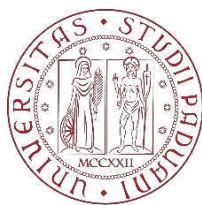


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**CYPRUS: THE ISLAND STILL DIVIDED BETWEEN
TURKEY AND GREECE'S INFLUENCES**

**HOW DOES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
TURKEY AND GREECE STILL REPRESENT THE
CAUSE FOR THE NON-RESOLUTION OF THE
CYPRUS CONFLICT?**

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ABSTRACT

The Cyprus problem (Kypriako) represents one of the few still open conflicts within the European borders. At the same time, it corresponds to the only island divided into two different parties in which the capital, Nicosia, is known to be “the last divided capital” in Europe. This situation has seen only tiny improvements since the escalation of this issue, at the beginning of the 1960s. But the problem does not find its origin uniquely within the island’s border, rather it is the result of the foreign policy preferences and practices that external countries, neighbours and not, implemented towards the island: starting from the Ottoman Empire, the British Empire, to the modern relations between Greece and Turkey. And despite the official independence of the island from the United Kingdom obtained in 1960, Cyprus is located at the heart of one of the most unstable and precarious region, the MENA area, in which every country influences the actions of all the others, more than it happens in other regions. For Cyprus, these persuasive and affecting decisions come mainly from other two countries, Greece and Turkey, whose relationship has presented many complications since the establishment of the two independent nations. The rivalry between them, however, has not seen any improvements and, today, it can still be judged as one of the factors responsible for the non-resolution of the Cyprus problem. This primordial antagonism, nevertheless, is difficult to be solved in the first place as it is composed of many intersecting aspects, from the oldest struggle for supremacy in the Aegean to the most recent rivalry for the control of energy resources, each of which contributes to the non-resolution of the Cyprus problem. And, in addition, the more time passes to find a solution, the more the conflict takes root in society and the more difficult it becomes to solve the Cyprus problem.

Keywords: Cyprus, Cyprus Problem, Greece, Turkey, Foreign Policies, NATO, EU.

RESEARCH QUESTION: How does the relationship between Greece and Turkey still represent one of the causes for the non-resolution of the Cypriot question?

N° of words: 52.380

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Fig. = figure

ibid. = ibidem

p. = page

pp. = pages

Tab. = Table

AFSOUTH = Allied Forces South (of NATO)

AKEL = *Anorthotikó Kómma Ergazómenou Laoú*, Cypriot name for the Progressive Party of Working People

AKP = *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, Turkish name for the Justice and Development Party

ANAP = *Anavatan Partisi*, Turkish name for the Motherland Party

ANE = *Alkimos Neolaia EOKA*, Cypriot name for the Alkimos Youth EOKA

AP = *Adalet Partisi*, Turkish name for the Justice Party

BCBZ = Bi-Zonal – Bi-Communal (federation)

BCM = Billion Cubic Metres

CHP = *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, Turkish name for the Republican People's Party

DP = *Demokrat Parti*, Turkish name for the Democratic Party

DSP = *Demokratik Sol Parti*, Turkish name for the Democratic Left Party

EC = European Commission

EDC = European Debt Crisis

EEAS = European External Action Service

EEC = European Economic Community

EEZ = Exclusive economic Zones

EMGF = Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum

EOKA = *Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston*, Cypriot name for the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters

EU = European Union

EUAC = European Union Association Council

GDP = Gross Domestic Product

GFC = Global Financial Crisis

GNA = Government of National Accord

ICG = International Crisis Group

ICJ = International Court of Justice

IGB = (Gas) Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria

IPA = Pre-Accession Assistance Instrument

KKE = *Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas*, Greek name for the Greek Communist Party

KKTC = *Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti*, Turkish name for the TRNC

LNG = Liquefied Natural Gas

MEEM region = Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean

MENA region = Middle East and North Africa

NATO = North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PASOK = *Panellínio Sosialistikó Kínima*, Greek name for the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Party

PKK = *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, Kurdish Name for the Kurdistan Workers Party

RoC = Republic of Cyprus

SCG = Southern Gas Corridor

SCP = South Caucasus Pipeline

SHP = *Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti*, Turkish name for the Social Democratic Populist Party

TANAP = Trans Anatolian Pipeline

TAP = Trans Adriatic Pipeline

TFSC = Turkish Federated State of Cyprus

TRNC = Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

UNCLOS = United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UNFICYP = United Nations Forces in Cyprus

WSI = Water Stress Index

INTRODUCTION

As the title of this master dissertation suggests, the protagonist of the following analysis is the island of Cyprus. The author's interest in the issue of Cyprus was sparked by Professor A. Casaglia, professor of the course of Economic and Political Geography at the University of Trento, during the presentation of the very peculiar situation that can be recognized in Nicosia. Since that moment on, the curiosity of the author towards the reasons behind this state of affairs has fuelled the interest in deepening the topic. Nevertheless, after the first research, it was evident to the writer the lack of interest in Cyprus by the rest of the world confirmed by the fact that until today, no newspaper and no news ever mentioned this problematic issue.

The problematic aspect of this shortage of significance is that Cyprus is not as distant as one may think; it is not on the other side of the world. Rather, it is in Europe, a part of Cyprus is a European Union member, it is located in the Mediterranean, the same sea that bathes the Italian, Greek, Spanish and French coasts, all countries that are at the centre of the daily news. The question, then, has always been: "Why nobody talks about Cyprus?". The reasons are multiple and these are going to be presented in the research chapters of the dissertation; instead, the elements that must be kept in mind from the beginning are that Cyprus is the only officially divided country remaining in the European Union and that the "Cyprus Problem" does not seem to see a solution in the short run, even after all the peace talks organized in the past decades, mainly due to external influences and powerful decisions that make it difficult to get to a rendezvous point.

The Cyprus problem represents one of the few still open conflicts within the European borders; for the majority of European citizens, it does not exist and in the eyes of the few people who know something about it, it does not represent an emergency as the fighting has stopped, also because Cyprus is a very small island far away from the European core, meaning that it is not seen as a potential threat to the stability of the European Union. As a matter of fact, the island is located much closer to the Turkish border rather than the Greek one. The point that those in charge are missing is that this small and "remote" context is much more fundamental for us than everyone thinks.

The Cypriot islanders are living in a status quo that has developed and established

over time, starting from the end of the violent combating following the invasion of Cyprus by the Turkish Army. The two communities, the Greek and the Turkish Cypriot ones, before this disruptive event have always lived harmoniously and without even thinking about the need to be divided. This idea started during the colonial period of the Ottoman Empire and the new social organization of the “millet”, which guaranteed that every confessional community in the society was allowed to rule itself under its specific law. Under the Ottoman rule, the main division referred to the religious confession, but then it started to spread to all the social aspects, getting to the situation that makes the island unique still today (Bahcheli 1990).

From the harmonious coexistence before the Ottoman Empire, the island passed through various phases of active combat: the 1974 “invasion” according to the Greek community or the “Attila military operation” according to the Turkish authorities, numerous attempts of negotiations involving also external actors and, principally, the United Nations, to reconcile and reunite the two communities. Today, it is physically divided into two parts by the “Green Line”, the buffer zone established by the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in 1964 in order to separate the Greek-Cypriot Community in the southern Republic of Cyprus (RoC) and the Turkish-Cypriot Community in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The two communities still live in different parts of the island but they can move from one part to the other by showing an identity card to the authorities located at the crossing points, the first of which was opened on the 23rd April, 2003.

Nonetheless, and except for some rare events of violence close to the buffer zone, the life conditions on the island are much quieter and more sustainable than they were a few decades ago, and this is made possible by a status quo that has been achieved over time. However, this state of affairs is continuously threatened by the priorities and the requests of the two community leaders, which in their turn are strongly influenced by the two protecting countries: Greece and Turkey.

These two Aegean powers are extremely important as far as the Cyprus problem is concerned for the impacts that their decisions can have on the island, and vice versa. Despite this, Cyprus is not the only front on which Greek and Turkish

commanders continue to argue and fight. The “interlocking set of crises” (Dalay 2021, 10) and struggles between these two actors go from the control over the land-air-maritime space in the Aegean Sea (Schmitt 1996; IGC 2011; SIPRI 2020), to the control of the recently discovered gas resources’ basins in the Eastern Mediterranean (Buzan and Weaver 2003; Vogler and Thompson 2015; Hoffman 2018; Iseri 2019; Tastan and Kutchka 2019; Tanchum 2021), from the debated Greek membership in the EU while the Turkish admission continues to be postponed (Taylor 1998; Siegl 2002; Öniş and Yilmaz 2008; Morris 2016), to the membership of both in the NATO despite the fact that they have shown their inability to share power in the region (D.J.K. 1952; Botsas 1988; Yeşilbursa 1999; Güngör 2015).

Although for the last years of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the Cyprus problem had disappeared from the international security agendas due to the diminished urgency to find a solution to the problem (Mirbagheri 2005), there has been a reconsideration of the Cyprus-Turkey-Greece triangle as a consequence of two international circumstances. The first one has been the official reopening of the negotiations between Turkey and the EU for the first’s accession to the Union, and more precisely when the criteria for the admission have been listed. The chapters of the *Acquis Communautaire* which are still controversial for this process, and which are related to the topics of the current dissertation, are for example: Energy, Regional policies and Coordination of the Structural elements, External Relations and Foreign Policy, and Security and Defence. These chapters include also the consideration of the Turkish presence in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), the illegality of the latter, and the consequences that Turkish pressures have on the political decisions taken within Cyprus borders.

The second circumstance has been the outbreak of the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, which has intensified the discussions within the European Union about the alternatives to Russian gas and oil (Shlapentokh 2021; Tastan 2022). In this case, both Cyprus and Turkey fit in this matter as well due to the conflict for the resources that is taking place in the Eastern Mediterranean, all around the island and that sees Turkey as one of the major protagonists of this game. Once again, Turkey is the principal character, since it proposed itself as a possible

resource provider for the European countries; however, in order to implement this plan, it has to find an agreement with Cyprus and with the other Eastern Mediterranean countries involved in the game.

All these factors, which are interpreted as historical and present sources of conflict, have been present since the existence of these two nations and, since the outbreak of the Cyprus problem, they have not helped in finding a solution to it; rather, they make the division even more entrenched and the finding of an agreement even more complex.

The demonstration of what has been introduced here is the focus and the objective of this research thesis which can also be translated in the attempt to answer the question: “How does the relationship between Greece and Turkey still represents one of the causes for the non-resolution of the Cypriot question?”. This is going to be achieved in the next chapters. The first chapter is going to be dedicated to a more detailed description of the structure and the development of this thesis, as well as more literary details on the selected topic; furthermore, important procedural issues of the research will be clarified, namely the examination of the research design, the research question and the research methodology.

The second chapter will get into the details of the real research, by elaborating the chronological introduction of the historical events starting from the Greek War of Independence (1820s) to the present day; the focus will be placed on what happened in Cyprus, although this requires also the analysis of what happened in both Greece and Turkey after the independence of the first from the Ottoman Empire. Here, some factors that fuelled the rivalry between these two powers will be mentioned, as functional for developing the discussion.

After providing the historical context of the research, the third chapter will be devoted to the real analysis, relating the principal controversial aspects of the relation between Greece and Turkey to the effects that they provoke on Cyprus, among which the supremacy in the Aegean Sea and the competition for the resources that have been recently discovered in the waters surrounding the island. Here, the author’s responsibility is not only on the precise presentation of the elements of rivalry but also on the current role that they still have in protracting the conflict and preventing the delineation of a feasible solution for the island.

The aim of the fourth chapter is the discussion of the findings and the principal results obtained in the analytical part of the dissertation, starting by outlining the elements of the “real essence” of this rivalry predominant in the Eastern Mediterranean. This will also require the entry into play of a new element, the war in Ukraine, considering that for the European Union, this implies concerns about the energetic crisis and the dependency on Russian resources. This is because greater cooperation of the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean and major stability in the MENA region would also represent one of the possible solutions for the European energetic crisis that originated as a consequence of such an invasion. To properly close the chapter, some reflections will be offered about the (im)possibility of forecasting the future development of the triangular relations between Turkey-Cyprus-Greece.

Finally, the conclusion will follow with the resume of the principal information, the final considerations on the topic and the possible openings for further research concerning the Cyprus problem.

CHAPTER I: RESEARCH DESIGN, QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

Following the information given up to this moment, the procedural elements of the research itself are outlined.

Merging the point tackled in the introduction of this dissertation, it is possible to claim that Cyprus is still strongly impacted by the conflict that began half a century ago and a solution to the problem needs to be found in order to readjust the unstable status quo that has been reached immediately after the crisis in the light of the new needs and requests of the society. However, it has also been confirmed that the problem itself and the finding of a solution do not depend solely on internal factors, such as the political objectives and decisions of the two communities' delegations or the expressed preferences of the citizens. Rather, the major impacts are coming from the outside, mainly from Greece and Turkey foreign policy choices, which continue to act as the responsible and the guarantors for, respectively, the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities.

Starting from this basic consideration, it is possible to derive the principal research question of this thesis, the goal of which is, therefore, to understand how does the relationship between Greece and Turkey, that since the creation of the two modern countries has been predominantly rival, continue to influence the Cyprus context. In other words, the research question can be reframed into: "How does the relation between Greece and Turkey, still represents one of the preeminent causes for the non-resolution of the Cyprus question?". The exploration of this research question will proceed through the deepening of more specific questions touching several topics, such as what has been happening in Cyprus since the invasion, which are the most influential aspects of the antagonism between Turkey and Greece that still impact Cyprus and which is the role of international institutions and organizations, precisely the NATO and the EU, in attempting to solve the problem or, at least, to improve the situation.

To try to answer these questions, in the further development of the research two types of material are going to be considered: firstly, information and data coming from the existing primary and secondary literature will provide the solid theoretical background for the inclusion of, secondarily, knowledge developed during a

specific seminar attended during the Erasmus+ semester. The seminar “Cyprus: A Conflict at a Crossroad” is one of the seminars proposed in the catalogue of courses at the University of Tübingen, in Germany. At the end of the seminar, the professor who taught it, Professor T. Diez, managed to organize a study trip in Nicosia completed in February 2023, during which we had the honour to visit the capital accompanied by local guides and Professor Diez’s colleagues, who also helped in the organization and planning of meetings with authorities, members of foundations, civil society groups and study centres’ staff, of both communities. During these meetings, the various speakers presented us with their work for the Cypriot community, how they are working to give their contribute to the solution of the problem, which are their principal fields of research and action; at the end of every meeting, we also had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss topics of our interest. For the aim of this dissertation, information learned during the preparatory course will be included together with the notes of the author taken while interviewing the speakers of the on-site meeting with the Cypriot personalities.

Before giving more details about the literature it is important to remember that, being this is still an open conflict, which affects not only the Cypriot population but also the Greek and the Turkish ones among others, it is logical that many of the texts about the topic are written by people involved who, inevitably, cannot write in an impartial manner.

From this first specification, it is also deductible which is the nature of the most important debate behind an analysis about Cyprus developed in this way: the debate between those considering the entire crisis attributable to the Turkish invasion of the island and those who highlight that this act was a response to the provocative act of the Greek population. This controversy can be translated into some wider considerations about the relationship between the behaviours decided in Ankara and those approaches for which Athens opts. Meaning, that the debate is translated into: those believing that any decision Ankara takes is a provocative and objectionable action, aimed at triggering conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean region and those believing that Turkey, with all these kinds of actions, is reacting to the decisions taken by the other regional nations which have as main target the political, economic, social and military isolation of Turkey

This is why in this dissertation, both parts will be included, together with writers from all the countries involved in the Eastern Mediterranean dynamics (Israel, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Italy) in order to provide a more rounded understanding of the facts and in order to develop a more objective view of the Cyprus issue.

Among the primary literature, instead, the material mentioned in the thesis will primarily come from official archives of the European Commission, i.e. reports on the Cyprus problem after its accession to the EU, the digital library of the United Nations, from which official declaration of the Secretary-General, the Security Council, and the officials of the UNFICYP will be extrapolated, at the same way as for the texts of the Resolutions for the problem management. In the same way, also declassified documents obtained from the CIA FOIA archive will be utilized in order to have official documents of the NATO missions and operations; also reports and studies of the OECD and the World Bank archives will be used to have official data about the changes in the life of Cypriot people during the war years. Moreover, especially for the resource chapter, also the reports elaborated by the International Crisis Group will be fundamental.

With reference to the secondary sources, numerous studies of both Cypriot and international authors will be analysed and included in order to provide more precise and expert comments on the topic, as well as to favour the discussion on these data; at the same time, it will be the author's task to include qualified specialists from both sides of the debate, as well as external and non-partisan ones. As far as the existent literature about the topic is concerned, the starting point of this thesis will be some of the many existing books about the historical context; these will provide the main dates and happenings that shaped the history of Cyprus, Turkey and Greece; these will be sorted and presented in a chronological order starting from the most crucial events of the XIX century. The authors that elaborated the most detailed historical framework have been Bahcheli (1990), Aydin and Infantis (2004), Karakatsanis (2014) and Lindsay (2019).

In addition to these books, many other experts have been interviewed depending on the field of interest, among which the Press and Information Officer of the European Commissioner Representation in Cyprus Kezban Akansoy, Professor Ahmet Sözen as an expert of International Relations and member of the Turkish

Cypriot negotiation team, Professor Hubert Faustmann as an expert of Political Science specialized in Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot Special Representative in the UN negotiations Mr. Ergün Olgun and others. In this case, the people interviewed have been members of both communities, interviewed in both parts of the island, and all working and, directly or indirectly, involved in the political sphere in Cyprus.

To these oral testimonies, a long list of written papers and reports will be combined. Fortunately, both in the archives and online, verified material about the history of Cyprus or the rivalries between Turkey and Greece since their independence is not lacking. As a matter of fact, many writers have dedicated pieces especially about Turkish-Greek relations: Mango (1987), Botsas (1988), Bahcheli et al. (1997), Keridis (1999), Siegl (2002) and Heraclides (2011) among many others.

On the other side, focused on the Cyprus issue, Brands (1987), Kaloudis (1999), Zervakis (2004), Diez and Tocci (2010), Casaglia (2018; 2019), Shlapentokh (2021) must be kept in mind.

In analysing these two blocks of authors, the author has noticed that, despite the fact that the two fields proved to be absolutely relevant and appropriate for this dissertation, one gap was present. As a matter of fact, being very complete in their focus, few authors have tried to relate, especially in a cause-and-effect relationship, the Greek-Turkish rivalry and the persistence of the Cyprus problem (Tziarras 2019). Similarly, many have related the dispute between the two regional powers with the creation and the first phases of the Cyprus conflict; alternatively, almost all of them have dedicated some words to the influence that either Greece, Turkey or both of them have on the island and how they can be responsible for triggering and fuelling the conflict.

This is the reason behind the decision to develop a master thesis attempting to answer the presented research question.

A qualitative analysis will be then built up to describe and more deeply explore the information gathered via these two methodologies. This will be supported, essentially, by the application of a deductive approach, which will allow the drawing of conclusions starting from the theoretical information that will be

presented in the following chapters.

The time frame taken into consideration for this dissertation starts from the Greek War of Independence of the 1820s, moment from which it will begin a brief presentation of the outstanding events relatable and necessary for the following paragraphs. This part will move through the two world wars and will lead the attention to the 1960s and 1970s, the decades from which the focus is going to be narrowed on the most important stages that have forever marked the history of Cyprus. With the final considerations, ultimately, the spotlight will be placed on the current situation and the most recent events in Cyprus, in Greek-Turkish relations and the surrounding area.

CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

Cyprus itself has a long and troubled history as, due to its very strategic location in the intersection between Europe, Asia and the Middle East, it has always been under the international spotlight. In order to develop a useful and comprehensive analysis of the history of the island, it is not enough to consider only what happened within the national borders, but it is necessary to include also both the bigger and the smaller events that shaped the international equilibrium in the so-called MENA region, meaning the countries of Northern African and the Middle East, all those facing in the Eastern Mediterranean.

As a matter of fact, the situation that can be observed in Cyprus today clearly shows all the legacies of its previous conquering powers, mainly the Ottoman Empire and British Empire, as well as of the neighbouring actors exercising a strong influence on the island, namely Greece and Turkey. Notwithstanding, the influence that these conquering powers exercised over Cyprus did not stop with the declaration of independence in 1960; rather, given the proximity of both Greece and Turkey to the island, these two countries represent the most powerful elements external to the island's borders, affecting almost everything that happens within them, even nowadays. The Turkish-Cypriot, not being recognized by the international community, except by Turkey, have to rely on the latter for many aspects of their daily life, e.g. for trade and commerce. The relationship between Greece and the Greek-Cypriot community, instead, is less tangible; this is given to the fact that, with the independence of the Republic of Cyprus, it has become, to all intents and purposes, a nation-state internationally recognized as such. However, especially in the political decisions, a certain degree of alignment with Greece can be noticed.

In order to make everything clearer and to demonstrate the complexity of the context, the following paragraphs will present the main historical events that shaped the regional architecture, to provide the historical framework in which the further analysis of the security issues and the influence of, principally, Greece and Turkey will be intertwined. The focus has to be placed on the Ottoman Empire, since the first divisive elements responsible for the current division of the island date back to the social divisions imposed by the Ottoman Emperors; the focus will be moved on

Greece and Turkey as independent countries.

The historical framework has been divided here into three periodizations: from the Ottoman conquests in the regions at the beginning of the empire, passing through the Greek War of independence and finishing in the mid-1950s, the decade in which the Cyprus problem began to emerge but also the period of Greece and Turkey's membership to NATO. Then, from the mid-1950s to 1974, in order to concentrate on the years of the Cyprus independence, the emergence of the political differences and the conflicting priorities of the two communities of the Turkish-Cypriots and the Greek-Cypriots, the linkages of these two communities with, respectively, Turkey and Greece, the years of the active fightings and the intervention of the UN. Finally, the last paragraph will focus on the historical evolution since the "Turkish invasion of Cyprus" / "Turkish peace mission in Cyprus" to the current situation.

In all three following paragraphs, the historical happenings in Cyprus will be presented in light of what was happening in the neighbouring Greece and Turkey, in a historical plot intertwined with the aim of providing the most accurate description of the most important facts.

2.1 From the Greek War of Independence to 1955

In order to present the history of both Greece and Turkey from their independence, as well as the history of Cyprus, it is indispensable to remark some important dates before the declaration of Greek independence, in 1832. As a matter of fact, it is essential to start from 1453, when the Ottoman Empire captured the Byzantine capital of Constantinople because, from that moment, the Ottomans started to develop their new social structure based on the *millet* system. A *millet*, in that specific context, was an autonomous self-governing "ethnic or religious group [...] more or less officially recognized"; it was "granted autonomous powers of self-regulation: each with its own leader, responsible for ruling over their community". In other words, each *millet* was responsible for the fulfilment of *millet* responsibilities and duties but also for the social and administrative functions not provided by the states (Tas 2014, 498). With this type of social organization, within the same empire, or nation, the population is divided into smaller and autonomous

organizations that for some aspects require cooperation with the neighbouring *millets*, but in other occasions, the conflict cannot be avoided.

Even if this system needed to be tailored for each specific context and required continue refinement, the Ottomans introduced it in each new piece of territory that was included in their empire, which at the time also comprehended the Hellenic peninsula. As far as Cyprus is concerned, the *millet* system was established in the years following 1571, when Cyprus came under Turkish rule.

With regard to Cyprus, and to better understand the context of the Greek vindication on the island, it is an important detail the fact that since the second millennium BC, the island was inhabited mainly by Greek people and the second name of the island was “Aphrodite’s island” as, “according to the Greek mythology, the goddess was born near the city of Paphos, having risen from the sea foam of the Mediterranean” (Mediterranean Quarterly 2014, 66). In the Greek view, the problematic aspect of the Ottoman conquest of the island was that this historical event remarks the moment in which families and groups of Turkish origin began to settle on the island. Furthermore, due to the import of the *millet* system, the two populations could not integrate, rather these strong policies divided the so-called “Greek-Cypriots” and the “Turkish-Cypriots”. According to the Ottoman social organization, these two groups could not live together since the Greek community was Orthodox Christian and spoke only Greek, while the Turkish one was Muslim and only spoke Turkish, so they were not able to communicate with each other and, as a consequence, to live together (Bahcheli 1990, 51).

This starting situation has given rise to a vicious circle in which two relatively different communities had natural difficulties in integrating with each other; instead of solving such baseline conditions through assimilation and amalgamation policies, the *millet* system established diversified educational systems, diversified religious and political institutions and diversified businesses. The outcome was the further reduction of the contact points and the increasing identification with the Hellenic or with the Turkish cultures (ibid., 51-52).

Under the *millet* system, however, some rights and privileges were granted to both communities: both enjoyed the freedom of religion, and both the Orthodox Churches and the Muslim Mosques were officially recognized as autonomous and

self-governing entities, to the Greek-Cypriot Archbishop was also attributed the role of political leader – *Ethnarch*. The privileges of the Turkish community were those granted by the fact that they were ethnically and culturally tied with the Ottomans, so they had the right to live following the same standards and they have direct access to commerce with the Empire traders, while for the Greek Cypriot, there were other types of concessions, among others, the exemption from the military service (ibid. 55).

Despite all these “superficial” differences and religion-based divisions, observing the facts, it has to be recognized that under the *millet* system, the two communities managed to live in harmony with each other and there were also episodes in which they succeeded in mixing the communities through intermarriages, mixed villages and also exchange of traditions and customs.

Nevertheless, the *millet* system has not always had these “superficial and light” effects, because in the Hellenic peninsula, starting from the beginning of the XIX century, it is noticeable how this social and religious division erupted into a more profound sentiment of ethno-nationalist separatism, according to which the villages in the territory inhabited by Greek people should enjoy greater autonomy and be more independent. This was the feeling and the request that sparked the start of the Greek War of Independence, which lasted from February 1821 until September 1829, with the subsequent establishment of modern Greece as an independent state, free from the Ottoman Empire as pointed out by the principal provision of the 1932 Treaty of Constantinople.

After obtaining the independence, the Greek élites began to express their desire to regain all the power that they possessed before the Ottoman rule, by re-conquering all the territories inhabited by ethnic Greek peoples, that were now under the Ottoman and British control. This idea of the Greek re-enlargement in the Mediterranean islands is known as the *Megali Idea* and it will be the basis for the nationalistic policies and practices of the first decades of modern Greece as an independent country (ibid., 36). Within the *Megali Idea* also falls Cyprus, the island always considered Greek and inhabited by Greek people, but in the XIX century, still under the Ottoman rule. Simultaneously, also in Cyprus itself, the *Megali Idea* had its effect, since the Greek sponsorship of this plan managed to heighten the

national feeling and attachment of the Greek Cypriots who, in support of this, sent to their “motherland” volunteers, military support, money and provisions in order to assist in the achievement of this goal. However, even if on the island Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots were coexisting with no major complications, this nationalist attitude by the former revealed distrust and indignation within the latter, who felt the betrayal (ibid., 56).

Another fundamental event for the history of Cyprus was 1878, a year in which, with the Cyprus Convention of the 4th July, it passed from being an Ottoman territory to a British protectorate as an element of exchange to guarantee British support to the Ottomans during the Congress of Berlin – the diplomatic conference aimed at the geopolitical reorganization of the states in the Balkans after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. The more meaningful clause of the Convention was the establishment of the British military basis on the island, in operation and independent still today, in order to protect the Ottoman Empire from eventual Russian aggressions. However, the formalization of this important passage in Cyprus’s history happened in 1914, due to the major importance acquired by the island for the British Crown after the Ottoman Empire entered in the First World War; finally, the island became an official British Crown colony in 1925 (Mediterranean Quarterly 2014, 69).

Under British rule, due to the commercial importance that the island had for the Empire, the settlers concentrated money and resources in the commercial and financial sectors which, as anticipated, were controlled mostly by the Greek Cypriots. This decision resulted in a series of privileges for the inhabitants of Greek origin, raising their living standards and nurturing a feeling of independence, at the expense of their Turkish counterparts, which remained confined to their smaller villages with very limited interactions. This means that, indirectly, the British Empire fuelled and supported the enosis requests of the Greek Cypriot community (Bahcheli 1990, 57).

With the British rule, moreover, the tensions between the two communities were incited by this backing for the Greek Cypriots and the loss of Ottoman privileges for the Turkish Cypriots, whose support came only from Turkey. The Ottoman leaders and the Turkish community in Cyprus had, at the time, only one objective:

not the Turkish control of the island and of the Greek community – considered unlikely given the disproportion between the two communities – but rather the impediment of the realization of the enosis. This is the reason behind the first “quarrels and wars” between the two communities (ibid., 58). As a consequence of this response of this “No-Enosis policy”, it is possible to notice that also for the period between 1891 and 1913, there was a substantial decrease in the quantity of mixed villages in Cyprus.

At the end of the First World War, from 1919 to 1923, the Turkish War of Independence took place, leading to a series of very important consequences from the perspective of its international relations, both with Cyprus, but principally with Greece. In fact, since 1923, when the Republic was declared, the state of affairs in the Eastern Mediterranean was extremely different from the one that had been until just over a century before. From the Ottoman Empire extended on the Hellenic peninsula and on Cyprus, to a change in the Cyprus legacy in favour of the British Empire, and the establishment of two independent states, Greece and Turkey, which started to advance similar objectives and aims, for example in the Eastern Mediterranean, that constantly collided with each other. At the same time, the different cultures and political ideologies encouraged the promotion of different foreign policy ideas, for example in how to manage control in Cyprus. These similar objectives and opposite foreign policy strategies, summed with resentment and mutual feelings of distrust, did nothing else but fuelling the competitiveness and the rivalry between these two fundamental pawns in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the MENA area scheme. The only agreement that managed to establish order and peace between the two countries, the so-called Greek-Turkish *détente* (ibid. 30), at least for some decades, has been the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, which aimed at officially establishing the boundaries between Turkey and Greece, mainly following the course of the Maritsa River. The fact that this border was officially set by an international agreement eliminated a big contentious and allowed to find a strategic balance between the two countries. Moreover, as the presence of Great Britain was fundamental and desired on the island, both Greece and Turkey elaborated foreign policies targeted to increase their relationship with the Crown,

among other factors also due to the interests that both countries still had in Cyprus (ibid. 59).

Despite the British presence in Cyprus, Atatürk's Turkey managed to increase its influence and interconnections with the Turkish Cypriot community and, vice versa, the latter began to be more interested in the political, economic and social events happening in Turkey, tightening even more the relations with it.

If at the end of the XIX century, the British showed their support to the Greek Cypriot nationalism in favour of the enosis with Greece, in the first decades of 1900 this feeling became so entrenched and strong that it was difficult to handle even for the British settlers. This “too strong nationalism” could have represented a threat, not only to the peaceful coexistence with the Turkish Cypriot community, but to the legitimate permanence on the island of the European troops; to reduce the chances of this risk occurring, and respecting the new tight relationship between Turkey and Great Britain, the latter’s support changed front, meaning that they started to encourage a Turkish Cypriot response to the Greek ethno-nationalism that was spreading all around the island. Nevertheless, this change of attitude created even more confusion and led to a situation in which everyone was unsatisfied with the behaviour and unsupportive of the decisions of anybody else. This questionable attitude by the British delegates on the island generated a quite predictable reaction within the Greek Cypriot community who, at the beginning of the 1930s, launched a series of anti-British and anti-empire riots, which, in turn, increased even more the nationalism of this people towards the Greek “motherland”. These rebellion acts were counterattacked by British harsh measures enhanced to inhibit this growing nationalism, as well as to embed the Crown’s presence in Cyprus (ibid. 62).

Despite the volatile backing of the British and the continuous but not yet irreversible controversies within the Cypriot borders, between Turkey and Greece the communication was increasing and upgrading. As a matter of fact, it can be noticed that starting from the 1920s, they both began to include the concept of “friendship” and cooperation in the leaders’ political discourses. For example, the Greek Prime Minister of that time, Eleutherios Venizelos, in a letter to his Turkish counterpart İsmet İnönü, mentioned that in order to stop the bigger and smaller frictions between them and in order to guarantee a durable peace, a new “friendship

agreement” is required (Venizelos 1928 as quoted in Karakatsanis 2014, 4). Similarly, also in İnönü’s response to this letter, he emphasises that both countries should focus on the mutual “benefits of seeking friendship, trust and support from the other”, that would make possible the overcoming of many problems (ibid. 4).

However, despite the fact that both sides had begun to talk about such “friendship” and “reconciliation”, this remained only the subject of political speeches, an aspiration that had no concrete actions in support of it, because, in reality, the political-economic moves targeted to really reach these objectives were rather rare. The only field that has always been active in this respect, was composed by the numerous social groups and associations created to enliven the population and make it more likely to work for this Turkish-Greek friendship. The period of major appearances for these associations was between the 1930s and 1940s, which is not a coincidence that it corresponds with the “Golden Era” of the relations between the two countries, which lasted until 1954 (ibid. 7).

For the duration of the years 1930s and 1940s, Greece and Turkey not only signed more agreements with each other, such as the “Greek-Turkish Treaty of Friendship, Neutrality, Conciliation and Arbitration” of 1930 and the “Greek-Turkish Pact of Cordial Understanding” of 1933, but they also sided with each other to support the same causes in the neighbouring countries, for example cooperating with Yugoslavia and Rumania in the Balkan Entente of 1934 for the non-belligerence among the four countries, the inviolability of the frontiers, the coordination of the foreign politics and the mutual assistance in case of a war declaration from a country outside the pact (Bahcheli 1990, 46).

The peaceful and fruitful partnership between Turkey and Greece facilitated also the conclusion of major and stronger accords with the international powers. An example was the case of the United States. In fact, in 1931 the British government announced that it would have withdrawn all kinds of assistance to the Greek government in its fight against the growing power of the Greek Communist Party (*Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas*, KKE). This statement implied that, in Greece at that moment, there were no forces other than the Greek government, inclined and willing to fight against the communist threat; this represented an inconceivable situation in the eyes of the United States which, in the name of their fight against

communism and their support for democracy, in 1947 seized the opportunity and named the two Eastern Mediterranean countries as beneficiaries of the Truman Doctrine. This was a specific American foreign policy that secured political, military and economic aids to democratic nations which could be threatened, both internally and externally, by communist authoritarian forces; it was first established by President Harry S. Truman with the primary aim of constraining the Soviet geopolitical expansion in the decades of the Cold War. The Truman Doctrine was applied in both Greece and Turkey since, according to the U.S. government, these were two countries quite close to the Soviet regime but not strong enough to resist the advance of communism from the Soviet Union (U.S. Office of Historians n.d.).

In the same period, for Cyprus the procedures of decolonization had been initiated; nevertheless, its decolonization process was dissimilar from that of all the other African and Asian colonies because, rather than independence as such, the majoritarian Greek-Cypriot community “envisaged the transfer of sovereignty from one state to another - from Britain to Greece” (Bahcheli 1990, 66), as understandable from their support for enosis. This solution was supported by the result of an unofficial plebiscite that Archbishop Makarios II organized in Cyprus between the 15th and the 22nd of January 1950. The “1950 Cypriot Enosis Referendum” asked the population of Greek origin to decide if they were in favour or contrary to the union with Greece. According to Direct Democracy, the official results showed that 95.71% of the Greek Cypriots who voted, expressed their preference in favour of enosis, while only 4.29% were contrary to this idea (Direct Democracy, 2005). Despite the almost unanimous response to the referendum, this desire has never been implemented due to the fact that this plebiscite was unofficial. As the referendum was directed only to the Greek Cypriot community and seeing that the Greek front was firmly convinced of this union, the Turkish Cypriot community appealed to the illegality of the plebiscite to delegitimize any decision taken in favour of enosis, and in both Cyprus, Ankara and Istanbul demonstrations were organized both against this precise action of Archbishop Makarios and against the Greek government’s support for this illegal action (Bahcheli 1990, 67). The plebiscite was one of the main events that triggered the most important and powerful demonstrations organized by Makarios III, the direct successor of

Makarios II, and the Greek Cypriots against the British settlers on the island. Such offensives began in October of the same year, after the official enthronement of Makarios III, as Archbishop, on the 18th September. With Makarios III it can be noticed a gradual intensification of the enosis campaign and, as a consequence, also an exacerbation of the already damaged relationship between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the island.

The final fundamental stage for this paragraph of the Greek-Turkish-Cypriot history is represented by 1952, the year in which the first two countries of this triad became NATO members in its first enlargement phase. With this drastic change in the Eastern Mediterranean, the previous power balances, the influences among countries and the intervention space for the international powers shifted to a completely new situation. The official access to the Alliance provoked the increase and the normalization-institutionalization of the political and military collaboration between Greece and Turkey, and among them and the other twelve members. Moreover, this membership resulted also in the major opening of both Greece and Turkey to the European and international societies, substantially improving their status; especially Turkey began to be seen as a crucial actor in Western strategic designs and projects in the Middle East due to the influence and the partnerships that it had with other relevant countries in the region.

After the benefits received by both Greece and Turkey with the Truman Doctrine and after they joined NATO, the fight against communism carried on by the US in the MENA region intensified even more under the umbrella of NATO, which was spreading and consolidating the anti-Soviet sentiments and concerns closer to the Soviet borders (Karakatsanis 2014, 7). This common enemy detected in the Soviet Union, not only highlighted the alignment of Turkey and Greece with the Western Block but identified also a major common interest among the foreign politics objectives of the two countries, which served to bring them closer, carrying on their diplomatic “friendship” (ibid. 8).

This represents only one element more that emphasises the fact that, after a convolute beginning of the relations between Greece and Turkey, after their partition into two independent countries and the delineation of their different political, military and strategic interests, they managed to live their Golden Era,

both owing to internal changes towards more conciliatory and less offensive policies towards one another, as well as owing to their inclusion in the international society and their access in the NATO, which exalted the common aims that such different countries discovered to have.

2.2 From 1955 to 1974: The Turkish Invasion of Cyprus

During the decade of the 1950s, Cyprus became the main confrontation element when considering the political discourses between Greece and Turkey (Bahcheli 1990, 65). Both countries wanted to prevent the other from taking full control over the island, both vindicating the ethnic origin of their “affiliated population”; at the same time, both powers wanted to increase their influence on the respective Cypriot community. In such decade, in fact, the diplomatic and political discussion between the two countries began to limit the inclusion of the “friendship” aspect and they changed the focus from the reconciliatory policies to the growing tensions, and following concerns, “between the Turkish and Greek nationalisms over the prospect of the island’s de-colonization (Karakatsanis 2014, 31).

The ethno-nationalism was much more evident in the Greek-Cypriot community since it was precisely that one which, starting from 1954, took up arms for the first bi-communal armed clashes and which more publicly advertised its anti-colonial struggles while insistently requesting the unification with Greece (ibid, 31). Probably, this worsening of the bi-communal relations is due to the fact that in the same year, in August, Archbishop Makarios managed to sponsor the Cyprus problem in front of the United Nations to demand for aid and support for a solution to the disputes. This passage, however, has been possible only after months of negotiation by the Greek Prime Minister, Alexandros Papagos. As a matter of fact, the initial idea of Papagos was in line with the one of its two predecessors, meaning that the conflict would have not broken up and that, eventually, it would have been possible to solve internally. Previously, indeed, the three Greek Prime Ministers Eleftherios Venizelos, Nikolaos Plastiras and, Alexandros Papagos “turned down Makarios’ II requests to raise the Cyprus issue at the UN” and, as a consequence for this denial, the Archbishop even threatened that he would have asked the support of another powerful, but controversial, state: Syria (Bahcheli 1990, 69). In the end,

in order to avoid Syria's intervention, Prime Minister Papagos found an agreement with Makarios III and sponsored the question in front of the UN.

In the following years, violent organizations in support of both communities appeared in every part of the island, some bigger and more organized than others, some more powerful also at the institutional level compared to others. In April 1955 a Greek Cypriot nationalist guerrilla organization reverberated in the island for the increased violence of its actions; it was the *Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston*, the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters, from this moment simply EOKA. Moreover, the name of the organization became more popular due to the intensified contacts between its funder, Colonel Georgios Grivas, a former Greek fighter of Cypriot origin who acted as one of the main characters of the Cypriot War of Independence, and Archbishop Makarios III (ibid. 67). One of the main aspects of the EOKA organization was that it managed to involve all age groups of the Greek Cypriot community, also due to the important role that the *Alkimos Neolaia EOKA* (ANE), Alkimos Youth EOKA, had in affecting and including the younger generations. The violence of the EOKA is well remembered still today, as, for example, the first nights of the 1955 attacks consisted of a total of eighteen bombs in various locations all across the island. Other specific and important episodes have been the EOKA fight against the British army in the capital, Nicosia, in what has been called the "Battle of the Hospital" in 1956 and the demolition of the Broadcasting Station transmitter on the island.

With violent organizations of this kind spreading all over Cyprus, the instability of the relationship between the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots increased accordingly. This was reflected, in turn, in the relations between the two supporting powers, jeopardizing the long work that they had done to create a certain balance in the region and that "friendship" between the two nations. In point of facts, with the beginning of the fighting on the island, and Turkey and Greece committed to increasing both military and financial aid to the militants on the field, the peaceful communications between the two political delegations began to fail, giving way to political concerns on the possible actions and repercussions of what was happening in Cyprus. As a matter of fact, both countries could not promote peaceful and friendly talks while their peoples were fighting against each other on the field of a

third country. This is the reason why the mid-1950s represent the ultimate moment of the golden years of the relations between Greece and Turkey.

The following step of the Cypriot war was the transportation of the combat also outside the national border, with the opening of the fire, for example in Turkey, in those events named “September Events of Istanbul”, “Istanbul Pogrom¹”, “Istanbul Riots” or “Istanbul Kristallnacht”. These episodes, which happened on the 6th and the 7th September 1955, can be described as state-sponsored anti-Greek mass attacks targeting the Istanbul’s Greek minority and arranged by the Turkish ruling party, the centre-right Democrat Party, with the support of and cooperation with numerous national security agencies, among which the National Security Service, the Tactical Mobilisation Group and the Counter-Guerrilla (Foti 2008). The event of the Istanbul Kristallnacht became even more worrying because, as it happens in almost all occasions, the riots uniquely directed towards the Greek minority in Istanbul, turned into something more extensive and on a larger scale: generalized assaults against minorities in a broader sense, starting from the Greek Orthodox minority’s members and properties and, in a second phase, involving all the possibly related minorities (Güven 2006 and Kuyucu 2005 as quoted in Karakatsanis 2014, 32). This spread of the events and the widening of the targets eased the escalation of the conflicts and an increment of the violence, not only in Cyprus but now also in Turkey.

1960 represents another fundamental year to remember as far as the history of Cyprus is concerned, as it is the year in which the island managed to declare its independence from the British Empire, officially becoming the Republic of Cyprus² (Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία in Greek and *Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti* in Turkish). On the 16th August of that year, the British Crown handed over sovereignty directly to the recently elected Archbishop Makarios, who, as a consequence, became the President of Cyprus. The independence was also accompanied by the Constitution

¹ The term “Pogrom” has been coined to describe the massacres of Jews perpetrated in the Russian Empire in the XIX century. This is the reason why the term is inserted between quotation mark. For the Istanbul events, more appropriate terms are “massacre”, “violence”, “rioting” etc.

² As far as the name of the country is concerned, to treat unambiguously the topics, the island will continue to be called simply “Cyprus” in order to differentiate it from the “Republic of Cyprus”, intended as the Southern part of the island after the partition and the division from the Northern part of the island, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

of Cyprus (*Suprema Lex Cypri*) whose aims were to try to bring greater stability to the island, to officially establish rules that could not be interpreted subjectively by both parties and to guarantee as many rights as possible to both communities, without discriminating against any part of them - established and outlined in Part II – Fundamental Rights and Liberties.

Going into some specifics, Article 1 of the 1960 Constitution established a bi-communal unitary Republic in which both communities were part of Cyprus as a whole, but they were guaranteed partial communal autonomy; moreover, it decrees that the President of the Republic should always have been a Greek Cypriot, as representative of the Greek Cypriot majority of the population, but the Vice President should always have been a Turkish Cypriot – the first one was Fazıl Kucuk -, in order to guarantee the respect of the Turkish Cypriots' requests and needs, as well as their representation among the highest offices of the government. The rules and the methods of recognition of the belonging of a person to one of the two communities are provided by Article 2. Following the same logic and considering that at that time the population was unevenly distributed between 70% of Greek Cypriots and 30% of Turkish Cypriots (Morag 2010, 598, 616)³, Article 46 of the Constitution determines that also the public sector and the executive positions should have followed the ration 70:30 for the assignment of the offices (Editors of Mediterranean Quarterly 2014, 71).

On the same day, the 16th August 1960, also the Treaty of Guarantee was signed and promulgated. This is a treaty with Cyprus as the main subject and comprising Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom, namely the three external powers designated as guarantors for the maintenance of order and peace on the island, as well as the proper respect for the newly enacted Constitution. Some fundamental Articles of the Treaty determine that:

³ In these percentages are included also the more and the less populous minorities, whose inclusion and positioning within the society still represent one of the most difficult issues to be solved. Some examples are: Maronites, Armenians, Latins, Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Jews, Gypsies, Lino-bambaki. For more information: Varnava, A. (2010) “*The State of Cyprus Minorities: Cultural Diversity, Internal-Exclusion and the Cyprus Problem*”, The Cyprus Review, Vol. 22:2, Fall 2010).

- “The Republic of Cyprus [...] declares prohibited any activity likely to promote, directly or indirectly, either union with any other State or partition of the Island” (Art. I);
- “Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom, [...] recognise and guarantee the independence, territorial integrity and security of the Republic of Cyprus. Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom likewise undertake to prohibit, so far as concerns them, any activity aimed at promoting, directly or indirectly, either union of Cyprus with any other State or partition of the Island.” (Art. II)
- “In the event of a breach of the provisions of the present Treaty, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom undertake to consult together with respect to the representations or measures necessary to ensure observance of those provisions.” (Art. VI).

However, the only guarantor power that always behaved as such, for better or for worse, always keeping the situation within the island’s boundaries monitored, was Turkey. On the other two sides, after the granting of independence, the interests and the concerns of the British Empire concerning the island decreased; the same outcome can also be observed on the Greek side as those were difficult years from the internal point of view – the Greek Civil War after the liberation at the end of the Second World War and the resulting economic damages, the political tensions between the left and the right, the decade of the “Greek Junta” or “Regimes of the Colonels” between 1967 and 1974 in which right-wing military dictatorships ruled the peninsula -, leading to a minor focus on the external issues. These “external issues” included Cyprus as, immediately after the independence and the rules set by the Constitution, the state of affairs was rather stable and quiet, thus it did not require constant observation by the Greek authorities (Moon 2012).

Nevertheless, despite the Constitution and the three designated guarantor powers responsible for the order and the sodality of everything mentioned until now, the peaceful – but brief - cohabitation of the two communities on the unified and independent Cyprus came to an end on the 21st December 1963, time in which the intercommunal tensions erupted into brutal violence that lasted “solely” a year but which left the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities (and Greece and

Turkey as guarantor powers) in an irreversible and – still today - unsolvable state of apprehension and mistrust (Editors of Mediterranean Quarterly 2014, 72). Institutionally, this day led to the total collapse of the Constitution and all the rules set by it, with the subsequent spreading chaos between the two communities and in any aspect of everyday life all around the island, marking the official beginning of what is called today the “Cyprus issue” (*Kypriako*).

As neither the Archbishop nor any other authority was recognized by either community, and not even by most of the population, the 1963 conflicts resulted impossible to manage and appease internally. This is the reason why, in 1964, it is essential to signal the entry into play of the United Nations and their special convoy sent to Nicosia, the United Nations Forces in Cyprus, the UNFICYP (Bahcheli 1990, 101), decided and approved by the UN Security Council with the Resolution 186 of the 04/03/1964 (UN Digital Library, 1964). On this date, the UNFICYP initiates the peacemaking and peacekeeping practices implementing, for example, the drafting and the delimitation of the Buffer Zone, called the Green Line, which represents and works as a border but that in reality is “only” a demilitarized ceasefire zone exploited by the UNFICYP to patrol the villages most active in and hit by the fightings.

The work of the UNFICYP had also the individual backing of one of the most important diplomatic forces within the UN, the diplomatic team of the United States, whose mediating efforts in Cyprus started in 1964, with the elaboration of the “Dean Acheson Plan”. This represented an independent initiative of Washington under the former Secretary of State Acheson, which proposed and supported the idea of the enosis for the Greek Cypriot community (Walker 1984, 474). By accepting and respecting this plan, the Turkish authorities would be guaranteed the jurisdiction on some sovereign basis in the island, as well as some minorities' rights. This first US intervention was rejected both by Makarios, which did not support the concession of a sovereign territory to Turkey, and the Turkish Cypriot community which repudiated the idea of being considered a simple minority on the island (Brands 1987, 356).

Another novelty that emerged after the beginning of the Cyprus issue, and especially after the establishment of the Green Line, has been the almost elimination

of the mixed villages by 1970, precisely because of the impossibility of maintaining the interactions and the physical contact between the two populations (Editors of *Mediterranean Quarterly* 2014, 72; Moon 2012). As the mixed villages almost disappeared, the depiction of the communitarian division in a map of Cyprus began to be characterized by the formation of ethnic enclaves of people from the Turkish Cypriot community, inserted and surrounded by much larger areas inhabited by Greek Cypriots, as Figure 3.2.1 shows.

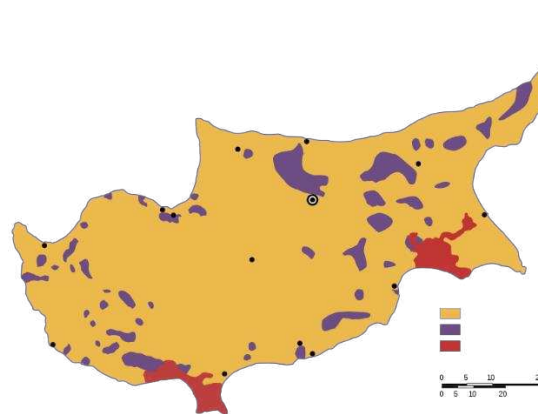


Figure 2.2-1: Ethnic distribution map in Cyprus, approximately from 1964 (the intercommunal violence) until 1974 (the official establishment of the Green Line as a de facto division of the island). (Source: Wikipedia)

Projecting the Cyprus issue outside the national borders, on the two neighbouring guarantor powers, it is observable that Greece and Turkey interpreted and reacted to these years in two different manners. On the one side, for Greece, the Cyprus issue acted as a “dislocatory moment” which elevated any question connected to Cyprus to a matter of primary concern, becoming an unstable situation that worried the Greek population as well. As a consequence of this public regard, during the 1970s the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Party (*Panellínio Sosialistikó Kínima – PASOK*) led by Andreas Papandreou, and as representation of the:

“majority of the centre-left constituency, focused a large part of its political rhetoric on the populist appeal to an autonomous patriotic Greek self that stood against Turkish aggression and the Turkish threat” (Karatastanis 2014, 34).

Nonetheless, this appeal to the Turkish threats was not a new element in the Greek – populist but not only – political campaigns and discourses because, as far as

Greece is concerned, since its independence and its establishment on the international scene as a potentially powerful nation in both Europe and in the Eastern Mediterranean, it always had to focus the totality of its energy in monitoring the actions of and protect itself against the attacks, on several fronts, of a single antagonist: the Ottoman Empire first, and Turkey then. On the contrary, with reference to Turkey, it has always been involved in conflicts with numerous neighbour actors in the Middle East and in the North Africa region, i.e. the War in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2021 or the interventions in the two Libyan Civil Wars in 2011 and 2020; but also the wars and fights with other international powers, i.e. the Franco-Turkish war between 1918 and 1921 in southern Turkey and Syria or the involvement in the Korean War alongside the UN between 1950 and 1953. This can be identified as one of the cardinal factors for which during the first years of the Cyprus problem, the latter and the possible Turkish intervention in the protection of its Turkish Cypriot companions, became the central focus of national politics and one of the main source of preoccupation within the Greek border while this, at that time, had a minor impact on Turkey.

The inconsistent relationship between Greece and Turkey and the incompatibility between their interests, in Cyprus and in general, were exacerbated even more by the happening of what can be conceived as THE year that has definitively altered the history of Cyprus, probably in an irreversible way: 1974.

2.3 The History of Cyprus since the Invasion

In the previous paragraph, it has been mentioned that from the 21st April 1967 until the *Metapolitefsi* (“regime change”) on the 24th July 1974, Greece was ruled by the Greek Junta, the seven years of the right-wing military dictatorships. It was predominantly led by the dictator Georgios Papadopoulos and, in a second phase, by its hardliner officer Dimitrios Ioannidis; both, through the Regime of Colonels, inspired and instilled in Greece anti-communism policies, serious limitations of the civil liberties and rights, the torture, imprisonment and exile of political rivals (Bahcheli 1990, 113).

The collapse of the junta was not a single sudden event but was the result of a transition period of two years, the so-called *Metapolitefsi* (1973-1974) in which student demonstrations, i.e. the Athens Polytechnic uprisings, supported by other political demonstrations led by the opponents, i.e. Panagiotis Kanellopoulos (of the National Radical Union Party) and Stephanos Sefanopoulos (of the Liberal Democratic Center), pushed the Junta towards the failure and incited the process of re-democratization of the national government (Karakatsanis 2014, 44, 64).

However, taking a step backwards, it is important to notice how the perception of Cyprus and of Makarios III has changed over the 1950s and 1970s from the Greek point of view. As a matter of fact, if during the 1950s the Greek government promoted its own enosis policies aligned with the requests and the actions of the Greek Cypriot community, during the 1960s the Greek government has attempted, on various occasions, to exert control over the decisions that had to be taken by the Cypriot counterpart, by attempting to influence President Makarios' administration. Seeing that this desired control did not scratch the political line of Makarios and that he remained disobedient towards Athens, the latter organized several attempts to overthrow, or at least undermine, the Cypriot presidency and executive. This provocative attitude of the Greek government changed precisely when the Junta took control in 1967, given its affiliation to the far-right paramilitary organization EOKA-B, always instituted by General Georgios Grivas (Bahcheli 1990, 126-128). As both the EOKA-B in Cyprus and the Greek Junta followed the ultra-nationalistic ideology and believing that Makarios was giving up on the enosis project, they coordinated themselves in order to execute the 1974 coup d'état. The coup was carried out on the 15th July, mainly executed by the rebel factions of the (Greek) Cypriot National Guard and the EOKA-B militants, as anticipated, backed by the Greek Military Junta. On the other side, in defense of Makarios III sided the Cypriot Government, the factions of the Cypriot National Guard loyal to Makarios and the *Efedriko*, the Reserve Corps of the Cyprus Police.

The first positive result obtained by the potters was the takedown of Makarios III and its substitution with Nikos Sampson who installed a regime strongly pro-enosis and much more nationalist than the previous ones (Bahcheli 1990, 100). These two policies represented a direct threat to the Turkish Cypriots on the island because

this was the first time in which the Cypriot President was installed and supported directly by Greece, combating to implement the enosis desire of both Greek leaders and the Greek Cypriot community. With the materialisation of threats and discrimination against the Turkish Cypriots, they asked for the intervention of the UNFICYP, which at that moment had not the resources to act immediately. In the eyes of Turkey, then, the only possible response in defence of the Turkish Cypriot community was its direct armed intervention on the island.

Five days after the Greek Cypriot coup against Makarios, on the 20th July 1974, the Turkish forces landed on the northern part of the island legitimizing its intervention by proclaiming it “legal” on the basis of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, which gave it the power to intervene if the order on the island was jeopardized, as well as in case of non-compliance with the Cypriot national Constitution which prohibited any kind of action in support of the annexation of the island with another country – Greece.

Even if the Turkish intervention on the island seems to be an objective historical event, it is one of the most disputed about the name that should be used to refer to it. As a matter of fact, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community used to define it as a “peace operation” or “liberation operation” since Turkey justified and continues to justify its action in the name of the Treaty of Guarantee and in the name of the fact that it was a response to the attempted coup of the Greek Cypriots; while the official code name used by the Turkish military troops was “Operation Attila”. On the other side, the international community, the Greeks and the Greek Cypriot community prefer labels like “Turkish Invasion”, “Turkish Occupation” or “Turkish violation”, in order to highlight the negative nature of the fact and the illegality of the operation as well as the fact that the invasion of a sovereign country like Cyprus is must be condemned by the international society (Azgin et al. 2018)⁴.

The Turkish troops entered and occupied numerous and important villages in the northern part of the island, starting from those villages inhabited by the Turkish

⁴ The dispute over the name to attribute to the Turkish operation is one of the issues which remains without an agreed alternative, but in support of the illegality of the act against the sovereign state of Cyprus, in the following chapters the label of “Invasion” will be favoured.

Cypriots and then expanding their control up to dominate an abundant third of the island's territory (Bahcheli 1990, 53).

After this massive increase of Turkish presence on the island, in August 1974 the ceasefire was declared and the relative ceasefire line was officially established, becoming the United Nations Buffer Zone in Cyprus, the Green Line. If before the Buffer Zone was only a demilitarized zone established by the UNFICYP to better handle the intercommunal violence of 1963-64, after the events of 1974 it was extended, it became impassable and it turned into the de facto partition line of the island, between the (Greek) Republic of Cyprus and the area under the control of the independent government of the Turkish Cypriot community, established as the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus (TFSC) – action condemned by the UN Security Council with the Resolution 367 of the 12/03/1975 (UN Digital Library, 1976) – and subsequently transformed into the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), later in 1983 – also condemned by the UNSC with the Resolution 541 of the 18/11/1982 (UN Digital Library, 1983).

With the erection of the Buffer Zone, as it was conceived and materialised in 1974, the configuration of the island radically changed and, except for the opening of the crossing points, it is the one that can be observed today as well, and it is shown by Figure 2.3.1.



Figure 2.3.1: Map of Cyprus after the construction of the Green Line (in green) dividing the two parts of the island - the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus - since 1974. (In purple: the British sovereign military basis, still present) (Source: Military Histories)

A controversial characteristic of this Green Line is the different conceptions that the two communities have of it and the consequent implications. As a matter of fact, on the Turkish Cypriot side, the Buffer Zone has been erected as a fixed barrier, with walls and permanent constructions (Figure 3.3.2-a); on the contrary, the Greek Cypriots have opted for temporary constructions made of barrels, sandbags and wooden boards (Figure 3.3.2-b), since for them, the division of the island in the two parts should not have been something permanent, but only a transitory phase that would have led to the reunification of the island in the future. A different opinion was the one of the Turkish Cypriots who, with their realization of the permanent border, have expressed their preference and their request to create two different nations.



Figure 2.3-2: The two different sides (and interpretations) of the Green Line built in Nicosia in 1964. On the left (a): built as a wall and interpreted as a border; on the right (b): built as a removable barrier. (Sources: Foursquare and Travel off Path)

The ceasefire line, however, has not acted only as the label suggests but has functioned, voluntarily or involuntarily, as a divisive element. In fact, if relations between the two communities were already difficult before the outbreak of violence and the moments of interaction were scarce, with the erection of the Green Line they would be totally eliminated. For decades, indeed, it was not possible to pass through the Green Line, since the first crossing point was opened in 2003; the

impossibility of crossing for people, also made trade between the two sides more complicated; a lot of workers that, before the establishment of the Green Line, worked “on the other side”, lost their job. Nevertheless, also the human perspective on the issue is important, due to the fact that mixed families, bi-communal friendship and any kind of multicultural interaction were neglected.

The official partition of the island in the two “republics” had major implications for the general organization of the population and it marked the beginning of one of the events that most affected the national unity from a human and relational point of view. As a matter of fact, the predominant consequence was the population migration that started in 1974, since the families of Greek origins living in the north of the island had to move to the southern part of it, and vice versa for the families and groups of Turkish origin, moving from the south to the north. The main difference, however, is constituted by the number of people that were expelled: it is noteworthy that the Greek Cypriot people that crossed the Green Line from the north to the south amount to around 150.000, 80% of the entire Cypriot population (Tocci 2007, 32). For the opposite path, from the south to the north, the value amounts to approximately 60.000 Turkish Cypriots – half of the Turkish Cypriot population (ibid, 32). Still today, this issue has not been resolved yet, as it has been confirmed by the President of Cyprus, Nikos Christodoulides at the 20th September 2023 UN General Assembly:

“A third of them [the people of Cyprus is] still displaced as a result of foreign aggression against their own country. [...] It’s people – Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots - continue to suffer the consequences of invasion, occupation, division. They are deprived of fundamental freedoms and human rights” (Christodoulides 2023).

After the grouping in the north of all the people of Turkish origin, in 1975 the TFSC was established as the first phase towards the creation of a planned Turkish Cypriot state with Rauf Denktaş as the first elected President. Subsequently, in 1983, the name was changed and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, (*Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti*, KKTC) hereinafter simply TRNC, is established as a de facto state but this is an action condemned by the UN Security Council. The main feature that characterizes both these unofficial states is that neither of them has ever

been recognized by the international community, with the exception of Turkey, which still today is the only Government which recognizes the TRNC.

This division had certainly massive consequences from the point of view of inclusion in the international scene of the island as well as from the domestic economic, social and political points of view. Economically speaking, for example, the living standards of the Greek Cypriot community were substantially higher than those of the Turkish Cypriots because, if on the side of the first one, they managed to trade with Greece and they were able to cultivate also the international trade, especially with Europe, on the TRNC side, this was not feasible because, not being internationally recognized, the commercial agreements could be negotiated and signed only with Turkey. And this is linked also with the inclusion of Cyprus within the international scene in general, since the Republic of Cyprus was part of the international society as an independent state, which will culminate with its membership in the European Union later in 2004, while the Turkish Cypriot side remained excluded from all these practices. Moreover, taking into consideration tourism, which has always been one of the greater sources of economic income of the island, it has suffered a serious decrease after the 1974 Greek Cypriots' economic embargo, as it made "it difficult for British and European tourists to visit the north" (Bahcheli 1990, 159).

Despite all these disadvantages for the Turkish Cypriot community compared to the Greek Cypriot one, it is necessary to mention that, in any case, Turkey has managed to maintain the living standards of Turkish Cypriots relatively high through innumerable policies drawn up for them accompanied by economic measures adopted and aids sent directly on the island (ibid, 158-159).

As in the 1970s Cyprus represented the greater focus of the confrontation between Greece and Turkey, these two countries almost completely abandoned the political talks invoking the "friendship" and the cooperation that, as mentioned before, dominated the period from the 1930s and the 1950s. In fact, in this new arena of political antagonism (Karakatsanis 2014, 14) the only exception in this "call for friendship" was personified by the "radical leftists group, the anti-nationalist aspirations of the Institutional Lefts, the pacifism of liberal urban intellectual

élites”, all pressuring for improving the image of the Eastern Mediterranean region at the eyes of the international powers (ibid, 15).

In 1977, President Makarios III died and the successor that was elected after him was Spyros Kyprianou, who remained in office until 1988. However, some weeks before his death, Makarios started the negotiations with Rauf Denktas for the settlement of the Cyprus problem under the supervision and the umbrella of the UN, following the provisions settled by the Security Council resolutions and the two High-level Agreements. The aim of the first one, signed precisely in 1977, was the establishment of an independent, bi-zonal and bi-communal federation, administered by a central government. The second High-level Agreement was signed after two years, by the Cypriot President Kyprianou and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Denktas; in this case, the focal points were the respect and the guarantee of the fundamental freedoms and the human rights, the demilitarization and the work to ensure the territorial integrity of the Republic (Republic of Cyprus Embassy in Helsinki, n.d.). Nevertheless, even if at the institutional level these Agreements represent important steps forward, at the social level the discontent remains high and this has been intensified during the 1980s and the 1990s by the “reactivation of the negative sentiments between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots”, as result of the political decisions of the nationalist right-wing and centre parties which, on the one side, were depicting “the other” as something completely different, as the enemy and as “the other part of the border” as if it was something negative. On the other side, the leftist and the anti-nationalist parties, while calling for friendship, were leveraging the “mirror effect”, namely highlighting that the two communities were not as different as they believed since they shared the same fears as “the other”, i.e. the fear of the other’s expansionist aspirations and offensive intentions (Karakatsanis 2014, 14).

For Greece, the decade between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s represented a crucial step in its history as in 1975 it submitted its official request for becoming a European Community member, application that was accepted on the 1st of January 1981, making Greece the tenth EC member and allowing it to enjoy a period of economic and social growth. This is the reason why the Greek government insisted with the Greek Cypriot community to officially appeal to become an EC member

as well (European Union website, n.d.). In the following decade, during the 1990s, indeed, the talks and the negotiations for the European Union memberships started, not only for Cyprus but also for Turkey, shaping the Cyprus-EU-Turkey triangle.

For the latter, the process began in 1995 when the first agreement on the finalization for the creation of a customs union was signed between the Turkish government and the EU Association Council. Two years later during the Luxembourg Council summit of 1997, it was declared the eligibility of Turkey to become an EU member, being then classified as a “candidate country” in 1999. From that moment on, decades of negotiations and assessments will be carried on (DG NEAR 2023)– the outcomes of which will be introduced in the following chapters.

As far as Cyprus is concerned, instead, in 1990 the Greek Cypriot Community, on behalf of the entire island and meeting the pressures of Greece, applied for the European Community membership even if this proposal breaches the international law, as both the Treaty of Guarantee and the Cyprus Constitution of 1960 stated that “Any form of union, economic or political, of part or the whole of Cyprus to any organisation where both Greece and Turkey are not members, was prevented” (Öztürk et al. 2006, 8). Despite this “detail”, in 1993 the European Commission published its positive opinion on the application of the Republic of Cyprus to become a formal European Union member and in 1998 the EU listed Cyprus as a potential member for entering the Union (Publications Office of the European Union, 1993) after the beginning of UN-sponsored formal bi-communal negotiations for the membership (Editors of Mediterranean Quarterly 2014, 75).

Notwithstanding all the UN efforts, the EU-mediated negotiations for Cyprus’ membership, and all the initiatives targeted to reconnect the two communities in the best way in order to achieve the best possible results for the entire island obtainable from the accession to the EU, this project was not finalized. The main causes attributable to this failure, however, cannot be ascribed only to internal factors, but rather mainly to external pressures exerted by both Greek and Turkish political campaigns intended to constantly remind to the Greek and the Turkish Cypriot communities of the conflicts of the past and the controversial elements between them, starting from crises that occurred in those years. Some examples of Greek

and Turkish crises – that will be deepened in the next paragraphs – have been the crisis caused by the exploration for the resources which began in the late 1980s or the Imia/Kardak islets dispute in 1995-1996.

With the prospect of the new millennium at its beginning, between 1999 and the early 2000s, both in Cyprus, Greece and Turkey, can be noticed a change in the attitude towards some major aspects of the conflict. For example, in the three countries can be observed new “high-politics” discourses based on the “Greek-Turkish friendship” probably endorsed by the “boom in civil society Greek-Turkish rapprochement initiatives that flourished in parallel” to such friendship-return (Karakatsanis 2014, 18). A possible explanation for these reconciliation attempts has been attributed to the “two deadly earthquakes” that hit both Greece and Turkey in August and September 1999; these catastrophic events, for some scholars, served to make the two populations feel closer and more similar, highlighting the suffering that united them rather than the back-then-futile reasons for conflict (ibid, 66, 111). It was at that moment that in the political programmes, the “‘friendship’ discourse gained unprecedented publicity and was taken up widely by the media, the state and by diplomatic discourse” (ibid, 118) provoking a “shift of the climate in Greek-Turkish relations (ibid. 195). Using James Ker-Lindsay analysis of the years between 1999 and the beginning of the 2000s (2007, as quoted in Karakatsanis 2014), the author concludes that this was the period in which the “first noteworthy shifts towards a relatively normalised relation between the two states took place at the level of diplomacy and foreign policy” (ibid, 2), becoming the first moment in which real friendship attitude and policies was plausible and desirable since 1952, the year in which both countries joined the NATO.

As it happened for the stages that have marked both the individual history and the relations between Greece and Turkey presented until now directly reflecting on the history of Cyprus, also in the 2000s this trend continues. As a matter of fact, the improvements of Turkish-Greek relations have led to a gradual enhancement of the state of affairs in Cyprus. In 2002, for instance, the Greek Cypriot leader Glafcos Clerides and the Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktas agreed to meet three times per week to “begin the UN-sponsored negotiations after decades of stalled talks”, with a special focus on the EU membership aspirations (BBC, 2022; UN news,

2022) and the following year, in April, the first three crossing points are opened in the Green Line, precisely at the Ledra Palace, at Strovolia and Pergar Domethios, in order to allow the passage from one part to the other after thirty years of partition (UNFICYP, n.d.).



Figure 2.3-3: Map with the geographic location of the first three crossing points opened along the Green Line in 2003 (personal elaboration of the information applied with Google Maps).

In 2002, moreover, another crucial process saw its beginning. As a matter of fact, in November, the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented for the first time the most extensive and far-reaching project aimed at solving the Cyprus problem. In the plan, Annan depicted Cyprus as “a federation with two constituent parts, presided over by a rotating presidency” (BBC 2022). This idea of the unified island was taken into account and further elaborated during the December 2002 EU Summit in Copenhagen, which resulted in the invitation for Cyprus to join the EU, an idea that could only be realized to the extent that the island had officially reunified. Otherwise “without reunification, only the internationally recognized Greek Cypriot part of the island” would have gained the membership (ibid.).

The Annan Plan was promoted by the UN and the EU as the first and the most important step in the resolution and reconciliation process for the two communities. But, as specified by both these international institutions, the Annan Plan should have been approved by both communities to allow the reunification of the island and the benefits resulting from this improvement. The method selected to understand which were the intentions of the Turkish and the Greek Cypriot citizens with reference to the Annan Plan was the vote in a “Twin Referendum” on whether

to accept or reject the reunification plan elaborated by the UN which would have led to the EU membership of the entire island (ibid.).

The question that the Referendum presented to the voters was:

“Do you approve the Foundation Agreement with all its Annexes, as well as the constitution of the Greek Cypriot/Turkish Cypriot State and the provisions as to the laws to be in force, to bring into being a new state of affairs in which Cyprus joins the European Union united?” (Annex IX, Article 1.1)

Contrary to the expectations of the international community, the Annan Plan was endorsed by 65% of the Turkish Cypriot community but it was rejected by 76% of the Greek Cypriots.

Electorate	Yes	No
Greek Cypriots	24.17%	75.83%
Turkish Cypriots	64.90%	35.09%

Table 2.3-1: Cyprus Referendum results (24th April 2004) (source: Chadjipadelis and Andreadis 2007, 5)

The reasons behind these voting results are several. In the Republic of Cyprus, the political leaders, the at-that-time President Tassos Papadopoulos of the Democratic Party and the Cyprus major political party – the Progressive Party of Working People (*Anorthotikó Kómma Ergazómenou Laou*, AKEL), in the days before the referendum, they carried out a political campaign of belittling and rejection of the Annan Plan since, according to them, “the plan was excessively oriented towards a bi-zonal situation in the sense of creating permanent ethnic and legal separation” (Drath 2004 as quoted in Chadjipadelis and Andreadis 2007, 4). Moreover, the idea of a centralized government would have weakened the advantaged position of the Greek Cypriots because they should have shared the administration of the island with the Turkish Cypriots and, finally, they were not satisfied by the plan since it slowed the Turkish troops to remain on the island for “some time” even after the settlement (Chadjipadelis and Andreadis 2007, 4).

Moreover, the Greek Prime Minister, Kostas Koaramanlis, as well as the whole government decided not to pressure Cyprus in any way by keeping its neutral position over the plan; on the other side, however, the opposition party PASOK and

its leader George Papandreou, presented themselves as promoter and sponsor of the plan and incited the Cypriots to vote in favour of it.

On the Turkish Cypriot side, the voting outcome is much easier to understand. If since the proposal of the plan the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktaş, considered it excessively pro-Greek and, for this, he strongly advocated an opposing vote, the motivations supporting the acceptance of it, sponsored by the Turkish Cypriot Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Talat and the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, had a much stronger appeal on the majority of the population. They promoted the adoption of the Annan Plan as the most effective strategy to end their prolonged international isolation and their segregation with respect to both European and International trade. The supporter on which the international society had less certainties was the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan who, instead, interpreted the resolution of the Cyprus issue as the starting point for re-opening the negotiations on Turkey's accession to the EU and as the most efficient way to appease the relations with Greece.

Being the Annan Plan the most comprehensive peace agreement which had pointed out all the required details of any single aspect necessary for the establishment of the Bi-Communal - Bi-Zonal (BCBZ)⁵ federation – bi-communal from the Constitutional point of view and bi-zonal from the territorial point of view -, the Cypriots and the international diplomats had placed great hopes on the adoption of the plan. This is the reason why, after the failure, many scholars refer to the Annan Plan as the “biggest missed opportunity” for the resolution of this protracted conflict (Ahmet Sözen⁶, interview with the author, 14th February 2023).

Despite the rejection of the Annan Plan, and consequently going against what had been previously established both by the EU and the UN, on the 1st May 2004, exclusively the Republic of Cyprus became the sixteenth European Union member

⁵ The Bi-Communal – Bi-Zonal Federation has been compared to the efficient regional system present in Belgium – comparison elaborated by Kezban Akansoy, interviewed by the author on the 17th of February 2023. Kezban Akansoy is the Press and Information Officer of the European Commissioner Representation in Cyprus.

⁶ Ahmet Sözen is a professor of International Relations, he is the Chair of the Department of Political Science and International Relations as well as the Founding Director of the think tank Cyprus Policy Center at Eastern Mediterranean University (Famagusta, Northern Cyprus). He also was a member of the Turkish Cypriot negotiation team.

state. The complicated situation of the island, however, makes it difficult to manage the involvement and the inclusion of the island in the Union's politics. The compromise that has been achieved and which still represents the current situation is that the entire island is considered to be a member of the Union, although the terms of the *acquis communautaire*, the Union's body of laws, has been suspended in Northern Cyprus until the dispute is resolved (Editors of *Mediterranean Quarterly* 2014, 75).

It took a couple of years of adjustment from the moment of Cyprus' EU membership to, then, restart the negotiations between the two communities, which resumed only in July 2006 when President Tassos Papadopolous and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, under the UN guidance, agreed for a new "series of confidence-building measures and contacts between the two communities" (BBC 2022). The most magnificent symbol of this resume of the peace talks happened between January and March of the following year, with the Greek and Turkish Cypriots working together to dismantle the barriers of the Green Line dividing the historic centre of Nicosia.

The peace talks continued also in the following years, despite the fact that elections were held for new leaders in both communities. In 2008 the protagonists were the newly elected left-wing President Demetris Christofias, while the Turkish Cypriot leader in charge was still Mehmet Ali Talat. The Turkish Cypriot elections were held in April 2010 and they saw the victory of Dervis Eroglu of the pro-independence National Unity Party; with Eroglu it is observable an expected shift in the priorities during the negotiations since he presented a much harder line on the future of the island which will provoke the stalemate in the subsequent rounds (BBC 2022).

In between these elections and reconciliation negotiations, it must be borne in mind that these were also the years of the most important energetic resource discoveries and disputes all across the Eastern Mediterranean countries. In this context, Turkey from the late 1980s and Cyprus from 2011 were involved in regional and bilateral fights for the priority in the oil and gas drillings due to the overlapping continental shelf; furthermore, also the role played by the other

principal actors in the region, such as Egypt and Israel, must be included (more details will be provided in section 3.4.2).

After the Annan plan, the moment when the two communities came closest to solving the Cyprus problem (Hubert Faustmann⁷, interview with the author, 15th February 2023) was in 2017, after the two-years-long talks sponsored by the UN which culminated in the Crans Montana meetings. In June 2017, in fact, the UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric, for Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, stated that the talks were proceeding in a highly constructive way, in support of its claims that, hopefully, a settlement was, finally, possible (Dujarric 2017). Nevertheless, only some days after these declarations, the Crans Montana reunification talks collapsed – in this case announced by Secretary-General Guterres on the 7th July 2017 (Guterres 2017) - “fuelling fears that the Mediterranean island is heading towards permanent partition” (Smith 2017).

The situation that can be observed in Cyprus today does not show major improvements. After the disillusionment of the two bigger missed opportunities – i.e. the Annan Plan in 2004 and the Crans Montana talks of 2015-2017 -, namely the two moments in which the Turkish Cypriot requests were aligned with the Greek Cypriot demands, no great progresses have been made. Moreover, with the changing presidents and leaders of the two communities, the continued influence of the Greek and Turkish Governments, as well as of the international powers’ role in the resolution processes, all these elements have caused the continued shift in the priorities of the two communities. This is more evident in the preferences expressed by the Turkish Cypriots. As a matter of fact, it can be observed that, if they agreed with the proposal of the Annan Plan of establishing a BCBZ in a united island, during the 2015-2017 talks they were demanding principally equality with the Greek Cypriot counterpart – consisting in having equal rights, equal sovereignty on the island, equal opportunities and equal recognition in the negotiations (Ergün Olgun⁸, interview with the author, 14th February 2023). Furthermore, after 2020,

⁷ Hubert Faustmann is an Associate Professor of History and Political Science at the University of Nicosia; he is also the Head of the Cyprus Office of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Nicosia.

⁸ Ergün Olgun is the Turkish Cypriot Special Representative in the UN negotiations; previously, he worked in the Human Resources Consultancy in the Turkish Cypriot Administration; he has also been a consultant for the UN Development Programme and, finally, he took part in the Annan Comprehensive Solution Plan negotiations.

the Turkish Cypriot delegation stated that they would cease to be in favour of the establishment of the BCBZ, shifting their support to a greater independence (Ahmet Sözen, interview with the author, 14th February 2023). The reasons behind this variation can be attributed to both domestic and international factors. On the domestic side, there is for example the persistent intransigence of the Greek Cypriots, apparently not seriously interested in solving the problem as, in any case, they are EU members and they enjoy numerous benefits compared to the Turkish Cypriots; moreover, there is also the frustration and the exhaustion of the Turkish Cypriot community which continues to live with a lot of difficulties due to the non-recognition and the international isolation. Among the international influencing factors, it has to be mentioned that also Turkey, under the rule of Erdoğan, has become more assertive and determined, able to influence even more the Turkish Cypriot leaders and which gained a more important and valuable position in the European and International society (ibid.). More in detail, within the AKP party itself, a shift has been observed in this regard: when it came to power in 2002, the party advocated for the bicomunal-federal solution for Cyprus proposed by the UN's plan. However, with the elections of the party leadership and Erdoğan rising from Prime Minister to President of Turkey, for the following rounds of negotiations Turkey pushed the Turkish Cypriot authorities to demand for a two-state solution or for a loose confederation, as a consequence of having re-embraced the "traditional policy" in Turkey itself (Özertem 2021, 2).

In the future, Erdoğan himself, the next president or the local leaders would probably turn the tables, modifying the requests of one community or the other, shifting the orientation of the policies both toward the neighbour community and towards the international relations of the island, there could be the intervention of other powers or institutions that would make more effective changes in favour of solving the Cyprus problem.

However, for the moment, one important thing that can continue to be made is focusing on the elements that nowadays are still impeding its resolution. Among these factors, as this dissertation is going to demonstrate, there are all the frictions that Greece and Turkey are still carrying along from their past problems. These are going to be the focus of the next pages, which will be exactly about the various

contentious in the Eastern Mediterranean and that, often, see these two countries as the main protagonists.

CHAPTER III: ANALYSIS OF THE RIVALRIES BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY

In order to elaborate his study on the “Turkish-Greek Relations” of 2014, the academic Leonidas Karakatsanis presented himself as a researcher and a scholar interested in understanding and analysing the “Turkish-Greek friendship”. The reaction of the people he met on the field was quite unanimous and can be resumed in a couple of questions: “Does it really exist?”, “Has it ever existed?” or “Is there, actually, such a thing as ‘Greek-Turkish friendship’?” (Karakatsanis 2014, 1). The deep study conducted by such author, together with other researchers such as those included in the historical framework presentation in this dissertation (e.g. Bahcheli 1990), all agree on the fact that since the moment of the partition of the two different countries, namely since the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s, the bilateral relations between these two countries have been characterized mainly by conflicting attitudes, rather than the imagined friendship.

By this time, Greece was not part of the Ottoman Empire anymore and, as an external element, it began to be seen more as a threat than a possible ally from Ankara; subsequently, this became even more evident with the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, which dates back to the 29th October 1923, after the Turkish National Movement started the War of Independence on the 19th May, 1919.

As of this moment, some old disagreements started to be exacerbated, e.g. the ambition of the supremacy over the Aegean Sea, and new contentions, e.g. the aspiration to control the newly discovered energetic resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, worsened the already delicate relationship between Greece and Turkey. Together with these political and strategic motives of dispute, it is essential to take into account also the perception that one people has about the other: broadly speaking, “Greeks tend to view Turks as crude and barbaric”, highlighting more the suffering of their people under the oppressive Ottoman rule while talking about their enemies in the political discourses (Bahcheli 1990, 30). On the contrary, Turkey tend to leave the rhetoric of the enmity with the Greeks for the public life, giving them only a marginal place in the political discussions. In the public representation of their counterparts, the Turkish people highlight their “resentment

and bitterness”, their unreliability, and their anchorage in the past which led them to bear the “ancient enmity toward the Turks” (ibid, 30). All of this was surrounded by a fear that the Greeks could attack the Turkish people at any time.

Furthermore, a peculiar feature of these bilateral relations is that their outcomes and impacts did not affect only Turkey and Greece, but the major effects can be observed in Cyprus, noticeable still today. This is due to the fact that, in the mid-1950s, the island became the major “arena where Greek and Turkish interests clashed”, becoming the pivotal element of the “deterioration of contemporary Greek-Turkish relations” (ibid., 31).

Nevertheless, even if none of the controversies between these two countries had the same “profound, damaging, and prolonged impact as Cyprus” (ibid., 50), it must be kept in mind that this is only a piece of the puzzle representing the complex and problematic configuration of the Greek and Turkish relations. More generally speaking, Kurop (1998) mentions only some of the elements increasing the hostility and the complicatedness of these specific disputes, e.g.:

“political problems in essence, political problems underscored and overwhelmed by historical bad blood, incessant second-guessing of motives, and high-pitched rhetoric that plays well in each side’s press”

that made Greece and Turkey “simply different animals, psychologically and politically” (p. 7). One of the mechanisms governing this typology of interstate connection is the fact that once there are disputes over certain elements, it is easier for other rivalries to come out, originating a vicious cycle from which it is difficult to exit. And this is the case with the rival character that has always described the relationships between Turkey and Greece.

Observing broadly the bilateral relations between these two countries, and highlighting the findings of Karakatsanis (2014), they can be summarized as follows: for most of the time, the idea of a possible friendship has been only an imaged possibility used by politicians to support some kind of reconciliation policies, but its concrete pursuing has not been attempted, nor achieved, due to the natural incompatibilities between Greece and Turkey. Only in a few and limited periods the rapprochement and reconciliation practices have been chased, i.e. the “détente” developed between 1923 and 1954 after the settlements established by

the Lausanne Treaty, or precisely after specific events that required coordination and harmonization of the relations, i.e. in the years around 1952, during the process of application and accession to NATO. Except for these rare moments, the Turkish-Greek rivalry has always accompanied their social, political, economic, military and strategic relations; these multiple fronts of confrontations will be the focus of the next paragraphs, at the end of which the complexity of the ties that hold these two fundamental actors of the Mediterranean Sea will be more clear.

3.1 The Supremacy in the Aegean Sea

One of the most enduring source of antagonism between Turkey and Greece is the supremacy that both of them aim to establish over the Aegean Sea. This is due to the fact that it represents the water separating the two mainland areas of the countries and because it includes all the island that are part of the Greek jurisdiction but some of which are vindicated by Turkey, due to the closeness to its border.



Figure 3.1-1: - Location of the Aegean Sea with reference to both Turkey and Greece (World Atlas 2021)

The transformation of the Aegean into a contention arena started to be more evident than ever since the Greek War of Independence (1821-1832) when the Greek people vindicated the surrounding islands as belonging to the Greek culture and as an essential element of its identity since they represented the core of the ancient Athenian and Byzantine empires (International Crisis Group – ICG 2011, 2). This situation partly smoothed in the first half of the XX century, more precisely after the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty in 1923, whose principal clause concerned the setting up of the official borders between these two countries.

Nonetheless, in the 70s the peaceful coexistence and common usage of the Sea between the two naval forces collapsed as a direct consequence of the escalation of the Cyprus conflict, after the attempted Greek coup and the following Turkish invasion.

The new dispute of that decade developed around the conviction of both sides that the continental shelf overlapped –

“the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas adjacent to the coast but outside of the area of the territorial sea [...] (or) adjacent to the coasts of islands” (Article 1 of United Nations Continental Shelf Convention 1958, 2 reaffirmed in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982)

- and that both had the right to take action in the area under consideration, according to their needs and desires. This included also the right to send vessels and ships in exploration; this was one of the first Turkish moves in 1974, the dispatching of the oceanographic “*Çandarlı*”, accompanied by several warships. In this case, Athens's proposal to solve the dispute was “to take the continental shelf issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and solve other problems through negotiations” (ICG 2011, 2). In 1976, Turkey decided to send the “*Sismik I*” to Lesbos island to collect seismic data, but always followed by a fleet of warships; diversely, on this occasion Athens went on full alert and, before taking the issue to the ICJ, Britain honouring its appellation of “Guarantor Power” attempted to mediate the dispute. Also the UN Security Council intervened with Resolution 395 requiring a reduction in tensions (ibid.).

In the following decade, while negotiating the resolution of the coinciding continental shelf, both powers were affected by the oil crisis of 1987; in the attempt to minimize the damages, Greece began to drill in the Eastern Aegean and, similarly, Turkey sent the “*Piri Reis*” “to search for hydrocarbons just outside Greek territorial seas, but in a portion of the Aegean that Greece considered part of its continental shelf” (ibid., 3). Athens, as did for the previous offence, immediately mobilised troops on the border with Turkey, also coordinating with Bulgaria. However, a compromise between the Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal and the Greek Deputy Foreign Minister Yannis Kapsis was found to prevent the outbreak

of violence: the former would have withdrawn the navy if the latter had no longer drilled across the national maritime border. This compromise marked the beginning of a reconciliation and trust-building path, going from the “Davos process” of March 1988 between Özal and Andreas Papandreou, the Greek Prime Minister of the time, passing through the “Memorandum of Understanding” signed in May 1988 by Mesut Yilmaz and Karolis Papulias, respectively Özal and Papandreou’s successors; finally, the parts get to the “Agreement on Preventing Accidents in International Seas and Airspace” in September.

The subsequent contentious concerns the already mentioned Greek sovereignty on the majority of the islands located in the Aegean, and this is mainly due to the ratification or the non-recognition of different treaties, as it happened with the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). In fact, said Convention was ratified by the Greek Parliament in 1995 obtaining the possibility for the Government to “extend territorial seas to twelve nautical miles from the state’s low-water line” (22 km) (Art. 3 UNCLOS 1982, 23). Turkey, on its part, not only avoided taking into consideration the UNCLOS, but even considered Greece’s move as a *casus belli* against it and against the validity of what was previously agreed with the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, namely that the territorial waters protracted for six nautical miles in the Aegean.

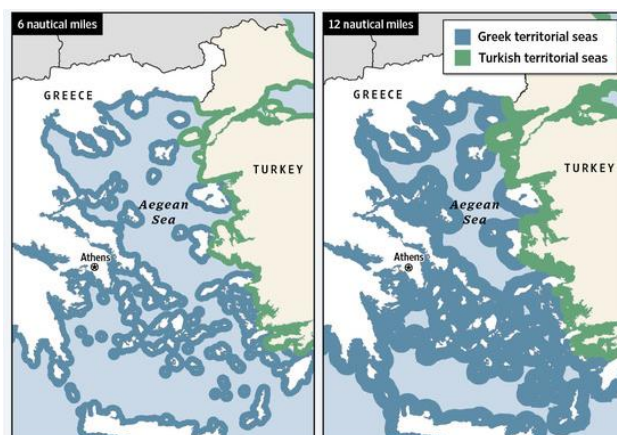


Figure 3.1-2: Configuration of the Aegean Sea: on the left side, according to the Lausanne Treaty (6 nautical miles); on the right, according to the UNCLOS (12 nautical miles). In areas where territorial waters overlap, the midpoint between the two coasts is typically the dividing line (source: The Wall Street Journal 2013)

The unique ratification of the UNCLOS by the Greek Parliament represents a complication in the Aegean; however, it is undeniable that, if also Turkey decides

to extend its territorial waters to twelve miles, the dispute would become even more difficult to solve. As a matter of fact, and as Figure 3.4.1-2 shows, with the six nautical miles' regime, Greece governed 35% of the Aegean, Turkey ruled over 7.5% of it, while the remaining 57.5% was left to the international high sea. In contrast, if both would agree to the twelve miles' regime, the portion controlled by Turkey would increase up to 10% while the international corridor would almost disappear as the section under the Greek rule would enhance, and actually enhance, up to 63.9% (Schmitt 1996, 48).

On the one side, Athens sweetened the pot of the extension of the territorial waters by agreeing on the permit for the passage through the territorial seas to all civilian and commercial ships along with military vessels, in innocent or transit passage. On the other side, Turkey confirmed its accusation to Greece for the "act of war" by claiming to have been "shut out from the Aegean and encircled" (Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu 2010, quoted in ICG 2011, 5).

The Greek share may be reduced, and consequently also the eventual threat for Turkey, if its islands were considered differently from the mainland maintaining the territorial water around them measured at 6 nautical miles. Greece relies on the fact that "the territorial sea, [...] and the continental shelf of an island are determined in accordance with the provisions of this Convention applicable to other land territory" (Article 121, UNCLOS 1982, 66). This means that if for the mainland the national waters are extended to twelve miles, the same can be applied also to the islands. Nevertheless, the Turkish reply builds on the discretionary nature of this application, even more if considering the island adjacent to the Turkish coasts (ICG 2011, 6).

The different measures of the territorial waters do not represent only a legal matter, but a problem of practical management. This was made evident by an episode happened in December 1995, when a Turkish bulk carrier ran aground in an area called "Kardak" in Turkish and "Imia" in Greek, precisely in the vicinity of a couple of inhabited islets located between the Greek Dodecanese chain and the

Turkish coast, as shown in Figure 3.4.1-3.



Figure 3.1-3: Map of the Geographic Location of the Imia/Kardak islets.
(source: *The Economist* 2017)

For the rescue of the ship’s crew, the Greek assistance was rejected in the name of the fact that the area belonged to the Turkish national sea, originating a media conflict over who first and most convincingly declared jurisdiction over the two islets (ICG 2011, 3). All of this, which went down in history as the “Imia Crisis” or “Kardak Crisis”, saw the intervention of both NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and the U.S. diplomatic pressure to propose a truce on the discussion, as well as military confidence-building measures for the following years in order to, at least, maintain the status quo, formalized afterwards by the 1997 “Non-Aggression Declaration” in Madrid (ibid.).

The important detail about the dispute on the territorial seas is that this implies also other series of problems, related to the airspace, the flight information regions, the military flights and shipping routes and the militarisation of the islands in the Aegean.

As it has been pointed out until now, one focus of the disputes is represented by the management of the islands between the two mainlands. Maintaining the spotlight on them, not only their position is precarious and unsettled, but also the fact that some of them are militarised and used as a protection front is not moving the situation towards a more peaceful coexistence. This militarising practice at the hands of Greece has been incriminated by Turkey as it goes against the “demilitarized status” stipulated by the international law, starting from Articles 4 and 6 of the 1923 Lausanne Convention Relating to the Regime of the Straits

(Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022). Such demilitarization clauses, according to Greece, were superseded in 1936 by the Montreux Convention on the Regime of the Straits which, by allowing Turkey to refortify the area in order “to furnish the necessary facilities for the safe passage” (Article 23 and Protocol 1(1)) in the zone of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Straits, raised the obligation of demilitarization also concerning Greece (Montreux Convention 1936 as quoted by the National University of Singapore, n.d.). On the other side, when it comes to the Dodecanese islands, their demilitarisation was established with the 1947 Paris Treaty, more precisely with Article 14(2) (Paris Treaty 1947, 11 as quoted in US Naval War College, n.d.).

The sensitivity around the militarization issue intensified considerably after the outbreak of the Cyprus conflict in 1974 which, once again, it proved to be a crucial year for the history of the Eastern Mediterranean. Due to this unique circumstance, security has risen even further in the list of priorities of both the responsible countries and this has consequences for both Turkish and Greek security policies. Turkey opted for the institution of its “Fourth Army” (also called the “Aegean Army”). Started as a “training army [...] established in Turkey on legal ground and (with) a defensive character” (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2022), it became one of the main formations of the Turkish Army, with the headquarter located in İzmir, with the aim of protecting the entire western coast of Anatolia. This new branch of the military, in the Greek mindset, is perceived as a potential threat and, therefore, Greece grounded on this its justification for the further militarisation of the islands in the Aegean (ICG 2011, 10).

The intricate and unpredictable nature of the security policies in the Aegean waters by both countries implies, as a consequence, a series of dilemmas on how to administer the airspace and the over-flights of it. Three different interrelated questions can be disentangled: reasonably, the dispute over the continental shelf is reflected also in the overlapping of the two national airspaces; this affects the handling of the two countries’ Flight Information Regions and, finally, also the problems related to the fly over inhabited islands.

As regards the national airspace, the issue is determined in the first place by the 1958 Convention on Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone and, subsequently, is

reaffirmed by the UNCLOS itself. Article 2 of the 1958 Convention, as a matter of fact, states that “This sovereignty extends to the air space over the territorial sea as well as to its bed and subsoil” (Convention on Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone 1958, 27). In the same manner as for the territorial waters, also for the national airspace the Turkish non-recognition of the UNCLOS generates numerous and similar problems. Moreover, Athens claims that Turkey is directly challenging the legal basis for the Greek airspace enlargement by flying in the Greek extended territorial airspace and the one claimed also by Turkey (ICG 2011, 9) – the area marked in red in Figure 3.4.1-4.



Figure 3.1-4: Turkish-claimed areas (both as a territorial sea and as territorial airspace). In blue: the Greek territorial sea-airspace; in pink: the Turkish territorial sea-airspace; in red: territorial sea-airspace that the UNCLOS recognizes as Greek but that Turkey refuses to acknowledge as Greek. (source: ekathimerini.com)

In the red area, Turkey had conducted low-altitude flights, focusing mainly on Greek islands, leading to an automatic deployment of the Greek military aircraft. These continued clashes have led, in the period between 1995 and 2011, to the death of three Turkish pilots and four Greek pilots (ICG interview with a European military official, Athens, May 2011).

One of the most thought-provoking findings refers to the funds that both Turkey and Greece continue to allocate to implement security policies aimed at protecting against each other, despite the fact that both of them are two significant members of NATO Stability in the region. That is because, despite the implausibility of an attack of a NATO member against another NATO member due to the chain of effects that this would entail, the lack of trust and the continuous suspicion for the

actions of the counterparts require the maintenance of a large amount of money devoted to military expenditure.

Combining the studies provided by the International Crisis Group (2011) and the data provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute – SIPRI (2020) it is possible to compare the official data referring to the period between the mid-1990s and 2010 with the period 2010-2019.

	<i>Greece</i>			<i>Turkey</i>		
	Mid-1990s	2010	2019	Mid-1990s	2010	2019
<i>Expenditure in \$</i>		6 billion	5.5 billion		15 billion (2.3 billion in defense)	20.4 billion
<i>% of the GDP</i>	5.5%	2.8%	2.6%	4%		2.7%
<i>Variation 2010-2019</i>		-23%			+ 86%	

Table 3.1-1: Military expenditures for defense of both Greece and Turkey personally elaborated by taking into consideration the data published by the International Crisis Group (2011) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2020)

The overall image obtainable from this table is that over the years, Turkey has continued to increase the money allocated for military expenses, due to the mistrust toward Greece but mainly for the other conflicts in the Middle East in which Turkey has been involved or decided to intervene; on the other hand, as far as Greece is concerned, notwithstanding the government decided to substantially reduce the military spending for defence (from the 5.5% to the 2.6% of the national GDP), this still represents the higher allocation of a NATO-EU member calculated proportionally to the dimension of the country, the population and the national GDP. To make a comparison, the share of GDP dedicated to military spending in 2010 – always proportionally to the population, the national GDP and the dimension of the country - amounts to 2.0% for France, 1.8% for Poland, 1.5% for Italy and 1.3% for Germany (SIPRI 2020, 2).

Moreover, differently from Turkey which is involved in more than one armed front, the majority of the funds spent by Greece are dedicated to the defence against the historic Turkish enemy.

As can be deduced from this brief analysis of the “Aegean Angst” (Schmitt 1996), this conflictual environment is much more delicate today than it was decades and centuries ago for the reason that all the elements that have been presented here are intricate and it is impossible to solve one of these issues without disappoint the other part in another issue. The positive element about all of this is that both countries are well aware that security in the Aegean Sea is necessary to maintain the minimum level of equilibrium and is considered as the primary concern for both Athens and Ankara. A similar conclusion has been outlined by Schmitt (1996) when determining that: “The labyrinthine dispute over the Aegean are complex and long-standing. As such, they do not easily admit of conclusive resolution” (p. 64) and this is caused by the fact that:

“the issues presented in the Aegean case are interrelated; on repeated occasion, progress on one has been frustrated by discord over another. Any lasting resolution, therefore, will inevitably have to address the dispute as an integral whole (and) ... must blend law with both practicality and a sensitivity to the reasonable concerns of the other side” (ibid., 65)

From this first comprehensive chapter about the supremacy in the Aegean Sea, the control and the management of the island, the airs-space-related problems and the militarization of the two countries’ armies, it is possible to outline other several problems, among which the recent issue about the jurisdiction over the resources found the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and the both countries’ membership into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. These are going to be the focus of the following two paragraphs.

3.2 The Control of the Resources in the Eastern Mediterranean

One of the most recent fronts of the Aegean competition is represented by the control over the energetic resource basins that have been discovered precisely in the Eastern Mediterranean and, consequently, around Cyprus itself. This is part of a multifaceted challenge: at least three actors are competing for the management of the resources, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus which create further problems that add to the background conflict between Greece/Greek-Cypriots and Turkey/Turkish-Cypriots. To the number of actors involved also other clashing addends must be added: the overlapping Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and the unsolved delimitation of the national maritime shelf between Turkey, Greece and all the other countries facing the Eastern Mediterranean and the regional conflict for the resources concerning Israel, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria as well. These are all factors that make the debate over the management of resources even more complicated and seemingly irresolvable.

The impact of energy in the modern world and lifestyle is growing and, subsequently, this happens to the importance of analysing it as a source for conflict-peace between parties as well. This is also the reason behind the creation, especially in the very complex situation in the MENA region, for the political condition for the securitization of these discoveries and their processing paths and the following elaboration of the creation of a new level of analysis for such intricate circumstance, the “regional security complexes” (RSCs), defined by Buzan and Weaver (2003) as a “distinct and significant sub-system of security relations existing among a set of states whose fate is locked into geographical proximity” (Buzan and Waver 2003, 4 as quoted in Iseri 2019, 258). In other words, and considering security and insecurity as security aspects, they can be understood as “joint spaces where states interact over various (in)security sectors (Iseri 2019, 258). As a matter of fact, the insecurity about the future management of energetic resources is one of the most powerful elements that can be manipulated to move the focal points of the regional balances.

Always considering regional security as the subject of their studies, Buzan et al. (1998) distinguished five different areas in which securitization can occur and be a potent process: military, political, economic, social and environmental (as quoted

in Iseri 2019, 258). However, after the analysis of the (in)security determined by the energetic sector, Iseri concludes that energy can be proposed “as a sixth sector that interacts with the other five security sectors” (p. 258) and it cannot be included as an intersection of the other five since it represents a “particularly exclusive policy domain”, even if connectable with the others. The practical example to explain this assumes that “a lack of energy resources can be conceived as a factor increasing the likelihood of military conflict” (ibid., 259).

Moreover, energy is a sector which needs a constant and deep analysis as a shaper of international relations because it is characterized by two features: imminence and immediacy. They both refer to the fact that “energy insecurity can appear at any time (and instantly), and with the potential to escalate from a minor to an existential threat” (ibid. 259), as the case of the Eastern Mediterranean shows. All these elements will be deepened and presented through the focus on gas, as characteristics easily relatable and recognizable in what is the current situation of the Eastern Mediterranean.

All of this, howbeit, must be considered as only a part of a much bigger phenomenon which does not involve only the Eastern Mediterranean, but also the neighbouring Europe. This is introduced with the name of “(new) Great Game”, defined by Tanchum (2021) as:

“an intense and complex competition over the nexus of trans-Mediterranean trade routes, energy transit routes, and industrial manufacturing value chains that connect Europe and the MENA region” (Tanchum 2021, p. 12).

In this game, however, other three of the Mediterranean basin’s largest countries have to be taken under advisement alongside Turkey, namely France, Egypt and Italy. Some of these, it will be demonstrated, will have a leading role in the energetic sector of the region, while others will be presented for their backing and supporting role (ibid. 12). Assembling on the one side the actions and the decisions of all these western crucial actors and, on the other side, the Cyprus problem, the Turkish-Greek maritime dispute and the conflict in Libya, the author elaborates another explanation for this (New) Great Game, understandable also as a strategy “to reorder Mediterranean power relations and the patterns of trans-Mediterranean connectivity” (ibid. 12) using energetic resources as a starting point.

The following pages will offer a comprehensive exposition of the current state of affairs for the two most problematic resources: gas – presented as the energetic resource creating more complications at the international level around Cyprus in recent times – and water – introduced as the “Second Cyprus problem” (Hoffman 2018, 267) due to its long-standing presence in the island and its correlation(s) with the Cyprus conflict.

3.2.A Gas

The first capital that is going to be covered is gas, the central resource around which the main naval explorations are organized and which generated the main arguments since it “is gradually becoming the ‘oil’ of the Eastern Mediterranean” (Tziarras 2019, 6). The tightening of the relationships around the gas is confirmed by a modified behaviour that can be observed in all the countries involved in resource explorations and energy production. As a matter of fact, these two fields have become unquestionably dangerous, since they moved from simple expeditions and research to something more, explained by Vogler and Thompson as follows:

“Naval and air forces designed to fight conventional wars are being assigned to take on roles traditionally associated with coast guard, such as [...] enforcing rules regarding licensing for offshore resource exploration and exploitation, providing point defence for critical national infrastructure, and preventing companies from operating under licenses issued by rival jurisdictions.” (Vogler and Thompson 2015, 2).

These specifications emphasize quite clearly how delicate and militarised the question of resources in the Eastern Mediterranean has become and how a wrong move can trigger a series of national responses that can generate something from which it would be difficult to go back.

Also around the Republic of Cyprus, in its EEZ, considerable quantities of gas have been discovered, approximately between 3 and 5 trillion cubic feet (equivalent to 80-140 billion cubic metres) have been estimated, unevenly distributed among the “Aphrodite”, the “Calypso” and the “Cuttlefish” basins. Other major reservoirs are located nearby of Cyprus’ EEZ, namely the “Levantine”, the “Tanin” and the “Karish” basins in Israel’s EEZ and the “Zohr” basin in Egypt’s EEZ (as Figure

3.4.2-1 shows).

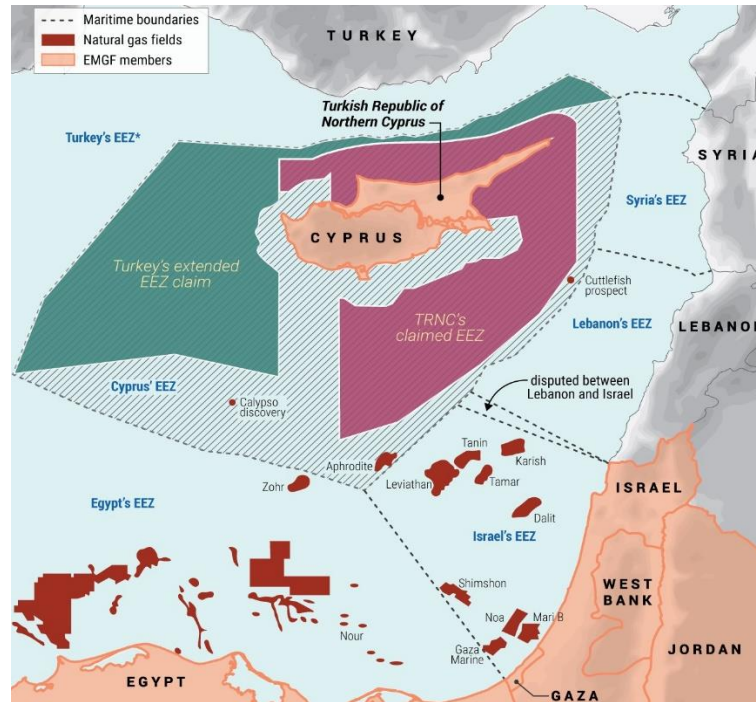


Figure 3.2.A-1: Natural Gas basins in the Eastern Mediterranean, with the precise location with reference to the countries' EEZs (source: Geopolitical Futures).

Since the moment of the first discovery, the explorations have continued with the aim of getting to the point in which, controlling a reasonable share of the gas stream, it will provide the island “with energy for the indefinite future and consolidate its economic recovery” after the crisis originated by the division of the country (Vogler and Thompson 2015, 5). Nevertheless, the geopolitical complications gravitating around the island and characterizing the region, prevent Cyprus from moving freely in this direction. The internal dispute of the country is that both the TRNC authorities, backed by Turkey, and the RoC Government agree on the fact that “both communities should benefit from the hydrocarbons discoveries but the two sides do not agree on how this should be achieved” since neither recognizes the other party and declares it illegitimate (ibid., 5).

As previously mentioned, while explaining the different desires for control of the Aegean Sea, in 2011 there was one of the first confrontations between Turkey and Cyprus as a response to the Turkish deployment of warships around possible gas basins in the Cyprus EEZ and the Turkish dispatch of research vessels seen as direct provocation to the island. Three years later, in 2014, Turkey expelled a Norwegian research vessel exploring hydrocarbons in the Cyprus EEZ, bypassing the island’s

authorities and, again, imposing its position over an area under the jurisdiction of Cyprus (*ibid.*, 5).

All these military actions, however, reflect also in the entire political process since the most common response to a military action like these is the suspension of the participation, of one or more parties, to the international talks. An example of this behaviour can be attributed to the RoC President Nicos Anastasiades, who in 2014 interrupted the talks with the Turkish Cypriot President Derviş Eroğlu that aimed at the solution of the division of the island.

After these Turkish acts aimed at undermining the Cypriot authority over its own EEZ, claimed by Turkey as of its property, the island defended its own jurisdiction by conceding drilling rights and permissions to the companies that it opted for; in fact, currently, it is possible to detect exploratory missions by American, Italian, French, South Korean and Israeli companies.

This last-mentioned country, Israel, took advantage of the unstable equilibrium in the Eastern Mediterranean by establishing a mutually beneficial alliance with Cyprus, generated by the necessity to form a united front against a common enemy, Turkey. This occasion develops in the form of a joint military exercise as a response to the October 2014 Turkish seismic surveys in a zone claimed by the latter but, as in the previous dispute, recognized as part of the Cyprus EEZ. Moreover, due to the increased sensitivity of the offshore resources exploration issue, the Cyprus Ministry of Defence also requested Israel military support, offered through the provision of two offshore vessels to improve the “anti-air, anti-submarine and anti-ship warfare capability” of the Cypriot maritime force (*ibid.* 6).

Since this joint action, the security relations between Cyprus and Israel have intensified enough to face the increasing diplomatic and political pressures from Turkey. In addition, this type of security relationship has been extended also towards Greece and Egypt, in order to constraint as much as possible the room of manoeuvre of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean (*ibid.*, 7).

However, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, also some Western European countries play a decisive role in producing changes in the MENA energetic question. One of the cases with the greatest impact is the Italian major energetic company, Eni, which officially is a private firm but, in reality, the Italian

government exercises control over around 30% of the company's share (Eni website, 2023). Its entry into the game dated in August 2015, began with the discovery of the massive Zohr gas field, currently owned by Egypt, which increased by far the natural gas available for the European market. Furthermore, Eni played the role of "lead operator in Cyprus's natural gas development", in addition to the influence as a sponsor of the promotion of the pooling of Cypriot, Israeli and Egyptian gas towards the latter liquefaction plants (LNG) of which Eni itself is a principal stakeholder, in order to reduce costs and increase the efficiency of this gas' market (Tanchum 2021, 13). As can be noticed, there is no moment in which Turkey is included in this "Eni's plan" for Energy management in the Eastern Mediterranean, leading Turkey to warn of possible repercussions on relations with Italy itself and the EU. The Turkish response to these actions began with a decision of Ankara to limit the naval action for the drill ships sailing towards the drilling site in the Cypriot waters, starting from February 23, 2018. Eni's counter-reply to this limitation was the starting of a partnership with the French energy giant Total as one of the Cypriot licensing blocks (ibid, 13-14). In the meantime, also Cyprus was working to mitigate the risks by signing an agreement with Egypt to supply the LNG plants for export, a deal which Israel decided to join immediately after. All these new moves in the geopolitical-energetic game of the Eastern Mediterranean generated further concerns for Ankara, which became clear when it engaged in a series of "measured exercises of gunboat diplomacy" – procedure of foreign policy which consist in "making another country accept your demands by using the threat of force" (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, n.d.); alternatively, "the use of military threats by a strong country against a weaker country in order to make that country obey it" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) - as a complementary manoeuvre to the increase of exploration and drill ships sent into the Cypriot waters, each of them accompanied by a naval escort (ibid. 14); the reason justifying the increased intension and militarization of the expedition was the protection and the defence of the rights Turkish Cypriot, who had been "precluded from the development of Cyprus offshore natural gas despite being the legal co-owners of Cyprus' natural resources" (ibid. 14).

In the Turkish initial plan, these moves should have disrupted the relationship

between Nicosia and Rome, by showing that the exclusion of the Turkish Cypriot community could have jeopardized the enforcement of the agreed-joined actions. However, this Turkish counter-offensive strengthened the front composed of Rome-Nicosia-Cairo. With this triad as a starting point, between 2019 and 2021 the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (“EMGF”) was founded by Italy, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan, and officially entered into force, as an attempt to constraint the Turkish escalation. Given the fundamental influence of Turkey in the Eastern Mediterranean energy sector, an inclusive action comprising Ankara in the decision-making process in this respect could have been useful in softening and reducing the tensions between all the players and in finding a solution from which everyone could have benefitted. Nevertheless, this was not the case, since Turkey has been excluded from the EMGF. Subsequently, the EMGF involuntarily changed its nature, from “an international organization for promoting the development and marketing of Eastern Mediterranean gas”, or in other words “the umbrella for cooperation and dialogue regarding the development of gas resources in the region” (Stergiou in Tziarras 2019, 11), it evolved towards a more general international security organization against the Turkish threat, which gained more and more military support both from France and Italy as EMGF members and from the USA, after their application as observers in the forum, all of which are, also, Turkish allies inside the NATO (ibid. 14-15).

Turkey found itself facing increased isolation in the region and reacted to this with a formal and overt alliance with the Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, formalized in 2019 with two Agreements, one on the “Delimitation of Maritime Jurisdiction Areas in the Mediterranean” and, the second one, on the “Security and Military Cooperation” (ibid. 15). This alliance caused the triggering of a series of chain events which include the General Khalifa Haftar campaign against Tripoli, supported by France and Egypt, the Turkish military intervention alongside the GNA to hamper the said campaign, the numerous attempts by the Turkish-supported GNA forces to capture Libya’s oil crescent region. The increased conflicts and hostilities in the region required external interventions to impose a ceasefire, attempted more than once by Germany, the United States and the United Nations. Although this was a fragile ceasefire, the results that it managed

to obtain were positive, for example, the focus placed on the Libya Political Dialogue Forum negotiations for the elections, which culminated with the formation of a unity government in the country. (ibid. 15). However, the Turkish military presence in Libya remained large and this was and is used by Ankara as a leverage towards the other countries in the Eastern Mediterranean.

From this brief analysis concerning the Western Countries' involvement and predominant role in managing the Eastern Mediterranean gas question, the Mediterranean's nexus of trade and energy transit routes, it can be claimed that they do not always lead to a positive displacement of the regional strategic architecture, especially when the focus of the "new Great Game" is moved from the "simple" energetic problems to the more general security issues and their problematic relationship with one of the major powers, Turkey.

Despite the fact that a solution in gas management appears impossible to negotiate, even with the inclusion of the Western powerful countries, the more recent developments show that the attention placed on the issue remains high and, for some aspects, is increasing. In 2019 two important events took place: the first one was the discovery of a new gas resource in front of the southern coast of Cyprus, the third-largest basin discovered by the American multinational ExxonMobil; the second one, instead had been the probationary and informal establishment of the already-mentioned "EMGF" – known also as "EastMed Gas Forum" or "EGF" – whose formal charter was subsequently signed in September 2020 and which led to the formal entry into force by the 9th March, 2021 (Tastan and Kutschka, 2019, 1). Both these developments are fundamental if analysed from the Turkish perspective and in the light of some other key factors. First of all, the importance that Turkey is gaining as an "inter-regional power" (Tanchum 2021, 18) in the energetic sector is indisputable due to its strategic location as a mid-point between Europe and Asia, between the Middle East and the Caucasus, being also the major power in the Russian south-western neighbourhood. Moreover, both the Middle East and the European Union are looking for alternatives to Russian gas in order to reduce their dependence on it and to expand and diversify their energy resources (Stergiou in Tziarras 2019, 11). Using this as a starting point, Turkey presents itself as the best alternative and source of diversity. Furthermore, Turkey itself wants to increase its

gas basins since it wants to detach as much as possible from Russian gas and, at the same time, find its own substitutes for Iranian gas. This is because, according to Tastan and Kutschka (2015, 1) “with around 17 per cent, the second-largest share of Turkey’s gas has been imported from Iran over the last years”, owing to an exceptional clause that has been granted to Turkey, among the US sanctions to Iran.

The other essential element that goes together with the exploration and the “ownership” of gas reservoirs, depending on the location of the basin and the company that discovered it, is the transportation of the resource in order to obtain the greatest possible benefits from its trade. To this, it is paramount to remember the urgency to diversify the gas sources for the majority of actors involved in the gas trade: Turkey, the European Union, Cyprus and the Middle East. In other words, the objective of these countries was to avoid the completion and the consequent dependency on the major gas pipeline connecting Russia to Eastern Europe, the “South Stream” Pipeline. This pipeline was a gas transportation project based on a commercial agreement signed by the participatory states in 2006, that aimed at connecting Russia to Bulgaria passing through the Black Sea, and to Austria running through Serbia, Hungary and Slovenia. However, it was aborted in 2014 due to intense US and EU pressures on the Bulgarian government and as a sanction to Russia following its annexation of Crimea (Walker, 2014).

The South Stream abortion was also accelerated due to the public opinion more oriented towards its main rival, the “Nabucco” pipeline, a conduit arranged to allow Bulgaria to obtain the natural gas, this time traded by Turkey, from the city of Erzurum and, more generally, to lessen the EU dependency on Russian resources. The preparation of Nabucco started in 2002 and the intergovernmental agreement between the involved countries was signed in 2009. Even if it seemed more promising, an even more auspicious proposal was elaborated, causing the official

abandoning of the Nabucco pipeline in June 2013 (Weiss, 2013).



Figure 3.2.A-2: Map of the South Stream and Nabucco natural gas transportation pipeline (source: WikipediaCommons 2009)

The revocation of the Nabucco project cleared the path for one of the actually working pipelines, the “Trans Adriatic Pipeline” (TAP). It was proposed in 2003 to advocate for the freightage of natural gas from Azerbaijan to Italy, transiting through the Caspian Sea, Greece, Albania and the Adriatic Sea. The construction of the pipeline began in 2016 and it inaugurated its commercial operations on the 30th December, 2020. The TAP, however, has not been constructed as an independent pipeline, but as part of the so-called “Southern Gas Corridor” (SGC), a passageway composed of other two pipelines, the “South Caucasus Pipeline” (SCP), which became operational in 2008, and the “Trans Anatolian Pipeline” (TANAP), inaugurated in June 2018, as shown in Figure 3.4.2-3.

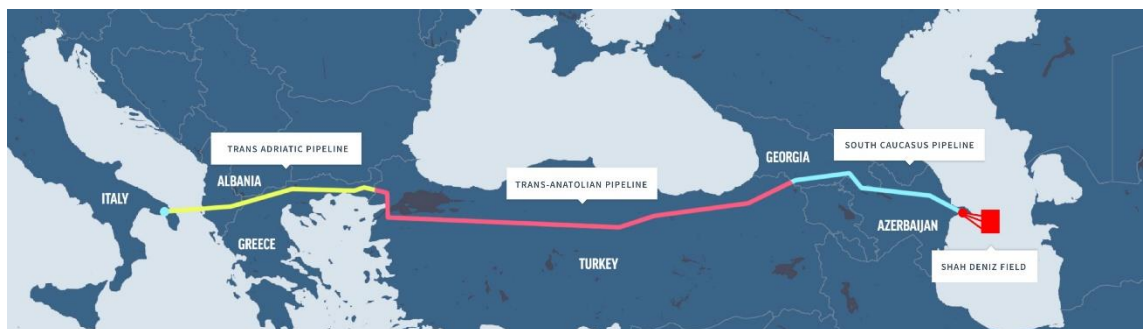


Figure 3.2.A-3: The Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) comprising the SCP, the TANAP and the TAP (source: Southern Gas corridor website)

This project was strongly supported by the European Commission in order to further diversify the origin of the imported gas. With this massive pipeline, the gas is extracted by the Shah Deniz Field in the Caspian Sea, running throughout the

Turkish territory and acceding in the European markets from Greece and Italy, for a total length of more than 3,200 kilometres (Southern Gas Corridor n.d.). The first section is composed of the SCP that starts by the Shah Deniz Field in the Caspian Sea and arrives at the border between Georgia and Turkey; from here, the TANAP originates to get the natural gas to the border between Turkey itself and Greece; the final section, the TAP, starts here to transport the gas to Italy (ibid.).

Another planned project for natural gas transportation is the “White Stream” pipeline, known also as the Georgia-Ukraine-EU gas pipeline, proposed to trade the gas extracted from the Caspian Sea to Central Europe, passing through Romania and Ukraine. It was proposed in 2005 by Ukrainian officials and it obtained the status of “Project of Common Interest” by the European Union. However, the increased Ukrainian tensions with Russia in the 2010s and the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine have blocked the whole process.

Despite these failed attempts and the blocked project, the establishment of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum has promoted the development of a new project of an offshore-onshore gas pipeline, the “Eastern Mediterranean pipeline”, or more simply EastMed, which is expected to be made operational between 2025 and 2027 as an interconnection between the “Levantine” basin of Israel and Greece, gliding through Cyprus and Crete. This EastMed pipeline is part of an even wider project that includes also the “Poseidon” pipeline, which is composed, on its turn, of two parts: the onshore part linking the Turkish-Greek border to Thesprotia, the conjunction point with the EastMed and where it transforms in an offshore section that directs the natural gas to Otranto, in Italy (DEPA International Projects, 2020).

In Figure 3.4.2-4, also the Gas Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria (IGB) is included as a feeding pipeline for the onshore section of the Poseidon one, which became operational on the 1st October, 2022, as the most recently implemented project.



Figure 3.2.A-4: Map of the East-Med pipeline project. In light blue: the offshore sections of the pipelines; in grey: the onshore section of the Poseidon Pipeline; in Red: the interconnection with the IGB (source: Samaha 2019)

Particularly with regard to this last project, Cyprus is under the international spotlight for representing the first destination of the pipeline, with the Levantine basin located just outside the boundary line of Cyprus’ EEZ. Nonetheless, on the Cypriot side, there has been the development of an alternative pipeline that would bypass not only Russia but also Turkey. This pipeline would transport the Cypriot gas of the “Aphrodite” field to the Egyptian gas export “Damietta SEGAS LNG Terminal” before exporting it as Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to the European markets (Tastan and Kutschka, 2015, 2). Its status is still “proposed” but it has been designed to be operational in 2025.

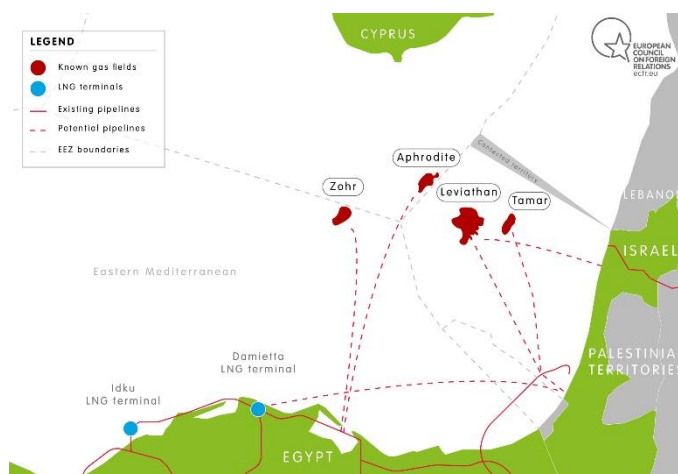


Figure 3.2.A-5: Plan aimed at transporting natural gas from the Cypriot field of Aphrodite to the Egyptian LNG Terminal "Damietta" - together with gas coming from other fields bypassing Russia and Turkey (source: Baconi 2017, 11).

In the previous pages, however, it has been made quite clear which could be the possible consequences of a further exclusion of Turkey from the gas exploration-management-transportation in the Eastern Mediterranean. That is because Turkey in the first place, is attempting to put some measures into practice expecting to benefit more from this energetic market, being one of the most important players in the game.

Broadening the view over the Eastern Mediterranean, it is necessary to consider the overlapping claims regarding the control over the discovered gas basins which, summed with the different conflictual situations explained in the previous paragraphs, results in very negative and damaging effects on resources management which implies, as a consequence, unfavourable conditions for the maritime security in the region. As many academics and experts sustain, the administrative difficulties can also be interpreted as a missed opportunity for stability in the area, since the finding of a solution at least for the gas management could represent an incentive to improve the conditions for a better, more stable and more cooperative future, as far as the energetic, economic and geopolitical points of view are concerned (Vogler and Thompson, 2015; Tastan and Kutschka, 2019). This point is going to be deepened at the end of this section while considering the most recent developments and the debate about how resources should be used.

3.2.B The “Second Cyprus Problem”

As if the gas bad management all around Cyprus and its territorial waters was not serious and dangerous enough, within the national borders of the island, another important resource is at the centre of the debate for its administration, with serious consequences for both communities. Water on the island has always represented a very sensitive topic and every solution that has been tried to establish has proved rather precarious.

In this section, water is intended specifically as “residential water” (Zachariadis 2010) and water dedicated to agriculture; in this regard, Cyprus is currently in a water scarcity situation, defined as:

“the point in which the aggregate impact of all users impinges on the supply or quality of water under prevailing institutional arrangements to the extent that the demand by all sectors, including environment, cannot be satisfied fully” (WWD 2007, 4).

Nevertheless, this status for the island is nothing new. On the contrary, this is a persistent and well-known problem and, as a consequence of the major acknowledgement of climate change, the degradation of groundwater and surface water quality, the ageing infrastructures, the ageing population, the recovery of tourism and the correlation with the interregional and international conflicts, it has become one of the crucial priorities (Marin et al. 2018 as quoted in OECD 2019, 7; Hatami et al. 1994, 7-10; Starr 1991, 18-20). To the concept of water scarcity, the “Water Stress Index” (WSI) must be combined to have a more comprehensive image of the water situation in a country. This index is a numeric representation of a situation in which “the demand for water exceeds the amount of accessible water or when the quality of the water is poor so that its usage is restricted” (Sofroniou and Bishop, 2014, 2904). This index is paramount to understanding the serious Cypriot situation since for the country, the WSI is the highest in Europe, as Figure 3.4.2-6 shows:

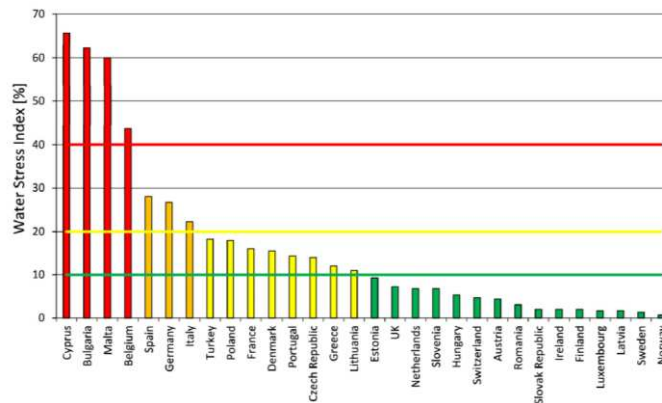


Figure 3.2.B-1: Water Stress Index for European countries at the beginning of the XXI century (source: Bixio 2008 as quoted in Sofroniou, A. and Bishop, S. (2014).

To Cyprus is attributed the value of 66% - approximately - of WSI which, according to the OECD (2003) is a value of “high water stress” – for all the values higher than 40% (OECD 2003, 11).

However, if on the one side, the severity of the Cyprus hydric status is universally recognized, the analysis of it in relation with the Cyprus conflict generates very

different assumptions: the range goes from who claims that it cannot “be more than a contributory factor to (the) conflict” (Black et al. 2011, 59) to those discussing even about “climate war” (Dyer 2010).

Some other experts named the problem as an “extreme water scarcity”; however, this concept is only partially true. As Hoffman and Selby (2012) debate and demonstrate in their work, on the one side Cyprus is located in the Mediterranean and, for this, it is characterized by the Mediterranean climate which provides for a discrete level of precipitation. The annual rainfall, in fact, reaches 1100 mm in Cyprus central area, the Troudos massif, and specifically Nicosia is hit by 324 mm as annual average (Hoffman and Selby 2012, 1003). On the other hand, however, the scarcity of water is caused by the absence of perennial rivers, the “natural storage problems” due to the small size of the island, the uneven distribution of resources and the incoherent management between the RoC and the TRNC administrations (ibid). The current measures attempt to mitigate the scarcity principally acting through technological means, like artificial reservoirs, wastewater recycling mechanisms, the creation of aquifers in Magosa/Famagusta and in Morphou/Guzelyurt and desalination processes, which are in any case insufficient for the needs of the island or are lacking maintenance (especially for the aquifers⁹). Furthermore, as far as the TRNC is concerned, “Turkey has started the construction of reservoirs for a suspended water pipeline” (ibid.) that connects the Mersin Turkish province to the Northern part of the island for a total length of 80 kilometres, placed “around 250 metres below the surface of the Mediterranean” (Dubocanin et al. 2014).

⁹ For more information about the conditions of the water infrastructures in Cyprus: Elkiran G, Aysen T. (2008); Elkiran G, Ongul Z. (2009); Ergil, M. E. (2000); WDD, Republic of Cyprus Water Development Department (2010).



Figure 3.2.B-2: Water pipeline connecting Turkey and Cyprus. (Source: Daily Shabah)

Nevertheless, together with the insufficiency and the poorly maintained water infrastructures, there are other issues to be acknowledged. Two of these are the fact that water resources are heavily polluted, as a consequence of the unkempt infrastructures, and, secondly, the serious supply shortfalls, traced starting from the 2000 drop in the precipitation level and the problematic management of the small amount of water available (Hoffman and Selby 2012, 1004). In detail and institutionally speaking, the TRNC has very weak administrative and regulatory capacities in the water sector, even worsened by the persisting conflict with the Greek Cypriot part of the island (ibid., 1006).

A further crucial factor to keep in consideration is that this water scarcity does not create difficulties only concerning the so-called “residential waters”, but also for the agricultural field, since this is one of the many economic sources for the island – mainly for the citrus farming - and it needs approximately the 60-70% of the total water consumption (ibid, 1004) compared to the other sectors, as shown by Figure 3.2.B-3:

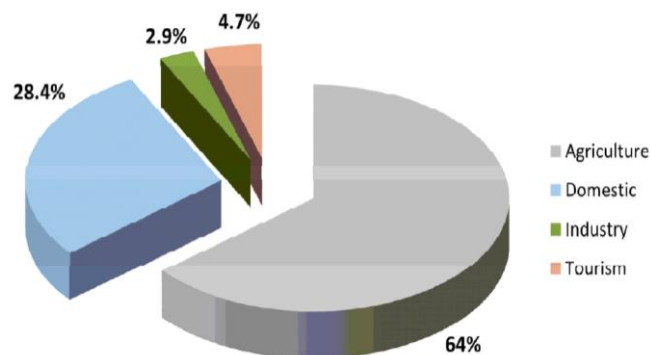


Figure 3.2.B-3: Diagram representation for water demand and consumption by sector: agriculture, domestic, industry and tourism demands. (source: Sofroniou and Bishop, 2014 re-elaborating data coming from WDD Annual Report 2012)

However, it is necessary to note that, as far as agriculture is concerned, there is a very evident imbalance between the water and resources demand of this sector and its contribution to the economy of the country (Figure 3.2.B-4), which remains quite limited and which implies major complications in the management of water for it.

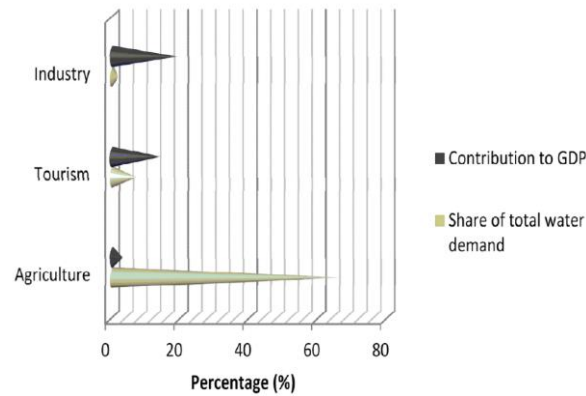


Figure 3.2.B-4: Demand share by sector (%) and contribution to the national GDP for the year 2006. Important to notice: the imbalance between the agriculture's water demand (64%) and its contribution to the national GDP (3%). (source: Sofroniou and Bishop, 2014 re-elaborating data coming from WDD Annual Report 2012)

If on the one side, the direct impacts that the water issue had and have on the conflict do not stand out so evidently, the contrary can be said for the opposite direction of the correlation, that considers the effects of the conflict, both violent and political, on the water problem, which are sufficiently evident. There are four aspects to consider while supporting this thesis. First of all, many of the issues mentioned up until now have been exacerbated starting from the years immediately after the outbreak of the conflict; secondly, the conflict has naturally had a negative influence on the good governance of the water industry, particularly in the TRNC where the “structural dependence on Turkey, combined with the international isolation, has left civilian governance institutions extremely weak” (ibid., 1008). The third element is that another consequence of the conflict is the limitation of the possibilities for transboundary cooperation between the two parts of the island. Finally, also all the economic impacts must be kept in mind, especially the negative ones afflicting the TRNC due to the isolation from all countries except Turkey, which severely restricts any possible investment in water management resources.

Another interpretation of the relationship between water and the “geopolitical realities of conflict, isolation, division and occupation”, is provided by Hoffman

(2018) when he claims that water is not the source of conflict, but rather water management practices, as well as the whole economy of the island, is driven by and intertwined with the conflict itself (Hoffman 2018, 267).

All the major causes for the mismanagement in the water sector, and it has been demonstrated that the same can be applied to all the other resources, are all shades of the same explanatory element, the non-recognition of the Turkish Cypriot administration, both internally by the RoC and internationally by the whole international community, that makes any sort of national and international cooperation with reference to resources, almost impossible (Brouma and Ezel 2011 as quoted in Hoffman and Selby 2012, 1007).

Due to all these elements, Hoffman and Selby reach the conclusion that “Conflict [...] is the primary reason for this state of affairs” (Hoffman and Selby 2012, 1008).

Despite the fact that, for sure, water scarcity and management remain a priority to which it is necessary to find a solution, it cannot be defined as one of the causes of the persistence of the conflict, especially since its inclusion in the peace processes remains marginal. As a matter of fact, also in the almost-successful 2004 Annan Plan, the attention on the water issue remained negligible, while the main resource of interest was represented by the gas reserves.

After considering all the elements provided until now about the issue of the resources around and in Cyprus, it is essential to mention the polarized debate relating to this apparently irresolvable character of resource management. More in detail, the debate develops around whether the mentioned resources, as well as oil and other hydrocarbons in general, should be considered and are actually used as a potential point for cooperation or whether they play the role of a bargaining tool to strengthen each party's position.

Each country involved in the energetic resources market of the Eastern Mediterranean provided its own claims, each of which was supported by strong benefits that the country would gain if in possession of greater control over resources. First and foremost, for the Republic of Cyprus, this would imply a total “transformation of the island economy”, achieving a better position in the energetic market and improving its “precarious capacity to generate electricity” (Leigh and

Brandsma 2012, 1); for Israel, this would mean the decreased dependency on vulnerable lines of supply connected to Sinai and Egypt; on the Lebanese side, a greater control would imply a better access to energetic supplies that, on its turn, would result in a reduced dependence on Syria; finally, the Palestinian authorities would be able to better exploit the resources discovered around Gaza (ibid.).

More generally speaking, the Eastern Mediterranean resources represent one of the “more promising global energy developments” of the last decades, whose better and joint management could contribute to the “development and the security for the countries (facing) in the Eastern Mediterranean” (Mankoff 2013, 1)

Other benefits of a more desirable administration of the resource processes and transportation in the Eastern Mediterranean market are highlighted by Raimondi (2022). The author mentions, for example, improved interconnectivity among all the countries involved (p. 3), stronger economic integration, major regional cooperation and stronger political stability (p. 11). A more delicate positive spillover would be the strengthening of energy security in and beyond the Eastern Mediterranean, in Southeast Europe and the European Union (p. 13). Raimondi acknowledges also the possibility of the diversification of the European energetic resources, namely reducing the dependency on Russia (further deepened to paragraph 4.2) (p. 6, 8, 13).

However, this list of benefits can hardly become a reality due to the even longer list of conflicts and contrasting priorities of all the countries facing the Eastern Mediterranean. (Leigh and Brandsma 2012, 2). The only strategy that would allow the obtaining of, at least, some of these benefits, would be an increased regional cooperation. Leigh and Brandsma (2012), for example, suggest that this regional cooperation would be better if it were implemented at a governmental level” but, because of the stark differences between the political ideas and foreign policy preferences, “it would be more realistic in the first instance for it to be pursued by representative of the civil society and economic actors” (ibid., 6). Moreover, such cooperation to be effective, should be focused on:

“the prevention of accidents in offshore gas operations, the reinforcement of the security of energy installations, the environmental impact of gas operations, [...] dispute settlement and mediation, [...] as well as implications of the development of Eastern Mediterranean gas for overall energy suppliers

to the region, Europe and Asia” (ibid., 6).

Under the current circumstance, according to Gürel and Cornu (2014), it is unlikely that this desired cooperation will be favoured, due to the party's different commercial and economic reasons regarding natural gas and because “the resource alone does not have the necessary force to bring the conflict parties any closer to a possible solution or a normalization of the Cyprus-Turkey relations” (Gürel and Cornu 2014, 27-28).

In his analysis, on his part, Raimondi (2022) suggests that the better approach to achieving these positive developments is necessary to focus on addressing and overcoming the international challenges, among which the lack of infrastructure, the economic constraints and the general interstate rivalries (p. 3, 8-15).

However, another important point on which regional cooperation should also work is the (re)building trust between the most important countries involved, in order to increase the probability of reaching agreements and the probability for the agreements to be efficient.

Notwithstanding, at the current state of affairs, convincing all the involved authorities to meet together to decide how to proceed and draw up a practical action plan, for example by allowing the access of Turkey to the EMGF, is quite an unfeasible idea since the entire issue being “at the heart of one of the most geopolitically complex regions of the world” (Mankoff 2013, 2).

These are only some of the reasoning behind the claims of some scholars, energetic security experts and politicians who advocate that the bad management and the missing joint decisions about the energy sector in the Eastern Mediterranean represent a missed opportunity. According to Wilson (2014), for example, the 2010 new discoveries could have been “the last window of opportunity” to catalyse and encourage lasting peace in the region (Wilson 2014 in Iseri 2019, 257), an idea originated from the belief that the:

“expected economic benefits from cooperation on exploiting and transporting these new resources could incentivize the countries of the region to transform their conflictive patterns of interaction into peaceful ones” (ibid. 257).

In reality, instead, “these discoveries have failed to help bring peace to Cyprus” and this is due to, once again, the peculiar regional characteristics, and mainly those of Turkey, which “created the political conditions for the securitization of these energy discoveries and their proposed export routes”, e.g. all the pipelines projects (ibid.).

Yet, another popular opinion is that this idea of missed opportunities is difficult to support because it is a complex situation in which the increase of energetic security in the region could also act as an incentive to solve other active conflicts, like the Cyprus problem, but the same can be said considering the cause-effect relationship in the opposite direction, for example: the solution of the Cyprus conflict could cause the removal of some obstacles to the energetic administration.

One thing which, on the contrary, is true, is the fact that somewhere it is necessary to start, whether it is promoting a greater engagement in the energetic field, or increasing the efforts in resolving some conflicts that have been developed all around the Eastern Mediterranean. One of the main challenges is the decision on which of the two approaches is better; however, it is crucial to re-shape the current condition because it is too delicate and too exposed to the adjustments of the international equilibria in the region, which makes it unstable and likely to collapse.

In this chapter, until now, a presentation of the current state of affairs referring to the use and management of resources has been provided. Also in this field, which seems to be confined inside Cyprus borders, there is a role played mainly by Turkey and, less importantly, also by Greece. As a matter of fact, Turkey represents one of the main player in the Eastern Mediterranean game of the energetic sector, being one of the bigger countries and, in the eyes of someone, also the only alternative that the European Union has to reduce the dependence on Russian gas. However, the possible impacts of Turkey in the energetic market, also considering the EU, is constrained by one important element: the fact that it has been excluded from the major negotiations regarding energy which has turned into the exclusion from the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum. This strategic decision describes a huge problem because the increasing isolation of Turkey does nothing but fuelling its mistrust in his neighbours, while further reducing the probabilities to find concrete

solutions for the energetic management, as well as for all the other conflicts.

3.3 The Controversial NATO membership

The beginning of the consideration of Turkey and Greece as possible NATO members, dates back to the end of the 1940s and the first months of 1950 when, among the funding countries began to spread concerns about possible hardship in the Middle East due to the proximity to the Soviet Union in the period of the Cold War. The first approaches to try to overcome this scenario were developed by Britain in 1950 when it hypothesized the idea of a kind of “Middle East Defence Pact”, considering as particularly worryingly the “Arab-Israeli dispute and the inter-Arab frictions such as those between the Hashemite Kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan on the one hand, and Egypt and Saudi Arabia on the other” (Yeşilbursa 1999, 70). However, this project was not successful since the possibility of the Arab countries and Israel joining the pact was improbable, and at the same way, also the US declared that they would not have taken part in such a plan. These are the reasons why in the end the Middle East Defence Pact proposal failed (ibid., 70).

If before the US appeared not interested in developing defence strategies in the Middle East, since it was something under British and the Commonwealth responsibility, “after the outbreak of the Korean War (1950) the United States accepted the necessity for collective defence schemes in the Middle East and Britain’s inability to defend the region on its own against possible Soviet aggression” (ibid., 72). As a consequence, they started to look to some new prospects to guarantee a certain degree of supervision also in the Middle East and this was the moment in which the leaders of the NATO countries began to discuss the possibility of welcoming Turkey and Greece as new members. Both countries were accepted as NATO members in the same year, 1952, but the reasons behind this decision were rather different for the two countries, except for the fact that they would “possessed the two largest land armies of NATO in Europe”, with soldiers trained to use the modern equipment provided by the British and the American, and for this reason they represented two of the biggest insertions in the NATO armed forces (D.J.K. 1952, 162).

Analysing uniquely the previous paragraphs, it could seem that Turkey and Greece

would never be able to develop some real cooperation policies, since the frictions over the organization and the division of power in the Aegean Sea, the islands and the militarization of them, date back to the institution of the two sovereign nations with competing foreign policies against one another. Consequently, it seems logical to think about them as bitter enemies with nothing in common.

However, as previously declared in the historical framework outline, there has been a circumstance in which for the first time Greece and Turkey, while remaining extremely different and always with a suspicious look on each other's actions, they were united by the same goal. In fact, after the formal application of both countries in 1950, in 1952, they entered as members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in the first phase of its enlargement. Turkey on its side, had the support of France and Great Britain as a consequence of the mutual Defence Treaties that they signed in 1939, while both Greece and Turkey enjoyed the support of Italy, who considered them as a huge backing in the defence of the Mediterranean; furthermore, to reinforce the proposed enlargement, the US "pointed out that both countries were already members of the Council of Europe and of the Organization for European Economic Co-operation" (D.J.K. 1952, 162-164). Although among the NATO leaders, there were some internal divergences and scepticism on the admittance of the two countries, the one thing that was evident to the eyes of all of them was that they could have been fundamental checkers in the game planned by the US against the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, due to the two countries' opening to the West and the alignment with Western values and ideologies, the US saw both Greece and Turkey as crucial allies to help in the limitation of the communist threat coming from the Eastern Block, keeping it far away from the European territories and attempting to hinder the communist appeal in the European communist parties.

This imagination has been the result of the outbreak of the Cold War in March 1947 and the gradual division of the world into two blocks: the Eastern Bloc in support of the Soviet Union and the Western Block in support of the United States. With the disruption of the international order from the usual "balance of power" between more than one regional power with multiple equilibria between the authorities, to a "bipolar" system in which the rivalry between the Soviet Union and

the United States dominated any kind of international relation, it can be observed the complete nullification of the control that the smaller countries had, “leaving very little room for these countries to manoeuvre” (Güngör 2015, 19).

For these reasons, it can be observed that the essential element that stimulated the enlargement and the strengthening of the Alliance was the existence of a “common enemy” (Botsas 1988, 252). However, this is a sufficient but not an exclusive reason to forge an alliance. Other reasons that moved the two countries in the direction of NATO and vice versa, are different for Turkey and Greece.

As far as Turkey is concerned, during the Cold War, it “feared that the Soviet Union was enlarging its influence over Middle Eastern countries, and Turkey could soon be contained by pro-Soviet and hostile Arab states” (Güngör 2015, 21). This, however, was not seen as a possible alternative by Turkey, since it identified itself in the “West by virtue of its pro-western orientation” as a consequence of the Celâl Bayar government, ruled by the Democrat Party, whose principles were the opening towards the Western geopolitical imagination, the liberal conservatism, the economic liberalism, the right-wing populism and, finally, the desire to be included in the Western dynamics. Logically, this ideology would not coexist alongside Soviet communism, while it was much more aligned with the principles of NATO and its central member at that time, the United States.

After these considerations is clear why Turkey was concerned about a possible Soviet influence expansion in the Middle East and had to elaborate a new strategy to defend itself. Here it is where the membership in the NATO enters into play, but not as an advantage only for Turkey, rather as a win-win circumstance for NATO as well. On the first side, Turkey considered the NATO membership as an approach to diminish the anxiety caused by the incumbency of the Soviet Union and its demands towards Turkey (i.e. its eastern provinces and the legitimate control over the Bosphorus straits) (ibid., 19); furthermore, it could have also served to divide with the NATO the costs for both the internal and the external security that, having become the absolute priority, had generated an increase in the military expenses necessary to insure it. At the same time, Turkey also saw in this opportunity, the chance to get closer to achieving another aim that became crucial in its foreign policies of those years, the full recognition of Turkey as a European state (ibid., 19)

– which would have led in the following decades to the request for becoming a European Union member.

On the NATO side, instead, having Turkey as one of its members would have represented a major strategic point in the expansion of the Western bloc's control in the geographically – not ideologically – Eastern countries, and a fundamental element in the restriction of the distances between the NATO boundaries and the Soviet front in the Middle East. In fact, with Turkey as a member and in the eventuality of a Soviet attack, the Atlantic alliance “bombers could attack the Trans-Caucasian oil fields, the industries of the Urals, and Russian supply lines from Turkish bases” (D.J.K. 1952, 163). Moreover, with the accession of Turkey, NATO would have gained a very important ally also with reference to the influence that it could have exerted on its neighbours and the other countries seeing Turkey as an example to follow.

All these preventive assumptions became reality once the accession phase began. As a matter of fact, “once Turkey joined NATO, Turkey's foreign policy quickly slipped to the backwaters of international politics. Turkish foreign and security policies were basically conducted in parallel with NATO's strategies” (Güngör 2015, 20). That means that, in the Turkish case, “NATO provided the national security guarantee and Turkey contributed to the policy of credible deterrence with its pivotal status on NATO's south-eastern flank” (ibid., 20). In addition, Turkish geographic location is strategic per se, since it represents the crossing point between Europe and Asia, but for NATO it represents also the appropriate spot from which to monitor both the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea (NATO n.d., 1). In this case, as to have better results in Greece, on the 11th of June 1952 it was established the LANDSOUTHEAST, the Allied Land Forces South-Eastern Europe, based in Izmir, for the operational control of the Greek and Turkish land forces. Together with the Headquarters of the Sixth Allied Tactical Air Force, always based in Izmir, both these units “came under the command of Allied Forces South (AFSOUTH), established in Naples in 1951” (ibid.).

As far as Greece is concerned, the internal situation of the country was quite different from the one in Turkey, but the outcome was the same, namely the rapprochement with Western values and towards NATO. Immediately after the

Second World War, in fact, “Greece was in the midst of a civil war between communist fighters and the Government army supported by a coalition of right-wing and centrist forces” (NATO n.d., 2). The outcome of the Greek Civil War saw the victory of the coalition internationally supported by the United Kingdom and the United States, with the defeat of the faction backed by the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries, and it finally led to the establishment of the Kingdom of Greece. From this moment on, Greece began to align more and more with the West, for example sending troops with the UN in South Korea. As it was the case for Turkey, also for Greece now, membership in NATO was a matter of security guarantee, especially the defence of the northern border, the 1200km-long frontier shared with one of the main Soviet satellite countries, Bulgaria which had one of the most mechanized armies (ibid.). With Greece’s access to NATO, the tensions in the region would have unwind and, at the same time, NATO would have been able to better control Bulgaria and the Soviet intentions on that front.

Both to guarantee a higher degree of national security for Greece and to pursue its objectives of regional stabilization and protection, NATO reinforced the role of the LANDSOUTHEAST, in cooperation with the subordinate Thessaloniki Advanced Command Post. The NATO membership also led to major improvements on the military side, because after 1952, the Hellenic Army began to be trained and supported directly by the US, via the Mutual Defence Assistance Programme; similarly, the Greek Air Force had been modernized in order to make it up to become part of the NATO’s Sixth Allied Tactical Air Force, which would have ensured the air defence of Greece and Turkey (ibid.). One of the military corps that was already one of the most advanced in the world was the Royal Hellenic Navy which “came from a long tradition of seamanship and expertise” (ibid.) and for this attracted more sailors coming from all the other NATO countries.

Nevertheless, Greece had an extra motivation to apply for NATO membership, and it was for concerns about Turkey's pressures on the coastline and islands issues. As it has been outlined in the previous pages, Turkey and Greece have discussed and fought for decades about supremacy and control over most of the Aegean islands. In this regard, NATO membership would have represented a deterrent to the Turkish ambitions in the Aegean Sea, since a false move on the Turkish

Government side, would have implied sanctions and a strong reaction by all the other NATO members.

This continued Greek concern is the essence of its relationship with Turkey. Indeed, even if both countries became together NATO members and, as a consequence, they could not combat each other because this would imply the mobilization of the NATO forces provoking an international escalation of the eventual conflict, they continue to base their relationship on mistrust, lack of confidence, a suspicion which leads them, and especially Greece, to be always on the warpath. This is due to the fact that all the disputes among them, mentioned until now, are either still open or have left some open wounds that do not allow the complete trust between them (CIA 1982., p. 6).

Unquestionably NATO membership has helped them in cooperating more with each other to obtain better results in the Alliance's objectives and for the greater good; however, there has been a moment in which neither NATO has been able to avoid the breakdown of the Greek-Turkish relations. In 1974, indeed, when the Cyprus issue got into the heart of the action and the real conflict began, Greece withdrew its military units from the NATO forces in the Southern Mediterranean "forced by the popular pressure on Mr. Kōnstantinos Karamanlīs", the Prime Minister (Mango 1987, 146). The reason for this decision lies in the fact that, facing a threat of invasion of Cyprus by another member country of the alliance, with this action Greece wanted to urge a NATO intervention in order to persuade Turkey to retreat this option. As Turkey finally decided to invade Cyprus, making Greece "frustrated with the unwillingness or inability of the allies to prevent the invasion" (Botsas 1988, 256), Greece withdrew also from the NATO military command – this does not mean that Greece left officially the NATO but it was certainly less active than any other official member (Hoagl 1980).

Since 1974, thus, both Andreas Papandreou, of the Greek PASOK, and the Turkish armed forces, introduced two new respective strategic concepts, both considering the other country as a major threat to the national security than the Socialist countries unified by the Warsaw Pact, both threatening to change the status quo in the Aegean Sea (Mango 1987, 146).

Even if the tensions between Greece and Turkey about the Cyprus issue seem to be lessened, for NATO countries is important to keep monitored any possible cause of strain between them because, as all these events have shown, when referring to Greece and Turkey, it takes very little to trigger a series of actions and responses that can lead to violence. If in other cases – e.g. the frictions between Greece and the UK over the autonomy of Cyprus - “a tolerable level of friction among allies is not necessarily bad for an alliance” as long as the deviating behaviours are known and the resolution is likely to be agreed (Botsas 1988, 255), the Greek-Turkish conflict cannot be left unsupervised.

Furthermore, NATO, being an alliance which cannot make decisions about its member states based on preferences with respect to one or the other since it would trigger dangerous military actions by the other participating countries, seems to be paralyzed (Dempsey 2020). When it comes the time to settle minor disputes between Greece and Turkey, in fact, it is not NATO per se which acts as the mediator, but it is an action taken by its most powerful member, the United States (ibid.).

In conclusion, when considering the role that the two countries played in the stabilization of the region and the fight against the communist threat coming from the Soviet Union, it can be claimed that both countries had a positive impact. Indeed, aligning with the Western Block, they managed to act as two important cornerstones in NATO’s southern flank, being two efficient deterrents and two potentially crucial elements for the collective defence of the Eastern Mediterranean in an eventual crisis or conflict with Russia (Meyer Zum Felde 2021, 95).

Observing the relation NATO-Turkey/Greece in the opposite direction, it can be noticed that the influence of NATO in the conflictual relationship between the two Eastern Mediterranean countries has been superficial, in that the Alliance has not produced any positive and lasting results concerning their rapprochement. This stalemate is generated both by a limited room for manoeuvre of NATO in this regard because any movement can become a spark and lead to a much wider action of the other member countries. The second reason for the deadlock is that the tensions and the grounds of rivalry between Greece and Turkey have been rooted in their political and military traditions for centuries and, for the moment, they

remain unlikely to be resolved. This is the motive for which the CIA defines these two NATO member countries as the “Deadlocked Allies” (CIA, 1982).

3.4 The debated European Union membership

Considering Turkey and Greece within the context of the NATO Alliance is not something easy and the same can be said when considering them in relation to the European Union. In fact, it became “highly interested in the Eastern Mediterranean developments particularly regarding the energetic domain, while individual European states such as Britain, Germany, France and Italy have also been trying to get more involved in the region’s affairs” (Tziarras 2019, 6; EC 2014).

If the admission process of Greece in the European Community and, then, in the European Union, has not shown any exceptional complication, it can be argued that for Turkey this was not the case due to the obstacles that Turkey is still facing, even now.

For Greece, the entire process began in June 1959 when it applied to become a member state of the newly established European Economic Community (EEC), a demand that was accepted and formalized on the 1st of January 1981. The main reasons that have pushed Greece towards the membership of the EEC have been, among others, firstly the stability that the EEC framework would have entailed for the Greek institutions and the democratic political system; secondly, the independence and the position that Greece would have gained in the regional and international system; thirdly, the increased political and economic relations that Greece would have developed with the other countries; finally, the EEC membership would have also involved the modernization of the infrastructures and the internal systems of Greece, thanks to the funding programmes provided by the Community (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

Instead, on the EEC side, Greece would have represented another important dowel in the European integration process, as well as for, more generally, the configuration of the European model (*ibid.*).

Since 1981, the path of Greece within the EU has always been consistent with the major decisions of the European institutions, has ratified the most important Treaties, Declarations and Laws emanated by the responsible institutions and has

almost always followed the European procedures without creating irresolvable problems.

Completely different has been the entire course of actions for Turkey which is, still now, negotiating with the European Commission its entrance into the European Union. The paths of these two components began to cross more frequently starting from 1959, with the first formalized agreement, the Agreement creating an Association between the Republic of Turkey and the European Economic Community, commonly known as the Ankara Agreement of 1963. Since that moment, even if not a formal member, Ankara represented one of the EU's main partners due to its closeness to other European countries and due to its strategic position, which has always played an imperative role in the state's international relations.

Ankara officially applied to accede to the European Economic Community in 1987 but the process did not see many improvements until the 3rd October 2005 when the negotiations were formally opened for Turkey as well as for Croatia. The negotiations, in this circumstance, are specifically related to the adoption and the implementation of the *Acquis Communautaire*. This adoption implies the fact that Turkey, in order to become an EU member, must adapt its own internal laws to the European body of legislation, that due to the differences between the EU and the Turkish values, means fundamental changes for the society and almost all sectors of the country, the judiciary system, the transports, the agricultural policies, the economic system and so forth. If, for example, the chapter on science and research has been harmonized in a very short time, for all the other sectors the process is still open and, with regard to some specific chapters, the situation was very critical. As a matter of fact, on the 24th November 2016, the negotiations came to a deadlock because the European Parliament interrupted the process after major human rights violations and deficits in the rule of law in the country, only two of the so-called Copenhagen criteria – for the eligibility for the membership in the EU. More specifically, those were the years in which, under the rule of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and its Justice and Development Party, the censorship over the media and the journalists' freedom of expression escalated, the Purges targeting judges, teachers, police, civil servants and Turkish Armed Forces personnel began

after the attempted coup d'état of the 15th July of that year (Sariyuce and Dewan 2016); moreover, actions in the name of “anti-terrorism security operations” have provoked the violation of several human rights in south-east Turkey (Hyriyet Daily 2016); furthermore, also the internet control and censorship has shifted from “moderate” to “severe” in late 2016 generating social media shutdowns, restrictions on web tools and regional Internet blackouts (BBC 2016 - 2). Starting from 2016 it can be observed also an increment in the number of persecutions of political dissenters referred to as “terrorists” (Weise 2016).

All these 2016 events have reached the limits of endurance of the European Union, whose Parliament then decided to stop the negotiations until the moment in which Turkey would have begun to make significant progress towards the criteria for accessing the Union.

Despite this critical situation, also in the previous years, the relationship between the EU and Turkey remained fundamental for both actors. Indeed, for the 2014-2020 period, Turkey continued to receive payments from the Union as a “Pre-accession Assistance Anstrument” (IPA), for a total of €3.19 billion allocated to the country, which should have been subdivided into the priority areas – democracy and governance, fundamental rights, climate action, energy and territorial cooperation (EEAS 2021).

2016, however, is also the year in which one of the most important agreements between Turkey and the EU came into effect. After the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe, the “Refugee Deal” or “EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan” was negotiated and signed in October-November to provide a deeper and more functional cooperation between the two parties, both via material and normative concessions (Morris 2016). After the disruption caused by the sudden crisis and the lack of organization of the European countries, this agreement proved necessary to try to limit the influx of irregular migrants passing through Turkey to arrive in the EU. As a clause of the agreement, any irregular migrant discovered in the EU would be sent back to Ankara, where they should have completed the asylum request procedure (European Commission 2016).

From Figure 3.4.4-1, it can be noticed a very consistent decrease in the months immediately after the signing of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan, especially for the three most-involved countries in the Mediterranean: Greece, Italy and Spain.

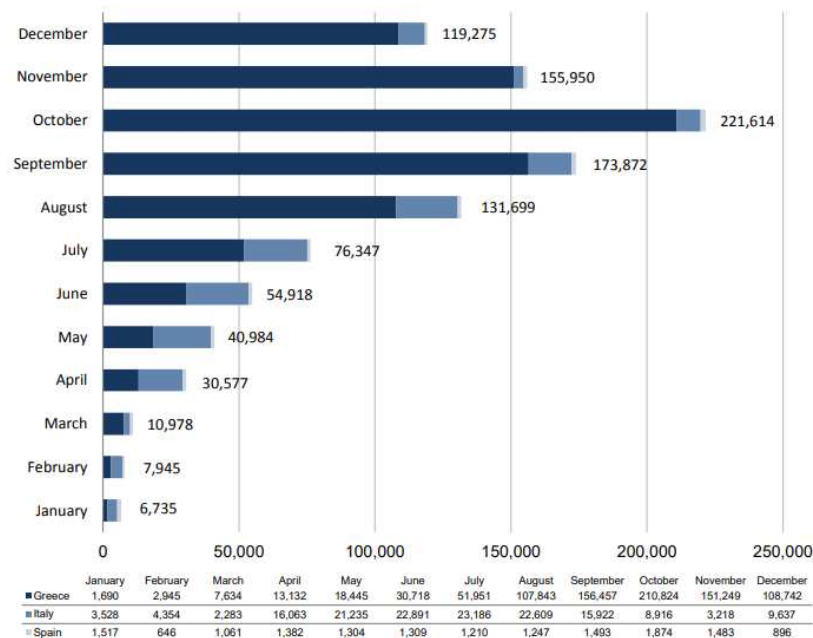


Figure 3.4-1: Arrivals to each of the three countries (Greece, Italy and Spain) by months, after the migrant crisis beginning and the sign of the EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan. (source: UNHCR Agency 2016, 1)

Except for this positive peak in the Turkey-EU relation, in the following years, the European institutions’ attention returned to be focused on the criteria for Turkey’s accession to the Union, and the fact that the Turkish values were still far from satisfying the Copenhagen criteria. The consequence was that on the 26th June 2018, there was an impressive statement by the EU’s General Affairs Council claiming that:

“Turkey has been moving further away from the European Union. Turkey’s accession negotiations have therefore effectively come to a standstill and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing and no further work towards the modernisation of the EU-Turkey Customs Union is foreseen.” (Council of the European Union 2018, 13).

Moreover, the Council added that it remains “especially concerned about the continuing and deeply worrying backsliding on the rule of law and fundamental rights including the freedom of expression”, the “deterioration of the independence

and functioning of the judiciary” and all the “other measures targeting journalists, academics, members of political parties including parliamentarians, human right defenders, social media users and others” (ibid., 12). Nevertheless, despite all these significant shortcomings, the EU maintain the relationship with the country which, in turn, does not lose its status of “candidate country”.

This is the main reason why, in October 2022, the Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades openly criticised and condemned the European Union’s “double standards” and “tolerance” when it comes to Turkey (Koutsokosta and Liboreiro 2022) claiming that interests cannot have the priority over the principles and the values that the EU is promoting in and with all the other countries (ibid.). By doing so, according to Cyprus’ President, the Union is allowing Turkey to “disregard international law and risks triggering a new conflict in the continent”. These accusations are mainly related to Turkey’s involvement in the Cyprus problem. Indeed, by maintaining the status of candidate country for a nation which is involved in a conflict, which has caused a conflict violating the territorial integrity of another sovereign state and which is illegally stationed in a country (like Turkey is in Cyprus), according to Anastasiades, it feels like that the EU is legitimizing the Turkish actions on the island.

Still today, the negotiations with the EU for the accession of Turkey as a European member are frozen because there are still numerous conditions and criteria that Turkey has to meet to proceed – e.g. increase the measures to prevent corruption, align the personal data protection with the EU standards, conclude an agreement with the Europol, work with the all the other EU countries on criminal matters (BBC 2016 – 1).

Furthermore, even if Turkey were to improve its situation on the Copenhagen criteria, the accession to the European Union would always hindered by Greece’s possibility to veto the final decision or any stage of the process. This is a prerogative that Greece has always exploited in its favour, since the beginning of the accession process. For instance, even back in 1998 during the EU meetings, while considering the candidacy of Turkey, Greek officials stated that they “do not regard Turkey as a candidate state because it does not meet the other criteria”, even if some progress had been made (Taylor 1998). Moreover, according to Athens, “Ankara should not

be given any help to prepare itself for EU membership because of its track record on human rights” (ibid.). In general, in any phase of the accession negotiations, since the moment in which Greece became an EC member, the veto that accompanied that membership “had put Turkey in a disadvantaged position” (EUCE 2008, 1). For all the points that have represented the focus of this thesis, the attention during Turkey’s accession negotiations has been placed on Greece’s veto rhetoric, which has obscured the other main EC countries’ concerns about the immigrant workers, and the exports of textiles and agricultural products that worried, respectively, Germany and France-Italy (ibid., 3).

In the past, the Greek government claimed that, to make it begin to support Turkey’s accession to the EU, a resolution on the Cyprus issue needed to be reached. Nowadays, instead, the position of the Greek government has become less tough due to a series of steps that Turkey has taken both towards Greece itself and the EU; however, the Cyprus clause remains one of the crucial elements blocking Turkey’s membership and the unanimous support of the other EU member countries.

One of the critiques that, on its turn, Turkey moves towards the Commission is that, if on one side they accepted Cyprus as a Union member despite the internal conflict, the division of the country, the problems that the non-recognition of the TRNC causes for the rest of the island and even though the membership would have been granted only as a consequence of the acceptance of the Annan Plan in 2004 – that it was rejected by the Greek-Cypriots, those who are now in the Republic of Cyprus, the official EU member part of the island-, on the other side, the same possibility should also be provided to Turkey. Indeed, as outlined in the historical framework, Cyprus became an EU member despite the fact that, in 2004, the Greek Cypriots rejected the Annan Plan, that projected the entire process of reunification of the island in a Bi-Zonal and Bi-Communal solution, that would have led, as a consequence, to the unified island’s accession to the EU.

In May 2004, one month after the failure of the Annan Plan, the Republic of Cyprus became the sixteenth member state of the EU following the elaboration of a compromise to make this accession legal and easier to implement. According to this compromise, the entire island entered the Union as a member, although the

validity of the *acquis communautaire* and the EU's benefits would have been interrupted and postponed only to a moment after the resolution of the Cyprus problem (Editors of *Mediterranean Quarterly* 2014, 75). The entrance of Cyprus into the European Union is considered by some scholars as the moment in which the presence of the EU and its engagement with Cyprus-Greece-Turkey became more important than ever, due to the numerous incentives by Brussels and the "catalyst approach" composed of "carrots and sticks" implemented with the three countries (Siegl 2002, 48).

Even if the TRNC suffers from many disadvantages due to this isolation, the European Union has implemented some projects also in the northern part of the island in order to promote a better image of itself and to bring the TRNC closer to the European standards required to be a member state and facilitate the access process, once the island has been reunified and the Cyprus problem has been resolved. The majority of these projects are targeted at environmental issues as this is a field in which the division of the island worsens the situation and the only way for the two communities to gain benefits is through cooperation; the same can be claimed also for all the resources and energetic questions opened on the island, as it has been previously described (Ergün Olgun, interview with the author, 14th February 2023). More precisely:

"these projects in support of the Turkish Cypriot community are aimed at improving: the environmental infrastructures on the ground, the social and economic development of the community, the processing of waste materials, the sanitary infrastructures, the monitoring of the air quality. At the same time, there are all the gas and water pipeline plans as well as other civil society activities" (Kezban Akansoy, interview with the author on the 17th February 2023).

Furthermore, the EU funded many camps and assistance centres on the island for the migrants obliged to move from one part to the other, it provided expertise and capacities to better organize the welcoming of refugees and asylum-seekers – related also to the 2016 EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan on migration (*ibid.*).

The approach with the TRNC is the same thing that the EU did with the "Pre-accession Assistance Instrument" (IPA) granted to Turkey in the period 2014-2020. With these projects and funds, the EU is providing the Northern Part of the island,

some insurance that, once the Cyprus problem is solved, it would become an EU member, without any particular problem and reaching the same status that the RoC currently has.

Notwithstanding the fact that the EU's presence is balanced and proportionate among the two parts of the island, that means that in different ways but it is promoting development and recovery after the difficult years of the division, in the TRNC the opinion about the EU institutions and officials is rather negative (Ergün Olgun, interview with the author, 14th February 2023). In point of fact, the general opinion of the population is that the United Nations, for instance, are a better neutral actor than the EU, which does not deserve the trust of the TRNC since it is biased in its decisions. The consequence is that, even during the most important negotiation phases, the Turkish Cypriots have always sought to avoid the involvement of the EU either as an observer or a part of the settlement because having firstly only Greece and then only the Republic of Cyprus as members, it would have protected and preferred their interest at the expenses of the Turkish Cypriots' ones (ibid.).

This common judgement is based on the assumptions and on the feelings of the Turkish Cypriot according to which the EU decisions are taken, not trying to solve the situation and enhance the life of this part of the society, but rather to "Europeanize" the island:

"finding compromises for the things that the EU cannot solve, e.g. the annexation of the TRNC, the language diversity and acceptance, the reunification of the island, and other problems that are not an EU competence or that require a greater cooperation that at the moment is absent" (Rüya Özkaya¹⁰, interview with the author on the 17th February 2023).

All these impressions and facts about the responsibilities of the European Union's institutions and their involvement in the Cyprus problem, lead the analysis towards some summative considerations.

The clearest thing in all this argument is that the role of the EU is much more controversial than it showed in other conflictual circumstances. And the reasons are

¹⁰ Rüya Özkaya is a PhD student in Political Science at the Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen researching the discourses on peace within the context of the ongoing stalemate in Cyprus.

multiple. It has been criticized that the EU in making its decisions sometimes lacks coherence, as it has been observed for Cyprus and Turkey's membership. In the first case, the membership procedure was completed despite the fact that the conflict had not been solved yet, and this was the most important clause in the Annan Plan. The fact that the conflict is still open has created many difficulties in how to manage the citizenship of the inhabitants, the visa procedures to cross from one part to the other, the adaptation and implementation of the *acquis communautaire* and also the trade with the other European countries.

On the Turkish side, the membership procedure has not been closed yet because, if for some aspects Turkey is working on the EU demands to adapt to its standard, there is still a very serious lack on fields related to crucial values for the EU, namely the protection of the fundamental human rights together with the protection of democracy and all its practices. Moreover, Greece's membership in the EU, since 1981, is not facilitating the joining of Turkey since Greece has the possibility to make requests to the detriment of Turkey, it can veto some decisions about it and it can jeopardize the process of accession from the inside.

The fact that Greece and the RoC are official members, that the TRNC is unofficially and non-fully a European Union member state and that Turkey is still processing its entrance into the Union, generate serious doubts on the fairness of the Union as an international institution, at least in this circumstance. The outcome of this is that the EU is given the adjective of "biased or partisan" in the negotiations and it has been seen in the common conviction of the TRNC in the negotiations for the reunification of the island. Logically, it is understandable that placing the interests of a member state at the same level as those of a non-member is an ambitious request. Moreover, there are no guarantees that, even if the EU were able to act unbiasedly from this point of view, the Cyprus problem is so entrenched in the island that it is not certain that this would be enough to achieve better results concerning the reunification of the island.

These different treatments that the EU provides for the different countries are also dictated by the fact that the EU does not have exclusive competence in all the areas within its member states and certainly does not have the possibility to act undisturbed in the non-member countries. As far as the competencies and room for

manoeuvre in the members, this must be agreed with the body representing the entirety of the population or at least an agreement must be awarded by satisfying the entirety of the population. This, however, is unfeasible in Cyprus because the Republic of Cyprus's institutions hardly allow the EU to make improvements or to implement projects favouring, in any way, the TRNC, as it is not a recognized authority. The only EU projects enforced in the TRNC, those previously mentioned, are those that represent the only way to bring benefits also to the RoC, i.e. the environmental policies, energetic reforms or projects for the management of the resources.

This refers to a much more general criticism manifested by the RoC leader, President Nikos Christodoulides, who recently invoked a more proactive behaviour by the Union, "which has the tools necessary and which has expressed its commitment to deliver, so as to reunify, its last divided member state". However, the President also comments that "Europe [...] remains fractured as long as Cyprus is divided" (Christodoulides 2023), highlighting once again the urgency to resolve the division of Cyprus, which could represent a huge resource for the entire region.

In any case, some scholars adopted a more optimistic view of the EU work in this complicated context. An example is provided by Öniş and Yilmaz (2008) who argue that at this moment, the relationship between Turkey and Greece is in a rapprochement phase which is made more stable and more sustainable, thanks to the Europeanization process implemented by the Union. Differently to what has been done in this paragraph, they focus their attention on the:

"dramatic easing of tensions on both sides, [...] dramatic increase in both diplomatic and civil initiatives, with multiple actors at multiple levels supporting the process of sustainable rapprochement"

both elementary pillars of the gradualist approach that the two countries opted for (Öniş and Yilmaz 2008, 125). The final objectives of this more proactive approach are, among others, a "considerable potential cooperation from the Balkans to the Eastern Mediterranean" (ibid., 125) and considerable progress in areas concerning "low politics" including, "bilateral economic relations and trade, tourism and civil society initiatives" (ibid., 130).

In all this process, the authors underline the presence of the EU as a “key reference point”, acting through “powerful pressures for change” (ibid., 135). The Europeanization process, indeed, has been tailored for Greece and Turkey in two different ways but to make these two countries converge towards one another. For Greece¹¹, Europeanization implied the shift from a:

“negative veto power to a country that increasingly realizes that it could achieve its national objectives through a process of dialogue with Turkey and most important of all, by promoting Turkey’s quest for full EU membership” (ibid., 136).

For Turkey, instead, Europeanization meant recognizing the country’s candidate status in the EU’s Helsinki Summit in December 1999, the attempted harmonization of the economic, political and foreign policy realms, the setting of more powerful conditions and incentives, the democratization reforms of the AKP since 2002 which supported the shift towards a more representative and procedural democracy and, finally, the improvements in the civil and human rights that allowed the establishment of a “substantive democracy” (ibid., 136). This translated also into the first moment in which Turkey realized the need for an “internationally acceptable solution” as far as the Cyprus dispute was concerned” (ibid., 137).

Another optimistic view on the Europeanisation of Greece and Turkey is provided by Keridis (1999). The author underlines how the EU membership for Greece and the Republic of Cyprus, as well as the Europeanization policies for the TRNC and Turkey, have proven to be the main “driving forces of modernization and globalization” (Keridis 1999, 2). At the same time, it was precisely such “domestic modernization [that] has raised awareness [...] that a resolution of the Greek-Turkish dispute was necessary” and could have been eased by those modern reforms (ibid., 3).

These two versions of the possible interpretation of the role that the EU played in the Turkish-Cypriot-Greek context provide with a comprehensive vision of the two sides of the same coin.

¹¹ For Europeanization of Greece see also Featherstone and Kazamias (2001) “Europeanization and the Southern Periphery”, Routledge, London.

From here, in the vicious cycle comprising the non-resolution of the Cyprus problem and the rival relationship between Greece and Turkey, from these two last paragraphs, it must be noted that also the enigmatic role of NATO and the controversial position of the EU, both with relation to the tirade Greece-Cyprus-Turkey must be considered.

3.5 The Instability of the two Nations

To briefly summarize what has been pointed out in this paragraph of analysis, the most important thing that must be highlighted is that both Greece and Turkey represent two rather unstable countries, both internally and internationally. Internally, they both have complicated political situations, caused by completely different systems in force in the two countries. And this is reflected internationally in the bilateral relations between them as well as with all the other countries.

Greece is one of the European countries with the highest number of political parties that aspire to rise to power at the Parliament, with the relative leaders who aim at becoming the Prime Ministers of the countries – the politicians with the central role in the political processes. However, in the last decades, there has been an alternation of mainly three political parties: the conservative right New Democracy (*Νέα Δημοκρατία*), the Coalition of the Radical Left, also known as Syriza (*Συνασπισμός Ριζοσπαστικής Αριστεράς*) and the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (*Πανελλήνιο Σοσιαλιστικό Κίνημα*), simply called PASOK. However, other parties are interacting with, supporting and hindering the political parties in the government at any time, for example, the Coalition of the Left, of the Movements and of Ecology, the Communist Party of Greece, the Popular Orthodox Rally, the lately-dissolved Golden Dawn, and many others. These last parties, even if very small and with almost no leverage in the Parliament, contribute to complicating the democratic practices in the decision-making processes in Greece, since they have different ideas from the main parties and, either way, they have to be convinced as well.

Greece had to – difficultly – move forward with the first declared neo-fascist dictatorship in Europe, the Greek Junta, and the complex situations in which it left the country, once democracy was established again. It had to regain the confidence

of the other neighbouring states and prove to be a valuable potential member for the European Union.

More recently, the weak stability of Greece has been put at risk several times due to the non-complete resolution of the first crisis, which subsequently led to the trigger of further crises. The greatest emergency of recent times has been the 2007-2008 financial crisis, or the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). It provoked serious financial damages worldwide but, as in any crisis, the adversities were stronger in some countries, e.g. Greece, compared to other realities. This Great Recession was caused by the vulnerabilities of the global financial system, starting with the collapse of the housing bubble in the US, the fall of the housing prices, the abandoning of mortgages, and the final collapses of the banking investments all around the world. The economic and financial crises, however, did not stop these two sectors, since another major consequence of them was the political instability that they led to (Ewing 2009). The relation between economy and politics in this specific case, is expressed by the fact that the economic stasis can often trigger social discontent which is revealed by mass protests and demonstrations asking for political intervention (Romero, 2013). In Greece, the social discontent translated into massive general strikes, and the shutting down of schools, airports and many other fundamental services (Maltezou, 2009).

The European response to this crisis was directed mainly at supporting Italy and Spain, the two countries with the most negative effects of this crisis. For all the European countries, the Commission proposed the European Stimulus Plan, or the European Economic Recovery Plan, which amounted to €200 billion, which should have been used to limit the economic drop-offs through the implementation of national economic policies (European Commission 2008). Nevertheless, the Government's work with the Parliament and the European measures proved not able enough to definitely settle the Greek economy and to safely complete the economic restoration of the country, which has not yet recovered. This is due to the fact that the irresolution of this first crisis, eased the outbreak of another problematic situation, represented by the 2009 debt crisis, which in turn, started the European Debt Crisis (EDC). In Greece, from early 2009, the emergence has been developed in the form of sudden reforms and austerity measures to face the economic

devastation of the GFC which generated the impoverishment and the loss of both properties and income, which on their turn, caused an alarming humanitarian crisis (Iefimerida 2015). During these years, moreover, the Greek government also had to face international mistrust and sanctions caused by the fact that according to European reliable sources, the Greek government had underreported the national debt and deficit levels (Higgins and Klitgaard, 2011).

Other causes of the 2009 worsening of the crisis have been the coupling of the budget deficit, the higher public debt to GDP ratio, the impossibility of autonomously manage the monetary policy stability due to the Eurozone membership; further internal factors have been the fiscal imbalances for the period 2004-2009, the increased deficit, and the higher debt-service costs, the imperfect budget compliance which required an enhancement, the unreliability of the data concerning Greece's economic levels, the too-high Government spendings, the persistent corruption and tax evasion (ibid.; Eurostat, 2004).

In order to prevent a total collapse of the country, after two years, on the 17th October 2011 the Minister of Finance, Evangelos Venizelos, promoted through the government the establishment of a new fund that would have supported those most seriously affected by the austerity measure.

The following step of this chain of crises is represented by the late 2011 Greek economic referendum attempt proposed by the Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou. This referendum asked the Greek citizens if the government should have accepted or rejected the conditions proposed by the European Union, the European Central Bank together with the International Monetary Fund, in order to approve a 50% cut in the national debt borrowed by private creditors (Sideris, 2011). The votes held on the 27th October reported that up to 60% of the Greek people were contrary to the EU plan for Greece (BBC, 2011); internally, the general reaction of the political parties was negative, especially those of the three main opposition parties which ended up by demanding elections (Ethnos 2011(a), (b), (c)). From here, also discussions on whether Greece should leave the Eurozone and for an eventual vote of confidence on the Greek PM and Government were held between the 2nd and the 4th November; the proposal of establishing a Government of National Unity (GNU) arose; demands for snap elections and new governmental

elections were advanced. The agreed decision, taken by PM Papandreou and New Democracy leader Antonis Samaras, referred to the establishment of an interim administration that would have led the country until the following February's elections (Los Angeles Times, 2011). This coalition government, however, would not be led by Papandreou, who lost the confidence of all the other opposition parties but the first proposed substitute was Lucas Papademos (Smith 2011), who at a later time, had to face the resistance of both PASOK and New Democracy.

The conclusion of all the negative effects and damages of these crises considered together is dated to 2018, the year in which both the return of economic growth and the end of the bailout mechanisms have been observed (Georgiopoulos, 2018).

These are only some recent examples in which the Greek political instability has caused several problems to the country – alongside international events and actions that triggered national responses. These happenings show that there is a certain pattern that has followed Greece during its history since its independence: the country is a potentially crucial actor in the international board – as also NATO has declared during the admission procedure; however, due to the political instability, which is related to economic downtrends and social discontent, it cannot make the positive contributions that were expected to generate.

On the other side of the Aegean Sea, Turkey ceased to be the most extended empire and one of the most powerful remained until its dissolution in 1922. In the following year, the Presidential Constitutional Republic was established, with a presidential-representative democratic character and a pluriform multi-party system, in which the president – the personification of both the head of state and head of government-, parliament, and judiciary share all the powers to manage the national affairs and to organize the international relations.

If, even with the passage from the empire to the republic, the main powers have remained in the hands of one single person – the Emperor first and the President then -, one major change has been introduced by the inclusion in the political world of the political parties backing the president and the opposition parties.

The principal parties that have taken hold in the Turkish left-wing political spectrum are the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* - CHP), the Social Democratic Populist Party (*Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti* - SHP) and the

Democratic Left Party (*Demokratik Sol Parti* – DSP) which are related to each other by values such as socialism, secularism and the Kemalism/Atatürkism (*Kamâlizm/Atatürkçülük*) – the ideology based on radical political, cultural, religious and social reforms which, in the moment of the Establishment of the Republic of Turkey, were aiming at separating the new Turkish foundation from the old Ottoman ground, and at embracing a more Western lifestyle, characterized by laicism and secularism, the support for sciences, a free education, the gender equality and the economic statism (Cleveland and Bunton 2009, 203-208, 278-286).

On the other side of the spectrum, in the right-wing one, the major political parties are the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Parti* - DP), the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi* – AP), the Motherland Party (*Anavatan Partisi* – ANAP) and the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP); all of these are sharing the same group of values, mainly conservative, Islamist and nationalist among which: the (social and/or liberal) conservatism, the economic liberalism and the right-wing populism.

The last political party that has been mentioned, the AKP, is the political party founded and led by the current President Erdoğan and which is the party with the largest support in the country – in decline after the first election of the president in 2014. The main values promoted by “Erdoğanism” (*Erdoğancılık*) and which represent the basis of the current Turkish national and foreign politics are the national and the social conservatism, the Neo-Ottomanism, the rejection of Kemalism and the economic nationalism with the addition of a soft Euroscepticism, fuelled by the suspicion of Western political intervention in the Middle East (Akyol 2016). This political ideology is also based on the cult of the personality of President Erdoğan and his charismatic authority (Abdulrazaq 2016) even if in the eyes of some critics this can be interpreted as a sort of authoritarianism and as an elective dictatorship (Bandow 2015).

Despite the Euro-Scepticism, it has been said that President Erdoğan has decided to continue with the practices and the negotiations with the European Union, since this would represent a major opening towards the international market and institutional world, together with the formalization of the sponsored alignment with the West. This would lead also to the achievement of a major role of Turkey in the

international society and the obtaining of great benefits that would improve the greatness of the country.

One of the elements that still divides the most popular perceptions about the government is the rupture with the past. As a matter of fact, the values promoted by Erdoğan are rather disruptive compared to those established with the first Turkish Republic in 1923. Back then, in the years of the Kemalist Revolution¹², the founding ideals promoted were secularism, the modernization of the society and of the state systems and the opening towards the West, due to a more pro-western tendency; in addition, the main pillars were represented by republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism, reformism and regionalism, playing a very important role also in the years after Kemal's death in 1938.

All these values, however, did not satisfy the people's nostalgic desire to regain the power and the strength that the Ottomans had as an Empire and for this, Kemal began to be seen as a betrayer (Zenonas Tziarras¹³, interview with the author 17th February 2023). Furthermore, after the establishment of the first republic, the people were also suffering the Sèvres Syndrome (*Sevr Sendromu*), from the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, according to which Turkey had both internal and external enemies – especially the West – “conspiring to weaken and carve up the Turkish Republic” (Göçek 2011, 105). The observed “symptoms” of this syndrome were the orientation towards the status quo, adversity and a major caution in the relations with the Western Great Powers, an increased compartmentalization of both regional and international politics which, summed together, led to an augmented isolationism of the country (Zenonas Tziarras, interview with the author 17th February 2023).

These have been the sentiments that led to the appointment of Erdoğan as Turkish Prime Minister in 2003, the year which marked the beginning of the “Erdoganist

¹² The name of the Revolution comes from Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, a Turkish General and politician; most importantly, he has been the first president of the Republic of Turkey, from 1923 to 1938 and for this he is considered the father of modern Turkey. More information: Britannica (2023) “Kemal Atatürk”, History & Society, 2nd August 2023. Accessed: 11/08/2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kemal-Ataturk>

¹³ Zenonas Tziarras is a professor of World Politics at the University of Warwick, with the specialization in Turkish foreign policy under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the Middle East; he also taught Greek-Turkish Relations, Strategy and War, and Global Security at the University of Cyprus; he also collaborated with numerous institutions in Cyprus.

counter-revolution” based, on the opposite principles compared to the previous one: conservatism, political Islamism and closure towards the West-focus on the East (ibid.).

The values proposed by Erdoğan are in contrast with those at the basis of the first Republic and, even if probably they better meet the demands of the population (considering the great support for the Head of State and the third re-election in early 2023), they represent something that creates insecurities and perplexities at the international level (ibid.).

Moreover, due to the peculiar decisions of the head of the State, Turkey still has to face the consequences of a controversial government, which in some interpretations is defined as dictatorial, due to the political grandeur of the President and some decisions he takes, especially as far as the political opposition, the freedom of expression and opinion and the protection of the fundamental rights of its citizens. At the same time, however, since the Cold War, Turkey has declared itself as aligned with the Western countries and values, in order to earn a seat in the NATO and attempt to achieve the same result also for the European Union.

In addition to the continued fights with the EU regarding the membership, the constraints imposed by the EU on Turkey and the limitations following Turkey’s support of the illegal establishment of the TRNC in Northern Cyprus, as it happened in Greece, also Turkey had to face the resolution of both internal and international crises. Most of them are related to the internationally observed human rights violations, the sanctions and repercussions arising from them. The European Court of Human Rights, as a matter of fact, has elaborated its 2014 Annual Report (ECHR 2015) which confirms that Turkey ranked first in human rights violations between 1959 and 2011, the period in which at least 2400 judgements have been made against the country’s situation (Merkezi 2012), especially on the Kurdish Issue, the women and the LGBT community’s rights and the media freedom.

The Kurdish conflict is one of the longest discrimination conflicts which are still open in modern Turkey and, similarly to the Cyprus problem, is far from finding a solution. This conflict takes place in the Turkish Kurdistan (or Northern Kurdistan), the south-eastern part of Turkey predominantly inhabited by the Kurds or Kurdish people. It is a population of approximately thirty million people, who share an

ethnic origin with Iranians natives of Kurdistan and whose people are spread between north-western Iran, Northern Iraq, northern Syria, and south-eastern Turkey (Centre for Preventive Action, 2023), as it is shown in Figure 3.4.5-1.



Figure 3.5-1: Area Vindicated by the Kurdish population, which includes north-western Iran, Northern Iraq, northern Syria, south-eastern Turkey (source: Speronello 2019)

The term “Kurdish Question” refers to the conflict between Turkish nationalism and the Kurdish nationalism professed by such people, who sustain that they are the inhabitants of an independent nation, Kurdistan, independent from Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Starting from the Ottoman Empire, the Kurds have always represented one of the largest minorities in the territory, and with the dissolution of the empire, they have been portioned between the four newly-formed countries, transforming the Kurds into a further reduced minority. Even if officially citizens of Turkey, as a minority – they represent one-fifth of the population (Centre for Preventive Action, 2023) - they are seen as a potential threat to the national integrity of Turkey, a possible cause of disorders within the borders; because of this and “legitimate” by article 13 of the Turkish Constitution of 1982, all the Presidents from that moment on, felt free to constrain this minority civil and social rights since these:

“may be restricted by law, in conformity with the letter and spirit of the Constitution, with the aim of safeguarding the indivisible integrity of the State with its territory and nation, national sovereignty, the Republic, national security, public order, general peace, the public interest, public morals and public health, and also for specific reasons set forth in the relevant articles of the Constitution” (Constitution of the Republic of Turkey 1982).

Already since the establishment of the Republic in 1923, the Kurds witnessed the limitation of their civil rights, the abolition of their Caliphate as well as of all the public expressions and institutions of the Kurdish identity, i.e. schools, newspapers, religious organizations and any type of association. In the same way, also the Kurdish language, traditional clothing, cultural traditions and names were prohibited (Gunes, 2012, 5). This type of discrimination is the main reason behind the emergence of Kurdish nationalism, strongly active during the 1960s and 1970s when the people were requesting the resolution of these grievances, but without achieving positive results (ibid., 10). The worsening of their status and the “legitimation” of the discriminations by the Constitution, led to the beginning of guerrilla insurgencies by the Kurdistan Workers Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê* – PKK), the armed militant political organization established in 1978 by Abdullah Ocalan but militarily active since 1984 (Centre for Preventive Action, 2023). Its primary aim was the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, but acknowledging the impossibility of this result, its purpose changed into the achievement of major autonomy and the equality between the political and cultural rights of the Kurdish and the Turkish people (Stanton 2016, 217). The activity of the PKK, designated as terrorist by many international institutions and countries (US Embassy in Turkey 2019; European Parliament 2015), stopped its guerrillas in 1999, the year of the lasting ceasefire (Gunes, 2012, chapter 7).

Despite the stop in the fighting, the repressions and the discrimination by the Turkish government continued and are persisting still today in the name of the “expansionist neo-Ottomanist tendencies” of President Erdoğan, with the Kurdish language prohibited from political speeches, in the mass media and for education purposes (Bengio 2023). Moreover, President Erdoğan’s troops in the south-east of the country had to deal and are dealing with the agitations put in place, not only by the PKK, but also by the Peoples’ Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi* – HDP) which is the most pro-Kurdish party in Turkey, and the People’s Protection Unit (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel* – YPG) which is the Kurdish militant group in the Syrian territory (Centre for Preventive Action, 2023). These turmoils have recently resulted in suicide bombings, the prosecution of suspected political conspirators, the arrest of approximately fifty thousand people and the increase in the number of

air strikes on PKK militants, all of these actions orchestrated by the Turkish President.

The already worrying perception that President Erdoğan had of the Kurds worsened even more when they began to be perceived as possibly responsible, or at least sponsors, of the 2016 failed coup in Turkey. The attempted coup took place on the 15th July 2016 when the Peace at Home Council, consisting of units of the First and Second Army of the Turkish Armed Forces, units of the Air and Naval Forces, supported by Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and, according to Turkey, also by the US, attempted a coup against President Erdoğan's government and all the institutions which demonstrated to be loyal to it. The motivations behind this rebellion act, according to the putschists, have been the endangering of the democratic rule in the country, the erosion of secularism, the nation's loss of credibility at the international level and, above all, the disrespect and the rejection of many fundamental rights.

The coup implied simultaneous bombings and attacks in the most important and institutionalized cities in Turkey, e.g. Ankara, Istanbul, the Marmaris port and the Bosphorus Bridge; these offensives proved to be very coordinated and well organized. However, thanks to the support that Erdoğan had at that time and his influence on the people, normal citizens armed themselves with homemade weapons and kitchen knives and they took to the streets to fight alongside their president (Al Jazeera 2017). This unprecedented civilian response was successful in impeding the coup, which in fact failed; nevertheless, it has also been one of the most devastating military coups in the country's history with 241 people killed and more than 2000 injured that night (ibid.).

The head behind the coup, according to the Turkish government, is Fethullah Gülen – a Turkish “businessman who has lived in self-imposed exile in the United States since 1999” after erosion of the relations with the AKP party (ibid.); this means that the Kurds and the pro-Kurdish political parties were cleared almost immediately by the accusation of organizing the coup; but, despite this, tensions with the Kurdish people continue and have faced some very life-threatening periods since then.

The problematic aspect of this coup is that it does not represent a singular event, but it can be included in a broader scheme of coups d'état of which the Turkish governments and presidents have been victims also for the whole duration of the Cold War. In fact, in those years, numerous happenings have threatened, and sometimes managed to undermine, the institutional stability of Turkey. Some of those worth mentioning in this regard are the more or less successful coups d'état of 1960, 1962, 1963, the events of the 1970s, and the Military Junta established in 1980, to which it is necessary to add the alleged military coup in 1993.

This chain of attacks started with the 27th May 1960 coup, the first one carried out in the Republic of Turkey. It was organized and completed by a group of young military officers first led by Cemal Madanoğlu who was then substituted by General Cemal Gürsel, as it had a higher ranking in the chain of command. The target of this first coup was the government of the Democratic Party, democratically elected on the 25th December 1957 and whose Prime Minister was Adnan Menderes. This protagonist of the 23rd government of Turkey was the main victim of the coup since its final outcome was the execution of the Prime Minister Menderes, together with other two ministers, Hasan Polatkan – Minister of Labour and Finance - and Fatin Rüştü Zorlu – Minister for Foreign Affairs (Gunn 2015).

In 1962, then, another coup was attempted always with the aim of overthrowing the democratically elected government in Turkey, precisely the 26th government elected on the 20th November 1961 and led by Prime Minister İsmet İnönü of the Republican People's Party. In this context, the opposition was represented by the Turkish Land Forces of the Army commanded by Staff Colonel Talat Aydemir and his companions. They managed to take control over a big portion of the capital but in the end, they could not prevail and the outcome was their surrender. Nevertheless, since the leader Aydemir was not punished, he orchestrated another attempted coup on the 20th May 1963 in order to oppose the return to civilian rule. After this second attack, he was finally arrested and executed (Heper and Evin 2011, 185; Time 1963; Cetin 2014, 18).

In the 70s, the institutional instability was rather relevant since it has been calculated that Turkey changed 11 Prime Ministers in that decade as a consequence of the continued clashes between the left- and the right-wing political groups,

always unsatisfied with the other party's work at the government. This, combined with the economic stagnation in the late 1960s and the consequent recession and increase in inflation (close to 80%), have been the triggers behind the 12th March military intervention aimed at restoring order. The Chief of General Staff Memduh Tagmac accused the government, and its leader Süleyman Demirel of the Justice Party (AP), of being the cause of the ruin of the country. However, this coup did not lead to great consequences as the other ones have done (Al Jazeera 2016).

More impacting military interventions started again in the 80s, destabilizing once again the democratic processes that were trying to be asserted within the Republic and in general the political scene in Turkey. On the 12th September began the coup guided by Chief of the General Staff Kenan Evren. As in the previous case, the target was the 43rd government of Turkey, in power since the 12th November 1979 with Süleyman Demirel as Prime Minister. The violence of this coup caused the subversion of the government, the establishment of the Armed Forces at the lead of the country, setting up of a Military Junta that ruled under martial law until 1983 when democracy was partially restored through the general elections (Marcella 2022, 283; Reuters Staff 2012). This coup has also more repressive consequences compared to the previous one since, with the establishment of the military government, all the political parties and any type of political group were prohibited within the national political sphere, as well as the total ban on the Kurdish language as a consequence of the intensified Turkish nationalism (Al Jazeera 2016; Marcella 2022, 286).

Finally, another event that weakened the political stability in Turkey has been the 1993 death of President Turgut Özal, publicly attributed to a sudden heart attack, but due to the particular political moment that Turkey was going through, it has always been considered as occurred in suspicious circumstances. For those who believe that the death of the President was not something accidental, it can be reconnected to the alleged coup that, according to part of the population, would be coordinated and carried out by some members of the Turkish Military forces through covert means, from here the term "Covert military coup". Together with the one of President Özal, there were other suspicious deaths of journalists and leading military figures loyal to the President.

Following this theory, the purpose of this “coup” was the protection of the so-called “Turkish Deep State” (in Turkish: *Derin devlet*), a series of relationships between the army, some Kurdish groups – including Kurdish Hizbollah -, some members of the Turkish mafia and also some intelligence services, like JITEM (*Jandarma İstihbarat ve Terörle Mücadele*, Gendarmerie Intelligence Organization). All these groups, apparently belonging to different social groups, shared anti-democratic values that they were trying to instil in the Turkish political structure from different angles (Kaya 2009, 101). Even if these suspicious events have never been recognized as something real, but seen as some conspirations, at least from part of the society, they contributed to jeopardising the already sensitive institutional cohesion of the country, increasing the insecurity and the concerns both within the political protagonists and also among the population.

Together with all these internal threats to the institutional unity of the Turkish Governments, also international events and claims have been instrumental in decreasing the certainties that the political authorities were trying to spread, and also in creating the image of Turkey as a strong and solid partner for the neighbours.

The first example is related to the continued Turkish threats of attacks and the actual operations targeting the Kurdish people that have triggered a series of reactions from international powers. As already mentioned, the European Commission will extend the obstacles for the Turkish membership in the Union, until when the Turkish government starts to guarantee the same fundamental rights to all its citizens, without any discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity (cases of the ECHR 2023).

Backing the EU sanctions, in December 2018 US President Donald Trump announced the withdrawal of the troops from Syria and its Kurdish territorial portion; this decision, however, left the Kurdish fighters and the US-baked Syrian Democratic Forces with major concerns about a possible increase of Turkish attacks against them (Centre for Preventive Action, 2023).

Moreover, in October 2019, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called once again for the urgency of a de-escalation of the renewed conflict in northern Syria and in the Turkish south-eastern region, after further air strikes and deadly ground offensive – immediately after the US withdrawal (United Nations 2019).

Another element of instability for the Turkish Government can be related to one of the characteristics of its political system, the declared independence that the judiciary power should have towards both the executive and the legislative powers. However, since 2013, and especially for the first years of the AKP Government, national and international analysts have observed that such independence was failing due to greater interference from the other two powers and the president himself in the appointment and promotion of prosecutors and judges (European Commission 2015, 5; European Parliament 2016, 4; Transparency International 2016).

The aim of this chapter was the presentation of some of the most controversial elements characterising both the Greek and the Turkish political systems. In the first case, it has been highlighted that any type of crisis that the Government had to face, both in the last century but also in more recent years, had the potential to break the political system, which has been judged, more than once, as a weak organization. This is the crucial reason why, even if institutions like the EU and NATO gave Greece the confidence to make a difference, the country has faced many difficulties.

On the Turkish side, instead, after the establishment of the Republic in 1923, several governments have followed, completely in contradiction with each other, overturning the system every time a new government was elected and replacing the old leaders' reforms. This has not only contributed to disproportionately increasing the internal instability, violence and mistrust towards the Government but at the same time has made it difficult for international institutions and other international powers to conclude efficient and long-lasting cooperation policies with the Turkish government.

All of this also reflects on the Cyprus issue since Greece has proved to have less power and less influence than what the Greek Cypriots – and the international society – hoped it had. For Turkey, the problem was and is represented by the fact that the Government still have to consolidate its place in the international community in order to gain a better position to make demands, also on the Cyprus issue. Moreover, as this chapter has shown, both countries have been focused on

solving internal conflicts and problems that undermined their perceptions from the outside, considering Cyprus not as an urgency in this regard.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter will be dedicated to the discussion of the results obtained by the previous chapters' analysis and of the findings that will be necessary to remember before going to the final conclusions of the following chapter.

It will be divided into three paragraphs. The first one aims to highlight the most important elements of the controversial relations between Turkey and Greece and the influences that these two countries have on Cyprus, two elements that will serve to understand how, even today, they perform as one of the main causes for the non-resolution of the Cyprus problem.

In the second part, the focus will be shifted to one event that has allowed the resurgence of the Cyprus issue in international security speeches. More in detail, it will tackle how the invasion of Ukraine has repositioned a spotlight on Cyprus and the importance that the resolution of the conflict could have.

The final paragraph, instead, will lead the attention of the readers to the most recent updates that will be mentioned as well as the possible interpretations of how events could evolve in the immediate future.

4.1 The “Real Essence of the Turkish-Greek Rivalry” and the Stalemate in Cyprus

For the entire writing of the current dissertation, what the author has tried to make clear is how much the rivalry between Greece and Turkey is not something that dates back to the past centuries, it is not something written in the past history of the two countries and, certainly, it is not something that has been solved definitively, rather is something defined “intractable” by some experts of these regional dynamics (Dalay 2021, 10).

As a matter of fact, the enmity of these two nations has been predominant in the analysis of their relations since the Greek independence, while the cooperation and the détente periods between them can be described as the exception, since they did not manage to find a way to live harmoniously side by side, both benefiting from this partnership.

The even more problematic aspect of all this is that, in an interconnected world as the current is, the relations between two countries affect international decisions and

alliances, at least in the region in which the two countries are included. Indeed, the effects of this problematic proximity between Greece and Turkey can be perceived in all the neighbouring countries members of the MENA area (Middle East and North Africa) and the MEEM (Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean) (Tziarras 2019, 5).

The “real essence of the Turkish-Greek relations” (Heraclides 2011) can be synthesized in few fundamental points: “historical memories and traumas, real or imagined that are part and parcel of their national narratives together with their respective collective identities which are built on slighting and demonizing the “Other”” (ibid. iii). In his paper, Heraclides outlines three possible paths that could be useful to cope with this enduring rivalry also relating it to the solution of the Cyprus issue. The first method “put the main emphasis on the settlement of the Cyprus problem that had derailed the cordial Greek-Turkish relations in 1954 and has poisoned them since ever”. However, the author of this thesis claims that the relations had showed the competing and unstable feature long before the outbreak of the Cyprus problem. The second path “is to tackle head on the various outstanding issues, namely those of the Aegean dispute, [...] sovereignty, sovereign rights, oil reserves, freedom of the high seas and of the air, access to ports, security and prestige” (ibid., 4). Finally, the third option “is the one of low politics, mainly economic cooperation, contacts, tourism, and extended interactions at sub-governmental level on issues of low politics”¹⁴ (ibid., 6).

The author of this dissertation sustains that the most appropriate path to relate the Turkish-Greek rivalry with the Cyprus issue lies in a reshaping of the first one, which claims that “if the Cyprus conflict was resolved by the reunification of the island, then the settlement of the Aegean and other points would be almost a child’s play” (ibid., 3). However, as it will be determined by the remainder of this paragraph, following some precise lines of reasoning, one can indicate that, rather, the settlement of the disputes open between Greece and Turkey would create a more stable environment to work towards solving the Cyprus problem.

The identity-based rivalries presented in Heraclides’ work can be projected into

¹⁴ For more information: Haass, R. (1990) “Conflicts Unending: The United States and Regional Disputes”, New Haven: Yale University Press.

some concrete disputes to better understand them. The most important of these definite concretization concerns the hegemony that both countries want to achieve in the Aegean Sea. This implies the discussions about the delimitation of the continental shelf, the delimitation of the national maritime zone and airspace, with the major consequences for the military protection of both of them and the (de)militarization of all the islands that are located between the two main-lands. Secondly, the NATO and the EU membership of the two countries play a very central role in defining the image that the most important international actors have of them; at the same time, however, it must be considered that if, on the one side, the EU and the NATO have a (controversial) influence on the two countries, the opposite direction of this relation is equally important. For instance, it is enough to mention the vetoes that Greece has put on the major decisions about Turkey's accession to the EU in the past decade.

Furthermore, also the energetic question has made its way among the most important issues, since the newly discovered basins in the Eastern Mediterranean and the importance that the different energy sources have gained, in view of the energy transition that needs to be addressed in the Turkish-Greek-Cypriot triangle, as well as in the entire region.

As far as the effect that all these elements have on the persistence of the Cyprus issue, the discussion has to start from the assumption that both Greece and Turkey have an influence on the respective communities on the island. Nevertheless, since the establishment of the status quo that allows for the coexistence of the two communities, the two influencing powers have decreased their pressures on Cyprus. Moreover, while at the beginning of the conflict the two countries undertook much more to depict the other as the enemy and as someone to be kept at a distance – the Greeks considered the Turks as “backwards, barbarian and prone to committing atrocities [...], the antipode of civilization” while the Turks regarded at the Greeks as “barbarian and backward, committing an array of slaughters and other atrocities, [...] ultra-nationalists, with deep-seated neurosis and a pathological enmity” (Heraclides 2011, 16-20) - nowadays it can be noticed that, in general terms, this attitude has been set aside in favour of a more cooperative attitude. Even Turkish President Erdoğan, for example in 2004, showed his encouragement for the

reconciliation between the two communities proposed by the Annan Plan, despite this meant more work alongside Greece.

Both countries' political decisions and programs almost always include points on the Cyprus issue, with some parties supporting the reconciliation and the rapprochement between the two communities, others proving to be more in favour of other approaches, the maintenance of the status quo or the Bi-Zonal – Bi-Communal solution.

Moreover, another element that has always generated major concerns was the Turkish Army's presence on the island, in the territory of the TRNC. Also in this respect, some improvements can be noticed. In fact, the majority of the troops that landed on the island in 1974 in order to guarantee the protection of the Turkish-Cypriot, community against the Greek/Greek-Cypriot threat, have been withdrawn and left the island in the last decades as a sign of the decreased pressure from Turkey.

Lastly, despite the fact that both the policies of the RoC and the TRNC are closely coordinated with those of, respectively, Greece and Turkey, these interlocked schemes are showing a bond less strong than it was in the past. And this also has spillovers from an economic standpoint. As Figure 5.1-1 shows, in fact, the monetary transfers directed from Turkey to the TRNC have considerably slowed in recent years, allowing for the TRNC to have greater independence and manifesting Turkey's readiness to reduce – even if partially – its control over the northern part of the island.

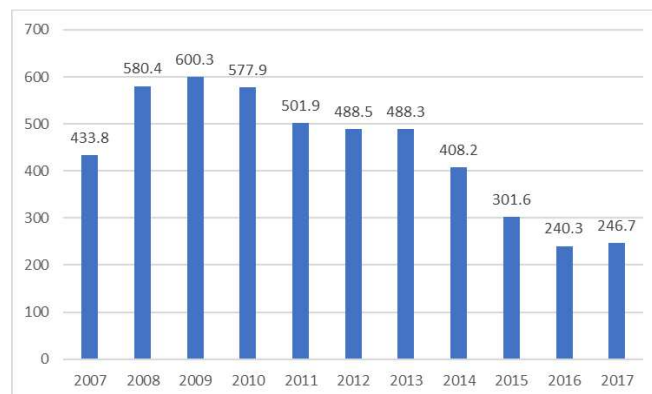


Figure 4.1-1: Turkey's Transfers to the TRNC (\$ million). (Source: Tuğba 2018 as elaborated by Özertem 2021, 12).

All these improvements might suggest that since the years of active combat and the rejection of the Annan Plan in 2004, in current times the situation is closer to a real solution to the problem. However, this has not occurred due to other aspects affecting the entire process. The most important one to remember, according to the author, is the removal of urgency from the issue, since the active combat has ended, the crossing points have been opened, there is the UNFICYP always working to reduce any risk of escalation and at the eyes of many, this implies that the issue has been resolved by itself and no longer needs intervention (Mirbagheri 2005, 151-152). The problematic outcome is that the Cyprus problem has ceased to be a matter of priority on the world's conflict agenda. In the second place, and as a consequence of the previous one, there is also the minimum level of satisfaction for the two communities living together. Indeed, the two communities are not satisfied with the current cohabitation situation and they want to definitely solve it; however, they can continue to live with the status quo that can be observed between them today. This leads to the decreased urgency also at the sight of the two communities and their leaders because, as just mentioned, with this new "equilibrium", kept also by the UNFICYP, they do not feel the urgency to cooperate to find a peace agreement.

This passive and acquiescent attitude has been observed and studied also by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Nicosia, whose president is Prof. Dr. Hubert Faustmann. During an interview with Mr. Faustmann, he claimed that the current situation can be defined as a dead point since:

"the general view that one can have talking to the majority of the people on the island is that many of them are giving up on finding an appropriate solution for the conflict because the status quo in which they are living can be maintained, nobody is completely satisfied but, at the same time, nobody is completely unsatisfied". (Hubert Faustmann, interview with the author, 15th February 2023).

A curious metaphor that he elaborated on during the interview is the following: "The patient (meaning Cyprus without a solution) is terminally ill, but nobody wants to admit it" (ibid.), and the major cause is always this compromise/status quo which manages to limit as much as possible the damages but at the same time prevent the advantages that could be obtained by the reconciliation and the official

resolution of the conflict.

A similar argument has been defended by Mr. Harry Tzimitras, the Director of the PRIO Cyprus Centre when he claimed that:

“every day without a solution to the problems in Cyprus makes the conflict more complex and entrenched since it sees the accumulation of other conflictual points between the two communities” (Harry Tzimitras¹⁵, interview with the author, 13th February 2023).

In support of this theory, Tzimitras explains how the entire problem started as a territorial dispute between two different ethnic groups, then it saw the involvement of international actors which increased the discriminating policies leading to the physical division of the two communities. One of the main problems generated by the division and the following reopening of the crossing points is still today the property issue: all those properties belonging to the Greek Cypriots in the northern part of the island, for example, after the division, either remained uninhabited or came under the ownership of Turkish Cypriots (and the opposite is true for the Turkish Cypriot properties in the southern part of the island); now that the Greek Cypriots have the possibility to move from one side to the other, the question of property rights on these buildings remains open.

A distinct aspect of the conflict that has been added over the years is the front of the missing persons, missing as a consequence of threats, harassment, kidnappings and mass killings that started during the years of the war and still have effects on the two communities nowadays¹⁶.

The last frontier added to the frozen conflict is the one about the management, exploitation and transportation of the energetic resources over the Eastern Mediterranean, in which not only Cyprus is involved, but also Turkey, Greece,

¹⁵ Harry Tzimtras, besides being the Director of the PRIO Cyprus Centre, is also a Professor of International Law and International Relation; he has been the Director of the M.A. in International Relations Program and the Director of the Turkish-Greek Studies Division at the Istanbul Bilgi University.

¹⁶ For more information about the issue of the missing persons, read the articles and listen to the interviews of Sevgül Uludag, the most famous Turkish Cypriot woman in the entire island. She is a journalist, a peace and gender activist. She dedicated his life to investigate the disappearance of these missing people, of both communities, without discriminating anybody, to give their relatives some certainties about their loved ones.

Egypt, Syria and other regional actors (ibid.).

From this overview of the periodic additions of new facets to the conflict, it can be noted how the depth and the rooting of these aspects in the personal sphere of the society is increasing more and more, affecting very sensitive topics for the people (Dalay 2021, 10); this is exactly the feature that makes the conflict more difficult to be solved as time goes on.

This is also the reason why some academics and some experts, advocate for the idea that the only way to arrive at a solution to the Cyprus issue is the elaboration and the establishment of a top-down solution, as the Annan Plan proposed to do since the Cypriots are too deeply-involved in the entire conflict that for them is more complicate to have an objective view on it and shelve the past for a greater good. If this were the case, both Turkey and Greece could make a difference in the rapprochement process on the island, but as the author demonstrated, they are not in a situation where they can cooperate and trust each other blindly to solve the problem.

Thus, on the one side there is the persistence of rival disputes between Turkey and Greece that, after centuries of interrelated histories, have not yet managed to find a way to make cooperation prevail over their antagonism; on the other side, the stalemate in Cyprus reduces the chances of finding a lasting solution as the conflict becomes increasingly an integral part of the Cypriot culture. It can be deducted, then, that if something is not changed in at least one of the two frozen contexts, the two impasses are likely to remain as they are, preventing an improvement in the stability of the MENA region (Bishku 1991, Siegl 2002, Dalay 2021).

All the things said until now are necessary to remember that, despite the improvements and the changes in behaviour that both countries did in the last decades, the Cyprus problem is still present, rooted in the island's society. This makes it very complicated to find a definitive solution for the issue, especially if it has remained undisclosed and latent for a long time after the end of the fights. Indeed, even though it is still an open question of international relevance, it remained excluded from the international and regional security agendas.

Nonetheless, this has recently changed, with the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In fact, as it has been anticipated in the chapter dedicated to the

energetic question in the Eastern Mediterranean and as it will be deepened in the following paragraph, the Cyprus issue re-emerged once Turkey started to be considered as a possible alternative to Russian energy for the European Union. This is the subject of the next paragraph.

4.2 Cyprus and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

As can be deduced from the findings of the previous chapters of this dissertation, one of the aspects that fuel the most the rivalry and the belligerent behaviour in the Eastern Mediterranean countries is the energetic question and, as it has been demonstrated more than once, the presence of a divided island in the middle of this region does not certainly help to smooth things down.

The energetic discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean, have been playing a fundamental role in defining the relationships of the involved countries since the beginning. The different countries' explorations have, in one way or the other, shaped the resources game in which all the nations facing the Eastern Mediterranean are involved; in addition, however, also other actors are fundamental. With the beginning of the new millennium, in fact, Russia has been interested in this region's events since the discoveries of gas and oil, especially to monitor the rise of an eventual competitor in the energetic market and to take advantage of the instability of the region, if possible. For example, as Shlapentokh (2021) explained, the already existing challenges between Turkey and NATO and, even more, the “conflict between Turkey and Cyprus, suits Russian interests by pulling Turkey closer to Russia and away from NATO” (Shlapentokh 2021, 120). Moreover, at that time, the relations between Ankara and Washington were not in their best phase, with further collapsing due to the alleged involvement of the United States in acts of threats to the unity and the power of Turkey, such as the 2016 coup (ibid., 122).

Russia, except from all the opportunities to integrate with the various energy processes of the Eastern Mediterranean, also aimed at strengthening its ties with Turkey, not yet perceived as a threat in the resource market due to the failure of some pipeline projects, to limit the chances for Turkish and Russian common enemies' - i.e. Turkmenistan - entrance in the European market (ibid., 128).

It was only in a second phase that the paths of Russia and Turkey began to drift apart until they came to a standstill. As a matter of fact, even if the energetic question already represented a crucial “hot issue” in the Eastern Mediterranean and the MENA area, in 2022 there has been a trigger event that made the problem even more difficult to manage: the Russian invasion of Ukraine, started precisely on the 24th February 2022. This event has further corroded the precariousness of the balance in the Eastern Mediterranean and has made even more evident the urgency to solve the Cyprus problem, in order to provide more security and greater cohesion in the region since this would trigger other stabilizing events.

As far as the energetic question is concerned, the European Union has been moving to reduce the resource dependency on Russia both for gas and oil, as a sanction for its actions towards Ukraine. This is due to the fact that the EU, in 2021, “imported about 140 billion cubic metres (bcm) of gas” and “about 15 bcm in the form of liquefied natural gas (LNG)” from Russia, for a total of 155 bcm accounting for 40 per cent of the European total gas consumption (Tastan 2022, 2). Moreover, some European state’s dependency on Russian gas was, and still is, one of the most profitable for the Russian market – for example, Germany and Italy -, while for some other countries, it was the only possible supplier. From here, the stress has been placed more seriously on the diversification of the gas providers to the extent of cutting this source of economic income at the basis of Russian wealth.

Some possibilities that the EU has looked at are the North Sea, Norway, North Africa, the Middle East and the Caucasus, but each of these presents difficulties of various nature - timing, technical, diplomatic, infrastructural or strategic complications or limitations of resources – especially since the EU is looking for an alternative to be exploited immediately, available in the short term (ibid. 2). This is the reason why, as anticipated in paragraph 3.2, one of the countries most considered as a potential alternative to Russia is Turkey, due to its objective power and influence in the region, its strategic position in the middle between the EU, the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Caspian and the Black Seas. Moreover, as previously stated, all the possible gas and oil pipelines bypassing Russian basins have to cross, either entirely or partially, the Turkish territory which increases the decision-making power of the country concerning resources supply. On its side,

Ankara advances as much as it can to become the leading supplier for the EU also to pave its way to become an official member of the Union, after years of conditionalities and criteria to be met. And in this sense, the construction of both the TANAP and the TAP as principal gas pipelines in the region has helped Turkey to prove its utility and effectiveness as an energy provider.

Alongside Turkey, another already mentioned crucial actor in the resources game between the Middle East and Europe is Iran, since its largest deposits of natural gas. The problem with this powerful player is that “the majority of the natural gas that Iran produces is consumed domestically, and export capacities are limited” (ibid, 4) and these export activities are mainly directed to Turkey itself, representing the 10 per cent of Turkish gas consumption (ibid, 4). Other limitations in Iranian provision are the consequences of the US sanctions on Iran since the 1970s which caused the absence of the technology required to establish liquefaction plants. All these elements make it difficult to choose Iran as a gas provider in the short and medium term.

Nonetheless, even if Turkey was the only alternative gas supplier that the EU could look at, some serious problems would be faced in this partnership as well. Firstly, it would be necessary to find a solution to the Turkish exclusion “from any multilateral cooperation within the framework of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum and from bilateral cooperation with other riparian states” because becoming the first EU gas provider would imply consolidating, even more, its powerful position in the region and the other countries should accept this as a fact. However, this step is in a stalemate due to the conflicting policies and antagonistic relations with most of its neighbours, despite the “process of normalization of relations” with them which has proved to be insufficient (ibid. 6). One of the fronts on which Turkey is still working is a partnership with Iran, demonstrated by the increased meetings between the two presidents, Isaac Herzog and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, accompanied by the Energy Ministries of the two countries, Karine Elharrar succeeded by Israel Kats for Israel and Fatih Dönmez and his successor Alparslan Bayraktar for Turkey. The visits between the two delegates were already frequent in 2016 during the discussions for the first undersea pipeline connecting the Leviathan – the Israeli largest natural gas field – and Turkey, which has never been

concretized, primarily due to an onset of deterioration of the political relations. Moreover, it has been calculated that this eventual pipeline “would cost up to €1.5 billion to build [...] making it more manageable than the €6 billion so-called EastMed pipeline” to take the gas from Israel to Cyprus, Greece and Italy (ibid. 6). Although to redirect the attention to the specific topic of this thesis, the problem with the Israeli-Turkish underwater pipeline is that, to remain economically advantageous, it must inevitably pass through the territorial waters of either the divided island of Cyprus or the perpetually-at-war Syria. And none of the two options is judged feasible at this time since the option of passing through Cyprus’ territorial waters without the RoC’s approval – which Turkey would not have – would imperil Israel's relations with both Cyprus and Greece, and this is a risk that Israel does not want to take. The conclusions that can be drawn are those outlined by Tastan (2022) himself:

“if there was a prospect for a resolution of the Cyprus issue or the possibility of a political normalisation between Ankara and the Republic of Cyprus, then an Israel-Turkey-Republic of Cyprus energy cooperation could become a reality, but this seems highly improbable anytime in the near future” (Tastan 2022, 7)

making clear once again, how much the resolution of the Cyprus problem would be essential and imperative to have major stability and security in the region of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Once that it has been clarified the relevance Cyprus can have, once again, in the simplification of an “interlocking set of crises unfolded in the Eastern Mediterranean” (Dalay 2021 10), which in this case can have much wider effects on Russia and the European Union, it is justified the return of the Cyprus question in some international security speeches.

However, this is not sufficient. It is crucial for all of this that Cyprus returns at the centre of these speeches; influential countries and/or international institutions must start working together in order to change the status quo on the island; it is necessary to resolve the Cyprus question also in order to ease the resolution of other controversial disputes in the region.

4.3. The latest developments and possible future scenarios

One of the most recurrent elements highlighted in all the chapters of this thesis is the volatility and the ease with which the bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey are forged. If until the late 2010s, they showed small but positive changes between them, as well as concerning Cyprus, some recent shifts have gone in the opposite directions. As a matter of fact, mainly basing this passage on the analytical reports of Tahiroglu (2022) and Yuksel (2022), the very last (negative) developments in the three countries' relationships among them will be delineated.

The drivers of this further modification of attitude, principally detectable on the Turkish side, are various. First of all, since 2017 there has been a sort of alignment between Turkey and Russia, with an increase of the meeting between the two presidents Erdoğan and Putin, as well as of the respective delegations, to reach agreements on diverse matters. One of the most worrying aspects has been the “growing military relationship with Russia” since 2017 and the cooperation in the “defence industry” since 2019 (Tahiroglu 2022, 4-5). As a consequence of this intensified set of deals, the US's concerns about their possible cooperation with Ankara increased accordingly, encouraging them to seek new partners in the region, namely Athens and the RoC. This caused the “loss of Turkey's competitive advantage vis-à-vis Greece in U.S. foreign policy” (ibid., 4). Moreover, Turkey has also been cut off from the EMGF, following a decision taken by all the other members: Israel, Egypt, Greece, the RoC, Italy, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. And with two of them, Israel and Egypt, Turkey argued numerous times also “over the policies towards Islamist groups and other contentious regional issues” (ibid., 4). Summing up all these elements, it is clear enough why Turkey is facing an intensified sense of isolation in the Eastern Mediterranean and a series of anxieties produced by the trilateral partnerships (Iseri and Çagri Bartan in Tziarras 2019, 120) which, in part, explains some of its behaviours.

In order to show the strong alliance between the Western powers and the firm stance against these decisions by President Erdoğan, also the EU aligned with the US in condemning them. European leaders claimed to be “frustrated by Erdoğan's use of gunboat diplomacy” and as a disciplinary measure they publicly stated their support, especially in the maritime dispute, for Athens and the RoC, already EU

members (ibid., 5). Furthermore, in November 2019, the EU also imposed strict sanctions on Turkey with the accusation of “deliberately provoking conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean” (ibid.). These sanctions were also accompanied by responses from individual European states; Germany, for instance, deployed forty German “Marder’ infantry fighting vehicles” near the Greek-Turkish border (Von Der Burchard and Stamouli 2022). Similarly, France decided to strengthen even more their military defence pacts with Greece to guarantee the latter a stronger backing against its enemy (The Economist 2021).

On the diplomatic side, instead, it is true that in 2020 the newly elected Biden administration attempted to boost the dialogue between Athens and Ankara and that in 2021 this plan seemed to work as at the NATO summit President Erdoğan appeared to be eager to reopen the dialogue with the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis (Gumrukcu and Toksabay 2021). However, what really happened during the following meetings between these two personalities is that in May 2022 President Erdoğan stated that PM Mitsotakis “no longer exists” for him (Toksabay and Koutantou 2022) and in September the first threatened Greece by saying that “Turkey could come down suddenly one night” (Bilginsoy 2022). But these are not the only threatening quotes of President Erdoğan, since both 2022 and 2023 are full of similar episodes.

Directly referring to Cyprus, it is observable that after the failure of the Crans Montana talks in 2017, and in line with this “return to an aggression policy toward Greece” (Tahiroğlu 2022, 1), Turkey permanently cut off any possibility of implementing a BCBZ solution for Cyprus. Instead, it convincingly switched towards a two-state solution, an option that has been advertised and advocated even more as a consequence of the increased isolation in the region.

However, neither the two-state solution has the necessary support to be effectively applied. On the one hand, because today the majority of “Greek-Cypriots advocate for a unitary state, the Greek-Cypriot administration continues to favour a solution based on federalism” (Yüksel 2022, 5). Furthermore, the Turkish preference for the two-state solution is not even in line with the preference of the entirety of the Turkish Cypriot community. As a matter of fact, the community is divided into the “Turkish settlers” – “who made Northern Cyprus their home after the 1974

invasion” (ibid., 8) – who support the predilection of their motherland, and the indigenous Turkish Cypriots which are “more firmly anchored in their relationship with the entire island” (ibid.).

If, previously, it has been claimed that at the beginning of the 2000s, President Erdoğan decided to withdraw part of the troops from the Cypriot territory to show his inclination to move forward by abandoning the aggression policy, this attitude has been reversed by the elements just mentioned. Indeed, the Turkish troops stationed in Northern Cyprus in the form of the “Cyprus Turkish Peace Force Command” have re-ascended to 30-40,000; on the other side of the Green Line, instead, the Greek military personnel “is estimated to be around 1,000” (ibid., 6). In addition, “Ankara upgraded the Geçitakale airbase [...] to enable armed drone sorties in late 2019”, it increased its military footprint in the Eastern Mediterranean, “signalled its intent to build a naval base next to the drone base in Magosa (Famagusta) (ibid.).

Also in the economic sphere, it was previously hinted, that at the beginning of the 2000s and until 2017 the economic transfer that Turkey directed toward the TRNC had diminished (Figure 5.1-1). As it happened in the military field, also here a retraction of this tendency can be noticed, since the “Turkish-TRNC Economic and Monetary Cooperation scheme” reached very high levels, amounting to US\$ 336,83 million in 2021 (Özertem 2021, as quoted in Yüksel 2022).

Finally, Ankara’s involvement in the island’s domestic affairs can be detected also regarding the strictly political realm. An involvement strategy is an intervention in the presidential elections in support of one political party rather than another; this dates back to October 2020 when he expressed direct support in favour of the right-wing National Unity Party (USP), and its candidate Ersin Tartar, as they were promoting the two-state solution (Yüksel 2022, 6). Another “Turkish intrusion” can be detected in the process of election of the head of the security forces of the TRNC, who is directly appointed by Ankara (Erol Kaymak, interviewed by Yüksel, quoted in Yüksel 2022, 6).

From this presentation of the facts, it can be deduced that the increased isolation of Turkey in the geopolitical schemes of the Eastern Mediterranean, of the EMGF and the MENA area is, almost automatically, translated into a more intense

involvement of Ankara in the Cypriot domestic decisions; this stronger cooperation between Turkey and the TRNC has as the principal outcome, the one of avoiding even more any possibility of finding a solution to the Cyprus problem, as Ankara will use its influence on the island as a spite to every attempt of exclusion by the other regional neighbours.

With the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, some of these tendencies have been blunted, especially the Turkish military and political proximity with Russia, as this would put at risk the few and weak remaining international relations with the major European countries, the EU as an institution and other actors necessary to maintain the reputation of Ankara. Especially the relations with the EU have seen a positive turn due to the possibility of having Turkey as an energy resource provider as an alternative to Russia, which has reopened the chances for Turkey's accession to the EU.

If all claims made so far are added up together, it should be clear that any kind of prediction about the future developments of both the Turkish-Greek relation and the eventual progress in the Cyprus issue is impossible to be made. The main reasons for this are that: neither of these contexts follows recurring patterns and the national preference can change suddenly; the stalemates in international relations, which imply also a stalemate in the Cyprus question, are too eradicated in the different societies and at the same time they are extremely dependent on other actors; moreover, no visible (positive) results are deriving from the détente processes between Greece and Turkey (Siegl 2002, 49).

In addition:

“despite the fact that both Greece and Turkey have reasonable incentives to prevent their disputes in the Aegean from escalating they still do not feel the urgent need to resolve problems at the expense of fundamental mutual concessions” (ibid., 50).

Furthermore, all the decisions concerning one of the two countries are today strongly interrelated to those of the other countries; that means that the prediction of the moves of Greece, for example, must necessarily take into account the possible responses of Turkey which will almost certainly affect Cyprus, which will have to adapt to eventual changes.

This is also the representation of the volatility of the geopolitical context of the MENA and the Eastern Mediterranean regions, in which internationally weak countries depend on one another more tightly than in other regions of the world, and being weak, they can be easily influenced by those who are superpowers.

The main variables to consider if wishing to forecast future developments in this context are, principally: the arrangement of the relations between Turkey and the EU, the eventual return of the status of urgency attributed to the Cyprus issue and, lastly, the management of the energetic resources in the Eastern Mediterranean together with the possibility for Turkey to enter in the EMGF.

Likewise, another crucial element to consider is also the military. As a matter of fact, the possibility of rapprochement between Greece and Turkey is predominantly subordinate to the creation of the trust that has been lacking for centuries. However, this is not possible if the two countries do not reverse their tendency to increase military expenditures – “Greece and Turkey have been the only two NATO countries that have increased military expenditures in the post-Cold War era” (Öniş and Yilmaz 2008, 141)¹⁷.

Some possible projections can be imagined, deriving from the combination of these variables. As far as the Turkish-Greek relationship is concerned, for example, the energetic question becoming of primary importance for the EU could be seen as the final solution for the Turkish resources as substitutes to the Russian ones. If that was the case, the relations between the EU and Turkey could increase and be strengthened, being transformed into a sort of more stable *détente* (Siegl 2002, 50); the next phase, after the work by Turkey to meet the accession criteria and to improve the human rights conditions in the country, could be the Turkish membership in the EU. As it happened when both Greece and Turkey became NATO members in 1952, both countries' membership in the EU could be the catalyst to reinforce the relationship between them, renovating the *détente* that produced positive effects in the past century and, eventually, stabilise in a permanent way the bilateral relations between the two actors. This consequent *détente* could increase the propensity of the two regional powers to cooperate in

¹⁷ For more information about the post-Cold War military expenditures of NATO countries: Brian A. (1995) "*NATO Military Expenditure in the Post-Cold War Era*," Hellenic Atlantic Treaty Organization Review, available at <http://www.hatareview.org/ardy.html>.

order to find also a feasible solution for the Cyprus problem, definitely smoothing the divisive thoughts between the two communities, reuniting the island – in a BCBZ reality, the two-state solution or in any other solution – making it returning to its nature of sovereign state, which it is, and allowing the Cypriots as a whole to return to live in harmony with each other, without any dividing line between them.

A similar outcome could be achieved along another path, namely through the admission of Turkey into the EMGF, or allowing it to have some power also in an indirect way. According to Emre Iseri and Ahmet Çagri Bartan (in Tziarras 2019, 120) and thought strongly shared by the author of this dissertation, this is necessary since, regardless of whether or not one can agree with Turkey's decisions, whether or not one can share its values and principles, it is undeniable that Turkey has a fundamental role in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially in the resource field. By granting it more space in the decision-making processes, the isolationism to which it has been forced in the time will be reduced, the political tensions will not be exacerbated, and, consequently, the two realities will meet and maybe the probabilities of finding agreements on other fields, for instance, Cyprus, will be increased accordingly.

Another possibility is that the relations between Greece and Turkey remain exactly as they are, unstable and unpredictable since they both rely on the fact that “there is not a pressing need or irresistible incentive yet to compromise and resolve stalled and complicated disputes once and for all” (ibid., 50).

Lastly, the third prospect is that either Greece starts again to firmly oppose Turkey's accession to the EU or that Turkey moves further away from the membership criteria. In both cases, the result would be a cracking of relations between the EU and Turkey, with a subsequent reduction of the possible impacts of the EU in solving the Cyprus issue.

In both these options, the Cyprus problem may encounter a breakthrough with two different circumstances: the two communities further intensify the inter-communal meetings, events, associations and cooperation in order to find a feasible solution internally, pushing it bottom-up; otherwise, another plan, like the Annan Plan, can be developed internationally, by the UN for example, or by other international institutions and/or organizations, proposing it top-down to the local authorities.

This second option is the one openly promoted by the current President of Cyprus, Christodoulides, in front of the UN General Assembly, when he recalls the UN Charter which attributes to the UN “the responsibility to act as the catalyst for peace in Cyprus” (Christodoulides 2023).

The open scenarios are many, some propose the repetition of something similar to what has happened in the past but with the hope of some better results; others aspire to understand if the current status quo could be maintained and for how long this can be possible.

In any case, with the instability and the volatility of the relations, alongside the numerous countries playing a central role in the MENA region, the future geopolitical developments remain somewhat mysterious.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

With the current dissertation, the author aimed to include the frozen Cyprus Problem in the already complicated geopolitical context of the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean (MEEM) or Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions. The relevance of this objective is given by the fact that, contrary to the public perception of this conflict, it cannot be considered a secondary issue in this geopolitically conflicting region. Rather, it must be considered on a par with the other major conflicts, and with the following (last) assessments, the author will explain the reasons for this claim.

All the aspects touched and deepened by the specific chapters of this thesis served the aim of describing the potential indispensable role that Cyprus can have in providing stability in the region even if it is considered to be only a small island in the middle of the Eastern Mediterranean. Since the conflict in Cyprus started, more than sixty years ago and now that the situation has “stabilized” with a non-optimal status quo, the Cyprus problem is not seen as an emergency likely to be resolved in the near future. To this, it has to be added that neither the global information sources, nor the powerful leaders talk about Cyprus anymore, convening more often on “more serious, recent, and heated conflicts”, that have not yet reached a minimum state of affairs, such as the Arab Springs, the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, the fresh memory of the Balkans wars, the Kosovar question, the ISIS threats, the re-appearance in the news of the Nagorno Karabakh war, that started in 2020, as a consequence of the intense ethnic cleansing which has recently begun and, definitely, the contemporary Russian invasion of Ukraine.

This kind of behaviour does nothing but sink a problem that, instead, must be recognized and addressed to be solved, as this "small island in the Eastern Mediterranean" proved to be of exceptional importance on several fronts: for the strategic position in which the island is located, in the crossing point between Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, for the energy sector and the discovery and basins surrounding the island, the crucial role of Cyprus as a guarantee of safety and security in the Eastern Mediterranean even without being a NATO member and the island being in the centre of very precise triangular relationship between Turkey, the EU and Greece.

Just consider the case of the energetic crisis that the European Union, the Middle East, and the neighbouring regions are facing as a result of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has been discussed in paragraph 4.2. With this example alone, it is possible to understand how the Cyprus issue is not something relegated to the last century or confined within the Cypriot borders; rather it is something more than this and during this thesis, this has been proved more than once.

In the first chapter, it has been mentioned the research question that inspired and guided the writing of this elaboration: “How does the relationship between Greece and Turkey still represent one of the causes for the non-resolution of the Cypriot question?”. In one way or another, every chapter of this dissertation has tried to add a piece of answer to this question, an answer that will be summarised in the following lines.

The focus on the relation between Turkey and Greece is due to the fact that the elements characterising Cyprus in the first place – the ethnic division, the people displacement and disappearances, the economic limitation, the developmental differentials and all their consequences -, however, must be placed in a wider and equally problematic context, that necessarily involves Greece and Turkey. In Chapter 1, the historical framework described the relations between the two countries, from the initial phases with the detachment of Greece from the Ottoman Empire and the beginning of the frictions after the independence, to the current situation which shows that no major progress has been made to improve such relations. Still having a great influence on Cyprus, in the chapter, it was highlighted that all the elements of the conflict between Greece and Turkey – the control of the Aegean Sea, the militarization of the border and of the islands, the military disputes between them - still have a massive (negative) effect on the development of reconciliation policies within the borders of the island.

Chapter 2, subsequently, has been dedicated to the deepening of the five most decisive spheres of influence that, from the Turkish-Greek relations, are projected on Cyprus. On the one side, the two countries have proved unable to solve the conflicting, rival, and mistrusting relations that characterize their history since the Greek independence, meaning that even after centuries, they continue to affect their peaceful coexistence as neighbours; on the other side, it must be recalled that they

also remain countries deeply affected by internal problems which affect all the sectors fundamental for the functioning of these countries: the politics, the economics, the military and, consequently, also the private sphere of their citizens. Both sides of this coin contribute to the persistence of the stalemate in Cyprus: the first one prevents the two countries from cooperating and coordinating themselves to find a solution for the restoration of order on the island, while the second situation makes such resolution for Cyprus secondary to internal problems which have the priority for the respective governments.

Also the role of NATO does not help in solving the Cyprus problem as it cannot have a firm position in mediating a settling of the Turkish-Greek relation even if both are NATO members. Similarly, the European Union continues to have a controversial role, judged by some as a partisan attitude favouring Greece and the Republic of Cyprus given that these are EU members while doing everything to obstruct Turkey's entry into the Union, except in situations in which Turkey seems to be the only actor capable of solving an EU problem. As a matter of fact, only from the moment in which Turkey was seen as the most desirable alternative to Russian gas, the EU started to seriously reconsider Turkey's membership, because in that case, the benefits would have been for the EU as well. In this negotiation, then, the clause about the resolution of the Cyprus issue must be inserted, as being not only linked to the political developments in Turkey but discovered as potentially indispensable for major stability in the European Union as well.

The problematic aspect of the conflicting bilateral relation between Turkey and Greece is that it does not affect only this restricted context between the two neighbours because, since the moment in which both of them vindicated a certain degree of control over Cyprus and since the officiality of the power conferred on them by the Treaty of Guarantee of August 1960, the link that both countries have made with the island has become temporarily indissoluble. And it will remain indissoluble until the moment in which a final solution is established for the island to honour its status as a sovereign state able to govern itself and as independent as possible from both the Greek and Turkish governments. The aspect on which the author wants to leverage is that the solution to the Cyprus issue lies in these two countries' relations: either the two countries normalise their relationship or the

island will always remain a pawn exploited by both governments to compete against one another and mobilise the domestic audiences with internal political instability based on the “historic enemy”. This means that what seems like the only way to reach a solution lies in both countries renouncing to a certain degree of overlordship over the two parts of the island facilitating, in this way, the opening of a real dialogue between the two communities. Being fundamental for the two parts, the dialogue would certainly include Greece and Turkey as well, but only once both Ankara and Athens have recognised that Cyprus is not a colony, for either two, nor a battleground for them to fight against one another.

Nevertheless, at the moment, this does not seem a viable scenario in the short term since the relations between the two countries are not moving towards a convergence or a more cooperative attitude, rather they are remaining fairly stable in this conflicting standstill. Moreover, when considering this kind of proposal, both countries recognize that in the short run, it would seem that they would be losing something from this reconciliation: the powerful political tool for domestic mobilization or the loss of priority in the race for energy resources.

What they should give more importance to, however, is that in the long run, both Greece and Turkey would massively gain from the normalized relationship which would lead to enhanced trade and joint exploitation of natural resources. This would also have as a consequence, more stable relations with Brussels and the EU as a whole, with NATO, as well as between NATO and the EU.

At this point, a conceivable procedure could be the shock of the situation by an “external” trigger. To a certain extent, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the energetic crisis prompted by this are having this outcome since, as it has been shown in paragraph 3.2 and even more in paragraph 4.2, with these dramatic events affecting the whole MENA/MEEM region, the regional leaders and their international counterparts have started the discussion of topics related to this invasion, including also the stalemate in Cyprus.

Confirming that the energetic crisis, the war in Ukraine, the rivalry between Turkey and Greece and their being continually on the warpath, the behavioural gaps on the part of NATO, and the questionable attitude of the European Union towards the triangle Greece-Cyprus-Turkey are all related topics, the following steps should

cover possible future scenarios in the MENA/MEEM region and the implications that these would have on the rest of the world and, above all, on the surrounding regions. A more concrete example could be the analysis of whether the resolution of the Cyprus problem could be the cause or the consequence of a stronger and more cooperative relationship between the EU and Turkey. Cyprus could be the cause of this improved connection if, for example, the EU were to use the settlement of the Cyprus issue as an additional clause on Turkey's membership; if able to find a solution, the two actors could demonstrate that despite the differences between them, they can cooperate when it comes to important issues, like security, and when it comes to a situation bringing benefits to both. Cyprus being the consequence of their relation, instead, could consist in the reversal of the just-presented phases. Specifically, whether an EU-Turkey agreement on the latter's membership in the Union should take place before the Cyprus problem is resolved, the EU could function as the umbrella organization promoting the two EU members – Greece and Turkey – cooperation in more official and stable terms, to elaborate a final solution to be developed with Cyprus itself.

Contrarily to what has been shown in this thesis, another type of work could be focused on the demonstration of how the resolution of the Cyprus problem (presumably through the intervention of an international organization/institution) could be the necessary trigger to finally calm the relations between Greece and Turkey. Related to this, it would also be interesting to understand if and which international organization could play a crucial role in solving the Cyprus issue, given the negative/null results obtained by the United Nations (not considering the positive effects of the UNFICYP troops in maintaining peace and certain stability on the island). Otherwise, another imaginable option discussed during the study trip in Cyprus has been the possibility of an Annan Plan 2.0; in this respect, then, it would be propitious to investigate which elements of the original plan could be retained and which, instead, should be changed to allow both Cypriot communities, as well as Greece and Turkey, to accept the deal for the solution.

For the moment, the author alleges that it would be enough to recognize that the situation characterizing Cyprus should be much more relevant than what is actually attributed to it, almost equal to the importance of other regional conflicts such as

the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Nagorno Karabakh war, the Gaza Strip or the war in Syria. This is due to the fact that Cyprus can be placed at the centre of the interlocked set of crises that is protracting in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially between Turkey and all its rivals (Dalay 2021, 10); in this view, a major acknowledgement of the Cyprus question could function as the starting point to unroll this tangle of conflicts and leading to major stability in the region. And this is possible since, as Ker-Lindsay reckons, "none of these issues presents an insurmountable challenge that could not be overcome with the right political will" (2011, 33).

This is why the author advocates for the conclusion that many other writers included in this dissertation have drawn, namely that a step towards solving the Cyprus conflict, even small and in any of the areas touched by the chapters of the thesis, will certainly represent the beginning of a win-win approach principally for all the littoral states in the Eastern Mediterranean (Grigoriadis 2021, 44), but not only.

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