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# **National Role and Foreign Policy: An Exploratory Study of Greek Elites' Perceptions towards Turkey**

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Kostas Ifantis<sup>#</sup>, Dimitrios Triantaphyllou<sup>\*</sup> and Andeas Kotelis<sup>+</sup>

## **ABSTRACT**

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This study is based on the findings of a National Bank of Greece research funding awarded to Kostas Ifantis and Dimitris Triantaphyllou by the Hellenic Observatory of the London School of Economics and Political Science (Research Tender 3-NBG3-2013).

The full report including the survey questions and their evaluation can be found on the Hellenic Observatory's website at this link:

[http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/hellenicObservatory/pdf/Ifantis-Triantafylloy-\(PROJECT-REPORT\).pdf](http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/hellenicObservatory/pdf/Ifantis-Triantafylloy-(PROJECT-REPORT).pdf).

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## 1. Introduction

The impact of the ongoing economic crisis on the Greek state and society has been unprecedented. The deep recession has dominated public debate as well as political discourse and left a deep scar in Greek political culture by empowering populists, nationalists and eurosceptics. Cosmopolitanism has taken a hit along with standards of living and self-confidence. For example, in the OECD's 'Better Life Index' 2013 survey the scores for Greece averaged only 1.2 on a 0 to 10 scale on the life satisfaction indicator, ranking Greece only third from bottom, ahead of Portugal and Hungary, among all OECD countries.<sup>1</sup>

This study deals with the repercussions of the Greek economic crisis as well, but with a strong focus on foreign policy, rather than society. Specifically, we analyse and provide an in-depth understanding of Greek elites' views and perceptions of Greece's position in the world amidst the financial crisis, and how these conceptions are related to Greece's relations with Turkey post-2009. The overall aim is twofold: First to clarify the national role conceptions of the Greek political elite and second to assess the power of the national role conceptions variable to explain whether the financial crisis has been instrumental in affecting

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<sup>1</sup> Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, (OECD), Better Life Index, 2013, available at <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/>.

perceptions towards Turkey as opposed to larger structural forces. The context revolves around Greece's downgraded status and prestige and Turkey's regional emergence and new geopolitical confidence. As a whole, these factors combine to impact upon developing perceptions.

## **2. Literature Review**

Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) has contributed significantly to our understanding of what influences foreign policy decision making and the actors that are part of the decision making process. It is these factors that Hudson (2005) calls 'explanans', which include the most noteworthy hallmarks of FPA.<sup>2</sup> Based on this long tradition of FPA theory, the current research makes several assumptions about the foreign policy process and the actors involved in it. On the one hand, we line up with the view that various international and domestic factors have an impact on a government's foreign policy behaviour; hence, a state's foreign policies are susceptible to change according to the given domestic and international considerations that policy-makers face. On the other hand, we assume that these influences are channelled through a group of foreign policy elite who identify, decide and enact or as in the cases of business and media elites, influence indirectly foreign policy actions.

The assumption that political, media and business elites are capable of influencing foreign policy outcomes begs for further analysis. If elites have the capacity to shape foreign policy, then the most urgent question

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<sup>2</sup> According to Hudson those hallmarks are: 1) Multifactorial; 2) Multilevel; 3) Multi/interdisciplinary; 4) Integrative; 5) Agent oriented; and 6) Actor specific. According to the author, '[T]he explanans of FPA are those factors that influence foreign policy decision making and foreign policy decision makers.' (p.2)

is what shapes elites' expectation, ambitions and interests. Scholars who study foreign policy have provided a number of answers; however, role theory is one of the most delicate explanations. The concept of 'role' is not endemic to the field of international relations. On the contrary, it was first used by sociologists to describe how individuals ascribe specific assumptions and values during their interactions with others (Harnish, Frank and Maull 2011). However, the most systematic effort to use role theory in FPA was done by Holsti, who used the term national role conceptions in order to describe:

The policymakers' own definitions of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems (Holsti 1970: 245-246).

Holsti identified 17 basic national role conceptions, and a number of other role conceptions that were unique for some states. These role conceptions reflected 'the degree of passivity or activity in foreign policy that the role conceptions seem to imply' (Holsti 1970: 260)

### 2.1. Criticism of Role Theory

Despite being a landmark study for future role theory literature, Holsti's work was criticized by several scholars on methodological and analytical grounds. On the one hand, a number of studies focused on Holsti's categorization scheme, and pointed out its built in insufficiencies. Shih (1988), for example, argues that Holsti's typology is logically imperfect, as it fails to describe the richness of human cultures, and ineffective as it

does not employ deductive categorization. Holsti's typology was also criticized on the basis that the role categories were heavily influenced by the Cold War. Chafetz, Abramson and Grillot (1996) observed that new national role conceptions such as 'global system collaborator' and 'global leader' which were not included in Holsti's typology can also fit in the post-Cold War international system.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, Wish (1980) points out two major limitations of Holsti's approach. On the one hand, she highlights the fact that Holsti connects national role conceptions only to a state's international involvement or participation. Indeed, Holsti has constructed his typology in such a way so that different roles suggest a state's different levels of involvement in international politics (activity-passivity scale), beginning with 'bastion of revolution – liberator' as the one with the highest participation, and ending with 'protectee' as the one with the lowest participation levels. Furthermore, Wish (1980) correctly indicates that Holsti does not provide a systematic way of measuring participation or involvement in the international system.

As an alternative, Wish suggested a different typology, which tries to include much more diverse foreign policy decisions, not necessarily related to international participation. Her research resulted in a typology that includes 13 different national role conceptions; each grouped under 3 different categories titled as status, motivational orientation and issue or substantive problem area. Wish's typology can be considered as an improvement compared to Holsti's as it was able to capture a wider range of foreign policy perceptions. Furthermore, the division of national

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted, however, that Holsti's typology included "subsystem collaborator" and "subsystem leader" roles.



conceptions into separate groups provided information about why some states choose to adopt some specific roles and not others.

Hymans (2006) developed a more compact typology. Drawing on the previous work of social psychologists who identified solidarity and status as the two primary dimensions of social comparison, Hymans built his typology on a two dimensional model including a) the solidarity dimension, which includes the 'oppositional' and the 'sportsmanlike' national role conceptions and b) the status dimension, which includes the 'nationalist' and the 'subaltern' national role conceptions.

On the other hand, several scholars raised their concerns regarding the analytical power of the theory, and especially as far as its application to foreign policy analysis is concerned. Not surprisingly the first major objection was based on whether we can apply to the study of foreign policy analysis a theory that was developed in a completely different field in order to study different phenomena. This inter-field theory compatibility issue becomes even more urgent when the theory in question was used to study phenomena on a different level of analysis. This issue was discussed in detail by Backman (1970) who was overall optimistic that role theory as psychologists and social psychologists use it can also be used in the study of international politics. He, thus, illustrated with examples how scholars can use role theory in order to organise and make sense of what they already know.

Cantir and Kaarbo (2012) address another shortcoming of role theory, which is in a way related to our research as well. Cantir and Kaarbo identified that the main response to the different level of analysis problem, which was discussed above, was for scholars to investigate the

national role conceptions of foreign policy elites. The main reason that role theorists focused on elites in order to study national role perceptions, was that role theory was firstly developed by sociologists and psychologists in order to understand the behaviour of individuals. As individuals comprise elites, then the theory applies better to them than it would to a different level of analysis, such as the state.

However, Candir and Kaarbo point out that scholars have failed to provide convincing evidence that would show that foreign policy elites influence foreign policy outcomes, or in other words, 'why foreign policy elites can stand for the entire country with regard to its role conceptions' (Candir and Kaarbo 2012: 6). In essence, Candir and Kaarbo's problematique focuses on the lack of information concerning whether elites are the only vehicle for shaping the foreign policy behaviour of the state, and if they are not, then how elites gather support from the society they represent in order to impose the role conceptions on a national level.

In response, role theorists have highlighted two different aspects of national role conceptions (Adigbuo 2007; Chafez, Abramson and Grillot 1996; Candir and Kaarbo 2012). Firstly, they follow a constructivist approach to suggest that identities and role conceptions in a given state are socially constructed and hence they constitute social phenomena that can be shared among individuals. According to Wendt, a state's interests are defined by how it sees itself in relation to other states, by creating social identities at both domestic and systemic levels of analysis. Furthermore:

*[A]ctors normally have multiple social identities that vary in salience...Social identities have both individual and social structural properties, being at once cognitive schemas that enable an actor to determine 'who I am/we are' in a situation and positions in a social role structure of shared understandings and expectations. (Wendt 1994: 385)*

Secondly, role theorists suggest that even if these identities are not shared between the elites and society, it is the elites that make the decisions, and, as such, they are limited in their selection of roles, to those that would be acceptable by their constituents. This explanation is heavily based on Putnam's ideas who suggested that national political leaders play simultaneously a game on two fronts, one internationally with other national political leaders, and one domestically where they have to explain their actions to society, the parliament, their constituencies and the like.<sup>4</sup> (Putnam 1988: 434).

## 2.2. Role Theory in Foreign Policy Analysis

The extensive use of role theory in FPA sometimes creates confusion among scholars as to what exactly a role is, how national role conceptions (NRCs) are created; who are the main carriers of these NRCs; etc. It is therefore imperative to provide a more coherent theoretical background of role theory, as well as. To adopt a working definition for the term, which will guide us throughout this study (for a discussion on the terminology and the conceptual language of role

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<sup>4</sup> The discussion on how foreign policy decisions are made is one of the most hotly debated topics in FPA, and cannot be analysed in depth in this paper. For an elaborate discussion on this issue see, for instance, Hermann, 2001.

theory see also Thies 2010). Next to Holsti's understanding of roles mentioned above, a clear-cut definition of national role conceptions reads as follows:

*NRCs are domestically shared views and understanding regarding the proper role and purpose of one's own state as a social collectivity in the international arena. They are products of history, memory and socialization. They may be contested, but often endure. (Krotz 2002: 6)*

A different approach is taken by Hymans (2006) who defines national role conceptions<sup>5</sup> as:

*An individual's understanding of the state's identity – his or her sense of what the nation naturally stands for and how high it naturally stands in comparison to other in the international arena. (Hymans 2006: 18).*

Krotz's and Hyman's definitions are fine examples of the two different schools of thought that divide role theorists on the basis of what shapes national role conceptions. Harnish (2011: 7; 2012: 48) makes a distinction between American scholars who highlight the importance of material or cognitive qualities as the determining factors shaping national roles, and European scholars who apply a constructivist approach that stresses the importance of social interaction in which roles provide 'reasons for action'. However, despite this basic distinction, it is also important to point out regardless of the domestic factors (capabilities and identities) that shape national role conceptions, all scholars studying role theory agree that national role conceptions are also shaped in response to the expectations of others. (Thies 2010)

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that Hymans uses the term national identity conception (NIC).

As an analytical tool, role theory incorporates a number of significant advantages as far as the study of international politics is concerned. It offers a number of typologies that scholars can use in order to group, and make sense, of diverse foreign policy behaviours. Furthermore, since it assigns specific behaviours to specific national role conceptions, role theory is capable to make predictions regarding the foreign policy options of states that ascribe to one or more roles. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that role theory has been used by a number of scholars in FPA.

In general, scholars who choose role theory as the major tool of their analysis do so in order to overcome insufficiencies of other theories to explain choices made by foreign policy decision-makers. Chafez, Abramson and Grillot (1996), for instance, attempt to illustrate how prevailing theories in international relations, such as neorealism and liberalism, fail to explain nuclear proliferation when one looks at the case of post-Cold War Ukraine and Belarus. According to them, for instance, materialist determinism as a realist variant would suggest that only states incapable of developing nuclear arsenals on their own should comply with non-proliferation. However, this is not always the case. Thus, role theory is promoted as a more convincing explanation.

Chafez, Abramson and Grillot's work constitutes a typical example of a study regarding the use of role theory in the relevant literature. The default research methodology for role theorists is the case study. Case studies are used for theory building as each of them brings forth new empirical evidence of how role theory provides a much more plausible

explanation regarding the foreign policy decisions and behaviours of states.

Oppermann (2012), for instance, argued that the shift in German foreign policy, especially as far as the European financial crisis and the NATO mission in Libya are concerned, can best be explained by the shift in the national role perceptions of the decision makers, coupled by a progressively stimulating domestic environment. Similarly, Catalinac (2007) studied two diverse foreign policy behaviours of Japan, one in response to the 1991 Gulf War, and one in the 2003 war against Iraq. Her conclusions suggested that the different Japanese responses were attributed to a change in Japanese national role conceptions, particularly the decline of the pacifist and pragmatic multilateralist identities, which were superseded by a centrist role identity.

A second breed of case studies aimed at connecting role theory with other theories relevant to the analysis of foreign policy. For example, an effort to connect role theory with diplomacy was made by Shih (1988), who suggested that role theory offers insights for the better understanding of Chinese diplomacy by clarifying its psychological function; explaining the difficult relations between China and other countries; illustrating why abrupt changes in Chinese diplomacy occurred; and finally, by providing a new perspective on the connection between Chinese diplomacy and the expectations of Chinese leaders regarding how the world should be. Similarly, Thies demonstrates how role theory can be utilised in order to unite 'theoretical treatments of state socialisation in IR with more practical applications in FPA'. (2012: 25) Thies depicts the socialisation process as a 'game' where a state

adopts a role while it enters a system without prior knowledge of the system's whereabouts. For his analysis, Thies uses the roles ascribed and achieved by Israel soon after its emergence as an independent state (1948 to 1956).

### **3. Research design**

Unlike the common practice in the field which typically look into statements made by top policy makers or foreign policy elites (see for instance Catalinac 2007; Miyagi 2009; Aras and Gorener 2010; Bengtsson and Algstrom 2012), we chose to carry out a structured questionnaire survey<sup>6</sup> using the summated rating (or Likert) scale with representative members of the foreign policy, military, academic, business, and media elite in Greece. There are several reasons why we pursued this strategy. To begin with, given our target group it would be difficult to find a different source of information. Apart from the media elites, foreign policy and business elites might not be as vocal, and hence, it would be unlikely to find public statements that would be indicative of a national role perception. Also, very early in the course of the research it became clear that people were very unwilling to be interviewed. That left us with the alternative of structured interviews or surveys. A survey emerged as the best option.

In our study we defined as elites six different categories of people, namely businessmen, diplomats, politicians, military officers, journalists,

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<sup>6</sup> The survey questions can be found in Appendix 2 of the research report (pp. 57-63) see ft. 1/

and academics. According to Baehr (1980: 226-7), politicians, diplomats and military staff could be considered to constitute the 'formal foreign policy elite', in the sense that their professional standing leads them to be participants in the foreign policy-making process. The rest could be considered as 'informal foreign policy elite' and is of a profoundly heterogeneous nature. Here we have people who deal with foreign policy indirectly, or what Almond (1960: 239) called 'policy and opinion elite' or 'the articulate policy-bearing stratum of the population which gives structure to the public and which provides the effective means of access to the various groupings' (as cited in Baehr, 1980: 227). We then proceeded with a purposive sampling procedure, which was sent to 522 individuals. The questionnaire was web-based, and constructed in a way that would protect the anonymity of the respondents was sent to the sample, while the whole process took place during the period of 1 May to 30 October 2014. The overall response rate to the questionnaire was 41.95% (219 respondents out of 522 sent questionnaires). Although the response rate might sound low, it is actually considerably higher than the mean response rate when referring to e-mail surveys. (see Sheehan 2001)

## **4. Main Findings**

### 4.1. Findings based on subject-by-subject analysis

The first major finding stemming from the analysis of the data is that the Greek elites trust that the country has both the potential and the qualities necessary to influence global politics. Indeed, the answers in the questions related to Greece's capability to influence international



affairs were quite positive. The respondents suggested that Greece is capable of influencing international politics at a rate of 60%, while when they asked whether the Greek state can impact the international order via the quality of its ideas and its dedication to International Law, the percentage of positive answers was even higher, reaching 73.3%. Similarly, Greece's EU and NATO memberships were also highly valued as tools for influencing global affairs.

Another important finding is that the Greek elites share a strong conviction that Greece constitutes a 'positive' unit of the international system, in the sense that it abides to its international commitments and defends and promotes International Law. This conviction has quite salient implications regarding the conception of the 'self' and the 'other'. If the conception of the self is positive, then it implies that one of the state's roles is, or should be, a model or paragon for other states to imitate. More importantly though it means that the state is not a 'troublemaker' and, hence, if regional problems arise, then these are caused by the 'other'.<sup>7</sup>

What might at first glance seem to contradict the aforementioned findings is that in some of the questions the respondents confirmed their belief, at least in the majority, that Greece is a small nation, that it has lost part of its prestige since the start of the economic crisis, that the country's foreign policy does not address global issues, and, finally, that Greek citizens do not necessarily want a more active foreign policy orientation. However, we strongly believe that there is no contradiction. It is rather a statement of belief that Greece can influence the

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<sup>7</sup> For a sophisticated discussion see Wendt 1999, especially ch. 5.

international system, by focusing more towards its immediate environment than to areas outside its space vital to its national interests. It is furthermore, a proclamation of confidence that Greece can be much more influential than its size implies or what its material capabilities currently are.

Moving on to the second set of questions that address Turkey and Turkish foreign policy, we can say that, overall, the answers mainly indicate the lack of trust and the perception of threat coming from the Turkish state. These two convictions derive especially from the changes in Turkish foreign policy, and the country's strong economic growth during the past decade.

On the issue of alliances, it is important to note that the results confirm the elites' belief that the US-Turkey partnership is a very relevant and strong one (68.5% of the respondents 'totally agree' or 'rather agree' that the relationship constitutes a strategic partnership). The results are in line with the popular belief in Greece that Turkey receives a lot of support from the US as far as bilateral issues are concerned.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, EU-Turkey relations are less valued, as significantly fewer respondents agreed it that they constitute a strategic partnership, while almost half disagreed. These results reflect the developments in relations between the European Union and Turkey during the course of the past few years, with declining support for membership among the Turkish public, and less enthusiastic pursuit of the fulfilment of accession criteria by the Turkish government. Finally, there also seems to be a

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<sup>8</sup> On this see Ifantis 1996; Couloumbis and Iatrides 1980.

strong inclination, among the respondents, towards the assumption that Turkey is distancing itself from the West and is getting closer to the East.

Several points can be made regarding Turkey's domestic affairs and their influence on Turkish foreign policy. The two most critical questions asked deal with two different types of changes -- one regarding democratization and another regarding foreign policy. To be more specific, the question about democratization does not directly ask if Turkey has been democratized. It rather aims at exploring whether or not the Greek elites believe that economic growth can lead to further democratization. The most important assumption is that the Greek elites seem, on the one hand, reluctant to accept the changes regarding the democratization of the Turkish state, while, on the other hand, confident that the changes have indeed been realized when the questions concern Turkish foreign policy. Hence, the answers are distributed evenly on the positive to negative spectrum (41.5% and 37.9% respectively) regarding the capability of Turkey to democratize itself, while a fifth of the respondents 'neither agree, nor disagree'. With regard to foreign policy changes, the answers are overwhelmingly in the affirmative with an overall rate of 67.6%. In addition, there is high consent among the elites that the changes in Turkish foreign policy can be attributed to the ideological (religious) views of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's President.

The aforementioned results make more sense when coupled with the other questions concerning Turkish foreign policy. We can thus construct a three piece puzzle. Firstly, it can be inferred by the responses that the overwhelming majority of the Greek elites think that the 'Davutoglu

Doctrine'<sup>9</sup> is designed for Turkey expand its sphere of influence. Secondly, Turkey has distanced itself from the West and it looks to the East. Thirdly, the changes in Turkish foreign policy can be attributed to the religious views of the Turkish President. Based on the responses to these three questions, it can be inferred that the Greek elites see Turkey as a state whose main foreign policy aspirations have shifted, and its primary goal is to acquire a leading role in the Arab Middle East and beyond by seeking to establish itself as a source of regional geopolitical influence on the basis of a common Islamic cultural identity. Such a hypothesis might have significant implications for Greece, especially on the perception of threat, and the understanding of Greek-Turkish relations as a whole.

Finally, the Greek elites are quite indifferent when they are asked to comment on Turkish foreign policy decisions or strategies in relation to Israel and Afghanistan. The argument that can be made in this case is that the Greek elites do not see a correlation between the future course of Greek-Turkish relations and Turkey's relations with its neighbours to the East, or other third countries. We would expect that the results would show higher levels of interest, especially for Israel, whose relations with the Republic of Cyprus and Greece have been significantly upgraded during the past years; however, this was not the case.

Moving on to the last set of questions, the one with reference to Greek-Turkish relations, the results are even more interesting, offering an

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<sup>9</sup> The 'Davutoglu Doctrine' refers to a foreign policy concept developed by Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey's current Prime Minister, some years ago in his capacity as an academic; chief foreign policy advisor to the Prime Minister; and later as Foreign Minister whose key principles were adopted as the foreign policy of Turkey's ruling AKP party. On the content of the Doctrine, see Davutoglu 2010.

assessment over Greek long-held foreign policy strategies, as well useful insights for the future of Greek-Turkish relations. The first question about the post-1999 rapprochement strategy reveals that Greek elites, en masse, have accepted the strategy and they consider it as correct. This is the first time that hard data is available supporting this landmark change in Greece's foreign policy towards Turkey, which has in times been characterized as one of appeasement, concessionary, or even as an act of treason by the patriotic and nationalistic circles in Greece.

The support for the Greek-Turkish rapprochement process somewhat abates when the question regarding the European Union enters the equation. Given that a significant step for the start of the 1999 rapprochement process was Greece's decision to lift its veto for the commencement of Turkey's accession negotiations, it is surprising that Greece's continued support for Turkey's EU accession process does not gather the same consensus from the respondents, as it did for the previous question. Nevertheless, overall support still amounts to over half of the respondents, so we can assume that the elites expect more pressure to be placed on Turkey to meet its obligations, rather than aspiring for the cancellation of the process altogether.

The data deriving from the questions that explore trust issues are also extremely revealing and noteworthy. Looking at the results, the undeniable assumption is that the Greek elites strongly agree that Turkey is not to be trusted. Of course, trust issues are extremely common in international affairs, let alone between two states that have been involved in an intractable conflict for decades. Nonetheless, the fact that the Greek elites think Greece cannot trust Turkey, in high

percentages, across elite groups is rather surprising, especially given the more moderate assessment of the relations between the two countries in the previous questions.

Additionally, the answers to the question concerning trust are contradictory when compared to the answers to questions addressing the perception of threat from Turkey. Undeniably, the perception of threat is much lower than one would assume by looking at the trust levels. Specifically, significantly fewer respondents considered Turkey's economic growth as a threat to Greek interests, than the ones who did not. Also, close to 40% of the respondents actually suggested that Turkey's economic growth is not contradictory to Greek interests. In a similar question on whether Turkish investments in Greece constitute a threat to Greek interests, and hence, they should be blocked, more than 60% of the respondents suggested that they 'completely disagree' or 'rather disagree' with that premise. Lastly, related to the threat concerns, it is important to note that low threat perceptions are also implied by the fact that, to a large degree, a crisis with Turkey is generally not considered very likely in the next five years.

Finally, special mention should be made to the Cyprus issue. The fact that the vast majority (more than 70%) of the elites consider the Cyprus problem a prerequisite for the improvement of Greek-Turkish relations, shows a strong attachment to the roots of the conflict, as historically Cyprus has been the catalyst for Greek-Turkish crises, on many occasions (1955, 1959-60, 1974, etc.). The answers also provide an idea on where the Greek elites think that Greek foreign policy and the decision-making

elites should focus if the goal is to normalize relations with Turkey. Any such attempt cannot but take the Cyprus issue under consideration.

#### 4.2. Findings based on divisions among elite groups

Greek elite groups have a high degree of internal homogeneity, but they present significant differences between each other. Indeed, a look into the results suggest that there is a tendency for agreement among each group, which is strong and consistent enough to allow us to provide a vague description of each group's main objectives and strategies in general, as well as, its perceptions regarding Greece, Turkey and their relationship. What follows is a concise description of each of the six elite groups.

##### *4.2.1. Diplomats*

The diplomatic elites are one of the groups that assess Greece's role and capabilities in the international arena quite highly. Diplomats tend to answer in the affirmative the questions concerned with Greece's competence and effectiveness; they also value highly the constructive role Greece can play via its membership in international organizations. Likewise, there are several questions that we do not find any diplomat disagreeing (rather or totally) with when the same questions are posed. It also important to note that the group was rather divided on the question regarding whether Greece is a 'small' nation, but the respondents tended to agree that Greece's role as a regional leader has been compromised by the economic crisis.

As far as Turkey is concerned, the diplomats were more negative than positive on a number of issues. For example, they were very reluctant to

assume that a process of Turkish democratization is possible; they were also quite suspicious as to the meaning of the 'Davutoglu Doctrine'. Furthermore, the diplomats were more negative than positive on whether Turkey should join the European Union; while they valued quite highly Turkey's relations with the US, they were not quite supportive of its relations with the EU.

With regard to Greek-Turkish relations, the diplomats' answers showed remarkable consistency. The majority considers the rapprochement process as the right strategy; however, the group is split on whether Greece should steadily support Turkey's accession to the EU. Most of the diplomats also agree that the relations between the two countries are 'neither good nor bad', while none described the relations between the two countries as bad. It should also be mentioned that the diplomats are one of the groups which suggest that Greece should not trust Turkey.

#### *4.2.2. Military officers*

The military elites were quite homogenous as a group and very consistent in their positive responses when Greece was concerned, while very negative when Turkey came into the equation. As in the case of the diplomats, the military officers showed an affirmative perception regarding Greece's capabilities in influencing the international arena; its enhanced role despite its small size; its positive attitude vis-à-vis International Law and its commitments; and the strength it derives from its participation to international organizations.

Turkey, on the other hand, is perceived by the majority of the military officers as a complicated and untrustworthy neighbour. One of the most



notable responses is the 55% rate of total disagreement on whether Turkey should join the European Union, while only around 13% (the lowest among all groups) suggested that they ‘totally agree’ or ‘rather agree’ that EU-Turkey relations constitute a strategic partnership. Regarding Turkey, the question that seems to have divided the group the most is whether its foreign policy under Recep Tayyip Erdogan has changed, as all four options (excluding the ‘I don't know/I don't answer’ option), received, more or less, a quarter of the answers of the group.

With regard to the questions on Greek-Turkish relations, the military officers behave like outliers when compared to other groups. For example, they are the only group that disagrees, on majority, with the rapprochement strategy Greece adopted after 1999. The same applies when the group is asked whether Greece should support Turkey's EU accession efforts. In addition, a vast 71.1% of the group ‘totally disagree’ with the statement that Greece should trust Turkey, while most suggested that Turkey's economic growth is not beneficial to Greece.

#### *4.2.3. Politicians*

The general assumption for this group is that it showed a vague uniformity, at least in its responses to most questions. It was quite moderate vis-à-vis Turkey, as well as with regard to Greek-Turkish relations.

To begin with, the political elites gave quite diverse responses in the first two questions which dealt with Greece being a small state and its ability to impact on international politics respectively. Nonetheless, in the questions that followed, the political elites demonstrated strong support

to the notion that Greece can influence with its quality of ideas, its adherence to International Law, and its international alliances, while they also strongly agreed that Greece meets its obligations stemming from its participation in various international organizations. It is also worth pointing out that all the political elites answered that Greece's regional leadership role was compromised (in varying degrees) by the economic crisis.

With regard to Turkey, the answers related to Turkey's European future, its democratization and its foreign policy, significantly varied, highlighting important divergences of political orientation among the political elites. Nevertheless, however, it is quite clear that most Greek political elites do not welcome the idea of Turkey joining the EU, while they also showed remarkable homogeneity in their understanding of the 'Davutoglu Doctrine'.

With reference to relations between Greece and Turkey, the responses of the political elites are very similar to those given by the diplomats. On the trust issue, the politicians strongly disagree that Greece should trust its neighbour, while the threat perception stemming from Turkey is deemed as moderate. It is important to note that most politicians agree with Turkey's accession to the EU, although a significant minority (36%) disagrees. Finally, the political elites differed in their assessments as to whether a crisis between the two countries is to be expected in the near future, although they tend to agree that should one occur, it will be due to reasons related differences regarding the Aegean Sea.

#### *4.2.4. Journalists*

The journalists make up the least coherent group as they show considerable variation in several of their responses, although in some instances they tend to agree strongly. Regarding Greece's role, the media elites have the highest positive consensus rate, regarding the perception of Greece as a small state. On the other hand, this group has the least positive responses on whether Greece can influence international politics. In the questions that ensued, the media elites consistently provide the least positive answers, suggesting a high reservation with the notion that Greece can influence global affairs, either through alliances, or its quality of ideas.

As far as Turkey is concerned, the media elites do not diverge much from the other focus groups. They are quite divided on the topic of Turkey's EU accession, as well as on most of the questions regarding Turkey's domestic politics and its foreign policy orientation. For instance, 44% agree and 30% disagree with whether Turkey's economic growth can accelerate its democratization process; while 47.5% agree and 47.5% disagree with the notion that Turkey can become a bridge between East and West.

Regarding Greek-Turkish relations, the journalists strongly support the rapprochement process; with their answers being similar to all other groups (neither good, nor bad) when they are asked to characterize current level of relations between Greece and Turkey. The media elites represent the second group (after that of the academic elites) to support Turkey's accession process; however, they are extremely reluctant to

suggest that Greece should trust Turkey. It should also be pointed out that the threat perception is quite low, compared to the rest of the groups, as are the expectations for a crisis between the two states within the next five years. If such an event were to occur, the media elites consider the Aegean to be the most likely focal point of the crisis.

#### *4.2.5. Business elites*

The improvement of relations between Greece and Turkey over the course of the last 15 years has generally benefited the Greek business community through the overall enhancement of economic cooperation and trade between the two countries (see, for instance, Tsarouhas, 2009; Kutlay, 2008). As such we would expect that the business elites would be among the groups that support the further rapprochement between the two countries and that would, probably, be more positive towards Turkey.

Before discussing the aforementioned issues, we should point out that most Greek businesspersons have a very positive view regarding Greece's capabilities to efficiently and positively contribute to international politics. For example, more than 85% agree that Greece can influence international affairs through the quality of its ideas and its commitment to International Law. Another 85% agrees that Greece can do so through its dual memberships in the EU and NATO. These answers suggest the strong belief of the Greek business community that the country can be a key player in the international arena despite its small size.

When it comes to Turkey, much as the other elite focus groups, the business elites are reluctant to suggest that Greece should trust Turkey. However, they don't perceive Turkey as a threat, and, furthermore, they support the notion that the economic development of Turkey could benefit Greece. On the important issue of Turkey's accession to the European Union that would have a catalytic role on Greek-Turkish trade, the businessmen quite unexpectedly, appear, to oppose such a development with some 53.4% suggesting that they 'totally disagree' or 'rather disagree'.

With regard to Greek-Turkish relations, the business elites basically concur that the rapprochement process is the correct strategy for Greece, even though their 60% support rate is actually the second lowest after that of the military elites. It is important to note that Turkish direct investments in Greece are not considered to be a threat by the Greek business community. As a group, they consider a possible Greek-Turkish crisis rather unlikely; while they see an Aegean dispute as the most likely cause should one actually take place.

#### *4.2.6. Academics*

The results suggest that the Greek academic elites represent a very distinct group with considerable differences of opinion vis-à-vis the other focus groups, as well as significant in-group coherence. The group was, by far, the most positive towards Turkey and Greek-Turkish affairs, in clear contrast to the responses of the military elites. Like most other groups in the first part of the questionnaire, the academics also valued highly Greece's potential; in spite of its small size. The academic elites

suggested that Greece gains much gravitas through her participation in international organizations, and they tend to agree, even though less so than the other groups, that the country abides by the obligations deriving from her participation in these organizations.

With regard to Turkey, the academic elites agree more than any other group that Turkey should join the European Union; in this context, it is also the only group that garners more than a 50% response rate for the ‘totally agree’ and ‘rather agree’ options. Also, this elite group agrees the most with the notion of the changing nature of Turkey’s foreign policy change under Recep Tayyip Erdogan. When asked about the ‘Davutoglu Doctrine’, almost three out of four academics consider it as an effort to create a sphere of influence for Turkey; at the same time, 17%, the highest among the elite groups, perceives it as a ‘zero problem with neighbours’ policy.

The group of academic elites is the one that values the most the improvement in Greek-Turkish relations. The academics agree with the rapprochement strategy (81.1%), and they describe the current state of affairs between the two countries way as positive. Furthermore, close to three out four (71.7%) suggest that Greece should continue to support Turkey’s EU bid. Finally, this elite group considers an upcoming crisis as a least likely development; however, if such an event were to occur, as in the case of the other groups, a dispute linked to the Aegean is indicated to be the most likely cause.

## **5. Food for thought**

In summarizing the results of this inquiry, the following points should be highlighted. They derive from the respondents' answers and, according to our assessment, are the ones that provide the most food for thought.

First, the responses to the questions regarding to Greece's position in the global system, reveal the conviction by the elites that Greece plays, or should play, a more important and active role in the international arena. Most of the respondents agreed that Greece is a small nation, but with a disproportionally high capability to influence international affairs effectively. Following Holsti's (1970) framework, we can assume, based on the responses, that there are a number of roles that can be attributed to Greece. The role of Regional Leader is definitely the first and most important one. This role perception is actually consistent with the country's older foreign policy orientation. Another role is that of a paragon, in the sense of offering a positive example for other states, as most respondents suggested that Greece's commitment to International Law and quality of ideas could influence international politics. Overall, Greek elites share a strong conviction that Greece constitutes a 'positive' unit of the international system, in the sense that it abides to its international commitments and defends and promotes International Law.

The second issue relates to the process of Greek-Turkish rapprochement, which began in 1999, and continues to this day, albeit with less momentum. For years, the change of Greece's strategy vis-à-vis Turkey by the Simitis government (in 1996) has been a contested topic

within Greece, both at the level of public opinion as well as among the elites.<sup>10</sup> In that sense, the results of the survey strongly suggest that Greece's rapprochement strategy's degree of acceptance is remarkably high among all groups, apart from the military elite. Furthermore, the impact of rapprochement on Greek-Turkish relations is also assessed positively as more respondents characterized the current level of relations as 'rather good' or 'good', even though almost half of them replied 'neither good, nor bad'.

Third, it is worth emphasizing the level of trust or lack thereof that the Greek elites have towards Turkey. Results suggest there is a high degree of agreement among Greek elites that Greece should not trust Turkey. Answers to this question seem to contradict the answers in favour of continued support for the rapprochement process. One would expect that if relations are improving, then trust levels would increase as well, but this is not the case. Given the importance of trust in the resolution of conflicts (see for instance Lewicki, 2011), we believe that research on Greek-Turkish relations should also focus on trust-building between the two peoples and the two states.

Fourth, special mention should be made to the Cyprus issue. A vast majority of respondents consider the resolution of the Cyprus problem as a fundamental prerequisite for the normalization of bilateral relations although the consensus is that should a 'hot' crisis occur between Greece and Turkey over the course of the next five years, this be due to trouble related to the Aegean rather than Cyprus. Though, this in itself

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<sup>10</sup> See for instance Karakatsanis 2014: 113-5 for a summary of the reactions of the 'patriotic left'; and Gkintidis 2013, for a discussion on how local elites in Greek border towns accepted the shift of policy.



would suggest a degree of decoupling between what are considered to be bilateral differences as opposed to the Cyprus issue which concerns the fate of a third party, the responses also seem to infer that should the Cyprus conundrum be resolved, the peace dividend would be tremendous. The multiplier effect would impact positively on the issue of trust, the commitment to the rapprochement process, and Turkey's EU accession negotiations, as well as on the wider regional and international context, with particular emphasis on NATO, the European Union and the relations between the two. In other words, the inference is that the resolution of the Cyprus issue would be a game changer. (See Acikmese and Triantaphyllou 2012)

In conclusion, this exploratory study cannot stand on its own without further study including the conducting of a similar survey to assess the opinion of Turkish elites vis-à-vis Greece as well as more comparative analysis. It provides enough food for thought or teasers to suggest that there is much ground for further research linking the responses to Foreign Policy Analysis and role theory in an effort to acquire a deeper understanding of how national role perceptions shape foreign policy making elites and are shaped by them both in Greece and Turkey. In this context, this study has hopefully contributed to this understanding and provided enough inspiration for other researchers to build upon it.

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