

# **A Critique on Contemporary Turkish Foreign Policy towards Cyprus and in the Eastern Mediterranean**

By

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# Author's Declaration

I hereby declare, that all the data used in this work, have been obtained and processed according to the rules of the academic ethics as well as the laws that govern research and intellectual property. I also declare that, according to the above-mentioned rules, I quote and refer to the sources of all the data used and not constituting the product of my own original work.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "C Patronidis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and a decorative flourish at the end.

**Constandine Patronidis**

# Abstract

The discovery of natural gas in the Eastern Mediterranean has the potential to spur an energy boom in the region, which could act as a catalyst in uniting the divided island of Cyprus; but, this phenomenon has further created tension between two states in the region, the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey, the illegal occupiers of northern Cyprus. This may have contributed to the recent stalled peace negotiations in 2017, in which Turkey was adamant on retaining its nearing five-decade presence on the island. The objective of this thesis is to argue that Turkey, and its contemporary foreign policy towards the Republic of Cyprus, has a hostile nature and poses as a threat to regional stability. First, this thesis will discuss the internal disorder in Turkey, which has repercussions on the course of its foreign policy. Secondly, this thesis will examine Turkey's means of conduct on two contemporary issues, which have been at the centre of its foreign policy towards Cyprus: the discovery of natural gas off the coast of Cyprus and the failure in UN-sponsored negotiations between 2015 and 2017. Finally, an interpretation of Turkey's foreign policy will be offered, with certain questions being looked at in greater detail: how is Turkey initiating conflict in the region? are peaceful means simply not an option for President Erdogan? are there underlying motives in Turkey's behaviour? Through qualitative research and the use of numerous secondary sources, the contribution of this project is that the traditional relations between political states in the region have shifted from 'zero-sum' to 'win-win'. Therefore, Turkey's overly

aggressive behaviour towards the Republic of Cyprus may isolate it in a region that continues to see the formation of positive relations.

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# Introduction

This thesis will be a critique of Turkey's contemporary foreign policy, with a specific focus on its policy towards the Republic of Cyprus. The objective of this thesis is to argue that Turkey's contemporary foreign policy raises hostilities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its current foreign policy approach is unique and unpredictable, and this thesis will offer an interpretation of this intriguing situation. In many instances, Turkey's actions can be deemed as hostile and cynical. Is President Erdogan's underlying method in achieving national interest accomplishments through exploitation and conflict? Are peaceful means in dealing with contemporary issues simply not an option for the Turkish government?

The definition of foreign policy, by the Cambridge dictionary, is a government's policy in dealing with other countries (Cambridge University Press, 2008). To elaborate, it consists of self-interest strategies from a state, to safeguard or pursue national interests within the international relations environment. National interests are of paramount importance, therefore, foreign policies are devised through high-level decision-making processes. National interest objectives through foreign policy can occur through peaceful means, but as well, through exploitation or conflict. The head of government, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, plays a pinnacle role in domestic and foreign policy initiatives (Kalin, 2011).

The Republic of Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' synopsis of Turkey's foreign policy states "Turkey conducts its foreign policy guided by the principle of 'Peace at



Home, Peace in the World'. Furthermore, "Turkey has a comprehensive, peace-oriented, and principled vision and is committed to making use of all its means and capabilities towards this twin objective" (Rep of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs n.d.). This thesis will challenge this statement through evidence of the current events in Cyprus.

This thesis will define 'contemporary' as 2016 to present-day (March 2019), which comprises of the repercussions of the 2016 coup d'etat and the 2017 referendum, which enhanced the powers of the president of Turkey. This thesis will focus on two current issues, which have been the focal point of Turkey's foreign policy towards Cyprus: the discovery of oil fields off the coast of Cyprus and the failure in peace negotiations that broke down in 2017. These two issues have been ongoing for longer than the recent coup d'etat, therefore, a discussion of events occurring within previous decades will be necessary, whereas the focus will be placed on events taking place in recent years.

The methodology of this thesis is the use of secondary sources, that are primarily taken from the past few years, as this topic focuses on the time period between the July 2016 coup d'etat in Turkey to March 2019. The issues presented in this thesis continue to be a trending topic among various international organizations and news outlets, and has received plenty of differing opinions from those alike. Many of the research articles that are used in this thesis are opinionated but still provide an in-depth summary of the relations occurring in its present state.

This thesis uses a careful selection of articles, newspaper articles and online journals, that include interviews and statistics, to support the thesis objective. Many of the sources used were obtained electronically but still considered credible, although not directly categorized as 'scholarly'. Many peer-reviewed journals, unfortunately, have yet to cover these events that have recently transpired. Nonetheless, many of the sources obtained are made with factual evidence that supports the thesis statement and outlines the intentions of the stakeholders involved.

The research was done with parameters that make it contemporary and still present. A qualitative research approach was undertaken, as the main objective of this thesis is an interpretation of the subject matter. Included are varying secondary sources that outline opinions and perspectives on the matter, which offer the reader an understanding of underlying motives and insight on the political situation. Combined with, educational materials provided during the courses of the masters in 'International Public Administration', especially 'International Law' and 'International Relations Theory', which were also crucial to providing an understanding of the context.

This thesis paper will argue that Turkey, and its contemporary foreign policy towards the Republic of Cyprus, has raised hostilities in the Eastern Mediterranean. To make this claim, the paper will be organized into three separate sections, with corresponding subsections.

The first section will discuss the political situation in Turkey, in which recent developments have caused domestic instability, that has repercussions on the course of Turkey's foreign policy.

The second section will state the ongoing conflicts and affairs, in which Turkey is acting as an aggressor towards the Republic of Cyprus. The two contemporary political situations are: Turkey's intent to remain in illegally occupied Cyprus and Turkey laying claim to a stake of the natural gas discovered off the coast of the island.

The final section will be an interpretation and discussion. This section examines Turkey's hostile approach, that is further enhanced by an ever-growing autocratic president. Insight from international relations theory will also be discussed to offer rationale on Turkey's behaviour, which will be proven to revolve around an offensive realist strategy. Moreover, this course of Turkey's aggression poses a threat to regional stability, and recommendations for how Cyprus and other international actors may act to deter Turkey, will be presented.

# Section I

## 1. Turkey's Domestic Political Situation

### 1.1. Contemporary Turkey and its Importance

It is important to discuss the security and stability of contemporary Turkey as this coincides with the manner in which it conducts its foreign policy. Neo-classical realism theory protrudes that a state's specific goals within a given power distribution and its strategies for pursuing them will also depend on unit level factors, such as its ideological priorities, societal pressures, and the state's ability to enact policy and extract resources to implement them (Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell 2016, p.84-85). Meaning, that the approach that the Turkish government takes domestically is dependent on the approach the government takes internationally, and vice-versa. Erdogan's autocratic form of leadership and hard-line policies in an attempt to mitigate Turkey's security problems has been conveyed in the Turkish government's overbearing and 'neo-Ottoman' behaviour in foreign policy. A provocative foreign policy is also a political strategy in rallying support amongst the Turkish populace. Engineering unity through rhetoric, nationalist sentiments and the labelling of neighbours as enemies to the state, as President Erdogan has done on many occasions, are tools in garnering support from Turkish voters. Furthermore, the domestic climate in Turkey shapes the perception that

other political actors have on the country. Turkey's descent to authoritarianism and away from democratic values, that are most prominent in the West, correlates to its worsened relations with the West and NATO. The European Union and the US have issued numerous stern warnings and criticisms towards Turkey (Gardner, 2018). Certain phenomenons like the Turkish Lira crisis may force it to seek economic exploitation at the expense of its neighbours, as seen in Cyprus. The domestic strife may also encourage Turkey to strengthen its military, which could contribute to an increase in Turkey's military presence in Cyprus (Andreou, 2018). A government's policy initiatives and conduct of behaviour tend to be closely associated at a domestic and international level.

The political situation in contemporary Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan can be described as unstable. Certain phenomenons such as domestic political strife, jihadist terrorism linked to the war in Syria, and the resumption of the Kurdish conflict have severely deteriorated security in the country. Turkey, at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, has been considered an emerging regional power. Turkey's location is important as the country neighbours war-torn Syria, which includes Western military intervention, and occupies a central role in the issue of migratory flows to Europe, the global fight against terrorism and the security of the south-east flank of NATO (Merz, 2018). The subsequent sections discuss the internal political climate in Turkey, its deteriorating security and stability, and the fierce responses from an autocratic government; which have been influential in its foreign policy approach, towards the Republic of Cyprus and in general.

## 1.2. Geography & History of Turkey

The Republic of Turkey is located in south-west Asia with a small 3% of its territory, known as Eastern Thrace, in south-eastern Europe. The Asia Minor peninsula, located between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, forms the main part of the country. Turkey's position at the crossroads of Europe and Asia makes it a country of significant strategic importance; particularly, as Turkey acts as the gateway into Europe from the Middle East and Asia for the inflow of goods, people and resources. The Republic of Turkey, with Ankara as its capital, is a parliamentary, secular, unified, constitutional democracy with a diverse cultural heritage. The official language of the country is the Turkish language, spoken as a mother tongue by about 85% of the population. Turks constitute 70-75% of the population. Minority populations include Kurds (18%) and others (7-12%). The overwhelming majority of the population is Muslim (Pope & Pope, 2012).

The Republic of Turkey was founded through a national resistance and liberation movement, which would arise due to the occupation of the Allied forces after the First World War, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. Mustafa Kemal was an Ottoman military commander who mobilized Anatolia in a quest for Turkish self-determination and national independence. The Turks were capable of forcing the allies out of Anatolia and successful in the war for national liberation. The Turkish National Liberation War lasted four years (1919-1922) and Ataturk was victorious, militarily and diplomatically. The newly established Turkish government, under President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk,

would sign the Lausanne Peace Treaty on July 24, 1923. This treaty was signed with Great Britain, France, Greece, Italy and others, and would recognize the international borders of Turkey, guaranteeing its complete independence. The Republic of Turkey was proclaimed on October 29, 1923. (Pope & Pope, 2012).

Turkey remained neutral for most of World War II but entered the final phase with the Allies on February 23, 1945. On June 26, 1945, Turkey became a founding member of the United Nations (UN). The difficulties faced by Greece and Turkey in suppressing a communist insurgency, coupled with the demands of the Soviet Union on military bases in the Turkish Straits, pushed the United States (US) to proclaim the 'Truman Doctrine' in 1947. The doctrine outlined the US' intentions to guarantee Turkey's security and resulted in large-scale US military and financial support. Both countries were included in the 'Marshall Plan' to rebuild its economies in 1948 and then became founding members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1961. After participating in the United Nations forces in the Korean War, Turkey joined North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, becoming a stronghold against the Soviet expansion in the Mediterranean (Pope & Pope, 2012).

Following the liberalization of the Turkish economy in the 1980s, the country has achieved stronger economic growth and greater political stability. Turkey has transitioned from unilateralism politics to multi-party democracy over the decades after the Second World War, which was interrupted by military coups in 1960, 1971, 1980, 1997 and most recently, 2016 (Pope & Pope, 2012). The recent coup holds

significance, as on the 15th to 16th of July 2016, an attempt was made to overthrow President Erdogan, which continues to have repercussions in Turkey to this day.

### 1.3. International Status of Turkey

Turkey has the 15th largest gross domestic product (GDP) in Purchasing Power Standards and the 17th largest nominal GDP. Turkey is a member of the Council of Europe, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Group of 20 of the largest economies. Turkey entered into negotiations for full membership with the European Union (EU) in 2005; however, negotiations have stalled. Turkey is also a member of the Turkish-Cypriot Cooperation Council (established in 2009), the International Organization of Turkish Culture (founded in 1993), the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Organization for Economic Cooperation (Pope & Pope, 2012). Turkey's numerous diplomatic and economic initiatives have demonstrated its push towards being influential in the region. In addition, Turkey has reached the world's 14th top military spending position in 2013 and the Turkish army is NATO's second largest (Baltos, Vidakis & Balodis, 2017).

### 1.4. The Current Party in Power: The AKP

As the AKP leads Turkey and ultimately decides on the foreign policy initiatives the country will take, this political party has an effect on the Republic of Cyprus. The



AKP (Justice and Development Party) is a conservative party that leans right on the political spectrum and deeply rooted in Islamic democracy and social conservatism. Almost two decades since the AK party was founded, Erdogan has gravitated towards tendencies of increased authoritarianism, while violating human rights and influencing 'Islamisation' of a secular society (Merz, 2018). A failed military coup that took place in July 2016, created an immensely tense situation and a more polarized Turkish society. In response to the coup, the Turkish government carried out a purge on a multitude of public sector workers, journalists and citizens. The domestic political strife occurred at a time when jihadist terrorism was frequent inside the country, most often inspired by the war in Syria. In addition, the Kurdish conflict has resumed since 2015 (Merz, 2018). These events were synchronous with one another and strongly deteriorated stability and security in Turkey within recent years.

The AKP, co-founded by Erdogan, democratically came to power in 2002. As a result of various reforms, Turkey first experienced strong economic growth and adopted a pro-Western stance. Negotiations for official membership opened in 2005 between Turkey and the European Union. The refined image of Turkey began to crumble with the first signs of an autocratic transition from Erdogan, which was manifested in the form of arrests and lawsuits against political opponents. A turning point came in the summer of 2013 when events around Istanbul's Gezi Park were repressed with violence. Initially sparked due to the urbanization of green spaces, the protests had focused on Erdogan, his authoritarian tendencies and the creeping 'Islamisation' of Turkish society (Merz, 2018). Turkey was publicly criticized for the way it suppressed the protest movement by

the United States and the EU, which interrupted the accession negotiations (Waterbury, 2017). The propensity of Erdogan's AKP government to undermine democratic and secularist values, rooted in the Turkish Constitution, have intensified to having a systematic character. Pressures on civil society and the media have escalated, access to various social networks (Twitter, Facebook) is regularly restricted and laws were adopted for Erdogan to gain executive control (Waterbury, 2017). These developments have led to Turkey drifting from democracy and a strong polarization of its society.

Repeated conflict had also broken out between different interest groups within the Turkish state, particularly between the AKP and the Gulen Islamic Movement, a transnational Islamic social movement and a former ally. The Gulen Islamic Movement, founded by Fethullah Gulen, is a group that advocates for Islamic democracy. The Gulen supporters were initially allied with the AKP and held positions in many governmental departments but Erdogan would later blame the movement for corruption scandals that would ruin relations (Merz, 2018).

## 1.5. Turkey's Coup D'etat of 2016

On the night of July 15 to 16, 2016, a military coup was attempted against the Turkish government and President Erdogan. Accusing Gulen of this attempted overthrow of power, Erdogan took action against alleged supporters of the movement, which included massive waves of arrests in the Turkish administration. A few days after the coup commenced, tens of thousands of civil servants were suspended or apprehended. Among those arrested, were more than 160 of Turkey's military generals

and admirals. The declared state of emergency led to a total of 120,000 public servants being suspended with as many as 40,000 imprisoned. According to observers, the government used the coup attempt as a pretext to justify an authoritarian government while targeting political opponents (Merz, 2018). The coup d'etat had an overall destabilizing effect, which may have limited the capacity of the Turkish state to cope with other domestic security issues such as terrorism and the resumption of the Kurdish conflict.

## 1.6. Spillover from the Syrian Civil War

An additional security problem Turkey currently faces is that of the jihadist militias fighting in Syria as a result of the spillover from the Syrian Civil War. Until mid-2015, Turkey was accused of passively and even actively supporting jihadist groups operating in Syria, including the Islamic State (IS) (Merz, 2018). Turkey has been criticized for turning a blind eye on the migratory flow of people and the movement of material in and out of Turkey, buying crude oil from the IS, and even providing support in the form of weapons and military equipment (Merz, 2018). It is difficult to verify independently to what extent these allegations are true. However, Turkey's potential support for jihadist militias could to some extent be explained by the strategic imperatives that Ankara is pursuing in Syria. In some areas, and especially at the beginning of the war in Syria, there was convergence between Turkish interests in Syria and those of jihadist militias, including the IS, from 2013 and on. The IS delivered a fierce military campaign against Syrian Kurds in the north of Syria, along the Turkish-Syrian border. After numerous

conflicts, the IS had taken control of the regions in Syria mainly populated by Kurds, and proclaimed an autonomous de facto zone of Rojava, along the Turkish border. Ankara considers militia groups composed of Syrian Kurds (YPG and YPJ) as terrorists, likewise to their stance on the Kurdish militia group in Turkey (PKK). For this reason, it was vitally important to weaken Syrian Kurds for reasons affiliated to the 'Kurdish question' in Turkey. An uprising of Kurds in Syria could create a cross-border united uprising from the minority group and further insurgency for the Kurds in south-eastern Turkey. In addition, jihadists including the IS, have been a strong opponent to the Assad regime in the Syrian conflict, a regime which Turkey had clearly taken a stand to at the beginning of the Syrian uprisings in 2011. Nevertheless, Turkey has substantially hardened its position with the IS from mid-2015. The pressure that the United States and its allies have maintained against Turkey to take more aggressive measures against the IS was one of the reasons for this shift in approach. Thus, at the end of July 2015, Turkey led large-scale raids aimed at jihadist networks operating on its territory. From that date, the United States have had access to use the Incirlik Air Base in their fight against the IS - although Turkey initially refused, despite joining the coalition against the IS in 2014. Turkey had intervened militarily north of Syria in August of 2016, pushing the IS outside the borders between the two countries, which was controlled by the IS at the time. Furthermore, in October 2017, Turkey once again sent forces in the Syrian province of Idlib. The possible motive may have been to block a possible expansion by Kurdish rebel groups such as the YPG (Merz, 2018). Turkey was able to

prevent Syrian Kurds from geographically connecting the areas they controlled in the north of Syria, thus weakening their overall position.

The crackdowns on jihadism by Turkey sparked a reaction from the IS, through asymmetrical means of warfare, which caused several attacks in Turkey. Instead of focusing on attacking the Kurds, such as the case before, attacks from the IS were directly and systematically directed against Turkish society. Turkey had been subject to IS-linked terrorist attacks on numerous occasions, including suicide bombings and shootings in Ankara in October 2015, in Istanbul in January and March 2016, at Ataturk Airport in June 2016 and at a nightclub in Istanbul in January 2017. These attacks had also coincided with weakened security, due to the upheavals of security forces and public servants, caused by Erdogan's purges after the failed coup. This terrorist campaign has greatly contributed to the deterioration of national security in Turkey (Merz, 2018).

## 1.7. The Kurdish Question

The 'Kurdish question' also has had a destabilizing effect on the domestic political climate in Turkey, which may have prompted an aggressive and further militarized Turkey. The peace negotiations between the Turkish Government and the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) first began in 2013, at a time when relations were extremely fragile. Tensions immediately sparked when the city of Kobane, a Kurdish city that borders Syria and Turkey, was under siege by the IS in the winter of 2014/2015 (Merz, 2018). Turkey was criticized for being tolerant of the IS on its territory, while the

Kurdish town was being attacked. The Kurdish people had formed protests against the Turkish state, in which the IS carried out terrorist attacks, particularly during a rally of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Party (HDP) in July 2015 (Merz, 2018). The Turkish security forces, perceived as accomplices to the IS in their efforts to weaken the Kurdish motive, had also been attacked in several instances by the PKK. In response, Turkish airstrikes targeted the PKK in northern Iraq, which was then consequently followed by a wave of arrests in Turkey. Ultimately, any hopes for peace negotiations between actors had failed. This spiral of violence led to an operation of Turkish security forces in south-eastern Turkey, where most of the Kurdish minority lives currently (Merz, 2018).

Human Rights watch groups and the United Nations had reported several violations against the Kurdish populace. According to the International Crisis Group, between July 2015 and March 2017, approximately 3,300 people lost their lives in the conflict between Turkish military forces and Kurdish groups (Merz, 2018). The resumption of the conflict Kurdish, combined with the terrorist campaign of the IS, has had a destabilizing effect in Turkey. The political strengthening of the pro-Kurdish party, the HDP, may have contributed to the escalation of the Kurdish conflict. Erdogan and the AKP were accused of fueling the Kurdish conflict, in order to gain political support.

## 1.8. Turkish Lira Crisis

From the end of 2017, Turkey faced another constraining issue: an economic crisis with international repercussions due to a financial contagion. The Turkish Lira had lost its value against the US Dollar and the Euro. Subsequently, Turkey experienced an

excessive current account deficit, rising loan defaults and borrowing from national banks, and high inflation. The excessive economic deficit and the devaluation of the Turkish Lira, coupled with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's growing autocratic policies and his refusal of raising interest rates, have also contributed to the issue. Erdogan has in many instances, used strong rhetoric during the financial crisis to crank up sentiments that Turkey is being threatened by the US and the West. Since Erdogan has increased his presidential powers, there are concerns that he continues to tighten his grip over Turkey's monetary policy (Elliot, 2018).

## 1.9. The Referendum of April 2017

The referendum of April 2017, which proposed turning Turkey from a parliamentary to a presidential republic resulted in 51.41% of votes stating 'Yes', which allowed changes to the Turkish constitution. The numerous alterations to the constitution removed the role of the prime minister and introduced the role of a vice president. Furthermore, the president would become the head of the executive as well as the head of state, while retaining any ties to a political party. The president would be given enhanced powers to appoint ministers, prepare the budget, choose the majority of senior judges and enact certain laws by decree. Alternatively, only the president alone would be able to announce a state of emergency and dismiss parliament. Parliament would lose its right to scrutinize ministers or propose an enquiry; however, it would be able to begin impeachment proceedings or investigate the president, with a majority vote by members of parliament (MP). The number of MPs would increase from 550 to

600 and presidential and parliamentary elections will be held on the same day every five years. The presidential tenure is limited to two terms. Evidently, scholars would agree that President Erdogan has enhanced his powers through these changes (BBC, 2017).

## 1.10. Public Life & Political Climate in Turkey

The Turkish government led by President Erdogan has carried out a spree of repressive and authoritarian measures disregarding heavy criticism from the European Union and other international organizations. Following the coup attempt in July 2016 and the subsequent referendum in April 2017, Erdogan has solidified his executive power enabling him to push his political agenda.

Political polarization, sectarianism and ethnic tensions have become far too common in contemporary Turkey, as its political climate has been rapidly deteriorating. Furthermore, public life in Turkey has been dominated by human right violations and political censorship. These include: the ruling party overseeing a massive centralization of power, a multitude of journalists and opposing parliamentarians being jailed, the swift reassigning of thousands of judges and prosecutors, and relentless political pressure being imposed on Turkish civil society organizations (Merz, 2018). The inability to reconcile internal political divisions in Turkey and the involvement in the war in Syria has had repercussions on Erdogan's domestic and foreign policy. The current domestic situation, including security issues and the increasing authoritarianism, have an influence on the political relations Turkey possesses with its neighbours and other major political actors.



Ultimately, the resumption of the Kurdish conflict, the terrorist attacks by the IS and an authoritarian increase from the AKP have caused instability for the country. Although militarily the IS is almost defeated, it is still capable of committing terrorist attacks in Turkey. Also, Turkey runs the risk of creating a domestic security problem by involving themselves in the Syrian conflict and trying to thwart the Syrian Kurds. Despite Turkey's efforts to counteract the Kurds in Syria, the Syrian Kurds do hold a large part of the border area on the Syrian side. They have established themselves as major players in a possible resolution of the Syrian conflict and do have political support from the United States and Russia. Turkey again intervened and launched another military intervention in Afrin, in the northwest of Syria in January 2018, to remove the Syrian Kurdish rebel groups from the region (Merz, 2018). These operations are in line with Ankara's political priorities on the 'Kurdish question', which is to foil the development of an autonomous Kurdish region in Syria; which may entail the risk of cross-border solidarity with the Kurds in Turkey. This has contributed to escalated tensions with the Kurdish minority. Moving forward, Turkey will continue to face domestic security problems. It has yet to be seen fully, whether the constitutional reform that has strengthened Erdogan's powers, will have a stabilizing effect or further accentuate instability.

## Section II

### 2. Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Cyprus

#### 2.1. History of the Turkish Presence in Cyprus

Located in the Eastern Mediterranean, the island of Cyprus is 380 km from northern Egypt, 105 km from Syria and 75 km from southern Turkey. Mainland Greece is 800 km west of Cyprus and the nearest Greek island lies roughly 380 km west of the island. Nicosia is the capital and largest city, and the last divided capital city in Europe (Papadakis, Peristianis & Welz, 2007).

As it straddles between three continents, its strategic geographic location has made Cyprus subject to foreign control and under the dominion of numerous empires in its long history. The last colonial power that occupied the island was Great Britain in 1878, which succeeded the Ottoman Empire. Historically in Cyprus, Greek and Turkish people, have coexisted for centuries in mixed villages, towns and workplaces. A Turkish presence in Cyprus dates back centuries, as the Ottoman Empire, Turkey's predecessor and transcontinental power ruled Cyprus from 1571 to 1878. During this period, the Ottoman Empire's control in Cyprus created a Turkish minority, through the migration of a large number of Turkish settlers on the island (Papadakis, Peristianis & Welz, 2007).

In 1878, Great Britain assumed administration of the island, and in 1914, Cyprus was annexed to the nation. In 1925, the island was formally declared a Crown Colony. Though the Greek-Cypriots had always expressed their demand for national self-determination, the colonial power did not satisfy it in the years before the Second World War. The policy of the Turkish-Cypriot leadership was in contrast to the national aspirations of the Greek-Cypriots. The first political party of the Turkish-Cypriot community, the KATAK (Party for the Protection of the Turkish Minority), which formed in 1943, supported the continuation of British colonial rule (Papadakis, Peristianis & Welz, 2007).

The Cyprus Problem, as we know it today, emerged in the post-World War II years, with the rising demands of the Greek-Cypriot population in regards to their self-determination against the British Colonial system. In 1955, when these appeals for self-determination had been neglected, the Greek-Cypriots proceeded to a fighting struggle for the liberation of the country. The Turkish-Cypriots, as co-inhabitants of the island, wanted to remain under the British protectorate as they feared that independence would lead to Cyprus unifying with Greece, or 'Enosis'. The liberation struggle led to the increasing tensions of the intercommunal relations. Importantly, Turkey's declared policy toward Cyprus, which had originally supported the colonial status quo, began to shift towards the partition of the island along ethnic lines (Papadakis, Peristianis & Welz, 2007).

In 1959, an agreement was reached by Greece, Turkey and Great Britain, known as the London-Zurich agreement; where the Republic of Cyprus was established in

1960, as a bi-communal state based on a civil and government partnership between Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots. Turkey, Greece and Great Britain would be the guarantor powers, overseeing that constitutional and human rights are abided by. In the event of a breach to the constitution and overall security of Cyprus, the three guarantor powers would be afforded the right to take action, collectively or individually, for the restoration of the legitimate regime. In 1960, Cyprus was finally granted independence; however, Great Britain would retain two military bases on the island (Papadakis, Peristianis & Welz, 2007). Though Cyprus had finally been independent and the government represented both communities, inter-communal tensions continued and the hopes for long-lasting peace through this agreement, had failed.

On the 15th of July 1974, the Greek military junta, in collaboration with EOKA-B (a Greek-Cypriot paramilitary organization), attempted a coup d'état to overthrow President Makarios and appoint a leader that was aligned with 'Enosis'. Shortly after, on the 20th of July, claiming to act in accordance with Article 4 of the Treaty of Guarantee signed in 1960, the Turkish armed forces carried out a full-scale invasion of Cyprus and proceeded to occupy the northern part of the island. Despite Turkey's claims, the invasion and occupation were clear violations of international law including Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter which calls on all members to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of other states (United Nations, 1945). The invasion resulted in over 36% of the territory of Cyprus occupied by the Turkish military forces. The human casualties were enormous as thousands of Greek-Cypriots were killed as a result of the Turkish troops. One-third of Greek-Cypriots were expelled

from their homes and became refugees in their respective country. During intercommunal talks held on the 2nd of August 1975 in Vienna, a Voluntary Exchange of Populations was agreed upon, where Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots would be transferred to the north and the south of the island respectively, with assistance from the UN. In an attempt to alter the demographic structure of Cyprus, Ankara had brought more than 160,000 settlers from Turkish Anatolia to the island. With the massive migration of Turkish settlers in the occupied areas, the total number of Turkish soldiers and settlers had surpassed the population of the Turkish-Cypriots that inhabited Cyprus, prior to the invasion (Papadakis, Peristianis & Welz, 2007). On the 15th of November 1983, the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' ('TRNC') was self-proclaimed, which is only internationally recognized by Turkey and remains an illegitimate pseudostate. Moreover, Turkey does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus as it views the 'TRNC' as the official government of Cyprus. Since 1977, and most recently in 2017, several rounds of negotiations under the auspices of the UN had taken place, which produced no results, as Turkey refused to abide by UN resolutions (Kouskouvelis, 2018, p. 10). The international community had deemed the Turkish invasion and subsequent occupation as illegal. Turkey has ignored this international opinion on Cyprus and insisted on pursuing a policy of legitimizing the invasion of 1974. Turkey continues to violate the human rights of Cypriots and has faced judgement and criticism from the most authoritative international institutions, which includes the UN Security Council and the European Court of Human Rights (Papadakis, Peristianis & Welz, 2007).

Currently, it is nearing five decades that the island continues to remain divided. The de facto separation of the island has had opposite repercussions on each side over the past several decades. Turkish-occupied Cyprus, due to its status as an unrecognized and illegal nation, has been a stagnating 'puppet state' completely dependent on its relations with Turkey; whilst, the Republic of Cyprus has become an important member of the international community and shares many economic, political and cultural relations with numerous large states (Kouskouvelis, 2018, p. 8-9). One thing remains consistent since the invasion and that is, Turkey's continued hostile behaviour towards Cyprus. The antagonistic behaviour that exists can be seen in two political affairs: the discovery of the hydrocarbon oil fields in the exclusive economic zone belonging to Cyprus and the recent failure of UN-sponsored negotiations in the summer of 2017.

## 2.2. Hostile Affairs of Turkey towards Cyprus

When questioned about the future of the estimated 40,000 Turkish troops, which have been illegally occupying the northern third of Cyprus since 1974, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan answered: "Turkey will be in Cyprus forever" (Cumming-Bruce & Ruris, 2017). Over four decades ago, Turkey intervened militarily on the island, in response to a coup d'etat aimed at linking the country to Greece. Since then, the Republic of Cyprus has exercised its authority only on the southern part while the northern part is controlled by the illegal government known as the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus'. UN peacekeepers have been present in Cyprus by controlling the

'buffer zone' between the two parties. In 2004, the UN proposed a reunification plan known as the "Annan" plan. The results had been determined by a referendum and were supported by nearly 65% of Turkish-Cypriots, but strongly rejected by more than 75% of the Greek-Cypriot population. The main reason for Greek-Cypriots' discontent of the proposal was that Turkey was allowed to retain its military presence on the island, an unjust entitlement that Turkey has not yet abandoned (Chadjipadelis & Andreadis, 2007). Negotiations since then have continued, however, there's been little to no progress for a successful resolution. The most recent being in July of 2017, in which another round of negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations failed in Switzerland.

In this matter, Turkey's approach of foreign policy in the Cyprus affair is uncompromising and self-seeking. Indefinitely, Turkey has no intention of withdrawing troops and control from occupied Cyprus. Professor Ilias Kouskouvelis, from the University of Macedonia, states three complexities found in the Cyprus issue. In the journal article titled, "Ending the Fallacies and the Invasion: A 'Small but Smart' State Strategy for Cyprus" (2018, p. 1-15), Kouskouvelis deems Turkey an aggressive actor and all of Cyprus, including the Turkish-Cypriots, as the victims. The basis of the first argument is that the military invasion of Cyprus and the occupation for the last 45 years are violations of Cyprus' sovereignty and almost all fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter. In addition, the recent negotiations in 2017 were always destined for failure. This is because Turkey under the AK party and Erdogan, have the same foreign policy towards Cyprus as previous Turkish governments have had since 1974, which is

to have a military presence and a foothold in Cyprus. Turkey has shown no real desire of seeking out a compromise nor making any positive strides towards instilling a peace plan. Their foreign policy dictates that Cyprus is of utmost strategic and geographic importance. This has been validated in a quote from the former Prime Minister of Turkey, which explicitly stated “Even if there was not one Muslim Turk there, Turkey had to maintain a Cyprus problem. No country can stay indifferent towards such an island, located in the heart of its very own vital space” (Davutoğlu, 2008, 179). 40,000 heavily armed troops are still present on the island and Turkey will not withdraw its status as the guarantor power, granted through the London-Zurich agreement; although, the other two guarantor powers, Greece and Great Britain had agreed to do so (Kouskouvelis, 2018, p.3). Although Turkey’s narrative of invading the island was due to protecting the rights and security of the Turkish-Cypriot minority, the underlying reality is that Turkey places strategic importance on Cyprus and includes Cyprus in its plans for an expansionist policy. Turkey has no role in guaranteeing the rule of law of a European Union member state and uses hostile tactics to place pressure on other actors.

Another complexity that portrays the antagonism of the Turkish government is the claim towards the energy resources discovered in Cyprus’ Exclusive Economic Zone. Ankara argues that the interests and rights of Turkish-occupied Cyprus are being violated and that Turkey should have a say in the decision-making process as well as an equal share in the revenue (Kouskouvelis, 2018, p. 3-4). The potential for natural resources and Turkey’s illegitimate claim in them further complicates efforts to reach an agreement with Cyprus. The benefits of natural gas should be shared amongst all



Cyprus (Nedos, 2019), but Turkey should have no role in being a beneficiary and cannot dictate negotiations based on their illegal occupation.

The Turkish blockade on oil drilling rigs from international companies, that have made agreements with the Republic of Cyprus to enter the exclusive economic zone of the legal and recognized government of Cyprus, is a threatening action that breaches international law; specifically, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UN General Assembly, 1982). Ankara's provocations in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone make the resumption of the talks seem impossible under the current circumstances. The untapped resources have been an incentive for Turkey to exert influence over the region in a confrontational manner, by deceptively claiming to be a protectorate of human rights of the island (Kouskouvelis, 2018, p.3). This claim lacks substance as Cyprus has been a European Union member since 2004 and President Erdogan's contemporary Turkey exhibits values that completely contradict European values and the EU Human Rights Policy. Turkey has made threats to the Cyprus negotiations if they are impeded in the region, they have prevented international companies from exploring offshore, and they have sent Turkish research vessels in Cypriot waters.

Lastly, an agreement has been virtually impossible as Turkey has immense control and influence over their occupied territory (Kouskouvelis, 2018, p.5). If both the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriot communities genuinely want to strive for a solution, it is not in the hands of the Cypriots to dictate their future. To have the democratically elected and internationally recognized president of the Republic of Cyprus meet for peace talks with a self-proclaimed, unrecognized president or community leader of the

Turkish-Cypriots holds merely ceremonial and symbolic value. As Turkey has deployed 40,000 militants on the island, the Cypriot occupation depends solely on the Turkish government as unification cannot occur with the presence of the Turkish military. However, Erdogan's Islamic outlook and autocratic leadership have further complicated the situation. The Turkish-Cypriots pride themselves on this secular lifestyle and this is threatened by Erdogan and Turkey. Thousands of Turkish-Cypriots have taken to the streets to protest against the 'Islamisation' of daily life under Turkey's influence in the past years. The building of mosques such as the massive 'Hala Sultan' Mosque in June 2018, which was funded by Ankara, has been a concern for Turkish-Cypriots. Furthermore, the encouragement of religious education was another fear of an Ottoman-like imperial mentality. Cemal Ozyigit, the Minister of Education, has complained of a "Change towards an Islamic character being forced" upon Turkish-Cypriots, in comments he made before joining the administration of occupied Cyprus (Weise, 2018). The territory's youngest Member of Parliament, Zeki Celer, has been a vocal opponent of Turkey's attempt to mould the entity's secular culture into one that is more in tune with Islamic norms. "Of course I am concerned, Turkish-Cypriots are secular" (Smith, 2018). However, Zeki Celer admits that the unrecognized territory would struggle without Turkey's help as it has boosted public finances, and provided infrastructure and aid. According to the 2019 budget, the administration in occupied Cyprus expects 695 million Turkish liras (about 113 million euros) in financial aid and 575 million TL (about 94 million euros) in loans from Ankara. The financial dependency is crucial for the pseudostate for infrastructure investments, defence expenses,

incentives and private sector support. Turkey's infrastructure investments in the 'TRNC' include: the construction of two underwater projects that supply electricity and water, upgrades to its airport, and ongoing housing projects. These investments are aimed at accommodating the needs of the small amount of Turkish-Cypriots and the numerous new arrivals of settlers from mainland Turkey. All these projects have been allocated to private Turkish companies with close ties to the AKP government (Kouskouvelis & Chainoglou, 2018, p.58). Nevertheless, Turkey in 2019 has not been able to send the required funding that the budget calls for, most likely due to the economic and currency crisis it faces. This has crippled the economy of occupied Cyprus (Aygin, 2019).

Turkey's role in the survival and maintenance of the microstate has been paramount and this portrays that Turkey is the key factor in allowing a separated state to exist, disallowing the unification of Cyprus to occur. Turkey's foreign policy in Cyprus depicts a neo-Ottoman imperial mentality. This is made evident by the presence of Turkish troops, the attempted transformation of Cypriot Muslims from secularism to pious, and the demographic changes due to the increase of Turkish settlers. Turkey's relationship with the administration in occupied Cyprus was clearly described by MP Zeki Celer: "Turkey is our mother, when your mother gives you something but also tells you what to do, you do what she says"(Smith, 2018). The rise of religious conservatism, major economic dependency and an increase in devout Turkish nationals are phenomenons occurring in occupied Cyprus; in consequence, these can force a cultural wedge between Cypriots, make future reconciliation significantly harder and further propel a Turkish 'puppet state'.

### 3. Oil Discovery off the Coast of Cyprus

The discovery of oil fields off the coast of Cyprus has flourished in recent years, attracting international attention and creating local optimism regarding the island's future. These findings have occurred within the past decade and fall within Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). As well, there has been a massive discovery of hydrocarbons in the Zohr gas field in the Egyptian waters, found on the edge of the Cypriot maritime border. The Republic of Cyprus has organized the gas discovery fields into 13 blocks. Cyprus has granted 8 exploratory licences with corresponding Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) to oil drilling companies, which is an agreement to how much oil Cyprus and the involved company would receive (Rep. of Cyprus' Ministry of Energy, Commerce & Industry, 2019). The first licence granted was to Noble Energy in October 2008 for block 12, known as the Aphrodite field. The Aphrodite field is the most prominent of the 13 blocks, as commercial production is imminent. It is currently split amongst three energy companies: Delek Group, the Israeli holding group, controls 30%, the British–Dutch energy giant Shell owns 35%, whilst Noble Energy holds the remaining portion at 35%. It was in 2011 that Noble announced the first discovery of oil in Cyprus within the Aphrodite field, an estimated resource range of 3.6 to 6 Trillion cubic feet (Tcf) (Kambas & Zawadski, 2019).

In February 2016, the Cypriot Government announced the most recent licensing round, the third in succession, where blocks 6, 8 and 10 were put up for auction. In 2017, exploration licenses were granted for the remaining blocks and the Cypriot

Government entered into PSC's with drilling companies ENI & Total consortium for block 6, who also have a partnership for block 11. Furthermore, ENI solely received block 8, and ExxonMobil & Qatar Petroleum consortium were granted block 10. Block 2, 3 and 9 are currently being explored by the consortium of ENI-Kogas, a partnership between the Italian and South-Korean companies (Rep. of Cyprus' Ministry of Energy, Commerce & Industry, 2019). In February 2018, the ENI & Total consortium announced a preliminary natural gas discovery in block 6 of an estimated find between 4.8 and 8.1 Tcf (Orphanides 2018). Further to this, in March 2019, ExxonMobil announced the most significant discovery of hydrocarbons yet. Block 10 of Cyprus' EEZ is now considered the largest repository as it houses approximately 5 to 8 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of natural gas. Cypriot Energy Minister Yiorgos Lakkotrypis said, "This is the biggest find so far in Cyprus and based on some official data it is one of the biggest finds worldwide in the past two years" (Kambas & Zawadski, 2019). These findings are of utmost significance as they have the propensity to vastly improve the economic environment in this area. According to Lakkotrypis, just 0.5 trillion cubic feet of gas could provide Cypriots with energy for 25 years, leaving ample reserves to export to Asia and Europe (Joy, 2013). Considering how minuscule 0.5 Tcf is, in comparison with the totality of the findings and how this has the potential of sustaining a European country for a quarter of a century, portrays the staggering amount of wealth which can be accumulated for the stakeholders involved. The government of Cyprus continues its negotiations concerning the infrastructure required for the procurement of the natural gas; while exploring all the options for Cyprus to export it through collaboration with neighbouring countries in the

Eastern Mediterranean region. The main actors in the region being Israel, Greece and Egypt.

This discovery of hydrocarbons in Cyprus' waters has added a new dimension in the political relations of the region. It can act as a catalyst to promote a solution for the Cyprus problem or it could create the potential of conflict over the possession and claim to these resources. Cyprus has already seen numerous Turkish obstructions, as Turkey argues that they are entitled to a stake in the natural resources.

Cyprus has demarcation agreements with Egypt in 2003, Lebanon in 2007 and Israel in 2010, which clarified the exclusive economic zone of each country and therefore the right to jurisdiction over these areas (Syrigos & Nedos, 2018). These agreements with Israel, Egypt and Lebanon have given the Republic of Cyprus the ability to delimit its EEZ in its southern and south-eastern seas, in which drilling has been underway for the past decade. Cyprus has divided most of its EEZ, which is being explored in the southern and south-eastern seas into 13 parts and as aforementioned, have proceeded with international partnerships for its exploration.

### 3.1. International Law: Exclusive Economic Zone & Continental Shelf

It is important for this section to offer the definition of the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf, as defined in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The 1982 United Nations' Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is the primary document of international law, which regulates the various aspects

concerning the establishment of an exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Maritime delimitation issues, including the delimitation of a country's EEZ, have been previously settled by states' agreements or by the jurisdiction of the relevant international tribunals. The definition of a country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is defined by Article 55 as: the area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea, subject to the specific legal regime established in this part, under which the rights and jurisdiction of the coastal state and the rights and freedoms of other states are governed by the relevant provisions of this convention. Furthermore, the exclusive economic zone shall not extend beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured. In addition, this United Nations convention affirms that a coastal state has the jurisdiction and control of their own EEZ. This includes: the rights for exploration and exploitation, that no other state is able to intervene without permission of the coastal state, and the coastal state have rights to use resources, build structures, commence scientific research, and lay pipelines in their EEZ (UN General Assembly, 1982).

The continental shelf, according to article 76, is comprised of the seabed and subsoil of the submarine area that extends beyond its territorial sea through the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin; or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured, where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance. Simply put, it is the state's extension of land underwater and ends when a steep slope or 'continental slope' begins that leads to the ocean's abyss (UN General Assembly, 1982).

Cyprus' continental shelf and EEZ is in accordance with UNCLOS and legitimized by the UN, but Turkey refuses to acknowledge this (Kouskouvelis & Chainoglou, 2018, p.87-88). It has only recognized the Republic of Cyprus's territorial waters, which is the belt of coastal waters extending 12 nautical miles from the baseline and regarded as the sovereign territory of the state. Moreover, Turkey is not a signatory of the 1982 United Nations' Convention on the Law of Sea. The convention has been ratified by over 160 states, and four states are still not parties to it: Turkey, Israel, the United States and Venezuela. Although Turkey has not ratified it, certain provisions of this convention have become acquired customary international law status and are binding on all states. This includes the provisions of the EEZ, which is now seen as customary international law. Turkey does not recognize the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus and has considered these agreements delimiting Cyprus' EEZ, as legally void and nonbinding. International law, however, would attest that the Republic of Cyprus is a sovereign and recognized state, with the rights to a continental shelf and an EEZ.

Turkey's recent interventions or obstructions in Cyprus' EEZ on the south and southeast of the island, which will be further discussed in the subsequent section, were supposedly made on behalf of protecting the rights of the Turkish-Cypriots. Turkey claims a substantial amount of areas in Cyprus' EEZ belong solely to the pseudostate. In response to Cyprus' commencement of drilling, Turkey signed a continental shelf delimitation agreement with the Turkish-occupied government in Cyprus on the 21st of September, 2011. The state-owned Turkish Petroleum Corporation (TPAO) has been conducting survey and drilling activities according to licences granted by the



government of Turkey and the administration in occupied Cyprus, in which other countries consider illegal (Ioannides, 2017, p.5). Claims to the jurisdiction and rights of the EEZs can only be legitimate if they are done by internationally recognized states, not by groups within states, such as Turkish-Cypriots or a self-proclaimed pseudostate, such as the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus'. In addition, Turkey argues that its continental shelf extends into internationally recognized Cypriot waters. Turkey has claimed the waters south-west and west of Cyprus as being part of the Turkish continental shelf. This includes parts of Cyprus' blocks 1, 4, 6 and 7. These claims have not only been limited to Cyprus. Turkey has indicated that the jurisdiction of their continental shelf extends well into the Mediterranean and the Aegean, which violate the territorial sovereignty of its neighbours. Another example of Turkey violating the sovereignty of its neighbours has been towards Greece. Turkey has ignored the jurisdiction of the islands of Greece and their corresponding continental shelves, such as the Greek sovereign territory of Crete, Rhodes and Kastellorizo (Ioannides, 2017, p.5).

In response to the EEZ delimitation agreement between Egypt and Cyprus, Turkey published maps outlining its alleged maritime border with Egypt in 2004, completely disregarding the maritime rights of Greece and Cyprus. The long-standing position of Turkey is that the Greek islands in the eastern Aegean Sea and the unrecognized Republic of Cyprus are not entitled to a continental shelf or claims to an EEZ. Turkey does not accept the principle of equidistance/median line when it comes to maritime delimitation with Greece; as Turkey argues that islands, in this case, the Greek

islands in the eastern Aegean Sea, (Kastellorizo, Rhodes, etc.) are not entitled to full maritime zones when they are competing directly against continental land areas (Ioannides, 2017, p.5). The equidistance/median line is a concept that a state's maritime boundaries are defined by a median line that is equidistant from the shores of neighbouring states (UN General Assembly, 1982). Turkey argues that islands do not count in determining this. Turkey's stance is that delimitation zones should be based on the 'equitable principle', which is on the basis of fair and equal proportionality. In contradiction, Turkey does use the median line method in its proposed maritime borders with Egypt and has already ratified agreements with its neighbours on the Black Sea, based on this same principle they dispute (Ioannides, 2017, p.4). Nevertheless, there is no particular delimitation method that is obligatory.

Evidently, Turkey is lacking consistency, when backing their claims to a delimitation zone. It is self-seeking to purport an EEZ on the basis of the equitable principle with one country (Greece), and the equidistant principle with another (Egypt), while completely ignoring the sovereignty of another country (Cyprus) (Ioannides, 2017, p.7). The Turkish objective has been to claim as large of an EEZ as possible. Regarding Greece, it cannot be overlooked that these Greek territories are not tiny isles, but are islands that are inhabited with significantly large populations. Furthermore, the alleged Turkish EEZ claims overlap with blocks 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of Cyprus' EEZ. Turkey has tried to persuade Egypt to abandon its EEZ delimitation agreement with Cyprus, with the reasoning that Egypt has lost out on a maritime space of approximately 19,400 km<sup>2</sup> (Ioannides, 2017, p.3). However, Egypt has respected its delimitation agreement

with Cyprus and has awarded oil concessions to them, with many forthcoming agreements on the commercialization of Cyprus' oil. Not only are Turkey's claims and activity in Cyprus' EEZ illegal by international law and a violation of the legal framework between Cyprus and Egypt, but it also contradicts Turkey's interest in protecting the rights of Turkish-Cypriots. If Turkey were to succeed in acquiring Cypriot maritime space, this would also infringe and reduce the maritime space of Turkish-Cypriots, which would impair all Cypriots to the natural wealth of the island.

On the authority of UNCLOS' Articles 56(1)(a)(3), 77(1)(2) and 81 LOSC, coastal states have exclusive sovereign rights for conducting exploration and exploitation operations in their EEZ and on their continental shelf (the seabed and subsoil of the EEZ is actually the continental shelf) (UN General Assembly, 1982). This rule is part of customary international law, and all states, even non-state parties to the convention, are required to follow it. The convention enables the coastal state the exclusivity to enjoy the natural resources in its maritime border, and the exclusive jurisdiction to authorize and regulate the construction, operation and use of installations and structures pertinent to hydrocarbon activities (i.e oil rigs). Despite this, Turkey from 2008 and onwards, granted concessions to the TPAO for areas that Greece and Cyprus consider falling within its continental shelf. Cyprus and Greece have acknowledged that Turkey is entitled to maritime space in the Eastern Mediterranean, but these entitlements do not cover the entire region.

During the same time that Turkey and occupied Cyprus formed an agreement to define the continental shelf borders, the TPAO, had also signed an 'agreement' with the

pseudostate, which granted the state-owned company the 'right' to explore the waters on the coasts of Cyprus (Ioannides, 2017, p.6). Given the fact that the administration of the pseudostate is highly dependent on, and under the military and political control of Turkey, it is virtually Turkey granting licences to their own national company to explore the waters of another state. The unlawfulness of the Turkish invasion and occupation of Cyprus render these agreements invalid. Furthermore, it is unprecedented for a national community or ethnic group within a country to be able to grant licences to a national company for the exploration of natural resources. The Kurds living in Turkey would not have the same privilege.

Turkey does not only object the EEZ and maritime activities of Cyprus but has granted exploration licences to the TPAO for areas falling within the continental shelf of Greece and Cyprus' EEZ. Taking into account the relevant legal framework, Turkey violates the sovereign rights of Cyprus through its activity in the Eastern Mediterranean. Whilst, Cyprus forms potential lucrative partnerships with its neighbours, Turkey is left on the sidelines. Turkey's non-compliance with international law has discouraged other states to collaborate with it and this is evident in its exclusion on energy agreements in the region.

Turkey's intentions must be seen in the context of their aggressive foreign policy towards Cyprus and objective since the illegal invasion of 1974, ensuring the continued Turkish presence in Cyprus. The disputed maritime boundaries are related to the recently formed alliances in the region between Greece, Israel, Cyprus and Egypt; as well as, Cyprus's energy projects, which are receiving international attention and have

the potential to attain lucrative rewards. In response, Turkey circumvents international law and only abides by it when it works to serve their interests. Any interference or involvement from Turkey in Cyprus is a clear violation of international law. Overall, the illegal Turkish occupation of the island does not abolish the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus and therefore, the Turkish claims to Cyprus' EEZ are illegitimate.

### 3.2. Strategic Alliances of Cyprus with Greece, Egypt and Israel

Cyprus has made an effort to encourage cooperation with other states in the region, namely Israel, Egypt and Greece. Cyprus has issued several 'Joint Declarations' with these three political states that depict a growing cooperation in an array of fields, and the communal pursuit for stability and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean. The need for good neighbourly relations and support has intensified due to the discovery of the hydrocarbons. Cyprus has established agreements with Egypt and Israel, in an effort to export gas to Europe via undersea pipelines that would go through Greece. Much to Turkey's dismay, Cyprus has proceeded to devise coherent plans to export natural gas to Europe and virtually turn the Eastern Mediterranean into an energy hub. The options that the Republic of Cyprus has followed through with have excluded and bypassed Turkey, one of the largest countries in the region. Cyprus, being a sovereign and recognized state, that enjoys the right to self-determination, can pursue alliances and negotiations with whichever state it pleases. Turkey, in several instances, has made it clear that they are not content with this and must be involved in the commercialization projects. The agreements Cyprus has made with Israel, Egypt and

Greece have created an alliance in the region, that offers Cyprus support from an aggressive Turkey.

### 3.2.1. Cyprus' Agreements with Greece

The Hellenic Republic, a historical ally of Cyprus, is not directly involved with the exploitation of the hydrocarbons found in Cyprus' EEZ. They do remain as a stable passageway for the Eastern Mediterranean oil to Europe. The two countries have an exceptionally close relationship as they share a common language, heritage and ethnicity. Both countries are full members of the European Union, the Council of Europe and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Greece is also the largest trade partner of exports and imports with Cyprus. Cyprus involving Greece in the oil discovery is not only due to their historical alliance but Greece holds a strategic position. Greece is the closest European Union member to Cyprus and connected to continental Europe. For this reason, Greece can act as a gateway for Cyprus, Israel and Egypt to export their gas to Europe, where the oil demand is high (Staff, 2018). Greece being a Western, democratic and European nation has a critical role, as an important political and geographic intermediary. Greece's location, as a passage to the rest of Europe, allows Cyprus to bypass the geographic confines of Turkey.

### 3.2.2. Cyprus' Agreements with Egypt

In the past 5 years, Egypt, Cyprus and Greece have met to intensify the cooperation of the three countries in numerous sectors such as energy, economy, tourism, security, as well as, defining the maritime borders between the countries. The

first tripartite summit between Egypt, Greece and Cyprus was held for the first time in Cairo in 2014 and the most recent, sixth summit was held on the island of Crete in Greece. The summit in Crete on the 10th of October 2018, highlighted the enhanced cooperation between the three countries and the importance of promoting regional stability in a critical period for the region. Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi met to discuss mutually beneficial energy projects, such as the EuroAfrica Interconnector, a high voltage submarine power cable connecting Egypt to Europe, through Cyprus and Crete. Furthermore, the talks included the extraction and export of energy resources from the East Mediterranean, with Egypt and Greece both voicing their support to exploit offshore gas deposits, and for Turkey to cease its illegal activity in Cypriot waters (Ekathimerini, 2018).

Egypt has not only offered support over this topic but has agreed to a mutually beneficial project with Cyprus. In September 2018, Egypt and Cyprus signed a transnational agreement that would eventually allow natural gas found in Cyprus' block 12 or Aphrodite field to be sold to mainland Europe. This has forwarded plans to turn the Eastern Mediterranean into an energy hub.

The Cypriot Energy Minister Yiorgos Lakkotrypis and Egyptian Oil Minister Tarek El Mola, along with the representative of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy, Anne-Charlotte Bournoville, agreed to this milestone development; which will be a projected development of an undersea pipeline for the transport of Cypriot natural gas to Egypt. "Today's signing is an important milestone, not

only for Cyprus but also the entire Eastern Mediterranean region," Mr. Lakkotrypis stated at the ceremony of the agreement. "It constitutes, for Cyprus, another crucial step towards its goal to efficiently exploit the underwater wealth in its EEZ, and specifically gas from Aphrodite, for the benefit of all Cypriots. In addition, it reinforces the joint efforts by the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean to establish the synergies required for attracting the multi-billion [dollar] infrastructure investments for hydrocarbons production and transport" (Stevenson, 2018).

### 3.2.3. Cyprus' Agreements with Israel

As of March 2019, Greece, Cyprus and Israel have met for a total six summits, with the most recent being in the city of Jerusalem, with the participation of Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Similar to the summits involving Egypt, these summits have covered a wide range of topics, which include: the division of Cyprus, energy, regional developments, the Middle East peace process, research and innovation, education, tourism, communications, agriculture and cybersecurity. The United States' ambassador in Israel was present at the fifth summit on December 20th, 2018, as the United States has voiced support over the alliance and of the strategic partnership in the region. In addition, the US secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, attended the sixth trilateral summit in March 2019. The US is a firm believer in this network being a pillar of stability for the region and wants to be involved in the collaborative relationship between this tripartite (Idiz, 2019). An official press release from the US embassy after the summit, outlines



the 'Joint Declaration' between Cyprus, Greece, Israel, and the United States: "The leaders agreed to increase regional cooperation; to support energy independence and security, and to defend against external malign influences in the Eastern Mediterranean and the broader Middle East. They welcomed the recent natural gas finds in the Eastern Mediterranean and its potential to contribute to energy security and diversification" (U.S. Embassy Nicosia, 2019).

The US and the three other countries have common interests in the exploration of the hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean. The American company, Noble Energy, is exploring in both the EEZ's of Cyprus and Israel, the Israeli drilling company, Delek, owns a stake in the Aphrodite fields in Cyprus and most importantly, the leaders of the three countries have reached an agreement to develop the 'East Med natural gas pipeline'. This development plans to transport Israeli natural gas to Europe, through Cyprus and Greece, and make its way to Italy. The East Med project has received €35 million (\$40.1 million) in funding from the European Commission and is estimated to cost over €6 billion. With a length of 1900 kilometres (km), the pipeline is designed to carry 10 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas per year from the Eastern Mediterranean to Greece. The East Med line will then connect through another pipeline west from Greece to Italy, spanning an approximate 300 km (Staff, 2018). Although these projects between Cyprus, Egypt, Greece and Israel, are still in the early stages of development, they depict a growing regional partnership between the four countries. These mutually beneficial energy partnerships have excluded an aggressive Turkey.

Turkey has responded with clear intentions; these are that Turkey will intervene by any means if they are left out of this new energy balance in the Eastern Mediterranean.

## 4. Turkish Obstructions in the Eastern Mediterranean

The Minister of Defence of Turkey, Hulusi Akar, has made Turkey's stance on the discovery of hydrocarbons clear. In 2018, in his speech at the Turkish Parliamentary General Assembly, Akar said: "Turkey will never allow any step or fait accompli to be taken in Cyprus, Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean in spite of Turkey and also unilateral hydrocarbon activities in the Eastern Mediterranean, adding that everyone should be aware that a project in the Aegean and Mediterranean, in which the 'TRNC' and Turkey do not participate, does not have any chance to survive" (Toksabay & Kambas, 2018). This stance was further reiterated as recently as February 2019, when the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlut Cavusoglu proclaimed that "Let those who come to the region from far away, and their companies, see that nothing can be done in that region without us. Nothing at all can be done in the Mediterranean without Turkey, we will not allow that" (Turkey set to begin oil and gas drilling off Cyprus, 2019).

Turkey's stance on the issue is not only limited to rhetoric, but also through coercion and military threats. In February 2018, Turkey had threatened to use force against a drillship chartered by Italy's Eni, that was in agreement with Cyprus to explore the hydrocarbons in Cyprus' EEZ. The Italian drillship was heading to block 3, which

Cavusoglu has stated firmly that the exploration of block 3 is a unilateral move by the Greek-Cypriots that violated the rights of the Turkish-Cypriots. After, the deputy government spokesman of Cyprus, Victoras Papadopoulos, described the Turkish vessels interrupting the course of the Italian drillship; “The drillship was halted by five Turkish warships and after threats of violence launched (by the Turkish side) and the threat of a collision with the drillship ... the drillship was compelled to return back,” he said (Maltezou, 2018). France’s Total and the US energy giant ExxonMobil, have also allegedly had threats against them from the Turkish navy but ignored warnings to back off.

Turkey has also commenced exploring in Cyprus’ EEZ. Cavusoglu mentioned in February 2019 that Turkey will begin drilling off of Cyprus, as reported by the Turkish state-run Anadolu News Agency. “In the coming days we will start drilling with two ships around Cyprus,” Cavusoglu was quoted at a business conference in Western Turkey’s Aydin province. Turkey has already begun drilling off the coast of Turkey’s southern Antalya province and a second ship, which was set to drill in the Black Sea will also be diverted to explore Cyprus. Furthermore, on October 18th, 2018, a little over a week after a summit was held between Cyprus and its allies, a Turkish survey vessel ‘Barbaros’ was spotted conducting gas exploration in an area off of western Cyprus that overlaps with the rightful EEZ of Cyprus. At the present moment, ‘Barbaros’ is conducting their activities under the protection of Turkish warships. The Republic of Cyprus has repeatedly assured that any potential lucrative findings will benefit all of Cyprus, including Turkish-Cypriots. However, it is clear that Turkey wants a share of the

profits. Turkey will violate Cypriot jurisdiction, international law, and use hard power methods to attain their objectives, which may spark future conflict (Turkey set to begin oil and gas drilling off Cyprus, 2019).

The foremost obstruction is Turkey's continued illegal occupation of the island. If Turkey were to remove Cyprus from its expansionist plans, as well as, the 40,000 troops from the island, a compromise could be devised internally in Cyprus. Moreover, the occupation of Cyprus does not abolish the sovereignty and rights of the Republic of Cyprus, and therefore, Turkey's claims to Cypriot resources are illegitimate. After the 'Eni' confrontation, Cavusoglu asserted that Turkey would continue to protect the rights of Turkish-Cypriots. "We also make use of this opportunity to strongly emphasize our expectation that companies centred in third countries refrain from supporting ... this unconstructive Greek-Cypriot attitude which also constitutes a major obstacle to the settlement of the Cyprus issue," he said (Turkey set to begin oil and gas drilling off Cyprus, 2019). However, the only major obstacle to a Cyprus solution is Turkey's imposed presence on the island. When the drilling commenced in 2012, former President of Cyprus, Dimitris Christofias gave a speech to the UN General Assembly, which reaffirms Cyprus' stance on the Turkish-Cypriots. Christofias stated "We believe that the possible discovery and extraction of hydrocarbons shall constitute yet another motive for Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots to expedite a just, functional and viable solution to the Cyprus problem, so that both communities can enjoy the natural wealth of our country in conditions of peace, security and prosperity. I wish to reassure our Turkish-Cypriot compatriots that regardless of the circumstances, they will benefit from

the possible discovery and extraction of hydrocarbons” (Christofias, 2012). This position has been further reiterated by President Anastasiades and several other ministers of the Cypriot government. Cyprus, a small post-colonial state, that has plenty of foreign influence and is highly dependent on positive economic and cultural relations with many international actors, would not be deceptive when they declare that all of Cyprus would receive a distribution of revenue. If wealth is to be made, fallacies of this sort are frowned upon by the international community and are completely out of question.

Turkey proclaims that their intervention in Cypriot waters is to assure Turkish-Cypriot benefit and prevent unfair treatment from the Greek-Cypriot side but Cyprus’ stance remains consistent and unchanged. This stance is that revenue from the oil exploration on the coast of Cyprus will benefit all of Cyprus. In March 2019, after ExxonMobil’s major discovery, the Cypriot Parliament voted through legislation for the creation of a ‘National Hydrocarbons Fund’ (Nedos, 2019). The highlight of this fund is that it ensures investments for future generations and secures the rights of the Turkish-Cypriots. This passing reiterates that the commercialization of hydrocarbons is inclusive for both communities and all Cypriots. An accumulation of wealth could even be a catalyst to encourage a solution, free of Turkey and its stricken economy, as it could decrease the Turkish-Cypriot financial dependency on it. Evidently, the only obstacle for Turkish-Cypriots is the Republic of Turkey, as they are obstructing the searches and delaying the project, which would inevitably benefit the Turkish-Cypriot community.

## 5. 2017 Failed Negotiations due to Turkish Demands

Considered the greatest hope to resolving the 45-year dispute, the most recent talks to resolve the division of Cyprus, started in May 2015 and ultimately failed on 7 July 2017. Mustafa Akinci, the leader of the illegitimate pseudostate, was elected in April 2015. The focal point of Akinci's campaign was for a united Cyprus and upon election, immediately announced that negotiations would commence. Akinci, a long-standing advocate of a reunified Cyprus, was greeted with a positive response by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades. The leaders did not take long to meet. As soon as the 17th of May 2015, Anastasiades and Akinci met for their first formal negotiation and on the 23rd of May, the two politicians took a symbolic walk on Ledra Street, a famous street in Nicosia that divides the island. The two leaders met regularly, with a series of meetings in August and September 2016. Akinci, not only advocated a unified Cyprus but reiterated that the status of the relationship between Turkey and Turkish Cyprus should change. Akinci stated in his victory statement after his election, "It should be a relationship of brothers/sisters, not a relationship of a motherland and her child." Akinci displayed to Ankara that he is a strong believer in a Cyprus with less of Ankara's influence. In response to Akinci's remarks, Erdogan warned Akinci to be wary of his rhetoric and not forget that Ankara financed the Turkish-Cypriots (Aygin, 2019). Furthermore, it was reported in the Turkish press that Akinci and Erdogan had exchanged some unpleasant words immediately after the election.

Despite Akinci, being elected by 60 percent of Turkish-Cypriots and was running a clear political campaign on the basis of a united and federal Cyprus, the negotiation talks between 2015 and 2017 were inevitably doomed for failure. This is due to Turkey's stance: a united, bi-zonal and bi-communal federation would be to the displeasure of Ankara, who has advocated for a two-state solution. Ankara is trying to steer the process away from a federation, as it may lose its direct influence on the island.

Under the sponsorship of the UN, the most significant of meetings were held in the Swiss Alp town of Crans-Montana over a period of 10 days, in July 2017. The main issue discussed was the maintaining of military intervention rights, under the tripartite 'guarantor power' security system, between Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom conceived during Cyprus' independence in 1960 and the accompanying, London-Zurich agreements.

On July 3, 2017, both sides presented their proposals. Turkey insisted that the security system under the London-Zurich agreements be kept the same but initially offered to withdraw most of Turkey's military force, with a small contingent remaining on the island from both, Greek and Turkish forces. The Greek-Cypriots argued that the key elements for unification to occur are, the guarantor and security system would need to be abolished and gradually, the 40,000 Turkish troops would need to be withdrawn in totality. The other two guarantor powers, the United Kingdom and Greece, agreed to the withdrawal of their guarantor status. Turkey declined and in spite of these demands, Turkish Foreign Minister Cavusoglu stated that Turkey would never accept a 'zero guarantees, zero troops' option (Smith, 2017). After a stalemate in the negotiations

between July 3 and July 7, Turkey continued to insist on Turkish troops on Cyprus' soil. Furthermore, there were also disagreements on governance, such as plans for a rotating presidency, the return of the town of Morphou to Greek-Cypriot administration, and the rights of former and current owners of property located in the occupied north. However, the ultimate failure of the negotiations was attributed to Turkey insisting that the security system's status-quo remain the same. On July 7, 2017, the UN acknowledged that the negotiations had failed and the conference would be closed. UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, announced the failure by stating, "I wish the next generation good luck on this and that one day maybe Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots will decide together that there is no longer a need for troops on the island" (Smith, 2017).

The Turkish foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, has made the intent of Turkey to remain in Cyprus clear. He reaffirmed that the failure of negotiations was due to the demand from Greek-Cypriots that Turkey pulls out the entire military force, saying: "For Turkey and the Turkish-Cypriot side it is not acceptable for troops to be withdrawn" (Smith, 2017). In addition, in April 2018, Cavusoglu met with Akinci in occupied Cyprus at a conference. The Turkish media reported that Cavusoglu continued to advocate for a two-state solution. Cavusoglu stated "Some people in north Cyprus keep on saying, 'According to my ideology federation is the best' and dictate what should happen," referring to Akinci; he continues "The Cyprus issue is too grand to be sacrificed to someone's political ideologies or political ambitions." Akinci firmly disagreed and was quoted "Of course nobody can single-handedly dictate the solution model for Cyprus,



But this rule is valid for everyone”, in reference to Ankara and their unwillingness to make any concessions. Akinci further mentioned “I was elected to discuss federation, I can’t tell my voters federation is not possible, I would have to resign” (Aygin, 2019).

Fundamentally, an independent Cyprus and a member of the European Union, cannot exist with the presence of Turkish troops, nor is it acceptable for external states to have the unilateral right for military intervention in a sovereign state. This makes an envisioned federal Cyprus impossible under Turkey’s demands. With the growing autocratic leadership of Erdogan and the aggressive foreign policy also exemplified towards Greece and Syria, there are concerns in what the future has in store. Ankara may continue to push for the partition of Cyprus for their own benefit, ignoring the sovereignty and self-determination of Cypriots. This may happen by pressuring international recognition on the pseudostate or maintaining the military annexation of the north. If Turkey is left out of the oil exploitation, this may escalate to further military confrontation. To add to this, Erdogan mentioned in 2018 that Turkish troops in Cyprus would even be increased (Andreou, 2018).

It is evident, that Akinci nor the Turkish-Cypriots, who had democratically elected their leader to strive for a federal Cyprus, have any power or influence in the negotiation table. The main obstacle lies in Ankara as there is a longstanding disagreement with Cypriots and Ankara on the future of the island. Consequently, as Turkey boasts the military and economic power, coupled with an ever-growing hostile foreign policy, they will continue to have a presence in Cyprus, in spite of Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot wishes.

## 6. The Benefits of a United Cyprus

Turkey's narrative of remaining on the island for the protection of the rights and security of Turkish-Cypriots is unjust and fallacious. Turkey's intent to remain in Cyprus is not due to this narrative, but the real motive is its overextending foreign policy and appetite for energy resources (Kouskouvelis, 2018, p.3). To illustrate that Turkey is merely imposing itself, the benefits of a united Cyprus without a Turkish presence will be outlined. A united and free Cyprus would be prosperous for both the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot populace. A united Cyprus would entail the Turkish-Cypriots having the ability to rule themselves, live in an internationally recognized state with a diplomatic voice in the international arena, be economically free and have the ability to produce and sell goods, fully free of embargoes. The whole of Cyprus would share the same benefits and rights as every state. The dependency that Turkish-Cypriots have with Turkey is due to the self-proclaimed state having no other option, as it is not recognized by the international community. On the contrary, the Republic of Cyprus is a prospering, modern and democratic state, that holds European Union membership and has a high GDP, relative to the size of the island. To attain European Union accession in 2004, the Republic of Cyprus would have to have compatible human rights with the European Community, which include: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights; in which it does. The government and state exercised in the southern part of the island have an excellent position, and to have the Turkish-Cypriot community merging with the rest of Cyprus would benefit the entirety of

the island. Due to the polar opposite situations in the Republic of Cyprus and occupied Cyprus, the Republic has far more incentives to maintain the status-quo. However, negotiations have been unsuccessful due to Turkey's position. Turkey's reasoning of protecting the democracy and human rights of the Turkish-Cypriot minority from the Republic has no substance, as the Republic of Cyprus' human rights record is far more progressed than that of Turkey. In a contemporary Turkey under the AK party, Turkey's human rights record would have no chance of meeting the criteria for membership in the EU and certainly do not have the capacity to condemn human rights in a country that possesses a far more stable domestic climate.

The economic situation in Cyprus would also see a significant change. The European Commission (2017) summarizes that "The economic prospects of a future united Cyprus are very positive. Unification will bring together two distinct economies, in terms of income levels and underlying economic structures. The integration of the two economies is expected to bring significant benefits, including the attraction of domestic and foreign investment."

Since the Global Economic Crisis of 2008, much has happened in the Eastern Mediterranean. Cyprus has recovered from the economic crisis, which culminated in a March 2013 bailout for the island. However, several scholars and studies portray that the Cypriot economy, both on the Republic of Cyprus and in occupied Cyprus have been significantly underperforming. In the period between 2005- 2012, growth in total factor productivity (tFp), which measures the long-term prospects for growth, was negative in occupied Cyprus, at -0.742% and barely positive in the southern Republic,

at 0.008% (Mullen, Apostolides & Besim, 2014). This has spurred economic issues on the island such as high deficits, high unemployment and rising debt. Economists have agreed that both sides would benefit from devising a solution. Firstly, economists agree that a peace deal could cause 'positive shock', which is due to two reasons: recurring benefits and settlement-related investment. The recurring benefits are due to the integration of markets, that currently are separated: Turkey's market of almost 80 million people to Greek-Cypriots and the EU market of a collective 500 million people, to Turkish-Cypriots (Mullen, Apostolides & Besim, 2014).

To further list the possible benefits of a peace agreement, tourism between the communities and at an international level would increase. Shipping, including cruise tourism, would be freed from current constraints. A settlement would prosper the university system, allow Cyprus to be a regional hub for flight connections and international trade, and offer support to the real estate sector due to the removal of legal impediments on property in occupied Cyprus. With a peace deal, Cyprus has the potential of being a shipping centre in the Eastern Mediterranean, and a solution would provide endless opportunities for the island's tourism. A withdrawal of Turkish forces in Cyprus could even encourage actors in the area to cooperate with Turkey, and if so, the construction of an energy pipeline to Turkey could be a possibility.

According to an economic analysis, titled "The Cyprus Peace Dividend Revisited" the economic benefits of a United Cyprus were quantified. The study took numerous factors in consideration and calculated that the "All-island GDP (at constant 2012 prices) would rise from just over €20bn in 2012 to just under €45bn by 2035, (that is,

under 20 years after the settlement) compared with around €25bn without a solution. In other words, the peace dividend over 20 years would be approximately €20bn” (Mullen, Apostolides & Besim, 2014). Annual incomes would rise from €17,000 in 2012 to just over €28,000 in 2035, compared with the forecasted €16,000 in 2035 without a solution. This means that annual incomes would be €12,000 higher by year 20 with a solution, than without one. The yearly average growth rate on the GDP would be 4.5% on average over 20 years, compared with a mere 1.6% without a solution. Cyprus’ main industry, tourism would prosper from a value of €1.3bn in 2012 to €2.9bn in 20 years. The economic boost to the country will reduce unemployment, public debt and should offset any costs related to devising a solution.

In addition to the economic benefits, a united and independent Cyprus will have numerous long-term political benefits. A well-functioning federation, between two ethnic communities, could set a constructive example for a region that has its fair share of ethnic tensions and unassimilated minorities within a state, as seen in Turkey and Israel. Furthermore, a thriving and politically stable Cyprus, that practices fundamental EU values, could be a pillar of stability in the region. Many states in the Eastern Mediterranean region face a wide array of domestic issues and strife, and if Cyprus were to overcome its greatest one, it would certainly set a positive example.

Although a solution would benefit the Turkish-Cypriot community, it remains clear that Turkey has underlying intentions to remain in Cyprus. This is evident in the continued failure of negotiations due to Turkey repeatedly not agreeing to the condition of removing their military presence on the island. The recent settlement of Turkish

people from mainland Turkey, populating northern Cyprus with loyalists to Turkey, and Turkey advocating for a two-state solution, portrays their attempts to remain in Cyprus. In spite of this, there is an ample amount of evidence that portrays that a united, bi-communal Cyprus, free of Turkish influence, can be a prosperous state.

## 7. Turkish Hostilities towards Greece: A Guarantor Power of Cyprus

Cyprus is not the only state in the region that is being aggressed by Turkey. This section portrays that Turkey's behaviour is not limited to Cyprus, and has been an overly aggressive actor in the region. To better understand this, the relationship between another neighbour, its NATO ally Greece, will be examined.

“The wretched Greek cannot achieve his purposes. They say do not pass, I'll go to Smyrna, I'll throw the Greeks into the sea” (GCT, 2019). This sort of hostile rhetoric has become a common occurrence from Erdogan with neighbours and other actors that have had a confrontational relationship with Turkey. Although Greece and Turkey are members of the NATO, a military alliance of collective defence, the relationship between Greece and Turkey remains turbulent. The countries have seen conflict several times in the 20th century, with the most recent military escalation occurring in 1996, over the Greek island of Imia.

Greek and Turkish hostilities have resurfaced, although conflict between the countries is not new. Each country has formed their national identity, with the

association that the other is the national enemy. Greece's war of independence was fought against the Ottoman Turks in 1821 and saw the subsequent creation of the modern Greek state, whilst, Turkey's war of independence saw the expulsion of the Greeks and allies from Anatolia in 1922. The Treaty of Lausanne, which holds contemporary importance, was signed in 1923 by the allies and the Republic of Turkey, which sets the borders of modern Turkey.

The main source of the disputes today is the Aegean Sea, which separates the mainlands of the two countries, and houses approximately 3000 islands and islets. Turkey's obstinate attitude on scattered rocks and isles in the Aegean, of no strategic importance and virtually uninhabitable shows an underlying strategy in Erdogan's antics. If Erdogan were able to attain the 18 isles that the Turks claim, it cannot be said with certainty that this expansionism would cease to end. Turkey with an area of 783,562 km<sup>2</sup>, one of the largest countries in the region (Pope & Pope, 2012), striving to acquire isles that may not amount to anything beyond a few dozen square kilometres, depicts these intentions. The two sides have disputed territorial water, national airspace and the militarization of Greek islands for decades. However, 2018 saw an unprecedented amount of incidents in which Turkey violated Greek sovereignty. The number of violations of Greek territorial waters, from the Hellenic National Defence General Staff statistics for the year 2017 & 2018 combined, was 3,477. In comparison, with the number of violations of Greek territorial waters in the year 2009 & 2010 combined, which was 223, a staggering increase (Hellenic National Defence General Staff, 2019). All of these violations were carried out by the Turkish Navy and Turkish

Coast Guard Vessels. In addition, Greek airspace was violated 3,705 times in 2018, in comparison, with 1779 violations in 2015. This rise can be linked to a contemporary post-coup Turkey with a new executive president. Erdogan has been intimidating and striving to expand in the territorial waters of Greece, whilst simultaneously laying a claim in the natural gas reserves found on the coast of the Republic of Cyprus. Furthermore, Turkey claims the 18 Aegean islands fall under 'grey zones' areas of dispute jurisdiction in the Aegean sea, which Greece firmly denies in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne.

Diplomatic channels have been a remedy to alleviate tensions between Greece and Turkey in the past. After the 1996 Imia/Kardak dispute, in which a Greek helicopter was reportedly shot down and the countries were on the brink of a war over the disputed isles, there was a period of rapprochement and an increase in social and economic interaction. Particularly, in 1999 in a phenomenon known as "Earthquake Diplomacy", in which Greeks and Turks both aided each other after destructive earthquakes had struck major cities in each country (Kinzer, 1999). The current escalations have demonstrated a more aggressive approach from Turkey and that rapprochement is not an option for Ankara. In mid-April 2018, a series of events unfolded: the Greeks opened fire on a Turkish helicopter violating airspace, a Greek fighter jet had crashed in the Aegean after returning from a mock dog fight with a Turkish jet, Prime Minister Tsipras' helicopter was harassed by a Turkish Aircraft, and the Turkish navy had removed a Greek flag on a disputed island. Despite these tensions, these countries do have other preoccupying and pressing concerns. In



Greece, repercussions are to be handled from the economic crisis and the disagreements amongst the Greek parliament and populace over the 'Prespes Agreement' regarding the Macedonia naming dispute; while in Turkey, the 'Kurdish question' is of urgent importance. Nonetheless, President Erdogan has amplified an aggressive demeanour as he takes on an expansionist approach. The main event that preceded the escalated tensions would be the failed military coup. Not only did this enhance an authoritarian and aggressive Turkey, but a multitude of asylum seekers had fled from Turkey to Greece after Erdogan's commencement of purges. One example was the fleeing of eight airforce pilots to Greece, and Athens denying Turkey's calls for the pilots to be repatriated. Following this, there had been an arrest of two Greek army officers. They were imprisoned in Turkey and faced charges of espionage, which was labelled a tactic of Turkey as Greece was not responding to Turkish demands of repatriating Turkish asylum seekers (Smith, 2017).

In December 2017, Erdogan visited Athens in a historic moment as he was the first Turkish president to do so in 65 years. There was the potential of putting the relationship on a positive foot, however, Erdogan continued his intimidating rhetoric towards its NATO ally. Erdogan boldly threatened an EU member from Athens, in a clear political statement. On Erdogan's visit to Greece, he argued that Greece should seek to improve the religious rights of the Muslim minority in Thrace and most controversially stated that the Treaty of Lausanne, essentially a treaty that has long governed Greek-Turkish relations, "Needs to be modernized". The stunned President and head of the Greek state, Prokopis Pavlopoulos stated in response "The Treaty of

Lausanne defines the territory and the sovereignty of Greece, and of the European Union, and this treaty is non-negotiable. It has no flaws, it does not need to be reviewed, or updated” (Smith, 2017). Moreover, Erdogan blamed the Greek-Cypriots for the recent failures in reunification talks.

The Aegean disputes are a decades-old conflict. What recently developed, which may instigate conflict, was Erdogan being granted executive powers. Furthermore, there is an absence of oversight and a mediator in the conflict. The United States performed as a mediator between the Turkish and Greek parties, particularly during the 1996 Imia/Kardak crisis; but with Turkey’s relations being strained with the US because of a lack of cooperation over accused coup initiators residing in the United States and each side focusing on the Syrian war, this is no longer an option. In addition, the NATO alliance which is fundamental in preventing an outbreak, has been in a state of disorder as the current US administration, shows a lack of interest in it (Smith, 2017). Other than the United States, no country has shown initiative in mediating the hostilities. Ultimately, Turkey’s behaviour in Greece, Cyprus and Syria may portray trends of Ottoman-like Turkish expansion, particularly after the president was granted executive powers and that the desire for accession into the European Union is obsolete.

## Section III

### 7. Interpretation of Turkish Foreign Policy

#### 7.1. Offensive Realism and the 'Mearsheimerian Tragedy'

A neorealist approach of International Relations theory (IR) is applicable to the current case of Turkey. This approach is divided amongst two schools of thought, offensive and defensive realism, and encapsulates the concept of state-centrism in the international system, international anarchy, sovereignty and survival. The main difference between offensive and defensive realism is between the perception of how much power a state must have in order to survive. Offensive realism, supported most notably by John Mearsheimer, argues that states must pursue unlimited power, whilst, defensive realism, defended by Kenneth Waltz, focuses on the need for power checks and a balance of power in the international system (Troulis, 2015). To elaborate on offensive realism, it postulates that states are rational actors and the main protagonists of world affairs. The condition of international anarchy on the world stage always encourages states to expand, and this creates potential conflict for states in the international system. An expansionist policy will be pursued if it yields more than it costs. All states seek to maximize their strength relative to other states, since only the

strongest are guaranteed to survive. The desire to survive encourages states to behave aggressively.

Mearsheimer's offensive realism protrudes that the most paramount aspect of a state's grand strategy is regional hegemony, as well as, strong economic growth to support military empowerment and preponderance in the region (Troulis, 2015). This being said, Turkey is a state that follows the offensive realist strategy and this is consistently made evident in the Cyprus issue. Turkey's perspective is that remaining in Cyprus is crucial, as it is of close proximity to the vital space of Turkey and geographically significant for Turkey's objective of regional hegemony. Besides its strategic geographic location, Turkey is also adamant on remaining in Cyprus for economic purposes; particularly, due to the economic potential of the hydrocarbons. If Turkey were excluded in the commercialization of them, this would be a lost opportunity to boost its recessed economy and would affect its prestige for its goal of regional hegemony. Turkey being left out of lucrative oil agreements in the Eastern Mediterranean, although it sits in a geographically favourable location that can ensure a sound logistical path of the transfer of oil to Europe, would be a major hindrance towards Turkey's ambitions. The Turkish government would not experience any economic benefits and its influence in the region would be constrained. Furthermore, if unification and independence in Cyprus were to be achieved, this would propel the island to be a stronger actor in the region, posing a threat to Turkey's pursuit of a hegemony. The inclusion of Egypt, Israel and Greece in strategic alliances with Cyprus would as well strengthen the relative power of these states. Offensive realism theory

supports that Turkey's coercion towards Cyprus and other actors in the region is due to the possibility that Turkey's grand strategy towards regional hegemony is jeopardized. Stronger and wealthier states in the region would affect Turkey's ambitions. Therefore, Turkey portrays an antagonistic 'zero-sum' relationship with other actors in the region. This means that their success entails a corresponding loss for the other actors and vice versa.

Turkey's aggressive behaviour is due to their aspirations for hegemony in the region but this perspective and approach may be misguided. Other actors in the Eastern Mediterranean region have portrayed a more optimistic 'win-win' relationship with each other, made evident in the recent agreements and positive relations between Israel, Egypt, Greece and Cyprus. Turkey may perceive that there is an absence of a regional power; but this is because the relations between states in the Eastern Mediterranean have shifted from the traditional 'zero-sum' game to interdependence and 'win-win', particularly in the field of energy. Furthermore, the United States has pledged military and political support to states like Cyprus, Greece and Israel, offering reassurance from external threats and stability, to allow for a greater focus on cooperation. Turkey's offensive realist approach indicates the belief that if Turkey lost control in Cyprus, its goal of becoming a regional power could be made open to other states; as well as, its withdrawal in Cyprus would be deemed a risk to its economy, the political role it holds in the region, and the capacity to exercise influence beyond its borders. All these factors explain Turkey's persistence in its foreign policy to remain in Cyprus, as without a foothold in Cyprus, their ambitions and survival are considered to be threatened.

The unprecedented level of economic opportunities and Turkey's possible exclusion from them has further propelled Turkey's hard power strategy on Cyprus. However, states that follow an offensive realist strategy may be a victim to an endless cycle, known as the 'Mearsheimerian Tragedy', a concept which refers to the excessive desire for power and domination, as a means of survival (Troulis, 2015). Turkey's aggressive behaviour may lead to them experiencing such a fate. This strategy overlooks the option of peaceful and cooperative measures as a way of solving conflicts. Mearsheimer presents this concept in his acclaimed book titled, "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics" (2001).

Moreover, historic threats that have hindered a Turkish expansionist policy, no longer exist, which could be a factor in the aggressive policy that is apparent now. Recent phenomenons of the past decade such as the 'Arab Spring' of 2011, the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean and Turkey being a forgotten candidate for EU accession have had a significant influence on the politics of the region. The revolution known as the 'Arab Spring' weakened Turkey's neighbouring states, such as Syria, allowing Turkey to appear more powerful in the region. The discovery of natural gas in the region and the lucrative export options that are available has affirmed Turkey's stance to remain in Cyprus. The purges and violations of human rights that happened in the aftermath of 2016 coup d'etat illustrate that Turkey no longer attempts to comply with EU law and can act internally and externally, as it pleases (Kouskouvelis, 2018, p. 3). These political situations and Turkey's recent conduct portray its intrinsic nature of foreign policy, which is aggressive and hostile.

In the fascinating article by Markos Troulis, titled “How Far is Turkey from a Mearsheimerian Tragedy’ (2015), Troulis argues that the most significant security dilemmas from Russia, Syria and Greece, have ceased to exist and neighbouring states no longer threaten Turkey’s survival. This has given Turkey the opportunity to expand its power in the greater region. With Russia, the land border disputes, which were due to the formation of the Caucasus countries (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) and long at the centre of Turkish foreign policy, have ended. Turkey and Russia have further increased economic interdependence, particularly in the energy sector. In addition, Russia in the post-Cold War world has sharply decreased military spending and is less powerful, in comparison with the former USSR. On its south-east border, Syria is ravaged by its civil war and is dependent on external powers, especially for humanitarian aid. Moreover, Greece has been crippled by its economic crisis, which has weakened the country and its defence budget over the past decade. Overall, the security dilemma posed by Russia, Greece and Syria no longer exist in the post-Cold War. Although a ‘power vacuum’ appears to have formed in the region, as historical powers have weakened in ‘hard power’, there has been a transformation in political relations of the region. Ultimately, Turkey’s shift to a hard power strategy of foreign policy may work against them.

Certainly, Mearsheimer theory would project that Turkey is in its best position since its establishment in 1923 to strive for maximal relative power in the region, but this can backfire. The political climate of the Eastern Mediterranean has increased in cooperation and Turkey's ‘Mearsheimerian Tragedy’, may work against the interests of

the state. This is because their aggressive nature has only caused it to have been left out of numerous alliances and economic opportunities. A growing autocratic Turkish government and a hostile foreign policy has weakened Turkey's relations with the United States, the European Union and states in the Eastern Mediterranean. The worsened relations with the US, mainly due to Turkey's growing discontent towards Israel, could limit Ankara's access to military advances and intelligence-sharing from the last global superpower. In addition, Turkey's loss of amicable relations with Israel has encouraged Israel to further support the Republic of Cyprus and Greece. Turkey, also have conflicting views with Russia, as it supports an opposing belligerent in the Syrian Civil War, which rules out more significant security and military agreements with Russia, beyond merely economic cooperation. Equally important, a multitude of asymmetrical threats currently plague Turkey, which include the 'Kurdish question', terrorist groups such as the IS, and economic recession. Turkey's worsening relations with the global powers and its neighbours, along with the rise of domestic threats, suggests that Turkey may face future dangers and without support. Turkey's lack of alliances would isolate Turkey, in a world that prospers with growing interdependence, cooperation and liberal relations. If Turkey were to continue on the path of striving for regional hegemony and acting overly aggressive, they could sit in soli and excluded from regional prosperity. As a result, this could strengthen the relative power of its neighbours and weaken its own; and ultimately, Turkey's 'Mearsheimerian Tragedy' or excessive desire for power may continue ineffectively.



An example of this can be drawn from the political situation that is being discussed with regards to Cyprus. Turkey's confrontational behaviour is likely believed to be essential for the nature of the system and what is required to attain a hegemony in the region. Neoclassical realism would support that overextension by some states might lead to systemic war, as other states are left with no alternative but to balance aggressively, whereas more prudent strategies would have led to relative systemic stability (Ripsman, Taliaferro, & Lobell 2016, p.85). Traditionally, states would respond to aggressiveness through balance, but as made evident in the formed alliances in the region, prudent strategies are available and have been utilized by the Republic of Cyprus. In this unique case, Turkey's overextending foreign policy is up against the political unity of Israel, Greece, Egypt and Cyprus, with the military and political backing of the United States. The Republic of Cyprus, a state much smaller than Turkey, has exceeded the traditional response to 'balance aggressively'; by attaining the political and military support to be in a favourable position. Turkey can act aggressively but it remains in soli; and due to the unequivocal backing Cyprus has, the chance for systemic war is limited, as this would be catastrophic for an isolated Turkey. Therefore, in the Eastern Mediterranean, it is unlikely to see any considerable actions taken from Turkey, beyond threats and short-lived confrontations.

## 7.2. Future Outlook

Turkey has become an increasingly regressive nation that does not hold the values of a European nation or embody the European standards of human rights and

democracy. President Erdogan's vision of Turkey contradicts these values, values that are present in the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey's continued influence in occupied Cyprus would carry over the deterioration of human rights seen in Turkey. This has already occurred, particularly with worries over the 'Islamisation' of Cyprus. A post-coup Turkey and the uncompromising political authority that has breached democracy and human rights in the country has had severe repercussions on its international reputation. The Turkish-Cypriots growing concerns of Turkey's influence on the island may be one of these repercussions, as there has been an increase in negative sentiments towards Erdogan. The domestic strife and economic recession in Turkey have even spurred negative sentiments towards Erdogan from the Turkish populace. Most recently, Erdogan's ruling political party, the AKP, lost mayoral elections in Turkey's three major cities (Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara) in late March 2019 (Uras, 2019). Moreover, the political and economic leverage of Nicosia is capable of transforming the political environment in the region and at no time should Nicosia backtrack to accommodate the demands of Turkey. The Republic of Cyprus' economic ambitions are supported by the EU and the US whilst other major actors such as Russia and China have recognized Cyprus' role as a key player in the region (Pedi & Kouskouvelis, 2019, p.160-161). For this reason, it is far more inclined to maintain the status quo, as the Greek-Cypriot administration is officially recognized, internationally legitimate and economically prosperous; which cannot be said for Turkish-occupied Cyprus. The Republic of Cyprus' political and economic stature, supported by the future commercialization of its hydrocarbons, can act as a catalyst to increase initiatives for a fair and viable solution

from the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot populace. A successful solution must be devised without haste and with the assurance that Turkey's presence on the island is removed (Pedi & Kouskouvelis, 2016).

Although the underlying issue has been Turkey's presence in Cyprus, the exclusion of Turkey in the economic agreements on natural gas, which may see substantial out-turn from the commercialization of it, may encourage it to seek benevolent relations with its neighbours. Diplomatic relations are the only channel for Turkey to be involved in these alliances, as its aggressive attempts to have a hand in the hydrocarbons will be suppressed by the political might of involved allies to the Republic of Cyprus, such as the US. Turkey's claim in the marine resources can be backed by vocal and military threats, but ultimately it is the Republic of Cyprus that is fully endorsed at an international level.

## 8. Conclusion

Turkey is far from a pillar of stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, and can be best described as an inducer of conflict to attain what it desires; which is, hegemony in the region. The geography, geology and demography of Turkey allow it to be an important economic and political player in the region, particularly with the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean and the demand Europe has for oil. Erdogan's aggressive domestic and international policies deem Turkey as uncooperative and hostile, discouraging actors to cooperate with it. Turkey's approach towards its neighbours has faced a wide array of criticism from political leaders, including leaders of

the European Union and the United States. Turkey's international activity coincides with domestic strife such as the spillover from the Syrian Civil War, economic recession and the 'Kurdish question'. Turkey faces several intricate problems at a domestic and international level, which can have future consequences. Moving forward, Turkey should stop seeing its affairs with actors in the region as 'zero-sum', and more along the lines of 'win-win'. Erdogan's aggressive manner is counter-productive for the interests of the state, and as a result, Turkey is being excluded in significant economic opportunities and political alliances.

The Republic of Cyprus has been subject to these hostilities of foreign policy. Contrary to Turkey, the Republic of Cyprus is an EU member-state, that is well-respected at the international level, is involved in several strategic agreements with neighbours and international powers, and forms relationships based on positive interdependence. Cyprus has created alliances with Israel, Egypt and Greece to economically prosper the region and have strong political ties with its neighbours. However, Turkey continues to bully its southern neighbour, specifically through two major issues: the illegal Turkish occupation of the island and the discovery of hydrocarbons in Cyprus' EEZ. Turkey refusing to withdraw its military and political presence in Cyprus, the underlying issue in the Cyprus dispute manifested in the failed UN-sponsored agreements in 2017, and Turkey obstructing the drilling of natural gas off the coast of Cyprus, are clear violations of international law. Turkey's pursuit for a hegemony in the region through an offensive realist strategy, accompanied by numerous domestic problems, is a significant drawback for the state. If Turkey

continues hostilities towards Cyprus, it poses the risk of isolation and continued distrust; but if they strive for friendlier relations with Cyprus and withdraw their military forces from the island, Turkey would develop more of a positive global reputation. Turkey losing its foothold in Cyprus and a peace settlement being reached would be only for the betterment of both, Cyprus and Turkey. Cyprus would be a free and sovereign state, that would enjoy economic and political benefits; and states would be inclined to cooperate with Turkey, in a region that is increasing in interdependence. Turkey may be included in the lucrative economic agreements, and major actors such as the US and the EU, as well as neighbours in the region, may reward Turkey with more open and mutually beneficial relations. In turn, this would further promote political stability and economic prosperity in the region.

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