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**CYPRUS CENTER FOR EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**  
**University of Nicosia**

**1993-2018** TWENTY FIVE YEARS OF POLICY FORMULATION AND ANALYSIS

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## SAUDI ARABIA AT THE CROSSROADS



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The 19<sup>th</sup> century French statesman and historian Alexis de Tocqueville once remarked that the most dangerous moment for an oppressive regime is when it starts to reform: its traditional norms and institutions have already been discredited, while the alternative structures have not yet been firmly established. Tocqueville mainly had in mind the reforms King Louis XVI of France started to initiate but which led to the French Revolution and to his own execution; a 20<sup>th</sup> century example could be seen in Gorbachev's attempts to reform the Soviet Union, which brought about its collapse and his own loss of power. It may be that the current steps undertaken by the young Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) could lead to similar results.

Because of its enormous oil wealth, Saudi Arabia was able to maintain relative inner stability by spreading its wealth widely while at the same time imposing an extreme fundamentalist Islamic regime based on the Wahabi tradition. Hundreds of members of the royal Saudi family were transformed from desert sheikhs into enormously rich members of an international money elite, and regular subjects enjoyed unprecedented standards of living. The various sons of the country's founder, Abdelaziz Ibn Saud succeeded each other as rulers in a kingdom whose name – *Saudi Arabia* – reflected historical Arab traditions of calling states by the names of their founding and ruling dynasty (another example. Though politically very different, is the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan).

Plummeting oil prices, and the aftershocks of the post-2012 Arab Spring, which brought down rulers in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, and seriously challenged the Assad family rule in Syria, signaled that some changes have to be introduced in the Saudi system, and the sweeping reforms introduced by the young crown prince are obviously a response to these challenges.

MBS succeeded in receiving enormously favorable international press coverage by announcing that women will be allowed to drive and that the power of the religious police, which enforced, among other, dress codes in public, especially for women, would be curtailed. These are obviously positive steps which could help emancipate the kingdom from significant aspects of the more oppressive Wahabi interpretation of Islam. So have the prince's statements of wishing to return to a more tolerant and pluralistic approach to non-Muslim communities, including Christians and Jews, as well as a less radical approach towards Israel.

Yet other aspects of MBS's policies are more problematic. While his attempts at diversifying the Saudi economy and freeing it from its exclusive dependence on oil are still on the drawing boards, his campaign against what is euphemistically called the war against corruption has some worrying aspects. The arrests of hundreds of members of the Saudi social elites, including princes and businessmen, some of them with international profiles, has been done with total disregard to basic tenets of the rule of law – partly because Saudi Arabia lacks a basic code of laws, nor are basic rights enshrined in any normative codex. The fact that many of the people arrested have agreed, under duress, to "return" some of their obviously ill-gained fortunes, to the treasury (i.e. to the control of the crown prince) may have been welcomed by many frustrated Saudi citizens as justice, suggests that what MBS is establishing in the country is a centralized, authoritarian personal rule – something which never existed in the country, where traditionally various princes shared power in a highly decentralized system. In the short term, these steps may succeed, but if so, they will establish MBS – who will be the next king – as an authoritarian despot.

MBS's rough approach to politics has also international repercussions. He has underscored the Saudi opposition to Iran's regional outreach, thus exacerbating the Sunni/Shia divide: this may gain the support of other Sunni countries, like Egypt and Jordan, as well as of Trump's USA and Netanyahu's Israel, but will certainly not contribute to the region's stability: MBS's not very well-informed comparisons of the Iranian regime to Hitler's Nazi Germany are not exactly helpful. MBS's decisions to intervene militarily in Yemen have until now been a failure, and his siege of Qatar – a small, though enormously rich Gulf country challenging Saudi hegemony – has boomeranged.

It is difficult to know where Saudi Arabia is heading. The country certainly needs serious transformative reforms, but the jury is still out whether MBS's approach is the right path. If he succeeds internally, he will emerge as a reformer – but will turn his country into a personal authoritarian dictatorship, as the country lacks any representative institutions and the crown prince is obviously not interested in encouraging their growth. On the other hand, his sweeping authoritarian tendencies, and his failures on the

international scene, may cause internal opposition – both from the traditional elites he has vowed to decimate, as well as from the significant Shia minority in the east of the kingdom, who may look to Iran as its protector. Things can also get out of hand vis-à-vis Iran, and in a military confrontation Iran will obviously have the upper hand, despite all the American hardware to be sold to Saudi Arabia. Hopefully such a confrontation will not lead to a wider regional war.

## GREECE: THE CAUSES OF CRISIS ARE STILL THERE



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As Greece offers an appearance of return to normalcy, everybody in Athens, Washington and Brussels hopes for the best. Everybody is tired of the Greek crisis and this apparent calm offers an, uneasy it is true, opportunity to declare that the worst is behind us. But why this eagerness to put the whole affair behind us? Maybe because everybody knows that in effect during the crisis neither Greece nor Europe did what they had to do to deal with their, respective, weaknesses that brought about the crisis?

But how can this be, when so much has been done – so many pieces of legislation adopted in Europe to deal with the crisis, so many mechanisms created and so many measures imposed on the mostly reluctant Greeks?

And here it strikes us: Europe has done rather little to update the structure of its governance to deal with the core issues that exposed it to the crisis, be it from the cracks in the notion that the Union is permanent up to the ability to enforce EU law evenly in all member states in a way that will lead to a more visible “convergence in institutions” even while making the democratic foundations of the Union more relevant for the average European citizen. And Greece has done little to improve its ability to offer quality governance to the Greeks, that is Greece has done little to move towards what an idealized European state would look like.

Which brings us to the inconvenient truths about the supposed “Greek success story”. The average size of the Greek company remains small, a product of the many structural weaknesses of the country that have worked over decades as an almost insurmountable “barrier to growth”. The reflection of this situation can still be observed in the weak private sector job market, the weak innovation and export activity, the “missing tax base” and the persistently high consumption to GDP ratio. The adjustment programmes have failed to put Greece on a trajectory that clearly separates it with this negative metrics that characterize the years till the eruption of the crisis, in spite of the fall in the so called “triple deficits” – that is the current account and budget deficit and any fashionable measure of labor cost competitiveness.

In other words, the adjustment programmes failed to bring upon the structural reform of the Greek economy that they set out to achieve. In spite of the fact that the government now taxes much more heavily and progressively everything that moves, breathes or rests and Greeks earn much less for more work.

So maybe simply enforcing austerity, whatever that means, and a devaluation, again regardless if it is called internal or somewhat differently, does not suffice to do the trick after all. Maybe the way day-to-day economic and social activity is organized, from licensing to policy debates, from the rule of law and court decisions to the protection of the freedom of the press, are more important after all. Because they determine the extent to which people take initiatives, create among others economic activity and thus generate taxable income.

Even if we take into account the fact that the private sector in Greece has been excluded from access to finance for almost a decade now, if we take into account the impact of overtaxation and the risks entrenched by the so called Grexit talk, we still cannot explain this extreme lack of any evidence that the structure of the Greek economy is moving away from the patterns that are associated with the creation of the crisis. Unless, that is, we accept that the whole equilibrium between politics, society and the economy has not really changed all these years, and that after 9 years of programmes the kleptocratic rent seekers in the country still conduct “business as usual”. Which of course would also lead to the question how this is possible, given the strict oversight of Greece all these years under the watchful eyes of the so called Troika.

And it is here that the unhappy answer dawns. The adjustment programmes did little to shift the balance of power that had turned Greece into a rent seekers paradise, a kleptocracy run by hard core groups. On the contrary, through the imposition of ever higher and more progressive taxation it amplified the barriers to growth that has turned Greece into a nano-

shopkeepers economy in the first place. With the addition of the the cutting off from access to finance and the persisting uncertainty (no “we will do whatever it takes” declarations here) actually the tax paying individuals and companies, that were looking forward to the adjustment programmes as a liberation from the tyranny of the kleptocracy, experienced an awakening not dissimilar to the one experienced by the Ukranian villagers that for a fleeting moment hoped that Hitler’s armies would liberate them from Stalin’s oppression. If anything was to change for anybody who worked, saved and paid taxes in Greece, the adjustment programmes would make sure that especially for them things would be worse not only in absolute measures but also relatively to whomever has a cozy relationship with the kleptocracy.

Is anybody thought that clientism would be exiled from the country as a result of the list of structural reforms, that lagged always the list of fiscal measures, he should think twice. As people became poorer, they became politically more radical as has happened so many times before in history. The combination of weak institutions and unchecked executive power meant that in such an environment populism did not decrease, but rather flourished and even took some interesting, from an historic perspective, turns. Nationalism, radical left and radical right united under the watch of the institutions as they prioritized the achievement of short term fiscal goals, regardless of how the fiscal milestones were achieved.

So everybody seems to sigh with relief as the fiscal targets are met, and does not want to deal with the inconvenient fact that the private economy has largely been decimated, to an extent that it will not be able to mend itself. That weak political institutions have been weakened even more, rendering essentially the country incapable to design and implement quality policies – not because of a failure of the lazy and tax evading Greeks but simply because they have been broken and corrupted to an extent that they also cannot mend themselves. Surprisingly Austerity has not made Greeks more frugal, but rather disgruntled and more prone to listen to political sirens. That in such a context politics have radicalized to an extent that has never before in history been able to recovery without a catastrophe. The fact that Greece has now a parliamentary system with a newly acquired purely proportional electoral system, just as the Weimar Republic had, surely adds no comfort.

But acknowledging that there is more than the fiscal target for the next quarter would imply that one acknowledges that there is more to the reforms Europe needs than a more stringent oversight of public finances in deficit countries. Such thoughts make the choice to pretend that Greece is now a success story indeed much more appealing. In the short term. And tomorrow someone else will be on watch, or at least so we hope. This is exactly the ultimate argument of our last book *Who’s to Blame for Greece*.

But it need not be so. For one, Greece has almost succeeded in the past to overcome the underlying causes of the crisis. So it could do it again. And Europe could deal with its shortcomings if it were willing to redesign the map of powers and competencies in an more elegant and coherent way. Technically both can be done. Political vision and will is all that is required.



\* Theodore Pelagidis and Michael Mitsopoulos are the authors of *Who's to Blame for Greece? How Austerity and Populism are Destroying a Country with High Potential*, MacMillan/Palgrave, February 2018.



## CYPRUS AND TURKEY: WALKING A LINE BETWEEN BOOM AND BUST ON EAST MEDITERRANEAN NATURAL GAS



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In search of commercially viable levels of hydrocarbon resources, Cyprus third international licensing round for three blocks within its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) resulted in the awarding of licenses to Italian ENI and French Total for Block 6; ENI for block 8; and, American Exxon Mobil and Qatar Petroleum for block 10. The July 2017 drilling in block 11 commissioned to Total and ENI in the second licensing round has been critical as first results show that the geology of Egypt's Zohr gas field extends into Cyprus's EEZ. This assessment raises expectations for the findings of the two drillings scheduled for the second half of 2018 in block 10 that lies in close proximity to the super-giant Zohr gas field.

Additionally, ENI's recent gas discovery in Block 6 offshore Cyprus with Calypso 1 NFW that could contain more than 230 bcm of gas paves the way for focused exploration leading to successful drillings given the geological structure's similarity to that of Zohr's field. It is estimated that oil majors' plans center on connecting gas discoveries in Cyprus with Egypt's by pipeline and re-export reserves as liquefied natural gas (LNG) by utilizing the Egyptian Idku and Damietta LNG facilities.

Political tensions however as consequence of the collapse of the Cyprus Peace talks and competing EEZ claims between Cyprus and Turkey can impact negatively regional energy cooperation. The prevention of ENI's Saipem 12000 drill ship from reaching block 3 southeast of Cyprus by military means highlights not only the exercise of unilateral steps by Turkey as a third country in the Cypriot setting but also the existence of accrued problems related to maritime boundaries and to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). A number of Cypriot energy experts maintain that "the Philippines arbitration case vs China over South China Sea" can serve as model for the settlement of competing EEZ claims between Cyprus and Turkey, while many from the Turkish side consider the

Malta-Libya arbitration case as more appropriate given that Turkey is not signatory to the UNCLOS.

There is widespread belief that the resolution of the Cyprus conflict is prerequisite for constructing a pipeline that would connect Israeli Leviathan field to the Turkish coast given that the pipeline will have to cross through the island's EEZ. Thus, Nicosia could effectively exercise its veto power to the pipeline under its rights as a signatory of the UNCLOS.

Turkey seems to solidly promote its potential as a trading hub, on the basis that the country's geographic location and growing demand for natural gas- reflected by its annual imports of approximately 48 bcm- qualify it as a trading hub rather than a transit country. It is in this context that Turkey proceeds with market liberalization and regulatory reform in cooperation with private oil and gas companies; intends to create a reference price to be able to influence the pricing of gas in the region; and, plans to increase oil and gas exploration and production activities so that the country turns into a viable energy hub for Europe.

It is noteworthy that the normalization of Turkish relations with Russia falls within Ankara's broader strategy to become a competitive regional market player and a strong transmission system operator. The reason is that Ankara's emergence as a prominent regional energy player can be achieved through the development of adequate physical entry and exit points for capacity allocation, thus securing diversification of supplies and energy liquidity. Turkey, which imports 98% of its gas, must diversify energy sources but its energy dependence is connected to Russia. It is no secret that long-term energy contracts and a "take-or-pay" clause tie Russia and Turkey together for at least 8 more years. According to the take-or-pay provision, the contract places the danger of worsening energy market conditions on the buyer, by requiring the buyer to always be accountable for the payment of a minimum purchase commitment, thus leaving the seller to deal only with the market price risks.

When it comes to the East Mediterranean, the declared decision by Turkey to carry out seismic surveys off Cyprus's southwestern Paphos along with the its intention to proceed with offshore exploration in the northern part of the island through its state-owned Turkish National Oil Company highlight the shift of its focus on exploration efforts to the Mediterranean region. The latest gas discoveries in the East Mediterranean coincide at a time of tension in Turkish-US relations. Turkey so far appears cautious in not crossing a threshold beyond which Washington would be forced to respond decisively as evidenced by the recent unimpeded arrival of Exxon Mobil's Med Surveyor and Ocean Investigator to Limassol port. The operation of Exxon Mobil's chartered research vessels in Cyprus's southwest coast falls within

the American position that the Republic of Cyprus has the right to develop energy resources within its EEZ.

No doubt that the existence of sufficient gas quantities available for export is necessary for the monetization of East Mediterranean gas. Upon this reality, Cyprus and neighboring Egypt should consider the joint monetization of their gas resources on the basis that economies of scale could reinforce profitability and produce higher government revenues. Commitment on resolving the Cyprus problem is important and, in the meantime, implementation of concrete confidence building measures such as Track-II diplomacy between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the future use of the East Mediterranean natural gas resources could invalidate any third country's meddling in Cyprus. Concurrently, Cyprus should speedily proceed with the establishment of a National Investments Fund where revenues from hydrocarbon exploitation will be deposited for the benefit of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, while Turkey needs to refrain from harsh political rhetoric and military provocations to avoid incidents at sea or in the air that carry the risk of regional escalation.

Evidently, the principle of good neighbourly relations should unequivocally commit the East Mediterranean's littoral countries so that prosperity becomes a shared gain; or otherwise intensified tensions run the risk of trapping the region in a state of persistent stagnation.

## FROM CONFLICT TO COOPERATION: A WIN-WIN APPROACH IN SOLVING THE CYPRUS PROBLEM



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The latest alarming developments in Cyprus Republic's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (culminating with the interception of ENI SAIPEM 12000 drillship by the Turkish Navy in order to prevent the said drillship from sailing into sea plot number 3 of the said EEZ , an area disputed by the Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots) inevitably bring Greek Cypriots and Greece on the one hand and Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots on the other hand before a critical political dilemma: either to continue their confrontation over Cyprus Republic's EEZ in a lose-lose manner or to opt for an alternative win-win approach that could, inter alia, potentially turn the said crisis into an opportunity for resolving the Cyprus problem.

Following the incident with ENI SAIPEM 12000 Turkey has threatened to continue to obstruct any further effort by the Cyprus Republic to exercise its sovereign right to explore and exploit its natural resources in accordance with EU and international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS). In this regard Turkey has argued that, in acting as such, it safeguards both the rights of the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey's claims inside Cyprus Republic's EEZ, albeit the fact that Turkey has not signed or ratified UNCLOS. More specifically, Turkey sees part of the Cyprus EEZ in the south-west as its own continental shelf and Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots see the rest of the EEZ as jointly owned by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Even though the rest of the world does not recognize Turkey's continental shelf claims and supports the sovereign rights of the Cyprus Republic to exploit its own resources yet Turkey has made it clear that it would attempt to militarily deter any future effort by Cyprus Republic to explore and exploit its hydrocarbon reserves unless either (a) the Greek Cypriots jointly form with the Turkish Cypriots a bi-communal committee to commonly explore the resources or (b) the Cyprus Republic freeze its program to explore and exploit its natural resources until a solution is found. In addition, Turkey has indicated that should Cyprus Republic continue implementing its hydrocarbon energy program then Turkey-via the

Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO)-will support the Turkish Cypriots to explore and exploit in Cyprus EEZ as well.

Contrary to the Turkish and the Turkish Cypriot above-mentioned stance the Greek Cypriots have manifested in every international direction that they will continue an unconditional facilitation of the various international companies' exploration and exploitation activities in the Cyprus Republic's EEZ. In this respect ExxonMobil (*with the political support of the US government*) has reiterated its wish and will to start drilling in sea block 10 of the EEZ during the second half of 2018. Moreover, the government of Cyprus Republic, via its Minister of Energy, has reiterated that Cyprus's plans to explore, develop and exploit hydrocarbons in its EEZ will continue even if Turkish war vessels have prevented ENI SAIPEM 12000 from approaching its target. In addition, Cyprus Republic has initiated the process of exploiting the natural gas discovered in sea block 12 of its EEZ by preparing the signing between Cyprus and Egypt of a framework agreement governing the construction of an undersea pipeline which will allow the companies involved in the relevant negotiations to sell natural gas to one of Egypt's liquefaction plants.

All of the above-mentioned developments create a very complex and sensitive political and military environment with unpredictable and uncalculated negative consequences. In this respect it goes without saying that should both sides of the equation (Turkey/Turkish Cypriots vs Greek Cypriots/Greece) continue maintaining the same stance on this matter then a conflict between the two sides may erupt resulting in a lose-lose situation. Namely, a hypothetical future further military obstruction by Turkey of Cyprus Republic's and of the international companies' efforts to continue their exploration and exploitation activities in Cyprus Republic's EEZ as well as a possible move by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots to also start exploration activities in Cyprus Republic's EEZ could bring Turkey into a direct confrontation with the EU and the USA. Moreover, such negative developments in Cyprus Republic's EEZ could reduce both tourist arrivals on the island as well as the influx of foreign direct investments (FDI) thus threatening the stability of the Republic's economy. In addition, a tension in the Cyprus Republic's EEZ, and a subsequent standstill in Cyprus Republic's hydrocarbon program, could potentially deprive Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots of the opportunity to reap the future benefits of the relevant exploration and exploitation. Finally, a possible conflict over the hydrocarbons issue will undermine the last few chances for a comprehensive solution of the Cyprus Problem.

Regardless, however, of the above gloomy picture both sides still have the chance to turn the said crisis into an opportunity for a win-win approach that could solve the Cyprus Republic's hydrocarbon issue dispute in a

mutually beneficial way by simultaneously paving the road for a comprehensive solution of the Cyprus. This can be achieved in my opinion if both sides, with the support of the UN, think “out-of-the box” and thus agree to follow a step-by-step, or an evolutionary, solution of the Cyprus Problem based on high and low policy Confidence Building Measures (CBMs).

To be more specific, *after substantial preparation and consultation with all interested parties*, the UN Secretary-General ought to call in 2018, an International Conference convoking the participation of: the three Guarantor powers of the Cyprus Republic (i.e. Greece, Turkey and the UK), the EU, ideally the five permanent members of the UN, and the two Cypriot communities. The said Conference should aim at leading the two communities to a **Provisional Agreement for a step-by-step solution of the Cyprus Problem**. Such an Agreement should incorporate a preamble which will, inter alia, include a clause stating that the two communities are binded by the the Guterres Framework submitted to all interested sides at Gran Montana on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 2017 and a clause stating that the two communities will remain committed in seeking in the near future a comprehensive solution based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality. In addition, this Provisional Agreement could incorporate a **3 year road-map** within which both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots shall concurrently implement a series of high and low policy CBMs monitored by the UN. On the one hand such measures would engage them in a creative, constructive and trustful political, economic, military and cultural collaboration, and on the other hand would satisfy each side’s core negotiating interests. The goal of CBMs would be to gradually lead all sides at the end of this road map to intensive negotiations for a comprehensive and permanent solution of the Cyprus Problem. An indicative list of five *substantial* CBMs might be the following:

- i. *First, return by Turkey of the fenced-off section of the Turkish occupied city of Famagusta to the administration of the UN and subsequently to its legal Greek Cypriot inhabitants in return for a Cyprus Republic approval of the direct trade regulation (via a commonly accepted legal wording) and thus the legitimate opening of the port of the said city and the Tymbou (Ercan) airport\* (essentially via the consent of ICAO and ideally co-managed by a Greek Cypriot and a Turkish Cypriot Board of Directors under the auspices of the EU or of the UN).*
- ii. *Secondly, the creation by the UN (with the approval of the Cyprus Republic) of a bi-communal Steering Committee that should start discussing a mutually agreed way in exploring and exploiting of the hydrocarbon reserves in the Cyprus Republic’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in return for Turkey’s avoidance of any threats and actions that violate of the said EEZ.*

- iii. *Thirdly, implementation by Turkey of the 'Ankara Protocol' in return for a de-freezing by the Cyprus Republic of the six negotiating chapters of Turkish accession negotiations (that the Cyprus Republic has been blocking since 2009) as well as a Cyprus Republic's consent to the upgrading of the EU-TURKEY Customs Union Agreement.*
- iv. *Fourthly, gradual withdrawal of the Turkish troops from northern Cyprus and approval by Turkey of a de-mining of the island in return for a freezing of Cyprus Republic's National Guard's weapons' upgrading programs (**this CBM can start in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year**).*
- v. *Finally, the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots ought to continue and intensify their current cultural and educational exchanges, under the UN's supervision in order to help their respective societies to understand each other.*

In unison, such an evolutionary approach should point the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots, as well as Turkey and Greece, in the direction of an all-win situation. More specifically,

*The Greek Cypriots would be able to:*

- Maintain the internationally recognised Cyprus Republic.
- Reclaim, for first time since 1974, an important piece of now occupied land (Varosha) plus reap the economic and financial benefits (i.e. influx of foreign direct investment plus job creation and so on) that would inevitably result from the reconstruction of this piece of land.
- Experience conditions of tranquillity in the Cyprus Republic's EEZ and as a consequence make the exploitation of the island's relevant hydrocarbon reserves easier, safer and more lucrative.
- Gain semi-recognition of the Cyprus Republic by Turkey.
- Save a vast amount of money from the freezing of the Republic's National Guard's weapons upgrading programs, and
- Develop confidence with their Turkish Cypriot compatriots – something quintessential for a future comprehensive solution of the Cyprus problem.

*Likewise the Turkish Cypriots, would be able to:*

- Gain a lifting of their so called 'economic and political embargo' by the legitimate opening of Famagusta port and Tymbou (Erchan) airport.
- Reap the economic and financial benefits of the reconstruction of Famagusta.
- Proportionally enjoy any future possible remuneration by the exploitation of Cyprus hydrocarbon reserves.
- Indirectly receive acknowledgement by the Cyprus Republic that they are politically equal with the Greek Cypriots and,
- Develop confidence with their Greek Cypriot compatriots.

What is more, both Turkey and Greece can benefit enormously from the signing of such an interim agreement.

*On the one hand, **Turkey** could, inter alia:*

- Enjoy a boost in its efforts to either become a member of the EU or to establish a “special relationship” with the Union..
- Save a good sum of money from the gradual withdrawal of its troops from Cyprus and
- Improve its relations with Greece markedly, hence creating the necessary conditions for solving the Aegean political and economic differences with Greece (differences that involve a set of interrelated issues).

*On the other hand **Greece** could, among other things:*

- Further improve its bilateral political and economic relations with Turkey.
- Locate a solution to the Aegean differences revealed above that could allow Greece to exploit the full potential of its EEZ. (For a more detailed analysis of my proposal for a step-by step solution of the Cyprus Problem please view YIANGOU C. "SOLVING THE CYPRUS PROBLEM: AN EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH" THE CYPRUS REVIEW JOURNAL, VOL.26, NO.2 (FALL 2014).

In conclusion, all interested parties do have perhaps a last chance to turn the latest crisis in Cyprus Republic’s EEZ into an opportunity for a lasting solution of the Cyprus Problem. To do so, however, they need to think in a non-conventional way.” After endless abortive efforts by parties to find a comprehensive solution to the said problem based on the elusive and failed principle “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” it seems that time is now ripe to approach the solution from a different thinking pattern – namely, from a step-by-step or an evolutionary point of view based on CBMs. Adopting this approach in everyday collaboration between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots on high and low policy issues, based on a non-zero sum game, may be extremely productive. Such teamwork may enable the two communities, but also Greece and Turkey, to eradicate the sources that fashioned the Cyprus problem. Moreover, via this solution, both Cypriot communities with the support of the international factor could, in stages, quench their basic negotiating interests but also create a baggage of trust. This would hopefully help these communities to renegotiate in the future, with a fresher angle, a comprehensive settlement of the problem within the framework of a future plan by the UN, *ideally* again based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with *political equality*.



## THE ENERGY WARS OF TURKEY AND THE THUCYDIDEAN TRAP OF GREECE<sup>1</sup>



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### **1. Turkey's invasion in Cyprus's EEZ**

Sensing the power vacuum in the Eastern Mediterranean Turkey rushed in to fill it by issuing two illegal and void Navtex on 5.2.2018 and on 10.3.2018 in its efforts to disrupt the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) hydrocarbon program. Ankara met with no resistance and thus managed to prevent the Saipem 12000 drillship of the Italian company ENI from carrying out exploratory drilling for natural gas in offshore Block 3 of the Cyprus Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Evidently, proactive measures were not taken in time, although Turkey's attitude towards Hellenism is predictable. There has long been a repository of hopes in emotional misconceptions, although international relations must be seen and analyzed through the model of absolute realism.

### **2. The international community fails to react**

Unfortunately Cyprus has found itself alone again. The European Union (EU), which has legitimate interests in the region, not limited to energy, responded with the expected worthless pious statements. From Britain, which is the guarantor of the RoC, nothing more could have been expected than the hypocritical keeping of apparently equal distances in breach of its guarantee obligations in the face of Turkey's aggression and the violation of the sovereign rights of Cyprus. In fact, British policy remains totally pro-Turkish within the framework of the ever-applied "divide and rule" doctrine, so that the RoC can never have real independence or adopt policies against British interests. The United States (US) stressed the right of Cyprus to develop its EEZ resources to be shared "equitably" between both

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<sup>1</sup> More extensive analysis can be found at the following web links:

[http://www.sigmalive.com/news/opinions\\_sigmalive/490755/oi-energeiakoi-polemoi-tis-tourkias](http://www.sigmalive.com/news/opinions_sigmalive/490755/oi-energeiakoi-polemoi-tis-tourkias)

<http://www.philenews.com/f-me-apopsi/paremvaseis-ston-f/article/492973/oi-energiakoi-polemoi-tis-toyrkias-kai-i-thoykydideia-pagda-tis-elladas>

<https://www.greekenergyforum.com/publications/opinions/2018/oi-ενεργειακοι-πόλεμοι-της-τουρκίας-και-η-θουκυδίδεια-παγίδα-της-ελλάδας/>

communities. The term “equitably” is open to interpretation. Putin’s geostrategic objectives go beyond even those of the Soviet Union. In this case Moscow intends to acquire a sphere of influence in the Middle East and the Mediterranean (Syria, Egypt, Libya), weakening NATO’s southern flank. In addition Russia wishes to delay as long as possible the alternative “Fifth Corridor” natural gas supplies to Europe from the Eastern Mediterranean, enabling Europe to diversify away from Russia. The United Nations once again avoided their responsibility, washing their hands like Pontius Pilate, despite their very own Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982) being trampled upon by Ankara, thus rewarding its violation of international law.

For Turkey, the invasion of Cyprus's EEZ has remained a small, low-tension crisis without having to escalate it in order to achieve its goals. Once again it is confirmed that diplomacy without force has zero value or expected benefit. Notwithstanding, Ankara is not expected to dare harass Exxon-Mobil exploratory drilling in offshore block 10 in the second half of 2018.

### **3. Turkish Objectives**

Ankara’s warship/gunboat piratical act of obstructing the RoC exploration for natural gas has the following strategic objectives:

1. To stop the hydrocarbons exploration program of the RoC and further to prevent hydrocarbon exploitation.
2. To claim a significant part of the EEZ of the RoC in violation of the UNCLOS.
3. To become a co-owner of the energy wealth of Cyprus under the pretext of the Turkish Cypriots and blackmail the RoC to change its energy policy in a direction serving Turkey's goal of becoming an energy hub itself.
4. To grab the energy wealth of the RoC and to channel it through a pipeline to Turkey, imposing its own conditions and terms on prices and making Cyprus hostage, although Cyprus has much better export options.
5. To effectively compel the international oil companies involved in the RoC hydrocarbon exploration and production program to negotiate with Turkey through a so-called hydrocarbons co-management committee with the Turkish Cypriots, utilizing the 1960 Constitution on an à la carte basis.
6. To humiliate and draw at the negotiating table a fully-weakened President of the RoC in order to impose upon him the terms for the solution of the Cyprus problem on the basis of essentially a condominium with Turkey via the Turkish Cypriots in a confederation wherein Ankara would monopolize Cyprus's hydrocarbons. Ankara’s current intimidation is an omen of how much “freedom” the Cypriots people will have in the proposed confederation under Turkish suzerainty.

7. To abolish the RoC with the proposed solution and transform it not just into a satellite within its own sphere of influence but into a colony. Already in the northern part of Cyprus, occupied since July 1974, Turkey has installed hundreds of thousands of settlers as part of its progressive ethnic cleansing and eventually complete occupation of Cyprus, based on the Ismail Nihat Erim Report of 1956.

8. To turn the Levantine Basin into a Turkish lake, using coercion tactics and to demonstrate at international level that it is the regional hegemon in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East.

9. To prevent other great and regional powers from gaining access or a decisive role in the region's energy resources except under its own terms and time framework.

#### **4. Conclusions for Cyprus and Greece from Turkey's revisionist neo-ottoman imperialism**

The East Med gas constitutes a viable, secure and independent alternative corridor for European demand and diversification needs. It can be a «game changer» for Europe at least to the extent that the stronger countries of the European Union decide that they will not allow Turkey to monopolize the situation.

Cyprus primarily and Greece have entered the global energy map. I have analyzed in another article as well as a university dissertation<sup>2</sup> that the East Med gas pipeline is not the best export option for Cypriot natural gas reserves. The optimal economic and geopolitical choice is the Natural Gas Liquefaction Terminal, which is now possible with the recent discovery of the Calypso reservoir (Block 6), including the existing Aphrodite (Block 12) reserves, but also certain future discoveries (Block 10 etc.).

The energy reserves of Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean are the most important, if not the only, trump card available to the RoC to help play an important role in the EU and find a fairer solution to the Cyprus problem. If Greece really wants to have a role in the Eastern Mediterranean and the new energy game by constructing the East Med gas pipeline then it should dynamically assert its claims as Turkey does. International law is not a guarantee of protection for the weak. Only the country capable of taking the initiative and projects hard power will be effective in the control over energy corridors and export options.

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<sup>2</sup> Follow web links: <https://www.academia.edu/32471372>,  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316145175>  
<https://cceia.unic.ac.cy/volume-14-issue-2-p-tilliros/>  
<https://www.greekenergyforum.com/publications/studies/2017/the-role-of-east-med-gas-in-the-european-energy-security-and-the-best-cyprus-gas-monetization-option/>

Under no circumstances should the Turkish extortion be conceded to either co-manage or freeze the energy program of the RoC until the Cyprus problem is resolved. It is right to take steps and initiatives within the European Union and the United Nations without expecting however that such actions will expel the Turks from the Cypriot EEZ unless hard power is projected. The current huge strategic deficits of Greece, its turcophobia and defeatism bring it only insults and repeated defeats across the board and not just in the Aegean Sea. The persistent policy of supposedly securing "peace" by retreating before all Turkish provocations and accepting from a position of military weakness unacceptable national compromises, like the 1996 Imia Agreement, simply turns Greece into a satellite through the process of finlandisation.

Hellenism and Greece now face a stark choice before the Turkish neo-ottoman threat: either pursue a realist militarized strategy geared towards reestablishing the balance of power the soonest possible and altering the just-defensive doctrine of deployment of forces; or follow the already-failed alternative liberal logic (fallacy in this case) that seeks to promote long-term peace through closer economic, social and political ties and involves relinquishing all national assets and capitulating to Turkey.

With its constant inaction, Greece has been caught in the Thucydidean trap of a rising Turkey. The continuous erosion of the balance of power has reached a point that will eventually make war inevitable. War does not necessarily mean catastrophe provided there is preparation and determination. It has not yet been comprehended that in the ambiguous but realistic Orwellian world of the political and international chessboard peace can mean war and war peace.

## INTERNATIONAL LAW OF THE SEA AND GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS: THOUGHTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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The International Law of the Sea is constituted by a particularly sufficient and solid legislative and case law framework, with its bigger part being characterized by high regulatory and binding nature. The customary nature of a large number of provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)<sup>3</sup> and of related case law principles along with the fact that UNCLOS is not subject to reservations, amplifies this specific field of International Law and its enforcement process.

The Republic of Cyprus and Greece have signed and ratified UNCLOS. Turkey has not signed or ratified it. Given that international customary law creates erga omnes obligations and is set beyond the national law of the states and the national constitutions; on the relevant Greek-Turkish issues, the customary nature of UNCLOS provisions becomes even more important.

It could actually be argued that Turkey by applying UNCLOS to the Black Sea -not only seems to accept and adopt it- but it also contributes to the creation and strengthening of the customary nature of its arrangements. In particular, the elements of the international customary law are fulfilled: as Turkey (i) applies a consistent and recurring practice in the Black Sea and (ii) follows it opinio juris.

Cyprus and Greece have, over time, respected and applied all fields of International Law and are fully consistent with their international obligations. The implementation of International Law of the Sea, in particular UNCLOS -as regards maritime zones and all the rights and obligations imposed- is not only an international obligation but it is also for the best interest of Cyprus and Greece, is an important guarantee for their national laws, and assures them against Turkey's (current or any future) arbitrary disputes, claims and actions.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos\\_e.pdf](http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf)

Cyprus and Greece, when dealing with Turkey about issues concerning International Law of the Sea, should opt for legal methods/processes, as their arguments against Turkey's disputes and claims are fully documented and established by International Law. Therefore, raising legal arguments, invoking the existing legislative and case law framework, seeking to resolve their issues with Turkey through judicial settlement or arbitration, -i.e. on the basis of International Law-, is overtime in the interest of the Greek side.

It should be noted that legal arguments follow specific rules, specific and clear legislative and case law framework. They are governed by the principles, procedures and methodology of law; hence they are objectively verifiable.

On the other hand, political arguments do not follow defined rules and procedures. Their interpretation is subjective. The content of a political term may be defined differently by each party. Consequently, in the event of a dispute, it is very difficult to determine which position will prevail.

Turkey's strategy has always been the political settlement and resolution of Greek-Turkish issues related to International Law of the Sea, and has been favored by this strategy. Turkey invokes International Law without applying it. It aims at giving legal dimension to the political terms it uses.

It seeks to create the impression to the international community that there is a "complicated regime" regarding the Aegean. By raising many disputes and demands, it looks forward to gaining benefits in the event of a political resolution. But even in the case of a judicial settlement, by invoking many issues (even with no legal basis) pursues a "more balanced solution".

In the case of a political settlement, all possibilities are open, while in the case of a legal settlement, it is not possible to diverge significantly from the existing legislative and case law framework, which mostly guarantees the rights of the Greek side. The discretion of relevant judgments, analyzes and decisions is limited, defined by International Law, and therefore scientifically and reasonably auditable.

The obligation of a state which violates International Law or of any "recalcitrant" international actor (in this case Turkey) to use legal arguments is a first achievement in favor of justice and legality, because it is supposed to follow specific legal norms, whose appropriate and bona fide invocation is verifiable.

The International Court of Justice in the Aegean Continental Shelf Case (Greece v. Turkey) (1978)<sup>4</sup> was based on a procedural impediment and did not decide on the merits of the case. Having in mind the above Judgment, a proposal is made, that could generally apply to international jurisdiction and that it could be used in the future to strengthen the Greek argumentation.

Given the fundamental principle of pacific settlement of international disputes, in case of doubt there should be a presumption of jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice, and the Court itself to favor its main mission and purpose (i.e.) the resolution of international disputes. It is obvious that the ultimate goal is to resolve and not to perpetuate international disputes. In addition, the Court itself has “kompetenz kompetenz”.

Approaching International Law in an evolving perspective, and at the same time with respect to the principle of national sovereignty of states; in case of doubt, reservations -when they are allowed- should be interpreted narrowly. A restrictive interpretation of reservations should be followed, because they put obstacles to international jurisdiction.

The necessity of the maintenance of international peace and security, of the peaceful settlement of international disputes and of friendly relations between states -basic purposes of International Law- should prevail.

The customary nature of the greatest part of UNCLOS and of many case law principles and also the fact that UNCLOS is not subject to reservations, provide clear guidance on how this framework should be interpreted and applied.

It is crucial not to overlook that the concept and the function of prescription/usucaption -term of the Property Law- in certain cases is mutatis mutandis applied in the International Law of the Sea. Thus, in this way, acquired rights, fait accompli and precedents often arise, even by unilateral action by states. The Turkish offences against Cyprus and Greece state sovereignty, sovereign rights or jurisdiction may not only be of a political nature, but may be later presented as legal facts. For this reason, in no case an illegal conduct of a state should be left without a legal response.

Cyprus and Greece for any existing or future arising issues with Turkey should internationalize them, which is achieved through recourse to international or regional courts and to international or regional organizations. In addition, they should utilize fully and effectively the

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<sup>4</sup> ICJ, Aegean Sea Continental Shelf Case (Greece v. Turkey), (1978)  
<http://www.icj-cij.org/files/case-related/62/062-19781219-JUD-01-00-EN.pdf>

framework of International Law of the Sea, and its increased binding and regulatory nature.



## NATURAL RESOURCES AND ETHNIC SYMBOLISM IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN



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The 'nationalization of space' is a process through which nationalism strives to transform the territory the nation occupies to an ancestral homeland and attach special symbolisms and meanings to it. It turns the territory the nation happened to live on to a historic territory, a 'homeland', and a rightful possession from one's ancestors through the generations. This process is multi-dimensional and primarily symbolic as symbols have the capacity to generate collective emotions and feelings of belonging on the one hand, while demonstrating to 'outsiders' to whom the particular territory belongs to, on the other. Language as the most symbolic form of communication is the primary mode of the nationalization of space: from the naming (and re-naming) of towns, streets, squares, natural features and everything associated with the collective life, language is one of the most distinguishing 'national' characteristics that is easily employed to nationalize the territory. Another mode for the nationalization of space is the employment of arts – statues and sculptures of 'national' heroes or personas and the utilization of national flags – one of the most important national symbols.

Of the most radical and profound nationalization of processes in the Eastern Mediterranean, has been the one undertaken by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots in the northern part of Cyprus since 1974: from carving flags to mountains, changing the names of towns, villages, streets, mountains, creeks, rivers and destroying or seriously undermining Greek Orthodox Christian monuments in favour of mosques, to implanting Anatolian populations as well as statues of prominent Turkish figures (primarily of Ataturk) and Turkish flags to every town and village square, the campaign to 'Turcify' northern Cyprus has been extraordinary. This again has a two-fold message: one for internal consumption – that is to incite a sense of 'Turkishness' of the land to Turkish Cypriots and formulate a connection between their national identity and that particular stretch of territory and a message to outsiders – primarily the Greek Cypriots – that this land is now Turkish.

In their efforts to appropriate their air and maritime space, modern nation states have turned these to 'national' air and maritime space, as a natural extension of their national territory. The delineation of the national air and maritime space has been regulated by international treaties and agreements; the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), or the 'Law of the Sea Convention' (1982) is an international agreement that established guidelines for the management of marine natural resources, the environment and businesses, by defining the rights and responsibilities of nations with regards to their use of the oceans.

The Eastern Mediterranean is a highly contested area, one reason being that it is rich in natural resources. The island of Cyprus lays in the centre of the eastern Mediterranean and according to the UNCLOS, the island's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) covers a significant area of the eastern Mediterranean Sea. Turkey challenges the Cypriot jurisdiction on its EEZ for reasons that touch upon a) the Cyprus problem (Turkey does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus, and thus its right to establish an EEZ) and b) the claims of Turkey itself on the continental shelf of the Eastern Mediterranean that clash with the EEZ proclaimed by Cyprus.

Regarding the nationalization of the maritime space in Eastern Mediterranean, one cannot fail but to notice the tendency of name giving to natural resources – names that have direct associations with the prevailing national narrative of the group that claims those resources. The natural gas reserve of block 12 of the Cypriot EEZ 'Aphrodite' comes to mind. One of the strongest arguments of Greek Cypriot nationalism is that Cyprus is Greek since early antiquity, tracing the origins of its 'Greekness' to the first Mycenaean Greeks that colonized the Cypriot shores in the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC. Moreover, per the ancient Greek mythology, goddess Aphrodite was born in Cyprus and its worship was widespread on the island. Having one of the twelve gods of the ancient Greek culture originating from Cyprus automatically places the island to the sphere of the Hellenic world. Aphrodite being born in Cyprus constitutes the ultimate symbolic proof – to the eyes of the Greek Cypriot nationalists – that the island was, and still is, ultimately Greek. This nationalist monopoly of Cyprus lies at the core of the Cyprus problem itself: the conviction of the Greek Cypriots that Cyprus is ultimately Greek and of the Turkish Cypriots that it is ultimately Turkish. One of the main arguments of the Greek Cypriots towards the 'Greekness' of the island is the claim to a historical continuity of the Greek culture since the arrival of the first Mycenaeans in the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC. The myth of Aphrodite being born on the island further enhances their view of Cyprus as ultimately Greek. Aphrodite thus comes to symbolize the continuous Greek presence on the island since antiquity while attesting to the importance of Cyprus for the Hellenic world. The 'we were here first' argument is often heard by Greek Cypriot nationalists in any discussion on the presence of the Turkish Cypriots on the island.

By naming the natural gas reserve discovered in Block 12 of its EEZ 'Aphrodite', the Greek Cypriot government of the Republic of Cyprus attempts to 'Hellenize' its maritime space and to prove its ownership with ethnic symbolic terms. This falls within the process of nationalization of space, that on the one hand aims to convince the Greek Cypriots that this reserve is 'ours' and on the other hand to deter and cancel the Turkish claims on the Cypriot maritime space. Especially given the Turkish threats about the engagement of the Cypriot government with the hydrocarbons in its EEZ and the challenging by Turkey of the EEZ of Cyprus, the move to name the gas reserve 'Aphrodite' automatically 'brands' it as Greek. Ownership of the reserve is thus elevated to a symbolic level. Apart from the legal level and the rights of Cyprus to the reserve that stem from UNCLOS, on the symbolic level the reserve becomes Greek as its very naming places it to the domain of Greek national heritage. Thus, the nationalization of space process of the Cypriot government further enhances the perceived 'Greekness' of Cyprus instead of attempting the promotion of a more Cypriot-centred identity.

## EARLY GENERAL ELECTION IN THE OCCUPIED PART OF CYPRUS



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The 14th general election in the northern part of Cyprus, which has been under Turkish military occupation since 1974, took place on 7 January 2018. Since 1974, this area has been ethnically cleansed from the Greek Cypriot population and the demographic structure has been changed through the settlers brought from Anatolia. A breakaway state was declared in 1983 on this territory occupied by the Turkish troops and this illegal state is recognized only by Turkey.

In 42 years since 1976, 39 governments have been formed in this occupied area and the National Unity Party (UBP) took place in 24 of them. The UBP, supported by the separatist Turkish Cypriot leadership and its underground organization TMT, has been in power for 29 years. In the last elections, the majority of the votes went to the UBP.

In the table below, you can see the names of the political parties that participated in the last three general elections, the percentage of votes they received and the number of seats they won in the 50-seat-parliament, shown in parentheses. The increasing number of the voters and the decreasing number of participation are also significant:

	19.4.2009	28.7.2013	7.1.2018
UBP	43.97 (26)	27.30 (14)	35.57 (21)
CTP	29.34 (15)	38.37 (21)	20.97 (12)
DP	10.6 (5)	23.11 (12)	7.83 (3)
TDP	-	-	8.61 (3)
HP	-	-	17.10 (9)
YDP	-	-	6.96 (2)
Number of voters	161.373	172.803	190.553
Actually voted	131.349	120.287	125.900
Participation (%)	81.70	69.61	66.07

As you can see from the table above, the National Unity Party (UBP) raised the number of seats from 14 to 21. The second party is the Republican Turkish Party (CTP), which used to be in opposition to the traditional Turkish Cypriot leadership and was on the left, lost 9 parliamentarians and won only 12 seats. The Head of the Democratic Party (DP) is Serdar Denktaş, the son of Rauf Denktaş, who was the founding President of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”). The number of the seats of his party has fallen from 12 to 3, despite he was in the coalition government with the UBP before the election. Only three seats went to the Communal Democracy Party (TDP), which is close to the President of the “TRNC”, Mustafa Akıncı, who represents the Turkish Cypriot community in the present inter-communal negotiations.

There are two newly formed parties that could gain seats in their first endeavour. The People’s Party (HP), founded by Kudret Özersay, an academician, who took part in the previous negotiation team, gained 9 seats with a significant success. Prior to the formation of his party, Özersay had a stance that supports the traditional Turkish politics in the Cyprus problem and he was leading the “Clean Community Association”, bringing forward demands such as fighting corruption, transparency and good governance. 2 seats are won by the Revival Party (YDP) that represents mainly the settlers brought from Anatolia.

It was the first time that a new electoral system was implemented and it was adopted in the parliament that allowed all settlements to be identified as a single constituency, with a mix of party lists and independent persons, as well ticking a mixed cross-party list.

As you can see from the table above, the number of those, who went to the ballot-boxes in the last general election was the lowest. Meanwhile, the rate of invalid votes has reached the highest level with 11.7%. 67,653 voters (33.8%) did not go to the ballot-box. Besides the fact that the new electoral system has not been adopted by a significant portion of the voters, the people are not satisfied with the policies of the existing political parties and this may have increased the proportion of those who abstained from voting. There were already 379 candidates from 8 parties and 9 independents. We have to consider also that 17,000 new citizenships were granted to the Anatolian settlers before the elections, which was strongly criticised by the oppositional parties.

The illegal state, which was created by the occupying power Turkey and was defined by the ECHR as “a subordinate local administration of Turkey”, violated the Article 49(6) of the “Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. According to this article, “The occupying power will not transfer a part of its civilian population to the region it occupies, nor will it send through exile.” Unfortunately, Turkey, have sent since 1974 more than 300 thousand

civilian population as settlers to the occupied northern Cyprus and this practice continues until today.

In the booklet of “The Basic Economic and Social Indicators”, the “State Planning Organization of the TRNC” gives the population as 326,158 in 2015, whereas the “High Electoral Council” declared before the recent elections that the population of the “TRNC” was 230,747, out of which 190,553 are eligible to vote. De facto population was supposed to be 299,514 in 2016.

The local government granted the settlers the citizenship of the “TRNC” and distributed them the homes and the agricultural land that had been abandoned by the Greek Cypriots in 1974. They were given the right to vote together with the indigenous Turkish Cypriots for the general and local elections so that the collaborationist governments could maintain their power. Furthermore, they took part also in the voting of the Annan Plan.

When we evaluate the results obtained in this early general election, we can see that the right-wing and non-solution political parties have won the majority of the votes. The positive outcome of 60:40 on the Annan Plan is now reversed and the parties that are in favour of a non-solution have a superiority with 70:30. In the campaigns run by the political parties before the last early election, which was held six months after the failure of the last round of the inter-communal talks in Switzerland, there was no debate whatsoever about the solution of the Cyprus problem. Although mainly the internal issues have been raised, no political party has presented a convincing project for their concrete solution.

The new distribution of seats in the parliament indicates that a coalition government will be formed, rather than a stable government. The authorities in Ankara have already begun to work in order to transform the existing parliamentary regime in the occupied area into a presidential regime, similar to the one in Turkey.

AK Party Istanbul deputy Burhan Kuzu shared the following statement in his twitter account related to the elections held in the “TRNC”: “Today, there was an election in the TRNC. A majority government did not emerge. Three governments were formed in the last four years. Obviously, this system doesn’t work in the TRNC. My recommendation is that they should go to the Presidential System. As a scholar who has studied 40 years the architecture of bringing this system to Turkey, I’m ready to give them my service.”

Already the Directorate of the Aid Mission of the Turkish Embassy in Northern Nicosia and the “Prime Ministry of the TRNC” commissioned the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey to look into the existing electoral system in the “TRNC” and a report was published in April 2013.

Under the title “The State of the TRNC Functional-Institutional Review Study”, the report reads as follows: “In case of a revision of the electoral system, it is recommended that the election districts in accordance with the district boundaries should be abandoned and that a single constituency be formed to cover the entire territory of the TRNC.” (pp. 23-24)

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Çavuşoğlu gave a statement after the election results were announced and asked the Turkish Cypriot politicians to stop saying that they will not participate in a certain coalition government, which was regarded as a clear order and a message sent to the public. A group of Turkish Cypriot Trade Unions issued a protest declaration and condemned Çavuşoğlu’s interference with the internal affairs of the Turkish Cypriot community.

In the coming days, Turkey’s socio-political engineering plans, which will be applied in the occupied part of Cyprus, will become clearer.

#### UPDATE:

On 19 January 2018, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed his anger against Afrika newspaper, which wrote that Turkey’s military operation in Syria was similar to Turkey’s invasion of Cyprus. Erdogan reacted to Afrika’s main title with this call: “What is necessary must be done by our friends in North Cyprus!” One day later, on 20 January 2018, an angry mob of ultra-nationalist Turkish settlers from the AKP’s youth organization, which had the support of some civilian organizations and ‘municipalities’, gathered outside the building of the Afrika newspaper and threw stones and eggs against its windows. Two protesters climbed on the balcony and removed the paper’s signboards from the wall in front of police’s eyes. The protesters attempted also to enter into the building, but the police prevented them. The demonstration was turned into a lynching operation with slogans such as “Allah is most great.” Protests were made as well against the Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, who came to attend the first session of the ‘parliament’ on the opposite corner of the Afrika’s office. He was jeered by the mob outside Afrika, when he approached to calm down the situation, but he was forced to get in his car and leave the scene with the help of his bodyguards.

The crowds were dispersed by riot police, but they then made their way to the ‘parliament’ where ‘deputies’ were being sworn-in after the elections on 7 January 2018. Two men managed to climb on top of the building from which they waved Turkish flags and a flag frequently waved at rallies by supporters of Turkey’s nationalist Good Party.

CTP’s ‘deputy’ Dogus Derya was booed during her swearing-in by Nationalist Unity Party lawmakers and the protesters in the ‘parliament’. She reacted shouting “Shoulder to shoulder against fascism”. This caused the reaction of

Bertan Zaroglu, 'deputy' with the settlers' Revival Party (YDP), who threw a paper to Derya, something which caused tension in the room. All these incidents were watched through a live broadcasting on television and shocked the ordinary Turkish Cypriots.

A "Peace and Democracy March" was held on the evening of 26 January 2018 under the pouring rain in Nicosia in order to protest against the violent attacks by the ultra-nationalists. Around 5,000 Turkish Cypriots took part at this march, which was organized by the Trade Union Platform that represented 21 organizations. It ended up in front of the 'parliament' and Afrika newspaper, where a declaration of the Platform was read.

On 2 February 2018, the prime minister-designate Tufan Erhurman presented his cabinet to the President Akinci. The cabinet, which was approved by Akinci is made up of following members: Tufan Erhurman (CTP), Prime Minister; Kudret Ozersay (HP), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; Aysegul Baybars Kadri (HP), Minister of Interior; Serdar Denktas (DP), Minister of Finance; Cemal Ozyigit (TDP), Minister of National Education and Culture; Zeki Celer (TDP), Minister of Labour and Social Security; Filiz Besim (CTP), Minister of Health; Tolga Atakan (HP) , Minister of Public Works and Communications; Fikri Ataoglu (DP), Minister of Tourism and Environment; Ozdil Nami (CTP), Minister of Economy and Energy; Erkut Sahali (CTP), Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

In the meantime, CTP Famagusta 'deputy' Teberruken Ulucay has been elected as the speaker of the parliament, while Zorlu Tore from the main opposition UBP has been elected as the deputy speaker. The government received the vote of confidence on 15 February. While 27 deputies voted in favour of the new government, 22 deputies voted against it. One MP did not attend the session. According to the constitution, no party or group of deputies can table a motion of no confidence for the first three months after a vote of confidence is secured.

The six men, charged for the attacks against Afrika newspaper and the 'parliament' building, have been sentenced on 21 February 2018 to between two and six months in prison. Judge Tacan Reynar, who was presiding over the case, found all of the six accused guilty of the charges of unlawful assembly, rioting, causing damage to property and inflicting intentional harm.

On 7 March 2018, contacts were held in Ankara by 'prime minister' Tufan Erhurman (CTP) and 'foreign minister' Kudret Ozersay (HP) with Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, Deputy Prime Minister Recep Akdag and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.



Havadis newspaper reported on 9 March 2018 that “everything was discussed” during these meetings and described as “interesting at first sight” the fact that the ‘finance minister’ Serdar Denktas (DP) was not included in the Turkish Cypriot delegation. A full harmony was exhibited on the Cyprus problem. The privatization of the “telecommunications authority”, the decrease of the number of “municipalities” and the “citizenship” were issues to which the government in Ankara attached importance.

Dogan News Agency reported on 13 March 2018 that President Erdogan asked for more “citizenship” to be given up to one million so that the population of the occupied area would be able to compete economically with the same population of the Greek Cypriots!

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