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Imia, EEZ, and Enosis: Cyprus in the Context of Greco-Turkish Antagonism (Brochure)

Historical Note

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It is the introduction to the demonstration "Imia, EEZ, and Enosis: Cyprus in the Context of Greco-Turkish Antagonism", which took place on 29 March 2017 within the Autonomous School.

Content

Imia, EEZ, and Enosis: Cyprus in the Context of Greco-Turkish Antagonism

When in November of 1993 the governments of Clerides and A. Papanadreu signed the 'Dogma of the Unified Defence Space' (ΔΕΑΧ), they triggered a new era of Greco-Turkish tensions. This agreement took place within the context of a weakened Turkish state which had to confront, among other, the insurgency of the Kurdish PKK. It was therefore conceived within the framework of the attempt to promote the imperialist plans of the Greek state who considered the 'timing' to be right. What became known as the 'Unified Defence Dogma' officially characterised as a defensive measure, with the ultimate purpose being the prevention and confronting of every kind of attack against one or both of the states. Within the framework of this deal, Greece also proclaimed any attempt of a Turkish advance into 'Free Cyprus' as an act of war (casus belli).

The deal foresaw a qualitative and quantitative upgrading of the National Guard, the coordination of the staff of the two Defence ministries, the creation of appropriate operational infrastructure (read air base in Paphos) and joint exercises. From 1994 the annual Nikiforos-Toxotis exercise were established, which were a demonstration of force and prepared the army for a hypothetical conflict with Turkey. The same year the Greek state signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which formed the basis of its right to extend the limit of its territorial waters from 6 to 12 nautical miles. Turkey's response was the declaration of its own casus belli, declaring that such an expansion would amount to an act of war since the Turkish state had not signed up to the convention and therefore did not recognise it.

Two years later, in 1996, the declared casus belli threatened to materialise. In January 1996 the drums of war are played louder than ever in the past 20 years during a series of provocations involving the uninhabited rocky islets in the Aegean. When of course the Greek state realised that it would not declare war it retreated in disarray; however, the tension continued and was transferred to Cyprus. The tension over Imia led to the approval of a new gigantic armament program which

culminated in the purchase of Russian-made S-300 missiles by the Clerides government, who would eventually postpone their installation on the island. In exchange, the Cypriot state installs the likewise Russian-made TOR-M11 missiles with a range that reaches up to eastern Turkey. The tension on the island reaches boiling point in the summer of 1996. On 2 August, on the initiative of the Cyprus Motorcyclists Federation, a motorcade demonstration sets off from Berlin with the aim of finishing in Kyrenia. What followed were the murders of Isaac and Solomou by the Grey Wolves and T/C police, which mark the culmination of Greco-Turkish tensions on the island. Meanwhile, the delivery of the captured leader of the PKK Öcalan by the Greek to the Turkish state and the deactivation of the 'Unified Defence Dogma' in 1999 sealed the end of the imperialist aspirations in that decade.

The state of tension that had formed in the 90s reached a lull in the first few years of the 21st century only to return in the past months with force to the forefront. The tune to which the war drums are being played are above all regarding the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). Here we quote Wikipedia:

"In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is considered to be the maritime area within which a State has the right to explore or exploit marine resources, including the production of energy from water and wind. It stretches beyond the national waters of a country to 200 nautical miles from the coastline. Conventional use of the term EEZ includes both national waters and the continental shelf beyond the 200-mile limit.

Greece has not defined its EEZ with any of its neighbouring countries, though it retains the right to enforce it in accordance with the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and international legislation. However, the Greek side has not acted on any such claim so far. The Turkish proclamation of war does not concern the EEZ. Turkey argues that the Aegean, as a semi-enclosed maritime area, must be placed under a special status, in contrast to other semi-enclosed seas such as the Adriatic, or the fully enclosed Black Sea. Turkey has not signed the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea, with which the national waters of a country may be extended to 12 nautical miles. Although it has maintained a permanent objection to the relevant article of the Convention, it has itself extended its national waters to 12n.m. in the Black Sea. In 1995, when the treaty was ratified by the Greek Parliament, Turkey stated that if Greece extended its national waters beyond 6 nautical miles, it would be seen as an attempt to restrict Turkey as well as a direct violation of its national sovereignty. With this claim the so-called casus belli is still valid today."

Therefore, the delimitation of marine areas in this form is a relatively new institution. On the other hand, the impossibility of imposing recognition on them is the subject of controversy, since in the eyes of one of the sides there are violations that are not considered as such by the other side. The complex geopolitical reality in the region does not allow for general conclusions to be drawn regarding the sovereignty of EEZs. From the perspective of the Greek and G/C state, the recognition of the EEZs of the Greek islands creates, along with the G/C EEZ, a theoretically unified Hellenic area that covers a large part of the South-Eastern Mediterranean and limits Turkish sovereignty over marine areas to a very small stretch of sea. Greece, with military exercises, treaties and alliances with the 'new' enemies of Turkey (Israel and Egypt) but also with the 'old' ones (Cyprus), and the reinstating of the 'Unified Defence Dogma', is trying to create an anti-Turkish axis, in an attempt to exploit - as in 1996 - the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean.

On the other hand, the Turkish state claims a delimitation of EEZs according to its own interpretation. It does not recognise the EEZs of the Greek islands in the Aegean and it maintains that the general regulations should not be applied in the present case due to the very close proximity of the Greek islands to the Turkish coast and that they would block access to the sea of the SE Mediterranean for 70 million people for the sake of the few dozens of residents that populate most Greek islands of the

area.

With Turkey reopening domestic but also external fronts, one being against the PKK, Cyprus remains anything but uninvolved, with military and economic agreements with Israel and Greece, which followed from military exercises and discussions regarding the exploitations of natural gas in Block 12 of the Cypriot EEZ. The agreement on a joint venture with Israel not only upgrades the geopolitical importance of the island but leads to new nationalist fervour, with Turkey warning that it will intervene by any means if Turkish interests are not taken into account with regards to deposits in the area. This is the context within which we are following the famous violations of the Cypriot EEZ by the Turkish vessel Barbaros which is conducting surveys for natural gas in the Mediterranean. At the same time we are once again spectators to the 'Imia' spectacle, whereby Greece and Turkey are mutually condemned by the other for harassing the violation of their territorial waters by boats of the other which are then harassed, once again creating conditions of war around a rocky islet in the middle of the Aegean. We note here that with these tensions the Greek state has planned a programme of modernisation for the F-16 aircrafts with a budget of 2 million, as well as an upgrade of the S-300 anti-aircraft system.

In Cyprus, the cherry on top of the cake of the nationalists' pallet came with the vote to commemorate the Unionist referendum of 1950 in schools. This decision (which passed by a majority after it was proposed by the Fascists in the parliament) has its own marked importance, especially in the timeframe in which it came about: it shows that the forces opposed to a potential reunification of the island, who hear of Greco-Turkish tension and dream of war, have a lot of influence both within the system as well as in wider society. The importance of this decision became apparent with the break in the Cyprus talks, at the moment when the media sets up scenes of a Greco-Turkish war with headlines like 'Turkey prepares for war', 'The Turks want war: they are preparing intervention in the Aegean'; the background includes tension over Imia, the so-called violations of the EEZ and airspace, the official questioning of the Lausanne Treaty by Erdogan's government, and the Greek Minister for Defence P. Kammenos making statements to the press: "For Greece, Cyprus is not far, as Mr. Ioannis Varvitsiotis said. Greece has an obligation to uphold the common defence space of Greece and Cyprus as has been specified in the national plans. (...) Today, the flags are being defended by the Armed Forces of the country".

Beyond the smugness of such statements and media excitement we cannot but help but feel the danger around the contemporary Greco-Turkish tension and their nationalist followers in Cyprus. The facts of the day show clearer than ever that both capital and the states that are involved with the talks to resolve the Cyprus issue are not interested in its solution. Their position regarding a solution or non-solution changes according to the geopolitical context and their changing pursuits. At this juncture, it seems they are heading towards the strategy of tension, creating a new period of Greek-Cypriot-Turkish conflict and nationalist outrages. The anti-nationalist, bi-communal narrative of events is undoubtedly a prime necessity these days.

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