



Apostolos L. Pierris

The Editor  
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Dear Sir,

That "a few millenia after Pericles, Greece soon will again be at the center of Europe" (your editorial, December 27-29, 2002) must be declared easily the joke of the year. It is also an insult at the face of any Greek with a surviving modicum of self-respect.

What occasioned your inimitable hyperbole is that Athens takes its turn at the chair of the rotating, six-month presidency of the European Union. This is, of course, a mostly ornamental position, with responsibilities chiefly of a procedural and organizational nature; otherwise it represents the figure-head of a conglomerate of states with differing vital interests. Some measure of convergence is achieved on two levels: first, on a laborious mutual balancing of economic advantages; and, secondly, in important matters, on the strength (such as it is) of the *Frankish Axis*. Before the recent Copenhagen summit, Schröder and Chirak met and decided on the new version of the *Eastern Question*. Their will was done. Dutifully, the European Union Council rubber-stamped their decrees. Turkey was once more denied a definite date for the start of accession talks. Germany and France pontificated that the country must undergo a thorough mutation before it can be eligible for club-membership. *Conformity to the common "European values" is a euphemism for the destabilization of Turkey*. On the contrary, the security and advancement of this historically multi-dynamic Balkan-Asia Minor geopolitical field require a strong Turkey in the EU, to counterbalance the Axis directorate. Sincere support for Turkey's entrance into the EU must mean support for Turkish Turkey's entrance. Otherwise we have another example of (super) European Nationalism or double dealing. Between a debilitated Turkey within, and a powerful Turkey at the borders of, EU, the choice (at this and at your end of the arc), should fall on the latter option.

As to Greece in herself, the country has passed into the comatose phase of its terminal protracted crisis. The economy is in shambles: it lives in effect *parasitically* on the inflow of EU funds and the vast amount of private and public money spent for the Olympics 2004. This largess has not been, and is not being, used to stimulate the self-sustaining dynamics of progress. The systems of human activity remain closed, opaque, hyperregulated, chronically suffering from an adverse distribution of roles; they stay, as a result, inefficient and corrupt. A faulty beginning in the construction of the modern Greek State and long periods of nationalistic, ideological or socialistic control exercised on society's workings (and in an arbitrary and ad hoc way at that), have established a suffocating network of dependencies, within which the human potential (and its most capable part in particular) underperforms or misfires. What is urgently needed is thorough, universal, radical liberalization that can free the imprisoned creative potential. Instead, effective, painful structural reforms remain an elusive dream.

The economic disarray is an exact homologue of corresponding failures in culture, education, athletics, justice, you name it. *All systems malfunction systematically*.



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More than this. A wedge has been inserted between society and its institutional power-structures. The establishment is in dangerous maladjustment to societal reality. One is reminded in this respect of conditions prevailing during the last days of the Byzantine Empire: the resemblance is uncanny in other connections as well. The people are often here far in advance of their élites of nonexcellence. And they thoroughly mistrust them. Opinion polls present an alarming picture of dissolution. The political system and the MM are at the bottom of the public trust (less than 30%). Army and Church top the line, with rates of about 70% each. There is a warning signal here, to be ignored at one's own risk.

Which all suggests that the significant question is not whether one supports or opposes Greece's apparent "*new outlook*" in both foreign policy and the economy. But whether this new outlook is *serious and sincere*. Which in order to be, it will have to be more than a *new look*. Alas, solid facts indicate that it is just that. Judging by the economic situation, one will have to be pessimistic: there is some show of reformed attitudes with no real substance behind it. Neofeudalism persists rampant.

But then there is a vastly more important question of sincerity, this one of global concern. The dominant establishments in the EU avow to be working for the Union with an economic rationale; and that they are the friends and the allies of the US as the hegemonic world power. How is it then that the dominant European model of the state endures unstructured? And that there is no major issue in which these very establishments do not behave in effect antagonistically to the leader of the alliance? However justifiably a realist may impatiently denigrate issues of authenticity, sincerity of will is directly connected with clarity of understanding and effective action. /7

After all you may have hit the nail with your editorial. In the present critical circumstances, and with a weighty subject such as the Eastern Question on the table once more, let us gauge the genuineness of intentions both in Greece and in the EU on the opportune occasion of such a flimsy affair as the presidency of the EU. It would be nice to give more say, for a change, to factors in Europe that would push for a loose EU, for, in effect, a cooperation of states in economic matters, ideally for little more than a *true common market*. But this is rather too big for European establishments that all along history have substituted ideologies of utopia for hard realities in their policies. Which is, by the way, a main reason why their grandest endeavours have always quickly collapsed, unfortunately amidst torrents of human misery.

Yours sincerely