

Transforming Conflicts on EU Borders: the Case of Greek-Turkish Relations*

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Abstract

Drawing on the trajectory of Greek-Turkish conflicts, this article demonstrates how the EU's bordering practices affect the conflict resolution capacity of the EU on its external borders. Close institutional relations and positive identification with outsider states diffuse the logic of the security community. On the other hand, hard EU borders incapacitate the EU from having a positive influence.

Introduction

As the EU expands, it faces an increasing number of (potential) conflicts on its external borders. On 1 May 2004, following the failed Greek-Cypriot referendum on the UN-sponsored reunification plan, Cyprus became a member of the EU as a divided island. It is still uncertain whether the Greek Cypriots will accept a revised reunification plan and how the EU will relate to the unrecognized Turkish Cypriot state. Along the EU's southern border, which separates the prosperous and stable northern Mediterranean from the poor and non-democratic Maghreb, a primary source of conflict is illegal

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migration. In addition, Morocco and Spain nearly came to blows over the status of the Perejil islet in July 2002. On the eastern frontier, lingering historical tensions at the societal level between Poland and Ukraine risks resurfacing and disrupting the improved bilateral relations of the post-Cold War period (Wolczuk and Wolczuk, 2003). Similarly, the tensions between the pro-Romanian nationalists and the pro-Russian government in Moldova could threaten Moldovan-Romanian relations (Partos, 2003). Although the current borders of the EU are neither definite nor final, given that the states beyond these borders have not been given the prospect of membership, these conflicts are likely to remain on EU borders for at least a considerable time.

Can the EU successfully manage – and possibly help transform – these conflicts on its borders? Routinely hailed as a ‘security community’ (e.g. Waever, 1998), the EU has had a successful track record in transforming various conflicts and rivalries within its borders. Recently, the EU has also acted as a catalyst in the resolution of several potentially serious disputes between central and eastern European states by making ‘good neighbourly relations’ an explicit condition for membership (Smith, 2004). Developing the literature on the EU and conflict resolution, this article will argue that conflicts on its external borders present the EU with unique challenges. The means of conflict resolution at the EU’s disposal are not applicable as effectively for conflicts on EU borders, which are, by definition, between insider and outsider states. The asymmetrical institutional relations of conflict parties with the EU may impede their mutual socialization into EU norms and the development of trust. As long as the EU does not offer a membership perspective to the outsider state, the EU cannot use the membership carrot, its most powerful instrument to induce its political leadership to change its policies. The conflict may become ‘Europeanized’ against the EU’s will through the Member State’s attempts to use the EU against the non-member state. While co-membership of the EU fosters transgovernmental and transnational links between conflict societies, the EU border may limit or even serve to disrupt the links already in place. The discourse of a European collective identity cannot be invoked to reduce the identity conflicts between the conflict parties, which are themselves constituted by the EU as ‘self’ versus ‘other’. In short, there is the risk that the conflicts on the EU’s external borders may be perpetuated.

To investigate these challenges posed by conflicts on EU borders, this article draws comparative insights from a detailed analysis of the EU’s experience with Greek-Turkish conflicts. Though each conflict is inevitably different with regard to its causes and implications, the case of Greek-Turkish relations is instructive for how the EU can be a positive as well as a negative force for conflicts on its external borders. The Greek-Turkish conflicts have been situated on the external borders of the EU since Greece’s accession

in 1981.¹ For a long time, the EU failed to have a positive impact on this conflict on its borders; quite conversely, it was often abused as an additional battleground. Greece sought to use the EU as a lever against Turkey, while Turkey resisted any EU involvement in Greek-Turkish disputes on the grounds that the EU is captured by Greece. The two states came very close to war on a couple of occasions, first over the Aegean continental shelf in 1987 and lately over the status of the Imia/Kardak islet in 1996. Hence, the EU could not extend its zone of peace to its borders.

Towards the end of the 1990s, however, Greek-Turkish relations entered into what is likely to be a sustainable period of *rapprochement*. Since 1999, the two states have signed numerous co-operation agreements, advanced towards resolving their border disputes and most importantly managed to maintain the positive momentum in their relations despite changes of government and throughout the contentious period leading to Cyprus' EU membership. Serious episodes that would have easily escalated into crises in the past are now carefully managed by the elites.² In effect, the Greek-Turkish conflicts have de-escalated to issue conflicts, with the as yet unresolved Aegean disputes being to some extent desecuritized, and have begun to be articulated as differences that can be managed, rather than as existential threats.

Though the initial impetus for improving relations came from the political leaders and civil societies of Turkey and Greece, almost all of the actors involved agree that the EU in general and its December 1999 decision to grant Turkey candidate status in particular, have been crucial for legitimizing the pursuit of conciliatory policies and consolidating change. Most importantly, the fact that the EU border divides Turkey and Greece ceased to be an exacerbating factor for their conflicts. Rather than using the EU to obtain concessions from Turkey, Greece became the strongest advocate of Turkey's membership of the EU. Turkey ceased to perceive the EU as captured by Greece and accepted the EU norms and principles as the basis for improving its relations with Greece. The link between Turkey's EU membership and the resolution of Greek-Turkish disputes expanded and legitimized civil society

¹ Although Greek-Turkish conflicts have long roots in history, the two states have also enjoyed periods of sustained co-operation. Following the 1920–22 war, bilateral relations between Greece and the newly established Republic of Turkey started out in a spirit of co-operation. Starting in the mid-1950s, however, the relations began to sour over the Cyprus question. Previously, the two states came dangerously close to war over Cyprus in 1964, during Turkey's 1974 military operation and over the Aegean continental shelf in 1976.

² For example, during the most recent stand off between Greek and Turkish coastguards near the Imia/Kardak islets in April 2005, Greek Foreign Minister Molyviatis did not break off his official visit to Turkey and Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan called on the Turkish media not to inflate the issue out of proportion. The two countries concluded an agreement on confidence-building measures in the Aegean. In response to the death of a Greek pilot during a dog-fight in May 2006, Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers made a joint statement expressing their regret and agreed that the incident must not affect the two countries' target of improving relations.

activities directed toward Greek-Turkish co-operation. While, previously, the discourse of Europe was used strategically by the two states to mark the other as inferior and threatening, it became the foundation for articulations of a shared identity and common interests between Turkey and Greece.

After remaining for a long time as a protracted conflict on EU borders, Greek-Turkish relations now stand out as a success story of EU involvement.³ It is therefore important to understand under what conditions and through which processes the EU became a positive force in Greek-Turkish relations. Drawing on a wide array of sources, including secondary literature, interviews with Greek and Turkish policy-makers, analysts and civil society leaders and newspaper articles and commentaries published in Greece and Turkey, this article seeks to identify these conditions and processes.

I. EU Borders and Conflict Resolution

There is a growing literature on how and by what means the EU can contribute to the resolution of conflicts in its near-abroad. Scholars have analysed various types of conflicts (inter-state, ethno-political and secessionist) and how the EU alters domestic dynamics in conflict societies through policies of conditionality and processes of social learning (Tozzi, 2004; Noutcheva *et al.*, 2004; Smith, 2004). It has been noted that in case of ethno-political conflicts, prospective EU accession also provides a framework within which to embed loose federal arrangements (Tozzi, 2004). In addition, scholars have identified various domestic and EU-related factors that may undermine the EU's efficacy in conflict resolution on its periphery, ranging from the priorities of domestic actors and the value they place on EU membership, the slow pace of EU accession, lack of interim or post-accession rewards and the absence of agreement between EU Member States on a coherent conflict resolution strategy (Hill, 2001; Tozzi, 2004).

Developing a more comprehensive framework, Diez *et al.* (2006) have argued that the EU can 'perturbate' conflicts through four pathways (see Table 1). At the elite level, the EU can employ the carrot/stick of granting/withdrawing an offer of membership, candidate, or association status, or specific benefits associated with those positions to coerce or induce parties to seek resolution of their disputes (compulsory impact). Simultaneously, the EU indirectly provides an ideational/normative structure for the rationalization and legitimization of alternative foreign policy options at the domestic elite level (enabling impact). At the societal level, the EU can selectively

³ The fact that the Aegean dispute remains unresolved does not disqualify it from being a success story of EU involvement at least in relative terms. It may suggest, however, that there are limits to the EU's positive influence.

Table 1: Pathways of EU Influence

		Approach by EU	
		Actor-driven	Structural
Direction of Incentive <i>vis-à-vis</i> conflict parties	Political Leadership	<i>Compulsory Impact</i>	<i>Enabling Impact</i>
	Wider Societal Level	<i>Connective Impact</i>	<i>Constructive Impact</i>

Source: Diez et al. (2006, p. 572).

direct material resources to non-governmental initiatives, which are promoting inter-societal collaboration and advocating peaceful resolution. At the same time, the EU indirectly provides a discursive structure (i.e. the discourse of a common European identity) that allows for the rewriting of the identity and conflict discourses at the societal level.

Cases of ‘conflict on EU borders’ require the further development of this literature on the EU and conflict resolution. While, excepting the compulsory impact, the mechanisms of EU influence, as identified by Diez, Stetter and Albert, are applicable to member as well as non-member states, their framework does not address the interactive dimension of conflict resolution, particularly the question of how the EU can simultaneously influence the insider and outsider states to promote conciliatory policies on both sides. Given that EU Member States are able to exercise significant control over EU policy towards non-member states, there is the risk that the EU framework may work against conflict resolution, by encouraging the Member State to adopt more uncompromising positions. Secondly, there has not been a systematic study of how the EU’s bordering practices are an important condition for EU impact beyond its boundaries. While the literature has in general terms pointed to the negative implications of hard borders (Zielonka, 2002), the specific ways in which the EU’s bordering practices affect policies in member and non-member states have not been examined. The case of Greek-Turkish relations clearly illustrates that in cases of conflicts on EU borders, the EU’s bordering practices provide a structure, which shapes Member and non-Member States’ policies *vis-à-vis* each other.

It has been noted that the EU’s external borders manifest significant diversity (Zielonka, 2002; Rumelili, 2004; Walters, 2004). In this respect, it may be useful to also distinguish between the institutional, physical and identity borders of the EU (Smith, 1996). Institutional borders separate members from non-members and demarcate institutional benefits and voice opportunities. The EU’s institutional borders take the form of a zone in areas

where the enlargement process is ongoing and a line where outsider states are not granted membership prospects. Physical borders function as a barrier to the flow of goods, services and people. Along the EU's institutional borders, we find that the physical border is open in some places to the flow of goods through free trade and customs union agreements, but never to the flow of people. Finally, the EU's identity border demarcates self from other. Because the EU defines itself as a community, there is a strong overlap between institutional and identity borders. The EU's identity border is simultaneously fuzzy and strict; fuzzy because the categories of self and other are always contested, but nevertheless strict because it is continuously re-established through discourses that clearly demarcate self from other.

Within this multi-dimensional framework of EU borders, I conceptualize the EU's bordering practices as a spectrum, which varies between the ideal-typical end-points of 'hard borders' and 'open frontiers'.⁴ A 'hard border' entails minimal institutional relations between the EU and the outsider state, allows for little – if any – transnational and cross-border contacts, is perceived by the EU as a line of defence (against unwanted immigration, terrorism, crime and so on) and is articulated through an identity discourse, which is based on a sense of inherent difference. An 'open frontier,' on the other hand, entails close institutional relations between the EU and the outsider state – usually anchored in a membership perspective, dense transnational and cross-border contacts, is perceived by the EU as a zone of co-operation and cross-fertilization and is articulated through an identity discourse, which is based on a sense of similarity.

As summarized in Table 2, 'hard' EU borders pose unique challenges for the EU's impact beyond its boundaries and on conflicts on EU borders, in particular. A 'hard EU border' also hardens the border between the insider and outsider states and impedes the development of institutional relations, trans-governmental and transnational links and positive identification at the bilateral level. In effect, it reinforces the logic of alliance rather than the logic of security community along the external borders of the EU. In terms of EU impact on the outsider state, 'hard borders', first of all, severely circumscribe the EU's *compulsory impact*. Though it is possible to build low-level institutional relations across hard borders and employ the withdrawal and granting of these privileges as carrots and sticks, in the absence of a membership perspective, the stakes involved are not high enough to induce or coerce meaningful change in the outsider state. Secondly, hard borders reinforce a low-level of identification (or possibly even negative identification) between the EU and the outsider state. Under these conditions, the EU's *enabling impact* is also

⁴ Zielonka (2002) distinguishes hard borders from soft borders and also analytically separates the questions of the nature of the EU borders from the scope of the EU borders.

Table 2: Implications of EU Bordering Practices

<i>Hard Borders</i>			<i>Open Frontiers</i>	
<i>EU impact</i>	Outsider state	Insider state	Outsider state	Insider state
<i>Compulsory</i>	weak	none	Strong	none
<i>Enabling</i>	disabling		Enabling	
<i>Connective</i>	Non-conductive, dis-connective		Positive, connective	
<i>Constructive</i>	Non-constructive		Positive, constructive	

Source: Author’s own data.

debilitated because it is difficult to legitimize new policies in the outsider state, when the reference point is an external actor (the EU), with whom the level of identification is low.

Within the insider state, hard borders serve to empower those domestic actors, who approach and view the EU as a means of power *against* the outsider state, rather than as a means of reconciliation *with* the outsider state. The clear lines of inclusion/exclusion drawn by the hard borders provide the insider state with institutional instruments to use against the outsider state, instruments which are simply too convenient to pass over. The corollary of this from the perspective of the outsider state is that the already low level of identification with the EU is further worsened by the perception that the EU is captured by the insider state.

Hard borders also incapacitate the EU from having positive *connective and constructive impacts* on the conflict. It is difficult to encourage transnational contacts when the border functions as a barrier. In addition, the willingness of societal actors to engage in meaningful transnational contacts declines when the level of identification is low. Furthermore, a hard EU border reinforces the conflict-enhancing self versus other identity distinctions between the conflict parties by superimposing on them the more authoritative distinction of European versus non-European.

Open EU frontiers, on the other hand, greatly facilitate the EU’s impact beyond its boundaries (see Table 2). They reinforce the logic of security community along the EU’s external borders and promote the development of institutional relations, transgovernmental and transnational links and positive identification between the insider and outsider states. In terms of EU impact on the outsider state, dense institutional relations across the EU border raises the stakes and strengthens the EU’s hand in the application of its conditionality instrument. The closer the EU’s bordering practice is to open frontiers, the stronger the EU’s *compulsory impact* on the outsider state. Secondly, open frontiers foster positive identification with the EU both at the governmental and societal level and thus make it easier to legitimize the policy changes advocated

by the EU. As a result, the reform process in the outsider state acquires its own domestic dynamics, with the EU's enabling influence in the background.

Within the insider state, the eventual possibility of conflict transformation through co-membership of the European Union empowers moderate domestic actors in both conflict societies, who would like to use the EU as a means of reconciliation. Open EU frontiers gradually incapacitate the hardliners in the insider state who value the EU as a means of power against the outsider state. The institutional instruments of power possessed by virtue of EU membership increasingly become less convenient and more costly to use in terms of prestige for the insider state. Consequently in the outsider state, the defensive perception that the EU is captured gradually gives way to a growing willingness to use the EU norms and principles to settle the differences with the insider state.

Open EU frontiers also strengthen the EU's *connective and constructive impact* on the conflict. Transgovernmental and transnational links multiply between the two countries, underpinned by the shared interest in EU membership/conflict resolution and the growing mutual trust. And finally, open EU frontiers construct the less-oppositional distinction of European/Europeizing between insider and outsider states and thereby gradually weaken the conflict enhancing, oppositional discourses of self versus other in both societies.

It is worth repeating at this point that 'hard borders' and 'open frontiers' are ideal-typical end-points of a conceptual spectrum; I am not claiming that either of these bordering practices actually materialize on the external borders of the EU. That there is variation in the EU's bordering practices towards outsider states is, however, undeniable. Since the late 1990s, the EU's bordering practices towards Turkey have changed from a point closer to hard borders to a point closer to open frontiers on this conceptual spectrum. The physical EU border became relatively more open – open to the flow of goods but not to people – with the 1995 EU-Turkey Customs Union agreement. With the declaration of Turkey's EU candidacy in 1999, the EU's institutional border with Turkey also became more open, changed from being a line that separates the non-member Turkey from Europe to the form of a transition zone to Europe. Finally, with Turkey's EU candidacy, the EU's identity borders also became more inclusive of Turkey, even though in light of the ongoing controversies in Europe on Turkey, one can argue that they remained relatively less inclusive compared to other candidate states.

Sections III and IV of this article demonstrate the implications of this variation for Greek-Turkish relations. Section III discusses how the relatively hard borders of the EU with Turkey prevented the EU from having a positive influence on Greek-Turkish conflicts until 1999. Section IV shows

how the change towards open frontiers in the EU's bordering practices has facilitated positive EU impact on foreign policy-making in both Greece and Turkey and helped ground the conflict resolution efforts in an EU framework. Although a comprehensive examination of change in Greek-Turkish relations would necessitate due attention to various domestic as well as systemic conditions, this account focuses on the implications of the EU's bordering practices for analytical reasons.

III. Perpetuating Conflicts on EU Borders

Until recently, Greek-Turkish relations suffered from all the negative implications of relatively 'hard EU borders'. Greek-Turkish conflicts got situated on the external borders of the EC with Greece's membership in 1981; and though, over time, the EC/EU developed a stronger interest in the resolution of the Greek-Turkish disputes, its direct and indirect interventions interacted with the domestic factors in both countries in such a way that empowered the hardliners and perpetuated the conflicts. This section will demonstrate how the EU's interventions were rendered ineffective in this time period mostly as a result of the relatively hard border that the EU maintained with respect to Turkey.

Although Turkey-EU relations have a long history, dating back to a 1963 Association Agreement,⁵ especially the EU's enlargement policy after the end of the Cold War hardened the EU's institutional and identity borders with Turkey. Even though the 1963 Association Agreement recognized Turkey as a European state, Turkey's eligibility for EU membership became more dubious as the EU refrained from granting Turkey candidate status along with other central and eastern European states. As the end of the Cold War re-shaped definitions of European identity, EU-Turkey relations increasingly got embedded in an identity discourse, which situated Turkey as an outsider (Rumelili, 2004). As Turkey sought closer relations with the EU, its differences from Europe were more forcefully articulated (active Othering).

Until 1999, the nature of the EU's relations with Turkey prevented the EU from having a positive impact on the Greek-Turkish conflicts in several ways. First of all, it helped legitimate the existing foreign policies in both countries *vis-à-vis* each other. In Greece, the potentially permanent exclusion of the 'arch-enemy', Turkey, from the EU institutions furthered the perception of the EU as an alliance against Turkey. Therefore, the EU indirectly helped to empower the hardliners in Greece, who perceived the conflicts with Turkey in zero-sum terms and who valued the EU as a convenient instrument of leverage against Turkey. In this context, the EU could not serve as the basis for any

⁵ For accounts of Turkey's relations with the European Union, see Muftuler-Bac (1997) and Onis (2000).

alternative policy of the moderates, who saw the futility of the ongoing Greek-Turkish conflicts.⁶ Similarly, in Turkey, the exclusionary stance of the EU furthered the perception of the EU as hostile towards Turkey and captured by Greece and therefore disabled the EU's interventions in Greek-Turkish conflicts. Change in Turkish foreign policy towards Greece could not be legitimized either by the prospect of EU membership (which was not perceived as credible) or by reference to EU norms. Secondly, the nature of the EU's relations with Turkey posed institutional constraints on the EU's ability to directly support Greek-Turkish civic initiatives and directly helped perpetuate the legitimacy problem of Greek-Turkish civil society activities. Finally, the 'Othering' of Turkey by the EU also helped to reproduce Greek and Turkish identities as different from and antagonistic towards each other.

Following Turkey's military operation in Cyprus in 1974, a foreign policy consensus has emerged in Greece that Turkey poses a revisionist threat in the Aegean, Thrace and Cyprus (Triantaphyllou, 2001; for a critical account, see Heraclides, 2001). Turkey's status as an outsider to the EU served to further the foreign policy consensus. In this context, the EC membership was perceived as and valued for having provided Greece with security and negotiating leverage in its dealings with Turkey; in short, within the logic of alliance (Valinakis, 1994; Tsakonas and Tournikiotis, 2003). Hence, within the EC, the established Greek strategy of deterrence of Turkey (Platias, 2000) found a new means of implementation. Greece pursued a policy of conditionality towards Turkey, blocking its relations with the EU until Turkey offered some concessions and/or agreed to the endorsement of the Greek positions by the EU. For example, in 1986, Greece vetoed the resumption of the Association relationship between Turkey and EC and the release of frozen aid to Turkey (Guvenc, 1998–99). When, in 1987, Turkey applied for EC membership, Greece was the only Member State that openly opposed referring the application to the Commission for an Opinion (Guvenc, 1998–99). In December 1994, the Customs Union Agreement with Turkey was not finalized due to Greece's opposition and Greece lifted its veto in March 1995 only after the EU pledged to start membership negotiations with Cyprus. Greece also vetoed the release of the EC financial assistance to Turkey under

⁶ The hardliner/moderate distinction is used in an ideal-typical sense, mainly for analytical convenience and specifically in reference to the policies advocated by actors on Greek-Turkish relations. In general terms, hardliners in the two countries perceive Greek-Turkish issues from a security lens and in zero-sum terms, while the moderates approach the issues as well as the means of conflict resolution as win-win situations. Such positions were clearly discernable in the interviews conducted with Greek and Turkish elites during 2003–05, albeit expressed in finer gradations. The hardliner and moderate positions are not necessarily tied to certain specific individuals or institutions; there is variance within institutions and across time. Therefore, it is more appropriate to analyse the EU's influence on these policy positions rather than on specific individuals and institutions.

the Fourth Financial Protocol, the EC's Mediterranean Programme and the Matutes Package until March 1995. Following the Imia/Kardak crisis in 1996, Greece blocked the release of EU financial aid to Turkey, which was granted as part of the Customs Union agreement.

The use of the EU lever as a short-term instrument of pressure against Turkey remained attractive to the Greek elite because it was generally successful (Author Interview No. 1) and politically less risky and more rewarding than alternative policies (Veremis, 2001). The nature of the EU's relations with Turkey rendered this policy of negative conditionality not only possible, but also successful and legitimate. It enabled Greece to score short-term institutional victories against Turkey, which Greek governments could then use to muster domestic support. In addition, it served to legitimate such policies domestically and at the EU-level because they reproduced the understanding of Turkey as an outsider to Europe; hence different and potentially threatening.

On the other hand, hard EU borders placed the proponents of alternative policies towards Turkey on uncertain and shaky grounds. While Costas Simitis, who assumed the governing PASOK's leadership in 1996, advocated a fundamental change in Greek foreign policy towards supporting Turkey's European orientation, on many occasions, he had to give in to the hardliners, who favoured the continuation of the exclusionary policies of negative conditionality (Author Interview No. 2). This disabling effect on the moderates in Greece can be clearly seen in the period between 1996 and 1999. For example, in 1997, the EU Presidency sought a solution to the continuing Greek veto on the EU financial package offered to Turkey by proposing to establish a committee of wise men to study the problems between Turkey and Greece. Right after the protocol on the establishment of the Committee was signed, 32 MPs from the governing PASOK party addressed an open letter to Simitis stating their opposition to any discussion on the substance of the Greek-Turkish problems and the lifting of the Greek veto on Turkey in the EU. As a result of this pressure, the Greek government diluted the wisemen's proposal and the Greek veto on EU funds for Turkey remained.

Mirroring Greece, the prevailing perception among Turkish policy-makers has been that Greece is pursuing a revisionist policy against Turkey (Gunduz, 2001; for an elaboration of this position, see Bilge, 2000). In response to this policy, Turkey pursues a policy centred on military deterrence (Ayman, 1998) and not leaving Greece alone in international organizations like the EU (Birand, 2000).

Prior to 1999, the perceived ambivalence of the EU to Turkish membership has hindered the potential impact of the EU on Turkish policy in many areas, including Greek-Turkish relations (Diez and Rumelili, 2004). The EU's direct interventions in Greek-Turkish relations, through statements and

warnings that the Cyprus problem and Greek-Turkish disputes would adversely affect EU-Turkey relations were negatively interpreted as broader reflections of a European reluctance to admit Turkey into Europe (Ugur, 1999). The EU's exclusionary stance towards Turkey also fuelled a dominant conviction in Turkish political culture that 'Europe' is conspiring to weaken and dismember Turkey, aptly called the 'Sevrès syndrome' after the 'Sevrès Treaty', which conceded large parts of the Ottoman Empire to European powers after the First World War (Kirisçi and Carkoğlu, 2003). This conviction has naturally hindered the EU's impact on sensitive, sovereignty-related issues such as territorial disputes with Greece.

Second and more indirectly, by enabling Greece to pursue the above-described policies of negative conditionality against Turkey, hard EU borders have created and sustained the understanding in Turkey that the EU is captured by the hostile Greece (Aksu, 2001). In other words, the EU was perceived as just another platform through which Greece pursues its revisionist agenda with respect to Turkey. Under these perceptual conditions, alternative policies could not be legitimized by reference to the EU, because then their critics would automatically frame them as concessions to Greece.

The developments leading to and the immediate aftermath of Turkey's Customs Union agreement with the EU constitute a clear example. When, initially, the Agreement could not be finalized due to the opposition of Greece, the EU decided to resolve the problem of the Greek veto through a linkage strategy. In March 1995, Greece was induced to lift its veto on the Customs Union with Turkey in return for the EU's pledge that accession negotiations with Cyprus would begin six months after the conclusion of the intergovernmental conference. While the majority of the Turkish elite regarded this linkage as fundamentally a Greek tactic to force Turkey to concede in Cyprus, some perceived no problem in Cyprus joining the EU before Turkey if a prior solution is reached on the island (Author Interview No. 3).

When the Turkish media released the details of the deal, it became the focal point of opposition.⁷ The alternative argument that the membership of a re-united Cyprus could even be to Turkey's benefit was effectively silenced. In order to counter the criticisms on Cyprus sell-off and to regain domestic legitimacy, the Turkish government made some communications, which in turn fuelled the perception of threat in Greece and Cyprus. For example, in June 1995, the Turkish parliament issued a perennial resolution that it would view the extension of Greek territorial sea to 12 nautical miles as a *casus belli*.⁸

⁷ See, for example, *Cumhuriyet* (1995).

⁸ This resolution was issued right after the Greek Parliament ratified the 1985 Law of the Sea Treaty, which grants states the right to extend their territorial waters up to 12 n.m.s. Turkey has lobbied to make the Aegean Sea an exception in the Treaty, but has failed.

On 28 December 1995, Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus set up an Association Council that would take measures to achieve partial integration. This conflict escalation process shortly culminated in the Imia/Kardak crisis that brought the two states to the brink of war in January 1996.

The relatively hard border that the EU maintained with respect to Turkey also did not aid the development of transnational links between Turkey and Greece. Civil co-operation between Greece and Turkey remained weak because the civil society in both countries was underdeveloped and the Greek-Turkish activities particularly lacked legitimacy because of the ongoing conflicts (Rumelili, 2005). Groups – among them businessmen, journalists, artists and activists – dedicated to the intensification of transnational relations remained small, isolated minorities in both societies and their activities were often subjected to criticism and, in a few instances, to physical attack. Although following the 1996 Imia/Kardak crisis, civil society efforts intensified, they remained vulnerable to crises at the governmental level and were easily disrupted. For example, in reaction to Ocalan's capture on his way out of the Greek embassy in Kenya, Turkish businessmen unilaterally cancelled the scheduled meeting of the Turkish-Greek Business Council and 'even the most pro-Greek business personalities felt the need to make anti-Greek statements' (Ozel, 2004, p. 167).

The EU's hard institutional border with Turkey also posed limitations to the EU's ability to support financially the development of civil society in Turkey and direct funds to Greek-Turkish initiatives. Turkey became eligible for most forms of EU funding only after it signed an Accession Partnership with the EU in 2002. For example, while the Greek-Turkish civil society activity peaked following the 1999 earthquakes, the European Commission was able to initiate its Greek-Turkish Civic Dialogue Programme only in 2002. In 1999, the then Representative of the European Commission in Ankara had actually put forward such a proposal, but was not able to obtain funding from Brussels (Author Interview No. 4).

The problem with the hard EU border between Greece and Turkey was not primarily one of access, but one of meaning. Through its effects on the general course of bilateral relations, the EU helped perpetuate the legitimacy problem of Greek-Turkish civil society activities. Even though the 1995 Customs Union agreement opened the Greek-Turkish border to free trade, the volume of trade between Greece and Turkey experienced a real increase only after the post-1999 improvement in bilateral relations (Ozel, 2004). On the other hand, the fact that the EU border still functions as a barrier to the free movement of people has not impeded the multiplication of transnational contacts after 1999.

Finally, the hard EU border also helped to reproduce Greek and Turkish identities as different from and antagonistic towards each other. The European/non-European distinction that the EU discourse respectively superimposed on Greek and Turkish identities reinforced and legitimized the perceptions of threat and conflict (Rumelili, 2003). In order to validate its identity as a part of Europe, Greece sought to distinguish itself sharply from the non-European Turkey, by underscoring Turkey's differences from Greece and, in turn, from Europe. Similarly, in Turkey, the traditional rival Greece functioned as the expedient scapegoat as Turkey sought to validate its European identity in the context of European discourses that constructed it as an 'outsider'. The hard EU border accentuated Turkey's identity insecurity and this has led to the reproduction of discourses that constructed Europe and in particular, Greece as threatening.

IV. Transforming Conflicts on EU Borders

In December 1999, the European Council decided to grant candidate status to Turkey. By grounding the future relations between the EU and Turkey on a membership track and by symbolizing the EU's recognition of Turkey as a 'potential European', this decision entailed a fundamental change in the EU's institutional and identity borders towards Turkey. It is true that EU-Turkey relations, as demonstrated by the debates in Europe prior to the December 2004 decision to start accession negotiations with Turkey, retained some degree of controversy. However, the December 1999 decision definitely marked at least *a shift towards* relatively open frontiers between the EU and Turkey.

Starting with 1999, Greek-Turkish relations began to benefit from the conflict-diminishing effects of relatively open EU frontiers. Though, as I will explain below, domestic developments in Turkey and Greece initiated the change, the EU's decision to offer a membership perspective to Turkey helped to consolidate it, leading to a sustained *rapprochement* between Turkey and Greece within an EU framework. First, it empowered the moderates and provided the basis for alternative policies in both countries. Secondly, by facilitating EU funding and legitimization, Turkey's EU candidacy has broadened the scope of Greek-Turkish civil society co-operation activities. Finally, the prospect of Turkey's inclusion in Europe has facilitated the emergence of an alternative discourse on Greek-Turkish identities.

Starting with the Simitis leadership of PASOK in 1996, there were indications of a change in Greek foreign policy towards supporting Turkey's European orientation. However, the intra-party divisions did not allow for the consistent implementation of this new policy. In this context, the Ocalan crisis

in February 1999 paved the way for the removal of three hardliner ministers from the Greek cabinet and the placement of the moderate George Papandreu in the foreign ministerial post. Soon after, the twin earthquakes that devastated Izmit and Athens respectively in August and September 1999 created a mood of popular empathy in both countries that allowed the leaders 'to claim a popular mandate for changing policies historically supported by a large majority on both sides' (Gundogdu, 2001). Thereby, Greece was able to make a historic departure away from the previous policy of negatively conditionality⁹ and not use its veto against the EU's decision to grant Turkey candidate status in December 1999.

These developments should not, however, draw our attention away from the essential role played by the EU in structuring the foreign policy change in Greece. In Greece, Turkey's EU membership perspective has been a crucial element of the logic upon which the alternative policy of supporting Turkey's Europeanization has been formulated and advocated: for Greece to eliminate the Turkish threat, Turkey needs to Europeanize. For Turkey to Europeanize, the EU must be both willing and able to start Turkey's membership process. This logic therefore legitimizes and renders rational that Greece should work towards bringing its main rival into the European Union. However, the logic is doomed to fail if the EU insists on maintaining hard borders with Turkey: the exclusion of Turkey from the EU would make it much more difficult – if not impossible – for Turkey to Europeanize. As our first interviewee surmised in October 2004 (Author Interview No. 1), 'if Turkey is not given a date [to start accession negotiations] in December, Greece's Turkey policy would lose its foundation'.

The EU's inclusive approach towards Turkey has constrained the hardliners in Greece by rendering the policy of negative conditionality less possible, successful and legitimate. The more the EU commits to Turkey's membership, the more Greece loses its power within the Union to block Turkey's path and it can exercise a veto only at great cost to its reputation (Author Interview No. 5). This awareness was highly visible among Greek policy-makers in the lead-up to the Brussels Summit which granted Turkey a date to start accession negotiations (Bourdaras, 2004).

Turkey's EU membership perspective not only provided the backbone for the new Greek policy on Turkey, but also facilitated the emergence of a broad domestic coalition necessary to maintain this policy. Differences in policy approach towards Turkey are accommodated within a broad consensus on supporting Turkey's European orientation. Whereas the hardliners want

⁹ However, Greece has not departed fully from this policy with respect to Cyprus, as it continued with its threat to veto the EU's entire eastern enlargement unless Cyprus is included in it. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for this point.

Turkey to remain on the membership track because they believe they will thereby be able to extract more concessions from Turkey, the moderates support Turkish membership because they believe it will socialize Turkey into changing its foreign policy along EU norms. This domestic coalition has proven flexible enough to survive potentially serious episodes in bilateral relations, such as the outbreak of the airspace 'violations' issue during April–May 2003. Following the 2004 elections that brought Karamanlis to power, policy differentiation has been contained within the overall framework of EU-Turkey relations, with Papandreou criticizing the Karamanlis government for failing to tie EU-Turkey relations to a strict timetable and conditions on Greek-Turkish relations.

The EU's December 1999 decision to grant candidate status to Turkey has triggered a process of reform and transformation in Turkey in all areas of politics, including foreign policy. In the 1990s, Turkey perceived nearly all of its neighbours as security threats and pursued policies of deterrence. The present government, on the other hand, has adopted 'zero-problems with neighbours' as the guiding maxim of its foreign policy (Author Interview No. 6). The policy change towards relations with Greece manifested itself in at least four ways. First, Turkey has first tacitly and then, more explicitly accepted a linkage between Turkey's EU membership process and the resolution of Greek-Turkish disputes. Second, it agreed to the adjudication of the Aegean disputes in the Hague if bilateral negotiations were to fail. Third, it actively maintained *détente* with Greece through various confidence-building measures and co-operation agreements. Fourth, it supported the Annan Plan for the re-unification of Cyprus. On the other hand, despite some encouraging statements by the government, the *casus belli* on the expansion of territorial waters by Greece has been recently reasserted by the Turkish military (*Radikal*, 2005).

This foreign policy change in Turkey was facilitated by the prospect of EU membership and the concomitant positive identification with the EU. The EU began to function both as a legitimate reference point and as an attractive carrot, enabling the moderates to justify policy change, to convince the sceptics and to silence their opponents. The prospect of co-membership of the EU with Greece offered Turkish policy-makers a perspective for an alternative future when the border disputes with Greece would lose their meaning. As our seventh interviewee recounts: 'Once Turkey is in the EU, the problems with Greece will be resolved. We give the example of France and Germany. Many issues are resolved within the EU in the long-term' (Author Interview No. 7). Thus, the perception of the EU as a successful security community is well established among the Turkish elite and serves to legitimize the joint efforts to gain membership in the EU and to resolve the outstanding disputes with Greece. The sceptics are in turn convinced to support Greek-Turkish

co-operation because maintaining good relations with Greece is essential to Turkey's EU membership bid. Our eighth interviewee puts this in crude give-and-take terms, 'we are pursuing good relations with Greece because we want to be in the EU' (Author Interview No. 8). For our seventh interviewee, on the other hand, it is a matter of realism:

It is a fact that without Greece's positive stance – I am not saying if it does not just use its veto – it will not be possible for Turkey to enter the EU. We have to assess this realistically and we're doing so, Greece is one of the countries that have to be on our side. (Author Interview No. 7)

Civil society co-operation between the two countries received a boost following the deadly earthquakes that Izmit and Athens suffered in September 1999. Its December 1999 decision to grant Turkey candidate status enabled the EU to help consolidate this process in two ways.¹⁰ First of all, the institutional status of candidate made Turkey eligible for many additional forms of EU funding and thus allowed the EU to support directly the development of civil society in Turkey and assist Greek-Turkish civil initiatives. The Civil Society Development Programme was introduced in 2002, with a budget of €8 million for two years to promote Greek-Turkish dialogue at the grassroots level and to enhance the capacity of NGOs in Turkey. In February 2004, the European Commission introduced a €35 million package to support cross-border co-operation between Greece and Turkey for 2004–06. The availability of EU funding has been important especially for Turkish NGOs, which are more dependent on foreign funding than their counterparts in Greece (Belge, 2004). The EU has specifically supported local and grassroots organization, which would have difficulty accessing other forms of funding and encouraged the formation of new partnerships between Greek and Turkish organizations (Author Interview No. 9).

Secondly and perhaps more importantly, Turkey's EU membership has provided a common denominator or reference point for activists in Turkey and Greece to gather around (Author Interviews Nos. 10 and 11). Especially the Turkish activists perceive themselves and are also perceived by others as not only working for Greek-Turkish co-operation but also for [Turkey's membership in] the EU. The VEN Volunteers Association, for example, states this very explicitly in its mission statement:

It became apparent that the common denominator of our vision was to contribute to Turkey's process of European Union membership and this vision directed us to re-orient ourselves. The active members all agreed that the most important advantage for Turkey in the EU membership process

¹⁰ This discussion draws on Rumelili (2005).

would be the establishment of strong and healthy relations between Turkey and Greece. (Tarikahya, 2004)

Finally, the EU's inclusive approach towards Turkey encouraged the formation of a new discourse on Greek-Turkish identities that dwells on a common European future. Keridis (2001, p. 14) argues that the now dominant perception of Turkey in Greece 'is not a monolith but a complicated and rapidly changing reality with a variety of constituencies'. As a result of this changed perception, negative representations in the media, such as barbaric, primitive, etc. that used to be applied to Turkey indiscriminately are now reserved only for certain groups within Turkey. This pluralistic perception of Turkey has also triggered the realization of common identities and interests that cut across national lines: 'People who are pro-Europe in Greece are probably more like people who are pro-Europe in Turkey, than they are their compatriots, who might subscribe to some outlandish beliefs or conspiracy theories' (Konstandaras, 2002).

On the other hand, relatively open EU frontiers, coupled with Greece's strong support for Turkey's EU membership, have radically transformed the perceptions of Greece in Turkey from negative to positive. The new discourse on Greece recognizes it as a 'fully European' state and no longer dismisses it as a 'fake-European' (Rumelili, 2003). Nothing would demonstrate this better than Turkey's willingness to accept Greece's guidance on EU matters. Both the Turkish government and the Turkish military have made public statements that Turkey no longer sees Greece as its rival. While a small minority in Turkish society maintains its anti-Greek sentiments and actions, there is a growing liking for Greek society and culture and an increasing awareness of the Greek heritage in Turkey.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of the transformation of the Greek-Turkish conflicts, this article has sought to demonstrate that the EU's bordering practices towards outsider states are an important condition for EU impact beyond its boundaries. Close institutional relations and positive identification with outsider states diffuse the logic of security community also to the external borders of the EU. On the other hand, hard EU borders reinforce the logic of alliance, perpetuating the existing conflicts between insider and outsider states. I have sought to show the manifold ways in which the change in the EU's institutional and identity relations towards Turkey after 1999 have positively affected the Greek-Turkish conflicts. It is important to underscore that the change has not solely been due to the inducement provided by the membership carrot. The EU's changed

approach towards Turkey has also been the basis of the alternative Greek foreign policy, empowered the moderate elites in both countries, legitimized the governmental and civil society efforts directed at Greek-Turkish co-operation and conditioned significant changes in discourse.

The obvious policy implication of this study is that the EU should build close institutional and identity relations with outsider states in order to have a positive impact on (potential) conflicts on its external borders. To some extent, this is supposed to be realized through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which promises the EU's 'neighbours' privileged relations and possibly, a certain degree of economic and political integration with the EU. However, the experience of Greek-Turkish conflicts points to some serious shortcomings in this policy, as it stands. First, the ENP replaces the distinction between insiders and outsiders with another clear-cut dichotomy between members and neighbours both in terms of institutional and identity relations. In other words, the ENP is oriented towards opening the physical and to a very limited extent the institutional borders of the EU, while maintaining and in some instances hardening, its identity borders. The alternative does not necessarily entail committing to further enlargement, but offering to neighbours a more nuanced, but also clearly-defined, gradation of integration/co-operation relations on a differentiated basis. More importantly, this gradation of relations needs to be grounded in an identity discourse that rejects any sharp distinction between Europeans and non-Europeans. Then, just as it did in the case of Turkey-Greece, the prospect of a higher degree of integration with the EU can induce the outsider state to change its policies, while, at the same time, providing the basis for an alternative policy to the insider state. Second, the ENP includes no safeguards against possible attempts by a Member State to affect adversely the EU's relations with a particular neighbouring state, as a strategy in their ongoing conflicts. Though the Strategy Paper states that 'it is of utmost importance that the Institutions and Member States act in a consistent and coherent way' (Commission, 2004) in the implementation of ENP, there is no set of general principles which will govern the Member State's relations with the EU's neighbours.

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3. Former Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Istanbul, 9 February 2004.
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5. Head of Policy Planning Unit at the Greek Foreign Ministry, Athens, 22 February 2005.
6. Chief Foreign Policy Advisor to Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Ankara, 17 November 2003.
7. Turkish Foreign Ministry Directorate General for Bilateral Relations with Greece, Ankara, 3 March 2004.
8. Turkey's Former Ambassador to Greece, Ankara, 4 March 2004.
9. Project Co-ordinator, Civil Society Development Programme, Representation of the European Commission to Ankara, Ankara, 18 November 2003.
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