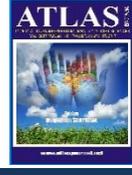




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KALIMERHABA¹: TURKISH-GREEK FACEBOOK COMMUNITIES

KALIMERHABA: SANALAĞDA TEMELLENEN TÜRK- YUNAN DOSTLUĞU

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ABSTRACT

It is taken for granted that non-governmental organizations (NGOs), epistemic communities (epicoms) (Hass, 1992: 28-35) and other cross-border networks are able to shape transnational and international relations. According to such actors contributed to the fall of the so-called “iron curtain” and helped to bring an end to the Cold War in the early 1990’s (Risse- Kappen, 1995: 3-36). This fact leads to the assumption that special kinds of international or transnational relations like “partnership”, “hereditary enmity” or “reconciliation” can also be co-designed by non-state actors like associations, foundations, networks or even “netizens”.

This study analyzes the possible contribution of Turkish-Greek online communities on bilateral relations. Since 1999, the deep gap between the two nations has been bridged partially. For that reason, Turkish-Greek facebook friendship groups were analyzed between August and October 2015. This study argues, that Turkish-Greek facebook friendship groups are suitable to trigger rapprochement on a cultural base (rather than promoting authentic bi-national reconciliation). In this case, the relevance of the possible influence of social media on bringing together these two societies at virtual, local and transnational levels is to be discussed. In order to set up mutual friendship, Turks and Greeks are capable of using facebook online groups and pages.

The aim of this study is to analyze, whether existing bi-national Facebook online groups are capable of contributing to strengthen Greek-Turkish relations or not. Therefore some can tell Turks and Greeks separated from each other in the first quarter of 20.th century, may find a civil solution for themselves by getting help from facebook intersection groups, YouTube and other technological communication alternatives. If this interaction reaches a point when all political- social groups meet in some virtual groups and begin to debate in a mature way together, this new communication can force the ordinary citizens of both side to demand for better relationships.

Keywords: Turks, Greeks, facebook, Turkish-Greek relations, internet.

ÖZET

Bu çalışmada sanalağda Türk-Yunan internet kullanıcıları tarafından oluşturulan grupların, Türk-Yunan ilişkilerine olası katkı düzeyleri irdelenmektedir. 1999’dan itibaren, iki ulus arasında bulunan derin uçurum, en azından sanal ağ portalları üzerinden kısmen aşılmıştır. Bu bağlamda sosyal medyanın bu iki toplumun yerel, sanal ve ulus- aşırı düzeyde biraraya getirilmesi tartışılacaktır. Karşılıklı dostluğu kurmak için, Türkler ve Yunanlar facebook grup ve sayfalarını kullanarak bir paylaşım düzeyi geliştirmek amacındalar.. Dolayısıyla ikili facebook dostluk gruplarının Türk-Yunan ilişkilerini pekiştirip pekiştiremeyecekler hususu, Türk ve Yunan

¹“Kalimerhaba” is a popular word combination of the Turkish and Greek greeting words “Merhaba” and “Kalimera” in order to symbolize the bi-national friendship. This word was used at first as a novel title by Cemal Başlangıç in 1987, named as, “Ege’de Sevda’nın İki Dili, Kalimerhaba”, Istanbul, Boyut 1987.

siyasetçilerinin çok az katkıda buldukları dostluk- diyalog- ortak akıl oluşturma noktalarında tikanıkların aşılmasına katkı sağlayacakları umulmaktadır.

Halihazırda, karşılıklı kısıtlamalar üzerinden ve belli başlı siyasi konuların açılmamasına özen gösterilerek yürütülen, sanal ağ çerçevesinde iletişim mekanizması daha çok iki tarafın birbirlerini tanıması düzeyinde gerçekleştiği görülmektedir. Bu kanalların her iki ülkedeki farklı eğilimler için sağlıklı bir tartışma zemini oluşturup oluşturmayacağı, hatta itilafli konuların çözümlenebilmesi için pek az çaba gösteren Türk ve Yunan siyasi önderlikleri üzerinde bir baskı unsuru yaratıp yaratmayacakları, iki toplum arasındaki ilişkilerin normalleştirilmesi yönünde oldukça önemli bir araç teşkil etmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Türk, Yunan, facebook, Türk-Yunan ilişkileri, sanalağ

1. INTRODUCTION: Epistemic Communities and Beyond

It is taken for granted that non-governmental organizations (NGOs), epistemic communities (*epicoms*) (Hass, 1992: 28-35) and other cross-border networks are able to shape transnational and international relations. According to such actors contributed to the fall of the so-called “iron curtain” and helped to bring an end to the Cold War in the early 1990’s (Risse-Kappen, 1995: 3-36). This fact leads to the assumption that special kinds of international or transnational relations like “partnership”, “hereditary enmity” or “reconciliation” can also be co-designed by non-state actors like associations, foundations, networks or even “netizens”. The word “netizen”, can be described as follows:

“A Netizen (net citizen) exists as a citizen of the world thanks to the global connectivity that the net makes possible. You consider everyone as your compatriot. You physically live in one country but you are in touch with much of the world via the global computer network. Virtually you live next door with every other single Netizen in the world. ... A new more democratic world is becoming possible as a new grassroots connections that allows excluded sections of society to have voice.” (Hauben- Hauben, 1997: 3-5)

With the appearance of information and communication technology (ICT) and social networking sites (SNSs) like “Twitter, Facebook or YouTube” in the first decade of the 21st century, ordinary people are able to coordinate, share information and further social ties worldwide and every time. According to Peter Kruse, facebook was already the fourth-largest “nation” even in 2009 (Kruse, 2009), which leads to the possibility of exerting political and social influence through coordination, information sharing and networking in the cyberspace. Online whistleblower sites like *WikiLeaks* and leaked “Panama Paper”s (Dickinson, 2011) throw “information bombs” to start revolutions or make politicians resign, while politically-motivated “flash mobs” (Gümüş, 2010: 298-309) organized by Twitter and facebook played a relevant role in, “Twitter Revolutions” at the beginning of the “Arab Spring”. (Meller, 2011) Online communities at SNSs co-design the public opinion on bilateral relations as well as co-manage cross-border relations.

For example, within the Turkish context, some Armenian (Ulupınar, 2010) or Turkish (Toprak, 2009) facebook groups contribute to the “historical enmity” between the “othered” Turks and Armenians, whereas other bi-national online groups like the Student Initiative for Armenia and Turkey (Facebook, 2016) (*TürkiyeErmenistanÖğrenciİnisiyatifi*) tries to transform the charged liaison between Armenia and Turkey into a “unbalanced reconciliation”. In despite of all facts explained above it must be told the quest for an answer to the question, “Whether and to what degree Turkish-Greek online communities are capable of promoting Greek and Turkish ‘rapprochement,’” is the main theme of this article.

Turkish-Greek Friendship Groups on Facebook (August 2015)		
Name of the group, www	Main Language/Dominating Group	Members ²
https://www.facebook.com/groups/249219700032/KapadokyaTürkYunanDostlukGrubu	T	9
İkiKıyınınİkiYakasıTürkveYunan https://www.facebook.com/groups/turkyunandostlugu/	T	2591
ΕΛΛΗΝΟΤΟΥΡΚΙΚΗ ΦΙΛΙΑ - TÜRK YUNAN DOSTLUK GRUBU - GREEK&TURKISH FRIENDSHIP https://www.facebook.com/groups/18240801110/	T	1140
Turkish & Greek Friendship-İstanbul & Κωνσταντινούπολης https://www.facebook.com/groups/1401062196886671/	T	1972
Türk&YunanDünyası (Turkish&Greek World) https://www.facebook.com/groups/422886021211170/	T	1442
ANTONIS YUNAN&TÜRK DOSTLUK GURUBU https://www.facebook.com/groups/1555564654723373/	T	1685
TÜRK YUNAN KARDEŞLİĞİ -- ΕΛΛΗΝΟΤΟΥΡΚΙΚΗ ΑΔΕΡΦΟΤΗΤΑ. https://www.facebook.com/groups/133251623435081/	T	2996
Türk&YunanDostluğu (Turkish&Greek Friendship) https://www.facebook.com/groups/turk.yunan/	T	20530
TÜRK-YUNAN DOSTLUĞU (TURKISH-GREEK FRIENDSHIP) https://www.facebook.com/groups/186194485736323/	T	168

Table 1: Common Turkish- Greek intersection points at facebook. Not promising for a virtual alliance but an attempt to build a bridge between two nations' youth groups.

For that reason, Turkish-Greek facebook friendship groups were analyzed between August and October 2015. This study argues, that Turkish-Greek facebook friendship groups are suitable to trigger rapprochement on a cultural base (rather than promoting authentic binational reconciliation).

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF TURKISH- GREEK RELATIONS

Although Turks and Greeks lived together throughout centuries in the Ottoman Empire, bi-ethnic, bi-communal and bi-national relations were anything but healthy. For example, "After the siege of Istanbul, the term *"Rum"* was introduced to integrate ancient native population into the new society as *the children of the Rome*", whereby the second meaning is *"people of Greek origin outside Greece"*, to encourage them as new citizens to live in harmony with the state government. (Dural, 2013: 67) In the 19th Century however, nationalist Greeks formed a violent and successful campaign for ethnic-national independence which led to traumatic events of mutual ethnic conflict which will continue on for decades. (Evin, 2004: 6) Following the Greek independence, the collapse of the Ottomans and the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922), Turkish-Greek relations were regarded as *"historical enmity"*

After the Establishment of Nation. States

With the establishment of the Greek and Turkish nation states, a compulsory population exchange between the two countries took place, where Muslim Turks of Greece and Orthodox Christian Greeks of Turkey were both forced to leave their home, but the exchange did not include the communities living in Western Thrace (Greece), Istanbul, Bozcaada and Gökçeada (Turkey). (Rumelili, 2005: 15-16) Most scholars claimed that the exchange included only Greek-Orthodox and Turkish-Muslim communities, but many Christian Orthodox Turks and many Muslim Greeks were also forced to leave their home due to the religious criteria of the exchange program according the Treaty of Lausanne. (Akşin, 2017:

² The data was collected in mid-August 2015.

180-181) This was due to the fact Mondros Treaty was made according to the ethno- religious composition of the Ottoman Empire so the renovations made within Lausanne should be done in the same way.

Turkey and Greece, and respectively, Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots bickered over the island of Cyprus (Cyprus Dispute). As long as the island was ruled by the United Kingdom, Cyprus was not important. The issue started with provocations of Greek Cypriots to Great Britain for sovereignty after World War II in the era of decolonization and their efforts to balance Turkish Cypriots. These attempts caused conflicts in- between these two communities up to the Turkish intervention to stop a pan- Hellenic campaign to violently connect the island with Greece, and the declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. During the Cyprus negotiations, assaults on members of the Greek minority occurred in Istanbul against the background of the Cyprus Crisis. On 6-7 September 1955, there was one tragic event in history on account of a newspaper hoax posing that Greeks bombed Atatürk's house in Thessaloniki during the Cyprus Crisis.

Cyprus and Aegean Issues

Hence, Turkish mobs started anti-Greek riots and destroyed their houses and stores. As a result, many Greeks were forced to leave Turkey (Bali, 2010).³ As Carley notes, “*Of the many issues that currently divide the two countries, for instance, the two most antagonistic and intractable are the Cyprus and Aegean disputes.*” (Carley, 1997: 8-9)

Moreover, high-rating Turkish TV serials in Turkey and in Greece like “*Muhteşem Yüzyıl (Magnificent Century)*”, arouse interest in Ottoman or Turkish culture and history and helps bi-national tourism between the two countries⁴ (Dedeoğlu, 2012) (The Greek Reporter, 2013). As a consequence, the talk is of “*contribution of television dramas to Turkey's soft power*” (Rousselin, 2013: 16). In fact, the Greek interest in Turkish TV series started 2004 when the Turkish serial, “*Yabancı Damat (Foreign Husband)*” showed the bi-national, “*Love story between the poor son of Turkish baklava-maker and the rich daughter of a Greek ship tycoon.*” (Rousselin:19)

3. TURKISH-GREEK ONLINE FRIENDSHIP GROUPS

Cover photos, user postings and user comments are communicative means of seeking, maintaining and designing social, virtual transnational relations between Greeks and Turks. When it comes to Greek-Turkish relations, highlighting common history as reference criteria in order to create friendship can be counterproductive, because the development of this relationship is generally viewed as emotional zero-sum game with many examples of collective triumphs and traumas, apart from minor “*Heleno- turkist*” positive interpretations of the common Ottoman past (Kitsikis, 1996).

Thus, divided commemorative culture is a bone of contention that continues to engender enmity between the two nations, with the result that Greek-Turkish reconciliation is difficult without coming to terms with their own past and giving up one's own strict attitudes.

³ As a matter of fact it was a Turkish bomber who had attacked the house of Atatürk. In Yassıada court trials it was proved the bombing event was planned by the ruling Democrat Party officials in order to make the world believe Turkey is very keen on Cyprus issue.

⁴ For more information researchers can also take glance into; Greek Metropolitan Bishop Warns against Turkish Series, *Hürriyet Daily Newspaper*, September 18, 2012, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/greek-metropolitan-bishop-warns-against-turkish-series-.aspx?pageID=238&nid=30395> (January 16, 2016); Mathieu Rousselin, Turkish Soap Power: International Perspectives and Domestic Paradoxes, *Euxeinos* 10 (2013), pp. 18-19. The general contribution of Turkish TV series to the Turkish Cultural Diplomacy is evaluated by B. Senem Çevik, Kültürel Diplomasiye Devlet Dışı Aktörler: Türk Sineması ve Dizileri, in Mehmet Şahin and B. Senem Çevik (Ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası and Kamu Diplomasisi*, Nobel, İstanbul 2015, pp. 391-438. (an)

For this reason, in bi-national online friendship communities, debates on current or historical conflicts or the active coping of the common past are explicitly not desired, lest they upset prospective candidates for friendship. One example is the description of, “*ANTONIS YUNAN&TÜRK DOSTLUK GRUBU*”, where the netiquette is explained as such:

Internet as a Bounding Bridge among the Nations

“Welcome. Our group is a Greek-Turkish friendship group. This group shares, discusses and gives information about our common food, drinks, starters, our common Greek and Turkish taverns, history, our holidays, our journeys, our folklore traditions and customs our culture, our music. Postings with political, religious, ethnic content are not allowed. Besides from this, postings should not contain immoral, unpleasant phrases, slogans, abuse and insult. Otherwise, urgent intervention against and deletion of [such postings,] will follow and any user or users will be excluded from the group, if necessary.” (Antonis Yunan Türk Dostluk Grubu, 2015)

Contrary to Indian and Pakistani friendship groups with similar background of historical enmity in which no member is allowed, “*to post something which abuses any country or religion*”, even political or historical debates are explicitly forbidden in Turkish-Greek online communities.

Moreover, some Turkish-Greek communities operate as “*closed groups*”, which restrictively pre-determine the selection criteria for candidates for exclusive group membership. There are some expressions of, “*ΣΥΣΦΙΕΗ ΕΛΛΗΝΟΤΟΥΡΚΙΚΩΝ ΣΧΕΣΕΩΝ-TÜRK ve YUNAN İLİŞKİLERİNİ PEKİŞTİRMEK*” group such as;

“Welcome to our page! This page is for Greek and Turkish friendship, you can upload photos, songs, happenings and anything concerning Turkey and Greece. No swearing is allowed! This is a page for peace and mutual respect. Thank you.”

Also, in Greek; “*Οί Έλληνες και οι Τούρκοι είναι αδελφοί και αδελ φέζτου Αιγαίου*” (“Greeks and Turks are brethren of the Aegean”)⁵

Rapprochement Rather than Reconciliation

For this reason, one should only content oneself with common values and norms, lifestyle and common eating and drinking habits as a great basis for friendship and peace, tolerance and understanding between nations, instead of discussing about politics and the torturous past. For example, Greek culinary is very close to Turkish food culture. Even some of the meal names are the same; for instance, *hünkârbeğendi* (χουνκιαρ μπεγεντι), *fasulye* (φασόλια), *cacık* (τζατζίκι), *dolma* (ντολμαδάκια). Greek language has many Turkish words and phrases, for instance “*χαρτζιλίκι*” (*harcliki*, *harçlık*) mean pocket money especially when children receive money from their families. Even when you enter a Greek restaurant and then rush into a

⁵For more information: These expressions indicate that the Aegean Sea is a collective heritage of both nations, and this partnership is regarded like a brotherhood by the users. Another group *Χαβάρια Της Κωνσταντιναπολις* which has a significant number of members, has a statement such as News from Istanbul. Except this, there are no more statements to be expressed. When we shoot a glance to the sharing in Greek-dominated Greek-Turkish groups (on Facebook) generally Istanbul pictures, Turkish-Greek songs, pictures from well-known actors and actresses from Turkish TV serials like *Muhteşem Yüzyıl (Magnificent Century)*, various pictures from the Black Sea and Cappadocia regions are remarkable where emigrant Greeks in Anatolia used to live before. For example, [t]he former members of Istanbul’s Greek community who had to leave their town and migrate to Greece in the last decades are still very attached to their city of origin. (Beril Dedeoğlu, A new look at Greece, *Today’s Zaman*, December 14, 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist/beri-l-dedeoglu/a-new-look-at-greece_301186.html, 16.01.2016). This sharing of comments or photos does not show the Greeks’ longing to Anatolia, Black Sea and Istanbul, it also demonstrates the religious importance of these places for the Greek-Orthodox people. Namely there are historical and cultural bonds between them. For example, Constantinople was the capitol of the Greek Byzantine Empire until it was conquered by the Ottoman Turks and became Istanbul in 1453. This subject will be discussed in another article on Greek-dominated Greek-Turkish friendship communities. (an.)

Turkish one, you immediately begin to think they have got the same menus. Mostly Greeks and Turks visit each other's restaurants while they are abroad.

Therefore, it is appropriate to stress mutual respect towards national symbols, common eating/drinking habits and leisure behavior such as postings about and pictures of common food, drinks and dining on the beach, besides tourist attractions in Greece and Turkey⁶.

Such online communities are not capable of promoting transnational reconciliation in the Greek-Turkish context, because there is hardly a debate on bi-national problems because of the discussion ban by the administrators (admins) and of the overrepresentation of concerned "White Turks" searching only for like-minded people to get along with rather than reconcile with.

4. POLITICAL CENSORSHIP OVER FRAGILE SUBJECT

Cover photos of facebook groups mainly showing both nations as equal partners and brethren are observed frequently, whereas other pictures of online communities display touristic attractions like the Bosphorus Strait in Turkey or stylish Greek white beach houses with sea view to induce people to visit one another's country.

For example, the cover photo of the group "ΕΛΛΗΝΟΤΟΥΡΚΙΚΗ ΦΙΛΙΑ - TÜRK YUNAN DOSTLUK GRUBU - GREEK&TURKISH FRIENDSHIP" shows two similar doves of peace covered in national flags and holding together an olive branch, which is another symbol of peace and mutual respect by equal treatment of national symbols. The olive figure is also representing a crop raised in both countries' Aegean, Marmara and Mediterranean districts symbolizing the two countries competing with themselves in a peaceful manner. This picture leads to the impression that both countries are also equal partners striving for peace.



Table 2: Doves of Peace in "ΕΛΛΗΝΟΤΟΥΡΚΙΚΗ ΦΙΛΙΑ - TÜRK YUNAN DOSTLUK GRUBU - GREEK&TURKISH FRIENDSHIP"

From Cover Photos to User Posting: Netizens Communicating

Another example is cover photo of the group, "İkiKıyınınİkiYakasıTürkveYunan" which displays both national flags against the background of a sandy beach, on which is written the word "Love", symbolizing the good relationship between nations.

⁶ This subject is to be discussed later in this paper.



Table 3: Both national flags above the word “Love” in “*İkiKıyıninİkiYakasıTürkveYunan*”

Other cover photos stress touristic attractions of both Turkey and Greece to attract interest. For example, the cover photo of the group, “*Turkish & Greek Friendship- İstanbul & Κωνσταντινούπολης*” shows the legendary Bosphorus Strait of Istanbul, while a Greek beach house is used in the community “*İkiYakaBirDeniz Two Shores – One Sea*”.



Table 4: The Bosphorus Strait at the cover photo of İstanbul in “*Turkish & Greek Friendship- İstanbul & Κωνσταντινούπολη.*”



Table 5: Picture of a Greek beach house with a sea view in, “*İkiYakaBirDeniz Two Shores – One Sea*”⁷

Postings of individual users or administrators consist mainly of pictures related with common specialties of Turkish and Greek cuisine, Mediterranean lifestyle (breakfast on yachts or on the beach; alcohol-drinking and exuberant mood in taverns) in order to highlight commonalities. Pictures of Turkish and Greek touristic attractions, Greek- Turkish music

⁷<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ikiyakabirdeniz/>(August 15, 2015).

video clips from “YouTube”, congratulations on religious and national holidays, daily greeting rituals including mutual and direct warm greetings in both languages sometimes with images stress mutual respect. The apolitical perspective espoused in these postings conveys the common idea that the people belonging to the other side are very ordinary people with



common worldviews.

Table 6: Posting with pictures of classic Turkish breakfast on the beach with Turkish tea (çay), simit and açma.



Table 7: Breakfast with orange juice, coffee and ice-cream nearby the sea in front of a yacht with a Greek flag in, “Turkish &Greek Friendship-İstanbul &Κωνσταντινούπολης”

Picture comments demonstrate mutual kind wishes, respect and empathy, while pictures of Turkish çay, simit, rakı, watermelon or yacht with the Greek flag on the beach (Table 7, 8, 9) are used to stress common Mediterranean lifestyle (dining and drinking on the sunny beach) and to evoke fascination and enthusiasm. Such pictures and comments are shared daily and this is a good way to express feelings and desires, which in turn triggers empathy from the audience. The purpose of Greek and Turkish (facebook) groups seems to establish bridges of fraternity between two communities.

In order to show empathy and respect, users of both nations congratulate each other in their national or religious holidays. For example, while Turkish female user Sbnm K. congratulates Christian Greeks on their religious, “Assumption Day” with a Virgin Mary picture in the group “İki Kıyının İki Yarısı Türk ve Yunan”, Greek user and administrator Chrysa A. congratulates Turks on their national “Victory Day (over the Greek occupation forces)” in 1922 with a picture of Atatürk and a Turkish flag in “Turkish & Greek Friendship-İstanbul &Κωνσταντινούπολης” on behalf.

Religious- National Holidays to be Celebrated

Thus, both user groups show esteem to their respective values. Interestingly, secular and patriotic Turks congratulate Greeks on their Christian holidays, whereas Greeks congratulate secular Turks on their national holidays.

According to the concept of “*internalized other*” (Sánchez, 2015: 180-199), “*White Turks*” deny the similarity with indigenous Anatolian Turks and regard them as “*backward-looking*” and “*uneducated*” just like the Greeks view ordinary Turks. “*The ‘barbaric’, ‘undemocrati*” and “*backward*” Turks and their ancestors “*the Ottomans*” in the imagination of the Greeks and their perception of self as the “*opposite: modern, progressive, democratic*” (Heracklides, 2011: 16) leads to the fact that “*White Turks*” who rather identify with modern educated people try to approach Greeks through discourses of self-exclusion from conservative Anatolians by stressing non-Islamic values, secularism and anti-conservatism.

At this point it must be stated that “*White Turk*” type has been labeled as a fragment representing, “*Old Turkey*” by the conservatist press in Turkey. After the ruling JDP confession the party is also “*Laic*” by President Erdogan almost a year ago, it is seen the “*white Turk*” vision has not been changed for the conservatists. By addressing the ruling party has no problems with laicism, “*the white Turks*” still kept accused of being not “*laic*” but “*secularists*” represent the “*shadowy- unpleasant*” face of modernism.

Examples are user postings with pictures of Turkish schnapps or even a posting with a nude woman with tattoos on her tailbone which was sent by a female Turkish user as part of a daily greeting ritual to mixed-sex group members of different religions (see below). Postings between male and female users with such content are certainly not in phase with restrictive Islamic values and norms of gender segregation.

Remaining Conflicts Edges of the Knife

In ordinary rural Anatolian facebook groups, such a posting with a nude woman even of a female user would have been sanctioned by conservative Muslim group members, while people sending such pictures would have been labeled as immoral.

So, these Turkish-Greek online groups seem to form something like a liberal virtual enclave where “*bon vivants*” can communicate freely with each other without having to pretend. Greeks seem to fulfill the expectations. Otherwise secular Turks had to grapple with their Anatolian Muslim conservative fellowmen they get *sick off*.

There are three critical discourse moments displaying the dominance of secularist “*White Turks*” in the Turkish-dominated Turkish-Greek Friendship Communities. The moments can be summarized as follows:

1. One moment is the period where the violence between the PKK and the Turkish army renewed and gave rise to the Turkish nationalist mood in the online groups.
2. The second moment is the anniversary of the liberation of Izmir from Greek occupation in 1922 which was celebrated in some online groups.
3. The third moment was the anniversary of the Istanbul riots against members of the Greek community in Istanbul in 1955 (September 6-7).

Nowadays it seems not only the “*white Turks*” but there are also a bunch of conservatist (Pan- İslamists/ nationalists) citizens in Turkey who are not in favor of the JDP manner over Aegean issue and normally having a more open view for foreigners emerging in Turkey. In the last polls targeting conservatism in Turkey a slight percent of JDP and NMP (Nationalist Movement Party) voters are criticizing both their parties and “*falcon policy*” shown towards

international affairs beginning to show manners similar to “white Turks” attitude rather than general conservatist politics. The percentage of the new- line nationalist and Islamist voters reach among the total share of the conservatist voters sphere will determine the “white Turks” effect on internal affairs. Maybe another “white Turk” attitude will evolve which is this time more conservatist rather than being secular, will contribute to the Turkish- Greek relations.

On the other way there were also examples of Greek solidarity with Turkey in the online communities which are examples of Greek attitude against terrorism and can be used to strengthen bi-national relations. For example, a female Greek user named Eleni T. sent an emotional psalms for the fallen Turkish soldiers to show her solidarity with the Turks:

“... I know there is a wedding of martyrs in the paradise/For a mother it is hard to bury her own son /before seeing his wedding ceremony/ I know there is a wedding of martyrs in the paradise/How can the heart of a father bear/to bury his own son who was seen as his future/I know there is a wedding of martyrs in the paradise/if a child is born as a soldier in a country/it is immortal in this country/ I know there is a wedding of martyrs in the paradise... Regard us as your friend let us share your pain”⁸

Not only Greeks of Greece (Yunan), but also Turkish citizens of Greek origin (Rum) stressed their solidarity with the Turkey. One example is the famous singer Fedon Kalyoncu, a member of the Greek minority in Turkey, wearing a t- shirt with the Turkish national flag and in front of a portrait of Kemal Ataturk as a sign for his support of nationalist and secular Turkey in “*Turk&YunanDostlugu (Turkish& Greek Friendship)*” and a Pro-Turkish statement against the ruling JDP government which is seen as inactive against the PKK. This posting was liked by 294 users:

*“IT IS ENOUGH. WE HAVE PLEDGED TO DIE FOR THIS HOMELAND. IF YOU CANNOT DO IT THEN F*** OFF, IF IT IS ENOUGH, IT IS ENOUGH. BECAUSE OF YOUR GREED OF POWER... HUNDREDS OF SONS BECOME MARTYRS, MY COUNTRY BURSTS INTO TEARS OF BLOOD...”*



Table 8: Pro-Turkish Posting of Greek singer Fedon Kalyoncu

One significant function of these facebook groups is to bind the Turks and the Greeks together, so that both sides may communicate with each other. However, both user groups talk about leisure activities like dining or drinking rather than discussing politics or sensitive topics of the common past of the two nations. Thus, one remarkable point is the general

⁸*Biliyorum şehitlerin düğünü var/ Cennette/Bir babanın nasıl yüreği dayanır/ Geleceğim dediği oğlunu toprağa vermede./ Biliyorum şehitlerin düğününü var cennette./Bir çocuk asker doğarsa bir ülkede/ Şehit olunca ölümsüzdür bu ülkede. / Biliyorum şehitlerin düğünü var cennette. ... Dost bilin bizi acınızı paylaşalım birlikte” (Cennette Düğüne Var)*

omission of tragic events between two nations as a consequence of the ban on political issues. Kind wishes dominate on debates on historical events, pains and tragedies. Apart from that, it seems that there are no common bi-national offline, such as real common activities organized through internet besides postings about culture, food and related matters.

5. CONCLUSION: “EVERY DEBATE IS OUGHT TO BE POLITICAL”

Therefore, these virtual friendship groups are good for “*rapprochement*” at the cultural level rather than “*reconciliation*”, but the rapidly increasing membership in these communities indicate that negative perceptions of the “*other*” can disappear.

Nerveless, both facebook and YouTube serves and operating for the sake of the Turkish-Greek friendship but if a peace channel is opened with “*white Turks*” chatting with social democrat& socialist Greeks some can easily state that “*it is not enough.*” The “*net friendship*” has to be widened by the participation of Turkish central- right and perhaps some nationalist citizens. In the same way Greek conservatists as well as some Orthodox- religious Greeks should be “welcomed” by the admins of both facebook groups for the “acceptation” of the problems in between. To reach up to that level, as Soner Yalçın states, first the path for the “acceptation” of the reality and need to communicate should be opened:

*“From food people consume every day to the sharp political debates it is always the same. We have got the learn the political face all the time. People want to change the world should begin from the first step which can be summarized as ‘to learn.’ Than we have to accept the facts than the last step comes in. It is to fight against prejudices ”*⁹ (Yalçın, 2018)

Therefore some can tell Turks and Greeks separated from each other in the first quarter of 20.th century, may find a civil solution for themselves by getting help from facebook intersection groups, YouTube and other technological communication alternatives. If this interaction reaches a point when all political- social groups meet in some virtual groups and begin to debate in a mature way together, this new communication can force the ordinary citizens of both side to demand for better relationships. Aftermath perhaps the politicians may be forced to build a peace bracket over the tense issues like Cyprus, Aegean costs and the islands which are armored against each other’s. By this way the critical issues between two countries may be solved without the interference of world super powers building their accumulation of interests on the conflict of two states rather than establishing peace.

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⁹ Although Yalçın is speaking of “*food terror*” people are facing with in the 21 st. Century, ge generalizes the item and states in each Political issue it is the learning –acceptation steps which guide people to teh solution. (an.)

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