



New
Direction

REVISITING THE “FROZEN CONFLICT” OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

NEW SECURITY APPROACHES IN THE CYPRUS PROBLEM

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A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)" is not recognised by the international community except by Turkey. Cited or other references to the "TRNC", its institutions or officials is done acknowledging this position of the international community. Beyond this, each co-author had the freedom to choose any historical and contextual terminology they wanted to express their free opinion, and without prejudice to the entirety of this report.

INTRODUCTION

Russia's war against Ukraine has been a watershed moment for Europe. The ensuing confrontation between Russia and the West following the invasion that began on 24 February 2022 is not merely about the future of Ukraine's sovereignty and security; it is about Europe's entire post-Cold War strategic framework. The war has already triggered some fundamental changes in European security architecture. For the European Union, this has meant an amplifying of calls for strategic autonomy, a new institutional design, and a major revamp of some key policy areas including security and defence, enlargement, migration, energy, and climate change. European capitals have also shown a strong sense of solidarity with Ukraine in the face of Russia's aggression – the eastern flank has been boosted, and notwithstanding the initial divergences on agreeing to an oil and gas embargo on Russia, political unity has ensured that an array of far-reaching sanctions is in place. For its part, the United States has responded to Russia's attack on Ukraine with a renewed, bolder commitment to Europe, acknowledging the growing need to have the capability to act simultaneously in two theatres – the Indo-Pacific and Europe – until at least Europe has the required capabilities to defend its interests and deter further Russian aggression. NATO too has adjusted to these new realities through the adoption of a new strategic concept which now defines Russia as a significant and direct threat to the alliance and by extending invitations to Finland and Sweden for membership. In this vein, Russia's actions in Ukraine have also encouraged a reconsideration of relations between the West and Turkey and shed new light on efforts to resolve disputes that had hampered relations with Ankara, including those in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Among those, the Cyprus problem has long drawn world attention, perhaps increasingly so in the context of the offshore energy resources found around the island in the last two decades. The lack of a resolution in Cyprus has meant that the competing claims over maritime jurisdiction areas, and over the monetisation of these resources between Turkey, Greece, and the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) has increased the

chances not only for a Greek-Turkish crisis, but also a weakening of the transatlantic alliance at a time of sharpened rivalry between Russia and the West. This report examines the relevant geopolitical and geostrategic developments of the last decade in the Eastern Mediterranean that have revolved around the Cyprus problem, with the aim of producing a balanced account of that dispute and its manifold aspects including its implications for regional, European, and transatlantic security.

For those who are unfamiliar with the Cyprus problem, the report first provides a historical and political overview to the inter-communal conflict and particularly the sovereignty-related dispute between the island's Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. The following section then outlines the positions on offshore energy resources, and their exploration of various parties involved in the dispute over maritime jurisdiction areas: the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriots, Greece, Turkey, the United Kingdom, as well as the response of the international community. The report also looks at the attempts to start a discussion on the hydrocarbon questions between the two sides as part of, or parallel to, the peace talks. In light of the current impasse over the negotiations that last took place between the parties in 2019, the report subsequently highlights the security concerns of the relevant parties as a major stumbling block for settlement and conclude that broadening the debate on security can offer a way forward for enhanced cooperation and eventual peace-making. The report also suggests that the potential benefits that would emanate from the resolution of the conflict in Cyprus should be appreciated within a much broader outlook; one that transcends the existing disputes in the area. This means that there are high stakes also for Western interlocutors, above all the US and the EU, to see a breakthrough in Cyprus as part of wider efforts to deter Russia, thus of utmost importance. Conflict resolution in Cyprus could, among others, pave the way for the membership of a reunified Cyprus to NATO, which could serve regional, European, and transatlantic security interests.

THE CYPRUS PROBLEM: AN OVERVIEW

The Cyprus problem has long been subject to diverse scholarly and policy interventions. As Lord David Hannay, a former UK Special Representative for Cyprus, famously remarked: “no one has ever lost money betting against a successful outcome to negotiations on the Cyprus problem.” At the heart of many such interventions is the dispute about sovereignty and power-sharing between the island’s Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, which became more vexed with the unilateral declaration of the independence of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)”, on 15 November 1983 after two decades of intercommunal strife. Meanwhile, security concerns comprise among the leading determinants of the attitudes of Greek and Turkish Cypriots vis-à-vis a solution. The situation is complicated further by the presence of the so-called “Guarantor Powers”, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom each holding effective veto rights on a future deal between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, rendering the possibility of a settlement conditional upon “a grand bargain,” or what can be described as the unlocking of a padlock that requires four keys, held respectively by the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriots, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

A former British colony, Cyprus became a sovereign state in 1960 after a series of international accords concluded first between Greece and Turkey at Zurich in 1959, later signed jointly by Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (UK) in London, following endorsement by both “the representative of the Greek Cypriot Community” (Archbishop Makarios) and “the representative of the Turkish Cypriot Community” (Dr. Fazıl Küçük). One of the documents accepted as part of what became known as the London-Zurich agreements, entitled “Basic Structure of the Republic

of Cyprus”, outlined the power-sharing arrangements that were later incorporated in the 1960 Constitution of the Republic as the “Basic Articles”. Other documents that were penned in London and Zurich included the Treaty of Guarantee (signed by the RoC, Greece, Turkey, and the UK), and the Treaty of Alliance (signed by the RoC, Greece, and Turkey). In Zurich, Turkey and Greece also concluded a “gentlemen’s agreement” which provided that the two countries would support the entry of Cyprus into NATO.¹

A second group of accords, designed as interlinked and augmented documents² was subsequently signed in Nicosia on 16 August 1960 to declare the partnership state (the Treaty concerning the Establishment of the RoC), the Treaty of Guarantee, and the Treaty of Alliance. Under the Treaty of Guarantee, Greece, Turkey, and the UK each committed to “recognise and guarantee the independence, territorial integrity and security of the Republic of Cyprus, and also the state of affairs established by the Basic Articles of its Constitution”.³ In case of a violation of the regime or of the territorial integrity of Cyprus, the three guarantor powers were thus given the right to act — jointly or, if that proved impossible, individually — with the sole aim of restoring the status-quo. The Treaty concerning the Establishment of the RoC also carved out the two areas of Akrotiri and Dhekeleia (with an area totalling ninety-nine square miles) that remained under the “full sovereignty of the UK”, as also enshrined in the Treaty of Guarantee. The Treaty of Alliance concerned a military alliance of the RoC, Greece, and Turkey for the purpose of defending Cyprus against any aggression.

Still, as the original positions of the two communities, *enosis* (union with Greece) for the Greek Cypriot

¹ Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, “Post-War Cyprus, 1945-1960: Social, Political and Economic Development” in George Kazamias, Antonis K. Petrides and Emmanouil Koumas, eds., *Introduction to the History of Cyprus* (Nicosia: Open University of Cyprus, 2013)

² Article 181 of the Constitution states that the Treaties of Guarantee and Alliance “have constitutional force”.

³ United Nations Peacemaker, *Cyprus Treaty of Guarantee* (United Nations: Nicosia, 1960), available from <https://peacemaker.un.org/cyprus-greece-turkey-guarantee60#:~:text=Summary%3A,or%20partition%20of%20the%20Island.>

community, and *taksim* (partition) for the Turkish Cypriot community were superseded by the “middle-ground” solution of independence, it was clear that this “second best” solution would not enjoy strong support by either community. Only three years later, in late 1963, a constitutional dispute emerged leading to inter-communal strife which brought about the collapse of the bi-communal power-sharing structures. Turkey considered the 1959-1960 treaties null and void, conducted air raids against RoC security forces in defence of armed Turkish Cypriot insurgents, stationed in Tylliria/Erenköy, north-west Cyprus, while Greece provided military support to the RoC against Turkey when the crisis of 1963-1964 erupted.

Greek involvement in Cypriot domestic politics became stronger following the military coup of 21 April 1967. Internal divisions within the Greek junta were reflected in Cyprus and the Greek military forces stationed there. Eventually the Greek military regime supported groups that aimed to overthrow the Makarios government and promote Cyprus’ immediate union with Greece. Makarios survived an assassination attempt in 1970 which pointed at how deeply entrenched in the security infrastructure his enemies were. Anti-Makarios conspiracies culminated with the coup of 15 June 1974, which was clearly linked with the Greek junta. This move did not only aim to topple the Cypriot government whose Greek nationalist

credentials were seen as dubious. It also aimed to achieve Cyprus’ union with Greece.

Turkey also proved unwilling to observe its guarantor power mission vis-à-vis Cyprus and became itself a challenge against Cypriot sovereignty. Instead, it aimed to prove her point that coexistence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots was impossible, and hence a partition of the island between Greece and Turkey was the optimal solution. Following the withdrawal of Turkish Cypriots from state positions in December 1963, the toughening of Greek Cypriot positions in early 1964, and the outbreak of widespread intercommunal violence, Turkey ceased to recognise the Republic of Cyprus. In addition, it continued supporting the secessionist activities of the local Turkish Cypriot paramilitary group, the Turkish Resistance Organisation (*Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı-TMT*). Turkey considered intervening militarily in Cyprus already in the 1960s at the height of intercommunal violence. Yet it was the military coup of 15 July 1974 that gave Turkey a pretext to intervene on the island while claiming it meant to restore the constitutional order. Acting on the legal basis of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, Turkey responded to the coup by intervening so as to restore the constitutional order. The military operation that began on 20 July 1974 did bring an end to the union plans but went further as it

morphed into a full-scale war, itself a challenge to the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus. Despite the leaders of the coup being arrested and Makarios being returned to power a week later, Turkey resumed its military operation, taking control of over 37 percent of the island. The third guarantor power, the United Kingdom, despite its military presence on the island failed to prevent the de facto partition of the RoC which resulted in about 3,500 civilian and military casualties from both sides, and the internal displacement of around 200,000 Cypriots. All three guarantor states failed to honour their obligations and became themselves security liabilities and not assets for the nascent republic. All three failed, in one way or another, in upholding their international

obligations with respect to securing and restoring the constitutional order and the security of the Republic of Cyprus.

Negotiations for a settlement have since failed, and the island remains de facto divided. The physical division between the two parts of the island is marked by what is known as the Green Line, either side of which is a demilitarised zone that is patrolled by the United Nations (UN). The 1983 unilateral declaration of independence of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)” was condemned by the international community, and all UN-brokered conflict resolution efforts focused on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federal solution for Cyprus.



Source: politico.eu

EU-CYPRUS RELATIONS

EU-Cyprus relations were first initiated in the context of an association agreement in 1972. The agreement provided for a customs union which was fully implemented in the late 1980s without any complications.⁴ But with the application of the RoC to join the European Community (EC) on 4 July 1990, the largely economic relationship between Brussels and Nicosia would spill onto the political realms of a very complex dispute. For the RoC, long-standing ambitions of third-way neutrality and Non-Aligned Movement membership in the context of the Cold War came to an end; there were clear economic, social, and political benefits to be attained from EU membership. The prospects of joining the EU were also conceived, in the context of the Cyprus problem, as a “catalyst” for a settlement by offering incentives to convince Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community. For its part, the EU and the Commission also maintained the view that EU membership would bring the two communities closer together.⁵

However, Cyprus’s accession process was in effect exclusively managed by the Greek Cypriot community. The then Turkish Cypriot leadership led by the late President Denktas was hostile to the idea of Cyprus joining the EU, which in its eyes resembled enosis and did not take part at any stage of the accession negotiations. In line with its long-term goal of international recognition, the Turkish Cypriot side also rejected any claims that the RoC could pursue accession talks on behalf of the whole island. In this respect, the Turkish Cypriot side during this time questioned the legality of the RoC application with reference to the Treaty of Guarantee, prohibiting Cyprus from union with a third state (or an organisation, the Turkish side stipulated) of which Turkey, as the guarantor of its constitutional integrity,

was not a member. On the whole, the Turkish Cypriot leadership asserted that Cyprus could and should join the EU only if a deal could be struck to solve the Cyprus problem and only after Turkey itself became a full member. Such claims were nonetheless dismissed by the EU which endorsed RoC’s application on behalf of the whole island by formally accepting it in 1993 but tying membership to the resolution of the Cyprus problem.⁶ This strategy was later abandoned in favour of a more direct approach towards what was seen as Turkish Cypriot and Turkish intransigence when the 1995 Corfu Summit decided for Cyprus to be included in the next round of enlargement, regardless of a solution being reached ahead of the date of accession. That year, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) also took a decision in the Anastasiou case (C-432/92) which effectively excluded Turkish Cypriot exports from the EU market by disallowing movement certificates issued by the Turkish Cypriot authorities.⁷ It was understood that Turkey and the Denktas administration should have no veto right to the future of Cyprus’ EU membership.

In response to this progress in Cyprus’s EU application and to the ECJ verdict, the Denktas administration revoked from the Turkish Cypriot constitution the commitment to a future federation and declared itself in favour of integration with Turkey. On 28 December 1995, Turkey and the TRNC signed a joint declaration reasserting that accession negotiations should be initiated with the EU only after a final settlement safeguarding Turkish Cypriot sovereignty had been reached and that federal Cyprus and Turkey should only join the EU simultaneously. This was followed by another Turkey-TRNC joint statement on 20 January 1997, asserting that structural cooperation and harmonisation of Cyprus with the EU would be

⁴ Stéphanie Lauhé Shaelou, *The EU and Cyprus: Principles and Strategies of Full Integration* (Leiden: Brill | Martinus Nijhoff, 2009)

⁵ European Commission, *Opinion on the Application by the Republic of Cyprus for Membership* (Brussels: European Commission, 1993)

⁶ European Council, *Presidency Conclusions* (Brussels: European Council, 1993)

⁷ “The Queen Vs. Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Secretary of State for Health, Ex Parte: Fedesa and Others. Reference for a Preliminary Ruling: High Court of Justice, Queen’s Bench Division - United Kingdom,.” in *European Court of Justice (ECJ)* (Luxembourg: European Court of Justice (ECJ), 1994)

followed by similar action from Ankara and the Turkish Cypriots to accelerate their own integration process.⁸ On 6 August 1997, an Association Agreement was signed between the two parties, which provided the framework for: “determining the measures to be taken with the aim of achieving partial integration [...] in the economic and financial fields and in matters of security, defence, and foreign affairs on the basis of association”.⁹ A further retaliation came after December 1997 Luxembourg Summit, when Ankara and the Turkish Cypriot leadership demanded that the future talks between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots be conducted on a state vs. state and not on a community vs. community basis.

In parallel, a “Joint Defence Doctrine” between Greece and Cyprus was declared, and Greece’s involvement in Cyprus security increased. Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu wished to provide unprecedented guarantees involving Cypriot security, asserting that Greece should develop its defence capacity so that it could defend the Republic of Cyprus against future Turkish aggression. This required sizable investments on the Greek air force and navy and the development of an analogous infrastructure in Cyprus. Yet, the prospective installation of Russian S-300 anti-aircraft defence missile batteries in Cyprus met with the vehement opposition of Turkey. Escalation was averted with the decision to install the batteries in Crete instead. Greek-Turkish relations in the mid-1990s were anything but cordial, and no prospect of conflict resolution in Cyprus was in sight.

Nonetheless, optimism rebounded by the end of the 1990s when the “EU factor” appeared as a significant catalyst in the UN efforts geared-up towards reaching a federal solution ahead of Cyprus’ EU accession.¹⁰ This was largely due to the European Council’s decision at the Helsinki Summit in December 1999 to grant Turkey

EU candidate status. This signalled a strategic shift of Greece’s view of EU-Turkey relations from imposing “conditional sanctions” to offering “conditional rewards.” Turkey’s European membership perspective was understood to be in line with Greek strategic interests and the key for the resolution of the Cyprus problem.¹¹ The greater optimism in EU-Turkey relations which culminated in the context of Greco-Turkish rapprochement following the so-called “earthquake diplomacy”¹² — and also saw the shelving of the Greece-Cyprus “joint defence doctrine”, and the Turkey-TRNC Association Agreement — paved the way for a fresh round of proximity talks in Nicosia. Meanwhile, earlier in 1999, the UN Security Council had called for the launching of Cyprus “proximity talks,” and between December 1999 and November 2000 five rounds were held under UN auspices.¹³ But this was short-lived when it became clear that UN efforts to convince the sides to engage in direct talks failed, and in December 2000 the Turkish Cypriot side unilaterally abandoned the proximity talks, plunging the negotiations into deadlock. Meanwhile, Cyprus’ accession continued in full swing as per the European Council’ 1999 decision, stating: “*The European Council underlines that a political settlement will facilitate the accession of Cyprus to the EU. If no settlement has been reached by the completion of the accession negotiations, the Council’s decision on accession will be made without the above being a precondition. In this the Council will take account of all relevant factors.*”¹⁴

In November 2002, elections in Turkey saw the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* - AKP). The AKP’s victory signalled a radical shift in Turkish policy towards Cyprus favouring a federal solution to the Cyprus problem in line with its own EU-related aspirations. Perhaps more remarkably, its absolute majority in the Turkish Parliament indicated that the AKP was in a position to undertake such

radical policy changes on “national issues” like Cyprus.¹⁵ The advent of the AKP administration facilitated an open debate about the rationale of Turkey’s military presence in Cyprus: Was Turkey’s military presence in Cyprus understood as a means to protect the security of Turkish Cypriots against a potential Greek Cypriot threat? Or was it meant to protect the security of the Turkish state itself by establishing a bridgehead on an island and making sure that Turkey could not be encircled from the south? In other words, was Turkey’s interest and strategic objectives in Cyprus defined solely by the security and welfare of Turkish Cypriots or by its wider strategic interests independently of the latter? The view that Turkey’s presence in Cyprus is of vital importance regardless of the Cyprus problem resonated with the view that the Cyprus problem was indeed solved with the de facto partition of the island in 1974. In other words, Turkish military superiority in Cyprus solved the security problem of both Turkish Cypriots and Turkey itself. In addition, it reinforced the tutelary role of the military in Turkish politics.¹⁶ In that view, Turkey had no other interest in Cyprus than the status quo and its eventual legitimisation. This approach was challenged by the new AKP government, which appeared willing to break with stereotypes about Cyprus. This was manifested with Turkey’s support for the fifth version of the so-called “Annan Plan,” a UN blueprint for a comprehensive resolution, which in its last version envisioned Cyprus as a federal and not confederal state with a permanent presence of Greek and Turkish troops.

The Annan Plan, named after the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, with its thousands of pages of draft federal laws (inspired by the 1977-79 “High Level Agreements,”¹⁷ the 1992 Set of Ideas¹⁸ and the 1960 Constitution) and international agreements and treaties, represented the most comprehensive blueprint by the UN to bridge the gaps and settle the decade-old Cyprus problem. In essence, the fundamental provisions of the Plan formulated a “loose federation” with two constituent states, called for gradual demilitarisation of the island, allowed for the return of a large number of refugees through territorial adjustment and included

guidelines for the settlement of the vexed “property issue”.

Cyprus’ accession negotiations were completed before the first version of the Annan Plan was submitted on 11 November 2002, and the second version was rejected by the Turkish Cypriots in December, although it was already evident that Turkish Cypriot public opinion supported the Plan, but that Ankara, where the military retained dominance over security policy despite the AKP’s electoral victory in October 2002, did not. In the Copenhagen European Council in December 2002, while the Greek Cypriot leader Glafcos Clerides declared his intention to sign the Annan Plan, the Turkish Cypriot leader boycotted the summit, allowing for the decoupling of the EU membership from a prior signature of the Annan Plan. On 10 March 2003 the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denктаş, himself turned down the third version of the Annan Plan at The Hague. EU leaders now had no option but to consider two firm refusals the “relevant factor” and thus Cyprus, together with nine other EU candidate countries, signed its Treaty of Accession on 16 April 2003. Neither the UN nor the EU requested the Greek Cypriots to unilaterally agree to the third version of the Annan Plan, presumably because the UN hoped, as later occurred, to produce a further plan, which in fact would be acceptable by all parties. Yet, government change in the Republic of Cyprus and Greece and the emergence of a fifth and final version of the UN plan shifting the balance to accommodate Ankara and the Turkish Cypriots, and displeasing Greek Cypriots, after the Republic of Cyprus was already legally certain of EU accession on 1 May 2004, had a crucial impact on the outcome of the peace referendum.

On 24 April 2004, simultaneous referenda were held on both sides of the island in which voters were asked to approve the final text of the “Annan Plan” to reunify the island on the eve of EU accession. Despite much anticipation, whilst 65 percent of the voters in the north approved the Plan, it was rejected by an overwhelming 76 percent of the voters in the south. Still, the failure of the “Annan Plan” in the referenda did not derail the

8 Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Turkey-TRNC Joint Declaration January 20, 1997* (Republic of Turkey: Ankara, 1997b), available from https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey-trnc-joint-declaration-january-20_1997.en.mfa

9 Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on the Establishment of an Association Council* (Republic of Turkey: Ankara, 1997a), available from <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/agreement-between-the-government-of-the-republic-of-turkey-and-the-government-of-the-turkish-republic-of-northern-cyprus-on-the.en.mfa>

10 Kevin Featherstone, “Cyprus and the Onset of Europeanization: Strategic Usage, Structural Transformation and Institutional Adaptation”, *South European Society & Politics*, Vol. 5, no. 2 (1998)

11 Panayotis Tsakonas, *The Incomplete Breakthrough in Greek-Turkish Relations: Grasping Greece’s Socialization Strategy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, “Greek and Greek Cypriot Views of Turkey’s Accession to the European Union: On the Endurance of a Spectacular Paradigmatic Shift” in Meltem Müftüler-Bac and Yannis A. Stivachtis, eds., *Turkey and the European Union: Dilemmas, Constraints and Opportunities* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008)

12 Ayten Gündoğdu, “Identities in Question: Greek-Turkish Relations in a Period of Transformation”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA)*, Vol. 5, no. 1 (2001)

13 Nathalie Tocci, *EU Accession Dynamics and Conflict Resolution: Catalysing Peace or Consolidating Partition in Cyprus?* (London: Ashgate, 2004)

14 European Council, *Presidency Conclusions* (Cologne: European Council, 1999)

15 Ayşe Aslihan Çelenk, “The Restructuring of Turkey’s Policy Towards Cyprus: The Justice and Development Party’s Struggle for Power”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 3 (2007)

16 Alper Kaliber, “Securing the Ground through Securitized “Foreign” Policy: The Cyprus Case”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 36, no. 3 (2005)

17 Hellenic Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The 10 Point Agreement of 19 May 1979* (1979), available from https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/kyprako/10_point_agreement_may_1979.pdf [posted on 19/5/1979], Republic of Cyprus Press and Information Office (PIO), *Agreements-High-Level Agreement of 12 February 1977* (Republic of Cyprus: Nicosia, 1977), available from <https://www.pio.gov.cy/en/agreements-high-level-agreement-of-12-february-1977.html> [posted on 12/2/1977]

18 UN Secretary General, *Report of the Secretary-General on His Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus* (New York: United Nations, 1992)

plans to admit a divided island; Cyprus joined the EU together with Malta and eight other CEEC countries on 1 May 2004. While the Republic became a member of the European Union on behalf of the whole island, the application of EU law (or the *acquis communautaire*) was suspended in the north, now defined in the EU *acquis* as territory that fell “outside the effective control of the RoC”.¹⁹ As such, the collective advantages, and institutional privileges of EU membership for the Turkish Cypriot community was “put on the shelf”. While the suspension of the *acquis* did not have any bearing on individual rights and entitlements as EU citizens outside the north, Turkish Cypriots as members of a territorially defined community were somewhat left on the “margins” of the European Union.

In this regard, the new context was sharply marked by the tension between what the Turkish Cypriot community expected from the EU in relation to the ongoing isolation as recognition of its cooperative attitude and what the EU, constrained by international law but also by the position of the RoC government, could deliver.²⁰ This became clearer when the EU foreign ministers, on 26 April 2004, agreed “to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community, and to facilitate the reunification of Cyprus by encouraging the economic development of the latter community”.²¹ The European Commission subsequently drafted further regulations to “lift the isolation” on the Turkish Cypriot community, who, according to the UN Secretary General, by “no fault of their own” were left outside of the EU.²² The process ended in stalemate however, with the European Council unable to decide on the Commission’s proposals on direct trade as a result of the Greek Cypriot veto, with Nicosia insisting that these would imply the recognition of the TRNC.²³

Talks were relaunched at the end of a two-year deadlock, when the Cypriot leaders, Tassos Papadopoulos and his newly elected counterpart, Mehmet Ali Talat, agreed, on 8 July 2006, to discuss

“issues that affect day-to-day life” and, concurrently, substantive issues. The “Gambari Process”, as it came to be known, almost immediately developed into a stalemate however, and the five-point accord was not implemented. Demetris Christofias’ election as the RoC President on 24 February 2008 ended the impasse and in March, he and Talat agreed to resume the settlement process, with working groups and technical committees. Talat was ousted at the presidential elections on 18 April 2010 by Derviş Eroğlu, a right-winger, who continued negotiations with Christofias under the UN Special Envoy Alexander Downer. Though without much progress, peace negotiations came to a complete halt in 2014 when the Greek Cypriots walked out in protest of a Turkish ship entering Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), prospecting for natural gas.²⁴ Energy emerged as a new point of conflict in the Cyprus problem negotiations.

The latest attempt to resolve the dispute began in 2015, when the Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı who was elected in 2015 and Nicos Anastasiades who succeeded Christofias in 2013, announced that they would push forward the new round of negotiations with an aim to reach a deal by the end of 2016.²⁵ A key difference of the new negotiation process compared with that which culminated with the Annan plan was the so called “Cypriot ownership” of the process. In other words, the United Nations or any other mediator would not be in a position to impose its view on the two parties. If there were to be a settlement to be put in a referendum, this would have to be signed by the leaders of both Cypriot communities. The fact that both leaders had endorsed the Annan Plan before the 2004 referendums ignited some optimism. Almost two years later, negotiations produced convergence in most of the negotiation chapters: governance, relations with the European Union, property, economy, and territory. Hopes rose about the possibility of a breakthrough in the bi-communal negotiations between Nicos Anastasiades and Mustafa

Akıncı that continued through summer 2017. In light of the significant convergences achieved in most negotiation chapters, Cypriot leaders and guarantor state representatives met at Mont Pèlerin, Switzerland in November 2016 and January 2017 with the aim to achieve convergences on all chapters. There was much anticipation in the run up to the resumed Conference on Cyprus in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, at the end of June 2017. The view among many observers was that this latest phase of negotiations was the closest the parties had ever come to reaching a settlement. Still, these renewed hopes turned to disappointment after a week of intensive discussions, and in the early morning of 7 July, Secretary-General António Guterres announced that, despite considerable efforts, the Conference was closing without an agreement. After a two-year hiatus, Guterres met again with Anastasiades, and Akıncı in Berlin for “informal, trilateral” talks but these also failed to make any breakthrough in reviving talks.

To date, the talks have not led to a settlement, and at the time of writing talks at the leader level had been in effect suspended since late November 2020 when Akıncı was replaced by Ersin Tatar who has since then called for a two-state solution, in contradiction of the basis of the UN-facilitated negotiation process.

Indeed, the victory of Tatar in the Turkish Cypriot presidential elections held on 18 October 2020, marred by allegations of interference from Ankara, highlighted the stark division between political stakeholders in the Turkish Cypriot community on the future of the peace process. These differences had grown steadily following the closure of the Conference on Cyprus in July 2017, and Tatar’s victory indicated the shift in the Turkish Cypriot position away from the bi-zonal, bi-communal federation that Akıncı had championed. Though a narrow victory for Tatar — securing 51.7 percent of the vote which translates to a majority of only 4,412 votes — the result also saw public confidence in the possibility of securing a settlement dropping from an already low level.²⁶ Meanwhile, media attention on both sides of the island since the elections remain largely preoccupied with the continuing internal disputes on

the island, the tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, but also the upcoming presidential race in the RoC, scheduled for February 2023.

It is worth mentioning that Anastasiades’ recent offer of a new “package”²⁷ of confidence-building measures that were articulated in a letter to Tatar on 20 May 2022, registered a call for the resumption of peace talks, and the counteroffer of the Turkish Cypriot leader, also referred to the need to “prepare the necessary conditions conducive for a settlement in Cyprus”. At the same time, while Anastasiadis is no more considered to enjoy any goodwill as the erstwhile supporter of the Annan Plan and champion of a compromise agreement, Tatar’s positions contradict key features of the negotiating framework agreed upon after decades of peace talks and bring the Turkish Cypriot position closer to the intransigent and historically defeated position of the late Rauf Denktash, i.e., the partition of the island as the solution of the Cyprus problem.²⁸ An important assertion here, which is also echoed by Ankara, is that federation as a formula for a settlement has been exhausted after long, arduous negotiations. Thus, as in many policy areas, the AKP government departed radically from the position it adopted when it came to power in November 2002 and adopted nationalist positions it had initially challenged.²⁹

Obviously, such views are not accepted by the Greek Cypriots or the international community. The Greek Cypriot side has expressed the position that negotiations should resume from where they left off in Crans-Montana and be aimed at achieving a settlement based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality, on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions, the Joint Declaration of 2014, the existing body of work, and in line with the European Union *acquis*.

As it stands, a modest level of exchange of information and cooperation on specific issues and individual cases is maintained between the negotiators and the bi-communal technical committees, though there is no meaningful communication between the leaders.

19 Official Journal of the European Communities, *Act Concerning the Conditions of Accession of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Latvia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Malta, the Republic of Poland, the Republic of Slovenia and the Slovak Republic and the Adjustments to the Treaties on Which the European Union is Founded - Protocol No 10 on Cyprus* [12003T/PRO/10] (Brussels: European Council, 2003)

20 See George Kyris, *The Europeanisation of Contested Statehood: The EU in Northern Cyprus* (United Kingdom: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015), George Christou, “The European Commission as an Actor in the Cyprus Conflict”, *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 35, no. 2 (2013)

21 European Council, *Presidency Conclusions* (Brussels: European Union, 2004)

22 UN Secretary General, *Report of the Secretary-General on His Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus* (New York: United Nations, 2004)

23 Newsroom, “Direct Trade out of the Question”, *Financial Mirror*, 6/2/2008

24 Nielsen Nikolaj, “Cyprus Seeks Harsh EU Statement on Turkey”, *EU Observer*, 24/10/2014

25 Evie Andreou, “After One Year of Talks, Leaders Pledge to Solve Cyprus Problem in 2016”, *Cyprus Mail*, 15/5/2016

26 UN Secretary General, *Report of the Secretary-General on His Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus* (New York: United Nations, 2021)

27 Antonios Gkildakis, “Proposal for CBMs “Mutually Beneficial” Spokesman Tells CNA and Expresses Regret over Turkish Cypriot Rejection”, *Cyprus News Agency (CNA)*

28 TRNC Presidency, *Statement from President Ersin Tatar of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Regarding the Cooperation Proposals of the Turkish Cypriot Side* (Nicosia, 2022), available from <https://kktcb.org/en/statement-from-president-ersin-tatar-of-the-turkish-republic-of-9969from> [posted on 1/7/2022]

29 Günter Seufert, *Erdoğan the Builder in Northern Cyprus* [SWP Comments 47] (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), 2021)

ENERGY COOPERATION AND NEW CONFLICT LINES IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

While Turkey's positive attitude and the Turkish Cypriot positive vote did not suffice for the resolution of the Cyprus problem in 2004, Turkey's position initially became somewhat relieved, as in 2004 it appeared not to be the factor that obstructed conflict resolution in Cyprus. Still, the failure of the international community to reward Turkey and Turkish Cypriots for their constructive stance led to a hardening of the Turkish position, and the official Turkish position started vacillating again between prioritising the security interests of Turkish Cypriots and putting forward the interest of Turkey itself. Meanwhile, the discovery of natural gas reserves in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Cyprus in 2011 led to increased confrontation between Turkey, Greece, and the Republic of Cyprus, whilst driving yet another wedge between the leaderships of two Cypriot communities on the negotiating table. Instead of becoming a catalyst for conflict resolution, the discovery of Cypriot hydrocarbons amplified the existing conflict.³⁰

The exploration and monetisation of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean have emerged as an additional source of cleavage in the shaping of the Cyprus problem for several reasons. First, the Eastern Mediterranean holds substantial natural gas potential.³¹ According to the US Geological Survey estimates, gas reserves in the region amounts to around 122 trillion cubic feet (TCF).³² Around half of that volume (70 TCF, which is equivalent to Azerbaijan's current gas reserves) was discovered in the past decade in Tamar (2009) and Leviathan

(2010) in Israel, Zohr (2015) in Egypt; Aphrodite (2012), Calypso (2018) and Glauco (2019) in Cyprus.³³ When the assessments for undiscovered resources are also considered, the region's gas potential could be equivalent to that of the North Sea, making the Eastern Mediterranean region an exciting energy basin.³⁴ And second, the majority of maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean are not demarcated, e.g., between Greece and Turkey, RoC and Turkey, the RoC and Syria, Israel and Lebanon, Israel and Palestine. And those that have been agreed between the RoC and Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon, have been unilaterally contested by Turkey. This situation has emerged as a major obstacle to monetisation of hydrocarbons in the region. The maritime boundary disputes between Turkey, the RoC, and Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean, are inextricably linked to the Cyprus problem and the monetisation of Eastern Mediterranean natural gas reserves.

The official Turkish Cypriot position is that Turkish Cypriots were the co-founders of the bi-communal RoC that broke down in 1963. According to that view —and contrary to the view of the international community — there has been no legitimate authority that can represent Cyprus as a whole, that is, both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. The Turkish Cypriots have therefore objected to the signing of maritime boundary agreements on behalf of the whole island by the RoC, on the grounds that they are being conducted without their participation or consent.³⁵ The RoC's October 2008 granting of the first gas exploration

³⁰ Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "Energy Discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean: Conflict or Cooperation?", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 21, no. 3 (2014)

³¹ Sang Yoon Shin and Taehwan Kim, "Eastern Mediterranean Gas Discoveries: Local and Global Impact", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 28, no. 1 (2021)

³² Christopher J. Schenk et al., *Assessment of Undiscovered Oil and Gas Resources of the Levant Basin Province, Eastern Mediterranean: 2010–2014* (U.S. Geological Survey Fact Sheet: Washington DC, 2010), available from <https://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2010/3014/>

³³ Simon Flowers, "Monetising the East Med's Giant Gas Finds: Could an LNG Hub Break Down the Geopolitical Barriers?", *Wood Mackenzie*, 10/7/2020

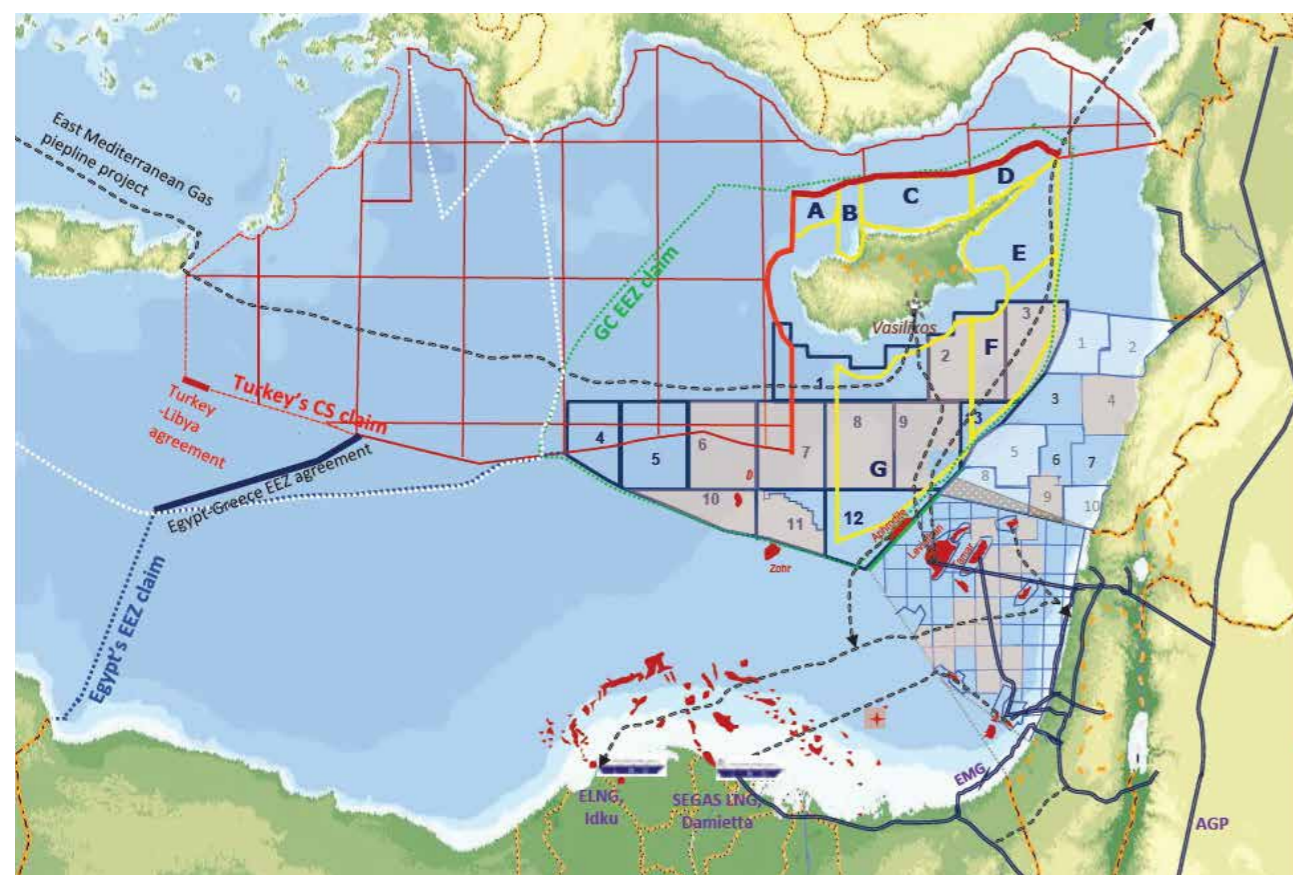
³⁴ Ana Stanic and Sohbət Karbuz, "The Commercial Challenges Facing Eastern Mediterranean Gas", *Oil, Gas & Energy Law*, Vol. 3 (2020)

³⁵ Mustafa Çıraklı, "TRNC-RoC Cooperation: A Critical Missing Piece for Eastern Mediterranean Stability" in Michaël Tanchum, ed., *Eastern Mediterranean in Uncharted Waters: Perspectives on Emerging Geo-Political Realities* (Ankara: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Turkey, 2020b)

license to the US-based firm Noble Energy for the “Aphrodite” gas field was the opening salvo in the intercommunal dispute over hydrocarbons.

Taking “reciprocal steps of equal significance,” the Turkish Cypriot administration has since put in place its own arrangements and issued its own gas exploration licensing blocks, in close coordination with Turkey in response to steps taken by the RoC. Noble Energy’s drilling eventually began on 19 September 2011, prompting the Turkish Cypriot administration to respond more robustly by signing a Continental Shelf Delimitation Agreement with Turkey on 21 September 2011, making major concessions to Turkey.³⁶ This was immediately followed by the 22 September 2011 signing of a licensing agreement with Turkish Petroleum Inc. (TPAO) for hydrocarbons exploration in waters that overlap with parts of licensing blocks 8, 9, and

12 issued by the RoC on the basis of the RoC’s EEZ demarcation. The agreement with TPAO was ratified by the Turkish Cypriot Parliament on 9 January 2012 and the Turkish Parliament on 29 June 2012. Describing the move to grant licences to TPAO as a step to protect the legitimate rights and interests of Turkish Cypriots, Turkish Cypriot officials asserted that the agreement was “entirely the consequence of the Greek Cypriot side’s commencement to drill on 19 September 2011, in total disregard of the existence of Turkish Cypriots.”³⁷ Turkey has also maintained that the RoC’s awarding of hydrocarbon exploration blocks to energy companies disregards the Turkish Cypriots’ legitimate rights. Moreover, Turkey’s continental shelf claims overlap partly with those of the RoC’s EEZ (specifically parts of the RoC’s blocks 4, 5, 6, and 7). Furthermore, two of the Turkish Cypriot blocks, awarded to TPAO (blocks F and G), overlap with RoC blocks 2, 3, 8, 9, 12, and 13.



Source: Ana Stanic and Sohbet Karbuz, “The Commercial Challenges Facing Eastern Mediterranean Gas”, *Oil, Gas & Energy Law*, Vol. 3 (2020)

Aside from putting in place its own legal framework and initiating exploration activities in the island’s maritime regions, the Turkish Cypriot administration also proposed on several occasions that the two sides

work together to jointly develop the island’s natural gas resources. The idea was introduced during talks with the UN Secretary-General Bann Ki-moon in New York on 24 September 2011 – two days after signing

a licensing agreement with TPAO. Arguing that that agreement was provoked by the RoC’s “unilateral actions”, and that the Turkish Cypriot side nonetheless favoured joint development, the then Turkish Cypriot leader Derviş Eroğlu proposed that the two communities either “jointly halt all hydrocarbon-exploration activity” until a deal was reached, or form a joint *ad hoc* committee, with the participation of the UN, to take responsibility of the “joint operation of all hydrocarbon activities.”³⁸ Rejecting the Turkish Cypriot offer, the RoC government spokesperson Stephanos Stephanou retorted that “[. . .] exploration and exploitation of our natural resources constitutes a sovereign right of the Republic of Cyprus [. . .] our sovereign right is not negotiable. This is clear.”³⁹

The Turkish Cypriot proposal was brought onto the table once again the following year when Eroğlu proposed the appointment of an independent intermediary by the UN Secretary-General to broker an agreement on A) how the two sides could work together; B) how the revenues from gas resources could be shared; and C) into which sectors these revenues could be channelled. The Turkish Cypriot position, outlined in a “talking paper,” was that gas revenues should primarily be used to finance the implementation of an eventual comprehensive settlement. The RoC, for its part, announced its willingness to examine setting up an escrow account for the revenues to benefit Turkish Cypriots, based on population ratios, provided there was progress in negotiations, and that a delimitation agreement is concluded between Nicosia and Turkey.⁴⁰

In October 2014, the situation escalated when Turkish warships escorted TPAO’s seismic research vessel *Barbaros Hayreddin Paşa* to explore for natural gas within the EEZ of RoC. This resulted in the RoC breaking off the peace talks that were being held under the UN auspices.

The election of Mustafa Akıncı, a left-liberal moderate and a prominent figure of intercommunal dialogue in the presidential elections of April 2015 revived the talks following a seven-month hiatus. Akıncı’s election was regarded as an important opportunity for the

peace talks and created the expectation for a pause in the dangerous escalation between Greece and Turkey, while the negotiations continued in Mont Pelerin (2017), Crans Montana (2017) and Berlin (2019). Yet with the faltering of hopes for a breakthrough in the peace talks, the hydrocarbons issue was left simmering, with the potential to trigger a crisis in Greek-Turkish relations beyond Cyprus.

In February 2018, the RoC announced the discovery of the Calypso field in Block 6, a sizable discovery holding twice the volume of gas reserves than the Aphrodite field in Block 12. And three days after that, Turkish military vessels stopped an ENI drillship that was on its way to drill in Block 3 of RoC’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), southeast of Famagusta.

Akıncı put forward the Turkish Cypriots’ long-standing proposals again the next year, calling on the RoC to cooperate in developing the island’s energy resources. Involving the establishment of a joint committee under UN supervision that would consist of an equal number of members from the two communities as well as an independent observer, the Turkish Cypriot proposals also outlined the structure, targets, and procedures of the committee, including the setting up of a revenue-sharing fund, and details on how that fund would be used. Detailed proposals were also shared with the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the European Commission and then EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini. Turkey also supported the proposals and appealed to the RoC for a positive response. Almost immediately after the publication of the proposal, the Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu penned an op-ed for the Turkish Cypriot daily *Kıbrıs Postası*, to reiterate Turkey’s support for the proposals to the Greek Cypriot side, and to echo that cooperation in the exploration and exploitation of gas around Cyprus could contribute to a settlement, as well as stability and peace in the Eastern Mediterranean. More assertively, Çavuşoğlu also warned that Turkey would continue its gas exploration in areas where TPAO had been granted licenses by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, until the Greek Cypriots agreed to work together.⁴¹ Meanwhile,

36 Nikolaos A. Ioannidis, “The Continental Shelf Delimitation Agreement between Turkey and “TRNC”, *EJIL Talk: Blog of the European Journal of International Law*, 26/5/2014

37 TRNC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Press Statement on the “Agreement on the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf in the Mediterranean”* Nicosia, (2014), available from <https://mfa.gov.ct.tr/press-statement-on-the-agreement-on-the-delimitation-of-the-continental-shelf-in-the-mediterranean/>

38 Newsroom, “Eroglu Proposal over Cyprus Gas”, *Kathimerini English Edition*, 25/9/2011

39 News Desk, “Cyprus Drilling Rights”, *Parikiaki*, 29/9/2011

40 George Psyllides, “Hydrocarbon Account for Both Communities FM Says”, *Cyprus Mail*, 21/9/2014

41 Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, “Ya Öneriye Uyun, Ya Da Devam Ederiz” [Either Accept the Proposal, or we Will Continue], *Kıbrıs Postası*, 14/7/2019

on 8 July 2019, TPAO sent its second drill ship, *Yavuz*, southeast of the Karpasia/Karpaz Peninsula to start drilling operations. This was swiftly followed by a set of EU sanctions on Ankara for its drilling activities and an ensuing war of words that continued into 2020.⁴² In August 2020, following the signing of a maritime deal between Greece and Egypt – days after Ankara said it would postpone its oil and gas explorations as a goodwill gesture – *Yavuz* was sent back to resume its operations around the island.

The maritime borders disputes between Greece and Turkey have existed for decades. However, rising tensions around Cyprus eventually a spillover effect triggering latent Greek-Turkish disputes over the delimitation of their maritime borders in the Eastern Mediterranean. The ensuing war of words between Turkey and Greece over maritime rights nearly came to boiling point in the summer of 2020. On 21 July 2020, Turkey announced that it was sending its *Oruç Reis* research ship to conduct a seismic survey in the Eastern Mediterranean, southeast of the Greek island of Megisti (Kastellorizo). This eventually led to the longest and most fractious standoff between the two NATO allies in over 20 years. A breakthrough appeared on 8 October when the two sides agreed under Germany’s mediation and with the full US blessing, to resume exploratory talks for resolving their maritime disputes. But a few days later, on 11 October 2020, Turkey withdrew from the talks and released a NAVTEX, or a navigational warning, that it would be conducting surveys on the waters 6.5 nautical miles off the Greek island of Megisti (Kastellorizo).⁴³ After a brief battle of heated exchanges, another space opened for resuming exploratory talks when Ankara pulled back the *Oruç Reis* from disputed zones in late November and announced a month later that the vessel would conduct seismic research in uncontested waters until 15 June 2021. In January, following a meeting of delegations in Istanbul, the two sides announced that the exploratory talks between delegations of the two foreign ministries would resume in Athens. Tensions were ramped up again in March 2021 when an unexpectedly volatile press conference between

the two foreign ministers, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and Nikos Dendias, saw the two men trading accusations on maritime borders, migration, and the treatment of minorities, although calm was ensued after a more amicable meeting in May during Çavuşoğlu’s visit to Athens saw the two sides announcing that they had agreed to work together for better ties.⁴⁴

Yet in September 2021 fresh tensions were sparked after Turkish frigates intercepted the Italian-operated vessel *Nautical Geo* while conducting surveys on Greece’s behalf, ten miles off the Greek island of Crete. Turkey subsequently asserted that it would resume its own surveys with the arrival of its fourth drill ship, *Abdülhamid Han*, in the summer of 2022.⁴⁵ For its part, in December 2021, the RoC granted the consortium of Qatar Energy-ExxonMobil (QE-EM) an exploration license for oil and gas drilling in Block 5, located off the southwest side. QE-EM already possesses licenses to operate in Block 10, where the group discovered a mid-size gas reservoir at the Glaucus-1 well in 2019. QE-EM is expected to begin seismic research in late 2022 in block 5 and probably in some parts of block 10, while the Eni-Total consortium resumed drilling on Block 6 in May 2022.⁴⁶

Limited export infrastructure and lack of investor appetite however, together with global energy transition to renewables have thus far meant slow progress, and many have expressed serious concerns regarding the feasibility of discussed monetisation projects, mainly due to political, environmental, and financial risks in a rapidly changing energy landscape.

At the moment, Cyprus has no natural gas export infrastructure. Since the volume discovered in the Aphrodite natural gas field was not sufficient to support the commercial viability of an LNG plant at Vassilikos, the construction of a subsea gas pipeline has been put on the table. The first, ambitious but politically, technically, and financially more challenging pipeline option is the EastMed project, with an annual transport capacity of 10 bcm. This pipeline would link Egyptian, Israeli and the RoC natural gas fields to the European market

via Greece. Despite the optimism and political support, significant questions remain about the project’s feasibility especially since, after touting the EU’s “Green Deal” vision, the European Commission announced that it would cease financing hydrocarbon projects.⁴⁷ The Biden administration has also recently pulled its support from the EastMed project, citing the pipeline’s economic viability and technically challenging nature, and suggesting alternatives. As Undersecretary of State Victoria Nuland put it more bluntly for the Greek daily “Kathimerini”: “The idea here is to build a very long pipeline in very deep water in about ten years, and we think that is very expensive, not economically viable and it will take a long time. We don’t need to wait for 10 years and spend billions of dollars on this stuff. We need to move the gas now [...] so we’ve got to use LNG and we’ve got to use electricity connections that we can do more quickly”.⁴⁸ An alternative project aims to transport Cypriot natural gas to the Egyptian LNG units of Idku and Damietta. The RoC and Egypt signed an inter-governmental agreement concerning this project in September 2018. Nevertheless, none of the above-mentioned projects have registered any tangible progress. This is partly due to the uncertainties concerning the development of the Aphrodite field caused by the absence of a unitisation agreement with Israel, bureaucratic delays concerning the field’s development plans, and the lack of sufficient feed gas. In the northern part of the island, there have been suggestions of building a natural gas pipeline in parallel to the existing water pipeline between Northern Cyprus and Turkey. If realised, this could provide an export route for RoC and potentially also Israeli gas to Turkey and from there onward to Europe. But the prospects for the EastMed gas pipeline and the Turkey-Israel pipeline projects remain dim. This is partly because both pipelines need to cross disputed maritime zones, which would provoke political tensions. Political considerations on the part of Israel, namely, concerns over its relations with Turkey and jeopardising its evolving energy and

defence relationship with the RoC and Greece, also curb the probability of an Israeli-Turkish pipeline under existing circumstances. Therefore, the feasibility of both projects can be boosted only if the Cyprus problem is resolved.

Still, the resumption of drilling by both Turkey and the RoC means the Eastern Mediterranean may heat up once again. Turkey’s relatively reconciliatory tone, aimed at mending fences with the West, and with other regional actors, may shift toward a more assertive stance once the repercussions of the war in Ukraine, whether in terms of food insecurity or sanctions-induced inflation, fuel public discontent and push Turkish decision-makers to follow a more assertive foreign policy. The impending presidential elections in 2023 could also add further domestic pressure on President Erdogan to reassess his country’s rapprochement with its neighbours, and with the West more broadly. Indeed, the past two years have witnessed a more nuanced and multilateral Turkish foreign policy, indicating that Ankara is open to working with the EU and NATO on a number of issues including Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Ukraine – showing a good degree of alignment with the western interests. The most recent Turkish request to purchase F-16 upgrade kits together with a new fleet of modernised F-16 fighter jets from the United States (as a substitute for the banned sale of the more advanced F-35s) could also be seen in this context of reconciliation.⁴⁹ On the Mediterranean front too, Ankara has recently reached out to Israel to normalise relations, and in seeking alternative energy arrangements. Back-channel discussions with Egypt are also ongoing. This could present the West with a window of opportunity to reset its relations with Turkey. The results could allow more room to address the disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean, above all the Cyprus problem, and potentially offer a better prospect for common ground within the transatlantic alliance against further Russian aggression.

42 Menelaos Hadjicostis, *Cyprus Blasts “Pirate State” Turkey’s New Gas Drilling Bid* (AP News: Nicosia, 2020), available from <https://apnews.com/article/5caea09c1fdaeb2f0212cdfd8d8d402d> [posted on 19/1/2020]

43 Newsroom, “Turkish Drill Ship South of Kastellorizo as Athens Says 6 Nautical Miles a “Red Line””, *Kathimerini English Edition*, 15/10/2020

44 Tefik Durul and Mehmet Hatipoğlu, “Turkish Foreign Minister’s Athens Visit “Fruitful, Earnest”: Greek Press Outlets”, *Anadolu Agency*, 2/6/2021

45 Evie Andreou, “Turkey Vows Reciprocal Response to New Greek Cypriot Drilling”, *Cyprus Mail*, 4/9/2021

46 Newsroom, “Eni-Total to Resume Drilling in May”, *Financial Mirror*, 12/5/2022

47 Whether Russia’s invasion of Ukraine would also mean renewed interest in financing hydrocarbon projects aiming to phase out Russian natural gas imports to the European market remains to be seen.

48 Newsroom, “Eastmed not Economically Viable and Will Take Too Long, Says Nuland”, *Kathimerini English Edition*, 7/4/2022

49 Hümeýra Pamuk and Andrea Shalal, “Biden Administration Throws Support Behind Potential F-16 Sale to Turkey”, *Reuters*, 29/5/2022

UNLOCKING CYPRUS' POTENTIAL: ENTER "HUMAN SECURITY"

In the run up to the crucial Geneva talks, Turkey's position on the question of security was considered to be crucial for the success of the process. In Turkey's official view, protecting the security of Turkish Cypriots would require the permanent presence of a substantial number of Turkish troops on the island. Turkey also pledged for the continuation of the guarantee system, so it maintained a permanent influence on the island security. This influence was meant to offset the demographic superiority of Greek Cypriots and deter acts of aggression against Turkish Cypriots. While the permanent presence of Turkish troops in Cyprus and the confirmation of the Treaty of Guarantee were unacceptable terms to Greece and the Republic of Cyprus, there were some indications pointing at the possibility of a more flexible Turkish position, which could pave the way for a breakthrough. While the talks in Switzerland failed to produce the desired outcome, security issues were discussed for the first time with the participation of the two community leaders and the foreign ministers of the three guarantor states. In other words, Geneva talks showed that addressing the security concerns of both communities while winning the consent of the guarantor states was a crucial step towards a breakthrough.

Obviously, there are legitimate security concerns emanating from a difficult historical past. Turkish Cypriots are concerned that a settlement might expose them to the risks that led to their marginalisation between 1963 and 1974. Greek Cypriots would namely attempt to take again advantage of their demographic and economic superiority to violate the rules of the settlement and marginalise them. Greek Cypriots are also concerned about any Turkish influence on Cypriot security. Their fear is that Turkey would take advantage of the

security provisions recognising a right to intervene, attack once again the Greek Cypriots and extend its control over the whole island. Addressing the security concerns of the Turkish Cypriots against the Greek Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots against Turkey is essential to reach a settlement that can win popular support in a referendum and later be implemented in a successful manner. Rather paradoxically however, insistence on outdated forms of security has been one of the obstacles to reaching a deal. What appears to be a security asset for the one side, becomes a security liability for the other side. The zero-sum game approach derives from the undisputed predominance of statist understandings of security, which is in itself an obstacle to a solution.

It is no surprise that the security dimensions of the Cyprus question have been heavily influenced by the conventional views of international security. As a conflict that emerged and developed during the Cold War, it was inevitable that the security considerations were heavily affected by a state-centred approach. This was clear both in the founding documents of the Republic of Cyprus, as well as in the transcripts of the negotiations throughout the decade-long UN-facilitated negotiations. Neither the 1992 Set of Ideas put forward by UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali in 1992, nor any of the five versions of the Annan Plan employed any of the instruments introduced by the rich discussions taking place in the literature on international security. While following the end of the Cold War both theory and practice of international relations were enriched with the "broadening of the security agenda"⁵⁰ and the contribution of human security⁵¹ in particular, the Cyprus problem remained unaffected by this trend. Local decision-makers and the three guarantor states, Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, remained unique and unchallenged; they remained the single point

50 Keith Krause and Michael C Williams, "Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies: Politics and Methods", *Mershon international studies review*, Vol. 40, no. Supplement_2 (1996), Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap De Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998)

51 Gary King and Christopher JL Murray, "Rethinking Human Security", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, no. 4 (2001)

of reference in all security negotiations that led to the Annan Plan and ever thereafter. Even in the latest peace negotiations between Nicos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akıncı in Geneva in 2016, during which security issues were discussed for the first time with the participation of the two leaders, the foreign ministers of the three guarantor states, the EU and the UN, human security remained virtually absent.

Meanwhile, human security has been one of the instruments applied in the resolution of numerous conflicts around the world.⁵² It is also useful to remember that addressing the security chapter in the Cyprus conflict in both its state- and citizen-oriented parameters can improve through the study of other conflicts where peace settlements were reached and implemented. The cases of Northern Ireland, Kosovo, and Bosnia Herzegovina, for example, can provide interesting insights and lessons regarding conflict resolution in Cyprus. The experience gained from other conflict resolution processes could help

shape the Cyprus security negotiation process in a more efficient and effective way and also hint at ways through which non-state actors and citizens could be involved and contribute to the security negotiations. Experience can point towards imitating successful practices and avoiding mistakes made in other cases.

The need to introduce the parameter of human security into the peace negotiations and the greater security debate on Cyprus is not meant to dismiss the crucial role that all involved states are expected to play in a comprehensive solution. It is meant to facilitate the emergence of compromise solutions which meet the fundamental concerns of all parties and overcome a zero-sum game mentality that has for years hampered security negotiations in Cyprus. Putting emphasis on the security concerns of citizens, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, is thus an imperative that could unlock Cyprus’ potential in contributing to its inhabitants’ prosperity, regional stability, and international security.⁵³

BROADENING THE DISCUSSION ON SECURITY: ENTER “HUMAN SECURITY”

Questioning the hegemonic role of the state in academic inquiry was one of the effects of globalisation in the field of international relations. The end of colonialism and the Cold War meant that some key determinants of the international order, namely the United Kingdom and France as global powers, the Soviet Union and the East-West bipolar order, eclipsed, and the vacuum was meant to be filled by regional and global organisations, such as the United Nations, the European Union, the World Trade Organization and the nascent global civil society, aiming to promote different normative priorities. This was reflected in the introduction of new concepts and terms that tried to introduce the human dimension in debates over sovereignty, identity, and security that were normally monopolised by an emphasis on the state and its multifold reflections on the international arena. In the field of political economy, for example, novel definitions of the term “development” went beyond the adoption of economic growth (with an exclusive focus on the “gross domestic product”) as

its single indicator and suggested the consideration of qualitative factors, such as education, health, safety, and the environment. The term “human development” was coined in a path-breaking report published by the United National Development Programme (UNDP) that set the framework for later debates. In the field of international relations, the term “security” underwent similar conceptual revamp. The rising incidence and lethality of internal conflicts made it clear that conventional approaches were not helping prevent some of the most horrendous international crimes of our times. New forms of violence emerged and matched with recurring ones with catastrophic results. The threat of genocide in intrastate conflicts became a horrible reality in the case of Rwanda, as well as the failure of the international community to act proactively and forestall it. The Rwanda genocide for example was a clear case for that. Being an intrastate conflict, it failed to attract sufficient international response from the beginning of a horrendous crime which did not directly affect international security, as

regional borders remained unchallenged. Similarly, international involvement against the wars that crippled former Yugoslavia was delayed, because they were understood as mere intrastate conflicts. The plight of hundreds of thousands of citizens failed to attract military and diplomatic response for long, as international actors appeared unprepared for that. Violence in failing or failed states, such as Somalia or Afghanistan also posed a major challenge for the international community. In all these cases, the rights of distressed individuals were juxtaposed against the interests of neighbouring states and the willingness of the international community to undertake some responsibility for the plight of individuals. Recurrent refugee crises also put the question of protecting civilians high on the agenda of international organisations. Moreover, the rise of transnational dangers to international security, such as global terrorism and crime, global warming, and epidemic, have also contributed to a new approach. Increased international interest in human rights, the rise of a global public sphere and cosmopolitan views of citizenship as well as the growing debate on humanitarian intervention and the “responsibility to protect” have raised attention to the plight of endangered groups. The Kosovo war opened a whole new chapter in the debate about the responsibility of the international community to prevent genocide and ethnic cleansing with violent means, if necessary. In other words, states are no more alone in claiming security protection from the international community, and states are no longer considered the sole security threats. Security can be compromised by organisations such as al Qaeda, ISIS, and other phenomena, including climate change. The war in Syria has become a recent example of human security emergency, as it pushed millions of Syrian citizens below the threshold of poverty and exposed them to violent and non-violent security risks. Famine, infectious diseases, and environmental degradation were added to the already existing physical security risks and greatly contributed to the refugee wave in Europe.

Under these circumstances, the term “human security”, introduced in the 1994 UN Development Report, involves a deepening and broadening of the term “national security.” Deepening because it includes new definitions of the term “security” expanding beyond the military realm. Broadening because it no longer involves only the states but includes non-state actors and individuals. Security is

understood in its multiple dimensions and is viewed as having a universal, global scope, which recognises individuals as the point of reference. Citizens are no longer considered to be bystanders or “collateral” of the security debate; their interest is understood as critical in that respect. Human security can have multiple manifestations: it can be understood as economic, food, environmental, personal, health, cultural, community, ontological and political security. The core definition of security as “freedom of fear” was expanded to include “freedom from want.” This became clear in some of the path breaking documents that signalled the advent of the human security era included non-violent but pressing forms of insecurity. While this widening did not meet with unanimity in academic and policy circles and certainly not by governments, it paved the way to a novel way of thinking as far as the concept of national security was concerned. The “Responsibility to Protect” UN resolution also raised the bar as far as expectations regarding humanitarian interventions were concerned. Specialised UN Agencies such as the UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) undertook the duty of addressing human security concerns for vulnerable groups such as refugees, children, and women in the developing world. In that context the growing role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) was also pinpointed. NGOs have popularised the debate on introducing and promoting human security and exercised pressure for the promulgation of major legal initiatives. They also provided information and warning, channelled relief, and supported peace building and development missions throughout the globe. In other words, NGOs reconfirmed their role as a force not to be ignored as far as questions of human security were concerned.

Not all states showed the same interest in the emergence of human security as a new concept of international politics. Some states that qualified as “middle powers” in the international political arena saw human security as an opportunity to develop their international clout and appeared willing to provide leadership as far as the development of human security was concerned. Canada and Japan became examples of states which vowed to support diplomatically and financially the consolidation of the human security agenda and the development of international legal instruments. The European Union in its effort to develop its own foreign and security

52 Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security: From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

53 Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, “Reaching Convergence through Broadening the Debate: New Approaches to Security in the Cyprus Question”, *Friends of Cyprus Report*, no. 60 (2018), Costa Carras et al., *Discussion Paper on Security in a Federal Republic of Cyprus* (Athens: GTF Greek Members, 2017)

policy, also put special emphasis on human security. There were two significant legal developments that contributed to the consolidation of human security discussions.

The first was the signature in Ottawa of the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction. The Ottawa Treaty became a landmark event signalling the importance which the protection of individual human rights and security acquired against state interests and security—banning antipersonnel landmines aimed to protect not only foot soldiers but also the most vulnerable victims of interstate or civil warfare i.e., civilians who would be threatened by forgotten but active antipersonnel landmines decades after the end of warfare. The second was the signature in 1998 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The signature of the Rome Statute Treaty on the establishment of the International Criminal Court later renamed into World Court was another seminal step towards the better protection of human security. Establishing a permanent international organisation with the aim to oversee the implementation of international human rights agreements and punish individual violators was a major step in the direction of effective human rights protection. Hitherto a decision of the UN Security Council on the establishment of an ad hoc international court was necessary, yet the veto rights of the permanent members of the UN Security Council often meant that the establishment of such a court was not possible even in cases of sheer human rights violations.

On the other hand, it would be very premature to argue that traditional definitions of security have lost their appeal and influence. States still play a dominant role in international politics, and it would create false expectations about the ability of non-state actors, institutions, and individuals, to have a defining influence on international politics. It would be foolhardy to raise the expectations about the ability of the international community to forestall security threats against threatened groups and successfully intervene in order to protect human rights. States are still the leading actors in the definition of security interests and will most likely remain so in the foreseeable future. Sometimes excessive emphasis on human security may lead to false expectations on the side of affected individuals with respect to the ability of international organisations or the willingness

of the international community to intervene. Yet it is also important to underline that as a result the concept of security has been reformulated under the influence of post-Cold War developments. State and non-state actors are bound to work together to protect the security of both states and individuals. In other words, security now needs to be understood at multidimensional levels other than the state, and response to security issues, which pertains to ontological, developmental, environmental, and geographical issues, entailing a more comprehensive framework based on interdependence among state, non-state, and individual actors. In the case of Cyprus, this comprehensive framework could then allow the transcending of the self-perpetuating state and ethnic security dilemmas, through the development of cooperation, interdependence, trust-building and peace-making. In light of these, recent years have witnessed the promoting of the human security agenda on various platforms by several local and transnational civil society actors. Interpeace, a peace research non-governmental organisation (NGO) founded by the United Nations, has been among the main supporters of such initiatives. In the context of the Cyprus dispute, the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD), a local NGO that was recently established by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot peace researchers and quickly developed worldwide research activities in the field of peace research and conflict resolution has produced some important work on the topic. This emphasis coincided with increased optimism about the prospects of conflict resolution that the resumption of peace negotiations by Anastasiades and Akıncı had brought about. The importance of introducing human security into the Cyprus peace negotiations was highlighted by two publications, produced in the framework of the Security Dialogue Project of SeeD, Interpeace and the Berghof Foundation, a Berlin-based foundation that includes support for conflict resolution research to its mission. These publications attempted to raise attention about the need for rethinking the security conundrum in the Cyprus issue. They were based on preliminary findings from comprehensive public opinion surveys aiming to identify the security concerns of the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot community and suggest solutions that would incorporate human security in a manner that widens the security debate to include human security in all its manifestations and also allows for a new security architecture in Cyprus addressing the needs of both communities. This new

architecture should be able to respond effectively to both real and perceived threats, develop reactive and proactive measures, and aim to build endogenous resilience. These findings have confirmed that it is possible to address security concerns in a manner which benefits both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. In other words, it is possible to reconfigure key aspects of the security dilemmas of the Cyprus issue into a positive-sum game, where what is a gain for Greek Cypriot security is not automatically a loss for Turkish Cypriot security and vice versa. Bringing the citizen to the centre is an approach aiming to overcome the stalemate where conventional discussions about security are bound to end. This approach would not only dampen ethnonationalist

security dilemmas, and the difficulty that arises from convincing the leaderships of the two communities to relinquish absolute control in transitioning to a more post-national form of governance, but it could also, in the interim, facilitate greater communication, interaction and cooperation between the two communities through a new state of awareness and morality, and breathe new life to the stalled peace talks.

The following proposals provide a useful guideline for breaking the deadlock by fostering greater cooperation, and indeed reaching a security agreement if there is a new resumption of negotiations for a federal settlement.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

PROPOSAL I: Promoting Human Security

All recently published opinion surveys point towards the significance of perceptions with respect to the security concerns of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Security appears to be high on the list of issues that would affect the vote of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in a prospective peace settlement referendum. While each community fosters some specific security concerns, surveys also highlight commonalities. Insecurity appears to be embedded not always to bitter personal experience or memories but most frequently to information communicated through family, friends, the media, or public education. Viewing the Greek Cypriots or the Turkish Cypriots as existential threats or refusing to treat them as equals, or even worse, dehumanising them have greatly contributed to mutual mistrust. In view of that, human security would greatly improve if the two mainstream narratives about the two communities and the Cyprus question which victimise the one and scapegoat the other community were challenged. In other words, addressing the question of Cyprus security requires among other a change of hearts and minds

It is certainly commendable that NGOs such as SeeD and others have increasingly promoted a human security approach for the Cyprus issue, but such organisations must find some way of penetrating the decision-making processes at the Track I level. The main issue here is that local and state actors remain paralysed by the traditional security dilemmas, and unable to move beyond the military dialogues of insecurity. To make them do so, the NGOs that have thus far been marginalised from having a societal impact must carve out a space in which newer conceptions of security that prioritise human rights can begin shaping socio-political and economic spheres. Here, the framework provided by “confidence building measures” can provide a useful avenue, though only after some important modifications.

A number of “confidence building measures” (CBMs) have been introduced over the years with the aim of promoting reconciliation and trust on the island. In the 1990s, Turkish and Greek Cypriot officials worked together for the implementation of the Nicosia Sewerage Project, and the Nicosia Master Plan. On 23 April 2003, the Turkish Cypriot authorities opened the “Green Line” checkpoints. While the RoC declared the decision illegal, it nonetheless facilitated free movement. Residents have since made millions of “Green Line” crossings with very few incidents. In the following years, the two sides set up several “technical committees” to implement concrete confidence-building measures and provide technical input to the peace process. In May 2015, Nicos Anastasiadis and Mustafa Akıncı, agreed to further confidence building measures which involved the RoC sharing the coordinates of 28 minefields in Pentadaktylos/Beşparmak mountain range in the north, with the Turkish Cypriot authorities agreeing, in return, to no longer require Greek Cypriots to fill in visa forms at crossing points. In 2019, the sides concluded an agreement on the seamless use of mobile phones across the Green Line, through separate agreements concluded by the operators in both communities with a roaming hub in Switzerland, and with support from the United Nations and the European Commission, which has meant Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots have been able to use their mobile phones throughout the island. But mainly because of the diverging visions of the two sides on their objectives the CBMs have failed to reach their full potential in fostering collaboration on issues that affect the day-to-day lives of the island’s inhabitants. To be more specific, CBMs are increasingly conceived as a means to benefit, or undermine, one of the two sides.

The RoC has tended to view CBMs as “distractions” diverting attention from the substance of the problem, or as traps which aim for “recognition by stealth”, a reference to the “upgrading” of the status of the

TRNC. This reluctance on the part of the Greek Cypriot authorities was also noted by the UN Secretary-General Guterres in his 2021 report, lamenting that “in their efforts to promote closer cooperation between the communities, local and international actors continue to be confronted with challenges and obstacles linked to the status of the north and concerns relating to “recognition””.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the Turkish Cypriot leadership has rebuked UN efforts with its decision to partially open the coast of the fenced-off area of Famagusta (Varosha/Maras), an area that has remained closed for 48 years.

Against this backdrop, it is apparent that a new, bottom-up approach toward CBMs is needed in order to revive the UN process and find creative means to relaunch the negotiations. In this new understanding, NGOs could play a key role by formulating confidence-building proposals informed by the human security paradigm outlined above. The international community, including regional organisations such as the EU, also needs to facilitate this pivot and provide NGOs and other grassroots initiatives with the infrastructure for designing and promoting “out-of-the-box” confidence-building proposals, including the appointment of a special “Civil Society Coordinator” under the auspices of the UN Good Offices, to convene opportunities for more effective dialogue and collaborative working between civil society actors from the two communities on devising and advocating such proposals.⁵⁵

A good starting point in that direction could be the identification and targeting of thematic, island-wide challenges for which Track I dialogue appears deadlocked, or unable to produce tangible outcomes. Tackling the challenges of irregular migration is a case in point. While irregular migration on the island has been extensively discussed between the sides, including through the Deputy Special Adviser’s weekly meetings, divergences remain on how to effectively address this growing phenomenon. Authorities in the north continue to pursue and arrest the traffickers and accept the return of migrants intercepted in the

buffer zone with documentation indicating that they had travelled from the north. Nonetheless, it is also acknowledged that much more could be done to stem the flow of irregular migrants through the north, especially in view of the large number of asylum-seekers holding valid documents (student permits et al.) issued by the Turkish Cypriot authorities. It is also well-known that such intercepted migrants are often deported or sent to Turkey.⁵⁶ The RoC, for its part, is yet to improve the asylum procedures, with asylum-seekers presenting themselves to the police at the crossing points to seek asylum being refused such access and pushed back into the buffer zone.⁵⁷ RoC authorities have also recently approved a bill to deploy surveillance technology along the Green Line and a new private police force to deter irregular migrants and asylum-seekers from crossing south.⁵⁸ This lack of access to regular procedures contributes to an exponential increase in the number of persons who attempt to cross the Green Line irregularly in order to eventually gain access to asylum procedures, putting them at risk of exploitation and abuse by smugglers and traffickers. Indeed, in 2021, of the 13,235 asylum applicants, 11,488 (a staggering 87%) belonged to those who crossed irregularly from the northern part of Cyprus in order to seek asylum.⁵⁹ There is no doubt that the island has been facing a genuine crisis, and the Cyprus problem further exacerbates the problem. More alarming perhaps, an almost exclusive focus on judicial and policing measures adopted by the respective authorities is of a serious concern from a human rights perspective. A renewed effort in this regard could involve relevant civil society actors from the two communities to work together and mobilise their efforts to address the challenges and join the regular interaction between experts on both sides for consultations and convergence on the issue. This could allow local ownership of the island-wide efforts and serve to enhance the trust-building between the two communities. Such NGO involvement could also help stop the further securitisation of the issue that could feed harmful narratives promoting “zero-tolerance” of irregular migrants, or which assume that people crossing borders irregularly are a threat to the host society.

PROPOSAL II: Promoting Environmental Security

Within its area of 9.251 km² Cyprus hosts a remarkable environmental diversity. Nevertheless, economic and in particular real-estate and tourism development have taken their toll on the landscape and the environment of Cyprus. Nonetheless, tourism development and climate change have posed significant threats for the environmental security of Cypriots. Tourism accounts for a substantial part of the Cypriot GDP, and tourism development will probably boom at the event of a solution, when security concerns become dissipated, the property issue is resolved, and previously blocked private land becomes available for investment. This renders the protection of environmental security ever more important. In particular, the development of the tourism sector will most probably exert pressure on the most remote and pristine regions of Cyprus. Akamas and Karpasia/Karpaz on the westernmost and northeasternmost tip of Cyprus respectively, have due to their geographic position, remained unscathed by human activity, and preserved excellent natural wildlife habitats. Nonetheless, their future may come into question as tourism development looms as a threat for their fragmentation or very survival as intact ecosystems. The experience of tourism development in other parts of Cyprus such as Kyrenia/Girne and Ayia Napa has left a rather bitter taste of how detrimental tourism development to the Cypriot natural environment can be. The inclusion of both Akamas and Karpasia/Karpaz regions into the federal areas as national parks of a post-settlement Cyprus could become a swift way to protect environmental heritage for all Cypriots. The Akrotiri and Dhekeleia UK sovereign bases, which also include important wetlands that serve as habitats of numerous wildlife species, could also be included in the federal park provisions. Moreover, special protection measures should be taken in the core forest areas of Mount Olympus (Troodos) and Pentadaktylos/Beşparmak, which have also come under threat by intensive economic activity.

Alongside the destruction of coastline habitats, the threat of desertification is another major environmental security concern for Cyprus. Cyprus has experienced along with other Mediterranean regions declining rainfall and increasing average

temperatures over the last decades. Besides developing water desalination infrastructure powered from renewable energy sources, the water pipeline that has connected Turkey with the northern part of the island could at the event of a peace settlement provide substantial additional relief for the whole island. It should not, however, detract from the aim of optimal management and protection of the Cypriot forested areas and minimising water waste in agricultural and civilian uses.

The importance of environmental security lies in the fact that it affects humankind and its institutions anywhere and at any time. In this regard, preparatory work could be undertaken without waiting for a political breakthrough in the peace process. Indeed, the urgency of bi-communal cooperation on disaster management was made abundantly clear when wildfires engulfed large parts of the in the north in July 2022 and aircraft from both sides of Cyprus, as well as the British military on the island and Israeli personnel responded to calls for help to fight the fire. In view of Cyprus’ vulnerability to such wildfires, and the recent RoC proposal for the creation of “an Eastern Mediterranean firefighting hub”⁶⁰ aimed at quickly addressing huge summer wildfires that could overwhelm any single country, the formation of a “Bi-communal Rapid Reaction firefighting hub” that would coordinate, streamline and speed up the dispatching of firefighting teams, gear and aircraft to help combat massive wildfires in Cyprus and around the region, remains pertinent. The Firefighting Hub would be a bi-communal unit consisting of Cypriots from both communities and assigned with the duty to respond to crises with a squadron of firefighting aircraft. As well as conducting routine operations and emergency assistance in Cyprus (during wildfires and other emergency situations), the unit could also respond to calls from neighbouring countries. Subject to the agreement of all parties, the Hub could be based in the UN-controlled Nicosia airport in the Buffer Zone, where the Argentinian Air Force (ARGAIR) is located, or in the UK sovereign bases in Cyprus (where the UK Royal Air Force’s 84 squadron is based), namely on the island of Cyprus but outside the jurisdiction of the RoC.

54 UN Secretary General, *Report of the Secretary-General on His Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus* (New York: United Nations, 2019)

55 Maria Hadjipavlou, “The Cyprus Conflict: Root Causes and Implications for Peacebuilding”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 44, no. 3 (2007)

56 Live News, “Divided Cyprus, Island at Frontline of Migration Flow”, *France 24*, 1/12/2021

57 George Psyllides, “UN Chief Censures Cyprus over Treatment of Asylum Seekers”, *Cyprus Mail*, 01/01/2022

58 Newsroom, “Lawmakers Approve Private ‘Green Line’ Armed Cops”, *Kathimerini Cyprus*, 24/6/2022

59 UN Secretary General, *Report of the Secretary-General on His Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus* (New York: United Nations, 2022)

60 Menelaos Hadjicostis, “Cyprus Pitches Regional Firefighting Hub to Israel, Greece”, *AP News*, 9/5/2022

PROPOSAL III

Promoting Cultural Security

Cypriot cultural heritage has greatly suffered due to the conflict. Monuments that were viewed as belonging to the community residing on the other side of the Green Line were exposed to dereliction, conversion, or systematic looting. The looting of the mosaics of the Kanakaria Church in Lythrangomi/Boltaşlı has been only one example of how monuments have suffered since the beginning of the Cyprus conflict. Images of destroyed or derelict cultural heritage sites have been one of the strongest instruments in the hands of hardliners on both communities. Raising the threat of obliteration of cultural heritage of their respective community they claimed that the other community and their “motherland” remained an existential threat for their community.

Respect for Cyprus’ multicultural and multireligious heritage is essential and requires the developments of institutions designed to serve that purpose. The walled old towns of Nicosia and Famagusta both host numerous excellent specimens of medieval architecture that have suffered because of conflict-related dereliction or damage. Their restoration should not only rescue precious parts of Cypriot cultural heritage but would also be a significant contribution to world heritage preservation. Some key cultural and religious heritage sites could be better served through their inclusion to the responsibility of the federal government. The ruins of Salamis, Kourion, Soloi and Vouni, and important religious sites such as the Apostolos Andreas Monastery in Karpasia/Karpaz Peninsula, the Apostle Barnabas Monastery near Famagusta, and the Hala Sultan Tekke in Larnaca can all come under the protection of a federal authority aiming to treasure cultural and religious heritage of all Cypriots. This would make it clear that all cultural heritage sites should be recognised as elements of a common Cypriot heritage, as the Cypriot contribution

to the common European cultural heritage, not to be appropriated in a spirit of ethnic or religious triumphalism. Special attention should be devoted to the heritage of Cyprus’ smaller communities, Maronites, Armenians and Catholics.

Until then, it is hard to overestimate the significance of the work of the bi-communal committee for the protection of cultural and religious heritage led by Takis Hadjidemetriou/Sotos Ktoris and Ali Tuncay. While this committee has delivered invaluable services, yet much more is to be done, for all buildings facing an imminent threat of collapse to be rescued and restored. Particular attention should be paid to Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot religious monuments on the territory of the other constituent state under a federal settlement. This would be of great significance for many Greek and Turkish citizens and an excellent example for both Greece and Turkey.

In line with this, a broadening of the remit of the bi-communal committee on technical heritage to collaborate with relevant stakeholders from the island-wide civil society remains pertinent. A first step in that collaborative direction could be the developing of a comprehensive programme for heritage education that facilitates the engagement of youth in the promotion, protection, and transmission of heritage in all its forms. On a broader level, education plays a critical role in equipping young people with the skills and cultural literacy they need to understand their environment and make informed choices. The UNESCO-led “Unite4Heritage” global campaign is a case in point. Civil society and decision-makers alike contributed to the campaign to counter propaganda, sectarian agendas, and extreme violence. And in doing so, they helped bring culture to the core of the international security agenda, whilst promoting cultural security as a positive unifying force.

PROPOSAL IV

Promoting Greek-Turkish Conflict Resolution

While the Cyprus question has become an international dispute since the independence of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960, it is important not to underestimate its effect on Greek-Turkish bilateral relations. Since the 1950s the Cyprus question and

Greek-Turkish relations have been in a mutually constitutive and interacting relationship. The 1963-1964 crisis in Cyprus had a disastrous effect on Greek-Turkish relations and on the fate of the Greek minority in Turkey. Similarly, tensions in Greek-Turkish

relations were reflected on intercommunal relations. Cyprus’ membership application to the European Union was a big step for the disengagement of the Cyprus issue from bilateral Greek-Turkish relations, while the 1999 Helsinki EU Council decision provided a framework for the resolution of the Cyprus question and the referral of the Greek-Turkish maritime zone delimitation disputes to the International Court of Justice in the Hague on the basis of the international law of the sea by 2004. This was envisioned through awarding Turkey EU candidate status and triggering a Europeanisation and reform process which was hoped to give Turkey the incentive to support conflict resolution and accept the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice for its disputes with Greece in the Aegean. While these efforts failed and the opportunity to refer the disputes to the Hague in 2004 was missed, Greek-Turkish relations have ever since developed at the low politics level, despite the absence of conflict resolution in Cyprus and the long-standing bilateral disputes. EU-Turkey relations have recently soured, while Turkey has ever since claimed a stronger role in its Middle Eastern neighbourhood and got involved in multiple ways in the conflicts of Iraq, Libya, and Syria. The need to prevent

negative spillover effects from the Cyprus issue to Greek-Turkish relations and vice versa has remained strong. Maintaining a stable bilateral relationship and avoiding acts that would increase tension and insecurity is sine qua non for the achievement of a just settlement in Cyprus.

Nevertheless, there is one Greek-Turkish bilateral dispute that could have a significant impact on the conflict resolution process in Cyprus. This is the dispute of the delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone of the two countries, in particular in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁶¹ Given Greece and Turkey have completely different views on the delimitation of their EEZs in the region and given that the latter border with the EEZ of the Republic of Cyprus, it would be easily conceivable that a reunified Cyprus may face a deadlock if the Greek Cypriot constituent state sides with the Greek position and the Turkish Cypriot constituent state sides with the Turkish position. In light of this, it would be strongly advisable to resolve the issue of the delimitation of the Greek and Turkish maritime zones in the Eastern Mediterranean by means of adjudication before a final peace settlement in Cyprus, so a probable crisis is averted.

PROPOSAL V

Promoting Maritime Security in the Eastern Mediterranean

It is very important to consider the fragility of the transition period and the need that the international community makes a contribution to Cyprus security which would be commensurate to the sensitivity of the phase. Nevertheless, in light of the regional security situation revisiting the concept of “demilitarisation” of Cyprus as envisaged by the then leaders Spyros Kyprianou and Rauf Denktaş in the 1979 High Level Agreement should be revisited.

Cyprus could, under certain conditions, turn from a security liability to an asset for its European partners and the Eastern Mediterranean. Discussions on demilitarisation of the island have focused on the need to dispel fears that armed forces or ethnic militias may become threats for the security of Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots. Nevertheless, Cyprus security is threatened not only by domestic but also by regional threats. The eastern coasts

of Cyprus are not far from the Syrian coastline, where a scorching civil war has brought the country to rubble, led to the death of at least 400,000 people and to the displacement of millions. Refugee trafficking which is currently primarily taking place in the Central Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea could also become a major human security concern in the Eastern Mediterranean, which can only be addressed through efficient patrolling of the sea under the rules of international law. The concept of demilitarisation remains valid for Cyprus internally but may be counterproductive both for Cyprus and the EU if also implemented externally. Cyprus, following a peace settlement, can best serve European, Western, and global interests by contributing to regional stability by effectively policing its waters through the development of a naval force. Such a force could also serve the protection of the recently discovered natural gas fields and any other that may be discovered in the

⁶¹ Nicholas A. Ioannides, “Rights and Obligations of States in Undelimited Maritime Areas: The Case of the Eastern Mediterranean Sea” in Stephen Minas and H. Jordan Diamond, eds., *Stress Testing the Law of the Sea: Dispute Resolution, Disasters & Emerging Challenges* (Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2018)

future. Through policing in the Eastern Mediterranean sea lanes and through the monetisation of its own energy resources Cyprus can make a substantial contribution to European security. Given the nature of

the duties of the Cypriot coastguard and naval force, it would be advisable that it would be located in areas of the constituent states under a federal regime or directly federal territory.

PROPOSAL VI Promoting Energy Security

Energy security has become a recent addition to the security debate in Cyprus. Energy discussions in Cyprus have inevitably focused on natural gas since the discovery of the Aphrodite natural gas field within the EEZ of the Republic of Cyprus and hopes that more natural gas fields could be discovered in the coming years. The discovery of natural gas fields in the EEZ of the Republic of Cyprus, Israel and Egypt have generated optimism about the energy potential of the Eastern Mediterranean. Yet the Cyprus issue remains the most significant obstacle to energy cooperation and monetisation of resources at a regional level. The monetisation of the energy resources requires regional cooperation which will be greatly facilitated through a resolution of the Cyprus dispute.

Energy security is one of the fields that a Cyprus, following conflict resolution, could become an asset instead of liability for the European Union. Conflict resolution would pave the way for comprehensive exploration activities, the monetisation of energy reserves and the development of infrastructure for the transport of Cypriot, Egyptian and Israeli natural gas to the European market via a pipeline to Turkey or other commercially viable projects. In such a case, Cyprus would not only become self-sufficient in terms of energy, but also contribute to European energy security, and the ongoing efforts to cut energy dependency on Russia, through its natural gas exports to its European partners. The additional income from the export of hydrocarbons could contribute to meeting the financial costs of a peace settlement in Cyprus.

Meanwhile, this development of the hydrocarbon does not necessarily need to jeopardise the development

of renewable energy infrastructure in Cyprus. The European Green Deal has set a new framework for the transition from a hydrocarbons-based to a renewable energy-powered economy. Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean have unparalleled renewable energy resources to be tapped. As an EU member state Cyprus has committed to the Renewable Energy Directive which set the guidelines of a policy for promoting the production of energy from renewable sources. According to the EU Renewable Energy directive, all member states are required to fulfil at least 20 percent of its total energy needs with renewables by 2020. EU countries also need to ensure that at least 10 percent of their transport fuels come from renewable sources by the same year. A revised Renewable Energy Directive in 2018 was published with the aim of increasing the 20 percent mark, as the contribution of renewable energy to each member state's energy mix, to 32 percent by 2030. In its action plan, Cyprus has declared to fulfil by 2030 that 23 percent of share of energy generated in gross final energy consumption; 39 percent of heating and cooling consumption; 16 percent of electricity demand met by electricity and 7 percent of transport energy demand would be met by renewable energy sources.

Given its geographic position, Cyprus has all the potential to become a model at the EU level, as far as renewable energy economy is concerned. Solar, wind, and biomass power projects could attract more attention, and become one of the booming sectors of the economy of Cyprus following a settlement. Investing on renewables to meet and even exceed the EU thresholds would allow the country to export an ever-larger part of its natural gas production and thus make a more considerable contribution to European energy security.

PROPOSAL VII Promoting European Strategic Autonomy

From a European perspective, the war in Ukraine not only drew renewed attention to sources of diversification, in particular gas resources in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean, but also led to a geopolitical reawakening, that NATO remains at the heart of Europe's territorial defence, but also that Europeans should also develop their own capabilities and be able to conduct operations in the neighbourhood and beyond. There is also a growing awareness in both the EU and NATO, that the war in Ukraine cannot be handled geopolitically in the mere context of the Black Sea, but through a strengthened reengagement with the Eastern Mediterranean which could pave the way to a new relationship with Turkey. The Eastern Mediterranean has emerged as one of the regions where the European Union can put forward its strategic autonomy agenda.⁶² While Turkey's actions in the region, and around Cyprus in particular, are seen as “gunboat diplomacy” and an act of aggression towards EU member states, there is also an overall feeling that while remaining steadfast on issues of human rights and international law, the EU should not give up efforts for a more functional partnership with Turkey in the context of the war in Ukraine. Also depending on domestic political developments in Turkey, these arrangements could include high-level dialogue, the upgrading of the Customs Union agreement and the renewal of the 2016 refugee deal. The EU could thus use this opportunity to mend fences with Turkey and tackling the problems that are found in the Eastern Mediterranean would also stop the dangerous transatlantic rift in its tracks.

For its part, Turkey also knows too that it is ultimately the EU that holds the key to unlocking the Eastern Mediterranean conundrum. RoC and Greece are member states, and Turkey itself is still within the EU accession framework. The EU countries have already offered Turkey a “positive agenda”, and there is no reason for Brussels not to continue pressing on with a wider, regional dialogue in the Eastern Mediterranean while advancing cooperation with Turkey within

that positive agenda. Turkey's assertiveness in the Eastern Mediterranean may have galvanised a certain penchant within the EU for a more punitive approach toward Ankara. However, it is also understood that such measures are likely to consolidate a stalemate; in contrast to France, Germany has been clearly interested in reaching a balance in the Greece-Turkey confrontation. Despite past rhetoric, Paris and Ankara could seek ways to reduce tension in their bilateral relations. Recent months have given ample indication that a rapprochement has been taking place between Paris and Ankara in light of the war in Ukraine.⁶³ Paris could also use its close ties with Athens and the other EMGF states to emphasise the importance of dialogue. Germany, meanwhile, should continue to use its economic and political influence over Turkey to ensure Ankara remains committed to its de-escalatory approach, and seek ways to inject a positive dynamic to the overall EU-Turkey relationship that is sorely lacking. The EU agreeing to expedite the new tranche of its migration deal with Turkey, or the start of negotiations over the modernisation of the Customs Union could also breathe new life to peace talks in Cyprus.

Even a better step in that direction would be to renew efforts toward convening an Eastern Mediterranean Conference which remains the only concrete proposal that both EU and Turkey say could reduce tensions and open a channel for dialogue.⁶⁴ This conference could also offer a useful platform to inject new life into the Cyprus problem, which remains one of the main bottlenecks for a strategic engagement with Turkey. It is true that a number of regional actors including Israel and Egypt expressed reservations toward the Turkish calls for the multilateral conference on the Eastern Mediterranean when the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, floated the idea in late 2020. Still, another window of opportunity may soon open, as more sustainable forms of energy economy in the region are now moving centre-stage. The recent expansion of renewable energies, and

62 Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, “The European Union in the Eastern Mediterranean in 2020: Whither Strategic Autonomy”, *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* (2021)

63 Louis Dugit-Gros, Pierre Morcos and Soner Cagaptay, *French-Turkish Relations: Foes or Friends?* (Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2022)

64 Mustafa Çıraklı, “High Time for Dialogue in the Eastern Mediterranean”, *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, Vol. 20 (2020a)

the planned expansion of power interconnections in particular, can now offer incentives to all sides in devising a new, adequate framework to coordinate the wider energy transition in the Eastern Mediterranean beyond the hydrocarbons. While the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF), which was established to promote regional cooperation in the field of natural gas⁶⁵, has taken up this issue in its summits, it is still beset by its strained relationship with Turkey. For its part, Turkey stands deeply opposed to the construction of the EuroAsia Connector, a 2,000MW electricity highway connecting the national electricity grids of Israel, Cyprus, and Greece through a 1,208 km subsea cable, which could, in part, run through what Turkey claims to be its continental shelf. Another key project is the EuroAfrica Interconnector, which is set to connect the electricity grids of Egypt, Cyprus, and Greece through a 1,396 km subsea cable, yet faces the same Turkish resistance. To create the politically favourable conditions for the construction of the EuroAsia and EuroAfrica Interconnectors, the EU could initiate a constructive

exchange with Ankara through a new framework that could be devised with the convening of an Eastern Mediterranean Conference on Energy Transition and also provide a new impetus for negotiations on the Cyprus problem. The EMGF can also become a crucial actor in that direction. Turkey’s ultimate participation in the EMGF,⁶⁶ following the resumption of peace talks in Cyprus, would facilitate mutual trust and further boost regional cooperation prospects.

Such a framework is also likely to prove a cornerstone of the EU security policy in the Eastern Mediterranean. The resolution of the Cyprus issue and advanced cooperation between Cyprus, Greece and Turkey will unlock EU’s strategic potential in the region being a fundamental new element in its regional policy in and towards the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. It could help the EU face the challenges of state failure, refugee and migrant movements and of course global terrorism and crime, while securing freedom of navigation, trade, and development of the energy upstream and downstream sectors in the Eastern Mediterranean.

While there are other conflicts and acute crises in the Eastern Mediterranean, Cyprus holds the key to consolidating a robust Black Sea-Mediterranean line, and it could usher in a new period of stability, providing momentum for the resolution of other bilateral and transnational conflicts. It is an ambitious task which is complicated further by the policy of “equal sovereignty” that Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership now favour, but stakes are too high for the West to sit by.

Disputes that revolve around the Cyprus issue, and the Aegean, have been costly to NATO, obstructing, delaying, or causing the cancellation of military exercises, impacting alliance readiness and coordination, and ensuring that the alliance has been less than fully coordinated and prepared for operations in the region. Using its leverage within NATO, Ankara prevents high-level formal meetings between NATO and the EU’s Political and Security

Committee (PESCO) on the grounds that Cyprus does not have any security clearance from NATO. Just as the RoC has the upper hand in the EU, where Turkey is not a member, Turkey has the upper hand in NATO, where the RoC is neither a member of the alliance nor of NATO’s Partnership for Peace, a program of bilateral and security cooperation between individual countries and NATO. As a result, NATO and the EU cannot even talk to each other. Given the magnified demands of the current security environment, especially those of Russian aggression in Ukraine, this is no longer tolerable. A reunified Cyprus would thus remove a significant barrier to better cooperation between the EU and NATO – better still, Cyprus could join NATO rather than a potential source of conflict between Greece and Turkey. In so doing, Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus could then all work together, with the US and European allies, to carry out the redirection of NATO’s strategic mission to counter Russia.

PROPOSAL VIII Promoting Transatlantic Security

As Ukraine war opens new channels of dialogue among the pillars of the Western security architecture, it sets a fresh ground of potential cooperation between Washington and Ankara. The United States has had to include Russia to its security radar in addition to China, and this new global power struggle forces Washington to consider two things: first, rethinking the former alliances that exclude Turkey as a NATO member, and second, using the recent political normalisation wave that emerged between the countries on the Black Sea-Mediterranean line in favour of its global struggle. It is true that US relations with Turkey are at a precarious state due to its purchase of Russian S-400 missile in 2017, and the US has hedged its bets in that regard by upgrading its defence relationship with Greece and with the RoC. The recent amendment to the US-Greece Mutual Defence Cooperation Agreement (MDCA) which allows US forces to train and operate in Greek territory, extends the cooperation by allowing the

presence of US forces in four more military areas, including two army camps in central and northern Greece and a naval base on the island of Crete.⁶⁷ The new US access facilities at Alexandroupolis are also an important asset that could help NATO bypass Turkish straits in transporting men and material overland to allies in the East, and even Ukraine, should the need arise.

But it is important to note that Turkey too remains an important NATO ally and continues to host US bases. Turkey’s military capabilities, and its recent diplomatic sobriety toward the West further underscore its importance for the alliance. In this vein, the US would do well to consider resetting its relationship with Turkey, with the aim to double down on efforts to solve the Cyprus problem, including with the appointment of a special Cyprus coordinator, a position that was last held by the late U.S. Ambassador Thomas Weston from 1999 to 2004.

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66 Pınar İpek and V. Tibet Gür, “Turkey’s Isolation from the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum: Ideational Mechanisms and Material Interests in Energy Politics”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 23, no. 1 (2022)

67 Derya Gülnaz Özcan, “Us Military Gains Access to More Bases in Greece”, *Anadolu Agency*, 13/5/2022

CONCLUSION

The Cyprus problem has been aptly compared to a padlock requiring four keys, held respectively by the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriots, Greece, and Turkey. This situation has been one of the biggest obstacles to reaching a deal, as it implied that any of the four parties could block the resolution of the conflict. Given the electoral cycle and other political developments in the four stakeholders, it has appeared very difficult to find a window of opportunity where all involved parties had no domestic political priorities and were willing to invest political capital on the resolution of the Cyprus question.

Crucial time has been lost. Recurrent delays have understandably demoralised peace activists on both sides. The challenge now facing Cypriots and the international community alike is to take steps that would facilitate a final settlement through a quick resumption of the negotiations following the presidential elections. Working on the security chapter along the proposals made in this report is one way. The implementation of confidence-building measures (CBMs) which have long been discussed and could boost optimism and highlight the benefits of reunification should take priority. The opening of new checkpoints, the facilitation of communication between the two communities, the return of the ghost town of Varosha to its displaced residents are only some of the measures that could generate a positive momentum on the path to conflict resolution. Moreover, the public discourse on all sides of the conflict has hitherto focused disproportionately on the risks and less of the opportunities of a peace settlement in Cyprus. A media campaign which would inform Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot, Greek and Turkish public opinion about the major potential benefits of conflict resolution would also be essential.

One cannot overstate the positive contribution that the European Union could make in terms of ending the stalemate as far as security is concerned. The development of the defence capabilities of the European Union has been one of the issues that has attracted attention as one of the ways the Brexit

could be turned into an opportunity for further integration. Cyprus is an excellent case for testing the EU determination to finally develop its foreign and security capabilities and make a critical contribution to the resolution of one of the longest-lasting conflicts. It would be inaccurate to argue that all risks can be eliminated before a peace settlement. The imponderabilia always lurk, and it is possible that a Cyprus peace settlement may face unpredictable obstacles. This is, however, no reason for inertia. It is unquestionable that the status quo offers no security or prosperous future for all parties. Those who think that instead of a federal solution, it would be desirable to negotiate an agreed partition of the island and the mutual recognition of two states, one Greek Cypriot and one Turkish Cypriot in Cyprus that would become EU member states overlook the weak and contested statehood of Northern Cyprus, the unwillingness of the European Union to set a precedent of endorsing partition, as well as the fact that such negotiations would probably turn even more cumbersome and complicated than the current negotiation process. In case the current impasse continues, risks that could culminate into Northern Cyprus being absorbed by Turkey would continue threatening regional stability and security. The failure of the negotiation process at Crans Montana, Switzerland in early July 2017 pointed that it was impossible to overcome the current status quo without transformative leadership. A fresh look on security issues could become a crucial tool to overcome seemingly intractable disagreements and make a substantial contribution to the security architecture of a post-settlement Cyprus. This would require, however, the resolve and commitment of all involved parties, not least of whom the community leaders.

There are a number of difficulties and challenges that the leaders of the two communities need to overcome through negotiations; they also have to secure the blessing of the guarantor countries over this negotiated settlement and convince their communities for a final seal of approval. On the other hand, there now appears a narrow window of opportunity, created by the events in Ukraine, which

could nonetheless offer a new momentum for a win-win deal by allowing greater room for manoeuvre for the key players, local as well as external.

For one, Turkey has recently shown some willingness to improve its relations with several of its neighbouring states. It is true that Ankara appears to be “sitting on the fence” regarding Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. On the one hand, it justifies its non-participation in the EU’s sanctions regime with a number of economic and security considerations. In this regard, Turkish airspace remains open to Russia. On the other hand, Turkey is acting in close coordination with NATO and has repeated its firm commitment to Ukraine’s territorial integrity and sovereignty on numerous occasions, and closed the Straits to warships from any country, whether or not they border the Black Sea. Meanwhile, it is also acting as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia, and it played a key role in the brokering of the recent “grain corridor” deal that was welcomed by the international community. While Ankara has some way to go before restoring trust with European capitals, and Washington, this is nonetheless a welcome development that indicates Turkey could well be ready for a deal in Cyprus. It is true that the upcoming presidential elections in 2023 brings about a lot of uncertainty. At the same time, seasoned observers have been suggesting for some time that the ruling AKP and President Erdogan himself needs a success story to support their popularity that has been in decline with the worrying downturn of the Turkish economy. Indeed, The recent spat over the NATO membership of Finland and Sweden should also be seen from this perspective of a Turkish administration, eager to end its isolation whilst boosting its popularity at home and without losing face. The 11th hour decision of Turkish President Erdogan to lift his objection over these countries’ membership, was branded in Turkey as a “diplomatic victory”. Ankara has also been stepping-up its regional rapprochement efforts with Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, but also with Israel and Armenia that have traditionally evoked strong nationalist sentiments.

The RoC, for its part, has been reluctantly coming to terms with the likely shelving of its flagship EastMed Project. Facing even more limited export options, Greek Cypriot authorities are now considering a “floating LNG terminal” (FLNG) solution to export gas to Europe and the rest of the world. But from a commercial and conflict resolution perspective, this represents a lost opportunity as the FLNG would not

bear the economic and political fruits associated with a pipeline, that could make a solution to the Cyprus problem more appealing. More worryingly perhaps, the monetisation of gas is likely to further provoke Turkey to continue with its own exploration and eventual drilling activities questioning the viability of all monetisation projects.

The EU, for its part, may need the Eastern Mediterranean gas in the short term, but its long-term interests lie in meeting its climate and energy policy targets. In other words, offshore gas is likely to soon lose relevance in favour of renewable energy and electricity interconnection. Besides, the EU is aware that a functioning relationship with Turkey is of primary significance. This is due to the expansive economic and societal linkages between Turkey and the EU, the geographical proximity (laid bare during the 2016-17 refugee crisis), the volatile security situation in the EU’s Southern Neighbourhood, and more recently, the war in Ukraine. The resolution of the Cyprus problem would offer the EU the opportunity toward building a sustainable relationship with Turkey based on mutual trust in line with its economic, political but also strategic interests. Russia clearly sees Turkey as a strategic exit in overcoming the difficult economic situation that it has put itself in and pushing Ankara closer to Russia’s orbit would bear significant strategic perils.

The US policymakers too are in need for a respite from Greek-Turkish skirmishes that only serve to detract attention and energy from dealing with Russia. The US in the past, focused on maintaining the delicate status-quo between Greece and Turkey, and chose to hedge its bets for Athens when relations with Ankara got tense. There is nonetheless a growing realisation in Washington that keeping Greek-Turkish tensions at bay is growing harder, and so is Ankara’s frustration to be kept on the margins in relation to commercial, military, and political developments in the Eastern Mediterranean. At the same time, the US would clearly benefit from a settlement in Cyprus that would cement the integrity of NATO by removing a significant thorn from full normalisation of Greece-Turkey relations.

In summary, while it is essential that political vision and leadership comes from the island, efforts to reach a settlement still have to be supported and nurtured by the two critical outside actors, the US and the European Union, as both Washington and Brussels

have vested interests in finding win-win solutions with positive spillover effects on their current security dilemmas. As the saying goes, “never waste a good crisis”. The opportunities for solving the Cyprus problem which flow from crisis that now faces the

Western alliance amidst the war in Ukraine are too good to be missed. It is thus of utmost importance that the international community, together with the local actors that strive for a settlement, urgently seize upon the momentum.

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