

THE TURKISH THREAT AND THE IRRATIONALITY OF APPEASEMENT

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It is broadly recognized in the light of contradictory theoretical approaches that states form their grand strategy rationally. This does not mean that their decisions are always right; states make decisions via cost-benefit analyses under the prospect of achieving survival and thus, at least preserving their power status in the region they belong to.¹ Therefore, balance of power is the crux of the matter. As Arnold Wolfers declared in 1962, '[a nation tends] to regard any shift in the balance of power that favors its adversary as at least an indirect threat to its own survival'.²

In other words, the intentions of a powerful state may not be offensive, but the uncertainty for its intentions represents itself a security dilemma for the weaker state. According to Robert Jervis, security dilemmas are resulted from the zero-sum substance of the inter-state relations, since a unit's increase of security measures is linked relatively to another unit's relevant decrease.³ In this context, the weaker state ought to form its grand strategy on the basis of the worst case scenario. This need is even more intense if it is verified that the powerful state, apart from the relevant capabilities, has also the intentions to destabilize the regional balance of power in its favor.

The above-mentioned theoretical hypothesis is absolutely in line with the case study of the Greek-Turkish relations. In summary, Turkey represents a threat⁴ to Greece's survival, since power has been redistributed in its favor during the last period. Turkey's GDP increased to 783 billion dollars in 2012, while Greece's GDP decreased to 255 billion dollars mainly due to the current economic crisis. For the same reason, in 2012, Greece limited its defense budget to 7.5 billion dollars as well as its military personnel, while Turkey increased it from 10 to 17 billion dollars between 2009 and 2012 keeping steady, at the same time, its personnel. Furthermore, between 2007 and 2013, Turkey has added to its population almost 9.5 million people; a number almost equal to Greece's overall population.⁵ In Stephen Walt's words, it is worth to be inclined that this data is even more emphatic, if it is

considered that the two countries are geographically proximate. With regard to Turkey's intentions, its hegemonic aspirations have been identified with neo-ottomanism, which has been the ideological framework since Turgut Özal behind the regime's efforts to secure internal cohesion and form grand strategy. It is widely accepted that in the 1980s, Cengiz Çandar was the first to introduce this term supporting that it is connected with the ideal of Turkey's rise to the status of the regional hegemon.⁶ Therefore, Turkey represents a threat for Greece's security and poses a clear security dilemma.

However, why is appeasement not a wise option for Greece to deal with this security dilemma? Appeasement represents a strategic option of relinquishment under the scope of dealing with the opponent's offensive aspirations.⁷ The negative results of this strategy were made clear in the case of the Second World War. Appeasement feeds the opponent's maximization of demands and inclination to essentially change the status quo. For this reason, appeasement is identified with destabilization and thus, leads to escalation as far as the appeasing state, sooner or later, is offended. However, in this case, the offended formerly-appeasing state will have already relinquished from a large part of its capabilities and thus, it will be at disadvantage during the peak of the escalation. Since appeasement leads to escalation and finally to a war-prone strategic environment, it is an evadible strategy not only from Greece's point of view, but also for the sake of peace in the greater region.

Especially during the last two decades, Greece has followed appeasing strategy against Turkey's demands. The most indicative example refers to Greece's support for Turkey's EU candidacy without any practical prerequisites. It is true that, in the aftermath of the Helsinki summit in 1999, a certain negotiations road map was adopted, but in the end it led to continuation of Turkish provocations in the Aegean, non-inhibition of the casus belli and of course, the Anan plan regarding the Cyprus problem. Greece's reaction cannot be considered as balancing; it continued to support Turkey's efforts to access the EU and keep an ambivalent stance with regard to Cyprus.

This situation has led to escalation reflected, for instance, to Turkey's current demands over the Cypriot exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as well as its rhetoric regarding Western Thrace. In the long-term, Greece seems to defend once non-negotiable vital interests. Therefore, if it is kept in mind that rational choice is crucial for a state desiring to survive, Greece's appeasement strategy may be regarded as completely irrational, since it has led to the limitation of its relative positioning in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean.

References:

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² Wolfers, A. (1962) *Discord and collaboration: Essays on international politics*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins press. P.73.

³ Jervis, R. (1978) Cooperation under the security dilemma. *World politics*, 30 (2), p.178.

⁴ Regarding the conceptualization of threat, see: Walt, S.M. (1987) *The origins of alliances*. New York: Cornell university press. Pp.21-26.

⁵ Source: The Military Balance series (2007-2013). London: Routledge.

⁶ Sözen, A. (2010) A paradigm shift in Turkish foreign policy: Transition and challenges. *Turkish studies*, 11 (1), pp.106-107.

⁷ Regarding states' strategic options, see: Mearsheimer, J. (2001) *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Pp.138-167.