

**PHANTOM MENACE: WHAT JUNIOR GREEK ARMY OFFICERS
HAVE TO SAY ABOUT TURKS AND TURKEY**

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This chapter focuses on the discourse of low-rank Greek army officers about the Turks and the state of Turkey. This is a combination of the hegemonic narratives promoted by the Greek state and other forms of conventional, informal rhetoric. Concentrating on the Greek and Turkish States rather than on the respective populations the officers reveal a form of nationalism built on seemingly rational arguments as opposed to sentimental reactions. Their struggle to think globally however, does not necessarily allow them to disengage from a view of the world order that is very much based on local, culturally informed perceptions about micro-level social interaction. Despite their attempt to analyze the current situation in terms of international relations, the subjects of this study do not abstain from recycling hypothetical scenarios and conspiracy theories that ultimately present Greece and Turkey as predictably non-sovereign countries whose policies are dictated by larger and more powerful interests, states and coalitions.

Key words: International politics (perceptions of), conspiracy theory, identity, Great Powers, Greece and Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1999, Greece and Turkey, two neighboring countries that have traditionally been regarded as potential adversaries, are engaged in a systematic effort to build mutual trust and to resolve their differences in an amiable manner. Besides its political dimension, the recent rapprochement is an intriguing academic subject in itself as it allows for the recognition of the differences within as well as the similarities between the respective cultures. During the last six years, various segments of the Greek population have expressed diverse opinions about the new friendly shift in Greek-Turkish relations, a phenomenon colloquially termed as ‘Greco-Turkish friendship’. This chapter focuses on

the discourses put forward by junior Greek army officers during different stages of this Greek-Turkish rapprochement – and in particular in the period between 2000 and 2003 – seeking to highlight that not only do different groups of individuals promote varying discourses about the neighboring Other but also, and perhaps more importantly, that the same individuals often foster seemingly contradictory elements in their rhetoric, which thus appears to be constantly shifting and filled with numerous inconsistencies (cf. Kirtsoglou and Sistani 2003).

The seemingly contradictory elements that appear on my informants' agendas and perspectives strongly relate to where they perceive – not Turkey's but – Greece's position to be in the international political order. Turkey becomes, inveterately, a suitable mirror into which the Self can look and see itself: its assumed weaknesses and strengths, its own ambivalence, its own feelings of centrality and marginality (see also, Argyrou this volume). Turkey as a proximate nation has the unique ability to stand simultaneously for what is intimate, alien, admired, feared, respected or despised depending on the context and the circumstances. It is a symbol of proximity and distance, of what one admires and hates about the Self rather than the Other. In the discourses of my informants the image of the Turk is largely a projection of what is to be Greek, only at times a projection that is inverted and distorted to signify what the Greek should abjure, what the Greek was and is not, and simultaneously what Greeks as an imaginary, collective entity aspire and strive to be.

All the different views that my informants express are permeated by a collective representation of the national Self and the national Other as essentially vulnerable entities directly dependent on 'Powers' much greater than themselves (cf. Sutton 2003). Concentrating on the Greek and Turkish nation-states, rather than on their respective populations, the army officers I studied struggle to think 'globally'. Their struggle, however, does not necessarily allow them to disengage from a view of the world order that is very much based on local, culturally informed perceptions of the micro-level social interaction. Despite their attempts to analyze political circumstances in terms of international relations, the subjects of this study do not abstain from recycling hypothetical scenarios and conspiracy theories that ultimately present Greece and Turkey as predictably non-sovereign countries whose policies are dictated by larger and more powerful interests, states and coalitions (cf. Brown & Theodossopoulos 2000, 2003).

Based on my own ethnographic material, the main argument of this paper unfolds in two parallel directions. First, in relation to national identity and employing Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities' (1983: 15), I argue that citizens of nation states imagine the Other to be as much a member of a community as is the Self. In the minds of a nation's inhabitants the image of communion with their fellow members is potent and alive despite the fact that they will never know the vast majority of them, while each citizen 'has complete confidence in the steady anonymous, simultaneous activity' of her fellow citizens (Anderson 1983: 31). It is because of the latter conviction, or 'sense of simultaneity' (Banks 1996: 127) of the national Self, that one perceives the national Other, not simply as an individual or a group of individuals, but as a member of an equally 'synchronized' and homogenous community with common perceptions, aspirations and desires for action (cf. Loizos 1988).

Huges (1994) puts forward a similar argument concerning ethnic groups. He claims that: '[a]n ethnic group is not one because of the degree of measurable or observable difference from other groups; it is an ethnic group ... because the people in it and the people out of it know that it is one; because both the *ins* and the *outs* feel and act as if it were a separate group' (1994: 91 original emphasis). Likewise, it could be said that national identity is constructed around the imagined community of the Self as well as the imagined community of the Other, which is perceived and represented in the same essentialist and naturalized fashion as a stable, permanent and homogenous collectivity.

Nevertheless, when subject to close examination, national identities are not as homogenous as they first appear to be (cf. Hirschon 2000; Brown and Hamilakis 2003). On the contrary, and this is the second part of my argument, national identity – like any other category of identity – consists of multiple and often contradictory elements, being the result of various and sometimes contrasting identifications. Its cultural contents, as Ardener has suggested, are 'constantly shifting' (1989: 69) constituting national identity as an unfinished entity, one that is always in the process of becoming.

The incompleteness and permeability of national identity (see Theodossopoulos, this volume) is, I believe, closely associated with its relational and performative character. With reference to the former, a number of theorists have stressed the significance of relationships – either between groups or between groups and states – and the importance of interaction in the formation of national and ethnic identities (Barth 1969; Bromley 1974; Cohen 1985, Williams 1989; Chapman 1992; Forsythe 1989; Eriksen 1993; Jenkins 2003).¹ The claim that national identity ought to be viewed as

positional is also supported by anthropologists who specialize in the ethnographic region of Greece. Hirschon for instance calls for our ‘attention to specificity’ and argues that identity ‘needs to be interpreted in a particular socio-political context at a specific time’ (2000: 165). Similarly, Argyrou claims that identities are relational since they express ‘the meaning and significance attached to oneself and others’ (this volume: 4). As it will be demonstrated in the ethnography that follows, the army officers I studied – in line with the majority of the subjects who identify themselves as Greek – always negotiate their sense of national Self vis-à-vis other imagined communities, constantly oscillating between their perception of the occident and the orient (cf. Herzfeld 1987). It is perhaps as a consequence of this that Turkey and her citizens are regarded by my informants as being – similarly to Greece – a collectivity in transition with the same aspirations of ‘becoming’ a European state, a nation subject to the same predicament of being peripheral and dependent upon the ‘Great Powers’.

Having stressed its relational character, I am inclined to think that national identity is not only constituted in actual or imagined relations with other nations and coalitions, but also that these relations and the collective representations of them are partly responsible for the fluid and dynamic nature of identities. Because the national Self is always in the process of becoming, the apparent instability of rhetorical narrative views and beliefs about the imagined communities of the Self and the Other is probably also partly founded on the performative quality of national identity. Again, a number of theorists discuss practice² either in the form of daily performances (Linde-Laursen 1993; Billig 1995; Wilk 1993), the manipulation of symbols (Cohen 1994), or political action (Weber 1978). With special reference to Greece, Hamilakis draws attention to ‘national pedagogical procedures’ that involve bodily experiences and performances ‘which are instrumental in constructing a bodily mnemonic *habitus*, a sensuous reception of national truths’ (2003: 60-61).³ Learning through performance the officially condoned ‘virtues’ of Greekness notwithstanding, Herzfeld has argued that ‘Greekness’ – and most importantly all its ‘unofficial’ features – is ‘embodied in social attitudes and physical movement’ (1995: 126). Factionalism, localism, disorganization, unruly individualism and bravado compose ‘a great deal of Greekness that the official ideology would rather not know about’ (ibid) and constitute the ‘experiential and practical dimensions of cultural intimacy’ (Herzfeld 1995: 140).

The way ‘we’ perform nationality and the manner in which we know or imagine the Other(s) perform their nationality is, I claim, often responsible for our *changing*

perceptions of both the Self and the Other, as well as for the various inconsistencies and contradictory elements inherent in our discourses. Much of the challenge, as well as the *perpetuation* of identity norms is perhaps to be found in this asymmetry between the instability of the performance of nationality and its actual stabilizing effects. Seen in this light, performance operates both as a reason and a reasoning tool. In other words, there are a number of actions, private, local, political and international which are supposedly 'explained by' and, at the same time, seemingly explain one's 'belonging' to a certain imagined community, the latter applying equally to the Self and the Other(s).

The following sections intend to ethnographically explicate all the aforementioned themes through the changing discourses of a loosely interconnected group of junior Greek army officers on Turks and Turkey. Although their rhetoric is to an extent particular to their status and occupation, much of what is being said also revolves around themes commonly explored by ordinary Greek commentators beyond the confines of this particular group. The discursive commonalities, however, of a number of subjects who identify themselves as Greek need not divert our attention from the fact that *within* the ethnographic context of Greece diversity is to be found as much as outside it.

CONTENT AND PROTAGONISTS

The ethnography presented in this chapter is based upon fieldwork carried out from the summer of 2000 until early 2003 among junior army officers serving in the area of Thessaly, in central Greece. The reason I have chosen to focus on this particular group is that although its members do not enjoy a high status within Greek society, when it comes to anthropological investigation they easily assume the standpoint of the connoisseur and try – almost consciously – to offer what they consider to be a learned exegesis of Greco-Turkish relations. Being so exposed to the official and hegemonic discourses of the state my informants' rhetoric is perhaps an excellent example of the 'dialectical process' between grand narratives and personal stories, 'abstract formulations proposed by political parties' and the 'local and personal history' of the everyday agent (Papadakis 1998: 150, 151, 161; cf. Hirschon 2000: 166).

My informants belong to the generalized category of what is called in Greece *karavanadhes*, 'the dixies' or 'the mess tins' after the metal pot where food is supposed to be cooked in military camps. The meaning of the term is complex suggesting on the one hand that they chose their job because of the security it offers – steady salary and

not too many or too onerous responsibilities – and on the other that they are seen as not the cleverest or the most refined individuals one could fraternize with. The officers themselves do not necessarily enjoy talking about their job, which they do not perceive as being a glamorous one, and they don't feel they are paid enough either. The majority of them admit pursuing a career in the army because of the employment security it entails, but they would have preferred to be civil servants of some other kind. They complain about the transfers, the nights they have to spend on standby in the camps and 'on watch', the discipline and the uniform. They feel useful when they are summoned in extreme conditions such as forest fires – which are frequent in Greece – floods and earthquakes, but they also resent the perceptions of some fellow Greeks who feel that they are 'paid out of taxes to sit and do nothing'.

It is perhaps because the army is seen as an institution somehow related to Aegean and Balkan politics that the officers, when talking about Turkey and the Turks, try to distinguish themselves from what they regard to be 'the views of the lay public'. Although their discourse is constituted of culturally recognizable patterns and themes, it is also unique in some respects in that it contains conscious claims to knowledge of political and diplomatic 'truths' that supposedly escape the attention of the daily interlocutor. Against different political circumstances, the officers express their views about Turkey engaging in distinct, complex and often contradictory forms of political aetiology, only to attest Theodossopoulos' claim that political cosmologies are 'systems of cultural justification and accountability', symbolic of the actor's attempt to partake in the creation of history and to 'legitimize' and explicate political and historical causality (Theodossopoulos, this volume).

Greek-Turkish friendship, September 11th, decisions about the European army, the discussions in Copenhagen about Turkey's incorporation into the EU, and finally the war against Iraq, are different occasions that trigger the production of different discourses about the Self and the Other, and different perceptions of 'Our' imagined community and 'Our' identity in relation to that community 'We' imagine 'Them' to be, the identity 'We' envisage 'Them' to have. For ultimately, although the officers discuss Turkey, it always seems that what is uppermost in their minds is Greece's position in relation to the East, the West, the Europeans, the Americans and generally powers assumed and regarded as greater than the two countries. It is with reference to these powers that my informants, who identify themselves as Greek, articulate their national identity, employing Turkey – a prominent hero and a feared villain – as a yardstick, an

evaluative criterion through which they understand their own relationship with the 'Great Powers'.

THE FIRST TIME

Since the devastating earthquakes that happened at almost the same time – August and September 1999 – in Greece and Turkey, the two countries initiated a policy of mutual trust, co-operation and friendship. Istanbul or Constantinople (depending on which side of the Aegean one finds oneself)⁴ was the first to suffer from the devastating earthquake. The Greek state offered to Turkey humanitarian aid which was readily reciprocated in less than a month when large areas of Athens suffered a similar disaster. The autumn of 1999 was an instance of de-collectivisation and re-humanisation of the Other, and despite its tragic character served as an excellent context for the commencement of a new era in relations between the two countries led by the then Turkish and Greek ministers of external affairs, Jem and Papandreou respectively.

Almost a year later, and while the developments of 'Greco-Turkish friendship' were a popular subject of discussion in Greece, my informants offered me their perspectives on this. Assuming the position of the 'insider' and the 'politically aware', the officers sought to promote the discourse of the 'rational-professional-male' who avoids sentimental reaction and is at any time able to engage in *real politik* coldly, calmly and above all 'reasonably'. This is what Dimitris, a thirty-year old officer told me:

Listen, people talk about friendship. My mum for instance uses the term friendship and she asks can you trust the Turks to be your friends? And she is being hopeful but slightly suspicious. What I have to say about this is 'let's be reasonable'. We are not talking about friendship between people here. Two countries are enemies or not enemies. To put it simply, they either have mutual claims or not. What you call friendship I call a peace policy and perhaps economic co-operation. What Papandreou and Jem try is to reach an agreement that Greece and Turkey can co-exist without one being a threat to the other. The same way Greece is with Italy for instance.

The commentary of the army officers at the time was revolving consistently around the concept of Turkey as a state. It was inspired by official discourses and replete with personal views about what 'peaceful coexistence' is and how it can be achieved at

diplomatic forums. My informants made constant attempts to reassess the position of Greece and its tactics as a state only to find them too 'illogical', 'too spontaneous' and mostly ineffective. As Thanasis, another junior officer added:

States are not like people. States do not become friends. They become allies at best, and even alliance cannot be taken for granted. In a situation where it's not in a state's best interest to stand by another state, it doesn't or at least it shouldn't. To call it 'friendship' has a very Greek logic because Greece does not have a serious foreign policy. Look at the Europeans. Are they ever carried away by emotions? Look at us! Take Ocalan⁵ for example... a sentimental reaction. We thought that we can appear big and brave if we offer Ocalan asylum. We became friends with the Kurds all of a sudden without sitting down and examining: Is this in our best interest? What does Greece have to gain from it, if anything?

Greco-Turkish friendship confronted Greek subjects with – to say the least – problematic inconsistencies in the collective biography of their imagined community. Looking back at just five years or so before the 1999 rapprochement the Greeks had to deal daily with numerous violations of the Greek FIR⁶ and mock aerial combats⁷, which were shown on the evening news. Such confrontations escalated in January 1996 in an incident relating to an islet in the Aegean sea (Imia in Greek, Kardak in Turkish) that almost embroiled the two countries in military engagement. Months before the earthquakes that brought the two countries together, most Greek citizens felt sympathy for the leader of the Kurdish movement and participated in heated demonstrations in the centre of Athens upon his arrest in February 1999. In this particular and immediate historical context, presented with the prospect of friendship with Turkey, the army officers 'arrive at convenient explanations of the failures and disappointments of world politics' (Theodossopoulos, this volume), in order to reconcile disparate events and thus offer a reasonable narrative of political causality.

Their confusion notwithstanding, my informants take a reflexive stance towards the Self in relation to the West and Europe where Greece aspires to belong, only to discover yet again and to their disappointment that what is so suggestively 'Greek' is not at the same time 'European'. Sentimentality, disorganization and political bravado are in this case perhaps the very 'backward', the very 'oriental' features that connect Greece with Turkey, proving that the two countries can be seen as 'culturally intimate' (cf. Herzfeld 1995, 1997).

THE EUROARMY

In late September 2000 the officers were adamant that *'Greece will never go to war with Turkey. It is in nobody's interest, unless of course the Americans wish it so, for reasons that we cannot currently foresee'*. Their conviction was based on a perception of Turkey as – similarly to Greece – an organized, secular state with a 'European orientation' and which is in the process of modernization. Turkey and Greece share the parallel experience of a painstaking transformation from disorganization to organization, factionalism and corruption to modernization and political transparency, and ultimately from Orient to Occident (cf. Herzfeld 1995: 134). What lies perhaps at the core of Greek perceptions of the imagined communities of the Self and the Other is the confidence that neither Greece nor Turkey are sovereign states. '[T]he logic of a society that collectively sees itself as oppressed by the outside world' is projected onto the Other, who is subsequently perceived as having to equally 'learn to be good European' if the hope in 'progress' is to materialize (Herzfeld 1995: 134). Political and cultural incorporation into the West seems for both Greeks and Turks (always according to my informants and I believe other Greeks too) the only way towards gaining some sovereignty and some control over their respective fates. So long as Greece and Turkey are still 'in transition' they are seen as remaining nothing more than puppets in the hands of the 'Great Powers', the milieu which the two countries are deemed as not yet fully belonging to.⁸

The aforementioned belief became evident when the same officers who proclaimed that *'Greece will never go to war with Turkey'*, were extremely concerned over the matter of the Euroarmy. At the conferences in Nice (December 2000) and later in Laaken (December 2001) it was agreed that European defense will remain under NATO's jurisdiction and that the 120.000 men of the EU's RRF (Rapid Reaction Force) would be deployed only in cases of peripheral crises in countries outside the EU. Most Greeks –including my informants – had placed their hopes on the existence of the Euroarmy as a force designed to protect European borders and consequently Greece and Cyprus from the 'Turkish menace'.⁹ When it was finally agreed that this would not be the case, feelings of insecurity and marginalisation overcame many Greeks who saw their role as the 'peripheral entities of Europe' being affirmed yet again (cf. Herzfeld 1992). Typical is the comment of Yannis, a thirty-seven year old officer:

What would you expect? They [the Europeans] are using us. They play with us like puppets and when the time comes, when the Americans wish that war breaks out in the Balkans, they won't be here to help us. They have no wish whatsoever to protect Greek interests against Turkey. Greece and its borders are *not* uncontested. Europeans or not, we'd better find a way to defend ourselves and not trust others to do so on our behalf.

Turkey was seen at the time as having been able to manoeuvre Greece, but – and this is what I find particularly interesting – not on the basis of her own power. Although Turkey is indeed seen as the threat to Greece *par excellence* (cf. Loizos1988: 645), her powerful status is seen as always borrowed, the result of mortgaging her territory – so that US missiles could be fired from her military bases – or predictably supporting US policy in international affairs. The following statement of another officer is perhaps even more suggestive of the belief that Greece and Turkey probably share a common predicament:

The Turks think they know how to play with European policy. They make sure certain things are settled before they finally join so that any future interests they might have, stay intact. But they are like us, naïve. They probably think they are smarter than the Europeans – as we do – but they are not. They exercised pressure – surely via the Americans – on the subject of the Euroarmy, and now they believe that should they join the EU they can still attack Greece since the Europeans intend to stay neutral. We Orientals (*anatolites*) naively believe that the Others (*alloi*, i.e., westerners) have *bessa* (honour) and that they keep their word, but they don't. If and when Turkey joins the EU, the Turks will finally realise what kind of two-faced bastards the Europeans are. The same way they play with us they will play with them.

COPENHAGEN

Early in 2002 the Greek military forces were confronted with a threatening prospect: it was proposed that a NATO strategic base in Larissa (Thessaly) should cease operating or its role should be downgraded for financial reasons. According to my informants, if that had happened several Greek islands may have found themselves under foreign operational control – even Turkish – since the area would fall under the jurisdiction of NATO's Mediterranean HQs in Naples, Italy. It was perhaps a coincidence that

something similar was proposed for the Eski-Sehir base in Turkey and the two countries decided to cooperate in objecting to NATO's decisions. Greece and Turkey finally succeeded, and Larissa as well as Eski-Sehir retained operational control of the Greek FIR and a large area of south-eastern Mediterranean respectively. Around the same time, the Greek military sent to the ministry of external affairs a number of propositions for the lessening of tension in the Aegean, but Turkey refused to discuss them and, as a result, although the Greek-Turkish collaboration was successful the military professionals said they were wary of the new developments in Greek-Turkish relations. I have asked some of the officers to comment upon these statements; they all seemed to agree with Kostas who readily complained:

We thought that the Jem-Papandreou initiative would work. Greco-Turkish friendship! ... what a good prospect indeed that would be! But can you trust the Turk? Can you ever trust the Turks? Give them a finger and soon your arm is in danger¹⁰. Every time they are called to discuss easing tension in the Aegean they prefer to bring up the issue of the de-militarisation of our islands. They never came to terms with Greece becoming an independent state. They still think we ought to be part of the Ottoman Empire.

For the most part, 2002 was a year of suspicion in respect to Greek-Turkish relations. Most of the officers were consistently reverting to discursive themes and examples that revolved around the idea of mistrust, although both countries were taking positive steps towards mutual trust and cooperation at a political level. In February the two countries signed an agreement of cooperation in the fields of energy, industry, agriculture and transportation. With reference to the Aegean, both Greece and Turkey agreed to fewer military exercises, and the respective ministers of external affairs together visited the Middle East. None of the aforementioned developments though had wide media coverage, which could perhaps explain the discrepancy between actual political developments and the people's views of the two countries' relations.

The events that took place in December 2002 however, signalled a new era in Greek perceptions of Turks and Turkey. The European Union was scheduled to meet in Copenhagen on the 12th and 13th of that month to discuss, among other issues, the application of Cyprus to the EU as well as the prospect of Turkey's incorporation at a later stage. In the context of this meeting, the Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Anaan, prepared a protocol for the resolution of the Cyprus problem which the Turkish Cypriot

government would not accept, much to the dismay of perhaps the majority of Turkish Cypriots who declared their desire to become part of the European Union. The Greek government and that of the Republic of Cyprus on the other hand, were satisfied with the final decision in Copenhagen according to which the Republic was to become affiliated to the EU independently of whether a resolution was realized or not¹¹.

In relation to Turkey, and despite considerable pressure applied by the US on European leaders, the European Union decided that the country did not meet the criteria that could guarantee her a date of membership and the issue was postponed indefinitely. Greece was – perhaps counter-intuitively – one of the EU countries that supported Turkey's incorporation, a stance that further strengthened the friendship policy of the two countries. It was probably the first time that 'the supposedly unbeatable Turkey appealed to Greece for support in order to obtain the dear 'date of membership'.¹²

The results of the Copenhagen meeting descended on Greece as a revelatory moment that nevertheless presented the Greeks with new paradoxes and inconsistencies that needed to be incorporated into the local systems of political causality. Greece appeared not only to support Turkey in joining the EU, but also to be almost sponsoring her application to the European coalition. The US – predictably according to most Greeks – tried to 'enforce' Turkey's membership but proved – surprisingly, and again, according to most Greeks, unpredictably – unable to dictate European policy, while the results of the meeting were positive for the Republic of Cyprus. Suddenly, Greece ceased to appear in the eyes of her citizens as a weak and always wronged nation, the US lost some of its appeal as the all-powerful, and Turkey emerged as a country seeking her neighbour's support. The exhilaration of the Greek public notwithstanding, some of the comments of my informants are, I believe, indicative of the confusion that these developments created to their political, cosmological order.

Don't think that because the Europeans appeared to say 'no' to the US that something really changed. Greece and Turkey are like toys in their hands. It is in their interest now that we cooperate and for this reason they probably created an artificial tension, to bring the two countries together. Or it might be that the US really played the wrong card this time and the Europeans got pissed off. Who knows? And what they say about criteria [meaning the criteria that Turkey has to fulfil in order to join the EU] is all bullshit. The Germans don't want it because they have a lot of Turkish migrants and should Turkey join the EU all these people will have citizen rights. It's all a

big game. Both Greece and Turkey think they are something, but we are nothing. Just toys in their hands.

Most of my informants believed that the persistence of the US irritated European leaders who might have not decided against Turkey if less overt pressure had been applied. ‘*You see*’, Yannis told me, ‘the Turks are like us, factionalists. They don’t understand the Europeans. They thought that if the US put in a good word for them it would be OK. But it was not. Just as a matter of principle a German or a French would do the opposite’.

As Theodossopoulos (this volume) argues, probably the central point of cultural intimacy between Greeks and Turks relates to the ‘unofficial’ side of their respective profiles: powerlessness, factionalism, but mainly their perceived inability to be understood by Europeans. It is true that in Greece there is a widely held perception that Turkey is less modernized and in certain areas – such as human rights, for instance – less ‘civilized’. It is also true that most Greeks, including my informants, perceive themselves as ‘rightfully’ belonging to Europe, ‘undoubtedly’ more so than Turkey. ‘*It has become clear*’, one of my informants argued, ‘we have managed to find ourselves on the other side of the hill. We are part of Europe. Turkey will follow but they will have to undergo the same painstaking process as we did. They will one day manage to become Europeans.’

At other times, however, the officers perceive their own imagined community as following a parallel course with the imagined community of the Other. Both countries are regarded as having a common goal, that is their official incorporation into the ‘West’ and both countries’ failures are seen as perhaps not so much related to ‘real’ problems, but stemming from their incapacity to communicate to more sophisticated Others the right message in the right language. As Thanassis commented: ‘I was happy with the decisions taken in Copenhagen and I believe that perhaps for the first time we managed to speak in *their* [ie. ‘the Europeans’] language, and we were finally understood’.

It is in the aforementioned context that most of my informants criticized France’s and Italy’s refusal to support Turkey’s defences against Iraq, should Turkey offer military assistance to the US. ‘I’ve told you before’, Argyris commented, ‘the Turks have still a lot to learn about European sly tricks. Those guys [‘the Europeans’] have no honour my friend. They are neither your friends, nor you enemies. You never actually know *what* on earth they are to you!’

CONCLUSION

I have argued earlier in the chapter that national identity – as in all categories of identity – can be viewed as relational and performative if its fluidity, positionality and unfinished character are to be theoretically and politically appreciated. The sense of national Self is constructed not only on the basis of the belief that one is part of an imagined community but also, and perhaps most importantly, on to the conviction that the national Other belongs to a community which is preferably homogenous, *hitherto* essentialised and engaged in activity as ‘steady, anonymous and simultaneous’ as that of the Self (Anderson 1983: 31). In many ways, as Loizos (1988), Hirschon (2000), Just (1989) and others have maintained, the ability to imagine the Self – and I would argue the Other as well – as part of a national community rests on a vision of the nation as a metaphor of the ‘family’ constituting kinship as an idiom that mediates nationality, ethnicity and notions of collectivity.

When the army officers talk of Turkey and the Turks they do so by *performing* Greekness, and thus their commentary is composed of culturally informed ways of viewing the world. Turkey can be anything from a friend to a foe, from a threatening to a culturally intimate Other, but, above all, Turkey – like Greece – will be what some powerful Others want her to be. Sutton claims that viewing the ‘foreign finger’ (the western ‘Great Powers’, that is) as the decisive factor in political and diplomatic reality is not ‘an exception but the consistent pattern in Greece’s relationship with the West’ (2003: 197). I do not intend to discuss here whether these perceptions are warranted, as Sutton believes, or not as others would argue (cf. Pipes 1996, 1997; Mouzelis 1993). What interests me more is that the army officers – and many other Greeks – conceptualise Turkey and Greece as being essentially the same, in that they both strive to become Europeans through a painstaking process of effacing their ‘Oriental’ features and that they both have their policies and diplomacy dictated by the ‘Great Powers’ who ‘play games at their expense’ (cf. Sutton 2003: 204; Brown & Theodossopoulos 2000; 2003). In this respect, I would agree with Bastea’s comment that ‘we resemble our neighbours more than we resemble our ancestors’ (2003: 167).

Experiences of betrayal by the West, feelings of marginality and the problems of transition are perhaps the very features that disprove nationalist myths of ‘essential “otherness” and the “difference” of the Other’ (Danforth 2003: 215). As is true of cultural intimacy between Greeks (Herzfeld 1995, 1997), notions of affinity between Greeks and Turks rely on perceptions of a shared unofficial orientalism and the

conviction that should both countries wish to ‘make any progress’ they must ‘learn to be good Europeans’ (ibid: 134). The performative and experiential aspect of Greek identity thus becomes an important aspect of perceiving, envisaging and explaining the imagined community of the Other, and the orientation and purpose of its ‘steady, anonymous and simultaneous activity’ (Anderson 1983: 31).

Documenting the officers’ discourses over a period of time meant that I could see the changes and inconsistencies that stem from the positional and contextual character of the national Self. As Brown and Hamilakis argue the ‘components of the myth of the nation present an internally contradictory picture’ (2003: 8) and this, I believe, refers to the *relational* aspect of identity. Acknowledging one’s identity always in relation to Others implies that the Self is never in stasis and that her perceptions of the Other – be it friend or foe or anything in between – are constantly changing. To be a Greek – as to be anything – is no simple and straightforward matter if the subject is viewed as a multiply constituted entity with many and, at times, conflicting identifications (cf. Moore 1994). The unfinished, imagined, relational and performative character of national identity is what renders it a ‘hollow category’ in the sense that Theodossopoulos (this volume) understands it; not empty of meaning, but ample, flexible and ever capable of incorporating new historical and political changes.

Daily commentary – even in the form of conspiracy theories – and spontaneous attempts at political aetiology are precisely the ways in which the actor participates in the making of history: by endorsing, refusing, distorting, challenging, denying, by striving to make sense of grand narratives and large-scale political action through establishing some connections between them and her own lived cultural experience (cf. Papadakis 1994; Sutton 2003; Brown & Theodossopoulos 2000, 2003). Agency is then to be found not only in political decisions, but also at the point of intersection of the personal and the intimate with the imagined collectivity of the Self and the Other(s), which can be both discursive and practical in the sense that it can inspire action. It is then a matter of whether imagining and explaining the world as a sum of homogenous ‘synchronised’ collectivities leaves any room for the ‘idea of *individual* responsibility ...causal and contextual specificity’ (Loizos, 1988: 649, original emphasis), or results in a ‘totalizing doctrine of collective passive solidarity’ (ibid: 650). For, if the latter is the case, the Greeks – like other national subjects – will continue seeing the Turks, and all national others, as friends, foes, friends and foes, sometimes friends and sometimes foes,

but sadly, always as nothing more than a faceless collectivity that happens to inhabit the other end of the Aegean.

NOTES

¹ Throughout my introduction I have been discussing national and ethnic identity without exploring the differences between the two. This use of the concepts is not intending to conflate their differences, but is rather a product of a general theoretical view of identity in its social and personal expressions.

² Bentley (1987) in particular proposed the application of Bourdieu's notions of practice and habitus to the study of ethnicity, receiving pointed criticism by Yelvington on the fact that his proposition inherits all the problems that accompany Bourdieu's theory (1991: 160).

³ Hamilakis suggestively refers to national school celebrations, marches, school visits to museums and church ceremonies as well as the school textbooks 'which are meant to be publicly performed in the classroom rather than studied privately' (2003: 60-61).

⁴ Instabul and Constantinople is a case of 'conflictual resemblance', a competition of Turks and mostly Greeks over the symbolic ownership of a city through the strategy of naming (Harrison 2002; Theodossopoulos this volume). For the importance of Constantinople as the spiritual, and dare I say emotional, centre of the Greek world, see Just (1989) and (Macridge 1981) suggestively.

⁵ Thanasis is referring here to the reactions of the Greek public upon the arrest of the leader of the Kurdish autonomist movement in 1999. Regarded by the Turkish state as a terrorist, Abdullah Ocalan sought asylum in Greece. The Greek government tried to avoid an escalation in the Greek-Turkish relations by sending Ocalan to the Greek embassy in Kenya where he was finally captured by Turkish special forces. The Greek public saw this as a dishonest move on behalf of the government that was widely accused of 'handing Ocalan over to the Turks'.

⁶ FIR stands for 'Flight Information Region', the limits of which has been a matter of dispute between Greece and Turkey. FIR limits of European countries were established in Paris in 1952 and in Geneva in 1958. Issuing NOTAM 714 Turkey attempted in 1974 to expand Istanbul's FIR jurisdiction over the Aegean westwards. In an effort to resolve the situation that was disrupting the air traffic in the area, the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) mediated by appealing to both countries. Turkey finally withdrew NOTAM 714 in February 1980.

⁷ Otherwise known as 'scrambles' or interceptions.

⁸ It has to be mentioned at this point that Greeks collectively perceive themselves as being either 'ahead' of Turkey in the course of this 'transformation' or 'behind' according to the circumstances, but almost never at the same point.

⁹ For a fuller picture of the Greek views on the Euroarmy and reactions to the final decisions, see a suggestive series of articles by G. Kartalis in the newspaper *To Vima* from December 2001 until March 2002.

¹⁰ The rhetoric of suspicion in Greece is actually a very well documented one and relates closely to the idea that one compromise will most certainly lead to another. In April 2005 there was again a minor incident in the Imia/Kardak area that fortunately did not develop into a major crisis. A Greek fisherman who happened to be in the area at the time reported that he was ordered by the Turkish authorities to 'leave because these were Turkish waters'. 'I refused and responded to them in the broken English that we both spoke that I was going nowhere and these were definitely Greek waters', the fisherman added and commented: 'I could go of course, but had I left this time, next time they

would order me to go even further away. Give them an inch, and soon they'll claim that Leros [a Greek island well within the borders] is Turkish too'.

¹¹ The Anaaan plan was finally accepted by the Turkish Cypriot side, but rejected by the Greek Cypriots, in April 2004, while the Republic of Cyprus (the Greek Cypriot side that is) became indeed affiliated to the EU as planned, despite the absence of political solution to the problem.

¹² This is what Mihalis Neonakis, a MP of PASOK – the ruling party in Greece at the time– wrote in the newspaper *To Vima* on Sunday, 1st of December 2002, that is ten days before the actual Copenhagen meeting.

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