

Key Note Speech

Professor Nikos Kotzias

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs

Conference 15-16 March 2019

Kranidiotis Amphitheater, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Thank you all!

Now, here is my issue: when so many people during this Conference say such nice things about yourself truly, one cannot help but think that maybe the person in question should not utter a word to ensure the nice impression stays on.

But let me start by thanking my four dear friends, the Ministers, who took the time, made the journey and were here for this personal, yet collaborative, academic celebration.

I wish to warmly thank Yiannakis Kassoulides, the Nestor of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus. Thank you so much, Ditmar (Bushati): you were the first person I met and I thoroughly enjoyed the nice talks we had and the events we held at the University of Tirana. And thank you, Daniel (Mitov), as the two of us have worked hard on a series of issues regarding us, Bulgaria and our future together.

My thanks go to my namesake, Nikola (Dimitrov). I could very well be from North Macedonia, I guess, since Nick is a common name there. So here we are: Nik and Nick. Still, the situation is not exactly the same because you as a landlocked state do not have much sea. And fortunately, to paraphrase a Greek expression, no one was at sea.

I wish to, moreover, thank our nowadays and former Foreign Ministers as well as our many friends, the parliamentarians, who are attending this Conference.

Let me greet our peers, the Professors who have come over for these two days, from various academic institutions, the Universities of Crete, Peloponnese, Thrace, Thessaloniki and of course Universities of greater Athens and Piraeus area. And, certainly, a big thank-you to all of you, the wonderful crowd who dedicated yesterday and today to this two-day event that has been going on for a total of 12-13 hours, with you being actively involved in it, too.

But above all, let me acknowledge my students, the girls and the boys, young ladies and gentlemen alike. I have often said that there is no better job in the world, even if it is actually underpaid in Greece, than that of an academic Professor teaching at a University like the University of Piraeus. We were and are still fortunate to get the top Social Sciences undergraduates, considering their admission scores.

But do let me say a big thanks to my distinguished and beloved colleagues who work for the Department of International & European Studies, of University of Piraeus. It is an honour to have collaborated and to have shared so much with them while working hard over the years to make this a Department which, quite possibly, is the best for International Relations in Southern Europe.

I shall certainly thank the University's and the School's Dean and the Rector and their respective teams for everything they have done for us, for helping us out and for honoring me.

I wish to, still, refer and pay a special tribute but also extend my thanks to the thousands of students who, as we were reminded today, and as my colleague Fotini Asderaki told us yesterday, used to flood the classes, sit down on the steps and even hop on the window sill.

The happiest time for a Professor is no other than when upon walking into his classroom he finds it packed with students and when people sign up for his elective course by the dozen and the student name list is full almost as soon as it opens. Or when students attend his classes despite the fact that they did not make it to that list, and therefore he won't be giving them a grade since they have not officially enrolled but the students do not mind it and they still show up. This is my biggest joy and a source of gratification that makes me feel fortunate in life. I have been fortunate with my family. I have been fortunate with work. I have been fortunate with young people and the people who trusted us and all those people who entrusted us with educating their offspring at University.

I had another piece of good fortune, though it did not simply happen out of sheer luck. What was that? You see, I spent my life and evolved as an ad hoc expert, who retired with the rank of Ambassador from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which I started from as a trainee and where I worked for 17 years. And parallel to that, for over 30 years, I got to teach foreign policy students in Greece and abroad. My favorite subject, and that of my students, was "Special issues in Greek Foreign Policy".

Then as Anna, my daughter, puts it, as one long prepared after 30 years of theoretical work and nearly 20 years of practice I evolved as a University Professor.

All this experience of mine, due to my practice, my work, my academic employment and the job at the Ministry, as far as I am concerned, boils down to three truths which I would like to share with you, hopefully without tiring you much -though I guess I will eventually tire you a little.

First, it helped me realize that politics is anything but boring. This is just the way it is: never, ever, will it bore you. Nonetheless, should your goal be to make a difference and change things, then it is bound to have its bitter moments. And thus, you will always be oscillating between pure interest and a bitter aftertaste.

I also found out that politics, which is not boring, calls for a collective spirit. It becomes a source of great satisfaction when it offers solutions, when it helps add a grain of sand to the hill that is the world so that things improve.

The second thing I realized was that science is teamwork and it involves a community of people. There is no greater team than the one you get to spend three or four years with. You see young students join an academic institution fresh out of senior high and then we see them go through an entire process where they grow and eventually graduate as mature citizens, with many of them - I always hope most of them will be- turning out so much better than us. Every time, upon setting foot in my classes, I would remind myself that most of my audience were bound to

become better and more important than me, which also gave me a sense of worth.

Nonetheless, I might let you know that the practice of science, much like politics is more often than not, and especially when you are being systematically under attack, is a very solitary. I hold the opinion that no other occupation is as lonesome as that of a composer, which applies to writing music as much as it does to writing books, be they academic volumes or novels, and thus to writing. Just make sure you look up what that great American writer, H.D.Thoreau, wrote about his loneliness and the demons who possessed him whenever he wrote.

The third thing I have learnt, which I was not always good at, was that scientific work and politics require public speaking. As concerns public speech, I counted on at least three principles which were my compass. So, let me offer to the youth, who may eventually find themselves in politics someday, in particular, food for thought here.

First principle: speak less, when you expect to be heard. Speaking more, does not mean you shall be addressing more people. Speaking so that the audience can sense you mean business, will get you bigger audiences.

Second principle I abided by was to allow myself time to listen and learn. In science and in politics the most important thing is to ask questions and to wonder about this and that and the way things are.

Our friendship, the one that connects all five of us, former and acting ministers who are here today, was built on the questions we asked each other, which we did in a lively manner.

My connection to Ditmar is one such example. Since day one I was amazed by the fact that he would ask questions, on Greece, how things are done, how come this is like that, why it is the way it is and it got me thinking. (A question gets us halfway through the reply, as they say in the world of science and as we tell our aspiring PhD students, isn't that so, Mr. Dean?)

The third thing I have learnt, which my experience corroborated, my very interesting and hopefully long life that is, is a quote from Bertold Brecht who wrote, in a verse of his, that whenever you speak, you ought to consider the ear that is listening.

The mouth says one thing the ear hears something else. I grasped that when I went to Ankara for the very first time in 1996 and encountered Turks who were fearful of Greece. Theirs was an entirely different image compared to what we have in mind and I am referring to the common individual. Whenever we talked, given the engrained prejudice, they would hear a different thing as their perception was different.

By the way, let me also point to the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as such was faced with a tough reality during my tenure and over my less-than-four-year term. I hope you realize that the good reputation and global standing of Greece, which many are taking for granted today, was not given 4 years ago.

Four years ago I found a country stuck in the quagmire of unreliability. In the global arena nobody cared about what we had to say. No one wished to listen to what Greece had to say, as one of our diplomats told me 4-5 years ago, no one cared about meeting with us even within the marginal meeting within the UN either. Back then, we were asking people to meet with them whereas last September 2018 we were so overbooked we had to turn down six times as many proposals for appointments and meetings, compared to the number of actual meetings we already had booked, and our schedule was so hectic we would start at 7 am and go on until way past midnight, and sometimes even later than that. So, statistically speaking, this shift is really interesting.

We did a lot at the level of the Ministry. It was not me, you see, it was the Ministry which, as I have said, is the best in Greece. And we clearly demonstrated our set of values which we have also provided tangible proof of.

How did we kick off our work and what we had in mind and planned? Above all, we worked on the ground that the nation-state is still a core and dynamic factor, albeit not the only one in today's world.

We knew that when it comes to small states, in particular, the role of the nation-state is critical but that role should be combined with self-protection, the use of International democratic principles and international law.

We knew that the great powers still dominate the scene and that their policies are still playing a major role although this hardly signifies that smaller nations have no role to play today.

We were aware that a small state upgrades and rebrands itself by doing what Eleftherios Venizelos did for Greece, in his good moments, i.e. at the time when he formed alliances.

At the same time, we had to bear in mind that next to bringing the world closer together as one, there is another trend, too, that of fragmenting the world, and that several global issues emerge on a local and a national level.

In addition, we learned and proved that a diplomacy of all-or-nothing, which I will unfold right after, let me rephrase that, the diplomacy of "take it or leave it", has no prospect. There is no future for those who wish to impose it on us as well and I have, to that end, made it clear over the years that we will not act under pressure and that when our national interests require it, we will definitely act. We should not ask others, though, to do the exact opposite of what we preach, nor should we expect them to act unlike us. After all, this is valid in real life. Do as you will be done by. What we do not approve of or condone, what you do not wish others to do unto you, you should refrain from doing yourself.

We also understood that our diplomacy ought to be active and in some cases pro-active, but definitely not defensive or reactive. A policy to promote plans and alternative solutions. It needed to be coupled with proposals based on the interests of our country, the region and Europe. It had to be the type that spreads and permeates every diplomatic field: economic, citizen, cultural diplomacy etc.

And there is something else, which we have yet to learn: we need to transform the successful diplomacy we have scored

over these last three and a half years, to capitalize on our relations and develop primarily economic relations, with certain states.

And last, in this world we found ourselves in, the world I have described and others have followed suit as well, globally, there is a triangle of instability, with Ukraine at the top and Libya, Syria and Iraq, which makes it imperative that we foster stability and not allow ourselves to get destabilized: security and stability policies matter a lot.

This is not a doctrine we are simply preaching about just because Hobbes mentioned it or some other figure quotes him. This is pragmatism. We will either allow the waves of instability to shallow us or we shall impose stability together with our friends in the region.

There is something else we found out about. We learnt that in the context of pro-stability politics it is of the utmost importance to stand up for human rights. And defending human rights presupposes the survival of the people, defending human lives themselves.

I am referring to this because, for instance, there is Syria. What is the point of claiming that what happened over there, the death toll of 500,000 and the 12-14 million of homeless and displaced, was somehow linked to human rights? Whatever we do, it must be practical and meaningful, aimed to improve the lives of people and help protect them.

The aforementioned were among our core issues at the level of the Ministry. So far, I have made it familiar to you concerning our fundamental thoughts in a high-quality Ministry,

the personnel of which is exceptional and where there are people with whom I have been collaborating for over 30 years, who are friends and everyone worked on the issues in an innovating, creative and productive manner.

On that note, after having extended my thanks to the people I mentioned in the beginning, and especially the University and my dear colleagues there, I will now acknowledge and thank the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the members of which worked with me on promoting our shared objectives.

I wish to thank the former Director of my Diplomatic Cabinet, Ms. Tassia Athanassiou, who was unable to attend today since she is moving from Rome to Moscow.

I also wish to thank Thodoros Passas, my Diplomatic Cabinet Director over the last year, and wish him "Happy Name day", along with all the Theodores and Doras for whom today is a special day.

Thank you both, Theodore and Tassia.

I have been meaning to thank Yiorgo and Yorgo, Thanassi and Alexandro, Athena-Maria, Christina and Christos, Niko and Dimitri along with our young Akis.

But let me pay a special tribute to my colleagues from the National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and University of Piraeus who volunteered and helped me out over the past 4 years.

At this point, I must single out my friend Petros Liacouras, a university peer and a close partner in conducting serious and major negotiations.

What I insisted on telling all of them was to not turn others into their yardstick. I told them that whenever you measure yourself up as opposed to the others, you conveniently tend to make them smaller so as to cope and that is a mistake. Your yardstick should be the size of the problems and that will force you to grow bigger and taller.

The duty of a Minister and any human being working in the field of Foreign Policy is exactly that. We should not heed our ego; we must stay focused on our plan, our ideas, the homeland.

In this Ministry there were also certain individuals who were lured by the sirens of fast money - I would venture to guess there are more such people in other Ministries. It was through hard work, which I am very proud of, despite the venomous attacks we were under and which we are still under, that we tracked down the people who had broken the law and made a profit from "selling visas". As a result, we forwarded dozens of such cases to the Defense Attorney and some of the perpetrators are now serving prison.

I am proud of the fact that such negative exceptions were made public. I believe in not covering such stories up or sweeping them under the carpet, or they downgrade and undermine our Ministry, which is the best in the country.

Moreover, it was by working together that we managed to find dozens of millions of Greek state funds that had been just left to sit idly abroad.

We were able to build new scientific institutions and to breathe new life into old ones. We reactivated the Center for Analysis and Planning. Together with Christos Rozakis, this

important Greek jurist whom I should thank, we mobilised our Scientific Council. The "classified funds" are now subject to the scrutiny of the Hellenic Parliament, and I am really proud of this development that some pretend they have forgotten about.

We opened new offices abroad, exactly where they were needed, like in Erbil, Iraq, where we opened a Consular Office and in Singapore, the hub for state-of-the-art technology, where we now have a new Embassy.

On top of that, we moved diplomats from cosy nooks to critical posts, where the battles are being fought, such as in Turkey, China and Germany.

Another great achievement is that we succeeded, thanks to hard work, in setting up 16 new institutional systems of international cooperation and action, regional and international ones. Greece, in a nutshell, managed to create 16 brand-new international on going conferences and organizations, encompassing a wide array of participating states, within the space of 4 years.

And part of this work involves the establishment of a Secretariat with the Cypriot Republic now putting it together so that it coordinates at least the trilateral and quadrilateral cooperation schemes for the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider region, as the total number of those schemes currently amounts to 8.

What we actually achieved was to politically transform the E.Mediterranean area as a region of relative autonomy. We separated it somehow from the Middle East.

We did not intertwine our foreign policy's scope for growth and partnerships with the core of the Middle East problem. We also kept it a little apart from the rest of the West, since ours is an area with its own special issues, special prospects and capabilities.

I have a confession to make. When we went to Riyadh on a state visit, the President of the Hellenic Republic was there and so was there Ambassador George Yennimatas. Our hosts took us all to their new Museum –remember, Mr. Yennimatas? - where they had on display Greek artifacts dating back to 6,000 years ago.

What is the first thought that would normally cross the mind of a common person who works in foreign policy at the sight of those exhibits? It would be that back in that era, 5,000 or 6,000 years ago, ties between South Europe and the area that is nowadays part of the Arab world were closer, all things considered. That the agenda at that time was positive. That it apparently was aimed at improving social, cultural, and economic relations.

That is what gave birth to what I named "the positive agenda", which was meant to help escape the negative agenda of the Middle East and has in the meantime become a popular term.

Our positive agenda was about ways to build new institutions, regional and international, which unlike the other 500 that are there would not talk about the various conflicts in the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is indeed a vast subject. Should we keep focusing all of our

attention solely on that and exhaust all of our might and limit the prospects of the region to that alone?

That is how we created the "Spirit of Rhodes" and, like Yiannis Kasoulides said, we all embraced the positive agenda. We had joint youth festivals in Cairo and much more as we kept coming up with initiatives and, like Petros Liacouras said yesterday, we worked on developing that special security and stability system as well.

Thus, we set the Eastern Mediterranean apart. We singled it out, methodologically speaking, and fostered new cooperation schemes, such as what Ditmar mentioned before, when he talked about the cross-border quadrilateral of the Balkans.

On top of the aforementioned, and the last thing we did, just a little while before the political leadership changed at the Ministry, was to add a new partnership for agricultural products and CAP-related issues, the members of which are Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, plus the four Balkan countries who are also EU member-states.

We did promote all possible forms of cooperation and did more, beyond the scope of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans, by creating two organizations of general interest. One of them aims at defending cultural and religious communities in the Middle East, where there was a multicultural population the West has seemingly been interested in putting back together for the past hundred years. Still, that community had already been there for over 3,000 years and it was being unraveling without anyone objecting in the meantime.

We also helped what I had been writing and teaching about since 1993, when I first formulated it, materialize: The Ancient Civilizations Forum. The Forum brings together the cultures and civilizations that still have a timely and topical role to play in this day and age, such as the Chinese, the Indian, the Iraqi, the Iranian, the Egyptian, the Italian, the Peruvian, the Bolivian and so on.

In parallel, we undertook some major scholarly and scientific work concerning the delimitation and the declaration of the Exclusive Economic Zone and the extension of territorial waters. And we did something which, as a Minister, I cannot fathom why nobody had done over the past 40 years: we drew and charted all the Greek gulfs and bays upon measuring them along with drawing straight baselines with the assistance of distinguished international and Greek cartographers and experts. The zones were measured and, to be exact, we determined the baselines.

We did the preparatory work which should have been done a long time ago. Just like we drafted the law, which I suppose shall be brought to the Parliament soon, along with the law for the National Security Council and the new amended law for Ministry's Organigram, structure and function.

All of that involved partnerships, and our alliances, all 16 of them, along with support measures, within the Ministry.

A question now begs itself: 4 years down the line, how could someone (I know many of you must be knowledgeable about political system typology) tackle foreign policy typology-

wise? I mean, how does one tell one foreign policy from another?

There can be many sets of criteria. Yet, based on our own needs, experience and practice, two are the main criteria to tell foreign policy strategies apart.

The first depends on which school of thought people who work in foreign affairs belong to: the proponents of one school of thought are solution-oriented, the other school is popular with people who either feed off problems or are afraid to solve them.

The second criterion is about choosing between active or passive policies: people are, respectively, either proactive and wish to get things done or else sit it out and claim that time will do their work- or time is on their side. I guess this was what people thought when Alexander the Great was building his empire- they believed time was their ally.

Given the aforementioned two criteria I suggest that, taxonomy-wise, we group foreign policy strategies into four distinct categories, the fourth being typical of the work we did.

The first of the fourth categories dislikes solutions it is passive, and simply avoids getting involved, as Nikola and Ditmar said. It is the policy of "let the country go to ruins, no one can blame me."

The proponents of such an approach accused me of fixing the zone measurements, with reference to the numbers and not the legal existence thereof. And yet, the relevant international legislation had been there for the past 40 years, no one having reproached anyone else before me that they had failed to do the measuring. What was the reason why? They were having a great

time. That is what statespeople are accustomed to doing, so let's not even go there.

The second approach is anti-solution but not in a passive manner. The followers of such an approach will do everything they can to hamper or not to proceed with any solution whatsoever. There is a pattern there and it is what the opposition normally follows, so they kicked off with that and then added to that when we started working on the Prespa Agreement.

What was it they said? Let us wait, they said, for the second coming of foreign policy and some other, some better, agreement will come along. They have been saying exactly that for the past 50 years. It is on its way, yes, it is, they said, it is coming. Should you try to solve the issue, then they say "oh, no solving for now, leave it for later". This is not mere passivity; they do work, and passionately so, to make sure that no solution may be found.

The third approach is in favor of solving problems, albeit not so energetically. It aims at passively influencing the surroundings somehow, much like a subsystem in systems theory, but clashing is certainly out of the question. Whatever we can do, we will do definitely it, but quietly.

The fourth approach, which reflects my philosophy, says you must be an influencer: you must impact on events, turn situations around, be fearless, and do that whatever the price may be. To do so, nonetheless, your initiatives must be well-prepared and carefully thought out. Whatever you decide to pursue, it is necessary to show that the country shall benefit from it and that it helps upgrade itself. You also must

demonstrate you are willing and committed to show trust and create an ambience of trust with the other party so you can all grow and develop.

I am aware that the fourth strategy requires courage, valence, outspokenness, intellectual, mental and moral strength. And, of course, partnerships as well as resilience to sordid attacks.

Let me explain why. Pursuing solutions to problems is not pleasant to all. It is not enjoyable, I get that. There are people who preach inertia. There are some who have made inertia their religion.

There are certain people who live off and profit from the existence of the very problems you may be trying to solve. Maybe they have written a whole book on the problem but they are unable to offer a solution. Or maybe they are making a living thanks to an institution that can go on as long as the problem is not being solved, so they are absolutely against solving the issue.

Moreover, this kind of people believe the country is at no risk when problems are being perpetuated unsettled. What is worse, they perceive solutions as something negative. It is not like they believe there are no solutions at all, it is just that to them any solution is by definition a negative or a counter to national interest one.

Why is it that any solution, which is not the outcome of warfare, is negative? Because there can be not one single solution after waging a war that will not necessarily involve some sort of compromise.

When you believe that every compromise is bad, it is rotten, it automatically equals defeat, then you cannot accept a compromise and you thus cannot endorse the solution, unless may be, just maybe, you agree to waging a war whereupon you will end up imposing your own solution completely but, then again, these wars, as a rule, do not end well.

Against the backdrop of such perceptions and having taken the four strategies into account, we opted for three types of conduct in dealing with the problems we were trying to solve, or that we indeed solved, in foreign policy.

Typologically, as you know, there is the ideal or pure type and the middle ground, two extremes and hundreds of variations in between the two. But in this case, typology-wise, I will dwell on the two extremities and the intermediate.

The first of the two extremes is against solving problems. Any solution is a shame and equals retreat. And so with regard to the issue of Cyprus and our foreign policy, our approach was tolerant if not partially positive.

But why was there no solution after all? Even so, we made a courageous step in the negotiation framework as we got to the core of the problem. The raising of guarantees and security thorny issues were included at the table and all the big states, the UN Secretary General included, agreed to the items on the agenda. Even the British side could not avoid it.

But when your stance is against finding solutions, when you do not wish for problems to be solved, then you do not like the Prespa Agreement. Some even called the Agreement an act of treason, which was either because they disliked the solution

being my brainchild or maybe they disliked the fact it had not been them supporting a solution instead of us or perhaps they do not wish for any resolution at all.

The other extreme stance is the antipode of what I was just explaining to you about. In this case there must be a solution at all costs. No matter what, whatever the proposal, we must go along with that to prove we are pro-solution.

You understand that the fans of solutions at-any-cost are fans of the Prespa Agreement, despite my allegedly having been rude during the negotiation. They said that, Nikola, no worries though, this is typically Greek. Then it got apparent that Nikola and I are on friendly terms, so the same people criticized the fact we are friends and it is still the same who said I was not nice to him.

As I said, the "solve-it-at-all-costs" proponents can live with the Prespa Agreement. They can tolerate it. It was our handling of the issue of Cyprus they did not like and our putting the issue on the table on new terms. But instead of lending an ear to what the government of Republic of Cyprus and the government of the Hellenic Republic have to say about the negotiation, they are listening to third parties. They have not told me exactly who the third parties are but they are listening to them instead.

It is my firm belief that, in our case, neither the former nor the latter perception are right. Both are simply classifying what they like and/or dislike, in general, but fail to either demonstrate the necessary creativity or to capitalize, each and every time, on the maximum scope that circumstances allow for

at the time. And they fail to grasp, dear colleagues, my dear youth, students, ladies and gentlemen, that our main issue is not whether they are for or against solutions.

The main issue is to find a solution that serves the national interests. I want a patriotic solution. If I can get a solution that, firstly, serves the national interests, secondly the interests of the region and, third, the interests of Europe, in that order, then I am going to fight for that solution to the end, not at the expense of others but certainly in our favor.

If the solution in question does not serve our national interests (and how could, for instance, the presence of occupation troops help in Cyprus?), then I cannot go along with that. My main criterion is not to agree to any solution in general or to object to and overrule whatever solution scheme comes along. My fundamental yardstick is whom that solution serves, how it serves them, where it aims, where it would take me in the future and will it signify stability?

That was what we, Ditmar and Nikola, always had in mind during our long negotiations. We never lost sight of the fact that we do agree we want a deal that stands the test of time, not a Versailles-like Treaty which, as soon as some balance of powers would change, on either side, we would again be faced with the same issues all over again.

Since I mentioned Cyprus, I wish to say a few words about Yiannis Kassoulides, whom I would define as the Nestor of Foreign Affairs. Through the years that I was Minister I was truly fortunate to be friends with him and he is still a friend today.

He is a man who thinks clearly, deep and solidly, a calm person with values and principles. He is the most knowledgeable person about the Arab world. He had already been foreign minister for 8 years when we first met. As of the first moment I told him: "Dear Yiannaki, let us look into what we can do about the Arab world and how we can proceed. Please, help me with your experience". We will be presenting his new book in a couple of months, here in Athens and he is also held in high esteem within the European Union.

I want, also, to say a few words about my friend Daniel Dimtrov, with whom we worked together and created a pattern that pestered all Europeans. Remember, Daniel, what it was?

Everyone in Europe talks about a tremendous Franco-German friendship that put an end to 120-140 years of between them conflict. But, if there are two states that are peacefully living together within the European Union and other international organizations, the oldest such examples are not Germany and France, as big as they may be: the oldest such partnership is that of Greece and Bulgaria.

Actually, in jest, I used to say that in case you aspired to being crowned king of the Greek Byzantium, you had to have a descriptive adjective next to your name like Bulgaroctonus (Slayer of the Bulgars). There is no Germanoctonus in France or Francoctonus in Germany that we know of.

My point is that we tend to look for global paradigms and overlook our achievements and our positive energy. So, thank you, Daniel, for our overall cooperation.

I teased everyone by giving them Greek names. There was Yiannakis (Johnie) for me and my friend, Ditmar Bushati, I called Dimitri. Ditmar is not Dimitri. Ditmar is actually a kind and wise man with whom I have often disagreed and those verbal clashes of ours taught me new things so I enjoyed talking to him.

I always advised my young colleagues, since I am a bit older than they are, to be open and straightforward with me because I am not the type to be offended. I will assert my right to have an opinion about the domestic affairs of my homeland, the institutions I am a member of and my foreign relations. So how could I possibly deny someone else that right? Like I said before, do as you wish to be done by. Ditmar was a tremendous interlocutor who would ask great questions while being noble and wise.

Certainly, the youngest of my friends the Ministers, who is no less of a great friend, is Nikola Dimitrov, a modern-day politician, with a strong sense of duty who was looking at me when he first came over in the summer of 2017 as if he was wondering "who is this man and what is he trying to do?"

Because I was in touch with the Gruevski administration and Nikola Poposki, the ex-Minister who is our friend (not Gruevski, the other Nikola is our friend). And there was a look of mistrust in his eyes which was to be expected and made sense because the Balkan countries were aware of foreign policy that agencies in Greece had been playing, exactly what my interlocutors had mentioned, the blame game.

What was on these people's minds (and I was also advised to approach the situation that way but I do not think nor do I act like that) was to do the manoeuvring and then leave the other party hanging, get the blame game started and allege that failure was due to the other side.

That is how the Cypriot and the Greek side failed to come to an understanding with Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktas during the Annan plan negotiations. They thought he would not agree to the terms but he caught on, turned the tables, the Turkish-Cypriot side accepted the deal and we were left exposed with the referenda. No, I am telling you. You need to construct relations of clarity, trust and honesty and to have a straightforward talk. Whenever you would beg to differ, bring your disagreement to the table. There will be nothing under the table - no third parties. Let us be open, put our disagreement on the table, see whether we can solve it or not, and, in addition, build relations of trust.

With Nikola we built formidable relations of trust. Both of us have spent wakeful nights. We talked through the night. At the start of the second day of each of our discussions, over the first hour, we would always begin with recapping on the problem of the day before. We did the same with Ditmar in Crete and Korca.

Negotiation is needed between people who certainly have their own interests, their strengths, but also trust between people is necessary. The prerequisite that me and you, all of us and all of you are willing to take a chance. There is a risk, is not there? There will always be someone asking for our head on a platter.

So, what if I take that chance? Will my country come out stronger? Will it be a win-win outcome? Will it benefit all of our peoples? Once there is trust, and you know your interlocutor is not putting you on, you will have your negotiation without worrying about your personal cost.

I shall make a personal remark at this point: I remember, even back when I was a child, there were people in Greece saying (and I recall I mentioned that at the Delphi Economic Forum) "see now how neither a single minister, nor any government have the courage to tackle problems because they are all worried about the internal repercussions it is going to have?".

And I was a rascal and the government I was part of making the decision to solve the issue and to not exclusively focus on reactions at home.

What am I accused/criticized of today? I am accused of not focusing on domestic reactions the way my "prosecutors"/critics say. Had I focused on them though, it would have been the other way around: they would have accused me of not solving problems because of stressing over the internal repercussions of a solution. That is what I call a negative disposition towards solving issues.

Through the Prespa Agreement we managed, which was to our national interest, to end a clash on the name issue. We succeeded in giving our country its managerial/dynamic - let me not call it hegemonic- role in the region. We averted the taking-over of our north by third parties, such as Turkey. And we disallowed the domination of Islamic fundamentalist networks,

we pruned irredentism, which we must prune on all sides, and all of the above is not a one-way thing.

Let us set the record straight: how does "bring me weapons and I'll take you to Skopje" sound to you? It is a mantra, it is about our national interests and it has nothing to do with irredentism, some say.

The change we made and consolidated was tough. I must get this out of my system, I need to avow to that, how can I say it? Deep down inside I was telling myself it had to be done, that there is no deal without constitutional changes, without *erga omnes* and so on.

But I did not wish to be in Nikola's shoes when he was telling me "you see, our language, you have agreed and accepted it, you recognized it back in 1977", and Nikola did not want to be in my shoes either. We understood that compromise is not a walk in the park, and it is unlike what you see in those movies that are set in the 16th-17th century.

I think that, overall, by means of teamwork, partnerships and human relationships, thanks to building relations and an active foreign policy really intent on solving problems while primarily protecting national interests, never succumbing to the convenience of inertia, which would have let issues rot, our policy can be described as active and democratic.

It was active, solution-friendly and intertwined with a multilateral foreign policy-making. We developed our foreign policy in such a way as to strengthen bilateral relations between Greece and the United States. We reinforced the security relation through NATO but also bilaterally. It all led to what we

had been prepping for and is actually happening now: a quadrilateral scheme consisting of the USA, Israel, Cyprus and Greece and another quadrilateral I am hoping to see, that of France, Egypt, Greece and Cyprus. I look forward to all of the above being interconnected when they can.

Several voices were heard wondering how it is ever possible for a left-wing government to have such a good understanding with the United States? My reply to that was "Stalin had an even better relationship with the USA during WWII and Mao Che Tung promoted "table tennis diplomacy" with the much-quoted Henry Kissinger. How was that ever possible? It was because they had common interests in life. So do not reproach me or us. Blame it on common interests".

To paraphrase Kavafy, and the part where he talks about the three military generals, we would gladly serve some other common interests.

The starting point for everything we do though cannot be that "it is wrong to work with the Americans and it is wrong to find solutions". The starting point should be whether what we do indeed benefits the country. Does it help stability in the region which in turn benefits the country as well? This ought to be our denominator.

We, no doubt, have excellent relations with the Peoples Republic of China. I spent decades teaching Chinese foreign policy. With China we have no security relations. We have soft power relations, i.e. cultural, economic, which some westerners do not like. But let me tell you that 23% of Chinese trade and

investment go through Germany and 21.2 go to the U.K. when we are getting 0.7% which is no tremendous rate.

Still, let us be clear. They and us, we have a specificity: we are the only two civilizations which have survived for over 5,000 years. Remember that the formidable Mycenaean, as well the Minoan civilization in Crete, their social model, everything there was -as the great political economists pointed out, Smith, Marx etc.- in line with the Asian production paradigm. They were similar to the Chinese.

Shall I also remind you that it was there that all the great discoveries and the big philosophical questions came from? We should not barter away this specificity of ours. It is a historical feature. Though our security is connected to the west and our interests, too.

A few words now on the EU. I do not like it, I have not liked since day one, when in 1992 I joined the Ministry for the first time the mentality suggesting that one or another big power would tell us what they thought and we would simply agree or disagree with them.

We must share views in the European Union as well. There is an error in the europeanization theory though. It says we should get europeanized. I disagree because without us there is no Europe.

What they call europeanization, must also encompass our own interests and our own view. We must influence that and make an impact. We are not the mere passive recipients of a procedure.

The EU is also faced with a crisis issue. It has no mechanism to overcome the crisis. And there is also a democratization issue. Let me tell you what is worse and I wish to underscore it now as no reference was made to that during yesterday's panel discussion.

We tried with all of our might for over 40 years to democratize the European Union. We got to the Treaties of Amsterdam, Nice, Lisbon and the EU draft Constitutional treaty. I participated in each negotiation. With each and every one, the European Parliament's role was enhanced. Then came the crisis and then what happened? Capacities were removed from the European institutional system, despite being guaranteed by the Treaties, and an autonomous institution, the Eurogroup (of the Eurozone) emerged to torment us without being subject neither to any legal entity nor to any institutional scrutiny. Neither under the European Parliament nor under the Commission.

Individual states have a say now. This is a mechanism that no one is asking for it to be integrated within the European Stability Mechanism, and I believe it should be. At least do it to add an actual democratic element to this mechanism or else problems will start repeating themselves. In addition to that, the EU has nowadays become a bureaucratic mechanism which often lacks a sense of legitimacy.

The EU thinks that all problems are administrative: the banks are rescued, memoranda of understanding are signed, austerity is enforced. This policy is a boomerang, and they have been warned.

A young person cannot possibly wake up every morning to news about memoranda, hear about sanctions against a member-state in the afternoon and austerity measures in the evening. Despite that, there are still people in Brussels who think that the EU is the most appealing paradigm there is in the whole wide world.

You need more than a negative agenda. As I said upon commenting on the Eastern Mediterranean, you need to come up with a positive agenda. You need to have a Europe where state sovereignty will not disappear but where states interconnect. And moreover, in my opinion, a European Forum where the option of vetoing decisions on foreign and security policies should still be there.

Furthermore, I am of the opinion that what we need in Europe is an *ad hoc* budget for the future. Let us get funds earmarked for new technologies, research, energy retrofitting, migration and foreign policy.

I have to state on that note that the EU must have a migration policy, at least. I fully agree with my colleagues; we do need a European migration policy.

I will never forget about the first time I went to a Ministerial Council. I can talk about it now that I am no more Minister. It was back in late January 2015 when the rest of the cabinet was in Athens for they were being sworn-in and I attended my first European Foreign Minister Council where I raised the issue of migration before my peers.

I ended up being under attack, not just by my fellow Ministers who did not know me and I expected they would be

suspicious. The international press attacked me, too, the international news agencies did and the Greek press reproduced it.

Why? What did I say? I told them that apart from the Ukraine, the migration issue is cropping up. Daniel understood, that is how we became friends.

So I warned that a migration crisis was coming and that the UN, and other international organizations, should not have stopped providing financial assistance to states where the refugees had "camped" along with new economic migrants, as Jordan and Lebanon were no longer receiving financial aid.

I added that "they will be coming in hundreds and thousands"! Do you remember what they said? Do you even know about that? They said I was the only threat as I was the one creating new, big problems, when I was merely describing the problem that was surfacing.

Why was the EU unable to see the problem? Because it has no vision and it lacks strategic thinking. It cannot see further than its nose. It can see as far as the next two months.

Major trends, big flows, movements and shifts: it all has vanished. For the European Union the question of what kind of society we would like to live in has also disappeared. And what about the big geostrategic issues?

But, there can be no future without a vision. And there can be no change without entropy. When people have no vision, they become bureaucrats. The dreamers and the visionaries ought to be careful to not turn into fanciful and naive dreamers, but they still need to dream on, especially the youth. As the world is

changing in unpredictable ways, it calls for strategic thinking, now more than ever before, which is a fact that is also obvious in the case of Brexit.

For what is the United Kingdom? It is the first modern parliamentary democracy. It was the next parliamentary republic after ancient Athens. And what is that we witness? The UK Parliament seems to be in no position to have a serious discussion on how to deal with that country's big issue since they have been lacking in strategic thinking.

The British PM at the time opted for a referendum thinking he could win and show them who is in charge. He lost. His successor thought "once I replace him, I will do a better job". She is losing one vote after another and she is the one who was supposed to fix it.

How come? Are they mean people? No, but they have no strategic vision about the role they want their country to play in this new world that is emerging, and even more so in this world of major zigzagging which requires two principles that I have named myself.

One of them I called "the logic of the solution", meaning that your entire reasoning must be put to use, your strategic perception should be about how to solve a problem in ways that can help your own country and the wider region. Most certainly, the logic of the solution must have what I originally described as a "culture of compromise and consent", an expression that is now being used by the European Commission in its own documents.

There can be no solution unless there is a compromise. Not even two individuals can get along unless they first assimilate and understand each other's thinking and culture or else they will be unable to work together.

Today, as a state, we are aware, perhaps more and better than before, of what we can do for the future and how to claim it. And we have realized that power does not always equal claims and demands.

I have been telling my colleagues that Greece is a small country, it is maybe a tiny blot against the global backdrop, but in its region it is the most powerful country as far as the economy, its institutions and defense are concerned. Does this give rise to claims and demands? Does it lead to arrogance like the one we had vis-a-vis our friends in the rest of the Balkans during the '90s? It does not.

To me all this led to a sharpened sense of responsibility. Because the way you use your power, unless you are playing snooker is not similar to striking the ball for a win at a pool game, but should be aimed at bringing the region closer together to have a future together.

Our supremacy, as I often said whenever I was on a visit abroad, has been through three different periods. During the first, real socialism collapsed and every former socialist state was rushing to connect with the western world. Big investments materialized, next to networks of economic cooperation and cultural contacts.

But then came Thessaloniki, in 2003-2004, in the first decade of the new century, when every European country was

trying to join the EU and NATO, their fundamental motive being the one I have systematically insisted on: the truth of the matter is we must join forces and stick together, which is also the reason we joined hands and had the cross-border cooperation scheme and the other six partnerships in the region. How do you measure Montenegro or even Greece up against the Europe of 35 or even 40 states and a total population of 600,000 or 200 billion (187 billion now, to be exact) in GDP?

We need to walk together for, fight together, live together in this EU. To do so we must learn to listen to each other, to reach a compromise now, to understand there are shared interests in the region.

I am listening and have listened to what my peers had to say. Five years ago, we did not use to talk like that. Five years ago there were negative agendas, bias, fears, disbelief. Nowadays, we have one common language, we can articulate both our individual interests as states and the interests of the region in the face of those who think that the area is like it used to be in the 19th century, or just before the Balkan Wars.

Nonetheless, dear colleagues, the big question is not about what we do, how we get along and so on and so forth. The big question is what more we would need to do in the future. You see, neither a country's individual power nor our alliances can grow unless we put in place relevant policies, call them as you please, be it partnerships or allied policies.

But we must specialize in something as a country. Find out what is unique about our country. For example, Turkey has the special characteristic of easily sending troops over to third

countries and it can afford to watch coffins parading through its streets more easily than we do. Or, with reference to extreme Arab fundamentalism, people dream of dying to eventually go where there are maidens and whatever stereotypical, metaphysical or biased they may have in mind.

Can we, as a country, apart from creating partnerships, fostering growth in the region and enhancing our power, also specialize in mediation, in facilitating communication with third countries and assisting them in the framework of International organizations, in working on arbitration for places and regions where there are open or hidden conflicts? Can we be negotiators, masters of a trade we could pass on and disseminate in today's world?

We have, indeed, taken part in many negotiations. It is not widely known and I guess it never will be, nor is there any reason why it should become known for that matter, but we have participated in many arbitrations and have facilitated a lot and quite tough negotiations between third countries. We have such expertise and is a specialization that is fitting. It suits us and it strengthens our role because whenever would Greece conduct such a negotiation, having the type of expertise that few countries have, like Norway, Finland, Sweden to a lesser extent, and then the Netherlands and Canada, what would that mean for us? It upgrades and strengthens our image, our standing, prestige and reputation in the global environment. Once you are upgraded within the global environment, once you become necessary, then you are in a position to convince people and you can solve your own problems easily.

Whenever I had a first meeting with a leader of a big power, I never began a conversation with "that name is a problem, I have an issue with Albania, I have a problem with Turkey and there is the rub with Kosovo". You see, it is pointless. Personally, I do not feel like having countries come to me and list their hundreds of issues.

So, instead, I always kicked off my conversations with emphasis on the strengths of my country, and how we can ensure stability in the region and once I had explained why the role and the voice of Greece are so strong, then I would claim what is, in proportion, ours, even more so when I faced the people who questioned such rightful claims.

And who is it that does so, more than anyone? It is Turkey; it is Erdogan.

I appreciate Erdogan who is a great leader, and we should never underestimate the other party just because we do not like them. It is actually the other way around: we need to accurately assess the capacities and capabilities of others. It is not accidental that Erdogan has been in charge of such a big power in the region for so long.

I have often talked to him and explained that "Tayip, your Allah and my God have thrown us into this together. They have put the two of us in this region together. How can we live together? The episodes you are staging in the skies, the seas and the rest, do not allow for good cohabitation conditions for the two of us."

Never ever did I lose sight of the fact that Turkey is not exercising its foreign policy the way we are. Now, do pay

attention and mark my words since, in my view, here is the most common of mistakes the majority of foreign policy and statespeople make.

Turkey's foreign policy is different than ours. Turkey is a revisionist power who is also nervous and jittery, the way post-Bismark Germany was in the 19th century. It is oscillating between integration within the West or acting as an independent hegemonic regional centre.

It is easier for it than us to resort to the use of hard power and, of all our neighbors, it is the most confrontational. I am not assessing it from a moral point, these are its real characteristics.

The problem is that Turkey perceives as a sign of weakness every policy that is not argumentative like hers, and therefore misunderstands it.

There are three views on dealing with Turkey. I shall again break this down to three different types to facilitate our discussion and have a common understanding before I conclude.

The first is what I would call the yielding view. According to it, we shouldn't provoke the Turks but we should behave, lay low, go unnoticed and do not disturb. Generally speaking, the yielding view suggests that this is the right way to appease Turkey. Turkey though will catch on and ferret us out of our hole because the more you give, the more it wants, or so the saying goes.

The second view, next to yielding, is what I would call acquiescence, which means people can comply with the type of foreign policy Turkey follows. I was told: Turkey yells, we yell

back. When Turkey cries out, we should do too. Should Turkey provoke us, we shall provoke it back.

Actually, some people believe this is what a nationally proud policy-making is all about. He who yells at me, I yell back to, much like people in a neighborhood do. Then people can tell stories about this or that neighbor who "dared speak to me like that, and here is how it turned out". Well, there is a difference: this is not about the personal differences of two individuals, this is about states that have strategic prowess and prospects.

So I cannot help but wonder: what are these approaches doing? What does adjusting to the other party's views lead us? What does it do to you when you subscribe to the ways in which the other side exercises its own foreign policy? Both previously mentioned approaches mean succumbing to the manner Turkey enforces its foreign policy, either by keeping quiet or by pretending to roar.

This is not working though. This yelling, roaring, provocative type is not our own, it is not European; it is Turkish.

Let us be clear so that everyone who might be having second thoughts (which is ok) can relate. That particular type of foreign policy, Turkey knows so much better than we do. No matter how much we yell, no matter how much we roar, we do not have the culture and the soul Turkey puts in such affairs.

Let us make sure we are on the same page here: what does it mean to assent to the way another power uses in the game of foreign policy? Think of it in terms of a soccer match or a

basketball game. (My apologies to the ladies in the audience who I can only hope watch a bit of soccer or maybe the odds are higher for basketball). Picture this amazing player, someone like Yiannis (Antetokounmpo) in basketball or Ronaldo (if you are a Juventus fan) or maybe Messi (if you follow Barcelona FC instead). So take a pick, whatever works for you as they are all amazing players who play their game by the rules they know.

Can you picture Messi being carried away by Yiannis so that the former tries to play basketball at center as a 4 (power forward), or 5. Do you think Messi can pull it off? Can you see him beating Yannis? Of course not, he is going to be bitterly disappointed in a defeat that is inescapable.

Or imagine Yiannis, this young man who is probably 2.08-2.09 meters high. Can you see him play at center for with Barcelona FC and set strong screens when by definition such a position ought to be manned by a player who is able to turn the ball swiftly around and fast? He is going down!

What I am saying is that being a good player does not suffice. You have to play the game and follow the rules and play whatever position fits your physical qualifications.

If we get carried away either by yieldingness or acquiescence and therefore play the game following the rules of Turkish foreign policy, it is like expecting Messi to be drafted by the Lakers. It does not pan out, I think but you have every right to your own view, so you can beg to differ if you want.

I believe that the most important thing in foreign policy is to neither yield nor acquiesce or denounce and call it in when you have that kind of neighbor. You need to try and get the

neighbor to come to terms with your standards, to get them to play in your own field by your rules of foreign policy.

For instance, the European orientation of Turkey, which we are supportive of, is fundamental. It means that Turkey will be playing within the framework of Europe and by the rules we know much better than it does, in a context where we have the dominant position.

Being a master of the art of foreign policy, and I am recapping now, means you can get the opponent to your playing field where they will be following a procedure that you realistically know better.

In a nutshell, and in conclusion, I believe that foreign policy must be based on high values and principles. But whenever we claim that foreign policy must go hand in hand with values and principles, its agencies and institutions must also subscribe to those values and principles.

It is impossible to invoke values and principles as if they are something abstract which is of no immediate concern to us. We must enforce our principles without extreme nationalist statements dressed in the mantle of blind internationalism. And what may these values be? It is the sense of moderation, historical continuity and protecting the future.

Which explains why I sometimes declare that yesterday is history, the future may be uncertain but the present is here and now. The present is today, it is about our life, and we must ponder on it and reflect to have a future, ward off future evils and work towards transforming all of that into a positive agenda.

Like I said, time and again, there is a background and history to our foreign policy which we must be proud of. There ought to be continuity. History is not a prison. It is a school where we learn and draw lessons from by comparing and improving what we do. But we should not get trapped in history or we might end up being hostage to it.

Overall, I believe that what we need is an active foreign policy, a multifaceted and realistic approach coupled with asserting respect for and the enforcement of international law while being aware of the role power plays. We need foreign policy aimed at solving and overcoming problems while protecting national interests and securing better conditions for the benefit of the Greek society.

It must be a foreign policy that is sincere, bold and fearless without being opportunistic or yielding. Our foreign policy ought to be future-oriented while capitalizing on the past to improve both our present and the future. It must be forward-looking with a plan, meaning it must have a strategy, understand the objections of others, their oscillations even, to help and build on them, to provide security to the country, the wider region and the citizens.

All in all, foreign policy must be intelligent and patriotic; it ought to be patriotically intelligent and creative.

And, so, now, I ought to thank you for your attention. Thank you very much indeed.