant vessels, this interpretation is not supported by the legal documents alluding to Russian-flagged navigation. Building on the 1774 Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, the 1779 clarifying convention stated that Russian ships could employ Ottoman subjects as crew only in case of dire need, but with Ottoman permission (§VI). Articles 33 and 34 of the 1783 Treaty of Commerce stated that Russian-flagged vessels could only be stopped and searched in the Bosporus on suspicion of Ottoman subjects among their crews. Military and naval auxiliaries, although sometimes combatants under Russian flags, were not holders of Ottoman-issued *berats*.[112] Instead, in many instances, the Russian flag was deployed without Russian permission and the Russian government played the dual role of securing privileges for the Russian flag while policing its usage.

Given Russia's willingness to distribute the Russian flag to merchants, it is not too surprising that it should have become an often-raised point of concern in Russian-Ottoman diplomacy. From the Russian flag's first appeared in the Mediterranean in 1769, the Russian navy proved powerless to police its unauthorized use even in the eastern-most corners of the Middle Sea over which it claimed dominion. During and after the 1768 Russian-Ottoman war, reports of vessels raising the Russian flag without authorization reached Russian

authorities in the region.[113] In 1775, the Russian *chargé d'affaires* in Constantinople Nikolai Repnin learned that as many as fifty vessels captained by Ottoman Greeks sailed in Ottoman waters and even entered the port of Constantinople waving Russian flags, a circumstance he sought to rectify by taking them away.[114] Sometimes havoc in the region was caused even by Russian-flagged vessels that were also in possession of a *firman*, an Ottoman measure to control trade in Ottoman domains, as a consul in Trieste reported to the Commerce College in 1777.[115] Over the next quarter-century concerns escalated until in 1797 new legislation required all ships waving a Russian flag to apply for a special patent from the Russian Admiralty.[116]

Merchants circumvented the 1797 legislation by exploiting other avenues to gain access to the Russian standard. Some locals affiliated with Russian consulates claimed that the *beratli*, or protégé, system, which granted privileges such as tax exemptions and access to foreign legal systems to select Ottoman subjects, gave them permission to navigate under the Russian flag. The treaty texts and Ottoman policy only ever intended Russian subjects to sail under the Russian flag, but the *beratli* system created a legal grey area which lent some credibility to such claims. Even so, despite the proliferation of *berats*, they remained expensive and difficult to come by, and therefore were not a universally viable option.[117] Other entrepreneurs feigned an interest in settling in Russia to obtain a passport to travel to Russia's southern provinces, where, in the guise of immigrants, they could receive a Russian passport and flag for navigation.[118] In 1819, a new strategy was uncovered: fictional sales of ships. This scheme involved using affidavits or documents of legitimate Russian subjects to purchase ships in the Mediterranean, allegedly on their behalf.[119] As in previous schemes, this too was addressed with a detailed plan that called for additional documents to prove the buyer's (Russian) subjecthood and guild affiliation, and restricted the approval of these documents to the Chancellery of Commerce in the Constantinople Embassy and the general

consulates only.[120] Predictably, low levels of awareness of these new regulations among both the merchants and consular staff created even lower levels of enactment and enforcement, or, at best, raised numerous points for clarification through St. Petersburg.[121]

In response to Ottoman concerns, the Russian government investigated ships and captains navigating under the Russian flag. As early as 1806, the Porte complained that its subjects received Russian passports and flags with great ease, especially considering many never permanently relocated to the Russian Empire and remained Ottoman subjects.[122] Authorities in St. Petersburg instructed the embassy in Constantinople to be more scrupulous in issuing permissions to travel to Russia and to cease handing out permissions to settle.[123] Successive foreign ministers stressed that the Russian emperor sought to avoid giving the Ottoman Empire "any reason to complain."[124] Yet new restrictions on Russian flags were circumvented, leading to further Ottoman objections, launching new Russian investigations and new measures.

Despite the reports of malfeasance, each new regulatory hurdle came with cautious warnings about the potential economic and political fallout from new flag regulations. As most requests for the Russian flag were framed in terms of economic incentives, ministers worried that those to whom they denied usage of the Russian flag would cease trading with Russian ports. Stroganov himself surmised that with the removal of the advantages of the Russian flag, both Ottoman Christians and other Mediterranean merchants would flock to the protection of the British flag instead.[125]

Protégés

Russian-sponsored *berats* and a generally aggressive advocacy launched by Russian consulates constituted another layer of Russian sovereignty – that of real and imagined Ottoman subjects benefitting from Russian protection. In the late 1810s the conversation about Russian commercial rights in the Ottoman Empire turned into a conversation about

privileges and protections extended to Ottoman subjects. Imagined to exist in great numbers by officials on both sides, these assumed Ottoman subjects under Russian protection, and their rights, began to matter more and more in the political discourse of the Russian and Ottoman governments. While both sides agreed there were numerous persons of Levantine extraction conducting business *as* Russian subjects in Ottoman domains, the ambiguity of whether these were in actuality Russian or Ottoman subjects created tensions around every purported defense of their positions and privileges. Russian officials lamented bickering with an ally over such "inconsequential causes"; they dismissed "all that concerned *berat*s and protection for people, who were not in fact Russian subjects and whose protection served neither the interests nor the honor" of the Russian Empire as trivialities.[126] But as questions of subjecthood became intertwined with Russian commerce and navigation, they became inescapable areas of policy concern.

Beyond the potential economic consequences of new regulations over access to Russian flags, members of the foreign ministry speculated that these obstacles would result in a decline of Russian political influence over the sultan's Christian subjects. Despite the government's stated reluctance to antagonize the Ottoman Porte over this issue, Russian ministers gave increasingly greater consideration to formal and informal protection over Ottoman Christians. As Roderic Davison and others have shown, Russia's position on protection changed tone over time, becoming stronger, more assertive and expansive with every decade.[127] In 1806, official instructions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs both underscored Russia's reluctance to go to war over these protections and ordered diplomats on the ground to accommodate Ottoman grievances, issuing demands to curtail surreptitious and indirect accommodations to Ottoman Christians.[128] Instructions to Stroganov in 1816 were more assertive, arguing that Russian protection was not incompatible with Ottoman sovereignty over its subjects: "If Christians – subjects of the Porte – hope for Russian

protection, and if that empire [Russia], finding justification in its religion, its rights, its army and territorial proximity, can and is obliged to offer them this protection, then why should we consider this to be incompatible with the existence of the Turkish Empire or as damaging to the interests of other European powers?"[129] Within one decade the defense of Russian interventions became more acute. Russia's rights to protect Ottoman Christian subjects were deemed "incontrovertible rights" founded in law and mutual interests of the contracting parties. While legalism has long been a feature of Russian law, the differences in instructions also reflected the new landscape of international politics. If the 1806 instruction was issued by a war-weary minister with no intention to antagonize a recent ally, by 1816 the two empires had fought another war and Russia had bolstered its standing in Europe with its triumphant campaigns against Napoleon. The Congress of Vienna cemented Russia's standing among the European powers, adding to Russia's growing sense of superiority over the Ottoman Empire.[130]

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stopped short of stating that it would take forceful measures to protect foreign subjects holding *berats*. It asserted that Russia's goal was to stop the Porte's "war against its [own] subjects" and to facilitate the latter's "transformation into peaceful and faithful subjects of the monarch, under whose scepter they exist."[131] Despite rumors and misperceptions to the contrary, this remained the case in the run-up to and the years immediately following the Greek uprising in 1821.[132]

The issue of *berats* became linked to the misuse of the Russian flag through Grigorii Stroganov's memorandum. In detailing the potential dangers of widespread access to the Russian flag, Stroganov cast doubt on the entire protégé system. In his internally-circulated report on the abuses of foreigners using Russian names to purchase ships, he claimed that trust placed in these intermediaries was not always warranted as they "deceived, stole merchandise, caused accidents, substituted skippers, lied about their assets, concealed debts"

in addition to many other infractions.[133] Stroganov's memorandum sounded alarm bells in the Russian government, and despite the decreased ambassadorial and consular presence in light of the Eastern Crisis in the 1820s, the Russian government launched an investigation into its consular practices throughout the Ottoman Empire.[134]

As the investigation confirmed, the government's measured position was undermined by its consular representatives, who out of sympathy or personal gain facilitated distribution of the very *berat*s that conferred Russian protection onto Ottoman subjects.[135] Spiridon Destunis, one of the most prolific commentators on his position as consul in Smyrna, captured these sentiments in his personal diary. In his entry for May 29, 1819, he recounted how he protected a young Greek who converted to Islam and then repented by providing him with documents and passage to Mount Athos. Destunis had no disillusions about his infraction, yet offered little hesitation as to where his moral compass pointed: "This is a false certificate and a violation of international law," he wrote, "but it was all for a greater good, not out of personal interest. It's good to be a Russian consul – but first, one must be honest and sensitive, and not hold one's Orthodox co-religionists in contempt."[136] Destunis's views went further, to suggest that expanding the number of protégés should be official government policy. In a draft of a policy proposal likely written during his tenure as consul, Destunis denied having ever misused the privilege of Russian protection himself but made a forceful argument for the Russian government not to shy away from this opportunity.[137] The memorandum hit all the key notes stirring Russian society's attitudes towards Ottoman Christians: a moral duty of protection, a mark of Russian greatness and generosity, and a potential for profit.[138]

The Russian foreign ministry's stated sympathy towards Ottoman grievances about the proliferation of *berats* was undermined not only by the actions of its consuls on the ground, but also by the presumption of Ottoman retribution. In private, Russian ministers

often agreed with Ottoman grievances; however, they were adamant that they did not give the Porte permission to renege on its legal obligations. In asserting old grievances and formulating new ones, Russian complaints were made in the most general form - accusing the Ottoman government of violating its legal obligations.[139]

The Legal Battleground

The Russian position in legal disputes with the Ottoman Empire came down to a specific reading of Russian-Ottoman treaties. This reading argued that the Russian Empire had a right to oversight over locales that it understood to be an extension of Russian sovereignty, including consular affairs and Russian-flagged ships, and placed this right above the Ottoman desire to ensure that Russia was not violating its treaty obligations within these locales. In enforcing this interpretation, Russian ministers lodged protests at any Ottoman attempt to investigate treaty infractions, claiming any such Ottoman investigation of Russian affairs to be an insult to Russian sovereignty. In response to Ottoman attempts to uncover whether the persons sailing on Russian-flagged ships had the right to do so, Russian ministers demanded that the Porte "desist from letting its ministers conduct such an investigation," claiming that the investigation had to be conducted by Russian ministers according to *Russian* standards of fraud.[140] (Not only was this seen as a Russian right according to the framework set out by capitulations, but the government claimed that Russian oversight was necessary to ensure impartiality.) In another incident, where a captain suspected of being an Ottoman subject was accused of smuggling barley, the Russian minister denied the Ottoman Porte the right to investigate the incident and punish the perpetrator. Instead, Stroganov insisted that the transgression would be corrected only after *he* investigated the incident. His reasoning was that the offense occurred on a Russian vessel, which was exclusively within Russian jurisdiction, even if the captain was, as the Porte claimed, an Ottoman subject.[141] In other words, while the Ottomans tried to assert sovereignty over their subjects, the Russians

argued that the absolute sovereignty over Russian-flagged vessels superseded these rights. Vehement denials of an Ottoman right to verification themselves created further tensions, escalating the issue beyond whether Ottoman subjects were sometimes stowaways on Russian ships or illegally using the Russian flag to a more abstract disagreement over which empire's rights would prevail in enforcing these treaties. Russian ministers repeatedly claimed that their consular representatives were more impartial in making such determinations. What has often been interpreted as the Russian government's patronage and protection of Orthodox Christians was actually a more universal argument about the sovereignty of the Russian flag and the legal rights that Russia held to ensure the inviolability of these rights.

In the scope of this seemingly technical aspect of international law about flag usage, both empires played out issues of tremendous psychological and symbolic importance. In addition to the financial loss from numerous taxes and tariffs that the Ottoman Empire incurred from the protégé system, the government's protests revealed its anxiety over losing sovereignty over its subjects. The Ottoman Empire, as van den Boogert has argued, was fully aware of all the ways that European governments exploited the privileges of the protégé system – an awareness that had created numerous responses to control it from the Ottoman side.[142] In the Russian case, as Prousis has argued, "Ottoman officials sought to ... limit the Russian flag to strictly Russian ships, namely those carriers owned and operated by bona fide Russian subjects, and by reducing the number of *reaya* in Russian service."[143] These efforts, however, only revealed the seriousness of what the Ottoman Empire faced: the proliferation of *berats* and Russian flags in the Mediterranean region made it increasingly difficult to identify who was an Ottoman subject, and consequently, for the empire to govern them. As one reis effendi reportedly remarked in 1819, "all the inhabitants of the Archipelago have become Russian; we have no more *reaya*."[144]

Flag politics became the means by which broader concerns of the two empires were expressed. When they were arguing about the usage and rights of the Russian flag, the Russian and Ottoman empires were discussing more than just national honor and international prestige, they were defending core imperial interests: trade and commerce on the one hand, and imperial governance on the other.[145] For the Russian Empire, Russian-flagged ships provided a not insignificant annual fee for a patent, but even more importantly, they represented the health and robustness of Russian trade. For the Russian government, Russian-flagged ships were a proxy for the empire's commercial viability. Where British consular representatives diligently reported the value of goods entering and leaving the ports assigned to them, Russian consuls and ministers counted the flags docking in each port.[146] The embassy in Constantinople kept careful records of the number of ships passing through the port in each direction and reported these to the government in St. Petersburg on an annual basis. For the Ottoman Empire, the replacement of the Ottoman flag with the Russian flag throughout the Aegean Sea, and Mediterranean more broadly, was tantamount to, as the reis effendi suggested, the usurpation of Ottoman sovereignty over these populations. In an era of numerous Balkan uprisings against Ottoman rule, Mehmed Ali Pasha's challenges to Ottoman governance, and further alienation of the Maghreb provinces of North Africa, the displacement of the Ottoman flag – a symbol of the Sultan – by the loathsome Russian flag was not only a reminder of the military losses that yielded these concessions, but a reflection of a further erosion of Ottoman strength.[147] As the numerous Ottoman objections captured in the historical record showed, the flag – a symbol and metaphor for Ottoman subjects' allegiance to the Sultan – now served as a physical reminder of how that bond was broken. The Russian ministers, who understood the increased use of Russian flags as reaffirming Ottoman fears of foreign intervention and influence over their population, noted that

increased Russian influence wounded "the pride and vanity of the Sultan" who held the view that Russian influence "in his domains, impinge[d] on his authority."[148]

As Russia's physical control over political entities in the Eastern Mediterranean waned in the 1810s, the government stepped up its efforts to advocate for Russian commercial interests in the region. The rights surrounding shipping and navigation in Ottoman waters made favorable tariffs and other benefits all the more valuable; the privileges accorded to the Russian flag lay at the heart of Russia's commercial interests in the Levant. Equally, the procurement and spirited defense of these privileges made them more desirable for Mediterranean merchants. Moreover, in addition to bringing prosperity to the empire, the Russian flag also came to be seen (by the Russian government) as a way to exert influence over Ottoman Christian subjects and the region in general. Therefore, as Russia's defense of Russian-flagged navigation ran up against the Ottoman Empire's concerns about its subjects, the Russian government walked a tight rope between defending its rights and assuaging Ottoman concerns over misappropriation of the Russian flag by its subjects. In deference to the Ottoman Empire, Russians sought to introduce burdensome restrictions, increased costs of patents, and slow bureaucratic procedures to ward off Ottoman retaliation and, despite potential hindrances to Russian trade, to forestall danger to the integrity of the Russian flag (and by extension the Russian Empire). These did little to curb illicit flag use and complaints stacked up on both sides. Russia's rights around commerce and shipping, which the empire claimed were violated repeatedly, like treaty clauses concerning Serbia, Moldavia, Wallachia, became part of a bigger discourse about Ottoman propensity to violate treaties. The 1828–1829 war, declared over non-fulfillment of treaty obligations, inadvertently provided a partial resolution to the flag politics through the creation of the kingdom of Greece.

Conclusion

The half-century that was Russia's Mediterranean Moment forged a Russian Mediterranean, not a stable geographical entity, but a historically constructed region with a strong grasp on the international imagination. Captured in the *Atlas of the Archipelago* as one geographical constellation with a singular layer of meaning, the Russian Mediterranean had in fact manifested itself numerous times and in a variety of patterns and shapes. It incorporated different groups of islands, cropped up in different subsidiary seas, and drew new boundaries between the Russian Empire and neighboring polities that now had to accommodate a Russian presence in the region. With each iteration, alongside designated Russian physical spaces, be they ships or islands that the Russian Empire claimed for its own, new legal questions arose, in response to which imperial agents, the monarch's envoys, plenipotentiaries, and representatives delimited what fell under Russian protection and within its sphere of influence.

Situated in a variety of legal claims, the Russian Mediterranean was not based on one – Orthodox – idea; it existed in more than one dimension and through a plurality of institutions and structures. When Russian imperial intermediaries entered the region, they did not eradicate existing political and legal orders, but weaved through them, resurrecting Venetian-era privileges, replacing or complementing Ottoman forms of governance, eradicating revolutionary French departments, empowering religious classes, and laying the foundation for British rule. Russia's political experiments, laws, and symbolic and cultural markers contributed to the distinctive political, intellectual, and cultural climate that, as Konstantina Zanou has argued, fostered a distinctive intellectual tradition that shaped Greek national consciousness.[149] But Russia's presence was notable for more than just the post-imperial afterlives of personalities and thinkers empowered by the empire as its intermediaries. It was the effort to situate the region within the Russian imperial order that

left a cultural legacy and a legal framework on which new formulations of the Russian Mediterranean could be imprinted.

Russian claims to Ottoman lands, control over important commercial centers and routes, and insistence on the security of its commercial and navigational rights in the region went to the heart of the Ottoman Empire's biggest concern at the time: retaining control over its sprawling domains and populations. By the nineteenth century, there was a growing anxiety inside the Ottoman government that these very ships, the floating pieces of Russian sovereignty that Russian ministers so forcefully protected, were carrying Ottoman subjects away from the empire in great numbers. The Treaty of Adrianople (1829) that ended the 1828 war with the Ottoman Empire confirmed those rights to Russian commerce and navigation in the region. While the treaty did not solve commercial tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, the creation of an independent Greece and Britain's growing presence in the region shifted the nature of international anxiety about the Russian Mediterranean. Once Russian flags no longer symbolized rebelling subjects, Russian commerce caused less anxiety for the Porte. In the wake of the Treaty of Adrianople, new tensions arose.

International competition shifted to new realms of activity. Contrary to historical accounts that characterized Russia's Mediterranean politics of the previous sixty years as centered on a Russian Orthodox messianism, it was in the 1830s and 1840s that religious politics emerged as central to the Russian Mediterranean.[150] Away from legal disputes with the Ottoman Empire about the interpretation of treaties, consular functions turned to protecting increasing numbers of pilgrims that now flooded into Ottoman provinces, including Palestine, Syria, and Arabia. The religious politics of the decades leading up to the Crimean War did not explicitly equate to promotion of Orthodoxy abroad – the Russian consular apparatus advocated for the rights of Muslim hajjis alongside Orthodox pilgrims – but it included interdenominational rivalries stoked by a developing Orthodox

internationalism.[151] Pilgrims formed one strand of the confessional and church politics that emerged in the Holy Land, and it was the political pressure over religious issues – and for the Russian Empire this was expressed as the traditional privileges of the Orthodox Church that had been challenged in numerous ways – that led to the next Russian-Ottoman conflict.[152] Compounded by other international and imperial dynamics, the Crimean War drew in the British and French empires, and its end created numerous conceptual shifts in the realm of international law, European politics, and Russian-Ottoman affairs.

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[1] Vilim von Dezin and Ivan Bersenev, *Atlas arkhipelaga soderzhashchii v sebe karty* [...], ed. Ivan Golenishchev-Kutuzov, 1st ed. (St. Petersburg, 1788), 1.

[2] Evgenii Tarle, *Chesmenskii boi i pervaia russkaia ekspeditsiia v Arkhipelag, 1769–1774* (Moscow, 1945). Newer scholarship has ascribed more significance to the imperial overtones of the first Archipelago Expedition, see Galina Grebenshchikova, *Baltiiskii flot v period pravleniia Ekateriny II: dokumenty, fakty, issledovaniia* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2007); Irina

Smilianskaia, Mikhail Velizhev, and Elena Smilianskaia, *Rossiia v Sredizemnomor'e* (Moscow, 2011).

[3] Andrei Zorin, *By Fables Alone: Literature and State Ideology in Late-Eighteenth–Early-Nineteenth-Century Russia*, trans. Marcus Levitt, Nicole Monnier, and Daniel Schlaffy (Brighton, MA, 2014), 28. "Ideological construction" is also borrowed from Zorin, who sees literature as a space of production of ideological metaphors through which political ideas are refined. *By Fables Alone,* 1–23.

[4] Subsequent atlases of Finland and Poland, both mapped and incorporated into the Russian Empire around this time, conveyed a similar imperialistic message. See Aleksey Postnikov, "Outline of the History of Russian Cartography," in *Regions: A Prism to View the Slavic-Eurasian World,* ed. Kimitaka Matsuzato (Sapporo, 2000), 20–23.

[5] Vilim von Dezin and Ivan Bersenev, *Atlas arkhipelaga: soderzhashchii v sebe karty* [...], ed. Ivan L. Golenishchev-Kutuzov, 2nd ed. (St. Peterburg, 1798).

[6] Avgusta Stanislavskaia, *Politicheskaia deiatel'nost' F. F. Ushakova v Gretsii* (Moscow, 1983); Norman Saul, *Russia and the Mediterranean 1797–1807* (Chicago, 1970).

[7] Grebenshchikova, *Baltiiskii flot,* 13–161.

[8] Virginia Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700–1870: An empire besieged* (Harlow, 2007); Christine Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley, 2011).

[9] Kahraman Şakul, "An Ottoman Global Moment: War of the Second Coalition in the Levant" (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 2009); Ozan Ozavci, *Dangerous Gifts: Imperialism, Security, and Civil Wars, 1798–1864* (Oxford, 2021).

[10] The unity of this space has been examined through the lenses of Ottoman law and eastern Christianity. See Joshua White, *Piracy and Law in the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Stanford,

CA, 2017), 3–4; Molly Greene, *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), 3–12.

[11] *Arkhiv Gosudarstvennogo soveta* (St. Petersburg, 1869) (hereafter *AGS*) 1: 370–371; *Materialy dlia istorii russkogo flota* (St. Petersburg, 1886) (hereafter *MIRF*) 11: 529.

[12] These territories were occupied in the course of various wars, but in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the right of conquest was ambiguous. These territories might have easily become Russian through unilateral annexation, a process that the arriving Russian forces began by writing constitutions, setting up governments, and imposing new laws. Sharon Korman, *The Right of Conquest: The Forcible Acquisition of Territory in International Law and Practice* (Oxford, 1996), 9; Eyal Benvenisti, *The International Law of Occupation* (Oxford, 2012), 20–41.

[13] Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge, 2010), 112.

[14] Albert Sorel, *The Eastern Question in the Eighteenth Century: The Partition of Poland and the Treaty of Kainardji*, trans. F. C. Bramwell (London, 1898), 248; Barbara Jelavich, *Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806–1914* (Cambridge, 1991), 2; Paul Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848* (Oxford, 1994), 23.

[15] Lucien Frary, *Russia and the Making of Modern Greek Identity, 1821–1844* (Oxford, 2015); Grigorii Arsh, *Rossiia i bor'ba Gretsii za osvobozhdenie: ot Ekateriny II do Nikolaia I* (Moscow, 2013); Inna Leshchilovskaia, *Serbskii narod i Rossiia v XVIII veke* (St. Petersburg, 2006); Elena Kudriavtseva, *Rossiia i Serbiia v 30-40kh godakh XIX veka* (Moscow, 2002); Barbara Jelavich, *Russia and the Formation of the Romanian National State, 1821–1878* (Cambridge, 1984).

[16] Omer Bartov and Eric Weitz, eds., *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington, IN, 2013); Victor Taki, *Tsar and Sultan: Russian Encounters with the Ottoman Empire* (London, 2016); Lucien Frary and Mara Kozelsky, eds., *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands: The Eastern Question Reconsidered* (Madison, WI, 2014); Andrew Robarts, *Migration and Disease in the Black Sea Region: Ottoman-Russian Relations in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (London, 2017).

[17] On seas as border zones and symbolic boundaries, see Pamela Ballinger, "Liquid Borderland, Inelastic Sea?: Mapping the Eastern Adriatic," in *Shatterzone of Empires*, 423–37. Lauren Benton and Jeppe Mulich argue that insular microregions gained prominence at the turn of the nineteenth century not only as heavily patrolled sea spaces of strategic importance, but as sites of innovative political arrangements due to their locales in politically pluralistic regions. Benton and Mulich, "The Space between Empires: Coastal and Insular Microregions in the Early Nineteenth-Century World," in *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History*, ed. Paul Stock (New York, 2015), 151–71.

[18] The imperial elite put the sea at the center of their conceptualization of the region by consistently using the term *Arkhipelag*, or Archipelago, as shorthand for the spaces of Russian overseas activity. While its meaning has come to signify a chain of islands, for the eighteenth-century public the term Archipelago primarily meant the Aegean Sea, or, grudgingly, any sea that contained a group of islands clustered together. One enthusiast of antiquities began his 1771 description of the region: "That Sea that the Ancient Authors called Aegean, is now called Archipelago," Ludwig Ross, *Graf Pasch van Krienen: Seiner italienischen Beschreibung des griechischen Archipelagus* (Halle, 1860), 14. See also *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII veka* (Leningrad, 1984), 1: 101; "Arcipelago," in Giovanni Francesco

Pivati, *Nuovo dizionario scientifico e curioso sacro-profano* (Venice, 1746), 1: 369–70; "Archipel," in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.,* eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, ed. Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe, http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/.

[19] Olga Markova, "O proiskhozhdenii tak nazyvaemago grecheskogo proekta (80-e gody XVIII v.)," *Istoriia SSSR*, no. 4 (1958): 58–72; Edgar Hösch, "Das Sogenannte 'Griechische Projekt' Katharinas II. Ideologie und Wirklichkeit der Russischen Orientpolitik in der zweiter Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 12, no. 2 (1964): 168–206; Hugh Ragsdale, "Evaluating the Traditions of Russian Aggression: Catherine II and the Greek Project," *Slavonic and East European Review* 66, no. 1 (1988): 91–117; Ragsdale, "Russian Projects of Conquest in the Eighteenth Century," in *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Hugh Ragsdale and V. N Ponomarev (Washington, D.C., 1993), 75–102; Inna Leshchilovskaia, ed., *Vek Ekateriny II: Rossiia i Balkany* (Moscow, 1998).

[20] James Howard Harris, ed., *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury* (London, 1844) 1: 236–38, 538–39.

[21] Much of the scholarship on Russian interest and activity in the Levant has been written in the key of the Eastern Question, a notoriously slippery concept which, for most scholars of the Russian Empire, referred to concerns about the declining sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire and control over the Eastern Mediterranean region. That the issue itself should be framed as one with objective solutions pointed scholars towards studying events contributing to those solutions: the creation of independent national governments and efforts to restrict Russian expansion and influence. For one elaboration of this view, see Alexander Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question: Army, Government and Society, 1815–1833* (Oxford,

2006), 1–13. For a more critical overview, see the introductory essay in Frary and Kozelsky, eds., *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands*, 3–33. Holly Case offers a valuable critique of framing complex phenomena as clearly defined problems necessitating resolution in the form of international action in *The Age of Questions* (Princeton, NJ, 2018).

[22] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ, 2010).

[23] For an overview of the formation of the Russian Empire, see most recently Nancy Kollmann, *The Russian Empire, 1450-1801* (Oxford, 2017); Valerie Kivelson and Ronald Suny, *Russia's Empires* (New York, NY, 2016).

[24] Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (Princeton, NJ, 2006), 3. On Pacific exploration as part of Russia's European identity, see Ilya Vinkovetsky, *Russian America: An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6; Ryan Tucker Jones, *Empire of Extinction: Russians and the North Pacific's Strange Beasts of the Sea, 1741-1867* (New York, 2014), 151–53, 179; Richard Wortman, "Texts of Exploration and Russia's European Identity," in *Visual Texts, Ceremonial Texts, Texts of Exploration: Collected Articles in the Representation of Russian Monarchy* (Boston, 2014), 253–73.

[25] Zorin, *By Fables Alone*, 24–120; Proskurina, *Creating the Empress*, 150–81.

[26] On Russian settlements in Alaska and simultaneous efforts to master the North Pacific environment, see Martina Winkler, *Das Imperium und Die Seeotter: Die Expansion Russlands in Den Nordpazifischen Raum, 1700–1867* (Göttingen, 2016); Jones, *Empire of Extinction*.

[27] Integration is a major theme of regional studies of the Russian Empire, too many to list here. On integration as a goal, see Anatolyi Remnev, "Siberia and the Russian Far East in the

Imperial Geography of Power," in *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1930*, ed. Jane Burbank, Mark von Hagen, Anatolyi Remnev (Bloomington, IN, 2007), 425–54; John P. LeDonne, *Forging a Unitary State: Russia's Management of the Eurasian Space, 1650–1850* (Toronto, 2020).

[28] Victor Taki, "Limits of Protection: Russia and the Orthodox Coreligionists in the Ottoman Empire," *Carl Beck Papers in Russian and Eastern European Studies*, no. 2401 (April 2015): 21. A comparable situation arose in Bulgaria after the 1877 war: the occupied state lacked historical rights and a viable political elite leaving Russia to create a new social and political order. See Ilya Vinkovetsky, "Strategists and Ideologues: Russians and the Making of Bulgaria's Tarnovo Constitution, 1878–1879," *Journal of Modern History* 90 (December 2018): 752–53.

[29] Lauren Benton and Richard Jeffrey Ross, eds., *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500–1850* (New York, 2013).

[30] "General-prokurorskii nakaz pri kommissii o sostavleniia proekta novago ulozhenii, po kotoromu i marshalu postupat," *Nakaz eia imperatorskago velichestva Ekateriny Vtoryia samoderzhitsy vserossiiskiia, dannyi kommissii o sochinenii proekta novago ulozheniia, s prinadlezhashchimi k tomu prilozheniiami* (St. Petersburg, 1820), 100–102.

[31] For a *longue durée* overview of the centrality of law to Russian governance, see Tatiana Borisova and Jane Burbank, "Russia's Legal Trajectories," *Kritika* 19, no. 3 (Summer 2018): 469–508.

[32] Richard Wortman, "Russian Monarchy and the Rule of Law: New Considerations of the Court Reform of 1864," *Kritika* 6, no. 1 (March 3, 2005): 145–70. For a recent synthesis of law in the Russian Empire and successor states, see William Pomeranz, *Law and the Russian State: Russia's Legal Evolution from Peter the Great to Vladimir Putin* (London, 2019).

[33] Jane Burbank, "An Imperial Rights Regime: Law and Citizenship in the Russian Empire," *Kritika* 7, no. 3 (2006): 397–431; Boris E. Nol'de, *Ocherki Russkago Gosudarstvennogo Prava* (St. Petersburg, 1911), 1: 278–79. On the popularity of written constitutions emerging after 1750, see Linda Colley, *The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen* (London, 2021).

[34] Janet Hartley, "The 'Constitutions' of Finland and Poland in the Reign of Alexander I: Blueprints for Reform in Russia?," in *Finland and Poland in the Russian Empire: A Comparative Study*, ed. Michael Branch, Janet Hartley, and Antoni Maczac (London, 1995), 54–56.

[35] Sergei Pol'skoi, "Dvorianskii konstitutsionalism v Rossii XVIII–nachala XIX vv.," *Voprosy istorii* no. 6 (2011): 27–42.

[36] In Colley's usage, a constitution is a document that "establish[es] curbs on those in authority or provide[s] for individual rights"; a "constraining document." Colley, *The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen*, 2–7. In the Russian context, Hartley argued that constitutions should be understood in the "*ancien régime* sense" of the word, as a "body of laws, regulations and customs by which a state is governed." Hartley, "'Constitutions' of Finland and Poland." Also see Sergei Pol'skoi, "Konstitutsiia i fundamental'nye zakony v russkom politicheskom diskurse XVIII veka," in "*Poniatiia o Rossii": K istoricheskoi semantike imperskogo perioda*, ed. Aleksei Miller, Denis Sdvizhkov, Ingrid Shirle (Moscow, 2012), 1: 94–150.

[37] "Appendix 4: Otvety Admirala G. A. Spiridova Dukhovenstvu Arkhipelaga o Budushchem Gosudarstvennom Ustroistve," in *Rossiia v Sredizemnomor'e*, 504–10; Smilianskaia, Velizhev, and Smilianskaia, *Rossiia v Sredizemnomor'e*, 148–60.

[38] Letters to Orlov instructed to "… create from the Greek provinces a single unified body, which would take upon itself to represent them together in public affairs…through which, having united into a single Christian body and separate from the unrighteous power, could

ask for help from all of Christian society [i.e. Europe]." (*Russkii arkhiv* 3, no. 2 (1880): 229–30). The strategy in the letter spoke to winning support from other European powers for Russia's war effort than the future form of any Greek state. Spiridov's instructions deliberately left strategic and operational details in his hands, to act according to local circumstances. (*MIRF* 11: 373). Notably, this was also a key strategy for the Greek revolutionaries in 1822. See Mark Mazower, *The Greek Revolution: 1821 and the Making of Modern Europe* (New York, 2021), 92–114.

[39] "Appendix 5: 'Uchrezhdenie' ob upravlenii Arkhipelazhskim kniazhestvom Pavela Nesterova," 24 July 1772, *Rossiia v Sredizemnomor'e*, 511–16.

[40] Maria Fusaro observed that centuries of Venetian rule that influenced the political culture of the Ionian islands was frequently misunderstood by governing empires, which were quick to romanticize the islands as the embodiment of an independent Greece. See "Representation in Practice: The Myth of Venice and the British Protectorate in the Ionian Islands (1801–1864), in *Exploring Cultural history: Essays in Honour of Peter Burke*, ed. Melissa Calaresu, Joan-Pau Rubies, Filippo de Vivo (Farnham, 2010), 309–325. Konstantina Zanou shows how members of the Venetian aristocracy adapted to Russian rule: Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800–1850: Stammering the Nation* (Oxford, 2018), 75-81.

[41] "Plan o uchrezhdenii pravleniia na osvobozhdennykh ot frantsuzov prezhde byvshikh venetsianskikh ostrovakh," in *Admiral Ushakov*, ed. Rostislav Mordvinov, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1956), 2: 520–26.

[42] Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism,* 72–75.

[43] Avgusta Stanislavskaia, *Rossiia i Gretsiia v kontse XVIII-nachale XIX veka* (Moscow, 1976), 68–71.

[44] Gerassimos Pagratis, "The Ottoman Empire and Ionian Maritime Enterprises in the Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries," in *Istanbul and the Black Sea Coast: Shipping and Trade (1770–1920)*, ed. Edhem Eldem and Sophia Laiou (Istanbul, 2018), 27–33. Şakul shows the Ottoman fleet's contributions to the conquest of the islands, including providing political cover for the military action and funds for provisions, often downplayed in the scholarship. See "Ottoman Global Moment," 96–205.

[45] Sakis Gekas, *Xenocracy: State, Class and Colonialism in the Ionian Islands, 1815–1864* (New York, 2017), 24–26. Following a period of social and political unrest, another constitution was adopted in 1803, with a series of proposed amendments drafted in 1806, leading some to refer to this period as a "parade of constitutions." In the interim, two further constitutional drafts emerged – one from the provisional government formed in opposition to aristocratic rule (1801) and a second from the Russian ambassador to Naples (1802). For the statutory changes introduced with each constitution, see Ol'ga Petrunina and Sergei Klisunov, "Evolutsiia gosudarstvennogo ustroistva Respubliki Semi Soedinennykh Ostrovov v 1799–1803 gg.," *Vestnik moskovskogo universiteta* Series 21, no. 2 (2009): 119–47.

[46] Gekas, *Xenocracy,* 23–46; Fusaro, "Representation in Practice," 320.

[47] Initially, naval officers recruited from the Mediterranean were entrusted with this responsibility: first Ivan Voinovich, then Antonios Psaros. After Psaros was redeployed on a secret mission, the role fell to Spiridov's questionably qualified adjutant-general and brother-in-law Pavel Nesterov. Smilianskaia, *Grecheskie ostrova*, 48–49, 136.

[48] Smilianskaia, *Grecheskie ostrova*, 119–121, 137–139.

[49] Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism*, 79.

[50] I borrow the terminology of petty despotism from Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford's discussion of colonial oversight and middle power, Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order: The*

British Empire and the Origins of International Law, 1800–1850 (Cambridge, MA, 2016), 7–12, 28–55. Although the Russian Empire was obviously not plagued with the same level of public debate about forms of rule across the empire, like British colonial subjects, elites in Poland and Finland protested when Russian ministers stepped on local political rights.

[51] Whether such a flag existed or not continues to be a historical mystery. Many sources allude to an Ottoman Greek flag, e.g. Katerina Papakonstantinou, "Malta and the Rise of the Greek-Owned Fleet in the Eighteenth Century, *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 16, nos. 1–2 (2006): 119–217. For sketches of the Ottoman Greek flag, see *The Greek Merchant Marine (1453-1850)*, ed. Stelios Papadopoulos (Athens, 1972), 412–13 (plate 263).

[52] Smilianskaia, *Grecheskie ostrova*, 139, especially fn. 48.

[53] Gerassimos Pagratis provides compelling data on the robust size of the Merchant Fleet of the Septinsular Republic. See "The 'Discovery' of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea by Ionian Maritime Entrepreneurs," in *Port-Cities of the Northern Shore of the Black Sea: Institutional, Economic and Social Development, 18th-early 20th Centuries*, ed. Evrydiki Sifneos, Oksana Iurkova, Valentyna Shandra (Black Sea History Project Working Papers, 2015), 309. The Ionians apparently also, or at first, had permission to raise the Ottoman flag: Pagratis, "The Ottoman Empire and Ionian Maritime Enterprises," 27–33; Şakul, "Ottoman Global Moment," 131.

[54] *MIRF* 11: 654–56; Smilianskaia, *Grecheskie ostrova,* 35–38.

[55] This did not prevent the Septinsular Republic from establishing consulates through the old Venetian consular network. Gerassimos Pagratis, "Ionian Shipping and Trade in the Port of Malta (late 18th– early 19th centuries)," in *The Port of Malta*, ed. Carmel Vassallo, Simon Mercieca, and Stanley Fiorini (Malta, 2018), 175–97.

[56] *Vneshniaia politika Rossii XIX i nachala XX v.* 16 vols. (Moscow: Nauka, 1960–95) (hereafter *VPR*) 3: 572–77.

[57] Frank Nesemann, "'Keine Konstitution, keine Grundgesetze haben wir derzeit…': Verfassungsdenken und Verfassungsbestrebungen im Finnland der frühen Autonomiezeit," *NORDEUROPAforum* no. 1 (2007): 45–76; Nesemann, "A Special Baltic Understanding"; Thackeray, *Antecedents of Revolution*, 60–92.

[58] On the construction of Ottoman imperial authority in the eighteenth-century Mediterranean, see Michael Talbot, "Protecting the Mediterranean: Ottoman Responses to Maritime Violence, 1718–1770," *Journal of Early Modern History* 21, no. 4 (2017): 283–317; White, *Piracy and Law in the Ottoman Mediterranean*.

[59] *MIRF* 11: 383, 408.

[60] *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii: Pervoe sobranie* (hereafter *PSZ*) (St. Petersburg, 1830), vol. 22, no. 16599 (December 31, 1787).

[61] Vladimir Ulianitskii, *Dardanelly, Bosfor i Chernoe more* (Moscow, 1883), cxxii–cxxiii; M. S. Anderson, "Great Britain and the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-74," *English Historical Review* 69 (1954): 54–55; *Sbornik Imperatorskago Russkago istoricheskago obshchestva* 148 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1867), 1: 83–86. On the established maritime order in these waters, see Michael Talbot, "Ottoman Seas and British Privateers," in *Well-Connected Domains: Towards an Entangled Ottoman History*, ed. Pascal W. Firges et al. (Leiden, 2014), 54–70.

[62] RGAVMF f. 42 op. 1 d. 124 ll. 12, 54.

[63] Aleksei Orlov's Manifesto of 1 May 1772, *Nouvelles Extraordinaires de Divers Endroits* (Leiden), June 19, 1772. Aleksei Orlov's Russian-language original (Orlov did not speak French) would have been translated by a member of the expedition, for its audience was all of Europe.

[64] At the time Russian maritime law did not have a category of piracy as a capital crime comparable to Britain. Most crimes were described as cases of robbery and plunder, and in the early years of Russia's presence, they were often committed by marine infantry troops recruited from the region to serve in the Russian war effort and therefore regulated by internal military processes (e.g. RGAVMF f. 190 op. 1 d. 56 l. 13ob.). Once dismissed from Russian service, many of these troops went rogue. One of the largest piracy cases was heard by the admiralty court on March 8, 1774, in which thirteen people on the island of Hydra were accused of theft, kidnapping, and murder (RGAVMF f. 42 op. 1 d. 144). The language of piracy used to describe these crimes for European audiences never quite captured the "networks of violence" operating in the Eastern Mediterranean. On these, see Will Smiley, "'After Being so Long Prisoners, They Will Not Return to Slavery in Russia': An Aegean Network of Violence between Empires and Identities," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* xliv (2014): 221–34; Tolga Esmer, "Economies of Violence, Banditry and Governance in the Ottoman Empire around 1800," *Past & Present* 224, no. 1 (2014): 163–99.

[65] David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), 100–124; Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty*, 104–61; Martine Julia Van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies, 1595-1615* (Leiden, 2006); Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations* (New York, 2009); Richard Pares, *Colonial Blockade and Neutral Rights, 1739-1763* (Oxford, 1938). Benton especially articulates the link between geographical features and the exercise of law, see *A Search for Sovereignty.*

[66] Julia Leikin, "Prize Law, Maritime Neutrality, and the Law of Nations in Imperial Russia, 1768-1856" (Ph.D. diss., London, University College London, 2016), 37–44, 151–56.

[67] Julia Leikin, "'The Prostitution of the Russian Flag': Privateers in Russian Admiralty Courts, 1787-1798," *Law and History Review* 35, no. 4 (November 2017): 1049–81; Leikin, "Greeks into Privateers: Law and Language of Commerce Raiding Under the Imperial Russian Flag, 1760s-1790s," in *Ideologies of Western Naval Power, c. 1500–1815*, ed. J. D. Davies, Alan James, and Gijs Rommelse (London, 2019), 209–25.

[68] RGAVMF f. 8 op. 3 d. 822 l. 104.

[69] Leikin, "Prize Law," 117–27.

[70]Compare with British and French legal claims in the Mediterranean in the same period: Benton and Ford, *Rage for Order,* 102–116; Dzavid Dzanic, "Informal empire and international law in Tunisia after the French Revolution," *Journal of North African Studies* 25, no. 3 (2020): 386–414; Dzanic, "France's Informal Empire in the Mediterranean, 1815–1830," *The Historical Journal* (2021): 1–21.

[71] Even the Ottoman Empire was having a "constitutional moment": two documents issued in the early nineteenth century sought to "regularize and formalize existing power relationships" between influential Ottoman Christian families and the sultan. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, 57–59.

[72] As Jennifer Pitts argues, justification for state action was among the reasons that states turned to the discourse of the law of nations in framing their imperial projects. *Boundaries of the International*, 3.

[73] E.g. Catherine's instructions to Spiridov: "…on the one hand [England] is on close terms with us and of a similar mind on general European affairs on hard soil, but on the other hand, on the basis of its form of government and its naval superiority ahead of all other powers… it could easily be that out of a natural sense of jealousy, it would keep a watchful eye on all

other maritime undertakings and your expedition, if not entirely with envy, then at least with particular attention." *MIRF* 11: 368.

[74] Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*.

[75] RGAVMF f. 190 op. 1 d. 16 l. 7. The manifesto of July 1770 named Orlov only a plenipotentiary and Commander-in-chief of Her Imperial Majesty's forces in the archipelago. *Recueil de Traités d'Alliance* […], ed. Geo. Fréd. de Martens (Gottingue, 1817), 2: 32–33.

[76] Smilianskaia, *Grecheskie ostrova,* 39.

[77] John Elphinstone, the commander of one of the Russian squadrons, encountered both types of reception. Elphinstone, "Russian Faith, Honour, and Courage Displayed in a Faithful Narrative of the Russian Expedition by Sea in the Years 1769 & 1770,"" Box 3, vol. 2, ff. 124, 134–135, 154, John Elphinston Papers Relating to the Russo-Turkish War, Princeton University Library Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Manuscripts Division (hereafter JEP).

[78] Smilianskaia, *Grecheskie ostrova*, 41–42.

[79] Smilianskaia, *Grecheskie ostrova,* 53–54.

[80] The community elders (primates, proestoi, kodzabashi) of the islands took oaths; individuals were issued certificates of subjecthood, e.g. RGAVMF f. 190 op. 1 d. 16 l. 11.

[81] RGAVMF f. 190 op. 1 d. 2 ll. 10–11; Smilianskaia, *Grecheskie ostrova,* 47–48.

[82] Count Ivan Voinovich's concern over the safety of the inhabitants was probably genuine. He was a Slavonian (Dalmatian) nobleman belonging to the Venetian aristocracy who recruited Venetian subjects for Russian war service. For this he was banished from the republic of Venice, his property confiscated, and was sentenced to death should he ever return. RGADA f. 15 op. 1 d. 181; Smilianskaia, Velizhev, and Smilianskaia, *Rossiia v Sredizemnomor'e*, 80.

[83] Şakul, "Ottoman Global Moment"; Stanislavskaia, *Politicheskaia deiatel'nost' F. F. Ushakova v Gretsii*; James McKnight, "Admiral Ushakov and the Ionian Republic; the Genesis of Russia's First Balkan Satellite" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1965).

[84] In 1806 arriving reinforcements under the command of Dimitri Seniavin, known as the Second Archipelago Expedition, also occupied the Bay of Kotor, calling it "Russian Albania." Evgenii Tarle, *Ekspeditsiia Admirala D. N. Seniavina v Sredizemnoe More, 1805–1807* (Moscow: Voenizdatelstvo, 1954); D. Fedotoff White, "The Russian Navy in Trieste During the Wars of the Revolution and the Empire," *American Slavic and East European Review* 6, no. 3/4 (1947): 25–41. Seniavin distributed letters of marque to "Russian imperial subject[s]" from the *oblast'* of Castelnuovo, in the province of Bocca de Cattaro in "Russian Albania" (RGAVMF f. 166 op. 1 d. 560 l. 23).

[85] *Admiral Ushakov*, 2: 114.

[86] K. Goloviznin, "Ocherki iz istorii Russkogo flota: Kapitan-komandor Sorokin v Ionicheskoi Respublike," *Morskoi sbornik*, no. 8 (1882): 28–29; C. M. Woodhouse, *Capodistria: the founder of Greek independence* (London, 1973), 17–19.

[87] Goloviznin, "Kapitan-komandor Sorokin," 40.

[88] Stanislavskaia, *Rossiia i Gretsiia,* 331.

[89] Smilianskaia, Velizhev, and Smilianskaia, *Rossiia v Sredizemnomor'e*, 149.

[90] Smilianskaia, Velizhev, and Smilianskaia, *Rossiia v Sredizemnomor'e*, 173. Elphinston received the same instructions, although he observed that the islands could barely support themselves. JEP, Box 3, vol. 3, f. 209.

[91] Stepan P. Khmetevskii, "Appendix 8: Zhurnal S.P. Khmetevskogo," in *Rossiia v Sredizemnomor'e*, 586.

[92] Khmetevskii, "Zhurnal," 600.

[93] RGAVMF f. 150 op. 1 d. 85.

[94] Leikin, "'The Prostitution of the Russian Flag,'" 1069–78.

[95] Irina Dostian, *Rossiia i Balkanskii vopros* (Moscow, 1972), 103-111; Brian Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 230–32.

[96] Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question*, 26–29.

[97] Bitis, *Russia and the Eastern Question*, 358–60; Anatolii Fadeev, *Rossiia i vostochnyi krizis 20-kh godov XIX veka* (Moscow, 1958), 315–18, 327–29; Vitalii Sheremet, *Turtsiia i Adrianopol'skii mir 1829 g.* (Moscow, 1975), 114–17, 157–59.

[98] Lucien Frary and others describe the dual character of imperial Russia's foreign policy in this period. Frary, *Russia and the Making of Modern Greek Identity*, 19; Barbara Jelavich, *A Century of Russian Foreign Policy, 1814-1914* (Philadelphia, PA, 1964), 60.

[99] *VPR* 9: 208.

[100] *Istoriia voennykh deistvii v Aziatskoi Turtsii v 1828 i 1829 godakh* (St. Petersburg, 1836) 1: 383–84. On inevitability of war and preparations, Fadeev, *Rossiia i Vostochnyi krizis*, 196–99; Sheremet, *Turtsiia i Adrianopol'skii mir*, 30–32.

[101] Theophilus Prousis, *Russian Society and the Greek Revolution* (DeKalb, IL, 1994); Lucien Frary, "Russian Consuls and the Greek War of Independence (1821–31)," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 28, no. 1 (2013): 46–65; Frary, "Slaves of the Sultan: Russian Ransoming of Christian Captives during the Greek Revolution, 1821–1830," in *Russian-Ottoman Borderlands*, 101–30; Prousis, "Smyrna in 1821: A Russian View," *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 7 (1991): 145–68. Sympathy extended well beyond Russian society to the European press and pamphlet literature. Davide Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815–1914* (Princeton, NJ, 2012), 67–78.

[102] By the 1810s, there were no fewer than 80 complaints of Ottoman infringements of treaty obligations. *VPR* 9: 722–29; Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi imperii (hereafter AVPRI) f. 161 II-5 op. 38. A summary of Ottoman accusations is provided in *VPR* 9: 208–10, 696, fn. 72. Russian concerns about impediments to trade were formally articulated as early as 1787 in the "Manifesto of War against the Ottoman Empire." *PSZ*, vol. 22, no. 16567 (September 7, 1787); on the eve of the 1806 war, *VPR* 3: 273–78; and in 1829, *Istoriia voennykh deistvii v Aziatskoi Turtsii v 1828 i 1829 godakh* (St. Petersburg, 1836) 1: 383–84.

[103] On capitulations, see Maurits van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls, and Beratlis in the 18th Century* (Leiden, 2005); Feroz Ahmad, "Ottoman Perceptions of the Capitulations 1800–1914," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 11, no. 1 (2000): 1–20. For the Russian context, see Elena Druzhinina, *Kiuchuk-Kainardzhiiskii mir 1774 goda* (Moscow, 1955), 278–307.

[104] For examples of the changing interpretations of protection, see Taki, "Limits of Protection"; Roderic Davison, "'Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility': The Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji Reconsidered," *Slavic Review* 35, no. 3 (1976): 463–83. For another example of treaty interpretations and enforcements becoming the basis of Russian-Ottoman policy, see Will Smiley, *From Slaves to Prisoners of War: The Ottoman Empire, Russia, and International Law* (New York, NY, 2018).

[105] RGADA f. 1261 op. 1 d. 956 ll. 1-2. Article 33 of the 1783 Russian-Ottoman treaty of commerce allowed the Ottomans to ask whether there were Ottoman subjects on board.

[106] AVPRI f. 1 op. II-20 (1825) d. 15 ll. 1-5.

[107] AVPRI f. 1 op. II-20 (1826) d. 8.

[108] Theophilus Prousis, "A Guide to AVPRI Materials on Russian Consuls and Commerce in the Near East," *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 16–17 (2000): 526.

[109] *VPR* 10: 594–96.

[110] On Ottoman policies to disincentivize *berats*, see Bruce Masters, "The Sultan's Entrepreneurs: The Avrupa Tüccaris and the Hayriye Tüccaris in Syria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24 (1992): 579–97.

[111] Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 131–63.

[112] *PSZ*, vol. 20, no. 14851 (March 10, 1779); T. Iuzefovich, *Dogovory Rossii s Vostokom* (St. Petersburg, 1869), 138–39. For an alternative reading of Russian policy, see Prousis, *Russian-Ottoman Relations in the Levant*, ch. 1.

[113] Smilianskaia, Velizhev, and Smilianskaia, *Rossiia v Sredizemnomor'e*, 139.

[114] AVPRI f. 89 op. 8 d. 447 ll. 24–26ob.

[115] RGAVMF f. 1261 op. 1 d. 490. A *firman* was a special permit required to conduct trade in the Ottoman Empire obtained from the Porte.

[116] *PSZ*, vol. 24, no. 17939 (April 29, 1797). The patent system for flags introduced in 1797 became the first of several measures to regulate unauthorized use of the Russian flag. Further efforts came through additional regulations. The Consular Statute issued in 1820 required consuls to examine ships' patents for navigating under the Russian flag in addition to other ship documents.

[117] Salahi Sonyel, "The *Protégé* System in the Ottoman Empire and Its Abuses," *Belleten* LV, no. 214 (December 1991): 676–86.

[118] Requests for resettlement papers went to Russia's Constantinople mission, which issued these subjects passports to travel to the southern provinces where they would register as Russian subjects. The Russian government's understanding of these schemes is laid out in a memorandum, *VPR* 10: 686–87.

[119] Grigorii Arsh, "O russkoi sisteme 'pokrovitel'stva' i o nekotorykh ee sotsial'no-ekonomicheskikh i politicheskikh posledstviiakh dlia naseleniia Balkan (konets XVIII-nachalo XIX vv)," *Études Balkaniques*, no. 2 (1975): 108–13.

[120] RGIA f. 18 op. 5 d. 237 l. 19.

[121] RGIA f. 18 op. 5 d. 237 ll. 19ob.–20.

[122] In addition to Russian measures, in 1806 the sultan also revoked numerous berats and curtailed the privileges they allowed. *VPR* 3: 686, fn. 143; Boogert, *Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System*, 109–12.

[123] *VPR* 3: 205–8. In the same dispatch, Czartoryski claimed that "the Porte was looking for pretext to present the Russian court with grievances" and entreated with Italinskii "not to give them any foundation for these" (205).

[124] *VPR* 3: 240.

[125] *VPR* 10: 627–28.

[126] *VPR* 3: 205–8.

[127] Davison, "Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility"; Taki, "Limits of Protection."

[128] In 1806, the ministers in St. Petersburg repeatedly stressed to the envoys to Constantinople that they did not want to go to war over the question of protections. See for example *VPR* 3: 205–8.

[129] *VPR* 9: 170.

[130] Elise Wirtschafter, *From Victory to Peace: Russian Diplomacy after Napoleon* (Ithaca, NY, 2020), 17–19; Taki, *Tsar and Sultan*, 227–88.

[131] *VPR* 9: 172.

[132] As Mark Mazower shows, the illusion of Russian support for the Greek revolution was a critical part in convincing many to join the rebellion, although Russian policy was firmly the opposite. Mazower, *The Greek Revolution*, 17–22.

[133] Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (hereafter RGIA) f. 18 op. 5 d. 235, ll. 8–11ob.

[134] Prousis, *Russian-Ottoman Relations in the Levant*, 18–21.

[135] Arsh, "O russkoi sisteme 'pokrovitel'stva,'" 108–13.

[136] Otdel rukopisei, Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka (hereafter OR RNB) f. 250 op. 1 d. 55 l. 29ob.

[137] Despite the above incident, elsewhere in his diary Destunis lamented that he could have made fabulous sums of money had he only "closed his eyes and failed to strictly observe justice and his duties" (OR RNB f. 250 op. 1 d. 55 l. 76ob.).

[138] OR RNB f. 250 op. 1 d. 21.

[139] Wirtschafter, *From Victory to Peace*, 140–64.

[140] *VPR* 3: 206–207.

[141] *VPR* 10: 626.

[142] Boogert, *Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System*, 105–10.

[143] Prousis, "Storm Warnings in the Straits," 111–12.

[144] *VPR* 10: 626.

[145] Most scholarship on flags sees them as national symbols and rallying points for nationalism and national identity. I am arguing that the Russian flag held a different meaning for each party.

[146] See for example the tallies for ships passing through Constantinople 1776–1782 in Otdel rukopisei, Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka, f. 41 k. 12 d. 27 l. 26, or for 1831 in AVPRI f. 161 II-5 op. 38 (1831) d. 5. Also see Kudriavtseva, *Russkie na Bosfore*, 81–82.

[147] On these historic events, see Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870*; Frederick Anscombe, "The Balkan Revolutionary Age," *The Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 3 (September 2012): 572–606; Katherine Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte: Diplomacy and Orientalism in Ali Pasha's Greece* (Princeton, NJ, 1999).

[148] *VPR* 10: 403–404. Incidentally, when making arrangements for the Russian fleet's departure from the Aegean Sea in 1774, the Imperial Council suggested that the squadron sail without flags or pennants and close the gunports to avoid the need for salutations and other forms of greetings. *AGS* 1: 391–92.

[149] Konstantina Zanou, "Imperial Nationalism and Orthodox Enlightenment: A Diasporic Story Between the Ionian Islands, Russia and Greece, ca. 1800–30," in *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century*, ed. Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou (London, 2016), 117–34; Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism*.

[150] See, for example, Jelavich, *A Century of Russian Foreign Policy*, 60: "The recognition of Russia as the protector of the Christians, in accordance with the policy established in the Treaty of Kuchuk Kainarji, thus became a major goal of Russian diplomacy, because it could be used as a means of controlling the Porte."

[151] Simon Dixon, "Nationalism versus Internationalism: Russian Orthodoxy in Nineteenth-Century Palestine," in *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities Since 1750*, ed. Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene (London, 2012), 139–62; Eileen Kane, "Pilgrims, Holy Places, and the Multi-Confessional Empire: Russian Policy

Toward the Ottoman Empire under Tsar Nicholas I, 1825–1855" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2005).

[152] On the breakout of the Crimean War, see Jack Fairey, *The Great Powers and Orthodox Christendom: The Crisis over the Eastern Church in the Era of the Crimean War* (Houndmills, 2015); Orlando Figes, *Crimea: The Last Crusade* (London, 2010); David Goldfrank, *The Origins of the Crimean War* (London, 1994).