

## Recensions / Book Reviews

**Ann Cacoullos: "Women in the Political Culture of Greece"**  
Athens University Press, 1996. 215 pp.

This is a unique English language book on Greek politics by a professor in the University of Athens, based on two studies done between 1988 and 1994. The former is more general and theoretical on the "quiet revolution" brought about by women in the politics of Greece, while the latter is more specific and practical on the involvement of rural women in that country.

The first study argues that recent years have witnessed a dramatic social change which politicized women in Greece, as elsewhere; thereby challenging traditional male dominated politics. During the last twenty years since the fall of the Greek Junta, feminist movements made great strides in promoting and consolidating women's rights in both constitutional law and political action.

In reviewing the literature, Professor Cacoullos finds that androcratic political science had sustained and reinforced the idea that politics is exclusively a game of elderly men. In that male dominated culture, the political role of women had been ignored and their historical contribution suppressed.

On the contrary, the author argues that since political knowledge does not require any special training or education, women have the same natural political abilities and interests as men. So if women are not willing or able to engage in politics, it can only be the fault of a culture that belittles and marginalizes them. Such traditional culture of elitism and etatism, as well as factionalism and clientism, dominated Greece and still makes it very difficult for women to penetrate the inner sanctums of masculine national politics. At best, all women can do is participate in the rather trivial lower and limited arena of local community affairs.

The second case study finds the role of rural women in the collective decision-making processes of Greece very restricted. The research method of that pilot study centered on participant observation and qualitative survey techniques carried out in a few representative locations.

In her conclusion of various interviews, Professor Cacoullos found rural women to be the most excluded group or class in Greek politics. Their involvement varied inversely with the power attached to the political

office, so, although women exert some power in insignificant private matters, they count very little in important public affairs.

If anything, their influence has declined lately due to technologic and demographic developments that demote their work and economic contributions. These recent trends reinforce the elitist democracy at the expense of the populist one. Women are therefore caught in a double-bind which puts them in a dilemma of either being coopted in the world of male politics or being trivialized in the margins of real power.

Indeed, as true as these observations are, they apply not only to women but to men. Most people do not partake of politics, other than vote once in a while, so the author does admit that neither rural men nor women control the political process in the first place.

Although, in some instances, the author found women's vote to be the deciding factor in local elections, in most times and places, women are still compelled to exert their influence in unconventional, indirect and manipulative ways, including the power of sex and purse, something that apparently demeans them.

So how are people in general and women in particular to become more active in public affairs? Of course, there are many ways of political participation. Cacoulios even suggests being silent and refusing to vote in such a way. But if that were so, most people would be politically involved, so we would not have to worry about them.

Unfortunately, that is not such an effective way to shape the political agenda and get things done. So the dilemma for women still remains to either focus on so-called women's issues involving kitchen, school and children exclusively, or expand to broader public issues common to both genders. The former concentrates but marginalizes them, while the latter includes yet dilutes their clout. What is sure is that they cannot have it both ways, something that Cacoulios, to her credit, seems to acknowledge.

**Thanos Veremis:**

**"The Military in Greek Politics: From Independence to Democracy"**  
Black Rose Books, Montreal, 1997. 225 pp.

This a good episodic account of the involvement of a military establishment in national politics, by the Director of the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy as well as professor of political science in the University of Athens.

The dozen chapters of the book include both historical developments and thematic subjects. The former span the 150 years of the modern Greek state, with the greatest emphasis given to the first forty years of the 20th

century; while the latter treat such topics as officer selection and education, the military and nationalism, professionalism and patronage.

The main discovery that the author claims to have made is that, contrary to popular belief, armed intervention in politics is a latecomer in modern Greek history. For most of the time since its establishment in 1828, the military accepted their subordination to the civilian governments which dominated the Greek state.

A reason for this is that the army was hardly in a position to get involved, given that it was created *ex nibilo* after the war of independence and took fifty years before it became a credible war fighting force. Until then, it was nothing more than a ten thousand strong militia barely maintaining internal order.

It was not until 1909 that Greece witnessed its first autonomous military intervention in politics, and even then its byproduct was to introduce the liberal politician Venizelos into national prominence. This first attempt was followed by sporadic interventions in 1916, 1922, 1923, 1933, and 1935. These military coups intended to clean up political corruption and institute social reforms, as the self-appointed guardians or guides of the nation, rather than to take power and form a government. Of these, the most significant according to the author, who devotes a long chapter to it, was the last one, even though it failed miserably.

But the scope and aim of most army conspiracies, coups, revolts and insurrections were to redress personal and professional grievances or to replace one civilian government with another, and republican versus monarchist parties; not to establish a military regime, as it did in 1967.

As a result of these limited aims, a peculiarity of the Greek political culture was that leaders of even failed military coups could continue their careers and even rise to high political offices afterwards, as did Generals Plastiras, Papagos, and Metaxas.

As a nationalist, bourgeois, conservative institution, the army operated on the traditional concept of populism and clientism which impaired professionalism and modernism. It was only recently, after the restoration of liberal democracy in the mid-seventies that the Greek military was finally brought up to modern, western professional standards.

Political scientists have long tried to fit the Greek case into some theoretical framework, but to no avail. As a result, the author rarely goes beyond descriptive narrative and event analysis to document the complicated evolution of Greek military-civilian relations. As such, it requires some historical and cultural background for a reader to appreciate the Byzantine character of Greek politics. All in all however, the book is worth reading as a good companion to modern Greek civil-military history.

G. T. Allison & K. Nicolaidis (Eds):  
"The Greek Paradox: Promise vs Performance"  
MIT Press, Cambridge, 1997.180 pp.

This anthology of fifteen articles collected by the Center for Science and International Affairs is the result of a special Harvard Leadership Symposium held at the Kennedy School of Government in 1995. Its paradoxical title was meant to be provocative because it juxtaposed the gap between high expectations and low realizations which disappointed, disturbed and intrigued many observers of the Greek scene.

It is said that macrohistorically, geopolitically and socioeconomically, Greece should have been the natural hub of the Balkans; and yet it has lately lagged in its development and lost that privileged position. So the Symposium organizers asked some leading Greek and American academics, diplomats and journalists, including Constantine Stephanopoulos and Michael Dukakis, to determine the causes of this infamous gap and propose some policy solutions to fill it.

The editors did a good job in culling the various diagnoses and therapies proffered into a fairly consistent whole where crucial questions are impassionately debated and uninhibited answers are often given. In her editorial introduction, Professor Nicolaidis sets the agenda by defining the Greek paradox and summarizing the subsequent discussions on its political, economic and military aspects; focused around Europe, America, and the Hellenic diaspora.

Assessing the Greek paradox, Professor Diamandouros opens the discussion by pointing out the structural weaknesses of Greek society whose political factionalism and particularism did not prepare the country for the turbulent times of the nineties. As Dr Woodward reminds us, in her article, isolationism is the greatest threat to national survival in the contemporary interdependent world.

Similarly, the chronic backwardness of Greek economy, according to Professor Thomadakis, contrasts starkly with the individual prosperity of Greek entrepreneurs. As a small and poor country, Greece has wavered between the Scylla of oligopolistic heavy industry and the Charybdis of inefficient small business.

Finally, as far as Greek foreign and security policy goes, former US Ambassador Stearns, points out the gap between diplomatic potential and military performance, especially in the Macedonian fiasco which isolated Greece politically more than it did FYROM economically. Professor Tsoukalis explains this mishandled toponymy, as well as national pathology, on the highly emotional and exaggerated sense of Greek importance and insecurity which emphasizes ancient rights rather than current interests.

Unfortunately, most foreigners do not share the deeply held belief of Greeks, as reflected in their President's article, that their position is always right. To the outside world, Greece therefore has a long way to go to close its "credibility deficit" as Larrabee calls it in his article.

In trying to answer what's to be done, all analysts agree on the need for reform. Pulling together their proposals, the challenge and agenda of reform boil down into three strategies for Greece: engage in a reevaluation of its actions, begin a reconstruction of its policies, and move towards a rapprochement with its Western allies.

More specific proposals are given as to the Turkish, Cypriot, and Balkan problems, such as an independent foundation for the study of the future of Hellenism. As Professor Nye concludes recalling Thucydides, since honor, fear and interest are the main causes of war, if it wants peace, Greece must work to reduce its neighbors' fears by recognizing their interests, and thus demonstrate its own honorable intentions.

If it does so, Greece can easily become the leading country of the Balkan region, economically, politically and culturally, with its key foreign assets being the European partnership, American friendship, and Hellenic diaspora. To maximize their impact and contribution in international affairs, Greeks must replace their old reactive politics of complaint and veto with new policies of proaction and persuasion.

Fortunately, since these proposals were proffered two years ago at the low point of recent Greek diplomacy, most of them have been adopted by its reformed government. Unlike the dogmatic and emotional policies of Papandreou, those of Simitis are more pragmatic and realistic. As a result, Greek reputation has improved both in its regional and global scope, thus narrowing the gap between the promise and performance of the Greek paradox.

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