

## Editorial Overview

*Dan Georgakas*

With this issue the social policy journal of the American Hellenic Institute takes on the formal name the *American Journal of Contemporary Hellenic Issues*. We bring the perspectives of a Greek American institution to the complex issues facing Greek Americans, especially the relationship of the United States with Greece, Cyprus, and their neighbors in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans. Our focus is on the present and near future with references as needed to recent past events that are relevant to the challenges at hand.

The foreign policy of Turkey under Recep Tayyip Erdogan continues to be a disruptive force in the Eastern Mediterranean, manifesting itself in designs on Thrace, violations of Greek air space, opposition to the unification of Cyprus, and military actions against American allies such as the Kurds. The first two essays in this issue focus on the international agreements currently in force that spell out the rule of law in the Eastern Mediterranean. Nicholas Karambelas, legal counsel to and a director of the American Hellenic Institute, reviews the treaties relating to this region from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present time. Theodore Kariotis, who was a member of Greek delegation to the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea writes about the legal definitions regarding how far off-shore rights extend with special attention to Greek islands adjacent to mainland Turkey.

Turkish cultural theft of Classic Greek and Byzantine achievements is a key element in Erdogan's vision of a twenty-first century, Ottoman-style role for Turkey. Alexander Kyrou discusses how the desire to turn Hagia Sophia into a mosque suits those ends.

Detailed knowledge of realities in Erdogan's Turkey is hampered by his brutal suppression of the press and the principles of free speech. Despina Afentouli offers a detailed account of this suppression.

Occupied Cyprus is inadequately covered in mainstream media. Even Greek Americans often lack a sense of what that reality entails Theofilos Koulianos, Elizabeth Conway, and Stavros Piperis, participants in the ninth annual *AHIF Foreign Policy Student*

*Trip to Greece and Cyprus* in 2017, offer up-close looks at how occupied Cyprus strikes contemporary visitors of college age.

Taking a historical look at Rhodes is Willard Manus. He goes back to the time the island was run by the Knights Hospitallers through to the present. His focus is the fate of the Jewish community. We see that community's congenial relations with Greek and Turkish governments, and its suppression by the Catholic knights who wanted to bring the Inquisition to Rhodes and by the murderous assault by the Nazis in World War II. A striking feature of the essay is the fond memories Greek Jews of Rhodes have of their former homeland.

One of the few positives associated with the burning of Smyrna in 1922 by the Turks is the action of a Japanese merchant ship that evacuated over 800 Greeks and Armenians when they had been abandoned by the European powers. Some historians have considered this story to be a myth. Nanako Murata Sawayanagi of Toyo University in Japan offers a comprehensive summary of the data at hand, including research in Greek and Japanese sources. She has established the probable name of the ship and is now trying to recover the name of its captain.

Presenting legitimate data for often complex Hellenic issues is a mandate for scholars of Modern Greek Studies. Yiorgos Anagnostou, a leading scholar of Greek America, discusses the funding of Hellenistic studies in America. He argues that scholarships limited to students of Greek genetic heritage ultimately are a disservice to Hellenism.

Poetry has always been a vital force in Greek communities. Included in this issue are three poems by contemporary poets that deal with social issues. George Economou uses the *villanelle* poetic form to denounce Turkish usurpation of Greek art while what the Greek words *xeni*, *xeno*, and *xenita* signify about being "foreign" in the homeland and the diaspora is the theme of a poem by Andrienne Kalfopoulou. Sam Hamod suggests that humans might learn a thing or two from the political organization of crows.

Our final essay is a review by Constantine Danopoulos of *Adults in the Room: My Battle with the European and American Deep Establishment* by Yanis Varoufakis. Danopoulos observes that the account reveals a great deal about the personalities involved in the Greek financial crisis of the past decade.