

*Were the Eagle and the Phoenix Birds of a Feather?
The United States and the Greek Coup of 1967*

by

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In the summer of 2004, Greece will host the Olympic Games. Americans attending the games and visiting traditional tourist stops in Athens are sure to be greeted with open arms. But for those who delve a bit further into the country-side seeking a taste of average Greek life, some are sure to hear some fascinating tales flavored with a strong hint of anti-Americanism.

To many foreigners that visit Greece these days, it might seem like the cradle of democracy is also the cradle of conspiracy. Take these schemes, for example: (1) Orthodox Serbs, not Muslims, were the true victims of the slaughters in the Balkans during the 1990s—and the primary reason that NATO intervened was so that the United States could establish a military foothold there;¹ (2) the U.S. Ambassador played a tacit role in the removal of the Secretary-General of Greece's ruling political party;² and (3) the attack on the World Trade Center was a joint Jewish-American conspiracy to justify a Western war against Muslims—with reports that no Jews died in the September 11 attacks.³ All of these perspectives have numerous subscribers in Greece. This should come as no surprise given that they have often been reported in the Greek media.⁴

Often conspiracy theories are brushed off. But in Greece, such conspiracy theories are no laughing matter as they often reinforce the anti-Americanism that pervades Greek society. Such anti-Western sentiment has, in recent years, resulted in violent protests and street attacks, inspired domestic terrorism in Greece, and jeopardized NATO operations in the Balkans.

The roots of anti-Americanism in Greece are many, including media irresponsibility, electoral opportunism, and religious dogmatism.⁵ But perhaps the strongest root has been American foreign policy toward Greece during the Cold War—particularly policy leading up to the establishment of a dictatorship in 1967.

On April 21, 1967, a military junta of Greek Army colonels staged a successful coup d'état that suppressed the rule of law and democracy for seven years.⁶ Domestically, Greeks were subjected to martial law—often exiled, repressed, or tortured.⁷ Internationally, the junta launched a military overthrow of the democratically elected President of Cyprus, which triggered a Greco-Turkish war that has left the island nation divided and heavily militarized thirty years later.⁸

All along, one of the strongest held conspiracy theories has been that the United States sponsored the 1967 coup.⁹ In other words, many Greeks have long believed that the Eagle and the Phoenix—respective symbols of the United States government and the Greek military regime—were birds of a feather. In fact, recognizing that many Greeks accept this as true, President Clinton, during a 1999 visit to Athens, practically apologized for American policy during the 1960s and early 1970s. “When the junta took over in 1967 here, the United States allowed its interests in prosecuting the Cold War to prevail over its interests—I should say its obligation—to support democracy, which was, after all, the cause for which we fought the Cold War. It is important that we acknowledge that,” Clinton told a group of Greek businessmen.¹⁰

Certainly, it is difficult to deny that the Nixon administration (which came to power in 1969) supported the junta.¹¹ But as to the equally significant question of “Did the U.S. give the ‘green light’ to the Colonels to overthrow democracy in Greece?” a new volume of declassified documents and a new collection of oral histories seem to shatter the long-held Greek position that the Colonels were just America’s boys acting out the Johnson administration’s wishes.¹²

Prelude to the Coup

Greece became a focal point for American attention following the end of World War II. By 1946, Greece was embroiled in a civil war, pitting monarchists against communists. With the Cold War dawning, the United Kingdom came to the aid of the Greek monarchist forces. Due to limited resources and the pressing costs of reconstruction, however, the British were forced to turn over their operations to the United States in 1947. The Truman administration, perceiving Greece as geostrategically vital vis-à-vis the Soviet sphere, feared the possible implications of a communist victory. On March 12, 1947, United States President Harry Truman delivered his famous Truman Doctrine speech before Congress:

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.¹³

The launch of the Truman Doctrine marked the start of a two decade relationship of American influence on Greek democracy. Some of the major American accomplishments in Greece included assistance in the defeat of communism in the Greek Civil War, incorporation of Greece into NATO, the establishment of U.S. military bases in Greece, the creation of military and security services capable of maintaining domestic security, the marginalization of the Greek left from the electoral system, the socialization of the Greek monarchy into a Western political agent, and the consolidation of the Greek political system into a stable parliamentary democracy that safeguarded over a decade of pro-American conservative rule.¹⁴

In August 1953, the U.S. Ambassador to Greece, John Peurifoy, characterized American Cold War efforts in Greece as largely successful:

US leadership [in Greece] has been respected more highly and followed more unquestioningly than elsewhere in Europe or in most parts of the world. This statement applies particularly to the present Greek Government under Marshal Papagos since its own unswervingly anti-Communist convictions coincide with ours and since, in our desire to promote political and economic stability in Greece, we exercised [sic.] our influence in such a way as to favor its advent to power. . . .

[T]he Greek Government and people continue to be in full agreement with the main lines of US foreign policy and to be willing, indeed eager, to accept US leadership whenever it is proffered. . . .

If we are able and willing to continue some support for these purposes, through a combination of all the various means and techniques available to us, we shall have no difficulty in maintaining our preeminent position and influence in Greece. . . . Continuing modest doses of financial support and political consideration can safeguard at small cost a unique US position.¹⁵

As Peurifoy's memorandum acknowledges, the United States, at times, pursued its interests in Greece with a heavy-hand. As a result, the Greek people began to resent America's "leadership." By December 1954, American symbols were coming under attack.¹⁶ The "disengagement" of the Greek people from America's preferred course was meticulously discussed in 1957. In a 15-page memorandum, James K. Penfield, a political officer at the American Embassy in Greece, observed:

When the Greek public sees its desires with respect to Cyprus supported without stint in the United Nations by the Afro-Asian Bloc, by Tito, and, however tardily and hypocritically, by the Soviet Bloc, and sees the United States and each of its partners in NATO either thwart those desires or remain indifferent or neutral toward them, it lends an ever more receptive ear to those who in public speeches and in the daily press ask what Greece's ties to the West have gained her and why she should continue to maintain them. . . .

We and our policies have become less popular with the Greeks in recent years and months and we see no evidence of the existence of any force which will reverse this trend in the immediate future, barring an immediate settlement of the Cyprus issue in a manner satisfactory to Greece or a very large increase in the amount of American economic assistance.¹⁷

The memo insisted, "We are not winning the battle for the Greek mind."¹⁸ This led Penfield to conclude:

We are passing through a period when our influence and prestige among the Greek people and with the Greek Government are undergoing a reassessment and readjustment in a changed world situation. We can no longer be as certain as we have been in the past that we shall have Greece's support in foreign policy matters that are critical to us. . . . Unless [the reasons for disengagement] are corrected, however, there is a distinct possibility that Greece will find herself ultimately in the neutral bloc or in a "non-bloc" alignment where, we have reason to fear, a growing number of Greeks today are already finding themselves psychologically.

We have reached a new stage in Greek-American relations in which many of our decade-old assumptions and rules-of-thumb are no longer valid.¹⁹

With the United States no longer being perceived by the Greek public as the champion of the free world and democracy, a swing toward disengagement began. It followed that the Greek right, which the United States helped bring to power, also came to be perceived in this negative light. As Laurence Stern described the period, "Greek public opinion in the mid-sixties was running counter to the interests of the entrenched institutions of palace, army, intelligence service, and the counterpart American presence."²⁰ Representative of this growing opinion were George and Andreas Papandreou and their Center Union political party.

Waging what he called an "Unyielding Struggle" against a corrupt political establishment that had manipulated the elections of 1961, George Papandreou, in February 1964, was elected Prime Minister. Still bitter over his electoral loss in 1961, George Papandreou released documents that discussed the *Pericles Plan* (an alleged Greek covert operation to influence the 1961 election).²¹ When King Constantine identified the five military officers that conducted the investigation of the *Pericles Plan*, he asked Papandreou to dismiss them. However, George Papandreou refused to dismiss them.²²

In response to Papandreou's unwillingness to appease the King, information was leaked to the press about an alleged plot to eliminate the Monarchy and establish a left-wing government. This plot was to be carried out by a para-military group known as ASPIDA,

allegedly under the leadership of Andreas Papandreou, George Papandreou's son.²³ George Papandreou, in a reaction to the ASPIDA allegations, attempted to reshuffle some senior military officers. He also attempted to retire some officers, so as to replace them with younger, more liberal officers. One of the officers that Papandreou tried to dismiss was the Army Chief of Staff, General Ioannis Gennimatas, who had been implicated in the *Pericles Plan*.²⁴

Papandreou's Defense Minister, Petros Garoufalias, did not accept Papandreou's military re-structuring scheme. Papandreou then dismissed Garoufalias and attempted to head the Ministry of Defense himself. Garoufalias refused to resign, however, without a writ from King Constantine. The King did not approve of the dismissal of Garoufalias on the grounds that Papandreou, by making himself Defense Minister, was putting himself in charge of the investigation of the ASPIDA group and his son's relationship with that group.²⁵

George Papandreou, who felt that the Prime Minister should be able to select his own cabinet, resigned on July 15, 1965. Feeling that he had been maneuvered out of politics by the King, Papandreou countered by launching a second "Unyielding Struggle."²⁶ Elections were ultimately scheduled for May 28, 1967. By mid-March 1967, many Greeks, including the King himself, became convinced that the Papandreous would win the May elections. A pre-election CIA poll predicted that George Papandreou's margin of victory would be greater in the upcoming election, than it was in 1964, when his party secured 53% of the vote.²⁷

In order to prevent George Papandreou's return to power, the King planned an "extra-parliamentary" solution, i.e., a coup, to be staged by generals loyal to the Palace.²⁸ However, to the surprise of many, a group of army colonels staged a coup d'etat of their own on April 21, 1967, circumventing the scheduled May elections and the victory of George Papandreou.²⁹

The Circumstantial Evidence of American Involvement

For the people of Greece, the military dictatorship constituted a real life Greek tragedy. Many Greeks still hold the United States responsible for the events that took place on April 21, 1967. This section reviews the evidence that is commonly presented to implicate the United States in the 1967 coup. Much like a criminal prosecution, the evidence that speaks to the intention (*mens rea*) as well as the action (*actus reus*) of preventing a Papandreou electoral victory is reviewed. Unlike a successful prosecution, though, the evidence is too circumstantial and problematic to support the questionable allegation of American sponsorship of the Colonels' coup.

Mens Rea

Like any serious criminal matter, guilt requires intent. So, did the United States have a motive for overthrowing democracy in Greece in 1967?³⁰ To answer this, we must ask: Why would the United States want a coup d'état to take place in Greece? The response is: to prevent the Papandreous, especially Andreas Papandreou, from coming to power again. Andreas Papandreou represented the new tide of public opinion that was spreading throughout Greece. As one observer noted, "popular reaction to his speeches became more and more enthusiastic."³¹ Polls increasingly found that he was a gaining in popularity.³²

To many of the U.S. foreign policy representatives in Greece, Andreas Papandreou was a growing threat to American interests.³³ The United States soon developed a paranoia concerning him. For instance, new Foreign Service officers arriving in Athens were given detailed briefings on him. As one U.S. diplomat told Laurence Stern:

The Greek desk officer had handed me a large file folder of background material on Andreas prepared by the CIA which, among other things, purported to prove that he had been a fellow traveler if not worse for many years—since his student days—that he had

engaged in corrupt practices during his membership in his father's government . . . that he was morally sinful . . . and that he was generally a most reprehensible individual who posed a serious danger to United States' interests in Greece.³⁴

In the words of a senior American intelligence officer:

There was growing concern in our embassy that in an election Papandreou would win and Andreas would become the dominant figure. He had become increasingly anti-American. He was charging openly that Greece had lost her sovereignty to NATO which was an instrument of United States policy. Greece was agitated over the Cyprus situation and there were many who wanted to fight the Turks more than anyone else.

Andreas was complaining that Greek national security requirements were being subordinated to NATO and American interests [and that] Greece was not able to meet its security requirements in Cyprus, for example, as a result of American manipulation of NATO. He said NATO and Greece had become instruments of United States policy, not Greek policy. He attacked the United States, KYP [the Greek Central Intelligence Service], and CIA.

The old man was now senile and if he were elected, Andreas would become more influential than ever. We were increasingly concerned about the election. We were concerned that if Papandreou won, Andreas would be in the driver's seat for all practical purposes. He would withdraw Greece from NATO, evacuate the United States bases, shut down the Communication Center at Nea Makri [a major US naval communications facility near Marathon]. Andreas was also charging that the Americans corrupted the Greek economy. His answer would be to restrict the American presence and demand a high price for what remained.³⁵

John Owens, one of the Desk Officers for Greece at the State Department in the late 1960s, described the situation as follows: "I think Andreas upped the stakes and made it either us or them. It turned into a zero sum game, so that eventually . . . he convinced the power structure that it was not possible for Greece to endure an eventual Andreas Papandreou government."³⁶

The Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) in 1967, Norbert Anschuetz, felt that there was a growing concern that Andreas would "abolish the monarchy" and "purge the Hellenic military forces to his political advantage."³⁷ The unease was shared by the Embassy's leadership. According to the CIA Station Chief in Athens in 1967:

The “country team” . . . concluded that a Papandreou victory would seriously damage vital U.S interests in the eastern Mediterranean, weaken NATO’s southern flank and seriously destabilize Greek-Turkish relations, then strained by the Cyprus situation.³⁸

Concerns resonated back in Washington at the highest levels as well. Former Undersecretary of State George Ball referred to him as “that evil Andreas.”³⁹ Former Secretary of State Dean Acheson described both Papandreous as “the old fool and the young rascal.”⁴⁰ Criticism even came from President Johnson, who reportedly accused Andreas Papandreou of having “betrayed America.”⁴¹ Allegedly, Johnson once complained:

We gave the son of a bitch American citizenship, didn’t we? He was an American, with all the rights and privileges. And he had sworn allegiance to the flag. And then he gave up his American citizenship. He went back to just being a Greek. You can’t trust a man who breaks his oath of allegiance to the flag of these United States.⁴²

Despite such negative impressions of Andreas Papandreou, the Embassy staff did not signal a serious distaste for him and his politics until September 1965. Between the time of George Papandreou’s resignation on July 15 through the remainder of the summer, Embassy personnel had avoided taking positions in the festering Greek political crisis.⁴³ “Discretion needed to avoid untimely involvement of American factor” was the official instruction coming from Washington.⁴⁴

On September 5, 1965, however, DCM Anschuetz counseled that American interests would be better served if the Papandreous were not re-elected. While most of the memo remains classified, a large portion the de-classified text, which marks the first official American position against the Papandreous, warrants reproduction here:

Embassy has concluded George Papandreou's return to power should be avoided if this can be done without a direct and open confrontation with him. . . .

Andreas' motives are difficult to present categorically. In my assessment, based on half dozen extensive conversations with him, Andreas is neutralist, ambitious, amoral, and emotionally unstable. Although conclusive proof has not yet been adduced I believe Andreas is probably a leader in Aspida and that he hopes eventually to achieve a measure of control in army which would be exercised as decisive element in Greek political life.

In his view the weight of the American position in Greece, political and military, is an obstacle to "independent" foreign and domestic Greek policy which he advocates. I believe Andreas would seek significantly to reduce Greek military expenses, would progressively remove Greece from close NATO alignment, look increasingly toward Soviet bloc both as growing market for Greek products (30 per cent of Greek exports now find their way to the Soviet bloc) and as source of aid to fill gap created by decline in Western aid (U.S., OECD, NATO defense support). His natural ally in implementing such a policy is extreme Left and Communists. Explanation of his dubious role in Cyprus issue and his opposition to an active enosis policy may lie in his desire to avoid a position which would be offensive to Soviet Union and Communist elements to whom he seems to be looking for support in other areas. Under these circumstances, it is of great importance to obtain better measure Andreas' relationship Communists and extreme Left, determine sources and magnitude his financial resources, and circumscribe to extent possible his political power, actual and potential.

Greece is small, poor country in strategic area of world. Gradual elimination of Western economic aid, reduction of East-West tensions, increased trade between Greece and the bloc, frustration over the Cyprus situation, and current political impasse with its implication for viability of regime itself have all combined create movement of new dimensions in postwar Greek political life. This situation presents new opportunities for Soviet bloc and perhaps other unfriendly forces such as Gaullist France and Red China. Objective evidence such as organization of public manifestations, program of personal threats and intimidation, and rumors regarding substantial funds available to Andreas clearly suggests Communists are not standing aside.⁴⁵

As the testimonials reviewed above indicate, Andreas Papandreou, at a minimum, was considered a nuisance to American interests. The fear, though, was that he could evolve into a serious threat. As Anschuetz's telegram makes clear, by the fall of 1965, American authorities were proposing an official anti-Papandreou foreign policy—because the potential costs of a Papandreou electoral victory were assessed as outweighing the potential benefits, in terms of American national interests.

In terms of motive, therefore, the United States stood to reap a potential political benefit from an extra-parliamentary action: the rise of Andreas Papandreou would be curtailed.⁴⁶ As such, the United States had reason to advocate, if not help stage, the Greek coup of 1967. And many Greeks would swear that it did. But did it? Was their action to complement the motive?

Actus Reus

There are three factors that are frequently high-lighted to suggest American blameworthiness: (1) the Athens Embassy favored a covert operation to prevent the Papandreous from coming to power; (2) the junta that staged the coup had connections to the American intelligence community; and (3) the U.S. military and intelligence presence in Greece did not resist the coup—which was likely executed via a NATO plan—on the morning it occurred. There is evidence to support these propositions. But do any of the claims prove American responsibility?

First, as the former CIA Station Chief John Maury publicly acknowledged in 1977, the Embassy leadership advocated a covert operation to prevent the Papandreous from winning the May 1967 elections.⁴⁷ The operation, decided on “reluctantly,” was “to generate enough political energy to oppose effectively those who would lead Greece down more dangerous trails.”⁴⁸ Maury characterized it as “a modest covert program to support moderate candidates in a few ‘swing’ districts.”⁴⁹ In large part, the country team was concerned with the consequences of Andreas Papandreou’s rise to power. According to Ambassador Phillips Talbot, “important successes by Andreas could set off policy shifts away from traditional firm alliance with West.”⁵⁰ The recommendation concluded:

[The] United States has interest in maintenance in power of a Greek Government, of whatever party, that is committed to continued close and broad relations with United States, and that Andreas is the most immediate and prospectively potent factor opposing

this relationship. . . . U.S. policy needs also to demonstrate sympathetic American support for Greek progress and stability. This has become more difficult at stage when economic assistance has been phased out, military assistance is being phased down more rapidly than either government had foreseen, and unresolved Greek-Turkish differences put strains on Greek-American as well as on Turkish-American relations. Best long-term answer will be found in maintaining variety of active if inexpensive cooperative and contact programs during this transitional period when, rightly or wrongly, Greeks still have not got over sense of dependence on United States developed during past two decades and look to U.S. to push them into doing what they know they should.⁵¹

While members of the country team were open to a covert operation, their proposed course of action was relatively mild; hardly a coup d'etat. As the recently de-classified minutes of the National Security Council show, the operation would have cost \$200,000 to \$300,000.⁵² Indeed, it was motivated, in part, by a desire to avert a coup—not to facilitate one. As Ambassador Talbot wrote, “Upsurge of Andreas’ strength is deepening dichotomy in Greek public life to degree his incipient success might set off rightist counterrevolutionary attempts with prospectively adverse consequences for Greece and for the Alliance. *What we don’t need in NATO now is a Greek military dictatorship.*”⁵³

The National Security Committee on Covert Action (the 303 Committee) concurred with the Embassy that “Andreas Papandreou had been observed for a sufficient period to realistically place him in a camp definitely hostile to U.S. interests.”⁵⁴ But the 303 Committee asked: “Was the threat that great? . . . Was it not possible that we were attributing more potential to Andreas than he deserved?”⁵⁵ The matter was deferred largely to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, who voted down the operation on the grounds that “the possible political gain is outweighed by the security risks.”⁵⁶ Manipulation of the upcoming election was, therefore, expressly prohibited by the 303 Committee.⁵⁷ It is inconceivable that the Johnson administration would have forbidden a relatively small-scale black operation but would have actively championed American involvement in a complex and large-scale measure such as a coup.⁵⁸

Second, the junta leaders had connections to the American intelligence community, given the strong relationship that existed between the CIA and the KYP. In fact, the American intelligence community had been monitoring a group of Greek military officers who were discontent with the political system and conspiring to overthrow democracy, if things did not improve to their liking. Reports were being submitted to Washington that mentioned a possible coup could be staged by a group of officers known as the “Revolutionary Council.”⁵⁹ The leaders of the Revolutionary Council just so happened to be some of the same officers that staged the coup of April 21, 1967. The CIA’s reports on the Revolutionary Council, which numbered 15 in total, started in June of 1965.⁶⁰ No reports, however, were filed in the two months prior to the coup.⁶¹ Some commentators have speculated as to whether the break in reporting was a conscious effort by CIA agents to stop drawing attention to the coup plans, thus, making it difficult for officials to undermine the military takeover.⁶² Specifically, Robert Keeley has suggested:

There is a possibility that one or more lower level people, particularly some Greek-Americans who worked in the intelligence services, both military and civilian, knew about [the coup] in advance, because they were very sympathetic to the Colonels and their approach. These staffers were very conservative, very anti-communist, fearful of the Papandreuos regaining power; one might say even anti-democratic in some respects. It is possible that they knew about the Colonels’ plot and failed to report it either because they were cut off from their sources or because they colluded with the Colonels by not passing on information which would have enabled us to predict the coup.⁶³

While commentators have implied that the break in reporting points to American involvement in the conspiracy, alternative explanations exist. For instance, the reports were sporadic to begin with. It is not inconceivable that the next report would have been prepared in late April or early May, had the coup not taken place on April 21.⁶⁴ It is also possible that the Colonels, fearing American resistance, went into “operational mode,” cutting communications

between themselves and the informant.⁶⁵ John Maury has suggested that the failure to predict the Colonels' coup was related to the decision to "isolate ourselves from any sources who might have tipped us off."⁶⁶ This instruction, coming from the Ambassador (with the support of the CIA Station Chief), was given in order to prevent curiosity about a possible coup—then heavily rumored to be in the works by the Generals—from being construed as "U.S. sympathy or support" for a military takeover.⁶⁷ In addition, an intelligence cable filed on March 7, 1967, notes restlessness among military officers advocating a takeover. Because one of the officers listed in this dispatch, Lt. Col. Georgios Papadopoulos, was also a member of the "Revolutionary Council," it is possible that American officials conflated the two groups and did not feel the need to file a separate report on just the Colonels.⁶⁸ In short, awareness of the conspiratorial group, followed by a break in reporting, is hardly proof of American involvement—or even encouragement.

That the United States had information on the Colonels, however, should come as no surprise. The junta leaders did, after all, have working-level relationships with American officials. For instance, the leader of the group, Lt. Col. Georgios "George" Papadopoulos, was reportedly the liaison officer between the KYP and the CIA, as well as the Director of Counter-intelligence.⁶⁹ Sworn testimony given to Greek judges following the fall of the Colonels in 1974 alleged that "George Papadopoulos received a personal stipend from the American CIA agents and that he was the man through whom they [the CIA agents] paid stipends to the rest of the KYP employees."⁷⁰ According to Lawrence Wittner, Papadopoulos "had been on the CIA's payroll since 1952."⁷¹ Col. Nicholas Makerezos, moreover, was reportedly the head of the KYP's information section on the night of the coup and Lt. Col. Michael Roufogalis was reportedly director of the KYP's personnel section.⁷² Brig. Gen. Stelianos Pattakos, who had no

known contacts with the KYP, had been trained in the U.S. and was the only dictatorship leader who spoke English.⁷³ Even Brig. Gen. Alexander Hadjipetros, although not associated with the KYP, was commandant of NATO's missile-testing site on the Greek island of Crete. According to Andreas Papandreou, this position "could be held only by men intimately associated with the American Military Mission and the CIA."⁷⁴ Thus, all of the junta's leadership had known ties to the American security community.

The argument, however, that familiarity with someone makes you responsible for their actions is about as convincing as the argument that college professors are guilty for their students' crimes. The implication is that, because some American representatives had professional connections to the junta leaders, the United States must have had a role in staging the coup; guilt by association. Alexis Papahelas goes so far as to speculate that, while "the records released so far do not contain documents confirming that the Papadopoulos group contacted the CIA for the U.S. 'green light,'" the absence of a documentary connection "does not mean that an irregular communication of this kind did not occur, given that Papadopoulos and others maintained irregular but close contact with Greek-Americans serving in key posts in the CIA Station in Athens at the time."⁷⁵

Looking beyond innuendo, John Maury has rebutted the allegations of a significant American connection to the junta:

The brigadiers and colonels who thus found themselves in control were basically rather simple little men. I had met some of them, including George Papadopoulos, who was the head of the junta, casually when they were middle-grade officers in KYP, the intelligence service which CIA had working-level liaison on matters of common concern, as with the intelligence services of all NATO countries.

But none of the key junta members had any close connection with the Americans or experience in foreign policy or political activity.⁷⁶

Robert Keeley has corroborated Maury's claim: "we were working over-time trying to figure out who the Colonels were; no one knew them. We had no bio-data on them; they didn't speak English; they were not part of our military circles. Only one had been trained in the United States. . . . The other coup leaders had not been in the U.S."⁷⁷ Assuming all of these former American officials are not lying, it seems a stretch to argue that the U.S. government was behind the Colonels' coup.

Third, Andreas Papandreou cites the reaction of certain American elements in Greece as evidence of American complicity. In a normal reaction to a coup, Papandreou suggested, the United States Military Mission in Greece would have "taken strong action," fearing that the military intervention was a leftist putsch.⁷⁸ The Mission, however, did not react in a forceful manner. Papandreou speculated that the Mission's response was indicative of prior knowledge.⁷⁹ Papandreou also alleges that the plan used to execute the coup was a modified version of NATO *Plan Prometheus*. According to Andreas Papandreou:

Originally designed to facilitate the suppression of the Communists and the fellow travelers within the country in case a Communist nation attacked from the north, [*Prometheus*] was revised shortly before the coup to deal with a strictly internal situation, independently of an attack from some other country. And, though this has not been proved to date, the revision is said to have been carried out by a group of American colonels.⁸⁰

The U.S. not putting down the coup was the appropriate action. Anything forceful would have been an overt interference in Greek politics—and a violation of Greece's sovereignty. Given Washington's previous admonishments to avoid interference in Greek politics, it is hard to imagine a scenario that would have justified an immediate (and obviously militaristic) reaction to quell the coup during the early hours of April 21, 1967. As for the use of a NATO plan, the CIA Station Chief in Athens at the time concurred, characterizing *Prometheus* as "a NATO

contingency plan . . . designed to provide for military control in the event of war or revolution.”⁸¹

It seems that *Plan Prometheus* was modified and then implemented to overthrow the Greek government.⁸² But, again, this is not indicative of American involvement. Nor has proof of American assisted revisions ever surfaced.

Clearly, the evidence—albeit circumstantial and questionable—indicates prior knowledge of a *possible* Colonels’ coup. But where is the smoking gun? Many American diplomats preferred to keep Andreas Papandreou out of power. So motive was present. But guilt should require action in addition to desire. Did the U.S. actually do something to foment a Colonels’ dictatorship? The Embassy advocated a covert operation. The U.S. security community had ties to the Colonels. And the U.S. presence in Greece did not act to put down the coup on April 21, 1967 (which was likely executed pursuant to a modified NATO plan). Yet, all of these factors are a far cry from American sponsorship of the coup. Based on the evidence often cited to indict the U.S., it is clear that not only is there no smoking gun, but that the gun never even left the holster. While hints of *mens rea* are present, evidence of *actus reus* does not even come close to meeting a preponderance of evidence standard, let alone a beyond a reasonable doubt standard. Yet, for those not placated by the weakness of the often-cited evidence, there is exculpatory evidence which exonerates the U.S. from involvement in the overthrow of Greek democracy.

The Exculpatory Evidence

“Η Αμερική εβαλε την Χούντα.” Translation: America installed the junta.

The accusation is so nonchalantly made that it is easy to see how this claim has evolved into an accepted part of modern Greek history. Still, this oft-repeated assertion has never been more than conjecture. Because the relevant archival material from the U.S. State Department remained under lock and key till recent, it was extremely difficult to counter any arguments of American culpability for the 1967 coup. Today, as the declassified memos, telegrams, and interviews show, there is a strong body of exculpatory evidence, from before and after the coup, to reject one of Greece’s strongest held conspiracy theories.

Disapproval and Discouragement

Let’s begin with exactly what the U.S. government knew. As mentioned earlier, the Colonels were on the CIA’s radar screen as early as June 1965. In fact, a de-classified field information report dated March 7, 1966, forewarned of a military plot to suspend democracy in Greece. Titled “Rightist Greek Military Conspiratorial Group,” the document identified many of the figures who would go on to govern Greece during its seven years of authoritarianism—including Georgios Papadopoulos. The report noted that “The aims of this rightist group are to counter or avert leftist infiltration of the government and the military.”⁸³ According to follow-up field information report, Papadopoulos had begun asserting that “if the political situation continues to deteriorate at the present rate, drastic action, i.e., dictatorship, will be needed.”⁸⁴

Following the release of *FRUS XVI*, several Greek commentators stated that the field information reports are evidence that “U.S. Government officials knew *everything* about Papadopoulos’s conspiratorial group.”⁸⁵ The implication is that some American officials knew

when the coup was to have taken place. A careful and unbiased reading of the report, however, indicates that there was no knowledge of when a Colonels' coup would be launched. As the December 20, 1966, field information report noted, "The group discussed the current political situation, but did not make a decision concerning the establishment of a dictatorship."⁸⁶ A later telegram, dated March 24, 1967, concluded: "there is no evidence that army leadership is actually plotting to create conditions leading to deviation from Constitution. On contrary, we hold to opinion that military would not seek independently to impose a dictatorship, but it would support a dictatorship if King decided in favor of such a regime."⁸⁷ So, as late as March 24, 1967, American officials believed that a coup—especially one led by a group of colonels acting without the blessings of the King—was not forthcoming; let alone certain.

In the first few months of 1967, the United States was not 'in the know' of a concrete plan for the suspension of democracy. Still, conspiracies were cooking and rumors were rampant. The prevalent buzz in early 1967 was that the Generals would stage a coup in May, sponsored by the Palace, if a Papandreou electoral victory seemed inevitable.⁸⁸ When such schemes were floated past them, American officials often took the opportunity to express their disapproval of any constitutional suspensions. In January 1967, for instance, Dimitrios Bitsios, the Chief of the Royal Cabinet, asked John Maury, the CIA Station Chief, if the U.S. might be receptive to Palace-supported "extreme measures." Maury discouraged the idea:

I said if he were speaking of unconstitutional measures, I was confident that U.S. reaction would be extremely unfavorable. I pointed out that . . . unconstitutional measures rarely solve knotty political problems, and once such a course is embarked upon it is difficult to turn back."⁸⁹

Later in the meeting, Maury told Bitsios, “whatever justification might be found here for an unconstitutional solution, I saw no way in which it could be justified in the eyes of the American public, press or political leaders.”⁹⁰

In mid-March, there was a “flurry of rumors in press and elsewhere regarding . . . postponement of elections.”⁹¹ Even George Papandreou expressed “grave concern” and “fear” that a “junta might try to upset the plan for elections and to create the conditions for a dictatorship.”⁹² Meanwhile, a confidential informant was also reporting that “Lt. Gen. [Gregory] Spandidakis, Chief of Greek Army General Staff, has recently acted to prepare for implementation of *Ierax (Hawk) 2*, an alleged plan for military control of Greece.”⁹³ Despite the buzz in the air of a coup, however, Ambassador Talbot was still optimistic that a coup was not likely:

In our view, a plan probably does exist for certain actions by military in event of a dictatorship, but there is no evidence that army leadership is actually plotting to create conditions leading to deviation from Constitution. On contrary, we hold to opinion that military would not seek independently to impose a dictatorship: but it would support a dictatorship if King decided in favor of such a regime.⁹⁴

Talbot concluded his cable by observing that “King, despite pressures by Right, wishes to avoid extremism.”⁹⁵

Less than a week later, Talbot’s optimism had given way to pessimism. On March 29, the King directly informed Talbot that “he [King Constantine] cannot afford to risk the destruction of free Greece by permitting Andreas Papandreou to come to power.”⁹⁶ Talbot informed the State Department, “From that conclusion, if he [King Constantine] should hold to it, there naturally would flow decisions ranging on the extreme.”⁹⁷ Forecasting the mess to come, Talbot concluded, “As I say to my colleagues here: Well, chaps, we’re in it now!”⁹⁸

All throughout the winter and early spring, Talbot and his staff were indicating their distaste for any suspension of democracy in Greece. As DCM Norbert Anschuetz recalled, “The position of the Embassy was that a coup was not the proper solution to the problem.”⁹⁹ Indeed, Talbot commented in a February cable, “What we don’t need in NATO now is a Greek military dictatorship.”¹⁰⁰ The Ambassador expressed a similar view in his telegram of March 24:

In our view, any effort by Palace and by Right to postpone elections could play right into hands of Andreas Papandreou and Left, unless it were carefully engineered to avoid appearance of direct involvement by King. This, however, would be extremely difficult to accomplish. Even more dangerous would be establishment of a dictatorship—a view that we have expressed to many Greek personalities, including King, over past several months.¹⁰¹

By and large, Talbot had “in earlier talks . . . emphasized to the King our generally repugnant attitude toward dictatorships, citing our foot-dragging in recognizing the new Argentine regime. He is sufficiently aware of the general American posture.”¹⁰² But after the King personally floated the possibility of the Palace sponsoring a coup, Talbot decided to seek direct instruction from Washington on how to further proceed. Washington advised the Embassy as follows:

We would be inclined to warn more strongly against possible constitutional deviation. Depth of Greek feeling against such a move should be more carefully weighed by King. Andreas [Papandreou] as ‘martyr’ with Lambrakis machine standing fully behind him would be very formidable opponent. As matter of principle, of course, U.S. would be opposed to extra-parliamentary move. You should stress point that U.S. reaction to such move cannot be determined in advance but would depend on circumstances at time.¹⁰³

Pursuant to this guidance, Talbot met with the King. As he reported, the King was discouraged from considering a coup as a feasible option to settle the brewing political crisis:

I reassured him of continuing United States interest at highest level in Greece’s difficult situation. I said we share his concern over policies that might be adopted by government with Andreas Papandreou as leading figure but believe certain restraints could operate to

keep such a government from at least some of extreme measures Andreas now advocating. I expressed our agreement with the King's hopes that current difficulties can be overcome through parliamentary processes. I stated the inability of USG [U.S. Government] to give advance assurances of support to King and noted our traditional opposition to dictatorial solutions to constitutional crises. They are wrong in principle and rarely work yet create many new difficulties. A dictatorship in Greece might cause short-term upheavals, leading to more repressive measures, and to coalescence of opposition forces which in turn could be penetrated and dominated by international Communist agents. Adverse international reactions would not be limited to the Communist apparatus but would include supporters of democracy. Considerable criticism could be expected in United States.¹⁰⁴

On April 14, Talbot cautioned, "time has come to hoist urgent storm signals from Greece," as the situation had "deteriorated into imminent danger of first-class mess leading country to brutal choice between dictatorship and Andreas Papandreou-led attacks on monarch and probably Greece's foreign alignment."¹⁰⁵ The forecast was that the Center Union would "probably" emerge from the May 28th election with a "clear majority."¹⁰⁶ Talbot then opined:

This wouldn't be too bad if George Papandreou would emerge as boss. At age 80, however, he's lost biological race to his son Andreas, only other leader of vigor now in party, and a government with Andreas either as backstage manager or at helm would—as we evaluate thrust of his campaign—transform military high command into a party-controlled instrument and thus effectively break authority of King and traditional influentials in this country. United States would not necessarily find that and various domestic programs projected by Andreas so damaging except that they would give him springboard for foreign policies that sound like a Mediterranean Bhutto's. Comfortable and satisfactory Greek-U.S. relationship of past 20 years would inescapably yield to kinds of strains we are experiencing not only in Pakistan but in too many other countries. By all signs visible here, Russians would not be slow to take advantage.

Fearing such consequences of adverse election results next month, coteries in Palace, armed forces and ERE are evidently building up steam for 'constitutional deviation,' meaning dictatorship. They would hope to set things straight by period of firm rule and control of radicals. While their script is unclear, we presume that after dissolution of Parliament, and probably in May if election prospects then look unfavorable to them, current ERE government would be transformed into an emergency government with, initially, civilian Ministers backed up by armed forces under orders of King. Whether difficulties in enforcing order and meeting national problems would subsequently lead to direct army takeover is hard to perceive, as is method by which authoritarian rule would later make way for resumption of democratic government.¹⁰⁷

Talbot concerned over the prospects of authoritarianism, which “would set Greece far back domestically and internationally and in end might not save either monarchy or Western orientation,” then requested immediate advice on how to proceed with “looming dangers.”¹⁰⁸ The answer came within hours of the coup. In an effort to avoid an overthrow of democracy, the State Department proposed a compromise between the King and George Papandreu which would protect the King’s interests following a Center Union victory in the upcoming election.¹⁰⁹

Talbot, though, never had an opportunity to pitch Washington’s solution for averting a showdown. On April 21, the Colonels orchestrated a suspension to democratic rule in Greece.

The evidence from the period before the coup clearly and convincingly shows that, while the U.S. was well aware of the possibility of a dictatorial scheme, diplomats in Greece, acting under the guidance of superiors back in Washington, consistently discouraged extra-constitutional measures.¹¹⁰ Had the U.S. government sponsored the 1967 coup, the archival material would not only contain foreknowledge of the April 21 plot, it would also be filled with evidence of American encouragement and assistance.

Surprise and Scorn

The Colonels’ coup caught American officials by surprise.¹¹¹ As John Maury recalled, “the plan was carried out to the letter, completely surprising the palace, the senior military commanders, the chiefs of the Greek intelligence and police services—and *the Americans*.”¹¹² The sense that Americans were caught off-guard is reflected in early telegrams. Ambassador Talbot’s initial report to Washington observed, “On basis [of] still fragmentary information I have formed tentative impression that coup was triggered this morning by small army group not including

High Command, King or civilian political leaders.”¹¹³ By the end of the night, Talbot had concluded that, even though, the “real power rests with military. Question is which military.”¹¹⁴

Had the United States known of the April 21 plot, details of the executors and their justifications would have been immediately dispatched to Washington. Yet, even after meeting with two of the regime’s new civilian leaders and hearing their *raison d’être*, the Embassy was still reporting “there remain so many gaps in our understanding of what has happened and why.”¹¹⁵ It took over 48 hours to compile the first informative report on members of the junta and their possible motivations.¹¹⁶ In the weeks that followed, the Embassy continued to report additional fragments of information back to the State Department, further indicating that the Johnson administration was in the dark as to the Colonels’ plan.¹¹⁷

While surprise is one theme that runs through most of the reporting from the first two weeks of the junta period, the other theme is moderate scorn for the new regime. Immediately, the decision was made to support the King. And it was clear from the first moments of the coup that the junta did not have the blessings of the Palace. As an April 21 cable notes, the new government “was forced upon” the King.¹¹⁸ The same cable reported: “King Constantine, blazingly angry, has just told me that neither he nor General officers control Greek army tonight. ‘Incredibly stupid ultra-rightwing bastards, having gained control of tanks, have brought disaster to Greece,’ he said.”¹¹⁹ Indeed, so livid was the King that he literally “contemplated shooting perpetrators when they came to Palace to be sworn in.”¹²⁰

One of the first policy decisions taken by the Ambassador was to establish an emergency communications line with the Palace and to prepare for the possible evacuation of the Royal Family. The other major decision made on April 21 was to meet with the civilian leaders of the new regime and to admonish them that:

[W]e look to the government to maintain order, we insist that they open up communications for stranded Americans and call strongly upon government to restore normal life as rapidly as possible. With all force we call upon government to protect detainees from physical harm, and I will assert that United States, which gives Greece much assistance, will watch developments minutely. I will also express our support for role of King as Chief of State.¹²¹

Later that evening, Ambassador Talbot called on the appointed Prime Minister, Constantine Kollias, and informed him of the United States' concerns. In addition, the new Greek leadership was cautioned that the United States was "deeply distressed by today's developments, including the use of American-furnished equipment to overthrow the constitutional government of Greece."¹²²

The day after this initial encounter, Talbot cabled Washington and advised that "our public and press posture [should] reveal our regret and our distaste for process of changing governments by military coups."¹²³ The response from the State Department was one of general concurrence, emphasizing continuing support for the King vis-à-vis the military regime.¹²⁴ The overall tenor of policy guidance was that the United States might be willing to work with the new government, but that American actions would follow the King's lead and be dependent on a reduction in the "extensive security measures now in force."¹²⁵

Two days after the military takeover, Ambassador Talbot was reporting:

Until now Embassy . . . has coldly pointed out American reaction to overthrow of parliamentary government of a NATO ally by military establishment trained and equipped by Americans. We have been all but rude to Spandidakis [the new regime's Deputy Prime Minister] and others in cross-examining their assertions that they and other properly constituted commanders are actually in control of army. Without predicting what policy lines United States might adopt we have spelled out possible consequences in short words. We have made sure arrival of Sixth Fleet task force group in Greek waters has not gone unnoticed by top people. If we haven't educated the mule, at least we have given it those knocks required to get its attention.¹²⁶

The dispatch continued: “Now that we have its attention, what do we say? From our vantage point here, what is essential is to get Greece pointed again in direction of some kind of government with consent of governed. . . . [A]vowed steps toward restoration of constitutional rule would give promise of way out from present dictatorial deadend.”¹²⁷

On April 24, the State Department informed the Embassy that American military assistance to Greece was being suspended in response to the Greek military’s suspension of democracy. Washington counseled, “we should follow a policy of watchful waiting, and an attitude of coolness towards new govt while encouraging King vigorously to support move towards more viable government.”¹²⁸ Talbot, following this guidance, met with the King and told him, “we remain exceedingly uncomfortable at having Greek ally under military dictatorship.”¹²⁹ Talbot explained, “Americans would find it extremely difficult during this period to deliver tanks and similar major weaponry to regime which has used American-made tanks to overthrow established government.”¹³⁰

The junta, nonetheless, started consolidating its power through anti-democratic and repressive measures. Talbot warned Washington:

We are concerned about internal political implications of current situation and its impact on long term US position here. . . . It is difficult predict how much time may elapse before leftist and militantly democratic elements of population recover from shock and reaction sets in. Tenor of broadcasts from bloc radios suggests Communists may consider that coup provides them unexpected opportunity to enhance their position in Greece. A large number of Greeks believe United States concurred in or tolerated coup. Many Greeks assert only Communists dispose of an organization capable of leading resistance against a dictatorship and warn that Communists must not again be permitted to become leaders of democratic resistance as in World War II.¹³¹

Realizing the pitfalls of the Greek military regime, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara capitalized on an opportunity during a NATO Defense Ministers meeting to administer a high-level scolding. He admonished Deputy Prime Minister Spandidakis:

[I]t concerns us greatly that Greece has moved away from constitutional processes. . . .

[T]he American people could never understand a statement that there is more democracy today than before April 21—with the press suppressed, assembly prevented, people restrained, no free speech, and other constitutional guarantees suspended. Also, important to the view by the American people was the absence of any schedule for resumption of constitutional processes. These . . . are strong feelings of most of the people in the US. . . . [I]t would be extraordinarily difficult to maintain the Greek military assistance program without modification if there is no acceptable time schedule for the resumption of constitutional processes. . . .

[T]he Greeks should not underestimate the concern of the US and the strong hopes for movement back toward constitutional processes. . . .

[T]he whole Greek situation is dangerous, and that, until action is taken to remedy it, the dangerous situation will continue. . . . [T]he greatest deterrent to the Soviets and the thing most likely to encourage support from the US would be a demonstration by the Greeks that they can return to constitutional processes.¹³²

The logic behind the conspiracy theory of American culpability in the Colonels' coup requires that, if the U.S. government had been behind the military intervention, then the U.S. would have been 'in the know' and would have been warmly receptive to the new regime. But the newly released documents point in the other direction. As reflected in an April 22 telegram, the initial views of American officials were well captured by Talbot, who described the previous day as "the day of the rape of Greek democracy."¹³³ As Talbot added, "I am certain that Greece will long rue this day's events, whose long range effects are hard to foresee."¹³⁴

Conclusion

As Talbot predicted, to this day, many rue the events of April 21. Moreover, many resent those responsible for the events of that historic date in Greek history.¹³⁵ As the evidence above shows, however, the U.S. government is not guilty for the tragedy of April 21. The United States discouraged conspirators who suggested a military takeover might be the solution to Greece's political crisis in the mid-1960s. The United States had no foreknowledge of the Colonels' plot specifics. And the United States, once presented with the coup as *fait accompli*, expressed disdain for the overthrow of democracy. Combined, these facts not only weaken the case of conspiracy theorists, they exonerate the Johnson administration.

The belief that the United States helped stage the Colonels' coup has been a source of bitterness for over three decades—leading to heated debates, anti-Americanism, and even violence and terrorism in Greece. Arguably, the Nixon administration—which was far more supportive of the Papadopoulos government than the Johnson administration—deserves some blame for these consequences. But as for the question of were the eagle and the phoenix birds of feather? Well, if they were, they did not take flight together until after April 21, 1967.

¹See, for example, Pavlos Tsimas, “Stories from Pristina,” *Ta Nea* [Athens—In Greek], March 4, 2000, 4.

²See, for example, “Miller’s Secret Involvement,” *Ta Nea* [Athens—In Greek], July 4, 2003, 5.

³See, for example, Dimitrios Konstandakopoulos, “Secrets and Lies about the Twins,” *Ependitis* [Athens—In Greek], May 9, 2002, 40-41.

⁴See, for example, Alexis Papahelas, “17N Was Defeated, Together with the Television,” *To Vima* [Athens—In Greek], August 22, 2002, A6; and Louis J. Klarevas, “Debunking of Elaborate Media Conspiracies an Important Trend,” *Kathimerini* [Athens—Online English Edition], September 21, 2002.

⁵Takis Michas, “America the Despised,” *The National Interest*, No. 67 (Spring 2002), 94-102; and Takis Michas, *Unholy Alliance: Greece and Milosevic’s Serbia* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2002).

⁶For overviews of the Greek junta, see, for example, Richard Clogg and George Yannopoulos, eds., *Greece Under Military Rule* (New York: Basic, 1972); and C. M. Woodhouse, *The Rise and Fall of the Greek Colonels* (New York: Granada, 1985).

⁷On the brutality of the Colonels, see, for example, Amnesty International, *Torture in Greece: The First Torturers’ Trial 1975* (London: Amnesty International, 1975); and James Becket, *Barbarism in Greece: A Young Lawyer’s Inquiry into the Use of Torture in Contemporary Greece with Case Histories and Documents* (New York: Walker, 1970).

⁸On the foreign policy of the junta toward Cyprus, see, for example, Theodore A. Couloumbis, *The United States, Greece, and Turkey: The Troubled Triangle* (New York: Praeger, 1983); and Tozun Bahcheli, *Greek-Turkish Relations since 1955* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990).

⁹See, for example, Derek Gatopoulos, “Mistrust, Not Orthodoxy, Lies at the Heart of Greece’s Objections,” *Athens News* [In English], March 28, 1999, 3; and Andonis Karkayiannis, “US Files,” *Kathimerini* [Athens—In Greek], August 20, 2002, 20.

¹⁰“Remarks to Business and Community Leaders in Athens, November 20, 1999,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, William J. Clinton, 1999, Vol. 2* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000), 2122.

¹¹See, for example, Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit, 1983).

¹²The volume of newly declassified documents is part of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* [FRUS] series: James E. Miller, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968: Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey*, Volume XVI (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2002) [FRUS XVI

hereinafter]. The new collection of oral histories related to Cold War Greek-American relations is part of the Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection (CD-ROM 2000) [FAOHC hereinafter].

¹³“Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), accessed on-line at: www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers.

¹⁴For overviews of Greek-American relations in the decade following World War II, see, for example, Theodore A. Couloumbis, *Greek Political Reaction to American and NATO Influences* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966); Theodore A. Couloumbis, John A. Petropoulos, and Harry J. Psomiades, *Foreign Interference in Greek Politics: An Historical Perspective* (New York: Pella, 1976); Yiannis P. Roubatis, “The United States and the Operational Responsibilities of the Greek Armed Forces, 1947-1987,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* (Spring 1979), 37-57; Theodore A. Couloumbis and John O. Iatrides, eds., *Greek-American Relations: A Critical Review* (New York: Pella, 1980); Lawrence Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Minas Samatas, “Greek McCarthyism: A Comparative Assessment of Greek Post-Civil War Repressive Anti-Communism and the US Truman-McCarthy Era,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* (Fall-Winter, 1986), 5-75; and Yiannis P. Roubatis, *Tangled Webs: The US in Greece, 1947-1967* (New York: Pella, 1987).

¹⁵USDSR, 611.81/8-453, August 4, 1953. The U.S. State Department’s explicit instructions to Ambassador Lincoln MacVeigh, Ambassador Peurifoy’s predecessor, are also indicative of the type of heavy-handed approach that is implied in Ambassador Peurifoy’s memorandum of August 4, 1953. Ambassador MacVeigh was instructed to play a role in any of the following matters:

- (A) Any action by the United States representatives in connection with a change in the Greek Cabinet;
- (B) Any action by the United States representatives to bring about or prevent a change in the high command of the Greek armed forces;
- (C) Any substantial increase or decrease in the size of the Greek armed forces;
- (D) Any disagreement arising with the Greek or British authorities [still remaining in Greece] which, regardless of its source, may impair cooperation between American officials in Greece and Greek and British officials;
- (E) Any major question involving the relations of Greece with the United Nations or any foreign nation other than the United States;
- (F) Any major question involving the politics of the Greek Government toward Greek political parties, trade unions, subversive elements, rebel armed forces, etc. including questions of punishment, amnesties, and the like;
- (G) Any question involving the holding of elections in Greece.

Quoted in Couloumbis, *United States, Greece, and Turkey*, 17-18.

¹⁶Examples include the attack on the USIE library in Thessaloniki (Salonica) and the burning of President Eisenhower's portrait. These incidents are mentioned in USDSR, 611.81/12-1654, December 16, 1954. This anti-American sentiment was also brought to the attention of the United States government by George Frantzis, an American citizen traveling through Greece in 1954. Claiming that there has been a "definite disillusionment with United States policy in Greece," and citing the leftward swing in the local elections of December 2, 1954, as evidence, Frantzis sought to bring "to light some of the reasons which may lead a formerly staunch ally away from us." USDSR, 611.81/3-255, March 2, 1955.

¹⁷USDSR, 611.81/11-457, November 4, 1957.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Laurence Stern, *The Wrong Horse: The Politics of Intervention and the Failure of American Diplomacy* (New York: Times, 1977), 30.

²¹Andreas Papandreou, *Democracy at Gunpoint: The Greek Front* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 143. While there is not much discussion of the *Pericles Plan* in U.S. diplomatic cables, a telegram sent from Deputy Chief of Mission Norbert Anschuetz noted the potential of this disclosure to undermine political stability in Greece: "Army, which from beginning has been unenthusiastic about Papandreou administration, is now widely disillusioned with his govt. First real jolt came with publication of so-called Operation Pericles plan in Feb, in which, much to distress of military leadership, PriMin used Lt. Gen Loukakis as his hatchet man in attempt to implicate army in exercise of partisan political activity in support of ERE 1961 electoral campaign." "Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State," Athens, June 18, 1965, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 194. This telegram is one of the first American forecasts of a clash between the Papandreou government and the traditional Greek political establishment. ERE, which is mentioned in the telegram, was the conservative party of Greece.

²²Papandreou, 144-147.

²³Ibid., 149-150. In his memoirs, Andreas Papandreou referred to ASPIDA as a "frame-up." Ibid., 150. Commenting on the ASPIDA investigation, a former U.S. diplomat on the Greek Desk at the State Department (1966-1968) stated, "Nothing conclusive ever came out of it. Even the junta was unable to really prove these charges." John P. Owens, oral history interview, FAOHC.

²⁴Richard Clogg, *A Short History of Modern Greece*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 184.

²⁵Roubatis, *Tangled Webs*, 188; and Stephen Rousseas, *The Death of a Democracy: Greece and the American Conscience* (New York: Grove, 1967), 28.

²⁶Papandreou, 169-176.

²⁷Stern, 35.

²⁸Stern, 38-39; and “Letter From the Ambassador to Greece (Talbot) to the Country Director for Greece (Brewster),” Athens, March 30, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 265.

²⁹Commentators frequently distinguish the rumored coup from the actual coup. The former is often referred to as the “Generals’ coup”; the latter, the “Colonels’ coup.” The latter reference draws attention to the fact that the April 21, 1967 was orchestrated and executed by five officers, three of whom were colonels. Moreover, the leader of the junta, Georgios Papadopoulos, was a lieutenant colonel.

³⁰*Mens rea* is actually intent. Because intent is difficult to establish, however, motive is often used to supplement evidence of intent. Indeed, intent is often inferred from action when motive is present. Therefore, this sub-section focuses largely on evidence of motive.

³¹Philip Deane [Gigantes], *I Should Have Died* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), 116.

³²*Ibid.*

³³Andreas Papandreou described the Center Union’s stance on dealing with NATO and the United States as follows: “Greece was part of the Western alliance. This we did not challenge in any way. But we refused the role of satellite. We resented intervention in our internal political life. ‘Allies, yes. Satellites, no.’ That was our slogan.” Papandreou, 120. A sampling of Andreas Papandreou’s positions can be found in “Airgram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, November 30, 1965, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 214.

³⁴Quoted in Stern, 25. One of my favorite stories from the time is relayed by former Greek Desk Officer John Owens, who notes that Andreas Papandreou’s involvement in the American political system led, in part, to his branding as a leftist: “Andreas Papandreou, though, with his American ways and his militancy which he had developed during the course of being in the civil rights movement . . . supported Henry Wallace rather than Harry Truman in ’48, which suggested that he was quite far to the left.” John P. Owens, oral history interview, FAOHC.

³⁵Quoted in Stern, 36. John Owens explains, “there was a feeling that if elections were held that . . . the father might step down or in any case might die since he was I think at the time 77 or 78 when he was forced out. There was a general feeling that they [the traditional Greek establishment] could live with George Papandreou and with the traditionalist, if slightly more liberal members of the Center Union who were in the George Papandreou government. They could not live with an Andreas Papandreou type government. . . . Andreas represented forces and ideas, possibilities, which the powers that be generally felt that they could not live with.” John P. Owens, oral history interview, FAOHC. Indeed, George Papandreou died in 1968. It should also be noted that, during the Cold War, U.S. bases in Greece were considered important to the strategy of containment. As John Owens stated, “The bases were important . . . for the

cohesiveness of the NATO alliance.” Ibid. Similarly, a former Country Officer for Greece at the State Department (1966-1969) expressed, “Greece was real estate, valuable real estate.” Herbert Daniel Brewster, oral history interview, FAOHC.

³⁶John P. Owens, oral history interview, FAOHC. Owens adds, “the communist party [of Greece] was considered an agent of Moscow, and there was always the extreme right wing fear that there was a link between Andreas and the communists, which was very nebulous.” Ibid. By 1967, Andreas Papandreou had become so critical of the U.S. that Owens, who had been more reluctant to see Papandreou in a completely negative light than some of his colleagues, felt “Andreas was taking an increasingly anti-American line. I did feel it would be inimical, disadvantageous to American interests if Andreas Papandreou were elected. Yes, I did, looking at it coldly from the point of view of U.S. interests. U.S. bases, Greek participation in NATO.” Ibid.

³⁷Quoted in Stern, 26. Robert Keeley, Political Officer at the Embassy in 1967, also felt that a Papandreou victory “would have challenged . . . the existence of the monarchy.” Ambassador Robert V. Keeley, oral history interview, FAOHC.

³⁸John M. Maury, “The Greek Coup: A Case of CIA Intervention? No, Says Our Man in Athens,” *Washington Post*, May 1, 1977, C3. In the same op-ed piece, Maury wrote, “Andreas Papandreou made no secret of his desire to reduce the U.S. presence and curtail Greek participation in NATO. He argued that sovereignty was threatened because American officers occupying senior positions in the NATO command had gained a voice in the development and disposition of the armed forces. He urged the closing or curtailment of several important U.S. and NATO installations, and courted the support of leftist extremists.” Ibid.

³⁹Quoted in Stern, 26.

⁴⁰Quoted in *ibid.*

⁴¹Quoted in Deane [Gigantes], 116-117.

⁴²Quoted in *ibid.*

⁴³On July 23, DCM Anschuetz dispatched a cable noting that Embassy personnel were “endeavoring [to] avoid actions which might prejudice U.S. position.” Still, as he noted, the U.S. was being blamed, falsely, for interference in Greek politics: “Given incredibly sensitive political acoustics in Athens and virtuosity of Greek talent for misrepresentation and distortion, Embassy position is constant subject for local exploitation. For example: King has been quoted as saying I discouraged Stephanopoulos from forming or joining government following Papandreou resignation; rightist elements have charged that U.S. is no longer interested in fighting Communism; Andreas Papandreou told me he knows Americans are saying that he must go. This spectrum of commentary suggests that although our attempt not to become involved may not prove to be completely successful, the effort is at least a valiant one.” “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, July 23, 1965, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 200.

⁴⁴Telegram 127 from the Department of State to the Embassy in Greece, July 31, 1965, Department of State, Central Files, POL 15, quoted in “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, July 23, 1965, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 200, n. 4. In a subsequent cable, Washington again urged non-involvement: “Appreciate intense nature of pressure employed to force American involvement in crisis. However, believe response to any further approaches of type mentioned your [telegram no.] 229 should be reiteration that ultimate solution will be healthier politically and more permanent if Greeks work it out without interference.” Telegram 164 from the Department of State to the Embassy in Greece, August 12, 1965, Department of State, Central Files, POL 15, quoted in “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, August 10, 1965, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 201, n. 3.

⁴⁵“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, September 5, 1965, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 204. Given the strategic placement of this document in *FRUS XVI*, between the editor’s note on the 303 Committee in charge of planning and coordinating all American covert operations (Document No. 203) and the still classified “Memorandum From Albert Carter of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (Talbot),” September 10, 1965 (Document No. 205), which is drawn from the INR files of the 303 Committee records, I believe that the *FRUS XVI* editor was hinting that the classified portion of the September 5 Anschuetz telegram recommends that the U.S., in the words of the editor’s note, “take active steps to strengthen a moderate regime as well as weaken the political base of the Papandreous.”

⁴⁶It should be mentioned that American concerns over Andreas Papandreou were not unanimous. Commenting on how he and his fellow desk officers viewed the situation, Herbert Daniel Brewster stated, “We didn’t buy the idea that this was that dangerous, that holding elections would make that much difference at the time. We were ready to work, as we had since 1964, with George Papandreou and with Andreas.” Herbert Daniel Brewster, oral history interview, FAOHC. August Velletri, a junior political officer in Athens at the time, concurred: “The Greeks were very supportive even under the George Papandreou government. It was not George who was feared but his son, Andreas, and his anti-Americanism, etc., which, I think was just a policy ploy to get elected. Before the Colonels, the Foreign Office had been very supportive of us. I never had any problems with it.” August Velletri, oral history interview, FAOHC.

⁴⁷Maury, C3.

⁴⁸“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, February 11, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 255.

⁴⁹Maury, C3.

⁵⁰“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, February 11, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 255. The telegram also noted, “Significance is that [Andreas Papandreou] gives respectable centrist cover to advancement of Communist policies. Moreover, his public commitment to these policies has become so complete that EDA [Greece’s

left wing political party] and his personal supporters from left will have effective grip on him should he attain high office after elections. American interests in Greece would be vulnerable to substantial erosion in such an atmosphere.” Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²“Memorandum for the Record,” Minutes of Meeting of the 303 Committee, Washington, March 13, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 261.

⁵³“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, February 11, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 255; emphasis added.

⁵⁴“Minutes of Meeting of the 303 Committee,” Washington, March 8, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 259.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶“Memorandum for the Record,” Minutes of Meeting of the 303 Committee, Washington, March 13, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 261.

⁵⁷The March 8, 1967, meeting of the 303 Committee was continued on March 13. The minutes indicate that at least one person was present at the meeting, advocating the covert operation. The person, whose identify remains classified, argued, “one of the principal factors making Andreas Papandreu a distinct threat was his percolating animosity to the United States which was unlikely to change. . . . If it looked likely that Andreas was moving closer to victory, the monarchy and the military could well suspend the constitution and take over. The military was estimated as being loyal to the king.” Ibid. While it is not certain, it is likely that the advocate of the operation present for the meeting was CIA Station Chief John Maury. In his *Washington Post* article on the role of the CIA in Greece, he implied that he was present for the deliberations. As he wrote, “National Security Council representatives in Washington considered but ultimately disapproved these proposals. The argument was that the United States was already heavily committed in Southeast Asia and that the time had come for the Greeks to care of themselves.” Maury, C3. See, also, the next footnote below.

⁵⁸Maury recalls that during the meeting of the 303 Committee, a “very high administration official” opined, “Maybe we should let the Greeks try a military dictatorship; nothing else seems to work over there.” Quoted in Maury, C3. While some might read this as American support for a coup, it seems to be a sarcastic remark which expresses American frustration with events in Greece in 1967. There is no indication from the minutes that a coup was ever discussed as a feasible or desirable alternative to a Papandreu electoral victory. In fact, following the coup, National Security Advisor Walt Rostow sent a memorandum to President Johnson informing him that the 303 Committee both never approved the modest covert operation and never deliberated a coup: “In general, the view we took was that it was becoming less and less appropriate for us to try to influence elections in places like Italy and Greece. . . . Moreover, there was considerable skepticism—shared by me—that the outcome in Greece would be much affected by this kind of money. In any case, the issue before us was not ‘what should

we do or not do about a coup': it was, 'what should we do or not do about an election which at that time we all believed was more likely, rather than less likely, to take place'; although we knew there was considerable anxiety in certain Greek quarters about that election."

"Memorandum from the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to the President," Washington, May 15, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 290.

⁵⁹See, for example, "Field Information Report," Athens, March 7, 1966, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 225; and "Field Information Report," Athens, December 20, 1966, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 245. See, also, Stern, 42-46.

⁶⁰Stern, 42-46. Stern metaphorically comments that these reports pointed out that "the butler had announced his intention to commit the crime and was on his way to the master bedroom, loaded revolver in hand." *Ibid.*

⁶¹In addition to the reports, DCM Norbert Anschuetz was once tipped of a Colonels' coup during a meeting in early April, 1967, with Nick Farmakis, a conservative member of the Greek Parliament. Farmakis informed Anschuetz that a group of colonels, described as "personal friends," would be staging a coup soon. *Ibid.*, 45-46. When Anschuetz relayed his meeting to members of the Embassy's political section, he claims his information was not taken seriously. *Ibid.* It is now known that at least one of the reports on the "Revolutionary Council" identified Farmakis as a close contact of the Colonels. See, for example, "Field Information Report," Athens, March 7, 1966, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 225. It is conceivable that the Embassy officers just brushed off the hint of a coup as a boastful, yet low credibility, example of wishful thinking on the part of Greek politician.

⁶²Stern, 42-46; and Papahelas, "CIA Was Obsessed."

⁶³Ambassador Robert V. Keeley, oral history interview, FAOHC. Alexis Papahelas has also suggested that perhaps "someone in the CIA did not wish to reveal the group's activities during the last phase of preparations for the coup." Papahelas, "CIA Was Obsessed."

⁶⁴Robert Keeley has acknowledged that the reports had been "intermittent." Ambassador Robert V. Keeley, oral history interview, FAOHC. Between June 1965 and February 1967, 15 reports were filed. That is an average of one every month and a half.

⁶⁵*Ibid.* John Maury has acknowledged that the information in the reports was being provided by an informant: "One CIA informant—with whom we had only casual relations—did report on a conspiracy among the colonels which might lead to a coup, but he was unable or unwilling to provide details, and his information was but a tiny fragment in the masses of reports then coming in." Maury, C3.

⁶⁶Maury, C3. As Maury writes, "All of which illustrates a familiar dilemma in the intelligence business: If you want to know what the bad guys are doing under the covers, you

may have to crawl in bed with them. If you uncover them and their mischief, you're a hero. But if somebody uncovers you before you uncover the bad guys, you've had it." Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸"Intelligence Information Cable," Athens, March 9, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 260.

⁶⁹Roubatis, *Tangled Webs*, 209.

⁷⁰Deane [Gigantes], 96.

⁷¹Lawrence Wittner, *American Intervention in Greece, 1943-1949* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 305. One commentator, indeed, claimed that Papadopoulos had undergone CIA training in the United States. "George Gives Value," *The Nation*, August 13, 1973, 101. But this has been contradicted by the former Ambassador to Greece, Robert V. Keeley, who served as a Political Officer in the Athens Embassy in 1967. See, Ambassador Robert V. Keeley, oral history interview, FAOHC. I feel it is only fair that I mention that Papadopoulos did not speak English. Interview with the former General Secretary of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Byron Theodoropoulos, 2 January, 1989. Furthermore, C. M. Woodhouse claims that Papadopoulos, at his own trial, testified that "he had never been trained or employed by the CIA, and that he knew the USA 'only from TV and the cinema.' His claim was not rebutted. It was even corroborated by the evidence of later investigations conducted by members of the U.S. Congress hostile to both the dictatorship and the CIA." Woodhouse, 1985, p. 20. In his memoirs, Andreas Papandreou referred to a report submitted to him by a former "disaffected member of Papadopoulos' junta." Although never publicly released, Papadopoulos was supposedly identified as "the CIA's leading agent in Greece." Papandreou, 221-225. It should be noted that Woodhouse questions Papandreou's veracity regarding this alleged report. Woodhouse, 9-10.

⁷²James Becket deduced that, because the "KYP's financial support came directly from the CIA without passing through any Greek ministry," making the KYP an "administrative and fiscal appendage of the CIA," the CIA knew all the Colonels. Becket, 13.

⁷³Ambassador Robert V. Keeley, oral history interview, FAOHC.

⁷⁴Papandreou, 224-226.

⁷⁵Alexis Papahelas, "The CIA Was Obsessed with Andreas Papandreou," *To Vima*, [Athens—In Greek], August 17, 2002, A6-A7. It is not that Papahelas's suggestion is inconceivable. After all, former operatives have disclosed ties to the Colonels. Take, for example, Gust Avrakotos, who was an American clandestine agent in Greece in the 1960s. He claims that, prior to the coup, "he had made it his business to get to know the colonels. . . . They could speak Greek with him. He drank and whored with them, and they knew from the heart that he shared their ferocious anti-Communism." George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly

Press, 2003), 52. But there is no evidence whatsoever of even rogue CIA agents giving the Colonels a “green light.”

⁷⁶Maury, C3. Embassy Political Officer August Velletri supports Maury’s implication that the CIA was not behind the coup: “The coup, however, came as a big surprise to all of us. Even the CIA was not prepared by this turn of events. Some of the officers didn’t even know who this ‘fellow Papadopoulos’ was.” August Velletri, oral history interview, FAOHC. Robert Keeley holds a similar view: “CIA has been blamed for engineering that 1967 coup or for fomenting it or for supporting it or for organizing it. I don’t believe that for a minute. I have tried to examine it from a logical point of view. I know that the ‘station chief’ and his deputy were not knowledgeable; they had run into the same military road-block as I had the morning of the coup as we were all trying to get to the Embassy. They were completely unaware of the coup and when we met at the Embassy, they had nothing to tell us; as I said, neither CIA nor we—nor our military attaches!—knew who those Colonels were. I have to believe that Washington headquarters was also in the dark.” Ambassador Robert V. Keeley, oral history interview, FAOHC.

⁷⁷Ambassador Robert V. Keeley, oral history interview, FAOHC. Desk Officer for Greece Herbert Daniel Brewster, too, recalls being unfamiliar with Papadopoulos: “George Papadopoulos was not a name known to the desk.” Herbert Daniel Brewster, oral history interview, FAOHC.

⁷⁸Papandreou, 227.

⁷⁹Ibid. Supposedly, the Greek police and the *gendarmerie* that night thought that the coup was actually executed by the Communists. Ibid. Even more extreme, Philip Deane [Gigantes] claimed that there exists sworn testimony from an agent of the KYP stating that “some American CIA members, wearing Greek uniforms, participated in the coup on the night of April 21st, 1974 [sic.] to make sure it would be bloodless.” Deane [Gigantes], 92, 124. I have never been able to locate this testimony. Nor have I ever come across any other source that even references this testimony; let alone corroborates it. It has long been on record, though, that John Maury, the CIA Station Chief in Athens on the day of the coup, donned a military uniform so that he could navigate past military road-blocks and reach the Embassy in order to report back to Washington. See, for example, Norbert L. Anschuetz, oral history interview, FAOHC.

⁸⁰Papandreou, 227-228.

⁸¹Maury, C3.

⁸²An American diplomat working in the political section of the Athens Embassy in 1967, however, takes issue with this claim: “The mistake is to think that NATO had a plan, whereby, a bunch of army officers took over the government of Greece and arrested the Prime Minister and the ex-Prime Minister . . . and locked them all up in jail. That was not in the *Prometheus* plan. It was a plan that would have been executed by the civilian Greek government, but using the military to do certain things such as rounding up the Communists. So that’s the fallacy about

it. . . . There was no NATO plan for a takeover of the government of Greece; hardly. That's just not conceivable." Interview with Ambassador Robert Keeley, December 28, 1988.

⁸³"Field Information Report," Athens, March 7, 1966, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 225.

⁸⁴"Field Information Report," Athens, December 20, 1966, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 245.

⁸⁵"The U.S. Government Had Known about the Members of the Junta for Quite a While," *Kathimerini* [Athens—Online English Edition], August 23, 2002; emphasis added. For an identical claim, based on the field information reports, that the U.S. knew "everything" about the junta, see, Alexis Papahelas, "The CIA Had an Insider in the Papadopoulos Group," *To Vima* [Athens—In Greek], August 18, 2002, 15.

⁸⁶"Field Information Report," Athens, December 20, 1966, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 245.

⁸⁷"Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State," Athens, March 24, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 264.

⁸⁸Rumors of a coup were rampant in the months preceding the Colonels' coup—albeit that most officials expected a Palace-supported Generals' coup. Herbert Daniel Brewster, who oversaw the Greek Desk at the State Department, remembers being told stories of an impending coup during his familiarization tour in Greece in early 1967. As he recalled, "It was true that as of December-January rumors were up that some higher level Greek generals might be tempted to pull a coup rather than have an election." Brewster also noted, "we were not clued into the Papadopoulos scene." Herbert Daniel Brewster, oral history interview, FAOHC. John Owens, who was also on the Greek Desk, expressed a similar expectation: "My own feeling, and I think it was shared by many in the Embassy, was that there was a danger of a coup, but that it would come from the Generals." John P. Owens, oral history interview, FAOHC. In fact, on the evening of April 20, 1967, Robert Keeley, then a Political Officer in the Athens Embassy, completed a draft of a memorandum that "predicted that the [Generals'] coup would take place well before May 28." Of course, Keeley never had the opportunity to deliver his analysis to his superiors as the Colonels' staged their coup that next morning. Ambassador Robert V. Keeley, oral history interview, FAOHC.

⁸⁹"Memorandum of Conversation," Athens, January 28, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 251. Maury also reminded Bitsios that "Whatever we may suspect of Andreas' motives and affiliations, there is still no proof of active Communist or Soviet connections." *Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹"Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State," Athens, March 24, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 264.

⁹²“Memorandum of Conversation,” Athens, March 17, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 262. In addition, the memo noted, “referring once more to the junta, Papandreou expressed the hope that the Ambassador would use his influence in favor of an amnesty for Aspida. Papandreou obviously had in mind the Ambassador’s speaking to the King.” *Ibid.*

⁹³“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, March 24, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 264. The *Ierax (Hawk) 2* plan is also briefly discussed in “Intelligence Information Cable,” Athens, March 9, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 260.

⁹⁴“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, March 24, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 264.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶“Letter from the Ambassador to Greece (Talbot) to the Country Director for Greece (Brewster),” Athens, March 30, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 265.

⁹⁷*Ibid.* Despite this expectation of the “extreme,” in a “fast-breaking situation” where “crucial decisions could be made also any night in the next dozen,” Talbot did still express that “it still seems more likely that the King will try to stick to the parliamentary track as long as he can until he is finally persuaded that if elections are held the Andreas forces are headed for an EK [Center Union] majority.” *Ibid.*

⁹⁸*Ibid.*

⁹⁹Norbert L. Anschuetz, oral history interview, FAOHC. John Maury’s recollection is similar: “the official U.S. position, that a military coup would do irreversible damage to Greek-American relations and to the Greek position in the NATO community, was faithfully followed by all responsible civilian personnel in contacts outside the embassy family.” Maury, C3.

¹⁰⁰“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, February 11, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 255.

¹⁰¹“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, March 24, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 264.

¹⁰²“Letter from the Ambassador to Greece (Talbot) to the Country Director for Greece (Brewster),” Athens, March 30, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 265.

¹⁰³“Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Greece,” Washington, April 3, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 267. The reference to the “Lambrakis machine” is a reference to the newspapers of Greek publisher Christos Lambrakis. It is worth noting that several commentators have singled-out the last sentence of this instruction as “giving the go-ahead for the coup.” Alexis Papahelas argues, “This telegram was sent to Athens on 3 April 1967, and constitutes a ‘vague message,’ if not an ‘orange light,’ to Constantine, giving the go-ahead for the coup.” Papahelas, “CIA Was Obsessed.” An even stronger interpretation was offered in the Greek daily *Kathimerini*, which wrote, “a telegram from Washington to the

Embassy dated 3 April also gave the green light for a coup on behalf of the then King.” “U.S. Government Had Known.” Interpreting the telegram this way, though, is plain wrong! Indeed, what matters most is not what one sentence, taken out of context, said, but how Ambassador Talbot interpreted and applied the instructions in the entire telegram. As Talbot’s post-April 3 dispatches make clear, he acted, based on the instructions, in such a manner that heavily discouraged coup plotting.

¹⁰⁴“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 9, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 269.

¹⁰⁵“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 14, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 271.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.* Talbot also wrote: “As you know, King and Kanellopoulos have told me Greece ‘will not’ be delivered to Andreas Papandreou. Nonetheless, we must consider this possibility if we are to oppose dictatorship. My own view is that key question—to which I have no present answer—is whether basic Greek institutions can withstand shock of Andreas’ takeover attempts so that further elections could be assured after couple of years or so. Based on his past record of executive performance, I believe Greek people would then reject him and excesses of his fiscal and administrative policies. In these circumstances we could live for a while with his abrasive if not defiant policies. However, Andreas strikes me as capable in adversity of dismantling traditional Greek institutions and policies if he is permitted to do so and to lead country even deeper into Nasserist posture.” *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹“Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Greece,” Washington, April 20, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 272. Washington’s solution was “compromise based on iron-clad assurances from both sides. Our formula would envision assurance from King to G. Papandreou that Andreas Papandreou would not be arrested, in return for following two concessions from Papandreou, on assumption he wins May 28 elections: (1) that he appoint only persons of ‘mutual confidence’ to sensitive positions of Foreign Affairs and Defense and (2) that he not carry out widespread shakeup in armed forces leadership.” *Ibid.* As this proposal implies, the State Department felt that political problems in Greece could be resolved even if the Papandreous won the upcoming elections, so long as both sides were open to some political compromise. Such an attitude shows no desire in Washington to take active measures against the Papandreous. The obvious implication is that Washington dissented with proposals for a coup.

¹¹⁰The recollection of Herbert Daniel Brewster is consistent with this interpretation: “we knew that the generals might have come up, we used all our influence in terms of telling them, ‘no, this is not the answer; coups are not the way to go, you are a member of NATO,’ etc. etc. I presume that they took heed of it but along came this undercover upstart type and he just ran the ball.” Herbert Daniel Brewster, oral history interview, FAOHC.

¹¹¹As this analysis is concerned with what role, if any, the United States played in helping the Colonels overthrow democracy in Greece, its focus is on events prior to and including April 21, 1967. Nevertheless, as immediate American reactions to the coup also shed light on the research question, a *brief* sampling from the first few days of the dictatorship are reviewed in this sub-section.

¹¹²Maury, C3; emphasis added. Maury, who awoke at 5 a.m. to the surprise of a coup, added, “When the question of a possible military coup did arise, it was always in the context of a move by the generals, who could be expected to exercise moderation and to restore democracy as soon as possible. The possibility of such a move by the rigid, fanatical colonels was never seriously considered.” Maury’s insistence that the coup was a bolt from the blue has been corroborated by numerous other American officials. See, for example, FAOHC oral history interviews with Herbert Daniel Brewster, Norbert L. Anschuetz, John P. Owens, August Velletri, and Ambassador Robert V. Keeley.

¹¹³“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 21, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 273. In a subsequent cable sent later in the day, it was noted that “Emb[assy] had been following situation as closely as we could but that our information still extremely limited by inaccessibility of persons involved, fact telephonic communications had been cut, and that circulation in city had been prohibited.” “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 21, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 274.

¹¹⁴“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 21, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 276. Cables sent out that first day also portray an Embassy staff concerned with the whereabouts and conditions of political prisoners. As one dispatch states, “Ambassador has in fact instructed all official American representatives . . . to emphasize that bloodshed will make an already tragically complicated situation infinitely more so.” “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 21, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 274. See, also, “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 21, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 273; “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 21, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 275; “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 28, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 282; “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, May 5, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 285. Had American officials been aware of the Colonels’ plans, they would have probably spent far less time scrambling for information on prisoners and admonishing Greek authorities as to the treatment of their detainees.

¹¹⁵“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 22, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 277.

¹¹⁶“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 23, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 279. This telegram noted: “Coup is revolutionary. Its central core—Papadopoulos, described as the top theoretician; Patakos, the top executive; and Makerezos—are limited, politically inexperienced, tough-minded, no-nonsense types setting out to ‘purify’ Greek political, social and economic life. Their manifesto sounds like Ayub in 1958.

Also like 1958 model Ayub, they declare themselves thousand percent pro-American and are urgently seeking any hint of American understanding of what they're doing. With or without it, they know they must succeed or lose their heads." Ibid. The telegram also speculated as to the fundamental cause of the military intervention into Greek politics: "While it is early to judge causes of coup, personality and policies of Andreas Papandreou may be prime reason Greece today is under dictatorship. King, moderate centrists and moderate conservatives had all been opposing ultra-rightist convictions that only the army could safeguard Greece from Communism. Andreas' style and the thrust of his threats to the Greek 'establishment', particularly the armed forces, were alien to normal to-ing and fro-ing of Greek political life. Because they exceeded bounds of Greek political tolerance and therefore induced deepest distrust in rightist quarters especially the army, Andreas lost chance to move Greece in directions he favored." Ibid.

¹¹⁷See, for example, "Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State," Athens, April 25, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 282; and "Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State," Athens, May 5, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 284.

¹¹⁸"Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State," Athens, April 21, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 275.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²"Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State," Athens, April 21, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 276. It was during this meeting that the United States was first informed of a justification for the coup: "PriMin responded that he was also sorry that use was made of this matériel, but that action was absolutely essential in view of Communist threat. By Communist, he explained that he meant not only those who belong to extreme left but also those who 'sympathize' with them. (In latter category he undoubtedly was thinking of Andreas.) PriMin asserted that, had military not acted, another Viet-Nam might have occurred in Greece and country might have fallen in Iron Curtain abyss. Neither [Deputy Prime Minister] Spandidakis nor PriMin was precise in explaining what exactly had happened to trigger coup." Ibid. The reader might recall that previous intelligence reports had identified Spandidakis as a conspirator in the Generals coup. See, for example, "Intelligence Information Cable," Athens, March 9, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 260.

¹²³"Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State," Athens, April 22, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 277.

¹²⁴As Washington cabled, "We think that his position vis-à-vis the military officers controlling the government is stronger than he appears to think and that he should use what we consider to be their considerable need for him to extract from them the maximum concessions." "Telegram from the State Department to the Embassy in Greece," Washington, April 22, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 278.

¹²⁵Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach instructed the Embassy that “we like the King will need a modus vivendi with this Government but believe that establishment of ours should await establishment of his.” Katzenbach also forecast, “increasing Congressional and public disapproval of association with this regime, to say nothing of collaboration with it, and that its use of MAP equipment in staging coup will be particularly sore point.” “Telegram from the State Department to the Embassy in Greece,” Washington, April 24, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 280.

¹²⁶“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 23, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 279.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*

¹²⁸Telegram 181282 from the Department of State to the Embassy in Greece, Washington, April 24, 1967, Department of State, Central Files, POL 23-9 Greece, quoted in “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 23, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 279.

¹²⁹“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 25, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 281.

¹³⁰*Ibid.* When the King inquired into how flexible the U.S. was regarding the suspension of the military assistance program, Talbot responded, until the junta “demonstrated its readiness to return to constitutional rule . . . there was no prospect that American reserve would melt.” *Ibid.*

¹³¹“Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, May 5, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 284.

¹³²“Telegram From the Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and European Regional Organizations to the Department of State,” Paris, May 9, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 286.

¹³³Telegram 4797 from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State, Athens, April 22, 1967, Department of State, Central Files, POL 23-9 Greece, quoted in “Telegram from the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” Athens, April 22, 1967, *FRUS XVI*, Document No. 277.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

¹³⁵*Ibid.*