

**XXIV. Geostrategic Analysis of the Current Situation
in the Southeastern Mediterranean:
The Case of the Geostrategic Position of Greece
and the Issue of “Diplomatic Time”**

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A. Triggering the chain reaction: the Palestinian issue²

The post Arafat era of the Palestinian issue is characterized by two different possible paths:

1) The path of conflict between opposite groups of PLO, i.e. Hamas (which is more widely accepted by people than Fatah), Hezbollah as well as other “Arafatian” tendencies which will lead the Palestinian case to disaster, and

2) The desired path of finding a “successor” to Arafat, who will be accepted as a negotiator by the other side that is the Israeli and, principally, the American one. In that case, acceptance by the American side is far more important than that by the Israeli government, as it will help address the Palestinian claims more fully. As things have evolved according to what was predicted, Mahmoud Abbas (better known under his PLO name as Abu Mazen) is Arafat’s successor and is considered by the Israelis as a tough but honest negotiator; he is also accepted by the Americans.

Certainly, in both cases, it is reasonable that diplomatic references

2. The views herein are reflecting and binding exclusively to the author. They do not necessarily represent DAI or the Hellenic Ministry of Defense.

between the two parties will be defined in the Oslo Agreement I³ and II⁴ and in the “Road Map”,⁵ since the aforementioned Agreement has been accepted by i) the American arbitration and the Quartet⁶ ii) the Israeli side and iii) the Palestinian side. Moreover, iv) it bears the seal of Arafat, which provides the text with moral and political vindication for the Palestinians and, therefore, with greater flexibility for legitimate national maneuvers to his successor.

In both cases, the period within which commonly accepted conclusions may be reached, can be no less than 5 years.

B. The Syrian-Israeli issue in the post-Arafat era (a version of the case mentioned in point A.2. hereof)

Naturally, settling the Israeli-Palestinian issues and positively evolving peace talks between the two sides will lead Syria to reevaluate its stance towards various Islamic revolutionary (Palestinian or not) groups and movements, whose activities it endures or covers to this day, thus maintaining a volatile situation in Iraq.

Syria is concerned by two strategic issues of national interest: i) the continuous and uninterrupted water supply from Euphrates (Turkey) at quantities of 750 cubic meters /sec and ii) the Golan Heights issue, upon and near which the Jordan River springs are located.

Potential settling of the peace process in the Palestinian issue, with the contribution of Damascus, could enhance the latter's position before Ankara and Tel Aviv as far as both of the aforementioned issues are concerned. Syria would also be characterized as a stability factor by the American side, whose support would boost Syria's claims and positively affect the Israeli stance. The results would be nothing less than positive for Damascus and, together with positive developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict Syria will be quick to realize it.

3. Cairo Agreement or Oslo I on May 4th 1994.

4. Taba Agreement or Oslo II on September 28th 1995 or Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

5. This was the result of the collaboration between the “Quartet” parties and was originally presented by President G. W. Bush on December 20th 2002.

6. Quartet” is the name of the diplomatic scheme including USA-Russia- EU and UNO.

Such a development (settling of the Palestinian issue, restoration of democratic legitimacy in Iraq after the January elections, cease of Syrian support to Islamist and Palestinian anti-Israeli organizations active in Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon) would make Syria an important strategic partner to the USA, NATO and the EU, a fact that would diminish Ankara's strategic importance respectively.

If that were the case, there would be nothing but benefits for Syria:

1) The important Baghdad-Banias (Syria) pipeline would resume its operation, which has been stopped in 1982 and can transfer around 1 Mb/d to Eastern Mediterranean, in view of the resumed exploitation of the Mosul and Kirkuk (Sanjak of Mosul) oil fields.⁷

2) Its future reassurance regarding "Kurdish subversive activities" right after the establishment of the federal Kurdish state at the Sanjak of Mosul (N. Iraq). Activities however that the writer does not consider neither probable nor possible.

3) Reacquisition of rights upon Golan and part of the water reserves of the Jordan River.

4) The settling however of the Israeli-Syrian relations in Golan, will allow the operation of the Mosul-Haifa pipeline through Syrian territory, thus providing to Syria a significant strategic importance in the region, due to the high quality of Light Kirkuk oil and the shortness of the pipeline's route to the Mediterranean, through Syria (see Map 1, two different routes. The "Syrian route" is more economical).



Map 1: Two routes of pipelines through Syrian territory

Elaborated by I. Th. Mazis

7. 1Mb/d = 1.000.000 barrels per day. Towards the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the levels of Iraqi oil exports via all possible channels had reached 2 Mb/d. Before the beginning of this war, the respective quantity amounted to 3 Mb/d. Until now, Iraq has failed to restore the level of oil exports it presented before the break of this war.

5) The settlement of the issue pertaining to the Unity Dam at Yarmuk River, a tributary of the Jordan River with its springs in Syria. Apart from purely developmental and financial benefits for Syria,⁸ Damascus will acquire greater political status and reliability within the Arab world, stronger influence in Amman, wide financial cooperation with the USA and strengthening of its position compared to Ankara as per the issue of Euphrates. Multifaceted advantages play a primary role in the geopolitics of water. Turkey is attempting to assume the role of a regional power in the shadow of the talks between Jordan-Syria-Israel, however its links with the participants and the mediator, as well as the reliability of its good services are doubted by the international community because of its efforts to impose military solutions on the Kurdish issue on the one hand, and its obvious aspirations of expansion over the oil fields of Mosul. Thus, the fact that Turkey is situated upstream of Euphrates is more an annoyance than a guarantee for those involved. It is natural for the USA to consider the Unity Dam as a unique opportunity to promote their interests in the Middle East in pursuit of peace and security in the region.

Reasonably enough, the mediation of Syria, which is either way involved in this issue, strategically upgrades it within the Middle East subsystem and diminishes Turkey's strategic importance respectively.

C. Settling things in Iraq - A federal Kurdish state in North Iraq (Sanjak of Mosul)

Settling things in Iraq, as made clear by points (A) and (B), will be a product of positive developments in the peace talks on the Palestinian issue during the post-Arafat era and the subsequent reformation of the Syrian foreign policy. However, this settling and democratization of Iraq, even according to ethnic and religious standards in the Middle East, presents in itself the creation of a federal Kurdish state in the Sanjak of Mosul.

8. See. I. Θ. Μάζης, *Γεωπολιτική των Υδάτων στη Μ. Ανατολή*, 1996 (Τροχαλία), 2000 Παπαζήσης, Αθήνα, 286-287 [I.Th. Mazis, *The Geopolitics of Water in the Middle East*].

This Kurdish state –the size of Scotland– will hold the largest confirmed crude oil reserves (in terms of quality and quantity) in the Iraqi territory and it will be to the advantage of both powers to control them. The “Light Kirkuk” oil, famous for its low percentage in sulphur and thus its high quality, is also known and desired for its low drilling cost that barely amounts to 1 dollar per barrel. Comparatively, I would like to mention that oil from Oman and Malaysia, also considered to be of low drilling cost, amounts to 5 dollars per barrel, whereas North Sea oil amounts to 16 dollars per barrel and American reserves exceed 20 dollars per barrel.

Besides, the Mosul-Jordan-Haifa (Israel) pipeline will resume operations rendering Israel a major international strategic and energy player. This upgrading of Israel and the respective downgrading of a “Turkey of Generals” greatly strengthens the Kurdish element in the region and establishes the federal Kurdish state under creation in Northern Iraq as another crucial player of US power projection in the Middle East and it should also be considered as a component of the US antimissile defence network. (See point E below).

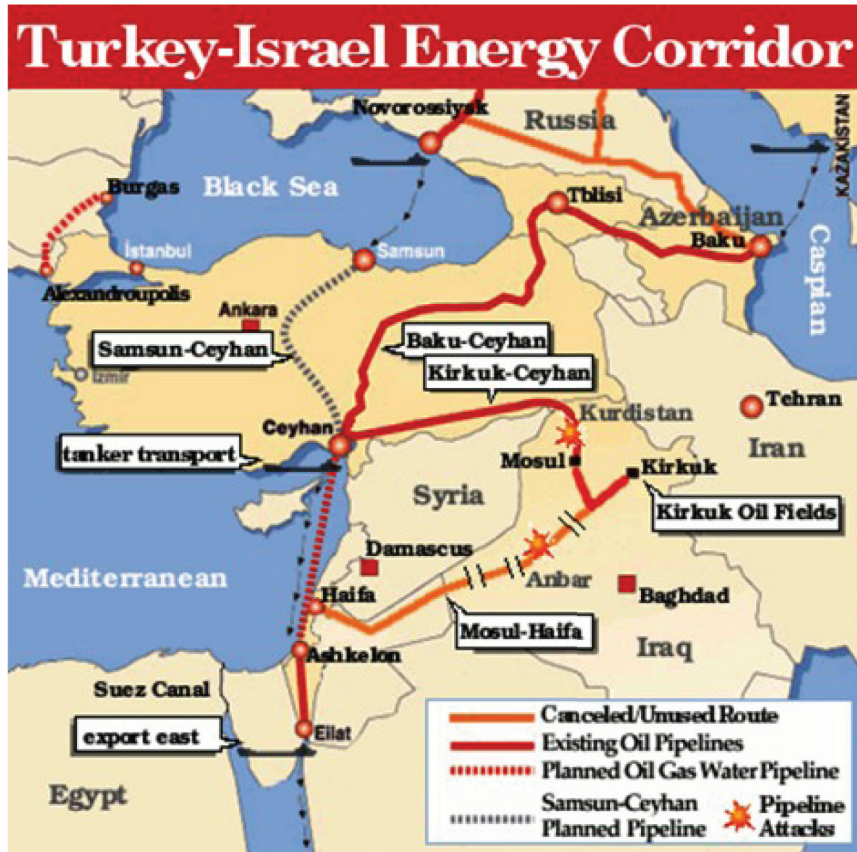
Given the above and the utterly positive stance of Jordan towards the USA, the future implications of strategic balances in the Middle East region are almost evident, i.e.:

The oil fields and the future reuse of the aforementioned Mosul-Haifa (Israel) (see Map 1) pipeline will change in fact the geostrategic and geopolitical characteristics of the region, affecting also the internal political balances of the Mediterranean countries. A look at the attached **Maps 1 and 2** helps us understand that he who controls the Mosul fields, controls their energy route through Turkey (Syria-Turkey borders) and, depending on the prevailing political instances, the alternative route of Mosul-Kirkuk-Haifa.

It is obvious of course that, for both of the aforementioned reasons, Turkey’s strategic importance for the transatlantic side will be greatly diminished, thus presenting the relevant diplomatic benefits for Athens.

However, the risks of a “Kurdish liberating explosion” invoked by the Turkish side, as well as the risks run, according to Ankara, by the 150,000 Turkmen living in the Sanjak of Mosul, are of a different nature and are considered to be nonexistent, even more so, under the regime of American and British influence, which will govern this federal state. In any case, a potential aggressive explosion of some form, of this state in terms of defense and population against Turkey,

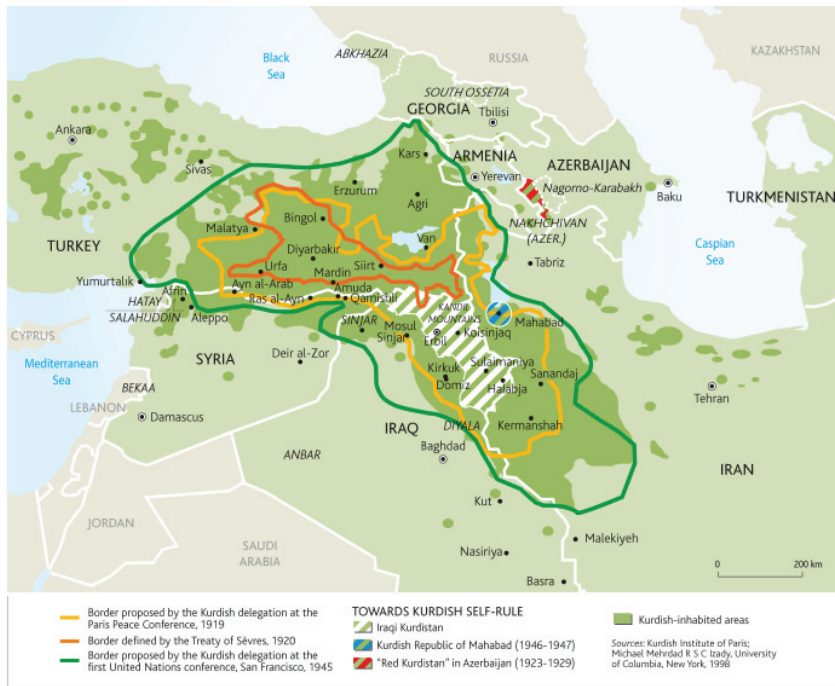
equals a potential attack by...Luxembourg against France (!) or by Skopje against...Greece (!).



Map 2: Mosul fields and pipelines

Source: <http://www.yenizaman.az>

In terms of politics and given the radical change of geostrategic factors in the region, as set herein, such a danger is purely metaphysical. Protests by Turkey are simply part of its effort to increase Ankara's negotiating power before the Anglo-Americans for wider "participation" in the Northern Iraq oil fields. Besides, the Kurdish ethnicity on Turkish soil is so largely expanded in terms of territory (see Map 3) and population, that such a danger, if indeed there were one, could have emerged from the territory of Northeast Syria or Southwest Iran, that is from countries with which Turkey never had ideal relations, especially in times of disputes.



Map 3: Kurdish population in the Middle East
 Source: <http://mondediplo.com/maps/kurdistanborders>

Besides, settling the situation in Afghanistan releases in the near future (a five-year horizon) the route Central Asia – Afghanistan – Pakistan – Indian Ocean, which conveying (see Map 4) the hydrocarbon fields – and especially those of natural gas – through the shortest route to the rapidly emerging Indian market, diminishes even more Turkey’s strategic importance before the USA, in the framework of the Caspian – Central Asia – Middle East geopolitical System.

Acknowledgment of this fact by the Greek side will have to render clear to Greek defense and foreign policy makers the principle paths to be followed, which are the following:

1) An effort by Athens to “buy some time” regarding all kinds of disputes with our neighboring Turkey and chiefly on issues bearing as a main feature the pressure by Ankara on Athens through Washington and/or London.

The case of October 3rd is an excellent opportunity for the Greek side to act accordingly, only under the condition that it will manage, in

cooperation with Nicosia, to include certain prerequisites (as in point E herein) regarding Greek-Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot relations, in the Conclusions of the Summit Meeting.

If these prerequisites are to be included, and their implementation is constantly monitored continuously by the European side,⁹ this “buying of time” will be possible for the Cypriot and Greek side.



Map 4: Oil and gas fields in Afghanistan and Central Asia

Source: <http://www.afghanistannews.org/>

D. The Skopje issue

Having almost no relation with the views of Mr. Bush’s Republicans and making use of the newly elected president’s sensitivity to the Islamic movement and its offshoots in the Balkans, the liberal bureaucratic

9. And the European side will not hesitate to refer to these for obvious reasons...

status quo of the US Department of State (which on its own planted and manned the aforementioned offshoots in Albania, Kosovo and Western FYROM), proceeded to an unreasonable triggering of the issue under the impression that it contributes in the containment process of Albanian-Islamic expansionism and liberating movement in the Balkans. Such a contribution would not have been controversial if it hadn't taken its fellow and ally government (Greece) by surprise; a government that helped the USA by sending a company to Afghanistan and a frigate patrolling the Arab Persian Gulf in the case of Iraq, and showed its complete solidarity to Washington on issues of prevention and containment of international terrorism.

The FYROM name issue is governed by an institutionalized process, the Interim Agreement in 1995, in the framework of a dialogue under the auspices of the UNO and assisted by a Special Mediator, Mr. M. Nimitz. Any effort to diplomatically tackle this fact may take place within the EU and NATO framework, as already announced by the Greek Prime Minister Mr. K. Karamanlis in Brussels, as well as in the existing framework of the UNO.

However, the issue of possible diplomatic pressures to FYROM by Greece within the European community framework adds another point of "discontent" of our European partners before Athens and it burdens further the already large agenda of Greek-European issues of "discontent" that will be discussed on October 3rd in view of the issue on the opening of Turkey's accession negotiations.¹⁰

At this point, we should try and find the deeper reasons for this sudden, as well as diplomatically inelegant action by the US Department of State. The Greek side must not give in to the temptation of magnifying the Skopje name issue for reasons of (doubtful) internal consumption, because this will weaken its negotiating power and the respective weapons it possesses on the issues of clauses it will demand to be gratified, in view of the date for the opening of Turkey accession negotiations.

It must be also made clear to the Bush administration that what must be of immediate concern to it, is the dissemination of the Islamo-albanian liberating idea in the Balkans and no other "Balkan-type" adventures which reverse all stabilizing efforts in the Balkans.

At this point, the author reckons that the country's interests, as well as those of the Republic of Cyprus, are in many points common with Tel

10. As stated in an article in «*Ta Nea*» newspaper on November 10th 2004.

Aviv's, and that Greek-Israeli and Cypriot-Israeli relations must be seen through this angle, with the aim of their strategic amelioration. Such an eventuality will also contribute to reducing the strategic importance of our neighbor; however it must be tackled promptly.

E. The Greek-Turkish and Greek - Turkish - Cypriot issue

It is clear that the Greek side has several issues/prerequisites to set (in order to accept providing a date for Turkey) in view of the 3rd October.

- 1) The prerequisite of the delimitation by legal means of the Aegean Sea shelf and its acceptance by Ankara as the only one.
- 2) The prerequisite of the validity or not of the "border disputes and other similar issues" as set in the already expired Helsinki Agreement.
- 3) The prerequisite/clarification over the acceptance or not by Athens of Turkey's "vital interests" in the Aegean (Madrid Protocol).
- 4) The prerequisite of non-waiving Greece's legal right to extend its national territorial waters up to 12 nautical miles.

The legitimate Cypriot Government must demand the following prerequisites for the same text of Conclusions:

- 1) Recognition of the Republic of Cyprus by Ankara.
- 2) Withdrawal of occupation troops from the Island.
- 3) Partial withdrawal of Turkish settlers from the Island.
- 4) Formal request from Nicosia's side for the accession of the Republic of Cyprus in NATO.

The first demand is a reasonably and legally necessary prerequisite for a state that wishes to become a member of the European family; the next two points are backed by relevant UNO resolutions and by International Law either way.

This is the important aspect of negotiations and not the fuss around Skopje.

F. US antimissile defense and its geostrategic repercussions in the Middle East region: the strategic role of Greece

According to a recent study conducted by CIA, ICBMs (Interconti-

mental Ballistic Missiles) by “hostile” countries are expected to deploy within 10-15 years from now. Within this time span, research efforts for the development of an effective defence mechanism at a launching stage, must be put into action.

In the same study, however, it is claimed that elimination at a launching stage is possible when the threat comes from ships off the US coast, trying to launch an S/MRBM (Short/Medium Range Ballistic Missile). What is necessary is monitoring the hostile ship by warships with antiballistic capabilities within a distance less than 40 km.

On a practical and political level, the conclusions of the study show that the USA will need either way, to cooperate with countries located near the “hostile” ones. It is estimated that antiballistic forces should be located 400-1000 km from the launching point. Greece’s proximity to the Middle East and countries where problems may arise in the future (e.g. Iran), places it among the countries whose help the USA will ask for. Even more so, if Greece is to deploy marine systems, which could act as floating antiballistic bases, it could become the “antiballistic bastion” of the USA, as well as the EU.

The alleged purchase of the Israeli antiballistic system Arrow 2 from Turkey, and Turkey’s possible inclusion in the group of “front line” countries as per the American antiballistic defence, render this issue extremely significant for vital Greek interests. Furthermore, if this piece of information is accurate, President Bush will be emphasizing the deployment of antiballistic defence.

Equally, if the aforementioned piece of information is accurate, then it confirms the assessment that President Bush will be emphasizing on the deployment of antiballistic defence.

It is advisable that the competent services of both the Hellenic Ministry of Defense and the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, start to examine how Greece could be integrated in the antiballistic defence systems network of Europe and the Western world in general, as well as the potential gains and problems that such a development could produce.

Such a development would produce risks as well as opportunities for Greece. Participating in the worldwide antiballistic “umbrella” under creation by the USA could turn Greece, theoretically at least, into a target-country by “rogue states” in the international system. The counter-argument, however, has to do with emerging perspectives of successful negotiations with the United States, which could end up in reaping important gains on a political, military and technological level. As far

as the Greek Armed Forces are concerned, they could gain access to arms currently under export ban and the Greek Defense Industry would be able to claim its participation in research projects that will guarantee their viability. The alliance, in terms of defence, with Israel, at the same time with the aforementioned alliance with the USA, is deemed necessary, especially in the sector of co-production of arms technology.

The danger of diminishing the strategic importance of our country in the area of US antiballistic defense, derives from the potential exploitation by USA of the northern (occupied) part of Cyprus, the eastern areas of the Balkan peninsula (Bulgaria, Romania), the southern geographical zones of Baltic countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia) and Finland, and (as a second line of antiballistic defense) the zone of Eastern Europe countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland).

Greece should take advantage of all its geophysical features (Aegean, Ionian Sea) that allow it to remain a player in the geostrategic game in the region with its own particular role. If the maritime character of Greece is altered and its national sovereignty in the Aegean Sea is diminished by whichever means, Greece will cease to have a strategic role in the geopolitical subsystem of the Eastern Mediterranean as a strategic partner of the USA, since land-wise it can be easily and effortlessly replaced by the aforementioned national-land complexes.

In order to achieve the above, the strategic weight of our neighbor must be diminished, something that will take place in the course of time, because of the aforementioned developments in the region. However, the time for this to occur must be gained at all costs and will be gained as the foundations have been already laid on December 17th; as long as they are ratified on October 3rd.

Bibliography

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