

CHAPTER 11
RAPPROCHEMENT ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL:
THE STORY OF THE TURKISH-GREEK FORUM
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Relations at many different levels between Greeks and Turks and dialogue between different groups never really came to a full stop even at the worst of times. Businessmen conducted their affairs and quite often acted as intermediaries between political actors. Municipalities organized get-togethers. Many Greek citizens either originating from Turkey or from different parts of Greece itself visited their neighbor since the lifting of the visa requirement for Greek citizens in 1985. At the darkest periods of the relations there were many attempts, mostly inconclusive, to have a sustained political or conflict resolution venue that was not official. Although, there always remained a level of communication, dialogue and constructive engagement between a wide range of groups and individuals, some meaningful and some not, no opening was able to generate its own sustainable momentum. In the prevailing atmosphere of insecurity, mistrust and intimidation that defined the 1990s, particularly after the Imia/Kardak crisis of 1996, many concerned Greeks and Turks from different walks of life looked for a workable ‘second-track’ diplomatic route.

Arguably, a majority of such efforts proved to be in vain for a variety of reasons. The political or conflict resolution groups, as opposed to cooperative endeavors between municipal authorities of the Aegean islands and the Aegean coast, were mostly ad-hoc, and the commitment in time, resources and follow-up could not always be taken for granted. In the best of circumstances, the disconnectedness of the process undertaken by private initiative from official circles rendered it a dead-end track. Many initiatives suffered from the fact that the usual suspects appeared in most of them whether these were academic gatherings, NGO meetings, professional conferences or panel discussions. Whereas all these efforts undoubtedly played a role as building blocks in the critically necessary process of confidence building between two peoples, for far too long immersed in their own mythmaking and mutual vilification, no progress could be registered in resolving the outstanding problems between the two states.

There was also the fact that unlike the Palestinian-Israeli problem, no incentive existed for the officialdom of both parties to search for new informal institutional arrangements for the resolution of bilateral issues. After all, Turkey and Greece were both mature states, allies in the North Atlantic Treaty organization, shared membership in different organizations and had fully accredited diplomats present in one another’s capitals. Whether they admitted it or not, there was as much reason for cooperation between the two in places like Southeastern Europe as there was for rivalry. There was no state of war between the two countries in spite of an endless flow of recriminations, accusations and projections that at times may have bordered on the absurd.

In the seemingly zero-sum game they were engaged in, the two parties took advantage of all opportunities to score against one another, keeping the rhetoric up, developing doctrines of war, looking for encircling alignments. There is no need to enumerate all the issues between the two countries as they are dealt with in much greater detail in the articles that make up this book. It took the absurd crisis over two pieces of uninhabited rocks that brought the two allies/neighbors/rivals, once more since 1987,¹ literally to the brink of war, to change the perception on both sides that this game of brinkmanship and escalation was not without a substantive cost. The atmosphere was

then ripe for an opening on second-track diplomacy. Under such circumstances there would have to be recognition, on the part of officialdom and civil actors alike, that there is a role to play for informal actors in decision-making processes. These should go beyond the historically well-tested practice of using private individuals, businessmen, journalists who have extensive connections on both sides to act as intermediaries and message carriers. Unofficial organizations, think-tanks and others could act as agents of change and provide a propeller for policy learning and innovative policies. Unconstrained by established bureaucratic norms, rules and parameters, such organizations can attempt to redefine material interests, change the perceptions of groups and indeed promote social learning. In these times, the resources available to civil society in human, information, expertise and material terms make institutionalized second-track diplomacy an effective supplement to interstate relations, particularly in conflict situations.

The Birth of the Forum

The idea to organize a gathering of prominent Greeks and Turks with the expectation that there would be a follow-up and that beyond this opening a diplomatic track could be launched, originated with Jamie Bruce-Lockhart. Bruce-Lockhart, a retired British Foreign Office veteran who worked as a press officer in Cyprus for four years, took charge of the Roberts Centre, in London, a private charitable fund. The Wills family that prospered in the tobacco business funded the Centre. Previously, it concentrated on confidence and peace building initiatives particularly in South Africa in the 1980s and later in the Middle East. In the wake of the Imia/Kardak crisis that nearly brought Turkey and Greece to the brink of war, Bruce-Lockhart believed that his organization could help sponsor a second-track initiative in a conflict that needed it much but did not have one. After all, following the crisis, some confidence building steps were taken between the two parties with the help of their allies. The plan could be successful, provided that organizations that were well established and could be trusted by both parties would be willing to associate themselves with the move.

Bruce-Lockhart chose *Wilton Park* as the site of the first meeting and arranged Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) to host the follow-up sessions. Wilton Park had an excellent reputation around the world for hosting important meetings where sensitive issues could be discussed without reservations and links for further engagements could be formed between conflicting parties. RUSI, as the first established British defense academy and with its affiliation with NATO, of which both Turkey and Greece were members, had impeccable credentials for both sides. The presence of such reputable organizations made the cooperation of the diplomats of the two countries easier as well. Wilton Park consulted with the British Embassies in both countries to choose the candidates who would be suitable for an ongoing process. Bruce-Lockhart also obtained support from both countries' ambassadors in London in preparing for the initial meeting.

The most significant aspect of the meeting that took place in November 1997, where RUSI assumed the chairmanship, was probably the opportunity for the participants from both sides to clear the air and present their perspectives, lay out their suspicions and perhaps expose their prejudices. It did help the prospects of the meeting that at the June 1997 NATO Summit in Madrid the two antagonists also reached an agreement under the auspices of the United States on how to conduct their affairs in the future. Mindful of the recent, almost calamitous crisis, the participants agreed on the necessity not to make this meeting a one-off event and encouraged the organizers to carry on with the work. It was thus decided that Bruce-Lockhart would go to Ankara and Athens to speak with potential participants and prepare the groundwork for the next meeting.

Encouraged by the proceedings of the Wilton Park meeting, Bruce-Lockhart arrived in Ankara on the day when the EU at its Luxembourg summit of 12-13 December 1997 decided to leave Turkey out of the list of candidate countries for membership. Without any doubt, this was the most inauspicious time imaginable for seeking official support for a second track experiment in Turkish-Greek relations as Greece (together with Germany) was universally seen in Turkey to be responsible for what constituted a most unwelcome summit conclusion for Turkey. In the event, the Turkish government decided to break off political relations with the EU and the country began to turn inwards. Contacted at that time to be the coordinator of the Turkish side in this process, retired ambassador Cem Duna as well as his would-be counterpart in Greece, the politically engaged businessman Costa Carras, suggested that the meeting scheduled for early spring 1998 be postponed.

Despite the interruption, the search for appropriate coordinators and the teams that would participate in the meetings, continued. Based on his observations of and conversations with the participants at Wilton Park and on advice from a range of international academics, former diplomats, journalists and the British Embassies in Ankara and Athens, Bruce-Lockhart began to select the participants for the upcoming meeting. In April Costa Carras and Paulina Lampsas, a key figure who worked both in the Prime Ministry and the Foreign Ministry, proposed Professor Christos Rozakis as Greek coordinator of the first Forum meeting. Rozakis was a highly respected academic and a known dove, a confidant of Prime Minister Simitis and the deputy Foreign Minister of Greece during the crisis over the islets. He was earlier one of the two official 'wise men' participating in discussions with their Turkish counterparts on bilateral issues concerning the Aegean. Through the efforts of journalist Mehmet Ali Birand, an old hand in Turkish-Greek relations and a personality who enjoys close relations with many power holders on both sides across the political spectrum, Bruce-Lockhart contacted retired admiral Güven Erkaya. At first sight, this was an odd choice since the late admiral, who was the commander of the Turkish navy during the Imia/Kardak crisis, was considered a hardliner and one of the primary forces behind Turkey's tough posture then and on some other occasions. But Admiral Erkaya saw the advantages and benefits of such an undertaking since he, himself, had been active in establishing better communications with his Greek counterpart in order to defuse crises that might get out of hand. He wanted to pursue an agenda of confidence building between the two countries and needed a platform to do it. The incipient Greek-Turkish Forum appealed to him as a concept and a possible vehicle to bring about the changes that he sought in bilateral relations.

With the sponsoring organization, the chairmanship and the coordinators in place for the next meeting to take place in May 15-16, 1998, a moderator was needed in order to ensure that the difficult process of sorting through a multitude of thorny issues during the following meetings would remain on track. This was the cue for Dan Smith, then director of Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO), to take his place on stage. Norway and Oslo's think-tanks had been jealously admired by the rest of the think-tank communities around the world. This was engendered by the contribution made by FAFO (a social science research institute with links to the Norwegian Labour Party and trades unions) to the Israeli-PLO agreement in Oslo that led to the Declaration of Principles. The Oslo agreement then led to the historical Rabin-Arafat handshake on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993. Smith, an accomplished academic with a substantial body of writings and experience on conflict resolution, turned out to be the ideal moderator as the record of the next four years would show.

The Forum Takes Shape and Its First Steps

The first meeting of the Greek-Turkish Forum took place on 15-16 May 1998 in London. In addition to the two coordinators, Rozakis and Erkaya, both sides were represented by a mixed group of journalists, academics, businessmen, retired diplomats and politicians who held a wide spectrum of views between them. TÜSİAD chairman Muharrem Kayhan, journalist Süleyman Gençel, journalist Costas Iordanides, businessman Theodore Papalexopoulos, Members of the Turkish Parliament Bülent Akarcalı and Ali Dinçer, independent member of the Greek Parliament Stephanos Manos were among the participants. As the statement released to the press by RUSI at the end of the meeting summarized it, 'the participants agreed to form a contact network without delay that would seek to maintain and enhance the dialogue between the two communities. To carry out the work that needed to be undertaken as the Forum institutionalized itself, the following sub-groups were formed: web site, public opinion survey, press and editorial matters, academic exchanges and conferences, documentation and history, confidence building measures.

Of these subgroups nothing of substance remained by the end of 2000 and many of their original coordinators have gradually dissociated themselves from the activities of the Forum. The web site was built and mastered by RUSI's James Ker-Lindsay and it is still running. Some of the essential information concerning the Forum and its activities can be found at <http://www.greekturkishforum.org>. For a variety of reasons, the Forum opted for not to have links to other sites, and decided to be overly discriminating about the articles that it would post. The result is that the site's current content leaves a lot to be desired.

The Forum spent considerable amount of time and energy to get the organization of simultaneous opinion polls, similar to the 'euro-barometer' surveys of the European Union, to be taken in both countries. The results were then going to be published on the same day in major national newspapers in each country. A Turkish and a Greek social scientist would each write an individual essay interpreting the results and these were also going to be published in both countries. Although the *Hürriyet* newspaper in Turkey and *Kathimerini* in Greece originally agreed to sponsor such a survey, in the wake of the capture of Abdullah Öcalan in Kenya after he left the residence of the Greek Ambassador, the deal fell through.² Unhappy with the tone of the coverage of the event by *Hürriyet*, *Kathimerini* dissociated itself from the project and no suitable substitute was found even after the amelioration of relations between Greece and Turkey that started in the Summer of 1999.

Most of the other subgroups did not really take off. There was already a plethora of academic gatherings, conferences and the like so that yet another one organized by the Forum could not have made a substantive contribution in that area. Although the Forum tried and to a degree succeeded in bringing together parliamentarians from both countries in its plenary meetings, such contacts did not lead to sustained relations. As the Forum gave up on having plenary meetings after the last one in March 2001, both because of financial constraints and the lack of tangible results, such contacts under its auspices had also come to an end. On the issue of engaging in the writing of history, there were better-equipped groups that had already begun to work on that matter or on reinterpreting the historical record.³ There was also no visible sign that any of the ongoing endeavors would be interested in accepting the Forum as an umbrella organization.

The media were an important source of the problems between the two countries. At the very least, they did not, in general, make much of an effort to rid their headlines, coverage and most often their editorial statements from an approach that inflamed the prejudices of the publics on both sides of the Aegean. Yet in the wake of the Öcalan

affair and the beginning of the closer and cooperative relations between the two foreign ministers, the situation began to change. Representatives from the media in both countries through their respective professional associations came together in a number of conferences and took some steps to put a lid on the prevailing chauvinistic discourse in the way they reported the news. Although there is yet much distance to be covered for a truly objective, informed and unbiased presentation of the 'other side' in the media, the Forum no longer concerns itself with that matter.

In the early stages, therefore, the most productive and consequential subgroup of the Forum turned out to be the one concentrating on *Confidence Building Measures* (CBM). The Turkish side of the group was headed by Admiral Erkaya who was at the time ambassador-at-large and chief counsel to Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz. Admiral Erkaya was aided by Professor Hasan Ünal, a knowledgeable and increasingly hawkish specialist from Ankara's Bilkent University. The two other members were Mr. Ali Dinçer, a Member of Parliament and Captain Ziya Bülent, Admiral Erkaya's aide-de-camp. The Greek side was headed by Professor Rozakis, aided by Paulina Lampsa. The other two members on the Greek side were Professor Theodore Couloumbis from Athens University and retired Ambassador Costas Zepos. Professor Couloumbis was an internationally renowned scholar of International Relations and one of the two 'wise men' on the Greek side designated to discuss Aegean matters with their Turkish counterparts. Ambassador Zepos was a highly respected diplomat, who negotiated Greece's accession to the European Community and had been active in Turco-Greek affairs. James Ker-Lindsay of RUSI and Dan Smith of PRIO participated in the deliberations of the subgroup as well.

The CBM subgroup held two substantive meetings after the May launch. The Turkish side came prepared to the meeting in Athens that took place on 19-20 September 1998 with a draft proposal on CBMs. The discussion that ensued was thorough, constructive, far-reaching and frank. The absence of a military person on the Greek side who could discuss the technical aspects of military CBM's was deemed by all participants to be unfortunate especially given the open and problem-solving oriented nature of the discussion. The group met once more in İstanbul on 24-25 October 1998. By then Professor Rozakis had to leave the Forum as he was appointed to the European Court on Human Rights. Costas Zepos replaced him as the Greek party's head in the CBM group. Costas Carras, with his boundless energy, assumed the role of the overall coordinator of the Greek party in the Forum. At the end of the deliberations the group prepared a report outlining the Suggested Confidence Building Measures and Crisis Avoidance Measures (CAMs), to be submitted to the plenary meeting that was scheduled to take place on 6-8 November at Delphi, Greece.⁴

The Report was never made public but it included proposals that covered three different areas: Non-Governmental, Inter-Governmental and Peacekeeping and Military Related Proposals.⁵ The proposals that were made were characterized as either CBMs or CAMs. It specified by whom the measures would have to be implemented. For each proposal the question as to whether or not it needed governmental, non-governmental or a mixed approach was raised. Although the Report was never officially submitted to the two governments, undoubtedly the nature and content of the discussions were relayed to the relevant authorities. This may have contributed to the continuation of the more relaxed atmosphere between the two countries that began a year earlier and may have helped the containment of the frictions that erupted in the succeeding years either during NATO exercises or because of the dog fights over the Aegean.

Following its second plenary in November, the critical threshold for the Forum was passed in the wake of the Öcalan affair and the group came into its own. The

circumstances surrounding the apprehension of Öcalan unsurprisingly generated great tension between Turkey and Greece. Not only were the two governments seriously at odds with one another, but long-standing collaborative enterprises were also threatened. The Turkish-Greek Business Council's meeting was cancelled because of the Turkish side's unilateral decision. Individual Turks, long associated with favoring friendly relations between Turkey and Greece, took to recriminations. Suddenly, almost all efforts to build bridges between Greece and Turkey and Turks and Greeks came to a halt. It was to the credit of the Forum and the high point of its existence that under the blistering winds of the post-Öcalan climate, its CBM subgroup met in Athens in April 1999 and the plenary was convened in May in İstanbul.⁶ By then the ailing Admiral Erkaya was replaced as coordinator of the Turkish side by former Foreign Minister İlder Turkmen who had a long and distinguished career as a diplomat and also served as ambassador in Athens.

The very fact that these meetings took place was an important landmark in the growth and maturing of the Forum. It was also widely agreed at that time, despite some strong dissent, that in addition to the CBMs the Forum in general and the CBM subgroup in particular had to involve themselves with political analysis as well. The shakedown in Greece following the Öcalan affair, the replacement of Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos by Yorgos Papandreou who had a significantly different temperament and approach to Turkish-Greek relations were considered to be positive developments. On the other hand, partially as a result of the apprehension of Öcalan, the April 1999 elections in Turkey recorded an upsurge of nationalism and brought to power a coalition government of the left and right nationalists along with a center-right party, under the premiership of Bülent Ecevit.

The Spring of 1999 was also the time of the NATO intervention in Serbia that aimed at protecting the Albanians of the province of Kosovo. Whereas the Greek public vehemently opposed the intervention, the Turkish public was delighted that NATO, in whose operations the Turkish Air Force also participated, would not allow a repeat of Bosnia. The concerns that the Turkish government had, about potentially supporting a separatist movement, remained unarticulated. The Greek government treaded a delicate line between its alliance obligations and the fury of its own public and managed to conduct a successful policy. It also transpired both before and during the Kosovo crisis that all the loose talk about this war eventually engulfing Turkey and Greece and possibly Bulgaria as well was just speculation. The two countries had a strong interest in making sure that the conflict remained contained, that the operation was finalized in a short time and that stabilization started immediately. It was partially because of the personnel change in Greece and partially because of the commonality of interests in Southeast Europe, which became so evident by the recent crisis in Kosovo, that the ice-breaking meeting of two foreign ministers took place in New York on 30 June 1999.

Sensing that the turn of the mood in the relations provided an important opportunity, the Forum decided to come forward and present some of the conclusions from its work to date to the two ministers. The CBM group met in Athens to discuss the recent developments and to decide on the proper course of action. In a letter dated 7 July 1999, Admiral Cobbold from RUSI and Dan Smith from PRIO, two of the facilitators, wrote to Ministers Cem and Papandreou on behalf of the Greek-Turkish Forum. In the letter, after mentioning the two ministers' recent exchange of letters and their meeting in New York, Cobbold and Smith presented ten proposals that were agreed upon at the Athens meeting. In the words of the letter;

These ten proposals are not an exhaustive list of possible measures. They draw on the background of discussion over the past fourteen months. Participants selected them on the basis of practicality and the potential for quick implementation without extensive staff preparation. These relatively modest yet meaningful steps are aimed at addressing the five areas you discussed in your meeting in New York. The ten proposals are as follows:

Peacekeeping

- Arrange liaison and co-operation between Greek and Turkish contingents in KFOR [United Nations Kosovo Force].
- Convene a conference for Greek and Turkish staff officers on the lessons learned from the experience of Operation Alba.

Official Conduct and Communication

- Authorize direct contact and communication between the ministers of the two governments who handle the issues highlighted in your meeting of June 30, specifically: Culture; Tourism; Trade; Public Order/Interior; [and] Environment.
- Hold regular meetings of the Under-Secretaries of the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Business Cooperation

- In order to strengthen the prospects for business and investment between the two countries, select and implement one of the existing proposals for the prevention of double taxation.
- Implement the project on mutual restoration of monuments developed over several years by meetings of businessmen from Greece and Turkey

Exchanges and contacts

- Encourage exchanges of lectures to university students by government ministers.
- Facilitate special visa arrangements for journalists and businessmen.
- Encourage local authorities of the two countries to work together to foster tourism.
- Ensure that the encouragement given to contacts between local non-governmental organizations of both countries is endorsed through direct practical assistance.

Given the feedback provided to the governments by some of the participants in Forum meetings, perhaps it was not at all surprising that this list of proposals and the list of the agreements signed between Greece and Turkey, including the pending agreement on double taxation, had a lot of items in common.⁷

In August and September 1999, the two countries were both literally shaken by strong earthquakes. The Greek public's compassionate response and generous help in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Turkey on 17 August that claimed at least fifteen thousand lives broke the ice between the two societies. The Turks reciprocated with the full force of their emotions when Greece too was hit by an earthquake a few weeks later.⁸ With these lethal acts of nature, the two neighboring peoples have rediscovered each other's humanity and changed their attitude towards one another. The stage was truly set for a rapprochement that was expected to bear its first fruit at the Helsinki summit of the EU in December 1999.

The circumstances were auspicious for the Forum to carry on its work and produce papers to address the tangible problems between the two countries. By the end of 1999, the CBM group became the Political Analysis Group (PAG) and effectively overtook the Forum whose plenary meetings would prove to be less and less useful. At the end of 2000 both RUSI and the Roberts Center exited in accordance with an earlier decision to localize the process. The Foreign Ministries provided the financing for the PAG meetings that took place six times a year evenly divided between Athens and Istanbul. PRIO remained on board and Dan Smith continued as the facilitator with Jamie Bruce-Lockhart, retired from the Roberts Centre as well, assisting him as co-facilitator.

The work of the PAG

By the beginning of 2000, many of the original participants in the Forum had gone their way. The core group that would tackle the issue of formulating policy frameworks for the Aegean and possibly for Cyprus and that decided to try the European Union as well for recognition and funding consisted of the following individuals: Costas Carras, Costas Zepos, Theodore Couloumbis, Arghyris Fatouros (a well respected professor of law at the University of Athens who served as the minister of Communications prior to the Greek elections in 2000, and currently a wise man on the Greek side for discussing the Aegean issues), Thanos Veremis (another well respected professor from Athens University who wrote extensively on Turkish-Greek relations), Paulina Lampsas made up the Greek side. İltar Türkmen, Ziya Bülent, Cem Duna, Mehmet Ali Birand, Sami Kohen (the dean of Turkish foreign policy commentators and a well-respected journalist), Muharrem Kayhan (an industrialist and former chairman of Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association, who left the group after the Aegean paper), Soli Özel were the members of PAG on the Turkish side. Birand and Kohen could rarely participate in meetings because of schedule conflicts. In 2000 Özdem Sanberk, a seasoned diplomat who served as the undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Turkish Ambassador in London when the Forum was being launched, joined the group. Üstün Ergüder, an eminent political scientist and the former rector of Boğaziçi University, İstanbul, followed suit in 2001. Until RUSI officially withdrew from the Forum, Jonathan Eyal, a senior associate of RUSI made invaluable contributions to the deliberations of the PAG.

The members of the PAG hold a wide variety of views, have different temperaments and negotiation styles. This fact both enriches the debate and complicates the progression of the discussions. The meetings usually open with a brief presentation by the two coordinators on Turkish and Greek political developments and political calendar. The political calendar usually serves to determine what can or cannot be done at a specific date. There are differences of opinion as should be expected between the two groups, but more interestingly there are serious differences as well within each group as to the approach to certain topics or the best way to tackle a specific issue. The discussions usually take place within the bounds of civility and comity, in spite of the fact that all participants are fairly opinionated and express their views with passion. Occasional flare-up of tempers is well contained. What keeps the group disciplined is its concentration on the framework of common interests that it devised for itself. Dan Smith's interventions and guidance also play a constructive part in keeping the group to its task. The group also proved considerably imaginative in finding ways to break gridlocks and move forward. The key to the exceptionally smooth operation of the PAG meetings, besides the presence of competent facilitators, is the fact that the members have weathered the worst period in Turkish-Greek relations. Having met fairly regularly, in an engaged fashion, to discuss issues of mutual concern they developed mutual trust, which enabled them as individuals to be as forthcoming as possible.

The major achievement of the PAG/Forum to date has been the publication of its report entitled *Issues in the Aegean: Openings and Possibilities* (see Appendix I). The report was the fruit of many months of discussions and most specifically two meetings, one in Athens the other in İstanbul in April and June 2000 respectively, devoted entirely to draft the paper. During these sessions the points that were agreed upon would be put in draft form by the facilitators and then debated, altered, contended and finally agreed upon. The finalized report was presented to both Foreign Ministers on June 23, 2000 by the co-coordinators, Carras and Türkmen. As the paper stated its 'preferred methodology is to start not from legal or political positions and arguments, but from an assessment of interests –common interests to start with, but each state's particular interests as well.'

Referring to an earlier memorandum submitted to the EU officials in Brussels during a visit in March 2000 and then to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both countries, the Forum identified the following common interests of Greece and Turkey:

- A fundamental interest in freedom of navigation [in the Aegean].
- An interest in cooperation on environmental protection, on search and rescue, and policing.
- An interest in cooperation in promoting tourism.
- An interest in ensuring [that] there is no use or threat of force in the pursuit of attempted settlement of differences.
- An interest in understanding each other's attitude as to whether, when and how the issue should go to the International Court of Justice.

Discussions in the GTF (Greek-Turkish Forum) have made clear that the underlying issues are overlaid by perceptions of threat and prestige. ...Discussions in the GTF have identified the importance of both demystifying and unpacking the contentious issues over the Aegean. This may already be producing results: recently progress has been made towards settling the contentious issue of flight information procedures.

Three key issues are:

- Delimitation of the continental shelf;
- Delimitation of territorial waters and air space;
- The disputed interpretation of treaty restrictions on the militarization of certain Greek islands.

The GTF then went on to propose a particular route in dealing with these issues and suggested a three-step approach. The first issue to be dealt with was the delimitation of the continental shelf in a two-stage process. The first stage called for negotiations of a predetermined duration and the second stage called for the submission of all unsettled issues to the International Court of Justice. The GTF paper believed that the 'issues of sea and air zones might be approached incidentally to the main issue, at either stage of the process, as primarily problems of interpreting treaties and precedent.' As for the third issue of demilitarization and disputed interpretations, the GTF paper believed that once the first two matters were brought to a conclusion successfully, 'the salience of this issue would decline sharply'. So, it was best to leave it to the very end of the process. The GTF paper also suggested that this avenue would be viable if there is;

- Informal agreement in advance by both sides that they will go through the procedures in 1 and 2 above in partnership;
- A low-key, low-publicity approach on both sides, backed by a continuing dialogue that takes common interests as the starting point; [and]
- Sensitivity by each government towards the concerns of and pressures by public opinion in the other country.

After finishing and submitting the Aegean paper that was silently but well-received by the Ministries, the Forum had to set a new agenda for itself. After lengthy deliberations the Forum decided to undertake a study on Cyprus which most participants agreed was the core issue that poisoned Turkish-Greek relations. Not wishing to be presumptuous, the Forum decided to analyze the importance of solving the Cyprus issue from the perspective of the common interests of Greece and Turkey and did not dwell on possible solutions to the problem. Although the initial plan was to just outline the common interests, once that task was finished the Forum decided to undertake a paper identifying the 'Elements of a settlement in Cyprus'. After four PAG meetings between December 2000 and June 2001 a text was finalized but because of the objections of one member it was not adopted as a Forum paper.

Yet, the Forum remained determined to get involved in the Cyprus issue. The opening by Rauf Denktaş in December 2001 and the resumption of talks between Mr.

Glafcos Clerides and Mr. Denktaş gave further impetus to the Forum. In April and July of 2002 the Forum sponsored, with the help of PRIO, two meetings bringing together Greek and Turkish Cypriots from politics and business life and representing almost the entire political spectrum.⁹ These talks were fruitful and they enabled the parties to understand one another's positions, appreciate each other's difficulties and to be introduced to ideas and perceptions that might prove to be useful as the critical deadline of the EU's Copenhagen Summit in December 2002 approaches. At that summit, the EU will make its decision on enlargement as well as whether or not Turkey will be given a date to start negotiations provided that it fulfills the so-called Copenhagen Criteria of 1993. Should Cyprus be admitted as a divided island, that is without an agreement with the Turkish side, most observers fear that deterioration in Greek-Turkish relations may prove to be inevitable. As a result of this concern the Forum also decided to go public and present itself and its work to audiences in Ankara, İstanbul and Athens. The inspiration for this enterprise also came from a successful 'road-show' that Forum members performed at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in late March 2002.¹⁰ In a well-attended two-day conference, Forum members explained to the audience what the Forum was about and presented their personal views on Turkish-Greek relations, on Cyprus, on Greek and Turkish foreign policies.

Assessment of the Forum

The Greek-Turkish Forum has turned into a successful second-track diplomacy effort. From the beginning, the Greek Foreign Ministry showed more interest and engagement in its activities than the Turkish one, although the latter continued to provide financial support for the Forum's activities. It is essential to recognize that whatever success the GTF may have registered could not have been achieved without the tacit support of the two governments. Perhaps more importantly, the lesson that one can draw from the Forum's journey is that second-track initiatives need both a first-track opening in the background and a degree of official sanctioning that does not jeopardize their independence of thought and action. Arguably, without the timid post-Kardak steps, the launch of the Forum would have met the fate of many other such initiatives. Without the post-Öcalan, post-earthquake rapprochement, the Forum could not have come of age. It is under these circumstances that the major accomplishment of the Forum, the paper on the Aegean, is treated as an important document that could provide a methodological basis for any future negotiations on these matters.

The success of the Forum and its longevity may be the function of many factors. First among these is the fact that the Forum itself had been a CBM. Four years of, at times grueling meetings, open discussions, opinionated arguments brought about a degree of mutual trust between the two parties that was extraordinarily valuable. The emphasis on a political analysis of Greek and Turkish public affairs provided both parties with a better understanding of political developments, public moods and perceptions in each country. This appreciation made it possible to be careful about how to approach controversial topics, how to select the language of proposals and how to devise policy alternatives.

It was also undoubtedly of critical importance that the Forum could benefit from the expertise, experience and the impartiality of reputed organizations and competent facilitators. The contributions of Bruce-Lockhart, Smith, Eyal, Cobbold at the initial stages of the gatherings when the structure was still very fragile was indispensable. As Bruce-Lockhart himself put it, 'an umbrella of neutral imprimatur was needed in early days as GTF was finding its way forward and in times of mutual national hostility and tension - because of real fears of participants of being branded "traitor" and potential

damage to personal career, standing or interests'. This observation perhaps addresses a most important concern about second track processes. There is always a careful balance that must be observed between getting too far ahead of the curve on an issue or trailing behind official openings. In the case of the Forum, the record so far suggests that it managed to be just daring and imaginative enough to generate important openings and sensible enough not to venture to the realm of irrelevance.

Ultimately, what made the Forum a relative success story was the devotion of the participants to the cause and work at hand. The willingness to spend endless hours around a table, at times in stuffy rooms with bad coffee and cookies, and to discuss issues of mutual concern with imagination until you find an opening is truly the *sine qua non* of any such endeavor. In a way a successful second-track initiative may be as much the result of stamina and stomach as it is of sense and sagacity.

ENDNOTES

¹ For details of the crisis see Mustafa Aydın, 'Cacophony in the Aegean: Contemporary Turkish-Greek Relations', *Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 27 (1997), pp. 109-140.

² For details of the Öcalan affair and its effects on Greek-Turkish relations see Şahin Alpay, 'After Öcalan', *Private View* (Spring 2000), pp. 34-41.

³ As a result of the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation, signed between two foreign ministers on February 2000, an official working group was established to 'co-operate on the presentation of history, geography, culture and economy of the other country, especially in the school textbooks...[and to] exchange and study school textbooks, with a view to propose the correction of inaccuracies'. For the full text of the agreement see [http://www.greekturkishforum.org/bilat_6.htm].

⁴ For the text of the press release after Delphi meeting see [http://www.greekturkishforum.org/pr_1.htm].

⁵ For details of the 'Report Outlining the Suggested Confidence Building Measures and Crisis Avoidance Measures Proposed by the CBMs Working Group', see [http://www.greekturkishforum.org/rep_1.htm].

⁶ For the text of the press release after İstanbul meeting see [http://www.greekturkishforum.org/pr_2.htm].

⁷ For the texts of the 9 agreements signed between the two sides on January-February 2000 see [<http://www.greekturkishforum.org/documents.htm>].

⁸ For an excellent analysis of the effect of the earthquakes see, Gülden Ayman, 'Springtime in the Aegean', *Private View* (Spring 2000), pp. 55-61.

⁹ For the participants and the press release of the later meeting see [http://www.greekturkishforum.org/pr_8.htm].

¹⁰ See [http://www.greekturkishforum.org/pr_9.htm].

Appendix I: *Issues in the Aegean: Openings and Possibilities.*¹

In a memorandum of 10 March 2000, submitted initially to EU officials in Brussels, and later sent to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Greece and Turkey, the Greek-Turkish Forum (GTF) set out the issues in relations between Turkey and Greece on which it will focus some of its work for the coming period, and explained its methodology.

The approach of the GTF is to attempt to facilitate the search for solutions and to indicate fruitful approaches. Our preferred methodology is to start not from legal or political positions and arguments, but from an assessment of interests - common interests to start with, but with each state's particular interests as well. Acknowledging the existence of common interest in areas of contention between the two countries can be a useful starting point in the search for solutions to existing problems. It is also necessary, of course, for each government to clarify its aims and to comprehend its neighbor's particular interests. Recognizing common interests makes the search for solutions a mutual exercise: understanding each state's separate interests is a necessary component of a sustainable agreement.

In the context of the differences over Aegean issues, the GTF's March memorandum identified both general and specific common interests. The general point made is that "the common interest in integration emphasizes the importance of Turkey's EU accession process", in the framework of the Helsinki summit declaration. As to specific Aegean issues, the GTF's earlier memorandum identified the following common interests of Greece and Turkey:

- A fundamental interest in freedom of navigation.
- An interest in cooperation on environmental protection, on search and rescue, and policing.
- An interest in cooperation in promoting tourism.
- An interest in ensuring there is no use or threat of use of force in the pursuit of attempted settlement of differences.
- An interest in understanding each other's attitude as to whether when and how the issue the issue should go to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Discussions in the GTF have made clear that the underlying issues are overlaid by perceptions of threat and of prestige. The GTF is fully aware of and has reflected on the tone and contents of debate in both Greece and Turkey over the years, which have made these important issues so complex. However, the GTF has chosen not to go into that aspect of the Aegean issue here, because it seems to us that the long-term interests of both countries encourage settlement. If so, a fresh approach is required, and we have indicated above the common interests, both general and specific, which we believe should govern such an approach.

Discussions in the GTF have identified the importance of both demystifying and unpacking the contentious issues over the Aegean. This may already be producing

¹ Text is taken from Greek-Turkish Forum web site, at [http://www.greekturkishforum.org/rep_2.htm]. The members of the Political Analysis Group who worked on the text were Costas Carras (Greek Coordinator), İter Türkmen (Turkish Coordinator), Mehmet Ali Birand, Ziya Bülent, Theodoros Couloumbis, Cem Duna, Arghyris Fatouros, Muharrem Kayhan, Paulina Lampsa, Soli Özel, Özdem Sanberk, and Costas Zepos.

results: recently progress has been made towards settling the contentious issue of flight information procedures.

Three key issues are:

- delimitation of the continental shelf,
- delimitation of territorial waters and air space,
- the disputed interpretation of treaty restrictions on the militarization of certain Greek islands.

The GTF recognizes these issues are affected alike by important questions of interpretation of international law, or procedure, of concepts of national interest, and of attitudes and perceptions. To make progress, it is important that accurate information about both substance and procedure in these matters is publicly available.

The GTF wonders whether the following route could be a helpful way to work towards a resolution of these three problems. Any other issue that concerns territorial jurisdiction should be treated as a matter of treaty interpretation to be brought before the ICJ by the party raising it.

1. The delimitation of the continental shelf is an issue that may be entrusted to a two-stage process, these two stages to be determined by the two countries in advance, with a mutual undertaking that neither country will act to change the existing legal situation until the entire process has been completed. The first stage would be one of negotiation, of predetermined duration, which may lead either to an agreement on some of all substantive issues or to submission of any remaining issues to the ICJ through a *compromis*. The settlement of any issues which may occur at that stage shall be formally confirmed by relevant agreements, while any issues not settled at the first stage will then be submitted to the ICJ. The underlying premise of the entire process is that, at the start, both parties will have accepted the jurisdiction of the ICJ.
2. Issues of sea and air zones might be approached incidentally to the main issue, at either stage of the process, as primarily problems of interpreting treaties and precedent. An ICJ judgment on the continental shelf and agreed interpretation of the treaty regime in the Aegean would ensure the freedom of navigation each side requires, as also the exploitation of sea resources.
3. The issue of the effects of treaty restrictions on the militarization of certain Greek islands is best left until last. Were all the other issues in the Aegean settled, and were the Greek-Turkish rapprochement making progress on other key questions, the GTF suspects that the salience of this issue would decline sharply. The GTF therefore concludes there is nothing to be gained by openly addressing this issue at this time.

Following this avenue is viable if there is:

- Informal agreement in advance by both sides that they will go through the procedures in 1 and 2 above in partnership.
- A low-key, low publicity approach on both sides, backed by continuing dialogue that takes common interests as the starting point.
- Sensitivity by each government towards the concerns of and pressures by public opinion in the other country.

The GTF regards it as possible that, undertaken in this way, a new approach to the Aegean issues would do a great deal to underpin the current improvement in bilateral relations.