

EVANTHIS HATZIVASSILIOU / ATHENS

Greek Foreign Policy attitudes towards the Soviet Bloc, 1944–1959

During the early post-war period, official Greek attitudes towards the Soviet bloc were being determined by three sets of considerations: history, geography and the cold war, with ideology being a part (though a major one) of the third set. This article will attempt to assess the views of Greek diplomacy about the Soviet bloc, especially the country's Balkan neighbours, from Liberation in 1944 until the conclusion of the 1959 Zurich and London agreements regarding Cyprus. The latter date is important because the Cyprus settlement removed the strain from Greece's relations with the West and radically changed the pattern of Greek-Soviet bloc relations as well. The article is not a factual account of Greece's eastern policy in 1944–59, but rather focuses on the schools of thought that dominated Greek policy-making.

I. George Papandreou and the Western Option, 1944

The 1944 George Papandreou government was the first Greek administration which faced the task of formulating a comprehensive response to the emergence of the Communist East. Indeed, it was during the lifetime of this government that the sweeping Soviet advance in Eastern Europe took place. The Papandreou administration was a peculiar case in Greek history. Until October 1944 it was a government-in-exile; after returning to Athens, it was immediately confronted with the responsibility of re-establishing the state and reaching a *modus vivendi* with the Communist-led National Liberation Front (EAM); it also was the government which faced the Communist revolution in December 1944. Moreover, this administration did not remain unchanged between April 1944 and January 1945: from September until early December it included EAM members.

Last but not least – a very important factor, when Greek attitudes towards Eastern Europe are being examined – this was the administration which in

autumn 1944 dealt with the Bulgarian reluctance to evacuate the Greek territories of Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace, even after the Communist takeover in Sofia. This was seen by most Greek policy-makers and opinion leaders as a continuation of the old policy of Bulgarian revisionism and of the three successive Bulgarian invasions of Greek territories (1913, 1916, 1941), and thus confirmed in the Greek official mind that the “menace from the north” continued, regardless of changes in the Bulgarian social and political regime.¹ Even during the war, an increasing number of Greek opinion leaders – among them Giorgos Theotokas, the main analyst of Papandreou’s Democratic Socialist Party – expressed concern at a Soviet descent in the Balkans and at the probable emergence of a Soviet-backed Communist Slav (i.e. Bulgarian-Yugoslav) axis against Greece. This also interacted with the rise of the Communist-led resistance movement in occupied Greece, and created the impression to many Greek opinion leaders that there was a combined, external as well as internal, threat against the social order and the territorial integrity of the country.² The Bulgarian attitude regarding Eastern Macedonia and Western Thrace in autumn 1944 seemed to confirm their worst fears.

George Papandreou led the effort to retain the country in the western world. In summer 1943 he became the first prominent Greek political figure to refer to the possibility of an internal conflict with EAM, which would decide the country’s international orientation. He also expressed concern at the future strong position of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, and argued for a strategic partnership with Britain and Turkey. After becoming prime minister, Papandreou played an instrumental role in the May 1944 Lebanon Conference, which marked the political defeat of EAM and led to the creation of a “National Union” government in which EAM’s influence was not dominant. Finally, in December 1944 he led the suppression of the Com-

¹ On the end of Bulgarian occupation and Papandreou’s attitude, see GIORGOS KAZAMIAS AND XANTHIPPI KOTZAGEORGI-ZYMARI, *Το Τέλος της Κατοχής* [The End of the Occupation], in XANTHIPPI KOTZAGEORGI-ZYMARI (ED.), *Η Βουλγαρική Κατοχή στην Ανατολική Μακεδονία και τη Θράκη, 1941–1944* [Bulgarian Occupation in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace]. Thessaloniki, Institute for Balkan Studies and Paratiritis publications, 2002, pp. 235–286.

² See the views of two prominent personalities in PROCOPIOS PAPASTRATIS, *Ο Γεώργιος Καρτάλης στην Κατοχή*, [George Kartalis during the Occupation], in *Ο Γεώργιος Καρτάλης και η δύσκολη δημοκρατία: σαράντα χρόνια από το θάνατό του*, [George Kartalis and the Difficult Democracy]. Athens, Etaireia Spoudon Neohellenikou Politismou kai Genikis Paideias, 1998, pp. 55–84; GIORGOS THEOTOKAS, *Τετράδια ημερολογίου (1939–1953)*, [Diary Notebooks], ed. by DIMITRIS TZIOVAS, Athens, Hestia, n.d., (15.2.1942) p. 337, (27.10.1942) p. 375, (6.1.1943) p. 389.

munist revolution. In order to put Papandreou's perceptions in their proper historical perspective, it is necessary to always keep in mind that the major foreign policy question of that time – the choice between East and West – involved an *internal* power struggle.

In his July 1943 memorandum to the Greek and the British governments, Papandreou, still in occupied Athens, noted that a new era of world history was beginning, as two major fronts were being formed: “Communist Panslavism and Liberal Anglo-Saxonism”; they mostly differed on the issue of liberty, “individual, political, national”. According to Papandreou:

Greece and Turkey are destined to be allies of England, as they are natural enemies of the advanced posts of Panslavism in the Balkans, and natural guardians of the exit to the Mediterranean.

However, he continued, Greece should not adopt a hostile and provocative attitude towards the Soviet Union. Moscow would now become the “strongest aggressive power, the menace of Europe”, and therefore Greece needed to adopt a cautious policy towards this new power centre. Papandreou insisted that prudence towards Moscow was not contradictory with “the realization that our interests absolutely identify with the British ones”. He noted that the Soviet Union of 1944 was radically different than older European great powers with hegemonic ambitions: firstly, the Soviet Union was a colossal power, which united two expansionist ideals, Panslavism and Communism; secondly, Communism gave to Moscow a worldwide moral and political appeal. Papandreou believed that this formidable power should be resisted by a “defence organization”, which would unite Liberal Anglo-Saxonism, Nationalist China and a “Socialist Paneuropa”. He also noted:

*It is only within this Socialist Paneuropa, aided by the moral and material force of Liberal Anglo-Saxonism, that Greece can find a sense of security vis-à-vis the mounting threat of Communist Panslavism.*³

In this document, Papandreou tried to assess the realities of an emerging bipolar world and summarized Greek fears about the ascent of Soviet power and about the future Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. It is also notable that although he referred to a “Socialist Europe”, he did not perceive it as a Third Force in world politics, but as a rather minor ally of the Anglo-

³ George Papandreou, memorandum to the Greek and the British governments (1943), in PAVLOS PETRIDES AND GIORGOS ANASTASIADES (EDS.), *Γεώργιος Παπανδρέου: ο Πολιτικός Λόγος* [G. Papandreou: The Political Discourse]. Thessaloniki, University Studio Press, 1995, pp. 247–248 and 254. See also the analysis of Papandreou's strategy in CONSTANTINOS SVOLOPOULOS, *Ελληνική Εξωτερική Πολιτική* [Greek Foreign Policy], volume A (1900–1945). Athens, Hestia, 1992, p. 310.

Saxon powers with which Greece had other important common interests. Last but not least, he noted the importance of the notion of liberty as the central issue of this future bipolar world. The war years were a period of tense ideological search, especially in occupied Europe; but Papandreou's analysis was noted for the clarity of its conclusions, both on the ideological and on the geopolitical levels.

Papandreou's strategy in 1944 derived from this analysis, and could be described as "post-Venizelism". It was a form of Venizelism, because it accepted some of the fundamental elements of Eleftherios Venizelos's strategy from the inter-war years. Mostly, Papandreou shared the consideration that Greece should approach the dominant maritime power in the Eastern Mediterranean, which at that moment was Britain. Indeed, since the "permanent" menace against the Greek territorial integrity came from the north, which by that time was going Communist, Papandreou regarded it as even more necessary for Greece to maintain its links with its traditional liberal western partner, London. Papandreou also shared the Venizelist conviction that a strategic Greek-Turkish partnership was the natural response to threats from the interior of the Balkans. On the other hand, Papandreou's foreign policy perception is defined here as *post*-Venizelism, because it also differed from the strategy of Eleftherios Venizelos in some respects, as the international context had radically changed in the aftermath of a new World War. Thus, in 1944 the Papandreou government had to deal with a *combined* Yugoslav-Bulgarian threat (in which Eleftherios Venizelos did not believe in the 1920s and 1930s). Papandreou also placed great emphasis on the Greek National Claims, which Venizelos had abandoned following the Treaty of Lausanne.

In later years, the Left accused Papandreou of being a puppet of the British in pursuit of a static reactionary policy. Research has disputed this thesis: Papandreou hoped that he could use the British military presence in liberated Greece to *deter* a new round of civil conflict as well as to ensure the smooth withdrawal of the Bulgarians from north-eastern Greece.⁴ Indeed, after the December 1944 battle of Athens, he was criticized by the Right for being "soft on EAM" and for playing the role of a "Greek Kerenski". He

⁴ See Papandreou to Greek Embassy, London, 10, 14 and 18 September 1944, and Papandreou to Churchill, 22 September 1944, in GEORGIOS PAPANDEOU, *Η Απελευθέρωση της Ελλάδος* [The Liberation of Greece]. Athens, Alfa, 1945, pp. 125–131; Papandreou, memorandum to the British government, 8 October 1944, *ibid.*, pp. 150–153. See also JOHN O. IATRIDES, *Revolt in Athens: the Greek Communist "Second Round"*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972.

was instrumental in keeping Greece in the West, but failed to prevent the bitter civil war that was to follow.

II. Panayiotis Pipinelis and Geopolitics, 1946–52

The eruption of the Greek Civil War roughly coincided with the start of the Cold War. This meant that the country had to manoeuvre within a polarized international context, which made challenges, external as well as internal, even more pressing. At the same time, the Greek National Claims were not vindicated, with the exception of the annexation of the Dodecanese, and this also had a demoralizing effect on Greek opinion. This is clear in texts (for example numerous newspaper articles) or other evidence of that time, for example in the bitter reference to National Claims and the “forgetfulness” of Greece’s allies in the famous film *Οι Γερμανοί ξανάρχονται* [The Germans Return].

But there was more than that. The rise of the new power in the East, the fact that Bulgaria emerged as the main ally of “Communist Russia” and the pressures on the country (including the Civil War) led to the emergence of tense psychoses in Greek public opinion. By the late 1940s wild ideas circulated regarding imaginary versions of “Panslavism” as an anti-Greek conspiracy. It was on these bases that theories about the “Slavic conspiracy against Macedonia” developed. This was more so in Greek Macedonia: a recent study has showed that in the Greek north, anti-Communism and Slavophobia largely coincided; political clubs which projected these views sprang up all over Greek Macedonia from “below”, not as a result of central party planning.⁵ Thus, during the second half of the 1940s, Greek diplomacy needed to provide a response to the new international setting, and simultaneously to fight a civil war which was perceived as combining an internal threat against the social order of the country, as well as an external threat against its territorial integrity. But at the same time, Greek diplomacy needed to resist exaggeration and alarmism in order to shape a realistic response to these challenges.

Indeed, a healthy reaction to alarmism was attempted not only by the politicians and the diplomatic officials, but also by other parts of informed Greek opinion. In 1948, M. Th. Laskaris, professor of history at the Univer-

⁵ BASIL K. GOUNARIS, *Εγνωσμένων Κοινωνικών Φρονημάτων: Κοινωνικές και Άλλες Όψεις του Αντικομμουνισμού στη Μακεδονία του Εμφυλίου Πολέμου* [Of Known Social Beliefs: Social and other Aspects of Anti-Communism in Civil War Macedonia]. Thessaloniki, Paratiritis, 2002.

sity of Thessaloniki, published his classic book on the Eastern Question. In the prologue, Laskaris wrote that his subject “after the end of the second world war appears to have regained its old importance”. He stressed that the central problem of the Eastern Question was the control of the Straits, and he quoted Russian views that for Russia the Eastern Question centred on who *in practice* dominated the Straits. At the end of the volume, Laskaris made an indirect yet clear plea for careful and calm analysis, mocking the alarmist ideas that the real target of Pan Slavism was Greece, and that this explained why Belgrade had been chosen as the seat of the Cominform!⁶

Another example can be found in the writings of the influential conservative journalist Georgios Vlachos, editor of the Athens daily *Kathimerini*. Although Vlachos was often noted for his sentimentalism, for his fear of Slavism and for his bitterness about the lack of international gratitude for Greece’s sacrifices in the War, he also put forward a distinctly realistic analysis, arguing that peace could be secured only by a systematic strengthening of Western military might. In early 1949, Vlachos even suggested that Communism in Greece could not prevail (and even if it prevailed it could not survive) because history had shown that it was impossible for Greece to belong to an international combination different from the one which dominated the Eastern Mediterranean. He pointed to similar experiences from the Crimean War, the Eastern Crisis of 1875–78 and the First World War, and evidently, as an opinion leader of anti-Venizelism, he knew very well what he was talking about. Vlachos concluded that Greece could not become Communist “unless the sea turned red” – which in the Civil War discourse was a multidimensional metaphor.⁷ Vlachos’s switch to such a geopolitical analysis is indicative of the trends of informed Greek opinion in these years.

Indeed, during this turbulent period Greek foreign policy displayed an emphasis on crude realism, which seemed to be the only way to provide a swift response to problems, as well as a counterweight to the alarmism of the public. This crude realism and the need to react to a major crisis also had side effects, mainly the dependence on the US, but this was regarded as a lesser evil, compared to the things which were at stake on a daily basis. On the other hand, this was a period of governmental instability and it is difficult to suggest that a single person controlled Greek foreign policy. In

⁶ M. TH. LASKARIS, *To Ανατολικόν Ζήτημα, 1800–1923* [The Eastern Question] volume A, 1800–1878. Thessaloniki, Pournaras, 1978, (first edition 1948), pp. 9, 13, 300.

⁷ See GEORGIOS A. VLACHOS, *Πολιτικά Άρθρα* [Political Articles]. Athens, Galaxias, 1961, especially the article “Συζήτησις” (Debate) first published on 30 January 1949.

fact, several people exerted influence. Initially, in 1946, one can focus on the role of the Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Philippos Dragoumis. He invoked the fundamental principle that Greece had to stay close to the maritime powers which also were the country's preferable political and ideological partners, since they supported liberal/democratic ideals and the "principles of the Western world"; Dragoumis also noted that the support of the western powers was important in Greece's resistance against the effort of "Slavic imperialism" to secure an exit to the Mediterranean.⁸ In the following years, 1946–49, a major influence was that of the leader of the People's Party, Constantinos Tsaldaris, who served as Prime Minister and as Foreign Minister. In 1950–52 it is important to stress the role of the Liberal leader, Sophocles Venizelos, who secured Greece's entry into NATO.⁹

Yet one should focus on the importance of the views of Panayiotis Pipinelis, who served as ambassador of the government-in-exile to the Soviet government in 1942–43, as Greek representative to the Peace Conference in 1946, as Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry until the end of the Civil War, and then as permanent representative to NATO. Greece's most prominent Realpolitiker, known for his connections with the Palace and a leading figure of Greek conservatism, Pipinelis did not control foreign policy, but held a permanent influence over it. He tried to create a counterweight to alarmism and to unrealistic expectations: in the late 1940s he set up a Political Committee of officials in the Foreign Ministry which examined problems of foreign policy as they emerged, and provided immediate advice to the political leadership. Although this committee was not a decision-making body (nor could it function as one, in a parliamentary system), it was the closest that Greece ever got to the creation of a National Security Council. It was under the influence of Pipinelis that Greece regarded the 1948 Tito-Stalin split as a major positive development in the region, since it destroyed the Soviet-supported Sofia-Belgrade axis, and thus dramatically improved Greece's geopolitical position.

Pipinelis presented his views in his *History of Greek Foreign Policy, 1923–1941*, which was published in 1948, at the height of the Civil War, and was dedicated to the memory of King George II. In the final chapter, "A Glance to the Future", Pipinelis dealt with the "implacable strategic and diplomatic realities" for Greece. The book was a call for realism:

⁸ See BASIL KONDIS, *Η Αγγλοαμερικανική Πολιτική και το Ελληνικό Πρόβλημα, 1945–1949* [Anglo-American Policy and the Greek Problem]. Thessaloniki, Paratiritis, 1986, p. 104.

⁹ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΙΔΗΣ, *Από τον Εμφύλιο στον Ψυχρό Πόλεμο: Η Ελλάδα και ο Συμμαχικός Παράγοντας, 1949–52* [From Civil War to Cold War: Greece and the Allied Factor]. Athens, Proskinio, 1999.

Foreign policy has escaped from the context of purely strategic, monarchical or racial situations, which formerly were the essence of international life, and has included the economic communication between states, [technological] invention, cultural influence, social or class (...) aims (...). Thus, the correct realization of the necessities of a people's foreign policy is the most correct start even for the shaping of its internal policy (...). Internal policy without a steady adjustment of analysis to the dictations of the international environment is therefore a contradictio in terminis.¹⁰

Pipinelis dismissed the idealistic visions of the war years as naïve. He focused on the importance of power and of national interest in international affairs, and warned that Greece should not place excessive hope in the newly-founded United Nations, which could not change the nature of international politics:

But the War with its implacable necessities and its countless effects soon left its mark on these high ideals (...). But all these grandiose enthusiasms did not last long against the force of the new reality. Slowly, this reality began putting aside the ideological axioms of the early War years (...). The principles, which were intended to inspire the charter of peace instead of dominating from the start the interests of the United Nations [i.e. of the member states], were soon dominated by these interests.¹¹

The Permanent Undersecretary thus focused on geopolitics, the crudest form of realism. Technology and the economic developments, he stressed, ensured that the large states would become more powerful and the smaller states would be left increasingly behind; the power struggle now acquired global dimensions; ideology, which had provided for hope during the War, proved to be an instrument of power politics and of national policy, rather than anything else. As for Greece, the post-War years had created a gigantic problem: the country had become a *border of worlds*:

The Balkans was suddenly lost to us. The forward defensive line of the Danube and of the Balkan hinterland has disappeared. The enormous geopolitical pressures of continental Europe, which formerly were being partially checked on the Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire and then on Yugoslavia or Bulgaria, now come to throw their full weight directly on our borders.

The importance of Greece as a beachhead of the oceanic powers has multiplied, both for the oceanic powers and for the continental ones. The danger has become larger, the pressure on the country more tense.¹²

Pipinelis is usually regarded as a sinister figure of contemporary Greek history: he was authoritarian and a man of the Palace while, in top of that,

¹⁰ PANAYIOTIS N. PIPINELIS, *Ιστορία της εξωτερικής πολιτικής της Ελλάδος, 1923–1941* [A History of Greek Foreign Policy]. Athens, Saliveros, 1948, pp. 2 and 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 362, 363, 364.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 372.

in 1967–70 he became Foreign Minister of the Junta. But in the late 1940s his “no-nonsense” line and even his cynicism proved an important barrier and a counterweight to confusion and demoralization. In any case, his influence on foreign policy ended with Alexandros Papagos’s electoral victory in November 1952. Papagos was on bad terms with Pipinelis’s power base, the Palace, while he relied on the advice of one of Pipinelis’s personal enemies, Alexis Kyrou; immediately after his electoral victory, the new Prime Minister removed Pipinelis from the permanent mission to NATO.

III. Alexis Kyrou and History, 1953–54

Alexis Kyrou, formerly a Venizelist, served as Permanent Representative of Greece to the UN in 1947–53 and as Director General of the Foreign Ministry in 1954; he was the main international analyst of the Papagos government, and its main expert on Eastern Europe.¹³ In many respects (and not only because of their personal rivalry), Kyrou was the opposite of Pipinelis in foreign policy analysis: his service in New York and his strong devotion to the UN pushed him in positions which Pipinelis dismissed as naïve and idealistic, mainly on Cyprus. More importantly, in the triptych of History/Geography/Cold War which dominated Greek analysis regarding the Soviet bloc, Kyrou placed his emphasis on history.

Kyrou argued for the disengagement of Greece from imaginary international conspiracies against it. In 1944, as a member of the small pro-royalist resistance group *Ελληνικόν Αίμα* (Greek Blood), he published a pamphlet in which he made an impressive statement: “Panslavism has done less harm to Greece than the exaggerated fear of Panslavism”.¹⁴ In later years he did not press this proposal, but he still made it clear that the danger for the country did not come from international master-plans, but from a much more tangible source, namely Bulgarian nationalism. In his book *Our Balkan Neighbours*, published in 1962, he noted:

If, indeed, we leave aside, without any envy whatsoever, the dark glory of Bulgarian achievements in the days of Krum or Symeon, of Samuel or the Asenides, and we come

¹³ EVANTHIS HATZIVASSILIOU, Ο ρόλος της προσωπικότητας στη διαμόρφωση της εξωτερικής πολιτικής: η περίπτωση του Αλέξη Κύρου, 1953–1954, [The Role of Personality in the Shaping of Foreign Policy: the Case of Alexis Kyrou], *Δελτίο του Κέντρου Ερεύνης της Ιστορίας του Νεώτερου Ελληνισμού* [Bulletin of the Centre for Research of the History of Modern Hellenism, Academy of Athens], 3 (2003), pp. 283–307.

¹⁴ ANONYMOUS [ALEXIS KYROU], *Εξωτερική πολιτική και εθνικά διεκδικήσεις: φαντασία και πραγματικότητα* [Foreign Policy and National Claims: Phantasy and Reality]. Athens, Greek Blood Pamphlets, April 1944.

*to their modern history, we shall see that this history, from its very start – from the moment, that is, when the Bulgarians acquired conscience of their national existence, which was maintained and which developed thanks to the Greek clergy to the Greek spirit and to the Greek language – is being founded by the leaders of the Bulgarian people on a fanatical hatred against Greece, against the Greeks and against anything Greek.*¹⁵

In his *Greek Foreign Policy*, published in 1955, Kyrou indicated that Athens should not expect much from Greek-Bulgarian contacts, exactly because Bulgarian attitudes did not change:

*[The author – Kyrou] is personally of the opinion that Greek interests require the normalization of Greek-Bulgarian relations and the implementation of a realistic policy towards this neighbouring state. At the same time, however, the author is also convinced that our guidance from the teachings of the past, recent and older, as well as the realization by the Bulgarians that we have decided not to forget these teachings, are elementary preconditions for the success of such realistic policy towards them, regardless whether today they are organized as a “People’s Republic” and whether, instead of Tsankov, they are being governed by comrade Chervenkov. Thus, neither hatred, nor rancour, nor unbending prejudices, nor insistent dislike. Simply cold logic and systematic reserve. We must make every conceivable effort to fully normalize Greek-Bulgarian relations, but also to fully understand that the Bulgarians themselves will not allow this normalization to evolve into a true friendship. All the better if the future disclaims the past!*¹⁶

Kyrou also referred to the “mad and aggressive chauvinism” which had steadily characterized Bulgarian policy towards Greece, and insisted that Bulgaria had to present “guarantees” to Athens.¹⁷ This attitude reflected Athens’s reserve towards Sofia after the three Bulgarian invasions of 1913–41. Under Kyrou, Greek diplomacy strove to “test” Bulgarian sincerity: in 1954 Greece and Bulgaria decided to re-establish diplomatic relations, but Athens refused to agree to an exchange of ambassadors prior to the settlement of the Bulgarian reparations due according to the 1947 Peace Treaty. The settlement of the reparations question was regarded by Athens as the testing ground for Bulgarian future intentions.¹⁸

Kyrou’s attitude towards the Soviet Union was reserved, but much less suspicious than towards Bulgaria; he held that Athens had to develop friend-

¹⁵ ALEXIS AD. KYROU, *Οι βαλκανικοί μας γείτονες* [Our Balkan Neighbours]. Athens, n.p., 1962, pp. 85–86.

¹⁶ ALEXIS AD. KYROU, *Ελληνική Εξωτερική πολιτική* [Greek Foreign Policy]. Athens, Hestia, 1955, p. 217.

¹⁷ KYROU, *Οι βαλκανικοί γείτονες*, pp. 226–229.

¹⁸ EVANTHIS HATZIVASSILIOU, Greek-Bulgarian and Greek-Soviet Relations, 1953–1959: a View From the British Archives, *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, 8 (1992), pp. 119–137.

ly relations with Moscow, provided that the latter would not try to destabilize Greece or to aid a new Bulgarian bid for territory. He argued for a “careful policy towards Soviet Russia and the other states of the eastern bloc”:

Our sentiments towards Soviet Russia are being guided – and have to be guided – by the experience of the last fifteen years [i.e. the Civil War]; but they are not being influenced – nor should they be influenced – by prejudices arising from differences between our ideological views and the political, economic and social organization of the two states (...). These relations will always be guided, so far as Greece is concerned (...) by past experience and the pressing need to strengthen our security, external as well as internal (namely also our security against subversive elements aided from outside), but never by ideological views.

More specifically, we want our relations with Soviet Russia to be as normal as possible, and we are determined to avoid anything which could place obstacles to such normalization, on the elementary understanding that this “anything” will not be imposed by the primary need to safeguard the security of the country.¹⁹

Indeed, in 1953 commercial relations were initiated with Soviet bloc countries. Kyrou was in favour of establishing closer contacts with Moscow; he supported the normalization of Greek-Soviet relations and the exchange of ambassadors in 1953.²⁰ He aimed at – and partially succeeding in – adjusting Greece’s eastern policy during the years of “peaceful coexistence”. But he placed two very narrow limits for this: a historical legacy which left little hope for full normalization of relations with Moscow’s main regional ally, Sofia; and a security perception which could easily lead to alarmism, especially if one takes into account the role that he attributed to historical legacies. In effect, Kyrou represents for Greek foreign policy a transition from the inward-looking years of the Civil War to the more outward-looking attitude that would characterize the next sub-period.

IV. Constantinos Karamanlis, Evangelos Averoff and Geography

The triptych History/Geography/Cold War continued to guide Greek analysis even after Papagos’s death in 1955; but the emphasis now shifted on a “deeper force”, geography. In the following eight years, Greek policy was dominated by Constantinos Karamanlis (Prime Minister, 1955–63) and Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza (Foreign Minister, 1956–63). Karamanlis con-

¹⁹ KYROU, *Ελληνική εξωτερική πολιτική*, pp. 194–196.

²⁰ HATZIVASSILIOU, Ο Ρόλος της Προσωπικότητας στη Διαμόρφωση της Εξωτερικής Πολιτικής.

stantly indicated his concern for geography. Thus in November 1958, talking to the West German economics minister, Ludwig Erhart, he noted:

I think that some special treatment for Greece is in order [on the economic field]. Its people are in a dramatic position, facing pressure from the north, and defend themselves literally on a rock to preserve themselves as a nation.²¹

The same emphasis appeared even more clearly during Karamanlis's discussion with US President Dwight Eisenhower in December 1959:

Greece ideologically belongs to the West, but geographically and ethnically is isolated. Surrounded by Slavs, it has faced for centuries now a pressure. This pressure has lately combined with Communism, which unites them [the Slavs] even more, and therefore has become more tense and dangerous.²²

The Foreign Minister, Averoff, had served as Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs in the Centre coalitions of 1951–52 and had displayed a strong interest in the effect of the “deeper forces”.²³ His Ph.D. thesis, from the University of Lausanne (1933), dealt with a similar subject, the geographical, economic, financial, legal, technical, administrative and psychological pre-conditions for Balkan co-operation; his second academic work, which received an award by the Academy of Athens in 1939, also dealt with a “deeper force”, the demographic prospects of Greece.²⁴ Averoff kept his eyes fixed on the geographical position of the country, which, he claimed, determined the course of its history. Thus, in April 1961, after the visit that he and Karamanlis paid to the U.S., Averoff noted in a newspaper article:

Greece, finding itself in the most spectacular, perhaps, crossroads of the globe, in the crossroads where three continents and important maritime routes, races and religions meet, has lived intensely all the major crises of humankind. I could argue, pointing to many historical events, that Greece has lived these crises not only intensely but also as a vanguard, for many of these crises erupted as crises of Greece, before even becoming crises of humankind in general. Allow me to mention only one contemporary example:

²¹ Record (Karamanlis-Erhard), Bonn, 11 November 1958, in CONSTANTINOS SVOLOPOULOS (GEN. ED.), *Κωνσταντίνος Καραμανλής: Αρχείο, Γεγονότα και Κείμενα* [Archive, Events and Texts – hereafter *Karamanlis*], volume 3. Athens, Ekdotike Athenon, 1994, p. 278.

²² Record (Karamanlis-Eisenhower), Athens, 15 December 1959, *Karamanlis*, volume 4, pp. 222–226.

²³ On his views, see EVANTHIS HATZIVASSILIOU, *Ευάγγελος Αβέρωφ-Τοσίτσα, 1908–1990: Πολιτική Βιογραφία* [Evangelos Averoff-Tossizza: Political Biography]. Athens, Institute C. Karamanlis and Sideris Publications, 2004.

²⁴ EVANGELOS AN. AVEROFF, *Union Douanière Balkanique*. Paris, Sirey, 1933; by the same author, *Συμβολή εις την Έρευναν του Πληθυσμιακού Προβλήματος της Ελλάδος* [A Contribution in the Research for the Population Problem of Greece]. Athens, Christou Publications, 1939.

*the horrible bandit war of 1946–1949 was initially regarded as a crisis of Greece, but it then was recognized as the beginning of the terrible crisis which the whole of human-kind experiences today, in the form of the conflict between the totalitarian and the liberal ideologies.*²⁵

Averoff presented a comprehensive overall sketch of Greek foreign policy in May 1958, lecturing to students of the U.S. War College; he described Greek policy in terms of a series of responses to challenges with a distinctly geographical flavour. The Foreign Minister referred to Greece's need to secure the support of larger nations in its age-long effort to check the "Slav tide" (in that instance he did not even mention the term "Communist"); he underlined the "abiding need" of reviving Greek-Turkish co-operation after a settlement in Cyprus; he mentioned the "desirability" to "neutralize" a part of Greece's northern border through friendship with Yugoslavia; and also noted the country's need to secure a "backdrop or rear echelon" through friendship with the Arab countries.²⁶

In short, Karamanlis and Averoff held that Greece faced a situation which is classic in international analysis: Greece controlled the narrow coastal areas and faced the pressures of the "masses" of the interior who strove to secure an exit to the sea. The term "Slavs" was used as a geopolitical rather than as a racial description – hence their readiness to establish a strategic partnership with the strongest Slav country of the Balkans, Yugoslavia, which, however, had quarrelled with Moscow. The threat from Sofia did not exist because the Bulgarians were "bad", but because it was "natural" that the Bulgarians, in their given geographical position and with their Soviet/Russian allies, would seek an exit to a southern sea. The "Communist danger" was a part of this threat, and certainly made it even more dangerous (since Communism "unit-ed even more" the peoples of the interior), but did not create it.

These, on the other hand, did not prevent the Karamanlis government from making an opening to the Eastern bloc in 1956–57. The analytical basis of this policy should be sought in an important minute by Averoff to Karamanlis in the summer of 1956, shortly before the visit of the Soviet Foreign Minister, Dmitri Shepilov, in Athens. Averoff argued that Greece had to recognise the reality of the ascendancy of Soviet power and to adjust to the new situation:

One has to note that we cannot, as a small country in a geographically crucial position at the crossroads of continents, interests and great roads, ignore the fact that we are

²⁵ EVANGELOS AVEROFF-TOSSIZZA, Η νέα μορφή του έθνους [The New Shape of the Nation], *Kathimerini*, 30 April 1961.

²⁶ Horner (Athens) to State Department, 21 May 1958, in NARA, RG 59, 781.00/5–2158.

near a real colossus, the size, political and material development of which has reached a stage which it had never reached before, and continues to grow. Indeed, the Soviet Union politically reigns in areas which in the past were hostile to it, while today it is highly regarded in other neighbouring regions (Yugoslavia, Arab countries, the Far East), and economically it experiences an unprecedented take-off. The reports of our ambassador to Moscow, a good observer, are quite characteristic regarding economic development, and he believes that after the forthcoming sixth Five Year Plan, Russia's economic capabilities will be immense. Considering also that a balance in thermonuclear weapons seems to have been reached, it is obvious that one needs to deal with the future of one's relations with the Soviet Union with extreme care and concern.

I of course have to categorically stress that there is for me no question of loosening our alliance bonds. Perhaps what I have noted above lead me to the conclusion that we must strengthen our alliances; but no doubt we must also develop, as far as this is possible, better relations with the Soviet Union.²⁷

Greece's new eastern policy derived from this minute: in 1956–57, Greek-Romanian relations were normalized, Greek-Bulgarian negotiations were resumed (although they led nowhere), the Soviet foreign minister paid an informal visit to the Greek capital (the first since 1917) and a major Greek-Soviet commercial agreement was concluded in early 1957, while a Greek-Albanian understanding was reached to clear the mines from the Corfu Straits. In 1956–57 Greece concluded commercial agreements with all Soviet bloc countries save Albania. At the same time, Athens sought the support of these countries in the UN debates on Cyprus. But the government rejected grandiose Soviet proposals for economic co-operation, fearing that their acceptance could make the country dependent on eastern markets, or that Moscow would exploit the strain which the Cyprus dispute created in Greece's relations with the West. Athens tried to cautiously develop commercial relations with the Soviet bloc, but also to keep these countries at arms' length as far as political questions were concerned. Thus this eastern opening has perceptively been called "restricted"²⁸, but it was a notably more outward-looking policy than previous ones.

Conclusions

This article has claimed that post-War Greek attitudes towards the Soviet bloc cannot be explained by a single-cause argument such as the memories of the Civil War, which was important but must not be exaggerated. Greek

²⁷ Averoff to Karamanlis (summer 1956), *Karamanlis*, volume 2, p. 114.

²⁸ SOTIRIS WALLDEN, *Ελλάδα και Ανατολικές Χώρες, 1950–1967: Οικονομικές Σχέσεις και Πολιτική* [Greece and Eastern Countries, 1950–1967: Economic Relations and Politics] volume A. Athens, Odysseas, 1991.

attitudes should be sought in a combination of geographical, political, international, regional, historical and psychological factors, which touched upon a variety of hopes, expectations, fears or psychoses, burdened legacies, military inferiority and internal political rivalries. Thus, this article does not provide for a full account of Greek official thinking; it merely sketches the larger trends.

Throughout 1944–59, Greek analysis evolved, of course, in the context of the anti-Communist/anti-Soviet consensus of all major political forces of the Centre and the Right. All these forces and analysts accepted the “traditional” school of thought regarding the Cold War, which was dominant in the West at that time. According to this thesis, the Soviet Union was a structurally expansionist power, combining traditional Russian expansionism with the inherent aggressiveness of an ideology of world revolution. That was the point of convergence for all Greek schools of analysis in the post-War period.

But having said that, it is important to stress that post-War Greek foreign policy analysis was by no means static or monolithic during the fifteen years under consideration. In 1944 George Papandreou defended the western option at a moment when the Cold War had not started; in fact, the Second World War had not yet ended. Thus Papandreou expressed the expectations for a better future after a titanic conflict, but he was crushed in the life-and-death civil conflict that ensued. After that, during the Civil War and its immediate aftermath, at a period when the Cold War erupted and the Korean War created alarm in the West, Greek analysis was based on a crude realism, arising out of the perception that the very survival of the country was at stake. During the years of relative stabilization that followed – in 1953/54 – Alexis Kyrrou attempted to effect a first adjustment of the country to the new international environment; but his emphasis on historical legacies meant that his analysis was too ideological, the limits of his effort were too narrow, and, in any case, his Cyprus policy complicated the whole affair too much. A more permanent adjustment was effected by Karamanlis and Averoff and their more calm and outward-looking attitude, which marked the return of Greek analysis to a mild realism.

Evanthis Hatzivassiliou
University of Athens

