

Greek Foreign policy since 1974

Intellectual debates and policy responses

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This volume of *Études helléniques/Hellenic Studies* summarises the post-1974 intellectual debate in Greece on the direction and objectives of Greek foreign policy. It also contains articles assessing post-1974 Greek foreign policy and provides insights into policies *vis-à-vis* the European Union, Balkans and United States. Other essays evaluate the influence of Constantine Karamanlis on post-1974 Greek foreign policy, and the risks of a Greco-Turkish confrontation.

The contributions from professors Conostas, Couloumbis and Ifaistos aptly summarize the theoretical and practical policy debates and dilemmas that the community of Greek international relations scholars face. Professor Conostas argues that Greek international relations scholars have failed to become a respected, autonomous factor influencing Greek foreign policy. He calls upon policymakers and the IR community to join forces and address a central issue; i.e. Can the diversion of scarce resources intended to assist the integration of Greece in the European Union cause irreparable damage to the country's security? Professor Ifaistos shows how internationalism and Euro-supranationalism has become a political epidemic casting a shadow over post-war Greek diplomacy. In contrast Professor Couloumbis stresses the pragmatism of Greek foreign policy which is based on a synthesis of the Eurocentric and the ethnocentric schools of thought. He concludes that the multilateralist paradigm remains the dominant element guiding the consensus on which post-1974 Greek foreign policy is based.

Professor Katseli analyzes the challenges that the Greek economy faces given the implementation of the Maastricht guidelines and of the 1997 Amsterdam stability pact. The Greek economy faces the dual challenge of financial stability and productive restructuring. Professor Ioakimidis, in turn, traces the evolution of Greek thinking on the participation of Greece in the European Union. Greece supports a pro-federal Europe and has developed a coherent European Union policy. It now needs to complete the adjustment of its economic, social and political system to the European Union's requirements.

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Professor Catsiapis contrasts the foreign policy objectives of Constantine Karamanlis to those of Andreas Papandreou, the two pre-eminent figures of post-1974 Greece. He concludes that Karamanlis' European option served the economic, political and security objectives of Greece. This option has been adopted by all post-1974 Greek governments. Thus, Karamanlis' greatest contribution has been that he led Greece to Europe.

Professor Veremis reviews trends in post-1974 Greek foreign policy before and after the end of the Cold War. He discusses how Karamanlis and Papandreou sought to broaden the dimensions of Greek foreign policy and to lessen the dependence of Greece on the United States. However, the European Union's failure in the Yugoslav crisis and in addressing the ongoing Turkish threat have shifted the focus of Greek foreign and security policy back to the United States. This point is also highlighted by Professor Evriviades who concludes that in the 1990's, because of the Greco-Turkish problems, the "umbilical cord" between the United States and Greece in the security area may be stronger than in the early days of the Cold War. Thus, despite the post-1974 quest for Greek foreign policy independence, the relations of Greece with the United States in the area of security appear to have come full circle.

Dr. Triantafyllou examines the objectives of Greek diplomatic activism in the Balkans and concludes that the consensus backing Greek foreign policy has helped Greece overcome the failures in its Balkan policy during the period of 1991-1995.

Finally Dr. Papatotiriou in his article points at the risks of a Greco-Turkish confrontation. He finds that even though neither side is deliberately seeking such a confrontation a number of conditions may contribute towards one. These conditions include the growing strategic imbalance between the two countries, Western policy attitudes that encourage limits testing by Turkey, and political and societal forces that support inflexible positions. Thus, the author pessimistically concludes that the normalization of Greek-Turkish relations seems unlikely and that the risk of conflict remains significant unless Greece succeeds to restore the strategic balance with Turkey.

Despite rhetorical pyrotechnics, post-1974 Greek foreign policy reflects a fundamental consensus that cuts across partisan and ideological lines. In the post-Cold War period, and especially in the aftermath of the crisis in former Yugoslavia, Greece is the stabilizing factor in the Balkans. It is a country committed to the widening and the deepening of European institutions, but it is also the only European country whose territorial integrity is threatened by Turkey's revisionist policies. Greece's

commitment to regional stability appears to be challenged by the twin forces of Turkish revisionism and Balkan irredentism. With the restoration of democracy in Greece, Prime Minister Karamanlis sought the integration of Greece in the European Economic Community in order to enhance the country's economic performance, to support its democratic institutions, and to lessen the dependence of Greece on the United States. However, the European Union's inability to define a common foreign and security policy, the crisis in Yugoslavia, and the growing Turkish threat in the Aegean and Cyprus, have brought Greek-American relations back full circle. This all the more evident, given Washington's pro-Turkish policies in the post-Cold War era.

Greece has overcome its isolation from the days of the crisis in the former Yugoslavia. Today, Greece is the source of stability in Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. In contrast to its neighbors to the North and East, Greece is politically stable with established and functioning democratic institutions and processes. Moreover, Greece is a *status quo* power that has no revisionist and no territorial claims against any of its neighbors. Greece will protect its borders but, in contrast to many of its neighbors, it does not look beyond its borders to satisfy nationalist sentiments. Greece supports the *status quo* established by international treaties including those of Bucharest (1913), Lausanne (1923) and Paris (1947). Greece is not just a member of major international and regional organizations but also the only European Union member located in the Balkans. Greece, in contrast to its neighbors, particularly Turkey, has made its political, economic, strategic and cultural commitment to an integrated Europe. It is committed to widening and deepening the European Union, to both free trade and free markets. The active positioning of the Greek private sector in Bulgaria and Romania shows that Greece has the entrepreneurial know-how to be a major player in a region confronting the challenge of transition to a free economy. Finally, Greece continues to occupy a most important strategic location vis à vis the Balkans, Northeast Africa, the Black Sea and the Middle East. This was shown during the Gulf War.

Post-Cold War Greek security considerations arise from three distinctive and overlapping areas, that is the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa, and Greco-Turkish relations and Cyprus. Each of these areas and particularly issues in Greco-Turkish relations and Cyprus impact on the relations of Greece with the United States and with the European Union. They are also the main focus of Greek foreign policy and security policy.

Multiple issues burden Greco-Turkish relations. Some issues date back several decades; for example, the minorities, the Patriarchate and Cyprus.

Most of the Greco-Turkish issues, however, arose after the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus. These issues include the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf, the extent of the Greek airspace and territorial waters, NATO's operational and control areas in the Aegean, and claims on Greece's sovereign rights over certain Aegean islands. It is the intensity and the aggressive pursuit of these Turkish claims that have raised serious questions in Athens and Nicosia about Turkey's regional objectives. These issues are complicated further by Turkey's involvement in the Balkans, by the arms race between the two countries which consumes between 5-7% of their GDP, and the internal instability in Turkey. Turkey's domestic problems include the state of the economy, the Kurdish problem, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, and the pivotal role of the military in the political life of the country. Turkey appears to externalize these problems and to use Greece as a scapegoat. Finally, there is the unresolved problem of Cyprus. The Cyprus problem is not a Greco-Turkish problem, but a problem of invasion and occupation. Although its resolution may have a positive effect on Greco-Turkish relations, it cannot be part of a broader Greco-Turkish package deal. Cyprus cannot be held hostage to the resolution of the problems in Greco-Turkish relations which have their own dynamics.

Ever since 1974, Greece has continued to pursue a policy of moderation and pragmatism in the face of Turkish provocations. The Greek approach combines firmness, when needed to protect sovereign rights, and negotiation, where legitimate issues existed as in the case of the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf when upheld its right under international law to extend Greek territorial waters to 12 miles, even though Greece has not chosen to do so until now.

The American response to Turkey's challenge has been presented as one of "even handedness". The United States has called for negotiations between the two countries without regard to the validity of the issues raised by Turkey. Characteristic of this position was the American response during the 1996 Imia Crisis. As Senator Biden said during the September 23, 1997, nomination hearing of the new U.S. Ambassador to Greece R. Nicholas Burns, "even handedness" has no place when Turkey, a friend and ally of the United States stands in violation of international law. The Imia Crisis was of vital importance not only to Greece's territorial integrity but also to American foreign policy. Imia affected fundamental American foreign policy principles, such as the respect of international agreements and the respect of established international boundaries. Turkey has mastered the art of creating incidents and provocations which are then systematically followed by calls for negotiations in a generous show of goodwill and peaceful conduct for the rest of the international community

to witness. Had there been an unqualified American renunciation of these tactics, subsequent Turkish governments would have found it difficult to challenge Greek sovereignty over other Aegean islands under the theory of the "grey areas" in the Aegean. When Washington finally criticized Turkey's behavior in the fall of 1997 following serious violations of the Greek air space by the Turkish Air Force, that response may have been "too little too late" to have had any effect. Hence Washington is increasingly perceived in Athens not as an objective mediator in Greco-Turkish issues, but rather as Ankara's silent partner in destabilizing the region. Such an assessment may contradict previous remarks about the growing dependence of Greek security policy on that of the United States. However, this may be a practical policy option that takes into account the important role of the United States in the region.

The pro-Turkish tendencies of American policy have also been manifested in Cyprus where Washington

- opposed the defense cooperation between Cyprus and Greece
- opposed the acquisition of defense weapons systems by Cyprus and has refused to sell such systems to Cyprus
- armed the Turkish armed forces with sophisticated weapons that are a clear and present danger to Cyprus and to the Greek islands in the Aegean
- stood silent during the course of 1997 when Turkey threatened to use force against Cyprus because of the acquisition of the S-300 anti-aircraft missile system.

Washington has taken two other steps indicative of its pro-Turkish policies: (1) it has promoted through the United Nations constitutional schemes that undermine the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Cyprus much as Turkey has demanded since 1974, and (2) it has linked the integration of Cyprus to the European Union with the political solution of the Cyprus problem and with progress in the integration of Turkey in the European Union.

The dilemma of Greek foreign policy can be understood even better when examined within the context of American interests in the region. These interests include:

- (1) The American interest in the gas and the oil resources of the Caspian Sea and the movement of these resources through a new system of pipelines in Turkey. This choice is the direct result of America's "double containment" policy against Iraq and Iran, and the American reluctance to endorse alternative routes through Russia, the Black Sea, Bulgaria and Greece.

(2) Washington's recognition of the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism to the region and to Turkey in particular. Washington appears fearful to antagonize the Turks in order not to strengthen nationalist and Islamic political forces.

(3) The growing internal political instability in Turkey which can be attributed to the bad state of the economy, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, the Kurdish insurrection, corruption, human rights violations, and the interventionism of the military in the political life of the country. Repressive measures against the Kurds and the Islamic fundamentalists are not likely to succeed. Nor will American pressures for concessions by Greece and Cyprus will help retain in power secular Turkish governments. On the contrary, they are likely to destabilize the region further. Secularism does not guarantee either democracy or peaceful conduct on the part of Turkey.

Greece, Cyprus and the United States share the goal of regional stability. There is also complementarity in American, Greek and Cypriot interests *vis-à-vis* Turkey. All three countries are interested in a stable, democratic, secular Turkey that follow rule of law and Europe-oriented policies. Any disagreement arises over the method not the content. Washington's policies aim to achieve American objectives by appeasing Turkey, by placing at risk the regional *status quo* and by undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Greece and Cyprus.

Regional stability and the relations of Greece, Cyprus and the United States will be enhanced if the following conditions obtain:

(1) Washington acknowledges that neither Greece nor Cyprus are Europe's or America's stepchildren, and that like other nations they will not sacrifice their vital national interests to mollify unstable régimes like that of Turkey;

(2) Washington must give an unqualified endorsement of the regional *status quo* which has been established under international treaties such as those of Lausanne of 1923, Montreux 1936 and Paris 1947;

(3) The unqualified renunciation of Turkey's threat to use force in Cyprus and the Aegean.

(4) The abandonment by the United States of the so-called "even handed" policy. When dealing with Turkey's revisionism, "even handedness" violates fundamental principles of American policy, contributes to the instability of an already unstable region and does not help Turkey address the serious problems that it faces on the eve of the 21st century.

At the end of the current century, there are additional challenges facing Greek foreign policy. It must capitalize on its strengths as a source of stability and peaceful change in the Balkans. Moreover, since 1974, there

has been a fundamental consensus on Greek foreign policy priorities including Greece's role in the European Union, its role in the Balkans and its confronting the Turkish threat. The challenge for the Greek government and for the opposition parties remains that of channeling this consensus into practical policies. Using foreign policy for short-term partisan gain, as during the crisis in the former Yugoslavia, has had the effect of isolating Greece from its allies and undermining Greek interests in the region.

As an equal member of the European Union and of other regional organizations, Greece must stand ready to cooperate and share in the burdens of multilateral policies. To do this, Greece must continue along the road of economic convergence with the Maastricht criteria. In terms of political objectives, Greece can take a page from Turkey's diplomacy and learn to promote its national interest in pragmatic ways in bilateral and multilateral fora.

Of course, Turkey remains Greece's greatest foreign and security policy challenge. Greece has not refused negotiations with Turkey to resolve real issues such as the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf under contemporary rules of international law. But international law cannot be used at Turkey's convenience. Greece lifted its objections and supported Turkey's Customs Union with the European Union. The European Union's Luxembourg summit last December clearly proved that Turkey's future in Europe depends solely on Turkey's domestic and international behavior. Greece asks nothing of Turkey but conformity with its international obligations. Legitimate differences, such as the delimitation of the continental shelf, can be resolved easily within the context of international law. However, no Greek government will negotiate its territorial integrity or its sovereign rights.

For any meaningful negotiations to occur, Turkey must acknowledge the international treaties defining the regional *status quo* and must renounce the use or the threat of force in its relations with Greece. Even though the Greco-Turkish Declaration in Madrid on July 8, 1997, pointed Greco-Turkish relations in the right direction, that declaration met the sad fate of its predecessors following Turkey's aggressive behavior in the Aegean and intransigence in Cyprus.

Although a member of the European Union, Greece is directly affected by problems not shared by the other member-states. These problems emanate from the dangerous neighborhood in which Greece resides. It is in the interest of Greece as well as Greece's European and American partners to cooperate in the search for peaceful solutions to regional problems. These solutions must conform to international law. They must also enhance regional stability and the credibility of the institutions that will lead us into the 21st century.