

Forum: Advisory Panel on the Question of the Black Sea

Issue: Creating positive momentum on Turko-Greek relationships as a means towards regional stability

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Introduction

The Black Sea region is a very geopolitically important area with the interest of countries such as the Russian Federation and the United States of America. On the other hand, the Eastern Mediterranean region is home to many countries such as Greece, Israel, Türkiye, Lebanon and more on. Türkiye and Greece are two countries that are very prominent in said regions and share a very rich history of culture, politics, and conflict. Establishing the increase of positive momentum when it comes to Türkiye and Greece, is directly correlated with enhancing the stability of the Eastern Mediterranean region. The Black Sea region consists of countries such as Türkiye, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, ect. Türkiye and Greece have had a joint history filled with conflict, geopolitical rivalry, territorial conflicts as well as deep-rooted social ties throughout said countries' histories, due to conflicting interests.

From times before the two said nations were founded, during the Byzantine and Ottoman era, to the 21st century filled with political and economic setbacks for both countries, Türkiye and Greece have had a multitude of both armed, as well as social and politics-based conflicts and disagreements. As two geopolitically influential countries, the conflicts between Greece and Türkiye affect neighboring countries within the region as well. Therefore, the positive improvement of these countries' intergovernmental relationships is necessary for the increase of regional stability. The deep-rooted historical context of the two countries, as well as events



following their respective independence wars; such as the population exchange, conflict regarding Cyprus, disputes regarding the Aegean sea, Maritime disputes and many more events have played a significant role in shaping the relationship between Türkiye and Greece.

Definition of Key Terms

Maritime

The term maritime refers to something that is related to, or borders a large body of water, more specifically, the sea. It is often used within terminology referring to naval matters as well.

Intergovernmental

Intergovernmental is when something, an event, a diplomatic treaty and more over occurs between two or more different governments.

Exchange

The Oxford Languages Dictionary defines exchange as "an act of giving one thing and receiving another (especially of the same kind) in return."

Geopolitics

Geopolitics is a term correlated to how a place or country's geographical location, neighboring countries, terrain, size and more, affect both its national and international politics, relations and policies.

Eurozone

The eurozone is a geographical area that is made up of 20 countries who are part of the European Union, and have all adapted into using a euro-based currency. These countries are Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany,



Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, The Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.

Continental Shelf

The United Nations defines this term as "The continental shelf of a coastal State comprises the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance."

Background Information

Balkan Wars

The Balkan Wars can be defined as a number of conflicts within the Balkan peninsula that took place from 1912 to 1913. These wars had an undeniable impact on both the futures of Greece and Türkiye (The Ottoman Empire during the time of the war). The First Balkan War consisted of a coalition created by a number of the Balkan states Greece, Montenegro, Serbia and Bulgaria fought against the Ottoman Empire. This resulted in the Ottoman Empire facing major territorial losses, specifically regions of Macedonia, Kosovo, etc. This loss led to the decrease of the influence that the Ottomans had on the region and the increase of the influence that Greece had. Following the First War. The first war also led to tensions arising between the Ottoman Empire and Greece even more regarding territories with mixed ethnic groups and their status. Moreover, the second Balkan War took place, once again with the Ottomans and Greeks going against each other. The outcome of this war was one of the main reasons as to why the Greco-Turkish war occurred in the near future, as well as the population exchange.



The Balkan Wars hold a very significant place within the histories of both modern-day Türkiye and Greece. It is important to keep in mind that this is because the Balkan Wars can be noted as the start of the decline of the Ottoman Empire, which played a role in the founding of The Republic of Türkiye. However, the war also led to territorial losses for the country. When it comes to Greece, the Balkan Wars led to Greece expanding its territories and increasing cooperation with other countries in the Greek Diaspora.

Population Exchange

The population exchange between Türkiye and Greece, more specifically referred to as the Treaty of Lausanne or the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange, happened during 1923. It aimed to relocate the Orthodox Greeks and Muslims from Türkiye to Greece, and from Greece to Türkiye. This happened as a result of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) and was intended as a means of resolving territorial disputes between the two countries and creating an environment of peace. The exchange was decided upon during the "Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations", in Lausanne, Switzerland. Regarding the numbers of the exchange; approximately 1.5 million Greeks residing in Eastern Thrace and Anatolia were sent to Greece, and around 500.00 Muslims were relocated during this event.

While the population exchange's goal was protecting the rights of minorities in both countries, it had incredibly negative effects. The forcible relocation of citizens created catastrophic political as well as social problems for the two countries as well as the people who were affected. This event set a legal precedent for population control based on ethnicity and religion. Together with this, the population exchange led to turbulence in Greece and Türkiye. After the exchange, Greece faced a large number of refugees who could not be properly relocated and struggled to adapt to a new country. For Türkiye, the loss of the Greek population in the country led to both cultural and economic losses for the nation.



Cyprus Conflict

The conflict surrounding Cyprus, to this day, remains the most important and prevalent source of conflict between Türkiye and Greece. During this dispute, outside actions such as embargos on Türkiye and Turkish Cypriots from countries such as the United Nations of America played a role as well. At its core, the Cyprus dispute centers on long-standing claims to sovereignty, territorial dominance, and the rights of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities on the island of Cyprus. The conflict started in the 20th century when tensions between the majority of Greek and the minority of Turkish Cypriots led to intercommunal violence and, in the end, Turkish intervention in 1974. As a result, Cyprus has been split between the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus, which is run by the Greek Cypriots in the south, and the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which is only recognized by Turkey. For many years, the United Nations and other international players have aided in the pursuit of a comprehensive settlement that would include the reunification of the island under a federal government. However the conflict is still unsolved, and important problems like property rights, power dynamics, security protocols, and the presence of foreign forces continue to obstruct efforts to reach a durable peace deal.

Aegean Disputes and the Greek Islands

The disputes between Türkiye and Greece regarding the Aegean Sea primarily revolve around the two nations and their disagreements/conflicting interests regarding claims over sovereignty and maritime boundaries, as well as EEZs. Many of the disagreements regarding said sea stem from differing views on international law such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

One of the primary sources of conflict is based around the Aegean islands, which are currently a part of Greece. The fact that Greece asserted rights



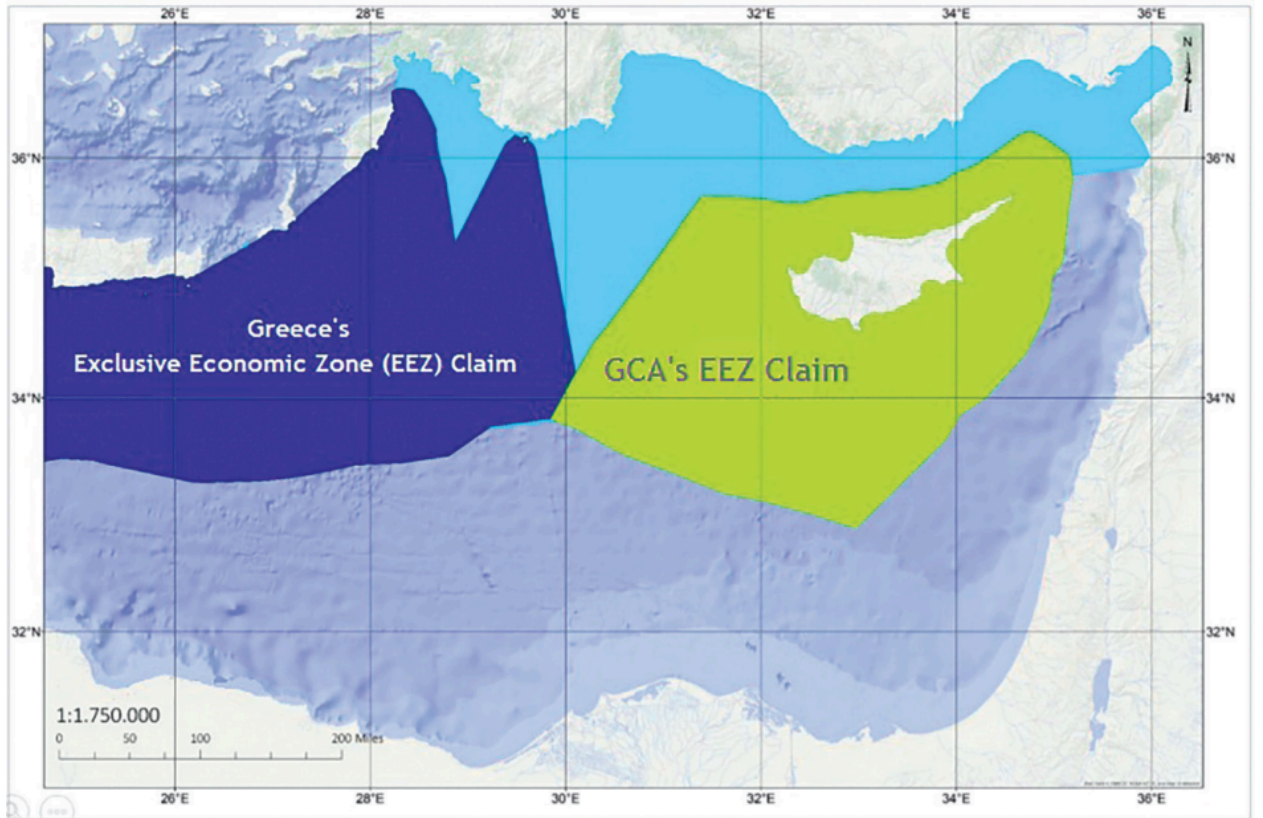
towards territorial waters as well as EEZs, basing this around the continental shelf of the islands became a point of conflict between the two nations. This is because Türkiye claims that due to the islands being too close to Turkish coastlines for a full continental shelf, and therefore, claiming that Greece should set its maritime boundaries in accordance with this. A point of conflict also arose between the two countries in regard to the demilitarization of certain islands in the Aegean Sea. Aegean disputes, to this day, are one of the most important factors leading to political tensions between Türkiye and Greece.

21st Century Diplomacy

The current diplomatic relations and conflicts between Türkiye and Greece that also affect nearby regions are mostly related to the Eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and the Aegean Sea; with maritime boundaries and borders being a cause of concern. "Regional tensions, natural resources, and geopolitical rivalries make the Black Sea region a strategic but sensitive area. In the absence of cooperative structures able to contain conflict, security threats ranging from interstate conflicts to illegal trafficking have emerged." (Çelikpala, 5) The Black Sea region is in a state of political division with three main parties playing a crucial role: Russia, the EU, and the USA; other than the influence of Türkiye and Greece in the general area. The Russian Federation aims to escape pressures from the West and therefore, is on opposing sides with the two other involved parties. Russia aims to stop the expansion of NATO and stop newly arising military projects. On the other hand, the US has focused on the energy sector as well as free trade within the region. With this, the EU serves more of a mediatory role in conflicts. When it comes to Türkiye and the Black Sea, "The changing security environment after 11 September 2001, Turkey's disagreements with the US about Iraq, and growing tensions between Russia and NATO-led Turkey to pursue a policy of "caution" with regard to the Black Sea." (Çelikgala, 12)



In regards to the general region, and how the 12th century political conflicts of Türkiye and Greece affect the stability of the region; one should keep in mind that the uncertainty about security measures, energy sources, and economic dynamics in both the Black Sea, Aegean sea and the Eastern Mediterranean affect the two said nations. Conflicts regarding newfound energy sources in the Eastern Mediterranean, maritime disputes as well as the ongoing effects of the Cyprus dispute, the increase of militarization in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the island problem between Türkiye and Greece all play an important role in rising tensions.



EEZ Claims of Greece and Greek Cypriot Administration (BRI , 2023) (Erkeç, 32)



Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Türkiye

Türkiye is, and has been throughout its history, a very prominent country within the region it is in due to its geopolitical location allowing the country access to three different seas, the Bosphorus, as well as being located in two different continents. Due to the fact that Türkiye is an active member of NATO, the nation plays a key role in achieving regional stability within the Black Sea. With a notable naval army, Türkiye has been involved in many maritime disputes within the Aegean sea, as well as the Black Sea regarding islands, borders, and exclusive economic zones (EEZ). When it comes to the Eastern Mediterranean, türkiye plays an active role once again, especially in regards to its military with naval patrols and deployments being important to underline.

Greece

As a part of both the European Union and NATO, Greece plays an active role in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea region (although not having any borders to said sea), and the Balkans. Greece has multiple maritime boundaries with countries in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Some of these countries can be listed as Türkiye, Cyprus, and Egypt. It should also be noted that Greece still faces maritime disputes in regard to EEZs with Türkiye. It is also crucial to keep in mind that while Greece may be a member of the EU, joining the union in fact affected the country's economic state negatively. The structural weaknesses of the nation, and being unable to adapt to the new euro-based currency after entering the eurozone affected its economy negatively.

Romania

It can be noted that Romania and Türkiye often cooperate with international organizations such as NATO, and share substantial economic and diplomatic ties with each other. Other than the European Union, Türkiye is Romania's most significant



trading partner, as the two countries often work in unison within the areas of manufacturing, agriculture, and energy. Said countries work together when it comes to regional issues such as the security of the Black Sea. When it comes to Romania and Greece, the two countries are trading partners within the umbrella of the European Union. The two nations have had disagreements over certain issues such as the management of the Greek financial crisis, however, overall have a diplomatic relationship with each other.

Georgia

Both Türkiye and Greece have a multifaceted relationship with the nation of Georgia; as they both have historical, cultural, economic, and political ties to the country. Türkiye and Georgia share a primarily historical connection with each other, and have many traditions in common. Together with this, Türkiye and Georgia are very prominent economic partners, with Türkiye being a notable investor in the areas of energy and transportation. Another crucial reason why Georgia is important to Türkiye is the fact that the country's location acts as a transit hub between Europe and Asia, similar to Türkiye. This comes into play when it comes to energy transit projects. Greece and Georgia also share diplomatic, cultural, and economic relations with each other. It is important to recognize Greece's support of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aims and in the reform of the country's defense and security sectors. The relationships of Georgia with Türkiye and Greece allow for the continuation of economic and cultural exchanges within the Black Sea and Caucasus region.

Moldova

Moldova currently shares political ties with both Türkiye and Greece. Said connections should also be noted as cultural and economic ones, with the nation having formal diplomatic ties with both countries. Ever since the independence of Moldova, Türkiye has shown interest in fostering a closer relationship and is one of Moldova's most prominent economic and trade partners. Türkiye also gives infrastructural and educational support to the nation and acts as one of the primary



routes for Moldovan immigrants with hopes of employment in Western Europe. On the other hand, Moldova has a historical and cultural connection to Greece through the Greek diaspora. Greece also aids the development of Moldova in terms of investments in the agriculture and energy industries. Both Türkiye and Greece play an important role in Moldova's status on a global scale.

Israel

Israel is another prominent nation within the Eastern Mediterranean region. Israel has relatively positive relations with Greece. Both said nations are members of the Union for the Mediterranean. The construction of the EastMed pipeline which is used to transport natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean region, through Greece, to Europe; allowed for the ties of said two nations to become stronger as they also cooperate in the sector of energy. When it comes to Israel and Türkiye, up until very recently, the two countries shared quite strong political ties, however, these ties were not stable and often fluctuated. Israel and Türkiye have had very strong ties when it comes to bilateral trade relations and have economic interdependence to some extent. However, in recent times, due to the conflict between Israel and Palestine; the political ties between Türkiye and Israel have weakened with Türkiye publicly denouncing the actions of Israel.

The European Union (EU)

It should be noted that both Türkiye and Greece have a very complicated and long history with the European Union. However, as of currently, Türkiye is not a member of the EU while Greece is, which is a situation that leads to the increase of unease and disputes between the two countries. Turkey has been trying to get into the European Union for more than two decades now, with their first application being in 1987; however, due to a number of financial and political obstacles, they have not been accepted yet. On the other hand, Greece was accepted as a member in 1981. The Cyprus dispute was one of the major reasons why Turkey is not part of the EU



yet. Another reason is the fact that Turkey also acts as a transit country for immigrants who want to enter Europe from the Middle East.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

While the relationship between Türkiye and Greece remains strained, it is important to underline that both nations are members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO has played a very important role as a mediator between Türkiye and Greece during political conflicts. However, even with their disputes taken into consideration; Türkiye and Greece share the same security concerns with NATO. Therefore, while the two nations remain in a state of complicated international relations, their respective memberships in NATO allow for some sort of cooperation in hopes of regional stability for said two nations.

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)

The Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) consists of 13 members, with these members being: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, The Republic of North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Türkiye, Russian Federation, and Ukraine. It also has 10 Observer States and furthermore, 10 Sectoral Dialogue Partners. It has a permanent international secretariat. It aims to create an environment for political discussion between its member states. Due to the fact that the Black Sea region, a region that is home to many political conflicts and disagreements, is the second biggest source of natural gas as well as oil after the Persian Gulf; this cooperation is necessary.

Timeline of Events

25 March 1821	Start of the War of Independence of Greece
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8 October 1912 - 10 August 1913	The Balkan Wars Against the Ottoman Empire
19 May 1919 - 24 July 1923	Turkish War of Independence
29 October 1923	The Republic of Türkiye was founded
1923	Turkish-Greek Population Exchange
18 February 1952	Both Türkiye and Greece joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
15 July 1974	Greek Coup D'etat in Cyprus
20 July 1974	Cyprus Peace Operation by Türkiye
1 January 1981	Greece joins the European Union (EU)
17 August 1999	The İzmit Earthquake
7 September 1999	The Athens Earthquake



Relevant UN Resolutions and Other Documents

- The Lausanne Treaty

https://www.mfa.gov.tr/lausanne-peace-treaty-part-i_-political-clauses.en.mfa

Said treaty is the treaty in which the population exchange between Türkiye and Greece was decided upon.

- Letter dated 16 May 1978 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/224836?ln=en&v=pdf>

This letter detailed the remarks made by Bülent Ecevit regarding the conflict of Cyprus, addressed to the United Nations Secretary-General. The letter mentioned US embargos as well as the action of Greece and Greek Cypriots.

- Hellenic Republic ministry of Foreign Affairs

<https://www.mfa.gr/en/issues-of-greek-turkish-relations/relevant-documents/turkish-claims-regarding-the-demilitarization-of-islands-in-the-aegean-sea.html>

Includes relevant documents regarding Turkish claims over the Aegean Sea.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

There have been many attempts to solve disputes between Türkiye and Greece throughout history in order to achieve international regional stability. However, tensions are still high regarding the two nations.



Possible Solutions

When coming up with solution ideas regarding the issue at hand, it is very important for delegates to look at the problem from an objective point of view. Many of the problems that Türkiye and Greece are facing regarding the Aegean and Black Sea, stem from unresolved historical disputes and disagreements regarding their outcomes. Because of this, it is important for all delegates to look for ways to create environments where said disagreements can be discussed and possibly settled. Together with this, it is important for delegates to look for solution ideas about protecting the rights of civilians in all involved nations, as well as going into detail about border and economic conflicts, especially in the Black Sea.

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