

# **The Geopolitics of Greek Foreign Policy: From the Great Idea to Great Ideas?**

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## **Greek Foreign Policy and ‘National Issues’**

**2019 – Present**

### **Introduction**

In following on from the previous chapter, here I will build on Katsoulas’ theory of the *Rimland Bridge* in what he specifically refers to as the ‘Guardian’s Dilemma.’ Katsoulas argues that while the *Rimland Bridge* is geographically singular and forms a natural link between Europe and Asia in the *Rimland*, and constitutes a buffer zone against the *Heartland*, it is geopolitically divided between three states. Two of these states, Greece and Cyprus, are united under the banner of Hellenism, while the remaining state, Turkey, is neo-Ottoman.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of which great power assumes dominance over the *Rimland Bridge*, whether Britain, the US or possibly even France in the twenty first century, all are faced with an enduring dilemma. That is, the constant challenge of Greek and Turkish rivalry. While Greece and Turkey are official allies in NATO, the two share a turbulent past deeply resonated in enmity that resonates now into the present. The greatest indicator of this is Greece and Turkey’s confrontational foreign policies that clash over geography that they both claim. Irrespective of where this may break out, it is a certainty that Greece and Turkey always find themselves on opposing sides against one another. In what is truly a civilisational battle, Greece and Turkey face off both directly and indirectly in none other than ten fronts. The first front is in the

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<sup>1</sup> S. Katsoulas, *The United States and Greek-Turkish Relations: The Guardian's Dilemma*, Abington, Routledge, 2022, p. 37.

vast archipelago of Greek islands and sea that form the Greek and Turkish maritime border: the Aegean. The second front is in the Rhodope Mountains and plains close to the only land border between Greece and Turkey: Thrace. The third front finds itself in the Eastern Mediterranean's only island: Cyprus. Back in the Aegean, the fourth front regards the Greeks of two islands close to the Dardanelles: Imbros and Tenedos. Northeast, the fifth front concerns the Greeks of The City: Constantinople. Here, the sixth front is with the heart of Orthodox Christianity: The Ecumenical Patriarchate. To the Greek mainland, the seventh front is in the rugged Pindus Mountains: Epirus. Just north of here, the eighth and ninth fronts refer to the Greeks of Northern Epirus as well as, for the purposes of a case study, Sason island. The tenth and final front is in the adjacent mountains, valleys and home to the influential city of Thessaloniki: Macedonia. The aim of this chapter is to describe, analyse and critically evaluate the geopolitics of Greek foreign policy from 2019 onwards at the bilateral level. The argument I present is that since 2019, Greek foreign policy is driven by the sporadic decisions of the Greek leadership under Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, rather than a formulated grand strategy. Throughout his role, Mitsotakis continues to align Greece with the Great Powers of the *Rimland Bridge*, the US, and newcomer France, to strengthen their relationships of reciprocity in achieving their respective goals. In addition to enhancing its protection from the US and France, Greece also relies on its two main allies for support in resolving all Greek 'National Issues' with Turkey and its proxies. As has been the case since the end of WWII, the US and more recently France are concerned with maintaining security and stability over the region to prevent Russia's expansionism and Turkey's revisionism. While Greece's recent diplomatic and military efforts with the US and France have allowed it to maintain the status quo in the Greek-Turkish rivalry across numerous fronts, Greece's absence of a grand strategy is failing to halt Turkey's *Blue Homeland* that aims to conquer the Aegean. With this to consider, the chapter will explore the Greek-Turkish rivalry at the bilateral level, namely, all ten of Turkey's direct and indirect threats against Greece. First, Turkey's threat to the Aegean and

in particular, against Greek borders, sovereignty and sovereign rights. Second, Turkey's threat to Thrace vis à vis the instrumentalization of the Muslim Minority. Third, Turkey's threat to Cyprus in the form of its continued occupation. Fourth, Turkey's threat against the Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos through ongoing persecutions. Fifth, Turkey's threat against the Greeks of Constantinople through similar persecutions, although for different reasons. Sixth, Turkey's threat to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople through the limits placed upon it. Seventh, with support from its Turkish ally, Albania's threat to Epirus by attempting to ignite the 'Cham Issue'. Eighth, Albania's threat to the Greeks of Northern Epirus, the largest minority in the country, through its own persecutions. Ninth, with additional support from Turkey, North Macedonia's threat to Macedonia by consistently violating the Prespa Agreement. Tenth and finally, the chapter will present a case study on how a threat, such as the one against Sason island many years ago, can lead to an unfavourable *fait accompli* for Greece if left unchecked. It should be noted that the threats from Albania and North Macedonia are deemed indirect and from two states that are vehemently allied with Turkey and equally hostile to Greece.

## **Greece and Turkey: Aegean**

Turkey hereby renounces all rights and title whatsoever over or respecting the territories situated outside the frontiers laid down in the present Treaty and the islands other than those over which her sovereignty is recognised by the said Treaty, the future of these territories and islands being settled or to be settled by the parties concerned.<sup>2</sup>

### **Greek Borders and Sovereignty**

Turkey threatens Greece in the Aegean in many ways, and the first such threat is against Greek borders and sovereignty. In what begun with the Imia Crisis of 1996, Turkey has continued to openly challenge and threaten Greek borders and sovereignty over a number of islands and islets in the Aegean. Turkey's rhetoric states that the uninhabited islands and islets in the Aegean are not part of Greek sovereignty and constitute 'grey zones' whose status is yet to be determined, and also challenges the status of larger and inhabited Greek islands, including Lesbos, Chios and Samos, citing Greece has lost its rights to sovereignty over these islands due to their militarisation. In what is now an open strategy, Turkey is attempting to alter the status quo in the Aegean by trying to create a *fait accompli* that leads to the subjugation of the Greek islands in the Eastern Aegean.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, Greece's position invokes the Treaty of Lausanne 1923 that explicitly resolved all matters of sovereignty between the two in the Aegean, namely:

Regarding the sovereignty of Greece over the islands of the Eastern Mediterranean, other than the islands of Imbros, Tenedos and Rabbit Islands, particularly the islands of Lemnos, Samothrace, Mytilene, Chios, Samos and

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<sup>2</sup> Treaty of Lausanne, 1923, Article 16, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> A. Heraclides, *Greece and Turkey in Conflict and Cooperation: From Europeanization to De-Europeanization*, Abington, Routledge, 2019, pp. 89-108.

Nikaria, is confirmed. Except where a provision to the contrary is contained in the present Treaty, the islands situated at less than three miles from the Asiatic coast remain under Turkish sovereignty. Turkey renounces in favour... all rights and title over the following islands: Stampalia (Astrapalia), Rhodes (Rhodos), Calki (Kharki), Scarpanto, Casos (Casso), Piscopis (Tilos), Misiros (Nisyros), Calimnos (Kalymnos), Leros, Patmos, Lipsos (Lipso), Simi (Symi), and Cos (Kos) ... and the islets dependent thereon, and also over the island of Castellorizzo. Turkey hereby renounces all rights and title whatsoever over or respecting the territories situated outside the frontiers laid down in the present Treaty and the islands other than those over which her sovereignty is recognised by the said Treaty...<sup>4</sup>

While Greek sovereignty over the Aegean islands and islets is clearly binding, the Treaty of Lausanne has proved ineffective at halting Turkey's threats which has inevitably resulted in a firmer response by Greece. Utilising Greek diplomacy at the highest levels, Greece asserts it will not tolerate threats to its sovereignty and, if pressed, will defend Greek territory at all costs, even with a military response. In light of Turkey's persistence, Greece aims to maintain the territorial integrity of its borders and sovereignty while preventing a situation in which they are appropriated.<sup>5</sup>

It is obvious now, more than ever, that Turkey has territorial ambitions against Greece in the Aegean. The Aegean islands, in particular, are clearly on Turkey's radar whereby, if given the opportunity, would invade one or more to occupy and eventually annex (aligned with its strategy in Cyprus discussed later). What seems to have halted Turkey, for the time being, is Greece's firmness that it will not surrender an inch of Greek territory, even at the cost of an armed conflict or worse, war.<sup>6</sup> It is because of this that Greece now openly militarises the Aegean islands at Turkey's frustration.

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<sup>4</sup> Treaty of Lausanne, 1923, Articles 12 – 16, pp. 5-6.

<sup>5</sup> A. Stergiou, *The Greek-Turkish Maritime Dispute: Resisting the Future*, Cham, Springer, 2022, pp. 97-112.

<sup>6</sup> N. Christofis and A. Deriziotis, *A Century of Greek-Turkish Relations*, London, Transnational Press, 2024, pp. 243-258.

## Militarisation of Aegean Islands

In addition to Greek borders and sovereignty, Turkey threatens the militarisation of Greece's Aegean islands. Once again, since the Imia Crisis of 1996, Turkey continues to demand that Greece must demilitarise almost all the Aegean islands in the eastern half of the Aegean Sea, namely Lemnos, Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Rhodes. Turkey boasts that Greece is legally obligated to ensure these islands are demilitarised, as per international treaties, to ensure its security interests are not compromised due to their close proximity to the Straits and Asia Minor.

However, Turkey's end goal is to ensure these Aegean islands are defenceless in the wake of its active *casus belli* and military that will 'suddenly come at night', from the infamous 'Aegean Army' based in Smyrna, a robust offensive force specifically targeted at Greek islands.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, Greece disregards Turkey's demands and invokes the UN Charter as superseding over the international treaties that refer to demilitarisation given its right to self-defence against Turkey's threat of war.

All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state...

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations...<sup>8</sup>

In accordance with its right to self-defence, Greece has taken a number of steps to heavily militarise the Greek islands in the Aegean so as to conduct defensive manoeuvres. Utilising its recently acquired Rafales and F16-Vipers, the Greek Air Force routinely intercept and 'lock on' to armed Turkish aircraft that fly over the Greek islands or in their airspace, while the Greek Navy confront and fire warning

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<sup>7</sup> A. Mitsos and E. Mossialos, *Contemporary Greece and Europe*, Abington, Routledge, 2021, pp. 372-380.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Charter, 1945, Article 2 and Article 51, p. 3 and pp. 10-11.

shots against Turkish vessels that enter the Greek waters surrounding these Greek islands. As Greece continues to militarise the Aegean islands, and with further weaponry on the way such as the F35, Greece advocates its capability to withstand, repel and even go on the offensive against a Turkish attack.<sup>9</sup> The vast militarisation of the Aegean islands can be described as Greece's attempt to form a shield wall in the Aegean that together, act as a strong and united front. The purpose of such a shield wall is to protect any vulnerabilities to Greek sovereignty from a sudden Turkish attack that, if successful, would collapse the entire formation and severely expose all of the Greek islands to a heinous fate. As it currently stands, Greece's shield war has shifted the balance of power in the Aegean, particularly in strategic areas adjacent to Turkey's weak spots, namely Lemnos against the Dardanelles, Lesbos and Chios against Smyrna, and Rhodes against Attaleia.<sup>10</sup> With its own newfound sense of confidence, Greece has taken a partial gamble regarding its territorial waters and airspace.

### **Territorial Waters and National Airspace**

Further to its irrationality, Turkey threatens Greek territorial waters and airspace in the Aegean. Since a 1995 decree, Turkey has maintained that any extension by Greece its territorial waters or airspace from 6nm to 12nm would justify a *casus belli* or grounds for war. Turkey maintains its threat of war is valid and the only means to prevent Greece from unequally and disproportionately altering the balance of power in the Aegean Sea to its detriment. Turkey's true agenda, however, is that it does not want Greece to turn the Aegean into a 'Greek lake' as such extensions would see the Greeks attain 70% of territorial waters and airspace, up from 40%, while the Turks would attain only 10%, with the remaining 20% belonging to the international sphere.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> C. Kollias, *Greek-Turkish Relations in an Era of Detente*, Abington, Routledge, 2020, pp. 66-79.

<sup>10</sup> V. Kappis and M. Papageorgiou, *The Arms Race in the Middle East: Contemporary Security Dynamics*, Cham, Springer, 2023, pp. 341-358.

<sup>11</sup> C. Yiallourides, *Maritime Disputes and International Law*, Abington, Routledge, 2019, pp. 67-82.

Nevertheless, Greece's position invokes the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as both international and customary law that refutes Turkish claims:

1. The sovereignty of a coastal State extends, beyond its land territory and internal waters and, in the case of an archipelagic State, its archipelagic waters, to an adjacent belt of sea, described as the territorial sea. 2. This sovereignty extends to the air space over the territorial sea as well as to its bed and subsoil. 3. The sovereignty over the territorial sea is exercised subject to this Convention and to other rules of international law.<sup>12</sup> Every State has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles, measured from baselines determined in accordance with this Convention. The outer limit of the territorial sea is the line every point of which is at a distance from the nearest point of the baseline equal to the breadth of the territorial sea. Except where otherwise provided in this Convention, the normal baseline for measuring the breadth of the territorial sea is the low-water line along the coast... In the case of islands situated on atolls or of islands having fringing reefs, the baseline for measuring the breadth of the territorial sea is the seaward low-water line of the reef... Where the coasts of two States are opposite or adjacent to each other, neither of the two States is entitled, failing agreement between them to the contrary, to extend its territorial sea beyond the median line every point of which is equidistant from the nearest points on the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial seas of each of the two States is measured. An island is a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above water at high tide. Except as provided for in paragraph 3, the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf of an island are determined in accordance with the provisions of this Convention applicable to other land territory.

In accordance with the sovereign rights set out in the UNCLOS, Greece's position has semi defied Turkey's threats of war. In 2020, Greece officially extended its

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<sup>12</sup> UNCLOS, 2022, Articles 2-6, p. 23; Article 15, p. 30 and Article 121, p. 66.



territorial waters and airspace to 12nm around the Ionian Islands but has held back from declaring any official extensions in the Aegean to avoid a war. Echoing the words of Pericles, 'the rule of the sea is a great matter', and Greece, adhering to such a proverb, insists that it will extend to 12nm in the Aegean when the time is right.<sup>13</sup>

However, Greece's reluctance to apply an equal rule to all its territories has created a sense of doubt and confusion in the Aegean. At the official level, Greek territorial waters are set at 6nm and airspace is set at 10nm with Turkey only recognising both at 6nm, while at the same time, the Greek Armed Forces police waters and airspace as if they were *de jure* extended to 12nm. Quite clearly, Greece may be theoretically aiming to steadily expand Greek sovereignty to command the Aegean as a uniquely Greek lake but lacks the practical will to do so, halting its power projection to permanently restrict Turkey to the Asia Minor coast.<sup>14</sup> Such conflicting responses are also seen with the Greek continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zone.

### **Continental Shelf (CS) and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**

As with Greek territorial waters and airspace, Turkey threatens the Greek continental shelf (CS) and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Aegean. While Turkey has challenged the Greek CS and EEZ since 1973, it signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2019 with Libya that demarcated an EEZ between the two which significantly violated Greek territory. Under the pretence that islands are not entitled to a CS or EZZ, Turkey's officially declared CS and EEZ in the memorandum includes more than half of the Aegean, surrounds the Aegean islands in the east and ignores others such as Rhodes and Crete. Turkey's

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<sup>13</sup> N. A. Ioannides, *Maritime Claims and Boundary Delimitation: Tensions and Trends in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea*, Abington, Routledge, 2021, pp. 31-39.

<sup>14</sup> T. C. Kariotis, *Greece and the Law of the Sea*, Leiden, Brill, 2023, pp. 325-332.

preposterous CS and EEZ claims are to expand its control over the Aegean and exploit its natural resources unchallenged.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, Greece's position counters Turkey's challenges to its CS and EEZ by once again invoking the UNCLOS that clearly stipulates:

1. An island is a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above water at high tide. 2. Except as provided for in paragraph 3, the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf of an island are determined in accordance with the provisions of this Convention applicable to other land territory. 3. Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone or continental shelf.<sup>16</sup>

Greece disregards Turkey's challenges as baseless and has begun the process of officially confirming its EEZ with its neighbours. To date, Greece has formalised its EEZ with Italy, formalised a partial EEZ with Egypt, agreed in principle to refer its delimitation with Albania to the ICJ, and finally, convinced Libya to cancel its MoU with Turkey. It remains to be seen how successful Greece will be with its negotiations, although the end goal for the Greeks is to establish an EEZ at the full 200nm from both the mainland and islands.<sup>17</sup>

Thus far, while Greece has prevented its EEZ from falling into Turkish hands via encroachment, it has failed to gain recognition of its full claims that remain at a stalemate. In its most important delimitation, Greece has completely disregarded the bridge of Hellenism in the East Mediterranean by outright refusing to formalise its EEZ with Cyprus, a move that would put a further divider between Turkey and Libya. In light of these developments, and with so much at stake, it is uncertain

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<sup>15</sup> A. Tziampiris and F. Asderaki, *The New Eastern Mediterranean Transformed: Emerging Issues and New Actors*, Cham, Springer, 2021, pp. 105-118.

<sup>16</sup> UNCLOS, 2022, Article 121, p. 66.

<sup>17</sup> D. Kavakas, *Greece and Spain in European Foreign Policy: The Influence of Southern Member States in Common Foreign and Security Policy*, Abington, Routledge, 2020, pp. 157-181.

whom shall reap the spoils from the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>18</sup> In a similar approach, Greece holds off Turkey within the Athens Flight Information Region (FIR) and responsibilities therein.

### **Athens Flight Information Region (FIR) and Search and Rescue (SAR)**

In the remaining area, Turkey threatens the Athens FIR and SAR. While Turkey no longer challenges the jurisdiction of the Athens FIR as it did from 1974-1980, Turkey now violates the rules within it. Rather, Turkey refuses to submit the flight paths for state aircraft, in particular those belonging to the Turkish Armed Forces, that regularly violate the Athens FIR and Greek airspace or encourage Turkish vessels in need of assistance to refuse Greek SAR aid. As one last hurdle, Turkey is attempting to claim half of the Aegean as its area of responsibility under the Constantinople FIR.<sup>19</sup>

Contrary to these additional challenges, Greece's position invokes the Convention on International Civil Aviation that clearly sets the rules and a state's response if not adhered to:

No state aircraft of a contracting State shall fly over the territory of another State or land thereon without authorization by special agreement or otherwise, and in accordance with the terms thereof. The contracting States undertake, when issuing regulations for their state aircraft, that they will have due regard for the safety of navigation of civil aircraft.<sup>20</sup>

As a result of Turkey's antics within the Athens FIR, Greece has upped the ante whereby the Greek Armed Forces intercept Turkey's violations far more aggressively. Rather than simply monitoring Turkish state aircraft, the Greek Air

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<sup>18</sup> A. Stergiou and M. Karagianni, *Does Energy Cause Ethnic War? East Mediterranean and Caspian Sea Natural Gas and Regional Conflicts*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Press, 2019, pp. 52-76.

<sup>19</sup> A. Chrysogelos, *Party Systems and Foreign Policy Change in Liberal Democracies Cleavages, Ideas, Competition*, Abington, Routledge, 2021, pp. 108-133.

<sup>20</sup> CICA, 2006, Article 3, pp. 2-3.

Force now chases them out of the area, while Turkish vessels that refuse Greek aid are pushed backed by the Greek Coast Guard or Greek Navy into Turkish waters. Through such actions, Greece is simply aiming to prevent air violations and transgressions, as well as naval escalations, to ensure its responsibilities are met within the Athens FIR.<sup>21</sup>

In what is roughly the same size as the Greek EEZ, it is evident that Greece uses the Athens FIR as a means to dominate both international airspace and the high seas beyond Greek sovereign territories. As an additional layer of defence against Turkey's actions, such methods ensure Greece limits or at the very least, has eyes on Turkish aircraft or ships that wish to pass over or adjacent to Greek territory. Despite this, the Turkish element has not been removed, and the vastly opposing tactics of both has left the Aegean as a hotbed for conflict.<sup>22</sup> In 2020, such differences almost led to a full-scale war.

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<sup>21</sup> O. Anastasakis and N. Vrousalis, *Greece in the Balkans: Memory, Conflict and Exchange*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, pp. 219-236.

<sup>22</sup> C. Spanou, *Crisis, Reform and the Way Forward in Greece: A Turbulent Decade*, Abington, Routledge, 2022, pp. 61-76.

## **Greece and Turkey:**

### **Thrace**

The following persons shall not be included in the exchange provided for in Article 1: b) The Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace. Moslems established in the region to the east of the frontier line laid down in 1918 by the Treaty of Bucharest shall be considered as Moslem inhabitants of Western Thrace...<sup>23</sup>

### **Muslim Minority**

Turkey, in sum, threatens Greek Thrace as it is viewed as a vital part of a resurgent Ottoman Empire that includes all of Thrace proper. Toward this end, Turkey politicises the Muslim Minority as a purely ‘Turkish Minority’ that identify as ‘Turks’ and ‘Western Thrace’ part of the Turkish homeland. Turkey attempts this feat by inciting Turkish nationalism amongst the Muslim Minority, by funding and discretely operating the reactionary ‘Turkish’ KIEF party, and by using Turkish intelligence (MIT) agents to strong-arm any dissenters who stray from the Turkish line. Turkey has been quite vocal about its intentions and openly calls to liberate the ‘Turkish Minority’ and eventually annex Thrace to consolidate its claims to the Aegean from the north.<sup>24</sup>

After Turkey released a map of Greater Turkey that included Thrace, Greece reiterated its position whereby Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias stated:

First and foremost, Greece will not accept any questioning of its territorial integrity. This is considered a *sine qua non*; we have stated that a thousand times... Aside from that, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken a clear position on any provocation or challenge; this cannot be accepted in any way... And I’ll say it again; I am neither naive nor do I fly in the face of reality. And, neither are we

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<sup>23</sup> Treaty of Lausanne Convention, 1923, Article 2, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> M. deTar, *Figures That Speak: The Vocabulary of Turkish Nationalism*, Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 2022, pp. 33-63.

going to abandon our basic, established national positions that are the “acquis” of the entire political system.<sup>25</sup>

Greece’s response to prevent Turkey from acting against Thrace has been to heavily fortify the region with the both the Greek Armed Forces and more importantly, those from the US and France. So great is the extent to which Greece and its allies continue to militarise Thrace, particularly in Alexandroupoli, is that it is the most fortified region between NATO members and apparent allies, with the French in particular noted for their solidarity. The initiative by Greece, as well as the US and France, is to establish a firm deterrent against Turkey.<sup>26</sup>

With the territorial integrity of Greek sovereignty of the utmost importance, the strategic position of Alexandroupoli for NATO has elevated all of Thrace for Greece as an untouchable region. As long as Russia continues its expansionism and Turkey its revisionism, Thrace remains shielded given its ability to bypass the Straits via Bulgaria and into the Black Sea as a matter of NATO operational dependency. For the foreseeable future, Greece has fended off Turkey from Thrace in its attempt to claim the territory on behalf of its kin and using this as a pretext to usurp half of the Aegean.<sup>27</sup> Beyond Greece proper, Turkey threatens the Greeks in the far south-east in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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<sup>25</sup> Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias...*, [Website], 27 April 2023, <<https://www.mfa.gr/en/current-affairs/statements-speeches/minister-of-foreign-affairs-nikos-dendias-interview-on-the-online-talk-show-meeting-point-on-newsbomb-with-journalist-olga-tremi-highlights-27042023.html>>, (Accessed 01 June 2024).

<sup>26</sup> A. G. Papadopoulos and T. G. Petridis, *Hellenic Statecraft and the Geopolitics of Difference*, Abington, Routledge, 2021, pp. 133-166.

<sup>27</sup> N. Christofis and A. Deriziotis, *A Century of Greek-Turkish Relations*, pp. 338-373.

## **Greece and Turkey: Cyprus**

Turkey hereby recognises the annexation of Cyprus proclaimed by the British Government on the 5 of November, 1914.<sup>28</sup>

### **Turkish Invasion and Occupation**

Turkey threatens Cyprus in many respects with the first in regard to its illegal occupation. Since 1974, Turkey has remained steadfast that the invasion and continued occupation of Cyprus is a necessary peace operation. Turkey argues that given the overwhelming Greek Cypriot majority remains entwined with Greece, it is hostile to the Turkish Cypriot minority who need protection. Turkey, however, aspires to prevent the Greeks from dominating the entire Republic of Cyprus at the expense of the Turks, administratively and territorially.<sup>29</sup> Despite this view, Greece's position invokes UN Security Council Resolution 353/1974 that unequivocally:

1.Calls upon all States to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Cyprus. 2.Calls upon all parties to the present fighting as a first step to cease all firing and requests all States to exercise the utmost restraint and to refrain from any action which might further aggravate the situation; 3.Demands an immediate end to foreign military intervention in the Republic of Cyprus that is in contravention of the provisions of paragraph 1 above; 4. Requests the withdrawal without delay from the Republic of Cyprus of foreign military personnel present otherwise than under the authority of international agreements, including those whose withdrawal was requested by the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, in his letter of 2 July 1974...<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Treaty of Lausanne, 1923, Article 20, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> C. Adamides, *Securitization and Desecuritization Processes in Protracted Conflicts: The Case of Cyprus*, Cham, Palgrave, 2020, pp. 25-56.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Security Resolution 353, 1974, Articles 1-4, p. 1.

As a firm supporter of the UN Security Council Resolution, Greece's response has remained unchanged and advocates strongly for Turkey to end its occupation. In doing so, Greece incites that Turkey must respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus and completely withdraw from Cypriot territory. From its stance, Greece rejects the age-old anachronistic system of guarantees by third countries such as Turkey as this overarching 'protection' is not necessary in democratic states governed by the rule of law in the twenty first century.<sup>31</sup>

Turkey, nonetheless, remains unhindered, and its occupation of 50 years will most certainly remain in force for the foreseeable future. The occupation itself raises many questions, namely, what is to be done when Turkey blatantly violates UN resolutions and treaties, disregards international condemnations and sanctions, and seeks only its self-interests in occupied Cypriot territory? There are no simple answers, but it is definite that Greece and Cyprus stray from the current party line and raise the stakes collectively with all options on the table.<sup>32</sup> Until Greece and the Greek Cypriots are viewed as a serious adversary, the occupation shall remain and so will the provocations of the TRNC.

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<sup>31</sup> G. Ioannou, *The Normalisation of Cyprus' Partition Among Greek Cypriots*, Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2020, pp. 143-178.

<sup>32</sup> S. A. Efthymiou, *Nationalism, Militarism and Masculinity in Post-Conflict Cyprus*, Cham, Palgrave, 2019, pp. 191-205.



## **Greece and Turkey: Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos Islands**

The islands of Imbros and Tenedos, remaining under Turkish sovereignty, shall enjoy a special administrative organisation composed of local elements and furnishing every guarantee for the native non-Moslem population [Greeks] in so far as concerns local administration and the protection of persons and property. The maintenance of order will be assured therein by a police force recruited from amongst the local population [Greeks] by the local administration above provided for and placed under its orders. The agreements which have been, or may be, concluded between Greece and Turkey relating to the exchange of the Greek and Turkish populations will not be applied to the inhabitants of the islands of Imbros and Tenedos.<sup>33</sup>

### **Imbros and Tenedos Islands**

Turkey's systematic targeting of the Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos is to prevent any remnant of a Greek majority from ever actualising. As with the case of the Greek Cypriots in the occupied territories, Turkey has targeted the Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos to rid the Greek majority from its two most strategic islands in the Aegean. Long viewed as a threat, Turkey reduced the Greek majority of Imbros and Tenedos to prevent the Greek inhabitants, if in the event of a Greek-Turkish war, from supporting the former, either through an insurrection or allowing it to utilise the islands against the efforts of the Turks. In what it viewed as a serious security risk, Turkey altered the demographics of the islands to prevent future calls for *enosis* or *union* by the Greeks so close to the entrance that leads to Constantinople.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Treaty of Lausanne, 1923, Article 14, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> S. Roussos, *Mediterranean Politics: From Pluralism to Extinction*, London, Transnational Press, 2023, pp. 93-112.

Sadly, Greece's position on Imbros and Tenedos remains ambiguous with most remarks coming from the Greek Foreign Ministry as follows:

Let me say outright that no one in the International Community can be left free to dream of challenging or, to put it more mildly, "updating" the Treaty of Lausanne. Because, in fact, no one can dream of and imagine any change of borders, either in our broader region or, and let me be clear on this, anywhere else. And we must clearly condemn any form of revisionism. The Hellenic Republic views the Treaty as a guarantee of our territorial integrity, as well as the security policy of our broader region and, of course, the Hellenic Republic and this is not to be misconstrued... Any discussion between Greece and Turkey and any serious hope for a new chapter in our relations, 100 years after the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, must take into account that this dialogue must view the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne and the International Law of the Sea as absolute facts... This is a great opportunity for a deep discussion on the Treaty of Lausanne... A Treaty which, by the way, has not been observed in full, as in the case of e.g. article 14 concerning the rights of the Greek populations of the islands of Imbros and Tenedos and their administrative organisation.<sup>35</sup>

Greece's response on Imbros and Tenedos is neither 'all in' or 'all out' and at best, stagnant. While it advocates on behalf of the Greeks and their rights by invoking the Treaty of Lausanne, it shies away from advocating parts of the very same article that call for the Greeks to have autonomy over the islands, albeit under Turkish sovereignty. Despite this internationally recognised fact, Greece stops short of inciting any calls for the autonomy of Imbros and Tenedos under a Greek element and instead unrealistically hopes to bring justice to the Greeks through the rule of law.<sup>36</sup>

At Greece's expense, the strategic importance of Imbros and Tenedos are now well within Turkey's sphere of influence. By not pressing on their autonomy,

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<sup>35</sup> Greek Ministry of Defence, *Greek Defence Minister Nikos Dendias...*, [Website], 13 November 2023, <[URL](#)>, (Accessed 15 May 2024).

<sup>36</sup> N. Christofis and A. Deriziotis, *A Century of Greek-Turkish Relations*, pp. 259-297.

Greece has lost the greatest advantage that Imbros and Tenedos offer, that is, the ability to use the islands as a launch zone to easily blockade the Dardanelles by sea, and, now more than ever, by air. In this environment, Greece's new fallback line is Samothrace-Lemnos-Lesbos, a triarchy of islands that make such a maneuverer far more difficult, although not entirely impossible with the correct weaponry.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, the threat of Turkey to the Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos has succeeded and is also apparent with the Greeks of Constantinople.

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<sup>37</sup> P. J. Tsakonas, *The Incomplete Breakthrough in Greek-Turkish Relations: Gasping Greece's Socialisation Strategy*, New York, Palgrave, 2019, pp. 31-51.

## **Greece and Turkey: Greeks of Constantinople**

The following persons shall not be included in the exchange provided for in Article 1: a) The Greek inhabitants of Constantinople... The Turkish Government undertakes to assure full and complete protection of life and liberty to all inhabitants of Turkey without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion... Turkish nationals belonging to non-Moslem minorities will enjoy the same civil and political rights as Moslems. All the inhabitants of Turkey, without distinction of religion, shall be equal before the law... No restrictions shall be imposed on the free use by any Turkish national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, religion, in the press, or in publications of any kind or at public meetings.<sup>38</sup>

### **Greeks of Constantinople**

Turkey has threatened the Greeks of Constantinople in such a way given its geopolitical view that they remain a 'Trojan Horse'. Like the Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos islands, Turkey has targeted the Greeks of Constantinople to remove a large portion of the population from its grandest city of all. Turkey's view is the Greeks are, and will always be, an internal threat that cannot be trusted and are waiting, quietly yet cautiously, for the opportunity to make a claim on Constantinople itself, The City as it is known to them, the true Greek capital. To avoid its own downfall, Turkey chose such a course of action to protect the city, at all costs, from those it believes are loathsome to, and eternal enemies of, the Turks.<sup>39</sup>

While Greece condemns such accusations as ludicrous, it's position strongly condemns Turkey with empty threats:

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<sup>38</sup> Treaty of Lausanne Convention, 1923, Article 2, pp. 38-44.

<sup>39</sup> S. Roussos, *Mediterranean Politics*, pp. 93-112.

Turkey's positions, each time, expand the context in which human logical reasoning is called upon to address... What we say in response is that Türkiye had better respect International Law and return at least to the realm of logical reasoning as soon as possible. The specific claims of the Turkish side have been heard and answered many times before... Turkey had better explain what happened to the Greek minority in Constantinople and how the once thriving minority of over 100,000 has now been reduced to less than 5,000 people. Or as it was once said, Turkey has no right to speak.<sup>40</sup>

Greece's response to the Greeks of Constantinople is, quite simply, an utter failure. It is one thing to continue to invoke a treaty as a reminder of a state's obligations, in this case the Treaty of Lausanne, and another thing to actually hold that state accountable for its actions, or at the very least, issue a strong warning that the Greeks must remain untouched or face a certain Greek response. In any case, Greece advocates for the remaining Greeks of Constantinople as it does for the Greeks of Imbros and Tenedos, wishfully hoping that the rule of law will one day prevail in an authoritarian and dictatorial Turkey.<sup>41</sup>

Turkey's successful targeting of the Greeks of Constantinople is viewed, internally, as defeating its very own Sevres Syndrome, named after the former Treaty of Sevres that carved up the Ottoman Empire. Tied to the Turkish deep state, the Sevres Syndrome is a long-held fear that Greece, with assistance from the West, still conspires and is determined to both weaken and partition Turkey so that it is confined to central Anatolia with no access to the sea. By ridding the so-called Greek masterminds who wish to disperse the Turks from historically Greek territories, Turkey remains victorious of Greece's apparent intentions to turn it into a rump state.<sup>42</sup> In The City, the Greeks as a nation are not the only ones on the radar.

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<sup>40</sup> Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias...*, [Website], 20 September 2022, <[URL](#)>, (Accessed 17 May 2024).

<sup>41</sup> N. Christofis and A. Deriziotis, *A Century of Greek-Turkish Relations*, pp. 259-297.

<sup>42</sup> P. J. Tsakonas, *The Incomplete Breakthrough in Greek-Turkish Relations*, pp. 31-51.

## **Greece and Turkey: Ecumenical Patriarchate**

There seems to me to be no reason why the Patriarch should not continue to exercise his spiritual and ecclesiastical prerogatives without enjoying any sort of political and administrative authority at all. On the other hand, if these spiritual and ecclesiastical prerogatives were to be destroyed and the seat of the Patriarchate removed from Constantinople, a shock would be delivered to the conscience of the whole civilized world. [Turkey] Taking note of the solemn declarations and assurances which have just been given concerning the future situation and attitude of the Patriarchate and in order to give a supreme proof of its conciliatory dispositions, renounces the expulsion of the Patriarchate from Constantinople.<sup>43</sup>

### **Ecumenical Patriarchate**

Despite its religious nature, Turkey threatens the Ecumenical Patriarchate due to its secretive political role. Geopolitically, Turkey fears that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is a pawn of Greek nationalism that seeks to gain international support and become independent like the Vatican. To prevent this, Turkey holds that it must limit, control or completely remove the Ecumenical Patriarchate and its anti-Turkish diplomacy that seeks to create disarray and serious problems with Turkey's foreign relations and foreign policy at the international level toward this end. At all costs, Turkey aims to prevent the 'enemy within' or Ecumenical Patriarchate from establishing a 'Greece inside us' via a Byzantine inspired Orthodox state in the heart of Constantinople, albeit of much smaller proportions.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Great Britain Parliamentary Papers, "Lausanne Conference on Near Eastern Affairs, 1922-1923," *Records of Proceedings and Draft Terms of Peace*, 1923, pp. 319-320.

<sup>44</sup> G. Sidiropoulos and K. Kalabokidis, *The Geography of Greece: Managing Crisis and Building Resilience*, Cham, Springer, 2024, pp. 67-80.

When it comes to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Greece's position is blurred, as seen in statements coming out of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a very strong interest in the Patriarch's initiatives on especially sensitive issues, such as environmental protection, on which the Ecumenical Throne is very active globally. So, I will have the opportunity to talk to him about issues that concern Orthodoxy, the Greek community here in Istanbul, and other matters of shared interest.<sup>45</sup>

Despite Orthodoxy being the prevailing religion in Greece, the response by the Greek state toward the Ecumenical Patriarchate is treated as if it is completely outside of its jurisdiction. That is, as the political heir of Byzantium, Greece does not cross the red line of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the religious heir, and interfere in strictly religious matters, regardless of the obvious geopolitical implications. So dire is the religious-political divide that even if the Ecumenical Patriarchate declared its desire for political autonomy as part of the Turkish state, not independent of it like a Vatican-style would suggest, Greece would not support the motive.<sup>46</sup>

At their own peril, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, without the correct support from Greece, remains powerless in Constantinople with no one, in practice, under its banner. In lieu of a political authority, the Ecumenical Patriarchate drags its feet with the Turkish authorities, is in a schism with the Russian Orthodox Church over Ukraine, is in opposition with Russia's Slavic Orthodox allies, and is even faced with internal disputes within the Greek Orthodox Church itself. If to divide and conquer the Orthodox World is the end goal, the former is now true, as NATO memberships demonstrate, and the latter is surely underway over the fractured

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<sup>45</sup> Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias...*, [Website], 14 April 2021, <[URL](#)>, (Accessed 23 March 2024).

<sup>46</sup> O. Anastasakis, *Diaspora Engagement in Times of Severe Economic Crisis: Greece and Beyond*, Oxford, Palgrave, 2022, pp. 216-234.

Orthodox Arc in Europe.<sup>47</sup> Here, reason must counterbalance and compliment faith for change.

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<sup>47</sup> C. Rhodes and G. Soroka, *Conflict, Politics and the Christian East: Assessing Contemporary Developments*, Abington, Routledge, 2022, pp. 89-106.



## Greece and Albania:

### Epirus

In 1945 and 1946 the prosecution of more than 2100 Albanians, mainly males, followed. They were sentenced as war criminals and collaborators with the Occupation Forces *in absentia*... The same regulations applied for the rest of the Albanians as persons who acted against the Greek nation.<sup>48</sup>

### Epirus

It is through Albania's raising of the pseudo 'Cham Issue' that Turkey seeks to gain influence in the Western Balkans. In the same instance in which it gained support on Kosovo and Western Northern Macedonia, Turkey fuels Albania in its attempts to internationalise 'Chameria' against Greece. At the political level, Albania's leadership openly incite inflammatory statements on the Albanian homeland of 'Chameria', and where politics has failed, Albania continues to fund and support the dormant paramilitary Liberation Army of Chameria that aims to liberate the region through violent means. Through any means necessary, Albania endeavours to include Epirus, and the territories of all its neighbours, in a Greater Albania.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, Greece's position on the matter has been consistent, and acts of Albanian irredentism are following by such statements:

The laying of a wreath by the president of Albania at a monument that presents ahistorical and false accusations and implies territorial claims against Greece is an action reminiscent of unacceptable nationalisms of bygone eras... This act, which is incompatible with historical truth, undermines the development of good neighbourly relations between our countries.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> L. Baltsiotis, "The Muslim Chams of Northwestern Greece", *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> C. P. Danopoulos and K. G. Messas, *Crisis in the Balkans: View from the Participants*, London, Routledge, 2019, pp. 155-176.

<sup>50</sup> Kathimerini, *Greece Slams Albania...*, [Website], 16 July 2024, <[URL](#)>, (Accessed 24 July 2024).

Albania's irredentism has not gone unnoticed, and in response, Greece has attempted to consolidate its efforts around reinforcing the territorial integrity of Epirus. In addition to demarcating Greek national waters and airspace around Ionian Islands, Greece attempted to delimitate its continental shelf and EEZ with Albania here and in parts of Epirus as a means reinforcing their borders. In a deal that fell through, Greece hoped Albania's reconfirmation and recognition of territorial sovereign rights would remove, once and for all, any aspirations for a renewed 'Chameria'.<sup>51</sup> The current division between Greece and Albania has created a state of affairs whereby Epirus is partially exposed in the Western Balkans. As is the case with the successionist 'Kosova' from Serbia, courtesy of the West, and the *de jure* autonomous 'Ilirida' of North Macedonia that seeks independence, a Greater Albania looms largely over Epirus. With Turkey at the helm of such irredentist policies, Greece alone cannot prevent their desired Muslim Arc that stretches from Albania to Bosnia in the Western Balkans and cannot risk hesitating on its cooperation with traditional Orthodox states and for a time, allies in the Balkans.<sup>52</sup> It is here that the Greeks of Northern Epirus must also be mentioned.

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<sup>51</sup> O. Anastasakis and N. Vrousalis, *Greece in the Balkans*, pp. 118-129.

<sup>52</sup> A. Heraclides, *Greek-Albanian Entanglements Since the Nineteenth Century*, London, Routledge, 2024, pp. 253-279.

## **Greece and Albania: Greeks of Northern Epirus**

At the Paris Peace Conference... Greece demanded not only reparation, but also territorial security through the readjustment of the frontier with Bulgaria and the cession of Northern Epirus... When on 30 August 1946, Dragoumis requested the Conference to put on the agenda of its next meeting the Greek draft resolution on the question of Northern Epirus, the Soviet and Yugoslav representatives opposed the Greek request. The British and the Americans insisted that Greece had the right like any other delegation to present its case. The Conference by a twelve to seven vote, with two abstentions, placed on the agenda of its next meeting the Greek motion concerning Northern Epirus... The Paris Peace Conference when ended on 15 October 1946 did not reject Greece's claims against Bulgaria and Albania but referred them to the Council of Foreign Ministers in New York without any specific recommendation... On 3 December 1946, the Council of Foreign Ministers decided that the Greek-Bulgarian border would remain along the lines which existed on 1 January 1941. It was also agreed Greece would receive 150 million dollars for reparation from Italy and Bulgaria combined<sup>76</sup>. Thus, this decision finally closed the question of the Greek claim against Bulgaria and the Bulgarian claim for western Thrace. On the other hand, the question of Northern Epirus remained open since it was ignored and never discussed at the Council...<sup>53</sup>

### **Northern Epirus**

With influence from Turkey, Albania threatens the Greeks of Northern Epirus out of fears Greece has geopolitical designs on the region. Incensed by the supposed state of war that currently exists between the two dating back to WWII, Albania claims Greece has left this open as a means of waiting for the opportunity to one day annex Northern Epirus. Albania holds that according to the rules of war,

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<sup>53</sup> B. Kondis, *Greek National Claims at the Paris Peace Conference of 1940, 1991*, pp. 321-324.

Greece utilises the predicament as a means of flexing that it can, at will and any time, be within its rights to invade and occupy Northern Epirus until a peace settlement is found. Caught between its own rock and a hard place, Albania is uneasy about the prospect of losing Northern Epirus to Greece given the drawback this would have to its own plans for a Greater Albania.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the accusations, Greece has not commented on 'Northern Epirus' directly for years, and when last pressed on the matter, Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias briefly stated the Greek position:

We have no rivalry against... Albania or anyone as to the borders. We want our people and our countries to prosper, with solemnity, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, the European *acquis*, the human rights. All this has to happen. But it has to happen with solemnity and decency.<sup>55</sup>

Greece's lack of a response on the matter is due to its view that the Greeks of Northern Epirus are equivalent to Pandora's box, that is, once opened, will cause great havoc. Even as Albania continues to threaten these Greeks, Greece does not wholeheartedly act on their behalf vis à vis their rightful political autonomy, independence or union out of fear of a Turkish reprisal and European condemnation. Greece, therefore, keeps the lid on Northern Epirus and if pressed, links any reference of the term as nothing more than an outdated and nationalist sentiment, despite the historical facts and view by the Greeks on the ground.<sup>56</sup>

In lieu of a Greek presence, Turkey has taken the initiative and successfully opened up a second front against Greece in the Western Mediterranean using Albanian territory. Far from the ports of Asia Minor, Turkey maintains a foothold in the Ionian Sea courtesy of the Pasha Liman Base located at the strategic Bay of Avlona, purposely built to fend off Greece from ever attempting to reclaim the region. Even as all three are official NATO allies, Greece now risks its encirclement

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<sup>54</sup> C. P. Danopoulos and K. G. Messas, *Crisis in the Balkans*, pp. 155-176.

<sup>55</sup> Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias ...*, [Website], 03 July 2018, <[URL](#)>, (Accessed 05 June 2024).

<sup>56</sup> G. Sidiropoulos and K. Kalabokidis, *The Geography of Greece*, pp. 81-112.

by Turkey in any state of war that begins or resurfaces.<sup>57</sup> Moving away from Albania, Turkey also has a hand in North Macedonia aimed at Greece.

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<sup>57</sup> A. Heraclides, *Greek-Albanian Entanglements*, pp. 209-242.

## **Greece and North Macedonia: Macedonia**

Pursuant to those negotiations the following have been mutually accepted and agreed. A. The official name of the Second Party [Skopje] shall be the 'Republic of North Macedonia' which shall be the constitutional name of the Second Party and shall be used *erga omnes* [for all purposes] as provided for in this Agreement. The short name of the Second Party shall be 'North Macedonia.'<sup>58</sup>

### **Macedonia**

If the Prespa Agreement is not respected in full, there will be no doubts that North Macedonia strives to threaten Greek Macedonia. Since its founding in 1991 and as recent actions indicate, North Macedonia is attempting to reinvoke 'Macedonian nationalism' that incites irredentist claims against the region of Greek Macedonia. North Macedonia holds that this region, 'Aegean Macedonia', is an unclaimed territory that historically belongs to 'Macedonia' and the distinct 'Macedonian nation', a separate ethnic group that speak the 'Macedonian language' and have their own 'Macedonian heritage.' In their view, the current territory of North Macedonia, Greece's 'Aegean Macedonia' and Bulgaria's 'Pirin Macedonia' all form part of a 'United Macedonia' with the 'Solun', the Greek city of Thessaloniki, as its capital.<sup>59</sup>

In an effort quash these ambitions, Greece's position is reinforced throughout the Prespa Agreement with many of its articles stating the following:

The Parties hereby confirm their common existing frontier as an enduring and inviolable international border. Neither Party shall assert or support any claims to any part of the territory of the other Party or claims for a change to their common

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<sup>58</sup> Prespa Agreement, 2018, Article 1, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> D. A. Sotiropoulos, *The Irregular Pendulum of Democracy: Populism, Clientelism and Corruption in Post-Yugoslav States*, Cham, Palgrave, 2023, pp. 275-311.

existing frontier. In addition, neither Party shall support any such claims that may be raised by any third party...

Each Party commits to respect the sovereignty, the territory integrity and the political independence of the other Party. Neither Party shall support any actions of any third party directed against the sovereignty, the territorial integrity or the political independence of the other Party...

Each Party undertakes not to make or authorise any irredentist statements, and shall not endorse any such statements by those who purport to act on behalf of, or in the interest of, the Party...

When reference is made to the First Party (Greece), these terms denote not only the area and people of the northern region of the First Party, but also their attributes, as well as the Hellenic civilisation, history, culture and heritage of that region from antiquity to present day.

When reference is made to the Second Party (North Macedonia), these terms denote its territory, language, people and their attributes, with their own history, culture, and heritage, distinctly different from those referred to under Article 7(2).

The Second Party (North Macedonia) notes that its official language, the Macedonian language, is within the group of South Slavic languages. The Parties note that the official language and other attributes of the Second Party are not related to the ancient Hellenic civilisation, history, culture and heritage of the northern region of the First Party.<sup>60</sup>

By virtue of such articles, Greece's response is to safeguard the Prespa Agreement that protects the territorial integrity and heritage of Greek Macedonia from a Slavic usurpation. Through this treaty, Greece has ensured that North Macedonia adopts a geographical qualifier in its name, that the citizens of North Macedonia accept their Slavic origins and that the cultural appropriation of the Greek Macedonian

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<sup>60</sup> Prespa Agreement, 2018, Article 3-4, pp. 5-6, Article 7, p. 7.

legacy, from Alexander the Great to Pavlos Melas, remains untainted. Put simply, Greece defends the notion that Macedonia was, is and always will be Greek.<sup>61</sup> The Prespa Agreement, more importantly, secures Greece's northern frontier from a historical yet persistent Slavic threat, despite now being NATO allies. What the Prespa Agreement achieved was that it confined North Macedonia to its present territory and ensured it remains small and weak under Greece's watchful eye, as opposed to falling victim to a Greater Albania, Greater Bulgaria or influenced by Turkey to pursue a United Macedonia. With the combined pressure of Greece, the EU and NATO, one can predict that, despite its rhetoric, North Macedonia will not stray from the Prespa Agreement.<sup>62</sup> While there are no guarantees in foreign matters, what is certain is that such a foolhardy decision would have grave repercussions.

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<sup>61</sup> I. Armakolas, *The National Politics of EU Enlargement in the Western Balkans*, Abington, Routledge, 2020, pp. 94-116.

<sup>62</sup> G. C. Papavizas, *Claiming Macedonia: The Struggle for the Heritage, Territory and Name of the Historic Hellenic Land*, London, McFarland and Company Publishers, 2015, pp. 211-242.



## Case Study:

### Sason Island

On May 5, 1914, the Venizelos Government introduced a bill with two articles, according to which: Article 1: The Government is allowed to cede to the Albanian territory the island of Sassonos, belonging to the Hellenic Kingdom, by virtue of its 2<sup>nd</sup> article on the cession of the Ionian Islands Treaty of London of March 17/27, 1864. Article 2: The validity of this law comes from its publication in the Government Gazette.<sup>63</sup>

### Sason Island

The fate of Sason island is the perfect example of how Greece's lack of foresight led to a *fait accompli*, perpetrated by Italy. As has already been discussed extensively, Italy was one of Greece's main antagonists throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century when it came to Greek territorial claims. Like the Ionian Islands or Northern Epirus before it, Italy had no intention of allowing Greece to retain Sason and implied that any attempt would be grounds for war. Unlike Greece, Italy was well aware of the strategic importance that Sason held and in Greek hands would severely impact on Italian interests.<sup>64</sup> Despite the fierce debates in the Greek Parliament when discussing Sason in 1914, Venizelos defended his decision by infamously declaring:

Sason island was never Greek.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> ProtoThema, *Sasson Island...*(Greek), [Website], 14 January 2024, <[URL](#)>, (Accessed 01 July 2024).

<sup>64</sup> V. Wilcox, *The Italian Empire and the Great War*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021, pp. 121-150.

<sup>65</sup> ProtoThema, *Sasson Island...* (Greek), [Website], 14 January 2024, <[URL](#)>, (Accessed 01 July 2024).

Despite Venizelos' best motives, the fact remains that Greece carelessly ceded what was a Greek national territory. As the victor of the Balkan Wars and with a vast number of allies, including Britain, the odds were in Greece's favour with no reason to make such a hastily decision, despite Italy's demands or threats. While there is no doubt Venizelos was by and large triumphant for Greek gains at the time, the Ethnarch misperceived what could have been Greece's very own Gibraltar.<sup>66</sup>

If Greece had retained Sason, it would have given the Greeks a strategic position in the Western Mediterranean. From Sason, Greece would have been able to blockade the Bay of Avlona against Albania, and more importantly, repel the Italians from the Western Balkans and control their manoeuvres in the Adriatic with Santa Maria and Otranto well within Greek sights. Had Greece prevented the *fait accompli*, the Greeks would have been the gatekeepers of the Adriatic.<sup>67</sup> Alas, with this historic yet imperative case study in mind, Greece does not stand to overcome the triarchy of threats stemming from Turkey, Albania and North Macedonia in the present without a Greek Grand Strategy that foresees such situations.

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<sup>66</sup> D. Keridis, *Thessaloniki: A City in Transition*, Abington, Taylor and Francis, 2020, pp. 142-151.

<sup>67</sup> G. Sidiropoulos and K. Kalabokidis, *The Geography of Greece Managing Crises and Building Resilience*, Cham, Springer, 2024, pp. 81-112.

## Conclusion

In accordance with Katsoulas' theory of the *Rimland Bridge* and the 'Guardian's Dilemma', this chapter has described, analysed and evaluated the geopolitics of Greek foreign policy from 2019 onwards at the bilateral level. The argument I presented is that since 2019, Greek foreign policy is driven by the sporadic decisions of the Greek leadership under Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, rather than a formulated grand strategy, where Mitsotakis continues to align Greece with the Great Powers of the *Rimland Bridge*, the US, and newcomer France, to strengthen their relationships of reciprocity in achieving their respective goals. In addition to enhancing its protection from the US and France, Greece also relies on its two main allies for support in resolving all Greek 'National Issues' with Turkey, while the US and more recently France are concerned with maintaining security and stability over the region to prevent Russia's expansionism and Turkey's revisionism. In light of Greece's recent diplomatic and military efforts with the US and France that have allowed it to maintain the status quo in the Greek-Turkish rivalry across numerous fronts, Greece's absence of a grand strategy is failing to halt Turkey's *Blue Homeland* that aims to conquer the Aegean. At the bilateral level, the chapter successfully explored the Greek-Turkish rivalry across ten fronts or rather, Turkey's direct and indirect threats against Greece. In the Aegean, Turkey openly attempting to establish a *fait accompli* that leads to its subjugation via the *Blue Homeland*, and Greece has merely responded by defending the territorial integrity of its borders, sovereignty and sovereign rights. While Greece has vehemently prevented a situation in which the status quo is changed, it has failed to have a more offensive approach whereby it consolidates its borders, sovereignty and sovereign rights to the fullest, such as officially demarcating the Greek-Turkish maritime border or extending Greek territorial waters and airspace to 12nm. In Thrace, Turkey's calls to 'liberate' the pseudo 'Turkish Minority' signal its intentions to one day occupy and annex the region, and again, Greece's position remains defensive, and a temporary one at that, by increasing the

importance of Alexandroupoli for its US and French allies battling Russia in Ukraine. While successful at present, Greece must reevaluate how it deals with the Muslim Minority to permanently deter Turkey attempting to usurp Thrace and subsequently use the territory to lay further claims to the Aegean from the north. In Cyprus, Turkey has continued to occupy a third of the island for 50 years and now openly calls for the secession of the TRNC while Greece, powerlessly, reiterates its support for a unified Cyprus under a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. Ironically, Cyprus has come full circle and the reality on the ground is that both Greece and Turkey have, unofficially, fulfilled their desires for enosis and taksim in one form or another, and Greek Cyprus should at least view this a viable option as a half victory so long as it continues to restrict the TRNC. In regard to Imbros and Tenedos, Turkey has successfully reduced the once majority Greeks to a minority whose future remains in doubt, while Greece has merely called for their justice through the rule of law, remaining silent on their right to autonomy over the islands Greek administration. In lieu of this, Greece's fallback line is Samothrace, Lemnos and Lesbos, a triarchy of islands that make it far more difficult to blockade or restrict the Straits from sea or air. The same can be said for Constantinople or the Greeks therein who, as a once thriving community, have been almost completely eradicated, with the same wishful thinking coming out of Greece that the rule of law and human rights will one day prevail. The permanent exile of these Greeks, has, severely weakened Greece's (and the West's) ability to influence Turkey from within, not to weaken or partition, but rather, to keep at bay. While on the topic of Constantinople, Turkey has also restricted the Ecumenical Patriarchate fearing it aspires for independence like that of the Vatican, while Greece abstains from holding political opinions on matters of religion. In its reluctance to politicise the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the first among equals is powerless over a fractured Orthodox World. In Epirus, Albania aspires to include the region, like that of Kosovo or parts of North Macedonia, in its plans for a Greater Albania via a resurrected 'Cham Issue', while Greece attempted to halt this ambition through a failed deal that would have consolidated the borders, sovereignty and rights

between the two, removing any aspirations for a renewed 'Chameria'. Attempting to handle the matter in such a puzzling way has left Turkey's Muslim Arc, stretching from Bosnia to Albania, hanging over Epirus in a fight that Greece cannot win without its traditional Orthodox allies in the Balkans. In Northern Epirus, Albania continues in its attempts to remove the large number of Greeks in the region en masse through persecutions, while Greece has attempted to resolve the matter by removing its territorial aspect, thus separating these Greeks from their very own homeland. What Greece fears to be its Pandora's box is an error, as the lid has already been opened by Turkey and Albania in their encirclement of Greece via the Pasha Liman Base in the Ionian Sea. In Macedonia, North Macedonia has again begun to incite its own version of a United Macedonia through the violation of the Prespa Agreement, and Greece, thus far, has done well to ensure it does not withdraw from the agreement. A case study was also presented that proved Greece's lack of vision can lead to an unfavourable *fait accompli* and subsequent loss of sovereignty, in this case, the once Greek island of Sason that, if the Italians had been met head on, would have been the Greek Gibraltar at the entrance to the Adriatic. In the following chapter, I shall describe, analyse and evaluate Greek foreign policy and the NATO-EU Bloc from 2019.