

## **Alexis Heraclides and Gizem Alioğlu Çakmak (Eds.): Greece and Turkey in Conflict and Cooperation. From Europeanization to de-Europeanization**

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The volume “Greece and Turkey in Conflict and Cooperation. From Europeanization to de-Europeanization” by edited by Alexis Heraclides and Gizem Alioğlu Çakmak is part of the series Routledge Advances in European Politics.<sup>1</sup> The editors are professors of international relations and social science.

The book aims to provide a comprehensive overview of Greek-Turkish relations, presenting the political scene, historical stereotypes as well as the controversial issues which burden the bilateral cooperation between Greece and Turkey (such as the Cyprus problem, the dispute over the Aegean or minority issues). At the same time, it considers the historical dimensions, which are crucial and essential to understanding the actual political dynamics. The authors emphasize why these issues remain contentious despite the efforts made in the past years.

Besides the introduction, the book is divided into three parts, and it is composed of fifteen chapters dealing with different aspects of Greek-Turkish relations. All contributions contain a short conclusion in the end.

In the introduction, the reader receives a broad overview of the conflicting areas in Greek-Turkish relations, including the Cyprus issue, nationalism or cultural differences. The author presents the various periods of the Greek-Turkish relations and concludes that despite the high hopes of normalisation in the first decade of the 21st century, pessimism has emerged on both sides since 2016. Furthermore, the introduction highlights the most relevant areas of cooperation, namely in the fields of energy policy, the economy, civil society, migration and relations with the European Union, which are less controversial areas in the relationship of Greece and Turkey. It is important to mention that even though energy policy can create some level of cooperation, keeping in mind its geopolitical angle, it can easily create competition or rivalry as well. The role of the European Union is also complex, as indeed it served as a constructive catalyst in Greek-Turkish relations – at least until Turkey’s accession process was progressing.

The first part of the book, called “International theory and perceptions/misperceptions” provides an appropriate overview of the institutionalist international relations theories and Greek-Turkish relations. It highlights that recent conflicts in the bilateral relations challenge not only Europeanization perspectives but also institutional theories in international relations, referring to the dispute over the Aegean and the escalatory rhetoric perceivable in recent years. In principle, the European Union and other international institutions are supposed to generate mutual trust and peaceful solutions, but in the case of Greek-Turkish relations one can argue that analysts overestimate the impact of the European Union and disregard the domestic conditions. The accession process to the European Union would raise expectations of the transformative power on

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<sup>1</sup> Alexis Heraclides & Gizem Alioğlu Çakmak, *Greece and Turkey in Conflict and Cooperation. From Europeanization to de-Europeanization*, Routledge, 2019.

both member and candidate states, creating among other things a security community. In this case the European Union failed to moderate the mutual mistrust and threat perception in an appropriate way. At the same time, it facilitated numerous civil society connections, inter-societal collaboration and transformed the relations by the early years of 2000. The book emphasizes the fact, that the relations did not immediately deteriorate following the growing tensions linked to the Cyprus issue. This also proves that Turkey was committed to improving its relationship with Greece in order to propel the accession process forward. However, the chapter called “Back to the future: institutionalist international relations theories and Greek-Turkish relations” highlights that Turkey’s confidence as an emerging power and weakening membership prospects in the 2010s, undermined its commitment to the EU membership and resulted a slowdown in fulfilling all the criteria in the accession process. The book examines the national identities, narratives and perception. While for Greece Turkey is a danger (military, security), Turkey sees Greece rather as an irritant (especially in diplomatic influence level), than a real threat. The first part of the book concludes that the relations are in a need of a drastic paradigm shift.

The second part addresses “the traditional disputes” between the two countries and examines the problems and prospects. The dispute over the Aegean remains an unresolved issue, despite several attempts at a settlement and involving tangible interests. The situation has worsened considerably since 2016, as one can witness incidents on a weekly basis. The conflict is quite complex including disputes over the Aegean continental shelf, the breadth of the Greek territorial sea, the breadth of the Greek national airspace, the demilitarization status of the Eastern Greek islands, the sovereignty of Imia/Kardak islets and the rights and obligations linked to the Athens Flight Information Region. The book mentions that the non-resolution is also related to the Cyprus issue and the mutual fears regarding the “real aim” of the other side. Due to the fundamental demographic inequalities, establishing a political equality is extremely difficult. The chapter dedicated to the Cyprus issue examines in detail the Cyprus stalemate and demonstrates opportunities for peace and lessons from the Turkish-Bulgarian ethnic relations, which is unusual in the Turkish/Greek/Cypriot context.

This part also explores the impact of reciprocal minorities and the mutual minority protection. Negative measures taken against minorities were not only based on minority issues, but also on the broader Greek-Turkish conflict. Hence, minorities are vulnerable to the general Greek-Turkish relations. The chapter on Greek and Turkish reciprocal minorities concludes that reciprocity is a highly controversial point, which determined the minority provisions set in the Treaty of Lausanne. The chapter titled “The Ecumenical Patriarchate under Patriarch Batholomew and Greek-Turkish relations” provides many interesting pieces of information, for example, data on the shrinking Greek Orthodox minority in Turkey and state of Muslims in Greece. Undoubtedly, the European Union had a significant role in the modernization of Turkey and was seen as a powerful force until 2005. Churches have a special role in international relations and could be described as “soft power”, therefore this part finishes with demonstrating the international role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The chapter argues that the deadlock of Turkey’s accession process is contrary to the Patriarchate’s desire.

The third and final part titled “New prospects” focuses on the areas of cooperation and friction. It looks at the economic and energy dimension of the relations as well, and provides a well-structured overview on the Greek-Turkish rapprochement, their relationships with the European Union and how things moved from Europeanization to de-Europeanization. This part of the book analyses the European Union’s constructive impact on the relations in many areas. However, as Turkey’s EU membership started to fade away, the reform process and democratization slowed down as well. Along the economic and financial crises and the EU-imposed austerity measures, a de-Europeanization process was also observed in Greece. The author examines the economic relations, including the trade volumes, foreign direct investment and tourism flows. Despite the

increasing volumes, the political disputes set a ceiling in the ability to de-securitize the relations. By a comparative study on conjunctural images, Greece's portrayal by the Turkish print media is also analysed. The main argument is that the media passively mirrors the government's views on Greece. Turkey has always been a popular topic in the Greek media, where Turkey is often presented as an aggressor or expansionist. This is explained by the theory that Greek (public and political elite) tend to navigate foreign policy through the "prism of Greek exceptionalism".

The Eastern Mediterranean has a special geopolitical significance in regional politics and international relations. The recent discovery of hydrocarbon deposits has put the region into the spotlight once again. Instead of catalysing peace, the discovery has created further tension. The European Union also plays a crucial role in regional energy projects, which can develop energy security. By examining not only the political but economic interests, this part indirectly refers to the role and interests of regional and global actors in the broader context of Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean. The book argues that Turkey returned to its traditional Cyprus policy by securitizing energy. No doubt, that the refugee crises also had a major impact on the relations. The third part concludes that the EU-Turkey Statement has become the main tool to manage the flows and provides a legal umbrella for the externalisation of refugee management, while turning Greece and Turkey into "buffer zones".

Overall, the book has many strong points, and presents the results of collaboration of academics from Greece, Turkey and Cyprus. A constructive understanding dominates throughout the book, while providing a realistic approach and overview. It gives an analysis of the recently emerged challenges, which dominate the relations nowadays, such as the dispute over the energy resources or the refugee crises. In addition, the book dedicates special attention to the Europeanization of Greek-Turkish relations and other factors, which have played a crucial role in shaping the relations, for example the role of the civil society. Moreover, it also examines the facts, which have led to de-Europeanization and a downward trend in the bilateral relations or relations with the European Union. The style of the book is professional and understandable – also for readers who are new to the subject. One of the major achievements of the book is that it analyses the multidimensional nature of the Greek-Turkish relations. It refers to historical facts and data, which makes the analyses empirically strong (however some information is repetitive). Overall, the book can be considered essential reading for those who are conducting research of Greek-Turkish relations, the Cyprus issue or the Europeanization of Turkey, be they university students, academics, researchers or policy-makers.

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