



## THE GEOPOLITICAL PROBLEMS FACING GREECE

George Economou

We live in interesting, albeit dangerous times. Some countries are condemned by geography to play a pivotal role in the history of their region and of the world. One such country is Greece which is an entry country into the Continent of Europe.

Although not the oldest civilisation, Greek civilisation, because of the make up of the country and its extensive exposure to the sea, was the first one to spread to the known world. The Greeks formed colonies all over the Mediterranean where they grafted their language and customs which endured until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and not only in Europe which one may be justified to argue that it shares the same civilisation, but also in Egypt (Alexandria), Syria and Turkey, whose coast was originally inhabited by Greeks.

Apart from geography, however, other factors such as the size and the homogeneity (ομοιογένεια) of the population play a pivotal role in maintaining a country's importance, especially to-day. With the climatic cosmogonic changes and the unprecedented movement of populations from countries that have been vulnerable due to climate or wars, states of the European Union, North America and Australia are in danger of being swamped by alien civilisations, highly incompatible with the natives in cultural terms. The numbers are so high and the protection afforded to multiculturalism by international conventions, adopted in recent times, so much, that assimilation is no longer possible.

### Relations with Turkey

In recent years with the rise of Islam in its more belligerent form financed by Saudi Arabia, the whole of Europe is under threat. I suspect that this is exploited by Turkey, whose ambition and (not so secret) policy is to become the leader of the Muslim world and revive the Caliphate. Since 2016 Turkey is controlling an area of 3.500 km<sup>2</sup> in northern Syria, which includes Afrin, Jarabulus and Hierapolis. Turkey supports the creation of "a safe zone of 30-40 km. in North Syria where it proposes to transfer a large number of the 4.0 mil. Syrians who

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Turkey claims that they are now refugees in Turkey. Ankara will undertake to build new, modern towns. In reality Erdoğan's proposal aims to clear the area on the North of Syria along its borders, to separate forcibly the Kurdish area between Turkey and Syria and the local population to abandon their land and become refugees. Turkey plans to assist these refugees to emigrate to Europe, although Turkey receives billions from the EU in order to keep them in place. Despite this Turkey facilitates them to cross to Europe by sea or by land, using the money from Europe to populate the safe zone in north Syria with fanatical Sunni Arabs and Turks who are enemies of the local Kurds, Yazidi and Alevites who have been living there for centuries. Thus Turkey acquires a huge strip of Syrian territory which will be evacuated from its indigenous residents and populate it with friendly population. Its own Kurdish inhabitants will be confined within the Turkish borders with no means of escape over to Syria when Turkey decides to proceed to their subdual by sending in the Army.

Greece, being a gate to Europe, is the first European country that is in danger of being overwhelmed by immigrants from the East and also from Africa. The flow has already started. This, combined with the steady reduction of Greece's indigenous population exacerbated by immigration due to the dire economic situation and made worse by the very hard economic measures imposed by its European allies, transforms Greece into the Trojan Horse of Europe.

The situation becomes worse when we take a look at developments within Greece. Turks have managed to become the dominant Muslim minority within Greece through the systematic policy of Turkey, which succeeded in integrating the Pomacs and the Romany. Recently a purely Turkish Party (D.E.B. – Friendship, Equality and Peace Party, the old party of Ahmet Sadic) was formed, which at some future election will field its own candidates for the Greek Parliament nationwide, perhaps jointly with the Rainbow party, composed of believers in a Slavic Macedonia. The worst case scenario in this case is for the D.E.B. to become the balancer of the Greek Parliament as happened with the Turkish Party in Bulgaria.

In addition to the continuous harassment of Greece through aerial violations, fishing boat bullying in the Aegean, Turkey facilitates immigrants to enter Greece illegally (for example the AirTicket from African countries to Istanbul is very cheap and from there the immigrants are assisted to cross the Aegean or the Greek-Turkish border in the North). Turkey is developing its relations, mostly through the local Turkish population, with the Balkan countries either by financial assistance or by undertaking to develop projects of mutual benefit so that Turkey may be looked upon as the "big brother" and a "benefactor".

Turkey has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Libya, a binding agreement according to Turkey which Erdogan has ratified through the Turkish Parliament delineating its EEZ with a veneer of legality EEZ with Libya, ignoring the rights of the islands of Crete, Rhodes and of the South Aegean in general.

This has been condemned by the EU, the US and Russia but Turkey aspires to proceed with its plans. Inevitably this will test Greece. This is an opportune moment for Greece to press its allies in Europe and Eastern Mediterranean to forge a closer strategic alliance in order to frustrate the threats and plans of Turkey for the whole region.

Add to this Turkey's firm and intertemporal policy to control the Aegean and its wish "to penalise" Greece for being the first country to win its independence from the Turkish Empire, its expenditure of huge amounts on armaments and nuclear energy stations which at some stage soon will allow Turkey to produce a nuclear device, and its openly expressed policy, supported by its superior military prowess, to become the main beneficiary of the underwater exploration of hydrocarbon in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is abundantly clear that Greece has no alternative but to make changes to its strategic doctrine and military policies which may have served her well in the past, but now require updating.

#### Relations with Albania and N. Macedonia

To continue with the dangers surrounding Greece, Albania, encouraged by the separation of Kosovo from Serbia which imposed by the West and its recognition by major powers, is now dreaming to become a "great Albania", making life difficult to its Greek minority, refusing to honour agreements and being in the process of raising claims against Greece in international fora on behalf of Chams (Τσάμηδες) who claim the whole of Thesprotia.

Albania has allowed Turkey to built a naval base for combat vessels which may threaten the Greek Ionian Islands. Further, despite the fact Greece and Albania have signed an international agreement on the delineation of the EEZ between the two countries, Albania, on the instigation of Turkey, asked its Constitutional Court to declare the agreement unconstitutional and until today is refusing to be bound by it.

Greece has recently signed an international agreement recognizing FYROM by the name of Northern Macedonia. Unfortunately two mistakes were made: (a) the agreement did not provide for the amendment of FYROM's Constitution in all matters agreed between the two countries before it came into force and (b) the agreement was not guaranteed by the EU and the United States, therefore it depends for its full and proper implementation on the goodwill of the future governments of Northern Macedonia.

#### The growing irrelevance of NATO and Greece's options

Another factor that has to be taken seriously into consideration is the effectiveness of NATO which in view of the evolving strategic global situation is becoming out-dated. We are now witnessing its slow demise. After the end of the Cold War NATO has become irrelevant, no matter how the American deep state wishes to revive the confrontation between the West and Russia. Very recently, President Macron used the words "dead horse" in order to describe NATO.

Did the West go to war when Russia recognised Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia or when it deprived Ukraine of Crimea?

Which NATO country, except Turkey for its own reasons, is prepared to go to war for a third country? I think none. Yugoslavia cannot be repeated and neither can the Arab Spring. Both experiments have proved disastrous and their effects can be seen today – Syria, Libya, etc.

What was achieved by the Arab Spring is to strengthen in most Arab countries the hold of the Muslim Brotherhood which has its headquarters in Turkey, controls the recognised government of Libya and has a huge following in Egypt and in most Sunni Arab countries, except perhaps Saudi Arabia. Turkey is supporting the government of Libya with money and armaments and in exchange is demanding agreement on the EEZ. If this materialises, Greece's EEZ in the South of Crete is almost halved.

This new situation, requires new commitments, new thinking and a new approach. How can a small country such as Greece (and in this respect we should put into the picture Cyprus because together with Greece they acquire depth and their effectiveness is multiplied geometrically), maintain or even enhance its importance, increase its power, earn the respect of its allies and, at the same time, maintain peace on its terms, avoiding Finlandisation which is the least aim and plan of Turkey for Greece and subjugation which is the declared policy of Turkey for Cyprus?

In my view Greece should take the following steps.

First, it should have a strategic plan based on the contemporary realities which should be firmly adhered to.

Secondly, Greece should extend its territorial waters to ten miles so that they be compatible with the national air space. Too much energy and money is spent "defending" our air space. Despite the fact that Turkey has said that extending the territorial waters is a "cause for war" (casus belli) Greece must extend its territorial waters without any further delay. It is very doubtful whether Turkey will declare war or even proceed with the capture of an island or two. This will be a clear violation of international law and will be squarely condemned by the EU and indeed the U.N. In any case our military experts maintain that at present Greece has the capacity to repel or strike back successfully if Turkey attempts to attack the mainland or even invade an island. Further, if Turkey makes an attempt, even if successful, and we strike back, Erdoğan could face domestic doubt. His political enemies await such a move, and he knows it. He is too clever to risk a war. But even if he does, Turkey, and Erdoğan, could risk suffering a devastating blow to their prestige, which could be fatal for Erdoğan's political future.

Further, if such a situation develops the EU cannot remain indifferent. It will side with Greece and will be obliged to impose serious sanctions on Turkey. Also the United States. Very recently the EU decided on extended sanctions against Turkey following a complaint from Cyprus.

The Congress of the United States has recently voted against providing Turkey with advanced military equipment, as it is no longer a reliable ally. The House of Representatives has also recognized the ethnic cleansing of the Armenians in the

early 20<sup>th</sup> century and has it voted for the imposition of sanctions on Turkey that will bring it on its knees economically. We are now awaiting to see whether the Senate will follow suit. Despite these moves, the American deep state finds it convenient to have Turkey in NATO because it believes, wrongly, that Turkey will fight NATO's (and America's) wars. This is wishful thinking. Turkey will always act according to its own interests. After all, Turkey is historically known as the "Evasive Neutral".

Eventually, I believe that it will be sooner rather than later, that the United States will be forced to abandon Turkey. With modern warfare developing as it does it is no longer necessary to rely on unreliable allies. At the same time Turkey will move further from the West as it is now in the grandiose stage of believing that it can control on its own the whole Eastern Mediterranean and most of the Middle East.

Greece has always been a loyal ally of the United States. The relationship goes back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when substantial numbers of Greeks emigrated to the States for a better future. A long term agreement with the United States covering Souda Bay, the foremost Base in the Mediterranean, together with other bases and facilities in Greece coupled with a base in Cyprus, is a full substitute for Turkey and for the facilities which Turkey offers. Apparently such a policy is now being followed and both parties are proceeding with its formulation and implementation.

Greece with Cyprus is slowly but steadily developing a close relationship with Israel, Egypt and the other countries in the region and this relationship, based on the common interest for the wealth of the Mediterranean in hydrocarbons should develop into an alliance which will counter balance the power of Turkey. Turkey has not signed the Montego Bay Agreement on the Law of the Sea and wants to extend its EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone – AOZ) to our, and our neighbours' detriment. Greece should avoid substantial discussions on the issue with Turkey, even if pressed, before it has taken the steps outlined above. There should only be contacts between officials when there are accidents or misunderstandings in order to smooth things over. It was a dangerous initiative for the Prime Minister to meet Erdoğan in New York. The previous meeting in Athens between Erdoğan and Tsipras was a disaster and it opened the bag of Aeolus. This was made worse when former Minister of Foreign Affairs Katrougalos met Çavuşoğlu in Turkey in early July of this year, and felt obliged to offer to Turkey co-management of offshore resources. Thank God the meeting between Erdoğan and Mitsotakis did not advance beyond formalities. Talks beyond the obvious between neighbours are not required at this stage. We don't claim anything from Turkey – they claim everything from us. And given the latest statements of Çavuşoğlu in the Greek Press and in the U.N. and of Erdoğan when addressing the U.N., Turkey interprets a win-win situation as "what is mine is mine and what is yours is mine".

We should meet Erdoğan only when we implement a new strategy and after declaring our EEZ. If Turkey does not agree with the demarcations then we should apply to the International Court or to international arbitration in order to solve the only dispute we have with Turkey in a civilised and neighbourly manner. If

Turkey refuses, will it declare war? Will anyone support Turkey? International law creates obligations and responsible states are not, in my opinion, ready to ignore. Indicatively despite the pessimistic opinion of many Greeks, recently the Council of Ministers of the EU unanimously imposed sanctions because of Turkey's unlawful behavior on the Cyprus EEZ, despite the fact that many EU countries have substantial economic interests in Turkey.

#### The Cyprus problem and the proposed new talks

Cyprus was very lucky when the talks at Crans-Montana broke down. I believe that President Anastasiades with the assistance of the Greek minister of Foreign Affairs, Kotsias realised at the last moment the trap and drew back. Çavuşoğlu was ready to accept that the Turkish army withdraws completely from Cyprus within a number of years.

Be that as it may, the new talks that have been proposed by the Secretary - General and his staff and agreed by the parties are problematic. Turkey has since the last round of talks hardened its negotiating position and demands (a) specific timetable and if no agreement is reached then it implies that the Northern part will continue its own way, (b) equality in everything, i.e. the rights of the 18% Turks to equal the rights of the 80% of Greeks, (c) the continued guarantee of Turkey for the protection of the Turkish Cypriots, (d) equal rights of the two federal states to the hydrocarbons in the Cypriot EEZ, (e) both parties to have equal say and decide together on the extractions from the EEZ.

Furthermore, I suspect that if an agreement is reached, Turkey will demand from the central government of Cyprus the money that Ankara has spent all these years supporting the North. Turkey even charges for the water it supplies the North. Also Turkey will demand that Cyprus limits its EEZ in favour of Turkey by accepting the Turkish position which is incompatible with the provisions of Law of the Sea. In this case the EEZ of Cyprus cannot be joined with the EEZ of Greece and Egypt and Castellorizo will be lost for Greece.

Finally, and most important, Turkey does not recognize the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and has a precarious theory about a possible agreement. According to Turkey the two communities will come together and form a new state (Parthenogenesis). This purifies Turkey of the invasion and occupation of Cyprus, the murder of thousands of Greeks, the ethnic cleansing and the forceful deportation of over 200,000 Greeks from their homes. Further, it legitimises the hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants settled on purpose to Cyprus so that the ratio of the population be altered to the advantage of the Turks. It is a well known fact that the illegal Turkish immigrants are now more than the Turkish Cypriots and together with the Turkish army control the illegal state.

This state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue. So long as Turkey does not recognise the Republic of Cyprus there should not be any talks.

My proposal for Cyprus is that the Cypriot government should amend the present constitution in order to become a modern functional Constitution. The rights of the Turkish Cypriot community are to be protected with specific provisions.



Otherwise in a few years Cyprus will be unable to resist first Finlandisation and secondly complete subjugation to Turkey. Greek Cypriots will eventually be forced to emigrate as Greeks were forced to leave Turkey in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.