

# **Negotiating Collective Memory, History, and Nationhood in Trade Fairs: An Economic and Cultural Reappraisal of Greek-Turkish Relations in the interwar Period**

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## **Abstract**

This study foregrounds Greek-Turkish relations through the prism of trade fairs in which both nations negotiated their culture, economies, and histories in the interwar period. Although the Treaty of Lausanne ended the armed conflict between them, the two states could not settle their diplomatic problems until 1930. In the 1930s, however, interconnected interests bound Greece and Turkey together. The increased relations between them through fairs gained momentum particularly after the Balkan Pact of 1934. The Thessaloniki and Izmir Fairs became two of the main foci and loci of the Greek-Turkish rapprochement. The fairs facilitated not only commercial relations between the two countries but also the development of advertising, sports activities, and tourism. Both high-ranking officials, including governors, inspector-generals, and ministers, and civilians, such as businessmen, journalists, and tourists, participated in trade fairs hosted by Greece and Turkey. The interactions between the two countries via fairs took place also outside Greece and Turkey. The officials tried to present a unified image to the fury of their common adversaries.

Word Count: 9350

## **1) Introduction**

This study intends to contribute to the studies of Greek-Turkish relations in the interwar period with a non-traditional study. The bilateral relationship between two nations in this period has been well covered in traditional terms. A considerable body of literature in Greek, Turkish, and Western European languages has focused on population exchange, national security issues, and minority rights. While other issues led to bewilderment between the two countries, the overall effect of fairs on relations was positive. By building on this scholarship, this presentation discusses that diplomatic and non-diplomatic aspects of the relationship were intimately interconnected. While resolving disputes and entering an era of harmonious relations via state-to-state dialogues, Greece and Turkey increasingly made use of

trade fairs to complement diplomatic efforts. Although the Izmir and Thessaloniki fairs were first and foremost commercial meetings, they opened up new diplomatic, economic, and cultural avenues between Greece and Turkey. These fairs brought together not only mayors, ministers, and governors but also artists, businessmen, journalists, and sportsmen from Greece and Turkey.

In elaborating on Greek-Turkish relations as experienced through trade fairs and consulting archives and libraries in Greece, France, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the presentation argues that commercial gatherings influenced the formation of collective memory in Greece and Turkey and shaped the way in which both nations defined themselves in relation to each other in the interwar period. It identifies this multifaceted process occurring in several stages as ‘fair diplomacy.’ Fairs in and outside these two states increased diplomatic setbacks in the 1920s when relations between the two countries suffered a serious rift. In parallel with the rapprochement, fairs became one of the avenues in which Greeks and Turks interacted in the early-to-mid 1930s. Links between the Greek and Turkish fairs grew sharply, reaching their climax in the late 1930s.

The historiography of interwar fairs has been predominantly concerned with the Great Powers at the international fairs and how fairgrounds became battlegrounds for fascism, liberalism, and socialism.<sup>1</sup> This paper discusses that the connection between Greece and Turkey through fairs was not only part of the global trends but also exemplified the diplomatic use of fairs in the interwar period. Whereas other examples of trade diplomacy had limitations in terms of geographical scope and longevity, Greeks and Turks expanded the fair diplomacy even into commercial gatherings in other countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Karen A. Fiss, *Deutschland in Paris: the 1937 German Pavilion and Franco-German Cultural Relations* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Yale University, 1995); Nicholas J. Cull, “Overture to an Alliance: British Propaganda at the New York World’s Fair, 1939-1940,” *Journal of British Studies* 36 (1997): 325-54; Anthony Swift, “The Soviet World of Tomorrow at the New York World’s Fair, 1939,” *Russian Review* 57 (1998): 364-79; Matthew G. Stanard, “Interwar Pro-Empire Propaganda and European Colonial Culture: Toward a Comparative Research Agenda,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 44(1) (2009): 27-48; Danilo Udovički-Selb, “Facing Hitler’s Pavilion: the Uses of Modernity in the Soviet Pavilion at the 1937 Paris International Exhibition,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 47(1) (2012): 13-47; Kari Shepherdson-Scott, “Conflicting Politics and Contesting Borders: Exhibiting (Japanese) Manchuria at the Chicago World’s Fair, 1933–34,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74(3) (2015): 539-564; Robert H. Kargon, Karen Fiss, Morris Low, and Arthur P. Molella (Eds.) *World’s Fairs on the Eve of War: Science, Technology, and Modernity, 1937–1942* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015); Andrew C. Herman, “Fascists at the Fair: Political Resistance at the 1933–1934 Chicago World’s Fair,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 33(2) (2020): 198-215.

## 2) The mid-to-late 1920s

The Lausanne Treaty was the main factor in shaping the Greek-Turkish relations in the mid-to-late 1920s. It put an official end to the Greek-Turkish war and provided the international recognition of the Turkish sovereignty. Eleftherios Venizelos, the leader of the Greek delegation, evinced “readiness realistically to accept a new situation.”<sup>2</sup> In Lausanne, Greece and Turkey also signed the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations, which led to the transfer of 355,000–400,000 Muslims to Turkey and 1,221,489 Greek Orthodox to Greece.<sup>3</sup> The Lausanne Treaty led to the homogenization of populations and heavily influenced the construction of new, national identities in both countries.<sup>4</sup> Although the governments promised to compensate refugees in return for their properties, the shortcomings of the exchange soon became plain. Lack of planning and settlement of refugees in a very short period of time created problems during the implementation of the convention.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Llewellyn Smith, “Venizelos’ Diplomacy, 1910–23: From Balkan Alliance to Greek–Turkish Settlement,” in Paschalis M. Kitromilides (Ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos - The Trials of Statesmanship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 134-192 at 135.

<sup>3</sup> For the historiography on the exchange, see Fahriye Emgili, “Türk Yunan Nüfus Mübadelesi Hakkındaki Araştırmalara Bir Bakış,” *Tarih ve Günce* 1(1) (2017): 29-54.

<sup>4</sup> There is a sizeable literature that explores the role of the population exchange on the construction of new, national identities in Greece and Turkey: Dimitri Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Populations and its Impact on Greece* (Paris: Muton, 1962), 125-140; İbrahim Erdal, *Mübadele, Uluslaşma Sürecinde Türkiye ve Yunanistan (1923–1925)* (Istanbul: IQ Yayınevi, 2006); Yaprak Gürsoy, “The Effects of the Population Exchange on the Greek and Turkish Political Regimes in the 1930s,” *East European Quarterly* 42(2) (2008): 95-128; Gökçe Bayındır Goularas, “1923 Türk-Yunan Nüfus Mübadelesi ve Günümüzde Mübadil Kimlik ve Kültürlerinin Yaşatılması,” *Alternatif Politika* 4(2) (2012): 129-146; Tuncay Ercan Sepetçioğlu, “İki Tarihsel ‘Eski’ Kavram, Bir Sosyo-Kültürel ‘Yeni’ Kimlik: Mübadele Nedir, Mübadiller Kimlerdir?,” *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 180 (2014): 49-84; Yeşim Bayar, “In Pursuit of Homogeneity: the Lausanne Conference, Minorities and the Turkish Nation,” *Nationalities Papers* 42(1) (2014): 108-125; Vasilis Koutsoukos, “Tó plaísio efarmogís tis profygikís enkatástasis kaí apokatástasis kaí i epivolí ethnotikís kaí chorikís omoioyéneias stí Thrakikí eparchía (1922-1930),” *Bulletin of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies* 19 (2015): 161-190; Pınar Şenışık, “1923 Türk-Yunan Nüfus Mübadelesi: Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Modern Devlet Pratikleri ve Dönüşen Kimlikler,” *Studies of Ottoman Domain* 6(10) (2016): 83-119; Anastasia Filippidou, “The Impact of Forced Top-Down Nation Building on Conflict Resolution: Lessons from the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey,” *Nationalities Papers* 48(1) (2020): 144-157.

<sup>5</sup> Stephan P. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), 618-719; Alexandra Yerolympos, “Inter-war Town Planning and the Refugee Problem in Greece: Temporary ‘Solutions’ and Long-Term Dysfunctions,” in Renée Hirschon (ed.), *Crossing the Aegean - An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York: Berghahn, 2003), 133-143; Ercan Çelebi, “Mübadillerin Yunanistan’daki Mal Kayıtları ve Muhtelit Mübadele

The population exchange was not the only problem between Greece and Turkey in the 1920s. The irredentist policies of Greece under the leadership of Theodoros Pangalos turned the Greek-Turkish problems for the worse.<sup>6</sup> Although both governments attempted to solve their diplomatic issues through the agreements of Ankara (1925) and Athens (1926), the agreements brought no real gain for either side.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, despite the population exchange, there were sizeable Muslim and Greek Orthodox communities in Greece and Turkey, respectively. Minority issues continued to be an irritant in Greek-Turkish relations.<sup>8</sup> The relationship between the Turkish government and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, especially the election of the Patriarch, further contributed to the antagonism between Greece and Turkey in the late 1920s.<sup>9</sup>

Within this backdrop, the Greek and Turkish governments tried to fortify their national identities and to strengthen patriotism by othering each other. They embraced newfound identities as they distanced themselves from the Ottoman past. The Thessaloniki Fair of Greece and the Izmir Fair of Turkey served this purpose. The Thessaloniki Fair was constructed on the former ‘Turkish’ grave.<sup>10</sup> Greek politicians endeavored to prove that

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Komisyonu Tasfiye Talepnameleri,” *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 5(12) (2006): 35-45; Ellinor Morack, “Claiming ‘Imagined Property.’ Tasfiye Talebnâmes and the Lost Material World of Migrants after the Greek-Turkish Population Exchange of 1923–24,” *Diyâr* 1(1) (2020): 129-152.

<sup>6</sup> Harry J. Psomiades, “The Diplomacy of Theodoros Pangalos: 1925-1926,” *Balkan Studies* 13(1) (1972): 1-16; Antonis Klapsis, “Attempting to Revise the Treaty of Lausanne: Greek Foreign Policy and Italy during the Pangalos Dictatorship, 1925–1926,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 25(2) (2014): 240-259; Gözde Emen, “Turkey’s Relations with Greece in the 1920s: The Pangalos Factor,” *Turkish Historical Review* 7(1) (2016): 33-57.

<sup>7</sup> Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities*, 513-545; Antonis Klapsis, “Cutting the Gordian Knot: The Implementation of the Lausanne Convention for the Exchange of Greek-Turkish Populations and the Ankara Convention of 10 June 1930,” *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook*, 26/27 (2010/2011), 83-101 at 88-92; Bestami S. Bilgiç, “Atatürk Döneminde Türkiye-Yunanistan İlişkileri, 1923-1938,” *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 31(91) (2015): 1-28 at 11-14.

<sup>8</sup> Vermund Aarbakke, *The Muslim Minority of Greek Thrace* (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bergen, 2000); Dimitris Kamouzis, *Greeks in Turkey - Elite Nationalism and Minority Politics in Late Ottoman and Early Republican Istanbul* (London: Routledge, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Harry Psomiades “The Ecumenical Patriarchate under the Turkish Republic: The First Ten Years,” *Balkan Studies* 2 (1961): 47-70; Ahmet Özgiray, “Türk-Yunan İlişkileri 1923-1930,” *Türk Kültürü* XXVI(300) (1988): 195-206; Mustafa Sıtkı Bilgin, “Atatürk Döneminde Türkiye’nin Balkan Diplomasisi (1923-1930),” *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* XX(60) (2004): 804-813; Bestami S. Bilgiç, “Atatürk Döneminde Türkiye-Yunanistan İlişkileri, 1923-1938,” *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 31(91) (2015): 1-28 at 4-11.

<sup>10</sup> Devin Naar, *Jewish Salonica - Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 242.

Thessaloniki was not a ‘Turkish’ or ‘Jewish’ but a ‘Greek’ city.<sup>11</sup> The presence of refugees from Asia Minor in the city contributed to this process. They played a central role in the promotion of new identities through fairs by having individual stands and showcasing their works to their new compatriots. A pavilion was reserved exclusively for tobacco, a product that refugees played a key role in its production.<sup>12</sup> The Greek Refugee Settlement Commission developed a special pavilion for the fair where the agricultural and industrial production of the refugees was on display.<sup>13</sup> According to the French newspaper *Le Gaulois*, the fair demonstrated the “miracle of the refugees” (*Le miracle des réfugiés*).<sup>14</sup> The inclusion of refugees and the promotion of their works in the fair often reflected a desire to include the refugees in the national community.<sup>15</sup> Through pavilions and exhibits by refugees, the organizers of the fair and governmental authorities tried to convey messages that refugees played a large role in the economic recovery of the region.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, while the Thessaloniki Fair became an inter-Balkan trade hub, Turkey was the only neighbor of Greece that did not participate in the Thessaloniki Fair in the 1920s.<sup>17</sup>

On the other side of the Aegean Sea, the Izmir Fair had similar nationalist functions for the Turkish government. Izmir was one of the cities with sizeable refugees from Greece

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<sup>11</sup> The increased antisemitism of the 1920s resulted in the Campbell Riot in Thessaloniki in 1931. For details, see Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 384.

<sup>12</sup> *Le Messager d’Athènes*, 22-23 October 1926, 1.

<sup>13</sup> “Résultats de la IIe Foire Internationale de Salonique,” *Europe Orient-Extrême-Orient*, 1 April 1928, 3. The commission worked under the auspices of the League of Nations to actualize the settlement of Greek refugees from Bulgaria, Russia, and Turkey (John Hope Simpson, “The Work of the Greek Refugee Settlement Commission,” *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 8(6) (1929): 583-604).

<sup>14</sup> “En Grèce,” *Le Gaulois*, 26 October 1926, 3.

<sup>15</sup> The indigenous population in Greece welcomed refugees initially but hostilities towards refugees grew over time (Georgia Eglezou, “Refugees in Greece (1922): The Attitude of the Press towards Their Arrival,” *Ethnologia Balkanica*, 13 (2009): 75-90).

<sup>16</sup> For the role of refugees on the Greek economy, see Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Populations and its Impact on Greece*, 143-167; Elisabeth Kontogiorgi, *Population Exchange in Greek Macedonia: The Forced Settlement of Refugees 1922-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 265-329; Theocharis Grigoriadis and Dimitrios Moschos, “Farewell Anatolia: Refugees & the Political Economy of New Greece,” Available at SSRN 3735503 (2020).

<sup>17</sup> “Inter-Balkan Trade,” *Financial Times*, 25 January 1927, 5; Eliot Grinnel Mears, *Greece Today - The Aftermath of the Refugee Impact* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1929), 104.

who could not transfer all their properties.<sup>18</sup> The control of the city by Greek forces and its capture by the Turkish army shattered the local economy in Izmir.<sup>19</sup> The idea of a fair at Izmir went back to 1923 when the Izmir Economic Congress was taking place. The Fair of 1923 was a very small exhibition, but it became a prototype of the fairs in Izmir for the rest of the century. Four years later, in 1927, the governor of Izmir Kâzım Pasha [Dirik] gathered a commission to organize another fair at Izmir, which was to be bigger in size than that of 1923. Although Turkey's largest fair was mainly about business, it became a political symbol as well. The early history of the fair can be evaluated within the nationalist spirit of the early republican period.<sup>20</sup> The government wanted to introduce the world the idea that Izmir, which had been dominated by foreigners and non-Muslims in terms of economic affairs, became a 'Turkish' city after 1923.<sup>21</sup> This idea formed one of the central themes of the Izmir Fair.<sup>22</sup> The fair was named September 9 in the 1920s after the day when Turkish forces took control of Izmir. Although the Izmir Fair did not take place from 1928 to 1933, it symbolized the construction of a new, national identity in Republican Turkey.

As trade fairs in Greece and Turkey reflected and contributed to the simultaneous processes of Hellenization and Turkification, fairs abroad helped Greeks and Turks spread anti-Turkish and anti-Greek messages, respectively. While touting their own products in the international exhibitions, each side was in pursuit of a competitive advantage over another. At the same time, Greek and Turkish merchants competed against each other to market their products, exemplified by the Oriental tobacco, at international fairs. According to Turkish journalists, Turkey was losing this war of representation abroad. The editorial piece by Habip

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<sup>18</sup> Kemal Arı, "1923 Türk-Rum Mübadele Anlaşması Sonrasında İzmir'de 'Emval-i Metruke' ve 'Mübabil Göçmenler'," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 6(18) (1990): 627-658; Ellinor Morack, "Refugees, Locals and "The" State: Property Compensation in the Province of Izmir Following the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange of 1923," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 2(1) (2015): 147-166; Elif Yıldizer Özkan and Hayat Zengin Çelik, "The Settlement of the Emigrants in İzmir between 1923-1930 according to the Treaty of Lausanne and Liquidation Requisitions," *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 20(41) (2020): 579-621.

<sup>19</sup> Kemal Arı, "Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı'nın Bitiminde İzmir'in Genel Ekonomik Durumu," *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1(3) (1993): 29-46.

<sup>20</sup> Yüksel Pöğün-Zander, "Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminin Önemli Bir Tanığı Olarak İzmir Fuarı," in *Cumhuriyet'in Zamanları Mekanları İnsanları* Elvan Altan Ergut and Bilge İmamoğlu (eds.) (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2010), 142.

<sup>21</sup> Biray Kolluoğlu, "Excesses of Nationalism: Greco-Turkish Population Exchange," *Nations and Nationalism* 19(3) (2013): 532-550.

<sup>22</sup> Jülide Tunaseli, *Love for 70 Years: Izmir Fair* (Izmir: Metropolitan Municipality of Izmir, 2001), 1-2.

Edip [Törehan] in *Cumhuriyet* was illustrative of this perception. Törehan shared his experience of the Leipzig Fair in 1929. Törehan regarded Greece as the biggest rival to Turkish exports. According to him, Greek exhibitors did not only promote their own products but also made propaganda against Turkish exhibits. Pointing to the collaboration between the Greek Chamber of Commerce in Berlin and the Greek government, Törehan wanted Turkish businessmen and politicians to do the same.<sup>23</sup> The managers of business organizations in Turkey made similar claims that Greeks successfully marketed grapes and figs to China and Japan although these two countries had not been previously familiar with either fruit.<sup>24</sup> Fairs not only reflected but also increased tensions between Greece and Turkey, let alone playing a constructive role in improving relations, in the 1920s.

### 3) The Beginning of Fair Diplomacy (1930-1936)

The role of fair diplomacy began to change with the June 1930 Convention, which marked a watershed and initiated the Greek-Turkish rapprochement in the 1930s.<sup>25</sup> After he became the prime minister in 1928, Eleftherios Venizelos radically changed Greek foreign policy since his concerns over national interests in the Balkans and the Aegean arose. He expressed a desire for improved relations with Ankara to limit the ambitions of Italy that vied for influence in the region.<sup>26</sup> Venizelos thought that Greece could not trust the Great Powers to secure its independence and territorial integrity.<sup>27</sup> Instead, he attempted to strengthen the diplomatic ties between Greece and its neighbors. Nonetheless, unresolved territorial issues between Greece and Bulgaria, the mistreatment of the Greek minority in Albania, and the Yugoslav intentions to become a regional hegemon made Turkey Greece's only neighbor that

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<sup>23</sup> Habip Edip [Törehan], "Beynelmilel Sergiler ve Biz," *Cumhuriyet*, 9 April 1929, 1, 3. He later repeated his criticism: Habip Edip [Törehan], "Yerli Mallar Sergisi," *Cumhuriyet*, 19 August 1929, 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> Hakkı Nezihî, *Mallarımızın Kıymetlerini Muhafaza Tetbirleri ve Kıymetlendirilmesi* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1931), 4.

<sup>25</sup> Damla Demiröz, *Savaştan Barışa Giden Yol: Atatürk-Venizelos Dönemi Türkiye-Yunanistan İlişkileri* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2007), 75-96.

<sup>26</sup> Iphigenia Anastasiadou, "O Venizelos kai to Ellinotourkiko Symphono Philiias tou 1930," in Thanos Veremis and Odysseas Dimitrakopoulos (Eds.), *Meletimata gyro apo ton Venizelo kai tin Epokhi tou* (Athens: Ekdoseis Philippotē, 1980), 309-426; Iphigeneia Anastasiadou, *O Venizelos kai to Ellēnotourkiko Sumphōno Philiias tou 1930* (Athens: Filipotēs, 1982); Bestami S. Bilgiç, "Atatürk Döneminde Türkiye-Yunanistan İlişkileri, 1923-1938," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi* 31(91) (2015): 1-28 at 14-17.

<sup>27</sup> Prokopis Papastratis, "Apó ti Megáli Idéa sti Valkanikí Énosi," in George Th. Mavrogordatos and Chrēstos Ch. Chatzēiōsēph (Eds.), *Venizelismos kai Astikos Eksynchronismos* (Heraklion: Panepistēmiakes Ekdoseis Krētēs, 1992), 417-38.

“appeared satisfied with the territorial status quo.”<sup>28</sup> Turkey responded to Greek professions of friendship. Like Greece, it was threatened by Italian encroachments in the Eastern Mediterranean. Similarly, both countries were resentful of the Bulgarian growing presence in the Balkans. The common threat from Bulgaria provided further ample incentive for cooperation between Greece and Turkey.<sup>29</sup> On 30 October 1930, Greece and Turkey signed three treaties regarding economic, military, and political issues, which was accompanied by calls for working together. Venizelos, who came to Ankara for the treaties, spoke of the immediate need for cooperation on economic relations.<sup>30</sup>

The Greek-Turkish relations in the immediate aftermath of the June 1930 Convention were not free from problems. Nationalism, as well as bitter memories of wars, occupations, and the population exchanges, did not cease with the rapprochement. The rapprochement sparked a public outcry among refugees from Asia Minor, who had been supporters of Venizelos, but he remained popular with them eventually.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the Great Depression hit both countries hard and laid the foundation for economic nationalism in both countries though Turkey adopted protectionist policies earlier than Greece.<sup>32</sup> Economic nationalism in Turkey adversely affected many Orthodox Christian producers.<sup>33</sup> Despite these

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<sup>28</sup> Ioannis D. Stefanidis, “Reconstructing Greece as a European State: Venizelos’ Last Premiership, 1928–32,” in Paschalis M. Kitromilides (Ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos - The Trials of Statesmanship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 193-233 at 217-220.

<sup>29</sup> Melek Fırat, “Yunanistan’la İlişkiler,” in Baskın Oran (Ed.), *Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar, Cilt -1* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), 325-356 at 351.

<sup>30</sup> “Gazi Mustafa Kemal,” *Cumhuriyet*, 28 October 1930, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Ioannis D. Stefanidis, “Reconstructing Greece as a European State: Venizelos’ Last Premiership, 1928–32,” in Paschalis M. Kitromilides (Ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos - The Trials of Statesmanship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 193-233 at 209-211; Antonis Klapsis, “Cutting the Gordian Knot: The Implementation of the Lausanne Convention for the Exchange of Greek-Turkish Populations and the Ankara Convention of 10 June 1930,” *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 26/27 (2010/2011), 83-101 at 96.

<sup>32</sup> For details, see Mark Mazower, *Greece and the Inter-War Economic Crisis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 296-297; Christine Agriantoni, “Venizelos and Economic Policy,” in Paschalis M. Kitromilides (Ed.), *Eleftherios Venizelos - The Trials of Statesmanship* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 284-318 at 306; Adnan Türegün, “Policy Response to the Great Depression of the 1930s: Turkish Neomercantilism in the Balkan Context,” *Turkish Studies* 17(4) (2016): 666-690.

<sup>33</sup> Alexis Alexandris, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974* (Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1983), 105-112; Maria Christina Chatziioannou and Dimitris Kamouzis, “From a Multiethnic Empire to Two National States: The Economic Activities of the Greek Orthodox Population of Istanbul, ca. 1870–1939,” in Darja Reuschke, Monika Salzbrunn, and Korinna Schönhärl (eds.), *The Economies of Urban Diversity - The Ruhr Area and Istanbul* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 132-136.



and similar other developments, such as the Cyprus Crisis of 1931, that could have damaged the rapprochement, both governments pledged to cooperate with each other in the following years.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the radical change in the course of Greek-Turkish relations caught the attention of foreign papers. For example, *The New York Times* wrote that “If Turk and Greek, a few years ago utterly and bitterly estranged, could now be friends, it would seem that the whole world might be at peace.”<sup>35</sup>

The Greek-Turkish rapprochement altered the balance of power in the Balkans and grew to include other countries in the region.<sup>36</sup> Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia came together for two conferences in Athens and Istanbul in which participants discussed diplomatic, economic, and cultural issues.<sup>37</sup> Bulgaria left the meetings but other countries maintained their efforts to sustain regional collaboration. Thessaloniki hosted a Balkan meeting in February 1931. These conferences brought limited economic benefits to Thessaloniki because of tensions between the Balkan countries other than Greece and Turkey.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the council of the conference decided that national groups should take action for a wide representation of the Balkan states at the Thessaloniki Fair of 1931 to facilitate a rapprochement among the Balkan states. During his speech after the conference, Charisios Vamvakas, the mayor of Thessaloniki, stated that “from the horrific slaughter of the world war arose one more factor for the realization of this [peaceful] ideal. This factor is the new free and republican Turkey, free from the imperialist aims of ancient Turkey.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Enis Tulça, *Atatürk, Venizelos ve Bir Diplomat Enis Bey* (Istanbul: Simurg Yayınları, 2003), 48-56; Bestami Sadi Bilgiç, “The Cyprus Crisis of October 1931 and Greece’s Reaction: The Place of Turkey and Turkish Cypriots in the Eyes of Greek and Greek Cypriot Leadership,” *Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika* 04 (2005): 91-101.

<sup>35</sup> “When Greek Meets Turk,” *The New York Times*, 7 January 1933, 14.

<sup>36</sup> Aptülâhat Akşin, *Atatürk’ün Dış Politika İlkeleri ve Diplomasisi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1991), 256-257; Thanos Veremis, *Greece’s Balkan Entanglement* (Athens: Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy, 1995), 22.

<sup>37</sup> For more on Pan-Balkanism in this period, see Suzana Vuljevic, *The Crisis of Spirit: Pan-Balkan Idealism, Transnational Cultural-Diplomatic Networks and Intellectual Cooperation in Interwar Southeast Europe, 1930-1941* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2020).

<sup>38</sup> I.K. Hassiotis, “First after the First and Queen of the Worthy: In Search of Perennial Characteristics and Landmarks in the History of Thessaloniki,” in I.K. Hassiotis (ed.), *Thessaloniki: Queen of the Worthy - History and Culture* (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1997), 11-39 at 30.

<sup>39</sup> “À Salonique,” *Figaro*, 2 February 1931, 3; “Le Conseil de la Conférence balkanique a terminé ses travaux,” *Le Petit Journal*, 2 February 1931, 3; “Balkan,” *Milliyet*, 3 February 1931, 2.

The management of the fair sent an invitation to Turkey and published the fair's catalog in Turkish.<sup>40</sup> The Turkish government did not want to participate officially, citing the low budget of the foreign ministry and time limitation but it encouraged chambers of commerce to participate.<sup>41</sup> Turkish producers decided to take part in the Thessaloniki Fair in 1931. Greek newspapers welcomed their participation.<sup>42</sup> The Turkish government appointed Ahmet Tevfik, who was in Thessaloniki for his own business, to become the Turkish representative at the Thessaloniki fair. He was expected to hire a national pavilion that would exhibit Turkish commodities produced by both private and public enterprises. He visited the fair and sent a report to Turkish Prime Minister İsmet İnönü on his observation on the fair. According to Ahmet Tevfik, there were six Turkish merchants who participated in the fair on their own accounts. All of them, Ahmet Tevfik claimed, properly represented Turkish products, with the main emphasis being on Turkish tobacco.<sup>43</sup> As fair diplomacy came to fruition, exhibitions of smaller scopes, such as the agricultural exhibition in Lesbos, contributed to it.<sup>44</sup>

Private and public actors worked hand in hand to facilitate fair diplomacy and normalize ties between Greece and Turkey. Fair diplomacy received further momentum with the Balkan Entente of 1934, which was motivated by the Bulgarian threat.<sup>45</sup> Greece and Turkey increased their relations by signing new treaties. Greek and Turkish Ministers of Economy, Georgios Pasmazoglou and Celâl Bayar, both of whom played a key role in the conduct of fair diplomacy, advanced talks on a potential trade deal and signed a treaty in Ankara in November 1934.<sup>46</sup> Businessmen in both countries complemented official efforts and played a key role since the beginning of the rapprochement. When both countries concluded a commercial convention in Ankara in 1930, Greek officials were followed by a

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<sup>40</sup> Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivleri (Prime Ministry's Republican Archives; hereafter BCA), 30.18.1.2.22.54.17, 15 April 1931, 5.

<sup>41</sup> BCA, 30.18.1.2.22.54.17, 11 July 1931, 2; BCA, 30.18.1.2.22.54.17, 27 July 1931, 7.

<sup>42</sup> *Hestia*, 3 February 1931, 1.

<sup>43</sup> BCA, 30.10.0.0.172.193.14, 15 September 1931.

<sup>44</sup> "Ziraat Sergisi," *Yeni Mersin*, 3 July 1933, 1. A Greek floating exhibition that carried industrial samples from Greece visited Izmir and Istanbul in 1934 ("Bir Yunan Seyyar Sergisi İstanbul'a Gelecek," *Yeni Mersin*, 14 May 1934, 2).

<sup>45</sup> Mustafa Türkeş, "The Balkan Pact and its Immediate Implications for the Balkan States, 1930–34," *Middle Eastern Studies* 30(1) (1994): 123-144.

<sup>46</sup> Ahmet Şükrü [Esmer], "Türk-Yunan Ticaret Anlaşması," *Milliyet*, 12 November 1934, 1.

cohort of businessmen, such as M. Christidis of the Athens Chamber of Commerce.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the Thessaloniki Chamber of Commerce gave the Greek government a detailed opinion on a number of trade agreements with Turkey.<sup>48</sup> Business leaders participated in the Balkan conferences as well.<sup>49</sup> During the meeting in Istanbul in 1933, the conference committee engaged in a vibrant discussion about how to encourage periodic meetings of chambers of commerce and the active participation of Balkan countries in the Thessaloniki Fair.<sup>50</sup> These ties flourished into a major relationship via business organizations, such as the Balkan Chamber of Commerce, that represented the business sectors of participant countries.<sup>51</sup>

Such organizations made efforts to facilitate fair diplomacy, and potential economic and cultural cooperation extended to trade fairs.<sup>52</sup> In 1934, Turkey participated in the Thessaloniki Fair officially for the first time. Greek newspapers expressed their satisfaction when they learned that Turkey had decided to officially participate in.<sup>53</sup> Türkofis, an influential public institution, assisted in arrangements for Turkish exhibitors. Meetings held in the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce for the preparations. The chamber sent samples of Turkish export products.<sup>54</sup> As the rapprochement took place gradually, so did the collaboration via fairs. The Turkish government was not happy with the Turkish representation in 1934. Even though Minister of Economy Celâl Bayar planned to go to Thessaloniki for the fair, Prime Minister İsmet İnönü wanted him not to take part in the fair since the incomplete pavilion might tarnish the prestige of Turkey in Greece.<sup>55</sup> Contrary to

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<sup>47</sup> The British Foreign Office (FO) 424/273, E 4664/463/44, 21 August 1930, 47.

<sup>48</sup> Evangelia A. Varella, "To Emporiko kai Viomichaniko Epimelitirio Thessalonikis kata ta Chronia tou Mesopolemou," *Scientific Annual of the Thessaloniki History Center of Thessaloniki City Council - Fourth Volume* (Thessaloniki: Center of the Historical Studies, 1994), 251-286 at 277.

<sup>49</sup> "Balkan Konferansı," *Vakit*, 8 October 1931, 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Bulletin Périodique de la Presse Grecque*, 27 May 1933, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Joseph Kerner and Harry Nicholas Howard, *The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente, 1930-1935: a Study in the Recent History of the Balkan and Near Eastern Peoples* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), 159.

<sup>52</sup> "Sergiler, Panayırlar," *T.C. İstanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Mecmuası*, June 1933, 251-252.

<sup>53</sup> *Athinaika Nea*, 15 July 1935, 1.

<sup>54</sup> "Selânik Sergisine Gönderilecek İhraç Eşyamız," *Milliyet*, 7 September 1934, 3.

<sup>55</sup> BCA, 30.10.0.0.173.194.1, 5 September 1934, 1. The prestige was a main concern in the following years as well (BCA, 30.18.1.2.78.72.6, 16 August 1937, 4-5).

expectations, visitors in Thessaloniki enjoyed Turkish exhibits from public and private enterprises.<sup>56</sup> The Turkish pavilion and the Izmir Chamber of Commerce were awarded the gold medals.<sup>57</sup> After seeing this success, the Turkish government lost no time in beginning its preparations for 1935, starting with the publications of the brochures and advertisements for the Thessaloniki Fair.<sup>58</sup> Chambers of commerce sent samples.<sup>59</sup> Turkish exhibits received an enthusiastic reception from Greek spectators in 1935 as well.<sup>60</sup>

At a time when relations between Greece and Turkey were at their most cordial, economic exchange initiatives benefited from a number of high-profile events that highlighted the bond between the two countries. The management of the Thessaloniki Fair invited Behçet Uz, the mayor of Izmir. Although the Thessaloniki Fair ran concurrently with the Izmir Fair, Uz accepted the invitation and embarked on a trip to Athens and Thessaloniki where he was scheduled to focus on studying the organization of the fair and intensifying bilateral trade between Greece and Turkey.<sup>61</sup> Since Behçet Uz was the leader and architect of the Izmir Fair, his attendance at the Thessaloniki Fair was of cardinal importance for the Greek-Turkish fair diplomacy. In the same year, Greece participated in the Izmir Fair officially for the first time. 50 firms from Greece sent samples to Izmir.<sup>62</sup> Minister of Economy Celâl Bayar spent a “long time” visiting the Greek pavilion.<sup>63</sup> The fairs reflected the growing ties between Greece and Turkey in the first half of the 1930s. They continued to play an increasingly significant role in the remainder of the decade.

#### **4) The Climax of Fair Diplomacy (1936-1939)**

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<sup>56</sup> “Selânik Panayırında,” *Türk Sözü*, 19 September 1934, 3; “Selânik Budinler Panayırında Türk Pavyonu,” *Savaş*, 21 September 1934, 1; “Selânik Panayırında Türk Mallarına Rağbet,” *Urfada Millî Gazete*, 24 September 1934, 2.

<sup>57</sup> “İzmir Ticaret Odası Madalya Aldı,” *Türk Sözü*, 20 November 1934, 3.

<sup>58</sup> “Selânik Sergisindeki Pavyonumuz İçin,” *Ulus*, 7 August 1935, 3.

<sup>59</sup> “Odamızın Ellinci Dönüm Yılına Tes’id Törenindeki Hitabe,” *Mersin Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Aylık Bülteni* 1(1) (1936): 4.

<sup>60</sup> “Selânik Sergisinde,” *Ekekon*, 12 September 1935, 2.

<sup>61</sup> “Şarbay Atınadan Geldi,” *Yeni Asır*, 20 September 1935, 1, 4.

<sup>62</sup> İzmir Belediyesi, *Arsuulusal Beşinci İzmir Panayırı Genel Rapor* (İzmir: Dereli Basımevi, 1935), 30-31.

<sup>63</sup> “İzmir Panayırı,” *Türk Sözü*, 28 August 1935, 3.

Ioannis Metaxas, who came to power through coup d'état, continued the efforts of previous Greek leaders to improve ties with Turkey.<sup>64</sup> At the opening of the Thessaloniki Fair, Metaxas thanked participant countries, and Turkish newspapers perceived his speech as a testimony of good faith toward Turkey.<sup>65</sup> In 1937, Mehmet Fazlı Güleç, the governor of Izmir who was born in Lesbos, went to Thessaloniki upon invitation.<sup>66</sup> King George II, Prince Paul, Greek ministers, and the governor of Thessaloniki visited the Turkish pavilion (Figure 1).<sup>67</sup> Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Konstantinos Zavitsianos came from Athens to Thessaloniki to attend the reception given by Turkey in his honor.<sup>68</sup> Kâzım Dirik, general-director of Eastern Thrace and a leading promoter of the Izmir Fair, was the highest-level official from Turkey to visit the Thessaloniki Fair. Dirik met the fair management and Greek officials for a dinner in his honor.<sup>69</sup> Officials and businessmen from both countries attended (Figure 2).<sup>70</sup> Dirik shared his experience with the Turkish public and championed the Turkish-Greek friendship.<sup>71</sup>

The government's support further increased in 1938.<sup>72</sup> Kâzım Dirik went to the Thessaloniki Fair one more time. After he returned, Dirik wrote a report to the Prime Minister. He expressed full appreciation for the welcoming attitude of Greek civic and military leaders. According to Dirik, the chair of the Thessaloniki Fair made the following remarks in an address to Dirik and the Turkish delegation:

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<sup>64</sup> Dimitri Kitsikis, *Historia tou Hellēnotourkikou chōrou apo ton E. Venizelo ston G. Papadopoulo (1928-1973)* (Athens: Vivliopōleion tēs Hestias, I.D. Kollarou, 1981), 67-84.

<sup>65</sup> "Selânik Panayırının Açılışı," *Anadolu*, 9 September 1936, 8.

<sup>66</sup> "İzmir Valisi," *Anadolu*, 19 September 1937, 3. He wrote a report to the government upon his return (BCA, 30.18.1.2.78.72.6, 25 September 1937, 6). Turkish Foreign Minister Tevfik Rüştü Aras went to Athens in early September.

<sup>67</sup> "Selânik Fuarı," *Ulus Sesi*, 27 September 1937, 1.

<sup>68</sup> "Selânik Fuarında," *Olca*, 27 September 1937, 4; "Selânik Panayırında Türk Pavyonu Büyük Bir Alâka ve Takdir Gördü," *Ulus*, 8 November 1937, 2.

<sup>69</sup> "General Kâzım Dirik," *Ulus Sesi*, 26 September 1937, 2; Serap Tabak, *Kâzım Dirik Paşa, 1881-1941: Askeri, Mülki Hayatı ve Şahsiyeti* (Çorum: Karam, 2008), 241.

<sup>70</sup> "Kâzım Dirik'in Selânik Sergisini Ziyareti," *Ekekon*, 25 September 1937, 4.

<sup>71</sup> "Selânik Fuarında Türk ve Pavyonu ve General Kâzım Dirik'in Ziyaretleri," *Trakya* (September 1937): 28-30.

<sup>72</sup> "Selânik Beynelmillel Panayırında Türk Teşhircilerine Kolaylıklar," *İstanbul Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Mecmuası*, September 1938, 377.

Today, the only goal of the Greeks and Turks is to unite. [...] You're at home. And when we go to Turkey, we will be at home. There are no more barriers between the two countries. There is, of course, a border that separates us but there is a soul - the soul of our people - that unites us, the soul attached to a common ideal.<sup>73</sup>



**Figure 1:** Kâzım Dirik and Greek Ministers in the Turkish pavilion (1937)<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> BCA, 30.18.1.2.78.72.6, 29 January 1938, 7-10.

<sup>74</sup> "Selânik Fuarında Türk ve Pavyonu ve General Kâzım Dirik'in Ziyaretleri," *Trakya*, September 1937, 28-30.



**Figure 2:** Dinner in honor of Kâzım Dirik at the Thessaloniki Fair (1936)

The Izmir Fair complemented the role of its Thessaloniki counterpart. The mayor of Izmir and the manager of the fair Behçet Uz stated that the pavilion of “ally Greece” was the best one of the foreign pavilions.<sup>75</sup> The Greek pavilion proved a big hit with Turkish journalists and the general public.<sup>76</sup>

In these close-knit networks of trade fairs, businessmen played a pivotal role. As they maintained their collaboration under the body of the Balkan Chamber of Commerce,<sup>77</sup> Greek and Turkish businessmen formed the Greek-Turkish Chamber of Commerce in Athens in 1936 to facilitate commerce between the two countries.<sup>78</sup> The chamber and the Greek-Turkish Trade Office regularly met in the following years and called for closer cooperation between Greece and Turkey.<sup>79</sup> They played a decisive role in the formation of a Greek-Turkish joint-stock company in 1938.<sup>80</sup> With economic relations between Greece and Turkey thriving, more and more Greece and Turkish businessmen participated in the Izmir and Thessaloniki Fairs,

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<sup>75</sup> “Yirmi Ağustos Akşamı,” *Yeni Asır*, 30 July 1938, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Adnan Birget, “1938 İzmir Fuarı,” *Son Posta*, 20 August 1938, 8; “Sekizinci İzmir Fuarı,” *Yeni Asır*, 25 August 1938, 1.

<sup>77</sup> “Balkan İktisat Konseyinin Tebliği,” *Kurun*, 28 March 1937, 6.

<sup>78</sup> “Kıymetli Bir Eser,” *Yeni Asır*, 30 August 1936, 7; “Türk-Yunan Ticareti,” *Yeni Mersin*, 10 September 1936, 2.

<sup>79</sup> “Türk - Yunan Ticaret Ofisinin Atina Ticaret Odasında Yaptığı Senenin Umumi Toplantısı,” *Yeni Asır*, 16 July 1938, 3; Şakir Çeçen, “Atina Mektupları,” *Akşam*, 25 July 1938, 5.

<sup>80</sup> “Ekonomi,” *Yeni Asır*, 16 December 1938, 2.

respectively. Both businessmen enjoyed the support of governments, which allotted national pavilions for the display of Greek and Turkish goods.<sup>81</sup> Türkofis and chambers of commerce organized the collection of Turkish exhibits from every corner of Turkey.<sup>82</sup> In 1936 and 1937, the Turkish pavilion became the first among all other national pavilions in terms of prizes that it received.<sup>83</sup> In addition, Sümerbank, a nationwide public enterprise in Turkey, and Tariş, a large union of cooperatives, received golden medals.<sup>84</sup>



**Figure 3:** The Use of Fair Prizes in Classified Ads<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup> BCA, 30.18.1.2.68.71.18, 27 August 1936, 1; BCA, 30.18.1.2.68.79.10, 3 October 1936, 1; BCA, 30.18.1.2.84.79.11, 6 September 1938, 1-2; BCA, 30.18.1.2.88.81.18, 25 August 1939, 1.

<sup>82</sup> BCA, 30.18.1.2.78.72.6, 16 August 1937, 6.

<sup>83</sup> "Dış Sergileri," *Yeni Mersin*, 16 Ağustos 1936, 2; "Selânik Fuarı," *Halkın Sesi*, 28 August 1936, 4; "Selânik Panayırı Dün Açıldı," *Ulus*, 7 September 1936, 6; "Selânik Sergisi," *Zaman*, 20 September 1937, 2.

<sup>84</sup> "Birinci Olduk," *Yeni Asır*, 6 October 1936, 3; "Tariş," *Anadolu*, 10 November 1936, 2.

<sup>85</sup> "Aşçıbaşı Marka," *Halkın Sesi*, 23 December 1938, 3; "Aşçıbaşı Marka," *Halkın Sesi*, 28 January 1939, 3.



The awards and prizes at such international meetings were not only a gesture of respect and friendship but also brought practical benefits for producers. Although public authorities were more interested in public diplomacy, commercial interests were at the forefront of the private enterprises' minds. Indeed, many merchants reaped the benefit of fairs since they were able to sell their products. Mutual benefit from this bilateral cooperation continued even after the end of the fairs. The firms that sent their samples and products received orders from national and foreign customers.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, as one can see from classified ads, prize-winners used their awards and prizes to promote their products in the years that followed (Figure 3).

As a result of such benefits, the number of Greek and Turkish businessmen who took part in the fairs increased. A large Turkish business delegation, including several managers of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce, went to the Thessaloniki Fair in 1938 (Figure 4). In the same year, 62 firms from different parts of Greece sent exhibits to Izmir.<sup>87</sup> 14 firms of them won gold medals.<sup>88</sup> In 1939, 48 firms participated in the Izmir Fair.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, businessmen hoped that the growing cordiality between Greece and Turkey through fairs would facilitate the transfer of knowledge.<sup>90</sup> Journalists pointed to this connection.<sup>91</sup> For example, the Greek pavilion at the Izmir Fair was centered on tourism and propaganda in 1938.<sup>92</sup> Kostas Dimitriadis, the head of the Greek Tourism Office, talked to Turkish journalists and cited Turkey's tourism sector as an example.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> "Selânik Panayırı Kapandı," *Kurun*, 2 October 1937, 3.

<sup>87</sup> *VIIIinci İzmir Enternasyonal Fuarı Kataloğu: 20 Ağustos-20 Eylül* (Izmir: İzmir Belediyesi Fuar Bürosu, 1938), 117-123.

<sup>88</sup> *İzmir Enternasyonal Fuarı* (Izmir: İzmir Enternasyonal Fuarı, 1938), 204-205.

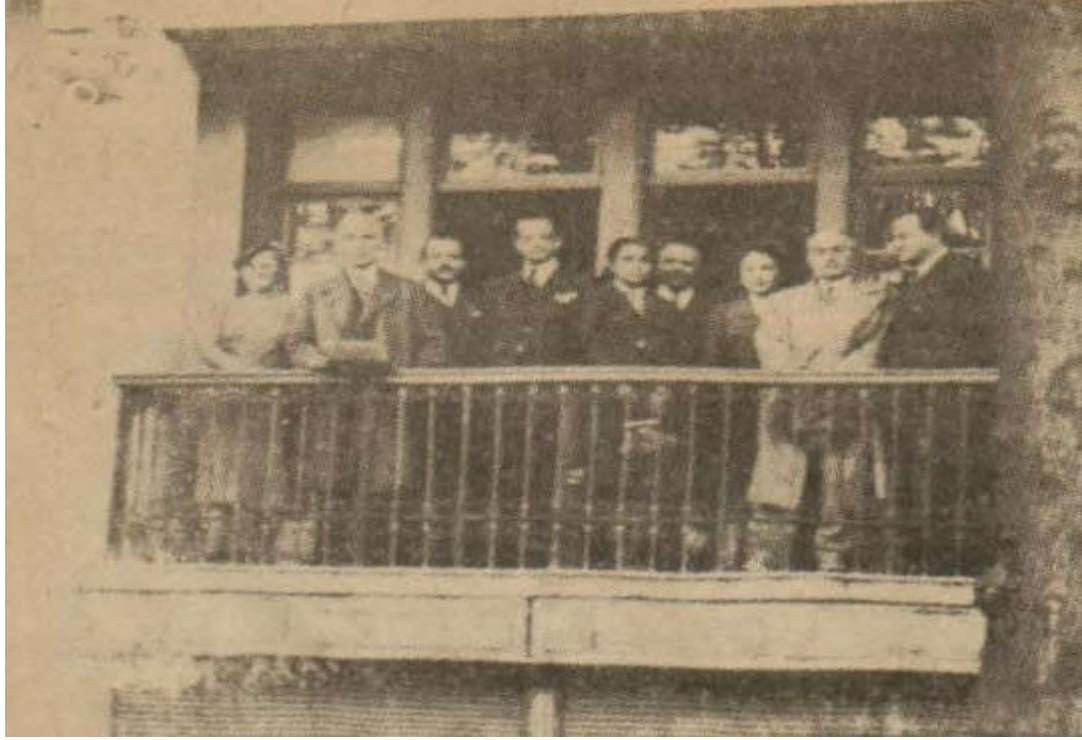
<sup>89</sup> *Enternasyonal İzmir Fuarı 1939 Kataloğu* (Izmir: Meşher Basımevi, 1939), 155-163

<sup>90</sup> According to Kemal Arı, the population exchange led to the transfer of knowledge between these two countries (Kemal Arı, *Büyük Mübadele - Türkiye'ye Zorunlu Göç (1923-1925)* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2000), 177-181).

<sup>91</sup> For example, see Adnan Bilget, "Enternasyonal Fuarda," *Yeni Asır*, 26 August 1937, 6.

<sup>92</sup> Adnan Bilget, "1938 İzmir Fuarı," *Son Posta*, 20 August 1938, 8.

<sup>93</sup> "1938 İzmir Fuarı," *Son Posta*, 20 August 1938, 8.



**Figure 4:** Turkish businessmen who visited the Thessaloniki Fair (1938)<sup>94</sup>

In effect, tourism exemplified the interconnected aspects of different forms of diplomacy between Greece and Turkey. Both governments recognized the tourism potential of the fairs, embraced it as part of a strategy for fair diplomacy, and loosened travel restrictions. For example, for those who wanted to participate in this fair, the Turkish government reduced the cost of transportation that only the wealthy could afford in the past.<sup>95</sup> The government also gave foreign currency and diplomatic passports for free to the attendees,<sup>96</sup> a privilege that mostly civil servants could enjoy. Likewise, Greece and Turkey created an array of intertwined activities that made fairs more attractive for both nations. Apart from fair diplomacy, other forms of diplomacy were also at work. Sports, especially those within the context of the Balkan Games,<sup>97</sup> increased the popularity of the fairs. For example, Greek and Yugoslav wrestlers came to Izmir for the Fifth Balkan Wrestling Tournament. Turkish authorities and newspapers welcomed their “Greek brothers” (Figure 5).

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<sup>94</sup> “Selânik ve Belgrad Panayırına Giden Heyet Döndü,” *Kurun*, 29 September 1938, 4.

<sup>95</sup> *T.C. İzmir Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası Mecmuası* 8(4) (March-April 1933): 130.

<sup>96</sup> BCA, 30.18.1.2.56.58.8, 19 July 1935.

<sup>97</sup> For details on the political aspect of the games, see Penelope Kissoudi, *The Balkan Games and Balkan Politics in the Interwar Years 1929–1939: Politicians in Pursuit of Peace* (London: Routledge, 2013).

There was a significant increase in the number of tourists who visited the fairs in the late 1930s. Although the decision of the Greek government to limit foreign currency hampered attendance from Greece who considered visiting the fair in 1936, 252 Greeks visited the fair.<sup>98</sup> Next year, the Greek-Turkish Chamber of Commerce made efforts to lure more visitors.<sup>99</sup> A Greek tour group headed to Izmir. After seeing the Izmir Fair, they went to Istanbul and Marmara Archipelago.<sup>100</sup> In 1938, the fair committee published catalogs in Greek.<sup>101</sup> The fair tempted tourists from Mainland Greece and Lesbos to Izmir, including refugees from Asia Minor.<sup>102</sup> The number of Greek tourists reached its climax in 1939. A group of 400 Greeks came to the fair. The Greek-Turkish Chamber of Commerce played an intermediary role between them and the fair management. The Greek government gave them foreign currency.<sup>103</sup> In addition, with the permission of the Greek government, a horde of Turkish-speaking tourists from Komotini visited the Izmir Fair.<sup>104</sup> Although the total number of such people remained limited, the arrival of Greek and Turkish tourists within the context of trade fairs in a period when mass tourism did not exist was significant.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> “Memleket Haberleri,” *Son Posta*, 25 September 1936, 5.

<sup>99</sup> “İzmir Fuarına İştirak Edecekler İçin,” *Ulusal Birlik*, 25 May 1937, 1.

<sup>100</sup> “Fuarı Görmek İçin,” *Tan*, 1 August 1937, 8. The tour cost Δρ 8,900 (approximately TL 100), an amount that was far beyond what an average Greek could afford.

<sup>101</sup> *Izmir Diethnis Ekthesis* (Izmir: İzmir Enternasyonal Fuarı, 1938).

<sup>102</sup> “Midilliden Mübadil Yunanlılar Fuara Geliyorlar,” *Kurun*, 3 August 1938, 8.

<sup>103</sup> “Fuar Sahasında Romanya için Büyük Pavyon Yapılıyor,” *Yeni Asır*, 24 June 1939, 6.

<sup>104</sup> “Garbî Trakya Türkleri,” *Yeni Asır*, 20 August 1939, 4.

<sup>105</sup> Muhittin Birgen, a famous journalist, recommended a “Balkan passport” that would facilitate movements of people between the Balkan countries (Muhittin Birgen, “Hergün,” *Son Posta*, 21 August 1938, 2).



**Figure 5:** Turks and Greek Wrestlers at the Izmir Fair (1937)<sup>106</sup>

The fairs also brought a chance for several people, who had been forced to immigrate because of the state-sponsored population exchange, to visit their place of birth, but the othering process maintained even in the 1930s. While the interests of Greece and Turkey dovetailed, and fairs contributed to play a positive role, a historical chasm continued to separate Greeks and Turks even in the late 1930s. First, there were contesting interpretations of the shared history because of the decades of mutual hostility. For example, Greeks considered the Balkan Wars as a victory, Turks saw it as a national tragedy. Whereas Turks commemorated the Greek-Turkish Wars in a positive way, Greeks saw it as the Great Catastrophe (*η Μεγάλη Καταστροφή*).<sup>107</sup> Likewise, the population exchange and the subsequent forced migration left bitter memories in the collective memory of Greeks and Turks.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> “Güreşler,” *Anadolu*, 17 September 1937, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık, “Comparative Narratives of ‘Catastrophe:’ Ottoman Perception of Balkan Wars and Greek Perception of Asia Minor Campaign,” in Mustafa Türkeş (Ed.), *The Centenary of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913): Contested Stances = 100. Yılında Balkan Savaşları (1912-1913): İhtilaflı Duruşlar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2014), 477-492; William Stroebel, “Distancing Disaster: Trauma, Medium, and Form in the Greco-Turkish War and Population Exchange,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 32(2) (2014): 253-285.

<sup>108</sup> There is an immense body of literature on this common memory: Alice James, “Memories of Anatolia: Generating Greek Refugee Identity,” *Balkanologie* 5 (1–2) (2001): 2–8; Michael Varlas, “I diamórfosi tis prosfygikís mnímis,” in Giörgos Tzedopoulos (Ed.), *Pera apo tēn Katastrophē: Mikrasiates Prospyges stēn Hellada tou Mesopolemou* (Athens: Hidryma Meizonos Hellenismou, 2003), 148-174; Feryal Tansuğ, “Memory and Migration: The Turkish Experience of the Compulsory Population Exchange,” *Bulletin of the Centre of Asia Minor Studies* 17 (2011): 195–216; Aytek Soner Alpan, “But the Memory Remains: History, Memory and the 1923 Greco-Turkish Population Exchange,” *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 9 (2012): 199-232; Haris Exertzoglou, “Children of Memory: Narratives of the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the Making of Refugee Identity in Interwar Greece,” *Journal of*

What is more, both states promoted the official historical narrative and commemorated significant moments in the host nations' histories in the ways of fairs. For instance, the Izmir Fair of 1936 was of monumental importance, for it was on Kültürpark, which remains to this date a key symbol of the city of Izmir. Having inspired by the Soviet model, Kültürpark became a symbol of Kemalist modernity.<sup>109</sup> The area that Kültürpark was established had been at the heart of urban life prior to the First World War. The area was heavily damaged by a fire during the Turkish War of Independence, which adversely affected the shared memory of Greeks and Turks.<sup>110</sup> The construction of Kültürpark on the area and the opening of the Izmir Fair there gave the message that Izmir was vibrant enough to create a glittering fairground and recovered from the devastation of the Greco-Turkish War.

The Izmir Fair contained further references to the common memory. Even the choice of the names of entrances to the fair was intended to be symbolic. One gate was "9 Eylül" (September 9) that symbolized the beginning of the Turkish control of Izmir during the Turkish War of Independence. More importantly, the main entrance of the new fairground at Izmir was named "Lausanne" in 1936, as a clear reference to the Treaty of Lausanne and the Turkish victory over the Greek army. Turkish newspapers enticed their readers with references to Ottoman capitulations and their ending by the Treaty of Lausanne.<sup>111</sup> In addition to its symbolic gates, the Izmir Fair had an individual pavilion that was devoted to the historical development of Izmir in 1939. Titled as "Izmir of Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow" (*Dünkü Bugünkü Yarınki İzmir*), the pavilion gave a visual and historical journey of Izmir.

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*Modern Greek Studies* 34(2) (2016): 343-366; Georgios I. Kritikos, "Silencing Inconvenient Memories: Refugees from Asia Minor in Greek Historiography," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2020): 1-16; Merih Erol, "Between Memories of Persecution and Refugee Experience: The Armenians in Greece in Aftermath of the Greek-Turkish War," in Konstantinos Travlos (ed.), *Salvation and Catastrophe: The Greek-Turkish War, 1919-1922* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020), 341-368; İlhan Zeynep Karakılıç, "Social Memory of the Greek-Turkish Population Exchange in Daily Life: a Case Study of a Tobacco-producing Village in Turkey," *Sociologia Ruralis* 61(1) (2021): 96-115; Thanos Koulos, "Nationalism and the Lost Homeland: The Case of Greece," *Nations and Nationalism* (2021): 487-489.

<sup>109</sup> Zeynep Kezer, *Building Modern Turkey State, Space, and Ideology in the Early Republic* (Pittsburgh: the University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 136.

<sup>110</sup> Zeese Papanikolas, "To a Greek Bootblack," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 20-21 (1994-1995), 65-86 at 74; Biray Kolluoğlu-Kırlı, "The Play of Memory, Counter-Memory: Building Izmir on Smyrna's Ashes," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 26 (2002): 1-28; Leyla Neyzi, "Remembering Smyrna/Izmir: Shared History, Shared Trauma," *History & Memory* 20(2) (2008): 106-127.

<sup>111</sup> "Dokuz Eylül Panayırına İştirak Ediniz," *Yeni Mersin*, 22 August 1933, 3; "Beynelmilel 4.üncü 9 Eylül İzmir Panayırılarını Görmeğe Hazırlanınız," *Niğde*, 9 July 1934, 3; "İzmir Fuarı Bu Yıl Daha Cazip!," *Haber*, 25 August 1938, 1.

The objective of the pavilion was to illustrate the difference between ‘Ottoman Izmir’ and ‘Turkish Izmir.’<sup>112</sup>

Although the fairs seem to be poignant reminders of bitter memories at first, both politicians and intellectuals tried to work together to achieve the overall goals of sustainable peace and not to alienate each other. The Greek government “refrained from endorsing memorials or other public events that could provoke Turkish reactions” in this period.<sup>113</sup> The Turkish government had similar concerns. For example, pro-government *Cumhuriyet* stated that the new fairground was set into the fire during “the Greek regress” (*Yunan ric’ati*). Nonetheless, it likened the “friendly” Greek pavilion to an industrial city that walks on the same level as Turkish industry.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, Şevket Bilgin of Izmir-based *Yeni Asır* claimed that Turks owned the alliance of Greeks to this victory against Greece.<sup>115</sup> Certainly, fair diplomacy did not erase division and tensions between Greeks and Turks. Nonetheless, this combined strategy of fomenting nationalism at home while remaining co-operative regionally through fairs helped both nations improve their relations.

More importantly, the interactions between the two countries via fairs took place also outside Greece and Turkey. Both Greeks and Turks participated in several international commercial gatherings, such as the Levant Fair of Palestine, the Belgrade Fair of Yugoslavia, and the Bari Fair of Italy. The cultural and economic exchanges between Greece and Turkey abroad reached their climax with the New York Fair of 1939-1940. The two countries did not only represent their own culture and economies in New York. The Turkish Commission boosted the idea of a Balkan Day in which people from Greece, Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia expected to participate in. The fair management demanded the participation of Albanians and Bulgarians as well.<sup>116</sup> The attempts of “Turko-Balkan representatives,” however, did not produce a positive outcome. Yet, Turkish and Greek participants came together and coordinated efforts for a joint venture that offered fertile ground for conveying messages to their common adversaries. The Aegean Festival on September 21, 1939 was the most powerful manifestation of this idea. Commissions from both countries, along with the

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<sup>112</sup> Süleyman Tuser, *Dünkü Bugünkü Yarınki İzmir* (Izmir: Nefaset Basımevi, 1939).

<sup>113</sup> Haris Exertzoglou, “Children of Memory: Narratives of the Asia Minor Catastrophe and the Making of Refugee Identity in Interwar Greece,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 34(2) (2016): 343-366 at 345.

<sup>114</sup> “Başvekil, Diğer Vekillerle Dün Gece Şehrimize Geldi,” *Cumhuriyet*, 3 September 1936, 1, 4.

<sup>115</sup> Şevket Bilgin, “30 Ağustos,” *Yeni Asır*, 30 August 1936, 2.

<sup>116</sup> National Days Program, New York World’s Fair 1939 and 1940 Incorporated Records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library, July 29, 1939.

Greek and Turkish residents of New York participated in “a parade of antique and historic Turkish and Greek costumes, folk dances and native music and songs.”<sup>117</sup> The main value of the festival was symbolic. In a period when the Second World War broke out and international politics was polarized, it was of scant importance in diplomatic and cultural terms.

## 5) Conclusion

This study has adopted a multiperspective approach to explore the Greek-Turkish relations in the interwar period. Despite tensions with each other over minority issues, the population exchange, and nationalism in the 1920s, Greek and Turkish foreign policies remained aligned with each other in the next decade. A key element that motivated closer Greek-Turkish ties was trade fairs in the 1930s, which secured far-reaching benefits of the rapprochement. These ‘twin’ fairs helped Greece and Turkey settle disputes and move from conflict to dialogue in the early 1930s. They grew in tandem with one another, becoming more interconnected in the remainder of the decade. The crucial factor for the success of fair diplomacy was the participation of non-state actors. Along with politicians, Greek and Turkish businessmen tried to channel competition toward peaceful progress and collaboration. They began lobbying for closer relations between these two countries. Business organizations and their participation in the fairs created virtual networks that opened new channels of trade with Greece. Although public diplomacy through fairs was not a cure-all for all diplomatic and social problems, it led to a better understanding between Greece and Turkey.

The experience of Greek-Turkish conduct of fair diplomacy became a glaring exception in the 1930s. It resumed to such an extent that Greece was considered Turkey’s most important partner within the context of trade fairs. There were similar attempts for greater regional cooperation and commerce in the rest of the world. Examples included the Greater Texas, Pan-American Exposition of 1937, and the Nagoya Pan-Pacific Peace Exposition. Nonetheless, participants of other regional fairs were much less successful in reaping long-term political gains because of international developments, such as the Second Sino-Japanese War. The cooperation between Greece and Turkey within the context of trade fairs was different in another respect from most other examples because it proved to be a durable one. While neighboring countries occasionally participated in the Thessaloniki and Izmir Fairs, Greece and Turkey were continuously represented in the Izmir and Thessaloniki Fairs, respectively. They were voted the best national pavilion in each other’s largest commercial gathering. Both private and public participants received a variety of awards.

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<sup>117</sup> “The Fair Today,” *New York Times*, 21 September 1939, 29.

One can see the influence of fair diplomacy until the mid-1950s. In 1940, Turkey participated in the Thessaloniki Fair, but the Greeks did not take part in the Izmir Fair.<sup>118</sup> Nonetheless, the public reading of telegrams from Greek authorities confirmed the Greek-Turkish alliance.<sup>119</sup> Although the invasion of Greece by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany interrupted fair diplomacy, the strategic alliance between Greece and Turkey in the post-war period resumed it. Interestingly enough, the negotiation of the common past continued in the Early Cold War. For example, when the Ottoman Empire was portrayed as “invader Turks” at the Thessaloniki Fair in 1952, the Turkish government protested this portrayal.<sup>120</sup> Namely, the coexistence of tension between nationalist propaganda and diplomatic goals did not cease.

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<sup>118</sup> BCA, 30.18.1.2.92.82.8, 14 September 1940, 1.

<sup>119</sup> “Türk-Yunan Dostluğu,” *Yeni Asır*, 23 August 1940, 2; “Ticaret Vekili Bugün İzmirden Ayrılıyor,” *Yeni Sabah*, 24 August 1940, 1.

<sup>120</sup> BCA, 30.18.1.102.637.2, 25 September 1952, 3.