Greek-Turkish Relations

Crisis in the Aegean

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RÉSUMÉ

L'invasion de Chypre a ouvert la boîte de Pandore en mer Égée si bien que des issues contestées ont fait périodiquement surface. Dès lors les choses sont prévisibles: à chaque fois qu'est introduite avec vigueur une nouvelle question à l'ordre du jour du différent gréco-turc, des invitations sont lancées pour des négociations bilatérales. La crise de janvier 1996 autour d'Imia constitue la première revendication de la Turquie d'un territoire grec de la mer Égée. La position grecque selon laquelle cette dispute devrait être référée à la Cour internationale de justice a été contrecarrée par la proposition turque de renvoyer à la Haye tous les litiges, y compris celui de la démilitarisation des îles grecques.**

Le gouvernement de Erbakan a exposé la Turquie aux critiques des Occidentaux. Mais cette conjoncture ne devrait pas diminuer la vigilance grecque en mer Égée.

ABSTRACT

The Cyprus invasion opened the Pandora's box of the Aegean and one after another the contested issues flew out in periodic succession. The pattern has since become predictable:. Every so often a new item is forcefully introduced onto the Greek-Turkish agenda by Turkey. Invitations to bilateral negotiations follow. The January 1996 crisis over the Imia rock constitutes Turkey's first claim on Greece's Aegean land territory. Greece's position that the dispute should be referred to the International Court of Justice was countered by a Turkish proposal that all issues, including the demilitarization of the Greek islands, should be taken to the Hague.

The Erbakan government has exposed Turkey to Western criticism, but this situation should not diminish Greek vigilance in the Aegean.

To a great extent the Aegean problems that erupted in the 1970s can be attributed to the waning of the cold war. Although Turkey had demanded the exclusion of the island of Lemnos from NATO exercises as early as 1965, Greece's operational responsibility within the Aegean had not been challenged yet. Such issues as the continental shelf (CS), the Flight Information Region (FIR), and the incompatibility between the ten-mile limit of Greece's air space with the six-mile limit of its territorial waters were raised by Turkey between 1973-74.[1]

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**La Grèce considère que le statut juridique de la mer Égée est défini par les conventions internationales. Par conséquent, la seule chose qu'elle considère devoir régler avec la Turquie est la délimitation du plateau continental.

The ambiguity that governed the transition from cold war entrenchment to the relative freedom of movement within the climate of détente, spurred Turkey to pursue a more autonomous policy within NATO. The Middle East crisis of 1967, which increased the value of their country in the American agenda, convinced the Turkish policy-makers that the vulnerable adjacent regions were no longer off limits. Furthermore, the Soviet-American détente minimized the probability of Russian military involvement in regions of high priority for US interests and, therefore, what appeared unthinkable to President Johnson in 1965, was condoned by Foreign Secretary Kissinger in 1974.[2]

The invasion of Cyprus in 1974 constituted a landmark in Turkish foreign policy because it was the first case of conquest since the Turkish army marched into the Syrian province of Alexandretta (now Hatay) in 1938. In both cases a fait accompli was established with little international outcry. The lesson that war can promote foreign policy objectives through other means has thus made a lasting impression on the military and the diplomatic establishments—the two immutable factors in Turkey's policy-making.

As the cold war and its deterrent effect on regional conflict waned, the agenda of Turkish demands on Greece expanded. A sense of self-worth in terms of size, military might and strategic value became the determining factor in Turkey's view of its western neighbour. Even moderate Turkish analysts have not escaped the temptation of using power as the major criterion in resolving Greek-Turkish differences.[3]

The invasion also opened the Pandora's box of the Aegean and one after another the contested issues flew out in quick succession. Besides the Cyprus issue, three other critical questions gave rise to serious tension between Greece and Turkey: 1) Aegean continental shelf; 2) control of the air traffic over the sea; and 3) allocation of operational responsibility of the Aegean and its air-space within the framework of NATO.[4]

The Continental Shelf

Concerning the first issue, Turkey considered its continental shelf to be an extension of the Asia Minor land mass into the sea to the west of certain Greek islands, to which Turkey denied possession of a continental shelf. It follows that the islanders can only exploit the sea bed of their islands within the territorial sea limit of six miles. Greece, while referring to the Geneva Convention which recognizes the right of islands to a continental shelf, also reserved the right (following general world practice) to extend the Greek territorial sea limit to twelve miles. Such a decision would automatically solve the continental-shelf controversy in Greece's favour. Yet, according to Turkey, this would constitute a *casus*

belli because it would limit Turkish access to international waters. Retreating from an earlier commitment, Turkey insisted that the question of the continental shelf should be solved through political negotiations between the two interested parties, while Greece, although submitting to negoriarions, believed that the dispute necessitated a settlement by international legal arbitration.[5] The advantages of such a solution are obvious. International arbitration would save the politicians of both countries from loss of face; furthermore, a decision made by the International Court of Justice would be easier to accept.

Throughout the summer of 1976 the Turkish ship *Sismik* conducted research in areas of the Aegean shelf apperraining to Greek islands. Because of opposition at home and the danger of an armed confrontation with Turkey, the Greek Government appealed to the UN Security Council and simultaneously sought arbitration unilaterally through the International Court of Justice. The Security Council did not attempt to deal with the substance of the dispute but tried to lessen the tension by asking both sides to abstain from hostile acts. On 11 September 1976 and 19 December 1978 the International Court indicated its inability to come to a decision on the substance of the Greek application.

The 1978 Karamanlis-Ecevit meeting in Montreux diminished tension on this specific issue. Both sides agreed to discuss the problem and to abstain from activities (e.g. magnetometric studies for discovering oil in disputed areas) which would cause friction between them. Although bilateral discussions did not lead to a solution they did at least lessen the possibility of recourse to violence. Turkey continued to reject the median line berween the islands and the mainland and insisted on the Turkish formula of equiry, but refrained from pressing the argument.

Air Traffic Control

While refusing to accept an extension of Greece's territorial waters, Turkey pointed out that the existing six-mile limit should set the standard for Greek air space, which since 1932 has extended four miles beyond the limit of Greece's territorial sea. Since 1974 Turkey has constantly violated the ten-mile limit of Greek air space with Turkish fighter planes. Turkey has thus embarked on the dangerous practice of unilaterally redefining the Aegean air space. This systematic testing of nerves has repeatedly caused deadly accidents and could lead to general conflagration.

A regional convention of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Paris decided in 1952 that the Aegean controlled air space (except the band of Turkish national air-space off the coast of Asia Minor) should form part of the Athens Flight Information Region (FIR) for air traffic control purposes. All planes flying west (civil or military) were required to file flight plans and to

report positions as they crossed the FIR boundary after leaving the coast of Turkey. Planes coming from the opposite direction were required to report to the control centre in Istanbul as they entered the Turkish FIR. As author Andrew Wilson has pointed out: «To have placed the FIR boundary further to the west would have obliged Greek aircraft to pass through a Turkish zone of control on flights to the Greek islands. To this extent the arrangement was consistent with geography and seems to have worked well for 22 years.»[6] On 6 August 1974, the Turkish Authorities issued NOTAM 714 (notice to ICAO for transmission to air users) demanding that all aircraft reaching the median line of the Aegean report their flight plan to Istanbul. Greece refused to accept this contravention of ICAO rules and, on 14 August 1974, issued NOTAM 1157 declaring the Aegean area of the Athens FIR dangerous because of the threat of conflicting control orders. All international flights in the Aegean between the two countries were suspended. On 22 February 1980, Turkey withdrew its claim to air-traffic rights in the eastern half of the Aegean, and the air corridors were subsequently reopened.

The NATO Framework

Greece's withdrawal from NATO's military structure after the failure of the western alliance to react to the captivity of northern Cyprus, was more of a trial separation than a divorce as the country remained in the political arm of the Alliance. As early as August 1975, and after the normalization of Greece's return to a democratic regime, Karamanlis' government expressed irs willingness to re-enter the military structure of NATO. However reintegration attempts were vetoed by Turkey, which having raised a claim over the reallocation of the Athens FIR, was in effect also demanding a reallocation of the operational control zones of the Aegean air space. According to the pre-1974 arrangements, NATO has ceded the military control over the Aegean air-space (Greek and international sea waters) to Greek command. Any other arrangement would result in placing Greek territories under Turkish protection.

The reintegration of Greece into the military structure of NATO in October 1980 was achieved after Turkey was persuaded to postpone claims on the operational status quo in the Aegean. In his interview with the *Financial Times* (24 February 1982), Andreas Papandreou admitted that, as Turkish pressure had diminished since the advent of military rule in Ankara, Greece could perhaps exchange its right to extend Greek territorial waters for the withdrawal of Turkish objections to the pre-1974 operational responsibilities in the Aegean. Such operational arrangements that exist within the NATO framework, however, are without international legal status, and if Greece had chosen to ignore Turkish demands, Turkey could do nothing to impose its claims, short of war.[7] All Greek governments have made clear the fact that they can not tolerate arrangements which would affect the air space of the Greek islands.

George Rallis, Greek Foreign Minister at the time, expressed his country's fundamental concern over the Aegean problem in his September 1979 Harvard speech: «Claims that could result in the enslavement of the Greek islands of the Eastern Aegean in a Turkish continental shelf and in a Turkish controlled airspace are obviously unacceptable to Greece, all the more so since such claims have no basis either in international law or in international practice.»[8]

The most persistent Turkish demand in the Aegean is the demilitarization of the Greek islands of Samothrace, Lemnos, Lesvos, Chios, Samos and the Dodecanese. Turkey invokes the relevant provisions of the Lausanne Treaty and Convention (1923) as well as the Paris Treaty (1947); however, Greece argues that Samothrace and Lemnos were relieved of their demilitarized status through the Montreux Convention of 1936 and the other islands were fortified after the establishment of the Turkish Fourth Army based in Izmir. According to US estimates,[9] the Fourth Army had had a peacetime force of 35,000 combat personnel and is equipped with landing craft and an amphibious capability which is the second largest among NATO members.

In the past Greece has repeatedly cancelled its participation in Aegean NATO exercises, refusing to accept the exclusion of the Lemnos air-field from NATO scenarios. In an attempt to overcome the deadlock, Papandreou attempted another approach by the end of 1984. Greece officially notified the presence of its forces on the island in the Defence Planning Questionnaire (DPQ) and asked that they be placed under NATO command but failed to override Turkey's veto.[10]

Throughout the late seventies and early eighties, Turkey pursued an opening towards the Islamic east. The loss of Iran to Western interests is the single most important gain for Turkey, which inherited the entire geostrategic value of its neighbour. The subsequent Iran-Iraq war, increased Turkey's versatility in the region because as a non-Persian and a non-Arab Muslim country, it was able to maintain relations with both adversaries throughout the war. Furthermore the Turkish military took part in the Islamic Summits and established relations with the oil-producing Arabs. Relations with Israel were inversely proportional to Turkey's Arab priorities. The Turkish policy-makers in fact attempted to replace Israel in some of its western functions in the Middle East.

On 27 March 1987, Greece and Turkey came closer to an armed confrontation than they had been in years. The cause of the crisis was Turkey's decision to send a research vessel escorted by warships to explore for oil in the disputed continental shelf around Lesvos, Lemnos and Samothrace.[11] This author had been to Turkey a few days before the crisis and realized that the Turks were misreading Papandreou's pronouncement that he would nationalize the North Aegean Petroleum Company (NAPC) consortium prospecting for oil in the

northern continental shelf of Greece. As the late Evangelos Averoff pointed out to this author,[12] Papandreou was clearly trying to prevent NAPC from drilling in a disputed area in order to avoid trouble with Turkey. The crisis was defused after Greece's firm stand, but both sides agreed to abstain from oil exploration in a large part of the Aegean continental shelf.

The question of Turkey's relationship with the West is a recurring theme in Turkish history, especially at times when the Middle Eastern option appeared to recede. Turgut Ozal made his own western preference clear from the outset of his term in power but the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the Soviet withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and the declining fortunes of the oil producers, relieved his foreign policy from its eastern distractions and made the European Community a more desirable prospect.

The meeting of Papandreou and Ozal in Davos in February 1988 heralded a brief but significant détente in Greek-Turkish relations. The move elicited relief from the Greek public and was based on a consensus among the Greek political parties. In Turkey its acceptance was less obvious. Ozal's Motherland Party had only secured 35% of the electorate in November 1987 while the position of the other political forces on Davos remained unclear.[13]

There was also confusion between the two sides. Before the meeting, Papandreou had declared his commitment a) to a «compromise» between Greece and Turkey which was the sine qua non for referring the Continental Shelf dispute to the Hague and b) to the withdrawal of the Turkish forces from Cyprus, as preconditions to any progress in Greek-Turkish relations. These, according to Papandreou, were the only two issues he intended to discuss in Davos. Instead he agreed with Ozal to create two committees that would, a) review all pending problems between the two states and b) would deal with questions of cooperation in commerce and tourism.

On the Turkish side, Foreign Minister Mesut Yilmaz, appeared to be in tune with his Ministry's establishment when in the spring of 1988 he reiterated standard Turkish positions on the «Turks» of Greek Thrace and refused to consider a troops withdrawal from Cyprus before the two communities came to an agreement. On the Greek side, there was increased reluctance to discuss issues which threatened the status quo, although they constituted points of friction between the two states and technically belonged to the mandate of the first committee.

After a short interval of improved relations, the credibility gap that plagued Greek-Turkish relations since 1974, began to widen again. In the autumn and winter of that year, the allegations of scandals that paralyzed the PASOK government hampered any initiative to salvage the «spirit of Davos». By 1989, when détente between East and West was in full spring, it was already too late for a revival of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement.

The demise of communism and the unity of the Soviet Union temporarily deprived Turkey of its vital role in the western alliance. The prospect of a withdrawal of US interest brought Europe into Turkish focus. The year 1989 therefore could have been a good one for a genuine Greek-Turkish rapprochement. Turkey was preparing for the final attempt to enter the European Community and Greece was looking for a principled solution to the problems that strained relations with her neighbour and burdened her own ailing economy. Unfortunately the Davos process between the two Prime Ministers—Papandreou and Ozal—came a year too soon and the détente generated by it had expired by the time (20 December 1989) that the Turkish government received a negative reply from the European Commission to its 14 April 1987 application for full membership in the EC. Since further negotiations for entry were deferred, a major incentive for seeking immediate improvement of relations with Greece was removed from Turkish desiderata.

The Gulf crisis, which commenced in the summer of 1990, was yet another turning point in Turkish foreign policy. Between the winter of 1989 and fall of 1990, there was considerable change of attitude on the part of Turgut Ozal, who had already secured his election as President of the Republic through the majority of his Motherland Party in parliament. Whereas in the past Ozal had projected the image of a moderate technocrat, dedicated to his country's European vocation and therefore open to a Greek-Turkish detente, during the Gulf crisis he was transformed into a gambler who pursued opportunity wherever it occurred in order to establish Turkey's role as a peripheral power. At the same time, he continued to give the Islamic element in Turkish society a free hand in areas which had been off limits to fanatical Moslems under the Atatürk tradition. He thus managed to extend his country's influence in Azerbaijan as part of Turkey's old Turanian claims to the inhabitants of Transcaucasia and used this foothold as leverage to extract Soviet compliance on such items as the exclusion of the Southeastern part of Turkey from the CFE disarmament talks in Vienna. Ozal also began to appeal to the Balkan Moslems.

Throughout the Gulf war, Ozal succeeded in becoming a standard bearer for the cause of the alliance against Saddam. Via CNN television broadcasts, he championed western values, lectured on democracy and liberalism and admonished the Germans for their passivity throughout the conflict. This stance won him points with the American administration which were soon turned into economic benefits.[14] Despite Atatürk's policy, Turkey in the post-war period had often vacillated between a Middle-Eastern and a European vocation according to opportunities arising in each instance. Criticized for his departure from neutrality by a small westernized élite, by the military, as well as by fanatical Moslems, Mr. Ozal chose to appeal to his wider public's instincts by promising a windfall of benefits for his contribution to the war effort. He also might have hoped that a disintegration of Iraq would yield the oil-rich province of Mosul to Turkish influence.

Mr. Ozal's image as a dynamic politician with a daring foreign policy has prompted such statements as the one of March 1991 questioning the status of the Greek Dodecanese islands. Mr. Ozal was also quick to embrace the initiative of the UN Secretary General on Cyprus in order to 1) counter the EC Presidency's (Luxembourg) effort at a solution, and 2) provide a justification to members of the State Department and Congress trying to abolish the 7:10 ratio in military aid to Greece and Turkey.[15] After his death it became apparent that Ozal had facilitated a major transformation in Turkish society and politics that would have a profound impact on relations with Greece.

Ozal's successor as Prime Minister (and later as President) Suleyman Demirel, was an old conservative who deplored his predecessor's innovations. His presence in power was conducive to a rapprochement in Greek-Turkish relations. On February 1, 1992, he met with Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis in Davos. Their joint communiqué stated that they had agreed to prepare a «friendship, good-neighborliness, cooperation treaty» and pledged support for UN efforts in Cyprus. Although Mitsotakis was criticized at home for not insisting that a Cyprus settlement was the precondition to improved relations with Turkey, he insisted that bilateral disputes and a solution of the Cyprus problem must follow separate, but parallel paths. The friendship treaty however did not materialize. Demirel's moderating influence did not alter the predicament of his successors who were absorbed by Turkey's internal metamorphosis. Transition, from the Atatürk legacy into an era of Islamic influence became the main challenge for the new generation of center-right politicians.[16] Ms Ciller and Mr. Yilmaz were too preoccupied with domestic developments to bother with striking an improved relationship with Greece. Ciller in fact encouraged and exploited a strain in relations as a diversion to her own insoluble problems at home.

In March 1995, Greece raised its objections to Turkey's entry into the EU Customs Union agreement, with the understanding that the application of Cyprus for membership would be discussed after the Intergovernmental meeting of 1996. Greece's move, although celebrated in Turkey, elicited no positive response from Ms Ciller's government towards Greece. A series of incidents between the two states that began in 1994, over the twelve-mile issue, reached their high point on 8 June 1995, when the Turkish parliament granted the government license to take whatever action it deemed necessary (including military) if Greece exercised its right, foreseen by the International Law of the Sea Convention, to extend its territorial waters. Although such a decision had not been made, Greece refused to give up a potentially important bargaining chip by relinquishing its right to extend its territorial waters.

When a Turkish vessel ran into a reef near the islet of Imia on 26 December 1995, and refused to be tugged by Greek boats insisting that this was Turkish territory, the Mayor of nearby Kalymnos decided to plant a Greek flag on the

islet. The flag was subsequently removed by a team of Hurriyet journalists in January 1996, and a Turkish flag was hoisted on the barren islet. Greek soldiers replaced the Greek flag and the incident was deemed as innocuous by the Foreign Minister Theodore Pangalos until Prime Minister Tansu Ciller herself laid an official claim on Imia. This was the beginning of an escalation that added another yet negative item to the already burdened agenda of Greek-Turkish relations. Was the Turkish move designed to bring the Greeks to the negotiating table over all the Aegean claims raised by Turkey, or an opportunity to allow Ms Ciller a way out of her political impasse? Since 1994, «casus belli» threats became the Turkish Prime Minister's favourite expression when addressing relations with Greece. During the Imia crisis the number of disputed islets and islands increased in Ms Ciller's estimates, from under one hundred, to three thousand and became yet another *casus belli*.

The problems over the Imia issue continue to surface.[17] This is the first occasion that Turkey has laid claims on Greece's land territory and has chosen to do so within the Dodecanese islands whose regime has been described in the 1932 treaty between Italy and Turkey. The sea border agreed upon was a continuous median line from north to south, between the islands and the coast of Turkey. After the Dodecanese were ceded to Greece, the latter, as the successor state inherited the regime of 1932.

The pattern has become predictable. Every so many years since 1973, a new item is forcefully introduced into the Greek-Turkish agenda, followed by invitations to bilateral negotiations. In 1973 Turkey refused to accept that Greek islands are entitled to a continental shelf. In 1974 the territorial integrity of Cyprus was violated and the island was divided in two. The same year, the Turkish aviation authorities challenged the 1952 ICAO decision, according to which, for air-traffic control purposes, most of the Aegean airspace was considered part of the Athens Flight Information Region (FIR). At the same time, the violation of Greece's ten-mile air space (established in 1931) began in earnest by Turkish aircraft and this practice continues to this day. Fighters traversing Greek islands off the coast of Turkey has become a routine. In 1978 Turkey refused to abide by the 1964 NATO decision that the operational responsibility of most Aegean air-space was assigned to Greece. Far from considering the Aegean a Greek sea (since much of it consists of international waters and air-space) the above arrangements were based on the rationale that between Greece and Turkey flights had to go over the Greek islands. In March 1991, none other than Turgut Ozal began to question past treaties and expressed his regret that President Ismet Inonu had not been forceful enough in denying Greece possession of the Dodecanese islands in 1947.

Questions and objections concerning the regime of the islets can only be brought to the International Court of Justice, since this is obviously a legal question. If Turkey would agree to submit the issue to the Court, the Greek government has stated its willingness to take part actively in the procedure. However, Turkey's refusal to accept international litigation on one issue is not new. In 1976, Greece applied to the International Court of Justice over the question of the Continental Shelf, but Turkey insisted on bilateral negotiations. The bilateral talks held berween 1976-1981 failed to produce a tangible result. It was Greece's view then and now that international legal processes will preclude confrontational attitudes and will spare politicians on both sides from going back on their word.

According to Greek perceptions, Turkey is forever burdening the agenda with new claims so that if bilateral negotiations occur it will be only on Turkish demands. Of course this strategy precludes any credible discussion and inches towards armed conflict with each passing incident. The most recent, following the Imia crisis, was centered on the inhabited Greek island of Gavdos. During the planning of NATO exercise «DYNAMIC MIX 1996» in Naples (Italy) to take place in the area of Crete, the representative of the Turkish General Staff submitted a statement (dated May 30, 1996), according to which Turkey opposed the inclusion of the Greek island of Gavdos (situated Southwest of Crete) in the exercise «due to its disputed status of property». The Turkish Representative also suggested that NATO officials should refrain from becoming involved in what he termed a Greek-Turkish dispute. The claim was endorsed in the following days by senior officials of the Turkish Government and Ptime Minister Yilmaz himself. Seventy three years after the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, Mr. Yilmaz referred to unspecified islets of the Aegean and questioned Greece's sovereignty over the island of Gavdos, the legal status of which was defined in 1913, by the Treaty of London. According to that document, Turkey renounced all sovereign rights over Crete (and Gavdos in this respect), with article 4 of the London Peace Treaty. As far as the Aegean Sea is concerned, the Treaty of Lausanne stipulates that Turkish sovereignty extends only to those islands that lie within 3 miles from the Turkish coast as well as on Imbros, Bozcaada and the Rabbit Islands. By signing the same Treaty, Turkey renounced all rights and titles over all territories and islands beyond the three-mile limit.

On August 7, 1996, the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet*, printed excerpts of a Turkish academy report, according to which any Aegean island under six miles from the Turkish coast «by law belongs to Turkey, a successor of the Ottoman empire» and «Turkey still retains sovereignty over the islands which were not given to Greece under article 12 of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty.»[18] Greece is accused of allegedly «claiming all of the Aegean islands that are not mentioned in

the Treaty and the 1947 Treaty of Paris», which decided on the sovereignty over the Dodecanese islands. Although the content of the academy report (most probably addressed to cadets and officers) has been neither affirmed nor refuted by the government, it appears to reflect accurately a sense of disappointment from international reaction to the Imia incident. According to the same report, «Greece has succeeded in disputing the Turkish sovereignty over Kardak (Imia) which is Turkish territory according to international law. Turkey must persuade Greece to sit at the negotiating table about the sratus in the Aegean.»[19]

After the Erbakan-Ciller government of July 1996 was formed, widespread criticism against various aspects of Turkish policy, previously downplayed by the western media, was finally unleashed. Jim Hoagland of the *Washington Post* turned his guns against Ciller for striking a «cynical» deal to save her skin and because it was during her term in power that Erbakan's Welfare party went from 7 percent of the national vote to 21 percent. «Ciller never attempted to gain control over the Turkish military, still a dominant force in the country's politics. The military has in fact been throwing its weight around in this time of domestic uncertainty, stoking the fires of nationalism by aggressively courting confrontation with Greece and smacking around Turkey's own citizens and guerrillas in Iraq and Iran.»[20]

Western coverage of the murder of two Greek Cypriots at the hands of Turkish soldiers and «Grey-Wolf» paramilitary groups in mid-August of the same year also constitutes a departure from the relative apathy of the Western media to similar phenomena in the past. No doubt Erbakan's decision to visit Iran in the midst of President Clinton's advisory to US allies rhat they should abstain from relations with the maverick srate added fuel to the fire. It is true that American policymakers agree on at least three issues concerning US-Turkish relations: «defending Muslim Bosnia, whose army is to be supplied and trained by Turkey, among others; building a bridge between the West and the Caucasian and Central Asian republics; and containing any Russian push toward the strategically important waters of the Mediterranean.»[21] Ultimately the course of US-Russian relations will also determine the future of Turkey in western strategic evaluations. The advent of the Islamists in Turkish politics has granted Greece a brief respite in the Aegean, in the sense that Mr. Erbakan will surely attract more western invective should he decide to continue his predecessors' Aegean policy. In the long-run, however, the future of the Aegean will depend on the larger Russo-Turkish antagonism and even more so on Russia's relations with the West.

In the meantime, Greek vigilance must focus on the protection of the Greek islands off the Turkish coasts. In an August 1996 article of Air Force Monthly, three options of a Turkish attack on Greek territory were aired: «The first would be to occupy some of the inhabited Greek islands close to mainland Turkey.

Kastelorizo, the most easterly of the Dodecanese chain and barely two miles (3 km) from the Turkish mainland, is an obvious choice, but seems hardly worth the effort. The much larger islands of Lesvos, Chios and Samos would give much greater long-term strategic gains by opening up a far larger portion of the Aegean.»[22] The second Turkish option, according to the author of the article «would be a limited offensive in mainland Thrace. While this seems unlikely, the fact is that both countries are better equipped to fight a series of massive land battles than anything else.»[23] The third option, «which would hurt Greece badly, would be the conquest of the remainder of Cyprus ... (however) should Turkey seek to occupy the whole island, it would be faced with a hostile population and an extremely active resistance movement. The game is simply not worth the candle.»[24] In conclusion, the same author does not exclude an attack on a couple of the larger Greek islands which «might well prove to be a useful bargaining counter for the future, if they can be taken at a reasonable price».[25] What not too long ago appeared to western commentators as Greek paranoia is now being discussed in earnest.

Greece's position that the «Imia» dispute should be referred to the International Court of Justice, was countered by the then Turkish Prime Minister, Mesut Yilmaz proposal that all issues, including the demilitarization of the Aegean islands, be taken to the Hague. To exchange successful litigation over the ownership of a rock for the demilitarization of Chios, Lesvos and Samos, would certainly constitute a disaster of the first order for Greek security. As Costas Melakopides suggests, Greece must point out that Turkey could not be threatened by the militarization of the islands unless the Turkish military can prove «that in spite of its military superiority over Greece, (Turkey) is threatened...»[26]

At the end of every incident, the US urges Greece to accept bilateral negotiations over Aegean questions with Turkey. Given the declared importance which the US attaches to its own relations with Turkey, the leasing of flight refuelling tankers that allow constant refuelling of Turkish planes in the air, and the sale of ATACMs, Greek officials view American mediation with great concern. At the same time the EU partners of Greece have made few efforts to mediate and, in fact, some British TV stations asked this author if fighting over a rock in the Aegean made any sense. Images of the armada sailing across the globe to affirm British rights in the Falklands, and the solidarity displayed then towards a fellow member by all Community states, immediately spring to mind. Yet Greece must still point out to fellow EU states that it is impossible to discriminate over sovereignty, whether in Athens' Syntagma Square or a barren Aegean islet.

NOTES

1. For a full discussion of the legal problems in the Aegean, see Christos ROZAKIS, «An Analysis of the Legal Problems in Greek-Turkish Relations 1973-88» **Yearbook 1989, ELIAMEP**, 1988, pp. 193-251.

2. Van COUFOUDAKIS, «Turkey and the United States: The Problems and Prospects of a Post-War Alliance», **Journal of Political and Military Sociology**, Vol. 9, No. 2, Fall 1981, pp. 179-194.

3. Tozun BAHCHELI, **Greek-Turkish Relations Since 1955**, Boulder: Westview Press, 1990, p. 193.

4. Andrew Wilson, The Aegean Dispute, **ADELPHI Papers**, No. 155, London, IISS, Winter 1979/80.

5. See joint **Brussels Communiqué of 31 May 1975** to resolve problems peacefully «by means of negotiations and as regards the continental shelf (through) the International Court». In February 1976 Turkey rejected a Greek proposal for a non-recourse-to-force pact.

6. Wilson, op. cit., p. 6.

7. Christos ROZAKIS «Dyo yposimioseis sti sizitisi yia epanentaxi», **Ikonomia kai Kinonia**, No. 15, December 1980, pp. 42-3.

8. The speech was circulated by Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 1979 with no other indication.

9. **US Senate, Turkey, Greece and NATO: The Strained Alliance**, Washington DC: US Government printing office, 1980, p. 57.

10. T. VEREMIS, «Greece and NATO: Continuity and Change» in John Chipman (ed) **NATO's Southern Allies: Internal and External Challenges**, London: Routledge, 1988, p. 270.

11. **New York Times**, 28 March 1987.

12. Interview with Evangelos Averoff in his home in Kifissia, 1 March 1987.

13. P. Loukakos, «Sti gonia 1 kikloi tou polemou», **Eleftherotypia**, 1 February 1988.

14. «Since the beginning of this crisis Turkey has received grants and low interest loans totalling $ 1.9 billion and modern weapons and equipment totalling some $ 8-9 billion». In addition to the $ 553.4 million budgeted for this, Turkey is to receive an additional 4x82 million in US aid. James BROWN, «Turkey and the Persian Gulf Crisis», **Mediterranean Quarterly**, Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring 1991, p. 48.

15. As Bruce Kuniholm put it, «the high proportion of grant assistance to Turkey (as distinguished from concessional loans to Greece) essentially cancelled any semblance of the seven-to-ten ratio» «Turkey and the West», Foreign Affairs, Spring 1991, p. 38.

16. For Turkey's ideological crisis and its implications on relations with the West see, Shireen T. HUNTER, Turkey at the Crossroads: Islamic Past or European Future, Brussels: CEPS Paper, No. 63, 1995.

17. The Citizens' Movement & ELIAMEP. Borders Sovereignty and Stability, New York: Melissa Media Associates, 1996. See also Ekavi ATHANASOPOULOU, «Greece, Turkey, Europe: Constantinos Simitis in Premiership Waters», Mediterranean Politics, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Summer 1996), p. 113-117.

18. Athens News, 8 August 1996.

19. Ibid.

20. Jim Hoagland, Washington Post, 11 July 1996, p. A25. Having admonished the Clinton administration for prerending «that instability is not stalking this vital country» he concludes that «The Turks cannot be allowed to think their cynical machinations go unnoticed and uncensured». The 16 August 1996, Wall Street Journal «Get Serious about Turkey» makes no bones about its aurhor's view of democracy. «While the West waits for the seemingly inevitable collapse of this government (Erbakan's), its strategy should be to reaffirm its commitment to a Western-oriented Turkey without conferring undue legitimacy on its titular head. That includes affirming in every way possible to Western commitment to Turkey's military, which strongly values irs relationship to NATO».

21. Eric Rouleau, «Turkey Beyond Atatürk», Foreign Policy, Summer 1996, p. 84.

22. Mike Spick, «Aegean Crossroads». Air Force Monthly, August 1996, p. 42.

23. Ibid., p. 43.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Costas MELAKOPIDES, «Making Peace in Cyprus. Time for a Comprehensive Initiative», Martello Papers, no. 15, Centre for International Relations, Queen's College, Kingston, Ontario, 1996, p. 85. The author draws attention to the importance of the «Moral Dimension» of the Cyprus issue and counters the school of realism with principled argumentation.