

EGE JEOPOLİTİĞİ

Editörler: Prof. Dr. Hasret Çomak - Doç. Dr. Burak Şakir Şeker - Dr. Dimitrios Ioannidis

Cilt I

Ege Denizi, Karadeniz ile Akdeniz arasında İstanbul ve Çanakkale boğazları ile birlikte önemli bir su yolunu oluşturmaktadır. Bu su yolunu kullanan tüm ülkeler için Ege Denizi, jeopolitik ve jeostratejik önemini korumaktadır. Yarı kapalı bir deniz olması nedeniyle Ege Denizi'nde istikrar odaklı politikaların üretilmesi ve izlenmesi önem kazanmaktadır. Bu suretle, Ege Denizi'nin barış ve istikrara örnek teşkil etmesi ve bunun devam ettirilmesi, bölge ve dünya barışına çok katkı sağlayacaktır. Deniz güvenliğinin ve istikrarının her zamankinden daha fazla önem kazandığı bu dönemde; Ege Denizi'nde kıyıdaş ülkeler arasında karşılıklı güvenin tesis edilmesi ve sürdürülmesi, tarafların, Uluslararası Antlaşma ve Sözleşme hükümlerine uyması ile mümkündür.

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EDITÖRLER
Prof. Dr. Hasret Çomak
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Editörler

Prof. Dr. Hasret Çomak

Doç. Dr. Burak Şakir Şeker

Dimitrios Ioannidis, Juris Doctor



EGE JEOPOLİTİĞİ CİLT 1

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Redaksiyon : Samet Tekin -samet@nobelyayin.com-
Sayfa Tasarım : Gülbeyaz Güler -gulbeyaz@nobelyayin.com-
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GREECE'S AEGEAN POLICY IN THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD - II

Ioannis Th. Mazis*

Markos I. Troulis**

INTRODUCTION

In the current study, the challenges, the priorities and the systemic opportunities regarding Greece's strategic behavior and its overall policy initiatives in the Aegean in the post-Cold War era are described and analyzed. In accordance with the Dardanelles Strait, the Aegean Sea represents an integral part of a trade passage of great significance for the regional balance of power, as well as for the planet-level effects on the balance of power among the Great Powers.¹

Hence, the strategic behavior of the littoral states - Greece and Turkey - owns distinctive value for the geopolitics of the Greater Middle East, especially in the aftermath of the end of the bipolar order of the international system. This is examined in the light of the questions above: What are the static geopolitical aspects determining the balance of power in the Aegean Sea and what are the new challenges of the post-Cold War system? What are the political-strategic initiatives taken by Greece and what is the level of effectiveness within the framework of national interest implementation?

The crux of the matter relates to the great geopolitical significance of the trade sea passage of Dardanelles-Aegean and the position of the intervening actors on the climax of power not permitting them to act as the sole geopolitical factors. This is implemented by the super-systemic actors and of course, the dominating naval powers, as it was the case of the U.S. in the post-war era. Nevertheless, the strategy of small and middle pow-

* Dr d' État, Professor of Economic Geography and Geopolitical Theory, Head of the Department of Turkish Studies and Modern Asian Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece.

** Dr/Post Doc., Adjunct Lecturer of International Relations Theory and Turkey's Foreign Policy, Department of Turkish Studies and Modern Asian Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece.

1 Ioannis Th. Mazis, "Geopolitical analysis of the trade sea passage of Dardanelles-Aegean" (in Greek), http://old.turkmas.uoa.gr/mazissite/greekpubs/eliamep_OP97.19_article.pdf (Erişim: 10.07.2019).

ers may give answers to such challenges when leadership capacity and strategic plans will exist in an active way vis-à-vis the inter-state dilemmas, especially when referring to Greece owning - according to the International Law of Seas - the dominant role in the Aegean Sea.

For instance, the plan and implementation of patron-client relations² could contribute productively towards this aim via the interconnection of interests and the cultivation of a situation of mutual commitment between the dominating naval power and Athens. On the contrary, the failure of Greece to move towards this choice deals with the overall failure of Greece's strategy in the Aegean Sea in the post-Cold era, referring to deterrence credibility, managing security dilemmas and last but not least, balancing the Turkish threat.

1. THE GEOPOLITICAL FRAMEWORK

Within the current study, the analytical description of the geopolitical framework in the Aegean Sea is next to impossible. However, we may underline some basic aspects related to the "overall reality" of the Eurasian perimeter. According to Nicholas Spykman, rimlands are defined as "*the intermediate land, located between the pivot area-axis and the regional seas*",³ while in parallel it is noted that "*towards the west and the south, nature has offered the most accessible passages from the heart of the continent to the ocean*".⁴

The Aegean Archipelago is located at the center of this analysis and it represents a passage of great significance towards the Mackinderian zone-axis of the Eurasian island. As it is quoted by Ahmet Davutoğlu, it is "*the most important sea pivotal point of the Eurasian world continent when referring to the North-South direction*".⁵ From this standpoint of classical geopolitics the post-war U.S. grand strategy was structured mainly in conjunction with the so-called "Containment Doctrine", but it also depicts absolutely the U.K. grand strategy referring to the control of the chokepoints for the purpose of deterring the continental powers' strategic inclination to access "warm waters".⁶

In the middle of the Cold War period and the high geostrategic antagonism, the meaning of the Aegean Sea was profound. However, this does not mean that the aforementioned significance was limited in the post-Cold War era. On the contrary, the dynamic entry of Russia in the planet-level energy gamble, the confirmation of large hydrocarbon quantities in the Aegean continental shelf,⁷ the new threats for international security in the Greater Middle East and the changing strategic role of Turkey, rendered the Aegean Archipelago a new field of competition and potential conflict. The re-distribution of power offered systemic "windows of opportunity" to Turkey for expansion and broadening the strategy of power projection, an evolution interrelated with Yugoslavia's dissolution (Balkans), the U.S.S.R.'s demise (the Caucasus and Central Asia) and Iraq's

2 Panayiotis Ifestos, "Patron-client relations in the emerging security environment", *Jerusalem journal of international relations*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1992, s. 37-38.

3 Nicholas Spykman, *The geography of the peace (in Greek)*, Athens, Papazisis, 2004, s. 103.

4 A.e., s. 79.

5 Ahmet Davutoğlu, *The strategic depth: The international position of Turkey (in Greek)*, Athens, Piotita, 2010, s. 267.

6 See: Ilias I. Iliopoulos, *Geopolitics of sea powers: The geography of British power 1815-1956, with an evaluation of the Eastern Question and the power antagonisms in the Eastern Mediterranean (in Greek)*, Athens, Leimon, 2017.

7 Ioannis Th. Mazis, "Turkey, Israel, Greece: Reshuffling in the Eastern Mediterranean", *Civitas gentium*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2018, s. 66.

strategic exhaustion (Middle East) after the Gulf War. With reference to the last case, Turkey has vital interests identified with the prevention or Iraqi sovereignty, the protection of the Turkmen minority, the extermination of the PKK and the formation of the new correlation in Baghdad.⁸ At the Balkan sub-system, Turkey favored the empowerment of its quasi allies; i.e. Albania and Bosnia,⁹ in conjunction with the manipulation of Turkish, Turkic and Muslim minorities in the periphery and their rendering into “strategic tools” of hegemonic interests’ promotion.

Greece responded passively to Ankara’s strategic priorities and chose an appeasing strategic behavior avoiding to enter into the antagonisms towards the neutralization and internationalization via NATO surveillance of the Aegean Archipelago sea routes. This was obvious due to its incapability to deter Turkey’s revisionist inclinations and the resulting consolidation of illegitimate claims. As it has been mentioned already by the mid-1990s, with reference to the Great Powers’ strategies and the relevant Greek and Turkish governmental replies:

*“Without any doubt, we may conclude that the line crossing Baku-Grozny-Novorossiysk-Alexandroupolis is of high importance, concerning the geopolitical and the geostrategic role of the Northern Greek zone and the island complex of the Aegean, which may supplement to the control of one of the most crucial oil routes of the Mediterranean [...] The NATO management of the Aegean Archipelago in this case represents the best geopolitical counterweight and geostrategic countermeasure of the naval metropolitan Powers”.*¹⁰

2. THE RE-DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND SYSTEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

The end of the Cold War signified the cultivation of a new reality regarding the distribution of roles, power, and spheres of influence in the international system. It is profoundly important to note that the geopolitically crucial complex of the Greater Middle East was not an exception, while the balance of power in the Aegean changed in many ways. In 1992, the Greek GDP was 76.37 billion \$, the country’s population was estimated at 10.127.600 people and the defense budget approached 4.4 billion \$ with obvious signs to remain the same for the upcoming years.¹¹ For example, in 1999, Greece continued to give 3.8 billion \$ for defense, but Turkey has already approached 10.1 billion.¹² Afterward, in 2013, the Greek defense expenditure was estimated at 5.68 billion in relation to Turkey’s 14.3.¹³

For this reason, it is deduced that the balance of power in the Aegean Archipelago changed dramatically with the simultaneous rise of a security dilemma¹⁴ of great im-

8 Ioannis Th. Mazis, **The geopolitics of the Greater Middle East and Turkey (in Greek)**, Athens, Livanis, 2008, s. 204-205.

9 Davutoğlu, a.g.e., s. 200.

10 Mazis, “Geopolitical analysis of the trade sea passage of Dardanelles-Aegean” (in Greek), s. 12.

11 The Military Balance, “NATO”, **The Military Balance**, Vol. 93, No. 1, 1993, s. 49.

12 The Military Balance, “NATO and non-NATO Europe”, **The Military Balance**, Vol. 99, No. 1, 1999, s. 58.

13 The Military Balance, “Europe”, **The Military Balance**, Vol. 115, No. 1, 2015, s. 100 ve 144.

14 Security dilemma refers to the situation in which a state tries “to increase its security and this decreases the security of others” in correlation with the zero-sum game characterizing inter-state relations. Robert Jervis, “Cooperation under the security dilemma”, **World politics**, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1978, s. 169.

portance for Greek security, the cohesion of NATO and the stability of the region. The changing perception of threat is confirmed by four criteria constituting the parameters of strategy formation.¹⁵

The first criterion is identified with the elements of power (aggregate power), meaning the capabilities of actors in total and in relation to each other. At this level, the situation for Greece becomes more and more problematic and worrying. Geopolitical indicators, such as technological and industrial capacity, population and firepower are contained in this theoretical description of the relation between a threatening and a threatened part.

The second relates to geographic proximity, which is profound in the case of Greece and Turkey. As long as the notion of the “territorial state” is still valid as well as the one of sovereignty, the natural presence, and the geographic proximity determine the state’s capability to project power and its own revisionist claims.

The third criterion has resulted from the comparative analysis of defense budgets and it is summarized by the term “offensive power”. This criterion responds to the geopolitical pillar of defense and security and in this sense, to the means used for achieving survival.

The fourth is about offensive intentions, also existent and summarized by the neo-ottoman ideological framework described as:

*“A spiritual movement, supporting the Turkish inclination of an active and differentiated foreign policy in the region, on the basis of the ottoman historical legacy. The Neo-ottomans envision Turkey as the potential leader of the Muslim and the Turkish-speaking world as well as the major source of power in Eurasia”.*¹⁶

In practice, the neo-ottoman expansionist intentions represent a systemic result, since the existence of the ideological inclination pre-exists the end of the Cold War, but the actual implementation resulted - as it has been mentioned already - from the demise/strategic exhaustion of the U.S.S.R., Yugoslavia, and Iraq. These evolutions provoked the halting of Turkey’s security dilemmas offering, which included the systemic opportunities of the status change and the adoption of hegemonic initiatives, as these were depicted via the words of the former Prime Minister and President of Turkey Turgut Özal:

*“Whatever the shape of things to come, we will be the real elements and most important pieces of the status quo and new order to be established in the region from the Balkans to Central Asia. In this region, there cannot be a status quo or political order that will exclude us”.*¹⁷

3. GREECE’S DETERRENCE INCAPACITY

The gamble of the Aegean Archipelago and the Eastern Mediterranean refers to a peer hegemon (Turkey) and neighboring powers having the interest to deter it. As Alfred Mahan stated: *“the circumvention in the regional seas of a peer hegemon represent a ‘key of deterrence’”*¹⁸ and pro-

15 Stephen M. Walt, **The origins of alliances**, New York, Cornell university press, 1987, s. 21-26. The threat perception is resulted from a series of complex procedures not linked to mathematical estimations. In this sense, a threat is perceived in a subjective way and weighted with imponderables. On this issue, see: Robert Jervis, **Perception and misperception in international politics**, Princeton, Princeton university press, 1976.

16 Ioannis Th. Mazis, **Davutoğlu and geopolitics (in Greek)**, Athens, Herodotus, 2012, s. 16.

17 Stephen J. Blank, Stephen C. Pelletiere ve William T. Johnsen, “Turkey’s strategic position at the crossroads of world affairs”, **Strategic studies institute of the US army war college**, 1993, s. 70.

18 Davutoğlu, a.g.e., s. 171-180.

foundly the Aegean is a sea passage of that geopolitical hierarchy. Effective deterrence results from the capability of maintaining the status quo via preclusion of circumstances, which could favor manipulation of sovereign rights, escalation or even war in the next phase. Thus, Greece's deterrence strategy failed in the aftermath of the Cold War, as far as *"deterrence failure is a situation in which the defendant cannot succeed in its aims because the aggressive revisionist part "wins in a war without belligerency"; i.e. coerces the defendant to move back to a small or a large extent.*¹⁹

Greece's deterrence failure is explained by the indigenous strategic choices of Athens in the international arena. Appeasement, via the indirect acceptance of the other part's negotiation positions or the "understanding" of its aggressive actions, has led stably to the cultivation of a situation, not only subverting Greek national interests and core principles of international law but also precluding any prospect of stability of the complex of the Greater Middle East. The geopolitical factor of the post-Cold War re-distribution of power provoked changes, which drove Greece's strategic stance irrational in the new inter-state environment, especially if lack of an autonomous or independent strategic planning is kept in mind. An indicative example is the - legally weak and untypical - "Joint Communiqué of Madrid"²⁰ between Costas Simitis and Suleiman Demirel in 1997, which was in no way an "agreement" presupposing an absolutely different legal framework. In this "Communiqué" wishful thinking is referred:

"Both countries are inclined to promote bilateral relations, among others based on [...]:

IV) Respect of the legitimate vital interests and of each country in the Aegean, which are of great importance for their security and their national sovereignty.

V) Commitment of avoidance of one-sided actions on the basis of mutual respect and desire for abstaining from conflicts reasoned by misunderstanding".²¹

The afore-mentioned Joint Communiqué came almost one year after the "Imia Incident", a fact indicative of the appeasing stance of Athens, which was not left unexploited by Turkey, declaring via President Abdullah Gül in 2007 that *"Turkey and Greece own legal and vital interests and worries in the Aegean of high importance for their security and national sovereignty. They are committed, via the Joint Communiqué of Madrid in 1997, to respect these principles and manage their disputes with peaceful means and mutual understanding"*.²² The Joint Communiqué resulted from the pressure of NATO and Washington to the Greek side, a fact confirming the internationalization inclination of the Aegean passage. In parallel, it gave a reason (even inadequate in legal terms) to Ankara on its axioms considering "grey zones", the imposition of casus belli for the case of extension of Greece's territorial waters to 12 n.m. and the revision of the Greek sovereignty of islands and islets and its legal rights on the continental shelf.

19 Panayiotis Ifestos, "The failure of Greek deterrence strategy and the fact that "newer Greeks become grey" (in Greek) <https://ifestos.edu.gr/2018/05/02/%cf%80-%ce%ae%cf%86%ce%b1%ce%b9%cf%83%cf%84%ce%bf%cf%82-%ce%b7-%ce%b1%cf%80%ce%bf%cf%84%cf%85%cf%87%ce%af%ce%b1-%cf%84%ce%b7%cf%82-%ce%b5%ce%bb%ce%bb%ce%b7%ce%bd%ce%b9%ce%ba%ce%ae%cf%82-%ce%b1%cf%80/> (Erişim: 10.07.2019).

20 The common press release neither constitutes an international treaty or agreement, nor constitutes a committing text for both sides. It is just an expression of wishful thinking, a political declaration of principles, aiming to set the framework of Greek-Turkish relations.

21 Ioannis Th. Mazis, "Geopolitical approach and "constructive uncertainties"" (in Greek), <http://www.skai.gr/news/opinions/article/160599/geopolitiki-prosegisi-peri-ellino-kupriakis-aoz-ufalokripidos-kai-loipon-dimiourgikon-asafeion/> (Erişim: 11.07.2019).

22 A.e.

The already mentioned “internationalization-neutralization” includes the Aegean Archipelago and the Eastern Mediterranean in total, as it is about a cohesive complex of sea route on the “North-South axis”. Therefore, Greece’s strategic behavior on the Cyprus issue results directly to the Aegean, while the gradual abandonment of the dogma of “United Defense Space” at the end of the 1990s represents one more indication of the appeasing set of policies and tendency towards strategic retrenchment adopted by Greece vis-à-vis Turkish revisionism.²³

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The adoption and implementation of an appeasing strategy by Greece is based on a far-reaching tradition characterizing the country’s policy-making procedures. The definition process of national interest has deteriorated during the Greek state-building process. The circumstances of achieving independence, the dominance of externally dependent and “appeasing perceptions” within the political elite, the geopolitical importance of the space where Hellenism developed and the resulting - and continuing - lack of strategic culture, as well as the negation of strategic planning, represent significant reasons explaining the cultivation of the notion of external dependence.

The post-Cold War decades of the 1990s and the 2000s, especially with reference to Greece’s policy in the Aegean, constitute characteristic cases of false prioritization, since the rationally formed national interest was put aside. The bandwagoning to the German political-strategic side contained an unfruitful and unconditional adherence to an à la carte “Europeanization” for the sake of access to the EMU (Economic and Monetary Union), but not the construction of European-like state institutions. In the face of access to the EMU, any “warlike disorder” was considered “discordance”. In the light of the “S-300 crisis” in 1998, the dialogue between the former President of Cyprus Glafkos Clerides and the former Prime Minister of Greece Costas Simitis is indicative and it is quoted by the former President of the Cypriot Parliament and former Minister of Defence Giannakis Omirou:²⁴

“Prime Minister Simitis: What would happen in case the Turks send airplanes for flights over Nicosia?

President Clerides: We would denounce them to the UN Security Council.

Prime Minister Simitis: What would be the consequences for your tourism?

President Clerides: We can afford it. Our economy is strong enough.

Prime Minister Simitis: And if the Turks move towards a kind of ground operation to occupy land? What would happen in this case?

President Clerides: We will have a war!

23 Strategic retrenchment is implemented either through “unilateral abandonment of certain of a state’s economic, political, or military commitments” or through “entering into alliances with or seek rapprochement with less threatening powers” or through “making concessions to the rising power and thereby seeking to appease its ambitions” (i.e. appeasement). Robert Gilpin, **War and change in world politics**, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1981, s. 207-208.

24 Giannakis Omirou, “The fight of two “friends” for S-300: When Clerides connoted a “treason” by Simitis” (in Greek) <https://hellasjournal.com/2018/12/o-kaygas-dyo-quot-filon-quot-gia-toys-s-300-otan-o-kliridis-afise-yponoies-gia-quot-prodosia-quot-simiti/> (Erişim: 15/07/2019).

Simitis seemed to be surprised and obviously worried to listen to Clerides's reference to war and he was limited to ask twice: "A war?" [...] After that Theodoros Pagkalos said that the Turks need a chance to offend and with these weapons (S-300) we give it to them. He said that the Turks will implement military operation of limited climax and Cyprus's EU accession process will be blown. He concluded that: 'You have to forget this S-300 case'".

Absolute priority was given to the economic and monetary alignment of the country *only* under the state of a short-sighted economic and monetary perception, distanced from the pillars of security and defense and setting aside national rationalism, meaning the prerequisites of national self-help. On this line of thought, the fully irrational adoption of the appeasing strategy is confirmed. The protection of national interests on the "Dardanelles-Aegean-Cyprus" passage has proven to be ineffective, due to the full lack of will and the avoidance of strengthening Greece's geopolitical position "via the defense pillar". In contrast, Greece kept only the first part of the definition of International Law,²⁵ neglecting to build the necessary political and strategic preconditions for expressing and putting forward an argumentation based on international legality.

25 In a way, the afore-mentioned remark quotes Ioannis Th. Mazis's definition of international law: "International law refers to our interest equipped with Army, Navy and Air Force". Ioannis Th. Mazis, **Secret Islamic sects and political-economic Islam in modern Turkey (in Greek)**, Athens, Proskinio, 2000, s. 572.