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THE GREEK "NEW GREAT IDEA" (1943–46): GEOPOLITICS, GEOECONOMICS, AND PEASANTIST NATIONALISM

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by

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Introduction

The defeat of the Axis Powers and the end of World War II did not usher in an era of peace and political stability in the Balkans. On the contrary, old and recent enmities and nationalist rivalries resurfaced, and the reshuffling of the world order nourished among vying Balkan nations expectations for territorial aggrandizement. This went against the 14 August 1941 British-American declaration, known as the Atlantic Charter, with which the Western Allies (the self-styled United Nations) had striven to discourage and prevent any such expectations. In particular, points 1 and 2 of the charter declared that the two powers did not pursue any territorial aggrandizement and would not allow any territorial changes made against the wishes of the peoples concerned.[1] Furthermore, the avoidance of any discussion on territorial issues while the war was going on, and the deferment of any such arrangement to the peace talks after the war was a standard position of British foreign policy toward the exiled Greek government in Cairo.[2] However, this continued deferment could not mitigate in practical ways the bitterness of the occupied nations (namely, Greeks, Yugoslavs, but also the disgruntled Romanians) against their invading neighbors or conceal the dismemberment of the former's homelands. This essay aims at examining the stance of the Greeks (particularly those of the right-wing, non-communist camp) toward their neighboring nations. It will argue that the thundering defeat of the Axis forces in Stalingrad (1943) raised Greek nationalist pretensions for the redrawing of Greece's borders at the expense of their northern as well as eastern neighbors. These territorial pretensions, which drew on geopolitics and geoeconomics, did not subside before the closure of the Paris Peace Conference in 1947, and fomented the nationalist turmoil in the Balkans at the threshold of the Cold War.

241

The Genesis of a "New Great Idea"

Pretensions for the creation of a new Greater Greece started evolving shortly after Greece's surrender to the Wehrmacht. On 1 December 1941, the first issue of the clandestine newspaper *Μεγάλη Ελλάς* (Great Hellas) was published. This publication was the mouthpiece of the *Στρατιά Σκλαβωμένων Νικητών* (Army of Enslaved Victors), an Athens-based resistance organization, mainly consisting of young members of Panaghiotis Kanellopoulos's Unitary Party. Therein, its publishers urged the Greek people "to materialize the geographical and ethical borders, within which Greece will be able to live up to its undisputable civilizing mission."[3] In 1942, they vaguely referred to "national aspirations" and to a "New and Greater Greece" within novel "ethical and geographical borders," which they did not define.[4] It was not until after the surrender of the German forces in Stalingrad in February 1943 that these "national aspirations" began to take shape in the discourse in *Μεγάλη Ελλάς*. Its publishers underlined that

> The Army of Enslaved Victors cannot tolerate the preservation of the present borders, which are very far from providing basic comfort to the creation and the development of those geographical frames that would secure "sufficient economic space," which is necessary for the smooth and progressive evolution of the ethical and intellectual powers of the Greek people.[5]

For that matter, they maintained that "the reorganization of postwar life" of the Greek nation and "solutions to its agonizing intellectual, social and economic problems" were "absolutely and indissolubly connected with the size of the Greek territorial space." To this end, the Army of Enslaved Victors suggested the "improvement" (that is, the enlargement) of Greece's future borders as the only solution to the country's "most acute" social and economic problems, demanding that "all the territories that once historically, ethnologically and today economically belong to Greece's sphere should be included within its necessary living space."[6] In July 1943, the Army of Enslaved Victors explicitly laid claims to Bulgaria's "territories up to the Haemus Mountains and up to Varna on the Black Sea," to the area between Bitola and Skopje of "Serbia" (*sic*), and to the whole of "Southern Albania" up to the Skumbi River. In addition to the principles of "justice" (meaning historical and contemporary ethnological rights, as well as Greece's contribution to the Allied war effort) and "security" of Greece's future (northern) borders, the Greek organization substantiated its claims on the "pressing need to secure sufficient space for the development and progress of Hellenism," further arguing that

> the Greek people, who number 8-9 million and have a steady annual increase of 100,000, are literally piled up on the edge of the Balkan Peninsula. With an area of 127,000 square kilometers, of which only one sixth is arable—but can hardly be characterized as fertile—, Greece comes down to being the poorest country in the world, and Greeks to having the lowest personal income.[7]

In the light of the above geoeconomic analysis, the acquisition of new fertile lands was viewed as a panacea for the country's economic and social ills. In other words, social equilibrium and economic prosperity was identified with sufficient territory.

Similar views were propounded by other resistance organizations. In July 1942, *Δόξα* (Glory), the clandestine mouthpiece of PEAN (Panhellenic Union of Fighting Youth), demanded "to be included within our future frontiers all the regions that are ethnologically or geoeconomically Greek and wherefrom Greek populations were uprooted without any prior agreement."[8] On 10 June 1943, *Δόξα* envisaged the creation (after the war ended) of a "Greater Greece that would secure for its people the space that ethnologically, geopolitically and historically belongs to it and that would allow its economic development." The following month, in a (clandestine) pamphlet that was published separately and was titled *Τι προσέφερε και τι δικαιούται να ζητήση η Ελλάς* (What Greece has offered and what it is entitled to demand), PEAN declared: "we demand those [lands] that were taken from us and those that belong to us historically, ethnologically, geoeconomically." In the event, PEAN claimed, on behalf of postwar Greece, ethnologically Greek lands, such as the Dodecanese, Cyprus, and Northern Epirus, as well as "geopolitically necessary" territories, such as Eastern Rumelia (southern Bulgaria), the southern part of Yugoslav Macedonia (with the towns of Monastir/Bitola, Ohrid, Strumica, Gevgelja, and Prilep), and Eastern (that is, Turkish) Thrace and the (Turkish) islands of Imbros and Tenedos.[9]

Identical territorial claims were also included in the political program of RAN (Rumelia—Avlova—Nissoi), another Athens-based resistance organization, whose members were mainly career officers. (RAN aspired to become the focus of all commissioned officers that were residing in the capital. Its historical significance is highlighted by the fact that in the summer of 1944 two of its leading members, Colonels Konstantinos Ventiris and Panagiotis Spiliotopoulos, were appointed by the Greek exiled government as shadow commander-in-chief of the army and military commander of Attica, respectively.)[10] *Κήρυξ* (Herald), the secret press organ of RAN, demanded "the securing of adequate geographical and economic supports for the life of the Greek people, for the present and the forthcoming generations." Therein, RAN declared that its ideal was the edification of a "Greater Greece." RAN justified the "need for an adequate expansion of [Greece's] geographical boundaries" on overtly geopolitical grounds: "The notion of greatness and prosperity always appeared interconnected with the extent [of a nation-state's area]: A nation becomes mightier and happier, if and when it reaps the fruits of more extensive and more fertile lands." According to RAN, the solution to the "Greek problem" (*sic*) would be "the acquisition of territorial and economic bases that would secure an acceptable standard of prosperity and a favorable space for our demographic development." To this end, RAN succored the expansion of the Greek borders to Avlona (Valona, in Albania) and Rila Mountain in Bulgaria.[11] In a separate pamphlet, titled *Το ελληνικόν πρόβλημα* (The Greek Problem), which circulated in March 1943, RAN argued that "it is unfair for 8-9 million Greeks to be suffocated within 20 million acres of mediocre

arable land, while 6 million Bulgarians are reaping the fruits of much more extensive and more fertile lands." Thereupon, it reasoned that the annexation of Eastern Rumelia, Strumica, Gevgelja, Monastir and Northern Epirus, Cyprus, and the Dodecanese would secure an "adequate living space" of 48,558 sq. km^2 to postwar "Greater Greece" and would solve the country's demographic problem upon a "proportionate geographical space"—according to RAN, within the span of three generations the population of Greece would have increased to 20 million. In that case, Greece would evolve into a "great, self-sufficient, autarkic national unit" and would overcome its "past suffocating scarcity of land."[12]

In fact, during the 1930s and early 1940s, Greek economists and, more generally, intellectuals (in their majority, German-educated) had been deeply influenced by German geopolitical and geoeconomic ideas.[13] These ideas, which originally drew on the theories of Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), Rudolf Kjellén (1864–1922), and Karl Haushofer (1869–1946), perceived the entire state, inclusive of the society and the economy, as a living geographical organism (*Lebensform*, *Lebe[ns]wesen*), whose development and prosperity depended on its geographical and natural setting. Geopolitical theorists pronounced economic and political autarky as the highest goal of a dynamic state, and—adopting the Malthusian theory of population—despised *Übervölkerung* (overpopulation) as the greatest ill of a state. Therefore, they propounded the acquisition of adequate territorial space wherefrom a state organism could retrieve its needful (for its domestic survival, development, and prosperity) natural resources and raw materials, and wherein it could accommodate its population surplus. For that matter, autarky was practically equated with colonialism and territorial expansion.[14] In Greece, geopolitics and geoeconomics were introduced by Konstantinos Sfyris, from 1927 a professor at the Advanced School of Economics and Business Studies (now the Athens University of Economics and Business). In 1930, Sfyris argued that in Greece "absolutely there is a morbid overpopulation." A year later, he expressed his deep concern about the "viability," in "geopolitical and geoeconomic terms," of Greece as a "State Unit" due to its "unhealed demographic problem of overpopulation." According to Sfyris, Greece's "agricultural autarky," particularly in wheat and other staple agricultural products as well as in industrial raw materials, was, under the existing conditions, a "mere utopia." The reasons for that were the "narrowness of the state borders," "the scarcity of land," and the "restricted dynamics of the Greek land and nature." Sfyris opined that "the Greek problem" (a rubric that he coined) was due to the "suffocating amassment" of large numbers of refugees (around 1.5 million, according to estimates of the time) within Greece's "narrow state borders"; to the cutting-off of the Greek nation from its "living space" in the Mediterranean basin; and to the blocking of the latter's "old" routes of emigration to the Americas. The "Greek problem" of overpopulation subsequently was the cause of the "professional inflation" (an overflow of labor and professionals in the cities) and of the "narrowness of action" (a close asphyxiation) within the urban job market. Sfyris's ideas exerted a strong and long-lasting (into the mid-1940s) influence on the minds of Greek bourgeois politicians (including Eleftherios Venizelos and Panaghis Tsaldaris, the leaders of the two opposing political camps) and intellectuals.[15]

From 1943 on, this geopolitical and geoeconomic frame of analysis overtly became a prime tool for the justification of Greece's territorial claims. The legitimization of territorial aggrandizement under the prism of geopolitics and geoeconomics was most consistently elaborated and expanded by Konstantinos Christopoulos, a professor of general and agrarian hydraulics and improvements at the Agricultural School of the University of Thessaloniki. In 1945, in his book *Το Ελληνικό Πρόβλημα* (The Greek Problem), a political treatise that he alleged to have drafted by October 1943 and clandestinely disseminated to resistance organizations (including the leftist EAM), Christopoulos connected "the entire problem of the life of the [Greek] nation" with "the geography, the wealth and the natural boundaries especially of the northernmost regions of the Greek country." He maintained that Greece had always been marred by poverty, and that Greek farmers were the poorest in the world, for the median agrarian plot did not exceed in size "two acres, usually of arid and in many cases of rocky land." His perception of the nation-state was admittedly "physiocratic" (see below the geoeconomic analysis of Sfyris), and the "nation" was "basically a natural phenomenon," while "national conscious-ness" was "interwoven with natural agents." In his opinion, "the most basic elements for the existence, maintenance and development of life are land and water." To this effect, "the major, the foremost [Greek] problem" was scarcity of land, since "cultivation of the land is the foundation of the [Greek] econo-my."[16] Accordingly, he argued that

> the Greek people have been abandoned in the narrowest borders of this rocky end . . . The prewar miserable Greek frontiers and yesterday's unbearable poverty cannot be the eternal fate of the Greek people! . . . Indeed, if the Greek people are supposed to live under human conditions and follow other civilized peoples in their progress and culture, if the Greek people are sup-posed someday to cease being the poorest and most sickly people of Europe and of our [Balkan] Peninsula, then we are in absolute need not only of socio-economic reforms and popular liberties, but also of a way to cover our deficit in natural wealth, especially in land and water. Our farmers everywhere cry out to those who approach them with interest in their lives and their real needs, "Above everything else, we need land and water." This cry is nation-wide. . . . Like any other living organism, which desires enough space and light and air and water and food for its survival and prosperity, so the Greek People, today more than ever, are in need of more land and water and security in or-der to survive and prosper.[17]

Christopoulos advised the "development of the national organism" and "the in-tegral realization of the Great Idea of the Greek Nation." To this end, he sug-gested as the northernmost limit of Greek claims the line that runs from Mount Haemus (Stara Planina in Bulgaria) through Mounts Rila and Šar Planina to the Genoussos (Skumbi) River in Albania. In that event, the entire Macedonia would become "an essential part of the Greek body." Christopoulos admittedly drew his geopolitical ideas from the teachings of Richard Hennig (*Geopolitik: Die Lehre vom Staat als Lebewesen*; Leipzig, 1928), a professor at the University of Düsseldorf and an academic partner of Karl Haushofer.[18]

Most conspicuous was the geopolitical analysis that was presented, first at the Congress of National Rights (see below) and afterwards in the form of a book, by a certain Vassileios Vogiatzis, a future professor of political economy at the Advanced School of Industry in Salonika who had received his doctorate in economics from the University of Munich. His geopolitical study, titled *Λαός χωρίς χώρο* (A People without Space), obviously drew on the interwar German geopolitical thinking that was shaped by Hans Grimm's *Volk ohne Raum*, a largely political novel published in Munich in 1926.[19] (Geopolitics were far from being identical with National Socialism. Despite the fusion of geopolitical thinking into National Socialist rhetoric, there certainly were fundamental differences in the theories of geopolitics and National Socialism: whereas geopolitics originally derived from Ratzel's scientific materialism, National Socialism promoted ideas of innate human qualities, which enabled racial theories of superiority.)[20] Vogiatzis followed closely the teachings of geopolitics in his examination of Greece's case:

> The geographical space is fateful for the destiny and progress of a people . . . The abilities for the evolution of this particular space are in full dependence on the quality of the ground and the underground; on its formation; and also on its geographical position.[21]

Vogiatzis elaborated more extensively on the notions of *διατροφικός χώρος* (sustenance space) and *βιοτικός χώρος* (living space); as he explained, the latter is "supplementary" to the former and "extends beyond the state borders." Drawing more vigorously on the physiocratic axiom that "the farmers are the un-drying source of the national body" of Greece, Vogiatzis underlined that during the interwar period, "the [median] agricultural plot became most insufficient, and the professional inflation assumed huge dimensions"; as a result, there was "almost not a single area [of the sustenance space of Greece] that is not satiated to an asphyxiating degree." The author indentified the "porous soil" and the "deficiency in water" (from rainfall and rivers) as the main liabilities of Greek agriculture, adding that 54 percent of Greece's surface is "infertile," whereas the same applied to only 25 percent of Bulgaria's area. Furthermore, the agricultural density (the number of farmers per square kilometer of arable land) had reached in 1929 the "asphyxiating" number of 119 in Greece, compared to the more favorable 82.7 in Bulgaria and 72.5 in Yugoslavia. In light of this, "the scarcity of agricultural plots and the poverty of cultivable land" rendered Greece "one of the most densely populated countries in Europe."[22] Therefore, Vogiatzis concluded that

> The Greek problem is a problem of sustenance space. . . . The Greek sustenance space is completely satiated both in the towns as well as in the countryside . . . the sustenance space is absolutely satiated. . . . the Greek people belong to the group of peoples that are poor in space and thus poor in their abilities for development and for the evolution of their capabilities.[23]

Vogiatzis further argued that, for the "Greek people" to be "well nourished," the area of Greece needed to be doubled, adding that "Greece must seek the

supplement of its short sustenance space beyond its borders." This additional "sustenance space" would also serve as a haven for Greece's "population sur-plus" and its "parasitic beings," that is, un- or under-employed individuals left out of the "professionally inflated" job market during the interwar period.[24]

This new, or "smaller"—compared to the old (that ended in the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922) maximalist—Great Idea,[25] certainly was a novel ideological phenomenon in Greek politics. This "New Great Idea," unlike the old Great Idea, was not exclusively or mainly of an irredentist nature and based on the principle of self-determination;[26] besides ethnological criteria, it was also substantiated upon the discourses of geopolitics, geoeconomics, and "peasantist nationalism" (see below). In March 1946, Georgios Alexiadis (the theoretician and leader of PEAN in 1943–44) emphatically stressed that "the [Great] Idea is not dead, but still lives on, and is continuously defined as the liberation of the lands that belong to us historically, ethnologically and geopolitically." Alexiadis explained in 1946 that this new "Great Idea" was not only of an irredentist na-ture, and besides addressing "historical and ethnological demands," it also was a "result of geographical and economic exigencies."[27] And he admitted that "the examination of the geoeconomics and geopolitics of the Greek lands is organically connected with the issue of our territorial claims."[28] In fact, in 1943–46, Greek territorial claims, particularly toward Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Turkey, wherein the presence of Greek populations was at the time negligible, were almost exclusively substantiated upon geopolitical and geoeconomic cri-teria.[29] For instance, in March 1945, *Ελληνικός Βορράς* (Greek North), a Thessaloniki daily, commented that (former) "Eastern Rumelia" (southern Bulgaria) should be claimed by Greece, because it would be useful "for the attainment of a tolerable economic life for our [agrarian] populations, who even in that case would still not be equal to the Bulgarian farmers in terms of af-fluence."[30] The proliferation of such (geoeconomic and geopolitical) publica-tions, organically connected to the agenda of Greek national territorial claims, testifies that this "New Great Idea" was widely popular and diffuse among the bourgeois strata of Greek society at the time. The agenda of this widespread nationalist fervor went far beyond glory brought by territorial aggrandizement and retribution for the suffering endured by the Greek people in 1941–44;[31] more broadly, it came to address a series of socio-economic problems that had appeared and developed much earlier, during the interwar period, and had been seriously aggravated by the Axis Occupation. This novel form of Greek nationalism became the simplistic tool for the solution and remedy of several complications that had been caused by the arrival of 1.5 million of refugees, the agrarian crisis of the 1920s, the quest for autarky in wheat and other nutritional agricultural products, Greece's bankruptcy of 1932, industrialization, and the policies of economic nationalism, which had prevailed domestically and global-ly during the 1930s.[32] The solution to these problems was simplistically, through the filter of geopolitics and geoeconomics, identified with the acquisi-tion of more territory and became interwoven with Greece's national claims in the Paris Peace Conference of 1946–47.

Geopolitics in Greek Foreign Policy

Geopolitics and geoeconomics first entered the discourse of Greek foreign policy on a semi-official level in 1942, when Emmanuel Tsouderos, head of the exiled Greek government in Cairo, in a memorandum to the U.S. and British governments on Greece's postwar claims, referred to the "serious crisis of overpopulation" from which Greece suffered, stressing that "the demographic problem of Greece, which is due to its rapidly increasing population, is one of the most acute problems of this kind in Europe"; Greece would in the very near future be "congested," unless its "population surplus" was timely conveyed elsewhere.[33] The head of the exiled government added that

> the endeavors of the inhabitants [of Greece] for their self-sufficiency in wheat are annulled by the steady increase of the country's population and the number of births, which in times of peace is significantly exceeding the number of deaths.[34]

Thereupon, the Greek premier requested the right to "free immigration" of Greece's "surplus population" to the Italian colony of Cyrenaica (which was expected to be eventually surrendered to the Allies); however, Tsouderos hesitated to demand that Cyrenaica become a colony of the Greek crown, noting to Eden on 7 August that "a small country [like Greece] cannot be exposed to the heavy tasks of colonial policy."[35]

Allusions to geopolitical and neo-Malthusian exigencies continued to appear in Greek semi-official documents after the return and settlement of the exiled government to Athens (18 October 1944). The initiative for these allusions lay with Philippos Dragoumis, deputy minister of foreign affairs (and former MP for Florina). On 28 October 1944 (on the fourth anniversary of Italy's attack on Greece), Dragoumis submitted to the British and American, as well as to the other Allied governments, a memorandum (in French) on the "agrarian problem" (l'insuffisance des terres arables); the "overpopulation" (surpopulation); the "dead end of the national economy" of Greece due to the "lack of space" (le manque d'espace provoqua une impasse dans l'économie nationale); the insufficiency of arable lands and the (natural) increase of the population (l'insuffisance des terres arables et le surcroit de la population). Therein, Dragoumis deplored the country's standing deficit in staples, fuel, and raw materials (la nécessité d'acheter à l'étranger des articles de première nécessité, telles que du blé, du bois, de cuirs, du carbon et du pétrole); the "scarcity of lands that would suffice the needs of the rural population" and the consequent latter's drift to the towns; the "twenty-two year long economic and social distress and disruption" that had been caused by the influx of 1,500,000 refugees from Eastern Thrace and Asia Minor; the absence of "viable" industries and the restricted industrial and economic progress of the country; and "parasitism" and the "surplus of professionals" in the cities. These geo-economic and neo-Malthusian arguments were founded on the principle of "economic security" (sécurité économique). Therefore, "the annexation to Greece of certain districts," Dragoumis concluded, and the provision to the

"Hellenic people" of the "necessary productive space," which would provide to the latter their "daily bread," would further reinstate "the economic and social equilibrium" of the country and forestall any future "political and social interior antagonisms and disorders" that could be provoked by the "economic malady" (malaise économique).[36]

A subsequent memorandum, drafted by an officer of the Greek foreign service for Dragoumis's use, argued that in 1940 Greece had "the lowest average of arable land amongst European Countries." In particular, the "space available for the sustenance of 100 souls" in Greece allegedly was 33 hectares, compared to 112 hectares in Albania, 98 in Yugoslavia, 93 in Rumania, 62 in Bulgaria, and 55 in Turkey. At the same time, the "density of agricultural population per square kilometer" in Greece reportedly was 154, compared to 116 in Bulgaria, 114 in Yugoslavia, 97 in Rumania, 90 in Italy, 52 in Germany, 17 in the United States, and so on. The draft memorandum pointed out further that "the soil of Greece is less productive than that of the neighboring countries: It produces less and requires frequent fallowness." Thereafter, the drafter of the (unsigned) memorandum drew the reader's attention to Greece's "overpopulation," which he identified as a main cause of the country's economic and social ills. For that matter, he underlined that

> The natural increase of the population of Greece, before the present war, was reaching the maximum rate, compared to the other countries. For instance, in 1938 the increase of the population was of 12.8%, against 8.9% in Bulgaria, 12.9% in Yugoslavia and 9.7% in Italy. It should be added that, besides this natural increase, successive waves of refugees have come, since the turn of the century, to settle on the already overpopulated soil of the State of free Greece. . . . after the Greco-Turkish Treaty for the exchange of populations, 1,500,000 Greeks were exchanged against 459,000 Turks. This number of refugees corresponds to 1/5 of the total population of the Kingdom [of Greece].
>
> Under such conditions, a strong current toward emigration started developing between 1890–1924, with the Greek immigrants in North America numbering 400,000. Yet, this outlet—which, notwithstanding its positive facets, was weakening our manpower disproportionally—has practically been closed following the measures taken by different countries against immigration and in particular by the U.S. government.
>
> Thus, the surplus of the rural population, having to face an exceptional insufficiency of arable land and being unable to emigrate to countries which have now closed their doors, has turned toward the towns. This development would be welcome if viable industries existed in urban centers. But owing to the lack of raw materials and especially of fuel, the conditions required for the establishment of a prosperous industry do not exist.
>
> Consequently, this surplus of our urban population was compelled to turn toward non-productive and parasitic professions.[37]

Dragoumis's successor in the office of deputy foreign minister, Michael Tsamados, fully concurred with these political views. On 23 May 1945, in a directive to the embassies—that he also forwarded a week later, in search for further publicity (in French), to the deputy ministry of press and information—

Tsamados founded Greece's territorial claims on four "fundamental principles": (1) the "principle of self-determination of the populations," which (as he explained) applied to the Dodecanese, Northern Epirus, and Cyprus, in their capacity as "questions ethnographiques"; (2) "the various conventional provisions or other international recognitions" (that concerned the legal status of certain regions); (3) the "principle of [military] security," which primarily regarded the quest for the redrawing of the Greco-Bulgarian border; and (4) "the exigency of securing a physiological territorial pedestal for the country and of improving the present economic, financial and demographic condition of Greece," a principal that by and large was identical with Dragoumis's notion of "economic security." Tsamados was prompt in clarifying that "this last demand has absolutely nothing in common with the Hitlerite living space" (the notorious *Lebensraum*), yet he emphatically underlined that "Greece is lacking the most essential arable land," and he accordingly substantiated the suggested solution to this "scarcity of land" in the following terms:

> The acquisition of a normal territorial basis—i.e. the securing of new arable lands, lands that until recently were populated by Greeks—is not for Greece an issue of "living space" but a precondition for the survival of its population, whose living conditions today are not even barely up to the modern standards of living. . . . We are obliged, by an absolute exigency, to declare that the preservation of our asphyxiating prewar borders would literally enclose us within a real *Todtesraum* ("a space of death") and would hinder the creation of those particular conditions that, we hope, would ultimately prevent any further disturbances and upheavals.[38]

These "disturbances and upheavals" that Tsamados alluded to were the December 1944 events, that is, the clashes between ELAS and forces loyal to the Papandreou government. Within the geoeconomic frame of analysis, the political leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attributed these civil clashes between left-wing and right-wing forces to a "problem of space" and of insufficient "productive land," a problem that could be remedied only with the expansion of Greece's territorial borders. Nevertheless, apart from these semi-official soundings, the Greek (the Tsouderos, Papandreou, and Tsaldaris) governments of the immediate postwar period never put forward official claims for territories that were not densely inhabited by ethnically Greek indigenous populations, such as southern Bulgaria, Turkish Thrace, or Cyrenaica.[39] The formal Greek claims at the Paris Peace Conference of 1946 and the Council of Foreign Ministers were restricted to Northern Epirus and the Dodecanese, which were identified as Greek from an ethnological standpoint, and the "rectification" of the Greco-Bulgarian border for reasons of "strategic security."[40]

Nevertheless, the agenda and discourse of this "New Great Idea" had already gained a strong social momentum and continued to be propagated by the Athens and Thessaloniki establishments. With a seventeen page-long *Διακήρυξις* (Declaration) addressed to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the elite of Athens in September 1945 requested that the Greek people "should be firmly fixed on their [Balkan] peninsula." By that, they meant the annexation of southern Bulgaria and of the southeastern corner of Yugoslav

Macedonia. This declaration was signed by the president of the Academy of Athens; the rectors of the University of Athens, the National Technical University of Athens, and the Advanced School of Economics and Business Studies; the director of the Advanced School of Agriculture; the chairman of the Archaeological Society; the chairman of the Historical and Ethnological Society; the chairman of the Parnassos Society (Greece's oldest literary society); the chairman of the Lawyers' Society; the chairman of the Medical Society; the chairman of the Hellenic Federation of Industrialists; the chairman of the Union of Greek Ship-owners; the director of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and about a dozen other leading figures. In this declaration, the Athenian elite stressed that "these small territorial acquisitions are of vital importance for Greece, not only for its military security, but also for its productive sufficiency," its "adequacy in arable land," and especially its "autarky in grains."[41] The declaration reasoned that

> The scarcity of agricultural land in Greece, which is the biggest among the countries of the Peninsula of Haemus, is the most serious reason for the country's adversity. In addition, Greece completely lacks underground resources, such as solid fuel, oil and coal; Greece is further missing sufficient capital for the development of its indigenous capabilities. . . . While this is the case with Greece, the neighboring peoples are over-sufficient in land and other productive means and are in possession of territories that from every point of view— geographically, historically, ethnologically, economically, etc.—should actually belong to Greece.[42]

Subsequently, the declaration argued that the satisfaction of Greece's territorial claims and the consequent attainment of the country's "economic sufficiency" would have positive effects on the country's society and prevent further social upheavals (alluding to the December 1944 clashes):

> For only by these means, i.e., by the full satisfaction of the needs of the Greek nation, shall the civil strife and social upheaval, which were triggered by the war and its consequences, cease to exist. The sufficiency in resources and in means of production as well as the cooperation of all of us in order to make the best use of the productive capabilities of our country in its new [i.e., territorially expanded] form will bring forward prosperity, harmony and complete brotherhood among all the Greeks.[43]

For their part, on 18 July 1945 the "people of Salonika," at the initiative of the Patriotic Union of national (that is, non-communist) organizations, organized a rally in support of Greece's territorial claims. The rally's resolution laid claims on "all the territories that historically, ethnologically and organically belong to Greece and by means of which the prosperity of the [Greek] people and the security of the country will be secured" (namely, Northern, i.e. Yugoslav, Macedonia; Northern Epirus; and Northern Thrace, i.e. southern Bulgaria).[44] On 25–28 October 1945, the First Panhellenic Congress of National Rights was convened in Salonika. Therein officially participated around six hundred representatives of the church (among whom were the Orthodox bishops of Corfu

and Salonika), the universities, the municipalities (the mayor of Athens included) and rural communities, the chambers of commerce and industry, trade unions of laborers and private employees, war veterans, non-commissioned and warrant officers, and irredentist and other organizations. The congressmen demanded annexation of Northern Epirus, Northern Macedonia "along with the lake of Ohrid," and Northern Thrace, based on the argument that the acquisition of "adequate cultivable lands" would "secure the nourishment and provide means of employment to the impoverished, due to the scarcity of the existing space, Greek People."[45]

Peasantist Nationalism in the Service of Greek Territorial Claims

"Peasantist nationalism," a novel discourse in Greek nationalism that made its appearance in 1927 and flourished in the interwar period, drew primarily on radical agrarianism and neo-romanticism and was disseminated along with the rise of the forces of peasant populism. The crisis in agriculture in the 1920s, urbanization (the result of labor overflow in the countryside), and the "overpopulation" of Greek cities were important societal factors that instigated the intellectual construction of the Greek "peasant nation." Peasantist nationalist intellectuals not only perceived the farmers as the backbone of the Greek nation, but also constructed an over-political idealism deeply rooted "in the soil" (in rural culture) and identified the material existence and prosperity of the nation with productivity in agriculture. The narrative of peasantist nationalism was largely constructed by agronomists, a new stratum of technocrats who used nationalism as a vehicle for social mobility and their entry into the upper strata of the organic intellectuals of the bourgeoisie. Initially, peasantist nationalism did not focus on the economy per se. Rather, it aimed primarily at: (1) attracting and (rather naively) persuading farmers not to emigrate to towns but to remain on their lands; (2) enhancing farmers' endeavors toward achieving the country's nutritional autarky; and (3) strengthening their loyalty toward the bourgeois state and the socio-political establishment (a nexus first founded by the far-reaching 1917 land reform). After the bankruptcy of 1932, however, Greece's autarky in cereals and other alimentary products became a particularly vital exigency. Peasantist nationalist ideas, set forth earlier by the agronomists, were adopted by the Metaxas quasi-fascist regime and upgraded to the level of the state's hegemonic ideology in 1937–41.[46]

Peasantist nationalism in interwar Greece also drew extensively on Sfyris's geoeconomic thinking and physiocratic analysis. In Sfyris's opinion, the economy was mainly "a product of interactions between Nature and man," and thus the geoeconomic analysis, which is "closely connected to geopolitics," needed to take into account, in the close examination of the economic problems of a country, the demographic and geophysical realities, as well as the available natural resources in agriculture, animal husbandry, and mining. In 1927, Sfyris, who was indoctrinated in the German school of geoeconomic thinking, overtly based his analysis on the "geocentric fundamental law" of the physiocrats and more particularly on the theories of the French economist

François Quesnay (1694–1774), who had maintained that "agriculture exclusively and primarily provides the products that satisfy our most urgent needs, those of nutrition as well as a large part of the raw materials that are needful for industry."[47] In fact, the physiocrats insisted that land constituted the only source of wealth. Although they clearly analyzed and approved of capitalist production in agriculture, they denied that manufacture or trade produced new values. For them, manufacture or industry and trade only elaborated the values produced by the agricultural sector. They placed particular emphasis on the high price for grain, arguing that this would benefit consumers as well as industrial producers, since prosperous agricultural producers would provide a strong market for the goods and services of non-agricultural producers. What is more, the physiocrats presented these prescriptions as absolute and inviolable laws of nature. All in all, physiocracy (rule of nature), which evolved into a distinct stream of thought in the field of political economy, practically revered agriculture as a privileged form of economic activity.[48] In the twentieth century, physiocratic theories deeply influenced and fused with geoeconomics and geopolitics. In interwar Germany, *Lebensraum* geopolitics substantiated by the Nazi regime were based on the quest for the expansion of peasant farming into the "East," that is, the vast meadows of Soviet Russia.[49]

In Greece, at the end of the war and in view of the official peace negotiations, peasantist nationalism (in conjunction with more purely geopolitical, geoeconomic, physiocratic, and neo-Malthusian ideas) was utilized with the aim of justifying Greece's territorial claims on grounds of "scarcity of the land" and the destitution of Greek agriculturalists. Not surprisingly, Konstantinos Christopoulos, the most ardent advocate of the "New Great Idea," was an agronomist by trade "with interest in the lives and the real needs of the farmers" (see above).[50] The utilization of peasantist nationalism was most obvious in the campaign of Greek farmer cooperatives and rural communities for the support of Greek territorial claims. This campaign, ostentatiously orchestrated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during the summer of 1946, laid particular emphasis on the material plight of the agrarian class and the immediate need for more agricultural land that would meet Greece's urgent needs in wheat and other staples. By means of petitions that addressed as their final recipient the Paris Peace Conference and the diplomatic representatives of the victorious Allied Powers (alias the United Nations), dozens of agricultural cooperatives and local communities pleaded, "in the name of the unionized agricultural people," for justice to be done to Greece, "a small and poor country without autarky." The territorial demands of these petitions far exceeded the official claims of the Tsaldaris government.[51] For instance, the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Drama, which allegedly represented eight thousand agrarian families, asked in its petition to the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs

> not for the rectification but for the expansion of our borders toward Bulgaria by the immediate occupation of Mount Haemus by our troops, so as to secure once and for all our territory from the various invaders, which during the last thirty years have thrice violated our borders.[52]

Along these lines, the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Verroia stated that

> We, the poor farmers of Greece, whose harsh and painstaking profession has
> enriched our soul with prudence, reason and perseverance, will never forget
> that our bad neighbors, the Bulgarians, betrayed the Holy endeavors and the
> titanic struggle of the [United] Nations against VIOLENCE [i.e., Nazi aggres-
> sion] . . . We, the Greek farmers of this poor country, demand justice from the
> United Nations; and justice calls for the due punishment of Bulgaria for its
> criminal acts.[53]

For its part, the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of the Rhodope Mountains
petitioned for "the restitution to Greece of nearly unpopulated Eastern
Thrace—from which the indigenous Greek inhabitants were ousted—, so that
the entire demographic problem of Greece can be positively solved," adding
that "the economic equilibrium can be redressed with territories that belong to
Greece ethnologically and geographically."[54]

Conclusions

World War II and the triple alien occupation of Greece by the Axis
forces recycled old enmities and nationalist passions. In 1945, the Balkans
came once more to be (in Hermann von Keyserling's terms) the "powder keg
of Europe." Greece's claims on Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia (and vice
versa) threatened to create a flashpoint between the Western Allies and the
Soviet Union. The emergence of a "New Great Idea" among Greek intellectu-
als and elite circles in 1943–46 became part of the scramble for power at the
threshold of the Cold War. The territorial claims put forward by Greek indi-
viduals and organizations were new not in form but in nature. These claims,
which remained largely unofficial and did not reach much beyond the semi-
official level, were maximalist in their geographical extent and substantiated on
novel ideological arguments. The theoretical tenets of this New Great Idea
were geopolitics, geoeconomics, and peasantist nationalism. Whereas the pre-
1922 Great Idea was based almost exclusively on ethnological data and the
principle of national determination, this newest form of Greek nationalism
mostly referred to geoeconomic, physiocratic, and neo-Malthusian exigencies.
The annexation of new territories was seen not exclusively as a fulfillment of
Greek national unification, but also as a means for the attainment of Greece's
economic and social stability and material prosperity. These claims gave the
impression of an inclination on the part of Greece toward imperialist foreign
policies. Yet, the official claims put forward by the Tsaldaris government at the
Paris Peace Conference in 1946 were rather minimalist and did not pertain to
geographical areas where Greeks did not constitute an absolute majority. In
the end, the "New Great Idea" flashed through Balkan politics without leaving
a long-standing trace or igniting a new local conflict. The emerging realities
and exigencies of the Cold War marginalized the traditional demands of Balkan
nationalisms for nearly half a century.

NOTES

1.   Martin McCauley, *The Origins of the Cold War 1941–1949* (London and New York: Longman, ²1998), 114.

2.   Procopis Papastratis, *British Policy towards Greece during the Second World War, 1941–1944* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 68.

3.   *Μεγάλη Ελλάς* 1 (December 1941), 1, reprinted in *Μυστικός Τύπος της Κατοχής* (Clandestine press during the Occupation) (Athens: Syllogos "Philoi tis PEAN, [2000]), 252.

4.   *Μεγάλη Ελλάς* 5 (February 1942), 1, in *Μυστικός Τύπος της Κατοχής*, 262; *Μεγάλη Ελλάς* 7 (March 1941), 1, in *Μυστικός Τύπος της Κατοχής*, 266.

5.   *Μεγάλη Ελλάς* 15-16 (January-February 1943), 1, in *Μυστικός Τύπος της Κατοχής*, 288.

6.   Ibid.

7.   *Μεγάλη Ελλάς* 18 (July 1943), 1-2, in *Μυστικός Τύπος της Κατοχής*, 294-95.

8.   *Δόξα* 7 (July 1942), 2, in *Μυστικός Τύπος της Κατοχής*, 48.

9.   PEAN, *Τι προσέφερε και τι δικαιούται να ζητήση η Ελλάς* (What Greece has offered and what it is entitled to demand) (Athens: n.p., 1943), 20, 22-27; *Δόξα* 44 (1 September 1944), 2, in *Μυστικός Τύπος της Κατοχής*, 228; Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, *ΠΕΑΝ (1941–1945): Πανελλήνιος Ένωσις Αγωνιζομένων Νέων* (PEAN [1941–1945]: Panhellenic Union of Fighting Youth) (Athens: Syllogos pros Diadossin Ofelimon Vivlion, 2004), 42-43, 56-57, 155-57, 283-85, 290-93; and Odette Varon-Vassr, *Η ενηλικίωση μιας γενιάς: Νέοι και νέες στην Κατοχή και στην Αντίσταση* (The coming of age of a generation: Young men and women in the occupation and resistance) (Athens: Hestia, 2009), 128, 157-58.

10.   Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, "'Ο κρατών της πρωτευούσης…': PAN, 1943–1944" ("The commander of the capital …": RAN, 1943–1944), *Κλειώ* 3 (summer 2006), 97-99, 102-6.

11.   Historical and Ethnological Museum of Corinth (HEMC), Vassileios Sinaniotis Archive, *Κήρυξ* 1 (22 November 1943), 2; 2 (22 December 1943), 1-2; 9 (6 September 1944), 1.

12.   HEMC, Vassileios Sinaniotis Archive, Ethnikos Synaspismos PAN (National Coalition RAN), *Το ελληνικόν πρόβλημα: Α΄ Τι ζητούμεν. Β΄ Ο βουλγαρικός φάκελλος* (The Greek problem: a. What we demand; b. The Bulgarian file) (Athens, 1943), 1, 4-5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 27-28.

13.   Spyridon G. Ploumidis, *Έδαφος και μνήμη στα Βαλκάνια: Ο «γεωργικός εθνικισμός» στην Ελλάδα και στη Βουλγαρία (1927–46)* (Land and memory in the Balkans: "Peasantist Nationalism" in Greece and Bulgaria [1927–46]) (Athens: Patakis, 2011), 167, 169-70.

14.   Peter Schöller, "Geopolitik," in *Staatslexikon Recht—Wirtschaft—Gesellschaft* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1959), 3:775-80; Geoffrey Parker, *The Geopolitics of Domination* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 56; and Kathleen E. Braden and Fred M. Shelley, *Engaging Geopolitics* (Edinburgh Gate, Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000), 15.

15.	Ploumidis, Ἔδαφος καὶ μνήμη, 21-22, 95-99, 361-90. For estimates of the number of refugees in interwar Greece, see André Andréadès et al., *Les effets économiques et sociaux de la guerre en Grèce* (Paris and New Haven, [1929]), 15.

16.	Konstantinos P. Christopoulos, *Τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ Πρόβλημα* (The Greek problem) (Thessaloniki: n.p., ¹1945), 3, 16-18, 56, 122; (Thessaloniki: n.p., ³1946), v, vii; cf. Konstantinos P. Christopoulos, *Σκέψεις: Λόγοι—Ἄρθρα—Δοκίμια* (Thoughts: Speeches, articles, treatises) (Thessaloniki: n.p., [1964]), 28, 56, 58, 75, 77, 82.

17.	Christopoulos, *Τὸ Ἑλληνικὸ Πρόβλημα*, 13, 19, 113.

18.	Ibid., 24 n. 4, 29, 31-32, 39, 113-14, 119; cf. Schöller, "Geopolitik," 776.

19.	Francis L. Carsten, "'Volk ohne Raum': A note on Hans Grimm," *Journal of Contemporary History* 2, no. 2 (April 1967), 221-27. In 1932, Sfyris had also claimed that "Greece [*sic*] is a people without space"; see *Πολιτεία* 4299-365 (9 December 1932), 2.

20.	Peter J. Taylor, *Political Geography: World Economy, Nation-State and Locality* (New York: Wiley, 1989), 50.

21.	Vassileios Th. Vogiatzis, *Λαὸς χωρὶς χώρο* (People without space) (Thessaloniki: Etaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1946), 5.

22.	Ibid., 5-6, 11, 13-14, 23-24, 30-32, 34, 37, 55, 97.

23.	Ibid., 55, 94.

24.	Ibid., 57-58, 90, 97, 99-100.

25.	Ioannis D. Stefanidis, *Stirring the Greek Nation: Political Culture, Irredentism and Anti-Americanism in Post-War Greece, 1945–1967* (Aldershot, England, and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007), 45-46, 58.

26.	Cf. Stephen G. Xydis, "Modern Greek Nationalism," in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973 [1969]), 248. For the old Great Idea of Hellenism, i.e., the Greek state-based irredentist nationalism and gradual territorial expansion of Greece to areas inhabited by ethnic Greeks (such as Thessaly, Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace, and Asia Minor) in the years 1830–1922, see ibid., 235-43; Douglas Dakin, *The Unification of Greece 1770–1923* (London: Ernst Benn, 1972), 71-245; and Thanos Veremis, "From the national state to the stateless nation 1821–1910," in *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* , ed. Martin Blinkhorn and Th. Veremis (Athens: SAGE-ELIAMEP), 9-17.

27.	Georgios S. Alexiadis, *Γεωοικονομία καὶ γεωπολιτικὴ τῶν ἑλληνικῶν χωρῶν* (Geoeconomics and geopolitics of the Greek lands) (Athens: Syllogos pros Diadosin ton Hellinikon Grammaton, ²1946), 69, 76. Emphasis added.

28.	Ibid., 5.

29.	Christos Hadziiosif, "Ἀπόψεις γύρω ἀπὸ τὴ βιωσιμότητα τῆς Ἑλλάδας καὶ τον ρόλο τῆς βιομηχανίας" (Views on the viability of Greece and the role of industry), in *Ἀφιέρωμα στὸν Νίκο Σβορῶνο* (Dedication to Nikos Svoronos), ed. Vassilis Kremydas, Chryssa Maltezou, and Nikolaos M. Panaghiotakis (Rethymnon: University of Crete, 1986), 2:357-58.

30.	*Ἑλληνικὸς Βορρᾶς* 36 (13 March 1945), 1.

31.	Cf. Hagen Fleischer, *Στέμμα καὶ Σβάστικα: Ἡ Ἑλλάδα τῆς Κατοχῆς καὶ τῆς Ἀντίστασης 1941–1944* (The crown and the swastika: Greece during the Occupation and Resistance, 1941–1944) (Athens: Papazissis, 1995), 2:77-84.

32.   For the nature of the "New Great Idea," see further Ploumidis, *Έδαφος και μνήμη*, 325-26, 361-63.

33.   Emmanouil I. Tsouderos, *Ιστορικό Αρχείο 1941–1944* (Historical archive, 1941–1944) (Athens: Phytrakis, 1990), 2:27, Memorandum on National Claims to the American and the British governments, 12 June 1942; and Stephen G. Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers 1944–1947: Prelude to the "Truman Doctrine"* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1963), 14-18.

34.   Tsouderos, *Ιστορικό Αρχείο*, 2:27.

35.   Ibid., 2:27, 51-52.

36.   Historical Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AYE), 1945, 21/8: "memorandum sur les possibilitiés productives et demographiques de notre pays," 28 October 1944.

37.   AYE, 1945, 81/2: Athens, 1 December 1944.

38.   AYE, 1945, 81/1: Michael Tsamados to all the Embassies, Athens, 23 May 1945, no. 15600, pp. 2-3, 10, 16-19; Tsamados to the Deputy Ministry of Press and Information, Athens, 31 May 1945.

39.   Constantine Svolopoulos, *Η ελληνική εξωτερική πολιτική 1900–1945* (Greek foreign policy 1900–1945) (Athens: Hestia, 1992), 311-18.

40.   Xydis, *Greece and the Great Powers*, 270-84, 412-22; and Basil Kondis, *Η αγγλοαμερικανική πολιτική και το ελληνικό πρόβλημα: 1945–1949* (Anglo-American policy and the Greek problem: 1945–1949) (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1984), 157-64, 188-93.

41.   AYE, 1945, 21/1: "Declaration," Athens, September 1945, 3-9, 11, 15-17.

42.   Ibid., 2-3.

43.   Ibid., 9.

44.   *Ελληνικός Βορράς* 144 (19 July 1945), 2.

45.   *Ελληνικός Βορράς* 222 (23 October 1945), 2; 228 (30 October 1945), 1; and Stefanidis, *Stirring the Greek Nation*, 66-67.

46.   Ploumidis, *Έδαφος και μνήμη*, 99-112, 154-67. On peasantist nationalism in interwar Greece, see also Spyridon Ploumidis, "'Peasantist Nationalism' in Interwar Greece (1927–41)," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 37, no. 1 (2013): 111-29.

47.   Konstantinos D. Sfyris, "Γεωοικονομία και οικονομία: Μεθοδολογική έρευνα" (Geoeconomics and the economy: A methodological research), *Αρχείον Οικονομικών και Κοινωνικών Ερευνών* 10, no. 3 (July-September 1930), 213-14, 234, 242, 255.

48.   David Miller, ed., *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought* (Oxford and New York: Blackwell, 1987), 372-73.

49.   Parker, *The Geopolitics of Domination*, 56.

50.   Ploumidis, *Έδαφος και μνήμη*, 326.

51.   AYE, 1946, 8/1 and 8/2.

52.   AYE, 1946, 8/3, Drama, 12 August 1946, no. 1413.

53.   AYE, 1946, 8/6, Verroia, 1 August 1946, no. 2656.

54.   AYE, 1946, 8/6, Komotini, 2 August 1946, no. 2325.