

# Greek Foreign Policy at the Turn of the Millennium

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## Introduction

A revolution took place in Greek Foreign Policy in 1981 when Greece joined the EU (then called the EEC). It was in that year that Greece had to depart from her egocentric foreign policy and was obliged to formulate, within European Political Cooperation (EPC), policies on Asia, Africa, South America. Whenever the EU was to make a policy statement or issue a declaration, for example decisions on the situation in El Salvador, Namibia and Laos, Greece had to participate in the formulation of such a policy by taking a position during the drafting exercises. We had to explain to our Ministers, the national considerations behind an EU position which meant that we had to study and scrutinize the internal situation in El Salvador, Namibia or Laos. The same applied to the preparation of the EU speech at the annual General Assembly. It was at this point that Greece started to learn in detail about the domestic problems of the rest of the world and became involved in solving them.

This is simply the general background to the discussion at hand on bilateral relations between Greece and Canada. The article will also describe Greece's present foreign policy.

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## Greece and Canada

The relations between Greece and Canada are based on a series of bilateral agreements covering almost all fields of cooperation. High level bilateral contracts are frequent and constructive. Last year's official visit of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Constantinos Stephanopoulos, created a stimulus that strengthened bilateral cooperation even more. This year the Greek embassy and community had the visit of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grigoris Niotis, who had very useful and constructive discussions with Minister Manley, who received an official invitation from George Papandreou to visit Greece.

Greek-Canadian cooperation in the area of defense has also been excellent. In April, Minister Eggleton had made an official visit to Minister Tsochatzopoulos in Athens, during which questions of military procurements were discussed, as well as the exchanges in this field. On the basis of my experience, this area is currently the most active at the moment, since almost every month military delegations from both sides and from all levels visit.

With Canada, we have an ongoing dialogue in Ottawa, Athens and in international *fora* where the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs usually hold brief bilateral meetings and discuss, exchanging information on all issues of mutual concern and more precisely the evolving situation in the Balkans, Middle East, Turkey, and Cyprus. We are also closely cooperating with Canada in some of the initiatives concerning human security. George Papandreou, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is a member of the Advisory Board of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty that met in May 2001 in Jordan. Overall, the state of our bilateral political relations is more than satisfactory.

Another area of great importance in the field of bilateral cooperation is trade relations between Greece and Canada. These relations are governed by the rules set in the several agreements that have been signed between the EU and Canada which are the following:

- Framework Agreement for Commercial and Economic Cooperation (1976), which created the Joint Cooperation Committee that meets on the second semester of each year to overview the economic -commercial relations between the EU and Canada. This agreement provides for closer business and commercial links, encouraging exchanges and joint undertakings between companies and industries from both sides. Under this agreement the cooperation and consultation between EU and Canada in a number of fields such as environment, telecommunications and the information society were developed. The agreement facilitates the efforts to manage and resolve trade and investment disputes and encourages joint contributions to multilateral trade liberalization.
- Transatlantic Declaration on EU-Canada relations (1990), which sets out the institutional framework that forms the basis for the Summit meetings (two times per year) and the Ministerial meetings (two times per year)
- Joint Political Declaration on EU-Canada relations and Joint EU-Canada Action Plan (1996)

Other sectoral agreements between EU and Canada complete the legal framework which has also full validity for Greece:

- Agreement on Research in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (1959) and Agreement on Cooperation in Nuclear Research (1998)
- Agreement on Trade in Alcoholic Beverages (1989). In September 2000 the two sides decided to start new negotiations in order to reach a new agreement on wines and spirits
- Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation (1995, expanded in 1998)
- Agreement on Education and Training (1996)
- Customs Cooperation Agreement (1997), which provides the basis for closer cooperation of EU and Canadian Customs administrators to combat fraud and protect and promote legitimate trade

- Mutual Recognition Agreement (1998), which facilitates trade between EU and Canada by allowing each side to certify the conformity of the products with the standards required by the other
- Veterinary Agreement (1998), which facilitates bilateral trade in live animals and animal products and sets the framework for further simplification of trading conditions through recognition of equivalence of sanitary measures applied by the EU and Canada
- Competition Agreement (1999), which entered into force upon signing provides the means for a more effective application of EU and Canadian competition rules in cases of common interest

Regular meetings take place between the European Commission and Canadian officials in various frameworks such as:

- The Joint Science and Technology Cooperation Committee
- The Joint Customs Cooperation Committee
- The Joint Management Committee under the Veterinary Agreement
- The EU-Canada Working Group on Satellite Navigation
- The High Level Consultations on the Environment
- The High Level Consultations on Fisheries
- The Bilateral Biotechnology dialogue
- The Health and Consumer Dialogue

In June 1999 the Canada Europe Round Table for Business (CERT) was formally launched. The European and Canadian Businessmen participating have already submitted recommendations for the improvement of the bilateral trade relationship and the multilateral WTO framework.

Greek exports to Canada last year were 103.43 million Canadian dollars (an increase of 6.9% over 1999) while Canadian exports to Greece amounted to 155.53 million Canadian dollars (a decrease of 21.6%). Both sides are dissatisfied with these figures, and efforts are being made to try to increase them. In mid-June 2001, the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs of Canada and the Greek Embassy are organizing a round table in Ottawa to examine ways and means of increasing this cooperation. It is within this framework that Deputy Minister of Communications Mr. Voulgaris visited Canada in March and had contacts with the Canadian high-tech community.

The main products that Greece exported to Canada in the year 2000 were bentonite, canned peaches, aluminum plates, agricultural products like olives, olive oil, cheese, wine, ammonium and nitrate. The main Canadian products exported to Greece were fire-fighting hydroplanes, newsprint paper, wood pulp, and motor vehicles. Trade between the two countries in the last few years has been in Canada's favour, but this trade surplus is partly compensated by the income from Canadian tourists visiting Greece and by the remittances of Canadian citizens of Greek descent.

Greece's investments in Canada increased last year. It has been a few years since the National Bank of Greece and NEOSET, a Greek Company that manufactures ready-to-assemble furniture, were in Canada as investors. Since last December OPTIMUM, a Greek company that produces software has created a subsidiary in Canada called Veltion Inc., while Petzetakis is cooperating with Imperial Plastics Inc. for the joint production of flexible pipes for the Canadian, US and Latin American markets. These last two investments constitute positive developments in our common objective of increasing bilateral economic cooperation.

There are about seven Canadian companies that have invested in Greece. These are National Networks, McCain's whose famous french fries account for 60% of the local market, SNC Lavalin, Bombardier (Thessaloniki Metro), the Bank of Nova Scotia, TVX Gold Inc. and Delcan that in partnership with the Dutch DHV has been awarded the planning for the Egnatia Road in Northern Greece.

There are two basic reasons for the low level of economic cooperation with Greece. One is the structure of Canadian commerce that is orientated towards the US. Eighty-six percent of total Canadian

exports went to the US while only 5% went to the EU. Canadian imports from the US were 74% of the total imports while imports from the EU were only 9%. The other reason concerns Greece and Greek business people who prefer to invest, import and export to neighbouring and the other EU countries. In spite of these reasons, I do believe that it is possible to see a reasonable further increase in our bilateral economic relations with Canada.

The role of the Canadians of Greek descent is a very important component of Greece's bilateral relations with Canada. With their vote, they contribute to the election in federal and provincial parliaments of many members of parliament who may also participate in the Federal Government. They are highly respected by the Canadian Government. At this moment, there are actually three Canadians of Greek descent in the Federal and one in the Provincial Parliament of Quebec. Since the Canadians of Greek descent are very capable, well educated, clever and talented, I strongly encourage them, particularly the younger generation, to participate actively in Canadian politics, so that they may contribute to making Canada even greater than it is today and to face the problems of the future effectively.

The Canadians of Greek descent also play an important role in promoting the bilateral economic relations between the two countries, since many are involved in trade with Greece and send remittances to their country of origin.

Hellenic Studies Programs and Chairs in Canadian universities also play an important role in promoting Greek civilization in Canada and allowing many Canadians to acquire knowledge of Ancient and Modern Greek civilization. The Chair of Hellenic Studies at Simon Fraser University is functioning in a satisfactory way. In the next academic year, the Papachristidis Chair in Modern Greek and Greek-Canadian Studies, the Inter-University Centre of Modern Greek Studies at the University of Montreal recently started operating. Hopefully, we shall soon have another chair at York University while the Centre of Hellenic Studies of the University of Manitoba and the Centre of Hellenic Studies and Research Canada-KEEK are also very active.

## Greece and the World

Leaving aside the bilateral relations between Greece and Canada, allow me to develop Greece's foreign policy with emphasis on the EU and the Balkans.

Greece's foreign policy objective is clear: to carry forward fundamental, dynamic initiatives in order to establish a framework of principles and rules, of justice and democracy, which will take effect throughout our region. Greece is, and will continue to be, a model of democracy, stability and cooperation for the region. Greece's regional policy is, in a sense, our answer to the new challenges of globalization.

In recent years, Greece has undergone a continual process of development. Extensive modernization programs and intensive institutional reforms have generated a new self-confidence among the Greek people. At the same time, Greece has gained a new credibility on the world stage.

Greece's vibrant economy has been brought to convergence with the European Monetary Union. Greek investments in South-East Europe are helping to boost regional development. Contemporary Greek culture is thriving in a new, multi-cultural context. While we do not underestimate the importance of maintaining a strong defense, we actively promote a principled policy that supports Greece's long tradition of preserving peace.

Greece has always supported EU enlargement as a means to build a bridge of security, co-operation, and development between nations. There is an inherent logic to Greece's approach. With the harrowing war in Kosovo still fresh in our memories, the Greek people are critically aware of the importance of good neighbourly relations.

We believe that our neighbour's strength is our strength. To exclude a country from participation in the full benefits of international society is a sure path towards the kind of crises we have faced for too long in South-East Europe. Participation in this process has become a democratic demand of the people of this region.

We believe that stability in our region is the pre-requisite for Greek security. We define stability as the practice of democracy, the strengthening of institutions that provide transparency and accountability, the reduction of economic inequalities and the rule of law in our societies and between our countries. Our own security has been established as members of the European Union and of NATO and we work so that countries in the region may benefit from the stabilizing influence of membership in these institutions.

In the next years Greece will build upon this base. We are determined to transform the plight of a war and its brutal memories into an opportunity for the generations to come. Through the process of a neighbouring war, we in the region have managed to inspire in the international community the importance of a consistent, universal and unifying policy towards South-Eastern Europe. From Bosnia to Cyprus, through Yugoslavia, we have the same objectives: we want all the countries in the region to be integral, peaceful and democratic, we want them to remain multi-cultural and we want them to join the European Union. This is our message. Even though simple sounding, our message is a radical break from the past where favouritism, cold war intricacies and double standards, have consistently broken the spirit of the people in the region.

We must stop redrawing borders around ethnically homogeneous communities in the Balkans while compelling them to seek the favours of greater powers. In the next years, we commit Greece to an effort to transform the multitude of races, religions and ethnicities in the region into an instrument of solidarity, stability, a beautiful kaleidoscope of creative multicultural cooperation.

Greece's vision for the Balkans is one of a region in which democracy finally becomes the norm; where citizens' aspirations can finally be realized through peaceful and democratic practices; where the rights of minorities are respected; where governments are accountable, economies are transparent and politics allow for the fullest participation of all elements of society.

I do not say that we will succeed. The situation in FYROM is deteriorating. We have a vision, a policy and we will do everything possible. The world has a responsibility in supporting this vision for our region: First we need to empower the region that has historically been handicapped, dependent and divided by a world community of competing interests and a babble of conflicting signals. This "balkanisation" of the region must be replaced by coordination of international efforts. Secondly, we need to support cooperation within the region. Thirdly we need to invest in the region: in infrastructure and most importantly in education in order to tap into its full human potential.

Faced with the above challenges, Greece has created a comprehensive strategy for the region. A strategy that we term a *Total Balkan Approach*, a regional approach to democracy, security and prosperity. Our objectives are to control potential sources of conflict, and to create the prerequisites for political and financial development throughout the region. Our ultimate goal is regional integration into European institutions. This strategy is founded upon the principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, respect of existing borders, and the dissuasion of separatist tendencies and divisive ideologies. At the same time, we actively promote the establishment of democratic procedures, and the protection of human and minority rights. We firmly abide by these rules, in the strategic framework already mentioned and we consider that these are not confined to our region. We firmly believe that they apply globally, as a potential and constructive answer to the challenges inherent to globalization.

In the framework of the Balkan Stability Pact, Greece is taking important initiatives to promote regional stability, by creating networks of cooperation, and by taking steps to actualize regional reconstruction. Southeastern Europe can be a region unified, reunified with Europe, within the European Union. This vision led more than 40 nations last year to develop a unique contract between the international community and South East Europe: it was coined "the Stability Pact". In short, the Stability Pact can be the incubator of a new contract for the Balkans. For Greece, all this is critical as what

happens in the region and what our allies and partners propose for the region, is central to our own future.

The Greek Policy of committing to embrace all those nations who strive for democracy within their frontiers and peaceful cooperation beyond them, into the European family, applies also to Turkey. We believe that Greece and Turkey have no choice but to explore new avenues for co-operation. We believe our mutual interests can outweigh our political differences. We can and must resolve these differences through peaceful means, through the arbitration of the International Court of Justice and other legal mechanisms. That is why Greece has initiated a process of constructive dialogue with Turkey.

This policy of openness requires courage and determination. While Greek foreign policy is guided by a genuine commitment to regional stability and prosperity, we also have a duty to safeguard our national interests. Our European allies appreciate that Greece has both more to gain — and potentially more to lose — from Turkey's European prospects, than any other EU member state.

That is why Greece has created a window of opportunity for Turkey to move closer to Europe. The time has now come for Turkey to prove that her intentions towards Europe are serious. EU candidacy brings shared benefits, but also mutual responsibilities. If Turkey is willing to play by EU rules, we in Europe must back Turkey's candidacy both in substance and in process.

What does this mean in practice? It means we can not condone double standards: the entry criteria set down in Copenhagen apply equally to all candidate nations. In Turkey's case, this means greater political and religious freedom, independence of judiciaries, and free media. It means guarantees for the protection of human rights and minority rights. It means the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, and respect for international law. We remain worried by Turkey's incessant violations of Greek airspace and its practice of placing restrictions on the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople.

Turkish candidacy is not a bilateral question for Greece, but an issue of Turkey adjusting to the democratic principles of the EU; in other words, equal responsibility lies with the EU: Turkey cannot and should not be expected to carry out painful reforms, unless the EU demonstrates an unequivocal commitment to Turkey's European future. Membership in the European Union is a binding contract. It is a contract that requires engagement both within and among countries. A contract that requires economic efficiency and the reduction of military expenditure, in exchange for participation in the greater security provided by the Union. It calls for the renunciation of unilateral action and submission to the multilateral arbitration of differences. Turkey must commit to these values, and Europe must be determined to uphold them and her commitments.

What South East Europe needs most is to achieve a climate of security, democracy, and peace. The acceptance of Turkey's candidate status at Helsinki's European Summit will move us closer to these goals. Bringing Turkey closer to Europe will bring greater security to the region. Helsinki opened up an historic opportunity for Turkey. This does not mean that Turkey's problems have miraculously been solved. The gates to heaven have not opened, but a new path, leading to new prospects, surely has.

Helsinki did not signal the end of Greece's efforts: on the contrary, it represented the starting point for new, and equally courageous, Greek initiatives. Helsinki marked a significant shift in bilateral relations with our neighbor. But the current positive climate is the result of persistent and often painful efforts, despite a number of both domestic and international obstacles and issues, which must be overcome.

The Helsinki summit in December 1999 was also a milestone for Cyprus, which is now firmly on the way to EU membership. Integration with European standards and principles is the surest way to bring about the unification and demilitarization of Cyprus. Likewise, Bulgaria and Romania have moved forward on the road to integration, as have Albania and FYROM.

Recalling the Helsinki conclusions, as mentioned above, we know that all our European partners agree with us that a political settlement will facilitate the accession of Cyprus to the European Union. If no settlement has been reached by the completion of accession negotiations, the EU's decision will be made without the above being a pre-condition. That is our commitment as European Union. We have also told the EU partners and the candidate countries that if there is any attempt by the "14" to reconsider the Helsinki agreements by blocking the accession of Cyprus until a political solution to the Cyprus problem is found, then the accession agreements of the candidate states will not be ratified by the Greek Parliament.

Turkey continues to occupy 38% of the island with over 30,000 troops. Can the EU accept any candidate country, which forcefully occupies the territory of another candidate country? Blatantly disobeying UN Resolutions Turkey maintains that troops are there to protect the Turkish Cypriots. The EU can provide greater security and prosperity than the fragile status quo of Cyprus today. The European Union has a responsibility to help break down the last Berlin Wall dividing a European capital. The legitimate government and innocent population of Cyprus must not be held hostage to the whims of a régime, which is not recognized by the international community. This would tarnish the moral integrity of Europe.

EU membership is the best way to guarantee progress on the Cyprus issue. Cyprus is closest among all EU candidates to fulfilling entry requirements. Entry into the European framework would increase the security, stability, and prosperity of both communities on Cyprus. Indeed, the Turkish Cypriot community, now isolated from the rest of the world, would benefit the most. Indeed we see them as brothers in our wider European family.

EU considers the matter of accession of Cyprus to the EU as of strategic importance for Europe, the Middle East, as for stability in a vital region. The international community appreciates the responsible and consistent stance of the Cypriot government throughout all efforts towards a just solution as well as its will to defend the interests

of the whole population of Cyprus: the interests of both communities in Cyprus. Greece supports the effort and commitment of the Cypriot Government so that proximity talks become substantive; so that they lead to a just and viable solution for Cyprus; so that they secure the essence of the Republic of Cyprus as a modern multi-cultural society, inseparable part of the European Union.

In order to meet our new responsibilities, we have learnt to apply new political practices. Perhaps most importantly, we have introduced the concept of citizen's diplomacy, which is entirely new for Greece. In keeping with global trends, we no longer rely solely on traditional diplomacy. We are democratizing our foreign policy. Citizen's diplomacy effectively means that our citizens themselves are actively involved in shaping foreign policy. Greek citizens have discovered that they have an important role to play in relation to the citizens of other Balkan nations, the people of Turkey, and of Europe as a whole. The power of the people was confirmed by events in our region. During the crisis in Kosovo, the Greek government actively supported the courageous efforts of Greek humanitarian non-governmental organizations. In fact, the government introduced a new law to formalize the role of NGOs.

In a gesture towards our cultural and democratic heritage, we have also revived an ancient ideal that we hope will be powerful in promoting global peace in the future. In preparation for the 2004 Athens Olympics, Greece has revived the tradition of the Olympic Truce. Our dream? To bring about a global ceasefire to coincide with the 2004 Athens Olympics. We believe that if our principles apply to our practices in our immediate geographical vicinity they must also apply globally. The final area of our concentration in our Olympiad for peace is new international initiatives in which our country can play a role. Drawing on our ancient traditions, we are working to reestablish the practice of Olympic Truce. We aspire to the day when the tradition of suspending all hostilities during the Olympic Games becomes the seed of a more lasting peace. To this end and in close co-operation with the International Olympic Committee we have established the International Centre for Olympic Truce in Olympia. It is a worthy

project, upon which we all place high hopes: we aspire in enhancing the relevance of the Olympic message in today's world, in strengthening the bond between contemporary Games and Olympic ideals and in deepening respect for global peace.

Foreign policy reflects a country's domestic dynamism. Greece enjoys a vibrant economy and political stability. However, it is committed to continuing its efforts to modernize other fields — such as education, information society, and public administration. These will be essential for Greece's future role in the region. This is the foundation upon which Greece will continue to build, to further deepen its foreign policy for the benefit of the peoples of our wider region.

#### NOTES

1. Basic elements and statistics used in this article are based on the archival material from the Greek Embassy in Ottawa.