

U. S. AND GREECE : A PERSPECTIVE ON THE POLITICS OF DEPENDENCE AND LIMITED SOVEREIGNTY *

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Many scholars have examined the subject of «intervention/penetration» in the affairs of small states in general and Greek politics in particular¹. The empirical evidence accumulated in modern historiography eloquently documents the fundamental premise that Greece has been a political entity with unusually limited sovereignty and excessive dependence upon major powers. The patterns of foreign interference, the degree of its influence and impact on Greek foreign policy are, generally speaking, points in which all major studies agree. What I propose to do, briefly, here however, is not to reexamine or review the obvious, but to submit several premises to the test of your reaction and hopefully to raise a few points for discussion.

It is the central theme of the speaker that the ideological sources of Greece's behavior in international relations and her special ties with the United States are traceable to the deep-rooted perceptions by Greek elites of the country's place in world politics, specifically, to the long-ingrained notion that Greece belongs to the West culturally, and consequently politically. This view naturally has its historical justification and its beneficial effects upon the modern Greek state. During the past 150 years, however, the «mythology of belonging» has produced a national complacency and concomitantly an *externally-defined* national identity and sovereignty.

Besides, the «mythology of belonging», there are more concrete factors which have and continue to influence the public and elite attitudes of contemporary elites in Greece. At the risk of simplification, I would list them as : elite sense of self-preservation; uncritical identification of national interest with the interests of major powers; strong adherence to multi-ethnic collectivities and alliances which inevitably produced an excessively dependent Greek defense system and a perceptibly reduced Greek sovereignty. Naturally, it is not my intention here to go into any depth in re-examining the major problem of Greece's place in a divided world.

* Delivered at Center for European Studies, Graduate School of the City University of New York, April 27, 1977.

I would however, raise the question (and the doubt) whether it is scholarly correct and historically sound to perpetuate the myth that Greece belongs culturally to the West and by implication she must be cautious of other cultural intrusions or diplomatic alternatives. I must point out here, that this observation relates essentially to the historical experience of the past 150 years and it is not to be construed as intended to diminish the political and military threats to Greek sovereignty from the North, since the establishment of Communist states in her periphery.

The notion that Greece «belongs to the West», a notion which is historically traceable to the French Revolution, is in my view in need of serious re-examination. For, to accept it uncritically, we must reject most if not all of our Byzantine heritage. The modern Greek state reflects the implications of a cultural identity crisis the paradox caused by a questionable cultural Westernism, which on the one hand created a national inferiority in the mind of modern Greeks, vis and vis the West, but on the other it has settled them with the burdens of their ancestry and the resultant feelings of superiority towards their neighbors. These two ingredients were the prescription for the decline of cultural Hellenism in the Balkans and the elements upon which the politics of dependence has been based upon.

The U.S.-Greek relations have been influenced by the burdens of the past, and more emphatically by the global aspirations of the post-World War II powers. The mythology of belonging, has created the psychology of «dependence» among the Greek elites. In this respect, the relations of U.S. and Greece during the past thirty years are neither unique, nor unusual. A weak state, with a long history of limited sovereignty, became the «stepchild» of a major power which was seeking to expand its influence in a rapidly polarized world.

Any examination of U.S.-Greek relations, since 1945, however, must take under consideration the two factors that gave it its content : The American strategic objective of denying the territory of Greece and Turkey to the Soviets, and the persistence by which Greek elites sought to involve the U.S. in the affairs of their country.

It is almost axiomatic for Greek elites that their country cannot survive as a «neutral state». Post-War Greek scholars and academicians saw neutrality or even high degrees of independence as an immoral and dangerous concept. Panayotes Canellopoulos, addressing a Conference of The International Relations of Afro-Asian states in 1962, thought neutrality to be a «utopia». Specifically he argued :

In the exercise of politics, this attitude of neutrality, reflected in passivity, represents adherence to an abstraction that is in fact utopian².

and further he added :

If communism were to neutralize the entire non-communist world, it would itself dominate the world. And what would neutrality mean then³?

If such were the views of policy-makers in the sixties, they were even stronger when the post-war foundations of U.S.-Greek relations were established. With few exceptions during the mid-fourties, political spokesmen of diverse views welcomed a strong U.S. role in domestic Greek affairs and only, in rare occasions, did they protest violations sovereign rights. It may very well be argued that under the threat of a civil war, the onset of the cold war and a devastated Greek economy the bartering of substantial segments of the Greek sovereignty was the price to be paid for the protection of the traditional way of life. The point to be made here, however, is that the insistence on the part of Greek elites to get the U.S. involved in the Greek problem during the mid-forties, often exceeded the desires and the designs of American interests and in retrospect it appears to have been unnecessary. The U.S. and Britain had pretty much made up their minds to keep Greece under the Western influence and control, and any Greek pressure or inducement to that end was besides the point.

Greek political leaders of diverse ideologies and objectives have, for different reasons, viewed the American factor, as the arbitrator of their differences and the solution of their problems. Few examples, taken from declassified diplomatic documents, would suffice in that respect :

- General Plastiras, upon assumption of the Premiership, placed the «fate of the Greek nation in the hands of Your Excellency [Roosevelt] and of the United States.» And in return promised to «raise an army of 300,000 to help the allies in active theaters of war in the Far East ⁴».
- Elias Tsirimokos seemed more than anxious to have the American Embassy interceed and resolve the differences between the E.A.M. representatives and the other participants in the coalition government which resulted from the Varkiza agreement, than try the direct approach ⁵.
- George Papandreou, Sophocles Venizelos and Panayotes Canelopoulos, saw the intervention of the American Embassy to «force Zervas out of the government, and to induce Sophoules to form the next coalition cabinet» as the only way to create strong government ⁶.
- Prime Minister Maximos and Prime Minister Tsaldaris on more than one occasion solicited the reaction of the American factor of such issues as «preventive arrests» and «preventive executions» ⁷.

This writer is in full agreement with the premises of major studies on the nature of interference in domestic Greek affairs by the U.S. and foreign powers. Perhaps some reflection on the dialectics of interference might be warranted. A substantial amount of evidence suggests that the foreign factor, i.e. the *United States*, was not always the initiator of the process. There are instances where American officials expressed annoyance to the obsession of Greek decision-makers

to get the U.S. so deeply involved, so as to be impossible to extricate itself.

William O. Baxter, Chief of Iranian, Turkish, and Greek Affairs in the State Department once reported to his boss Loy M. Henderson :

Recent telegrams from Athens underline the fact that many Greeks are so obsessed with the idea of getting the United States so deeply committed that it will be unable to withdraw if the Greeks themselves lie down on the job ⁸.

Similarly, another notion concerning the U.S. role in post-war Greek affairs, must be re-examined : the notion that Washington was from the outset in favor of the Right as opposed to liberal forces. Some misconceptions about this aspect, have to a great extent, been created by the British, who, in my view, more than the Americans, contributed to the stabilization of the Right and set the pattern of gross interference in organizational aspects of the Greek military.

In my research of this period, and the readings of released documents (which regrettably reflect only partially the activities of the U.S. in Greece during the Civil War), I found a significant amount of evidence indicating lack of American trust towards key Rightist figures such as Papagos and Markezinis. (This attitude naturally changed with the onset of the Cold War, the advent of MacArthism and Purifoyism). Objections to Rightist excesses, to imprisonment and executions of alleged subversives were expressed in explicit terms by American officials; distrust of Markezinis and Papagos, were communicated to Washington more than once. The record shows that the policies of the Greek governments, were not always pleasing in the area of civil rights.

Dwight Grisswold, for example, was profoundly disturbed by the continued presence of Zervas in the Cabinet. In a telegram to George McGhee, he advised :

In my view Zervas needs to be forced clear out of the government and I think it would be a distinct advantage from our standpoint to have him in the opposition. I feel he is making more Communists than he is eliminating ⁹.

Similarly, Ambassador MacVeagh warned Prime Minister Maximos about the consequences of his governments toleration of Rightist excesses :

Public opinion is constantly disturbed by reports of official toleration of Rightist excesses and application of security measures to non-subversive political opponents of the government. The impression created by these reports is that the President's program aims to assist a reactionary regime with all the earmarks of a police state, which is an idea unacceptable to the American people. . . . That the government of Greece is fascist in mind and action is an argument which is telling more potently than any other against the President's program ¹⁰.

As to a rumored Markezinis- Papagos solution in the late forties, the Ame-

rican documents express no illusions about its probable character. Mr. Jenergan, Charge' d'Affaires in Athens, cabled that such a solution which was promoted by the Greek military and I.D.E.A., entailed grave dangers :

I feel we should have no illusions as to the probable character of a Papagos-Markezinis government, or take too much stock in any pledge by the King to prevent such a government from becoming a disguised dictatorship¹¹.

We must note that similar dissatisfaction with the Greek Right was not apparent after the end of the Greek Civil War. At the same time, it appears that the concern of the U.S. officials during the forties to have democratic procedures respected by the government, were not equally reflected in the armed forces, which as we stated, have been initially reorganized by the British. The Greek military, emerged from the experience of the Second World War with its pre-war ideology intact and its foreign links strengthened. The admission of Greece into NATO, only served to shield it from effective Greek control and to contribute to its uneven development in relation to other institutions. Greek military affairs were viewed as «High Policy» matters, not to be handled by Greeks without the expressed consent of the Americans.

Thus, the pattern of post-war U.S.-Greek relations manifests the pains of clientism in military structure and political dependence. Greece's admission to NATO—despite the strong objections of the Northern European—has institutionalized the patron-client relationship with appreciable reduction of the country's flexibility in world affairs. It is questionable whether Greece or Turkey could be appropriately called «partners» in the largest peace-time alliance. As General William A. Kowlton (Commanding General NATO-Smyrna) recently stated, «We might call them Southern flank, but in reality, they are our front line¹²».

Greece, like other states of similar size and development are not sought as allies because they add appreciable to the «weight» of senior partners. Catherine McArdle of the M.I.T. explains such relationships thus :

Few of the developing states sought as present or potential military allies are viewed as capable of adding significantly to the armed strength of the donor nations against actual or potential enemies. The prime purpose seems to develop military client states, to build up military-political strongholds through which to preserve or upset regional balances, or to maintain-favored regimes against international subversion or revolt¹³.

Similarly, Jack Sutton and Jeffrey Kemp of the London-based Institute for Strategic Studies empirically confirms the McArdle thesis and the reasons for which small states are accepted in big alliances. In order of priority small states are sought as allies because (a) they strengthen the defense of the *free world* as

this concept is defined by the senior partner, (b) they preserve and extent military influence in accordance with the national objectives of the senior participants, who, (c) reap additional benefits by standardization of weapons and strategic concepts through the use of common military hardware¹⁴.

Greece's position in the alliance has become more precarious due to the American conceived order to importance attributed to its members. It seems to me that from the outset, Greece has been placed on a secondary position vis-a-vis Turkey. Some of the reasons suggested for such a position are traceable to Washington, but most of them, need not be taken as inevitabilities by Greece.

In summary, the U.S. has elevated the importance of Turkey for reasons which contradict world developments and advanced technology. Washington strategists who often behave as Turkish lobbyists, give as their reasons for their myopic thinking the following :

- Turkey's geographic position and her proximity to the Soviet Union;
- The still persisting notion in the West that Turkey is the gatekeeper of the straights;
- The large size of Turkey's Standing Army;
- The mythology that Turkey is a trustworthy ally and that in time of crisis, it will stand up to Northern pressures.

However, there are reasons which may be traceable to the style and content of Greece's foreign policy, which have also played a role in the current state of U.S.-Greek relations and contributed to the notion that American diplomatic and military bureaucrats can take Greece for granted. Greek foreign policy suffers the consequences of superficiality and inadequate evaluation of factors. More often than not, Greek policy-makers subject the national interests to the interests of collectivities; more often than not, Greek foreign policy fails to develop credible alternatives, once the country enters a multi-ethnic association, be it an alliance, or an economic grouping. Somehow the notion prevails that in the collectivity there is security and protection of vital national interests. At least, in the present juncture this is not true.

The notion of utilizing available leverage is all too often rejected by post-war policy maker, while acts undertaken for purposes of pressure are not so perceived by those whom we seek to pressure or influence. A good example in point is Greece's exit from the military branch of NATO—an act which was never taken seriously anywhere. It is the view of the author, therefore, the foreign policy of Greece must free itself from the syndrome of «me-too» which resulted in converting the country into the stepping stone for Turkey's admission to Europe.

NOTES

1. Theodore A. Coulombis: *Greek Political Reaction to American and NATO Influences* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).
- S. M. Sophocles: *A History of Greece* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1961); Stephen G. Xydis: *Greece and The Great Powers—1944-47*, (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), etc.
2. Panayotes Cannelopoulos's Preface in Kurt London's: *New Nations in a Divided World: The International Relations of Afro-Asian States*, (New York: Praeger, 1963,) pp. XIV-XV.
3. *Ibid.*
4. U.S. Department of State: *Foreign Relations of the United States*, (Vol. VIII, 1945), p. 101.
5. *Ibid.*, 106.
6. *Foreign Relations of the U.S.*, (Vol. V, 1947), p. 300.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 461.
8. *Ibid.*, (Vol. IV, 1948,) p. 75.
9. *Ibid.*, (Vol. V, 1947), p. 295.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 142-43.
11. *Ibid.*, (Vol. IV, 1948), p. 187.
12. General William A. Knowlton: *Speech before the West Point Society of New York, February 1, 1977.*
13. Catherine McArdle: *The Role of Military Assistance in the Problem of Arms Control: The Middle East, Latin America and Africa*, (Cambridge, M. I. Center for International Studies, 1964), pp. 1-2.
14. Jack Sutton and Jeffrey Kemp: «Arms to Developing Countries, 1945 - 66», in *Delphi Paper No. 28*, (London: Institute for Strategic Studies, October, 1965), p. 6.