

## **Conflict Transformation in Greek-Turkish Relations: Between Belligerent Nationalism and Conciliatory Europeanization**

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### **Abstract**

*From the perspective of conflict analysis and resolution and of peace studies, this paper examines the changing bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey as an illustrative case of conflict transformation. The changes in Greek-Turkish relations are analyzed against the historical backdrop of how belligerent ethno-nationalist conditioned cultures, perceptions and foreign policy approaches have functioned in inter-state and inter-societal interactions between the neighboring countries. The analysis proceeds by examining the currently evolving and deepening paradigm shifts in the foreign policy approaches and political cultures of the respective countries. Moreover, it looks at the catalytic influence of the European Union framework in enhancing and empowering conciliatory bilateral relations in the Eastern Mediterranean. The gradual transition of Greek-Turkish relations from their traditionally belligerent nationalist orientation to a more post-nationalist, peace-engendering European orientation is assessed in terms of its likely impact on the peaceful resolution of issues that remain outstanding in the Eastern Mediterranean.*

### **Introduction: Historical Background to Greek-Turkish Relations**

The founding of the Greek and the Turkish nation-states in 1827 and 1923 respectively was accompanied by a rigidly ethnocentric view of identity, historiography, political culture, social morphology, territoriality and state power. This was an approach to governance constructed and codified by the rampant nationalism of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Alter, 1994; Anderson, 1995). Elaborated through the nationalist mindset, the sacralization, and hence mystification, of the nation-state through references to a sense of distinctive and exclusive destiny, supreme calling, invincibility, moral rightness, and the right to employ violence in the name of *the nation* have set the stage for modernity's ambiguous and conflict-reddened history, of which Greece and Turkey have been an integral part.

While both the nation-state of the Republic of Greece and nation-state of Republic of Turkey share the common legacy of having been established through violent struggle against the Ottoman Empire, their respective ethnocentric nationalisms have constructed master narratives in which one saw the other as the perpetual and invariable national enemy (Anastasiou, 2008a; Özkirimli and Sofos, 2008). This was facilitated by the fact that the founders of the Greek Republic associated national freedom with their violent struggle against the Turks through a perspective that conflated Ottomans with Turks. It was also facilitated by the fact that the founders of the Turkish Republic associated their national freedom with violent struggle against the Greeks, whose army, among others, had occupied parts of Asia Minor during and after World War I. Thus, at their very advent, the Greek nationalist narrative had associated Greek national freedom with bloody battles against Turks, and the Turkish nationalist narrative had associated Turkish national freedom with bloody battles against Greeks.

In its further historical consolidation, Greek nationalism has projected on all Turks an absolutist image of "the enemy" by constructing a historiography that suppressed historical eras of peaceful coexistence and selectively highlighted conflict and struggle.

The latter referenced the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453 A.D.; the four hundred years of Ottoman rule over the Greek people; the massacres of Greeks during the 1821 revolution; the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922, with massive killings and expulsion of Greeks; the 1955 expulsion of Greeks from Turkey; the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, displacing 200,000 Greek Cypriots and gaining control of 37% of the Republic of Cyprus; and Turkish territorial claims in the Aegean.

On the other hand, in consolidating its own narrative, Turkish nationalism had projected on all Greeks an absolutist image of "the enemy" by also constructing a historiography that suppressed historical eras of peaceful coexistence and selectively highlighted conflict and struggle. The latter, in complete contrast to the Greek narrative, referenced the killings and final eradication of Turkish Muslim inhabitants from the Greek mainland during the Greek war of independence; the flooding into the Turkish mainland of Turkish refugees from the Balkan wars of 1912-13 (that doubled the population of Istanbul), as they fled from the advancing armies of Greece, Serbia and Montenegro fighting against the Ottomans; the massacres and devastation left behind by the eastward advancement of the Greek army into the Turkish hinterland in 1922, following the end of World War I; the 1960s Akritas Plan, developed by Greek Cypriot nationalists, which spoke of

enforcing the union of Cyprus and Greece and, if need be, annihilating the Turkish Cypriot population; and the killings of Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus during the 1960s.

Typical of nationalist world views and the constructed historiographies that underpin them, both Greek and Turkish master narratives have been conditioned by violent conflict and thus forged by narcissistic patterns of selective memory, half-truths, victimization and the transposition of pain, loss and suffering specific to certain historical events to perpetual justifiers of animosity, grievances and belligerent approaches toward the other (Anastasiou, 2008c). The respective ethnocentric narratives thus inevitably sustained and perpetuated a belligerent ethno-polarizing relationship between Greeks and Turks, even beyond the original historical events that gave rise to the respective nationalisms.

As the nationalist mind prevailed in the political world of each of the neighboring countries, elaborating a constructed historiography around the primacy of revolutions, war and conflict with the “enemy other,” historical periods of peaceful coexistence were suppressed and eliminated from the collective memory of each nation. For example, the period of rapprochement in the 1930s between Greece and Turkey, initiated under premierships of Venizelos and Atatürk respectively, was altogether forgotten and excluded from any political and historical discourse in the public realm on Greek-Turkish relations. It took more than seven decades before Greeks and Turks started to rediscover and acknowledge that in both the pre- and post- nation-state era, contrary to the nationalist narratives, there have been historical periods of peaceful coexistence and widespread ethnically mixed living of Greeks and Turks throughout the Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean regions.

The historical impact of the overriding nationalisms conditioning Greek-Turkish relations, that tended to trump all other factors, was that the preservation of divergent memories and grievances over old conflicts fused with, and created of new ones, accumulating into a complex and burdensome mountain of unresolved problems.

Against this backdrop, issues that otherwise would be manageable had the tendency to escalate to near-war episodes, as was the case with the mainly media induced crisis over the uninhabited islet of Imnia-Kardak in 1996. Simultaneously, new opportunities for cooperation and mutual benefits went unnoticed as they were neither attended nor sought.

The fact that Greece and Turkey have been NATO allies since 1952 did little to curb their belligerent nationalism toward each other. It merely constrained the tension between them and, on numerous occasions, averted all-out war, as the USA repeatedly intervened to keep the Greek-Turkish link within NATO from breaking. On the other hand, throughout the cold war, the fiercely anti-communist orientation of the American-backed governments of Greece and Turkey led them to support the most extreme rightwing nationalists among their respective ethnic counterparts in Cyprus. This strategy empowered the most militant right-wing nationalist in each of the Cypriot communities who were already pitted against each other as fierce enemies. As a consequence, this anti-communist Greek and Turkish strategy escalated ethno-nationalist tension

in Cyprus, culminating in a decade of inter-ethnic bloodshed, a bloody Athens-led coup d'état, followed by an overpowering and devastating Turkish invasion that forcefully partitioned the island in the summer of 1974 (Anastasiou, 2008a, Stern, 1977). These events radicalized the alienation between Greece and Turkey as it fed and reinforced the belligerent ethnocentrism of their respective nationalist narratives that set the stage for the conflict in the first place, bringing the neighbor countries, once again, to the brink of war.

Nationalism always superseded the fight for or against communism, and historically outlived the rift between right-wing and left-wing ideologies (Pfaff, 1993). Common cause against communism during the cold war era did little to deter Greece's and Turkey's ethnocentric nationalisms and the conflict-oriented predisposition their respective narratives sustained toward each other. Indicative of this fact are the innumerable times the two countries faced near-war crises, ranging from their antagonism over Cyprus throughout the 1960s, and the 1970s, to the escalating dispute over oil drilling rights in 1987, to the conflict over territorial claims over rock islets in 1996. Historically, Greece and Turkey pursued and perceived their fight against communism via NATO as formal, circumstantial and strategic in nature. However, under the conditioning affect of nationalism, Greece and Turkey pursued and perceived the antagonism between them as substantive, diachronic and perpetual in nature.

The latter orientation persisted even after the cold-war era came to an end. Problems centering on the eastern part of the Aegean Sea, particularly along the Greek-Turkish border, entailed a complex of unresolved interrelated issues. They included disputes over the boundaries of territorial waters, the delimitation of the continental shelf, air space, the status of certain coastal islands in regard to militarization, the line of the flight information region (FIR), and the ownership of certain rock islets. Strategies by one side to counteract the strategies of the other have metastasized over time into substantive issues that started to traverse sovereignty rights—a process that deepened and complicated the issues dividing the neighbor countries. As each dispute that emerged in Greek-Turkish relations was contextualized within the adversarial predisposition of each country's ethnocentric nationalism, Greece and Turkey tended to always end up with conflicting interpretations of past treaties, conflicting perceptions of historical rights, claims and truths, and conflicting concepts of justice and fairness (Gündüz, 2001; Triantaphyllou, 2001).

As an anomalous factor in Greek-Turkish relations, the Cyprus problem continued to persist with little progress on substantive issues. Until 2000, the Cyprus problem either exacerbated tension and/or severely constrained the possibility of positive change in Greek-Turkish relations.

A further issue of contention centered on the status and treatment of the Greek minority in Turkey and the status and treatment of the Turkish minority in Greece. Mutual accusation on the mistreatment of minorities added to the mix of unresolved problems that burdened and complicated Greek-Turkish relations. That the issue of minorities posed a significant human rights challenge was only acknowledged and addressed by the two countries belatedly, well after

2000, as European requirements started to weigh heavier on the region and on Turkey in particular.

For decades, Greece and Turkey perceived, contextualized and interpreted all of the above-mentioned issues from the narcissistic perspective of their respective nationalist master narratives, which sustained a polarized, zero-sum outlook on the relationship between the neighboring countries. Under the conditioning impact of ethnocentric nationalism the array of problems dividing Greece and Turkey could in no way be approached as challenges to be transcended or problems to be resolved through mutual engagement. Rather, they were simply and always approached as issues to be unilaterally addresses through one's instruments of state power, in a manner that secured one's national gain to the loss and detriment of the other. From the perspective of this mindset the prospect of any resolution was thus *a priori* precluded, and herein laid the impasse, and dangers, of the belligerent and polarizing nationalist worldviews that have historically shaped and informed the respective national cultures of Greece and Turkey. Until the late 1990s, any enlightened advancements that either Greece or Turkey claimed to have achieved since their establishment as nation-states have fallen short of superseding their rivalry, precisely because of the overarching impact of nationalism on their bilateral relations.

### **Realist theory versus Europeanization**

Though rarely explicated, the so called "realist theory" of international relations, is a historical by-product of multiple nationalisms competing around exiting and/or projected nation-states. The ensuing power configurations and the violent conflicts that competing nationalisms generated and sustained throughout modernity have established the framework for world politics throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and thereafter—a framework that under conditions of postmodern globalization is emerging as increasingly problematic and unsustainable. Realist theory asserts that nation-states are the primary and sovereign actors in the world political system which by nature is anarchic and in which nation-states pursue their self-interest through the preservation and/or expansion of their power.

A crucial fact that is often evaded is that the realist theory of international relations, and the anarchic world order on which it is premised, holds true to the degree that nation-states continue to think and behave nationalistically, hence narcissistically toward each other. In this perspective, an equally crucial fact that is also overlooked is that to the degree to which nation-states think and behave in ways that supersede the narcissism of nationalism the world ceases to be anarchic and precariously perilous. The most notable example of the latter is clearly the EU. The process of European integration achieved through the post-nationalist concept of shared sovereignty, and the institutionalized democratic management of inter-state and inter-societal relationships and of trans-national phenomena has moved Europe from being the most anarchic and unprecedentedly violent region in the world to the most stable, democratic and peaceful region in the world (Anastasiou, 2008d; Leonard, 2005; Rifkin, 2004). The distinctiveness of the process of European integration lay in extending democracy beyond the nation-state, institutionally linking democracy and peacebuilding in a manner that gradually deconstructed that adversarial nature of

nationalism, and in establishing an inter-national and trans-national regime of human rights and the rule of law that situates nation-states within a regional system of democratic and legal accountability.

In this perspective, Europeanization emerged as a “force for good” which profoundly impacted the political values and behavior of the EU’s member countries as well as its peripheral countries (Anastasiou, 2008d; Commission from the Commission, 2005). To the degree that Greece and Turkey came within the orbit of the EU, they too, became exposed to the transformative influence of the EU’s democratizing and peace-enhancing soft power. To what degree Greek policy toward Turkey and Turkish policy toward Greece have changed, and what obstacles and setback have beleaguered Greek-Turkish relations over the last decade are clearly issues that continue to be debated. However, what is beyond debate is that overall, Greek-Turkish relations within the broader EU process have undergone a significant shift away for belligerent nationalism and toward more Europeanizing conciliatory approaches, even to the point of disclosing notable signs of a paradigm shift (Aksu, 2004; Grigoriadis, 2008a; Ker-Lindsay, 2007).

## **The Thaw**

### ***From conflict escalation, to humanitarian Assistance, to first steps at rapprochement***

Even though Greece and Turkey had sporadic diplomatic contacts over the years, it was not until the late 1990’s that they engaged in any serious efforts at rapprochement in a manner that rendered progress in bilateral relations sustainable and consequential for the future of the Greek and Turkish people. Against the shocking backdrop of the Balkan wars in Greece and Turkey’s back yard, which brought to sharp relief the destructiveness of belligerent nationalism, a small number of political leaders and intellectuals in both Greece and Turkey began to call for the historical urgency to modifying the hitherto premise of Greek-Turkish relations (Gundogdu, March 2001).

The process of Greek-Turkish rapprochement commenced in the summer of 1999 when the Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Çem communicated with his counter part George Papandreou in search for ways to improve relationships between the two countries (Greek-Turkish Forum, 2002). Papandreou, who also had been keen in improving Greek-Turkish relations reciprocated swiftly and proactively. But while the two ministers where in the process of exchanging ideas a sequence of significant events took place: two devastating earthquakes struck northwestern Turkey in August 1999 killing over 30,000 people, followed by a less destructive earthquake in central Greece in September. Hugely tragic, the earthquakes struck a sensitive cord among the peoples of the traditionally enemy countries. Seeing in their respective media the losses and damage that the other had suffered, first the Greeks and then the Turks were moved to offering assistance to their neighboring society. In view of the magnitude of the devastation of the Turkish earthquakes, the Greek response was both massive and spontaneous, mobilizing government agencies, municipalities, NGOs and citizens.

The strong sense of family, and the heightened sensitivity to the plight of children and the elderly, prevalent in both Greek and Turkish cultures, was catalytic in moving public opinion in each society toward identifying with the suffering of the other, so much so that during the period of this unfolding tragedy public sentiment transcended the hitherto commonplace perception that “the other” was simply the enemy. In the midst of tragedy “the other” was also seen as human, with frailties, needs and hopes similar to one’s own. As a consequence, humanitarian aid poured out in multiple forms through both government and civil society initiatives.

These mutual acts of humanity had an enormous, subsequent impact on Greek and Turkish public opinion, as the highly profiled engagement in each other’s suffering induced the first meltdown of the nationalist stereotypes that had long dominated each country’s political culture—stereotypes that traditionally determined the modus operandi of each country toward the other, sustaining adversarial relationships that rendered the solution of bilateral problems untenable. In contrast to the usual enemy images, the press in the two countries was highlighted with words such as “neighbor,” and “true friend.” The Greek response to the earthquake in particular received broad coverage in the Turkish press. Headlines in newspapers ranged from “Friendship Time,” to “Friendly Hands in Black Days,” to “A Great Support Organization - Five Greek Municipalities say there is no flag or ideology in humanitarian aid,” and to “Help Flows in from Neighbors - Russia first, Greece the most.”

In the context of this momentary lull in adversarial attitudes, foreign ministers Çem and Papandreou seized the opportunity to launch a set of rapprochement initiatives with the intention of progressively instating medium and long term structural ties between their countries. Unlike many international offers of humanitarian assistance that remain politically inconsequential, Çem and Papandreou sought to complement the mutual relief efforts with an array of bilateral agreements for cooperation, thus giving rise to what has since been referred to as *earthquake diplomacy* (Heil, 2000).

By the end of 1999 another major event reinforced Greek-Turkish rapprochement. At the December Helsinki Summit of the European Union (EU), Greece lifted its objection to Turkey’s candidacy for future membership. The Greek initiative broke a vicious cycle of stalemates and crises that had haunted the relationship between the neighbor countries. For years Greece obstructed Turkey’s progress toward the EU arguing that Turkey’s secessionist intransigence over Cyprus, its continuing occupation of the northern part of the island, its massive human rights violations against Greek Cypriots, as well as its territorial claims and incursions into the Aegean disqualified her from acquiring EU-candidacy status, as its behavior was contrary to the Union’s fundamental values.

Against the backdrop of its longstanding demand for recognition of the breakaway “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” and its military posturing in the region, Turkey hardened its position over Cyprus, especially after the EU rejected its bid for candidacy during the Luxemburg summit of 1997. Particularly throughout the 1990’s Turkey’s hard-line approach was premised on its regional security interests, its defense of the Turkish Cypriots as a minority that suffered in the hands of the Greek Cypriot majority, on its objection to the Greek/Greek-Cypriot

Joint Defense Dogma and the related Greek Cypriot attempts to install in southern Cyprus the Russian S-300 missiles, and the unilateral Greek Cypriot efforts toward EU membership of the Republic of Cyprus at the exclusion of Turkish Cypriot wishes and participation. Turkey accused Greece of bad faith, of systematically undermining Turkish national interests and thus eroding any prospects for progress on the Cyprus problem. By late 1997, estrangement between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and between Greece and Turkey had reached dangerous levels, with a regional arms race under way and with Turkey threatening to annex northern Cyprus, turning it to a Turkish province, if the Greek Cypriots, heading the Republic of Cyprus, proceeded unilaterally to join the EU.

The first sign of change in this dangerous trend was evidenced in 1998 when Greek Prime Minister Simitis convinced Greek Cypriot President Clerides not to install the S-300 missiles on Cyprus but store them, instead, on the island of Crete in southern Greece. Furthermore, in the context of broader EU deliberations, Greece and Turkey reached an agreement by which Greece would not obstruct EU funding to Turkey in exchange of Turkey dropping its objection to the Greek Cypriots' endeavors to accede to EU.

The big breakthrough however came at the Helsinki Summit in December 1999, a few months after the summer earthquakes, when the EU, with the consent of Greece, accepted Turkey as a candidate state for future membership. Initiated by the Simitis government, this historic change in Greek foreign policy was made possible following a struggle within the ruling party of The Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) between the old guard of staunch nationalists and the more European-minded post-nationalist, the chief proponents of which were Prime Minister Costas Simitis and Foreign Minister George Papandreou.

### ***Greek-Turkish rapprochement through low-level politics***

The Helsinki summit decision to accept Turkey's EU candidacy and the softening of public opinion resulting from humanitarian exchanges during the earthquakes provided foreign ministers Papandreou and Çem a unique context for translating their vision of improving bilateral relations into action. Under their joint leadership, the ministries of foreign affairs of the neighboring countries began to work together, at low profile, on specific issues that were deemed cooperatively manageable, while being fully aware that outstanding national issues, like the Cyprus problem and the Aegean disputes, remained at an impasse. Formal bilateral agreements were eventually signed in a number of areas of mutual interest and benefit. These included a series of provisions for cooperation in: tourism and economic development; combating terrorism, organized crime, illicit drug trafficking and illegal immigration; environmental protection; economic cooperation; and cultural cooperation.

By February 2000, nine agreements were signed between Turkey and Greece. Others followed, soon totaling seventeen bilateral agreements. Within the broader EU framework, the commencement in 1999 of this confidence-building process between Greece and Turkey, referred to as *low-level politics*, marked a small but vital step in positively modifying Greek-Turkish relations (Gundogdu, 2001; Papandreou, January 2000). Low-level politics signaled the



beginning of a modest conflict-transforming, even peace-building, process that disclosed the historical possibility of changing interstate and inter-societal relationships between the traditionally enemy countries.

In contrast to the “realist theory” of international relations, the basic assumption behind low-level politics is that while high-level issues, under the circumstance of protracted historical rivalry, cannot provide a basis for rapprochement and cooperation, low-level issues, particularly non-controversial ones, may furnish a starting point. The idea is that while two rivals may be incapable of forging agreements and cooperation on matters of high national priority, they may be able to see eye-to-eye on matters of lesser significance, or even on issues that may be altogether neutral with respect to the unapproachable, longstanding divisive issues. Engaging each other through a process of dialogue, exploration, and the development of mutually agreed-upon strategies for cooperation on secondary issues constitutes a relatively low-risk task. However, in embryonic form it may include the conditions for taking greater steps and greater risks in the future. Thereby, achieving multiple agreements through low-level politics has the potential of creating a sample culture of cooperation and promise that may in turn catalytically evolve and fertilizing the broader public culture of politics for greater yield.

The words of the Turkish Foreign Minister following the first low-level bilateral agreements with his Greek counterpart are to the point. “Our countries,” stated Çem, have been engaged in a constructive process... to create a synergy in several fields such as tourism, environment, economic cooperation, culture, regional cooperation, and fight against terrorism and related issues... . This pattern of cooperation proved that with necessary willpower both countries can establish a close working relationship (Greek-Turkish Forum, 2002).

Success in low-level politics demonstrates in small but clear examples the viability of non-adversarial, post-nationalist approaches to inter-state and inter-societal relationships. In and of themselves, the cumulative effects of low-level politics leading to concrete outcomes may not amount to much. But in the broader context of socio-political change they may have potentially significant effects. In the process, low-level politics give policy leaders the otherwise barred opportunity to become directly acquainted and familiar with their counterparts from the enemy camp, to work systematically together, deepen understanding of each other, become jointly focused and creative, share successes, and learn the merits and prospects of consensus-based cooperation. Rendering this process publicly visible in the two societies introduces the public to the actual and potential mutual benefits from sustaining a culture and practice of inter-state cooperation.

Viewed from the prism of on-going rapprochement in low-level politics, what historically have been protracted and intractable differences may appear in a new light, giving rise to a new understanding of old problems. Generating positive change in the relationship between the two sides through the cumulative impact of low-level politics may, in effect, help change the intractability of high-level issues by modifying the perspectives from which each side addresses

them. As Fisher and Ury (1991) asserted, “positions on difficult problems may be changed only as the relationship between the disputants begins to change, giving rise to new understanding and insight into each other’s fears and concerns.” This was precisely the approach pursued by the pioneering efforts of Çem and Papandreou. Papandreou clearly explicated this principle: “We have started a confidence-building measures procedure. I hope that in this way we will create the right psychology, the right atmosphere, and the right approach towards each other. Only in this way can we solve our more difficult problems” (Greek-Turkish Forum, 2002).

The work of Çem and Papandreou signaled the first significant effort by the political leadership of Turkey and Greece in almost half a century to move Greek-Turkish relations beyond the adversarial modality of nationalist politics (Gundogdu, 2001). Without recourse to hyped publicity and lofty declarations, the effort ushered into the politics of both societies a new approach to building cooperation, albeit around matters and issues of secondary importance. It added a significant dimension to the post-Helsinki era of Greek-Turkish rapprochement, which became increasingly noticed by its sharp contrast to the adversarial, nationalist cultures that had historically dominated Greek-Turkish relations (Gundogdu, 2001; Papandreou, January 2000). In its essence, the rapprochement process of low-level politics helped the two countries gradually move away from their unilateral preoccupation with abstractly elaborated and held “national rights,” typical of nationalist approaches, to a concern with the pursuit of practical bilateral solutions around mutual opportunities, tangible benefits and relationship building.

In time, the process of low-level politics yielded both practical results as well as novel historical facts that reflected the broader vision of the initiators of rapprochement, namely, a tangible demonstration that Turks and Greeks could work together on specific social, cultural, and economic issues, even though outstanding differences on key political and national issues still prevailed.

Of crucial significance is also the fact that Papandreou and Çem sought to institutionalize the rapprochement effort, so as to dissociate it from their own particular personal initiatives, thus providing continuity through a structured process in which others may subsequently participate in promoting rapprochement between the Greek and Turkish people. It was thus not surprising that when the New Democracy party subsequently came to power in Greece, winning two consecutive elections in 2004 and 2007, and the Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey, also winning two consecutive elections in 2002 and 2007, Greek-Turkish rapprochement continued and deepened. The process was particularly empowered and enhanced as the common EU framework began to increase its catalytic effect on Greek-Turkish relations through the process of enlargement in the Eastern Mediterranean.

### ***Challenges and learning from the EU: from nationalism to post-nationalism***

It ought to be emphasized that the nationalist foreign policy instruments that prevailed in old Europe included propaganda, coercive tactics, isolation, power plays, threats, and a readiness to resort to the use of force in the name of *the nation* (Goff, et al, 2001). In the process of building the EU, such instruments of foreign policy have been considerably demoted, abandoned

altogether, and in many respects even deemed illegitimate and illegal. The old nationalistically conditioned foreign policy approaches have been replaced by the prioritization of on-going negotiations, process politics, consensus building, reciprocity, participation, inclusiveness, mutuality and joint inter- and trans- national institution building (Peterson & Bomber, 1999; Reid, 2005; Rifkin, 2004). As such, this historic paradigm shift underpins the complex process that transformed Europe from the world's deadliest and war-ravaged region to the world's most peaceful, stable, cooperative and democratic consortium of countries.

The impact of the EU as a peacebuilding system, particularly through the process of enlargement, has been generally acknowledged (Anastasiou, 2008d; Coppieters et al, 2004; Diez et al, 2008). Even though there are varying opinions as to how exactly and to what extent the EU process has improved Greek-Turkish relations, there is considerable consensus that overall the EU has had a formidable influence on reframing the interactions between the long-standing enemy neighbors (Grigoriadis, 2008b; Ker-Lindsay, 2007; Loizides, December 2002; Rumelili, 2004). While it may be difficult to establish a direct causal link between the EU and changing Greek-Turkish relations, it can be argued that over the last decade changes in each country's approaches, policies and attitudes toward the other began to reflect key elements of European political culture and norms, especially as the enlargement instruments of conditionality, communication and consolidation were brought to bear on the Eastern Mediterranean.

At the historic Helsinki Summit, the European Council asserted that candidate states "must share the values and objectives of the EU as set out in the Treaties" (Presidency Conclusions: Helsinki European Council, 10-11 December 1999). Since the acceptance of Turkey as an EU candidate in 1999 and the commencement of accession negotiations in 2005, Greek-Turkish relations have been contextualized within the EU edifice. Inasmuch as Greece has been an EU member state and Turkey an acceding state, the EU, directly and indirectly has functioned as a third factor that transcended the traditionally conflicted Greek-Turkish relations. The post-nationalist, conflict-preventive and peace-building procedures, laws and institutions of the EU at national, sub-national and transnational levels have both confronted and counterbalanced the adversarial, nationalist approaches, which traditionally conditioned interactions between Greece and Turkey and between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

In essence, the Helsinki decision introduced a new framework of actual and potential relationship changes between Greece, Turkey, as well as between Greek and Turkish Cypriots that rendered increasingly ambiguous and blurred the traditional clear-cut conflict lines that polarized Greek and Turks into presumed permanent enemies. For Turkey, Greece could no longer be just the traditional enemy, as it was the geographically closest EU member state with which Turkey was expected to cooperate while on its long road to European integration. Furthermore, within the EU system, the Turkish view of the Republic of Cyprus as the enemy of the Turkish Cypriots was now skewed by the fact that the Republic of Cyprus was also a co-candidate for EU membership.

Within the EU framework, Greece and Turkey could not be merely each other's traditional enemy, but also each other's European partner, bound together by their EU responsibilities and

privileges. This general framework was maintained despite the continuing impasse over Cyprus, and despite Turkey's domestic constitutional crisis of 2008 and its EU-related setbacks due to its reluctance since 2004 to extend the Ankara Protocol to include the Republic of Cyprus as a new member state.

It must be stressed that in both Greece's policy shift toward Turkey and the commencement of Greek-Turkish bilateral low-level politics, the EU furnished the broadest and strongest institutional framework for engendering, empowering, and legitimizing non-bellicose foreign policy approaches, entailing conflict resolution and rapprochement strategies in the interest of peacebuilding.

Within the major political parties of both Greece and Turkey (PASOK and New Democracy in Greece and the Justice and Development Party and Republican Party in Turkey), Europeanization introduced a novel form of political dialogue, including polarizations, between the nationalists of the hitherto establishment and the Euro-reformers that started to emerge as a new voice in public culture. Even though the major parties in each country continued to compete against each other for national ascendancy on the domestic front, they all encountered the challenges of Europeanization, leading the reformers in each of the major parties to gradual ideological and policy adjustments in the face of intraparty tensions with the old nationalist guard.

The significance of this intraparty process was that it started to brake the monolith of ethnocentric nationalism in both countries—a monolith that for decades had constricted and suppressed democracy, abhorred ethno-cultural diversity, bred and sustained a fundamental mistrust of “the foreigners,” asserted an absolutist concept of national sovereignty and rightness, and cultivated a readiness for confrontation, even violent conflict, on the presumption of national loyalty and interest.

More significantly, the EU furnished a post-nationalist paradigm that Euro-reformers within the major parties adopted in initiating and expanding Greek-Turkish rapprochement, and which the Greek and Turkish governments felt increasingly compelled to follow since 1999. Particularly through their on-going contacts with EU institutions and processes, the Euro-reformers within the major parties of Greece and Turkey became increasingly conscious of the fact that in an era of globalization and economic interdependence, policy approaches driven by ethnocentric nationalism were inappropriate and incapable of addressing the current and future challenges facing Greek and Turkish society. Moreover, it became increasingly apparent that the traditionally bellicose predisposition of nationalism, that readily polarizes the world into circumstantial allies and permanent enemies, could neither serve the national interest nor provide sustainable security for one's country. This view was enhanced among the rising Euro-reformers especially after the Balkan wars of the 1990s and the 1996 near-war incident between Greece and Turkey over the tiny uninhabited islets of Imnia-Kardak, both of which brought to sharp focus the grave dangers in continuing their foreign policy approaches from the traditional perspective of belligerent ethnocentric nationalism.

At both the formal and cultural levels, Greece, having been a full EU member, has always been ahead of Turkey on the trajectory of Europeanizing reforms. But both countries, particularly at the leadership level, have been compelled to encounter and adjust to the post-nationalist norms, practices and approaches of the EU. Over the last ten years, Greece's foreign relations attitudes and approaches became embedded in and consciously modeled after European political values. Along with acceptance of multicultural principles of governance and internationalization of the economy, Greece's Euro-reformers promoted the idea that the traditional policy of deterrence toward Turkey was no longer sufficient; it needed to be supplemented with a proactive policy of rapprochement founded on new, reality-based assumptions that were free from both nationalist myths and outdated events. The challenge the Euro-reformers accepted and brought forward was to forge a new approach that was free from the facts of the distant past and the stereotypical perceptions they gave rise to, and more grounded on the facts of the present and the likely future promises they held.

Greece's progress toward a more open approach to Turkey, entailing increasing engagement in search for solutions and common interests, is integral to socio-economic and political changes, associated in great measure with the general process of Europeanization that has extended and deepened EU institutions, law, democracy, and political culture within as well as between EU states and societies (Keridis, 2001). As Greece became increasingly embedded in the EU, participating in the union's poly-ethnic decision-making institutions, the political leadership of Greece, began to adopt perspectives and foreign policy approaches that gradually moved away from traditional mono-ethnic nationalism, in favor of more inclusive, synthetic and sophisticated approaches that sought to positively modify inter-national relationship rather than to unilaterally assert and project national power as the primary mode of conduct toward other nations.

On the other hand, Turkey went through, and continues to go through, its internal struggle in regard to its identity, policy approaches toward Greece, Cyprus and the region, and its strategies for enhancing its European aspirations. Since 1999, Euro-reformers incessantly prodded their affiliates and colleagues both inside and outside the government to assume a more European approach to both domestic problems and foreign affairs. Many in Turkey have been echoing the EU's conditionality requirements for accession, frequently challenging the old Turkish political establishment to face up to the fact that Turkey cannot realistically expect an open path toward the EU unless it generates the political will to evolve beyond its traditional top-down statist approach to governance, to curb the dominant role of the military, deepen democracy, bolster human rights, and seek conciliatory resolutions to outstanding regional problems, particularly in regard to Cyprus and the outstanding Aegean disputes with Greece.

The rise to power of the Justice and Development Party since 2002, with its enactment of the unprecedented array of EU-related reform legislation and its abandonment of Turkey's secessionist approach to the Cyprus problem, was in great part the net outcome of Europeanizing agents within Turkey, who saw the EU as the historical lever for moving the nationalist conditioned monolith of the Turkish state toward increasing democratization.

In the eyes of Euro-reformers in both Greece and Turkey, the traditional association of national economic interest, foreign policy, national security and the functions of the state with ethnocentric nationalism was deemed erroneous. Nationalism's belligerent predisposition, with its populist agitation politics, was not only ill founded according to the Euro-reformers but offered no basis for a viable future. Over time, the Euro-reformers started to re-conceptualize democracy, economic wellbeing, the function of the state, national security and national interest in general, in terms of a vision of regional wellbeing, peace and stability, where rigorous diplomacy, multilateral and bilateral engagement of neighboring countries, at both the national and civil society levels, and finally socio-economic and political integration within the EU were slowly prioritized over and above the adversarial zero-sum approaches of ethnocentric nationalism.

As early as 2000 Greek foreign minister George Papandreou asserted that one of the challenge for Greece centered on redefining Greek identity at a deeper level, extending and opening it up to the multicultural setting of Europe, the Balkans, and the Eastern Mediterranean in particular (Papandreou, January 2000). Four years later, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan publicly declared that a Turkish citizen could call himself a Kurd if he so wished. The implication was that it was fully legitimate for a citizen to be both a Turk *and* a Kurd—a statement that marked a significant deviation from Turkey's traditional mono-ethnic nationalism, opening up and accepting a more multifaceted and multiethnic concept of identity. While these reframed understandings of national identity aroused the reaction of nationalists, they signified a process of Europeanizing change in the interest of cultural diversity, inclusiveness and peaceful coexistence.

Overall, the Euro-reformers aspired to supersede the ethnocentric nationalist mode of governance by the pursuit of rational fiscal management of the national economy; deepening human rights; developing a foreign policy of engagement focused on the practical resolution of problems in the interest of regional stabilization, conciliation and peace; and the commitment to relationship building with neighboring countries as a perpetual endeavor through the quest for, and pursuit of, collaborative opportunities for mutual benefit.

More importantly, the Euro-reformers exhibited a tacit paradigm shift in regard to the traditional view of national sovereignty—the cornerstone of modernity's construction of the nation-state. They gradually realized that barricading national sovereignty within the narcissistic confines of ethnocentric nationalism is not only fundamentally out of step with the times but potentially contrary to the national interest, and, under certain conditions, even conducive to conflict escalation and outright war. The unilateralism and the “realist theory” of international relations that naturally flow out of the absolutism of the nationalist concept of sovereignty fundamentally fails to grasp the synthetic nature of globalizing technological, economic and political phenomena. Euro-reformers saw the latter as constituting post-modern conditions that strongly challenge the classical concept of the nation-state, compelling the nation-state to resort to fundamental modifications and adjustment if it is to be relevant and viable for the future sustenance of society (Keridis, 2001).

The implication regarding a changed approach to national sovereignty is clearly the apogee of the challenge that post-nationalist Europeanization posed to the Eastern Mediterranean neighbors. Its essence lays in the realization that in reframing the place and function of nation-states, national sovereignty needed to become embedded, shared and pooled in sustainable and constructive international relationships, and in common institutions conducive to non-belligerent conflict-resolution and the multilateral democratic management of common global challenges and opportunities.

Under the gradual but persistent influence of the above-mentioned Europeanizing paradigm shifts two significant and novel policy orientations crystallized in the Eastern Mediterranean. The first was that Greece modified its foreign policy approach from isolating and obstructing to supporting and even advocating Turkey's European aspirations (Anastasiou, 2008b; Grigoriadis, 2008a). The second was that Turkey, while becoming increasingly open toward Greece, changed its policy approach to Cyprus from its decade-long push for ethnic secession and recognition of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" to acceptance and pursuit of an inter-ethnic, bi-zonal, bi-communal federation—a change that led Turkey to prod and support the Turkish Cypriots in voting "yes" for the Annan Plan in the 2004 Cyprus referendum. Both of these changes are indicative of the direct and indirect influences of Europeanization, disclosing gradual movement away from belligerent ethnocentric nationalism and toward post-nationalist conciliatory politics. In both Greece and Turkey, these paradigm shifts that led to these unprecedented changes in foreign policy approaches greatly dismayed the hard-line nationalist. However, they maintained open the path toward conflict transformation, on-going rapprochement and European-oriented reform. This is affirmed by the fact that over recent years, high-level diplomats from Greece and Turkey have abandoned to a substantive measure the bellicose language of past nationalisms when addressing their neighboring country.

### ***Bilateral civil Society engagements as a function of conflict transformation***

The emerging Europeanizing trends in Greek-Turkish relations gave rise to numerous events and phenomena that started to modify the hitherto ethno-nationalist landscape of the public political cultures of Greece and Turkey. With increasing frequency since the earthquakes of 1999, Greek and Turkish citizens began to see in their respective media—which themselves underwent diversification and liberalization—their political leaders engaged in cross-border meetings, in negotiations, in joint public appearances, and in signing treaties, with the Greek and Turkish flags flying side by side. Even purely symbolic gestures helped usher into public culture the evolving rapprochement in Greek-Turkish relations. One highlight came in 2001, when through the initiative of the Turkish government Turkey and Greece made a surprising move in the sporting world as they made a joint bid to host the soccer games of *Euro 2008* (BBC, 9 May 2001). Another one came three years later, during the run-up of 2004 Olympics, when Greece and Turkey became official signatory to the "Olympic Truce," an initiative of the Greek government, revitalizing the 3,000-year-old tradition of ceasing hostilities during the Olympic Games.

Within the broader public political culture of the two countries, new post-nationalist images and symbols began to assume their place next to, in competition with, and in contradiction to, the all too familiar nationalism that had traditionally conditioned the politics of Greek-Turkish relations—a trend that finally broke the presumed monolith of ethnocentrism.

Non-state actors such as market and civil society agents also began to gradually participate in and contribute to conflict-transforming Europeanizing trends, thus adding, complementing and reinforcing government initiated rapprochement. Within the framework of bilateral agreements for economic cooperation, Greek and Turkish private businesses began to step forward with several cross-border investment and trade initiatives, the level of which has been constantly rising (Aksu, 2004). A steady increase in reciprocal tourism has reflected the gradual erosion of past apprehensions and the increasing comfortableness Greeks and Turks are beginning to feel about visiting each other's country, coming in direct touch with the neighboring people and their culture.

Academic exchanges and joint research projects have also added to the general rapprochement efforts. For example, the Istanbul Policy Center located at Sabanci University has undertaken a number of more academic projects focusing on conflict resolution challenges in Greek-Turkish relations. The center has worked in concert with the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, a Greek think tank that aims at developing civil societal ties between the two nations.

Adding to the mix of rapprochement phenomena, Greek and Turkish journalists have been organizing joint media events, including national panel discussions involving political leaders, academics and journalists from both sides of the ethno-national divide. On some occasions these inter-ethnic encounters were broadcasted simultaneously in the two countries.

Changing trends in Greek-Turkish relations have also been marked the twinning of Greek and Turkish towns and by cross-border rapprochement events jointly organized by Greek and Turkish municipalities and communities living in close proximity along the Greek-Turkish sea border.

Another highlight has been the organized visits of Greeks to their ancestral homes and towns in Turkey, and of Turks to their ancestral homes and town in Greece, whose families were forced to massively relocated in the 1920s by the decision of the then Greek and Turkish governments—a practice that has since been established as illegal and a violation of human rights.

Over the last decade there has been a rise in joint efforts by Greek and Turkish NGOs undertaking numerous cooperative rapprochement projects. EU facilitation and funding has also prompted and empowered civil society rapprochement between Greek and Turks. Since 2004, the Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey has been sponsoring the Civil Society Dialogue (Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey, 2008). Its budget of €21.5 million has, among other things, funded many different Turkish-Greek cultural initiatives by NGOs and other civil society agents, including the Youth Association for the Habitat and Agenda 21, and the



Istanbul Foundation for Culture and the Arts. One of the efforts funded by the EU was the Turkish-Greek Civil Dialogue project. Implemented by the Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe (AEGEE), it aimed to establish dialogue and encourage partnership projects between young people in Greece and Turkey (Turkish-Greek Civil Dialogue, 2001-2004). 2008 was the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, during which the EU promoted several programs and events designed to further inter-ethnic dialogue on an array of themes, including the treatment of minorities in Turkey, and to build bridges of communication between Greek and Turkish people (Delegation of the European Commission to Turkey, 2008).

A steadily increasing number of cultural and artistic exchanges between the neighboring countries, including joint performances and cross-border public concerts by nationally renowned singers, have fostered openness toward the many common sentiments in Greek and Turkish music and has engaged the entertainment industry in cross-border initiatives, rendering practical and tangible the mutual benefits of such peace-enhancing cooperative ventures.

Certain film and television productions introduced courageous new genres in which Greek and Turkish themes and perspectives were reflected and explored in search for authenticity and understanding of both the complexities and renewed possibilities in Greek-Turkish relations. Such films started to reflect a reframed, non-belligerent and more existential approach to Greek and Turkish themes, depicting poly-ethnic perspectives of Greek-Turkish relations, forgotten eras of peaceful symbiosis, and the realization that that in both peace and conflict the histories and lives of the two peoples are intimately interwoven. The novelty of these films was marked by an effort to both understand the alienation of past conflicts and to help re-humanizing the image of the other. A prime example was the film *Politiki Kouzina* (entitled in English as *A Touch of Spice*) which came out in theatres in 2003. In 2005, Turkish Kanal D television began airing *Yabancı Damat* (entitled in English *The Foreign Groom* or *Love's Frontiers*). A highly rated television series, the film focused on a romance between a Turkish woman and a Greek man, and the challenges they faced in overcoming family prejudices and resolving their cultural differences. The enormous popularity of the above-mentioned films was indicative of the significant role of film media in fostering inter-cultural reflexivity, a prerequisite for positive change. In an article entitled "Aegean Peoples Begin to Share Stories Again," Bruce Clark of the *International Herald Tribune* aptly noted that "films, novels and songs articulate truths of which politicians or soldiers cannot easily speak. While the business of presidents and generals is to draw lines and enforce them, art can deal with ambivalence, worlds that overlap and boundaries that blur." (Clark, 10 December 2003).

Inter-societal rapprochement has brought forward the increasing acknowledgement that despite their conflict and cultural differences, Turks and Greeks, at the human level, also share certain common characteristics such as food, music, folklore and even common words in their languages—historical facts that have been suppressed and denied by the respective nationalisms for several decades. Knowledge of cultural similarities and overlaps was hitherto narrowly restricted to a handful of academic specialist, mostly non-Greek and non-Turkish. However, increasing contact and interaction resulting from sustained rapprochement has gradually exposed the two peoples to

new understandings of their differences and to a variety of common features in their cultural heritage—a heritage that was inevitable forged by their mixed coexistence in the Eastern Mediterranean region of the Ottoman Empire from the 16<sup>th</sup> century until their ethnic segregation with the advent of the nation-state and its accompanied ethno-nationalist worldview (Anastasiou, 2008a; Özkirimli and Sofos, 2008).

By focusing on shared and overlapping characteristics, it may be possible that both Greeks and Turks begin to recognize that the “other” is not in fact as unqualifiedly different, sinister and dark as the old nationalist stereotypes suggest. Public opinion data collected by studies, such as the one conducted by Ali Çarkoglu and Kemal Kirisci from the Turkish public, attest to the increasing awareness of cultural overlaps, in parallel with past trends of continuing alienation and suspicion. In the Greek press, articles with titles such as “Turks enjoy themselves like Greeks” reflect the same developments toward inter-cultural re-familiarization (Kathimerini, 28 January 2008).

### **Deepening and Widening Rapprochement**

#### ***Rapprochement economics: finding common cause in common interest***

Between 1999 and 2008, one of the most tangible aspects of changing Greek-Turkish relations occurred in the area of economic cooperation and trade in particular. As both the cause and byproduct of foreign policy shifts in the interest of rapprochement, the series of joint strategic decisions pursued by Greece and Turkey have elaborated a political framework conducive to cross-border projects, rising bilateral trade, reciprocal investments and joint ventures. In turn, these efforts deepened inter-state and inter-societal confidence, offered tangible samples of the benefits of post-nationalist approaches and provided a path for transcending the decades-long impasse of the adversarial nationalist paradigm of foreign relations. In all these ways, Greece and Turkey emulated the European model by deliberately linking together their national economic interests within a political framework of inter-state and inter-societal cooperation—a process that is not only conflict-preventive but one that has the propensity of transposing national economic interest from a factor of likely rivalry and even conflict to one of peacebuilding and mutually amplifying benefits.

#### ***Cross-border economic pact***

One of the most ambitious projects, that in essence institutionalized long-term Greek-Turkish rapprochement, was the 2004 launching of the first cross-border economic pact between Greece and Turkey that instated of a common economic-growth infrastructure. Backed by the EU, the pact was of utmost significance for Greek-Turkish rapprochement.

Worth €66 million, €35 million of which were disbursed by the EU, Greece and Turkey partnered in a project that not only fostered mutual economic growth and integration but also a foundation conducive to regional normalization, peace and stability.

Announcing the endorsement of the pact by Brussels, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained that the project, which geographically spanned more than 17 percent of Greece and 8

percent of Turkey, was aimed at “creating conditions for economic growth and employment through business cooperation between Greece and Turkey.” The objective of the project also included “improvement of the quality of life, protection of the environment and the preservation of cultural heritage.” Greek Finance Minister Nikos Christodoulakis declared that “for the first time, Greece and Turkey are embarking on a joint endeavor to implement infrastructure in sectors including tourism, communications, and transport.” He explained that “this will give impetus to joint economic cooperation, which is to the benefit of both countries” (Demiris, 2004).

Despite the fact that outstanding bilateral problems over the Aegean still remained, such a project had the affect of decompressing unresolved border issues that in the mid 1990s brought the neighboring countries to the brink of war. The political commitment and sizable economic investment by the EU, Greece and Turkey, conjoining the national economic interests of the neighboring countries in this cross-border infrastructure rendered disputes such as the one over the uninhabited islet of Imnia-Kardak appear clearly irrational and counterproductive.

#### ***Greek-Turkish rapprochement after the Cyprus referendum of 2004***

Despite the failure to solve the Cyprus problem in 2004 (an effort that both Greece and Turkey supported) Greece and Turkey continued to improve their bilateral relations. For both countries this was a conscious national policy decision, albeit undeclared.

Prior to the 2004 referendum and European membership of Cyprus, the Cyprus problem led the way in conditioning Greek-Turkish relations. It was generally understood that a continuing unresolved Cyprus problem imposed stringent limitations and a major obstacle to the degree to which Greek-Turkish relations could be normalized. However, with the European integration of the Island, even with the problem remaining unresolved, the process of improving of Greek-Turkish relations surpassed and superseded the Cyprus issue. Whereas prior to the 2004 referendum and accession of Cyprus to the EU, Greek-Turkish relations followed behind the Cyprus problem, thereafter, progress in Greek-Turkish relations took the lead, moving ahead of the Cyprus problem (Anastasiou, 2008b).

Attesting to this fact was the Greek government’s full alignment with the EU in maintaining and supporting Turkey’s European orientation, even in the face of specific objections by the Papadopoulos government of the Greek-Cypriot-led Republic of Cyprus. As it was the Greek Cypriots that voted against the 2004 UN peace plan, the UN placed the responsibility for the failed effort on the shoulders of the Greek Cypriot leadership. Had Greece responded nationalistically, it would have fully backed the Papadopoulos government, obstruct Turkey’s European aspirations and recycle the old absolutist polarization between Greeks and Turks. Greece however chose not to do so. Based always on the EU principle of conditionality, Greece’s support of Turkey thus began to surpass the Cyprus problem, despite some political rhetoric to the contrary. Given the failed effort to resolve the Cyprus problem in 2004, placing Greek-Turkish rapprochement ahead of the Cyprus issue may eventually transform the historical role of the respective motherlands from contributors to inter-ethnic polarization in Cyprus to catalysts

for a final Cyprus settlement, similar to the role that Ireland and Britain played in the final settlement of the Northern Irish conflict.

Overall, it gradually became clear that it was in the mutual benefit of Greece and Turkey to continue emulating the EU model in their bilateral relations. This trend was reinforced in October 2005 when the EU Summit approved the commencement of accession negotiations by which Turkey's future became more firmly anchored to the path of Europeanization.

### ***Continuing bilateral relations in areas of mutual economic interests***

Despite the stalemate over the Cyprus throughout 2004-2008, mainly due to the Papadopoulos administration, and despite the escalating constitutional crisis that shook Turkey's national politics, Greek-Turkish trade and investment continued to increase.

In May 2006, the National Bank of Greece, the biggest financial institution in the region, purchased 46 percent of Istanbul-based Finansbank's common shares as well as 100 percent of its preferred shares from the Fiba Holding Group for \$2.774 billion. Halkbank, the largest branch network in Turkey signed a contract worth 2.5 €million for the purchase of office chairs from The Chair Company, a subsidiary of Greek-listed Sato Group in Turkey. In the first two months of 2006, Greek exports to the EU rose 10.4 percent, while exports to Turkey increased by 4 percent compared to the same period a year earlier, ranking Turkey as Greece's fourth trade partner (News Bulletin, April 4, 2006). Turkish businesses opened in new shopping centers in Athens, while a rising number of young Greek professionals were now working in Turkey. By 2007 the neighboring countries announced the founding of a Greek-Turkish Business Council, a move reflective of both the political will and intention to institutionalize on-going economic cooperation.

Greek-Turkish rapprochement reached new heights in November 2007, when the Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamalis and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan inaugurated the opening of the natural gas pipeline, a cooperative project that was agreed in 2004. The pipeline was designed to carry Azerbaijani natural gas from the Shah Sea to European markets, constituting an integral part of the EU's policy of diversifying and decentralizing its energy sources. Appearing in front of a giant banner depicting a handshake sleeved with the Greek and Turkish flags, the Prime Ministers of Turkey and Greece underscored the significance of the project for all concerned. The event, which was celebrated on the northern Greek-Turkish border, was seen as yet another major step in transforming Greek-Turkish relations in the interest of peace, cooperation and shared national interests (Carassava, 2007; Hellenic Journal, December 12, 2007; The New Anatolian, November 19, 2007).

### ***Greek-Turkish Military Cooperation***

As a rule, military issues are hypersensitive, particularly when they pertain to long-standing rivals with disputes that, among other matters, have a bearing on sovereignty involving land, sea and airspace, especially against the backdrop of a historical legacy of respective nationalist

narratives that for decades have stereotypically identify the other as the perpetual national enemy.

Despite this problematic background, the rapprochement process initiated in 1999 and the successive achievements of low-level politics have created the preconditions and climate for Greece and Turkey to deepen and extend bilateral rapprochement by forging cooperative ventures even in the contentious domain of military matters.

Even before economic cooperation and trade reached observable high points, one of the first steps that Greece and Turkey took pertaining to military issues came in 2001, when they agreed to suspend their annual military exercises in and around Cyprus. These were exercises that each country had been traditionally conducting jointly with the military forces of their Cypriot ethnic counterpart, raising tension in the region each time the war games were enacted.

For years the Greek Cypriots conducted annual war drills jointly with Greece code-named “Nikiforos” and “Toxotis” respectively. Integral to the broader Joint Defense Dogma, the exercises followed the scenario of countering the Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus and the threat posed by the presence of 40,000 Turkish troops on the Island. The annual Nikiforos–Toxotis military exercises took place in parallel to the equally high-profile “Taurus” military drill on the Turkish side, involving Turkish troops and the Turkish Cypriot Security Forces. The projection of power, mainly from the Turkish army, intended to communicate the Turkish side’s capacity to counter any threat to the breakaway state of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.” The show of force by both sides, which consistently reflected Turkish superiority in air power, always precipitated into an annual escalation of tension, often reaching dangerous limits. By agreement, Greece and Turkey terminated this practice in 2001 in an effort to support the ongoing, UN-led negotiations for a Cyprus settlement.

It is noteworthy that as Greek-Turkish rapprochement deepened through an array of low-level agreements, rising trade, joint ventures and cross-border projects, Greece refused to follow hard-line, Greek Cypriot President Papadopoulos when in October 2005 attempted to revive the joint Nikiforos-Toxotis military exercises. By prioritizing Greek-Turkish rapprochement, in which Greece had become politically and economically invested, the Greek government refused to follow Papadopoulos’s ethno-nationalist driven agendas of military posturing. By so doing, Greece averted conflict escalation, even in the face of the continuing presence of the Turkish army in northern Cyprus, which the Greek side and the international community deemed illegal and extraneous to a Cyprus settlement. The Greek government risked taking a non-belligerent approach toward Turkey against the backdrop of Turkey’s support of the 2004 Annan Plan which provided for the progressive demilitarization of Cyprus—the plan that the Greek Cypriots rejected in the referendum.

If rapprochement continues to deepen, it may be possible for Greece and Turkey to reach a point where they jointly and cooperatively assume serious initiatives for resolving the Cyprus problem. In his comparative study Byrne (2007) is correct to indicating that while close cooperation

between the UK and Ireland was a vital factor in resolving the Northern Irish problem, a similar type of cooperation between Greece and Turkey over Cyprus is missing.

Nevertheless, by averting conflict escalation over Cyprus—one of the most contentious issues in Greek-Turkish relations—Greece kept the path open toward further constructive bilateral options. Already in 2004 Greece and Turkey had signed an agreement for the removal of mines along the Greek-Turkish land border. Under Canadian supervision, the demining process marked a further step toward bilateral trust, normalization and peacebuilding.

Certainly, while all of the abovementioned moves toward deepening rapprochement had a formidable affect on improving Greek-Turkish relations they did not automatically eradicate outstanding bilateral problems. Greece and Turkey continued to remain entangled over unresolved issues such as the boundaries of territorial waters, the delimitation of the continental shelf, the right or not of Greece to militarize certain Greek islands close to Turkey, the legitimacy or not of Turkish claims over certain islands, and the dispute over the flight information region (FIR) pertinent to air corridors in the southern Aegean.

In regard to the latter, Greece continued to accuse Turkey for violations of its air space in the Aegean, while Turkey continued to question Greece's jurisdiction over the air corridors in question. While the frequency by which Turkish fighter planes flew over the Aegean Sea steadily declined with rising Greek-Turkish rapprochement, they did not altogether cease. Mock dog fights between Greek and Turkish fighters continued, always at the risk of a conflict-escalating incident. In 2006, such an incident occurred when a Greek and Turkish F-16 fighter jets collided in mid air, resulting in the death of the Greek pilot (BBC, 23 May 2006).

Luckily, the Greek and Turkish governments cooperatively contained the political impact of the incident. It ought to be stressed however that had this incident occurred prior to the commencement of Greek-Turkish rapprochement, while the respective nationalist approaches prevailing, it could have easily led to a major crisis, not excluding military confrontations with unforeseen consequences. By 2006, when the jets collided, Greece and Turkey already had in place an institutionalized rapprochement framework that included a series of successful bilateral agreements, exchanges and projects. This fact acted as a significant deterrent to conflict escalation, as it prevented the traditional ethnocentric nationalism and its "realist" theory of international relations have the final word. Having experienced the benefits of post-nationalist Europeanizing approaches, gradually leading them to mutually recognize, by contrast, the dangers of belligerent nationalism, Greece and Turkey managed to contain and finally end the crisis by jointly declaring that, while regrettable, the incident will not deter the two countries from continuing to improve their relations. Moreover, they agreed to establish a hotline between their air forces and armies to avert similar incidents in the future.

Having defused the collision incident and having been strengthened by the successful completion in 2007 of the joint pipeline project, Greece and Turkey proceeded even further in their rapprochement initiatives by announcing a new agreement on a package of confidence-building

measures through military cooperation. The agreement entailed expanding high-level exchange visits at the Greek-Turkish border, conducting joint missions in NATO and overseas peacekeeping, as well as establishing a joint all-branch military unit to manage natural disaster relief and humanitarian assistance.

### ***Cross visits: Historic Meeting of Premiers***

The rapprochement process reached a symbolic zenith in January 2007, when Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis traveled to Turkey for an official high-level visit. The historic significance of the event is underscored by the fact that the last Greek premier to visit Turkey was in 1959.

Following talks with Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, Karamanlis called for the “full normalization of Greek-Turkish relations,” stressing that this was “the only road toward essential progress that will allow us to exploit future opportunities within a European framework” (Altan, 2008). In their joint public appearances and press conferences the two leaders, while exuding an air of hope and optimism, did not shy away from acknowledging the existence of problems that await resolution. Karamanlis pressed Turkish authorities to improve the rights for Greeks living in Turkey, primarily by reopening the Halki Orthodox Seminary off Istanbul. Erdogan, with whom Karamanlis developed a close personal relationship, noted that Turkey was working on a solution for reopening the seminary but also stressed that Athens must do more to protect the Turkish minority living in northern Greece, stressing that improving the situation of minorities in both countries “would boost the bridge of friendship between our countries” (Altan, 2008). The Greek premier urged Turkey to normalize its relationship to Cyprus as required of an EU candidate member, while the Turkish premier focused on the need for fresh negotiations on Cyprus, as expected by the UN and EU, while calling for “a period of cooperation and solidarity in the Aegean” (Altan, 2008).

The visit of the Greek premier to Turkey was more symbolic than substantive. Its significance however lay in the fact that it focused public opinion on the on-going process of Greek-Turkish rapprochement, on the now public and official commitment of the neighboring countries to jointly work toward peaceful and mutually beneficial resolutions of their remaining bilateral problems.

### **Conclusion**

The facts and patterns of Greek-Turkish bilateral engagements between 1999 and 2008 clearly suggest that the policies and behavior of the neighboring countries towards each other are no longer confined to the traditional ethnocentrism and belligerency of the master narratives of their respective nationalist legacies. Certainly, ethnocentric approaches to national and international issues still persists in both Greece and Turkey, with constituencies at all levels of society that, contrary to Europeanization, are still operating within the zero-sum modalities of confrontational nationalist zealotry. However, within the broader process of EU integration, the changes in the political thinking of the Greek and Turkish governments, the new cooperative bilateral structures that have been established and the rising cross-societal initiatives of the private sector and civil society have created a positive dynamic that has moved the two countries towards post-

nationalist, problem-solving and conciliatory foreign policy approaches. The new era of rapprochement has been marked by the significant fact that Greece and Turkey learned to live with ambiguity, while forging and implementing constructive bilateral policies in the direction of cooperation and even reconciliation. While much work still lies ahead, the overall constructive experiences and mutual benefits of Greek-Turkish rapprochement have demonstrated that the process in question is far more promising and sustainable in serving the national economic, cultural and security interests of Greece and of Turkey than nationalist approaches ever will, particularly in an era of globalization. From this perspective, the prospects for a positive future ought not to be sought around the axis of Greece versus Turkey but of old Greece and old Turkey versus New Greece and New Turkey.

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