REVIEW: GEOPOLITICAL REALITIES IN THE GREECE-CYPRUS DIPOLE, SOLUTIONS AND ALIBIS
BY PROF. IOANNIS TH. MAZIS

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The present paper comes to review Professor Ioannis Th. Mazis’s acclaimed paper with the title ‘Geopolitical realities in the Greece-Cyprus dipole: Solutions and alibis’. Professor Mazis, with a contribution by Dr. Virginia Balafouta, makes an overall geopolitical analysis with regard to the Cyprus problem, Greece’s dilemmas and Turkey’s prioritizations. On this basis, the geostrategic significance of the island is underlined and thus, its positioning vis-à-vis Great Power’s grand strategies is implied. It is exactly in the foreword for the English edition in Civitas Gentium where Mazis refers to the US and Russian strategic gambles as well as whether and how these reframe the global antagonistic variables. The main parts of the paper contain: (a) a description and analysis of the international geopolitical network, (b) proposals of tools-geostrategic planning, (c) the case of Greece and Cyprus: the cultural pillar, (d) the international law dimension of cultural pillar, (e) provisions of the ‘joint communiqué’ – contexts and views on the legal fiction – main axes of Turkish foreign policy – Greek foreign policy.

In the beginning, Ioannis Mazis refers to the European redistribution of interests among the historical political parties. He interrelates this set of changes with Russia’s overall redefinition of interests; besides, he writes about ‘putinism’ as a counter-proposal against globalization. The Russian President’s agenda deals with Moscow’s return into Europe via soft power means and financing of pro-Russian parties around Europe either if these are far-right (see the Netherlands) or conservative (see France) or just activist parties (see Italy). According to the main argument, this is considered the antidote to the often called ‘American ex-

ceptionalism’. It is a well-known fact that the post-war US strategic inclination towards a ‘hegemonic stabilizer’ status was favored by some undisputed evolutions; (a) the pre-war balance of power system failed, (b) the collective security system failed, too, (c) American foreign policy changed its status from isolationism to interventionism, (d) British grand strategy changed in favor of the establishment of the Atlantic Alliance and several institutions, (e) Europeans failed to create a common political and strategic area. A similar situation seems to result with regard to Russia and its strategic return to Europe; i.e. the absence of political and strategic cohesion in Europe and the indigenously problematic function of international institutions impel Moscow to maximize its interests and power in the European continent.

In this sense, the main idea behind the new Russian foreign policy is noted to focus on the ‘US-EU threat’ deterrence. Systemic stakes keep Moscow far from coordinating its strategic interests with the US and EU member-states and thus, it insists on competing instead of cooperating. An additional parameter concerns Donald Trump’s election and his promise for foreign policy change. Historically, American foreign policy is characterized by four traditions regarding the way in which it is practically shaped, uses any geopolitical factors and looks for benefits maximization methods for the US.

The first tradition is the Hamiltonian, according to which the fine balance between national interest and capital is needed. This tradition supports the use of economic means for the expansion of American power and of course, the global economic structures are integral part of this effort. The second tradition is the Jeffersonian, identified with the isolationism idea and preceding democracy in the interior as well as intervention avoidance in international conflicts. This tradition has been expressed as a reaction to any possibility of US engagement to the Napoleonic Wars and consequently, to any military engagement in the abroad. The third tradition is the Jacksonian which is, also, isolationist focusing exclusively on economic growth instead of offshore campaigns. The forth tradition is the Wilsonian containing a series of messianic ideas. It is based on

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3. Martel, W. C. (2015) Grand strategy in theory and practice: The need for an effective American foreign policy. New York: Cambridge university press. Pp. 301-302. The traditions, related to isolationism, are identified with the idea that the US are adequately protected due to the vast oceans of the Atlantic and the Pacific. Thus, the afore-mentioned geographic reality is read dually; on the one hand, it shapes the limits of power projection and offense and on the other hand, it contributes to the US defense in case of intervention. Mearsheimer, J. J. (2011) Imperial by design. The national interest, 111, p. 18.
a moral argumentation and is broadly recognized as the alter ego of idealism, democracy diffusion and global change on the basis of respect to political and economic rights. A change of foreign policy tradition – or to put it simply, grand strategy – was asked by Trump and profoundly, this could create new balances in Europe since Washington would choose to increase its power projection in the Pacific and the containment effort against China.

The main body of Mazis’s study starts with the basic argument that, during the last decades, Greece has chosen a strategy of appeasement with regard to Turkey and its demands. This is related to the weakening of the strategic ties between Greece and Cyprus with a merely effective Common Defense Doctrine, the retreat on the issue of the S-300 system and the several postpones of common military exercises and mainly that of ‘Nikiforos-Toxotes’. Appeasement has provoked Ankara’s maximization of demands even with reference to issues that it did not previously reacted. As Glenn Snyder has put it, appeasement is still an option when confronting a threat but it is not the most favorable since it increases the threatened actor’s dependence, something completely irrational in a world full of uncertainty and need for self-help. Besides, appeasement has been repeatedly characterized as an ‘example of what not to do’ by strategic thinkers.

Afterwards, as an expert on geopolitics himself, Mazis elaborates the argument of the increasing significance of the Eastern Mediterranean he had described in previous studies on the basis of geopolitical factors. The first one deals with the ice melting in the Arctic and the challenges this brings to the classical axioms of Sir Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman. Essentially, ice melting offers an ‘exit’ to the oceans for Russia and thus, Turkey’s value as a part of the western containment effort against Moscow is delimited. Containment of the Russian factor represents a diachronic priority for the Anglo-Saxons and Turkey (or previously the Ottoman Empire) always had a crucial role due to the Bosporus Straits and the Dardanelles. Moscow’s suspension from accessing the so-called ‘warm waters’ has been a sine qua non for the western powers and Turkey’s usefulness was always recognized. The new sea routes via the Arctic urge Ankara to look for other factors which will make it geostrategically ‘useful’ to the West or to Russia.

On this line of thought, neo-ottomanism has arisen. Neo-ottomanism comes to correlate the nationalist narrative of Turkism with that of Islam and Ankara’s leading position among the Muslims. What is argued in the paper is that counter-balances based on cultural precedents are difficult to be formed. Such neo-ottoman perceptions are mistaken and of course, they could not represent a serious antidote to the change of geopolitical factors. Neo-ottomanism has been identified with the adoption by Turkey of a dynamic and multi-dimensional foreign policy aiming to a leading role both in the Turkic and the Islamic world. In this way, the Kemalist status quo principle as well as its tactic of abolishing the ottoman past is disputed. Neo-ottomanism embodies a more extrovert vision with regard to the Turkish grand strategy, which becomes obvious in Turkey’s post-Cold War era revisionist rhetoric and practices.7

The term ‘neo-ottomanism’ originates from the ideological fermentations of the 19th century and the ‘ottomanism’ from the last decades before the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The basic logic behind ottomanism was linked to the idea of construction of a major identity able to incorporate heterogeneous national or regional groups in the empire. In this regard, ottomanism was a tool for the survival of the ottoman state and the legitimization of the Turks’ over-expansion into the Balkans, the Middle East, the Caucasus and North Africa.8 Modern neo-ottomanism has become known mainly after Turgut Özal’s era as that set of thoughts favoring the re-definition of the Turkish grand strategy in terms of power maximization abroad and establishment of inner cohesion. Cengiz Çandar was the first to introduce the term ‘neo-ottomanism’ trying to describe Özal’s as well as Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel’s rhetoric and policies towards assuming a leading role in a vast area ‘from Adriatic to the Chinese Wall’ (‘Adriyatik’ten Çin Seddi’ne’).9

The second factor concerns the significance of the Arctic itself. Huge energy resources as well as bio-resources (e.g. fishing) lead Russia not to abandon the opportunity of expanding to this area and consequently, Turkey’s role diminishes as far as the gains from accessing the Mediterranean remain of high cost and low benefits for Russia in comparison with the Arctic option. In other words, there are reasons for Russia to neglect its southern exits in favor of the northern


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one. Besides, the richness of the Arctic’s continental self offers so many opportunities of interests’ convergence with Western companies that Turkey will be preferred to be abandoned. Turkey’s external balancing of Russia with a western alliance is extremely impossible under such an analysis. In addition, Turkey will not be able to implement a role of a significant energy market as it is more than obvious that the Russo-Chinese energy relations will increase, due to Moscow’s new reserves and Beijing’s growing market. The more Russia diversifies its hydrocarbons’ exports, the less valuable Turkey renders and the more Russia grows its energy trade income, the more capable it becomes to expand its influence in Central Asia, Eastern Asia and the Middle East, as well as to increase the EU’s energy dependence. Besides, it is a well-known fact that this is one of the EU’s top priorities; to diversify its energy imports at the expense of Russia.\textsuperscript{10}

On the same basis, the third factor refers to Russia’s reaction via ‘pipeline diplomacy’ to NATO’s expansion to its strategic backyard as one more security dilemma that Moscow has to confront. Therefore, the new-found reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean become extremely important in this ‘energy gamble’ between Russia and the ‘US-EU axis’. These reserves may be complementary in a broader system of energy supply towards the EU member-states. For an effective function of such a system, stability and credibility are needed and Turkey cannot offer them. Turkey’s any geographical advantage is undermined by three specific factors.\textsuperscript{11}

The first is related with Turkey’s inclination to manage its energy policies not in terms of rules of market economy, but of political manipulation. The second problem is institutional and strongly linked to the accession negotiations between the European Commission and Turkey. In conjunction with the previous, Turkish legal framework concerning energy and the interior is incompatible with the acquis communautaire (compliance with EU law) in many aspects. The third problem refers to Turkey’s internal gas demand, which is essentially “locked” by Russia. This increasing leverage of Russian gas can be seen in the relevant diachronic data. In 1991, Turkey imported 142.4 bcm (billion cubic meters) while, in 2007, this number rose to 1,264.3 bcm. Keeping in mind that the Azeri gas reserves are – in comparison with the massive Russian gas reserves –

\textsuperscript{10.} The European Commission has defined energy security and particularly, energy supply as ‘ensuring that future essential energy needs are satisfied by means of a sharing of internal energy sources and strategic reserves under acceptable economic conditions and by making use of diversified and stable, externally accessible sources’. European Commission (2006) \textit{Green paper: A European strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy.} Brussels: Commission of the European Communities. P. 10.

poor and there are obstacles regarding the Turkish-Iranian energy cooperation due to the continuing embargo, Ankara seems incapable to diversify its own imports let alone Europe’s. Referring to the Russian political-economic leverage in the Turkish market, what is even more important is that natural gas represents the main energy pillar of Turkey’s economic growth, since it is consumed primarily by industry. The industrial sector absorbs 45% of the imported energy, while the main gas exporting country is Russia.12

The fourth factor is the Kurdish. A strong Kurdish factor is needed by the US and Israel since it may offer the necessary strategic depth for the second’s survival and first’s capability to project power next to the Russian near abroad. At the time of writing the current review, the Kurds have implemented a referendum for their independence in Northern Iraq and the neighboring countries seem incapable to confront the series of evolutions. All the major power of the super-system support this possibility even carefully since the US do not want to alienate Turkey and Russia does not want to alienate Iran. The clashes taking place in the Greater Middle East and in the occasion of a free Kurdistan underline, according to Mazis, the value of the cultural pillar of geopolitics. Indeed, the Middle East remains fragmented and the several groups legitimizing their existence via religion and culture find themselves stronger and stronger. In this regard, the Kurdish – non-Arab – factor finds itself closer to the Western perception of nationalism and state-centrism and thus, is appears friendlier to Tel Aviv and the western interests in the region.

Kurdistan is born in a framework of re-distribution of power and major changes in the Greater Middle East. Turkey, with a large Kurdish population in its interior, will be possibly destabilized while Israel is about to own its desirable territorial strategic depth apart from the existing sea strategic depth offered by Cyprus, the Aegean and the Ionian Seas. Profoundly, this is an extremely timely issue giving answers to the security dilemmas Tel Aviv is about to face in the near future and beyond. Traditionally, Israel has followed a deterrent strategy by rejecting maximalist strategic choices and orienting towards status quo preservation.13 Since the hostile Arab countries were clearly benefited in terms of strategic depth, population and positioning (circulation and two-front war threat) around Israel, the Israeli deterrence strategy has been promoted as the only choice for survival. On this issue, Samy Cohen notes that ‘in a country surrounded by hostile neighbors that depends entirely on the military to ensure its survival, the army’s deterrence capability is a basic pillar of its strategy. Call-

ing it into question would be tantamount to an “existential threat” for Israel. When deterrence ceases to function or when it is defied, there is no greater national emergency than to reestablish it, usually via a display of force or a military feat’.14

The Israeli deterrence strategy has been absolutely in line with the US grand strategy especially in the post-Cold War era. In the aftermath of the USSR dissolution, a unipolar international system emerged and thus, the US interest has been identified with status quo preservation under the scope of deterring any regional hegemonic aspirations in a world-wide level and especially in the Middle East, which is a crucial region in terms of energy reserves and geographic location. Therefore, since the US have not favored regional hegemonies and compellence strategies in the post-Cold war era, their historical alliance with Israel has been reinforced and defined in terms of common interests; i.e. the status quo preservation. In contrast, Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Turkey has recently emerged as a new challenger for regional hegemony after historical examples such as Gamal Abdel Nasser’s Egypt and Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. Among such case studies, the similarity deals with hostility to Israel since anti-Israeli rhetoric always mobilizes Islamic population’s reflexes. So, the cultural pillar is still defined as a basic determining variable in the analysis of the clashes and the re-distribution of power in the Greater Middle East.

To return to the paper’s main argumentation, the new situation as well as the identification of the US, Russian, Chinese and Israeli interests with the secular forces against Islamic fundamentalism drive Cyprus to converge its own interests with all these forces. Operationally, Cyprus finds itself at the edge of NATO’s defense against Islamic fundamentalism and Greece seems inadequately powerful to support an extrovert multi-dimensional role with the inclusion of Cyprus in its strategic planning. The ongoing economic crisis has provoked a series of problems in Greece’s military preparedness and thus, external balancing seems to be more important and necessary than ever.

A main field of interest and competition concerns the energy exploitation in the Eastern Mediterranean. A favorable proposal for the energy transfer to the European markets deals with an undersea pipeline from Israel to Greece via Cyprus. Such a possibility would provoke great anxiety to Ankara since it would be circumvented. For this reason, Turkey makes efforts to lobby the Islamic World (e.g. Libya since Egypt is included in the pro-western ‘energy axis’) in order to balance the afore-mentioned possibility. Mazis refers to the necessity of expelling Turkey from becoming a partner, a co-producer or a co-transit country. Prior in his paper, he has underlined the areas and the reasons of the Turkish-Israeli antagonism in the Middle East and on this line of thought, Mazis

notes that it would be completely irrational if Greece and Cyprus save Turkey from its abandonment in the region. Relative gains do matter and thus, Mazis’s argument is valid; Greece and Cyprus have to increase their gains not only in absolute terms but, also, at the expense of Turkey. In practical terms, according to the professor’s writings, the foreign policies of Greece and Cyprus have to be coordinated, their upmost national interest has to be defined in terms of status quo preservation and the illegal content of Turkey’s invasion in Cyprus has to be underlined consistently. Towards this aim, the common cultural pillar ought to be the legitimization factor.

What is more important is that Mazis consolidates his argument not only under the prism of geopolitical analysis but, also, referring to international law with a full record of committed crimes by Turkey in Cyprus. Besides, international law is linked to geopolitics as a crucial intervening variable and policy recommendations are impossible without a good use of law aspects. As Panayiotis Ifestos has put it, ‘by international rule of law we mean, principally, the respect of the high principles of international relations, that is, non-intervention, parity among sovereign states, internal and external sovereignty, no use of force and peaceful resolution of international conflicts’. It is out of question that Cyprus has to stabilize its stance on this priority; i.e. to highlight the illegality of Turkey’s invasion to a sovereign member-state of the United Nations and the derived illegality of territory occupation of a member-state of the European Union as well as the necessity of abolishment of the anachronistic Treaty of Guarantee to all the international fora.

Taking into consideration the island’s security tie to Turkey, the Cypriot endeavor is extremely difficult to be fulfilled. As it is mentioned in the conclusions of Mazis’s paper, Greek foreign policy is correlated to international law order but Turkish foreign policy is led by the fact that Cyprus is an inseparable part of Ankara’s peripheral visions. For instance, Mazis has repeatedly analyzed Ahmet Davutoğlu’s writings on Cyprus. In case the international law order is kept and the Republic of Cyprus (at its whole) becomes truly independent, Turkey will be essentially contained with whatever this means for the increase of its security dilemmas. Turkey must have a say in Cyprus if it wants to own a hegemonic positioning in the broader region. Besides, it is a well-known fact


that Ankara considers its past strategy-making in Cyprus as a good precedent for whatever it wants to accomplish in Greek Thrace, Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia and beyond.

Undoubtedly, Ioannis Mazis’s ‘Geopolitical realities in the Greece-Cyprus dipole, Solutions and alibis’ is a must-read article for anyone desiring to understand the ongoing gamble in the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece and Turkey’s stakes, Israel’s interests and the relevant impact of geopolitical transformations in the global level. The writer’s argumentation is coherent responding fully to the questions having posed in the introduction via a highly sophisticated procedure. Therefore, his paper’s contribution is decisive keeping in mind, also, the level of attachment to the ongoing-current evolutions regarding Syria, North Africa, Kurds’ independence and Turkey’s hegemonic stance. The argumentation is consolidated, also, due to the existence of illustrations and tables citing all the necessary information for a reader of international relations and geopolitics.

References

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