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EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN GEOPOLITICAL REVIEW

**Perspectives on Strategic Cooperation
in the Eastern Mediterranean**



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A Note from Professor Andreas Theophanous, Executive Chairman of the Center for European and International Affairs, University of Nicosia

The Center for European and International Affairs is an independent non-profit-making think-tank of the University of Nicosia. Since its establishment in 1993 the Center (formerly known as Research Center-Intercollege), has sought to advance academic and policy-oriented research, contribute to the study and analysis of important economic, political, social and strategic issues of concern to Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean and the European Union. These include issues of European political and economic integration, ethnic conflict and governance in biethnic and multiethnic societies, political economy, themes revolving around Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East. Not surprisingly issues involving Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean have always received a substantial share of attention.

This work has been advanced through the engagement in national, European and international research projects, the organization of international symposia, conferences, round-table discussions, seminars, as well as the publication of books, policy-papers, studies, conference papers and research reports. The Center aims at further enhancing strategic thinking in Cyprus, encourage debate and analysis of current affairs, promote a constructive dialogue and create fruitful partnerships. It also aspires to upgrade its contribution in issues of regional, European and international interest.

In addition to its close collaboration with the University of Nicosia for the coordination of various BA, MA and Ph.D programs of the Department of European Studies and International Relations the Center cooperates with other academic and research institutions in various countries. These relationships as well as networks of cooperation are useful as they provide opportunities for fruitful exchange of information, knowledge and critical analysis.

For years we have been thinking to proceed with the publication of a journal to address regional issues in a more systematic manner. The Eastern

Mediterranean has always been a very important region as it is a meeting point of three continents, of three major world religions, of the East and the West and of the Economic North and South.

A modest ambition of this publication, the *Eastern Mediterranean Geopolitical Review*, is to contribute to a meaningful debate on these issues. Furthermore, a major objective is to enhance policy-oriented analysis within this framework. Last but not least there will be special emphasis on Cyprus given that developments in the broader region have also been affecting this island-state over time in several ways.

Editor's Note

A new scholarly endeavour in the Eastern Mediterranean

The life roots in the Levantine basin date back to the beginning of prehistoric experience when the region began growing into a fertile nucleus of influential civilizations, sacred religions and vital trade routes, as well as a geo-nautical pole for ambitious conquerors and rulers that coveted the region's geo-historical importance and affluence. The industrial revolution that accompanied the emergence of the modern era expanded its vital geopolitical importance to the adjacent energy-rich Middle East, while Cold War rivalry extended its geostrategic significance as far as the Asian heartland. Today, the collapse of regional Arab states and growing instability in the volatile Middle East and northern Africa, as well as the discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the Levantine basin urgently prescribe the necessity for the transformation of the Eastern Mediterranean into a vital security bastion between the three intersecting continents. This imperative is also underlined by global challenges, such as the developing existential complexities in relation to the European integration process, re-emerging East-West antagonism, growing traces of clashing civilization principles, fomenting regional nuclear proliferation, and invisibly spreading asymmetrical threats.

In a rapidly evolving world where human reasoning, political thinking, and geostrategic perceptions cannot always explain the intricacies and comprehend the challenges of the post-modern era, scientific research and academic conception acquire a new contributing role in the sophisticated intellectual demands of contemporary life. The *Eastern Mediterranean Geopolitical Review (EMGR)*, published by the Center for European and International Affairs (CEIA) of the University of Nicosia, aspires to become a leading review of interdisciplinary scholarly analysis. It aims at examining critical questions and complex issues that pertain to the geopolitical arena of the Eastern Mediterranean and analysing their effects, influences and implications in the context of Middle Eastern, Eurasian and global affairs. It envisages the attraction of original research contributions by established as well as emerging academics, researchers and analysts from a diverse variety of scientific disciplines and research fields such as geopolitics, economics, political science, history, diplomacy, international law, security, defence, intelligence, political geography, and other related fields.

The first thematic issue of the journal – under a provisional advisory academic board – examines the emerging perspectives of strategic cooperation between the Republic of Cyprus and neighbouring states in areas such as security and intelligence, the law of the sea, EEZ delimitation, bilateral political relations, airspace security, and maritime surveillance. The second thematic issue of the journal will concentrate on the analysis of the Cyprus Problem and its geopolitical implications on regional and European affairs under the present status quo and on the eventuality of a successful agreement for the solution of the fifty-year old problem.

Petros Savvides
Editor

Cyprus-Greece-Israel: Strategic Relations

Phoivos Klokkaris
Lieutenant-General (ret.)

The recent developments in the geopolitical environment of the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean have severely affected the security conditions and the political and financial affairs of regional states. The danger arising from asymmetrical and conventional threats, and the growing instability, have also raised the necessity for the development of new strategic approaches among neighbouring states with the intention of safeguarding their national and regional interests.

Eastern Mediterranean

The new conditions in the Eastern Mediterranean mainly encompass the vital issues of energy and security; factors that, directly or indirectly, influence global peace, stability, prosperity and world economy. Recently, the Eastern Mediterranean crossroad of commerce and energy transfer has been transformed into a region of energy production as well. The discovery of underwater hydrocarbon resources offshore Egypt, Israel and Cyprus, and the potential discovery in the seas of Lebanon and Greece, convert the global energy map and create new conditions in the wider geopolitical equation. As a consequence of this development, the geopolitical gravity of the energy-producing states increases accordingly, as well as the security and cooperation imperatives among them, due to the proximity of their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs).

Today, security in the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider Middle East – already burdened by longstanding and unresolved disputes such as the Cyprus problem, the Palestinian question, the Kurdish problem, and the Arab-Israeli conflict – is undermined by unpredictable violence, barbaric acts of terror, mass

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migration, terrorist mobility, and other problems, that threaten global security, such as: internal upheavals and bloody clashes in the Arab counties of the region; the extermination of Christian communities by radical Islamists; the evolving inter-Moslem antagonism and clashes between Sunnies and Shias; the radically expanding Islamic Jihad that pursues, through violence and brutality, the formation of an “Islamic State” (a caliphate) founded on the moral principles of sharia; the destabilizing role of Tayyip Erdogan’s Islamist Turkey.

Turkey

Ankara’s ambitious national policies and precarious initiatives in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean undoubtedly cause complications and difficulties in the region; furthermore, the objectives of the recently launched air strikes against ISIS and PKK targets have not been clarified. Turkey indirectly encourages and supports Islamic Jihadist action in Syria and Iraq aiming at enhancing its political objectives against the Kurds and the Assad regime in Syria; it wishes to see the Kurdish movement near its borders weakening, as well as the establishment of an Islamic regime in Syria that would be friendly to Ankara and hostile to Tehran. Its geopolitical manoeuvres have caused the Turkish Kurds’ frustration, while its controversial domestic policies have generated Western speculation regarding Ankara’s reliability and devotion to democracy; the recent cases of suppressing the freedom of speech and other liberties by the despotic administration of Erdogan have strengthened this belief. Beyond its long-term disputes with Greece, Cyprus and Armenia, Ankara’s hegemonic tendencies and ambition to become a regional power and leader of the Moslem world in the Middle East, have also aggravated its foreign relations with other neighbouring states such as Syria, Iran, Israel, Egypt.

Turkey aggressively contests 28% of Greek EEZ and almost 70% of Cypriot EEZ, in violation of international law and the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Although it had not signed the UNCLOS Agreement, it questions the fact that the Greek islands in the Eastern Aegean and in the Kastellorizo complex can be entitled to their own continental shelf and EEZ rights; this argument was the main reason for its refusal to sign the Agreement. Ankara illegally claims rights in the Aegean Sea east of the 25°E meridian (essentially half of the Aegean), as well as all the sea area between Rhodes and Cyprus, where it illegally incites the delimitation of its EEZ with Egypt without consideration of the Greek and Cypriot EEZs. It also arbitrarily and irrationally claims that Cyprus has no EEZ rights west of the 32°16’18”E meridian.

Turkey refuses to recognize the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), a European Union member state, and questions its EEZ rights as they derive from the UNCLOS 1982 articles about island states. It also disputes the RoC’s right for the

exploitation of its hydrocarbon resources before the final settlement of the Cyprus Problem, which was actually created by itself with its military invasion of 1974 and the continuing illegal occupation of the northern territory of the Republic. Since 2011, Ankara – through the aggressive deployment of its navy and illegal exploration activities by research vessels *K. Piri Reis* (2011) and *Barbaros Hayreddin Pasa* (2013-2015) in the Cypriot EEZ – pursues a policy of de facto usurping the RoC's EEZ. Moreover, it foments the channeling of Eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbon resources to Europe through Turkey and militates against the prospect of the creation of an energy corridor connecting Israel, Cyprus and Greece with the rest of Europe. Instead, Ankara is interested in transforming itself into a regulating energy hub – with important political and financial benefits – through which hydrocarbon resources from the Caspian Sea, Northern Iraq, Eastern Mediterranean and Russia will be transferred to Europe. Furthermore, the rupture of Turkish-Israeli relations is linked to Ankara's effort to undertake a protector's role for Palestinian rights, and reflects its ambition to develop a hegemonic role among the Arab-Moslem states; an endeavour that has failed, at least for the time being.

Cyprus-Greece-Israel

The emerging geopolitical situation in the Eastern Mediterranean (hydrocarbon resources, turbulence in the Arab World, Islamic fundamentalism, Turkish hegemonic ambitions), in correlation with the Ukrainian crisis that jeopardizes Russian natural gas flow to Europe, have created a window of opportunity for the development of new strategic partnerships between regional state actors. Especially, there is a growing imperative for cooperation between Cyprus, Greece and Israel, principally for security reasons and other which relate to the effective exploitation of the three states' hydrocarbon resources. The existing regional conditions and the consequent convergence of interests comprise the foundation for the development of strong bonds and a viable cooperation. These three parties, the only non-Moslem states in the Eastern Mediterranean, share democratic systems of governance and a Western cultural identity; they may play a key role for the stabilization of the region and for the containment of threatening phenomena such as Jihadism, global terrorism, and anti-Western hatred. Their potentially energy-rich EEZs provide for a geographic bond that facilitates the development of a new energy axis (Israel-Cyprus-Greece-EU) that could contribute significantly to EU's energy needs and energy security. The common energy interests the EU shares with these natural gas producing states also provides the basis for the implementation of such an axis, either in the form of a natural gas pipeline or an LNG plant.

The core idea for the development of such a tripartite, or even multiparty, cooperation is founded on various levels of approach:

Energy Security: Apart from the development of a joint energy axis, another promising perspective is the joint exploitation of neighbouring energy reserves, with mutual benefits for the cooperating parties. There are common security needs deriving from the unstable political environment of the Eastern Mediterranean (especially due to the emergence of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism), as well as due to the Turkish tendency for revisionism. The latter should be contained through the development of a joint deterrence strategy, based on a reliable security system.

Military Cooperation: The military capacity of these states is the most significant factor that could create and safeguard the security conditions necessary for the achievement of uninterrupted exploitation of regional energy resources, and the prevention of crises. Coordination of cooperation and action, common military planning and joint training could maximize the effectiveness of Greece and Israel's existing military capabilities and technological air-naval means. Despite Cyprus's urgent need for reinforcement of its naval and air capabilities, the use of its infrastructure (ports, airports, early warning systems) could be vital for the protection of regional energy production and distribution facilities.

Cooperation in other areas: political cooperation, tourism, environment, telecommunication, health system, search and rescue, military technology, trade, etc.

The benefits of such a cooperation can be multiple for all three states in all areas and, particularly, those of security and energy. Greece and Cyprus will strengthen their capability of deterrence against Turkish aggressiveness, while their geopolitical gravity as EU member states (with a role in Europe's energy supply and security) would increase. Similarly Israel, which is surrounded by Moslem states and possesses limited air space, will gain strategic depth towards the Mediterranean and effective access to the EU through Cyprus and Greece. The use of the two countries' sea and air space may effectively serve the operational needs of the Israeli Air Force in the fields of training, exercises and operational effectiveness; in the past, before the decline of Israeli-Turkish relations, these vital needs were offered by Turkey.

The prerequisites for the effective, long-term implementation of a tripartite strategic cooperation between Cyprus, Greece and Israel are the following: mutual contribution among all contracting parties and coordination of their actions; development of programs and mechanisms for rapid and effective implementation of this cooperation; decisiveness in the realization of the cooperation, solidarity and avoidance of any unilateral actions inconsistent with the interests of any one of the three parties; delimitation of Greek EEZ with Cyprus and Egypt; safeguard of the Republic of Cyprus' independent existence.

Any settlement of the Cyprus Problem that would place the island under the strategic control of Turkey would contradict with the interests of Greece, Israel, and other states in the region (such as Egypt), and would overturn the evolving multilateral strategy in the areas of energy and security.

Conclusion

The strategic cooperation between Cyprus, Greece and Israel is both possible and imperative for the benefit of the three states, as well as the EU, but also for the stability and security of the Eastern Mediterranean. The cooperation may also be beneficial to Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan, to the extent that these states' interests converge with those of Cyprus, Greece and Israel; the Cairo joint declaration between Egypt, Greece and Cyprus, concluded on 3 November 2014 and the Nicosia joint declaration of 29 April 2015 already serves these prospects. The Republic of Cyprus and Greece may serve as a link between Israel and the Arab World as part of the development of regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean that will contribute to peace and stability in the wider region. Turkey's aggressive and hegemonic behavior encourages neighboring states to cooperate for its prevention and discouragement.

The Geostrategic Position of Cyprus: Israel's Prospect for Strategic Depth in the Eastern Mediterranean

Petros Savvides
University of Birmingham

The article examines the geostrategic significance of the island of Cyprus in the post-Second World War era, its exclusive strategic utilization by the United Kingdom and the United States, and the failed attempts of Nicosia to capitalize on the island's vital geographic position. It describes how the discovery of hydrocarbon fields in the Levantine basin introduced both Israel and Cyprus to the Eastern Mediterranean and turned into a catalyst for bilateral cooperation in energy as well as security issues. It analyzes how the emergence of strategic and new unconventional threats in the Middle East prescribe the consideration of alternative security options by Jerusalem, including the prospect for the expansion of its strategic depth in the Mediterranean.

Since antiquity the pivotal position of the island of Cyprus – long thought of as the very crossroads of three continents – and its importance for access and domination in the Eastern Mediterranean, had a catalytic influence in transforming this *strategic land*,¹ into a nucleus of rivalry among foreign conquerors in the past and a geostrategic apple of discord in the modern era. Benjamin Disraeli (1878) regarded Cyprus as “the key of Western Asia,”² Henry

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¹ Francis Henn, “Cyprus - the Geo-strategic Dimension,” *Contemporary Review* 289:1685 (2007), 175-181; *Strategic Colonies and their Future* (London: Fabian Publications and Victor Gollancz, 1945), 3-5, 27-37; A. M. Pamir, ed., *Turkey and Cyprus: A Survey of the Cyprus Question with Official Statements of the Turkish Viewpoint* (London: Turkish Embassy Press Attache's Office, 1956); Georgios Grivas (ret. General), *Apomnemonemata Agonos EOKA 1955-1959* [Memoirs of the EOKA struggle 1955-1959], (Athens: [n. pub.], 1961), 8-11; Brednan O'Malley and Ian Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy: America, Espionage and the Turkish Invasion* (London: Tauris, 1999), 1-7, 77-86.

Kissinger (1957) as a “staging post” for the Middle East,³ and John Kennedy (1961) considered that “Cyprus’ real estate and strategic location are of considerable importance to us and our allies.”⁴

Sixty-five years after the formal rise of the *Cyprus Question* for self-determination in January 1950, as well as endless inter-communal negotiations between 1968 and 2015, the prospect for a *just, secure and viable* political solution of the *Cyprus Problem*⁵ vanished and has been substituted by a profound ambiguity for the *strategic future* of the island. Today, Nicosia is faced with a pseudo-dilemma: either to continue its strategic-less ephemeral policies and eventually submit⁶ to Ankara’s long-term objectives⁷ for the *strategic control* of the island and the liquidation of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) through an Anan Plan-type solution;⁸

² On 5 May 1878, the British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli wrote to Queen Victoria that “If Cyprus be conceded to your Majesty by the Porte, and England, at the same time, enters into a defensive alliance with Turkey, guaranteeing Asiatic Turkey from Russian invasion, the power of England in the Mediterranean will be absolutely increased in the region, and your Majesty’s Indian Empire immensely strengthened. Cyprus is the key of Western Asia:” quoted in William Flavelle Monypenny and George Earl Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield*, 3 vols, (London: John Murray, 1929), II, 1163.

³ Henry A. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper Brothers [for the Council of Foreign Relations], 1957), 165.

⁴ Secret, John F. Kennedy to Secretary of State, “National Security Action Memorandum No. 71,” 22 August 1961, Digital National Security Archive (DNSA) PD00728.

⁵ The term *Cyprus Question*, which pertains to the 1950s’ Greek Cypriot anti-colonial claim for self-determination, is often confused with the term *Cyprus Problem*. The latter concept emerged with the inter-communal strife of 1963-64 – that ended with the secessionist creation of armed, semi-autonomous Turkish Cypriot enclaves within the newly established Republic – and was formalised with the 1974 Turkish invasion and illegal occupation of 36.4% of the Republic of Cyprus’ soil.

⁶ Randall L. Schweller, “Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back in,” *International Security* 19:1 (1994), 72-107.

⁷ The rise (electoral victory of 26 April 2015) of progressive Turkish Cypriot leader Mustapha Akinci to the presidency of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” is not expected to overcome Turkey’s acute positions on critical issues of the inter-communal negotiations: such as Ankara’s demand for guarantor rights over a European Union member state; its refusal for demilitarization and its insistence for the presence of Turkish forces on the island; its demand to identify the political future and fate of the island with Turkish progress in EU negotiations; its demand to control the perspective export of Cypriot hydrocarbon resources by a pipeline through Turkish soil.

⁸ Klearchos A. Kyriakides, “Legitimising the Illegitimate: The Origins and Objectives of the Annan Plan,” in *The Case Against the Annan Plan*, ed. Van Coufoudakis and Klearchos Kyriakides (London: Lobby for Cyprus, 2004), 17-44, 45-48; Claire Palley, *An International Relations Debacle: The UN Secretary-General’s Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus 1999-2004* (Oxford and Portland OR: Hart, 2005); *Reunifying Cyprus: The Annan Plan and Beyond*, ed. Andrekos Varnava and Hubert Faustmann (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009).

or awake from the self-inflicted coma of the past and formulate a strategy for the future⁹ by safeguarding the existence of the Republic and encouraging strategic cooperations with states that have direct interests in the region (Israel, France, Russia, the United States and the United Kingdom). Such a strategy will not only enhance the Republic's geopolitical gravity – as a *peaceful predictable factor of stability* – in the wider volatile and unstable region, but will also raise the cost against the lawless tactics of Ankara in the Eastern Mediterranean.

A strategic asset for London and Washington

Since its establishment in August 1960, the young Republic not only failed to capitalize the importance of its geographic position, but also turned a blind eye to the extensive utilization of the island – both by the United Kingdom and the United States – for important strategic purposes.¹⁰ Under the pretext of Sovereign Base Area (SBA) rights, the two British military bases as well as many other Retained Sites have been utilized for strategic activities – on many occasions without the knowledge and consent of the Republic.¹¹ During the Cold War, Cypriot soil had been secretly used for the storage of British *Red Beard* (15/25 kt)

⁹ Michalis Kontos, “Strategic Security and Survival Planning of the Republic of Cyprus: The Choices of the Past and the Prospects of the Future,” in *E Kypros se Nea Epochi: Geostratigikes Parametroi, Economia, Exoteriki Politiki* [Cyprus in a new era: geostrategic parameters, economy, foreign policy], ed. Christina Ioannou et al. (Nicosia: Hippassus, 2014), 81-98.

¹⁰ “The United States has a general interest in the availability of Cyprus for use by the United States and its allies for strategic purposes:” Secret, National Security Council, “US Policy toward Cyprus: Contingencies and Options,” 7 July 1971, 14, DNSA PR00736; also Petros Savvides, “The strategic value of the British Bases in Cyprus” [in Greek], *Philelefttheros*, 30 September 2014, 15.

¹¹ The three main US ELINT stations operating on Cypriot soil from the early 1950's until the Turkish invasion of 1974 were:

- i. CIA Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Med Bureau at Karavas (since 1949);
- ii. NSA Naval Security Group (NAVSECGRU) Station USN-16, known as Naval Facility (NAVFAC) Nicosia, at Yerolakkos (since 1950), which was initially (1950-1957) operated by the CIA as USF-61 under the cover-name Project APPLESOUCE: National Security Agency, Confidential, [writer not declassified], “The History of Applesauce,” *Cryptologic Spectrum* 3:1 (1973), 9-12; NSA, Top Secret, Director of Naval Intelligence to Director of Strategic Plans Division, “Evacuation of Applesauce Personnel in Emergency,” 16 January 1952, DNSA HN00689;
- iii. NSA United States Air Force Security Service (USAFSS) 14th Radio Squadron Mobile (RSM) at Mia Milia (since 1952).

In 1968, under the presidency of Archbishop Makarios, the Government of Cyprus claimed and achieved a ten-year agreement with Washington for the operation of US facilities on Cypriot soil, with an annual compensation of more than one million dollars per year: Secret, National Security Council, “US Policy toward Cyprus: Contingencies and Options,” 7 July 1971, 12, DNSA PR00736.

and later of *WE.177B* (450 kt) nuclear bombs,¹² as a RAF forward deployment nuclear air base,¹³ and as a NATO communications cell.¹⁴ It has also been utilized as a critical Over-the-Horizon Radar (OTH-R) location for the monitoring of strategic activities in the Asian heartland¹⁵ (Figures 1 and 2), as an invaluable “hub for military intelligence gathering across the region”¹⁶ for the British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and the American National Security Agency (NSA)¹⁷ (Figure 3), an air base for USAF U-2¹⁸ strategic reconnaissance missions,¹⁹ and lately – for the first time – as a combat base for RAF Tornado air strikes against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.²⁰

¹² Tom Rhodes, “Britain Kept Secret Nuclear Arsenal on Cyprus,” *The Sunday Times*, 31 December 2000.

¹³ “[...] a RAF base committed to NATO but publicly identified with CENTO:” Secret, National Security Council, “US Policy toward Cyprus: Contingencies and Options,” 7 July 1971, 12, DNSA PR00736. References about the deployment of nuclear weapons in Cyprus are found in the following files: Top Secret, “Nuclear Bases,” Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) POL 21/176/1, 1960-1963, The National Archives (TNA) DO 204/3; Top Secret, “Nuclear Weapons in Cyprus,” CRO CON 14/95/1, 1960-1963, TNA DO 161/21.

¹⁴ Retained Site A6 at Cape Greco was a NATO Communications Station of the HIGH ACE system while the A7 Site at Yailas on the Pentadaktylos Range was described as a NATO Relay Station.

¹⁵ The first OTH Radar – code-named *Project Sandra* – was installed in Cyprus in 1963 and was replaced in the 1970s by another OTH system code-named *Cobra Shoe*, that monitored and provided early warning for strategic activities (nuclear tests, ballistic missile tests, etc.) in the USSR and China: Peter Laurie, “An Eye on the Enemy Over the Horizon,” *New Scientist* 64:922 (7 November 1974), 420-423; Richard J. Alsbrich, *GCHQ: The Uncensored Story of Britain’s Most Secret Intelligence Agency* (London: Harper, 2011), 321-323. The existing OTH *Pluto* system, installed in 1998 and 2002-03 at Akrotiri (transmitter) and Ayios Nikolaos (receiver), monitors strategic activities in Asia at a range of 5000+ km.

¹⁶ Nick Hopkins et al., “GCHQ: Inside the Top Secret World of Britain’s Biggest Spy Agency,” *The Guardian*, 2 August 2013, 8.

¹⁷ According to the documents leaked by Edward Snowden, the NSA subsidises half of the operational cost of British interception facilities in Cyprus: Nick Hopkins and Julian Borger, “Exclusive: NSA Pays £100m in Secret Funding for GCHQ,” *The Guardian*, 2 August 2013, 1.

¹⁸ The CIA Detachment G of two U-2s was deployed for the first time at RAF Akrotiri in August 1970, under Operation *Even Steven*. Since April 1974 a USAF U-2 detachment has been operating from Akrotiri under Operation *Olive Harvest*.

¹⁹ In 2008, USAF U-2s from RAF Akrotiri were carrying out strategic reconnaissance missions for the benefit of foreign governments; Operation *Highland Warrior*, covering eastern Turkey and northern Iraq, offered intelligence for Kurdish PKK activities to the Turkish Government, while Operation *Cedar Sweep* over Lebanon collected Hezbollah intelligence for the Lebanese Government: Secret NOFORN-SIPDIS, US Embassy London, 001115 (18 April 2008), 001159 (24 April 2008), 001350 (14 May 2008), and 001412 (20 May 2008), Wikileaks:

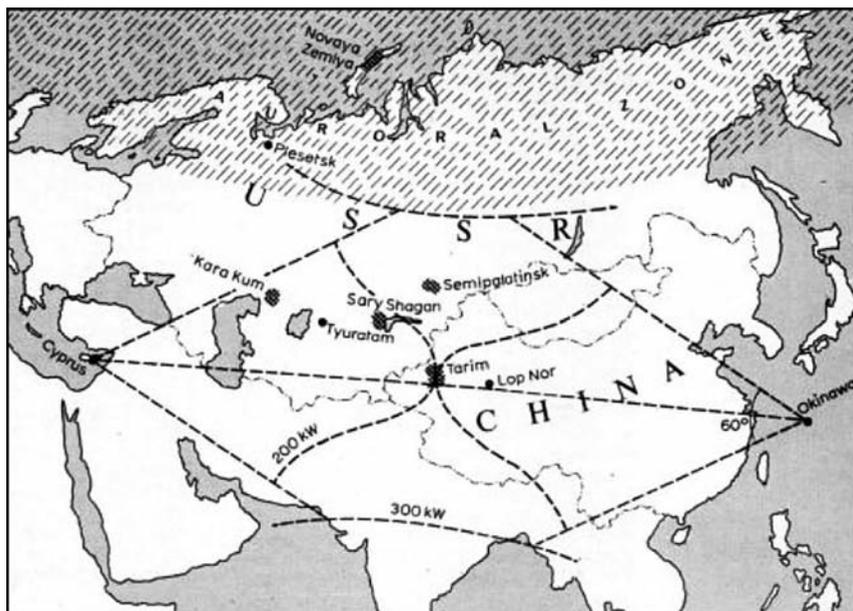


Figure 1: The map, published in the *New Scientist*, presents the coverage of the OTH *Cobra Shoe* transmitter at Akrotiri Cyprus and the respective receiver in Okinawa (and vice versa), for transmitter powers of 200 kW and 300 kW. © 1974 *New Scientist*, published by Reed Business Information Ltd, England. All Rights Reserved. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency.

Beyond its own inconspicuous use of the SBAs for half a century,²¹ Whitehall – exchanging *terrain for technology*²² – has been silently offering Cypriot soil to Washington without the acquiescence of the Government of Cyprus (GOC); in

<http://www.wikeleaks.org/cable/2008/04/08LONDON1115.html>; <http://www.wikeleaks.org/cable/2008/04/08LONDON1159.html>; <http://www.wikeleaks.org/cable/2008/05/08LONDON1350.html>; <http://www.wikeleaks.org/cable/2008/05/08LONDON1412.html>, [all accessed 19 October 2013]. Richard Norton-Taylor and David Leigh, “UK Overruled on Lebanon Spy Flights from Cyprus, Wikileaks Cables Reveal,” *The Guardian*, 3 December 2010, 9.

²⁰ House of Commons, *Hansard Debates*, 26 September 2014, Vol. 585, No. 39, Col. 1255-1366; House of Commons, Louisa Brook-Holland and Claire Mills, ed., “ISIS: The Military Response in Iraq and Syria,” SN/IA/6995, 8 December 2014, 7-14, <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn06995.pdf> [accessed 11 September 2015].

²¹ The decolonization of the Middle East gradually transformed Cyprus into a “safe heaven” for overt and covert British communication monitoring and propaganda activities: Alsbrich, *GCHQ*, 155-157, 160-163, 320-321.

²² Alsbrich, *GCHQ*, 7.

both cases their controversial use by both the UK and the USA²³ deprived Nicosia of any political advantage. The responsibility does not pertain exclusively to HMG's unilateral interpretation and invisible abuse of the *Treaty of Establishment*;²⁴ it also derives from Nicosia's misconception that – under the burden of Turkish



Figure 2: The two transmitter antennae of the HF 1 MW OTH *PLUTO* System at Akrotiri in the Western Sovereign Base Area (WSBA) – installed in 1998 (*PLUTO* I antenna, height 58 m) and 2002-2003 (*PLUTO* II antenna, width 196 m and height 96 m) – provide the capability of monitoring strategic activities in the Asian heartland at a range of 5000+ km. © 2015 Google Earth.



Figure 3: The interception facilities of the *Joint Service Signal Unit (JSSU) Cyprus* at Ayios Nikolaos in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA), jointly operated by the services of the British Armed Forces, provide vital intelligence to the GCHQ and the NSA from the wider Middle Eastern region. © 2013 Petros Savvides.

²³ "Cyprus continues to remain one and irreplaceable intelligence, communications, radar and transmission centre for Britain, the United States and NATO:" D. E. Hawkins, Joint Planning Staff, "Cyprus: Review of Strategic Requirements," 7 January 1959, TNA.

²⁴ *Cyprus*, Cmnd. 1093 (London: HMSO, 1960).

occupation of the island's northern part – any claims for the strategic use of its territory by third parties – one of which is also a guarantor power – could question its ambivalent loyalty to the West.

Failed attempts of Nicosia

Unsurprisingly, the two strategic attempts of the RoC to strengthen its security and increase its geopolitical gravity failed. The promising adoption, between 1993-2001, of the *Dogma Eniaiou Amyntikou Xorou Elladas Kyprou* (DEAXEK) [doctrine for common defense space among Greece and Cyprus]²⁵ ultimately collapsed when it was erroneously projected, by the Clerides Government, as a political catalyst – under the *active volcano* theory²⁶ – for the extraction of a political solution, rather than as a defensive tool which would primarily enhance the Republic's military deterrence against threatening Turkish offensive capabilities, both on the island and the southern Anatolian mainland.²⁷ The intentional leak and mass-media promotion of the Russian S-300PMU-1 Surface to Air Missile (SAM) system purchase by Nicosia eventually turned into a missile crisis (1997-1998)²⁸ which – accompanied by Turkish threats for its preemptive destruction and Israeli annoyance – ended with a GOC retreat and the deployment of the defensive system in Crete rather than on the Eastern Mediterranean island. Likewise, the political expectation of Nicosia that the strategic objective for European Union (EU) membership in 2004 would also serve as a *security shield* against Ankara's hegemonic ambitions over Cyprus – as well as a catalyst in favour of a *European solution* – soon vanished, after realizing

²⁵ Giorgos Kentas, *E Asphaleia sto Plaisio Lysis tou Kypriakou* [Security in the framework of a solution of the Cyprus Problem], (Athens: Livanis, 2013), 89-96; Aristos Aristotelous, *To Dogma tou Eniaiou Amyntikou Chorou Elladas-Kyprou* [The Greece-Cyprus common defence space dogma], (Nicosia: Cyprus Center for Strategic Studies, 1995).

²⁶ "President Glafkos Clerides, the Greek Cypriot leader, attributes heightened US interest to Washington's realization that the densely militarized island is not an 'extinct volcano', and that any eruption could suck in the feuding NATO allies, Greece and Turkey:" Michael Theodoulou, "Divided Island Faces Critical Year of Talks," *The European*, 3-9 April 1997, 24. Also Andreas Hatzikyriakos, "Mr Clerides' Great Dilemma" [in Greek], *To Vima*, 23 August 1998, <http://www.tovima.gr/relatedarticles/article/?aid=102260> [accessed 26 December 2014].

²⁷ Letter of Andreas D. Mavroyiannis [permanent representative of Cyprus to the UN] to Secretary General, 23 February 2007, <http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/MOI/pio/pio.nsf/All/4FC90989378EAD00C225729000290986> [accessed 13 January 2015].

²⁸ For a chronology of the S-300PMU-1 Missile Crisis: James Martin Center for Non-proliferation Studies, "The Sale of Russian S-300PMU-1 Missile Systems to Cyprus: Selected CNS Missile Database Abstracts," <http://cns.miis.edu/cyprus/abstract.htm> [accessed 26 December 2014].

that the EU's internal dynamics are not always compatible with the principles of equality and justice, especially whenever Great Power interests are at stake.²⁹

Among other causes, there are three inherent reasons that may explain both failures. Firstly, GOC's lack of a long-term national security strategy; secondly, its mistaken perception – further burdened by the political elite's incapacity of understanding geopolitical dynamics – that the limited size of the Republic, especially in comparison to Turkey, prohibits the development of an *autonomous strategic identity*, which could be enriched by strategic cooperations with regional and other parties; thirdly, and most importantly, by the fallacious and self-entrapping political consideration that the *solution* of the Cyprus Problem is the principal long-term strategic objective, and sole duty, of Nicosia. The Greek Cypriot political *fixation* for a solution is primarily founded on GOC effort to avoid any responsibility for a prospective failure of the talks, rather than an effective negotiating strategy, with multiple options, which would uncompromisingly adhere to the values of human rights and the principles of European and International law. Consequently, Nicosia's monolithic insistence for a solution only succeeds in encouraging Turkish and foreign pressures and continually leads to retreats in the bilateral talks that endanger not only the existence and continuity of the Republic, but also the security and the future of the 80% Greek Cypriot majority on the island.³⁰

During the last few years, and while the quality of the inter-communal talks continually degenerates – due to Ankara's aggressive demands in the negotiations and its militarized interventions in the Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)³¹ and the Nicosia FIR, as well as prejudiced UN negotiating tactics³² – GOC's perception regarding its potential geopolitical role in the Eastern Mediterranean gradually began to change³³ as a result of three factors: a) the early understanding of the prospective financial and geopolitical value of its EEZ (since the Cyprus-Egypt delimitation agreement, February 2003); b) Nicosia's effective actions

³⁰ Phoivos Klokkaris (ret. Lieutenant-General), *Tourkiki Apeili kata tou Ellinismou tis Kyprou* [Turkish threat against Cypriot Hellenism], (Nicosia: Epiphaniou, 2011).

³¹ Michalis Kontos, "The Mini Crisis of September 2011: Comparative Evaluation of the Power Indicators of Turkey and the Republic of Cyprus" [in Greek], *National Guard and History* 31, June 2013, 19-25.

³² Achilleas Aimilianides, Michalis Kontos, Giorgos Kentas, *Symademeni Trapoula: Ta Aporrita Eggrafa ton Diapragmatefseon Christofia-Talat* [Marked cards: the secret documents of the Christophias-Talat negotiations], (Nicosia: Power, 2010).

³³ Cypriot Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides' speech at the conference "Cyprus in the New Era," 18 June 2014, in *Kypros Nea Epochi*, 11-18.

towards developing an active diplomatic role in the region (since the Lebanon crisis, 2006); c) its approach to Israel after the decline of Israeli-Turkish relations³⁴ (from the *Mavi Marmara* incident, May 2010).

Radical threats

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the security of the Jewish state – and consequently the safety and prosperity of its people – has been the principal strategic concern of Jerusalem. For many decades, the conventional military threats by the surrounding Arab countries as well as the *limited geographic size* of its territory and the *lack of operational space and strategic depth*, were effectively responded by a strategic doctrine that prescribed powerful armoured and mechanized Israeli Defence Force (IDF) formations that could confront the enemy within its own borders, under the dominance of a superior Israeli Air Force (IAF) in the air.³⁵ The strategic existence of Israel was further safeguarded by the development of an independent *Israeli nuclear deterrent*³⁶ in the 1960s – a strategic necessity for survival in a profoundly threatening environment.

Today, beyond the recognised conventional ballistic missile threat from Shia Islamist Iran, as well as the unorthodox threats posed by Sunni Hamas in Gaza and Shia Hezbollah in Lebanon, Israel may soon be faced with two types of inter-related strategic threats: Iran's opaquely evolving nuclear warhead program³⁷ and chemical-biological³⁸ warfare; a remote, worst-case, scenario may involve massive saturation strikes on major Israeli cities and military bases by Iranian ballistic missiles and Hezbollah-Hamas rockets, both with unconventional charges.

³⁴ Banu Eligur, "Crisis in Turkish-Israel Relations (December 2008-June 2011): From Partnership to Enmity," *Middle East Studies* 48:3 (2012), 429-459; Oziem Tur, "Turkey and Israel in the 2000s: From Cooperation to Conflict," *Israel Studies* 17:3 (2012), 45-66.

³⁵ Eliot A. Cohen, Michael J. Eisenstadt, Andrew J. Bacevich, "Israel's Revolution in Security Affairs," *Survival* 40:1 (Spring 1998): 48-67; Uri Bar-Joseph, "The Paradox of Israeli Power," *Survival* 46:4 (Winter 2004-05), 137-156.

³⁶ Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Peter V. Pry, *Israel's Nuclear Arsenal* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1984); Avner Cohen, "Before the Beginning: The Early History of Israel's Nuclear Project," *Israel Studies* 3:1 (1998), 112-139.

³⁷ Dore Gold, *The Rise of Nuclear Iran: How Tehran Defies the West* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2009); Lynn E. Davies et al., *Iran's Nuclear Future: Critical US Policy Choices* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2011); Bijan Mossavar-Ragmani, "Iran's Nuclear Power Programme Revisited," *Energy Politics* 8:3 (1980), 189-202.

³⁸ Harald Doornboos and Jenan Moussa, "Found: The Islamic State's Terror Laptop of Doom," 28 August 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/28/found-the-islamic-states-terror-laptop-of-doom/> [accessed 15 June 2015].

While such contingencies may appear irrational in western thinking, recent intelligence failures – such as 9/11, the reverse impact of Arab Spring, and the emergence of the Islamic State – tend to indicate that a reliable forewarning of threats and the concept of *absolute strategic security* may after all belong to the past. Despite the technological sophistication of the intelligence community, the deep roots and militant ideology of an evolving *radical Islam* are, for the time being, beyond the comprehension of Western political-military conception and intelligence analysis.³⁹ While Bernard Lewis (1990)⁴⁰ and Samuel Huntington (1993)⁴¹ prophetically predicted a possible cultural-religious chasm in global affairs and the rise of ethnic-cultural conflicts,⁴² it appears that the formal appearance of conservative political Islam on institutional-state level (Turkey) and the invisible global growth of divergent forms of ultra-militant radical Islam (al-Qaeda, Islamic State, Muslim Brotherhood, Boko Haram, etc.), even in western cities,⁴³ may indeed pertain to characteristics of a prospective *clash of civilizations*.⁴⁴

Evolving security cooperation

Amid growing over-the-horizon threats against Israel over the last two decades, the latest discovery of extensive hydrocarbon resources in the Levantine basin

³⁹ Petros Savvides, “Jihad v Reason: The Failure of Western Intelligence in the Middle East,” *In Depth* [bimonthly electronic newsletter] 11:5 (October 2014), http://www.cceia.unic.ac.cy/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=413&Itemid=413 [accessed 26 August 2015].

⁴⁰ Bernard Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 266:3 (1990), 47-60.

⁴¹ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72:3 (1993), 22-49.

⁴² Shirleen T. Hunter, *The Future of Islam and the West: Clash of Civilizations or Peaceful Coexistence?* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998); Jonathan Fox, “Two Civilizations and Ethnic Conflicts: Islam and the West,” *Journal of Peace Research* 38:4 (2001), 459-472; Jonathan Fox, *Ethnoreligious Conflict in the Late Twentieth Century: A General Theory* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2002).

⁴³ Dan Bilefsky, “Cartoons Ignite Cultural Combat in Denmark,” *The New York Times*, 30 December 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/30/world/europe/30iht-islam9.html> [accessed 8 July 2015]; Ian Austen and Rick Gladstone, “Gunman’s Attack on Parliament Shakes Ottawa,” *The New York Times*, 23 October 2014, 1; Michelle Innis, “Sydney Hostage Siege Ends with Gunman and 2 Captives Dead as Police Storm Café,” *The New York Times*, 15 December 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/16/world/asia/sydney-australia-hostages.html> [accessed 8 January 2015]; Dan Bilefsky and Maia de la Baume, “Terrorists Strike Paris Newspaper, Leaving 12 Dead,” *The New York Times*, 8 January 2015, 1.

⁴⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); Samuel P. Huntington, ed., *The Clash of Civilizations?: The Debate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996). The term firstly appeared in 1925 in Basil Mathew’s, *Young Islam on Trek: A Study in the Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Friendship Press, 1926).

had turned, for the first time, Israeli geostrategic attention towards the sea; Jerusalem foresaw not only the financial prospects of its EEZ, but also the *strategic potential of the Mediterranean* in a dangerously unstable Middle East. Indicative of this shift is Jerusalem's interest for strengthening the Israeli Navy with state-of-the-art nuclear-capable submarines⁴⁵ and its recent approach towards EU island member – and only non-Moslem neighbouring state – Cyprus.

Jerusalem, realizing – after the decline of Israeli-Turkish relations – the importance of alternative options and the dominant geopolitical location of Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean, responded positively to Nicosia's approach for the delimitation of the EEZs of the two states. The signing of the Cyprus-Israel agreement on 17 December 2010 – despite Turkish threats against Nicosia and demarches against Jerusalem⁴⁶ – turned into a landmark for bilateral relations that led to the growth of diplomatic bonds and cooperation in energy exploitation, telecommunications, tourism and art, as well as other sensitive areas⁴⁷ such as security and intelligence. The first signs of security cooperation appeared in the area of Search and Rescue (SAR), when the initiatives of the Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC - Larnaca) in the Eastern Mediterranean were positively responded by the Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC – Haifa), ultimately bringing about, in February 2012, the signing of a bilateral agreement for SAR cooperation. The close exchanges between the two SAR centers were soon followed by a series of Search and Rescue Exercises (SAREX), organized by the JRCC Larnaca and featuring the participation of Israeli Navy units. The

⁴⁵ The Israeli Navy received two new AIP Dolphin 2 class submarines – INS *Tanin* (2014) and INS *Rahav* (2015) – and a third one was ordered in March 2012 and is expected by 2017: Ramit Plushnick-Masti, "Israel Buys 2 Nuclear-Capable Submarines," *The Washington Post*, 25 August 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/24/AR2006082401050.html> [accessed 15 January 2015]. Yaakov Lappin, "Navy Undergoing 'Unprecedented' Upgrade in Capabilities," *Jerusalem Post*, 7 August 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Navy-undergoing-unprecedented-upgrade-in-capabilities-322294> [accessed 15 January 2015].

⁴⁶ Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Press Release Regarding the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Delimitation Agreement Signed Between Greek Cypriot Administration and Israel," No. 288, 21 December 2010, http://www.mfa.gov.tr/no_-288_-21-december-2010_-press-release-regarding-the-exclusive-economic-zone-_eez_-delimitation-agreement-signed-between-greek-cypriot-administration-and-israel.en.mfa [accessed 27 December 2014].

⁴⁷ <http://cyprus-mail.com/civil-protection/cyprus-and-israel-sign-agreement-civil-protection/20121221>; <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-greece-cyprus-sign-energy-and-water-deal/>; <http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/08/08/historic-plan-for-water-and-electricity/> [all accessed 13 January 2015].

first bilateral SAREX was carried out on 23 April 2013⁴⁸ and was followed up, on 10 April 2014, by the multinational SAREX *NEMESIS-2014* – with the participation of air and naval units from Cyprus, Israel, Greece and the USA.⁴⁹ The exercise was meaningfully carried out in the area of the delimitation line of the Cypriot and Israeli EEZs – Cypriot Block 12 and Israeli Leviathan – 95 nm (175 km) from the Cypriot coast. The Israeli Navy also participated in the multinational SAREX *ARGONAUTIS 2014* that was carried out in the Nicosia FIR on 21 May 2014,⁵⁰ while in a night time SAR operation (22 October 2014) for the discovery of a small twin-engine aircraft, Israel immediately responded to the effort with two IAF CH-53 helicopters and two C-130 airplanes.

Although Israeli interest for military cooperation with the Cypriot National Guard (NG) was discreetly expressed to the previous administration,⁵¹ which in its turn permitted the use of the Republic's two international airports at Larnaca and Paphos for IAF refueling and touch-and-go activities, it was the Anastasiades Government that eventually encouraged the development of this sensitive cooperation. Following a two-day, helicopter Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) exercise by the IAF in the mountainous areas of Troodos on 18-19 June 2013,⁵² the NG-IDF cooperation continued in 2014 and 2015 with three important Suppression of Enemy Air Defense (SEAD) exercises on the island, the scenarios of which provided for IAF offensive missions against Russian-made SAM systems of the National Guard, in an intense Electronic Warfare (EW) environment: Joint Exercise *ONESILOS-GEDEON 2014* was carried out

⁴⁸ The State of Israel participated with Sa'ar 4-class missile boat *INS Nitzachon* and four fast patrol boats of the Israeli Navy; the Republic of Cyprus contributed with four helicopters, two fast patrol boats and an air coordination aircraft: <http://www.mod.gov.cy/mod/CJRCC.nsf/All/4FE4F75278324DDBC2257C78002F530E> [accessed 03 January 2015].

⁴⁹ The multinational aeronautical exercise between Cyprus, Greece, Israel and the United States prescribed the coordination between JRCC Larnaca, JRCC Piraeus, RCC Haifa, and NAVEUR/PRCC in Naples Italy in the conduct of SAR operations in the EEZs of Cyprus and Israel. The tabletop phase of the exercise was carried out on 26 February 2014: LCCC NICOSIA NOTAM A0230/14; <http://www.mod.gov.cy/mod/mod.nsf/All/2242EF10C1ECC3EDC2257C910041FC91>; <http://www.mod.gov.cy/mod/mod.nsf/all/75FE7EEE0FAF9C43C2257CB40021E967>; <http://www.mod.gov.cy/mod/CJRCC.nsf/All/361A60F5101E6C33C2257CB4001ED5A7> [all accessed 03 January 2015].

⁵⁰ The Israeli Navy participated with Sa'ar 4.5-class missile boat *INS Tarshish* and four fast patrol boats: LCCC NICOSIA NOTAMS A0404/14 and A405/14.

⁵¹ The leftist government of Demetris Christofias (28 February 2008 - 28 February 2013).

⁵² LCCC NICOSIA NOTAM A0533/13.

on 11 February 2014⁵³ while *ONESILOS-GEDEON 2/14* was conducted on 21 October 2014⁵⁴ (Figure 4) and *ONESILOS-GEDEON 1/15* on 14 May 2015.⁵⁵

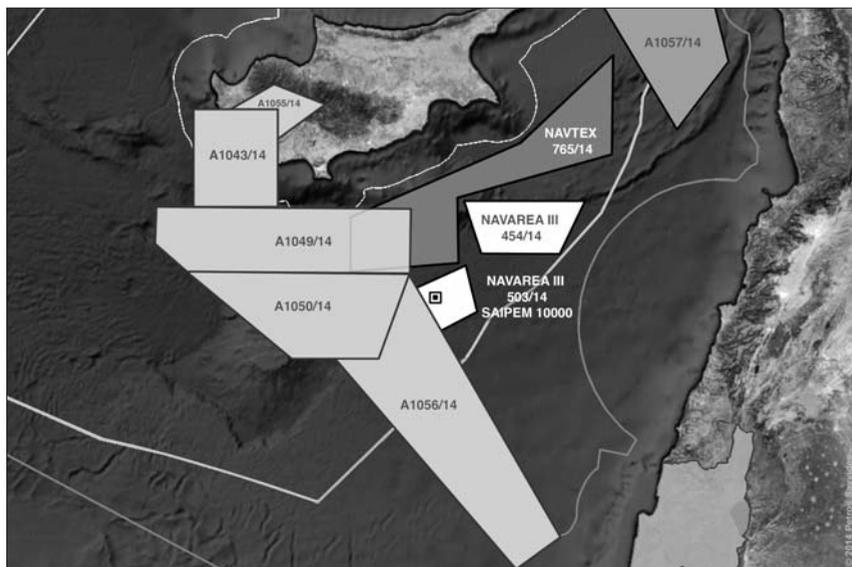


Figure 4: The operational situation in the Eastern Mediterranean on 21 October 2014 included increased air activity of the Israeli Air Force in the Nicosia FIR for the joint *ONESILOS-GEDEON 2/14* SEAD/EW Exercise (A1056/14, A1049/14, A1050/14, A1043/14, A1055/14), a Russian Navy fire exercise (A1057/14), illegal exploration activities by the Turkish research vessel *Barbaros Hayreddin Pasa* in Cypriot EEZ (NAVTEX 765/14), GOC exploration activities in Blocks 2, 3, 8, 9 of Cypriot EEZ (NAVAREA 454/14), and drilling activities of platform SAIPEM 10000 by the ENI-KOGAS consortium (NAVAREA 503/14) at the potential Onasagoras field in Block 9. © 2014 Petros Savvides (background image: Google Earth).

⁵³ The joint exercise was carried out in the southern coastal areas of Paphos (NG Air Base “Andreas Papandreou”) and Mari-Zygi (NG Naval Base “Evangelos Florakis”). The IAF participated with 32 F-16 and F-15 fighter jets in SEAD missions and were complimented by other aircrafts in EW and combat support roles. The NG participated with Mistral MANPADS/ATLAS elements, a Skyguard/Aspide SHORADS Squadron, a Russian TOR-M1 SHORADS Squadron, a MRADS Squadron, and air defence radars. Also <http://www.mod.gov.cy/mod/mod.nsf/All/1A753EB58EC1A067C2257C7D00244FFE>, [accessed 21 February 2015].

⁵⁴ The joint exercise was carried out in the southwestern coastal area of Paphos (NG Air Base “Andreas Papandreou”) and the mountainous area of Troodos (NG Air Early Warning System). The IAF participated with two strategic UAVs, 24 F-16 and F-15 fighter jets, and other EW and combat support aircrafts. The NG participated with units similar to the ones that took part in the previous exercise: LCCC NICOSIA NOTAMS A1043/14, A1049/14, A1050/14, A1055/14, A1056/14.

⁵⁵ The joint exercise was carried out in the southwestern coastal area of Paphos, the northeastern coastal area of Polis and the mountainous area of Troodos. The IAF participated with five strategic UAVs, 34 F-16 and F-15 fighter jets, eight Apache helicopters, and other EW and combat support aircrafts. LCCC NICOSIA NOTAMS A0547-A0553/15, A0567/15, A0568/15.

Strategic depth in the Eastern Mediterranean

Although the strategic significance of the island was monopolized by Whitehall and invisibly by Washington, its strategic control was heavily aspired by Turkey since the 1950s.⁵⁶ Ankara's hegemonic ambition of *Stratejik Derinlik* [Strategic Depth] in the region,⁵⁷ directly threatens not only the remaining sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus, but also the stability in the region and the strategic interests of neighbouring states, including Israel and Egypt. Nicosia, acknowledging its political loneliness after the collapse of the Greek economy and the demystification of Brussels at the Cypriot bail-in crisis of March 2013, began realizing that its *predictable, non-threatening, democratic stability* offers multiple advantages and is attractive to neighbouring states.⁵⁸ Its traditionally friendly relations with the Arab countries and its evolving understanding with Israel create a unique pole for multilateral cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean, offering promising benefits in Middle East stability and to the EU.

On the other side, although Jerusalem's historical record on strategic cooperation with third parties is burdened by disappointments and failures (France, Northern Africa, Turkey, etc.), a factor which may very well prove impeding both to Nicosia and Athens, its *permanent – unchangeable – geographical proximity* to Cyprus offers a unique foundation for the development of a *strategic understanding* between Jerusalem, Nicosia and Athens; a cooperation that can ultimately be completely independent of future Israeli-Turkish relations. In spite of Israel's indisputable conventional military superiority and nuclear deterrent in the Middle East, the emergence of strategic and unconventional threats against Israel prescribe the consideration of alternative security options. Furthermore,

⁵⁶ For the Turkish conception of strategic encirclement, see Pamir, *Cyprus and Turkey*. For the Nihat Erim reports regarding the partition of the island: Nihat Erim, *Bildigim ve Gurdugum Olculerle Kibris* [Cyprus with the dimensions I know and see], (Ankara: Ajans-Turk Matbaacilik Sanayii, 1975), 15-42. For the ultra-secret *Kibris Istirdat Projesi* (KIP) [Cyprus Recapture Project], prepared by Major Ismail Tansu of the *Seferberlik Tektik Kurulu* (STK) [mobilization supervision committee] in Ankara: Ismail Tansu, *Aslinda Hic Kimse Uyumuyordu: Yaraltinda Silahlı Bir Gizli Orgut, Hem de Devlet Eliyle ... TMT* [In reality no one was sleeping: An underground armed secret organization with the support of the state ... TMT], (Ankara: Minpa Matbaacilik, 2001), 32-54.

⁵⁷ Ahmet Davutoglu, *Stratejik Derinlik: Turkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* [Strategic depth: the international position of Turkey], (Istanbul: Kure, 2001); Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42:6 (2006), 945-964; Gokturk Tuysuzolu, "Strategic Depth: A Neo-Ottomanist Interpretation of Turkish Eurasianism," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 25:2 (2014), 85-104.

⁵⁸ Andreas D. Mavroyiannis, "The Geopolitical Role of Cyprus in the Wider Context of the European Union," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 25:1 (2014), 54-64.

the cooperation of the two neighboring states – based on the principles of reciprocity and equality – on security, defense, and intelligence issues offers multiple advantages to both parties. The proximity of the island to Israel may provide a *vital geopolitical expansion* of its *critically minute strategic space*. Already the Nicosia FIR is being utilized – with the full consent of the GOC – by the Israeli Air Force for large-scale exercises that include air refueling of IAF squadrons and the prolonged sustainment of aerial operational readiness. Not only may the ports and airports of the island prove precious to Jerusalem, but also the Republic’s territory, along with its air and naval early warning capabilities, can very well offer an additional advantage to its security and intelligence needs. By adopting the *terrain for technology* concept, Israel could similarly provide valuable technological hardware and expertise that can strengthen the security of the island Republic as well as the collective effort for regional security in the Eastern Mediterranean. The upgrade of Cypriot Israeli-made naval radars on the island, the offer of UAV strategic reconnaissance capabilities to Nicosia, and the enhancement of Cypriot EW and ELINT capabilities on the island are among the issues that can be privately, rather than publicly, discussed between the two parties.

Overview

Although the strategic location of the island, in the post-Second World War, era is being monopolised by London and Washington, Ankara’s long-term objective for the strategic control of Cyprus – through de facto occupation or a de jure “solution” – had never ceased since the 1950s. The two principal efforts of Nicosia to strengthen its strategic existence against Turkish ambitions eventually collapsed as a consequence of the fallacious Greek Cypriot perception that the unconditional solution of the Cyprus Problem – even through the dissolve of the Republic of Cyprus, a EU member state – is the ultimate means for the termination of Turkish occupation in the northern part of the Republic.

The discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the Levantine basin – amid growing over-the-horizon threats against Israel and aggressive Turkish maneuvers against Cypriot EEZ and FIR – turned both Jerusalem’s and Nicosia’s strategic attention towards the Mediterranean and, after the decline of Israeli-Turkish relations, to each other. The evolving diplomatic, energy and security relations between the two neighbouring non-Moslem states, during the last five years, offer multiple advantages to both parties. On the one hand it increases Nicosia’s geopolitical value in the region and on the other it offers the prospect for the expansion of Jerusalem’s strategic space in the Mediterranean. Although the historical past indicates that, in a continually evolving world of growing interests, strategic relations are more ephemeral rather than permanent, geography may eventually turn into an indispensable ally rather than a creeping foe.

The Israeli-Cypriot Relations under the Law of the Sea

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At the threshold of the 21st century, the discovery of offshore hydrocarbon reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea (East Med) marked a turning point in terms of maritime affairs in the region. Cyprus has been a pioneer in concluding bilateral agreements with its neighbors on maritime issues. It has been closely collaborating with one of the regional states, Israel, which although it had either signed or ratified the 1958 Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea, it did not sign and has yet to accede to the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea Convention (LOSC). Nevertheless, Israel has been implementing many of the LOSC provisions, which form part of customary international law, and this facilitated the signing of three significant agreements between Israel and Cyprus; namely, an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) delimitation agreement (2010), a search and rescue agreement (2012), and an agreement on exchange and non-disclosure of confidential information regarding hydrocarbons (2014). This article deals with how the sea has linked the two states and argues that activities pertaining to the sea domain, exercised within the ambit of the law of the sea apparatus, provide a unique opportunity for cooperation between the East Med states.

Since time immemorial the sea has been a connecting bridge amongst lands and peoples; the East Med could have not been an exception. A range of peoples and cultures flourished around its coasts¹ and the maritime domain has frequently been at the epicentre of all major developments in the region. At the threshold of

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¹ Cyprian Broodbank, *The Making of the Middle Sea: A History of the Mediterranean from the Beginning to the Emergence of the Classical World* (London: Thames & Hudson 2013), 363; Irini Papanicolopulu, "Mediterranean Sea," in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), electronic edition, <http://www.mpepil.com>, para. 4 [accessed 30 March 2015].

the 21st Century, the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves offshore Israel, Egypt and Cyprus² turned anew the attention of the regional states towards the sea. With Cyprus at the forefront of regional co-operation, the East Med states have concluded maritime boundary delimitation as well as an array of other agreements between them regarding maritime affairs.³ Of course, the horizons for further cooperation remain wide open and, arguably, the law of the sea

² The first offshore Israeli gas reserve, found in 1999, was named *Noa* after the Biblical hero; similarly, other reserves off the Israeli coasts were named after Biblical figures such as *Tamar*, *Dalit*, *Leviathan*. Likewise, the prospective reserve sites in the Cypriot EEZ were named after Greek historical and mythological figures such as *Aphrodite*, *Onasagoras*, *Zenon*.

³ “Agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and the Arab Republic of Egypt on the Delimitation of The Exclusive Economic Zone” (17 February 2003), <http://www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/TREATIES/EGY-CYP2003EZ.pdf> [accessed 30 March 2015].

“Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt on Merchant Shipping” (26 November 2006), *Republic of Cyprus Government Gazette* 4076, 20 December 2006, 245-275, [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/AADF835E948405DCC225724A004082C3/\\$file/4076%2020.12.2006%20Parartima%207o.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/AADF835E948405DCC225724A004082C3/$file/4076%2020.12.2006%20Parartima%207o.pdf?OpenElement) [accessed 27 February 2015].

“Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the Republic of Lebanon on the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone” (17 January 2007) (pending ratification by Lebanon), David A. Colson and Robert W. Smith, eds, *International Maritime Boundaries VI* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2005-2011), 4452.

“Co-operation Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the Republic of Lebanon on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue” (16 January 2008) (pending ratification by Lebanon), *Republic of Cyprus Government Gazette* 4105, 04 July 2008, 865-886, [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/EA0198C82FE14748C225747C00340E81/\\$file/4105%204.7.2008%20Parartima%201o%20Merros%20III.pdf](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/EA0198C82FE14748C225747C00340E81/$file/4105%204.7.2008%20Parartima%201o%20Merros%20III.pdf) [accessed 27 February 2015].

“Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the State of Israel on Merchant Shipping” (13 January 2010), *Republic of Cyprus Government Gazette* 4118, 21 January 2010, 49-75, [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/730894552D14FDF6C22576BA003140B0/\\$file/4118%2029.1.2010%20PARARTIMA%207o.pdf](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/730894552D14FDF6C22576BA003140B0/$file/4118%2029.1.2010%20PARARTIMA%207o.pdf) [accessed 30 March 2015].

“Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the State of Israel on the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone” (17 December 2010), http://www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/TREATIES/cyp_isr_eez_2010.pdf [accessed 30 March 2015].

“Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the State of Israel on the Coordination of Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Services” (16 February 2012), *Republic of Cyprus Government Gazette* 4165, 29 June 2012, 4001-4033, [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/493E69557A81AB4BC2257A2C002EF03B/\\$file/4165%20%2029%206%202012%20%20PARARTIMA%20%201o%20%20MEROS%20%20III.pdf](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/493E69557A81AB4BC2257A2C002EF03B/$file/4165%20%2029%206%202012%20%20PARARTIMA%20%201o%20%20MEROS%20%20III.pdf) [accessed 30 March 2015].

“Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the State of Israel on Exchange and Non-Disclosure of Confidential Information” (28 April 2014), *Republic of Cyprus Government Gazette* No. 4195, 04 July 2014, 10617-10644 <http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/5F4B14A1A6C1674AC2257D0B00415505/>

edifice, namely both conventional and customary rules, offer a functional framework within which maritime issues could be adequately addressed. What follows is a scrutiny of the Israeli-Cypriot relations under the prism of the law of the sea and a brief analysis of the pertinent bilateral agreements, as it is widely accepted that the two states' collaboration in terms of maritime issues has enabled them to strengthen their relations and has further contributed to the consolidation of a broader scheme of cooperation in the East Med.

Israel and the law of the sea

In the first place, it must be noted that Israel did not sign and has yet to accede to the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea Convention (LOSC)⁴ due to its opposition to the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III, 1973-1982) – the conference that led to the LOSC – as well as the signing of the Final Act of the Conference by the PLO.⁵ Another reason related to the Israeli belief that the LOSC did not adequately address important maritime issues, such as the freedom of the seas and the regime of straits, which were of utmost importance for Israel in light of the Aqaba Gulf conundrum.

For decades, Israel and the Arab states bordering the Gulf of Aqaba (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan) quarreled over freedom of navigation in those waters as the Arabs purported to hinder vessels heading to the Israeli port of Aqaba from passing through the Strait of Tiran and traversing the waters of the Gulf up to Aqaba. Nonetheless, in 1979 Israel and Egypt signed a Peace Treaty, Article V(2) of which envisages the “unimpeded and non-suspendable freedom of navigation and overflight in the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba;” ergo, there was serious concern on the part of Israel that the LOSC provisions on the regime of straits would supersede the more liberal provisions of the Peace

[\\$file/4195%204%207%202014%20PARARTIMA%201o%20MEROS%20III.pdf](#) [accessed 30 March 2015].

“Framework Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt Concerning the Development of Cross-Median Line Hydrocarbons Resources” (12 December 2013), *Republic of Cyprus Government Gazette* 4196, 25 July 2014, 10692-10707, [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/A88D02909DC27F10C2257D20002C1DB5/\\$file/4196%2025%207%202014%20PARARTIMA%201o%20MEROS%20III%20.pdf](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/A88D02909DC27F10C2257D20002C1DB5/$file/4196%2025%207%202014%20PARARTIMA%201o%20MEROS%20III%20.pdf) [accessed 30 March 2015].

⁴ *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (signed on 10 December 1982, entered into force on 16 November 1994), *United Nations Treaty Series* (UNTS) 1833 (1994), 396-581.

⁵ Official Records of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, Vol. XVI, A/CONF.62/L.129 and A/CONF.62/L.138, Vol. XVI, A/CONF.62/SR.182, para 74, Vol. XVII, A/CONF.62/SR.190, para 24.

Treaty, impairing the Israeli interests.⁶ However, it should not escape attention that Israel is a signatory to the 1958 Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea, although it has not ratified all of them;⁷ this demonstrates the significance Israel attached to regulation of maritime affairs. Even though the LOSC is not binding upon a 1958 Geneva Conventions state party, the contemporary Israeli stance on maritime issues indicates that Israel accepts and implements a range of LOSC provisions,⁸ many of which, at any rate, form part of customary international law. Israel's tendency towards compliance with the LOSC norms is aptly illustrated by the agreements Israel has signed with Cyprus. Given that Israel is surrounded by hostile nations, its "strategic depth" lies in the Mediterranean Sea and the cooperation with Cyprus, Greece and the European Union.⁹ Of course, Israel's determination to act in conformity with the law of the sea would probably be a catalyst in terms of normalization of Israeli relations with its Arab

⁶ Andrea Gioia, "Gulf of Aqaba," in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), electronic edition, <http://www.mpepil.com>, para. 17 [accessed 30 March 2015].

Some Israeli scholars argue that the 1979 Treaty is compatible with or even prevails over the LOSC: Ruth Lapidot, "The Strait of Tiran, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the 1979 Treaty of Peace Between Egypt and Israel," *The American Journal of International Law* 77:1 (1983), 84-108 (106-107); A. E. Danseyar, "Legal Status of the Gulf of Aqaba and the Strait of Tiran: From Customary International Law to the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty," *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review* 5:1, 127-174 (172).

⁷ Israel signed and ratified the 1958 Convention on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, the 1958 Convention on the High Seas, and the 1958 Convention on the Continental Shelf; Israel, also signed the 1958 Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources of the High Seas and the Optional Protocol of Signature concerning the Compulsory Settlement of Disputes: Audiovisual Library of International Law, "Status of the 1958 Geneva Conventions on the Law of the Sea," <http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/gclos/gclos.html> [accessed 30 March 2015].

⁸ Israel has established a twelve nautical miles territorial sea belt according to the Territorial Waters Law 1956, as amended in 1990, and enacted legislation in respect of its continental shelf (Submarine Areas Law 5713/1953). Additionally, Israel signed an EEZ delimitation agreement with Cyprus in 2010, without having declared such a zone prior to the conclusion of the agreement. Also, the Israeli government has drafted a new bill, the Maritime Areas Law 2014, which enshrines most of the LOSC provisions into the Israeli domestic legal order.

⁹ Israel, Cyprus and Greece signed a Memorandum of Understanding on energy and water in August 2013, Globes, "Israel, Greece, Cyprus sign new energy MoU," 8 August 2013, <http://www.globes.co.il/en/article-1000870108> [accessed 30 March 2015]. The European Commission has also included the Euro Asia Interconnector (an underwater electricity cable between Israel, Cyprus and Greece), an LNG storage facility in Cyprus, and a pipeline from offshore Cyprus to mainland Greece via Crete in the "Projects of Common Interest" (PCI) for the construction of which the interested states are likely to receive funding: European Commission, Press Release, "Energy: Commission unveils list of 250 infrastructure projects that may qualify for 5.85 billion euro of funding" (14 October 2013), http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-932_en.htm [accessed 30 March 2015].

neighbors since the legal scheme governing maritime affairs provides states with the necessary tools for addressing any discrepancies. Therefore, it is argued that observance of international law rules, those of the law of the sea in particular, could play a vital role in mitigating tensions in the East Med and enabling the regional states to reap benefits from the oil and gas boon.

The Israeli-Cypriot agreements¹⁰

The 2010 EEZ delimitation agreement. Over the last few years – in reality after the *Mavi Marmara* incident and the decline of Israeli-Turkish relations – Israel and Cyprus have forged stronger ties, through the conclusion of agreements relevant to the maritime domain which is utterly significant for both states in light of the offshore oil and gas findings in the region. Maritime boundary delimitation is a pivotal function within the realm of the law of the sea and as the Arbitral Tribunal in *Bangladesh/India* arbitration stressed:

The importance of stable and definitive maritime boundaries is all the more essential when the exploration and exploitation of the resources of the continental shelf are at stake [...] the sovereign rights of coastal States, and therefore *the maritime boundaries between them, must be determined with precision to allow for development and investment.*¹¹

In 2010 the two States signed an agreement on the delimitation of their EEZs¹² from which useful conclusions can be drawn. An interesting point arises from the perusal of the Preamble where the contracting parties recall the provisions of the LOSC on the EEZ. This fact not only illustrates the universal

¹⁰ The agreement on merchant shipping will not be addressed in this paper owing to its purely commercial character falling outside the scope of Public International Law.

¹¹ Author's emphasis; *Bangladesh/India Award* (2014) para. 218, www.pca-cpa.org/showpage.asp?pag_id=1376 [accessed 30 March 2015].

¹² "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the State of Israel on the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone" (17 December 2010), http://www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/TREATIES/cyp_isr_eez_2010.pdf [accessed 30 March 2015]. Israel has not signed any maritime boundary delimitation in the East Med either with Egypt or Lebanon. Nonetheless, Israel in 2011 unilaterally submitted to the UN a list of geographical coordinates regarding its claimed maritime boundary (territorial sea and EEZ) with Lebanon, http://www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/isr_eez_northernlimit2011.pdf [accessed 30 March 2015]. On its part, Lebanon deposited with the UN Secretary-General a list of geographical coordinates concerning its EEZ boundaries in 2010 (revised in 2011), as a reaction to the Israeli-Cypriot EEZ delimitation agreement, since Lebanon maintains that the said agreement encroaches upon the southern segment of its maritime space. http://www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/mzn_s/mzn85ef.pdf [accessed 30 March 2015].

application of the LOSC provisions, but, most importantly, highlights the willingness of Israel to act in conformity with the LOSC, at least in terms of the particular provisions, which in any event form part of and parcel of customary international law;¹³ thus, even non-member states to the LOSC are entitled to use and shall observe them.¹⁴ Moreover, by virtue of Article 1 of the delimitation agreement the maritime limit between the two states is the median line, viz. a line “every point of which is equidistant from the nearest points on the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial seas of each of the two States is measured.”¹⁵ At this juncture it should be stressed that the EEZ boundaries between Egypt-Cyprus and Lebanon-Cyprus have also been effected according to the median/equidistant line method (Figure 1).¹⁶

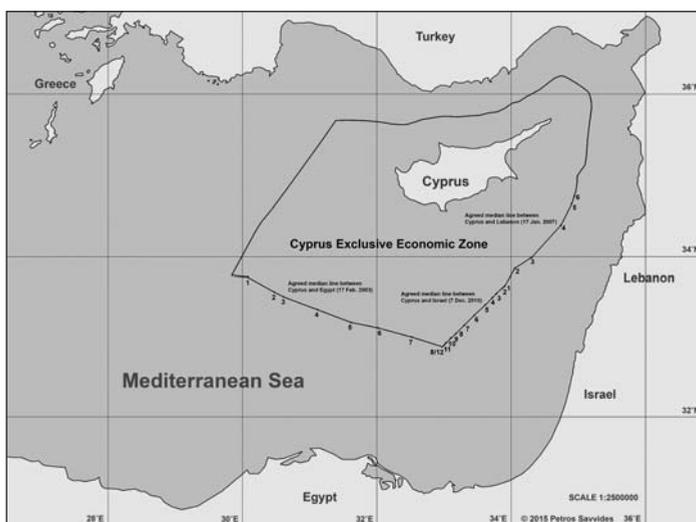


Figure 1: Delimitation agreements of Cyprus with Egypt, Israel and Lebanon. © 2015 PS

¹³ *Continental Shelf (Tunisia/Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)* (Judgment) [1982] ICJ Rep. 18, para. 100; *Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary in the Gulf of Maine Area* [1984] ICJ Rep. 246, para. 94; *Continental Shelf (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya/Malta)* (Judgment) [1985] ICJ Rep. 13, para. 34.

¹⁴ *North Sea Continental Shelf Cases* (Judgment) [1969] ICJ Rep. 3, para 60; H. Thirlway, “The Sources of International Law,” in *International Law*, ed. Malcolm D. Evans, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014), 97, 102; Antonio Cassese, *International Law*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005), 157, 162.

¹⁵ *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, Article 15.

¹⁶ “Agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and the Arab Republic of Egypt on the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone,” Article 1; “Agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and the Arab Republic of Lebanon on the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone,” Article 1.

The mutual acceptance and use of the median line evinces the entrenchment of a common understanding in the East Med favoring this method, with the exception of Turkey, which has diachronically been rejecting the median/equidistant line principle; instead, Turkey has been advocating the vague equitable principles method,¹⁷ which provides that all relevant factors should be considered in order to reach an equitable result.¹⁸

However, it should not escape notice that any future Palestinian maritime claims offshore the Gaza Strip¹⁹ are likely to introduce some deviations with respect to the usage of the equidistance/median line method in the region. The reason is that the coast of Gaza is slightly concave thus an equidistant line drawn between Gaza and Israel would converge towards the Egyptian maritime area and as the maritime space allocated to Gaza would be limited that might call for an adjustment of the equidistant line. Nonetheless, it is questionable whether such modification would affect the Israeli-Cypriot maritime boundary (Figure 2). The concavity of the coast does not always lead to the modification of a delineation line unless it diminishes the maritime entitlement of one of the parties;²⁰ thus, any dispute that may occur should be dealt with according to its own peculiar characteristics.

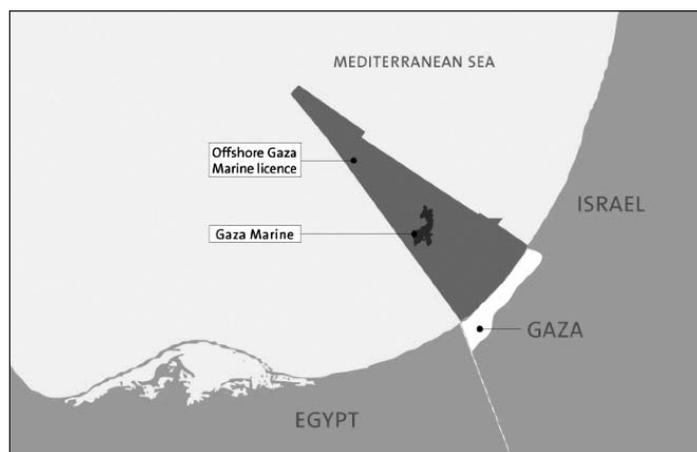


Figure 2: The Palestinian maritime claims off the Gaza Strip.
[source: BG Group]

¹⁷ Official Records of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea Vol. II, A/CONF.62/C.2/SR.19, para 37 and Vol. XVI, A/CONF.62/SR.160, para 11.

¹⁸ *North Sea Cases*, paras 23, 57-58, 85,101.

¹⁹ Palestine Liberation Organization, Negotiations Affairs Department, "Maritime Boundary Issue," <http://www.nad-plo.org/etemplate.php?id=10&more=1#1> [accessed 30 March 2015].

²⁰ *North Sea Cases*, paras 89, 91; *Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary in the Bay of Bengal (Bangladesh/Myanmar)*, Judgment, ITLOS Reports 2012, p. 4, para. 292, 297. *Bay of Bengal Maritime Boundary Arbitration between Bangladesh and India* (2014) paras 402, 408 http://www.pca-cpa.org/showfile.asp?fil_id=2705 [last accessed 30 March 2015].

Furthermore, Article 1(e) addresses a possible review and/or modification of the extreme ends of the demarcation line and the determination of a tri-point in case either state reaches a maritime delineation agreement with a third state (this term is found in the Egypt-Cyprus and Lebanon-Cyprus agreements too). This clause is quite crucial as it provides the contracting parties with the capacity to adjust their demarcation lines if they come to a consensus. Although Egypt has not protested against the Israeli-Cypriot delimitation, it cannot be argued that a tri-point has been defined since explicit agreement between all the three states is required for this to happen. However, serious predicaments have occurred regarding the tri-point between Cyprus, Israel and Lebanon – the Israeli-Cypriot agreement stops short of the said tri-point – as the latter deems the Israeli-Cypriot agreement injurious to its interests. In particular, Lebanon asserts sovereign rights over a maritime space of 850 km², which according to the agreement under examination has been allocated to Israel (Figure 3).²¹ Despite the above, Israel's northern maritime blocks do not encroach upon the disputed area, whereas the Lebanese blocks 8 and 9 fall within that area (Figure 4).²² Notwithstanding the mediation efforts on the part of the USA, Cyprus and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the aforementioned controversy to date remains unsettled.²³

²¹ Republic of Lebanon, Letter dated 20 June 2011 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning the Agreement between the Government of the State of Israel and the Government of the Republic of Cyprus on the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone, signed in Nicosia on 17 December 2010; Letter dated 3 September 2011 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning the geographical coordinates of the northern limit of the territorial sea and the exclusive economic zone transmitted by Israel: <http://www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/STATEFILES/LBN.htm> [accessed 30 March 2015]. D. Meier, "Lebanon's Maritime Boundaries: Between Economic Opportunities and Military Confrontation," Centre for Lebanese Studies, St. Anthony's College, University of Oxford, 2013, 2, 4, lebanesestudies.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/maritime.pdf [accessed 30 March 2015]. T. Scovazzi, "Maritime Boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea," The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2012, 9, www.gmfus.org/file/2674/download [accessed 30 March 2015]; M. Wählisch, "Israel-Lebanon Offshore Oil & Gas Dispute - Rules of International Maritime Law" (05 December 2011), ASIL Insights, Vol. 15 Issue 31, <http://www.asil.org/insights/volume/15/issue/31/israel-lebanon-offshore-oil-gas-dispute-%E2%80%93-rules-international-maritime> [accessed 30 March 2015].

²² Meier, "Lebanon's Maritime Boundaries," 6, 11.

²³ Meier, "Lebanon's Maritime Boundaries," 11-12; Natural Gas Europe, "The Lebanese-Israeli Maritime Border Conflict Explained" (05 May 2014), <http://www.naturalgaseurope.com/lebanese-israeli-maritime-border-conflict-explained> [accessed 30 March 2015]; Fox News, "Cyprus offers mediation between Lebanon, Israel to solve undersea oil, gas dispute" (3 December 2012) <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/12/03/cyprus-offers-mediation-between-lebanon-israel-to-solve-undersea-oil-gas/> [accessed 30 March 2015].



Figure 3: The Israeli-Lebanese disputed maritime area. [Source: huffingtonpost.com]

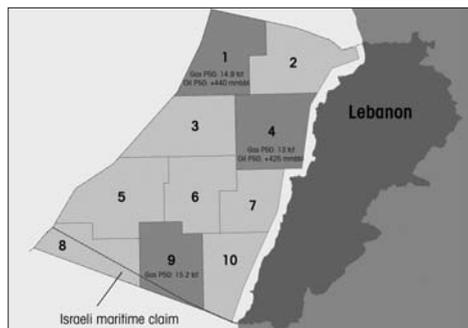


Figure 4: Lebanese offshore blocks within the disputed area [Source: Executive Magazine]

Article 2 of the Israeli-Cypriot delimitation agreement provides for cooperation in the event straddling hydrocarbons reserves (stretching from the EEZ of one Party to the EEZ of the other) are discovered. This clause is also met in Cyprus' relevant agreements with Egypt²⁴ and Lebanon and reflects the exhortation set forth by international juridical organs in terms of promoting joint exploitation of underwater natural resources among neighboring states.²⁵ Finally, Article 4(b) of the delimitation agreement envisages the possibility of recourse to arbitration following an agreement to this end between the two states in case "the two Parties do not settle the dispute within a reasonable period of time through diplomatic channels." The importance of this term lies in the fact that Israel has always been disinclined to and still remains reluctant to be subjected to the compulsory jurisdiction of international courts and tribunals (i.e. International Court of Justice, International Criminal Court). Therefore, the acceptance on the part of Israel of the likelihood of an arbitration procedure is indicative of the significance Israel ascribes to the agreement together with its willingness to establish a strong, long-term cooperation framework with Cyprus.

The 2012 Search and Rescue agreement. Prior to examining this agreement, it should be borne in mind that the LOSC accentuates the duty of every coastal state – not only states that are parties to it – to "promote the establishment, operation and maintenance of an adequate and effective search and rescue service" and "cooperate with neighboring States for this purpose."²⁶ Although Israel is not a party to the LOSC, it has been acting in compliance with the said

²⁴ A joint exploitation agreement has already been concluded between Egypt and Cyprus in 2014 (see note 2).

²⁵ See note 3.

²⁶ *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*, Article 98(2).

provision as well as to the rules set forth in the 1974 International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea,²⁷ in Annex 12 to the 1944 Convention on International Civil Aviation²⁸ (Israel and Cyprus are parties to these conventions) and in the Annex to the 1979 Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue²⁹ (Cyprus is a party, Israel not), by virtue of which the two contracting states pledge to take action, as stated in the Preamble of the agreement under scrutiny. On the whole, the agreement sets the framework of cooperation within which the two states will collaborate when aeronautical search and rescue operations take place.

A point worthy of attention is the provision of Article 2 of the agreement, whereby the Search and Rescue Regions (SRRs) of the Parties are defined. As regards Cyprus, the Nicosia Flight Information Region (FIR) is determined as its SRR; this clause consolidates even more Cyprus as the sole legitimate authority entitled to control flights within the Nicosia FIR, despite the efforts of Turkey to achieve recognition of the illegal airport of Tymbou (so called “Ercan”) in the northern occupied part of Cyprus.³⁰ Also, in contradiction to the EEZ delimitation agreement and the agreement on exchange and non-disclosure of confidential information between the two states, Article 13 envisages that “any dispute concerning interpretation and/or application” of the agreement should be resolved through direct negotiations or diplomatic channels; this probably stems from the character of the agreement, which aims at merely coordinating search and rescue operations within the FIRs of the two states and does not entail allocation of maritime space and/or sharing of natural resources and/or any other issues pertaining to sovereignty/sovereign rights.

The 2014 agreement on exchange and non-disclosure of confidential information. In 2014 Israel and Cyprus concluded the abovementioned agreement. Interestingly enough, the parties reaffirmed their adherence to the median line method and, as is set out in the Preamble, they undertake the obligation to “mutually exchange Confidential Information relevant to the hydrocarbons identified on either side of the Median Line, as such term is defined in Article 1 of the Agreement on Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone.” The Preamble, also, stresses that the exchange of information

²⁷ International Convention for the Safety of Life At Sea (signed on 1 November 1974, entered into force on 25 May 1980) 1184 UNTS 278 .

²⁸ Convention on Civil Aviation (signed on 7 December 1944, entered into force 04 April 1947) 15 UNTS 295.

²⁹ International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (signed on 27 April 1979, entered into force on 22 June 1985) 1405 UNTS 97.

³⁰ LCCC NICOSIA (ACC/FIC): NOTAMs A0440/01, A0151/02, A0110/02, A0557/05, A1133/12, A0692/12.

relates to Block 12 of Cyprus and *Ishai* of Israel. In respect to dispute resolution, Article 6 stipulates that failing any diplomatic efforts to resolve a disagreement, recourse to arbitration may be sought unilaterally by either party, thus in such case no prior agreement is necessary in contradiction to what is envisaged by the respective clause in the EEZ delimitation agreement; again – as in the EEZ delimitation agreement – this marks an exception to Israel's long-standing disdain *vis-à-vis* compulsory dispute settlement mechanisms and signifies the central role of these agreements in the bilateral relations of the two states.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the hydrocarbons windfall – if dealt with wisely – will lead to the growth of energy efficiency, financial prosperity, and the geopolitical upgrading of the East Med states in global affairs (the discovery of the enormous reserve “Zohr” offshore Egypt affirms the energy potential of the region). Against this backdrop, the regional states appear to realize the potential opportunities and have already taken steps towards grasping this valuable momentum. Among these states are Israel and Cyprus, which have signed pivotal agreements on EEZ delimitation, search and rescue operations, and exchange and non-disclosure of confidential information regarding straddling hydrocarbons reserves. Back in 1958 Israel had been a champion of the law of the sea rules since its interests were served, but it chose not to sign the LOSC as it deems some of its provisions detrimental. Nevertheless, as depicted in the analysis of the agreements Israel has concluded with Cyprus, the former is keen on implementing several law of the sea norms either conventional or customary. Moreover, Israel demonstrates its willingness to participate in the nascent regional cooperation network acting in accordance with international law. Indeed, given that progress and prosperity in the volatile East Med can be facilitated through the application of international law, the Israeli-Cypriot partnership seems to be developing in the right direction.

The New Geopolitical Landscape in the Eastern Mediterranean: the Israeli Perception

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The article investigates the role of Israel in Eastern Mediterranean affairs, and particularly the dynamics of its participation in the new partnership with Cyprus and Greece, through the prism of its past and future relations with Turkey. It identifies the background context that led to current regional relations in the Eastern Mediterranean, evaluates the character and objectives of the Israeli-Cypriot-Greek (and Egyptian) partnership, and examines the prospects of this multiparty cooperation and mutual exclusiveness, under the light of future Turkish-Israeli relations.

An enquiry about Israel's geopolitical position in the region could notably be related to current Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's well-known monograph *Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position*;¹ what he laid out in 2001 about his vision of "Turkey's international position," is directly linked to the current affairs in the Eastern Mediterranean and the wider Middle East. Among others, Davutoglu argued that Turkey's strategic relations with Israel in the mid-1990s favored Israel and alienated Turkey from its Arab neighbors;² an implication that called for "the reevaluation of [Turkey's] broader Middle East policy and its inter-regional outcomes" and the unburdening of the country from "the passive image that it presents in its relations with Israel."³

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¹ Ahmet Davutoğlu, *To Stratigiko Vathos: Oi Diethnis Thesi tis Tourkias* [Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position (*Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu*, 2001)], trans. Nikolaos Raptopoulos (Athens: Poiotita, 2010).

² Davutoğlu, *Stratigiko Vathos*, 108, 631.

³ Davutoğlu, *Stratigiko Vathos*, 637.

In order to understand and evaluate contemporary international relations in the Eastern Mediterranean, and Israel's position in particular, one needs to take into account the evolution of Turkish foreign policy since the early 2000s, including its perceived need to distance itself from Israel. This article looks at Israel's relations with the Eastern Mediterranean states, particularly Cyprus and Greece by factoring in Turkey's regional policy. The aim is threefold: firstly, to identify the historical and geopolitical background of the current Eastern Mediterranean affairs in conjunction with Turkish foreign policy; secondly, to evaluate the character and goals of the developing Israel-Cyprus-Greece (and Egypt) cooperation; thirdly, to explore the future of the new partnership and Israel's position in the light of Turkish-Israeli relations. Although geopolitical antagonism is the name of the game in the Eastern Mediterranean, regional relations should not be considered as mutually exclusive in the long run. Regardless of any changes in the geopolitical setting, Israel's regional stature has a lot to gain from sustainable ties with Cyprus and Greece and this could constitute a new era in Jerusalem's foreign policy; one of more stable regional relations.

Turkish Foreign Policy and the Eastern Mediterranean

Today's geopolitical dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean are driven by three main factors: Turkey's history of bad political relations with Greece and Cyprus; the gradual deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations since 2002, and particularly after 2008; and the discovery of hydrocarbons in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of Cyprus and Israel. Unquestionably, the political disputes between Turkey and Greece over the years (e.g. Greek Cypriot claim for self-determination, national minorities, delimitation of maritime areas in the Aegean, etc.) and the Cyprus Problem – particularly the 1974 Turkish invasion and occupation of the island's north – have shaped, to a great extent, the region's patterns of enmity and amity. Greece and the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), given their close political, cultural and ethnic ties, have been in diplomatic cooperation and close coordination towards their problematic relations with Turkey; the nature of this bilateral relationship has changed little overtime and is thus an important component of the current geopolitical equation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

For its part, Israel had not been a traditional partner of Greece and Cyprus as the two countries have, over the years, been more closely affiliated with the Arab World. On the other hand, Turkey was the first Muslim country to recognize the State of Israel; though Turkey and Israel maintained a mostly

covert relationship since 1948,⁴ they found themselves forming a strategic cooperation in 1996. Apart from the fact that the special relationship was established by the most important allies of the United States in the Middle East, two main elements led to its formation: the improvements in the Arab-Israeli peace process in the early 1990s and the mutual security threat perceptions particularly towards Syria. The promising *Oslo Accords*⁵ – signed in 1993 by then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat – alleviated, at least temporarily, the main cause of friction between Israel and Turkey.⁶ After that, and despite the fact that their geopolitical bond became official in 1996, the deepening of their relationship was almost instantaneous as they were both aware of the mutual strategic benefits. Furthermore, Syria – as a fierce Palestinian supporter, a traditional military threat to Israel, and a security threat to Turkey’s territorial integrity via its support for the militant-secessionist Kurdistan’s Workers Party (PKK) – became an important driving force towards the Turkish-Israeli partnership.⁷

But it did not take long for this dynamic to be reversed. In 1998 Turkey and Syria escaped a full-scale war when Damascus eventually complied with Ankara’s demands over the PKK question.⁸ Thereafter, Turkish-Syrian relations, and by extension Turkish-Iranian relations, entered a period of booming and multileveled cooperation. At the same time, in 2000, after the failure of Camp David Summit, the Palestinian al-Aqsa intifada broke out and the Arab-Israeli peace process collapsed.⁹ Therefore, by the early 2000s the two

⁴ Jacob Abadi, “Israel and Turkey: From Covert to Overt Relations,” *The Journal of Conflict Studies* 15:2 (1995), <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/viewArticle/4548> [accessed 10 April 2015].

⁵ U.S Department of State, “The Oslo Accords and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process,” 2014, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1993-2000/oslo> [accessed 10 April 2015].

⁶ Alan Makovsky, “Tansu Ciller in Israel: Pursuing Turkish-Israeli Partnership,” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 03 November 1994, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/tansu-ciller-in-israel-pursuing-turkish-israeli-partnership> [accessed 10 April 2015].

⁷ Amikam Nachmani, “The Remarkable Turkish-Israeli Tie,” *Middle East Quarterly* 5:2 (1998), 19-29 (19). The Greek-Syrian developing alliance was also an issue of security concern for Turkey; see, Daniel Pipes, “Syria Beyond the Peace Process,” *Policy Paper No. 40* (1996), *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 57.

⁸ Meliha Benli Altunisik and Ozlem Tur, “From Distant Neighbours to Partners? Changing Syrian-Turkish Relations,” *Security Dialogue* 37:2 (2006), 217-236 (217-218).

⁹ U.S Department of State, “The Oslo Accords and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process.”

main catalysts that gave rise to and kept together the Turkey-Israel bond were no longer in place. In 2002, this geopolitical conjuncture coincided with the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey. Being characterized by a (Turkish) political Islamic ideology that aspired to elevate Turkey to the leadership of post-Ottoman geopolitical and geocultural existence, the AKP signified a break with the traditional, and mostly isolationist, Kemalist military-bureaucratic establishment.¹⁰ Although Turkey's relations with the region improved significantly, through increasing economic and diplomatic relations,¹¹ this strategic vision was not adopted entirely in policy-making until after 2008, when AKP managed to largely marginalize the Kemalist political and military elites.¹²

As the AKP began dominating domestic political life, its ideology became aligned with policy-making and the revisionist character of Turkish foreign policy became more evident. This change enabled the AKP to implement policies described in Davutoglu's *Strategic Depth* regarding Israel and the wider region. Turkey's reevaluation of the Turkish-Israeli partnership had both an ideological and a pragmatic basis; the latter stemmed from the fact that Turkey's dissociation from Israel would allow it to grow deeper relations with the Arab World and pursue a more independent foreign policy. After all, Arab disapproval of the Turkish-Israeli cooperation was one of the main reasons behind Davutoglu's criticism of it. This new policy was notably expressed during the 2008-2009 Gaza War, when Turkey heavily criticized Israeli methods and policies. Similarly, at the 2009 Davos World Economic Forum, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan publicly embarrassed the Israeli President Shimon Peres accusing him that "when it comes to killing, you know well how to kill."¹³ On

¹⁰ See Behlul Ozkan, "Turkey, Davutoglu and the Idea of Pan-Islamism," *Survival* 56:4 (2014), 119-140; Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine of Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42:6 (2006), 945-964.

¹¹ Nader Habibi and Joshua W. Walker, "What Is Driving Turkey's Reengagement with the Arab World?," *Middle East Brief* 49 (2011), Crown Centre for Middle East Studies.

¹² Michael Reynolds, "Echoes of Empire: Turkey's Crisis of Kemalism and the Search for an Alternative Foreign Policy," *Brookings Analysis Paper* 26 (2012), The Saban Center for Middle East Policy; Dariush Zahedi and Gokhan Bacik, "Kemalism is Dead, Long Live Kemalism," *Foreign Affairs*, 2010, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/66391/dariush-zahedi-and-gokhan-bacik/kemalism-is-dead-long-live-kemalism> [accessed 10 April 2015].

¹³ "Gül, Erdoğan lash out at Israel for ongoing Gaza assault," *Today's Zaman*, 17 January 2009, http://www.todayszaman.com/diplomacy_gul-erdogan-lash-out-at-israel-for-ongoing-gaza-assault_164329.html [accessed 10 April 2015]; Katrin Bennhold, "Leaders of Turkey and Israel Clash at Davos Panel," *The New York Times*, 29 January 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/world/europe/30clash.html> [accessed 10 April 2015].

the following year, the *Mavi Marmara* affair – a deadly Israeli raid on the Turkish ship that was currying humanitarian aid to Gaza – undermined even more the bilateral relations between the two former partners, while in September 2011, the release of the United Nations Palmer Report on the Gaza flotilla incident, with which Turkey disagreed, further downgraded its relations with Israel.¹⁴ Thus by 2011 Israel was facing significant political problems with Turkey and became more isolated in an already hostile and unstable region, especially after the outbreak of the Arab Spring uprisings.¹⁵

In the meantime, Israel in the late 2000s discovered significant natural gas reserves in the *Tamar* and *Leviathan* fields; apart from the regional security issues and the declined relations with Turkey, hydrocarbons became another important issue that called for the reconfiguration of Israel's regional relations. At that moment, Cyprus – which launched its own hydrocarbons exploration program in 2011 – appeared in the emerging geopolitical environment in need for security and energy partnerships. For Israel, Cyprus – and consequently Greece – was a reasonable choice since both shared similar security concerns and were interested for potential energy cooperation. After all, as Efraim Inbar noted, “about 90 percent of Israel's foreign trade is carried out via the Mediterranean Sea, making freedom of navigation in this area critical for the Jewish state's economic well-being.”¹⁶

Israel-Cyprus-Greece (and Egypt)

It was against this geopolitical background that the Israel-Cyprus-Greece cooperation emerged, while recently, another partnership began developing between Cyprus, Greece and Egypt under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, as Cairo's relations with Turkey have also deteriorated after the ouster of the

¹⁴ Carol Migdalovitz, “Israel's Blockade of Gaza, the *Mavi Marmara* Incident, and its Aftermath,” CRS Report for Congress (June 2010), Congressional Research Service; Sebnem Arsu, “Amid Tensions With Israel, Turkey Threatens Increased Naval Presence,” *The New York Times*, 6 September 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/07/world/middleeast/07turkey.html> [accessed 10 April 2015]; “PM: Turkey to impose more sanctions on Israel, boost presence in east Med,” *Today's Zaman*, 6 September 2011, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-255903-pm-turkey-to-impose-more-sanctions-on-israel-boost-presence-in-east-med.html> [accessed 10 April 2015].

¹⁵ Efraim Inbar, “The Strategic Implications for Israel,” in *The Arab Spring, Democracy and Security: Domestic and International Ramifications*, ed. Efraim Inbar (New York: Routledge, 2013), 145-165 (145-157).

¹⁶ Efraim Inbar, “Israel's Challenges in the Eastern Mediterranean,” *Middle East Quarterly* 21:4 (2014), 1-12 (1).

Muslim Brotherhood from power – a development Turkey criticized ferociously. The two trilateral partnerships have been further strengthened by agreements on various political, economic, energy and military issues.¹⁷ The Cairo Declaration that followed the trilateral summit of Egypt, Greece and Cyprus in Egypt, on 08 November 2014, noted: “We share the conviction that this first Summit Meeting will pave the way to a new era of tripartite partnership promoting peace, stability, security and prosperity in the Eastern Mediterranean in all fields (political, economic, trade, culture, tourism).”¹⁸

In the same document the leaders of the three states also acknowledged the vital security problems in the Middle East region, the need for the resolution of the Cyprus Problem and the need to deal with the security threats and to collaborate in the energy sector in favour of regional security and stability.¹⁹ These goals and sentiments were reiterated in the Nicosia Declaration, the product of their second trilateral summit that took place in Cyprus on 29 April 2015.²⁰

It is evident that today there is a new set of perceptions and convergences of interests that could affect the Eastern Mediterranean balance of power, having though in mind that it would be premature to argue that new “alliances” have been formed. Although there are many benefits that can come out of these developing relationships, the glue that is holding them together is

¹⁷ For example, Amanda Midkiff, “Shifting Dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Developing Relationship Between Greece and Israel,” *Perspectives on Business and Economics*, 30 (2012), 45-53; “Greek Cyprus Ratifies Military Cooperation Deal with Israel,” *Today’s Zaman*, 03 July 2012, http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?newsId=285431 [accessed 10 April 2015]. See also, “Greece, Israel sign pact on security cooperation,” Jewish Telegraphic Agency (05 September 2011), <http://www.jta.org/2011/09/05/news-opinion/israel-middle-east/greece-israel-sign-pact-on-security-cooperation> [accessed 13 April 2015]; “EuroAsia Interconnector,” 2014, <http://www.euroasia-interconnector.com/> [accessed 13 April 2015]; “Israel, Cyprus sign defense agreements - reports,” *Globes*, 10 January 2012, <http://www.globes.co.il/en/article-1000714277> [accessed 13 April 2015]; Asher Zeiger, “Israel, Greece, Cyprus sign energy and water deal,” *The Times of Israel*, 08 August 2013, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-greece-cyprus-sign-energy-and-water-deal/> [accessed 13 April 2015].

¹⁸ “Egypt-Greece-Cyprus Trilateral Summit Cairo Declaration,” 09 November 2014, <http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2006.nsf/All/B2AF4B08214D31D5C2257D8D002AF831?OpenDocument> [accessed 13 April 2015].

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ “Nicosia Declaration,” Cyprus News Agency, 29 April 2015, <http://www.cna.org.cy/webnewsEN.asp?a=e4f1917b4c3f45858481a187b28740d5> [accessed 30 April 2015]

Turkey. Its power projections and its efforts to impose its hegemony over the region have naturally produced opposition. Against the backdrop of poor relations with Turkey, Cyprus and Greece have joined forces with Israel and Egypt, giving rise to an opposing geopolitical pole that contradicts the aims of Turkish foreign policy. In the traditional *realpolitik* sense, this is an effort to at least balance out Turkey's relative power stature in the Eastern Mediterranean; at the same time, it can be seen as a form of political and ideological resistance to Turkey's hegemonic efforts over the Middle Eastern region. For the RoC, the emerging partnerships also constitute a way of drawing international support for its efforts to resolve the long-standing Cyprus Problem.

Unquestionably, the emerging bilateral dynamics challenges Ankara's strategic objectives to an important extent. To begin with, it is reflective of the fact that Turkey lost much of its post-"Arab Spring" ideological and political clout in the Arab World and especially in Egypt. Perhaps more importantly, Turkey seems to have been "frozen out" of the plans for energy and security collaboration in the Eastern Mediterranean, at least for the time being.²¹ As a result, it could potentially face obstacles in the achievement of at least two of its strategic energy goals: to emerge as a regional energy hub and to become an energy supplier of the European market. With regard to the former, Ankara stated that after the completion of a number of projects "it is anticipated that 6 to 7 % of global oil supply will transit Turkey and that Ceyhan will become a major energy hub and the largest oil outlet terminal in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Ceyhan Terminal has already been designed to receive crude oil from different countries."²²

The same aspirations apply for natural gas. Of course the European Union (EU) still considers Turkey as an alternative energy supplier to Russia.²³ And

²¹ Daniel Dombey, Heba Saleh, and John Reed, "Egypt and Cyprus Freeze out Turkey in Possible Gas Deal," *Financial Times*, 25 November 2014, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/90dcafea-74bb-11e4-8321-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3VsFjYqsw> [accessed 30 April 2015]; Gedalyah Reback, "Israeli-Greek-Cypriot Alliance Challenges Turkey in the Med," *Israel National News*, 09 March 2015, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/192357#.VRwZEvmVIul> [accessed 30 April 2015]. Moreover, there is the perception that the rift between Turkey and Egypt is very personal and concerns the enmity between Erdogan and al-Sisi. This makes their (energy) cooperation an even more difficult problem to solve while at the same time entails that should one of these leaders leaves the political scene, Turkey and Egypt may well mend fences. From author's discussion with an Egyptian official from Egypt's oil and gas industry (March, 2015).

²² "Turkey's Energy Strategy," 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkeys-energy-strategy.en.mfa> [accessed 30 April 2015].

while Europe's energy supply from Turkey, and the rest of the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, is not necessarily mutually exclusive, Ankara's options and energy-hub potential decrease when Cypriot and Israeli gas are removed from the equation. In this light it can be suggested that the new geopolitical landscape in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Israel-Cyprus-Greece partnership in particular, pose obstacles to Turkish foreign policy without that, however, necessarily entailing that Turkey is completely isolated or marginalized.

The partnership's future and the Israeli position

The Israel-Cyprus-Greece partnership has a lot of potential and it is not implausible to see it evolving even further. However, its character and goals in the long run are far from certain; they are in many ways related to Israel's foreign policy decisions and its relations with Turkey. Leaving aside the mutual energy and economic benefits that derive from the trilateral relationship, for Cyprus and Greece it is important to have Israel by their sides as a means of dealing with Turkey. This dynamic, however, may not be sustainable as it deepens the gap between Turkey and Israel. According to one analyst:

While Israel has increased its cooperation with Greece and Cyprus, at times coming to the defense of Cypriot interests in the Eastern Mediterranean, it is also cautious not to further damage its relationship with Turkey. In conclusion, Israel's interests in maintaining the status quo with Turkey has established a ceiling on how enthusiastic its relationship can be with other regional actors, like Greece and Cyprus.²⁴

From this perspective, the trilateral partnership functions – at least for Cyprus and Greece – as a strategic counterweight to Turkey. Thus one may assume that a Turkish-Israeli rapprochement and the Israel-Cyprus-Greece relationship are mutually exclusive; yet Israel's understanding is different. Jerusalem appreciates the strategic benefits of its relation with Cyprus and Greece and,

²³ European Commission, "European Energy Strategy," Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council, COM 330 Final (2014); Miguel Arias Canete, "EU-Turkey High Level Energy Dialogue and Strategic Energy Cooperation," European Commission, 17 March 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/arias-canete/announcements/eu-turkey-high-level-energy-dialogue-and-strategic-energy-cooperation_en [accessed 30 April 2015].

²⁴ Author's Interview with Gabriel Mitchell, PhD candidate in Government & International Affairs at Virginia Tech University and the Israel-Turkey Project Coordinator at Mitvim – the Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies (March, 2015).

provided the necessary political will exists, it is even open to see the partnership evolving to a more solid strategic cooperation.²⁵ At the same time, Israel sees its relations with Turkey, Cyprus, and Greece independently from each other,²⁶ in an effort to maintain a multidimensional regional foreign policy that would minimize the costs and maximize the benefits.

In this sense, the partnership in question could also signify a break from Israel's tradition of uneasy and temporary alliances (see France, South Africa and most recently Turkey),²⁷ by becoming permanent and stable. Both geographic proximity and energy prospects could contribute to a future of common interests. Moreover, the fact that the multileveled cooperation between Israel, Cyprus and Greece does not face any significant opposition from Arab states or Great Powers creates an even more favoring environment. Minor challenges may be expected from the Palestinian lobby, Lebanon and Iran. With regards to the former, the traditionally good relations that Cyprus and Greece²⁸ maintain with the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular²⁹ may lead to some – yet limited – Palestinian pressure for less cooperation with Israel.³⁰ In parallel, the maritime dispute between Israel and Lebanon³¹ is an

²⁵ Author's interview with Israeli official A [name of interviewee in possession of the author] (March, 2015).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Jane Hunter, "The Israeli-South African-U.S. Alliance," *The Link* 19:1 (1986), 1-13; Guy Ziv, "Shimon Peres and the French-Israeli Alliance, 1954-1959," *Journal of Contemporary History* 45:2 (2010), 406-429.

²⁸ The election of Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) to power in Greece (January, 2015) stirred fears among Israeli circles that pro-Palestinian and anti-Israeli feelings would increase in the Greek Government, given Syriza's past political stance on these matters. However, not only did the new government not challenge Greece's relationship with Israel, but vowed to deepen it. See "The Victory of Syriza in Greece is bad news for Israel," *The Jerusalem Post*, 26 January 2015, <http://www.jpost.com/International/Analysis-The-victory-of-Syriza-in-Greece-is-bad-news-for-Israel-388960> [accessed 30 April 2015]; Herb Keinon, "Visiting Greek Specialist: Core of Jerusalem-Athens ties Remain Strong," *The Jerusalem Post*, 12 March 2015, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Visiting-Greek-specialist-Core-of-Jerusalem-Athens-ties-remain-strong-393653> [accessed 30 April 2015].

²⁹ See "Cyprus recognizes Palestinian states within 1967 borders," *Haaretz*, 30 January 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/report-cyprus-recognizes-palestinian-states-within-1967-borders-1.340169> [accessed 30 April 2015]; "Cyprus formally recognizes State of Palestine," *Al Akhbar*, 08 February 2013, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/14906> [accessed 30 April 2015].

³⁰ Author's interview with Israeli official A.

issue “in which Iran may have some interest;” and while Israel is “concerned about the potential of sabotage of its offshore platforms by Iranian proxies [...] the subject is outside of Tehran’s purview.”³²

Turkish-Israeli Relations

Eventually, what will matter are Israel’s strategic assessments and the regional repercussions of Turkish foreign policy. Currently, it seems that Turkey under the AKP, and President Erdogan more specifically, has a difficult time to distinguish between its relations with Israel³³ and its pro-Arab/Muslim communication policy. In spite of Israeli political will for reconciliation with Turkey,³⁴ Ankara’s actions, as expressed through frequent criticism of Israel and tolerance of anti-Semitism, indicate a reluctance to normalize its relations with Jerusalem; this, arguably, has some impact on the character of the trilateral partnership and the involvement of Egypt.

Although Israel’s declared policy is to have positive relations with all state players in the region and to maintain creative ties with both Turkey as well as Cyprus-Greece, a fundamental shift in Turkish-Israeli relations will undoubtedly affect the Israel-Cyprus-Greece partnership. This does not mean that diplomatic relations will automatically deteriorate but, in such an occasion, arguably the character of the partnership will probably change, especially if Jerusalem decides to orientate its energy exports toward Turkey. Such an undertaking would entail significant geopolitical risk and, as proven in the past few years, uncertain political repercussions. In this regard, it is highly questionable whether the estimated less expensive option of an Israeli-Turkish pipeline would actually be the most beneficial one (as opposed to a Cyprus-Israel pipeline and a Liquefied Natural Gas plant in Cyprus).³⁵

³¹ See Martin Wählisch, “Israel-Lebanon Offshore Oil & Gas Dispute - Rules of International Maritime Law,” *ASIL Insights* 15:31 (2011), <http://www.asil.org/insights/volume/15/issue/31/israel-lebanon-offshore-oil-gas-dispute-%E2%80%93-rules-international-maritime> [accessed 30 April 2015].

³² Author’s Interview with Gabriel Mitchell.

³³ This refers mainly to their security, diplomatic, military and energy ties. On the economic front, and specifically trade, Turkish-Israeli relations have reached record high levels despite political problems; see Koray Tekin, “Turkish-Israeli trade booms despite harsh rhetoric,” *Today’s Zaman*, 20 January 2015, http://www.todayszaman.com/business_turkish-israeli-trade-booms-despite-harsh-rhetoric_370381.html [accessed 30 April 2015].

³⁴ Israel’s apology to Turkey in March, 2013, for the *Mavi Marmara* incident was a big step to that direction but it has not borne fruits thus far.

³⁵ See Theodore Tsakiris, “The Case Against an Israeli-Turkish Export Pipeline,” ELIAMEP Briefing Notes, 25/2013 (2013).

For Jerusalem, a strong Turkey-Israel cooperation makes sense because of military-intelligence issues and Western interests, as much as cooperation with Cyprus and Greece is imperative due to vital maritime trade and energy export routes, to say the least³⁶ – regardless of the political problems between Greece-Cyprus and Turkey. Therefore, Israel should take into account all these parameters while trying to develop a multidimensional foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean; a foreign policy that will be able to build stable, sustainable and beneficial relationships in a region that is already greatly hostile to Israel.

Another rather timely scenario that might alter Eastern Mediterranean dynamics, presumably for the best, is the potential resolution of the Cyprus Problem. Given that it has thus far been an obstacle to regional cooperation, it would not be implausible to see Greek-Turkish and Cypriot-Turkish relations undergoing positive changes should a viable, functional and socially acceptable settlement occurs in Cyprus. Such a prospect could easily prompt improvements in the relations between Turkey and Israel, while Israel itself supports the peace process in Cyprus with the hope that a settlement will open up new possibilities for peace and stability.³⁷

Conclusions

This paper set out to evaluate regional relations in the Eastern Mediterranean and Israel's position in particular. It examined the historical background and the motivations behind the newly developed partnership between Israel-Cyprus-Greece, and interpreted its character, prospects, and Israel's role and importance in the region, under the light of Turkish-Israeli relations. It suggested that Turkish foreign policy provided the ground for the closer cooperation between Israel, Cyprus and Greece, and later Egypt. The new partnership, which acts as a regional counterweight to Turkey's relative power, also expands to significant sectors of cooperation such as energy, economy and security. Provided that the necessary political will among the partners continues, the future of the partnership is generally deemed promising though its character may change on the eventuality of a Turkish-Israeli reconciliation.

³⁶ See Gedalyah Reback, "Israeli-Greek-Cypriot Alliance Challenges Turkey in the Med;" Thanos Dokos, "The Prospects for Greek-Israeli Relations: A View from Athens," ELIAMEP Briefing Notes, 11/2013 (2013); Theodoros Tsakiris, "Shifting Sands or Burning Bridges," ELIAMEP Policy Paper, 22 (2014), 30-37.

³⁷ Author's interview with Israeli official A.

As noted earlier, the resolution of the Cyprus Problem would also be an important development that could, under conditions, have a positive impact on the international relations of the Eastern Mediterranean and Turkish-Israeli relations more specifically. A significant point of regional geopolitical friction would belong to the past. That would be an ideal state of affairs for all states involved and the region more generally. But even from today's point of view, Israel's regional and international position will certainly benefit, in the short and long term, from a deeper relationship with Greece and Cyprus, as they constitute important partners in the Eastern Mediterranean and a vital political, energy, security and economic link between Israel and Europe.

The geopolitical importance of the Eastern Mediterranean airspace

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The article examines the geopolitical importance of the Eastern Mediterranean region through the lens of a number of classical and neo-classical geopolitical models and describes Cyprus' predominant geostrategic post regarding the effective control of this region. As airspace constitutes an inextricable part of every territory, its mastery is imperative for the effective control of the area in question. Peace and stability in this volatile and complex region could not be achieved without the effective control of its airspace. The location of Cyprus that occupies a central position in the Levantine basin seems to be ideal for the conduct of all sorts of air operations. Cyprus' important location was realised by the British in the late 19th Century, long before the advent of the aeroplane. The UK still maintains several strategic surveillance facilities along with an airbase of critical importance, however the island has been the cat's paw for many regional or international actors. The article explains the pivotal role of the airspace concerning the control of the Eastern Mediterranean in combination with Cyprus' significant position in this region.

The Eastern Mediterranean region is located at the cross-roads of three continents – Europe, Africa and Asia – whilst it also comprises a large part of the Middle East – one of the tensest and war-torn zones in the human history; most of the empires that played a prominent role throughout the history of the western world were born and thrived there; it is the cradle of three worldwide monotheistic creeds.¹ The island of Cyprus, apart from being an inextricable

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¹ Ioannis Parisi, *I Kath Imas Thalassa, Geostratigiki Analyse tis Mesogeiou* [Our sea, geostrategic analysis of the Mediterranean sea], (Athens: Livanis, 2013), 21, 120-145; Bouchra Rahmouni Benhida and Younes Slaoui, *Géopolitique de la Méditerranée* [Geopolitics of the Mediterranean Sea], (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013), 5, 25-54; Alexandre Defay, *Géopolitique du Proche-Orient* [Geopolitics of the Near-East], 6th edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013), 6-7, 37-51.

part of this region, occupies a predominant geostrategic position able to serve any regional or world power that has aspirations for controlling the area. Undoubtedly, the legal government of the island has the only and paramount say on any potential strategic cooperation with these global or regional powers, aiming to protect its *raison d'État*.

Land and sea comprise two major components of a territory that every ambitious power has to command effectively in order to hold sway and be the absolute master of a particular area. However, the importance of the third dimension – the airspace – was only recognized in the early years of the 20th century along with the invention of the aeroplane, whilst it was only during World War II when the Great Powers comprehended its strategic value.² The technological evolution in aviation, along with continuous developments in the field of utilization of the aeroplane as a war platform have rendered the airspace a seamless element of the whole space that could not be ignored³; in fact it has to be taken into serious consideration as its control determines to a large degree whether a power shall gain regional predominance.

Geopolitical models and the Eastern Mediterranean Region

A number of geopolitical models were introduced in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries in order to explain how international politics were influenced or even determined by geography. The Westphalian model rendered the state the most important unit of social organisation in world politics. The sovereign states became pivotal actors whose unilateral acts and interactions with their counterparts form the global political landscape. Hence the territory of each state has become its political terrain, the space where it exercises its sovereign power over a society delimited by its frontiers.

Based on the aforementioned, various intellectuals have articulated world models in an attempt to bring the geographical factor into political discourse and the formation and implementation of foreign policy.⁴ Notwithstanding a number of considerable criticisms, that have been aired mainly during the last two decades of the 20th Century, these world models and their geopolitical perceptions –

² Stephen Shrewsbury, "September 11th and the Single European Sky-developing Concepts of Airspace Sovereignty," *The Department of the Air Force, AFIT/CIA* (2002), C102-128; Peter Adey, "Aeromobilities: Geographies, Subjects and Vision," *Geography Compass* 2:5 (2008), 1318-1336.

³ Alison Williams, "Hakumat al Tayarat: The Role of Air Power in the Enforcement of Iraq's Boundaries", *Geopolitics* 12:3 (2007), 505-528.

⁴ Geoffrey Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 7-14; Patrick O'Sullivan, *Geopolitics* (New York: Routledge, 1986), 5-6, 23-38.

although heterogeneous – still influence and in some cases dominate the *modus vivendi* and the *modus operandi* of a number of powerful states.⁵

The vast majority of those models define the Eastern Mediterranean as a region of major importance, where the fermented political developments occurring there may have a global impact – that is, all the major world or regional powers are entangled in regional affairs in order to protect their perceived *raison d'État*. This is not, in the least, an exaggeration since the world model proposed by Halford Mackinder⁶ and then further elaborated by Nicholas Spykman⁷ situates the specific region in the “Inner or Marginal Crescent” or the “Rimland.” The control of this area determines the dominant power of Eurasia thereby governing the whole world. Mackinder himself corroborates the aforementioned statement by making a special reference to Greece as a state “bounded by water and therefore accessible to sea power” and arguing that the “possession of Greece by a great Heartland power would probably carry it with the control of the World-Island.”⁸ Needless to say, Greece constitutes an inextricable part of the Eastern Mediterranean region, or vice versa, the region cannot be delineated without the incorporation of Greece. Alfred Mahan’s prominent premise regarding the unquestionable importance of the sea power in comparison with that of land power adds more value to this specific region.⁹ In addition to Mahan’s renowned suppositions, French political theorist Charles Maurras has also championed the great value of a

⁵ Parker, *Western Geopolitical Thought*, 120-138; O’Sullivan, *Geopolitics*, 2-8, 23-38; Gerard O’ Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, (London: Routledge, 1996), 53-55; V.D. Mamadouh, “Geopolitics in the nineties: one flag, many meanings,” *GeoJournal*, 46 (1998), 237-253 (237-241); Christopher J. Fettweis, “On Heartlands and Chessboards: Classical Geopolitics, Then and Now,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (Spring 2015), 233-248 (233, 240-248).

⁶ O’ Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, 25-36, 75-110; Geoffrey Sloan, “Sir Halford Mackinder: The Heartland Theory Then and Now,” in *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy*, ed. Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 15-38.

⁷ Saul Bernard Cohen, *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations*, 2nd edn (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 2-23.

⁸ Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideas and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1919), cited in Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography* (New York: Random House, 2012), 77.

⁹ O’ Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, 38-43; Jon Sumida, “Alfred Thayer Mahan, Geopolitician” in *Geopolitics, Geography and Strategy*, ed. Colin S. Gray and Geoffrey Sloan (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999), 39-62; Klaus Dodds, *Geopolitics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 27-28; Alexandre Defay, *La Géopolitique* [Geopolitics], 2nd edn (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2012), 18-19; Pascal Gauchon and Jean-Marc Huissoud, *Les 100 mots de la Géopolitique* [The 100 words of geopolitics], (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008), 9-10.

mighty fleet, yet referring mainly to the French Republic.¹⁰ Every world power that espouses Mahan's thesis cannot turn a blind eye to this region. The Eastern Mediterranean Sea constitutes a critical hub for the world economy where large quantities of crude oil and natural gas are transferred from the Middle East via the Suez Canal or pipes either to Europe or to America.¹¹ The Suez Canal itself constitutes a world transit corridor; 20% of total oil transport and 30% of world trade of goods are conducted via this waterway.¹² Furthermore in the northwest, the Dardanelles Strait is Russia's only sea-passage to warm waters, rendering it a point of paramount strategic importance.

These Western geopolitical theories have diachronically impacted on the foreign policy of the British Empire and, later on the United States of America.¹³ The latter remained the only global power, a world hegemon after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact.¹⁴ Many eminent policy makers have in large adopted the aforementioned geopolitical models, thereby embracing the respective geopolitical posture regarding the importance of the Eastern Mediterranean region.¹⁵ Like Mackinder who referred particularly to Greece, Brzezinski has recently classified Turkey as a geopolitical pivot – being one out of six countries – namely a state “whose importance is derived not from its power and motivation but rather from its sensitive location.”¹⁶ Thus, the two countries – Greece and Turkey – that are evidently part of the Eastern Mediterranean region are considered to be of crucial importance to global geopolitical affairs. In addition to that, Brzezinski echoes Mackinder's and those of the old British colonial imperialist bureaucrats' ideas, who considered the Eastern Mediterranean as a stronghold for securing particular areas in the Middle East that are rich in energy resources.¹⁷

¹⁰ Aymerique Chauprade, *Géopolitique: Constantes et Changements dans l'Histoire* [Geopolitics: Constants and Changes throughout History], 3rd edn (Paris: Ellipses, 2007), 64-71.

¹¹ Parisis, *Kath Imas Thalassa*; Benhida and Slaoui, *Géopolitique de la Méditerranée*, 77-81.

¹² Guillaume Lagane, *Premiers pas en Géopolitique* [Basic steps in geopolitics], (Paris: Ellipses, 2012), 424.

¹³ Cohen, *Geopolitics*, 25.

¹⁴ Cohen, *Geopolitics*, 85.

¹⁵ Gerry Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire, The Legacy of Halford Mackinder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Klauss Dodds, Merje Kuus and Joanne Sharp, “Introduction: Geopolitics and its Critics,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Critical Geopolitics*, ed. Klauss Dodds, Merje Kuus and Joanne Sharp, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 1-14.

¹⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 41.

¹⁷ Kearns, *Geopolitics and Empire*, 226-227.

Furthermore, new world models have been propounded based on the same premises as the old ones; the postulate of the panoramic view, a *tour d'horizon* of the world and the presupposition that the globe "has become a system of closed space where events in one part inevitably have their consequences in all other parts" constitute the grounds of these models.¹⁸ Huntington's well-known thesis concerning "the clash of civilisations", again stresses the great significance of the Eastern Mediterranean region, a junction of various different cultures where the tense political environment inevitably generates confrontation and turmoil.¹⁹ Huntington's comprehensive elaboration of fault lines, characterising them as zones where intra- or interstate war could escalate and erupt into a global one, renders the region – the cradle of three civilisations – one of the most volatile areas of the world.²⁰ The French geopolitical school, even though more local and detailed in its analysis, is fundamentally based on historical, cultural and regional factors and aspects of view, thus adopting the same principles regarding the role of civilisation with Huntington's world model.²¹ Another theory vastly founded on the classical Cartesian world view is that of the "Shatterbelt." In accordance with this, "great powers compete in those regions because they perceive an interest in doing so and because they have opportunities in gaining alliance footholds with states in the region. Rival footholds of major powers are present here."²² Again, Middle East (of which the Eastern Mediterranean region constitutes an inseparable part) figures prominently on the list.²³

Against the *Pax Britannica* and the *Pax Americana*, the Russian Empire and later its successor, the USSR, strived to expand its sphere of direct influence and control even though the communists had long rejected the orthodox theories of geopolitics due to their connection with the Nazi regime.²⁴ However, the lordly spirit, the *animus dominandi* as Luther called it, impelled the foreign policy of the Eastern camp as well, as expansionism and support of surrogate states were always in its agenda.²⁵ Post-USSR Russia has embraced

¹⁸ O' Tuathail, *Critical Geopolitics*, 27.

¹⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World Order*, (London: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

²⁰ Huntington, *Clash of Civilisations*, 312.

²¹ Benhida and Slaoui, *Géopolitique de la Méditerranée*, 44-46.

²² Philip L. Kelly, "Escalation of Regional Conflict: Testing the Shatterbelt Theory," *Political Geography Quarterly* 5:2 (1986), 161-180.

²³ Kelly, "Escalation of Regional Conflict," 161-176.

²⁴ O'Sullivan, *Geopolitics*, 18-19; Geoffrey Parker, *The Geopolitics of Domination* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 76-132; Cohen, *Geopolitics*, 201-226.

²⁵ Cohen, *Geopolitics*.

classical geopolitical views mainly drawing on those of the German School led by Haushofer, whilst Mackinder's views still retain their honoured position as well.²⁶ Notwithstanding the grand changes in ideologies and regimes occurred in Russia during the past century, Middle East and more particularly Eastern Mediterranean have been always in the epicentre of the Russian foreign policy.²⁷ Thus the region has long been the field where world and regional powers constantly antagonise for control and supremacy.

All these classical and neo-classical geopolitical models and theories are assuredly not flawless; they are castigated by a number of renowned opponents for merely being over-simplified world views that are oblivious of the particularities of the space qua historical and geographical. However they still consist a substantial tool for the formulation of the foreign policy of the regional and world powers. Hence, the Eastern Mediterranean remains one of the most important geopolitical regions on the globe, regardless of any world-model or kind of analysis.²⁸ According to Vamvakas, the competition for the control of this geostrategic crossroads has been reignited for three main reasons: the perception of a weakened America, the increased interest for commercial activity of traditional and new antagonists and the domestic political unrest throughout the region.²⁹

Cyprus – an island of great geostrategic importance

Throughout the centuries the island of Cyprus has repeatedly been the apple of discord between opposing regional or even world powers.³⁰ Its history is fraught with invasions, occupations, conquests and battles of control and domination.³¹ Evidently, this fate of history has not occurred by chance.

²⁶ Mark Bassin, *The Two Faces of Contemporary Geopolitics*, in Alexander B. Murphey et al., "Is there a Politics to Geopolitics?," *Progress in Human Geography* 28:5 (2004), 619-640, (623-624).

²⁷ Gérard Claude, *La Méditerranée, Géopolitique et Relations Internationales* [The Mediterranean, geopolitics and international relations], (Paris: Ellipses, 2007), 100-112; William Mallinson, *Cyprus, Diplomatic History and the Clash of Theory in International Relations* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 31; Benhida and Slaoui, *Géopolitique de la Méditerranée*, 35-36; Evagoras L. Evagorou, *Oi Ellinotourkikes Scheseis apo to 1923 eos simera, Theoria Dietnon Scheseon kai Strategikes* [The Greco-Turkish Relations since 1923, Theory of International Relations and Strategy], (Vari Attikis: Poitita Editions, 2010), 109, 111.

²⁸ Petros Vamvakas, "Global Stability and the Geopolitical Vortex of the Eastern Mediterranean," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 25:4 (2015), 124-140.

²⁹ Vamvakas, "Global Stability," 125.

³⁰ William Mallinson, *Cyprus, A Historical Review*, (Nicosia: Press and Information Office, 2008), 10-20; William Mallinson, *Cyprus: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 2-6.

³¹ Mallinson, *Cyprus*, 10-20; Mallinson, *Cyprus: A Modern History*, 2-6, 90.

Cyprus is considered to be a central geostrategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean region.³² Several powers that envision playing a significant role in the region, espoused the foregoing premise. A reference made by the Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, former diplomat and prominent academic, in his book *Strategic depth*, is distinctive of and utterly highlights the geostrategic value of the island. Davutoglu bluntly admits that:

[A]ny state that ignores Cyprus cannot play a resolute role in the politics of the region or globally. It would not be effective in the world politics because this small island is situated in such a geographical position that can impact directly on the strategic junctions between Asia and Africa, Europe and Africa and Europe and Asia. Moreover, it [the ignorant state] would not be effective in regional politics, because Cyprus with its east tip likens an arrow headed to the Middle East, whilst with its west tip constitutes the cornerstone of the strategic balances of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Balkans and the North Africa.³³

The British Empire that realised these important particularities of the island before any other power, and leased it from the Ottoman Empire in 1878, aiming – to use it as a bastion in the Eastern Mediterranean – a “*place d’armes*” according to Taylor – in support of its imperialist objectives in the region, and in order to safeguard the passage to India.³⁴ Moreover, Western nations’ foreign policy in the region has also been stimulated by the Russian threat, especially during the Cold War.³⁵

Cyprus’ geopolitical value *vis-à-vis* the western powers increased enormously after the Suez debacle.³⁶ Mainly due to the decolonisation trend that followed World War II, new independent states emerged forcing the western colonial powers to retreat. Thus, Cyprus constituted Britain’s last stronghold in the region. Despite its eventual independence, Cyprus has essentially remained under British and Western control, in accordance with the related clauses of its

³² Andrekos Varnava, *British Imperialism in Cyprus* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2009), 9.

³³ Ahmet Davutoglu, *Strategiko Vathos: E Diethnis Thesi tis Tourkias* [Strategic depth: Turkey’s international position], trans. Nikolaos Raptopoulos, 5th edn (Athens: Poiotita, 2010), 275.

³⁴ William Mallinson, *Cyprus, Diplomatic History and the Clash of Theory in International Relations*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 34.

³⁵ Claude, *La Méditerranée, Géopolitique et Relations Internationales*, 100-112; Mallinson, *Cyprus, A Modern History*, 12-15; Mallinson, *Cyprus, Diplomatic History and the Clash of Theory in the International Relations*, 53.

³⁶ Mallinson, *Cyprus: A Modern History*, 21.

constitution (which was in fact imposed on it) that provides for two sovereign military bases on the island and a number of other facilities for the United Kingdom. The geostrategic importance of these two bases – one of which has been converted to a modern military airbase – is encapsulated in the following words of Henry Kissinger – then US Secretary of State – on 16 November 1974, in a letter to the British Prime Minister James Callaghan. At the time, the UK was considering relinquishing its bases on the island.

I do want you to know of my very strong belief that the elimination of the SBA's [Sovereign British Area] in Cyprus could have a destabilising effect in the region as a whole, encouraging the Soviet Union and others to believe that the strategic position of the West has been weakened in the area, and damage Western flexibility to react in unpredictable situations. I hope, therefore that whatever decision you feel obliged to make can be flexible enough not to undermine our overall position in the Mediterranean.³⁷

Being in the middle of the Levantine basin and situated at an exceptionally important geostrategic point of the Eastern Mediterranean, the island's position could contribute to the control not only of two of the most significant world marine arteries (those of the Atlantic Ocean-Mediterranean Sea-Indian Ocean and the Black Sea-Mediterranean Sea-Indian Ocean) but also of all the oil and gas pipes that ends to the shores of the Near East.³⁸ Furthermore, the recent explorations of natural gas in the Exclusive Economic Zones of Israel and Cyprus, along with the officially confirmed intentions of the Greek government to proceed to seismic surveys in search for hydrocarbons, augments the geopolitical prominence of the region whilst at the same time transform the existing dynamics.³⁹

The airspace aspect

The evolution of technology has rendered airspace at least as important as the other components of a territory; land and sea. Nowadays, a state in order to be *de facto* sovereign has to control effectively not only its land and territorial waters but also the relevant airspace above them.⁴⁰

³⁷ FCO 46/1178, file DP 13/441/2, part C cited in William Mallinson, *Britain and Cyprus, Key Themes and Documents since World War II*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 92.

³⁸ Parisi, *Kath Imas Thalassa*, 217-218.

³⁹ John Sitalides, "The Modern Geopolitics of the Cyprus Question," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 25:1, (2014), 77-94.

⁴⁰ Williams, "Hakumat al Tayarat: The Role of Air Power in the Enforcement of Iraq's Boundaries", 513; Stuart Banner, *Who Owns the Sky? The Struggle to Control Airspace from the Wright Brothers on*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 261.

In a similar vein, a global or regional power has to be in the position to assert itself in all these three elements of a specific area, in order to be the indisputable master. Thus, a mighty air force presence is imperative for fulfilling the above goal. Even though, the military value of the aeroplane was recognised soon after its invention, it was only a century after, at the dawn of the 21st Century and more specifically during the US-led war against Iraq that the strategic importance of the air force as a distinct branch, but at the same time seamlessly operating in concert with the other two, was fully comprehended.⁴¹ Air superiority and power projection is impossible without the existence of a strong, capable and adequately equipped air force.⁴²

In addition, the civil and commercial facet of the aviation is also of great importance for the global economy.⁴³ In our epoch, a large part of human transportation is conducted by aviation means as it has become much more convenient in terms of time reduction and overcoming “impermeable” geographical obstacles. However, the security of commercial aviation is vastly threatened due to the emergence of terrorism. The 9/11 tragic events in the heart of the American territory, along with the manifested failure of the US-led coalition in Iraq, have reduced the credibility of Western powers whilst in parallel a perception of an Islamist victory has been created especially in the Arab world. Hence, the threat of terrorist attacks by using commercial aeroplanes remains high.⁴⁴

The Eastern Mediterranean region, described above as a global geopolitical hub, has also been designated by Renner as one out of the six most important strategic zones that serve as corridors for the military and commercial aviation.⁴⁵ It is more than evident that the area is vastly affected by evolutions in the aviation sector. Even though each state is exclusively responsible for the control of its national airspace, as an inextricable part of its sovereign rights, the Eastern Mediterranean mainly consists of international airspace. The Nicosia, Athens and Cairo Flight Information Regions (FIRs) constitute the largest part of the

⁴¹ Etienne de Durand, “Le Renouveau de la Puissance Aérienne” [The Revival of the Air Power], *Aviation et Géopolitique* 114 (2004), 17-34.

⁴² Yves Lacoste, “Aviation et Géopolitique: les Projections de Puissance” [Aviation and Geopolitics : The Projection of Power], *Aviation et Géopolitique* 114 (2004), 5-16.

⁴³ Durand, “Le Renouveau,” 17-34.

⁴⁴ Durand, “Le Renouveau,” 17-34.

⁴⁵ Serge Gadal, “L’Aviation et la Géopolitique : L’Apport de George Renner” [Aviation and Geopolitics : The contribution of George Renner], in *Approches de la Géopolitique, de l’Antiquité au XXIe Siècle* [Approaches of Geopolitics, from Antiquity to 21st Century], ed. H. Coutau-Bégarie and M. Motte, (Paris : Economica, 2013), 542-543.

international airspace of the Eastern Mediterranean. Greece and Egypt, though both beset by different internal and external issues, are in a position to control effectively their part of the international airspace, due to the existence of strong, capable and well-equipped air forces. Cyprus however – a small state with very limited air force capabilities – is not in the position to effectively control its own part. It is noted that effective control of the airspace is not confined to the provision of air traffic information; issues of border control, terrorism and the protection of sovereignty rights and jurisdictions all fall also into its scope. Yet, Cyprus as argued above, is still very essential for the whole regional security system.

Bearing this in mind, the Nicosia FIR remains a critical element of the region's security (Figure 1). It is situated at the centre of the region's airspace covering almost the whole Levantine basin, whilst the puzzle is completed by all the other littoral states FIR's.⁴⁶ The telling size of the Nicosia FIR is likened

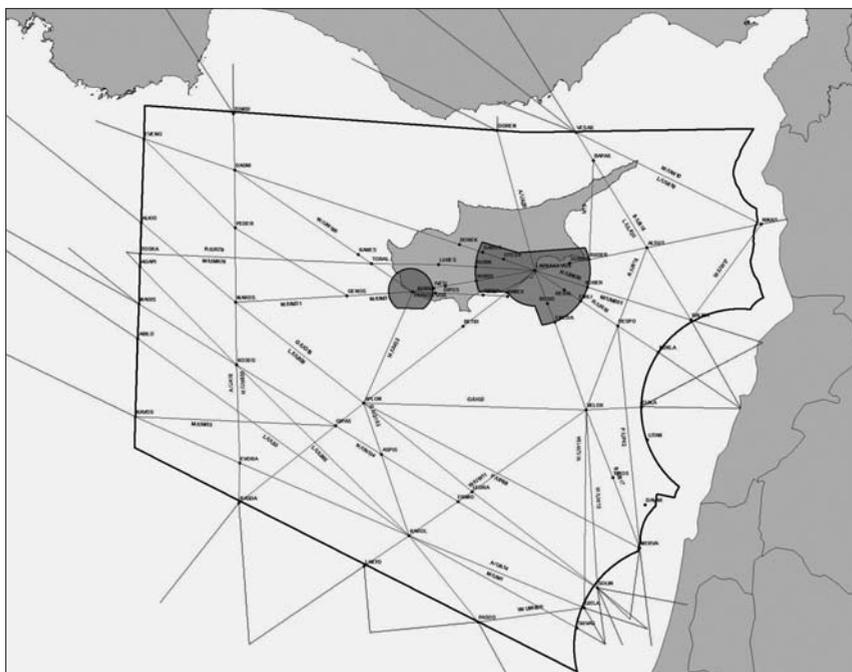


Figure 1: The Nicosia Flight Information Region in the Eastern Mediterranean. [source: author]

⁴⁶ The Nicosia FIR was officially delimited during the 3rd (Paris 1952) and the 4th (Geneva 1958) European Regional Aviation Conferences: Panayiotis Hadjipavlis and Demetris Petrou, "Cyprus' Airspace: Legal and Political Issues," (dissertation, Hellenic Air Force Academy, Athens, 1996).

to that of Malta, both being British colonies at the time of the FIR European regional arrangements⁴⁷ (Figure 2). This fact constitutes convincing evidence of how the British assessed the importance of the airspace element regarding the overall control of an area. At this point, it is important to stress that the state which is responsible for providing air traffic control and search and rescue services within the limits of its FIR, has sovereign rights only in that part that coincides with its national airspace.⁴⁸

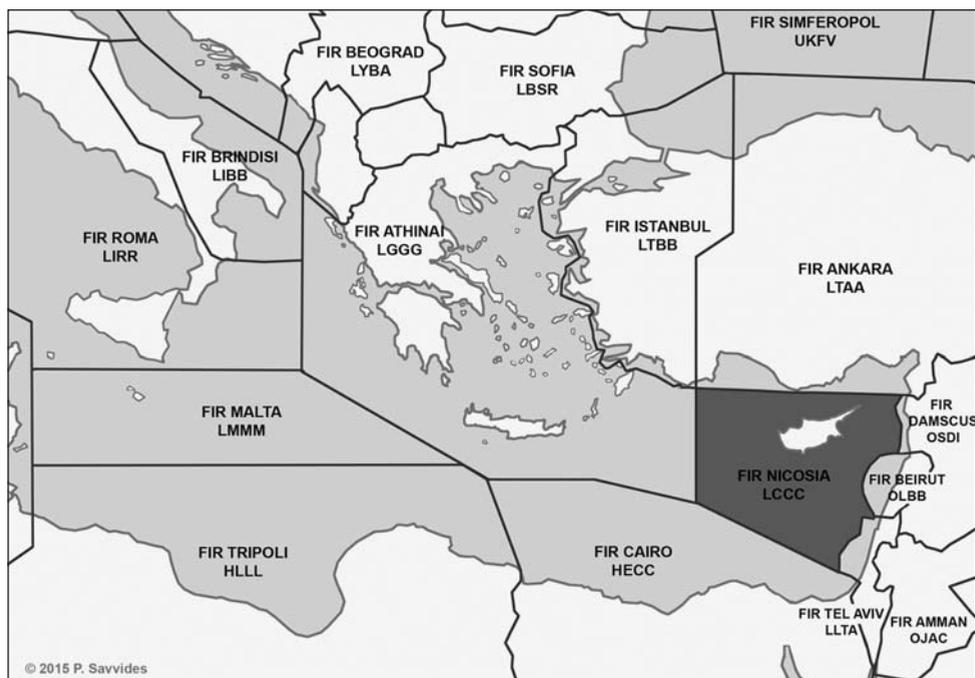


Figure 2: The Nicosia Flight Information Region in relation to other Mediterranean FIRs.
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Despite the close cooperation that has recently developed in the field of search and rescue among a number of states – Cyprus has been admittedly the coordinator of this effort – a vacuum still remains regarding all the other matters of airspace security, including the anticipation and effective resolution of terrorist air incidents. In addition, the complete absence of communication between Nicosia and Ankara FIRs due to the continuous denial of the Turkish

⁴⁷ Hadjipavlis and Petrou, "Cyprus' Airspace," Annex, 43, Chart 15.

⁴⁸ Angelos Yiokaris, *Oi Diadikasies tou Paraktiou Kratous ston Enaerio Horo, Ethniko kai Diethi* [The processes of the coastal state in the national and international airspace], (Athens: Sakoulas, 1991), 23, 55-56, 134-139.

side to recognise – and contact with – the Cyprus civil aviation authorities, along with the creation of the “ERCAN airspace” over the illegal entity of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”)⁴⁹, has augmented the insecurity in the civil aviation sector whilst several safety incidents have already been reported.⁵⁰

The air force, despite the fact of being a special corps for the airspace, cannot operate without the utilisation of adequately equipped air bases on the ground; hence the paradox of an air-force largely dependent on ground facilities and operations. Maintenance, refuelling and logistics support are essential ground operations for the effective conduct of any kind of air operations. Furthermore, timely additional instructions and situation appraisals are transmitted from ground radar installations – specialised for these kind of tasks – to the aircraft in order to assist the pilots for accomplishing their mission. The aircraft as war platforms can only operate for few hours without ground support in contrast to warships that can conduct operations for days or even months without the need of anchorage. To mention Mackinder once again, he insightfully claimed that “today armies [...] have, too, the aeroplane, which is of a boomerang nature, a weapon of land-power as against sea power.”⁵¹ Even though, during recent military campaigns – in Iraq, Libya, or Mali – air tankers and the procedure of air refuelling were used and applied to a large extent, aircraft capabilities still remain reliant on the existence of ground airbases close to the battlefield.⁵² When the air operation is conducted from a close base the number of sorties is increased – due to the short flight time – whilst the fighters’ weapons are more specified to fit their exact missions, as situation on the ground constantly changes. Moreover, the role of the human factor is also crucial for the mission’s accomplishment. Human fatigue constitutes a critical factor that might determine the mission’s outcome – an advantage of short range missions over the long range ones. Thus, the existence of air bases close to the area of operations is considered to be a critical factor for the conduct of effective air operations. This conclusion is not only fully aligned but at the same time strengthens “sustainability”, a principle of war according to the UK Defence Doctrine.⁵³ However, on the opposite side of the

⁴⁹ Resolution 541 (1983) of the UN Security Council considers the declaration of the TRNC as “legally invalid and calls for its withdrawal.”

⁵⁰ Hadjipavlis and Petrou, “Cyprus’ Airspace”; Letter of the President of the ICAO’s council Mr. Kotaite (19-3-1977), Doc 4.

⁵¹ Halford, J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*, (Suffolk: Penguin Books, 1944), 86.

⁵² Lacoste, “Aviation et Géopolitique,” 5-16.

⁵³ *UK Defence Doctrine*, 5th edn, Ministry of Defence: Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01 (2014), 31.

spectrum, the air force allows a power to conduct parallel attacks since, according to Warden, airpower transcends geography.⁵⁴ This premise stresses the great importance of the air force, as an independent branch, for military campaigns despite its innate flaws.

Cyprus, being an important vantage point in the Eastern Mediterranean, could be effectively exploited for the patrol of the region's vast airspace. Even though it can afford only meagre means by itself, its military air base, situated at Paphos, could be used by a joint force comprised of European and other states, aiming to guarantee the region's aviation security. This could be extended towards securing peace and stability in this volatile area taking into account the recent developments related to the civil war in Syria and the emergence of the "Islamic State".⁵⁵ The direct threat of terrorist attacks in European soil along with a possible wave of refugees coming from the Near and the Middle East war-torn countries, have to be tackled proactively and effectively by the Western states. The European Union's role has to be prominent and determinant as its member states are directly affected. Paphos air base is used by a number of European air forces in the context of UNIFIL and for other logistical purposes, yet not in a coordinated and combined fashion.⁵⁶ The European Union has to be resolute in anticipating all the foregoing threats and risks by taking advantage of Cyprus' geostrategic position. The scenario of a permanent European force comprising of an air fleet – capable of patrolling and surveying the area – has to be seriously elaborated by the Republic of Cyprus and the European institutions, since stability and peace of the Eastern Mediterranean region affects directly Europe's security and prosperity.

Cyprus' geostrategic value has been once more confirmed as the Royal Air Force has been conducting air strikes against the "Islamic State" from Akrotiri, a British sovereign base in the island's south.⁵⁷ Moreover, American U-2 spy planes operate frequently from the British airbase at Akrotiri for conducting

⁵⁴ Clayton K. S. Chun, "John Warden's Five Ring Model and the Indirect Approach to War," in *USAWC Guide to National Security Issues*, Vol I: Theory of War and Strategy, (United States: Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College (SSI), 2008), 295-307.

⁵⁵ Cyprus Ministry of Defence, press release, 08-11-2013; Cyprus Ministry of Defence, press release, 11-11-2014.

⁵⁶ Speech by ambassador Andreas Mavroyiannis at the Hellenic American bankers association's annual charitable event New York, "Cyprus: an Emerging Player in a Volatile Region", 9 November, 2006.

⁵⁷ Patrick Wintour and Richard Norton-Taylor, "More Tornados to join Iraq Missions says Cameron on Visit to Cyprus Airbase", *The Guardian*, 2 October 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/oct/02/tornados-iraq-mission-cameron-visit-cyprus-airbase> [accessed 03 June 2015].

surveillance operations over the Middle East. This occurs with the implicit consent of the Cyprus Government, as the bases have to be used only for the security interests of the UK, in accordance with the Treaty of Establishment of the Republic of Cyprus.⁵⁸ According to Kissinger, the USA considers Cyprus – and especially the British Sovereign Bases on the island – a seamless part of its security strategy in the region.⁵⁹ In addition to Akrotiri, strategic surveillance is also conducted by the over-the horizon radar installations, “with a range of thirty seven hundred miles”, which are considered “among the most important Western intelligence posts in the Eastern Mediterranean”.⁶⁰

Furthermore, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) has created new realities in the region. In accordance with UNCLOS III, coastal states have the right to establish Exclusive Economic Zones of a maximum width of 200 nautical miles “from the baselines from which the territorial sea is measured”.⁶¹ Therefore, the Eastern Mediterranean states have acquired significant sovereign rights and jurisdictions far beyond their territorial waters.⁶² Yet, the question is; how capable are these states to protect and preserve their sovereign rights and jurisdictions from external aggressive aspirations and other direct threats? Even though the aforementioned sovereign rights and jurisdictions refer to the sea, it has become evident that strong naval forces are not enough by themselves. Instead, they have to be combined with a capable and technologically modern air force in order to be able to safeguard the sovereign rights and jurisdictions provided by the convention.

Despite the fact that when it comes to regional cooperation, as far as the demarcation and the eventual exploitation of the hydrocarbons reserves is concerned, substantial improvement has been achieved, a loud cacophony still exists. Turkey, a regional power itself, has not yet signed UNCLOS.⁶³ In addition, it claims an enormous continental shelf, by not recognising the agreements Cyprus has already signed with its neighbouring states – Lebanon, Israel and Egypt – whilst it applies a gunboat diplomacy against Cyprus and

⁵⁸ Open Source IMINT, Historical Imagery: U-2 at RAF Akrotiri Cyprus, 29 August 2013, <http://osimint.com/2013/08/29/historical-imagery-u-2-at-raf-akrotiri-cyprus/> [accessed 03 June 2015].

⁵⁹ FCO 46/1178, file DP 13/441/2, part C cited in William Mallinson, *Britain and Cyprus, Key Themes and Documents since World War II*, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 92.

⁶⁰ Sitolides, “The Modern Geopolitics,” 86.

⁶¹ UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, 10 December 1982, Article 57.

⁶² UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, 10 December 1982, Article 56.

⁶³ Theodoros Karyotis, *E AOZ tis Ellados* [Greece’s EEZ], (Athens: Livanis, 2014); Sitolides, “The Modern Geopolitics,” 77-94.

Greece.⁶⁴ This Turkish attitude adds to the insecurity in the region, whilst it hinders further progress.

The Eastern Mediterranean states are compelled to maintain modern capable military forces in order to preserve their independence and protect their territorial integrity and sovereign rights provided by international law due to aggressiveness, hostility and expansionist ambitions of some states or regional non-state actors and the volatile environment of the region. However, a modern capable military force cannot exist without the incorporation of a mighty air force. This fact has been completely understood by Israel that from the very beginning immediately after its creation captured the strategic value of the air force.⁶⁵ Deprived of hinterland, and be limited by the sea, Israel's only obvious solution was the formation of a potent air force.

The Greek and Cypriot effort to establish a strategic alliance – under a joint defence space doctrine – during the last decade of the 20th Century was purely intended to counter Turkish aggressiveness.⁶⁶ At the time, both countries invested significantly in strengthening their air force and air defence capabilities, understanding their critical importance.⁶⁷ The frequent Hellenic Air Force exercises between Crete and Cyprus along with Cyprus' official intent to purchase the Russian long range surface-to-air missile system S-300PMU1 have induced vehement reactions from all the affected powers.⁶⁸ The Russian system's impressive capabilities, concerning both surveillance and interception,⁶⁹ along with the intent of Russian officers to be permanently

⁶⁴ Christos Kassimeris, "NATO and the Aegean Disputes", *Defence and Security Analysis* 24:2 (2008), 165-79; Yiorghos Leventis, "Warm waters: 70 Days ahead," *International Security Forum* 12 (November 2014), <http://www.inter-security-forum.org/warm-waters-70-hot-days-ahead/> [accessed 4 June 2015].

⁶⁵ Frédéric Encel et François Thual, "Israel: le Salut par les Airs" [Israel: the salute from the air], *Aviation et Géopolitique* 114, (2004), 52-55.

⁶⁶ Aristos Aristotelous, *O Eniaios Amyntikos Horos Elladas-Kyprou* [The unified defence space between Greece and Cyprus], (Nicosia: Cyprus Centre of Strategic Studies, 1998), 71-73; Aristos Aristotelous, *To Dogma tou Enieou Amyntiku Chorou Elladas - Kyprou* [The Doctrine of the unified defence space between Greece and Cyprus], (Nicosia: Cyprus Centre of Strategic Studies, 1998), 76-82; Stavros Lygeros, *Kypriako i airetiki lysi* [The Cyprus problem – The heretical solution], (Athens: Patakis Editions, 2014), 86-90.

⁶⁷ Aristotelous, *Eniaios Amyntikos Horos*, 77; Aristotelous, *To Dogma tou Enieou Amyntiku Chorou Elladas - Kyprou*, 147-149.

⁶⁸ Mallinson, *Cyprus: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 101.

⁶⁹ The maximum range of the surveillance radar is 300Km, whilst the maximum range for interception is 150Km.

stationed on the island, have worried the Western allies who loudly expressed their discontent. The Greek-Cypriot strategic alliance itself, along with a robust navy and air force presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, would have changed the region's balance of power. Apart from Turkey, neither the British, nor the Americans and their allies, the Israelis, could consent to this new order the Greek-Cypriot coalition would have imposed.⁷⁰ What irritated them the most was the perspective of significant airspace control that could be achieved as a result of the introduction of a variety of air defence means. Eventually, the so-called "Doctrine of the unified defence space" (as the coalition between Greece and Cyprus was called) faded away in the following years. Since then, the geopolitical map of the region has changed. As mentioned above, the explorations of hydrocarbons reserves, the emergence of new terrorist threats such as the "Islamic State", the civil war in Syria, the deterioration in Turco-Israeli relations, and the potential rapprochement between the USA and Iran are but a few of the new realities. Therefore, a new wind is now blowing in the region calling for close cooperation between states with converging interests. The air force qua a distinct branch of every nation's forces is again at the forefront showing the way forward. Being the extended arm of Greece and Israel, the air force has contributed to the formation of a new strategic cooperation through the conduct of joint exercises.⁷¹ Cyprus participates as well, since its geostrategic role cannot be ignored.⁷²

Conclusion

The Eastern Mediterranean region constitutes one of the world's most crucial geostrategic pivots. Its importance is confirmed by all the well-known geopolitical world models. Thus, any disturbance, disorder or aberration occurring in the region could have a global impact. Being situated at the centre of the Levantine basin, Cyprus occupies a prominent position. Hence, any power that aspires to play a critical regional or global role has to take into account this island.

⁷⁰ Mallinson, *Cyprus: A Modern History Cyprus*, 101.

⁷¹ Ben Ariel, "Greece planning joint military exercises with Israel," *Arutz Sheva* 7, Israel national news.com, 12 February 2015, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/191241> [accessed 4 June 2015].

⁷² Defense Update "Israeli Fighter Jets Challenge Cypriot Air Defense in Mock Battle Exercise," 17 February 2014, http://defense-update.com/20140217_israel_cyprus_air_force_exercise.html [accessed 4 June 2015]; "Cyprus and Israel mount joint military exercise," *Cyprus Mail*, 11 February 2014, <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/02/11/cyprus-and-israel-mount-joint-military-exercise> [accessed 4 June 2015].

Territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states in the Eastern Mediterranean along with the exercise of their sovereign rights and jurisdictions provided by the international law are critical factors for progress and prosperity in a region that impacts on the global affairs. The airspace constitutes an indivisible element of every territory whilst its geopolitical importance has been only recently apprehended in its full extent, almost a century after the invention of the aeroplane. The effective control of the third dimension is considered to be critical for the Eastern Mediterranean's stability and peace. However, the effective control of the vast space cannot be achieved only by a strong naval presence; the contribution of the air force is also vital since without air superiority this control is unattainable. Each state, either tiny or powerful, aiming for different strategic objectives has to bear in mind the strategic importance of airspace.

Strategic Surveillance in the Eastern Mediterranean

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The article proposes that the recent deterioration of the security situation in the Middle East and North Africa and the rapid growth of various types of asymmetrical threats, necessitate the establishment of a sophisticated strategic maritime surveillance system in the East Mediterranean to effectively supplement the existing security mechanism of the European Union in its sensitive southern border. It briefly explains the technological and operational aspects of contemporary maritime surveillance in European Union's security strategy and examines the prospects of operational and technological cooperation between Greece, Cyprus and Israel for the creation of a joint strategic maritime surveillance system in the East Mediterranean.

Security situation

The recent fall of several governments on the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea¹ has created, on many occasions, internal security chaos and regional instability in a territory that stretches from Damascus to Tripoli and Rabat. The upheaval in Libya, the on-going Syrian civil war and the recent Sunni-Shia crisis in Yemen, have uncovered Pandora's boxes that directly affect North Africa and the Middle East, and influence, in multiple ways, the security of several European countries, including Cyprus and Greece, as well as Israel. The repercussions of this wave of extreme violence have already hit the Mediterranean basin, which is a European border as fragile as important, that

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¹ Spyridon Litsas and Aristotle Tziampiris, eds, *The Eastern Mediterranean in Transition: Multipolarity, Politics and Power* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

has grown, during the last decade, into a maritime zone of strategic importance for both the European Union and Israel.

With the outbreak of the Arab Spring, there was an exponential increase of irregular migration into the Eastern Mediterranean, especially of irregular immigrants and asylum seekers through Cyprus, Greece and Turkey. Likewise, the unobserved flow of extremist recruits from and to European countries that support the cause of terrorist groups fighting in North Africa and the Middle East, and the accompanying increase of asymmetrical threats, such as arms smuggling, terrorism, drug trafficking and other criminal activities, have created a complicated security situation in the Mediterranean.² It is realized that, despite some modest results, the common European Security Strategy³ presents a situation that is not so idyllic. It is more than obvious that the operational security mechanism already developed at a European Union level⁴ – FRONTEX,⁵ EUROSUR (European Border Surveillance System),⁶ EUROMARFOR (European Maritime Force),⁷ etc. – needs to be supplemented by a highly sophisticated intelligence collection network. The EEZ delimitation in the Eastern Mediterranean and the recent discovery of hydrocarbon deposits in the Levantine Basin as well as the urgent need for the establishment of an effective energy security mechanism against conventional military and unconventional terrorist

² Peter Apps, “Arab Spring fallout fuels Mediterranean smuggling rise,” Reuters, 8 November 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/08/us-crime-mediterranean-for-will-waterman-idUSBRE9A708620131108> [accessed 5 January 2015]

³ Sven Biscop, *Euro-Mediterranean Security: A Search for Partnership* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003).

⁴ Council of the European Union, “Plan for the Management of the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union,” 10019/02, 14 June 2002; Council of the European Union, “Effective Management of the External Borders of the EU Member States,” 10274/03, 06 June 2003; European Parliament, “Report on the Proposal for a Council Regulation Establishing a European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders (COM (2003) 687 – C5-0613/2003 – 2003/0273 (CNS)),” A5 – 0093/2004, 24 February 2004.

⁵ Sarah Leonard, “The Creation of FRONTEX and the Politics of Institutionalization in the EU External Borders Policy,” *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 5:3 (2009), 371-388; A. W. Neal, “Securitization and Risk at the EU Border: The Origins of FRONTEX,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 47:2 (2009), 333-356.

⁶ Commission of the European Communities, “Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Examining the Creation of a European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR),” COM (2008) 68 FINAL, 13 February 2008, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52008DC0068&rid=7> [accessed 15 March 2015].

⁷ <http://www.euromarfor.org>.

threats, further highlight the need for multilateral cooperation. The development of a *strategic maritime surveillance system* in the East Mediterranean by Cyprus, Greece and Israel can not only improve regional security but also provide a turnkey solution to the European Union.⁸ This would contribute to the Union's effort to overcome a major obstacle, namely the shift from a policy of *reaction* to the current situation, to a strategy of *pro-action* for preventing it.

The technology

Before examining the characteristics of a strategic surveillance system it is pertinent to define the term *strategic*. Depending on the territory (maritime/land), surveillance activities can be grouped in distinct progressive phases based on three levels: a) The tactical level pertains to the conduct of elements of an operation and involves the selection of elementary actions in (almost) real time or as close to real time as possible, utilizing preselected systems and sensors. b) The operational level refers to the planning and execution of operations in a specific, predefined area, where operation is defined as a sequence of actions in a pre-planned framework of assets, personnel and time according to a predefined plan and a Concept of Operations (CONOPS). c) The strategic level refers to the planning of sequences of operations and the collection and analysis of intelligence needed to make that planning.⁹

Furthermore, *maritime surveillance*¹⁰ is identified as the intention to detect, classify and identify at least 80% of all vessels of interest, within a predefined, designated area of fixed size, using different platforms and sensors. The 80% of the criteria for detection and classification may be achieved through the fusion of both space (satellite) and aerial MPA/UAV (Maritime Patrol Aircraft/ Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) observation assets; identification should be provided for vessels larger than 10-12 m.

The level of intelligence collection, utilizing various technological products, systems and sensors, triggers the four phases of maritime surveillance operations.

⁸ "Council Regulation (EC) No. 2007/2004 of 26 October 2004 establishing a European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union," *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 349/1-11, 25 November 2011, http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/About_Frontex/frontex_regulation_en.pdf [accessed 15 March 2015].

⁹ European Commission Report, "Application of Surveillance Tools to Border Surveillance 'Concept of Operations'," V 1.4, 07 July 2011, 10-11, http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/security/files/doc/conops_gmes_en.pdf [accessed 15 March 2015].

¹⁰ Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services, "Maritime Security and Surveillance – Case Study," January 2011, 2-6, http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/security/files/doc/maritime_case_study_cses_en.pdf [accessed 15 March 2015].

Obviously the same products may be used in each of the above-presented levels, but in a different way and with different data collection scenarios and CONOPS. Phase 1, at the strategic level, involves the identification and monitoring of a prospective target prior or during its departure towards the controlled area of interest (e.g. EEZ, FIR maritime responsibility, etc.). Phases 2 and 3, at an operational level, refer to the surveillance of the target at least 200 nm from the controlled area and within the EEZ respectively. Phase 4, at a tactical level, pertains to the monitoring of maritime traffic within the range (<40 nm) of coastal maritime radars.

The strategic level of maritime surveillance (Phase 1) is defined by two distinct objectives: to monitor the ports and sea of a specific third country with the aim of determining if/when a specific vessel, which based on intelligence has already been identified as being suspicious, has departed; and to monitor coastal areas that may harbour departure points for small boats used by terrorists. The corresponding requirements for strategic level surveillance include the following technical capabilities: a) to recognize preparatory activities such as the gathering of vehicles, and the placement of boats on the beach, with sensors that detect targets at a resolution greater than 3 m; b) to define whether the identified vessels are equipped with a cooperative identification system such as AIS (Automatic Identification System); c) to discriminate ships from one another and from the docks with sensors that have a resolution of at least 3-5 m; d) to identify areas of personnel and equipment gathering in preparation of missions that need specific logistic support for activities in the sea. The platforms usually selected, in order to fulfil the above requirements, are satellites and Long Endurance UAV Systems with Optical and IR/Thermal Imagery, Synthetic Aperture Radars (SAR) with inherent coherent detection and Moving Target Indicator (MTI), and Cooperative Transponders like AIS and LRIT (Long Range Identification and Tracking System).

The operational level (Phases 2 and 3) of maritime surveillance includes the intention to track, identify and intercept a medium to large size vessel coming from a distant third country port, heading for the controlled waters. This vessel has been identified before departure or at an early stage of its journey (at Phase 1 described above). This service heavily depends on the use of cooperative systems like AIS, LRIT and VMS. It is extremely difficult to track small vessels (smaller than 8 m) utilizing Satellite Optical Imagery and SAR, but these sensors could be used to verify the information received by the cooperative systems. One single platform cannot provide alone sufficient coverage to track any type of vessel, therefore a combination of platforms and sensors has to be utilized. Traditionally, Maritime Patrol Aircraft play an important role in maritime surveillance. Usually equipped with a variety of sensors, an MPA can be tasked to patrol large areas to

discover suspicious activities or to relocate a vessel or boat, based either on intelligence information or past recording data if it was previously under surveillance. UAV technology has emerged during recent years and today there is adequate operational experience in deploying UAVs in support of maritime surveillance. Strategic UAVs could be used to detect and track suspicious vessels based on intelligence, but the utilization of UAVs in maritime surveillance is strictly related to the capability to carry a maritime radar; a prerequisite that severely limits the list of systems currently available for such missions. The corresponding requirements of operational level maritime surveillance include mainly two actions: the detection, track and re-location of vessels of interest; the estimation of speed and heading, as well as the level of threat.¹¹

The prospect of Maritime Surveillance in Eastern Mediterranean

Having defined the distinction between strategic and operational maritime surveillance, it is now appropriate to examine their potential application in the Eastern Mediterranean,¹² particularly in relation to the emerging cooperation between Greece, Cyprus and Israel.¹³ The analysis will focus on ranges greater than 40 nautical miles from shore, which is the physical-technical limitation of coastal radars for the detection of maritime targets.¹⁴ Beyond the obvious aspect of geography, political and economic considerations have to be taken into account. The prospects of developing a strategic cooperation for maritime surveillance in the Eastern Mediterranean are enhanced by three important factors: a) the recent discoveries of hydrocarbon deposits in the Cypriot and Israeli EEZs offer the necessary financial encouragement; b) the widely recognized cultural, political and democratic stability of the three states provides an important security motivation; c) the abundance of state-of-the-art solutions available in Israel offers a technological incentive.

The Israeli defence industry can effectively support Greece and Cyprus on the issue of satellite maritime surveillance services developed by the European Union while it can equally provide supreme solutions on UAV systems equipped

¹¹ European Commission Report, "Application of Surveillance Tools to Border Surveillance 'Concept of Operations'," V 1.4, 07 July 2011, 10-14.

¹² Sarah Wolf, *The Mediterranean Dimension of the European Union's Internal Security* (New York: Pelgrave Macmillan, 2012).

¹³ Aristotle Tziampiris, *The Emergence of Israeli-Greek Cooperation* (New York: Springer, 2015).

¹⁴ Due to the earth curvature effect, a coastal radar range is limited to 40nm-50nm. This range can be extended by using ESM-ELINT systems but only for radiating targets within the frequency range of the receivers.

with maritime radars for the monitoring of national EEZs and for safeguarding security in the Eastern Mediterranean [Figure 1]. While sophisticated technology deriving from Israel can support the strategic cooperation between the three countries in ensuring security in East Mediterranean, political and economic constrains can impose obstacles on the materialisation of this prospect. It is not yet clear whether Jerusalem is willing to allow the export of sophisticated long endurance UAV systems, equipped with maritime radar, to the Cypriot Government.

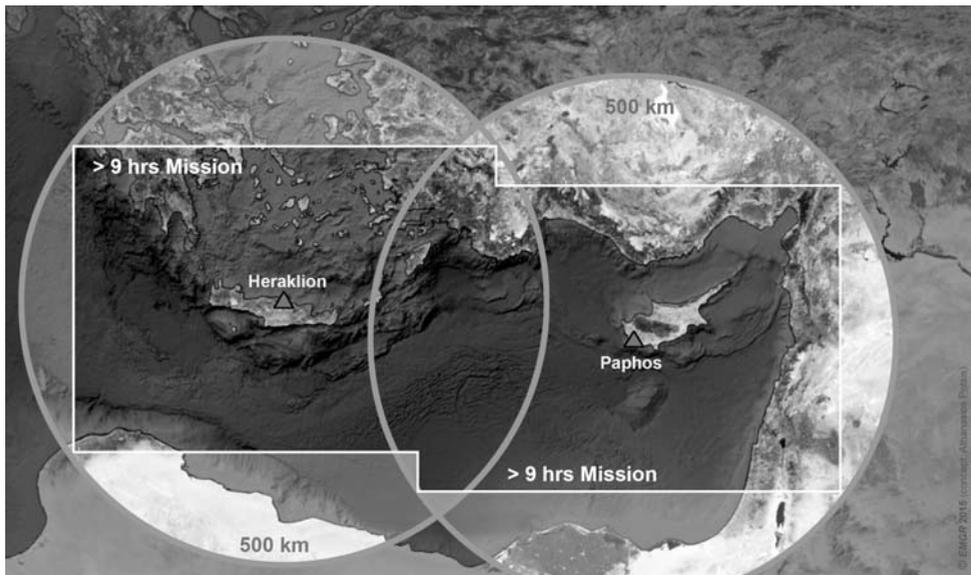


Figure 1. The prospective cooperation between Greece and Cyprus with Israel for the strategic maritime surveillance of the Eastern Mediterranean offers, with minimum cost and human risk, multiple national and geopolitical advantages to Athens and Nicosia, since they could also offer valuable intelligence to European and international security organizations for asymmetrical threats in the sensitive zone of the Mediterranean. The figure depicts an actual surveillance scenario where two UAV systems equipped with maritime radars provide sustainable surveillance over the East Mediterranean for several hours. © 2015 EMGR (concept Athanasios Potsis).

The recent failure in the negotiations between the two governments for the purchase of two Israeli-made fast patrol boats,¹⁵ may indicate the current export restrictions of the more capable Israeli-made strategic surveillance systems; which means that political considerations are still strongly influencing the

¹⁵ <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/top-stories/885/176993/ypograftike-i-symfonia-gia-agora-dyo-opv-tis-ef-apo-to-israil> [accessed 20 April 2015].

unrestricted cooperation between the two states. Furthermore, the economic crisis introduces additional obstacles to the implementation of a strategic cooperation. Greece, facing severe financial problems, was not able to take full advantage of the technologies offered by the Israeli defence and homeland security industry. During the past five years the Greek Government procurement program for the development of a strategic maritime surveillance system was limited to conventional rather than strategic systems. Today, although Greece is operating a powerful naval fleet and an even stronger air force, the absence of modern MPAs and strategic UAVs, as well as its limited satellite surveillance capabilities (it currently utilizes only the EU HELIOS-II Strategic Reconnaissance System), do not permit the operation of a reliable strategic reconnaissance maritime system in the East Mediterranean.

In conclusion, technology wise, the strategic cooperation between Cyprus, Greece and Israel can be fully supported by state-of-the-art sensors and systems. It is only the political and economic limitations that have to be resolved in order to develop in a very short time one of the most reliable maritime surveillance systems in the world. A system that will provide high level of security, currently in one of the hottest regions in the world, the East Mediterranean.

The first thematic issue of the journal *Eastern Mediterranean Geopolitical Review* examines the prospects of strategic cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean between Cyprus, Greece and Israel, as well as other neighbouring states such as Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan, in vital geopolitical issues that pertain to regional stability, multilateral cooperation and peace. The articles examine alternative perspectives and analyse principal questions such as regional security, national defence, the Law of the Sea, EEZ delimitation, airspace, energy exploitation, Great Power and EU role in the Eastern Mediterranean, and interpret the potential repercussions in the growingly volatile Middle East.



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