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Greek parliamentarians and Greek foreign policy (2004-2014)

Stelios Stavridis

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Stelios Stavridis[1]

ABSTRACT

The Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy was announced in the 1990s as a 'success story'. However, it has led to a vivid debate over whether this has really occurred or if it only amounted to 'superficial Europeanisation'. More recent research, that also takes into consideration the impact of the current financial and economic crises, tends to confirm the latter approach. However, there is very little research on 'deep Europeanisation', for instance on its 'crossloading' dimension. This is particularly so over the international role of Greek parliamentarians. It also represents a gap in the growing academic study of 'parliamentary diplomacy', and that on International Parliamentary Institutions, including on the European Parliament. This paper is a pilot study that presents preliminary findings from the Hellenic Parliament (in Greek, the Vouli ton Ellenon, in short the Vouli), from Greek members of the European Parliament (MEPs), and from a parliamentary network, the World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association. Its objective is to call for the need for more research on this subject.

Keywords:
Greek parliamentarians, Hellenic Parliament (Vouli), Europeanisation, Greek foreign policy, European Parliament, World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association

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1. Introduction

The Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy was announced in the 1990s as a 'success story' (see several publications, in particular by Ioakimidis 1999; 2000; 2001; 2003). However, it has led to a vivid debate over whether this has really occurred or not. For instance, Tsardanidis and Stavridis (2005, 2011) have labeled it 'superficial Europeanisation' (see also Economides 2005)[2]. More recent research, that also takes into consideration the impact of the current financial and economic crises, tends to confirm the latter approach (see Tsardanidis, 2015). This paper intends to add to the now vast literature on Europeanisation (see below).

However, it does so from a specific perspective as there is very little research on the question of 'deep Europeanisation' in Greece, for instance on its 'crossloading' dimension. This is particularly so over the international role of Greek parliamentarians. It also represents a gap in the growing academic study of what has been defined as 'parliamentary diplomacy' (see Stavridis and Jancic 2017; for empirical cases in the Mediterranean see Stavridis and Gianniou. 2016). Perhaps this is due in part to the fact that there is growing consensus on the absence of such a process in the first place, including possibly some de-Europeanisation. But, this question falls beyond the direct scope of this work.

The paper presents some preliminary findings from the Hellenic Parliament (in Greek, the Vouli ton Ellenon, in short the Vouli), from Greek members of the European Parliament (MEPs), and from a loose parliamentary network, the World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association. It is a short pilot-study that will hopefully lead to more interest on the question. The period covered is 2004-2004, partly because there has been hardly any study of the international relations of the Greek Parliament since then, and partly in order to cover coherent periods of governance, i.e. prior to what was supposed to become a tectonic shift in the bipartisan politics in Greece with the arrival to power of SYRIZA in early 2015.

The paper is also written for a number of other reasons: 1) to qualify further the initial and misplaced Euro-enthusiasm that marked most studies on the Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy; 2) to present these still preliminary, and mainly quantitative, findings with a view to develop a possible agenda for future, more systematic and comprehensive, research on this topic; and 3) to build a basis for future comparative work with other national parliaments of EU member states.

[2] For a similar critical assessment that does not cover foreign policy, see Gemenis and Lefkofridi (2013).

2. The Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy

Until now, the literature on the Europeanisation of national public policies has mainly focused on collecting evidence that either "proves" its existence, or, on the contrary, that 'shows' its limits. Over time, academic research has extended beyond policies, to also cover politics and polities via numerous case studies – thus, comprising most areas of regional integration in Europe, and even beyond (particular attention has been given to candidate countries prior to the 2004 'big bang' enlargement, or even to Turkey). The concept of Europeanisation itself has also been further developed into three interrelated dimensions: downloading, uploading and crossloading (Olsen 1996; 2002; Radaelli 2001; Featherstone, Radaelli 2003; Lynggaard 2011).

In the specific case of foreign policy, initially there was some resistance to the use of this concept itself on the grounds that domestic politics and foreign affairs (FP/foreign policy) are not one and the same thing. However, such a distinction has now long gone as it simply did not reflect reality, due not only to an advanced regional integration process in Europe but also to the wider development of Globalisation worldwide: it has led to a plethora of studies on the subject (Wong 2007; Wong, Hill 2011; Baun and Marek 2013; Tonra 2015; Hadfield, Manners, Whitman 2017).

As far as the Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy is concerned, as already noted, there has been a debate over whether this has really occurred or not. In particular Tsardanidis and Stavridis (2005; 2011) have argued that to 'upload' FP issues of national interest (ethnika themata in Greek – see below) does not amount to real Europeanisation: because all it does in practice is to prevent the development of a common European position. Thus, the 'national' interest may be preserved but it is imposed through the use of a – implicit or explicit— veto at the EU level, but without finding a satisfactory solution to the international problem in question, which continues to exist. Foreign policy in general and diplomacy in particular are supposed to solve problems, not to create more or worsen the ones existing. This is not to say that the 'merits' of the Greek stances should be ignored. Indeed the Europeanisation literature has just started to address such a dimension (Brommesson 2010; see also Stavridis and Tsardanidis 2009, 156). But, it means that the whole question of how to Europeanise national foreign policies and what this implies for all actors involved is not as simple as initially thought by those who only looked at the *EU*isation of domestic politics.

However, there is very little research on 'deep Europeanisation', for instance on its 'crossloading' dimension, and, in particular, on the role of the Hellenic Parliament in Greece´s foreign policy has received scant attention to date. Indeed, this is particularly relevant for Greece as there exist clear divergences between elites and the public over several key foreign policy issues. Parliaments are supposed to represent the voters but also to act as transmission belts between them and the executive and vice versa. Hence, the lack of research on this subject is particularly alarming (for examples see Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2005: 124-125). Greece since the 2008 world crisis has also become the

country that experienced the most dramatic shift in public support away from the EU (see Torreblanca and Leonard 2013:3).

The Vouli is of vital importance for a small country that is situated in/between the Balkans and the Middle East, with Turkey as a neighbor (a country with serious internal and external problems, especially after the failed coup attempt of July 2016). This is even more so now that Greece has also been suffering from a deep economic, financial and political crisis; a situation that was further aggravated in 2015 especially by the additional massive input of refugees, mainly from Syria. Again, there is hardly any research on the role of the Greek Parliament over those issues.

What follows looks in more detail at the Greek Parliament by presenting a number of quantitative findings on this specific research question: over the past ten years (2005-2015), has the Vouli helped the Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy? In order to do so, this preliminary analysis will present a quantitative study based on foreign policy debates. Furthermore, as the existing literature on the international role of parliamentary actors has shown that there is now a multi-layered parliamentary field (Crum and Fossum, 2009; 2013, Jancic 2015), the empirical section of this study will cover not only Greek MPs but also Greek MEPs. As the same literature has identified a proliferation of international parliamentary bodies (on IPIs, see Costa, Dri and Stavridis 2013a)[3], this study will also cover less institutionalised parliamentary structures, such as parliamentary networks, where Greek MPs are also active. It will look at the World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association, a parliamentary network that was launched by the Vouli itself. This multi-dimensional approach will offer some indication of whether Greek foreign policy has become really Europeanised or if, instead, it still only represents yet more 'superficial' Europeanisation.

Whitman and Manners (2000: 11) have correctly claimed that it is through problematic FP issues that one should test if there is Europeanisation or not[4]. Therefore what follows concentrates on Greece´s 'national issues'. Greece was called and behaved like an 'enfant terrible' for years after it joined the then European Economic Community and its European Political Cooperation system of foreign policy coordination[5]. Markou et.al. (2001) call it 'a European Paradox'. Sotiropoulos (2015, 335) uses the word 'tortuous' to define that period of relations between Greece and the (then) EEC (see also Kazakos and

[3] For a discussion of the differences between formal IPIs known as international parliamentary organisations/IPOs and less formal, often informal international parliamentary associations/IPAs, see Cutler (2011). For the EP as an IPI, see Cofelice and Stavridis (2014).

[4] They refer in particular as examples to the following cases: 'German relations with Turkey, *Greek relations with FYROM/Macedonia*, Finnish relations with Russia, and the issues of Gibraltar and Northern Ireland' (Whitman and Manners (2000:11, emphasis added).

[5] The predecessor of the Common Foreign and Security Policy/CFSP. On EU foreign policy, see inter alia Keukeleire and Delreux (2014).

Ioakimidis 1994[6]; Kakavas 2000). Whether its stance on 'ethnika themata' has changed over time represents therefore a good initial test for Europeanisation.

In brief, what follows offers preliminary findings based on quantitative analysis of three different sets of parliamentary data: Vouli debates on FP 'ethnika themata'/national issues; MEPs membership of EP interparliamentary delegations; and, topics discussed in the World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association.

3. The Vouli, the EU and Greek foreign policy

In addition to the fact that there is overall very little research on the international role of the *Vouli* (see below), a literature overview also shows that the Parliament does not really possess much clout in the overall Greek policy-making process. As Sotiropoulos (2015: 336, 337, emphases added) puts it:

> "its role in the [Greek political] system is fairly **marginal** to that of the government (…) "; "the legislature … is not autonomous but almost completely dependent on the" government; and due to strong interest groups many "policy measures often fall into the **abyss of a deep implementation gap**".

Moreover, on EU policies, there is also "cosmetic parliamentary control of draft EU legislation" (Sotiropoulos 2015: 340) - in spite of the recent Lisbon Treaty reforms. This continuing lack of parliamentary input should be contrasted to the experience of other EU national parliaments that have not only expanded their powers after Lisbon but have also used the financial crisis as further impetus for more active participation in EU affairs: for instance, the French and the Portuguese Parliaments (see respectively Jancic 2012 and 2015).

As far as Greek FP is concerned, the picture is even more problematic. Sotiropoulos (2015: 343) warns us that "[w]hen it comes to sensitive issues of national importance, such as foreign policy, the government is even more discreet about its negotiating position". Similarly, whereas the 2008 crisis led to a (re-)Europeanisation in the case of Cypriot FP (Christou and Kyris 2015), in the case of Greece, as noted, this did not happen - therefore further reinforcing its initially superficial Europeanisation (Tsardanidis 2015).

Such a sorry situation gets even more perplexing because as far back as nearly two decades ago, Kavakas (2000: 150, 157) had already stressed the inconsistencies of Greek FP and its resistance to Europeanisation[7]. He argued that the "issues of national

6 In preface to their book: '[n]o doubt Greece stands as a unique case among the member states of the European Community/European Union in practically every respect' (Kazakos and Ioakimidis 1994: x).
7 on the related questions of "resistance to EU norms in foreign and security policy", see Saurugger and Terpan (2015), and on that of de-Europeanisation, see Aydın-Düzgit and Kaliber (2016).

importance (…) Turkey, Cyprus and the Balkans", including the Macedonian question and the Greek-speaking minority in Albania are intentionally kept outside any Europeanisation process. Which means that "foreign policy is made for domestic consumption", leading to enormous contradictions between elites and public opinion but also confusion about what Greece would like to see in an ideal world (EU support for its ethnika themata often resulting from its difficult geopolitical situation) and its means of achieving it (retaining veto power over those same issues whilst calling for majority voting in CFSP matters) (Stavridis 2003a; 2003b).

As for the existing literature on the international role of the Greek Parliament, it is very limited in Greek, and quasi non-existent in other languages. What is also striking is that most of the existing literature on the Greek Parliament is now out of date, that it is rather descriptive, or that it confuses EU affairs with FP[8]. There are also several articles in the media written mainly by practitioners and in particular by the Vouli Presidents. Some of the more academic pieces are also written by practitioners and very few university professors or think tank researchers have bothered to study this growing international phenomenon of 'parliamentary diplomacy' (see above).

4. Analysis: some quantitative data and several preliminary findings

4,1 .The Vouli

What are the instruments that the Vouli possesses in foreign policy? There are constitutional arrangements and rules of procedures that define the international role of the Vouli. The main actors are the President of the Vouli, the relevant Committees, Delegations, and Friendship Groups. These Committees are:

- Standing Committee on National Defense and Foreign Affairs.
- Special Standing Committee on European Affairs.
- Special Permanent Committee on the Hellenism of the Diaspora[9].
- Special Standing Committee on the follow-up of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

8 See Stelios Stavridis, Sophia Chani and Zacharoula Georgiou, "Greek parliamentary diplomacy", Paper delivered to the 1st Workshop on Security & Stability in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, organised by the Institute of International Economic Relations (IIER/IDOS) on 26-28 May 2016 in Athens.

9 The Greek Diaspora ("Omogenia") is important for Greece (population just under 11 million) as it is estimated "that the number of Greeks living outside Greece and Cyprus are around 7 million. Around 3 million of them live in the US, 700,000 in Australia, 400,000 in the UK, 400,000 in Germany and around 300,000 in Canada. Smaller Greek communities exist in South America, mainly in Argentina, Brazil and Chile, in several other European countries (Sweden, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland, Netherlands) and other places throughout the world": http://www.hellenism.net/greece/greek-culture/greek-diaspora/.

On a current count drawn from the Vouli´s own website[10], there are currently 78 Friendship Groups; the Vouli also sends delegations to the five following parliamentary assemblies[11]:

- NATO Parliamentary Assembly –NATO PA
- Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)
- Inter – Parliamentary Union (IPU)
- Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE)
- Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO).

The Vouli therefore participates in a number of bilateral and multilateral arrangements and, in both, special attention is given to EU states and institutions (in particular the Conference of the Committees of the national Parliaments of the European Union Member States/COSAC, or the Conference on EU Parliament Presidents). Greek MEPs can also attend - but without the right to speak - the Vouli´s Committee on European Affairs. They also participate in one of the EU Interparliamentary assemblies (the one on the Union for the Mediterranean[12]), as well as the recently set up IPCs (interparliamentary conferences) that have appeared following the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty (see Lupo and Fasone 2016). In addition, Greek MPs also participate in several other, mainly regional, IPIs such as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) or that of the BSEC (PABSEC). In fact, Greece comes first in a list of 23 IPIs dealing with the Mediterranean as it takes part in no less than 13 of them (Cofelice and Stavridis 2017: 20).

The research question is therefore as follows: over the past ten years (2004-2014), has the Vouli helped the Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy? A period that covers over 4 parliamentary terms (11th to 15th)[13]. The data[14] results from an analysis of the how many questions on foreign policy have been asked during plenary sessions, and what where there topics, divided between total and national issues - in turn the latter being split into Turkey, Cyprus and FYROM. The results are as follows.

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10 www.hellenicparliament.gr.

11http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/Diethneis-Drastiriotites/Diethnes-Perivallon/Diethneis-Organismoi/.

12 The other three cover respectively the ACP countries, Latin American states and regional organisations, and the Eastern neighbourhood countries - but only the EP is represented. Which means that Greek parliamentarians there are Greek MEPs and not Greek MPs as is the case in the Euro-Med where both are present.

13 excluding the 14th term (March 2004-May 2015) as it only took place to show that there was no working majority and therefore there were immediate fresh elections.

14 The author would like to thank for this data Sofia Chani and Zacharoula Georgiou, then students at respectively the University of Piraeus and at the Panteion University of Athens and also interns at IDOS during October 2015-January 2016 when they worked on Greek parliamentary diplomacy under the current author´s supervision.

Results (1):

Questions on FP issues during plenary sessions (11th, 12th, 13th and 15th parliamentary terms)

	total	"ethnika themata"	TURKEY	CYPRUS	FYROM
11th: 18/3/2004-2/8/2007	21	13	10	5	2
12th: 26/9/2007-3/9/2009	32	17	9	-	9
13th: 14/10/2009-10/4/2012	32	16	10	1	5
15th: 28/6/2012-30/12/2014	45	19	11	2	6
	130	65	40	8	22

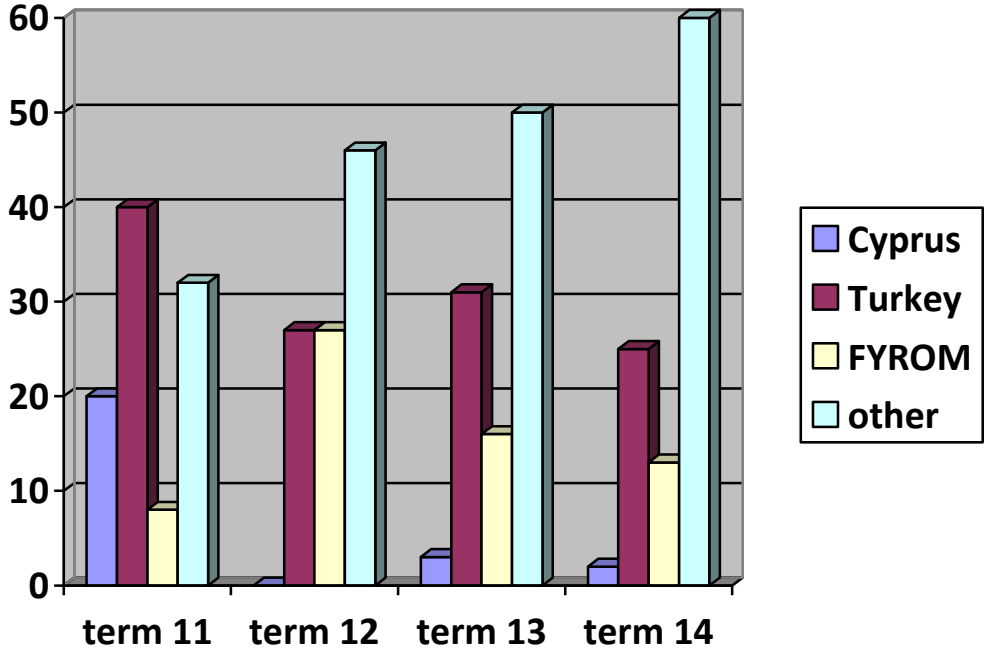
Table 1 & Graph 1:

Percentage (%) of questions for each national topic/total questions for each parliamentary term (Total may be over 100% as different issues may be covered in same questions**)**

Table 1

	Cyprus	**Turkey**	**FYROM**	**others**
11th	**20%**	**40%**	**8%**	**32%**
12th	**0%**	**27%**	**27%**	**46%**
13th	**3%**	**31%**	**16%**	**50%**
15th	**2%**	**25%**	**13%**	**60%**

Graph 1



Thus, the above data *seem to show* that some form of Europeanisation is taking place as national issues appear to lose their overwhelming share in the debates. From about 20% at the beginning of the period under study the Cyprus issue almost disappears. Turkey remains important but drops overall. The Macedonian issue fluctuates somehow but without passing the 20% mark for most of the time. Finally, other topics expand from 30 to 60%, that is from one third to two thirds, thus doubling their importance over a period of ten years plus.

Thus, this data shows an overall trend away from ethnika themata. Yet, it needs further research in the future. Of course one should also assess if this is not due to specific developments during a specific period: e.g. in 2004 Cyprus was prominent because of the Annan Plan and of its EU membership negotations. For instance one could expect renewed interest not only over Cyprus as the most recent reunification efforts have failed (July 2017) but also over Turkey following the July 2016 failed coup attempt and its consequences.

In terms of which parties have been more active on FP issues, it is usually the ones from the Opposition that are more vocal as question time allows them to express their disagreements and criticisms with the Government of the day. Greece is not exception and therefore most questions are asked on the one hand, by LAOS (Popular Orthodox Party) and, after 2012, the neo-nazi Golden Dawn (on the extreme Right), and, on the other, by the Communist Party (on the extreme Left). The former oppose Greece's Europeanisation process on the grounds that the EU represents a threat to 'traditional'

Greek and Orthodox values. The latter has always shown a Eurosceptic attitude, and opposed both Greece's membership in the European Union and any subsequent treaty reform including that of Lisbon. Its opposition extends to NATO and the West in general as the EU is seen as a proxy for what they call 'American imperialism'.

As for the (then) main parties, the Conservative New Democracy and the Socialist PASOK, they did the same when they were not in power, although not from the extreme positions that have just been described. The same applies for SYRIZA (Coalition of the Radical Left) which came out of SYNASPISMOS, both radical left parties, and for the Independent Greeks (ANEL), this time a radical right party that is until they formed a coalition government in January 2015.

Finally, there is another dimension to this question that will not be discussed here and that is the rather pro-Russian role of most Greek fringe parties in the past and currently of the SYRIZA party.

4.2 .European Parliament delegations membership

There are currently 21 MEPs from Greece out of a total of 751 (EU 28), whereas there were 22 in the previous Parliament[15]. The number of MEPs depends on demographical weight according to the overall number of member states (hence, as with other countries, less Greek MEPs following recent enlargements) but also on election results in terms of which political groups these 21 MEPS join. The more MEPs have been elected for a given group, the more powers this group obtains in terms of who leads a delegation, who chairs a committee, etc.

In the term 2009-2014, the largest groups[16] were the EPP (with 274 MEPs), the S&D (196), and ALDE (83). Greek MEPs belonged to the following ones[17]:

- 8 to the EPP
- 8 to the S&D
- 1 Greens
- 3 to GUE/NGL
- 2 to EFD.

15 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en (as accessed on 03/11/17).
16 EPP: Group of the European People´s Party
S&D: Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament
ALDE : Group of Alliance of Liberals and Democrats in Europe
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformist Group
GUE/NGL: Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left
EFD: Europe of Freedom
NI: Non-attached members.
17 http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/seats-group-member-2009.html.

In the current term 2014-2019, the largest groups are the EPP (with 217 MEPs), the S&D (189), ECR (74) and ALDE (68). Greek MEPs belong currently to the following groups – reflecting a move at the national level of the popular vote away from traditional parties towards more populist ones, both of the Left and of the Right:

- 5 to the EPP
- 4 to the S&D
- 1 to ECR
- 6 to GUE/NGL
- 5 to N.I.

Thus, from the start, due to demographics, Greek MEPs do not belong to all 8 political groups, plus the N.I., represented in the EP. As noted, in the current parliamentary term, there is also an overrepresentation to the Left of the political spectrum, especially in GUE/NGL: over a total of 52 MEPs, Greece represents almost 10% of that group, which is not the case with any other political group. All these dimensions need further analysis but they fall beyond the scope of this preliminary study.

What this paper does is to consider which EP delegations Greek MEPs participate or have participated in. Interparliamentary delegations cover all states and regions of the world. The EP currently has 44 such delegations, including those that deal with interparliamentary assemblies. The objective of this quantitative exercise is to show whether or not there has been a move away from the traditional Greek foreign policy concerns. It is to be expected also that due to their relative small share of total MEPs, Greek members will try and focus their attention on important issues or at least on issues that are important for their electorate. As this is a preliminary exercise, the study focuses on how many Greek MEPs are members of which delegations.

First an overall comparison is carried out between the two terms. If one compares the current and the last EP parliamentary terms, the number of Greek MEPs on the delegation with FYROM passed from 5 to 3 and that of Turkey from 3 to 5. Thus, it is difficult to draw a conclusion from these equidistant shifts.

Table 2

	Greek total members 2014-2019	Greek Total 2009-2014
FYROM	3	5
Turkey	5	3

This finding is rather inconclusive. One needs to go one step beyond and to compare more than these two delegations:

LISTS A & B: TOP NUMBERS MEMBERSHIPS current and past TERM[18]

List A:

- **6 MEPs**: 2014-2019 **Turkey**
- 5 = 2009-2014 **FYROM**
- 5= 2014-2019 Russia
- 4 = 2009-2014 China
- 4 = 2009-2014 USA
- 4 = 2014-2019 USA
- 3 = 2009-2014 **Turkey**
- 3 = 2014-2019 **FYROM**
- 3 = 2009-2014 Russia
- 3 = 2009-2014 Palestine
- 3 = 2014-2019 Serbia
- 3 = 2014-2019 China
-

List B - Once the three "big powers" (USA, China, Russia) are "removed":

- **6 MEPs**: 2014-2019 **Turkey**
- **5** = 2009-2014 **FYROM**
- **3** = 2009-2014 **Turkey**
- **3** = 2014-2019 **FYROM**
- **3** = 2009-2014 Palestine
- **3** = 2014-2019 Serbia

Therefore, these aggregate lists show that Turkey and FYROM come up in the top 4 over these two terms, that is to say that these remain the main Greek concerns afterall. These findings somewhat qualify and contextualize those from the *Vouli* above. Cyprus does not appear simply because it joined the EU in 2004 and therefore it now has MEPs and there is no longer a parliamentary delegation/committee with it as was the case before that date.

There is a need to go into further research on this subject, for instance who are the Greek MEPs involved? Are they only passive or active participants? How many of them act as "rapporteurs"? How do they link their delegation work with that of their membership in other relevant (from a FP perspective) EP Committees? Are these Greek MEPs senior or junior politically speaking? Do they speak foreign languages? These all are questions that are not addressed here.

18 We focus on those two terms because these are the only archives fully accessible online which include detailed memberships (as of summer of 2017).

4.3 Interparliamentary network: The World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association

The academic literature on parliamentary diplomacy and on IPIs also stresses that informal or rather less formalised fora are as important as formalised ones: in part because parliamentary activities in world affairs often use more flexible arrangements than traditional diplomacy (Weisglas and de Boer 2007); and also to a certain extent because IPIs come out in many a form and shape (Costa, Dri and Stavridis 2013b, esp. 5-11). Thus, the paper now turns to the World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association (W.H.I.A)[19].

The W.H.I.A is an informal set-up launched by the Hellenic Parliament. It groups parliamentarians of Greek origin in non-Greek speaking countries[20] from 72 legislatures in 27 states. For instance, from the Mediterranean there are parliamentarians from Albania, France, Israel, Jordan and Gibraltar.

From its official website, "The World Hellenic Inter-parliamentary Association (W.H.I.A), was founded on August 1996 in Athens, Greece, when an International delegation of elected members of Parliament of Greek descent living in non-Greek speaking countries convened for the first time. The purpose of this meeting was to organize this unique association which created a network of top level Government officials and parliamentarians from around the Globe who are of Hellenic heritage. In June 2005, W.H.I.A acquired its current legal status in Greece"[21].

What follows is a first evaluation of how these 'ethnika themata' appear in the WHIA´s work. The website presents 33 press releases over a 30-month period (November 2008 to May 2011), of which there are 8 resolutions, and 3 motions, plus references to the discussions that took place during its 2008 and 2009 General Assemblies (respectively, its 6th and 7th such events).

First, the resolutions, during 2011, there were 8 of them: two concerning directly Cyprus, one FYROM, and two more referred to Turkey, directly or indirectly. That means 50% cover those 'ethnika themata'. There is also a resolution (No. 1, 8/4/2011) that calls for the return of the Elgin marbles that were taken out of Greece in 1800 under … "Turkish rule" (sic)!

In the 6th General Assembly, "[d]uring the sessions of the General Assembly were discussed various issues of concern regarding the strengthen of the organisation, updated problems concerning Hellenism, the Macedonian issue, the Cyprus dispute, the Pontic Greek Genocide and the Patriarchate".

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19 On informal politics in the EU, see Christiansen and Neuhold (2013).
20 Therefore Greek and Cypriot MPs are not included.
21 http://www.whia.gr/central.aspx?sId=103I295I777I323I420684.

The 7th one “Calls for action on return of Parthenon Marbles, Justice for Cyprus, Recognition of Pontian Genocide and Supporting the Recognition and Rights of Albania´s Greek Minority”.

So there is overwhelming focus on those issues. Mainly they amount to condemnatory declaratory statements, which is a typical parliamentary activity in international affairs. The only difference here that it is a result of Greek MPs using this forum with other non-Greek counterparts, although of Greek origin/language, to try and push for ethnika themata through parliamentary channels. Thus, this example also shows that Greek input and participation in parliamentary diplomacy and IPIs are used for those purposes. The related question of whether this is an effective policy or not falls beyond the scope of this study and it deserves academic attention in the future.

5. By way of Conclusion

This preliminary research has shown that although an initial look at some of Vouli’s foreign policy questions and raw figures may point to some evidence of Europeanisation, a wider look at other fora, institutionalised like the EP, or not like the W.H.I.A, seem to show a different picture: the ethnika themata clearly continue to dominate the concern, attention, and agenda of Greek parliamentarians. Thus, in the case of EP delegations, it has been shown that FYROM and Turkey remain of crucial importance. The same is also true in an informal setting like the W.H.I.A network.

Future research should expand on this pilot-study both quantitatively, by adding more examples in order also to facilitate comparisons with other countries, and qualitatively, in particular through extensive interviews with parliamentarians and not necessarily only Greek ones.

More research on Greece is required on the link with public opinion where there seems to be huge gaps with elites, for instance: over relations with Israel, Turkey but also over issues like the Macedonian saga, let alone EU policies vis-à-vis Russia, or, more recently over relations with Germany.

It would be important to also update the current research to include the SYRIZA-ANEL government in power since early 2015. This period was intentionally left out of this study because that date is seen as a seminal change in Greek politics: the advent to power of a radical Left party and the collapse of most of the bipolar system of government that had characterised Greece on a Left-Right divide since the return to democracy in 1974.

There is little doubt that there is a pressing need for a new research agenda on this issue. It is hoped that this working paper will attract the necessary academic attention it deserves. In at least three directions as identified in this paper: 1) The role of the Vouli in

Greek foreign policy; 2) The multi-layered dimension of Greece´s parliamentary involvement in international affairs; and, 3) The implications of domestic politics for the Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy.

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