

Andonis Piperoglou

Welcome everyone. Hello. My name is Andoni Piperoglu.

I'm speaking to you today from Melbourne, where I'm based at the University of Melbourne on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations. We're gathered here today across different pockets of the world. to listen to the second webinar of the transnational studies committee of the modern Greek Studies Association in tandem with some interesting and important thinkers who've played a role in setting up an organization an interesting collaborative space called decolonize hellos and today's webinar is engaged with pressing questions to colonial legacies and decolonial prospects within and across the eastern Mediterranean.

We're going to listen to three speakers and then have the opportunity to engage in some time for questions and answers. And so first up we're going to hear from Will Stroebel. I will introduce each speaker just before they speak.

So first we're going to hear from William Stroebel who's going to talk to us today about philology and the Hellenic Arche. and will teach as modern Greek and comparative literature at the University of Michigan. He's a faculty director of the Meditopos interdisciplinary workshop, outgoing chair of the NGSA Transnational Studies Committee, of which this webinar is a part, and director of the undergraduate studies for comparative literature department.

His first book, highly recommend Literature's Refuge, came out in 2025 has won several awards it was recognized as the best book in Mediterranean studies by the Mediterranean seminar it was given a high commendation for book history by the Society for the history of authorship reading and publishing and most recently it was co-winner of the Keely Prize prestigious book award of the modern Greek studies Association together with his partner He is busily raising two children, Ophias and Leandros. Welcome, Will, and over to you.

Will Stroebel

Thank you so much, Andoni, and thank you, everyone, for joining us today. I'm just going to set up my slides, give me a moment here, and we'll get right to it. Okay.

All right. So, philology has some serious baggage, and I'd like to unpack some of it with you today. But first, what is philology?

Well, if you work in the humanistic sciences, chances are that you are a grandchild of philology, whether you know it or not. Philology, which is the study of written texts and languages, stretches back to the ancient Mediterranean. More recently, over the course of the 19th century, philology produced the modern disciplines, of literary studies, linguistics,

history, religious studies, archaeology, art history, and even anthropology, as James Turner has demonstrated in his book, *Philology, the Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities*.

At its core, though, philology is the study of material texts and languages. It aims to recover and curate the stories and languages that humans have conveyed across history, and the material media, such as papyri leaves, manuscript and printed books in which those languages have been conveyed. The big question I'll ask today is what role did Greek philology play in shaping the modern border regime at the edges of southeastern Europe and West Asia?

I'll argue that philology, in fact, played a considerable role in racializing and partitioning the modern Mediterranean. In the interest of time, I can only touch on a few of the main highlights in philology's history. But to understand the first principles that underlie philology, let me start at the beginning with the librarians of Hellenistic Alexandria. It was these librarians, foremost among them, Xenodotos Aristophanes of Byzantium and Aristarchos of Samothrace, who laid the foundations of philology.

Their main task was the constitution and stabilization of the Homeric epics, which had been floating around in multiple oral and textual forms for centuries. For the ancients. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* served as instructional tools in schools.

They were performed across a number of popular venues. They were quoted by elites. They were analyzed in philosophical treatises.

They were recited aloud for magic spells and seances with the dead. And they were remixed into divination books and fortune-telling across the Hellenistic Mediterranean. They even fed into some early Christian writings like the Acts of Andrew and the The problem was, the poems themselves were hard to pin down.

There was no standard edition. The librarians of Alexandria set about to make one. And in doing so, they developed some of the core philological tools that we still use today, such as collation, emendation, *scolia*, and the first elements of what would eventually become the critical apparatus.

So, zoom out. Why am I talking about Homer? came into existence in order to bridge a perceived gap, a chasm that was standing between us, the audience, and the author, Homer, whose authoritative text had been vitiated by the errors of vulgar performers, scribes, and copyists over several centuries of textual reproduction.

The job of the philologist then was to weed out these mistakes, to expunge them from the text, and to get rid of any linguistic traces of the scribes and the copyists, and to restore the author's own vulgar. And philology itself thus became a kind of *nostos*, that returned us

to the authorial source. All those other people involved in reproducing the work, the actual humans who copied it out over and over again across the centuries, these nameless scribes who brought with them dialects and languages that were radically different from the Homeric text, these scribes and copiers were not viewed as interesting historical actors worthy of study in their own right, they were viewed as a problem to be overcome, dirty windows that needed cleaning, Weeds that needed extirpation, blemishes that needed whitewashing.

For much of the Middle Ages, Western Europe lost touch with philology and its Greek origins, but the philological methods came roaring back in Europe during the Renaissance. First in Italy, with humanists like Valla and Poliziano, and then in Northern Europe with figures like Erasmus, Scalagher, Cassavan, Grotius, and then in England with Richard Bentley and William Jones, who first posited the Inter-European language. By the turn of the 19th century, philology's center had again shifted away from England and France toward Germany, with the rise of *Altertumswissenschaft*, which is the study of ancient history and literature.

Thanks to the German model, philology was now being hardwired into the central blueprints of the modern university, funded by the state for the first time, which organized research agendas, academic conferences, and journals. Philology exploded into multiple innovations across the discipline. It likewise informed state and colonial administration.

For example, it was William Jones's philological work that helped to hammer out the legal framework for the Hindustani legal code in British India. And as Firoz Vesuniya has shown, it was again classical philology that was used as the basis of civil service exams for entrance into the colonial administration. Philology was everywhere.

At its core though, philology remained laser-focused on the same questions. How to reconstitute the ancient text. How to re-establish our lost connection with the author and his or her historical moment.

How to weed out scribal error and the contamination of non-authorial voices, words, dialects, and languages that had worked their way into the text over the centuries. A number of philologists in the 19th century, most important among them Friedrich Ritchell and Karl Lachmann, in fact, developed a new system to model textual transmission, the *Stemma codicum*, which was in fact a family tree, showing genealogical relationships among various manuscript witnesses to a work, leading back to the omega at the top there of the tree, which always represents the hypothetical archetype. Lost to history, but thanks to philology, something that we could now reconstitute based on phylogenetic lineation.

This genetic way of thinking developed alongside a similar model in and comparative linguistics, which developed a family tree to trace its way back to the supposed Indo-

European language of prehistory. As Yi-Jan Lin has argued in her book, *The Erotic Life of Manuscripts*, this method of thinking genealogically, of mapping out a family tree of texts and languages, to work our way back to the lost ancestor, it evolved amidst the racist pseudosciences of the 19th century and was influenced by their blood-based models of human culture. Approaching the same problem from a different angle, Tony Grafton has described this as the will to replace the text.

More and more, he wrote, philologists tended to dissolve the actual physical text in front of them in an attempt to create some lost origin. The so-called will to replace the text was oftentimes a kind of necroscience, performing vivisections on real-world texts to construct a Frankenstein's archetype. And it was not just texts that were being escorted out of the building.

Entire languages and cultures were sometimes seen as too corrupt, too contaminated, and too distant from their classical past, such that, for example, the post-classical Greek of medieval scribes that sometimes left its traces on the classical texts that they copied out were an obstacle to be overcome, an error to be excised. It was not too much to say that post-classical Greekness itself was on the chopping block. European philologists had started asking whether contemporary speakers of Greek could lay claim to their own tongue.

Writing of his experiences in the final years of the Byzantine Empire, where he had traveled to learn Greek, the Italian humanist Francesco Filelfo warned against, quote, the vulgar Greek language of the plebs, perverted and corrupted by the multitude of migrants and merchants who flocked into Constantinople every day. Welcomed as residents in the city, these travelers mixed in with the Greeks and tainted and defiled the Greeks' most beautiful manner of speech. For the ancient dignity and elegance of speaking was retained only by members of the court, first and foremost by the noble women, who had no commerce whatsoever with foreign men, and thus kept the uncontaminated and pure language of the ancient Greeks intact.

There's a lot to remark on here. Filelfo argued that the Greek spoken in the capital had been tainted and defiled, or if we translate the verb *inquinare*, more literally, the language had been shat into and mixed up with the feces, of the migrant multitudes. The fatal mistake had been to welcome these migrants as residents.

The ancient dignity of the language, according to Filelfo, had thus been perverted and corrupted by the unchecked flow of non-Greeks into the city. It was only by walling itself off from this massive human migration that a small cadre of Greek nobility, particularly women, had been able to preserve the Greek tongue from contamination. Linguistic integrity depended on a class-based border regime against the unregulated flow of human bodies.

in and out of the city. Europeans who wanted to learn Greek, he warned, would thus

do well to similarly wall themselves off from the language of the masses and seek out tutors among the nobles. In later centuries, after the collapse of the Byzantine Empire, many European philologists held increasingly deep suspicions of their Greek contemporaries, whose language they viewed as irreparably corrupted by a long series of population movements.

Daniel Heinzius, one of the most renowned scholars at Leiden University in the and father of the really notable Nicholas Heinzius penned a witty epigram in ancient Greek bemoaning, there's no Greece left in Greece now, who'd believe it? Into Greece's tongue was mixed the barbaric, all voices long since mixed together, and not a single voice remains to those has-beens born too late. The verbs of mixture, mignomy, immediately catch one's eye, continuing the same vocabulary of philopho, But one finds also a subtler and more devastating innovation in these verses.

The confusion of land and language. You'll note that in my translation of the second line, I write not the Greek tongue, but Greece's tongue. This is because Heinzius is geographically marking the language as Hellatic rather than Hellenic, an adjective that means of the Greek lands.

If there's no Greek tongue, or at least nothing that European scholars acknowledge as a Greek tongue left in Greece, then surely there's no Greece left there either. Heinsius quips. Not only does he dispossess Greeks of their speech and language, he simultaneously dispossesses them of their land.

Born too late into a language and a soil that were no longer their own, these linguistic outcasts belong nowhere but to the roving masses of barbarians. I could go on with more examples, but in the interest of time, let me jump to the 19th century, when explicit racist discourses emerged. And emerged most famously with the Bavarian philologist, who argued that successive waves of Slavic immigration into Byzantine lands in late antiquity had effectively wiped out the race of the Hellings.

As a result, he wrote, not the slightest drop of undiluted Hellenic blood flows in the veins of the Christian population of present-day Greece. Modern Greeks, he implied, were not only culturally illegitimate heirs to the title, they were racially illegitimate too. And he continued, the Greek nation, which from the Trojan War until the sixth century after Christ, lived in the Peloponnese, and the mainland to the north no longer exists today.

Due to unfortunate circumstances of every kind, the Greek nation perished or melted into totally insignificant dregs and was so intermixed with foreigners that the initial character of the Greeks was snuffed out completely. This doctrine, which was initially just an historical experiment, enters henceforth into the ranks of undebatable historical truths. It has become a fact that no one can deny, save by self-delusion.

This is not a political matter. a purely scientific nature and is intended only for those who are seriously interested in the proper knowledge of the past and the present. It is a matter of mental exercise in the European fashion, such exercises that only a European can bring to fruition, that they have sharpened the acuity of the mind of those who live in this region of the world and have led them to such discoveries in fields of nature, art, and science that with their wise institutions and their skillful use of physical force, have gained dominance over the entire human race.

Fulmer-Eyer buttressed his argument within a vocabulary of phylogenetic miscegenation and decline. But crucially, his evidence, if you read the larger treatise, was not genetic but philological. He was looking at texts and the language and dialects used in those texts.

Infusing race into philological analysis, Fulmer-Eyer harnessed it to present his thesis as scientific fact and to foreclose debate. Notably in the final lines of this excerpt, his rhetorical access spills even further outward into the geopolitical manifestations of that racial discourse, empire and colonization, which Follmeier explicitly links to European knowledge production. Indigenous Greek language philology and historiography in the 19th century absorbed these attacks and incorporated the same philological logic into its defense.

In other words, even as Neo-Hellenic philology repudiated these racist attacks, is legitimately Hellenic on many of the same terms set by European philologists, with some modifications and accommodations that we can discuss in the Q&A if there's time. Most famous is the Greek historian Kostadinos Paparigopoulos, but again in the interest of time I'm going to skip over the historiography to look instead at the literary philology, namely Kostadinos Sathas, who was the first to make sense of the literary terrain with his *Neolenikii Philologia*, modern Greek philology. As one would expect, Sathos viewed Greek literature primarily through the twin prisms of language and religion.

You earned a place in his book by being Greek Orthodox Christian and speaking Greek. Yet he also allowed for exceptions and differentiated degrees of Greekness, as seen, for example, in his entry on Leo Alatios, a Greek convert to Catholicism, who spent the better part of his career actually attacking the supposed heresies of the Greek Orthodox faith. Despite his anti-Orthodox writings, Alatios finds a welcoming and sympathetic host in modern Greek philology, which praises the former's gift for locution and poetry and makes excuses for his anti-Greek polemics.

Sathos writes, by necessity he became a strident critic of Orthodox Christianity, but not a supercilious reviler of the faith, like other renegades. Sathos expels most of the Greek converts to Catholicism from the Greek tradition, but he opens up a provisional space in the canon for those few whose aesthetic value can be isolated from their religion excusing their

attacks on greek orthodoxy as a matter of necessity this kind of partial inclusion and partial omission of the unwanted element was his way of managing migration and cultural contact without sacrificing the hellenic core seen as sathos was willing to make exceptions for certain greek speaking catholics in europe One might ask, did he extend the same courtesy to Greek-speaking Muslims of the Ottoman Empire? This is a critical question, and one that brings us to the heart of the Hellenic border regime, whose textual foundations, I argue in my book, went on to shape the geopolitical border regime of the Population Exchange of 1923.

Because while philologists were often willing to search out hybrid forms of Hellenism in the borderlands of Catholic and Slavic Europe, Ottoman Islam continued, and constituted the ultimate limit case for Greek nationalists. To my knowledge, throughout his career, Sathas only recorded one Greek language poem by a Muslim, the Alipasiyad, which is an epic ballad sung by Haji Shekreti at the court of Alipasha in the early 19th century. But even as he published the poem, Sathas reviled it as barbarous and illiterate, and he went out of his way to displace it from the Greek canon.

but as a historical curiosity from which he could basically strip-mine any data of interest to national Greek history. In fact, Sathas had already laid bare his view of Ottoman Islam in another tome released the previous year, titled Greece Under the Turkish Occupation. Here, Sathas opines that after Greek Byzantium had been hit by the so-called Asiatic deluge, Asianos Himaros, of Ottoman Islam, Hellenism, quote, "fled up into the mountains where it set up camp during those long and stormy years.

It bore itself bravely under oppression and while sometimes meant victory and sometimes meant defeat, it always preserved itself pure and untouched, just like the pure and untouched mountains that had rescued it." The key concept here is pure and untouched, literally "virgin," which applies both to the physical mountains of Greece and to the faithful Greeks atop them. Climbing up into the hills and engaging in guerilla warfare for centuries, These Greeks kept themselves high above the supposedly murky and impure waters of the Asian deluge that had come flooding into erstwhile territories below.

The stakes of Hellenism's survival, in other words, now reverted to that philological standard since Homer, rooting out the error and the vitiation of this foreign culture so as to return to the pure authoritative origin. In the case of Ottoman cultural contact, then, ... have been almost entirely forgotten by Greek philology and modern Greek literary studies.

And of the Greek Orthodox Christians, the refugees who came to take their place from Anatolia, at least a couple hundred thousand of them did not in fact speak Greek. They spoke Turkish, writing it in the Greek alphabet of their Bible. These refugees were likewise dispossessed of their place in the Greek canon, for despite their Greek alphabet and their shared Greek Orthodox faith, In the eyes of Greek nationalists, their language was irreparably contaminated by Turkish Islam.

In the years following the exchange, the literatures of both Greek-speaking Greek Orthodox Christians and Greek-speaking Muslims were categorically exiled from the pages of Greek literary history. Over the entire course of the 20th century, for example, there was only one philologist in Greece, to my knowledge, who published a survey of Greek-language Islamic poetry. But even Pirsinales felt the need, or perhaps the peer pressure, to reassure his readers, and I'm quoting him here, there's no poetic value in Islamic Greek poetry. The presence of Turkish and Arabic words, which were a source of intellectual flair for the Turks, creates for us a series of ugly and displeasing phonetic impressions without anything poetic to add to the plotting nature of the Greek verses.

He concludes by suggesting that the only value of this literature is of a pure or historiographic nature. Greek philologists defended Hellenism's pedigree by displacing Islam beyond the bounds of literary aesthetic value. It was very rarely allowed a place on the page, but when it was, it was only in as much as it provided raw facts to the historiographic archive of the nation.

The absence of Islam in Greece was papered over by a more systematic nationalist philology in the years that followed. In 1926, just a year after the population exchange had been completed, The Academy of Athens was founded and charged with salvaging and studying the national heritage. Less than a decade later, in 1935, Nicolae Austomadakis submitted the first doctoral dissertation in modern Greek philology to the University of Athens.

His topic was the editions and manuscripts of Dionysio Solomos, author of what had become Greece's national anthem. That same year, the Academy announced its plans to publish the Greek library series, devoted to ancient Greek titles and modern translation. These and other philological pronouncements and organizations further cemented and institutionalized the implicit categorical limits on what constituted greek literature in conclusion then what was the institutional helenism that philology created since hellenistic antiquity philology had been had built a method around reconstituting the lost archetype and the notion of rupture that had made it lost Philological practices of weeding out scribal error, seeking incessantly for a return to the pure authorial and authoritative form of the past, mapping out quasi-biological family trees.

These methods didn't just prepare editions of Homer and Horace and Solomos and Calvos. They shaped the cultural imaginary, and they informed more modern ethno-racist discourses, colonial institutions, and national projects. was hardwired into the state infrastructure of the 19th century.

From the Humboldtian University to the national and international legal frameworks that governed colonial territories. Operating within this statist infrastructure, Greek

philology extracted and displaced human cultures that were deemed errors of Greekness. First and foremost among them, Islam.

So finally, what can we do today? As much as I have critiqued philology's historical trajectory here, I don't want to abandon it actually. I am quite convinced that the methods of philology are still useful tools.

Like scholars before me, such as Edward Said, I would instead call for a return to philology's methods. A return to its insistence on the material text as a social object, on the physical archive, and on comparative linguistics and language learning, and on new innovations in collation and comparison. But I would invite us to use these methods not toward the reconstruction of a Hellenic archetype, or at least not just that, but also and primarily toward what the Germans call *Textgeschichte*, or even better what D.F. McKenzie first called the sociology of the text, which is in a sense the entire social history of texts and stories as they move through different hands and storytellers.

in order that is to make a place for philologies displaced in Greece and its neighbors and to tell their stories across languages, alphabets, and religious boundaries. Thank you. And now let me unshare my screen.

Andonis Piperoglou

Thank you so much, Will. Fascinating. And we're going to move on to Despina Lalaki.

at New York City College of Technology and works in political and cultural sociology, social theory, American and modern Greek politics. And her publications have appeared in a number of volumes, including the *Journal of Historical Sociology*, the *International Journal of Politics and Culture and Society*. She's co-edited *The Battle of Ideas*, *Cultural Cold War* and *the Making of Liberal Democracy in Greece*.

She is working on a monograph entitled digging for democracy in Greece intra-civilization processes during the American century. She's also a founding member of the collective decolonized Hellas and today Despina is going to talk to us about Cold War civilizations Hellenisms judeo-christianity and the making of a Greece Israel imaginary over to the you Despina.

Despina Lalaki

Thank you very much, Adoni, and thank you well for organizing this. Nice to see you all online, hopefully soon in person at the Modern Greek Studies Association conference.

Okay. So as Adonis suggested, the title of my presentation is Cold War Civilizations, Hellenism, Judeo-Christianity and the Making of Greece, Israel Imaginary. I have been the, I want to basically turn our attention to the war, a different kind of a war, like is sort of like

happening side by side with that in Palestine now or in Iran.

or in the region. And that is basically the war for the hearts and minds of the world. And this is the war basically that uses, employs to a great extent very old material.

Some of it like we'll already refer to with the name of like what comes with the name of like Hellenism, basically this intersection of like classical antiquity and European or Western modernity. And on the other side, of course, Judaism and Christianity to pretty much legitimize this contemporary geopolitical alliances, military interventions, hierarchies of power. Here I have an excerpt from Netanyahu basically explaining in his meeting with Tsipras and Anastasiadis of Cyprus, like the fact that these are like basically the three stable a foundational idea itself for the establishment of Israel.

So I have been mostly focusing on this idea of Hellenism as very much like the different mutations it has been taking over the years. The most recent one, I think, is very much exemplified by the words of President Obama in 2016 when visiting Greece, where he made the point of making the statements with the background of Acropolis and the museum and so forth, where he said a couple of very interesting things, the obvious connection to the American founding fathers and everything, but also made the point connecting modern Greece with the American with the Cold War and President Truman's commitment to the United States to defend Greece and so forth. So I have been looking at these mutations, if you wish, of Hellenism for a while.

But in the face of these recent developments, I started looking in this direction of this, trying to understand what exactly is Netanyahu referring to, what kind of civilization. And so I started looking at this direction of the Judeo-Christianity. and try to understand how it came into place as sort of like a new identity, not just for Israel and a way of like sort of incorporating the Western canon and tradition and civilization narratives, but like first and foremost, like American identity as well.

So that's so central to this history, of course, is the United States and in the post-Second World War hegemonic project. in the region and beyond, and the incorporation of Judeo-Christianity into narratives of American identity alongside the appropriation of classical Greece, of course, as the birthplace of Western democracy, where I argue that they have been providing powerful ideological foundations for the Cold War liberal order and beyond. These constructions have since undergone successive transformations, and these are what I'm trying to trace here and share some of it with you.

Acquiring renewed significance in contemporary narratives of civilizational conflicts. This geopolitical convergences between Greece and Israel is the case study, obviously, here. And again, I repeat that the paper examines how Hellenism and Judeo-Christianity are produced, circulated, used, basically, to establish a supposedly shared civilizational identity.

It investigates how these narratives intersect with material interests, security arrangements, economic cooperation, the political legitimization of Western power. I'm not going to go very much into the methodology and like, but just very, very quickly to suggest that this is sort of like constitutes a challenge also to the methodological nationalism. This could have been an approach that sort of like examines the three states as as an international set of exchanges and collaborations and so forth.

But it is a very like calculated decision to place it within this discussion of civilization, which very much discredited it for a long time, especially with the rise of post-colonial and anti-colonial studies, but sort of has made like a very strong comeback in popular discourse. And it is also a way of looking at these parts of the world as an entity itself. Sort of like breaking down these literally boundaries, but also like metaphorical, cultural boundaries of nation states.

It has other implications as well as sort of like looking at the empire and its hegemonic project from a peripheral perspective. Clearly, like, or historically, Greece and Israel have been understood as sort of very much in the periphery of the empire. Clearly, recent developments, especially in the case of Israel, make it very, very clear that this is not the case. And it's sort of like a way to destabilize and challenge this understanding we have of, like, the relation between metropolis and periphery and relations of power.

So I'm going to try to give sort of like an overview of like this understanding of Hellenism and its mutations like in the 20th century, especially after the second half of the century after like the intensification of relations between United States and Greece. And sort of like a political, an overview of like the politics of the country for those not so familiar with it before I transition. to explain like this Judeo-Christian identity and how it came into place.

And talk a little bit about the changes in the geopolitical arrangements and conclude with a couple of notes in terms of like question of memory, especially in the face of the newly, they're about to be built like Holocaust Museum in Thessaloniki. have had a very troubled history in Greece. Monarchy and the dictatorship of the 20th century cast a very long shadow on the fragmented history of the Hellenic Republic.

And while self-determination and equality were the basis of the Republican strand in Greek nationalism, and we have had a couple of books in that direction that have been doing a great job explaining it. Democracy, nevertheless, was not a prominently featured in the state's representational agenda until after the Second World War, with the end of the struggle between the old political establishment and the communist insurgency. In Greece, in the midst of the war, emerged this mass popular movement, the National Liberation Front, that could probably be understood as the culmination of a series of social struggles that had taken place throughout the first half of the century.

This developed basically the prospect of new structures that could provide the blueprint for the articulation of an actual strong civil society and democracy as many of us have envisioned it. Nonetheless, the British military intervention against the arm in favor of the old regime, the subsequent American intervention, military, indirectly political, And later on, of course, the incorporation in the European family, European Union, where events directly related to broader socioeconomic and geopolitical configurations, which, however, carried a strong ideological imprint. Churchill and among others have talked in that direction, basically saying that the cradle of Western civilization, democracy could not be abandoned to communism or the influence of a semi-European culture.

The American military and economic intervention in Greece, the site of the first proxy war of the Cold War, left little room for any alternatives. In the process, Hellenism was first further employed to shape new ontological and epistemological distinctions between the democratic West and the communist East, normalizing the post-war political and economic status quo and offering legitimacy first to the American hegemonic, and later on to the European integration project. Post-war Greece, as the cradle of democracy, had basically had to be secured and propelled into modernity.

And a state-sustained capitalist system was offered as a bulwark against totalitarianism, which was the word used for communism, leftism in general, another interesting term that has its own history. of democracy and modernization, a process of urbanization, industrialization, and overarching rationalization. Under the threat of communism, modernization was promoted with great urgency, emphasizing the need for economic development, which would rely on tourism and the rationalization of the country's cultural heritage management, while fostering the mutable values and ideals of Hellenism.

The war liberalism, and give a list here of explanation what liberalism means, as an endorsement of a capitalist economy, was offered as a public narrative through various collaborative cultural projects between United States and Greece, normalizing the post-war political and economic status quo and offering legitimacy to the American hegemonic project. The United States, the active engaged for the United States, The active engagement with the foundational culture of Western civilization had always been a question of legitimacy of moral and symbolic authority and the new civil civilizing force. I'll come back to that.

So modernization basically was promoted with great urgency in Greece by the economic cooperation administration, an ambitious program emphasizing heavy industry, chemical, steel, refinement, and so forth, because before very quickly turning into tourism and basically the development or like of cultural heritage as a way of like promoting the country and extracting wealth from that. A process of sort of like what we call the modernized, monumentalization of modernity, especially in the urban centers was set into

motion. A very active, aggressive would say like a soft power program on behalf of by the United States and active collaboration with like Greek government and other agencies was set in motion with great urgency actually.

One has to consider for instance Fulbright Foundation is established like right after, is the second in the world established I think after China. So there is a sense of urgency here that Greece has to be you know saved from the Soviet Union, from the Soviet threat. And these markers of Hellenism, basically, one can find all over the place at the time.

Hilton, the reconstruction of the Atalapha, the American embassy itself bearing all the traces of resemblance with Parthenon and everything. this, but sort of like made those connections really, really explicit. And of course, tourism, how the heavy industries of the countries is this very interesting particular species of industry, which more than any other form of capitalist industry sells not only commodities, but also worlds of meaning and experiences marketed so as to create very specific and at the same time highly idealized representations of places, cultures, natures, nature, and people.

Now, globalization, however, and the EU integration process can be the cause for great uneasiness. As the Socialist Party gradually abandoned its radical roots and socialist agenda to push for neoliberalism in the mid of 80s or late 80s, what was left behind was an up-for-grabs nationalism, which would research across the Greek political spectrum after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the implosion of next-door Yugoslavia into full-scale war. The limitations perceived and real to the national sovereignty that the union with the EU or economic community could impose caused the collective anxiety.

The need for self-assertion again found expression in the cultural field in which the The Fall of the Berlin Wall did not merely suggest the end of socialism and utopian visions, but the end of liberalism, which until then it was proven very effective with containing unrest and real Democratization. Coupled with Tina, liberalism was mutated into neoliberalism, that is to say, the absolute role of financial capitalism, and complete disregard for a democracy and its trapping civil rights, human rights, and so forth. It was an interesting period that you see again, like that soft power kept being in place with different projects, the celebration of modernity, and like what was understood as the 2,500 years from its beginnings with a key tennis constitutional reforms were very much celebrated both in Greece and United States with some exhibitions.

And which again like and kind of surprisingly, they carried a very strong like Cold War imprint. Now, to move to explaining, saying a few words at least about this Judeo-Christian tradition, the notion of this unified Judeo-Christian civilization is, I want to explain basically that is a relatively recent political construction, whose apparent historical continuity conceals a profound conflictual past. And the literature, of course, is very rich on this subject.

So although Judaism and Christianity share theological and textual traditions, their historical relationship was shaped as much by antagonism, Christian supersessionism, persecution, and exclusion as by commonality. The emergence of Judeo-Christianity as a coherent civilizational category during the 20th century must therefore be understood in relation to the ideological struggles against fascism and communism, the reconfiguration of American national identity, the aftermath of the Holocaust, and the incorporation of Israel into Western geopolitical order. Its subsequent identity against Islam, I mean its subsequent transformation into a marker of Western identity against Islam, reveals the enduring political unity of this constructed tradition.

So, the modern political language of Judeo-Christianity, one can trace it back in the 1930s, when immigration, urbanization, and the increasing public presence of Catholics, Jews, and Jews, challenged the historically Protestant definition of American identity. Organizations such as the National Conference of Christians and Jews promoted a new understanding of the United States as a nation comprising three legitimate religious communities, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Helen Gaston demonstrates this transformation contained competing political possibilities.

For religious pluralists, Judeo-Christianity offered the means of challenging Protestant dominance, combating anti-Semitism, and expanding democratic citizenship. For others, it established Judaism Christianity as the distinctive religious foundations of Western democracy, defining political freedom through religious belief, and presenting secularism as a threat to civilization. The Second World War accelerated the consolidation of this new civilizational identity, and in the struggle against fascism and Nazi racial ideology, Judeo-Christianity provided a language through which the United States could represent itself as the defender of religious freedom, and democracy against totalitarianism.

Yet the Holocaust also exposed the profound contradictions of this narrative. The destruction of European Jewry forced Christian institutions and intellectuals to confront the history of Christian anti-Semitism. The emerging language of Judeo-Christian reconciliation Religious Perspective, and common moral values.

The Jew, historically constructed as Christianity's internal religious other, was now incorporated into a newly imagined civilizational community. Judeo-Christianity thus offered the West a means of reconciling its self-representation as the birthplace of democracy and human rights with a catastrophic history of European and anti-Semitism. This did not erase genuine efforts towards religious reconciliation, but it allowed a profoundly antagonistic history to be recognized, reorganized, sorry, into a seemingly continuous tradition of Western tolerance and freedom.

With the defeat of fascism now, Judeo-Christianity acquired renewed ideological significance in the confrontation with Soviet communism. The central opposition shifted

from Nazi racial totalitarianism to atheist communist totalitarianism. So religious belief became a defining characteristic of Western freedom, while atheism and materialism were increasingly associated with political oppression.

This is the time that under Eisenhower, this religious conception of American identity became even further institutionalized. the addition of the under God to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954, but also the adoption of the in God we trust as the national motto in 1956, which exemplified the convergence of religion, anti-communism, and American nationalism. The creation, of course, of Israel introduced a new geopolitical dimension to this civilization, and as Caitlin Karen demonstrates, American Christian support for Zionism preceded the rise of evangelical Christian right.

Liberal Protestant organizations and intellectuals, including Reinhold Niebuhr, supported the Jewish National Project through a combination of post-Holocaust moral responsibility, humanitarianism, democratic internationalism, and geopolitical calculation. The American Christian-Palestine Committee played an important role in mobilizing political support for Zionism, among other organizations that I look at, which I don't have time basically to go into now, and lobbying the Truman administration. Through overlapping networks of religious organizations, intellectuals, politicians, diplomats, and Zionist activists, Israel was increasingly represented as simultaneously Jewish, Biblical, Democratic, Modern, and Western.

The process intensified after the 1967 war, when Israel's capture of East Jerusalem and other territories acquired particular significance for American evangelical Christians. Biblical prophecy and Christian eschatology increasingly supplemented the earlier liberal Protestant language of humanitarian responsibility. The incorporation of Judaism and Israel into the Western civilizational imaginary also involved the construction of new boundaries of exclusion.

The transformation of the Christian West into the Judeo-Christian West did not simply expand Western identity. It basically helped redefine its constitutive outsiders. The Jew historically Christianity's internal other could increasingly be incorporated into shared Western identity.

identity, while Arabs and Muslims became central figures of civilizational difference. Within this framework, Israel could be represented as a democratic outpost of Judeo-Christian civilization surrounded by an allegedly authoritarian, irrational, and culturally alien Muslim world. Following September 11, the old language of anti-totalitarianism was readily reconfigured around terrorism and radical.

The Palestinian question exposes, of course, the contradiction of this transformation, to say the least. The Western narrative of Jewish emancipation and reconciliation meant

Palestinian dispossession, occupation, and the denial of national self-determination. Palestinian Christians, of course, destabilize the presumed identification of Christianity with Western geopolitical interest.

A whole different topic one could go in like some other time. "Ultimately, Judeo-Christianity emerges not as an ancient unified tradition, but as a modern political construction, continuously reconfigured through changing relations of power. From anti-fascism and anti-communism to contemporary confrontations with Islam, it has provided a durable civilizational language through which American hegemony, Israel's Western identity, and geopolitical alliances require acquire the appearance of the of historical and moral necessity.

Now, I will go a little bit into this political economy of civilization. I think Nikola says more on it, so I might just go a little fast through this. Now, the contemporary strategic partnerships, which actually generated my interest in this direction, between Greece and Israel is increasingly presented as the natural convergence of these two ancient civilizations, sharing democratic values and a common Western heritage.

Yet the history of their diplomatic relations reveal a very different trajectory. For much of the 20th century, Greece maintained close political and economic relations with the Arab world, opposed the 1947 United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine, for a brief time at least, withheld full diplomatic recognition of Israel until 1990. Their contemporary alliance is therefore not the realization, clearly of an ancient civilization affinity, but the outcome of changing political and economic relations in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Greece's historical orientation towards the Arab world reflected its particular position within the post-war international order. As I explained earlier, into the American-led Western bloc, Greece maintained extensive commercial interests in the Middle East, dependent on Arab diplomatic support over Cyprus, and sought access to regional markets and oil. This interest complicated any straightforward alignment with Israel, even under the fiercely anti-communist military dictatorship of 1967 to 1974, which, however, recent revelations suggest that There were some economic exchanges and trading.

So, following the restoration of democracy, Greek support for Palestine acquired an explicitly anti-imperialist character under Andreas Papandreou. And these were like the image very much we remember from the time in terms of like the relationship between Greece and Palestine. support for the Palestinian struggle in the context of third world liberation.

And of course, the position to American intervention. The perceived parallels between Cyprus and Palestine reinforced this orientation. This configuration began to change with Greece's deeper European integration, PASOK's retreat from the radical economic program,

and the declining significance of Arab markets.

The dramatic recognition of Israel started in 1990, initiated a gradual normalization of relations, although the decisive transformation occurred after 2010. As I said, I might skip over that. I think Nicholas might be covering some of it.

So it was basically within this new, and the changing relations, presumably between Israel and Turkey, was a decisive turning point. So it was within this new political economic configuration that civilizational narratives acquired renewed importance. Now, a couple of words about a little bit more about this contemporary rapport between Greece and Israel and like this soft power relation and the cultural diplomacy, basically.

We see So this contemporary rapport between the two countries, Greece-Israel, raises the question of whether their growing political, economic, and military cooperation is generating a new Hellenic, Judaic, civilizational imagery capable of retrospectively endowing a historically contingent alliance with the appearance of ancient cultural affinity. There is a renewed scholarly interest in Greek-Jewish history which is particularly interesting. There is the promotion of Israeli tourism in Greece for a while now, especially with emphasis on the Thessaloniki and cultural exchanges.

And most recently, the decision for the establishment of the Holocaust Museum of Thessaloniki, which provide important sites for examining this process. Recovering the largely erased history of Greek Jewry challenges dominant national narratives organized around classical antiquity, orthodox Christianity, and ethnic continuity. Yet the convergence of this historical recovery with Greece's strategic partnership with Israel raises questions about the political uses of memory.

The central concern is whether the recognition of Greek Jewish history and the institutionalization of Holocaust remembrance are becoming incorporated into a broader European civilizational narrative that identifies Israel with Western democracy and historical responsibility. It is interesting, just recently found out the museum is actually funded by the Nyrhos Foundation, the Greek state, and Germany. So such a narrative risks conflating Greek Jewish history with Israeli statehood and translating the memory of European anti-Semitism into political identification with Israel, potentially marginalizing, of course, Palestinian histories of dispossession and occupation.

Universities, museums, cultural foundations, and memory institutions must therefore be examined alongside military cooperation, energy projects, investment, and diplomacy as interconnected sides through which geopolitical alliances acquire cultural legitimacy. Ultimately, the question is not whether Hellenism and Judaism of course possessing authentic civilizational affinity, but how, by whom, and under what historical conditions such an affinity is being constructed? Can the recovery of Greece's Jewish past contribute to

a genuinely plural historical consciousness without rendering Palestinian disposition invisible?

The emerging Hellenic-Judaic imaginary offers, I think, a revealing case for examining how cultural memory participates in the of that Western hegemony. And with that, I think I can stop. And thank you very much.

Andonis Piperoglou

Thank you, Despina. Thank you very much. I'm going to pass on now to Nikolas Kosmatopoulos, who's Associate Professor of Political Sciences and Anthropology at the American University of Beirut, and Founding Director of the University of Beirut.

in the Mediterranean East. His research spans political anthropology, critical geopolitics, and anti-colonial thought, focusing on peace expertise in West Asia, global maritime politics, and political ecologies of the Eastern Mediterranean. He's the author of Masterpiece, Lebanon's Violence and the Politics of Expertise, and multiple He co-founded Floats, a floating laboratory for maritime research, and also is a founder of Decolonize Hellas Collective.

Welcome, Nicholas. Nicholas is about to talk to us with the cleverly titled A Match Made in Hellenism. the genocidal and suicidal embrace of Zionism.

Thank you, Nikolas.

Nikolas Kosmatopoulos

Thank you, Adonis. Thank you, everyone, for joining. I'm talking to you from Beirut.

It's really great to see faces and names whose work I've been reading and whose work I was very much inspired by. I want also to thank Will for organizing this. And of course, Vagelis there in the shadows for backing this initiative and for Despina also for joining us actually here, despite the summer debacle.

That's only for those who know and should what happens in Axos stays in Axos. This is where I end that prologue. The talk today was supposed to be indeed provocative.

The title, as Adonis said, as an effort and as a hope to to keep some of the audience awake after two fantastic presentations. I'm the third and the last and I knew that it's going to be very difficult and challenging actually to keep the attention high. So what I'm going to do today is to talk a little bit about the talk title, to the talk's title, and make sure that those of you who came for that won't leave disappointed.

But I also want to talk a bit, Hopefully half of my time is going to be about something

else, something that the talk doesn't really include, which is practically the resistances to this rather dark predicament that we face in our region. So I want to start with a paradox, and I imagine that this paradox was actually present in Despenas' talk. The image of the great Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou standing in Pireas and giving Yasser Arafat from the PLO a hero's welcome.

Full state honours for the leader of an anti-colonial liberation movement, which most of the Western world at that time still treated as a terrorist organization, the Palestine Liberation Organization. For a generation, at least, Greece was one of the most pro-Palestinian in Europe. And I think this is a paradox that many actually bring to the discussion today.

Seeing, for example, 44 years later, only a few days ago, another Greek Prime Minister, Kiriakos Mitsotakis, sitting down with Benjamin Netanyahu on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, shaking the hand of a man. The International Criminal Court has an outstanding arrest warrant for, on charges of war crimes. and crimes against humanity.

Netanyahu's reception in New York that week was so diplomatically toxic that dozens of delegations walked out of his address, especially countries of the global south, and he could find only a small handful of governments willing to meet with him at all. Most of them far protectorates far from Europe. If I'm not wrong, from Europe, only the Greek government actually accepted or at least rushed to meet him in the United Nations.

So how does the country go from giving Arafat a hero's welcome to being one of the only two governments left in Europe still willing to shake Netanyahu's hand? That is the paradox that we definitely need to explain or at least to take into consideration some of the changes that happened in this country the last two decades or so. I must say here that this is not really my own research.

This is practically a result, an outcome of my discussions with people in Greece and in Lebanon. I bring a perspective, I think, that sheds light on the Greek predicament from the point of view of Western Asia and hopefully some interesting ideas also and suggestions about where Greece actually belongs not only geographically, but also where does Greek studies, how do we actually study Greece and where do Greek studies actually belong as a geography, as a genealogy, as also as a border region as well in fantastic ways suggested before. So I think it's important here to mention some basic facts that in the aftermath, you know, in the hindsight, we can definitely consider, for example, as confirmed.

You know, there are, for example, definitely material interests here. There is an arms industry happening between the both countries and Cyprus. Also, there are energy agreements.

There's also tourism. Desvina talked about it. And real estate running into the billions.

I think this is also extremely important background to what's happening today to this realignment. Second, however, there is also geopolitical realignment. And I think this is quite important that goes far beyond the triangle, the triangle being Israel, Greece and Cyprus.

And this is something I think that we see it forming, taking place practically and taking shape from the seas around the whole world. Hormuz, around the Red Sea, all the way up to the Mediterranean, and further northern to the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea, there is a fault line of conflict. There's a fault line of war that certainly has drawn Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, and many other neighboring countries into it.

I think this is a fault line of war that should be in the background of our discussions and our analysis of how exactly this situation happened. I would say that this fault line of war has been in the making since at least 25 years. Those of you who are that old could remember the quote by Condoleezza Rice, back then the Secretary of State of the Bush administration, in the aftermath of the 2006 Israeli war on Lebanon, that these are the pangs of a new Middle East.

It seems that we're still in the same phase with different and much more painful pangs, which, however, don't necessarily stop and don't necessarily limit themselves to the Middle East. It seems that Greece and Cyprus should be considered, at least in this respect, part of the Middle East. And I think that also changes the way that we consider we look at Greece and how we study Greece in its environments and its region.

The third element here is definitely something that happened in 2010. Everybody studies Greece or lived in Greece or knows Greece, knows that very well. It is practically the loss of sovereignty during the crisis, the debt crisis, which left Greek elites looking for allies that could practically lift their shattered image, self-image in the region.

I believe that one cannot explain today's embracement with Zionism without understanding what happened in these times. It is a given historical fact that in 2010, when the IMF deal was signed in Greece in April 2010, amidst huge demonstrations and the popular resistance in the streets and the society, at large, only a few months later, we had for the first time in the Greek history the visit of an Israeli Prime Minister, not other than Benjamin Netanyahu, signing a series of agreements, far-reaching agreements, many of them including military and economic agreements that went all the way until today. However, in that part of my talk, I think I would like actually to take into account an excellent recent article by political scientist in the Journal of Palestine studies in which practically he makes the argument that today what's happening in Greece, you know, the

main approach by Greek elites and the so-called, you know, the consensus among them is replacement, replacement of a swapping of one enemy for another.

So Samaras actually argues that in the Greek far right, at least imagination, there has been a swapping. The Jew has been practically replaced by the Muslim as the object of nationalist paranoia and hatred. Despite the fact that Samaras makes some really good arguments in this article, I would say that this is a problematic thesis and it's actually obscures the fact that the Muslim is the fact that of the ideas of the nation and how the nation was constituted during the Greek War of Independence and later on.

Here I lean on a wonderful and disturbing recent history by Yanni Koçonis, for example, of the Greek Revolution. Koçonis shows that the Greek War of Independence did not constitute only a political rapture. There was also a decade-long process of demographic and religious cleansing of Muslims and Jews, starting from the and moving onward and northwards to the new Greece.

So when Greek elites today opt for Zionism, they are not really inventing an enemy. I think they are in fact retrieving, reifying, remembering one. Yet in a vastly different way, Zionism offers a novel framing that includes civilizational, geographical, geopolitical expansion, through which a much older grammar of exclusion and enmity gets to speak fluently in the idiom of the present.

These are, I think, basic ideas that I would like to put forward there. And these ideas have culminated, have been brewing for a while. Again, some of them are ideas, imaginaries, as Despina suggested.

Some others are extremely material interests like profits and shared investments through the war economy. It's important here to mention how Israeli arms contract are run nowadays into the billions. Training center built with Elbit systems and air defense program worth \$36 billion running through 2036.

the so-called Achilles Shield deal signed during the genocide actually as per this year a few weeks ago. These are material interests that need to be taken into consideration and we cannot really have a full picture of the embrace of Israel by Greek elites and by Greek economic interest without having the war economy in mind. There is an energy of course imaginary here the so-called 3+1 energy architecture linking Greece, Israel, Cyprus and US as an overlord, engineered in no small part by the same American diplomat actually who helped manage the 2014 Ukraine crisis.

This is an interesting connection between Greece and Ukraine. The American diplomat who practically managed poor America, for the US, the situation in 2014, the so-called Euromaidan, those of you who follow the developments know that this was the

beginning practically of the war in Ukraine, then moved to Greece to seal the fate of the alliance between Greece and Israel. Now, that alliance has taken also a regional imaginary, which is important.

It's called, you know, the Euro, sorry, the East Med imaginary. This is the understanding of the Mediterranean, the Eastern Mediterranean as a geography of investments, energy investments, extractivism and exclusionism, especially excluding the nations, the states, the societies and the countries that are surrounding this pipeline. The pipeline was supposed to be actually running from Israel through Cyprus and Greece all the way to Europe.

And of course, given today that the current wars that happen around us have definitely an energy accent. Much of that is, of course, about controlling energy routes and channels. It is definitely important to keep this in mind as the background of how today these articulations of energy alignments have been happening.

You know, that's practically how what this new regional imaginary has taken the minds to use Despina's expression has been at the center or has been, you know, fluttering the minds and the hearts of many Greeks. The idea of alliance with Israel will give them maybe some sort of lost pride also for the most part of the world. of lost advantage vis-a-vis Turkey, even going back to settling some scores from the past, like 100 years ago.

If you read some of the online commentary by far-right proponents of this alliance, many of them are preparing to take back Constantinople with the Israeli help. Apart from the fact, of course, that these ideas are completely out of touch with reality, with the geopolitical reality, it's interesting, however, to see how easy it is to flare up this Greek erendetist hopes for quasi Hellenic Empire in the hills of the Ottoman collapse. But that's a story that has been, of course, corroborated. You know, this imaginary has been corroborated with many different kinds of materials.

You know, as I said, energy agreements, military, industry, also fears and and hopes even vis-a-vis the enemy, which is again, once again, portrayed Turkey, which is again, once again, portrayed as an enemy. But it also mainly gives, you know, projects and a geographical imaginary about the East Mediterranean as, you know, an area and kind of a geographic area, which is under the domination of the Israeli-Greek-Cypriot alliance, with of course the blessing of the US and the West in general. However, I would like to say, this is practically the second part of my talk, which I'm not going to go into much detail, but I just have to say that this has been the actual research I'm doing, and this is why I am hesitant in presenting in full, because it's still a work in progress.

What I'm trying actually to say here is that there has been an obscured This geographical imaginary of the eastern Mediterranean, an extractivist and exclusionist

imaginary obscures the histories and the connections and the resistances that have been ongoing for at least 50 years in the region. And these resistances, I think, are worth putting forward, especially in this discussion today, where much of our interventions are about deconstructing a rather grim situation coming all the way from Homer to today's NATO.

So it's not from Plato to NATO, but from Homer to NATO, to paraphrase a very well-known quote in political theory that describes actually the canon. Today, I think what we're faced with is a new imaginary that practically threatens to cover up and also to silence the resistances against the plans and the machinations of current imperial designs. This resistance is also articulated. The resistance is articulated in many different places and through many different practices.

I am looking at the maritime, the sea-related practices, and how they have been articulating. They can articulate, they can help us actually see another kind of geography, a geography that doesn't necessarily divide, that doesn't necessarily promise a new round of war, but actually introduces different understanding of the region as a region that can be perceived as an anti-colonial iteration of other maritime regions like the Caribbean, for example, the Pacific and the Oceania. So in that regard, I would suggest actually also an inversion of the name, the inversion of the name of the of Eastern Mediterranean.

Hence, also here in our region, in our new lab that Adonis talked about, we use the, quote, Mediterranean East instead of Eastern Mediterranean. And this move has been very much inspired by an oceanic anthropologist, Epele Hawfa, and his counter-cartography of Oceania. Hawfa moves from the imperial view of Oceania as islands in a far as tiny isolated dots confined by boundaries drawn by continental Europeans and Americans to the view carried by his ancestors who had lived in the Pacific for over 2,000 years and understood their world as a sea of islands.

And this is practically the place and the home of the people from the sea. So this inversion of the Eastern Mediterranean, which is practically strategic studies and extractivism, the Mediterranean East, I think performs Haifa's first move. It reads the region as a periphery of coastal dots on the edge of European imperial and Gulf.

Interior politics integrated into a block through military industries, EEZ concessions, you know, the the continental zone concessions and civilizational alignments, like Despin also suggested and showed. To speak, however, of a Mediterranean East, following how far a second move is to read the same waters from the standpoint of the people who inhabit them as a sea of ports, connected ports, and insurgent ships. And there are multiple cases.

I'm actually collecting, as we speak, cases of insurgent ships that connect Palestine, Greece and Cyprus, all the way coming back to practically going back to the 1945 refugees, the refugees that left Greek islands to Gaza. And for those of you who have not read the

recent book by Yael Weizmann, *Ungrounding*, one of the interesting points he makes is that Nusirat, very well known for the bad reasons, for the wrong reasons, The refugee camp in Gaza was practically established to host Greeks and Yugoslavs fleeing Nazi invasion in Greece. This is the beginning of a series of insurgent ships that I'm looking at.

Of course, the ships that brought Arafat and the PLO to Greece in 1982 are part of it. The ships practically that broke the embargo in Gaza in 2008 and those again who tried in 2010 are part of this. The research practically tries to tell a story of the sea as a sea of resistance with its practices, some recurrent practices and the biographies of its people.

Many of them are, in fact, mixed biographies, biographies that extend Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Egypt, of course, and Palestine. I'm going to stop here without actually going further into the the nitty-gritty of my research. I just want to make sure that part of this conversation should be also the resistances to what we see today.

There's a lot happening in this region, in this place where I am here. There's a lot also of demonization of resistance. I think this is also important to talk about.

There's a lot of punishing of even those who speak of the resistance today, resistances that are actually in plural. We academics, we have a duty to speak up and to speak actually against demonization of resistances. This is actually the only way that we can also survive in academia, you know, having our own issues that we face.

So demonization of resistance is practically something that turns even against us, against our own survival and the survival of our societies. I added this part for the resistance in the end of the, you know, actually a few hours before my presentation. I had another presentation that I decided to ditch, another part of the presentation that I decided to ditch, because somehow it all seemed to me pretty grim, and I didn't want to end on that note.

I do believe that there is hope, there's light at the end of the tunnel, and sometimes this light might be coming, might be coming, is an even from the other side of the sea or the ocean. Thank you so much.

Andonis Piperoglou

Thank you so much, Nicholas. Thank you. That's been a thank you. Will folks, I welcome you to ask questions in the chat and I'll field them as they come.

I'm just going to try for the moment as questions come in and I'll keep an eye out. But there is kind of I'm going to return, if you will, to our title. here, right? Colonial legacies.

We've certainly heard a range of colonial legacies tonight. Oh, my night here in Australia. Your morning in the US and what time is it over there, Nicholas, in Beirut.

A range of different legacies. We're thinking then also with a sense of decolonial possibilities, prospects, futures, right? And through that, I think it's very apt then, as Nicholas has said, to then take seriously modes of resistance.

So one of the ways that we've just heard that then is this framing of the sort of region that we see ourselves in within the context of modern Greek studies. And Nicholas, I think, importantly forced us to think about, well, what does this all mean within the study of Greece or ideas of Greece? or the intersection of ideas of Greece with other ideas and imaginaries like say a judo Christianity right or how then language as will has shown us intersects with then claiming space over land right I'm going to just throw in a three perspectives here just from my little corner here in Australia and that is a couple of things that the popped out as I was thinking hearing you all speak.

One is then to say that this idea of a judo-christianity Despina certainly then speaks to a broader, if you will, sort of settler-colonial world. An English-speaking world, particularly, I would say. But not only.

So, there are ways to think about the global reach of that kind of recalibration of sort of civilizational Bineries. But the other one, as I was hearing, and I'm very interested in this region, if you will, of a kind of Eastern Mediterranean or Mediterranean East, for the purest fact that, well not pure fact, for one fact, is that so many of, say, the Greek diaspora that exists in Australia went through Port Said, right? their journeys then onwards to encountering different types of colonial resistance here in Australia.

Right. Was facilitated by the roots of empire that have permeated across these regions and very much we're living in the sort of hangover of that today. And also the kind of recreation new colonial forms.

I guess what I'm trying to. If we think with Nicholas's point here about modes of resistance, is there ways that we can think about comparative ways of thinking about this region in comparative context? You pointed us to the Pacific, for example, Nicholas.

What other border regimes will, for example, have informed your thinking? Right? Another point then I'll just kind of end on here is then to say There is immense need for historical redress and repair and me as the kind of historian among the group here I just want to kind of put a note in that you all spoke in very you know historical sociology will with your philology right?

that that there is an immense tension I think and I think a human tension and I will then say An issue then on a human spectrum that is not necessarily and I should make the point of kind of locked into a politics of a left and a right but there's something kind of

interesting in how this region continues to persist in this division of sort of an east and a west and a barbarism, if you will, with this kind of notion on one sense of the human spectrum of preserving, conserving, maintaining, keeping something, whether it's your religious inheritance, identity, land, culture, civilization, and then the reality of progress and change through, I would say, the everyday human movement of exchange and encounter. So it seems to me that this region of which we're hovering around within the context of modern Greece has continually popped up this tension within ourselves, our families, the street, the city, between this desire to conserve, this sort of need for preservation, and this. This is a sort of reality of change. And how do we then, through our work, deal with these translations, negotiations and adaptations?

We've sort of just drawing on Despina and Nicholas's framings, this sort of like re-evaluation is taken. Holding on to something, but remaking it at the same time. Am I making sense, folks?

I invite anyone of you to respond.

Despina Lalaki

Was this last part, I don't need like a question?

Andonis Piperoglou

I could ask a direct question. Yeah. In the sense then that my statement there is to say that there seems to be the aspects of a continuity of these divisions these persistent binaries these these kind of like quite absurdist if you will senses of paradoxes of civilizational decline and civilizational superiorities erasures right recreating within the context of the shifting dynamics of the region so I guess I have direct question for Nicola in the sense of where can you think about comparative regions in the world? And then the same context, you know, like Judo-Christianity, as a fairly recent formation, you're saying, are there other examples, right, that you can kind of identify?

Despina Lalaki

Yes. Well, without having done much research on that, or given it that much thought, and drawing a little bit from what both Will also said and Nicholas, these categories of the ultimate other, as perceived from the side of the Hellenic or the side of the Greek, actually, I noticed there is sort of like a shift, like traditionally in historically, again, not that going not very far back, like the Ottoman Turk, and what that meant in the context of like national identities. I think that it has been undergoing like a considerable shift, and replaced with imported ideas of like, of what we describe as Islamophobia.

So I feel like this carries sort of like traces of like American, European, like Western engagements with historical engagements with Islam. So I find this interesting there. One can look more closely in it and of course has to do with like refugee movements and sort of

like a replacement there, like a new civilizational narrative, basically.

So I don't know if that's the you know, you know, direction you are going, like whether, you know, we're seeing the making new civilizational narratives or new like cultural categories emerging. But I think this is a recurrent thing. I mean, it is often like in dialogue or reflection of like with ongoing or changing geopolitical, social, economic, like circumstances.

On top of my head, I can't think of another one, at least in the region, but yeah, basically. Nikolas.

Nikolas Kosmatopoulos

Thank you, Adonis. Well, this is a very interesting question, and I'm afraid I don't have an interesting answer. But it can be answered at least at that stage initially from the point of view of the frame that you want to take. For example, what I tried to suggest before is that this declaration, the geopolitical declaration of the new Middle East included also Greece.

And what that means, what does that mean for the way we're going to do this? We study Greece, you know, and where the way we study Middle East, you know, where does Middle East begin and where does Greece end and vice versa. So that's interesting because, you know, a tenet, very much a kind of a common understanding of the Cold War divisions, right? This has been around for some time now that flew over, you know, practically and very much framed the disciplinary division of area studies.

That has been a discussion back then. So the Cold War practically framed the area studies fields. Now that we see another kind of war, not so cold anymore, pretty warm, pretty hot in some places, actually churning in some others, and maybe even growing war.

I'm confident that we practically experienced an imperial war against is the global south, if you ask me. I mean, this is what we're actually experiencing now, you know, against the prospect of the rising global south, broadly defined and don't, you know, interrogate me about the use of the term. The global south is not necessarily only geographically understood, but it is telling that we have actually a fault line that cuts through, you know, Eurasia, right, from Hormuz and the Red Sea all the way up to the Baltic. I don't think it's a coincidence, and I think this is a new geography that we have to deal with.

That's one. A geopolitical, I think, realignment is very important. And we should definitely take it in consideration in anything we do and everything we analyze today.

The things we analyze, either even the way that the elites are moving and the people also are thinking about the societies are thinking of themselves and of the futures. In my own

research now, I try to, of course, as you noticed, suggest that the Caribbean is a very interesting the Mediterranean, at least parts of the Mediterranean. The Caribbean has been a region that has been rethought through colonial encounters and colonial mobilities.

Not so much, I think, the Mediterranean, because, of course, has been to a great extent, I think, in the Mediterranean, the literature has been divided between the North and the North. and the South, there are other frames, other privileged ways of theorization. Of course, Islam versus non-Islam, North and South.

Anthropology has also done its framing work there, which is also, I think, important. But now that we see that the Mediterranean has definitely turned into a border region by all means, that also, as Despinel suggested, is certainly, you know, makes sense to bring each other, to bring these regions closer to each other. And a third region, I think I would be interested in a third comparison, if you wish, regional comparison coming closer to where you are.

And it has to do also with, you know, what's happening in the region in general. And I think this is certainly a way to understand historically and geographically what's happening in the region is certainly the comparison with Vietnam. Which you know you can do with it whatever you want. As a historian you can freak out.

As a geographer you can even shut me down. But what I'm trying to say here is that you know we are I think my sense is that we're experiencing a Vietnam like proportions of imperial attack and even perhaps debacle and defeat. What does that actually mean to our categories of thought, to our categories of analysis, to our funding structures?

I don't know. It's definitely ongoing and it's going to have tremendous consequences on all of that and even more.

Andonis Piperoglou

We've got a few questions, but Will, I do want to give you the option here to just share perhaps where else the notions of border space, border worlds, if you will, intersections in other regions of the world or literatures that have spoken to you within within your dead and study of of this of the space that we're speaking out today before you get there though will i just will i'll just i'll just get to the two questions just so you can all have a think in the meantime the one is about what's the role of the church in the greece greek israel relationship particularly with if we're considering the treatment of orthodox Palestinians at the hands of Israel and then also there's a question here about name I guess Greece and the selective optional use of Hellas carry in themselves this is some Vasily carry in themselves the Western Imperial epistemic imprint on the non-sovereign existence of the country. So is the construction of trans-historical genealogies evoking Greeks? Are your interventions exempt from this hegemonic entitlement? So Will, to you first.

Will Stroebe

Thank you, Andonis. Yeah, I would say that my research, part of which you saw today, but the large portion that deals with border studies you didn't see today, is in close dialogue with a lot of anthropological work that's coming out in the 2010s. I would say most notably Borderless Method, which views the border as a borderscape, as a geography, not just a line for economic extraction and precaritization, which coexists along with other forms of border making, such as like militarized borders or wartime borders. But the notion of the borderscape and the borders as a site of precaritization is definitely at play in the eastern Mediterranean. It's been at play since at least 2014, if not sooner and earlier.

And it's also at play, as Jason DeLeon has shown, in the U.S.-Mexico border. These are spaces and geographies that are turned into sites of where the ecology is weaponized and the passage across borders is turned into a space of precaritization. Documentation is withheld or restricted such that access to the labor market is precaritized, which makes it harder for undocumented workers to gain access to protections from the state, to form or engage in unionization practices to make demands of their employers.

And that all precaritizes and pulls down the value of labor. And so that idea of the border as a space of extracting value and pulling down value by separating out people, picking them apart, that's happening all across the globe. And it's part of a larger kind of border process, another wing of which would be, you know, Dispossession, settler colonialism, or sites of transit, as Nicholas was talking about, where the extraction has to go through places to get to other places.

So all these different ways of passing through borders, I think, are interconnected, and they're all about extracting value or extracting land in certain situations. And my research tries to approach that border space as a site of extraction. and precaritization on the level of what I do, which is textual studies and literary history and thinking about the ways that storytellers and the stories we tell have also been precaritized and extracted and picked apart to construct these things, these notions of quote-unquote Hellenism or modern Greece or Turkey or Greek Orthodoxy or Islam.

And I'm really interested in the ways that the border functions to do all of these things on so many different levels, right? In philology, in sociology, in anthropology, in political sciences, and the ways that it functions in all these different domains. And one other thing before I pass the mic off to Despina and Nikolas, one other through line that I'm noticing in all three talks is the and materiality, right?

So with Despina, it takes shape, for example, in this museum as a site of discourse becoming material, as a space where different actors are trying to construct a fortress that can then create a material network for the discourse that she's examining. For Nicolas, on

the other side of the coin, the insurgent ships, right? There's a whole infrastructure on, and some of Nicolas's published work has examined this as well, not just on the ships, but in ports and in the workers who are organizing at the ports to support particular insurgencies or to obstruct and stop particular colonial or imperial transfers.

And so I think, and in my case, the infrastructure is the idea of the textual apparatus as a physical object and the university and academic institutions that constructed it. through state funding through the gradual, I think, organization of the modern university in the 19th and the 20th century. So in all three presentations, what I'm seeing as a through line is this idea of infrastructure as a way to examine larger discursive imperial and colonial practices.

Despina Lalaki

I haven't really been looking at that direction, but I can offer sort of like an, and I don't know that much about the subject. I can offer sort of like an anecdote here, however, which might be a good way to start the discussion or think about it. I was at the pilgrimage trip, like I think back in 2019, like with the Piraiki Ecclesia.

by the way, like accompanying my mother, it was like a lifetime dream of like, you know. With Piraiki Ecclesia, by the way, broadcast internationally online, there were people from Australia, were people from Canada at that trip. So it was a great experience from many different directions for many reasons, but what stood out, it was basically what the tour guide was shared with us. And the first information she shared was that the Greek church is the second largest land owner in Israel after the state of Israel itself. So in a sense, it's like a second in line occupier of the land.

On the other side, I mean, alongside many other completely unprovoked information that they were like, was very, very clear that the guide was basically reproducing a narrative. I felt like she was reading from a pamphlet that some agency, like governmental agency, had delivered to her. On the other side, of course, we see with the recent developments that sort of like Greek orthodoxy and like the church itself, probably, is under attack from, you know, the regime of occupation.

So I would be very interested myself in reading a more comprehensive history of that relationship. And if anyone has anything to share in that direction, I would be very, very interested.

Andonis Piperoglou

Nicholas, do you want to jump in? And then we have time, I think, for just one more question.

Nikolas Kosmatopoulos

Well, I forgot to advertise our special issue here. I think it might be a good way to

jump in. because we've been working on it for some time now.

It came out, the call came out at the beginning of the realization of this close alliance between Israel, Greece and Cyprus, which we call, of course, the white triangle, but it's not just white. It can also be the black triangle, given, for example, the pipeline dream. And it can also have different kind of colors. It's not really where So we're trying to take as many perspectives as we can. And we have, as far as I remember, also an article on the Greek church by a historian on this special issue. And I think this is important to say that this special issue will come out in the Middle East Journal, Middle East Studies Journal, so the Middle East Critique.

Again, going back to the suggestion that we should start looking at Greece from the point of view of Western Asia more and more. And I think that would be a refreshing view. I mean, we're not going to be alone in this. There are many others, not necessarily academics who already been doing that, investing and doing many other things in this country. But I'm saying we are late to the game, but better late than never.

What Will said about infrastructures, I would agree. I would actually even expand. If Will allows me to expand the notion to materialities in general, I think it's important.

Imaginaries are important. Disciplines are important. But I think, you know, we should also ground this discussion to materialities on the ground and how, you know, material is interest and historical material analysis also help us connect these dots that have been presented today.

And there are many more actually out there to connect.

Andonis Piperoglou

If I could just share that one example of a materiality that's come across my world of late is so and connecting then to this tourism within the region which is profound in terms of the extraction and the economies at play it's not uncommon for pilgrims to visit the holy land and get it get it get it across which has a pearl shell on it Maybe if you follow what I do you know what I mean yeah a Palestinian artist here in Australia is fairly certain that he can track the exchange of Palestinian networks from northern Australia in which the pearling industry was strong and in which Greek divers played a significant role in in in this extractive enterprise and use their networks through Malaya and onwards through the roots of empire back to Palestine to then be solved. Right. As as as as where's for people to to take home with them.

Right. As an object of visiting and accessing these lands, you know, feeling the spiritual insignificance of them. I share this story as a way then of saying there are many countering's that are at play in these very messy but very alive regimes of borders but also of

encounter and so these these ships you know offer us say Nicholas other types of possibilities within a very sort of volatile and difficult kind of modes of exchange and the various nodes by which Our cultures interact and find commonality The last question here, which would perhaps we we've all touched on but we could probably wrap up with a sentence here because it sort of sits within then I think all of our energies It's it's asking us to kind of how is it possible right?

this kind of persistent perhaps confrontational duality between this sense of a sort of an ancient Greek Orthodox neo neo logism alongside the kind of opposite oppositional sense of an Ottoman Muslim other right an Eastern West maybe you know that modernity and barbarity civility and barbarity We're approaching ways of deconstructing. But if we could just kind of wrap up with a sense of your take then on a kind of decolonial prospects for studying both modern Greece and the region at large. What kind of excites you as the possibilities going forward?

Maybe excites you.

Will Stroebe

I can start. I think Nicolas' idea of Mediterranean East is a great framework to begin to think through this. Obviously, it needs work to elaborate how it is not extractive in its own nature. As you know, Nicolas was just talking about certain elites of the Greek state who are making investments in the East.

That could also be understood as a Mediterranean East of a more sinister nature. But I really like the idea of reframing our area of study as a kind of a network of solidarities and affinities of resistance to what I think Nicholas aptly called a kind of war on the global South. What my own work does, I think, is to always insist on granularity and specificity.

My book doesn't bear the word Greek or Greece or Turkey or Turkish in the title, and I try not to use those terms. I refer to specific localized communities and storytellers. For example, Greek-speaking Sunni Muslims of Yanina or Turkish speaking Greek Orthodox Christians of Cappadocia.

And I try not to expand beyond the granular so as to hold on to that specificity and those locations, which many of which have been erased and are sites of deracination and cultural genocide. And I think those larger terms, whether they whether they we mean to or not, participating in those practices of deracination when we use them.

Andonis Piperoglou

Nikolas and then Despina to wrap us up.

Nikolas Kosmatopoulos

Well, that's quite a daunting task. Exactly because, you know, this presentation today just proved how far reaching these borders are. You know, I mean, we took us all the way back to Homer and Espinata, the Cold War.

You know, these are not easily deconstructed. I mean, we might be happy with ourselves deconstructing here, but it doesn't really matter as long as society practically follows them. So, you know, we can pat ourselves on the soldier, but it doesn't mean that we did much.

I'm not underestimating what we do, but I'm saying these are today's practical categories, unfortunately, are extremely and these categorizations. And you see how easily many of the Greek far-right jumped on the Zionist bandwagon. And I think this tells a lot how deep Islamophobia goes, how deep also the hate for Islam, the hate for the Turk, the hate for the other has been perpetrated in this country and in the region.

And living in a country where I see how the hate actually has been, again, flaming up, you know, flared up by internal and external powers, I think it's very important to have the granular on one hand, but also the geopolitical on the other hand. I don't think that they anyway that they are contrasting, they are complementary. And if we don't think also in terms of serious interventions, in the political space outside there, I think we're going to be facing very, very nasty surprises, if not already. So, you know, decolonize, *helas*, was supposed to be one such intervention to the open public, you know, to the publics of the region, but it seems that, as Will suggested, and thank you, Will, for accepting my suggestion, actually, suggestion of suggestion, is to, we need practically to decolonize of the Mediterranean East, We need a bigger space where we can come to conversation with communities and scholars and societies of the region.

Because the danger is, of course, that we create another echo chamber within the Greek studies and the Greek discussion again. Even decolonized, but still Greek. So I think these connections are important.

Establishing these networks are extremely, I think, crucial because, you know, also, the way that these networks have been, again, destroyed. Nowadays, it's extremely difficult to bring Palestinians to speak in Greek spaces. And if they speak in Greek spaces, they speak only at the image of the victim, right? I mean, they cannot really speak as resistant actors, as insurgent actors, as actors who push back against actually how the history has been told and how they live their experience.

And the crazy thing that happens is that, you know, by evacuating Palestinian resistance, right, from our panels, and by bringing in, you know, the necessary both-sidism of the Israeli anti-Zionist, eventually the Israelis actually end up occupying the resistance label too, you know, which is great. I mean, you know, the colonial Zionism steals the land.

and the anti-Colonial, anti-Isaranist Jews still is the resistance.

So it's all for them, you know, no matter what they do, they end up winning. No, I'm saying these are actually important, you know, dynamics that should be discussed and somehow addressed in our public spaces. Thanks.

I hope I didn't. Thank you.

Andonis Piperoglou
And Despina.

Despina Lalaki

Yes, like just to pick up from where like Nikola's left. I don't really mind like the, I don't know Jews or like Israelis like joining the resistance actually.

Nikolas Kosmatopoulos

And I don't think in those... I didn't say that I mind that. I said that eventually because of the silence of resistance, it turns out that they monopolize it. That's what I mean that they should have.

Despina Lalaki

Evidence of that, what this can be as a success story, let's say, I would like to actually end with a more positive note. Like I would say, The challenge here, and I think we're all in this business here, is to shake up and destabilize this, what from the outset appear as very established and concrete and resistant identities. I mean, I often invite my students to sort of go back a generation or two and consider the fact that probably their parents or grandparents were speaking a different language or even practice different religion or even look different.

And I think there is, despite the resistance and despite like, yes, the rise of what we see like xenophobia all around the place, the rise of fascism again and like racism and all that stuff. The recent, to draw like from my experience here, like in New York, the recent like in US in general uprisings we see within the universities and the universities as sites of resistance. of the younger Jewish students who are part of that resistance, probably we are doing something good in our classes.

And in our publications, either addressed to the peers or general public, it appears like that the resistance is paying off. and the efforts like the other side is putting in actually like changing people's hearts and minds. I think we can claim some victories in that direction.

So which I think like can be also encouraging in terms of like continue doing what

we're doing.

Andonis Piperoglou

Thank you. Thanks, Despina. Well, on that positive note of thinking about how it's possible from the academy to think more constructively about how, if you will, togetherness in difference.

I just remind everyone that you've been listening to the second webinar of the Transnational Studies Committee of the Modern Greek Studies Association which in a few weeks time will be hosting its biannual symposium in Chicago at the University of Illinois. Thank you for being with us and please thank Despina Lalaki who's been speaking from New York, Will Stroebel who's been speaking from Michigan and Nicholas from Lebanon. And I'm Andonis Piperoglu from Melbourne.