

**Forum:** Disarmament Committee (GA1)  
**Issue:** Question of Disarmament in the Aegean Sea  
**Student Officer:** Olgar Bilallar  
**Position:** President Chair

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## Introduction

Being one of the most ancient spots of settlement, the Aegean Sea is a region of extremely high geopolitical and historical importance. However, with quite pleasant historical richness, the common shared history has led up to intertwined, contrasting claims over the region. Ergo, the region has been full of disputes between Greece and Turkey, particularly in terms of military capabilities and armaments. Disarmament in the Aegean Sea has been a long-standing issue between the two countries and has been the subject of numerous diplomatic efforts and negotiations over the years.

The main goal of the Aegean Sea disarmament has been to lessen the military activity, presence, and armaments of both Greece and Turkey in the area. Both nations have bases and military facilities in the Aegean Sea and have stationed numerous naval and air assets there. The aggressive policies that have been adopted by the involved parties have made this presence even more dangerous and have made the issue unable to be resolved so far.

To accomplish disarmament in the Aegean Sea, a number of multilateral agreements and proposals have been put up. They include the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) started by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, and the bilateral discussions between Greece and Turkey.

Disagreements and tensions over military presence and armaments have persisted despite these attempts, and disarmament in the Aegean Sea has proven to be a difficult problem that is still waiting to be peacefully tackled by the international community.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Exclusive Economic Zone:** The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines an exclusive economic zone as “an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea, subject to the specific legal regime [...], under which the rights and jurisdiction of the coastal State and the rights and freedoms of other

States are governed by the relevant provisions of this Convention". To put it into simpler terms, an EEZ is a zone that can extend up to 200 nautical miles from shore in which the coastal state has the right to explore and exploit, as well as the responsibility to conserve and manage both living and non-living resources.<sup>1</sup> If this definition is not applicable, as in there being multiple countries with overlapping EEZ, UNCLOS calls for the determination of EEZ via bilateral agreements between Member States. Although some countries were able to resolve their EEZ disputes over bilateral agreements, such as the agreement between India and Sri Lanka which set the Indo-Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary equidistant from the coasts of both states, this has not been the case all the time. There have been around 300 EEZ disputes

**Maximalism:** A maximalist, by definition, is "one who advocates immediate and direct action to secure the whole of a program or set of goals" without making compromises. Evaluating this definition in the context of international politics, it is possible to say that all countries in the Aegean Sea are trying to uphold maximalist positions in their respective relevant disputes, by playing a zero-sum game, preventing any improvements in the situation through the means of diplomacy.

**De Facto State:** De facto states are "political entities that possess control over a territory but lack international recognition"<sup>8</sup>. This term is important to contextualize the opposing EEZ claims of Turkey, alongside the TRNC, and the Republic of Cyprus. In 1974, Turkey, following Greece's coup d'état against the elected government of Cyprus, invaded the northern part of the island. Though there are several perspectives on the underlying intentions of this invasion, those arguments lie outside of the scope of this report. Turkey assisted local authorities in officially establishing the TRNC in 1983, which possesses control over the northeastern part of the island. It should be noted, however, that Turkey is the only country that has recognized the TRNC, making it a de facto state. In fact, the UN, under the UN Security Council resolution S/RES/550 (1984), recognizes Northern Cyprus as a territory of the Republic of Cyprus under Turkish invasion. This means that the international community recognizes the boundaries of the Republic of Cyprus to include that of the TRNC. The Republic of Cyprus, which is a member of the EU, represents the northeastern part of the island on the international stage, despite those two regions being separated by the Green Line.

It is due to the fact that the TRNC is a de facto state that instigates opposing EEZ claims by the Republic of Cyprus and the TRNC, which signed an EEZ border agreement with Turkey in 2011<sup>9</sup>. The Republic of Cyprus declared its EEZ in 2004 and has signed agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, and Israel. In 2007, it created 13 licensing blocks in order to speed up the gas exploration process. Turkey strictly opposes these actions, arguing that "*Cyprus has no right to award drilling concessions unless an agreement with Northern Cyprus on sharing revenues is reached and the two parties agree on a final settlement*". While the Republic of Cyprus considers its EEZ to include that of the TRNC, the TRNC argues that it has a separate EEZ and has provided

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<sup>1</sup> "Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)." *WTO*, [www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/glossary\\_e/exclusive\\_economic\\_zone\\_eez\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/glossary_e/exclusive_economic_zone_eez_e.htm).

Turkey with exploration rights. The different international legal status of the two divided parts of Cyprus has and is likely to cause further turmoil in the region.

**Blue Homeland:** Blue Homeland is Turkey's doctrine "to establish Turkish naval supremacy in the eastern Mediterranean"<sup>2</sup>. This doctrine is the embodiment of Turkey's maximalist position on the issue, kindled by "mutual intransigence [and] the growing power of ultranationalists in the Turkish state"<sup>3</sup>. Greece's maximalist position, which is portrayed clearly in its claim that Kastellorizo, an island 2 km off the coast of Turkey, and 570 km away from the Greek mainland is entitled to an EEZ, escalates the tension between the two North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies. Through its claim in Kastellorizo, Greece can close off the eastern Mediterranean to Turkey, a scenario Turkey promises to retaliate against. The "Blue Homeland" which is awarded legitimacy by Greece's maximalist ambitions "extends to 462,000 square kilometers, which is more than half of Turkey's land territory" and "claims maritime jurisdiction on 89,000 square kilometers in the Aegean Sea and 189,000 square kilometers in the Mediterranean Sea"<sup>4</sup>. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey, who strongly supports the Blue Homeland doctrine, has pledged to protect "every swath of our 462,000 square kilometers of Blue Homeland with great determination" by all means necessary.

**Flight Information Region:** A Flight Information Region (FIR) is a designated airspace within which a particular air traffic control center is responsible for providing flight information and alerting services to aircraft. An international agreement establishes the parameters of an FIR, which are often based on geographic or political boundaries. An FIR normally consists of a number of control sectors, each of which is overseen by a different air traffic control unit.

**Continental Shelf:** A continental shelf can be defined as a shallow underwater platform that surrounds the coastlines of continents. In article 7, UNCLOS considers a continental shelf to be "... of a coastal State comprises the seabed and subsoil of the submarine areas that extend beyond its territorial sea throughout the natural prolongation of its land territory to the outer edge of the continental margin, or to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured where the outer edge of the continental margin does not extend up to that distance.". The continental shelf is a crucial region

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<sup>2</sup> Çandar, Cengiz. "Turkey's Blue Homeland Doctrine: Signaling Perpetual Conflict in the Mediterranean and Rough Waters Ahead." *The Turkey Analyst*, 26 Aug. 2020, [www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/648-turkey%E2%80%99s-blue-homeland-doctrine-signaling-perpetual-conflict-in-the-mediterranean-and-rough-waters-ahead.html](http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/648-turkey%E2%80%99s-blue-homeland-doctrine-signaling-perpetual-conflict-in-the-mediterranean-and-rough-waters-ahead.html).

<sup>3</sup> Çandar, Cengiz. "Turkey's Blue Homeland Doctrine: Signaling Perpetual Conflict in the Mediterranean and Rough Waters Ahead." *The Turkey Analyst*, 26 Aug. 2020, [www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-](http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-) Page 4 of 17 | **Research Report**

<sup>4</sup> Çandar, Cengiz. "Turkey's Blue Homeland Doctrine: Signaling Perpetual Conflict in the Mediterranean and Rough Waters Ahead." *The Turkey Analyst*, 26 Aug. 2020, [www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/648-turkey%E2%80%99s-blue-homeland-doctrine-signaling-perpetual-conflict-in-the-mediterranean-and-rough-waters-ahead.html](http://www.turkeyanalyst.org/publications/turkey-analyst-articles/item/648-turkey%E2%80%99s-blue-homeland-doctrine-signaling-perpetual-conflict-in-the-mediterranean-and-rough-waters-ahead.html).

for fishing and other types of marine resource extraction, as well as for the exploitation of oil and gas deposits. In addition, the continental shelf is a crucial home for a variety of marine animals, including fish and shellfish.

**Demilitarized Zone:** A demilitarized zone (DMZ) is an area in which treaties or agreements between nations, military powers, or contending groups forbid military installations, activities, or personnel.<sup>5</sup> A demilitarized zone in the Aegean Sea would be an area on the island of Cyprus where Turkish and Greek military forces are not allowed to enter or operate. Since the 1970s, the island of Cyprus has been divided, with Greek Cypriots controlling the southern portion and Turkish Cypriots controlling the northern portion. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) established the demilitarized zone, sometimes referred to as the "Green Line," in 1974 following a Turkish military invasion of the island. The zone divides the portions of the island that are under the control of Greek Cypriots in the south and Turkish Cypriots in the north.

**Islets:** Islets are a set of numerous small islands. Islets can be found in the Aegean Sea and they separate Greece from Turkey. The Cyclades, the Dodecanese, the Sporades, and the Northeastern Aegean Islands are just a few of the islet examples in the Aegean Sea. These islets are well-liked vacation spots because of their stunning beaches, pristine waterways, and quaint communities. Mykonos, Santorini, and Rhodes are among the Aegean Sea's most well-known islets.

## General Overview

### UNCLOS

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was briefly referred to in the "Definition of Key Terms" section of this report is unquestionably one of the central issues instigating disagreement between Member States. UNCLOS was designed with the "desire to settle, in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation, all issues relating to the law of the sea" and were considered "an important contribution to the maintenance of peace, justice, and progress for all peoples of the world"<sup>15</sup>. The international treaty was opened for signatures in 1982, and went into force in 1994, putting an end to the Geneva Conventions of April, 1958<sup>16</sup>. The convention is currently ratified by 168 parties, including the European Union. Relevant countries that have not signed or agreed to the agreement are Turkey, Syria, and Israel. The United States of America argued that Part XI of UNCLOS (1982)

### Important Details Regarding UNCLOS

UNCLOS "contains important general definitions and specific definitions on functional sea space", categorizing them as internal waters, territorial waters (12 nautical miles from the coastal state), the

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<sup>5</sup> Oren, Michael (3 June 2003). *Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*. Presidio Press. p. 7. ISBN 978-0345461926.

contiguous zone (12 miles from the territorial water border), the EEZ (200 nautical miles from the coastal state), and international waters; outlining the rights and responsibilities of Member States with regards to these spaces<sup>6</sup>. It also defines the mandate of the regulatory bodies of the Convention which serve as “peaceful dispute-resolution mechanisms”, namely being the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and the International Seabed Authority. To date, only 29 cases have been submitted to ITLOS with a specific focus on issues regarding “the release of illegally seized vessels, environmental pollution activities, proprietorship of maritime resources, and security in the maritime space”.<sup>7</sup> UNCLOS, despite being one of the key factors in the dispute between Turkey and Greece “is nothing less than one of the most effectual peace instruments regulating the largest space on the planet”<sup>8</sup>.

### **Issues Raised by Turkey Regarding UNCLOS**

Turkey has a longstanding objection against the provisions of UNCLOS concerning “*the breadth of territorial sea (Article 3), the delimitation of the territorial sea (Article 15), and the regime of islands (Article 121)*”<sup>20</sup>. Turkey is concerned over a possible limitation of the scope of its EEZ and continental shelf due to the geographical proximities between itself, the Greek islands, and Cyprus<sup>9</sup>.

The effect UNCLOS would have on the scope of Turkey’s EEZ and continental shelf is displayed on the map on the right. The sea space definitions of UNCLOS provide the island of Kostellorizo (see p. 4), which is depicted with a red dot on the map, with its own EEZ despite being 2 km away from the Turkish coast, thereby effectively closing off the eastern Mediterranean to Turkish gas exploration and exploitation efforts. Turkey argues for the total exemption of Greek islands from the EEZ definition while Greece argues the total opposite, instead giving full weight on the islands. With increasing news of new gas discoveries from the eastern Mediterranean, it is unrealistic to hope that Turkey, a country highly dependent on oil imports, would agree to fully implement UNCLOS in its current version. It is up to the international community to consider amending UNCLOS or letting the tensions in the eastern Mediterranean develop into a naval confrontation.

### **The Delimitation of the National Airspace between Turkey and Greece**

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<sup>6</sup> Folkenberg, Julian Kubilay. “Can Turkey Foster Regional Stability Under UNCLOS?, Summer 2015.” *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 14 Sept. 2015, [turkishpolicy.com/article/763/can-turkey-foster-regional-stability-under-unclos-summer-2015](http://turkishpolicy.com/article/763/can-turkey-foster-regional-stability-under-unclos-summer-2015).

<sup>7</sup> Folkenberg, Julian Kubilay. “Can Turkey Foster Regional Stability Under UNCLOS?, Summer 2015.” *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 14 Sept. 2015, [turkishpolicy.com/article/763/can-turkey-foster-regional-stability-under-unclos-summer-2015](http://turkishpolicy.com/article/763/can-turkey-foster-regional-stability-under-unclos-summer-2015).

<sup>8</sup> Folkenberg, Julian Kubilay. “Can Turkey Foster Regional Stability Under UNCLOS?, Summer 2015.” *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 14 Sept. 2015, [turkishpolicy.com/article/763/can-turkey-foster-regional-stability-under-unclos-summer-2015](http://turkishpolicy.com/article/763/can-turkey-foster-regional-stability-under-unclos-summer-2015).

<sup>9</sup> Lindenstrauss, Gallia, et al. *The Perils of the Turkey-Libya Maritime Delimitation Deal*. Institute for National Security Studies, 2019, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23503](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23503). Accessed 23 Dec. 2020.

The dialogue between Greece and Turkey regarding their airspaces have been complex and disputed. The two countries have overlapping airspace claims, citing international documents as the supporting factor of their respective arguments. Moreover, both countries have engaged in military exercises and air incidents in the past and this involvement has given the international community a solid reason to be concerned about future potential conflicts.

Turkey opposes Greece's claim to a sizable portion of the Aegean Sea's airspace, which includes a 10-mile airspace over its islands. Since the start of the dispute, Turkey has maintained that the two nations should share equally in the airspace over the Aegean Sea. Military aircraft from both countries have been involved in a number of disagreements and incidents as a result, mainly in the eastern Aegean Sea.

Greece and Turkey are both members of NATO, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the UN. Turning this common membership status into an opportunity, both countries have pledged to utilise these organizations' dispute resolution processes to enhance regional air safety. Efforts to integrate international organizations adequately in coming to a conclusion, despite not being fruitful until now, is an admirable approach by both countries. Furthermore, to lessen the possibility of miscommunication, the two nations have also decided to set up a direct hotline between their military authorities.

Despite these initiatives, tensions between Greece and Turkey continue to be fueled by disagreements over Aegean Sea territorial seas and airspace. As of 2021, hostilities have recently increased once more as a result of Turkey's announcement that it would undertake military drills in the Aegean Sea, which Greece and other nations viewed as an infringement on their right to sovereignty over their airspace.

### **The FIR and the Control Over the Region**

Another source of contention between Turkey and Greece has been the size of each country's FIR in the Aegean Sea. The term FIR has been defined in the sections above. On this particular issue, Turkey claims that Greece's FIR violates its sovereignty and prevents it from conducting military drills and other activities in the area because it reaches too far into the Aegean Sea. On the other side, Greece claims that Turkey's concerns are unjustified and that its FIR complies with international law.

Over the years, the conflict has caused a number of events, such as airspace violations, fighter aircraft dogfights, and the 2006 crash between a Greek and a Turkish fighter plane. Parties have accused each other of breaches of FIR, yet such allegations have met with responses such as "NATO exercises"<sup>10</sup> or other drills. The tensions between the two parties remain present and the dispute regarding FIR is yet to be resolved.

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<sup>10</sup> Venckunas, Valius. "Greece-Turkey Clash over the Aegean: Here's What We Know." *AeroTime*, 21 Dec. 2022, <https://www.aerotime.aero/articles/turkey-greece-clash-over-the-aegean-sea-heres-what-we-know-so-far>.

## Geopolitical Shifts in the Aegean Sea

On November 27th, 2019, Turkey officially signed a maritime delimitation agreement with the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, Libya<sup>11</sup>. The agreement promised security and military cooperation between Turkey and the GNA, which was under threat by a rival government led by Khalifa Haftar, a general-turned-warlord who is backed by France, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the Russian Federation for regional strategic interests. The subsequent upset in balances “pose further challenges to the already questionable plans for the East Med pipeline; and raise the stakes for outside actors involved in the Libyan Civil War”<sup>12</sup>. Upon escalating friction within the region, President Emmanuel Macron of France gave a warning about Turkey, stating: “We have to create a *Pax Mediterranea* because we see an imperial regional power coming back with some fantasies of its own”<sup>24</sup>. President Erdoğan, following the France-led efforts to push for EU sanctions against Turkey due to its repetitious “violations” of Greek waters, responded to President Macron, stating: “My wish is for France to get rid of the Macron trouble as soon as possible”<sup>25</sup>. Turkey also accused France of being irritated by the developments in Libya.

Putting all the verbal barbs between presidents and Member States aside, there are some developments that point out certain Turkish ambitions. Turkey observers have noted a pan-Islamic Ottoman ideology surfaced and was driven by President Erdoğan, which is further complemented by Turkish military interventions such as the 2019 Turkish offensive in Syria code-named Operation Olive Branch, and Turkey’s technical and military support of Azerbaijan during its clashes with Armenia. The Blue Homeland doctrine and the Turkish-Libyan agreement is the most recent example of Turkey’s solidified ambitions to become a regional power. Considering the current economic state of the country, this seems highly unlikely. This doesn’t, however, prevent Turkey to spark a geopolitical shift in the region, with Israel, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Jordan, France, UAE, and the Palestinian Authority already forming an East Med Gas Forum to “draw up a joined plan to extract and export gas from the region” while concurrently isolating Turkey<sup>26</sup>.

The formation of alliances and implementation of opposing agreements only contribute to the already tense situation in the region. Egypt’s announcement that it is ready to send its military into Libya following Turkey’s deal implies that countries are on the verge of conflict. Countries’ opposing geopolitical interests in the region,

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<sup>11</sup> Lindenstrauss, Gallia, et al. *The Perils of the Turkey-Libya Maritime Delimitation Deal*. Institute for National Security Studies, 2019, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23503](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23503). Accessed 23 Dec. 2020.

<sup>12</sup>Lindenstrauss, Gallia, et al. *The Perils of the Turkey-Libya Maritime Delimitation Deal*. Institute for National Security Studies, 2019, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23503](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep23503). Accessed 23 Dec. 2020.

and the pressure they apply on each other does not help de-escalate the situation. A return to a diplomatic medium is required, and this can only be established via the joint efforts of the international community.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### Turkey

Turkey is one of the two contending countries in the region. The country has long argued agreement with Greece should be reached over the demilitarization of the Aegean islands. Greece, according to Turkey, has militarized some Aegean islands, endangering Turkey's security. Moreover, Turkey has declared that it is prepared to demilitarize its own Aegean islands if Greece follows suit.

More details on the country's stance, claims, desires, and overall involvement on the issue have been given in other sections of this report, please refer to them.

### Greece

Following an equally maximalist policy with Turkey in the eastern Mediterranean, Greece has established international backing in the region and is continuing to use UNCLOS as its main argument in the region. However, despite backing its claims with an internationally recognized agreement, Greece has not carried the issue to the ICJ, knowing that it "may not endorse Greece's maximalist position"<sup>13</sup>.

More details on the country's stance, claims, desires, and overall involvement on the issue have been given in other sections of this report, please refer to them.

### United States of America

The United States is an external party that has focused on increasing its presence and influence in the eastern Mediterranean following the gas discoveries in the region. The United States' "America First" policy under the Trump Administration has led to its isolation on the international stage, who some argue may have paved the way for increasing Turkish unilateral action in the last four years. This, however, has not prevented the United States to increase its involvement in the region. In December 2019, the United States Congress "approved the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act of 2019, which redefines U.S. diplomatic, military, and economic policy in the Eastern Mediterranean and the alliance between the United States, Greece, Israel, and Cyprus"<sup>14</sup>. The law also "authorizes new security assistance for Cyprus and Greece, lifts

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<sup>13</sup> Wintour, Patrick. "How a Rush for Mediterranean Gas Threatens to Push Greece and Turkey into War." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 11 Sept. 2020, [www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/11/mediterranean-gas-greece-turkey-dispute-nato](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/11/mediterranean-gas-greece-turkey-dispute-nato)

<sup>14</sup>Talbot, Valeria. "Turkey and the West in the Eastern Mediterranean." JSTOR, German Marshall Fund of the United



the arms embargo imposed on it in 1987, and the establishment of a United States-Eastern Mediterranean Energy Center to facilitate energy cooperation among the United States, Israel, Greece, and Cyprus”<sup>15</sup>

The United States is particularly concerned about the increasing Russian naval presence in the region. The Russian Federation “has [...] established a persistent naval presence in the Eastern Mediterranean for the first time since the Soviet era. The naval task force consists of approximately 16 ships and 3 marine helicopters, and at times has included Russia’s one aircraft carrier, the Admiral Kuznetsov”<sup>16</sup>

## NATO

The NATO Charter outlines the responsibilities of its members, expecting them to “*promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area*”<sup>17</sup>. This has unfortunately not been the case in the eastern Mediterranean. Turkey’s divergent security and foreign interests have been a cause of concern between NATO allies. Its NATO-opposed purchase of the Russian S-400 system and its unilateral actions in the region are not received well, and indicate a “strategic decoupling”. The deteriorating relationships with Turkey and its European allies were most clearly displayed during an instance on June 10th, 2020, when the French Navy “*operating in the eastern Mediterranean in the framework of NATO’s Operation Sea Guardian [...] tried to inspect a cargo ship*” on the way to Libya, escorted by the Turkish Navy<sup>18</sup>. The EU had just started implementing the UN Security Council arms embargo on Libya. The United States grew suspicious of the intentions of the EU, “*questioning whether the EU mission was ‘serious,’ because it only focused on interdicting Turkish material and not preventing Russian military equipment from reaching Libya*”<sup>19</sup>. The Turkish escort intervened, “*leading to an aggressive and dangerous situation*”<sup>20</sup> The French government later accused Turkey, saying that “*Turkish*

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States, 2020, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25046.7](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25046.7).

<sup>15</sup>Talbot, Valeria. “Turkey and the West in the Eastern Mediterranean.” JSTOR, German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2020, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25046.7](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25046.7). Page 12 of 17 | **Research Report**

<sup>16</sup> Vogler, Sarah, and Eric V. Thompson. Gas Discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean: Implications for Regional Maritime Security German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2015, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18906](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep18906). Accessed 24 Dec. 2020.

<sup>17</sup>Conley, Heather A. “How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean.” *How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean* | Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, 14 Dec. 2020, [www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean](http://www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean).

<sup>18</sup> Conley, Heather A. “How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean.” *How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean* | Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, 14 Dec. 2020, [www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean](http://www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean).

<sup>19</sup>Conley, Heather A. “How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean.” *How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean* | Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, 14 Dec. 2020, [www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean](http://www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean).

<sup>20</sup>Conley, Heather A. “How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean.” *How NATO*

warships turned their fire-control radars on the French warships," which Turkey rejected<sup>21</sup>. NATO has opened up an investigation but has not disclosed its results

The Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 (SNMG2), a global naval task force that operates in the area, is one method NATO has supported stability in the Aegean Sea. To monitor and stop criminal activities including smuggling and human trafficking, the group runs patrols and surveillance operations. SNMG2 can contribute to a safer and more stable environment by assisting with regional security, which could aid in disarmament efforts.

## European Union

Turkey is allegedly "*at odds with EU values and interests*," according to the EU.<sup>22</sup> There are significant differences between Turkey and the EU, as evidenced by Turkey's energy interests and pressure on the EU as a result of the migrant crisis.

The EU supports Cyprus' EEZ claims and stands with it as a member. But, it appears that EU sanctions against Turkish exploration attempts are more symbolic than practical. Due to Turkey's critical involvement in several important issues, such as the control of migrant and refugee flows, the EU "appears reluctant to exert heavy pressure on Turkey."<sup>23</sup> The security goals of the EU and NATO are compatible, thus any inconsistency in those interests could jeopardize EU security.

Per contra, regarding the overall disarmament in the Aegean coastline, the EU has encouraged Greece and Turkey to engage in dialogue and to seek peaceful solutions to their disputes. In 2016, the EU Foreign Affairs Council issued a statement calling on the two countries to "refrain from any action or rhetoric that could further increase tensions and to engage in a constructive dialogue to resolve any issues."<sup>24</sup>

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*Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean* | Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, 14 Dec. 2020, [www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean](http://www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean).

<sup>21</sup>Conley, Heather A. "How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean." *How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean* | Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, 14 Dec. 2020, [www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean](http://www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean).

<sup>22</sup>Conley, Heather A. "How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean." *How NATO Can Avoid a Strategic Decoupling in the Eastern Mediterranean* | Center for Strategic and International Studies, CSIS, 14 Dec. 2020, [www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean](http://www.csis.org/analysis/how-nato-can-avoid-strategic-decoupling-eastern-mediterranean).

<sup>23</sup> Talbot, Valeria. "Turkey and the West in the Eastern Mediterranean." JSTOR, German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2020, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25046.7](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep25046.7).

<sup>24</sup>"EU-Turkey Statement, 18 March 2016." *Consilium*, 18 Mar. 2016, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/>.

In addition, the EU has been involved in promoting confidence-building measures between Greece and Turkey, including through the exchange of military officers and the establishment of hotlines for communication between the two countries. The organization has made efforts to enhance cooperation on issues such as maritime safety, environmental protection, and search and rescue operations in the Aegean. In several global issues, the EU, perhaps naturally, is looking to protect the interests of its members more. There is an inevitable imbalance between Turkey and Greece on account of their membership status difference. However, firstly, Turkey is a part of certain economic zones and trade deals with the EU that contributes to the economy of Europe in general. Thus, seeing Turkey completely irrelevant to the EU would be wrong. Also, peace in the region is a common objective to all parties is highly beneficial. Ergo, if Turkey adopts EU's involvement as beneficial of course, the organization's said involvement could have huge potential.

## Italy

Greece and Italy inked a "historic" agreement for the demarcation of the EEZ between the two nations on June 9, 2020, in reaction to Turkey's actions in the area. The agreement was signed by respective foreign ministers Nikos Dendias and Luigi Di Maio. The agreement affirms that islands have complete rights over their continental shelf and EEZ in accordance with the UNCLOS. The EEZ boundary is based on the median line that was used to demarcate the continental shelf in a 1977 agreement between Italy and Greece. For Greece, this agreement and the support by Italy was an "extremely favorable legal precedent" in the dispute with Turkey.

## Timeline of Events<sup>25</sup>

<b>20 July 1974</b>	Turkey invades the northeastern part of Cyprus with the operation codenamed "Atilla".
<b>10 August 1976</b>	Greece issues proceedings against Turkey in the ICJ about the Aegean Sea Continental Shelf.
<b>August 1976</b>	The UNSC urges Turkey and Greece to engage in bilateral meetings in order to de-escalate the tension in the region.
<b>November 1976</b>	Turkey and Greece sign the Bern Agreement, temporarily de-escalating the situation in the eastern

<sup>25</sup>“Deep Sea Rivals: Europe, Turkey, and New Eastern Mediterranean Conflict Lines.” *ECFR*, [ecfr.eu/special/eastern\\_med/timeline](https://ecfr.eu/special/eastern_med/timeline).

	Mediterranean.
<b>10 December 1982</b>	UNCLOS is adopted
<b>15 November 1983</b>	TRNC is established officially recognized by Turkey
<b>16 November 1994</b>	UNCLOS enters into force
<b>1 May 2004</b>	The Republic of Cyprus officially becomes a member of the EU.
<b>17 January 2009</b>	The Tamar Gas Field is discovered within Israel's EEZ.
<b>31 May 2010</b>	Gaza flotilla raid – Israeli forces conducted an operation on six ships on international waters carrying Turkish activists, killing 10 civilians and causing the deterioration of Turkish-Israeli relations.
<b>28 January 2016</b>	Greece, Israel, and Cyprus hold their first trilateral meeting to discuss regional and security issues.
<b>4 November 2018</b>	Turkey dispatches gunboats to block ENI drilling ship on its way to carry out exploration efforts off the coast of Cyprus.
<b>April 2019</b>	General Khalifa Haftar starts his offensive strike against the GNA in Tripoli with the support of the UAE.
<b>May 2019</b>	Turkey sends drilling ships escorted by Turkish warships into Cypriot waters.
<b>July 2019</b>	The EU members unanimously vote to sanction Turkey due to its “illegal” drilling activities.
<b>December 2019</b>	The U.S. Congress passes Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act.
<b>May 2020</b>	The European Council issues a statement calling on Turkey to respect UNCLOS and the sovereignty of EU member states.
<b>23 August 2022</b>	Turkish F-16s were allegedly radar locked by Greek Air Force fighter jets

	while they were escorting US B-52 bombers as part of a NATO deployment, according to the Turkish Foreign Ministry. Greece refuted these claims, and a Western military official emphasized that Turkey has not yet shown any proof to back them up.
<b>6 January 2023</b>	The Turkish coast guard was warned by the Greek coast guard with gunfire. Greek coast guard allegedly harassed Turkish fishing vessels, according to the Turkish coast guard.

## UN Involvement

The UN has additionally worked to foster communication and collaboration amongst nations in the area, notably Greece and Turkey. António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, proposed mediating between Greece and Turkey in 2020 to assist in settling their disagreements over maritime boundaries in the Aegean Sea. Even if there haven't been any official negotiations yet, the UN's willingness to mediate could be considered a step in the right direction for fostering regional peace and security.

The UN has likewise urged the nations of the area to cooperate toward the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free area in the Middle East, which would encompass the Aegean Sea. All of the regional nations would need to work together to construct such a zone, which might aid in the Aegean Sea and international disarmament efforts.

## Relevant UN Documents

The Situation in Cyprus, 11 May 1984 (**S/RES/550**)

Security Council Resolution 789, 25 November 1992 (**S/RES/789**)

## Treaties and Events<sup>26</sup>

**Treaty of London (1913):** The future of the Eastern Aegean Islands had been left to the decision of “the Six Powers”.

**1914 Decision of Six Powers:** The islands of Lemnos, Samothrace, Lesvos, Chios, Samos, and Ikaria and

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<sup>26</sup> “Militaryization of Eastern Aegean Islands Contrary To the Provisions of International Agreements.” *Militaryization of Eastern Aegean Islands Contrary To the Provisions of International Agreements / Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/militaryization-of-eastern-aegean-islands-contrary-to-the-provisions-of-international-agreements.en.mfa>.

others under Greek occupation as of 1914 were ceded to Greece by the 1914 Decision of Six Powers (Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary) on the condition that they should be kept demilitarized.

**1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty:** In Article 12 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty the 1914 Decision of Six Powers was confirmed.

Article 13 of the Lausanne Treaty stipulated the modalities of demilitarization for the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, and Icaria. It imposed certain restrictions related to the presence of military forces and the establishment of fortifications which Greece undertook as a contractual obligation to observe stemming from this Treaty.

The Convention of the Turkish Straits annexed to the Lausanne Treaty further defined the demilitarized status of the islands of Lemnos and Samothrace. It stipulated a stricter regime for these islands, due to their vital importance to the security of Türkiye by virtue of their close proximity to the Turkish Straits.

**Montreux Convention (1936):** The Montreux Convention has not changed demilitarized status of these Islands. With the Protocol annexed to the said Convention, the demilitarized status of the Turkish Straits has been lifted to ensure the security of Türkiye. In the Montreux Convention, there is no clause regarding the militarization of the islands of Lemnos and Samothrace.

**Paris Peace Treaty (1947):** The demilitarized status of the Eastern Aegean Islands was once again confirmed in 1947. The "Dodecanese Islands" namely Stampalia, Rhodes, Calki, Scarpanto, Casos, Piscopis, Nisiros, Calimnos, Leros, Patmos, Lipsos, Symi, Cos, and Castellorizo were ceded to Greece on the explicit condition that they must remain demilitarized (Annex 6).<sup>27</sup>

**Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969):** An agreement made in 1969 that is known as the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties lays out the guidelines and processes for the creation, interpretation, and termination of treaties between governments. The convention, which is regarded as the definitive source of international treaty law, codifies the common international law on treaties.

A treaty is defined by the convention as "an international agreement concluded between States in writing and controlled by international law, whether incorporated in one instrument or in two or more related instruments and whatever its precise designation." It outlines the fundamental guidelines for the creation and implementation of treaties, such as the necessity for complete powers, the need to negotiate in good faith,

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<sup>27</sup> "Militarization of Eastern Aegean Islands Contrary To the Provisions of International Agreements." *Militarization of Eastern Aegean Islands Contrary To the Provisions of International Agreements / Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/militarization-of-eastern-aegean-islands-contrary-to-the-provisions-of-international-agreements.en.mfa>.

and the requirement that consent be given freely and without coercion.

The convention also stipulates guidelines for treaty interpretation, such as the use of context and subsequent practice, the "ordinary meaning" of the text principle, and the object and purpose of the treaty. It specifies the circumstances in which a state may request the nullity or termination of a treaty and offers the chance for reservations and treaty changes.

With more than 100 states as parties, the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties has received widespread ratification. It is now a pillar of international law and a crucial tool for the amicable settlement of conflicts between governments.<sup>28</sup>

## **Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

Albeit being an urgent developing matter which has grabbed the attention of the international community, there haven't been notable attempts to solve the issue. Germany has been a crucial mediator in de-escalating any multilateral tension regarding the Aegean Sea, as the country has strong ties with Turkey and has a prominent role in the EU. Per contra, NATO, which is becoming gradually more concerned regarding the tension between its member states has invited specific countries to engage in bilateral meetings. Turkey and Greece had discussions at NATO summits on September 2020, which despite not resolving the conflict, helped in the temporary de-escalation of it.

## **Possible Solutions**

This issue is extremely complex, and multiple factors are at play, often intertwined. Considering the fact that no real progress has been made to resolve the issue, delegates have a great opportunity to come up with creative solutions centered around diplomacy and involving the support of the international community.

Firstly, the obvious solution step is enabling multilateral dialogue. The ultimate goal of disarmament in the region should be acknowledged by all involved parties and common methods of doing so should be uniformly adopted. The UN is a crucial establishment for the issue. In certain milieus of international relations, at certain times, the organization can receive criticism on account of not "being able to enforce certain policies". However, and this is a general remark, the UN should not be interpreted as the major authority of enforcement that commands its member states certain policies. Instead, the UN should be evaluated for what it means and potentially what it enables.

Additionally, crucially but also rather radically, UNCLOS may be amended. This has been done before. In

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<sup>28</sup> Bauer, Pat. "Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Vienna-Convention-on-the-Law-of-Treaties>.

1994, Part XI of UNCLOS was amended following the objections of the United States of America. Considering the implications of this crisis, discussing the concerns of member states regarding UNCLOS would not be a setback, but a step toward mutual understanding. Aside from implementing UNCLOS, new treaties could be established and then implemented. Already existing on disarmament such as, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty could be used as a framework for new negotiations.

After enhancing the legal framework concerning the issue, mechanisms to verify and regulate compliance with these documents should be created. Inspections, on-site visits, report creation and data sharing may be some of the methods. It should be noted that military deployment could be seen as a sensitive issue to share, therefore, the trustworthy nature of the UN should be emphasized on and the country side of the sea should not be seen as an agent possessing threat to the other nation's existence.

Making the involved parties not view the others as member threats could be done by adopting confidence-building measures. Such notion could initially be interpreted as unrealistic and/or wishful thinking but regular meetings, exchanges of military personnel, and joint military exercises are some of the possible measures for this. These actions may seem to sudden to the two countries and if the delegates refrain from the endorsement of these measures, certain joint practices or drills can be starting point for Turkey and Greece with the overseeing of the UN and NATO could sound more feasible.

Finally, education and public awareness campaigns could be an alternative policy. Albeit being somewhat indirect, such policies may assist in promoting a culture of disarmament and reducing the demand for weapons in the region and compliment the above-mentioned ideas.

Overall, uncontrollable geopolitical shifts tend to drive toward adversity, bypassing diplomacy and its potential. The United Nations and the global governance system should be effectively used, and Member States should create solutions optimizing the international organizations' (primarily the UN's) capabilities.

## **Notes from the Chair**

As mentioned before, the issue at hand is highly difficult to tackle. The armament of the issue, at principle, links to the land claims in the region. Both countries' claims are in somewhat of a grey area. International documents are not sufficiently conclusive and require amendments. Once again, to remind the delegates, Turkey and Greece currently have the legal basis (at least to a certain extent) to continue their increased armament in the region. Therefore, they should be provided a reason with to sit the negotiation table. The term "incentive" shouldn't be interpreted as a materialistic asset but instead a general, unconfined interpretation of "creating motivation".



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