



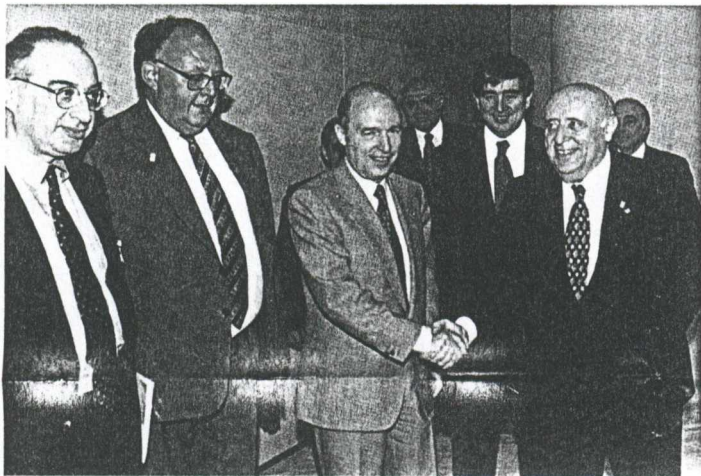
## Ἀπόκομμα Ἐφημερίδος

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# A PEAK Beyond the Madrid SUMMIT

By signing a joint communiqué pledging to address their mutual problems peacefully, Greece and Turkey startled their NATO partners in Madrid this July. Nikos Koustandaras analyzes what might come next.



Above: Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis seals the deal with Turkish President Suleyman Demirel; Right: NATO's leaders gather for a group photo-op in Madrid.

The leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization came away from their Madrid summit meeting in early July with more than an invitation to Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic to join their 16-member club. On the sidelines, Greece and Turkey, who have been NATO members since the mid-1950s, suddenly took an important step toward restoring relations and ending the cold war between them, raising the possibility of strengthening the alliance's troublesome southeastern flank.

Taking their countrymen by surprise, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis issued a joint communiqué setting out six commitments by which the two quarreling neighbors will work to resolve their differences. This was the first such step since 1988, when Greece and Turkey agreed to a set of confidence building measures (which were then shelved until this year).

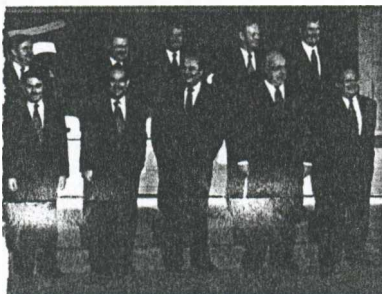
The breakthrough in Madrid was as wide-ranging as it was unexpected. Just three months earlier, at a NATO meeting in Paris, the two countries had stepped back from making any commitments to improving relations, choosing instead to keep shadow boxing with each other and to continue bowing to vocal domestic demands for intransigence.

And even when they announced the results of their talks, the Greek and Turkish officials were cautious to say that there were no losers or victors from the agreement. Indeed, the reaction in Greece was less vociferous than expected, with the major opposition party, the conservative New Democracy, welcoming the step but demanding more information on it. The loudest voices of dissent came from 22 deputies of the ruling Panhellenic Socialist Movement who are fixated on a hard-line foreign policy, and from the small Democratic Social Movement (DIKKI), which is made up mostly of former PASOK malcontents and which immediately called on the 22 to bring down the Simitis administration.

#### **The Line in the Sea**

The main concern in Greece was whether Athens had given up the right it retains, in accordance with the international law of the sea, to double its territorial waters to 12 miles. Turkey has repeatedly said that if Greece extends its territorial waters, the result will be war. Foreign Minister Theodore Pangalos stressed that the six commitments did not preclude Greece from carrying out the rights it had under international law. Greece's position all along has been that it will not extend its territorial waters for now, but that neither will it give up the right to do so, using this right as a bargaining chip.

Turkish journalist Mehmet Ali Birant, who is usually party to the thinking of his country's military and diplomatic establishments, appears to have grabbed the essence of the Madrid commitments. "The formula found is very simple. Greece will not constantly shout, 'It is my right to extend my territorial waters to 12 miles'... and Turkey will not repeat, 'If you do, it is cause for war.' In other words, both sides will hold their tongues... For the moment, no one has backed down from their basic positions," Birant wrote in the daily *Sabah*. Holding their tongues will, of course, be no mean feat for Athens and Ankara, where foreign policy intransigence has always been a major ingredient of domestic politics.



Otherwise, the Madrid communiqué presents little that is not self-evident—a commitment to abiding by international law and treaties and not using the threat of violence, or violence itself, to resolve differences. And yet this is precisely where the agreement is important, giving both countries the chance to back out of the corner in which they had painted themselves. As Pangalos said, until now relations with Turkey were not simply bad, they were non-existent. The Madrid agreement should allow the two to find a way to live together more comfortably. And the truth is, whatever PASOK's professional superpatriot dissidents might say, Greece is the winner from this part of the deal.

Without having to cash in its chip on territorial water expansion, Greece has a commitment from Turkey that it will abide by international law. This is what Greece has been pressing for (with the support of the United States and the European Union) since Turkey suddenly upped the stakes and brought the two countries to the brink of war in January 1996 with its claims on the Imia islets in the eastern Aegean.

#### **A Euro Invitation to Cyprus**

Turkey's domestic politics are going through a critical phase, with the political system, the military, and the population at large having to absorb the bloodless coup that the country's generals brought about with Demirel's assistance. Conservative secular leader Mesut Yilmaz has managed to cobble together a coalition government, and the judiciary is investigating former deputy prime minister Tansu Ciller on charges of espionage and corruption. But Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan remains a powerful and unpredictable force that could still rock Turkey. Erbakan's forced resignation as prime minister is almost certain to lead to political retribution when he feels strong enough to strike back.

Turkey is also in trouble on another important foreign-policy front. The European Union has chosen to ignore Ankara's threats that it will annex northern Cyprus if accession talks with the Cypriot government go

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#### THE SIX COMMITMENTS

1. Mutual commitment to peace, security, and the continual development of good neighborly relations.
2. Respect for each country's sovereignty.
3. Respect for the principles of international law and international treaties.
4. Respect for the legal, vital interests of each country in the Aegean, which are of great importance to their security and national sovereignty.
5. Commitment to avoid unilateral actions on the basis of mutual respect, so as to avoid conflict based on misunderstandings.
6. Commitment to solve differences through peaceful means, on the basis of consensus and without the use of violence or the threat of violence.

ahead. The European Commission recommended in mid July that Brussels start talks with Nicosia early next year, along with five former Communist countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia), so as to be in the next wave of nations to join the EU. Turkey was left off the list and was advised to solve its problems regarding human rights and democracy, and to improve its relations with Greece while also helping solve the Cyprus problem.

The reaction in Ankara was—predictably—furious. Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, who was prime minister at the time that Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974, warned, "Any step taken in connection with Cyprus which we or Turkish Cypriots do not accept will be more than met by our own steps."

#### Greece Conquers Taboos

The EU and the Greek Cypriots have chosen to see Turkey's threats as bluster. But one thing has been clear throughout the recent history of Turkey regarding Cyprus: Neither Turkey nor the Turkish Cypriots bluff. They carry out their threats. The difference this time, though, is that with Greece having given in to the pressure from Washington to start talking with Turkey, it is Ankara that has to prove it is willing to abide by principles of civilized behavior. It should be very difficult, if not impossible, for Turkey to annex northern Cyprus and not come to regret it. With Greece and the Greek Cypriots having agreed to a host of confidence building measures (such as not carrying out military flights over Cyprus), the international community can only point the finger at the Turks for any worsening in relations.

As shown by the continued Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus in the face of international condemnation, finger-pointing alone accomplishes little. This time, though, Greece has freed itself from a host of taboos by talking to Turkey. This should allow it to deal with EU-Turkish and Greek-Turkish issues with a new self-confidence and greater authority in NATO and the EU. Rising confidence between the business leaders of the two countries will also lead to practical benefits for both countries.

It has taken far too long for Greece to see this, and Turkey's behavior has not helped. But perhaps the greatest gain from the slow normalization of relations with Turkey will be the normalization of political and foreign-policy thinking in Greece as well. The time might be near when foreign policy will be left to those who are trained to map out national strategy and will not be the servant of populist politicians and pressure groups whose sole guideline is the memory of the suffering caused by the Greek-Turkish conflict—and not the benefits that can come once conflict is averted.