

Turkish Imperialism and Deterrence **[Τουρκικός Ιμπεριαλισμός και Αποτροπή]**

Vassilis Fouskas

Epikentro Publishers

Athens, 2022 (pp. 249)

ISBN: 9786182041413

This is a book that assesses the theme of Turkish imperialism and the potential Greek deterrence in a unique way. Vassilis Fouskas attempts to critically evaluate the Greco-Turkish antagonism and the dynamics around it. The author also attempts to examine the Turkish regional imperialism and the Greek efforts for deterrence.

Fouskas critically describes the structures of the Greek and the Turkish economy and state respectively –for the author this is of particular importance in comprehending the dynamics of the Greco-Turkish antagonism. He describes the limitations of the Greek capital, as well as its indifference to national issues.

‘Greece from the beginning of its existence (as a modern state), is a dependent state because its bourgeois classes are subservient to the foreign (western) capital.’ (p. 29)

At the same time he considers that the structure of the Turkish economy is such that the Turkish capital cooperates with the state for the achievement of national objectives. Fouskas also elaborates on particular socioeconomic indicators of Turkey and Greece –national debt, population, economic growth rates, etc.– which indicate that Turkey is ahead.

According to Fouskas, the Turkish working class and the Turkish people must cooperate with the socialist movement of the Greek people, because only such a working class –people’s rule in Greece in conjunction with the further development of a respective movement in Turkey- can put an end to the imperialism of the Turkish state and the internal authoritarianism which has tortured in various ways the Turkish society (p. 36). I do not share this approach. It is very idealistic –I consider it mission impossible. It reminds me of the Marxist hypothesis before World War I, which indicated that the confrontation would be prevented because the working classes would refuse to fight against each other.

Fouskas considers that the two major objectives of the 1821 Greek Revolution,

that of national independence and people's sovereignty and of social liberation, in other words a national people's and class objective, still remain unfulfilled (p. 41).

In relation to the theoretical positions about 'tolerance' and 'mercy' on behalf of the Ottoman Empire toward its subjects, they constitute a myth and not a reality according to Fouskas (p. 49).

The author also notes that the 'Greek state was created following a geopolitical intervention of England and France with the purpose to prevent the influence of Russia over the Greek territory' (p. 54). I would suggest that, as Russia was also involved in the creation of the Greek state, the objective of Britain and France was to contain the damage and the losses of the Ottoman Empire and, furthermore, to not allow Moscow to monopolise Greek sympathy and support.

According to Fouskas, 'an interesting conclusion with sustained historic and political significance that is derived from these international political circumstances is that, if the relationship between Russia and Turkey is problematic, this benefits the Greek interests to the extent that in the Greek government there are competent diplomatic skills which exercise a multidimensional foreign policy, like in the case of Kapodistrias' (p. 59).

I think this has not always been the case; Fouskas' argument seems to be absolute. I think the outcome also depends on the West and its relations with Turkey. One could also suggest that, when the antagonism between Russia and the West is heightened, it is more likely that Turkey will have its way with the West. And in such an event, the Greek interests are not served.

Fouskas also notes that, while Greece was liberated from the Ottoman yoke, it was enslaved to the West (p. 62). Furthermore, according to the author, the struggle continues on various levels and domains, with threats in Cyprus, the Aegean and Thrace. At the same time there is the need to struggle for social liberation. I think it is up to the Greeks to influence, if not define, the relation of their country with the West.

Fouskas raises several questions that revolve around the record of the state, the struggles for social justice and the position of the country in the international system. He also notes that 'the turning point which must be understood in relation to the Greek historic ruling elite in the 2010 crisis was not what it declared to do, but what it decided to not do. And that was not to leave the Eurozone' (p. 108). In this regard he also refers to Lapavitsas, who had argued in favour of the return to the national currency.

Fouskas also notes that 'in June 2021 the public debt of Greece had risen to 235%

of its GDP, while that of Turkey was only 28,3% of the GDP' (p. 121). In this regard he takes the opportunity to criticise the dependence of Greece -in all domains- on Western institutions. He also presents several socioeconomic indicators to make his point that Greece is lagging behind Turkey and the West.

Fouskas also stresses that Turkey is much stronger than Greece and it asserts its independence in all domains of the international system. At the same time he notes that Turkey is a revisionist power with growing aspirations.

The author also refers to the relations between Turkey and the United Kingdom 'and explains why Britain is in favour of the partition of Cyprus' (p. 155). My view is that the issue is much more complex. Britain would support a loose federation or even a *sui generis* confederation, but not a two-state solution. With a two-state solution the British presence in Cyprus might be negatively affected.

Fouskas again calls 'for an effort for people's involvement to deter the Turkish regional imperialism.' Fouskas also quotes Davutoğlu: 'The Turkish world extends from the Adriatic Sea to the Wall of China' (p. 167). This stresses, among other things, the importance of the demographic factors in the international system and power dynamics.

Although I do not agree with all the arguments that Fouskas puts forward, I recognize that his work is a pioneering one. And the comparison of the structures of the Greek and Turkish economies and states respectively helps us better comprehend the specific issues under consideration.

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