

A.L. PIERRIS

## A BRIEF ANATOMY OF THE GREEK IMPASSE

- I -

Unfortunately Greece is a typical statist State, with an incompetent, flawed and failed leading "elite" mismanaging things systematically and predictably under a strangling closed-shop mentality, a collectivist ethos surreptitiously enforcing positive discrimination against individual excellence and tenaciously upholding a complementary standing absolutism at all times from any personal responsibility in the outcome of events, and, to match, a thoroughly dirigist culture where position, role and return within the system are normally dissociated from efficiency, foresight and success in real tasks, reflecting instead manipulative cunning in the internal little games of the establishment. Everything, and especially economic activity, in the private sector as well, works in unhealthy bondage to direct or indirect protectionism: *favourable options are exchanged for political support*, and whichever individual subject (physical person or firm) stands aloof from that system of patronage wishing to freely compete while counting on its own capacity and achievement, is punished on purpose not according to its possible oversizing but proportionately to its real merit and worth. Enterprising risk-prone and profit-goaded behaviour of optimal performance and maximal gain is an anathema to the avowedly gregarian instincts of this very peculiar elite of noneminence.

Two principal tools are of overwhelming, indeed determinative, significance in the subjugation of any independent entrepreneurial spirit: an arbitrarily twistable, secretive decision-making process and brokerage of EU subsidies and inflows. As a result of this climate, creative investment is uninterested and growth unstable. In fact, and here is a point worthy of more general analysis, Greece proves to be a veritable paradigm case where to study the intimate interrelationship and interaction between Economic Culture, Political Structure and Foreign Policy Orientation.

The Political System answering to the above valuations exhibits the fundamentals of a non-libertarian Democracy, or rather in effect (and definitively eschewing the illegitimate notion that Democracy is defined by the occurrence of regular and regularly held elections alone) a thinly disguised Parliamentary (worse, *Partarian*) Dictatorship without any real, operative, in-built corpus of checks and balances. In particular, perpetual, effective, public accountability, of the essence of genuine democratic rule, is next to non-existent. The group that controls the Majority Party wields practically unlimited power (bounded only by popular resistance which is, by reason of the assiduously cultivated network of dependencies, very atrophic in Greece, and, when it makes its presence felt, is disregarded on purpose), as there does not even obtain a working division between the Law-making and the Decision-making State-faculties, between Parliament and Government, while the Judiciary, when not acting on direct political suggestion and with political in any case motivation, keeps standardly in abeyance its crucial constitutive jurisdiction to examine, judge and correct the Administration's conduct and practice - and if occasionally the activation of that jurisdiction is not avoided, its outcome is simply disregarded or circumvented. Journalism, on the other hand, is both incapable and essentially compromised to

deliver creditable and sustained scathing criticism on governmental monolithicity and imperviousness, being further conditioned by the prevailing false norm of national unity not to question accepted dogmas of national obfuscation.

Such economic and political landscape correlates also significantly to the constants of Greek Foreign Policy, and its habitual failure to meet especially the regional challenges of the new Order of Global *Unipolarism* in World affairs. It is the "elite" here that is at bottom strongly anti-American, not effectively the people; on a regular basis the former had exploited a supposedly popular anti-Americanism which it itself had really instigated and nurtured. One main reason for such attitude (apparently paradoxical in the extreme given, if nothing else, the security dependence of Greece on the U.S.A.) is that the establishment (naturally decrepit) can only be maintained by a European "vision" and, more to the point, a European bureaucracy - that is by a pervasive incorporation of the local heavily regulatory and protectionist structures into the Brussellian dirigisme. The same underlying causes explain why high tension is artificially kept on a permanent basis with Turkey, as well as the fact that Greece belatedly, and at a forced, unequal, insufficient and faltering pace, has entered the Balkan arena, and even this as an EU functionary only, and not, despite superficial appearances (basically promissory) to the contrary, in the required deep resonance with US strategies. One further notices silly conceits like the one that would implicate EU and WEU by the side of USA and NATO in a six partite framework of talks between Greece and Turkey for the resolution of their complex disputes including the Cyprus problem. (A problem at whose serious tackling all realistic American endeavours, starting with the Acheson Plan onwards, have been rocked or thwarted by the local establishment here). Not to mention the amateurish attempt (pregnant with consequences) to invite Russian participation in the delineation of the regional power-architecture. The S-300 affair is suspect. Rescinding on a self-proposed matter of much trumpeted principle and strategic doctrine was a calculated and predetermined intention; it was meant to cause disaffection in the people and to appear as yielding under intense American pressure.

As a result of such unnerving policies, the geopolitical field comprising the Balkans and Asia Minor (with its potential radiating projections *both* to Eastern Europe *and* to the Caucasus area, Middle East and Central Asia) remains in an unnaturally (for the new Order in formation) low state of strategic integration, security stabilization and dynamic economic cooperation, to the detriment of all regional States, Greece included. This coupled to the unreserved and uncritical forwardness of Greece, as a *first* priority, towards full political, strategic and security European unification (and a smaller rather than larger European union at that), gives to the ad hoc improvised in every juncture Foreign Policy of the country a pathetic hue of desperate cynicism.

24/11/1997

- II -

In a country like Greece things become clearer being extremer. Not only you notice magnified the ugly signs from the galloping of the four apocalyptic horsemen, but, further, one can observe the close working correlation between economic culture, political structure and foreign policy orientation. Statism is dominant: systematically, individual excellence and responsibility are

marginalised, failure is protected and success impeded. This establishes a close circuit of interdependencies, in the manner of a conspiratorial pact: the political establishment exercises patronage over the economic activity and the media industry by means mainly, firstly of an untransparent, twistable decision-making and, secondly, brokerage of E.U. subsidies and "packages". Partial privatizations and superficial restructurings cannot even begin to address the real problem. Just as regular elections under a multiparty system are no proof of an active, functioning democracy: nonexistence of effective checks and balances, absence of the spirit of continuous accountability, and the abrogation, in all but formality, of the principle of the division of constitutional authority in the state, transmute the republic politically into a parliamentarian (indeed partarian) dictatorship. Such a protectionist regime, when it cannot be sustained by itself nationally under a nationalist ideology, turns to the Brusselian dirigisme of the "New Europe" as to its rescuer from the otherwise inescapable healthy exposure to globalization. Hence one can understand the inimitable and contradictory combination in Greece's foreign policy of an uncritical strategic Europeanism on the one hand, with a stubborn and equally uncritical nationalism towards her regional neighbours (esp. Turkey), and this in a geopolitical field of exemplarily high historical integration, on the other.

The uncompetitive elites of nonexcellence in Greece (and, *mutatis mutandis*, in Europe generally) are, therefore, inherently anti-American; they cultivate, in order to exploit it, an alien antiamericanism among the people, based on the sheer perception of American power. Their economic, social and political "ethics" differ fundamentally from the American system of values and their cultural artificiality (now decrepit and destructured) contravenes the American youthful instinct for naturalness that pushes (albeit hesitantly) towards a really new order. Above all, they are, in the present condition of the World, against the evolving constitution of a universal terrain with no barriers, but with full and free interaction between the historical players: they are, that is, against unipolarity and, in practical terms, against the American Imperium. Whatever accommodation they may show or profess to the American power or model, is spurious, a work of necessity cancelled, besides, by other corrective moves elsewhere in the nexus of their internal structures.

It is therefore crucial to analyse the basic strategic options facing the U.S. in the post cold war era (on the global arena and not merely in relation to European developments), if things are seen in a macrohistorical perspective and in their interfield correlation.

4/5/1998