

Necessary But Not Sufficient: The Role of the EU in Resolving Turkey's Kurdish Question and the Greek–Turkish Conflicts*

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I Bridging Two Literatures: Conflict Resolution and European Studies

Recently, there is growing interest in how the EU may diminish conflicts and provide legal and political structures that can deal efficiently with potential conflicts in candidate countries. Because such issues are the focus of different disciplines with alternative perspectives, we believe that they should be studied in an interdisciplinary fashion. In this section, we attempt to bring together the alternative perspectives provided by the European Studies (ES) and the Conflict Resolution (CR) literatures.

While the ES literature approaches questions of the EU and conflict resolution from an EU-centered perspective, the CR literature analyses the cases where the EU becomes a party within the broader context of the role that regional organizations play as third parties in interstate and intrastate conflicts. According to the CR literature, third parties – be they states or multilateral organizations – have the power to bridge the parties through building trust, can provide extra resources (information, technology, etc.) to change the nature of the conflict, and can supply the guarantees needed to make peace stable.

Third-party roles vary depending on the nature of the conflict, the stage of the conflict (escalation, peak, de-escalation, reconciliation), the level of violence, and the nature of the society in which conflict takes place. According to the CR literature, the third party should not only pay attention to the timing and the characteristics of the conflict societies, but also synchronize carefully its efforts with other existing conflict-resolution attempts. Expressed in CR

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terminology, good intervention requires good analysis, a good intervention process, timing and sequencing.¹ CR scholars offer a variety of intervention options at various levels of conflict.² Choice among these options depends on the third parties' 'capabilities, leverage, and linkage to the parties, their level of interest, and the sustainability of their potential commitment to the intervention role'.³

Among scholars of conflict resolution, there are two major paradigms on when third-party interventions should best take place. The 'structuralist' paradigm, treating causes of conflict as objective, argues that a good intervention should take place at a 'mutually hurting stalemate'⁴ and that third parties should use 'various side payments and/or penalties and sanctions to get the parties to the dispute to change their cost-benefit calculations about the utility of a negotiated settlement'.⁵ On the other hand, the 'social-psychological' approaches, treating causes of conflict as subjective, contend that third parties should change the perceptions, attitudes, values and behaviours of the parties through consultative meetings, problem-solving workshops, conflict-resolution training, and third-party assistance in developing and designing alternative dispute-resolution systems. The role of the third party, according to this paradigm, should be a neutral and essentially a facilitating one.⁶ The general view on intervention strategies, however, is that a single intervention strategy is almost always a failure and that it seems more useful to adopt 'a coordinated series of concurrent and consecutive strategies directed towards the long-term goal of resolving the conflict'.⁷

¹ R.J. Fisher and L. Keashley, 'The Potential Complementarity of Mediation within a Contingency Model of Third Party Intervention' (1991) 28/1 *Journal of Peace Research*, pp. 29-42; C.A. Crocker, 'Intervention: Toward Best Practices and a Holistic View' in C.A. Crocker, F.O. Hampson and P. Aall (eds), *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict* (United States Institute of Peace, Washington D.C., 2001); D.U. Eralp and N. Beriker, 'Assessing Conflict Resolution Potential of the EU: The Cyprus Conflict and Accession Negotiations' (2005) 36 *Security Dialogue*, pp. 175-192; E. Çuhadar-Gürkaynak and O. Memişoğlu, 'Varieties of Mediating Activities and Their Complementarity in the Cyprus Conflict' *Regional Development Dialogue* (forthcoming).

² For a discussion of these options, see Crocker, note 1 above.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁴ S.G. Amoo and I.W. Zartman, 'Mediation by Regional Organizations: The Organization for Africa Unity (OAU) in Chad' in J. Bercovitch and J.Z. Rubin (eds), *Mediation in International Relations: Multiple Approaches to Conflict Management* (St Martin's Press, New York, 1992), p. 131.

⁵ C.A. Crocker, F.O. Hampson and P. Aall, 'Multiparty Mediation and the Conflict Cycle' in C.A. Crocker, F. O. Hampson and P. Aall (eds), *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World* (USIP, Washington, D.C., 1999), p. 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷ Fisher and Keashley, note 1 above.

There is agreement in the literature that, among various third-party actors, regional organizations have the advantage of being more familiar with local actors and the situation that led to the conflict.⁸ Literature on the role of regional organizations in conflict resolution suggests that these organizations have a range of capacities for the resolution of conflicts among their members: the ability to provide a solution, shifting weight (relations with the parties), persuasion, side payments⁹ and brokering ceasefires during the early phases of the conflict as well as its escalation and de-escalation. When regional organizations intervene in a conflict as third parties, they can narrow the area of uncertainty in disputes which may precipitate conflicts, influence in a predictable and positive manner the behaviour of parties in the conflict environment, and help clarify the general bargaining setting and consequently facilitate the negotiation process.¹⁰

Although a regional organization's strength as a third party stems from its regional salience and moral authority, in most cases, their third-party roles in intractable conflicts are constrained as a result of their limited resources and enforcement power. Amoo and Zartman argue that regional organizations are limited in their conflict-resolution capacities because of the fact that 'members of the organization have a primary interest in capturing the flag for their side of the dispute', and thus, 'they are under pressure from their own members to *endorse* rather than to *mediate*.'¹¹ Another important note that conflict-resolution scholars often make is that regional organizations are useful third parties as long as the parties to the conflict are looking for some acceptable way out of their conflict.¹² Regional organizations are weakest when the conflict requires complex negotiations and solutions, and when the issues that lead to conflict are defined as top 'security' issues.

With regard to the timing of the interventions, the CR literature points that in general, regional organizations have been more effective in preventing conflicts in their early stages through structural interventions than in making parties reach a negotiated outcome in later stages through direct intervention. The conflict prevention role of regional organizations mostly presents itself in setting and promoting compliance with fundamental norms to prevent conflicts, promoting the process of democracy building as a foundation for

⁸ Amoo and Zartman, note 4 above; A. Chayes and A.H. Chayes (eds), *Preventing Conflict in the Post-Communist World: Mobilizing International and Regional Organizations* (Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1996); C. Peck, *Sustainable Peace: The Role of the UN and Regional Organizations in Preventing Conflict* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, Maryland, 1998); C. Peck, 'The Role of Regional Organizations in Preventing and Resolving Conflict' in Crocker, Hampson and P. Aall (2001), note 1 above, pp. 561–584.

⁹ Amoo and Zartman, note 4 above, pp. 132–133.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131, emphasis added.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 144.

peace and security, identifying and responding to brewing conflicts in order to prevent the outbreak of violence.¹³

Near unanimity exists among CR scholars and activists that the regional organizations in Europe represent the best examples of providing agreed-upon norms for the implementation of human rights standards and for monitoring state compliance in order to prevent intrastate and interstate conflicts.¹⁴ Human rights documents established by the Council of Europe provide crucial guidelines for conflict prevention and human security.¹⁵ And in providing a framework for preventive diplomacy, facilitating negotiations, and furthering processes of conflict resolution, primary responsibility has fallen to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.¹⁶ In this regional context, the EU's power in conflict prevention derives from the fact that its membership conditionality constitutes a very powerful carrot and stick mechanism to diffuse these principles and to monitor compliance.

Coming to the European Studies literature, there are well-established presumptions about the conflict-resolution capacity of the European Union in the long term. It is assumed that in the course of European integration, through democratization and the dissolution of borders, intrastate and interstate disputes will gradually lose their bases and significance. However, this broad link between integration and peace needs to be analytically distinguished from the EU's capacity to directly intervene in conflicts of immediate concern and to resolve them in the short term. The latter entails the purposive action of various EU organs and includes policies, measures and communications directed to the conflict parties with the explicit objective of aiding the resolution of their conflicts.

Until recently, the ES literature has remained rather underdeveloped in its conceptualization of the EU as a purposive actor in conflict resolution.¹⁷ Recently, however, studies that focus on the role of the European Union in the resolution of various conflicts have distinguished between the EU 'as an active player' and the EU 'as a framework'¹⁸ and combined in their

¹³ P.T. Hopmann, 'The Role of Multilateral Organizations in Conflict Resolution: The Case of Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe', Sabanci University, Program on Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Occasional Papers No. 2, 2002.

¹⁴ See, for example, Chayes and Chayes, note 8 above; Peck (1998), note 8 above; Peck (2001), note 8 above; Hopmann, note 13 above.

¹⁵ Peck (2001), note 8 above.

¹⁶ Hopmann, note 13 above.

¹⁷ Perhaps the underdeveloped status of the literature can be explained by the fact that until recently the EC/EU itself was quite hesitant and timid to intervene directly in interstate and intrastate disputes.

¹⁸ G. Noutcheva, N. Tocci, B. Coppeters, T. Kovziridze, M. Emerson and M. Huyseune, 'Europeanization and Secessionist Conflicts: Concepts and Theories' (2004) *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Special Focus 1, pp. 1-35.

analyses the indirect effects of integration and association with the purposive interventions of the EU in conflicts.¹⁹

For example, Diez et al. have argued that the EU potentially can impact border conflicts through direct and indirect pathways:²⁰ As a purposive actor in conflict resolution, the EU can directly employ the carrot and stick of granting or withdrawing membership, candidacy or association status, or specific benefits associated with those positions to coerce or induce parties to seek resolution of their disputes ('compulsory impact'). Membership conditionality has been identified as by far the most powerful (though not necessarily always effective) conflict-resolution mechanism at the EU's disposal.²¹ Simultaneously, the EU can selectively direct material resources to non-governmental initiatives in conflict societies, which are promoting intersocietal collaboration and advocating peaceful resolution of disputes ('connective impact'). The EU actors themselves consider support directed to civil society actors as their most effective instrument of conflict resolution and more in congruence with the proclaimed identity of the EU as a civilian and normative power.²²

In terms of the EU's indirect influences, Diez et al. argue that the EU framework, first of all, rationalizes and legitimizes the pursuit of alternative policy options at the domestic elite level ('enabling impact').²³ Conflict parties come to redefine their interests as they realize that the benefits of interdependence (in the case of interstate disputes) and democratization (in the case of intrastate disputes) outweigh the costs of continued conflict. In addition, in the course of their participation in the European integration process, conflict parties come to internalize the norm of peaceful conflict resolution. Another indirect conflict-resolution pathway is the EU's discursive power to change the prevalent construction of identities and of the conflict in conflict societies ('constructive impact'). The processes of European integration and EU accession activate certain discourses in conflict societies that 'desecuritize' the conflicts, that is to transform them from being conflicts over identity and 'security' into disagreements about issues that do not threaten identity or security.

¹⁹ C. Hill, 'The EU's Capacity for Conflict Prevention' (2001) 6 *EFA Rev.*, pp. 315–333; N. Tocci, 'EU Intervention in Ethno-political Conflicts: The Cases of Cyprus and Serbia-Montenegro' (2004) 9 *EFA Rev.*, pp. 551–573.

²⁰ T. Diez, S. Stetter and M. Albert, 'The European Union and Border Conflicts: The Transformative Impact of Association' (2006) 60/3 *International Organization* (forthcoming).

²¹ Tocci, note 19 above.

²² I. Manners, 'Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?' (2002) 40 *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 235–258; M. Pace, 'Governing Border Conflicts: When can the European Union be an Effective Mediator?', paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Montreal, 17–21 March 2004.

²³ Diez et al., note 20 above.

In analysing the role of the EU in conflict resolution, the ES and CR literatures stand to benefit from a closer engagement with each other. Insights from the CR literature would enable European Studies scholars to put the conflict-resolution activities of the EU in a broader context with other possible third-party roles.²⁴ More specifically, there is not much of a discussion among European Studies scholars on how the EU may engage in direct interventions to the conflict process, which lead the conflict parties to a negotiated solution of their disputes. In fact, what are referred to as 'direct' interventions in the ES literature are considered to be structural interventions in the CR literature,²⁵ precisely because they leave the actual resolution of the conflicts to the conflict parties. In the cases of Turkey's Kurdish and the Greek-Turkish conflicts, our analysis shows that the EU influences, while leading to a significant degree of conflict de-escalation, have not been sufficient in bringing about the actual resolution of the conflicts.

In addition, the CR literature alerts us to several limitations that the EU faces in conflict resolution. CR scholars are in agreement that different types of intervention are necessary for different types as well as different stages of conflicts. However, because conflict resolution becomes derivative of and secondary to the EU's priorities in its enlargement policy and external relations, the EU cannot be attentive to the concerns of timing and sequencing with respect to the particular characteristics and stages of intrastate and interstate conflicts. Related to this, these mechanisms are the most effective in relation to conflict parties that are in the EU accession process and have credible membership prospects. In addition, as the case of Greek-Turkish conflicts will show, the EU faces a particularly challenging limitation in the case of interstate conflicts that involve Member and non-Member States. In such cases, the EU is institutionally vulnerable to capture by the Member State and losing its impartial status, which, according to the CR literature, is a key to effective conflict resolution.

Similarly, the CR literature stands to benefit from a closer engagement with the ES literature, especially in paying due attention to the EU's effectiveness in legitimizing the pursuit of alternative policies and in shaping the dominant constructions of identities in the conflict societies. As will be discussed below, our comparative analysis of the EU's impact on Greek-Turkish and Turkey's Kurdish conflicts suggests that such indirect, ideational forms of EU influence have been primarily important in both cases.

²⁴ For an interesting comparison of the liberal modernist approach of the UN and the integrationist, post-modernist approach of the EU to the Cyprus problem, see O.P. Richmond, 'Shared Sovereignty and the Politics of Peace: Evaluating the EU's "Catalytic" Framework in the Eastern Mediterranean' (2005) 81 *International Affairs*, pp. 905-923.

²⁵ Eralp and Beriker, note 1 above.

II The EU's Impact on Turkey's Kurdish Question²⁶

According to the CR literature, internal identity-based conflicts, such as Turkey's Kurdish question, are the hardest in which to intervene because of sovereignty concerns. The Copenhagen Criteria became the primary instrument that the EU strongly and repeatedly used as a vehicle to overcome such conflicts in Turkey²⁷ and other candidate states. Within the context of Turkey's Kurdish question, the EU was most concerned about human rights abuses, the cultural rights of minorities and the removal of the state of emergency in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, and overall the Commission paid a special attention to the structural problems in Turkish democracy. Among the Copenhagen Criteria were political criteria indirectly affecting the issues related to Turkey's internal displacement policies and its approach to the Kurdish question. Of the political standards, respect for the principle of the rule of law and minority rights serves as a crucial part of the basis for compliance.

Although the Copenhagen Criteria are part of the membership conditionality, the EU was able to effectively exert pressure on Turkey even before the declaration of its membership candidacy.²⁸ For example, prior to the 1995 EU–Turkey Customs Union Agreement (CUA), the European Parliament asked Turkey to progress toward solving its Kurdish problem, along with such other issues such as changing the 1982 constitution, and Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law,²⁹ as well as improving the situation of the MPs from the pro-Kurdish Democracy Party (DEP),³⁰ and human rights practices.³¹ In response, Turkey

²⁶ Although Turkey's Kurdish Question stems back to the Ottoman period, intensifying after the foundation of the Turkish Republic, with 18 rebellions taking place between 1924 and 1938 (K. Kirişçi and G. Winrow, *A Translation of the Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Tran-State Ethnic Conflict* (Frank Cass, London, 1997), p. 100), this paper focuses on the current phase of the conflict from 1984 onwards when the PKK became an important actor in the conflict and the Turkish state engaged in armed response to the PKK's secessionist claims.

²⁷ For a detailed discussion on how the EU uses the 'conditionality principle' and its limitations for the case of Turkey, see A. Gates 'Negotiating Turkey's Accession: The Limitations of the Current EU Strategy' (2005) 10 EFA Rev, pp. 381–397.

²⁸ The institutional relations between Turkey and the EU have a long history, dating back to the 1963 Association Agreement. For historical accounts of EU–Turkey relations, see M. Müftüler-Baç, 'The Never-Ending Story: Turkey and the European Union' (1999) 34/4 *Middle Eastern Studies*, pp. 240–258. Turkey was declared a candidate for EU membership at the 1999 Helsinki European Council, and officially began accession negotiations with the EU on 3 October 2005.

²⁹ See the Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website at <www.mfa.gov.tr>.

³⁰ On 16 June 1994, Turkey's Constitutional Court banned the pro-Kurdish Democracy Party (DEP). Its thirteen deputies were stripped of parliamentary immunity, and seven who did not flee abroad were charged with treason and put in jail.

³¹ Müftüler-Baç, note 28 above.

modified some articles in the constitution to broaden political participation, and softened Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law; however, it recorded no improvement in the case of the Kurdish MPs. As a result, the ratification of the EU–Turkey CUA in the European Parliament came very close to rejection on 13 December 1995, and was accepted only with the added stipulation that in case of a deterioration of human rights, the financial aid enabled through the Customs Union could be frozen.³² Following the activation of the CUA, on 17 January 1996, the European Parliament awarded Leyla Zana, the only female Kurdish MP in prison, the Sakharov Prize³³ as a warning to Turkey. During the same period, the European Parliament also warned Turkey about some of its practices and voted to force the Turkish government to grant a general amnesty and start negotiations with all Kurdish organizations, including the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), for a possible political solution in 1997.³⁴

At the following Luxembourg Summit of the European Council in December 1997, when the EU did not include Turkey in its plans for future enlargement, one of the political conditions mentioned by the EU was the improvement of human rights practices and treatment of Kurdish citizens, a condition to which the Turkish state reacted harshly.³⁵ Subsequently, the European Commission's Progress Reports of 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001 presented Turkey's adherence to the political conditions of the Copenhagen Criteria as an important condition to start the accession negotiations.³⁶

However, the Copenhagen Criteria could only be applied to the candidate states. That's why more powerful steps to transform the Kurdish question were taken after Turkey's candidacy has been accepted at the Helsinki Summit of December 1999.³⁷ These problems were so central to the EU that the Council's decisions re-emphasized that Turkey should progress towards 'fulfilling the political criteria with particular reference to the issue of human rights'.³⁸ In November 2000, the EU issued an Accession Partnership Document with a list of issues Turkey had to address. These issues dealt mainly with minority rights, torture, the role of the military in politics, and the Cyprus issue. Turkey

³² *Turkish Daily News*, 14 December 1995.

³³ I.D. Dağı, *İnsan Hakları, Küresel Siyaset ve Türkiye* (Boyut Kitapları, İstanbul, 2001).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³⁵ B.A. Yeşilada, 'The Worsening of EU–Turkey Relations' (1999) 19/1 *SAIS Review*.

³⁶ European Commission, *The Regular Report on Turkey's Progress Towards Accession*, Brussels (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001) available at <www.eu.int>.

³⁷ It is important to note that this period also signifies a period where other third parties such as the USA became less of a visible actor. However, one can argue that the USA is still an important actor affecting Turkish-EU relations; see S. Wood and W. Quaisser, 'Turkey's Road to the EU: Political Dynamics, Strategic Context and Implications for Europe' (2005) 10 *EFA Rev*, pp. 147–173.

³⁸ Presidency Conclusions, Helsinki European Council, 10–11 December 1999. cf. M. Müftüler-Baç, 'Enlarging the European Union: Where does Turkey stand', Turkish Social and Economic Studies Foundation, TESEV monograph, İstanbul, 2002.

adopted its National Programme for Adoption of the *acquis* in March 2001 that resulted in the enactment of 89 new laws and amendments to 94 others in order to, inter alia, 'improve Turkey's human rights and bring the country's inflation-prone economy up to European standards'.³⁹

In the Turkish context, the EU's mechanisms to transform the Kurdish question proved more effective after Turkey's status was elevated to a candidate. As part of harmonizing its laws with the European norms in the process for the adoption of the *acquis*, Turkey signed several important international documents that guarantee the social, economic, cultural and political rights of its citizens.⁴⁰ It also ratified Protocol 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (abolition of the capital punishment⁴¹); and showed its official intent to comply with the judgments of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, particularly judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (section II of the Convention).⁴²

In its recommendation report released in October 2004, the European Commission for the first time clearly discussed the situation of the Kurdish minority rather than implicitly referring to the cultural rights of the minorities.⁴³ After reporting that Turkey has signed important international treaties that guarantee minority protection and that it showed improvement in the use of Kurdish language in public, the report stated that 'the measures adopted in the area of cultural rights represent only a starting point. There are still considerable restrictions, in particular in the area of broadcasting and education in minority languages.'⁴⁴ It also criticized Turkey for not taking enough measures to develop the southeastern Anatolian region, where Kurds are highly congregated, to foster return migration of the displaced people from the region. The report specifically spelled out the need for 'the establishment of conditions for the full enjoyment of rights and freedoms by the Kurds'.⁴⁵

³⁹ P. Martin, E. Midgley and M. Teitelbaum, 'Best Practice Options: Turkey' (2002) 40/3 *International Migration*, pp.119–129.

⁴⁰ Among these, we can list the 1969 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the European Agreement Relating to Persons Participating in Proceedings of the European Court of Human Rights.

⁴¹ Even though since 1984 there have been no executions exercised in Turkey, the Turkish Penal Code, until recently, provided for the death penalty for nine different offences. The Turkish Grand National Assembly passed the resolution to abolish capital punishment and to replace it with life imprisonment without remission on 3 August 2002, and signed Protocol 6 of the ECHRt.

⁴² Commission of the European Communities, Communication from the Commission to the Council, Strengthening the Accession Strategy for Turkey, Brussels 2003. See also <www.abhaber.com>.

⁴³ Recommendation of the European Commission on Turkey's progress towards accession, Brussels, 6.10.2004, COM (2004) 656 final.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.13.

The basic problem in analysing Turkey's Kurdish question from a CR perspective is that one of the parties to the conflict does not recognize any person/organization/institution *claiming* to represent the other party as a legitimate actor. This is mostly because throughout the 1980s the Kurdish question had been put on Turkey's agenda through the PKK's activities. Many state officers for a long time perceived the conflict as a terrorism whose aim was to carve out an independent Kurdistan within the territories of the Turkish state. Considering the PKK a 'terrorist' organization, the Turkish state did not consider the issue anything other than terrorism and treated its Kurdish population as part of its whole Turkish citizen population, thereby not granting a special status for minority rights. That is why the Kurdish question was never pronounced as an issue of cultural rights or ethnic conflict but as terrorism or in the best case as a 'southeast underdevelopment problem', whereas the Kurdish population and the international community perceived the issue as an identity conflict and a representation problem. This approach also made the State turn down the idea that some special rights should be granted to this population. From the State's point of view, the whole issue was related to sovereignty issues.

From an ES perspective, the EU has contributed to important changes at the domestic-policy level in Turkey with respect to the Kurdish question, especially after the acceptance of Turkey's candidacy to the Union. Membership conditionality became an important carrot mechanism for Turkey to undertake some previously very controversial policy changes, such as the abolition of the death penalty and the release of the Kurdish MPs from prison.

In terms of the pathways of EU influence of Diez et al., we can say that the EU's enabling and constructive impacts have been the strongest on Turkey's Kurdish question. Through Turkey's involvement in the European integration process, the Turkish state started treating its Kurdish question as a democratization issue if not an unpronounced minority representation issue. That is to say, after the earlier treatment of the conflict merely as a development or a terrorism problem, since 1999 the Turkish political public started to talk about linguistic rights, removal of the state of emergency, return to and reconstruction of the post-conflict zones, and release of the Kurdish MPs. The NGOs representing such stakes in the Turkish public all refer to the EU as the most important actor in bringing the conflict to this stage. When analysed carefully, it is obvious that at least on paper, this was a big turning point in the history of the Kurdish question. Although it cannot be argued that the two sides came to a complete understanding and respect for each other's needs, it seems that, with the involvement of the EU, at least the parties have started to change positions. From the State's perspective, it moved from complete denial to a more 'acceptance of difference' whereas for the Kurdish

citizens of Turkey, it was moving away from the idea of an independent state to more of an emphasis on asking for cultural rights and political representation within the existing state.⁴⁶ Therefore, even the nature of the conflict perceived by each party changed as the EU became an important actor in the conflict.

At the same time, the EU's interventions in the conflict through allocating some financial resources to the civil societies might have some important altering effects. These projects may not only pave the way for bridging the parties closer, but also might empower those that have been hurt during the process.⁴⁷ In Turkey, the post-1999 period saw the flourishing of more civil society attempts and pressures for more peaceful societies. Although these attempts date back to earlier phases, and are still restricted due to state pressures, civil society organizations became vocal actors of democratization, understanding, rapprochement and the diffusion of social norms necessary for a conflict-free society. The strengthening of these organizations was an outcome of the EU integration process and EU pressures.

We have to note that the European Union, due to its complex structure, did not take a unified position on Turkey's Kurdish question. The Council and the Commission mostly refrained from suggesting that there is a conflict that needs to be resolved, but rather emphasized the fact that the Turkish state should improve the cultural rights of all its citizens. The assumption behind this approach is that rather than negotiating issues explicitly and undergoing a healing process, once the country conforms to the democratic and cultural norms of the organization, there would be no issue to have conflict over. The European Parliament (EP), on the other hand, had a different approach. Not only did several resolutions passed by the EP explicitly pronounce 'the recognition of the Kurdish identity' but the EP also asked the Turkish authorities to accept international initiatives to provide a dialogue between the State and the representatives of the Kurdish segment of the society. For example, in a resolution passed in 1998, the EP reaffirmed 'its view that a solution of the conflict in the southeast can only be achieved politically' and supported 'proposals aimed at providing legal recognition of Kurdish identity and national and international initiatives which could promote dialogue and negotiation between the parties'.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Of course, this should not suggest that the PKK halted its activities nor that it lost its support completely. We should also be careful in not treating the Kurdish population as an homogenous entity. One can depict several tendencies among Kurds. Yet, the general tendency is more towards a belief that the EU negotiation period will bring more opportunities for overcoming the problems.

⁴⁷ One such example for the latter case is the European Commission's grant to the Diyarbakir Bar Association for teaching Kurdish citizens their rights, especially about human rights and right to return to their homes.

⁴⁸ A4-0251/98 Resolution on the Commission reports on developments in relations with Turkey since the entry into force of the Customs Union.

However, as discussed earlier, in its 2004 Progress Report on Turkey, the European Commission specifically mentioned the developments and areas that required improvement (related to the Kurds and southeastern Turkey where the Kurds are highly congregated). Even though this might look as if the Commission has changed its approach towards spelling out 'the other' party in the issue, another interpretation might be that as Turkey engages with the negotiation process further, issues get laid down in more detail.

In assessing the EU's impact on Turkey's Kurdish question, one also has to keep in mind that for the Kurdish citizens of Turkey, the process went hand in hand with another development. The year Turkey was accepted as a candidate was also the year when the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, was captured. This broke the hopes of many which set their hopes on what the PKK has been fighting for and left only democratic means to voice their demands as a viable solution. The capture of Öcalan also paved the way for the flourishing of the civil society organizations that address the issue. The softening of the discourses in Turkish and Kurdish society also coincides with the capture of Öcalan and the decreasing intensity of the conflict following it. Because these two events overlap, the effect of the EU as an actor in the process became much more powerful. Had Öcalan not been captured, one could legitimately question the effectiveness of this rapprochement, socialization by integration, as well as changes at the domestic-policy level.

From a CR perspective, what makes the EU significant as a third party to the conflict is that, compared to many other international organizations, it had the biggest effect in changing the position of the Turkish state through its use of the membership 'carrot'. In Rubin's terms, the EU had the coercive, reward, legitimate and referent power to introduce itself as a third party to the Kurdish question but it ignored the fact that social conflict involves a dynamic process and that 'different interventions will be appropriate at different stages of the conflict'.⁴⁹ What the EU does, especially in deep-rooted conflicts, is to ignore the fact that every conflict has its own nature and stages and that different strategies should be used to change the perceptions and attitudes of the parties since 'no one third party method should be expected to deal with all or even most elements of a given conflict'.⁵⁰ The assumption is that through structural intervention (e.g. decreasing human rights abuses, protecting cultural rights, strengthening democratic governance, etc.) ethnic conflicts can be resolved. Although these mechanisms seem to have worked to a certain degree at least for the moment, many civil organizations representing the dissident Kurdish population find these attempts insincere and temporary.

⁴⁹ Fisher and Keashley, note 1 above, p. 34.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

III The EU's Impact on the Greek-Turkish Conflict⁵¹

In analysing the impact of the EU on the Greek-Turkish conflict, it is important to stress, first of all, that the EU has played a qualitatively different third-party role in Greek-Turkish disputes than either the USA or NATO. The interventions of the latter, usually directed at the political leadership in crisis periods, have prevented the outbreak of militarized conflict, but have not succeeded in pushing the conflict parties towards a resolution of their disputes. However, as a security community, the EU has played a critical role in transforming Greek-Turkish disputes, especially since 1999.

The EU's interventions in Greek-Turkish disputes have followed the long history of the two states' institutional relations with the EEC/EC/EU. However, prior to 1999, these interventions only led to brief and tactical improvements in Greek-Turkish relations and did not affect the underlying identity and interest definitions and conflict conceptions. For example, during Greece's application and membership process from 1975 to 1981, the EC's stated reservations about importing Greek-Turkish disputes⁵² forced the Greek policy-makers to restrain themselves from further escalating the crises during an especially tense period in bilateral relations. Couloumbis and Yannas argue that how the Greek prime minister, Karamanlis, chose to handle Greek-Turkish relations following the Turkish 'invasion' of Cyprus in 1974 reflected 'the deep impact that the prospect of EU accession exercised on post-1974 Greek foreign policy'.⁵³ When the 1976 Aegean continental shelf crisis erupted right after the filing of the Greek application for membership to the EEC in June 1975, Karamanlis chose to deal with the crisis by taking the issue to the United Nations Security Council and the International Court of Justice, rather than by military means.⁵⁴ In addition, the period from Greece's application in 1975 to its membership in 1981 was marked by several attempts

⁵¹ Greek-Turkish conflicts have long roots in history. In the contemporary period, the two states came close to war over Cyprus in 1964 and during Turkey's 1974 military operation, over the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf in 1976 and 1987, and most recently, over the status of the uninhabited Imia/Kardak islets in 1996.

⁵² When Greece applied for full membership in the EC in 1975, the Council of Ministers communicated its concern for maintaining an equitable relationship with Greece and Turkey by explicitly assuring the Turkish government that the Greek application would not affect Turkey's rights. In addition, in its opinion on the Greek application, the European Commission expressed its concern about importing conflicts and recommended a pre-accession period that would allow, among other things, for the settlement of Greek-Turkish disputes. The Commission opinion was overruled in the Council of Ministers meeting in February 1976 by extensive Greek lobbying.

⁵³ T. A. Couloumbis and P. Yannas, 'Greek Foreign Policy Priorities for the 1990s' in K. Featherstone and K. Ifantis (eds), *Greece in a Changing Europe: Between European Integration and Balkan Disintegration?* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1994), pp. 160-175.

⁵⁴ P. Tsakaloyannis, 'European Community and Greek-Turkish Dispute' (1980) 29 *Journal of Common Market Studies*, pp. 35-54.

at dialogue, which were mainly driven by Karamanlis' desire to secure Greek membership of the EEC.⁵⁵

Similarly, following Turkey's application for EC membership in 1987, Greek-Turkish relations enjoyed another temporary period of improvement. Replicating the Greek pattern, Turkey's reaction to the second crisis over the continental shelf in 1987 was restrained as it occurred right before Turkey filed its application for membership in the EC.⁵⁶ Aware that improved relations with Greece were necessary to prevent a Greek veto and to strengthen Turkey's membership prospects in the EC, Turkey's prime minister, Ozal, adroitly defused the crisis and actively pursued dialogue with Greece.⁵⁷ However, the European Commission's Opinion on Turkey's application in 1989 pointed out that the Greek-Turkish disputes, as well as the Cyprus problem, constituted negative factors for Turkey's admission.

These brief periods of relative improvement in bilateral relations, coinciding with the membership applications of the two states to the EC, could not be sustained because the underlying perceptions of the conflict and national interest remained the same. The post-1974 Greek foreign policy consensus based on the deterrence of the Turkish threat was not challenged by Greece's EC membership in 1981. If anything, EC membership was perceived as and valued for having provided Greece with bargaining advantages in its dealings with Turkey. Afterwards, as Turkey sought closer relations with the EC, Greece quite successfully used its membership as a diplomatic lever to extract concessions from Turkey.⁵⁸ As a result, Greece's membership has created and sustained the understanding in Turkey that the EC/EU has become 'captured' by Greece, and therefore, cannot be impartial with respect to Greek-Turkish issues. Consequently, the EU's direct interventions in the form of warnings that the Cyprus problem and Greek-Turkish disputes would affect EU-Turkey relations were negatively interpreted as Greece's doing, and moreover, as reflections of a European reluctance to take Turkey into the EC/EU.⁵⁹

As Turkey intensified its pursuit of EU membership in the context of deteriorating Greek-Turkish relations, the Union continued its direct interventions in Greek-Turkish disputes by making the resolution of the disputes a condition for furthering relations with Turkey. For example, in reaction to the 1996 Imia/Kardak crisis, the EU took a firm line towards

⁵⁵ G. Pridham, 'Linkage Politics Theory and the Greek-Turkish Rapprochement' in D. Constan (ed.), *The Greek-Turkish Conflict in the 1990s: Domestic and External Influences*, (St.Martin's Press, New York 1991), pp. 73-88.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ P. Yannas, 'The Greek Factor in EC-Turkey Relations' in P. Kazakos and P.C. Ioakimidis (eds), *Greece and EC Membership Evaluated* (Pinter Publishers, London, 1994), pp. 215-221.

⁵⁹ M. Ugur, *The European Union and Turkey: An Anchor/Credibility Dilemma* (Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999).

Turkey in solidarity with Greece. The European Union statement, dated 15 July 1996, warned that 'the relations between Turkey and the EU have to be based on a clear commitment to the principle of respect for international law and agreements, the relevant international practice, and the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the member states and of Turkey'. In addition, the Council called for restraint, the pursuit of dialogue, and proposed the establishment of a crisis prevention mechanism as well as the submission of the dispute to the International Court of Justice. Consequently, EU-Turkey relations hit rock bottom during the Luxembourg European Council on 12-13 December 1997, where the EU did not grant Turkey candidacy status while further advancing its relations with other candidate states. The Presidency Conclusions noted that 'strengthening Turkey's links with the EU depends on . . . the establishment of satisfactory and stable relations between Greece and Turkey'. Even though the deteriorating relations with Greece took their toll on Turkey's EU membership bid, the EU's interventions and pressure on Turkey did not lead to an improvement in Greek-Turkish relations.

By the autumn of 1999, the deadly earthquakes in Izmit and Athens, as well as a change of cabinet in Greece, jolted Greek-Turkish relations out of their conflictual course and onto a European course of cooperation. The long-term influences of European integration on Greek foreign policy⁶⁰ came to fruition when combined with Greece's objective to secure entry into the EMU by increasing its bargaining position with the Community. Thus, the new foreign minister, George Papandreou, was able to put into full practice a policy of engagement that supported the European orientation of Turkey instead of a policy of deterrence based on using its EU membership as a lever against Turkey. Meanwhile, the deadly earthquakes in Izmit and Athens, respectively in August and September 1999, brought out feelings of empathy and solidarity between the Greek and Turkish people.

Reflecting this policy change, Greece chose not to use its veto against the EU's decision to grant Turkey candidacy status during the Helsinki European Council on 10-11 December 1999. The Helsinki Council decisions established the peaceful resolution of outstanding border disputes as a community principle and urged candidate states 'to make every effort' to resolve any outstanding disputes, and if these efforts fail, to bring the disputes before the International Court of Justice. The European Council has also set the end of 2004 as the latest date by which it will review the situation relating to outstanding disputes and their repercussions on the accession process. Incorporated into the Turkey's Accession Partnership Agreement and National Program, the

⁶⁰ D. Keridis, 'Domestic Developments and Foreign Policy' in D. Keridis and D. Triantaphyllou (eds), *Greek-Turkish Relations in the Era of Globalization* (Brassey's Inc., Dulles V.A., 1994), pp. 2-18.

Helsinki Council decisions linked progress on Turkey's membership with the resolution of its border conflicts with Greece.

After 1999, many things changed in Greek–Turkish relations.⁶¹ The two states agreed to cooperate in various issues, such as tourism promotion, the fight against terrorism, the removal of landmines along the border, illegal migration, incentives for trade and mutual investment, and environmental and health issues. In addition, as confidence-building measures within the framework of NATO, the two states have agreed to reduce and exchange information about military exercises. Most importantly, Turkey's EU membership became the focal point of bilateral cooperation. Greece, which had persistently vetoed any advances in the relations between Turkey and the EU, suddenly became the most ardent supporter of Turkey's EU membership. Progress towards the resolution of bilateral disputes has been slow; between 2002 and 2004, thirty-plus rounds of secret negotiations have taken place at the technical level between the two foreign ministries.

The trajectory of Greek–Turkish relations presented above poses a two-sided puzzle in terms of the EU's impact.⁶² On the one hand, there is the need to account for the pre-1999 phase in Greek–Turkish relations, during which the relations between the two states remained conflictual in spite of their close association with the EU. The EU failed to have a positive impact on the Greek–Turkish conflicts in this period, and was often abused as a forum for continued rivalry. On the other hand, there is the need to explain the post-1999 phase in Greek–Turkish relations, where we observe a promising rapprochement founded on the principles and procedures of the EU.

In analysing both sides of this puzzle, the CR perspective would emphasize that Greece's EU membership significantly constrained the EU in positively influencing the Greek–Turkish conflicts. Because Greece is a Member State and Turkey is a non-member of the EU, the EU is under pressure to *endorse* the Greek position and cannot effectively *mediate* between Greece and Turkey.⁶³ This explains the widespread perceptions of the EU by the conflict parties, especially prior to 1999. Greece perceived the EU as a lever to be used against Turkey, and Turkey perceived the EU as captured by Greece. However, it cannot explain how such perceptions became less prevalent and less determinative of policy in the two countries after 1999 while their institutional positions with respect to the EU stayed the same.

In explaining the transformation of Greek–Turkish relations since 1999, both the CR and the ES perspectives would stress the importance of the credible

⁶¹ A. Heraclides, 'Greek-Turkish Relations from Discord to Détente: A Preliminary Evaluation' (2002) 1 *The Review of International Affairs*, pp. 17–32; Keridis, note 60 above.

⁶² B. Rumelili, 'The European Union's Impact on the Greek-Turkish Conflict: A Review of the Literature', Working Paper Series in EU Border Conflicts Studies No. 6, University of Birmingham, 2004.

⁶³ Amoo and Zartman, note 4 above.

membership carrot offered to Turkey at the Helsinki European Council. Just as in the case of the Kurdish question, the EU candidacy status has been the main instigator for policy change in Turkey towards Greece. Turkish policy-makers, who were otherwise opposed to conciliatory moves towards Greece, have altered their cost-benefit calculations, and come to support the Greek-Turkish rapprochement because they view Turkey's EU membership as the foremost strategic objective. As one former Turkish diplomat put it: 'We are pursuing good relations with Greece because we want to get into the EU.'⁶⁴

In addition to the credible membership carrot, the CR perspective would also point to the importance of good timing. The Helsinki Council decisions were so effective in producing policy change because they built upon and in fact were made possible by the widespread popular feelings of empathy generated by the twin earthquakes in Turkey and Greece. In the absence of such a positive atmosphere in bilateral relations, the Helsinki decisions themselves could not have been taken because the compromises involved would not have been accepted by either Greece or Turkey. As has been the case in the past, Greece would have insisted that Turkey's candidacy be made conditional on the improvement of its relations with Greece, and Turkey would have rejected the attachment of such conditions to its relations with the EU. Moreover, the earthquakes paved the way for civil society actors in the two countries to play an independent critical role in bilateral relations. For the first time, the impetus for change came from the societal level, and the leaders pursuing the rapprochement could claim to act on a popular mandate.⁶⁵ The EU's 'connective impact' through funding Greek-Turkish civil society initiatives built upon their earlier development in this period.⁶⁶

On the other hand, because of the attention it devotes to the longer-term, indirect, ideational influences of the EU, the ES literature has an advantage in explaining how the policy change in Greece came about. Because of Greece's membership, the EU lacked effective carrot and stick instruments to coerce or induce policy change in Greece. In this context, the EU's 'enabling' and 'constructive' impacts became more paramount. Turkey's membership perspective in the EU offered both conflict parties the eventual possibility of conflict transformation through co-membership in the EU. In Greece, Turkey's EU membership perspective has been the crucial basis on which the alternative policy of supporting Turkey's Europeanization has been erected and advocated. Also, in Turkey, the candidacy status fostered positive identification with the EU, and legitimized the joint efforts to gain

⁶⁴ Personal interview, 4 March 2004.

⁶⁵ A. Gundogdu, 'Identities in Question: Greek-Turkish Relations in a Period of Transformation?' (2001) 5 *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, pp. 106-117.

⁶⁶ B. Rumelili, 'Civil Society and the Europeanization of Greek-Turkish Cooperation' (2005) 10 *South European Society and Politics*, pp. 43-54.

membership in the EU and to resolve the outstanding disputes with Greece.⁶⁷ In addition, Turkey's EU membership candidacy has fostered a more pluralistic perception of Turkey in Greece, and promoted the construction of Turkey as a 'Europeanizing' rather than a 'non-European' state.⁶⁸ The support given by Greece to Turkey's membership bid after 1999 promoted constructions of Greece in Turkey as less threatening.

Finally, the CR literature would point to the fact that while these various forms of EU influence have facilitated significant conflict de-escalation, they have not been sufficient to bring about an actual resolution of the Greek-Turkish disputes. Even though the 1999 Helsinki Council decisions had stipulated that if the parties fail to resolve their disputes by 2004 through bilateral negotiations they should refer them to the ICJ, this deadline has not been respected. Believing that Turkey's EU accession process will be a stronger incentive for the resolution of bilateral disputes than the pressure of a deadline, the Greek government announced in the spring of 2004 that it will not insist on the 2004 deadline set by the Helsinki European Council and that it is willing to extend the negotiations beyond. The EU has modified its stance on the Greek-Turkish disputes accordingly. The 16-17 December 2004 Brussels European Council conclusions 'welcomed the improvement in Turkey's relations with its neighbors and its readiness to continue to work with the concerned Member States towards resolution of outstanding border disputes'; and stated that 'unresolved disputes having repercussions on the accession process, should *if necessary* be brought to the International Court of Justice for settlement' (emphasis added).

IV Conclusions

The comparative analysis of the EU's role in the Greek-Turkish conflict and the Kurdish question yields important insights, both in terms of evaluating the EU's role in conflict resolution and of assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the CR and ES literatures. The common thread in the EU's involvement in both conflicts is that the EU became a force for change only after Turkey began to enjoy credible membership prospects after the declaration of its candidacy in 1999. Turkey's EU membership candidacy generated the conditions for a successful rapprochement between Greece and Turkey, and the attractiveness of the membership carrot led to Turkey's acceptance of more cultural rights and the opening up of the political system

⁶⁷ Rumelili, note 62 above; Rumelili, note 66 above.

⁶⁸ B. Rumelili, 'Liminality and Perpetuation of Conflicts: Turkish-Greek Relations in the Context of Community-Building by the EU' (2003) 9 *European Journal of International Relations*, pp. 213-248.

to resolve the political tension in its Kurdish question. While the extent of change experienced after 1999 points to the power of the EU in conflict resolution, the fact that membership candidacy was a necessary condition for a credible EU impact in both cases indicates a very significant limitation: that the EU's capacity in conflict resolution in its near abroad is dependent on and in fact derives from the enlargement process.

The comparative analysis of both cases also indicates a particular intertwining of direct and indirect influences by the EU. In both cases, the credible membership carrot that the EU offered to Turkey after Helsinki induced Turkey to undertake important policy changes, and the EU framework enabled the conflict parties to alter their perceptions of their interests and of the conflict. In the case of Greek–Turkish disputes, the Helsinki decisions induced Turkey to accept the linkage between Turkey's membership process and the resolution of these disputes, to pursue negotiations on bilateral disputes with a view towards their subsequent referral to the ICJ, and to engage in extensive functional cooperation. In both Greece and Turkey, Turkey's potential EU membership became the basis for alternative, more conciliatory, policies towards the other. In the case of Turkey's Kurdish question, the EU has induced Turkey to accept and implement international human rights. It also helped the Turkish state to use more 'constructive' means to deal with the conflict – although indirectly – and offered alternative perspectives to many of its Kurdish citizens.

Viewed from a CR perspective, however, the policy changes induced by the EU membership carrot constitute an indirect route to conflict resolution, as they may not be *sufficient* to bring about actual resolution and reconciliation. Recent developments in both cases have brought such questions of sufficiency to the surface. The 12 May 2005 decision of the European Court of Human Rights that the trial of Ocalan was not 'fair', the burning of a Turkish flag by Kurdish demonstrators in March 2005 and the PKK's taking up arms again in October 2005 have reignited tensions around the Kurdish question in Turkey. Similarly, although short lived, the tension over the Imia/Kardak islets in April 2005 led many to question how strong the improved Greek–Turkish relations have become within the EU context.

In addition, the trajectory of the EU's role in both conflicts indicates the importance of timing, which is cited as an important condition of successful third-party intervention in the CR literature, but widely neglected in the ES literature. In both the Greek–Turkish and Turkey's Kurdish conflicts, the EU interventions followed and benefitted from important independent developments in the conflicts. In the case of the Kurdish question, as previously discussed, the capture of Ocalan contributed to the easing of violence and the moderation of Kurdish nationalists, which made it possible for parties to embrace the democratization agenda promoted by the EU. In the

case of the Greek–Turkish disputes, the earthquakes that Izmit and Athens suffered respectively in 1999 acted as an important catalyst in fostering civil society cooperation and initiating the Greek–Turkish rapprochement which the EU instigated and encouraged.

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