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Hellenic-Turkish Cooperation

Financial & Social Approach

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1. Prologue...

South-east Europe has always been a troubled land. During the last 24 centuries many battles have been fought in order to conquer these areas. The last of them was the Hellenic invasion of Asia Minor (1919-1922). The Hellenic campaign turned out to be a disaster both for Hellas as well as for all the Hellenes who were inhabitants in the areas of Asia Minor (or Aegean according to the Turkish geography). Many were forced to Hellas as immigrants as their homes and fortunes in those areas were destroyed by the furious Turks, who under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk were fighting to claim their country back.

Of course the background of Turkish – Hellenic history starts from way back in time, many centuries ago and till the era of the Byzantine Empire. Since that period the history of these nations was woven together. Unfortunately, the coexistence was not always peaceful, as it was disturbed by displeasing events.

The late years of the 20th century, a different approach has brought both nations closer. After two earthquakes, in Hellas and Turkey respectively, these countries started to make efforts for cooperation in various areas, both financial and social, for an undisturbed march to a better living in the region. If these efforts are going to be fruitful no one knows, but history will show if Hellenes and Turks are able to make the best out of them....

2. Points of Cooperation

A partnership between two neighboring countries is limited only by each one's imagination. The possibilities are virtually endless. This paper will try to point out some of the most important possibilities that are having better odds for their fulfillment. Some of these aspects will be really optimistic and might be considered by some people as "romantic ideas". But these ideas are the driving forces that are making the people to achieve certain goals.

2.1 Energy

A basic factor that determines the growth and the prosperity of a country is energy. Without the continuous contribution of energy, the growth in any region of planet Earth would not be the expected.

Energy can be produced with different ways. The majority of energy produced around the globe is from mining fuels, like oil and natural gas. This situation has led to an energy dependence from mining fuels, which is virtually visible when oil prices rising.

The combustion of mining fuels however has unpleasant results. It increases the rates of coal dioxide in the atmosphere. Consequently it contributes in the intensification of the greenhouse effect and world climatic changes. For this reason the European Union (EU) has decided a concrete directive to face climatic changes. This directive encourages the production of energy from renewable sources, i.e. Aeolian, solar, hydroelectric.

The countries that are on either side of the Aegean are particularly profited from a meteorological point of view. Strong winds and many sunny days per year are

a great advantage for the implementation of projects to benefit from renewable energy sources. Collaboration between the two countries, Hellas and Turkey is considered necessary, as they can realize exceptionally big centers of renewable energy sources production, with an output that might even cover a big part of the increasing needs of these two nations. With what was mentioned above it is easy to understand that “energy imports” will be reduced, be them in the form of oil barrels, or electricity received from neighboring countries (http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr/print_article.php?e=A&f=17956&m=N26&aa=1).

The collaboration of the two lands could also pass to another stage, that of common production of energy crops. Energy crops are cultivated or wild types, traditional or new, which produce biomass as a main product that can be used for various energy purposes as for example the production of heat and electric energy or liquid biofuels.

Traditional cultures of which the final product will be used in order to produce energy and biofuels are also considered to be energy crops. This category includes wheat, barley, maize, sugar beet and sunflower when they are used for the production of liquid biofuels (bio-ethanol and bio-diesel).

Possible problems that could emerge are first bureaucracy and secondly the existing problem of pointless energy consumption. Regarding bureaucracy on matters of renewable energy and energy crops the problem can easily be overcome by conforming to the guide-lines of EU (2003/87/EC and 2003/30/EC respectively) and also by creating a variety of attractive regulations for cooperation of energy companies from Turkey and Hellas. Concerning the other problem that already exists – the senseless consumption of energy – it is caused firstly by the bad building layout, which is something that cannot easily change and secondly, due to energy consuming domestic appliances. This problem can be countered with regular briefings to the consumers regarding how they should regulate their needs in order to economize money on one side and help each ones country on the other side to a transition to more economic forms of energy production.

An exceptionally interesting game in the wider region of Aegean, Balkans and Black Sea is shaped nowadays round the issue of energy, production and marketing. Firstly with the support of EU and with European capital the pipe of Novorossiysk-Burgas-Alexandroupoli is created. This pipe will transport oil from the Black Sea to Europe. Simultaneously with American funding and with USA blessings a competitive

pipe is being manufactured, that of Baku-Ceihan. Additionally, another memorandum has been signed for the creation of another competitive pipe. That pipe will transfer oil from the Black Sea through Burgas, but it will bypass Hellas and it will channel oil to Europe using the harbor of Vlore in Albania (www.oey-tiflis.org.ge/brief2.htm).

One can easily understand that the lands of Turkey and Hellas are becoming the panel on which the world powers (EU, USA, Russia) practice their strategic planning's and their competitive ideas. Moreover the pipe that will transfer natural gas from Caspian Sea-Hellas-Italy should also be mentioned, as it is under the benediction of EU and can constitute a good effort in order to consolidate the spirit of collaboration between countries (www.aegeantimes.gr/oil.htm).

Finally it is of vital importance the co-exploitation of oil reserves in the Aegean Sea. According to existing clues these reserves are more than enough. What is needed is will and joint decision for their exploitation and in particular without the entanglement of others.

2.2 Cross border collaborations

Most problems that trouble simple citizens are not limited in the narrow borders of a country. The needs of medical care, natural disaster protection and quality issues of food and water are the same both for Hellenes as for Turks. Consequently regions that face the same problem, but are separated from borders of countries, are supposed to collaborate in order to face jointly an existing problem.

A good and seasonable example that highlights the unpleasant consequences for both sides is the over flooding of river Evros, the natural border of Hellas and Turkey. The sudden downpours that affect the two countries result to the overflow of the river and the destruction of the adjacent cultures or stock raising facilities. The collaboration could also be realized with the participation of Bulgaria, because the rainfalls there also result in an overflow of the river (http://www.grtrnews.com/gr/publish/article_401.shtml). However Turkish-Hellenic collaboration is imposed, in order to eliminate the danger of overflow with flood-

preventing works. Creativity could also be used. The momentum and quantity of the overflowing water could also be used with the help of small hydroelectric installations. With this method electric power will be produced and after that the water could be used for other purposes, i.e. irrigation.

Another common point of brainstorming for both countries is marine pollution and the marine wealth of the Aegean. Marine pollution is created from ships that sail in the Aegean Sea or from coastal municipalities. This has an indirect impact to coastlines that attract tourists, preventing perhaps with this way the flow of foreign currency in Turkey and Hellas. Definitely marine pollution directly influences fish catches and also the consumer, as he/she is high on the food chain. It is worth mentioning that the protection of the natural wealth is necessary, because it is the subject of commercial exploitation from the residents of coastal regions. It is imposed to act accordingly before the situation comes to a certain point, where we might not be able to intervene catalytic to rescue it. The heedless fishery of the past as well as of our days does not allow the smooth –temporal- reproduction of fish catches. This results in small in size fish catches, which shows that fish don't have the necessary time to grow to full size. If marine wealth doesn't start to be protected right now, Turkey and Hellas will face bigger problems in the future, since the Aegean Sea is the economical lung of the two countries. The immediately interested, i.e. fishermen, could react with complaints that there is government interventionism and they are free anymore to fish as they did in the past. It should however become perceptible, that the fish catches that they trade today, is substantially like consuming food from the next generations, because with this way sustainable growth does not exist.

Another collaboration which could come true is the benefit of medico-pharmaceutical help. With the creation of hospital units near borders or in big cities that are located near borders. These hospital units will be created in order to serve the needs of citizens, Hellenes or Turks, which live nearby. The reason for this collaboration is the weakness of state to create, to staff and to maintain hospitals in frontier regions, or the weakness of patient transportation due to bad weather conditions. With the creation of these new hospital units and the crewing of these with personnel from both countries, so that to avoid communicational voids and the financing for their foundation with EU funding, it is sure that the future results will be positive.

2.3 Tourism

Tourism is a source of wealth for Turkey and Hellas. And as such both countries need to stay up to date and to adapt to anything new regarding tourism and tourists. Hellas in the year 2005, received a number of tourists that exceeded the population of its own residents (roughly 15 million tourists). Turkey received the same year a number of tourists that approximately reached 21 million. These facts only show that these two countries are popular destinations for tourists all over the world. For the time being one can say that Hellas and Turkey are two different tourist destinations. That means that a tourist visits either Turkey or Hellas. The creation of a future partnership in the particular sector could yield exceptional results for both countries (<http://www.acci.gr/reports/turkey2004.htm>). The joint collaboration could serve the customer-tourist, from the moment someone is going to search to find a place for the vacations, till the moment of return back home. This service could be provided with information supplied via internet (websites) or via telephony that will exploit the modern technology (VoIP). As it was also mentioned earlier, Hellas and Turkey are two different and separate destinations. Consequently it is judged necessary and imperative to create common destinations that will have a certain theme. This could be something that has to do with the common Hellenic-Turkish historical background, i.e. "Streets of Byzantium" where the tourist will have to visit cities in both countries, Thessaloniki in Hellas and Constantinople (Istanbul) in Turkey. The theme could also be an event like golf. The choices for this kind of attractions are limited only by one's imagination. Turkey and Hellas have both the means as well as the infrastructure for such a strategic partnership. Maybe the only thing missing is the eagerness for such type collaboration from the people that are in this sector. Substantially the perseverance in the errors of the past should not be anymore, so that Turkey and Hellas may pass in the new era of collaboration to achieve the goal of creating a better future in the wider region.

2.4 EU Programs

Turkey as a candidate member of the European Union, will receive a big sum of money from the EU with the form of EU Programs. Hellas since 1986 that the 1st Community Support Framework (CSF) began and up to the running year (2006) has exploited three different CSFs. Many millions of Euros were invested in Hellas via the CSF. Equally many were however the millions of Euros that remained unexploited, because some obstacles existed. The investors didn't know how they should apply in order to be granted the money from the EU. Or they were not good informed regarding the European Community Programs. Turkey in the future (or already) will receive the opportunity to have this kind of money flow from the EU. Here precisely comes the role of the Hellenic State. Hellas has accumulated experience in the exploitation of EU funding. It is obvious that a collaboration of institutions and private individuals of both sides, Turkish and Hellenic, should take place. The Hellenes will provide the necessary know-how for the utilization of EU funding. It is essential to create collaboration in the level of technocrats, Turkish and Hellenes, where the second will provide knowledge and experience to the first. With this way the Turkish partners will be able to learn fast the way EU funding is working. An instant result of this collaboration will not only be the rejection of EU funding loss, but also the upgrade of infrastructure of the neighboring country, improvement of living standards and commercial transactions.

2.5 Art & Culture

A promising collaboration could be in the frames of culture. Of course Hellenes and Turks have their own separate distinctiveness and uniqueness that distinguishes them from all the other, but also between them. Simultaneously however these two populations have also a lot of common points. Thus in a potential discussion of a Hellene and a Turk it will appear that both use common words and expressions. Even small funny stories from the Turkish culture, which hide wisdom and logic "have been

passed on” to Hellenes (Nasreddin Hodja stories). These two cultures have many common points and this could be the corner stone that could support the bringing closer of Hellenes and Turks (http://www.grtrnews.com/gr/publish/article_680.shtml). An annual cultural meeting in the field of arts would be capable to the most completed picture of the human in the other side of the Aegean. Dance, theatre, cinema and other fine arts will be the unique elements that will elevate the common concerns of the present and the common roots of the past.

Another collaboration in the frames of culture could materialize with student or professor exchange of the analogical educational grades. The exclusive aim of these exchanges will be to eliminate the prejudice that each one has from his own education and culture to human on the other side. This collaboration will show that a Turk does not constitute substantially any threat for the peace and the prosperity of a Hellene and vice versa.

2.6 Banking collaborations

A new period of collaboration between Hellas and Turkey undoubtedly will attract the interest of even more businessmen for an “invasion” to the new market. Such a movement usually requires the analogical support from banks with the disposal of the necessary capital for the financing of new investments. In order for the motive force –money- to exist a Hellenic-Turkish bank (or more) could be created. The basic object of work for this new institution would be the benefit of modern banking products to the enterprises that wish to enter the new Hellenic-Turkish market (http://www.grtrnews.com/gr/publish/article_582.shtml). At the same time the institution could also provide assistance to new domestic exporters to provide their products in markets other than those of Turkey and Hellas.

2.7 Transportation

This is the period of speed. Speed in the transmission of information, speed in the transports of individuals and goods. "Time is money" is the slogan of the era. The fast and unhindered transport of individuals and goods is necessary. Many are the forms of collaboration that can materialize itself in the particular sector. A first collaboration could come true in the shipping sector. Hellas possesses worldwide the biggest commercial fleet. Turkey is in the 10 first countries worldwide for shipbuilding and third in the frames of the EU (2005) (http://www.grtrnews.com/gr/publish/article_642.shtml). What was mentioned could be the pledge for Hellenic-Turkish collaboration in the sector of goods transportation. More rapid and sure transport of export goods in the important markets abroad, ensuring thus the confidence of customers, and also the sure import of goods from foreign markets, without voids created in the offer of goods.

As long as it concerns human transportation, new routes could be created. For example a railway connection like the Trans-Siberian in Russia, but adapted in the Hellenic-Turkish data. This connection could begin from Athens and come till Ankara. With this way people will be transported from one country to the other, as well as goods.

Another itinerary could be created in the coastal of Asia Minor. A coastal line that will begin from Rhodes Island and will reach up till Constantinople (Istanbul) making stops in both sides, the Hellenic islands of Eastern Aegean as well as the Asia Minor coastal cities. Of course this itinerary could also be included in the Hellenic-Turkish collaboration in the field of tourism, because it will present the particularities and the uniformities of the Hellenic and Turkish landscape, but the belief is strong that this route would facilitate goods transportation.

3. Epilogue...

What was presented in this paper was the result of research, brainstorming and endless discussions regarding the possibilities of collaboration of Hellas and Turkey. The proposals presented were few in comparison with the endless possibilities that could be realized. Fact is however that the realization of each one of these or some others possibilities will bring the two nations together and united for a better future and a peaceful and harmonic coexistence.

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