

ELIAMEP; 10 02 2017

Thanos Dokos, George Tzogopoulos

Greeks have a romantic notion of Russia; "In difficult times they will help us." Although there is no evidence that this will be so, eg the Russian failure to bail out Cyprus with loans. Most recent polls say: "Russia is the most friendly power to Greece".

The Greek Government well understands the value of disinformation and uses it domestically. But the Government is completely closed to hearing the message that Russia is conducting an influence and disinformation campaign against Greece. The public will likewise resist the idea, indeed they will conclude that it is others who are doing this.

ELIAMEP tries to be non-ideological and useful to the government. ELIAMEP cannot do anything which targets Russia alone. Moreover there are very few staff who are competent to address this issue. George Tzogopoulos is an exception. Most staff have had very little exposure to the outside world. Few speak good English. Many have ideological problems.

ELIAMEP will fight to prevent Greek reorientation away from the west towards Russia and China. But the current argument is to improve relations with Russia and China. ELIAMEP cannot publicly say "politicians are taking Russian money, or Russia is spreading disinformation to deceive us".

The question is, are people pro-Russian because they understand, or because they are ignorant? If it is the latter, ELIAMEP can help put this right. It is fine that Russia and China should pursue their national interests. But Greece should understand its national interests and the need to protect them.

So, it needs a lot of thinking about how to manage introducing this issue so that we have a positive effect. Perhaps the way for ELIAMEP to introduce this issue would be to expose professionals to the idea that the nature of conflict and competition in the world is changing, starting by/ looking at new methods of conflict, Understand that people are using information in new ways which we need to be aware of, etc. looking at Russia's use of new weapons in different places. This can be done and will start the process of making people aware.

NB. The Government is crumbling and may be out in 6 months. if Mitsotakis wins the next elections and become PM, he is not pro-Russian.

Despina Afentouli

Key Government people have close links to Russia.

The Government is now covertly pro-Russian; it was overtly so at first. Pro-government Media is also pro-Russian. The Government is trying to control the media completely. It has failed so far, so it is trying to get the media which does support the government to undermine media which does not.

Ivan Savvidis, a strongly pro-Russian entrepreneur in Northern Greece is trying to buy a very important centrist media outlet, which is upper middle class and pro-western. It includes: Lambrakis Press, the weekly "To vima", the daily "Ta nea". If he succeeds it will have an important effect.

Greeks think they need the US but they like Russia. If Trump and Putin reach some sort of agreement this will also reinforce pro-Russian sentiment. Whatever specialness the US was seen to have will be lost completely.

She is in contact with Professor MARANTZIDIS from Macedonia University who runs a public opinion survey with SKAI. They report that the attitude to Russia, especially from young people, is devastating and a very serious issue. These people do not remember the Cold War at all and are really attracted by Putin's demonstration of power.

Despina also coordinates Caucasus countries and Moldova within NATO and sees a lot of Russian disinformation put into Georgia.

Targets for our activity;

The main vehicle for Russian influence in Greece is cultural, showing the affinity between peoples. This is reflected in lots of TV programmes.

The Orthodox religion is an important weapon which Russia is using. The Russian patriarch is trying to exceed the influence of the Greek patriarch. Bishop Emmanuel of Reghion – Metropolitan of France – will be a good ally for us. Despina organised a NATO forum on religion and security in Jan 2016 and at the end of Feb 2017 is bringing Georgian Orthodox Bishops to NATO. The Montenegrin church is trying to sabotage this discussion of religion and euro atlantic security. Montenegro and other Balkan Orthodox religions look to Serbia and Russia, not to Greece. The exceptions are Bishop Anastasios in Albania, Bishops in Romania and Kosovo.

Currently we cannot access the Greek educational system. Most teachers and professors are dogmatically very left-wing.

Politicians: even "New Democracy" party, the centre-right junior coalition partner, cannot afford to come out as anti-Russian. Its key deputy leader, MOD Kammenos is pro-Russian. Indeed, very few in any party will be prepared to come out as anti-Russian

Defence procurement: Russians are well entrenched in this, due to bribery. Greek defence correspondents accredited to MOD are the most corrupted of all Greek journalists. They work as a ring. It will be easy for a middle man to approach them and buy them. For example, regarding the Greek purchase of the Russian S300 air defence missiles Despina thinks that the Russian defence attaché is the main method of Russian influence on them.

Tasos Telloglou, *Inside Story*

In Greece, the press is not only black and white, there is also a grey area.

For example, they got Wikileaks three years ago. The dilemma was whether to publish or not. 98% of Greek journalists will publish anything. Tasos would only publish if he can demonstrate the facts are true, no matter what the source.

There is a serious problem with Russians, they are more and more skilfully exploiting the rules of our society. For example, they offer journalists a scoop playing to our system when, in fact, it is active measures to deceive us. The Russians steal material and pass it to the press through a 3rd party for deniability. Good journalists will try and verify the information but the Russians can often manage to fake the verification. About 63% of journalists are Russophiles in Greece. Tasos' understanding of how the Russians operate is due to his work experience in Berlin where he saw how journalists had got material from East Germany which was subsequently proved to be planted and the journalists were manipulated.

There is currently a serious Russian backed attempt to take over a significant section of the Greek media. This is led by a Russian Ivan Savvides and a Giannis Karageorgis, a friend of Konstantin Malofeyev. Malofeyev paid for Karageorgis' marriage in Moscow. Karageorgis has bought 11 local TV channels across Greece and wants to create his own national network. The current Govt. sees this as an advantage, not a problem. The main Greek news agency has Sputnik and RT officially as its main partner. They are vulnerable because they need money. The Russians are able to buy people quite cheaply in Greece. They look for those with financial problems and pay them relatively little money. For example, Livanis, owner of Epikera, gets 50k Euros from the Russians each year.

Tasos is currently producing a TV programme on Cyber warfare. It is now being edited and should be ready by the end of February. It will look at elections in France and Germany. He talked first to companies doing post cyber-attack autopsies rather than talking to State run organisations. Most countries outsource their analysis / autopsies of cyber-attacks. Only the Estonians never do this.

Subsequently he did talk to the Federal Germany office for IT Security. He has studied APT28, the Russian group who hacked the German parliament and the Democratic convention. He has studied the hacking of Channel 5 Monde in France, and the Russians setting up of a CDU page in the Baltic states.

He assesses that the Russians started to hack into French systems at the same time as the sale of the Mistral ships to Russia were stopped but he is certain that the Russians had penetrated the French system 3 months before this.

Tasos works for a Conservative newspaper but he has trouble from his Editor who is frightened of his attacking the Russians (in print).

The Russians think of Greece as their own back yard, for historic reasons. Greece is thought of as a special case. The Prime Minister went on a visit to Ukraine yesterday and even the simple act of visiting gave him a lot of problems from supporters of Russia in Greece.

Tasos understands that Putin outsourced the Ukrainian operation to Konstantin Malofeyev and gave him all the hotels as a reward. The current Greek defence minister has attended a party organised by Malofeyev who paid for his electoral campaign. Russians see Greece as a weak link in NATO.

Arkady Rotenberg from St Petersburg was sent to try and buy up lots of Northern Greece from Russians who had moved into Northern Greece.

Ivan Savvidis is a Pontic Greek from Georgia but speaks Russian, not Greek. He was the Director of a tobacco company in Rostov on Don smuggling tobacco into Transnistria via Cypriot companies with offices in London. He is a Russian citizen and the main spokesperson for Russians in Northern Greece.

The CATANERU, which includes SKAI TV, is the biggest Conservative media organisation in Greece and it includes Inside Story. They have been helped by TE Correspondent in the Netherlands. They are entirely web based and put out 2 new stories a day. They have 2000 subscribers in Greece. Inside Story has written extensively about Russia. But no one else will publish about Russia. People are frightened to tackle Russia. For example, General Kostovakos who is head of the EU military delegation in Brussels is a good guy but he "would not mess with the Russians".

Ioannis Armakolas

Also at Thessaloniki University. Expert on the Balkans.

He is seriously concerned about Russia in the region. The region is so weak despite heavy investment by the West that the situation could be overturned by Russia. This is especially true in Bosnia, Serbia and Kosovo.

Russian influence is insidious but everywhere, so it is difficult to pin point. Their funding is difficult to identify. The current crisis is transforming Greek society very negatively. In the early 1990's Greece was not pro-Russian. Even in 2005 there was immense trust in the EU. (Although not in the US), and 5 times more people trusted the EU than trusted Russia. But this is not true today. There is a need to fight to re-establish in Greece trust in Western institutions. Furthermore, anti-German feeling has been revived in Greece. There are historical reasons for anti-German feeling but this later revival has been artificially generated.

The best regional analysis by the Ministry of Interior think tank which gets most EU funding, which makes it self-sufficient from Govt. It is an internal body which does officer training. Ioannis sits on its board.

Sissy Alonistiotou *Inside Story & Journalists about Journalism*

These people are prepared to do a private study, not for publication, of the Russian influencing and financing of the Greek political and media systems. They will also do analysis papers for publication which of necessity will be less explicit and will translate and distribute material in Greece on Russian disinformation and influence measures if we can provide it.

Sissy, with her colleagues at JAJ and Inside Story, will create the basis of our hub in Greece.