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The Hellenic Parliament's use of digital media in its response to the 2019 Turkey-Libya Memorandum of Understanding on maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean Sea: a preliminary assessment

Fotios Fitsilis and Stelios Stavridis

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Fotios Fitsilis[*] and Stelios Stavridis[†]

ABSTRACT

There is growing academic attention to both parliamentary diplomacy and to parliamentary digital communication in recent years. Yet, the study of Greek parliamentary diplomacy remains an under-researched topic. The paper brings together these two dimensions by considering the following case study: the Hellenic Parliament´s reactions to the November 2019 Turkey-Libya (internationally recognized government) Memorandum of Understanding on maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean Sea. To do so, this study will address the following key research question: has the Hellenic Parliament as an institution adopted new technologies and data openness to promote its parliamentary diplomacy? There is new literature widely expecting that parliaments do so, but, to date, there is little empirical evidence to that effect. This paper attempts to close this gap by investigating which digital tools were utilized in an effort to defend and promote Greece´s stance on that issue between November 2019 and March 2020.

Keywords: Hellenic Parliament, Greek parliamentary diplomacy, digital media, Turkish-Libyan MoU, maritime boundaries

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1. Introduction

Important technological developments in digital communication have greatly impacted the daily running of governance institutions and processes throughout the world (Mansell, 2012; Milakovich, 2012; Fitsilis, 2019). In particular, parliamentary organisations have incorporated innovative methods in their organisational culture and novel technologies into their working procedures (Hoff, 2004; Leston-Bandeira, 2007; Griffith, 2010). The international role of parliamentary actors has also greatly developed over the years, but whereas respective existing literatures on these subjects have grown fast (for reviews, see Parts 2 and 3 below), there is little overlap between the two, let alone dedicated case studies.

As there is also very little general academic interest in Greek parliamentary diplomacy, this study will assess how and why digital technologies have contributed (or can contribute) to the Hellenic Parliament´s diplomacy. This paper will bridge this gap by analysing a specific case study. Indeed, it will investigate which digital media the Hellenic Parliament (or the 'Vouli' in Greek) has utilised in an effort to defend and promote Greece´s stance on a particular issue: the 27 November 2019 Turkey-Libya Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean Sea.

The authors have used the following method to generate a dataset for this particular investigation. The dataset consists of parliamentarian statements (see Appendix) that appeared in digital parliamentary media during the period of interest for our study, i.e.: between November 2019 and March 2020. The latter date corresponds with the beginning of the institutional lockdown due to the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, when all parliamentary functions were put on hold. As most statements also debated other issues not immediately relevant to the 2019 Turkey-Libya MoU, particular care has been taken to isolate the directly relevant part of the message analysed, without altering its central meaning. The roles of the parliamentarians making the statements as well as the venue or occasion where they have been expressed were also studied.

Since Ministers may also be parliamentarians, their interventions have been taken into account whenever made within a parliamentary set-up, be it national or international. As for the digital media screened for these statements during the above period, they consisted of the following: the official Vouli web page, the YouTube channel of the parliamentary TV station, the official Twitter account, as well as two special information actions, Global Hellenism News, and the parliamentary e-Magazine. Analysis goes along two main paths: qualitative, by discussing the implications of single statements on parliamentary diplomacy, and quantitative, by collectively studying significant attributes of the statements captured – for instance the digital medium they appeared, the timing of expression, the role of the parliamentarians involved and even the use of language.

Together with this introduction, the paper consists of six parts. The next one (Part 2) contextualises our study by presenting the state of play in general parliamentary diplomacy and in the use of digital technologies in parliamentary diplomacy. Part 3 then presents the Hellenic Parliament´s digital communication means and instruments. The next two parts focus on the actual case study: Part 4 offers a background to 2019 Turkey-Libya MoU on maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean Sea. Part 5 then provides a descriptive analysis of what digital means the Vouli has used in its reactions to the MoU. Part 6 concludes with some specific policy recommendations. As a result, this study enriches both our general

understanding of parliamentary diplomacy means, especially the use of new digital technologies, but also their particular utilisation in a specific case-study of the Hellenic Parliament.

2. Digital technology advances: a 'revolution' for (political) communication

This part presents an overview of digital technological changes and their impact on political communication. First, technology advances and their effects on representative institutions are discussed from the data openness point of view, before considering digital media and their impact on political communication. This precedes the discussion of the evolution of digital (parliamentary) diplomacy, which constitutes the main focus of the present contribution.

2.1. Digital technology developments and parliaments

There follows a review of how technological advances in digital communication affect parliamentary practice. Parliamentary functions rely on the existence and exchange of information (data). Data analysis is vital for a successful parliamentary participation in international commissions and forums. Moreover, parliamentarians need to communicate in a meaningful way with their relevant stakeholders, such as diplomats, journalists, interest groups and the general public – both domestically and externally. Parliamentary diplomacy, widely defined, is no exception to this need for a sophisticated use of information. Indeed, open parliamentary data and relevant advanced algorithms for processing and visualisation have the potential to open up new dimensions in parliamentary diplomacy. These new technologies can facilitate this practice.

In his 2013 study dealing with why and what data should be open and how multi-stakeholder efforts can help parliaments achieve those goals, Granickas (2013) argues that recent technological developments, and in particular those in digitalisation, mean that de facto parliamentary informatics is a welcomed development. In particular, parliamentary transparency gains not only in feasibility but also in desirability:

'Why open parliament data? The growth of information and communication technologies (ICT) offers unique opportunities to explore ever-closer relationships and interaction between governments and the people in modern democracies. There is no technology-related barrier remaining to engage citizens in decision-making processes and also truly ensure citizens' right to information. (...) Parliaments, as representative bodies of governments, should be and often are on the frontline of encouraging provision and re-use of open data. They are in a good position to benchmark openness standards for other institutions as well as to improve open, accessible, transparent and accountable representation.' (Granickas, 2013, p. 3, note omitted)

Fitsilis (2019) argues that, in addition, it is important for parliaments to be as active as possible in being part of these new technological processes. He goes as far as to maintain that a specific regulatory framework (e.g.: through legislation or 'soft law') needs to be imposed on advanced algorithms. During a June 2020 webinar on the topic, Vlachopoulos

insisted on the fact that legislation always tends to follow technological developments (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2020). In other words, the real choice now –as in the past– is between letting new technology de facto create some sort of self-regulation or, instead, actively decide to ex-ante develop a relevant regulatory framework. Thus, the still limited literature on parliamentary communication in the digital age has produced interesting findings that are summarised in what follows.

In modern democratic political systems and societies, achieving transparency is a dynamic process that requires a constant evaluation and implementation of communication initiatives. Parliaments are key actors in that process. As parliaments work to engage with their respective people and media, no communication plan can be one-size-fits-all. Citizens have a unique set of needs and capabilities based on historical experiences and present realities, and, as a result, parliaments should reflect these complexities. Nonetheless, a citizen engagement strategy will almost always include some fundamental elements.

In democracies, '[o]pen communication allows for a state and its citizens to engage in a reciprocal dialogue' (Loewenberg 2009, p. 167). In the parliamentary context, open communication may represent a novel approach of conceptualising and presenting core parliamentary roles: it requires parliaments to develop communication strategies that will enable them to both educate and inform citizens about their affairs and operation of their working bodies. Moreover, it can encourage greater public engagement by adopting direct channels of communication with customised packages of information. Key issues for successfully communicating parliamentary information include: language –as the official language of the parliament is not easy to comprehend for citizens at large–, accessibility to all initiatives undertaken (e.g.: for people with disabilities), and the relationship with the media, as these facilitate information flows and assist in closing communication gaps between citizens and Parliament that often exist in practice (Griffith, 2010, p. 27). Griffith and Leston-Bandeira (2012) offer an overview of conditions for the deployment of new media by parliaments.

It needs to be noted that our understanding of the relations between parliament and citizens in the new digital media landscape might be still limited (Leston-Bandeira, 2012), while Dai and Norton (2007, p. 344) have pointed out at the danger for new technologies to "exacerbating existing participating and engagement gaps in the parliamentary system". Nonetheless, there is a strong need for Parliaments to re-connect with citizens and the greater public. The reasons for this are manifold. In parliaments, politics is being debated. At the same time, parts of society are being detached from political processes, mainly due to the lack of accountability and transparency (Auel and Raunio, 2014, discuss public parliamentary accountability in the case of EU politics). In addition, in the era of the social web, several representative institutions still struggle with openness and the use of new communication channels to reach out to citizens (IPU, 2019). Moreover, in times of crises, which in the past years have rather become the rule than the exception, the executive branch takes the institutional lead, thus distorting the institutional equilibrium (Fitsilis et al., 2020). Without proper countermeasures, parliaments risk gliding into insignificance in the general consciousness.

One way to re-connect with the public is to take actions that will enable citizens to re-affirm the fact that parliaments, regional or national, are legitimate bodies of democratic debate, and, that Members of Parliament (MPs), and they alone, are primarily entrusted by their constituents with the task of legislating and controlling governmental actions and policies;

and, as such, the government, both in its management of daily business and in its definition of future policy, has an obligation to be accountable to the parliament, as parliamentary control over governmental actions constitutes an essential element of democracy. But in order for interactive communication via digital media to firmly re-link citizens and parliaments, it needs to be regarded as an "integrated feature of the democratic political process" (Coleman, 2006, p. 384).

As such, Parliament has to utilise every opportunity to present a positive but also accurate image of both itself as an institution and of its own proceedings to help overcome public apathy, disenchantment, dissatisfaction, or even ignorance. For a parliament, traditional advertising and marketing evaluations, such as TV viewing ratings, might have little relevance.[3] Content of premium quality and diversity and community outreach are far more significant concepts. For this, direct channels of communication between the public and the parliament are necessary. Indicatively, traditional printed media, radio, TV and Web-TV broadcasts, the parliamentary website, emailing lists and the use of social media all belong to such channels. It needs to be noted that public hearings, parliamentary sessions and other similar actions are considered parliamentary activities rather than dedicated communication channels. At the institutional level, the messages are usually generated and distributed through a parliamentary press office (short: press office).[4] Contrary to this centralised parliamentary communication model, there are also decentralised ones that allow for distinct parliamentary bodies to make use of digital media, such as, for instance, in the case of the House of Commons (UK).[5]

The press office, whose description and challenges are notably absent in the literature, operates inside the parliament and is usually attached to its Speaker. It cooperates with national and international media, covering for instance the activities of the presidium (Speaker and deputy Speakers), official participation in international forums, as well as significant publications, exhibitions, educational programs and issues of national importance. Through various initiatives and multiple channels, the press office constantly interacts with society ensuring public access to parliamentary information, while at the same time protecting the institution by responding to various controversies presented by media. Its announcements make use of journalistic rather than official legal language norms, hence being more understandable by the wider public. A general presentation of the main digital communication channels is presented next.

2.2. Digital communication and its channels

During the past decade, parliaments worldwide have started to operate in a more transparent and engaging manner. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for the facilitation of parliamentary work among working bodies, MPs, administrative units and parliamentary personnel have contributed in many ways, such as the creation and implementation of e-services enhancing collaboration among related stakeholders, the

[3] For instance, *Vouli TV*, the parliamentary television channel at the Hellenic Parliament, is not included in TV ratings.

[4] This is the case in the Hellenic Parliament that is discussed herein.

[5] As of 2019, there were 42 Twitter accounts managed by the UK´s House of Commons related to different committees and administrative units, such as parliamentary television (parliamentlive.tv) and archives, https://www.parliament.uk/site-information/foi/foi-and-eir/commons-foi-disclosures/information-technology/social-media-2019/ (last accessed: 20/1/2021).

fostering of many-to-many communications, and the automation of required procedures (see, indicatively, Hoff, 2004; Leston-Bandeira, 2007; 2019; Romanelli, 2016; Fitsilis et al., 2017). Digital communication channels provided novel ways to interact with the citizens. Moreover, they enable a higher degree of understanding among the two parties, i.e. citizens and public officials, in this context, the MPs. This has to do with the enhanced channel parameterisation that is possible, such as the choice between one-way or two-way communication and the range of options that are available to members or institutions to process and tackle comments or questions by the public, hence being able to form policies based on these comments (Griffith, 2010, p. 19).

Understanding the nature of communication and how it takes place on the web sphere is a crucial factor for forming a parliamentary web communication strategy and related policies. In particular, dissemination of information and subsequent communication between parliaments and citizens is achieved through:

- parliamentary websites (e.g. Hamajoda, 2016);
- digital platforms (e.g. social media and webTV);
- blended channels (e.g. social media and website; website and face-to-face interaction in the physical environment of the parliament building) (Papaloi et al., 2012);
- media-mix, with the use of both traditional media (printing, e-mailing, SMS) and contemporary ones fostering the ability for sharing content among users, and therefore, enhancing discussion and subsequent participation.

Since its beginnings, Television (TV) remains one of the most efficient communication channels for parliament (Hill, 1993; IPU-EBU-ASGP, 2007). In the digital era, TV broadcasting went digital over dedicated platforms, giving the public direct access to information, as television extends the ability of representative institutions to potentially reach out to the entire nation –and the world, when referring to web broadcasting–. According to an IPU survey, 55% of parliaments have broadcast channels and 62% provide use web broadcasting IPU, 2019, p. 64). TV broadcasting opened-up new perspectives to citizens, organisations and other interested stakeholders who want to be informed on specific legislative and oversight processes. Citizens become more than simple spectators and journalists are no longer the sole analysts of parliamentary news. Hence, while some saw it merely as an instrument for mobilising popular support (Mughan and Swarts, 1997, p. 48), TV (and webTV) broadcasting gradually become a vital tool for reconciling society with democracy.

In addition, the existence of parliamentary websites and the publishing of information related to parliamentary operations and processes have raised public and civil society interest calling for dialogue and transparency (Setälä and Grönlund, 2006; IPU, 2009; Bernandes and Leston-Bandeira, 2016). The task of building and establishing a sustainable communication policy either online or offline is a multi-part effort requiring an array of factors to be taken into account such as:

- a political decision on the degree level of openness;
- setting objectives for communication with citizens and their engagement;
- coordination among relevant administrative units;
- capacity building of dedicated personnel;

- interoperability among communication channels;[6]
- a communication strategy that points out at the desired communication-mix.[7]

The nature of social media is different from that of other communication channels because communication is interactive. As such, various 'actions' and 'reactions' are received and transmitted in an unprecedented manner (e.g. in real time), compared to older forms of communication, such as TV, radio or printed media. In relation to institutional actors like parliaments, the use of social media enables instant communication of any given message with citizens, albeit in a more 'informal' manner, as the enactment of some official documents is still made via traditional and sometimes time-consuming procedures, such as publishing in official gazettes. At the same time, omnidirectionality allows citizens to express their opinion directly to the parliament. Forwarding to other citizens can make certain announcements 'go viral', in the social media jargon, hence quickly reaching out to great numbers of recipients. Furthermore, there are no 'middlemen' between citizens and parliaments, which implies that the message is delivered in the most direct manner possible. What is more, given the capacity to do so is there, parliament has the opportunity to respond to such comments and even engage in a discussion. Yet, special attention and rules of conduct are necessary to avoid this kind of 'online accountability' undermine the status of the institution (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Fuchs, 2017).

Issues such as communication style, marketing and dissemination of information indicate the complexity, but also the challenging, character of social media related communication channels. As it is the case with traditional media, social media also require a technical expertise to be used efficiently in the parliamentary context. The appointment of dedicated, educated and well-supported social media managers needs to be considered. Their expertise should be both institutional and technical, in the sense that they need to understand political and decision-making processes, while also having knowledge of marketing, social media analytics and ideally search engine optimisation techniques. Tuten (2020) offers in-depth information on how to optimise the use of social media.

When it comes to parliaments, social media open up a new terrain in the interaction with the public, calling institutions to re-evaluate their communication strategy and policy (Kindra and Stapenhurst, 2010; Griffith and Leston-Bandeira, 2012; IPU, 2013; Williamson, 2013; Allen et al., 2013). At the same time, most social media are free of charge and offer a space for information and education to the public, which can be a cost-saving opportunity in terms of a parliament, often with budgetary restrictions. The available information can reach more recipients via social media and via sharing than through a usual communication channel. This can be achieved through existing social media as well as by adding widgets for sharing or tweeting specific positions on the website. Established social networks of the likes of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube can serve as mediators in establishing constructive relations with other state bodies, civil society and non-governmental organisations. 'Liking' a page and getting notifications of a state body, subscribing to its YouTube channel, tweeting a message from a non-governmental organisation that seems useful to the parliament and its followers, all can pave the way for building up strong inter-institutional and societal links.

[6] e.g.: traditional and offline communication with citizens and the use of web 1.0, web 2.0 and -in the near future- of the semantic web (web 3.0).

[7] e.g.: the selection of the suitable ICT tools and methods (both traditional and contemporary) to tackle target groups with specific needs.

Efficient utilisation of the available digital channels needs to be encompassed in a web communication strategy and the related action plan, also called communication plan. One should also bear in mind that achieving a successful web communication policy requires a constant effort because '[s]trategic planning must be viewed as an ongoing process that engages all major stakeholders within the parliament' (Griffith, 2010, p. 23). Achieving a digital communication plan that fosters transparency and citizen participation is dependent on political decisions or setting objectives through an agreed-upon plan. On top of these, there are additional issues that e-parliaments needs to encompass, such as inclusion, awareness, engagement, higher quality of information and greater access to parliamentary documents (UNDP, 2006; IPU, 2019).

In practice, usability and accessibility issues can significantly determine users' experience and affect their engagement, as well as the degree of openness and transparency. This would include, for instance, the decision on how parliamentary information is provided and presented to users via a website, the choice of formats for sharing information, e.g. csv, XML, via a dedicated API, eventual graphical representation[8] and the presence of widgets and their placement on the website. Factors such as internet penetration, digital literacy, and public opinion on the institution play a vital role in order to define and structure any sustainable communication strategy.

2.3. Impact on parliamentary diplomacy

Why impact new technologies on diplomacy and, especially, parliamentary diplomacy? The wider technology developments described in the previous part have a profound effect on diplomacy which is captured by the term 'digital diplomacy'. Around digital diplomacy there is a body of rapidly expanding literature that in fact proves a strong interrelation between two formerly distant worlds in science and politics, digital technology and diplomacy. Exclusively on digital diplomacy, the savvy reader may refer to Bjola and Holmes (2015), Adesina (2017), Bjola (2019), and Bjola and Zaiotti (2020). Nonetheless, this is still an under-researched topic where several operational models are employed (Manor, 2016), while apparently the benefits seem to outnumber any risks (Rashica, 2018). In the light of the above, analysing effectiveness of digital diplomacy remains a challenge. However, new computational methods may offer reliable insights (Park et al., 2019).

Naturally, technology –or aspects thereof– also affects parliamentary diplomacy. Hocking and Melissen (2015), Gilboa (2016) and Rigalt (2017) argue that this is so because these new technologies affect directly the question of data openness. They represent means that facilitate, on the one hand, a democratisation of parliamentary input in foreign policy, and, on the other, a connection with citizens, which is the other side of the same coin: parliaments as transmission belts between the government and the governed.

The international role of parliamentary actors has greatly developed over the years. As a result, there is also growing academic interest in that respect (Raunio and Wagner, 2018; Malamud and Stavridis, 2011), be it on parliamentary diplomacy (Stavridis and Jancic, 2017; Stavridis, 2019; Ferrero, 2019), the expansion of International Parliamentary Institutions

[8] See Hansard at Huddersfield project of the University of Huddersfield, a project that aims to make accessible 'the official, substantially verbatim report of what was said in both houses of Parliament between 1803-2020 through various search functions and interactive visualisations.' More information available at: https://hansard.hud.ac.uk/site/index.php (last accessed: 15/11/2020).

(IPIs) (Cofelice, 2019), without forgetting more traditional attention paid to 'technical' inter-parliamentary cooperation (García Chourio, 2019). This (inter-)parliamentary framework is particularly visible in Europe with a proliferation of IPIs (Raube, Müftüler-Baç and Wouters, 2019). It is within that multi-layer context that Greek parliamentary diplomacy in general and that of the Hellenic Parliament in particular should be considered.

Examples of diplomatic practices date back to ancient times. In the modern Westphalian world, it amounts to 'a dialogue between (independent) states': 'the process of dialogue and negotiation by which states in a system conduct their relations and pursue their purposes by means short of war' (Watson, 1982, p. 10).

Barston (2019, p. 2) lists 'information and communication' and 'international negotiation' as two key diplomatic areas. These dimensions are of particular relevance to our study. Indeed, as new actors have appeared, thus developing new forms of diplomatic interaction in a post-Westphalian world, there are nowadays many types of diplomacy, e.g. economic, cultural, celebrity, sports, gastronomic, religious, humanitarian, scientific, and of course, parliamentary - which often overlap in many ways and forms (Davenport, 2002; Cooper et al., 2013; Constantinou et al., 2016).

The existing literature also shows that there are many examples of parliamentary diplomacy efforts towards finding solutions to potential or real international conflicts (Beetham, 2006). Indeed, as two Dutch parliamentarians, Weisglas and de Boer (2007, p. 93) have put it: parliamentarians develop a more flexible and informal approach because '[t]hey are representatives of a people, [and] (…) their actions do not necessarily commit a government, which can make it easier for them to operate in particularly sensitive situations'.

3. The impact of digital revolution on the Vouli´s parliamentary diplomacy

3.1. The Hellenic Parliament's digital communication

After discussing the nature of channels and other digital dimensions of communications, the impact of digital developments on parliaments and on parliamentary diplomacy in general, the paper now turns to the Greek case.

The Hellenic Parliament connects with media representatives through a press office and a media/press gallery, the services of its communication directorate and its television channel, in order to promote its various parliamentary activities and provide substantial information to media and citizens. A great deal of these activities is broadcasted online. To achieve that goal, the role of digital media is of particular significance.

All Hellenic Parliament media outlets try to promote activities in order to include the public, both within the country and abroad, in a democratic process, with activities, such as open days, guided tours and conferences, as well as TV programs on legislative work, parliamentary and political history. Other examples of recent related initiatives are:

- thoughts for an all-new parliamentary portal;
- publication of parts of the content in the parliamentary portal in both English and French;

- various parliamentary events and conferences;
- the creation of a newsletter and a mini-portal, www.diaspora.parliament.gr, published both in Greek and English, addressed to the Greek Diaspora;[9]
- τhe creation of a regular (twice a month) parliamentary e-Magazine issued by the press office called "Επί του …Περιστυλίου!" [Greek for "On the…Peristyle!"][10] with reports on parliamentary, political and cultural issues.

The press office and all communication outlets of the Hellenic Parliament have on a daily basis direct interaction with accredited media representatives. Such communication is conducted to avoid misunderstandings, provide further information and enhance access to intra-parliamentary information. These close links with journalists can be particularly useful in times of crises, such as the one described in this paper.

The following ones are the main digital communication channels of the Hellenic Parliament that have been assessed in the context of the present study:

- official web page;[11]
- parliamentary TV channel;[12]
- Twitter (@PressParliament);
- Global Hellenism News website and newsletter;[13]
- "Epi ... tou peristiliou!" e-Magazine.[14]

3.2 Greek parliamentary diplomacy: the wider context

There is very little research on Greek parliamentary diplomacy, especially in English. Most studies (in Greek) on the international relations of the Vouli date back to the early 2000s, and often are rather descriptive (Gkikas, 2003; Karabarbounis, Mastaka and Dalis, 2004; Karabarbounis, 2005).

Stavridis (2018, pp. 5-6) summarises the most significant instruments that the Vouli possesses in foreign policy and maps internal bodies and stakeholders. In addition, he mentions the main parliamentary assemblies to which the Vouli dispatches delegations.[15]

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[9] The Greek Diaspora (ὁμογένεια [Omogenia], see: hellenicnews.com/category/news/omogenia-national-issues/) is given particular attention as it is very important for Greece: there is an estimated 7 million Greeks who live outside Greece, when the latter´s population is just under 11 million. There exist numerous organisations dealing with the Greek Diaspora, including formal ones: a World Council of Greeks Abroad (SAE), a General Secretariat of Hellenes Abroad, and, at the parliamentary level, the World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association (WHIA). This forum was initially set up by the Greek government but it is the Vouli that steers it. On the WHIA, see Stavridis (2020).

[10] A peristyle is an alternative architectural term of Greek origin for colonnade.

[11] The press releases are visible in a dedicated news box: https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Enimerosi/Grafeio-Typou/Deltia-Typou.

[12] The Hellenic Parliament TV channel (VouliTV) also broadcasts online; its archives may be found on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/hellenicparliamenttv.

[13] This newsletter is being managed by the Directorate for International Affairs: https://diaspora.parliament.gr/.

[14] This e-Magazine is being published since July 2020 by the press office and hence its assessment did not produce any results.

[15] These are the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Inter–Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) and the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy (IAO).

Other multilateral arrangements, particularly in the context of the European Union (EU), are also in place, such as the Conference of the Committees of the national Parliaments of the European Union Member States (COSAC) and the Conference of the Speakers of the EU Parliaments. At the regional level, just to mention two of the most significant inter-parliamentary institutions (IPIs), the Vouli belongs to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC). Moreover, as of early 2021, during the18th parliamentary period, 78 parliamentary friendship groups cover for bilateral parliamentary diplomacy issues with parliaments from all five continents.[16]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to holistically study the use of digital media for parliamentary diplomacy purposes across all actors and bodies of the Hellenic Parliament. Instead, this paper tries to bridge this important gap in the literature from a specific perspective: that of the digital media and related technologies.

4. The context and content of the 2019 Turkish Government-Libyan Government of National MoU

Before focusing on the parliamentary diplomacy case study, this part contextualises it: what is the content of the 2019 Turkish Government-Libyan Government of National MoU (the term "agreement" is used interchangeably).

On 27 November 2019, the Turkish Government and the (internationally recognised) Tripoli-based Libyan Government of National Accord (since 2015 and led by Fayez al-Sarraj) signed in Istanbul a Memorandum of Understanding[17] to delimitate their supposed maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean Sea (see also Oruç, 2019). As per the MoU, the two jurisdictions have established an 18.6 nautical miles boundary - both for Exclusive Economic Zone, as well as the Continental Shelf - just southeast of Crete. It creates a new maritime border delimitation that links the Turkish territorial waters with those of Libya (Bozkurt, 2019). The important aspect of such an agreement is that, first and foremost, it attempts to delineate the vision of Turkey in terms of how the allocation of maritime zones should be done in the Mediterranean.

Islands in the Aegean Sea are not taken into consideration for the delimitation of the Continental Shelf and this is clearly shown by the fact that large islands, such as Crete, Rhodes and Karpathos are not considered at all, notably in their right to a 12 nautical mile territorial sea, as per the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and customary law. Thus, the supposed Turkish continental shelf starts 6 nautical miles off the Greek coast, and, as a consequence, it disregards the possibility for islands of any right to possess a continental shelf.[18,19] It totally ignores the existence of several Greek islands in

[16] General information about the parliamentary diplomacy activities of the Hellenic Parliament can be accessed through the dedicated link at the parliament's portal: https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/Diethneis-Drastiriotites (last accessed: 19/1/2021).

[17] Its official name is: 'Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the Republic of Turkey and the Government of National Accord – State of Libya on delimitation of the maritime jurisdiction areas in the Mediterranean'.

[18] UNCLOS article 121.2. '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.' (United Nations Treaty Series, 1998).

doing so, and therefore infringes on Greek territorial waters and its EEZ (also related with the questions of Cyprus´ EEZ, hydrocarbons, non-recognition).[20]

The Greek reaction was to declare the MoU 'null and void', to lodge a complaint to the UN, and to expel the Libyan ambassador from Athens (Reuters, 2019). In addition, less than a month after the MoU was signed, Aguila Saleh Issa, the President of the Libyan House of Representatives based since 2014 in Tobruk – under the control of Haftar, visited Athens and met with the Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament, a very important and symbolic meeting.

As briefly mentioned in Part 2 above, Greek decision-making including its parliamentary dimension, now takes place in a fully developed multi-layer, multi-level context. Therefore, it is also important to discuss the EU reaction. Replying to a December 2019 MEP written question by an Italian MEP on the subject, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell responded on 24 February 2020 as follows:

> '(…) on 12 December 2019, the European Council [of the European Union] stressed that the Turkey-Libya 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 for third States' (*To Vima*, 2020; European Parliament, 2020).

5. Greek parliamentary reactions to the Agreement: a descriptive analysis

As noted above, the agreement was met with fierce resistance and opposition from many countries, especially Eastern Mediterranean countries, such as Greece, Cyprus, Syria, Israel, and Egypt, as well as the Tobruk-Based Libyan House of Representatives. In a similar way, after the signing of said agreement, the Hellenic Parliament reacted in various ways and at different levels. What follows first offers a descriptive account of a series of statements on the matter made by the Speaker, Committee representatives, as well as individual MPs, followed by an analysis of the digital dimension. These statements were issued on several occasions within Greece, but also before institutions of the EU, NATO and the United Nations (UN). The full list of statements, original and as a translation can be found in the Appendix.

5.1. Traditional means

Just a few days after the announcement of the agreement, on 1 December 2019, Constantine Tassoulas, the Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament, while answering a question regarding this important development, commented on the provocative nature of the

[19] 'The process of delimitation involved establishing the boundaries of an area already, in principle, appertaining to the coastal State and not the determination *de novo* of such an area. […] the rights of the coastal State in respect of the area of continental shelf constituting a natural prolongation of its land territory under the sea existed *ipso facto* and *ab initio*, by virtue of its sovereignty over the land. That right was inherent. In order to exercise it, no special legal acts had to be performed.' (International Court of Justice, 1969).

[20] Papastavridis (2020) presents a general discussion of the maritime disputes between Greece and Turkey from an international law perspective. On the EEZ of Cyprus see, inter alia, Jiménez García-Carriazo (2020) and Dokos et al. (2018).

Agreement and even paralleled it with the Turkish occupation of the northern part of Cyprus. Moreover, he Europeanised the conflict by saying 'we will confront all these issues (...) as Greece, but also as Europe' and stated that it has to be dealt with at the diplomatic level (Hellenic Parliament, 2019a).

This first reaction from the Speaker thus fully condemned and rejected the illegal Turkish-Libyan MoU in no uncertain terms, although at the same time it was intentionally vague, so as to allow room for manoeuvre to Greek foreign policy. The mentioning of the Cyprus issue possibly aims at highlighting the gravity of the matter and indicates that Greece is willing to engage in a long-term legal and diplomatic battle to annul the Agreement. The choice of Europeanization is important in diplomatic rhetoric, both in a legal (link to the widespread international acceptance of UNCLOS) and strategic sense (positioning the issue as an international conflict rather than a bilateral one). The fact that this 'European approach' to the Agreement attracted significant support is visible in one third of the recorded statements.

Only days later, on 3 December, speaking at the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC), Angelos Syrigos,[21] a Greek MP for New Democracy (ND) and an international law and foreign policy expert by profession, emphasised that this accord violated UNCLOS by depriving large Greek islands of their rights to a maritime zone, especially to a Continental Shelf, as well as to a territorial sea of up to 12 nautical miles. The accord limits them to just 6 nautical miles of territorial sea. He also called upon the European Union to take action (Hellenic Parliament, 2019b). This exact position was repeated again the next day by ND MP Konstantinos Gkioulekas, Chairman of the Committee on National Defence and Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament at a meeting with the German Ambassador in Greece, Ernst Wolfgang Reichel (Hellenic Parliament, 2019c).

On the same day, Andreas Koutsoumbas, a ND MP and member in the aforementioned committee, talking in the Interparliamentary Meeting of the Committees on Foreign Affairs of the European and National Parliaments, stressed the importance of any aspiring EU members to respect international law, in a clear reference to Turkey current status as a candidate member since accession negotiations began in late 2005 (Hellenic Parliament, 2019d).

On 12 December 2019, as a result of the Turkish-Libyan MoU, as well as Greece´s diplomatic reactions –the most important being the expulsion of the Libyan (GNA) Ambassador in Greece (Wintour, 2019)–, the Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament, Constantine Tassoulas met with the Speaker of the House of Representatives in Tobruk, Aguila Saleh Eissa. In a post-meeting statement, Speaker Tassoulas underlined that the Libyan House had also condemned the Agreement, seeing it as 'legally non-existent' (Hellenic Parliament, 2019e).

The actions of those days showed that Greece aligned with the Tobruk-based administration, at least on this specific issue, yet at the same time there was no explicit recognition of it as the legitimate government and representative of Libya. However, the explicit rejection of the agreement by the Speaker of the Libyan Parliament is a reason enough for this diplomatic move of Greece to *de facto* endorse the Tobruk-based Administration, when months later there were discussions about the possibility of opening a Greek Consulate Office in Benghazi, but also about the potential of re-opening negotiations

[21] Angelos Syrigos (MP) was also President of the Greek-Libyan parliamentary friendship group during the period under investigation.

for a Greek-Libyan maritime boundary delimitation agreement (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020).

Following this meeting, in a TV interview with the National Broadcaster ERT, the Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament made a reference to the Greek Government's decision to move the issue to the UN Security Council, since:

> '(…) the Security Council has a much more decisive competence regarding any destabilisation in the world. Turkey is now, officially denounced as an agitator for [threatening] international stability in a disputed region of the world and not only for bothering Greece.' (Hellenic Parliament, 2019f).

At this point, it needs to be emphatically noted that the Hellenic Parliament is an autonomous institution within the Greek democratic system and its Speaker enjoys the privilege to speak on its behalf. At the same time, it is recognised that differentiated parliamentary positions vis-à-vis the official diplomatic line could be prove problematic for the national interest. Therefore, the Parliament´s organisation foresees the existence of a permanent diplomatic office directly attached to the Speaker. The position of the diplomatic advisor to the Speaker is assumed by an experienced diplomat. Therefore, on such an important issue, there is little doubt that there is strong coordination between the Foreign Ministry and the Vouli.

Still talking about the Turkish-Libyan Agreement, the Speaker referred to the Morocco December 2015 agreement,[22] saying that it 'commits the [Libyan] Government to not undertake any initiative with any foreign actor that would excessively bind the country'. Hence, he concludes, the MoU cannot bind Libya (Hellenic Parliament, 2019f).

The above refers to the rejection of the Agreement by the Tobruk-based Administration, because it did not follow Libya´s constitutional arrangements for ratifying international agreements. Therefore, Greek parliamentarians raised this key issue, something that the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis also stated in a letter sent to the President of the UN Security Council on 4 September 2020, '(…) this Memorandum was never endorsed by the Libyan Parliament as required by article 8, paragraph 2 (f) of the Skhirat Agreement of 2015, and was concluded despite the fact that the two countries have no common maritime boundaries.' (United Nations Security Council, 2020).

Speaking at the Hellenic Parliament EU Affairs Committee on 17 December 2019, ND MP and Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs Miltiadis Varvitsiotis claimed that not only the MoU was null and void, but that it also had no legal effects on third parties, i.e. on the rights of the Greek islands to their own maritime zones: '(...) the memorandum of understanding infringes upon the sovereign rights of third states, is inconsistent with the Law of the Sea and may not produce legal effects for third states.' (Hellenic Parliament, 2019g).

The issue of this illegal agreement was also highlighted by ND MP Maximos Charakopoulos, Chairman of the Committee on Public Administration, Public Order and Justice, on 17 January 2020 during an official visit to Czechia. While meeting with members of the Czech

[22] This refers to the 17 December 2015 Skhirat Agreement signed in Morocco. The UN welcomed it as a step forward because it included '[r]epresentatives from a broad range of Libyan society (…) on forming a national unity government'. See *UN welcomes 'historic' signing of Libyan Political Agreement* (UN News, https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/12/518412-un-welcomes-historic-signing-libyan-political-agreement (last accessed: 20/1/2021).

Government and Parliament, he stated that this agreement infringed upon the sovereign rights of Greece and Cyprus regarding their maritime zones (Hellenic Parliament, 2020a).

On 22 January 2020, in a meeting of the Delegations of Defence and Foreign Affairs Committees of the Southern European Union Parliaments, Angelos Syrigos emphasised once more the illegality of the Agreement as '(…) it violates sovereign rights of third countries, and is inconsistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, therefore having no legal implications for third parties (…)' (Hellenic Parliament, 2020b).

The main issue of a televised interview aired from the Hellenic Parliament TV on 30 January 2020 was also the–then–recently signed Turkish-Libyan MoU: in it, Marietta Giannakou, ND MP, and Sia Anagnostopoulou, MP for the Major Opposition Party SYRIZA, both MPs showed a remarkable concord – given the historic experience of fierce political tension between governing and major opposition parties in Greece (Hellenic Parliament, 2020c).[23] This can be explained from a point of 'national unity', when it comes to foreign affairs of major significance.

This joint political bloc was also clearly visible in another instance of that period, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on 19 February 2020. As noted after the event, the Hellenic Parliament inter-party representation, consisting of Marietta Giannakou (ND), Manousos Voloudakis (ND), Theodora Tzakri (SYRIZA), Marios Katsis (SYRIZA), and Andreas Loverdos (Kinima Allagis), made a joint statement in which they not only briefly repeated Greece´s positions: they also explained their protest move when they all left the meeting room due to unacceptable behaviour on behalf of the Chairman-in-office (Hellenic Parliament, 2020d). This rather uncommon reaction in IPIs practice (i.e: an openly discriminatory attitude of a presiding officer towards a member state) – was broadcast and commented numerous times by national media, thus contributing to a strengthening of the parliament's image in Greece and beyond.

In his address, in Greek,[24] to the 14th Plenary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean on 20 February 2020 held in Athens, Speaker Constantine Tassoulas, talking about Turkish actions and the Agreement, stated that:

> '(…) there can be no tangible progress in the relations between neighbouring countries, without the full respect of International Law, including the International Law of the Sea, as well as the International Conventions.' (Hellenic Parliament, 2020e).

The repeating mentioning of the International Law of the Sea clearly shows the intention of Greece to weaken the position of the Turkish side as much as possible, as Ankara is not a party to UNCLOS. Using strong language in front of homologues from countries around the Mediterranean See, he also expressed that such actions 'threaten peace and stability in the eastern Mediterranean.' (Hellenic Parliament, 2020e). Therefore, the Greek stance on that particular issue is clear: to use all diplomatic means at its disposal, including those of parliamentary diplomacy, to put its message across.

Thus, this strategy continued over time. On 24 February 2020, ND MP Dimitrios Kairidis, First Deputy Chairman of the EU Affairs Committee of the Hellenic Parliament met with Deputy

[23] Methodologically, we regard both statements as one, since they were recorded during the same discussion/event. Obviously, this is also true for the joint MP statement during the following the 19 February 2020 NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

[24] The Speaker's address however was published both in English and French.

Chairman of the EU Affairs Committee of the French Senate Simon Sutour, a Socialist. Kairidis' statement repeated again the Greek position that the MoU has no legitimacy and no implications, as it contradicts the international law, geography, and common sense. He then called the EU to develop a strategy against Turkey´s provocations, in particular by highlighting the important role of France in this aspect and the need for the latter to take initiatives on that matter (Hellenic Parliament, 2020f).

On 27 February 2020, in his meeting with the Dutch Ambassador in Greece, Stella Ronner-Grubačić, Konstantinos Gkioulekas, ND MP and the Chairman of the Committee on National Defence and Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Parliament, pointed out that the Agreement ignores the rights of two coastal states, Greece and Cyprus, by disregarding the Law of the Sea in general (Hellenic Parliament, 2020g).

Finally, ND MP Anastasios Chatzivasileiou, member of the Delegation of the Hellenic Parliament at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP), raised also the issue of Turkey violating the arms embargo imposed in Libya by a United Nations' Security Council Resolution. He then called on the EU for a 'Mediterranean-wide' co-operation and common action against Libya, within the framework of 'European values' and international law (Hellenic Parliament, 2020h).[25]

5.2. Digital dimension

Once these more traditional in form parliamentary reactions have been presented empirically, the paper will now address both how the parliament has made use of its digital means in the case of the Turkey-Libya MoU. The authors point out that the vast majority of the press releases are available only in Greek; out of the 15 used here, only seven are available in English and French (the other languages that the official website of the Hellenic Parliament is available in) but mainly in the form of a picture and a legend. Only one statement is placed in both English and French, the speech of Speaker Tassoulas to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, while the meeting at the South Mediterranean Foreign Affairs and National Defence Committees is only translated into English, despite the fact that no English-speaking country is part of the that Group, while France is its most important member.

In general, it could be a sign of week prioritisation from the side of the Hellenic Parliament to externalise its actions beyond an exclusively Greek speaking area, i.e. Greece and Cyprus. In this regard, is can be noted that there is an informal directive to express themselves using the Greek language, an institutional option that is related with insistence in the historicity of the Greek language and culture. This is to be applied wherever possible, but there can be deviations due to practical issues, e.g. unavailable interpretation during webinars. But it also constitutes a problem of not putting much emphasis on the issue of international meetings that are usually conducted either in English or in French, the two de facto working languages in EU foreign policy. After all, out of the 15 statements above, 11 are directed to an international audience, thus falling into the category of parliamentary diplomacy. Last, but not least, although the Hellenic Parliament operates an English website dedicated to informing the Greek diaspora, none of these statements, however much important they were, were ever included in this network.

[25] On the role of CFSP/CSDP in EU's external action, see Morillas (2020).

Another important issue to note is the use of social media, primarily Twitter, as the Hellenic Parliament does not operate other social media accounts, e.g. on Facebook or LinkedIn. It does have an Instagram account (@parliamentoffice), but was not evaluated for the purpose of this study due to the very nature of the medium, i.e. it is designed to share visual information rather that text. Another remark is the fact that the Hellenic Parliament only tweets in Greek and places a headline and a photo, along a press release link. This therefore amounts to what could be seen as parliamentary social media presence being not active, but rather passive – with the twitter account solely working as an 'aggregator' of press releases. Regarding the statements used above, out of the 15 in total, only eight were available on Twitter. Also, although for most statements only a headline and a photo are available in English and French –two essential parts of any tweet nonetheless– there still is no activity in tweeting in those two foreign languages. In relation to the actual statements used in this paper, it is worth mentioning that only statements with a direct reference to the agreement were chosen. There were additional statements by parliamentarians that 'condemned Turkish aggression' in general, without clear reference to the agreement. Evaluation of such vague statements would spread the width of this study beyond its main focus; hence, there was a firm decision to narrow it down to direct mentioning of the agreement.

Finally, during the period examined, there were multiple meetings with representatives[26] of France, Israel, Cyprus, Tunisia and Egypt, as well as the World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association (WHIA). However, in none of them was there any reference to the Turkish/Libyan Agreement, despite the potential to internationalise this issue even further. Below the results of the statistical analysis of the recorded statements.

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the statements in terms of the level of intervention. According to our findings, four of them were made by the Speaker, four by the Committee Chairs and seven by MPs. This shows a balanced approach, with all parliamentary levels participating. It is worth mentioning that one of the MP statements was made in front of the EU Affairs Committee by Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, a Minister. There, he spoke as a governmental representative, talking about the actions of the Hellenic Government, rather as a parliamentarian. Hence, if his statement is excluded for methodological reasons, it could be argued that there is an even greater balance in the statements per actor.

[26] As seen earlier, representatives had different functions such as diplomats, politicians and parliamentarians.

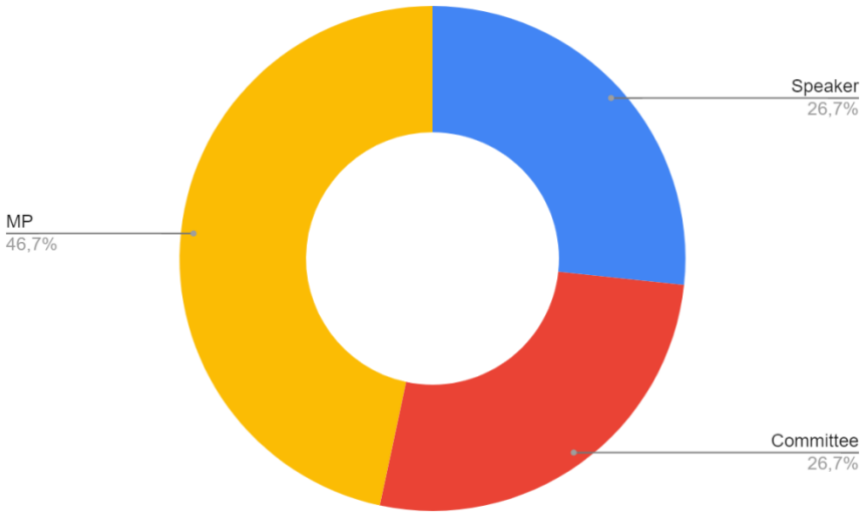

Figure 1. Number of statements per actor

Figure 2 depicts the timeline of statements, in order to explore the frequency of occurrence. It is interesting to note the prompt and 'front-loaded' reaction of the Hellenic Parliament. Out of the 15 statements in total, seven of them were made in December, three in January, four in February and only one in March. In early March, due to the institutional lockdown for the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an abrupt stop in almost early parliamentary activity. This also affected parliamentary diplomacy, as no other statements relevant to the agreement could be detected for several months (until June 2020) on the parliament's digital channels. This is the reason for choosing the timeframe of this study.

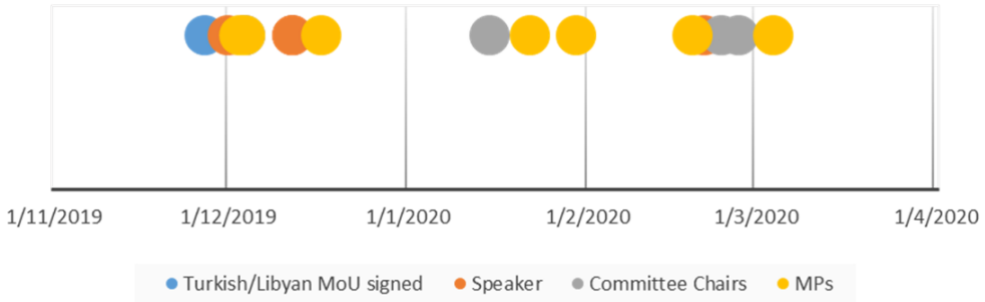

Figure 2. Timeline of examined interventions

The choice of the different channels can be seen in Figure 3. Almost all Statements can be found on the parliamentary portal, i.e. 14 out of 15, while only half of them, i.e. eight out of 15, were propagated via Twitter. Despite the global outreach of web broadcasting, the Hellenic Parliament TV did not organise but a single relevant debate, on 30 January 2020, which is available on YouTube. In the studied case, the Hellenic Parliament did not make use of the other digital channels, though available, that are at its disposal. Our final finding is related to the political origin of the statements. These were expressed by overall 13 MPs, 10 of which belong to ND (77%), two to SYRIZA (15%) and one to Kinima Allagis (8%). Though

statements originate overwhelmingly from MPs from the governing party, there are clear indications that the 'national line' is expressed by opposition parties.

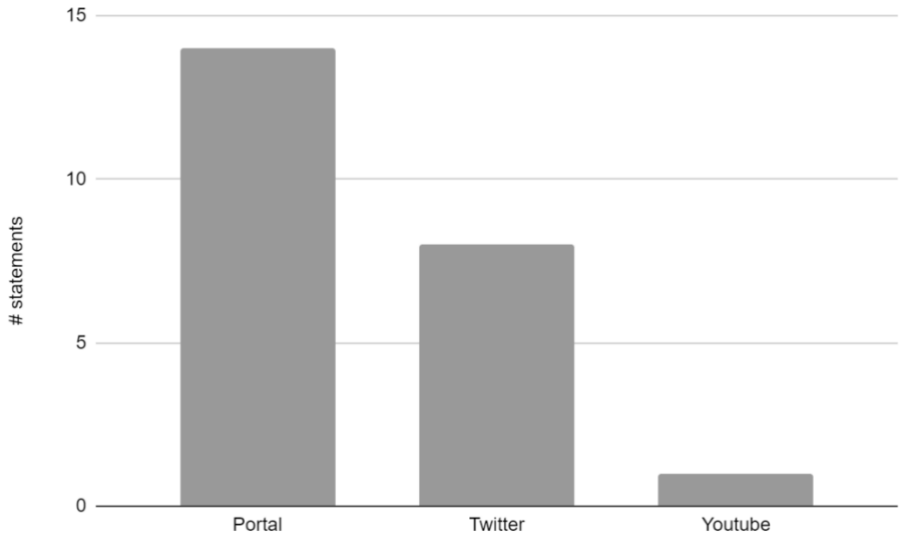

Figure 3. Breakdown of statements according to digital medium

It needs to be noted that the rest of the parliamentary parties, i.e. the Communist Party of Greece and Mera25, are notably absent. This could be attributed to the fact that their representatives do not frequently assume leading positions in parliamentary bodies nor do they regularly participate in official delegations.

6. Conclusions and policy recommendations

The current paper has captured and studied the Hellenic Parliament's primary digital response to the November 2019 Turkey-Libya (internationally recognised government) memorandum. As expected, the Speaker has made his voice heard, by clearly rejecting the memorandum on many occasions, namely interviews, official meetings, assemblies and statements. It is traditional for parliamentary Speakers to act as official spokespersons of their respective institutions´ stance on international affairs. For instance, in the case of France, Maus (2012, p. 30) describes the Presidents of the *Assemblée Nationale* and of the *Sénat* as the very 'embodiment' of French parliamentary diplomacy.

This study has also shown that the Vouli´s Chairs of parliamentary committees covering this subject have also complemented this rejection of the Turkish-Libyan agreement in their official capacity: when meeting with ambassadors, parliamentarians and officials from EU member states, as well as within EU forums. Lastly, MPs, from the ruling majority and the pro-EU opposition, have made personal or joint statements in various EU forums or in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, therefore, showing a constant and systematic parliamentary support of the official Greek diplomatic stance on this particular subject.

Thus, a common stance is clearly visible across the major political spectrum regarding the outright rejection of the said agreement as 'null and void'. A fair balance is visible in the interventions at all levels, i.e. Speaker, committee Chairs and MPs. This could be interpreted as a well-thought and robust reaction of the Hellenic Parliament. The timing of these interventions can be regarded as 'front-loaded', as almost half of them (seven out of 15) where within a month after the signing of the memorandum. This was an expected 'reactive' approach, based on 'instinct' rather than planning.

Yet, during this period, apart from the recorded events in this text, there was a series of other additional meetings that one would think to be significant from a diplomacy point of view. These were the meetings with the World Hellenic Inter-parliamentary Association (WHIA) and representatives/ambassadors from Cyprus, France, Israel and Tunisia. Here, the absence of any public reference to the said agreement seems rather strange, which leaves plenty of room to assume that there the Greek side has opted to handle this politically sensitive topic primarily at the diplomatic level. In other words, there is still a lot of improvement in the coordination and follow-up parliamentary activities of Greek parliamentary diplomacy. This absence is more surprising considering that, as noted above, the official state diplomacy and the declared parliamentary diplomacy fully coincide on the issue under investigation. There is no discrepancy between the two and therefore it would be expected to see more coordinated efforts in that direction.

As far as emphasis on how digital channels, as well as several message attributes, have been used in this case study goes, it is possible to conclude the following: all but one appears at the official parliamentary portal, with around half of them being communicated via Twitter. Other channels, though available, were not used to propagate the Greek positions. For instance, the following two could be used in the future: the newsletter for the Greek diaspora –which appears also in English– and the e-Magazine provide ample and regular opportunities for customised information of specific target audiences.

Outside the Greek-Cypriot axis, the choice of language is an important issue – especially for a country whose official language, in spite of its long historic tradition and culture, is only spoken by a very small minority in today's world. The Vouli´s press releases are provided in English and French, but in most cases only the title is translated and some pictures made available. Furthermore, tweets appear only with the Greek title and contain a link to the original press release in the portal. Not every press release gets twitted though. The recorded broad use of Greek is consistent with an informal directive to parliamentarians to use their native language when on the international stage. Here, it would no doubt be important to use English and French in a most systematic way. Not only because both languages are the EU´s CFSP vernaculars but also two of the UN's official tongues. It might also be useful to extend this practice to Spanish, another world language, justifying it under the wider Europeanisation process of Greek foreign policy. With digital revolution, it is even easier to, for instance, retweet in various languages.

The specific case study handled by the paper could also be used as a model for future research avenues, e.g.: analyses of parliamentary positioning on the more recent Greek-Italian, Greek-Egyptian and Greek-Albanian agreements on maritime boundaries. Moreover, as the digital revolution is going to affect every form of parliamentary diplomacy, such as the friendship groups, more efforts in soft diplomacy actions to bridge long foreign affairs gaps will also need to materialise. The Hellenic Republic, with its multiple open diplomacy 'fronts' and, in particular the Hellenic Parliament, could investigate an integrated framework

of operation and cooperation for its numerous friendship groups to work in tandem, if not to complement, official diplomatic channels. In this context, and despite recent tensions as the ones generated by the agreement under study here, one might discuss the possibility to set up a Friendship Group with Turkey, a move considered impossible for a long time. Technically, such a step would reinforce existing dynamics and support existing and on-going bilateral exchange.

Greek and Turkish parliamentarians already meet regularly in numerous IPIs (e.g.: IPU, UfM PA, PAM, NATO PA, OSCE PA and PACE, indicatively). In that respect, translating Greek parliamentary declarations and statements into Turkish (by proxy users or national think tanks), would be an original measure worth investigating in detail as it would facilitate an additional channel of dialogue between the two countries, including between its respective civil societies.[27] At the end of the day, parliamentarians 'are representatives of a people, which perhaps gives them more political weight than NGOs, but at the same time their actions do not necessarily commit a government, which can make it easier for them to operate in particularly sensitive situations' (Weisglas and de Boer, 2007, 96). Indeed, flexibility, informality, search for compromises are not only characteristics of diplomatic practice in general, they represent also those of parliamentary diplomacy (Stavridis, 2017; 2019).

It is also not unheard of that individual parliamentarians attempt actions that may cross official foreign policy lines. A parliamentary code of contact appears in this regard as the best possible option to homogenise and bundle individual and random quasi-diplomatic moves. Given the pluralism and wide spread geographic distribution of personal actions from parliamentarians, such guidelines could potentially impact other forms of diplomacy such as diaspora diplomacy (Stone and Douglas, 2018) or Olympic diplomacy (Beacom, 2012).

This paper has therefore offered a number of preliminary findings on a still under-researched area of academic interest. As such, it represents both a pilot-study and a possible framework for future work, especially in a comparative context, both spatial and chronological. Finally, special interest should be given to the way Greek parliamentary diplomacy has used new digital technologies in recent times. Still it is not clear if the response presented here constitutes a particular model for parliamentary diplomacy, such as the ones shown by Manor (2016). Vice versa, further study, possibly of comparative nature, is necessary to determine if lessons learned for digital diplomacy can find their way into legislatures. Ultimately, it is hoped that this contribution will lead to more academic interest on this important dimension of Greek foreign policy.

[27] In this respect, it can be noted that the Hellenic Parliament has a long-term language teaching program for administrators that includes Turkish.

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Appendix (The original statement appears in grey)

Date	Person(s) (MP)	Statement (EN)	Statement (EL)
1/12/2019	Konstantinos Tasoulas	‘I would say that this agreement on the one hand shows how unrelated to history, geography and any concept of international law the provocation of Turkey is. But we must not rest on these words, since also other things that Turkey has done were unhistorical and challenging international law, and yet, based on the "blessed are the holders" [principle], such as the occupation of Cyprus, [these things] keep on torturing us being a wound on the body of Hellenism. Therefore, we will confront all these issues in the diplomatic and in any other decisive field, as Greece, but also as Europe.’	‘Θα έλεγα ότι αυτό το σύμφωνο αφενός δείχνει την ανιστόρητη, αγεωγράφητη και εκτός κάθε έννοιας Διεθνούς Δικαίου προκλητικότητα της Τουρκίας. Αλλά δεν πρέπει να επαναπαυόμαστε σε αυτές τις λέξεις, γιατί και άλλα πράγματα που έκανε η Τουρκία ήταν ανιστόρητα και εκτός Διεθνούς Δικαίου, και εντούτοις, με βάση το "μακάριοι οι κατέχοντες", όπως η κατοχή της Κύπρου, εξακολουθούν να μας βασανίζουν και να αποτελούν πληγή στο σώμα του Ελληνισμού. Συνεπώς όλα αυτά τα πράγματα θα τα αντιμετωπίσουμε και στο διπλωματικό και σε κάθε άλλο αποφασιστικό πεδίο ως Ελλάδα αλλά και ως Ευρώπη.’
3/12/2019	Aggelos Syrigos	‘Mr. Syrigos (...) informed the Conference about the illegal actions of Turkey within the Cypriot maritime zones, as well as the signing of the illegal Memorandum of Understanding between Turkey and the Tripoli-based Government of Libya. Mr. Syrigos underlined that this Memorandum is a blatant violation of the Law of the Sea, as it fully ignores the continental shelf of heavily populated and territorially large Aegean Islands, by limiting their territorial sea to 6 nautical miles, and called on the European Union to take action.’	‘Ο κ. Συρίγος (...) ενημέρωσε τη Διάσκεψη για τις παράνομες ενέργειες της Τουρκίας στις κυπριακές θαλάσσιες ζώνες, καθώς επίσης και την υπογραφή του παράνομου Μνημονίου Κατανόησης ανάμεσα στην Τουρκία και την κυβέρνηση της Τρίπολης της Λιβύης. Ο κ. Συρίγος υπογράμμισε ότι το Μνημόνιο αποτελεί κατάφωρη παραβίαση του Δικαίου της Θάλασσας, καθώς αγνοεί πλήρως την υφαλοκρηπίδα μεγάλων σε πληθυσμό και έκταση νησιών του Αιγαίου, περιορίζοντας την αιγιαλίτιδα ζώνη τους στα 6 ναυτικά μίλια, και ζήτησε από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση να αναλάβει δράση.’
4/12/2019	Konstantinos Gkioulekas	(...) the Greek Parliamentarian scolded Turkey's provocative stance in the Eastern Mediterranean, noting that the recent agreement between Turkey and Libya regarding the demarcation of maritime boundaries constitutes a clear violation of international law.	(...) ο Έλληνας βουλευτής καυτηρίασε την προκλητική στάση της Τουρκίας στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο, επισημαίνοντας ότι η πρόσφατη συμφωνία μεταξύ Τουρκίας και Λιβύης για τον καθορισμό των θαλασσίων συνόρων αποτελεί κατάφωρη παραβίαση του διεθνούς δικαίου.
4/12/2019	Andreas Koutsoumbas	He also referred to the need for countries engaged in accession or pre-accession negotiations to respect international law, given that "we have recently seen a clear violation of International Law and the Law of the Sea in the wider Mediterranean region.	Αναφέρθηκε επιπλέον στην ανάγκη οι χώρες που βρίσκονται σε ενταξιακές ή προενταξιακές διαπραγματεύσεις να σέβονται το Διεθνές Δίκαιο, με δεδομένο ότι "βρισκόμαστε τον τελευταίο καιρό σε μια κατάφωρη παραβίαση του Διεθνούς Δικαίου και του Δικαίου

			της Θάλασσας στην ευρύτερη περιοχή της Μεσογείου.
12/12/2019	Konstantinos Tasoulas	‘This briefing regarding the problems and challenges that Libya is facing is of particular importance due to the fact that Mr. Aguilla Saleh Eissa has very recently taken a stand -with legal documentation and unequivocally- for a serious issue of concern for his country, that is the recent agreement signed between Turkey and the Tripoli-based Government, an agreement which he considers absolutely condemnable and legally non-existent.’	‘Αυτή η ενημέρωση, για τα προβλήματα και τις προκλήσεις που αντιμετωπίζει η Λιβύη, αποκτά πρόσθετη σημασία για εμάς ενόψει του γεγονότος ότι ο κ. Aguila Saleh Eissa πολύ πρόσφατα έχει τοποθετηθεί, με νομική τεκμηρίωση και απερίφραστα, για ένα σοβαρό ζήτημα που απασχολεί τη χώρα του, δηλαδή την πρόσφατη συμφωνία που υπεγράφη ανάμεσα στην Τουρκία και την κυβέρνηση της Τρίπολης, συμφωνία την οποία θεωρεί απολύτως καταδικαστέα και νομικά ανύπαρκτη.’
12/12/2019	Konstantinos Tasoulas	‘Turkey's destabilising behaviour in the Eastern Mediterranean is the reason why Greece has sent a letter not only to the UN Secretary General, but also to the UN Security Council, because the Security Council has a much more decisive competence regarding any destabilisation in the world. Turkey is now, officially denounced as an agitator for [threatening] international stability in a disputed region of the world and not only for bothering Greece.’, ‘The December 2015 agreement, concluded in Morocco, (...) commits the Government to not undertake any initiative with any foreign actor that would excessively bind the country. That is not to make what is called an agreement, and this is the reason why it can only sign MoUs. And here is the key, (...) the Libyan Parliament, through its President, reveals in the letter to the Secretary General of the UN, with legal arguments, citing the agreement of 2015, that this is a memorandum (MoU) that does not bind the Nation of Libya (...)’	‘Η αποσταθεροποιητική συμπεριφορά της Τουρκίας στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο είναι και η αιτία που η Ελλάδα έστειλε όχι μόνο στον Γ.Γ. του ΟΗΕ, αλλά και στο Συμβούλιο Ασφαλείας του ΟΗΕ επιστολή, γιατί το Συμβούλιο Ασφαλείας έχει πολύ πιο αποφασιστική αρμοδιότητα εν σχέσει με την αποσταθεροποίηση σε μια περιοχή της υφηλίου. Η Τουρκία λοιπόν, επισήμως πλέον, καταγγέλλεται ως ταραξίας της διεθνούς σταθερότητος σε μία επίμαχη περιοχή του κόσμου και όχι μόνον ως ενοχλούσα την Ελλάδα.’, ‘Η συμφωνία του Δεκεμβρίου 2015, που συνήφθη στο Μαρόκο, ... δεσμεύει την Κυβέρνηση να μη λαμβάνει με τον ξένο παράγοντα καμία πρωτοβουλία με την οποία να δεσμεύεται υπέρμετρα η χώρα. Να μην κάνει δηλαδή αυτό που λέμε συμφωνίες, γι’ αυτό και μπορεί να κάνει μόνο MOU. Και εδώ είναι το κλειδί, γι’ αυτό και το Κοινοβούλιο της Λιβύης, διά του Προέδρου του, αποκαλύπτει στην επιστολή προς τον Γ.Γ. του ΟΗΕ, με νομικά επιχειρήματα, επικαλούμενο και τη συμφωνία του 2015, ότι πρόκειται για μνημόνιο (MOU) που δεν δεσμεύει το έθνος της Λιβύης (...)’
17/12/2019	Miltiadis Varvitsiotis	‘(...) the memorandum of understanding infringes upon the sovereign rights of third states, is inconsistent with the Law of the Sea and may not produce legal effects for third states.’	‘(…) το μνημόνιο συνεννόησης παραβιάζει τα κυριαρχικά δικαιώματα τρίτων κρατών, δεν συνάδει με το Δίκαιο της Θάλασσας και δεν μπορεί να παράγει έννομες συνέπειες για τρίτα κράτη.’
15/1/2020	Maximos Charakopoulos	‘In addition, he scolded (...) the Turkish provocation that has been	‘Επίσης, καυτηρίασε (...) την τουρκική προκλητικότητα που

		noted down lately with regards to the contestation of the Greek and Cypriot EEZ after the signing of the Turkey-Libya Memorandum.'	καταγράφεται το τελευταίο διάστημα σε σχέση με την αμφισβήτηση της ελληνικής και της κυπριακής ΑΟΖ μετά την υπογραφή του Μνημονίου Τουρκίας-Λιβύης.'
22/1/2020	Aggelos Syrigos	He specifically referred to Turkey's provocative behavior in the Eastern Mediterranean and emphasized that the Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of Libya and Turkey on the delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zones in the Mediterranean Sea violates sovereign rights of third countries, and is inconsistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, therefore having no legal implications for third parties, a statement also recorded in the Joint Declaration of the meeting.	Ιδιαίτερη αναφορά έκανε στην προκλητική συμπεριφορά της Τουρκίας στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο και υπογράμμισε πως το Μνημόνιο Κατανόησης μεταξύ των κυβερνήσεων της Λιβύης και της Τουρκίας για την οριοθέτηση των Αποκλειστικών Οικονομικών Ζωνών στη Μεσόγειο Θάλασσα, παραβιάζει τα κυριαρχικά δικαιώματα τρίτων κρατών, δεν συνάδει με το Δίκαιο της Θάλασσας και δεν μπορεί να επιφέρει νομικές συνέπειες για τρίτα κράτη, αναφορά η οποία αποτυπώθηκε και στην Κοινή Δήλωση της συνάντησης.
30/1/2020	Marieta Giannakou (MG), Sia Anagnostopoulou(SA)	MG: '(...) France will be on our side and I suppose that during the European Council, in which for me Greece must put on the table the implementation of sanctions that have been decided, because it is not only about the announcement that "sanctions are imposed", it is for the sanctions to be implemented.' / SA: 'And a last point Ms Giannakou made a reference to, I am also in favour of sanctions, European ones, and not only in their dimension of "what are we going to impose on Turkey" (...), sanctions also oblige member states of the European Union (...)'	MG: '(…) Η Γαλλία θα είναι στο πλευρό μας και υποθέτω ότι κατά την διάρκεια του Ευρωπαϊκού Συμβουλίου, που για μένα η Ελλάδα πρέπει να θέσει επί τάπητος την εφαρμογή των κυρώσεων που έχουν αποφασιστεί, διότι δεν είναι μόνο η ανακοίνωση ότι "επιβάλλονται κυρώσεις", είναι να αρχίσουν να επιβάλλονται οι κυρώσεις." SA: 'Κι ένα τελευταίο σημείο, που ανέφερε η κυρία Γιαννάκου, κι εγώ είμαι υπέρ των κυρώσεων, των ευρωπαϊκών, και όχι μόνο στη διάσταση του "τι θα επιβάλλουμε στη Τουρκία"(…), οι κυρώσεις όμως υποχρεώνουν και τα κράτη-μέλη της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης (…)'
19/2/2020	Marietta Giannakou, Manousos Voloudakis, Theodora Tzakri, Marios Katsis, Andreas Loverdos	During the work of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Brussels, as the Hellenic Delegation, we emphasised the issue of the Turkey-Libya agreement, which violates international law and the sovereign rights of Greece. In the discussion that followed after the Turkish NATO Ambassador had expressed his position, we both sought to provide answers regarding the issue of the violation of the sovereign rights of Greece and to inform our colleagues from other NATO member-states about Turkey's illegal actions and the explosive risks they pose to the region. We especially stressed the fact that Turkey, via its	Κατά τη διάρκεια των εργασιών της Κοινοβουλευτικής Συνέλευσης του ΝΑΤΟ στις Βρυξέλλες, ως Ελληνική Αντιπροσωπεία θέσαμε με έμφαση το ζήτημα της συμφωνίας Τουρκίας-Λιβύης η οποία παραβιάζει το Διεθνές Δίκαιο και τα κυριαρχικά δικαιώματα της Ελλάδας. Στη συζήτηση που ακολούθησε μετά από τοποθέτηση του Πρεσβευτή της Τουρκίας στο ΝΑΤΟ, αφ' ενός ζητήσαμε να λάβουμε απαντήσεις σχετικά με το ζήτημα της παραβίασης των κυριαρχικών δικαιωμάτων της Ελλάδας και αφ' ετέρου επιδιώξαμε να ενημερώσουμε τους

		agreement with Libya, is consciously violating the principle of international law that the islands are taken into consideration in determining the EEZ. We also stressed that we have already writing samples from Ankara in another field, on the practical utilisation of its legal stunts: Turkey is already drilling in the EEZ of Cyprus on sites that were allocated for research through international tender to oil companies of NATO member-states, such as France and Italy. The Chairman-in-office systematically interrupted our statements and questions, thus hindering the development of our positions. Even being interrupted, we completed our positions [and] our Delegation left the Room in protest, denouncing the attitude of the Chairman-in-office.	συναδέλφους μας των λοιπών χωρών μελών του ΝΑΤΟ για τις παράνομες ενέργειες της Τουρκίας και τους κινδύνους ανάφλεξης που προκαλούν στην περιοχή. Αναδείξαμε ιδιαίτερα το γεγονός ότι η Τουρκία με τη συμφωνία της με τη Λιβύη συνειδητά παραβιάζει την αρχή του Διεθνούς Δικαίου ότι στον καθορισμό της ΑΟΖ λαμβάνονται υπ' όψιν τα νησιά. Τονίσαμε δε ότι έχουμε ήδη δείγματα γραφής από την Άγκυρα, σε άλλο πεδίο, σχετικά με την πρακτική αξιοποίηση των νομικών της ακροβασιών: η Τουρκία ήδη διενεργεί γεωτρήσεις στην ΑΟΖ της Κύπρου σε οικόπεδα που με διεθνή διαγωνισμό δόθηκαν για έρευνα σε πετρελαϊκές εταιρείες κρατών μελών του ΝΑΤΟ όπως η Γαλλία και η Ιταλία. Ο Προεδρεύων των εργασιών συστηματικά μας διέκοπτε στις τοποθετήσεις και τις ερωτήσεις μας, εμποδίζοντας την ανάπτυξη των θέσεών μας. Αφού έστω και διακοπτόμενοι ολοκληρώσαμε τις τοποθετήσεις μας, η Αντιπροσωπεία μας αποχώρησε από την αίθουσα σε ένδειξη διαμαρτυρίας, καταγγέλλοντας τη στάση του Προεδρεύοντος.
21/2/2020	Konstantinos Tasoulas	'(...) there can be no tangible progress in the relations between neighbouring countries, without the full respect of International Law, including the International Law of the Sea, as well as the International Conventions. Actions, which insist on questioning the sovereignty and the sovereign rights of Greece, undermine the basic principle of good neighbourly relations, contravene international law and seriously obstruct efforts towards a mutually beneficial relationship. For example, the memoranda that were signed between Turkey and Libya are null and void and cannot be implemented, while they threaten peace and stability in the eastern Mediterranean.'	'(…) δεν μπορεί να υπάρξει απτή πρόοδος στις σχέσεις μεταξύ γειτονικών χωρών, χωρίς τον πλήρη σεβασμό του Διεθνούς Δικαίου, συμπεριλαμβανομένου του Διεθνούς Δικαίου της Θάλασσας, καθώς και των Διεθνών Συμβάσεων. Δράσεις που εμμένουν στην αμφισβήτηση της κυριαρχίας και των κυριαρχικών δικαιωμάτων της Ελλάδας, υπονομεύουν τη βασική αρχή των σχέσεων καλής γειτονίας, παραβιάζουν το διεθνές δίκαιο και εμποδίζουν σοβαρά τις προσπάθειες για μια αμοιβαία επωφελής σχέση. Παραδείγματος χάριν, τα μνημόνια που υπεγράφησαν μεταξύ Τουρκίας και Λιβύης είναι άκυρα και κενά περιεχομένου και ανεφάρμοστα, ενώ απειλούν την ειρήνη και τη σταθερότητα στην ανατολική Μεσόγειο.'
24/2/2020	Dimitris Keridis	(...) regarding the Turkey-Libya Agreement, Mr. Kairidis underlined that it violates international law, geography and logic, and stressed	(…) σε ό,τι αφορά το Σύμφωνο Τουρκίας - Λιβύης, ο κ. Καιρίδης υπογράμμισε ότι παραβιάζει το διεθνές δίκαιο, τη γεωγραφία και τη

		that Europe should develop a more dynamic strategy in the face of the Turkish provocation, by calling on France to take initiatives on this issue.	λογική και τόνισε ότι η Ευρώπη θα πρέπει να αναπτύξει μια πιο δυναμική στρατηγική μπροστά στην τουρκική προκλητικότητα, καλώντας τη Γαλλία να αναλάβει πρωτοβουλίες στο θέμα αυτό.
27/2/2020	Konstantinos Gkioulekas	With regard to Turkey's provocative behaviour in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean, the Greek Parliamentarian stressed that [Turkey] cannot blatantly violate the sovereign rights of Greece and Cyprus and added that the Turkey-Libya Memorandum ignores the Law of the Sea.	Σχετικά με την προκλητική συμπεριφορά της Τουρκίας στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο και το Αιγαίο, ο Έλληνας βουλευτής τόνισε πως αυτή δεν μπορεί να παραβιάζει κατάφωρα τα κυριαρχικά δικαιώματα της Ελλάδας και της Κύπρου και πρόσθεσε πως το Μνημόνιο Τουρκίας – Λιβύης αγνοεί το Δίκαιο της Θάλασσας
4/3/2020	Anastasios Chatzivasiliou	Special reference was made by Mr. Chatzivasileiou to the destabilising role that Turkey plays in Libya, by violating the agreed-upon arms embargo, as well as the sovereign rights of Greece, through the illegal Memorandum of Understanding with Libya for the maritime zones, and called upon the EU to cooperate in the Mediterranean and take joint action in Libya, on the basis of European principles and International Law.	Ιδιαίτερη αναφορά έγινε από τον κ. Χατζηβασιλείου στον αποσταθεροποιητικό ρόλο που παίζει η Τουρκία στη Λιβύη, παραβιάζοντας το συμφωνηθέν εμπάργκο όπλων αλλά και τα κυριαρχικά δικαιώματα της Ελλάδας, μέσω του παράνομου μνημονίου κατανόησης με την Λιβύη για τις θαλάσσιες ζώνες και κάλεσε την Ε.Ε. να συνεργαστεί στη Μεσόγειο και να αναλάβει κοινή δράση στη Λιβύη στη βάση των ευρωπαϊκών αρχών και του Διεθνούς Δικαίου.

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