

The Potential for Conflicts in Greek-Turkish Relations

Introduction

An extraordinary warming of relations between Greece and Turkey in the wake of the devastating earthquake of August 17, 1999 in western Turkey has raised expectations of lasting improvement in Greek-Turkish relations. Ironically, this unexpected improvement in the climate of relations between Greece and Turkey has occurred in the final months of an otherwise troubled decade that witnessed dangerous confrontations between the two neighbours, both in the Aegean and in Cyprus. During much of the 1990s, Turkish leaders have accused Greece of acting against Turkey in virtually every area vital to Turkish interest: Cyprus, the Aegean, EU relations with Turkey, and Kurdish separatism. For their part, Greek leaders have accused Turkey of assuming a more aggressive stance towards Greece, for making new territorial claims in the Aegean, and for consolidating the division of Cyprus. An intensified arms race between the two rivals, and the extension of their competition to regions where they were barely active before the end of the Cold War, (namely the Balkans, the Caucasus, and the Middle East) has helped fuel Greek-Turkish rivalry through much of the 1990s.

In the aftermath of the earthquakes in Turkey and Greece, leaders in both countries have endorsed the new warmth in relations. However, the impetus for better ties between Greece and Turkey has been provided by public opinion in both countries. In the weeks following the earthquakes that struck both neighbours, the Greek and Turkish media, particularly the press, have given ample coverage to acts and statements of friendship on the part of ordinary citizens and non-governmental organizations, as well as officials. The enthusiastic and generous response of the Greek people and government to assist Turkey's earthquake victims struck a positive chord among the Turkish public and Ankara. Turks were also pleased when, in a reversal of its earlier stance, Athens lifted its opposition to previously earmarked EU assistance to Turkey while endorsing new aid initiatives. The Greek government has also pledged not to oppose Turkey's EU membership. When a considerably less severe earthquake struck Athens three weeks after the Turkish one, Turkey reciprocated by providing swift assistance to the Greek victims, thus boosting sentiments for Greek-Turkish friendship that have been generated in both countries.

In the wake of the Turkish and Greek earthquakes, what some reporters have described as the „earthquake“ or „seismic“ diplomacy between the two neighbours has raised expectations that Greek-Turkish relations may enter a new era of cooperation. A series of bilateral meetings, scheduled before the earthquakes, have registered considerable progress on such topics as cultural ties, border security, as well as fighting terrorism and organized crime. At the same time, however, as some commentators and officials in both countries have observed, there exists a wide divergence of interests between the two neighbours and it is premature to envisage a change of policies in key areas of contention such as Cyprus and the Aegean.

1 The author would like to thank the United States Institute of Peace for grant which has made possible his research on this article.

The Aegean Issues

The types of disputes that Greece and Turkey have in the Aegean, namely those concerning the territorial sea, the continental shelf, and sovereign airspace, are not unlike those which have sparked disagreements over maritime boundaries elsewhere. The settlement of these disputes has clearly become much more complicated due to the poor relations between Greece and Turkey. On the other hand, the issues involve vital strategic (and commercial) interests, as huge tracts of maritime and airspace are at stake for both rivals: their resolution would have been difficult even if relations between Greece and Turkey were harmonious.

In staking its claim in the Aegean, Greece has enjoyed important advantages: virtually all of the Aegean islands and islets (which number over two thousand, some of which are close to Turkey's coast) belong to it. Moreover, the changing regime of international laws has favoured Athens: in particular, the adoption of the 1982 Law of the Seas Convention has greatly strengthened the position of Greece in that it is entitled to extend its territorial seas in the Aegean from six to twelve miles. Indeed, if Greece were able to extend its Aegean territorial seas from six to twelve miles, the most critical Aegean issues (i.e., the territorial sea, sovereign airspace, and the continental shelf²) would be resolved in Greece's favour.

Confident of its legal position, Athens considers its right to a twelve-mile territorial sea as non-negotiable. At the same time, it has stated its willingness to discuss a joint *compromise* with Ankara in order to submit the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf to the International Court of Justice (hereinafter ICJ) at the Hague. The Greek position that the continental shelf issue is the sole Aegean issue to be resolved by the two neighbours was revised in the aftermath of the Imia/Kardak crisis of January 1996. Greece stated its willingness to have the ICJ rule on the sovereignty of the disputed islet.

For Turkey, the worst possible outcome in the Aegean would involve the application of the twelve-mile territorial sea: this would increase the Greek share of the Aegean sovereign waters to 64 percent from the current 35 percent, and reduce the proportion of international waters in that sea from 56 to 26 percent. By contrast, as it is surrounded by numerous Greek islands along its Aegean coast, Turkey's share of sovereign Aegean waters would increase by less than one percentage point, from 8.3 to 8.8 percent. Under these circumstances, Turkey's access to its major ports (Istanbul and Izmir) would become very difficult without going through Greek sovereign waters.

It is on these grounds that Turkey has claimed that the adoption of the twelve-mile territorial seas would turn the Aegean into a „Greek lake“, and has repeatedly warned that such an extension would constitute *casus belli*. After the Greek parliament ratified the International Law of the Sea on June 1, 1994, the Turkish parliament followed suit on June 8, 1994 with a resolution authorizing the government to use all measures to protect Turkey's rights in the Aegean. Both countries have shown great vigilance to ensure that their Aegean rights are not compromised or threatened. A case in point was Ankara's reaction to reports that Greece planned to populate remote Aegean islands in 1995.³ For its part, Athens was even more concerned when Ankara disputed Greek ownership of the Imia/Kardak islet in January 1996, fearing that this signalled a new challenge to the sovereignty of Greek islands. Ankara's contentions (since 1996) that there are dozens of uninhabited Aegean islets whose legal status is unclear, and thus represent „gray areas“, has added to Greek anxieties concerning Turkish intentions.

2 All of the continental shelf claimed by Greece in the Aegean lies within the twelve-mile territorial sea.

3 See the Economist Intelligence Unit Report, Turkey, 1st Quarter, 1996, p. 17.

Turkish officials have argued that the Aegean disputes are more than legal problems. They have insisted that there are important economic, political, and strategic interests for both neighbours that require negotiations before resorting to international arbitration. In an interview he gave several months after the Imia/Kardak crisis of January 1996, former Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz re-stated Ankara's position that the two countries „resolve everything possible through negotiations and leave the rest to international arbitration and, as a last resort, to the International Tribunal in the Hague“⁴. But these overtures have not moved Athens to change its own approach to resolving the Aegean problems that international laws must be applied in the Aegean.

Turkish power has prevented Greece from extending its territorial seas to twelve miles, and Greek leaders have no realistic expectation of doing so. However, there is no reason to expect that Athens will forsake its right without corresponding concessions from Turkey.

Negotiation or legal adjudication, or a combination of both, could well address Greek-Turkish differences concerning territorial seas, continental shelf, and airspace issues, as indeed other matters that have also caused discord, such as the re-militarization of Greece's eastern Aegean islands. However, deep mistrust, and the fear of compromising their individual interests, have discouraged any steps to find acceptable formulas for resolving the Aegean issues.

Given their fundamentally divergent approaches, Greek and Turkish leaders do not anticipate a resolution of the Aegean disputes in the foreseeable future. Arguably, in spite of occasional tensions, the Aegean status quo is tolerable for both neighbours. It may even be possible to put in practice ideas floated in some Greek academic writings that Athens and Ankara formally agree to defer the resolution of their Aegean disagreements by up to twenty years. Assuming that such a course is feasible, neither side would renounce its position on the territorial sea, continental shelf or other issues, but merely cease poisoning the atmosphere by repeatedly stating their positions; also by cooling any inflammatory rhetoric.

Diplomatic Focus on Cyprus

By comparison with the Aegean problems, the Cyprus issue has been thoroughly internationalized. The issue has been on the agenda of the international community for over forty years. Cyprus, among other conflicts, can boast of having had the most sustained United Nations involvement (since 1964) in both a peacekeeping and peace-making capacity. When the Turkish Cypriots were in a position of weakness on the island, between 1963 to 1974, both Turkish Cypriots and Ankara welcomed and even solicited international attention in order to pressure the Greek Cypriot leadership to restore the bi-communal government that had been created by the independence agreements of 1960. The results were disappointing as Ankara received scant support for its Cyprus policy, even among its allies in the West. However, following its successful military intervention in 1974 in response to the Athens-junta's coup on the island, Ankara (as well as the Turkish Cypriots) have been distinctly wary of international involvement and the pressures it would bring to bear on them.

The primary interest of Greece (as well as Greek Cypriots) in Cyprus is for the removal of all or most of Turkey's troops, and the re-unification of what most Greeks consider to be a „Hellenic“ island. Both Athens and the Greek Cypriots would like to remove or reduce the danger of Turkish troops moving southward and taking over the entire island under a pretext in the future.

4 See Yilmaz's interview with Madrid el Pais on November 25, 1997, as reported in Foreign Broadcast Information Service-Western Europe, November 25, 1997.

By contrast, Turkey is determined to maintain a substantial military presence in Cyprus in order to use it both to protect the Turkish community on the island, and as leverage in negotiations for a final settlement. Ankara is resolved to protect the guarantor status it was granted (along with Greece and the United Kingdom) by the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee. It has also supported the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (hereinafter TRNC) since its unilateral declaration by the Turkish Cypriot leadership in 1983.

By and large Ankara and the Turkish Cypriots are content with the Cypriot status quo. They argue that as a result of the separation of the two communities, communal violence has ended.⁵ However, Greek Cypriots and Greece are anxious for the existing status quo (i.e., partition) to become a permanent feature on the island. Keen as they are to re-unite the island, Greek and Greek Cypriot leaders have successfully promoted the internationalization of the Cyprus issue in order to put pressure on Ankara and the Turkish Cypriot leadership.

Much to Turkish and Turkish Cypriot displeasure, periodic tensions on and about the island, have ensured considerable international interest in a Cyprus settlement. Indeed, several developments during the 1990s provided reminders that the peace which prevails on the island is precarious.

Thus, in 1994, Turkish suspicions were provoked by the Greek Cypriot government's agreement with Athens to bring the Greek Cypriot-controlled part of Cyprus under Greece's defence umbrella. This helped fuel an arms-build up on both sides of the Green Line. New tensions occurred when several Greek and Turkish Cypriots were killed along the Green Line in 1996. However, potentially more dangerous developments appeared on the horizon in 1997 when the Greek Cypriot government announced its intention to deploy Russian S-300 ground-to-air missiles capable of reaching targets in southern Turkey: Ankara threatened to use force to remove the missiles if deployed and Athens responded that it would defend Greek Cypriots in accordance with the 1994 defense agreement. Strong diplomatic pressure, led by Washington and London, persuaded the Greek Cypriot government to cancel deployment of the missiles, thus averting a major crisis and possible military confrontation.⁶

Old and New Irritants, and Rivalries in the New Strategic Landscape

The Aegean and Cyprus have continued to cause major problems in the Greco-Turkish relationship. These have been compounded by other long-standing as well as newer issues and anxieties. One perennial irritant that has troubled the bilateral relationship has been the treatment of ethnic minorities: specifically, the Turkish minority in Greek Thrace and the Greek minority in Istanbul. Each has leveled charges of discrimination against the other, even though both governments have been culpable for mistreating the other's minority. The discrimination applied to both the Turkish community in Greece and the Greek community in Turkey has been chronicled and publicized by human rights groups in the West.

Greeks have accused Turkish governments of forcing most of the Greek minority in Istanbul to leave Turkey. The Greek community in Istanbul has diminished drastically, from a population of approximately 120,000 in 1923, to about 3,500 in 1999. Turkish harassment and discrimination forced most Greeks of Istanbul to emigrate during the 1950s and 1960s when Greek-Turkish relations worsened due to the Cyprus issue. But even after the exodus of most Istanbul Greeks, Athens (as well as the remaining Greek community) has complained that the Turkish authorities have placed severe restrictions on the activities of the Greek Orthodox patriarch in Istanbul.

5 There are occasional incidents and casualties, however, along the cease-fire line, popularly known as the Green Line. On average, one death per year has occurred along the Green Line since the war of 1974.

6 The missiles were diverted to Greece which deployed them on the island of Crete.

Ankara has found that the drastic diminution of the Greek community of Istanbul has diminished its leverage vis-a-vis Athens concerning improvements of the status and treatment of the nearly 130.000 Turks in Greek Thrace. On the other hand, after years of inaction, Athens has taken numerous steps to improve the lot of the Turkish minority. Greek governments have made economic investments in the region designed to benefit the Turkish community. In addition the Simitis government abolished the much-criticized Article 19 of the Greek Constitution on June 11, 1998; this law was applied by Greek authorities to deprive many Thracian Turks of their Greek nationality when they travelled to Turkey or to other countries. Moreover, in July 1999, the Simitis government braved domestic opposition and revised the long-standing Greek policy of insisting that the community in Thrace is Muslim and not Turkish.

Ankara considers that these favourable improvements have only partially addressed the grievances of the Thracian Turks. In any case, greater improvements both in the status of the Greek minority and Patriarch in Istanbul, and the Turkish minority in Greek Thrace, are more likely to occur with a marked improvement in the Greek-Turkish relationship.

In the meantime, other issues have weighed more heavily in the minds of Greek and Turkish policy makers. For Ankara, alleged Greek support for the separatist PKK has long been an issue of priority, and a source of great discord. Indeed Turkish-Greek relations seriously deteriorated in February 1999, when Athens was forced to admit that it sheltered Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK, in its embassy in Kenya for twelve days. Turkey's President Suleyman Demirel vented Ankara's anger by proposing that Greece be designated a „rogue state“ for its support of terrorism, and warned that Turkey would use its right of self-defence if Greece continued to support Kurdish insurgents.⁷

In the post-Cold War era, the arena of Greek-Turkish rivalry has expanded, causing new suspicions and resentments. In a number of Balkan confrontations, for example, Greece and Turkey have often found themselves on opposite sides. Greece has been anxious concerning the growth of Turkish influence in the Balkans, particularly in Bosnia, Albania, and to a lesser degree, Macedonia. For its part, Turkey has resented Greek support for Serbia during NATO's Kosovo operation, and especially during the Bosnian war of 1992-1995.

In the Caucasus too, the two rivals have backed opposing states: Ankara has supported Azerbaijan while Greece established close relations with Armenia. While Turkey has vigorously promoted the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline to transport oil from the Caucasus, Greece (with Bulgaria and Russia) has proposed transporting oil from Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiisk through Bourgas on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast to the Aegean port of Alexandroupolis.

Greek-Turkish rivalry has been evident in the Middle East too, where Turkey's relations with some neighbours has been problematic: this has been particularly true of Syria which provided sanctuary for the PKK for many years, and has quarrelled with Ankara over the sharing of the waters of the Euphrates. In view of these considerations, reports of a Greek „strategic partnership“ with Syria in 1995 upset Turkish leaders. However, in spite of the effusive claims of Gerasimos Arsenis, the Greek defence minister at the time, what Athens secured from Damascus was merely „an informal defence accord with Syria under which Greek warplanes can land at Syrian airports in case of emergency – that means if Turkey attacks southern Cyprus“⁸. By comparison, Ankara's own far-reaching military cooperation agreement with Israel (in February 1996) although not aimed at Greece, promises to enhance Turkey's military capabilities in the future. Among the benefits of this relationship for Turkey will be the ease of purchase of some types of sophisticated armaments from Israel. Ankara

7 The Christian Science Monitor, February 26, 1999.

8 Foreign Report, July 4, 1996.

hopes that the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation agreement will indirectly enhance the strategic balance between Ankara and Athens in favour of Turkey. In addition, Ankara is hoping that the American Jewish community will help „ease the problems it encounters in the U.S. congress from pro-Greek, pro-Armenian, pro-Kurdish, and human rights lobbies“⁹. Greek (and Greek Cypriot) officials are concerned that the military cooperation between Turkey and Israel will tilt the military balance in Turkey's favour (even more so than it is today) in the years to come, and encourage Ankara to be more unyielding in dealing with Greek-Turkish disputes.

Domestic Factors

In general terms, policies towards Greece and Cyprus have enjoyed considerable support across the Turkish political spectrum, just as there is widespread agreement on key policies towards Turkey and Cyprus within the Greek political establishment. Previous crises between Greece and Turkey have shown (for example, during the Imia/Kardak issue in 1996) that both Greek and Turkish governments can assume public support for a hard line policy toward each other.

But the constraints exercised by public opinion could also limit the options of governments, as demonstrated during the Imia/Kardak crisis. For instance, Ankara and Athens were quietly engaged in discussions over the sovereignty of the disputed islet for weeks when the story was leaked to the press: subsequently, the Greek and Turkish media helped turn it into a fiercely contested issue. One of the lessons to be drawn from that episode may be that public opinion plays a larger role in the conduct of Turkish and Greek foreign policy than has ever been the case.

In Turkey, the military's powerful role in charting foreign and security policies makes it an important factor in the conduct of policies towards Greece. This has been especially the case in the 1990s when a succession of weak coalition governments alternated in office in Ankara. The Turkish military's evident hard line toward Greece discourages a change of policy towards Athens. But the military's tough outlook on Greece has generally been shared by other key institutions such as the Foreign Ministry. At the same time, however, while a war with Greece is not discounted, both the military and the civilian Turkish leaders are cognizant of the high costs that Turkey would bear in such an event.

In comparison with its Turkish counterpart, the Greek military has less influence in decisions concerning foreign and defence policies. Nevertheless, the „Turkish threat“ has loomed large in Greek political discourse, and populist positions have enjoyed much electoral support, as shown during much of the prime ministership of the late Andreas Papandreou. Furthermore, the opposition that was generated to the Simitis government upon its decision to acknowledge the Turkish identity of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace (in July 1999) is a reminder of the domestic constraints on Greek policy makers. Simitis was able to deflect the opposition on that score, but he would face far greater opposition if his government contemplated revisions to policies in the Aegean and Cyprus, where vital Greek interests are at stake and where so much national prestige has been invested.

At the same time, it is possible to envisage that the current thaw in the relations between Greece and Turkey as of this writing (September 1999) will provide both the Greek and Turkish governments with a window of opportunity to reduce tensions and begin a

9 Alan Makovsky, „The New Activism in Turkish Foreign Policy“, *Sais Review*, 19:1, Winter-Spring 1999, p. 102. The author noted, however, that „although American Jewish groups do indeed show increasing interest in Turkey, it is at best uncertain whether that will result in greater congressional support for Turkey anytime soon.“ *Ibid.*

constructive dialogue to tackle their differences. The current atmosphere is reminiscent of the „Davos spirit“ that was created by the late Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal with his late Greek counterpart, Andreas Papandreu. The meeting of the two leaders in Davos, Switzerland, in early 1988 led to a dialogue. This came in the wake of a dangerous military confrontation in the Aegean in the previous year. However, in spite of the expectations it raised in many circles in Greece and Turkey, and among their allies in Europe and Washington, the Davos initiative failed to yield any major breakthroughs, and lost momentum the following year. The Davos initiative failed in part because public opinion in Greece and Turkey did not appreciate the „top down“ approach of their leaders. By contrast, in the wake of the Turkish and Greek earthquakes of August-September 1999, public opinion in both countries has displayed a strong desire for an improvement of relations between the two countries.

Third Parties: The U.S. and the EU

Greek-Turkish disputes, particularly the long-standing and unresolved Cyprus issue, have long worried Greece and Turkey’s allies because of the dangers of war between two NATO members. This largely explains the involvement of numerous third parties that have sought to bring about a settlement in Cyprus, as well as to reduce tensions in the Aegean. Of these, the United States has been the most influential and active. It has endeavoured to create opportunities for the settlement of the disputes in the Aegean. It has also used its diplomatic leverage with Greece and Turkey to encourage Cypriot compromises, and has supported the United Nations Secretary-General’s good offices in the intercommunal talks. Washington has long believed (as do its European partners in NATO) that no significant improvement in Greek-Turkish relations is possible without a Cyprus settlement. Washington’s appointment of prominent diplomats as mediators (including Richard Holbrooke, the architect of the Dayton agreement)¹⁰ attest to the importance that Washington has placed on resolving the Cyprus issue and easing Greek-Turkish tensions in the Aegean and elsewhere.

A recurring concern for the United States and its allies has been the perennial threat of Turkish-Greek relations to NATO’s cohesion. Indeed, NATO has been preoccupied with Greek-Turkish quarrels throughout much of its existence. In theory, as it endeavours to bridge Greek-Turkish differences, NATO could act without being burdened by charges of bias that often face Washington in Turkey and, especially, Greece. In practice, however, NATO’s contribution has been modest, usually in the area of promoting a series of confidence-building measures in the Aegean.

Since the 1980s, and particularly the mid-1990s, the EU assumed an important, though highly controversial, role in Greek-Turkish relations, particularly concerning Cyprus. In the aftermath of the EU’s Luxembourg summit of December 12-13, 1997, which rejected Turkey’s bid to be included in the list of countries that are eligible for membership, Ankara vented its anger at Greece (and Germany) for their leading role in rejecting the Turkish candidacy for accession. Turkish bitterness was compounded by the EU decision to bend to Greek pressure and place Cyprus on a fast track for accession in spite of Ankara’s insistence on a prior settlement of the island’s ethnic conflict. Moreover, Turkish leaders were furious that instead of placing the onus for settlement of bilateral problems jointly on Athens and Ankara, the EU members called upon Turkey to settle its disputes with Greece „in particular by legal process, including the International Court of Justice“¹¹.

10 Holbrooke served as U.S. President Bill Clinton’s special emissary for Cyprus during 1997-1998. Earlier, in January 1996, Holbrooke played a key role in averting a Greek-Turkish war during the Imia/Kardak crisis.

11 See European Council, Luxembourg European Council, 12 and 13 December 1997, Presidency Conclusions,

Greece has obviously welcomed EU support for its position on a legal settlement of the Aegean problems with Turkey, and the EU's position on the accession of Cyprus. However, Athens would prefer its EU partners to be more helpful in coping with what it considers to be a Turkish threat to its sovereign rights in the Aegean. It has sought but failed to enlist EU guarantees on its borders, and was similarly disappointed when the Western European Union (WEU) „declared Greek-Turkish differences to be beyond its scope“¹². Nevertheless, in spite of these disappointments, Greece has exploited its EU membership to promote Greek and Greek Cypriot interests with considerable effect.

It is apparent that both Greece and Turkey have been primarily motivated by strategic considerations in Cyprus. Greek leaders see in Cyprus' membership the best assurance for the long-term protection of Greek Cypriots from Turkey, and for limiting the latter's influence on the island. This belief is based on the expectation that Turkey would be obligated to withdraw the bulk of its troops from Cyprus once the island becomes an EU member.

For Turkey the biggest risk is that, with Cyprus admitted as a member prior to a settlement, Cyprus will become an EU-Turkish issue and not just a Greek-Turkish dispute. Ankara anticipates that Cypriot EU membership would increase pressures for Turkey's withdrawal of forces from the island, even though Turkish leaders can be expected to resist such withdrawal without first securing Turkish and Turkish Cypriot interests. There is also a potential threat that unless EU rules on veto rights are revised, with Greek Cyprus admitted as a member, there could be two „Greek“ vetoes cast against Turkey's future membership. More importantly for Ankara, Greek/Greek Cypriot success in gaining Cyprus' EU membership would deny Turkey the use of a Cyprus settlement as a bargaining chip to secure its own membership. Consequently, Ankara has vigorously opposed the island's membership without Turkish Cypriot consent, and unless Turkey itself is assured of joining the EU.

But having secured Cyprus' candidature, and with accession negotiations already in progress, neither Athens nor the Greek Cypriots would give up the EU option, which offers the best chance in many years to settle the Cyprus issue consistent with broad Greek/Greek Cypriot interests. This is why, in spite of the recent warming of relations with Athens and Ankara, the Greek government is bound to advance the cause of Cypriot membership in the EU.

Pulled in opposite directions by Greece and the Greek Cypriots on the one hand, and Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots on the other, Brussels is clearly faced with a huge dilemma on the Cyprus-EU membership issue. It is conceivable that a clear EU commitment for Turkey's own membership will help pave the way for Cypriot membership and a Cyprus settlement. However, even Turks who are optimistic regarding Turkey's prospects acknowledge that it would be many years before Turkey could satisfy EU membership requirements. In the meantime, the EU members themselves can contemplate their policy options concerning Cyprus, as the island's accession talks are not expected to conclude much before the year 2005.

Conclusions

As Greece and Turkey enter the twenty-first century, they face formidable obstacles in improving their relations. Even as both governments have shown a capacity to maintain the status quo in the Aegean, developments in Cyprus in the 1990s have displayed a potential to provoke new troubles. In particular, the possible success of Athens in securing EU

paras. 31-36 (1.htm).

12 Monteagle Stearns, „Greek Security Issues“ in Graham T. Allison and Kalypso Nicolaidis (eds.) *The Greek Paradox: Promise vs. Performance* (Cambridge, Mass, and London: The MIT Press, 1997), p. 71.

membership for Greek Cyprus will inevitably create new tensions unless Turkey receives assurances concerning its own membership.

At the same time, one must not lose sight of the fact that, in spite of several confrontations, the two neighbours have managed to avoid going to war with each other for more than seventy years.¹³ More often than not, Ankara and Athens have acted to avoid and defuse crises.

There may be a real opportunity to capitalize on the keen desire for reconciliation on the part of public opinion and a multiplicity of non-governmental groups in both countries. In describing the mood of public opinion in both countries, Greek foreign minister George Papandreou declared that „the earthquake created an amazing climate. The citizens took the lead in diplomacy (...) They have sent a very strong message to us that we must work for peace“¹⁴. Therein lies a worthy challenge for Greek and Turkish statesmen.

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13 The exception was Cyprus in 1974, where Turkish troops fought primarily against Greek Cypriot forces in a brief war.

14 The Telegraph (London), September 6, 1999.

