Rephrasing nationalism: elite representations of Greek–Turkish relations in a Greek border region

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Dimitrios Gkintidis*

Contemporary Greek Studies, SEESOX, European Studies Centre, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

This article focuses on the representations of Greek–Turkish relations among local political elites in the Greek border region of Evros. The transition from competitive nationalism to Greek–Turkish rapprochement in the late 1990s created a new context for political action and led to a readjustment of public practices. This process reflected an interplay of national and European policies and global normative discourses. Nonetheless, changing discourses should be critically examined, as fieldwork in Evros revealed ambivalent representations that point to the reproduction of nationalism and the state, a condition that is becoming salient anew in the context of the recent economic crisis.

Keywords: Greece; Evros; nationalism; state; elites; crisis

Introduction

Greek–Turkish relations have undergone significant changes during the last 20 years. The competitive stance between the two countries of the early 1990s, which culminated in the crisis of Imia in 1996, was followed by a period of Greek–Turkish rapprochement in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This was widely popularized as an era of 'Greek–Turkish friendship'. However, recent years have seen a slowdown in the momentum of relations as a result of a succession of governments in Greece, Cypriot accession to the EU in 2004, setbacks in Turkey–EU relations (Kotzias 2009, 263; Onar 2009, 48, 71) and, most recently, the devaluation of the Greek economy in light of the global economic crisis. In any case, the changing diplomatic configurations of these last two decades have shown the flexibility of national policies and narratives in both countries, their constant readjustment to a changing economic context, as well as the significant impact of supranational policies and institutions, such as the EU framework, in the field of Greek–Turkish relations. In the case of Greece, the Greek–Turkish rapprochement of the late 1990s and early 2000s had been conceptualized by scholars and national political elites as an issue related to the growing institutional, economic and political integration of south-eastern Europe into the EU. The change in official nationalist discourse from an anti-Turkish stance to an economy-centred approach steeped in the logic of mutual

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*Email: dimitrios.gkintidis@sant.ox.ac.uk

cooperation was natively interpreted as a feature of Greece's pathway towards 'modernization'. This was related to another leitmotif of the time – the 'globalized free-market economy' – which meant that the expansion of the Greek capital eastwards was envisaged as serving to establish a liberal vision of 'peace-through-trade' (Papadopoulos 2009, 291). This was a novel approach for Greece, and stood in striking contrast to the immediate and troubled past of belligerent bilateral political and economic relations, perceived largely through the prism of a 'zero-sum game' (Tsarouhas 2009).

The reorientation and softening of political and economic relations with Turkey engendered a new context for public action in Greek society in the late 1990s and 2000s. This was first apparent among national political elites of the then dominant parties, PASOK and Néa Dimokratía. This new approach to public action, however, faced opposition from networks across different political backgrounds, which publicly advocated vigilance towards Turkey and its perceived ongoing aggressiveness. Contests over the appropriate reading of Greek–Turkish relations took place within and in dialogue with a wider conceptual struggle over the definition of Greek nationalism and its relationship to 'economic realism' and 'rationality' (Gavriilidis 2002; Pantazopoulos 2002), given the momentum of theories of globalization and European integration, which prescribed economic collaboration and extroversion towards neighbouring countries, and therefore questioned the utility of a rigid competitive nationalism in a globalized world. Such debates gave rise to a wide range of multifaceted discourses and representations – both public and private – which often transcended political or ideological affiliations. Furthermore, the eventual normalization of Greek–Turkish rapprochement in the national public sphere in the 2000s meant that a large number of Greek politicians and policy-makers – at various levels – reoriented their action and discourse. This was often in contrast to their previous public practices. The readjustment process, with all its contradictions, became even more striking in the case of local communities where competitive anti-Turkish nationalism had long been a key feature of public action, as well as a way of constructing and experiencing one's place in the imagined national community.

In this article, I propose to reflect on the local case study of the Greek border region of Evros and on the symbolic struggles that these new policies entailed in this region during the last 20 years. I will use material from ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted among local political elites, i.e. local government officials, party representatives and economic advisors. Fieldwork in the local public sphere took place between 2006 and 2009 through semi-structured interviews, participant observation in public events and research in archival and textual materials from the early 1990s. This case study uncovers the social conditions that shape local political elites' relations with both centrally produced official nationalist discourse and global normative discourses. It compels us to ask: what conditions created a new context for public action among these social agents, and how did they negotiate their own action in this changing context? As I will show, local elites changed their public action towards Turkey, in accordance with the overall framework of 'Europeanization' as it was mediated by the Greek central state. At the same time, they practiced double discourse and enacted alternative and intimate representations regarding national interest and Greek–Turkish opposition. In the context of the recent economic crisis, images of competing nations are becoming salient anew.

Striving for inclusion

The region of Evros is situated in the most northeastern part of mainland Greece, and is the only Greek region that shares a land border with Turkey. Even though it is a relatively homogenous area of Greek-speaking Christians, Evros is part of the wider multiethnic region of Thrace, where a significant minority of Greek Muslim citizens live, most of whom define themselves as Turks. This geographic and demographic setting rendered the wider region a field of competition between Greek and Turkish nationalism, especially in the period following the 1974 crisis in Cyprus and the invasion of the Turkish army in the island. These developments aggravated tensions in Greek–Turkish relations and bore upon the local economy and politics in Evros, which were 'militarized' and largely dependent on the central Greek state's developmental policies (Kolodny 1982, 156–162; Academy of Athens 1994, 15–37; Dalègre 1997, 213–253). Political positions articulated by local political, economic and intellectual elites reflected this reality. Fervent anti-Turkish discourses dominated in the local public sphere along with constant demands for economic and developmental privileges, based on the premise that the region should be militarily and economically fortified.

Nationalism and its local enactment reflected the efforts of this borderland community and its political representatives to secure viable symbolic and material relations with the central Greek state. Competitive anti-Turkish discourses revealed the peculiar function of nationalism as a 'local phenomenon' (Tsibiridou 1995, 155), mediated by immediate geopolitical realities, historically constructed categories, emotions and experiences,[1] and the need to gain visibility vis-à-vis the central Greek state. Despite their often denunciatory tones towards the central Greek state, local nationalist discourses were in accordance with the central state's foreign policy. These public practices reached their peak in the late 1980s and early 1990s, through a militant movement of 'Thracian Regeneration' directed both against the perceived aggressiveness of Turkey, as well as the putative ineffectiveness of the Greek state. Local militancy coalesced during a period of general political change and nationalist turmoil in the Balkans, which fuelled fears of minority upheaval or even armed conflict. At the same time, Thracian militancy was structured around demands for more involvement of the Greek state, both in terms of foreign policy and increased funding – especially with the influx of European developmental aid to Greece after the late 1980s (Featherstone 1998, 25–32).

These anxieties and mobilizations resulted in the organization of local public events involving ostentatious nationalist display, such as the World Thracian Congresses since 1993. The congresses were initially conceptualized and organized by networks of Thracian militants including local politicians in cooperation with neo-orthodox intellectuals from Athens, businessmen, local clergy and cultural associations. These events were an occasion for the delineation of statehood and hierarchy (Handelman 1998, 42, 112), since they consisted of rituals and discourses typical of an atemporal and unitary nationalist cosmology. Their purpose was explicitly the definition of both the local and national interests – merged into one, while the predominance of government and party officials in the designation of this common interest was constantly reproduced. The congresses gathered the vast majority of local Greek-speaking Christian political elites, who found in these events an occasion to pronounce their achievements to local voters and demand more national and European funds, while professing their allegiance to the

principles of Greek nationalism. Most importantly, these congresses were endorsed by the Greek state and national political parties through economic support and the physical presence of high-profile political personalities from the then dominant parties (PASOK and Néa Dimokratía), as well as representatives of smaller parties.

The first congresses took place in 1993 and 1994 and reflected the views of their organizers with regard to Turkey. Turkey was publicly accused of threatening the region; the Greek state was called to reinforce the region and alert its EU counterparts of the Turkish danger, while economic development was generally depicted as a means of securing the well-being of the nation and the region against Turkish expansionism. Among numerous calls for patriotic mobilization and alertness towards Turkey, the mayor of Alexandroupoli, the largest city of Evros, declared in 1993 that:

> Thrace is the shield and spear of Christian Europe […] Europe must understand that the main threat to Greece is Turkey […] Turkey is wholeheartedly devoted to its campaign of infiltrating the Balkans and this prospect is dangerous since it goes against the cultural and social reality of Europe and the ideals of Orthodox Balkan countries. (Proceedings of the 1st World Thracian Congress 1994)

Such discourses – accompanied by references to the war in Bosnia, business opportunities in the Balkans and declarations of unmitigated patriotic ardour – were in evidence also at the ensuing congress in 1994.[2]

A new context for political action

The rise to power of the modernizing faction of the PASOK party in 1996, under the leadership of Prime Minister Kostas Simitis, signified a change in Greek foreign policy towards its neighbours. This reflected the overall modernization policy of the government. Along with the teleological expectation of greater integration with the Western European core of the EU, and thus Europeanization, came the articulation of new geopolitical representations emphasizing the free-market economy and cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries, including Turkey. This also reflected the gradual reorientation of Greek capital towards the Turkish market (Argyropoulou 2004; Papadopoulos 2009; Tsarouhas 2009).

The new official discourse had immediate repercussions in Thrace and Evros. In fact, due to its particular position vis-à-vis Greek foreign policy and interethnic relations, the region stood as a highly symbolic locus for the enactment of new policies by the modernizing government. The prioritization of the region was marked by frequent interventions by Athens. Ministers, parliamentary representatives and business representatives gave speeches at wide-ranging public events. For example, Giorgos Papandreou, Deputy Minister and then Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1996 and 2004, affirmed the preoccupation with Thrace through his frequent visits to and public speeches in the region.

This shift in discourse was echoed in the World Thracian Congresses. This was evident in the congress of 1996 and, more importantly, that of 1998 where government and party officials, as well as business representatives sought to inform the local population of the new categories within a changing geopolitical context. These speakers rationalized their retreat from 'old school' Greek nationalism through references to the global economy and the necessity for Greece to adapt, as they

professed faith in economic extroversion and the potential of Greek–Turkish economic cooperation, especially in light of the EU–Turkey customs union agreement of 1995.

Interestingly, local politicians appeared to endorse this new version of Greek nationalism. During the 1998 congress, the mayor of Orestiada, who hosted the congress and therefore served as chairman, openly acclaimed the new foreign policy of the Greek government, and chastised a part of the audience for having reacted to the new discourses of Greek–Turkish cooperation; indeed, he invited, in a less than subtle manner, those who did not understand the pressing geopolitical necessities of those times 'to leave the room' (Proceedings of the 4th World Thracian Congress 1999, 47). Thus, the congress of 1998 signalled a radical turn in tone of the Thracian congresses. Despite the protests of local clergy or marginalized 'patriotic militants', subsequent congresses took a similar course, thus reflecting the dominant configuration of political power and its impact on local enactments of nationalism.[3]

A few years later, during my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to discuss with organizers and participants of those first congresses. It was interesting to note that the radical change in the content and scope of public discourses at the congresses often caused embarrassment. Most of my interlocutors explained the dissonance between past and present practices in vague temporal terms, noting that 'times change' and thus avoiding any direct reference to earlier practices of competitive nationalism and patriotic exaltation. To paraphrase Michael Herzfeld, one decade's pride and joy had become another's embarrassment (Herzfeld 2005, 64).

The transformation, however, was not solely a function of the symbolic power of state and business representatives, but also reflected a new set of practical conditions. First of all, public endorsement of the new foreign policy became an issue of party allegiance inside then dominant PASOK, and also gradually within the opposition party, Néa Dimokratía. Thus, a local politician seeking to secure his or her relation to the national centre had to publicly align himself/herself with the novel discourse of Greek–Turkish cooperation. The shift also reflected new material expectations among local policy-makers. Political change in the Balkans and the momentum, at the time, of south-east Europe's European integration as part and parcel of the broader process of globalization created a new set of economic imperatives and boosted aspirations for international investment in the region, economic growth and more concretely the involvement of more European programmes. Perhaps, the most striking case of this intertwining of discourses and material interests was the EU-funded INTERREG cross-border programme between Greece and Turkey. This programme was supposed to lead to the funding of joint initiatives between Greek and Turkish local governments; however, it was never implemented, apparently due to diplomatic disagreements between the central governments. Regardless of INTERREG's ultimate failure, it is interesting to note that the anticipation of this programme alone created important expectations among policy-makers and politicians – on both sides of the border – in accordance with the experience of other INTERREGs and, more generally, the appeal of European funds in Greece and Turkey. In this sense, ambitious plans for cross-border cooperation were often intertwined with individual strategies for accumulating economic and political capital within an emerging field of funds and discourse.[4]

Moral controversies and practical responses

Within this context, pioneers of cross-border policies reproduced early on the representation of Greek–Turkish rapprochement as an evolutionary step towards Europeanization and modernization.[5] These representations were constructed in accordance with the neoliberal worldview that dominated the policies and discourses of the European Union and the European social democratic parties from the mid-1990s (Shore 2000, 108; Simitis 2005, 560), since these pioneers were initially members of PASOK-affiliated local networks. In fact, their open adherence to the policies of the Greek–Turkish friendship was coupled with a gradual adherence to the principles of free-market, entrepreneurship and minimum state intervention. Therefore, new international and cross-border opportunities for the development of Evros appeared to present a contrast to the old patterns of protectionism and economic dependence on state policies, or 'handouts from Athens' – in the words of one of my interlocutors.

Besides these few bearers of such a coherent neoliberal and cross-border ethos, in the course of time, the vast majority of local politicians in Evros also readjusted their discourse and practices of self-presentation. This was not an easy task, since changing ideas, allegiances or party affiliation opened the door to accusations of moral looseness and opportunism. After all, Turkey had stood for many decades as a negative point of reference for the symbolic construction of the local political community and of the notion of the public good.

This issue was recognized explicitly by those who persistently opposed Greek–Turkish rapprochement and cross-border policies throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Such cases included old standard bearers of Thracian militancy (who were gradually ostracized from PASOK), some extreme right-wing groups and a few members of 'patriotic cultural associations'. The overwhelmingly material and economic thrust of the new supra-local policies spurred these networks to accuse local elites of dubious patriotism – in the sense of 'heteronomy', meaning the loss of 'autonomy' and the moral enslavement to material conditions and interests (Papataxiarchis 1994; Hirschon 1998, 172). Since dominant discourse and policies in the public sphere were aligned to the realities of a new global economy, the strategies of these networks of patriotic resistance took the form of ostentatious anti-materialist moralism.[6] Criticism in this vein was often evident in the discourse of local cultural associations, some of which were reactions to alternative definitions of 'culture' set forth by EU cultural and cross-border programmes (Gkintidis 2012). Such views on autonomy – in contrast to the seeming heteronomy of opportunistic local political and economic elites – were also combined with anti-Turkish nationalist discourse.

Thus, the late 1990s in Evros and Thrace saw the rise of an anti-elitist discursive field in the margins of the public sphere (Tsibiridou 2006, 129–130), which critically negotiated a wide array of supra-local policies and conditions, from Greek–Turkish rapprochement to globalization. The dichotomy that these groups perceived between the 'economy' and 'patriotism' appeared to provide them with a certain symbolic capital, mostly in the form of recognition by the local population for their seemingly disinterested actions and motivations. Yet, at the same time, it meant their marginalization in terms of political success, since they were seen as romantics without a grasp on reality.

These pockets of resistance demonstrate that the adoption of the new dominant discourses of the Greek–Turkish friendship and cross-border cooperation was not unilinear. Rather, it involved a fraught negotiation of everyone's past and present actions in terms of patriotic morality. Throughout my fieldwork, the issues of personal and political transformations, especially regarding the old, anti-Turkish nationalist discourse, were a potential source of embarrassment. One of my key informants, a 50-year-old policy consultant, even warned me to be subtle in my questions, as many politicians could be offended by 'inappropriate' questioning; as he jokingly put it, 'no one wants to be labelled as a traitor'.

Many of my interlocutors, including politicians, representatives of cultural associations and businessmen, indeed sought to tone down the anti-Turkish implications of their past actions. In so doing, they also revealed that the new official representations of Turkey and cross-border programmes provoked among regional actors unprecedented moral introspection, dilemmas and criticism, which were inextricably intertwined with their relation with Greek nationalism and the imagined national community. Within this context, I recorded specific ways in which local politicians justified and came to terms with their actions. The most frequent and publicly advocated explanation was the evolutionary discourse of maturity and rational adaptation to the new reality of free-market capitalism, in contrast to the anti-Turkish reactions of the past, which were labelled as emotional. This carefully articulated narrative was recurrent during my fieldwork in Evros. In fact, it was rather difficult to find any local official or established politician who would publicly oppose Greek–Turkish rapprochement or EU-funded policies of cross-border cooperation. This unanimous stance among local political elites was primarily a strategy of public self-presentation which reproduced the new official reading of Greek–Turkish relations. It responded to the new requirements for political success.

At the same time, I was able to record in some instances divergent narratives that clearly showed differences between public and private views. Such was the case of a local member of PASOK, who had successfully adapted to the new dominant conditions of public action. Since the early 1990s, he had managed to become involved in various EU programmes and had therefore increased his political capital. Moreover, in contrast to his older anti-Turkish discourses, he became implicated in cross-border initiatives with Turkey, thereby aligning his public practices to the new standardized discourse on Greek–Turkish rapprochement. When recounting the course of his political actions, he initially articulated a discourse of maturity, personal evolution and 'rationality'. As he put it, he had acquired 'a more realistic perspective on Greek–Turkish relations'. However, in the course of our interview, during which my interlocutor began to grasp the methodological premises of my research,[7] he gradually modified his discourse, through the enactment of alternative private strategies of self-presentation. He seemed eager to prove that, notwithstanding his public success, he remained loyal to what he saw as a core principle of Greek nationalism – vigilance towards Turkey – and silently maintained a critical stance towards Greek–Turkish rapprochement. Lowering his voice and in a somewhat complicit and boasting tone, he confided to me, on condition of anonymity, that people in the old days used to call him 'Turk hunter [τουρκοφάγο]' – because of his fervent anti-Turkish discourses at the time. Furthermore, despite his public adherence to the Greek–Turkish rapprochement, he had never become a 'dönme [ντονμές]'.[8] The use of such nationalist credentials showed that, even among local political elites, the imagery of competitive anti-Turkish nationalism functioned as a

refuted but semantically and emotionally powerful narrative. In fact, it was used as a synonym for personal integrity and consistency.

This politician was highly doubtful of the eventual outcome of Turkey's EU integration process. At the time of our interview, in 2007, there were clear signs of stagnation in the EU–Turkey talks, while the euphoria of the past years over EU enlargement and integration had been superseded by scepticism. Most importantly, for this politician, it seemed that 'no matter how much money Turks will have, they will always remain an Oriental people'. Such assertions of cultural essentialism remind us of persistent, if unspoken, categories in local enactments of European integration.

This politician also understood that his political success demanded public behaviour that did not match his private beliefs, hence his adoption of a double discourse. This reflected a form of what Michael Herzfeld has termed 'disemia', meaning dissonance between official and socially embedded discourses (Herzfeld 1987, 201). Such dissonance reflects multiple layers of power relations, such as that between the Greek state and Western normative discourses, between citizens and the national state, and between the margins and the centre of the national state, among others. In our case, local political elites feared that any public deviation from the official discourse of Greek–Turkish rapprochement would cost them their party membership and therefore endanger their political career. Such enactments of double discourse depicted their efforts to combine seemingly old precepts with new sets of interests and resources that prevailed within the public sphere, locally and nationally (Scott 1985, 310).

At the same time, double discourse reflected the interchangeability of both cross-border discourses and essentialist representations of competitive anti-Turkish nationalism. In the long-term, the apparently opposing stances proved to be complementary. On various occasions, pro-friendship discourses were paired with silences or deliberate verbal slips which showed the will of the interlocutors to display their knowledge of the larger implications of interstate relations and distance themselves from the idyllic imagery of the Greek–Turkish friendship. In fact, some interlocutors referred to a specific category of topics, 'things that cannot be said in public'. These had to do with unspoken but persisting features of Greek–Turkish relations, ones that not only included mutual economic benefits and cultural exchanges, but also diplomatic strategies, 'spies', national armies, and, in the long-term, competing national states.[9] An experienced businessman confided to me that one should always be careful when doing business with Turkish partners, since, as he put it, a large part of the Turkish economy was controlled by the Turkish army.

Interestingly, my interlocutors viewed the readjustment of public discourses on Turkey as being consistent with the national state's equally multivalent policy and complex diplomacy. In this sense, the practice of double discourse seemed to be based on the premise that the official discourse of the Greek state might also conceal a long-term reasoning that exceeded the (possibly temporary) conjuncture of the Greek–Turkish friendship. For example, my 'non-dönme' interlocutor from the PASOK party justified his course of action by using the allegory of the Greek state's diplomatic strategy: according to him, Greek foreign policy under the PASOK government had succeeded, through the tactic of the Greek–Turkish friendship, in overcoming the obstacle of Turkey and allowing Cyprus to become a member of the EU in 2004. This was, according to my (very satisfied) interlocutor, a great diplomatic defeat for Turkey. This politician thus insinuated that the national

state showed evidence of a similar double discourse to his own, predicated on a practical strategy that pertained to antagonistic conceptions of the security and the interests of the national community.

Thus, barring the minority of 'pro-Turkey neoliberal pioneers' on the one hand, and 'anti-Turkish militants' on the other, the majority of local elites modelled their own strategies on what they perceived to be the state's equally flexible policies. They justified their actions in accordance with a shared 'intimate self-knowledge' (Herzfeld 2005, 3, 8, 9) that is, the view that they had of the Greek state's purported two-fold agenda vis-à-vis Turkey, one which aligned both with the new normative requirements of international relations, and the inner truth concerned with reproducing the state and national interests.

Geopolitics in a time of crisis

The pervasiveness of the state and nationalism in the ways that the local community and its elites perceived social reality was evident during a short follow-up fieldwork in the summer of 2012. At that time I had the opportunity to speak with some old informants, as well as attend the 9th World Thracian Congress. The economic crisis and the ensuing political instability appeared to have fostered an overall sense of devaluation and geopolitical insecurity. In this context, perceptions of Turkey had changed. Turkey was deemed to be thriving in contrast to Greece. This inversion of what had been the established certainty of the Greek economic dominance appeared to have had engendered new discourses and strategies among political and economic elites. For some – mostly businessmen and a few of the old neoliberal pioneers of cross-border cooperation – Turkish consumers and investors represented an inevitable solution to Greece's economic problems. For others, including the (reinvigorated) clergy, the prospect of Turkish capital intruding into the region – in the case, for example, of a proposed special economic zone – was alarming.

What stood out in the new situation was that the economic crisis was largely being experienced and conceptualized in national terms. While this corroborates my earlier findings, in the transformed regional and geopolitical context, it was accompanied by the diminished salience of EU and cross-border referents. This was reflected in anxious and often contradictory interpretations of foreign policy, comparisons with neighbouring countries and concerns about what the future might bring within the constellation of nation states. Questions that were being posed included: Will Germany and the EU help Greece? Will Turkey's economy collapse as well? If the Greek Left were to win elections, would Turkey – which is often thought of as an enforcer of global capitalism and US interests – provoke an armed conflict? There was also fear that social change and the crisis could have implications for the Greek–Turkish balance of power, that is, weaken Greece's position vis-à-vis Turkey, or give Turkey a pretext to interfere with Greek affairs. This native geopolitical sensibility and all its related emotions and categories can be ascribed, on the one hand, to the weight of international politics in most Greek readings of history (Herzfeld 2005, 122, 125, 235; Sutton 1998, 159–160). On the other, such (oftentimes well-founded) geopolitical concerns are particularly pronounced in the Evros region, where historical realities and specific policies have conditioned local practices and representations.[10] In the new geopolitical context, these concerns have taken the form of a generalized sense of vulnerability. Yet,

while there is a throwback to older representations of Turkey, the discourses of the 1990s and 2000s have not been totally eclipsed. Which will prevail – or, rather, the complex ways in which these perspectives will interact – remains to be defined by ongoing developments in the Evros region, Greece, Turkey, South East Europe at large and the EU.

Conclusion

The recent political history of the region of Evros offers multiple and diverse examples of the ways in which social agents respond to supra-local realities. In the 1990s and 2000s, this entailed a process of adaptation to the new official vision of the region's position in a changing world, which emanated from the interplay of European and national policies, and which prescribed favourable attitudes towards Greek–Turkish relations. Such policies introduced new contexts for political action and new requirements for political success. They also created a tension between public practices and intimate representations that continued to reflect aspects of competitive anti-Turkish nationalism. Indeed, double discourse appears to have been a fairly common practice among a number of local political elites. In this context, their attempts to prove that they possessed an intimate knowledge of the rationale behind the new official discourse on European integration, borders and Turkey – as well as their adaptability to these discourses despite the contradictions it created in their public profiles and platforms – stemmed from a reading of Greece's new foreign policy vision as driven primarily by national interest.

As such, 'Europeanist' discourses and the reimagination of Greek–Turkish relations at the local level reflected in many respects a new iteration of Greek nationalism. Being in favour of the Greek–Turkish friendship was the 'right thing to do in public' during the early 2000s, as it was clearly advocated by state officials on occasions for ostentatious patriotism, such as the World Thracian Congresses. In this regard, local elites in Evros showed a good understanding of both the flexible content and hierarchical structure of nationalism. Indeed, their claims to intimate knowledge of the state's purpose call into question the purchase of the neoliberal rhetoric about the 'gradual eradication of borders' or 'diminishing states'.[11] At least in the case of Evros, the state prevailed as the crucial mediator of wider policies in this border region. This appears to have become explicit again in light of the recent economic crisis and the broader geopolitical uncertainties of the 2010s.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Border regions bear the impact of national policies in immediate ways. The delineation, security and control of borders are crucial to the reproduction of the national state itself (Gupta 2003, 329). In contrast to examples of 'ambiguous' border regions, Evros and its population have been constructed in the local and national political imagination as a par excellence case of 'bastion of the nation' in its highly territorialized Westphalian conceptualization, with all the ensuing connotations of cleanness and internal coherence (Green 2012, 577). Furthermore, self-regulation, conformism and/or excessive patriotic displays

among border populations can help us reflect on the impact of the national state on local modes of social interpretation, which include not only spoken discourses but also unspoken taxonomies and emotions, typical of what could generally be termed as a nationally conditioned borderland habitus (Billig 1995, 42; Bourdieu 1997, 142, 260, 261; Eilenberg 2005; Hirschon 2009, 74). In the case of 'loyal' border communities, such as Evros, one is able to reflect on the fact that despite being implicated in intersecting sub-, trans-, and supra-national conditions, a local community may internalize and adjust itself to the rationale of the national state to a relatively greater extent (Herzfeld 1987, 160; also see Thomassen 2005).

2. Within this context, the relative ethnic homogeneity of Evros and the image of an unambiguous 'Greek Christian enclave' provided local politicians with a certain recognition in comparison to their Christian Greek-speaking counterparts from the neighbouring regions of Xanthi and Rodhopi, who were faced with the complex reality of a multi-ethnic constituency. The following example is indicative of the symbolic and emotional construction (Wilson and Donnan 2005, 9) of this unambiguous borderland condition: during an award ceremony in honour of a renown folk artist from Evros in 1998, and in the presence of politicians from Evros, an official from the neighbouring prefecture of Rodhopi praised Evros as being the 'only prefecture which is masculine and stands straight [ο Έβρος είναι ο μοναδικός νομός αρσενικός και όρθιος]' (Chronos 26 January 1998). Indeed, the delineation of the territory of Evros on the map gives the image of being straight-up, facing Turkey, and moreover the term 'Evros' is grammatically masculine, in contrast to most geographical terms in Greek. This honorary praise of an uncompromised masculinity was a clear reference to the ethnic reality of Thrace and the symbolic position of Evros as a presumed homogeneous 'bastion' against a nationally and sexually menacing Turkish expansionism. I would like to thank Fotini Tsibiridou for having provided the information.

3. Through such debates on the definition of 'real patriotism', we are able to grasp the correlation between power, social recognition and the right to speak about the 'nation'. State officials, politicians, business representatives and more generally dominant classes held a specific symbolic power with regard to the audience at such events. Any 'simple participant' who defied their established discourse and order could easily be labeled a 'fool'. After all, these congresses constituted displays and confirmations of social power. On a wider level, such occasions for ostentatious patriotism remind us of the hierarchical logic of nationalism and its close intertwinement with political and class hierarchies.

4. By the time I had started my fieldwork, in 2006, it was obvious that the Greek–Turkish INTERREG programme would not materialize. Nevertheless, through interviews, I came to understand that the wide majority of local politicians and local government institutions in Evros had been preparing proposals and projects, for as long as the programme seemed viable – roughly throughout the first half of the 2000s. Besides collective consultations and meetings between local politicians in Evros, most of them had also undertaken contacts with Turkish counterparts from the adjacent Turkish regions. In fact, cross-border expectations exceeded the confines of the local followers of the modernizing PASOK, thus finally involving other members of PASOK and Néa Dimokratia, even some that had stood as renown anti-Turkish 'patriots' in the immediate past. More generally, cross-border programmes, either with Bulgaria or Turkey, had become at that time a prerequisite for the accumulation of political capital. This orientation of local politicians had become evident with the creation of cross-border networks, meaning loose networks of cooperation between Greek, Bulgarian and Turkish local government institutions. During my fieldwork, there were still four such networks in the wider region. These cross-border networks were created and maintained by politicians, along with their consultants, as part of their strategies of political reproduction. I should point out that, in the long term, those who chose to focus on Greek–Turkish relations didn't succeed as much as those who had focused e.g. on Greek–Bulgarian projects, given the eventual halt of EU–Turkey relations. Nevertheless, during the first half of the 2000s, Turkey's potential accession course into the EU had provided these practices a specific momentum. A local policy consultant who had taken part in joint meetings on the issue of Greek–Turkish INTERREG pointed out the 'Europeanization' euphoria that prevailed at the time, while he indicated that the expectation of European funding was also

widespread among Turkish mayors and representatives, who were enthusiastic about this prospect.

5. James Wesley Scott points out the importance of 'cross-border cooperation' within the project of European Integration since the mid-1980s, as well as its practical enactment through EU funded programmes (2012, 85).

6. Bjorn Thomassen's reference to 'spiritualist' and 'mercantilist' readings of nationalism in Trieste (Thomassen 2005) seems to be of particular relevance to the case of Evros as well.

7. This interlocutor also seized upon the fact that I was a native researcher with a familiar Thracian surname, possible common acquaintances, etc., all of which implied a localized experience of unspoken and unofficial practices. I believe that this made him more eager to justify himself to a native researcher who might have easy access to locally intimate knowledge. After all, I was part of his constituency. Also see Herzfeld 2005, 1–38.

8. The term 'dönme' usually refers to the Ottoman Jews of Thessaloniki who converted to Islam from the late seventeenth century. However, in this context, it is used in a derogatory way to denote those who change beliefs and opinions, who 'turn' (from the Turkish verb 'dönmek') and align themselves to the will of the Ottoman/Muslim/Turkish 'enemy', in order to secure survival or gains.

9. For another case of discursive self-regulation regarding 'nationally sensitive issues', see Lauth Bacas (2005, 72).

10. It should be noted that these preoccupations were typical of urban political elites – local intellectuals of the national state (in the Gramscian sense), with a specific conservative class ethos, who are particularly prone to talk and theorize about politics. At the same time, the constant anxiety caused by geopolitics should not be reduced only to a strategy for social pacification or to a singularly bourgeois experience. Rather, I propose, it can be seen as permeating wider parts of the local population. In this sense, we are invited to reflect on recurrent geopolitical fears and hopes as elements of a historically constructed and shared *doxa* or common sense, intertwined as it is with emotions and inhibitions. This may help us to further explain hegemonic limits in social agents' action – not only in Evros, but in other similar settings in Greece and Turkey as well.

11. These discourses can be seen as a localized critique of the one-dimensional 'post-national and post-state' interpretation of global capitalism that has prevailed for the last 20 years and that does not take under account that (neo) liberalism and nationalism stand as mutually inclusive constitutive traits of modern political and economic power –in Greece, as elsewhere.

Notes on contributor

Dimitrios Gkintidis is 2012/2013 A.G. Leventis Fellow in Contemporary Greek Studies at SEESOX, ESC, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford. He obtained his PhD degree from the University of Macedonia in 2011. His current research interests focus on the multifaceted relation of Greek society with the European Union, on the wider hegemonic framework of "Europeanization", as well as on the reformulation of Greek nationalism within the conjuncture of the global economic crisis.

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