



**The Hellenic Observatory**

The European Institute

**Anti-Americanism in Greece:  
reactions to the 11-S, Afghanistan and Iraq**

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**GreeSE Paper No6**

**Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe**

**September 2007**

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THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
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### Acknowledgements

An earlier draft in Spanish ('Greek public opinion reactions to the 11 September 2001') was presented to the University Rovira i Virgili Workshop on "11-S, Five Years On" (30 November-1 December 2006, Tarragona). The author would like to thank the workshop participants and especially Profs Enric Olivé and Joseph Maila, as well as LSE HO staff members: Prof Kevin Featherstone, Drs Spyros Economides and Vassilis Monastiriotis and Mr Andreas Kornelakis. The usual proviso about sole responsibility applies here too.

# Anti-Americanism in Greece: reactions to the 11-S, Afghanistan and Iraq

Stelios Stavridis<sup>#</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Ever since the military junta rule in Athens in the late 1960s – early 1970s and especially following the Turkish invasion of part of Cyprus in 1974, Greece has shown strong signs of anti-Americanism. A phenomenon that is well-embedded in the Greek society, even if Greece is a member of the West (NATO but more importantly the European Union). This paper focuses on Greece's anti-Americanism in the aftermath of the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 mega-terrorist attacks. Why was Greece's reaction to that seminal event so different from other European countries? It also shows how deep anti-Americanism is by considering previous events, such as Greek reactions to the 1999 Kosovo War. The paper also stresses that nowadays there is no major difference between Right and Left in Greece's anti-American view. Moreover, if anything, anti-Americanism has strengthened since the 2003 Iraq invasion. Finally, it highlights a growing discrepancy between what Greek elites say and what, in particular, governmental elites do. Therefore, the paper calls for more systematic research on both subjects: of course on anti-Americanism but as importantly on the growing gap between government rhetoric and reality.

Keywords: Anti-Americanism, 11-S, Greek public opinion

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# **Anti-Americanism in Greece: reactions to the 11-S, Afghanistan and Iraq**

## **1. Introduction**

The International System has changed drastically over the past 15 years (Hill 2003: 11). To the monumental changes that the 1989-1991 unexpected and sudden end of the Cold War and implosion of the Soviet empire have produced, one must add those that have resulted from the emergence of economic globalization, and the many implications of the '11-S' (the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 mega terrorist attacks). Another development that had already emerged in the 1970s, but has really gained prominence since 1991, is the appearance of 'the humanitarian intervention doctrine' (*le droit d'ingérence*), i.e. the 'right of interference' in the internal affairs of an independent and sovereign state in order to protect human rights worldwide. There is also a growth of failed or collapsed states with all their implications for human security. Among other many developments (such as environmental, migration and demographic threats and challenges), the sum of the above have led to such an increase in the number of military interventions in the world (Everts and Isernia 2002: 5) that it is easy to lose count of them. Moreover, man-made disasters and other natural catastrophes often require the use of military interventions as so many of them occur in situations of civil wars or other types of open conflicts<sup>1</sup>.

There is therefore a need to give a legal codification to this emerging world system. To date there have been some attempts in that particular direction, be it

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<sup>1</sup> See the debate on that issue, for instance in Spain: Soledad Gallego-Diaz, 'Los militares de Mihura', *El País*, 24.11.06.

the creation of an International Criminal Court in The Hague (which has now began its first trial), or a number of reform proposals in the United Nations, including the *possibility* of formalizing the use of pre-emptive actions<sup>2</sup>. A recent Report by an UN-sponsored High Level Group does not provide any real answers to that important question but the mere fact that it is being discussed at that level shows that the question of preventive use of force is no mere 'Neo-Con obsession'.<sup>3</sup>

This is the wider context, which is meant to show that we have now entered a rather difficult period in international affairs, where more conflicts and more military interventions will become the norm. Thus, any reactions to events which have contributed to that situation must be assessed carefully, because of the dynamic effect in politics. It is the aim of this paper to deal with the way Greek public opinion and political parties reacted to the 11-S, Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, several general points must be addressed before considering that particular reaction, because the role and importance of public opinion in foreign affairs is a moot point. Not necessarily in the way that the so-called 'incompatibility theorists' have argued in the past (for a critical review, see Goldmann 1986): democratic incompatibility theory claims that the *internal strengths* of a democratic state represent *necessarily weaknesses externally*, as diplomatic efficiency requires secrecy, expertise, and rapid decisions. In other words, that democracy stops at the borders of a state. Such an approach has been greatly undermined not only by the existence of International Democratic Theory, but also because -building on Charles Beitz (1979)- international moral skepticism simply amounts to moral skepticism *tout-court*.<sup>4</sup> The same

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<sup>2</sup> On the differences and similarities between 'pre-emptive' and 'preventive' use of force, see Andersen (2007: 62-64).

<sup>3</sup> See Ripol Carulla (2005). On the wider issue of UN reforms, see Glennon (2003).

<sup>4</sup> In the same vein, others argue that there is perhaps *too much democracy* right now, meaning mainly a volatile public opinion and the existence of more trust in non-elected bodies than in elected ones, according to Fayed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom*, as Gabriel Tortella mentions in *El País*, 20.11.06, '¿Demasiada democracia?'. Similarly some claim that today there is too much trust in opinion polls, Andres Ortega, 'La mandarina', *El País*, 20.11.06. Both approaches fall in the trap of

devastating criticism can be applied to democratic skeptics. Moreover, the triumph of liberalism, to borrow from Fukuyama's end of history approach, means that, at least theoretically speaking, there is no real challenge to democracy as the 'best' system of political governance (or the 'least bad' form of government, to paraphrase Winston Churchill, this time). Foreign Policy (FP) and democracy *can* –but also *should*- go hand in hand.

Where the question of public opinion in foreign policy remains problematic is whether it acts as a 'sun' or as a 'moon'<sup>5</sup>? That is to say, is public opinion something that constrains FP decision-makers, or is it something that reflects the preferences of opinion shapers? In the literature, a difference is also made between 'attentive opinion' and 'mass opinion'. In that particular aspect, one should add the increasing role of the media as opinion-shapers and, thanks to the telecommunications revolution, their impact on what is loosely called 'world opinion'. The latter is usually associated with the so-called 'world society' or 'international community', both expressions that reflect perhaps some reality, although it is difficult to know what they actually mean in more concrete terms. Furthermore, there are now more and more non-traditional actors in International Relations generally speaking, and in FP more specifically speaking: be they economic ones (multinational firms for instance), political ones (NGOs or other civil society actors), multi-level ones (sub-national and transnational entities like regions, be they micro ones or macro ones), or parliamentary actors (see the increasing role of 'parliamentary diplomacy'). It means that, perhaps paradoxically, the impact of public opinion is both *enhanced* (because there are more routes to influence FP) and *limited* (because there are more specific channels that need to be accessed, thus facilitating the role of organized *lobbies*).

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mixing up the way democracy is *implemented* in specific cases with the *ideal* of democracy, and also of not going to the full end of their particular logic: to openly call for non-democratic systems of governance!

<sup>5</sup> To borrow from a Conference paper on the role of the press in foreign policy: 'Foreign policy and the Press - The Press is a moon and not a sun, it only reflects light' (N. Berry, 1989 Joint British International Studies Association/International Studies Association conference, London).

Finally, one must add the ‘perceptions and misperceptions’ dimension: in all foreign policies there is such a problem. It is also assumed that such a problem is even bigger because most average citizens are simply not interested in world affairs. Whatever they hear they tend to repeat even if it is the opposite of what they may actually believe. After this contextual and theoretical introduction that was needed to put the bulk of the study in its wider context, the paper next addresses how the Greek public opinion reacted to the 11-S (section 2), how different was this reaction from that in other EU states (section 3), why was it different (section 4), and whether there have been any fundamental changes since then (section 5). The final section concludes.

## **2. How did public opinion in Greece react to the 11-S?**

The *initial* reaction of politicians and other leaders was one of condemnation without reservation. As for the Muslim communities in Greece<sup>6</sup> (mainly in Thrace, as well as mostly unregistered immigrants or asylum seekers from Albania, Turkey/Kurds, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran), their leaders condemned the 11-S attacks as ‘a crime against humanity’, arguing that, in the words of the Mufti of the city of Komotini in Thrace (Northern Greece), Al Qaeda was conducting a *Kital* and not a *Jihad* (an unjust war of destruction vs. holy war). But, he also warned against any form of future war or aggression all the same (this was prior to the 2001 Afghanistan war). Hassan Patsaman, the publisher of the Muslim religious periodical *Invitation to Justice* also criticized possible future US ‘indiscriminate bombings resulting in the death of innocent civilians’. Muslim members of the Greek parliament also issued statements condemning terrorism and accusing Al Qaeda of mass murder (EUMC 2002: 6-7).

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<sup>6</sup> An estimated 150,000 people in all.



Once the initial shock was ‘quickly’ overcome, the *real* Greek reaction appeared and this was rather different. First, there appeared clear expressions of sympathy with the Arab world and disassociation between what had happened in New York/Washington (‘pure terrorism’) and any use of violence within national liberation struggle contexts, especially those of the Palestinians (EUMC 2002: 6): of course, here there is a debate about whether the use of force is acceptable by ‘liberation movements’, but in Greece it is seen as an undeniable right (Greece’s Independence War from the Ottomans in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century but also Greek-Cypriots attempt at Union with mainland Greece in their fight against British colonial rule in the 1950s). This is where the importance of public opinion in Greece comes into play.

There is a vast literature on the subject of how Greek public opinion reacted to the 11-S, especially in the Greek language. To summarize, I will use the title of a famous book on that subject: *Καλά Να Πάθουν*, that is to say, ‘they had it coming’. Its cover represents a drawing of a plane smashing into one of the Twin Towers with the word ‘CIA’ written across its fuselage. In brief, for Greek public opinion, the whole 11-S was an American plot (Vasilakis 2002). That is to say, there was first a claim of *conspiracy*, then *well-done to them because they deserved it*, and finally, it was *justified*, was it not?

Moreover, whether ‘buying’ or not the US plot, there was open satisfaction that such symbols of *US power and imperialism* had been literally wiped out (Tzogopoulos 2005: 5). The casualty figures were only mentioned initially to claim that it was rather horrific (after all many Greeks use planes and/or have visited the USA, and the Twin Towers in particular), before adding in the same breath ‘but of course one could expect such a thing, couldn’t one?’. Meaning as a result of ‘US power, policies and imperialism’. Vasilakis’ book contains many very clear illustrations of what was reproduced in the Greek media at the time. There was a plethora of cartoons representing the USA as Nazis, fascists, totalitarian and dictatorial. Vasilakis (2002) also recalls at least instances where the minute silence for the 11-S victims was booed and turning into shouts in

favour of ... Bin Laden (at a concert and at two European Cup football games). He also shows a picture of a demonstration in Greece with a placard stating that 'terrorism = CIA + NATO', next to one saying 'no involvement in imperialist aggressive plans'.

Further evidence can be found in a number of opinion polls that were made at that time. What follows presents an overview of these surveys:

**Survey No 1:** One September 2001 study (cited in Hatziantoniou 2002) asked that, in case it is proven that behind the terrorists there was a given country that had backed them (hosted them), would the polled person support a military attack against that country, or, instead, would that person accept that pressure be put for that country to extradite those responsible for trial? *In favour of military intervention* were: 29% in France, 28% in the Netherlands, 21% in Italy, 20% in Denmark, 18% in Portugal, Luxembourg and the UK, 17% in Germany, 14% in Finland, 12% in Spain, 10% in Austria, and 6% in Greece. *In favour of a trial* were: 88% in Greece, 86% in Spain, 82% in Austria and Finland, 78% in Luxembourg, 77% in Germany, 75% in Portugal and the UK, 74% in Denmark, 71% in Italy, 68% in the Netherlands, 67% in France. Needless to point out that there is a reverse relation between those who head the first group and those who head the latter group. It is therefore logical to argue that the two issues are seen as alternative options and this is probably how respondents reacted to the questions asked.

**Survey No 2:** Using data from another poll dated September 2001 (reported in Everts and Isernia 2002: 12), about support for participation of one's own country in a military action led by the USA in Afghanistan, out of 37 countries, 'only in member states of NATO (but *excluding Greece*) could majorities in favor of participation be found at the time' (emphasis added)<sup>7</sup>. More specifically (Everts and Isernia 2002: 32), when

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<sup>7</sup> For reasons not explained, there was no data for Belgium, Poland and Hungary.

divided into five groups, ranging from ‘very supportive’ of US military action to ‘strongly opposed’, Greece is the only EU state that is in the fifth and final group, which includes a mixture of African, Latin American and Asian countries, *but no other EU state*. Although it is interesting to note that both Austria and Spain are in the previous group; the bulk of the EU15 states are in the first group (seven of them), with another two in the second group, and another three in the third one.

**Survey No 3:** A poll from the daily *Eleftherotipia* dated 16.09.01 (reproduced in Vasilakis 2005: 31) shows that 25% of Greeks felt that *justice* had been done on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001. Split into political party preferences, the results are as follows (*from Right to Left*): New Democracy 19.2%; Socialist Party PASOK 25.2%; Left Coalition SYN 34.6%; Communist Party KKE 36.4%. That is to say that there is no big Left-Right divide, nor between the bulk of the Greek electorate and the more ‘fringe parties’. The March 2004 elections results are as follows: 45.36% ND; 40.55% PASOK; KKE 5.90%; SYN 3.26; LAOS 2.19%. New Democracy is now in power but PASOK has ruled most of the past 25 years. Between them, they gather about 85% of the vote. In recent years, the Communist KKE, the Left-Wing SYN (Synaspismos = Coalition of the Left and Progress), and the populist extreme right national LAOS have never been that important politically-speaking.<sup>8</sup>

To illustrate the above further, one should list a number of comments and declarations, mainly by Greek politicians. Thus, SYN leader Alavanos

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<sup>8</sup> Although, especially the far Left, garners wider respect in the Greek media and in the Athens *intelligentsia* than its electoral support would warrant; the reason may be the role and importance of leftist trade unions in the media, especially the written press, but also a general trend to the Left in intellectual circles in part due to the May 1968 events in the world but especially in Europe. Also in terms of big party dominance, it must be noted that even if the 16 September 2007 early elections results show a substantial decrease in the two larger parties’ share of the vote (and as a result the current Parliament includes 5 parties: ND, PASOK, KKE, SYRIZA –a coalition lead by SYN- and LAOS), it remains to be seen if this is the beginning of a new trend, or just a unique ‘protest vote’ due to a number of reasons, including the exceptionally devastating forest fires in August when 76 people died. The ND government had called for early elections before the fires occurred and the elections took place only days after the end of those devastating events. ND won another term –by a reduced majority- all the same.

said that, following the 11-S, the ‘New York stock exchange yuppies now felt like the Cypriots, the Palestinians, the Israelis, the Serbs in Kosovo or Belgrade’ (cited in Vasilakis 2005: 31). Communist Party KKE activists argued that NATO means ‘North Atlantic Terrorist Organization’, and that the CIA was to blame because it was *obviously* not possible for anyone so far away and in the middle of the desolated lands of Afghanistan to organize something as big as 11-S (Vasilakis 2005: 29).

In addition to the above, Vasilakis (2005) provides a number of other instructive examples:

- p.16: Ocalan, Karadic and Bin Ladin are described as ‘freedom fighters’ (in Greek AGONISTES); and, ‘NATO and the USA are the chief terrorists, and the EU are the criminals’.
- pp 28-29: a New Democracy youth party event was advertised on a poster depicting the two burning towers, and the event was labelled ‘the party of the year’.

In brief, Greek public opinion considered that the 11-S was justified (Everts and Isernia 2002: 34). One should contrast this finding to how the same attacks were considered to be *totally unjustified* in Indonesia (74%), Lebanon (61%), or even Iran (51%). Greek reactions were closer to, but still more critical than, those in Morocco (48%), Pakistan (40%) and Kuwait (26%). Thus, the 11-S was overwhelmingly deemed to be justified in Greece. This reaction led Vasilakis, one of the few Greek critics of such a reaction, to label Greece (HELLAS in Greek), the ‘Helleban’, as a reference to the Taliban. He also described the dominant view in Greece where any diverging opinion was heavily criticized as having simply created ‘a politico-spiritual gulag’ (Vasilakis 2005: 15).

### 3. How different was it from other EU states?

The reaction in Greece was *different* from other EU states in the sense that it was much more open and vocal against the USA. Greece reacted quite similarly to so many reactions in the ‘Arab streets’, those reactions that led Oriana Fallaci to write her famous book (Fallaci 2002) – although perhaps nothing like the street celebrations that were shown across so many TV channels. But there were plenty of anti-war and anti-American demonstrations, with parliamentary and extra parliamentary support from the Left of the political spectrum, especially the extreme left (at that time a Socialist government was in power). Extensive media coverage of these events also took place. In addition, an explosive device caused material damage outside an *American Express* bank in central Athens. In short, a long way from the European-wide cry of ‘we are all Americans’, as announced on the front page of *Le Monde* the day after 11-S.

Conversely, and this only represented a very small proportion of the Greek reaction, especially on fringe TV stations’ programmes, there was strong anti-Islamic discourse, mainly directed at Muslims who live in neighbouring countries (Albania, Bosnia and the FYROM), who were described by some as ‘security threats’ (by the extreme right) or as ‘instruments of US imperialist manipulation’ (by the extreme left) (EUMC 2002: 5 and 7).

The reaction in Greece was *different* also because its previous record on world events had not been similar to those of other EU states, especially over the 1999 Kosovo War. Greece was, at least at the public level, the only EU country where that particular war was considered to have been sheer and uncalled-for military aggression. In Greece, there simply were no systematic human rights abuses of Kosovo’s large Albanian majority<sup>9</sup> and plenty of ‘pacifist’ statements. For instance, one made by Karolos Papoulias, former PASOK

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<sup>9</sup> At that time, I was teaching International Relations at The University of Reading in the UK, and several Greek students of mine regularly brought to my office ‘tons’ of Greek newspapers clippings ‘confirming’ that all the evidence of human rights abuses by Serb forces had *in fact* been manufactured by the Americans!

foreign minister and currently the President of Greece: 'war should not in any case be a tool of solving any problems, it only creates more' (Tsakona 2005: 7).

There were also plenty of mass protests in the streets of Athens and other Greek cities, throughout the duration of the military phase of the war, but also regularly, especially on the anniversary of the 17<sup>th</sup> November 1973 student uprising ('Politechneio').<sup>10</sup> She identifies three reasons for such a different reaction from the rest of the EU: *first*, it was feared that the bombing could lead to a massive refugee crisis as Greece is so close to the region; *second*, the overall destabilization of the region was at risk; *third*, as there was no UN authorised action, it was therefore an illegal war (Tsakona 2005: 2). In addition to the geographical proximity of the crisis (after all Greece is a Balkan country as well), the existence of a Greek minority in Southern Albania, and of a Muslim community in Greece, explain in part the Greek reaction.

Tsakona (2005: 2) also reproduces a number of useful opinion poll results: 'over 95 percent of the population was against the war (...). 91 percent of Greeks declared themselves "not at all satisfied" with the attitude of the European Union and 94.4 percent had a negative opinion of President Bill Clinton'. Respected journalist Alexis Papachelas argued that 'the Greek reaction to the Kosovo crisis was the result of 80 percent of the Greek anti-American feelings and only 20 percent of the Greek solidarity towards the Serbian people' (Tsakona 2005: 2)<sup>11</sup>.

As for political statements on the issue, the harsher criticisms came from the non-dominant parties. The 'fringe parties' (my own label, as it seems that among Greeks they command much more 'respect' than I grant them) at that time were the Communist KKE, the Leftist Synaspismos Coalition, and the now defunct DIKKI (a splinter group from PASOK) and the equally defunct

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<sup>10</sup> For more details of the way the Greek political parties and politicians reacted to the 1999 War, see Tsakona (2005).

<sup>11</sup> To be contrasted to Takis Mihas' claim of an *UNHOLY ALLIANCE* between Greece and Serbia of course, see Mihas (2002). See section 4.1 below.

Political Spring (a splinter group from ND), as well as the more recently created extreme right-wing party LAOS. All of them were much more vocal in their opposition to the war. For instance, they accused the government (and the leading opposition party) of 'lying' to the Greek people. Communist Party leader Aleka Paparigas accused Greece of 'subjugation to American demands'. Those small parties openly favoured a Serbian (read Yugoslav at that time) victory, and not a NATO one. They claimed that Slobodan Milosevic had really 'no bad intentions' (to quote from then Synaspismos leader Nikos Kostantopoulos, in Tsakona 2005: 13).

Even leading PASOK and New Democracy politicians argued that Milosevic had been 'manipulated by the USA'. Many political leaders complained about the use of NATO in the Balkans as a 'policeman' for American imperialist policies throughout the world, starting with the Balkans. Synaspismos leader called Kosovo 'the first war of globalization' (Tsakona 2005: 19). Others, like Dimitris Tsovolas, leader of DIKI, argued that 'NATO has been transformed into an international terrorist'. The famous Greek music composer and former icon of the Left, Mikis Theodorakis, claimed that American Law was replacing International Law the same way as 'Hitler in the past wanted to replace global regulations with his own' (Tsakona 2005: 21). One exception was then Defense minister, Athanasios Tsochatzopoulos. He was described as 'the only Greek politician who used such harsh language to denounce Milosevic and his policies' (Tsakona 2005: 22).

In addition to the above reasons, another common explanation stemmed from the claim that there were of double standards in world affairs in general, and on the Cyprus problem in particular: for instance by the then Greek Parliament President Apostolos Kaklamanis (PASOK), and by Dora Bakogianni (current FM) (New Democracy). The latter characteristically and ironically declared that '[u]nfortunately the Americans feel that some people deserve to be rescued more than others' (Tsakona 2005: 17), a clear reference to George Orwell's

famous dictum about how some are more equals than others. I need to add here that Bakoyannis is usually known for her pro-US views (sic).

All of the above also meant that in fact Greece was in a rather *awkward* position as a NATO member (more than an EU member because the Union played no military role in that particular conflict). On the whole, the Greek government decided it would not be the right action to veto anything in NATO because of the need to be a loyal ally.<sup>12</sup> Both PASOK and New Democracy approved of this decision not to leave the NATO line, justifying it on the grounds that the real interests of Greece were to align itself with the West.

Greece's reaction to the 11-S was also *different* because the 'Greek people did not welcome the US military operation in Afghanistan' in late 2001 (Tzogopoulos 2005: 10). I mention this here, because the existing literature argues that one of the main reasons for not backing the USA in 2003 had to do with the fact that there was no legal authorisation from the UN Security Council. In the case of Afghanistan in 2001 there was, so there is some clear inconsistency here.

Greece's reaction was *similar* to other EU states in the sense that *over time*, there might be a European-wide public opposition to the use of force in international affairs. A development that the 2003 Iraq war appears to have confirmed to a certain extent (the real issue is how consistent such a stance will turn out to be over time) with mass demonstrations in February 2003 in the build-up to the war. In February 2003, Greek demonstrations were just more demonstrations among the huge number of such events throughout the world. Many Greeks were convinced that, as in Kosovo, they held the high moral ground but that, unlike other countries, they at least had been consistent throughout the test of time. There was some satisfaction that at long last 'the Greek view had been accepted elsewhere'. This approach is also often used to

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<sup>12</sup> See then PM Simitis' statements to that effect as cited in Tsakona (2005: 10). See also the discussion in the Conclusions below.



claim that it justifies other previous Greek views, included on other not necessarily related topics. The claim is that, even if in a minority of one in the past, Greeks 'know better'. I must stress that this latter point only represents a possible interpretation of what actually happened because having discussed it with a number of academic colleagues many of them do not share my assessment.

## **4. Why was Greek public opinion different? The roots of Anti-Americanism**

### *4.1. Anti-Americanism*

The Greeks always favour the underdogs because they believe overall that they have been the victims of external powers and world conspiracies. In Greece common conspiracy theories are that *the USA dominates the world; and that if it does not, it really wants to*. Part of this plot is led by the international Jewish lobby (see Apostolou 2005). Examples abound from Pinochet in Chile in the 1970s to Saddam in Iraq in the 1980s (not lately of course but a couple of years back the claim was that after the US invasion in 2003, the Iraqi leader was holidaying in Florida ... or was it Hawaii?), Musharraf in Pakistan, the oil dynasties in the Gulf, the military in Turkey and so on. Historically speaking, of course there is some memory, among the Right especially, that the Americans helped restore democracy in Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When the Truman Doctrine was announced in 1947, it meant that the Americans helped the Right win the civil wars (1946-1949) in Greece, and thus prevent a Communist takeover at that time. So, on the whole, the Right was pro-American and the Left against it, especially among the many Communist exiles (to the Soviet bloc, especially in East European countries). The Left, especially PASOK, was particularly anti-USA (and for years anti-EU, at least until 1996 and Simitis as PM).

For more examples about how there are ‘American plans to control oil wells’ in Iraq, Iran and elsewhere, see the Synaspismos leaders’ comments and those of the KKE, best encapsulated in the view that a capitalist *Pax Americana* is governing the world (in Tsakona 2005: 9).

But even among the Right, there was some suspicion about the ‘foreigner’ and especially the ‘Americans’. This is what Takis Mihas has labeled the ‘new Anti-Americanism’, that is to say something that goes much further the traditional Left anti-Americanism (marxist or more champagne socialists à-la May 1968). This new stance in Greece, Mihas (2002) traces it to the Orthodox Church and the new conservatives of the Right who strengthened Greece’s overall anti-Americanism with that of the old Left. He describes it as not what used to be an anti-Americanism *because of what the USA did* (or was perceived to be doing), but *because of what the US is*. In that respect<sup>13</sup> he argues that it looks much more like Arabic or Muslim anti-Americanism. This anti-American approach, again, is not limited to the Left in Greece. ‘A poll taken shortly after the 11 September terrorist attack revealed that over 50 per cent of conservative voters define themselves as anti-American’ (Mihas 2002: 4). Tsakona is of the belief that this is because it is an easy vote-winner, but she also points out that by doing so politicians have often turned people towards anti-Americanism (Tsakona 2005: 6).

Interestingly, this US ‘lifestyle’ (but also its policies) is seen as a threat to the EU, both undermining it as it is right now, and preventing it from developing as an alternative to US power and influence in the future. Especially now that there is, as Hubert Vedrine has famously said, only one *hyper-puissance!* Tsakona’s study of Greek MPs views shows such a belief among all of those she interviewed; except of course Communist MPs who continue to regard the EU as an extension of capitalist America (something confirmed in my own research among European MPs and MEPs over the years). But anti-

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<sup>13</sup> Tsakona (2005: 27) does not agree. She argues that it still has to do with the way the USA behaves in the world, and that therefore all political parties (and no longer just the Left) criticize the USA because in her view it behaves more like an empire than a democratic state. See footnote 10 above.

Americanism as a pro-EU stance includes more established politicians: Simitis himself (then PM) argued that '[i]t is essential for all European member states to fight for a strong EU. Otherwise Europe will always play second fiddle to the US (...). A strong EU is the only way to avoid a detestable monopolistic world, in which one hyper-power would have responsibility for everything' (parliamentary records, as quoted by Tsakona 2005).

#### 4.2. *Other explanations*

Another explanation for Greece's idiosyncratic reaction to the 11-S is its *traditional pro-Arab, and anti-Israeli stances*. There is a pro-Arab public opinion in Greece, mainly due to long-standing links with those countries, especially through the extensive presence of Greek nationals in vast numbers until the mid-1950s, in particular in Egypt. Even among those Greeks (and there are quite a few of them) who were expelled after the Suez crisis in 1956 the dominant feeling is that without the 1948 creation (by external powers) of Israel this would not have happened to them. The blame for their expulsion falls on the Israelis (and the British and the Americans), not on Nasser. This pro-Arab, and pro-Palestinian in particular, stance became clear in 1982 with the Israeli siege of Beirut where trapped PLO leaders, including Yasser Arafat himself, were lifted to safety thanks to a huge number of planes and boats including many Greek ones. Much more recently (and as a mere anecdote) the recent 2006 basketball win over the USA in the World Cup semi-final led many in Greece to believe that 'just for beating the Yankees today there will be no Al Qaida attack on Greece for years to come!'.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This is not academic evidence, just hearsay following the days after that victory in September 2006. But it reflects a widely held view that Arab terrorists will never attack Greece because the Greeks are anti-Americans. Or at least not 'intentionally' as it is so often (and unconvincingly) argued. Past experience shows that a pro-Arabic stance and especially a pro-Palestinian one has not prevented terrorist attacks on Greek soil, waters or airspace. To name but a few: a Palestinian terrorist incident that left one dead at Athens airport in 1968 and was followed by a hijacking of a Greek plane to free the two arrested terrorists; another Black September attack at Athens airport in 1973 which killed 3 and

Finally, another explanation can be found in the so-called '*moral stance*': the point here is that after all the USA and its allies (including the Greek government, especially if such a criticism comes from someone who is not of the same political colour as the party in power) have committed such 'heinous crimes' throughout recent history (in Greece the coup in 1967 and in Cyprus in 1974), that it is good to see them with a 'red nose' after such a blow in the face. It is good for the underdogs to beat the superpower once in a while.

Also related to this approach, but somewhat distinct, is the (more practical) view that because in the past Greece had often been presented as *soft on terrorism*, especially on efficient counter and anti terrorism measures, there was some satisfaction that such a massive and coordinated attack took place in the USA and was planned so faraway (Afghanistan).<sup>15</sup> It may also be due to the specificity of the Greek case in that it is a country which has experienced numerous terrorist acts, both domestic (especially by the now dismantled 17 November) or imported (Kurdish mainly against Turkish targets, Palestinian mainly against US targets). This is to say that there might be some fatalism about what happened in 11-S, and also that better that it happened to 'them' and not to 'us' (although the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens more than doubled its costs for security reasons as these were the first post-11-S Olympics).

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injured 55; the June 1976 hijacking of an Air France Airbus after it had left Athens (the famous Entebbe rescue saga); the 1985 TWA plane hijacking en route from Athens to Rome; an Egypt Air airplane bound from Athens to Malta was hijacked by the Abu Nidal Group in November 1985, the hijack ended in a bloodbath after Egyptian commandos stormed the plane in Malta; four were killed as a bomb exploded onboard a TWA flight from Rome as it approached Athens airport in March 1986. The 1988 Abu Nidal terrorist attack on the City of Poros, a Greek passenger ferry that ran from Egina to Faliro left 9 tourists, many of them French citizens, dead. Seven died when a bomb destined to the British consulate in Patras exploded prematurely in 1991, etc (sources: Kaminaris, 1999; Wikipedia, *undated*).

<sup>15</sup> In part similar to some reactions in Greece to the 1988 Lockerbie TWA terrorist attack, as it was a plane that had left Heathrow and that a bomb had been smuggled through German airports, both 'safe airports' unlike the usually decried 'unsafe' Greek ones.

## **5. Has there been any fundamental change since?**

Has Greece softened its anti-USA stance over time? Not at all. Quite the contrary in fact: as recent PEW surveys have shown throughout the world there is growing anti-Americanism. In Greece, a March 2003 poll showed that 90.7% totally disagreed with the war in Iraq and 77.5% held an unfavourable view of the USA (Metroanalysis poll 15-30 March 2004, cited in Tsakona 2005: 6). There were plenty of massive and regular demonstrations in Athens and in other Greek cities. For instance, in February 2003 there were about 100,000 demonstrators in Athens (the total population of Greece is about 10 million). Thus, 'very often from February to April 2003 the center of Athens was turned into a huge protest arena' (Tzogopoulos 2005: 10). Nationwide strikes were also organized by GSEE and ADEDI, the two trade union federations (one from the private sector and the other from the public sector) (Tzogopoulos 2005: 10).

The war in Iraq continues to be seen as unnecessary (there were no nuclear WMDs) and un-related to the fight against terrorism. On the contrary it is widely believed to have fueled international terrorism. In fact, it has been argued that 'Greece does not agree with Bush's strategy of pre-emptive war as a means of fighting terrorism' (Tzogopoulos 2005: 6).

Why then, Greece supported<sup>16</sup> and participated in Gulf War I (Kuwait 1991) and not in Gulf War II? The main reason given is that the first had UN backing and that it was a clear case of the violation of the sovereignty of an independent state. It was also argued at the time that because of the Cyprus situation, the Greeks could only welcome an international use of military force to expel the invaders. The other reason had to do with the fact that as Turkey had backed

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<sup>16</sup> Although Brady Kiesling (2003) claims that the Greeks were also 'sentimentally opposed to the I Gulf War'.

the US-led attack on Iraq in 1991, Greece could but follow suit. As such support was not forthcoming from Ankara in 2003, there was no need to be more *royaliste que le roi!* Greece 'did not have to counter-balance the role of Turkey since Gulf War II could not influence Greek-Turkish relations at its expense' (Tzogopoulos 2005: 9). Other reasons include a fear of massive refugee flows through Greece (out of an estimated 3 million refugees, it was expected that 100,000 would do so via Greece), something that did not materialize immediately (Spanish TV reports on 22.11.06 show that *nowadays* 100,000 Iraqis leave the country each year<sup>17</sup>), as well as fears about an economic downturn (oil prices), especially as war would affect Greece's tourism industry. Also trade between Greece and Iraq amounted to 6% of Greek exports and 5% of its imports.

Other more down to earth reasons (the domestic sources of foreign policy<sup>18</sup>) had to do with the closing gap between the Socialists in power and New Democracy in opposition (elections were due in early 2004). Because of popular disappointment about unemployment, prices, education and pensions, the government could not but use the existing anti-American feelings in the country. Thus, Simitis 'observed that PASOK might, if not improve, at least not aggravate its image by supporting public opinion on the Iraq issue' (Tzogopoulos 2005: 11). Still other more down to earth reasons had to do with the fact that Iraq owed large sums of money to Greek companies for cooperation during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war (Tzogopoulos 2005: 12). Something that was not unique to Greece as there was an amazing (sic) similarity between the list of countries to which Iraq owed money and that of governments that opposed the war in 2003. Cooperation continued throughout UN sanctions but probably in areas that were not covered by such sanctions,

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<sup>17</sup> The Spanish ambassador in Iraq claimed that 1.8 million Iraqis were now living abroad, and 1.5 million had to move within Iraq itself as a result of the 2003 war and its aftermath, *El País* (25.11.06).

<sup>18</sup> This is not the place to discuss it but there were deep disagreements among PASOK politicians on that issue. It led to the sacking in July 2003 of its Secretary General, Costas Laliotis, who had openly supported the anti-war movement. See Tzogopoulos (2005: 39).

like science, culture and education (1998 agreement) (Tzogopoulos 2005: 12-13).

Although New Democracy tried to make the most of the internal PASOK disagreements, the fringe parties on the Left used much stronger language as they had done during the Kosovo war (see above). Thus, KKE Secretary General Aleka Papatoufaki argued that Greece participated in the war by giving logistical support to the USA, the Americans being only 'criminals trying to share the spoils of Iraq between the EU and NATO' in her view (as paraphrased from Tzogopoulos 2005: 41). In addition, Synaspismos leader Nikos Konstantopoulos claimed that 'offering military facilities in an illegal war is illegal' (Tzogopoulos 2005: 42). In brief, the overwhelming view in Greece was that the real cause for the war in Iraq was oil and 11-S just a pretext. George W. Bush had a negative image among 93.2% of the Greek young people as a result of all this (Tzogopoulos 2005: 44).

As for the Democratic victory in the November 2006 US elections, it is deemed to be something 'positive' because the Neo-Cons have been defeated. As a result, it is expected that they will have to shift policies, especially on Iraq. But there is in Greece growing concern as well: such a shift will require 'victories/gains/scoring points' elsewhere, especially on Turkish accession to the EU, on Greek-Turkish relations. Hence the storm in late 2006 over the increasing use of the term 'Turkish minority' for Greece's Moslems in Thrace by US State Department officials, but also over US pressure on President Tassos Papadopoulos of Cyprus over the stalled negotiations there following the 2004 Annan Plan rejection by the Greek Cypriots. Need I add that one does not have to fall necessarily into a conspirational trap to see this kind of developments in recent months<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> US Administration officials are using more and more the term 'Turkish' rather than 'Muslim' minority in Thrace. For instance in Athens, US Chargé d' Affaires Thomas Countryman and US Ambassador in Athens Charles Reis, the latter in a meeting with Greek foreign minister Dora Bakoyannis on 9.11.06 ('Recent incidents cloud US-Greek relations', *Kathimerini-English edition*, 13.11.06). In addition, the Greeks continue to be the only EU citizens who still require a visa to enter

There is also deep and firmly seated anti-Americanism that does not really distinguish between Democrats and Republicans. As for Israel, continued mistrust is evident, especially since the 1996 military alliance between Turkey and Israel. Greeks believe that there is a Washington-London-Ankara-Tel Aviv/Jerusalem axis that is disregarding Greece's interests systematically, but also those of the Arab peoples, as the recent war in Lebanon in the summer of 2006 has shown, and in particular Israel's systematic destruction of Lebanon's infrastructure and of course even more importantly the high level of civilian casualties.

## 6. Conclusion

It is important to note that in Greece there appears to be *double talk* between elites and public opinion. As already witnessed in the 1999 Kosovo War (where *Greek* police and special anti-demo forces known as 'MAT' were protecting NATO troops on their way from Salonica to Kosovo from *Greek* demonstrators) to the 2004 cancellation of US Secretary of State Colin Powell planned visit to Athens during the Olympic Games (where a huge banner stating that he was a murderer was placed on the Acropolis, which is a holy site and not just a tourist place<sup>20</sup>).

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the USA. The symbolism of 'words' remains important in Greece because US foreign policy shifts mean big time change, as the recent US recognition of FYROM as the 'Republic of Macedonia' confirms. Prior to the US shift another 70 states had done the same thing but none had led to so strong Greek reactions as the US one. The Macedonian Question has drawn 1 million people (one tenth of the Greek population) in the streets of Salonica in the past. The FYROM question falls within the wider question of Greek identity but also in the geopolitics of the Balkans where it is widely believed there is a German plot to undermine Slav Orthodox countries deemed to be –even if this is not necessarily correct historically speaking– Greece's *natural allies* (together with Russia).

<sup>20</sup> A precedent had been set when President Clinton's visit in November 1999 had to be shortened to just one day because the Greek government had declared publicly that it could not guarantee the President's own safety for a longer visit (sic). The President had not taken into account the susceptibilities of the Greek public when he decided to come to Athens on the 17 November, a date linked with a student revolt in 1973 that was violently put down by the military junta (widely considered to have been US-backed or at least tolerated).



Thus, to mention a number of examples, in early 2002 the then Greek Defence Minister Yiannos Papantoniou recalled that following the 11-S events, ‘we have stated very clearly that we support this struggle [against international terrorism] and we have supplied the United States with substantial facilities in conducting this war (...). The port of Souda [in Crete] has been opened for free use of the American forces, we are sending people in Kosovo in order to liberate American forces who might have to join the war in Afghanistan, we have supplied one warship to patrol the Persian Gulf and also AWACS aircraft pilots to the US. We are also ready to supply humanitarian aid to Afghanistan when the war ends’ (from his interview in *Defensor Pacis* 2002: 11).

In other words, there is a growing divergence between what the Greek elites say and what they do, and that this has to do in part because of the existence of a fundamentally anti-American public opinion at home, and the need to act as a reliable EU and NATO member abroad. That is to say, there is a big and growing gap between the elites and the people, especially on practical cooperation over anti- and counter- terrorism measures and in Afghanistan and Iraq (EU or NATO), but also in the Balkans (more and more EU and less and less NATO means more troops can be used elsewhere). Here, it goes beyond the purview of this paper but the democratic disjuncture between elites and public opinions throughout Europe appears to be growing. A recent study on the future of US-European relations shows that, among other things, even if there is no agreed line about their future prospects (*European Political Science* 2006), economic ties across the Atlantic are not affected at all<sup>21</sup>. In fact, quite the contrary, as they ‘almost appear to have an autonomous life of their own outside of the larger political and military relationship’ (Cox 2006: 33).

Thus, if applied to Greece’s cooperation with the USA during the invasion phase in Iraq in 2003, we can see that ‘it did not bar the US use of Greek

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<sup>21</sup> See also European Commission President José Manuel Barroso’s recent article in *The International Herald Tribune* on the eve of the 2007 EU-USA summit meeting in Washington where he proudly recalls that ‘Americans invested four times as much in Belgium in 2005 as they did in China last year’; ‘Collectively, the European Union and the United States register more than \$3 trillion of commercial sales annually’, 27.04.07.

military bases´ (Souda base in Crete; AWACs used bases in Aktion, Andravida and Arkasos), due to bilateral treaty obligations and NATO membership. Such a stance should be contrasted to those of Belgium, Germany, France and Luxembourg who had collectively prevented NATO from guaranteeing the security of Turkey´s airspace at that time (Tzogopoulos 2005: 36-37).

What is also relevant (also to the question of whether public opinion is guided by or leads elite views), is to mention however briefly that despite (or is it perhaps because of) this double talk, to the question of has one´s own government reacted well to terrorist attacks, Greece gets a 13% ´very well´ and a 44% ´well´ (total 57%) response, with 20% thinking it was neither well nor badly, and only 9% rather badly. This is at a time when outside Greece there was overwhelming critique of Greece´s anti- and counter-terrorist policies, at least until the 2004 Olympic Games (Everts and Isernia 2002: 36).

There is the additional question of whether, more generally speaking, and rather as a question than an answer, a ´pacifist´ trend that does exist in Europe is something that is here to stay, or whether it will disappear eventually because of international events and because of the need to react to them, including sometimes by military means, but also because of the growing militarisation of the EU as an entity (i.e. the military dimension as the missing element in the EU´s integration process).

One could even be tempted to argue that, as with the latest European Parliament report on European defence, a majority of elites feels that the EU needs to develop into a full international actor, including in military matters, whereas the bulk of European public opinions tends to agree with the ´minority opinion of the United Left´, that is to say a dissenting pacifist view of the world<sup>22</sup>. But one should not forget that often one does not choose what happens

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<sup>22</sup> *Final Report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy in the context of the ESDP*, EP Committee on Foreign Affairs (Rapporteur: Karl von Wogau), A6-0366/2006, 18.10.2006.

to them. In the post-Cold War and post-11-S world there appears to be no real option to become another ‘Scandinavia’.

Finally, on Greece and the EU (last year was the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Greek accession 1981-2006)<sup>23</sup>, there appears to exist a fundamental contradiction in Greece, which shows on the one hand public opinion being in favour of a common federal-type CFSP, and, on the other, the same public opinion wanting to keep the national veto in foreign, security and defence matters.

Also during the 2003 Iraq war, Greece happened to be holding the EU Council Presidency and there were interesting developments: a Houdini-like (i.e. an amazing escapologist act) performance with different parts (and people) of the government sending (e.g. participating or not in anti-war demos) different signals to different sectors both home and abroad: an attempt to square the circle in the EU between those in favour and those against, keeping a supposedly neutral stance as the Presidency, whilst at the same time playing a clearly anti-US tune at home. Some even concluded that unlike previous presidencies, the 2003 one was not too bad considering the situation (Dimitrakopoulos and Passas 2004<sup>24</sup>). Others (Tzogopoulos 2005: 23-24) are more critical: ‘The Greek initiative ... was not fruitful’. My own view is even more damning. To do so I have used elsewhere the following quote: ‘For example, disagreement over those who demanded condemnation of the American occupation of Iraq, and others who wanted to praise Washington for handing back sovereignty on June 30 has undermined any possibility for a common strategy’. An academic observer had made this comment over a May 2004 Arab League meeting. ‘It is a pity that such a comment is so reminiscent of something much more sophisticated and developed than the Arab League,

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<sup>23</sup> On the question of the Europeanisation of Greek foreign policy, see Tsardanidis and Stavridis (2005).

<sup>24</sup> Its authors also made some strange statements like ‘Failure is improbable’ when holding a Presidency. On specifics, they claimed that ‘it is a question of the political and administrative capacity of the Presidency to increase the pace of integration in first pillar issues and its ability to manage political divergence in the intergovernmental arena. The fourth Greek Presidency has a very positive record in both’ (Dimitrakopoulos and Passas 2004: 45-46).

namely the EU' (Stavridis and Fernández Sola 2005: 21).<sup>25</sup> Thus, coming to the conclusion that once again the Greek government was not up to its role as EU President, even under adverse circumstances. After all there is no real credit in being successful under favourable circumstances!

Which brings me to my final point. The real question about the future is whether or not an 'anti-something' attitude (in this case, anti-American) is enough to build a 'pro-something' policy. That is to say that the EU needs to have a common voice of international affairs not because of Bush's foreign policy stance, there will be other US presidents in the future and the history of Trans-Atlantic relations has been a series of encounters and mis-encounters although there is little doubt that the gap over Iraq is the most serious one.

But if anti-Americanism is not the sole prerogative of the Europeans, in fact it is the dominant view throughout the world<sup>26</sup>, then why is it argued that the 2003 Iraq war has launched a common European public opinion on world affairs? As the EU as a whole goes, it remains unquestionable that if it wants to have a role to play in the international system it must go beyond this mere anti-Americanism, not only because, as I have just said, to be 'anti' does not help to be 'pro-something', but also because the West is seen usually as a bloc (or at least perceived as such).

Thus, even if the EU thinks that it can take a different stance, for third parties this does not really matter. The EU remains a member of the Western world. As Andrés Ortega has reminded us recently, 'however much Spain, France and Italy claim and wish that the ISAF force in Afghanistan is not there "to kill

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<sup>25</sup> The quote is by Bishara, Marwan, 'Another Arab summit ends in words but no deeds', *International Herald Tribune*, 25.5.04. I also owe to Professor Panayotis Tsakonas (University of the Aegean) the very colourful description of the 2003 extraordinary European Council Presidency declaration as a 'meeting of hypocrites': all knew they fundamentally disagreed but worded the final communiqué in such a way that they could all pretend everything was fine (informal discussion, Athens, December 2006).

<sup>26</sup> For a theoretical discussion of the question of anti-Americanism, see Stivachtis (2007).

Talibans”, the problem really is that the Talibans themselves do want to kill the ISAF soldiers<sup>27</sup>.

This paper has described and explained Greek public opinion reactions to the 11-S and beyond. In brief, it agrees with Vasilakis (2002: 15) that Greece seems to be ‘the most anti-Western European country’, and the ‘most anti-American country in the Western world’. But also that there is a real gap between public opinion and the elites in Greece, at least between what the elites say and do. Both dimensions deserve attention and further research.

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<sup>27</sup> Andrés Ortega, ‘NATO 2.6’, *El País*, 27.11.06 (my translation).

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