

RECENSIONS/BOOK REVIEWS

DIMITRI C. CONSTAS AND ATHANASSIOS G. PLATIAS EDITORS, DIASPORAS IN WORLD POLITICS: THE GREEKS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE, FORWARD BY JAMES ROSENAU, LONDON: THE MACMILLAN PRESS LTD, 1993, XXI+ 239PP.

The term *diaspora*, from the Greek word meaning dispersion (its lexical meaning being planting seeds the traditional way), has been politically associated with the Jewish people following their dispersal from their homeland at the beginning of the first millenium. Today the term is a political one and means the dispersal of people, voluntarily or forcefully, from their place of origin and their presence amidst other peoples and cultures, some hostile, some not.

Diasporas have played a significant role throughout history. One need only mention the role of Greeks in the Roman empire and, just prior to the Renaissance in Europe, the role of Jews in the spiritual and artistic life of Central Europe in particular, the role of Greeks, Jews and Armenians in the administrative and commercial life of the Ottoman Empire, the Chinese and Indians in many parts of Asia and Africa and the Palestinians in the Arab World.

Diaspora communities, in the form of immigrant groups, have also played a vital role in the building of the new worlds of the Americas and of Oceania, though not without a high cost paid by the indigenous cultures, some of which were either wiped off the face of the earth or forced into a marginal existence.

The systematic study of diasporas as political non-state actors affecting international and domestic politics is in its infancy. One recent study other than the one under review edited by Professor G. Sheffer entitled *Modern Diasporas in International Politics*, is one of the first attempts to study diasporas as an international phenomenon. The few other studies done until now have focused primarily on the Jewish and to a lesser extend on the Armenian diaspora. This may be expected since these two groups have gone through horrendous genocidal experiences in the hands of the Germans and the Turks respectively. The predicament that befell these two ancient peoples, naturally begot a divergent form of literature, mostly introspective, but also political, the latter centering on their role as non-state actors in world politics.

The Greeks along with the Jews and the Armenians comprise the three archetypical world diasporas. But unlike the Armenians and especially the Jews, the Greeks as a diaspora have hardly been studied in a systematic way and especially as a political force in world politics. The current study, edited by professors D. Conostas and A. Platias of the Panteion University of Athens, is a first attempt to do just that. Moreover the study is done in a comparative perspective and the current volume includes articles on the Jews and the Armenians.

The Conostas-Platias volume resulted from an international symposium on the

importance of international diasporas organized by the Institute of International Relations of the Panteion University in Athens in May 1990.

The movements of people within Europe itself, in the aftermath of the upheavals that followed the end of the Cold War and prior to that, the ongoing flow of political and especially economic refugees from south to north, provides added importance to the study of diasporas since the phenomenon of compact ethnic groups that resist affiliation is now becoming worldwide with worldwide implications.

Besides being a comparative study of the Greek diaspora, the Conostas-Platias volume is also an attempt to make sense of diasporas as non-state actors of international politics and, as such, it is a modest contribution to international relations theory. As James A. Rosenau, an acknowledged authority on international relations theory, notes in his foreword to the present volume, "it seems unimaginable" that the role of diasporas should not have a place in the analytical framework of international theorists (p.3).

The present volume is divided into four parts. In a joint analysis in Part One, Conostas and Platias examine diasporas in the context of international theory, identify some problem areas and raise questions for further study. Part two, which forms the bulk of the study, includes contributions from notable scholars, mostly of Greek origin, that study the role and influence of diaspora Greeks in the United States and Canada, Australia and South Africa. There is heavy emphasis in this part on the mobilization, role and effectiveness of the Greek-American and Greek-Canadian communities that followed the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus. This mobilization climaxed with the Congressionally-mandated partial US arms embargo against Turkey (1975-1978). The embargo marked the apogee of Greek-American influence and the Greeks of North America have, as of yet, been unable to attain any comparable levels of success.

Two of the contributions in this part are particularly relevant for our times. One by Van Coufoudakis examines the "reverse influence" phenomenon, namely the attempt of Greek-Americans to align Greek foreign policy goals with American ones and not the other way around. The other is the contribution of N. Stavrou that provides insightful observations into the varied Greek-American community and the mechanical and patronizing way in which successive Greek governments have dealt with it without being able to utilize its true potential and, all too often, alienating the community to the disadvantage of Greece and Cyprus. Those in Greece and Cyprus who often talk about the almost metaphysical potential of the Greek diaspora and want to utilize it to counter forces hostile to Hellenism, ought to read this contribution and learn something from it before going, once again, on a wild goose chase of the Greek diaspora hoping for a miracle.

The third part contains contributions from notable international scholars who analyse the opportunities for ethnic groups to function effectively as well as their

restraints in pluralistic societies such as Canada, the US and Australia. In the fourth part, two well known students of Armenians and Jews, R. Hovannisian and G. Sheffer respectively, analyse the role of these two groups in influencing foreign policy and offer areas of comparison with the Greeks. The contribution of Hovannisian entitled "The Armenian Diaspora and the Narrative of Power" provides a fascinating account and an analysis of the power politics as well as the cynicism that permeated the US Congress when the American-Armenians tried but failed to obtain a resolution marking the 75th anniversary of genocide the Turkish committed against the Armenian people.

Diasporas in World Politics is a most welcome addition in an area where the dearth of information is the exception rather than the rule. For Hellenes in particular, this volume provides a much needed comparative perspective for scholars and policy makers alike. One hopes that this erudite publication will serve as an example and inspiration to other scholars to approach the study of diasporas and especially of the Greek diaspora, with the attention, evidenced in this work, that diasporas deserve.

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Contributors:

Dimitri Conostas and Athanassios Platias, *Diasporas in world Politics - An Introduction.*

Paul Watanabe, *Ethnicity and Foreign Policy: Greek-American Activism and the Turkish Arms Ban.*

Van Coufoudakis, *The Reverse Influence Phenomenon: The Impact of the Greek-American Lobby on the Foreign Policy of Greece.*

Nicolaos A. Stavrou, *The Hellenic-American Community in Foreign Policy Considerations of the Motherland.*

Andrew C. Theophanous and Michalis s. Michael, *The Greek Community and Australian Foreign Policy: With Particular Reference to the Cyprus Issue.*

Stephanos Constantinides, *The Role of the Greek Communities in the Formulation of Canadian Foreign Policy.*

Christos Theodoropoulos, *The Involvement of the Greek Community in South Africa in the Formulation of the Foreign Policy of Greece.*

Kalevi J. Holsti, *Ethnicity and Canadian Foreign Policy.*

James Jupp, *Ethnic Groups in Australian Politics.*

Walker Connor, *Diasporas and the Formation of Foreign Policy: The US in Comparative Perspective.*

Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Armenian Diaspora and the Narrative of Power.*

Gabriel Sheffer, *Jewry, Jews and Israeli Foreign Policy: A Critical Perspective.*