

Cold War Dilemmas, Superpower Influence, and Regional Interests:

Greece and the Palestinian Question, 1947-49

At the beginning of the Cold War, two regional crises broke out almost at the same time in the Eastern Mediterranean. The outbreak of the Greek civil war in 1946 made Greece the first battlefield of the Cold War, and its outcome put the country firmly in the western camp. Another regional crisis was caused by Resolution 181 adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in November 1947, which recommended the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state leading to the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49. The outcome was the beginning of the Middle Eastern question in a form which exists until today.

Not surprisingly, there is a significant literature concerning great-power policy towards the Palestinian question, as well as the emergence of the state of Israel and the first Arab-Israeli war.¹ However, the attitude of smaller states, especially of the

¹ See, for example, Nicholas Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle between the British, the Jews and the Arabs, 1935-48* (London: Deutsch, 1979); Michael Joseph Cohen, *Truman and Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987); Zvi Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979); Joseph Heller, *The Birth of Israel, 1945-1949: Ben-Gurion and his Critics* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000); William Roger Louis, *The British Empire and the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Postwar Imperialism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984); Arnold Krammer, *The Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc, 1947-53* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974); Ritchie Owendale, *Britain, the United States, and the Transfer of Power in the Middle East, 1945-1962* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996); Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, eds., *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*

Eastern Mediterranean, towards the Middle Eastern crisis of 1947-49 has been neglected. Indeed, research on major international issues has hitherto focused on the role of the great powers/superpowers, as major international actors and initiators of policy. The general perception is that small states, unless they are directly involved in an international problem, usually display limited interest. During the Cold War, international issues, at least in the First and the Second Worlds, assumed a character where “toeing the party line” (i.e. supporting the stance of one or the other superpower, according to the camp a country belonged to) was the accepted norm: while countries like Britain or France had some leeway, smaller states were expected to conform with the great powers.

This article will attempt to analyze Greek policy on the Palestinian question between the U.N. decision to divide Palestine into two states and the end of the first Arab-Israeli war. In 1947-49 Greek governments adopted a pro-Arab stance on the issue. Greece was the only European country which voted against partition; during the Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49, although officially maintaining a position of strict neutrality, Athens repeatedly expressed its solidarity with the Arab states. As Greek officials had put it, neutrality facilitated the Arab interests, as the new Israeli state was much more dependent on foreign military aid than the Arab states.² For example,

(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Frédérique Schillo, *La France et la Creation d' État d' Israël, 18 Février 1947-11 Mai 1949* (Paris: Artcom, 1997); Evan M. Wilson, *Decision on Palestine: How the U.S. Came to Recognize Israel* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1979); and Yaacov Ro'i, *Soviet Decision-Making in Practice: The USSR and Israel, 1947-1954* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1980).

² Pipinelis to Cairo Embassy, No. 36647, 3 April 1948, in Archive of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereafter AGMFA) 100/1/1948; and Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 10 September 1948, AGMFA 101/1/1949.

Greece banned all transit across its territory to Israel and impounded arms shipments for Israel while in transit through Greek ports.³ Furthermore, in September 1948 two spitfires, which Tel Aviv purchased in Czechoslovakia, had been confiscated by Themistocles Sophoulis' government on landing in Rhodes for refueling.⁴ After the war Greece consistently adopted pro-Arab positions at the international organizations.⁵ On 11 May 1949 Greece abstained in the vote on Israel's admission to the United Nations despite the fact that Alexis Kyrou, Greece's representative at the United Nations, considered that nothing could come out of it.⁶ Finally, on 15 March 1949 Greece gave Israel *de facto* recognition only.⁷

In 1947-49 Greece was faced with a choice in the Middle East between the Arab option and the Israeli option. The fact that a small Mediterranean state adopted an anti-Israeli policy at a time of ongoing civil war, despite extensive dependence on

³ Amikam Nachmani, "So Near and yet so Far: Graeco-Israeli Relations," *Mediterranean Historical Review*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (December 1987), p. 224.

⁴ Tsaldaris to Air Ministry, No. 61170, 17 December 1948, AGMFA 89/10/1950; and Pipinelis to Air Ministry, No. 17150, 21 January 1949, AGMFA 89/10/1950. Greek government denied allegations that Prodromos Bodosakis-Athanasiadis, a prominent businessman and industrialist, was delivering arms to the Israelis. See, Kyrou to Foreign Ministry, No. 3465, 5 May 1948, AGMFA 107/5/1948; and Pipinelis to Kyrou, No. 32488, 9 May 1948, AGMFA 107/5/1948. According to the British, Bodosakis was selling arms to the Arabs. See, Mogens Pelt, *Tying Greece to the West: US-West German-Greek Relations, 1949-74* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), p. 399.

⁵ Pipinelis to Foreign Ministry, No. 1875, 6 December 1948, AGMFA 9/3/1948; and Mallah to Foreign Ministry, No. 605/III.1, 9 December 1949, AGMFA 94/3/1949.

⁶ Kyrou to Foreign Ministry, No. 1644, 25 March 1949, AGMFA 110/4/1949; and Kyrou to Foreign Ministry, No. 2790, 12 May 1949, AGMFA 110/4/1949.

⁷ For the distinction between *de facto* and *de jure* recognition, see Amikam Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), p. 126.

the Americans who were sponsoring the state of Israel, calls for an explanation. This will involve U.S.-Greek relationship, Athens' definition of its interests in the region, the Greeks' perception of developments in the Eastern Mediterranean, but also U.S. policy, which left a wide range of options for the policy of its lesser ally.

Britain and the Palestinian question from the Balfour Declaration to the end of the British mandate

British involvement in Palestine stretched back in the First World War. Before 1918 the Arab lands eastward to Egypt were dominated by the declining Ottoman Empire. However, during the First World War, as the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers, Britain promised the Arabs independence in return for their support against the Ottomans. At the same time, however, London and Paris concluded the so-called "Sykes-Picot Agreement", which divided the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire into areas of post-war French and British influence. The situation was further complicated in November 1917 as the British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour promised the Jews support for a national homeland in Palestine.⁸

After the end of the Great War, Palestine was granted to Britain as a mandate and large numbers of Jews began to immigrate to the area. For the next two decades, dramatic and often violent demographic shifts took place between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine. After Hitler's rise to power in 1933 and as anti-Semitic regimes emerged across Europe, Jewish immigration to Palestine increased significantly. In

⁸ David Stevenson, *The First World War and International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 124-131 and 176-180. See, also, Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Random House, 2010).

the late 1930s the Arabs revolted against both the British and the Zionists in order to halt the Jewish state-building project. The Second World War and Holocaust made the situation in Palestine much worse.⁹ As a result, in 1946 the Jewish population in Palestine had increased to six hundred thousand (sixty thousand in 1917), while the Arabs numbered approximately one million, three hundred forty thousand (six hundred thousand in 1917).¹⁰

In the late 1930s the British government under Neville Chamberlain had envisaged the establishment of an independent Palestine state within ten years, while a limit of seventy-five thousand Jewish immigrants was set for the period of 1939-44. Nevertheless, after Winston Churchill's ascendancy to the premiership, Chamberlain's policy was gradually abandoned and in 1943 London started planning the partition of Palestine with the creation of an Arab and a Jewish state. In other words, during the war the British were trying to play both sides.¹¹

After the end of the war, in order to focus on domestic reconstruction and economic recovery, and unable to cope with the ongoing fighting in the area, Clement Attlee's Labor government decided to relinquish Britain's mandate in Palestine. Against this background, in April 1947 the British government brought the Palestinian

⁹ See, Neil Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 56-105; and Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000).

¹⁰ Justin McCarthy, *The Population of Palestine: Population History and Statistics of the Late Ottoman Period and the Mandate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 37; and Avi Shlaim, *Israel and Palestine: Reappraisals, Revisions, Refutations* (London and New York: Verso, 2009), p. 11.

¹¹ Amikam Nachmani, *Great Power Discord in Palestine: The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry into the Problems of European Jewry and Palestine, 1945-1946* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), pp. 4-5.

question before the United Nations asking that the General Assembly make recommendations concerning the future status of the region. A special General Assembly met from 28 April to 15 May and set up a committee to make a preliminary study and submit a report. In mid-June the eleven-member U.N. Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) arrived in Jerusalem for an on-the-spot investigation of the problem. For a five-week period UNSCOP toured Palestine and visited Lebanon, investigating conditions and hearing witnesses.¹²

On 31 August UNSCOP submitted its report to the U.N. Secretary-General Trygve Lie. The committee recommended that the British mandate be terminated and Palestine be granted its independence at the earliest practicable date. Eight members of UNSCOP (Australia, Canada, Guatemala, Czechoslovakia, Netherlands, Uruguay, Sweden and Peru) prepared the so-called “majority plan,” suggesting the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. These two states were to become independent after two years. During the transition period, the British would continue to administer Palestine under the auspices of the United Nations. The “majority plan” also recommended the creation of a special international regime in the City of Jerusalem, constituting it as a *corpus separatum* under the administration of the United Nations. A “minority plan,” signed by three members of the committee (Yugoslavia, India and Iran), preferred an independent federal state of Palestine, following a transitional period not exceeding three years. Jerusalem would become the capital of the federal state.¹³

¹² See, Michael Joseph Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945-1948* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 260-267.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 267; and Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 46-48.

On 23 September the General Assembly established an Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian question. The committee invited the representatives of the Arab High Commission and the Jewish Agency for Palestine to explain their views on the future of Palestine. The Arabs rejected both plans, insisting on the establishment of an Arab state in the whole of Palestine. On the contrary, the Jewish Agency, though criticized “the majority proposal concerning Jerusalem,” accepted the partition solution on the condition of the “immediate re-establishment of the Jewish State with sovereign control of its own immigration.” The Ad Hoc Committee, after making a number of changes, adopted the UNSCOP majority recommendations and on 25 November submitted its final report to the Assembly for consideration.¹⁴

On 29 November the General Assembly adopted the U.N. partition plan by a vote of 33 to 13 and ten abstentions. However, the Arabs declared their determination to block the implementation of partition by all means at their disposal, and a new round of hostilities broke out in the Middle East. On 14 May 1948 the British civil administration in Palestine was terminated and a provisional government of Israel was established. Following Israel’s proclamation of independence, Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq and Syria attacked the new state. The Arab-Israeli war ended a few months later with the conclusion of armistice agreements between Israel and Egypt (24 February), the Lebanon (23 March), Jordan (3 April) and Syria (20 July). Israel increased its territory by 21 percent, Transjordan gained the West Bank and Egypt the Gaza Strip. In contrast, the Palestinians lost all the territory they had been granted by Resolution 181. By the end of 1948 more than seven hundred fifty thousand Palestinians had

¹⁴ See, *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1947-1948* (New York: United Nations, 1948), pp. 227-245.

become refugees, while almost one hundred fifty thousand Palestinians came under Israeli rule.¹⁵

Decision-making in Athens and the great powers, 1944-49

In the aftermath of Greece's liberation from the Axis occupation, London struggled to retain its pre-war influence in the country. Since 1941/42 the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had constantly advocated the restoration of the pro-British King George II. However, in the summer of 1944, when the withdrawal of German forces from Greece was imminent, Britain became alarmed by the perceived capabilities of the Communist-controlled resistance organization EAM (National Liberation Front) to fill the power vacuum and seize control of the country. Although the British had worked concertedly to undermine this organization at least since the spring of 1943, EAM managed to expand its control to large areas of Greece. At the same time, the remnants of the traditional political parties had long lost their influence in Greek politics, while the pro-British government-in-exile was not in a position to control developments in occupied Greece. Although in October 1944 Joseph Stalin had agreed that Greece would lie within the British sphere of influence, the prospect of a Communist takeover could not be ruled out.¹⁶

¹⁵ Morris, 1948, p. 375; and Antony Best et al., *International History of the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 119-126.

¹⁶ See, Thanasis D. Sfikas, "'The People at the Top Can Do These Things, which Others Can't Do': Winston Churchill and the Greeks, 1940-45," *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (April 1991), pp. 307-332; and John O. Iatrides, "Greece at the Crossroads, 1944-1950," in John O. Iatrides

Against this background, the first post-war Greek governments were unable to impose full control on the country without substantial British economic and military assistance. This became obvious in December 1944, when the Communist-led forces of EAM were defeated in the Battle of Athens only after the decisive intervention of the British forces.¹⁷ For the next two years, dependence on Britain largely determined Greece's foreign and domestic policy. The rise of the Labor Party to power in July 1945 did not change significantly British policy towards Greece. In September 1946, following a plebiscite which led to the restoration of monarchy in Greece, a full-scale civil war broke out. Once again, the British backed the Greek coalition government against the communist forces.¹⁸

In early 1947 the British government informed Washington of its inability to continue aiding Greece. The U.S. President Harry Truman was determined to contain communism in Greece (as well as in Turkey) and responded with what became known as the Truman Doctrine.¹⁹ The announcement of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, in March and June 1947 respectively, raised the immediate prospect of U.S. military and economic aid to Greece but also marked the beginning of a new era

and Linda Wrigley, eds., *Greece at the Crossroads: The Civil War and its Legacy* (University Park, Pa: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp. 1-30.

¹⁷ See, John O. Iatrides, *Revolt in Athens: The Greek Communist 'Second Round', 1944-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

¹⁸ See, Thanasis D. Sfikas, *The British Labour Government and the Greek Civil War, 1945-1949: The Imperialism of "Non-Intervention"* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1994).

¹⁹ See, John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), pp. 316-351; and John O. Iatrides, "George F. Kennan and the Birth of Containment: The Greek Test Case," *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Fall 2005), pp. 126-145.

of Greek dependence on the United States. Thus, after March 1947 the United States gradually took over Britain's role as the primary foreign influence in Greece.²⁰

However, even this new dependence in the painful conditions of a civil war did not prevent the decision-makers in Athens from trying to form a long-term strategy in the context of Greece's relations with its western allies. During the late 1940s, traditional Greek foreign policy-making had undergone serious transformations. The Greek Prime Minister Themistocles Sophoulis (born in 1860) was too old to affect Greek policy-making,²¹ while Constantinos Tsaldaris, the Foreign Minister and the leader of the largest government party, had no experience on foreign issues. As a result, it was the experienced diplomat Panayiotis Pipinelis rather than the political leaders, who played a prominent role in Greek foreign policy-making.

Pipinelis was probably Greece's most famous *Realpolitiker*.²² He entered the diplomatic service in 1922 and he first came in contact with politics a decade later, when he became diplomatic advisor of Panayis Tsaldaris' government. During the Second World War he followed the Greek government in exile and after the restoration of monarchy in September 1946 became head of the Political Office of

²⁰ See, A. A. Fatouros, "Building Formal Structures of Penetration: The United States in Greece, 1947-1948," in John O. Iatrides, ed., *Greece in the 1940s: A Nation in Crisis* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1981), pp. 239-258; and John O. Iatrides, "Britain, the United States and Greece, 1945-9," in David H. Close, ed., *The Greek Civil War, 1943-1950: Studies of Polarization* (London: Routledge, 1993).

²¹ Dionysis Chourchoulis, *Θεμιστοκλής Σοφούλης: πολιτική βιογραφία* [Themistocles Sophoulis: Political Biography] (Athens: Hellenic Parliament Foundation, 2014), pp. 309-338.

²² Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, *Greece and the Cold War: Frontline State, 1952-1967* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 136.

King George II.²³ On 7 June 1947 Pipinelis was appointed Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry. A few days later, he established the Council of Political Affairs.²⁴ This council, consisting of the directors of all departments of the Foreign Ministry and a representative of the Greek Army, held more than one hundred meetings under Pipinelis' presidency until mid-1950. The Council of Political Affairs was to become the main foreign policy-making centre, as its recommendations were usually adopted by the Greek governments.

Greece's Cold War priorities and the Arab world

A pro-Arab attitude was strictly connected with Greece's post-war geopolitical position and security problem. According to Pipinelis, after the end of the Second World War and the establishment of communist regimes in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, Greece had become a front-line state. In his book on Greek foreign policy, published in 1948, Pipinelis offered a geopolitically-based analysis of the country's postwar security problem:

“The forward defensive line of the Danube and the Balkan hinterland has disappeared. The enormous geopolitical pressures of continental Europe, which formerly were partially being checked out on the Balkan territories of the Ottoman Empire and then on Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, now come to throw their full weight directly on our borders. ... The importance of Greece as a beach-head of the oceanic

²³ “Leading Personalities in Greece, 1947,” p. 31, Foreign Office Records, The National Archives, London (hereafter FO) 371/67128.

²⁴ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 12 June 1947, AGMFA 28/2/1947.

powers has multiplied, both for the oceanic powers and for the continental ones. The danger has become larger, the pressure on the country more tense.”²⁵

In order to compensate for the loss of strategic depth, Pipinelis insisted that Greece was obliged to broaden and deepen its ties with the other Mediterranean countries and in particular with Italy, Turkey and the Arab states.²⁶ Although he realized that it was not really possible for Greece to solve its security problem through participation in Mediterranean alliances, he admitted that the post-war situation in the Balkans did not leave many alternatives for Athens.²⁷ Pipinelis’ analysis was fully adopted by the Greek Chargé to Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan and Iraq Nikolaos Chatzivassiliou, an ardent supporter of Greek-Arab cooperation.²⁸

In the minds of Greek policy-makers, Athens’ attitude towards the Palestinian question was strictly connected with Greek Mediterranean strategy and in particular with the Greek efforts to conclude the so-called Mediterranean Pact. The first country which aired the idea of a pact between the Mediterranean states was Turkey. In March 1947 the Turkish Ambassador in Paris Numan Menemencioğlu suggested to the British the conclusion of a regional pact which would include Turkey, Greece and Egypt. A few months later, Ankara came back with a new proposal according to which the pact should include not only the Mediterranean countries but also Britain

²⁵ Panayiotis Pipinelis, *Ιστορία της εξωτερικής πολιτικής της Ελλάδος, 1923-1941* [A History of Greek Foreign Policy, 1923-1941] (Athens: Saliveros, 1948), p. 372.

²⁶ Pipinelis, “The diplomatic dimension of the Greek security problem,” 7 August 1947, AGMFA 134/4/1947.

²⁷ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 28 July 1947, AGMFA 28/2/1947; and Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 6 April 1948, AGMFA 101/1/1949.

²⁸ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 6 April 1948, AGMFA 101/1/1949.

and the United States. Turkey hoped that such a pact would enhance its external security against the Soviet threat.²⁹

Greece endorsed the Turkish proposal for formal co-operation between the Mediterranean states. However, Athens insisted that the Mediterranean Pact should also include the Arab states.³⁰ According to Pipinelis, after the establishment of communist regimes in the Balkans, Greece was important for the United States as a bridge to the Arab world and Turkey.³¹ Although he was against the conclusion of a military alliance with the Arabs,³² he was convinced that Greece should demonstrate its ties with the Arab states and play a leading role in linking the Middle Eastern states with the Western world. In other words, enhancing Greek-Arab relations was part of a deliberate policy to involve the United States even closer in the defense problems of Greece through the back door. As Pipinelis explained to the U.S. Chargé d' Affaires in Athens, James Keeley, "Greece had to consider her relations with Moslems" in order to promote "Greek inspired project for Pan Mediterranean pact as bulwark against Communist pressure from north."³³

In this context, on 9 August 1947 Pipinelis asked Chatzivassiliou to enquire whether the Arab states were willing to consider a co-operation with Greece, on the

²⁹ Ekavi Athanassopoulou, *Turkey: Anglo-American Security Interests, 1945-1952. The First Enlargement of NATO* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), pp. 67-69.

³⁰ Pipinelis to Ankara Embassy, No. 20301, 5 February 1948, AGMFA 137/1/1947.

³¹ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 27 July, 30 July and 3 August, AGMFA 101/1/1949.

³² Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 6 April 1948, AGMFA 101/1/1949.

³³ Keeley to Marshall, No. 2088, 3 December 1947, 867N.01/12-347, in College Park, MD, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NARA), Record Group (hereafter RG) 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs 1945-1949, microfilm reel 13.

condition that Britain and the United States would raise no objections.³⁴ In early February 1948 the Greek Ambassador at Washington Vassilios Dendramis informed John Jernegan, head of the Division of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs of the State Department that his government “had been thinking of the possibility of forming an entente among Greece, Italy, Turkey, and the Arab states.” Dendramis added that “some form of leadership from the great powers would be necessary” and that the United States and Britain “might give the necessary support and encouragement.”³⁵ However, neither the Arabs nor the Turks showed enthusiasm for such a pact. Furthermore, after U.S. *de facto* recognition of Israel on 14 May 1948, it was not possible for the Arabs to participate in the Mediterranean Pact. Thus, Athens abandoned the idea.³⁶

Greek pro-Arab attitude towards the Palestinian question derived also from the fear that Britain’s loss of Palestine could shift the balance of power in the Middle East and open the door to Soviet penetration in the region. The feeling that British influence in the Middle East was collapsing created strong fears in Athens. As early as in April 1947, Leon Melas, the Director General of the Greek Foreign Ministry, had stressed that Greece was against the Egyptian proposal for immediate termination

³⁴ Pipinelis to Chatzivassiliou, No. 35775, 8 August 1947, AGMFA 19/1/1947.

³⁵ “Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs,” 4 February 1948, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1948, Vol. IV, p. 41.

³⁶ Ekavi Athanassopoulou, “Western Defence Developments and Turkey’s Search for Security in 1948,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (April 1996), pp. 88-89.

of the British mandate in Palestine as such an evolution would facilitate “Soviet penetration of Middle East.”³⁷

Furthermore, some Greek officials went as far as to argue that the new state of Israel would incline towards the Soviet Union. In September 1947, during a meeting of the Council of Political Affairs, the representative of the General Staff Colonel Karatzenis warned that the USSR aimed at extending its influence in the Middle East through Israel and added that the new state would become a “Slav outpost” in the area. Karatzenis claimed that “Jewish terrorists were trained in Moscow.”³⁸ In December 1947 Chatzivassiliou commented that communist penetration in Syria and Lebanon was growing and that the partition scheme gave to the “Soviets opportunity of entering Middle East and thus further endangers Greece’s security.”³⁹ The Greek Chargé called Israel a “willing instrument of Soviet intrigue”, a “pro-Soviet Zionist state” and a “hot spot in the Middle East.”⁴⁰ Pipinelis adopted these arguments, especially the one regarding the Soviet support for Israel.⁴¹ In late 1947 he told Keeley that “just as Arabs fear that Zionists want Palestine as spearhead for political expansion in Middle East, so it is feared Soviet Russia will utilize her backing of

³⁷ Keeley to Marshall, No. 586, 26 April 1947, 867N.01/4-2647, NARA, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs 1945-1949, microfilm reel 11; and Reilly to Lascelles, 1 May 1947, FO 371/61875.

³⁸ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 21 September 1947, AGMFA 28/2/1947.

³⁹ Dorsz to Marshall, No. 638, 2 December 1947, 867N.01/12-247, NARA, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs 1945-1949, microfilm reel 13.

⁴⁰ Chatzivassiliou to Foreign Ministry, No. 2060, 31 December 1947, AGMFA 107/5/1948; and Chatzivassiliou to Foreign Ministry, No. 2046, 1 January 1948, AGMFA 107/5/1948.

⁴¹ Nachmani, *Israel*, p. 104.

partition to get her head within the Arab tent.”⁴² In September 1948, four months after the United States had recognized Israel, Pipinelis still expressed worries about information concerning the rise of communist influence in Israel and the Soviet penetration in the Middle East.⁴³

Greek fears were not completely unjustified. The danger of Soviet penetration in the Middle East was also mentioned by U.S. high-ranking officials who were against the partition of Palestine for exactly the same reasons. For example, in January 1948 George Kennan, head of the Policy Planning Staff, argued that Resolution 181 was “favorable to Soviet objectives of sowing dissention and discord in non-communist countries.”⁴⁴ Samuel Kopper of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs of the State Department mentioned as one of the reasons that led Stalin to back partition “the possibility of the establishment of a Jewish state which might subsequently come within the USSR orbit.” According to Kopper, such an evolution “would place the USSR in a highly strategic position at the eastern end of the Mediterranean and further its encirclement plans against Greece and Turkey.”⁴⁵

Stalin’s policy towards Palestine puzzled officials in the Western world. Until 1947 the USSR had favored a “single independent democratic Palestine” and rejected

⁴² Keeley to Marshall, No. 2088, 3 December 1947, 867N.01/12-347, NARA, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs 1945-1949, microfilm reel 13.

⁴³ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 10 September 1948, AGMFA 101/1/1949.

⁴⁴ “Report by the Policy Planning Staff on Position of the United States With Respect to Palestine,” 19 January 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. V, Part II, p. 551.

⁴⁵ Kopper, “The Partition of Palestine and United States Security,” 27 January 1948, 501.BB Palestine/1-2748, NARA, RG 59, Decimal File 1945-1949, Box 2115.

mass Jewish emigration to the Middle East. Thus, Soviet support for an independent Jewish state was considered to be a remote possibility.⁴⁶ However, in April 1947 Stalin completely changed his attitude towards the future status of Palestine. In his speech of 14 May 1947 before the General Assembly, the Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Gromyko, stated that if the establishment of a single Arab-Jewish state proved impossible “then it would be necessary to consider the second plan which provides for the partition of Palestine into two independent single states.”⁴⁷ On 13 October the Soviet representative at the Ad Hoc Committee, Semen Tsarapkin, argued that Moscow favored the second of the two alternatives, namely the partition plan.⁴⁸ Finally, on 29 November the USSR voted in favor of partition, with the other members of the Eastern bloc following her lead.⁴⁹

Stalin provided full support to the Zionist movement even after the adoption of partition by the United Nations. In late 1947, as the United States had imposed an arms embargo on Palestine and its neighboring states, Zionist representatives reached an agreement with Moscow according to which Czechoslovakia stopped the delivery of arms to the Arabs and started supplying the Israelis. Although Moscow rejected the

⁴⁶ Laurent Rucker, “Moscow’s Surprise: The Soviet-Israeli Alliance of 1947-1949,” CWIHP Working Paper No. 46, Cold War International History Project, Washington, DC, 2005, pp. 13-16.

⁴⁷ “A.A. Gromyko’s Speech at the First Special Session of the UN General Assembly,” in *Documents on Israeli-Soviet Relations, 1941-1953* (London and Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), p. 195.

⁴⁸ Yaacov Ro’i, *From Encroachment to Involvement: A Documentary Study of Soviet Policy in the Middle East, 1945-1973* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1974), pp. 49-50.

⁴⁹ Rucker, “Moscow’s Surprise,” p. 20.

Jewish request for Soviet military aid, cooperation between Prague and Tel Aviv continued until 1951.⁵⁰

Soviet policy on Palestine emerged from both ideological and geopolitical considerations. In the early Cold War period, Stalin and Molotov shared the view that the Middle East was an area of likely confrontation between Britain and the United States. The Soviet leader was also convinced that Zionism was nothing more than another national liberation movement that Moscow had to support in order to undermine the British dominant position in the region. Therefore, although the Soviets were afraid of a possible strengthening of U.S. position in the region, they supported the partition scheme. To put it simply, Stalin believed that the establishment of Israel and British-American rivalry on Palestine could open the gates for Soviet penetration in the Middle East. At the same time, by advocating the establishment of an Israeli state in Palestine, he aimed at increasing the Soviet popularity among the Jews all over the world.⁵¹

Thus, it was not a paradox that Greek policy-makers were concerned about a possible Soviet interference in the Eastern Mediterranean. Memories of earlier attempts of the USSR to extend its influence in Turkey and Iran also played a role to these Greek fears. The fact that during the Greek civil war the states of the Eastern

⁵⁰ Ibid, pp. 26-27; and Vladislav Zubok, "The Soviet Union and the Establishment of Israel," in Michael J. Devine, ed., *Harry S. Truman, the State of Israel, and the Quest for Peace in the Middle East: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 29 May 2008* (Kirkville, MS: Truman State University Press, 2009), pp. 77-78.

⁵¹ Zubok, "The Soviet Union," pp. 74-75; and Rucker, "Moscow's Surprise," pp. 7-10.

bloc were supplying weapons to the Greek Communist Democratic Army intensified Athens' fears of Soviet policy in the wider region.⁵²

Greek regional interests and the Palestinian question

Geopolitical pressures and security priorities were not the only reasons for which the Council of Political Affairs finally recommended that Athens should vote against partition. Greek pro-Arab policy was also determined by the need to protect Greek regional interests in the Middle East. In particular, the Greek government had to take into account the position of the large Greek community in Egypt, the existence of the Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem with its mainly Arab-Orthodox flock and Greek commercial interests in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In the mid-19th century the Greeks of Egypt were numbered approximately three thousand “heads of families.” After the “cotton boom” of the 1860s, the number of Greeks increased significantly as they benefited from the privileges Egypt (formally a province of the Ottoman Empire) provided to the citizens of capitulatory powers. In 1922 Egypt emerged as an independent state but the capitulations system remained. As a result, in the 1920s the number of Greeks reached its peak as almost one hundred thousand “persons of Greek race” living in Egypt.⁵³ However, the

⁵² See, for example, John O. Iatrides, “Revolution or Self-Defense? Communist Goals, Strategy, and Tactics in the Greek Civil War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer 2005), pp. 3-33; and Nikos Marantzidis, *Δημοκρατικός Στρατός Ελλάδας, 1946-1949* [Democratic Army of Greece, 1946-1949] (Athens: Alexandraia, 2010).

⁵³ Alexander Kitroeff, *The Greeks in Egypt, 1919-1937: Ethnicity and Class* (London: Ithaca Press, 1989), pp. 11-13.

Montreux Convention of 1937 led to the abolition of capitulations. According to the convention, the future status of foreigners would be arranged through the conclusion of bilateral treaties between Egypt and the ex-capitulatory powers. After the Second World War, the situation of Greeks further deteriorated, as the Egyptian government introduced laws which aimed at reinforcing the position of Egyptian citizens in the labor market. For instance, in 1947 Cairo passed the so-called Company Law, which stipulated that all private companies should employ a minimum of 75 percent of Egyptian nationals within a period of three years (for workers the percentage should reach 90 percent). Naturally, the process of Egyptianization of employment largely affected the working population of Greek community.⁵⁴

In mid-1947 Athens approached Cairo with a view to starting negotiations for the conclusion of a Consular Convention and a Treaty of Establishment according to the provisions of the Montreux Convention.⁵⁵ Not surprisingly, in September 1947 the Council of Political Affairs claimed that voting in favor of the creation of an Israeli state would cause a serious crisis in Greek-Egyptian relations, with catastrophic consequences for the large Greek community in Egypt.⁵⁶ In February 1948 Pipinelis argued that the conclusion of an agreement with Cairo would have been impossible if Greece voted in favor of the partition plan. For this reason, he added, Athens should insist on its pro-Arab orientation.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Angelos Ntalachanis, "The Emigration of Greeks from Egypt during the Early Post-War Years," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2009), pp. 36 and 43.

⁵⁵ Campbell to Bevin, No. 632, 21 July 1947, FO 141/1224; and Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 26 August 1947, AGMFA 28/2/1947.

⁵⁶ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 21 September 1947, AGMFA 28/2/1947.

⁵⁷ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 27 February 1948, AGMFA 103/1/1948.

In other words, the fact that in 1947-48 the Greek government was negotiating the conclusion of a Consular Convention and a Treaty of Establishment with Egypt made Athens vulnerable to pressures not only from the Egyptian government but also from the Greeks of Alexandria. In 1947 a delegation of Egyptian Greeks arrived in Athens and asked the Greek government to vote against the partition of Palestine.⁵⁸ Until the mass exodus of Egyptian Greeks which took place from 1961 to 1966,⁵⁹ the Greek communities of Egypt constituted a significant non-governmental pressure group which influenced Greek foreign policy options towards the Middle East. In contrast, during the German occupation of 1941-44, the great majority of Jews was deported from Greece and had been executed by the Nazis in extermination camps.⁶⁰ As a result, after the Second World War the local Jewish community was too weak to influence Greek governments towards the adoption of a pro-Israeli policy.

Another reason for which Athens adopted a pro-Arab stance in 1947-49 was the need to protect the interests of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem. According to the plan presented by the Ad Hoc Committee, Jerusalem would be placed under an international regime. In addition, Resolution 181 envisaged a demilitarized Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* under a special international regime. According to the resolution, the Trusteeship Council should within five months “elaborate and approve a detailed Statute of the City.” The resolution also provided

⁵⁸ Nachmani, “So Near and yet so Far,” p. 236.

⁵⁹ See, John Sakkas, “Greece and the Mass Exodus of the Egyptian Greeks,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2009), pp. 101-115.

⁶⁰ See, Hagen Fleischer, *Στέμματα και σβάστικα: η Ελλάδα της Κατοχής και της Αντίστασης* [The Crown and the Swastika: Greece of Occupation and Resistance] (Athens: Papazisis, 1995), Vol. 2, pp. 342-348.

that the Trusteeship Council should appoint the Governor of Jerusalem who in turn would be responsible for “the protection of the Holy Places, religious buildings and sites located in the city.”⁶¹

In September 1947 Pipinelis expressed some reservations concerning the prospect of internationalization of the City of Jerusalem. He argued that U.N. direct involvement in the administration of Jerusalem might facilitate Soviet penetration in the Middle East. Among others, such an evolution would be against Greek interests, as traditionally the Soviet Union –Russia’s successor– competed for the protection of Orthodox Christians in Palestine. Pipinelis was also afraid that the new Governor of Jerusalem would be a Catholic and “keep an unfriendly attitude towards us.”⁶²

After the adoption of Resolution 181 the primary aim of Greek diplomacy was to maintain the status quo in the Holy Land. In January 1948, after consulting with the Sophoulis government, the Archbishop of North and South America Athenagoras analyzed the views of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem before the Trusteeship Council. In his speech Athenagoras strongly supported “the maintenance of the existing rights in respect to the Holy Places, religious buildings and sites” and claimed that the Governor of Jerusalem should be elected “on the basis of special qualifications and without regard to nationality provided that he shall not be citizen of the City, the Arab State or the Jewish State.” He also argued that the selected Governor “should not belong to any of the denominations which have direct interests in the keeping of the Holy Places.” Finally, Athenagoras suggested that the Statute of Jerusalem should include provisions concerning “the existing character of the Cloisters belonging to

⁶¹ General Assembly, Resolution 181 (II), 29 November 1947.

⁶² Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 21 September 1947, AGMFA 28/2/1947.

any denomination”, “the maintenance of the ethnological and linguistic peculiarity of any Church”, as well as the preservation of the property and the administration of the Patriarchate.⁶³

Meanwhile, in December 1948 Israel and Transjordan came to an agreement according to which Jerusalem should be divided between the two states with the eastern sector (including the Old City) coming under Jordanian rule. However, the *de facto* division of Jerusalem did not attain U.N. recognition. On 11 December 1948 the General Assembly adopted Resolution 194 (III) which led to the establishment of the so-called Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC). The aim of PCC was to mediate in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In September 1949 PCC published a plan which established a permanent international regime for Jerusalem. At the same time, the plan provided for the division of the city into a Jewish and an Arab zone. However, neither party accepted these proposals. As a result, in December 1949 the Assembly restated its aim that the city should be placed under a permanent international regime and called upon the Trusteeship Council to prepare a plan for Jerusalem.⁶⁴

In 1948-49 Greece supported U.N. views on the internationalization of Jerusalem. Pipinelis believed that the international status would constitute a guarantee for the preservation of status quo in the Holy Land. He also argued that any change in the status quo would facilitate Soviet infiltration in the Middle East. He concluded that the best solution for the Greek interests in Jerusalem was the implementation of

⁶³ “Speech delivered by Athenagoras before the UN Trusteeship Council on 22 January 1948,” AGMFA 143/5/1948.

⁶⁴ Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951* (London and New York: IB Tauris, 1992), pp. 183, 196-198 and 252-253.

the provisions of Resolution 181.⁶⁵ Despite their different approaches to the issue, the Arab states also favored the internationalization scheme, while Israel was against it. Once more, an essentially pro-Arab stance was evident in the Greek attitude.

However, the problem for Greek interests was that while the great majority of the Orthodox flock and Patriarch Timotheos himself lived in Jordan, almost 90 percent of the Patriarchate property was under Israeli control. Indeed, during and after the war Israel had occupied most of the “abandoned property” and refused to permit transfer of rent to the Greek Orthodox Church. On the other hand, Timotheos was strongly opposed to U.N. views on Jerusalem, as he was afraid that internationalization would enhance the Vatican’s influence in the area. Thus, despite Athens’ different stance on the issue, the Patriarch negotiated a solution directly with the Israeli government.⁶⁶

Finally, commercial interests in the Eastern Mediterranean also played a role in the formation of Greek policy towards the Palestinian question. During a period when the Greek government intensified its efforts to make a commercial opening to the Middle East, Greek policy-makers regarded the establishment of a western-type civic state like Israel in the Eastern Mediterranean as a potential competitor for trade, shipping and markets.⁶⁷ However, it seems that in the late 1940s, the economic factor

⁶⁵ Pipinelis to all Embassies, No. 32041, 11 May 1949, AGMFA 7/3/1949.

⁶⁶ Nachmani, *Israel*, pp. 110-112; and Uri Bialer, “Horse Trading: Israel and the Greek Orthodox Ecclesiastical Property, 1948-1952,” *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (September 2005), pp. 205-207.

⁶⁷ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 21 September 1947, AGMFA 28/2/1947; Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 27 July, 30 July and 3 August 1948, AGMFA 101/1/1949; and Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 10 September 1948, AGMFA 101/1/1949.

played a secondary role in the formation of Greek Middle Eastern policy. As Chatzivassiliou had put it, given the hostile relations between the Jews and the Arabs, the emergence of Israel would possibly deepen economic co-operation between Greece and the Arabs states.⁶⁸

The Greek question

In 1947-49 Greek pro-Arab stance also derived from the need to secure the votes of the Arab states on the Greek question before the United Nations. On 3 December 1946 the Greek delegation to the United Nations had called the attention of the Security Council to the situation resulting from the aid provided by Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia to communist guerillas operating in Northern Greece. On 19 December the Security Council established a commission to investigate Greek frontier incidents.⁶⁹ In May 1947, after carrying on its investigation on the spot, the commission submitted a report recommending that the Security Council should appoint a permanent body to investigate any frontier violations which might occur and to assist the governments concerned in settling controversies.⁷⁰ However, the resulting

⁶⁸ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 10 September 1948, AGMFA 101/1/1949.

⁶⁹ Amikam Nachmani, *International Intervention in the Greek Civil War: The United Nations Special Committee on the Balkans, 1947-1952* (New York: Praeger, 1990), p. 33; and Thanasis D. Sfikas, "Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union in the United Nations Commission of Investigation in Greece, January-May 1947," *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1993), p. 243.

⁷⁰ *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1946-1947* (New York: United Nations, 1947), pp. 370-371.

Security Council stalemate led the U.S. government to refer the issue to the General Assembly. The Greek question was to be discussed in mid-October 1947.⁷¹

U.N. debates on the Greek question placed Athens in urgent need of Arab votes.⁷² In these circumstances, Greek officials stepped up their efforts in order to come to an agreement with the Arab bloc. Finally, in return for Greek support on the Palestinian issue the six Arab states (Transjordan was not yet member of the United Nations) agreed to give full support to Greece at the United Nations. However, in early October 1947 the Egyptian delegate at the United Nations, Hussein Heykal Pasha, speaking before the Political Committee, called for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from all Balkan countries. Not surprisingly, Heykal's speech was interpreted as a clear indication that the Arabs would not support the Greek case. According to Pipinelis, the Arab attitude was largely affected by Egypt's priority to secure the votes of the Eastern bloc because of the British-Egyptian dispute over the Sudan. The Director General of the Foreign Ministry, Ioannis Stefanou, shared the same view, while the Permanent Representative to the U.N., Alexis Kyrou, argued that the Arab stance on the Greek question derived from "anti-American and anti-Anglo-Saxon obsessions."⁷³

On 21 October 1947 the General Assembly passed a resolution favorable to Greece but the Arab states abstained from voting.⁷⁴ Though expected, this was a great

⁷¹ Van Coufoudakis, "The United States, the United Nations, and the Greek Question, 1946-1952," in Iatrides, ed., *Greece in the 1940s*, pp. 284-285.

⁷² Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 21 September 1947, AGMFA 28/2/1947.

⁷³ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 6 October 1947, AGMFA 28/2/1947; and Kyrou to Tsaldaris, No. 6110, 2 December 1947, AGMFA 89/5/1947.

⁷⁴ Coufoudakis, "The United States," p. 285.

disappointment for Athens, and Greek officials repeatedly protested against the Arab stance on the issue.⁷⁵ However, the Foreign Ministry adopted Chatzivassiliou's proposal that, despite recent disappointments, Greece should insist on its pro-Arab orientation and vote against the establishment of an Israeli state.⁷⁶ Greece's pro-Arab policy was to bring immediate results: in November 1948 the Arab states supported Athens in the discussion of the Greek question in the General Assembly, while Pipinelis delivered a speech in favor of the Arab interests.⁷⁷

Anti-Semitism

In March 1949 the Greek Consul in Jerusalem George Argyropoulos cabled to Athens that if the Sophoulis government did not recognize Israel, this would be interpreted by Tel Aviv as an expression of its anti-Semitic feelings.⁷⁸ It is quite possible that many in Israel believed that Greek attitude on the Palestinian question derived from anti-Semitism. Although the role of anti-Semitism in the formation of Greek Middle Eastern policy during the Cold War era has not been studied, there is some evidence that in 1947-49 anti-Semitism did affect Athens' options towards the Palestinian question.

⁷⁵ Triandaffylides to Foreign Ministry, No. 7201, 29 November 1947, AGMFA 107/5/1948; Triandaffylides to Foreign Ministry, No. 7277, 18 December 1947, AGMFA 107/5/1948; and Chatzivassiliou to Foreign Ministry, No. 2039, 31 December 1947, AGMFA 107/5/1948.

⁷⁶ Chatzivassiliou to Foreign Ministry, No. 2039, 31 December 1947, AGMFA 107/5/1948.

⁷⁷ Pipinelis to Foreign Ministry, No. 1711, 24 November 1948, AGMFA 9/3/1948; and Kyrou to Foreign Ministry, No. 1320, 12 December 1948, AGMFA 9/3/1948.

⁷⁸ Argyropoulos to Foreign Ministry, No. 531, 14 March 1949, AGMFA 13/4/1949.

Recent historiography has already suggested that Panayiotis Pipinelis had adopted an anti-Semitic attitude.⁷⁹ The Permanent Undersecretary has been reported as being inspired by the French author Charles Maurras, a figurehead of the anti-Semitic *Action Française*.⁸⁰ Furthermore, analyzing Greek policy towards the partition of Palestine, Pipinelis argued that “by its nature the Jewish element is always hostile to the Hellenic political and spiritual world.” He accused both the American journalists and the Jewish intelligentsia of hostility in the Greek question and he referred to the trade rivalry between the Greeks and the Jews in the Eastern Mediterranean. According to Pipinelis, “peaceful cohabitation between the Hellenic and the Jewish element is impossible.” He also accused “wandering Jews” of “seeking wealth and profit in countries without a strong middle-class.” He concluded that the Jews had no national identity and therefore “they always consist a threat to people, like the Greeks, who have strong national sentiment.”⁸¹ No doubt, the stereotype of a wealthy and grasping merchant Jew without national identity was dominant in Pipinelis’ analysis.

Yet, innuendo there is an important question: given that Pipinelis exerted the greatest influence on Greek foreign policy in 1947-49, to what extent was Greek pro-Arab orientation a result of his anti-Semitism? As the current article has already shown, Pipinelis’ policy towards Israel was mainly based on a realistic reading of international affairs. Anti-Semitism was an important, but still secondary factor that

⁷⁹ See, Ioannis D. Stefanidis, *Stirring the Greek Nation: Political Culture, Irredentism and Anti-Americanism in Post-War Greece, 1945-1967* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 40.

⁸⁰ Christos Xanthopoulos-Palamas, *Διπλωματικό τρίπτυχο* [Diplomatic Triptych] (Athens: Ekdoseis ton Filon, 1979), p. 163.

⁸¹ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 21 September 1947, AGMFA 28/2/1947.

drove his policy on the question of Israel. In other words, it seems that in 1947-49 Pipinelis' anti-Semitic views had been subsumed to political, geographical and economic considerations on the Palestinian question.

Western powers and Greek pro-Arab policy

Greece's final decision towards the creation of Israel was conditional to the consent of both Britain and the United States. As Pipinelis noted on 21 September 1947 (namely, *after* concluding that Greece should adopt a pro-Arab stance) "we have no information about British and U.S. attitudes towards the Palestinian question. In any case we should not displease them."⁸² For this reason, Athens approached both the Foreign Office and the State Department in order to explain Greek policy on the issue. London clarified that it "would not wish to influence the decision of the Greek Government in the matter and that Greek Government should act as seemed best to them." The Americans also replied that they had no objection the Greeks supporting the Arab case.⁸³

London's reply was consistent with British policy towards the Palestinian question after the end of the Second World War. After the loss of India in early 1947, it was imperative for Britain to preserve its position in the Middle East in order to

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Foreign Office to the United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations, No. 3187, 26 September 1947, FO 371/61880.

protect its status as a great power.⁸⁴ For this reason Britain had no choice but to preserve its close relations with the Arabs. Therefore, on 29 November 1947 the British delegation abstained from the vote on the future status of Palestine,⁸⁵ while during the Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49 British policy was determined by its support for its only loyal ally in the region: the Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan. In this context, Attlee's government supported King Abdullah's aims for a Greater Transjordan, which would include part of Arab Palestine.⁸⁶

U.S. attitude towards Israel during the early Cold War era divided Harry Truman's administration. On the one hand, the U.S. President as well as many of his advisors and members of his staff in the White House (such as Samuel Rosenman, Max Lowenthal and David Niles) favored partition.⁸⁷ On the other hand, State Department officials (including George Kennan and Loy Henderson, head of the Near East Affairs) were against the establishment of an Israeli state. Their attitude was determined by two sets of considerations: first, they were convinced that the partition of Palestine would open the Middle East to Soviet penetration; second, they believed that in case the Americans supported the Jews, U.S. relations with the Arab states would deteriorate. U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall, Under Secretary Robert

⁸⁴ Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, "Cold War Pressures, Regional Strategies, and Relative Decline: British Military and Strategic Planning for Cyprus, 1950-1960," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (October 2009), p. 7.

⁸⁵ Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers*, pp. 274-275; and Ellen Jenny Ravndal, "Exit Britain: British Withdrawal from the Palestine Mandate in the Early Cold War, 1947-1948," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (2010), pp. 417-419.

⁸⁶ Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, pp. 158-159.

⁸⁷ Ronald Radosh and Allis Radosh, "Truman, Jews, and Zionists," in Devine, ed., *Harry S. Truman*, pp. 95-118.

Lovett, Assistant Secretary for U.N. Affairs Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense James Forrestal shared the same views.⁸⁸

Nevertheless, despite the insistence of American officials that Washington should adopt a pro-Arab policy, Truman's personal sympathy and support to Jewish aims remained remarkably constant since the end of the Second World War. Therefore, on 29 November 1947 the United States not only voted in favor of the partition plan but also put pressure on other delegations to follow suit. As Kennan had put it, "without U.S. leadership and the pressures which developed during UN consideration of the question, the necessary two-thirds majority in the General Assembly could not have been obtained."⁸⁹ Furthermore, on 14 May 1948, just a few minutes after Israel's proclamation of independence, the United States recognized the provisional government as the *de facto* authority of the new state.⁹⁰ Given Truman's constant support on Israel, it seems to be a paradox that Greece chose to dissent from the views of its superpower patron. However, U.S. government never brought serious pressure to bear upon Greek decision-makers on Palestine.

In mid-September 1947 the Assistant Director for Reports and Estimates of the Central Intelligence Group, Theodore Babbitt, concluded that "although Greece

⁸⁸ Bruce J. Evensen, "Truman, Palestine and the Cold War," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (January 1992), pp. 131-132; Herbert Druks, "Truman and the Recognition of Israel Reconsidered," in William F. Levantrosser, ed., *Harry S. Truman: The Man from Independence* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 58-59.

⁸⁹ "Report by the Policy Planning Staff on Position of the United States With Respect to Palestine," 19 January 1948, *FRUS*, 1948, Vol. V, Part II, p. 548.

⁹⁰ George De Vries, "Truman and the Recognition of Israel," in Levantrosser, ed., *Harry S. Truman*, pp. 37-53.

has recently been attempting to increase its contacts with the Arab World, it will probably vote with the US on the issue.”⁹¹ Still, Washington raised no objection when the Greek government announced its intention to follow a different stance; nor did it react on 25 November 1947 when Greece abstained from voting at the Ad Hoc Committee. However, the fact that the partition proposal received 25 affirmative votes with thirteen against and seventeen abstentions (thus falling short by one vote of the two-thirds majority which would be required in the plenary session) alarmed the supporters of partition.⁹² For the next four days, pro-Zionists intensified their efforts to ensure that Greece change its vote.

On 25 November Chaim Weizmann, Israel’s first President, wrote to Truman that unless some of the countries which abstained from voting changed their attitude before the final vote, the partition plan would fail to obtain a two-thirds majority. Weizmann insisted that the U.S. President should intervene “at this decisive hour to bring about a settlement.”⁹³ The next day, the President of the American Jewish Committee, Joseph Proskauer, asked Lovett to use all his efforts “to get the votes” of Haiti, Liberia, Honduras, Philippines, Paraguay and Greece.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Babbitt to Henderson, 15 September 1947, 501.BB Palestine/9-1547, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File 1945-1949, Box 2114.

⁹² Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers*, p. 292.

⁹³ Weizmann to Truman, 25 November 1947, in Nana Sagi, ed., *Political Documents of the Jewish Agency* (Jerusalem: Hassifriya Haziyonit, 1998), Vol. II, p. 877; and Weizmann to Truman, 25 November 1947, in Sagi, ed., *Political Documents*, Vol. II, p. 879.

⁹⁴ Proskauer to Lovett, 26 November 1947, 501.BB Palestine/11-2647, NARA, RG 59, Central Decimal File 1945-1949, Box 2129.

Nevertheless, with the opening of the debate in the General Assembly on 26 November, Greece announced its intention to vote against partition “on the grounds that its implementation could create greater disturbance than if no decision were taken.” The same day, the delegate of the Philippines stated that his country “could not support any proposal for the political dismemberment of Palestine,” while the representative of Haiti declared that he would vote against partition.⁹⁵ In other words, Greece, the Philippines and Haiti, namely three of the states which had abstained from the voting of 25 November, declared their intention to support the Arab views. As a result, 48 hours before the final vote, the establishment of an Israeli state was far from being secure.

On 27 November the leader of the Jewish Agency for Palestine Moshe Shertok appealed personally to both Sophoulis and Tsaldaris arguing that Greece should “join all other European countries, United States, South Americans, British Dominions in only chance effective international action essential for peace of Palestine and future of United Nations.”⁹⁶ The same day, Shertok asked Asher Moïssis, President of the Central Council of Jewish Communities in Greece, “to approach at this last moment your Government in the name of traditional Jewish-Greek friendship and request favorable change their position.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, from 27 to 29 November the Greek delegation at the United Nations received more than fifty telegrams from U.S. leading personalities (including Republican Senators Styles Bridges and Robert Taft) and pro-

⁹⁵ United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations to Foreign Office, No. 3553, 27 November 1947, FO 371/61890; and United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations to Foreign Office, No. 3554, 27 November 1947, FO 371/61890.

⁹⁶ Shertok to Tsaldaris, 27 November 1947, in Sagi, ed., *Political Documents*, Vol. II, p. 882.

⁹⁷ Shertok to Moïssis, 27 November 1947, in Sagi, ed., *Political Documents*, Vol. II, pp. 888-889.

Zionist organizations asking Greece to support partition.⁹⁸ Finally, Niles approached Tom Pappas and Spyros Skouras, two prominent Greek businessmen in the United States, to use their influence in order to change Athens' attitude towards the Palestinian question.⁹⁹

Although it was not easy for the Sophoulis government to accommodate all these pressures, Greece voted against partition. It has been argued that "American pressure apparently came altogether too late for the Greeks."¹⁰⁰ However, there is no doubt that despite its reservations, in the end Washington allowed Athens to take a different stand on such an important issue. On 29 November, as Dendramis sought American advice, Henderson assured him that Greece should not change its vote.¹⁰¹ On 30 November Tsaldaris said to King Paul that before voting he informed the British and the Americans on Greek intentions. Tsaldaris added that although the Americans expressed some reservations, they accepted the Greek arguments.¹⁰² Finally, on 2 December Pipinelis affirmed that "before casting negative vote Greece had inquired whether US had any objections and had been assured that Greece was free to vote as she saw fit."¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Dendramis to Foreign Office, No. 9219, 8 December 1947, AGMFA 128/3/1947.

⁹⁹ Jacob Abadi, "Constraints and Adjustments in Greece's Policy toward Israel," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Fall 2000), p. 42.

¹⁰⁰ Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers*, p. 297.

¹⁰¹ Dendramis to Foreign Ministry, No. 9219, 8 December 1947, AGMFA 128/3/1947.

¹⁰² Record of the meeting in the Palace, 30 November 1947, General State Archives, The Royal Archives, Athens, file 377.

¹⁰³ Keeley to Marshall, No. 2088, 3 December 1947, 867N.01/12-347, NARA, RG 59, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files: Palestine and Israel, Internal Affairs and Foreign Affairs 1945-1949, microfilm reel 13.

Evidently, the White House showed understanding for Greece's special interests in the Middle East.¹⁰⁴ Truman's administration might have realized that it was much more difficult for Greece to change its vote than it was for the Philippines or a Latin-American nation which had no interests in the Middle East. Furthermore, Greek policy in the Palestinian question could minimize the alienation of the U.S. from the Arabs vis-à-vis the partition of Palestine and the establishment of the state of Israel. Most importantly, on the day Henderson met Dendramis the Americans had already secured a two-third majority in the General Assembly. Indeed, by 26 November Luxemburg, France, Belgium, New Zealand and the Netherlands had already declared that they were prepared to accept partition.¹⁰⁵ During the last 48 hours before the final vote, particular pressure was put on Haiti and the Philippines which in the end voted "yes."¹⁰⁶ The Greek delegation managed to resist pressure from individuals and non-governmental groups (such as pro-Zionist organizations and Senators) among others because its vote was not needed. As a result, no serious *official* American pressure had been exerted on Greece.

After the U.S. recognition of Israel and the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war, the Greek government faced a new dilemma: it would either refuse to recognize Israel so as not to harm relations with the Arab world; or it would take the opportunity to normalize its relations with Israel. Once again, the Truman's administration gave

¹⁰⁴ John Sakkas, *Η Ελλάδα, το Κυπριακό και ο αραβικός κόσμος, 1947-1974: Διπλωματία και στρατηγική στη Μεσόγειο την εποχή του Ψυχρού Πολέμου* [Greece, the Cyprus Question and the Arab World, 1947-1974: Diplomacy and Strategy during the Cold War Era] (Athens: Patakis, 2012), p. 51.

¹⁰⁵ United Kingdom Delegation to the United Nations to Foreign Office, No. 3548, 26 November 1947, FO 371/61890.

¹⁰⁶ Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers*, p. 296-299.

Athens space for manoeuvre.¹⁰⁷ In any case, Greek attitude towards Israel's recognition could not affect U.S. interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. In contrast, London did influence the Greek attitude towards Israel's recognition.

On 19 May 1948 the Greek Ambassador at London Leon Melas informed Pipinelis that Truman's initiative to recognize Israel just a few hours after its proclamation of independence dissatisfied Britain. Melas added that Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin was determined not to compromise on the question of recognition. Furthermore, the Foreign Office suggested unofficially that Greece should not recognize Israel for the time being.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, Pipinelis knew that an immediate Greek recognition would spark strong reactions in the Arab states. Thus, he concluded that Greece should advocate a "wait-and-see" policy.¹⁰⁹ At the same time he suggested that Athens should make every effort to develop further its relations with the Arabs.¹¹⁰

In early 1949 the question of Israel's recognition was still open for Greeks. On 25 January the British Embassy in Athens informed the Greek Foreign Ministry that Bevin had decided "to consult immediately with the Commonwealth Governments and the Western Union Governments concerned with a view to *de facto* recognition of the Israeli Government, having in mind the importance of establishing direct relations with that government at an early stage."¹¹¹ Indeed, the British recognized *de facto* the

¹⁰⁷ Dendramis to Foreign Ministry, No. 106, 8 February 1949, AGMFA 13/4/1949.

¹⁰⁸ Melas to Foreign Ministry, No. 3499, 19 May 1948, AGMFA 107/5/1948.

¹⁰⁹ Pipinelis to Ankara Embassy, No. 33826, 19 May 1948, AGMFA 107/5/1948.

¹¹⁰ Records of the Council of Political Affairs, 27 July, 30 July and 3 August, AGMFA 101/1/1949.

¹¹¹ British Embassy to Foreign Ministry, No. 31, 25 January 1949, AGMFA 13/4/1949.

new Israeli government on 30 January.¹¹² The next day the United States extended *de jure* recognition. Now, the Arab states expressed reservations as to the possibility that Greece might recognize the new state.¹¹³

Thus, it was imperative for the Greek government to make a decision on the recognition issue. Athens was well aware of the Turkish intention not to recognize Israel “for the time being.”¹¹⁴ Pipinelis argued that Greece should not hurry to recognize the new state before Turkey so as not to displease the Arab states.¹¹⁵ The conclusion of the armistice agreement between Egypt and Israel on 24 February 1949 gave Athens the opportunity to recognize Israel *de facto* on 15 March.¹¹⁶ Finally, on 28 March Turkey became the first country with Muslim majority population which recognized Israel.¹¹⁷

¹¹² For British policy on the recognition issue, see Keith W. Pattison, “The Delayed British Recognition of Israel,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Summer 1983), pp. 412-428.

¹¹³ See, Triandaffylides to Foreign Ministry, No. 6129, 30 January 1949, AGMFA 13/4/1949; Chatzivassiliou to Foreign Ministry, No. 261, 1 February 1949, AGMFA 13/4/1949; Pipinelis to Cairo, Beirut and Ankara Embassies, No. 18602, 1 February 1949, Constantinos G. Karamanlis Foundation, Constantinos Tsaldaris Archive, Athens (hereafter Tsaldaris Archive), file 38/6; Chatzivassiliou to Foreign Ministry, No. 267, 4 February 1949, AGMFA 13/4/1949; and Triandaffylides to Foreign Ministry, No. 6195, 9 February 1949, Tsaldaris Archive, file 38/6.

¹¹⁴ Skeferis to Foreign Ministry, No. 280, 2 February 1949, AGMFA 13/4/1949.

¹¹⁵ Pipinelis to Cairo, Beirut and Ankara Embassies, No. 18602, 1 February 1949, Tsaldaris Archive, file 38/6.

¹¹⁶ Tsaldaris to Jerusalem Consulate, No. 24014, 16 March 1949, AGMFA 13/4/1949.

¹¹⁷ Mesut Özcan, *Harmonizing Foreign Policy: Turkey, the EU and the Middle East* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 108.

Conclusions

Greek policy towards the making of the state of Israel was determined by a mixture of political, strategic, regional and ideological factors. Among them, the Greek security problem during the early Cold War period; the existence of the Greek Orthodox Church of Jerusalem; Athens' need to take into account the position of the Greek community in Egypt; commercial interests in the Eastern Mediterranean; anti-Semitism; the need to secure the votes of the Arab states concerning the Greek question before the United Nations; and, most importantly, relations between Greece, the United States and Britain at the beginning of the Cold War era.

In 1947-49, at a time of a huge challenge (the Greek civil war) but also of dependence on the United States, foreign policy decision-makers in Athens never faced a real dilemma on the Palestinian question. All members of the Council of Political Affairs as well as the Greek Foreign Minister himself (though he did not take an active part on the decision-making process) constantly adopted a pro-Arab stance. Athens' decision to vote against the establishment of an Israeli state and grant Israel *de facto* (and not *de jure*) recognition offered a clear indication of things to come. Indeed, during the Cold War all Greek governments insisted on the pro-Arab orientation adopted during the late 1940s. Therefore, they all refrained from fully normalizing Greece's relations with Israel. As a result, Greece recognized *de jure* Israel only in 1990.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ See, Eirine Cheila, "Η αραβο-ισραηλινή διαμάχη και η ελληνική εξωτερική πολιτική [The Arab-Israeli Conflict and Greek Foreign Policy]," in Dimitris Conostas and Charalambos Tsardanidis, eds., *Σύγχρονη ελληνική εξωτερική πολιτική, 1974-1987* [Contemporary Greek Foreign Policy, 1974-1987] (Athens and Komotini: Sakkoulas, 1988), Vol. 2, pp. 359-383; Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, "Greece and

Recent scholarship has shown that the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union attempted to manage both sides of the conflict in Palestine during the late 1940s. However, in the case of weaker states such as Greece things were quite different. For Greece, the adoption of a pro-Arab attitude resulted automatically to an anti-Israeli stance. In the Arab-Israeli dispute Athens felt that if it followed a more lenient policy towards Israel (i.e. by voting in favor of partition or by recognizing Israel *de jure*) it would run the risk of completely alienating the Arab world and endanger major Greek interests in the Eastern Mediterranean. As seen from Athens, the Greek government's room for manoeuvre was limited.

The study of the Greek attitude towards the making of the state of Israel reveals some interesting patterns of American leadership in the early Cold War. In late 1947 the United States recognized that its minor partner felt that it had major interests on the Palestinian question, which run counter to American priorities. However, when they realized that they did not need the Greek vote at the United Nations, the Americans were content to let their minor ally adopt a deviant attitude. Washington adopted self-restraint in the imposition of its policy towards Greece and as a result Greek Middle Eastern policy in 1947-49 was not dictated by the United States. This points to a pragmatic U.S. leadership. Arguably, this ability to give its

the Arabs, 1956-1958," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, Vol. 16 (1992), pp. 49-82; John Sakkas, "The Greek Dictatorship, the USA and the Arabs, 1967-1974," *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (December 2004), pp. 245-257; Eleni Stavrou, *A Pioneering Vision? Greek-Arab Relations during the Papandreou Era, 1981-1989* (Athens: Papazisis, 2010); and Ekavi Athanassopoulou, "Responding to a Challenge: Greece's New Policy towards Israel," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2003), pp. 108-125.

minor partners some space for maneuver was one of the most important advantages of U.S. policy in the troubled second half of the 1940s.

Acknowledgements

The article is based on research through the Operational Program “Education and Lifelong Learning,” co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund) and Greek National Funds.