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THE MISSING 50%: WOMEN IN TRUST-BUILDING, CRISIS DIPLOMACY AND CONFLICT PREVENTION, MANAGEMENT AND RESOLUTION IN GREECE - TURKEY RELATIONS

YVONNI EFSTATHIOU
POLEN TÜRKMEN



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
FOUNDATION** For Freedom.
Turkey



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ABSTRACT

Acknowledging the vital role of women in conflict prevention and given the current urgency in fostering a mechanism to ease tensions between Greece and Turkey, this policy paper argues for 1) the inclusion of Greek and Turkish women and 2) the adoption of a gender dimension, in all diplomatic and grass roots efforts. The paper provides a literature review on the role of women in peace and security, before it examines their participation in the Greek-Turkish context. It will assess women's participation in diplomatic efforts since 1996, examining whether they have occupied a prominent role in government, embassies, or official negotiations. It will also discuss a case study of a female-led peace and security related civil society organization for Turkish-Greek relations to discover best practices in trust-building activities. Ultimately, this policy paper aims to contribute to the discussion on the missing role of women from both Greece and Turkey in official relations. It also provides some concrete recommendations on how to better include women in conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

Keywords: Greece, Turkey, Women, WPS, foreign policy, international relations, international security, crisis, conflict, diplomacy, trust-building, civil society

INTRODUCTION

Greek-Turkish relations have deteriorated in recent years, over, among other issues, migration, hydrocarbons, and a divergent understanding of territorial boundaries. At a time when tensions are high, open channels of communication and diplomacy are ever more urgent. The United Nations Security Council Resolution S/RES/1325 that was adopted on 31 October 2000, reaffirms the important role that women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and prompts all actors to pursue a gender-balanced approach in terms of participation and women's full involvement in all efforts for the promotion of peace and security. To that end, this policy paper addresses the role of females in trust-building, diplomatic and conflict management processes between Turkey and Greece from 1996-2020 and explores ways in which an increase in the female participation in crisis diplomacy can provide added value to future exploratory talks and negotiations between the two countries.

We first provide a brief background to Greek-Turkish relations since 1996. Second, we discuss relevant literature findings to understand why the absence of women mediators in Turkish-Greek relations is both a human rights issue as well as an issue in terms of the effectiveness of trust-building and crisis diplomacy between the two countries. Our third section discusses the findings of our content analysis of over fifty reports, documents, official statements, newspaper articles and images on the exploratory talks between Greece and Turkey since 1996. In our last section, we will provide several policy recommendations for those concerned with Greece and Turkey's bilateral relations and argue that it is not just an increase in women's participation that is needed, but also the inclusion of a gender dimension in all activities pertaining to Greek-Turkish relations.

BACKGROUND: THE CONTEXT

The relations between Greece and Turkey have been bumpy, marked by alternating periods of mutual hostility and reconciliation. Relations deteriorated after the 1950s over several events such as the 1955 Istanbul pogrom, the expulsion of the Istanbul Greeks in the 1960s, the 1974 Cypriot coup d'état, the ongoing Cyprus dispute, the Öcalan incident, the Imia/Kardak military crisis in 1996 and subsequent military confrontations over the Aegean. (Karakatsanis, 2014) Despite a relative normalization after 1999 with the so-called “earthquake diplomacy,” the two neighboring NATO countries continue to be at odds over several issues, with tensions reaching high levels in the past few years. (Yildiz, 2020)

The Aegean disputes, which remain unresolved, are still a major source of tension and conflict in Turkish-Greek relations. The stalemate in reaching a settlement is liable to give rise to new frictions resulting in an acute strain on relations. Greece and Turkey's differences date back to the 1970s, starting with the dispute over the delimitation of the continental shelf (1973) and Greece's desire to extend its territorial sea to 12 nautical miles. (Hurriyet Daily, 2020) Turkey is disputing the extent of Greek national airspace; the Greek regime and sovereignty over islands; the delimitation of the territorial sea; the responsibilities within the Athinai FIR; Greece's jurisdiction within the search and rescue region under Greek responsibility, while it demands the demilitarization of the islands of the Eastern Aegean. The signing of the Turkish-Libyan Memorandum of Understanding in 2019 added another source of contention. (Dalay, 2021) Despite over 60 rounds of exploratory talks and countless meetings and negotiations among the two states' leadership, Greece and Turkey remain far from reaching an agreement, even on the mechanism to resolve them.

BACKGROUND: THE LITERATURE

In academia, feminist security studies have focused on how gender plays a role in shaping foreign and security policy, theories, and ideas. Studies overwhelmingly show that the inclusion of women in trust-building and peace-building processes can lead to more comprehensive and inclusive agreements that can better reflect the needs and concerns of a society, which in turn lead to better peace agreements. Since the adoption of S/RES/1325, worldwide, women have participated in only 9% of peace negotiations. (UN Women, 2012, 4) Between 1992-2019, women represented 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators, 6% of signatories of major peace processes globally. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020)

This lack of female representation is indeed grave and regrettable, given that when women do participate in peace processes, the agreements are more durable and better implemented. (Krause, Krause, Bränfors, 2018) There is also a further link between gender equality, peace, and security. Where there is a greater gender equality and political representation in parliaments, a country is less likely to be involved in wars. (Caprioli 2005, Hudson et al. 2012, Fearon 2002) With greater gender equality, they are also less likely to resolve disputes with other countries through violent conflicts. (Caprioli 2003) There is also evidence that the degree of violence in a conflict decreases when a country is more gender equal and where there are more female leaders. (Caprioli & Boyer, 2001)

Women in Foreign Policy (DPK) in Turkey recently published a paper titled “Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Turkey and Women in Diplomacy: How to Integrate the WPS Agenda in Turkish Foreign Policy” which interviewed a dozen diplomats, ten of whom are still on active duty. They provided important information regarding women's place in the foreign ministry, especially within the context of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Their in-depth interviews with diplomats reflect important findings from the diplomats' experiences.

First, all the female diplomats interviewed agreed that they were “convinced that they are better at starting a dialogue and building communication channels with their foreign counterparts, be they male or female”. (Alemdar and Yinanç, 2021, 9) Nonetheless, what is most striking about Alemdar and Yinanç’s findings is that while increasing female representation, including in top diplomatic positions were indeed important, an increase in percentage does not necessarily help build a gender-sensitive foreign policy. (Alemdar and Yinanç, 2021, 8) They explain that many female diplomats are largely unfamiliar with S/RES/1325 (2000) and therefore do not make use of the WPS agenda, which would require a gender perspective to contribute with a difference from their male counterparts to foreign policy. (Alemdar and Yinanç, 2021, 8) As they have adapted to a patriarchal bureaucratic culture, none of the interviewees “seem to have looked at the issues through a gender lens”. (Alemdar and Yinanç, 2021)

Ultimately, this shows that there are two issues at hand - first: the equal representation of women in Greek and Turkish diplomacy, and second: the inclusion of the gender dimension in both countries’ foreign policymaking.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Having reviewed the literature, we compared the number of women in leadership and ministerial positions in Greece and Turkey, as well as researched the role of women in exploratory talks between the two countries. We found that out of the eight Greek Prime Ministers (Table 1) that were in power from 1996-2020, the period under consideration, not even one was female. Similarly in Turkey (Table 1), out of the nine Prime Ministers that held the post only one was female; Tansu Çiller (1993-1996), who remained in power only for a few months following the Imia/Kardak crisis in 1996.

GREEK PRIME MINISTERS	TERM	TURKISH PRIME MINISTERS	TERM
KYRIAKOS MITSOTAKIS	2019- PRESENT	BINALI YILDIRIM	2016-2018
ALEXIS TSIPRAS	2015-2019	AHMET DAVUTOĞLU	2014-2016
ANTONIS SAMARAS	2012-2015	RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN	2003-2014
PANAGIOTIS PIKRAMENOS	2012-2012	ABDULLAH GÜL	2002-2003
LOUKAS PAPADEMOS	2011-2012	BÜLENT ECEVIT	1999-2002
GEORGE PAPANDEOU	2009-2011	MESUT YILMAZ	1997-1999
KONSTANTINOS KARAMANLIS	2004-2009	NECMETTİN ERBAKAN	1996-1997
KOSTAS SIMITIS	1996-2004	MESUT YILMAZ	1996-1996
		TANSU ÇILLER	1993-1996

Table 1: Greek and Turkish Prime Ministers between 1996 and 2021 [1]

[1]The position of Prime Minister in Turkey ceased to exist in 2018. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is the President of Turkey since 2014 and de facto leader of the country.

This does not suggest that the leaders listed in *Table 1* have not worked alongside women diplomats or advisors. For example, Eleni Sourani is the director of the current Prime Minister's diplomatic office and very much involved in the exploratory talks, meetings, and negotiations, while Alexandra Papadopoulou, Greece's Ambassador to the US is also advising Mitsotakis. Similarly, President Erdogan has been advised by Gülnur Aybet, who is Senior Advisor to the President of the Republic of Turkey and member of the Presidential Security and Foreign Policy Council. Moreover, in the latest round of exploratory talks that took place on 25 January 2021, Evgenia Kanara participated in the meeting as part of the Greek delegation along with Pavlos Apostolidis and Alexandros Kuyu. However, in our content analysis of over fifty open-source documents, articles, and press statements, we found that women were either not included in bilateral talks at all or were a significant minority in the delegation when included. We also found a serious data gap and transparency in the identity of the delegates involved in the negotiations. On the other hand, as the following *Table 2* suggests, both countries had respectively only one female Foreign Minister, a key position that allows them to shape policy and engage in negotiation processes.

The complete historic absence of Turkish female ambassadors in Athens and the identical absence of Greek female ambassadors in Ankara also highlights the lack of women in decision-making and influential positions. Overall, 64 out of 257 (~25%) of the current Turkish ambassadors are women. This number has been increasing steadily over the last two decades; in 2000, there were notably only 8 women ambassadors. (Çetin and Yüzbaşıoğlu, 2021) In contrast, about 36% of the current Greek ambassadors are women, with indication of a positive change over time. (Personal Communication, 2021) This indicates that we are far from achieving full equality in the field of diplomacy and therefore from reaping the benefits suggested by the literature. Yet, it also shows that there is gradual change in the right direction. It is important to remember that while equal numbers in male and female diplomats are important due to the simple matter of human rights, the increase in the number of women ambassadors cannot be said to contribute entirely to the adoption of a gender dimension in the respective diplomatic policies, as pointed out in literature.

Besides these findings, the proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament is 22% in Greece and 17% in Turkey. (World Bank Open Data, 2020) Moreover, in Greece the third strongest party (KINAL) is presently led by Fofi Gennimata, while in Turkey, the IYI Party is led by Meral Aksener. This means that in each country, only one major parliamentary party is led by a woman. The absence of female politicians, policymakers, and negotiators, particularly in Greek-Turkish diplomatic, trust-building and conflict management initiatives is starkly evident and regrettable. Yet, these findings do not indicate that dialogue and the gender dimension in conflict mediation between women from the two countries is lacking. On the contrary, there are several peace and mediation projects created by women networks, such as WINPEACE.

CASE STUDY: GREEK-TURKISH-CYPRIOT MEMBERS OF WOMEN'S INITIATIVE FOR PEACE (WINPEACE)

Having discussed our findings on the role of (or lack of) women in Greece-Turkey external relations, we also examined WINPEACE as a case study of a bottom-up approach to further the WPS agenda in the context of the two countries. WINPEACE was created by Zeynep Oral (Turkey) and Margarita Papandreou (Greece) in the context of the Kardak/Imia crisis in 1996. The crisis involved a small set of islets over which both Greece and Turkey claimed sovereignty. On the night the crisis emerged, Margarita Papandreou was watching television and found that the tone of the talks on what to do was militaristic and "... irresponsibly macho. I kept zapping around the channels, with one purpose only: to find out if any woman had been asked how she felt about the situation, how it should be handled and what it was all about. There was none. They were talking about war! And, who are the true victims of war for god's sake? Women and children." (WINPEACE, 2010, 9)

As a result, Papandreou wrote an open letter to the women of Turkey claiming that “regardless of who is responsible for the recent incidents in the Aegean, we urge you to join us in pressuring our governments to avoid all acts of provocation which might result in an armed conflict”. (WINPEACE, 2010, 10) Alemdar responded to the call and invited women’s organizations in Turkey who were interested in jointly working with Greek women towards certain goals, “mainly for building a peace culture”. (WINPEACE, 2010)

Fifteen women from both countries representing different NGOs met on the Greek island of Kos and, later, in Bodrum in Spring 1998 to launch WINPEACE. Of WINPEACE’s achievements, Papandreou claims that they did not necessarily stop a war from occurring but rather, they “started a process that in large part created a climate that made it impossible for a small incident to lead to a war. This is a great achievement”. (WINPEACE, 2010, 11)

GREEK FOREIGN MINISTERS	TERM	TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTERS	TERM
NIKOS DENDIAS	2019-PRESENT	MEVLÜT ÇAVUŞOĞLU	2015-PRESENT
GEORGE KATROUGALOS	2019-2019	FERIDUN SINIRLIOĞLU	2015-2015
ALEXIS TSIPRAS	2018-2019	MEVLÜT ÇAVUŞOĞLU	2014-2015
NIKOS KOTZIAS	2015-2018	AHMET DAVUTOĞLU	2009-2014
PETROS MOLYVIATIS	2015-2015	ALI BABACAN	2007-2009
NIKOS KOTZIAS	2015-2015	ABDULLAH GÜL	2003-2007
EVANGELOS VENIZELOS	2013-2015	YAŞAR YAKIŞ	2002-2003
DIMITRIS AVRAMOPOULOS	2012-2013	ŞÜKRÜ SINA GÜREL	2002-2002
PETROS MOLYVIATIS	2012-2012	ISMAIL CEM	1997-2002
STAVROS DIMAS	2011-2012	TANSU ÇİLLER	1996-1997
STAVROS LAMBRINIDIS	2011-2011	EMRE GÖNENSAY	1996-1996
DIMITRIS DROUTSAS	2010-2011	DENİZ BAYKAL	1995-1996
GEORGE PAPANDREOU	2009-2010		
DORA BAKOYANNIS	2006-2009		
PETROS MOLYVIATIS	2004-2006		
TASOS GIANNITSIS	2004-2004		
GEORGE PAPANDREOU	1999-2004		
THEODOROS PANGALOS	1996-1999		

Table 2: Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers between 1996 and 2021

Oral clarifies this: “[...] we could point the way to resolution without violence and without threats. We would put all our efforts together to develop non-violent solutions to all problems and tensions. We would do this using a gender analysis and women’s practical problem-solving methods. We would develop an atmosphere of trust and understanding between us.”. (WINPEACE, 2010, 11) This was meant to be achieved through creating common short- and long-term projects and to adopt a different framework of mentality, “In the learning process, we, women from both countries, were trained by experts in conflict resolution”. (WINPEACE, 2010, 11)

The women were also engaged in several joint projects on issues such as the reduction of arms in Turkey and Greece, reassessing the common history, peace education, contribution of non-governmental institutions in conflict resolution and agro-tourism. (WINPEACE, 2010) These statements from Papandreou and Oral speak volumes regarding the amount of expertise and training that these women acquired in trust-building and mediation, throughout their activities. While their efforts were mostly a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach from politicians and governments, the amount of media activity generated by the group did not go unnoticed. Ultimately, two women parliamentarians from Greece and Turkey met in Ankara under the initiative of WINPEACE and signed a “Memorandum of Understanding” committing themselves to a first step of maintaining “a dialogue between our political parties and parliamentarians at all levels, starting from women politicians”. (WINPEACE, 2010, 54) These efforts can be analyzed as not only valuable for promoting peace, identifying points of cooperation and in political lobbying for better relations, but also in demonstrating that trust-building between the two communities, even during a crisis context, is possible. WINPEACE also demonstrates that there already are many educated women from both communities in matters of peacebuilding and mediation which remain on the sidelines of diplomatic structures.

While WINPEACE emerged in the context of the Imia/Kardak crisis, in the recent escalations between the two countries over the Eastern Mediterranean, there was also a joint call for peace from women in Greece and Turkey initiated by a women’s rights activist, Gülseren Onanç. The call expressed the women’s’ “determination to strive for peace in the Aegean, enhance shared culture, and embrace solidarity and friendship despite the patriarchal system that threatens the world” and was signed by more than 350 women. (BIA News Desk, 2020) In contrast to WINPEACE, the call for peace did not garner attention from political representatives or large news organizations. Yet, the sheer number of signatures from the two countries’ women demonstrated once again their contempt for the recent escalations and militarization, and their willingness to resolve differences through constructive dialogue and peaceful means.

It can therefore be said that women activists and civil society groups do aim to prevent conflict between Greece and Turkey and to build bridges across the Aegean communities via the use of a gender dimension. It strongly appears that there is a recognition by women’s organizations that the current state of affairs is heavily masculine, macho and militarized. Yet, there appears to be a continuing mutual desire for peaceful dialogue and mediation across women’s communities on both sides. It also appears that there is a lot of knowledge and experience that civil society organizations, who already appreciate the value of WPS agenda, can bring to the policy world. The trust-building and mediation activities have thus far remained mostly as informal bottom-up initiatives on the sidelines of formal diplomacy structures. Respective governments, organizations and other members of civil society that focus on Greece - Turkey relations must take note of the achievements of WINPEACE, particularly in conflict resolution. For example, the Greek-Turkish Forum (GTF), the invite-only “one-and-a-half-track diplomacy initiative” only involves four women members out of twenty-five members. (Greek-Turkish Forum, 2020) It is therefore clear that there is room for improvement on all fronts.

Emphasizing the effectiveness of involving female mediators and acknowledging that equal representation is also a human rights issue is the responsibility of all who work in Greece - Turkey relations, as Soner Cagaptay from The Washington Institute for Near East Policy highlighted:



Having analyzed the role of women in Greece-Turkey relations, we will now provide some policy suggestions based on the literature and our discussion.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More female diplomats should be included in the external relations and mediation efforts between the two countries.

- a. Through increasing the number of diplomatic training programs and ensuring they have a minimum quota of 50% female trainees.

b. Through posting the first women ambassadors to Athens and Ankara.

c. Through agreeing to include more balanced delegations in forthcoming meetings including military delegations and in exploratory talks.

- i. This would have to be accompanied by increased transparency in the identity of the delegations to the exploratory talks, as the lack of transparency has resulted in a data gap.

- ii. Evidence suggests that the issue is not a lack of expert women, but rather a lack of inclusion. Therefore, agreeing on a gender balance for future meetings would be a low-hanging fruit.

- iii. Future meetings should be encouraged to include considerations for gender issues.

2. An effort to adopt a gender dimension and the WPS agenda at the respective foreign ministries could be initiated.

- a. This could be an area of official cooperation between the two countries where they learn from best practices elsewhere in Europe and receive joint training from experts in feminist foreign policy and organizations like PeaceWomen[2], Mediterranean Women Mediators Network [3] and WINPEACE, on how to mainstream gender into their institutional practices.

- i. In addition, the expertise of women involved in joint peace organizations in Cyprus could also be included, such as those who participated in Hands Across Divide and the Women's Civic Initiative for Peace in Cyprus[4].

- ii. Building a "policy channel" between these civil society organizations and the policymakers would facilitate the share of knowledge and expertise.

[2] PeaceWomen facilitates the monitoring of the United Nations System, with a focus on the Women Peace and Security Agenda by engaging in advocacy and providing outreach and capacity building in order to support local gendered conflict analysis and expertise (PeaceWomen, 2021).

[3] The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network's aim is to fulfill the need to increase the number of women involved in peacemaking efforts. Its geographic scope is the Mediterranean area with members including both Greece and Turkey (Womenmediators.net, 2021).

3. A Parliamentary group could be created: it could fall under a regional umbrella (eg. Eastern Mediterranean) that will cater for the present inability to forge a parliamentary friendship group [5].

a. Parliamentarians could facilitate women NGOs in Greece and Turkey to be more involved in peace-making efforts.

b. Parliamentarians in both countries could jointly build a policy channel between civil society and policy-makers, exchanging policy ideas and practices on women's issues in both countries.

4. Civil society organizations, the media, the policy world, and academia working on Greece - Turkey relations must also do its part:

a. By ensuring more equal female participation and membership.

b. By bringing the gender dimension into their frames of reference (rather than seeing it as a secondary consideration).

c. By encouraging media organizations to invite more women experts to prime-time television programs both in Greece and Turkey that discuss the state of bilateral relations. For instance, experts should reject participating in panels that do not include a minimum of 40% female experts and should be vocal about this issue on their social media platforms.

CONCLUSION

While increasing the presence of women in foreign policy and diplomacy within the two nations is a desirable goal, it is also important not to forget the importance of improving gender mainstreaming in foreign policy in both countries. That is because it is one thing to increase women's participation in the external relations between the two countries and another to adopt a gender dimension.

While civil society organizations like WINPEACE can provide this dimension and conduct important political activism and develop trust-building projects, they mostly remain on the fringes of diplomacy and mediation, and therefore in key decision-making structures. Without institutionalization, they are also dependent on external support, finance, and facilitation.

It also appears that the policy world could utilize and learn much from the established knowledge and expertise prevalent in women's organizations in both countries. This is important not only because the lack of representation of women is a matter of human rights, but also because as evidence strongly suggests, women's inclusion is beneficial to facilitating peace, preventing conflicts and in trust-building between communities.

Moreover, while there has been an increase of female ambassadors in both Turkey and Greece over time, they may be adopting patriarchal behaviors, rather than reshaping policy by contributing a gendered lens. Therefore, while women's participation needs to increase, so too does training on the WPS agenda and its importance for mediation, in both countries. Civil society, academia and the policy world involved in Greece - Turkey relations also need to actively ensure equal participation from women to adopt and support the WPS agenda, and to reform the patriarchal culture prevalent in the fields of diplomacy, conflict prevention, management, and resolution. However, above all, what has become most evident throughout our research is that there is a serious lack of data tracking the gender representation of delegations from both sides in bilateral meetings, without which many problems pertaining to equal representation cannot be identified, discussed, and resolved.

[4] Hands Across Divide is an autonomous women's group founded by a Greek Cypriot woman peace activist and a Turkish Cypriot woman peace activist. It is a bi-communal NGO of Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot women who work towards building a culture of peace in Cyprus. The women involved were trained by conflict resolution experts to create a joint future together (Peace-Cyprus, 2021a). Likewise, Women's Civic Initiative for Peace in Cyprus was formed in 1999 to defend and contribute towards peace in Cyprus by creating a culture of peace through joint work on conflict resolution and strengthening relationships across women's communities (Peace-Cyprus, 2021b). Both of these organisations have extensive experience in training women in conflict management and resolution, and in trust-building capacities. Given this experience and the geographic, historic and cultural similarities of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot women's organisations with Greek and Turkish women's organizations, there is a possibility and clear value in facilitating a transfer of knowledge in terms of best practices.

[5] To date, the lack of a Greek-Turkish Friendship group can be traced to the Casus Belli 1995 passed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1995.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Y V O N N I E F S T A T H I O U

Yvonne Efstathiou currently serves as Political Officer at the EU Delegation to the United Arab Emirates. She has previously worked at the EU Delegation to Madagascar and as a Defense Analyst at the International Institute for Strategic Research (IISS) in London. Her portfolio focused on naval military capabilities and security in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the MENA region. Yvonne specializes in the European defense cooperation package (PESCO, EDF, CARD), EU-NATO relations and the Turkish Defense Industry. She regularly comments on defense and military issues for international media outlets such as the BBC and Defense News. She has studied History and Political Science and holds a master's degree in Security Studies from University College London (UCL).

P O L E N T Ü R K M E N

Polen Türkmen is currently a research associate at an independent think-tank, A Path for Europe, and a Blue Book trainee at the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments of the European Commission. She holds a master's degree in International Affairs with a specialization in 'security and sustainability' from the Hertie School and a bachelor's degree in Philosophy from the University of St Andrews. She has previously worked as a student/research assistant at the Hertie School's Jacques Delors Centre and All European Academies (ALLEA) and interned at the Global Public Policy institute (GPPi). Her research interests include European foreign and security policy, EU-Turkey-NATO relations, strategic intelligence, and disinformation.

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Kadir Has University
Kadir Has Caddesi
Cibali / Istanbul
34083 Turkey

Tel: +90 212 533 65 32, ext. 4910
Fax: +90 212 631 91 50

Email: cies@khas.edu.tr
Website: <http://cies.khas.edu.tr>
[Facebook.com/CIESatKHAS](https://www.facebook.com/CIESatKHAS)
Director: Prof. Dimitrios Triantaphyllou

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N A U M A N N
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F R E E D O M**

Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom
Turkey Office
Cumhuriyet Cad. Belvu Apt. No:107/2
Elmadag - Istanbul
34437 Türkiye

Tel: +90 212 219 72 53
Fax: +90 212 219 70 63

Email: Turkey@freiheit.org
Website: turkey.fnst.org
[facebook.com/FNFTurkey](https://www.facebook.com/FNFTurkey)
Director: Beate Apelt

