The international dimensions of the Metapolitefsi, 1974–1976: a reassessment

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This article approaches the Metapolitefsi *as an international event and seeks to historicize the perceptions and concepts that drove Greek and Western policy-making after the fall of the junta. Its main argument is that from 1974 to 1976 and in conjunction with domestic democratization, a parallel process developed when it came to Greece's external relations, which entailed a significant reformulation of Greek foreign policy. The year 1974, then, should be seen as an important turning point not only in Greek domestic politics but in Greece's external relations as well. These two processes were mutually reinforcing and closely interdependent.*

Keywords: Greece; foreign policy; democratic transition; *Metapolitefsi*

In 1984, Nikiforos Diamandouros' authoritative pen concluded that the regime established in Greece in 1974 was 'by far the most open, inclusive and democratic […] in modern Greek history'.[1] Since then, two conflicting narratives have prevailed in Greek political discourse about the period that began with the collapse of the junta in 1974. The first sees the story of post-dictatorship Greece as one of success, modernization, and economic growth. In contrast, the second narrative, heavily influenced by the economic crisis of the 2010s, considers the same period as one of failure leading to a predetermined catastrophic outcome. At the same time, the term *Metapolitefsi* (regime change), initially used to describe the period of the restoration of democracy *stricto sensu* – corresponding roughly to one year after the fall of the military regime[2] – acquired the meaning of a continuous event, a period with specific

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1   N. P. Diamandouros, 'Transition to, and consolidation of, democratic politics in Greece, 1974–1983: a tentative assessment', *West European Politics* 7.2 (1984) 50–70 (67).

2   For the evolution of the term Metapolitefsi, see L. Kallivretakis, *Δικτατορία και Μεταπολίτευση* (Athens 2017) 201–22.

characteristics whose end is still debated and moulded according to the political needs of each era.[3] The fiftieth anniversary of the restoration of democracy provides the opportunity – and the necessary chronological distance – for a much-needed reassessment of the Greek national and international experience, which will put the early period of Greece's Third Republic in historical perspective and eventually attempt to historicize many of its still highly politicized aspects.

This article attempts to distance itself from the presentism and the teleological nature of such debates and focuses instead on the international dimension of the Greek democratic transition. It approaches the *Metapolitefsi* as an international event with distinct temporal limits and seeks to historicize the perceptions and concepts that drove Greek and foreign policy-making during the first crucial years after the fall of the junta. Its main argument is that from 1974 to 1976 and in conjunction with domestic democratization, a parallel process developed when it came to Greece's external relations, which entailed a significant reformulation of Greek foreign policy. The year 1974, then, should be seen as an important turning point not only in Greek domestic politics but in external relations too. As will be shown below, these two processes were mutually reinforcing and closely interdependent.

The first works on the Greek democratic transition were produced in the 1980s and 1990s by political scientists who integrated the Greek case within a 'Southern European model' of transition.[4] Although these works paid little attention to foreign policy, other studies delved into the international dimensions of the southern European transitions, emphasizing the influence of the EEC on the democratization process and the bridging actors.[5] Shifts in the international orientation and in the national identity of the examined states were also taken into account,[6] yet the interplay between the national and the international remained under-studied – especially in the prevailing Cold War framework – while the comparative prism used for theorization and modelization tended to blur the national particularities of each case. Recent literature has shown that 'Southern Europe' as an analytical category emerged only in the 1970s due to the

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3   K. Tsoukalas, *To Vima*, 1 May 2010; E. Dinas, V. Fouka, 'Το τέλος του τέλους της Μεταπολίτευσης', *Kathimerini*, 3 March 2019. Available at: https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/1012817/to-telos-toy-teloys-tis-metapoliteysis/ [accessed 23 February 2024]. For the Metapolitefsi as a historical period, see G. Voulgaris' studies *Η Ελλάδα της Μεταπολίτευσης, 1974–1990: Σταθερή Δημοκρατία σημαδεμένη από την μεταπολεμική ιστορία* (Athens 2002) and, *Η μεταπολιτευτική Ελλάδα, 1974–2009* (Athens 2013).

4   G. O' Donnell, P. C. Schmitter, and L. Whitehead, (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: southern Europe* (Baltimore: 1986); J. J. Linz, A. Stepan (eds.), *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore 1996).

5   N. S. Texeira (ed.), *The International Politics of Democratization. Comparative perspectives* (London 2008); L. Whitehead, *The International Dimensions of Democratization* (Oxford 2005); G. Pridham (ed.), *Encouraging Democracy: the international context of regime transition in southern Europe* (Leicester 1991). With the term 'bridging actors', the literature describes the political forces or institutions that undertook the transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime.

6   L. Whitehead, 'Democracy by convergence and Southern Europe: a comparative politics perspective', in Pridham, *Encouraging Democracy*, 45–61 (57).

similar problems that the West had to face simultaneously in Greece, Portugal, Spain, and to some extent Italy.[7] In the Cold War framework, this categorization made sense, but is it still relevant today? The Greek case effectively tests the limits of this comparative approach, for it is impossible to understand the Greek democratic transition without giving weight to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the ensuing Greek-Turkish crisis, which do not fit easily into a comparative framework.[8] Additionally, recent studies show that there was little real interaction between the three transitions and, simultaneously, call for academic endeavours that will 'revisit, challenge and revise' the Southern European 'model'.[9] The aim of the present study is not to present Greece as an exceptional case, but to emphasize the differences between the three transitions and thus understand them better. This is maybe the only way to grasp the dynamics that make the concept of 'Southern Europe' relevant today.

It should also be noted that the majority of the works that deal exclusively with Greece focus either on the domestic dimension of the democratic transition or on the foreign policy front. These bodies of literature rarely communicate with each other. In her seminal work on Greece's accession to the EEC, Eirini Karamouzi has highlighted the importance of the prospect of EEC membership in the transition strategy of the Karamanlis governments.[10] However, this is only one – albeit a central one – of the many external challenges that the Greek government had to address in order to secure democratization. Accordingly, this article first examines the new approach that the Greek government adopted in foreign policy and shows its interdependence with the process of democratization. Consequently, the perceptions and strategies of the major Western powers vis-à-vis the Greek transition will be discussed with the aim of highlighting the close link between democracy and Western external orientation in Western considerations. Finally, the last section of the article presents the key moments that resulted in the stabilization of multiple foreign policy fronts: US-Greek relations, the Greek-Turkish confrontation over Cyprus and the Aegean, and the opening of membership negotiations with the EEC. By the end of 1976, the process of reformulating Greek foreign policy had been completed and mirrored the domestic process of democratization which had been concluded one year earlier with the

7   E. G. H. Pedaliu, 'The making of Southern Europe: an historical overview', in E. Karamouzi, E. Pedaliu, E. De Angelis, Z. Koustoumpardi, and U. Durand-Ochoa (eds.), *A Strategy for Southern Europe, Special Report* (SR017) (London 2013) 8–14.

8   P. Radcliff, K. Kornetis, and P. A. Oliveira, 'The southern European transitions to democracy: a historiographical introduction', *Paru dans Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 53.1 (2023). Available at: http://journals.openedition.org/mcv/18531 [accessed 25 February 2024].

9   See n. 8; also S. I. Balios and A. Muñoz Sánchez, 'Transnational and International Dimensions of the Transitions ', *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* 53.1 (2023). Available at: http://journals.openedition.org/mcv/18781 [accessed 25 February 2024].

10   E. Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974–1979: the second enlargement* (Basingstoke 2014) 14–34.

establishment of a new democratic constitution and the trials of members of the junta in the summer of 1975.

The turning point of 1974 and Greek strategy

Throughout Greek history, the country's domestic structures have been in close correlation with its place in the international system. It is indicative that the major internal conflicts of the twentieth century, the National Schism and the Greek Civil War, were to a large extent disputes over Greece's external orientation. During the Cold War, Greece's role as a 'front-line state' magnified this trend by restricting the capacity of the political system to reform itself and withstand internal crises.[11] In 1974, the collapse of the military regime, which had ruled the country for seven ignominious years, was again the result of an external adventure, the Cyprus crisis, instigated by the failed attempt of the junta to overthrow President Makarios. The subsequent Turkish invasion of Cyprus meant that the new National Unity government under Karamanlis had to restore democratic institutions while simultaneously dealing with a national crisis that could lead to war with Turkey. At the same time, Greece's perceived abandonment during the crisis by its closest ally, the United States, estranged even the most pro-Western Greek policymakers. These included Karamanlis, who had to withdraw Greece from the military structure of NATO in order to appease the overwhelmingly anti-American public opinion and protest about the alliance's passive stance during the crisis.[12]

Undoubtedly, the summer of 1974 constituted a creational moment for both Greece's internal and external affairs. As Athanasios Platias observes, between 1945 and 1974, in order to obtain protection against the threat of the Warsaw Pact, Greece joined the Western camp, and, like other small states, was obliged to trade off part of its independence for security; however, in 1974, Greek policymakers discovered that the country was both insecure *and* dependent.[13] On the one hand, this realization compelled Greek policymakers to restructure Greece's relationship with the West, and above all to balance the country's one-sided dependence on the US, which seemed to benefit only Washington's security interests. On the other hand, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and Ankara's claims on the Aegean produced a major change in Greek strategic thinking. As the Greek defence minister Evangelos Averoff pointed out in a strategy-setting memorandum to Karamanlis in November 1974: 'although for strategic and geographical reasons, the permanent threat against the country stems

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11   E. Hatzivassiliou, *Greece and the Cold War: frontline state, 1952–1967* (London 2006); I. Nikolakopoulos, *Η Καχεκτική Δημοκρατία, κόμματα και εκλογές, 1946–67* (Athens 2001); A. Papachelas, *Ο βιασμός της ελληνικής δημοκρατίας: ο Αμερικανικός παράγων 1947–67* (Athens 1997).

12   J. E. Miller, *The United States and the making of modern Greece: history and power, 1950–1974* (Chapel Hill 2009) 195–200.

13   A. Platias, 'Greece's strategic doctrine: in search of autonomy and deterrence', in Dimitri Constas (ed.), *The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s, domestic and external influences* (London 1991) 91–108 (98).

from the North, the recent brutal events compel us to face primarily the threat from Turkey.'[14] The shift of Greek threat perceptions from the north (Warsaw Pact) to the east (Turkey) undoubtedly constitutes a historical turning point in Greek foreign policy. It was the first time in Greek history that the Greek leaders felt that the main threat to Greek security came from the east; even in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, it was Greece that nurtured territorial ambitions against the Ottoman Empire and not the other way round. Of course, the Greek-Turkish rivalry was not something new. Relations between Athens and Ankara had reached breaking point several times in the past due to the Cyprus question, but after 1974 the Aegean dispute tended to overshadow other considerations. Ankara's positions on the Aegean continental shelf, territorial waters, and airspace were perceived as a Turkish-coordinated and expansionist plan by Athens with clear sovereignty implications for Greece.[15] According to a Greek note of 1976, if Turkey succeeded in its claims:

> then all the Greek islands which lie east of this continental shelf-airspace line would be cut off from the rest of Greece; they would be under the economic and strategic control of Turkey, and, in the end, a claim on the sovereignty of these islands would be just a matter of time [...].[16]

As early as the summer of 1974, the so-called 'Turkish threat' had become the priority of Greek foreign policy. The Karamanlis government had to avert a Greek-Turkish war over Cyprus that Athens could not win and then build a coherent deterrence strategy aiming to curb the perceived Turkish expansionism. Obviously, the external crisis interacted in many ways with the democratization process. The external danger tended to unify the Greeks under the auspices of Karamanlis, who spoke as a national leader beyond partisan affiliations.[17] In his first address to the Greek people on 25 July 1974, the Greek prime minister stressed that his government had 'as its first and supreme duty to face all the external dangers which have accumulated as a result of the recent tragic events'. The 'foundation of a genuine and progressive democracy' would immediately follow.[18] At the same time, the 'Turkish threat' underlined the

14   K. Svolopoulos (ed.), *Κωνσταντίνος Καραμανλής: Αρχείο, Γεγονότα και Κείμενα* (Athens 1997), (hereafter *Karamanlis*), vol. 8, 'Memorandum of the Defence Minister', 30 November 1974.
15   For the Aegean disputes, see A. Wilson, 'The Aegean dispute', in J. Alford (ed.), *Greece and Turkey: adversity in alliance* (New York 1984) 90–130; T. Bahcheli, *Greek-Turkish Relations Since 1955* (New York 1990) 129–68; A. Syrigos, *Ελληνοτουρκικές σχέσεις* (Athens 2015); V. Coufoudakis, 'Greek–Turkish relations, 1973–1983: the view from Athens', *International Security* 9.4 (1985) 201–10.
16   Konstantinos G. Karamanlis Foundation, Athens, Konstantinos Karamanlis Archive (hereafter AKK), B10, 'Aegean', n.d., [1976].
17   National Archives, Central Foreign Policy Files, RG 59, Electronic telegrams 1973–1979 (hereafter NARA-AAD), Kubisch to State Department (6867), 19 September 1974; Archives du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, La Courneuve, France (hereafter AMAE), 189QO/270, de Margerie to Sauvagnargues (545/EU), 2 August 1974.
18   The National Archives, Kew, UK, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), 9/2003/29, Message to the Nation, 25 July 1974.

fragility of the whole endeavour. Western diplomats and analysts observed that a humiliating settlement over Cyprus or a new Greek-Turkish crisis were the main stumbling blocks that the new civilian regime had to face.[19] These might not only provoke an authoritarian relapse, but 'even at worst, an eventual civil war if Cyprus went entirely sour', according to one report.[20] A CIA memorandum estimated that after a significant foreign policy failure, Karamanlis would be under pressure to terminate relations with the United States and either swing completely toward Europe or adopt a neutralist posture:

> Should Karamanlis fail to take severe action in such circumstances, his government would either be voted out of office or overthrown by a coalition of leftists, both in and out of the military. A new government, which would almost certainly have a leftist or at least neutralist orientation, would probably sever remaining ties between Greece and the US.[21]

In the years that followed, foreign delegations in Athens would continue to see a new external adventure as an important danger for the restored democracy.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Karamanlis was not inclined to loosen Greece's ties with the West any further. As the main proponent of the 'We belong to the West' doctrine, his primary objective was to make Greece more autonomous but at the same time more solidly anchored within the Western system. The prospect of Greece's estrangement from the West was considered disastrous by Karamanlis and his associates since it would not only isolate Greece and limit its defence capabilities but would 'multiply Turkey's strength at our [Greece's] expense'.[22] Most importantly, it would ultimately block Karamanlis' overarching objective, Greece's accession to the (as it was then) European Economic Community. EEC membership was considered to serve both short-term and long-term Greek aspirations. On the one hand, through close interdependence with the developed states of Europe, Greece would secure its long-term economic and social growth.[23] On the other, EEC membership had a pronounced security dimension which was inseparable from the establishment and consolidation of democracy. Karamanlis used to reiterate in his speeches that Greece's accession would reinforce 'national security' and 'relieve us of the need to seek special protectors'.[24] First, it was believed that the equal participation of Greece in a major

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19   AMAE, 189Q/270, de Margerie to Foreign Ministry (244-251), 24 July 1974; TNA, FCO 9/2003/17A, Tomkys to Goodison, 24 July 1974.

20   TNA, FCO 9/2003/33, Wood to FCO, 30 July 1974.

21   Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter FRUS), 1969–1976, vol. XXX, doc. 22, Paper prepared in the CIA, 'Athens' frustrations with the US and the prospects for the Greek left', 29 August 1974.

22   Karamanlis, vol. 9, Speech in Parliament, 20 October 1976, 314.

23   K. E. Botsiou, 'Αναζητώντας τον χαμένο χρόνο: η ευρωπαϊκή τροχιά της Μεταπολίτευσης', in K. Arvanitopoulos and M. Koppa (eds.), *Τριάντα χρόνια ελληνικής εξωτερικής πολιτικής, 1974–2004* (Athens 2005) 99–121.

24   *Karamanlis*, vol. 8, 'Speech in Syntagma Square', 15 November 1974, 214–19.

decision-making centre would help Greek diplomacy improve its diplomatic standing vis-à-vis Ankara.[25] The EEC governments may have been following an even-handed approach to the Greek-Turkish disputes, but once Greece had become an EEC member it was believed that the Community would move closer to the Greek positions. Besides, in the long term and with the politico-military integration of the Community at an advanced stage, the Greek borders would coincide with Europe's borders. As Karamanlis remarked in a speech to his cabinet in September 1976:

> Because, apart from a general war that the entire world faces, Greece, due to its geographical position, has always had anxiety about a local war. And this is proved by history. [...] for the last fifty/one hundred years, we have been in a state of war with Turkey. And the other Balkan countries always had various aspirations. I want to say that, in the area where we live, we are never safe. This was the reason that Greece was always obliged to seek protectors. It is no coincidence that Greece always had and invoked the Protector Powers. [...] We will free ourselves from this anxiety, this agony, if Greece accedes to the United Europe; then it will be a province of the United Europe and no one will be able to think of attacking it. This is the secret of this aspiration.[26]

Karamanlis' speech introduces a second – and largely ignored – aspect of Greek thinking: Greece's need to dissociate itself from special patrons and protectors, who over the course of Greek historical experience had penetrated and eroded Greek domestic institutions. As Karamanlis implies, Greek policymakers had invited foreign interference due to their inability to achieve their foreign policy goals without external assistance. The EEC, which aspired to become an autonomous pole of power in the international system, was seen as a partial answer to Greece's perennial problem of dependence and domestic instability: it seemed to be the only framework through which small states like Greece could achieve cooperation with the great powers on an equal footing. The French Embassy in Athens was quick to understand the multifaceted nature of Greek motives for joining the EEC:

> However, the accession of Greece to an economic community which is seeking its way towards a political organization is considered here as an absolute imperative in view of the danger that could loom from the rivalry with Turkey. While being faithful to the Atlantic Alliance, faced with the threat – now hypothetical – that could come from the north, it is estimated that membership of the EEC will protect Greece from falling again to the rank of a country protected by the Americans.[27]

25 K. Yfantis, 'State interests, external dependency trajectories and Europe', in W. Kaiser and J. Elvert (eds.), *European Union Enlargement: a comparative history* (London 2004) 75–98 (92).

26 AKK, B75, 'Records of Cabinet Meeting', 11 September 1976.

27 AMAE, 189QO/286, de Margerie to Sauvagnargues (408/EU), 23 May 1975.

Therefore, a closer examination of the Greek motives for joining the Community provides a more nuanced picture of Greek thinking and challenges the simplistic argument prevailing in public discourse which contends that Greek democracy would be protected by the EEC simply because the Community was a values-oriented organization. EEC membership was expected to lower the risk of external adventures such as those that had undermined Greek domestic institutions in the past and at the same time offer an institutional framework that would safeguard Greek independence.

The direct influence of the EEC on the Greek democratic transition has been explored by the literature.[28] The Karamanlis government needed the Community's symbolic and practical support to consolidate its power, while the democratic preconditions for EEC membership were one of the main driving forces that instigated Karamanlis to opt for a swift democratization process. By the end of 1974, the Greek government had restored social and individual rights; legalized the Greek Communist Party which had been outlawed since 1947; conducted free and fair elections, which Karamanlis' party won with a striking majority; and solved once and for all the issue of the monarchy – which had tormented Greek politics since the beginning of the twentieth century – with a referendum.[29] Only a few days after the ratification of a new democratic constitution by the Greek Parliament – and immediately after the new constitution came into force – in June 1975, the Greek government submitted an official application for EEC membership. The Greeks tried to capitalize on the momentum of the democratic transition and presented the support of the Greek application as a moral obligation of the EEC governments, which could not refuse Greece's plea to the founding values of the Community.[30] At the same time, Greek policy-makers played on the Europeans' geopolitical concerns by implying that a rebuff by the Community would mean that Athens might have to reexamine its external orientation.[31] This combination of moral and geopolitical pressure ensured that the Nine would have to take the Greek application seriously and show tangible proofs of their support for the nascent Greek democracy.

Nevertheless, it should be stressed that Greek policymakers did not view Greece's relationship with the Community as antagonistic to their ties with the US and NATO. EEC membership was meant to serve as a complementary pillar of Greece's Western orientation.[32] Karamanlis and his team were pragmatists and continued to value the

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28   Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War*, 14–34.

29   A. Klapsis, 'The Greek transition to democracy' in A. Klapsis, C. Arvanitopoulos, E. Hatzivassiliou, E.G.H. Pedaliu (eds.), *The Greek Junta and the International System: a case study of southern European dictatorships, 1967–1974* (London 2020), 215–27.

30   I. Chalkos, 'Democratic Greece and the West, 1974–1983: A difficult relationship', PhD diss., European University Institute 2023, 144–7.

31   See for example, TNA, FCO 9/2243/28A, 'Record of a meeting between the Prime Minister and the Greek Prime Minister', 30 May 1975.

32   S. Rizas, 'Atlanticism and Europeanism in Greek foreign and security policy in the 1970s', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 8.1 (2008) 51–66.

US-Greek strategic relationship: it remained essential in countering militarily the threat from Turkey and maintaining a credible defence posture vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact. However, partly due to the anti-Americanism which dominated the political culture of the early post-dictatorial years and partly because of a genuine wish to disentangle Greece from the web of superpower politics, Karamanlis would attempt to 'restructure'[33] relations with Washington in accordance with Greek security needs. In this respect, 1974 was a watershed for US-Greek relations as well. Athens would press for negotiations on the status and the modalities of American military presence in the country and, at the same time, would not hesitate to confront Washington publicly in order to secure the balance of power between Greece and Turkey, which to a large extent depended on American military aid.[34] Thus, Athens clearly prioritized its national interests and effectively showed to its larger ally that Greece's contribution to Western defence would be analogous to the support that it would receive in its confrontation with Turkey.[35] This allowed Karamanlis and his government to convince public opinion that democratic Greece was ready to safeguard its independence both from the encroachments of its enemies and from the pressures of powerful allies.

It is evident, then, that the Karamanlis governments adopted a holistic approach to the process of the democratic transition in which the reformulation of the objectives and methods of Greek foreign policy played a major role. The overall aim should be seen as the creation of a coherent whole which would diminish the likelihood of external and internal crises that might jeopardize the entire process. Greek policymakers also tried to combine short-term and long-term goals – corresponding roughly to the creation of a deterrence strategy against Turkey and accession to the EEC respectively – demonstrating that Greece had learned its lessons from the errors of the past.

The Western approach to the Greek democratic transition

The Greek democratic transition came at a moment of peril for the entire security system of the West in the Mediterranean. Instability prevailed across the region because of the parallel democratic transitions in Greece, Portugal and later Spain, while the rise of the Left in Italy, Moscow's naval build-up in the region, and an uncertain peace in the Middle East tended to exacerbate Western security concerns. Anti-Americanism was sweeping the southern European countries and threatened American strategic interests in the long term, while American diplomacy did not seem to have recovered from the internal and external shocks of the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam

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33   FRUS, vol. XXX, doc. 22, Paper prepared in the CIA, 'Athens' frustrations with the US and the prospects for the Greek left', 29 August 1974.
34   A. Antonopoulos, *Redefining Greek–US Relations, 1974–1980: national security and domestic politics* (Cham 2020) 55–131.
35   Chalkos, 'Democratic Greece and the West', 37–8, 167–88.

War.[36] Moreover, the EEC had not yet developed a coherent policy towards southern Europe and the Mediterranean. Its initiatives were primarily of an economic nature and not always coordinated with Washington.[37] In fact, in the last couple of years, the transatlantic relationship was under severe strain as a result of the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, which had plunged NATO into a severe internal crisis, and Kissinger's efforts to limit the Nine's path towards a more autonomous stance in world affairs.[38]

Therefore, the Western approach towards the Greek democratic transition should be seen in its wider historical context: the evolution of the transatlantic relationship in the mid-1970s and the challenges that stemmed from the new strategic environment created in the Eastern Mediterranean after the Cyprus crisis. Undoubtedly, the main priority of the Western governments during the second half of 1974 was to prevent a Greek-Turkish war that would completely unravel the southern flank of NATO and leave it exposed to Warsaw Pact forces. NATO unity, weakened with the Greek withdrawal from the military structure of the Alliance in August 1974, remained the principal objective for Western policymakers. At the same time, ensuring that Greece would not drift to the left or towards neutralism was considered equally important. As a result, Western governments saw Karamanlis' pro-Western policies as the only hope to keep Greece in the Western camp. Despite their differences, both Americans and Western Europeans considered Karamanlis as the only political figure capable of achieving domestic stability, reining in the army, and finally reaching a peaceful solution to the Cyprus question and the Greek-Turkish differences.

Nevertheless, Washington and the Nine had different roles to play during the Greek transition. After its ambivalent stance during the Cyprus crisis, American diplomacy could not do much to bolster Karamanlis' position. Kissinger's idea to seek further concessions over Cyprus from the still vulnerable National Unity government had only served to exacerbate anti-Americanism in Greek public opinion and demonstrate that Washington, preoccupied with Cold War and domestic considerations, paid little real attention to the process of Greek democratization.[39] In the following months, the American embassy in Athens would engage in damage-limitation aimed at restoring confidence in US-Greek relations and maintaining its strategic assets in the country. One of the main objectives of American diplomacy for the year 1975 would be 'to convince Greek leadership and public opinion that the U.S. opposes anti-democratic trends in Greece and believes that long-term political health and progress is best served

36   M. Del Pero, 'The United States and the crises in southern Europe', in A. Varsori, G. Migani (eds.), *Europe in the international arena in the 1970: entering a different world* (Brussels 2011) 301–16.

37   E. Calandri, 'The United States, the EEC and the Mediterranean: Rivalry or Complementarity?', in E. Calandri, D. Caviglia and A. Varsori (eds.), *Détente in Cold War Europe politics and diplomacy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East* (London 2012) 33–48.

38   M. Schulz and Th. A. Schwartz, *The strained alliance: US-European relations from Nixon to Carter* (Washington 2010); D. Mockli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the dream of political unity* (New York 2009).

39   Miller, *The United States*, 195–6.

by representative government'.[40] Even though the Americans did not discount the possibility of a neutralist drift after a new external adventure, they believed that the prevailing geopolitical realities considerably limited Greece's options. As the American ambassador to Athens Henry Tasca remarked after Greece's withdrawal from NATO's military command: 'when the dust settles the basic elements tying Greece to the United States and its NATO allies will be given their appropriate weight. They are a small country surrounded by hostile and potentially hostile forces. Geographically, they clearly need friends.'[41] Tasca's successor Jack Kubisch also argued that due to its vulnerable geographical position, 'the real choice for Greece is continued alignment with the United States and its Western European allies or alignment with the Soviet Union and its Eastern European dependencies'.[42]

Due to Washington's tarnished reputation in Athens, the main burden of Greece's stabilization fell to the EEC Nine, who also held the key to the realization of Karamanlis' overarching objective of joining the EEC. Despite being critical of US policy towards Cyprus, France took Cold War considerations seriously and believed that a decisive French and EEC role in consolidating the Karamanlis government was the best way to avert a Greek-Turkish war and protect Western strategic interests in Greece.[43] The UK and West Germany also agreed that the Community had an important role to play in stabilizing Greece within the Western system. According to a British memorandum of September 1974, 'generous action by the Community now would play an important part in assisting our efforts to bring peace to the Eastern Mediterranean as well as making it easier for Greece to maintain her links with the West at a time when her old allegiances are in doubt.'[44] It seemed that Cold War imperatives pushed the Nine to coordinate their foreign policies and for the first time assume an active strategic role in European affairs. On 28 August 1974, the EEC ambassadors to Athens agreed on a list of conclusions about EEC-Greek relations, which surprises with the clear expression of the geopolitical logic that underpinned the Nine's response to the Greek situation. The ambassadors praised Karamanlis' initiatives towards democratization but also noted that his government was vulnerable to domestic and external tensions:

> In this perspective, the Ambassadors consider that the European Economic
> Community can provide decisive support to the current government. The

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40   NARA-AAD, Kubisch to State Department (2423), 'Annual Policy Assessment – Greece', 28 March 1975.

41   FRUS, vol. XXX, doc. 21, Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State, 15 August 1974.

42   NARA-AAD, Kubisch to State Department (2423), 'Annual Policy Assessment – Greece', 28 March 1975.

43   AMAE, 189QO/286, Executive Summary, Sub-Directorate of Southern Europe, 4 September 1974.

44   TNA, FCO 30/2190/116, EQO(74)65, 'The "unfreezing" of the EEC/Greece Association Agreement and other related moves consequent on the change of government in Greece', note by the FCO, 2 September 1974.

resumption of the process of the association of Greece to the Common Market should have a consolidating effect of the first magnitude. The Cyprus affair has also given rise to a powerful anti-American trend throughout the country, which largely explains the decision of the Greek government to leave the integrated military organization. The Ambassadors, having in mind the solidarity of the Atlantic Alliance, consider that the European Economic Community constitutes the most appropriate framework to protect Greece from the temptations of neutralism and ensure its maintenance within the Alliance.[45]

Although economic issues would gain more prominence in the future, it would be this argument about protecting Greece from the 'temptations of neutralism' that would shape the Europeans' approach to the *Metapolitefsi* and eventually ensure the successful conclusion of the Greek application for membership.

Having shown that Western policies towards Greece were mainly determined by strategic calculations, it is reasonable to wonder what was the significance of democracy in the decision-making processes of the Western governments. After all, the restoration of democracy in its birthplace was 'no small victory for the Western system'[46] in the ideological framework of the Cold War. For sure, in public declarations and speeches, democracy was everywhere. However, if one looks carefully at the Western archives, one finds a more subtle relationship between democracy and geopolitics. The link between the national and the international or between internal and external developments in Greece was omnipresent in Western analysis. For Western policymakers, Greek domestic stability was perceived as another factor in the complicated equation of Western security. Tasca estimated in September 1974 that if Karamanlis delayed elections too long, this would result in new uncertainties and risks for Greek internal politics:

> At the end of this road lie extremism, renewed instability, and even new unrest among the military, particularly the more junior officers. Internationally, Greek instability would shatter the integrity of Western defense in this part of the world and could prove seriously disruptive in the Balkans generally.[47]

In the same vein, the British ambassador to Athens, Brooks Richards, warned a few weeks before the elections of November 1974 that 'the next twelve months will still be perilous not only for Greece but for Western interests in the area as a whole.'[48] This intermingling of local and global concerns highlights the broader issues of the Cold War agenda with which the Greek democratic transition was intertwined: the rise of the Left in southern Europe, seen as contagious by Western policymakers, and – as the Greek-Turkish confrontation showcased – the paradoxical destabilization of the peripheral fronts of

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45 AMAE, 189QO/289, Conclusions of the Ambassadors, 28 August 1974.
46 TNA, FCO 9/2001/90, Richards to Callaghan, 27 November 1974.
47 NARA-AAD, Tasca to State Department (6496), 7 September 1974.
48 TNA, FCO 9/2000/68, Richards to Callaghan, 'Prospects for the Greek Elections', 16 October 1974.

the Cold War exactly when stability had been achieved at the centre through superpower détente.[49] It was for these reasons that domestic stability played such a central role in Western considerations.

In their search for stability, Western observers emphasized the need for Karamanlis to institutionalize his party and government in order to withstand future crises even when Karamanlis would no longer be at the helm.[50] This implied that Greek domestic institutions should follow the Western democratic model, which was considered the most stable and more likely to maintain a pro-Western external orientation. According to Kubisch, if Karamanlis failed to create 'European' political institutions and liberate Greek political life from its rural roots and near-Ottoman mentality,

> a new collapse could not only occur, but might entail reorientation of Greece's external policy in ways seriously threatening to the interests of the United States. [...] The traditional meshing of Greece's internal and external affairs means that shocks in one area invariably produce repercussions in the other'.[51]

On this way of thinking, other conceptions of democracy, such as Andreas Papandreou's non-aligned socialism, were considered too fragile to survive and obviously lacked the crucial element of Western alignment. Traditional political structures were also rejected as unstable and obsolete. Another US memorandum describes more clearly the 'best' framework for US interests: 'a stable, democratic political system that will maintain a pro-Western foreign policy even in the face of continuing frustrations with respect to Turkey'.[52] As I have argued elsewhere, Western analysis tended to establish a degree of causality between democracy, stability, and Western orientation, thus giving shape to the coherent and strategically informed concept of 'democratic stability' which eventually defined Western attitudes towards the Greek and the other Mediterranean transitions.[53] This means that the 'democratic argument' was part and parcel of Western strategic thinking, but it was primarily its role as a stabilizer in the Cold War context that made democracy relevant to policymaking.

Reformulating Greek foreign policy, 1974–1976

After having placed Greek and Western motives and strategies in their historical context and highlighted the close interconnection between foreign policy and democratization,

49   E. Pedaliu, 'A Sea of confusion. The Mediterranean and détente, 1969–1974', *Diplomatic History* 33.4 (2009) 735–50.

50   AMAE, 189QO/271, Merillon to Sauvagnargues, 'The Karamanlis system' (28/EU), 12 January 1976; NARA-AAD, Kubisch to State Department (0001), 1 January 1976; TNA, FCO 9/2225/109, Richards to Callaghan, 'The first year of the New Democracy', 10 December 1975.

51   NARA-AAD, Kubisch to State Department (2423), 'Annual Policy Assessment – Greece', 28 March 1975.

52   FRUS, vol. XXX, doc. 56, Paper Prepared in Response to National Security Study Memorandum 222, 'US and Allied Security Policy in Southern Europe', 15 December 1975.

53   Chalkos, 'Democratic Greece and the West', 76–8.

this section explains why the first two years after the collapse of the junta should be regarded as a distinct and profoundly transformative period for Greek internal and external affairs. On the EEC front, by the time of the submission of the Greek application in June 1975, all EEC governments had in principle expressed their support to the Greek bid for membership. However, behind their welcoming attitudes there were serious reservations about Greece's accession, which included a fear of estranging Turkey from the West as well as the new economic and institutional strains that the Community would have to face in view of the admission of a new member only a few years after the northern enlargement of 1973.[54] The Nine clearly understood that they could not rebuff Greece without seriously weakening the Karamanlis government, which had in the meantime elevated EEC accession as the cornerstone of its policy. As a British document stressed, 'a rebuff to the Greeks from the EEC would have important and negative political consequences for the West, for Europe and for ourselves.'[55]

All the underlying contradictions of the Greek application were revealed when the Commission presented its 'Avis' on the issue of Greek membership in January 1976. The Commission, which was not restricted by the political considerations that dominated decision-making in the European capitals, proposed a seven-year pre-accession period for Greece and, most importantly, stressed the need for a balanced EEC approach to Greek-Turkish disputes. In Athens, the report was perceived by Greek public opinion as an attempt to blackmail Greece at the behest of Washington so as to make more concessions over the crucial issues of Cyprus, the Aegean, and NATO.[56] Karamanlis' pro-Western policies were openly criticized at home, while his position vis-à-vis the left, the army and Turkey seemed to be undermined by the same international actors that considered it to be in their interests to support him. The Greek prime minister, furious about the Commission's 'almost negative reply', warned the EEC ambassadors that the situation could be exploited by far leftist elements and create a problem 'with regard to the external orientation of the country'.[57] The French embassy in Athens shared these fears:

> some people here could take advantage of the incident to yield to a temptation- or at least to squint at it. Namely, a reorientation of a neutralist type of the foreign policy of Greece. On the theme 'America betrayed us. Europe let us down. Let's try the East.'[58]

54 Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War*, 36–9.
55 TNA, FCO 9/2246/132, PM/75/78, 'Greek Accession to the European Community', 12 November 1975.
56 NARA-AAD, Kubisch to SecState (916), 30 January 1976; Kubisch to State Department (1011), 3 February 1976; AMAE, 189QO/291, Merillon to Sauvagnargues (76/EU), 30 January 1976.
57 TNA, FCO 98/159/3, Coreu Lux., 1 February 1976; AMAE, 189QO/291, Merillon to Foreign Ministry (71–76), 31 January 1976.
58 AMAE, 189QO/291, Merillon to Foreign Ministry (86–94), 2 February 1976.

The EEC governments grasped the political dangers that the crisis posed for Western interests and at French and FRG initiative formally rejected the Commission's reservations at the Council of Ministers of 9 February 1976.[59] Greek-EEC negotiations started formally on 27 July 1976 and showed that the Nine's political commitment to the Karamanlis government, which was identified with democratization and the maintenance of Greece's Western orientation, had not waned.

In 1975, despite the fact that anti-Americanism continued to dominate Greek public opinion, US-Greek relations seemed to be in a process of normalization. Negotiations over the presence of the American bases in Greece seemed to be proceeding at a steady pace, while the US Congress imposed an arms embargo on Turkey despite the efforts of the Ford administration to prevent it.[60] The embargo complicated relations between Washington and Athens but was a favourable development for Greece: it would allow it to modernize its armed forces while Turkey was cut off from sophisticated American weapons. In March 1976, however, in an effort to strengthen the military capabilities of Turkey, always considered by American policymakers as the bulwark of Western defence in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Ford administration offered Ankara a favourable Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) including military aid of one billion dollars over the course of four years. The Turkish DCA sparked a serious crisis in US-Greek relations. The Greeks felt that the agreement disrupted the balance of power, which was already in Turkey's favour, and considered it 'a hostile act against Greece'.[61] Thus, they asked for a comparable military agreement to the Turkish one and tried to commit the Americans as far as possible to Greek security. During the difficult negotiations that followed in April 1976, the Greeks could not obtain a security guarantee from the Western superpower, but managed to extract Kissinger's commitment that 'the US would actively and unequivocally oppose either side's seeking a military solution'.[62] The two sides also reached 'a framework agreement of principles' that concerned the status of US facilities in Greece and military aid. Regarding the latter, Greece secured 700 million dollars over a period of four years, thus establishing the famous 7:10 ratio (regarding military aid to Greece and Turkey respectively), which effectively guaranteed the Aegean balance of power to which the Greeks aspired.[63] All these meant that in April 1976, the Greek government took a decisive step towards restructuring its relationship with Washington according to Greek security needs. By committing the Americans to a balanced approach towards Greece and Turkey, Athens created a triangular relationship between Washington, Ankara, and Athens that ensured that its disputes with Turkey could be managed

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59   Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War*, 59–61.
60   Antonopoulos, *Redefining US-Greek Relations*, 55–94.
61   AKK, B24, Bitsios to Washington Embassy (2529), 28 March 1976.
62   AKK, B25, Secretary's letter to Bitsios. 10 April 1976.
63   AKK, B25, 'Principles to guide future US-Greek defense cooperation', 15 April 1976.

under a specific political framework aimed at reducing the likelihood of conflict and maintaining the balance of power.[64]

The most serious threat to Greek security and domestic stability came from the Aegean. The long list of Greek-Turkish differences and recent military confrontation over Cyprus had turned the relationship between the two countries into a zero-sum game where both sides saw any political or military gain for their opponent as a loss for themselves. Since the 1973 oil crisis, the issue of the delineation of the Aegean continental shelf acquired a central position in the Greek-Turkish agenda: it did not only concern the exploitation of the natural resources of the Aegean, but was an integral part of the wider problem of the strategic control of the Aegean.[65] In early 1975, Greece and Turkey agreed to refer the continental shelf problem to the International Court of Justice, but soon Ankara backtracked and showed its clear preference for a political bilateral solution.[66] At the same time, Turkish statements questioning the status of several Greek islands and the establishment of a new Turkish military force on the western coast of Anatolia tended to exacerbate Greek fears.[67]

In the summer of 1976, the Turkish government announced that the Turkish research vessel *Sismik* would undertake oil explorations in the Aegean, including areas disputed between the two countries. The incident quickly became a test of resolve for both sides and the crisis threatened to evolve into a point of no return. Greece had to protect its legal rights in the Aegean but at the same time was determined to avoid war or another external adventure which could endanger the entire process of domestic stabilization and, most importantly, block its path to European integration.[68] The Karamanlis government displayed military preparedness but tried to internationalize the dispute in order to put diplomatic pressure on Ankara to withdraw the *Sismik*. Greece's double recourse to the International Court of Justice and the United Nations Security Council was not fruitful but allowed the Western governments, and above all the US, to play a mediator role and eventually diffuse the crisis.[69] The Aegean crisis also showed that both Athens and Ankara wished to avoid war. After the end of the S*ismik*'s mission, the two parties resumed bilateral talks, which resulted in the Bern protocol of November 1976. By the latter Greece and Turkey undertook to initiate a dialogue over the Aegean problems and to refrain from provocative actions, including oil exploration in disputed areas.[70] The protocol did not of course settle the Aegean problems, but it offered a diplomatic framework aimed at freezing the dispute and

64   Th. A. Couloumbis, *The United States, Greece and Turkey: the troubled triangle* (New York 1983).
65   S. Rizas, *Οι ελληνοτουρκικές σχέσεις και το Αιγαίο, 1973–1976* (Athens 2006) 9–11.
66   Syrigos, *Ελληνοτουρκικές σχέσεις*, 305–7.
67   AKK, B25, To Foreign Minister, no date [April 1976].
68   AKK, B75, 'Record of Cabinet Meeting', 11 September 1976.
69   S. Rizas, 'Managing a conflict between allies: United States policy towards Greece and Turkey in relation to the Aegean dispute, 1974–76', *Cold War History* 9.3 (2009) 367–87 (381–3).
70   Syrigos, *Ελληνοτουρκικές σχέσεις*, 326–31.

lowering bilateral tensions. The agreement of 1976 would be respected by both sides until the next great Aegean crisis of 1987.

The geopolitical pressures exerted upon Greece because of Greek-Turkish tensions and the prospect of joining the EEC compelled Greek policymakers to broaden the horizons of Greek foreign policy. By the end of 1976, Athens had attempted a successful diplomatic opening in the Balkans, which culminated with the Balkan Conference of Athens in early 1976.[71] By improving its relations with its northern communist neighbours (Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania) and promoting Balkan cooperation, Greece aspired to secure its northern borders in view of its confrontation with Turkey and enhance Greece's role in regional affairs. Athens' 'Ostpolitik' and a more active role at the United Nations also aimed to build a solid diplomatic basis, which would protect Greece's vital interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and the EEC.

Conclusions

The year 1974 was a watershed for both Greece's internal and external affairs. From the beginning, it was clear that the establishment of democratic institutions depended to a large extent on Karamanlis' ability to overcome the domestic and external pressures that the Cyprus crisis had unleashed and, in the medium term, formulate a coherent and credible deterrence strategy against Turkey. The close interconnection between domestic stability and external danger made Greek policymakers adopt a holistic approach to the democratic transition process, in which the reformulation of Greek foreign policy constituted an integral part. While revising Greek security doctrine to deal with the 'danger from the East' rather than the 'menace from the North', which had dominated Greek foreign policymaking for the first three quarters of the twentieth century, Karamanlis and his associates had to devise a new strategy that would safeguard both Greece's short-term and long-term interests. On the one hand, Athens would try to contain Ankara politically by restructuring its relationship with the United States according to Greek security needs; on the other, it would pursue EEC membership as a means to enhance its diplomatic stature vis-à-vis Ankara, reduce the pressures exerted on a small country like Greece by great power politics, and ultimately secure long-term economic and social development. The Western governments' response to the Greek *Metapolitefsi* was primarily driven by Cold War considerations and focused on the prevention of a Greek-Turkish war and a Greek drift to neutrality. However, in Cold War strategic thinking, strategic and ideological conceptions were closely interrelated and, thus, democracy – and particularly Western democracy – could only buttress the country's stability and Western orientation.

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71   L. Kourkouvelas, 'Détente as a strategy: Greece and the Communist World, 1974–9' *The International History Review* 35.5 (2013), 1052–67; E. Karamouzi, 'Managing the 'Helsinki Spirit' in the Balkans: Greece's initiative for Balkan cooperation, 1975–1976' *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 24.4 (2013) 597–618.

By the end of 1976, all the external fronts that could threaten the process of democratization and undermine stability had been stabilized. Greece had opened negotiations with the EEC, thus fulfilling a major Greek objective during the transition period; it had forced the Americans to adopt a balanced approach towards Athens and Ankara; and, after coming close to war, Greece and Turkey had found their way towards dialogue. Despite occasional disagreements, Greek and Western policy-makers worked together to build a framework aimed at reducing the likelihood of internal and external crises, something which served the interests of both. This process ran in parallel with domestic democratization and played a crucial role in its success. Indeed, it would be impossible to contextualize and reassess the *Metapolitefsi* without taking into account its international dimension.

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