The Changing Global System: Tools for Coping

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It is reasonable to posit that the new post-Cold War, post-information international environment is best characterized by the fluidity inherent in the changing global system that conceivably transcends the 'new order' – an order that is still eagerly anticipated the world over. This is challenging at best, particularly when it comes to decision making at different levels – the intrastate, the interstate and the regional / international. Indeed, scholars and political leaders grapple with what Henry Kissinger referred to as the shifting 'centre of gravity of international relations […] to Asia' ('A Global Order in Flux', *The Washington Post*, July 9, 2004); or, with what Harvard professor Joseph S. Nye depicted the same year as 'the changing nature of power' and the subsequent need to rely more on soft tactics and less on military means in pursuit of a state's national interest (*Soft Power – The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, New York, NY, 2004). This essay focuses: (a) on the inevitable 'marriage' of academics and politics in order to better comprehend this transitional state of affairs and formulate 'smart' policies; (b) on the practical applications of 'soft power' with a view to maximising the probability that a state persuades others (states or non-state international actors) to go along with its intended policy objectives; and (c) on the tools and policy relevant options that both major and small states must consider when dealing with geopolitical strategies.

Joseph Nye argues that while in the recent past prominent academics like Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinsky served in 'high level foreign policy positions,' today very few 'top-ranked scholars of international relations are going into government, and even fewer return to contribute to academic theory' (*The Washington Post,* April 13, 2009, A15). If this holds true in the United States, where high-ranking universities like Harvard and Think Tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations play a significant role in policy making, it is true in most countries where such institutes are both rare and much less influential. Yet Professor Nye scolds more the scholars themselves rather than the government because the former do not pay sufficient attention as to 'how their work relates to the policy world.' One solution is a 'reappraisal' of, for example, political science departments whereby more emphasis is placed on 'real world relevance' of rigorous and scientific scholarly work, and 'greater incentives' are offered to junior faculty, in particular, to engage in such activity.

Synergies between Politicians and Academics

Academic work could have added value in the real world if scholars of international relations worked in tandem with policy makers. In other words, academics have to be induced to conduct scientific and policy-relevant research, if anything because their scholarship would be applicable – and recognizable – in the political world of practitioners. Indeed, without inducement from government and political leaders, scholars are more likely to

remain on the sidelines and their findings will have minimum, if any, influence on a state's foreign policy even if they offered 'intelligent' opinions. Inversely, intelligent and well educated policy advice on causes and effects with respect to foreign policy, when in sync with real politics, would be most valuable. International Relations, according to Harvard Professor Jeffry A. Frieden and Professor David A. Lake from the University of California, San Diego, 'is most useful when scholars can identify with some confidence the causal forces that drive foreign policy and international interactions, not when they use their detailed empirical knowledge to offer opinions, however intelligent and well informed' (ANNALS, ASPSS, July 2005).

Harvard Kennedy School Professor Stephen S. Walt underlines that the connection between (academic) theory and (political or diplomatic) practice is 'more tightly linked' than many politicians or people usually assume. Policy decisions or debates, for example, often imply certain underlying theoretical assumptions. Likewise, different policy prescriptions are the result of a specific theory (e.g., political realism or liberalism). A consistent foreign policy and strategic planning are conceivably more sustainable when policy makers are cognisant of the various theories at play and, more importantly, of their relative strengths or weaknesses, in a changing context of global (power) relations. Alternatively, even intelligent leaders, according to Professor Walt, are likely to 'make serious mistakes' because their assessment of events may often be 'naïve, optimistic or overconfident' as they do not account for policy-relevant expertise.

Foreign policy makers 'often dismiss academic theorists (frequently, one must admit, with good reason), but there is an inescapable link between the abstract world of theory and the real world of policy,' argues Stephen Walt in a *Foreign Policy* essay (Spring 1998, Issue 110) titled, 'International Relations, One World Many Theories.' Along the same lines, Frieden and Lake underline that 'explicit attention to scientific rigor can provide a degree of generality and clarity that might not be obvious even to experienced policy makers.' They emphasize that a thorough understanding of various theoretical perspectives 'can also discipline the thinking of policy makers so that sloppy or wishful thinking does not lead them astray.' As Walt posits, 'We need theories to make sense of the blizzard of information that bombards us daily. Even policymakers who are contemptuous of "theory" must rely on their own (often unstated) ideas about how the world works in order to decide what to do.'

When Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou served as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1999-2004, he was known to have relied heavily on a host of academics, both Greek and foreigners, as advisors for his policy analysis and policy formulation. The same was true for former Prime Minister Costas Simitis who, as early as 1965, upon his return to Greece from Germany and the UK, was one of the founders of the 'Alexandros Papanastasiou' political research group. Both Mr. Papandreou and Mr. Simitis had conceivably pursued a flexible, creative and successful foreign policy that included numerous ambitious objectives, notably Greece's entry into the European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and Cyprus' accession into the European

Union (EU). Mr. Simitis stood out for his rational and dispassionate assessment of the political environment, internal and international, relying to a considerable degree on the advice provided by academic experts on a number of policy areas.

In Cyprus there is no tradition of a systematic academic input into the political arena, though occasional presidential advisers have offered invaluable expertise, i.e., on the Cyprus negotiations, on legal matters and economic planning. But this is the exception, not the rule. Yet in the context of the highly complex European political system, where Cyprus now participates as full fledged member of the EU and, more importantly, in the light of ongoing peace negotiations on the Cyprus question, the need to maximize synergies between academics and politicians is all the more germane. This cross-fertilization is imperative for three reasons: first, the increasingly technical nature of a great many policies, especially at EU level, and the absence of adequate civil servants with relevant expert knowledge or training; second, the interconnectivity of different policy areas (e.g., trade and environmental issues) and the speed with which political decisions must be taken; third, the highly complex (and changing) nature of power and of geopolitics, especially in areas adjacent to Cyprus as well as Turkey, whose geo-strategic decisions impinge directly upon Cyprus.

The ability to persuade

'The Turks are being very smart,' asserts Roula Khalaf in a recent article in the *Financial Times* (Nov. 17, 2009). She quotes a senior Arab official as saying, 'They want influence but without antagonizing anyone.' The article explores Turkey's 'soft tactics' designed to 'win friends and influence' through an ambitious diplomatic initiative whose eventual goal is to make the country 'welcome as a regional power.' Evidently, Ankara – via the leadership of current Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, an academic himself – has meticulously studied *inter alia* Joseph Nye's soft power philosophy. Turkey is applying soft power in its foreign policy by taking advantage of a power vacuum in the Middle East with the aim to win hearts and minds among the Arab world, though conceivably this posture has strained relations with Israel because of Ankara's 'strident criticism […] during the Gaza offensive.' In brief, this diplomatic overture and image marketing strategy is intended to attract and persuade, its ultimate aim being 'a pre-eminent role within the Muslim and Arab world.'

Yet, in the pursuit of its national interest, Ankara – as any other state – is aware that substance is as important as style in foreign policy. And it is also aware of consistency, i.e., avoidance of double standards which would inevitably erode both the objectives (attraction and persuasion) as well as the intended image projection. In this sense, the national interest cannot be exclusive of other states' interests and sensitivities. According to Nye, policies that 'are based on broadly inclusive and far-sighted definitions of the national interest are easier to make attractive to others than policies that take a narrow and myopic perspective' (*Soft Power*, p. 61).

Soft Power and Geopolitics

There was a certain truth as well as foresight in Former British Foreign Secretary James Callaghan's statement, in the aftermath of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in July 1974: 'Today, Cyprus is hostage to the Turkish army. But tomorrow, Turkey may find itself hostage to Cyprus.' This applies, in an important sense, to the new context of European politics where Cyprus and, increasingly, Turkey now find themselves. Joseph Nye often uses the example of David and Goliath as an illustration of relative power in order to drive home to his students at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government his point about relational and contextual power in a changing international environment. When this analogy is used with respect to the asymmetry that exists between Cyprus and Turkey, it is obvious that the latter enjoys an undisputable power advantage in terms of mere size, military capabilities and geo-strategic position (clearly an unbalanced relationship). What Ankara does not have as yet, however, is full membership to the EU, unlike Cyprus (and Greece), and therefore it feels increasingly restrained from making use of its hard power when negotiating with the EU (whether this concerns its accession process or issues like Cyprus). By contrast, Nicosia enjoys both a comparative advantage (i.e., being an EU Member State with all the privileges of membership) and relational power, in a contextual (EU) perspective. Consequently, it clearly attempts to apply this 'soft power' in its policy *vis-à-vis* Turkey, within the parameters of EU politics.

This relational or contextual power looses its strength, however, when the Cyprus question is discussed, for example, at the UN (traditionally where Nicosia preferred to raise the issue because of the Non-Aligned support it had enjoyed then). By contrast, Turkey insists, conceivably for the reasons outlined above, to keep the problem outside of the EU (its leaders often arguing that they don't 'trust' the EU) and prefer the UN as the main framework for the negotiations mainly because Turkey's relative power in the international body has increased significantly in recent years (i.e., it is a member of the Security Council and of virtually all major international groups such as the G-20, in addition to being member of the Islamic Conference and NATO). The roles have been reversed effectively because of the two states' perception of their relational or 'soft power' calculations, in a new context.

This case also aptly demonstrates the relevance of the changing nature of power in international or regional politics, and shows how different states, regardless of their size or military capabilities, can take advantage of their 'soft power' capability as a tool to effectively pursue their ends. Inversely, it illustrates the ineffectiveness of old thinking, grounded in hard power alone and bureaucratic resistance to change, miscalculations exemplified, for example, by the actions of the 'Ergenekon' plotters in Turkey. In brief, 'soft' or 'smart' power, when used intelligently and flexibly, even by realist actors like Turkey (or, for that matter, small actors like Cyprus) can prove more effective than mere hard (military) power in the pursuit of their objectives. In the case of Cyprus, Turkey would potentially maximize its benefits in the EU context, once the problem is resolved. The likelihood for that eventuality is higher if the states shift their policies, for example, away from hardliners and

the military to undertake rational foreign policy postures, in words and deeds. This re-posturing would require more rigorous and systematic academic advice to both Ankara and Nicosia with a view to ensuring a consistent and credible foreign policy in the pursuit of their respective national interests, relying heavily on the soft policies practiced by the EU. Indeed this would have the potential of creating a win-win scenario for all players involved: Turkey, Cyprus and the EU.