

Greece and Bulgaria: From the Experiences of the Past to the Challenges of the Future

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The relations between Greece and Bulgaria in the first decades of the twentieth century were determined exclusively by Bulgaria's thirty-year long (1913-1944) effort to reverse the status quo that was established by the peace treaty that ended the Balkan Wars. It was actually an open wound right in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula, and it was linked to bloody conflicts and a temporary occupation of parts of Greek Macedonia and Thrace. The result of this long-lasting and painful antagonism, has been that the Greco-Bulgarian region has been one of intense disputes and nationalistic fervor that continued to torment both peoples even after the end of World War II.

During the early post-war years, Greece and Bulgaria did not even maintain diplomatic relations. Progress was not achieved until the 1954-1964 period, when the international climate improved significantly. Between 1964 and 1974, the progress in Greco-Bulgarian relations was rapid and was even ahead of the rest of the international system. The deterioration in Greco-Turkish relations following the Cyprus events in 1974, gave Athens a reason to improve its relations with its northern neighbor. Bulgaria, in turn, recognized that it somehow had to escape its isolation in the Balkans.

All joint communiqués issued following bilateral meetings after the fall of the dictatorship in Greece, were characterized by the key phrase: "Greco-Bulgarian relations are a model for the relations between neighboring countries having a different socio-fi-

nancial system." Contacts between Athens and Sofia during the last period of the ideological separation in Europe were a fundamental component of the existing balances in the Balkan Peninsula. The Declarations of Friendship signed by the two countries (31/5/1973¹ and 11/9/1986²) were rather characteristic, in providing the actual basis for the development of their bilateral relations.

Despite the ongoing historical and political controversies between Greece and Bulgaria, the two countries undertook serious initiatives to improve their relations during the Cold War. When World War II ended, the two countries acceded into different political and military coalitions. The tension and rivalry between the leaders of these coalitions was also reflected on the bilateral relations between Greece and Bulgaria. Post-war, communist Bulgaria made an effort – at least as far as its regional foreign policy was concerned – to find within its socialist entourage, the avenues that would allow it to preserve its national dreams for the Balkan region. In contrast, Greece, being a member of NATO, was equally interested in defending its interests within the wider Balkan peninsula zone. Yet, the expression of independent political reasoning in this region and careful distancing on behalf of the two countries from the positions of the Super Powers evolved during this post-war period until 1989.

FACTORS THAT SHAPED GRECO-BULGARIAN RELATIONS

Relations between Greece and Bulgaria³ progressed on a steady basis of co-operation after 1974. The changes in the geographic and political map of Europe after 1989 were also catalytic for the development of Greco-Bulgarian relations. An assessment of the progress in bilateral relations since 1990 as well as of the prospects for these relations will require an examination of certain aspects of political, defense, and economic cooperation.

The Greco-Turkish Antagonism

The most fundamental parameter influencing the policy options of Greece and Bulgaria to this day is the delicate balance of the relations of both countries with neighboring Turkey. The clear orientation of Greek foreign and defense policy has been towards the

so-called *danger from the east*. Both Greece and Bulgaria⁴ also have a Muslim minority. Post-Cold War Greco-Bulgarian relations were characterized by an intense fluidity.

Because of its geographic position, Bulgaria took foreign policy initiatives. Bulgaria attributed high priority to its relations with its two main competitors in the Balkans: Greece and Turkey. However, maintaining a balance between the two countries is a difficult task. The countries in question tend to interpret Bulgaria's contacts with each of them as the expression of a threat that subverts the situation in the area. Bulgaria, especially after 1989 on one hand, appears as rather insecure – because of the arms race between Greece and Turkey. On the other hand it creates the impression to both Bulgarians and to the international scene, that it is being used as leverage in the Greco-Turkish antagonism.

The Bulgarians however, attempt to justify their policy as an effort to balance various trends in the Balkans. At the same time, this policy is justified by a climate of quasi-euphoria, due to the fact that the country can now shape an independent foreign policy. Actually, this policy is necessary for Bulgaria because of the presence of a significant Muslim minority and country's defence requirements. Because of these conditions, Bulgaria may be forced to negotiate with Turkey and keep a balance with Greece. Bulgaria would also prefer to make important progress in its relations with Greece because of the new international political climate.

The two major poles that define the framework of the relations of Bulgaria with Greece and Turkey are connected directly to the state scheme established in Bulgaria following the changes of 1989. These are the President of the Republic, who until today comes from within the *Union of Democratic Forces*, and the government. The latter in the seven years following the political changeover (1990-1997), is controlled either directly or indirectly by structures and people that used to belong to the Communist Party which has evolved into the *Bulgarian Socialist Party*. The institutional aspects of Bulgaria's government, and the personal signature of the people who are in control, provide an explanation of the internal political factors that shape and implement the country's foreign policy.

The Macedonian Issue and the Yugoslavian Crisis

The developments in the Balkan peninsula have brought to the surface other parameters that now influence decisively the relations between Greece and Bulgaria. On one hand we have the Macedonian issue with all its implications and interweavings in the Balkan and international scene. On the other hand we have the attempts by an insecure post-war Bulgaria to approach the structures of the European Union and those of NATO.

If until the end of the 1980s the Greco-Bulgarian approach was based mainly on the fear of Turkey's deterrent power, the Macedonian issue and the Yugoslavian crisis, in the beginning of 1992, created significant friction in the Greco-Bulgarian relations. The Macedonian issue is a reality for Bulgaria, reflecting the existing historical, linguistic and minority parameters. This issue implicates primarily Yugoslavia/Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) as well as, secondarily, Greece.

Communist Bulgaria's post-war policy on the Macedonian issue was determined by the parallel existence and action of two components. On one hand, during its communist period, Bulgaria did not recognize the existence of a Macedonian minority in its administrative district of Pirin's Macedonia. On the other hand, however, it accepted the reality the way it was shaped in the interior of the post-war Yugoslavia after the establishment of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia (SRM). This contradicted its position on the Bulgarian consciousness of the people of the SRM. The consistent Bulgarian position is the non-recognition of the existence of a specific Macedonian nation. Zhivkov's Bulgaria constantly fought to prove the pacifist dimensions of its Balkan policy. Despite all this, it did not always succeed to hide its discontent on the efforts made on behalf of the state authorities and the scientific community of the SRM and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to "macedonize" its history. The USSR also played a decisive role in the creation of the then retrogressions of Bulgarian policy over the Macedonian issue.

In the months that followed Bulgaria's decision on January 15, 1992⁵ to recognize the FYROM as an independent state under its constitutional name, a general state of euphoria was to prevail be-

tween Sofia and Skopje. As a matter of fact, this state of euphoria reached its peak in Bulgaria in the period between 1992 and early 1993, when the country could speak about and act freely in the – by then "forgotten" – issue of Macedonia. On the other hand, however, Bulgaria's hope that, by leading the countries that would recognize the FYROM, the issue would be subsequently resolved, Bulgaria's image in the West, was not fulfilled.

A while later, Bulgarians started expressing their concern on the issue of article 49 of the FYROM's Constitution, regarding the protection "of Macedonian nationals living in neighboring countries, by the Republic of Macedonia." After 1994, Bulgaria's concerns on issues of nationality and the existence of minorities in the two countries, as well as the language issue, were expressed even more vigorously. As a matter of fact, following the attempted assassination of President K. Glikorov, on October 3, 1995, Bulgaria experienced its historical connection with the Macedonian issue at an international level. Bulgaria felt negative consequences in its general image⁶ as a result of allegations and responsibilities attributed to it for its involvement in the attempt in question. Today, Bulgaria is still uneasy about the development of its relations with FYROM.

Greek Economic Presence and Greek Communities in Bulgaria

Greco-Bulgarian relations in the post-communist period have also been supplemented by the significant economic presence and activity of Greek public and private enterprises. Bilateral relations have also been influenced by the fragile balances in the political life of Bulgaria because of its parliamentary inexperience. Another factor is the presence of Greek communities in the Black Sea and in the large urban centres as well as the Saracatsans.⁷

The effort to regroup the historical Greek communities of Bulgaria plays an important role in the consolidation of the Greco-Bulgarian co-operation. The fact that neither country has raised any minority issues and guarantees by the Bulgarian state for a normal integration of Greeks into the mutating society of the country, constitute firm ground on which to base Greco-Bulgarian relations. Both countries need to avoid the burden of irredentist claims which has been a characteristic phenomenon throughout the Balkans.

Today, the Greek communities of Bulgaria are found mainly in traditionally Greek urban centers of the nineteenth century, such as the coast of the Black Sea, the broader areas of Varna and Plovdiv, Veliko Tarnovo and Stara Zagora. Another part of Bulgaria's Hellenism is constituted by political refugees who abandoned Greece after the Civil War. Most of them live in Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna. A common characteristic among the members of Greek communities is their activities in the associations of Greco-Bulgarian friendship at their places of residence. In the last census of December 1992, 4,930 Greeks were recorded. However, according to the estimates and calculations of these communities, their number amounts to approximately 25,000.

ASSESSMENT OF GRECO-BULGARIAN RELATIONS (1990-1997)

Political Relations

The following comments reflect the factors that have been examined in this paper.

1990 could be characterized as a good year for Greco-Bulgarian relations. In the field of bilateral relations, efforts were undertaken by both sides to develop not only their political relations but also their economic relations, mainly with the region of Northern Greece. The Bulgarian side has been mainly interested in establishing special arrangements for the use of ports in Thessaloniki, Kavala, and Alexandroupolis, in the creation of joint ventures in Northern Greece and in the opening of new borderline routes. At a bilateral level, the two sides mainly dealt with the issue of management of the waters of river Nestos but also with issues related to security in both bilateral and regional levels, avoiding double taxation as well as the mutual protection of investments. At an international level, Bulgaria expressed a remarkable interest in gaining the support of the European Union for the democratic changes that were taking place in the country, as well as the tightening of relations with the European Union in order to help Bulgaria's collapsing economy.

The year 1991 was a milestone for Greco-Bulgarian relations in the post-communist period. As it pertains to the Balkans, the two countries agreed to encourage bilateral and multilateral relations among Balkan countries and on the common promotion of initiatives towards institutionalizing the mechanisms of interbalkan co-

operation. At a bilateral level, there was interest for a multifaceted co-operation in the economic, commercial and tourist sector.

More precisely, during the visit of the then Prime Minister of Greece K. Mitsotakis in Bulgaria (11-12 January 1991) and the subsequent visit of the then Prime Minister of Bulgaria D. Popov (14-17 February 1991), the following was agreed upon:

- Negotiate and sign an agreement by the end of February 1991 between the authorized Banks of both countries, as to the utilization of the \$50 million loan, granted to Bulgaria by the Greek government,
- Create a Committee in order to settle labor issues,
- Create a Mixed Committee on Ecology for the rivers crossing the two countries by the end of March 1991,
- Establish an airline connection between Thessaloniki and Sofia starting March 1991
- Open cultural centres in Athens and Sofia,
- Abolish visas for diplomatic passports and passports belonging to state officials and to issue a six-month visa for businessmen from the two countries.

The two Prime Ministers also signed the agreements on the avoidance of double taxation and early warning in case of nuclear accidents and exchange of information on nuclear facilities.

The climax of these positive developments in the relations of the two countries was the signing in Athens at the end of that same year (October 7, 1991), of the Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighboring, Co-operation and Security. This Treaty included arrangements in the fields of economy, security, industry, banking, technology and science, hydro-economics, and ecology at both bilateral level as well as in the framework of international organizations and conferences. Article 12 of the Treaty attributed primary importance to the reestablishment of close communication in the field of early warning of nuclear accidents and information exchange on nuclear installations. Article 13 was also pioneering and innovative, stressing the particular role of Orthodoxy in the historical and cultural development of both peoples, explicitly stating that the two countries shall facilitate the work of the Orthodox Church at all levels.

A negative development in Greco-Bulgarian relations was the

decision of Bulgaria, on January 15, 1992, to recognize FYROM. Throughout 1992, Greco-Bulgarian relations were characterized by stagnation and mutual distrust. Bulgaria's recognition of FYROM was followed by that of Turkey. This created a climate of mistrust in Greece towards its neighbors on the Macedonian issue because Greece felt that it was geopolitically "surrounded." During this time Greece had various problems with virtually every adjacent country in the Balkan Peninsula. This intensified Greece's feeling of mistrust towards its Balkan neighbors.

Both countries came under new governments in 1993. During this year, efforts were made from both sides to revive Greco-Bulgarian relations. In addition the shadow of the Macedonian issue, the relations between the two countries were also burdened – by the UN sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, by the ties of Greece with Serbia and the potential interference of Balkan countries in the crisis in Bosnia through the deployment of peacekeeping forces.

In 1994, bilateral relations were limited to regular annual contacts at a governmental level, as well as in the field of regional and local government on issues of environmental protection and transport. When Minister of Foreign Affairs St. Daskalov visited Athens on May 23-25, 1994, the two sides attempted to upgrade their sorely tried relations. They sought solutions to both bilateral issues (utilization of the Nestos river waters, opening of new borderline routes, expansion of road axes) as well as to matters of wider inter-Balkan co-operation (Yugoslavian crisis, Macedonian issue, UN sanctions).

Bilateral relations between the two countries returned to the "good times of the recent past" after the Socialists assumed Bulgaria's government, following the elections of December 1994. The main policy directions in that bilateral relations from 1994 to 1996 were directly related to the promotion of inter-Balkan co-operation in the framework of the imminent resolution of the Bosnian issue, as well as to the plans to construct the pipeline of Burgas – Alexandroupolis, in order to transport oil from the wider Caucasus area into Europe. The visits by the then Foreign Minister of Greece, K. Papoulias to Sofia (3/30-31/1995, 10/23/1995 and 12/22/1995), the then Prime Minister of Bulgaria, Z. Videnov to

Athens (6/19-20/1995), the President of the Hellenic Republic, K. Stefanopoulos (11/20/1995) to Bulgaria and the then Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, G. Pirinski to Athens (4/4-5/1996) contributed to the revival of Greco-Bulgarian relations.

In 1997, the agenda of Greco-Bulgarian relations included the pursuit by Bulgaria – through Greece – of better prerequisites for approaching Euro-atlantic structures and the faster promotion of interstate and commercial co-operation at a bilateral and inter-Balkan level. A rather remarkable incident⁸ in the framework of these activities took place during the visit of the caretaker Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, S. Stalev (April 14-16, 1997) to Athens. For the first time important Greek businessmen with investments in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe, took part in the meetings of the two official delegations.

During 1997, an important element for the consolidation of a spirit of co-operation between the two countries was the humanitarian aid⁹ extended by the Greek people to the Bulgarian people because of the economic crisis in the country. This was not the first time after the changes of 1989, that the Greek people tried to support their Bulgarian neighbors at a time of need. Basic sources for the humanitarian assistance campaign from Greece to Bulgaria have been local government bodies, the Church and the Media.

Energy and Transport

Most noteworthy are the contacts of the two countries in energy- and transport-related issues. These new fields of co-operation are linked to the plans for the construction of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline for the transport of oil from the former soviet republics as well as for the expansion of the two countries' transport capabilities through new land-, river- and sea routes connecting Central Europe and the Danube with the Aegean, the Mediterranean and the Near East. Within the framework of these new activities in the fields of energy and transport, the two countries expect to promote and enhance the economic and social development of their respective borderline areas.

The laws for the construction of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis oil pipeline have gone through several changes for two main reasons:

a. Russia, as the owner and distributor of the oil in question is trying to secure itself completely. It aims to control nearly the entire oil flow from Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. In addition, the private companies involved in the project with or without assistance from their respective governments, also aim at striking the best deal on their own behalf.

b. Bulgaria, on the other hand, is trying to take advantage of its intermediary position in the handling of oil, so as to achieve the greatest gain possible from refining and transit rights. When the socialists were in power, Bulgaria sought state involvement throughout the project's implementation while at the same time limiting the involvement of Greek and Russian private companies.

Following the April 1996 agreement between Russia and Kazakhstan on the transportation Tengiz oil to the Russian port of Novorossisk, there was a revival of interest on the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline, as a part of the alternative routes for the distribution of the Kazakh oil. In mid-October 1996, the relevant agreement was signed finally in Sofia between the governments of Bulgaria, Russia and Greece, with the participation of interested private companies. However, in 1997, the new centre-right wing government of Bulgaria, lead by the Prime Minister I. Kostov was expected to review the issue from a zero base. Thus, the project was likely to run into another obstacle.

However, regardless, of differences at the governmental and private level, both the Bulgarian and the Greek side were limited to the distribution of the oil. Both countries view the construction of the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline as having the following advantages:

- a. lack of terrain irregularities throughout the pipeline's plotted course,
- b. its relatively short (270 km),
- c. low transport cost
- d. bypassing the straits:
 - i. Turkey has set already strict limitations on the transport of dangerous flammable cargoes through this sea route,
 - ii. it provides an alternative in the transport and distribution system. It bypasses Turkey and its effort to mo-

nopolize the control over all pipeline routes in its territory,

e. political and defensive coverage of the project with the participation of Greece in EU, NATO and WEU structures. The commissioning of the pipeline is expected to upgrade the borderline areas of both Bulgaria and Greece. It is also going to contribute significantly – through the need for pipeline security – to their defensive shielding and, finally, yield important financial profit from the transit and storage of oil.

Of utmost importance for the course of the bilateral relations between Greece and Bulgaria, is the settlement of the long-pending issue of the Nestos river waters. The governments of both countries adopted the agreement on the Nestos waters, which was signed on June 20, 1995¹⁰ in Athens.

If in the case of energy networks Greece and Bulgaria have focused their attention on the geopolitical zone of Eurasia, in transport network development-related issues, the route is through the EU. The latter, in the context of strengthening borderline regions has created the prerequisites for the implementation of common projects in the field of transport networks. European programs, however, cover other sectors as well. They consolidate inter-border co-operation, democratic institutions, regional and municipal co-operation, telecommunications, energy, environment, tourism, private sector support, agricultural economy, human resources utilization and administrative reform.

Greece's involvement in all these sectors is of importance to Bulgaria. The efforts for co-operation in the aforementioned fields are based on Article 11 of the 1991 Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighboring, Co-operation and Security between the two countries, on the Protocol of the Mixed Inter-governmental Greco-Bulgarian Committee on Economic and Technical-Scientific Co-operation and on the Joint Statement of the then Prime Ministers of Greece and Bulgaria, A. Papandreou and Z. Videnov on June 20, 1995 in Athens.

At the same time, both countries – taking advantage of their geographical locations – emphasize their participation in the so-called regional co-operation schemes. They include multilateral co-operation schemes of various types and content in the Balkans,

the Black Sea¹¹ but also in the areas surrounding the Danube¹². For Bulgaria, these initiatives constitute means of approaching its "euro-atlantic" goals. However, the necessary prerequisite for the promotion of its political emancipation is the development of the required infra-structure programs and the improvement of its economic figures.

So, the Greek initiative for co-ordination and co-operation in the field of transport among Greece, Bulgaria and Rumania is integrated fully in the above framework of the European perspective of Bulgaria. The trilateral meetings of Ioannina (August 26, 1995), Varna (March 16-17, 1996) and Sinaia (October 23, 1997) among the Foreign Ministers of all three countries, gave the first practical results in the pursuit for new forms of co-operation in the Balkans. The existing – and expanding towards Southeastern Europe – trans-European transport networks, constitute a challenge for the commerce and the economy of the entire geographic area from the Aegean and the Black Sea to Central and Eastern Europe.

Through Bulgaria and Romania, Greece – and subsequently the European Union – gains a hinterland and a bridge to the *Visegrad countries* (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia), Ukraine and Russia. Greece, through these new road axes and border stations¹³ with Bulgaria, offers the ports of Northern Greece (Thessaloniki, Kavala, Alexandroupolis) to Bulgarian and Romanian products, and at the same time ensures continuity of the European space in the Balkans and the Middle East.

Even this area is affected by the Greco-Turkish rivalry and other Balkan localisms.¹⁴ To a better position themselves in the starting grid of the pan-European transport horizon, new and old Balkan countries jostle one another – more at a verbal level – on the so-called Balkan piece of the new road- and railroad axes of the European continent. The example of the Egnatia Highway construction in Greece, has turned into an object for new separation lines in the Balkan Peninsula. Following a Turkish initiative, the Presidents of Bulgaria, Turkey, Albania and FYROM, signed on October 23, 1995 in New York a Protocol for the construction of the so-called "Para-Egnatia Highway," a road axis counteracting the Egnatia Highway project, linking the Black Sea with the Adriatic Sea. these activities intensify Balkan divisions and create confusion in European

political and economic decision making centers. The result is the delay of projects and the isolation of this region from the other European axes.

Economic Relations between Greece-Bulgaria

Most noteworthy are the economic relations between Greece and Bulgaria during the seven years of 1990-1997. We have seen that the political cooperation between the two countries has been through many fluctuations. This is largely due to differences of each of the countries with other Balkan countries.

The efforts to liberalize the Bulgarian economy following 1990, created a sound framework for both Greek exports to Bulgaria as well as for Greek commercial investments. The huge success of Greek economic presence in the commercial sector is due mainly to the geographic proximity and the combination of quality and price, which has allowed the average Bulgarian consumer to rate Greek products as affordable. In the field of investments, we have the phenomenon that Greek investments hold the first place in the number of investments. However, Greek investments are low in relation to the total value of invested capital.

Bilateral economic co-operation has been enhanced by the help Greece has given to Bulgaria in European Union bodies in order to achieve Bulgaria's speediest accession to European institutional structures. Bulgaria signed on May 8, 1990 a trade agreement on commercial and economic co-operation with the European Union, aiming at improving the access of its products to the Union's market. Developments in E. Europe led Bulgaria, on 8 March 1993, to sign an Agreement for its adhesion to the European Union. In contrast to the first agreement of 1990 the new agreement offers the possibility for the future integration of Bulgaria in the European Union.

The positive developments in the fields of economic co-operation, that undoubtedly influence the entire range of Greco-Bulgarian contacts. They are linked also to the necessity to regulate issues concerning inter-border communication matters and the facilitation of contacts between citizens of the two countries. This includes issues of opening new border stations and interconnecting road axes, legislative regulation of the employment status of

Bulgarian seasonal workers in Greece and the general revision of the policy of issuing visas of any kind for business and tourist reasons.

Military Diplomacy

In contrast to the field of bilateral political co-operation, where developments are influenced by the incidents in the Balkans and the non-resolution of pending issues, the situation in the field of the so-called *military diplomacy* is totally different. Immediately after the fall of the Zhivkov regime and the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact, Bulgaria found itself in limbo in terms of its defensive coverage. The protective umbrella of the Soviet Union now belongs to the past and post-communist Bulgaria has not yet clearly defined its defence doctrine. The Yugoslav crisis, created a lot of instability in the Balkans. Bulgaria attempted to cope with this security "gap" by signing bilateral defence pacts with neighbouring and other countries. At the same time, it started an effort to join NATO. Finally, on February 14, 1994, Bulgaria acceded to NATO's "Partnership for Peace."

Regardless of these events, Bulgaria's contacts with NATO face numerous difficulties. In contrast to the contracts with the EU, there is less of a consensus among the political forces of the country on the promotion of ties with NATO. The debate over NATO contacts is due to the different ideological outlook between the President of Bulgaria during these seven years, Z. Zhelev and the socialist-like government. The latter reflects more the country's historical past in the framework of the military mechanisms of E. Europe and the Soviet Union. In the case of NATO,¹⁵ all protagonists – on both sides – are mistrustful. The USA, even in the post-Cold War era, does not trust the complete opening of NATO to the former most loyal ally of the Soviet Union. Besides, Central European countries come first. Russia still considers E. Europe in its entirety as the most important geopolitical bridge-head against the West. In the case of Bulgaria, Russia¹⁶ is exploiting the friendly predisposition of Bulgarian society towards it as well as the great needs of the Bulgarian Armed Forces and of the military industry in technology and raw materials.

Within the framework of Bulgaria's search for new defensive

guarantees, its contacts with Greece in the military field have a prominent place. Of utmost importance for the defense of both countries and for the consolidation of the two countries' initiatives in the defense field, was the signing of the 1991 Treaty on Friendship, Good Neighbouring, Co-operation and Security¹⁷. The Treaty contains a special stipulation on defence matters of interest to the contracting countries. The Armed Forces constitute an important factor for guaranteeing peace and security in the Balkans, in the context of the generalized climate of disarmament and detente in the political scene. Especially noteworthy is the provision of article 6 of the Treaty in question, stating that in case one of the two countries is under direct or indirect attack or is threatened by a third country, the other country shall not provide the third country with any political, military or other assistance and support.

Agreements have been signed on the installation of a telephone line between the General Staffs of Greece and Bulgaria, in compliance with the CFE Treaty, on defence industry, on the co-operation between the two countries' armed forces,¹⁸ on the exchange of training programs¹⁹ (such as pilot training, staff training in firing field), on the carrying out of common military maneuvers on a bilateral level²⁰ and within the framework of the *Partnership for Peace*.²¹ Furthermore, the two countries' General Staffs have moved into matters such as the exchange of visits and delegations of military staff, of teachers in military War Schools and military doctors, of sports meetings between military units as well as the exchange of visits between warships and mutual test inspections in conformity with the CFE treaty.

Conclusions

Since 1989, and despite the fluidity of Balkan realities and the fluctuation in the relations between Greece and Bulgaria the two countries provide stability to each other. Moreover, the two countries do not act, nor are they likely to so in the future in a way potentially harmful to their national interests. Regardless of their individual historical and political differences in their approach and evaluation of Balkan issues, especially after 1992, the two countries are trying to pursue in today's transitional²² period convergence and co-operation in the following fields:

- the enhancement efforts to resolve crises in the Balkans,
- the consolidation of democracy in the region,
- the development of infrastructures to facilitate the geographical, economic and political connection of the Balkans with Central and Eastern Europe as well as with the former Soviet Republics,
- the generalization of positive results in their bilateral relations.

The natural outlet of Bulgaria towards the centers of decision making and influence in Europe comes through Central Europe and the Black Sea. In its political activities, Bulgaria is inspired by the European perspective. For Bulgaria, the Balkans and its relations with Greece, especially as a member of the European Union, will continue to constitute the stable foreign policy choice. This provides a "certificate of proper conduct" for use in Bulgaria's wider European and Atlantic quests. Bulgaria will continue stressing to the EU its role as a "bridge" but also a "corridor" in the Balkan and Black Sea regions.

Greece, on the other hand, seeks through Bulgaria – inter alia – a natural outlet to the Black Sea, Central and Eastern Europe. By being a member of all important political, military and economic organizations, facilitates its bilateral relations with Bulgaria but also its generalized pursuits and initiatives in the Northeastern Europe region.

Past perseverance in friendship and co-operation sides and axes is well known for its painful results in the Balkan Peninsula. Bulgaria is not only forced to adapt to the harsh demands of competition as it pertains to its economic policy, but also it has to pursue successful choices in its foreign and security policies. The enhancement of the policy of tighter bonds with "euro-atlantic" structures, brings forth Greece's role in the development of their bilateral relations.

Greece and Bulgaria have also signed agreements covering nearly all those issues two countries can agree on. This element denotes the sound foundations of Greco-Bulgarian relations. Besides, it is an indisputable fact what the Bulgarian President P. Stoyanov stated while in Athens "that Greco-Bulgarian relations over the past eight years set an example to be applied in bilateral relations all over Europe."²³ In the final analysis, what is demanded in the next century, is the will of both sides to implement the agreements signed

over the years. Only in this manner the historical obstacles, bitter memories, and mistrust that affected the development of bilateral relations can be set aside. After all, this is the pre-requisite for the expansion of the European Union's policy on building a Europe of regions and of democracy in the Balkan Peninsula.

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* Translated by Theo Buchelos

¹ See the text in the Bulgarian newspaper *Rabotnichesko Delo* (2 June, 1973).

² See the text in *Sfidosteuropa* (10/1986): 600-603.

³ See for Greco-Bulgarian relations in general, Riedel (1997); Tonchev (1996); Engelbrekt (1993); Kentrotis (1993); Tounta-Fergadi (1986); Têennes (1984); Pentzopolulos (1962).

⁴ In the case of Bulgaria, the role of the minority is a catalytic one, given both its size as well as the parliamentary support offered occasionally by the Bulgarian Muslim Party, the *Movement for Rights and Freedoms*, to the governments formed after the elections of October 1991.

⁵ The official communiqué issued by the Bulgarian government on its decision to recognise the new state, stressed that this decision "is a new kind of solidarity towards our Bulgarian brothers in the Republic of Macedonia". This formulation supports the fixed Bulgarian position on the non-recognition of a Macedonian nation and language. See the text of the official communiqué in the Bulgarian newspaper *Vek 21* (21-28 January 1992): 1.

⁶ The case in question was added to the country's already negative image, when, in the 1980's, communist Bulgaria was linked to both the attempt to assassinate Pope John-Paul II, as well as to suspicions of training and financially supporting terrorist organisations.

⁷ They found themselves in Bulgaria about 150 years ago, after being persecuted by Ali Pasha's Turkish-Albanians. They were forced to move towards the Balkan peninsula, seeking safer refuge than their traditional centers in the Agra area in Greece. As a nomadic people, they started organising shepherds' clans and moving around the Balkans, Rila and northern Rodopi during summer and the coasts of the Black Sea and Thrace during winter. In today's Bulgaria, Saracatsans are being treated as Bulgarian citizens of Greek origin. The foundation of the *Union of Saracatsans of Bulgaria* in Sliven on 28/12/1990, contributes significantly to their

contact with the Bulgarian society and state authority. Their annual meetings are honored by the presence and participation of the Bulgarian authorities and the local society. During the last census of December 1992, 5,144 individual Saracatsans were recorded (the Saracatsans themselves estimate their population at approximately 15,000).

⁸ In the peculiarities of Greco-Bulgarian relations we also have the fact that for the first time after 1989, Greece was visited by a Bulgarian President of the Republic. From 2-4 July, the new Bulgarian President, P. Stoyanov made an official visit to Athens and Thessaloniki.

⁹ In the most formal way, the Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, N. Michailova thanked the Greek people for their support towards the Bulgarian people in their time of need, during her participation in the inter-Balkan conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Thessaloniki (9-10/6/1997).

¹⁰ On 28 March 1996, the Agreement was submitted to the Bulgarian Parliament for ratification. However, both the opposition and the then President of the Republic Zhelev, considered it as unfavourable for Bulgaria's interests. Critics on the agreement considered the stipulation awarding Greece 1.5 billion m³ (namely 29% of the total water quantity of the river Nestos) per year to be harmful to Bulgaria's interests. This stipulation, according to the opposition, was based on calculations effected during 1935-1970. Now, however, due to a draught, the facts have changed dramatically at Bulgaria's expense. Finally, the agreement was ratified on 15 April 1996. See the Agreement text, *The 1996 Yearbook of Defence and Foreign Policy* (1996): 163-264.

¹¹ In addition to the various forms of Balkan co-operation, which constitute an immediate priority of Bulgarian foreign policy, Black Sea co-operation is another point of reference for Bulgaria in its immediate locale. Although, the creation of the Black Sea co-operation was not greeted warmly by Bulgaria due to the multitude of participating countries and of the leading role assumed by Turkey, Bulgaria seems to have accepted this step because it contributes to regional co-operation, and to improving its financial level. See on the Black Sea Co-operation, *Balkan Review* (1995): 3-36; *zer*(1996): 75-106.

¹² It concerns the programme named *South-eastern Europe Co-operation Initiative* (SECI), pertaining to issues of border abolishment and circulation of persons and products.

¹³ On 22 December 1995 an Agreement was signed in Sofia on the opening of three new border passages between Greece and Bulgaria. More precisely it's the border passages in the region of Drama (Exohi-Goche Delchev), in the region of Xanthi (Xanthi-Ehinos-Rudozem-Smoljan) and in the region of Komotini (Komotini-Haskovo).

¹⁴ Another example is the disagreement between Rumania and Bulgaria, on the location of a new bridge that will be constructed over the Danube.

¹⁵ Although during the seven years of 1990-1997, two NATO Secretary Generals visited Bulgaria (Manfred Werner in 1991 and the current's SG, Javier Solana, in May 1996), they did not hesitate to speak openly of the difficulties presented by the Bulgarian case in particular, as a former loyal ally of the USSR. These positions were confirmed during the NATO Summit in Madrid on the Alliance's expansion (8-9 July 1997).

¹⁶ On 31 January 1997, the Russian Prime Minister V. Chernomyrdin declared in Davos, Switzerland, that Bulgaria has much to lose by becoming a NATO member; a development naturally passing through the most general policy of NATO towards Russia and its former allies. See relevant Bulgarian newspaper *24 Chasa* (1 February 1997).

¹⁷ The Greco-Turkish conflict and Bulgaria's balancing effort is apparent mainly on issues of security and military co-operation. On 9 December 1991, a similar Treaty between Bulgaria and Turkey followed (for Greece this was yet another opportunity to be mistrustful towards its neighbours, given that, for instance, during the 1984-1989 period we had the harsh Turkish-Bulgarian confrontation on Bulgaria's policy on the Muslim minority issue).

¹⁸ See texts of relevant agreements, *Bulgarische Militar Rundschau* (1992 test issue): 48-51 and (3-4/1993): 120-123 (this is an edition in both English and French).

¹⁹ *Bulgarische Militar Rundschau* (2/1993): 77-78.

²⁰ During the visit of the then Greek Minister of National Defence, G. Arsenis in Sofia on 21/2/1995, there was an agreement on the participation of the Greek Navy in joint manoeuvres in Bulgarian territorial waters in the summer of the same year.

²¹ Participation of Bulgarian units (along with respective Greek, American, Albanian and Rumanian ones) in Alliance manoeuvres in Peloponnissos (code name: New Spirit 1995) in May 1995 for training on earthquake-victims assistance-related matters.

²² Woodard (17 January 1997); T. Wilkinson (23 January 1997).

²³ Gocheva (7 July 1997).

The Geopolitics of Oil in Central Asia

CONSTANTINE ARVANITOPOULOS

One important geopolitical consequence of the demise of the Soviet Union was the rise of an intense political and commercial competition for control of the vast energy resources of the newly independent and vulnerable states of the Caucasus and Central Asia. These energy resources and, in particular, the oil and natural gas deposits have now become the apple of discord in Central Asia introducing, according to analysts, a new chapter in the "Great Game" of control over Eurasia.¹

Although, the stakes involved remain the same, power-influence-security-wealth, the new playing field is further complicated by a vast array of problems. These include intra-regional conflict, political instability, fierce competition among multinational conglomerates, and a shortfall in commercial expertise and legal infrastructures.²

Moreover, the fact that the three countries that share the majority of the region's energy resources, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, are landlocked makes them dependent on their immediate neighbors for access to the Western markets.

The essence of this "new geopolitical game" in Central Asia is twofold: first, control of production of the oil and gas, and second, control of the pipelines that will transfer the oil to the western markets.³

From a geopolitical point of view, Central Asia has always been important.⁴ From the middle to the end of the nineteenth century,