

# The U.S. strategic vacuum produces a crisis in NATO's southern flank

by Criton Zoakos

The Atlantic Alliance could soon unravel, beginning with a collapse of its southern flank in the Balkans. The current Balkan crisis derives from the changes in doctrine and strategy which were introduced into the alliance during the Kissinger era and subsequently. Turkey and Greece, faced with the prospect of finding themselves involved in a "limited theater nuclear war" fought in Europe, opted for two different and contradictory national security policies which today form the basis of those two nations' bitter rivalry. Turkey chose to build up a credible, independent national military force, a regional military preponderance of sorts, intended to enable the country to *stay out* of any future superpower conflict. Greece chose to pursue a policy of European disarmament, in association with the so-called Carrington Plan for a European "third force." These two divergent small-nation reactions to NATO's MC 14/4 theater nuclear warfare doctrine is now the central source of friction between Turkey and Greece, rather than any real or imagined ethnic rivalry between the two NATO neighbors.

## Consequences of U.S. defense policy failure

As of this writing, there is a complete breakdown in the final phase of U.S.-Greek negotiations over the future of U.S. military bases in Greece. The reasons are as follows: The United States, not having adopted any serious and credible strategic doctrine for the Alliance since the policy of "mutually assured destruction" (MAD) was modified with the "theater nuclear war" doctrine, and faced with an uncertain future for the Euromissiles, is engaging in a frantic conventional military buildup usually associated with the policies of Gen. Bernard Rogers, the NATO Commander in Chief. This policy assigns a major role to the Turkish military, and only a marginal role for the Greek armed forces. Hence, NATO's current strategy is seen by the Greeks as merely building up Turkey's already superior military strength. During the current U.S.-Greek negotiations, the consensus among Greek politicians is to demand from the United States an increase of military assistance to Greece to match, according to some formula, Turkey's increased strength. The United States re-

fuses to consider this request until after Greece signs an agreement to renew the stay of U.S. bases in the country.

Greece's Socialist government is adding further unnecessary complications by fanning anti-American sentiments in its propaganda posture, and demanding among other things that the new treaty state that the bases in Greece "serve only American interests," which is not strictly true. The U.S. government is also adding unnecessary complications by failing to see that Greek concern over a potential Turkish threat to Greece is not simply based on traditional paranoia about Turkey. The 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the continued partial occupation of that island demonstrate a point not about Turkey's hostility to Greece, but about Turkey's well-considered overall national security strategy.

That Turkish strategy was established by modern Turkey's founder Kemal Atatürk during the 1919-23 War of National Liberation and continues intact today. It is to keep the nation out of the conflicts of major powers. In historical terms of reference, the Turkish republic invented non-alignment as the basic policy for a minor nation before Nasser or Nehru or Tito were ever known. Turkey had to fight for its national existence against France, England, Italy, and Greece from 1919 to 1923 and had to rely on friendly relations with the nascent Soviet Union, her most powerful neighbor. Turkey was forced to join NATO in 1951 because since 1945 the U.S.S.R. had been pressing an official claim for Soviet control over the Dardanelles Straits and for cession of two adjacent Turkish provinces to the Soviet Union. Had it not been for this direct Soviet claim, Turkey would have preferred to remain neutral.

Because of her geographical position, Turkey is viewed by Moscow as part of its immediate defense periphery and by the United States as part of its forward defenses against the Soviets. Turkey's Montraux Convention obligations concerning the Dardanelles make her subject to Soviet naval pressures in periods of tension. Her geographical position with respect to the Middle East and the Persian Gulf make her subject to U.S. pressure for access to landing facilities and so forth. Turkey's national policy forbids her to allow

deployment of military threats against Middle Eastern nations. The country's current foreign policy is to encourage Khomeiniac Iran's anti-superpower posture and discourage any development of Iraqi-Syrian rapprochement, on the theory that the combined military establishments of Iraq and Syria are greater than Turkey's and that both Arab nations have military cooperation treaties with the Soviet Union. If they ever come together militarily, Turkey will be sandwiched in a way that will make it difficult for her to resist Soviet pressures for use of her air and naval space.

Hence Turkey is condemned to seek a combination of diplomatic policies and military forces which will encourage her neighbors, especially the Soviet Union, to "leave her alone" in case of major confrontations in the Middle East-Persian Gulf region. If there is a theoretical possibility for Turkey to be "left alone" in a major East-West conflict, Turkey will discover and utilize that possibility. It all, however, depends on the nation's ability to accumulate military advantages for bargaining with the superpowers. It appears that such advantages, in the context of the region, are to be found at the expense of Greece. Hence the excessive concern of Greece over Turkey's military strength.

To the extent that the U.S. government pursues the "Rogers Plan" course of conventional strengthening of whatever regional forces it deems suitable, the crisis in the southern flank of NATO will persist. Regardless of the fact that the current Greek government of Socialist Andreas Papandreu is making a painful nuisance of itself, Greece is confronted with a genuine national security crisis of tragic proportions for a small nation. If it approves the continued presence of U.S. bases and remains in the alliance under the present terms of the "Rogers Plan" of selective conventional buildup, it is faced with a clear and present regional threat, which will make itself manifest in the event of a—now likely—superpower confrontation which will trigger into action Turkey's underlying neutralist national security strategy. If Greece opts to rupture its security relation with the alliance, it will almost certainly be destroyed as a nation.

### **The superpower framework**

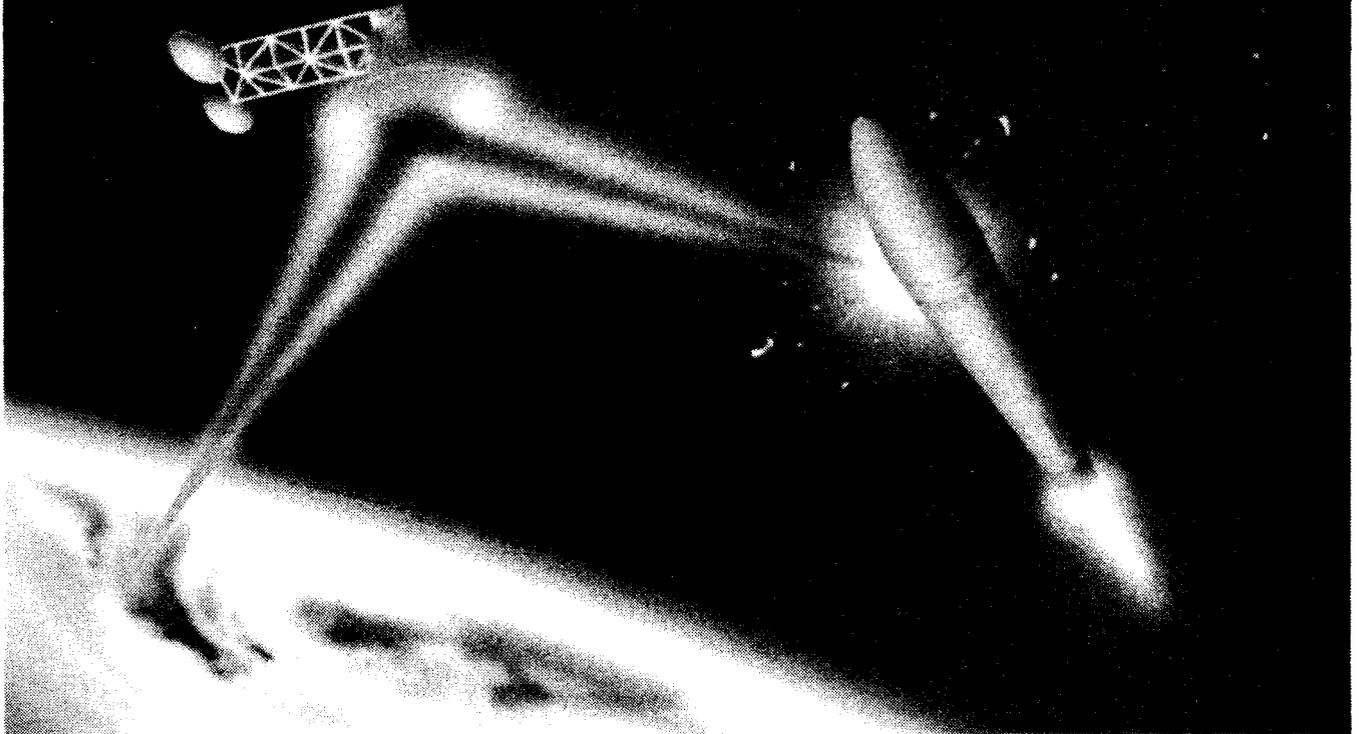
The current Balkan troubles should be gauged against the prospect that throughout 1983 the countdown toward a Cuba missile crisis confrontation between the two superpowers will continue ticking as the time approaches for a final decision on the deployment of the Pershing II missiles. If such a confrontation occurs, one of two outcomes will result: either general thermonuclear war or a retrenchment of U.S. power, which will leave the Balkans in a vacuum, associated, in the region's memories, with the Treaty of San Stefano. All national borders will be at stake. Current domestic instabilities in Yugoslavia, Albania, and Greece will contribute toward the pressures to redraw the region's map and turn the entire region, from Romania to Saudi Arabia, into a zone of instability and ferment.



*Turkey wishes to wield its military strength to avoid a new conflict in the Balkans, but U.S. policy is aggravating the war threat.*

A refusal of the Papandreu government to accept U.S. terms for a renewal of the U.S.-Greek base treaties would unravel NATO's southern flank in the weeks ahead. The U.S. administration's hard-line attitude this month toward Athens has certainly placed the ball in Socialist Papandreu's court. What Papandreu will do will depend on what he is told to do by the strategic gamemasters in London who are running the Carrington Plan for the emergence of a European third force. This group has essentially controlled, directly or by manipulation, the Papandreu government since its election in October 1981. The "old boys" in London, in turn, will be making up their minds over this matter after they see what new governments will emerge in France and the Federal Republic of Germany after those two countries' just concluded elections. Lord Carrington's European third force gameplan is earnestly on. Greece and Turkey might once again be used as expendable guinea pigs on which to experiment with a "New Yalta" agreement, a balance-of-power rearrangement, just as the two were used in the 1946-47 period as an excuse to pronounce the Truman Doctrine and plunge the United States into a protracted period of Cold War. That is the prospect for the Balkans—unless the Reagan administration announce a war-avoidance strategy for the alliance based on the development and deployment of high-technology, space-based, beam-weapon anti-ballistic missile defense systems.

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