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***MASTER'S DEGREE IN SOUTHEAST EUROPEAN STUDIES***

***Greek Foreign Policy towards Turkey and  
the role of the EU and the US***

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To Erotospilia of Porto Rafti

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## **Preface**

I undertook this study mainly because an investigation of the Greek foreign policy vis-à-vis Turkey offers the opportunity to elucidate the process of change or not of the Greek considerations. This can be done through taking into account the role of the EU and of the US, the two decisive factors affecting Greek foreign policy. The repetitive references of the media on the Greek – Turkish relations, building or collapsing myths or realities, challenge a young researcher to study and assess different approaches and pluralism of views.

## Introduction

A quick look in the extensive literature concerning the Greek-Turkish relations can easily show how determinant was the EU and the US factors during the last decade. Especially the period 1996-2006 the EU and the US influenced Greek foreign policy and the way how Greece was considering Turkey. The decisive role of the EU and of the US is taken for granted the last years and it is not of much interest to point it out. The key events for Greek foreign policy of the last decade are the Imia Crisis (1996), the Helsinki summit (1999) and the developments marked in 2004 (Cyprus accession, end of Helsinki strategy), which are a turning point that clearly show the changes of the Greek considerations vis-à-vis Turkey and the effective or not role that EU and US have played.

The research question of the project is how effective had been the role of the EU and the US the period 1996-2006 on how Greek foreign policy towards Turkey had been formed. In other words, how effective were the EU and the US as factors that have an impact on the Greek foreign policy? The answer on the questions can be given by defining what effectiveness means in the case of the EU and the US and their impact on Greek foreign policy:

1. Whether or not Greece's external policy follows the principles and the objectives of the EU and the US; that is to say, whether or not Greece supports Turkey's European perspective and improves the bilateral relations.
2. Whether or not Greek foreign policy is stable and steady the last decade towards the support of Turkey's European perspective and the resolution of the Greek-Turkish differences.
3. Greek foreign policy towards Turkey is not a matter of dispute among Greek politicians (ministers, representatives) and Greek people, but Greek position appears to be as a result of consent.
4. Timetables and the set deadlines designed by the EU and the US are followed.
5. Whether or not the bilateral differences-which fire the bilateral relations-are being resolved.

The main contention of the thesis is that the EU and the US had to a large extent, but not fully, been effective. On the one hand, Athens had been conformed with the US and the EU objectives and the Greek foreign policy the last decade had to a large extent been moved towards the rapprochement and the support of Turkey's European perspective. Yet these efforts and the change made mainly from 1999 have not yet fully accomplished. The existence of tensions and of unresolved differences put the rapprochement at stake and questions the effectiveness of the EU and the US factors.

As far as methodology is concerned, the dissertation follows the historical narrative method through an analysis of the events, given the impact that the US

and the EU had on Greek internal considerations. The investigation was based on the comparison between different views and approaches. Primary sources (such as recorded talks are, extracts of which are presented in the annex) and secondary ones (e.g. books, articles and daily Greek press) have been used for the needs of the thesis.

## **The Imia Crisis**

### **1. Literature Review**

**Athanassopoulou Ekavi, 'Blessing in Disguise? The Imia Crisis and Turkish-Greek Relations', *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol.2, No. 3 (Winter 1997) pp. 76-101.**

The article explains the US and the EU policy towards the Greek-Turkish dispute and the impact on Greek political circles. It considers the Imia crisis as a 'blessing in disguise', that is to say, as a chance to reach a better level of understanding, to break past policies and conceptions between Greece and Turkey. Kostas Simitis, the Greek prime minister, is considered to be the person, who gave a different dimension on how Greece should face from now on the issue of Greek – Turkish relations.

Our focus is on the impact of the American mediation and the European Union factor, as being analysed through the Greek internal political situation, covering statements of Greek politicians, showing the distance of opinions between the Greek prime minister and ministers of his cabinet, and revealing the Greek political conception during and mainly the following events of the Imia crisis up to the Madrid joint statement.

The American initiative and the reasons why in the end was turned down by Athens, the US pressure on both sides to reach a better level of understanding, the confidence-building measures proposed by NATO (May 1996), the fact that the Council of Ministers rejected a motion proposed by Athens (February 1996), the Mediterranean Aid programme (MEDA) blocked by Athens, the Greek veto on financial assistance and on Turkey's customs union with the EU, are issues addressed by this article and which this dissertation is searching, trying to show the effectiveness of the American and of the EU role.

**Ifantis Kostas, 'Strategic Imperatives and Regional Upheavals: On the US Factor in Greek-Turkish relations', *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 5 No. 1, (Spring 2004), pp. 21-44.**

The paper evaluates the interaction of four environments: the US foreign policy priorities, the bilateral relations, the domestic political arenas and the international environment. The paper can be useful not only for the Imia crisis but in the following chapters as well, since it covers the US factor from the cold war to 2004.

Ifantis' article examines the Greek considerations in the field of the US role in the Greek-Turkish relations. The author emphasizes on the interaction between power position and regional behaviour. Ifantis make clear that the US initiatives to normalize Greek-Turkish relations have been unsuccessful and he argues that the Aegean and Cyprus pose a 'continuous crisis prevention situation for the United States'. However,

since the mid 1990s there is a reformulation in the Greek policy vis-à-vis Turkey due to Greece's priority and ability to fully incorporate in the EU.

**Kouris Nikos, *Ελλάδα-Τουρκία ο πενήνταετής πόλεμος* [Greece-Turkey the fifty-year war], Athens, 1997 Nea Sunora.**

Nikos Kouris, the Greek wing commander, honorary leader of General Staff of National Defence and former deputy of defence during the Imia crisis, refers in the last chapter of his book to the Imia dispute. He considers the decisions taken by the Greek side as a compromise, which harmed the Greek sovereignty rights. He argues that the US factor fully supported the Turkish side while forcing the Greek policy to negotiate and put in the agenda of the bilateral relations issues that had not been questioned in the past. According to Kouris, 'grey areas' is an achievement of Ankara based on false management, lack of agreement and acceptance of negotiations. Concerning the Imia crisis, he supports the idea that it is an example of Turkish aggressiveness and part of the strategy of demanding as more as possible in order to gain part of the claims, and that will be repeated on the near future. The American mediation did not resolve the crisis, but just postpone it for the future. The value of Kouris' witness is that he was a member of Simitis government with the policy of whom he disagreed.

**Liberis Christos, *Πορεία σε ταραγμένες θάλασσες* (March in turbulent seas), Athens, Poiotita 1999.**

The book of Christos Liberis, the Greek admiral and chief of General Staff of National Defence, is an autobiography of his career. The fifteen chapter of his book is devoted to the Imia crisis. In that chapter he describes all the details of the crisis and explains his position and the reasons of all the decisions taken in every moment of the crisis.

Liberis, one of the Greek protagonists of the crisis, supports in his book the idea that Greece should have followed a different approach towards the crisis. He argues that instead of a diplomatic policy, a more aggressive policy – and in some cases even war - should have been the priority of the Greek government. He accuses Greek prime minister for lack of knowledge in the fields of defence and external policy. He supports the idea that the political leadership (including prime minister, foreign minister, minister of defence) turned against the armed forces and blamed them for their faults.

**Simitis Kostas, *Πολιτική για μια δημιουργική Ελλάδα 1996-2004* (Policy for a creative Greece 1996-2004), Polis 2005.**

Kostas Simitis, the Greek prime minister during the crisis, in his last book published a year after his resignation from the prime ministry and the elections of

2004, describes the policy of PASOK during the years 1996-2004. In that book K. Simitis analyses in almost 20 pages the Imia crisis. The former Greek prime minister argues that Imia are part of the Greek sovereignty and recognizes as the only difference between the two countries that of the continental shelf, which is the main argument of the Greek foreign policy. As far as the crisis is concerned, he supported the de-escalation and the American mediation. He argues that the diplomatic solution was in favour of Greece. He considers as responsible for the mistakes and the omissions of the Greek side the armed forces and especially the admiral Liberis. The main thesis of the head of the Greek government is avoidance of war and peaceful resolution through the mechanism of mediation.

Simitis book, which will be useful for the Helsinki summit as well, express the reasoning of all the decisions taken by the prime minister and analyses the ways in which the EU and the US had an impact on the foreign policy. Mainly it notes the impact and the perceptions of the Greek prime minister who was responsible for the external policy during the crisis and on the ensuing developments.

## **2. The Crisis and the American mediation**

Greek - American relations had never been an easy case. Since 1974 every year on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November Greek people demonstrate and realize a march in the American embassy. The Greek governments have not been satisfied with the US stance towards the Greek - Turkish relations. According to Athens, Washington followed a more tolerant policy towards Ankara than expected. Greek external policy expected from US to exert pressure on Ankara to abandon claims in the Aegean and solve the Cyprus issue.

United States considered both Greece and Turkey - both members of NATO- as important allies with whom should maintain a policy of 'equidistance'. The New Democracy governments (1974-1981) normalized the bilateral relations with Washington, while in the 1980s the PASOK governments gave priority in strengthening the ties with the US. However, they were both parties disappointed by the aggressiveness shown by Ankara and the tolerance that characterized Washington. From the US perspective, as long as stability in the north-eastern flank of NATO was not at stake, there was no need to interfere in the Greek - Turkish dispute.

In addition, Washington demanded from Athens to open a dialogue and sign a settlement with Ankara. According to Athens, dialogue with Turkey had been an unacceptable policy. Opening a dialogue meant that Greece was recognizing the Turkish demands. That policy was giving the chance to Turkey to ask for more and become more aggressive.

In the beginning of January 1996 the Greek internal political situation had been unsteady. Since November the Greek prime minister Andreas Papandreu had been in a serious situation in the hospital and substantially the country had

been ungoverned. The absence of a prime minister and the gap created in the leadership in the party and in the government as well, and especially the fact of the delayed resignation from the prime ministry caused reactions among members of the leading party PASOK. Theodoros Paggalos, Vaso Papandreou, Anastasios Peponis and Kostas Simitis formed the so-called 'team of four', asked from the prime minister to resign and criticized the intimate environment of A. Papandreou that was influencing him.

The Imia crisis officially begun on 29 December 1995 with the Turkish verbal note, which was given to the Greek ambassador in Ankara and which questioned the Greek sovereignty in Imia. The first Greek reaction towards the crisis came on 9 January 1996. The Greek embassy denied and rejected the Turkish claims. The response of the 9<sup>th</sup> of January explained that Imia are part of Dodecanese and therefore according to the Treaty of Paris belonged to Greece. It is noted that the Greek argument was mainly based on law and on treaties, and especially on the agreement between Italy and Turkey (1932), which delimited the boundaries between Dodecanese and the Turkish coast, and on the Treaties of Lausanne (1923) and of Paris (1947) as well. Not only did Greece reject the Turkish claims but also declared that she was not willing to negotiate issues that undoubtedly belonged and dealt with Greece's national sovereignty.

Andreas Papandreou finally resigned on 15 January and a week later Kostas Simitis was elected in the second round as the prime minister by the parliamentary team of PASOK. In the new government important portfolio received the three other persons of the 'team of four'.<sup>1</sup> On 25 January 1996 the Turkish newspaper Hurriyet brought into light the issue and called into question the Greek sovereignty of the islet. The same day the mayor of Kalymnos together with three fellow-citizens of him went over the islet and raised the Greek flag. Two days later and after Turkish journalists had landed by helicopter in the islet and raised the Turkish flag in the place of the Greek one, the Greek navy struck the flag and raised once again the Greek one.

On 30 January 1996 the American President Bill Clinton communicated with Kostas Simitis. Clinton explained to the Greek prime minister his concern and fear for an escalation of the crisis between Greece and Turkey and recommended to take all the necessary measures in order to avoid war.<sup>2</sup> In the governmental meeting of the same night, which took place in the prime minister's office in the Parliament, the prime minister explained, on the one hand, that he was against a war and, on the other hand, that he was against a direct dialogue between Greece and Turkey and therefore against an imposition of negotiations with Turkey on

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<sup>1</sup> It is noted that Theodoros Paggalos undertook the foreign ministry from Karolos Papoulias, the current president of the Hellenic Republic.

<sup>2</sup> Kostas Simitis referring to their conversation notes that 'From our conversation I came to the conclusion that USA was worried, but that it had not been into partnership with the Turkish positions' Simitis K., *Πολιτική για μια δημιουργική Ελλάδα 1996-2004* [Policy for a creative Greece 1996-2004], Polis 2005.

issues that arose in the Aegean. According to the Greek prime minister, the policy of 'no dialogue' with Turkey led to the mediation of the US factor, as the only factor, which could influence Ankara.

It is striking that at 3. 30 a.m. in 31 January it was Richard Holbrooke, the US envoy, who phoned and informed Th. Paggalos, the Greek foreign minister, that Turkish commandos had occupied the west islet of Imia. Few hours later, perhaps in one of the most difficult nights<sup>3</sup> of the Greek political scene of the last decade, the Greek government agreed with the American foreign minister Christofer the simultaneously departure of both the Greek and the Turkish forces. US guaranteed to the Greek side the no coming back of the Turkish forces.

The US mediation -to a large extent and at least on the eve of the crisis – as adopted by the Greek prime minister, created the reaction not only in the opposition parties, but among members of the government and representatives of PASOK as well. During the crisis, the most significant development of the Greek internal situation was the disagreement between members of the government and the general staff of national defence. The internal crisis was fueled by the two different approaches of how to deal with the crisis, the diplomatic or the direct and aggressive policy.

The Greek prime minister supported the de-escalation and the diplomatic resolution of the crisis. In his book he explains that: 'I believed that any continuing of the tension would have had particularly negative consequences for the international image of the country and of the economic stability. The developed countries avoid conflicts and are not misled by them'.<sup>4</sup> The Greek prime minister focused on the political dimension and not on the military aspect of the issue. It is characteristic the decision taken by K. Simitis to convene the government not in the ministry of defense, as it had been used in a case of war, but in the prime minister's office. He wanted to give the impression that Greece was not facing a war and that any crisis should be dealt with political means and not with a military operation.

On the other hand, a number of ministers seemed to have a different opinion. Gerasimos Arsenis, the minister of defense, did not fully support that idea. G. Arsenis, who was one of the four who contested the succession of Andreas Papandreou in the prime ministry, tried to balance between the diplomatic and the military way. For instance, Kostas Simitis mentions in his book that the Ministry of Defence did not inform for the striking of the Turkish flag and the raising of the Greek one. While the crisis was reaching an end, Arsenis took Simitis side. Chr. Liberis mentions that the relations between Simitis and Arsenis were ruined because of the failure of the minister to be the successor of A. Papandreou in the prime ministry.

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<sup>3</sup> Around 4 o'clock a Greek helicopter fell, while trying to locate the Turkish commandos in the west Imia. Due to weather conditions three officers were lost. The relatives of the officers did not accept the official explanation of the incident.

<sup>4</sup> Simitis K, op.cit, p. 62.

Nikos Kouris, the deputy of defence and honorary chief of general staff of national defence, argues that K. Simitis did not trust the military forces of the country. To his view, the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs should have been during the crisis in the National Center of Operations where all the information were arriving and where there was a clear and real picture of the situation in every stage of the crisis. According to N. Kouris the dilemma of the Imia crisis was mainly between war and compromise. The compromise was against the Greek benefit. According to Kouris, it is impressive how the Greek part was divided into three parts: that of the prime minister, that of the foreign minister and that of the minister of defense each one negotiating in a different level with the US factor. According to Kouris, one of the reasons of the Greek failure is that Simitis background was mainly economics and he was by that time inexperienced in issues of defense and of external policy.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, Christos Liberis, the Greek admiral and chief of general staff of national defence openly disagreed with the prime minister. He had a completely different approach towards the crisis and that led to the disagreement while the crisis had been developing. The opposition mainly between the heads of the political and the military leadership led K. Simitis to ask Liberis to resign few days later. Liberis refused considering that his resignation would have meant acceptance of all the mistakes made by the Greek side. According to Liberis, the political leadership changed a stance during the crisis and blamed for all the faults made the military side.

In the parliamentary discussion on 31 January the opposition parties and especially that of New Democracy and Politiki Anoiksi - particularly when K. Simitis thanked the US for their role during the crisis - accused the government for 'national betrayal'.

Soon after the Imia crisis, Nicholas Burns, deputy of the American foreign ministry, declared that 'US does not recognize Greek or Turkish sovereignty in Imia and it is thought likely the existence of other islets of the same situation'. As far as the Greek side is concerned, the status of the Imia was undoubtedly part of Greek sovereignty and only the International Court of Justice could have clarify it. For the US, the sovereignty of the islet was unclear and the Court of Justice had been just one possible arbitration body. Therefore, US suggested the dialogue between the two countries. Turkey had no intention to resolve the issue through the International Court.

The rejection of the dialogue by Athens had mainly to do with the internal developments of PASOK. Kostas Simitis had been elected as prime minister, but he still was not the party leader of PASOK. The reaction of members of his party against him made clear that any effort for a settlement with Turkey would have been considered as compromise and would have caused him the election as the new leader of the party. The PASOK congress had been scheduled for six months later in June 1996.

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<sup>5</sup> See annex pp. 52-53 the extracts from the conversation with N. Kouris.

At this juncture, the Greek government accepting the American mediation chose to avoid the escalation and a possible war that would have driven Greek – Turkish relations to a severe crisis with incalculable damages. Even if the government had no intention to promote – at least to this point – the rapprochement, its aim was to avoid tension. The government had been faced with opposition from within the cabinet and it was evident that Simitis had to take into account all the different voices in his party regarding the forthcoming congress.

The effectiveness of the US factor should be seen through the achievement to prevent an escalation between the two NATO members. The impact of the US was decisive on the Greek government, which started considering that normalization of the relations should have been the priority of the Greek external policy. However, in the beginning of 1996 the bilateral differences were considered to be far from reaching an agreement and a great number of representatives within the leading party strongly supported past policies.

### **3. European Union: inaction and action**

During the crisis European Union - in contradiction to the US - did not take any initiative to prevent it. EU considered Turkey as an important regional player, taking into account its geostrategic position in the Middle East, in the Central Asia, in Caucasus and in Southeast Europe. In no way did EU want to put at risk its relations with Turkey. Turkey's pro-western policy and therefore its close military and political relationship with the west were a significant issue for EU. In addition, Turkey constituted a remarkable market of 70 million people and EU had shown its economic interest for Turkey the previous year when signing the customs union agreement, which was now expected to be implemented.<sup>6</sup>

Greece was astonished by the EU inaction while the conflict was taking place.<sup>7</sup> Greece expected from the EU to play a key role in the crisis and at least to be a mediator. In the Greek eyes, not only should the EU follow a carrot and stick policy towards Turkey during the crisis, but also in the following months as well. Turkish aggressiveness had been so unreasonable that EU should have been more demanding and driving towards Turkish policy over the Aegean. However, EU considered that there was no reason to relate that issue with the EU-Turkish economic relations. Besides, the signing of the customs union agreement a year before indicated that EU did not relate the Greek-Turkish relations or the internal developments in Turkey, such as the Kurdish or the human rights issues are, to their bilateral economic progress. As far as the Greek – Turkish relations are concerned, EU officials laid the blame on both Ankara and Athens.

In the aftermath of the crisis and only when the war between the two countries had been avoided did the European Union start playing a role. The first action of the EU came on 16 February 1996 when the European Parliament

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<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, according to Wolfgang Schussel, Austrian vice-chancellor and minister of foreign affairs, Turkey was useful because had both stabilizing and destabilizing potential.

<sup>7</sup> The Greek prime minister admits in his book that 'European Union is surprisingly absent'.

questioned the Turkish claims over the islet and stated that the borders of Greece constituted borders of the EU as well.<sup>8</sup>

However positive was the statement for the Greek side, EU made soon clear that by no means was taking sides in the dispute. It is characteristic that ten days later EU rejected the motion with which Athens suggested that the financial aid to Turkey should be based on three preconditions: forbiddance of use of arms in the Aegean; respect of the status quo in the Aegean; pressure on Turkey to appeal to The Hague to resolve the differences with Greece. Britain vetoed the motion and other European capitals followed. It is obvious only few days after the crisis how different were the views between the Greek and the other European countries regarding the issue. The Greek claim that economic relations of the Community should be used as a means to exert pressure on Turkey and on the unacceptable Turkish requests had no repercussion on the EU side.

As far as the Greek side is concerned, it did not remain in verbal accusations but proceeded in diplomatic means as well. Greece vetoed the first financial package to Turkey, an assistance package of \$250 million. Moreover, Greece blocked the release of the Mediterranean Aid programme (MEDA), which was to grant financial aid to Turkey along with other Mediterranean countries. It is remarkable that this policy contradicted to the previous statements of the prime minister Kostas Simitis.

Greece in all the meetings with the EU partners pointed out that Turkey was systematically questioning the Greek sovereignty rights. The Turkish challenge dealt with:

- The Greek sovereignty over the Greek islands, especially that of Dodecanese, such as the Imia were, and generally over the Greek undisputable rights over the Aegean.
- The Greek right to defend the under threat islands, and guarantee the basic defence, according to the UN chart.
- The existence of continental shelf for the Aegean islands.
- The Greek national air space as it stands since 1931.
- The Flight Informational Region (FIR) needed for the air operational control.
- The Greek right to extend its territorial waters from six to twelve miles. Turkey - in the case of Greece putting into practice the extension of its territorial waters- threatened with a war (*casus belli*).

The Greek prime minister explains the foreign policy issued by Greece the months soon after the Imia crisis. Greece could not continue promoting the agreements between EU and Turkey, as far as Turkey was not implementing all the promises given in the customs union agreement in March 1995, concerning the declaration about good neighboring. Based on all this reasoning, Greece asked from the EU to promote all the needed regulation to enforce the EU security in

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<sup>8</sup> Athanassopoulou E., 'Blessing in Disguise? The Imia Crisis and Turkish-Greek Relations', *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol.2, No. 3 (Winter 1997), p. 79.

the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). It was only when Athens realized the Brussels detachment towards the Greek argumentation that the Greek government moved on a strict policy blocking financial packages of its neighbor and the same time challenging its relations with the EU.

With no doubt the main reason for not proceeding to an entire turn of the foreign policy had to do with the internal political situation of the party. With the election of the new leader of PASOK still pending, Simitis could not change completely the previous foreign policy. He had calculated the fact that members of his own government, PASOK representatives in the Parliament and members of his own party were opposing the idea of a dialogue with Turkey; they were claiming that the only difference with Turkey was that of the continental shelf and that the only way to be solved was to appeal to The Hague. Simitis would have been committing political suicide if he had agreed to a foreign minister's meeting without the support of his cabinet.<sup>9</sup>

Brussels could not for long put at risk the customs union agreement and jeopardise relations with Turkey. Since the confidence of the agreement was at risk, EU partners supported the idea of delaying the negotiations on Cyprus accession to the EU, if Greece insisted on its veto. Athens replied that if Brussels would have related the Greek veto to the Cyprus accession to the EU, then Greece would have vetoed the next EU enlargement. In the Greek domestic conversations the issue had been considered as a very crucial, since it was threatening Greece's relations with the other EU member – states.

Finally in July 1996 Greece withdrew its veto on the MEDA, but not on the financial aid linked with the customs union agreement. Even if the conditions that Greece had posed in order to lift its veto had not been fulfilled, Athens had to compromise with the statement made by the Council of Ministers, according to which the EU – Turkish relations should be based on international law and on the sovereignty and integrity respect of member states.

The Greek compromise and lift from veto had to do once more with the internal political developments. The PASOK congress in June and the election of Kostas Simitis as the new leader of the party released him from the pressure exerted on him the previous months, even if he had also to wait for the general elections that were to be held in September. However, it is questionable whether it was the prime minister's role or Greece's very weak position that left no choice to proceed to the lift. With no doubt could Greece – an EU member state - continue for a long time to be an obstacle to an agreement between EU and Turkey.

In the mid – 1996 the Greek foreign policy seemed to balance between what Greece considered as Greek national rights and between a new approach. The Greek veto expressed the disapproval towards the EU tolerance, but the lift of the veto expressed the acknowledgement that Greece in any case was a member of the EU and had to proceed to the Europeanization of its policies. The internal political

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<sup>9</sup> Athanassopoulou, op.cit, p. 84.

considerations were vague and not formed so as to support openly the idea of candidacy of Turkey.

#### 4. The rugged road towards an understanding

In the next month NATO involved in the Greek – Turkish conflict suggesting confidence – building measures and the Secretary General Javier Solana proposed the NATO mediation. The Greek side withdrew from the talks, when the Turkish side insisted that any dialogue with Greece should include the issue of the ‘grey areas’ as well.<sup>10</sup> Turkey also challenged Greece repeating the ‘casus belli’ in case that Greece would extend its territorial waters.

Moreover, in May 1996 the Turkish side claimed that Gavdos, the island south of Crete inhabited by Greeks, was a ‘grey area’, challenging even more the Greek external policy. The strong reaction of Greece was supported by the US, as a result of which Turkey had to take back its claim.

However, it is argued that Simitis intention for a change can be seen through specific statements and actions. Hint of his intention constituted the statement after the visit in the White House and the Clinton – Simitis meeting in April 1996. The prime minister expressed the will of the Greek side to discuss with Turkey the issues of air space and air-control over the Aegean.<sup>11</sup>

The election of Kostas Simitis in the leadership of the party in the summer of 1996 and the reelection of PASOK at the general elections in September strengthened his position. The ratification of his policy by the Greek people and the weakness of the opposition to persuade indicated that the Greek public opinion had been prepared for a shift and for a new approach in the Greek – Turkish relations.

However, the first crisis in the Greek ministry of foreign affairs came with the resignation of the deputy minister Christos Rozakis, professor of international law at the University of Athens and close friend of Kostas Simitis. Rozakis’ view



that there is no reason for Greece to extend its territorial waters to twelve miles, his support to the ‘step by step’ policy regarding the Greek – Turkish relations, contradicted the views of the minister of foreign affairs, Theodoros Pangalos, and of the minister of defence, Akis Tsohatzopoulos. Even if the official explanation of the resignation was Rozakis’ health problems, the Greek press underlined, firstly, the

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<sup>10</sup> With the term ‘grey areas’ the Turkish side implied the areas of the Aegean left uncharted by international treaties. It must be also mentioned that Turkey rose for the first time that issue. And therefore in the history of Greek – Turkish differences it is added another one, accepted only by Turkey.

<sup>11</sup> It was in the same month that a meeting between the Greek and the Turkish foreign ministers took place. It was in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation session in Bucharest on 27 April when both decided to repeat their meeting in Berlin in early June. Nevertheless, this did not mean an official dialogue.

substantial distance of views for diplomacy among ministers and prime minister, and secondly, that the resignation was considered to be a personal defeat of the prime minister, considering the fact that Rozakis was Simitis personal choice and signed a return to the previous external policy.

It seems that Rozakis' removal can be seen as a motion of the prime minister to avoid an alliance between the two ministers and reinforce the opposition within PASOK. Rozakis very short presence as deputy minister of foreign affairs (from 25 September 1996 to 3 February 1997) -and his replacement by Giannos Kranidiotis - had caused heated contrast in the government that indicated a more serious crisis in the future. Tsohatzopoulos, close collaborator of A. Papandreou, defeated at the second round in the last party congress, with more traditional views, openly showed his disagreement. Pangalos started balancing between conciliatory and traditionalistic or even nationalistic views. The main reason was power politics within the ministry of foreign affairs. Kranidiotis appointment was considered to be a personal success for Pangalos, because he was a personal friend of him.

In any case the resignation and mainly the declarations that followed, showed clearly that even if the government had the evident mandate to move on a new strategy concerning the bilateral relations, Simitis had still not consolidated his power. The 'old' and the 'new' PASOK were fighting for their identity, confused between the new era. The rivalry inside the party had slowed down the mechanism of decision-making. In addition, the new defence system, despite the promises for a reduction, increased the defence expenditures and signified the return to the old policy.

## **5. A wind of change and the cold winds**

It can be said that from April 1997 a wind of change characterized Greek – Turkish relations. This was due to a series of events that took place the following months and in which the EU and the NATO involvement played the key role. Agreements, meetings and even joint statements introduced by these two factors were in general terms accepted by the Greek foreign policy.

The Dutch presidency of the EU proposed the establishment of a committee of 'wise men' for pending bilateral differences. Both sides agreed that the reports were not binding and they also refused the involvement of a third party. The Greek government very soon clarified that the approval of a committee did not mean the acceptance of a dialogue. The Greek prime minister declared that the initiative gave the chance to both sides to establish channels of communication. However, the opposition noted that such initiatives put at risk the national interests and openly expressed their disagreement.

Moreover, the under-secretaries of the ministry of foreign affairs of Greece and Turkey, George Papandreou and Onur Oymen, respectively, participated in a seminar in Athens organized by the Centre of Political Research and Information. Even if the speech of the Turkish official did not contribute to a turnover of

relations, only the fact that officials from the two ministries of external policy met in a seminar was considered to be – at least in a symbolic manner – an indication of adopting a new policy towards Turkey.

But what really meant the entrance in a new stage of Greek – Turkish relations was the NATO meeting in Madrid on 9 July. The approach was presented in domestic news as a sudden development. However, it was the result of preparation of the last months. The secrecy was due to fears that the political instability in Turkey and the expected reaction of the opposition parties in Greece would jeopardize the signature of the declaration. The American minister of



foreign affairs Madeleine Albright had been effective in bringing in contact her counterparts Th. Pangalos and Ismail Jem, who both agreed in the context of the declaration. The effectiveness of Madeleine Albright was proved when realizing the meeting between the Greek prime minister K. Simitis and the president of Turkey Suleiman Demirel.<sup>12</sup>

Concerning the content of the declaration it mainly included six points. Both countries were to undertake to promote their bilateral issues and both leaders made a pledge in order to respect sovereignty of each other, peace, security, good neighboring, international law and treaties. It is characteristic the fifth point of the declaration, which stated not to undertake unilateral actions, so as to avoid conflicts resulting from misunderstandings. In other words, Turkey had to refrain from the demands of the ‘grey areas’ and Greece not to expand its territorial waters. In Athens the Madrid statement caused a debate, which showed that Greek domestic situation had not been prepared for a bilateral dialogue, which would mean for Athens to abandon internationally recognized rights.

In PASOK, 32 PASOK MPs declared that any accord would recognize the Turkish unacceptable demands as differences and that would put at risk Greece’s national rights. The letter of the 32 members of PASOK –consisted of the opposition within PASOK- to the prime minister was considered to be dangerous for PASOK’s cohesiveness. A. Tsohatzopoulos reminded that the extension in the twelve miles had been an undisputable right of Greece and that the resolution of the Cyprus issue had continued to be a precondition for resolving the bilateral differences and that the only issue to be solved was just the continental shelf. With the same view agreed Y. Arsenis, who in the PASOK session of the next days, noted that such a decision should not have been signed in a NATO meeting, under the pressure of the US and without a previous discussion with the participation of the elected members of the party.

A. Peponis, who had signed the letter to the prime minister and he was one of the writers of it, pointed out that the fourth point of the declaration,

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<sup>12</sup>It is noted that in the specific period US provoked the meeting for three reasons: to persuade the senator Paul Sarbani to shift his embargo on providing equipment to Turkey; to create a positive image before the talks, which were to take place in New York between the president of the Republic of Cyprus Glafkos Kliridis and the leader of the Turkish – Cypriot side Rauf Denktas; the need for the new Turkish government to give immediately the impression of good will.

mentioning 'respect in the legal, vital benefits and interests of each country over the Aegean, which have a great importance for their security and national sovereignty' meant that Greece and Turkey as well had vital and strategic benefits in the Aegean, which would allow Turkey to ask for more. One of the main arguments of A. Peponis was that the 'step by step' policy, as it was named, and the repetitive references of the prime minister that Turkey should appeal to the International Court for the Imia case, would contribute to a sort of acceptance of Turkish claims and to Turkey's facilitation to increase its claims. According to Peponis, Greece should have insisted on the acceptance that the issue of the continental shelf was the only difference that should be resolved through The Hague.<sup>13</sup>

In New Democracy, even if top-level members (Karamanlis, Souflias, Mitsotakis, Evert) of the party expressed different views for the latest developments, the trend of the majority seemed not to be differentiated with the Madrid statement, expressing though doubts for the character of the future dialogue. Concerning the other parties of the parliament, Aleka Papariga, the general secretary of the Greek Communist Party (KKE), stated that the Madrid accord recognized the Turkish claims over the Aegean and that the Greek government should not have signed a common statement under the pressure of the US. According to the KKE, the NATO involved in favor of the Turkish benefits and sacrificed the Greek national rights. The fourth party of the parliament, Synaspismos clarified that the general principles of the accord could have been a step to smooth relations, only if this would mean a substantial dialogue with Turkey.

Soon after the Madrid statement Kostas Simitis and his counterpart Mesut Yilmaz met in the Interbalkan conference in Crete which on 4 November 1997 brought together seven Balkan leaders. The main purpose of the meeting between the two prime ministers was how to keep up the Madrid statement. In their meeting the differentiation had been evident, since Yilmaz insisted on a dialogue in all issues, while Simitis repeated his support to the 'step by step' approach.

The Joint Statement in Crete achieved the reinforcement of Greece's international position, while it failed to engage a statement in favour of the Greek positions. Therefore, in the Joint Statement the leaders of the Balkan countries agreed to the commitment to the principle of territorial integrity, to the acceptance that disputes should be settled peacefully, to the respect for human rights and they denounced the use of violence or the threat of the use of violence. For the Greek side, the non-acceptance that disputes should be settled in The Hague, was considered to be a diplomatic failure.

K. Simitis referring to the Interbalkan Conference notes that he came to the conclusion that the meetings between the prime ministers had been used for public consumption and that there was no real intention for a dialogue. Yilmaz's official invitation to pay a visit to Ankara had been unofficially rejected by Simitis,

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<sup>13</sup> See annex p. 50-52, where Anastasios Peponis is explaining his views.

since the circumstances had not prepared yet an improvement in a bilateral level. The Greek side did not manage to turn over Yilmaz' s intransigence. However, it showed a policy of good will and an intention to promote the approach between Greece and Turkey.

Undoubtedly all these developments especially of the year 1997 indicated that something was moving in the Greek – Turkish relations. A significant number of meetings (e.g. Athens, Crete), the establishment of a committee of 'wise men' and the Madrid statement proved the intention of the Greek side to reach a better level of understanding or at least to show a good will towards the EU and the US. Even if nothing really provided the safeguards for a resolution of the bilateral issues, it was more than clear that the Greek – Turkish relations had entered a new phase. The Greek side was aware of the fact that any effort for an improvement of the relations should had taken into account the EU and the US factors. The Greek government started to accept Turkey's request for discussions. The Madrid declaration initiated a new era in the foreign policy.

The current political situation in Athens had not been the ideal for the PASOK government. The prime minister's power and intention had not been consolidated one year and a half after his election in the Parliament as prime minister. In his decisions he had to consider the political dissidents within his party. The 'team of 32', although it might had declared to be occasional, nothing was inhibiting its reemergence. Moreover, it meant that a strong opposition had been formed in his party, making clear the differentiation in the current Greek stance vis-à-vis Turkey. It is important to stress that the '32 representatives' had the power to withdraw their support to the government and provoke new elections.

The majority of these developments did not bring to an end the Greek – Turkish dispute, and to a certain point their character had just a symbolic character and bore the intention to show the good will from both sides. In Athens a great number of circles supported the idea that as soon as these efforts would come into practice then the real issues would come to the surface.

## **6. Conclusions of Luxembourg summit 1997**

The European Council meeting in Luxembourg on 12 and 13 December 1997 satisfied to a large extent the Greek position. More specifically, in the paragraphs 31 – 36 where referring to the European strategy for Turkey, it mentioned that 'Turkey will be judged on the basis of the same criteria as the other applicant countries' and that 'the economic and political conditions allowing accession negotiations to be envisaged are not satisfied'. What is remarkable and fully satisfied the Greek side was that for the first time the Council associated Turkey's links with the EU, asking for the 'establishment of satisfactory and stable relations between Greece and Turkey'. It also demanded the settlement of disputes by legal processes, including the International Court of Justice and asked the Turkish support of the UN talks over Cyprus.

In Athens the Luxembourg summit had been a diplomatic success for the government. It was the first time that in a European council level the International Court appeared to be a possible way of resolving the disputes. In addition, the Greek – Turkish crisis had been transformed into a European issue. It was the EU which now had to be interested in resolving the crisis. In other words, Greece considered that European Union would have been an ally in her bilateral differences with Turkey. Moreover, for Athens EU had proved in Luxembourg that the Greek claims had been reasonable and compatible with the Community.

The Greek foreign policy by that time had a stable stance towards Turkey. Athens was not willing to open a dialogue with Turkey unless Turkish side would satisfy certain preconditions. Ankara had to drop the ‘casus belli’ related to Greece’s right to extend its territorial waters, to recognize the status quo in the Aegean and to agree in bringing the Imia issue to the International Court of Justice. Athens was remaining to that policy, despite the US and the EU opposite objectives, which considered the dialogue as a necessary prerequisite for resolving the crisis. The Greek internal political situation did not allow a dialogue and exerted pressure for maintenance of the past policy of ‘no dialogue with Turkey’. By that time, even if previous actions had shown that a new approach had initiated by Greece, Greek foreign policy remained officially attached to defend the Greek national rights. However, Luxembourg showed indirectly to Greece that it was an EU member state and as such should cooperate with the EU strategic agendas. While asking for ‘stable and satisfactory relations between Greece and Turkey’, EU was sending the message not only to Turkey but to Greece as well, that she had to make efforts to improve relations with Turkey. In practice, Greece from now on had to fully support the European perspective of its neighbor. It is noted that after the summit Turkey responded with disappointment and irritation. The Turkish government even considered freezing its relationship with the EU.

In the Luxembourg European Council Greece had been decided to veto the Turkish participation in the European Council that would include all the candidate states. The main intention of Greece was to force Turkey to accept the legal road of The Hague for the Imia issue. Finally, the value of the International Court had been recognized as a solution by the EU, as did the respect for the international treaties.

The Luxembourg Summit closed a circle, which had opened in January 1996, when a crisis gave the opportunity to reconsider consolidated views. Greek foreign policy saw the crisis as a ‘blessing in disguise’ and hints of reconciliation had been expressed. Nevertheless, nothing was promising for a resolution of the bilateral differences. They had been postponed for a resolution in the future and, moreover, for the Greek side they had to be based on their European dimension.

## II. S-300 missiles and the Ocalan case

### 1. Literature review

Yallourides Christodoulos, *Η Ελληνοτουρκική σύγκρουση από την Κύπρο έως τα Ίμια, τους S-300 και το Ελσίνκι 1995-2000, Η οπτική του τύπου* [The Greek – Turkish conflict from Cyprus to the Imia, the S-300 and the Helsinki 1995-2000, The press perspective]. Athens, Sideris 2000.

The professor Yallourides is presenting the issue of the S-300 missiles through the perspective of the press (Eleftherotypia and Eleftheros Typos concerning Greece). He presents all the publications referring to the issue and analyses their impact on foreign policy (of the Greek side as well). It is an interesting research in the introduction of which it is presented the historical field of the crisis.

The US position and their impact on the Greek and Cypriot side are analysed. The main argument is that the pressures exerted by the US and Turkey are decisive for the installation in Crete and that the initial decision to be purchased was a wrong and not a realistic action.

Chatziantoniou Katerina, *Δυνατότητες και περιορισμοί για την ανάπτυξη της αμυντικής ικανότητας της Κύπρου: Η περίπτωση των S-300*, [Potentials and restraints in the development of Cyprus defence ability: the S-300 case], IAA, Athens 2000.

Katerina Chatziantoniou is focused on the S-300 crisis through the Cyprus defence system and researches the potentials of establishing the S-300 missiles in Cyprus. The main conclusion of the paper is that the establishment of the missiles is a feasible scenario, even if the international environment is not favourable. Not only the strategic interests of the US and of countries of the EU are explained, but also their impact on the Greek - Cypriot decision not to establish the missiles in Cyprus. Statements of the US and of the EU officials, their positions and interests in the region are presented and taken into account.

Makris Spyros, 'Χειρισμός κρίσεων και εθνική στρατηγική' [Crisis management and national strategy] in Arvanitopoulos K., Koppa M., *Τριάντα χρόνια Ελληνικής Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής 1974-2004* [Thirty years of Greek Foreign Policy 1974-2004], Livanis 2005, pp 402-422.

Makris Spyros is researching the management of the S-300 crisis and especially the internal field. According to his analysis the handling of a crisis is seen as a

composition of specific variables (political parties, army, public opinion, stereotypes). In the S-300 case and in the defence doctrine issue, his analysis is presenting the position of all the parties of the Greek parliament and their differences before and after the establishment of the S-300 in Crete. His comparative method is helpful for clarifying the stance of each party during the crisis and the understanding of the extent of their differences. The answer on how the Greek parties are gradually changing their views between the two different periods (before and after Crete) is given analytically, even if the impact of the external role is lacking of the analysis. The Greek internal considerations are elucidated by the article.

**Cheiladakis Nikos, *Φάκελος Οτσαλάν, από τη Δαμασκό στο Ιμραλί* [The Ocalan case, from Damascus to Imrali], Epikoinonies ΑΕ, Athens 1999.**

The author is mainly focused on the historical events that have to do with the Ocalan case. His description of Ocalan's departure from Rome and his final capture in Nairobi can be very useful, since he is not just presenting the facts, but also refers to the statements of foreign officials and the publications of the foreign press.

**Konstas Dimitris, *Διπλωματία και Πολιτική* [Diplomacy and Politics], Livanis, Athens 2002.**

In his book, Dimitris Konstas is referring in the fifth chapter on the Ocalan case and the issue of terrorism. He describes his experience on the Council of Europe in which the Ocalan case had been discussed. He gives a clear picture of the Greek position and especially on the Greek diplomatic efforts concerning Ocalan and the Kurdish issue, whether it should be characterised as terrorist or not. His talks, as presented, with the Greek ministry of foreign affairs, give the picture of the impact of the crisis on the Greek side.

## **2. The S-300 crisis**

Already before the Helsinki summit two cases proved how vulnerable the Greek foreign policy was and that nothing had guaranteed its stability and reliability. The Greek foreign policy the years 1998 and 1999 had been occupied mainly by the two crises: that of the S-300 and that of Ocalan.

For the United States, the Cyprus issue had always been an impediment for the normalization of the Greek –Turkish conflict. The continuation of the current political situation would have an impact on the region of Southeastern Europe. The strategic position of Cyprus, vicinity with the Middle East and the Gulf, and its crisis with Turkey, demanded the immediate resolution of the dispute and as

soon as it became known that Russian missiles were going to be delivered to Cyprus, US intervened against such actions.

The EU reaction was also negative and the main arguments coincided with those of US. Although there had never been an official statement for the crisis, it was several times mentioned that the current international environment was appropriate for a resolution of the Cyprus conflict and that the S-300 missiles did not contribute to a better level of understanding. The future accession of Cyprus in the EU demanded the resolution of the political issue. The British ministry of foreign affairs had characterized the installation as 'a big step to a wrong direction' (Reuters, 8 January 1997).

Soon after the announcement by the Cyprus government that an agreement had been signed on 4 January 1997 between Cyprus and Russia for buying and delivering the Russian S-300 missiles to Cyprus, the Turkish reactions provoked a *cause celebre*. Turkey threatened - in the case of delivering the missiles - she would not hesitate to realize an attack. Although the deputy prime minister Bulet Ecevit officially denied the intention of attacking the missiles, Turkish political and military circles had considered that the installation of the missiles would have target Turkey.<sup>14</sup> Cyprus had chosen the installation of the Russian missiles, so as to improve its own defence, but also to strengthen its defence cooperation with Greece in the field of the Integrated Defence Doctrine. It is reminded that Greece and Cyprus in 1993 had agreed on the Doctrine of Common Defence Space. In other words, Greece and Cyprus had developed a common defence strategy to avoid the common Turkish threat.

Athens replied to the Turkish threats considering as *casus belli* any attack against the missiles. Soon after these statements, the Greek side softened its tones by stating that any decision for installing the missiles in Cyprus had to do with the common defence strategy. In addition, the Greek government made clear, that the agreement for the missiles could be cancelled as soon as Turkey contributed to the demilitarization of the island, and if the talks for the resolution of the Cyprus issue were drove at a common acceptable solution.

The US position had been negative for several reasons. Firstly, the installation of the missiles was considered to be a destabilizing element for the region in a period when international efforts had been introduced for the resolution of the Cyprus issue. Secondly, the interests of the north-eastern flank of NATO were threatened and the relation between the two NATO members (Greece and Turkey) was going to be even more complicated. In addition, the European security of the region would have been at stake.

Officially US never criticized the Integrated Defence Doctrine. However, the US minister of foreign affairs M. Albright had pointed out her concern for the

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<sup>14</sup>The S-300 missiles were a defensive anti-aircraft system, which did not have such aggressive abilities as Turkey was claiming. For details of the characteristics of the S-300 system see: *The Russian S-300PMU-1TMD System*, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, CNS Resources on the Missile Crisis over Cyprus on the website <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/cyprus/>.

continuous militarization of the region (Eleftherotypia, 10 July 1996). The Greek foreign policy supported the doctrine and after the establishment of the new PASOK government in 1996.<sup>15</sup> The common defence strategy between Greece and Cyprus had been the result of the deep – rooted belief in Greece that the Cyprus issue was a Greek issue as well. In addition, the common defence strategy had been important for the Greek side as well, since it was covering the area from Thrace to Cyprus.

### 3. Revised strategy

After the Luxembourg summit and the Greek success, the Turkish side became more aggressive and intransigent. Athens and Nicosia were at a dead end. The Greek positions and suggestions had been rejected by NATO and by the European allies, since they were not willing to put at risk their relations with Turkey and be faced with the scenario of a new crisis over the Aegean. In March 1998 Greece's proposal made by the foreign minister Th. Pangalos, who suggested a moratorium of flights over Cyprus, in exchange of postponing the installation of the missiles, had been rejected by both Turkey and US.<sup>16</sup> Later on, US came back on that proposal.

Under these circumstances should be seen the Greek turn and the beginning of rethinking its initial decision for installation in Cyprus and considering the idea of finally installing the missiles in Greek soil. The Turkish side had been questioning the Greek sovereignty over Greek inhabited islands over the Aegean and exerting pressure on Greece by using statements of Abdullah Ocalan and indirectly associating Greece with the international terrorism.

The Greek foreign policy, being afraid of the international isolation, had also to deal with its insistence on the veto for the financial package to Turkey. EU had already sought to find ways to overcome the Greek veto, since the financial package had been essential for the European policy of the region. It is characteristic the decisions taken in the Cardiff summit in June 1998 where the Greek government made efforts to preserve the text of Luxembourg and insisted on the veto, despite the EU and the US opposite positions. The conclusions of Cardiff included a reference of the need to promote the economic strategy of the Community by elaborating means to put into practice these strategies. It is noted also that the accession of Cyprus had started to be questioned by statements of governmental factors of the EU, in the event of installing the S-300 missiles in Cyprus.

The Greek external policy, faced with all these developments and mainly because of its weak position towards the EU and the US, started falling back from

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<sup>15</sup> It had been also underlined in 1997 by the Greek deputy foreign minister G. Papandreou in a speech at Panteion university: 'The common defence space between Greece and Cyprus is a natural and self-evident policy which derives from the common threat'. [www.mfa.mfa.gr/gpap/omilia\\_panteion](http://www.mfa.mfa.gr/gpap/omilia_panteion)

<sup>16</sup> Thanos Veremis notes that as a result of the rejection, the Americans envisaged their asymmetry towards the two NATO members. Veremis, *Greek Turkish Relations 1453-2005*, Sideris, 2006, p. 183.

its initial thesis. For instance, G. Kranidiotis, the deputy foreign minister, after his visit to Cyprus, claimed that the obsession of all the discussions on the missiles disorientated from the real issue, which was the Turkish occupation of Northern Cyprus (Ta Nea, 17 August 1998).

The decision of installing the Russian missiles finally in Crete was announced in the end of January 1999 and it was the result of the above factors. The opposition parties in Greece reacted heavily characterizing such initiatives as national betrayal. New Democracy claimed that after the Imia crisis the S-300 missiles constituted a second national defeat, as a result of the Turkish pressure. The KKE noted that the installation in Crete marked the end of the doctrine and that the only use of it in Crete would have been to protect only that island. Synaspismos, which was the only party opposed from the beginning to the installation in Cyprus, mentioned that the Greek foreign policy was a 'hostage' of the international pressure.

#### **4. Abdullah Ocalan: the confused foreign policy**

Greek foreign policy in the same period had also to be involved not only with the Cyprus but with the Kurdish issue as well.<sup>17</sup> Only the fact of the abdication of the Greek foreign minister showed the extent to which the crisis influenced Greek foreign policy. The Greek government did not manage to inform sufficiently the public opinion about the exact events and the real extent of Greece's involvement in the international issue of Ocalan. Greek foreign policy seemed to be divided and contradictory to its statements.

The European capitals had refused asylum to Ocalan, who did not want to be tried in Turkey. Italy, where he passed 65 days in Rome, the last known stop of the leader of PKK, declared its intention to bring into discussion the Kurdish issue, but avoided to take an official position towards Ocalan. His secret entrance of in Athens and his escape to Kenya in the Greek embassy in Nairobi pointed out the Greek interference in the Ocalan case, which provoked Turkey, considering the fact that the Kurdish issue has been one of the most sensitive issues for Turkey.

As soon as it was revealed that Ocalan was captured and sent to Turkey, the Greek prime minister refused to take all responsibility for the crisis. Three ministers resigned, accusing the one another and provoking the stability and the cohesiveness of the government. Simitis moved on a reshuffling of the government and he announced his decision to form an investigatory committee to ascertain the true responsibilities. Simitis government was in front of a real dead end, since it was facing the severe criticism not only of the Greek, but of the international public opinion as well. Greece had been accused for fomenting a terrorist.

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<sup>17</sup> For the Kurdish issue see the very good articles of Vallianatos Stefanos, 'The Kurdish issue at a crucial turning point: the Ocalan capture and the changing setting', in *Anaskopisi ELIAMEP 1999*, pp. 233-246, and Philip Robbins, 'More Apparent than Real? The Impact of the Kurdish Issue on Euro-Turkish Relations' in Olson Robert, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement in the 1990s*, London 1996.

The government spokesman stated that the prime minister had been informed, but that the ministers had the responsibility for handling the case. Th. Pangalos, who resigned and was substituted by George Papandreou in the ministry of foreign affairs, openly accused the prime minister as the person in charge for the crisis. His explosive statements were focused not only on the prime minister, but on the ministers who resigned and on the new foreign minister G. Papandreou as well. His uncompromising and unpredictable character and his weakness to fully integrate to the new political situation towards Turkey had for a long time been an impediment for the prime minister. Diplomatic circles in Athens, but in Brussels as well, had been several times wondering how it was possible Pangalos to be foreign minister of Greece and making comments, such as that Turkish people were 'rapists, thieves and murderers' (Athens News Agency, 27 Nov. 1997). Washington was considering Pangalos as unsuitable for the ministry and M. Albright had made known her annoyance for her Greek counterpart.<sup>18</sup> His replacement by George Papandreou definitely relieved Washington. In Athens Pangalos' removal opened the door for putting into practice the rethinking of Greek foreign policy as it was issued after the Imia crisis.

The opposition parties asked Simitis' resignation and new elections because of the Ocalan case. New Democracy asked intensely the prime minister to resign and supported that it was unacceptable officers and state officials to shoulder all the blame while the government and especially the person in charge, the prime minister, to be excluded from any blame. The leaders of the smaller opposition parties asked for elections, since the government had proved its inability to manage a crisis. Aleka Papatrifa, general secretary of the KKE, criticised Simitis view that 'Greece is not covering the international terrorism', underlying that his policy was under the US and the Turkish pressure. Nikos Konstantopoulos from Synaspismos claimed that the removal of ministers did not substitute the prime minister's responsibilities. Dimitris Tsovolas, leader of DHKKI (Democratic Social Movement) supported the idea that the mechanisms of the government did not allow the informing of the Greek people and that the PASOK government did harm to the Kurdish fight and to the leader of PKK A. Ocalan.

In reality Greek diplomacy aggravated its relations with Turkey. Its involvement on the case had an impact on the country's picture in an international level. It failed to bring the Ocalan case in its European dimension and internationalize the Kurdish issue. The first days of Ocalan's capture Greek embassies abroad had been aimed by Kurdish outraged groups. In addition, in the Greek foreign policy were involved Greek private individuals, who had nothing to do with Greek diplomacy and to whom were focused many times the governmental arrows. Greek foreign policy sent contradictory messages to the outside. On the one hand, it supported the Ocalan's trial in a European court, but

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<sup>18</sup> Later on Pangalos implied in the Greek Parliament that his removal was after M. Albright's intervention (Ta Nea 11 January 2001).

on the other hand, it was defending –at least indirectly- its decision to hide Ocalan in its embassy in Kairo.

The confusion and the inconvenience, which followed the announcement of Ocalan's capture, gave rise to the Greek public opinion to express his sympathy to the Ocalan as a means to support the direct resolution of the Kurdish issue. Turkey used the Greek reaction in a legal basis, questioning the Greek respect on international law. The characterization of Ocalan as a terrorist or not became a matter of dispute in the Greek internal political thinking.

The S-300 and the Ocalan cases were the crises, after the Imia one, which brought in a very difficult position the Greek side, since both of them impeded the Greek – Turkish approach. Not only did they challenge the Greek tolerance towards the Greek rethinking vis-à-vis Turkey but also the potential of the Greek government, which many times seemed to be balanced between past and new policies. Both of the crises prepared the soil for a revised approach of Turkey.

## C. The Helsinki European Council (1-11 December 1999)

### 1. Literature Review

**Reuter Jurgen, 'Reshaping Greek – Turkish Relations: Developments before and after the EU-summit in Helsinki', ELIAMEP.**

The ELIAMEP paper written by Jurgen Reuter is a closer examination of the period before and soon after the Helsinki summit. He is analysing the EU role, presenting the Brussels relationship with Ankara through statements made by EU officials, such as the President of the Commission or France's and Britain's foreign ministers are. In his paper Reuter argues that the Greek minister George A. Papandreou was able to build an ideal relationship with his counterpart. The atmospheric change in the countries is reflected in Papandreou's speech at the 54<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly in September 1999. Moreover, EU was in favour of giving the status of a candidate to Turkey. He claims that one of the main reasons for Greece's revision was its will to apply for entry into the Economic and Monetary Union. Greece's main achievement at Helsinki was the transformation of the dispute into a problem of Euro-Turkish relations and that the political resolution of the Cyprus issue is not a prerequisite for its accession to the EU.

**Simitis Kostas, *Πολιτική για μια δημιουργική Ελλάδα 1996-2004* [Policy for a creative Greece 1996-2004], Polis 2005.**

The Greek prime minister explains in his recent book all the considerations that led to the signing of the Helsinki conclusions. He mainly gives the rationale behind the shift in Greece's Turkish policy and the reasons why Greece in 1999 supported the Turkish candidacy and withdrew the veto. In an analytical way, taking into account the EU deliberations and all the meetings before the signing, he presents the Greek reasoning and the steps made for the Helsinki summit.

He argues that Greece's traditional veto towards Turkey had an impact on its relations with the other EU-members and that it was time to revise its external policy by transforming the Greek – Turkish relations into a Euro – Turkish case. According to the Greek prime minister, the main benefit for Greece was not only that it was for now on EU who had to get involved in the Turkish claims – which meant that Turkey had to comply with the EU agenda of deadlines and specific criteria- but also the fact that Helsinki opened the European road to Cyprus.

**Kazakos Panos, 'Αντί εισαγωγής: «Υψηλή πολιτική» και εσωτερικοί παράγοντες στις ελληνοτουρκικές σχέσεις** [Instead of introduction: "High policy" and internal factors in Greek – Turkish relations] in Kazakos P., Liargovas P., Botsiou K., *Η Ελλάδα και το Ευρωπαϊκό Μέλλον της Τουρκίας* [Greece and Turkey's European Future], Sideris, Athens 2001, pp. 7-24.

In the first chapter of this collective book, Panos Kazakos is making an introduction of the change concerning the bilateral relations referring to the internal factors of each country. He stresses the idea that the 'Helsinki', the procedure of approach, which was associated with that summit, was the result of several factors. Mainly it was the result of issuing new political strategies (e.g. dialogue in 'low-policy' issues), the hard procedure of privatisation and generally the effort for economic integration, and a 'coincidental element', which was the persons of the political situation, mainly George Papandreou and Ismail Cem. Kazakos is underlying the significance of Papandreou speeches, as hints of the 'new doctrine' in the foreign policy and he points out that the revision of the Greek foreign policy met severe resistance within Greece (see p. 15). For P. Kazakos the main question is the duration of the 'new doctrine' since it causes social tensions, which might provoke a nationalistic rhetoric.

**Marias Notis, 'Διαπραγματευόμενοι την ειρήνη: Η απόφαση του Ελσίνκι για την Ευρωπαϊκή προοπτική της Τουρκίας υπό το φως των θεωριών της ολοκλήρωσης** (Negotiating peace: Helsinki's decision for Turkey's European perspective under the light of the integration theories) in Kazakos P., Liargovas P., Botsiou K., *Η Ελλάδα και το Ευρωπαϊκό Μέλλον της Τουρκίας* [Greece and Turkey's European Future], Sideris, Athens 2001, pp. 25- 131.

Marias is looking at the Helsinki summit in the light of the theories of integration. He argues that the Helsinki summit needed mutual concessions. Concerning the Greek part, it was important its concession to recognise Turkey as a candidate. The Helsinki is the case of 'dividing the difference', which also demands a mediator. According to Marias, the mediator role had been undertaken by Bill Clinton in his visit to Athens and by the German chancellor Gerhard Shredder in his visit in Istanbul. The Helsinki is elevating the common benefit for Greece and Turkey and contributes to a community of no-war in the Aegean. The theoretical framework as presented by Notis Marias can be useful, since it gives light on the importance of the Greek side in the signing of the Helsinki, and its impact on the bilateral relations.

## 2. 'Seismic diplomacy'

In August and in September 1999 two unexpected natural events issued a revised policy, which made both neighbors to change – at least temporarily – their mind about past policies. In August 1999 the Marmara region in Turkey was hit by a devastating earthquake as a result of which thousands people were killed. The humanitarian aid sent by Greece – among the first who sent condolences and rescue teams – sensitized Turkish public opinion. Twenty days later the earthquake that hit Greece made Turkey to be the first to sent condolences and rescue teams.

Doubtlessly these natural catastrophes were a psychological counter-shock that strengthened the spirit of good will in both countries. The new spirit among the two sides, as both minister of foreign affairs claimed, had been inaugurated before the earthquakes in the Kosovo crisis, which provoked the common fear of destabilization of the region and the intensification of the contacts. European Union provided through different means cooperation in a variety of fields. The Stability Pact and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation were some of the fields where the two countries – together with other member-countries of the region - started working together to guarantee a level of trust and cooperation, especially in the so-called 'low-level policy' issues.

However, the Greek conception about the 'Other' changed since the earthquakes. Psychologically it played a major role on how Greek people started thinking about its neighbors. These developments, which to a large extent changed the climate and created the preconditions for a different approach, had been taken into account by the two governments.<sup>19</sup>The 'high policy issues', such as Cyprus and the Aegean are, were still excluded from the agenda of the dialogue. Both sides inaugurated a period of dealing with 'low-policy' issues, such as trade, tourism and environment are, and initiated the so-called 'seismic diplomacy'.

## 3. Clinton's visit and the open deliberations on the road to Helsinki

The visit in Athens of the American president Bill Clinton a month before the Helsinki summit was part of the mediator role that US had undertaken. The American president – in the shadow of the demonstrations against the American visit in Greece - referred in his speech to Greece's geostrategic role in the Balkans, to the economic progress and fast integration that Greece achieved the last years. It is interesting his reference about the Greek – Turkish relations. He underlined

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<sup>19</sup> It is characteristic George Papandreou's speech at the 54<sup>th</sup> UN General assembly on 22 September 1999: 'My Turkish counterpart, Ismael Cem, and I have been engaged in careful diplomacy for many months. We recently inaugurated discussion committees to address a number of bilateral concerns, including trade, tourism and the environment, where we feel our countries have much to gain from mutual cooperation'. Furthermore, he added: 'From the outset, Greece shared with Turkey the vision that one day Turkey will become a worthy member of a United Europe. But we recognize today that our role needs to load the process.'

the need for both countries to move beyond the ‘earthquakes diplomacy’ and focus more on an authentic reconciliation. In the common interview with Kostas Simitis, he stressed the idea that the differences should be settled ‘in The Hague or in a common accepted organisation’. He supported for once more the Turkish European perspective, adding although that Turkey had to make further progress and that the resolution of the Cyprus issue was the prerequisite for any improvement of the Greek – Turkish relations.<sup>20</sup>



Special interest had been given by the press to the previous speech of the then Greek president of the Hellenic Republic, Konstantinos Stephanopoulos, who referred to the Greek-Turkish relations as well.<sup>21</sup> He reminded that the Cyprus issue became after the Turkish invasion of 1974, because of the occupation of the 38% of the island and of the systematic Turkish refuse to comply with the UN resolutions. He repeated the Greek positions: that the political issue of Cyprus should not be taken into account for its accession to the EU, and that the only difference over the Aegean is that of the continental shelf, for which both countries should appeal to The Hague.

The deliberations between the EU officials and the member-states just before the signing of the text were intense, as was the mobility from all sides to guarantee the smooth outcome of the summit. The letter sent by the EU chairman Paavo Lipponen to the Turkish prime minister Bulent Ecevit and Solana’s urgent trip to Ankara to persuade Turkey that the summit was in favour not only of Greece but of Turkey as well, indicated Brussels’ will to grant Turkey the candidacy status. In addition to this, EU made more than clear that it was not supporting Turkey under no preconditions. The president of the Commission Romano Prodi had stated in the European Parliament that in the event of granting Turkey the candidacy status, she would have to meet the Copenhagen Criteria. In other words, EU very soon declared that accession talks with Turkey would begin once the criteria were fulfilled.

#### 4. Summit conclusions

The EU-Council in Helsinki in December 1999, which finally granted Turkey the candidate status<sup>22</sup> came as a result of the previous rethinking of

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<sup>20</sup> It is of some interest to mention to this point that the Helsinki conclusions finally included The Hague as a solution of resolving the dispute, but did not considered the resolution of Cyprus political problem as a prerequisite for the accession.

<sup>21</sup> Stephanopoulos caused a sensation when indirectly referred to the US role in Greece for the last decades.

<sup>22</sup> In the paragraph 12 of the presidency conclusions in Helsinki it is noted that ‘the European Council welcomes recent positive developments in Turkey as noted in the Commission’s progress report, as well as its intention to continue its reforms towards complying with the Copenhagen criteria. Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other

Greece's foreign policy. What was the major change is that Greece – the country, which had several times vetoed Turkish candidacy – was voting in favour of Turkey in the European Union.

Concerning the Greek interests in the Helsinki presidency conclusions, the European Council stressed the idea that any settlement should be in accordance with the United Nations Charter. The European Council in the paragraph 4 'urges candidate States to make every effort to resolve any outstanding border disputes and other related issues. Failing this they should within a reasonable time bring the dispute to the International Court of Justice. The European Council will review the situation relating to any outstanding disputes, in particular concerning the repercussions on the accession process and in order to promote their settlement through the International Court of Justice, at the latest by the end of 2004.'

As far as Cyprus was concerned, in the paragraph 9 it was noted that 'the European Council welcomes the launching of the talks aiming at a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem on 3 December in New York and expresses its strong support for the UN Secretary-General efforts to bring the process to a successful conclusion'. Moreover, it refers to the political problem of Cyprus: 'a political settlement will facilitate the accession of Cyprus to the European Union. If no settlement has been reached by the completion of accession negotiations, the Council's decision on accession will be made without the above being a precondition. In this the Council will take account of all relevant factors.'

## **5. Simitis and Papandreou's 'new doctrine'**

Undoubtedly, the Greek government had made a remarkable change in its foreign policy. The Greek prime minister, referring to the Helsinki summit, he explains: 'after the contacts and the conversations with our partners for the Turkish European perspective, I had the feeling that the conditions were mature for a further pace'.<sup>23</sup> According to Simitis, Greece's continuous refuse had started to be counterproductive and the Greek presence in the European affairs had been at stake because of the Turkish candidacy. 'This became specially noticeable, when the basic disclaimers of the Turkish candidacy – or at least those who hesitated – had given way under the pressures of the others, and probably of US, while others were comfortable behind Greece's refuse'.<sup>24</sup> The Greek prime minister supports the idea that Turkey's turn to EU should have been associated with new rules that would improve the Greek – Turkish relations and the Cyprus issue. The Europeanisation of the bilateral relations was an 'effective substitute in the policy

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candidate States. Building on the existing European strategy, Turkey, like other candidate States, will benefit from a pre-accession strategy to stimulate and support its reforms. This will include enhanced political dialogue, with emphasis on progressing towards fulfilling the political criteria for accession with particular reference to the issue of human rights...'

<sup>23</sup> Simitis, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91-92.

of the continuous veto against Turkey, which, in any case, had overspent its potentialities'. Under these considerations, the Greek external policy was based on mainly three principles: on the release of the Cyprus accession from the resolution of the political issue, on the peaceful resolution of the bilateral dispute according to the international law and the International Court, and thirdly on a 'road map' of Turkey, that is to say, the drawing of a list of obligations and deadlines.

The new external policy expressed openly since the change in the ministry of foreign affairs. The undertaking of the ministry by George A. Papandreou transformed the foreign policy. The process of rejecting the past policies moved in a quick pace. The main change had to do with the political will, which now was more determined for a revision. The 'new doctrine' in the Greek foreign policy had been from the end of 1999 expressed several times in a clear and explicit way: 'The reassessment and re-evaluation of Greek national interests, together with the transformed international order, led to the revision of Greek foreign policy. The most important accomplishment of the last few years, culminating at the EU summit in Helsinki, is Greece's rejection of zero-sum objectives. We are implementing a win-win foreign policy. To lose the momentum or political will now is not an option for Greece or for Turkey'.<sup>25</sup>

The revision, as expressed by the Greek government, above all, stressed the idea that the European perspective of Turkey would be in favour of the region. 'Bringing Turkey closer to Europe will bring greater security and stability to southeastern Europe and will help achieve a climate of security, economic development, democratization, and fuller cooperation among all the countries of the region. The EU's acceptance of Turkey's candidate status will with no doubt move us closer to these goals'.<sup>26</sup>

For the Greek government, the integration of Turkey in EU would have had a positive impact on the Greek – Turkish dispute as well. The transformation of the dispute into an issue of Euro-Turkish relations was a positive development that unblocked Greece from the previous policy of vetoing, which had influenced its relations with the other counterparts. Based on that conception of the Greek side it was now the EU who had to exert pressure on Turkey, as the new agenda showed. By the end of 2004 Turkey had to resolve the differences in order to move further on its European road. For the Greek foreign policy, the Helsinki summit paved the way to Cyprus<sup>27</sup>, which was considered to be a great exchange for the need of the foreign policy to be revised.

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<sup>25</sup> Papandreou G. "Revision of the Greek Foreign Policy", Western Policy Center, 1 January 2000.

<sup>26</sup> Papandreou G., *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> George Papandreou underlined that 'The Helsinki summit was also a milestone for Cyprus. The same political principles that we apply to all countries, including Turkey, also hold true for Cyprus. Cyprus is now firmly on its way to becoming united with Europe. Our ultimate goal is the demilitarization and unification of Cyprus. We are working toward building communication and understanding between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. We firmly believe that the island's progress toward the European Union is bound to benefit both communities.' *Ibid.*

## 6. Different voices

Despite the impact that Greece's support to Turkey on the other EU-member states had, there was a severe criticism exerted on the above considerations from within and outside PASOK. Within PASOK the most serious different voice- which expressed the whole opposition within PASOK- came from its representative and ex-minister Anastasios Peponis. On 12 December 1999 A. Peponis stated that 'with the decision of the European Council the unilateral and arbitrary claims of Turkey are recognised as border differences. It is about the full abandonment of the steady until 1996 position that we do not recognise existing border differences, but only the issue of the continental shelf, as a legal issue...The tragic conclusion is that the Greek government is countersigning a text with which indirectly but clearly is recognised that our borders are being questioned by an EU candidate' (To Vima, 12 Dec. 1999).

Anastasios Peponis underlines also the gravity of the 'Liponen letter'. On 10 December 1999 the Finnish prime minister and current EU chairman Paavo Lipponen sent a letter to the Turkish prime minister Bulent Ecevit, who had stayed in Ankara, since he had considered the Helsinki conclusions as a disaster. In the letter Lipponen was explaining that the criteria for Turkish accession are those of Copenhagen; that the fourth paragraph related to the Greek – Turkish issues was referring to the political dialogue; that the year 2004 was not a deadline, but EU would re-examine the situation of the existing differences. A. Peponis points out that '*A letter cannot reject the text of the Presidency conclusions but when the text of the conclusions allows the possibility of several interpretations the letter of the President of the Council, who under that status sent the letter, can be an interpretative tool.*'<sup>28</sup> The letter of the EU chairman showed the vivid interest to include Turkey to the candidate countries, and it was a letter that Turkey could in the future use as supplementary of the Helsinki conclusions.

The opposition within PASOK mainly considered Helsinki as the first legal means with which Greece was opening the door of dialogue – the main Turkish objective- and indirectly was recognising the legal basis of the Turkish claims. However, the internal PASOK opposition considered as a great success the paragraphs for Cyprus and positive the idea of transforming the Greek – Turkish relations, as a Euro – Turkish issue, while adding that 'EU could be an unpredictable for the Greek interests judge'.

As far as the other parties are concerned, New Democracy claimed that the government changed its traditional policy without any exchange. According to this criticism, the previous governments had vetoed financial packages aiming at Turkey in order to force Turkey to withdraw its claims over the Aegean and contribute to the Cyprus resolution based on the UN resolutions. Contrary to this,

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<sup>28</sup> See annex p. 51.

the government accepted the vague conclusions for Cyprus and the beginning of the dialogue, which was the major goal of Turkey.

## **7. Addendum**

Washington and Brussels, especially after the Kosovo crisis, not only did they support the idea of a dialogue between Greece and Turkey, but also saw the Turkish candidacy as the only means to Europeanise Turkey, and therefore guarantee the stability in the region. Washington was facing the open fronts in the Middle East. The NATO experience in the Balkans the whole decade of the 1990's had shown that the region would not be able to withstand any more conflicts. Only the fact that the two NATO members were for a long time under the policy of 'no dialogue' had caused problems within the organisation. The EU had for a long time shown its intention to include in the Community the whole region and especially Turkey, a country with special geostrategic and economic position. The EU-summit in Helsinki was the highest pitch of its policy to grant Turkey the candidate status, overcoming the Greek refusal.

We can argue to this point, that in the end of the 1990's US and EU started being effective, since Greece was –at least in an official level- supporting Turkey's European perspective. Greece had been at a dead end. On the one hand, it was a member of NATO and a member-state of EU, with which was not willing to break its relations. The US and the EU objectives were contradictory to the so far Greek foreign policy as formed in the past. The Helsinki signalled the first substantial turn in the Greek foreign policy. Simitis government, which aimed at a country with an active role in the EU - even in the Economic and Monetary Union - had no other choice than to conform with the US and the EU objectives, which meant to grant Turkey the candidacy status.

The opposition in Greece considered the summit as a Greek concession without serious exchanges in favour of the Greek interests. Mostly, it considered the Greek consensus as a means transforming in a better diplomatic and legal position the Turkish provocative claims in the Aegean. This position was strengthened by the fact that still the bilateral differences had not been resolved. It must be added, that even if the main differences were open and unresolved, the Helsinki for the first time brought on the table the high-level issues and decided their resolution on a specific deadline in the end of which – only if any disputes were still unresolved- both sides should appeal to The Hague.

## D. 2000-2004<sup>29</sup>

### 1. The 'Helsinki spirit'

Greek foreign policy of 2000-2004 was covering in general terms a climate of reconciliation and rapprochement officially issued in December 1999. It was the period in which the previous serious crises and tensions were lacking. The US, and mainly the EU, started having an effect on the Greek behaviour towards Turkey, considering the amount of meetings and agreements taking place these years.

With the EU support, both countries started collaborating in the 'low policy' sectors. According to the EU thinking, the major and more sensitive issues should not have been discussed at a first level, but the building of a bilateral level of trust should have started with the issues of a non-confrontational character, the 'low-policy' issues, as a means to prepare the ground for the 'high-policy' ones, that of the Aegean and of Cyprus. In this atmosphere both ministers of foreign affairs Papandreou and Cem visited Ankara (January 2000) and Athens (February 2000) respectively, and 9 agreements were signed.<sup>30</sup>Papandreou's official visit to Turkey in January 2000 was the first of a Greek foreign minister in the last 38 years, which initiated a circle of meetings and contacts, even on the sidelines of the NATO, the EU and the UN meetings.

The four-year period 2000-2004 was characterised by the re-election of Kostas Simitis in April 2000. PASOK's electoral victory confirmed the revised choice made in the external policy and it meant the undertaking of initiatives that would implement these decisions, including the 'high-policy' agenda. However, the marginal win of PASOK in the elections pointed out the need of Greek people to realise the 'new spirit' and the new active role of Greece in the international and European forum, not only in a theoretical level, but in his daily life as well. The continuous dogfights in the Aegean and the repeatedly references of the Turkish side in the 'casus belli' were firing the good climate. To this point of view,

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<sup>29</sup> From 2000 and then the literature is limited and the sources are most of the times referring generally to the events of the Greek foreign policy. Very interesting and useful are the articles in the recent special issue for Greek foreign policy: Altmann, Couloumbis, Veremis, Triantafyllou (Eds), 'Special issue: The Priorities of Greek Foreign Policy', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol.5, No.3, (September 2005) Taylor and Francis.

<sup>30</sup> Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Tourism, Agreement on Economic Cooperation, Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology, Agreement on Maritime Transport, Agreement on Cultural Cooperation, Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between Customs Administrations, Agreement on reciprocal Promotion and cooperation Protection of Investments, Agreement on Cooperation on Environmental Protection, Agreement on Combating Crime, especially terrorism, organized crime, illicit drugs trafficking and illegal immigration.

PASOK's main rival, New Democracy, and its leader, Kostas Karamanlis, had several times before the elections expressed the will to support Turkey's integration in the EU.

Kostas Simitis declared his intention to develop the Helsinki decisions. He favoured Turkey's EU perspective, given that a democratic Turkey would contribute to the stability of the region. He stated that 'Greece does not claim anything but also does not concede anything'<sup>31</sup> and reminded that The Hague had been always been an option for the continental shelf. To this point, George A. Papandreou at the ministerial council had supported the implementation and utilization of the Helsinki. He mentioned that these goals would be achieved through bilateral and multilateral (mainly the EU) level that would prevent Turkey from any sign of aggressiveness. He suggested the strengthening of the 'low-policy' issues and the promotion of the confidence building measures (To Vima, 2 July 2000).

## **2. Agreements and Disagreements**

Although the serious crises of the S-300 and of the Ocalan case were not to be repeated, a series of disagreements, which had to do with sovereignty issues, erupted. In October 2000 during the NATO exercise 'Destined Glory' Greece decided to withdraw after the severe mock dogfights, which aimed at questioning the Greek sovereignty over the Greek islands of Lemnos and Ikaria. The Greek side repeated its position, that demilitarisation was not referring to these islands and angrily withdrew from the NATO exercise. The Greek minister of defence Akis Tsoxatzopoulos asked NATO to take a position to the dispute. US and NATO undertook the mediator role to substitute the tensions, since under no circumstances would they have allowed any tension to put at stake the stability in the eastern Mediterranean. After negotiations and six day Greek refuse to allow its fighter jets to fly, the NATO exercise proceeded. It is of some point to stress that Washington considered as a mistake the withdrawal from the exercise, while Brussels characterised 'exaggerating' the Greek behaviour.

The government spokesman tried to keep a balance stating that the tension was a 'negative development', but that Greece's task was 'to guarantee peace and stability in the region, and accelerate, in collaboration with the EU, the harmonization of Turkey with the international rules' (Ta Nea, 25 Oct. 2000). Moreover, the Greek minister of defence A. Tsoxatzopoulos indirectly questioned the Greek - Turkish dialogue, stating that 'we have to wait for the future developments'.

The seriousness of the disagreement was proved by the fact that the Papandreou-Cem meeting about the Confidence Building Measures was postponed for the next days. In addition, the Greek minister of foreign affairs G. Papandreou

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<sup>31</sup> In his pre-election speech at Zappeio Megaro in March 2000. Available at: <http://www.costas-simitis.gr>

asked from his counterpart to undertake initiatives that would prevent such crises in the future. The foreign ministers at their meetings in Budapest agreed to take up and implement a set of Confidence Building Measures (CBM). The agreement included eleven CBMs.<sup>32</sup> The responsible for the issues of external policy of New Democracy, Ntóra Mpakoyanni, criticised the government: 'the next day of the provocative Yılmaz statements, the Greek foreign minister is proceeding, as if nothing has happened' and that 'the policy of appeasement allows the Turkish challenge'.

The US mediator role prevented from an escalating of the disagreement, but nothing guaranteed that such events would not be repeated in the future. Already, in the eyes of Greek public opinion, most of the changes had been originated from Greece, while the Turkish policy had not shown any sign of a shift. Alekos Alavavos, posed the question in the European Parliament whether 'the EU should react to actions of third countries that breach the sovereignty rights of a member state and, consequently influence the territory of the EU'. The response, in the words of Alain Richard, the French minister of defence, was that 'the EU had no interest in dealing with such an issue'.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, it was shown that in the eve of signing the CBMs, a serious disagreement, which had to do with the national air-space and the territorial sovereignty, occurred.

### **3. EU as an area of action**

The EU came for the Greek foreign policy of the new century as a tool to promote the national interests. Greece sought a mighty position in the EU, while supporting the Turkish European perspective, taking the risk that Turkey's will to integrate to the EU would simultaneously improve their bilateral relations. The Greek participation in the Euro-zone from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2001 clearly indicated that Greek strategy. Greece's economic integration had been complementary for the strategy of the external policy choices.

EU showed its will in strengthening its relations with Turkey after the Helsinki and Greece turned to be a strong supporter of Turkey's relation with the EU. This had been evident in all the European Councils that followed and at Nice in December 2000 the Presidency conclusions mirrored this spirit.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Namely, the exchange of information on annual military exercises, the cooperation between the National Defence Colleges and the exchange of personnel for training between the training centers of the two countries; at the Political Directors level agreed on the establishment of direct telecommunication channels at FM level, the exchange of invitations to officers from the two capitals to attend one large-scale military exercise, the cooperation for the prevention of the pollution of Evros, the establishment of a direct phone line between General-Staff officers, exchange of visits of students of the military academies.

<sup>33</sup> Tsakonas P. and Tournikiotis A., 'Greece's Elusive Quest for Security Providers: The Expectations-Reality Gap', *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 34, No3, Sep. 2003, p. 309.

<sup>34</sup> 'The European Council welcomes the progress made in implementing the pre-accession strategy for Turkey and is very pleased at the agreement reached on the framework Regulation and on the Accession Partnership at the Council meeting on 4 December 2000. It highlights the importance of that document for closing relations between the Union and Turkey along the lines mapped out by the

#### 4. UN, US, Copenhagen Summit (Dec. 2002)

Just before Copenhagen, US had sought to find a resolution to the Cyprus issue, since it was concerned about anything that could stir up trouble in the region. In Cyprus – a non-NATO member – NATO had not been directly involved, but always considered the conflict as an internationally dangerous and explosive one for the region. However, as far as the two NATO members were directly involved –Greece and Turkey- the US interest was increasing for a resolution. At this point, in November 2002 the UN General Secretary Koffi Anan suggested a peace plan, which reactivated the talks between the two Cypriot sides, while associating the plan with the Cyprus accession to the EU.

For the Greek side, the Anan Plan had been a controversial issue. The Greek foreign minister had been –ever since his appointment as minister- repeating that ‘hardly could it be an improvement in the bilateral relations without a Cyprus resolution’. The Greek interest for Cyprus – the issue that was and still is influencing the Greek–Turkish relations – had been satisfied with the pending Cyprus accession to the EU, especially with the political resolution not being a precondition for the accession. The Greek public opinion had been divided considering the Anan Plan, as did the Greek politicians in the Parliament.

The Greek government seemed to be in favour of the Anan Plan. In the common meeting of the PASOK parliamentary team and of the PASOK central committee, the prime minister pointed out that Greece had to see ‘the substance of the solution and mainly that the plan is focused on the future and not on the past’. Additionally, he argued that those who support the ‘no’ in the solution were indirectly supporting the division of the island. The Greek foreign minister claimed that the solution of Cyprus would facilitate the resolution of the issue of the continental shelf. Contrary to the governmental view, the ex-foreign minister Th. Pangalos disagreed: ‘we should not have attended the negotiation as self-flagellated, but we should have underlined the huge responsibilities and the huge mistakes of the Turks, the British and the Americans’, and together with the PASOK representatives I.Kapsis and Y. Arsenis prepared a resolution with which suggested further pressures for improvement of the Plan. (Ta Nea, 30 Nov. 2002)

Considering the opposition parties, the New Democracy representative Petros Moliviatis claimed in the commission of foreign affairs of the Parliament that the Plan ‘made equal the majority with the minority’, while many ND representatives rejected it (Ta Nea, 15 Nov. 2002). The secretary of the Greek communist party, Aleka Papariga, characterized the Plan as a ‘trap’ against Greece

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Helsinki European Council conclusions. Turkey is requested swiftly to submit its national programme for adoption of the *acquis*, basing it on the Accession Partnership.’

and the Greek-Cypriots imposed by the Americans, the leader of DHKKI D. Tsovolas claimed that it was against the Greek national interests, and the president of Synaspismos N. Konstantopoulos, considered it as a basis for negotiations.

The same month, the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002 draw the conclusion that 'if the European Council in December 2004, on the basis of a report and a recommendation from the Commission, decides that Turkey fulfils the Copenhagen political criteria, the European Union will open accession negotiations with Turkey without delay'. Greece secured at Copenhagen the decision that Cyprus along with nine other candidates would be admitted to the EU, regardless of whether or not the political issue had been achieved by that time. In exchange, Greece supported the EU decision to open membership negotiations 'without delay' with Turkey.

Greek opposition within and without PASOK expressed its criticism and scepticism against the Copenhagen conclusions. The criticism was mainly focused on the decision of the Greek foreign policy to present the exerted foreign policy as the dilemma of 'a divided Cyprus or a Cyprus resolution'. According to this view, the presidency conclusions did not mention a word about the illegal occupation of the island and of the Turkish invasion, but it several times referred to the 'northern part of Cyprus' as an effort to legitimize and open the road for its independence. The Plan and its supporters were taking into account the two communities as equal, challenging the majority and provoking dividing lines. It was clear that the difficult part was not whether Cyprus would have been part of the EU or not, but if there would be a fair resolution. Moreover, the criticism pointed out that the text of the conclusions made no reference to the violation of human rights in Turkey, but it mentioned that 'the Union will significantly increase its pre-accession financial assistance for Turkey'.

## **5. Greek presidency and climax of foreign policy**

The years 2003-2004 Greek foreign policy reached the peak of diplomatic relations with its European partners. The first semester of 2003 was marked by the Greek presidency of the EU, during which it seized the opportunity to promote the dialogue with Turkey. In addition, during the Greek presidency the war in Iraq took place and the US-Turkish relations faced a remarkable change.

While September 11 had strengthened the US-Turkish partnership, the American military intervention in Iraq the spring of 2003 provoked –at least temporarily– deterioration in their relations. In March 2003 the Turkish parliament rejected the American request for using southeastern Turkey to launch attacks in Iraq. US-Turkish tension had an impact on the region and on the Greek-Turkish affairs as well, since it was questioning the stability of the neighborhood and practically would facilitate the air-violations by Turkish – and Greek as well– fighters. However, the visit to Ankara by the US – Secretary of State Colin Powell

and the 1 billion USD supplement for Turkey into the US war budget, showed that Turkey remained a strategic player for the NATO ally.<sup>35</sup>

Greek foreign policy during the war and during its presidency gave an impulse to its bilateral relations with Turkey, following the 'Helsinki strategy' and promoting the Greek –Turkish dialogue. Despite the fact of the dialogue, the continuing violations and the daily dogfights compelled George Papandreou to protest and send a letter to the Commissioner Gihunter Ferhoigen. Papandreou pointed out that his interlocutor was not the Turkish army. EU, due to the war in Iraq, started a series of contacts and meetings with Turkey, in which Greece played a role. For instance, in the end of January 2003 the Greek foreign minister in his visit to Ankara informed the Turkish side about the EU intention to intervene for a diplomatic resolution into the Iraqi crisis. Besides, the presidency conclusions underlined for once more the new EU-Turkish relation. The EU acknowledged the efforts made by Turkey but that further progress was to be made.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps the more significant development had to do the same period with Cyprus. On 16 April 2003 the signature in Athens by the president of Cyprus Tassos Papadopoulos for accession to the EU in May 2004 marked a great success of the Greek foreign policy – which had achieved the accession without the political resolution being a precondition- and a change in the bilateral relations. According to a certain school of thought, Cyprus' accession to the EU liberated Greece from being obliged to support Cyprus in every EU meeting. From now on Greek foreign policy could have been more independent towards Turkey.



## 6. Winding-up

In the Brussels summit in December 2003 – the last summit in which PASOK had been government- EU redefined and moved closer its relationship with

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<sup>35</sup> Ifantis Kostas, 'Strategic Imperatives and Regional Upheavals: On the US Factor in Greek-Turkish relations', *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 5 No. 1, (Spring 2004), p. 39.

<sup>36</sup> 'The European Council welcomes the commitment of the Turkish government to carry forward the reform process, in particular the remaining legislative work by the end of 2003, and supports its on-going efforts made in order to fulfil the Copenhagen political criteria for opening accession negotiations with the Union. Taking into account progress achieved, significant further efforts to this end are still required. With a view to helping Turkey achieve this objective, the Council adopted recently a revised Accession Partnership, which sets out the priorities that Turkey should pursue, supported by substantially increased pre-accession financial assistance. In accordance with the Helsinki conclusions, fulfilment of these priorities will assist Turkey towards EU membership. The Accession Partnership constitutes the cornerstone of EU-Turkey relations, in particular in view of the decision to be taken by the European Council in December 2004.'

Turkey. Turkey fulfilled the economic criteria and showed its will to resolve the Cyprus issue. However, further progress was needed, especially in the field of judiciary and freedoms. US had continued to consider Turkey as a strategic ally in the region, considering the open issues in Iraq, Iran and in the Middle East, while a possible crisis in their relations would have caused tensions in South-Eastern Europe. Greek foreign policy fully supported the EU policy towards Turkey and through its meetings and conferences promoted the spirit of cooperation and dialogue. The prime minister announced its will not to participate as leader of PASOK in the next elections and its support to the foreign minister George A. Papandreou, who was to lead PASOK in the following elections.

Just before the elections of March 2004, a number of changes and new goals were pointed in the Greek foreign policy towards Turkey. The 'low-policy' issues had been issued and implemented without difficulties. Meetings among prime ministers and ministers – and in many cases without the external pressure, but as a result of an understanding of the need- started being part of the daily diplomatic life. The Cyprus issue reached a turning point by officially being a member of the EU and Greece further transformed –as it had been obvious through all the EU-summits- its bilateral relations into a European case.

However, the sensitive and difficult issue of the Aegean had not met any further progress and continued to poison the reconciliation. The continuous air-violations mirrored this reality. To a large extent, the Greek foreign policy followed the Helsinki decisions, but did not try to take advantage of the deadline of 2004 and exert pressure on Turkey in order to both appeal to The Hague, as it was anticipated. According to the PASOK foreign-policy makers, this should have been done after the elections of 2004. Nevertheless, the persistence on the 'low-policy' issues and not the 'high-level' ones disorientated for a large period from the real issues and did not prepare the ground for a discussion for The Hague in 2004. Both EU and US had been effective in culminating the climate of détente, but still a number of open disagreements and tensions were threatening the improvement of the bilateral relations.

## E. 2004 – 2006

### 1. The 'hands-off approach'

The new prime minister of Greece and leader of New Democracy, Kostas Karamanlis, and the new foreign minister Petros Molyviates, as soon as they undertook the foreign policy of the country, they had to deal with the Cyprus issue and the bilateral relations. 2004 was a key year, since a number of key issues were reaching closure and the Helsinki circle was coming to an end.<sup>37</sup>The new government underlined the necessity of good neighbourly relations and the need for stability in the region. From the early beginning, priority had been given in strengthening the relations at a prime-ministers level.

In March 2004, in the negotiations that had been taking place in Lucerne, just before the referenda in Cyprus, with the UN mediation and the presence of both the Greek and Turkish prime ministers, and the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot sides as well, the Greek side had distinguished its position. US expressed the need of all the parts to collaborate for a common accepted resolution. The US foreign minister Collin Powell stated that 'all the negotiating parts should not lose this historical moment for a resolution' and that 'they should bear in mind how many chances for unification of the island had been given in the past' (Kathimerini, 1 April 2004). The Greek prime minister tried for an improvement of the Anan Plan, especially in the fields of security and the acquis. In the end, the negotiations did not conclude into a common solution. Kostas Karamanlis asked the Cypriot people to be the one to decide for his own future. Athens considered that the Greek opinion about the Plan should not have been openly expressed, avoided to take a clear position and tried to assist and side up with Nicosia. Athens did not want to put at risk its relations with Ankara, and the prime minister confirmed in the end of the negotiations the good level of contacts with his counterpart T. Erdogan.

In the aftermath of the referendum and the 'no' vote of the Greek-Cypriot side, the so-called 'hands-off approach' created the severe criticism of the opposition, and especially that of PASOK, which considered it as the 'end of a strategy', as it was the title of an article written by the previous prime minister Kostas Simitis (Ta Nea, 23 April 2004). In that article Simitis accused the new government for the inactiveness shown in the external policy, by avoiding

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<sup>37</sup> Triantafyllou D., 'The priorities of Greek Foreign Policy Today' in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 5, No3 (September 2005), p. 333.

undertaking a clear position. He pointed out that as a result of that method all the previous steps, starting from the Helsinki, had been based on Greece's active role, which had realised the need for Greece's resolution and had supported the Anan Plan, the elements of which were overwhelmingly more positive than the negative ones. The new leader of PASOK George Papandreou claimed that the government was afraid of taking a clear position, trying to satisfy all the interested sides, contrary to PASOK's unambiguous policy.

With the Anan Plan exception, the approach of the new government remained on the sphere of rapprochement, as inaugurated in the Helsinki. The new policy of 'peace offensive', which meant to secure the national rights and not provoke Turkey, increased the bilateral meetings and improved the level of the dialogue. In May 2004 the Turkish prime minister Erdogan paid a visit in Athens, which was the first official visit of prime minister for the new Greek government. Symbolically, they both expressed the continuation of the previous policy. However, the sensitive bilateral issues had not been proceeded in a satisfactory level, although the Helsinki strategy had been pressing for a resolution by the end of 2004. The bilateral exploratory talks had been completed 24 rounds of contacts, but the results of these meetings had not been given to the press. The Greek prime minister explained that 'the exploratory talks had started a few years ago, and nobody can predict whether they will be completed in the near future', which signified that postponement of the deadline of 2004 would have been possible. Concerning The Hague, he noticed that 'we have the political will to continue, and we are hoping to have a result'. (Kathimerini, 8 May 2004)

On 6 October 2004 the Commission presented its report and recommendation on Turkey, in which concluded that bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey had positively developed: 'Exploratory talks have started in April 2002. In the last year, bilateral relations have continued to evolve positively. The Turkish prime minister paid an official visit to Athens in May. As a result of the implementation of a series of confidence-building measures both governments are taking steps in view of gradual and balanced reduction of military expenses. There have been 26 meetings at the level of both countries in the framework of the exploratory talks launched in 2002'.

However positive was the report for the bilateral relations, not a word did recall the Helsinki conclusions about the 2004 deadline. According to Helsinki, until the end of 2004 both countries should have resolved their disputes, otherwise they should have appealed to The Hague. Athens seemed willing to proceed with negotiations in the hope that the EU perspective would make Ankara more 'flexible', so that in the future the issue of the continental shelf would be sent to the International Court of Justice.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Axt Heinz-Jurgen, 'Relations with Turkey and Their Impact on the European Union' in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol5, No3, (September 2005), p. 375.

## 2. A fragile balance

It was during Molyviates visit to Ankara that sovereignty issues came to the surface and reminded once again that the bilateral differences had not been resolved. Greek and Turkish vessels passively confronted one another at the Imia rock and rung the bell of the Imia crisis of 1996. The provocations ended just before Molyviates departure from Ankara. The Greek foreign minister did not proceed to protest against the Turkish challenge, but chose to shorten his visit. Athens supported the de-escalation of the tensions and did not give rise for further provocations. The Greek foreign minister stated: 'During the visit, we managed to use all the possibilities to face events over the Aegean, so as not to be developed into a crisis'. (Kathimerini, 4 April 2005)

Few months later of that event and while dogfights in the Aegean had turned out to be a daily reality, the economic relations of the two countries became more tight. The prime ministers of Greece and Turkey inaugurated a 300-kilometer natural gas pipeline between Bursa and Komotini. Athens considered as essential the improvement of the economic relations with Turkey as supplementary tool for stability.<sup>39</sup>

For Greece and EU, the march of events was marked by the decision taken to start formal accession negotiations with Turkey in October 2005. Washington had supported the Turkish accession to the EU, considering it as a means to guarantee the stability in the region. For Brussels, the strategy of integrating Turkey in the EU body aimed at a country with a new economy and a new population, which had been playing a strategic role in the Middle East and Central Asia developments.

The EU diplomatic efforts to start the accession negotiations with Turkey coincided with Greece's objectives. The Greek foreign minister stated that 'Greece is supporting Turkey's European perspective, because we believe that a European Turkey which would have been adapted in the European principles and values, it would be in favour of the Turkish people and mainly in favour of the Greek people...' (Alpha, 4 Oct. 2005). The Greek government stressed that the resolution of the bilateral differences would have been more easily settled by strengthening the ties with the EU and especially by starting negotiations. Turkey would have been more flexible and tolerable in the European values and in the possibility to appeal to The Hague.

The opposition exerted severe criticism underlining the absence of a deadline for resolving the differences of the Aegean and of Cyprus. PASOK insisted on the tragic error of the Greek government to abandon the 'Helsinki strategy' and that it left the resolution for the future, without schedules and timetables. According to this view, there was nothing obliging Turkey not to stop the air-violations, the threat of the 'casus-belli' and its claims for the 'grey-zones'.

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<sup>39</sup> The bilateral economic relations had shown a level of improvement. For instance, the volume of trade was at US\$857 million in 2001, the figure for 2004 increased to US\$1.9 billion.

It should be mentioned that a number of EU countries seemed to be against the Turkish accession. The time of the decision for Turkey's accession negotiations, EU had been facing a crisis that had to do with the nature of its Union and the rejection of the EU constitution contributed to a negative spirit towards the scenario of Turkey to turn out to be an EU member-state.<sup>40</sup> According to this spirit, Greek public opinion was not fully supporting Turkey's membership. Nevertheless it was supporting the idea of a special relationship with the EU. Greek foreign policy tried to turn down any tensions and not to emphasise on issues –such as was the one during Molyviates visit- that might put at risk the rapprochement.

### 3. Hopes and scepticism

In February 2006 the change in the foreign ministry with Dora Bakoyannis – daughter of the ex-prime minister of Greece K. Mitsotakis and wife of the assassinated representative Pavlos Bakoyannis- created the hope for a reactivation in the bilateral relations. <sup>41</sup> The new foreign minister, who was in favour of the Anan Plan, stated that the policy of détente and of enhanced dialogue will be continued. In her first interview clarified that strategic choice of Greece had been the European perspective of Turkey. However, this strategy had been depended on Turkey and whether she will put in practise its commitments and the criteria set by the EU. As far as Cyprus-Turkish relations are concerned, she claimed that Turkey is committed to sign within 2006 the Protocol for the customs-union connection –and indirectly recognise Cyprus- and that Greece, as will do EU, will wait to see the next month's developments. (To Vima, 26 Febr. 2006)

In March the visit of the new foreign minister in Washington pointed out the very good level between Athens and Washington. US stressed the idea that Athens should support the European perspective of Turkey, especially after the signs that other European partners (e.g. Austria, Germany) would not be strong supporters of the Turkish membership. The Greek side the following months moved based on three principles: firstly, the strengthening of the bilateral relations, so as to avoid any future crises; secondly, in a European level, to secure references to the need for good-neighbourly relations; and thirdly, the emphasis on that the Turkish road to EU would create the conditions under which the bilateral differences will be resolved and the acknowledgement by Ankara that The Hague could be a possible solution.

The tragic death of the Greek airman Kostas Iliakis after the two F-16 crash in the Aegean sky put the Greek government and the Greek public opinion into a scepticism about the future of Greek –Turkish relations. Athens efforts were once more focused on the de-escalation of the event and pointed out that previous

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<sup>40</sup>It is interesting that on 4 October 2005 the Spanish newspaper ABC bore the title 'Europe against its people', while explaining that 35 % of the European population were not in favor of the idea Turkey to become a member-state.

<sup>41</sup> Turkish newspapers characterized Mrs Bakoyannis as 'the new George Papandreou'.

policies would have provoked a serious crisis and would have damaged the rapprochement.

However, the Greek approach had been questioned and the article in the Greek newspaper Kathimerini of the previous President of the Hellenic Republic Kostis Stephanopoulos, who was considered to be by all the parties of the Parliament as a serious and respectable politician, laid the gravity of the bilateral relations on the table. By his article, Kostis Stephanopoulos pointed out that the 33 exploratory talks had no result and that Greece's policy, to be based on the negotiations with Turkey, had no impact on the improvement of the relations. 'Contrary to that the air-violations are continued, the closure of the Theological School of Halki remains an open issue, the casus-belli is being repeated. Since the dialogue has failed, Greece has the right to ask from Turkey to appeal to The Hague, bringing to the court all the bilateral disputes, with the only exception of the grey areas, which belongs to 'the imagination of Turkey' (Kathimerini, 28 May 2006). Stephanopoulos gave food for thought and a productive dialogue – among university professors- started.

According to this spirit, the current President of the Hellenic Republic Karolos Papoulias made an intervention from the border Greek island Symi. 'The issue are not the differences claimed by Turkey, but the reason why Turkey evoke these claims' he said. According to K. Papoulias, there is nothing to secure that after The Hague Turkey will not find other claims that would drive at a vicious circle. Moreover, he supported the European perspective of Turkey noting that 'the democratisation of Turkey will be in favour of both people' (Ta Nea, 21 June 2006). The current President of Democracy had several times in the past showed a strong position vis-à-vis Turkey. He had disagreed with Simitis partner Chr. Rozakis and he had signed texts that belonged to the opposition within PASOK. For K. Papoulias, the reconciliatory policies had no room in Greece's foreign policy and this is his aim at his remarks from the Symi, the Greek island of only three miles distance from Turkey.

The 2 years of ND governing the effectiveness of the EU and the US had been proved through the détente and the reconciliation expressed after each tension. However, the disagreement among politicians, scholars and Greek public opinion about the different approaches that should be addressed towards Turkey indicated the need for a substantial diplomacy in all fields. Moreover, it was indicating that as long as the bilateral differences remained, the tensions in the Aegean would not stop to be in the front pages of the press.

## Concluding Remarks

The effectiveness of the EU and of the US on Greek foreign policy towards Turkey and the objective to avoid war and tensions the period 1996-2006 had been enforced, but impeded as well, by several factors.

Considering the first factor, whether Athens had been supporting Turkey's European perspective or not, it is more than clear that Greek foreign policy realised a turn by abandoning the long-held policy of 'no dialogue' with Turkey. The Greek government had been compelled to start reaching an agreement with Turkey. The Madrid joint statement marked the first motion in that direction and paved the path for what followed in the next years. The Helsinki summit and the acceptance of Turkey's candidacy had been a U-turn for Greece, the country which traditionally had been vetoing Turkey's effort to be included in the EU, as a means to exert pressure on Turkey's aggressiveness. Greece had been driven to a dead end by the previous crises, that of the S-300 missiles and that of the Ocalan case, faced with isolation by its European counterparts and by the accusations of fostering the international terrorism. Under these circumstances, Greek foreign policy by the end of 2000 transformed the bilateral relations into a European issue and supported Turkey's European perspective. Signs of how effective had been the two external factors were the number of agreements signed and the number of Confidence Building Measures taken by the Greek and Turkish foreign ministers. Especially the second four-year period of Simitis government did Greek foreign policy turn out to be a strong supporter of Turkey's European perspective. Greek foreign ministers (Papandreou, Molyviates, Bakoyannis) had since 2000 stated the Greek intention Turkey to be fully integrated in the Union and in practice had paid several visits in Turkey.

As far as the question of how steady and firm had been Greek foreign policy the last decade it is important to stress that Athens from 1996 to 2000 followed a rather unsteady and vague policy, trying to balance between past beliefs and revised views. The main reason was the fact that Greek foreign policy was in a transitional stage. The first years of Simitis governing past policies (veto, 'no-talks with Turkey', acceptance only of the continental shelf as bilateral difference, insistence on the legal resolution) dominated, although hints of a new approach (through statements in official visits and in the sidelines of meetings) had been evident. The weakness to support the common defence doctrine with Cyprus and the vague external policy towards Ocalan were signs of confusion. On the one hand, the government had to overcome the opposition pressure for a tougher policy towards Turkey and, on the other hand, the intention to maintain the Madrid spirit. Just before 2000 and the Helsinki summit did Athens revise its foreign policy. The reconciliation and the policy of developing dialogue on the 'low-level issues' was adhered through all the second Simitis government (2000-2004). During all that period bilateral meetings, official visits, motion of 'good-will' had been strengthened, even if consolidated views had not changed. Greek side supported only the continental shelf as a difference that both countries should

appeal to The Hague. Very soon the obsession with the legal resolution made Athens to support the idea that Turkey should bring the question of Imia to the International Court of Justice, reversing previous statements. The confusion of which were exactly the bilateral differences with Turkey, even if officially Greece was recognising only the continental shelf as an issue, was to be repeated the whole decade, provoking debates among politicians and scholars.<sup>42</sup>

The lack of a consensus among the Greek side put at risk the effectiveness of the US and the EU role several times the last decade. The strong opposition within the cabinet and the party provoked a reconsideration of the policy of detente. The accusations of 'national betrayal' by New Democracy the next day of the Imia crisis, the letter of the 32 PASOK representatives and the open statements, as was that of Anastasios Peponis criticising the Helsinki, created an embarrassment and a scepticism over the exerted foreign policy. Moreover, the views of personalities with a wider acknowledgement, as Kostis Stephanopoulos is, proved that they had an impact on the foreign policy and that they had to be taken into account by foreign policy makers. These different voices (e.g. the opposition within the cabinet, the opposition parties in the Parliament, independent personalities) turned out to be an impediment in the new foreign policy doctrine.

The set deadlines and timetables –mainly those by the summit conclusions– had been followed and in general terms maintained. It is crucial to stress the criticism exerted for the 2004 deadline as mentioned by the Helsinki summit. It has been already mentioned that Helsinki determined 2004 as a final year for the exploratory talks and that both countries had 'to promote their settlement through the International Court of Justice, at the latest by the end of 2004.' As far as Athens is concerned, in practice it did not show any willingness to promote the specific Helsinki concluding remark.

The main element impeding the effectiveness of the US and of the EU role had to do with the sensitive 'high-level' issues, that of the Aegean and of Cyprus, that through the whole decade were adding insult to injury. The continuing existence of serious differences among Greece and Turkey proved that a number of disagreements, tensions and conflicts were posing the improvement of the bilateral relations at stake. Actually none of the bilateral issues had been touched. and ten years after the Imia crisis none of these issues had been completely resolved. It is not hard to imagine that by the time these issues will come on the table, the climate of détente and reconciliation might be put once again at risk..

According to the above considerations US and EU had been effective. Undoubtedly, the very good climate between the countries as inauratated in the eve of the new century and the transformation of the bilateral relations as an EU issue have improved the bilateral relations and - to a certain extent- have created the conditions under which the main differences could be finally resolved. However, as long as the disputes remain unresolved the spirit of reconciliation

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<sup>42</sup> It is characteristic that in June 2006 the ex-foreign minister and leader of PASOK George Papandreou suggested the extension of the territorial waters before appealing to The Hague.

might expire. The repeatedly phrase of the ex-wing-commander Nikos Kouris that 'we will face the Imia case over and over again in the future' might be revealing of the great need for a substantial internal Greek dialogue and for a direct and clear decision towards resolving the bilateral differences, as the only way for building good-neighbourly relations.

## Annex<sup>43</sup>

The recorded conversation with the ex-minister and PASOK representative Anastasios Peponis took place on 23 June 2006 in his house in Maroussi in Athens. It is reminded that A. Peponis had been one of the dissidents of the Helsinki and opponent of the revised policy towards Turkey. In the conversation is clearly presented his view, which has a special value, considering the fact that it reflects the opposition within PASOK.

-Mr. Peponis, you had been minister in the government during the Imia crisis. I would like to ask you how effective had been the role of the US during the crisis?

- The result came after the mediation and pressure of the US. The fact that we withdraw the military unit and we hauled the flag is a result of the American interference, as did the Turkish departure from the Greek islet. I underline that it was not Greece, who had occupied a Turkish islet. The mediation aimed not at a mutual departure.

**-And the EU role?**

-There was no role during the crisis. As far as I know there was no role and no effort made by the EU.

**-How did the Greek government handle the crisis?**

The prime minister in his first declaration explicitly stated that we will not haul down the flag. But as you know the flag finally had been hauled down. Certainly Greece could not have left a flag in every islet and guard them. It is military impossible and unserious. But we should not have negotiated hauling down the flag as a condition for abandoning Turks the islet. During the whole night the prime minister and the foreign minister had been negotiating with the US side and the result of these talks had been the so-called 'no troops, no flags, no vessels'. In addition, the communication between prime minister and of the officer of 'EYII' (National Intelligence Service) had been always direct, but that night he did not accept him, for reasons still unknown.

**-How did Athens start gradually revising its foreign policy?**

-The meeting and statement of the deputy foreign minister and current leader of PASOK from Malta paved the way for the 'step-by-step' approach and then it followed the Madrid joint declaration between Demirel and Simitis. Regardless of the legal validity of the text, it includes a Greek acknowledgement. It opens the door to Turkey's claims that we have common strategic interests. It is an unacceptable acknowledgement since 'strategic interests' are only those, which according to the international law protect the legal rights, of sovereignty or others, of a country. The insistence of the prime minister declaring in public, and through international meetings, Turkey to appeal to The Hague had been an acceptance that there is an issue. It was a first step to recognize that every claim of Turkey it is accepted to be sent to the International Court of Justice.

**-How did you react towards the declaration?**

-When the prime minister convened the ministerial council about the foreign policy, I was the only one who talked and expressed my views. When in the end of the council, the prime minister said 'we all agree that' I explained him that obviously my wording had not been clear and that I would like to express my full disagreement with the 'step-by step' policy. In that council the foreign minister disagreed, as did another minister but without arguments. The minister of defence remained silent. Through the letter I sent him [to the prime minister] the next day, I explained him that he was taking account the 'step-by-step' approach according to the Greek views. But it is important also what the other side will say. The other side will demand more steps in other issues and this does not lead anywhere. I insisted on

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<sup>43</sup> In the annex are presented extracts from the two recorded conversations with two of the protagonists who played a role in the foreign policy the period 1996-2006.

remaining on the past policy that we recognize only one issue as a legal one, that of the continental shelf.

**-Mr. Peponis with the Helsinki you were one of the dissidents...**

-With the Helsinki squarely I was the only one who disagreed from the PASOK representatives. Mr. Verivakis and Mr. Papatthemelis had also disagreed, but squarely I was the only one. The Helsinki conclusions had been prepared by saying the Imia case to be appealed to The Hague, by the constant references to the 'step-by-step' policy, with the Madrid joint declaration. The previous motions had not a legal value, but Helsinki is a decision of the European summit. With the Helsinki Greece recognized the existence of pending border disputes, an unthinkable position before 1996.

**-Greece's main argument was that by the Helsinki Greek-Turkish relations were becoming a Euro-Turkish case.**

-During the Helsinki period I had been invited by the Greek foreign minister, who explained to me that his aim was to transform the Greek-Turkish issues into Euro-Turkish ones. My response was that I fully agree, but that I had a second thought: that in the case of a dead end EU might turn out to be an acceptable arbitrator, for whom is unknown which are his judgements. Definitely it is in favor of Greece the issues to be a European case

**-You don't think there were any positive sides on the Helsinki conclusions?**

-The positive sides are those of the Cyprus issue. There was a great success of the then government for the accession of Cyprus in the EU. I only add to this that hopefully the Cypriot people did not comply with the dominant view for the Anan Plan. If the Anan Plan had been accepted, that success of the government and of the Greek nation would have evaporated.

**-The talks of the EU agenda before the Helsinki had an impact on the Greek side?**

-The then current prime minister of Finland and president of the Council Lipponen sent a letter to the Turkish prime minister explaining him that the deadline set by the conclusions will be indicating and not binding. A letter cannot reject the text of the Presidency conclusions but when the text of the conclusions allows the possibility of several interpretations the letter of the President of the Council, who under that status sent the letter can be an interpretative tool.

**-Could the International Court of Justice be a solution for improving the bilateral relations?**

-Could Greece recognize any claim presented by Turkey as possible to be sent to The Hague? Can each claim be a difference that needs a resolution? When both sides appeal to The Hague and Turkey has 6 or 7 claims, most probably The Hague would make an intersection. When we have an intersection and the one part claims and the other does not, this is against the one who does not demand. As far as I know Greece does not occupy any Turkish territories. A compromise could have been only in the case of both having mutual claims.

**-Could you make a comment about the Ocalan case?**

-For the Ocalan case there had been realized the signing of two texts. The first made by all the parties and the second only by PASOK. The first expressed the intention Ocalan to come back in Athens and by the second to be invited to the PASOK congress. I refused to sign such texts. I am against any conciliation towards Turkey, but I am also against any challenge towards Turkey. I have a feeling of sympathy towards Ocalan, but I am completely opposite to making a text that would be a provocation for Turkey. Of course, I am against the Ocalan delivering.

**-From 2000 we have initiated a policy of developing the 'low-policy' issues. How effective has been that policy?**

-As far as the substance of these issues there was no change. Turkey has made no concession and no respite on its provocations, whatever Greece did. It is not the people that give food on these tensions, but the leaderships. The Turkish leadership has made no rollback. The Greek position after 1996 had no result

**-From 2004 and the win of New Democracy in the elections?**

-Greek foreign policy from 2004 had been a bit better, until Mrs. Bakoyiannis undertook the ministry. I came to the conclusion and because of his position, that Molyviates did not support

the idea that everything should be sent to The Hague and this was why he decided not to insist on the deadline. Contrary to this, Mrs. Bakoyianni is complied with the policy of Simitis government.

The conversation with Nikos Kouris was realised on 20 June 2006 in his apartment in Papagou in Athens. Nikos Kouris, the Greek wing commander and honorary leader of General Staff of National Defence, had been the deputy of defence during Imia and one of the protagonists of the crisis. His testimony is mainly focused on the Imia case and on the S-300. He did not hesitate to answer all of my questions and expressed in a vivid and explicit way his views and experiences.

**-Mr. Kouris, I would like to ask you about the US role over the Imia crisis.**

-On 17 November 1990 the US cartographic service had published the map 54418 with the indication 'Nisos Limnia (Greece)' for Imia. Three days before the Turkish action to invade the West Imia on 27 January 1996, US made another edition and instead of the previous indication it noted 'undefined sovereignty'. This gives us a hint to say that US services were not irrelevant with what Turks were planning to do that days. In 31 January we took a 'high - credibility' information for an impending Turkish attack. That information was coming from US sources. It was proved that Turkey had direct telephone communication with CIA, which was selectively transmitting information to us. They said to us that Turks are going to realize an attack, but without reference on when and where. When we took that information we commanded a national alarm and all of our ships objected all the Turkish ones of the area [...]. Simitis made the fault not to come together with the foreign and defence ministers and the chief of General Staff to the National Centre of Information when all the information were arriving.[...] The US had always the will to have a finger in all the issues of the region and especially of the Aegean. They tried to play the mediator role and impose regulations over the Aegean in favor of them. While helping Turkey, they actually were supporting their plans.

**-How exactly did the US mediate?**

-US interfered by the overnight triangle contact between Washington-Ankara-Athens. Although in Turkey there was one interlocutor, in Athens there were three (Simitis, Pangalos, Arsenis).

**-And the EU role during Imia?**

-It was non-existent. It did not play a role.

**-Why did Simitis take that decision?**

-Simitis was an expert in finance, but irrelevant with the issues of foreign policy. By that time he had never been involved in the issues of foreign affairs and of defence. In my view, Simitis is having a bad feeling for the military. He does not trust them, contrary to Andreas Papandreou. In Simitis book (p.73) where referring to the military, is obvious his irony and his derision towards the army, presenting the military as warmongers and ready to sacrifice the Greek people. We also knew that Simitis as long as he was prime minister never put his foot on the armed forces celebrations.[...]He had a completely different view than his commander in chief, the admiral, Liberis had. Andreas Papandreou in contrast, when I was in Liberis position, had the same views as I did, and we had no disagreement. We handled in an absolute success the crisis of 1987. Unfortunately there was no understanding. Not even among Pangalos and Arsenis, between Arsenis and Simitis, and between Simitis and Liberis. Simitis was feeling politically weak to realize a war, since he had recently been elected as prime minister. He decided, together with the US mediation, to move on a compromise with Turkey. It was the notorious Pangalos agreement of 'no ships, no troops, no flags'.

**-While reading Simitis book I noticed his reference that Liberis had suggested him bombing Imia, as a means to force Turks to abandon the islet.**

-It was Liberis fault. Liberis is a skilful mate, but he made faults. His biggest fault was that when Simitis asked him 'what are the perspectives of launching an attack?', he did not respond in a clear and explicit way. He said that 'we will make a good strike, but I can not guarantee a win for sure'. This made Simitis to double think any intervention. When Andreas Papandreou had asked me in his house in Kastri 'what will we do with the Turks' I explicitly responded him that 'we can defend our rights'. In reality, Simitis let Pangalos to negotiate with the Americans. As a result we had to choose between war and compromise. Simitis chose the compromise option.

**-Simitis policy did not lead to a war with Turkey...**

-In my view it is early to be judged Simitis decision not to be driven to a war. We were not driven to a war, but it let us a mortgage. Nowadays in the border disputes, as called by Turkey, it was added another one, that of the 'grey areas', with which they ask Greek territory [...]. We will find again the Imia case in front of us in the future.

**-I would like to ask your comment about the S-300 missiles.**

-The S-300 followed the destiny of the S-A2 missiles of the 1960's, when Makarios had bought anti-aircraft missiles, paid them, and were removed in Egypt. We had trained staff of the air force and they had started removing from Egypt to Cyprus by ships. The Americans knew everything and were watching day and night the ships. Parallel to this, they had been exerting pressure on the governments of Athens and of Nicosia not the missiles to be established in Cyprus. This meant for them the infiltration of the Soviet Union in a region that was considered to be a stronghold of the west defence in the eastern Mediterranean. [...]

**-Now with the S-300?**

-It happened the same thing. The Cyprus government bought an improved system for its defence. By no means did Turkey want us to establish such a system, which was a threat for their aircraft, as did the US for the same political reasons, not to allow the Russians to step in Cyprus. Cyprus delivered to us the missiles. And we [the Greeks] for reinforcement of the so-called 'common defence doctrine' established them in Crete, considering that it covers a part of the west area Crete-Cyprus to protect our aircrafts acting in Cyprus.

**-Where do you think should a young student, who is researching the Greek side and the events of the last decade, be focused?**

-I think emphasis should be given on the elasticity, compliance of the Greek side towards Turkey. We shouldn't have allowed the talks of Turkey's accession to the EU, without before having resolved all these issues that provoke tension and danger in the region, Cyprus included. I think we have lost that chance and we will discover it in the future.

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