Breaking Away from the Union?
The Case of Greek-Israeli Relations since 2010

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How can we explain the divergence of Greek foreign policy from the European Union (EU) Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) since 2010? Between the late 1990s and the beginning of the Greek financial crisis in 2009, the country's external conduct had remained relatively stable and in close alignment with EU CFSP goals. Even Greece's long-standing rivalry with Turkey had been subject to the country's foreign "Europeanization" policy, culminating in the relinquishment of the Greek veto on Turkey's bid for EU accession at the 1999 Helsinki EU summit.[2] The onset of the Greek crisis, however, coincided with initiatives which put the country's commitment to the EU CFSP in question. The establishment, in particular, of the Greek-Israeli security partnership in 2010 was a striking example of Greek "activism" in the foreign policy domain, with the once detached, if not downright hostile, relations between Athens and Jerusalem giving way to the notion of an Israeli-Greek geopolitical axis.[3] In the following years, bilateral cooperation in security, intelligence, and economic matters flourished. Joint military exercises, moreover, attained a notable regularity and sophistication, resulting in a "status of forces" accord between the two countries, an unusual arrangement for an EU member. Previously, the United States had been the sole beneficiary of a similar agreement, rendered essential due to the permanent presence of NATO bases in Greece.[4]

At a time when Europe had turned its focus to the resolution of the escalating Greek financial crisis, the country's conduct in the Eastern Mediterranean appeared to stand in stark contrast to the EU's posture toward Israel, as articulated in the 2010 European Neighbourhood Policy and subsequent European Council decisions.[5] While the

2   H. Athanasopoulos, *Greece, Turkey, and the Aegean Sea: A Case Study in International Law*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, (2001), p. 99.
3   P. Klokkaris, Cyprus-Greece-Israel: Strategic Relations, *Eastern Mediterranean Geopolitical Review* 1, no. 1 (2015), pp. 1-5.
4   From now on Greek and Israeli soldiers will be allowed to station either in Greece or Israel to participate in military training exercises, New Europe website, July 22, 2015, https://neurope.eu/article/greece-and-israel-boost-military-co-operation (accessed March 29, 2017).
5   S. Rosen, The EU's Israel Problem Goes Far Beyond Labels, *Tower Magazine* 34, (2016), at www.thetower.org/article/the-eus-israel-problem-goes-far-beyond-labels (accessed April 14, 2017).

EU emphasized human rights issues and concessions to the Palestinians as its policy cornerstones vis-à-vis Israel, Athens chose to distance itself from Brussels, surprising analysts with its support of Jerusalem in a number of strategic policy areas.[6] Observers suggested that the Greek-Israeli partnership was merely a reaction to the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations, particularly following the Gaza flotilla incident in May 2010.[7] Athens certainly took advantage of the regional dynamics in order to promote its interests, though the persistence of the Greek-Israeli partnership deserves closer scrutiny, as it has not only managed to "survive" the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement, but has also spearheaded Greece's diplomatic return to the Eastern Mediterranean, through a network of partnerships and collaborative projects with Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.[8] Today, the Greek-Israeli partnership is rapidly evolving into a cornerstone of Greek foreign policy. The perseverance of what appeared initially to be a short-term, almost instinctive, response to the Turkish-Israeli estrangement could be viewed as part of a wider Greek shift towards the Eastern Mediterranean, an area of prime geopolitical significance.

This geopolitical shift, therefore, appears to transcend the narrow confines of a short-term, zero-sum material calculation, as Greek elites increasingly highlight the country's role as an Eastern Mediterranean actor, a claim based on political, historical, and cultural factors. One could thus challenge the predominant narrative which views Greek foreign and security policy behavior through the prism of material, national interest-related considerations. More specifically, the country's foreign policy re-alignment could be indicative of an evolving Greek leadership self-image which is informed by identity-related, psychological factors, reflecting a novel "National Role Conception (NRC)."[9] The extent to which this new NRC is incompatible with not only the "letter" of the CFSP but also European norms and values has yet to be determined,

6 A. Mekel, A New Geopolitical Bloc Is Born: Israel, Greece and Cyprus, *Jerusalem Post*, February 21, 2016; Greece Rejects EU Labeling Guidelines after PM Calls Jerusalem Israel's Capital, *Tower Magazine,* February 12, 2015, at www.thetower.org/2633-greece-rejects-eu-labeling-guidelines-after-pm-calls-jerusalem-israels-capital (accessed May 12, 2017); A. Tziampiris, *The Emergence of Israeli-Greek Cooperation*, Springer International Publishing, (2014), pp. 64-101.

7 A. Nachmani, Israel, Turkey and Greece: Dramatic Changes in the Eastern Mediterranean, in C. Shindler. ed., *Israel and the World Powers: Diplomatic Alliances and International Relations beyond the Middle East*, London, I.B. Tauris, (2014), pp. 282-284; J.L. Samaan, Israel-Turkey Strategic Ties Show Signs of Thaw, Al-Monitor website, March 20, 2013, at www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/israel-turkey-greece-relations-improve-gas-cooperation.html (accessed May 12, 2017).

8 Israeli MFA General Secretary to HuffPost Greece: Cooperation between Greece, Cyprus and Israel is robust and advanced (in Greek), Huffington Post, May 29, 2017, at www.huffingtonpost.gr/2017/05/29/eidiseis-diethnes-yuvalrotem-stis-15-ioyniou-h-trimeris-synantisi-korifis-elladas_n_16865622.html (accessed May 30, 2017.)

9 J. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy*, Cambridge University Press, (2006), p. 18.

but could potentially exacerbate existing tensions between Athens and Brussels, thereby undermining the country's prospects for retaining its hard-earned European orientation.

Perceptions in world politics: Rational and psychological narratives

In order to highlight the implications of the case study, it is crucial to map the theoretical premise of this foray which emphasizes the impact of leadership perceptions on international politics. In the past, realist scholars assumed that leaders understood well the core attributes of their strategic environment. Indeed, from Thucydides to Morgenthau[10] prominent theorists have espoused the notion that decision makers are in a position to accurately perceive parameters such as balances of power or the reliability of allied commitments, selecting their responses on the basis of a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis.[11] This model, articulated in the seminal *Essence of Decision*, leaves little room for leadership perceptions affecting foreign policy decision making.[12] Allison and Zelikow assumed, in essence, that states are consistent in their pursuit of "national security and national interests" in the face of external threats and opportunities.[13] Friedberg clearly noted that "assessment through rational calculation plays the part of a reliable but invisible transmission belt connecting objective change to adaptive behavior."[14]

Nevertheless, realist scholars have come to acknowledge a role for perceptions with regard to decision making. After all, "if power influences international relations, it must do so through the perceptions of those who act on behalf of states."[15] According to Wohlforth, "the corollary of a perceptual approach to power is the realization that expectations inform policy."[16] But while scholars espouse a crucial role for perceptions acting as a transmission belt between systemic attributes and decisions, they tend to limit their analytical value to the accuracy of capability and hostility appraisals. In other words, although leaders may, or may not, possess valid perceptions, state policies are primarily informed by their estimates of third party intentions and capabilities. Rational leaderships

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10 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, revised ed., Harmondsworth and Ringwood: Penguin Books, (1972); H. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, NY: Alfred Knopf, (1973).
11 R. Keohane, Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond, in R. Keohane, ed., *Neorealism and Its Critics*, NY: Columbia University Press, (1986), p. 165.
12 G. Allison. and P. Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed., NY: Addison-Wesley, (1999).
13 Ibid.
14 A. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, NJ: Princeton University Press, (1988), p. 13.
15 K. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, 2nd ed., NJ: Prentice-Hall, (1972), p. 158.
16 W. Wohlforth, Realism and the End of the Cold War, *International Security* 19, no. 3, (1994), p. 98.

are thus expected to undertake a comprehensive assessment of power distributions and subsequently move to balance (ally) against (potentially) threatening actors.[17] Leaderships should thus be expected to "stay the course," unless interests or power shifts necessitate a foreign policy adjustment. While this realist notion of perceptual factors is analytically robust, it clearly prevents perceptual variables from having a meaningful impact on interest, and hence policy, definition.

The scholarly emphasis on the perception/misperception nexus in international politics has a logical explanation, as the importance of leadership perceptions with regard to foreign policy-making was initially acknowledged in a rather negative manner, gaining prominence only after the conclusion of World War II. Confronted with the recurrent inability of states to respond to warnings of impending attacks, military historians examined in detail such instances as the attack on Pearl Harbor or the outbreak of the Yom Kippur or the Korean wars.[18] Partly as a result of this pioneering literature on strategic surprise and intelligence failure, perceptual factors have been treated with apprehension by analysts and scholars, who routinely regard them as elements that may lead to escalation and inadvertent conflict. Indeed, the causal importance of misperception leading to strategic blunders has been well established, particularly in relation to the two world wars.[19]

The emphasis on cognitive deficiencies, however, may have obscured the wider analytical significance of perceptions; that is, perceptions should not be regarded as the only factor in case of policy failure. Even when miscalculations occur, it is far from certain that inaccurate perceptions were the underlying cause. In examining the erroneous decision of Anthony Eden to initiate the failed Suez War in 1956, for instance, one should not overlook the British establishment's—rather accurate—belief that the country had entered a period of decline and needed to act in order to preserve its status.[20]

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[17] S. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, (1987); A. Sabrosky, Interstate Alliances: Their Reliability and the Expansion of War, in D. Singer, ed., *The Correlates of War*, NY: Free Press, (1980), pp. 161-98; T. Christensen and J. Snyder, Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity, *International Organization* 44, no. 1, (1990), pp. 137-168.

[18] B. Whaley, *Codeword Barbarossa*, Cambridge: MIT Press, (1973); M. Handel, The Yom Kippur War and the Inevitability of Surprise, *International Studies Quarterly* 21, no. 3, (1977), pp. 461-502; R. Betts, Analysis, War, and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures Are Inevitable, *World Politics* 31, no. 1, (1978), pp. 61-89; A. Ben-Zvi, Between Warning and Response: The Case of the Yom Kippur War, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 4, no. 2, (1990), pp. 227-242; R. Lebow, *Between Peace and War*, Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, (1981); G. Blainey, *The Causes of War*, NY: Free Press, (1973).

[19] R. Jervis, Hypotheses on Misperceptions, *World Politics* 20, no. 3 (1968), pp. 454-479; R. White, Misperception as a Cause of Two World Wars, in R. White, ed., *Nobody Wanted War: Misperception in Vietnam and Other Wars*, NY: Anchor Books, (1970), pp. 3-33; D. Winter, Asymmetrical Perceptions of Power in Crises: A Comparison of 1914 and the Cuban Missile Crisis, *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 3, (2003), pp. 251-270.

[20] J. Renshon and S. Renshon, The Theory and Practice of Foreign Policy Decision Making, *Political Psychology* 29, no. 4, (2008), p. 511.

Psychological narratives have explored more ambitious notions of leadership perceptions in an effort to explain foreign policy decision-making as a process informed by multiple perceptual lenses. In this regard, scholars have employed variables pertaining to the values, motives, and preferences of policy-makers,[21] with concepts such as "belief systems," "images," and "perceptions" incorporated within various analytical frameworks.[22] A crucial assumption of these contributions was the complexity of cognitive and affective processes which construct images and ideas. No predictions could be made about how the material world is perceived in the ideational world, with scholars encouraged to ascertain empirically how individuals perceive a situation, process stimuli, and reach decisions.[30] During the Cold War, for instance, a number of scholars supported the notion that hostile images of the Soviet Union had a profound impact on American foreign policy beliefs, whether related to the USSR or not.[42] The existence of shared values or common elements of identity, on the other hand, could infuse a sense of trust and the desire to cooperate under conditions of uncertainty.[23] Liberal scholars have long argued, in this regard, that democracies tend to cooperate and form alliances.[24] Both psychological and material factors may, therefore, play an important role when assessing the origins and prospects of partnerships between, and among, sovereign states.

This implies that indicators of power differentials matter when we ascertain security partnerships, but factors related to values and shared identities could also shed light on the dynamics of security cooperation. The latter category of variables is competently captured by role theory and its emphasis on the behavioral implications of role-based identities. Drawing on insights from social psychology, National Role Conceptions can be defined as "the policymakers' own definitions of decisions, commitments, rules and actions suitable to their state, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems."[25] Various typologies of NRCs have been suggested, emphasizing

[21]   G. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, NY: Longman, (1999); C. Hermann, ed., *International Crises,* NY: Free Press, (1972); I. Janis and L. Mann, *Decision Making*, NY: Free Press, (1977); Lebow, *Between Peace and War*; O. Holsti, *Crisis, Escalation, War*, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, (1972).

[22]   J. De Rivera, *The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy***,** Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill, (1968); R. Snyder et. al., eds., *Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the Study of International Politics*, Glencoe: Free Press, (1962).

[23]   C. Kegley and G. Raymond, *When Trust Breaks Down: Alliance Norms and World Politics*, Columbia: South Carolina Press, (1990).

[24]   E. Gartzke and A. Weisiger, Fading Friendships: Alliances, Affinities and the Activation of International Identities, *British Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 1, (2013), pp. 25-52.

[25]   K. Holsti, National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy, *International Studies Quarterly* 14, no. 3, (1970), pp. 245-246.

attributes such as degrees of assertiveness, collaboration, and solidarity in states' foreign and security policy conduct.[26] These classifications enable scholars to categorize different behavioral patterns in international politics. It also enables scholars to undertake estimates of future behavior, based on the country's ascribed type of NRC.[27] Hymans, finally, provided a definition of NRCs which appears to be highly appropriate for security policy analyses, capturing both material and identity-related factors: Accordingly, a NRC is "an individual's understanding of the state's identity—his or her sense of what the nation naturally stands for and how high it naturally stands in comparison to others in the international arena."[28]

Role theory can be employed to make sense of foreign policy decisions that are not adequately explained by realist or liberal accounts, such as the decision of Ukraine and Belarus to reject a nuclear capability after the collapse of the USSR.[29] Finally, major foreign policy adjustments are amenable to role theory explanations, particularly when material considerations (with an emphasis on balances of power and capabilities) have remained relatively stable. The vastly different Japanese responses, for instance, to the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 war in Iraq have been attributed to the decline of the country's pacific and multilateralist role conception and the corresponding rise of a NRC which favors international engagement and security policy activism.[30]

Greece's major attitudinal shift towards Israel since 2009 could, in this regard, constitute an appropriate test for the applicability of role theory in international politics. Was Greece's foreign and security policy realignment predicated on shifting dynamics of power and interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, or was the Greek strategic shift informed, instead, by perceptual adjustments related to Greek NRCs? Finally, it would be interesting to ascertain whether material and ideational considerations have a differentiated effect on Greek foreign and security policy before and after the 2009 benchmark. After all, what may have been initiated as a mere response to regional dynamics may have evolved into a long-term doctrine, informed by deep-rooted beliefs.

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[26] G. Chafetz et al., Role Theory and Foreign Policy: Belarussian and Ukrainian Compliance with the Nuclear Proliferation Regime, *Political Psychology* 17, no. 4, (1996), pp. 727-57; N. Wish, Foreign Policy Makers and Their National Role Conceptions, *International Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4, (1980), pp. 532-554; Holsti, National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy, pp. 233-309.

[27] K. Ifantis et al., National Role and Foreign Policy: An Exploratory Study of Greek Elites' Perceptions towards Turkey, GreeSE Paper No. 94, *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, London School of Economics and Political Science, (2015), p. 9.

[28] Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation*, p. 18.

[29] Chafetz et al., Role Theory and Foreign Policy.

[30] A. Catalinac, Identity Theory and Foreign Policy: Explaining Japan's Responses to the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 U.S. War in Iraq, *Politics and Policy* 35, no. 1, (2007), pp. 58-100.

A short-term affair?

For more than six decades, relations between Athens and Jerusalem had been detached, if not downright hostile. From Greece's long-held support of the Palestinian Liberation Organization to its courtship of the Syrian regimes of Hafez and Bashar al-Assad, Israel viewed the posture of its Mediterranean neighbor with apprehension.[31] The bilateral relationship hit an all-time low in 1973, when the Greek government "refused to provide bases and facilities to the American airlift of weapons to Israel" during the Yom Kippur War.[32] In 2009, however, this equilibrium was overturned, starting with the exchange of high-level visits between the two capitals. Cooperation gradually flourished, with treaties and agreements concluded and enacted at an impressive pace. For Israeli and Greek commentators, this evolving relationship reflected a power balancing logic since it coincided with the rapid deterioration of Israeli-Turkish relations.[33] Indeed, a historically close friend of the Arab world, Greece surprised analysts with this dramatic policy shift, which was (and still is) largely attributed to the gradual deterioration of Israeli-Turkish relations from 2008, which climaxed with the 2010 Gaza flotilla incident.[34]

It was only natural, then, that this narrative would cast a shadow over the long-term prognosis of Greek-Israeli relations. The prospect of a "détente" between Ankara and Jerusalem generated skepticism about the future of Greek-Israeli cooperation.[35] Turkey, after all, is a major "player" in the Eastern Mediterranean, possessing a robust track record of cooperation with Israel, ever since prime ministers Menderes and Ben-Gurion upgraded relations to include joint military and intelligence undertakings.[36] Another high point in Israeli-Turkish relations was reached in the early 1990s, when the two countries developed a strategic partnership aimed at curbing Iraqi, Iranian, and crucially, Syrian, ambitions to alter the status quo in the Middle East.[37] According to this logic, Turkey's clout in security and economic terms could undermine the strategic value of the Greek-Israeli relationship, should Ankara mend fences with Jerusalem, rendering the Israeli-Greek axis relatively unimportant, if not obsolete.

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[31] J. Abadi, Constraints and Adjustments in Greece's Policy toward Israel, *Mediterranean Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2000), pp. 40-70.

[32] Ibid, p. 54.

[33] E. Inbar, Israel's Challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean, *Middle East Quarterly* 21, no. 4, (2014), pp. 1-12; E. Karagiannis, Shifting Eastern Mediterranean Alliances, *Middle East Quarterly* 23, no. 2, (2016), pp. 1-11.

[34] Mekel, A New Geopolitical Bloc is Born; Tziampiris, *The Emergence of Israeli-Greek Cooperation*.

[35] M. Stern, Might Turkish-Israeli Rapprochement Be Premature?, *The Jerusalem Post*, January 13, 2016.

[36] N. Schonmann, Back-Door Diplomacy: The Mistress Syndrome in Israel's Relations with Turkey, 1957-60, in C. Jones and T. Petersen, eds., *Israel's Clandestine Diplomacies*, Oxford University Press, (2013), pp. 85-101.

[37] Tziampiris, *The Emergence of Israeli-Greek Cooperation*, pp. 64-75.

In mid-2016, six years after the Gaza flotilla crisis, Israel and Turkey signed an agreement to normalize relations. The deal included elements of compensation for the casualties of the flotilla and a minor easing of the Israeli blockade enforced in the Gaza Strip, a long-term Turkish aspiration.[38] The US-brokered agreement came after powerful political and economic stakeholders in both Ankara and Jerusalem lobbied for the restoration of the partnership, which had proven beneficial to both parties in the security domain. While incomplete, the Turkish-Israeli rapprochement has been gaining momentum, aided by resilient commercial ties between the two countries, the possibilities for mutually advantageous synergies in the energy sector and the consistent mediating efforts of the Obama administration.[39] Israel's growing potential as a natural gas exporter fueled the impetus for the renewal of bilateral cooperation. The discovery of substantial hydrocarbon deposits offshore Israel (and Egypt) has engendered a heated debate in Israel regarding optimal export routes. Turkey is viewed by key energy companies, as well as by diplomatic circles in Ankara and Washington, as a regional energy "hub" through which Eastern Mediterranean gas could reach European markets, at a time when both the United States and the EU are striving to diversify Europe's energy supply sources and hence reduce the continent's historical dependence on Russian hydrocarbons.[40]

Nevertheless, Israeli-Greek relations appear to be impervious to these developments, as demonstrated by the "status of forces" accord of 2015, a comprehensive agreement on hosting Israeli or Greek military personnel on Greek or Israeli territory, respectively.[41] Joint military maneuvers, meanwhile, have attained a notable regularity and sophistication, with the Greek and Israeli air forces undertaking complex exercise scenarios throughout an operational theater that extends from the Israeli Negev desert to the Greek mountainous range of Olympus.[42] Intelligence cooperation between the two countries is bolstered, culminating in operations such as the interception of a Gaza-bound

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[38] Israel and Turkey reach deal to restore relations, Al-Jazeera website, June 26, 2016, at www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/06/israel-turkey-reach-deal-restore-relations-160626190909435.html (accessed May 17, 2017)

[39] D. Arbell, Back Together? Why Turkey-Israel Relations May Be Thawing, Brookings Institute, December 14, 2015, at www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2015/12/14-turkey-israel-thawing-relations-arbell (accessed May 11, 2017).

[40] Turkey-Israel natural gas deal important step for regional stability, Daily Sabah, April 27, 2017, at www.dailysabah.com/energy/2017/04/28/turkey-israel-natural-gas-deal-important-step-for-regional-stability, (accessed May 2, 2017); A U.S. Perspective on Regional Gas Connections, Remarks by former Ambassador Dan Shapiro at the Israel Energy & Business Convention, November 22, 2016, at https://il.usembassy.gov/november-22-2016-remarks-ambassador-dan-shapiro-israel-energy-business-convention/ (accessed May 20, 2017).

[41] See footnote 4.

[42] Here are some stunning photos of Israeli Air Force's largest ever international exercise, The Aviationist website, October 30, 2015, at http://theaviationist.com/2015/10/30/blue-flag-2015-exercise-photos, (accessed May 11, 2017); Top of the Olympus, IAF Magazine, at www.iaf.org.il/5642-37864-en/IAF.aspx (accessed May 6, 2017).

flotilla in 2011 by Greek security forces.[43] At the same time, both Greece and the Republic of Cyprus have increased armament purchases from their Mediterranean neighbor, widely regarded as a global leader in high-tech weaponry.

The partnership is not limited to the military domain. Agreements on economic and technical cooperation are also being negotiated and concluded on a frequent basis, indicating a desire to further develop bilateral cooperation. Bilateral ties have expanded to include civil society and the commercial sector in both countries, indicating the establishment of a "soft-power" basis upon which interactions are conducted. The increase of tourist flows between the two countries is telling. Before 2010, an average of 150,000 Israeli tourists visited Greece annually, while by 2016, their number had increased to approximately 600,000.[44] In the politically sensitive energy realm, Israel and Greece have not only agreed to link their electricity networks through Cyprus and Crete, but have also bestowed the ambitious "East-Med" gas pipeline project with a degree of political backing which appears to be surprising when one considers the relative economic merits of the alternative (Turkish) option. The longest and deepest (below 3 kms in places) sub-sea gas pipeline in the world is projected to carry Mediterranean gas to European markets through the Cypriot and Greek Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), with an estimated cost of six billion Euros and a tentative completion date of 2025.[45]

It is worth mentioning at this point that the Greek-Israeli partnership enjoys the support of all major political parties in Greece. The left-leaning government in Athens, elected in 2015, featured a number of influential anti-Israeli figures (including an openly pro-Palestinian prime minister, Alexis Tsipras). Nevertheless, cooperation between the two nations proved to be surprisingly resilient. This is a major turn of events, as the incumbent party strongly opposed military cooperation with Israel in its governmental program.[46] Since George Papandreou inaugurated high-level Greek-Israeli consultations in 2009, all administrations in Athens have been consistent with this paradigm, without a single incident of transgression. And while one could suggest that the United States might be behind the Greek-Israeli partnership, there is little evidence of relevant activity, despite the historical promotion of regional cooperation under American patronage. US-Israeli

43   J. Mitnick, Israel's new friend: Why Greece is thwarting Gaza flotilla, Christian Science Monitor, July 5, 2011.
44   Landing of…Israelis in Greece for investments and vacations (in Greek), FM voice website, February 7, 2017, at www.fmvoice.gr/index.php/oikonomia/eidiseis/item/159485-apovasi-israilinon-stin-ellada-gia-ependyseis- kai-diakopes-i-kountoura-sto-israil, (accessed May 23, 2017).
45   Israel signs pipeline deal in push to export gas to Europe, *Financial Times*, April 3, 2017.
46   See clause 38 of the SYRIZA political party 2014 governmental program, at http://links.org.au/node/2888 (accessed May 11, 2017).

relations in recent years have been complicated, with the occasional tense exchanges between the Netanyahu government and the Obama administration.

These realities cannot preclude the influence of material factors on the development of Greek-Israeli relations. On the contrary, the Papandreou government in 2009 could have well turned to Israel with a view to capitalizing on the Israeli-Turkish divide. A more benign interpretation of events is that Athens merely tried to rectify a historical omission by establishing a high-level dialogue with Jerusalem in a geopolitically turbulent part of the world. The intensification and resilience of cooperation, however, could indicate that deeper, inner dynamics have come into play.

The described dynamics fit the criteria of constructivist accounts of security cooperation. Alliances and security communities are gradually built on the basis of mutual trust and shared understandings about interests and threats faced by the actors involved. This is a step-by-step process with "humble" beginnings (military to military cooperation for instance) which gradually produces a trickle-down effect to other societal levels. The theoretical assumption is that the advancement of collaboration can have an impact on the identities of states, due to interactions among the various groups involved. Adler and Barnett showed that such patterns may subsequently lead to a broadening and deepening of cooperation, culminating in the establishment of a security community.[47]

This "perceptual" hypothesis suggests that the trajectory of Greek-Israeli relations may have reached a stage where it is no longer dependent on the purported Israeli-Turkish rapprochement, to the extent that it is empowered by deeper, ideational factors. The implications are important since our goal is to reflect on the impact of identity-related variables on the resilience of security partnerships. While power balances and common interests remain crucial in explaining patterns of international cooperation, psychological factors have an important role to play in determining the scope and longevity of interstate partnerships. In this manner, objective conditions and shared beliefs may bolster each other's effect. Indeed, alliances contingent on power and/or interests can be vulnerable to exogenous shocks such as power shifts,[48] in addition to endogenous concerns such as the so-called fear of "entrapment,"[49] whereas state-to-state relations based on shared beliefs may turn out to be particularly durable. The suggested thesis offers a plausible answer to

[47]   E. Adler and M. Barnett, eds., *Security Communities*, Cambridge University Press, (1998).
[48]   G. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, (1997).
[49]   G. Snyder, The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics, *World Politics* 36, no. 4, (1984), pp. 461-495. EU adopts resolution criticising Israeli settlement activity, *The Guardian*, January 18, 2016, at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/18/eu-adopts-resolution-criticising-israeli-settlement-activity-occupied-palestinian-territories, (accessed May 23, 2017).

the perseverance of Greek-Israeli security cooperation under volatile and occasionally tense, domestic and international, political conditions.

Commentators have noted that Greece's new friendship risks alienating the country from Brussels, particularly since the EU has recently adopted a critical stance vis-à-vis Israel, highlighting the Union's soft power appeal in its effort to promote regional stability and a resolution of the Palestinian issue. The EU's tough 2016 resolution on Israeli settlement activities, for example, was met with fierce Greek resistance before Athens succumbed to diplomatic pressure by its EU partners.[50] Earlier in 2015, Greece had become the second EU member to object the Union's guidelines on labelling Israeli products manufactured beyond the 1949 armistice lines.[51] The essence of the EU approach towards the Eastern Mediterranean lies at the crossroads of human rights promotion, intercultural dialogue and economic development. However, the EU could find itself adopting a worldview which is more compatible with Israeli (and Greek) sensitivities. The advent of Islamist terrorism, for instance, has rendered governments across Europe more receptive to Israel's uncompromising approach in security affairs.[52] The terrorist attacks in France and Belgium continue to reverberate through the echelons of EU capitals, where the once dominant narratives prioritizing tolerance and multiculturalism sound increasingly unconvincing to domestic constituencies.

Irrespective of the mood in Brussels, there is little doubt among Greeks that the country is "returning" to the Eastern Mediterranean. Maps highlighting Greece as part of the region, as opposed to showing either the Balkan peninsula or the European Union are now making the rounds in Greek media outlets. The Greek press provides extensive (and positive) coverage to Egyptian-Greek, Israeli-Greek and other regional summits and high-

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[50] EU adopts resolution criticising Israeli settlement activity, *The Guardian*, January 18, 2016, at www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/18/eu-adopts-resolution-criticising-israeli-settlement-activity-occupied-palestinian-territories, (accessed May 23, 2017).

[51] Greece Rejects EU Labeling Guidelines After PM Calls Jerusalem Israel's Capital, *The Tower Magazine*, February 12, 2015, at http://www.thetower.org/2633-greece-rejects-eu-labeling-guidelines-after-pm-calls-jerusalem-israels-capital, (accessed April 29, 2017).

[52] Statement by the Spokesperson on the Latest Attacks in Tel Aviv, Petah Tikvah and Jerusalem, EU External Action Service, Brussels, March 9, 2016, at https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/2834/statement-by-the-spokesperson-on-the-latest-attacks-in-tel-aviv-petah-tikvah-and-jerusalem__en (accessed April 10, 2017); Israeli Tech Can Help EU Fight Terror, Peres Tells French PM, Times of Israel website, March 25, 2016, at www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-tech-can-help-eu-fight-terror-peres-tells-french-pm (accessed April 10, 2017); PM Netanyahu Speaks with EU High Representative Mogherini, Israel MFA Press Release, February 12, 2016, at http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2016/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-speaks-with-EU-High-Representative-Mogherini-12-February-2016.aspx (accessed April 18, 2017); HN: EU Must Learn from USA, Israel in Fighting Terrorism, Prague Daily Monitor, March 24, 2016, at http://praguemonitor.com/2016/03/24/hn-eu-must-learn-usa-israel-fighting-terrorism (accessed April 11, 2017).

level gatherings.[53] At the same time, Greek policy planners seem to acknowledge (or perhaps fall back to?) the idea of a historical nation with a distinct culture which finds itself increasingly vulnerable and isolated from the rest of the world. This self-image could, theoretically, enable Greeks to identify with a long-standing perception of Israel held among Jews.[54] Finally, the two nations' emerging identities as bastions of stability, secularism and democracy in a volatile region could be reinforcing perceptions of mutual affinity, at a time when authoritarianism and radicalism engulf large parts of the Mediterranean, including Greece's historical rival, Turkey.

These developments, finally, were concurrent with the "rift" between Athens and Brussels. In this regard, a possible (though not necessarily causal) link can be argued to exist between the Greek financial crisis and the country's foreign policy realignment. As the Greek crisis was unfolding, with instances of deadlock and tense, if not bitter, negotiations, the European self-identification of Greek leaders gradually eroded. Between the collapse of the Greek junta in 1974 and the onset of the Greek crisis in 2009, Europe was the main provider of Greece's international identity. As the financial crisis deepened, pro-European sentiments and statements became sparse and rather weak, whereas support for regional cooperation and alliances in the Eastern Mediterranean was bolstered.

Are we therefore witnessing the gradual distancing of another EU member state from the European integration process? If so, is the Greek financial crisis to blame? There is substantial scope for research here. While numerous studies have examined the impact of the Greek crisis on the country's economy and society, its foreign and security policy implications have largely remained unexplored.[55] Theoretically, a foreign policy adjustment that coincided with the escalation of a major domestic crisis alludes to the existence of a link between domestic upheaval and foreign policy posture, with NRCs assuming the role of a "transmission belt" between the different levels of analysis. Through its impact on leadership identities, the Greek crisis could have indeed engendered a long-lasting effect on the county's international self-conception.

[53] Greece, Cyprus and Egypt end trilateral talks with broad declaration, e-kathimerini website, December 9, 2015, at http://www.ekathimerini.com/204199/article/ekathimerini/news/greece-cyprus-and-egypt-end-trilateral-talks-with-broad-declaration, (accessed May 17, 2017); Trilateral Greece, Cyprus, Israel Summit in Jerusalem, to vima online, December 8, 2016, at http://www.tovima.gr/en/article/?aid=850033, (accessed May18, 2017).

[54] G. Kokkolis, Greeks and Jews: Two "Brotherless" Brothers [in Greek], iefimerida news website, at www.iefimerida.gr/blog-content/29039/έλληνες-και-εβραίοι-δύο-«ανάδελφα-αδέλφια» (accessed May 2, 2017).

[55] M. Matsaganis, The Greek Crisis: Social Impact and Policy Responses, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (2013), at www.library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/10314.pdf (accessed April 21, 2017).