

World Regional Geography Book Series

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The Geography of Greece

Managing Crises and Building Resilience



 Springer

World Regional Geography Book Series

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Greece as a Central Actor Amid Geostrategic Antagonisms in the South-Eastern Mediterranean Complex

Ioannis Mazis, Georgios A. Sgouros, Markos Troulis,
and Xanthippi Domatioti

Abstract

We are presenting a geopolitical analysis of power redistribution in the Geopolitical Complex of the Eastern Mediterranean, as defined by the Greek-Cypriot-Turkish-Israeli-Egyptian pentagon. The factor causing the reallocation of power in the Geopolitical Complex examined is Turkey's policy in the Eastern Mediterranean, with a focus on the illegal Turkish-Libyan Memorandum of Understanding. Therefore, this analysis covers bilateral relations and tensions between Greece and Turkey and other international poles of power (France, Italy, Germany, the USA, and Russia) and their projection in the Eastern Mediterranean. Under the aforementioned perspective, we examine the converging factors upon which this analysis is focused: (a) the debate concerning the direct or indirect projection of power in the area, (b) the opportunities for cooperation between Greece and France in the defense sector, and (c) the advantages of creating a new Southeastern Mediterranean architecture of security in the context of NATO.

Keywords

Geopolitics of energy · Greek-Turkish relations · Turkish-Libyan MoU · Greek-French defense cooperation · Southeastern Security Architecture · NATO

Introduction

Greece is a crossroad between the eastern and western civilization; it is the frontier where European culture is mixed with Mediterranean characteristics due to commercial and trading interactions since ancient times. Nothing has changed in this respect. In recent times, though, the country is considered as one of the key dominant trading routes connecting the European Union with the rest of the world. Greece's role is and should be pragmatic; its economy is driven by EU strategies (e.g., the Green Deal agreement), and as part of NATO's alliance, it needs to comply with the security architecture within the NATO framework. At the same time, Greece has to find an equilibrium within the Eastern Mediterranean geopolitical environment where realistic approaches and policies are necessary to prosper.

Critical challenges related to Greece's regional development are presented. They are critical for a prosperous, secure and socially cohesive Europe in its southern periphery. As Table 29.1 indicates, Greece faces challenges requiring a regional approach combining European supra-systemic objectives, national interests, and regional development strategies. Trust building between nations depends on the EU "in-country" and "in-region" presence to facilitate and accelerate the processes required for development needs and, consequently, mitigate the associated geopolitical risks.

The future of Europe depends on the political stability of its neighbors and its ability and willingness to understand their requirements for development and prosperity without compromising the European values and international laws. Thus, the success factor depends on how well and how committed the EU is in this transnational cooperation scheme.

In this context, a sub-NATO security architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean has become a necessity, as the world is entering into a hypo-globalization period. Our analytical approach focuses on the identification of the geopolitical cen-

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Table 29.1 Greece at the forefront of transnational challenges

Eastern Mediterranean Basin	Transnational cooperation opportunities for development	Geopolitical and geostrategic challenge
Immigration flows	Cross-border mitigation measures	Turkish revisionism
	NGO – Government interaction	
Connecting the Eastern Mediterranean countries with the EU	Support actions targeting the implementation of interconnection projects (Greece-Cyprus, Egypt-Cyprus, Cyprus-Israel, Greece-Egypt) New potential interconnections with Balkan countries	Turkish-Libyan MoU Turkey's UNCLOS interpretation The Cypriot unresolved issue
Energy transition	The electricity market between Cyprus and the Balkan region based on the existing and proposed infrastructure GHG Emissions footprint reduction	Turkish – Libyan MoU Green Deal implementation delays
Retooling and reshaping the gas industry	Natural gas and clean hydrogen in the Eastern Mediterranean Basin The role of Egypt as a potential regional gas hub for the EU energy security	Libya's political instability and Turkish in-country influence The Cypriot unresolved issue

ters where conflict and instability are more likely to occur, based on supply and trade routes, international law conflicting interpretations among state actors, cultural and religious extremism uprising, defensive power accumulation, political instability, and energy reserves. State actors' foreign policies and aspirations for expansion of their influence in the region are also presented in detail with respect to the EU development prospects and NATO existing security architecture.

Greece, as any other rational actor, is expected to seek the maximization of its relative gains in the international arena. For several decades, the country received NATO's recognition for being one of its most trustworthy members, since it kept spending a large part of its GDP in military expenditures. Even in the 2010–2018 period, Greece was powerful enough to deter hegemonic threats, as it happened in the case of the illegal intrusion of the Turkish research vessel *Barbaros* over the Greek continental shelf in 2018. Especially now, Greece proves that it is financially strong enough to proceed into purchases of modern *Belharra* frigates and technologically advanced *Rafale* jets. Thus, Greece is considered strong enough to safeguard the regional balance of power and peace on the Southeastern NATO flank.

After its exit from financial stabilization programs in 2018, Greece is now probably offered the best opportunities among the countries of the EU South. Having secured the

viability of its debt at least until 2030, Athens finds itself in a position to exert an independent foreign policy, something obvious via the aforementioned major military expenditures. The sole real challenge is the neo-Ottoman revisionist agenda, balanced adequately enough by Greece's military forces. The thing is that challenging another state sovereignty nowadays receives low diplomatic legitimization in the international system, and thus, balancing revisionist Turkey is an even easier task regardless of the dangers to international security.

As it happens in any other society under external threat, the sharper the Turkish aggressiveness, the more public attention military issues receive. Besides, the social acceptance of expensive weaponry purchases is illustrated by the limited reactions of people. Even the leftist parties, traditionally positioned against massive defense expenditure, now approve and vote in favor of such programs in the Hellenic Parliament. Military issues acquired great importance on the margins of Greek public dialogue.

Besides, questioning internal spatial imbalances concerning military presence is simply unthinkable. Greece is a rational strategic actor seeking to secure its survival, meaning its sovereign rights in the Aegean and beyond. Therefore, military presence is broadly accepted because of the country's need to deter an increasing external threat. In case of a Turkish aggressive action, the maximization of strategic cost is identified with the empowerment of military presence.

Greece's Geopolitical and Geostrategic Position

The Mediterranean Geopolitical Complex: General Characteristics

The geopolitical framework and typology of Mediterranean power centers arise from primary and secondary structural determinants (Fig. 29.1):

- Primary determinants are (a) dominant transportation channels (sea passages and island centers) (Fig. 29.2) in the economic and civilizational power network (Mazis & Darras, 2015) within the broader international or regional environment, (b) domains with proven energy reserves and natural resource fields (Fig. 29.3), and (c) geographically defined places of defensive power accumulation and projection (Fig. 29.4), with parallel concentration and dissemination/distribution of political influence (Fig. 29.5).
- Secondary determinants are sub-hegemonic “trade routes” and hegemonic power centers of autonomous defensive type (e.g., American, British, or Russian bases) or attached to the framework of a common International Collective



Fig. 29.1 Typology of Mediterranean geopolitical centers. Sea passages and islands. (Sources: ESRI, USGS. Authors: I. Mazis, G. Sgouros)

Cyprus: The UN-recognized state of the Republic of Cyprus and an EU member state including the two sovereign bases of Akrotiri and

Dekeleia as well as a UK RAF base at Mount Troodos with 27 British intelligence personnel and the illegally occupied area under Turkish military occupation

Gulf of Sirte: The status of Sirte between GNA (Sarraj) and LNA (Haftar) is still undefined

Security System (e.g., NATO). The hegemonic powers (the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, and France) enforce their projection through the aforementioned centers or through the influence and interaction exercised through broader mechanisms such as the International or Regional Collective Security Systems (e.g., NATO).

Centers of mixed substances combine primary and secondary characteristics.

The Instability of Mediterranean Geopolitical Centers

Cross-cutting issues such as instability, conflicts, and ideological-civilizational hearths as well as ethnic confrontations (Islamist Movement, Kurdish and Palestinian issues) are found mainly in the Southern and Southeastern Mediterranean. The following review briefly exemplifies the density of major geopolitical centers in this area:

1. Israel: American geopolitical influence with internal problems due to the Palestinian Issue, the Iranian threat, and the Turkish-Iranian cooperation in Gaza and elsewhere,
2. Iraq: Unstable region with American, British, French, and Iranian influences,
3. Syria: A pole of absolute Russian geopolitical influence, unstable due to the activity of Turkish-Islamist units with unclear future; Russian bases at Qamichli N/E Syria (helicopters and surface-to-air missiles of S-400 type), Hmeimim/Lattakia and the Russian naval facility in Tartus which is essentially a permanent military base allocating S-300 missiles,
4. Lebanon: Unstable pole of subversion of American influence; typical French military presence at the base of Dayr Kifa and French participation in FINUL/South Lebanon with the Lebanese Army; broad Syrian-Iranian influence with unclear geopolitical future,
5. Egypt: Getting more and more stable under western geopolitical influence, excellent relations with Greece, France, Italy, and Russia, discreetly good relations with



Fig. 29.2 Primary determinants of the Maritime Silk Road in the Mediterranean. (Sources: ESRI, USGS, BRI database. Authors: I. Mazis, G. Sgouros, after (Reed & Trubetskoy, 2019))

Israel, dangers of destabilization due to the fundamental Islamist movement rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood established in Ismailia,

6. Maghreb subsystem: A region of western, mainly French-Italian geopolitical influence, with existent and active Islamist movements led by the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda / Daesh branches,
7. Iran: A powerful anti-American and anti-Israeli power center; cooperation with Russia, diplomatic communication with France; a hybrid product of geopolitical changes in the Middle East region,
8. Turkey: A region of dual geopolitical influence characterized by Eurasian and neo-Ottoman acquaintances submitted to internal and external instability of Islamist and Kurdish state-building origin; open issues and intervention in Syria and Libya, “revisionist behavior” vis-à-vis Greece and Cyprus, downgraded – even antagonistic – relations with the Gulf States except for Qatar, excellent relationships with the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda and Daesh fundamentalist branches. The political-social reality in today’s neo-Ottoman absolutist Turkey is characterized by important political freedom and human rights issues, while its geopolitical future is jeopardized,

related to Iraq, Syria, and Iran at the first sub-systemic level and with Egypt, Jordan Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates at the second.

Axes of Geopolitical Influence

Another way to get insight into the place of Greece within the Mediterranean geopolitical framework is to address the area through the form of ‘axes’, as follows:

The Horizontal Zone

A horizontal zone of Anglo-Saxon geopolitical influence defined by strategic military facilities stretches between the 36th and the 30th parallels (Fig. 29.6).

This area is controlled under different modalities:

- (a) The pre-existing ‘no-fly zones’ in Northern and Southern Iraq (from the 36th parallel northwards and from the 32nd parallel southwards, respectively), the remembrance of which reveals the aims of the Anglo-Saxon (as well as of the French) part in the region,

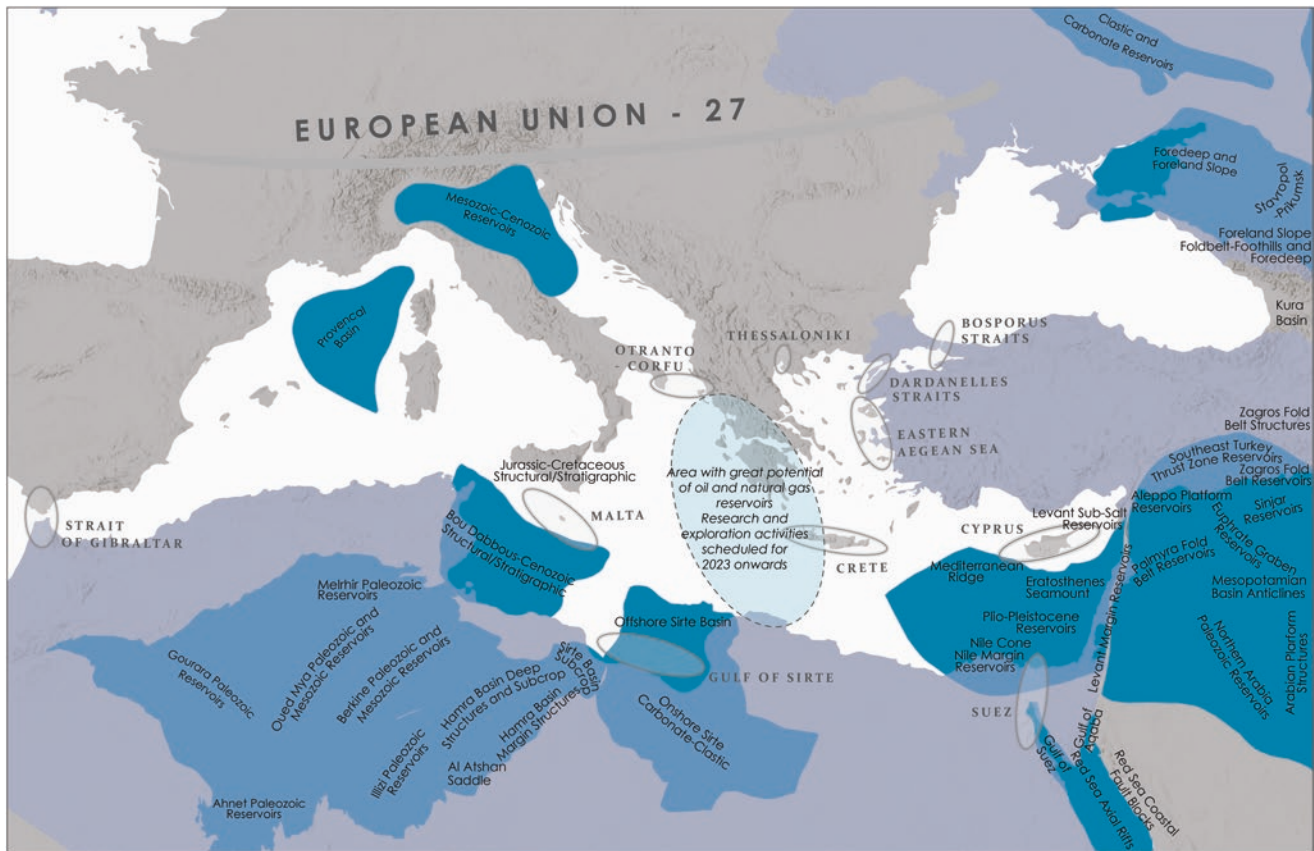


Fig. 29.3 Primary determinants of natural reserves in the Mediterranean. Proven conventional and unconventional oil and gas resources. (Sources: ESRI, USGS, BRI database. Authors: I. Mazis, G. Sgouros, after (Schenk et al., 2021; USGS, 2000))

- (b) The American-Turkish base of Lefkonoikos in the Turkish-occupied northern part of Cyprus, which the United States wants to render to NATO, with the purpose of transferring many of the activities based in Incirlik, a strategically complementary base to the one of Lefkonoikos, for the protection of American interests in the Middle East. It is worth mentioning that the Lefkonoikos base is facilitating modern anti-submarine armament. For now, Turkey illegally converted it into a drone base to conduct surveillance missions within the EEZ boundary of the Republic of Cyprus without having the right to act. We note that this fact conceals (or reveals?) the danger of channeling information of high importance to Moscow,
- (c) The British bases of Dekeleia and Akrotiri in the free, southern part of Cyprus,
- (d) The American bases in Crete,
- (e) Malta, and
- (f) The British-NATO base in Gibraltar.

This Anglo-American geopolitical influence zone, dichotomizing the Mediterranean Basin into a Northern and a Southern part, may exercise strategic control under a

nuclear war scenario or for electronic warfare and intelligence over a broad region extending from the Maghreb to Crimea, a key point of exceptional importance with respect to the Nuclear Missile Defence and also, in conjunction with the services of the planet-range American-British Echelon network.

The Vertical Zone

A vertical strip connects:

- (a) Port Said at the Suez Canal, through which almost 40% of oil from the Middle East is transported to the North-Western European markets and the relevant transatlantic routes via Gibraltar, with
- (b) The Port of Thessaloniki and its extended projection north-westwards, up to the Port of Rotterdam, the biggest market spot for oil in the world,
- (c) A diagonal (also of Anglo-Saxon influence) zone, linking the Dardanelles to Gibraltar (Fig. 29.7).

These hydrocarbon supply routes are fully controlled by NATO and managed by Anglo-Saxon defensive-political and military mechanisms.



Fig. 29.4 Primary determinants of regional power defensive accumulation. (Sources: ESRI, USGS. Authors: I. Mazis, G. Sgouros. Data retrieved from open web sources and provided for illustration purposes. Military bases in North Africa are not included)

Greece-Republic of Cyprus-Turkey, and Hyper-Systemic Actors

The geopolitical reality in the Southeastern Mediterranean, as currently interpreted by the United States, is that the island of Cyprus oversees a pivotal region in which (Fig. 29.5):

- (a) the oil pipeline of Mosul and Kirkuk terminates via Yumurtalık at the Port of Alexandretta; this pipeline offers smuggled oil for the benefit of Turkish governmental circles' interests and Daesh,
- (b) the – politically reasoned – oil pipeline Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan terminals,
- (c) the Syrian 70 km long gas pipeline, which will terminate at the Port of Latakia (where a small tanker terminal is under operational status); in addition to the above, October 2019 agreement for the construction of an electric power plant was reached by the Iranian MAPNA Group and the Syrian government, with a capacity of 540 MW; a significant addition to this equation is Latakia's role as the terminal of the largest part of the Syrian exporting oil pipeline network; Baniyas terminal is capable of supplying 19 tankers of up to 210.000 dwt simultaneously and holds a storage capacity of 437.000 t; on the other hand, the Tartus terminal may supply tankers of up to 100.000 dwt and it is connected with a pipeline at the previous Baniyas terminal (Gordesman & Al-Rodhan, 2006, p. 311),
- (d) the route Arish (Egypt) – Ashkelon (Israel) is also operative with a supply capacity of 7 bcm/year to the Arabian gas pipeline interconnection of Homs-Damascus-Amman-Aqaba-Taba-El Arish-Port Said-Ashkelon,
- (e) via the Suez Canal, the oil trade of the Persian Gulf reaches the Eastern Mediterranean, and afterward, the western markets,
- (f) the 100 km-wide airspace between Agios Andreas Cape (Cyprus) and Laodicea (Syria) may be absolutely controlled by air forces deployed in Cyprus through cooperation with Damascus (an existential threat to Israel); the same can occur for the Russian, Iranian, or Syrian Air Force, assuming deployment capability at the Turkish-occupied northern part of Cyprus; while Turkish adventurism is proven (in Libya through the al-Qaeda and Daesh branches, in Idlib with the relevant ones, as well as the cooperation of Russia and Iran), one of the aforementioned combinations is a possibility to be considered.



Fig. 29.5 Mediterranean geopolitical centers under the existing EU energy supply architecture. (Sources: ESRI, USGS, ENTSOG. Authors: I. Mazis, G. Sgouro)

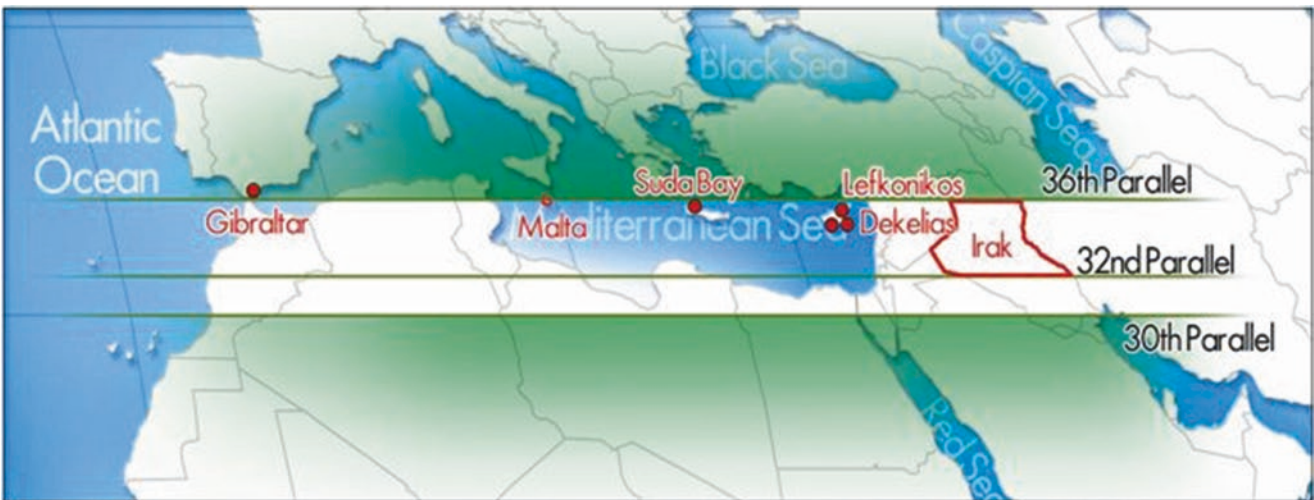


Fig. 29.6 Zone of horizontal Anglo-Saxon interest. (Source: Mazis I., Geopolitical approach for a new Greek defense doctrine, 2006, p. 47)



Fig. 29.7 The Rotterdam-Eastern Mediterranean / Middle East axis. (Source: Mazis I., *Geopolitical approach for a new Greek defense doctrine*, 2006, p. 48)

The zone between the 35th and the 36th parallels, to which the eastern part of Cyprus (Episkopi, Akrotiri, Larnaca, and Lefkonoikos), Crete (Souda), Malta, and Gibraltar belong, is of exceptional geostrategic importance for the Anglo-Saxon sea power. This axis is the exit of oil reserves coming from the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Basin destined to reach the Atlantic via Gibraltar.

The Russian Factor in Greece's Strategy Planning

To complete the picture, one has to consider finally the relationship with Russia. The Greek-Russian relations entered a turbulent period these last years. This is unprecedented considering the extent of disagreement, but evident especially through the decision made by the Greek government in July 2018 to expel Russian diplomats on the eve of the so-called "Prespes Agreement," and in view of Greece's stance on the occasion of Russia's invasion in Ukraine in February 2022.

In the first case, four Russian diplomats were banned following accusations of intervention into Greek politics during an agreement reached between Athens and Skopje, which could pave the way for the second to enter the NATO alli-

ance. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under Nikos Kotzias, found a solution allowing NATO to expand into the Balkan region, setting aside Greece's objections over its northern neighbor's revisionist stance and enemy policy vis-à-vis Athens. Moscow was accused of supporting political powers struggling to scuttle the Prespes Agreement in both these two countries. As FM Kotzias said at that time: "Our country is determined to send a message to the East and West, to all of our friends and others, namely, that whoever violates the principle of sovereignty and respect towards us will face the corresponding measures" (Naftemporiki, 2018).

In the second case, Greece became a firm supporter of Zelensky's Ukraine in the aftermath of Vladimir Putin's decision to invade the country. Athens steadily condemned Russian actions, and it ranked as the fourth supplier of weaponry to Ukraine setting aside any warning referring to its decision "to send weapons to kill Russians" and the danger of Moscow "not forgetting this in the future" (Mazis, 2022). In addition, Athens accused Russia of illegal actions in South and East Ukraine, becoming a firm supporter of Kiev's demands. Referring to Russia's invasion into Ukraine, Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis said during his speech before the US Congress that "Our shared values are once again being tested [...]. Our shared belief in freedom over tyranny, in

democracy over authoritarianism, in the fundamental importance of respect for the rule of law over war and anarchy” (EKathimerini, 2022). Significantly, since the encroachment on Ukrainian territory by Russia, the relations between Athens and Moscow deteriorated. A new era is beginning, keeping in mind the historical, cultural and religious common bonds between these two countries.

In essence, Greek-Russian relations have frozen due to Greece’s choice to broaden its strategic commitment on Washington in two ways. Firstly, Athens co-perceives Moscow as a major threat for European security while, at the same time, Greece aligned its interests with the US about energy security and Europe’s struggle to diversify its natural gas imports and decrease its dependence from Gazprom and Russia. Indicatively, in July 2022, Greece promoted the inauguration of a 182-km gas pipeline from the country’s northern part to Central Bulgaria contributing into cutting reliance from Russian hydrocarbons (Euronews, 2022). Last but not least, Greece limited its military equipment dependence on Russia and promoted a relevant cooperation mainly with the US and France.

With reference to the geopolitical gamble of Greece and Russia’s strategic positioning, the Turkish factor cannot be neglected. Moscow and Ankara are traditionally two competing geostrategic actors in Eurasia, but their cooperation over the last decades increased distrust between Greece and Russia. Athens seems to disregard Moscow’s need to torpedo the NATO South-Eastern flank coherence and, at the same time, Russia is inclined to set aside Greece’s sensitivity to the Turkish revisionism and offensiveness in both Cyprus and the Aegean. Greece’s strategic priority correlates the Russian aggression in Ukraine with the Turkish revisionism against Greek sovereign rights. As FM Nikos Dendias characteristically stated in one of his interviews referring to the issue of the western sanctions against Russia: “There is an ongoing global crisis and Turkey is already quite exposed by not imposing sanctions on Russia” (Dendias, 2022). An undisputed fact is that Greek-Russian relations evolved during the last years under the pressure of the ongoing redistribution of power having allowed Moscow to search for a new role in the international arena.

The Role of Israel, Egypt, and France as Geostrategic Allies for Greece and Cyprus

The relations between Greece, Cyprus, and Israel are currently stable in the areas of energy, security, antiterrorism, economy, culture, and political cooperation (Mazis I., Ta Nea, 2018), i.e., the whole spectrum of the four geopolitical pillars of state power. This collaboration was strengthened by the participation of Egyptian President Al Sisi. Under Sisi’s leadership, Egypt has declared self-sufficiency and is

steadily becoming a vast international energy power exporter able to supply the EU with gas, in cooperation with the three aforementioned state actors, for at least 50 years.

Besides, the maps above (Figs. 29.6 and 29.7) have connected Israel, Cyprus, Crete (Greece), and Egypt already since 2006 (Mazis, 2005, 2006). Fourteen years ago, we predicted the geopolitical dynamic having enabled the conventional relation signed on January 2, 2020, by Greece, Israel, and Cyprus in Athens as the “East Med” and included today as the “East Med Act” in the 2020 US defense budget signed by President Trump (Mazis & Sgouros, 2017). Amid the current geopolitical play, such realities represent a challenge and a preview of a “sub-Natoist” pillar around the French Mediterranean air-naval power consisting of Greece, Cyprus and Israel in a “special defense relationship” with Egypt and a prospect for Jordan’s access in the near future. Referring to the current evolution and Greece’s capacity to start exploration activities south of Crete, France’s demand to send a seismic survey vessel in the same area in March–April 2020, does not, and should not, by any means, allow Turkey’s activism to become a burden for exploration activities.

For monitoring and surveillance of the events referring to the transfer of weaponry and jihadists from Turkey to the GNA of the Sarraj’s government in Tripoli, the “EUNAVFOR MED Iriini” operation aims at ensuring the respect of the UN decision for an arms embargo on Libya (approved by the decisions 1970 (2011), 2292 (2016) and 2473 (2019) of the UN Security Council), with the use of Air Force, Navy and its participating member states satellite systems (Conseil de l’Union Européenne, 2020). Secondary aims of the “EUNAVFOR MED Iriini” are: (1) the surveillance and collection of information with respect to illegal oil exports from Libya, (2) the establishment of the Libyan army, navy and coast guard and their training so that they may participate in naval operations, and (3) contribution in deterring and dismantling networks of immigrant smugglers and slave trade via intelligence and air surveillance. The Council on Foreign Relations decided to commence operation “EUNAVFOR MED Iriini” by February 17, 2020, and worked until March 31, 2021, under the auspices of EU member states, exercising political leadership and ensuring the strategic direction via the Political and Security Committee (COPS) in the responsibility of the Council and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Conseil de l’Union Européenne, 2020).

Does “Iriini” have the capacity to be effective? This is not possible as its mission is limited in intelligence and transmittal of all relevant information directly to the UN. Turkey has proven that such institutional initiatives organized by the International Community cannot alter its revisionist behavior.

The geostrategic framework for energy security is clearly in line with the West based on the following reasoning: (1)

the planned East Med gas pipeline is not affected by the Russian or Iranian projection of power, and (2) it mitigates the risk/danger derived from Ankara's efforts to connect the fragmented fundamentalist Sunni movement (DAESH, Al Nusra, Jamaat al Islamiyya, HAMAS, etc.) with the relevant Tehran's Shiite (Hezb'allah) Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The aforementioned relationship is a clearly destabilizing factor for international security, with the utilization of the Muslim Brotherhood branch (Al Dawa organization) for the convergence between the two Islamist tendencies. Besides, "Erdoğan's government believed Muslim Brotherhood would make a huge comeback in Egypt in a few years" and on this basis it proceeds strategically until today (Bozkurt, Nordic Monitor, 2020). The triangle USA (Congress)-Israel-Egypt (Al-Sisi government) perceives the Turkish government revisionism (1) as an existential risk for Israeli national security, (2) as an identical risk for Egyptian national security and thus, (3) as a position jeopardizing the interests of the Gulf oil monarchies and also, (4) as a great threat for the western independence from the Russian-Qatari-Iranian energy influence on European economies.

Now that Ankara's intentions are characterized by a raw aggressiveness towards Greece and Cyprus (since October 2018), mainly at the Cypriot EEZ and along the Greek-Turkish boundary in Evros and the Eastern Aegean since November 2020, there are two cogent responses to Erdoğan referring to the Mediterranean security and especially that of the West: (1) American power and (2) the relevant French air-naval presence in the region. Facilitation was offered to Paris through the provisional clauses introduced in the French-Cypriot agreement of March 2019 (referring to the establishment of a French permanent base in Vassilikos). The agreement has to be extended and deepened to cover the issues of high-level defense software and satellite cooperation between Paris and Nicosia.

The Greek-French Defense Cooperation as a Factor of Geostrategic Stability

Nicosia, backed by the United States and France, may become the center of digital undersea and satellite communications between the EU-United States and the Greater Middle East, as well as a regional actor of relevant defense technology development, through the use of geo-informational tools of international utility and range. Also, the Greek-Israeli-Cypriot-Egyptian quadrangle, with its future extension to Jordan, may represent a valuable pillar of defense and security under France's leadership, within the framework of a "special relationship" with NATO emphasizing on security in the sensitive region of the Eastern Mediterranean and basically in the Levantine Basin.

In this context, we clearly note that French weaponry not only has offered a series of operational advantages to the Greek armed forces since 1974 but also France has been the sole western country intending to offer high-level sub-strategic weaponry to Greece, such as long-range cruise missiles (Mazis, 2019a, b, c). This will be a crucial factor in the future as the current evolution in military technology and international geopolitics will possibly affect the Greek-Turkish-Cypriot subsystem. Specifically, after the end of the INF Treaty, a dynamic evolution of technology in the range of missiles should be expected. In parallel, vast progress has been made in the development of anti-ship missiles, starting from China's desire to keep the US far from the Chinese coast (region denial) (Mazis, 2019a, b, c). In this geopolitical context, there are significant opportunities for Greece, under the assumption that Athens will proceed and act on the following: (a) encouraging President Anastasiades to apply for Cyprus's NATO accession, with US support and simultaneous political-diplomatic correlation with the relevant procedure fulfilled for Skopje (Associated Press, 2020), (b) deepening and extending its relationship with France in the aforementioned fields. Besides, the relations between Paris and Jerusalem are known and promising for Greece.

We support the idea that Greek-Turkish relations entered a new phase, possibly a more dangerous one than in the past. An intense empowerment of Greek defense capabilities is necessary to achieve the aim of balancing Turkey's destabilizing revisionism (Mazis, 2019a, b, c). France may offer solutions again for Greece. For example, French frigates equipped with air-defense missiles "Aster 30" and "cruise Scalp Naval" missiles with a range greater than 1000 km will offer the Hellenic Navy force a long-range strategic projection capability. Moreover, Greece may participate in the effort towards the production of a European fighter aircraft under French leadership. On June 17, 2019, during the Paris Air Show, the French Dassault company presented the new generation fighter (NGF), co-developed with Airbus, as part of the "Future Combat Air System / FCAS" Program. Greece is about to enter the program as a co-producer of the UCAV Neuron. The prospect of becoming a producer for the first time in its history, rather than a client, opens up new opportunities through access to crucial technologies and capabilities, offering a strategic advantage against Turkey in the next years.

In a decade, Turkey will possibly possess cruise and ballistic missiles able to hit ships operating in broad seas. For this reason, the Greek approach in naval equipment should focus on acquiring ships (1) with powerful stealth capabilities, to be targeted with difficulty, equipped with long-range ground-to-air missiles, (2) high-level aerial capacities, able to hit air fighters, cruise and ballistic missiles, and (3) equipped with high-range surface-to-surface and surface-to-ground missiles, with the intent to exercise its power across

long distances. The sole proposal, covering all the three demands, refers to the French frigates equipped with MdCN missiles (the previous “Scalp Naval”) with a range of more than 1000 km. Of course, the two frigates (still under consideration for purchase) cannot carry an adequate number of MdCN missiles able to support a deterrence policy based on strategic strikes. However, combined with air-launched missiles “cruise Scalp EG,” already existing in Greece’s forces and probably some other systems, they can shape a credible deterrence force.

Greek-French Satellite Cooperation

The Greek-French cooperation in space started in 2007 via the Greek participation in the “Helios-II” program, providing access to satellite images of military interest. The agreement was ratified by the Hellenic Parliament by Law 3546/2007. The choice of French weaponry contributed to the balancing of the quantity chasm with Turkey and the deterrence of the Turkish threat. In contrast, Turkey accessed relevant satellite images of very high definition in 2016 with the Göktürk 1. Thanks to the Helios-II program, Greece was 9 years ahead and was able to buy time and react to the Turkish efforts to acquire satellite images after the launch of the first remote sensing satellite “Bilsat 1” in 2003. It is worth mentioning that the management of this satellite system was entrusted to the Tübitak Uzay Institute until 2006 (when its mission came to an end due to damage) and offered low-definition imagery, especially for topography and environmental monitoring. This institute supervised the development of the Turkish space program, shaped as a scientific and technological council, while related to the construction and the development of satellite subsystems and the purchase of know-how capability. In 2011, Turkey replaced “Bilsat 1” with “RASAT,” another remote sensing satellite of low definition with improved characteristics. In 2012, “Göktürk 2” was launched, offering 2.5-meter ground analysis imaging products. After several years of delay (due to Israeli reactions), Turkey finally launched “Göktürk 1” in 2016, which is almost equivalent to “Helios-IIB.” Greece’s economic participation in the “Helios-II” program is limited to 2.5%. The system consists of two reconnaissance satellites, “Helios 2A” launched in December 2004, and “Helios 2B” launched in December 2009. The system offers up to 35 cm GSD images, better in comparison with Turkey’s “Göktürk 1” and its up to 80 cm GSD. One of Greece’s duties was the construction of a Ground Station operating since 2010 in Tanagra.

In December 2018, France launched the reconnaissance satellite “CSO 1,” the first out of three constituting the new satellite recognition system CSO (Composante Spatiale Optique), successor to “Helios II.” This satellite network will consist of two high-resolution reconnaissance satellites with

electro-optic sensors, while the German government has been asked to fund a third satellite, part of the broader European MUSIS system led by France. Greece expressed its interest in MUSIS, amid cooperation agreements signed by France, Italy, and Germany. Greece’s stance is interestingly expected, as the operational use of “Helios II” comes to an end soon.

Referring to satellites of signal intelligence, France commenced developing a satellite network of “committing” electronic signals (SIGINT) under the name CERES, comprising three satellites launched in 2021. CERES is the successor pilot program of ELISA. Via CERES, France enters the field of satellite “committing” signals, dominated up to now exclusively by the United States, Russia, and China. The Greek Ministry of Defence has signed an MoU with the French Ministry of Defence and the Swedish “Fursvarets Materielverk” for preparatory works for defining and implementing the multinational space system CERES aiming to collect military information from the electromagnetic spectrum (SIGINT). The MoU was ratified by the Hellenic Parliament on September 6, 2011, under Law 4005.

Taking into consideration that France revises its space policies aiming to establish two operational centers for space activity and rename its Air Force into “Armée de l’Air et de l’Espace” (“Force of Air and Space”), the alignment with the French vision seems to be necessary for Greece, providing it with capacities, non-obtainable by itself. Furthermore, the cooperation offers access to high-quality information material to the Greek Army and Intelligence Services.

The Legal Delimitation of Maritime Zones in the Eastern Mediterranean

According to the Law of the Sea, in case of a delimitation between neighboring countries with adjacent or opposite coasts, failing an agreement between them on the limits of their EEZ and continental shelf, the median line rule is applicable. In its established case law, the International Court of Justice applies a three-stage method for the delimitation of maritime zones: (1) first, it establishes a provisional delimitation line between the states concerned, either an equidistant line where the coasts are adjacent or a median line where the coasts are opposite, (2) second, it examines the facts and parameters for the adjustment of this median line, meaning the “relevant circumstances” in order to “achieve an equitable result,” and (3) third, it examines this configuration on a “not to be unfair” basis, e.g., the analogy and proportionality between sea areas and the respective longitude of the coasts are discussed (ICJ, *Territorial and Maritime Dispute (Nicaragua vs. Colombia)*, 2012, par. 193). Moreover, one has to underline that the continental shelf exists *ipso facto et ab initio* as a “natural right of the state” independently of

occupation or “express proclamation” by the coastal state (M. Shaw, *International Law*, CUP 2017, p. 438) (Ioannou & Strati, 2013). On the contrary, the EEZ has to be declared and delimited in cooperation with the neighboring coastal states. Nevertheless, an economic zone, such as an EEZ or a fishery zone, cannot exist without the corresponding rights over the seabed and the subsoil, similar to those rights over the continental shelf. Therefore, and in accordance with the distance criterion, already applied by the ICJ, coastal states are entitled to a continental shelf and an economic zone up to 200 miles from their coasts, irrespective of the geological characteristics of the area within that distance.

In the case at hand, Turkey is not a member state of UNCLOS 1982, nor does it recognize the jurisdiction of ICJ, thus imposing a significant legal barrier to a just resolution. Being a member state of UNCLOS 1982, Greece on its part accepts to settle the dispute with Turkey over the continental shelf only on the basis of the respective provisions of the law of the sea, both treaty and customary. On that end, reference should be made to articles 74 and 83 of the UNCLOS 1982, which provide the legal framework for the delimitation of the EEZ and continental shelf between neighboring coastal states. In particular and in accordance with article 83:

1. Neighboring states may proceed to the delimitation of their continental shelf via treaty or customary law aiming at an equitable solution,
2. The logic of a “fair solution” contains the recognition that the Aegean islands – apart from sea rocks – can generate a continental shelf and an EEZ, just like continental areas, something referred clearly in Article 121, par. 2, as already ruled by the ICJ (Jan Mayen case (Denmark v. Norway) case, ICJ Reports 1993, p. 37).
3. Moreover, in the South China Sea Arbitration, the legal components of a maritime feature, including an island, have been clarified for the first time by the international judiciary (PCA Case No. 2013–19, Arbitral Award of July 12, 2016). Therefore, the Turkish claims on “limited sovereign rights” of the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea are deprived of any legal basis. The same interpretative approach is already adopted by state practice; to that end, the recent statement by the American Ambassador in Greece stressing that the “islands have exactly the same rights in terms of EEZs and maritime rights as any continental territory” is characteristic (G. Pyatt, Delphi Economic Forum, 10-6-2020).
4. Furthermore, we should not forget that Greece has exempted from the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice all questions on its boundaries or sovereignty over its territory (Art. 74, para. 2 and Art. 83, para. 2, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982). Additionally, Greece, in accordance with article 298, par. 1 of the UNCLOS 1982, has excluded from the jurisdic-

tion of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), the “disputes concerning the interpretation or application of articles 15, 74 and 83 relating to sea boundary delimitations.” Therefore, since Greece, according to its official stance, does not accept the existence of any other legal dispute with Turkey apart from that of the continental shelf, other issues regarding delimitation will presumably be exempted from the jurisdiction of the International Court, even if Turkey accepts the Court’s jurisdiction.

5. If a delimitation agreement cannot be reached “within a reasonable period of time,” the states should proceed according to Part XV of the Law of the Sea to settle their dispute Art. 74, para. 2 and Art. 83, para. 2 (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982),
6. Pending an agreement as described in par. 1, the coastal states, “in a spirit of understanding and cooperation, shall make every effort to enter into provisional arrangements of a practical nature” and during this transitional period, they will not endanger or block the efforts for a final agreement (Art. 74, para. 3 and Art. 83, para. 3, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982). These provisions will not prejudice the final delimitation.
7. Wherever there is an agreement in force, problems regarding the delimitation of the continental shelf will be settled in accordance with this agreement.

The wording of article 74 is identical to that of article 83, substituting the word “Continental Shelf” with “Exclusive Economic Zone.” This distinction is simply explained. The Eastern Mediterranean is a geodynamically active realm. The area of interaction between Greece and Turkey comprises a convergent plate margin generated by the subduction of the northeastern oceanic segment of the African plate beneath the Aegean continental plate margin (which is part of the European plate). The forearc of the subduction system is characterized by rapid south-eastward crustal motion (up to 10 mm per year) and a series of steeply plunging trenches right at the front of the SE boundary of the Aegean plate, reaching abyssal depths (Pliny, Strabo, and Ptolemy Trenches). The interaction between the African and Eurasian plates extends eastwards as a convergent margin between the Dodecanese (Greece) and the Hecataeus Seamount to the south of Cyprus and terminates as a convergent/ transformational margin near Alexandrette (Iskenderun) in Turkey. Deep trenches develop along the forearcs of these plate boundaries as well, albeit with considerably milder bathymetric gradients in comparison to those of the Aegean subduction zone. In such a distinct geodynamic setting, it is apparent that certain difficulties may arise regarding the delimitation of the continental shelf. Nonetheless, these technical difficulties do not seem to be considered by Turkish officials who demonstrate disrespect with regard to Greece’s

interests in the region. Instead, they seem to favor a “half-share” of the eastern Mediterranean, not based on scientific rationale but rather on what can be perceived as a modern version of “gunboat diplomacy” (Cook & Carleton, 2000). However, arguments of high political concern do not appear to be admissible by the International Court of Justice (Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary in the Gulf of Maine Area, ICJ Reports 1984, para. 59).

Delimitation issues arising between coastal states that exhibit distances less than 200 n.m. between coastlines should always be designed on the basis of coincidence, e.g., the EEZ and continental shelf limits should coincide. It is the authors’ view that this is the only geopolitically correct approach, leading to a fair solution that will prevent future complications and secure the stability of the Eastern Mediterranean region. According to international practice, and on the basis of UNCLOS 1982, the maritime zones of neighboring coastal states at a distance of 400 n.m. will be mutually covered. In such a case of “coincident jurisdictions” of the EEZ and continental shelf, the equitable principles/relevant circumstances method is very similar to the equidistance/special circumstances method (*Guyana v. Suriname*, PCA Case No 2004–04, Arbitral Award of September 17, 2007). In this context, the Permanent Mission of Greece to the UN circulated many verbal notes condemning the one-sided and illegal Turkish actions (Note Verbale, 2005, 131; 2012, 16; 2013, 24).

The Turkish Strategy, Subverting Greek Sovereignty in the Aegean and the Evros District

Turkey’s disrespect towards the aforementioned legal prerequisites indicates that Ankara aims to finlandize Greece in order to reduce its ability to counter-react decisively on the Southeastern NATO flank. The objective is to fully control the Dardanelles-Crete-Libyan Sea trade route, with the intent to become the defensive and security dominant regional actor in the energy-rich Eastern Mediterranean and to secure a pivotal/hub position as regards the Europe-Africa and Asia-Atlantic sea transport networks. Turkey is making efforts to position itself through time-to-time illegal Notices to Air Missions (NOTAM) committing large parts of sea areas in the Aegean for live-fire exercises, or through airspace violations over Greek islands and attempts to manipulate illegal migratory flows. The Turkish activity adequately illustrates the intention to neglect Greek national sovereignty in the Eastern Aegean fully and during the whole year, clearly setting aside the fundamental notions of international law, the agreed Confidence Building Measures – CBM (Athens, May 27, 1988), and Bakoyianni-Gul discussions (Istanbul June 10, 2006). Furthermore, since February 28, 2020, Turkey has

made every effort to break the Greek-Turkish borders in Evros, leading there by force whole crowds of immigrants with help from the army, the police, and Special Forces – some of whom admitted that they were prisoners released so that they could conduct provocative actions.

Breaking fundamental principles of international law and neglecting all the bilaterally decided Athens-Ankara MoUs represents an undoubted aspect of Turkey’s problematic behavior affecting its western NATO ally, Greece. Many destabilizing activities have been recorded during the last decades, and they have reached the “unclear” crisis point, but further escalation was in the end prevented. This aggressiveness is lastly implemented through hybrid operations, meaning covert actions with the aim of destabilizing international peace and security, either in continental areas (Evros) or along sea boundaries (Aegean Sea). Hybrid operations usually seek to sap the morale of the local population and thus, they are implemented in a multidimensional way to generate destabilization (Pindjåk, 2014).

Pacta... [Non] Sunt Servanda in the Aegean

Athens, showing again good willingness, restarted the negotiations on CBMs (Confidence Building Measures) with Ankara between May 20–25 and June 17–21, 2019. Through this, Athens had no clear purposes, not only because the Greek side was perfectly aware of the non-functionality of the measures due to Ankara’s activism, but also because the Turkish authorities published NAVTEX 0635/19 precisely at the time when the Turkish delegation arrived in Athens. The NAVTEX transmission warned all ships sailing in the area between Chios and Evia that live-fire military exercises were to be conducted between May 27–30 and June 24–27, 2019. The second period of June contravenes the Bakoyianni-Gul agreement (from June 15 to September 15). A small interruption took place during the Greek elections and the early period of the new government, and negotiations continued on February 17–21, 2020.

Since the first agreement (27/5/1988), the aforementioned CBMs have been broken almost 90.000 times (!), always against Greek sovereign rights. From 1989 to 2006, Turkey sophisticatedly acted – within NATO rules and ICAO provisions – to divert 19 Greek islands of the Eastern Aegean from the Greek Air Force protection, resulting in the recent illegal claims of Turkey on 18 Greek Aegean islands. The Turkish “reading” of CBMs serves as a basis for Ankara’s “confusion” about the geographical definition of the “Aegean” and the “Eastern Mediterranean.” The same Turkish reading justifies Ankara’s capacity to put into question Greek sovereign rights in Kastellorizo, one of the hotspots of potential conflict between Greece and Turkey. Below, we examine some

recent and notorious examples of Turkey's activism, possibly leading to full destabilization in the Southeastern flank of NATO.

Turkish Naval and Aerial Activism

Since the largest part of the Greek-Turkish border is maritime, there are several border management difficulties, which explains why naval activism is at the forefront of Turkish aggressiveness against Greece. This situation gave rise to numerous incidents over the last years:

1. Already on January 18, 2018, risky aggressive actions by a Turkish Coast Guard ship against the Greek battleship "Nikiforos" took place inside the Greek territorial waters (Enikos, 2018).
2. On February 11, 2018, the embolization of the Greek Coast Guard ship "Gavdos" took place in the Imia sea area, while it is worth noting that "Gavdos" has been built with EU funding (Kathimerini, 2018).
3. The same tactic was followed on March 11, 2020, when a Turkish Coast Guard unit tried to strike a Greek Coast Guard ship inside the Greek territorial waters (SKAI, 2020a). Turkish practices contravene the basic principles of international (ch.5, 33 regulation of the relevant 1974 International Convention) and European (European Maritime Safety Agency) law, while putting human lives at risk (SKAI, 2020b; UNHCR, 2018). Furthermore, naval activism swept on towards the international migratory crisis.
4. Indicatively, on March 16, 2020, a Turkish ship from Çanakkale ran ashore on the island of Kea just a few miles from Attica, with 193 illegal immigrants while the smugglers escaped to the Turkish coast (SKAI, 2020a, b). Keeping in mind that the ship was of significant size and tonnage (47 m-long), it seems strange how a well-functioning state surveillance mechanism failed to monitor its course.
5. The same was about to happen on April 4, 2020, when an old aged Turkish tanker full of immigrants departed from the Ali Aga Port, then moved between Lesvos and Chios and tried to get close to the Greek territorial waters. It was immediately hailed and stopped by the Greek Coast Guard (Hellas Journal, 2020).
6. The same day, a Turkish Coast Guard Ship tried to ram another Greek Coast Guard vessel within Greek territorial waters (SKAI, 2020a, b). The crisis did not escalate due to the experience of the Greek crew.
7. Of course, Turkey's activism in the context of its participation in joint military exercises is not excluded. During the NATO exercise "Ariadni-19" on March 20, divers of Turkish Special Forces put a Turkish flag on the seabed of Souda. The relevant photo was republished enthusiastically by the Ministry of Defence of Turkey (Iefimerida, 2019a, b, c, d, e).
8. On March 22, this action was followed by an article of the former Secretary General of the National Security Council of Turkey, Saygı Öztürk, showing three fourth of Crete as a Turkish territory (Iefimerida, 2019a, b, c, d, e).
9. The same day, Turkey's Minister of Defence Hulusi Akar stated: "Sea and seabed belong to us. Black Sea, the Aegean, Eastern Mediterranean and in all these Cyprus" (Iefimerida, 2019a, b, c, d, e).
10. On March 26, the Turkish Minister of the Interior Soyulu admitted that "Turkish policemen throw chemicals into the Greek territory," as well as "Turks lead and support immigrants on a daily basis and take care of them to stay there until they cross at the opposite side" (Military News, 2020).
11. On April 4, 2020, an officially organized plan of Turkey to send immigrants with Covid-19 to Greece became known (In.gr, 2020).

This list is neither complete nor limited. Turkish activism is not only the subversion of Greek sovereignty, via the destabilization of an already ignitable geographical zone, in which Greece stands as a "stability pillar," according to the US (Pyatt, 2019). An indicative case of potential escalation is the chase of a Turkish battleship by a Greek one named "Votsis," when the former crossed the Greek border limit in the Kastellorizo sea area (Veteranos, 2020).

It will be something expected if Greece rationally revises its appeasing stance and establishes different principles for the enforcement of its national interests. NATO and EU responsibilities are distinct. In case of any direct confrontation, NATO would be in danger due to a conflict between two of its members found on the most critical periphery of the Eurasian rimlands. The EU would miss the opportunity to broaden its energy security and lessen its dependence from Russian natural gas via the stabilization of the South-Eastern European corridor, potentially connecting it with the Middle Eastern reserves.

The same Turkish aggressiveness and threat to stability and security is observed in airspace. On March 11, 2020, a couple of Turkish F16s overflew the Greek territory in Evros, while performing a dangerous low pass next to a Greek helicopter in the same region. Meanwhile, other Turkish F16 flights continued to carry out incursions over Lesvos, a Greek island of 100,000 people heavily impacted by the necessity of hosting and curing immigrants (Ethnos, 2020; Naftemporiki, 2020). On March 25, 2020, against the moratorium referring to National Holidays, Turkish Air Force flew over Kavala, and did the same on March 28 over North Evros (Lygeros, 2020; Proto Thema, 2020). Undoubtedly, Turkish Airforce activism has escalated dangerously and this

is proven by the fact that illegal actions now encroach on continental areas or large islands of the Aegean and not only airspace or small inhabited islands such as Agathonisi, Farmakonisi, Arkioi, Lipsi, or Oinousses.

Et Pacta... [Non] Sunt Servanda also in Evros!

Similar behavior is seen along the Greek-Turkish borders in Evros which, after Greek diplomatic initiatives, have been recognized as “European” by EU officials:

1. The kidnapping of two Greek military officers in Greek territory by Turkish militants and their imprisoning for months was a prelude to the escalation of provocations against Greece on March 3, 2018 (Ta Nea, 2018), i.e., a preparatory action aimed at testing the reflexes and the broader capabilities of the Greek border surveillance forces. The operation was mounted in a period of increased tension between Russia and Turkey. Ankara decided to temporarily freeze the delivery of S-400 anti-aircraft systems on June 7, after relevant pressure by the US with reference to F35 delivery (Chrysopoulos, 2018). Almost a month later, on July 11, Athens proceeded with the expulsion of two Russian diplomats having tried to get confidential information (BBC, 2018). These facts are cross-examined in light of the Turkish effort towards exporting the Russian-Turkish imbalances and the Greek capability to defuse Russian plans against NATO on its South-Eastern flank.
2. Nevertheless, the most indicative example of Turkish illegal behavior is the manipulation of the migrant crisis, seen as a revisionism opportunity since February 28, 2020 (CNBC, 2020). The Turkish hybrid operations against Greece were recognized by the Turkish Interior Minister Süleyman Hasan Soylu, who stated on March 7 (Babic & Ergin, 2020):

This is just the beginning. You should watch what will happen next. What has happened so far is nothing. Mitsotakis has no capacity to hold the border (gates).

In another interview, he stated (The Toc, 2020):

Speaking about the borders in Evros, since February 28, 148,360 people have crossed to Europe and 2,300 via the Aegean. Now, about 4,600 people wait at the Kastanies border gate. We cover all their needs, among which three meals a day, health care and disinfection. The Greek forces disturb ours. We responded with a 10-fold quantity to Greece. We bombed the other side with bullets and aerial bombs for hours. We can do it again.

The leak referring to migrants infected with COVID-19 and sent to Greece is in line with the overall geostrategy of Turkey. It is an integral part of hybrid operations correlated with statements, obvious practices, threats, and military

interventions, affecting the whole European continent. Besides, Frontex defined the borderline in Evros as European and direct intervention units operate on site (Frontex, 2020). When Turkish officers said to the Austrian special forces contributing to the border surveillance in Evros “what are you doing here? This is not your country,” they provided a significant answer: “This is our country and we guard European borders” (Greek City Times, 2020a, b).

When he visited the Evros borderline, President of the European Council Charles Michel noted that “Greek borders are European borders” and when addressing Greek officials he added, “whatever you do is important for Greece but it is also crucial for the future of the EU” (European Council, 2020). The identification of Greek national interests with the European immigration policy as well as the alignment of the Greek forces within the EU stems from the utmost importance granted to Greece’s geopolitical role and the harmful Turkish policy towards the Western power system.

Geopolitical Perspectives

Overviewing Turkey’s revisionist strategy, we conclude that any negotiation on CBMs was meaningless and mistaken to the expense of Greek national interests, since it was not perceived as a peaceful effort towards the resolve of the Greek-Turkish dispute, but as an expression of a Greek defeatism. Such perceptions surely lead to conflict.

Whenever CBMs are discussed, Athens ought to ask clearly for respect of territorial sovereignty, following (a) the provisions of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, as this was modified in the 1936 Montreux Convention with reference to Greek sovereignty in Limnos and Samothraki, (b) the ICAO convention (Chicago 1944), and (c) the agreement on FIRs delimitation in Europe (including the FIRs of Athens and Istanbul), as this was adopted in the ICAO meetings in Geneva and Paris in 1950, 1952, and 1958 – these were co-signed by Athens and Ankara. The international momentum is positive for Greece, and it could be a prologue for the implementation of a Greek policy accorded with International Law against Turkey’s destabilizing role in the Eastern Mediterranean. If these are not accepted by Turkey, *pacta [non] sunt servanda...*

Concerning the diplomatic and defensive antagonisms between NATO/EU and the Russian Federation, it is clear that Russia’s tolerance towards Turkish activism in the Mediterranean and the Aegean participates in increasing tensions within the NATO Southeastern flank and leads to rethinking Greece’s participation in the NATO framework. It is worth noting that the 42.08% record level of non-participation in the 2019 legislative elections in Greece was considered as a rejection of the political spectrum. This is extremely dangerous for the Euro-Atlantic stability in the

region due to Greece's profound geostrategic importance for western security and defense. Furthermore, Turkey's projection in Libya aimed to control the southern Mediterranean EU hydrocarbon supplies, which created a "historical-type spiral" through negotiations conducted with Germany – a "cooperation between continental powers" phenomenon based on energy, industry and transport in the Heartland. The same way, Ankara's projecting power in Algeria, Tunisia, and Egypt through the fight against the Muslim Brotherhood Islamist movements created patronage relationships (sales of Russian weaponry, protection and control of crucial ports and facilities, establishment of naval bases, etc.) exploiting Turkish geostrategic visions in the Maghreb subsystem. Blocking the EastMed project also ensured hope for Turkey to contribute to the transit of Middle Eastern hydrocarbons via Asia Minor, through cooperation with Qatar and Iran in exchange for Ankara's tolerance to the implementation of Russian geostrategic aims. If these objectives are reached, the energy connection between Iran-Syria (Tartus) and the EU will be possible. And if Moscow succeeds in its goal, via the Turkish-Natoist "geopolitical virus," then the Euro-Atlantic balance and relevant European energy security under a western-type democratic cloak will belong to the past. The next strategic balance will be under Eurasian leadership.

France seems to be the sole rational balancing solution to the aforementioned evolution, searching for its "DeGaullian self" and its relevant geopolitical identity. Its activity in February 2020 was characterized by its crucial naval presence in the Mediterranean, the Aegean, and the Cypriot EEZ in cooperation with United States and Greek forces as well as the offer of missile systems to Cyprus (Exocet and Mistral), proving that Paris aims to cover the gap created by the White House's irrational stance under the presidency of Trump. Strategic cooperation agreed with Athens and its practical contribution to crucial moments for Greece may inspire other Natoist allying powers. Besides, President Macron expressed – with diplomatically rare generosity – his clear stance. NATO proves the need for a serious self-reassessment on issues of political and defensive cooperation among its members with serious provisions in case of divergence. A collective security system loses half of its usefulness when it does not provide security and peaceful coexistence among its members. Thus, it will not be able to respond to the external challenges for which it was established. This will create centrifugal forces gradually moving towards a greater state of entropy and systemic decline.

In such cases, centripetal sub-systemic mechanisms are a logical intermediate phase, preserving a level of global entropy and initiating the necessary movement towards the structural rethinking of NATO. France could take such a rousing policy and moral action to the next step, while its

capability to project power both across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, combined with its nuclear and air-naval power, indicates that it is a suitable actor to be in charge of "sub-systemic coordination/organization" in the geopolitical complex of the Mediterranean. The moral power of France, as a democratic pole and a consistent supporter of human rights in the European context, contributes to the rise of the level of its acceptance as an axial provider of sub-systemic security towards its "near partners." Belonging to the NATO military command and, at the same time, retaining diplomatic relations with Russia while respecting its NATO commitments, are positions that make France a country contributing to peace and security inside the Mediterranean complex. French legal civilization and relevant political legacy offer validity to its sub-systemic nation-state partners.

There is an obvious need for the Greek foreign policy to change towards multi-level prospects of European and democratic essence. Therefore, the establishment of a Mediterranean strategic subsystem of energy security among Greece-Cyprus-Israel with a potential extension to Egypt is an unequivocal requirement.

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