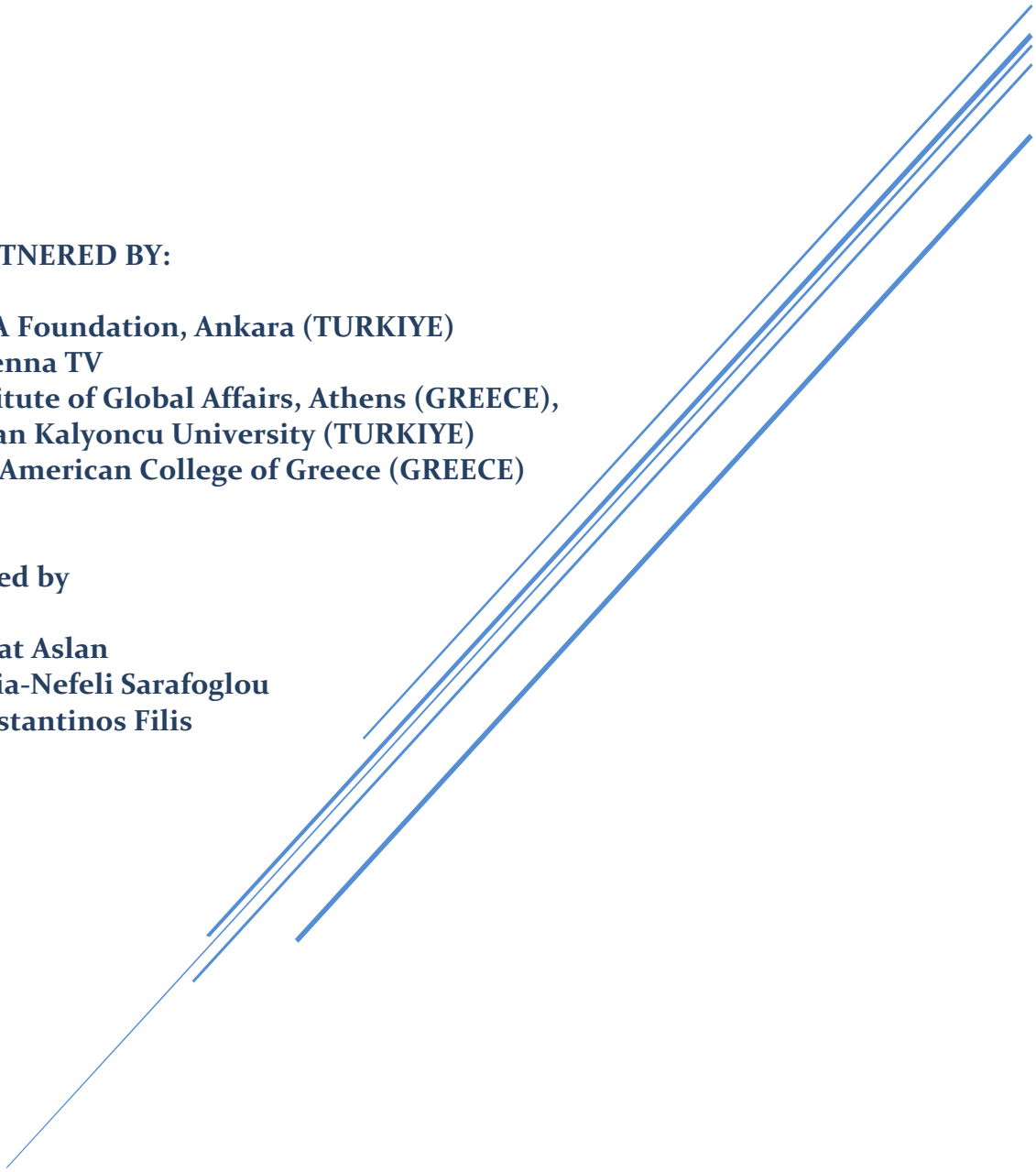
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TURKISH – GREEK RELATIONS:

For A Smooth Future

(5th Conference Series)



PARTNERED BY:

SETA Foundation, Ankara (TURKIYE)
Antenna TV
Institute of Global Affairs, Athens (GREECE),
Hasan Kalyoncu University (TURKIYE)
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Edited by

Murat Aslan
Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou
Konstantinos Filis



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THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

TURKISH – GREEK RELATIONS:

For A Smooth Future

1. CONCEPT OF THE CONFERENCE

The emerging risks of the contemporary globe require state actors to address the common issues in question collectively. Political, military, and economic disputes may push the state actors to run a 'relative' thinking to obtain the most, though; the patterns of this age obligate them to focus on interdependent approaches to minimize the impacts of the challenges. In this sense, states do not have the capacity to struggle for overcoming human, societal, and humanitarian deprivations. For instance, environmental degradation and climate change appear to be the significant inputs that states, as the most established entities of international politics, are interdependent to eradicate the impacts of them, surpassing the borders of each. New phenomena such as pandemic outbreaks, wildfires, floods, earthquakes, or energy shortages may devastate the faith of the next generations that international politics should be based on the collaboration of not only states but all designated units and levels of analysis. Meanwhile, the expectation of the public in every country is to have a prosperous life that states correlate their acts to promote it.

The depicted realities of the new landscape in International Relations are not only about the new risks and developments of its emerging patterns. Russian aggression in Ukraine has clearly pointed out that new and old sorts of risks and threats may erupt in the meantime. Further global competition for a 'Cold Peace' may provoke the 'balance of power' understanding of the post-Cold War era. In this sense, the globe may witness the integrated and complex kinds of conventional and unconventional, symmetric and asymmetric, regular and irregular, hybrid, proxy, or soft conflicts. Such a big picture of new complications in international politics will take the state actors on the horns of dilemmas. In other words, state actors will chest the traditional politics to rid of the accustomed risks whilst being prepared for the new unimaginable ones. On the other hand, the subjects of the states – individuals and society have the power of pushing states to overcome new hurdles and provide the 'most' security simultaneously.

The dual nature of international politics is no exception for the relations between Türkiye and Greece. Both countries have a history and a long list of political disputes, needless to put on this paper. The two countries occasionally mobilized their military assets in the past, as was lately witnessed in 2020. The abstracted lesson from the already experienced escalations is that any military strain is a military, economic, and human cost for both. In this context, the security dilemma perception of the last century increased military expenditures of both countries while the preparedness with a huge 'alternative' cost impeded the expected positive progress of either country. Despite the continuation of the disputes, two dynamics of this century inserted the requirement of shifting from a competitive posture toward a collaborative stance for Türkiye and Greece:

- The developments at the global and regional levels,
- The emerging risks that both countries jointly face.

The developments, to which Türkiye and Greece will be exposed to the impacts of them, appear to be the ones that either Türkiye or Greece could counter. Then it is nonsense who maximizes their gains or minimizes the losses. In this sense, the Russian – Ukrainian War was not within the initiative of Türkiye and Greece but both are exposed to the impacts of it. An American – Chinese competition, even across the Pacific, will dictate new terms of politics. Hence Türkiye and Greece are short of shaping the global, to some extent, regional situations. What makes both Türkiye and Greece share the same faith is that the two countries are the members of NATO Alliance and located in the neighboring geography. Furthermore, Greece is a member of the EU whilst Türkiye perceives the EU membership as a strategic objective. Hence, both countries, politically, are destined to act accordingly against global and regional developments.

The emerging risks are, again, common for both Türkiye and Greece. Natural disasters or new types of escalations - economic, societal, or environmental, require both countries to act in coordination and be prepared for assisting each other. The events of the last three decades may form a long list of such events. Once a natural, societal, or economic crisis erupted in either country, the responsibility of being a neighbor obligated the other to forget the political disputes and mobilize any available asset to assist the deprived, as were the cases during the February 6th Earthquakes in Türkiye or wildfires of the 2023 summer in Greece. Furthermore, both countries, and their publics, are concerned about the influx of illegal immigrants, terrorism, drug and human trafficking, and digital security.

The above-mentioned dynamics indicate another prerequisite for both countries. The long list of political disputes should be kept to a sustainable degree so that the new risk and threat patterns, depicted above, could not devastate either Türkiye or Greece. In this context, it is a timely attempt to scrutinize how both countries could improve their relations with a positive agenda and limit the impacts of shared concerns. It is the assumption of this conference that there should be mechanisms to respond to the shared risks and intend to smoothen the relations through well-designed and smart collaborative efforts.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT OF THE CONFERENCE

This conference aims at building an intellectual ground to portray why Türkiye and Greece could continue cooperating against the emerging risks and how both countries keep the political disputes manageable to jointly respond to all sorts of concerns. Given the global /regional developments and emerging threat types, the problem statement is "How can Türkiye and Greece keep up with positive agenda and collectively respond to the risks?".

3. MODUS OPERANDI

The conference is designed to promote the positive agenda of both countries. In this context, the first panel will delve into the potential areas of collaboration to reduce the risks because emerging risks require well-institutionalized cooperation of both countries. Meanwhile, the factors, which could ease the political disputes and facilitate the least terms of common understanding, will be scrutinized. The expectations of the public and relevant projections for future relations will be at the epicentre of discussions. The second panel, on the other hand, will review the political issues/challenges to pinpoint the stance of both countries within the mood of positive contribution.

The Conference will be held through virtual meetings. Each panel will have a moderator with his/her short intervention, and panelists will present their perspectives for participants' critiques, comments, or contributions. The panelists will have the opportunity to have an open discussion period in parallel to the received questions. The language of the Conference is English.

3. THE PANELS OF THE CONFERENCE

Panel I. Emerging / Shared Concerns and Prerequisites for Türkiye and Greece

Moderator: Talha Köse

TIME	SPEAKER	TOPIC
15.30	Moderator's Introduction	
15.40	Zuhal Mert	How do you take it? What sort of shared concerns do we have? And how can we act together?
15.50	Pavlina Lampsa	
16.00	Yücel Acer	
16.10	Kostas Ifantis	
16.20	Discussion and Q&A	

Panel II. Visions and Means to Manage the Political Incompatibilities of Türkiye and Greece

Moderator: Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou

TIME	SPEAKER	TOPIC
17.00	Moderator's Introduction	
17.10	Constantinos Filis	How do you see the incompatibilities and probable ways to resolve them after a constructive dialogue process between Türkiye and Greece?
17.20	Çağrı Erhan	
17.30	Petros Liakouras	
17.40	Murat Aslan	
17.50	Discussion and Q&A	

4. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES:

The transcripts of the speeches and presented perceptions will be published in an edited abstract e-book. In this context, the panelists are highly expected to provide the texts of their speeches.

Virtual attendance needs special care for the functionality of the internet connection, software, and sound checks. The participants are kindly requested to display themselves on the screen.

5. IMPORTANT DATES

Concept Submission	21 August 2023
Speech Submission	10 September 2023
Peer Review	13 September 2023
Coordination Meeting	13 September 2023
Technical Controls	26 September 2023
The Conference	27 September 2023

6. The Conference Board

Prof. Murat Yeşiltaş

Prof. Constantinos Filis

Assoc. Prof. Murat Aslan

Ms. Maria Nefeli-Sarafoglou

7. CONFERENCE COORDINATORS

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Conference Website

https://www.setav.org/en/events/

Conference Link (For Online Participation)

The link will be sent to the designated email of the participants. It is highly requested not to share the link with third parties to prevent unauthorized access. The Conference will be broadcasted through the social media accounts of partnering organizations.

PROCEEDING OF THE CONFERENCE

Panel – 1[1]

Murat Aslan:

Welcome to the "International Conference on Turkish-Greek Relations: For a Smooth Future". I, Associate Professor Murat Aslan, and Ms. Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou will moderate the overall conference.

Maria Nefeli Sarafoglou:

Good afternoon, everyone. This is Maria Nefeli Sarafoglu, I am a journalist for Antenna TV in Greece. I will be moderating this event which comes a week after the meeting of Turkish President Erdoğan and Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis in New York where they confirmed the will to maintain a good atmosphere in bilateral relations.

Murat Aslan:

The conference is comprised of two panels about two themes. The first one is about the emerging and shared concerns, and prerequisites for both countries right after the wildfires, floods, or natural disasters. Two countries experienced these devastating disasters in a year. The second panel will cover the political matters, visions, and means to manage the political incompatibilities.

Maria Nefeli Sarafoglou:

The aim is to promote a positive agenda and inspire a constructive dialogue between the two countries that will pave the way for reaching a solution to the most controversial issues. Our esteemed speakers will give their viewpoints, and they will propose the most effective ways to reach a common ground and ease political disputes.

Professor Talha Köse, the stage is yours for our first panel.

Talha Köse:

Thank you, Murat and Maria. It is a great honor and pleasure to be in this panel. This is Talha Köse, the Director of SETA Brussels Office and the Professor of International Relations at Istanbul University. It is a great honor and pleasure to be a part of this important and timely event.

[1] Editors appreciate the contribution of Bercis Soysal and Ekim Tarhanin collating the proceedings.

And I would like to thank Murat and Maria for organizing this symposium. As an expert on conflict resolution and foreign policy, I have been examining this topic, the Turkish-Greek relations, security and peace in the Aegean Sea, and the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean for a while. It is a very complicated issue. It has political, diplomatic, and legal aspects. The overall picture has been quite bleak during the last several years regarding the Turkish-Greek relations and the Eastern Mediterranean. The Turkish and the Greek sides came to the brink of a military confrontation in 2020, and there was continuous tension between the two neighbors.

The exchange of negative messages and menacing initiatives was a usual practice at that time. Nevertheless, the horrible earthquake that shook Türkiye on February 6th was an important turning point in the relations between two neighbors. Athens demonstrated significant solidarity after the earthquake, for which Turkish people are grateful, and a new window of opportunity was opened for a positive agenda between them.

So, there was this new momentum that accelerated after the meeting of two leaders at the NATO summit in July, and the two leaders came to a meeting in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. The meetings ended up generating positive messages from both sides. It is, at the moment, very important to maintain this balance, positive agenda, positive atmosphere with much more substantive efforts and substantive initiatives. It is important to keep the hope to spread and take a significant concrete initiative at the same time. In this sense, the purpose of this panel is to discuss these initiatives and limitations.

We have four very distinguished experts on the Turkish-Greek relations. Let me introduce, first, Zuhal Mert Uzuner from Marmara University. She has been writing extensively on the Turkish-Greek relations. Paulina Lampsa is an expert on the Turkish-Greek relations and is leading the Turkish-Greek Forum. Yücel Acer, our third panelist, is the Professor of International Law at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University and SETA Foundation. He is also an expert in International Maritime Law. Finally, Kostas Ifantis is the Professor of International Law at Pantheon University. He has written a lot on the Turkish-Greek relations.

Hence, what we are going to discuss in this panel is the new environment. We are aware of what both parties expect, what may be possible, and limitations as well as what we see in the next six months to two years in the Turkish-Greek relations and, at the same time, in the Eastern Mediterranean context.

I will give the floor to Prof. Zuhal Mert Uzuner. Each presenter will have eight to ten minutes to give initial comments on the same topic, and we will take some questions from social media as well. Zuhal, the floor is yours.

Zuhal Mert Uzuner:

Thank you for organizing such a timely and important conference. It is always very important to be in contact and discuss the topics, even though they are difficult to overcome for many of us. If we need to talk about the importance of these latest developments, it is important for the people of this geography, it is an opportunity. Because both countries have very strong governments, and they have strong support from their public. It is obvious from the results of the elections. This is somehow a very critical issue for bilateral relations because they are really difficult, and we need to address public opinion, hesitations, and problems. So, they are deep-rooted issues. That is why

the governments need to realize so many commitments together with, of course, the academicians and public opinion leaders. But there exist impediments in front of us. For instance, it is not easy to agree on the Cyprus issue. Another issue is the Grey Zones issue. We can see the hesitation in both public opinions, arising from these two issues. On the other hand, we have so many things to discuss and progress. Because we need to create a better atmosphere to start talking about these issues. We are at that stage to turn this contact and dialogue into a kind of rapprochement. We can see that there are many different opportunities in the world when we look at the latest developments and discussions in the UN General Assembly.

One of the most important issues is the rising interdependence in the world, especially from the liberal internationalist perspective. Also, the liberal economy perspective is critical because, we remember the discussions and explanations of the leaders in the UN General Assembly, they refer to the rising interconnections between countries, and that creates different roots of trade and contacts. So, we are lucky to live in the Mediterranean; it is the center, it stays at the 'center of the earth' according to so many languages. That is why we have an opportunity to create a bridge together. Because in order to have an opportunity to be a strategic country, a strategic hub for the new transfer route for energy resources or trade routes, we need to have these connections. When we look at the latest developments related to the rising Chinese trade capacity, the Middle Corridor, and the new corridor came from the G20, we see that all are somehow underlining the importance of our common geography. That creates a very important motivation for both countries to progress on this positive dimension. That is a very important issue. Another very important matter, as Murat explained at the beginning of our conference, is the common threats.

So, we have emergency cases, in which humanitarian diplomacy is a very important issue, environmental problems, and sustainable development. These are all on our agenda. We have to do something together. There is no other way to overcome these problems. Now, we have an opportunity to turn our eyes to the positive side of this story, but it does not mean that this is the only side.

There are many different sides to that dialogue. But, in order to make progress, you have to start from somewhere. Also; if it is necessary to refer to what we can do in the following months as a kind of progress in our relations; the Customs Union, for example, is a very important issue from the Turkish perspective because the Customs Union needs to be revised. And that revision is necessary for the inclusion of new issues. This is very critical for Türkiye because Türkiye is a very big country with its population and trade capacity. That is a very important dimension for the benefit of all regional countries.

Another important issue can be also related to visa liberalization. And as an EU country, Greece can create a kind of positive support for Türkiye to create a positive momentum in this process.

Also, we always need to underline the very important dimension of the youth and the contact between youth. We have Erasmus/Exchange programs, and I need to underline this very important dimension at that point. Türkiye now has the most Europeanized, neighboring to the EU in the region. So, that must be very important contact point for both countries. And it is the result of the Erasmus. We need to progress about this youth and exchange programs. They are functioning very well.

The bilateral issues are very important, like the trade issues. I remember during 2020, there were so many different discussions about, again, delimitation problems. But, again, in the same era, we

see the starting of the ferry route between Thessaloniki and Izmir. It was always full of people. So, that shows something very important; these people on both shores of the Aegean Sea want to create direct contact. We need to hear that voice, and we need to support the will of people.

Of course, there is a need to eliminate so many hesitations existing in the public opinion of both countries. If we have time, I may continue later about this public opinion results and its meanings for this positive momentum. Thank you.

Talha Köse:

Thank you very much as well.

As you mentioned, there is a very significant public support for normalization. We have seen that this is a very positive prospect for improving the ties. So, you also mentioned the EU dimension, which may also play a very constructive role. Thank you for this brief introduction. I am now, going to turn to Paulina Lampsa.

So, Paulina, the floor is yours.

Paulina Lampsa:

Thank you very much. First of all, I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me in this so timely conference, and I want to focus more on how we can move forward with the positive agenda. I will start with a comment in the Turkish-Greek relations. Every time that tension reaches a red line, and it becomes clear that further escalation may lead to confrontation; efforts are made to reverse the course to avoid detrimental consequences for both countries.

Thinking of what happened during the Imia-Kardak crisis, when the two countries were almost on the brink of a war, there was such a big reaction from politicians, the military, civil society of both countries. And so many people raised their voices calling for the need for a rapprochement. It is something we have discussed in depth in the Greek-Turkish forum on many occasions, and therefore we cannot but welcome the decision of Prime Minister Mitsotakis and President Erdoğan to inaugurate a new chapter on bilateral relations by promoting this idea of a positive agenda.

How can we successfully promote a positive agenda in the Turkish-Greek relations? For this, it is useful to review past experiences, see how and if they can become relevant in today's environment. It (the positive agenda) was initiated by George Papandreou and İsmail Cem in 1999, and they managed to profoundly change the bilateral relations and to secure peace and stability for almost two decades although the key contentious issues between the two countries remained unsolved. How was this achieved? Certainly, the political will was a key factor. Also, the creation of various consultation mechanisms between the two countries played a role. But, most importantly, there was a paradigm shift that affected not only the elite but also the two societies, generating concrete results.

At the formal level, the rapprochement gradually faded after 2012; but at the societal level, it lasted much longer. Low politics bilateral agreements were instrumental in this. To mention a few

examples, During the rapprochement period, low politics agreements contributed to increase bilateral trade from $700 million in 1999 to $4 billion in 2019.

In 2020, bilateral trade increased by 17%. The agreements on tourism resulted in tripling the number of Greek tourists to Türkiye from 2018 in 2000 to 6016 in 2009, despite the fact that Turkish tourists have to face the problem of visa restrictions, their number raised to 160,000 in 2007 and almost a million in 2017.

Even today, despite what happened during the pandemic, we can witness a big flow of Turkish tourists, in particular to the North Aegean islands of Lesbos, Samos, and Chios, only during the last Kurban Bayramı (*Eid al-Adha)*, more than 27,000 Turkish visitors traveled to these islands. We should not also forget the earthquake diplomacy that certainly highlighted the human dimension of cooperation, and the memories of what happened in 1999 have been engraved in the collective psyche.

We witnessed a very spontaneous wave of solidarity from the Greek people following the recent earthquake in Türkiye. The examples show that the current efforts of the two governments to promote a positive agenda are not starting from scratch, and I think this is very important. They can rely on the foundations of the previous acquis, even if periods of tension follow.

This can give us hope that there is a real possibility to transform rapprochement into effective cooperation. So, how can we move forward? The concept of a positive agenda is agreed upon by both sides. It enables a step-by-step approach and the road map that if successfully sustained could keep paving the way for a discussion on key dividing issues such as the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zones. They are undoubtedly crucial for achieving progress. It is necessary to create a climate of trust, and building trust is a prerequisite for creating solid foundations for the improvement of relations.

How can we achieve to build trust? First of all, creating stable lines of communication at different levels, understanding the different perceptions, and concerns of the two countries are essential.

In Greece, for instance, the Turkish-Greek relations are at the top of the security and foreign policy agenda, while in Türkiye, other issues may be more important. However, it is crucial, for instance, to understand why Greece has a stronger perception of threat from Türkiye, taking into account parameters like differences in size and population.

Moreover, it must be paid attention to the political rhetoric. Words matter and can poison bilateral relations and public perceptions. The pre-electoral periods often lead to an inflammatory rhetoric but now, we are in a post-electoral period in both countries, and this facilitates avoiding unproductive stereotypes. It should be accepted that the reality of existing bilateral differences unavoidably remains until substantial progress is made or until they become irrelevant.

Another point is agreeing on a range of cooperation agreements that can be effectively implemented, nurturing mutual trust, and a spirit of good faith. The importance of the role of media and social media that can influence negatively or positively the atmosphere may be understood from this perspective. Cooperation between local authorities, universities, and civil society organizations must be encouraged because a top-down approach is not sufficient.

Furthermore, symbolic gestures like the support of Greece by Türkiye in the UN and the support of Türkiye by Greece in the International Maritime Organization are certainly constructive. If a climate of trust is successfully established, it is easier to advance further and, at some point, reduce military spending in favor of other investments. This is very much needed in these times of crisis.

Should we see rapprochement mainly as a way to avoid military confrontation? It is a valid argument. But it is also a negative incentive. A post-agenda also needs a shared vision of common interest and benefit not only for the two countries but also for the broader region. In the previous rapprochement period, the two countries' cooperation in the European context was an inspiring vision.

Today, a lot of parameters may have changed, and the shared needs vision needs to collectively address a number of new challenges our broader region is facing. Addressing challenges beyond borders created by consecutive crises, climate change, health crisis, financial crisis, energy crisis, and population movement requires more cooperation.

The state of emergency wherein, for instance, the Mediterranean is predicted to be one of the most affected regions by climate change, can be a key factor for promoting peace and stability, but also economic development in the EastMed despite the existing unresolved conflicts and differences. In this context, it is very positive that cooperation on climate change and illegal immigration are at the top of the positive agenda discussions.

However; the list of the already signed and proposed bilateral agreements is very long, from cooperation addressing natural disasters to cooperation on trade, business, tourism, education, culture, cultural heritage, shipbuilding, naval training, information and communication technology, waste management, without forgetting connectivity; it is a very extensive catalog, and what is needed is prioritization, planning, and following up on implementation. Common security threats necessitate cooperation. Both Türkiye and Greece are NATO members, and both have security concerns regarding our broader and quite unstable region. The actual geopolitical instability may present opportunities for Türkiye's foreign policy aspiration, but it also represents important new threats.

A culture of non-respecting the unviability of territorial integrity that we witness in our neighborhood and beyond, the development of sophisticated hybrid forms of warfare that surpass all the traditional defense mechanism are valid reasons of concern.

Last but not least, Türkiye's European perspective remains an important sector to work on. There are a lot of issues that were mentioned on the table, for example, customs unions, visa liberalization, PESCO, opening of some frozen accession chapters, etc.

In conclusion, a roadmap that will include trust building, a common vision, the avoidance of aggressive acts, CBMs, and a concrete implementation of bilateral agreements can establish a positive agenda to secure not only long-term stability and peace but also fruitful and effective cooperation. The upcoming High-Level Cooperation Council in Thessaloniki is the next important step to follow. Thank you.

Talha Köse:

Thank you very much, Paulina. You highlighted very concrete, understandable steps on how this positive agenda should be followed and substantiated. You also highlighted the significance of the public in crisis times about how constructive roles the public can sometimes play, especially in times of escalation. That is also a significant aspect of this crisis. It is a very nice presentation. So, thank you.

I am now going to give the floor to Professor Yücel Acer. His expertise is also very important in understanding maritime issues, some of the border issues, and some of the conflicting areas. He also has some expertise on how to address those issues in a more constructive, peaceful way. Yücel *Hocam* (Professor), the floor is yours.

Yücel Acer:

Thank you very much. I, first of all, would like to thank the organizers, Maria, Murat and Talha *Hoca* for this quite valuable panel, I am well aware of this. Because this panel brings experts from two countries, Türkiye and Greece. That does not happen often. It is a very special occasion. That is why it is a really significant panel. As Talha *Hoca* mentioned, I mostly study on International Law and look at the issues between two countries from an International Law perspective. I will try to summarize my thoughts about how to address the issues or disputes between the two countries from a legal perspective.

We are actually witnessing a very mild period of relations between the two countries, luckily after a very tense period of relations within a couple of years. Fortunately, since the early months, since the mid of this year, we have been experiencing a very good period of relations. Diplomatic relations have started again, and it is quite possible that the two leaders will meet again in Thessaloniki to discuss the relations between the two countries. That is going to be quite a special occasion. When we talk about the relations between two countries, unfortunately, we still have to talk about the disputes that should be settled.

Without settling these disputes, we are actually not in a position to see permanent good relations between the two countries. It is very significant to raise the positive sides of the relations. But we should keep in mind that, somehow, we should address the disputes and try to get these disputed matters solved.

If you look at the matter from the law aspect, there are actually two roles the international law plays. The first one is that International Law says to the parties of a dispute about how to solve these issues and disagreements. That means that we learn from International Law and what kind of means that the states could use to settle these issues. That is the first role the law plays in any given international dispute.

The second one is what principles are to be applied when the states settle these disputes in a given method. It means that International Law also specifies the sides of the dispute and what kind of principles they should follow to settle these disagreements. As far as issues and disputed matters between the two countries are concerned, the fundamental legal problem we face is that both sides might not agree on the list of disputes.

It is so significant that it really prevents even from the start to the settlement of the disputes. Therefore, that is why the first issue is what the disputes between the two countries are, especially

concerning the agency. That is quite significant. I ought to start with this briefly. According to relevant rules of International Law, it is not unique for one side to argue that a dispute does not exist between two sides. It is quite usual for Greece to argue that there are not many disputes but only a single dispute of continental shelf delimitation in the Aegean Sea. Hence, none of the other issues raised by Türkiye as disputes. Actually, it is refused by Greece. So, what legal rules say about that?

We have some international decisions and court decisions to understand when we could really say that there is a dispute. I can mention a couple of international judgments. In 1924, there was a case called *Mavrommatis Palestine Concessions* case, which was decided by the Permanent Court of International Justice. According to this definition, the court says, to say that there is a dispute, it must be shown that the claim of one party is positively opposed by the other side.

It is quite a simple definition approved by many other international court decisions that if there is a claim by one side, and if this claim is positively refused by the other side, that means that it is an international dispute. That is why if one side says that their interests are conflicting, the issue should be this way, as opposed to the other side's arguments; according to relevant rules of International Law, there is clearly an international dispute between two sides. That is the one matter that should be addressed in any case by two sides. I will actually emphasize more points on this later on.

Another issue concerning the settlement of the issues is the means of settlement. The means of settlement is still a matter of discussion, I think. As far as I can see, it is a matter of discussion because sometimes, one side argues that a specific means of settlement should be used while the other side argues otherwise.

According to the UN Charter, there is no preference in favor of a single settlement means. Article 2, Paragraph 3 of the UN Charter says that parties should settle their disputes peacefully. That is the fundamental obligation for all states, including Türkiye and Greece.

So, what kind of peaceful means? Article 33 of the Charter gives certain examples: Some of them are called the *political means* of settlement like negotiation, mediation, and conciliation; some others are *legal* in nature like arbitration and judicial means of settlement. That is another kind of settlement means.

Are we going to apply political means or are we going to apply legal means between two countries to settle these issues? As far as I can see, Greece says that there is one dispute and that it should be taken to an international court. As it happened in the 1970s, I think Greece still argues to appeal the issue to international arbitration or an international court of justice since there is a dispute.

This is refused by Türkiye, not because Türkiye is not willing to go to the international court but because Türkiye clearly says that there are more disputes. What are we going to do with these disputes if we take the delimitation dispute to the International Court of Justice. So, what about the other issues? What will we do? That is a fundamental question. That is why the two parties seem to be in disagreement on selecting specific means. But fortunately, we have witnessed both sides manage to start negotiations. On the bilateral issues, starting in 2002, exploratory talks are a very good example, and they can really negotiate for a long time, even if you have not seen a

positive result yet. It shows that two states could again start such kind of a process of negotiation addressing the bilateral disputes.

Since I have a very limited time, I would like to emphasize a few more points. Another point is what the legal principles that two countries should apply to the settlement of the bilateral issues are. Many of the disputes between the two countries concern the Law of the Sea, but there are some other issues concerning the other principles of International Law.

I can only say on this point that even if they do not go to the international court, it does not mean that they are not in a position not to apply the relevant rules of International Law. When they are negotiating, of course, they are able to apply the relevant rules of International Law.

That is quite significant because even if they do not go to the international court and apply international law rules by themselves, it is quite possible that they will be able to persuade public opinion quite easily because they apply international law rules. Also, the result would be a permanent settlement. Because we can assume that by applying the relevant rules of International Law, they will be in a position to produce more equitable settlements that would be able to persist for a long time without any further disagreement. The last point is the prospect. Thus, we are at a very good point at the moment.

Both countries, Türkiye and Greece and Turkey started a new process of negotiations. As the Foreign Minister of Türkiye emphasized, we opened a new chapter in the relations. I can just say that it should be observed if there would be a permanent process of negotiations. Hopefully, they will be able to start this again, and we can look forward to seeing a real process of settlement. I hope, at the moment, there is a great chance for this.

Thank you, everyone.

Talha Köse:

Thank you very much, *hocam*.

So, Paulina mentioned how this *political* means can be substantiated by the public, political sides, and actors. And you mentioned that even in the *legal* arena, if the parties decide there are significant opportunities, they can address their problems.

There are good examples. Naturally, there is a need for political will for this initiative, but still, if there is a political will, I reckon the legal aspects going to produce some solutions to the major issues. Therefore, that is also very important.

Now, I am going to go to Professor Kostas Ifantis. He has also been evaluating this process and has been writing on the bilateral relations for a while.

Professor Ifantis, the floor is yours.

Kostas Ifantis:

Thank you very much. Also, I want to thank the organizers for setting up today's event, and I anticipate many others will follow. I am sincerely grateful for the invitation to be a part of this impressive lineup. First of all, I salute Zuhal, Yücel, and Paulina. It is always a great opportunity to engage with them.

It is imperative to engage and contribute to a process that just started and is very fragile by nature.

Nevertheless, one can ameliorate suspicion, profound a lack of mutual trust and provide more source of ideas at the end of the day. I am not going to repeat what has already been said. I am not going to pretend that this time is easier than the other times. The rapprochement process was initiated and finally collapsed in another crisis.

As a matter of fact, it is tough to come up with new ideas. Please allow me to use a more personal tone here. I sometimes feel that it is very difficult to generate meaningful concepts at all. There is a very strong set of perceptions and deeply rooted belief that -if I may- the Turkish-Greek relations will never be free due to prejudice, mistrust, the perception of threats, warmongering, and discourse. Because it is a relationship that has been developed throughout the centuries as something that touches upon sovereignty, something that it is about competitive geopolitics, something that is about culture… And all this burdened by not very pretty history. I have been a part of this kind of exercise for most of my academic life. I do not lose hope, but I am cautious because it is easy to develop a sense of -I might sound melodramatic- despair. Everything we do is futile, a sense of futility.

Let us hope that this time is different. I have two comments. One of a thematic nature or thought, which can be considered as a more general comment, and a more specific comment that relates to a soul-searching need in Athens in general. And I am pretty sure that it applies to the Turkish side as well.

I am not ready to go down the path of formulating proposals. Now, the thematic comment or thought is that I feel that we are at a point where attempts to untie the knot in the Turkish-Greek crisis require attention more than ever in order to look at the issue or issues from pretty much every angle.

That is what Paulina and Zuhal have referred to, which are climate crisis, clean energy needs, and public health. The pandemic was just a phenomenon yesterday, and another one might be around the corner. And of course, trade, economics, and security. I think that at this juncture of global developments, we need to form a much more integrated picture of what the two countries are doing or how that fits into their agenda and what happens in our region and in the world.

The global is local, local is global, and they relate to a much more collective, regional, global set of interests. It is what I am referring to. It is an attempt, that is very hard, but it is an attempt at changing the framework of dealing with the Turkish-Greek problems.

It is an attempt to change the paradigm, but it is very hard to arrive at. However, I think that everything is in front of our eyes. I am not optimistic. I believe that we need to develop a mindset of compromise within a new framework, not a bilateral one but a much more regional and global one. In that way, the compromise might be less difficult to achieve and to transform the

relationship from its traditional, conflictual, crisis-prone perception and nature into something different.

Somehow, we need to make the delimitation issue or issues less relevant. We need a much more global and strategic outlook widening in geographical and functional perspective. Those of you who know me know that I am a hardcore realist. However, at the end of the day, realism is about avoiding conflict. If we put our minds on that, then we can start talking about how to transform the bilateral interaction.

Now, my second comment stems from what I have just said, which is a more general wishful thinking like statement, but that is what I can come up with now. As I said, my second comment is very specific to Greece, but it also applies to Türkiye by any measure, at least in my mind.

At all levels -at the political personnel level, at the level of the military on foreign policy diplomacies, at the level of media and opinion-making and opinion-leading, at the level of civil society, at the level of the average citizen-, we must be careful of how we can approach a discourse that has the potential to destabilize our own beliefs and certainties. So, there is a question that we need to address in Ankara and Athens. I am pretty sure about that. If we fail or if we are unwilling to do it, this time will be a repetition of past attempts. As we start to talk to each other, political dialogue, positive agenda, the CBMs, and the CBMs process continue forward. But the fundamental question is -and this is what I am asking myself- what the strategic success for Greece with Türkiye is. What does that look like? What is the vision of success at the end of the road?

If this time, we are much wiser in pursuing the comprehension of what a successful conclusion of a peaceful resolution process is and what the markers of progress are, Turkish-Greek relations can be improved. It is an almost impossible question, and the reasons are easy to imagine.

I do not have a soundbite answer to this question myself, or I am not that arrogant to pretend that I have, at least in public, not yet. My hope is that in the coming months, we can continue to contribute to fleshing that out.

Thank you very much.

Talha Köse:

Thank you very much, Professor Ifantis.

You highlighted a very significant point. I mean, we should be optimistic, yet we should also be prepared for a much more substantial agenda. It has been taught to us that there may be some ups and downs, and this time it is more significant for cooperation. In the past, we know that there was a common, shared threat, the fascist threat, during the 1930s. The Soviet threats in the 1950s and 60s brought these two countries close. And, as you mentioned, there are many more global-scale threats right now. We experience these disasters such as environmental change and climate change. These are also very significant challenges like migration, which also push parties in the direction of further cooperation. I think that is very significant.

So, cooperation does not always happen for positive or constructive reasons. Sometimes threats or sometimes the shared challenges bring parties together. And, as you mentioned, there are necessities we need for further cooperation under these circumstances.

Thanks a lot for the initial comments. We have 20 minutes for comments and questions. I will raise at least one question to each speaker with the same order.

I will start with Zuhal *Hoca*. Zuhal *Hocam*, what is the expectation of the Turkish public from this process? As you mentioned, the Turkish-Greek tension may be prior to the agenda for the Greeks but for Türkiye as well. We have many other issues, like pressing issues and security issues. However, this issue is definitely significant. What is expected from the Turkish side and what may be the possible constructive and positive scenario in the next six months to two years?

Zuhal Mert Uzuner:

I will start with a sentence that is very important for understanding what we can do together. We are always in search of perfection, and it is the biggest enemy of the good one. There is no perfect path in front of us; we will always have problems, but the biggest problem, maybe the biggest impediment problem in front of us, is expecting a smoothness in politics. Nothing will be smooth in politics just like the other neighbors and actors in International Relations (IR).

But I see that in the Turkish-Greek relations, there is always a kind of emotional dimension. It is somehow fed by education and other public opinion-creation mechanisms. And that makes it much more like drama for both communities. So, this is the most important problem. When I look at the Turkish public opinion, I see, for example, the issue of the US basis in the Aegean Sea. It seems like a kind of source of the threat against the Turkish cities or Turkish people.

That seems a little bit difficult issue to understand from ordinary Turkish people's perspective. When you look at this discussion, which is always much more promoting negative ideas about the other, it refers to too much; but especially in TV shows, that is a critical point.

I know that, as the experts of IR, we can put some meanings to these happenings, but from the militaristic perspective, all these things can be understood from a very negative perspective for an ordinary person. So, this is a very important issue, and I always refer to this: The ties in between the universities and projects. When I look at the issue from a little bit higher educational level, there are so many common projects. Most of them are referring. When I look at these epistemic communities, they touch each other. And between these communities, there is a much wider perspective.

And when we look at the international developments and progress, these developments are relevant from Caucasia to Europe. Sometimes, it can enlarge a much wider geography, and these happenings promote more common benefits. So, when I look at the public opinion discussions, I somehow see this.

It is an interesting point from the Turkish perspective because there is an opportunity. We can benefit from that altogether by accepting the existence of all these actors. I want to give an example of that. When I look at the writings and discussions in Greek academia, I see that there is a term called the *Southeastern Mediterranean*. When we look at these discussions, we observe that this

is very important to refer to the southern part but also to what exists in the northern part of the Eastern Mediterranean. It is so important to have a kind of inclusive perspective.

There is no other way other than accepting each other as the neighbors. I always say, imagine the existence of another neighbor next to you. Maybe a much more favorable one. Just think of the same crisis and cases according to those criteria. We see that we need to change this mindset.

The problem is deriving from the mindset. We have so many different opportunities in front of us. Because the world is changing, and there is not space anymore for denying the existence of these opportunities to cooperate, but it is not automatic. We had another one like the hydrocarbon energies when we first heard about the existence of hydrocarbons.

Everybody was so opportunistic for a solution, for the promotion of this cooperation, but it did not happen so automatically. What is the reason? That is why we need to start to contact more and decrease fear, hesitation, conspiracy theories, and discussions in public more and more. And it needs to have more contact, maybe more the bottom-up approach, to contact for overcoming these problems.

Talha Köse:

Thank you very much. As you mentioned, emotions are sometimes an impediment to peace. We know that both countries can have very strong emotions, but at the same time, during disasters and difficult times, the same emotions might turn into positive stimulants for constructive engagement.

So, this is very difficult, but at the national level, probably if you put the relations at the more rational level, I think there may be a more sustainable kind of predictable level of engagement. We know that that aspect may be a very fruitful elements of cooperation in a much more rational exchange area. I am not saying that the emotions should be completely controlled. But again, it can go both ways, but rational cooperation can be managed in a more constructive way, and there are significant opportunities.

So, I am going to now turn to Paulina. Paulina, you mentioned the confidence-building measures and, possible steps towards these achievements. What kind of roles do you think the EU, the US, and other third parties play in supporting this process? And do you think that the third parties' roles can be useful? Or do you think it should be on the initiative of these two neighbors?

Paulina Lampsa:

I think that the two countries can decide based on how third parties can help. I can understand that.

I certainly wish to have stability, peace, and cooperation in the broader region, which we should start from that. But I think that the main actors are Türkiye and Greece, and it is up to them to find the way. Because I think that nobody knows us better than we know ourselves, I think that if we do our homework, then we can find how and if third parties can help us to achieve more progress. That is what I believe.

Talha Köse:

Yücel *Hocam*, in the literature on conflict resolution, some people think that during the resolution of conflicts, one should start with the easiest way. Some others argue that it is a total package; as one has to consider it as an agenda, a whole.

So, what do you think? Where should the party start dealing with these legal issues? Or should they take them as a holistic approach, or should they start with the easier way? So, what do you think should be the roadmap for dealing with these legal issues?

Yücel Acer:

Talha, it is quite a significant point because there is no obligation from International Law in favor of a specific means of settlement. It is up to the parties to choose as far as it is a peaceful means, but how the parties are going to choose actually depends on the specific circumstances of dispute or disputes. If we talk about the agency, especially the issues that are so interrelated, it is almost impossible to separate from one the others.

If you look at the air space dispute, it is fundamentally related to the maritime disputes. If we talk about the sovereignty issues about rocks, they are related to maritime issues again. If we look at the territorial waters issue, it is again related to continental shelf delimitation.

That is why, since it is not possible to separate them from each other, I think there is no other way to get these disputes together in a process of negotiation. It is not usual for one or two sides to take all these issues together to the international court. From the very beginning, it would be completely difficult to formalize the questions to be asked to the court.

Also, I am sure it is going to take a lot of time for an international court to handle all these significant issues. I think the easiest way for the Aegean issues is to get them negotiated in a process of negotiation between two sides. Allow me to add this as well. I think I can disagree with Pauline a little bit about the involvement of the other countries.

I can understand that Greece feels itself a bit of a relatively smaller country than Türkiye. That is why I can understand a smaller country trying to get the other powers alongside itself as against another relatively bigger country. At first sight, it seems to be in favor of Greece, but I think it is not. Because whenever you involve the major powers, they are not actually looking regionally. They are looking globally and from their own interests. That is why it is actually making it a little bit more difficult for Türkiye and Greece to settle the issues. As far as both countries are separating themselves from the interests of the global powers, I think it would be much easier -not inevitably very easy- in my perception.

Talha Köse:

Thank you very much. This is definitely a talk that needs to be taken into account as planning.

Professor Ifantis, if we check the situation, we definitely have a similar issue: the war in Ukrain. We do not exactly know where it will end, what the consequences of this war will be, and the ongoing tensions in the region, including the Syria issue, which is not resolved yet, and some other significant challenges.

So, what do you think? Do you think the ongoing tension in Ukraine and the unexpected situation about this can have an impact on improving or bringing the relations in a more tense way? What is your thought on this new security challenge? Because in the 1990s, we did not have this kind of issue. We do not have this kind of actual security issue for Europe right now for European security. Again, we can also mention the emerging crisis in Kosovo. What would we have emerging issues that are concerning for Europe? What do you think these challenges are? Do you think this can play a role in the cooperation of two countries, or do you think they are irrelevant?

Kostas Ifantis:

As well as I and everybody else on this panel know, although the global and regional situation is in a state of crisis, one can only hope that this might prove conducive to bringing the two sides closer to each other. As I said before, there is a global state of play, that the Turkish-Greek relations cannot be separated from. It is certain that it has to do with national preferences with national choices and strategies, at the end of the day. For example, as a discourse that I know Türkiye chooses a different path in the following years, away from the West and NATO. This will definitely affect us, most probably negatively. But right now; most of us; as a society, nation, and state; share the same anxiety about the future. There is violence and the potential for more violence. One thinks that this can be a very strong motivation to put aside differences and work together towards facing these threats.

One can argue that we have been living in de-escalation and tension-free months since the earthquake's destruction in February. It is not because of the earthquake; the earthquake was a tipping point. But the real issue is the upheaval in Europe and Ukraine. It is a very fluid and geopolitically fragile situation in the eastern and southern borders of Türkiye.

I think it has already played a role in making both governments much more amenable to a new attempt towards rapprochement. For that one, I can be less pessimistic about the future. It is not a good thing that we need an imbroglio, like the one in Ukraine, or in Syria in order to get together. Nor do we need an earthquake to initiate rapprochement. This is the tragedy of the Turkish-Greek relations.

Talha Köse:

Thank you very much, Professor Ifantis. As you mentioned, in addition to the global threats that will affect both countries, we now have the problem of the return of conventional conflicts, the state-to-state conflicts. I think this necessitates a readjustment in the relationship. I do not think that Türkiye has any second thoughts on NATO. I think there is a strongly committed readjustment.

Kostas Ifantis:

I agree.

Talha Köse:

This new environment may push two neighboring countries to work together because the effects of these conventional threats also threaten both countries.

Thank you very much. It was a very good exchange of ideas.

I think we are still at the beginning of this rapprochement process. Still, as far as I see, both countries have thinkers and academics who pay significant attention and put ideas to substantiate this process, which is very optimistic. It is right now the responsibility of the public and the politicians to move forward with these fresh ideas and explore new venues for engagement and resolution.

I know that it will be difficult. I know that in the past, there may be some hurdles. But I think there are also opportunities, very promising areas, and very promising outcomes at the end of this process. So, as scholars, we are very supportive of this process. But, with your thoughts and your ideas, this was an excellent panel, and I would like to thank again the planners of this panel.

Thank you very much for listening to us.

Panel – 2

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

Good afternoon, everyone and thank you for joining us. My name is Maria Nefeli Sarafoglu, a journalist for Antenna Television, and I will be moderating this discussion for the International Conference on Turkish-Greek Relations. So, moving along to our second panel, we are going to discuss the visions and means to manage the political incompatibilities between Türkiye and Greece.

A week after the meeting in New York between the Greek Prime Minister and the Turkish President, it seems that both countries want bilateral relations to improve. Both leaders agreed to a tight schedule, and we are going to witness more frequent meetings between Greek and Turkish officials on a wider range of subjects.

However, at some point, we will have to touch on the most controversial issues such as maritime jurisdiction, territorial waters, and the continental shelf. So, the purpose of this panel is to find out if we have a new window of opportunity to find common ground. Our esteemed speakers will make their point of view and will propose the best, notably the most effective ways to ease political disputes.

So, let us continue with the introduction. We have Çağrı Erhan, Professor at the Altınbaş University. Welcome and thank you for joining us.

Çağrı Erhan:

Thank you. Good evening, everyone.

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

We have Constantinos Filis, Associate Professor at the American College of Greece and the director of the Institute of Global Affairs in Greece.

We have Petros Liakouras, Professor of International Relations at the University of Piraeus.

And Murat Aslan, Associate Professor at the Hasan Kalyoncu University and Researcher of SETA.

As I was saying, the purpose of this panel is to find out if we can reach a common ground. I am going to begin with Professor Filis. So, is it possible to find common ground nowadays? How important is the role of political elites in shaping public opinion? We need a new narrative, which is the best way to change negative perceptions?

Constantinos Filis:

Thank you for the invitation.

Well, you have put lots of questions, which are not only topical but also challenging, as challenging are Turkish-Greek relations. They can be characterized if we want to be frank as problematic as well. It is even more challenging given that we are neighbors, and we share some common fronts. But at the same time, we have some issues that divide us, which are traditional, historic, and not easy to tackle.

At least, this is what practice has shown us. There are tensions between the two sides. We have mutual accusations of who bears responsibility for both the persistence of high tensions and the inability or unwillingness to settle bilateral disputes. There is a serious disagreement as to what ultimately constitutes a dispute between Athens and Ankara. Greece argues that there is only one dispute related to the delimitation of maritime zones, especially the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf, while Türkiye claims that there are more issues based on the claims that it has put on the table including the existence of gray zones in the Aegean or the demilitarization Aegean, which Türkiye links to their sovereignty. I will not get into details. We can discuss this issue during the Q&A session. I would like to focus on Maria's first question regarding the political elites and how public discourse is saved.

If you follow the debate in the two countries, you will find that some of the problems seem intractable, although this is precisely the role of diplomacy to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. However, another thing we see is that politicians are responsible to a big extent for the toxicity of the climate, are often investing in nationalistic rhetoric. There are others with a voice in public discourse, like academics but journalists as well, who play to the crowd.

We have found ourselves in a vicious circle, in a spiral of negativity, stereotypical perceptions, and prejudice. But, in the absence of a prospect of solution, the belief is being consolidate that on the one hand, dialogue and negotiations are a waste of effort, and on the other, that gains for one side automatically mean losses for the other. In other words, a clear zero-sum game.

Therefore, in such an environment, one wonders whether there is room for promoting a positive agenda, which has been your second or third question. The truth is that leadership must show political courage to be able to reverse the current climate. Although, as was clear from the recent earthquakes in Türkiye, the solidarity shown by the Greek people, and the welcoming of this solidarity by the Turkish people, I am not sure that it is the society that ultimately imposes an agenda of intolerance and unwillingness to compromise.

It is more the political elites who either play the nationalist card when it is expedient to do so or misread popular opinion. They are afraid of the political cost they might incur if they speak frankly. But the elite themselves have created this situation by disseminating maximalist aspirations that they ought to know are far from realistic.

There are some recent statistics. I was just reading a poll, which was conducted very recently, and it tells us that regarding improvement, 48% of Greeks and 43% of Turks think and feel that there is an improvement in bilateral ties since the catastrophic earthquakes in Türkiye. Half of Greeks and half of Turks have this impression. What is though very intriguing, to say the least, is that as

far as military incident is concerned, I read here that 55% of Greeks and 25% of Turks think that it is possible. So, more than half of the Greeks and one-fourth of the Turks think that a military incident is possible.

Although we know that nothing is impossible, especially in today's world, this possibility is very far from being one way or the other. As was mentioned in the previous panel, whenever the two sides got really close to a conflict. They both realized the dire consequences of such a possibility and decided to de-escalate.

For me, it is problematic that more than half of my compatriots feel that a military incident is possible with Türkiye. Of course, we also know that for us, Türkiye is a number one priority. It is not only a challenge or a competitor; it is considered as a threat whereas in the case of Türkiye, Greece is not and will not be its number one priority and can barely be regarded as a threat.

There is recently a discussion about whether we are about to go to the Hague or to a kind of, of settlement. I must admit that it is way too soon to be talking about the Hague or any other settlement through legal means.

There are a number of complicated steps that have to be completed first. Especially, taking the matter to the Hague requires the signing of a joint agreement to refer the dispute to the Hague, which means an agreement on the dispute to be considered by the court and the methodology. So, I think we are still a long way off.

At the current stage, what would be valuable is to restore at least a little trust because the distrust is mutual and very strong. We also need to reestablish and maintain the channels of communication so we can avoid hostile inflammatory statements, rhetoric, and actions on the ground and keep the moratorium alive.

As you know, the political consultations will begin in mid-October. During these consultations, it will become clear whether there is room for an agreement, not whether we can bridge our vast differences on various issues but in terms of how we can go about settling these disputes and to get to the point of the positive agenda.

There are obviously many common challenges in today's world, especially on the regional level that cooperation is imperative. If each country responds on its own to the problems that reach beyond its borders, failure is virtually guaranteed. On the other hand, if there is shared will and joint effort, on for example the climate crisis, natural disasters, and even migration flows, which are a bone of contention between Greece and Türkiye. In reality, their interests have more in common than those of each side of the European Union. Moreover, on low policy issues such as trade, economy, tourism, and innovation; there is also a great deal that can be achieved, as shown by the very good work carried out by the two deputy foreign ministers, which bore fruit.

As in life, in diplomacy, there are no one-way streets or dead ends. What we need is trust and confidence. *Trust* for each other even though disagreements will remain, and *confidence* in our capabilities and other partners' intentions. For example, I am going to conclude, Greece is not concerned if Türkiye and Israel or Türkiye and Egypt restore ties. On the contrary, given our strong ties, both with Israel and Egypt, we hope that this might even have a positive impact on how Türkiye approaches regional developments and its role.

I am going to end here. Thank you.

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

So we can pave the way to reach a solution at some point and collaborate through all the sectors that you mentioned.

I am going to ask Professor Erhan now. There is plenty of room for collaboration between the two countries. As Professor Filis mentioned, we have seen humanitarian diplomacy and support during natural disasters. In your opinion, which are the most suitable areas to ink an agreement and ensure a coordinated response? For example, can Greece and Türkiye agree on a migration pact? Today, the Turkish Minister of Interior said that there is great collaboration with the Greek Minister of Migration towards that direction.

Çağrı Erhan:

Hello, everyone.

Let me answer the question starting with the historical background. Going back to four decades, almost starting from the 1980s, late 1980s; every 10 years, Türkiye opened a new page with Greece.

Recently, we opened a new blank page, or we are more enthusiastic about solving our problems with Greece. I think there is no real sincere enthusiasm from both sides to come together and focus on the real problems between the two parties, like sovereignty problems, territorial waters, continental shelf, etc.

In my opinion, it is very tough, very mission-impossible to find a solution. The only thing we do every 10 years is to freeze. Is to stop it, deepen, and create some sort of confrontation in the region. We start, try to open ways for cooperation in software areas. We can find tens of examples of this kind in late for last four decades between Cem and Papandreou, Gül and Simitis, Davutoğlu and Papandreou. And this is, again, another round of the optimistic era. Within two-three years, we will lose our optimism and we will start another pessimistic era. This is circular, unfortunately, and maybe the fate of Turkish regulations since the last four decades.

We have very low motivation on both sides to come together and solve the problems for Turkish side, the main motivation was the European Union membership in late 1980s and throughout 1990s. But now, we, among many Turkish citizens, see that in Brussels, there is no willing for membership of Türkiye.

The membership to the EU has lost its place as a motive behind Turkish minds to come together with the Greeks to solve some problems. For instance, any promise from Athens about opening the way for visa removal would not make any sense in Ankara anymore because it is not Greece that blocks the Turkish way to Brussels. It is other countries.

Secondly, on the Greek side, the main motivation previously was the economic issue, particularly in the early 1990s. Then, Greece decided to enter the Eurozone. Our neighbor wanted to reduce

its military expenditure. They forced to open an era with Türkiye. Türkiye at that time was willing to be a candidate country for the EU, and Turkish politicians also supported this period.

But then what happened? Nothing. It did not result in the membership of Türkiye. Since 2004, we opened only half of the negotiation chapters with the EU. Eight of them are blocked because of the Cyprus issue, four more are blocked by France, etc. So, the EU has lost its being as a motivation behind the Turkish-Greek relations.

As a diplomatic historian who witnessed these four decades and actively played a role, at least the two previous white-page eras to foster the relations. Depending on my individual experience, we can find some areas of cooperation and we should focus on them other than the sovereignty issues.

Therefore, I would like to underline and propose some sort of cooperation areas, which can be realized and in which we can go forward very smoothly. The first one is fighting against natural disasters and environmental disasters. I sometimes do not understand why both statesmen from both countries do not come together and create a concrete, real means for fighting against forest fires, for instance. Because every year, both in the Greek islands in the Aegean and mainland Greece, and in Türkiye, we have huge wildfires and forest fires, which result in the burning of thousands of acres of forest. We can join our efforts to fight against them, and it can be a clear example of the furtherance of cooperation against natural disasters.

If we can establish a firm and permanent joint force against forest fires, then we can enlarge the scope of this cooperation to other means of natural disasters. For instance, sea pollution, preserving the sea life, or saving the lives of Mediterranean seals.

This kind of soft things can also create support among the people. If the support among the people for the furtherance of Turkish-Greek relations increases, then the politicians can maybe in the future, not in the near future but in midterm, can take a step forward to talk about real tough issues, so we should start from the easiest one.

another area of cooperation is the field of education. As a university professor, I, several times, proposed to my colleagues in Greece and Türkiye to start a joint diploma program with a Greek university. For instance, we have joint diploma programs with German, French, and British universities but not with Greece.

Every time, I heard a lot of pretexts from the Greek side that their universities are so independent, that they cannot take directives from the government, and that so they have to decide. Why not to create a joint full, uh, scholarship program, for instance, at graduate level? Both students from Greece and Türkiye can come together and take joint courses from Greek and Turkish university professors. They can have a joint degree, and already, it is possible with the American universities. My university has two joint programs: one with a German university and one with an American university. Why not to do this between Greek and Turkish universities? This would not be a tough job. We can go forward. I am not talking about writing a joint history book, it is mission impossible. It took the French and the Germans 50 years for writing a joint history book.

I am proposing that we should not lose time talking about these sovereignty issues. I am very sincere, very frank. I have listened to many scholars and politicians for 40 years. I have read and been sometimes a part of this kind of political negotiations that go up to nowhere. Because at the

end, it is a sovereignty issue. We are not talking about the same thing. Some of us talk about territorial waters, some talk about continental shelf. We do not use the same terminology. If we want to cooperate, we should take a way of neofunctionalism, which means that we shall start to cooperate where it is possible. We should start to cooperate in trade, tourism, education, humanitarian issues, fighting against the illegal trafficking of humans, and fighting against forest fires.

If we have a positive result, it will create real support among the peoples in the Bosphorus, the Aegean. Then politicians maybe can go forward for the other issues. Otherwise, it will take four or five more ages of blank pages in the next half-century, and we will result with nothing in the Aegean.

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

You described a long process of establishing and building collaboration in many sectors that will help politicians change their narrative and to improve their relations.

I am going to Professor Liacouras now. As we heard, Professor Liacouras, is it all a matter of process? Could you help us explore the best political and institutional methods in resolving disputes in a peaceful way?

Petros Liacouras:

Thank you very much, Maria.

First of all, I have to go through the terminology of dispute in order to understand what the disputes between Greece and Türkiye are. Because every time, one part invokes a dispute, the other part has to accept it, think about it, and find out what the best way of solving the problem is or settle the difference that exists. According to international law and practice on terminology, a disputed disagreement on the point of factor law, a conflict of legal views or of interests between parties; disputes may arise. From different interpretations of legal provisions or international law *or* from contesting legal rights or invoking a conflicting claim between Türkiye and Greece, disputes are classified according to applicable law, which is for settlement in each case.

Firstly, the delimitation of continental shelf, exclusive economic zone, the breach of the territorial waters, and international airspace are all legal disputes that can be addressed or involved bilaterally and be resolved according to principles and the rules of international law of the sea.

The Gray Zones Theory, the one that contests the sovereignty of islands or other islands is a complex legal framework, including not only the basic source of the Lausanne Peace Treaty but also the law of treaties and the contemporary notion of sovereignty. The restrictions on fortification -the partial demilitarization that exists- and the fortification of military personnel as provisional measures is being superseded by post-war international law concerning self-defense, countermeasures, and national security. The limitation of continental shelf, exclusive economic zone is a bilateral issue that deserves settlement of high priority through negotiations. Otherwise, exclusive sovereign rights cannot be enjoyed by either state.

Strategically, it has to be accelerated for even one reason, as the needed renewable energy sources are exploited or can be exploited also from wind turbines. And these are constructed in a delimited by-agreement or judicial decision, exclusive economic zone. This is very important.

Actually, it is an outstanding legal dispute, which is created by overlapping claims of underlimited areas of continental shelf-exclusive economic zone of the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean, over which in the absence of agreement or judicial decision, both states have only entitlements, which is an expectation of having a right at some point. According to the law of the sea, exclusive sovereign rights of research and exploration with regard to continental shelf and exclusive economic zone, natural resources are exercised in the area that appertains to each state after the limitation is agreed or has been agreed.

If the limitation agreement is not possible, of course, there is a way out. States can consensually resort to judicial adjudication, going to the court. This is according to the law of the sea, binding on both countries, so we have to follow it. On the other hand, because this is also a dispute from part of Türkiye, we can say a few things.

The correspondent of National Airspace is also a matter of dispute from Türkiye. There are zones of sovereignty, are enacted and probably can be settled unilaterally by national legislation. With regard to the territorial sea, every coastal state enjoys sovereignty and deserves the right to establish unilaterally the zone as well as the limit, which cannot exceed 12 nautical miles. There is a way out also to that. The relevant provisions of the law of the sea leave discretion to the state to define the outer limit. There is actually no obligation to extend it to 12 nautical miles, meaning that the coastal state can opt for variated extensions, different limits to different costs.

So, the state has to make the critical decision. The choice is between delimiting a continental shelf-exclusive economic zone, which is a high stake for the bilateral agreement, and the bilateral relation versus an extension of the territorial sea to the maximum possible, which is in some way a hardship for the delimitation of the continental shelf-exclusive economic zone.

In other words, to choose either territorial waters of lesser extent, which is a political cost for being a high stake domestically, or a wider high seas areas deceived of which is the continental shelf and the water column, possible exclusive economic zone. This is the dilemma but, in any case, I underline this, it is not a matter of bilateral agreement.

The rest of the disputes cannot become a subject of negotiation. I can explain this in more words in the Q&A. Because they concern allegations of Türkiye with regard to the interpretation of the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, which was signed hundred years ago. But now, we have also a contemporary international law that covers all of these matters with notions that are very important and very necessary. And, of course, they give answers to questions like this. Since 1975, when negotiations on the continental shelf delimitation were initiated, Greece has opted for a peaceful settlement of dispute. This is the only way to get out of this impasse. The main goal of Greece has been to settle the delimitation by recourse to the ICJ. That does not mean that we do not go to negotiation and settle other minor subjects of these disputes. The other issues concerning the extension of territorial sea, the width of the international airspace are seen as in the domain of sovereignty and a matter of unilateral legislation, as I said before.

However, any kind of determination of territorial sea has to be final before entering the jungle of negotiations concerning continental shelf and exclusive economic zone delimitation, which may imply also the adjustment of national airspace. You can see with one move; we can have two, three disputes settled and also the interests of either side or of the international community concerning international navigation.

High seas also has to be taken into consideration from 1975, which has been almost 50 years until the present day. These disputes remain unresolved and with confrontation having expanded to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea recently, an area which, according to the United Nations Convention, the law of the sea provisions and the courts and other tribunals jurisprudence, Türkiye and Greece should enter into substantive negotiations. And this is the real answer to our questions: Substantive negotiations to delimit their continent shelf and exclusive economic zone.

Articles 74 and 83 of UNCLOS, concerning exclusive economic zone and continental shelf respectively, provide for delimitation by agreement in geographical circumstances of overlapping claims between opposite or adjacent coastal states in order to reach an equitable result from the above-mentioned disputes.

The delimitation of continental shelf is crucial. The relevant provisions of UNCLOS to which all refer as binding. Customs and international law say nothing about the methodology of how to achieve an equitable result. But it has been up to the international tribunals to certify what the law is.

The law is judgement by virtue of its jurisprudence. Neither state can proceed to delimit unilaterally something that it is not permitted. So, delimitation based on the courts and other tribunal jurisprudence by way of agreement or judicial award is the only way of confirming sovereign rights in delimited continental shelf and exclusive economic zone areas. In order to do that, first and foremost, negotiation in good faith is abidinf step for both states concluding the limitation agreement or special agreement to refer the dispute to international court tribunals or arbitration for settlement and negotiation for both the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Before we engage in negotiation, we have to go through this phase of pre-negotiation. There is some sort of political dialogue today but in previous years, there were exploratory talks. In the course of settlement, each state should refrain from any unilateral act that may harden the peaceful settlement.

This is made possible. This can be made possible. If moratorium can be extended beyond December or beyond any time until the route or the roadmap justifies this.

So, I will share more in the Q&A session.

Thank you.

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

Thank you. So, Professor Aslan, Türkiye and Greece confirmed the will to maintain a good atmosphere in bilateral relations. Since we are discussing the most effective ways to find common

ground, which ones are the best to resolve any disputes in a peaceful way between Türkiye and Greece, in your opinion?

Murat Aslan:

Thanks, Maria.

First of all, I thank you for cooperating. Also, I thank Professor Filis for his support in organizing this event. It was really valuable, and this event is really timely. Because both countries will start refreshed negotiations, at least will start a trust-building process as was agreed in New York through the meetings of President Erdoğan and also Prime Minister Mitsotakis.

On the other hand, I believe that all countries, at least leaderships or decision makers, should ask one critical question: Is this what they want at the end of the overall processes? If it is about having the problems diminish from the agendas of both countries, it is one thing. If it is about maximizing exactly the profits, it is another thing.

So, this question is really critical. On the other hand, there is one fact. Sometimes you are not the one driving the overall process, but you are a subject of the developments surrounding you. For instance, global developments like natural disasters, like the wars which popped up nowadays in the form of either conventional or unconventional form; it is something. If it is about regional developments, you can go to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, the Balkans, etc.; it is another thing. These are the inputs for directly affecting the relations of both countries bilaterally, Professor Liakouras explained that much well. Bilateral relations are manifold.

On the other hand, there is one fact, as previously delineated during the first panel. These are intertwined with each other. So, you cannot isolate one single problem, but you have to have a comprehensive approach addressing the overall problems in the meantime. This is another fact of the problem.

There is also another matter: Especially for the Greek side, it is really important. It is the internal dynamics. Because there is a great prejudice in the minds of the public; there are narratives circulated a lot in the newspapers, like ‘the threat comes from the East’.

This is the sentiment, and you have to manage exactly the overall process per the perceptions of the public, especially peer to the elections. Then, if the picture is that much complicated, are we ready or do both countries are ready to resolve the problems, especially to achieve commonly agreed shared goals? This is the question. If the response is yes, I believe my suggestion would be to identify a common vision and delineate a common intention directly framed by the political leadership of both countries. I believe that it is lacking right now. There is no common vision for both.

Second thing, it is in my PhD dissertation and in my book published in the UK, there is a continuity of belief, attitude, behavior, and also added by group norms and values that I call *behavioral cascade*. If you apply this formula to Turkish-Greek relations; belief, attitude, and behavior are always uploaded by negative connotations. Group norms and values, which are much more permanent, they are over there, not changing that much, on the other hand, usually denying the probable resolutions.

In my opinion, first of all, both countries should start how to mend behavior, attitude, and belief to generate much more positive norms and values, and that is missing. Today, I read a sentence circulated by a Turkish-Greek professor. It was about values and ethics. As both countries, we have to start thinking about what values we could share. If there is no value, that means these problems will not have a result.

Second thing, the language and narratives are important, I believe. If we circulate and repeat the same things, same sentences continuously; there will be no change in the public perception, attitude, or behavior. In my opinion, it is the essence, as Professor Erhan underlined, I had to repeat the same. Currently, the problem is about the public perception in each country. There is a limited public to public interaction other than the Turkish tourists visiting the Asian islands.

In this sense, I believe there must be, as Professor Erhan delineated, a neofunctionalist application of politics. We should start with the most available, easiest issues that both countries can cooperate. For instance, business and tourism are one branch for this. We have discussed it a lot with Professor Filis. Then, not the hardships but easygoing issues must be at the top of the agenda. If you start discussing, for instance, international law; believe me, there are a lot of ways that you can easily surpass the norms. On the other hand, there is one thing that we usually confuse international law with national law.

National law binds all citizens or non-residents as far as this individual is inside the country. But international law is binding if the other country is a party to the treaty or agreement or regulation, international arrangement, and Türkiye is not a party to the law of the sea. Then, we will continue to discuss whether it is applicable or not.

I think we should discuss first the easy ones. Second, there is a great term in Latin, *rebus sic stantibus*, the conditions changed. I do not believe that. If there is great sensitivity in the relations of both Greeks and Türkiye; there are great agreements signed, inked by the leaderships of both countries.

If there is a dispute right now, we have to go back and exactly check what both countries inked and see what has changed. Then, we can go forward more easily. If you tell me, it is about having a court decision to resolve the problems. Well, it is not that much easy. Why both countries must prepare a folder to present it to the Court of Justice? Believe me, it will never happen because both countries will not agree on anything on this. For instance, what sort of reference both will agree on just to have the attention of the court? I do not think that it is not that easy. Then, we have to go back and check what was signed in 1923 between the two countries, and what the difference between the agreed and currently applied is. This is one issue.

Second, rationality is always the one that will drive the overall process. Smart decisions and wise actions are important. Trust-building efforts are really important right now. On the other hand, I was an officer in 2006 and there was there were still discussions on trust-building efforts.

As a delegation, we visited Athens, as members of the Turkish army, and we are still there, no developments right now. I want to stop here, Maria, because I do not want to exceed my time limit, and I will be waiting for the other question. By that, I can add some additional comments. Thank you.

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

Before we go to the Q-A session, I am waiting to see any comments or any questions from the audience.

Have not had any feedback yet.

Let us start with Professor Filis again. And let us talk about the European angle. Where do we stand on Türkiye's EU membership bid? Accession talks are practically frozen. Can Greece help in the resumption of accession talks, or is there any alternative?

Constantinos Filis:

Currently, we are in front of the perfect stalemate, the perfect gridlock. In the sense that until very recently, there was no appetite, either on behalf of the EU or on behalf of Türkiye for the resumption of accession talks.

If we want to be frank, there is no question the EU is having second thoughts and is very skeptical. Mainly France but even Germany in accepting some Western, Balkan states, which are much closer than Türkiye.

Türkiye feels as the eternal mistress of the European Union. Because of these, talks have been going on for quite some time more than a couple of decades. If we were back in 1999 when we had the Helsinki process that was initiated by Greece. Türkiye believed its European prospect.

In 2002, the AKP was elected. President Erdoğan was considered by many Europeans as a modest, Muslim leader, who can even develop into a paradigm for other Muslim countries. We are far from from there. Unfortunately, we had some developments in Cyprus in 2004. We had an agreement with Türkiye and Greece, and we reached a subject, if I recall well. It was in late 2003, Petros Liakouras knows more about this subject that we reached or we got really close to ink and agreement between the two sides for a number of internal reasons. But not only this momentum was lost. And now 20 years after, I can only see Türkiye-EU relations being built or restored not on the basis of values, the basis of possible accession. But they seem to be very transactional. That is very problematic, for me. In what sense? I am going to conclude in the sense within, for instance, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, or other states that have business interests and economic interests. They have exposure in Türkiye's banking sector like Spain and are interested only in promoting their national interest through the European path vis-`w-vis Türkiye. That is not enough.

And of course, on the Türkiye side… Now that Türkiye has this sense of great or potentially great power, even in global terms, not to mention regional terms, has this challenge, opportunity not to follow or to respect a specific framework in these relations with the European Union to do it on a transactional basis.

That will serve a very specific interest; that is highly problematic particularly for Greece and Cyprus for obvious reasons. What we want is to set the framework, some rules, and values and norms as Murat said before that will be calmly accepted.

In that respect, what I feel is that although Greece does not have the diplomatic clout to impose its will on other European partners, as was mentioned before, what I can say is that Greece and Cyprus can facilitate this new attempt to restore ties betweenTürkiye and the EU that have been damaged.

Let me share, Petros and I visited Mr. Christodoulides, the president of Cyprus. We had the discussion with him as we had with Mr. Tatar, the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community. Mr. Christodoulides told us that if there is an improvement in talks for the Cyprus issue, he is ready and prepared to lift some traditional policies on behalf of Cyprus vis-à-vis Türkiye as far as Türkiye-EU relations are concerned.

He sent a positive message to our Turkish colleagues as well. Petros was there, and he might add up to my comment provided that there is some improvement in talks in Cyprus. I do not see that happening. But provided that there is some improvement, Nicosia is ready.

To change its policies, even regarding some frozen chapters in talks on the accession of Türkiye to the EU. But it is not only that. I think that Greece has demonstrated its will to facilitate dialogue between Türkiye and the EU. If, for instance, in the near future, we have a modernization, an update of the joint declaration of March 2016 on migration between Türkiye and the EU, with the assistance of Greece, I think that this can be a first step. In very practical terms, that will showcase the new approach that Greece has, not only vis-à-vis Türkiye but on Türkiye-EU relations.

By the way, Greece and Cyprus can only benefit as long as Türkiye gets closer as norms, values, or at least a set of framework gets closer to the EU.

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

Thank you, Professor Filia.

Professor Erhan, under the current circumstances, what makes the difference in the efforts to build confidence between Türkiye and Greece?

Do you find that both leaders have the same will to go on and ink agreements in the non-controversial issues like you mentioned before in the areas of trade, investments and other areas that you mentioned?

Çağrı Erhan:

Yes. As I mentioned in the first round, I think it is not possible to find solutions to tough subjects in bilateral relations.

For instance, the Cyprus issue. Even speaking in this sincere, frank panel, we do not share the same history. It was not 20 years ago. It was because the Kofi Annan's plan. It is a reality. Even among the academics, when speaking about the facts that had happened under our witnesses, we changed it. It was because southern Cypriots rejected an agreement that was already reached between the two parties. That is why we do not have a solution for two decades after Kofi Annan's plan. However, the Cyprus Republic became an EU member without an agreement with the North. How can you put all the blame on the Turks in the North, who approved Kofi Annan's plan? It was

not the Turks; it was the Greek Cypriots who rejected the plan. That is why it is a very difficult issue to solve this kind of several problems. That is why I would like once more underlying the importance of soft issues cooperation between universities cooperation between the research and rescue teams' cooperation against environmental disasters can be areas to start.

If we come back to the European Union accession process; in fact, after 19 years of negotiations, Türkiye and the EU has changed a lot. When we look at Brussels, it is not the Brussels 20 years ago and Türkiye is not the same as it was 20 years ago. Unfortunately, as someone who was a supporter of the EU course of Türkiye 20 years ago, it is sorry for me to say that the related scope of the relations almost reduced into only two items.

For the European side, Türkiye is seen as a bloc to stop immigrants to Europe. So, everything is focused on using Türkiye as an apparatus to block the immigrants. For Türkiye, relations with the EU are reduced to trade relations only. However, it was a huge area of cooperation extending from Copenhagen's political criteria like human rights, democracy, etc. Two customs union but now we see both parties do not speak about the other issues rather than what I had mentioned. Therefore, before starting a comprehensive and extensive work on the Turkish-Greek problems, we should first decide the future of the Turkish-EU relations. The main body of the Turkish-EU relations, the Council of Ministers, is not gathered for four years. It is supposed to be gathered every year at least once at the level of foreign ministers. I think it is a better idea for Türkiye and the EU to come together first and decide whether this negotiation process will continue or not. Because it is not officially frozen, not officially suspended, it is unofficially suspended. Because since 2015, no single chapter was opened.

So, we should decide if it is officially suspended, then there should be a council decision. If this membership issue is finished, then the EU should say to Türkiye 'Okay, we can create other means of cooperation like privileged partnership, good neighbor relations'. But waiting and waiting for more than 50 years in front of the door, really made the EU an issue having a very low agenda item in the Turkish foreign policy agenda.

If you check with the Turkish public discourse about foreign policy, unfortunately, the EU is not among the top five issues. Türkiye is much more in foreign policy issues. The membership issue is not among number five in the agenda items according to the Turkish public. Number one is the war in Ukraine, the situation in Syria, the situation in Karabakh, the Eastern Mediterranean, and our relations with African countries. We do not care about what is going on in Europe.

We are very much busy in Africa, and I mean it. We have other jobs in other parts of the world. We do not need to wait for another five decades in front of the doors of Europe. I believe that Turkish-Greek relations cannot be extracted from the Turkish-EU relations anymore.

It became a part of the Turkish-EU relations. If you want to go forward in Turkish-Greek relations, first we have to decide about the future of the Turkish-EU relations. We cannot postpone it anymore. Otherwise, in Turkish public opinion, we will lose the support for the EU membership forever.

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

That is crystal clear. Professor Liakouras, you may comment to everything that has been said so far. But in your opinion, which is the greatest obstacle to overcome in the efforts to improve bilateral relations?

Petros Liacouras:

Yes. First of all, this is the EU motive that is missing. If we turn the clock back to 2004, we see that the whole process was not completed because the new democracy government that came to power after 2004 elections did not follow what has achieved in Helsinki in 1999, right?

And then of course, the red light became green without examining whether Türkiye has already completed the obligations towards the member states, especially in particular Greece, to go on and settle the outstanding disputes. Then, there is no motive, especially after 2008, when the major countries of the European Union, like Germany, the Great Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, turned their back to Türkiye saying that you are not going to become a member of the European Union.

That was the end of it. I remember that in 2008, Erdoğan turned, let us say, the button and said 'I do not have anything else to do, I do not have any motive to continue the exploratory talks'. Then he started and gave the directive to the people who were the interlocutors.

Of the exploratory talks to say that we have first to discuss about gray zones, demilitarization. If you start with gray zones, demilitarization means that you will never go to the crucial point, which is that delimitation of the continental shelf. It was becoming so hard, and you can also see that in the course of the years.

First thing that they put in front in order to make it harder for them to discuss the delimitation of continental shelf, always refer to demilitarization and to the gray zones. And of course, enhancing all these theories. Nowadays by connecting the militarization and because the militarization is not observed, which is a conventional obligation of Greece.

Because it is not observed, there is a case to contest the sovereignty of the islands, which have to be demilitarized. All of these become or come because of the objection of the EU to Türkiye. Even now, I do not think that the main EU member states are in favor of Türkiye's, continuing the examination of the different chapters and all of this. Wait for Greece and Cyprus to say whether they have problem with Türkiye to enter the European Union. Greece and Cyprus are very small states and cannot be the sole controlling as powers in the EU to turn around the game and narrative *and* say 'it is now time'.

Even because Greece always thinks about setting up a customs union upgrading, 'no visa', but it is not up to Greece. It is up to the major players in the EU to decide upon this. But Greece and Cyprus have to be very friendly and very much in favor of Türkiye's connection and good relations with the EU. Because first of all we are neighbors. Second, in our opinion, narrative, anytime Türkiye is in at an impasse, then of course the first to be affected by this is either Greece or Cyprus. In this case, it is good for Greece to have a very good stance towards Türkiye. And this is what has been happening nowadays. I think it is a very good time and momentum. This is the

momentum to continue, I suppose. I think that this is a unique time to go on and settle as much as we can.

Starting from the confidence-building measures, which are very difficult because it is matters that come from military. That is the positive agenda, which is the easier, and we can do many things.

And of course, if in the political dialogue, there is something that can be, let us say, very heavily on the table concerning the demilitarization of gray zone, then the political dialogue is not going to move ahead. But if there is political will on the part of Erdoğan. Because Erdoğan is a great player in this case. If Erdoğan gives the signal and say 'okay, let's go and finish up with the delimitation of continental shelf'. And if I understand correctly what I heard so many times in the exploratory talks from Turkish officials saying 'if we settle the continental shelf back on those days'; did not discuss about exclusive economic zone. But if we said the continent itself, everything else is going to be secondary.

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

I would like to ask a comment from Professor Aslan on this point of view. We heard Professor Liakouras setting priorities and Erdoğan's role in the process. We also have a comment, and I would like to read from Kavala (Greece). They are watching us and they are mentioning the diplomacy of citizens because tourism is another area where the two countries can collaborate effectively apart from education and trade and investments. The diplomacy of citizens, as Alexander from Kavala says, is really invaluable in the process of bringing the two countries together.

So, Murat, I would like a comment for what Professor Liakouras said on Erdoğan's role and on the priorities that are set.

Murat Aslan:

Thank you.

First of all, I am not pessimistic even though it is too early to be an optimist. I'm not pessimistic because there is a fact. If any country escalates in terms of security, or if Türkiye or Greece is exposed to any natural disaster, or there happens an economic crisis; the other will also suffer. Because we are that much intertwined with each other.

Just remember the economic crisis in Greece. There were a lot of Greek cars driving to, coming to Istanbul to find a job. And think about that. That was normal in this sense, I think. If something happens in a negative connotation to a negative connotation that we see, both will lose and spare time.

Another issue that must be brought to the attention of the publics and policymakers. Once there happens something negative. If there is any escalation like we have experienced in 2019-20. The third party is always exploited to set some arms, weapons, or building a base like the US bases in Greece right now. There were, I believe, nine bases. It may be a guarantee for the security of Greece. In the perception of the Greek public, though, there is a rule. I am a former soldier. Once

a soldier sets foot in somewhere, it is really hard to have this soldier be out of the country. So that is really important.

Another issue, the relations of both countries, as I said before, should not be an asset of internal politics. Once you try to state a word, it may be a point of reaction in the minds of radicals, nationalists, etc. On the other hand, we must have a long-term agenda and sight on how to develop the relations. If the relations are entrapped to the political expectations of either parties or leaderships, we will always stop the period to the elections. And sometimes escalation will be a point of instrumentalizing the environment. In turn, politics should be excluded in the case of Turkish-Greek relations.

And education curricula, it is important. Radicalization is a danger. Radicalization is not a term that should be used. Radicalization is also ultra nationalism, Nazism, racism, etc. Ultra left or ultra right, does not matter. In the case of Turkish-Greek relations, unfortunately, there is a great radicalization among the groups.

Let us check, for instance, as Professor Petros delineated, we are unable to solve some issues. Like the gray zones, politically, well, military should not be an option. Because now we are in a world that unconventionality, conventionality, symmetric and asymmetric, regular, and irregular are mixed. That complicates the struggle. In this sense, the gray zones must be managed in a sustainable formula. Otherwise, once you start military option, it is not easy to step back from the engagement as we have witnessed during the Ukraine and Russia war right now. And I would like to just delineate shortly some basic matters.

First of all, if both countries sit and agree or disagree on something, there must be left no ambiguity. And that is the problem. If there exists an ambiguity in understanding each other, that means you are surpassing the frame, and it is one thing.

Second, there must be flexibility, though there must be no flexibility in terms of breaching the rules of engagement, which leans on stability.

Sizing is good, especially in the newspapers. It is the freedom of expression. But having the words be selected is really important, especially in the minds of politicians.

Finally, now, there is a problem, in my opinion, especially of the Greek politicians. I have to tell this once there happens a sort of escalation or resonation. The referent object, the referent point is always the EU. If Türkiye feels that it will not be a member of the EU community, Türkiye does have options and may stand alone. The current policy of being a strategically autonomous actor, it may be something alien for the most, though, it is a viable option.

I believe that the relations of both countries should not rely on the intentions and visions of the third parties. Because they will exploit it, as I said before. And the EU is a ground, but it is the actor losing its ground. It is a projection of mine; you may agree or disagree. Currently, there is a great objection on the membership of Türkiye to the EU. But please, if you project the potential crisis in 30 or 40 years, it is the countries like Türkiye. That can provide safety to Europe because of the young population, the expanding economy, and the geopolitics.

Rather than pushing away, I believe that you must review the policy and search for how to include Türkiye to the equilibrium in the European ground. Otherwise, they will lose a lot. One of my Romanian colleagues told me that once Ukraine is accepted to the EU as a member, they have to accept Türkiye as well. This is just her remark, but I do not know. But the EU must review exactly what they are doing regarding Türkiye. Once they lose it, they cannot have it anymore.

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

Professor Filis or Professor Liakouras want to comment on that.

Constantinos Filis:

Two very short comments to my friend and my colleague Murat'a remarks: First, I think that Türkiye has to review its policy and approach vis-à-vis the EU and its neighbor, as it is doing actually right now. Türkiye decided to, for its own reasons, to break up its ties with Israel and Egypt.

For over a decade, to follow an assertive policy vis-à-vis Greece and Cyprus. Whether that was a result of its sense of being isolated from other Eastern Mediterranean countries or whether it was self-isolated does not matter for now. But what has happened is that since 2009, with the Mavi Marmara incident, and the events in Egypt; Türkiye was marginalized from Eastern Mediterranean developments, which was detrimental for Türkiye, but it brought instability to the region. Because Türkiye is too big to be ignored on the one hand, but it has to accept some common set of rules other sides, other neighbors, other players in the region to have agreed upon.

I am very glad that Türkiye is restoring its ties with Israel and Egypt. There are difficulties in both cases, especially with Egypt, but that is a positive development. Because we do not want to set a cordon sanitaire in the Eastern Mediterranean against Türkiye.

On the contrary, we want Türkiye to play a constructive role in regional affairs, but the constructive role through commonly accepted rules of the game. This is my first comment.

My second comment is that Türkiye's demographics are admirable. I would like to note, however, its economy. That was something that President Erdoğan and the rest of the political elite is very much dependent on Western capital. He is very much orientated towards the West. There has been support by Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Russia, given that Türkiye is not part of the sanctions that the West has imposed on, on Russia, but at the same time, more than 70% of the FDI.

And Türkiye is looking for FDI. I mean, foreign direct investment comes from European capital. So there is an interconnection between the economies and obvious interconnection. Uh, and we have to bear that in mind as well.

Maria-Nefeli Sarafoglou:

I want to thank you all for addressing such an interesting and important topic, Professor Filis, Professor Erhan, Professor Liakouras, Professor Aslan. The aim was to build a constructive

dialogue which will pave the way for reaching solutions in the most important issues between Türkiye and Greece. Let us hope that bilateral relations will improve in immediate future. Thank you all for watching.