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Greece still the EU's weak link?

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Name: [REDACTED]
Surname: [REDACTED]
Party: [REDACTED]
Under [REDACTED], the [REDACTED] accepted a strong and visible pro-Russian orientation [REDACTED] also found closer connections to other European parties of the far-right.



Name: [REDACTED]
Surname: [REDACTED]
Party: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] at the European Parliament and at [REDACTED] tends to put the blame on NATO and the EU and calls for an unconditional lifting of sanctions on Russia.



Name: [REDACTED]
Surname: [REDACTED]
Party: [REDACTED]
The [REDACTED] government's opposition to the EU's Russia policy did not go unnoticed [REDACTED] by Russia. [REDACTED] sent an immediate positive message.

Alina Polyakova, Markos Kounalakis, Antonis Klapsis,
Luigi Sergio Germani, Jacopo Iacoboni,
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THE KREMLIN'S TROJAN HORSES

Russian Influence in Greece, Italy, and Spain

**Alina Polyakova, Markos Kounalakis, Antonis Klapsis,
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GREECE

STILL THE EU'S WEAK LINK?

Markos Kounalakis and Antonis Klapsis

Russia has always had a strong—and sometimes reciprocated—interest in Greece. From the birth of modern Greece during its 1821 revolution against Ottoman Turkey to its contemporary relations with Greece's ruling leftist Syriza party and through their mutual support of Orthodox Christian institutions, Russia has found Greece open to a strategic relationship rooted in historic, cultural, and religious connections.

As president of Russia, Vladimir Putin has used these historic foundations to pursue closer economic, military, political, and cultural bonds between Athens and Moscow. Putin works to further his project of diminishing Euro-Atlantic institutions, of which Greece is a member, by strengthening Greco-Russian relations and attempting to tilt Greece's political stance into closer alignment with Russian interests. With Greek support, the Kremlin could leverage Greece's European Union (EU) and NATO memberships to drive wedges between members from within. In the short run, this means weakening the EU's common sanctions policy, which must be approved by all member states. In the long run, this means ultimately creating an alliance between Athens and Moscow and undermining Greece's affiliation with Western liberal democratic values and institutions.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Greece in 2017 is economically and politically vulnerable. The country is suffering its eighth year of a modern great depression,⁶ and its populace feels exploited and underserved by both NATO and the EU. Greece's economic condition—the result of predatory lending practices and irresponsible Eurozone

borrowing in combination with a severe EU economic austerity program—have left many Greeks embittered, cynical, and seeking radical solutions while openly challenging the status quo.⁷ As of September 2017, a quarter of Greeks were still unemployed, including 50 percent of youths, and the debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio was at an alarming high of 180 percent.⁸ In addition, Greece has received over one million migrants and refugees from the Middle East and North Africa since 2015,⁹ adding political and economic burdens on local communities and exacerbating anti-immigrant sentiments.

This volatile socio-economic climate has proven to be fertile ground for Russian overtures. The ruling coalition, led by Syriza—which is friendly to the Russian government—along with its marginal but important governing partner, Independent Greeks, took advantage of the crisis that discredited much of the old political establishment. Syriza, under the leadership of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, aimed to mobilize disillusioned voters with a radical platform opposed to the austerity policies imposed by the EU after 2009. Syriza made quick gains, growing from 4.6 percent of the vote and fifth place in Greece's 2009 general elections to 16.8 percent and second place in May 2012. By 2015, Syriza was the ruling party with over 35 percent of the vote.¹⁰

One of Tsipras's first moves as prime minister was to force a referendum on whether to accept the EU's bailout in exchange for more austerity measures or to leave the Eurozone. The confusing snap referendum was not literally a vote to leave the Eurozone, but did create the conditions for an exit. The so-called "Grexit" referendum failed to deliver by a small margin in the

6 "Explaining Greece's Debt Crisis," *New York Times*, June 17, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/business/international/greece-debt-crisis-euro.html>.

7 Markos Kounalakis, "Greece's High-Stakes Gamble," *Sacramento Bee*, July 10, 2015, <http://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/markos-kounalakis/article26905798.html>.

8 "Greece Government Debt to GDP | 1980-2017," *Trading Economics*, 2017, tradingeconomics.com/greece/government-debt-to-gdp.

9 John Clayton, "More than one million refugees travel to Greece since 2015," *UNHCR*, March 16, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2016/3/56e9821b6/million-refugees-travel-greece-since-2015.html>.

10 Antonis Klapsis, "In the Shadow of Grexit: A Short Story of Long (and Failed) Negotiations, January-July 2015," *Romanian Journal of European Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 14, 29-31.



Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in Moscow, Russia, April 8, 2015.
Photo credit: Press Service of the President of Russia.

summer of 2015, but it signaled Greece's potential to be a disruptive force in the EU. While Russia's desire to develop a deeper foothold in Greek politics serves the Kremlin's interests of weakening the EU and undermining the Western liberal project, for now, Russian economic investments, cultural connections, and political overtures fan the flames of discontent but do not ignite them.

Russia's successful actions in Greece—such as providing discounted energy, intervention in media ownership, and ethno-cultural seduction of the Orthodox hierarchy—have already weakened EU resolve toward confronting Russia's more egregious acts, neutralized Greece's previous intent for expansion of defense ties within NATO, and rebuilt the foundation of a strong and lasting alignment with Greece's people and interests.¹¹

MAJOR PLAYERS

Russian President Vladimir Putin himself is active in the direct overtures to Greece. He has made it a personal project to engage Orthodox religious institutions, meet with the Greek political leadership, and pursue any availing business opportunities in the country. As Putin made clear in his May 2016 visit to Greece, the new receptivity of a Syriza-led government provides a strategic opening for the two countries to increase their cooperation and collaboration. Tsipras told Putin that improving Greco-Russian relations was "a strategic choice." Putin asserted that "it is not a coincidence that an opportunity for this has arisen in Greece—a country with which we have deep and historic ties."¹²

A host of other individuals and institutions support the Kremlin's strategy toward Greece, but it is Putin who provides the leadership, vision, and symbolism for the renewed and rapidly evolving Greco-Russian relationship. The improving Greco-Russian twenty-first

11 Markos Kounalakis, "Greece Is a Good Insurance Policy for the West," *Sacramento Bee*, September 21, 2014, <http://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/article2610377.html>.

12 "Putin and Tsipras Seeking to Profit from Historic Ties," *Kathimerini*, May 27, 2016, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/209084/article/ekathimerini/news/putin-and-tsipras-seeking-to-profit-from-historic-ties>.

century relationship has not relied on leftist Greek governments alone, however. Greece's conservative New Democracy government of Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis (2004–09) provided a strong and symbolic boost to building economic ties with Russia in the energy sector. In March 2007, the Karamanlis government signed an agreement with Bulgaria and Russia for the construction of the Burghas-Alexandroupolis pipeline—a key strategic partnership—but a project that was never implemented.¹³

Unlike the Karamanlis administration, Tsipras's government made better relations with Russia a top priority and part of its anti-EU platform. In January 2015, Tsipras expressed “discontent” with an EU statement that Russia was responsible for a rocket attack on Mariupol, Ukraine.¹⁴ Countering the prevailing EU sentiment and action for economic sanctions on Moscow following its annexation of Crimea and incursion into Ukraine's Donbas in 2014, Tsipras made his first official foreign policy statement a criticism of those sanctions and an affirmation of solidarity with the Russian people.¹⁵

The Tsipras government's opposition to the EU's Russia policy did not go unnoticed (or even unmanaged) by Russia. Putin sent an immediate positive message: Putin, via his ambassador to Greece, was the first to personally congratulate Tsipras on his initial January 25, 2015 victory.¹⁶ This marked the beginning of Russia's public charm offensive with the Greek leadership and people.

Putin's first trip to an EU country after the imposition of sanctions against Russia was to Athens to meet Tsipras.¹⁷ Importantly, on this two-day visit in May 2016, Putin made a personal pilgrimage to the Orthodox spiritual center of Mount Athos along with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow. Putin first went to Mt. Athos in 2005, the only Russian leader ever to do so and, on this visit,

he received a warm welcome from monks and priests expressing adulation for his global leadership and moral rectitude. One monk, Father Efraim, exclaimed, “Putin is the only true world leader.”¹⁸ Putin made sure to solidify this perception by taking a seat on what appeared to be the Protaton Throne, the throne of past Byzantine emperors. In fact, this was widely misreported (instead he sat in an ornate bishop's chair in the Protaton church), but the story was propagated and popularly accepted as Putin symbolically taking his rightful place in Byzantium's resurrection, with his role presumably as its emperor. The photos of Putin at Mt. Athos were widespread and impressive, and conveyed to both Russians and Greeks the historic relationship of the two fraternal Orthodox nations.¹⁹

Putin's personal touch is visible with his regular and close communications with the Greek leadership, in particular Prime Minister Tsipras.²⁰ Tsipras and Putin have spoken by phone and met in both bilateral and multilateral settings, such as the May 2017 Beijing “Belt and Road Forum.”²¹ Defense Minister Panos Kammenos, a member of the governing coalition and leader of the far-right Independent Greeks party, also has moved to deepen professional relations with Russia, including signing a memorandum of understanding with the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (RISI)—a think tank known to have connections to the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service. Both Kammenos and RISI's leader, Leonid Reshetnikov, are devout defenders and aggressive promoters of Orthodox religious clergy and institutions, with Kammenos depending on the church and its fervent adherents as a reliably solid part of his power base.²² Reshetnikov is but one of the frontline individuals bridging institutional relations with Greece.

Putin's proxies are also able to develop these warm ties further and maintain personal, business, and media relationships with Greece. First among those playing

13 “Greece, Russia, Bulgaria Sign Pipeline Deal,” *Kathimerini*, March 16, 2007, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/47756/article/ekathimerini/news/greece-russia-bulgaria-sign-pipeline-deal>.

14 Andrew Rettman, “Greece Says No to EU Statement on Russia,” *EUobserver*, January 27, 2015, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/127393>.

15 Nick Squires, “Greece Objects to EU Call for More Russia Sanctions,” *Telegraph*, January 27, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/greece/11373136/Greece-objects-to-EU-call-for-more-Russia-sanctions.html>.

16 Bernard-Henri Levy, “Admired by Le Pen, Friends with Putin, Tsipras Spells Trouble,” *Daily Beast*, February 4, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/admired-by-le-pen-friends-with-putin-tsipras-spells-trouble>.

17 Derek Gatopoulos, “Putin Blasts West on First Trip to EU Country This Year,” *US News and World Report*, May 27, 2016, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2016-05-27/putin-heads-to-greece-for-business-orthodox-christian-site>.

18 Giorgos Christides, “Putin Auf Athos: Hier Bin Ich Mönch, Hier Darf Ichs Sein,” trans. Markos Kounalakis, *Spiegel Online*, May 28, 2016, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/wladimir-putin-auf-athos-hier-bin-ich-moench-hier-darf-ich-sein-a-1094681.html>.

19 “Putin on Athos: The Protaton Throne,” Athos - Agion Oros, June 1, 2016, <https://athosweblog.com/2016/06/01/1823-putin-and-the-protaton-throne/>.

20 Dalibor Rohac, “Putin's Best EU Friends,” *Politico*, June 16, 2015, <http://www.politico.eu/article/putin-friends-renzi-tsipras/>.

21 “Tsipras, Putin Underlined Need of Strengthening Greek, Russian Relations,” *National Herald*, May 14, 2017, <https://www.thenationalherald.com/161975/tsipras-putin-underlined-need-strengthening-greece-russia-relations/>.

22 John R. Schindler, “Is Putin Playing Puppetmaster in Greece?” *Daily Beast*, July 8, 2015, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/07/08/is-putin-playing-puppetmaster-in-greece>.

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a significant role is Ivan Savvidis, a Georgian-born Russian Greek, one of Russia's richest men, member of Putin's United Russia party, a member of the Russian parliament (Duma), and a resident of Thessaloniki, Greece.²³ Savvidis is actively investing in strategic industries and advocating against the New Democracy opposition party and its pro-Western leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis.²⁴ Savvidis bought Thessaloniki's PAOK professional soccer team, northern Greece's cigarette manufacturer SEKAP, Thessaloniki's best-known hotel, the Grand Pallas, and, most troubling to the Greek political opposition, a controlling interest in one of the more popular television networks, MEGA.²⁵ In late July 2017, he also purchased three historic newspapers.²⁶

In addition to Putin and Savvidis, there are second-tier players who dabble in real estate and business engagements, seeking opportunities to strengthen Greco-Russian ties where available. For example, three Russian companies, including Gazprom, purchased large stakes in the Greek gas companies DEPA and DEFSA.²⁷ Wealthy Russian individuals, such as Ekaterina Rybolovleva, also make headlines for their wealth, influence, and interest in Greece. Rybolovleva made a symbolic splash when she purchased the private island once owned by Aristotle Onassis—the island where he married former US first lady Jacqueline Kennedy.²⁸

PRO-RUSSIAN LEANINGS AND GREEK POLITICS

Russian attempts to influence Greek politics have a long history, starting with the early days of Greek independence in the nineteenth century, when Russia funded and fought together with Greek naval revolutionary forces and commissioned the famous female revolutionary leader, Laskarina Bouboulina, as an admiral in the Russian Imperial Navy.²⁹ But today, Russian efforts to influence Greek politics are part of a broader effort to undermine Western institutions, and

they have never found such fertile ground in Greece as the Syriza government and its Independent Greeks coalition.

For the leftist and anti-liberal Syriza, closer cooperation with Russia seems to be the key to Greece's gradual disengagement from the West. Tsipras and many of his closest associates are former communists who base their political thinking on a loathing of capitalism and many of the Western values that go along with it. From this perspective, Russia appears as Greece's geopolitical alternative to the EU and NATO. Members of the populist right Independent Greeks view Moscow favorably in light of the common religious background between the two countries.

Ardent supporters of the move to establish much closer Greco-Russian relations are found across almost the whole political spectrum in Greece, from the extreme right to the communist left. A striking example of this pro-Russian attitude was the vote of the Greek members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in September 2014, on the ratification of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement. Out of the 21 Greek MEPs, 12 voted against the agreement, 8 voted in favor, and 1 abstained. Not surprisingly, the votes against were cast by MEPs from Syriza (6); the Independent Greeks (1); neo-Nazi Golden Dawn (3); and Communist Party of Greece (2). The votes in favor were cast by MEPs belonging to the three major pro-Western Greek political parties, namely New Democracy (4), PASOK (2), and the River (2).³⁰ What is even more impressive is the fact that the Greek MEPs were the only national group in the European Parliament that voted in majority against the ratification of the agreement.³¹

As in the case of many other far-right European parties, Golden Dawn openly favors a pro-Russian turn in Greece's foreign policy.³² Golden Dawn officials have repeatedly referred to the religious bonds that unite

23 Giorgos Christides, "Greece Gets Investment from Russia with Love," *BBC News*, October 26, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20031296>.

24 "Greek-Russian Tycoon Intervenes in Politics," *Kathimerini*, May 2, 2017, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/218081/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-russian-tycoon-intervenes-in-politics>.

25 "Russian-Greek Investor Savvidis Buys 20% Stake of Troubled Nationwide TV Channel," *Naftemporiki*, May 22, 2017, <http://www.naftemporiki.gr/story/1238160/russian-greek-investor-savvidis-buys-20-stake-of-troubled-nationwide-tv-channel>.

26 Tasos Kokkinidis, "Greek-Russian Businessman Ivan Savvidis Buys 3 Historic Newspapers," *Greek Reporter*, July 26, 2017, <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2017/07/26/greek-russian-businessman-ivan-savvidis-buys-3-historic-newspapers/>.

27 Georgi Gotev, "Privatisation of Greek Gas Grid Operator DESFA Fails," *Euractiv.com*, December 1, 2016, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/privatisation-of-greek-gas-grid-operator-desfa-fails/>.

28 Julie Zeveloff, "24-Year-Old Russian Billionaire Heiress Is the Buyer of Greece's Most Famous Private Island," *Business Insider*, April 19, 2013, <http://www.businessinsider.com/ekaterina-rybolovleva-bought-skorpios-2013-4>.

29 Callum Rae, "Laskarina Bouboulina," *Female Soldier*, September 27, 2015, <http://thefemalesoldier.com/blog/laskarina-bouboulina>.

30 The Greek MEP that abstained belongs to New Democracy as well.

31 "EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, with the Exception of the Treatment of Third Country Nationals Legally Employed as Workers in the Territory of the Other Part," *Votewatch*, last updated September 16, 2014, <http://www.votewatch.eu/en/term8-eu-ukraine-association-agreement-with-the-exception-of-the-treatment-of-third-country-nationals-lega.html>.

32 For a detailed account of the forging of bonds between Moscow and far-right parties across the EU see Antonis Klapsis, *An Unholy*

the Greeks and the Russians. Being anti-European and anti-American, Golden Dawn sees Russia as Greece's "natural ally." According to the party's leader, Nikos Michaloliakos, Athens and Moscow share broad common interests in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean; therefore, Greece should disassociate itself from the West (i.e., from the EU, NATO, and the United States) and offer Russia an exit "to the warm seas" in return for a Russian guarantee of Greek national security. Golden Dawn's official program clearly states that a turn to Russia in the fields of investment and energy is absolutely essential, since a trade and defense agreement with the Russians would disentangle Greece "from the fatal embrace of the US and its allies."³³ Not surprisingly, Golden Dawn warmly welcomed the creation of the Russian-fostered Eurasian Economic Union in May 2014, expressing the hope that it would become a successful rival to both the EU and the United States.³⁴

The prospect of closer cooperation between Athens and Moscow, especially in the economic sector, has been warmly welcomed by the Tsipras-led coalition government, especially just after the government came to power in January 2015. In early 2015, Tsipras's government supported the expansion of the Turkish Stream gas pipeline to Greece and negotiations between Athens and Moscow on the project went on for several months.³⁵ However, the scheme was never implemented. Had it been constructed, the new pipeline would have increased Greece's dependence on Russian gas. In one of his recent interviews, Panagiotis Lafazanis, minister of productive reconstruction, environment, and energy in the first Tsipras cabinet and supporter of Greece's exit from the Eurozone, revealed that when he was in government, he made an agreement with Moscow that Russia would provide a "down payment" for a gas pipeline and that this money would be used to supplement the Greek budget, if Greece left the Eurozone. "The pipeline we agreed on would have changed the economic and foreign policy conditions for Greece if the deal had been implemented," he claimed.³⁶

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Tsipras himself publicly referred to his plan of deepening Greco-Russian bonds in June 2015, at a time when the Greek government's negotiations with the country's creditors were going from bad to worse. In 2015, Greece was on the verge of bankruptcy. Grexit, or a Greek exit from the Eurozone, was a real possibility ahead of a July 2017 referendum pushed through by Tsipras. During this tumultuous time, Tsipras took part in the St. Petersburg Economic Forum. Tsipras described Russia as one of "Greece's most important partners." He lambasted the EU for imposing sanctions on Russia over the annexation of Crimea, attacked the "delusions" of Europe, and openly hinted that Athens would form a strong alliance with Moscow if Greece had to leave the Eurozone. "We are at the centre of a storm, of a whirlpool," Tsipras added. "But you know we live near the sea—we are not afraid of storms, we are not scared of open seas, of going into new seas. We are ready to go into new seas to reach new safe ports."³⁷ After the so-called Grexit referendum failed, Tsipras had to make a quick U-turn and abandon these plans. However, the desire for closer relations with Russia remains among policy makers in Greece, some of whom are members of the current government. For example, in May 2016, Defense Minister Kammenos publicly announced his intention to sign an agreement with Moscow for the manufacture of Kalashnikov assault rifles in Greece as soon as the European Union ended its trade embargo with Russia.³⁸ Kammenos was also the only Western politician to attend the Fourth

Alliance. The European Far Right and Putin's Russia (Brussels: Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, 2015).

33 Klapsis, *An Unholy Alliance*, 19.

34 Klapsis, *An Unholy Alliance*, 28.

35 "Greece Says Financing Agreed to Extend Russian Gas Pipeline," *Euractiv.com*, June 2, 2015, <http://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/greece-says-financing-agreed-to-extend-russian-gas-pipeline/>.

36 "Lafazanis Claims Russian Cash Could Have Helped with Grexit," *Kathimerini*, July 22, 2017, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/220304/article/ekathimerini/news/lafazanis-claims-russian-cash-could-have-helped-with-grexit>.

37 Ben Chu, "Greece's Crisis: Alexis Tsipras Woos Vladimir Putin as Greeks Rush for their Savings," *Independent*, June 19, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/greece-crisis-alexis-tsipras-woos-vladimir-putin-as-greeks-rush-for-their-savings-10333104.html>.

38 "Greek Defense Minister Eyes Kalashnikov Project," *Kathimerini*, May 31, 2016, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/209185/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-defense-minister-eyes-kalashnikov-project>.

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International Security Conference held in Moscow in April 2016.³⁹

CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONS

What is clearly felt in the post-Grexit debate environment is a palpable shift and a political and popular Greek reorientation away from the US and European institutions and affiliations built, enhanced, and solidified following World War II and toward a reexamining and renewal of relations with Russia.

The harsh economic consequences of austerity,⁴⁰ Eurozone exigencies, NATO expectations and costs, the failure of previous Greek governments oriented toward the West, historic grievances over active US support for the twentieth century Greek Junta—in addition to the Kosovo war and Belgrade bombing, relations with Turkey, and the ongoing dispute in Cyprus—are all contributing factors to contemporary Greece's susceptibility to Putin and its increasing preference for a culturally aligned and fraternally seductive Russia.

Despite this current trend, Greece's foreign policy turn toward Russia might shift as domestic political disenchantment with Syriza grows over its economic and taxation policies. With this political shift, European leaders look toward the rising centrist New Democracy (ND) party and its US-educated and business-oriented leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis with some hope. Despite the relentless domestic press attacks on Mitsotakis by the Savvidis news organizations and historic disillusionment with ND among the public, current polls favor Mitsotakis's party. The mainstream EU leadership seems to believe an ND victory in the next general elections could reverse Greece's growing disposition toward Moscow. Polling in early 2017 showed a strong likelihood that Syriza would be turned out and New Democracy would become the number one vote-getter with a significant lead.⁴¹ The next general elections will take place no later than September 2019, but an exact

date is uncertain. Greek elections regularly take place earlier than expected.

The Greek government's attitude toward Russia also has ramifications for European and US security policies. In particular, Souda Bay is a key US naval support base on the Greek island of Crete and used by NATO for operations. Upgrading its role and facilities relies on reaching a longer-term agreement between Greece and the United States—an arrangement opposed behind the scenes by Russia. The current Greek government continues to negotiate this deal, but there is a clear lack of enthusiasm on Syriza's part, despite the economic and security benefits of such an agreement.⁴²

The European Union conducts its foreign policy on the basis of full consensus by its member states. As long as this is the case, the EU will be a weak foreign policy actor. It can only be as strong as its weakest link, and Greece, along with countries such as Hungary, is already practicing the pocket veto prerogative on EU policy making vis-à-vis Russia. Growing frustration with the evolving Greek reorientation has even led analysts to consider the possibility of cutting Greece loose in a "grand bargain" approach.⁴³ Such loose European talk and limited options create the potential for a conceivable concurrence of an opportunistic Russia offering a financial lifeline amidst a Eurozone renegotiation.⁴⁴

In essence, transatlantic relations are on the verge of being further undermined by the Greek Syriza coalition government that is neither oriented toward improving relations with the United States—exacerbated of late by the Trump presidency—nor positively inclined toward a Europe it perceives as strangling Greece economically and forcing it into impoverished subservience.

39 Con Coughlin, "NATO's United Front Under Threat after Greece Signs Arms Deal with Russia," *Telegraph*, July 8, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/natos-united-front-under-threat-after-greece-signs-arms-deal-wit/>.

40 Markos Kounalakis, "European Confederacy Slowly Dies," *Sacramento Bee*, June 27, 2015, <http://www.sacbee.com/opinion/op-ed/article25534822.html>.

41 Philip Chrysopoulos, "New Poll Shows New Democracy 17.5% Ahead of Syriza," *Greek Reporter*, April 11, 2017, <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2017/04/11/new-poll-shows-new-democracy-17-5-ahead-of-syriza/>.

42 Alexis Papahelas, "Agreement Needed on Souda Bay," *Kathimerini*, May 10, 2017, <http://www.ekathimerini.com/218283/opinion/ekathimerini/comment/agreement-needed-on-souda-bay>.

43 Stefan Wagstyl, "Germany's Wolfgang Schäuble puts Grexit back on the agenda," *Financial Times*, July 16, 2015, <https://www.ft.com/content/4bb34e4e-2bcf-11e5-8613-e7aedbb7bdb7?mhq5j=e7>.

44 "Signal: Acelaland, the United States of Europe and the New Hanseatic League," Eurasia Group, June 29, 2017, <http://mailchi.mp/eurasiagroup/signal-acelaland-the-united-states-of-europe-and-the-new-hanseatic-league-lshlqkhtd0?e=e0c1842e88>. In an interview with Eurasia Group, Karthik Sankaran made a flippant, if telling statement: "I was joking that the Russians should just pay Greece \$100 billion, at least in perpetuity, for the Sergey Gorkhov Memorial Base for the Russian Mediterranean fleet. You'd accomplish a few different things. You'd make Greece sustainable. You would make Greece, which historically at least, has been a country that has had an element to the left and seen a great deal in common with their kind of coreligionists in Russia. The great enemy of Greece is their neighboring NATO member 'ally,' Turkey."