From Nasser to Arafat and Ibn Salman; the Greek pro-Arabism revisited

Abstract

This study revisits the evolution of contemporary Greek – Arab relations from a geopolitical perspective. Due to a corollary of factors, *inter alia,* her lack of a colonialist past, Greece has been time and again endowed with a strong pro-Arab reputation. Greek pro-Arabism survives to this day, however it has undergone dramatic changes in terms of content, rhetoric and objectives; in fact, the once staunchest European supporter of the Palestinian cause and 'pariahs' like Qaddafi, Arafat or Hafez al-Asad, is now firmly aligned with Israel and the Gulf monarchies. By adopting a longitudinal approach, this chapter highlights the drivers and the constraints of the Greek pro-Arab policies diachronically and investigates today's convergence or divergence of interests between Athens and its new Arab friends.

Introduction

Athens hardly maintained an 'Arab agenda' before the late 1940s. Greek interests in Egypt were a bright exception. As early as 1833 Michael Tossitsas – a merchant and close associate of Muhammad Ali Pasha – was appointed as Egypt's first Greek consul[1]. In 1854 the Greek kingdom joined the Capitulatory Powers' club and thousands of Greeks were lured to settle afterwards[2]. While it is true that for 90 years since the inception of her nation-state in 1831, Greece was fulfilling the irredentist dream of *Megalē Idea* (Great Idea) at the expense of the Ottoman Balkan and Anatolian provinces[3], it lacked both the intentions, not to mention the means, of intervening militarily into the Arab lands in the British, French or Italian fashion. When the anglophile Trikoupis cabinet contributed with two warships in the expedition against 'Urabi in 1882, it acted so on the request of Lord Gladstone, rather than on any colonialist premises of its own[4].

As a matter of fact, Greek – Arab diplomatic relations were free from such controversies from the very beginning. Apart from the absence of a 'sinful' past, the country's stance on the Palestinian issue molded its pro-Arab reputation for over 40 years. It is worth mentioning that Greece – a then-major recipient of US aid in the framework of the Marshall Plan[5] – was the only European country that voted against the United Nations Resolution 181 for the Partition of Palestine on 29 November 1947, even though her unilateral action met with American disapproval; in this regard, the Republican Senator Bridges – a key person in distributing economic assistance – reprimanded the Greeks for not having consulted the State Department first[6]. More importantly, Greece was the last EEC (European Economic Community) member to

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[1] Athanasios Politis, *O ellēnismos kai ē neōtera Aiguptos. A', Istoria tou Aiguptiōtou ellēnismou apo tou 1798 mechri 1927* [Hellenism and modern Egypt. A', A history of the Greeks of Egypt from 1798 until 1927]. Alexandria – Athens: Grammata Publishing House, 1928, 189 – 190.

[2] Alexander Kitroeff. *The Greeks in Egypt 1919 – 1937 Ethnicity and Class* (London: Ithaca Press, 1989), 12 – 16, 37.

[3] Emmanuel Roukounas, *Exōterikē Politikē 1914 – 1923* [*Foreign Policy 1914 – 1923*] Athens, 1983, 299 – 315; Konstantinos Svolopoulos, *Ellēnikē Exōterikē Politikē apo tis arches tou 20ou aiōna eōs ton B' Pankosmio Polemo* [*Greek Foreign Policy from the early 20th until the Second World War*]. Thessaloniki: Sakkoula Publishing House, 1983, 129 – 136.

[4] Alexander Kazamias, ''To imperialistiko fronēma tou ethnous: ē ekstrateia tou Trikoupē stēn Aigupto Maios – Augoustos 1882'' [''The imperialist faith of the nation: the Greek expedition to Egypt May – August 1882''] *in O ellēnikos kosmos anamesa stēn epochē tou Diafōtismou kai ton 20o aiōna*, [The Greek world between the age of Enlightenment and the 20th century], ed. Demadis, Konstantinos (Athens: Ellēnika Grammata Publishing House, 2007), 99.

[5] The Secretary of State to the American Mission for Aid to Greece Secret, Oct. 24 1947, 868.00/10–2447: Telegram p. 378. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947. The Near East and Africa, Volume V.

[6] *Kathimerini*, November 30, 1947.

recognize the state of Israel *de jure*[7]. Greek pro-Arabism pivoted also on the containment of Turkey; in the 1980s the cabinet of PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) sounded out Hafez al-Asad to enlist his support in case of a Turkish attack and as recently as 2019, the present government of Nea Dēmokratia responded to Ankara's ambitions by signing a defense agreement with Abu Dhabi, sending Patriot air – defense missiles to Riyadh and delineating an Exclusive Economic Zone with Cairo. However, such moves might entrench Greece in conflict zones far away from the Aegean[8].

Therefore, this study re-visits the factors that shaped Greek pro-Arabism from past to present and scrutinizes the current alliances with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against the backdrop of their Mediterranean and Middle Eastern intersections. In respect of its methodology, a qualitative content analysis of the relevant bibliography, archives, newspapers and other primary sources in Arabic, English and Greek, is applied. A longitudinal approach is adopted and the main body of research is divided into five sections that overlap with the periodization of contemporary Greek – Arab relations. The first one suggests that the Greek diaspora and the Cyprus Question were pro-Arabism's cornerstones after WWII. The second discusses the proximity between the colonels' junta (1967 – 1974) and the Arab nationalists. As for the third, it argues that friendly relations with several Arab leaders were indispensable to the radical turn of the Greek foreign policy during PASOK's tenure during the 1980s. The fourth searches pro-Arab overtures within the scope of deteriorating Greek – Turkish relations from 1987 onwards, while the fifth focuses on the revival of an energetic pro-Arab policy and delves into the nexus of Greek – Arab interests and security concerns.

[7] *Eleytheros Tupos,* May 22, 1990.
[8] See sections 4 and 5.

1. The origins of Greek pro-Arab policies

Two factors dictated Greek pro-Arabism at its early stages: the future of the diaspora in Egypt and the need to secure the support of the Arab states for Cyprus. Meanwhile, the Cold War rivalry had intensified in the Near East ushering in new commitments to the Western anti-communist block[9]. Hence, it was against the backdrop of such geopolitical reconsiderations that Athens initiated its outreach to the Arabs in the midst of the devastating Greek Civil War (1946 – 1949). It should be noted that, when the then-Prime Minister Sofoulis was asked why his country had abstained from voting for Israel's admission to the United Nations in 1949, he invoked the fate of the 110.000 Greeks in Egypt[10]. Balances were delicate indeed and Greece had to find some sort of middle ground; she could not jeopardize her relations with the US and she could not leave her compatriots at the mercy of the Egyptians either, not least ahead of the Capitulations' expiration by 1949[11].

The second half of the 1950s witnessed a period of feverish diplomatic mobilization on the part of Konstantinos Karamanlis, the new emblematic figure of Greek politics and Nasser alike. Besides the Suez Crisis, Cyprus and Algeria were singled out as the thorniest regional issues and the Greek and Arab representatives requested their inclusion in the General Assembly's eleventh session[12]. Although Greece was a NATO member since 1952 *ergo* an ally of Britain, the latter's intransigence vis-à-vis nationalist desires for the *Enōsis* (unification) of the island with the motherland fanned the flames of anti-British outrage in the Greek streets[13]. The Greek government was at pains to win the hearts and minds of the Arabs by internationalizing the Cyprus Question and depicting the struggle of EOKA (National Organization of Cypriot Patriots) as yet another episode in the course of decolonization, regardless of the fact that the Cypriots' claim to self-determination engendered their – incomprehensible to many former colonies – absorption in the Greek state[14].

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[9] John Young and John Kent, *International Relations since 1945, A Global History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 188 – 89; Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The Cold War and the Middle East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 57.

[10] *Kathimerini*, March 31, 1949.

[11] Mahmud Muhammad Suleiman, *al-Ajanib fi Misr 1922 – 1952* [Foreigners in Egypt 1922 – 1952]. Cairo: Ein for Human and Social Studies, 1996, 30.

[12] UN General Assembly, Resolution 1012, Question of Algeria, A/RES/1012(XI) (Feb. 15, 1957) and Resolution 1013, Question of Cyprus, A/RES/1013(XI) (Feb. 26, 1957) https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/1013(XI)

[13] Christophoros Vernardakis and Giannis Mayris, *Kommata kai koinōnikes summachies stēn prodiktatorikē Ellada* [Parties and social alliances in pre-dictatorial Greece]. Athens: Exantas Publishing House, 1991, 139 – 141; Panos Kourgiotis, ''ē ellēnikē kuvernētikē krisē tou 1955'' [the Greek governmental crisis of 1955], *Istorika Themata* 100, (March 2011): 45-46

[14] Alexis Erakleidis, *Kupriako Provlēma 1947 – 2004* [*The Cyprus Question 1947 – 2004*]. Athens: Sideris Publishing House, 2006, 185; Eyanthis Chatzivasileiou, *To Geopolitiko Perivallon tou*

Those days Nasser shared the same adversaries with Greece[15]. Pogroms targeting the Greeks of Istanbul in September 1955 casted a heavy shadow on the ongoing negotiations over Cyprus, whilst the British invited Ankara in their bilateral talks with Athens, hoping to exert additional leverage[16]. In Nasser's viewpoint, Turkey, herself a signatory member of the Baghdad Pact[17], was linked to a British – inspired conspiracy against the Arab nation along with the 'reactionaries' of Hashemite Iraq and Jordan, which came under pressure to join as well[18]. At that critical juncture, the Greek public was accustomed to read on the front pages about Britain's punitive measures in Cyprus side by side with the threats levelled against ''the liberator of Egypt'', as the press called Nasser in the wake of his nationalization of the Suez Canal[19]. Just before the Tripartite Aggression of October 1956[20], *Kathimerini* expressed its strongest pro-Arab views ever:

> On no account, the Greek government wishes to find herself on a course of collision with Egypt and the Arab states, mainly for two reasons. First, politically, nationally and economically speaking, we know well that President Nasser had no option but to nationalize the Canal. Second, it is unacceptable for us to forget the clear pro-Greek posture of the Arab countries toward our own national question, which is no other than Cyprus[21].

Notwithstanding Cold War restrictions that inevitably left little room for maneuver, pro-American Greece courted the – increasingly pro-Soviet – Arab countries as much as she could[22]. In light of their decline of the British invitation to attend the London

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Kupriakou kai ē Ellēnikē Exōterikē Politikē tēn dekaetia 1950 [*The Geopolitical Context of the Cyprus Question and the Greek Foreign Policy in the 1950s*]. Athens: Aipeia Publishing House, 1998, 21 – 23.

[15] Eyanthis Chatzivasileiou, *E anodos tou Konstantinou Karamanli stēn exousia, 1954 – 1956* [*Konstantinos Karamanlis' rise to power 1954 – 1956*]. Athens: Patakis Publishing House, 2001, 277; Viron Theodoropoulos, *Anaskopēsē ē Exōterikē Politikē tēs Neoterēs Elladas* [*The foreign policy of Modern Greece in retrospect*]. Athens: Sideris Publishing House, 1996, 129.

[16] Alexis, Kyrou, *Ellēnikē Exōterikē Politikē* [Greek Foreign Policy]. Athens: Estia Books, 1984, 416.

[17] David Long and Berbard Reich, *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa* (Westview Press, 1995), 95.

[18] Hrair Dekmejian, *Egypt Under Nasir A Study in Political Dynamics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1971), 42 – 43.

[19] *Kathimerini*, July 29, August 9, September 11, September 16, September 21, October 4, 1956.

[20] J. A. Hail, *Britain's Foreign Policy in Egypt and Sudan 1947-1956* (Ithaca Press, 1996), 136 – 141.

[21] *Kathimerini*, August 3, 1956.

[22] Ioannis Stefanidis, *Asymmetroi Etairoi, oi Enōmenes Politeies kai ē Ellada ston Psychro Polemo* [*Unequal Partners, the US and Greece in the Cold War*]. Athens: Patakis Publishing House, 2002, 238; Ioannis Valinakis, *Eisagōgē stēn istoria tēs Ellēnikēs Exōterikēs Politikēs* [*An introduction to the history of the Greek foreign policy*]. Thessaloniki: Paratiritis Publishing House, 1989, 70.

Conference over the Suez Question, the Greeks were praised by the Syrian daily *al-Ittihād* which referred to ''the sacred bond between *al-Yunan* and the Arabs against British imperialism''[23]. At the height of Panarabism, with Nasser's popularity soaring across the Arab world, Karamanlis even attempted to sideline the British by suggesting to the Americans that it was in their interest to coopt the Egyptian leader, albeit to no avail[24]. The adoption of the Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957 perplexed matters further; after the military takeover of Iraq in the summer of 1958 that dealt a blow to the Baghdad Pact, Greece was the first NATO member to recognize the new pro-Nasserist regime; yet, at the same time, she facilitated the US marines to invade Lebanon and eschew a similar outcome there[25].

The common Greek – Arab anti-British enmity was rather coincidental and it could not have precipitated Karamanlis' friendly overtures to Nasser on its own right. A far more substantial issue was at stake; the future of the Greeks in the aftermath of Egypt's socialist experiment[26], triggered heated debates in the Greek parliament until the late 1960s. In his 1957 visit to Cairo, Karamanlis reportedly stated: ''we appreciate the recent economic and sociopolitical reforms undertaken by the inspired Egyptian Presidency (…) the happiness of Egypt reflects our happiness!''[27] In reality, Athens acknowledged that nationalizations were detrimental to the local entrepreneurs, no matter if they were foreigners or Egyptians. By the mid-1960s, thousands of Greeks had fled Egypt and Greece did not have many options to rescue their businesses, except for demanding compensations[28]. After all, the Greek exodus was the culmination of stripping the country's foreigners of their – decades-old – privileges and cordial relations with Nasser could not have averted it.

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[23] As cited in *Kathimerini*, August 12, 1956.
[24] *Kathimerini*, September 2, 1956.
[25] Chatzivasileiou, *Geopolitical Context*, 34 – 35.
[26] Dekmejian, *Egypt,* 124 – 132.
[27] *Kathimerini*, August 18, 1957.
[28] Efthumios Soulogiannis, ''O Konstantinos Karamanlis kai o Ellēnismos tēs Aiguptou me kapoia anaphora stis ellēnoaiguptiakes scheseis'' [''Konstantinos Karamanlis and the Greeks of Egypt with reference to the Greek – Egyptian relations'']. *ANALEKTA* 9, no. 2 (2010): 9 – 19; Giannis Sakkas, ''Oi ethnikopoiēseis stēn Aigupto'' [''Nationalizations in Egypt''], *Kathimerini*, December 20, 2015, https://www.kathimerini.gr/world/843126/oi-ethnikopoiiseis-stin-aigypto/

2. Greek – Arab relations from dictatorial to democratic rule (1967 – 1981)

The colonels' junta (1967 – 1974) did not change the course of the country's pro-Arab policies, even though its previous stimuli had been largely outdated by the time the army took over. Greece became gradually isolated in Europe; subsequently, the Arab states, which were indifferent to the undemocratic records of the military regime, offered an attractive alternative for partnerships[29]. In spite of paving the way for the Soviets to increase their clout in the area[30], Arab nationalists were admired by the Greek colonels by virtue of their fierce anti-communism at home coupled with a shared distaste for their respective kings. The fact that the junta's top figure, Georgios Papadopoulos, enjoyed to be called 'Nasser' by his colleagues should not escape our notice[31]. Moreover, according to US circles, the power base of the Ioannides coup that ousted Papadopoulos in November 1973 included:

> Another fringe group of younger officers commonly referred to as the 'Qadhafiites'. They are a hard core of tough nationalists who would like to see Greece adopt a more independent posture toward the US and NATO[32].

All fears of the Greek 'Qadhafiites' aside, the US saw the new Libyan regime's engagement with the junta with relief; the involvement of pro-Western nations, like Greece and Pakistan in training pilots and technicians was a minimum guarantee against communist influences[33].

In its defense of the Arabs, the Greek dictatorship went as far as to put itself at odds with the US, at least verbally. Foreign minister Palamas reiterated his country's reluctance to normalize relations with Israel and even proposed to Henry Kissinger,

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[29] Panos Kourgiotis "Opseis ellēnoamerikanikōn ki ellēnoaravikōn scheseōn kata tēn periodo tēs diktatorikēs diakuvernēseōs tēs Elladas'' [''Greek – American and Greek – Arab relations during dictatorial rule in Greece''] *ANALEKTA* 9, no. 2 (2010): 156.

[30] J.C. Hurewitz, ed. *The Soviet – American Rivalry in the Middle East* (New York: The Academy of Political Science, Columbia University: 1969), 1-17; Yaakov Ro'i and Boris Morozov, eds. *The Soviet Union and the June 1967 Six Day War* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press & Stanford University Press, 2008), 166.

[31] Jean Meynaud, *Oi Politikes Dunameis stēn Ellada Tomos II: Vasilikē Ektropē kai Diktatoria* [*Political Powers in Greece Volume II: Royal Coup and Dictatorship*]. Athens: Savvalas Publishing House, 2002, 374.

[32] Greece Under Ioannidis: Implications for US-Greek Relations, April 18, 1974, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, p. 64, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976. Greece; Cyprus; Turkey, 1973 – 1976, Volume XXX.

[33] National Intelligence Estimate 36.5-71. April 30, 1971, p. 1 – 13, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976. Documents on North Africa, Volume E-5, Part 2, doc. 74.

the recognition of a Palestinian state in the West Bank[34]. On the other hand, the Americans had long ago cemented their special relationship with the Jewish state; Israel was their most reliable bulwark against the Arab clients of the Soviet Union and it ranked highly on the American security priorities[35]. This last point proved to be a source of friction in Greek-US relations in the interim between the June 1967 and the October 1973 War, entailing the use of Greek soil and airspace against the Arabs[36]. For the colonels, Israel's protection was not a NATO responsibility and should had been disassociated from its mission[37]. Responding to President Nixon's comment on 27 July 1972 that ''Israel cannot be saved unless Greece helps in this direction'' the Greek press did not mince its words: ''US interventions scorn our traditional pro-Arab policies and seek to drag us into the Arab-Israeli conflict''[38]. Nevertheless, the Americans disclosed information that shed light on the dictatorship's crucial role in resupplying the besieged Israel[39].

After the junta's collapse in July 1974, two parties steered the wheel of the country's democratic transition, during the period of *Metapolitefsē* (1974 – 1990), i.e. Nea Dēmokratia and PASOK. The first defined itself as a liberal – conservative power at the center-right of the political spectrum, whereas the discourse of the latter was imbued with anti-imperialist and euroscepticist sentiments, not least at the onset[40]. Once in power, the ideological identity of both parties was imbedded in foreign policy ethos and orientations. That was particularly true apropos of their attitudes vis-à-vis the Palestinian fedayeen, Qaddafi or the prospect of normalization with Israel.

Karamanlis, the founder of Nea Dēmokratia, is credited with the milestone of Greece's admission into the EEC as its tenth member in 1979 and his advocates still invoke the historic quote ''*E Ellas anēkei eis tēn Dusin*'' (*Hellas belongs to the West*)[41]. In his bid to reconcile that accomplishment with the pro-Arab legacy of the 1950s, which

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[34] Memorandum of Conversation, October 13, 1970, p. 741 – 744, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976 Volume XXIX, Eastern Europe; Eastern Mediterranean 1969 – 1972, doc. 295.
[35] Douglas Little. ''The Making of a Special Relationship: The United States and Israel, 1957-68'' *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, no. 4 (1993): 563–585; Yevgeny Primakov, *Russia and the Arabs*, trans. Paul Gould (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 89, 253.

[36] Sotiris Rizas, *Oi Enōmenes Politeies, ē diktatoria tōn suntagmatarchōn kai to Kupriako zētēma 1967 – 1974* [*The United States, the Colonels' junta and the Cyprus Question 1967 – 1974*]. Patakis: Publishing House, 2002, 161 – 163.
[37] *To Vima*, August 6, 1972.
[38] *To Vima*, August 13, 1972.
[39] John Sakkas, ''The Greek dictatorship, the US and the Arabs, 1967 – 1974'' *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 6, no. 3 (2004): 245 – 257.
[40] Giannis Vulgaris, *E Ellada tēs Metapolitefsēs 1974 – 1990* [*Greece in transition 1974 – 1990*]. Athens: Themelio Publishing House, 2005, 57 – 72.
[41] ''*E Ellas anēkei eis tēn Dusin''* [*Hellas belongs to the West*], Speech of Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis in the Greek Parliament, June 12, 1976, video, 01:06 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wi75X_IGWoo

is personally attributed to him[42], Karamanlis' post-1974 pro-Arabism ebbed and flowed. In 1978 he visited Saudi Arabia and reassured King Khaled that the enhanced economic and political partnership with the EEC does not imply under any circumstances Israel's *de jure* recognition[43]. Greece was the only EEC member that condemned the Israeli attack on Iraqi soil in 1981[44], shortly after joining the community in January 1981, so as not to alienate the oil-rich kingdom that was backing Saddam Hussein during the Iraq – Iran War. Despite that, the center-right governments of the 1970s were cautious whenever voting in the UN concerned sensitive issues for the other nine EEC members, i.e. granting an observer status to the PLO or questioning Israel's right to exist within secure borders[45].

3. The Greek pro-Arabism from radicalization to de-radicalization (1980s – 1990s)

Relations with the Arabs reached their apogee when PASOK came in power in October 1981. Greece was held in high esteem in the Arab world, with a score of academics pinpointing the continuities in pro-Arab policies whether the socialists or their right-wing predecessors were in charge[46]. What distinguished the pro-Arabism of PASOK though lay in its radical outlook that conformed to the anti-Americanism of the party's electoral base and the populism of its charismatic leader Andreas Papandreou. To mention an example of how the ethos of foreign policy had changed, the first cabinet of PASOK (1981 – 1985) abandoned the abstention policies of Nea Dēmokratia and joined the Arab states in their UN vote against the Camp David Peace Accords[47]. We may conceptualize PASOK's pro-Arabism by resorting to the paradigm of preservative adaptation: the unrestrained exercise of foreign policy on sheer ideological grounds is renegotiated in conjunction with domestic variables – in our

[42] Soulogiannis, *Karamanlis and the Greeks*, 18.

[43]Demetrios Konstas, *Gia tēn exōterikē politikē* [*On the foreign policy*]. Athens: Papazisis Publishing House, 1989, 189.

[44] *Mesimbrini*, June 10, 1981.

[45] Valinakis, *An introduction*, 252.

[46] Christos Rozakis, ''E Ellēnikē Exōterikē Politikē 1974 – 1985'' [''Greek Foreign Policy 1974 – 1985''] in *Les Temps Moderens E Ellada se exelixē* [*Greece evolves*], Aristovoulos Manesis, ed. (Athens: Exantas Publishing House, 1986); Theodoros Couloumbis, "PASOK's Foreign Policies, 1981 – 1989'' in Richard Clogg, ed. *Greece 1981 – 1989. The Populist Decade* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

[47] Dimitrios Konstas and Charalambos Tsardanidis, eds., *Sunchronē Ellēnikē Exōterikē Politikē Tomos A'* [*Contemporary Foreign Policy of Greece Volume A'*]. Athens: Sakkoulas Publishing House, 1989, 36.

case the ruling party's anti-American audience – and geopolitical calculations that run counter to the expectations of the former[48].

In respect to anti-American feelings, those were fueled by what the public perceived as a Turkish – Western collusion against Greece, Cyprus (already invaded by Turkey in 1974) and other sovereign nations of the Mediterranean, like Libya and of course the Palestinians. According to a 1984 survey, less than 25% of the Greeks felt threatened by the Soviet Union despite the new heat in Cold War tensions and 60% of the participants were in favor of leaving NATO permanently[49]. Still, Greece was a member of the alliance, after having been re-admitted into its military wing in 1980 and always remained the newest member of the EEC. Thereby, Papandreou's spectacular records in befriending Arabs, who were considered terrorists by his Western partners, boosted PASOK's anti-imperialist credentials and kept the disillusionment of its voters at bay, without impeding neither the ongoing Greek – US negotiations over the future of the American bases, nor the Greek EEC membership.

Via PASOK's conspiracy theory-like interpretative lens, the Palestinians were portrayed as the eternal victims who suffered at the hands of Western imperialism, much like the Greeks and the Greek Cypriots. Papandreou intervened when PLO positions in Beirut were hammered by the Israelis in 1982 and guaranteed safe passage for Yasser Arafat[50]. The latter visited Athens amid Greek exaltation of the Palestinian 'brothers'[51]. When PASOK's first conference convened in May 1984, the famous slogan of the late 1970s ''*Ellada, Kupros, Palaistini, Amerikanos de tha meinei!*'' (*Greece, Cyprus, Palestine, Americans are nowhere to be seen*) was heard in the presence of Arafat more than 130 times during the three hours long speech of Andreas Papandreou![52] The Americans, even if they allowed the Greek government to boast about ''the end of the era of dependency''[53], at no time did they evacuate their bases. Upon the conclusion of the negotiations in the summer of 1983, Papandreou promised the Greek people that from that time on ''the US facilities would not be used for military action against our Arab friends in the Mediterranean, hence undermining our foreign policy''[54].

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[48] James Rosenau, *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy* (London and New York: Frances Pinter-Nichols Publishing, 1981), 501.

[49] Konstas, *On the foreign policy*, 175; Giannis Valinakis, *Exōterikē Politikē kai Ethnikē Amuna 1974 – 1987 E Ellada sto sustēma Anatolēs – Dusēs* [*Foreign Policy and National Defense 1974 - 1987; Greece in the East – West system*]. Thessaloniki: Paratiritis Publishing House, 1987, 28.

[50] Nabil 'Amru, *Yasser Arafat wa junun al-jughrafia* [*Yasser Arafat and the madness of geography*] al-Qahira: Dar al-Shuruq, 2013, 113.

[51] *Ta Nea*, September 2, 1982.

[52] Giannis Politis, ''PASOK: Ta sunedria tou kinēmatos pou egrapsan istoria'' [PASOK: the movement's conferences that wrote history], *Ethnos*, November 23, 2019 https://www.ethnos.gr/Politics/article/73752/pasoktasynedriatoykinhmatospoyegrapsanistoriapicsvids

[53] *Ta Nea*, August 20, 1982.

[54] Valinakis, *Foreign Policy and National Defense*, 315 – 319.

Likewise, when Greece held the presidency of the EEC (1st July – 31st December 1983) for the first time, Papandreou endorsed his government's pro-Palestinian positions. Nonetheless, instead of pulling Greece out of the ''lions' nest'' as he once routinely repeated, he shifted to the ''fight from within'' rhetoric and envisaged the role of the 'bridge' for his country between the Arabs of the Mediterranean South and the Europeans of the industrial North[55]. Only two months after PASOK's victory, the Greek prime minister was the first leader of a European country who ever invited Yasser Arafat for a state visit in December 1981; in his message on the state television Papandreou saluted the heroic Palestinian people and pledged that Greece will do her best to act as a 'bridge' between them and Europe[56]. In the same vein, Athens revived the Euro – Arab dialogue five years after its last session in Damascus in 1978; as it was expected, the EEC members participated out of strict economic considerations[57], contrary to the Arabs who saw an opportunity to put forth their political demands with PLO's recognition at their forefront. Amid European refusal the status of the PLO office in Athens was upgraded to that of a diplomatic mission[58].

Three years later, the Greek mediation to solve the Libyan – French dispute over Chad[59], vindicated Papandreou's obsession with the 'bridge' concept. Qaddafi had long been at loggerheads with François Mitterrand and Papandreou scored an impressive diplomatic victory when he managed to bring the two statesmen to the negotiating table in November 1984[60]; the Elounda Agreement between the two parties was named after the famous resort on the northern coast of Crete that hosted the talks. Quite interestingly, it seems that the eccentric Libyan leader had been always leaving his footprint on domestic Greek politics from the junta's 'Qadhafiites' up to the thirdworldist tendencies of PASOK. During the 1993 elections' campaign, at a time of international outcry against Libya as a result of the Lockerbie incident, Nea Dēmokratia warned the voters that Papandreou's embracement of Qaddafi had dangerously exposed the country before the West[61].

Arafat and Qaddafi were not the only radical Arab friends of Papandreou. Hafez al-Asad's, visit to Athens on 26 May 1986 took place at a very critical moment

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[55] Giannos Kranidiotis, *E Ellēnikē Exōterikē Politikē Skepseis kai Provlēmatismoi sto Katōfli tou 21ou aiōna* [*Greek Foreign Policy; Thoughts at the threshold of the 21st century*]. Athens: Sideris Publishing House, 1999, 60.

[56] ''*Episkepsē Yasser Arafat stēn Athēna*'' [''*Arafat's visit to Athens*''], December 14 – 16, 1981, video, 00:39 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVEqHKzNl7I&t=1s

[57] Greek Mediterranean Center for Arab and Islamic Studies, *Dutikē Eyrōpē kai Aravikē Anatolē; Tropoi sunergasias se enan allēloexartōmeno kosmo* [*Western Europe and the Arab East; means of cooperation in an interdependent world*]. Athens: Papazisis Publishing House, 1981, 131 – 156.

[58] Konstas, *On the foreign policy*, 106 – 109, 190.

[59] Geoff Simons, *Libya and the West: from independence to Lockerbie* (Oxford: Center for Libyan Studies, 2003), 47 - 78.

[60] *Ta Nea*, November 16, 1984.

[61] ''*Ekloges 1993 – politikes diafēmiseis*'' [''*1993 Elections – political advertisements*''], video, 03:54 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xD3BGLvESEM

confirming for a third time PASOK's steady pro-Arab choices. By the mid-1980s Syria's relations with the West had reached their lowest ebb; the Baathist regime was accused of sponsoring terror and many countries severed ties with Damascus[62]. Asad was in dire need of an interlocutor in the EEC and once again Greece was eager to stand up to her self-acclaimed role of being the Euro-Arab 'bridge'. To the Syrian President's satisfaction, Papandreou expounded on the cleavage between terrorist groups and national liberation movements[63]. Also, both Greece and Syria were on the same wavelength about Turkish policies; the utterances of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Christos Sartzetakis, spoke volumes of his conviction that the two nations were facing the same adversary from time immemorial: ''our peoples know very well the bitter taste of being enslaved for more than four hundred years by the same uncivilized dynast''[64].

Finally yet importantly, with regard to the intricate Arab – Israeli peace process, the Greek government played its radical card as late as November 1988, for the last time though; the second cabinet of PASOK (1985 – 1989) backed out from its initial normalization attempts, notably the foreign minister's visit to Israel – the first of its kind – in December 1987 and simultaneously recognized the self-proclaimed PLO state in its Tunisian exile in November 1988[65]! In response, the president of Nea Dēmokratia, Konstantinos Mitsotakis, affirmed his party's readiness to establish full diplomatic relations with the state of Israel in case of victory in the 1990 elections[66]. By then conditions were ripe, indeed, for a change of attitude within the Greek political establishment. First and foremost, many Arab states and the Palestinians themselves were fond of conciliatory approaches, preparing the ground for Oslo therewith[67]. On top of that, after Spain's recognition of Israel upon her accession to the EEC in 1986[68], Greece remained the only member that had yet to exchange ambassadors with Tel Aviv and its further isolation within the community was looming.

Henceforward, the return of Nea Dēmokratia at the helm signaled the enactment of a less ideological and more pragmatic foreign policy. Forty-one years after its UN admission, Israel was recognized *de jure* by the Mitsotakis cabinet (1990 – 1993) on 21 May 1990, as he promised. None of the governments, whether center-left, rightist or even leftist, that ruled the country for the next 30 years, ever questioned the

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[62] Moshe Ma'oz, *Asad the Sphinx of Damascus A Political Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), 174 – 175.
[63] *Ta Nea*, May 28, 1986.
[64] *Kathimerini*, May 27, 1986.
[65] Valinakis, *An introduction*, 262.
[66] Konstas, *On the foreign policy*, 188.
[67] 'Amru, *Arafat*, 263- 285 and Avi Shlaim, *Israel and Palestine; Reappraisals, Revisions, Refutations* (London, New York: Verso, 2009), 34 – 35, 123 – 168.
[68] *ABC Madrid*, January 18, 1986.

necessity of that decision. In the end of the day, 'Europeanizing' Greece's foreign policy became synonymous with de-radicalizing its most salient pro-Arab features[69].

[69] Sotiris Roussos, ''Greece and Regional Dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean'' in *Foreign Policy Under Austerity: Greece's Return to Normality?* eds. Litsas Spyridon and Tziampiris Aristotle (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 104.

4. Re-inventing pro-Arabism through the lens of the Greek – Turkish rivalry (1987 – present)

From the first years of the *Metapolitefsē*, Athens fostered its pro-Arab profile concomitantly with the serious deterioration of Greek – Turkish relations that led the two NATO allies at the brink of war more than once. Therefore, this section grapples with the implications of Turkey's antagonism with Greece in the region for the latter's Arab policy and vice versa. We need to assess whether the deterrence of Turkey, described in the post-1974 public discourse as *o ex anatolōn kindunos* (the danger from the East)[70], has been the major denominator of the Greek pro-Arabism at the threshold of the 21st century and beyond.

Among all the Arab states, Syria's adamant anti-Turkish positions rendered her a 'natural' ally to Greece. Syria and Turkey had been never at the best of terms; the former's insistence on revoking her historical rights over the Hatay province, let alone her active support of the PKK guerillas until the late 1990s, estranged the two neighbors further[71]. Asad's 1986 visit to Athens must be situated within the nexus of both countries' problems with Ankara. The Greek – Turkish disputes over sovereign rights in the Aegean arose for the first time in the 1970s, while Turkey's decision to recognize the so-called 'Turkish Republic of North Cyprus' followed shortly thereafter, in November 1983. Things were really brought to a head during the Aegean crisis of March 1987, when the two nations threatened each other with the use of force[72]. The repercussions of that near-conflagration are interesting. Andreas Papandreou made a rather bold – for the Cold War standards – move; he approached Bulgaria – then still a member of the Warsaw Pact – and a radically anti-Western Syria in order to circumvent his NATO ally! This is how the axis policy was inaugurated as an option in coping with Turkey throughout the 1990s[73]. Greek analysts underscored problems between Turkey and her neighbors with special reference to Armenia, Iran

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[70]Alexis Erakleidis, *E Ellada kai o ex anatolōn kindunos* [*Greece and the danger from the East*]. Athens: Polis Publishing House, 2001, 40.

[71] Kadir Sancak, ''Issue of Hatay in Turkey – Syria Relations and Geopolitical Importance of Hatay'' *Akademikbakiş* [*Journal of Academic Perspective*], no 74 (2019): 37 – 40; Tomas Kavalek and Miroslav Mares, ''PKK's Friends and Foes in the Middle East since 1999'' *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies 12*, no 2 (2018): 102.

[72] Thanos Veremis, *Istoria tōn Ellēnotourkikōn Scheseōn apo to 1453 eōs to 2005* [*History of the Greek – Turkish Relations from 1453 until 2005*]. Athens: Sideris Publishing House, 2005.

[73] Christodoulos Yallouridis, *E Ellēnotourkikē sunkrousē apo tēn Kupro eōs ta Imia, tous S300 kai to Elsinki* [*The Greek – Turkish conflict from Cyprus to the Imia, the S300 and Helsinki*]. Athens: Sideris Publishing House, 2001; Theodoros Couloumbis and Sotiris Dalis, *E Ellēnikē Exōterikē Politikē sto Katōfli tou 21ou aiōna Ethnokentrismos ē Eyrōkentrismos?* [*The Greek Foreign Policy at the threshold of the 21st century; Ethnocentrism or Eurocentrism?*]. Athens: Papazisis Publishing House, 1997, 69 – 70.

and Syria[74]. In the meantime, Turkey forged a military alliance with Israel in 1996[75]. The Greek anti-Turkish alignment with the Kurds and Damascus survived the 'Europeanisation' of the country's foreign policy, however the 1996 Imia crisis – the gravest after the invasion of Cyprus – de-escalated thanks to Clinton's mediation, not to Asad's threats[76].

The search for Ankara's foes faded out in the turn of the century due to substantial changes in the Turkish foreign policy. The rise of AKP to power in 2002 heralded a new era of 'zero problems'[77] in Turkey's relations with its neighbors; Greece and Syria were no exception to this. The governments of PASOK (2000 – 2004) and Nea Dēmokratia (2004 – 2007) departed from vetoing Turkish EU-candidateship – a policy stemming from Turkey's occupation of the 38% of the Cyprus Republic – in anticipation of 'taming' her regional behavior[78]. In tandem with the Greek – Turkish rapprochement, Ankara mend fences with Damascus; Erdogan's 'honey moon' with Bashar al-Asad matured by the end of the 2000s with the two countries signing dozens of memoranda, financial projects and even security agreements[79].

The eruption of the Arab Spring uprisings found Greece and Turkey in a much different position. On the one hand, a – mired in the nation's worst economic crisis – Greek government was passively watching the overthrow of the Arab strongmen and the ensuing chaos in the region; an ill-fated attempt of George Papandreou (the son of Andreas) to mediate in Libya was seen by the French as underpinning Qaddafi's legitimacy and was doomed to failure[80]. On the other hand, a victorious – for the third

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[74] Virginia Tsouderou, *Exōterikē Politikē ē Megalē Asthenēs* [*Foreign Policy; the Great Illness*]. Athens: Papazisis Publishing House, 1994, 104 – 105.

[75] Ersel Aydinli and Onlur Erpul, ''Elite Change and the Inception, Duration and Demise of the Turkish – Israeli Alliance'', *Foreign Policy Analysis* 17, Issue 2, (April 2021): 7.

[76] Veremis, *History of the Greek – Turkish Relations*, 211 – 212.

[77] Malik Mufti, "The AK Party's Islamic Realist Political Vision: Theory and Practice" *Politics and Governance 2*, issue 2 (2014): 34.

[78] Athanasios Kotsiaros, ''Greek Perceptions'' in *Turkey Watch: EU Member States' Perceptions on Turkey's Accession to the EU*, eds. Salt Akşit, Özgehan Şenyuva, Ciğdem Üstün (Ankara: Center for European Studies, Middle East Technical University, 2010), 73 – 74; Panagiotis Tsakonas, ''Koinōnikopoiōntas ton antipalo. E Ellēnikē Stratēgikē Exisorropēsēs tēs Tourkias kai oi Ellēnotourkikes Scheseis'' [''Humanizing the adversary. The Greek Balancing Strategy of Turkey and the Greek – Turkish Relations''] in *Sunchronē Ellēnikē Exōterikē Politikē Mia Sunolikē Proseggisē* [*Contemporary Greek Foreign Policy; an Overall Approach*], ed. Panagiotis Tsakonas (Athens: Sideris Publishing House, 2003), 69 – 79 and George Kyris, ''The European Union, Turkey and the Cyprus problem: the failure of a catalyst'' in *Turkey and the European Union: Facing new challenges and opportunities*, eds. Firat Cengiz and Lars Hoffman (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 11 – 23.

[79] France24, ''Erdogan yu 'akkid 'ala 'umq al-taqarub al-turki al-suri fi-l-mintaqa'' [''Erdogan confirms the depth of the Turkish – Syrian approachment in the region''], December 23, 2009 https://www.france24.com/ar/20091223-turkey-syria-visit-ardogan-cooperation-middle-east

[80] Aljazeera.net, ''Tarablus fawadat Athina liistikhdam amwal mujammada'' [''Tripoli held talks with Athens over the use of frozen funds''], June 10, 2011 https://www.aljazeera.net/ebusiness/2011/6/10/%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%84

time in a row – AKP capitalized on the ''solidarity with the oppressed peoples'' rhetoric and threw its full weight behind the countries under transition via exporting the 'Turkish model'[81]. Turkey was keen on asserting herself as a pivotal power and the Arab Spring was the perfect springboard for this; having secured the financial backing of Qatar, the Turkish leadership bolstered its liaisons with the Ennahda and the Muslim Brothers' elected governments in Tunisia and Egypt respectively and equipped the Free Syrian Army[82]. Asad – the once promising partner of Erdogan – turned overnight into a ''brutal dictator who fights his own people''[83].

It did not take too long for Turkey's meddling with Arab affairs to backfire. The 'zero problems' legacy unraveled setting in motion the reshuffling of alignments. Muhammad Morsi's 2013 ouster from power was tantamount to a direct assault on Turkey's and Qatar's hegemony in Egypt[84]. Reacting to the suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood, Erdogan suspended his country's diplomatic representation in Cairo and offered safe haven to the banned group[85]; needless to say that Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and his Saudi and Emirati backers, whose mistrust of Islamist parties is still running deep, viewed Erdogan's appropriation of the four-fingered Rabi 'a salutation as extremely provocative[86]. The split deepened in full swing after the Egyptian – Saudi –

%D8%B3-%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%AA-%D8%A3%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7-%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84

[81] Daily Sabah, ''Erdoğan: We side with Qatar to support oppressed people'', December 19, 2014 https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/12/19/erdogan-we-side-with-qatar-to-support-oppressed-people ; Stefano M. Torelli, ''The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Model for the Middle East'' in *Turkey's Relations with the Middle East Political Encounters after the Arab Spring*, eds. Hüsein Işiksal and Oğuzhan Goksel (New York: Springer, 2018), 53 – 64.

[82] Nikos Christofis, ''The Foreign Policy of the 'New Turkey': Priorities, Challenges and Contradictions'', *New Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 1 (2019): 6 – 7; Jillian Schwedler, ''Islamists in Power? Inclusion, Moderation and the Arab Uprisings'' *Middle East Development Journal* 5, (2013): 1–18.

[83] Mark Memmott, ''Comparing Assad to Hitler, Turkey's Prime Minister Calls On Him To Resign'', *NPR*, November 22, 2011 https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2011/11/22/142653413/comparing-assad-to-hitler-turkeys-prime-minister-calls-on-him-to-resign?t=1646750446515

[84] Bilgin Ayata, ''Turkish Foreign Policy in a Changing Arab World: Rise and Fall of a Regional Actor?'', *Journal of European Integration* 37, no. 1 (2015): 95 – 112; Simeon Kerr, ''Fall of Egypt's Mohamed Morsi is Blow to Qatari Leadership'' *Financial Times*. July 3, 2013 **https://www.ft.com/content/af5d068a-e3ef-11e2-b35b-00144feabdc0**

[85] Abdelrahman Ayyash, ''The Turkish Future of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood'' *The Century Foundation*, August 17, 2020 https://tcf.org/content/report/turkish-future-egypts-muslim-brotherhood/?agreed=1&agreed=1

[86] Ayman Nour, ''Inqilab 3 Yuliu Bitakhtit Saudi wa Tanfidh Imarati'' [''The 3rd July Coup was Designed by the Saudis and Executed by the Emirates'']. *Al-Sharq*, August 23, 2018 **https://www.al-sharq.com/article/23/08/2018/%D8%AF-%D8%A3%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%86%D9%88%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%82%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A8-3-**

Emirati – Bahraini axis imposed a blockade on Qatar in 2017 and Ankara sided with Doha[87]. The Khashoggi murder followed, estranging Erdogan with the Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman (MBS) even more[88]. Another bone of contention was Libya, wherein the regional players' vying for control escalated into a full-blown proxy war; Cairo and Abu Dhabi were trying to tilt the balance in their favor by supporting Khalifa Haftar in the east; Ankara did not stand idle, but stepped in to salvage its protégé in Tripoli[89].

Meanwhile, since 2018 Turkey has been encroaching on the – claimed, albeit not delimited – Greek and Cypriot EEZ in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean[90]. The Turks worried that collaboration among the Greeks, the Greek – Cypriots, the Egyptians and the Israelis might exclude them from their legitimate share of energy resources[91].Taking all the above into account, it is little wonder that many analysts in both Greece and the Arab world were convinced that Turkey nurtures 'neo-Ottoman' ambitions[92]. November 2019 was the landmark moment for reactivating Greek pro-Arabism. Amid Haftar's offensive, Turkey did not only pour

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%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88-%D8%A8%D8%AA%D8%AE%D8%B7%D9%8A%D8%B7-%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B0-%D8%A5%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%8A

[87] Cinzia Bianco and Gareth Stansfield, ''The Intra–GCC Crises: Mapping GCC Fragmentation after 2011'' *International Affairs* 93, Issue 3, (May 2018): 613–35; Wojciech Grabowski, ''The Muslim Brotherhood and the Crisis in the GCC: Roots, Issues and Implications'' *International Relations* 52, (2016): 355–66.

[88] DW, ''Khashoggi: Erdogan says top levels of Saudi government behind the journalist's killing'', November 3, 2018 https://www.dw.com/en/khashoggi-erdogan-says-top-levels-of-saudi-government-behind-journalists-killing/a-46140984

[89] Sigvart Nordhov Fredriksen and Zenonas Tziarras, ''The Libya Conflict and its Security Implications for the Broader Region'', *Peace Research Institute Oslo* 4, (2020): 11 – 15

[90] Aurélien Denizeau, ''*Mavi Vatan*, the 'Blue Homeland' The Origins, Influences and Limits of an Ambitious Doctrine for Turkey'', *Études de l'Ifri*, (April, 2021): 8 – 10.

[91] Zenonas Tziarras, ''International Competition and Cooperation in the New Eastern Mediterranean'' *International Studies* (June, 2021): 5 – 6.

[92] Al-Hurra, ''Erdogan yuhawilu ihia' al-imbraturiyya al-'uthmaniyya 'ala hisab al-duali al-'arabiyya'' [''Erdogan attempts to revive the Ottoman Empire at the expense of the Arab states'']. July 29, 2020, https://www.alhurra.com/turkey/2020/07/29/%D8%B5%D8%AD%D9%8A%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%8A%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A5%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%88%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%AB%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%AD%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9 Nikos Kotzias. *E exōterikē politikē tēs Elladas ston 21º aiōna* [*The foreign policy of Greece in the 21st century*]. Athens: Kastaniotis Publishing House, 2010, 248 – 253.

mercenaries and weapons into the LNGA (Libyan Government of National Accord) to repel the warlord's advance; she also put her *Mavi Vatan* (Blue Homeland) doctrine to test, whereby Ankara and Tripoli delineated the maritime areas between them. Greece considered the Turkish-Libyan Memorandum null and void, because it penetrates the continental shelf of Crete and she immediately stepped-up her contacts with the anti-Turkish Arab camp. The day after would find her embroiled in power contests all the way from Maghreb to the Arabian Peninsula.

5. Greece and her new Arab friends

In some respects, the present government's pro-Arabism could be compared to that of the 1950s or the 1980s, notwithstanding with crucial differences. Nowadays, neither a sizable community exists somewhere in the Arab world that Athens should care for, nor any ideological proximities between Greece and the Arab regimes as perhaps the wannabe 'Nasser', Colonel Papadopoulos or Andreas Papandreou had once fantasized. Furthermore, it seems that Kyriakos Mitsotakis follows the footsteps of his father; his friendship with the Arabs stays firmly on the de-radicalization trail without being subject to the – traditionally pro-Palestinian – sentiments of the Greek public.

In the previous section, we discussed how 'neo-Ottomanism' gave a fresh impetus to the Greek pro-Arab policies, however, Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias in his recent address to the parliament strove to detach them from Turkey's balancing:

> such defense agreements with a regional power like the UAE are not signed every day (..) our foreign policy does not revolve *a priori* around Turkey's deterrence (..) never before in her history had Greece enjoyed such amicable relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, although we cannot not accept the legal framework of these countries in its entirety[93].

By juxtaposing the minister's words with the facts, the closing section suggests that even if the Turkish threat brought together Greece with Egypt and the Arab

[93] Enikos.gr, ''Nikos Dendias: den askoume mia antitourkiké politiké, exoume ethnikes proteraiotétes kai symferonta'' ['Nikos Dendias: we do not exercise an anti-Turkish foreign policy, we have national priorities and interests'']. March 16, 2022 Νίκος Δένδιας: Δεν ασκούμε μία αντιτουρκική πολιτική, έχουμε εθνικές προτεραιότητες και συμφέροντα (enikos.gr)

monarchies in the first place, these alliances are currently playing out in harmony with broader security concerns, *inter alia*, access to the energy reserves of the Mediterranean and protection of the oil-rich kingdoms at all costs. Additionally, Athens' opting for the Cairo – Riyadh – Abu Dhabi triangle resonates with Tel Aviv's interests; the Israelis are have been working together with the Arabs of the Gulf on Iran's regional curtailment and with the Greek administrations on the possible scenarios of transporting natural gas to the European markets[94].

Among the three Arab states, Egypt is the closest to Greece by dint of the conflated priorities. Like Cairo, Athens hoped to see the LNGA government defeated and the Turkish-Libyan Memorandum scrapped all together. Despite Haftar's failure to capture Tripoli, Greece and Egypt surprised Turkey upon delimiting their EEZ south of Crete in August 2020; yet the agreement intentionally left the area east of the Dodecanese for future negotiations, raising speculation that Turkey might try to fill that gap with our without Greek consent[95]. Time will tell whether the current signs of thaw between Ankara and Cairo are able to overcome the bitter legacies of 2013[96]. Moreover, as long as the Libyan stalemate remains unsurmountable tensions might rekindle. Still, the Athens – Cairo cooperation has taken a life on its own regardless of Turkey. It is not exhausted in the maritime agreements, but in energy too; this last one enjoys full US support amid European efforts to decrease dependence on the Russian pipelines[97].

As for the Saudis and the Emiratis, it is the first time that Greece maintains such a multifaceted cooperation with them covering every sector, from tourism and

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[94] Gabriel Mitchell, ''Israel's Quest for Regional Belonging in the Eastern Mediterranean'' in *The Scramble for the Eastern Mediterranean Energy and Geopolitics*, ed. Valeria Talbot (Milan: Ledizioni Ledipublishing, 2021), 14 – 27.

[95] Walid Fahmy, ''The conundrum of delimitation of maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean: the Greece – Egypt agreement in the face of Turkey – Libya agreement', *Pro Justitia* 3, (2020): 119 – 123.

[96] Muhammad Nabil Hilmi, ''Misr wa Turkia 'alaqat muta'arjiha bain al-istikshaf wa-l-taqarub'' [''Egypt and Turkey ambivalent relations between exploration and rapprochement''], *Al-Sharq al-Aswat*, December 1, 2021 https://aawsat.com/home/article/3334151/%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1-%D9%88%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%AA%D8%A3%D8%B1%D8%AC%D8%AD%D8%A9-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%83%D8%B4%D8%A7%D9%81-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A8; Omer Ozkizilcik, ''What a Turkish – Egyptian rapprochement could offer the region'', *TRT World*, December 22, 2021 https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/what-a-turkish-egyptian-rapprochement-could-offer-the-region-52887

[97] Reuters, ''Greece teams up with Egypt on gas supply, infrastructure'', November 25, 2021 https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/greece-teams-up-with-egypt-gas-supply-infrastructure-2021-11-25/

investments to intelligence and defense[98]. The fact that Mitsotakis visited Riyadh twice in less than two years, while announcing a new 'strategic relationship' with Abu Dhabi is indicative of his government's high hopes for its Arab policy. Tangible rewards are also expected in the diplomatic arena, given that Saudi Arabia and the UAE set the tone of the entire Arab League's policies. In spite of present attempts to play down the anti-Turkish origins of this government's pro-Arabism, in July 2021 Nikos Dendias stated that ''Greece and the Arab states are united against some non – Arab nations that seek to reestablish long-forgotten, religious empires''[99]. It is true that the Arab League voiced its criticism of Turkey's actions not only in Syria, Iraq and Libya but in Greece and Cyprus as well[100], nevertheless it is Iran that tops the Saudi and Emirati agenda. If we compare how the Saudi Foreign Minister's visit to Athens in January 2022 was received by the Greek and the Arab media, it becomes clear that the former presented it as a demonstration of solidarity in the face of the continuous Turkish *casus belli*, whereas the latter overemphasized the Greek interest in Iranian ''destabilizing activities''[101].

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[98] The only work on Greece – GCC relations before 2019 is the study of Asteris Huliaras and Sophia Kalantzakos, ''Looking for an Oasis of Support: Greece and the Gulf States'' in *Foreign Policy Under Austerity: Greece's Return to Normality?* eds. Litsas Spyridon and Tziampiris Aristotle (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 49 – 76.

[99] For a Greek and Arab account, see Naftemporiki.gr, ''Mnēmonio katanoēsēs metaxy Elladas kai Aravikou Syndesmou ypograpse o N. Dendias'' [''N. Dendias signed a Memorandum of Understanding between Greece and the Arab League'']. July 13, 2021 https://www.naftemporiki.gr/story/1748980/mnimonio-katanoisis-metaksu-elladas-kai-arabikou-sundesmou-upegrapse-o-n-dendias; Sky News Arabia, ''tauqi 'a mudhakkira tafahum bain al-Yunan wa Jam 'ia al-Dual al-'Arabiyya'' [''Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Greece and the Arab League'']. July 13, 2021 https://www.skynewsarabia.com/middle-east/1451076-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D9%85%D8%B0%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%AA%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%B9%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9

[100] Al-'Ain, ''Bayyan al-Jami 'a al-'Arabiyya al-khitami.. idana tadakhulat Turkia wa da 'am mubadarat al-salam'' [''Concluding statement of the Arab League.. condemning Turkey's interventions and supporting the peace initiatives'']. September 9, 2020 https://al-ain.com/article/arab-league-condemning-turkey-interventions

[101] Alarabiya, ''Wazir kharijiyya al-Sa 'udiyya: qaliqun min tajauzat Iran fi barnamijiha al-nawawi'' [Saudi Foreign Minister: we are anxious about Iranian excesses in its nuclear program]. January 4, 2022 https://www.alarabiya.net/saudi-today/2022/01/04/%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%AC%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A3%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A7-%D9%82%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%A7%D8%AA-

Thus, one might ask how likely is for Athens to get involved in the Saudi – Emirati war in Yemen (2015 – present) in return for petrodollars and political support. Muhammad Bin Salman thanked the Greek government for transferring a battery of Patriot missiles along with personnel to train the Saudis[102]. Not surprisingly, that kind gesture was in line with the US burden sharing strategy for Gulf security; after all, the kingdom became vulnerable, some months before Mitsotakis visit in early 2020[103]. In the meantime, during a joint exercise of the Greek and the Saudi Air Force in Crete in March 2021 the Greek Chief of Staff, General Floros made a rather controversial statement that ''Greece shares the same values with Saudi Arabia''[104]. The Greek – Saudi 'love story' comes at a price too high to pay though; as these lines are written, Greek officers who serve close to the Yemeni border run the risk of being targeted by the Houthi drones. On a par with the strengthening of Athens – Riyadh ties is the new friendship with Abu Dhabi, announced by the Greek Prime Minister in November 2020: ''in unison with the United Arab Emirates we frame a strategic alliance based on the economic as well as the defensive and foreign policy cooperation''[105]. Analysts close to the Greek government hailed the defense partnership with the Emirates as the most important agreement that the country has entered in the last decades, because it calls for the two countries to assist each other in case of aggression by a third party[106]. Whenever the opposition criticizes the government for dragging the country into

%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A8%D8%B1%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D9%88%D9%88%D9%8A; Naftemporiki.gr, ''Dendias se synantēsē me al-Saud: ē Tourkia na anakalesei to casus belli'' [''Dendias to al-Saud: Turkey should stop threatening with casus belli'']. January 4, 2022 https://www.naftemporiki.gr/story/1818522/dendias-se-sunantisi-me-al-saount-i-tourkia-na-anakalesei-to-casus-belli

[102] Al-Quds, ''Ala nafaqati al-Riyadh.. al-Yunan satursil sawarikh patriot ila al-Sa 'udiyya lihimaiati munshaat niftiyya'' [''On Riyadh's expenses.. Greece will send Patriot missiles to Saudi Arabia to protect oil installations'']. February 4, 2020 https://www.alquds.co.uk/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%B1%D8%B3%D9%84-%D8%B5%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%88%D8%AA-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B9/

[103] Emily Hokayem, ''Reassuring Gulf Partners while Recalibrating US Security Policy'', *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, May 18, 2021 https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/05/18/reassuring-gulf-partners-while-recalibrating-u.s.-security-policy-pub-84522

[104] ''*Floros: ē Ellada moirazetai tis idies axies me tē Saudikē Aravia*'' [''*General Floros: Greece shares the same values with Saudi Arabia*''], video, 0:23 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtT0rsOqS_A

[105] ''*Dēlosē tou Prōthupourgou Kuriakou Mitsotaki meta tēn oloklērōsē tōn sunantēseōn tou sto Abu Dhabi*'' [''*Prime Minister's Kyriakos Mitsotakis statement upon the conclusion of his Abu Dhabi meetings*''], video, 0:30 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxq2NMo_jpg&t=32s

[106] Vasilis Nedos, ''Greece and the UAE sign a mutual defense agreement'', *Greece City Times*, November 23, 2020 https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/11/23/greece-uae-mutual-defense-clause/

conflicts overseas, the defenders of the new pact invoke the deployment of Emirati F-16s to Crete amidst tensions with Turkey in August 2020. One thing is for sure; whether the Greeks replicate the sort of defensive support they provided to the Saudis or they assume a more offensive role, their military presence in the Gulf should be seen as complementary to the American and the French one[107].

Conclusion

This chapter offered a detailed account of how pro-Arabism in Greece evolved as a repertoire of policies, stances and sentiments that manifest themselves dynamically both at home and abroad. In each period Greek – Arab relations unfolded against the background of certain incentives and obstacles emanating from an interplay of ideological choices, domestic pressure and geopolitical realities. The conservative governments of the late 1940s and 1950s and the populist PASOK of the 1980s alike defied – to some extent – their NATO and EEC partners by coopting radical Arab leaders at the height of their confrontation with the West. Furthermore, until quite recently a consensus was prevalent in the Greek political landscape concerning the taboo issue of Israel's recognition. Contrariwise, today's pro-Arabism is fully reconciled with Western and Israeli pursuits. This study also demonstrated that several governments, regardless of their ideological outlook, optimized relations with Arab states that have been at odds with Turkey. In that sense, pro-Arab policies are held hostage to the unresolved Greek – Turkish disputes, even if Greek – Arab interests do not always overlap. Last but not least, by assessing the Greek pro-Arabism in retrospect, it seems that it succeeded in some of its objectives, such us mustering Arab support for the Cyprus Question or against the Turkish – Libyan Memorandum and orchestrating the Euro – Arab dialogues, like the 1984 Elounda Agreement; yet, it failed to shield Greek capitalist interests from Nasser's nationalizations or to attract the much promised Arab investments. Greece will definitely continue to exploit her pro-Arab historical capital; she should keep an eye open though so as not get trapped in the moving sand of this turbulent region.

[107] Paul Iddon, ''Will Greece Help the UAE Defend Itself?'', *Forbes,* February 8, 2022 https://www.forbes.com/sites/pauliddon/2022/02/08/will-greece-help-the-uae-defend-itself/?sh=16f8651559b8

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