

TURKISH-GREEK RELATIONS: 1999-2010

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to elaborate on the substantial shift in the pattern of Turkish-Greek relations between 1999 and 2010 and the future prospects for the course of bilateral relations. It is my contention that the European Union membership conditionality and the civil diplomacy triggered by the unexpected earthquakes in both countries in 1999 have been the principal factors in inducing the positive shift in the bilateral relations between 1999 and 2010. Previously, Turkish-Greek relations followed a chequered path, determined largely by their territorial disputes, which brought the two states at times almost at the brink of war. Cyprus has played the major factor plaguing bilateral relations post 1955 along with those pertaining to the Aegean Sea post 1980s. The state of Greek Orthodox and Muslim Turkish minorities has also provoked frictions, though at a relatively less important level. Prior to 1999, ethno-nationalism played a determining role in bilateral relations. This was afterwards replaced by a more instrumentalist, pragmatist and democratic approach owing to the EU factor as well as civil diplomacy.

Key Words: Turkish-Greek Relations, EU Conditionality, Rapprochement.

TÜRK-YUNAN İLİŐKİLERİ: 1999-2010

ÖZET

Bu makalenin amacı, 1999-2010 yılları arasında Türk-Yunan ilişkileri örüntüsünde meydana gelen deęişimi incelemek ve ikili ilişkilerin gelecekteki seyri üzerinde durmaktır. Bu makalenin savı, 1999'dan 2010'a dek iki ülke ilişkilerindeki deęişimde ana rolün Avrupa Birlięi üyelik şartlılıęı ve 1999'da iki ülke arasında beklenmedik bir şekilde gelişen sivil diplomasiye ait olduğudur. Önceleri, Türk-Yunan ilişkileri, bazı durumlarda iki ülkeyi neredeyse savaşın eşiğine sürükleyen teritoryal ihtilaflar tarafından yönlendiriliyor ve dolayısıyla da oldukça inişli çıkışlı bir seyir izliyordu. 1955 ve sonrasında özellikle Kıbrıs meselesi ve 1980'lerde Ege

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Denizi ile ilgili anlaşmazlıklar ikili ilişkileri zehirleyen en önemli faktörlerdi. Göreceli olarak daha önemsiz bir seviyede de olsa Ortodoks Rum Azınlık ile Batı Trakya Müslüman Türk Azınlığı da ikili ilişkilerde ayrı bir anlaşmazlık unsuru idi. Üstelik, 1999 öncesi ikili ilişkilerde belirleyici rol oynayan etnik milliyetçilik, 1999 sonrası yerini AB faktörü ve sivil diplomasinin tetiklediği yakınlaşma sayesinde daha pragmatist, araçsal ve demokratik bir yaklaşıma bıraktı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk-Yunan İlişkileri, AB Koşulluluğu, Uzlaşma.

Introduction

Central to the ethno-nationalisms in both Turkey and Greece is their history of nation-state making that incorporates a series of bitter and violent events. Of the most outstanding on the Turkish side are the Greek rebellion for independence from the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan wars and massive refugee inflow to Ottoman lands, Greek occupation of Izmir and the resulting Turkish-Greek war, and more recently the ethnic conflict in Cyprus. On the Greek side are; the loss of Constantinople to the Ottomans, four centuries of subjection to the Ottoman rule, the violent suppression of the Greek Revolt of 1821, the defeat of Greek army and the subsequent expulsion of Greek Orthodox from Anatolia by the Population Exchange and the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus.¹ However, as Anastasiou correctly argues, history also incorporates periods of peaceful coexistence, friendly bilateral relations, which are unfortunately deliberately excluded from the grand national narrative in the process of identity construction.²

One of the greatest promoters of ethno-nationalism in Greece has been, undoubtedly the Greek Orthodox Church, whose role in nation building and politics dates back to the Ottoman period millet system and the relatively late development of civil society as a result of state centralism and

¹ Mustafa Aydın, "Crypto-optimism in Turkish-Greek relations. What is next? ", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Volume 5, Nr. 2, August 2003, pp. 224-226; Ahmet Evin, "Changing Greek Perspectives on Turkey: An Assessment of the post-Earthquake Rapprochement" in Ali Çarkoğlu, Barry Rubin, *Greek Turkish Relations in an Era of Détente*, 2005, p. 4; Ş. Sina Gürel, "Turkey and Greece: a Difficult Aegean Relationship" in Canan Balkır, Allan M. Williams (eds), *Turkey and Europe*, 1993, p. 162.

² Harry Anastasiou, "Changing Greek-Turkish Relations: Past, Present and Future", *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 50th Annual Convention "Exploring The Past, Anticipating The Future"*, New York Marriott Marquis, New York City, NY, USA, Feb 15, 2009, p. 2; Evin, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

relatively late establishment of democratic rule.³ Similar factors have played the same role in Turkish ethno-nationalism. Yet religion does not have an equally decisive role in the Turkish case. Ethno-nationalism, therefore, began to define and redefine Greek and Turkish identities as oppositional to each other, and influence the state and government institutions and actors in such a way that it eventually took root in foreign policy formulation concerning bilateral relations. Consequently, perceptions began to be dominated by mutual distrust and suspicion against each other⁴.

The Cyprus conflict has even more aggravated the ethno-nationalisms at the state and public levels. It is claimed that the Greek historiography of the events in Anatolia from 1914 to 1922 were approached from a relatively modest and objective viewpoint whereas the trend was reversed after the eruption of the Cyprus conflict from mid 1955s on.⁵ Therefore, it marks a major turning point in Turkish–Greek Relations.

Bilateral relations exacerbated with the conflict and the subsequent armed confrontation in Cyprus. Disputes over the territorial waters, continental shelf, and airspace in the Aegean Sea followed. After a decade Greece became an EC member, and the EC itself enlarged and deepened to transform into the EU in 1993. Henceforth, major subjects of dispute with Turkey were drawn within the EU body by Greece. This was a time that coincided with Turkey's desperate endeavors to become an EU member and eager to fulfill requirements in order to be eligible. Eventually Turkey was given candidacy status at 1999 Helsinki Summit. Yet this required profound changes in a number of policy areas including that of her Cyprus policy. The unexpected earthquakes in both countries brought for the first time not the governments but the civilians of both countries together from which a 'civil diplomacy' blossomed that facilitated a unique Turkish-Greek rapprochement.

1. The Relatively Friendly Period: 1923 - late 1950s

After the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne which confirmed the sovereignty and international recognition of Turkey, a treaty concerning the

³ Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Modern Greece*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 25.

⁴ Gürel, *op.cit.*, p. 163.

⁵ Stefanos Yerasimos, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Ermeni Sorunu", *TÜBA Akademi Forumu* 8, 2002, p. 4.

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Exchange of Greek and Turkish populations between Greece and Turkey was signed. The 1924 Population Exchange marks a central episode in the consolidation of the respective nation-state building processes in Turkey and Greece. Ultimately, it resulted in the forced uprooting of approximately two million people from lands they were born and lived for centuries. Over a million Greek Orthodox from Turkey and a half million Muslims from Greece were expelled with the exception of a Greek Orthodox community in Istanbul and a Muslim Turkish community in northeastern Greece both numbering around 120,000.

This period can be characterized as the consolidation of the nation – state making in both Greece and Turkey, along with modernization and socio economic development endeavors. Consequently, the need for security and protection of status quo was vital. Subsequently, balance of power considerations became the prevailing motif in bilateral relations which manifested itself in alliances against a third party aggressor in the region (Italy) as well as the need for neighborly cooperation in the realization of socio-economic development. The role of farsighted political actors (Venizelos, Atatürk, İnönü) played a constitutive role in the rapprochement. The initial approach for normalization and improvement of bilateral relations was initiated by Greece against the more powerful Turkey.

In 1928, Venizelos rearticulated an amicable Greek foreign policy aiming at the protection of status quo, which meant a complete shift from the previous irredentist line. The Turkish foreign policy orientation of the Republican era was also amicable and anti-revisionist. In 1928, Venizelos sent a letter to Ankara stating their new foreign policy orientation and inviting them for the improvement of bilateral relations and the settlement of remaining disputes over property emanating from the Population Exchange. This was welcomed by Turkey. In 1930, Venizelos paid an official visit to Ankara. As a result, bilateral agreements over the settlement of property disputes and the improvement of friendly relations was signed; a Treaty of Friendship, Neutrality, Conciliation and Arbitration, a Protocol of Naval Armaments, and the Convention on Residence, Commerce and Navigation.⁶

⁶ Melek Fırat, “Yunanistan’la İlişkiler”, Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, 1919-1980*, Cilt I, 6. Baskı, İstanbul, 2002, pp. 344-346.

The *Treaty of Friendship and Neutrality* was meant to build a political and economic alliance. It was ensuring neutrality in the case of an attack to the other party, refraining from any alliance against the interests of the other party and friendly settlement of disputes. The *Protocol of Naval Armaments* required both parties to inform each other 6 months before import or production of arms. This protocol was of crucial importance because it put restrictions on armament. Thus the money to be spent on armament would be used for economic development especially during the period of the Great Depression. The *Convention on Residence, Commerce and Navigation* affirmed the free movement of Greek and Turkish citizens between the two countries and set the rules for bilateral trade.⁷

In 1931, Prime Minister İnönü and Foreign Affairs Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras made a return visit to Athens who were received with an equally warm welcome. Venizelos proposed Atatürk for the Nobel Peace Prize for his contributions to peace on the Balkan Peninsula. As a gesture of goodwill, in 1937 the Greek sculptor Athineos presented his Atatürk bust to Turkey. The Municipality of Thessaloniki bought Atatürk's house and presented it to Turkey. Reciprocal chairs were established in the universities of both countries.⁸

The rapprochement between the two countries continued even after the resignation of Venizelos from the government in 1932. Official visits became frequent in this period. In October 1933, Turkish Prime Minister İnönü and Greek Prime Minister Tsaldaris signed another *Friendship Agreement* against a possible threat from Bulgaria. Both sides agreed on the **defense of mutual** borders (Greek and Turkish Thrace) in the case of an attack and the defense of common interests in international meetings. Furthermore, two other agreements were signed in December 1933 and November 1934 establishing alliance on economic and commercial issues. The signing of the *Balkan Pact* in 1934 (by Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania) was the most significant outcome of rapprochement at the regional level. Yet it became void upon occupation of the signatories by Italy and Germany.⁹

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 351-353.

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Prior to WWII, the two countries had established political, economic and military alliances. These alliances were largely influenced by the perceived threat from Bulgaria and Italy as well as deteriorating economic conditions in each country. As a result, both countries and particularly the Greek Orthodox and the Muslim-Turkish minorities enjoyed and benefited from a peaceful and friendly period of relations. However, in this friendly period, Greece took some territorial decisions, which would create serious troubles in the long term. In 1931, Greece unilaterally declared that it extended her air zone over the Aegean from 3 to 10 miles. In 1936, after the visit of Metaxas to Ankara, the territorial waters were extended from 3 miles to 6 miles.¹⁰

This friendly period of alliances, however, was disrupted with the occupation of Greece (1941-1944) by the Axis powers during the Second World War. Greece demanded Turkey to ally with her against the Italian occupation, invoking the bilateral agreements on military alliance and the Balkan Pact. However, Turkey retained her neutrality. Nonetheless, she sent the humanitarian aid collected by Istanbul Greeks by sea in 1941 and 1942 when Greece was suffering from hunger during the Nazi occupation and allowed the Greek ship *Adrias* escaping from Nazis to shelter in Turkish waters and then sail to the Northern Africa shores.¹¹

The subsequent period of 1947-1955 is also considered as a period of friendship and rapprochement between Turkey and Greece. In 1947, after the declaration of the Truman Doctrine, a *Turkish-Greek Cooperation Committee* was established in Athens and a *Trade Agreement* was signed in 1948 in order to facilitate bilateral trade. In 1952, both countries became NATO members. In February 1952, Prime Minister Sophoklis Venizelos (son of Eleftherios Venizelos) visited Turkey during which a *Turkish-Greek Mixed Committee on Cooperation* was established and a number of economic and commercial measures were taken such as joint marketing of Turkish and Greek tobacco to third countries, joint fishing in Aegean waters, bilateral abolition of visas, and alliance in security issues. Later in June 1952, King Paulos and Queen Frederica visited Turkey. In November, Turkish President Celal Bayar visited Athens and then Komotini (Gümülcine) to attend the opening ceremony of the Minority High School, built by the then King Paulos. Relations between the two countries were so

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 580-581.

good that in a declaration, Venizelos said: ‘The friendly relations between Turkey and Greece are so strong that within a short while we will declare the two countries one’.¹²

In 1954, both countries became members to the Second Balkan Pact. However, in 1955 Cyprus question began to cast a shadow over the bilateral relations. The first phase of Cyprus conflict was settled by the creation of an independent Cyprus Republic in 1960. However, the resolution did not last for long and the tensions escalated in the beginning of 1960s. From then on, Cyprus became the main obstacle in the development of Turkish-Greek relations.

2. Bilateral Relations Plagued by the Cyprus Conflict and Conflicting Claims over the Aegean Sea: early 1960s - 1999

Emergence and escalation of the ethnic conflict in Cyprus had devastating repercussions not only for Cypriots, but also for the Greek Orthodox minority of Istanbul, the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace along with the mainstream public in Greece and Turkey. Already in June 1955, the negotiations between Turkey, Greece and Britain at the London Conference were broken off by the pogrom against the Greek Orthodox of Istanbul. They became the target of a massive violent mob, plundering their shops, cemeteries and attacking ordinary minority persons.¹³

Upon the dissolution of the power-sharing regime in 1963, civil disorder and armed violence escalated in Cyprus. Negotiations between the two countries failed. Turkey tried to exert pressure on Greece in order to soften her attitude over the Cyprus stalemate by unilaterally abolishing the 1930 *Convention on Residence, Commerce and Navigation* on 16th September 1964. As a result, residence permits of 8600 Greek citizens of Greek Orthodox were cancelled and they were expelled from the country within 24 hours. On 7th May 1964, a secret decree (nr 6/8301) was issued which blocked all transactions on immovable Greek Orthodox property.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 587.

¹³ 4340 shops, 2000 houses, 110 restaurants, 83 churches of which 3 were burned down, 21 factories, 27 pharmacies, 12 hotels, 11 surgeries, 5 minority clubs, 3 newspaper printing houses, 26 schools and 5 sport clubs were attacked and plundered. Samim Akgönül, *Türkiye Rumları: Ulus-Devlet Çağından Küreselleşme Çağına Bir Azınlığın Yok Oluş Süreci*, (çev) Ceyla Gürmen, 1. Baskı, İletişim Yayınları, 2007, p. 207.

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This precipitated the second largest migration wave to Greece after the pogrom of 1955.¹⁴ By 11 October 1964, 30,000 Turkish nationals of Greek descent had left Turkey along with those expelled.¹⁵ A similar measure in the format of deprivation of citizenship would later be employed against the Muslim Turkish minority of Greece as retaliation against the diminished number of the Greek Orthodox in Istanbul. Around fifty thousand minority members would be deprived of Greek citizenship between 1960 and 1998.¹⁶

Eventually in 1974, the Greek-junta backed coup in Cyprus aiming to unite the island with mainland Greece failed due to the Turkish military intervention. Consequently the junta regime in Greece collapsed. Greece withdrew from NATO as a reaction to its failure to prevent Turkish intervention. Turkey was punished by the USA with an arms embargo for a while. Upon the overthrow of the junta in 1974, Greece entered a period of democratization. Yet, the Cyprus issue turned into an even worse impasse. Between 1974 and 1981, a number of bilateral talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriot members took place under the auspices of either the USA or the UN with no concrete prospects for settlement. At several times, disputes over the Aegean took precedence over Cyprus and almost brought the two countries on the brink of war.

Main issues of contention in the Aegean in 1975-1996 period were continental shelf, territorial waters, airspace and militarization of Aegean islands in close geographical proximity to Turkey. The timing of the emergence of these disputes -mid-1970s- reveal their political nature. No permanent resolution has been reached yet mainly due to the divergence in the approach of Greece and Turkey. Greece advocates the idea of legal arbitration by way of taking the matters to the ICJ whereas Turkey prefers bilateral negotiations.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

¹⁵ Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations 1918-1974*, 2nd Edition, Centre for Asia Minor Studies, Athens, 1992, p. 268.

¹⁶ Dia Anagnostou, "Deepening Democracy or Defending the Nation? The Europeanization of Minority Rights and Greek Citizenship", *West European Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 2, March 2005, p. 338.

¹⁷ Tozun Bahcheli, "Cycles of Tension and Rapprochement: Prospects for Turkey's Relations with Greece", in Tareq Y. Ismael and Mustafa Aydın (eds), *Turkey's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century: A Changing Role in World Politics*, 2003, p.164.

Referring to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Greece claims that islands are part of her mainland and therefore entitled to have a continental shelf of 200 miles from beyond the border of her territorial waters. Turkey, on the other hand, claims that the islands located on a natural prolongation of a land mass do not have continental shelves of their own, and therefore, delimitation should be implemented in equitable principles, taking into consideration the natural resources, security requirements of the parties, and transportation routes in the Aegean.¹⁸ Upon the Greek complaint to the ICJ about Turkey's search for oil in the Aegean, in 1978, the ICJ declared a 'non-jurisdiction' decision, stating that it is not authorized to give a decision about the case.¹⁹ During a set of negotiations in 1978, both sides reached a form of *modus vivendi* agreeing to adopt a set of procedures for bilateral negotiations and refrain from any exploration in areas outside their respective territories. However, Greece terminated the negotiating process in 1978 due to the domestic political pressure created by the new American government's possibility to lift the arms embargo against Turkey.²⁰ Consequently, the dispute was left unresolved.

Under the Lausanne Treaty the breadth of the territorial seas of the two countries was determined as 3 nautical miles. In 1936, Greece declared that it extended its territorial waters from 3 miles to 6 miles. Turkey did not oppose or in any way react to this declaration then. Twenty eight years later, on 15th May 1964, Turkey also adopted the 6 mile (Decree nr.476 concerning territorial waters). After 1982, depending on the Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS), which stated that "Every State has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial waters up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles" Greece began to claim that, it had the right to extend its territorial waters to 12 miles. Turkey never ratified the Convention, and objected to the Greek demands contending that it would be regarded as a *casus belli*.²¹ Currently, according to the 6-mile limit, Greek territorial waters comprise approximately 35% of the Aegean Sea, while Turkey's share is only 8.8 %, and international waters 56.2%. In the case of their extension to 12 miles, Turkish share would extend to 10%, whereas Greek

¹⁸ Melek Fırat, "Kıta Sahaneliği Konusunda Yunan ve Türk Tezleri", Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar 1919-1980*, Cilt I, 6. Baskı, İstanbul, 2002, p. 758.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 756.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.757.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 751-752.

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share to 63.9%, and international waters to 26.1%. In such a case, considering the proximity of Mytilene, Chios and Dodecanese to the Turkish mainland, it is considered that a ship sailing from Istanbul to Izmir will have to pass through Greek waters.²²

Greece defined a 10-mile airspace over 6-mile coastal waters. Turkey claimed that it was inconsistent with international law and the Chicago Convention, which determine the breadth of national airspace in line with the breadth of territorial waters. This friction over the airspace had negative repercussions for other international flights over the Aegean. In 1979, Turkey issued NOTAM 714 (*Notice to Airmen*), requesting information about all flights; civil and military; which would enter the east of the specified middle line of the Aegean, that is to say, moved the FIR line (*flight information region*) from between the outer limit of both countries to the middle of the Aegean. Greece then issued NOTAM 1157, declaring that part of the Aegean as a dangerous area. Consequently, for a long period of time, airplanes had to avoid the Aegean and follow another route²³. This was more to the detriment of Turkey as flight tickets became very expensive and complaints from airline companies proliferated. The problem was settled on 22nd February 1980, when Demirel, after completion of defense regulations with USA, withdrew NOTAM 714 unilaterally. Following this, Greece also withdrew NOTAM 1175.²⁴ Today, the primary dispute between the two countries is about military aircraft. Whereas Greece claims that the FIR regulation concerns military aircraft, and therefore requests flight information, Turkey asserts that it concerns civil aircraft only.²⁵

The final pillar of dispute in the Aegean is about the militarization of Dodecanese islands in close proximity to Turkey and the controversial issue of sovereignty over islets and rocks which do not exactly fall in legal jurisdiction of either side. A notorious case for the latter is the Imia/Kardak crisis in 1996. Art 14 of the Treaty of Paris (1947) sets the demilitarized status of the Aegean islands. Yet Greece started to militarize them after 1964, arguing that conditions had changed since the international instruments laid down the non-military status of the islands and that Turkey was not a signatory to the Paris Treaty of 1947. Consequently, Greece claimed to have no obligation to Turkey to keep the Dodecanese

²² *Ibid.*, p. 753.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 760.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

demilitarized. Furthermore, she defended militarization on the basis of Article 51 of the UN Charter against Turkish threat. Turkey claimed that there was no essential change in conditions to support Greek claims, that militarization of the islands concerns all states in the region including the non-signatories. As a response, Turkey placed the 4th Army in Western Anatolia as a defensive measure against Greek threats.²⁶

The only undertaking for the normalization of bilateral relationships in this period was the Davos meetings of 30-31 January 1988 by the then liberal functionalist Turkish Prime Minister Özal and his counterpart Andreas Papandreu. Özal was enthusiastic and very determined about initiating a dialogue so that he did not even raise the issue of the Muslim minority of Greece, despite the letter sent to him by minority representatives explaining the discrimination and oppression they were faced with for years.²⁷ Yet, Davos failed to generate the expected rapprochement. Although both leaders met in Brussels right after Davos and issued a joint declaration concerning the improvement of bilateral relations through increasing contacts between civilians, military personnel, businessmen and journalists and other issues, the political scandals in Greece and the deteriorating health of Papandreu himself blocked the process. The only positive outcome of the Davos was the abolition of the secret presidential decree (1964) in February 1988 which blocked transactions on the Greek nationals' immovable property.²⁸

In the second half of 1980s, the Muslim Turkish minority of Greece became another subject of contention in bilateral relations. By then, the Greek Orthodox minority of Istanbul had already diminished to a quite insignificant number. The Muslim-Turkish minority held the first large scale demonstration in 1988, as a reaction to Greece's continuing violation of human and minority rights and to kin state Turkey's indifference to minority matters at the Davos meetings. As no improvement took place, two

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 762.

²⁷ The minority notables had sent a letter to the then Turkish Prime Minister Özal to bring up the grievances of the minority during the talks. To the minority's disappointment, Özal made no mention of the issue. Furthermore, to Papandreu's surprise, Özal, like his counterpart Papandreu, even to his surprise, declared the mass minority demonstration of 1988 as 'provocation', Melek Fırat, "Yunanistan'la İlişkiler", Baskın Oran (ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar 1980-2001*, Cilt II, 6. Baskı, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2002, p. 117.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

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years later, on the same day another demonstration was held to raise their voices. A group of Greek fanatics attacked the demonstrators, plundered minority-owned shops, and injured twenty one minority members. The 1990 pogrom against the Muslim minority was considered to be a belated retaliation of the 1955 pogrom against the Greek Orthodox of Istanbul. The whole event raised a diplomatic crisis between Greece and Turkey. The Turkish Consul of Komotini, Kemal Gür was declared *persona non grata* by Greece and expelled from the country for addressing the minority as ‘our kinsmen’ in a letter he wrote to Greek authorities demanding the indemnification of damaged shops. Turkey retaliated by expelling Ilias Klis, the Greek Consul in Istanbul.²⁹

The period from 1981 to late 1990s was a scene of Greek Turkish aggression over the Aegean, exacerbated with the declaration of the Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic in 1983. An outstanding feature of this period was Greek endeavors to internationalize disputes with Turkey. She was allowed to rejoin the NATO, from which she had withdrawn in 1974, and without encountering a Turkish veto. The US, as the leading power of NATO was the chief mediator in bilateral relations, particularly during the 1987 oil-drilling crisis in the Aegean and the Kardak Crisis in 1996. Greece had already become member to the European Community in 1981. Membership to the EC had already provided Greece with a free hand in vetoing decisions in favor of Turkey. Until late 1990s, Greece vetoed EC funding to Turkey, and also retained a negative stance against the deepening of Turkey’s association agreement with the EC.³⁰

With the enlargement and the deepening of the EC into the European Union (EU) in 1992, Greece began to bring her subjects of dispute with Turkey, particularly the Cyprus issue, within the EU.³¹ Thus, Turkey’s membership to the EU and the resolution of her disputes with Greece was expected to become part of a ‘carrot and stick’ policy along with other requirements for membership. Cyprus had already applied for EC membership in 1990. Her application was accepted in 1993 by the EU. In order to facilitate the accession negotiations, Greece put forward Cyprus’s membership to the EU as a condition in exchange for lifting her veto against

²⁹ Baskın Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu*, 2. Basım, Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara, 1991, pp. 447-448.

³⁰ Bahçeli, *op.cit.*, p. 168.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

accession of Turkey to the Customs Union in 1995.³² Accession of Cyprus into the EU was thus made unconditional upon a prior bilateral settlement.

3. A Decade of Detente [1999-2009] and Future Prospects

The post 1999 reconciliation was initiated by two far-sighted, pacifist and determined domestic political actors, the then Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister İsmail Cem and his counterpart George Papandreu. This process of reconciliation was also corroborated by the civil dialogue instigated by the devastating earthquake in Turkey and the subsequent earthquake in Greece in 1999. Instead of focusing on classical disputes, this time points of agreement were given priority such as the establishment of an intensive web of economic, social and cultural ties in non contentious areas such as tourism, economic cooperation, science and technology.³³

3.1. The EU enters into the stage

Two strategies employed by European Institutions (EU, CoE, OSCE) for influencing state behavior are ‘normative pressure’ and ‘conditionality’. Normative Pressure usually takes the form of advices and recommendations given to a government about a specific policy direction, whereas conditionality is more a ‘carrot and stick policy’ as it links policy changes directly to an incentive.³⁴ Accordingly, the candidate states choose either to adopt rules imposed by the EU or not, based on cost-benefit calculations, where the benefit, or incentive is EU membership and the costs are those associated with change in behavior that requires sacrifice of sovereignty or even some national interests. Conditionality has been described as the most effective instrument on rule adoption for candidate states including Turkey.³⁵ The harmonization reforms undertaken in 2001-

³² *Ibid.*, p. 168, p. 174.

³³ Anastasiou, p. 20; Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, “Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: Rhetoric or Reality?”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 123, Nr. 1, 2008, p. 130.

³⁴ Judith G. Kelly, “Introduction”, *Ethnic Politics in Europe: the Power of Norms and Incentives*, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 18; Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, “Introduction: Conceptualizing the Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe”, (eds) Frank Schimmelfennig & Ulrich Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, Cornell University Press, 2005, p. 9.

³⁵ Frank Schimmelfennig, Stefan Engert, and Heiko Knobel, “The Impact of EU Political Conditionality on Slovakia, Turkey, Latvia”, (eds) Frank Schimmelfennig & Ulrich Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, Cornell University Press, 2005, p. 41; Paul Kubicek, “The European Union and Grassroots Democratization in

2004 as well as the change in foreign policy orientation towards Cyprus for the first time in history indicate the explicit change in the scope and effectiveness of the EU leverage on Turkey.

The achievement of EU membership for candidate states needs fulfillment of a number of requirements including adherence to the *Copenhagen Criteria*, adoption of *acquis communautaire*, and the alignment of foreign policy behavior towards a collective European common foreign and security policy, (CFSP), yet, the latter has not been imposed as a condition as strongly the former two.³⁶ The EU does not officially require the settlement of candidate states' disputes with her neighbors as a political criterion. However, for Turkey particularly; this kind of a requirement *de facto* exists, as the developments in this domain are specified in each annual progress report, Accession Partnership Documents, and Negotiating Framework.³⁷ The Helsinki communiqué of 1999 was clearly recommending Turkey the settlement of disputes with Greece in accordance with the UN Charter, the International Court of Justice by 2004, and was declaring that accession of Cyprus would be made unconditional upon any settlement³⁸, the latter obviously in favor of Greek interests. The communiqué created a divide among the Turkish officials; some proposed rejection of candidacy status under these conditions whereas others were in favor on the basis of expected returns of future membership.³⁹ The latter won.⁴⁰

The Europeanization of Greek and Turkish foreign policies generated profound results. The EU obviously transformed Greece from a veto player to a supporter of Turkey's membership. It has induced some otherwise impossible changes in Turkish foreign and security policy. Above all, it has curbed the role of military in foreign policy through reforms concerning the role of National Security Council.⁴¹ Furthermore, a profound

Turkey", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2005, pp. 361-377; Mustafa Aydın and Sinem A. Açıkmüşe, "Europeanization through EU conditionality: understanding the new era in Turkish foreign policy", *Journal of Southern Europe and Balkans*, Volume 9, Nr. 3, December 2007, pp. 263-274.

³⁶ The EU has not achieved a CFSP considering the divergent foreign policies of EU members to the Balkan Crisis in early 1990s, as well as to the USA's invasion of Iraq.

³⁷ Aydın and Açıkmüşe, *op.cit.*, pp. 268-269.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 268; Bahçeli, *op.cit.*, p. 174.

³⁹ Bahçeli, *op.cit.*, p. 174.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Aydın and Açıkmüşe, *op.cit.*, p. 269.

shift occurred in Turkish foreign policy as she adopted a reconciliatory approach towards Cyprus and supported the Annan Plan.⁴² However, it should be pointed out that, compared to Erdoğan's fervent promotion of the Annan Plan in Northern Cyprus, the then Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis did not exert an equal pressure on the Greek Cypriot leader Papadopoulos,⁴³ which could be apprehended by a simple cost-benefit analysis. The incentives were not equally distributed by the EU since Cyprus was already given the promise for membership without settlement.

However, a détente and a potential alliance constructed on the EU factor as a promoter was also considered instrumental and therefore criticized for being inherently fragile; particularly concerning the membership prospects of Turkey in the EU. Therefore it was argued that settlement of core conflictual issues pertaining to Cyprus and the Aegean was essential for the achievement of a sustainable, durable relationship; however these concerns do not preclude the concern for Turkey's EU membership.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, core issues were not expected to be settled down in a short period of time, which required, above all, 'political will', 'leadership' on both sides and a more stimulating EU in this context.⁴⁵

Overall, the EU has had two opposing implications; on the one hand, it has been the chief promoter of rapprochement in Turkish-Greek relations, on the other hand, it has contributed to the current impasse in Cyprus and created another veto player in the European Commission today, the Republic of Cyprus, replacing the role of previous Greece. In 2006, eight of the thirty five chapters were suspended due to Turkish rejection to opening Turkish ports to Greek Cypriot ships and aircrafts, a requirement of the Additional Protocol 2005 as part of the Turkey-EU Customs Union.⁴⁶ Moreover, the incentives the EU has offered Turkey have been 'asymmetric' compared with those to Greece.⁴⁷ First of all, the EU has not kept her promise of ending the isolation of Northern Cyprus by allowing for direct flights and marketing of Turkish Cypriot products to the EU markets. Secondly, the EU membership appeal in Turkey has been diminishing due to the inconsistencies of EU policy towards Turkey, such as 'open-ended'

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 270, p. 272; Öniş and Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 137.

⁴³ Öniş and Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 146.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 123; Oğuzlu, *op.cit.*, pp. 100-103.

⁴⁵ Öniş and Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 123.

⁴⁶ Aydın and Açıkmeşe, *op.cit.*, pp. 271-272.

⁴⁷ Öniş and Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

character of negotiations, the ‘absorption capacity’ debate, and the explicit opposition of France and Germany who insist on a ‘privileged partnership’.⁴⁸ This harbors the risk of weakening the EU membership conditionality; the instrumental factor in Turkish-Greek relations.

3.2. Strengthening the Détente at State and Public Levels: Diplomacy and Civil Dialogue

The existence of a strong link between domestic politics and international relations is an undeniable fact in democracies, no matter if they are consolidated or still in the process of democratization. According to Putnam’s analysis of the interactions between domestic and international politics, which he calls ‘two-level games’, political decision makers and their constituencies are interdependent; the former has to appeal to the interests of the latter in order to have their support for the legitimization of his power. Likewise, at the international level, foreign policy is adopted in a fashion to maximize the expectations of the constituencies, or at least with the pursuit of the minimization of unfavorable consequences for the constituencies in question.⁴⁹ Putnam calls the bargaining between decision makers (or negotiators) Level I, and the interactions, or discussions between decision makers and their constituencies Level II.⁵⁰

Hence, it could be inferred that achievement of a durable détente in bilateral relations requires the determination of political decision makers, their constituencies (the public), and their interactions with the political decision makers and publics. Within this framework, sustainment of the latest decade long reconciliation between Turkey and Greece, despite the impasse in Cyprus, and Turkey’s diminishing fervor for EU membership today, can be attributed mainly to the intention to maintain the detente by the succeeding governments and also their publics particularly since the start of the civil dialogue in 1999 which has born substantial fruits in bilateral trade, academic, cultural and social realms.

The reconciliation process was initiated by the then Foreign Ministers of Turkey and Greece, George Papandreu and Ismail Cem who

⁴⁸ Senem Aydin Düzgüt, *Seeking Kant in the EU’s Relations with Turkey*, TESEV Publications, December 2006.

⁴⁹ Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games”, *International Organizations*, 42 (Summer 1988), pp. 433-434.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 436.

met in New York upon Cem's letter of invitation to Papandreu calling for cooperation against terrorism. The first interaction started on a low politics basis, whereby they decided upon fields of cooperation in the realms of culture, education, commerce and tourism.⁵¹ Confidence-building measures adopted by the two sides to be extended in the future by the successor Foreign Ministers Bakoyannis and Babacan made significant contributions to mitigation of the security dilemma. Accordingly, both sides agreed to send notifications of their NATO exercises to prevent tensions through a red phone line between foreign ministers. Moreover, in 2001, they agreed on the prohibition of the use of landmines, and subsequently the landmines along the border of Meriç/Evros were removed.⁵²

After the period of Cem and Papandreu, AKP (centre-right) came to power in Turkey and the New Democracy (center-right) in Greece. The positive dialogue was also promoted by the Prime Ministers, Erdoğan and Karamanlis. Erdoğan paid an official visit to Athens in 2004, and Karamanlis to Ankara in 2008. The most important product of this period diplomacy is the inauguration of the Turkish-Greek pipeline of the Southern European Gas Project on 18 November 2007 to transport natural gas from Azerbaijan to Italy.⁵³

Deepening at Level II definitely requires achievement of social learning in the long term; adoption and internalization of new norms, rules and behavior. However, disappearance of old perceptions, hostilities and the negative legacy of history cannot be achieved within a short time. The development and sustainability of civil dialogue is crucial in this sense. Once again, the EU has contributed substantially to this mission through funding. The Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey has been supporting the Civil Society Dialogue since 2004 with an allocation of €21.5 million; funding cultural activities by Turkish-Greek NGOs, including the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts and the Greek-Turkish Civil Dialogue for the young people in Turkey and Greece, carried out by the AEGEE.⁵⁴

Civil dialogue started with the steps taken by Cem and Papandreu, promoted by the 1999 earthquake, which aroused widespread public

⁵¹ Evin, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

⁵² Öniş and Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁵⁴ Anastasiou, *op.cit.*, p. 16.

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sympathy from the Greek side, who were first to send aid. The event was cast alive by the media, who did not play a provocative nationalist role this time. As also acknowledged by many scholars and thinkers alike, the spontaneous casting of the misery of the victims, in a way, brought the Greek-Turkish reality directly to the attention of the masses⁵⁵, away from any political interference.

Within the frame of bilateral agreements, a Turkish-Greek Economic Council was established in 2000. Volume of trade and investments proliferated over the last decade; rising from \$644 million in 1999 to \$1.3 billion in 2003; Turkish exports to Greece from \$407 million in 1999 to \$1 billion in 2004, and \$2.2 billion in 2007⁵⁶, more to the favor of Turkey, though due to the value of currency and variety of exported products.⁵⁷ Concerning foreign direct investment, however, the amount of Greek FDIs far outweigh Turkish FDIs in Greece; the former rose from \$60 million in 2004 to €430 million in 2007 whereas the latter stands at \$487 thousands.⁵⁸ The major Greek investment in Turkey is in banking sector; 47% of the shares of Finansbank and 70% of the shares of Tekfenbank were bought by Greek banks in 2006.⁵⁹

Another significant indication of the thaw in Turkish-Greek relations is the fall in military spending in both countries. In March 2001, Greece suspended the purchase of a 5 billion euro 60 Eurofighter jets by at least four years. The next month Turkey suspended military purchases worth 23 billion euros.⁶⁰ This would also lead to a corollary reduction pertaining to the use of military equipment, such as the military airplanes which used to engage in dog fighting over the Aegean airspace, bearing monetary as well as humanitarian costs.⁶¹ Dog fighting cases have declined. Yet, they have not completely ended. The last lethal dog fighting occurred in 2006, when the Greek pilot died after the collision of two jets. However, it did not lead

⁵⁵ Evin, *op.cit.*, p. 4; Öniş and Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

⁵⁶ <http://www.ito.org.tr/Dokuman/Ulke/Yunanistan.pdf>, accessed 14.01.2010.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ <http://www.izto.org.tr/NR/rdonlyres/EA724C51-159E-469D-8454-B11C04BF453F/9058/YUNANISTAN2007EYLUL.pdf>, accessed 14.01.2010.

⁵⁹ http://www.ekonorm.com/haber/borsa/316/tekfenbank_in_yuzde_70_i_yunanlilara_satildi/, accessed 14.01.2010.

⁶⁰ Öniş and Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

to another crisis in bilateral relations, because, by that time, Greece and Turkey were engaged in an ‘institutionalized rapprochement framework’.⁶²

Cultural exchange was promoted through joint projects in academia, tourism, music and arts. There was a significant rise in tourism. The number of Greek visitors to Turkey were 197,258 in 2001, 393,517 in 2003, and 413,00 in 2006, and the number of Turkish visitors to Greece was 114,354 in 2001, 139,018 in 2002.⁶³ Academic cooperation was promoted by both sides. Along with the Erasmus Program, the Turkish-Greek student exchange was also promoted by individual initiatives of universities such as the Istanbul Policy Center of Sabancı University which collaborated with the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy on a regular basis.⁶⁴ Joint media events, films and TV productions also contributed to the cultural exchange. For instance, the Greek-Turkish joint film entitled *Politiki Kouzina* (A Touch of Spice/Bir Tutam Baharat) and the Turkish made TV series *Yabancı Damat* (Love’s Frontiers) received enormous popularity in both Turkey and Greece.⁶⁵

Conclusion

The EU factor- EU membership conditionality for Turkey and the deepening of Europeanization process for Greece was the chief promoter of the Turkish-Greek rapprochement between 1999 and 2010. The second significant factor in the process was the domestic political actors; the foreign ministers of Turkey and Greece respectively, Cem and Papandreu. They initiated the bilateral dialogue which was underpinned and advanced by the civil dialogue between the peoples of both countries after the earthquakes bound them together in an unprecedented way. Ultimately, for both states, this has resulted in a paradigm shift in foreign policy behavior from a realist, nationalist standing to a more pragmatic and liberal one.

Yet the sustainability of the current rapprochement and the chances for it to transform into a long lasting alliance depends on the enhancement of the civil dialogue which can in the long term set the fertile ground for the peaceful and permanent settlement of the contentious issues regarding the

⁶² Anastasiou, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

⁶³ Öniş and Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 134.

⁶⁴ Anastasiou, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

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Aegean and Cyprus. The effectiveness of the EU already declined in 2004. It failed to provide a permanent solution for Cyprus. More importantly, the prospect of EU membership suffers loss of popular support due to its inconsistencies against Turkey. Yet, so far, bilateral rapprochement has been enhanced at two levels; by the successor domestic governments of both countries and their publics. The JDP (AKP) government promoted it even more fervently than the Karamanlis government. For the first time after 1950s, mutual visits took place at the government level. Even the failure of resolution in Cyprus in 2004 due to Greek Cypriot refusal of the Annan Plan did not affect bilateral relations negatively.

Civil dialogue has been promoted by a number of joint projects in cultural and economic spheres. In the economic sphere, the most significant one is the Turkish-Greek pipeline, known as the Southern European Gas Ring Project. Economic interdependency has reached such a level that, referring to the classical functionalist theory, Coulumbis and Kentikelenis contend that such interdependencies would prove non-cooperation or a reversal of the last decade's détente too costly and therefore not very likely to happen,⁶⁶ an opinion also shared by some Turkish scholars.⁶⁷

Expansion of joint cultural projects and the rise of tourism are equally important developments that supplement the bilateral rapprochement at the grassroots level. More interaction is likely to break old prejudices and establish lasting companionships which will in return nurture mutual understanding and respect instead of suspicions, fears and antagonism.

The point reached in the course of bilateral relations today does not seem to carry the risk of being reversed unless there is a radical change in the behavior of governmental actors. The EU will continue to stand as a promoter of neighborly relations albeit with varying effectiveness. Cooperation on humanitarian and relatively low politics issues will set a more fruitful basis for the negotiation and eventual resolution of the contentious -high politics issues.

⁶⁶ Theodore A. Coulumbis and Alexander E. Kentikelenis, "Greek-Turkish Relations and the Kantian Democratic Peace Theory", *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 7, Nr. 4, December 2007, p. 529.

⁶⁷ Oğuzlu, *op.cit.*, p. 95; Öniş and Yılmaz, *op.cit.*, p. 144.

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