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**Geopolitical Expediencies and Foreign Policy Implications  
in Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria following the signing  
of the Lausanne Treaty**

Despite the fact that the Lausanne Treaty —signed on July 24, 1923— signaled the end of the vision of the Great Idea<sup>1</sup> it constituted the starting point of a new period of relations between Greece and its neighbouring states. The Asia Minor Catastrophe has left a host of problems that needed immediate resolution. The position of Greece in the international arena did not show any signs of recovery for five consecutive years after the signing of the Lausanne Treaty, fact which inevitably led Greece to isolation. At that point in time, two mistakes of grave political significance, developed into severe blows weakening further the already enfeebled Greek foreign policy. The first mistake was committed by the renowned international relations' expert, Nikolaos Politis, who served as the Greek representative in the League of Nations. Politis and his Bulgarian opposite number, Christo Kalfvf concluded a Protocol, the so-called Politis-Kalfvf Protocol —which recognized the slavophone population of Macedonia as Bulgarians. Apart from the fact that the Protocol was against the Yugoslavian interests in Serbian Macedonia, it also turned out to be a stumbling block for Greece as an excuse for the protection of the supposedly Bulgarian population in Greece.

The second mistake was committed by General Theodoros Pangalos, a well-respected figure, who gained his reputation in the war of Asia Minor. The second mistake was far more critical than the first one, as Pangalos tried to satisfy his secret wish to reoccupy Eastern Thrace,

1. See S. V. Markezinis, *Political History of Modern Greece*, v. 4, Papyros Publications, Athens 1966, p. 324; Ch. E. Agelakis, *The Chronicle of the Great Strategy (The Asia Minor Epic)*, Academy of Athens Award, Hestia Bookstore, 1963<sup>3</sup>.

through a military dictatorship. Immediately after his ascent to power, he concluded with Yugoslavia a number of agreements, creating a network of relations favourable to Yugoslavia and establishing a Serbian port in Thessaloniki. Because of the one-sided and burdensome nature these agreements had for Greece, they were termed the “Pangalos’ Agreements”.

The ensuing rise of Eleftherios Venizelos to power marked the beginning of a new era in Greek politics. A man of vision, Venizelos immediately succeeded in restoring the unfavourable geopolitical balance in favour of Greece. He laid down new foundations, obeying the spirit of the League of Nations on international cooperation and public diplomacy, revising at the same time, the Greek foreign policy.

#### *a. The Fall of Eleftherios Venizelos and the Asia Minor Catastrophe*

The consolidation of peace after the First World War found Greece on the side of the winners. The Greek military mission to Smyrna —on May 15, 1919— was enthusiastically received by the Greek inhabitants already living there for centuries<sup>2</sup>.

At the same time, however, a new nationalist movement had already progressively started to develop in Turkey. Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk), following a different policy from that of the sultan, made it clear that it was impossible for him to accept any foreign occupation in the Anatolia region, a territory he considered “the heartland of the Turkish people”<sup>3</sup>. This nationalist tendency, which represented the ultimate hope of the Turkish people for the avoidance of the final disintegration of the

2. Eleftherios Venizelos’ address of May 2, 1919, could not hide the great politician’s deep emotions: “The time has come. Greece was called upon by the Peace Council to occupy Smyrna, in order to restore order. Our fellow countrymen understand that this decision was taken by the Council in view of the union between Smyrna and Greece. Having been enslaved by the same yoke until the Balkan Wars, I understand the sentiments of rejoice which swarm the souls of the Greeks of Asia Minor today. I do not intend to block the manifestation of those sentiments. But I am positive that such a manifestation will not acquire neither a hostile nor an arrogant character towards any other cohabitating element of the population ...”. See D. Kokkinos, *History of Modern Greece 1800-1945*, v. 2, Melissa Publications, Athens 1972, pp. 1252-1253.

3. See R. Clogg, *Concise History of Modern Greece*, Kardamitsas Publications, Athens 1993, p. 170.

Ottoman Empire, was the mobilizing force behind Turkey's cause for its rescue.

The conditions for the fulfillment of the Turkish efforts became favourable in light of the latest developments in Greece. The newly elected government after the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres —November 1920<sup>4</sup>— by disregarding its allies' "threat-warning", concerning the return of King Constantine, gave the necessary alibi to the allies for the change of their policy, which previously allowed the Greek troops to enter Smyrna<sup>5</sup>. This is because, as early as the beginning of 1920 the Great Powers had decided to revise their former position on the deployment of the Greek military forces in Asia Minor.

In the February 1921 London Convention, France and Italy agreed with Mustafa Kemal to withdraw from Asia Minor and shortly afterwards Russia concluded a Peace Treaty which envisaged the provision of technical and financial assistance to Turkey<sup>6</sup>.

It was a misfortune for Greece that at that time Venizelos was not responsible for the Greek foreign policy. The fact that he called for elections, risking his own political survival at a particularly critical period of time, may be the only political mistake that can be attributed to this great politician. If there was anyone who could grasp the seriousness of the situation, then this was certainly Eleftherios Venizelos.

On the other hand, the fact that the newly elected government remained indifferent, despite the alarming signals sent by the international environment, is illustrated in the offensive of the Greek forces in Asia Minor —carried out in March 1921— under the leadership of King Constantine. Under these circumstances it would be safer to accuse the Greek government of political inexperience and unprecedented clumsiness<sup>7</sup>, than treachery<sup>8</sup>. The Greek Army, obviously over exhausted, would be left deep in Asia Minor, for about a year without supplies, confronted with its fatal destiny. The Turkish counter-offensive, which

4. See A. Kurou, *Greek Foreign Policy*, Hestia Bookstore, Athens 1955, p. 69.

5. See *Historical Archives*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1923, File no. 27, subfile 5, *Kiryx* Newspaper, September 23, 1923.

6. See K. Vakalopoulos, *The Modern Greek Nation (1204-2000)*, Herodotus Publications, Athens 2001, pp. 488-489.

7. See A. Kurou, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

8. See G. Dafnis, *Greece in between Two Wars*, v. 1, Ikaros Publications, 1955, p. 11.

started in August 1921, after smashing the overextended Greek front, made its way swiftly towards Smyrna.

The well-rooted Greek population of Smyrna was dislocated within days. This particular expulsion manifested the end of an era based on the vision for the fulfillment of the Great Idea<sup>9</sup>. Greece was the only state that failed to enjoy the fruits of the Treaty of Sèvres, despite the fact that it came out of the First World War victorious.

### *b. The Execution of the Six*

The breakdown of the Greek front led the military units, which found refuge after their retreat in the islands of Chios and Lesbos, to revolt. The responsibility for such a revolt was undertaken by colonels Nikolaos Plastiras and Stylianos Gonatas and lieutenant commander Demetrios Fokas<sup>10</sup>. When they reached Athens they demanded the King's abdication in favour of the heir to the throne and the dismantling of the Parliament. King Constantine, accepting the ultimatum abdicated and left for Palermo, Italy where he died on December 29, 1922<sup>11</sup>.

On October 13, 1922, the government formed under Sotirios Krokidas, issued a decree for the establishment of an extraordinary court martial to put through trial the alleged culprits of the Asia Minor Catastrophe<sup>12</sup>. The trial was carried out smoothly. The accused enjoyed every right of defense. The verdict was announced on the morning of November 15, condemning unanimously Demetrios Gounaris, Petros Protopapadakis, Nikolaos Stratos, Georgios Baltatzis, Nikolaos Theotokis, Georgios Hatzianestis to death and Michail Goudas and Xenophon-tas Stratigos to life imprisonment. Major General Xenophon-tas Strati-

9. See S. V. Markezinis, *op.cit.*, p. 324.

10. See extensive analysis on the issue in *St. Ep. Gonatas Memoirs*, Athens 1958, p. 229.

11. See K. Vakalopoulos, *op.cit.*, p. 494.

12. The accusation had as follows: "You are accused from November 1, 1920 since August 26, 1922 as decided by us and the relevant ministries, of the act of high treason as you unintentionally or intentionally supported the invasion of foreign troops, namely the Greek occupied Asia Minor, as was envisaged by the Treaty of Sèvres, and surrendered cities, fortresses, a large portion of the army and high cost ammunition to the enemy". See also *The Trial of the Six, Shorthanded Minutes (31 October-15 November 1922)*, A. P. Charissis Publications, Athens 1996.

gos and Vice-Admiral Michail Goudas were also deprived of their rank, while Demetrios Gounaris, Nikolaos Stratos, Petros Protopapadakis, Georgios Baltatzis, Nikolaos Theotokis and Michail Goudas were adjudicated damages in favour of the Greek state<sup>13</sup>. The fact that the verdict of the “Trial of the Six” was issued while the Lausanne Conference was taking place, worried Venizelos both for the development of negotiations and their final outcome. His fears proved right when Great Britain threatened to sever diplomatic relations with Greece.

The execution of the Six however, was unavoidable, mainly because of the prevailing sentimental state of affairs. It enflamed a new dichotomy without nevertheless imposing a threat in internal stability.

### *c. The Diplomatic Background of the Lausanne Treaty*

The execution of the Six had also a positive effect for Greece. It rung “the bell for imminent danger of civil war and helped restore discipline in the army”<sup>14</sup>. Especially in the area of Thrace, the rapid regrouping of the “Evros Army” and the raising of the morale within the Army<sup>15</sup>, created scenarios almost effected into decisions for the reoccupation of East Thrace. However, such scenarios were never materialized.

The stance of the Turkish delegation in the Conference contributed to the further breeding of these scenarios. Since early on, had set claims on the negotiating table, which could be perceived as arrogant, to say the least. From a certain point onwards the inability of the two opposite sides to communicate in the course of the Conference seemed unsurpassable and this fact rendered the break-up of the negotiations unavoidable. At that particular historic moment, the Turk delegate Izmet had a meeting with the Serbian delegate whom he asked what Yugoslavia would do, in case the hostilities between Greece and Turkey resumed. “In all probability” answered Jovanovic, “[Yugoslavia] would remain neutral, but if Bulgaria made any move, it would be impossible for Yugoslavia not to participate in the conflict”. Nevertheless, Jova-

13. See *Eleftheron Vima*, November 16, 1922. For an analysis of the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the Trial of the Six through the eyes of the accused see X. Stratigos, *Greece in Asia Minor*, A. P. Charissis Publications, Athens 1999<sup>5</sup>.

14. See R. Clogg, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

15. See St. EP. Gonatas, *op.cit.*, p. 261.

novic advised Izmet to exhibit moderation<sup>16</sup>. It was then, when the Turk delegate Izmet, gave the renowned answer: “I would be stone in Ankara if I put any signature without getting anything in return”<sup>17</sup>.

Following this meeting, Venizelos met Ismet, but without any indication of progress. On May 22, Alexandris, the person who was a possible replacement for Venizelos in the Conference, sent a cable to Athens, informing the capital that he would stay in Lausanne until the 26th of May, waiting for the signing of the Treaty. In case, however, no agreement was reached by then, he would denounce the truce “so as in the morning of the 27th the advance of the Greek army would start”. The Greek government responded positively, informing at the same time the Commander-in-Chief of the Greek Army to be ready for an offensive, aiming at the reoccupation of Eastern Thrace in the morning of May 27. At that point the resumption of hostilities seemed certain. Literally, at the last moment, Izmet backed out and the “conflict was averted”<sup>18</sup>.

The dominant view in the Greek delegation was, then, that the full Greek potential, including the “Evros Army”, would have to be focused on the national effort carried out in Lausanne in order to achieve the best possible result. Within this context, the exhaustion of Venizelos’ diplomatic skills and the restructuring of the Greek Army in Evros, which was used in the best of manners, finally led to the conclusion of the Lausanne Treaty. As we have mentioned above, this Treaty would constitute the final act in a long period of efforts inspired by the vision of the Great Idea<sup>19</sup>.

#### *d. The Corfu Incident (1923)*

The Corfu Incident is indicative of Greece’s enfeebled diplomatic position after the Asia Minor Catastrophe. Italy was the first state to take advantage of that. The excuse was given when, in the morning of August 28, 1923, unknown individuals murdered the members of the Italian commission, responsible for the delimitation of the borders

16. See G. Dafnis, *op.cit.*, pp. 35-47.

17. *Idem.*

18. *Idem.*

19. See Ch. E. Agelakis, *op.cit.*

between Greece and Albania, headed by General Tellini.

The following day, Italy through diplomatic channels, handed an ultimatum to the Greek government, comprising the following claims:

a. The Greek government [should] apologize in the most extended and official manner to the Italian government. This official apology would be asked by the Ambassador of Italy from the Supreme military authority ...

e. All culprits would be condemned to death.

f. The Greek government should pay 50 million Italian liras to the Italian government, as a penalty payment. This amount should be paid within five days from the delivery of this note<sup>20</sup>.

The partial rejection of the Italian ultimatum by Greece, resulted in the seizure and bombardment of the island by three Italian battleships on August 31, 1923<sup>21</sup>. It is worth-mentioning that Corfu was under a regime of perpetual neutrality, according to the London Treaty of July 13, 1863, with England<sup>22</sup>, France and Russia as guarantor powers. Because of that fact, England was particularly annoyed by Italy's stance and thus intervened in favour of Greece, during the drafting of the Note of the Ambassador's Meeting, the outcome of which was a text of moderate character.

The issue was finally resolved by the "incompetent" Ambassador's Meeting in the League of Nations<sup>23</sup>. This was because Italy, one of the two conflicting sides was a Great Power. Italy, playing the role of the victim rather than that of the victimizer, succeeded in imposing unbearable conditions on Greece, even before the conclusion of the investigations and the publication of the findings<sup>24</sup>. The position of the

20. See K. Paparigopoulos, *History of the Greek Nation*, v. 8, N. Nikas Publications S.A., p. 384.

21. On the "Corfu Incident" see S. N. Gregoriades, *The Tremendous Documents-The Corfu Case-August 1923*, Fytrakis Publications, 1976; G. Kordatos, *Great History of Greece, -Modern*, v. E (1900-1924), 20th Century Publications, 1958; J. Barros, "The Corfu Incident of 1923", *Moussolini and the League of Nations*, New Jersey 1965.

22. See *Eleftheron Vima*, September 2, 1923.

23. See L. Divanis, *Greece and the Minorities*, Kastaniotis Publications, Athens 2000<sup>4</sup>, p. 19.

24. According to the preliminary investigation, which took place in Ioannina, there were strong indications that the crime was planned in Argyrokastro, Albania and executed by Albanians, with the potential collaboration of the Albanian authorities. See *Historical*

Swedish delegate in the Ambassador's Meeting was rather prophetic for the future of the International Organization: "... what happened, illustrated vividly the crucial importance the functioning of the bodies of the League of Nations has for the resolution of international conflicts. The aim of the League of Nations is to preserve peace, but peace, that is based on injustice, bears the seeds of future conflict"<sup>25</sup>.

The "Corfu Incident", was doomed to be the first incident to manifest the League of Nations' inability to provide justice, inflicting, in that manner, a severe blow against its own existence<sup>26</sup>.

*e. The Politis-Kalfvf Protocol (1924) and the "Pangalos' Agreements"*

On September 29, 1924, the Greek representative in the League of Nations, Nikolaos Politis along with his Bulgarian opposite number, Christo Kalfvf, concluded the signing of a Protocol<sup>27</sup>, which recognized the slavophone population of Macedonia as Bulgarians and allowed the League of Nations to intervene for their protection against Greece<sup>28</sup>.

Besides any criticism that could be imposed on the Politis Protocol from a legal or political point of view, it is certain that its conclusion was politically wrong and shortsighted as the ensuing consequences were not foreseen. The problem the Politis Protocol created for Yugoslavia was that it included provisions for the members of the slavophone community situated "in the Yugoslav territory that did not belong to the 'disputed zone' of the Serb-Bulgarian Treaty of 1912"<sup>29</sup>. Mainly, however, because it recognized them as Bulgarians<sup>30</sup>.

*Archives*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, File no. 27, subfile 3, (Investigations Findings on the cover letter of the Ioannina Public Prosecutor's Office of September 26, 1923, register no. 13965).

25. See *History of the Greek Nation*, v. 15, Ekdotiki Athinon, Athens 1978, pp. 289-290.

26. See L. Divanis, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

27. In substance, the Politis-Kalfvf Protocol comprised two declarations signed by the two men and submitted to the League of Nations. For a detailed analysis on the legal and political parameters of the Politis-Kalfvf Protocol see Ch. II of that Protocol.

28. See P. Pipinelis, *History of the Greek Foreign Policy 1923-1941*, M. Saliveros Publishing House S.A., Athens 1948, p. 27; S. A. Gyalistras, *National Struggles (1909-1959)*, Athens 1963, p. 229.

29. See S. A. Gyalistras, *op.cit.*, p. 229.

30. See P. Pipinelis, *op.cit.*, p. 28.



Yugoslavia, nevertheless, from a certain point onwards lost touch with reality in its response to that Protocol. It reached the point to demand from Greece the conclusion of a new protocol, in which the slavophone population of Macedonia would be recognized as Serbs<sup>31</sup>. Greece, rightfully declined to satisfy this demand, and this led Yugoslavia to denounce the 1913 Treaty of Alliance with Greece<sup>32</sup>. It is worth-mentioning that relations between the two states did not normalize even after the nullification of the Politis - Kalfvf Protocol by Greece, in both the League of Nations and the Greek Parliament.

From that point onwards, Yugoslavia started to make excessive demands for a new round of negotiations with Greece. It referred to the official note of the denouncing of the 1913 Treaty of Alliance, in which, it demanded from Greece the revision of the following issues, as a prerequisite for the beginning of negotiations<sup>33</sup>:

- The recognition of certain individuals as Serbian citizens, based on the precedent of the Politis-Kalfvf Protocol, which recognized the slavophones as Bulgarians.
- The delay in the settlement of the issue of the port of Thessaloniki.
- The expropriation of certain monasteries and their dependencies on the Athos Mount.
- The Politis-Kalfvf Protocol, which Yugoslavia on the grounds of expediency, still considered valid.

However, the failure of the first round of negotiations, after the break-up of relations between the two states, is largely owed to the role Italy played<sup>34</sup>. The Greek-Yugoslav rapprochement became a reality on August 17, 1926, during Theodoros Pangalos' dictatorship, albeit with a considerable cost for Greece. The Pangalos' regime signed with Yugoslavia a series of agreements, the common ground of which was the settlement of all issues against the Greek interests. For that reason these agreements were called the "Pangalos' Agreements". H. Psomiades de-

31. See H. Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?*, Hurst & Company, London 1995, p. 88.

32. See D. G. Papamichalopoulos, *The Serbian Free Zone in Thessaloniki*, Athens 1953, p. 80.

33. See A. Tounda-Fergadi, *Greek Diplomatic History Issues (1912-1949)*, I. Sideris Publications, Athens 1966, pp. 276-277.

34. *Idem*.

scribes the reactions to those agreements in Greece very accurately:

The Treaty with Yugoslavia is to be opposed by every segment of the society. Some attacked it on its merits and others, whose dissatisfaction with Pangalos had been building up for some time, used it as a pretext to vent their grievances. There were protests and resignations within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The political factions and the commercial and industrial classes voiced their concern. There were also disturbances in various parts of the country and, more important, there were voices of discontent within the armed forces. They seemed to be saying that the treaty would not have the desired results but rather would simply lead to further demands by Yugoslavia<sup>35</sup>.

When the Greek political community was informed of the content of the "Pangalos' Agreements" it reacted fiercely<sup>36</sup>. The reaction resulted in the violent overthrow of Pangalos dictatorial regime. The whole issue was the subject of discussion in the Greek Parliament, on August 25, 1927 when Alexandros Zaimis was the Prime Minister and Andreas Michalopoulos, the Minister of Foreign Affairs<sup>37</sup>. The President of the Commission, A. Sachtouris addressed that Session, conveying the prevailing climate:

The 1926 Convention was not just giving away to Serbia a portion of the territory "which was given by the 1923 Treaty", but it helped establish a foreign state within the Greek territory. On the Greek line from Gevgeli to Thessaloniki a regime of co-sovereignty was established, a Serbian port in Thessaloniki was established and the right of authorization of maritime documents by the Serbian Consulate, which would be valid for the Greek ports, was given away. Furthermore, the right of navigation to Serbian steamboats, but at the same time to those of whatever state the Serbian

35. See H. Psomiades, "The Diplomacy of Theodoros Pangalos", *Balkan Studies* 13 (1972) 15 et seq.

36. See also *Eleftheron Vima*, August 28, 1926.

37. See *Minutes of Session A, Period A*, v. A, November 26 - August 29, Athens, National Printing House, 1927, pp. 185-186.

government entered into agreement with, concerning transit trade, was also given away. In substance, the foundations have been laid for the construction of a Serbian city<sup>38</sup>.

*f. Venizelos' Return to Power and the Restoration of the Greek-Yugoslav Relations*

The "Pangalos' Agreements" issue was surfaced once again by Eleftherios Venizelos, immediately after taking over as a Prime Minister in 1928. His coming to power by a unanimous vote in 1928<sup>39</sup> and his personal statute, would prove his most important assets for the accomplishment of his aims. Venizelos has made his objectives public in his speech in Thessaloniki, on July 22, 1928, during the pre-election campaign:

We hope [that the Pangalos' Agreements issue] will be settled as soon as possible in a satisfactory manner for both countries. We are ready to provide the maximum possible facilitations to the Yugoslav trade and we hope that our former allies will not insist on any claims, which could even unintentionally harm our sovereignty. We would like to continue our friendship on a solid basis ...<sup>40</sup>.

Immediately after his first contacts with Belgrade, Eleftherios Venizelos realized that Belgrade's negative stance concerning the signing of the agreements was a reflection of the fear of the Yugoslav foreign policy towards Italy. According to the Greek Prime Minister it was crystal clear that Athens-Belgrade settlement passed through Rome. Following his success in signing an agreement with Mussolini in Rome, on September 23, 1928 under the title "Treaty of Friendship, Settlement and Judiciary Reconciliation", he went to Paris in order to announce the agreement reached with Italy, in the most formal way. It is interesting to mention that Venizelos' diplomatic manoeuvres inspired Mussolini to the point he suggested the conclusion of an Alliance Treaty with Greece. As Venizelos himself reports:

38. See Tounda-Fergadi, *op.cit.*, pp. 285-286.

39. See *History of the Greek Nation, op.cit.*, p. 313.

40. See *Eleftheron Vima*, July 23, 1928.

... When we started negotiations for the conclusion of the Treaty, the idea for an alliance between Greece and Italy was proposed. I declined such an offer ... I said that Yugoslavia was a state on our northern borders, with which we have lived for the most part in peaceful terms, with which we fought three victorious wars side by side. It is a strong nation and thus Greece does not want to follow policies that would be deemed hostile to Yugoslavia. It is obvious that an alliance with Italy would be perceived by Yugoslavia as such<sup>41</sup>.

Eleftherios Venizelos' decision to go to France after the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship with Italy, was brilliant. This is because France, being Yugoslavia's ally, did not want Greece under any circumstances to become Italy's ally, risking the diplomatic isolation of Yugoslavia. The French intervention was enough to reverse the prevailing climate in the Yugoslavian side<sup>42</sup>.

This change was evident in the first meeting between Venizelos and Marinkovic. On October 11, 1928<sup>43</sup>, the two states concluded an agreement for the settlement of the Yugoslav trade through the port of Thessaloniki, while on March 27 of the same year the two states concluded a Treaty of Friendship, Settlement and Judiciary Reconciliation<sup>44</sup>.

### *g. Conclusion*

The Lausanne Treaty created the first purely Greek state. On the other hand, Greece's weak position at that time, created the pre-conditions for all other states in the wider periphery to satisfy their national aspirations.

It is unfortunate that Greece was the first state to surface the innate

41. See K. D. Svolopoulos, *The Balkan Treaty and the Greek Foreign Policy 1928-1934*, I. D. Kollaros Bookstore, 1974, p. 38.

42. See *Eleftheron Vima*, May 16, 1950.

43. The signing of the agreement was delayed for almost five months (October 1928 - March 1929), because Venizelos denied the free entry of Serbian ships in the port of Thessaloniki, without the prior inspection by the Greek authorities, with the excuse that in a crisis situation that kind of freedom could be exploited for the transportation of warlike material, fact which would harm the Greek sovereign rights. Finally, Yugoslavia retreated on that issue and the consensus was reached. See K. D. Svolopoulos, *op.cit.*, pp. 137-138.

44. The 1929 Treaty was ratified with the N. 4146/1929 (FEK A 172/May 14, 1929).

weaknesses of the new international arrangements and the hasty exultations for the creation of the system of collective security of the League of Nations. This injustice, nevertheless, worked in favour of the Greek state. Greece became more experienced since more than any other state, it was in a position to decode the message of the League of Nations, hidden in the decision for the Corfu Incident. That is, the much-promised organization was not destined to be the “magic key” for the resolution of disputes. Especially when a Great Power would be involved.

Following a period of embroilment and perplexion in both the international level (Politis - Kalfvf Protocol) and the domestic one (National Division-Execution of the Six-Pangalos' Dictatorship), the return of Venizelos in active politics, in 1928, signaled an upward drive for Greece. A man of sharp intellect and ingenious diplomatic skills, Venizelos managed to place Greece in its rightful position, without sacrificing any sovereign rights. He succeeded in creating new favourable balances in a sensitive and rather negative international environment avoiding diplomatic costs, at the same time.

Even Italy, a country whose attitude was ranging from neutral to negative towards Greece, at that favourable for Greece time, reached the point to ask for the upgrading of the Treaty of Friendship to a Treaty of Alliance. Venizelos' grandeur was manifested in his negative response to Mussolini, not only to accept the conclusion of the Treaty of Alliance but also the —without cost— written protection of Macedonia by the Italian Prime Minister.

Mussolini, the former instigator of claims in Macedonia, reached the point to declare that Italy, even without the signing of an Alliance Treaty, would stand on Greece's side, in case Macedonia was in danger. He characteristically mentioned: “Alliance or not, written or not, if the sovereignty of Thessaloniki is in danger I for one know that Greece will not be the only state to defend it ...”.