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## **The Role of Citizens in the Current Greek-Turkish Rapprochement**

### **Introduction**

The history of modern Greek-Turkish relations (1923-2006) is characterized by a series of ups and downs or as many scholars like to say as a “never ending Cold War”. Various rapprochement efforts have been made in the past (1931-1941, 1946-1953, 1988) but all of them proved to be lull before the new storm. The traditional tentative relations between those neighboring states has been a great focus of concern among political and military leaders both on a regional and on an international level throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and up to the present day.

During the Cold War, the geopolitical value of both states for NATO and the Western block was beyond doubt given their proximity to the Soviet Union and its allies. A conflict between Greece and Turkey during the East-West confrontation would signified a threat to the cohesion of NATO and the creation of fertile ground for the expansion of Soviet influence in the area. With the end of the Cold War, the existence of détente in the bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey still remains of paramount importance for both regional and international actors. The emergence of a completely different security environment in Europe and in its near abroad, which is characterized by the shift of focus from “hard” to “soft” security issues, makes interstate war in Europe to mean “suicide”. This new security environment demands close interstate co-operation at all levels. Furthermore, what is threatened in the post Cold War era is not the territorial integrity of states, as was the case during the Cold War, but the security of their citizens. As a result, citizens have or should have a say in security policy through their democratic rights.

Despite all these developments, however, the uncertainty in Greek-Turkish relations remains. This pessimism derives from the fact that even the last rapprochement effort between Greece and Turkey which started in 1999 did not manage, at least so far, to solve their bilateral problems. As a result Kostas Ifantis may be right when he argues that “...nobody can credibly claim that the

“Aegean Cold War” is historically over”<sup>1</sup>. This paper though can see some light, at least in the long-term, at the end of the tunnel. The current rapprochement effort between the two countries, deliberately or not, embraced the societies of each state to a greater extent than before. This fact, in combination with the liberalization-democratization process that takes place within Turkey and the technological progress in communications can even provide the shields for a lasting Greek-Turkish reconciliation<sup>2</sup>.

The task of this paper is therefore to point out this qualitative difference that the current Greek-Turkish rapprochement process poses in relation with the previous ones (1930-1941, 1946-1953, 1988). By examining recent normative and empirical discourses it will be shown that the current Greek-Turkish détente holds more promise than those in the past not only because there is a serious prospect for European Union ( EU ) membership for Turkey but also because the societies of both states are involved.

In order to support this argument thoroughly, a comparative analysis of the main rapprochement attempts that took place in the past between the two countries shall be made. Then, by focusing on the study of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement from 1999 up to the present day it will be shown that the societies of both countries are involved in such an extent as ever before. Furthermore, it will be argued that the new security environment that has emerged in the post Cold War Europe constitutes a threat for the individual security of citizens and therefore even in that, until recently prohibited, field citizens ought to have a say.

The last part of the paper will try to trace the prospects and limitations of the current rapprochement by answering questions like the following: How conducive can public opinion and public engagement be towards the achievement of a lasting reconciliation between Greece and Turkey? What role the press can play in this process? Is the process of further democratisation in Turkey an important variable? Is bilateral trade relations able to lead to a symbiotic - i.e. mutually reinforcing - economic relationship between Greece and Turkey? Which is the role of technological progress? What further steps have to be taken in order to maximize the benefits of this social involvement?

### The Rapprochement of the 1930s

The Greek-Turkish rapprochement of the 1930s is considered by almost everybody as one of the most serious reconciliation effort between the two countries. Every similar effort that followed had it as a reference point. The protagonists of this effort, Ismet Inonou and Eleftherios Venizelos, politicians and leaders of great caliber in both countries are invoked even today for their vision of a peaceful co-existence and constructive co-operation between the two nations. The importance of political personalities that lead such efforts was therefore manifested from the very beginning. The political choices of both, especially in the foreign policy field, have been confirmed in their countries even by the generations that followed. Despite the fact that this particular

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<sup>1</sup> Kostas Ifantis, “Greece’s Turkish Dilemmas: There are Back Again”, SouthEast European Studies, Vol. 5, No. 3, September, 2005, p.1

<sup>2</sup> The Author in another paper that was presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phd Symposium on Modern Greece, 10/06/05, argued that the current rapprochement between Greece and Turkey can even lead to the creation of a bilateral Security Community.

rapprochement effort took place 76 years ago it is still worth analysis because some very important conclusions can be drawn.

As was the case also with latter rapprochement efforts between Greece and Turkey the 1930 one was due to a combination of domestic, regional and international reasons that both countries were considering<sup>3</sup>. As Sotiris Rizas notes, the signing of Lausanne Treaty in 1923 created a completely new context for the Greek-Turkish relations. For Greece the signing of the Lausanne Treaty signified the end of the “Liberation Struggle in the form of “Megali Idea” (big idea) and for Turkey its evolution to a national state without however the ability to rescue the Ottoman Empire”<sup>4</sup>. This confirms Martin Walker’s point that “the histories of modern Greece and modern Turkey were each born in war against the other”<sup>5</sup>. As a result, nobody can claim that suddenly just after seven years of the end of another murderous Greek-Turkish war the leaders of both countries who were also in power during that war realized a hidden love between their states. It was political realism that guided their actions.

For Greece, on an international-regional level, it has been realized that the European borders have been established and any revisionist movement from its part would have isolated it politically. It had therefore to become a status quo supporter. Any other movement like this one of the dictator Pangalos to invade Bulgaria in 1925 in his effort to revive the “Megali Idea” would have been nothing else than another national disaster. Great Britain, the traditional political patron of Greece, was not willing to perform that role anymore. France was more lenient towards Yugoslavia and Turkey. Italy on the other hand, was demonstrating its aggressive tensions not only by the bombardment and occupation of the island of Corfu but also with its pro-Albania position. Furthermore, Bulgaria had never given up its revisionist plans against Greece, in its effort to gain access to the Aegean<sup>6</sup>. As a result, any miscalculation of foreign policy on behalf of Greece would have had a direct effect in its already problematic domestic situation in economic, political and societal terms. “Its security, its national dreams, even the wellbeing of its citizens, were directly linked in international variables”<sup>7</sup>.

The domestic condition in Greece was characterized by instability and uncertainty. The political rift in the Greek society between Royalists and the Republicanists (actually between the supporters of Venizelos and the Supporters of pro-Royalist parties) it was still very tense. The army, which was also divided along these lines, used to intervene by organizing movements and counter-movements. At the same time, more than one and a half million refugees from Asia Minor were settled in Greece further deteriorating the economic and societal problems of a country of 5,5 million people. Furthermore, the great trade deficits of Greece resulted in foreign loans that made her more dependent and vulnerable to international developments<sup>8</sup>. The increase of defense spending

<sup>3</sup> See especially, Geoffrey Pridham, Linkage Politics Theory and the Greek-Turkish Rapprochement, pp73-88, in Dimitris Konstas (ed), The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s, Macmillan, 1991.

<sup>4</sup> Sotiris Rizas, Apo tin Krisi stin Ifesi, (From Crisis to Détente), Athens, 2003, pp 19-20

<sup>5</sup> Martin Walker, “Europe’s Turkish Question”, special report, Prospect, February 2001, p.48

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed analysis of the international relations of Greece at that period see Kostas Karamanlis, Eleftherios Venizelos kai oi Exoterikes mas Sxeseis (Eleftherios Venizelos and our International Relations), Athens, 1995, pp 31-33

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.20

<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of the condition of the Greek economy of the period see, Gerasimos Soldatos, “The Inter-War Greek Economy: Income Inequality and Speculation”, in European History Quarterly, pp

by Pangalos for the revival of Megali Idea and the international economic crisis of 1929 simply made the situation worst. Consequently, all these conditions urgently required a new dogma in the foreign policy of Greece. Greece had to support the status quo in order to face all these challenges and formulate policies of domestic social, economic and political reconstruction. Venizelo's government that came to power in 1928 was aiming to do exactly this. The maintenance and support of status quo in the foreign policy of Greece was a necessary precondition to concentrate on the reconstruction policy in the domestic field. The following quote from the letter which Venizelos sent to Prime Minister of Turkey Ismet Inonou, is indicative of his intention:

“Mr President,.....I wish to assure you of my strong desire to contribute to a settlement of the relations of our countries that is going to secure a close friendship that will be followed by a friendship, no aggression and arbitration pact, as wider as possible”<sup>9</sup>.

The situation in Turkey was very similar with that one in Greece. In domestic politics Kemal Attaturk was trying to modernize Turkey according to western standards. He had to face the traditional political forces though which were deriving from the old regime and the religious institutions. Simultaneously, the economy was in a very bad condition because of the international economic crisis and the arms race with Greece<sup>10</sup>. On international level, moreover, Turkey was still suffering from the “Serves Syndrome”. The mistrust towards the western powers was still very tense. As a result, when Greece started settling its relations with Italy, Turkey also demonstrated political will for a rapprochement with Greece. The realization of the willingness of Turkey to settle its relations with Greece probably explains the letter that Venizelos sent to Attaturk. Both Greece and Turkey for the aforementioned reasons could not afford to go to war against each other.

It is clear therefore that the Greek-Turkish rapprochement of the 1930s it was not a result of a great desire for reconciliation but, a result of political realism. Both states wanted to focus on reconstruction policies in their domestic front and to adapt to the new international environment of the post WWI era. The reply, therefore of Ismet Inonou to Venizelos Letter was an acceptance of his proposal. “The context of your letter fully complies with my beliefs and it signifies the beginning of a new era in the relations of our countries of honest and honorable friendship”<sup>11</sup>.

On the 30 of October 1930 therefore the Prime Ministers of both countries signed an agreement of friendship, neutrality, conciliation and arbitration and also an agreement on the naval armaments and trade. Among the most important arrangements of the friendship agreement were to be the

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359-379, Vol. 23, No.3, 1993, and Sophia Lazaretou, “Macroeconomic Policies and Nominal Exchange Rate Regimes: Greece in the Interwar Period”, in *Journal of European Economic History*, pp. 647-670, Vol.25, No. 3 1996

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Dimitrios Kitsikis, *H Istoría tou Ellinotourkikou Xorou*, (The History of Greek-Turkish area), Athens, 1995, p.23

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed analysis of the domestic political situation in Turkey see Cem Emrence, “Reararticulating the Local, Regional and Global: The Greek-Turkish Rapprochement of the 1930”, in *Turkish Studies*, pp.26-46, Vol.4, No.3, Autumn 2003, p.37. Also for the arms race with Greece see Kostas Karamanlis, *Eleftherios Venizelos kai oi Exoterikes mas Sxeseis* (Eleftherios Venizelos and our International Relations), Athens, 1995, p. 86

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Dimitrios Kitsikis, *H Istoría tou Ellinotourkikou Xorou*, (The History of Greek-Turkish area), Athens, 1995, p.23

following: a) the commitment of both states not to join any political or military alliance that was going to act against to any of them, b) the maintenance of severe neutrality in case any one of them was going to receive an attack from a third party, c) the commitment of both parties to resort to the procedure of conciliation for their differences and in case an agreement was not reached to resort to the International Court of Justice or any other mutually acceptable arbitration organ.

The agreement for the reduction of naval armaments provided that each state should inform the other six months before the acquisition or ordering of any warship. The rationale behind this provision was the avoidance of a security dilemma which would unavoidably, as is the case today, lead to an arms race and probably to war.

The climate that was cultivated in the bilateral relations of Greece and Turkey was excellent and paved the way for further co-operation. In September of 1933 the Ankara agreement was signed that provided for the creation of an Alliance between the two countries in case western-Greek Thrace or Eastern-Turkish Thrace was attacked. The premise of this agreement was the interception of Slavic expansion towards Thrace and the Aegean. Furthermore, the expansion of the Italian influence in the Balkans with the control of Albania and in the Aegean under the occupation of the Dodecanese stimulate both Turkey and Greece to extend the Ankara Agreement with Balkan pact which this time embraced Yugoslavia and Romania. The pact guaranteed the security and integrity of the Balkan borders.

In 1938 they also agreed that in case either of them be attacked the other would remain strictly neutral without even allowing the aggressor to pass his army through their field. As a result Turkey and Greece had the same foreign policy orientation. Both of them were supporting the status quo. Consequently, both of them were inclined towards Britain and France, which in 1939 with a joint statement guaranteed the Greek borders and in the same year signed a mutual help treaty with Turkey. With that Treaty Turkey undertook the responsibility to protect the common Greek-Turkish borders. It is also worth to note that during that period Turkey managed to re-militarize the straits a movement that enabled Greece to remilitarize the islands Lemnos and Samothraki without any Turkish objections, as is the case today<sup>12</sup>. Within this context it can be observed that when the two states have common interests they can bypass their differences and move forward.

The end of the rapprochement effort can be considered the Turkish refusal of the Greek proposal for the creation of a joint Greek-Turkish front against a possible German-Bulgarian attack. Even worse, after the surrender of Greece, Turkey did not hesitate to negotiate its entrance to the WWII in return of Cyprus and various other islands of the Aegean. Furthermore, a series of measures in Turkey clearly aiming the Greek minority further deteriorated the relations between the Turkish government and the exiled to Egypt Greek government.<sup>13</sup> In 1943 the Turkish government confiscated property of Agion

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed analysis of the history and the evolution of Greek-turkish Relations of that period see Alexis Alexandris, "To Istoriko plaisio ton Ellinoturkikon Sxeseon 1923-1955" pp. 31-172, in Alexis Alexandris et.al (ed), *Oi Ellinoturkikes Sxeseis 1923-1987*, (Alexis Alexandris, The historical Context of Greek-Turkish Relations, 1923-1955, pp. 31-172 in Alexis Alexandris et.al (ed), *Greek-Turkish Relations, 1923-1987*, Athens, 1991

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*, p.89

Oros that was located in Imbros. The only gesture of good will and sympathy from Turkey during the German occupation of Greece was the humanitarian aid that had been sent to the Greek population by the Greeks of Istanbul and some individual Turks.

### The Rapprochement of 1946-1954

After the end of WWII, both Turkey and Greece had to face a completely new international environment. The Cold War was starting and the two confronting blocks were forming. The Soviet Union in 1946 raised territorial claims against Turkey. Greece on the other hand was suffering from a murderous civil war (1946-1949) between communists and national forces. The relation between the Greek-communists and the Soviet Union was not secret. As a result, both countries had a common threat, the Soviet Union and communism. The proximity of both countries to the Soviet Union and its satellites was making the sense of insecurity more intense. Consequently, both of them realized that a competition between them, at least at this stage, was against their interests. They had therefore to co-operate. Particularly since a rivalry between them would have made their prospects for NATO and Council of Europe membership very difficult. Greece moreover had to undertake reconstruction efforts after the devastating consequences of WWII and the Civil war that followed it.

Turkey in the post WWII era was clearly willing to improve relations with Greece. It abolished a series of measures which were discriminative against the Greek-minority. Moreover, it was more than co-operative in the election of the Ecumenical Patriarch Athinagora. The candidacy of Athinagora was also supported by the US and UK when they realized that Moscow was trying to transfer the Capital of the Christian Orthodox Church from Istanbul to Moscow, acquiring in that way an “ecclesiastical base” in Turkey<sup>14</sup>. All these policies on behalf of Turkey had doubled policy benefits. On a foreign policy field Turkey was further indicating its loyalty to the Western block and thus facilitating its entrance to western institutions mainly NATO and, on a domestic policy level Turkey was giving back rights to the Greek minority that have been abolished in the previous years. It should not be forgotten however that 1946 was the year of the introduction of multi-party elections in Turkey. As a result, the vote of the Greek minority had also to be taken into account. Further democratization of Turkey therefore, within this context, can be conducive to the creation of friendly relations with neighboring countries. Within this context, Turkey as an act of political realism supported an institution which is considered by many Turks nationalists as the reminder of the unfulfilled “Megali Idea” by the Greeks.

The simultaneous entrance of both countries in NATO further improved their bilateral relations. The climate was so good that in 1952 during a visit of the Turkish Prime Minister Celal Bayar in Athens his Greek counterpart Nikolaos Plastiras proposed the creation of a Greco-Turkish Union. The internationalization, by the Greek government of the Cyprus issue and the riots against the Greek minority of Istanbul, that as was later being proved were organized by the Turkish government in 1955 marked the beginning of the Greek-Turkish Cold War that is still apparent today. The events on Cyprus from

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p.128

1955-1974 that were culminated by the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 poisoned the relations of both countries and created a variety of other differences in the Aegean. Within this context the claim made by Ronald Crebs that the entrance to NATO by Turkey and Greece provided them with security from the Soviet threat and as a result enabled them to concentrate on their bilateral aspirations and differences, is fully justified<sup>15</sup>.

### The Davos Process and the “No War Result”

The rapprochement effort which began in 1988 in Davos is considered by many scholars of Greek-Turkish relations as the most important since the 1930s. It took place after a crisis in the Aegean over the continental shelf which brought Greece and Turkey very close to war. As was the case with the previous similar efforts, political realism of that particular period dictated that co-operation and détente is far more advantageous than confrontation.

Turkey, from one hand, did not want tentative relations with Greece not only because of its problematic relations with Syria, the war in its borders between Iran and Iraq, the insurgence of the Kurds in its internal and its problematic relations with Bulgaria but also because it was intending to apply for EU membership and was fully aware that its final acceptance in the EU, then EC, required the consent of Greece. Furthermore, the government of Turgut Ozal was implementing a modernization of the economy programme that could easily be disturbed by any serious negative development in the foreign policy domain<sup>16</sup>.

On the other hand, the Greek government of Andreas Papandreu realized that the policy of “no dialogue” with Turkey was not as effective as its rhetoric was making to look like. In contrast, the events of the crisis along, demonstrated how easily an issue of legal nature like the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf can escalate to a crisis that could easily lead to an armed confrontation with devastating consequences for both states. Furthermore, the absence of dialogue with Turkey was not conducive also for the resolution of the Cyprus problem. In 1986 a unique opportunity was lost for the settlement of the problem with a mutually accepted solution when the Secretary General of the UN proposed a solution which in many respects was satisfying the concerns of all parties. The faith of this plan might have been different if there was constructive dialogue between Turkey and Greece.

Both countries moreover had a series of common interests in pursuing a rapprochement. The experience of the crisis was very tense for all sides. Both of them wanted to concentrate in the improvement of their fiscal policies in their internal and the alternative cost caused by their arm race and their security dilemma was great. According to the United States Department of Defense in 1987 Greece was spending 6.2% of its GDP in defense and was ranked second among the NATO member countries and Turkey was spending 4.4% of its GDP

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Ronald Crebs, “Perverse Institutionalism: NATO and the Greco-Turkish Conflict”, pp.343-377, in International Organisation, Vol.53, No. 2, Spring 1999, p.358

<sup>16</sup> For the Turkish motives of rapprochement see mainly Heinz Cramer, “Turkey’s Relations with Greece: Motives and Interests, pp.58-72, in Dimitris Konstas (ed), The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s, Macmillan, 1991.

and was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> among NATO member states<sup>17</sup>. In addition, the prospect of co-operation over particular fields like tourism had more to offer. Moreover, the continuation of tension in their relations was making them vulnerable to the influences of the US and UK.

In Davos, none of the main differences between the two countries were resolved. This task has been ascribed to two committees. The only positive result was the signing of a memorandum that paved the way for the creation of confidence building measures in the Aegean. The memorandum was referring mostly to the specific time and duration of military exercises in the Aegean. Of course the rhetoric declaration of Davos stated that both governments in the future will settle their disputes not by the use of force but by diplomatic means. In other words, the Davos envisioned a “no war community” between Turkey and Greece<sup>18</sup>. In practice there were also some gestures of goodwill that had been made by both countries. Turkey, for example, abolished the measure of 1964 according to which the members of the Greek minority in Istanbul could not rent or sell their properties. Greece on the other hand, signed the protocol of adaptation of the association agreement between Turkey and EC.

A series of developments in domestic politics in both countries and some disagreements between Greece and Turkey over the negotiation of the reduction of conventional forces in Europe in Vienna brought the rapprochement effort to an end. Turgut Ozal became President of the Turkish Republic. The popularity of Andreas Papandreu was declining due to the emergence of economic scandals in Greece and the deterioration of the Greek economy. Since the whole rapprochement effort was linked to those two personalities it was bound that their popularity was going to influence it accordingly. “Davos in a way, remains very much a private enterprise of the two Prime Ministers, who seem to have staked their prestige on it....this personal element made the process in turn vulnerable to political difficulties facing either leader”<sup>19</sup> Only one third of the Greek public supported rapprochement with Turkey and 30% received Ozal’s visit to Athens as a provocation. Simultaneously, 45% of the Turkish Public rejected absolutely any partial removal of Turkish troops from Cyprus<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, the rejection of the Turkish application for entrance in the EU lightened the external pressure to her to demonstrate political will for the resolution of its disputes with Greece.

### **The Causes of the Current Greek-Turkish Rapprochement**

**The decisions taken at Helsinki, especially as the Greek-Turkish relations are concerned, have not been taken in vein. The Greek –Turkish relations in the 1990s have gone through faces of tension and uncertainty. The Imia/Kardak**

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<sup>17</sup> United States Department of Defence, Report on Allied Contribution to the Common Defence, Washington DC: USGPO, 1989, P.96

<sup>18</sup> See in particular Karl Deutch, Political Community at the International Level, Problems of Definitions and Measurement, Archon Books, 1970

<sup>19</sup> Geoffrey Pridham, “Linkage Politics Theory and the Greek-Turkish Rapprochement, pp.73-88, in Dimitri Conostas (ed), Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s, Macmillan, p.78

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* p.85



crisis of 1996 brought the two states very close to an arm confrontation and the capture of the PKK leader while leaving the Greek Embassy in Kenya further deteriorated the relations of the two Aegean neighbors and manifested the great lack of trust in their relations.

The tentative relations between Greece and Turkey was mutually damaging for both countries. From one hand, on an economic level, Greece, had to devote huge amounts of money for its defense budget and as a result could not concentrate its fiscal efforts to the fulfillment of the criteria for its entry in the European Monetary Union. Turkey on the other hand, had also interest in the reduction of tension with Greece not only in order to facilitate its European prospect but mainly, in that particular time in order to have more room for maneuvers in its fiscal policy. Turkey had agreed in 1999 with the International Monetary Fund to reduce its huge fiscal dept<sup>21</sup>. Greece and Turkey have the higher defense spending in the percentage of GDP among all other number countries, 4,5% for Turkey and 4,8% for Greece<sup>22</sup>. In addition, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) between 1994 and 1998 Turkey is ranked third among the main conventional armaments importers while Greece was sixth<sup>23</sup>.

At the same time, both states were directly exposed to the new security threats that emerged after the end of the Cold War. Post Cold War Europe is characterised by the emergence of a new security environment. The international security agenda has deepened drastically with the emergence of aggressive nationalism, social disruption and uncertainty in light of fundamental economic reforms, drug trafficking, organised crime, international terrorism, illegal immigration, environmental degradation and some diseases like the birds flue recently<sup>24</sup>.

The common characteristic of these new threats is their transboundary nature. In addition, they are closely interrelated with each other. An environmental disaster or an ethnic conflict in one country may produce immigration to other countries. This immigration movement may be accompanied by drug trafficking, and it may facilitate the transfer of weapons of mass destruction. It may also destabilise the society of the state where immigration takes place by causing an increase in unemployment and encouraging the rise of extreme parties, the creation of xenophobia and social conflict. The consequences of an environmental disaster may of course also 'travel' to the neighbouring countries. As a result what is threatened is not the 'Westphalian' state but its citizens and its internal infrastructure, as Donnelly argues: 'What is under attack is not the territory of the state but its fabric, the nature of its society, the functioning of its institutions, and the well-being of its citizens'<sup>25</sup>. Events like September the 11<sup>th</sup> and the rise of the extreme right wing

<sup>21</sup> Panos Kazakos, *Ypsili Politiki kai Esvterikoi Paragontes stis Ellhnoturkikes sxeseis*, ( High Politics and Internal Factors in Greek-Turkish Relations), pp.7-22, in Panos Kazakos, et.al. (eds), *H Ellada kai to Eyropaiko Mellon ths Tourkias*, ( Greece and the European Future of Turkey,, Athens Sideris, 2001, pp.18-19

<sup>22</sup> Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, *Further Turmoil Ahead?* Pp 56-79, in Dimitrios Keridis and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou,( ed) *Greek-Turkish Relations in the Era of Globalization*, Brassey's 2001, p.67

<sup>23</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Yearbook 1999-Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, New York:Oxford University Press, 1999, p.428

<sup>24</sup> See in Particular,Krause and Williams, "Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies : Politics and Methods", pp.229-254, in *International Studies Review*, Vol. 40, 1996

<sup>25</sup> Christopher Donnelly, 'Rethinking Security', in *NATO review (Web Edition)*, Vol.

in France in the last presidential elections are clear indications of the changed nature of international security.

It is within this framework that we can understand the Greek-Turkish rapprochement. Faced directly with the new security environment due to their geographic proximity and neighbouring with conflict zones such as the Balkans, Central Asia, Caucasus and the Middle East, both states realised that zero-sum game strategy is mutually damaging and that a 'policy of co-operation is far more advantageous than continued confrontation'<sup>26</sup> (Lindsay: 2000:216). Thus, in 1996 a few months after the Imia/Kardak hot incident the pair agreed in New York to embark on a 'step by step' rapprochement. Following neofunctionalist lines, the initiative aims by starting with 'low politics' issues such as immigration, environment, international terrorism, commerce and illegal drug trafficking, to be able to tackle and eventually peacefully solve the 'high politics' issues concerning both countries, the Cypriot problem and the dispute over the Aegean Sea<sup>27</sup>.

The Helsinki developments in a way open the way for the step by step approach that the Greek government had proposed in Washington in 1996 and had further discussed in 1999 on a foreign ministers level in New York. As a result, nine bilateral agreements were signed between Greece and Turkey on "low politics issues" i.e. in no controversial areas. These agreements include co-operation on: tourism, finance, technology and science, sea transport, culture, customs, protection of investments, protection of environment, fight against international organised crime and illegal immigration<sup>28</sup>. In these meetings the foreign ministers of both countries also agreed on the creation of Joint Task Force -a special committee- of Greek and Turkish officials that was going to help and advise Turkey, based on the Greek experience, on the adoption of the *aquis communautaire*<sup>29</sup>. The Greek-Turkish co-operation was also expanded in agriculture, energy and fight against natural disasters. In more details the ministers of agriculture of Greece and Turkey signed in June 2000 a protocol of technological, scientific and financial co-operation on the agriculture sector. Also in 28 of March 2002 an agreement was signed in Ankara by the ministers of energy of both countries for the construction of pipeline that is going to transport natural gas from Iran via Turkey to Greece and consequently to Europe<sup>i</sup>. At the same time a series of other agreements for co-operation on low politics issues had been signed between the two countries. The ratification, however, is still pending.

Without a doubt the co-operation on low politics issues between Greece and Turkey has been proved operational and mutually beneficial. Testimonies from both sides of the Aegean confirm such a claim. The then Turkish finance minister Kemal Dervis stated in a greek newspaper that the close economic, tourist a energy co-operation between Greece and Turkey has a great potential<sup>ii</sup>. At the same time Greek -Turkish investments in the region are playing an

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48, pp. 32-34, Winter 2000-2001, p.1

<sup>26</sup> James Lindsay, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: The Impact of Disaster Diplomacy?" Pp.215-232, in Cambridge Review of International Affairs, Vol.xiv, No.1, Autumn-Winter, 1999, p. 216

<sup>27</sup> Giannos Kranidiotis, *H Elliniki Exoteriki Politiki*, (Giannos Kranidiotis, Greek Foreign Policy, Athens, 1999, p.188

<sup>28</sup> [Http://www.mfa.gr/foreign\\_policy/Europe\\_southeastern/turkey/bilateral/html\(6/5/2002\)](http://www.mfa.gr/foreign_policy/Europe_southeastern/turkey/bilateral/html(6/5/2002))

<sup>29</sup> See Droutsas D. and Tsakonas Pangiotis, "Turkey's "Road Mp" to European Union: Implications for Greek-Turkish Relations and the Cyprus Issue", *Hellenic Studies*, pp. 71-100 Vol.9, No.1,2001

important role in the regional economic reconstruction and development. However, the main goal of the low politics co-operation was not the expectable benefits but the creation of a solid basis for co-operation which could gradually lead to the building of trust between the two states and eventually to the peaceful resolution of high politics issues. Within this context discussions on the implementation of confidence-building and risk reduction measures took place. The Greek –Turkish discussions on the confidence building measures is not an easy process. The two states have agreed to divide the areas where they want to establish confidence building measures in three categories, technical and operational which are going to be arranged on a bilateral level and military which are going to be discussed on a NATO level. Despite of this, however, there is no a spectacular progress that have been achieved in any of the categories of the CBM<sup>30</sup>.

This apparent deadlock in the process of CBM may explain the decision taken by Greece and Turkey on April 2002 to initiate a process of “investigating contacts” or, as is usually called, a pre-negotiation strategy. The aim of these “investigating contacts” between Greek and Turkish diplomatic officials and experts in the Greek-Turkish relations is to find out common ground and common interests in the resolution of high politics issues. This process does not commit any of the parties concerned. So far, however, there has not been any progress.

The government of Ankara has repeated many times that any attempt by Athens to extend, by evoking a legal right deriving from the Law of the Sea Convention of 1982, its territorial waters to 12 miles will be received from its side as a *casus belli*. Such a declaration, which has been also embraced by the Turkish National Assembly in 1995, it is obviously against the Helsinki spirit. Furthermore, Turkey several times in the post Helsinki era has raised claims of “grey areas”. The most well known example was during the NATO exercise “Destined Glory” when Turkey asked the exclusion of the Greek islands of Lemnos and Ikaria from the exercise. As a result Greece withdrew from the exercise. At the same time, Turkey continues to violate what Athens believes to be the Greek airspace and as a result makes the rapprochement more fragile. In addition, Turkey, despite Athens consent to be characterised a candidate state for EU membership and its consent for the initiation of negotiations procedures between the EU and Turkey for entrance in the EU, has not made any gesture of good will towards Greece. The re-opening of the Halki theological school for example would be a good starting point. The lack of a gesture of good will on behalf of Turkey is not conducive to the maintenance of public support for the rapprochement process in Greece.

### **The Qualitative Difference of the Current Rapprochement: The Role of Citizens**

Despite the fact that the current rapprochement between Turkey and Greece did not manage, at least so far, to solve the high politics issues that constitute a source of conflict between the two countries has managed to

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<sup>30</sup> See article in Eleftherotypia 31/03/02 “The Diplomacy of Natural Gas”

penetrate the societies of both states. The extent that the citizens of both states are involved in the rapprochement effort is unprecedented. As a result, there is some optimism that in the long term the result will be positive.

The process of societal rapprochement has been intensified when two earthquakes hit both countries in 1999. The immediate help that both countries provided to each other brought their societies closer and ‘exploded myths alleging eternal Greek – Turkish enmity and the burden of history’<sup>31</sup>. Friendship groups and other multiple contact routes were created and the media in both countries spread the feeling of mutual gratitude within their populations. As a result, popular support has been generated for the ‘step by step’ process of Greek Turkish rapprochement.

Without a doubt the co-operation on low politics issues between Greece and Turkey has been proved operational and mutually beneficial. Testimonies from both sides of the Aegean confirm such a claim. The then Turkish finance minister Kemal Dervis stated in a Greek newspaper that the close economic, tourist and energy co-operation between Greece and Turkey has a great potential<sup>32</sup>. At the same time Greek –Turkish investments in the region are playing an important role in the regional economic reconstruction and development. The bilateral trade between the two countries has also increased impressively. For example, the Turkish share in total Greek exports has increased from 3.9% in 1997 to 9% in 2000. The Greek share in total Turkish exports has increased from 1.1% in 1997 to 3.4% in 2000<sup>33</sup>. More concretely, bilateral trade between Turkey and Greece in 1998 amounted to 200 million dollars by 2003 it has reached 1.3 billion dollars. It has gone through a six-fold increase<sup>34</sup>. This steady and impressive increase in bilateral trade does not only brings the people of both countries closer and enables them even at this field to trust each other but it can lead to an economic interdependence between the two countries that will prevent any confrontation.

Another impressive characteristic that the current rapprochement poses is its apparent and positive influence in the arts. From both sides of the Aegean serials and movies, promoting the common characteristics of the Turks and the Greeks and at the same time demonstrating the prejudices and the bad experiences of both people, have been produced. All of these serials proved to be record breaking TV series. It worth to be mentioned the Greek movie “Politiki Kouzina” (Kitchen of Istanbul) and the Turkish serial Yabancı Damad (The Frontiers of Love). Additionally, Greek and Turkish music have also demonstrated to both people their great similarities as many songs from both countries have become a “common good”. At the same time a variety of institutions on both states have participated and organised events that are promoting mutual understanding and socialization and social learning between the peoples of both countries. These institutions are universities, research institutions, municipalities and various non-profit organisations and NGOs. The

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<sup>31</sup> Theodoros Couloumbis and Thanos Veremis, “Greece and the Balkans: A Critical Review”, pp147-162, in Royal United Services Institute, London , 1999, p.152

<sup>32</sup> “ To Vhma” OikonomikosTaxydromos, “Kemal Dervis: There is a gigantic potential of co-operation between Greece and Turkey” (20/04/02).

<sup>33</sup> Panagiotis Liatgovas, The Economic Imperative: Prospects for Trade Integration and Business Cooperation, pp. 145-161, in Mustafa Audin and Kostas Ifantis (ed), Turkish Greek Relations, Routledge, 2004, pp.148-149.

<sup>34</sup> See the Greek-Turkish News website, <http://www.grtnews.com/tr/publish/article139.shtml>

example of the municipality of the island of Hydra and the municipality of the Istanbul suburb Eregli is one good example. In many cases such initiatives have been sponsored by the European Commission. The “Greek-Turkish civic dialogue” programme of 2003 organised by AEEGE Ankara involved more than 5000 people from both countries who exchanged experiences and realised the great similarities between the two nations<sup>35</sup>. Furthermore, the technological progress especially in communications it is used as an instrument to bring the peoples closer. The internet is most common field where people from both sides communicate. Here both Greeks and Turks are free to exchange views and attitudes as they come to know each other better. This is particularly true amongst the youth.

Two things are of great importance in all these developments and events. First, the increase of interaction and socialization and of the so called human touch between the societies of the two countries aiming to delete prejudices and suspicion that exists for the “other”. Second and this is the contention of this paper, is an evident long term benefit. The involvement of citizens in the rapprochement effort between Greece and Turkey will lead eventually to its legitimization as a policy in the minds of the electorates in both countries. In other words, for the first time in the history of the bilateral relations of Greece and Turkey there will be a bottom up policy transformation towards rapprochement and reconciliation. To put it differently, regardless of the results of this intergovernmental rapprochement effort the shields for a success in the future have been planted. No political party that aspires to reach power will be able to neglect such demand on behalf of the electorates. For such dynamic to be maintained, however various variables and factors must be taken into account.

Within this context, the democratisation process in Turkey has to move forward. The implementation of the modernisation packs that Erdogan’s government passed through the Turkish National Assembly must be intensified<sup>36</sup>. A fully democratic Turkey where the role of the Military will have been isolated from Civilian life is prerequisite<sup>37</sup>. Human rights and political liberties have to be fully respected according to European Standards. This will encourage and facilitate the rapprochement effort from above. The democratic peace thesis in other words, can also be relevant for Greek-Turkish relations<sup>38</sup>. Similarly, the European prospect for Turkey will encourage further democratisation of the country and will also provide both Greeks and Turks with a common European future

At the same time, the mediating role of the media between political authorities and public opinion can also be conducive towards a Greek-Turkish reconciliation in all direction, in a bottom up and in a top down rapprochement procedure. The Imia/Kardak crisis of 1996 is attributed very much to the way the media presented it to both sides of the Aegean whereas the initiation of the bottom up rapprochement which begun in 1999 is attributed also the way the media in both countries covered it. With that in mind and provided that public

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<sup>35</sup> The author of this paper was a member of the Psychology Workshop of this Programme.

<sup>36</sup> See in Particular, Mehmet Ugur, “Testing Times in EU-Turkey Relations: The Road to Copenhagen and Beyond”, pp.165-183, in Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans, Vol.5, No.2, August, 2003

<sup>37</sup> For the Role of the Military in Turkey see, William Hale, Turkish Politics and the Military, Routledge, 1994

<sup>38</sup> For the Democratic Peace Thesis, see Michael Doyle, “Liberalism and World Politics”, pp.1151-1169, in American Political Science Review, Vol. 80, No. 4, December, 1986

opinion in both countries supports the rapprochement effort, the existence of independent and democratic media in both sides of the Aegean should reproduce public belief and direct it to their political authorities<sup>39</sup>.

### Conclusions

From the above analysis it has become obvious that the current rapprochement effort between Greece and Turkey is more promising than the previous ones not because it will solve the high politics issues between the two countries in the Aegean but because it involves citizens in such an extent as ever before. The approach that started in 1930s was mostly concentrated in interstate relations and was guided by the precepts of political realism as all similar attempts that followed. It did not involve or encourage relations between citizens. During that period, moreover, the distinction between domestic and international politics was very clear. The same situation applies also to the rapprochement effort that started in 1946 and in 1988. In 1988, however, there was an attempt to generate public support but without any serious preparation. This explains why the current rapprochement, which according to some people is over, has left a positive legacy. This is nothing else than an active role of informed citizens at all levels.

Within this context if there is real political will for reconciliation on behalf of both parties, the role of citizens and the idea of bottom up approach has to be fostered, encouraged, supported and harnessed in various ways. First, on an economic level the co-operation between the two countries must expand. Furthermore, the business world in both states should be supported to move towards joint investments. Low interest loans, for example, for such initiatives will be a very good motive. The tourist sector is a very important field where the business world could make joint investments. Secondly, the EU should also support any effort conducive to the continuation and further increase of the role of citizens in the current Greek-Turkish rapprochement. Support should be given to local governments, universities and any other institutions with similar activities.

Thirdly, both countries should make attempts to make their educational systems less ethnocentric. In particular, some schoolbooks, especially history schoolbooks, in both sides of the Aegean should be rewritten in such a way not sanctify the one and demonise the “other”. Schoolbooks, in other words, serve as a mechanism of propaganda that prolongs the conflict. As Plato said, “education is the art of orientation”<sup>40</sup>. Citizens in Turkey and in Greece should realize or try to find aspects of their common history that unites them rather than keeping them apart.

All in all, even if at the political level, the rapprochement effort that started in 1999 is over, the contention of this paper supports that the unprecedented citizens involvement in this particular effort of Greek-Turkish reconciliation has put the shields of a bottom up rapprochement effort between

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<sup>39</sup> For the role that the media can play in Greek-Turkish Relations see Katharina Hadjidimos, “The Role of the Media in Greek-Turkish Relations, Robert Bosch Stiftunskolleg fur Internationale, AufgabenProgrammjar 1998/1999

<sup>40</sup> Plato Republic, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.130

**the two countries which within the context of the European prospect for Turkey that in turn will inevitably flourish.**

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