



**THE “SPIRIT OF DAVOS” REVISITED: THE GRECO-TURKISH RAPPROCHEMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE GREEKS IN TURKEY (1987-1989)**

Aslı Bilge<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT**

This article focuses in detail on the rapprochement period or the “Davos spirit” of the late 1980s, initiated by Turkey who was searching to rejuvenate its relations with the European Community. The aim is to shed light on the measures, appropriated by the government concerning especially property rights not fully known in details by the public. The utilitarian approach will be analysed closely in order to find out whether those measures were effective on the long run on the Greek minority.

**Keywords:** Davos Spirit, Greek Minority, Rapprochement, Greek-Turkish Relations, Property Rights.

**ÖZ**

Bu makale, 1980’lerin sonunda Avrupa Topluluğu ile ilişkilerini canlandırmak isteyen Türkiye’nin Yunanistan ile başlattığı, “Davos ruhu” olarak adlandırılan yakınlaşma dönemini ayrıntısıyla incelemektedir. Amaç, bu süreçte hükümet tarafından yapılan ve tüm ayrıntılarıyla bilinmeyen özellikle mülkiyet hakkı konusundaki düzenlemeleri aydınlığa kavuşturmaktır. Bu dönemde benimsenen faydacı yaklaşım yakından incelenecek ve bu düzenlemelerin Rum azınlıkların hakları üzerindeki etkileri irdelenecektir.

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<sup>1</sup> Yard. Doç. Dr., Yeditepe Üniversitesi. Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü.

**Anahtar Kelimeler: Davos Ruhü, Rum Azınlık, Yakınlaşma,  
Türk-Yunan İlişkileri, Mülkiyet Hakları.**

**INTRODUCTION**

In the second half of the 1980s André Braën asserted the following on the principle of linguistic duality in the Canadian constitution: « Il est évident que même si le droit proclame l'égalité; l'égalité réelle dépend, quant à elle, de la révolution des esprits » (Braën, 1986).<sup>2</sup> A similar statement is made by Mr. Mihalis Vasiliadis (private communication, March 2008), the owner and the sole redactor of *Apoyevmatini*, a daily Greek minority newspaper in Istanbul. He complained that the legal arrangements that were undertaken for the European Union membership look promising on paper, but in practice they do not offer much in terms of minority rights, simply because the enforced legal arrangements are of very little help to ensure a change in the mindset. Until that happens, it is not possible to settle current problems with the involvement of the European Union.

From the very early days of the Republic, the Turkish state did not hesitate to take vexing measures against the non-Muslim minorities, disregarding their equal individual rights as citizens and also collective rights as minorities. Rights of the non-Muslim minorities were only considered when there was an external stimulant. This is especially true for the Greek minority, which suffered the reciprocity clause of the Lausanne treaty, or to be precise, the deliberate misapplication of this clause by both Greece and Turkey for their respective minorities. Turkey appropriated a utilitarian approach towards its Greek minority, restricting their rights whenever the relations with Greece were hard pressed.

Ever since the full membership of Greece in the European Economic Community (EEC) in January 1981, the organization became an external factor in the settlement of disputes between Greece and Turkey. Thus when the Özal government decided to apply for full membership of the EC in the 1980s, to be realized soon with a formal application in 1987, it had to foresee beforehand Greek reaction. The latter, having a veto right could impede such an application without hesitation. The reasonable way to follow appeared to throw a branch of olive to Greece. Instead of struggling for thorny deadlocked problems like the Cyprus or the Aegean question, making few gestures of good will for Greeks seemed easier.

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<sup>2</sup> It is obvious that even if one proclaims equality, the real equality depends on the revolution of the minds.

In the first part of this article I will briefly mention the protection of minorities under the Treaty of Lausanne and instrumentalization of the minority rights in Turkey. In the second part, I will analyze the Davos process of the late 1980s as a case study. This very period is an interesting time in the history: the end of the military regime, the process of adoption of liberal political and economic practices, the danger of a possible war between the two countries across the shore of the Aegean, and the application process of Turkey for a full membership of the European Community. All contribute to the era, making the period a very fertile ground for the analysis of the utilization of the Greek minority of Turkey in the relations with Greece and the European Union. In the final part, I will analyze in depth the measures taken by the Özal government concerning the Greek minority.

## 1. THE PROTECTION OF MINORITIES UNDER THE TREATY OF LAUSANNE

After the Greek defeat it was time to create a new Turkish state from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Lausanne, negotiated by the national government of Ankara implied the international recognition of the new Turkish state. After long years of struggle and wars in the Balkans and in Anatolia against the non-Muslims, the Ankara government had in mind to create a purified land for Turks. The meaning of the purification was Islamization –i.e. cultural belonging to Islam- of Anatolia. The objective was to create a Turkish nation, Muslim and Sunnite. Kurds, Circassians, Laz and Greek and Slav speaking Muslim immigrants from the Balkans could be a part of the new nation but not the Greeks of Orthodox faith.

Before the conclusion of the Lausanne Treaty the convention on the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey almost purified Asia Minor from the Greek element with the sole exception of Istanbul and the Turkish Aegean Islands of Imvros and Tenedos. Muslim minority of Greek Western Thrace were to be excluded from exchange as well. This exchange involved (including those who fled during the Greek-Turkish war) 1,200,000 Greeks of Turkey and 450.000 Muslims of Greece who were most forcibly made refugees and *de jure* denaturalized from homelands of centuries or millennia, in a treaty promoted and overseen by the international community (Ladas, 1993: 28).

The Lausanne Treaty contains several clauses on the ‘Protection of Minorities’. On the insistence of Turkish party to the treaty, only non-Muslims were considered as minorities in the treaty. However, Turkish authorities were determined to limit the foreign intervention for the rights of the minorities. Treaty articles guaranteed to non-Muslim minorities free exercise of religion, full

freedom of movement and emigration, full freedom of the use of mother tongues, enjoyment of the same treatment and security in law and in fact as other Turkish nationals, equal rights to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely. Also the minorities had the right to settle questions as far as those concerning their family law or personal status in accordance with the customs of the minority. The special rights granted in the Treaty of Lausanne gave rise to enmity against minorities in the eyes of the public. Especially the Greek minority's collaboration with the Greek army was not forgiven. The Lausanne articles were regarded as a handicap to the social harmonization and nation building aims of the new state (Bali, 2007: 62).

The short Article 45 was maybe the most determinant and the most misperceived in Turkey concerning the Greek minority. This article reads:

*The rights conferred by the provisions of the present section on the non-Moslem minorities of Turkey will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Moslem minority in her territory.*

Reciprocity is a controversial issue that poisoned the relations between Greece and Turkey and state-minority relations. Reciprocity has always been used in the negative sense: Same restrictions and same deprivations. Moreover, reciprocity in the international law may not be used towards the citizens of the respective states. The reciprocity principle was extended to Turkish-Greek disagreement in its entirety, but remained basically on minorities. The best example is the 1964 expulsion of Greek nationals in response to events in Cyprus. In the final analysis, reciprocity has become, in the specific case, a dreadful weapon in the hands of the two states (Akgönül, 2008: 34)

#### ***Instrumentalization of the Greek Minority in Greek-Turkish Relations***

Soon after Lausanne, Greece and Turkey, made a sincere try to improve the relations between them in 1930s. The highest point of this attempt was Venizelos' visit to Ankara. The two leaders concluded three documents during the official visit of Venizelos on 17-31 October 1930: A Convention of friendship, neutrality and reconciliation; An Accord on residences of commerce and maritime navigation and a Protocol of limitation of marine forces (Soysal, 1993: 46). The two first documents are related closely to the Greeks of Turkey. The first one regulated definitively the properties of the 'établis', and the second and the most important document permitted the exchanged Greeks that lost their Turkish citizenship and acquired the Greek one, to return to Istanbul, to settle and work there (Akgönül, 2008: 47).

The policy of rapprochement was successful for several reasons. First, both countries had strong governments, headed by indisputable and charismatic personalities. Venizelos and Atatürk were able to isolate themselves from domestic policies and opposition exerting immense political pressure stemming from the perceptions of public opinion. Second, both countries needed to undertake domestic reconstruction after a highly damaging conflict. Third, the international environment and specifically the expectations that arose in Lucarno and Geneva provided a favorable overarching principle for the Greek-Turkish peace efforts (Van Coufoudakis, 1985: 85-217) Finally, the rapprochement would facilitate defense efforts of both countries. Therefore the two young nations were taking significant steps on the road to create a close relationship that would best serve their interests.

But this period of honeymoon would not last long. Before and during the World War II, nationalism reached its climax in Turkey, making the life of Greeks like other minority groups difficult. During these years non-Muslim citizens were subject to new policies such as the mobilization into special battalions without the right to carry arms. A heavily discriminatory wealth tax targeted the end of the non-Muslim economic hegemony. However, the highly instable political situation in Greece and the conditions of war did prevent Greeks from immigrating to Greece or elsewhere. Relations between Greece and Turkey would blow with the outbreak of the Cyprus crisis in 1955. The anti-Greek riots during 6-7 September 1955, were organized to react to the Cyprus crisis and targeted the Greek minority of Istanbul.

One decade later, reciprocity clause was forged by Turkey since the expulsion of Greeks in 1964 in order to force Greece to seek a solution to hardships of Turkish Cypriots. In 1964, Turkey annulled the 1930 Treaty between the two countries and expelled all Greek nationals and seized their properties and froze their bank accounts. This decision was the beginning of the end of the Greek community in Turkey. Greek nationals left the country and were followed by their families who had Turkish citizenship. The intervention of the Turkish army in Cyprus after the *coup d'état* organized in Cyprus by the Greek military junta realized the *de facto* partition of the island. This issue became one of the major axis of the problems between Greece and Turkey until now. In spite of both Greece and Turkey's preoccupation with Cyprus as a major foreign policy problem, since 1974 both have avoided the appearance of negotiating a Cyprus settlement (Bahçeli, 1990: 107). The Cyprus crisis accelerated the immigration of Greeks of Turkey to Greece.

## **2. THE SECOND 'DÉTENTE' BETWEEN ANKARA AND ATHENS: THE "DAVOS SPIRIT"**

*The Davos process*, was a kind of precursor of building a relation based on mutual trust. This was the first of its kind since the famous Atatürk-Venizelos initiative of the 1930s. It started with the official meeting of Turkish Premier Turgut Özal and his Greek homologue Andreas Papandreu during the Davos Economic Meetings of 30-31 January 1988. The process was abandoned for several reasons by the end of 1989. Although the Davos process proved to be short-lived, it was in a sense the forerunner of the more recent rapprochement between the two nations in that it involved not only the participation of state actors, but also civil society and NGO initiatives (Öniş & Yılmaz, 2008). The failure of the Davos process was due to the ineffectiveness of the European Community to give Turkey some positive signals for membership, without which the process was deprived of an anchor.

### *The Background*

Three years after the military coup in Turkey, a civilian government under the leadership of Turgut Özal took over the power in Turkey. Özal was a convinced liberal and he was determined to change the foreign policy of Turkey to make it more compatible with the country's economic needs. The Cold War was already finished, and it was time to determine new roles to play in foreign policy. He saw Cyprus and other thorny issues with Greece as a major obstacle for developing better relations with the West. According to Mr. Tınaz Titiz, the former Minister of State, Culture and Tourism (1985-1989), Özal was aware that modernization of Turkey depended on integration with Europe (personal communication, March 2008). Therefore, improving relations with Greece was an important step towards this end. Since mid-1950s, bilateral relations were already sour between the two countries over the Cyprus issue and they came at the brink of war during the 1963 and 1967 outbreaks of inter-communal violence in Cyprus. Starting from the early 1970s, exploration for oil in the North Aegean Sea engendered new geo-economic hopes for Turkey and Greece. As a result, the continental shelf dispute became an issue of strategic importance. Since 1974 the areas of the Turkish-Greek dispute have focused on the Turkish occupation of the Republic of Cyprus, the delimitation of the Aegean Sea continental shelf, the sea and air borders, the international aviation responsibilities between the two countries, and the NATO local command operational responsibilities over the Aegean, as well as the militarization of Greek East Aegean islands on grounds of self-defense (Dimitrakis, 2007: 101). Minorities in the two countries were almost marginalized and formed a negligible part of the bilateral relations. Moreover the Turkish threat was made an integral part of the nationalistic discourse of the Greek politicians. Andreas Papandreu who came to power in Greece in 1981 was keen to say that "threat was not coming from the North (Russia) but from the East (Turkey)" (Van Coufoudakis, 1985: 201-203; Fırat, 2004: 102-123).

In the early 1980s, the EEC membership of Greece under Karamanlis' post-1974 leadership was a turning point in Greek-Turkish relationships. Starting from that date Greece preferred to Europeanize bilateral disputes, involving the Community institutions in order to criticize and isolate Turkey. Since 1987, however, this policy did not attain the aimed conclusions since Turkey was not a member of the EEC and the country was passing through important domestic hardships. Turkey applied for membership to the EEC as early as July 1959, one month after Greece's application and signed an Association Agreement on 12 September 1963. An additional protocol was signed in November 1970 where the rules for Turkey's prospective customs union with the European Economic Community were elaborated, which was to be followed by a decision on Turkey's accession to the Community. However, unfavorable political developments in Turkey, during 1970s as well as the major oil crisis that caused a downwards trend in EC's economic success, and most importantly, the military coup of 12 September 1980 precluded any possibility of Turkey's EC membership. Turkey's isolation abated with its return to civilian government in 1983. Trade barriers were removed, and on 14 April 1987 an application for EC membership was submitted by the Özal government (Grigoriadis, 2003).

Turkey was concerned that Greece would use the unanimity rules to block its full membership. Indeed, Athens overtly contested the Turkish application to the EC. Greece has made it plain that it expects a favorable settlement in Cyprus before it will endorse Turkey's bid for membership. Moreover, Aegean disputes – like the delineation of territorial waters, airspace and continental shelf to those of the Flight Information Regions (FIR)- were added to the unresolved Cyprus issue. A case in point was the Greek Premier Papandreu's attempt during the EEC summit in June 1986 to postpone the normalization of relations between the Community and Turkey following the restoration of a civilian elected government. For the Greek premier, Turkey's military presence in Cyprus and other issues such as the human rights record of the military government in Ankara were causes for concern. As Turkey was not willing to alter its policies, Turkey-EC relations suffered a stalemate as any decisions that could improve Turkey-EU relations were blocked by Greece's veto. The channeling of financial aid provided by the Fourth Financial protocol of 1981 between Turkey and the EEC was frozen.

The program of the civil government in Turkey launched before the Great Assembly on 13 January 1983 contained presumptions of a new approach towards Greece. The program aspired for "friendly relations with Greece" and mentioned the "common long term interests of the two countries" and "necessity of building good relations in the areas of commerce, economy and tourism" (Firat, 2004: 109). Obviously, the Özal government wanted to open a dialogue

between the two countries starting with soft issues like tourism and commerce instead of undertaking deadlock disputes.

The new foreign policy orientations of Özal were paralleled with his domestic policy. He was coming from a right wing, conservative and nationalist background. Still he was willing to change the foreign policy orientations of Turkey and diminish the powers of the army. He was an unusual politician who dared questioning taboos of the Turkish politics. He sought for a new post-Kemalist consensus –one which is better suited to a society that has developed dramatically and pluralized radically during the last half century. Modernization of the country depended on economic reforms that would in turn consolidate an open, liberal and democratic polity. He undertook important reforms in order to open Turkish economy to the world market. For the new government as well as for the business circles, the recent economic opening was translated into a similar political opening-up. He gave signals of an opening in the sphere of recognition of the multi-ethnic structure of the society (Keridis, 1999).

In Turkey, undermining the army requires an irreproachable nationalism for not being criticized as an enemy of the nation. Similarly changing the foreign policy even moderately requires to be acknowledged as an uncompromising nationalist to avoid the accusation of “selling off” the interests of Turkey. Turgut Özal used nationalist rhetoric that made sense for the voters, to lift all suspicions over his sentiments on the “mother-patria” and even on his ulterior intentions (Bertrand, 2000: 243).

### *The 1987 Crisis and the Beginnings of the Rapprochement*

In 1987, a new crisis in the Aegean became a “blessing in disguise” (Athanasopoulou, 1997) and opened the way for the Davos process. The crisis was the most serious episode of Turkish-Greek confrontation over the Aegean continental shelf and the exploration rights of Greece and Turkey in international waters (Dimirtakis, 2007: 100). The crisis was skillfully managed by Özal who reduced tensions between the two countries (Akıman, 2002: 26-28). 10 months after the crisis, Greek and Turkish leaders met in Davos during the World Economic Forum in 1988. This was the first meeting between the leaders of the two countries since 1978. After intense discussions during two meetings on 30 and 31 January, two leaders issued a *communiqué* of nine points. The communiqué briefly cited measures to prevent war, the condemnation of the instrumentalization of Greek-Turkish relations by nationalistic political discourse in the two countries, creation of commissions to examine sectors like tourism, commerce, communications, and installation of a direct line between two prime ministers. The two prime ministers promised to favor contacts



between “military and civil officials” but also between “press and business representatives”.

The Davos meeting created hopes in Turkey for better relations with the EC as well. Turkey was hoping that Greece would lift its veto on the Association Council Meeting (Cumhuriyet, January 16, 1988). Right after the meeting, the European Parliament congratulated the two countries on this initiative (February 6, 1988). Turkish politicians made remarks concerning the impact of the process for Turkey’s bid for EC membership (Cumhuriyet, February 14, 1988). The Turkish press supported the Davos process, celebrating it as a first step on a long, thorny way (Birand, February 2, 1988; Öymen, February 2, 1988).

After the Davos meeting two leaders came together on 3-4 March 1988 in Brussels for a second meeting and issued another communiqué. Turkey promised the easing of the liquidation of the properties of Greeks in Turkey. In exchange Greece promised to lift its veto over the Association Protocol of the EC. A calendar of future meetings including Özal’s visit to Athens was scheduled. After this date, in May the Greek Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri came to Istanbul for a conference and met Özal on this occasion. On 26<sup>th</sup> of May, the Greek-Turkish culture and economic commission adopted a first resolution and announced a future cooperation targeting the revising of schoolbooks to eliminate hostile expressions for the other people (Bertrand, 2000: 163).

On 24-27 May 1988 the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Athens. Yılmaz and his Greek colleague Carolos Papoulias, presided at the political commission. The major achievement of Yılmaz’s visit was the Vouliagmeni Memorandum (Athens, 27 May 1988) which contained confidence-building, tension-reduction and good neighborliness measures. It was the only significant agreement to take place at that time. Neither the core of the Aegean dispute nor the Cyprus problem were solved but the memorandum had a symbolic importance. This memorandum was followed by the Istanbul Agreement signed on 8 September 1988. The Agreement stipulated the measures to be respected for the overflights on marine and air spaces of the two countries.

Turgut Özal’s visit to Athens between 13-15 June 1988 was the first of its kind after 36 years. Before going to Athens, the Turkish delegation determined their positions on some important points.

1. Economic relations should lead cooperation in other areas.
2. Turkey may consider withdrawal of the estimated 30.000 Turkish troops on the condition that bi-communal start under the UN initiative.

3. Turkish sensitivity over the Muslim minority of Western Thrace will be asserted.
4. No change of attitudes over Aegean issues.
5. Turkey will ask Greece's support for its application to the EC. The Cyprus issue should not be a precondition for Turkish-EC relations (Milliyet, June 13, 1988).

In Greece, PASOK, issued a declaration in *Eksormisi* and put forward 5 conditions:

1. Cyprus is an international problem. The Turkish army shall leave the island.
2. Greece wants continental shelf problem to be solved before the International justice Court in La Haye.
3. Greek airspace of 10 miles cannot be negotiated.
4. There are no ethnic minorities in Greece. There is only Muslim minority. Therefore this question cannot be negotiated.

There was obviously a divergence between the two stances. Therefore, Özal's visit did not generate great hopes for both parties but was seen as a symbolic start. The visit started in a hostile environment. Papandreu was under domestic pressure of the opposition within his government and military circles. The Greek public opinion was also hostile to the Turkish premiers' visit to Athens. The Greek ambassador Stophoropoulos to Cyprus resigned, and the ancient commandant in chief of the Cypriot National Guard, general Matafias criticized the process in its entirety. The new president of the Cyprus Republic recently elected, (on 21 February 1988) Georgios Vasilliou, was observing prudently (Chiclet, January 1989). Thus Andreas Papandreu was obliged to make the Cyprus problem the "central theme" of the visit. Accordingly, the first speech of Papandreu was dominantly consecrated to the Cyprus issue (Le Monde, 15 June 1988). Özal delivered a psychologically informed speech. He spoke of the history of the two nations, their historical grievances, and the era of co-operation under Atatürk and Venizelos (Volkan & Itzkowitz, 1994: 158).

Despite good intentions the visit proved to be fruitless because of the deadlock over the Cyprus issue. The Turkish side was determined that if Cyprus issue was put on the table by the Greek government, Turkey would refuse to make this issue a negotiation item. Moreover, the visit of Özal did not change the Greek attitudes towards the EC application of Turkey. The Association

Council that was scheduled for the 1988 was once again vetoed by Greece (Erhan & Arat, 2004: 99). The Davos Process was condemned to death subsequently for several reasons. First, influential sections of the Greek Foreign Ministry objected to any agreement that concerns continental shelf, a dispute which should be referred to the International Court of Justice. Second, Turkey had to come to Greek's terms in Cyprus issue. Otherwise it was unnecessary to build cooperation in other fields. As Turkey insisted that the Cyprus issue would not be included in the Davos process, the Greek government was criticized by the opposition. And finally the Greek media was critical of the initiative without obtaining anything in return (Öymen, June 14, 1988). The most important point was that in Greece neither politicians nor the press nor the public opinion were prepared for a hasty peace initiative started in Davos. Papandreu did even not prepare his own government for a dialogue with Turkey. It was even more difficult to convince the media and the public opinion that the peace initiative was sincere and would conform to Greece's national interests (Öymen, June 13, 1988). During 1989, the two governments opposed on two sensitive issues: Turkish decision of extending the zone of intervention for research and air and maritime rescue and the Greek refusal to sign the Final Act of the CSCE in Vienna 6 March 1989. The reason for the Greek veto was the exclusion of Mersin from future accords of disarmament with reference to the role of this port as the base of Turkish operation to Cyprus in 1974 (Öymen, June 13, 1988).

Subsequently, Papandreu's illness, problems concerning his private life and the Koskotas scandal weakened the position resulted in the loss of momentum. Three consecutive general election campaigns in Greece led to the virtual abandonment of the Davos process. However, the election of Özal to presidency in November 1989 and the EC refusal of Turkish candidature to full membership on 18th December 1989 were also reasons for the failure of the Davos spirit.

### **3. BENEFITS FOR THE GREEK MINORITY OF ISTANBUL**

The Davos process between Greece and Turkey had its effects on the tiny Greek community of Istanbul. In the aftermath of the Lausanne Treaty, there were approximately 110.000 Greeks in Turkey. In addition to that number, citizens with Greek nationality who were 'établis' in Istanbul before 1918, were permitted to stay when the two countries exchanged populations in 1923, having the same rights as the Greek citizens of Turkey. In 1930, the Treaty between Greece and Turkey prolonged the right to stay of the Greek citizens in Istanbul. In his book on recent history of the Greek community, Alexandris notes that in 1927 the number of people with Greek citizenship was 26.431. In 1960, the number decreased to 10.488 (Alexandris, 1983: 281). When the Turkish government decided to abolish the 1930 Treaty and began to expel the Greek

nationals, 11.000 Greek nationals and 22.000 Greeks of Turkish nationality left Turkey within five years (Akgönül, 2004: 295). In other words, in the 1980s, the Greek minority in Istanbul had already lost a substantial part of its members. It is impossible to say precisely how many Greeks there were in Turkey in 1980s, because censuses contained no questions on ethnicity after 1965. But a statistics of the Greek pupils in Greek minority schools may give an idea. In the school year 1951-1952, 5.424 students were enrolled in Greek schools. In the school year 1974-75 the number fell to 2012. In 1980 the number was only 811. During the 1980s the number of students in Greek schools fell continuously. In 1995 there were only 306 pupils in all Greek schools (D. Frangopoulos, private archives). The collapse in numbers of Greeks in Istanbul after the 1974 period is striking, without any overt attack towards Greeks. The Cyprus crisis, anarchy, military coup, economic and political instability in Turkey in contrast to successful transition to democracy and membership of the EC in Greece, made the latter a better place to live for the Greek minority.

In 1984, before the process of Davos, Turgut Özal took a critical decision concerning indirectly the Greeks of Turkey. Loyal to his liberal policy, Özal lifted the Greek nationals' obligations to Turkish visa. In the middle of the 1980s, the total of Turkish exportations to Greece was representing only the 0,6 % of the total exportations, and only 1 % of Greek exportations were going to Turkey (Billon, 1997: 390). Özal thought that if visa was lifted, people could circulate freely. In consequence tourism and trade between two the countries would develop. The main target was declared as the return of the Greeks of Istanbul who were expelled in 1964. These people could form a sort of bridge between the two countries and maybe bring investments. In addition to the visa facilities for Greek nationals, Turkey offered to provide electricity, water and commodities to the Greek islands that are hundreds of miles away from Greece but only few miles from the Turkish costs. However, Greece reacted negatively to all these measures by maintaining visa obligations for Turkish tourists, impeding free crossing of tourists from Greek islands to Turkish coasts, and finally refusing the propositions concerning help for the isolated Aegean islands (Billon, 1997: 390).

Another concrete decision concerning the Greek minority indirectly was about the Patriarchate. The main wooden building of the Patriarchate was destructed in a fire in 1941. The repetitive demands for restoration were refused by successive governments under different pretexts. In 1985, Patriarch Dimitrios renewed the demand for an authorization. In 1987, 46 years after the fire, the Patriarchate obtained the authorization of its restoration from the Mayor of Istanbul (Macar, 2002: 230-31). Özal had no other choice but to find an immediate solution to break impasse in Turkish-Greek relationships. The Cyprus

and Aegean disputes were not to be discussed during the Davos meeting. In Western Thrace, the Turkish minority was demonstrating against the Greek government's recent decisions to ban their associations. Therefore it would be wise to build good relationships with Greece beginning with an "easy" issue: He would play on Greek minorities. However, he was well aware that the Greek minority was already a tiny community suffering from the continuous loss of blood. So, very wisely, he chose the Greek community of Istanbul either from Greek or Turkish nationality as his target group to make a nice gesture of good will to Greece without attracting the hostility of nationalists at home.

In a special interview to *Cumhuriyet* right before the Davos meeting, Turgut Özal made this wish clear (21 January 1988).

*I can simplify the return of Greeks with Turkish nationality. They can come and work here. Greeks with Turkish nationality, even Greek nationals who had already worked here... We can formulate this. Turkey cannot act in a chauvinistic way any more. Afterwards trade between the two countries would increase. Tourism is also important. Then we will have to handle other issues. There should be a rapprochement between businessmen and the media. This is not only an issue between two governments. It is also an issue between human beings.*

### ***Returning the Greek Properties***

In order to show his sincerity on this issue, the Turkish government took a major step just after the Davos meeting and lifted the 1964 decree on 6 February 1988. An article in *Milliyet* was explaining that there were 2.902 properties belonging to 12.000 Greeks expelled in 1964 and people who captured them illegally were in a panic. According to the article, Greek properties' total value was 300 milliards of Turkish liras (1 \$=1300 TL in 1988). One economist precised that all sales of these properties effectuated between 1964-1988 were illegal (February 5, 1988). This step was initially nothing more than a positive message to the EC and Greece and far from resolving the problem.

The Greek minority lawyer Vasilis Kalamaris explained the problem with these words: "the price of any property sold after the lifting of the decree will be blocked in the Central Bank of Turkey. This money cannot be used by the Greeks. However, within ten years when Turkey will become a member of the EC, these transactions will be much easier. If they sell their property because the decree of 1964 is lifted, they will be deprived of the property and they cannot transfer the money" (*Cumhuriyet*, 26 February 1988). But the problems were not limited to the transfer of the money: This decree was not retroactive. Therefore, the property already seized by the Public Treasury, an overall 80 % of all

property, could not be returned. Moreover, according to the Laws on Foreigners' Rights to acquire property in Turkey, register offices write to Ankara General Directorate of Land registry in order to get a permission to register the property. Foreigners can acquire property according to the permission (Cumhuriyet, February 26, 1988). This problem was solved with a decree, in exchange of Greek signature on the harmonization agreement between Greece and Turkey. Greece signed the Agreement on 20 April 1988 and sale of Greek properties were eased by Turkey.

In 1988, as a consequence of the rapprochement process of Davos, Turkey solved two problems concerning Greeks on executive level. One is the recognition of rights of Greek nationals to sell and leave their properties. Secondly, Turkey determined new rules for property rights of Greek citizens. Greeks acquired the same rights as other foreign nationals. However, these rules should be conforming to legal and active reciprocity (M. Cano, personal communication, March 18, 2008).

Between 1988 and 1991 many Greeks tried to sell their properties through specialized lawyers and Turkish real estate agencies. Between 1988-1991 those who gave deeds of trust to special agents could sell their property. However, starting from 1991 the Turkish Court of Appeals started to turn down the cases. A lawyer of the Public Treasury, Meral Kayalı, recalls that the treasury received an official letter from the ministry of Foreign Affairs signed by Mesut Yılmaz, then the Minister of Foreign Affairs during the Davos Process. In this letter the Foreign Minister asked the Treasury to not appear before the courts to claim properties let to the Treasury by Court decisions (personal communication, March 19, 2008). During the three years of the 'Davos Spirit' Greek nationals and their heirs could acquire their properties with the active involvement of government. However, since 1991, the Turkish Court of Cassation started to turn down cases in conformity to 'active reciprocity' in reference to Greek impediment to property rights of Turks in Greece [(Georgios Sklifas *et all* v. Treasury (October 6 2004), Decision of Supreme Court of Appeals, 2nd Chamber, No. 970-850]. Hundreds of cases are suspended before the courts and most of the Greek assets still are at disposal of the Turkish Public Treasury.

The Davos process did not bring much for the Greek minority in Istanbul. There were hopes that the new measures would lead to the return of those who left Turkey in previous decades. Turkish journals were optimistic about the outcomes of the measures and seemed to believe sincerely that those who left the country would come back (Milliyet, January 29, 1988). However, those who left did not return and the Greek minority of Istanbul did not stop to loose its members. During the Davos process, there were no measures taken by the Turkish government that would directly improve the conditions of the Greeks of

Istanbul. Greek education is a good example. While there were attempts of rapprochement with Greece, the Turkish law numbered 6581/1987, upgraded vice principals to become co-directors of the schools. They would be responsible of the functioning of the establishment with the same rights as the Principle (Anastassiadou & Dumont, 2003, p. 25). Similarly, problems of the Greek foundations were left untouched.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Concerning its Greek minority, there are several actors that influence Turkish attitudes. First, domestic politics; second, relations with Greece and, to a certain extent, Greek attitudes towards the Turkish-Muslim minority in Western Thrace and, last but not the least, relations with the EU and the USA.

During the Davos process, Turkey was between two worlds. On the one hand, the government desired to become a member of the EC and on the other it was preoccupied with numerous democracy problems at home. In all cases the future of Turkey depended on a peaceful solution to its troubles within the framework of a real democracy with the rule of law. Respect for and protection of minorities is one of the major challenges of the Turkish state on that thorny road. An inclusive understanding of the Turkish nation that would fit to majority and minority groups alike is not a remote option. However, it requires a new understanding of the society and the international conjuncture that goes with it.

Respective Greek and Turkish minorities in both countries have suffered greatly from the nationalistic approach, regarding them as 'the other', allegedly bound with the kin-state. This vision has already poisoned the minority groups' relations with their state. The reciprocity clause of the Lausanne Treaty was about reciprocal obligations of the states towards both minorities and not about restrictive measures that shall be applied in one minority whenever the other state undertakes a vexing measure against the other minority. However, this reality is undermined and not even perceived by the minorities themselves. The signals from the Turkish government for improvement in the Greek minority's conditions in Turkey raised the same expectations for the Turkish minority in Greece. During the first meeting in Davos, the Turkish demonstrated in Komotini to protest a large scale of Greek measures from restriction of property rights to the ban of the use of the term 'Turkish' in association names. However, their outcry fell in deaf ears, as Özal did not want to impede the process of rapprochement with Greece. On the closure of the associations bearing 'Turkish' in their name by the Greek Court decision, Turkey declared that there was 'no intention to close down Greek minority associations with the 'term' Greek in their names'. Consequently both Greek and Turkish minorities were

disillusioned with the outcomes of the process. The highly personalized basis of rapprochement processes without an overall change in policy yielded few and easily reversible results.



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