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Ways and means to establish a pillar of stability in Eastern Mediterranean through
military cooperation between Cyprus, Egypt and Greece

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Τρόποι και μέσα για την εδραίωση ενός πυλώνα σταθερότητας στην Ανατολική
Μεσόγειο μέσω της στρατιωτικής συνεργασίας μεταξύ Κύπρου, Αιγύπτου και
Ελλάδας

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Ways and means to establish a pillar of stability in Eastern Mediterranean through military cooperation between Cyprus, Egypt and Greece

Abstract

This paper comprises four chapters, conclusions, and proposals. The first chapter presents the theory behind our geopolitical approach, which is based on the systemic analysis of the Mediterranean geopolitical structure by Dr. Ioannis T. Mazis. It further focuses on the rising energy security issues and the partnership between Greece, Cyprus & Egypt.

The second chapter presents the intra-regional destabilizing factors that mainly stem from the Turkish imperialistic policy. Moreover, it unveils the strong influence of extra-regional (or super-systemic) actors such as the US, EU, Russia, China, and France.

The third chapter focuses on the limits of cooperation by exploring the different views of various international relations schools on matters like inter-state cooperation, absolute vs. relative gains and cheating, and the effectiveness of international institutions in fostering collaboration. Additionally, it presents neoclassical realism's complementary effect to realists' approach by adding intrastate variables into the overall systemic picture. Lastly, some conditions for successful cooperation are given for their application to the Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian tripartite.

The fourth chapter acts as the epicenter of this paper. It presents ways and means with which the existing Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian military cooperation can enhance regional security and establish a sturdy pillar of stability in the Eastern Mediterranean (EMED). It further discusses some of the points in the cooperation, which through further development, could enhance regional stability, the deterrent effect, and the state sovereignty of the participants through the expansion of the military cooperation and with its deepening through common situational awareness and threat perception.

The conclusions reflect the requirement to strengthen this military cooperation with a recurring broader common military exercise schedule. Furthermore, they underline Greece's and Egypt's vital role in developing a common deterrence strategy for the EMED based on mutual respect, compliance with international law, and a

sincere, non-opportunistic consensus. They also stress the need not to overlook individual military capacity building.

Lastly, some proposals are made for enhancing the cooperation's military capabilities through common Maritime Security Awareness, Defence Industry cooperation, interoperability of forces through the promotion of an intercultural environment, and future expansion into multilateral cooperation schemes, including more countries.

Word count: 344

Τρόποι και μέσα για την εδραίωση ενός πυλώνα σταθερότητας στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο μέσω της στρατιωτικής συνεργασίας μεταξύ Κύπρου, Αιγύπτου και Ελλάδας

Περίληψη

Η παρούσα εργασία περιλαμβάνει τέσσερα κεφάλαια, συμπεράσματα και προτάσεις. Στο πρώτο κεφάλαιο παρουσιάζεται η θεωρία πίσω από τη γεωπολιτική μας προσέγγιση η οποία βασίζεται στη συστημική ανάλυση της μεσογειακής γεωπολιτικής δομής από τον Δρ Ιωάννη Θ. Μάζη. Επικεντρώνεται περαιτέρω στα αυξανόμενα ζητήματα ενεργειακής ασφάλειας και στη συνεργασία μεταξύ Ελλάδας, Κύπρου και Αιγύπτου.

Το δεύτερο κεφάλαιο παρουσιάζει τους ενδοπεριφερειακούς αποσταθεροποιητικούς παράγοντες που πηγάζουν κυρίως από την τουρκική ιμπεριαλιστική πολιτική. Επιπλέον, αποκαλύπτει την ισχυρή επιρροή εξωπεριφερειακών (ή υπερ-συστημικών) δρώντων όπως οι ΗΠΑ, η ΕΕ, η Ρωσία, η Κίνα και η Γαλλία.

Το τρίτο κεφάλαιο επικεντρώνεται στα όρια της συνεργασίας διερευνώντας τις διαφορετικές απόψεις των διαφόρων σχολών διεθνών σχέσεων σε θέματα όπως η διακρατική συνεργασία, τα απόλυτα έναντι των σχετικών κερδών και η εξαπάτηση, καθώς και η αποτελεσματικότητα των διεθνών οργανισμών στην προώθηση της συνεργασίας. Επιπλέον, παρουσιάζει τη συμπληρωματική επίδραση του νεοκλασικού ρεαλισμού στην προσέγγιση των ρεαλιστών προσθέτοντας ενδοκρατικές μεταβλητές στη συνολική συστημική εικόνα. Τέλος, δίνονται κάποιες προϋποθέσεις επιτυχούς συνεργασίας για την εφαρμογή τους στην ελληνοκυπριακή-αιγυπτιακή τριμερή.

Το τέταρτο κεφάλαιο λειτουργεί ως το επίκεντρο αυτής της εργασίας. Παρουσιάζει τρόπους και μέσα με τα οποία η υφιστάμενη ελληνοκυπριακή-αιγυπτιακή στρατιωτική συνεργασία μπορεί να χρησιμοποιηθεί για την ενίσχυση της περιφερειακής ασφάλειας και τη δημιουργία ενός ισχυρού πυλώνα σταθερότητας στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο (ΕΜΕΔ). Εξετάζει περαιτέρω ορισμένα από τα σημεία της συνεργασίας, τα οποία μέσω της περαιτέρω ανάπτυξης, θα μπορούσαν να ενισχύσουν την περιφερειακή σταθερότητα, το αποτρεπτικό αποτέλεσμα και την κρατική κυριαρχία των συμμετεχόντων μέσω της επέκτασης της στρατιωτικής συνεργασίας και

με την εμπάθυνσή της μέσω της κοινής επίγνωσης της κατάστασης και της αντίληψης των απειλών.

Τα συμπεράσματα αντικατοπτρίζουν την απαίτηση ενίσχυσης αυτής της στρατιωτικής συνεργασίας με ένα επαναλαμβανόμενο ευρύτερο κοινό πρόγραμμα στρατιωτικών ασκήσεων. Επιπλέον, υπογραμμίζουν τον ζωτικό ρόλο της Ελλάδας και της Αιγύπτου στην ανάπτυξη μιας κοινής στρατηγικής αποτροπής για το την Ανατολική Μεσόγειο που βασίζεται στον αμοιβαίο σεβασμό, τη συμμόρφωση με το διεθνές δίκαιο και μια ειλικρινή, μη ευκαιριακή, συναίνεση. Τονίζουν επίσης την ανάγκη να μην παραβλέπεται η ανάπτυξη ατομικών στρατιωτικών ικανοτήτων.

Τέλος, διατυπώνονται ορισμένες προτάσεις για την ενίσχυση των στρατιωτικών δυνατοτήτων της συνεργασίας μέσω της κοινής ευαισθητοποίησης για την ασφάλεια στη θάλασσα, της συνεργασίας της αμυντικής βιομηχανίας, της διαλειτουργικότητας των δυνάμεων μέσω της προώθησης ενός διαπολιτισμικού περιβάλλοντος και της μελλοντικής επέκτασης σε πολυμερή σχήματα συνεργασίας, συμπεριλαμβανομένων περισσότερων χωρών.

Αριθμός λέξεων: 373

Introduction

The new geopolitical environment of the Eastern Mediterranean (EMED) is complex, for it involves state regional actors¹ and external influencers². The discovery of remarkable hydrocarbon deposits raised the already high geopolitical value of the area, but it also fueled antagonism due to the conflict of interests.

In this historically troubled area, military force is the only indisputable means of maintaining security and stability through deterrence. However, only through unity and joint effort can this be achieved. Robust military cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt (including joint exercises, interoperability, and shared awareness of the emerging threats), is the only effective way to establish a pillar of stability. The projection of superior common military capabilities through joint military exercises is supported by organizations such as the UN, NATO, and the EU. The EMED peoples mostly welcome it because it guarantees prosperity and emits a strong deterrent message to anyone who undermines regional peace and security.

During our significant times, where tectonic events such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine shake the very foundations of the International Geopolitical System and question the established global order and state sovereignty, a realistic approach concerning military—hard power is in dire need by the state actors to secure peace and to provide energy security. Strength comes through unity, and such is the case in the military cooperation between Cyprus, Egypt, and Greece. Through the unity of efforts and military cooperation, each participant can achieve an optimal ratio of safety and security investment both internally and externally, contributing to the EMED regional stability and energy security, which has gained particular weight lately.

¹ By the term intra-regional actors, we refer to the state entities within the EMED geographical region such as Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, etc.

² By the term influencers we refer to extra-regional state entities or unions with significant geopolitical international footprint that influence the EMED states, such as the US, the Russian Federation, the EU, etc.

Objective

This thesis aims to analyze the current geopolitical environment of the EMED in order to identify and propose ways and means to establish a pillar of stability in the region through military cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt.

Assumptions

Factors taken into consideration in this Thesis are the following:

a. Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt will continue to participate in existing international organizations and associations without change.

b. The EU will accelerate its military capacity building and energy transition to renewables, becoming gradually independent of Russian natural gas. In the mid-term, it will not abandon its interest in supporting hydrocarbon projects in the EMED.

c. There will occur no notable change in Turkish foreign policy and its revisionism against Greece and Cyprus.

d. The geopolitical interest of extra-regional actors will not change, nor will their current policy towards Greece, Cyprus, or Turkey.

e. China will seek the further increase of its geopolitical influence in the EMED region, albeit more cautiously compared to its aggressive policy in the broader Chinese region and China Sea (southern and eastern), mainly towards Taiwan and the Philippines, respectively.

f. France will continue to play a key role in the region and the EU affairs as a regulator of balances in the EMED and the EU's most significant military force.

g. The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation will not escalate to a full-fledged European conflict or a world war, and NATO will continue to avoid its engagement. Although it will be a prolonged conflict with serious side effects on energy and food supply markets, neither side (Ukraine or Russian) will achieve a decisive victory.

Chapter 1 - The new geopolitical environment of the Eastern Mediterranean

The EMED geopolitical complex and its characteristics

The entire Mediterranean region, geopolitically speaking, is an international system that can be divided into individual regions. The main regions include the European continent, North Africa, the Middle East, and other areas beyond the Mediterranean basin, such as sub-Saharan Africa, the Black Sea, and the Persian Gulf. What plays a crucial role in the Mediterranean basin is the existence of maritime communication channels to and from Africa, which include the regions of Cyprus, Crete, Malta, Sicily, Sardinia, the Balearic Islands, and Gibraltar. For this reason, in the Mediterranean basin, there are several main points of strategic importance (straits, main islands, and others) on which axes of geostrategic importance are aligned. These axes are essential for exercising control and influence in specific areas.³ The geostrategic value of these axes is due to their role as hubs or corridors of transport and communications, areas of concentration for military forces, bases for supporting military operations, energy reserves, and natural resources, as well as points of political influence. These axes are:⁴

- a. The horizontal axis that intersects in the middle of the Mediterranean basin.
- b. The axis that moves in North Africa, parallel to the previous one and from the Atlantic to the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.
- c. The axes that move in the north-south direction and vice versa, which intersect the previous axes and connect Northern and Central Europe with North Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Suez Canal.
- d. The axis that connects through the Bosphorus Straits, Dardanelles and Aegean islands, the Black Sea with Crete, and North Africa.

³ Πλατιάς Α., (2019). Γεωπολιτικές προκλήσεις στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο. In: Μπαμπανάσης, Σ., Πλατιάς, Α. & Σεϊμένης, Ι. (2019). *Οι Γεωστρατηγικές αλλαγές στη Μεσόγειο και οι επιπτώσεις τους*. (pp.69-83). Athens: ΠΑΠΑΖΗΣΗ publishing. (p.71). Retrieved: Dec.28, 2021, from: <https://eclass.unipi.gr/modules/document/file.php/DES261/Platias/Platias%20Anatypo.pdf>

⁴ Παρίσης, Ι. (n.d). *Το Σύγχρονο Στρατηγικό Περιβάλλον της ΝΑ Μεσογείου*. Lecture on Day Meeting entitled: “Οι Ειδικές Επιχειρήσεις στο Σύγχρονο Στρατηγικό Περιβάλλον” (*Special Operations in Modern Strategic Environment*). at: ΓΕΕΘΑ/ΔΔΕΕ (Hellenic National Defense General Staff /Joint Special Operations Command – HNDGS/JSOC).

In the same context, according to Professor Ioannis Mazis, the Mediterranean geopolitical Complex contains joints or centers that are defined by key characteristics and can be distinguished according to their role in 3 categories:⁵

a. Dominant communication nodes

Communication nodes that fall under category “a” include Gibraltar, Malta, Gulf of Sidra, Crete, Cyprus, Suez, Bosphorus strait, Dardanelles, Greek Eastern Aegean Sea with its insular complexes, port of Thessaloniki, port of Volos, and Otranto-Corfu strait.

b. Places of energy deposits, natural reserves, and resources.

Places that fall under category “b” criteria include the regions of the Caspian Sea, Eastern Aegean Sea, Otranto-Corfu, the region off the shores of Cyprus – Alexandretta – Syria – Lebanon – Israel, the Sidra Gulf in Libya, Algiers, and Morocco.

c. Points of armed forces accumulation, political power concentration, and dispersal or secondary sub-metropolitan centers of transference and imposition of hegemonic (metropolitan) power.

Such points and centers (under category “c”) are the NATO bases in Southern Italy, Northern and Northwestern Greece, the US & NATO bases on the island of Crete, the UK & US bases in Cyprus, Malta, Gibraltar (under British sovereignty), Israel (under the heavy western influence and with substantial problems due to Palestinian issue), Iraq (US geopolitical influenced but also an ally of Middle East Islamist movements), Syria (US and Russian pole of influence), Lebanon (US influence dispute as an instrument of Syrian influence), Egypt (western geopolitical influence but with elements of Islamist powerful movement instability), Maghreb (unstable western influence with an active Islamist movement), Iran (intense US dispute), Turkey (western-oriented geopolitical influence with political-social instability factors of Islamist and Kurdish origin, financial crisis and significant issues concerning political freedom and human rights).

⁵ Mazis I. (2004). Working Paper: *The Mediterranean Geopolitical Structure and the Matter of Resolving the Cyprus Issue in Accordance with the Annan Plan*. Centro di Ricerche sul Sistema Sud e il Mediterraneo Allargato (CRiSSMA), Milano: I.S.U. Università Cattolica. Facoltà di scienze politiche N.2(pp.7-29). Retrieved: Jan.20, 2022, from: http://old.turkmas.uoa.gr/mazissite/forpubs/CRiSSMA_No2_2004.pdf

The conclusion drawn from the geographical overview of the Mediterranean complex divided into zones with roles that fall under the above specific categories (a, b & c) is that the density of geopolitical importance appears to be overwhelmingly more significant in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean.⁶ Thus the EMED region is highly critical for the strategic plans of all the major players (the US, EU, Russia, and China) for the following reasons:

a. It is an important maritime trade crossroad between Europe, Asia, and Africa, and its importance has increased considerably after the recent opening of the Suez Canal (2015), which doubled its daily capacity while shortening the required transit time.⁷ As such, it certainly cannot be ignored by the Chinese quest for expansion in the lucrative European markets and the promising rising African markets with lots of investment room.⁸

b. It emerges as an essential protection zone for the containment of threats that develop on its perimeter and concerns: terrorist cells, organized crime, poverty, illegal immigration, religious fundamentalism, and others, which were intensified due to increasing political instability since the outbreak of the "Arab Spring".

c. It offers possibilities for monitoring all military activities and developments in the Middle East and can be used as a springboard basis for operations in these areas.

d. It can become a source of energy diversification for the EU as part of its quest to increase its energy security.

e. It is a constant objective of the expanding Russian quest for influence and strategic power, notably through the pursuit of optimal energy control of the European market.⁹

⁶ Mazis I. (2004). *The Mediterranean Geopolitical Structure and the Matter of Resolving the Cyprus Issue in Accordance with the Annan Plan*. (pp.7-29)

⁷ Παπαδημητρίου, Ι. (2019, Nov.17). 150 χρόνια Διώρυγα του Σουέζ. *Deutsche Welle*. Retrieved: Jan.21, 2022, from: <https://www.dw.com/el/150-χρόνια-διώρυγα-του-σουέζ/a-51279549>

⁸ "China is the African continent's largest trading partner and source of foreign direct investment". **Source:** Albert, E., (2017, Jul.12). China in Africa. *Council on Foreign Relations* (www.cfr.org). Retrieved: Apr. 28, 2022, from: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-africa>

⁹ Φίλης, Κ. (2017, Mar.13). Η Στρατηγική Αξία της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου. *ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ* (www.kathimerini.gr). Retrieved: Jan.22, 2022, from: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/world/900113/i-stratigiki-axia-tis-anatolikis-mesogeioy/>

The importance of EMED and the broader area of the Middle East (ME) has been amplified as it has undergone significant geopolitical changes throughout the last decade. The two regions (EMED and ME) “*have become increasingly interconnected and their impact has extended far beyond their borders, especially to Europe*”.¹⁰ The Arab uprising, the rise (and fall) of the DAESH (or Islamic State) and its remaining impact on the region, the US withdrawal from Iraq (2011) and Afghanistan (2021), along with the permanent unrest in Libya, have all contributed to the regional instability and rise of insecurity. Moreover, the hydrocarbon findings off the coasts of Egypt and Cyprus, the Greek foreign policy opening to its southeastern neighborhood, and Turkey’s increasingly aggressive and provocative policy have fueled a rather explosive geopolitical mix that enhances competition, creates an imbalance of power, and increases the influence of external actors.¹¹ At the same time, the stakes are high for a conflict between Greece and Turkey as the temperature rises due to the continued illegal occupation of North Cyprus and the escalating imperialism of Ankara. A short description of the modern geopolitical system in the EMED region is based on the three following facts:

a. It is still a regional geopolitical sub-system, integrated into a broader geopolitical context, with mostly the same international actors, regardless of the fluctuations temporally identified in the power factors of each of them.

b. The "new constants" are subject to changes that tend to bring back older ones, historically confirmed from the Cold War era.¹²

c. Parameters such as energy resources (confirmed or potential) are generally integrated into the pre-existing geopolitical context.

¹⁰ Tziarras, Z. (ed.) (2019). *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security, Re-imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Series*. PCC Report 3. Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre. Retrieved: Jan.20, 2022, from: <https://www.prio.org/publications/11329>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Braumoeller, B. F. (2012). *The Great Powers and the International System: Systemic Theory in Empirical Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. (p.65-67).

Energy security and the Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian cooperation

The geographical location of the EMED region marks its crucial geopolitical importance. Still, its potential as an energy source of fossil fuels, namely natural gas, is the catalyst that multiplied the regional value and amplified the risks due to the rising antagonism. If we try to view energy relations through a geopolitical lens and, in this fashion, analyze these relations among state actors, we can easily find behaviors dominated by national security and foreign policy interests rather than strictly economic ones. Besides, energy trade has always been a tool for achieving foreign policy and security objectives. Unfortunately, natural gas is more complex because its characteristics make transportation, whether through pipelines or in the liquified pressurized form [as Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)], quite expensive or at least more expensive than oil. In this regard, the infrastructure involved in the extraction, transportation, and distribution of LNG requires significant investments, long-term perspective, and political stability since developing effective gas policies is often affected by the embedded security environment.¹³ Unfortunately, for generations, the EMED region has been dramatically plagued by turmoil ranging from the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian issue to Turkey's illegal occupation of the northern part of Cyprus.¹⁴ Lately, though, we witnessed even more hazardous situations, such as the Arab-spring uprising (including the overthrowing of governments in Egypt and Libya), a civil war in Syria, the rise and fall of an extremist Islamic State (ISIS or DAESH), and of course the rise of an aggressive neo-ottoman policy towards Greece. Inevitably, major gas discoveries in the EMED (*as shown in Table 1 of Annex B*) attracted global interest. As Charles Ellinas stated recently, in the February of 2022 issue brief of the Atlantic Council Global Energy Center, “*Interest in the Eastern Mediterranean’s gas potential revived in 2015, following the discovery and successful development of Egypt’s Zohr gas field, along with Israel’s Leviathan field, which was discovered in*

¹³ Prontera, A. & Ruszel, M. (2017). Energy Security in the Eastern Mediterranean. *Middle East Policy*. Vol.24, No.3, Fall 2017. (pp.145-162). Retrieved: Jan 10, 2022, from: <https://eclass.unipi.gr/modules/document/file.php/EBI131/Energy%20Security%20in%20the%20Eastern%20Mediterranean.pdf>

¹⁴ Markind, D. (2020, Oct.22). Will Natural Gas Isolate Turkey and Integrate Israel in The Eastern Mediterranean? *Forbes*. (www.forbes.com). Retrieved: Jan.02, 2022, from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielmarkind/2020/10/22/will-natural-gas-isolate-turkey-and-integrate-israel-in-the-eastern-mediterranean/?sh=3577bbaa7209>

2010 and began producing gas at the end of 2019".¹⁵ This attraction of potential hydro-carbon buyers and great consumers is especially profound in the case of the EU, the most significant global importer of natural gas. Therefore diversification of supply sources is an important aspect of its energy security and competitiveness. In this sense, Israel, Egypt, and Cyprus, with their significant offshore gas reserve, made EMED a strategic partner for the EU that can act as a key source and alternate gas supply route.¹⁶

However, for there to be energy security, there must be, first and foremost, a safe and secure environment in the EMED. The latter can only be achieved by preventing revisionist tendencies and maintaining a balance of power among the often-contradictory pursuits of the neighboring EMED state actors such as Turkey. In this context, to mitigate the political risks and disputes over water and drilling rights and to promote regional natural gas development, energy ministers from Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority established the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) in 2019. This Cairo-based forum aims to support its members in maximizing the strategic, economic, and environmental benefits of their natural resources and regional infrastructure through cooperation.¹⁷ Although Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon are notably absent from this regional cooperation that can help all members to reach their potential, this unique initiative marked the emergence of a new-found joint commitment to prosperity through integration in the EMED. This initiative could hardly escape the attention of extra-regional actors and the international private sector. So, representatives from the European Commission, the US, France, and the World Bank attended the first meeting, and later, in 2021, France joined EMGF. Without underestimating that the EMGF initiative is a serious step to enhance regional security, it will likely take some time before this discussion-based forum can evolve

¹⁵ Ellinas, C. (2022, Feb). Issue Brief: *Energy and Geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Atlantic Council. Global Energy Center. (p.1). Retrieved: Feb 27, 2022, from: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Eastern-Mediterranean_Final.pdf

¹⁶ European Commission. (n.d.). *Diversification of gas supply sources and routes. Diversified supply routes increase security of energy*. Retrieved: Jan. 20, 2022, from: https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-security/diversification-gas-supply-sources-and-routes_en#developing-the-mediterranean-hub

¹⁷ Ahram Online. (2019, Jan.14). Cairo declaration establishes Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum with seven countries. *Ahram.org* (*ahram.org.eg*). Retrieved: Jan 20, 2022, from: <https://english.ahram.org.eg/News/321727.aspx>

into an effective tool for political and economic influence.¹⁸ Even when EMGF reaches its full potential, it can only be considered a “soft power” tool, which brings us to the question: how can the balance of power and deterrence against destabilizing regional actors be achieved? The answer is obviously by using “hard power” or at least a mixture of soft and hard power, often referred to as “smart power,” which is the requirement that multilateral cooperation satisfies. The trilateral cooperation between Cyprus, Greece, and Egypt is the expression of a dynamic based on the political will of all three parties to effectively promote cooperation, through productive and constructive dialogue, with specific content and aiming at the implementation of specific projects and programs in areas of common interest including the energy security. This triangular cooperation is essential not only for its members’ national security but also for the EU and the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation.¹⁹ Indeed, trilateral agreements between sovereign and democratic states in the region on a series of issues that are not limited to matters of low policy but also expand to critical issues of energy policy and security, enable the joint exercise of foreign policy and the common confrontation of challenges that arise in a particularly unstable geopolitical environment such as that of the EMED. Furthermore, major infrastructure projects within the framework of such agreements, such as the tripartite electricity interconnection between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, have a significant impact on the stabilization of the EMED, as well as on the security and diversification of the European energy supply. This project, underlined in the joint declaration of the tripartite summit of Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, which took place in Athens on 19 October 21, “... is an important component of the strategic development of the Eastern Mediterranean Energy Corridor, providing an alternative source of energy supply from the region to the European Union and vice versa...”,²⁰ and thus it has undoubtedly a specific geopolitical weight of significant importance for the EU.

¹⁸ Ellinas, C. (2019, Aug.4). High ideals but lacking in practicalities. *Cyprus Mail*. Retrieved: Feb 27, 2022, from: <https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/08/04/high-ideals-but-lacking-in-practicalities/>

¹⁹ Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (mfa.gr). *Διμερείς Σχέσεις της Ελλάδος: Τριμερής Συνεργασία Ελλάδος-Κύπρου-Αιγύπτου*. Retrieved Jan 28, 2002 from: <https://www.mfa.gr/blog/dimereis-sheseis-tis-ellados/egypt/>

²⁰ Γκάτσιος Δ. (2021, Oct.19). Article: «Τριμερής Ελλάδας - Κύπρου - Αιγύπτου: Αυστηρά μηνύματα στην Τουρκία για μονομερείς ενέργειες και τουρκολιβικό μνημόνιο». *Capital.gr*. Retrieved: Dec 21, 2021 from: <https://www.capital.gr/politiki/3589434/trimeris-elladas-kuprou-aiguptou-austira-minumata-stin-tourkia-gia-monomereis-energeies-kai-tourkolibuko-mnimonio>

The EU always needed to have access to diversified energy resources so as not to be dependent on a single producer or a series of extra-European natural gas exporters that could use energy to pursue an aggressive foreign policy and interfere in European affairs. “*However, finding hydrocarbons appears easier than exporting them, even without regional geopolitical challenges*”.²¹ For the EU, the 2011 discovery of significant quantities of natural gas in the EMED maritime area between Egypt, Israel, Cyprus, and Lebanon, changed the geopolitical status decisively and acquired a special interest since the main actors included two of its member states (Cyprus & Greece). Therefore, through the deepening of relations between Greece and Cyprus with Egypt and Israel, prospects were opened for the EU's gas supply through alternative sources, and this led in 2013 to the inclusion of the East Med pipeline in the list of EU Projects of Common Interest. Although the deposits in the EMED and namely the potential extraction rates, cannot fully meet the annual European demand for natural gas, the diversification of sources is essential for the EU, considering that even before the Ukrainian crisis, it was no secret that any interruption of the natural gas flow from Russia would lead to a shortage of EU supply within six months.²² Thus, a diversified EMED source could have been handy as an EU's bargaining chip against Russian pressure on energy issues and could also limit the aspirations of Turkey as an energy hub. Apart from the EMED geopolitical conflicts, the 2019 and 2020 oil and gas industry shocks and the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy and the global market²³ have turned the EU's main effort to the recovery rather than the intensification of its energy security efforts. Additionally, the EU's ambitious plan to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 while cutting greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030²⁴ set Europe on an ecologically friendly track which highly reduced the

²¹ Ellinas, C. (2022, Feb). *Energy and Geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean*. (Issue Brief). Atlantic Council. Global Energy Center. (p.1) Retrieved: Feb 27, 2022, from: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Eastern-Mediterranean_Final.pdf

²² Μάζης, Ι. & Σγούρος, Γ. (2020). *Γεωπολιτική Ανάλυση στο Ενεργειακό Σύμπλοκο της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου*. Athens: ΛΕΙΜΩΝ. Εθνικό & Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών. (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens). (p.10).

²³ Markind, D. (2020, Oct.22). Will Natural Gas Isolate Turkey and Integrate Israel in The Eastern Mediterranean? *Forbes*. (www.forbes.com). Retrieved: Jan.02, 2022, from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danielmarkind/2020/10/22/will-natural-gas-isolate-turkey-and-integrate-israel-in-the-eastern-mediterranean/?sh=3577bbaa7209>

²⁴ European Commission. (n.d.). *2030 Climate Target Plan*. Retrieved: Dec. 20, 2021, from: https://ec.europa.eu/clima/eu-action/european-green-deal/2030-climate-target-plan_en

willingness to invest in future gas projects in the EMED, such as the EastMed pipeline. (*Check Picture 1, in Annex B*). Although near the end of 2020, the US Congress passed legislation that included support for the EastMed pipeline, and in 2021 the European Commission designated the pipeline as a “Project of Common Interest”, in 2022, the US withdrew its support. This policy was a reversal of US foreign policy. Still, it could also be regarded as a sound call for a faster energy transition to renewables, despite rewarding Turkey’s aggressive behavior at the expense of close US allies like Greece and Israel. Meanwhile, the EU had effectively abandoned the energy transformation approach, declaring natural gas to be “green” since an immediate transition to renewables was impossible, leaving Europe vulnerable to Russian gas dependency.²⁵ Ironically, the recent and ongoing Ukrainian crisis has shown how premature and shallow these decisions were. The sanctions that the western countries have imposed on the Russian Federation in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine have triggered an explosion in gas prices that affected the EU equally, if not worse. Of course, the EU energy transition was never considered something that could be accomplished overnight. Even without the current geopolitical trembles, it would require considerable investments of roughly a 1,081 billion euros a year between 2021 and 2030, which is 20% higher than what would be needed under current policies.²⁶ Even before the invasion of Ukraine, the EU natural gas dependence on Russian supplies skyrocketed gas and electricity prices to record levels, forcing some factories to shutdown and bringing a 50% rise to household energy bills, let alone the shock at the pump that European drivers faced. Now, strategies in rich gas consumer countries such as Germany, which relied on increasing their dependence on Russian gas and oil before the “green transition” of their industries, are no longer viable in the midterm. Despite the ecological concerns, politically motivated actions such as ditching the Nord Stream II pipeline had heavy consequences indeed. So, the energy demands made German leaders rethink those coal-fueled power plans recently placed in reserve and even

²⁵ Kissane, C. (2022, Mar.). *Energy & Security in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Presentation in HNDC on Mar. 16, 2022. Lecture: Energy Security and Geopolitics. Retrieved: Mar. 17, 2022, from HNDC lecturers’ files: *Wednesday Presentation – Energy and Security in the Eastern Mediterranean.pdf* (<https://esetha.army.gr>)

²⁶ Buck, M., Graf, A. & Dr. Graichen, P (2019). *Agora Energiewende: European Energy Transition 2030: The Big Picture. Ten priorities for the next European Commission to meet EU’s 2030 targets and accelerate towards 2050*. Agora Energiewende. Retrieved: Dec 20, 2021, from: https://www.agora-energiewende.de/fileadmin/Projekte/2019/EU_Big_Picture/153_EU-Big-Pic_WEB.pdf?msckid=792c7bbcaee11ec832b62db60f0e4c7 (p.49)

consider reigniting them if necessary. After all, as the German economy minister Robert Habeck, set it: “*Security of our energy supply stands above everything else at the moment*”,²⁷ and this is a shocking truth not only for Europe’s largest economy but also for the Europewide majority of countries as their reliance on Russian hydrocarbons runs deep (***Check Picture 2 in Annex B***). Within this context, words like diversification and carbon-free industry sound more like wishful thinking rather than serious energy security concepts, especially when GDPs and growth rates are in peril. Admittedly, the EU now is in grave need of different and reliable sources, and this could reinstate the dynamics of EMED alternative projects such as the East Med, but these kinds of projects need time, and they cannot be considered quick alternatives.²⁸ Nevertheless, the Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA) and others like the Chevron CEO Michael Wirth speak out in favor of such projects because of the current crisis.²⁹ All in all, if we look at the facts with a realistic and unbiased eye and even accept that it could be far more cost-effective to bet on projects like Euro Asia or the Euro Africa interconnectors, we admit that these days the EU cannot afford to skip or turn a blind eye to any opportunity. EU’s global geopolitical position and influence as a great economic power rely heavily on its ability to sustain a competitive exporting capability on the global markets with lucrative outcomes for the interconnected economy of its member-states. The EU's competitiveness can only be achieved through political stability and mainly through the secure and uninterrupted availability of energy resources at a low price, which points to enhanced energy security by default. Thus, we could easily argue that the “European dream” of prosperity and economic growth is heavily dependent on the EU’s energy security, if not interwoven with its ability to sustain an efficient energy security policy.

²⁷ Cohen, P. & Reed, S. (2022, March 22). Will War Make Europe’s Switch to Clean Energy Even Harder? *The New York Times*. Retrieved: March 22, 2022, from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/22/business/economy/ukraine-russia-europe-energy.html>

²⁸ According to Natasha Pilides, the Cyprus’ energy minister, the Eastmed pipeline could not resolve the EU’s immediate demand, even if the project kicked off immediately. Besides, as energy analyst Charles Ellinas mentioned: “*who will invest billions of dollars in long-term projects...just to secure five years of exports? That requires the EU to confirm that use of gas in Europe will be longer-term, beyond 2040, something the EU is not prepared to do*”. **Source:** Hazou, Elias. (2022, March 20). Cyprus’ role in East Med gas supply currently stuck in politics. *CyprusMail*. Retrieved: Mar 20, 2022 from: <https://cyprus-mail.com/2022/03/20/cyprus-role-in-east-med-gas-supply-currently-stuck-in-politics/>

²⁹ Ibid.

While the cost of “missed opportunities” is becoming intolerable for the heavy industries of Central Europe, the gas deal between the US and EU seems very important as an immediate response to the reduced or even capped Russian gas flow. Nevertheless, according to many experts like the former US energy secretary Dan Brouillette, it may not be enough to compensate for the shortfall. *“To maintain the economic growth that all these countries want, that the United States wants, it will take more energy, not less... That’s the transition that we should focus on”*, he said.³⁰ Although US natural gas exports to the EU have ramped up after the trans-Atlantic partnership and its promise towards the goal of 50 billion cubic meters of LNG annually until 2030, it was clear from the very beginning that this would not be sufficient in the long term. The reason is that there are physical constraints to US LNG exports due to the extracting infrastructure ability that has reached its limits rather than the US deposits’ capacity by itself. Apart from that, there is also the price issue, as the US LNG does not come cheap; *“In fact, it is not cheap at all, which is what swelled the EU’s gas storage refill bill to 10 times its usual”*.³¹ Meanwhile, domestic prices in the US are now three times higher than a decade ago, and the US natural gas futures markets are up a stunning 95% year-over-year. Furthermore, US LNG exports have increased domestic inflation due to higher natural gas and electric power bills for businesses and households. This kind of financial pressure on US consumers usually returns the pressure on the US administration, and it is certainly not something to be taken lightly.³² While the high inflation persists, the White House is worried. President Biden struggled to secure a Democratic win over Republicans in the midterm elections to keep control of Congress as Democrats could lose control of both chambers.³³ Regardless of the final results that secured a democratic Congress and a balanced house of representatives for both democrats and republicans, midterm elections, among other serious and emerging

³⁰ Ng, A. (2022, Mar.28). U.S.-EU gas deal won’t be enough to replace Russian supply, says former U.S. energy secretary. *CNBC* (www.cnbc.com). Retrieved: Aug. 02, 2022 from: <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/28/us-eu-gas-deal-wont-make-up-shortfall-from-russia-dan-brouillette.html>

³¹ Slav, I. (2022, Sep.11). Record U.S. LNG Exports to Europe May Not Last. *Oilprice.com*. Retrieved: Oct. 02, 2022 from: <https://oilprice.com/Energy/Natural-Gas/Record-US-LNG-Exports-To-Europe-May-Not-Last.html>

³² Ibid.

³³ Hunnicutt, T., Bose, N., & Mason, J. (2022, Oct.26). Midterm elections outlook darkens for Biden’s White House. *REUTERS*. Retrieved: Oct. 30, 2022 from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/midterm-elections-outlook-darkens-bidens-white-house-2022-10-25/>

issues, suggested from their early exit polls that: “...the economy continued to dominate on voting day with nearly a third of voters saying that inflation shaped their vote for the House more than any other issue”.³⁴ Even without considering the potential impact on US LNG supply to Europe that the fragile political balances inside the US may have, next year’s European energy sufficiency could prove a tricky deal since this year’s reduced demand of the Asian Markets in natural gas is not likely to continue. Besides, as analysts have already warned, less Asian competition will not substitute for stable pipeline flows. According to Financial Times, Bernstein Research estimated that European countries need almost one-third of the global LNG market to replace Russian gas. At the same time, Qatar’s energy minister Saad al-Kaabi admitted that “European importers are in ‘huge competition’ with Asian buyers for exports from Qatar, one of the world’s leading exporters of liquefied natural gas, as they all hunt for alternative supply”.³⁵

Buyers in Asia seek volumes and price stability through term contracts to reduce spot market risk. Still, term contracts need time and often lack the flexibility of spot supplies that are sometimes necessary for countries like China to maintain high export levels, regardless of the uncertainty in the energy markets.³⁶ In this regard, despite reselling more than 4 million tons of not-used LNG to Europe last August, originating from Russia, in October, China decided to halt any further resale to other countries in Europe or Asia to secure its domestic needs.³⁷ Additionally, it is important to consider that since the laws of higher profit govern natural gas markets due to higher demand and piped supply uncertainty, they will likely remain tight for the next few years.

³⁴ Chalabi, M. (2022, Nov.09). Early lessons from the US midterm elections as votes are still being counted. *The Guardian*. Retrieved: Nov. 09, 2022, from: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/nov/09/democrats-republicans-midterms-takeaways-2024>

³⁵ Tayeb, Z. (2022, Oct.19). A Europe with zero Russian gas flows is unimaginable as Asian competition for supplies heats up, Qatar energy minister says. *Business Insider India*. Retrieved: Oct. 30, 2022, from: <https://www.businessinsider.in/stock-market/news/a-europe-with-zero-russian-gas-flows-is-unimaginable-as-asian-competition-for-supplies-heats-up-qatars-energy-minister-says/articleshow/94968488.cms>

³⁶ Yang, N., J., Reese, L., & Chong X., Z. (2022, Feb.03). Ten big questions facing Asia Pacific natural gas market in 2022. Energy & Natural Resources Research & Analysis. *IHS Markit, S&P Global Commodity Insights*. Retrieved: Aug. 20, 2022, from: <https://ihsmarkit.com/research-analysis/ten-big-questions-facing-the-asia-pacific-natural-gas-market-i.html>

³⁷ Tayeb, Z. (2022, Oct.17). China has stopped sales of LNG to Europe to make sure its own households have enough gas for the winter, report says. *Markets Insider*. Retrieved: Oct. 30, 2022, from: <https://markets.businessinsider.com/news/commodities/china-gas-lng-halt-sales-europe-energy-crisis-winter-supply-2022-10>

Although large energy companies and traders have secured most exports and even future supplies from the U.S, most certainly, the largest quantities will be channeled to the highest bidder. Such is the case for the EU, where LNG cargoes have even been diverted from their original Asian destination in search of greater profit.³⁸ At the moment, energy traders of US LNG enjoy mythical profits as exports to Europe have surged along with the prices. As Laurent Segalen, an energy investment banker, said: *“You’re not talking about a margin. You’re talking about a multiplier... All in all, it’s insane”*. He also gave an example stating that gas-selling companies can send a large LNG shipment across the Atlantic for around \$60 million and then fetch about \$275 million in Europe from its cargo. While through this opportunistic profit-making procedure, the EU suffers a heavy toll to protect its energy sufficiency and its industrial viability, in the future, it must be ready to pay an even higher premium and, at the same time, sustain a tolerable cost of living for its member-states while remaining competitive in the global markets. The latter is another great challenge that will test European integration, resilience, energy security, and capability to implement its manifested transition to green energy. While short-term agreements and spot supplies are unlike to provide a permanent solution, projects like the Egyptian-Greek electrical interconnector that promises significant quantities of “green” energy to Europe from Egypt and through Greece seem particularly tempting these days. In addition, the verified hydrocarbon deposits of Egypt and Cyprus, along with the potential Greek deposits and Greece’s ready LNG and pipeline infrastructure, provide alternatives for the EU’s energy diversification that are supported by a robust trilateral cooperation of sovereign and stable countries. Surely EU will accelerate its efforts to green transition, but war-footing relies first and foremost upon the reliability of energy providers and sources. In the highly competitive global energy market, there are indeed great stakes and uncertainty since the wake of every great demand is susceptible to exploitation by multinational energy corporations, regardless of the political impact. EMED initiatives, such as the Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian or the Greek-Cypriot-Israeli tripartite, can fulfill the EU’s demand for reliable partners because they involve countries and not profit-driven corporations. This way, multilateral cooperation bolsters EMED energy security and ensures a much-needed and desirable level of reliability. The latter is the best

³⁸ Dick, J. (2022, Jan.07). LNG Cargoes Continue Diverting Toward Europe. *NGI*. Retrieved: Jun. 20, 2022, from: <https://www.naturalgasintel.com/lng-cargoes-continue-diverting-toward-europe/>

guarantee for the global markets that aid them in overcoming energy insecurity issues, acquiring an encouraging trend, and controlling rising inflation.

Chapter 2 - Security destabilizing factors and external influence in Eastern Mediterranean

Geopolitical antagonism, threats to regional stability, and Turkish revisionism and expansionism

Geopolitical antagonism & threats to regional stability.

During the 30 years of US hegemony after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US served its strategic interests, by creating power relations, literally in every region of the world, including the EMED, and under the assumption that: *“With no challenger in the Western Hemisphere, Washington will be free into the middle decades of the twenty-first century to keep anyone power from gaining dominance elsewhere”*.³⁹ Although the US policy tried to maintain its primacy, global and regional players like China and the Russian Federation did emerge, and they claimed their “slice of the big geo-economical cake”. This way, competition gradually became a “zero-sum” game where the profit of one great power corresponded to the loss of the other. The US intervention in Iraq in 2003 and the “Arab Spring” of 2010-2012 ultimately led to an extensive security destabilization in the EMED area. More specifically, Iran’s geopolitical influence expanded over Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine after the US military operation in Iraq. Seven years later, the “Arab Spring”, beginning with the collapse of the Tunisian regime, brought the fall of authoritarian regimes in Egypt and Libya, and it also triggered a bloody civil war in Syria that let Islamic extremism evolve into a (thankfully short-lived) Islamic State (ISIS or DAESH). Eventually, all these created an unprecedented migration flow that overburdened the already weakened by the financial crisis, economies of stable Mediterranean countries, and mainly Greece. The collapse of the EMED status quo has led to relentless competition between its regional actors within the very geopolitical subsystem. *“Within this geopolitical minefield, a series of other important local confrontations are simmering, such as that of Turkey with the Kurds, inside and outside Turkey, the historical conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, and the rivalry of Greece (and Cyprus) with Turkey”*.⁴⁰ Into this

³⁹ Kaplan, R. D., & Kaplan, S. S. (2011). America Primed. *The National Interest*, 112, (pp.42–54). Retrieved: Dec 18, 2021, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42897718>

⁴⁰ Πλατιάς Α., (2019). Γεωπολιτικές προκλήσεις στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο. In: Μπαμπανάσης, Σ., Πλατιάς, Α. & Σεϊμένης, Ι. (2019). *Οι Γεωστρατηγικές αλλαγές στη Μεσόγειο και οι επιπτώσεις τους*. (p.73).

“burdened” geopolitical environment, a new crucial parameter occurred: energy deposits. As already mentioned, the relatively recent hydrocarbon discoveries in the EMED created new perspectives for profitable cooperation but also intensified the competition among local actors for potential economic benefits and attracted the interest of extra-regional powers. All these undoubtedly added the energy antagonism parameter to the subsystem’s entropy.

Since 2016 and even earlier, the internationalist-geopolitical analysis has been preoccupied with the question of whether the United States, driven by the strategic competition from China, has abandoned the Middle East and, by extension, the Eastern Mediterranean. The US withdrawal from Afghanistan, in April of 2021, after 20 years of persistent presence, and the emergence of the US as an energy-self-sufficient country that no longer relies on mineral resources from the Middle Eastern countries,⁴¹ supported the idea of a rapidly changing US foreign policy towards the Middle East and EMED region. What was not taken into account is that the US, using new production technologies such as shale gas fracking, emerged among the largest exporters of natural gas.⁴² Again, the reasoning that the US, after having ensured its energy self-sufficiency, "is losing its interest" in the region is predominated in the analysis and is partially incomplete without considering that the quantities that the US can extract contribute to US domestic self-sufficiency but are at the same time an exportable product, in search of new energy markets. These markets are a "privileged space" for third-party actors, such as the Russian Federation, whose wide-spread energy network allows it to apply economic and political pressures within and outside the EU. It should be noted, though, that the prices at which energy resources were available, at least until the Autumn of 2021, remained relatively low. These low energy prices, among other things, lured several foreign policy decision-makers in countries of the geopolitical periphery of the Eastern Mediterranean, in the interpretation⁴³ that the

⁴¹ Reuters, Bloomberg (2021, Dec.23). Πρωτιά των ΗΠΑ σε εξαγωγές υγροποιημένου φυσικού αερίου. Republished in: *Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ*. Online version. Retrieved: Dec. 23, 2021, from: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/economy/561640888/protia-ton-ipa-se-exagoges-ygropoiimenoy-fysikoy-aerioy/>

⁴² Κωστούλας, Β. (2014, Feb. 27). Shale gas: «Επανάσταση» στις ΗΠΑ, «πονοκέφαλος» στην Ευρώπη. *Η ΝΑΥΤΕΜΠΟΡΙΚΗ*. Online version. Retrieved: Dec. 23, 2021, from: <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/finance/story/771304/shale-gas-epanastasi-stis-ipa-ponokefalos-stin-europ>

⁴³ Solingen, E. (2018). *Regional Orders at Century’s Dawn, Global and Domestic Influence on Grand Strategy*. Princeton University Press. (p.83-94).

resources, arising through the area of national sovereignty-jurisdiction, which is guaranteed under international law: are unprofitable in terms of exploitation, they remain irrelevant as quantities for the impact on the global energy markets-Stock Exchanges and have influenced the radical reshaping of the geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean, inevitably and definitively. What all the analyses in this direction have not been able to ascertain is that geopolitics and international relations, in general, are governed by long-standing constants exported from the inter-historical power struggle between the major powers.⁴⁴ Although heavy wording such as “withdrawal” sounded like music to many US-unfriendly ears, the fact is that it never referred to any real disengagement diplomatically and economically. It only concerned a generous reduction in the US military presence (or boots on the ground). Besides, after years of strong military intervention, the US no longer need to have thousands of troops deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan and millions of dollars wasted into never-ending conflicts or “forever wars”, because they still retain an extensive network of bases and facilities in the broader Middle East. (*Check Picture 3 in Annex B*). Having said that, one can easily confirm that the US policy choices in the Middle East and the EMED rest somewhere between “commitment” and “withdrawal”, the real question, though, according to professor F. Gregory Gause, is: “*what interests in the Middle East justify the presence of U.S military force and what threats justify its use*”.⁴⁵

Turkish revisionism and expansionism.

Apart from bordering eight countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Iraq, and Syria), Turkey's central position at the confluence of three continents provides the country with a particular geopolitical weight as it grants access to the Middle East, the Caucasus, the Haemus Peninsula, and the EMED. In addition, its position allows it to control the Straits of Hellespont. At the same time, its relations with Azerbaijan offer a significant field of influence in the "energy reservoir" of the Caspian Sea. Moreover, it is the only Black Sea – Mediterranean land corridor, which enables it to be the best economical solution for the route of energy pipelines from the

⁴⁴ Hansen, B. & Heurlin, B. (Eds.) (2000). *The New World Order: Contrasting Theories*. Palgrave MacMillan (p.46-48).

⁴⁵ Gause, G. F. III, PhD (2021, Dec.10). What Does U.S. “Withdrawal” From the Middle East Mean? *The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington*. Retrieved: Jan. 20, 2022, from: <https://agsiw.org/what-does-u-s-withdrawal-from-the-middle-east-mean/?msclkid=bcc3291fab9d11ec8c9c2b3713025a6d>

sources of the deposits to the European market.⁴⁶ The doctrine of Turkish foreign policy in the EMED is guided by revisionism, aiming to establish Turkey as a regional superpower. In essence, Turkey is attempting to profit from the power void created by the US's growing introversion and gradual withdrawal from the region, aiming at effectively upgrading its geostrategic role.⁴⁷ The ideological basis was formulated by Ahmet Davutoglu⁴⁸ in his book: “*Strategic Depth. Turkey's strategic position*”. According to Davutoglu, the role of a country on the world political stage is determined by its geostrategic position and historical depth. The key aspect of this approach is the exercise of “soft power”,⁴⁹ using the country's culture, persuasion, and prestige as tools for fulfilling goals through which peace, cooperation, and prosperity are pursued. Based on this view and because of its central geographical location, Turkey can exert influence and play a strategic role with global implications.⁵⁰ However, Davutoglu's removal from the government in 2016 and the Turkish leadership's sharp turn towards harsh authoritarianism, especially after the failed coup in July of that year, redefined the road map for implementing the Turkish strategy. The rise of political Islam and the concurrence of President Erdogan's ruling AKP⁵¹ political party with the extreme nationalists of Devlet Bahçeli, led to the adoption of a highly aggressive foreign policy in the form of a doctrine of Neo-Ottomanism. At the same time, the threatened creation

⁴⁶ Stratfor (n.d.) (2010, Aug.3). The Geopolitics of Turkey: Searching for More. *Stratfor Worldview Assessments*. Retrieved: Dec 20, 2021 from: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/geopolitics-turkey-searching-more?msclkid=f0495700abd811ec98ad586f600d7cbe>

Also, in: Frazer, S. (2020, Oct.2). AP Explains: What lies behind Turkish support for Azerbaijan. *Associated Press (AP) News*. Retrieved: Dec. 20, 2021 from: <https://apnews.com/article/turkey-territorial-disputes-azerbaijan-ankara-armenia-9a95d9690569623adedffe8c16f3588d?msclkid=8e56ca6fabdd11eca827f6e262647cb5>

⁴⁷ Μακούσης, Δ. (2020, Jul.10). Το Δόγμα Στρατηγικού βάθους με όρους Ερντογάν όχι Νταβούτογλου. *SL Press (www.slpress.gr)*. Retrieved: Jan 10, 2022, from: <https://slpress.gr/diethni/to-dogma-stratigikoy-vathoys-me-oroy-erntogan-ochi-ntavoytogloy/>

⁴⁸ Ahmet Davutoglu, is a Turkish politician and academic who served as Prime Minister of Turkey and leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) from 2014 to 2016. He previously served as Foreign Minister from 2009 to 2014 and chief adviser to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan from 2003 to 2009. **Source:** Wikipedia. *Ahmet Davutoğlu*. Retrieved: Feb 20, 2022, from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmet_Davuto%C4%9Flu

⁴⁹ Nye, J.,S. (2021). Soft power: the evolution of a concept. *Journal of Political Power*. DOI: 10.1080/2158379X.2021.187957. Retrieved: Jan.10,2022, from: <https://www.softpowerclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Nye-Soft-power-the-evolution-of-a-concept-1.pdf> (p.4-7).

⁵⁰ Γρηγοριάδης, Ι. (2010, Jun.10). Το Δόγμα Νταβούτογλου και η Θέση της Τουρκίας. *Η ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ. (Online version)*. Retrieved: Jan. 10, 2022, from: <https://www.kathimerini.gr/opinion/720451/to-dogma-ntavoytogloy-kai-i-thesi-tis-toyrkias/>

⁵¹ AKP is the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), abbreviated officially AK Party (AKP) in English. It is a conservative Turkish party with Islamic roots.

of an independent Kurdish state and the recent discoveries of hydrocarbons in the EMED have been a catalyst for advancing Turkey's aspirations, leading to a rapid escalation of tensions in the broader region.⁵² Indicative of these imperialistic aspirations is the fact that during the last three years, Turkey:

a. Conducted military operations in Iraq and Syria with the tolerance of the US and the Russian Federation.

b. Attempted illegal drilling in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁵³

c. Submitted to the UN an illegal agreement⁵⁴ with the Government of Tripoli in Libya to define the continental shelf between them.⁵⁵

d. It was involved in the civil war raging in Libya, with the dispatch of troops, weapons, and ammunition, in support of the government of Tripoli, in violation of both the ceasefire agreement of the Berlin summit⁵⁶ and the current embargo under the 1995/2001 UN Security Council resolution.

e. It proceeded to a direct challenge to the sovereign rights of Greece and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean (Summer of 2020) through the conduct of hydrocarbon explorations in the maritime zones within the Greek and Cypriot continental shelf, a fact that sharply increased the risk of causing a "hot incident".

⁵² Μάζης, Ι. & Σγούρος, Γ. (2020). *Γεωπολιτική Ανάλυση στο Ενεργειακό Σύμπλοκο της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου*. (p.7).

⁵³ Fortune Greece. (2021, Dec.11). Μέρκελ: «Παράνομες» οι γεωτρήσεις της Τουρκίας στη Μεσόγειο – Στο NATO η συζήτηση για εξοπλισμούς. www.fortunegreece.com Retrieved: Jan.9,2022, from: <https://www.fortunegreece.com/article/merkel-paranomes-i-geotrisis-tis-tourkias-sti-mesogio-sto-nato-i-sizitisi-gia-exoplismous/>

⁵⁴ On November 27, 2019, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in Istanbul, between Turkey and the Libyan Government of Tripoli. According to this MoU the two countries agreed to cooperate in the establishment of maritime jurisdictions. The agreement moved to the basic principle that the islands do not have a continental shelf and an EEZ, essentially ignoring the influence of Kastelorizo, the Dodecanese islands and Crete on the demarcation of maritime zones and in full violation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

⁵⁵ The agreement was formally submitted to the UN on Dec.11, 2019 and registered on Oct.1, 2020, despite its condemnation as illegal by the European Union Summit on Dec.13, 2019. **Source:** Philenews. (2020, Oct.2). Ενεγράφη στον ΟΗΕ η συμφωνία Τουρκίας – Λιβύης. www.philenews.com Retrieved: Jan.12, 2022, from: <https://philenews.com/eidiseis/politiki/article/1030245/enegafi-ston-oie-i-symfonia-toyrkias-libyis>

⁵⁶ TA NEA Teams (2020, Jan.19). Διάσκεψη Βερολίνου: Συμφώνησαν εκεχειρία στη Λιβύη. *TA NEA*. Retrieved: Jan.14, 2022, from: <https://www.tanea.gr/2020/01/19/world/livyi-leykos-kapnos-sti-diaskepsi-tou-verolinou/>

Turkey's main objective is to expand its influence and to create a dynamic that will move the country away from being a passive spectator of changes turning it into a regional leader in the Balkans, Central Asia, and the Middle East.⁵⁷ In this process, one of the main "thorns" is the country's inability to play an essential role in the extraction and distribution of Mediterranean energy assets, as their discovery has lured and activated new players, such as Israel, Egypt, and Cyprus.⁵⁸ This creates a sense of isolation in Turkey that forces the adoption of a high-risk strategy, almost by definition. However, Turkey lacks the internal and external balancing conditions⁵⁹ to exercise such a strategy. More specifically⁶⁰: Firstly, the interior front is highly fragmented, with the Kurdish problem being a major issue for decades and the war continuing at home and abroad. Secondly, the meritocracy and effectiveness of state institutions have been shaken, especially after the failed coup of 2016. Thirdly, the continuous increase in claims has brought Turkey to the brink of over-expansion. Fourthly, the supposed policy of "zero problems with neighbors" has failed since there are significant cracks in Turkey's relations with Israel and the status of "*general deterrence that constantly shapes bilateral relations among Greece and Turkey*".⁶¹ Finally, the ongoing Turkish strategic rapprochement with Russia, which included the procurement of Russian weapon systems, has caused a rift in relations with the US.⁶²

⁵⁷ Γρίβας, Κ. & Μίχας, Ζ. (2021). *Ελληνική Αμυντική Στρατηγική για τον 21^ο αιώνα*. Athens: ΚΑΣΤΑΛΙΑ. (p.37-44).

⁵⁸ Μάζης, Ι. & Σγούρος, Γ. (2020). *Γεωπολιτική Ανάλυση στο Ενεργειακό Σύμπλοκο της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου*. (p.77).

⁵⁹ Τρούλης, Μ. (2019, Jan.25). Ενεργειακός καταλύτης στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο: Οι ηγεμονικές προκλήσεις για την Άγκυρα και οι δυνατότητες Ελλάδας, Κύπρου, Ισραήλ και Αιγύπτου. *Foreign Affairs. The Hellenic Edition*. Retrieved: Jan. 14, 2022, from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.gr/articles/72134/markos-troylis/energeiakos-katalytis-stin-anatoliki-mesogeio?page=show&msclkid=7f9f09f6aced11ec9af1fb51c1592b2f>

⁶⁰ Μάζης, Ι. & Σγούρος, Γ. (2020). *Γεωπολιτική Ανάλυση στο Ενεργειακό Σύμπλοκο της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου*. (p.32-45).

⁶¹ Κολλιόπουλος, Κ. (2008). *Η Στρατηγική Σκέψη από την Αρχαιότητα έως Σήμερα*. Athens: ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑ. (p.27)

⁶² Turkey bought Russian S-400 Anti-Aircraft missile defence systems worth a \$2 billion, despite NATO and US strong warnings against it. **Source:** Lister, T. (2019, Jul.13). Turkey bought Russian S-400 missiles designed to down NATO planes. For the US, that's a problem. *CNN World* (<https://edition.cnn.com>). Retrieved: Nov. 28, 2021, from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/13/europe/turkey-russia-missiles-nato-analysis-intl/index.html#:~:text=Two%20years%20ago%2C%20Turkey%20declared%20it%20would%20buy,for%20beyond%20the%20cost%20to%20Ankara%E2%80%99s%20defense%20budget.>

As we have already discussed, geopolitical antagonisms in the EMED region are related to energy competitions and the complex issues regarding the energy security of natural gas, which require security and stability in the long term. Paradoxically or not so, this is precisely what Turkey tries to exploit by creating destabilization and preventing mining efforts.⁶³ To accomplish such endeavors, Turkey uses an extensive set of tools, all imperialistic at their very core, which include:⁶⁴

- a. The illegal occupation of a large part (37%) of Cyprus in 1974 and its proclamation as a "state" recognized by no one other than Turkey itself.
- b. The unilateral framing of the EEZ for Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot "state" in a completely arbitrary way, thus challenging the Greek and Cypriot EEZ.
- c. The threat of war against Greece (*casus belli*) if the latter expands its territorial waters in the Aegean, and
- d. The use of blackmail diplomacy by sending its drilling rigs and escorting warships to carry out illegal drilling in the Cyprus EEZ or to block all exploration efforts by the Republic of Cyprus.

Instead of adopting peaceful practices and creating communication channels with other Mediterranean states within the legal framework, Turkey has opted for an aggressive attitude, strongly opposing the policy of deepening any cooperation.⁶⁵ At the same time, it demands to participate in energy developments by invoking its sovereign rights in the EMED, with its allegations utterly devoid of legal basis. Turkey's geographical position created great expectations for access to significant power resources. It led Turkey to dangerous revisionism, believing that if there was no Turkish share of the EMED hydrocarbons, there must not be for anyone else. The geopolitical causes of this foul revisionist and delusional behavior must be sought in a mixture of self-confidence due to geography and arrogance due to its Ottoman past. It is also a product of the constant tolerance of the Western World and the regional actors to

⁶³ As professor of strategy Athanasios Platias nicely set: *"It is precisely at this point that Turkey has set a 'diplomatic trap' by acting as a strategic destabilizer (spoiler) in the EMED with the aim of either 'trapping' hydrocarbons at the bottom of the Eastern Mediterranean or imposing its own claims"*. **Source:** Πλατιάς Α., (2019). Γεωπολιτικές προκλήσεις στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο. (p.76)

⁶⁴ Πλατιάς Α., (2019). Γεωπολιτικές προκλήσεις στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο. (p.76-77).

⁶⁵ Μάζης, Ι. & Σγούρος, Γ. (2020). *Γεωπολιτική Ανάλυση στο Ενεργειακό Σύμπλοκο της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου*. (p.17).

Turkish offending behavior. Indeed, what Erdogan refers to as a “balanced policy”, could easily be considered a controversial multifaceted foreign policy or a strongly opportunistic approach. Thus, although it remains a NATO member, Turkey bought the S-400 Russian air-defense missile system despite its western allies’ strong opposition, refused to impose sanctions on Russia after the Ukraine invasion, continues to import Russian oil, and provides a “safe harbor” to Russian tourist, travelers, and potential investors. Moreover, Ankara did not hesitate to block the initiative talks of Finland and Sweden’s Ascension as full NATO members. It is still vetoing the process, hoping to gain every possible concession and special benefit from the West.⁶⁶ On the other hand, due to the historical dispute with Russia over the Black Sea, Turkey restricted the passage of Warships in the Bosphorus⁶⁷ and provided Ukraine (at the right price, of course) with many domestically made “Bayraktar TB2” drones,⁶⁸ making some money and pretending at the same time commitment to NATO. This “blackmailing” and “disturbing” policy works at the moment for Turkey, but it is as dangerous as walking on a tight rope during a windy day without any safety net to catch your fall.

⁶⁶ Tharoor, I., (2022, May 20). Turkey’s awkward role in the Russia-Ukraine war. *The Washington Post* (www.washingtonpost.com). Retrieved: Sep. 20, 2022, from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/05/20/turkey-ukraine-erdogan-russia-nato/>

⁶⁷ As the Turkish government designated the invasion to Ukraine as “war” it exercised the right under the Montreux Convention of 1936, to close Bosphorus Strait (which leads to the Black Sea), to warships. “Although this applies to any naval vessel, it is clearly aimed at Russia’s fleet in case Moscow seeks to reinforce the firepower it already has there”. **Source:** Cook, S., A. (2022, March 3). Where Turkey Stands on the Russia-Ukraine War. *Council on Foreign Relations*. (www.cfr.com). Retrieved: Sep. 20, 2022 from: <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/where-turkey-stands-russia-ukraine-war>.

From another perspective though, Bosphorus and the Dardanelles Straits are now closed for warships from all countries, including any NATO naval forces and this favors Russia according to Cristian Nitoiu, lecturer in diplomacy and international governance at Loughborough University London, “as it does not allow NATO warships to enter the Black Sea in order to aid Ukraine”. **Source:** Falk, T., O. (2022, Mar.11). What do we know about Ukraine’s use of Turkish Bayraktar drones? *ALJAZEERA* (www.aljazeera.com). Retrieved: Sep. 20, 2022, from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/11/turkey-drones-use-ukraine>

⁶⁸ The TB2 Bayraktar sales to Ukraine arranged since 2019 (before the Russian-Ukraine war) and Ankara being heavily dependent on Russian gas and wheat, even before the outbreak of war sought a Ukrainian reference to Bayraktar devoid of the weapon’s Turkish label. As a high-ranking official stated referring to the drone’s company Baykar: “These are private companies and these drone purchases had been done before the war as well”. Although unlike other NATO countries Turkey says that it does not supply Ukraine with arms and namely Byraktar drones, there is indeed video footage that suggests otherwise. This video data of course may be fake or manipulated. “... but if the new analysis is correct, then Baykar is supplying Ukraine with new drones as fast as they can make them, presumably with the tacit approval of the government”. **Source:** Hambling, D. (2022, May 10). New Turkish Bayraktar Drones Still Seem To Be Reaching Ukraine. *Forbes*. (www.forbes.com). Retrieved: Sep. 21, 2022 from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidhambling/2022/05/10/new-turkish-bayraktar-drones-still-seem-to-be-reaching-ukraine/?sh=5b3ed604685b>

The extra-regional actors and their influence

The influence and geopolitical presence of extra-regional actors, such as the USA, Russia, China, the EU, and France, are intertwined with the geopolitical antagonisms in the EMED region. Even after the current energy developments, EMED seems to remain governed by traditional and hardly changed geopolitical constants. To outline the influence of these powerful extra-regional actors, it is appropriate to mention the following:

United States of America (USA)

An Evolution in US foreign policy. As we have already discussed, the US has never abandoned its geopolitical interest in the EMED region. Even with impaired averages and smaller military presence in numerical terms, US aspirations remain the same as in the immediate post-Cold War context. President Biden's withdrawal does not imply the lifting of long-standing political support for Israel, but rather a corrective move, in a broader context of balance with the Arab world, that frees the US from both domestic and foreign political pressure and allows actions perceived by Arab countries as a more balanced attitude towards the Middle Eastern issue. In fact, the USA, carefully interpreting the situation as it developed after the so-called "Arab Springs" (for which there were many complaints that they were US-supported),⁶⁹ does not insist further on policies of democratization of the authoritarian Arab states. Instead, they return to more realistic perceptions regarding the need to reshape the Arab political world. Admittedly, US foreign policy shows inconsistencies and contradictions, mainly since it adopts tools and practices that belong to a past of isolationism and considering that both the Middle East and the EMED have experienced new potential actors who aspire to replace the American presence.⁷⁰ This is not the case, though, since there is a strong reluctance on the part of the US to allow infiltration by dangerously serious players such as Russia or China.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Παναγώτα, Ε. (2018, Jan.18). Η Αραβική Άνοιξη και το ξέσπασμα του εμφυλίου πολέμου στη Συρία. *The Student Association for International Affairs (SAFIA) Blog*. Retrieved Dec.10, 2021, from: <https://thesafiablog.com/2018/02/08/η-αραβική-άνοιξη-και-το-ξέσπασμα-του-εμφ/>

⁷⁰ De Haas, M. (2010). *Russia's foreign security policy in the 21st century: Putin, Medvedev and beyond*. London: Routledge. eBook ISBN: 9780203854402. (p.167-170).

⁷¹ Christensen, T. J. (2016). *The China challenge: Shaping the choices of a rising power*. NY: WW Norton. eBook ISBN: 0393246612. (p.86-93).

Chinese infiltration in the US. Nowadays, Chinese firms closely tied to the Chinese communist regime own around 200.000 acres of farmland on US soil, worth \$1.9bn. Recently, the China-based food producer Fufeng Group expressed its plans to build a corn-milling plant on some newly acquired 300 acres of land in Grand Forks, Dakota, and this raised some serious security concerns regarding the proximity of this plant to a nearby Air Force Base, just 20 minutes away.⁷² Apart from security concerns, this highlights an aggressive Chinese expansion regarding the food supply chain and its control. In our times with the ongoing war in Ukraine, the sanctions against Russia, and the latter's retaliating policy leading to food and energy shortages, a monopoly on the food and energy supply chain poses a rather more dangerous threat to the Western World's wellbeing. As far as the US itself is concerned, China's expansion and invasive policy are apparent as it spent more money than any other country on US property last year (\$6.1 bn).⁷³

The revitalization of NATO and US presence in Europe. The post-cold war era, characterized by the supremacy of the US and its allies, provided the necessary political and military freedom of action to engage in multiple foreign endeavors outside of US and allied soil. NATO, in search of a new role, moved beyond its primary objective of collective defense and deterrence and, under the leadership of the US, engaged in many operations over the horizon to fight terrorism. This expanded the range of Western intervention to include many areas such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, the Sahel, and Syria, but the "intervention fatigue" as a side effect did not take too long to affect the US and its allies, forcing them to adopt a more indirect approach towards projecting stability. Eventually, this era came to an end after Moscow invaded Ukraine, and suddenly, the strategic competition returned, scratching at the surface of the European soil itself. Although it first resembled a new cold war, geopolitical data and the balance of power suggest that it is "a different new beast", albeit not less dangerous. While the bipolar system of the past posed a world-class threat, the new multi-polar reality can become much more dangerous and unstable in a highly volatile geopolitical

⁷² Oliveira, A. (2022, July 25). China purchased 300 acres in North Dakota 20 minutes from military base causing security concerns. *Daily Mail*. Retrieved Sep.20, 2022, from: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11044615/China-purchased-300-acres-North-Dakota-20-minutes-military-base-causing-security-concerns.html>

⁷³ Look at ***Chart 1 in Annex B (Foreign buyers in the US)***, for a graphical depiction of foreign investment in the US (as of July 2022).

environment such as the current one in Western Europe and even more its southern neighborhood, which has dangerous proximity to the broader middle east and North Africa. “Spanning from North Africa and the Sahel to the Balkans and the Middle East, NATO’s “South” remains fraught with many challenges—and is not impervious to the larger competition with Russia and China”.⁷⁴ Undoubtedly, the Russian decision to use military force against a sovereign European country revitalized NATO’s primary objective of collective security and accelerated or even forced the decision of Sweden and Finland to ascent into full members of the Alliance, but the new challenges are many, and stability seems extremely fragile. In this new environment where “resilience” is the key, NATO must not only cope with the extreme Russian aggression against Ukraine that questions its deterrence capability and effectiveness, but it must also pay very much attention to its southern allies and partners.⁷⁵ Apart from the fact that the Southern flank of NATO is indeed a theater of strategic competition, mainly between the US, Russia, and China, an actual 360-degree deterrence (which is the latest and greatest NATO trend) requires a different approach for the South that relies more on the significant maritime presence (on a rotational basis) and less on forward defense and vigilance activities which are effectively used in NATO’s eastern flank. Additionally, to effectively implement the “Forward Resilience” concept, NATO has to invest in the development and resilience of its southern partners and members and strengthen partnerships with key regional actors such as the EU.⁷⁶ Yet the question remains: Are partnerships, cooperation, or even political commitment enough to reassure stability? It is safe to say that the most undisputable and countable measure is military force, and in this case, the numbers seemed favorable for the Russian Federation and its invasion. Recognizing the need for an enhanced US posture in Europe, President Biden announced at the beginning of last June’s NATO Summit in Madrid the enlargement of the US forces in Europe to strengthen the Alliance.⁷⁷ Thus,

⁷⁴ Simon, L. & Morcos, P. (2022, May 9). CSIS Brief: NATO and the South after Ukraine. *Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS)*. www.csis.org. Retrieved: Jul 10, 2022, from: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/nato-and-south-after-ukraine>

⁷⁵ For a map depicting the Southern NATO partners and allies check **Picture 4 in Annex B**.

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ “There are now more than 100,000 U.S. service members serving in Europe with many along the eastern front of the alliance... In addition, Austin placed thousands of U.S troops designated for NATO’s Rapid Reaction Force on heightened alert for possible deployment to Europe”. **Source:** Garamone, J. (2022, Jun.29). Biden Announces Changes in U.S. Force Posture in Europe. *DOD News* (www.defense.gov). Retrieved: Aug. 25, 2022, from: <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3078087/biden-announces-changes-in-us-force-posture-in-europe/>

in the aftermath of the Ukraine invasion, a “back to basics” US military approach suddenly felt more “politically correct” and less of an intervention in European matters. Of course, during the current and unprecedented energy crisis in Europe due to the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the US presence, military and political, holds strong. It also seems pretty much needed because it supports not only NATO's deterrence but also the expansion of economic-energy activities to channel LNG from the US to the EU.⁷⁸ Arguably the latter could partially explain the US non-supportive policy for LNG projects such as the East Med pipeline project. Still, in any case, it proves that the US presence in Europe is being enhanced, marking the most remarkable US comeback since the end of WWII. This presence has an increasingly significant impact on any European and EMED matter, whether it has a military, political, or energy nature.

Russian Federation (RF)

The post-Cold War Era. During the first decade after the end of the Cold War (post-1991) and until its partial economic recovery, Russia followed behind the US, assuming the role of a “secondary power”, with Iraq being a typical example. A pillar of Russian foreign policy in the region was based on the upgraded relations with Iran, a country with similar concerns regarding the American factor and its presence. Later the active Russian intervention in Syria supported the Assad regime in maintaining its survival and ensured a permanent military, diplomatic and political presence within the Syrian territory.⁷⁹ During the last decade, the Russian Federation (RF) had a strong “comeback”, taking advantage of both Trump’s administration policy and the withdrawal of Biden’s administration from the Middle East and EMED in favor of the latest US politico-economical confrontation with China. Indeed, with the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008, the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the Donbas proxy warfare in Ukraine after 2014, RF proved its growing military capabilities.⁸⁰ In

⁷⁸ Taylor, K. (2022, Mar.25). EU, US strike LNG deal as Europe seeks to ditch Russian gas. *EURACTIV*. (www.euractiv.com). Retrieved: March 25, 2022, from: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/eu-us-strike-lng-deal-as-europe-seeks-to-ditch-russian-gas/>

⁷⁹ Borshchevskaya, A. (2022, Jan.23). Russia’s Strategic Success in Syria and the Future of Moscow’s Middle East Policy. *Foreign Policy Essay in LAWFARE*. Retrieved: Jan.23, 2022, from: <https://www.lawfareblog.com/russias-strategic-success-syria-and-future-moscows-middle-east-policy>

⁸⁰ Hussain, Ali. (2018, Dec.21). The return of Russia as a superpower. *Foreign Policy Association (Foreign Policy Blogs – FPB)*. Retrieved: Nov. 12, 2021, from: <https://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2018/12/21/the-return-of-russia-as-a-superpower/?msclkid=8c81769aad2511ecbdf43772d55f5f04>

addition, Russian intervention in the Libyan civil war, the EU's colossal energy dependence on Russian gas, RF sales of military equipment to countries such as Libya, Egypt, Syria, and the reformation of the Sino-Russian block⁸¹ emitted adequate messages of the RF's determination to reclaim its former superpower status.

The Ukraine Invasion Era. Ultimately, the invasion of Ukraine on Feb 24, 2022, certified the determination of RF to impose a new international status according to its interests and surfaced dangerous revisionist ideals for a “history correction” against International Law, the sovereignty of states, and the international systemic stability. All of these led to heavy sanctions against Russia and its isolation from the western world. Moscow's immediate response to the unprecedented trade and economic sanctions imposed by the western forces was, unsurprisingly, the limitation of its gas exports to the EU. However, this turned out to be rather a prolonged conflict instead of a quick and easy Russian victory, and the waging war on Ukraine, apart from its effects on the established geopolitical status, has a more direct severe impact on both European and Russian geo-economy. Since most of the Russian gas uses pipelines for transportation to the receiving customer countries rather than LNG tankers, it is pretty challenging to change destinations. So, Russia requires natural gas buyers within its gas pipeline network range and into a rather tricky juncture. Of course, the Russian energy trade will gradually change its focus to the Asian markets and namely China, but this shift requires time beyond short-term planning. Meanwhile, the EU is rapidly upgrading its infrastructure for a future carbon-free industry. “...*The way Russia acts now is triggering a fast and fundamental re-think of European energy security... ...the bigger effect will be a fundamental re-think on energy security which will accelerate decarbonization... ...it will be painful but effective*”.⁸² While the EU's decarbonization plan will take some time, Russia will inevitably turn to Asia and, most notably, China, revitalizing Sino-Russian cooperation and further complicating or even overturning the balance of power.

⁸¹ Sempa, F. P. (2022, Feb. 04). The Sino-Russian Bloc: It's Now Official. Fifty years after Richard Nixon's shrewd opening to China and the onset of the Sino-Soviet split, it's back to square one. *The American Spectator*. Retrieved: Feb.15, 2022, from: <https://spectator.org/the-sino-russian-bloc-its-now-official/?msclkid=4cd281c4ad2a11ecbecac9c6b5f1647f>

⁸² Lotzo, F. (2022 Feb., 28). Russia's war will hasten the drive for clean energy security. *The interpreter*. *Lowyinstitute.org*. Retrieved August 23, 2022, from: <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/russia-s-war-will-hasten-drive-clean-energy-security>

People's Republic of China (PRC)

China: the greatest rising US adversary. As early as the last years of the Obama period, China was seen by the US as the main threat to its global primacy,⁸³ mainly due to the exponential Chinese economic growth. However, the American strategy of "double containment" of both Russia and China,⁸⁴ on the one hand, was proven deficient in its design, bringing the two countries eventually closer together and against the West, and on the other hand, it did not prevent modern Russian revisionism in Ukraine. Concerning the EMED, the Chinese presence, by today's standards, is limited to securing mainly maritime facilities and infrastructure to ensure Chinese access to energy resources. Thus, the Chinese energy-intensive market in search of alternative resources faces a challenge in accessing countries in the EMED basin, such as Israel, Turkey, and Egypt.⁸⁵ Regarding Cyprus, though, no moves of similar magnitude are underway, and this is proven by the fact that the Chinese initiatives in Cyprus have not drawn any US attention, unlike Haifa port in Israel, where Chinese investments caused a strong US reaction behind the scenes.⁸⁶ Besides, in the Chinese plans for the well-known new "Silk Road" (Belt & Road Initiative - BRI),⁸⁷ Cyprus is not included, at least not yet. However, this does not mean that it could not fit as a transit station or a hub in the grand picture of the ambitious Chinese project. In the foreseeable future, apart from being a significant investor, China can always become a major player in the EMED, regardless of geographical distance. Besides, distance is no longer a limiting factor for China as the significant geopolitical shifts after the Ukrainian Crisis, and the economic blockade of Russia paved the way for greater Chinese involvement in the future, as it poses an obvious and maybe unique opportunity.

⁸³ Christensen, T. J. (2016). *The China challenge: Shaping the choices of a rising power*. (p.45-59).

⁸⁴ Trenin, D. (2019. Jul.31). US Obsession With Containment Driving China And Russia Closer. *Carnegie Moscow Center*. Retrieved: Jan. 02, 2022, from: <https://carnegiemoscow.org/2019/07/31/us-obsession-with-containment-driving-china-and-russia-closer-pub-79609>

⁸⁵ Blanchard Jean-Marc F. (Ed.) (2018). *China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia, A Political Economic Analysis of its Purposes, Perils, and Promise*. Palgrave-MacMillan. (p.106-112).

⁸⁶ Egozi, A. (2021, Oct. 05). US Presses Israel On Haifa Port Amid China Espionage Concerns: Sources. *Breaking Defense*. Retrieved: Jan.2, 2022, from: <https://breakingdefense.com/2021/10/us-presses-israel-on-haifa-port-amid-china-espionage-concerns-sources/>

⁸⁷ Chatzky, A. & McBride, J. (2020, Jan.28). China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative. *Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved: Jan.2, 2022, from: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>

China's Strategic expansion is no more regionally limited. Today's Chinese dream of an enhanced global presence leads China through its president Xi Jinping to consider the "reunification" with Taiwan as something that "must be fulfilled", presumably by any means necessary, without excluding the use of force. The situation seems to have deteriorated after the US house of representatives, Nancy Pelosi, visited Tai Pei. The following Chinese response to this high visibility event, reassuring the US political support to Taiwan, was the biggest ever Chinese military show in the air and maritime domain surrounding Taiwan, including the live fire of ballistic missiles. While this kind of response does not mean escalation to hostilities by itself, it marks the dawn of a new era in US-China opposition bearing much potential for future escalation, especially after the denial of the state sovereignty paradigm in the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Although it would be considered extremely dangerous for China to follow the Russian example in Taiwan, several western experts suggest that if China was to take over Taiwan (by force), it could gain all the desired freedom of movement and projection of power in the western Pacific region and "could possibly even threaten US military bases as far as Guam and Hawaii. But China insists that its intentions are purely peaceful".⁸⁸ Whatever the true intentions of China, its desire to expand its regional and geo-political influence cannot be ignored by the US, and neither can the Sino-Taiwanese tensions nor the stakes for the Taiwanese production dominance of computer chips in the global markets.⁸⁹ The recent Russo-Ukrainian conflict overturned the geopolitical status quo and proved that military or "hard power" is not always and for every state a final resort but a political tool at hand for the imposition of one state's will over another, especially if the aggressive state legalizes its actions as a rightful defending or even promoting its geopolitical position in the global system. No one can predict if China is set on a collision course with the US somewhere in the future. Neither can anyone tell for sure if the international institutions and organizations can act as a collision avoidance system since neither UN, EU, nor NATO stood capable of preventing a war in the heart of Europe between Russia and Ukraine 80 years after the 2nd World War. This is indeed a very bad paradigm for the efficiency of the neoliberal theories of economic interdependence and world trade and

⁸⁸ Brown, D. (2022, Aug. 8). China and Taiwan: A really simple guide. *BBC News* (www.bbc.com). Retrieved: Aug. 20, 2022 from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-59900139>

⁸⁹ Check **Chart 2 in Annex B** that shows the overwhelming dominance of computer chips global production by Taiwanese high tech companies such as TSMC and UMC.

a triumph of the realist's power politics. Although the post-Cold War geopolitical environment seemed to favor liberal theorists such as Rosecrance, who supported that within modern globalization of production and trade, the expansion of the territory and the recourse to war have limited value as means of increasing state power,⁹⁰ reality proved to be somewhat different, at least in the Russo-Ukrainian case. Of course, China may be another case where things can evolve quite differently. Chinese rise in power and geopolitical status may never evolve into an armed conflict with Taiwan and the US consequently, as this would fuel the current economic uncertainty and political turbulence,⁹¹ ruining the global trade, the high technology markets, and the global supply chain, with a severely damaging effect on the Chinese economy itself. On the other hand, even without requiring any violation of the sovereignty of other states but seeking only assured access to ever-expanding foreign markets, there is a limit in this trade expansion and sphere of influence beyond which any further Chinese expansion could be considered by the US and other states and Unions (such as the EU), a severe conflict of interests. Yet, liberal scholars of China's International Relations expect that deepening the economic interdependence and the vulnerability of the two Great Powers (the US and China) will strengthen common interests and prevent conflict. Rosecrance even proposes to attract China by forming a free trade zone between the US, EU, and Japan, potentially concentrating over half the global GDP into 900 million consumers. As China depends greatly on its access to these markets and the US, EU, and Japanese advanced technology, according to Rosecrance, Beijing may eventually be forced into political and economic reforms that will allow it to participate in this hyper-trade zone.⁹² Until this day, it seems difficult for a highly authoritarian government based on Marxist ideals to embrace the liberal sense of democratic team play overnight. However, it is not impossible considering that although the Chinese government retains

⁹⁰ Cited in: Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.102), cited as: Rosecrance, R., *The Rise of the Trading State*, *op. cit. Rosecrance, R., "The Rise of the Virtual State", Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (1996), p.45-61, Rosecrance, R., "International Security and the Virtual State: States and Firms in World Politics", *Review of International Studies*, Vol.28, No.3 (2002), p.433-455.

⁹¹ Buckby, J., (2022, Jun. 16). A Chinese Invasion Of Taiwan Could Unleash An Economic Disaster. 1945 (www.19fortyfive.com). Retrieved: Aug. 25, 2022, from: <https://www.19fortyfive.com/2022/06/a-chinese-invasion-of-taiwan-could-unleash-an-economic-disaster/>

⁹² Cited in: Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.102), cited as: Rosecrance, R. N., *The Resurgence of the West: How a Transatlantic Union Can Prevent War and Restore the United States and Europe*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2013, p.155.

its Marxist ideals, this did not prevent widespread capitalistic practices in Chinese global trade.

European Union (EU)

Towards a stronger EU security and defence. During the last decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the cold war era, the EU enjoyed economic prosperity without having to spend significant resources on security and defense since NATO was the absolute and indisputable guarantee force of deterrence and safety. With the invasion of Ukraine and the return of war in Europe, it became apparent that those carefree days have passed, and the cost of inaction is way too high. Into the newly volatile and more hostile security environment, the European Council formally approved the Strategic Compass: an ambitious action plan for strengthening the EU's security and defense policy by 2030. While NATO remains the foundation of collective defense for the members of the Alliance, a stronger and more capable EU in security and defense contributes to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO. The European Strategic Compass covers all the aspects of the security and defense policy in the European environment. For the first time, it is provided with the military means to act rapidly and robustly whenever a crisis erupts within European soil (EU Rapid Deployment capacity of up to 5000 troops, 200 equipped Common Defence and Security Policy experts, enhanced military mobility). Of course, this must not be considered a simple "militarization" of the EU or a reactive action to the Russian aggression in Ukraine. The strategic compass, apart from its "act" element (that includes the military capabilities), is also structured around three other pillars that include "Secure",⁹³ "Partner",⁹⁴ and most importantly, "Invest", as the latter

⁹³ "In order to strengthen its ability to anticipate, deter and respond to current and fast emerging threats and challenges, and safeguard the EU's security interest, the EU will: boost its intelligence analysis capacities, develop Hybrid Toolbox and Response Teams... ..strengthen the EU's role as a maritime security actor". **Source:** Council of the EU. (2022, March 21). A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade. Retrieved: Aug. 30, 2022, from: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/21/a-strategic-compass-for-a-stronger-eu-security-and-defence-in-the-next-decade/#:~:text=The%20Strategic%20Compass%20provides%20a%20shared%20assessment%20of,an,d%20to%20defend%20its%20security%20and%20its%20citizens.>

⁹⁴ "In order to address common threats and challenges, the EU will: strengthen cooperation with strategic partners such as NATO, the UN and regional partners,... ..develop tailored partnerships in the Western Balkans, our eastern and southern neighbourhood, Africa, Asia and Latin America, including through enhancing dialogue and cooperation, promoting participation in CSDP missions and operations and supporting capacity- building". **Source:** Ibid.

refers to the substantial enhancement of the defense expenditure of member states, the strengthening of European defense and industrial base, and the boost to defense technological innovation to fill strategic gaps and to reduce technological and industrial dependencies.⁹⁵ The essential element in this “strategic” and “ground-breaking” development in EU affairs is that the EU has finally accepted its delayed reactivity to challenges and is trying to become more proactive and capable of responding firmly without relying upon NATO. It is the first step for a more resilient EU capable of withstanding the aftermath of the invasion of Ukraine, the energy crisis, a potential new financial crisis, and more challenges yet to come. It also emits a political message of a more robust and decisive EU, committed to its citizens and capable of safeguarding its values and interests.

The EU Energy Crisis. Although there were voices supporting the idea that after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russia’s attempt to fracture Europe would have the opposite effect, in the end, it is rather the EU’s fragmented energy policy and its negligence regarding a quick diversification plan, that has led EU countries to an energy security crisis. In search of an effective mechanism to reduce natural gas consumption during summer and stockpile for the upcoming winter, EU Commission, in many cases, failed to convince its member states towards a unified action in favor of individual gas deals, partly because each EU country has a different level of dependency on Russian gas.⁹⁶ Regardless of the “Winter is coming” warning in a 53-second video on YouTube, which is trolling propaganda that tries to persuade English-speaking viewers to move to Russia,⁹⁷ the real winter has come, and the pressure of energy prices keeps getting more intense and painful for the average EU citizen. “*As high energy prices have now become a top political problem across Europe*”,⁹⁸ many voices are getting more

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Gostoli, Y. (2022, Jul.21). Could the EU break up over energy shortages? *TRT World*. <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/could-the-eu-break-up-over-energy-shortages-59003>

⁹⁷ According to Gillian Tett, chair of the editorial board and editor of the US Financial Times, although this video seems like a parody, “*its promotion on social media by several Russian embassies suggests otherwise... ..It might just be a joke reference to ‘Game of Thrones’, but it has also been interpreted as a thinly veiled threat...*”. **Source:** Tett, G. (2022, Aug.31). Putin propaganda just took an exceptionally strange turn. Winter is coming, is it time to move to Russia? *Financial Times*. (www.ft.com). Retrieved: Sep.10, 2022, from: <https://www.ft.com/content/20bb2c00-0710-4ac1-baf4-b667c1da904e>

⁹⁸ Tagliapietra, S. (2022, Aug 5). Letter: EU climate agenda is not at odds with energy security. *Financial Times* (ft.com). Retrieved Aug. 12, 2022, from: <https://www.ft.com/content/104d161b-df0c-4d3a-825e-fc6bfe7197a9>

assertive on their calls to put a limit on the European Emissions Trading System (ETS) and even decouple CO₂ emissions bringing back old climate change unfriendly fossil energy sources such as coal or lignite. It is perfectly acceptable that amid this current energy crisis EU must balance its energy policy considering security, competitiveness, and sustainability. Still, this deviation is not necessarily an EU Energy Strategy or ETS deficiency,⁹⁹ and it must be seen instead as an emergency plan temporary in its nature. Although the current condition favors the Russian energy warfare, brings the EU's decision latency issues to the surface, and even pays respect to the euro skeptics, in the long term, it will inevitably mark European independence from fossil fuels, bringing a quicker rollout of "green" technology and indeed a more resilient future EU. Unfortunately, it is challenging (if not impossible) to estimate how soon this rollout will happen. Meanwhile, after the abandonment of Nord Stream 2, the constraints of gas flow, and the sabotage of Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines, the Russian gas share in Europe's total natural gas imports reduced to 9% from 41% in a single year. At the same time, gas prices have skyrocketed to 8 times the average of the past decade. Still, the energy crisis could last for years, and this is forcing the European Governments to ask their citizens to drastically reduce their gas usage, to take corrective measures to ensure affordable gas and electricity bills to businesses and individual consumers, and ultimately to prepare the public for the worst-case scenario of periodic blackouts and cascades of industrial bankruptcies.¹⁰⁰ Thus, despite its plans for resilience, the EU is currently under heavy political pressure. It also faces unprecedented challenges in various aspects, including military, refugee, economic, and energy security issues that challenge its very existence. As far as energy issues are concerned, although the US is delivering short-term support, this may not be feasible in the long term, as discussed in Chapter 1. So, while it is true that the future of energy belongs to renewables, in the medium term, a secure and steady natural-gas flow either through pipelines or LNG terminals must be accomplished. As a result, the EMED emerges as an area of crucial future development, providing the EU with additional freedom of action and enhancing regional geopolitical stability. For all these reasons, EMED is a region of vital

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Abadi, C. (2022, Oct.10). Q&A: Europe's Energy Crisis Could Last for Years. *Foreign Policy* (*foreignpolicy.com*). Retrieved: Oct.11, 2022, from: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/10/10/europe-energy-crisis-russia-ukraine-war-ones-and-tooze/#:~:text=Europe%20is%20facing%20a%20generational%20energy%20crisis%20as,scrambling%20to%20find%20alternatives%20and%20contain%20the%20fallout.>

geopolitical interest for the EU. So, it is sure that the latter will seek to enhance its political-economic and military influence mainly through Greece and Cyprus: the EU's southeastern frontiers and critical crossroads to the Middle East and North Africa.

France (FR)

The Return of France in the EMED Affairs. Although France has lost the world's colonial power status and, after the Suez War, seems to have turned its exclusive attention to European issues, the civil war in Libya and the Syrian crisis triggered its return to the Mediterranean and Middle East region. The need for action became vital for France, on the one hand, given the great danger of its geopolitical isolation from the main events in the EMED region and the undermining of its interests by Turkish revisionism, and on the other hand, after its blatant downgrading by the Anglo-Saxon axis of influence and the AUKUS agreement. Thus, France deemed it necessary to assure its Great Power status and protect its foreign interests in the EMED by taking bold initiatives within the framework of the EU and unilaterally in Libya, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. It also paved the way for broader cooperation with Greece and Cyprus. In August 2020, the President of France, Emmanuel Macron, announced an increased military presence in the EMED to support Greece's efforts against the growing Turkish aggression and dispute over energy resources.¹⁰¹ In the following years, the military cooperation between Greece and France became tighter and firmer with the procurement of state-of-the-art French fighters and frigates by the Hellenic Airforce and Navy, respectively. Most notably, this bilateral cooperation and consensus reached a “historical high” with the Strategic Partnership on Defence and Security agreement, signed between Greece and France on the 28th of September 2021 in Paris, the first between two NATO members. Even before the Ukraine invasion and the European Strategic Compass concept, “*experts said the partnership, if successful, can have far-reaching significance, forming the Kernel of a European defence and foreign*

¹⁰¹ The decision was announced on the 12th of August 2020 by a Twitter Post of Emmanuel Macron (both in French and Greek), saying that “*the situation in the eastern Mediterranean is worrying. Turkey's unilateral decisions on oil exploration are causing tensions. These must end...*” **Source:** Didili, Zoe. (2020, Aug.13). France boosts military presence in Eastern Mediterranean. *New Europe*. Retrieved: Jun.20, 2022, from: <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/france-boosts-military-presence-in-the-eastern-mediterranean/>

policy".¹⁰² Apparently, after the Russian invasion and the evolution of the European and Global geopolitical status, this partnership gained particular weight as it proved extraordinarily proactive and vital. The French President Emmanuel Macron, during the signing of the agreement in Paris, urged Europeans to "come out of their naivete" on the world stage,¹⁰³ and the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, during the ratification of the agreement in the Greek Parliament, agreed with President Macron that: "... Europeans have to stop naively accepting the tectonic shifts in the global geopolitical chessboard".¹⁰⁴ Most importantly, the above statements reinforced by the agreement show a massive initiative and a "louder than words" return of France to the EMED. Even considering France's lower geopolitical capacity compared to the US, Russia, China, and the UK, France is the only nuclear power in the EU after Brexit, and it remains a vital game-changer in the EMED region, as the recent defence cooperation with Greece has shown. In addition, the active role it has assumed in the context of the Ukrainian crisis and the upgrading of European defence capabilities makes it the political-military European spearhead along with Germany, which is (at least for the time being) the political-economic driving Force of Europe.

France as an "equilibrium power", Domestic Vulnerabilities, and the Energy Crisis. Since 2017 French government, under the presidency of Emmanuel Macron, has become the driving force of many foreign policy and security initiatives, in the context of what Macron himself described in a speech to the conference of ambassadors during the Summer of 2019 as a "puissance d'équilibré" or "equilibrium/balancing power". Although many of those initiatives were susceptible to criticism of hyperactive or even disruptive foreign policy, the fact is that they played a key role in the strengthening of the EU and European sovereignty. In some cases, such as Mali, this served the French national interests well. After the intervention in Mali, France gradually "Europeanized its engagement in the Sahel", and the latter allowed

¹⁰² Psaropoulos, J. (2021, Oct.07). Greece ratifies landmark intra-NATO defence pact with France. *ALJAZEERA*. Retrieved: Aug.10, 2022, from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/7/greece-ratifies-intra-nato-defence-pact-with-france>

¹⁰³ Noack, R. (2021, Sep.28). Macron says Europeans need to stop being naïve and assert independence from United States. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved: Aug.11, 2022, from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/macron-us-independence/2021/09/28/5d900056-205d-11ec-a8d9-0827a2a4b915_story.html

¹⁰⁴ Psaropoulos, J. (2021, Oct.07). Greece ratifies landmark intra-NATO defence pact with France. *ALJAZEERA*. Retrieved: Aug.10, 2022, from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/7/greece-ratifies-intra-nato-defence-pact-with-france>

the withdrawal of French troops and the avoidance of a “French Afghanistan” in Mali.¹⁰⁵ Although this lowered the criticism on Paris policymakers of focusing on the military force at the expense of politics,¹⁰⁶ it allowed the deterioration of many regional issues, including the outbreak of violence, an increase of Russian influence with mercenary groups such as Wagner, the unresolved root causes of migration and the high risk of spillover to the broader region. In other cases, such as the invasion of Ukraine, despite the AUKUS agreement, which felt like the US “backstab” on French foreign affairs, the urgency of the situation itself forced France to put aside any bitter thoughts and work together with the US to build trust between NATO members, emphasizing the importance of transatlantic cooperation for Europe, despite the different perceptions and interpretations of the European sovereignty debate.¹⁰⁷

In addition to the multifaceted foreign challenges, France faces many domestic challenges too. As the last French Presidential elections have shown, “*France may be uniquely vulnerable among western European countries to Le Pen-style populism*”.¹⁰⁸ So, although Macron’s economic reforms aimed to improve the quality of life for many French people, their unequal results, mainly due to France’s extreme centralization, allowed a significant rise in Le Pen’s voters and her nativist platforms, mostly as a reaction to the steep cost of living rather than ideology.¹⁰⁹ Lastly, as far as the EU energy crisis is concerned, France was also affected despite the country’s dependence on nuclear power at about 69% of the total electricity generation. Still, France’s energy crisis has nothing to do with the Ukraine War and the sanctions against Russian gas, as it is primarily due to corrosion issues in nuclear reactors that forced the shutdown of

¹⁰⁵ Weber, G. (2022, Apr. 21). Foreign and security policy under Macron: “puissance d’equilibre?”. *UK in a Changing Europe*. Retrieved: Aug.25, 2022, from: <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/foreign-and-security-policy-under-macron/>

¹⁰⁶ Chrisafis, A. & Burke, J. (2022, Feb.17). France announces military withdrawal from Mali after nine years. *The Guardian* (www.theguardian.com). Retrieved: Sep.20, 2022, from: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/17/france-announces-military-withdrawal-from-mali-after-nine-years>

¹⁰⁷ Weber, G. (2022, Apr. 21). Foreign and security policy under Macron: “puissance d’equilibre?”. *UK in a Changing Europe*. Retrieved: Aug.25, 2022, from: <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/foreign-and-security-policy-under-macron/>

¹⁰⁸ Schwartz, M. (2022, Apr.23). Why France is So Vulnerable to Extremism. *New York Magazine. Intelligencer*. Retrieved: Oct. 03, 2022, from: <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2022/04/why-france-is-so-vulnerable-to-extremism.html>

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

about half of the 56 working atomic reactors around France. However, the restoration process needs structural repairs that take much time, several years in fact. So, the risk of electricity shortages is genuine this Winter and will probably affect some of the upcoming years.¹¹⁰ At the moment (Sep 2022), with prices that fluctuate dangerously close to record highs (baseload price that exceeds in some cases € 900 per MWh.), the social tension and unrest are getting stronger, but things are about to get even worse with the recent fuel shortages. While the Strikes at Total Energies Group refineries in France continue (as of 14 Oct 22), the fuel supplies are seriously disrupted, and about 30% of France's gas stations are experiencing temporary shortages. The "Confédération générale du travail" (CGT), which is a French main trade union controlled by the left-wing party, is blocking most of the country's refineries as it demands increased salaries for its members as a share of the extreme profits that the oil companies have already made by exploiting the high oil and gas prices amid the Russo-Ukrainian war that caused the energy crisis.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Dembik, C. (2022, Sep. 29). Energy Crisis in France: Higher Prieeces Than Anywhere Else! *FXMAG*. Retrieved: Oct. 05, 2022, from: <https://www.fxmag.com/economics/energy-crisis-in-france-higher-prices-than-anywhere-else>

¹¹¹ Turnbull, A. (2022, Oct.14). Strikes continue in French refineries, disrupt fuel supplies. *Associated Press. abc News*. Retrieved: Oct.14, 2022, from: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/strikes-continue-french-refineries-disrupt-fuel-supplies-91500901>

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Chapter 3 - The limits of cooperation

Inter-state Cooperation, Liberal Institutionalism, and Realism

It is true that when we are referring to the cooperation between states to acquire mutual gains, everything points out to the international relations theory of Liberalism and, more specifically, to liberal institutionalism. The latter originates back in the late 18th century when liberal scholars studied the question of the adoption of laws and the establishment of International Organizations that would contribute to the consolidation of peace.¹¹² Indeed, Immanuel Kant supported that countries with an organization of states should reach a permanent peace agreement and then join a confederation of sovereign states by abolishing the war.¹¹³ Moreover, Jeremy Bentham, to whom the fashioning of the term International Law has been credited,¹¹⁴ referred to the requirement to record the rights and obligations of states in a code of international law but also to the creation of an international court to resolve the differences of states and avoid armed conflict.¹¹⁵ Those ideals and the willingness to preserve life after the horrors of the “Great War” (WWI) led to the creation of the “League of Nations” as an institutional mechanism to prevent another war. In the end, the inability of this mechanism to avoid WWII made modern liberal institutionalism (also known as neoliberalism) abandon any dreams of universal peace and accept a more realist view in which the state, as a single rational actor, is guided by the national interest, in an anarchic international environment that hides severe threats to stability and peace.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.74)

¹¹³ Cited in : Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.74). Cited as: Gallie, W. B., *Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy*. Cambridge University Press, 1979, pp.25-26 · Huntley, “Kant’s third image: Systemic sources of the liberal peace”, *op. cit.*, pp.50-51.

¹¹⁴ Janis, M. (1984). Jeremy Bentham and the Fashioning of “International Law”. *American Journal of International Law*, 78(2), (pp.405-418). doi:10.1017/S0002930000208713. Abstract of p.405. Retrieved: Sep.28, 2022, from: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-journal-of-international-law/article/abs/jeremy-bentham-and-the-fashioning-of-international-law/FDF4F3AE70DDFD40EB5C30CCC74BF89B#>

¹¹⁵ Cited in : Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.74), cited as: Convey, S., “Bentham on Peace and War”, *Utilitas*, Vol.1, No.1 (1989), σελ.97.

¹¹⁶ Cited in : Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.75-76), cited as: Keohane, R. O., “Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond”, in R. O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p.193-194· Keohane, R. O., *International Institutions and State Power*, Boulder: Westview, 1989, p.7-8.

Later more international tension and conflicts further undermined institutional liberalism since “most liberals could not dismiss the core realist claim that humans are often driven by fear, insecurity, distrust, or the quest for power”.¹¹⁷ The cold-war era after WWII and the bipolar divide of most of the World into Western and Eastern further enhanced “real politics” to the point that realism became the dominating theory in international relations, at least until the end of the cold-war era and the collapse of the Soviet Union. “For realists, international anarchy fosters competition and conflict among states and inhibits their willingness to cooperate even when they share common interests. Realist theory also argues that international institutions are unable to mitigate anarchy’s constraining effect on inter-state cooperation”.¹¹⁸ Yet, despite the military competition of the 20th century, liberals, based on the optimistic epistemology aspect, did not give up seeking ways to figure out how states can break out of the vicious circle of competition and violence that realists seem so confident to accept.¹¹⁹ They even accepted some of the realist’s arguments, including proposing that anarchy impedes international cooperation. However, “The new liberal institutionalists basically argue that even if the realists are correct in believing that anarchy constrains the willingness of states to cooperate, states nevertheless can work together and can do so especially with the assistance of international institutions”.¹²⁰ So, while the central statement in this debate among the realists and neoliberals seems to be a matter of relative versus absolute gains that undermine the inter-state cooperation effectiveness, it is not; things are far more complex. “Realists never claimed that relative claims were

¹¹⁷ Silverstone, S. A. (2022). Liberal international relations theory and the military. (p.3), in: Sookermany, A.M. (eds). Handbook of Military Sciences (pp. 1–18). Springer International Publishing. Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02866-4_104-1. Retrieved: Sep.20, 2022, from: https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-030-02866-4_104-1.pdf

¹¹⁸ Grieco, J. M. (1988). Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism. *International Organization*, 42(3), pp.485–507. (p.485). Retrieved: Apr.18, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>

¹¹⁹ Silverstone, S. A. (2022). Liberal international relations theory and the military. (p.3), in: Sookermany, A.M. (eds). Handbook of Military Sciences (pp. 1–18). Springer International Publishing. Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-02866-4_104-1. Retrieved: Sep.20, 2022, from: https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-030-02866-4_104-1.pdf

¹²⁰ Grieco, J. M. (1988). Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism. *International Organization*, 42(3), pp.485–507. (p.486). Retrieved Apr.18, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>

all that mattered... and many realists have been sensitive to possibilities of mutual security”.¹²¹

Absolute vs. relative gains of cooperation and cheating

Neoliberals believe that cooperation between states that are atomistic actors is based on maximizing their absolute gains regardless of the gains achieved by others. In other words, states are indifferent to the gains of the others in cooperation. While cheating is a significant barrier to cooperation among rationally egoistic states, international institutions can help them mitigate or even overcome this barrier. Realists, on the other hand, agree that states seek absolute gains but are worried about compliance and cheating. In addition, states in cooperative agreements also worry that their partners might gain more from cooperation than they do because, in character, states are positional and not atomistic. Thus, for realists, a state will focus on absolute and relative gains. Even if it is satisfied by its partner's compliance, it could nevertheless exit the partnership because it cannot accept a partnership that favors its partner or partners. Besides, according to realists, today's friendly state that advances through cooperation could become a more dangerous potential enemy tomorrow.¹²² So, since in every cooperation, "cheating" is always an option, no matter how sincere the intentions of each participant may seem to be, the possibilities of secret and uneven strengthening of a potential future adversary is a constant and worrisome aspect that every rational and "realist" thinking part in cooperation, must seriously take into account. In the case of military cooperation, things can become even more serious as it is indeed hazardous and naive to let a potential future foe gain access to restricted military capabilities and familiarize itself with the country's national defense and special tactics. From a military perspective, it is pretty certain that when the cooperation is over, all the acquired knowledge can, and most certainly will be used against the country; it will degrade military effectiveness and increase vulnerability. Moreover, even if a member that has left military cooperation does not seem to have any intention of becoming a foe soon, all this knowledge and assets that it had acquired while being

¹²¹ Jervis, R. (1999). Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate. *International Security*, Vol.24, No.1 (pp.42–63), published by: The MIT Press. Retrieved: Oct.24, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539347> (p.46).

¹²² Grieco, J. M. (1988). Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism. *International Organization*, 42(3), pp.485–507. (p.486). Retrieved: Apr.18, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>

a member may become available to known adversaries to their advantage. While this kind of thinking may seem extreme or paranoid, it remains an actual operational risk that the military cannot ignore.

The effectiveness and ineffectiveness of International Institutions

By and large, liberal institutionalists strongly object to the realists' pessimistic belief that international institutions only affect the prospects for cooperation marginally. Of course, they do not underestimate the difficulties due to the distrust among state actors and the diversity of their national interests, nor do they believe that cooperation and consensus come easily.¹²³ They simply see the potential of international institutions with an optimistic eye and have faith in the resident effects of international institutions and the norms they dictate over time. According to Keohane, capacity building of international institutions and organizations significantly contributes to regulating inter-state relations and motivates multilateral cooperation.¹²⁴ This is indeed true since international institutions and organizations such as the UN, EU, NATO, Mediterranean Dialogue, and EAST MED Forum provide optimal conditions for multilateral discussions and exploration of the common interests among the states. This way, states develop specific expectations from their joint action, and the feedback they receive allows them to figure out whether the impact sharing of cooperation needs to change.¹²⁵ In other words, the member-states in cooperation, check whether the specific agreements governing their cooperation yield the expected benefits or need to be changed (to their advantage) so that there is a real and appreciable profit from the cooperation at the bilateral or multilateral level. In addition, international institutions favor the development of cooperation culture and norms rendering this way international relations somewhat more predictable, but above everything else, they limit and control the behavior of its members. More specifically,

¹²³ Cited in: Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.78), cited as: Keohane, *International Institution and State Power*, op.cit., σελ.11.

¹²⁴ Cited in: Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.78), cited as: Keohane, R. O., "International Institutions: Two Approaches". *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.32, No.4 (1998), pp.383-386· and 1989, pp.3-4

¹²⁵ Cited in: Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.78), cited as: Keohane, R. O. & Martin, L. L., "The promise of institutionalist theory". *International Security*, Vol.20, No.1 (1995), pp.45-46 · Keohane, *After Hegemony*. p.93-94 · Keohane, R. O., "International Institutions: Can Interdependence Work?", *Foreign Policy*, No.110 (1998). p.91.

member states comply with their responsibilities for a series of reasons that vary from the expectation of future benefits from continued cooperation to preserving their prestige and avoiding potential international sanctions. So Keohane rightly thinks that international organizations and norms ultimately reduce the cost of cooperation.¹²⁶ He refers to “international regimes”,¹²⁷ and argues that “*international regimes may make specific reciprocity more effective by providing information to the players, reducing transaction costs, and limiting strategic options*”.¹²⁸ While International regimes are international institutions, they are issue-specific and indeed more limited in scope compared to international organizations that can engage in a wider range of goal-directed activities. They both contribute to the formalization of cooperation in international relations, however. Of course, International organizations, institutions, and specifically “international regimes”, should not be seen as a panacea, or a prerequisite of cooperation, as the latter can - and it does - occur outside of international institutions without their dictation and through bilateral relationships. “*However it remains that international institutions facilitate the greatest amount of cooperation*”.¹²⁹ While neoliberals fully support the previous, and they heartily believe that establishing institutions will increase cooperation, “*realists believe that this is not so much a false statement as a false remedy, because the states will establish an institution if and only if they seek the goals that the institution will help them to reach*”.¹³⁰ So, the disagreement is not over their existence but their ineffectiveness and limitations that make them look like statecraft’s tools rather than independent organizations with free will.¹³¹ Hence, their inability to prevent major conflicts is apparent from the outbreak of WWII (that the League of Nations failed to stop in the first half of the 20th century)

¹²⁶ Cited in: Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.79), cited as: Keohane, *After Hegemony*, op. cit, pp.89-92.

¹²⁷ According to Stephen D. Krasner: “*International regimes are defined as principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area*”. **Source:** Krasner, S., D. (1982). Structural causes and regime consequences: regimes as intervening variables. *International Organization*. Vol.36, No.2. (Spring 1982). pp.185-205. Retrieved: Oct.22, 2022, from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2706520>

¹²⁸ Keohane, R. O. Reciprocity in International Relations (pp.1-27). *International Organization*. Vol.40, No.1 (Winter 1986). Retrieved: Oct.22, 2022, from: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2706740>. (p.25).

¹²⁹ Galbreath, D. J., (2008).Chapter 9: International Regimes and Organizations (pp.121-135) in: Salmon, T. C., & Imber, M. F. (eds.). (2008). *Issues In International Relations*. (2nd ed.). Routledge. (p.122-123).

¹³⁰ Jervis, R. (1999). Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate. *International Security*, Vol.24, No.1 (pp.42–63), published by: The MIT Press. Retrieved: Oct.24, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539347> (p.54).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

until the invasion of Ukraine in our times. Moreover, despite years of lessons learned in international relations, global institutions like the UN, strong Unions of Nations like the EU, and even mighty military alliances such as NATO, fell short of expectations in their deterrence capacity to effectively prevent another conflict in the very heart of Europe. Ultimately, the obvious lack of a solid, common, and immediate response policy due to the conflict of interests, even within the UN, NATO, and EU itself, proved the slow reflexes of international organizations and justified the realistic view of their limited effect on cooperation.

On the other hand, we could easily argue that the levels of political and mainly economic cooperation, interdependence, globalization of trade, and the freedom of movement of goods and people, that were achieved through multilateral collaborations - especially after the end of the cold war - also justified the liberals, because institutions played a major part into the neo-liberal narrative of true freedom, expressed by the globalization of international markets. Additionally, the rise of economic wars and global trade competition as means of non-armed conflict, for a long time, had shifted international relations into the liberal argument that states were becoming less concerned about power and security and more focused on economic growth and welfare, while armed conflicts seemed increasingly intolerant and prohibitively costly as an option. In a modern neo-liberal world, war seemed to have no place among rationally thinking state actors that “*viewed one another not as enemies, but instead as partners*”.¹³² This way, it appeared that the states, moving away from the Hobbesian worldview, began to look upon other states in the international system through the Lockean or even Kantian lens.¹³³ So, armaments and defence expenditure should gradually become an obsolete necessity and an unjustified cost, as no one in the liberal

¹³² Grieco, J. M. (1988). Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism. *International Organization*, 42(3), pp.485–507. (p.490). Retrieved: Apr.19, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>

¹³³ Borrowing from the cultures of anarchy (or empirical cultures) in Alexander Wendt’s systemic constructivism theory in international relations, these cultures correspond to the role of intersubjective structures in state social identities and there are three of them: Hobbesian, Lockean and Kantian where enmity, rivalry and friendship dominates respectively (and so the dominant identity can be that of the enemy, of the rival, or of the friend respectively). **Source:** Wendt, A. (1999). Three cultures of anarchy. In *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge Studies in International Relations, pp. 246-312). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511612183.007; Cited in: Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.136), cited as: Wendt, A., *Social Theory of International Politics*, op. cit., ch.6.

worldview would reasonably risk the disastrous outcomes of an armed conflict and the induced economic isolation or sanctions. Still, the Russian Federation paradigm taught us the hard way that sometimes a state's level of ambition can move beyond the obvious rational thinking and take its chances against all odds to achieve a better power status, regardless of the risk of international sanctions and politico-economic isolation.

The (neo)realist's approach

Frankly, the inability to prevent the invasion of Ukraine should not be considered a failure or weakness of the international institutions but a deficiency of liberal over-optimism, which was too quick to disregard the use of force as an option in world politics. While the unexpected brutal display of power in Ukraine left many neo-liberals bemused, the realist position seemed straightforward right from the very beginning and according to it: it was the NATO expansion to ex-member countries of the eastern bloc, and the prospects offered to countries like Georgia and Ukraine to join the great western alliance led by the US, *“that triggered a security dilemma with Russia that led to its invasions of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 and 2022”*.¹³⁴ After all, *“as Kenneth Waltz suggests, in anarchy, wars can occur ‘because there is nothing to prevent them’, and therefore, ‘in international politics force serves, not only as the ultima ratio, but indeed as the first and constant one’ ”*.¹³⁵ However, the realists failed to predict that the war in Ukraine would unveil Russian military vulnerabilities tarnishing its reputation as a competent projection of power, while sanctions would harshly damage the Russian Federation's economy.¹³⁶ Observing that Russia is losing more in this war than the US, Mearsheimer, a major supporter of offensive realism feels that this is a strategic mistake and a violation of Balance of power politics that will potentially

¹³⁴ Drezner, W. D. (2022, Mar.03). Can realism explain the war in Ukraine? When an elegant theory collides with a messy reality. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved: Sep.20, 2022, from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/03/03/can-realism-explain-war-ukraine/>

¹³⁵ Cited in Grieco, J. M. (1988). Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism. *International Organization*, 42(3), pp.485–507. (p.498). Retrieved on 18 Apr 2022 from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>. Cited as: See Waltz, *Man, State, and War*, p.232; and Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p.113. Similarly, Carr suggests that war “lurks in the background of international politics just as revolution lurks in the background of domestic policies.” See Carr, *Twenty Years Crisis*, p.109. Finally, Aron observes that international relations “present one original feature which distinguishes them from all other social relations: they take place within the shadow of war.” See Aron, *Peace and War*, p.6.

¹³⁶ Drezner, W. D. (2022, Mar.03). Can realism explain the war in Ukraine? When an elegant theory collides with a messy reality. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved: Sep.20, 2022, from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2022/03/03/can-realism-explain-war-ukraine/>

strengthen the Sino-Russian ties without any clue of what is going to happen next.¹³⁷ According to the neorealism school of offensive realism, states and major powers maximize their power in relative terms to secure their interests. So since mutual security may not be desirable or cannot be achieved, sooner or later, the conflict will occur as one (or more) of the states will eventually risk going to war in order to expand or secure its interests.¹³⁸ Defensive realists (the other school of neorealism) have a different opinion regarding the unnecessary conflict that resembles that of the neoliberals. However, “*Aggressor states are common; security and other interests often create differences that are irreconcilable. In these and only these instances, defensive realists see conflict as unavoidable*”.¹³⁹ While no realist approach can explain a prolonged conflict that fails to deliver (with the current Russian invasion of Ukraine being precisely the case, at least for the Russian Federation), the realist understanding of anarchy and its effects on international relations seems to be more precise than the liberal. For realists, “*the fundamental goal of states in any relationship is to prevent others from achieving advances is their relative capabilities*”¹⁴⁰ and as E.H. Carr suggests: “*wars are fought more often to prevent another from becoming militarily stronger*”.¹⁴¹ This seems to be the case in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, as the Russian Federation could not tolerate an infiltration of this magnitude into its geopolitical area of interest by NATO and the US. If left unanswered, it would compromise the Russian position in the system, so it seemed that there was a dire need for reaction by any means necessary - even the use of military force to preserve what felt for the Russian Federation an area of vital national interest, crucial for its geopolitical survival. This fully justifies Waltz’s defensive realism suggestion that “*the first concern of states is*

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Jervis, R. (1999). Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate. *International Security*, Vol.24, No.1 (pp.42–63), published by: The MIT Press. Retrieved: Oct.24, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539347> (p.48).

¹³⁹ Ibid. (p.49).

¹⁴⁰ Grieco, J. M. (1988). Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism. *International Organization*, 42(3), pp.485–507. (p.498). Retrieved: Apr.18, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>

¹⁴¹ Cited in: Grieco, J. M. (1988). Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism. *International Organization*, 42(3), pp.485–507. (p.498). Retrieved on 18 Apr 2022 from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>. Cited as: Carr, *Twenty-Years Crisis*. p.111, emphasis added.

not to maximize power but to maintain their position in the system".¹⁴² Moreover, it favors realism, which due to its comprehension of systemic anarchy, suggests that survival is the "core interest" of states rather than welfare.¹⁴³

The complementary effect of neo-classical realism

Cooperation between states seeking to maximize their security and positional gains can be approached by neorealism or neoliberalism when states seek to maximize their profits and economic status. Both these theories of international politics rely on the systemic or macro-level (International System and regional sub-systems) interactions between states where the state is considered the elementary unit of any global interaction. The intervening variables inside each unit that shape its behavior and, therefore, its foreign policy remain unexplored partly because of their complexity and partly because systemic factors are considered dominant, so states are considered pretty much "black boxes". By the late 1990s, neoclassical realism came to fill this gap between classical realism's purely micro-level approach (focusing on the individual state) and the strictly macro-level one of neorealism. Neoclassical realists, on the one hand, do not deny the neorealist's claim that a state's behavior and foreign policy are driven primarily by its relative power capabilities and its place in the international system; on the other hand, they cannot ignore that the impact of a state's power capabilities on foreign policy is complex because it is susceptible to intense pressure from intervening variables inside states' themselves, exactly as classical realism suggests. These variables are important because computer systems, no matter how advanced, cannot fully automate decision-making in one state's foreign policy. Political leaders and elites make the "hard" choices with a unique and sometimes unpredictable or alternate perception of relative power. Thus, instead of continuously and consistently following a particular track of objective power trends, they perceive power balances differently and somewhat subjectively. Furthermore, because those policy groups (leaders & elites) are not irrelevant to their domestic political and social environment,

¹⁴² Cited in: Grieco, J. M. (1988). Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism. *International Organization*, 42(3), pp.485–507. (p.498). Retrieved on 18 Apr 2022 from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>. Cited as: Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p.126; see also Waltz, "Reflections," p.334.

¹⁴³ Grieco, J. M. (1988). Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism. *International Organization*, 42(3), pp.485–507. (p.498). Retrieved: Apr.18, 2022 from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>.

their judgment is often affected by it, their access to national capabilities and resources is limited, and so are their choices in foreign policy.¹⁴⁴ This is the reason why “*Pure systemic theories face the reverse anomaly from the Innenpolitik counterparts: states in similar structural positions do not always act alike*”,¹⁴⁵ Of course, for neoclassical realists, the independent variables that derive from state’s domestic environment “*must be relegated to second place analytically because over the long run a state’s foreign policy cannot transcend the limits and opportunities thrown up by the international environment*”.¹⁴⁶ So, in the end, they do agree with their neorealist counterparts that the variables of the international system are the ones with the primary explanatory power.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, both international and domestic politics can be considered as significant constraints for leaders, so for neoclassical realists, it is preferable to assume that as a response to the uncertainties of international anarchy, states seek to gain control over their external (and, namely regional or international) environment and shape it, rather than to maximize their power or security. Furthermore, while they believe that an objective reality of relative power exists, they do not take for granted that the states and their leadership necessarily have an accurate apprehension of this reality all the time.¹⁴⁸

Considering the above, it is easy to argue that neoclassical realists indeed have supplemented neorealists’ structuralist theory rather than introducing something completely different and out of the realist way of thinking. While recognizing the significant influence of international anarchy, they choose to add more parameters to the equation of states’ behavior, creating a complex, albeit more accurate reality in international relations that needs not only an adequate understanding of the

¹⁴⁴ Rose, G. (1998). Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy [Review of *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security; Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958; Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler’s Strategy of World Conquest; The Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War; From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America’s World Role*, by M. E. Brown, T. J. Christensen, R. L. Schweller, W. C. Wohlforth, & F. Zakaria]. *World Politics*, Vol.51, No.1, (pp.144–172), published by: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved: Oct.24, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25054068> . (p.146-147).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. (p.150).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. (p.151).

¹⁴⁷ Cited in: Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σινο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.61), cited as: Taliaferro, J. W., ”State building for future wars: Neoclassical realism and the source-extractive state”, *Security Studies*, Vol.15, No.3 (2006), p.484.

¹⁴⁸ Rose, G. (1998). Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy. (p.152-153).

international environment but also a deep comprehension of the state's domestic one. Their observations of the domestic social and political environment's impact on the state leadership's decision and policy-making are instrumental in our days as we can agree that the overall amount of power and assets available to the state are often significantly lower than the entire national capacity. In this regard, if the state's perception of its geopolitical environment is blurred, its capability to shape it is often miscalculated or highly exaggerated. Furthermore, the political shifts and social concerns caused by different types of regional or international issues (global economic crisis, conflicts, sanctions, hydrocarbon discoveries, pandemics, interruptions of the supply chain), alter social trends and often have a corrosive effect on the intra-state political environment, letting it lean towards populism and nationalism. These changes can render states vulnerable to exogenous factors and to endogenous extremist political schemes that favor the rise of isolationism or imperialism and cancel any perspective for open and extroversive foreign policy, furtherly limiting cooperation.

Towards realistic and successful cooperation (despite its limitations)

After considering all the above, we can easily understand that cooperation cannot solve any given issue related to states' security (or insecurity) and their defence concerns. Neither does it occur by default among states, nor is there a recipe for a cooperation success story. Realists and neoliberals think differently about motivating cooperation in specific situations, but it is not always easy to clearly understand these differences. Applying Robert Powell's distinction between preferences over strategies (or ways to reach goals) and changes in preferences over goals (or outcomes)¹⁴⁹ can significantly help in detecting the core differences between neoliberals' and realists' approaches to cooperation considering the following:

a. Neoliberals believe that changes in preferences over strategies usually lead to mutual benefit and decreased transactional cost since these changes are a product of accurate situational awareness and information on the intentions of the cooperating members. As we have already discussed, increased information exchange between

¹⁴⁹ Powell, R. (1994). Anarchy in International Relations Theory: The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate. [Review of *Neorealism and its Critics*.; *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*., by R. O. Keohane & D. A. Baldwin]. *International Organization*, Vol.48, No.2 (Spring, 1994), (pp.313–344). Retrieved: Sep.02, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706934> (p.318-321).

states reduces the transactional cost and often leads to the involvement of institutions, resulting in increased cooperation's added value. It is hard, though, to value the effectiveness of information changes when changes in preferences over outcomes are required. "*Thus neoliberals do not discuss how states do or should behave when vital interests clash*".¹⁵⁰

b. Offensive realists do not find plenty of room in cooperation because, given that the security dilemma is intractable, additional information cannot bring adequate changes in preferences over strategy to reduce the potential for conflict. Furthermore, although changes in relative power constitute a significant aspect of international politics, they unevenly distribute relative gains among states, and so they fail to deliver mutual benefit. Lastly, although increasing the cost of war may render the option of a violent and extensive conflict unattractive, "*rarely can cooperation be increased by changing beliefs and information about the other or the world*".¹⁵¹

c. Defensive realists feel that cooperation should be approached on a case-by-case scenario as "*much depends on the nature of the situation*".¹⁵² While they agree with their offensive realist counterparts that when dealing with aggressors, increasing cooperation is out of reach, they support similar policies with the neoliberals in cases dealing with the security dilemma when "*either or both sides can seek changes in preferences over strategies (both their own and those of the other) in the form of implementing standard 'cooperation under anarchy' policies*".¹⁵³ The determinant for defensive realists is the correct diagnosis of the situation and the other part's objectives. However, this diagnosis is complex and critical as it leaves room for varied interpretations, and the latter explains why different analysts propose different policies and courses of action based on different perceptions of the other part.

Even through robust cooperation schemes that successfully mitigate the occurrences of cheating among its participant members, it is doubtful that a member

¹⁵⁰ Jervis, R. (1999). Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate. *International Security*, Vol.24, No.1 (pp.42–63), The MIT Press. Retrieved: Oct.24, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539347> (p.51).

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid. (p.52)

state will choose to serve any cooperation against its core national interests. So, in the case that these interests alter or evolve differently, away from the initial circumstances that favored specific cooperation, the state will more likely choose to leave or adjust the terms of the cooperation in whatever way best suits its current interests and, thus its relative gains and position in the broader system. In this fashion, while not perfect, the realist's point of view towards cooperation is more thorough than the liberal approach since it considers the uncertainty of cooperation reflected not only in the defensive state positionality but also within the problem of relative gain. By doing so, it is safe to say that realists have a more accurate picture of cooperation's uncertainty and pay close attention to how it might affect relative capabilities in the future. In fact, realism specifies a broader range of systemic-level constraints on cooperation than neoliberalism. Of course, this does not mean all cooperation efforts are condemned to fail. It simply proves that there are indeed limits in every cooperation that must not be overlooked. As Joseph M. Grieco suggests: *"further analysis of defensive positionality may help pinpoint policy strategies that facilitate cooperation. If relative gains concerns do act as a constraint on cooperation, then we should identify methods by which states have been able to address such concerns through unilateral bargaining strategies or through mechanism of international institutions"*.¹⁵⁴ It is of the essence to understand, though, that bargaining and international institutions alone cannot hold together weak cooperation or guarantee its success. Good cooperation practices, while not ignoring their limits, should be based on a series of conditions such as:

a. Strong individual members. Each state must not rely solely on defence agreements and military cooperation to have a strong and capable national defence footprint. Besides, nobody is willing to fight other's wars without profit, and successful cooperation can become as strong as its strongest member and as weak as its weakest.

b. Clear obligations. All members must clearly understand their obligations and maintain a specific ambition for cooperation, which is perfectly understood and accepted by all other members.

¹⁵⁴ Grieco, J. M. (1988). Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism. *International Organization*, 42(3), (pp.485–507). Retrieved: Apr.18, 2022, from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706787>. (p.506-507).

c. Credible members. Every member should be aware of the scope of the cooperation accepting the relative gains from it without trying to cheat, block or undermine other members' access to gains to maximize their own.

d. Commitment to trust building. Each member must understand that trust is built through cooperation, commitment, and active participation in common activities, such as common energy initiatives, construction schedules, military exercises, and joint defence programs. By doing so, members need to prove their commitment with actions and not only words.

e. Mutual respect. While trust should not be taken for granted, mutual respect is an absolute prerequisite for successful cooperation. In this case, historical bonds are critical as a starting point that further encourages intercultural interaction and capacity building of interoperable forces, capable of raising strong pillars of cooperation, emitting a strong deterrent message, and contributing to regional stability.

f. Political stability, consistency, and social cohesion within each member state. While states are considered single actors in the international or regional system, their ability to act depends on a series of domestic intervening variables supporting or undermining specific cooperative schemes. State leaders, elites, and local authorities are susceptible to the social level of acceptance and pressure. Thus, leaders do not always have complete freedom over the full range of a country's assets of power, nor do they have complete control over their domestic opposing political forces or social opinion. In fact, they often struggle to prevail politically; therefore, issues that affect their society (like energy, financial or supply chain issues, inflation), can drastically alter the level of social and political status quo, limiting governments' choices in foreign and domestic policy, letting extreme political parties to rise with a degrading impact on stability, or even contributing to the international system's entropy by promoting instability and revisionism. Lastly, the perception of relative power by the state's decision-makers and their interpretation of the developments in international relations can also limit their choices in foreign policy or alter their tendency to cooperate.

The case of tripartite cooperation between Greece, Egypt, and Cyprus

Trying to apply most of the above assumptions to the trilateral cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, it is safe to argue that we must not decline from the realists' view of cooperation, despite the fact, in our case, that solid international institutions such as NATO and the EU, support, and significantly augment the specific initiative's added value. Other major state actors such as the US, France, Germany, China, and even Russian Federation are highly influential because they pull the strings within the EMED geopolitical status, albeit according to their current interest, which is susceptible to changes. Thus, it is essential not to overlook or underestimate the significance of an individual member's mixture of hard and soft power, its potential contribution to the tripartite, and its level of expectations from the cooperation. In this context, it is safe to assume that while each member of the multilateral cooperation expects to benefit from a potential strengthening of its overall power and defensive positionality (and geopolitical status), it is also concerned with the other members' relative gains. A higher level of mutual understanding and reciprocity must be achieved to mitigate these concerns, although it can take considerable time and effort without guarantees.

In a volatile geopolitical environment such as the EMED, any cooperation's future evolution is uncertain. Moreover, cooperation schemes between significantly different countries (with different religions, norms, or even ethical, political, and value systems), under specific circumstances in which they have mutual interests and individual agendas in energy security gains, may further enhance the relative gains problem and raise distrust. Lastly, apart from the systemic analysis, each state's political and social stability must be closely monitored and seriously taken under consideration because it can favor or turn against specific cooperative schemes, encouraging their deepening and expansion or rendering them null and void, respectively. Conclusively, while liberal institutionalism, with its interstate cooperation paradigm through interdependence and international institutions, contributes to the holistic approach of the tripartite cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, providing visions of an ideal evolution, it is the realist's approach that can best describe the real stakes that characterize this cooperation. A micro-level neoclassical realists' approach, complementary to the neo-realist systemic (or macro-level) analysis, can be used as supplementary to give us some of the national variables and power factors inside the

states that can seriously affect their behavior. This multifactorial approach could help us avoid future surprises and understand the existing limits within this cooperative scheme.

Without denying the importance of the Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian cooperation scheme that includes joint defence capabilities, it is also essential to understand and accept its limitations and not underestimate the specific needs of each member's defence capability. Besides, correctly identifying these limits while building the necessary individual defence capacity is the key to successful military cooperation and the safest course of action in the volatile EMED region.

Chapter 4 - Military cooperation: an answer to regional security

The Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian military cooperation as a common toolbox for enhancing security in the EMED

Bearing in mind that Greece is located at the exact crossroads of the Balkans, Mediterranean Sea, and the Middle East, in other words, at the collision point of three major geopolitical tectonic plates, the country's pursuit for stability in alliances such as NATO, EU, and the USA, which have historically worked well, makes every sense. However, the EMED subsystem urges additional initiatives like the trilateral cooperation of Greece and Cyprus with Israel and Egypt. Such initiatives do not seek to replace the old alliances but aim to support, enhance, and ultimately make them an integral part of the regional security architecture.¹⁵⁵ This is very important considering the current enhanced commitment of NATO forces in Europe due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine because today, more than ever, unity is of the essence inside the EU and in other neighboring regions, such as the EMED. Only with unity and through multilateral commitments can stability be maintained in troubled areas where political influence and soft power projection sometimes are not enough to bring equilibrium and security assurances. On the other hand, hard power in the form of massive military force accumulation and excessive defence expenditure, apart from being extremely expensive for any individual EMED country, sometimes is not desirable because it emits a threatening power projection for all neighboring countries, and thus it triggers their insecurity and their defensive reflexes. In such cases, multilateral agreements, including military collaboration, are preferable because they can enhance each participating member and create a robust defence architecture based on the unity of efforts and shared goals without provoking or triggering any alarm.

The Trilateral Cooperation between Cyprus, Greece, and Egypt was established in 2014. Within the framework of this cooperation, nine Summits of the leaders of the three states have already taken place to date. The first one was in Cairo on the 8th of November 2014, and the latest took place on October 19, 2021, in Athens. While not directed against third parties, this partnership promotes military cooperation in matters

¹⁵⁵ Botsiou, K. E. (2018). *Changing challenges in a solid alliance: Greece and the western partners in past and present*. Hellenic Army General Staff (HAGS) & Institute of International Relations. 1st Land Forces Conference Proceedings (Athens 14-15 Dec 2017). Athens: Directorate of Military History. ISBN: 978-960-7897-69-5. (pp.144-145)

of common interest, such as energy security, and contributes to preventing revisionist tendencies. In the newly formed energy security environment, the effective response of the West to Turkish revisionism is the strong US and French aeronautical presence in the region. It is no coincidence that Greece has signed defence cooperation agreements with the US and France. In this respect, the recent strengthening of Greece, which is a democratic country of the West without expansionist aspirations, with advanced weapon systems originating from France and the US via extensive defence procurements and bilateral agreements, declares more than anything else the country's intention to defend its sovereign rights against any threat effectively. Besides, in our recent times, Europe and the EMED region are both experiencing intense revisionist tendencies, and so geopolitical realities justify any demand for *"the creation of a 'sub-NATO' enclave around the French Mediterranean aeronautical power that will be staffed by Greece, Cyprus, and Israel with a 'special nature of Egyptian defence cooperation, for obvious reasons."*¹⁵⁶ Embracing this view, Egypt, a stable and democratic Arab country, in response to the growing tensions between Turkey and Cyprus in its proximity, but also between Turkey and itself, due to the oil and gas exploration projects in the Eastern Mediterranean, even before the Egyptian government announced the huge hydrocarbon discovery in the areas of natural gas exploration, began a comprehensive modernization of all the branches of its armed forces, without emitting any unnecessary provocation but solely deterrence. Of course, this is hardly the most important thing that the two EMED countries have in common, as beyond the extensive armament programs of Greece and Egypt, it is almost impossible to overlook the fact that since ancient times, both Greek and Egyptian cultures have been beacons of cultural values for the EMED and the wide area of the Middle East and North Africa. The intercultural relationship and exchange between these two ancient civilizations indeed have thousands of years of tradition. This is perhaps the main reason this mutual understanding and respect withstood the test of time, even though many things have irreversibly changed from the times of the great ancient kingdoms and empires. Nevertheless, exactly such as relations of mutual respect, friendship, and cooperation were vital in ancient times, so important they do remain in our days too, while quite often their contribution to maintaining a safe and

¹⁵⁶ Μάζης, Ι. & Σγούρος, Γ. (2020). *Γεωπολιτική Ανάλυση στο Ενεργειακό Σύμπλοκο της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου*. (p.40).

secure environment in a turmoiled area such as EMED, is considered not only desirable but rather necessary. In this sense, the close relations between Greece and Egypt and their participation in multilateral formats involving countries of the Middle East are a guarantee of security and should therefore be promoted in international fora, with particular reference to the often indistinguishable from the West, but widely known in the East, timeless credibility of Greece in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East, as well as to the collective and historical consciousness of the Arab world in general. However, apart from the cultural capacity, the building of individual and collective military capacity in the framework of the military cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt is also essential because it enables “hard power” (aka military force), to effectively create the necessary barriers, capable of limiting the Turkish "crescendo" of expansionist rhetoric and restoring the balance in the Mediterranean. Since armaments alone indicate capabilities but not determination, the latter can manifest itself in the best way through joint exercises and military activities that promote interoperability and unity in the face of a common goal which is not to project a vulgar display of power or a threat to Turkey, but to avert imperialist aspirations and to maintain balance in the interests of shared prosperity and progress. *“Given that the region's main parties have managed the landscape through political, strategic, and even military mechanisms, which have emerged in the overall joint military exercises, this reflects ‘proactive preparations’ that have been indirectly monitored by Russia, the US, and EU countries standing in the way of Turkish expansion”*.¹⁵⁷

What is essentially being pursued through the robust armament programs of Greece and Egypt is nothing but deterrence through defence. While defence differs from deterrence, strong defensive capabilities enhance deterrence as a whole.¹⁵⁸ At the same time, military exercises such as the joint exercise of Greece and Egypt, “Medusa-11”, with the participation of personnel and means of the Armed Forces of Egypt,

¹⁵⁷ Fahmy, T. (2020, Jan.12). The future of the conflict in the eastern Mediterranean and Egyptian accounts. *Aawsat*. (www.aawsat.com). Retrieved: Nov.16,2021 from: <https://aawsat.com/home/article/2078141/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B5%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%B9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B4%D8%B1%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B3%D8%B7-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9?msclkid=18d0a629ad6a11ecaebde192a6ca5a67>

¹⁵⁸ Κολλιόπουλος, Κ. (2008). *Η Στρατηγική Σκέψη από την Αρχαιότητα έως Σήμερα*. (p.23)

Greece, the United Arab Emirates, and Cyprus, in the area south-east of Crete, promote the operational readiness of the participating forces,¹⁵⁹ and project deterrence through presence, demonstrating the common will to defend¹⁶⁰ the participants' sovereign rights and emitting a sound warning message to anyone defying these rights. While joint military cooperation and coordination of Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt are best implemented and projected as deterrence through joint military drills, for some of those drills (such as Medusa), their recursive character promotes wider cooperation opportunities by attracting other countries, such as Israel, Jordan, and UAE, to join, and also emits a strong commitment of the participating forces for incorporation into common long term political objectives. Although growing multilateral military agreements and cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and other regional players such as Egypt are expected to provoke adversary countries, namely Turkey, this would make no difference because Turkey already monopolizes the region with its provocative actions. It is no coincidence, given its behavior, that Ankara has a long history of disputes not only with Greece and Cyprus over hydrocarbon resources' rights but also with Egypt on a different ideological basis. Although Egypt and Turkey are two Muslim countries, they stand on the exact opposite side of the ideological spectrum. Ankara supports the Muslim Brotherhood, while Egypt has declared a full-scale war against this radical religious and political organization.¹⁶¹ These ideological differences have caused a long-term rivalry between the two countries expressed in Libya, where they support the opposite sides, but lately, this rivalry has escalated into a fierce struggle for regional control and influence. Turkey, aware of the powerful Egyptian armed forces and the Greek strong military capacity, periodically and consistently tried to undermine the Egyptian-Greek-Cypriot alliance and convince Egypt to rewarm their relations at

¹⁵⁹ The Toc Team. (2021, Nov.16). Κοινές στρατιωτικές ασκήσεις Ελλάδα, Κύπρου, Αιγύπτου και Ηνωμένων Αραβικών Εμιράτων - Εντυπωσιακές εικόνες. *THETOC* (www.thetoc.gr). Retrieved: Dec.18, 2021, from: <https://www.thetoc.gr/koinwnia/article/koines-stratiotikes-askiseis-ellada-kuprou-aigyptou-kai-inomenon-arabikon-emiraton---entuposiakes-eikones/>

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ The Muslim Brotherhood is a religious and political group founded on the belief that Islam is a way of living. Offshoots of the group have been linked to violent actions in the past and critics blame the Brotherhood for causing troubles in the Middle East. Many consider it the forerunner of modern militant Islamism. It is also true that Sayyid Qutb, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s, developed the doctrine of jihad, and the radical group Hamas is believed to be an offshoot of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. **Source:** Jones, B. & Cullinane, S. (2013, Jul.3). What is the Muslim Brotherhood? *CNN World*. Retrieved: Nov.20, 2021, from: <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/03/world/africa/egypt-muslim-brotherhood-explainer/index.html?msclkid=f1c50ec3ae0411ecb9624a7a3b188fec>

the expense of Greece and Cyprus. However, all Turkish efforts were in vain, because as the Egyptian independent political analyst Abdelmonem Halawa told Al-Monitor: *“Egypt is not convinced of this Turkish interest, simply because Turkey has failed in translating its rhetoric about better relations into actions”*.¹⁶² The motives behind Ankara’s approach are clear enough for everyone to read. There is a growing fear that the military forces of the three parts in this specific trilateral agreement are already strong individually, so if combined, things could get beyond Turkish military capabilities. In other words, while deterrence through defensive power works well, deterrence through the presence of aeronautical forces in joint multilateral exercises works even better. The latter makes Turkey feel isolated in the EMED region, making statements like that of the Turkish defence ministry spokeswoman Pinar Kara on the Medusa 2020 exercise, who said: *“Another exercise has been added to the countries that have united against Turkey, such as Greece, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, the Greek Cypriots and France, and since August they have been conducting successive exercises in the Mediterranean and trying to increase tensions”*.¹⁶³

Of course, the source of increased tensions is no one else but Turkey itself, and in the end, Turkish brutality, opportunism, and imperialism must not be left unanswered, for they may escalate. Indeed, this escalation in Turkish rhetoric, which lately has seen an unprecedented rise, causes rise to well-founded concerns in Athens especially considering the latest “issue” raised by the Turkish side regarding the demilitarization of the Greek island. According to Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias, *“... the issue of the islands has never been raised... Unfortunately, the real problem, if there was one, was that Turkey and Turkish public opinion were becoming trapped of it...”*. He also added: *“Following the illegal Turkish-Libyan memorandum, the Turkish leadership has made choices that leave no scope for negotiation...”*.¹⁶⁴ The main reason for this escalation could quickly be based on the estimation that Erdogan

¹⁶² Al-Monitor. (2021, Apr.12). Egypt, Greece, Cyprus edge closer militarily, but may be risking face-off with Turkey. (www.al-monitor.com). Retrieved: Dec.10,2021, from: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/04/egypt-greece-cyprus-edge-closer-militarily-may-be-risking-face-turkey?msclkid=69911311ad4811ec8a641c6db3da4301>

¹⁶³ Antonopoulos, P. (2020, Nov.29). France and UAE to participate in MEDUSA exercises with trilateral alliance for the first time. *Greek City Times*. Retrieved: Nov.28, 2021, from: <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/11/29/france-egypt-medusa-exercises/>

¹⁶⁴ Athens News Agency (2022, Sep.15). Dendias Expresses Concern over Escalation of Turkish Rhetoric. *The National Herald*. Retrieved: Oct. 03, 2022, from: <https://www.thenationalherald.com/dendias-expresses-concern-over-escalation-of-turkish-rhetoric/>

is trying to disorientate Turkish public opinion and use it according to his needs ahead of the following year's elections. On the other hand, escalation should not be answered with escalation from the Hellenic part because this could be precisely what Erdogan wishes for: to justify and nominate his "hate rhetoric" inside Turkey. In our significant times with the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict, when more than ever, the cohesion of NATO and Europe is required, the US and the EU stand together against Turkish revisionism; the safest solution, though, when de-escalation is not visible on the horizon, precisely as in the case of Russia, seems to be deterrence through solid defence capabilities. The only undisputable measurement of power is the national armed forces' capability and readiness. The next more effective deterrence technique after an armed conflict is convincing any potential enemy that a conflict will have an unbearable cost. In this case, military presence and the display of military power capabilities indeed have a very beneficial effect because while an armed conflict should be avoided, we can easily argue that recursive and multilateral joint military exercises are an effective means to discourage the Turkish revisionism and establish a pillar of stability in the EMED region.

The general concept for the military objective of the trilateral cooperation initiative between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt is to deter and protect participants' common geopolitical and economic interests through energy security and the containment of provocative Turkish imperialism.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the joint declaration text in the most recent 9th Summit of Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, which is presented in Annex "C", has indeed a more comprehensive set of objectives that include:¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Nasr Salem, a retired Egyptian army general, told Al-Monitor that: "*This growing cooperation mainly aims to rein in the Turks and trim their violations in the region...*" **Source:** Al-Monitor. (2021, Apr.12). Egypt, Greece, Cyprus edge closer militarily, but may be risking face-off with Turkey. (www.al-monitor.com). Retrieved: Dec.10,2021, from: <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/04/egypt-greece-cyprus-edge-closer-militarily-may-be-risking-face-turkey?msclid=69911311ad4811ec8a641c6db3da4301>

¹⁶⁶ Balkan News. (n.d). (2021,Oct.19). Joint Declaration of 9th Greece-Cyprus-Egypt, Trilateral Summit. (balkan.news). Retrieved Jan.20, 2022, from: <https://balkan.news/2021/10/19/joint-declaration-of-9th-greece-cyprus-egypt-trilateral-summit/?msclid=17d9b723aded11eca372914cd99888e5> - **A Greek language version source is available at:** Cyprus Times (2021, Oct.19). Το κείμενο της Κοινής Διακήρυξης της Τριμερούς της Αθήνας – Με αυστηρά μηνύματα για Κυπριακό και προκλήσεις. (cyprustimes.com). Retrieved: Jan.12, 2022, from: <https://cyprustimes.com/politiki/to-keimeno-tis-koinis-diakiryxis-tis-athinas-me-aystira-minymata-gia-kypriako-kai-prokliseis/>

a. The joint pursuit of cooperation between the parties in the exploration and transportation of natural gas and the belief that the reserves can benefit states' prosperity and regional stability.

b. The recognition of national sovereignty as it results from International Law and the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the basis of productive dialogue and not under Turkey's unilateral, illegal, and delinquent activities.

c. The decision to create a tripartite electricity interconnection between the three countries and the acceleration of the development of an energy corridor as an alternative source of energy supply from the region to the European continent and vice versa.

Through their joint declaration, the members of this tripartite agreement expressed a consensus on a series of issues, such as the interconnection through an energy corridor, the freedom of gas exploration and transportation, and the sovereign rights of all parties involved concerning the UNCLOS. All these refer indirectly to the concept of Maritime Security, and the latter is indeed an enormous task that aims precisely to secure the freedom of seelines, facilitate and defend commerce, and maintain good governance at sea. Maritime Security is also a responsibility in a broader sense. It covers many policy sectors and includes elements highlighted in the joint declaration of Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt cooperation, such as sovereignty as defined in territorial integrity and political independence, security of sea lines of communications, security protection from crimes at sea, resource security and access to resources at sea and the seabed, environmental protection and security of all seafarers and fishermen. Moreover, the maritime security responsibility concerns all nations that have signed the UNCLOS (which is exactly the case for Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt) and comply with a set of articles and regulations on the foundation for “Good governance at Sea”.¹⁶⁷ Examples of successful collaboration in the maritime environment that serves well in the avoidance of duplications and contributes to the achievement of Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) can be found in the

¹⁶⁷ Feldt, L., Roell, P., & Thiele, R. D. (2013, Apr.). *Maritime Security - perspectives for a comprehensive approach*. ISPSW strategy series: Focus on defense and international security. Issue No.222. (p.2-3). Retrieved: Dec.15, 2021, from: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/162756/222_Feldt_Roell_Thiele.pdf?msckid=6a37d30daec711ecb9cb9ad3d9eb6be7.

agreement between India, Japan, and China for maritime security in the Gulf of Aden, but also on the EU's multinational efforts such as the "operation ATALANTA". The latter is part of the EU Comprehensive Approach in the Horn of Africa and is also based on the EU Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). Many examples of national or multinational cooperation undoubtedly focus on Situational Awareness and, more specifically, Maritime Awareness. Because of this, the EU Maritime Policy, with the principles outlined in the Common Information Sharing Environment for the surveillance of the European Union domain (CISE), could be used as a model approach that suits the maritime collaboration efforts of Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt. Furthermore, it could help the enhancement of tripartite military cooperation by enabling a holistic and dynamic level of shared understanding towards different threats and challenges. In a way, as the integration of maritime surveillance is one of the critical strands of the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP),¹⁶⁸ so is the synergy of all parts in the Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian agreement for the creation and implementation of effective, shared tools in maritime surveillance. Such tools will provide the necessary situational awareness based on shared maritime information, enhanced perception of the EMED maritime area, inter-usability, and interoperability of systems, leading to a common maritime culture and mentality in joint exercises that multiplies efficiency. Ultimately, a common information-sharing environment in the maritime domain, compatible with the EU's approach to maritime security, would not only upgrade the military cooperation and interoperability between members of multilateral military cooperation schemes such as that of Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, and others; it could also become an essential and fully compatible part of the EU's Integrated Maritime Policy, an example to follow by other regional actors, and the most potent "smart power" tool for the establishment and preservation of stability in the EMED region.

Along with the deepening and strengthening of the existing triangles of military cooperation, such as that of Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, it is also crucial to expand into multilateral formats that enrich the cooperation between many states and multiplies the mutual benefit, mainly through trade and the creation of a common culture on energy security issues. EMGF aspirations include a vision for widespread cooperation between suppliers, buyers, and transit countries that will unlock the full potential of the EMED

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. (p.18-20).

gas basin, as well as The Forum's objectives of setting common strategies based on a shared vision, the formation of a competitive regional gas market, the security of supply and demand and coordinating efforts to optimize resource development.¹⁶⁹ These can be achieved only through fostering collaboration and mutual commitment to energy security which also requires a military function. This military function cannot be a unilateral effort or an extra-regional actor's intervening military force since it must serve the common regional interest. Without excluding extra-regional aid, military capabilities should be acquired primarily through multilateral military cooperation of regional players committed to energy security and with an enhanced naval presence in the region. In addition, broader participation of more states and their political commitment to already well-established multilateral agreements, such as those of Greece-Cyprus-Egypt (and France in a 3+1 scheme), Greece-Cyprus-Israel, and Greece-Cyprus-Jordan, seems like the only effective way to safeguard stability and energy security by providing the military capacity and the will to oppose unilateral provocative behavior and to deter revisionism. All these urges for a comprehensive approach to military matters in a more intercultural way that aims to establish commonly accepted strategies and practices and to serve common energy policy goals. Of course, multilateral cooperative schemes that involve many different countries with different interests and approaches in foreign policy can prove very difficult, considering the limitations of cooperation discussed in Chapter 3 and the different aspirations on relative gains that the cooperating members may have. In many cases, cultural differences and the volatile nature of foreign policy dynamics between the EMED countries can provide room for different interpretations or further limit multilateral initiatives, especially in the defense sector and military cooperation. Still, the best chance for a regional-based solution to address a series of regional energy security-related issues in the EMED, without the need for strong extra-regional intervention by global systemic powers, can only be provided through multilateral cooperation between regional players. The key to success lies in understanding the limits of the cooperative schemes and mitigating the doubts and distrust among the potential members through honesty, common understanding, and mutual cultural respect.

¹⁶⁹ East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF). (n.d.). Homepage – EMGF and Overview – EMGF. (<https://emgf.org>). Retrieved: Mar.12, 2022, from: <https://emgf.org/> and <https://emgf.org/about-us/overview/>

While the intercultural approach and mutual respect are essential for any successful cooperation, they are paramount for military cooperation since, as we have already discussed in Chapter 3, through a realistic lens, close military cooperation may be considered severe exposure to third countries that can potentially become future adversaries. To eradicate the identity of the stranger that speaks a different language, has different religious beliefs, appearance, and ethics, and could become a future enemy seems quite tricky. To cooperate with a stranger and expand into military cooperation schemes seems trickier while achieving a military consensus under the social identity or label of a partner and friend seems almost impossible. However, it is not, at least in the case of the trilateral cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt. The historical background itself favored the eradication of the “stranger” label throughout the long history of the EMED because Mediterranean civilizations like Greek, Cypriot, and Egyptian, and also middle east civilizations like Israeli and Jordanian indeed became part of this history. The key then is the same as now; it is nothing more or less than an intercultural and multivariate approach. The same goes for military cooperation. While shallow military cooperation, based on the opportunity can only be short-lived, an intercultural and multivariate military approach that tries to fuse a variety of cultural aspects, albeit without suppressing the national identities, can become an effective means to reinforce any pillar of stability in the EMED region, in the long term. Greece can have a pivotal role in these efforts because it possesses all the needed democratic, historical, geographical, organizational,¹⁷⁰ and cultural capacity to bridge and unite a significant number of regional actors in the EMED, considering their great diversity and different way of thinking as an asset to the multilateral integration rather than an issue.

Although strength and namely military strength lies in numbers, military cooperation in multilateral schemes should not be considered a full-fledged military alliance since no member is expected to fight other’s wars, drive tensions to an escalation, or engage in collective response. Considering that Egypt is a democratic Arab country with a Muslim religion and social tradition, it is obvious that it will try to maintain its domestic social balance and orientation without risking an open conflict

¹⁷⁰ Indeed, Greece is the only member of the tripartite agreements between Greece-Cyprus-Egypt, Greece-Cyprus-Israel and Greece-Cyprus-Jordan, that is at the same time a member of EMGF, BSEC (Black Sea Economic Cooperation), NATO and EU, among others. **Source:** Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs (mfa.gr). *Greece in International Organizations*. Retrieved: Jan.28, 2022, from: <https://www.mfa.gr/en/foreign-policy/greece-in-international-organizations/>

with other Muslim countries if its core national interests are not at stake. So, without underestimating the deterrence effect of the trilateral cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, it is crucial to understand its limitations as far as the use of military force is concerned. Bearing in mind the limits of cooperation discussed extensively in Chapter 3 of the present thesis, it is safe to argue that if not in any case, at least in the case of the Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian tripartite, the individual members must be self-efficient regarding their defence capabilities. Members with solid defence capabilities do not depend on friendly forces to protect their sovereign rights; thus, apart from being respected for their countable geopolitical footprint in terms of power, they have freedom of action in their foreign policy and are less susceptible to extra-state interventions. Thus, military cooperation among strong individual partners is based first and foremost on solid national defence foundations and the wiliness of each member to defend its sovereign rights. This way, they enhance the overall cooperation impact and further improve each member's geopolitical footprint in the international system. Most importantly, solid military cooperation has an adequate deterrent effect on any potential adversary in issues of common interest, such as energy security. While each participating country individually is more than eager to defend its sovereignty and national interest, this is not the case when another's national interest is at stake or when the common goal is not well defined. However, when prosperity becomes a common and reachable goal, all participating members are motivated to defend their rightful access to prosperity and stand ready to deter anyone who deprives them of this possibility. While credibility is a fundamental element of deterrence, what gives military cooperative schemes credibility in their deterrence is their individual members' defence capacity and willingness to use it.¹⁷¹ Lastly, it is helpful to consider that although the proactive use of joint military force in a cooperative scheme could prove somewhat problematic, the use of force for national sovereignty and prosperity is highly accepted by international law for any individual state without excluding cooperation in this endeavor. In any case, democratic principles and the rules of international law require respect for the needs of the many, and as the recent crisis in Ukraine has shown, anyone who dares to defy international law with unilateral actions faces international discrimination and isolation with unbearable consequences.

¹⁷¹ Κολλιοπούλος, Κ. (2008). *Η Στρατηγική Σκέψη από την Αρχαιότητα έως Σήμερα*. Athens: ΠΟΙΟΤΗΤΑ. (p.22-23).

Superpower and Great powers' support

Supportive Players (US, EU, France)

According to the Director of ELIAMEP and regarding the South-East Mediterranean, the geopolitical situation highlights the necessity of trilateral alliances.¹⁷² The new crisis in Ukraine (early 2022) shows that the US is indeed looking for allies after the new kinetic Russian policy, as the latter perhaps managed to revitalize Cold War claims concerning the spheres of sovereignty and influence in the former breakaway republics of the USSR and primarily in Ukraine. However, questionable US political actions such as that of the non-paper of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USA, which downgraded the role of the East-Med pipeline and essentially called into question the viability of the whole project, show that apart from the dynamics and intentions of trilateral agreements between Greece, Cyprus, and other regional actors, projects and investments are required in practice, through realistic expenditure planning, and within a reasonable time. Although projects such as the East Med seriously call into question Turkey's regional role and contribute to the weakening of its claims, the EU's long-term energy planning, committed to de-dependence on hydrocarbons and a potential shift of the US policy to the normalization of its relations with Turkey, should not be overlooked.¹⁷³ On the other hand, Greece's pivotal role in initiatives such as the trilateral cooperation schemes with Cyprus and Egypt, Israel and Jordan, respectively, proves, in contrast to the Turkish approach to Russia and the Turkish barriers to Sweden and Finland ascension as full NATO members, that Greece is a reliable Western partner committed to the values of EU and NATO, and even more, a powerful stabilizing player in the troubled EMED. On this basis, *“the US considers Greece a pillar of stability for the promotion of democracy and prosperity in the wider region.”*¹⁷⁴ This has already been redeemed in the best way on a bilateral basis, as US

¹⁷² Ντόκος, Θ. Π. (2019, Mar.23). Οι γεωπολιτικές εξελίξεις στην ανατολική Μεσόγειο και ο ρόλος της Ελλάδας. *REAL NEWS. ELIAMEP*. Retrieved: Dec.20, 2021 from: http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/OI-ΓΕΩΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΕΣ-ΕΞΕΛΙΞΕΙΣ-ΣΤΗΝ-ΑΝΑΤΟΛΙΚΗ-ΜΕΣΟΓΕΙΟ-ΚΑΙ-Ο-ΡΟΛΟΣ-ΤΗΣ-ΕΛΛΑΔΑΣ_REAL-NEWS.pdf

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Athens Bureau. (2021, Aug.27). Senator Menendez to Dendias: Greece is a pillar of stability. *Greek City Times*. Retrieved: Dec.18, 2021, from: <https://greekcitytimes.com/2021/08/27/menendez-dendias-greece-pillar/> Similar wording had been already used back in 2019 when the US Ambassador to Athens Geoffrey Pyatt had confirmed that bilateral relations between Greece and the US were ‘proceeding at top speed’ and described Greece as a ‘pillar of stability in a difficult region’. **Source:** Kathimerini Newsroom. (2019, Jul.17). Pyatt: US-Greece cooperation ‘proceeding at top speed’.

and Greece strengthened their ties by renewing and upgrading their Mutual Defence Cooperation Agreement (MDCA). According to Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias, one of the most important elements of the agreement is the use of the northern Greek port of Alexandroupolis by the US military, as the key role of this port should be an energy hub rather than a commercial port.¹⁷⁵ In addition, the enhanced US military presence in other strategic Greek seaports, airports, and military installations, such as the navy port of Souda in Chania, the Stefanovikion Airport in Volos, Larissa Airport, and Litochoro in Pieria, clarifies that Greece has gained an added value in the US strategic planning and has already elevated its overall geopolitical position. As far as Turkey is concerned, the erratic and controversial attitude regarding its Russian approach, cooperation, the procurement of Russian S-400 air defence systems, and the growing gap between the western world not only led to its exclusion from the US F-35 fighter program but also resulted in the drop of two important US Senate amendments. One that restricts the potential sale of F-16 jets to Turkey without real assurances that such jets shall not be used for repeated unauthorized territorial overflights of Greece, and another that is related to the Turkish efforts to undermine the Syrian Democratic Forces and the ratification of Sweden and Finland's accession to NATO. Obviously, this is not a zero-sum game that Greece is playing in terms of foreign policy against Turkey or an orchestrated incrimination of Turkey vis-à-vis its Western Allies, but a consequence of the dangerous path that Erdogan's foreign policy has taken reaching the limits of the US tolerance.

As allied forces do their best to prevent the Russo-Ukrainian conflict from spreading outside Ukraine into neighboring countries and becoming a full-fledged multi-regional war, it is essential to suppress similar dangerous revisionism in other regions, such as the EMED. Bearing that in mind, the EU's "Strategic Compass" regarding the EMED included references to the threats against the EU Member States, violations of sovereign rights, and the instrumentalization of refugees, stressing the need for a stable and secure environment that is beneficial for both EU and Turkey.

(www.ekathimerini.com). Retrieved: Dec.18, 2021, from: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/242682/pyatt-us-greece-cooperation-proceeding-at-top-speed/>

¹⁷⁵ Kokkinidis, T. (2022, May 10). Alexandroupolis a "Key Port" for U.S. Military Presence in Greece. *Greek Reporter*. Retrieved: Jul.20, 2022 from: <https://greekreporter.com/2022/05/10/alexandroupolis-military-u-s-greece/>

Most important is the fact that the war in Ukraine helped the EU to achieve a security and defence consensus, strengthen its cooperation with NATO, and agree to a common response mechanism for the interests of the Member States and the safeguarding of regional stability¹⁷⁶ Without any doubt, this further highlights the importance of multilateral cooperation schemes such as the Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian, because they remove extra-EU geopolitical tensions, relieve some of the EU's energy security concerns, and support a stable and secure environment, that discourages revisionist tendencies. Moreover, they provide the EU with an alternate energy option now that the economy is on a war footing and leaves no room for wasted chances or eco-friendly planning in the midterm. Even without building new energy infrastructure, the guarantees of safety and stability of the existing energy routes and potential resources, as well as the freedom of navigation and the insurance of undisrupted supply chains, are better than gold in indeed dangerous times where the clouds of war gathered over Europe and shortages of energy and consumer goods is a harsh reality. In times like this, even the most mediocre and condescending part of the European Commission cannot deny the deteriorating relations with Turkey and calls on the latter to “*respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all EU member states*”.¹⁷⁷ Turkish actions brought tension in the Aegean Sea and the EMED, and as the European Commission said: “*Tensions in the Aegean Sea and Eastern Mediterranean were not conducive to good neighbourly relations and undermined regional stability and security*”.¹⁷⁸

France's support for the trilateral cooperation schemes of Greece and Cyprus with other eastern Mediterranean countries, such as Egypt and Israel, was a given since French foreign policy chose to engage dynamically in this region and strengthen Greece's position, bringing balance to an environment disturbed by Turkish revisionism. Its excellent bilateral relations with Cyprus (through a bilateral defence

¹⁷⁶ Athens Bureau. (2022, Mar.25). The EU's “Strategic Compass” with Greek blessings in view of Russia and Turkey. *Greek City Times*. Retrieved: Mar. 25, 2022, from: <https://greekcitytimes.com/2022/03/23/strategic-compass-russia-turkey/>

¹⁷⁷ The Greek Herald. (2022, Oct.13). EU slams Turkey for Greek airspace violations and threats in new report. Retrieved: Oct. 15, 2022, from: <https://greekherald.com.au/news/eu-slams-turkey-for-greek-airspace-violations-and-threats-in-new-report/>

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

agreement),¹⁷⁹ Egypt, and of course, Greece, with which France has concluded the unprecedented, by European standards, strategic partnership agreement in the fields of defence and security,¹⁸⁰ have made France one of the most crucial and influential players in the EMED region. Furthermore, French support for multilateral cooperation schemes in the region is indisputable and emphasized with its participation in regular coordination between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt in the framework of a 3+1 format¹⁸¹ and also with the French approach to issues of energy security and deterrence of Turkish imperialism with the creation of a “Pax Mediterranea”.¹⁸² Of course, France is not a superpower comparable to the US or China. It remains, nevertheless, a capable, great power of the Western flank despite its differences with the US, and most importantly, it is a NATO and EU member with solid military, nuclear and naval capability. Currently, it is also affected by the European energy crisis and deals with its own domestic political issues. However, there is no doubt that its foreign policy is closely related to the EU integration and future development, and thus its interests in the EMED are interwoven with the European CSPD and Strategic Compass. In this fashion, France’s support of multilateral schemes such as the Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian provides it the best chance to play a significant role in the stabilization of the EMED and assume the role of a key regional regulator and a countable force in every Western regional midterm or long-term planning.

Unsupportive Players (Russia, China)

The Russian security culture, with its long history of conflict and competition with the European forces after WW2 and the US, continued to discredit all liberal and democratic achievements of the Western World, fueling a constant recognition in the

¹⁷⁹ Naftemporiki. (2020, Aug.16). Οργή της Άγκυρας για την αμυντική συμφωνία Κύπρου – Γαλλίας. (*m.naftemporiki.gr*). Retrieved: Jan.12, 2022, from: <https://m.naftemporiki.gr/story/1628622/orgi-tis-agkuras-gia-tin-amuntiki-sumfonia-kuprou-gallias>.

¹⁸⁰ The Pressroom. (2021, Sep.28). Αυτή είναι η αμυντική συμφωνία Γαλλίας-Ελλάδας. (*www.thepressroom.gr*). Retrieved: Nov.27, 2021, from: <https://www.thepressroom.gr/ellada/ayti-einai-i-amyntiki-symfonia-gallias-elladas>

¹⁸¹ In.gr (2020, May.11). Η τουρκική προκλητικότητα στο επίκεντρο της πενταμερούς Ελλάδας, Κύπρου, Αιγύπτου, Γαλλίας και ΗΑΕ. (*www.in.gr*). Retrieved: Jan.12, 2022, from: <https://www.in.gr/2020/05/11/politics/diplomatia/tourkiki-proklytikotita-sto-epikentro-tis-pentamerous-elladas-kyprou-aigyptou-gallias-kai-iae/?msclkid=20b617ffae2711ecade19e4461f05a19>

¹⁸² Antonopoulos, P. (2020, Sep.2). Macron: We need to create a Pax Mediterranea to stop imperialist Turkey (VIDEO). *Greek City Times*. Retrieved: Jan.14, 2022, from: <https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/09/02/macron-we-need-to-create-a-pax-mediterranea-to-stop-imperialist-turkey-video/>

face of the latter and what it represents, of the identity of the decadent enemy. It turns out that even today, little has changed. To reinforce and secure its geopolitical position, President Putin, with a purely aggressive neorealist reaction, did not hesitate to use military force and invade Ukraine despite the consequences. While he sought to justify the Russian invasion as a reaction to NATO's expansion into Russian territories, the invasion of Ukraine seems nothing less than a pretext for Putin to reclaim what he thinks is rightfully Russian soil. Europe remains for Russia its major battlefield in geopolitical and economic terms, so the Russian Federation, even without being the superpower that once was as CCCP, still supports its claims and visions of a privileged sphere of Russian strategic interests in Europe, questioning the status quo and the sovereign rights of former CCCP countries that declared their independence from the Russian influence. Regardless of its original aspirations, in the context of the current situation in Ukraine, the Russian Federation has not only been involved in a prolonged, as it seems, armed conflict with Ukraine, but as it turned out, it has been engaged in a far broader and exterminating attrition of Russian armed forces into a proxy warfare fueled by the Western Allies (US, EU, and NATO). The heavy economic sanctions imposed worsen the situation by crippling the Russian economy at a slow but steady rate, and the travel limitations have almost isolated the whole country (at least from most western destinations). In response, the Russian Federation constantly seeks to find cracks in NATO's cohesion, uses natural gas as an energy weapon against the EU and approaches other countries with similar dangerous revisionist views, such as China and Turkey. At the same time, Russian foreign policy is keen to burn bridges with historically friendly countries such as Greece, proving there are great interests in international relations rather than great friendships. While Greece's geopolitical footprint has been effectively improved through bilateral cooperations with the US and France, multilateral cooperations with other regional players (such as Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, and Jordan), and upgraded national defence capabilities, that leaves less room for opportunistic manipulation by extra-regional actors, and namely countries with revisionism tendencies. Such countries prefer to extend their sphere of geopolitical influence as far as their power permits them and greatly detest any cooperation initiative out of their exclusive control. So, without prejudice but purely out of a realist view on national interest, Greece cannot embrace Russia against its liberal and core democratic values. In this context, while the Russian strategic and security cultures shape the Modus Operandi of Russian foreign affairs, a status quo country like Greece, which is also an

EU and NATO member, and strongly opposes any revisionism, is indeed out of Russian reach. According to Dr. Kostas Ifantis, Director of «ΙΔΙΣ» (Institute of International Relations) and Professor at Panteion University, *“Despite the consistent efforts of Greece to achieve a new modus vivendi, the response from Moscow was weak. For Russia Greece is a factor that cannot be manipulated”*. Moreover, he adds: *“In such a strategic condition, Greek security interests are absolutely specific and identified from the country’s position in the liberal democratic West. Those who deny this reality are a significant part of the Greek society that has succumbed to the perception of a Russia with which it unites us, either the memory of a revolutionary socialist ‘motherland’ or the memory of an orthodox ‘protector’. In both cases, memories are nothing else than haunted mythology”*.¹⁸³

Although China (PRC) is not (yet) a superpower comparable to the US, both in hard and soft power magnitude, it has adjusted its national priorities on economic growth and strategic expansion well beyond the Asiatic region. This seems to have set it on a collision course with the US since China has been considered (for some time now) US's most dangerous adversary and competitor in the quest for global domination. The recent face-to-face meeting of President Biden with the Chinese leader Xi Jinping on the 14th of November during the G20 recent summit in Indonesia contributed to the re-establishment of a bilateral communication channel between the two strongest global economies. Nevertheless, while the US policy towards China and Taiwan has not changed, and in this context, the US strongly opposes the rise of Chinese aggression against Taiwan, neither has changed Chinese policy, as Beijing continues to consider Taiwan part of its territory with no right to develop independent foreign relations. While Biden reiterated that the competition between China and the US *“should not veer into conflict and underscored that the United States and China must manage the competition responsively and maintain open lines of communication”*,¹⁸⁴ and Xi said *“it is in both countries' interest to ‘achieve peaceful coexistence’”*,¹⁸⁵ the

¹⁸³ Υφαντής, Κ. (2022, Apr.23). Η ρωσική κουλτούρα ασφαλείας και η μυθολογία των ελληνορωσικών σχέσεων. *ΤΟ ΒΗΜΑ*. (www.tovima.gr). Retrieved: Sep. 10, 2022, from: <https://www.tovima.gr/2022/04/23/opinions/i-rosiki-koultoura-asfaleias-kai-i-mythologia-ton-ellino-rosikon-sxeseon/>

¹⁸⁴ Cheng, E. (2022, Nov.14). Biden objects to China’s ‘aggressive’ approach to Taiwan in three-hour meeting with Xi. *CNBC*. Retrieved: Nov. 14, 2022, from: <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/11/14/biden-and-xi-meet-in-person-for-the-first-time.html>

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

truth is that the harsh competition and the struggle for control will not cease easily or quickly (if ever), because the stakes are high. Meanwhile, China continues to act independently without accepting global trade rules. In this regard, Chinese investment policy in foreign countries remains rather aggressive and incompatible with western standards as it never releases data about its relative profits, and it does not comply with the EU and western objectives for mitigating climate change.¹⁸⁶ This behavior raises European and US concerns about unfair competition, and the latter will inevitably cause a broader Western reaction against Chinese trading practices. Although Chinese expansion to the EU and mainly Greece (with the Chinese shipping company COSCO now in possession of 67% of Piraeus port shares), on first look, does not seem to oppose initiatives such as the Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian tripartite - which are beneficial because they secure sea-line communications and provide the required maritime security for shipment - in the mid to long term, this expansion could pose a geopolitical vulnerability. Therefore, despite the COSCO investment in Piraeus, which is beneficial for Greece,¹⁸⁷ China's aggressive expansion in the European markets and ports (*check Chart 3 in Annex B*) sooner or later will crash into strong objections from the US and the EU.¹⁸⁸ Moreover, as long as China supports the dangerous and condemned by western standards Russian revisionism, it could also support Turkish revisionism or even undermine Greece's cooperation with its western allies, threatening the status quo in the EMED if that suits its interests against the US. In any case, Greece cannot differentiate from the common western perspective and mutual course of action since

¹⁸⁶ Διαμαντοπούλου, Α. (2022, Jan.27). Online Discussion of the Institute of International Economic Relations ("ΙΔΟΣ" in Greek) on the subject of: "*Η Κίνα, το Διεθνές Σύστημα και οι Ελληνοκινεζικές Σχέσεις*" (*China, International System and the Greek-Chinese Relations*). Retrieved: Sep. 10, 2022, from: <https://idos.gr/i-kina-to-diethnes-systima-kai-oi-ellinokinezikes-scheseis-kyria-simeia/> and also: https://idos.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/China-Summary_final.pdf

¹⁸⁷ By becoming the largest EMED port and the 7th largest in Europe, Piraeus has been transformed into a major transshipment point for Chinese goods and one of the most important Mediterranean hubs. **Source:** Bali, K. (2022, Oct.30). In Greece's largest port of Piraeus, China is the boss. *DW* (www.dw.com). Retrieved: Sep. 10, 2022, from: <https://www.dw.com/en/greece-in-the-port-of-piraeus-china-is-the-boss/a-63581221>

¹⁸⁸ The privatization of ports in the European countries, enabled Chinese infiltration through the effective control of essential infrastructure, and thus let significant geostrategic infrastructure end up in the hands of extra-regional actors. According to professor Chlomudis, "*Certain conditions must be included in the concession contracts to prevent national security, and that of the EU, being jeopardized. The guidelines for infrastructure of geostrategic importance should be the same throughout the EU*". **Source:** Bali, K. (2022, Oct.30). In Greece's largest port of Piraeus, China is the boss. *DW* (www.dw.com). Retrieved: Sep. 10, 2022, from: <https://www.dw.com/en/greece-in-the-port-of-piraeus-china-is-the-boss/a-63581221>

its national and geopolitical interests can hardly coexist or identify with the Chinese ones.

Areas for further development

Egypt is the most important manufacturer of weapons and military components among the Arab countries. State-owned enterprises, under the control of the Armament Authority, are the leading domestic producers of Egyptian defence systems.¹⁸⁹ Regarding the military cooperation with Greece and Cyprus, Egypt could play an important role by further enhancing its military research into maritime surveillance systems and related equipment compatible with the Greek, Cypriot, and Egyptian naval platforms. It can also participate in joint armament projects in cooperation with the French defence industry, a common supplier for the three countries. With the French defence industry as a common denominator and considering the Greek naval capabilities, the joint effort in the field of defence material and the development of common naval maintenance and upgrade platforms could boost the revival of Greek shipyards, give added value to Egyptian defence products, and contribute to the development of defence export capabilities.

The exchange of military information in the framework of a shared network platform and maritime situational awareness could enhance maritime security. Beyond that, adopting common exercise practices could gradually develop an enhanced perception and profound comprehension of the common threat environment in the EMED, leading to a more effective and long-term maritime cooperative strategy. Additionally, interoperability and situational awareness could be further enhanced by a two-way military data exchange link with the EU. Such an initiative will not only be highly appreciated by the EU strategic planning, but it would likely encourage a long-term investment of the EU and mainly the European Defence Agency (EDA) in

¹⁸⁹ Military goods produced in Egypt include: small caliber and heavy ammunition, mortars, mines, grenades and other explosives, antitank rockets, rocket motors, radars and electronic equipment, smoke and pyrotechnic devices, rifles, pistols (Beretta licensee) and machine guns, jet trainer aircraft (Alpha and Tucano), armored personnel carriers, Alpha jet engines, field and aircraft communications equipment, Gazelle helicopters and engines, gyroscopes, weapon sights, binoculars, periscopes, tanks, MLRs, and artillery pieces. **Source:** GlobalSecurity.org (n.d.). Defence Industry – Egypt. ([www.globalsecurity.org](https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/egypt/industry.htm?msclkid=a7538becad5911ecb92999310f5f8e52)). Retrieved: Mar.10, 2022, from: <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/egypt/industry.htm?msclkid=a7538becad5911ecb92999310f5f8e52>

developing, financing, and integrating more projects like this into the EU Integrated Maritime Policy.

Another field for further development that is already given special attention is the conduct of recurring joint aeronautical military exercises, such as “Medusa”. As the Hellenic Minister of Defence, Mr. Panagiotopoulos, underlined during last year’s Medusa 11 exercise (November of 2021), with the participation of Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates: *“The fact that four countries, Greece, Egypt, Cyprus, the United Arab Emirates, are coming together, involving the elements of their Armed Forces in a field of intensive exercises and training, shows the true will of these countries to form a network of defense and strengthening of the security and stability environment in the Eastern Mediterranean region”*.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, the presence of France as a regular participant since 2020, and the ever-expanding observing country list that includes: the US, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Italy, India, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, Kuwait, and others, proves the importance and the international recognition of the Greek-Cypriot-Egyptian tripartite military cooperation that extends beyond the EU or NATO. The aforementioned recognition, beyond national prestige, poses a unique opportunity to bridge different perspectives from significantly different countries and cultures, which, if it had not been for this EMED cooperation scheme, they would have never bothered to attend West-led military initiatives, not even as observers. As it seems, innovative cooperative schemes that include reliable and well-known historical countries located at the crossroads of the Western and Eastern worlds have a reassuring effect that emits reliability. Therefore, through this kind of cooperative schemes and their enlargement, Eastern and Western world countries can attempt a rapprochement in energy security on a new basis, devoid of past prejudice and cultural collisions.

¹⁹⁰ In.gr (2021, Nov.21). Παναγιωτόπουλος για «Μέδουσα 11» – Ελλάδα, Αίγυπτος, Κύπρος και ΗΑΕ προσπίζουν την ασφάλεια της Μεσογείου. (www.in.gr). Retrieved: Aug. 25, 2022, from: <https://www.in.gr/2021/11/22/politics/panagiotopoulos-gia-medousa-11-ellada-aigyptos-kypros-kai-iae-proaspizoun-tin-asfaleia-tis-mesogeiou/>

Conclusions

The EMED region, due to its geography, is an important strategic hub that brings advantages to whoever controls it but is influenced by the developments of the broader geopolitical system of the Middle East.¹⁹¹ It is also an unstable region where internal and external players struggle to reap geopolitical benefits by strengthening their presence, influence, and control of energy exploitation. Thus, they do not hesitate to cause regional instability according to their interests. Although the estimated energy reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean basin are smaller than those of the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea, they are considered capable of changing the geopolitical balances in the region on the one hand and of reducing European energy dependence on Russia on the other.

During the present period, the European and global geopolitical scene has undergone tectonic changes due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, creating security and energy uncertainties and emerging dangerous tendencies of revisionism. EMED is also in a reshuffle as Turkey's dangerous revisionism combined with its harsh economic situation makes it an "export of instability" factor.¹⁹² On a systemic level, the relations between Greece and Turkey, through the prism of Mearsheimer's aggressive (or offensive) realism, do not have the structure of a zero-sum game because neither of the two states individually can play a Great Power role. However, the game with other actors in the region, such as Egypt, Israel, S. Arabia, and the UAE, as well as extra-regional actors, such as the USA, France, Russia, and China, shows that it exceeds the narrow boundaries of a bipolar confrontation (Greece - Turkey), as it tends to be multifactorial. Besides, although geostrategic interest has temporarily shifted to Ukraine and China, the EMED remains a region of high geopolitical value for the US

¹⁹¹ Χειλά, Ε. (2019, Απρ.21). Ανατολική Μεσόγειος, γεωπολιτικές δυναμικές και Ελλάδα. *Η εποχή*. (www.epohi.gr). Retrieved: Nov.20, 2021, from: <https://www.epohi.gr/article/26112/anatolikh-mesogeios-geopolitikes-dynamikes-kai-ellada>

¹⁹² *"It should not escape attention that the scenario of Turkey's departure from the West combined with the deterioration of its economic situation is a cause for concern and reflection, given that economic weakness is a factor in 'exporting' instability to the wider environment. Even more so since it seems that its plan to play the role of ruler in the Mediterranean does not seem to succeed, since key countries such as Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and of course Israel, Cyprus and Greece seek synergies in order to promote common goals in the region with the support of the USA and EU countries."* **Source:** *ibid.*

and Russia, as it is also a field of economic and cultural penetration of China into the European and western markets.¹⁹³

The tripartite defence cooperation agreement between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, along with the military strengthening of Greece and Egypt with high-tech armament programs, does not pose a challenge to the region's security but rather an attempt to balance Turkish expansionism. The latter lies in the coercion, from the point of view of "defensive realism", to activate a balance of power mechanism that can function effectively as a deterrent to Turkish aspirations and as a central parameter in International Relations.¹⁹⁴ While no agreement should be considered immune to geopolitical changes, this trilateral cooperation has received significant US and EU recognition and full support from France. Moreover, the involvement of a considerable number of members in such multilateral agreements commits more local actors to joint actions of mutual interest aimed at common profit. Expanding these actions and partnerships, in addition to strengthening mutual friendship and understanding, creates legitimate needs to safeguard common interests and thus leads to defence cooperation and joint commitments to establish and maintain energy security in the EMED region. The possibilities of extending the agreements with the participation of more states, but also of deepening into closer and more dynamic military cooperation, emit security and stability, and therefore, they can become a pillar of stability in the region.

For the above reasons, it is necessary to expand the military cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, with the participation of other states, and to deepen it with a more extensive schedule of military exercises that promotes the interoperability and interculturalism of the participating forces. It is also important to converge on a shared culture regarding Maritime Security that is compatible with the European security architecture so that it can become part of it in the future. Furthermore, it is necessary to extend cooperation to the defence industry, to joint armaments programs, and facilitate the exchange of military information with provision for two-way connection to the respective European networks.

¹⁹³ Λίτσας, Σ., Ν. (2020, Aug.18). Ελληνο-τουρκικός διάλογος: Πραγματικότητα και Ψευδαισθήσεις. *Capital.gr* (www.capital.gr). Retrieved Dec.18, 2021, from: <https://www.capital.gr/arthra/3475021/ellino-tourkikos-dialogos-pragmatikotita-kai-pseudaisthiseis>

¹⁹⁴ Γκόφας, Α. & Τζιφάκης, Ν. (2017). *Θεωρητικές Προβολές στη Διεθνή Πολιτική: Η Σίνο-Αμερικανική Πρόκληση*. Athens: Πεδίο. (p.47)

There are indeed limits in every cooperative scheme that all members must be aware of. Strong and sincere cooperation should be based primarily on common respect for each member's sovereignty, history, and geopolitical position. The relative gains from military cooperative schemes should be carefully balanced, bearing in mind that it is better to cooperate out of preference and not out of necessity. Thus, without underestimating the power of unity, each state must feel responsible for fostering its defence capabilities without solely relying on others and mainly without burdening other members with their own deficiencies in national defence capabilities. Additionally, what is most needed out of cooperation and namely military cooperation within a volatile environment such as the one of the EMED, is not the accumulation of supreme military capabilities that raise concerns and spread awe and fear to the adversaries but a carefully balanced projection of smart power with significant deterrence capabilities. The latter emits commitment to the geopolitical status quo and stability to extra-regional actors or major powers, discouraging any potential destabilization attempt by raising its cost. At the same time, it calls on regional actors to respect the cooperations and their members or, even better, join them. While multilateral cooperative schemes have limitations and disadvantages, and their success is not “de facto” guaranteed, they are the best chance for peace and stability. Although their military capabilities cannot compete with those of long-established alliances such as NATO, sometimes this is unnecessary because they can act in a supplementary rather than alternative fashion. More important, though, is that their regional nature primarily serves the national interest of their members in a specific goal, such as enhancing regional energy security, without polarization or biases towards specific extra-regional players who try to control the geopolitical map according to their current interests.

Greece and Cyprus, and Egypt, have the historical background, tradition, military power, and credibility, in the context of their military cooperation, to play a leading role in a series of actions that will bring neighboring states closer in multilateral schemes of mutual benefit, building the future security and stability in the region and beyond, regardless of the pursuits of extra-regional destabilizing factors. Turkey is not exempt from this future either, albeit it must eliminate its revisionist practice. In light of the above, the military cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt should be seen as a beacon of peace and security in the EMED that points to a future based on sturdy pillars of stability and prosperity.

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Proposals

After the trilateral cooperation between Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt, and the (partially) declared¹⁹⁵ EEZ between Greece and Egypt, now more than ever is the right time for the expansion of Greek territorial waters to 12 nautical miles, the proclamation of the Greek EEZ with Turkey (even unilaterally) and the full development of a Mediterranean Strategic Energy Security Subsystem that will include Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel and may include in the future other countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Tunisia, and others.

The exclusion and isolation of Turkey must not be seen as an aspiration but as a side effect of its unilateral and revisionist aspirations. A Mediterranean Strategic Energy Subsystem must be considered a call on Turkey to abandon hegemonic atavism and political isolationism and cooperate based on rationality in a multilateral scheme with only profits to offer its members.

A real turnaround and compliance of Turkey that will render out of place any maximalist pursuit and attempt of Ankara to dominate can only be achieved when a combination of "hard" and "soft", namely "smart", power is achieved, through multilateral cooperation with the other major actors in the Eastern Mediterranean. For this reason, following the broadening of the trilateral and multilateral structures of military cooperation, it is necessary to deepen them with joint exercises under a common maritime security framework that promotes interoperability and the exchange of military information to acquire an expanded image of aeronautical operations as well as enhanced situational awareness.

Military cooperation must not be limited to joint exercises and national capacity building, but it should trigger closer multilateral cooperation in the areas of Research & Development and defence industry. A leading nuclear power such as France must assume the coordinating role in such an initiative because of its long-time experience, interaction, and dynamic engagement in the shaping of the EU Common Defence

¹⁹⁵ We are referring to the partial EEZ designation between Greece and Egypt, within the framework of the international law, which was signed in Cairo on Aug. 6 of 2020. (For a map, check *Picture 5 in Annex B*).

Policy, which assures the alignment and compatibility of the whole project to the EU military capacity building and Common Defence Strategy.

The tripartite military cooperation between Greece, Egypt, and Cyprus should not be seen independently of the one between Greece, Egypt, Israel, or Jordan. A common approach to maritime security and maritime situational awareness requires an extended data exchange between all the available sources. Thus, it is paramount to bridge the doubts and abandon past prejudices between the states of the EMED. It is also crucial for these states to develop resilience through unity at the intra-regional level and more independence from extra-regional actors that try to influence or even periodically destabilize the region according to their geopolitical needs.

Apart from the very anarchic nature of the international system and its multipolar orientation, along with the systemic pressure that characterizes the states' behavior in international relations, factors and forces within each state must not be ignored because they can play a significant role in deciphering each state's different response to geopolitical shifts according to its current leadership's perception. While an extensive analysis of each factor could prove quite difficult, it is sometimes necessary and safe to consider that different elite groups and decision-makers think and act differently under pressure from endogenous controversies unseen at the systemic macro-level. In this regard, multilateral cooperation is not static but an ever-evolving process that must be treated accordingly and with significant versatility.

Undoubtedly, there is an urgent need to exploit the participating countries' geopolitical potential in Greece, Cyprus, and Egypt's tripartite structure and adopt a common military deterrent strategy based on a more outward-looking and dynamic foreign policy. In the final analysis, in foreign policy, the expression of good communication intentions on the part of the benefit of the whole, but also the protection of individual national interests by any means necessary, must primarily serve the Mediterranean stability and common interests, even if this may lead to the partial "loss" of favor of the extra-regional power players with a significant role in shaping the international scene.

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ANNEXES

- “A” Pictures, Graphical Data & Charts
- “B” Joint Declaration of 9th Greece – Cyprus – Egypt, Trilateral Summit
- “C” Declaration of Non-Plagiarism

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Graphic that shows Europe’s dependency on Russian gas supplies. (IMAGE) *GraphicNews* Retrieved: 18 Jan 2022 from: <https://www.graphicnews.com/en/pages/42154/energy-europes-dependency-on-russian-gas>

Graphic that shows the East-Med Pipeline (IMAGE). Ellinas, C. (2018, Dec.2). EastMed gas pipeline increasingly doubtful. *CyprusMail*. Retrieved: Dec.20, 2021, from: <https://cyprus-mail.com/2018/12/02/eastmed-gas-pipeline-increasingly-doubtful/>

Military Facilities in the Middle East Region. (IMAGE). *American Security Project*. <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/national-security-strategy/u-s-bases-in-the-middle-east/>
via *Google Maps*.
https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=12AO9A22Cjkv3pG_tyiIx468a8WpqTaJU&ll=26.719749847011602%2C43.66837139832468&z=5

Annex A: Pictures, Graphical Data & Charts

Gas Field	Probable Reserves (billion cubic meters)	Discovery Date	Status
Tamar, Israel	280	2009	Producing
West Nile Delta, Egypt ^b	142	2010	Producing
Leviathan, Israel	622	2010	Producing
Aphrodite, the RoC	127	2011	Pursuing gas sales
Tanin, Israel ^c	37	2011	Producing
Karish, Israel ^c	28-42	2013	Producing
Zohr, Egypt	845	2015	Producing
Calypso 1, the RoC ^d	170-227 ^e	2018	Discovered in January 2018
Glaucus-1, the RoC ^e	142-227 ^f	2019	Discovered in February 2019

^a These figures are an update to the 2016 Atlantic Council report *Hydrocarbon Developments in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Case for Pragmatism* by Charles Ellinas, John Roberts, and Harry Tzimitras. Available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/hydrocarbon-developments-in-the-eastern-mediterranean/>.

^b "BP Makes a Significant Deep Gas Discovery in Egypt's West Nile Delta," BP, November 23, 2010, <https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/news-and-insights/press-releases/bp-makes-a-significant-deep-gas-discovery-in-egypts-west-nile-delta.html>.

^c John V. Bowlus, "Eastern Mediterranean Gas: Testing the Field," European Council on Foreign Relations, May 2020, https://www.ecfr.eu/special/eastern_med/gas_fields.

^d "Calypso Holds 6 to 8 Tcf, ENI Says," *Cyprus Mail Online*, February 13, 2018, <http://cyprus-mail.com/2018/02/13/calypso-holds-6-8-tcf-eni-says/>.

^e Gas quantities are still to be confirmed, and could be as low as 85 billion cubic meters. See Gregoris Savva, "ExxonMobil Announces a Discovery of 5 to 8 Trillion Cubic Feet in Cyprus' EEZ," *Greek News Online*, February 28, 2019, <https://www.greeknewsonline.com/exxonmobil-announces-a-discovery-of-5-to-8-trillion-cubic-feet-in-cyprus-eez/>.

^f Gas quantities still to be confirmed; appraisal drilling of Glaucus was started in December 2021 and is expected to be completed by the end of February 2022.

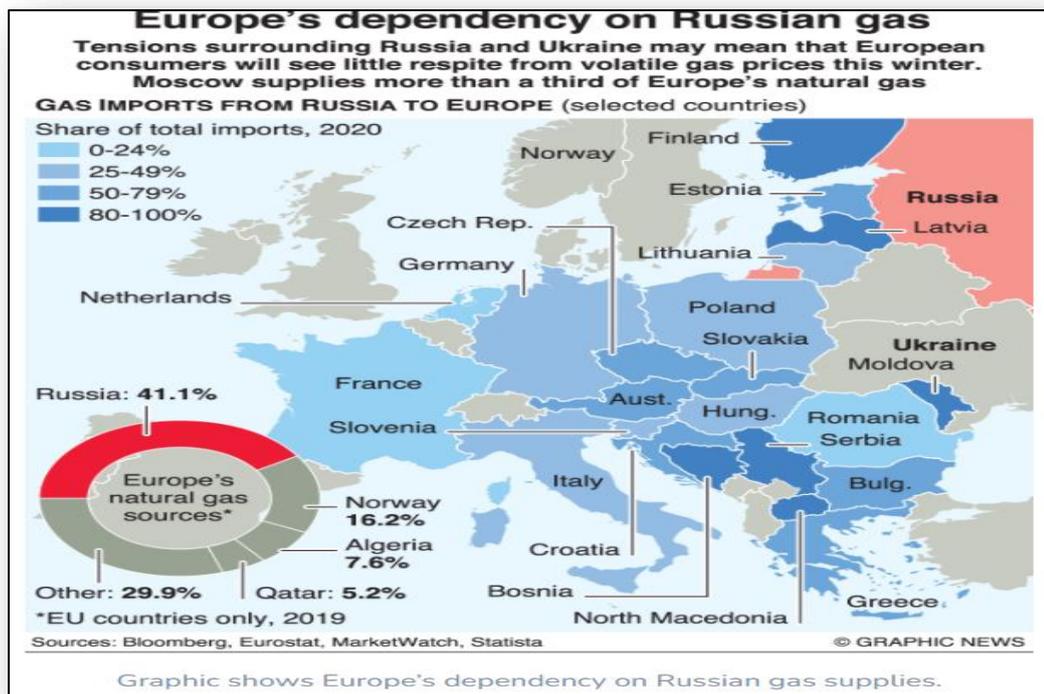
Table 1: Major Gas Discoveries in the EMED

Source: Ellinas, C. (2022, Feb). Issue Brief: *Energy and Geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean*. Atlantic Council. Global Energy Center. (p.2). Retrieved Feb 27, 2022, from: https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Eastern-Mediterranean_Final.pdf



Picture 1: The East-Med Pipeline

Source: Ellinas, C. (2018, Dec.2). EastMed gas pipeline increasingly doubtful. *CyprusMail*. Retrieved: Dec.20, 2021, from: <https://cyprus-mail.com/2018/12/02/eastmed-gas-pipeline-increasingly-doubtful/>



Picture 2: European Dependency on Russian natural gas

Source: Graphic News retrieved 18 Jan 2022 from: <https://www.graphicnews.com/en/pages/42154/energy-europes-dependency-on-russian-gas>



Picture 3: US Military Facilities in the Middle East Region

Source: <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/national-security-strategy/u-s-bases-in-the-middle-east/> and also: https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=12A09A22Cjkv3pG_tyiX468a8WpqTaJU&ll=26.719749847011602%2C43.66837139832468&z=5

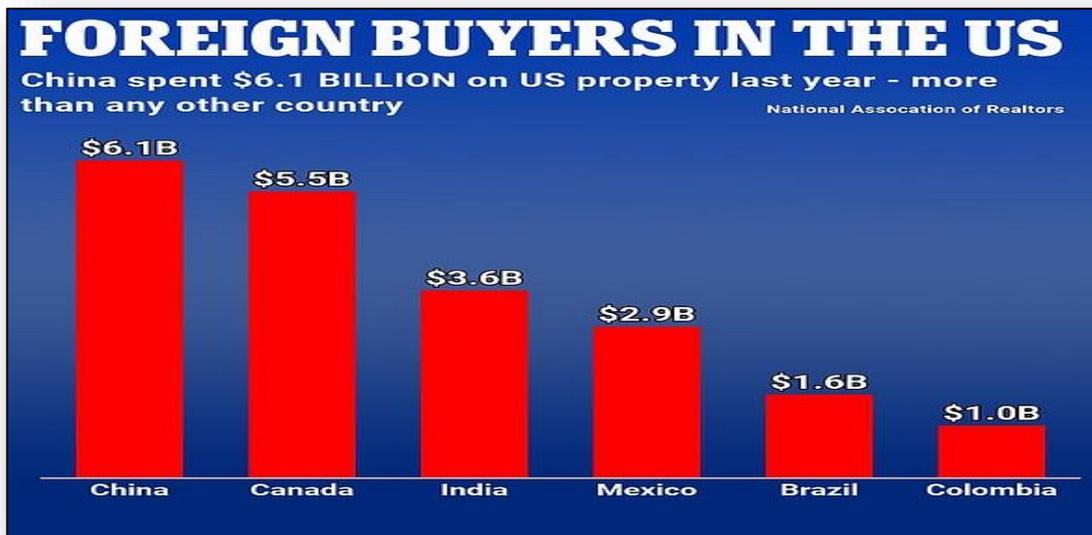
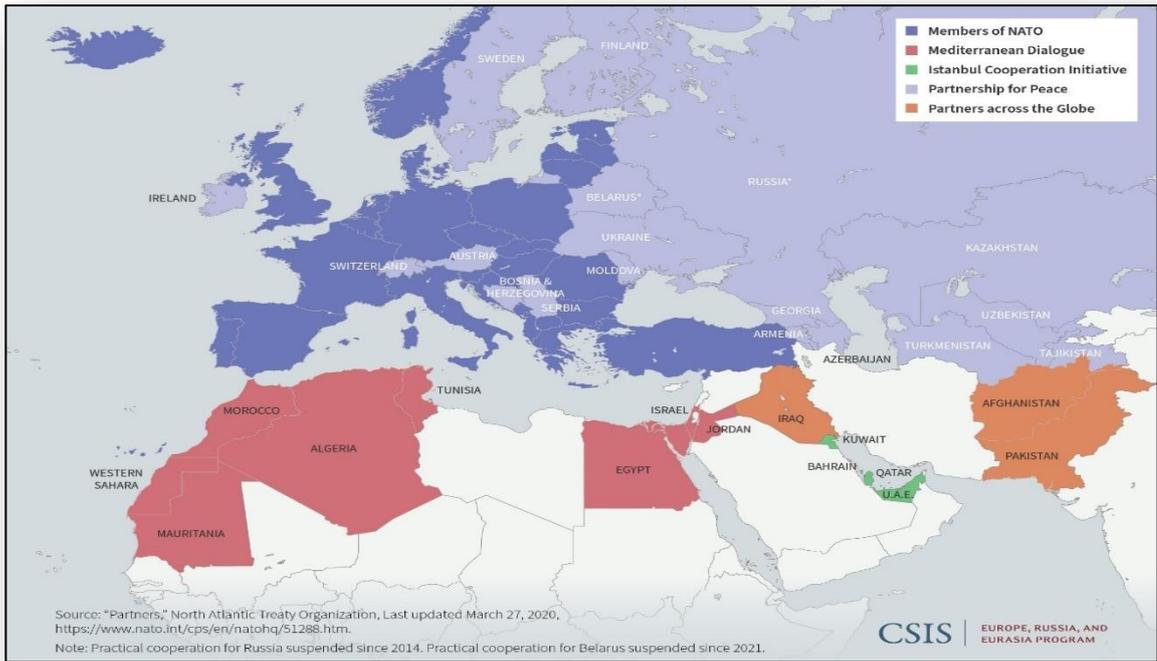


Chart 1: Foreign Buyers in the US

Source: Oliveira, A. (2022, July 25). China purchased 300 acres in North Dakota 20 minutes from military base causing security concerns. *Daily Mail*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11044615/China-purchased-300-acres-North-Dakota-20-minutes-military-base-causing-security-concerns.html>



Picture 4: NATO's Partners in the Southern Neighborhood

Source: Simon, L. & Morcos, P. (2022, May 9). CSIS Brief: NATO and the South after Ukraine. Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS). <https://www.csis.org/analysis/nato-and-south-after-ukraine>

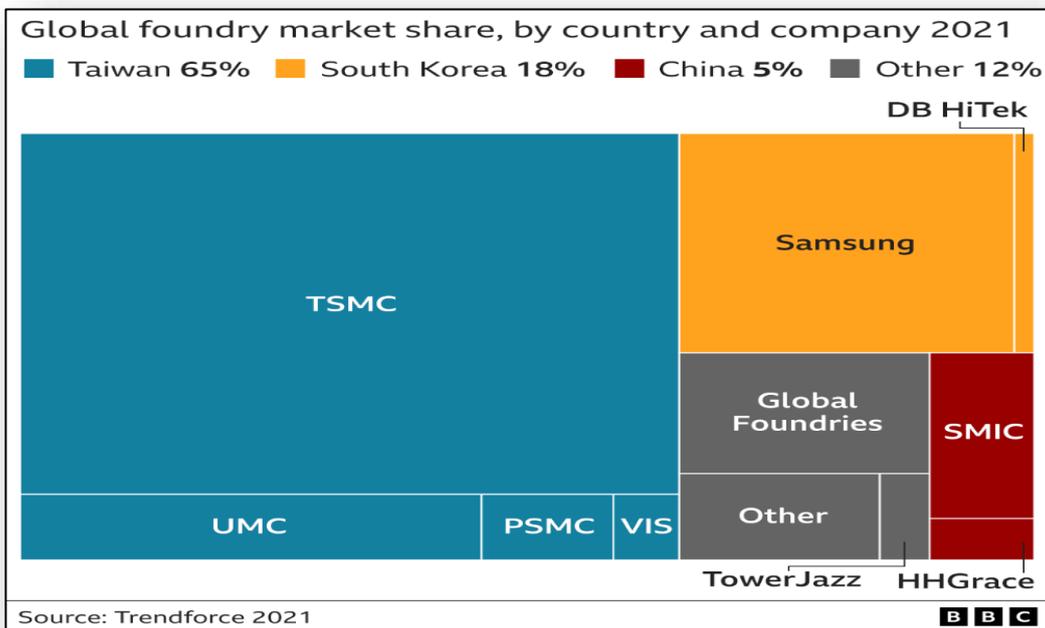


Chart 2: Taiwan dominates the global production of computer chips

Source: BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-59900139>

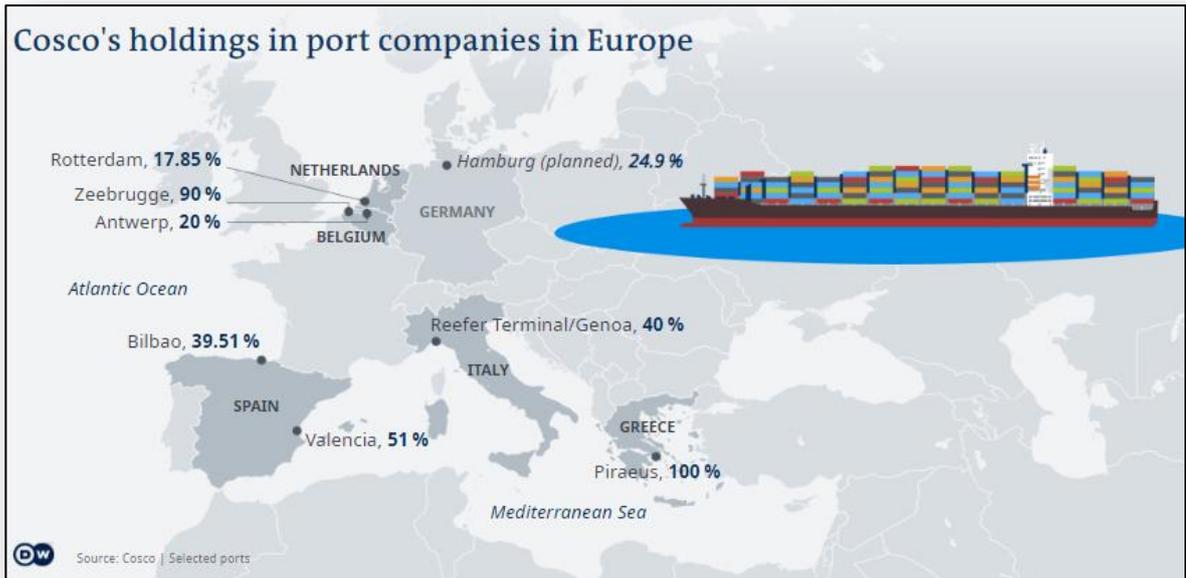


Chart 3: COSCO's holdings in port companies in Europe.

Source: Processed chart of Cosco Selected ports by Deutsche Welle (DW) available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/greece-in-the-port-of-piraeus-china-is-the-boss/a-63581221>



Picture 5: Demarkation of Egyptian-Greek maritime borders in the Mediterranean

Source: Wikimedia Commons

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Annex B: Joint Declaration of 9th Greece – Cyprus – Egypt, Trilateral Summit¹⁹⁶

“We, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus and Abdel Fattah El – Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, met in Athens, Greece, on the 19th of October 2021, in the framework of the 9th Trilateral Cooperation and Coordination Summit among our three countries.

We reviewed the work in the various areas of our cooperation and noted that significant progress has been achieved.

Encouraged by the positive results thus far and deeply convinced of the strategic importance of the trilateral cooperation between our respective countries, we expressed our firm determination to continue working closely on issues of mutual interest, enhancing peace, security and stability in our region. In this context, we reiterated our support for the establishment of the Permanent Secretariat for the trilateral mechanism between Cyprus, Egypt and Greece, based in Nicosia, in a way that maintains the uniqueness of the relations between the three countries.

We welcomed the signing of the agreement for the establishment of a trilateral electricity interconnector between the grids of Egypt, Cyprus and Greece. This project strengthens our economic cooperation and enhances the security of energy supply, not only of the countries involved, but also of Europe, as it will create a highway for the transmission of significant amounts of electricity to and from the Eastern Mediterranean. The Electricity Interconnector project, which connects the electricity grids of our countries, constitutes an important component of the strategy to accelerate the development of the Eastern Mediterranean Energy Corridor, providing an alternative source of energy supply from the region to the European Continent and vice versa.

We expressed our desire to continue strengthening our cooperation, through a series of agreements, on the exploration and transportation of natural gas; we remain

¹⁹⁶ Balkan News. (n.d). (2021,Oct.19). Joint Declaration of 9th Greece-Cyprus-Egypt, Trilateral Summit. (*balkan.news*). Retrieved Jan.20, 2022, from: <https://balkan.news/2021/10/19/joint-declaration-of-9th-greece-cyprus-egypt-trilateral-summit/?msclkid=17d9b723aded11eca372914cd99888e5>

convinced that the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves can serve as a catalyst for regional stability and prosperity. In this regard, we once again welcomed the adoption of the statute of the East Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF). The establishment of EMGF is based on the fundamental principle of respect of the Members' rights over their natural resources, in accordance with international law; EMGF will support the Members' efforts in unlocking the full gas resource potential in the region and monetizing their reserves in accordance with international maritime law and in particular UNCLOS. We reiterated that the EMGF as a regional organisation based in Cairo is open to all countries that share the same values and objectives of the EMGF and willingness to cooperate for the security of the whole region and the welfare of its peoples.

We underlined the importance of the respect of the sovereignty and sovereign rights of all states in their maritime zones in accordance with international law, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). In this context, we condemned the illegal drilling and seismic operations by Turkish vessels in Cyprus EEZ/continental shelf, in maritime areas already delimited in accordance with international law. We also reiterated our condemnation of the continuous violations of Greek national airspace and territorial waters in the Aegean Sea and all other illegal activities in areas falling within Greece's continental shelf, in contravention of international law. Hence, we called on Turkey to abstain, in a consistent and sincere manner, from provocations and unilateral actions in breach of international law, including from harassment of survey vessels duly licensed by Greece or Cyprus, thus helping to create conditions conducive to dialogue. We stressed that productive and result-oriented dialogue cannot be conducted in an aggressive environment or under the threat of the use of force.

We discussed the Cyprus issue and we reaffirmed our strong support to a just, comprehensive and viable settlement in line with the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions that call for a bizonal, bicomunal federation with a single sovereignty, a single international personality and a single citizenship as well as in accordance with the EU acquis, values and principles. Regarding Varosha, we recalled the Security Council Presidential Statement of 23 July 2021, which reaffirmed the status of Varosha as set out in previous United Nations Security Council Resolutions,

including Resolutions 550 (1984) and 789 (1992), condemned the announcement in Cyprus by Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leaders on 20 July 2021 on the further reopening of a part of the fenced-off area of Varosha, called for the immediate reversal of this course of action and the reversal of all steps taken on Varosha since October 2020 and stressed the importance of full respect and implementation of its Resolutions, including the transfer of Varosha to UN administration. We underlined the need to resume negotiations from where they were left off and expressed our support for the appointment of a Special Adviser of the United Nations Secretary General with the mandate to engage with all involved, in order to resume the negotiating process. We also stressed that an agreed, comprehensive and viable Cyprus settlement will not only benefit the people of Cyprus, both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, but will also significantly contribute to peace and stability in the broader region.

Referring to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), we recognized Egypt's unique status as one of the driest countries in the world, that is almost exclusive dependence on the River Nile. Accordingly, we recognized the existential threat that the GERD could constitute to Egypt if filled and operated unilaterally and we encourage Ethiopia to negotiate in good faith to conclude in a timely manner a legally binding agreement on the rules and guidelines of the filling and operation of the GERD, in accordance with the Presidential Statement of the UN Security Council of September 15, 2021, and the 2015 Agreement on Declaration of principles. We reiterated that previous agreements and the applicable principles of international law should be upheld, particularly the principles of prior notification and consultation, in order to ascertain that projects planned on international watercourses are undertaken in a reasonable and equitable manner, that does not cause significant harm. These principles should remain the foundation for reaching a fair and balanced agreement that respects the interests of the three countries.

We exchanged views on the political developments in our region and beyond, on issues that affect us directly:

On recent developments in the Middle East, we reiterated that the only sustainable solution to the Syrian crisis is a political one. In this respect, we reaffirmed our call for a nationwide ceasefire to be applied in Syria, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015). We expressed our full support to the efforts of the UNSG

Special Envoy for Syria, Mr. Pedersen, and hope that the Constitutional Committee will soon produce concrete results.

We also reiterated our support for a comprehensive, just and lasting negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the basis of the relevant UN resolutions, agreed parameters and international law. We continue to support the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state, with secure and recognized borders, on the pre-1967 lines, with East Jerusalem as its capital, while recognizing the right of Israel to exist in peace and security. We believe that both sides and the International Community should work towards reviving the Peace Process and we stand ready to support all efforts to re-initiate meaningful and result-oriented peace talks.

On Libya, while acknowledging the progress achieved in the political process so far, we reiterated the importance of maintaining the timetable agreed in the Road Map for the holding of free and fair elections on 24th December 2021 without foreign interference. Respect of the ceasefire and the arms embargo, as well as the withdrawal of all foreign forces and mercenaries is indispensable for peace and stability in the country. We commended the pivotal role of the 5+5 Joint Military Committee, through which many tangible positive steps have been taken, notably the opening of the Coastal Road and the exchange of detainees on both sides. Overall, we acknowledged that many challenges remain and need to be dealt with, if the process is to lead to the unification of the country and its institutions.

Furthermore, we recalled that the Memorandum of Understanding on the Delimitation of the Maritime Jurisdiction Areas in the Mediterranean and the Memorandum of Understanding on Security and Military Cooperation signed in November 2019 between Turkey and Mr. Fayed El Saraj, are respectively in contravention of international law and the UN arms embargo in Libya and that both undermine regional stability; moreover, the Memorandum of Understanding on the delimitation of maritime jurisdictions in the Mediterranean Sea infringes upon the sovereign rights of third States, does not comply with the Law of the Sea and cannot produce any legal consequences.

On Afghanistan, we expressed our deep concern for the situation in the country and the risks it poses both for itself and the wider region. Greece, Cyprus and Egypt will remain

in coordination and will explore ways to tackle together, as well as with other partners, the pressing challenges faced by the international community, in particular to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan, the fight against terrorism, the migration/refugee crisis and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need. In this context, Greece and Cyprus stressed that the evacuation of Afghans at risk due to political persecution remains a priority for the EU and its member States.

Common challenges and developments in the Mediterranean and the wider region require a strategic partnership between Egypt and the EU. We are committed to furthering EU-Egypt cooperation in key policy areas based on the Joint Communication and the Council Conclusions on a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighborhood – A new agenda for the Mediterranean. The new Partnership Priorities should contribute to fulfilling the aspirations of the peoples of both sides of the Mediterranean. It should ensure inclusive and sustainable development, social justice, decent job opportunities, and economic prosperity and substantially improved living conditions, thus cementing the stability and prosperity of Egypt, the EU and our common neighborhood. In this spirit, convening the EU-Egypt Association Council by the end of this year would be a strong and tangible signal of the increased EU engagement and partnership with Egypt.

On human rights issues, we exchanged views on different developments related to the promotion and protection of human rights, including fundamental freedoms. We welcomed the launch of the first National Strategy of human rights in Egypt, which is considered a significant step in this regard. Greece, Cyprus and Egypt reiterated their conviction that these issues should be dealt with an objective, impartial and non-selective manner, in accordance with relevant international law and norms.

Greece, Cyprus and Egypt are situated at the cross-roads of three continents and as such are seriously affected by irregular migration flows. We therefore underlined the need for concerted action in this area, in accordance with international law and the relevant humanitarian provisions, noting in particular that smuggling and trafficking networks had proven their resilience in finding alternative routes. We also stressed that the instrumentalization of migration for geopolitical purposes is inhumane and violates human rights. While determined to fight irregular migration, we recognized the value of establishing regular pathways of migration.

We agreed that climate change should be a core component of our cooperation agenda and affirmed that we remain strongly committed to the implementation of the UN 2030 agenda for sustainable development. We recognized that the Mediterranean has one of the richest marine and coastal ecosystems in the world, but also one of the most vulnerable. Its rapid degradation requires swift, common and concrete responses, as well as further regional cooperation, involving all relevant actors, in the protection of this shared environment. We welcomed Egypt's successful hosting of the 2nd Ministerial UFM meeting on environment on October 4th, 2021 and we look forward to the 27th UN climate change conference (COP27) to be held in Egypt next year. In the same context, we also expressed support for the Initiative of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus for coordinating climate change actions in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. Furthermore, we expressed support for the Initiative of Greece for the Protection of Cultural Monuments from the effects of Climate Change.

Referring to the repercussions of the pandemic, we agreed on the need to ensure continued concerted action in combating COVID-19, with a view to shielding our peoples. We acknowledged that such challenges know no national borders, therefore international cooperation remains essential, through the strengthening and reform of the WHO, and the reinforcement of the International Health Regulations (IHR).

Recognizing the strong bonds of friendship among our peoples and the growing cooperation of the Greek, the Cypriot and the Egyptian communities around the world, we welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cooperation in relation to Diaspora Affairs aiming at promoting our common values and collective interests abroad.

Looking forward to further enhancing our trilateral cooperation and aspiring to tangible results in all areas of mutual interest and understanding, we agreed that the next trilateral Summit shall take place in Egypt, in the second half of 2022”.

Annex C: Declaration of Non-Plagiarism

English Language Version

DECLARATION OF NON-PLAGIARISM AND ASSUMPTION OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

"In full awareness of the implications of copyright law, I signify that I am the sole author of this Postgraduate Thesis, for the completion of which all assistance is fully recognized and detailed in this work. I have fully and clearly stated all sources of data use, opinions, positions and proposals, ideas, and verbal references, either literally or based on scientific paraphrasing.

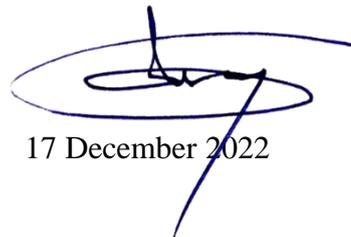
I assume personal and individual responsibility that in case of failure in the implementation of the above stated data, I am liable against plagiarism, which means failure in my thesis and consequently failure to obtain the Degree, in addition to the other consequences of copyright law.

I therefore declare that this thesis was prepared and completed by me personally and exclusively and that I fully assume all the consequences of the law in the event that it is proved, over time, that this work or part of it does not belong to me because it is the product of plagiarism of other intellectual property.

In this regard, I would like to mention that any similarity of this thesis with that of the Hellenic National Defence College, under the same title, is appropriate and acceptable, as the present thesis was based on a corresponding one of the Hellenic National Defence College, with the same title and of which I am the author."

Author's Name and Surname (In Capital Letters): GEORGIOS KAZAKOS

Signature (In full, without initialing):



Date (Day – Month – Year):

17 December 2022

Greek Language Version

ΔΗΛΩΣΗ ΜΗ ΛΟΓΟΚΛΟΠΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΑΛΗΨΗΣ ΠΡΟΣΩΠΙΚΗΣ ΕΥΘΥΝΗΣ

“Με πλήρη επίγνωση των συνεπειών του νόμου περί πνευματικών δικαιωμάτων, δηλώνω ενυπογράφως ότι είμαι αποκλειστικός συγγραφέας της παρούσας Μεταπτυχιακής Διατριβής, για την ολοκλήρωση της οποίας κάθε βοήθεια είναι πλήρως αναγνωρισμένη και αναφέρεται λεπτομερώς στην εργασία αυτή. Έχω αναφέρει πλήρως και με σαφείς αναφορές, όλες τις πηγές χρήσης δεδομένων, απόψεων, θέσεων και προτάσεων, ιδεών και λεκτικών αναφορών, είτε κατά κυριολεξία είτε βάση επιστημονικής παράφρασης.

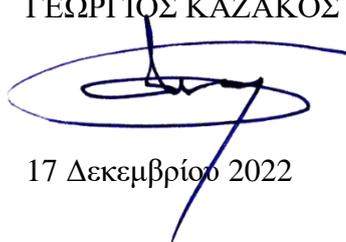
Αναλαμβάνω την προσωπική και ατομική ευθύνη ότι σε περίπτωση αποτυχίας στην υλοποίηση των ανωτέρω δηλωθέντων στοιχείων, είμαι υπόλογος έναντι λογοκλοπής, γεγονός που σημαίνει αποτυχία στην Πτυχιακή μου Εργασία και κατά συνέπεια αποτυχία απόκτησης του Τίτλου Σπουδών, πέραν των λοιπών συνεπειών του νόμου περί πνευματικών δικαιωμάτων.

Δηλώνω, συνεπώς, ότι αυτή η Πτυχιακή Εργασία προετοιμάστηκε και ολοκληρώθηκε από εμένα προσωπικά και αποκλειστικά και ότι, αναλαμβάνω πλήρως όλες τις συνέπειες του νόμου στην περίπτωση κατά την οποία αποδειχθεί, διαχρονικά, ότι η εργασία αυτή ή τμήμα της δε μου ανήκει διότι είναι προϊόν λογοκλοπής άλλης πνευματικής ιδιοκτησίας.

Συναφώς, αναφέρω ότι τυχόν ομοιότητα της παρούσας διατριβής με αντίστοιχη της Σχολής Εθνικής Άμυνας (ΣΕΘΑ), είναι σκόπιμη και αποδεκτή, καθώς η παρούσα διατριβή στηρίχθηκε σε αντίστοιχη της ΣΕΘΑ, με τον ίδιο τίτλο και της οποίας είμαι ο συγγραφέας.”

Όνομα και Επώνυμο Συγγραφέα (Με Κεφαλαία): ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ ΚΑΖΑΚΟΣ

Υπογραφή (Ολογράφως, χωρίς μονογραφή):



Ημερομηνία (Ημέρα – Μήνας – Έτος):

17 Δεκεμβρίου 2022