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Panel 1: Greek Foreign and Defence Policy

**“Greek Security Policy & Crisis (Mis)Management:
Searching for the proper institutions and coordination policy”**

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Greek Security Policy & Crisis (Mis)Management: Searching for the proper institutions and coordination policy

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine briefly the pathology of the Greek Security Policy and offer some suggestions regarding the institutions and mechanisms that are needed for a more effective security and crisis management policy. In order to achieve that, a two-phase process will be adopted. At first we will identify the factors that influence the foreign policy-making process and demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the current institutions. In a latter phase, we will examine the possibility of introducing a new institutional body, the National Security Council, so that Greece will be able to face successfully the emerging challenges of the new security environment.

1. Introduction

Greek Security Policy has been described by many security analysts and policy makers, both inside and outside Greece, as non-pragmatic, ineffective and occasionally leading to Greece being isolated in the international environment and even losing the support of its EU and NATO partners.¹ The criticism refers mainly to the lack of a coherent and effective strategy on issues of strategic nature, like the Greek-Turkish disputes,² the Cyprus Problem, the FYROM's attempt to be recognized by the international community with the name 'Macedonia' and Turkey's EU membership. The last decade, a number of incidents like the Imia Crisis, the S-300 missile crisis and the Otsalan case have also demonstrated the inability to handle low-intensity conflicts. Despite the fact that a number of initiatives were undertaken the last years, like the creation of a Foreign Policy Council³ and the establishment of Permanent Crisis Management Units within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Greece still lacks the proper institutions and coordination policy to face the challenges of an unstable international environment.

¹ For an account on Greek Foreign and Defence Policy after the Cold War see selectively: Conostas, D. and T. Stavrou (eds), *Greece Prepares for the Twenty-First Century*, (Stanford CA: Woodrow Wilson Centre Press, John Hopkins University Press, 1995), Moustakis, F. and M. Sheehan, 'Greek Security Policy after the Cold War', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 21, 3 (December 2000) and Aydin, M., and K. Ifantis (eds), *Turkish-Greek Relations: Escaping from the Security Dilemma in the Aegean*, (New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002).

² The Greek-Turkish disputes refer to the following: violations of Greek airspace by Turkish aircrafts, refusal to submit the delimitation dispute of the Aegean continental shelf to the International Court of Justice, threat of war should Greece extend the territorial waters limit from six to twelve miles, and challenges to the sovereignty status of the Aegean islets, 'gray areas' (see the Imia Crisis, 1996).

³ Law 3131/2003. The Foreign Policy Council consists of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, members of all the political parties of the Greek Parliament and a number of specialists and experts. This newly established institution aims to reach a consensus in foreign policy issues and offer 'continuity and consistency'. The sole role of the Foreign Policy Council is to offer advice on foreign policy issues and not coordinate the other bodies or get involved in the crisis management field.

2. Greek Security Policy: Defining factors and the lack of an institutional culture

In an attempt to examine the pathology of the Greek Security Policy and rationalize its inefficiency,⁴ certain factors that influence or even shape the policy-making process can be identified. In every foreign policy making system there are various political, cultural, institutional and psychological factors that influence the policy-making process. These factors are both endogenous and exogenous and reflect recent but also long-standing trends in the foreign and defence policy model.⁵ In particular:

Greece's geopolitical position

Greece, integrated into key Western institutions (EU and NATO), looks toward the Balkans, across the Black Sea and the Mediterranean to areas, where the security threats (both 'hard' and 'soft') are becoming more complex.⁶ Most of these security threats (international terrorism, refugee flows, proliferation of WMD and transnational crime) can not be addressed effectively on a purely national basis.⁷

Progressive 'Europeanization'

Participation in the EU and more particular in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) has inevitably expanded the activities of Greece's Foreign Policy. Rather than dealing exclusively with the so-called 'national issues', Greece has now a broadened policy agenda, both geographically (Latin America, Asia, Africa) and thematically (low politics issues, trade, environment, technology, peace keeping operations etc). The process of 'Europeanization' has also forced Greek Foreign Policy to adopt a new style for conducting policy, more compatible with the European model.⁸ Mainly after 1996, Greece shifted from a rhetorical, symbolic and nationalistic style to a more pragmatic and issue-oriented one.⁹ Participation in the EU has forced Greece to abandon its 'hellenocentric' approach of foreign policy and diplomacy, understand the importance of building alliances and legitimize the concept of negotiations and compromise.¹⁰ Europeanization has also an impact on the policy-making structures. The reformation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that took place

⁴ Pathology is the scientific study of diseases. Within the Greek National Security Policy context, the term pathology refers to the causes and symptoms of an inefficient policy mechanism.

⁵ Clarke M. and B. White (eds), *Understanding Foreign Policy: The Foreign Policy Systems Approach*, (Edward Elgar: 1989) and George A., *Bridging the Gap. Theory and practise in foreign policy*, (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993).

⁶ Moustakis, F. 'Soft Security Threats in the new Europe: The case of the Balkan region', *European Security*, 13, (2004), pp.139-156.

⁷ Regarding Greece's geopolitical role in the new strategic environment see Lesser, I., S. Larrabee, M. Zanini and K. Vlachos, *Greece's New Geopolitics* (Santa Monica: National Security Research Division, RAND, 2001).

⁸ On the 'Europeanization' of Greek Foreign Policy see the following: Ioakimidis, P. 'The Europeanization of Greece's Foreign Policy: Progress and problems', in Mitsos A., and E. Mossialos (eds) *Contemporary Greece and Europe*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp.359-372, Ioakimidis, P. 'The Europeanization of Greece: An overall assessment', in Featherstone, K and G. Kazamias (eds) *Europeanization and the Southern Periphery*, (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp.73-94 and Stavridis, S., *The Europeanization of Greek Foreign Policy: A literature review*, Policy Paper, (Athens: Hellenic Centre for European Studies, EKEM, March 2004).

⁹ For example the popular slogan 'European Economic Community and NATO - same syndicate' does not apply in the present context.

¹⁰ As Theodore Pangalos (former Minister of Foreign Affairs), characteristically pointed out in a recent conference about Greek Foreign Policy, 'negotiating does not mean surrender of our national interests' '30 Years of Greek Foreign Policy, 1974-2004', Institute of International Relations, held in Zappeion Megaron, 12-13 May, Athens, Greece.

in 1998,¹¹ aimed on the one hand to create a new structure that would deal successfully with low politics issues, given the thematic and geographic broadening of Greece's foreign policy, and on the other hand to improve its performance by establishing new structures like the Centre for Policy Analysis and Planning and the Permanent Crisis Management Units.¹²

Society & Public Opinion

Greek society shows great interest on foreign policy issues. In contrast to other European societies, which do not feel threatened by outside forces, the Greek society strongly believes that its territorial integrity and independent existence is under constant threat by outside forces and appears supportive of successive governments' decisions to keep defence expenditures at a high level. This long established belief derives not only from geography and history (the fact that Greece is placed in the unstable Balkan region and Turkey is questioning its sovereignty), but also from a conspiratorial interpretation of international politics, a notion that outside powers conspire against Greece or support Turkey's revisionist policy.¹³ As a result, foreign and defence policy is influenced by the electorate and this might 'force' decision-makers to reach decisions that are acceptable to the public opinion, but in the long run turn to be against the nation's interest.

'Counterproductive' consensus

For the past two decades, the belief that Turkey constitutes a potential military threat has been reflected not only in Greek public opinion, but also in the Greek political leadership. Despite differences in style and rhetoric, both of the major parties in Greece (PASOK and Nea Demokratia) have shown remarkable continuity in their national security agenda.¹⁴ In all the recent policy choices (the Greek-Turkish rapprochement, Turkey's EU accession and the Anan Plan), both political parties have adopted more or less the same approach. This offers a consensus, but at the same time the lack of fertile alternatives turns to be counterproductive (group-thinking),¹⁵ since both the policy-making instrument and by extent the Greek society have a monolithic understanding of the issues that are at stake.

Inefficient institutional structures

An important characteristic and probably the main cause of Greece's diplomatic inefficiency is the limited role of institutions and bureaucratic structures in the policy outcomes.¹⁶ The reason is not the lack of a constitutional framework or the absence of

¹¹ Law 2594/1998.

¹² Regarding the changes that took place in the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs see Zoras, K., and V. Gikas, *I thesmiki sigrotisi tis Ellinikis Exoterikis Politikis. O neos Organismos tu Ypourgeiu Exoterikon* [Greece's Foreign Policy Institutional Composition: The MFA's new organisation] (Athens: Sakkoulas, 2000).

¹³ Ioakimidis, P., 'The Model of Foreign Policy-Making in Greece: Personalities versus Institutions' in Stavridis S., T. Coulombis, T. Veremis and N. Waites, (eds) *The Foreign Policies of the European Union's Mediterranean States and applicant countries in the 1990s*, (London: Macmillan, 1999), p.147.

¹⁴ Tsakonas, P. and A. Tournikiotis, 'Greece's elusive quest for security providers: The expectations-reality gap', *Security Dialogue*, 34, 3 (September 2003), p.303.

¹⁵ Janis, I. *Victims of Groupthink*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

¹⁶ Regarding the role of institutions and bureaucratic structures in foreign policy making see Snyder, G. and P. Diesing, *Conflict among Nations: Bargaining, decision-making and system structure in international crises*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) and the three models (Rational Actor, Organizational Behaviour and Governmental Politics) in Allison G. and P. Zelikow, (2nd ed.) *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, (New York: Longman, 1999).

legally established organs, but the fact that even when the existing institutions function, they offer little to the actual policy-making process. The institutions exist, but in both practical and operational terms they are weak, ineffective and operate in a loose manner.¹⁷ In both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence, the various services rarely submit alternative policy scenarios to the political leadership, but rather view their role as that of implementing policy choices already made by the political leadership. The main institutional bodies, responsible for the foreign and defence policy - the Cabinet and the Government Council on Foreign and Defence Policy (KYSEA) - do not produce alternative policy. They hardly ever meet and when they do, they implement and legitimize the choices already made by the Prime Minister and a small group of people.¹⁸

Dominance of Personalities

The absence of a strong and effective institutional framework places individuals (prime minister and ministers) at the centre of the policy-making process. The record shows that the major political choices on security policy (Greek-Turkish rapprochement and support of Turkey's EU accession), were taken and implemented by individuals and not by collective bodies.¹⁹ The record is more impressive and worrying in the crisis management field. The Imia crisis, the S-300 crisis and the Otsalan case demonstrated that the leaders were averse to submitting their authority to any institutional discipline or collective body of policy-making and instead formed small *ad-hoc* groups that they could control. In a political system that individuals outbalance institutions, the policy-making process will inevitably lead to failures.

From all the above factors, any effort to reform the Greek Security Policy should start from the institutional factor. All factors are important and under constant play, but the institutional factor is the one that is both susceptible to change and able to influence all the others. The introduction of a new institution or the better coordination of the existing ones will take advantage of the positive developments that the 'Europeanization' brought about, counterbalance the negative developments deriving from the dominant role of personalities, challenge well established beliefs rooted in both the society and the ruling elite and provide a better understanding of the new security environment.

3. The institutional dimension of Greek Security Policy

Greece, being a parliamentary democracy reaches decisions in a collective manner. In particular, the main institutions responsible for the Greek Security Policy are two, the Cabinet and the Government Council on Foreign and Defence Policy (a smaller cabinet).²⁰ Both bodies are chaired by the Prime Minister. Although both institutions

¹⁷ Regarding the lack of institutional structures see Ioakimidis, 'The Model of Foreign Policy-Making in Greece', pp.144-9.

¹⁸ For an analysis of the present institutional inefficiencies see Dokos, T., and P. Tsakonas, *Charaksi Ethnikis Stratigikis kai Chirismos Kriseon*, [Mapping out National Strategy and Crisis Management] (Athens: Institouto Amyntikon Analyseon, 2004), pp.56-67.

¹⁹ About the dominant role of personalities in the Greek Foreign Policy see Ioakimidis, P., 'The Model of Foreign Policy-Making in Greece', pp.149-154.

²⁰ The permanent members of the GCFDP are the Prime Minister (Chairman), the ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Finance, Interior, Development, National Economy, Public Order, Environment and the under-secretary of Foreign Affairs. Depending on the issue at stake other ministers and the Chief of the Defence General Staff may also participate.

have the right to deal with foreign and defence issues, the Cabinet has entrusted expanded responsibilities to the Government Council on Foreign and Defence Policy (GCFDP) and therefore the latter is considered to be the main instrument responsible for the national security policy.²¹

The Government Council on Foreign and Defence Policy has the responsibility to:²²

a) Coordinate the existing instruments in the ministries of foreign affairs and defence. These instruments were introduced after 1998 and are mainly the Centre for Policy Analysis and Planning and the Permanent Crisis Management Units (in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and the Strategic Studies Directorate, which is a civilian crisis management unit (in the Ministry of Defence). Despite all the declarations, the GCFDP still lacks a Secretariat, so the coordination policy in both periods of peace and crisis (especially the latter) can only be limited.²³ In addition the various parts, as autonomous units, also operate faulty. The Centre for Policy Analysis and Planning and the Permanent Crisis Management Units (PCMUs) hardly ever operate. Actually the latter, despite its name is not a crisis management instrument; since its responsibility is to conduct simulations and prepare the way the MFA will respond in a crisis situation. Therefore in the best case the PCMUs will only have an advisory role and not actually ‘manage’ the crisis.²⁴ The inability of the MFA (and the PCMUs in particular) to ‘manage’ a crisis, also derives from the fact that the ministry lacks the proper infrastructure, there is no crisis management centre, no operational centre placed in the MFA to actually allow the management of any crisis, let alone a military one.²⁵ The issue of coordination gets even more complicated if we take under consideration that almost all crises involve more than just the ministries of foreign affairs and defence. The GCFDP (or any other institution) should ideally be able to coordinate also the National Intelligence Service and the Hellenic Police (for which the Ministry of Public Order is responsible), the Coast Guard (for which the Ministry of Mercantile Marine is responsible) and the Ministry of Press and Mass Media (communicative management).

b) Offer advice on long-term strategic issues and aspects of crisis management. The success of this role depends mainly on the leadership’s (Prime Minister and Ministers) willingness to receive advice. As mentioned above leaders intent to dominate if not supersede institutional bodies. Long-term issues, like the ‘Doctrine of Unified Defence Space’ with Cyprus, the ‘flexible response’ strategy or the rapprochement policy with Turkey, have been decided and implemented by individuals (Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs) and not by the Government Council on Foreign and Defence Policy or even the Cabinet. The record is more worrying on the crisis management field where decisions are made again by a small group of people (Prime Minister and some Ministers) who are not aware of crisis management principles, rules of engagements, the military jargon and technical details involving military operations.

²¹ Regarding the Government Council on Foreign and Defense Policy see Papastamkos G., B. Gikas and P. Liacouras, *Ethniki ke Europaiki Asfalia ke Diachirisi Kriseon* [National and European security and Crisis Management], (Athens: Ant. N. Sakkoula Publishers, 2002), pp.42-47, 146-155.

²² Dokos, *Charaksi Ethnikis Stratigikis kai Chirismos Kriseon*, pp.62-65.

²³ Papastamkos, *Ethniki ke Europaiki Asfalia ke Diachirisi Kriseon*, p.81

²⁴ *ibid.*, p.52.

²⁵ Dokos, *Charaksi Ethnikis Stratigikis kai Chirismos Kriseon*, p.65.

c) Control the outcomes and the suggestions that other instruments have already made and check whether the decisions made are applied properly. This task is only of theoretical value. No inspection or review has ever been implemented.

Recent low-intensity conflicts demonstrate the inability of Greek Security and Crisis Management Policy. The Imia Crisis was (mis)handled not by the GCFDP as it should be, but by a small *ad hoc* group, where the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Defence monopolized the decision making process. No coherent plan was drafted and the management was based on fragmentary inspirations. More striking is the fact that this idiosyncratic team had to respond to actions made by civilians (the Mayor of Kalymnos placing the Greek flag) and could not establish a form of communication with the Turkish side, the negotiations regarding the settlement of the crisis was actually achieved through the involvement of the USA.²⁶ The Otsalan case was again managed by an *ad hoc* team, consisting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Interior, the Secretary of the Cabinet (working as a link to the Prime Minister) and the Director of the National Intelligence Service. The Greek government denied providing asylum to the Kurdish leader, since that would jeopardize the Greek-Turkish relations.²⁷ The decision to send the Kurdish leader in Kenya was wrong both in political and operational terms. The Otsalan case proved that Greece was inexperienced to conduct 'covert operations' and was again driven into a crisis by initiatives that were taken by private individuals.²⁸

Based on the above, the need for a new institution - that will be able to coordinate the existing bodies that are scattered in various ministries, offer sound and timely advice on a wide range of issues, establish a strict crisis management mechanism and oversee each step of the policy-making and crisis management policy - is imperative.²⁹

4. National Security Council: The missing element?

The idea about creating a National Security Council is not new in Greece. Actually the NSC existed in paper during the period 1986-1996. There was a resolution by the Cabinet in 1986 referring to its creation, but in practice it was never established and in 1996 it was voided. The diplomatic failures and the recent establishment of new institutions in the MFA and MoD mentioned above gave new momentum to an already existing idea. The present legal framework allows for the creation of a coordinative and consultative body within the GCFDP.³⁰ The proposals about the establishment of a National Security Council outline an institution of coordinative and

²⁶ On the Imia Crisis see selectively Lymberis C., *Ethiki Stratigiki ke Diachirisi Kriseon*, [National Strategy and Crisis Management] (Athens: Piotita, 1996) and Kurkulas A., *Imia. Mia kritiki prosegisi tou Turkiku paragonta*, [Imia. A critical approach of the Turkish factor] (Athens: I. Sideris, 1997).

²⁷ Instead of sending Otsalan to Kenya, Greece could 'highlight' his request for an asylum as a human right issue and demand the EU to get involved. Using the EU option the Greek government would gain legitimacy and would be in a better bargaining position at the beginning of the crisis.

²⁸ Dokos, *Charaksi Ethnikis Stratigikis kai Chirismos Kriseon*, pp.85-87.

²⁹ Note that the proposals for an institutional reform involve among others the establishment of a permanent undersecretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the creation of a Crisis Management Committee.

³⁰ Papastamkos, *Ethniki ke Europaiki Asfalia ke Diachirisi Kriseon* p.46.

consultative nature that will assist the Government Council of Foreign and Defence Policy and will come under the Prime Minister's power.³¹

Keeping in mind that the NSC in its original (US) form is designed to serve the *presidential* model, certain legislative reforms will have to be adopted to ensure on the one hand that the prime minister will be at the centre of the process and on the other hand that the government will not lose its collective action. Therefore uncritically applying the 'NSC model' that is used in the US's governmental system is not an option.³² A critical issue is the relation between the GCFDP and the NSC in times of crisis. The parallel activation of the NSC should not undermine the ability of the GCFDP to make decisions, but rather provide flexibility by coordinating the various parts and offer alternative policies. Therefore a critical link between the decisive instrument (GCFDP and Prime Minister) and the consultative one (NSC) should be established. This role can only be undertaken by the National Security Advisor.³³ The latter should basically ensure the intermediate role of the NSC - among the various decentralized units and the GCFDP.³⁴ The National Security Advisor should preserve the National Security Council from turning into a super-institution that will end up being stiff and causing rivalry among its various parts. The NSC's main roles will be two.³⁵ First to shape the nation's strategic planning: form the grand strategy, set the priorities of the security agenda and monitor the enforcement of the government's decisions. Second, assist and coordinate the current crisis management units/centres in the MoD and MFA, as well as all the other institutions in the other ministries. The synthesis of the NSC should be similar to that of the GCFDP, but also broader. Apart from the Prime Minister (chairman) and the ministers that already participate in the GCFDP, actors like the National Security Advisor, the Head of the National Intelligence Service and the Chief of the Defence General Staff should also participate. The National Security Council should be staffed by military personnel, diplomats, higher officers from other services, specialists and technocrats. Having a 'mixed' staff will allow the NSC to develop a strategic culture that will allow it to reach broader consensus, gain flexibility, cope with the by-ministerial antagonism and understand better the complex international environment.

Although there is no agreement on its exact structure, the majority of the analysts suggest that the National Security Centre should consist roughly of the following:³⁶

- Strategic Planning Centre
- Crisis Prevention & Management Centre

³¹ For a detailed proposal on the establishment of the proposed Greek NSC (legal framework, organisation, staff and responsibilities) see Papastamkos, *Ethniki ke Europaiki Asfalia ke Diachirisi Kriseon*, pp.155-71 and Dokos, *Charaksi Ethnikis Stratigikis kai Chirismos Kriseon* pp.94-108.

³² For a comparative analysis of the US's NSC and the proposed Greek one see Papastamkos, *Ethniki ke Europaiki Asfalia ke Diachirisi Kriseon*, pp.166-8.

³³ For the importance of the National Security Advisor see Redd, S., 'The influence of advisers on foreign policy decision making', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 46, 3 (June 2002), pp.335-364.

³⁴ Papastamkos, *Ethniki ke Europaiki Asfalia ke Diachirisi Kriseon* p.47 and Dokos, *Charaksi Ethnikis Stratigikis kai Chirismos Kriseon* p.98.

³⁵ Regarding the responsibilities of the proposed Greek NSC see: Dokos, *Charaksi Ethnikis Stratigikis kai Chirismos Kriseon* pp.95-97.

³⁶ Regarding the structure of the proposed Greek NSC see: Dokos, *Charaksi Ethnikis Stratigikis kai Chirismos Kriseon* pp.100-104 and Papastamkos, *Ethniki ke Europaiki Asfalia ke Diachirisi Kriseon*, pp.161-64.

- Intelligence Centre
- Political Communication Unit

Key to the success of the NSC is to create a small, coherent and flexible unit that will assist the Prime Minister and the GCFDP and not replace them. Obviously the NSC, as every bureaucratic institution will have problems regarding its organization, role and coordination policy but then again the Greek National Security Council will have the benefit from learning from others that have introduced similar institutions in their policy-making structure.

5. Concluding remarks

This brief review of the Greek Security Policy proves the inefficiency of the policy-making and coordination process. This inefficiency derives not only but mainly from the fact that the existing structures are inadequate and poorly organized. Adding simply a new institution is not going to solve all the problems, it might actually produce new ones (the Prime Minister might manipulate the NSC, or the National Security Advisor might become a hyper-minister with increased powers). Creating an instrument that will adjust to the current institutional framework, make the most of the existing apparatus and confront its endogenous shortcomings is probably the only rational action that can be taken. Establishing the National Security Council should not be seen as a panacea for the Greek Security Policy, but as a necessary step towards a more organized and better prepared policy-making instrument.

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Abbreviation List

CFSP	Common Foreign and Defence Policy
GCFDP	Government Council on Foreign and Defence Policy
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NSA	National Security Advisor
NSC	National Security Council
PCMUs	Permanent Crisis Management Units