MANAGERIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE WORLD S NEED:

PERCEPTION AND MISPERCEPTION IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

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Does the practice of international relations today involve, in significant degree, misperception between governments? If so, what should be done at the world s universities, through research and curriculum development, to correct these misperceptions?

The current historical period offers a remarkable opportunity to study misperception in the conduct of international relations. The period since World War II now provides a time series of over 45 years   in a relatively stable international system - to study the bi-lateral relations of nations. At least on the American side, the policy making record is more open than any major power in history; the quality of reporting in the elite press has been high; both investigative reporters and Congressional investigators give comparatively rapid access to details of major, controversial, decisions.

Consequently, scholars can do more than study single decisions. They can study bi-lateral relationships and similar decisions across decades. They can contrast the perceptions of decision makers in different countries. They have a sufficiently large number of cases (in a statistical sense) to reach

conclusions about the quality of decision processes, comparing the outcomes decision makers anticipated with the record of how events turned out.

The new opportunity to draw useful lessons across several decades of return engagements is actively engaging social scientists who specialize in American foreign (e.g., Etheredge, 1981, 1985; Neustadt and May, 1986; Bundy, 1988).[1] This conference also responds to these new opportunities. It examines one bi lateral relationship across 40 years. The results may be broadly informative if patterns of misperception observed in the

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[1] The still-classic study of mutual misperception is Neustadt s analysis (1970) of the Skybolt missile cancellation. George and Smoke (1974) pioneered the method of focused comparisons. Lebow (1987) reviews research concerning the management of crises. Hermann (1979) reviews the effects of stress on decision processes. A wider range of cognitive processes are surveyed in Axelrod (1976), especially the chapter by Hoisti, and Tetlock and McGuire (1986). Etheredge (1976), George (1980) and Shepard (1988) review the literature concerning personality effects. A forthcoming data base (CASCON) assembled by Bloomfield at MIT will include all major post World War II conflicts, systematically coded. Janis (1989) provides an excellent discussion and wide-ranging bibliography. A series of case studies, which may prove cumulative and theoretically useful, has been funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts (1988): the initiative would benefit from greater participation by foreign scholars, especially if American decision makers have been prone to ethnocentric misperceptions. Horowitz (1989) reviews lessons from inter-group, ethnic conflict. The U. S. State Department s internal studies to inform future practitioners (e.g., Bendabmane and McDonald, 1985) are a worthy source of hypotheses. The rigor possible with computer simulation is suggested by such scholars as Alker (1987) and Mefford (1987). See also Blight (1989) and the forthcoming volume edited by George Breslauer and Philip Tetlock concerning learning in Soviet-American relations, especially the work of S. Weber.

Greek American case also occur more widely.

    I have been asked to suggest a framework for the study of
perception and misperception in Greek-American relations.
My plan is to be selective: I will discuss five groups of
hypotheses I believe are among the most promising, drawn from
theories of a.) the beginners cognitive biases of
individuals; b.) cognitive growth through experience; c.)
decision processes within the Executive branch; d.) network
theory; and e.) a new proposal for the application of public
drama theories.

A Caveat: The Null Hypothesis

    First, a caveat. It is highly controversial whether there
are any significant misperceptions in international relations.
International behavior is analyzed differently by two academic
traditions which seldom talk with one another. The Realpolitik
school perceives the forms of power related behavior to be
sufficiently universal, and power maximization (subject to
objective restraints) so ubiquitous a motivation of politicians
and states, that one can - like economists developing models of
firms or economies - develop a general theory of international
behavior based only upon knowing a state s relative place in the
international system, without extensive regard for the

particulars of its culture, history, or internal political organization. Politicians are politicians. Greek politicians are only American politicians in a different setting.[2]

By contrast, the academic tradition of area studies feels it necessary to have years of foreign language training and immersion in the details of history, culture, and politics, before an outsider could begin to guess how Greeks (or Chinese, or Russians or Iranians or Americans) think about themselves or make their foreign policy choices. The other is very difficult to know.[3]

With this background and warning that some political scientists would consider the exercise foolish I suggest the following starting points:

RELEVANT THEORIES

A. Cognitive Psychology of Novices

One tradition of research in cognitive psychology reflects a belief that rigorous scientific training - and the analytical

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[2] And vice versa.

[3] American (or Greek) foreign policy may be penetrated by complex ethnocentrisms (e.g., LeVine and Campbell, 1972; Wiarda, 1985; Etheredge, 1988). I leave aside these propositions here.

style of thought associated with it - increases an individual s ability to understand the political world. Many social science departments train their doctoral students to use the full power of the rigorous scientific methods, developed in the natural sciences, to understand the political world with this belief in mind.

Research in this tradition has shown many human beings are slip-shod scientists (e.g., Kahneman et al., 1982). And the research has done more: it has documented non-random, characteristic biases, that can be considered beginners or novice s biases, as the natural (flawed) baselines of thinking in the general population.

This may be an important insight for the study of international relations. If these same beginners biases can be found in foreign policy, and if scientific method is the standard for realism and success, then we have found a powerful set of explanations for previous history and correctives to improve international relations.

There are several such mechanisms that Jervis (1976) has argued can be observed prominently in international

relations:[4]

(1)   A virtuous self image.

(2)   A tendency to blame other people s characteristics for their behavior but to explain one s own behavior as a response to circumstances. (America fights in Vietnam for good reasons, and because it is <u>forced</u> to do so; but Greece disputes Turkey over Cyprus because Greek decision makers are irrational.)

(3)   A perception that we are the target. With this egocentric bias, decision makers will tend to perceive the motivation of other nations behavior as primarily expressing intentions related to themselves. They would personalize international politics and perceive what happens in Greece (or America) as directed by forces whose primary intention is to be friendly or hostile to America (or Greece).

(4)   A perception of unitary actors. Thus, if this mechanism is present, American decision makers will view Greece and the Greek government as a single entity (and vice versa) with little grasp of internal disagreements or the domestic processes affecting the balance toward one outcome or another.

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[4] Simon (1990) discusses the general study of novice biases, and novice-expert shifts.

These mechanisms we can group together into an initial
hypothesis that a set of   beginners biases,   with the contents
identified by Jervis, will be the naturally-occurring baseline of
misperception in bi-lateral relations:

Hypothesis 1:
    Perceptions in international relations will have a natural
baseline to be egocentric and personalized. impressionistic,
over-confident, and under-informed.

 Besides its possible technical accuracy, another benefit to
selecting the scientific ideal as a guide to realistic perception
deserves mention. Science is not only a strategy for empirical
investigation and self-correcting empirical inquiry but also a
rhetoric of public discourse designed to manage emotion. As
Geertz (1973, pp. 230 231) put it:

    The differentia of science and politics as cultural
    systems are to be sought in the sorts of symbolic
    strategy of encompassing situations that they
    respectively represent. Science names the structure of
    situations in such a way that the attitude contained
    toward them is one of disinterestedness. Its style is
    restrained, spare, resolutely analytic: by shunning the

semantic devices that most effectively formulate moral
sentiment, it seeks to maximize intellectual clarity.
But ideology names the structure of situations in such a
way that the attitude contained toward them is one of
commitment. Its style is ornate, vivid, deliberately
suggestive: by objectifying moral sentiment through the
same devices that science shuns, it seeks to motivate
action. Both are concerned with the definition of a
problematic situation... .But the information needed is
quite different, even in cases where the situation is
the same. An ideologist is no more a poor social
scientist than a social scientist is a poor ideologist.
The two are - or at least they ought to be - in quite
different lines of work...

Thus, if the professional conduct of international relations
is a nascent scientific enterprise we might obtain, as part of
the scientific package, a political (and diplomatic) strategy
that can calm - or at least control - strong, complicating emotion
in discussion of foreign policy and perhaps slowly transform the
conduct of Greek American, Greek Turkish, and other international
relations. (The associated caution also should be apparent: if
some issues ought to be discussed with passion, or some realities
characterized by terms with pejorative connotation, a growing
scientific discourse may subtly shift the discussion of reality

in a way that reduces moral intelligence or inhibits necessary political communication (etc.).)

The attraction of a scientific framework can be so compelling that I must ask the reader s indulgence to record a further skeptical thought. Politics (involving human beings and interpersonal relations) is both an art and a science. Thus, it may misconstrue and injure the complex, multi-level sensibilities of capable politicians to apply only a standard scientific framework to analyze (and improve) their perceptions. Larson (1986), for example, criticized President Truman for logical inconsistency in his responses to the Soviet Union in the early post World War II period. But Truman s ambivalences, to which he gave voice, may have reflected an honest, human engagement with contradictions in reality and have been part of a creative process of political judgment and decision making. Logical contradiction (or alleged conflicting perceptions) may be as valuable to political success as harmonies and dissonances in a work of music - or the ability to perceive and mix bold reds with subtle blues, hard edges and soft curves, in the visual arts.

B.   Individual Learning and Cognitive Development
    A second line of investigation in cognitive psychology,

developed carefully in the work of Axelrod (1976) and Tetlock (e.g., Tetlock and McGuire, 1986; see also the discussion of novice-expert shifts in Simon, 1990), focuses attention on the potential for cognitive development, especially the ability to recognize complex features of reality and to keep these elements in mind, in an integrated way, when a decision maker thinks about a problem. Such abilities seem to predict greater realism and success in political life; and it is a reasonable conjecture that individual decision makers and diplomats, as they gain experience in Greek-American relations, will develop greater integrated complexity in perceptions and cognitive maps.

Yet, it is also notable that the American government (at least) is designed to produce frequent turn-over at the high decision making levels (Heclo, 1977). And its Ambassadors and career diplomats are frequently rotated among posts.

Thus, we may derive two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Experience (of individuals) in the conduct of bi lateral relations will tend to correct the perceptual biases identified in hypothesis 1 and to replace them with more complex. integrated. and realistic cognitive maps. However:

Hypothesis 3: Frequent government personnel changes will tend to prevent any individual learning from becoming dependably institutionalized in bi-lateral relations.

C. Small Group Processes

A third, suggestive line of research focuses on decision making practices, especially occurring in small groups at the senior level of governments. Alexander George (1973, 1980) and Irving Janis (e.g., Janis and Mann, 1977; Janis, 1989) have argued that, whatever the initial misconceptions of individuals, a rigorous and systematic decision process in a government should, in principle, reduce or eliminate misperceptions. Janis and Mann identify seven characteristics of what they call high quality, vigilant decision making (Janis and Mann, 1977; Janis, 1989, pp. 30-31). Decision makers who engage in these practices:

1. Survey a wide range of objectives to be fulfilled, taking account of the multiplicity of values that are at stake.

2. Canvass a wide range of alternative courses of action.

3. Intensively search for new information relevant to evaluating the alternatives.

4. Correctly assimilate and take account of new information or expert judgments to which they are exposed, even when the information or judgment does not support the course of action initially preferred.

5. Reconsider the positive and negative consequences of alternatives originally regarded as unacceptable, before making a final choice.

6. Carefully examine the costs and risks of negative consequences, as well as positive consequences, that could flow from the alternative that is preferred.

7. Make detailed provisions for implementing and monitoring the chosen course of action, with special attention to contingency plans that might be required if various known risks were to materialize.

Thus, we can propose:

Hypothesis 4: For each decision. on either side. the better the decision process (by Janis s criteria) the greater the accuracy of perception in bi-lateral relations.

Especially suggestive evidence for the causal (corrective) role of good decision making processes is a study by Herek, Janis, and Huth (1987a, 1987b; Janis, 1989, chapter 6) of 19 major crisis decisions in post World War II American foreign policy. Independent and separate blind ratings of both the technical quality of the American decision process and of the favorableness or unfavorableness of the outcomes of the decisions showed a .64 (p <.002) correlation between the technical quality of the decision process and the favorableness, in retrospect, of the outcome. The American decision to intervene in the Greek civil war was among those decisions rated: it was recorded to be of high technical quality and to have yielded a favorable outcome (see, however, the criticisms of Andreopoulous in this volume.). Equally notable is that, for a majority of these 19 crucial American foreign policy decisions in the post World War II period (58%), the American government did not meet the criteria (cited above) for a high quality deliberative process (Janis, 1989, pp. 125 126).

D. Network Theory

Network theory has become increasingly prominent in the explanation of American domestic policy. It also points to a new type of influence in international relations and policy making whose impact might usefully be explored to understand the quality of Greek American relations.

An earlier conception of American domestic politics was that policies were created, in part, by conflict and cooperation among interest groups representing well-defined constituencies. By contrast, the new conception of policy networks views discussions among committed and responsible individual as increasingly influential to the creation of public policy in recent decades (e.g., Heclo, 1978).

These policy-influencing elites serve functions similar to those which members of the Council on Foreign Relations have sometimes performed in key American foreign policy relations: they sustain policy discussions during periods between dramatized crises; they explore and develop options; they can foster informal apprenticeships for younger members; their members can be recruited for policy making posts, and new decision makers can count upon informed support from other members when they are in office.[5]

Do networks of influential person-to-person conversations shape international relations outside the formal processes of

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[5] See also Saunders (1988) for a discussion of supplementary diplomacy and a valuable contribution to the philosophy of international relationships. Halley (1985) reviews cross national ethnic group ties.

inter-governmental communications (e.g., Kochen, 1989)? From network theory we can draw hypothesis 5:

Hypothesis 5: <u>The accuracy of perception in bi-lateral relations will be causally related to the development, and influence of informal policy networks among responsible individuals, in both countries. seriously committed to the quality of the relationship</u>.

E.   <u>Public Drama Management</u>

A fifth set of hypotheses can be drawn from the view of international relations as the management of a public drama of power relations. By this view, America s broader political conception of global political drama, national interest, and its appropriate role in history partly creates perceptions of other actors, of problems, and salient features of relationships.

This theory is a radical departure from the scientific ideal of perception we considered earlier.[6] By public drama theory,

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[6] Also, predictive efficacy is not a primary criteria. See Etheredge (1986) for an extended discussion and a pragmatic critique of over-dramatized perception in a series of cases in American foreign policy.

American policy makers are not guided, in each bi lateral relationship, by perceptions other nations or objective observers use - nor by perceptions derived - scientifically - to best model or predict the nature and dynamics of particular local realities. Rather, the perceptions on which they act are political overlays that often violate a basic scientific rule of objective perception (inter observer agreement).

An illustration of this way to understand perception is America s involvement in Vietnam, as viewed by Assistant Secretary of Defense John McNaughton. In 1965, McNaughton wrote that 70 percent of the justification for sending American soldiers to Vietnam was to avoid a humiliating U.S. defeat, 20 percent was to keep South Vietnam out of Chinese hands and only 10 percent was to permit the people of South Vietnam to enjoy a better, freer way of life (Surnivess, 1988). The governing perceptions and definitions of the situation on which American policy makers acted had little to do with the categories used to describe their war by most of the indigenous people.

Here is another - vividly top-down example - of international perceptions in a public drama. French President Charles De Gaulle is lecturing Dean Rusk (in private) about how to perceive European political reality:

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Well, what is Europe?Pointing with his finger as if at an imaginary map, he said,   Here are the Benelux countries. And he brushed them aside with a wave of his hand.   In the south, there is Italy, and he scoffed,   Psshhh. Then, there is Germany, he continued,   and Germany must be kept in its place, And there are the British. But the British are not Europeans, they are Anglo-Saxons. Then he smiled benignly,   And here is France at the heart of Europe, the soul of European culture.   (Schoenbaum, 1988, p. 359.)

Another example of unilateral, top-down perception in international power relationships is the traditional Chinese view of international relations - i.e., that they are the Middle Kingdom, located between Heaven (above) and the non Chinese barbarians (below) and ruled by the Son of Heaven:

The Confucian view of the foreigner depends partly on the stress given to the unique nature of the earthly authority delegated to the Son of Heaven. Such authority precludes the need for or the legality of other political units, and comprizes a temporal power over all members of the civilized world... Thus once a barbarian people has shown itself

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sufficiently well-educated to appreciate the benefits of
Chinese authority, it qualifies to become a full member of
the empire. Subject peoples can acknowledge his [Emperor s]
authority by the payment of material tribute whose presence
at court serves to enhance the Emperor s majesty and to
demonstrate the universal acceptance of his title to power.
(Michael Loewe, quoted in Bell, 1985, pp. 266 267.)

In these last two cases, the perceptions of General De
Gaulle or Chinese Emperors are not scientifically derived but
express a social (political) relationship in the mind of the
beholder. In both cases, the perceptions are unilateral. Thus,
the possibility for agreement among the perceptions of different
actors in international relations may have an upper bound: there
is no reason - in public drama theory - to expect rational
scientific discussion, based upon conventional notions of truth
and falsity, to alter such perceptions or reconcile perceptual
differences.

This hypothesis can be summarized as:

Hypothesis 6:
    American perceptions in bi-lateral alliance relations will
reflect the role assigned to its allies by American decision

makers. especially a role to defer to America s alliance
leadership and support America s primary strategic purpose.
since World War II. to contain Soviet aggression and prevent
changes perceived to be caused by Soviet aggression.

While perceptions, assigned by an actor in a public drama,
may be unilateral (or autistic), they are also fundamentally
social because the role relationships are (in the mind of the
beholder) in reciprocal definition (e.g., Alker, 1987; Etheredge,
1985; Hare, 1985). I have titled this paper Managerial
Responsibility and the World s Need to suggest specific details
of the reciprocally-defined system of roles and perceptions that
may be at work in the Greek-American relationship on the American
side.

My thesis is that America s commitment to a role of world
leadership after World War II engaged a managerial mindset that
has structured perceptions of the world.[7] In alliance
relationships, this drama of leadership has been politically (and
hierarchically) structured so American decision makers look

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[7] The term managerial, both describes this system of
perception and points to its origin in the American institutions
that have been the training ground for most American decision
makers and advisors (most are not professional politicians but
are socialized in bureaucratic elites).

outward, and somewhat downward, when thinking about other members of alliances.

Kanter and Stein (1979) imply a distinctly hierarchical feature of American organizational psychology. I suggest this template has generalized outward, since World War II, to inform American perceptions of its role in relationship with its allies.

In their analysis, large American organizations evolve three distinct hierarchical levels and cultures: elite, middle-management (white collar), and the workers (blue collar). I will develop the theory that such a template is at work in Greek=-American relations - acknowledging a debt to Kanter and Stein, and to a more rigorous formulation by Jaques (1990) and Krausz (1986), without making them responsible for my extrapolations.

The elite level - - the boardroom - is marked by courtesy and sensitivity, the understanding of others as unique human beings. People are taken to be autonomous human beings, the code is voluntary agreements, civility, and respect for the feelings of other elite members. It is a cosmopolitan world. A gentleman s word is his bond. He is taken to be responsible for his actions, expected to be professional and self-disciplined, self-starting,

and concerned with long term objectives and consequences. He is also expected to have the rationality, ability, and stature to plan and organize his work to produce results.

Looking downward, the elite managerial outlook perceives deficiencies in self-starting behavior and responsibility among those of lower status. Lower down, people do not always take responsibility to do a job or act in the long-term best interests of the organization - they take responsibility to do what they are told (in frameworks created by others). . . and then, often, they only do 80% of that. Left on their own, the middle rungs are not yet wholly professionals or trustworthy about maintaining standards and commitments to long term results.

Further down, of course, are the workers - even more suspect in their lack of managerial qualities - in need of leadership and inspiration, apt to be emotionalistic and to have short-term cognitive horizons. To self-starting managers at the top, the world is divided into two classes (in Reich s phrase), the entrepreneurs and the drones (Reich, 1988), with middle managers in-between.

These rules of top down perception can be stated more formally (Table 1):

Table 1

Rules of Top-Down Perception

  Those of lower status are more emotion driven and are less capable of abstract thinking and of creating and sustaining long term plans.

- Those of lower status are less responsible about designing and sustaining collective long term programs.

- Those of lower status are less inclined to sustain principles as a basis of social and political organization and are more susceptible to actions determined by personalistic relations, to manipulation by rhetoric, charisma, and the slogans of mass movements.

Those of lower status tend to blame leaders and authority for their problems rather than themselves.

Critics of lower status do not address long-term issues responsibly (as do the principal, managerial actors) but

function - reactively - like a chorus in a classic Greek drama. The content of their criticism has diminished standing and it is appropriate to respond by calming or manipulation (rather than serious discussion.)

These rules imply, to be candid, that American decision makers have viewed the prospects of armed, nationalistic conflict between Greece and Turkey as inherently immature. Their roles have not been managed responsibly by Greek politicians who ought to have been more far-sighted, self-disciplined, and appreciate the greater political maturity and compelling logic of America s concern for an anti-Communist alliance - and peace among members of NATO in the face of the Soviet threat.

By this theory, American perceptions have probably rendered several major Greek preoccupations as childish Thus, American decision makers have sought to manage both Greek public opinion - and the selection of Greek political leaders - to assure responsible, satisfactory outcomes. These perceptions lie behind official action but may not be candidly expressed: to elite decision makers these are issues that (as the phrasing goes)   are not helpful to discuss in public.

This conception of public drama and reciprocally defined roles, may be slightly less pejorative that other conceptions. For example, Couloumbis (1980) has written of the   paternalism and penetration   that has characterized American policy toward

Greece. But paternalism, (if that is a correct term) would be justified by American perceptions that the conduct of Greek politicians required such a response and, I suggest, the character of American interventions in Greek internal politics has the logic (born of annoyance and frustration with circumstances in Greece) of firing middle level managers of dubious competence. One suspects that although (as I suggested above) it would never be said in public before the kind of people about who it is perceived to be true, American Presidents have had similar perceptions and justified American interventions in Greece by such logic.

In fairness, I emphasize that, in this new model I have proposed, managerial responsibility in American alliance relations is not generated primarily by arrogance Rather, the nature of the intention, I think, has been managerial in a constructive sense, a response, as I suggested in my title, to a perception of "the world s need in the post-World War II period. (But it also true that such a model can be self fulfilling, with repeated interventions and management of Greek internal political processes maintaining or worsening the alleged irresponsible behavior of middle managers.)

Thus, a conception of public drama management, focusing attention on elite managerial psychology in hierarchical relations, suggests:

Hypothesis 7:   <u>American views in Greek American relations will reflect a perceptual schema of reciprocally-defined roles derived from American organizational psychology. This perceptual overlay will evidence the characteristic perceptions outlined in Table 1.</u>

<u>Summary</u>

Let me, now, weave together these five strands of theory into a framework to tell the story of perception and misperception. It is a preliminary aid to inquiry, not a conclusion; but I suggest studies in American bi-lateral relations will be a story of perception and misperception - with both forward movement and backsliding   along the following lines:

A set of impressionistic beginners biases;

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- Which, for individual policy makers may slowly give way, through experience, to more refined and integrated understandings;

- Or be collectively improved-upon when (possibly in the minority of cases) there is a vigilant, high-quality, decision process;

- Yet, at the systemic level, changes in diplomatic and political personnel will produce a tendency for American and other governments to forget these lessons of individuals (and not to know they have been forgotten), thus tending to recycle inter-governmental perceptions backward to step 1.

The accuracy of mutual perceptions will be increased to the extent there are active networks of policy influencing elites, external to the formal government bureaucracies, which lay track, maintain learning through supporting apprenticeship systems and unofficial communication networks, and whose members can be recruited to (and are supported in) public office.

- An upper bound to the extent of shared perception in will be created by American definitions of its own broader strategic role, which will assign a related role for the other nation in an alliance to play. American perceptions will be primarily concerned with whether foreign leaders play this role to American standards. In alliance relations, foreign politicians and publics will be perceived, and judged as, within a template of organizational psychology drawn from American culture, as partly autonomous subordinates within a hierarchical, managerial framework.

Concluding Remarks

In the short- or intermediate-term, if government policies are wrong headed or out of touch with reality, one can hold accountable the decision makers in power. But as the years go by, it is appropriate to widen the causal framework to explain the perpetuation of misperception in international relations: it is the role of universities (in both Greece and America) to codify the lessons of experience and to make the lessons of history - including recent history - available to the next generation of policy makers. Universities also have a role in creating the networks of serious and responsible people -including their

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faculty, but especially among their students and former students -who can sustain policy discussions that create more accurate and useful perceptions and keep them alive in the world. What they should teach about these issues of perception and misperception - in the post World War II period and today -only research can tell us.

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