

Title: 'Greece and Gulf War II'

Author: George Tzogopoulos,
PhD researcher on U.S. foreign
policy and the media,
Loughborough University.

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INTRODUCTION

The first semester of 2003 was marked by Gulf War II. On 20 March 2003 the United States together with Great Britain undertook a military operation against Iraq aiming at disarming Iraq and toppling Saddam Hussein's regime. A lot has been already said and written about this military initiative of the U.S. This essay focuses on the position of Greece regarding Gulf War II. Its purpose is to analyse whether Greece was for or against the war on Iraq, to explain the reasons for its stance and to outline its attitude before and after the war.

Initially, the official position of Greek Administration concerning the war on Iraq will be defined. This position will be justified on the basis of political, economic, historic and domestic factors. For instance, did Greece follow the same policy during Gulf War I and II and why? And also, how did the high possibility of war on Iraq influence the Greek economy? Moreover, a special emphasis will be put on the role of Greece as President of the European Union in 2003. For example, which initiatives did it undertake within the EU and how did it represent the Community at the United Nations? In addition, the use of military facilities with which Greece provided the U.S. will be analysed. Furthermore, the debate within the Administration and the Greek Parliament will be assessed, while the role of the Greek media, mainly the Greek press will be outlined. Finally, the conclusion that will be reached will endeavor to examine whether Gulf War II was positive or negative for Greece.

GREEK POSITION

Prime Minister Costas Simitis's declaration on 21 March 2003 mirrored the official Greek position regarding Gulf War II: 'Greece is not participating in the war and will not get entangled in it.'¹ In addition, Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou expressed Greece's opposition to the U.S. going it alone in Iraq.² Not only PASOK's Administration, which at that time was in power in Greece but also the opposition parties in Greece shared the same position regarding the war on Iraq. New Democracy (ND), which is was the strongest opposition party in Greece, opposed the war as well.³ In addition, the other two parties of the Greek Parliament, namely the Communist Party (KKE) and the Greek Left Party-Synaspismos saw the war as proof of U.S. expansionist policy and its imperialistic aspirations in the Middle East.⁴

Opposing Gulf War II did not mean that Greece ignored George W. Bush's accusations for Saddam Hussein's attitude on the basis of his 'Axis of Evil' speech of 30 January 2002. Greece, which expressed its solidarity with the U.S. after 11 September terrorist attacks, considered the U.S. accusation 'for possession of weapons of mass destruction and the incitement of terrorist groups by Iraq as serious issues.'⁵ Thus, it demanded the disarmament of Iraq and the destruction of any WMD it

¹ George Gilson, 'Split EU Watches War Unfold' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, (Athens News internet edition), 21/03/2003, p. A07.

² Gilson, 'Iraq: Greece's Hot Potato', in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, 04/10/2002, p. A03.

³ Synediassi 27/03/2003, Karamanlis's speech in: <http://www.parliament.gr/ergasies/showfile.asp?file=es0327.txt> (Greek Parliament webpage), 1^o periodos.

⁴ 'Hi Agonia ton Kommaton gia tis Synepies' in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr> (To Vima internet edition), 12/01/2003.

⁵ Author's interview with Ambassador Panagiotis Vlassopoulos- Director of Middle East Department of Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, 23/07/2003, Athens, Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

possessed in line with the UN position.⁶ Nonetheless, Greece did not agree with Bush's strategy of pre-emptive war as a means of fighting terrorism. By contrast it was in favor of settling the dispute over Iraq by diplomatic means and not by force.

Greece is a peace-loving country and has suffered the devastating consequences of war through the ages. It strongly believes that the use of violence is not a panacea.⁷ This principle is Greece's standing position. For instance, when 'Operation Desert Thunder' took place in 1997-1998, Greece opposed the use of violence and hoped that a peaceful solution could be found.⁸ Within the framework of this principle, there was a common belief in Greece that the application of force could not bring positive and desirable results in the case of Iraq in 2003.

Summarising, Greece was against the U.S.-led war on Iraq. At this point, the question that is important and has to be answered is why Greece adopted this position! As such, it is interesting to outline the reasons which drove Greek Administration to oppose Gulf War II.

⁶ Extract from the speech by C. Simitis before the European Parliament, in: <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/4/18/2544/>, 26/03/03.

⁷ K. P. Papadiochos's interview with George Papandreou, 'Den Theloume Polemo sto Irak' in: <http://www.kathimerini.gr> (Hi Kathimerini internet edition), 26/01/2003.

⁸ Synedriassi 22/02/1998 in: *Praktika tis Voulis, Olomelia* (Vouli ton Hellinon, Athina 1998), Th' periodos, 24/02/1998-18/03/1998, vol. 8, p. 5931.

REASONS FOR NOT ENTERING THE WAR

Comparing Gulf War I and II

Unlike Gulf War II, Greece supported the war of 1990-1991.⁹ Analysing the reasons for Greece's opposition to Gulf War II, a comparison of its stance during this crisis and that of 1990-1991 is inevitable. Although it is about two different wars, which took place at different times, this comparison reveals that the principal causes of Greece's participation in Gulf War I justify its stance during the recent Gulf Crisis.

Following international law

In his address to the Greek nation of January 1991 Constantinos Mitsotakis, who was Prime Minister of Greece from 1990 to 1993 declared that Greece participated in Gulf War I since international law had been broken by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.¹⁰ Due to the violation of international law by Iraq the UN supported the liberation of Kuwait even by war. Specifically, UN Security Council Resolution 687 of 29 November 1990 authorised Member States to 'use all necessary means' in order 'to restore international peace and security in the [Persian Gulf] area.'¹¹ Therefore, Greece participated in Gulf War I in order contribute along with many other countries to the defence of international law and the national independence of Kuwait.

⁹ Constantinos Mitsotakis's interview at CNN, Constantinos Mitsotakis Historic Archive, (Constantinos Mitsotakis Foundation), polog/1991/052.42, 10/01/1991.

¹⁰ Mitsotakis's address to Greek people, Constantinos Mitsotakis Historic Archive (Constantinos Mitsotakis Foundation), polog/1991/052.52, 19/01/1991.

¹¹ UNSCR 687, 29/11/1990 in: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/world/iraqsit/un/678.pdf> (EU webpage).

The specific distinction of Gulf War I and II was the role that the UN played in each case. Unlike Gulf War I there was no UN mandate which gave the U.S. the right to undertake a military operation against Iraq in 2003. That it because there was no evidence that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction or that Iraq was linked with Al-Qaeda as U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell had claimed. Thus, international law did not authorise a U.S.-led military invasion of Iraq.

Greece did not want to ignore the role and importance of the UN by supporting the U.S.-led war against Iraq. Prime Minister Simitis pointed out that Greece's standing position was respect for UN decisions.¹² 'Greece's foreign policy is based on multilateralism and international law enforcement.'¹³ So, Greece followed the UN route in the recent Gulf crisis as it did in the war of 1990-1991.

The Turkish factor

Furthermore, Greece participated in Gulf War I because it had national interests at stake. Apart from the above mentioned reason, Greece entered Gulf War I since Turkey entered the war as well.¹⁴ By supporting Gulf War I Turkey tried to improve its international position concerning its relations with the EU and the U.S. and managed to upgrade its strategic importance.¹⁵ As Greek-Turkish relations have always been of major

¹² Stavros Efstasiadis's interview with Costas Simitis, 'To Schedio mou gia tin Hellada tou 2004' in <http://tovima.dolnet.gr>, 05/01/2003.

¹³ Author's interview with P. Vlassopoulos.

¹⁴ Mitsotakis's address to Greek people, 19/01/1991.

¹⁵ Sotiris Rizas, *Apo tin Krisi stin yfesi, Ho Constantinos Mitsotakis kai hi Politiki Proseggisis Helladas-Tourkias* (Ekdoseis Papazisi, Hidryma Constantinos Mitsotakis, Athina 2003), p. 122.

importance for Greek foreign policy, 'it would have been dangerous for Greece to stay out of war.'¹⁶

In contrast to Gulf War I, the role of Turkey was totally different during Gulf War II. Turkey was not disposed to serve U.S. interests in the Middle East. 'By denying thousands of American troops the use of Turkish soil as a launching pad, Turkey stood accused of throwing Pentagon war plans into disarray and, with them, more that fifty years of strategic partnership with the U.S.'¹⁷ On that basis Greece saw no national interests at risk as in 1990-1991. In other words, it did not have to counter-balance the role of Turkey since Gulf War II could not influence Greek-Turkish relations at its expense. Thus, the Greek Administration was not in a dilemma as regards its decision on the Iraq issue. Greece had no reason to support a war which on the one hand had no international legitimacy and on the other did not put its national interests at stake.

Domestic response

Public opinion in Greece was overwhelmingly against the war on Iraq. A poll published on 4 April 2003 showed that 90.7% of Greeks were totally opposed to the intervention in Iraq while 3.4% were quite opposed to it.¹⁸ Only 1.4% agreed completely with the war and 2.0% agreed to an extent.¹⁹

Greek public opinion's opposition to Gulf War II reflected the strong anti-American feeling of Greek people. Specifically, Greek people are

¹⁶ Mitsotakis's address to Greek people, 19/01/1991.

¹⁷ 'A Friendship on Hold', in: *The Economist*, 29/03/2003, p. 26.

¹⁸ Nikos Costandaras, 'Owners of the Truth' in: <http://www.ekathimerini.com>, 04/04/2003.

¹⁹ Ibid.

biased against the U.S. considering it as responsible for the maintenance of the 'military junta' in Greece from 1967 to 1974 and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. After the end of the Cold War Greek people started to envy the U.S. since it remained the sole superpower and was economically, politically and militarily strong enough to deal unilaterally with international affairs. This gave Greek people the opportunity to vent their anti-American feeling. For example, anti-Americanism was on the rise during the Kosovo war in Greece. It should be noted that anti-Americanism has been growing since 11 September terrorist attacks, not because of those attacks but because America has, since then, been using or talking about using military force.²⁰ Thus, Greek people did not welcome the U.S. military operation in Afghanistan.

Gulf War II was the most recent case in which Greek people expressed their opposition to U.S. policy. Many demonstrations took place with people shouting anti-American slogans and marching to the U.S. Embassy in Athens and the U.S. consulate in Thessaloniki. For example, on 14 February 2003 approximately 100.000 people participated in the anti-war demonstration in Athens.²¹ In addition, nationwide strikes were called by the two general trade union federations in Greece, namely the GSEE (private sector) and ADEDI (public sector) to protest the war against Iraq. These strikes shut down public services, private companies, schools, universities, shops etc. in order to give people the chance to express their opposition to the U.S.-led war against Iraq. Very often from February to April 2003 the center of Athens was turned into a huge protest arena.

²⁰ 'On the Rise' in: *The Economist*, 04/01/2003, p. 12.

²¹ 'Ochi Ema gia to Petrelaio' in: <http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr>, (Ta Nea internet edition), 17/02/2003.

People of all ages and political parties participated in the anti-war demonstrations.

In this way, another reason that drove Prime Minister Simitis to denounce the war on Iraq was Greek public opinion. The war on Iraq took place at a point when PASOK's popularity was on the ebb and New Democracy seemed to be strong enough to win the next elections. A poll organised by Metron Analysis after the war had broken out showed that New Democracy had a lead of 6.5%.²² People in Greece were disappointed with PASOK on issues such as unemployment, high prices, pensions, education etc. So, PASOK could not ignore Greek public opinion. On that basis, PASOK had no other choice than to denounce the war. Prime Minister Simitis observed that PASOK might, if not improve, at least not aggravate its image by supporting public opinion on the Iraq issue.

Historic ties with Arab countries

Greece traditionally maintains good and friendly relations with Arab countries due to their geographical proximity, economic co-operation and strong historical and cultural bonds, dating back to ancient times.²³ Greek autocephalous orthodox churches as well Greek communities in the Arab world contributed to the forging of Greek-Arab solidarity and friendship. Since the end of World War II, Greece has supported the Arabs on the

²² I. K. Pretenteris, 'O Polemos Sozei to PASOK' in: <http://tovimadolnet.gr>, 06/04/2003.

²³ 'Middle East, Gulf, North Africa' in: http://www.mfa.gr/english/foreign_policy/amii/ (Hellenic Republic-Ministry of Foreign Affairs webpage).

Palestinian question and on their decolonisation rhetoric.²⁴ In the 1950's the Cyprus problem added a new dimension to its solidarity with the Arabs.²⁵

Since 1979, when Saddam came to power Greek-Iraqi political relations have been good but limited due to Iraq's totalitarian regime.²⁶ Official agreements signed by Greece and Iraq demonstrate the spirit of solidarity and co-operation by which relations of both countries are marked. For instance, in 1979 Constantinos Karamanlis, who was then Prime Minister of Greece, visited Baghdad; during that visit both sides signed a co-operation agreement on technical and economic issues.²⁷ Moreover, during the Iran-Iraq war there was co-operation in the field of war material. For instance, in 1985 the Greek company PYRKAL provided Iraq with \$ 77 million worth of munitions and in 1987 the Greek company EBO provided approximately \$ 83 millions worth of munitions.²⁸

After Gulf War I UN sanctions were imposed on Iraq. Greece supported the oil for food programme as it was interested in the future of the Iraqi people. As a result of its economic embargo Iraq owes high amounts to Greek companies on the basis of their co-operation during the Iran-Iraq war.²⁹ Despite Iraq's international isolation both countries continued their co-operation. Specifically, in 1998 Greece and Iraq signed a scientific and cultural co-operation agreement which included co-operation between Iraqi

²⁴ Panos Tsakalogiannis, 'Greece' in: D. Allen and A. Pijpers (eds.) European Foreign Policy-Making and the Arab-Israeli Conflict (Martinus Nijhoff Publisher, The Hague, Boston, Lancaster, 1984), p. 107.

²⁵ Ibid, p.107.

²⁶ Author's interview with P. Vlassopoulos.

²⁷ Constantinos Svolopoulos (ed.), Constantinos Karamanlis, Archeio, Gegonota & Keimena (Hidryma Constantinos Karamanlis, Ekdotiki Athinon), vol. 11, pp. 311-319.

²⁸ Synedriasi 07/02/1991 in: Praktika tis Voulis, Olomeleia (Vouli ton Hellinon, Athina 1992), Z' periodos, 23/01/1991-04/03/1991, p. 5866.

²⁹ Author's interview with P. Vlassopoulos.

and Greek universities regarding degree recognition, the granting of scholarships and the teaching of ancient and Modern Greek in Iraq.³⁰ In addition, in June 1999 the President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Iraqi Parliament visited Athens, as did the General Director of the Iraqi News Agency, who signed a co-operation agreement with the Athens News Agency.³¹ Furthermore, in June 2000, the eighth Meeting of the Mixed Economic Committee of the two countries took place, and upon its conclusion a Text of the Agreed Minutes was signed.³²

It can be concluded that Iraq is a friendly state to Greece. In this way, Greece did not want to support a military intervention against a friendly state, and in particular without UN authorisation. Moreover, Greece sought to avert a tragedy for the Iraqi people who would suffer a third war within 23 years. Greece also desired to maintain the spirit of solidarity with the other Arab countries, which also opposed the war against Iraq. However, what should be declared, at this stage, is that Greek-Arab-Iraqi friendship cannot be seen as a crucial, but only as an additional, reason for the Greek Administration's decision to oppose Gulf War II. If international law had been broken, Greece would have likely overlooked its friendly ties with the Arab world.

Economic repercussions

History shows that wars have deeply affected the economy of the world. Gulf War II could not be an exception. In December 2002, for instance,

³⁰ 'Greek-Iraqi Scientific, Cultural Co-operation Agreement' in: <http://www.hellenic.org/news.apeen/1998/98-07-24.apeen.htm> (Hellenic Resources Network webpage), 24/07/1998.

³¹ 'Greece and Iraq Bilateral Relations'.

³² Ibid, p. 2.

Europe's top banker, European Central Bank Governor Wim Duisenberg argued that 'a war was bad news for the economy.'³³ At this stage, it is interesting to investigate the economic issues the Greek Administration took into account when it decided to oppose Gulf War II.

Economic and Finance Minister of Greece Nikos Christodoulakis warned that a war in Iraq would have serious repercussions on the economies of Greece and Europe.³⁴ The war on Iraq was likely to influence negatively the European economy, which was on the brink of détente.³⁵ As regards the Greek economy Christodoulakis said it was not unassailable and 'the uncertain geopolitical climate had led to greater reticence in undertaking certain economic transactions, such as investments.'³⁶ Prime Minister Costas Simitis also told reporters on 28 January 2003 that the possibility of war had already affected developments.³⁷ The Greek stock exchange was on a downward trend, investments were below the normal rate and there was a sense of uncertainty.³⁸ Gross rate of GNP in Greece might decline from 3.8% to 3.1% since private consumption and exports were likely to decline.³⁹ The inflation rate in Greece, as in other European countries, would rise as well. The Governor of the Bank of Greece Nicos Garganas, warned that the inflation rate in 2003 would be higher than 3, 6%, which

³³ 'Iraq War Poses EU Challenge for Greece' in: <http://www.ekathimerini.com>, 30/12/2002.

³⁴ Dimitris Yannopoulos, 'Government Worried about Economic Effects of War' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, 31/01/2003, p. A14.

³⁵ Z. Tsolis, 'Polemika Senaria gia tin Ikonomia' in: <http://www.tovima.dolnet.gr>, 28/01/2003.

³⁶ Yannopoulos, 'Government Worried about Economic Effects of War', p. A14.

³⁷ Ibid, p. A14.

³⁸ Ibid, p. A14.

³⁹ Tsolis, 'Polemika Senaria gia tin Ikonomia'.

was its rate in 2002.⁴⁰ Within this framework, the Greek economy was likely to show a new deficit since the expenses of the Olympic Games of 2004 and of government's social policy were high.⁴¹ Thus, the Greek government was disposed to freeze public sector wages and stop hiring public employees except in the areas of health and education.⁴²

Moreover, according to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the consequences of war in Iraq of 26 March 2003 an increase in oil prices had started in anticipation of a possible conflict.⁴³ Christodoulakis said that both he and his European counterparts were concerned about the effects of war on international oil prices, although European economies were not based on Iraqi oil and warned that that a rise in oil prices to 40 dollars per barrel for a period of a few weeks - as in the first Gulf War of 1991 - could not be ruled out.⁴⁴ He declared, however, that 'as in the past, the effects on inflation and deficits would be temporary and easily absorbed by the European economies, unless the crisis lasted longer.'⁴⁵

On the basis of the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament of 26 March 2003 European aviation was

⁴⁰ D. Charontakis, 'Pros Anazopyrossi tou Plithorismou' in: <http://www.tovima.dolnet.gr>, 23/03/2003.

⁴¹ Tsolis, 'Polemika Senaria gia tin Ikonomia'.

⁴² Tsolis, 'O Polemos Pagonei Misthous, Proslipsis kai Dapanes' in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr> 23/03/2003.

⁴³ Commission of the European Communities, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the consequences of the war in Iraq for energy and transport in: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/energy_transport/iraq/com_2003_164_en.pdf, 26/03/2003, Brussels.

⁴⁴ Yannopoulos, 'Government Worried about Economic Effects of War', p. A14.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. A14.

likely to be affected.⁴⁶ War would likely lead to closure of airspace in the Middle East region, congestion of airspace above Europe and a fall in revenue at world level of around 6 billion euros in the event of a war lasting three months.⁴⁷ Within this framework, the frequency of Olympic Airways and Aegean Airlines flights might decrease.⁴⁸ For instance, after the outbreak of war Olympic Airways canceled its flights to Dubai, Beirut and Alexandria and limited its flights to Cairo, Tel-Aviv and Jeddah.⁴⁹ In addition, Athens International Airport Eleftherios Venizelos would probably suffer a loss.⁵⁰

It should be also taken into account that the war against Iraq might also influence Greek-Arab economic relations, which account for 6% of Greek exports and 5% of Greek imports.⁵¹ Oil, construction, marine supplies, fish cultivation, pharmaceutical products, tobacco, telecommunication equipment etc. are traded within the Greek-Arab market. In March 2003 the president of Greek-Arab Chamber of Trade and Development Antonis Antonopoulos expressed his fear that the impact of war on the economies of the neighboring countries of Iraq might limit Greek-Arab transactions and business activities.⁵² He pointed out that Greek-Arab trade had showed a decline due to the imminent war but was optimistic that the crisis could be overcome if the war did not last for long.⁵³

⁴⁶ Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, 26/03/2003.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ P. Mpouloukos and Ch. Colybas, 'Me Crach Apeilountai hi Aerometaforis' in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr>, 23/02/2003.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Discussion between Ch. Corfiatis and A. Antonopoulos, 'Pligmata alla kai Eukairies stis Aravohellinikes Ikonomikes Schesseis' in: <http://www.to-vima.dolnet.gr>, 23/03/2003.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

Furthermore, a U.S.-led war on Iraq would also influence tourism in Greece. The Bank of Greece said on 13 March that the tourism industry would be harder hit than other eurozone countries in the event of a war in Iraq.⁵⁴ Tour operators like TUI, Neckerman and ITS argued that their bookings for holidays in Greece showed a decline of 30-40%.⁵⁵ On the basis that the tourism sector accounts for some 15 percent of Greece's overall economic output and employs about 10 percent of its workforce⁵⁶, it becomes clear that the decline of tourism would seriously affect the Greek economy.

The problem of the refugees

The possible humanitarian fallout was another important issue that drove Greece to oppose a US-led war on Iraq. The war might push countless Iraqi civilians to the nearest border and thousands were likely to make their way to Greece.⁵⁷ UN officials warned that the impact of a U.S.-led war on Iraq would be worse than the humanitarian crisis caused by Gulf War I.⁵⁸ As many as 3,000,000 Iraqis were expected to flee in the event of a U.S.-led attack.⁵⁹ 100, 000 of these refugees were expected to pass to Europe through Greece.⁶⁰ That is because Greece is one of the easiest routes to Europe for immigrants and asylum seekers due to its long coast and

⁵⁴ 'Spring Tourism Drops' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, 14/03/2003, p. A13.

⁵⁵ Sp. Ctenas, '30-40% Miomenes hi Kratissis gia to 2003' in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr>, 09/03/2003.

⁵⁶ 'Spring Tourism Drops', p. A13.

⁵⁷ Kathy Tzilivakis, 'Bracing for Iraqi War Refugees' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, 04/10/2002, p. A06.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. A06.

⁵⁹ T. Bozaninou, 'Hi Hellada Perimeni 100, 000' in: <http://www.tovima.dolnet.gr>, 23/02/2003.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

proximity to Turkey.⁶¹ Nonetheless, Greece was not prepared and did not seek to host new refugees. It should be noted Greece has the lowest refugee recognition rate in the EU.⁶² Only 36 asylum-seekers were granted refugee status in 2002 and 58 were granted temporary humanitarian protection while more than 5.600 applications were submitted.⁶³ There are 11 reception-shelters in Greece for some 1.200 asylum seekers, and so, thousands of them are homeless.⁶⁴

In this way, the possibility of war operations in Iraq would give a new dimension to the problem of illegal immigration.⁶⁵ In general terms, Greece's coastline is under extreme pressure with respect to illegal immigration.⁶⁶ Even more so after 11 September incidents and given the increased surveillance in order to cope with organised crime and the possibility of extremist Muslim terrorism.⁶⁷ Especially after the beginning of Gulf War II, many Iraqi refugees due to their need for a new home were likely to be smuggled with the help of organised crime groups. In this way, Europe, and among other countries Greece, 'with large minorities at home and Islamic neighbors next door worried more about the spillover of Middle East instability.'⁶⁸

The imminent war on Iraq and the expansion of the phenomenon of illegal immigration would seriously affect Greece. Its effort to create an

⁶¹ Tzilivakis, 'Bracing for Iraqi War Refugees', p. A06.

⁶² Ibid, p. A06.

⁶³ Ibid, p. A06.

⁶⁴ Ibid, p. A06.

⁶⁵ 'Sea borders and illegal immigration' in:

<http://www.mmm.gov.gr/mmm/politics/immigration/illegal/en/index.asp>, (Hellenic Republic – Ministry of Mercantile Marine website).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Moravcsik Andrew, 'Striking a New Transatlantic Bargain' in: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 4, p. 76.

‘area of freedom and justice’ for all European citizens would be complicated.⁶⁹ In parallel, the organization of the Olympic Games of 2004, which created new security demands for Greece and intensified the need for safeguarding Greece’s sea borders against any type of organised crime - inter alia - illegal immigration, would be put in jeopardy.⁷⁰

Implications for the MEPP

The Greek government, which supports the creation of a Palestinian state within the framework of EU policy and its own sympathy for the Palestinians, also worried about the consequences for the Middle East Peace Process the war on Iraq might bring. Europeans, among them Greece, agreed on the urgency of moving forward the MEPP especially after 11 September as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could give rise to international terrorism. For example, George Papandreou declared: ‘In our discussions in the EU, we have unanimously demanded of the international community to put the MEPP first on the list of priorities.’⁷¹ If we talk of regional and world stability, then this issue must finally be addressed and resolved.⁷²

Nonetheless, Europeans had realised that the MEPP could not be revived without a U.S. contribution. In spite of the creation of the Quartet in May 2002 and the agreement for the roadmap for peace, the U.S. first priority was not the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but the removal of Saddam. As a

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ George Papandreou’s speech at the Arab League summit. Sharm el-Sheikh in: <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/3/2/2121>, 01/03/2003.

⁷² Ibid.

result, the roadmap for peace would be dealt with after the Iraq crisis. So, 'the EU was baffled by observing the U.S. to be obsessed with Iraq.'⁷³

Apart from the transference of publication and implementation of the roadmap for peace the EU worried about the post-war situation. The danger of destabilisation of the Middle East was high. Consequently, the MEPP was likely to be blocked again. At this stage, Philip Gordon argues that while it is true that Saddam's defeat in Gulf War I and the collapse of the Soviet Union were in part responsible for the Palestinian decision to accept the Oslo agreements, Saddam's regime toppling in 2003 might not convince them to stop using violence and trying to destroy Israel as the U.S. hoped.⁷⁴ By contrast, an attack against Iraq could have unintended consequences and aggravate the situation in the Middle East. For instance, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq al Shara warned that in the case of war the Middle East region would be in shambles.⁷⁵ That entailed 'more violence, more terrorism, more anarchy, less prosperity, more divisions, bloodshed and so many things', he said.⁷⁶

⁷³ Philip H. Gordon, 'Bush's Middle East Vision' in: *Survival*, vol. 45, no. 1, p. 155.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 161.

⁷⁵ Gilson, 'EU Gives Iraq Ultimatum' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, 07/02/2003, p. A03.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. A03.

GREECE AS PRESIDENT OF THE EU BEFORE THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

In January 2003 Greece took on the presidency of the EU. Greece's leader Simitis had high hopes for its EU Presidency but faced big problems.⁷⁷ One of the most important issues on the agenda of the Greek Presidency was the imminent war on Iraq. Greece sought to play a significant role in order to try to avert the war on Iraq. Greece aimed at boosting its international position, being internationally recognised as a serious and respectable country and demonstrating that it was ready for responsibilities. Greece also wanted to show that any mistakes it had made in the past belonged only to the past. Specifically, in 1983, when Greece first held the Presidency of the EC, it riled other member nations by blocking the group from condemning the Soviet Union for shooting down a South Korean Airliner.⁷⁸ In 1994, when Greece last held the presidency of the EU its approach to the volatile states of the former Yugoslavia, particularly its support for Serbia, was so unpopular and so unrepresentative of West European opinion that its economic embargo against FYROM was brought before the European Court. At this stage, it is worthwhile to investigate the initiatives Greece undertook as President of the EU regarding Gulf War II.

⁷⁷ 'Taking the Chair-Greece and the European Union' in: The Economist, 04/01/2003, p. 29.

⁷⁸ Frank Bruni, 'Greece Enters Europe's Spotlight under Skeptical Eyes' in: <http://www.nytimes.com> (New York Times internet edition), 11/01/2003.

Forging a common position

Although Greece had its own policy on the Iraq issue, Prime Minister Simitis argued that its role as EU Council President dictated a neutral posture, especially within the EU.⁷⁹ That is to say that Greek Prime Minister did not want to let domestic opposition to Gulf War II influence Greece's role as EU President. Simitis explained his government's stance at a press conference on 26 March 2003.⁸⁰ 'The role of the Presidency is not to express its own view as that of the EU, nor is it to attribute right to one or another side.[...] The Presidency must preserve as a basic value-the unity of the Union', he said.⁸¹

Within this context, Greece's role as President of the EU was to forge a common EU position regarding the war on Iraq. On 27 January 2003 EU Foreign Ministers under Greek Foreign Minister Papandreou discussed the situation regarding Iraq. The General Affairs & External Relations Council adopted a common conclusion which 'reaffirmed that its goal remained the effective and complete disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.'⁸² 'The Council fully supported the efforts of the UN to ensure full and immediate compliance by Iraq with all relevant resolutions of the Security Council.'⁸³ In particular, the EU supported UNSCR 1441 of 8 November 2002, which - inter alia - recognised Iraq's non-compliance with Council resolutions, and decided that Iraq had been, and remained, in

⁷⁹ Gilson, 'Simitis Wears Two Hats on Iraq' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, 28/03/2003, p. A08.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. A08.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. A08.

⁸² Extract of GAERC on Middle East in: http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/med_mideast/intro/gac.htm#me270103, 27/01/2003.

⁸³ Ibid.

material breach of its obligations and afforded it with a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations.⁸⁴ ‘The Council therefore urged the Iraqi authorities to engage in full and active co-operation with UNMOVIC and IAEA.’⁸⁵ ‘It expressed its appreciation for the work accomplished by the inspectors and reiterated its confidence and full support for Dr. Blix and Dr. El. Baradei to complete their mission with UNSCR 1441.’⁸⁶

Greece’s role as President of the EU became particularly difficult on 30 January 2003 when eight European states expressed their solidarity with the U.S. Specifically, Britain, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Portugal, and three new members of the EU, namely the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary lined up with the Americans on Iraq.⁸⁷ Greek Premier Simitis declared that this initiative of the above-mentioned European countries did not contribute to a common EU position and argued that the Greek Presidency would keep elaborating on EU unity.⁸⁸ On that basis, Greece invited the EU’s 15 divided heads of government to an emergency summit on the Iraqi crisis at the beginning of February 2003.⁸⁹ Indeed, the European Council held an extraordinary meeting on 17 February 2003 to discuss the crisis over Iraq. The European Council reaffirmed the conclusions of the GAERC of 27 January, reiterated its full support for the ongoing work of the UN inspectors and called on Baghdad to co-operate immediately and

⁸⁴ UNSCR 1441, 08/11/2002 in: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/world/iraqsit/un/1441.pdf>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Kyra Adam, ‘8 Carfia sto Soma tis Europis’ in: <http://www.enet.gr> (Eleftherotypia internet edition), 31/01/2003.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ ‘Greece Plans Iraq Emergency Summit’ in: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2744375.stm> (BBC webpage), 10/02/2003.

fully.⁹⁰ It declared that ‘the Iraq regime alone would be alone responsible for the consequences if it continued to flout the will of the international community and did not take this last chance.’⁹¹

Nonetheless, the Greek initiative to call an extraordinary meeting of the European Council about Iraq was not fruitful. Europe was united in theory but divided in practice. Although EU member states agreed on a common conclusion, the fact was that the EU remained split down the middle.⁹² Except for Britain, Italy, Spain, Denmark and Portugal, the Netherlands and Ireland lined up with the Americans as well.⁹³ In the be- more-patient camp were Germany, France, Belgium, Greece, Finland, Sweden and Austria, while Luxemburg seemed paralysed by indecision.⁹⁴

Greece and the UN

The role of Greece as President of the EU at the UN was not easy. In its attempt to avert the war against Iraq Greece sought to strengthen Europe’s position based on its traditional anti-war philosophy at the Security Council. There is no question that Greece’s attempt to strengthen Europe’s role at the UN was mirrored on its effort to forge a common EU position concerning the war on Iraq. Greece was spinning its hopes on the fact that four of the EU’s big players were members of the UNSC in January. Britain and France had been joined by Germany and Spain giving Europe a

⁹⁰ Extraordinary European Council on Iraq in: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/iraq/intro/ec170203.htm, 17/02/2003, Brussels.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² ‘United in Theory, Divided in Practice’ in: *The Economist*, 22/02/2003, p. 41.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 41.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 41.

powerful voice.⁹⁵ For example, Greek Foreign Minister Papandreou arranged a special meeting with his EU counterparts whose countries had a seat on the SC before the meeting of all 15 EU Foreign Ministers on 27 January.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, on the grounds of Europe's split Greece's ambition was a non-starter from the beginning. In any case, what should be pointed out is that even if Europe was practically united as regards the war on Iraq and all its member states opposed the use of violence by the U.S., normally it could not convince Washington to listen.

Despite Europe's split the Greek Presidency of the EU aimed at finding a common denominator among the countries which were in the war camp and those who were in the anti-war camp.⁹⁷ If the UN route had to be followed, that would entail only the vote for a second UN resolution that would give the U.S. the right to invade Iraq.⁹⁸ That is because the U.S. was powerful enough to be deterred if the UN did not have the will to authorise war against Iraq. At this stage, Michael Glennon compares successfully the U.S. Administration of 2003 with the Athenian generals of the 5th century b.c, who told the hapless Melians according to Thucydides: 'You and everybody else, having the same power as we have, would do the same as we do'⁹⁹. Nevertheless, a second resolution was opposed by China and Russia as well as France and Germany.¹⁰⁰ In this way, the SC became deadlocked and Greek Presidency had no important role to play.

⁹⁵ 'To Schedio mou gia tin Hellada tou 2004'.

⁹⁶ Gilson, 'Greece: Iraq Tests EU unity' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, 24/01/2003, p.A04.

⁹⁷ Author's interview with Vlassopoulos.

⁹⁸ Adam, Zitima Ion, Irak' in: <http://www.enet.gr>, 12/01/2003.

⁹⁹ Michael F. Glennon, 'Why the Security Council Failed' in: *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no.

3, p. 18.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Greece could only apply pressure for more time. For example, on 4 February 2003 George Papandreou told Colin Powell that the inspectors had not finished their work in Iraq and called on him to wait for the next report.¹⁰¹ Even after 24 February 2003, when the U.S., Britain and Spain introduced a resolution that would have had the SC declare that Iraq had failed to implement UNSCR 1441¹⁰² and the failure of the SC started to be clear, Greece continued proposing giving Iraq more time. Greece's last hope was that as long as UN inspection continued a peaceful solution could be found and Iraq would have disarmed. For instance, George Papandreou along with Javier Solana and Chris Patten held talks with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell in Washington on 27 February 2003.¹⁰³ Papandreou argued: 'I continue to stress even at this final hour that war is not unavoidable, that the EU and the Greek Presidency will do all we can to find a way, if possible, to resolve this crisis peacefully [...] Until now we do not have the full co-operation the UN wants.'¹⁰⁴

What should be pointed out is that Greek Presidency's attitude aimed at cultivating a good climate between the EU and the U.S. Since EU – U.S. relations entered a period of high tension due to the Iraq crisis, especially after France declared its intention to cast a veto at the SC, Greece preferred to maintain a balance. The Greek Presidency handled the crisis moderately. Therefore, Greece did not follow the policy of hard opposition to Washington as Germany and France had done. Thus, it did not condemn

¹⁰¹ Th. Tsitsas, 'Giorgos me Paouel: Ischyro Mynima na dosoume sto Irak' in: <http://www.enet.gr/06/02/2003>.

¹⁰² Glennon, 'Why the Security Council Failed', p. 18.

¹⁰³ Gilson, 'Papandreou Tries to Bridge Troubled Waters' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, 28/02/2003, p. A06.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

U.S. foreign policy and its decision to invade Iraq. For example, a few days before the war broke out Premier Simitis said in a mild way: ‘World peace is in danger.’¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, George Papandreou spoke again of the possibility of a peaceful solution, satisfying the EU, but he also spoke of the need for regime change in Iraq, satisfying the U.S.¹⁰⁶

Nevertheless, it should be reiterated that the transatlantic crisis over Iraq was so serious that the margin for a successful Greek mediation was narrow. At a point when a ‘hyperpower’ like the U.S. and powerful countries like France and Germany were opposed on the Iraq issue, how successful could the role of a small state like Greece be? That does not mean that Premier Simitis and Foreign Minister Papandreou were not capable or that they lacked skill and diplomatic effectiveness. Whoever had been in their position the result would have been normally the same.

Putting pressure on the Arabs

In its effort to avert a war on Iraq, while UN inspections took place, Greece undertook diplomatic initiatives in co-operation with the Arab world. On 5 February 2003 Greece delivered a public demarche to the Embassies of Iraq in Athens, Brussels and New York. In this demarche Greece warned Iraq of devastating consequences if it did not comply with UNSCR 1441.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, Greece did not manage to put pressure on Iraq as

¹⁰⁵ Adam, ‘Hi Vavel tis Europis gia tin epithessi sto Irak’, 09/03/2003.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Statement on the situation in Iraq by the Alternative Foreign Minister of Greece Mr. T. Giannitis in: <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/2/12/1897>, 12/02/2003.

the demarche of 4 February was no new warning for Saddam.¹⁰⁸ It is also worth-mentioning that Greece did not close the Iraqi Embassy in Athens as the Department of State demanded but it expelled a high-ranking diplomat of Iraq in order to show its disaffection with Iraq's non-compliance with UNSCR 1441.¹⁰⁹

In addition, Greece led an EU diplomatic mission to the Middle East. At the beginning of February 2003 Foreign Minister George Papandreou visited Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia in his capacity as president of the European Council of Foreign Ministers. His tour in the Middle East aimed at discussing possible means of averting war and seeking a diplomatic solution¹¹⁰. Papandreou sought to find out the position of the Arab nations and the Arab League and to try through the Arabs to put pressure on Saddam to comply with Resolution 1441.¹¹¹ He wanted to urge the Arab states to play a bigger role in mediating between the U.S. and Iraq. In this direction, on 1 March 2003 Papandreou addressed the 22-nation Arab League in Sharm el-Sheikh.¹¹² Among others he declared: 'Although the clock is counting down, we have not reached the final hour. We know the major role the Arab world can play. The EU supports this role. We know your message to Saddam Hussein - with our backing - is of utmost importance. We are ready to give you any necessary support in order to take an initiative in this direction.'¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Author's interview with Hikmat Mazid Altaif - Secretary of Embassy of Iraq in Athens, 28/07/2003, Embassy of Iraq, Athens.

¹⁰⁹ Stavros Lygeros, 'Politiki Lepton Isorropion' in: <http://www.kathimerini.gr>, 28/03/2003.

¹¹⁰ Nevine Khalil, 'Tied and Bound' in: *Al-Ahram weekly*, 13-19/02/2003, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Author's interview with Mr. Vlassopoulos.

¹¹² George Papandreou's speech at the Arab League summit.

¹¹³ Ibid.

At the beginning of March 2003 representatives from Arab countries were in New York invited by George Papandreou.¹¹⁴ The invention of a formula which would allow Saddam abandoning Iraq to find asylum in another country was dominating diplomatic talks.¹¹⁵ However, Arab representatives did not manage to find an authoritative U.S. interlocutor who could provide Saddam with guarantees on behalf of the U.S.¹¹⁶

AFTER THE WAR HAD BROKEN OUT

Although Greece tried as President of the EU to contribute to a peaceful solution to the Iraq crisis, this did not become a tangible reality. When the war broke out Greek Presidency could not but look to the future. Despite the severe split among EU members, Prime Minister Simitis expressed hope on some kind of common communiqué on the crisis after the war had broken out.¹¹⁷ That entailed expressing dismay that diplomatic efforts had failed and hopes for a quick end to the crisis with a minimum of casualties.¹¹⁸ He also wanted to discuss with other European leaders the European role in post-war Iraq.¹¹⁹ In this way, on 20 March 2002 the 15 declared their commitment ‘to the territorial integrity, the sovereignty, the political stability and the full and effective disarmament of Iraq in all its territory as well as to the respect for the rights of the Iraqi people, including

¹¹⁴ A. Papachelas, ‘To Telesigrafo: Triti 17 Martiou’ in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr>, 09/03/2003.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Gilson, ‘Split EU Watches War Unfold’, p. A07.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. A07.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. A07.

all persons belonging to minorities.¹²⁰ They also expressed their belief that ‘the UN must continue to play a central role’ and their ‘commitment that the EU should be actively involved in the field of humanitarian needs.’¹²¹ The member states also stressed the importance of ‘reinvigoration of the Middle East Peace Process’, declared their ‘determination to strengthen the capacity of the EU in the context of the CFSP and ESDP’ and focused on the importance of the transatlantic partnership.¹²² On 26 March 2003, in his speech before the European Parliament, Premier Simitis concentrated again on the above-mentioned issues.¹²³ At this point, it is worthwhile outlining the initiatives the Greek Presidency undertook after the outbreak of war.

Iraqi Administration

Would the post-war administration of Iraq be U.S. or UN-led? That was the most important issue after the outbreak of the war. It was an important success of the Greek Presidency that all members of the EU, principally those which participated at the SC agreed on the central role of the UN in post-war Iraq.¹²⁴ Since even Britain agreed on the common communiqué of 20 March 2003, the EU could put pressure on the U.S., which did not intend to cede authority to the UN after an invasion, which had cost American blood. Greek Foreign Minister Papandreou admitted that U.S.

¹²⁰ Statement on Iraq in:
http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/iraq/intro/council200303.htm,
20/03/2003, Brussels.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Extract from the Speech by C. Simitis before the European Parliament, 26/03/2003/

¹²⁴ Anni Podimata, ‘Diplomatiki Machi gia to Rolo tou OIE’ in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr>,
30/03/2003.

and British forces would remain in charge for an undetermined interim period and suggested that the UN would not be able to step in during that precarious period.¹²⁵ He did not support the idea of an American general in charge of Iraq since that idea was totally different from the formation of an Iraqi government or from setting up a process through the UN.¹²⁶

On 4 April 2003 Papandreou said after discussions between the EU, NATO and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell: ‘We must discuss in a clear way, in an open way with the U.S. and clarify as equal parties, with mutual respect the role of the UN.’¹²⁷ ‘The crisis with Iraq could not be cause for a clash between civilizations and the Greek Presidency had undertaken initiatives in the direction of dialogue in 2003’, he added.¹²⁸

The statement issued by the Greek Presidency on 16 April 2003, which reiterated EU’s support for a central UN role, said that ‘the EU welcomed the appointment by the UN Secretary General of a special adviser in Iraq.’¹²⁹ On 17 April 2003 a meeting between Simitis and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan took place on the sidelines of the European Conference in Athens. Simitis welcomed Annan’s presence at the European Conference and expressed EU’s support for every effort of the UN to resolve disagreements in order for there to be political settlements of the Iraq and Middle East problems at the earliest.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Gilson, ‘EU Seeks post-war legitimacy’, 04/04/2003, p. A06.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. A06.

¹²⁷ ‘FM briefs PM on talks with Powell on Iraq crisis and transatlantic relations’ in: <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/4/4/2442/>, 04/04/2003.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Presidency’s statement on Iraq in: <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/4/17/2538/>, 16/04/2003.

¹³⁰ Meeting between Prime Minister Costas Simitis and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in Athens’ in: <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/4/18/2546/>, 17/04/2003.

In general terms, and on the basis of a UN central role the European Commission and the Greek Presidency supported the right of the Iraqis to choose their own political future. They strongly believed that the interim administration could combine existing Iraqi administrative structures with a role for the diaspora and proposed the revision of Iraq's sanction's regime.¹³¹ The EU had acquired a practical experience and knowledge in reconstruction operations, for example in Kosovo and Afghanistan.¹³² The creation of a sound basis for an international contribution to the reconstruction of Iraq would give Europe the chance to become involved in this process. This involvement entailed an economic and political role for the EU in post-war Iraq. For instance, after the formation of an interim government in Iraq the EU could support the institution building in Iraq and the reform of its legal system and the holding of national elections.¹³³ It might also support the development of energy, water, transport and communication infrastructure.¹³⁴ It should also pointed out that the EU wanted the creation of an international framework concerning the administration of post-war Iraq since many of its members, mainly Germany and France sought to get more contracts and economic benefits for themselves.

In this way, on 22 May 2003 the Greek Presidency welcomed the unanimous adoption by the UNSC of a resolution of post-conflict Iraq.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Contribution of the European Community and the Greek Presidency: Options for a significant EU role in reconstruction in Iraq' in: <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/5/2/2653/>, 02/05/2003.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Presidency's statement on 22/05/2003 UNSCR on Iraq in: <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/5/22/2877/>, 22/05/2003.

Resolution 1483 achieved one of the main objectives pursued by the EU, namely that the UN must play a central role in the reconstruction process of Iraq.¹³⁶ The Presidency also welcomed the creation of the post of UN Special Representative for Iraq.¹³⁷

Reconstruction of Iraq

The European Commission did its best in order to deliver aid after the war broke out.¹³⁸ The humanitarian aid provided by the European Commission aimed at satisfying the needs of the refugees who might seek refuge in neighboring countries as well as of the Iraqi population. Greece as President of the EU sought to supervise this operation. Deputy Foreign Minister Andreas Loverdos sent a letter to EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Poul Nielson on 18 April 2003.¹³⁹ In his letter, Loverdos expressed on behalf of the Greek Presidency Greece's enormous interests in the progress of efforts being made for humanitarian aid to reach its final destination, the suffering people of Iraq, and particularly the vulnerable groups of population, women and children, given the difficulties that have arisen due to the transitional situation in the country.¹⁴⁰ Loverdos reaffirmed the Presidency's support for the efforts of the European Commission and appealed to the Humanitarian Aid Office to

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ See, for example Prodi's comments on humanitarian situation in Iraq in: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/iraq/intro/me03_70.htm, 26/03/2003.

¹³⁹ Iraq-humanitarian aid: Letter of Greek Deputy Minister Loverdos to Commissioner Nielson in: <http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/4/22/2572/>, 22/04/2003.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

do everything necessary to ensure that the needs of the Iraqi people were met immediately.¹⁴¹

In parallel, Greece played an important role in order to cope with the crisis in Iraq. On 31 March 2003 Kofi Annan announced the financing of humanitarian action in Iraq and its neighboring countries amounting to 3 million Euros.¹⁴² This set of humanitarian activities included setting up and operating refugee camps, medical care and food distribution.¹⁴³ The humanitarian aid, which would be forwarded through Greek Embassies and mainly through Non-Governmental Organisations in the Middle East region, was supported by the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs in close co-operation with other Greek Ministries, such as the Ministry of Health for example.¹⁴⁴ NGO's such as the Hellenic Red Cross, Medecins du Monde, Pharmacists of the World and Hellenic Rescue Team participated in the humanitarian aid programme.¹⁴⁵ Apart from the above-mentioned humanitarian aid Greece provided the UN with 1 million USD and the International Committee of Red Cross with 300, 000 euros.¹⁴⁶ Greece also provided international organizations and bodies of the UN, such as UNICEF, with voluntary contributions.¹⁴⁷

It should be also noted that Greece as President of the EU also focused on the protection of the cultural heritage of Iraq as part of the world's cultural heritage. For example, the statement issued by the Greek Presidency on 16

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² 'Greek contribution to Iraq' in: http://mfa.gr/english/foreign_policy/iraq/iraq1.html

¹⁴³ 'Greece undertakes urgent humanitarian action in order to cope with the crisis in Iraq' in: http://www.mfa.gr/english/foreign_policy/iraq/iraq4.html.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ 'Greek contribution to Iraq'.

¹⁴⁷ 'Greece undertakes urgent humanitarian action in order to cope with the crisis in Iraq'.

April 2003 said that that ‘the coalition had also the responsibility to ensure a secure environment, including for the provision of humanitarian assistance and the protection of the cultural heritage and museums.’¹⁴⁸ Indeed, on 6 May 2003 the Council of the EU expressed ‘its deepest concern at the tragic destruction of cultural goods, archeological sites, and monuments of irreplaceable historical value in Iraq, and the vandalism and looting of the museums and libraries.’¹⁴⁹ Thus, it stressed ‘the need to protect in an efficient way the cultural goods of Iraq and to return the objects illegally removed from museums or archeological sites, without allowing them to become objects of trade.’¹⁵⁰ Within this framework the EU declared its active support of UNESCO, governmental and non-governmental related activities.¹⁵¹ Transatlantic co-operation was important as well. Foreign Minister Papandreou and U.S. Secretary of State Powell focused on this issue.¹⁵² There is no question that Greece has a tremendous amount of experience in the field of antiquities and cultural property regarding identification and restoration.

¹⁴⁸ Presidency’s statement on Iraq, 16/04/2003.

¹⁴⁹ Declaration of the Council on the tragic destruction of cultural goods, archeological sites, monuments and libraries in Iraq in: http://www.eu2003.gr/en/articles/2003/5/6/2687_06/05/2003.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² State Department Daily briefing in: <http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/nea/iraq/text2003/0414state.htm>, (U.S. Department of State webpage), 14/04/2003.

MILITARY FACILITIES

Since Greece supported Gulf War I, it provided the U.S. with military facilities. It offered the use of the Souda base for the refueling of both war planes and ships along with air corridors for allied craft en route from Germany to the Persian Gulf.¹⁵³ The Aktion base in Preveza was used as a station for AWACS.¹⁵⁴ In addition, the Greek frigate 'Limnos' was sent to the Persian Gulf.¹⁵⁵ However, what would happen in Gulf War II? Would Greece refuse to provide the U.S. with military facilities because it officially opposed the war?

Although Greece denounced Gulf War II, it did not bar the U.S. use of Greek military facilities in the invasion of Iraq. In this way, Greece offered the U.S. military facilities in 2003 as in 1990-1991. Greece wanted to honor its treaty obligations with the U.S., namely the use of the strategically crucial Souda air and naval base on the island of Crete.¹⁵⁶ Foreign Minister Papandreou declared: 'We are talking about the standard measures that any alliance would take in case of a crisis to defend its interests and to protect the treaties it has signed.'¹⁵⁷ Prime Minister Simitis argued that Greece abided, by the Greek-American Technical Agreement of 1977, by the Greek-American Treaty of Co-operation of 1990 and by the Greek-American Comprehensive Technical Arrangement which was

¹⁵³ Gilson, 'Iraq: Greece's Hot Potato', p. A03.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. A03.

¹⁵⁵ Mitsotakis's speech, Constantinos Mitsotakis Historic Archive (Constantinos Mitsotakis Foundation), polog/1991/052.53, 17/01/1991, p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ Gilson, 'Split EU Watches War Unfold' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, 21/03/2003, p. A07.

¹⁵⁷ Gilson, 'Allies Seek Peace, Prepare for War', p. A04.

ratified by the Parliament in 2002.¹⁵⁸ In addition, Greece abided by the legal status of NATO member states.¹⁵⁹ So, it allowed AWACS to use Greek airspace and Greek bases such as those of Aktion, Andravida and Araksos. It also agreed with Turkey's airspace guard from an Iraqi attack under the condition that Turkey would not attack North Iraq.¹⁶⁰ In this way it did not follow the policy of Belgium, Germany, France and Luxemburg which impeded NATO support to Turkey.

Stavros Lygeros wrote in 'Kathimerini' that Greece's policy to provide the U.S. with military facilities was the right choice.¹⁶¹ He argues that Greece tried to keep a balance, and thus, could not oppose Washington.¹⁶² In the final account, Greece had no reason to oppose Washington at a point when it had no national interests at stake.¹⁶³ It is worth-mentioning that Iraq tried to convince Greece to bar the U.S. use of the Souda base. Farouk Al-Fityan who was Charges d' Affaires at the Embassy of Iraq in Athens put pressure on the Greek Government to revoke its decision to provide the U.S. with military facilities.¹⁶⁴ His effort was unsuccessful.

What should be pointed out is that Greece did not want to send Greek armed forces to the Persian Gulf. Greek Defence Minister Yiannos Papantoniou told the U.S. Ambassador to Greece Thomas Miller that Greece was not disposed to risk Greek lives during Gulf War II.¹⁶⁵ Nonetheless, this danger was not improbable. That is because Greek

¹⁵⁸ Synedriassi 27/03/2003, Simitis's speech.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Chassapopoulos interview with Y. Papantoniou, 'Hi IPA Echoun Apotychi Politika' in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr>, 30/03/2003.

¹⁶¹ Lygeros, 'Politiki Lepton Isorropion', 28/03/2003.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Author's interview with H. M. Altaif.

¹⁶⁵ N. Chassapopoulos, 'Hi Dieukolynseis pou Zitoun hi IPA apo tin Athina' in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr>, 12/01/2003.

personnel, for example pilots, participated in the AWACS, while frigates of the Greek Navy, namely 'Ksenos', 'Stavrakis', 'Hydra' and 'Elli' were involved in inspection missions in the Mediterranean.¹⁶⁶

DEBATE IN GREECE

Since all Greek political parties agreed with Greece's opposition to U.S.-led war against Iraq, there was no debate about the official stance of the country regarding the war. What provoked debate in Greece was the way PASOK's government expressed its opposition to the U.S. military initiative against Iraq and the U.S. use of Greek military facilities. At this point, it is interesting to outline this debate.

PASOK

As is mentioned above, although the Greek government opposed the war, it followed a neutral policy as EU president. This stance did not satisfy all PASOK members who wanted the government to express its strong opposition to U.S. policy. Ruling socialist PASOK's members were determined to offset Prime Minister Simitis's restrained stance and statements by Foreign Minister Papandreou, who was sometimes criticised by members of his party as exceedingly supportive of U.S. positions.¹⁶⁷ For instance, Greek Parliament Speaker Apostolos Kaklamanis expressed his strong opposition to the U.S. by accusing it of acting as if it felt all

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Gilson, 'Simitis Wears Two Hats on Iraq', p. A08.

powerful and dominated humanity.¹⁶⁸ PASOK's Secretary Costas Laliotis also offered scathing criticism of the U.S.-led war by linking PASOK to the anti-war movement and participating in the massive popular protests against the war.¹⁶⁹

The debate within PASOK concerning the government's stance on the Iraq issue reveals the different philosophy between its modern and old members. Modern members like Costas Simitis and George Papandreou follow a center-right policy. They have as a model Romano Prodi's and Tony Blair's political parties in Italy and in the UK respectively.¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, old members like Apostolos Kaklamanis and Costas Laliotis belong to the center-left and abide by PASOK founder Andreas Papandreou's socialist policy. They follow a more populist policy as Laliotis's participation in the anti-war demonstration shows.

The clash between Prime Minister Simitis and PASOK's Secretary Laliotis became clear in July 2003. At the beginning of July 2003 Simitis sacked Laliotis. It is worth-noting that Laliotis pointed out that the displeasure of the U.S. and its ambassador to Greece Thomas Miller over his anti-American stance before and during Gulf War II had an impact on Simitis's decision.¹⁷¹ That is to say that Simitis sought to create a new PASOK, to maintain good relations with the U.S. and to bring its center-left anti-American members under his whip.

¹⁶⁸ 'Greece Plans EU Peace Tour to Arab Nations' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr/>, 10/01/2003, p. A03.

¹⁶⁹ Pretenteris, 'O Polemos Sozei to PASOK'.

¹⁷⁰ K. P. Papadiochos and N. Tsioutsias, 'Pasok metaksy Elias kai Blair' in: <http://www.kathimerini.gr>, 04/07/2003.

¹⁷¹ Giorgos Papachristos, 'Antio me Echmes' in: <http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr>, 04/07/2003.

New Democracy

In general terms, New Democracy agreed with PASOK's European policy.¹⁷² For example, ND's leader Costas Karamanlis praised the Greek presidential initiative to call an extraordinary European meeting on 17 February 2003.¹⁷³ He also agreed with the need for reinvigoration of the Middle East Peace Process and stressed the importance of co-operation between the EU and the U.S.

Nevertheless, ND accused PASOK's Administration of following an ambivalent attitude concerning the war on Iraq. On 27 March 2003 Costas Karamanlis argued in the Greek Parliament that there was a clear differentiation between PASOK's position at home and the government's stance as EU President.¹⁷⁴ 'You cannot say the party has one policy and the government another', he pointed out.¹⁷⁵ 'When government members say they wear two or three different hats, then surely there is a problem', he added.¹⁷⁶ In this way, Karamanlis observed PASOK as an unreliable political party. According to him, PASOK's ambivalent stance regarding the war in Iraq proved the lack of seriousness of the Greek government on important issues such as foreign policy.¹⁷⁷ To be more straightforward Karamanlis underlined the difference between the pro-American stance of Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou and the anti-American attitude of PASOK's Secretary Costas Laliotis.

¹⁷² 'Skytali Karamanli gia tin Euroamyna' in: <http://www.kathimerini.gr>, 28/03/2003.

¹⁷³ Synedriasi 27.03/2003, Karamanlis' speech.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

In conclusion, ND's attack against the PASOK's government during Gulf War II was based on its clear position during the crisis of 1990-1991. In Gulf War I, when ND was the ruling party in Greece, there were no contradictions within the government. From the very beginning ND had declared its support for Kuwait's liberation even by war.

KKE and Synaspismos

The Communist Party of Greece accused PASOK's Administration of dishonesty in claiming it does not support the war.¹⁷⁸ On 27 March 2003 KKE Secretary Aleka Papariga attacked the 'hypocrisy' of the government. She argued in Parliament that Greece participated in the war against Iraq by providing the U.S. with important military facilities such as the bases of Souda, Araksos and Androvida and Greek airspace.¹⁷⁹ She also blamed the government for sending the Greek frigate 'Koundouriotis' to the Persian Gulf.¹⁸⁰ Simitis's answer was that this frigate participated in the 'enduring freedom programme' within the framework of fighting terrorism and had no relation to Gulf War II.¹⁸¹

KKE also pointed out that the clash of views within the EU and NATO was a clash of views among criminals with reference to the sharing of the spoils of Iraq. KKE Secretary pointed out that the oil factor was the reason for the war.¹⁸² She also argued that the U.S. did not have the right to

¹⁷⁸ Synedriasi 27/03/2003, Papariga's speech.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, Simitis's speech.

¹⁸² Ibid, Papariga's speech.

decide about the future of Iraq.¹⁸³ In this way, Greece should not have lined up with U.S. foreign policy goals.¹⁸⁴

In addition, Synaspismos's leader Nikos Costandopoulos also challenged the idea that Greece was obliged by bilateral agreements to offer its bases to the U.S. by claiming: 'Offering military facilities in an illegal war is illegal.'¹⁸⁵ He also objected to NATO member Greece sending AWACS pilots to guard Turkey's airspace against an attack by Iraq.¹⁸⁶

GREEK MEDIA

The Greek media have always constituted a very influential institution. According to the U.S. Department of State webpage the Greek media are usually aggressive, sensationalist, and frequently irresponsible with regard to content.¹⁸⁷ This observation proved to be correct during the Iraq crisis. The Greek media were biased against the U.S. and its foreign policy motivations. They viewed the war on Iraq in an one-dimensional way on the basis that Saddam was right because the U.S. was against him.¹⁸⁸ That is to say that the Greek media started to condemn U.S. policy towards Iraq and influenced the majority of Greek people to take the war to heart as if they were protagonists in the conflict.¹⁸⁹

Greek television channels and most newspapers focused on the most sensational images of the suffering of Iraqi civilians and the tragedy of the

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, Costandopoulos's speech.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ 'Background Note: Greece' in: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3395.htm>

¹⁸⁸ Costandaras, 'Owners of the Truth'.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

Iraqi people.¹⁹⁰ This created a skewed picture of what was happening in Iraq and helped drive the anti-war movement.¹⁹¹ On the other hand, viewers of television in other Western countries have been getting far more of the U.S. and British action from the safer side of their guns and bombs and less of the results of their actions.¹⁹² In this way, a whole generation of young Greeks was growing up with the message that the U.S. was responsible for nothing other than war.¹⁹³

To be more straightforward it is interesting to mention some headlines of Greek newspapers when the war broke out. ‘Burning hell in Baghdad’ was the headline of *Ta Nea* on 21 March.¹⁹⁴ ‘Deadly bombing’ wrote *Rizospastis* on the same day.¹⁹⁵ In the following days, the headlines were not different. ‘Human sacrifice’ wrote *Eleftherotypia* on 26 March¹⁹⁶ and ‘Disaster’ wrote *Kathimerini* on 27 March.¹⁹⁷ At the same time, *To Vima*, which is the most widely-read newspaper in Greece, included many anti-American articles. ‘The war for the spoils of Iraq has begun’ and ‘The illegal war’ are two characteristic anti-American titles.¹⁹⁸

There is no question that the Greek media had the right to express their own view on the Iraq issue. Nonetheless, they should have also been objective by presenting the arguments that the U.S. had, as well as the positive results of a war that Americans foresaw. In this way, the Greek Media saw the oil factor as the reason for war, while they observed the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ta Nea’s headline in: <http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr>, 21/03/2003.

¹⁹⁵ Rizospastis’s headline in: <http://rizospastis.gr>, 21/03/2003.

¹⁹⁶ Eleftherotypia’s headline in: <http://www.enet.gr>, 26/03/2003

¹⁹⁷ Hi Kathimerini’s headline in: <http://www.kathimerini.gr>, 27/03/2003.

¹⁹⁸ St. Eftstasiadis, ‘Archise ho Polemos gia ti Leia’ and P. Cartalis, ‘Ho Paranomos Polemos’ in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr>, 09/03/2003 and 23/03/2003.

terrorist attacks of 11 September as a pretext for U.S. expansionist aspirations. It is characteristic that a poll organised by Alco showed that 91.5% in 94.5% of Greek young people who watched television, read newspapers and listened to radio during the war believe that the U.S. invaded Iraq for economic reasons while only 2.7% to fight terrorism.¹⁹⁹ According to the same poll 93,2% of Greek young people had a negative image of George W. Bush.²⁰⁰ As Nikos Costandaras argues people read in newspapers articles and saw on talk-shows Greece's intellectuals trying to outbid each other in the extravagance of their condemnation of the U.S.²⁰¹

APPRAISAL

This paper was first written in the summer of 2003 and it was then too early to conclude if Gulf War II would have positive or negative results for Greece. Greek public opinion was not optimistic in April 2003. Survey figures gathered by the RASS Research Company showed that an overwhelming majority of those polled (75%) responded that the war would have a negative impact on Greece's economy, while two in five (38%) said Greek-Turkish relations might be strained and that Greece's international standing would suffer (42%).²⁰²

Nonetheless, looking at the impact of Gulf War II on Greece in 2005, two years after the writing of this paper, and so, on a long-term basis, it can be

¹⁹⁹ L. Stavropoulos, 'Pos Idan hi Nei ton Polemo' in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr>, 13/04/2003.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Costandaras, 'Owners of the Truth'.

²⁰² 'Iraq War Negative for Greece' in: <http://www.athensnews.gr>, 25/04/2003, p. A09.

concluded that the situation in Greece after the war was not discouraging. Greek economy started to recover after the initial uncertainty. For instance, in August 2003 the Greek stock exchange reached the highest point of the year. Analysts strongly believed that September 2003 would be a crucial month; if the U.S. economy continued to recover that would affect European economies and Greek economy would benefit as well.²⁰³ Indeed, Greek economy grew by 5% in the final quarter of 2003 and continued its good performance for the year of 2003, which was above government targets.

Furthermore, Gulf War II did not lead to a dangerous expansion of illegal immigration as the Greek government had feared. So, Greece did not face particular difficulties after the war in tackling the problem of illegal immigration. At the same time, according to data published by the Greek Ministry for Public Order 2879 Iraqis sought asylum in Greece in 2003 while their number was 2567 in 2002.²⁰⁴ That constitutes a 12.5% variation which was less than expected. The percentage increase of asylum seekers in Greece in 2003 of people from other countries, like from Iran and Pakistan for example, was significantly higher.

In addition, not only the international standing of Greece was not strained but it also managed to improve its international position due to its handling of the Iraq crisis as EU president. That is because the Greek Presidency elaborated in a prudent and moderate way on EU's unity before, as well as after the outbreak of the war. European leaders praised Greek Presidency.

²⁰³ Nicos Nicolaou, 'Ta Matia Strammena stis IPA' in: <http://tovima.dolnet.gr>, 03/08/2003.

²⁰⁴ See the ECRE Country Report 2003 about Greece in <http://www.ecre.org/country03/10.20%Greece.pdf>.

For example, European Parliament President Pat Cox declared during the EU summit of 20-21 March 2003: ‘We appreciate the determined leadership effort of the Greek Presidency.’²⁰⁵ Moreover, Prime Minister of Italy Berlusconi whose country took the EU Presidency in July 2003 expressed his hope that the Italian Presidency would be as successful as the Greek.²⁰⁶

On the other hand, going beyond the above mentioned developments, some other thoughts should be made concerning Gulf War II which are related not only to Greece but also to the international community in general.. The SC’s failure on the Iraq issue constitutes the most important blow of Gulf War II to Greece as to many other countries. The U.S. invasion of Iraq without UN mandate demonstrated that the world structure is unipolar and not multipolar. The fear that the UN will be splintered as regards similar cases to that of Iraq is high. Will international law be followed in the case of Iran and North Korea? As Michael Glennon observes, after Gulf War II ‘all who believe in the rule of law are eager to see the great caravan of humanity resume its march.’²⁰⁷

In parallel, as regards Greece and the other EU member states Gulf War II was another proof of their impotence to form a CFSP. It is certain that Gulf War II was a missed challenge for the EU to act in international affairs with one voice. The EU has a long way to go in order to be an equal partner with the U.S. as it wishes. The initiative taken by Germany, France, Luxemburg and Belgium for an autonomous European foreign and security policy was a step in the right direction. Greece endorsed this initiative but

²⁰⁵ Gilson, ‘Simitis Wears Two Hats on Iraq’, p. A08.

²⁰⁶ Filios Stagos, ‘Egomia gia tin Proedria’ in: <http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr>, 02/07/2003.

²⁰⁷ Glennon, ‘Why the Security Council Failed’, p. 35.

its EU Presidency dictated a neutral stance. The EU Constitution, if adopted, can bring new hopes for a successful EU foreign policy. However, predictions are highly risky in this case.

Finally, what should be pointed out is that the outcome of Gulf War II will depend on its contribution to Middle East stability.²⁰⁸ Two years after Gulf War II developments in Iraq are not positive. Although democratic elections have taken place, the continuation of the guerilla cannot guarantee a good future for the Iraqi people. Iraq looks as fragile as ever and many analysts are predicting a civil war. Nevertheless, it is true that in the first months of 2005 the situation in the Middle East has started to change. Besides the Iraqi elections, Jordan has announced a plan for regional elections, Egypt will held a sort of presidential elections, Saudi Arabia has called municipal elections, Syria has started to withdraw from Lebanon, and the Palestinians already have a democratic leadership. Does George W. Bush deserve a credit for that? The answer of this question is not easy. What is certain is that the U.S. ambition to democratise the Arab world may last many years. Philip Gordon comments that the defeat of communism and the spread of democracy and freedom to Eastern Europe and Russia took 70 years to achieve but is now a tangible reality.²⁰⁹ It would be a great success for the U.S. if Gulf War II signaled the beginning of Arab world's democratisation.

²⁰⁸ Author's interview with P. Vlassopoulos.

²⁰⁹ Gordon, 'Bush's Middle East Vision', p. 158.

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