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The Dog That Never Bites: Russian Influence in Greek Politics

This paper looks into the question of Russian influence in Greek politics and society and evaluates to what extent Greece is gravitating towards Russia's strategic influence. Greece is an EU and NATO member often singled out for its alleged closeness to Russian goals and priorities in the Balkans and the Mediterranean, a fear that increased after a populist government came to power in January 2015. The paper presents the Russian influence in Greece and Russia's connections to extremist and populist forces in Greek society in a historical context, while also taking into account recent developments, such as the falling out between Athens and Moscow over the alleged activities of Russian spies in Greece, and the rift between the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople and the Moscow Patriarchate. The paper argues that, while Greek elites are closer to Russia than their European counter-parts for geopolitical reasons and Greek society feels affinity to Russia for religious reasons, Russia's direct influence in Greece is significant but less so than what external observers often assume.