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1993-2020 TWENTY SEVEN YEARS OF POLICY FORMULATION AND ANALYSIS

MARITIME SURVEYS IN THE AEGEAN AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SINCE 1976: SOME LESSONS LEARNED



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In recent months, tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean have escalated over maritime rights. Turkey's issue of NAVTEX, on 21 July 2020, to carry out research for hydrocarbon, dispatching seismic vessel *Oruc Reis* and warships of the Turkish Navy, was followed by Greece's decision to dispatch a fleet to the region. One week later Ankara announced suspension of surveys and its willingness to commence talks with Athens. However, the signing of a maritime border agreement between Greece and Egypt infuriated Turkey and led to a statement that *Oruc Reis* would resume energy exploration in the region. Moreover, on 16 August 2020, the Turkish government fueled further tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean publishing another NAVTEX and announcing that the drillship *Yavuz* would continue its energy surveys off Cyprus (in a maritime zone which was delineated by Cyprus and Egypt).¹ In the meantime, all these tensions prompted other countries or organizations to intervene. For instance, the EU, siding with Greece and Cyprus, has been considering potential sanctions against Turkey. Also, France backed Greece and temporarily joined naval exercises with Greece off Crete. Turkey responded with rival exercises in the area south of Crete.² Recently, the Greek government has announced its intentions to strengthen its military forces

¹ <http://bianet.org/english/world/229883-eu-decision-of-possible-sanctions-on-turkey-they-could-apply-to-ships>

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53497741>;
<https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/how-defuse-tensions-eastern-mediterranean>

(through purchases from France).³ Eventually, by mid-September 2020 *Oruc Reis* returned to Turkey following the expiry of the NAVTEX, which was not renewed.⁴

The use of “gunboat diplomacy” by Ankara in its competitive relationship with Athens, to fulfill the Turkish objectives in various fronts, is not a recent phenomenon. It had been preceded by the summer 1976 *Chora/Hora Incident* and the March 1987 *Sismik 1 Incident*. After the major impact of the 1973-1974 oil crisis on the Turkish economy, Ankara started considering underwater energy surveys in the Aegean Sea.⁵ It therefore dispatched the Turkish vessel *Sismik 1* (ex *Chora/Hora*) to carry out energy exploration in the region. Various states (e.g. USA and USSR) intervened in order to defuse a forthcoming crisis, however Ankara remained adamant. *Sismik 1* conducted its energy surveys, in 6-15 August 1976, not only in Turkish waters but also in a maritime area (nearby the Greek islands of Ayios Efstratios and Lesvos) which was contested by both Ankara and Athens. While carrying out its mission, Greek Navy ships shadowed the Turkish vessel. At the same time each one of the two rival countries conducted Air and Navy exercises.⁶ Athens and Ankara reached on the brink of a war.⁷ Eventually, despite Andreas Papandreou’s (leader of the Greek party of PASOK) vivid rhetoric calling the Greek government to attack *Sismik 1*, the Greek Prime Minister, Constantinos Karamanlis, decided to self-restrain, opt for a diplomatic response and appeal to the UN Security Council.⁸ The latter concluded a resolution calling Greece and Turkey to engage in Greek-Turkish dialogue as well as appeal to the International Court of Justice. Turkey refused to take the Greek-Turkish dispute into The Hague.⁹

It is important to trace the reasons behind Ankara’s decision to resort to “gunboat diplomacy” in 1976. The Turkish leadership flared up tension in summer 1976 in order to fulfill its goals on multiple grounds: firstly, the government of Suleiman Demirel was under strong pressure by the Bulent Ecevit-led opposition. Ecevit claimed that Demirel followed a “submissive policy”; therefore, the latter tried to take a decisive stance against Greece in order to dissolve such accusations and increase its popularity in the domestic political scene. In addition, Demirel aimed at distracting the Turkish public

³ https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54132044?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c207p54mdq3t/turkey&link_location=live-reporting-story

⁴ https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54142497?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c40rjmqdqr/t/greece&link_location=live-reporting-story; <https://cyprus-mail.com/2020/09/13/oruc-reis-leaves-the-area-returns-to-antalya/>

⁵ Sotiris Rizas, *The Greek-Turkish Relations and the Aegean, 1973 – 1976* (Athens: Sideris, 2006), p.27 [in Greek].

⁶ See newspaper *Macedonia*, 6-15 August 1976.

⁷ Melek Firat (Alexis Heraclides ed.), *Greek-Turkish Relations and the Cyprus Problem* (Athens: Sideris, 2012), p. 199 [in Greek].

⁸ Angelos Syrigos, *Greek-Turkish Relations*, 2nd edition (Athens: Pataki, 201), p. 316 [in Greek].

⁹ Firat, *Greek-Turkish Relations*, pp. 197-200.

from Turkey's alarming domestic problems. Also, Turkey wanted to increase its negotiating leverage in the discussions for the continental shelf delimitation, as well as promote its view that the Aegean dispute required a regulation based on political and not legal criteria. In addition, Ankara sought to counter-act the Greek maritime surveys that had been carried out since 1961. Finally, the Turkish government intended to undermine the Greek accession talks with the EEC (commenced in July 1976).¹⁰

After US mediation, Greece and Turkey resumed talks. In November 1976 the two Aegean powers signed the Berne Declaration on the procedure to be followed for the delimitation of the continental shelf. Eventually, this effort came to be considered by the Greek side as futile and reached a deadlock.¹¹ When Papandreou rose to power he stated that no Greek-Turkish dialogue could take place as long as Cyprus's northern part remained under Turkish military occupation. Therefore, in 1981-1987, relations between Greece and Turkey got icy, allowing space for mutual distrust to grow even further. The 1987 crisis broke out after the Papandreou government, in its effort to avoid tensions with Turkey, tried to nationalise a Canadian-led consortium that planned to conduct oil surveys eleven miles east of the Greek island of Thasos. Ankara stated that Athens' decision was a clear indication that the latter had broken the Berne Declaration to refrain from drilling until their disputes were resolved. In March 1987, Turkey announced the dispatch of the vessel *Sismik 1* escorted by warships to search for oil into a maritime zone claimed by Greece. The crisis escalated and armed forces of both states were on alert. Not only that but also both countries threatened military action in a test of wills.¹² Once again, Athens and Ankara reached on the brink of a war. Karolos Papoulias, the Greek Foreign Minister went to Sofia to discuss the stance of the Bulgarian leadership in the event of a Greco-Turkish war. Simultaneously, Papandreou requested the temporary closing of American military bases in Greece.¹³ USA and NATO feared the southeastern flank of NATO might breach and put the Turkish government under pressure. Eventually, the crisis was eased when the Turkish Prime Minister, Turgut Ozal, ordered *Sismik 1* to sail only into Turkish (and not into contested by Turkey and Greece) waters.¹⁴ Soon, the two powers were forced by international community to engage themselves into another round of talks. Melek Firat pointedly comments: "The traditional motive of Turkish-Greek relations was the commencement of dialogue after each crisis".¹⁵

With reference to Ankara's motives, it should be noted that the Turkish intense reaction and use of "gunboat diplomacy" were dictated by the misinterpretation of the Greek initiative to nationalise the international

¹⁰ Syrigos, *Greek-Turkish Relations*, p. 325.

¹¹ <https://www.mfa.gr/en/issues-of-greek-turkish-relations/relevant-documents/delimitation-of-the-continental-shelf.html>

¹² Syrigos, *Greek-Turkish Relations*, pp. 378-381; <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/03/29/world/greeks-and-turks-ease-aegean-crisis.html>

¹³ Syrigos, *Greek-Turkish Relations*, p. 381.

¹⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/03/29/world/greeks-and-turks-ease-aegean-crisis.html>

¹⁵ Firat, *Greek-Turkish Relations*, p. 245;

corporation: Greece's efforts led to the opposite effect due to the cold relations and the absence of communication between Ankara and Athens in 1981-1987.¹⁶ Furthermore, when the crisis erupted, Ozal was temporarily absent from Turkey (for medical treatment). This gave the opportunity to bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Army who believed that Ozal had been following an appeasement policy towards Greece to take a hard line over the Aegean disputes, try to preempt what they perceived as an anticipated event (the Greek drilling)¹⁷ and force the Greek leadership to participate in talks, but on Ankara's own terms.¹⁸

To conclude, the main lessons to be drawn from the investigation of the 1976 and 1987 Greek-Turkish crises are the following two: Turkey did not hesitate exploiting "gunboat diplomacy" and test its opponent's (Greece's) will in its effort to prevent an anticipated event. At the same time, the Turkish activities aimed at attracting (or forcing to) international mediation that would result negotiations for which all the Turkish preconditions, or part of them, would be accepted. As for the crisis erupted in July-September 2020, the lessons described above can be used as interpretative tools for the Turkish multifaceted objectives in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey once again resorts to "gunboat diplomacy" to counter an anticipated event from becoming *fait-accompli*: the continuation of the Republic of Cyprus's undersea exploration program without the participation of Turkey in the decision-making process (through the Turkish-Cypriots). At the same time Ankara makes use of "gunboat diplomacy" to undermine the strengthening of the tripartite partnerships in the Eastern Mediterranean (Greece-Cyprus-Israel, Greece-Cyprus-Egypt) and force them to recognise a dominant role to Turkey. The fulfillment of all these objectives is pursued by Turkey as a step toward achieving its strategic aim for regional hegemony.

The implications for Greece and Cyprus are clear. These two countries would be successful in achieving a honorable compromise with Turkey if they manage to counterbalance Ankara's supremacy in the region. If not, Turkey would continue to use military power to impose its will on Athens and Nicosia. The experience especially in relation to Cyprus should be taken seriously into consideration.

¹⁶ Syrigos, *Greek-Turkish Relations*, p. 379.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 379, 401; Firat, *Greek-Turkish Relations*, p. 243.

¹⁸ Syrigos, *Greek-Turkish Relations*, p. 410.

TURKEY, THE WEST AND THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN – A GREEK PERSPECTIVE



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It is evident that Turkey wants to dictate the terms of the game. It is seeking geopolitical breathing room beyond its own borders, since it feels that it is suffocating. The Turkish president wants to extend Ankara's influence to a geographical range that resembles that of the Ottoman Empire.

Through constant threats, through constant presence in the region in the form of overflights, violations of airspace, air and naval exercises, and recently through seismic survey vessels and floating drill platforms in the framework of an energy program it has launched – in all these ways, it is trying to force Greece to come to the negotiating table and push Greek Cypriots to accept Ankara's conditions. In other words, through coercive diplomacy and creating 'grey areas' through its power, it is trying to gradually wear down and strain the Greek side to make us – in future negotiations – more open to Turkish sensitivities and, at the same time, it is attempting to keep us from exercising our sovereign rights in areas of Turkish interest, in the hope of weakening these rights over time. Turkey also wants to make everyone aware that it is the dominant power in the wider region and that no one can/should question it.

What's more, Turkey now violates international legality as a matter of conviction. It disputes the theory and practice of international treaties and conventions – first and foremost, the Treaty of Lausanne. It defies institutional processes and supranational organizations, emphasizing interpersonal relationships and transactional diplomacy. It pointedly disregards international law, fabricating its own admixture of interpretations and case-law to produce a result that is tailored to its own ends and that lends a legal veneer (however thin) to its actions.

We also detect a continuous belligerent talk from Turkey against the West, the EU and the US, with the sole exception of president Trump, whom Erdogan considers as a friend. Furthermore, what is worrisome is Erdogan's inclination to make comparisons between Islam and other religions, with the former always prevailing morally, as well as his strong view that the West is dishonest and corrupted but also its superiority is declining.

In its neighborhood, Turkey has penetrated Syria, established positions in Iraq on the pretext of countering Kurdish terrorists, is heavily involved in the Libyan war – systematically breaching the UN arms embargo – and has secured a base in Somalia. At the same time, it is using Muslim populations at various points on the globe to extend its influence. It is doing this by claiming the role of protector of Sunnis, trying to win over and become a rallying point for these Muslims. This has gained Turkey a Muslim audience, but drawn the ire of the leaderships of many Muslim and Arab states.

Greece's objectives

Greece's top priority since late November 2019 has been to counter the Turkey-Libya agreement, and it succeeded. It did this through the Greek-Egyptian agreement, which – as the sole legal delimitation agreement in the given section of the Mediterranean – first, creates a legal dispute with the Turkey-Libya agreement, as both agreements overlap one another, and, second, it cancels out part of the Blue Homeland, which is now at the core of Turkish foreign policy.

Greece's goal is twofold, first having strengthened its deterrent force, of course, given that Turkey is heavily armed and aggressive. It is indicating that Turkey's military expenditure has risen since 2010 by almost 80%.

On the one hand, Greece wants a dialogue with Turkey within a predefined framework and with a commitment to go to the international court if we cannot settle our differences bilaterally. In fact, ideally, we would like to see a new rapprochement between the EU and Turkey, obviously in the context of a special relationship, with specific commitments and terms that include good neighbourly relations with Greece and Cyprus. Thus, EU-Turkey and Greece-Turkey dialogues could proceed in tandem, as well as in parallel with a new fresh start in the Cyprus issue. Of course – and I think this should be the second axis of our policy – for this to happen, Turkey needs to be given incentives and a way out of its current stalemate, so as not to further alienate the pro-European camp within Turkey. The update of both the Customs Union and the joint declaration of March 2016 regarding the migration issue, followed with the necessary increase in European funding. These can serve as a "carrot" towards Ankara. But the latter's assertive policies need to be contained through the use of "stick", which is not supposed to punish Turkey and its people, but rather to set a framework of rules and pave the way for concrete dialogue based on the provisions of the international law. Erdogan gains confidence every time he sees either the EU or the US show their surprising level of tolerance for Turkey's moves (in Syria, for example). This makes the message unclear and the Turkish leadership takes advantage of this.

CYPRUS, GREECE AND TURKEY- THE LESSONS OF HISTORY



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Since ancient times, Cyprus was defined by power relations in the region, part and parcel of geopolitical war games in the area. Little seems to have changed today. The island being surrounded, even as we speak, by an armada of warships of various affiliations, proves a case in point. Possibly, the last chapter in the Eastern Question (that is, the struggle between East and West over who was to get the spoils of the Ottoman Empire) is still played out. However, Turkey is no longer on its deathbed. The 'Sick Man of Europe' no more, Turkey demands whatever territory it considers to fall within its all-encompassing imperial 'frontiers of the heart'. Amidst occasional glimpses of the French fleet caught in Mediterranean waters and the gradual withdrawal of Britain, Ankara has become the master of a delicate balancing act: flirting with Moscow, while wooing Washington. Greece and Cyprus are stuck in the middle.

But how have things come back to this?

Despite waiving any claims to Cyprus through the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, the Turks were invited back on center stage, in the 1950s, by the British, who were hoping, through their usual 'divide and rule' antics, to contain the Greek Cypriot claim for 'Enosis' and the anti-colonial struggle of EOKA, by juxtaposing the sponsoring of the 'Muhammadans' on the island by Ankara. Thus, Britain added a regional game-changer to an otherwise ordinary, for its time, colonial struggle between peoples and empire, a struggle hitherto chaperoned on national grounds only by Greece. Upon independence in 1960, this dividing policy became reality, as its footprint was reaffirmed in the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, between Cyprus, Britain, Turkey and Greece. Its consequences remain with us today.

In fact, the dynamics of the particular power mix orchestrated by Britain were only made worse, even if not originally created, by the two communities themselves. The way the two communities have treated and still treat each other is deeply rooted in the island's history, as past historical paths of these communities had never borne any semblance of commonality. In Ottoman times, the Greeks were the slaves to their Turkish masters; in 1821,

concurrently rising against such rule as other Greeks did elsewhere. In 1878, the very first day the British landed in Cyprus, a Greek delegation met their new rulers and petitioned enosis with Greece, while at that very same time the Turkish elites sent their own petition of fears and concerns about their new-found status on the island to the Sultan. Daily personal and sometimes economic relationships aside, there had never been throughout the history of Cyprus a precedence of equal and rightful political co-existence of the two communities; they had been used to positioning and defining themselves against each other, had sometimes managed to survive side by side, but had never felt *of* or *with* each other. Attempts at 'epanaproseggisi' between the two communities seem insistent on forgetting this fact, insisting at constructing rather romantic notions of the past. This is perhaps one of the reasons that bi-communal rapprochement has never had any real trickle-down effect to grassroots on the island. One can attempt to ignore or sanitize the past at one's own peril.

Glancing through history, for most Greek Cypriots, the narrative of their presence on the land dates back thousands of years to the Achaeans and later, the Dorians, who colonized the island around the time of the Trojan War- the Homeric Cypro-Arcadic dialect and the ancient names of Cypriot cities bearing witness to one's Hellenic history. This idea of Greekness stands above any practical assistance or support that Athens is and was prepared or able to offer, guarantor or no guarantor. Paraphrasing the well-known Cypriot poet, Michalis Pashiardis; "We are Greeks and thus, we expect nothing from Athens." Being Greek does not necessarily have much to do with being chaperoned or officially governed by Athens. In the same way that being under Ottoman rule, the 16th and 19th century, was nothing that the tide of history would not at some point sweep away. The Franks, the Venetians, the Templars, the Romans, the Persians had all left their mark on Cyprus before, but to no avail.

Putting national feeling aside, the 1960 established Republic of Cyprus, which, even if initially for many of the Greek Cypriots was the means to another ultimate end- that of Enosis with Greece, still was and is the direct product of their very own proud and rather painful struggle against the British Crown with whom, in fact, the Turkish Cypriots had sided early on. It seemed quite an affront to every sense of justice that the Turkish Cypriots had, back then, won, through Turkish patronage and a quotas-ridden constitution, a disproportionate numerical representation in a state for which they had never fought and to whose emergence had, in fact, placed immense obstacles. Despite the reasoning that the Turkish Cypriots may present to this effect, their decision to abandon the Republic's institutions in 1963 and wreak havoc in a newly-founded state, with zero institutional memory and few government reflexes, added insult to injury. Part of the Greek Cypriot fear of a collapsed state in the aftermath of the signing of a solution stems from that.

Simultaneously, it is no secret that the Turkish Cypriots had no sympathy for the Greek Cypriot Enosis struggle, lo and behold led by none other than a Greek Orthodox religious leader, Makarios, the majority claim of the Greek Cypriot community seen as a threat to the Turkish Cypriot physical existence on the island. Their first fall of grace, in 1878, had extinguished their superiority as the representatives of the Ottoman rule. Experiencing a second fall from grace, a few decades later, by having a somehow bearable British Cyprus turn into an outright bastion of Greekness was too bitter a pill for the Turkish Cypriot elites to swallow. Their only hope was to go along with the British and invoke the guiding hand of Turkey, which they, too, made sure they forced, on a number of occasions.

All this matters, as Cyprus cannot escape its history. The escalating rhetoric of past and present tensions of all actors, over legitimization, governance and territory has now been made worse by bickering over the sharing of maritime boundaries and natural resources. Greece is now once more being dragged into the military equation, as Turkey keeps surrounding the island with drills and warships, while extending the drums of war to the Aegean and far beyond. To the American reluctance of global leadership, Moscow and Ankara poise their appetite for hegemony. The shaky foundations of regional peace and security are now rattling, unbothered by European silence and UN collective pretenses.

Yet attempts at peace on the island by the international community choose to ignore the context and focus on the convenient, continuing to emphasize a jargon which no longer has any geopolitical resonance, focusing on the 'bi-communal' aspect of the Cyprus problem. This is convenient yet ahistorical. Even if one *is* to argue that this aspect is fore and foremost the most important part of the Cyprus conundrum, fact remains that the two communities in Cyprus have trodden down increasingly divergent historical paths of social, economic and political development for many decades: the Greek Cypriots looking to the West, the Turkish Cypriots being subsumed by the East. No serious attempts have been made to tackle this. Strong preference has been shown towards ignoring history rather than understanding it.

While everything changes, everything stays the same. Omens remain unfavorable for Cyprus, as the settling of old scores continues and the Eastern Question remains unanswered.

A LEGAL ANALYSIS OF THE LATEST CONUNDRUM IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SEA



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Introduction

On 21 July 2020, the Antalya Navtex Station issued a navigational warning announcing the performance of seismic activities by the survey vessel 'Oruç Reis' until 02 August 2020. Eventually, the vessel did not leave the port of Antalya. However, on 10 August 2020, the Antalya Station issued another navigational warning for seismic surveys subsequently extended twice until the 12th of September. This time 'Oruç Reis' was deployed and operated in a maritime area to the south of Kastellorizo, which Greece claims as part of its continental shelf according to the median line. This brief note aims at examining the aforementioned developments on the basis of international law.

The pertinent legal framework

First off, it should be made clear that, in principle, when a state issues a navigational warning for a maritime area that belongs to or is claimed by another state, that warning does not, *per se*, violate the sovereign rights of the latter; such an act is of a declaratory nature.¹ The circulation of a navigational warning does not entail either the acquisition of or the loss of sovereign rights/jurisdiction over a given maritime area. Besides, the competence of issuing navigational warnings falls within the ambit of duties the coastal state bears in its Search and Rescue Region ('SAR'), which usually coincides with the Flight Information Region ('FIR'). Notably, the foregoing regions are zones of responsibility not zones where the coastal state enjoys sovereignty/sovereign rights/jurisdiction.² However, the fact that Turkey transmits navigational warnings for areas that are not within its SAR entails that the Antalya Station is not authorised to do so and that creates risks in terms of the safety of navigation.

¹ *Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in respect of Kosovo* (Advisory Opinion) [2010] ICJ Rep 403; *The Philippines v China Award* [2016] paras 705-706.

² S. Trevisanut, 'Search and Rescue Operations in the Mediterranean: Factor of Cooperation or Conflict?' (2010) 25(4) IJMCL 523, 538.

With respect to the capacity of islands to generate maritime zones, Article 121 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ('LOSC'), which is part of customary international law,³ envisages that islands are entitled to all maritime zones, namely territorial sea, contiguous zone, continental shelf, exclusive economic zone ('EEZ'). Nonetheless, when it comes to the delimitation of maritime boundaries, islands may receive reduced effect, namely the area accorded to them may be diminished. In any case, according to international jurisprudence, each delimitation case involving islands is unique and must be examined bearing in mind its own peculiar characteristics.⁴

Turkey invokes international jurisprudence in order to enhance its claim that Kastellorizo should be confined to a 6 nm sea enclave because it is situated in front of the way longer Turkish coast. Although international case law usually gives reduced or no effect to small, isolated islands in close proximity to longer continental lands,⁵ we need to take into account that Kastellorizo is not an isolated island; it forms part of the geographical and administrative complex of the Dodecanese, which has always been treated as an integral whole.⁶ Hence, in a future delimitation it is necessary to compare the length of the relevant Turkish coast with the sum of the lengths of the coasts of the Greek islands projecting in the relevant area (i.e. Kastellorizo, Rhodes, Karpathos, Kasos) taking into consideration that those islands belong to an indivisible group. Of course, that would increase the total length of the relevant Greek coast. Moreover, possible enclavement of Kastellorizo would probably generate security risks for the island. It should be stressed that international jurisprudence has also deemed security as a relevant factor in delimitation and for this reason in several cases has refrained from creating enclaves.

Additionally, the view that the entire maritime area between the Greek islands of the southeastern Aegean and Cyprus is 'disputed' is abusive. International law provides safeguards in order to avoid the characterisation of vast maritime areas as 'disputed'. It is not legally sound to call an extended maritime area 'disputed' just because a state has put forward excessive

³ *Territorial and Maritime Dispute (Nicaragua v Colombia)* (Judgment) [2012] ICJ Rep 624, para 139.

⁴ *Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary in the Bay of Bengal (Bangladesh/Myanmar)* Judgment, ITLOS Reports 2012, p. 4, para 317; *Maritime Delimitation in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean (Costa Rica v Nicaragua)* and *Land Boundary in the Northern Part of Isla Portillos (Costa Rica v Nicaragua)* (Judgment) [2018] ICJ Rep 139, para 153.

⁵ *Maritime Delimitation in the Black Sea (Romania v Ukraine)* (Judgment) [2009] ICJ Rep 61 (Serpent's Island); *Bangladesh/Myanmar* (n 4) (St Martin's Island).

⁶ *Lausanne Peace Treaty* (signed 24 July 1923, entered into force 06 August 1924) 28 League of Nations Treaty Series 11, art 15; *Convention between Italy and Turkey for the Delimitation of the Territorial Waters between the Coast of Anatolia and the Island of Castellorizo and Protocol* (signed 04 January 1932, entered into force 10 May 1933) 138 League of Nations Treaty Series 243.

claims.⁷ A disputed area occurs when two or more states have overlapping legal entitlements.⁸ For instance, a claim up to the median line (without ignoring islands) is legitimate and demonstrates good faith.⁹ If a state makes maximalist assertions (i.e. exceeding the median line, ignoring islands), it would be more appropriate to use the term 'undelimited area'.¹⁰

Furthermore, given that there is no delimitation agreement in place regarding the maritime area under consideration, the interested parties shall abstain from unilaterally carrying out activities (i.e. seismic surveys/drilling) that may exacerbate tension and jeopardise the reaching of a final delimitation agreement (Articles 74(3) and 83(3) LOSC). The only way to settle the matter definitively is to strike delimitation agreements and/or have recourse to an international judicial organ with a view to drawing a final maritime boundary.

Concluding remarks

In sum, it should be borne in mind that the mere issuance of a navigational warning on the part of Turkey does not entail a breach of the sovereign rights/jurisdiction of Greece and/or Cyprus. Such navigational warnings, though, are unauthorised and might cause confusion in case there is a need to conduct a search and rescue operation because Turkey publishes navigational warnings for an area in which it does not have any competence to perform search and rescue operations.

Notwithstanding the fact that islands are entitled to all maritime zones, it is likely that in the delimitation process, if the median line method is not applied, the width of those zones might diminish. Nevertheless, each delimitation case involving islands should be dealt with according to its own unique features. In the case of the Greek islands of the southeastern Aegean there are peculiarities, which must be closely examined prior to deciding the breadth of the maritime space to be accorded to them. On any account, the argument that Kastellorizo and the nearby Greek islands are only allowed to have a 6 nm territorial sea neither finds support in international law nor is justified by the relevant circumstances in the region.

Lastly, albeit the maritime area between the Greek islands of the southeastern Aegean and Cyprus cannot be considered as 'disputed' in its entirety, it should not escape notice that there are overlapping legal entitlements therein. Absent definitive delimitation agreements in the region, the interested states shall refrain from seismic surveys and drilling operations

⁷ Letter dated 18 March 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, A/74/757.

⁸ *Maritime Dispute (Peru v Chile)* (Judgment) [2014] ICJ Rep 3, para 189; BIICL, Report on the Obligations of States under Articles 74(3) and 83(3) of UNCLOS in respect of Undelimited Maritime Areas (2016) 30–31.

⁹ R C Beckman and C H Schofield, 'Defining EEZ Claims from Islands: A Potential South China Sea Change' (2014) 29(2) IJMC 193, 211–212.

¹⁰ BIICL Report (υποσημ. 8) 30–31.

in undelimited areas lest they aggravate the dispute and put into jeopardy the prospect of a future delimitation.

WHAT TURKEY'S AGGRESSION IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN IS REALLY ABOUT



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As widely known, the current geopolitical situation in the Eastern Mediterranean is worrying. Greece and Turkey, two NATO alliance members with a known historically burdened relationship, have been for several weeks locked in a stiff standoff the region has witnessed in 20 years. Since a possible confrontation could destabilise NATO's south-east flank for good, the latest cycle of escalation that risks spiraling into a multinational conflict, has caused great uncertainty in the European Union and in the United States. Therefore, amidst the Republican national Convention in late August, the US President Trump stepped in to avert a bellicose incident, by calling the heads of the Turkish and Greek governments to commit to a dialogue.

Since Turkey and Greece have been for years stumbled into a clash over competing claims on offshore energy exploration rights in the Eastern Mediterranean, most of the analysts have speculated that the current geopolitical storm is about energy. It is true that Turkey believes it is being treated unfairly by its neighbours and resents what it perceives as its exclusion from talks on energy discoveries. Erdogan has been following gunboat diplomacy in the region, trying to erect barriers to the looming Israel-Cyprus-Egypt energy collaboration and carrying out his own natural gas and crude oil exploration in the waters that belong to the exclusive economic zones of two EU member states: Greece and Cyprus. However, contrary to the commonly hold perception, is not the existence of valuable offshore energy resources that has prompted Turkey's aggression.

The crisis started, when Turkey deployed an energy exploration ship along with its naval escort to search for oil and natural gas in waters near the Greek island of Kastellorizo-waters. This particular region, however, has not proved energy resources and has not been mapped out by the big energy companies as an area of interest. Despite the widespread euphoria about the natural endowment of the region, the East Med gas bonanza is rather overestimated. The gas deposits, for those many believe that they even could drastically alter the EU's energy security in the short to medium term, remain, apart from the Tamar and Zohr fields, so far largely undeveloped and exploration proceeds

slowly, because there is no available export route for the large volumes of gas that could be produced. The East Med Pipeline, designed to ship Israeli and Cypriot gas to Greece and on to Western Europe, is for economic and technical reasons more a pipedream than a realistic pipeline project. Given that the gas exports from the area, in the best-case scenario, would reach the amount of 50 bcm in the next years, probably long time after 2025, and that the EU market consumes more than 400 bcm/y, this perception is rather misguided. The existing gas finds also are insufficient to cover Turkey's gigantic domestic energy needs. Accordingly, the prospect of economic benefit in connection with the successful exploitation of energy resources can hardly be an incentive for peace or a catalyst for war for the people living in this region.

Regarding Turkey's claims on the Cypriot gas, it is noteworthy, that the Cyprus Republic has already offered Turkish Cypriots a share of gas revenues as a way to fairly divide revenue from the natural gas deposits thought to lie off the coast of Cyprus and de-escalate tensions with Turkey, if Ankara recognises Nicosia's energy exploration rights.

Consequently, it was not the discovery of new energy resources that has enabled or facilitated multilateral regional political and defence cooperation between Israel-Greece and Cyprus, but the opposite actually occurred. The various forms of cooperation or strategic partnerships came about for other reasons and the energy dimension either was added later or was utilized in order to dress up the real nature of the rapprochement. Both the escalation of all the regional ethnic and political conflicts and the establishment of new alliances in the region have little to do with energy resources and emerged after certain political incidents had taken place.

Ankara is aware of this fact and therefore Turkish exploration is as fake as its Economic Exclusive Zone claims. Turkish Petroleum, the state-owned company that has been undertaking the drilling work, does not have the expertise to analyse the seismographic data it is collecting. It certainly does not have the capital to bring any gas it finds into production. Moreover, the drilling ships, which the Turkish company has been using so far, might be well-suited for the Black Sea but it is uncertain whether they can achieve any tangible results in the Eastern Mediterranean. It seems that the Turks are not really doing any exploratory drilling at all and that it is all for show. Turkey's drilling activity appears not to be designed to find oil and gas but to stir up trouble and compel the rest of the East Mediterranean to bow to its leadership on energy.

Also, the show of force is for diplomatic leverage and domestic political advantage. Turkey's activity in the Mediterranean Sea needs to be seen as the implementation of the "Blue Homeland" doctrine. The doctrine defines any attempts of international co-operation in the region that do not take

Ankara's interests into account as hostile. The fact that Turkey upsets other states in the region in its desire to claim the leadership of Sunni Islam spurred the US State Department to issue some strong-worded statements, although at the same time Washington seems to have turned a blind eye to Turkish actions in Libya, primarily because Ankara took a stand against Moscow's support for Haftar.

Turkey has unambiguous aspirations to be recognised as the regional superpower. It cannot join a multilateral cooperation as an equal member. It's rather a country that dictates terms to others. Erdogan's provocative actions against Greece in the Mediterranean have been the extension of Turkey's policy against Kurds, Christians, and Yezidis from Northern Syria, Kurds in Northern Iraq and Egyptian interests in the Libyan Civil War. Erdogan knows that Turkey today has no friends except for Qatar, the government Erdogan is propping up in Libya and maybe Pakistan.

Therefore, should brinkmanship in this highly securitised region spill over into military confrontation, there would be no winners. For Turkey, this might mean the irrevocable end of its European Union candidacy and a de facto freeze of its NATO membership, alongside other damaging sanctions. For Greece the repercussion could be even worse. Since Greece would be left to face an open-ended confrontation with an unpredictable Turkey without expecting serious military assistance from NATO or any other country (France has been making a show of military muscle in the region, but no one honestly thinks France is ready to assist militarily Greece against Turkey), it would probably face a war debacle and an unprecedented economic meltdown before the last one is over.

TURKEY'S HEGEMONIC ASPIRATIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS



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For many years now, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey wishes to become a regional hegemonic power in the Eastern Mediterranean basin and the Middle East, and at the same time a country with a strong saying in international affairs at a global level. There are numerous strong indications for this. Turkish troops have repeatedly invaded Syria and Iraq, i.e. Turkey's southern neighbors. Ankara directly intervened in the civil war in Libya with the aim of facilitating the establishment of a Muslim Brotherhood affiliated and pro-Turkish regime in the country. Turkey has established a strong military base in Qatar and another in Somalia. The list could go on, including more examples.

It is clear that Mr. Erdoğan would like to see a sort of a revival of the Ottoman Empire, in the sense of establishing a zone of Turkish influence that would cover much of the territory of the old Empire of the sultans. This of course creates points of friction between Turkey and many other countries which are not willing to accept the prospect of Ankara establishing its hegemony. Turkey has many open fronts. It faces the danger of strategic overstretching. The severe problems that the Turkish economy faces make the situation even more complicated and potentially difficult if not dangerous for Turkey. However, these drawbacks do not seem to force Turkey into changing its strategy. On the contrary. Mr. Erdoğan insists on pursuing his dream without being deterred by the obstacles that he finds on his way.

As far as Greek-Turkish relations are concerned, Ankara continues to exercise strong pressure on Athens. Among others, contrary to all provisions of international law, Turkey does not recognize the inherent right of the Greek islands of the Aegean Sea to have either territorial waters of 12 nautical miles or continental shelf/exclusive economic zone, and even questions Greek sovereignty over small Greek islands and islets in the Aegean Sea. These provocative demands on the part of Turkey are not new of course. And they are not only associated with the Erdoğan era. They come from the 1970s, proving that Turkey's strategy on the matter is deeply rooted and does not drastically change with the change of political leadership.

What makes Mr. Erdoğan's approach towards Greece somehow different from the past is that it is related with his wider neo-Ottoman aspirations. Greece (and alongside Cyprus) is perceived as a small and weak country which should abide to all of Turkey's rules. Mr. Erdoğan wishes to see a sort of a "Finlandized Greece" that would continuously yield to Turkish demands. From his point of view, this is the only way for securing peace and stability in the region. It is definitely not a coincidence that he has repeatedly referred to the need of modifying the Peace Treaty of Lausanne: his public statements on this is a clear indication of his innermost desires.

Moreover, in late November 2019 Turkey signed an agreement with Libya which establishes a supposedly common border of the exclusive economic zones of the two signatories in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. The agreement is not only incompatible with the basic principles of the Law of the Sea, but it is also incompatible with the geographic reality of the region as it ignores the presence of numerous Greek islands (including Crete and Rhodes). Erdoğan's hegemonic approach is more than evident in this case as well. It is naïve to believe that Turkey will miraculously change its attitude and become a country respectful of international law and a promoter of fair cooperation among nations. Turkey feels that it is too big and too strong and thus it should be granted special privileges.

Apart from traditional/conventional methods, Erdoğan's Turkey has been using new ways in order to exercise pressure on Greece. The most characteristic example is the use of migrant and refugee flows. For example, in March 2020 the Turkish authorities clearly fostered the attempt of tens of thousands third country nationals residing in Turkey to cross the land borders with Greece. It was a sort of a "hybrid operation" aiming at the internal destabilization of Greece. At the same time, Mr. Erdoğan wanted to send a message to the European Union that he is in a position to create serious problems to a member state and possible to the cohesion of the Union itself.

For Greece, the only practical way of counterbalancing Turkey is on the one hand to find substantial political and diplomatic support at the international level, and on the other hand to show that it is well prepared and determined to defend itself against any aggressive move on the part of Ankara. This twofold approach has been the basis of Greek foreign policy for many decades now and it has been quite successful in the last few months.

HAGIA SOPHIA: TURKISH BRAND RECONSIDERED



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A very persuasive as well as convenient argument that Greece and Cyprus have posed to both the EU and NATO for years is the age-old premise that they are the border between the West and the East. Persuasive because it is now more relevant than ever and convenient on the grounds that they render their Western allies partly responsible for their survival, not only striking a psychological chord but -more importantly- making them draw the line to an ever-imposing East, whose advance towards the West Samuel Huntington predicted in 1996 with his 'Clash of Civilizations', an iconic book by all standards.

People's cultural and religious identities will be the main source of conflict for Huntington and the emergence of non-Western actors renders western survival precarious, depending mostly on the realization of its uniqueness and its capacity to stick together.¹ Huntington did get it wrong, however, in not considering Greeks an integral part of Western civilization² since Greece had never really envisaged itself away from the West.³ Since the 1820s, both Greece and Cyprus have one way or another made it clear that their choice is Western style liberal democracy.⁴

Huntington would have felt great disappointment had he been a member of Erdogan's congregation during Hagia Sophia mosque celebrations last July (2020). For Huntington, Turkey would lean on the West. Sadly, this is no longer the case and the days of Kemalist hegemony are a thing of the past, so is civilizational compatibility. The journey that has been unfolding in Turkey over the last four decades is a rejection of military secularization and forced,

¹ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 25.

² Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 162.

³ Stathis Kalyvas, *Modern Greece: What everyone needs to know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 34.

⁴ Roderick Beaton. *Greece: The biography of a modern nation*, trans. Menelaos Asteriou (Athens: Patakis, 2019), 37.

top-down westernization,⁵ islamizing domestic policies and abolishing the right to the age-old claim of being misunderstood. Just as declaring Hagia Sophia a museum in 1935 symbolized a rupture with Turkey's Ottoman past and an affirmation of the rise of western paradigm, its reinstatement as a mosque signifies a reclaiming of the country's past and an abandonment of a dual identity. An overdue responsibility of AKP intellectuals to establish the superiority of their religion over the westernized, modernized world. Islam is now indispensable to Turkish identity and Turks have a privileged role in the spread of the religion⁶ as well as advocating for the Sunni Muslim world's leadership.⁷

Of course "nobody goes to war for a church nowadays", people might say, but that Turkey has become NATO's "elephant in the room" is a fact that is indeed enhanced by a Taliban flag in Hagia Sophia and the symbolism is iconic. "Allahu Akbar" cries reportedly heard in Hagia Sophia during its inaugural multi-lingual ceremony bring home a lot more to Western policy makers than the hordes of immigrants transported to the Greek borders in Evros some months ago. In western eyes the image of Islamists chanting "Allahu Akbar" and Erdogan's meeting with two Hamas leaders on August 22nd this year,⁸ are far more disturbing than the one of the brutal murder of Tassos Isaak in 1996. This is closer to their experience, this is what ensures their emotional attachment. It is the picture that moves them. It is also the picture we are obliged to show them. This is called "intelligent listening",⁹ and we must listen to them. They would, for instance, find Cavusoglu's comments on the football match between PAOK and Besiktas odd. Politically incorrect piece of news should be made widely known. We must approach and influence. This is a long-lasting process, one that will not bear fruit so quickly and requires careful planning, and something Greeks are not so good at. It is called public diplomacy.

Public diplomacy deals with the influence of public attitudes on the formation and execution of foreign policies. It encompasses dimensions of international relations beyond traditional diplomacy; the cultivation by governments of public opinion in other countries; the interaction of private groups and interests in one country with another; the reporting of foreign affairs and its

⁵ Soumaya Ghannoushi, "Hagia Sophia & the Fall of Kemalist Secularism", *Kashmir Observer*, July 28, 2020. <https://kashmirobsvr.net/2020/07/28/hagia-sophia-the-fall-of-kemalist-secularism/>

⁶ Serkan Yolacan, "Why Hagia Sophia move spells trouble for Turkey's President Erdogan", *South China Morning Post*, July 21, 2020. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/3094037/why-hagia-sophia-move-spells-trouble-turkeys-president-erdogan>

⁷ Kadir Yildirim, "Triumphalism in Hagia Sophia", *Carnegie*, July 29, 2020. <https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/82390>

⁸ Ortagus Morgan, State Department Spokesperson, August 25, 2020.

<https://www.state.gov/president-erdogans-meeting-with-hamas-leadership/>

⁹ Nancy Snow, "Rethinking Public Diplomacy" in *The Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy* ed. Snow & Taylor (New York: Routledge, 2009), 4.

impact on policy; communication between professional communicators like diplomats and foreign correspondents; and the process of intercultural communications.¹⁰

Public diplomacy encompasses a wide spectrum of activity. Consciously and publicly listening to others is a public diplomacy act in itself, since you show that consideration is given to their perspectives, while also helping you modify your own approach. Facilitation involves providing others with the means of achieving their goals and can allow a public diplomacy organization to change the way the target audience acts. Building networks or long-term relationships is essential. However, without clear evidence of success in the short term, this work will need a great deal of vision. Cultural diplomacy is used to transmit a positive aura and in our case it should not be strictly limited to the ancient Greek civilization but also focus on modern achievements. Religious diplomacy should be deployed as well, given the nature the cultural rift with Turkey takes.

Direct messaging has an invasive nature and is pursued without reciprocity. This includes nation branding, strategic communication and marketing and aims to leave little space for alternative interpretation. This of course involves close cooperation of governmental and non-governmental agencies and bodies as well as central expert guidance. Broadcasting has to balance perspective and content to maintain the credibility of the broadcaster with the target audience, something lacking, for instance, in AKP Turkey.

Turkey's holistic diplomatic defeat in the region and something that Greece and Cyprus should not overlook is the fact that the neighboring countries do not want to be led by it. This consists a strategic handicap with far reaching effects in the not so distant future. The effects on Turkish soft power are more than visible in the area, with its former soft power heavyweight, the Turkish serials, facing negative criticism and rejection in the Middle East and elsewhere. Moreover, there have been editorials in quality press around European capitals warning Europe of Turkish aggression. Never has a USA presidential candidate lash out on a NATO ally's President the way John Biden did on Erdogan. Even the more diplomatic Ibrahim Kalin seems to have lost his composure in a power struggle that Turkey cannot obviously win. It is not so common to witness such a blatant hard power collapse after a soft power catastrophe.

What Greece and Cyprus need to do is take their public diplomacy seriously and exercise it more aggressively. They have both benefited in the past by the picture foreign audiences formed of them. They stand to gain a lot more if this is done professionally. "The picture very often replaces reality. Whoever

¹⁰ The Murrow Center Quote. <https://fletcher.tufts.edu/murrow/publicdiplomacy.html>

controls the picture starts to control reality”, in the words of Erdogan adviser Ibrahim Kalin.¹¹

Last but not least, our two ministries of foreign affairs need to realize that public diplomacy is not just about promoting “visit us” posters on the London Underground, nor reaching out to our first generation diaspora. It is a lot more than that...

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¹¹ Ibrahim Kalin, *Islam and the West*, trans. Maria Ververidou (Athens: Papazissis, 2012), 37.

FEAR ARGUMENTS IN ERDOGAN'S NARRATIONS



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This article explores the rhetorical argumentation of fear in Erdogan's narrations around Hagia Sophia and oil and gas exploration in the eastern Mediterranean, as were presented in the Greek Press. Is there use of fear argumentation by Erdogan? What kind of fear arguments does he prefer to use? What kind of narrations do these arguments facilitate?

Fear is the imaginary of the threat that approaches. Young children associate fear with monsters, ghosts, and other imaginary creatures more than with real threats to safety, such as robbers or bullies – at least in Western societies (Kayal et.al., 2015). The concept of evil and unknown, enemy and otherness is strongly connected with the fear appeal and fear argumentation. The concepts of enemy and otherness are strongly connected to the fear narrations between international state actors, especially between longtime rivals. But what is fear appeal and fear argumentation?

The rhetorical fear appeal as a persuasion tactic is an attempt to influence the attitude and behavior through the projection of all those destructive consequences that in compliance with the proposed solutions will bring (Rogers & Mewborn, 1976:56; Rogers, 1983:158; Witte, 1992 and 1994). Fear arguments are defined as the use of threat in an argument, as the use of force in argumentation and some define it simply as appeal to fear. In most of the cases, the definition of fear argumentation involves threat and risk (Walton, 1996). Threat is a speech act that international actors love to use, as the most crucial dynamics of the international status quo are based on threat, risk, and fear (Buzan, 1996; Bulzaq, 2005). The rhetorical construction of fear can be reflected in the political statements, in the content of media and also, in the political statements as presented in the media.

The current affairs concerning the change of Hagia Sophia status into mosque and of the energy extraction projects of Turkey in Eastern Mediterranean have stimulated communicative reflex actions of the Turkish government, while they try to legitimize their intrastate and their international options. What is the role of fear argumentation in the narrations of the Turkish President?

Following the official statements of Tayyip Erdogan as presented in the Greek Press (Efimerda Syntakton & Kathimerini) during the crucial period of June-August 2020 and analyzing them with the theoretical tools of fear argumentations, it is concluded that the Turkish President uses two general forms of fear argumentation.

The capstone of his intimidating narrations is the “threat of the threatened”. In that kind of argumentation, his threats come as justified responses to external threats. *“we are not going to give in, in threats and penalty measures. If Greece continues these moves, we will have to do whatever is necessary. We will not hesitate.”* (Efimerida Syntakton, 15/08/2020). He constructs a narration of defense based on the argument that Turkey’s threats come to save his country by the Greek imperialism, and in the concept of country he encompasses land, sea, culture and religion. *“ We are not going to permit the trespassing of our continental shelf, we are going to act as needed in order to protect the “blue motherland”, as we did during the Treaty of Sèvres, that had the same goal: to divide our country”* (Efimerida Syntacton, 15/08/2020).

The next fear argument that emerges is the “risk of our powerful will”. Within that kind of argument, the Turkish President constructs a narration of a great power that whoever dares to challenge, faces the risk of its wrath. *“We made it clear that if you keep harassing Oruc Reis, you are going to regret it. Today you had a preview of our will.”* (Efimerida Syntakton, 13/08/2020). He constructs a narration of foggy risky possibilities of attack in case he feels harassed, without presenting clearly the limits. It is a narration of liquid risks that Greece and any international actor faces. *“Who does Greece think she/it is? Greece thinks that she/it can speak to Turkey like this? Who do you think you are Greece? Understand your limits otherwise Turkey is going to respond and its not going to be nice!”* (Kathimerini, 09/06/2020). These liquid risks are not addressed exclusively to Greece, but also to E.U. . This way the Turkish President empowers that foggy narration of fear that is directed to a great range of international actors, regardless of their institutional power *“Until we get a respond from E.U. we keep our borders open and we act accordingly”* (Kathimerini, 11/06/2020).

In an overall look to President Erdogan’s narrations, his intimidating rhetoric can be summed up as a narration of a great power that responses to threats with threats that encompass the risk of a wild extend. He calls to action historically grounded fears of the longtime rival situation with Greece, but he also does not hesitate to address threatening arguments to international actors, as E.U., to demonstrate its limitless will. Following the fear narrations on international and intrastate rhetoric of Erdogan, in a more systematic way and in a long-time period, could give a clear imprint of the self-image and of the image Turkey holds for the international system. Studying the threats, the risks and the fears someone holds, addresses and claims can be a very

efficient X-ray of his political perceptions and, this way, can also be a very efficient mode of remedy.

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CHARACTER REPUTATION ASSASSINATION DURING THE GRECO-TURKISH CRISIS



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During the last six months, Turkey has escalated the tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean region, especially against Greece and Cyprus. Beginning in March 2020 Turkey sent deliberately immigrants and refugees to the Greek borders in Evros to pass over to Greece and Europe. In combination with fake news and disinformation campaigns, Turkey attempted to frame Greece's reaction to the asymmetric threat in its favor. In addition, the transformation of Hagia Sofia in Istanbul into a mosque in July 2020 was considered as another provocation from Turkey against Greece and Orthodox Christianity. The monument of Hagia Sofia represents a cultural and symbolic connection between orthodox Hellenism and the Byzantine past and therefore the transformation was thought as an indirect cultural provocation.

However, the tension escalated with the recent crisis of Oruc Reis. Turkey issued a series of NAVTEX for research in the Aegean Sea, south of the island of Kastelorizo which provoked the imminent reaction of the Greek government. At the same time, all these actions were accompanied with a heated rhetoric against Greece and its European allies including fear appeals and country defamation tactics.

With evidence of deliberate misinformation campaigns, spreading of fake news, accusations and blaming, Ankara intensified its actions and waged a psychological war against Greece. The rhetoric used by Turkey through the speeches and interviews of its political leadership refers to a large extent to the logic of Country Reputation Assassination.

The Character Assassination of States refers to the pursuit of sovereign states to destroy the reputation and image of their opponents and enemies. This action refers both to the procedure and outcome of the defamation campaign undertaken against the image of the enemy state in international politics. Country Reputation Assassination is being used either as supportive measure or as a main strategic "weapon" against an opponent, in order to deconstruct its positive image or even destabilize the country's position in the international society. Through this process, a state can achieve diplomatic

and political objectives. The target of a Country Reputation Assassination campaign can either be the leader of a nation, as the main state representative, the state itself or its people as a vital entity.

Character attacks on foreign leaders often enable their political opponents inside the other country to gain a competitive advantage in the exercise of opposition politics. On the other hand, the demonization of the enemy can prevent any diplomatic dialogue between states, as negotiating with an "evil" enemy looks like a "deal with the devil". Subsequently, any attempt at reaching diplomatic consensus is condemned, while at the same time any arguments and any actions undertaken by the demonized state before the international community are delegitimized.

Country Reputation Assassination campaign has been used in great power politics like the United States and Russia under different circumstances as part of their grand strategy. In particular, US President G.W. Bush used a series of character assassination strategies like demonization against Saddam Hussein and Iraq in order to legitimize his attack in 2003 and at the same time in order to achieve international isolation of Iraq. Another example is the case of Russia during the Ukraine crisis in 2014, where the destabilization of Ukraine was attempted to stop its European course. In this context, Russia has used character assassination strategies against the insurgents by identifying them with Nazis or terrorists to legitimize its own operations for intervention.

Turkey during the last semester has intensified its rhetoric towards Greece using also country reputation assassination strategies. During the refugee crisis in Evros, President Erdogan blamed Greece for "Human Rights violation", "inhumane behavior" and that they (the Greeks) "were sinking the ships caring refugees in the islands and were shooting against the refugees who were trying to cross the Greek – Turkish borders in Evros". At the same time, Turkey exerted psychological pressure against the Greek side by threatening that "the Greeks at some point may find themselves in the need to ask for compassion themselves". The accusation for violation of human rights and especially for the intentional sinking of the refugee ships constitutes a powerful attempt to defame the reputation of Greece and eventually the image of the European Union. This strategy mainly contained the ad hominem of double standards.

Greece had during the past years shown a great humanitarian interest in helping and giving shelter to refugees that arrived at the Greek shores in the Aegean. Through its management of the refugee crisis at that time, Greece accomplished to restore its negative image from the economic crisis. Through the ad hominem attack of double standards, Turkey aimed at deconstructing Greece's positive image regarding the migration issue management. In particular, the aim was to deconstruct the image of Greece in the eyes of the

West and to alarm humanitarian organizations and a part of western civil society to condemn Greece.

During the long-lasting crisis of Oruc Reis, Turkey's attacks focus on the defensive actions of Greece considering them a "jeopardy for the coastal and navigational safety of all the ships in the region" and that "with this attitude, which is against international law, goodwill and neighborly relations, Greece has thrown itself into a chaos which it will not be able to come through". Furthermore, President Erdogan asks whether the "Greek people are accepting what is going to happen to them due to the ambitions of their incapable leaders". In fact, President Erdogan uses disinformation in order to construct the image of the "dangerous" and "bad neighbor" for Greece that is the cause of all problems in the region. The reference to international law is being used by President Erdogan to deconstruct the image of Greece, which usually presented itself as the defender of international law and stability in the region. Using disinformation, President Erdogan attempts to reverse the image of the two countries and to destroy the image that Greece has projected over the years for its role in the region.

Consequently, Turkey carries out a systematic Character Reputation Assassination against Greece using strategies like disinformation, blaming, accusations, ad hominem attacks and plausible deniability for some actions, trying to change the image of Greece. The campaign's objective is to construct a new negative strategic image of Greece, and at the same time present Turkey as the stabilizing power and defender of the International Law in the region. In this sense, Turkey aims directly at the "heart" of Greece's foreign policy position during the past years. Turkey's objective is to gain international legitimation for its actions and to deconstruct Greece's image in the international community. Turkey's strategic communication should be dealt with directly by Greece in order not to allow the distortion of reality and leave no room for alternative interpretations in the international community.

NOTES ON ERDOGAN'S RHETORIC



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Rhetoric plays an important role in framing national responses to international emergencies. International crises are considered as rhetorical artifacts: events become crises, not because of unique sets of situational exigencies, but by virtue of the discourse utilized to describe them (e.g. Vatz 1973). This paper aims to put forward some considerations for the analysis of Erdogan's rhetoric.

"This article treats Erdogan's discourse as an example of the cultural paradigm of how to talk people into fighting wars". It demonstrates "how political agents concoct a rhetoric of motives which they use to incite their followers to fight their enemies". "Hyperbole is the idiom of political violence and an essential vehicle for preparing a nation to war". The speech practices of Erdogan's administration, "are a paradigm of fighting words – a rhetoric of war motives". "The effect of this discourse is to draw up a dramatism of patriots locked in mortal combat with enemies". Political leaders like Erdogan "deploy words much as they do troops in an effort to achieve strategic objectives". Talk in this form becomes a "decisive part of the practices that constitute the war system". "The main effect of war rhetoric is social integration through the constitution of common enemies".

Every single one of the aforementioned statements could have been excerpted from a rhetorical criticism paper on Erdogan's recent foreign policy discourse and in particular his discourse towards Greece and Cyprus. Every single statement has been excerpted from Michael Blain's essay "Fighting words: What we can learn from Hitler's hyperbole" and refers to Hitler. One just had to change the name of the leader. A juxtaposition of pre-existing rhetorical criticism research on Hitler's war rhetoric with Erdogan's contemporary rhetoric seems to suggest that they both drawn from the same rhetorical topoi, their key statements are generated from the same reservoir of ideas and core images. This, however, is a research hypothesis that should be systematically examined. The full exploration of Hitler analogy at the level of rhetorical criticism is a meta-communication endeavor of utter importance for Greece and Cyprus. The decoding of historical analogies as part of the

Neo-Ottoman discourse as well as the exploration of historical analogies as interpretative keys to understand and re-frame Erdogan are two complementary research activities.

An attribute of Erdogan's discourse that needs to be examined is the rhetoric of victimage, the projection of a wronged victim who is forced to sacrifice himself for a higher and noble cause. The victimage rhetoric, is based on the logic that "a people strongly committed to peace, but simultaneously faced with the reality of war, must believe that the fault for any such disruption of their ideal lies with others" (Morek, & Pincus, 2000:5). The victimage rhetoric stands at the core of Ivie's vocabulary of motives for war (Ivie, 1980). The requirement that just wars can be fought only reluctantly, places a burden on the advocates of war to establish the enemy's culpability (Ivie, 1980:279). The examination of the attributes of Erdogan's just war rhetoric is particularly interesting due to the extremely aggressive nature of his policies.

Victimage rhetoric offers redemption through the identification of a suitable and plausible scapegoat. It is important to analyze the construction of national enemies through the neo-Ottoman trope in Erdogan's discourse. The propaganda construction of enemies is a source of social integration, "it is only by reference to enemies that we became united, and the greater the internal discord within societies, the more powerful will our need for enemies be" (O'Shaughnessy, 2002:219). A topos of war rhetoric is that the enemy is portrayed as a savage, i.e., an aggressor, driven by irrational desires for conquest, who is seeking to subjugate others by force of arms. Such topoi are used to articulate "the key contrastive features distinguishing civilized from savage agents while synthesizing several dimensions of meaning into an integrated threat" (Ivie, 2004: 79). The rhetorical topoi used to create the image of savage, the "decivilizing vehicles", the rhetorical conduits that Erdogan employs to describe the enemy and define their acts is a key point of analysis. While Erdogan is perceived as an aggressor driven by irrational desires for conquest, he none the less constructs the savage image for his enemies.

Cherwitz, & Zagacki, (1986) differentiate between consummatory and justificatory rhetoric. By utilizing consummatory rhetoric a leaders' discourse constitutes the only official reply, the weaponization of speech aims to achieve goals without a resort to force. When justificatory rhetoric is employed discourse is from the very beginning part of a larger, overtly military action. This analytical category is particularly useful when examining Erdogan's rhetoric. Rhetorical criticism needs to identify the attribute and means of persuasion in these two rhetorics as they are employed by Turkey. It is valuable for the formulation of strategic response to be able to identify the occasions that the "war rhetoric" employed by Erdogan constitutes a preparatory process of a military effort from the cases when the projection of

a rhetoric of war motives is a propaganda device aiming to achieve goals without the use of military effort, as is the case with Finlandisation.

A final note. Erdogan's words are employed to arouse emotions and convey ideas. Their effect upon Turkish society and the capacity of Neo-Ottoman discourse to reshape Turkey's national self-image should not be underestimated. However image-projected and image-perceived are two different things; and often strategically projected images might backfire.

Goddard's (2015) analysis of the British reaction to Hitler's rhetoric provides valuable insights which might be relevant to the case of Erdogan and Greece. From 1933 to 1938, the UK avoided confrontation and attempted to settle German demands, but after the negotiations at Munich, they abandoned appeasement and embraced a policy of confronting Germany. According to Goddard the roots of both appeasement and confrontation were due to Germany's legitimisation strategies. Until the Munich crisis, Hitler justified Germany's aims with appeals to collective security, equality, and self-determination—norms central to the European system established by the Treaty of Versailles. After Munich, Hitler abandoned these legitimisation strategies, arguing instead that expansion was justified as a matter of German might, and not international rights. As Britain came to see German demands as illegitimate, so too did they decide this revisionist state was insatiable, impervious to negotiation, and responsive only to the language of force. This analysis explains while certain actors have abandoned the appeasement towards Turkey. It is important for Erdogan's rhetoric to be examined not only at the production but also at the consumption level. How his rhetoric are perceived by other strategic actors? With which nation image these perceptions correlate and which is the action element of these images?

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THE OTHER GREEKS: THE FORGOTTEN GREEK ETHNIC MINORITY IN TURKEY



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According to the standard narrative in both international and human rights law, the protection of intangible communitarian interests and the safeguarding of the plurality of cultural voices in both the domestic and the international level forms part of an overall international strategy to prevent and aver atrocity crimes, and more particularly international crimes.¹ The importance of a certain community's intangible legacy can be fully understood, once it becomes clear that its cultural imprint signifies intra-generationally its own concept of selfness, uniqueness, and continuity. These protective guarantees, sometimes incorporated into institutional arrangements and/or international treaties, acquire a further significance once seen within the framework of minority protection. For the best part of current literature, the protection of national, ethnic, or other minorities is understood as a juridical relic of the interwar period, with historic significance in understanding the evolution and amplification of post-war human rights law regimes.²

Nevertheless, the question of minority protection in international law is neither defunct nor obsolete. On the contrary, its reoccurrence, especially in the context of Greco-Turkish relationships makes it both contemporary and worth discussing in further detail. In this context, it would be important to highlight, even at this early stage of our discussion, that Greece's reluctance to raise the question of the Greek ethnic minority in Turkey appears to go hand in hand with a more expansive, and actually exorbitant, Turkish claim

¹ See William Schabas, *Preventing Genocide and Mass Killing: The Challenge for the United Nations* (London: Minority Rights Group International 2006).

² Minority communities were actually the first collective formations to be acknowledged as holders of intangible interests, guaranteed by the inter-war conventional mechanism for the protection of minority rights, like the Polish Minority Treaty (1919) or the Greco-Bulgarian Reciprocal Emigration Convention (1919), and the League of Nations System. Under the League of Nations successor, the United Nations, the protection of minorities fell within the human rights framework and specifically, the principle of non-discrimination. See Patrick Thornberry, *International Law and the Rights of Minorities* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1991).

in the form of a *droit de regard* vis-à-vis the totality of Greek or Greek-based Muslim communities, be it in Thrace, the Dodecanese, or elsewhere.³

It has been fairly documented that Turkey's policies vis-à-vis the Greek ethnic minority has led to the community's decimation.⁴ A set of restrictive policies has depleted both the social and cultural imprint of the said community.⁵ Thus a minority protected under the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923⁶ (Greeks of Constantinople, Imvros and Tenedos) came to be regarded as a forgotten enclave in an ethnically coherent modern Turkey, while Pontic Greeks, according to the Turkish point of history, have just vanished into thin air. The continuing cultural oppression of the remaining Greek minority in Turkey and the silence following the uprooting of a thriving Greek community in the Pontic area, necessitate the following distinction:

The remaining Greek minority is steadily targeted with policies amounting to incremental cultural oppression, i.e. they are in effect denied the right to enjoy, develop and transmit their own culture and own language, whether individually or collectively.⁷ In the genocide *après la lettre* period, Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek names for towns and villages have been changed to Turkish names, and even individuals have been forced to use Turkified surnames,⁸ thus abandoning their linguistic heritage or otherwise dropping markers of their ethnic identity. Turkey's language laws are extremely harsh.⁹

³ Cf. the Report prepared by the Head of the Research Services of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, which was tabled before parliament on 18 August 2020, https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/haber_portal.aciklama?p1=149241 (last accessed: 10 September 2020).

⁴ 'Denying Human Rights and Ethnic Identity the Greeks of Turkey' (Helsinki Watch Report) (1992), available at <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/TURKEY923.PDF> (last accessed: 10 September 2020). See also Matthias Bjørnlund, 'The 1914 Cleansing of Aegean Greeks as a Case of Violent Turkification' (2008) 10(1) *Journal of Genocide Research* 41–58.

⁵ Sule Toktas, Bulent Aras, 'The EU and Minority Rights in Turkey' (2009) 124(4) *Political Sciences Quarterly* 697–720.

⁶ Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations and Protocol, (adopted on 30 January 1923) 32 LNTS 75.

⁷ Cf. UNESCO, Latin-American Conference, Declaration of San José (11 December 1981), UNESCO Doc. FS 82/WF.32 (1982): Ethnocide means that an ethnic group is denied the right to enjoy, develop and transmit its own culture and its own language, whether individually or collectively. This involves an extreme form of massive violation of human rights . . . [E]thnocide, that is, cultural genocide, is a violation of international law equivalent to genocide, which was condemned by the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide

⁸ Meltem Türköz, *Naming and Nation-building in Turkey: The 1934 Surname Law* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

⁹ For instance, Article 2(b) of Law No 2923 of 14 October 1983, *The Law on Education and Teaching in Foreign Languages*, mandates that the vast amount of the curriculum, including such modules as History, Literature, Morals, and Geography, must be taught exclusively in the Turkish language. Article 7 of Law No 805 of 10 April 1936, *The Law on Compulsory Use*

Moreover, as per Article 42 of the Turkish Constitution, Turkey still rigidly adheres to the concept of a single-language State.¹⁰

Even the history of pre-Turkish period is frequently strictly regulated by law. For example, Article 299(1) of the 2004 Turkish penal code bans 'denigrating Turkish identity'¹¹ and it often has been, as its predecessor the infamous Article 301,¹² used to suppress any discussion or acknowledgement of the committed atrocities. On 30 April 2008, Article 299 was amended by the Parliament of Turkey, with the following changes: replacement of the word 'Turkishness' with the phrase 'the Turkish Nation' the reduction of the maximum penalty from three years to two; moreover, the modified law requires the permission of the Justice Ministry to file a case. However, the alteration is a 'paper modification' since Article 299/301 has been used against scholars, artists and common citizens advocating for an alternative to the State authorized account of minority history.¹³ Adding to that, a *lex specialis*¹⁴ punishes with 1 to 5 years of incarceration any citizen insulting the 'Atatürk cult', such as presenting Mustafa Kemal as an author or accomplice of crimes committed against minority groups of Turkey.

Moreover, the property rights of the Greek Minority Foundations continue to be violated. Specifically, the Greek Minority's Foundations have suffered from extensive confiscations of their properties. The Turkish government has established an administrative procedure for lifting the seizure orders by issuing a decree in 2011. The aim of the said act was to return some properties or pay compensation when return is not possible. Nevertheless, the decree's scope was extremely narrow and it was not able to fully remedy the chronic violations of the community's rights and interests. It is important to point out that the said decree excluded from its ambit the property of seized community foundations ('mazbut vakif').¹⁵ Additionally, access to the

of Turkish in Economic Enterprises, as amended in 2008, penalizes the use of foreign languages for all companies and institutions incorporated or seated in Turkey by imposing a judicial fine.

¹⁰ See Derya Bayir, *Minorities and Nationalism in Turkish Law* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013) 103 *et seq.*

¹¹ 'Any person who publicly denigrates Turkishness, the Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey shall be sentenced to 6 months to 3 years of imprisonment'.

¹² See the relevant criticism exercised by the European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) in Opinion No 831/2015, CoE Doc. No CDL-AD(2016)002 (15 March 2016) 20-24.

¹³ See the relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights in *Dink v. Turkey*, Application Nos 2668/07, 6102/08, 30079/08, 7072/09 & 7124/09, Judgement of 14 September 2010 (ECtHR) and *Altuğ Taner Akçam v. Turkey*, Application No 27520/07, Judgment of 25 October 2011 (ECtHR).

¹⁴ Law No 5816 of 1951, *The Law Concerning Crimes Committed against Atatürk*, available at <http://melaproject.org/node/554> (last accessed: 10 September 2020).

¹⁵ OSCE Doc. HDIM.NGO/0264/2018/EN (14 September 2018), 'The Greek Minority in Turkey - Statement and Recommendations' (submitted by the Constantinopolitan Society), available at https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/f/394904_3.pdf (last accessed: 10 September 2020).

intangible cultural heritage of the community is also denied; despite the issuing of the restorative decree, the Government has not yet initiated procedures to return the archives and the library of 50.000 valuable volumes of the Hellenic Literary Society of Constantinople, which has been illegally confiscated in 1925. This library represents the intellectual heritage of the Hellenism of Constantinople.

Cultural oppression persists, building on an ambiance of terror and silence inflicted upon the Greek minority due to the century old persecutions and denial of standing.¹⁶ For instance, the constant museumization of Greek Heritage Sites, like the 'Aya Yorgi' Church in Bilecik, decided by the local mayoral authorities and approved by the competent central agencies on January 2017, summarizes the strategy of negation. Bilecik's Church of St. George could have survived as a standing monument of the atrocities committed against the local Greek population during 1914-1923, or (better so) a bridge of reconciliation, given the fact that St. George is highly venerated as a military patron amongst non-Christians in Turkey, either as a matter of superstition or popular culture. However, St. George's Church turning into a museum, never to be opened to worship again as a district mayor Munur Sahin have stated, is not a fortuitous act.

In May 2016, Turkish officials including the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources Undersecretary Fatih Donmez, celebrated the 717th anniversary of the Ottoman conquest of Bilecik in a ceremony held at a cultural centre in the city. Selim Yagci, the mayor of the Bilecik, stated: 'Bilecik is a city of history. The conquest of Bilecik is not a random conquest[; it] means the establishment of the Ottoman State'. Most of the Christian worship places in the post-atrocity period have either been used for sacrilegious purposes (stables, urinals or even brothels) or been turned into museums to host local –mainly Ottoman– cultural items and artefacts.¹⁷ Thus, the fainting Greek minority has not only been overlooked, oppressed and terrorized, but also looted from places of significance as reference points, so as to preserve its own identity, and legacy. Turning important cultural heritage locations into museums or tourist attractions is yet another face of cultural oppression, removing the space and its symbolism from the collective patrimony of the interested community, which has never been given the opportunity to tell by itself and for itself its own long and bloody history in the region.

¹⁶ As the *Turkey 2019 Report* of the European Commission points out: 'Hate speech and threats directed against minorities remain a serious problem. This includes hate speech in the media targeting national, ethnic and religious groups'. See Commission Staff Working Document, SWD(2019) 220 final (Brussels, 29.5.2019) 39.

¹⁷ Uzay Bulut, 'Turkey Turns Church into Museum; Greece Builds New Mosque' (19 January 2017), featured by the *Gatestone Institute International Policy Council*, available at <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/9803/turkey-church-greece-mosque> (last accessed: 10 September 2020).

Important locations and organizations, such as the Hagia Sophia Basilica (a UNESCO world heritage itself) and the Theological School of Halki remain unattainable. It is of vital significance to highlight that as per a judgment dated 2 July 2020, the Turkish Council of State¹⁸ annulled the Act of the Council of Ministers No 2/1589 of 24 November 1934, adopted during the presidency of Mustafa Kemal, which established Hagia Sophia as a museum, thus returning the monument to the jurisdiction of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, to be administered as a mosque.¹⁹ These developments, and the subsequent opening of Hagia Sophia to Muslim worship gathered an extended amount of criticism vis-à-vis the Turkish Government and raised important questions about the legality of such unilateral measures, given the fact that the monument in question has been recognized as a world heritage site under the provisions of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.²⁰

The re-establishment of Hagia Sophia as an Islamic religious site and the continuous stagnation in the process of re-opening the Halki Seminary, alongside other measures of cultural appropriation and usurpation, deprive the community of important localities upon which they can construct their common legacy. For instance, the latest establishment of the Nevşehir (Cappadocia) underground museum,²¹ within the framework of the overall Turkish policy of museumization, negates the cultural identity of the troglodytic lifestyle, which was inescapably linked with the persecutions of the Christian populations in Anatolia.²² The said localities (being themselves reference points) are of paramount importance for the self-awareness of the community, which strives to keep up with its identity and cultural heritage legacy, while being considered alien and thus excluded from all public space, public authority, and public power. The extreme denial of the cultural and social imprint of the victimized community, paired with the traditional *inertia* of the Greek Government vis-à-vis the *Rumlar* minority, poses a very specific and yet highly unnoticed caveat regarding the Greco-Turkish relations. As history has taught us, the instrumentalization of the Greek minority *qua* scape

¹⁸ Danıştay/Onuncu Daire, (Council of State/Tenth Chamber), Judgment No 2020/2595 Case Nos E: 2016/16015, K: 2020/2595 (10 July 2020), available at https://www.danistay.gov.tr/upload/guncelkarar/10_07_2020_060019.pdf (last accessed: 10 September 2020)

¹⁹ Article 35 of Law No 633 of 22 June 1965, *The Law on the Establishment and Duties of the Presidency of Religious Affairs*: 'Mosques and masjids are opened for worship with the permission of the Directorate of Religious Affairs and administered by the Presidency'.

²⁰ See Δημήτριος Α. Κούρτης, 'GeoInsight: Μερικές σκέψεις για το καθεστώς της Αγίας Σοφίας με βάση το ισχύον διεθνές δίκαιο', *Geopolitical Cyprus* (14 July 2020), available at <https://geopoliticalcyprus.org/2020/07/14/agia-sofia-kai-diethnes-dikaio/> (last accessed: 10 September 2020).

²¹ 'Underground museum to be the first in Cappadocia', *Hürriyet* (8 August 2018), available at <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/underground-museum-to-open-in-cappadocia-135596> (last accessed: 10 September 2020).

²² Φωτιάδης Κωνσταντίνος, *Οι Εξισλαμισμοί της Μικράς Ασίας και οι Κρυπτοχριστιανοί του Πόντου* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Εκδόσεις Α/φων Κυριακίδη, 1993) 95.

goat to in order to vent domestic rages or anxieties, every time the bilateral affairs of the two nations reach a critical point, may lead to further atrocities, and event international criminal acts, that will finally erase from the face of the Earth one of the oldest autochthonous communities, the Ionian and Constantinopolitan Greeks.

A FRAMEWORK OF TURKEY'S ASPIRED ROLE FOR EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN



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This contribution briefly attempts to describe whether and by which means recent developments in Turkey's policy in the Eastern Mediterranean (having Greece and Cyprus in mind) point to the concept of coercive diplomacy. Then, I will turn to the question of what could be the aim of those Turkish policies and practices.

According to Paul Gordon Lauren coercive diplomacy "focuses upon affecting an opponent's will rather than upon his military capabilities. As a method for resolving or reconciling a conflict, coercive diplomacy attempts not to destroy an opponent, but rather to persuade him to terminate those policies that are viewed as undesirable".¹ A core element of coercive diplomacy is the use of threat and in some cases a limited use of violence as deterrence.

With regard to the above mentioned view, certain characteristics could be traced on how Turkey adopts its stance particularly towards Greece and Cyprus, and more generally on the role that it adopts in the Eastern Mediterranean.

A list of some of Turkish actions is sketched here as a rough, though limited indication of that newly aspired role, which, in Turkey's president wording when interpreting especially semiotics in his policies, reflect a glory of an imperial past who attempts to realize it in a contemporary context.²

The basic points of the list are structured as follows:

In the framework of Turkey's recently declared policy of "Blue Homeland", evolves an intensification of Turkey's aggression towards states in the

¹ Paul Gordon Lauren (1972) *Ultimata and Coercive Diplomacy*, *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 16, Issue 2, June 1972, Pages 131–166, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3013977>

² Alan Mikhail (2020) *Why Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Love Affair with the Ottoman Empire Should Worry The World*, *The Time*, 3 September 2020, <https://time.com/5885650/erdogans-ottoman-worry-world/>

Mediterranean.³ The philosophy underpinned in Blue Homeland, which many consider as a maritime doctrine, in substance, codifies Turkish claims of control in an area of 462,000 square miles.⁴

Ankara's long-standing established perspective for the government of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) depicts a non-recognized subject of international law and, therefore a defunct⁵ state. This view creates a paradoxical viewpoint, if one considers that Cyprus is a member-state of the EU, in which Turkey for decades attempts to join. Instead, Turkey recognizes the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus"⁶, a "legally invalid"⁷, self-proclaimed "secessionist entity"⁸, "subordinate local administration", established in 1983 in the northern, under Turkish military occupation, part of the island.

Building on this peculiar interpretation of legality and statehood, the "TRNC", acting as a state, signed agreements with Turkey and issued licenses to the Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) to conduct seismic research and exploration drillings in the "TRNC" maritime zone at the northern part of Cyprus.⁹ In addition, Turkey attributes to herself a role with which she has the capacity and a legitimate right to co-decide on any decision Cyprus takes in reference to the licenses of plots in its Exclusive Economic Zone.¹⁰ In doing so, the Turkish government and that of the secessionist entity threaten international companies if they cooperate with the recognized government of

³ Heather A. Conley, Rachel Ellehuus (2020) How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean, *Centre for Strategic and International Studies*, 17 July 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean>

⁴ Elis Gjevori (2020) Turkey's 'Blue Homeland': striking a balance in the Eastern Mediterranean, *TRT World*, 7 August 2020, <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/turkey-s-blue-homeland-striking-a-balance-in-the-eastern-mediterranean-37356>

⁵ Statements by Turkey tabled on the occasion of the 52nd meeting of the EU-Turkey Association Council, Luxembourg, 23 June 2014, p. 59, https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/EU/XXV/EU/03/08/EU_30840/imfname_10478048.pdf

⁶ "...the international community does not recognise the "TRNC" as a State under international law". Case of Cyprus v. Turkey, European Court of Human Rights, Judgment, Strasbourg, 10 May 2001, para. 61, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng-press?i=001-59454>

⁷ Resolution 541 (1983) / adopted by the Security Council at its 2500th meeting, on 18 November 1983, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/58970>

⁸ Resolution 550 (1984) / adopted by the Security Council at its 2539th meeting, on 11 May 1984, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/67600>

⁹ Cagatay Erciyas (2012) *Maritime Delimitation and Offshore Activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, Legal and Political Perspectives, Recent Developments*, 21 March 2012, p. 8, 23, 26, 27, 35.

¹⁰ Zeliha Khashman (2019) European Union sanctions against Turkey are an obstacle to peace, *TRT World*, 13 November 2019, <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/european-union-sanctions-against-turkey-are-an-obstacle-to-peace-31334>, Tugrul Cam (2019) Ankara to continue defending Turkish Cypriot's rights in Med., *Anadolu Agency*, 10 July 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/ankara-to-continue-defending-turkish-cypriots-rights-in-med/1527793>

the RoC.¹¹ Moreover, Ankara's government expresses its flagrant contradiction and disagreement whenever the RoC strengthens its ties in the political and military field with other states, such as France,¹² and sends vessels to conduct seismic research and drillings in the so-called disputed areas.

As far as Greece is concerned, the other part of the triangular scheme in the Eastern Mediterranean, certain facts should be emphasized. Turkey insists on a geophysical interpretation of international law where some Greek islands¹³ in proximity to the Turkish coast should not be attributed EEZ and continental shelf.¹⁴ This argumentation is further advanced in the Turkish-Libyan Memorandum of Understanding for the Delimitation of Maritime Zones, which was signed by the UN-backed Libyan government and that of Ankara in November 2019.¹⁵

The MoU, which was not endorsed by the Libyan House of Representatives¹⁶, has sparked a critique by many countries as it purports to demarcate a new maritime boundary and thus remodel the Mediterranean Sea. The maritime area claimed by Turkey in the above mentioned bilateral MoU, "infringes upon the sovereign rights of third States"¹⁷ and depicts a part of the Greek continental shelf as part of Turkey's maritime zone.

¹¹ (2018) Turkey warns oil companies against drilling near Cyprus, *The Guardian*, 4 November 2018,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/04/turkey-warns-oil-companies-against-drilling-near-cyprus>

¹² (2020) France stokes Turkey tensions by sending naval vessels to waters off Cyprus, *Financial Times*, 13 August 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/465ba697-451f-4601-b1a7-02eca6680edc>,

(2020) Turkey slams French-Greek Cyprus defense deal, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 16 August 2020, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-slams-french-greek-cyprus-defense-deal-157424>

¹³ (2020) Greek islands have no continental shelf, Cavusoglu says, *EKathimerini*, 19 June 2020,

<https://www.ekathimerini.com/253865/article/ekathimerini/news/greek-islands-have-no-continental-shelf-cavusoglu-says>

¹⁴ Irfan Kaya Ulger (2020) Meis Island's status according to UN Law of the Sea Convention, *Anadolu Agency*, 6 August 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/analysis/analysis-meis-islands-status-according-to-un-law-of-the-sea-convention/1933658>

¹⁵ (2019) Exclusive: Full Text of the GNA-Turkey Agreement Claiming to be an MOU Revealed, *Almarsad*, 5 December 2019, <https://almarsad.co/en/2019/12/05/exclusive-full-text-of-the-gna-turkey-agreement-claiming-to-be-an-mou-revealed/>

¹⁶ Article 8.2., Libyan Political Agreement as signed on 17 December 2015 (Sukhairat Agreement), Peace Agreements Database, The University of Edinburgh,

<https://www.peaceagreements.org/wview/1370/>

¹⁷ (2019) Joint Communiqué - Greek-German Bilateral Action Plan: 3rd meeting at State Secretary level, Berlin, 12th December 2019, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hellenic Republic, <https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/news-announcements/joint-communicue-greek-german-bilateral-action-plan-3rd-meeting-at-state-secretary-level-berlin-12th-december-2019.html>

A broader image of Turkey's policy of threats and limited use of military capabilities¹⁸ is seen also in the case of consistent, intensified violations of the Greek aerial space.¹⁹ This stance attempts to construct a fictitious scenery of multiple problems and controversial areas in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Based on the above and even though the MoU deviates from international law, Ankara claims rights far beyond the delimitation of the continental shelf²⁰ in the Aegean. At the same time, Turkish high-ranking officials explicitly state that any area comprises part of the Turkish national interests (to be precise a Turkish version of Turkey's national interests) will be defended by all means.²¹

Having considered the above described factual background and the use of threats, a sense of imminent danger and confrontation is provoked. From a Turkish perspective, it mainly aims at four interconnected political objectives.

First, to persuade the countries which Ankara considers as present or longstanding rivals to limit, postpone or inhibit any policy plans, they conflict with hers. Second, any threat has a domestic and an international audience. As regards the latter, the role and the program of activities of oil and gas companies could be transformed accordingly. What could be the outcome of such a change? A change of plans of an oil company took place in February 2018, when the Italian Saipem 12000 of ENI wasn't able to proceed with drilling at Block 3 of the Cyprus EEZ, after having been blocked by the Turkish navy.²²

¹⁸ Ilya Tsukanov (2020) Hunting for Turkish Subs in Waters Near Athens Amid Gas Exploration Spat, *Sputnik News*, 15 August 2020, <https://sputniknews.com/military/202008151080178836-greek-navy-reportedly-hunting-for-turkish-subs-off-athens-amid-gas-exploration-spat/>

¹⁹ (2020) Turkish jets embark on barrage of violations, *EKathimerini*, 7 July 2020, <https://www.ekathimerini.com/254468/article/ekathimerini/news/turkish-jets-embark-on-barrage-of-violations>, Tim Korso (2020) Greek F-16s Intercept and Escort Out Several Turkish Fighters Invading Country's Airspace, *Sputnik News*, 30 August 2020, <https://sputniknews.com/europe/202008301080321359-greek-f-16s-intercept-and-escort-out-several-turkish-fighters-invading-countrys-airspace/>

²⁰ *Greek-Turkish dispute over the delimitation of the continental shelf*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hellenic Republic, <https://www.mfa.gr/en/issues-of-greek-turkish-relations/relevant-documents/delimitation-of-the-continental-shelf.html>

²¹ (2020) Erdogan: Turkey will make no concessions in eastern Mediterranean, *Al Jazeera*, 27 August 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/08/erdogan-turkey-concessions-eastern-mediterranean-200826093937574.html>

²² Vincenzo Nigro (2018) Cipro, Eni rinuncia: la nave Saipem fa dietrofront. Media greci: "I turchi hanno minacciato di speronarla", *La Repubblica*, 23 February 2018, https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2018/02/23/news/eni_cipro_saipem_nave_piattaforma_tu_schia_speronamento-189577201/, (2018) Caso Saipem 12000: chi protegge gli interessi italiani nel Mediterraneo orientale?, *Analisi Difesa*, 11 February 2018,

Third, to push the Republic of Cyprus to return to the negotiating table for the solution of the island's political problem and discuss on Turkish conditions.²³ Fourth, to initiate dialogue, talks²⁴ or "unconditional negotiations"²⁵ with Greece as regards the status of the two countries, which was established by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.²⁶ Under this scenario of exploratory talks, direct military conflict may for the moment be deescalated and averted. However, amid the interplay of prospective negotiations, multiple Turkish claims²⁷ may be treated as existing, bilateral problems, the solution of which may pave the way for the case of a wider package deal²⁸ between the two southeastern NATO allies.

In short, it is not going too far to argue that Turkey's new role in conjunction with her narrative about the "Borders of the Heart"²⁹ and Erdogan's vision of a "New Turkey"³⁰ equates to a tendency of regional hegemony, where its main characteristic is the capacity to decide for the future of the whole region.

<https://www.analisdifesa.it/2018/02/caso-saipem-12000-chi-protgge-gli-interessi-italiani-nel-mediterraneo-orientale/>

²³ Yusuf Kanli (2020) Time for bold steps on Cyprus, eastern Mediterranean, Turkey's EU bid, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 1 September 2020,

<https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/opinion/yusuf-kanli/time-for-bold-steps-on-cyprus-eastern-mediterranean-turkeys-eu-bid-157859>

²⁴ (2020) Turkey seeks to resolve dispute with Greece through dialogue, Defense Minister says, *Daily Sabah*, 12 August 2020,

<https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/turkey-seeks-to-resolve-dispute-with-greece-through-dialogue-defense-minister-says>

²⁵ Enes Kaplan (2020) Turkey ready for talks with Greece: Ruling party, *Anadolu Agency*, 22 September 2020,

<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/politics/turkey-ready-for-talks-with-greece-ruling-party-/1982272>

²⁶ Helena Smith (2017) Confrontational Erdoğan stuns Greek hosts on Athens visit, *The Guardian*, 7 December 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/07/turkish-president-erdogan-to-make-landmark-visit-to-greece>

²⁷ Background Note on Aegean Dispute, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkish Republic, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/background-note-on-aegean-dispute.en.mfa>

²⁸ (2020) Turkey calls for unconditional, direct talks with Greece, *Hurriyet Daily News*, 11 September 2020, <https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-blasts-southern-eu-leaders-biased-med-statement-158181>,

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²⁹ Nick Danforth (2016) Turkey's New Maps Are Reclaiming the Ottoman Empire, *Foreign Policy*, 23 October 2016,

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³⁰ Asli Aydintasbas (2020) The Turkish Sonderweg: The New Turkey's role in the global order, *European Council on Foreign Affairs*, 2 April 2020,

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