# Explaining the Endurance of Greek-Turkish Rapprochement Process

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## ABSTRACT

The rapprochement process that has been initiated since 1999 between Greece and Turkey has demonstrated a remarkable endurance. According to this article this endurance is due to two main reasons: Firstly, to the political and socio-economic capital that has been accumulated as a result of this process. Secondly, to the autonomous character that this rapprochement is gradually acquiring and thus is becoming less dependent to external variables such as the European prospect for Turkey and the resolution of the Cyprus problem.

**Keywords:** Greek-Turkish Rapprochement, Endurance, EU, Cyprus.

# Türk-Yunan Yakınlaşma Sürecinin Sürekliliğini Açıklamak

## ÖZET

Yunanistan ile Türkiye arasında 1999'da başlayan yakınlaşma süreci dikkati çeken bir süreklilik sergilemektedir. Bu makale bahsi geçen sürekliliğin iki sebebinin olduğunu iddia etmektedir: İlki, bu sürecin bir sonucu olarak elde edilen siyasi ve sosyo-ekonomk sermayedir. İkincisi ise, sürecin zamanla Türkiye'nin AB macerası ve Kıbrıs sorunun çözümü gibi dış etkenlere gittikçe daha az bağımlı bir hale dönüşen özerk karakteridir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yunan-Türk Yakınlaşması, Süreklilik, AB, Kıbrıs.

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## Introduction

The history of modern Greek-Turkish relations (1923-2013) is characterized by a series of ups and downs or as many scholars like to say as a "never ending Cold War." Throughout the 20th Century and up to the present day, the tentative relations between Greece and Turkey has been a great focus of concern among political and military leaders both on a regional and on an international level. Different variables of domestic and international politics have been recognized as responsible for this problematic relation and similarly various solutions have been proposed for their treatment without however any lasting results. Towards this direction a series of rapprochement efforts have been made in the past (1930-1941, 1946-1953, and 1988) but all of them did not manage to deliver a lasting result.

The rapprochement[1] 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.[2] 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 efforts that started in 1946 and in 1988. In 1988, however, there was an attempt to generate public support but without any serious preparation.[3]

With the end of the Cold War, the existence of *détente*[4] in 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.[5]

Despite of all these developments, however, for some scholars, the uncertainty in Greek-Turkish relations remains. This pessimism derives from the fact that even the last rapprochement effort between Greece and Turkey that 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."[6]

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1   "Rapprochement is a diplomatic term of French origin meaning the renewal of normal relations before a period of disharmony or conflict." See G. Evans and J. Newnham, *Penguin Dictionary of International Relations*, London, 1998, p.464.
2   See Cem Emrence, "Rearticulating the Local, Regional, and Global: The Greek-Turkish Rapprochement of the 1930", *Turkish Studies*, Vol.4, No.3, 2003, p.26-46.
3   See Heinz Cramer, "Turkey's Relations with Greece: Motives and Interests", Dimitris Constas (ed.), *The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s*, London, Macmillan, 1991, p.58-72.
4   *Détente* is "a diplomatic term meaning a relaxation or a slackening of tension in the previously strained relations between states." Evans and Newnham, *Penguin Dictionary*, p.125.
5   For the new security environment in post-Cold War see Sean Kay, *Global Security in the Twenty-First Century, New York,* Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2006.
6   Kostas Ifantis, "Greece's Turkish Dilemmas: There are Back Again", *South East European Studies*, Vol.5, No.3, 2005, p.379.

This article though can see some light at the end of the tunnel, at least in the long-term. The last rapprochement effort between the two countries has demonstrated a remarkable endurance. This particular process, deliberately or not, embraced the societies of each state to a greater extent than ever before, increased drastically economic co-operation and created in a way institutionalized political bilateral relations. It is indeed the first time since 1974 that a decade passes without any major Greek-Turkish crisis in the Aegean (1976, 1987, 1996). This explains why the current rapprochement has created a positive legacy which if it is used wisely it may lead to the resolution of "high politics" issues in Greek-Turkish relations.[7] Within this context, by studying recent normative and empirical discourse this article aims to explain the endurance of Greek-Turkish rapprochement process up to the present day and to point out the potential for further mutually beneficial co-operation for both countries.

Consequently, the first section outlines the rational of the current Greek-Turkish rapprochement. The second section presents the outcomes of this process. The third section tries to analyze and evaluate the political importance of those outcomes as far as the endurance of this rapprochement process is concerned. The last section is presenting the concluding remarks of this article.

## The Rational Behind the Last Greek-Turkish Rapprochement

The decisions taken at the Helsinki European Summit in 1999, especially as the Greek-Turkish relations are concerned, have not been taken in vein. Greek–Turkish relations in the 1990s have gone through faces of tension and uncertainty. The Imia/Kardak 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 between them.

The competitive and tentative relations between Greece and Turkey was mutually damaging. 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 and the organization of the Olympic Games of 2004. As a result the "Europeanization" of its bilateral relations with Turkey seemed a more effective political choice.[8] Furthermore, "turcoscepti-sism" in major EU member states like France, Germany and Austria, could not use Athens

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7    For an analysis of the main rapprochements efforts between Greece and Turkey see George Koukoudakis, "The Role of Citizens in the Current Greek-Turkish Rapprochement", *Paper for the 56th Annual Conference of Political Studies Association*, University of Reading, April 4-6, 2006.

8    See Ziya Onis, "Greek-Turkish Relations and the European Union: A Critical Perspective", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol.6, No.3, 2001, p.31-45; Spyros Economides, "The Europeanization of Greek Foreign Policy", *West European Politics*, Vol.28, No.2, 2005, p.471-491 and Bahar Rumelili, "The European Union's Impact on the Greek-Turkish Conflict: A Review of the Literature," *Working Paper Series in EU Border Conflict Studies*, No.6, January 2004, p.10-15.

anymore to conceal EU's indecisiveness towards the European prospect of Turkey.[9] This was also conducive in eliminating "a reigning perception among the Turkish elite, namely that the EU was held hostage by Greece" over the accession of Turkey to its ranks.[10]

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. The Government of Ankara had agreed in 1999 with the International Monetary Fund to reduce its huge fiscal dept.[11] By that time, Greece and Turkey had the higher defense spending in the percentage of GDP among all other NATO Member countries, 4.5% for Turkey and 4.8% for Greece.[12] In addition, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) between 1994 and 1998 Turkey was ranked third among the main conventional armaments importers while Greece was sixth.[13] In other words the opportunity cost of the defense budgets was huge for both countries.[14]

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 characterized 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, organized crime, international terrorism, illegal immigration, environmental degradation and some transboundary diseases like the "birds flue" of 2006.[15] Furthermore, the crisis in Kosovo of 1999 and the international military intervention that followed it in combination with an

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9   Greek governments throughout the 1980s and the 1990s have been using the Cyprus issues and the revisionist policy of Turkey in order to block EU-Turkey relations. See Heinz Kramer, "Turkish Application for Accession to the European Community and the Greek Factor", *Europa Archiv*, Vol.42, No.10, 1987, p.605-617.

10  Panagiotis Tsakonas, "How Can the European Union Transform the Greek-Turkish Conflict?" Constantine Arvanitopoulos (ed.), Turkey's *Accession to the European Union: An Unusual Candidacy*, Springer, Berlin, 2009, p.107-120.

11  Panos Kazakos, "High Politics and Internal Factors in Greek-Turkish Relations", (in Greek), Panos Kazakos, *et.al.* (eds.), *Greece and the European Future of Turkey*, Athens Sideris, 2001, p.18-19.

12  Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, "Further Turmoil Ahead?", Dimitrios Keridis and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou (eds.), *Greek-Turkish Relations in the Era of Globalization*, Brassey's, 2001, p.67.

13   Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Yearbook 1999-Armamanets, Disarmament and International Security*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, p.428.

14  For the opportunity cost of defense see, Carl H. Lyttkens and Claudio Vedovato, "Opportunity Costs of Defence: a Comment on Dabelco and McCormic", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.21, No.4, 1984, p.389-394.

15  See Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, "Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies: Politics and Methods", *International Studies Review*, Vol.40, 1996, p.229-254; Emil J. Kircner and James Sperling, "The New Security Threats in Europe: Theory and Evidence", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol.7, No.4, 2002, p.423-452 and Ozgur Unal Eris, "The Emergence of New Security Threats to the EU and their Implications for the EU-Turkey Relations: The Case of Illegal Migration", Constantine Arvanitopoulos and K. Konstantina Botsiou (eds.), *The Constantinos Karamanlis Institute for Democracy Yearbook 2010*, Springer, 2010, p.95-106.

American scenario of its expansion to Greek-Turkish relations made both Greece and Turkey to reformulate their Balkan policy.[16] As the foreign minister of Greece by that time George Papandreou stated: "Greece has made an effort to take the lead in promoting stability, cooperation and democracy in the Balkans. Given this basic, but determined foreign policy outlook, it would have been incongruous to exclude Turkey."[17]

It is within this framework that we can also understand the Greek-Turkish rapprochement. Faced directly with the new security environment due to their geographic proximity to conflict zones such as the Balkans, Central Asia, Caucasus and the Middle East, both states realized that zero-sum game strategy is mutually damaging and that a "policy of co-operation is far more advantageous than continued confrontation".[18]

Thus, in 1996 a few months after the Imia/Kardak crisis the pair agreed in New York to embark on a "step by step" rapprochement. Following neo-functionalist lines, the initiative was aiming 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.[19] In other words, the Imia/Kardak crisis was a "Blessing in Disguise" for Greek-Turkish relations since it generated a strong impulse for reconciliation between both states and their societies.[20]

## The "First Gains" of the Process

The Helsinki developments in a way open the way for the step by step approached 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. areas not related to matters of national security. These agreements include co-operation on: tourism, finance, technology and science, sea transport, culture, customs, protection of investments, protection of environment, fight against international organized crime and illegal immigration.[21] In

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16  See Sabri Sayari, "Turkish Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era", *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.54, Issue 1, 2000, p.169. See also Ian Lesser, *et.al.*, *Greece's New Geopolitics*, Santa Monica, Rand, 2001, p.69.

17  George Papandreou, "Revision in Greek Foreign Policy," Western Policy Center, January 2000, http://www.papandreou.gr/Februrary 2000/wpc_jan2000.html (Accessed on 15 February 2003).

18  James Lindsay, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: The Impact of Disaster Diplomacy?", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol.XIV, No.1, Autumn-Winter, 1999, p.216.

19  Giannos Kranidiotis, *Greek Foreign Policy*, (in Greek), Athens Sideris, 1999, p.188.

20  See Ekavi Athanassopoulou, "Blessing in Disguise? The Imia-Kardak Crisis and Greek-Turkish Relations", *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol.2, No.3 Winter, 1997 and Eugenia Vathakou, "Greek-Turkish Peace Processes as Autopoietic Systems", Constantine Arvanitopoulos (ed.), *Turkey's Accession to the European Union: An Unusual Candidacy*, Springer, Berlin, 2009, p.133-146.

21  Http://www.mfa.gr/foreign_policy/Europe_southestern/turkey/bilateral/html (Accessed on 6 May 2002).

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 advice Turkey, based on the Greek experience, on the adoption of the *aquis communitaire*.[22] The Greek-Turkish co-operation was also expanded in agriculture, energy and fight against natural disasters.

All in all from 2000 to 2013 more than 100 bilateral agreements have been signed which contributed greatly to an impressive increase in the bilateral trade between the two countries,[23] to the increase of the direct foreign investments of Greek and Turkish Companies in Turkey and Greece respectively,[24] to the increase of tourist activities between the citizens of both countries,[25] to the improvement of the railroads and sea lines that connect both countries,[26] to the increase of the cultural and scientific co-operation between the people of both countries,[27] to the signing of a series of Confidence Building Measures (CBM),[28] to the joint ventures for the construction of Natural Gas Pipeline that is going to connect Turkey with Greece and Greece with Italy[29] and to the Establishment of the Council of Strategic Co-Operation where the Prime Ministers of both countries meet annually.

## Greek Turkish Rapprochement: An Evaluation

Bearing all that in mind the Greek-Turkish rapprochement process initiated in 1999 can be characterized as the most successful bilateral endeavor since the 1950s given that similar attempts since then did not deliver any lasting results. First and foremost the current rapprochement has eased tensions between the two countries and this is reflected not only in the absence of any Greek-Turkish crisis but also in the new political discourse on both sides of the Aegean.

22 See Dimitris Droutsas and Panagiotis Tsakonas, "Turkey's "Road Map" to European Union: Implications for Greek-Turkish Relations and the Cyprus Issue", *Hellenic Studies*, Vol.9, No.1, 2001, p.71-100.

23 Panagiotis Liargovas, "The Economic Imperative: Prospects for Trade Integration and Business Co-Operation", Mustafa Aydin and Kostas Ifantis (eds.), *Turkish Greek Relations: The Security Dilemma in the Aegean*, London, Routledge, 2004, p.145-162.

24 Constantine Papadopoulos, *Greek–Turkish Economic Co-Operation: Guarantee of Détente or Hostage to Politics?* Occasional Paper No.8/08, South East European Studies at Oxford, March, 2008.

25 See the website of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gr/el-GR/Policy/Geographic+Regions/South-Eastern+Europe/Turkey/Approach/Bilateral+financial-commercial+relations (Accessed on 28 December 2011).

26 Ali Osman Egilmez, "Developing Business Ties", *The Bridge*, No.7, 2007.

27 George Koukoudakis, *Secuirty Communities in the Post–Bipolar Era: The Transformation of European Experience in Greek–Turkish Relations*, (in Greek), Papazisis, Athens, 2011.

28 Ziya Onis and Suhnaz Yilmaz, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: Rhetoric or Reality?", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.123, No.1, 2008, p.123-149.

29 See Kostas Ifantis and Thedoros Tsakiris, "Secure Gas Supplies Will Empower Balkan Integration", available on line http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/secure-gas-supplies-will-empower-balkan-integration, 2010, (Accessed on 6 February 2013).

This peaceful and friendly climate has enabled both countries to concentrate on their internal political priorities. Since 2002, under successive Justice and Development Party (AKP) governments, Turkey has managed to recover from a severe economic crisis and also to experience an unprecedented economic boom that is not only reflected in the per capita income but in the fact that has been ranked among the G-20.[30] Also Ankara was able to adapt successfully EU's legislation, norms rules and requirements and thus to enhanced its European membership prospect given that in 2005 the EU officially initiated accession negotiations with Ankara.[31]

Greece on the other hand, successfully organized the 2004 Olympic Games and was qualified for the European Monetary Union. Furthermore, the fact that almost throughout this process of rapprochement a series of CBM has been agreed between Greece and Turkey indicates at least that none of them is willing to be engaged in an accidental confrontation with devastating consequences. Even today when Greece is going through a severe economic crisis with acute social and political repercussions the stabilized relations with Turkey proved a valuable investment that enabled the government of Athens to curtail drastically its defense budget.[32]

## Energy Cooperation

Furthermore, energy co-operation between Greece and Turkey through the construction of the Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI) pipeline does not only constitute a win-win situation but has increased their importance to the energy security of Europe. Europe today can only cover 50% of its energy needs by internal sources and by 2030 this percentage is expected to decline to 25%.[33] As a consequence, one of the basic principles of the EU's Energy Security Policy is the diversification of supplier countries and energy roots.[34] Undoubtedly, Greek-Turkish energy co-operation contributes significantly to the EU's energy policy. This aspect of Greek-Turkish co-operation will also enhance Turkey's candidacy for EU membership. Turkey in other words can increase tacitly its value for the EU and thus further enhance its EU membership quest.[35]

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30  See Ibrahim Ozturk, "Political Economy of Erdogan's Success Story in Turkey", *Al Jazeera Centre for Studies*, 21 June 2011.

31  George Koukoudakis, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement and Turkey's EU Membership Quest: Turning Rhetoric into Reality", *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, Vol.12. No.2, 2013, p.157-165. See also Meltem M. Bac, "Turkey's Political Reforms and the Impact of the European Union", *South European Society and Politics*, Vol.10, No.1, 2005, p.17-31.

32  Koukoudakis, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement".

33  See Bahgat Gawdat, "Europe's Energy Security: Challenges and Opportunities", *International Affairs*, Vol.82, No.5, 2006, p.963-964; Jerzy Buzek, "European Solidarity: Energy and Security. A Vision for a Common Future", Arvanitopoulos and Botsiou, *Democracy Yearbook 2010*, p.5-18.

34  See European Commission, *Green Paper, Towards a European Strategy for the Security of Energy Supply*, 2001, available at, http://europa.eu.int/comm/energy_transport/en/lpl_en.html (Accessed on 15 March 2013).

35  Koukoudakis, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement", p.159.

> Generally speaking, cooperation in this important field suggest a readiness by the two governments to pursue, or at least accept, the development of overlapping interests with whatever constraints on their freedom of action this may entail, in exchange for a greater degree of joint, in the event energy security *vis–a vis* the rest of the world and a more important joint role in European energy geopolitics.[36]

Furthermore, in 2008 the electricity grids of both countries were linked as a result of a memorandum of understanding that was signed in 2002 between DEH, Greece's Public Power Corporation, and TEIA, Turkish Transmission System Operator.

## Bilateral Economic Relations

At the same time due to the favorable political conditions that have been created and the domestic support that the policy of rapprochement met in both sides of the Aegean, Greek-Turkish economic relations expanded widely and in an unprecedented scale. There was a tremendous increase in the volume of bilateral trade from the very beginning. Cumulative trade transactions between Greece and Turkey was 200 million dollars just before the Helsinki European Summit and in 2003 reached 1.3 billion dollars achieving 600% increase.[37] The increasing tendency on Greek-Turkish bilateral trade was maintained almost throughout the 2000s. "The trade volume increased 312% over the period 2000-2008. While the Greek exports to Turkey increased from 266.2 million dollars in 2001 to 1.15 billion dollars in 2008, Turkish exports to Greece expanded from 590.3 million dollars to 2.42 billion dollars during the same period."[38] In 2010, cumulative trade transactions between Greece and Turkey reached the volume of the five billion dollars and in 2012 further increased to 6.5 billion dollars.[39]This increase formulated also a positive background for the creation of favorable conditions for Foreign Direct Investments (FDI). As Mustafa Kutlay points out "increase in trade created functional spillover effects and paved the way to the development in foreign direct investment."[40] In particular, according to the Undersecretariat of the Turkish Treasury, the number of Greek companies established in Turkey drastically increased from 76 in 2003 to 346 in 2008 making Greece in that way to be ranked as the third biggest source of FDI in Turkey, whereas there were not many Turkish companies that have invested in Greece.[41] In 2013 Greek FDI in Turkey amount to 6.6 billion dollars.[42]

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36  Papadopoulos, "Greek-Turkish Economic Cooperation".

37  See Greek-Turkish News Website, httpp://www.grtnews.com/tr/publish/articles139.shtml (Accessed on 20 March 2012). See also Liargovas, "The Economic Imperative", p.148-149.

38  Mustafa Kutlay, "A Political Economy Approach to the Expansion of Turkish-Greek Relations: Interdependence or Not?", *Perceptions*, Spring-Summer 2009, p.99.

39  Statement of the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayip Erdogan during the Press Conference with its Greek Counterpart Antonios Samaras on 03/03/2013 www.kathimerini.gr (Accessed on 8 June 2013).

40  Kutlay, "A Political Economy Approach", p.102.

41  Ibid, p.105.

42  Statement of the Prime Minister of Turkey Regep Tayip Erdogan.

The importance of FDI for the Greek-Turkish rapprochement process is two-fold. Firstly, bilateral investments indicate not only the existence of mutual trust but "the willingness of the investors to share the destiny of the country in question."[43] This implies that during the 2000s mainly Greek businessman and the Greek state, as was the state with the investment of the National Bank of Greece, demonstrated their trust not only in the political future of Turkey but also in the future of Greek-Turkish relations. The second important element of increased FDI between the two countries is that it creates interdependence of interests and involves non-state actors in the foreign policy decision making process, which can be expected to lower the risk of a possible deterioration of bilateral relations.[44] This implies that interdependence theory may also be relevant in explaining Greek-Turkish relations over the last 13 years.[45] Even less optimist approaches for Greek-Turkish rapprochement have recognized the importance and the positive contribution of economic cooperation between them. Constantine Papadopoulos for instance admits that:

> The stronger economic relations between Turkey and Greece are likely to have positive effect on bilateral relations. In so far as economic exchanges continue to flourish, they may well create the conditions for a greater multiplicity of opinions-born primarily of the new communities of common interests that will emerge- and hence a greater resistance to any comprehensive deterioration of relations. By themselves, however, they will not dislodge conventional politics from its pivotal role as the ultimate determinant of the quality and future of the relationship.[46]

## "Turco-Greek Tourism"

At the same time intercultural dialogue and exchanges through touristic, educational and cultural activities have also increased between the two societies. In terms of bilateral tourism, a large increase took place in the number of Greeks visiting Turkey but also in the number of Turks visiting Greece. The number of Greeks visiting Turkey in 1999 was 146.000 and in 2012 rose to 669.823. On the other hand the number of Turks visiting Greece has rose from 114.453 in 2001 to 466.166 in 2012.[47] In total more than one million people from Greece and Turkey visited both countries in 2012. This achievement has been mentioned by the Prime Minister of Turkey in the Press Conference with his Greek Counterpart on March 2013. Tourism in other words can provide both countries with a

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43 Paul Krugman and Maurice Obstfeld, *International Economics: Theory and Policy*, 7th Edition, New York, Pearson Addison, Wesley, 2006, p.609-614, quoted in Kutlay, "A Political Economy Approach", p.102.

44 Koukoudakis, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement", p.160.

45 See Bruce Russet, "A neo-Kantian Perspective: Democracy, Interdependence and International Organizations in Building Security Communities", Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, (eds.), *Security Communities*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

46 Papadopoulos, "Greek-Turkish Economic Cooperation".

47 Statistics for the year 2012 are drawn from kathimerini.gr http://www.grtrnews.com (Accessed on 24 January 2013) and for the previous years from Kutlay, "A Political Economy Approach", p.107.

win-win situation and contribute to the building of trust between their people. Furthermore, due to the geographic proximity of Greece and Turkey joint tourist ventures can contribute to their economic development. As Mustafa Kutlay points out:

> Tourism is another important indicator that shows the level of integration among the countries due to two reasons. First of all, it directly shows the level of intercultural dialogue and societal level of interaction. It also transforms the relationship from merely a rationalist understanding of economics to the personal and emotional understandings of interpersonal communication. Secondly, it sometimes plays a crucial role in the development of national economies, given that the geographical conditions are favorable.[48]

Simultaneously, it worth to be mentioned that both parts, fully aware of the especially sensitive to political instability and interstate tensions tourist market, agreed in 2001 on Summer moratorium on military exercises. This was actually the first sight of a "small spill-over" from "low" to "high" politics issue which at the same time demonstrated their interconnection but also some positive aspects of interdependent relations.

## The Role of Civil Society

In the 14 years of the current Greek-Turkish Rapprochement, numerous civil society initiatives and NGO activities took place that brought the people of both countries closer to each other. Actually this effort for the creation of a "second-track" diplomacy was always apparent but the securitization of the bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey did not allow it to find its way. It was after the Imia/Kardak crisis that NGO's aiming to the reconciliation of both countries emerged. The most representative example was the establishment of the Greek-Turkish Forum.[49] The process of societal rapprochement particularly intensified when two earthquakes struck both Turkey and Greece in 1999. The provision of immediate help by both countries to each other brought their societies closer and exploded myths alleging eternal Greek – Turkish enmity and the burden of history.[50] Friendship groups and other multiple contact routs 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.[51] At the same time the Turkish serials that have been played on Greek TV over the last years have received top ratings. Greek serials have also been played by Turkish TV channels. As a result, they have also been conducive in breaking down the prejudices and misperceptions that characterized Greek-Turkish public opinion.

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48  Kutlay, "A Political Economy Approach", p.106.
49  See Soli Ozel, "Rapprochement on Non-Governmental Level: The Story of the Greek-Turkish Forum", Aydin and Ifantis, *Turkish-Greek Relations*, p.269-290.
50  Theodore Couloumbis and Thanos Veremis, *Greece and the Balkans: A Critical Review*, Royal United Services Institute, London, 1999, p.152.
51  See Lindsay, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement".

In addition co-operation increased between local governments, NGO's, universities and various other research institutions, think tanks and prestigious individuals from both countries.[52] At the same time, as a result of the severe economic crisis in Greece, there is a growing number of highly skilled and educated Greek professionals employed in Turkey. The two cases in point are Greek academics in Turkish universities and Greek pilots recruited by the Turkish Airlines. It seems that Greeks top the list of non-Turkish pilots hired by Turkish Airlines.

The role of mass media in all of these cases as for the whole process was very significant. In other words:

> Mass media affect the way that we participate in the political sphere, through becoming an important source of our knowledge. With a capacity to reach large and influential segments of a given population in the shortest possible time, and provide factual information, analysis and opinion, mass media helps shape popular perceptions of the nature of a society. Their role is critical especially in the process by which people develop a view of the world.[53]

The fruits of these Civil Society interactions and exchanges were also demonstrated in opinion polls that have been announced in both countries over that period. According to an opinion poll, in 2001 29% of Turkish public opinion was considering Greece as the main enemy of Turkey,[54] in 2004 that percentage declined to 16. 9%.[55] At the same time Turkish public opinion ranked Greece in the fourth place among 12 states on which Turkey can count for help in case of a physical disaster.[56] In Greece on the other hand, in 2000 72.3% of Greek public opinion considered Turkey as the main enemy of Greece by 2002 this percentage had declined to 64.1%.[57] Despite the fact that there is no updated data to demonstrate that there is a consistently declining pattern on the mutual sense of hostility in two countries, this particular data indicates that when there is political will on an intergovernmental level for rapprochement and a conducive role of mass media, the public in both countries sooner or later will follow.

All in all, the win-win situation that the process of Greek-Turkish rapprochement developed was noticeable from its early stages. Ismail Cem, the foreign minister of Turkey and one of the basic architects of the whole process was quite clear regarding this early positive evaluation:

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52  See Koukoudakis, "The Role of Citizens".

53  Nikos Panagiotou, *The Role of the Greek Press in Greek–Turkish Rapprochement: The Coverage of the "Annan Plan" for the Settlement of the Cyprus Conflict*, European Studies Centre, University of Oxford,  Ramses Working Paper 6/06, September 2006.

54  This opinion poll was published in the Turkish Newspaper *Radikal* on 10 April 2001.

55  International Strategic Research Organization, *Foreign Policy Perception*, October 2004.

56  Ibid.

57  Theocharis Papadopoulos and Defne Paker, "Civil Society and Conflict Resolution: The Case of Greece and Turkey," Paper Pesented at the Conference "Learning Conflict Resolution and Producing Peace", Co-organized by the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy and the Istanbul Policy Center, Athens, 18-20 February 2005, quoted in Koukoudakis, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement".

> The gain is mutual: Tensions are dropping; there is a growing atmosphere of trust; Turkish and Greek Civil Society organizations of all kinds meeting almost every other day; nine agreements which already provide substantial results; co-operation within the EU; coordination in the Balkans; joint economic ventures already on track; official visits by the Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers, the first of their kind since 20 and 30 years respectively; Turkish and Greek flags waved together in concert halls and stadiums in both countries. If someone had described this picture some eight months ago, we would all have agreed that he was daydreaming.[58]

## The Disentanglement of Greek-Turkish Relations from the Cyprus Issue?

For many years the Cypriot Problem has been a negative variable in Greek-Turkish relations.[59] This was due to the fact that its resolution was set as a basic precondition for the normalization of relations between Athens and Ankara. Events and developments, however, since the referendum of April 24th for the ratification of the UN plan for the re-unification of the island point to a different conclusion. Despite the Greek-Cypriot rejection of the proposed plan and its acceptance by the Turkish-Cypriots the eventual accession of the Republic of Cyprus in the EU did not harm Greek-Turkish relations and especially the rapprochement process. To the opinion of this article this is due to several reasons. First of all, the Republic of Cyprus, thanks to its membership in the EU is able to conduct a more independent foreign policy compare to that of the past. It will not be dependent anymore on the support of Greece for the achievement of its foreign policy goals and mainly the resolution of its political problem. Secondly, its EU membership has strengthened its external deterrence effect and therefore it will be able to form strategic alliances and co-operations like this one with Israel over energy.[60] As a result, Greece will not have any more to spend diplomatic capital for the resolution of the Cyprus problem at least to the extend it used in the past and thus will be more able to concentrate on its bilateral relations with Turkey. This, however, does not imply that Greece has lost interest over the Cyprus issue. On the contrary, Athens now feels confident that the Republic of Cyprus can manage its issue own its own without inter-ferences. In other words, at present the 1957 dogma of Constantine Karamanlis "Nicosia Decides and Athens Supports" seems more suitable to describe the situation. This attitude may also be reflective of the political realization that Athens cannot anymore impose a solution on the Greek-Cypriots as a result of the greater autonomy enjoyed

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58  Ismail Cem, Interview given to Micahel Howard and Published by "Odyssey," Athens, March-April, 2000, Excepts.

59  For the Cyprus Problem and its implications for Greek-Turkish relations, see Harry Anastasiou, *The Broken Olive Branch: Nationalism versus Europeanization*, Syracuse University Press, 2008; and Robert McDonald, "Greek-Turkish Relations and the Cyprus Conflict", Dimitris Keridis and Dimitrios Triantaphyllou (eds.), *Greek–Turkish Relations in the Era of Globalization*, Brassey's, USA, 2001, p.116-150.

60  See Andreas Theophanous, *The Cyprus Question and the EU: The Challenge and the Promise*, Intercollege Press, 2004.

by the foreign policy of the internationally recognized government of the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey on the other hand seems to have accepted the "Europeanization" of the Cyprus issue and as a result it did not materialize its threats to annex the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus or to withdraw its own candidacy if the Greek-Cypriot administration was accepted as a full member before Cyprus problem was solved.[61] Turkish political elites in other words have come to realize the great diplomatic and political cost of the Cyprus issue not only for Ankara's European quest but for its international relations in the wider area.

It is within this context that we can understand why Greek-Turkish rapprochement process did not end after the Greek-Cypriot rejection of the Annan plan. On the contrary since then, as the above sections demonstrated co-operation between Greece and Turkey has been intensified at all levels.

## The Role of the EU towards Greek-Turkish Rapprochement

The role of the EU in all the rapprochement developments in Greek-Turkish relations since 1999 has been of paramount importance. Turkish longstanding goal and aspiration to join the EU has acquired a concrete form and in some respects a concrete timetable. As a result, both countries tacitly Europeanized their relations. As was mentioned above, Greece realized that its role as a veto or as a veto threatening member state for Turkish entrance in the EU did not suit to the new regional and international reality and more particular to the role it aspired to play in its near abroad. Turkey on the other hand, could fulfill, at least since then, one of its longstanding foreign policy goal, EU membership. At the same time, the European prospect for Turkey was facilitating the implementation of drastic structural and democratic reforms in its internal. In other words, the European prospect for Turkey provided its relations with Greece with a common ground.[62] As Prime Minister Erdogan has noted: "If Turco-Greek rapprochement is possible today, it is because we have a common ground through which mutual perceptions are formed most accurately. That common ground is the EU."[63]

It is very true that the EU has been, at least at the beginning a great promoter of Greek-Turkish rapprochement.[64] It has promoted and funded many civil society initiatives. The Civil Society Development Program, for example, was launched in 2002 and spent eight millions euros in a two years period in order to promote Greek-Turkish Civic

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61  Tsakonas, "How the European Union Transform the Greek-Turkish Conflict?", p.116.

62  Koukoudakis, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement", p.163.

63  Tayyip Erdogan, "Why the EU Needs Turkey", *Keynote Lecture at the South East European Studies Program of St. Antony's College, Oxford University*, delivered on 28 May 2004.

64  See Grigoria Kalyvioti et.al., "The EU Role in the Greek-Turkish Rivalry and Co-operation," Paper Presented at the Seminar: "Learning Conflict Resolution and Producing Peace," Co-organized by the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy and the Istanbul Policy Center, Athens, 18-20 February 2005.

Dialogue and to strengthen NGO's in Turkey.[65] It worth noting the results of a 2005 opinion poll in Greece, which revealed that 55 percent of Greeks believe that Turkey would be less likely to constitute a threat for Greece as an EU member.[66]

All in all, as Harry Tzimitras notes:

> The European Union, as rewards and sanctions mechanism, has played a more tangible role in the improvement of Turkish-Greek relations in many ways. Apart from the very direct effect of being a security community and welfare provider, the EU has promoted civil society and NGO initiatives in both countries; has facilitated the promotion of conflict reduction and resolution; has contributed to the changing of the existing construction of identities at the societal level; has provided a new normative leverage; and has served as a framework for the legitimization of new policies.[67]

## The Autonomy of Greek-Turkish Rapprochement?

Over the last years however, the EU is going through a severe economic crisis which in combination with its enlargement fatigue and the weakening of its absorption capacity[68] have prevented it from demonstrating the same enthusiasm and support for Greek-Turkish rapprochement as it did during its initial stages. In other words, the EU is unable to provide an immediate prospect for Turkey's accession. Furthermore, the EU does not seem willing anymore to fund any joint Greek-Turkish projects as Greek-Turkish relations is no longer its priority. On the other hand, European public opinion is not supportive of Turkish EU membership[69] and euro-skepticism since 2006, is constantly increasing in Turkey too.[70] This development combined with the new priorities of the Turkish Foreign Policy are considered to be some of the most serious causes of EU's waning interest in Turkey's membership.[71] The question therefore that has to be answered is whether Greek-Turkish reconciliation can move forward without the EU's conducive role.

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65  For more information see http://www.stgp.org/greek/docs, (Accessed on 5 August 2005). The author of this paper participated in such an activity in 2003. See also Bahar Rumelili, "Civil Society and the Europeanization of Greek-Turkish Cooperation", *South European Society and Politics*, Vol.10, No.1, 2005, p.45-56.

66  The research was conducted by the Greek polling company VPRC and its results were published on 22 October in the Greek Newspaper "*Kathimerini*."

67  Harris Tzimitras, "Europeanization and Nationalism in the Turkish-Greek Rapprochement", *Insight Turkey*, Vol.10, No.1, 2008, p.114.

68  Constantine Arvantipoulos and Nikolaos Tzifakis, "Enlargement Governance and the Union's Integration Capacity", Constantine Arvanitopoulos, *Turkey's Accession to the European Union: An Unusual Candidacy*, Springer, Berlin, 2009, p.12.

69  European Commission, *Eurobarometer-Public Opinion in the European Union*, http://europa. eu.int/comm/public opinion, 2005, 2006 (Accessed on 20 November 2010).

70  See Thomas Silberhorn, "Tertium Datur: Turkey's Application for EU Membership," Constantine Arvanitopoulos (ed.), *Turkey's Accession to the European Union: An Unusual Candidacy*, Springer, Berlin, 2009, p.45-52.

71  See Ahmet Davutoglu, *Principles of Turkish Foreign Policy*, SETA Foundation, Washington D.C., 8 December 2009.

Events and developments in Greek-Turkish relations over the last decade point to the conclusion that both states have come to realize common concerns and common interests over a wide range of "low politics" issues. It worth to mention moreover that Turkish foreign policy since 2010 has given priority to the Syrian crisis in particular and on the Arab Spring in general and as a result keeping the rapprochement with Greece alive also served its priorities. Greece on the other hand in order to recover from the severe economic crisis that is going through since 2009 was also provided with additional incentive to continue the rapprochement process with Turkey. This realization also explains the enduring nature of their rapprochement. Furthermore societal interchange that this cooperation implies, as was mentioned above, has contributed to the building of trust among the people of both states. As a result, it can be argued that Greek-Turkish rapprochement process has created its own "*aquis*" that enables it to be more autonomous. This also implies that: "while the EU may help to start a process of peace building, it might not always be required to keep it going."[72] This also points out a great qualitative difference between the present Greek-Turkish rapprochement and the previous one. In a way the "*aquis*" that has been created over the last Greek-Turkish reconciliation process has enabled its autonomy from the EU factor. "The previous Greek-Turkish rapprochement (1988) started some months after the first Turkish application for EC membership. Its collapse was closely linked with the EU decision to postpone this candidacy."[73]

## Answering to Criticisms

Greek-Turkish rapprochement process however, despite its important achievements in "low politics" has raised a fair amount of criticism. The fact for example that "high politics" issues remain unresolved and can trigger problems in the future is considered as an indicative factor of the serious limitations of the whole process. The stable Greek-Turkish relations however since 1999 indicate that the rapprochement process between them has demonstrated an admirable endurance. In a way this process has taught both states how to live with their differences on "high politics" issues not only absent from conflict but even more importantly in a cooperative and mutually beneficial manner.[74]

Also the rejection by the Greek-Cypriot community of the UN unification plan is also considered a set-back development. As the above analysis however indicated since 2004 the rapprochement process continues and is further deepening, pointing in that way to the disentanglement of the Cyprus issue from Greek-Turkish relations. Even negative developments like the last year confessions of the former Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz about Turkish agents being behind forest fires in Greek islands in the 1990s and the

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72  James Ker-Lindsay, "Greece and Turkey do not need the EU to Improve their Relations," http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europblog/2012/09/18/greece-turkey-relations/ (Accessed on 28 December 2012).

73  Gilles Bertrand, "Greek-Turkish Relations: From Cold War to Rapprochement, Observatory of European Foreign Policy", EUTR 5/2003, *EU-Turkish Relations Dossier*, http://www.iuee.eu/pdf-dossier/12/iPFzMjayLiR2fMmgJ0QG.PDF, (Accessed on 10 October 2013).

74  Koukoudakis, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement", p.163.

revelation in 2010 of operations "sledgehammer" in which the Turkish armed forces were believed to have been preparing a coup in 2003 against the elected AKP government and were working on a scenario of the invasion of the Greek island of Kastelorizo, despite their strong negative psychological effect, did not slow down the process. Only last March (2013) 25 bilateral agreements were signed between Greece and Turkey during a visit of the Greek Prime Minister in Turkey. The argument moreover that the enlargement of the EU in any direction is not anymore a top priority in its agenda should be considered as another setback factor, could have been of high validity at the beginning of the process. Nobody however can deny the extremely positive role of the EU towards this reconciliation. Similarly, nobody can deny the contribution that a new involvement of the EU can have to the further enhancement of the process and the eventual resolution of the "high politics" issues between Greece and Turkey. It is important, however, to be underlined that Greek-Turkish rapprochement continued over the last years during which Euro-Turkish relations was frozen. This implies that Greek-Turkish rapprochement has acquired its own autonomy.


## Concluding Remarks

From the above it can be argued that the Greek-Turkish Rapprochement process to date has made a remarkable achievement which in many respects constitutes its "*aquis*". The two countries are better off today in terms of bilateral relations than they were in 1996. The progress made in "low politics" areas is indeed remarkable and both states have benefited from it. Furthermore, the involvement of civil society probably constitutes the most promising aspect of this process given that people on their own are able to shape a common future. All in all, the rapprochement effort between the two states has created its own political and socio-economic capital and has thus acquired a noticeable endurance.

The rapprochement process may have not achieved to solve "high politics" issues between the two countries but has contributed significantly to the maintenance of peace and stability. In a way has taught both parts how to live with their bilateral problems not only absent from conflict but in a co-operative and mutually beneficial manner. To the opinion of this paper, this is the greatest achievement of the rapprochement procedure between Greece and Turkey. As a result concrete efforts should be made by both countries for this procedure to be continued. What is needed first of all is strong political will and committed political leadership in both shores of the Aegean.

Greece, for example should try to refresh the EU membership interest both for Turkey and the Union. The EU should also continue to provide funding for the Greek-Turkish Civil dialogue. It is very important for the rapprochement effort to continue the involvement of civil societies in both countries. Regardless of this and the eventual form that Turkey's membership will acquire, whether this is a full membership or a special relationship or whether is no membership at all, it is the contention of this article that both states have come to realize the win-win situation of this process and as a result both of them have to demonstrate political will for its continuation at all levels.

Turkey on the other hand should send signals of sympathy and goodwill to the Greek people who are going through a devastating for their living standards financial crisis. An action of goodwill towards Greece and Christian Europe in general would be the reopening of the Greek Orthodox Halki Seminary which has been closed since 1971.[75] This gesture will probably lead to the reduction of Euro-skepticism in Turkey and the preservations of the European publics as far as Turkish European prospect is concerned. Within this context, both Greece and Turkey should demonstrate a sincere willingness of understanding and mutual respect this will probably pave the way for the resolution of high politics issues. "Stable relations do not mean abandoning or compromising national interests. The process has been rather cost-free so far, but in a well-planned and sincere strategic interaction, real progress could be forthcoming."[76]

At the same time is common knowledge both to Greece and Turkey that the general political turmoil and instability caused in the wider Middle East by the "Arab Spring" will force them to intensify further their co-operation in soft security issues (illegal international migration, international terrorism, international organized crime etc.). All in all, Greek-Turkish rapprochement has been beneficial for both neighbors in the Aegean and its achievements make it more enduring against time and against pending "high politics" issues. As a result, is common logic that requires its preservation and continuation not only for the benefit of both countries but for the wider region as a whole.

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75  Ibid, p. 147.
76  Kostas Ifantis, "Whither Turkey? Greece's Aegean Options," Constantine Arvanitopoulos, Turkey's Accession to the European Union: An Unusual Candidacy, Springer, Berlin, 2009, p.131.

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