

Civil Society Development Program (CSDP) run by the  
EC Representation - NGO Support Team (Euromed).

THE IMAGINED  
'OTHER'  
AS NATIONAL  
IDENTITY  
GREEKS & TURKS

Hercules Millas

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Turkish-Greek Civic Dialogue Project, a component of a larger ED funded programme - Civil Society Development Programme (CSDP) - has been implemented by NGO Support Team during the period between November 2002 and November 2004.

This Civic Dialogue Project was foreseen by the Commission as a demonstration project along with other similar micro projects. Its aim was to foster better relationships between the two societies by encouraging cooperation and partnership between the NGOs and other civil forces present in Turkey and Greece. In this respect our overall mission has been to contribute to the reconciliation process between the two countries rooted back in 1999.

For the implementation of this well programmed project by EC, NGO Support Team has decided to work with experts who are dedicated to improve Greek-Turkish relations in both countries. As members of NGO Support Team we were very ambitious to introduce an innovative perspective differing from earlier approaches and to come up with a sound methodology. During the whole project, especially during the workshops, we emphasised the lack of knowledge about the "other country" and the existence of stereotypes, prejudices, and moreover, the reasonless fears from strangers/neighbors. In this process we also tried to identify the needs. It was agreed that present networks and joint projects could not go as deep as it was desired and that fears and prejudices would still block fruitful cooperation, even in the resolution of modest technical problems.

We believe that the first step toward a solution on to improve civic dialogue between the two countries is to engender some kind of a self knowledge among the workshop participants. As an expected result (ideally of course); we hoped to contribute to a positive kind of transformation on several levels such as attitudes, behaviors and access to knowledge and information among both societies. This book can be considered as the embodiment of our contribution.

With this occasion we would like to thank all our contributors namely Mr. Gorgios Terzis and Mr. Halil Nalçaoğlu for their kind support to the design of the workshops, to Ms. Paulina Lampsas for sharing with us her specific experiences on Turkish-Greek relations and for promoting our activities in Greece and to Ms. Damla Demiröz for her kind contribution. We also like to express our gratitude to our workshop participants for the work they put forth and for their sincerity about their own prejudices. Without them this book would not be possible.

On behalf of the NGO Support Team special thanks go to Mr. Hercules Millas; not only for writing this impressive book but also for his great energy to make us understand better the other's perception on various occasions. We know that in the 60's he was a champion sprinter of Turkey (100/200 meters), today, he is the champion of Turkish-Greek Civic Relations.

The participants of first workshop will remember the suggestion which came from gender and human rights thematic area subgroup "on cloning Mr. Millas" for a better cooperation in two countries. We believe that instead of cloning Mr. Millas, it would be better if we could create new names among the youth. We are hopeful to see this to happen in the years to come.

Finally we would like to thank to our Task Managers at the EC, Ms. Meriç Özgüneş and Ira Kaliampetsos as well as to the Delegation of European Commission to Turkey itself for their generous support to our project.

We hope that this book will help to give to the readers the right-message: "self knowledge . Enjoy !

CSDP NGO Support Team

## Preface

This book is a side product of three workshops that took place in Istanbul and in Athens in 2003 and 2004 and its object is to shed light to chronic conflicts that arise between neighboring countries.

The workshops were conceptualized and designed (together with other activities) under the auspices of the Civil Society Development Program (CSDP) run by the EC Representation and put into practice by NGO Support Team (Euromed). A separate general report is issued showing all particulars and outcomes of this wider program.

During the three workshops, among other activities, two questions were asked to the Greeks and Turkish participants who were all NGO representatives or academics and policy makers:

- a) What do you think as the negative qualities of the Other / what do you not like about the Other? and
- b) What do you think the Other thinks as your negative qualities / what do you think the Other does not like about you?

The answers in conjunction with other findings from other investigations and observations are illuminating. They shed light to issues that are related to national conflicts and national identity. This study is limited to this part of the workshop. The views, the evaluations and the conclusions presented in this analysis are of my own and they do not necessarily represent the views of the other members of the CSDP group. I participated in the workshops as the local focal point of Athens and as one of the moderators.

The answers to the said questions not only provide, for the first time, a 'list' of complaints, grievances, resentments and laments of the Greeks and Turks but they also show the way the two sides perceive and experience differently a conflict that at first glance seems to be symmetrical and/or reciprocal. Each side has its own repertoire of issues and complaints, its own sources that reproduce the conflict, as well as its unique way of confronting and coping with its frustration.

The evaluation of the findings also showed that the citizens of the two countries, irrespective of their intentions, operate on different levels of consciousness. Sometimes they silence some crucial issues, not only to be politically correct, but also because they do not accept them as such. And some other times, they voice complaints only indirectly, not even noticing that they constitute expressions of acute grievances and anger. There are various areas of conflict that are 'suppressed' and expressed as simple political issues, hiding the real questions such as standing fears, sense of shame, communal identity based on 'history', etc.

Greek-Turkish conflict and the craved rapprochement are more complex in the laymen's level than it is with politicians. National identity - the common denominator of all participants in any interethnic conflict - does not function to maximize social interest. It has its own intricate course. For this reason the general purpose of the three workshops was to accomplish 'self-knowledge'. It was a very ambitious target. Definitely we did not reach it but I hope we made a good start. The findings of these workshops together with other investigations and findings on Greek-Turkish relations compose a proposal to conceptualize an inter-national conflict on its inner dynamics.

Hercules Millas

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## Introduction

The Greeks and the Turks, especially after 1999, as if they wanted to make a fresh start in the new millennium, signaled a new period in their bilateral relations. The two parties, both on the level of the dignitaries, and of the citizens and NGOs now enjoy amicable relations. The question that is difficult to answer is the following: was the passed years of controversy an anomaly and a parenthesis that will not be repeated or is the present rapprochement a temporary situation that may give way to the old skirmishes?

The question can be put in another way too. Are the issues between Greece and Turkey of a contingent nature, in other words 'technical' and therefore can be resolved when tackled with 'good will' and systematically, or is there a more fundamental basis that nourishes and recreates enmity continuously, which in turn changes simple issues to serious problems? Naturally there may be a third alternative too: some issues may be of one kind and some problems of the other – or some individuals may behave as if the issues are easy to handle and others as if there are insuperable obstacles and a continuous crisis.

There are many analysts lately who are confident that the present day rapprochement is a 'one-way' leading to permanent peaceful coexistence. However, the questions are still valid. Since optimistic predicaments can only be verified in the future and especially since it is a necessity to assess the present amiable relations, a more thorough analysis is worthwhile.

I will first present some texts of Greeks and Turks to demonstrate that the issue is complex. One of the difficulties lies with the parties involved and not with the issues of controversy, as it is the case with most interethnic conflicts. The Greeks and the Turks do not perceive themselves as the intermediary (the subject) of each issue and problem. They do not even doubt that it is their evaluations – which often is exactly the opposite of the other side - that turns issues to problems, differences to enmity and small difficulties to a crisis. They perceive themselves as objective observers. They are confident that only the Other is ill informed, biased, obsessed, uneasy with and not ready to face reality. They have a great trust in their 'eyes' and their judgments and they do not suspect that human beings are not neutral detectors.

A second difficulty lies with the national identity of the participants. All issues in Greek-Turkish relations are associated with this identity since they are characterized and perceived within a national context. Once a problem is classified or is perceived as 'national' it is handled as such. Even the ecological issues in the Aegean become national ones once they are connected to 'Greek' or 'Turkish' sea, air space, territorial limits and eventually to 'our' and 'your' fish, birds, turtles etc.

This 'identity' is a complex issue in itself. It seems to consist of a self-identification that involves a perception of a past and a real or imagined group with which the citizens associate themselves. Modern citizens of nation-states are not neutral *vis a vis* this past and this in-group. They need to feel honored

by 'their' heritage and they enjoy portraying this heritage and history in a manner that is not traumatic to their identity. The Other plays an important role in this process. Sometimes the Other is what 'we' do not want to be and therefore he/she is described as the most negative person or nation. Sometimes we present him/her as a friend and as a positive Other, again with similar drives: the Other may be metamorphosed to the one who loves us and thus confirms 'our' superior and magnanimous past, our worth and our right to be appreciated; in short the positive Other is turned to a messenger who trumpets forth 'our' superiority.

On the theoretical level these introductory remarks do not pose any difficulty to anybody. All may accept the above as 'general truths' because they perceive them as realities associated only to the Other. Accepting the existence of prejudice, obsession, shortsightedness and even fanaticism, inability to introspect (self examination) and absence of self-doubt that are the result of a deep-seated 'identity' is not a problem; provided we talk about the Other.

Therefore the Greek-Turkish relations is a complex situation since the 'national' dimension of human relations is intricate, difficult to pinpoint and especially hard to be accepted by the interested parties. Silencing issues is one of the commonest manifestations of the parties, especially when they meet. Developing a selective national memory, i.e, forgetting some past incidents and living emotionally with some centuries-old other ones as if they happened only yesterday is another common phenomenon.

I will try in this analysis to discuss these issues. I will try to demonstrate the validity of my arguments hoping this enterprise will comprise a basis for a fruitful dialog – with the Other but especially with ourselves. I believe that 'self-knowledge' is the key to transect prejudices and harmful grievances.

#### Some texts (or behaviors) that need deconstruction

Some people often present contradictions in their arguments. Contradictions are very helpful in finding problematic areas. Self-contradictory statements show strain and confusion, they may present topics that cannot be handled effectively and calmly. Wishful thinking is characterized by fallacious arguments. Contradictions also demonstrate how complex a situation can be.

I will first present an article of a Turkish journalist that was published two days before I wrote these lines.<sup>1</sup> N. Özgentürk had just visited Greece, participated in a festival for Greek-Turkish friendship in North Greece and he wrote his impressions. He started saying that 'with the Greeks we are like twin brothers. *Even* our plaki (boiled beans), our tsifteteli and zeybek (two dances) are the same.' Another issue that shows that the two sides are like twins is the football victory of Greek team in the European championship and the Turkish success in the World Cup. Especially 'both sides' celebrate their victories with great enthusiasm. The journalist also narrates how both Greeks and Turks cheered 'long live peace' during this festival. Then he gives some cases where 'we' differ and concludes again that 'we' are very close: 'both they and we, like to enjoy life and know how to face the sorrows of life.'

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<sup>1</sup> Nebil Özgentürk, 'Komşuyla Ayrımız Gayrımız', *Sabah*, 4 July 2004.

The surprise in the article is the list of differences. There are so many that the metaphor of 'twins' seems redundant. I mention some that the journalist noticed during his visit to Greece: politically the Greeks are in peace with democracy and they have imprisoned army officials who dared to establish a dictatorship, whereas in Turkey dictators are treated as heroes; Turkey has political problems and 'contradictions'; in Turkey intellectuals go to prison for having expressed their opinions; Greek politicians (even though they speak a lot like their fellows in Turkey) move around without bodyguards contrary to their counterparts; women are more free and can enjoy life going out at nights; in short the membership to European Union and the high income make the big difference.

The journalist goes on enumerating differences of everyday life. Greeks 'know how to rest and enjoy': they have the habit of having a siesta in the afternoon and then they go out to enjoy themselves. When they drink they do not quarrel and do not start shooting like the Turks. People are not killed for that in Greece. Greeks sing their own songs, not foreign ones like 'us'; and they dance for themselves not like 'us' just to show off. Their marriages are not so 'official' and the bride and the groom are relaxed. In the hotels the waiters and the receptionists are uninterested in serving, they are even rude, whereas in Turkey the dynamic young counterparts are very good at this.

Naturally one may disagree with these evaluations and can make his own list of differences and/or similarities. The question lies somewhere else: how is it possible to call 'twin' brothers two sides which share so few similarities (some of which, celebrating football victories for example, are actually shared by many nations), and which have so many serious differences on the political/ideological level as well as and in everyday life? (Let alone the differences in language, religion, nationality and national identity). If a father had two sons with so many behavioral differences he would suspect the loyalty of the mother!

The Greeks do not share this discourse of 'we are very similar' and not at all the other enthusiastic motto of being 'the same'. 'Sameness' is a Turkish perception shared mostly by a portion of intellectuals. Naturally all Turks do not share this view; many feel they belong to a unique nation and religious group. Therefore the article of the journalist in Turkey is being understood as a political thesis: some will agree and will not notice the contradiction; others will disagree for his 'conclusions'. In Greece on the other hand, a discourse of this kind will be perceived as an 'eccentricity'; an act of goodwill but still 'a strange thing to say'.<sup>2</sup>

Four days before the above article was published my students at the University of Athens who study 'Political thought in Turkey' had to answer in their final exam, among other questions, a) if political Islam poses a threat to secularism in Turkey, b) on what do they base their conviction and c) if there are prejudices in Greece against Islam in Turkey. One of my students (who did not attend the lectures regularly!) said that the followers of Islam normally impose their way of life to others, that the Muslims being 'without capability of critical thought' behave like 'sheep' and that they always follow

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<sup>2</sup> An interpretation of the phenomena will be tried further ahead. For the moment I try to show some contradictory 'national' approaches.



their leaders since this is required by their religion. Islamists specially oppress women. She based this knowledge on what she had 'heard'. This student also knows that in Turkey when a girl is raped her father orders her execution. This is of course 'barbarism'. The Muslims cannot tolerate different religions either. They are conservative and resist modernization. Alterity creates anxiety to Muslims.

As for the prejudices in Greece against Islam in Turkey; yes, she said, there are: Some people believe Islam is an austere religion, even a barbaric one that does not allow women to live freely. For those prejudiced people Islam is as if it does not preach love among human beings. 'Probably we exaggerate when we associate Turks with barbarism but religious fanaticism is really a problem' she added.

The article of the journalist and the answer of the student have some common characteristics. They contain contradictions in spite of their effort to write sensible texts; the journalist addressed to at least 400,000 readers (this is the circulation of his paper) and the student had to prove to her teacher that her answer makes sense. Their second common point is that they did not notice their contradictions. For them their writing is 'normal'. As for me, these approaches towards the Other are 'usual' but not persuasive.

I have learned a lot about Greeks and Turks and their feelings for the Other from my students. I taught Greek literature at Ankara University for four years and another four years Turkish literature and 'political thought' in three universities of Greece. The exams, the papers prepared on selected issues and the discussions in class were revealing. I noticed that these students did not know anything about the way the Other side thought and felt. One student in Ankara, in a composition related to a Greek novel, wrote that it was the first time in her life that she had heard that the Turkish side might have committed atrocities against the Other during a war. She said she was shocked. Based on the answers that I received to a privately distributed questionnaire, I found out that half of the first year students of Ankara University who were studying international relations did not know that Ottomans had captured Athens. In Greece the situation may be worse because not only do they not know the Other but they also have deeply rooted misinformation about the Other.

Few additional examples may show the extent of absence of self-knowledge. Once I had given a quotation from a novel of a nationalist Turkish author and had asked my Greek students to characterize him ideologically. The author was accusing the Greeks (as a total and uniform body) for atrocities during a Greek-Turkish war. A student correctly called him 'nationalist' and explained that she called him so because he mistakenly had characterized 'all the Greeks' as violent, generalizing and forming nationalist stereotypes in the way nationalists usually do. Then she continued and explained that the author is wrong because the Greeks, on the contrary, are the opposite: civilized, do not commit atrocities but they only fight when they have to, etc. Apparently she had learned what a stereotype meant, but at the same time she also preserved the image she had for her side.

It is not only the students and the journalists that contradict themselves, that they do not see that their views do not make sense or that they contain

surprising ‘silencing’. In a book of mine where Greek and Turkish novels and the image of the Other was discussed I dedicated a whole chapter on contradictions. There is a great variety of them: some authors claimed that they respected the Other but in fact they systematically used only humiliating characterizations against ‘him’, others claimed their side was just and magnanimous but the examples that they gave proved the opposite, some others had ‘forgotten’ the most important historical incidents when dealing with the history of ‘them’ and ‘us’, simply because the events did not fit to the thesis developed.<sup>3</sup> The same tendencies are noticed in the texts of Greek and Turkish historians.<sup>4</sup>

Even psychoanalysts, who are experts in detecting the unconscious side of human beings and experts in conflict resolution showed weaknesses of this kind. The prominent researcher Dr. Vamik Volkan for example, in his book on Greek-Turkish conflict uses different wording and characterizations for the similar phenomena, depending on who the actor is: ‘us’ or ‘them’. As I wrote in a criticism of this book,<sup>5</sup>

The Turks ‘conquer’ (p.64), the Greeks ‘invade’ (p. 102); the Greeks purify their language to ‘reject’ Turkish words (p. 88), the Turks simply initiate ‘language reforms’ (p. 144); the Greeks grow ‘against’ Turkish territories (p. 77), the Turks expand ‘against Anatolia’ (p. 28); the identity discussion among the Greeks show their ‘confusion’ (p. 87), but Turkey’s recent ‘identity crisis’ is simply a process of ‘searching for a newer identity’ (p. 186-188); Crete is ‘absorbed’ by the Greeks (p. 203), Turkey ‘conquers’ Cyprus or ‘triumphs’ in Cyprus in the sixteenth century and ‘intervenes’ in 1974 (p. 131); the Turks were ‘humiliated’ by the Other in Cyprus (p. 142), but the Greeks ‘thought’ that they were insulted by the Other (p. 204). The word *self-determination* is used only once, as a right of the Turks (p. 101). When innocent people are killed, they are ‘massacred’ if the dead are ‘ours’ (p. 78) and they ‘lose their lives’ if they belong to the Other (p. 67).

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<sup>3</sup> See - *Türk Romanı ve ‘Öteki - Ulusal Kimlikte Yunan İmajı, (The Turkish Novel and the ‘Other’- The Image of the Greek and National Identity)* Istanbul: Sabancı, 2000. (The study is based on approximately 500 novels and includes a chapter on Greek novels and the image of the Turk).

- Εικόνες Ελλήνων και Τούρκων - σχολικά βιβλία, ιστοριογραφία, λογοτεχνία και εθνικά στερεότυπα, (Images of Greeks and Turks - textbooks, historiography, literature and national stereotypes), Athens: Alexandria, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> For the Greek historians see: H. Millas, - Εικόνες Ελλήνων και Τούρκων - σχολικά βιβλία, ιστοριογραφία, λογοτεχνία και εθνικά στερεότυπα, (Images of Greeks and Turks - textbooks, historiography, literature and national stereotypes), Athens: Alexandria, 2001. For Turkish historiography see: H. Millas, - Yunan Ulusunun Doğuşu (The Birth of The Greek Nation), Istanbul: İletişim, 1994. (Includes a chapter on how the Greeks are presented in the Turkish historiography.) and ‘Non-Muslim Minorities in the Historiography of Republican Turkey: The Greek Case’, in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, Ed. By Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi, Leiden: Brill, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Dr.Vamik Volkan and Dr. Norman Itzkowitz, *Turks and Greeks: Neighbours in Conflict*, The Eothen Press, 1994. For the critic of this book see: H. Millas, - ‘Greek-Turkish Conflict and Arsonist Firemen’ in Istanbul : *New Perspectives on Turkey*, Spring 2000 (No 22).

I remember a comic-tragic instance during the closing session of a meeting of Greek and Turkish NGO representatives in 1999 in Athens, one with the widest participation ever, where the Greek representative with his capacity of the organizing committee that had initiated the meeting with the purpose to accomplish rapprochement between the two parties (and to transcend stereotypes, too, I suppose) had said in his last sentence of the closing speech, thanking the participants, that ‘everybody was very cooperative and productive, even the Turks!’ The Turks started laughing and I am afraid that few Greeks understood why.

How should we interpret these attitudes? It is for sure ‘one sidedness’, ‘prejudice’, ‘stereotypes’, ‘lack of empathy’, ‘wishful thinking’, etc. However, what do actually these words mean? Why does this kind of behavior reappear so often? Why is it so difficult to behave more ‘rationally’?

A final example - among many that can be presented – showing the complexity that characterizes Greek-Turkish relations is the following. In 2001 the foreign minister of Greece George Papandreou hosted his counterpart Ismail Cem in Samos Island and at a certain moment he danced a Greek dance (zeybekiko, which is executed solo). Ismail Cem clapped his hands during this dance. Until now Papandreou has been criticized by his opponents, even by some members of this own party for this dance. His mistake has never been openly stated, but an ironical meaningful smile always appears on the faces of his critics when they remind him of this ‘error’ and the presence of Ismail Cem: ‘you danced as he clapped his hands!’

On the other end of the Aegean the photograph that showed this scene was immediately censored. The official Turkish news agency Anatolian removed Ismail Cem from the background and replaced him with a handsome gentleman. (Somebody told me that this gentleman belongs to the body responsible for the protocol but I cannot confirm it). Actually both photographs appeared in the Turkish press but the one that is censored appears more often.<sup>6</sup>

I personally never understood what was wrong with this dance and why there was so much uneasiness about it in both sides. Why were the parties so much disturbed? For the Greek side my guess is that the prime minister danced like a dancer entertaining the Turkish dignitary (does this remind you of a harem of Hollywood?). TH But why the censoring in Turkey? One may suspect that Papandreou looked self confident with his masculine dancing figure whereas ‘our minister’ was only passively watching. Whatever the reason of these ‘sensitivities’ - that cut across the masses, the intellectuals and the ministries of both societies – it shows that Greek-Turkish relations are multi-dimensional.

This complexity is the problematic of this book. Some observations and findings of the three workshops mentioned above will be presented below and then a general assessment and discussion will follow.

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<sup>6</sup> For the photographs see *Toplumsal Tarih* (history journal), August 2001, no. 92, p. 66.

## Chapter One

### First List of Complaints

The three workshops were held in Istanbul (the first and the third) and in Athens in November 2003 and in March and June of 2004. The total number of participants that answered the first question – What do you think as the negative qualities of the Other? / What do you not like in the Other? – are 74, 42 Greeks and 32 Turks. Very few participants did not select either identity or abstained and therefore they are not included in the interpretation.

The participants were selected and invited to the workshops according to some criteria. They were mainly representatives of Greek or Turkish NGO's, active in interethnic arena, preferably having prior experience with the Other, but also academics, mayors and other dignitaries in policy making. Care was taken that the participants were of both genders, various age groups but preferably young people and able to communicate in English. The selected thematic areas of the organizations and/or individuals invited to the workshops were the following: issues of women, youth, human rights, environment, culture, media, disaster preparedness and rescue groups, trade and industry, G-T relations, municipalities, preservation of cultural heritage, minorities, academics, education of history and policy makers.

It is clear that even though the thematic areas are very wide the invited participants are highly selective because they were individuals with some particularities. They were educated people able to speak a foreign language. Actually almost 80% of the participants had higher education and more than 50% were members of a university. Most of the participants had experience in working with the Other, shared the willingness to communicate with the Other and were optimistic in fruitful results. Apart from the above, the participants were active personalities, mostly in NGO's but also in various public activities. No doubt this group is not representative of the 'average' Greek and Turk and this will be taken into consideration when evaluating the results.

During the workshops the participants discussed the general framework within which the bilateral relations are carried on. They reviewed the stereotypes and preconceived notions about the 'Other' that prevail among the citizens of the two countries as well as the bureaucratic and the practical issues that still hamper the best possible relations. In the end, the participants, who were all experienced in working in various NGOs that were in touch with a counterpart in the other country, suggested ways to further improve their cooperation.

On the first day of these three-day long workshops I had the opportunity to address to the participants. In my presentation I reminded how only ten years ago when Greeks and Turks met they used to attack and insult each other, and how the situation has changed and now we communicate in peace and in a friendly climate. Then I noted that what was presently missing was the sincerity to state our complaints and grievances. We silence many issues and we only imply some others. I tried to encourage an open communication and to stress the need for 'self-knowledge' (See Attachment 1). The two 'questions' were asked later, after this presentation.

The idea of asking these specific questions to the participants was not based on a ‘scientific methodology’ or on a well-defined and known procedure. It originated from a playful personal curiosity. I wondered what the answers of such a group would be and I was not very confident of substantial findings at the start. As a very pleasant surprise however, it proved that the participants themselves showed a great interest in the answers of their group that were discussed at the end of each session. (The subsequent groups were not informed about the findings of the previous workshops.) I also believe that eventually the ‘answers’ compose a basis for a fruitful discussion of the relations between the Greeks and the Turks.

### The lists of complaints

The 42 Greeks wrote down a total of 97 complaints (2.3 complaints per person) and the 32 Turks 72 complaints (again 2.3 complaints per person). (For the complete list of the complaints of Greeks and Turks see Appendix 2).

Some of the grievances were voiced by various participants. For example, the Turks mentioned six times that the Greeks are ‘nationalists’ and the Greeks three times the same for the Turks. On the other hand, even though some accusations were phrased differently they seemed very close. The Greeks stated that they did not like ‘the role of the Turkish military in politics’ (5 times), ‘political and military intervention at all levels of life’ (3 times) and that ‘the Turkish army is imperialistic’. These three complaints that were heard nine times in total may form a group of complaints since they all seem to point to the same direction: annoyance with the role of the army. Therefore the complaints were grouped to compose close clusters as shown (as a1, a2, etc.) in Appendix 2.

All the answers were also grouped in three main categories (a, b, and c). The grievances directed to the state, government, politicians, army, dignitaries etc. of the Other compose the first category. Complaints that are directed against the ‘character’, behavior, tendencies of the Other compose the second category. Complaints that could not be classified in the first two were shown in the third category. Quite often complaints of different categories are indirectly interconnected since some characteristics of the Other, for example, may be perceived as backing up the negative state and/or the government.

A comprehensive interpretation of the test results will be tried further below when a thorough study of all the answers are considered as a whole. The complaints of each side against the Other will be presented first.

#### A. The complaints of the Greeks

The Greeks do not like the Turkish ‘state’ and the role of the army. The army is accused (in a1, total 9 times) for its ‘role’ and its political intervention at all levels of life. It is also characterized as ‘imperialistic’ (once). The state which is called various times in Turkish ‘*derin devlet*’ (i.e., *the deep state*) is accused being ‘oppressive’ and negative in general (4 times). It ‘influences’ the Turkish people and does not treat the Kurds well (4 times). The state influences relations with Greece negatively and delays solving problems such

as the Cyprus issue, the school of Halki, etc. The Turkish politicians are not good either (a2).<sup>7</sup>

Other complaints give an indication as of what is not good with the 'state' and the political system in general (a3). The Greeks do not like the absence of 'democracy' and respect of 'human rights' (3), the lack of 'freedom of expression', the 'negative state-citizen relationship', the 'suppression on journalists' and the 'intolerance of secular identity on religious groups'. 'Ethnocentric education (2) and the 'situation of women' should probably be included in the shortcomings of the Turkish 'state' (a4).

These grievances sum up to a total of 33 and they comprise the 34% of all the complaints of the Greeks. The category 'b' complaints, which are directed to the 'character' and 'behavior' of the Turks are not completely irrelevant to the shortcomings of the 'state'. In some cases it is as if the 'negative' behavior of the Turks sustains this negative 'state' and 'army'. Many of the shortcomings of the Turks, such as 'chauvinism' and 'nationalism' for example, can be directly attributed to a citizen-state relationship that indirectly backs up a negative state. In other words, the 'negative state' is explained through a political and ideological milieu, which the citizens themselves compose.

Some complaints of this kind against the 'Turks' are the following (b1). Chauvinism and obsession with nationalism and/or with Atatürk (6) and nationalism (3) are mentioned 9 times in total. Arrogance 'of a big country' (3) superiority complex and aggressiveness, submission to political figures, not critical attitude (2) are political 'complaints' too. Kemalism is criticized twice: 'devotion to father figure' and as 'confusing internationalism with Kemalism'. Turks are perceived as feeling they are the heirs of a big empire (this can be associated to superiority complex). Finally 'Islamic fundamentalism' is mentioned without further explanation. The total of these complaints are 20 (21%) and if added to the previously given 'a' category, all together comprise the 55% of all complaints of the Greeks.

There follows another group of complaints which resemble the above, but they are rather less political and more idiosyncratic (b2). They appear as political tendencies but they can be interpreted as the 'characteristic' of the Other, too. The statement 'the average Turk accepts the deep state' (2) is a complaint that presents a temperament of the Other. Statements such as 'Turks do not have respect for human rights' (3), they give 'importance to hierarchy in work and family' (2), they follow 'strict social stratification', they are not open on matters of family, (2), they are conservative and they 'delay in adjusting to new developments' (2) sound as 'sociological' observations and which endure time and compose rather to social reality than a political climate. They appear as 'diachronic entities' or in other words as stereotypes. Turks also 'do little to change public life'; they are conformists and lack solidarity with the poor and weak. These are in total 15 statements and comprise the 21% of the complaints.

Another group of nine complaints (b3) are more closely associated with the Greeks. They compose a unity where the Turks appear with some

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<sup>7</sup> Unless it is otherwise specified, the complaints mentioned appear only once. From here on the number in parenthesis show the frequency of the complaint.

'national characteristics' vis a vis the Other. Turks have general insecurity about the Other, low self-esteem, they are paranoiac with the Treaty of Sèvres and the *Megali Idea*, feel a conspiracy coming from the West (syndrome of Sèvres), they are 'attached to old hatred', they do not understand the culture of the Other, they talk of 'common culture' too much, they present a superfluous friendship with the Greeks and are ignorant of 'common history'. Naturally all these 'national characteristics' are in a sense political since they can be viewed as composing a unity of 'anxiety about the Other' in matters of security and historical references. The question remains however: whose is the 'anxiety'? Is it of the Turks or of the Greeks who perceive an environment as the above? These complaints are nine in total (and only 9% of the total).

Turks seem to have some 'personal' shortcomings ('vices') too (b4). They do not 'express their minds openly' (4), they 'conceal intentions under politeness' (2), they are cunning and are easily carried away/influenced (probably by those higher in the hierarchy). The eight complaints of this kind comprise the 8% of all complaints.

There is a final category of complaints – 'c', Various – which is not easy to define. Some of these statements are quite technical, others difficult to classify and some others very humorous and/or irrelevant. In general these complaints seem the least ideological. There are twelve of them, seen in Attachment 2 and will be dealt with in the final assessment.

#### Preliminary comments on the complaints of the Greeks

One should be very cautious in interpreting the above. These may not be the complaints of the Greeks but the ones voiced 'in the presence' of the Turks. The first interesting aspect is that there are very few complaints that are directly connected to Greek interests. There are two 'political' references to Greece (the Turkish state plays a negative role in matters of Greece, it does not solve Cyprus and Halki issues) and one stating that Turkish friendship with Greeks is superfluous. All the other complaints are either completely disassociated with the Greeks or one has to infer the connection in order to suspect the Greek connection of the complaint.

Why do the Greeks complain for issues that do not affect them? It is not clear why the negative perception of Turkish 'state' with the alleged negative effect on Turkish society is a main topic of grievances to Greeks. *Derin devlet*, lack of democracy, negative treatment of Kurds, bad politicians etc. (the first 33 complaints, except the two), are all internal problems of Turkey. Can we infer that the Greeks have only complaints about the local issues of Turkey or should we think that the Greeks believe that negative state apparatus is eventually harmful to Greek-Turkish relations? If it is the second, why don't the Greeks directly say it but 'silence' their main concern?<sup>8</sup>

The same questions apply to the next group of complaints. Is chauvinism, nationalism, arrogance, obsession with political figures, etc., shortcomings and vices of Turks or are they characteristics that eventually threaten and harm the Greeks? If the second case has predominance, why was it

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<sup>8</sup> It is like the dialogue that I remember from an old film of François Truffaut. To the question what he wants most in life, the second guy says 'money' and when he is asked what he is going to do with that money he answers 'I will travel around the world.' Why didn't he say he likes most to travel around the world in the first place?

systematically avoided and not declared? Nobody said, for example ‘Turks have nationalistic intentions against Greece’, or ‘Turks have chauvinistic feelings against the Greeks’. How are we going to interpret the complaint of ‘big country complex’? Is it personal weakness of the Turks or a threat to Greeks?

These ‘shortcomings’ are valid for many countries of the world but also of the Balkans and the Middle East. But the Greeks have ‘problems’ almost exclusively with Turkey. Is it because of Cyprus and Halki only? Why did we not hear other complaints that would justify and explain the long duration of Greek-Turkish problematic relations? A systematic silencing and an avoidance of directly and openly stating the complaints seem to be in effect.

The complaints about the ‘character of Turks’ need also be interpreted first in order to make sense out of them. Acceptance of ‘deep state’, lack of respect to human rights, conservatism etc., – if true – are definitely negative aspects of Turkish society and it is normal for the Greeks not to like them. The question that comes to one’s mind is the following: are the Greeks so much concerned about the ills of the Turkish society or are they worried that the ills will have a negative effect on the Greeks? This possibility has not been voiced either.

The complaints that need a thorough deconstruction are the ones that have to do with the ‘insecurity’, the ‘Sèvres syndrome’, the ‘*Megali Idea*’, the ‘common culture discourse’ etc., of the Turks. Connected with a tendency (of the Turk) not to ‘express his mind openly and hide it behind politeness’ (one wonders what intentions the Turks hide) the ‘cunning Turk’ appears rather as a threat than a neighbor with weaknesses and shortcomings. The word ‘threat’ however, was not mentioned; not even once!

A final assessment will be tried below, jointly with the answers given to the ‘second question’: what do you think the Other does not like in you?

### The image of a negative Turk

One should not misinterpret the above. Each Greek did not voice the 61 different complaints enumerated in Appendix 2! This is a list of all complaints of all 42 Greek participants. Each Greek declared different grievances. The reader should also be reminded that the participants were specifically asked to write their complaints. Had they been asked to write down the aspects they ‘liked’ in the Other, we would have ended with a much more cheerful list.

There is not a consensus about Turkish image either. Each individual has normally a different image of the neighbor. Some may even refuse to think in these terms, i.e., with stereotypes of Turks and Greeks. However, I will venture to draw a profile of the Turk based on the above complaints. I will put them all (or almost all) together, in one person. This portrait is not the worst possible ever! The stereotype will be ‘completed’ when the grievances of the ‘second question’ are also analyzed and the new ‘shortcomings’ of the Other will be added to this one. Try to see the humorous side of this exercise.



And try to answer the question: is this ‘the image of a Turk’ as it is reflected by ‘him’ to the outer world or is it ‘the image of a group of Greeks having an image of a Turk in their minds’?

An arrogant Turk  
(Collectively sketched by Greeks)

Why does he look so *arrogant*? He behaves as if he is still the ruler of a *big empire*, and probably because of that he often reminds us that *Turkey is a big country*. He always wants to feel *superior when he communicates with ‘us’*. But he cannot fool me! In reality he is trying to hide his *insecurity* and his *low self-esteem*. (Because ‘we’ have always been superior to him) He has *paranoiac fears against the West and the Megali Idea*. He thinks that *the West and the Greeks conspire* against him.

It may be due to this *insecurity* that he feels the need to develop a powerful *state (derin devlet)* and an *army, which controls all aspects of life*. *The military intervenes in all aspects of life*. This state cannot but become *oppressive*. Not only by *interfering and manipulating even the consciousness of the people* but sometimes by directly *suppressing* the citizens themselves. See the situation of the *Kurds* for example. There is *no freedom of expression, journalists are suppressed* and even a *secular identity is imposed to religious groups and to minorities*.

And what does our arrogant Turk do when all these happen? Due to his *devotion to ‘father figure’ Atatürk* and his tendency to be *carried away (and be persuaded)* easily, let alone his *lack of critical attitude*, not only does he not fight against the state but on top of it he *submits to political figures, he accepts the ‘deep state’* and he succumbs to the set *hierarchy*. In this country of his a *negative state-citizen relationship* prevails. He is *unwilling to change this public life* because he is very *conservative*, actually a *conformist*.

Is he clever? Maybe, but I would prefer to say he is rather *cunning*. He looks very *polite* but I am afraid *he hides his intentions and his feelings* behind this mask. To tell you the truth, these hidden intentions are what bothers me most. Let me explain why.

Right next to us he have this *Turkish army which is imperialistic, very bad politicians* and a *state that negatively influences Greek-Turkish relations*. See how they *delay in solving standing issues such as the Cyprus problem and the closed-down school of Halki*. This Turk is a *nationalist* and even a *chauvinist*. But no wonder, he has been brought up with an *ethnocentric educational system*. On one hand he talks a lot *about our supposed common culture, about ‘dolma’ etc.*, but on the other hand he *understands nothing about the culture of the Other*. His *friendship is superfluous* and he is *ignorant of our common history*. He is actually *attached to old hatreds*. Considering his *lack of respect to human rights and democracy* I believe this Turk constitutes a threat to me.

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## B. The complaints of the Turks

The asymmetry is most striking in the complaints of the Turks *vis a vis* the Greek 'state' (a1). Actually the complaints are not targeted to the Greek 'state' *per se*, nor to the 'army'. The complaints are against the policies of the Greek 'government': supporting separatist PKK, ill treatment of Turkish minority in Western Thrace, provoking the masses, 'exaggerating' Cyprus issue and creating tension and enmity in the bilateral relations. Some complaints are directed to bureaucracy (a2): visa problems, red tape (2 times) and the 'behaviour in the consulates' and in the national borders and customs. Some criticized the 'left' political groups as 'religiously dependent' (a3). The image of the Turks in textbooks is a source of complaint as well as the 'state-individual' relationship. These sum up to 14 complaints and constitute 19% of the total of 72 complaints.

Complaints by Turks related to the 'character' of the Greeks show similarities with their Greek counterparts (b1). The Greeks are 'nationalists' (6), arrogant, fanatical and too 'preoccupied' with the Turks, both left and right believe in conspiracy against them, they are 'too critical' and 'exaggerate political issues' (12 complaints, 17% of the total). The two groups of complaints, which are mostly 'political', put together (a and b1) comprise the 36% of grievances, whereas the corresponding Greek complaints, as we saw above, were 55%.

Then follows a list of 'historical' complaints, of concerns of negative Turkish 'image' and some resentment associated with the first two (b2 and b3). These complaints sum up to 20, (27%) of the total, whereas in the corresponding case of the Greeks the grievances comprise only 9% of the Greek complaints.

According to the Turks the Greeks are 'proud of their past (of Ancient Greece for example) (4), 'they write Ottoman-Greek history nationalistically' and they 'disregard our common past'. They do not 'feel one community with us'. They have an ideological history' and they 'appropriate our common traditions (coffee, cheese etc.). (Total 9 complaints).

Next we have the 'image' complaints - a category of resentment that is not encountered on the Greek side. The Turkish participants complained that the Greeks think Turks are 'aggressors' (occupied Greek lands), see Turks as 'barbarians', Greeks have stereotypes, they think Turks smoke hashish and nargile and that they do not drink alcoholic drinks. Greeks believe everything they read in the media, do not trust the Turks, they dislike, they even hate them and they develop insincere relationships. The indignation is expressed with long sentences and a rhetoric question: 'Greeks did not invite Turks, not even as tourists (to a meeting?) while they invite all the rest of the world' and 'why aren't the Greeks on top of the list of friends of Turkey?'

An asymmetry is noticed in complaints having to do with the 'character' and 'behaviour' of the Other too. According to the Greeks the Turks are 'arrogant' (4 times) on the political arena and with respect to the balance of power: 'big country' and 'ex-empire'. The Turks on the contrary see lack of 'humility' in a different framework; rather at a historical/cultural level. Greeks lack humbleness, they are snobbish, they think they are Europeans (2), 'they are sure they are right' (2), they are self-satisfied, they do not listen to

the Other, it is difficult to communicate with Greeks, they are restrained (3), they are superficial, they use demagoguery and they always complain.

These lamentations are coupled with some more complaints that are associated with the negative 'character of the Greeks' (b5). Greeks are hot tempered (2), noisy (2), pedants, untrustworthy, too religious, not considerate, not punctual, honest but harsh (10 complains, 14%).

The third category (c-Variou, c1) of 'complaints' is a surprise. Four different Turkish participants did not point any complaint saying that they do not have any: 'I meet Greeks for the first time', 'Greeks are not the Other', 'I wish peace between Greeks and Turks' were the answers given. (These answers were not included to the 'complaints'). There were two other answers with great sense of humour! 'Greeks do not cook well' and 'they always win in basketball games'.

### The Preliminary comments on the complaints of the Turks

Turkish participants voiced in total 72 complaints worded in 55 different ways (Appendix 2). When grouped together we obtain three big categories (a, b, c) and 9 groups (a1, a2 etc). Looking closely to see what the complaints about 'situations' that may cause a conflict are, i.e., the situations that 'harm' or distress the Other, we see that these are of two kinds: a) real situations that need to be corrected, and b) 'psychological' attitudes that should be abandoned by the Greeks (or ignored by the Turks).

The real problems mentioned in the workshops originate from the Greek government or the bureaucracy: Greeks back up separatist PKK, the Turkish minority is not treated properly, the Turks face difficulties in the consulates and in the borders (visa problems). These complaints are voiced in total 6 times (8%). Some other grievances against the Greek government (and Greeks) do not refer to real problems but only to 'images' and perceptions. The politicians (and the Greeks) are perceived to 'exaggerate' some (presumably) minor issues: 'Greek government exaggerates Cyprus issue', 'Greeks exaggerate political issues'.

The majority of Turkish complaints seem to consist of 'misperceptions', 'misunderstandings', 'prejudices', non-valid 'images' etc., originating from the Greek camp. Apart from the 'exaggerations' mentioned above the policy of the Greek government to 'provoke masses', to 'disturb cultural bilateral relations' and to promote a 'negative image of Turks in the textbooks' are actions of this kind too. The Greek government behaves *as if* there is a problem (where in fact there is not); and this of course becomes *the* problem.

It is as if the whole difficulty is one of an 'image', of the image of the Turks. The whole group of b2 and b3 seems to consist of this image problem. Greeks disregard 'our common past', 'write Ottoman history nationalistically' and by ideological history writing they develop tension: 'they do not feel one community with us', 'they think Turks occupied their lands', 'they see us as barbarians', they have stereotypes etc. Actually, have these not happened the 'Greeks would have been on top of the list of friends of Turkey'. These 'image' problems (voiced as complaints) are in total more than 30 (42%).

Some of the negative 'Greek characteristics' are also related to this image and prejudice problematic. The lack of humbleness of Greeks and the whole

of group b4 (and partly b5) complaints can be associated to the unwillingness of Greeks (due to their haughtiness, pride, superiority complex) to transcend nationalism (6 times in b1) and fanaticism against the Turks (total about of 10 complaints).

When the complaints related to images and related issues (exaggerations, lack of humbleness etc.) are summed up we reach the total of about 40 complaints (55%). This is an interesting figure because it equals to the Greek case where we saw that 55% of the Greek complaints are directed to the Turkish 'state' and to the related power relations. Tentatively we can infer that the Greeks have voiced complaints of 'state relations' and political, and the Turks grievances, or rather resentments and offenses of image, misunderstandings and prejudices.

An additional indication that the Turkish participants are more inclined to 'play down' the differences and instead bring forward 'misunderstanding' is seen in the answers of four Turkish participants who, contrary to the instructions, declared that they have no complaints and talked of peace and good will. But all these comments are preliminary and tentative. The final assessment will follow the evaluation of 'question two'.

#### The image of a negative Greek

Can we sketch a portrait of a negative Greek based on the list these complaints? Why not!

(And try to answer the following question: is this portrait 'the image of a Greek' - in the sense of an image reflected to the outer world by the Greeks- or is it 'the imagination of a group of Turks' - in the sense that the image is nothing but the perception of a group of Turks about some imaginary Greeks, and of course about themselves?).

#### My Greek Brother (Collectively sketched by Turks)

*As a Turk I feel we are one community with my Greek brother. I do not have any complaint from him. He is not the Other for me and the more I meet him the more I like him. My wish is to live in peace with him. We have the same traditions and under normal conditions this Greek is on the top of the list of friends of Turkey.*

*But the conditions are not normal! The Greek politicians and governments have provoked the Greek masses (and this Greek friend of mine), disturbed the cultural bilateral relations, created a negative image of the Turk in textbooks and media, exaggerated situations such as the Cyprus issue and other political issues and, what a pity, my Greek brother displays a strange attitude. He became a fanatic against Turks; he is preoccupied with me, all his compatriots, left and right, think we conspire against them.*

*My brother especially thinks that we occupied his land and he calls me barbarian. There are a thousand of stereotypes for a penny (this is a Turkish*

expression that means, abundance of stereotypes). Can you imagine it? *He believes everything that he reads in media against me* and the next day he reaches the point to ask me if I *smoke hashish and nargile!* Lately, I mean the last hundred years or so, he refrains from *inviting me even though he invites everybody else.*

I suspect *he does not trust me* any more; I feel that he dislikes me, maybe he even *hates me.* I think this nationalism of his is not an accident. It is the result of *ideological history* education. He has read books that *present Ottoman-Greek history nationalistically.* He ended up being too *proud of his historical past, of Ancient Greece.* He lacks the traditional *humility and humbleness,* now *he thinks he is a European.* You have to see how *self-satisfied* he looks. He *never listens* to me, and it is *very difficult for me to communicate with him.* He *always thinks he is right,* let alone his *demagogy* and his *superficial* behavior. Don't you think that this means an *insincere relationship?* And what I hate most is that he always *complains, complains, complains.*

I forgive some of his personal weaknesses. Who is perfect? He is *hot tempered, noisy, 'ukala' (smart ass), untrustworthy, inconsiderate, too religious, not punctual and harsh.* But mind you, he is *honest!*

I am sure he is very upset that his *government helps PKK and treats Turkish minority very badly.* He told me personally that he is sorry that I *suffer in the Greek customs and consulates to get a visa.* He *does not like Greek bureaucracy* either.

Thinking it over, I think he might have some faults. But I repeat, under normal conditions this Greek likes me very much, because we lived for years together happily (under the Ottoman rule). Earnestly, I feel this Greek is my twin brother.

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In the next chapter we will see the answers the Greek and Turkish participants gave to the 'second question'. As you will see, many of the above will have to be reconsidered. Among the items to be reinterpreted are the two 'collectively sketched portraits'. One possibility is that there is not one 'portrait' but many, as are the images, depending on the number of the painters!

\*