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Attempting to Revise the Treaty of Lausanne: Greek Foreign Policy and Italy during the Pangalos Dict

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Attempting to Revise the Treaty of Lausanne: Greek Foreign Policy and Italy during the Pangalos Dictatorship, 1925–1926

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In June 1925, General Theodoros Pangalos imposed his dictatorship on Greece. During his 14-month rule, he set as one of his basic foreign policy goals the revision of the territorial settlement imposed on Greece and Turkey by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Wanting to secure Eastern Thrace and possibly even part of Western Asia Minor for Greece, Pangalos sought the backing of at least one Great Power with interests in the region, in this case Italy, as its dictator, Benito Mussolini, remained equally hostile and aggressive toward Turkey. Pangalos tried to reach an understanding with Mussolini concerning the possibility of joint Greco-Italian action against Turkey. The first signs of closer co-operation came in early July 1925 when the Italian under-secretary of foreign affairs, Dino Grandi, visited Athens for discussions with Pangalos. However, a more important initiative involved the official visit of two Greek ministers—Loukas Kanakaris-Roufos, the foreign minister, and Anastasios Tavoularis, the transport minister—to Rome in early March 1926. They met with Mussolini who, because of British pressure, now seemed reluctant about Pangalos' ambitious plans for joint action against Turkey. The Greek leader's hopes to revise Lausanne ended.

The signing of the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923 that ended the 1919–1922 Asia Minor War proved a turning point in Greek foreign policy. Greece's defeat by the Turkish forces of Mustafa Kemal saw the violent uprooting of the Greek population of Asia Minor, Pontus, and Eastern Thrace—more than one million refugees flowed into Greece. This situation in turn signalled the supposed collapse of the “Great Idea,” the policy of Greek irredentism. Moreover, Lausanne delimited the Greco-Turkish border in Thrace along the route of the Maritsa [Evros] River, leaving Western Thrace to Greece—with the minor exception of the tiny district of Karagach ceded