

The Power of Geography

Reading Guide for Chapter 5, Greece

Underseas gas fields have been discovered in the Aegean. Many nations, including Greece and Turkey, want the rights to access.



“Thucydides Trap” – the fear and concern that the rise of one power evokes in threatened nations.
Mountains and Water – keys to understanding the past, present, and future of Greece.

These pages explain how the geography of Greece shapes its development and fortunes.
The Aegean has strategic importance to multiple powers – Greece, Turkey, EU, NATO , U.S., Russia – and Greece is at the crossroads of the Middle East crises and the current migrant crisis.

Greece’s mountainous terrain has poor soil for agriculture but is good for defense from invaders.
A Greek twist on **the concept of “strategic depth”** – there’s always high ground to fall back upon.
120. Greece depended on seafaring & a navy protected trade routes. Naval power is still vital to Greece.

A brief history of Greece, ancient to early modern.

The Persian Wars & the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BCE...the Peloponnesian Wars between Athens and Sparta 431-399 BCE...the rise of Macedon under Philip II and his son Alexander the Great...the rise of Rome, the split of the Roman Empire and the new Roman capital at Byzantium (Constantinople and now Istanbul)....The city of Rome was invaded in 476 CE but lasted 1,000 more years in the East and was still called “Rom”...1453 the Ottomans conquer Constantinople. Ottomans got to the gates of Vienna before being driven back in 1683.



A brief history of Greece, early modern to 1900.

Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires pushed against Ottomans in 1700s and 1800s until Greece revolted in 1832 against the Ottomans. Greece was a small, weak state, hoping for the **Megali Idea** (the Great Idea) of uniting all Greeks within its expanded borders...European powers dictated Greece’s ‘limited sovereignty,’ & the British kept control so it could protect its routes to India and keep Russia at bay.

A brief history of Greece, 1900 to 2000.

The two Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 saw nationalist conflicts erupt as the Ottoman Empire – “**the Sick Man of Europe**” – withered away. In first war Greece fought against the Ottoman Turks, the second war was against Bulgaria....Greece entered World War I very late on the side of the victorious Allies, and Greek nationalists hoped to reviving the Byzantine Empire. The Turks under Mustafa Kemal (“Ataturk”) crushed that dream. War created millions of refugees and forced movements of peoples to safety. Poor ethnic Greeks fled to Greece from other areas....

Greece entered World War II under a dictatorship and endured a brutal occupation by Germany and the other Axis Powers. A Greek underground resistance emerged as 70,000 were executed. 1944 the Germans withdrew and the British entered Greece.

Factions in Greek society led to a civil war, 1946-1949, as communists sought to take control of the country. The Americans supported the government in order to prevent the communist USSR from gaining a foothold in the eastern Mediterranean.



Democratic Army of Greece Soldiers during the Civil War. Greek government commandos, equipped with British berets and American fur-lined jackets.

The Greek military assumed control of the government in 1967 in a coup d'état after very unsteady 1950s and 1960s.

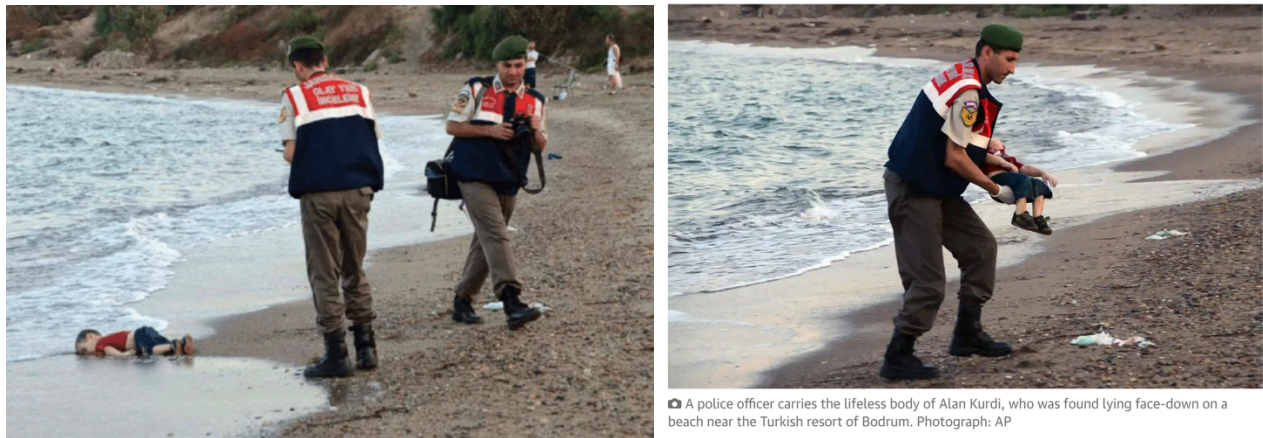
Greece had joined **NATO** in 1952 and after democracy was reintroduced in 1974 Greece was invited into the **European Economic Community** (later the **European Union**, or **EU**) in 1981.

Greece in the 21st century.

Greece's economy was not strong to start with, and the financial crash of 2007-08 exposed the enormous debt Greece had accrued. *Imagine being in big debt, then losing your job. That's what Greece's situation was in 2008. Germany and the International Monetary Fund stepped in with loans but put Greece on a very strict budget--the way a parent might after bailing out their son for overspending in college.*

The Greeks resented other governments telling them what to do, especially when waves of migrants and war refugees, mainly fleeing Syria's brutal civil war, were flooding into Greek islands without any financial assistance from the EU.

In 2015 alone 850,000 refugees entered Greece. Many Greek islands were overrun with refugees.



Photographs of three-year-old refugee Alan Kurdi, who drowned trying to get to Greece, prompted international outrage. His five-year-old brother Galip also drowned.

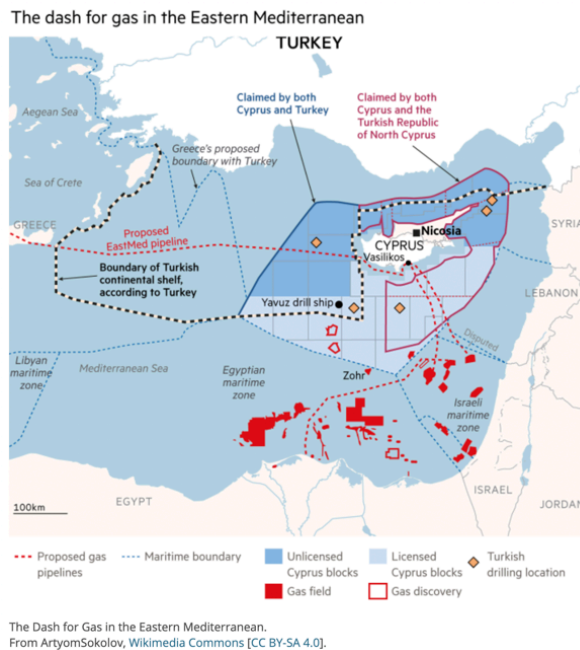
The EU paid/cajoled Turkey to stop migrants from setting out across the sea from Turkey to Greece. This increased longstanding tensions between Greece and Turkey.

Turkey's President Recep Erdogan stirs the pot with xenophobic & nationalist speeches.

Protecting its borders, wary of Turkey:

Greece knows it must control its seas or it is vulnerable to invasion. A nation with 6,000 islands needs a modern navy, and it has also developed a strong army and advanced air force.

Greece opposed the former Yugoslavian region to its north calling itself the Republic of Macedonia. Compromise name: "**North Macedonia**."...Maintaining control of the islands of Corfu, Rhodes, and Crete....And then there is **Cyprus**, where gas fields were recently discovered, so several countries wish to lay claim to them.



Sectarian violence in 1960 between the Greek majority and Turkish minority led to a UN border line, the **“Green Line,”** splitting the island in two. In 1974 the Turkish army invaded to prevent a Greek absorption of Cyprus and the Greek military government fell. A democratic government was installed.



132-133. Natural gas discoveries have led to new tensions, particularly between Greece and Turkey, both of whom are NATO members.

134. Greece has been reluctant to align fully with the U.S., but currently it sees that it must for its own security. The Americans want to make sure the Russians do not gain a diplomatic foothold with Greece, and they do not want to alienate Turkey, where U.S. has an important air base at **Incirlik**.

Greece is once again an important piece of real estate for foreign powers.

