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Greek–Turkish Relations and the Kantian Democratic Peace Theory

Theodore A. Couloumbis and Alexander E. Kentikelenis

Since the late 1990s, Greek–Turkish relations have undergone significant transformation. Both countries have reengineered their relations towards one another, and Turkey’s candidature for EU membership has been an important factor in this transformation. The aim of this article is to examine the shift that has taken place in Greek–Turkish relations through the prism of the Kantian democratic peace theory. A conceptual discussion of the democratic peace theory is followed by a comparative analysis of the political, economic and institutional variables in the case of Greece and Turkey, and a presentation of the progress that has been achieved in many aspects of the bilateral relationship. Given the nature of the unresolved issues that continue to render Greek–Turkish relations vulnerable, the authors conclude that ‘issue management’ will most likely characterize bilateral relations in the short to medium term, hoping that the trends of economic and social exchange, cooperation and interdependence will continue on their current upward path.

Introduction

For long, the Greek–Turkish space had been characterized as a volcanic zone that was expected to erupt into generalized warfare at any time, anywhere between the Aegean and Cyprus. Greeks and Turks, despite their joint membership in NATO since 1952, were described as politically incompatible and trapped by history (centuries of Ottoman occupation, Greek national revolution, and irredentist wars throughout the 19th century and the first two and a half decades of the 20th). Greeks and Turks were expected invariably to repeat their conflict-prone behaviour of the past well into the future.

Following the escalation of the Cyprus dispute in the mid-1950s, Greek and Turkish politicians, journalists and scholars would find themselves in international settings, before third-party audiences, to plead their cases and mobilize external support. What

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normally emerged had all the contours of a zero-sum game. Third-party audiences, in a mixture of amusement and boredom, would be exposed again and again to comparative culpability exercises and strategic beauty contests. The Greeks would focus on the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 and on Turkish revisionist claims in over half of the Aegean archipelago. The Turks would respond with complaints about Greek Cypriot abuses of Turkish Cypriots (in the early 1960s) and about Athens' attempts to turn the Aegean into a Greek lake. Both Turks and Greeks would then try to point up the 'unique' strategic importance of their respective real-estate during and after the period of the Cold War. The net result was the perpetuation of perceptions of a protracted and incurable conflict and the continuation of a cold war relationship between two important members of NATO. Tensions would periodically reach explosive limits, with the two countries coming close to an all-out war in 1974, 1976, 1983, 1987, 1996, 1998, and 1999.

Early in 1999, relations between the two countries reached an all-time low following the capture of Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), which had been labelled a terrorist organization by most Western governments and by the European Union. Significantly, Öcalan was delivered to Turkish authorities by Western intelligence services following a few days of hiding at the Greek Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. The situation thankfully did not degenerate into a hot war between Greece and Turkey. Instead, through self-restraint and prudent leadership, a new period of détente and step-by-step reconciliation was ushered in. The foreign ministers at that time, George Papandreou and Ismail Çem, began a serious diplomatic exchange of correspondence in the spring of 1999. The whole idea, which both of them apparently shared, was to abandon the zero-sum relationship of the past and to begin a search for common interests that could eventually (gradually and carefully) lead to a 'win-win' situation.

Two destructive earthquakes (Istanbul in August of 1999, Athens in September of the same year) contributed to the political climate of thaw and reconciliation, as rescue crews from both sides of the Aegean rushed to aid the stricken, and the media in both Greece and Turkey projected a mood of empathy and compassion in the face of mutual disaster. By December of 1999 (at the Helsinki EU summit meeting) a new era in Greek–Turkish relations was apparently beginning. Underpinning the Papandreou–Çem (Simitis–Ecevit) convergence strategy was the search for agreements and arrangements of mutual benefit, without winners and losers, as had often been the case in the past. In Helsinki, at the summit of December, 1999 everyone got a share of the pie.

Turkey gained because it secured EU candidacy status (given the lifting of Greek objections in the EU). Turkey also gained because it gave a positive response to its existential East–West dilemma: 'We belong to Europe'. Other definite gains for Turkey included the following:

- The road map to EU accession would pass through the building of a stable and advanced economy and a consolidated democracy, the latter presupposing civilian control of the military, pluralism and religious/minority freedoms;

- The path to EU accession, and beyond, entailed increasing packages of EU cohesion funds and related programmatic benefits;
- Commitment to a philosophy of peaceful settlement of disputes with its immediate Western neighbor would permit the Turkish government to gradually reduce its high military expenditures for the benefit of social and economic opportunity costs.

In its turn, Greece gained primarily because it escaped the thankless syndrome of '1 versus 14' among the EU's (then) 15-member family, where some of the other 14 were conveniently hiding their Turkish scepticism behind Greek vetoes. An equally significant Greek gain was the decoupling of Cyprus's road to EU accession from the prerequisite of a settlement with the Turkish Cypriots, who for years had been under the leadership of Rauf Dektash (a man notorious for his maximalist negotiating style). Greece also gained, because it began a process of engaging its eastern neighbor into a path of 'Europeanization' that could result in a drastic improvement of neighbourly relations. It also benefited by getting its EU partners to agree that the Aegean dispute should be settled peacefully through negotiations and, if necessary, through resort to the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

The EU gained by removing (or at least beginning to remove) from its agenda a serious dispute between a member and an applicant state. It also gained by extending free trade and investment activity into a lucrative market of close to 70 million people and, especially, by adding the valuable Turkish strategic and economic space to the European security and cooperation architecture.

Finally, NATO and the United States benefited from the Helsinki Summit agreement for similar to the above reasons and, also, for distancing the contingency of a catastrophic war between two strategically important American and NATO allies. Additionally, the prospect of a cooperative Greek–Turkish duet would be expected to serve decisively in efforts to establish and consolidate a stable regional system in the Balkans, the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. Needless to say, the process of Greek–Turkish détente was considerably facilitated by the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the rise of Russia (as its successor state) whose first priorities were transition to a market economy and stabilization of untested democratic structures that required an abandonment of an activist and competitive, vis-à-vis the United States, strategic presence in the Mediterranean region.

Hypothesis and Propositions

In a paper by Couloumbis and Ramaj (2007), one of the authors of the present article presented the views of the so-called 'recidivist' and 'transitionist' schools of thought. The proposition of the former group of analysts was that conflict was a constant condition in the Balkans (including Greece and Turkey) and that countries and governments of the region had a high probability of being repeat offenders (Kaplan 1993; Kennan 1993; Huntington 1998). The latter school (the transitionists) questioned the recidivists' assumptions and posited that war is not unique to the Balkans

but rather a product of economic, political and social underdevelopment (Todorova 1997; Veremis and Kofos 1998; Holbrooke 1999; Veremis 2007). In short, they argued that armed conflicts in the second half of the 20th century, even when these involved advanced democracies of Europe and the United States, had taken place in zones of poverty and backwardness, condemned to be governed by populist and irresponsible politicians.

Siding with the cautiously optimistic approach of the transitionists, Couloumbis and Ramaj (2007) had opted to employ a variation of Bruce Russett's Kantian peace theory and apply it to the countries of the post-communist Balkans. The findings provided ample evidence of convergence (in the economic, political and social sectors) between countries of the post-communist Balkans and the rest of the Euro-Atlantic region, after the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the end of the Cold War. In short, the cautiously optimistic projection was that a period of growth, cooperation and peace would follow the end of the wars of Yugoslav succession (1991–1999).

In this article, we focus on the future of Greek–Turkish relations by employing some of the central axioms of the democratic peace theory (Russett 1994). In various books and articles, Russett and his associates—using a solid statistical methodology—have proposed that democratic countries have a much lower probability of going to war with each other than do dyads pitting authoritarian countries against democratic ones or dyads involving inter-authoritarian conflagrations. Russett and Oneal (2001) have advanced a Kantian peace proposition along the following lines: Countries that fulfil successfully and durably three interrelated criteria, namely consolidated democracy, advanced/liberal economy with economic interdependence, and joint membership in regional organizations (for our purposes the EU and NATO), simply do not fight wars with each other. Following on their steps, we examine the record of Greco-Turkish relations since the late part of 1999 in order to assess progress in meeting criteria (necessary and sufficient) for the projection of a long period of sustained peace in the region.



Figure 1 Russett and Oneal's Kantian Triangle of Peace

Source: Figure 1 is a somewhat revised version of the 'triangle' found in Russett and Oneal (2001: 35)

Starting with the variable of consolidated democracy, and despite the wealth of the relevant literature focusing on transitions/consolidations of democracy in post-authoritarian polities, we should realize that we are dealing with soft and changeable criteria. The predominant criteria for the identification of consolidated democratic polities (Putnam 1993; Ball & Peters 2000; Huntington 1991; Shapiro 2003) include the following prerequisites:

- Two or more political parties;
- Periodic and constitutionally required elections (with a maximum period of five years between elections) respecting the principle of universal suffrage and at least two successful changeovers of power;
- Separation of powers with genuinely independent executive, judiciary and legislative branches of government;
- Free press and freedom of expression;
- Absence of political prisoners;
- A functioning pluralist civil society that is independent from government.

However, for the purposes of this study, and accepting Huntington's rule that 'commitment to democratic values on the part of elites is necessary for democracy to endure' (Huntington 1991, chapter 2), we also look into interventions by extra-parliamentary actors (especially the armed forces) following major political shifts or the changing of parties in power.¹

For the second Kantian variable, liberal/advanced economy and economic interdependence, we employ World Bank data and other credible sources emphasizing key macroeconomic indicators. Based on a study by Przeworski *et al.* (2000), we adopt the proposition that economic development and balanced growth permit the perpetuation of stable democracy. Furthermore, we place special emphasis on bilateral trade between Greece and Turkey, employing data from the last decade with added attention to post-1999 developments. We examine Greek and Turkish trade (imports and exports), as well as reviewing major investments and joint ventures.

Turning to the third variable, joint membership in international organizations, we should note clearly the feedback mechanism interlocking the performance of all three Kantian variables. In the case of Greece and Turkey, the most relevant organizations are the EU and NATO. Both countries—despite their tense and troubled relationship—have been members of NATO since 1952. Greece joined the European Union in 1981 and Turkey is currently in the negotiating phase of its accession path. 'Enlargement', the process of adding new members to the EU, calls for the fulfilment of economic and political criteria fitting Russett's specifications (European Commission, 2006a and 2006b). Needless to say, the satisfaction of this third criterion can best be determined by eventual EU membership for Turkey.

Throughout this study we remain aware of the limitations that accompany statistical research. In short, correlation in the behaviour of variables is not necessarily causation. Given that our dependent variable is the maintenance of peace (the absence of war), the Kantian triangle provides us with our independent variables.

Comparative Performance of Greece and Turkey in Political, Economic and Institutional Variables

The purpose of this section is to evaluate Greece's and Turkey's performance data employing the variables of Russett and Oneal's triangle of peace. Starting with the democracy factor, we can easily defend that Greece is a consolidated democracy. Following the seven-year military dictatorship from 1967 to 1974, the country chose to integrate itself into the European Community. It entered the EC (EU) in 1981, a process that was closely linked with the liberalization of its economy and the consolidation of stable democratic institutions. In sum, Greece satisfies all the criteria contained in Table 1 and there are no visible prospects of destabilization of its democratic institutions. However, the situation is more nuanced when one examines Greece's eastern neighbour.

Turkey is—constitutionally—a democratic state; however, as Stanley Hoffmann notes (2006), 'not everything that looks democratic on paper is democratic in effect'. As we suggest below, although Turkey is taking serious measures to strengthen its democratic structures, it still does not satisfy a number of the criteria for stable democracies as presented in Table 1. Specifically, Turkey ranks poorly in the protection of fundamental human rights, such as freedom of expression and freedom of the press, while cases of imprisonment due to political beliefs are not rare. Addressing the question of freedom of the press, according to data collected by Reporters Without Borders, Turkey ranks in the lower half of the annual 'freedom of press index'.² Although this data shows some improvement compared to previous years, in 2006 Turkey's ranking was still 113th out of 160. Interesting examples of government overreaction, when the media tend to challenge popular notions on sensitive issues, is the 2000 closing of television channel CNN Turk (for one day) after an interviewer wondered whether Abdullah Öcalan could become a future Nelson Mandela and when journalist Birgül Özbaris faced imprisonment in 2005 for her articles discouraging people from military service.

Table 1 Criteria for Consolidated Democracies

Criteria	Greece	Turkey
Two or more political parties	✓	✓
Periodic and constitutionally required elections (with a maximum period of five years between elections), respecting the principle of universal suffrage and at least two successful changeovers of power	✓	✓
Separation of powers with independent executive, judiciary and legislative branches of government	✓	✗
Free press and freedom of expression	✓	✗
Absence of political prisoners	✓	✗
Functioning of a pluralist, and independent from government, civil society	✓	✗
No interventions by extra-parliamentary factors (esp. the armed forces) following elections whose outcome calls for change of party/ies in power	✓	X

✓: satisfied ✗ in process towards satisfaction X: unsatisfied

In the case of Greece, Reporters Without Borders ranks it near the 30th place (on average) for the past six years. Freedom House's *Freedom of the Press 2007* has similar findings with the aforementioned ranking, and classifies Turkey as a country with 'partly free' media. Regarding freedom of expression, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have criticized Turkey for its very strict legal framework, limiting this freedom. According to the latter's 2006 report, 'more than 50 individuals were indicted for statements or speeches that questioned state policy on controversial topics such as religion, ethnicity, and the role of the army. The government is also slow to abolish laws that restrict speech'.³ A striking example of this strict legal framework is Article 301 of the new (2005) Turkish penal code on the denigration of Turkishness.⁴ The most publicized case where this article was enforced involved two Turkish professional associations that sued Nobel Prize-winning novelist Orhan Pamuk for pointing out that over one million Armenians were killed by Turks in 1915 (the charges against Pamuk were finally dropped by the Ministry of Justice). Greece is currently in a much better situation compared to that of Turkey, with the exception of occasional reports regarding the Muslim minority's rights in Greek Thrace.⁵

In its general freedom rankings, Freedom House places Turkey in the 'partly free' category and Greece is classified as 'free'. And, on the 2003 Polity Country Reports,⁶ Turkey ranks steadily since the 1990s among democratic states (although barely making the grade from 2000 onwards), with the main areas for improvement identified as the protection of minority rights and political participation. However, it should be noted that according to the European Commission (2006a: 11), Turkey has indeed made serious efforts (as part of its Europeanization process) to better protect fundamental human rights and to widen civil liberties. The extent to which these reforms can be implemented for the benefit of the entire population (that is, not excluding specific ethnic groupings) remains to be seen. Finally, based on data from both Amnesty International and the US State Department, Turkey is said still to detain a number of political prisoners, many of whom are Kurds.⁷ Greece is not included in the category of keeping individuals in prison for political offences.

As far as courts are concerned, although the Turkish constitution guarantees their independence, there are issues regarding the continuing dependence of the judiciary on the Ministry of Justice, thus making courts susceptible to political intervention. While substantive reforms have been legislated in the last few years, the European Commission notes that the 'implementation of the new legislation by the judiciary presents a mixed picture so far and the independence of the judiciary still needs to be further established' (2006b: 10).

In its latest (2006) progress report on Turkey, the European Union identifies some problems in the functioning of a pluralist civil society, due to legal restrictions. Recently, however, a more flexible legislative framework for NGOs has been adopted. Although this is a positive step towards building a stable democracy, it is perhaps too soon to tell whether these reforms will enable Turkey's civil society to exert influence on sensitive issues (European Commission 2006b: 16).

Last, but certainly not least, is the requirement that Turkey be free from extra-parliamentary intervention in politics. The problem in this case is focused mostly on

civil–military relations, which currently involve the two polar opposites of the Turkish political continuum. On one hand, there is the elected government of the Justice and Development Party (with strong Islamic roots) and on the other, there is the Kemalist/secular army, the judiciary and the bureaucracy in general. Even when the army does not intervene directly, its clout is significant.⁸ In addition, the military's impact has been considerable on other important issues such as Cyprus and the Kurdish question (Halle 1993; European Commission 2006b: 7; Cizre 2007). Furthermore, the Turkish army views itself as the protector of the secular precepts of Kemalism, thus retaining the right to intervene when it considers that secularism is in danger.

In sum, considerable progress has already been made by Turkey and the country is devoting a great effort into liberalizing its system. It should be noted, however, that many of these reforms have been required by the EU within the framework of the accession negotiations, and one should be cautious before presuming that the current pace of reform would continue if the prospect of full membership were to start dimming.

Moving to the second Kantian variable, the existence of a liberal and advanced economy coupled with bilateral economic interdependence, the data here are much more encouraging. As far as economic stability is concerned, Greece has a stable economy and Turkey has been moving towards this for the past few years. However, inflation, poverty and income distribution are problems that need to be addressed in both countries.

The data on the economic interdependence of the two countries, as viewed from the lens of the democratic peace theory, is promising indeed. Turkey is the 7th most important trading partner of Greece, absorbing 4.5% of the latter's total exports, and ranks 15th among countries that export to Greece, with 2.3% of its total imports.⁹ Similarly, Greece ranks 13th among the importers of Turkish products (1.9% share) and 34th based on its exports to Turkey (0.6% share).¹⁰ The rise in bilateral trade, however, has been spectacular: within one decade, the total volume of trade has grown almost six-fold (Figure 2).

Table 2 Comparison of Economic Indicators (€)

<i>Economic Indicators</i> ()	<i>Greece</i>		<i>Turkey</i>	
	2000	2005	2000	2005
GDP per capita (PPS)	14,600	19,600	6,000	6,800
GDP growth (%)	4.5	3.7	7.4	7.4
Inflation rate (consumer prices)	2.9	3.5	53.2	8.1
Imports of goods and services (% of GDP)	35.9	28.0	31.5	34.0
Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	25.0	20.8	24.0	27.4
Foreign direct investment, net inflows (billion)	1,1	0,63	0,98	9,8
Unemployment (%)	11.3	10.0	6.5	10.3
Inequality of income distribution ¹	N/A	6	N/A	9.9

Sources: World Bank, Eurostat, CIA factbook

¹ The number of times the median income of the upper 20% of the population is greater than that of the lower 20%

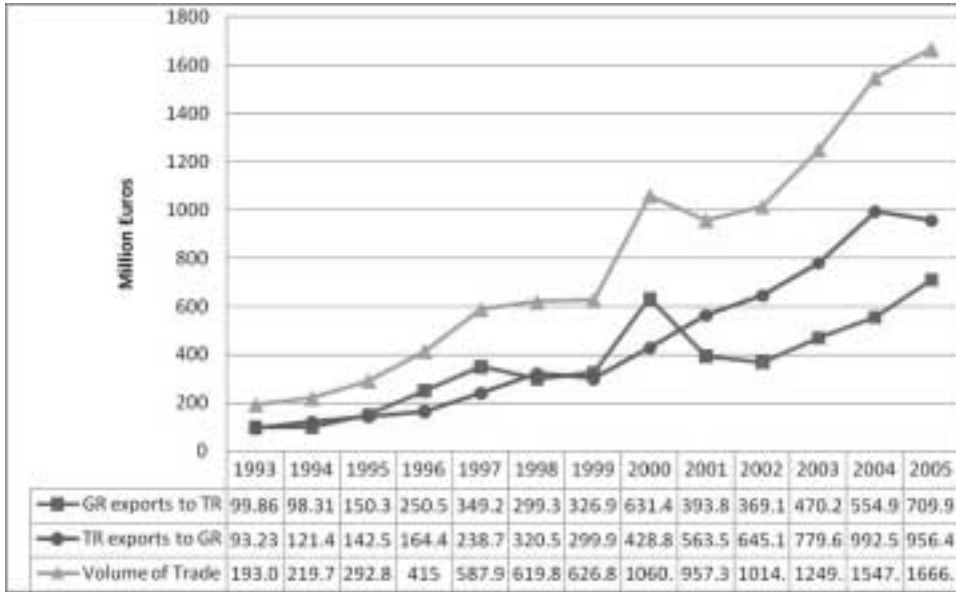


Figure 2 Greek–Turkish Bilateral Trade (€ million)

Source: Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs (www.mfa.gr) and Kotios & Petrakos (2003)

Turning to another important aspect of bilateral economic relations, investments, the data shows that Greece has a much stronger presence in Turkey than Turkey in Greece. In 2006, about 80 Greek firms were doing business in Turkey, with Greek investments climbing to over €3 billion in 2006—as opposed to €400 million in 2005.¹¹

The largest volume of investments has been concentrated in the banking sector, with the most important single transaction being the acquisition of Turkey’s third largest bank, Finansbank, by the National Bank of Greece. This 5 billion investment is a clear sign of Greek confidence in the stability of the Turkish economy. This purchase, it

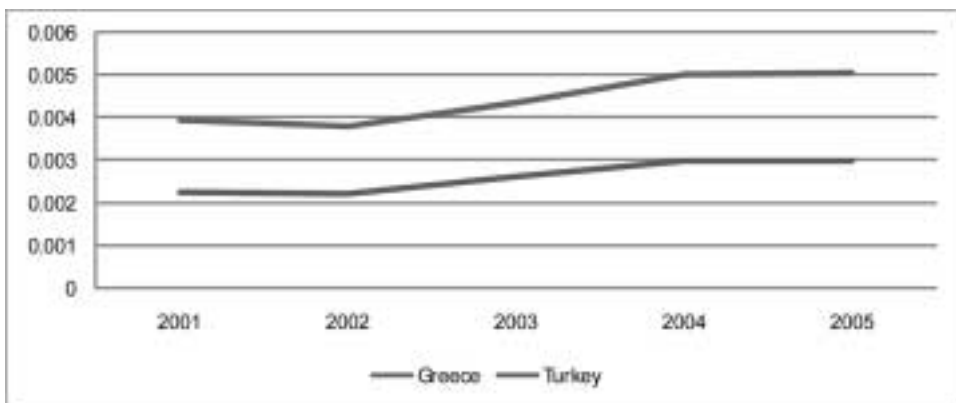


Figure 3 Trade Totals (Imports + Exports) Divided by GDP

Source: OECD statistics (www.oecd.org), with data from Figure 2

should be noted, has paved the way for a smaller acquisition by Greece's Eurobank which bought Turkey's Tekfenbank. In addition to the banking sector, a number of joint ventures have recently been initiated between firms in both countries. The largest-scale business partnership is undoubtedly that between two major construction companies, Turkey's ENKA and Greece's Technodomiki. They have jointly undertaken the construction of a new city (Blue City) in Oman, with a budget surpassing €20 billion. Greek Intralot teamed with Turkcell to create Inteltek, a company to handle lotteries; Greek Intracom invested 20% of the necessary funds to establish the informatics company Gantek. In a similar fashion, Greece's Thrace Plastics has teamed up with Turkey's Telnik Plastics to open a food packaging factory near Istanbul. Greek companies have also established subsidiaries to handle their affairs in Turkey, most importantly S&B minerals and Creta Plastics.¹²

Of special significance is Greek–Turkish bilateral cooperation on energy issues. In 2002, the natural gas companies of Greece and Turkey signed a Memorandum of Understanding to build a pipeline connecting the Turkish city of Karacabey and the Greek city of Komotini, which will complete the southern part of the pan-European natural gas pipeline originating in Azerbaijan. Hopefully, in the foreseeable future, Turkish investment activity in Greece will begin matching its Greek counterpart in Turkey.

The tourism data (Figure 4) indicate that Greeks, continuing the patterns above, tend to visit Turkey far more than Turks visit Greece. Although the strict EU visa policy and the different macroeconomic conditions of Turkey account for fewer Turkish tourists in Greece, the current situation does not reflect an ideal condition for the democratic peace variable.

Overall, bilateral economic relations between the two countries are moving forward. A steering committee to facilitate Greek–Turkish cooperation was established in 1999. Chaired by high-ranking diplomats, this committee aims to enhance cooperation in economic, technical, cultural and social issues as well as encouraging civil society institutions from both sides of the Aegean to strengthen the bonds between the two nations. However, despite all the positive steps that have been taken, the current level of bilateral economic ties is not as strong as would be desired

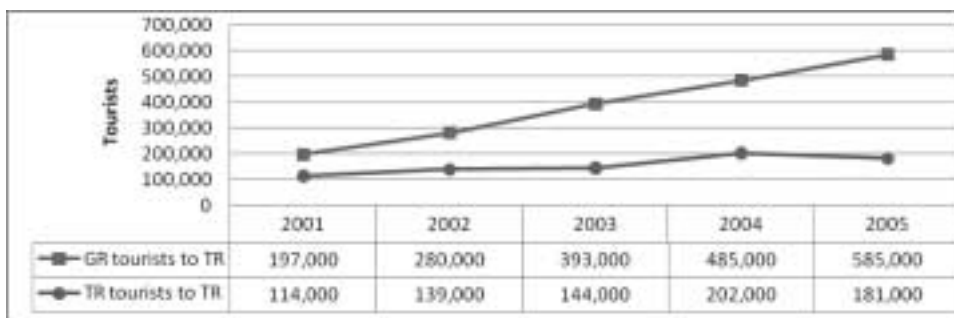


Figure 4 Greek–Turkish Tourism

Source: Greek Statistical Service (www.statistics.gr)

to create irreversible interdependence. Greece's presence in Turkey is much stronger than vice versa, and—at least to date—Turkish investors have not opted to increase their presence in Greece.

Moving on to the third Kantian variable, membership in international organizations, we focus on the EU and NATO, given that these two organizations are most relevant to Greek–Turkish relations. Both countries, as we have seen, have been members of NATO since 1952. Unfortunately joint membership did not give the necessary boost to help the two neighbours to overcome their differences. To a great extent, Greek–Turkish tensions have been allowed to escalate in previous decades (reaching 'brink' levels at times), given the absence of a dispute settlement mechanism within NATO. This organization is an international institution of military nature (calling for cooperation between member states on collective defence), and has not aimed to integrate the member states in any kind of regional political context. The founding treaty of the organization¹³ makes its purposes clear,¹⁴ and the member states' sovereignty remains absolute. Furthermore, members have been free to leave the organization (after 20 years of membership) and they also have the option to opt out of the military branch of NATO, a right that had been exercised by France and Greece (Greece reentered in 1980 and France shortly thereafter). Some make the argument that NATO seems to be losing some of its importance after the end of the Cold War, but the jury is still out with respect to its future.

The EU is clearly the more relevant of the two organizations when it comes to democratic peace variables. Turkey's road to EU membership began in Helsinki in 1999 and accession negotiations were initiated in October 2005. The EU is an international institution pursuing an 'ever closer union' among its member states. This means that the countries that join it have to yield part of their sovereignty in favour of the supranational Brussels structures. Greece entered the EU in 1981 and, despite a bumpy take-off, quickly realized that its interests would best be served by securing a place at the heart of the EU. Consequently, Greece has supported every effort for a 'deeper' Union and since 2001 it has joined the structures of the Economic and Monetary Union, the so-called Eurozone. Turkey is currently conducting its accession negotiations at a time when the EU is trying hard to absorb its 12 new member states¹⁵ with growing signs of 'enlargement fatigue'.

Turkey is realizing that the 'negotiation process' (at least in its early stages) entails less bargaining and more adjustment to existing norms. The integration of the entire *acquis communautaire*¹⁶ is a make-or-break issue for the EU, and the extent to which Turkey is willing and able to adhere to the EU's requirements is not yet clear. The European Commission's 2006 progress report on Turkey has made it clear that of the 33 'chapters' of negotiations, very limited or no progress has been made in 12, and only some progress in 11. Regarding the remaining 10 chapters, covering the alignment of the Turkish legal framework with that of the EU, there is notable progress. One could conclude that Turkey's outlook is relatively good when it comes to the economic chapters of its accession negotiations, and serious steps have been taken to further improve the functioning of a market economy while economic growth continues at healthy standards (European Commission 2006a, pp. 26–31). However, the EU is seriously

concerned about the functioning of a stable democracy, as has been outlined in the early part of this section.

It should be kept in mind that, beside the basic criteria required for potential membership, an important new requirement has been recently added by the European Commission. It involves the capacity of the EU to absorb further enlargement (European Commission 2006a). 'Integration capacity' highlights the importance of guaranteeing the ability of the EU to 'deepen its own development before pursuing its enlargement agenda' (ibid.: 17). Although this requirement cannot block a country's eventual membership, it can certainly be used to delay the accession. Ultimately, judgments on whether a candidate country can be easily integrated within the EU framework are fundamentally political and cultural, heavily depending on local conditions of member states.

Currently, there are several 'thorns' affecting EU–Turkish relations, which to a large extent have accounted for some stagnation in the accession negotiations. On the Turkish side, the unpredictability of its political system (as demonstrated by the presidential election crisis) has led to scepticism in certain European quarters on when, or whether, Turkey will become a stable democracy. Furthermore, the degree to which the Turkish leadership is willing (or able) to push for reforms on sensitive issues in Turkish domestic politics is continuously being debated. At this point the biggest perceived threat to Turkey's security is the Kurdish issue (which should also be linked to the situation in northern Iraq and the functioning of PKK Kurdish terrorist cells there), thus making it difficult for the government to grant meaningful freedoms to Turkey's Kurdish ethnic community. Another important issue that needs to be tackled is the Cyprus question. Turkey continues to declare that it does not recognize the government of the Republic of Cyprus,¹⁷ and the issue of the divided island will continue to create tensions in EU–Turkish relations.

Moving to the EU side, an important factor that should not be underestimated is the domestic political scene within many European countries. There is growing concern about defining the kind of union the Europeans want, and Turkey's full membership is, to put it mildly, a controversial question. Moreover, not all governments have adopted a positive stance towards a putative Turkish accession. In the recent French elections the question of Turkish membership was heavily debated, with the winning candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy, clearly opposing Turkey's membership. He reiterated his promise to the French people when he assumed power. But even in the case where political elites reach an agreement on full membership, the fact that some countries have already declared that further enlargement of the EU will have to be ratified by national referenda renders the role of public opinion much more decisive.

Despite their initial enthusiasm, the Turks are also beginning to realize that the negotiation process is going to be a lengthy and uncertain one. If the EU were to push Turkey to adopt measures that are perceived to be contrary to its national interests (such as the Kurdish issue, or Cyprus), and while the prospect of full membership is not assured, there is no telling what future leaderships of the country will do.

In sum, the membership of Turkey in the EU is not only important for the fulfilment of the democratic peace proposition, but also an outcome that will guarantee progress

in the other two elements of the Kantian triangle. In short, Turkey's road to the EU is synonymous with creating stable and functioning democratic structures and economic interdependence between it and all EU member states (Greece and Cyprus included).

Conclusions

As illustrated in the third section of this paper, the Greek–Turkish behavioural profile fits well—in the Hegelian sense of ‘becoming’—within the criteria of Russett’s and Oneal’s Kantian democratic theory of peace. Since 1999, in spite of occasional incidents of high tension involving Turkish military flights and Greek responses in the Aegean air space, Greeks and Turks have proceeded to create economic, social and political interdependences in classic functionalist theory style (Haas 1964; Mitrany 1966; Mitrany 1975).

In the economic dimension, the volume of bilateral trade, as we have seen above, has almost tripled in less than seven years (€626 million in 1999, €1.66 billion in 2006). Greek investments in Turkey (but not Turkish ones in Greece) have also grown proportionately, with a massive inflow of over €3.4 billion accounted by the purchase of Turkey’s third largest bank, Finansbank, by the National Bank of Greece. Cooperation is also rapidly increasing in bilateral energy networks following agreement on constructing a natural gas pipeline that traverses Turkey and northern Greece, connecting on to Italy and pointing west through a seabed pipeline across the Adriatic sea.

In the political sphere of Greco–Turkish relations there has also been progress, even if less obvious than that made in economic sectors. Since 1999, more than 20 bilateral agreements have been signed and implemented that fall under the rubric of mutual interests: clearing land mines in the border areas of Thrace, cooperating on matters of environmental protection in the Aegean, developing safeguards against trafficking (narcotics and persons) and illegal immigration, facilitating joint projects in the tourist industry, extending summertime moratoria on air and naval exercises, and establishing hotlines that connect the highest levels of political and military authorities—all excellent examples of confidence-building measures that are paving the way for a lasting reconciliation. We should not fail to mention here the joint foreign ministries’ exploratory dialogue involving well over thirty rounds of meetings designed to arrive at a procedural formula of negotiations and/or adjudication by the International Court of Justice on the Aegean continental shelf and related questions.

In the social sector of interaction there has been serious and noticeable progress. Government-supported and independent civil society initiatives have sought to build bridges of empathy toward the ‘other’. Universities in both countries have been encouraging student and faculty exchanges and setting up programmes of area and language studies focusing on Turkey and Greece respectively. Businesspeople, journalists, artists, entertainers, academics and others are steadily building networks of understanding with the aim of reducing mutual prejudice in textbooks, films, news programmes and commentaries on television and print journalism. It is worth noting, for example, that one of the most popular TV soap operas in Greece is a love story involving an affair between a Greek boy and a Turkish girl, with understandable but

humorous reluctance on the part of both sets of prospective in-laws. The programme, produced in Turkey, is in the Turkish language with Greek subtitles. Musicians such as Mikis Theodorakis and Zuflu Livaneli are highly popular in Turkey and Greece, respectively, and when a Turkish basketball player joined the ranks of a top Athenian team for some years, the fans lionized him as long as he continued making three-pointers.

Détente and reconciliation in Greek–Turkish relations is not necessarily a one-way street. A number of issues remain unresolved and the whole process of step-by-step normalization could go awry by accident or miscalculation. Topping the list of unresolved questions remains the occupation of northern Cyprus by 40,000 Turkish troops and the drastically different interpretations regarding the Greek Cypriots' overwhelming rejection of the UN (Kofi Annan) settlement plan in April 2004. Moving further west, the issues of the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf, the width of Greece's territorial air, treatment of minorities, and related questions have been kept on ice, heating up dangerously on various occasions (such as the crises of 1976, 1987 and 1996).

The prospect of a lasting settlement of the Cyprus and the Aegean questions is rather unlikely in the short run. The year 2007 was highly politicized in both Turkey and Greece. In the spring of 2007 the Turkish parliament was expected to elect a successor to the incumbent president, Ahmet Necdet Sezer. The ruling Justice and Development (AKP) party had a comfortable majority in parliament with which to elect to the highest office PM Tayyip Erdogan's designee, the then foreign minister Abdullah Gul. But as we have seen, Turkey's Kemalist secular establishment, inspired by the powerful military, had serious reservations about Gul's or Erdogan's suitability, given their Islamic political roots. Turkey's secularist supreme court circumvented the presidential election process. However, following the victory of the AKP (Erdogan's) party in the 22 July 2007 elections, and Abdullah Gul's elevation to the Turkish presidency (without decisive military reaction), the variable of extraparliamentary intervention in politics appears to be losing some of its potency.

Greece also held its parliamentary election in mid-September and the incumbent party of New Democracy, with some reduction of its parliamentary strength, remained in power. Presidential elections are also scheduled for the Republic of Cyprus early in 2008. One clearly cannot expect diplomatic breakthroughs in the immediate future. The safest projection regarding Greek–Turkish relations, therefore, is what we could call 'issue management', or a form of marking time for the next 12–16 months. Hopefully, throughout this holding pattern, the trends of economic and social exchange, cooperation and interdependence will continue on their current upward path. As the old saying goes, 'Siamese twins do not stab each other, for they would both bleed to death'.

Notes

- [1] Although these prerequisites might not be exhaustive, we believe that they are at the core of a fully functioning, stable democracy.
- [2] Available online at: <http://www.rsf.org>.

- [3] See <http://hrw.org/englishwr2k7/docs/2007/01/11/turkey14845.htm>.
- [4] Article reads as follows: '(1) Public denigration of Turkishness, the Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey shall be punishable by imprisonment of between six months and three years. (2) Public denigration of the Government of the Republic of Turkey, the judicial institutions of the State, the military or security structures shall be punishable by imprisonment of between six months and two years. (3) In cases where denigration of Turkishness is committed by a Turkish citizen in another country the punishment shall be increased by one third. (4) Expressions of thought intended to criticize shall not constitute a crime.' For more information on Article 301, see Amnesty International report, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR440032006?open&of=ENG-TUR>.
- [5] See State Department Human Rights report, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78815.htm>.
- [6] See Polity Reports, http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/polity/country_reports/Tur1.htm.
- [7] See Amnesty International's latest report, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR440022007?open&of=ENG-TUR> and State Department country report, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78844.htm>.
- [8] In 1997, the Turkish Army, in the so-called postmodern coup, triggered the removal of the Islamic-oriented Prime Minister, Necmettin Erbakan. In 2007, following what appeared to be certain election as President of the AKP foreign minister, Abdullah Gul, the military issued a statement on its website opposing his candidacy (thus the nickname 'electronic coup' was generated). This declaration sparked a major constitutional crisis, with spillover effects in Turkish foreign and defence policy, and could lead to destabilization of major proportions.
- [9] 2004 data from the Greek Statistical Service.
- [10] 2004 data from the Turkish Statistical Service.
- [11] Although the acquisition of Finansbank by the National Bank of Greece is mostly responsible for this increase, more and more Greek firms are investing in the neighbouring country. The total value of this investment was €5 billion, but only half of it was registered in 2006, explaining the difference between total investments and the Finansbank acquisition.
- [12] Sources: <http://agora.mfa.gr> and <http://www.capital.gr/news.asp?Details=286593>.
- [13] Signed 24 August 1949 by 12 countries.
- [14] See articles 2–8 of the founding treaty on the principle of collective security and its implementation.
- [15] Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia entered in 2004, and Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.
- [16] The *acquis communautaire* is the entire legislation package of the EU, from its founding to the present day, and comprises about 80,000 pages of rules and regulations.
- [17] In addition to the political aspects of the non-recognition of Cyprus, the issue has also sparked a debate among international lawyers. According to some views, given the nature of the EU (a supranational organization aiming at ever closer integration), the moment Turkey initiated its accession negotiations, it implicitly recognized (de facto) the Republic of Cyprus—an EU member state. However, according to other views, the fact that the EU has a legal personality distinct from its member states means that countries in accession negotiations deal directly with the institutions of the EU and not with member states (that is, they reserve the right not to recognize EU member states).

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