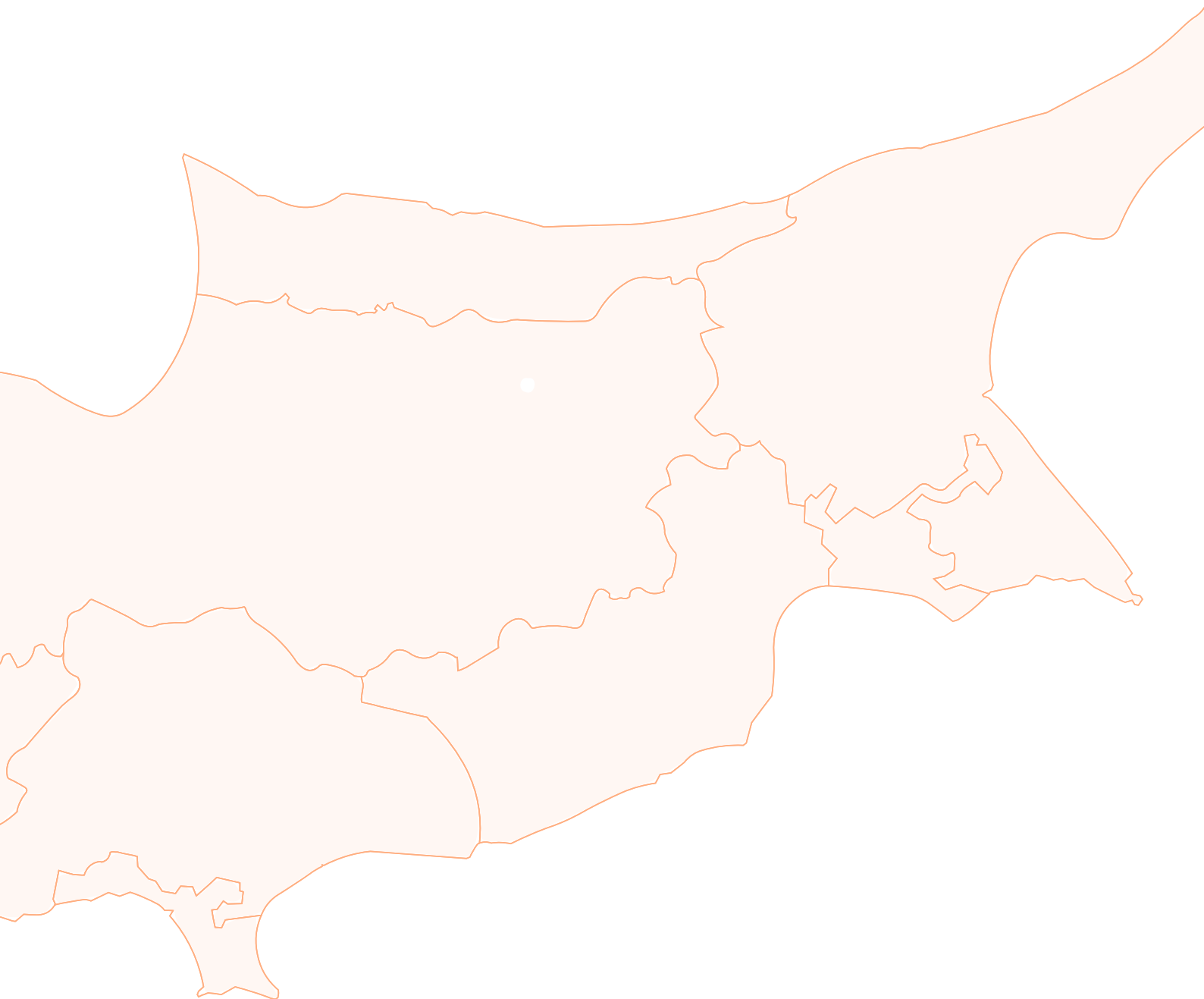


# GAS AND REUNIFICATION IN CYPRUS

*EXPLORING THE LINKAGES BETWEEN THE POLITICS OF NATURAL GAS  
AND THE PEACE TALKS IN CYPRUS*



# PREAMBLE

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# ABSTRACT

The discovery of a highly promising natural gas field in 2011 introduced economic and political opportunities for Cyprus, at the same time it risked intensifying its decade-old conflict, called *the Cyprus problem*. This protracted conflict over power-sharing of the island has led to episodes of violence and a lasting social, political and demographic divide between its two ethnic communities: the *Greek Cypriot* community and the *Turkish Cypriot* community. Their respective motherlands, Turkey and Greece have been crucially involved in their dispute as well. The division in Cyprus became cemented in 1974, when after a Greek-led coup on the island, the government of Turkey send military troops and erected a physical border that separated the two Cypriot communities. Turkish troops stayed, as did communal trauma, separation and mutual antagonism.

While internationally supported peace efforts have helped prevent violence in Cyprus after 1974, there has been no success in reuniting the communities under a new government. Peace talks have been a tremendously complex and seemingly impossible endeavor. While over the years they have broken down over similar causes, their dynamics, progression and outcomes have also been influenced by new and external developments. Using McAdam and Fligstein's *theory of fields* and a method of 'explaining outcome process tracing' this research asks how the politics surrounding Cypriot gas, involving the two governments in Cyprus as well as the Turkish government, has affected the Cyprus talks between 2011-2017.

It is found that gas has incentivized the recontinuation of the Cyprus talks in 2014, but also that political contention over the rights and ownership of gas have had a predominantly negative effect on the progression of peace talks. That contention has repeatedly damaged mutual trust between parties, negatively affected the atmosphere at the negotiation table and caused negotiations to come to a standstill. Lastly, it is found that the issue of gas has been used by parties as leverage to push for more a favorable peace settlement.

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# MAP OF CYPRUS





# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CBM</b>		CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURE
<b>RoC</b>		REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
<b>SAF</b>		STRATEGIC ACTION FIELD
<b>TRNC</b>		TURKISH REPUBLIC OF NORTHERN CYPRUS
<b>UNFICYP</b>		UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN CYPRUS
<b>UNSG</b>		UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY GENERAL

# INTRODUCTION

IN DECEMBER OF 2011,

NOBLE ENERGY COMPANY ANNOUNCED THAT IT HAD DISCOVERED A HIGHLY PROMISING NATURAL GAS FIELD JUST OFF THE SOUTHERN COAST OF CYPRUS. NEWS OF THIS GAS FIELD, WHICH WOULD LATER BE NAMED AFTER THE ANCIENT GREEK GODDESS APHRODITE, WAS RECEIVED WITH EUPHORIA AMONG CYPRIOT CITIZENS AND POLITICIANS. MANY EMBRACED THE IDEA THAT THE DISCOVERY, WHICH WAS THE VERY FIRST OF ITS KIND FOR CYPRUS, HERALDED A BETTER ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FUTURE FOR THE COUNTRY. NOT ONLY WAS IT LIKELY THAT MORE DISCOVERIES WOULD SOON BE MADE, THE EXPLOITATION OF APHRODITE ALONE COULD POTENTIALLY GENERATE BILLIONS OF EUROS.<sup>1</sup>

ADDITIONALLY, THE DISCOVERY OF CYPRIOT GAS INTRODUCED THE PROSPECT OF CYPRUS BECOMING A REGIONAL ENERGY PLAYER. EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN GAS COULD BE ADDED TO CYPRIOT RESERVES AND THEN EXPORTED TO EUROPEAN MARKETS.<sup>2</sup> FOR CYPRIOTS, THERE WERE CERTAINLY REASONS TO BECOME EXCITED. HOWEVER, LOOKING AT THE COMPLEX POLITICAL REALITIES THE COUNTRY HAD FACED UNTIL 2011 THEY COULD HAVE ALSO WONDERED HOW MATTERS WOULD DEVELOP MORE PROBLEMATICALLY. FOR ONE, WAS NATURAL GAS GOING TO BE A SOURCE OF PEACEFUL COOPERATION OR A SOURCE OF TENSION WITHIN THE NATIONAL PEACE TALKS?

## THE CASE OF CYPRUS

Cyprus, a small island and EU-member state located in the Eastern Mediterranean, has been internally divided ever since violent conflict erupted between the two ethnic communities governing the country. The sixties and early seventies of the twentieth century saw fundamental disagreements between the *Turkish Cypriots* and *Greek Cypriots* over power sharing and the political status of the island, culminating into a constitutional breakdown and episodes of ethnic violence that drew in motherlands Greece and Turkey. After the Turkish government sent an army to Cyprus in 1974 in response to a Greek-led coup, Turkish soldiers erected a physical border

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1 Aydın-Düzgit, Senem. Global Turkey in Europe: political, economic, and foreign policy dimensions of Turkey's evolving relationship with the EU. Vol. 9. Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2013, 68, 69.

2 Senay, Furkan, and Mehmet Ugur Ekin. "The Last Chance for a United Cyprus: Negotiations for a Federal Solution." SETA, 2014, 15.

that cut through the country. While violence ended, Turkish troops stayed, as did the separation of the two communities in political, social, and demographic terms.<sup>3</sup> Today, Cyprus is made up of a Greek Cypriot state in the south, and a de facto, breakaway Turkish Cypriot state in the north, named *Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus* (**TRNC**). Greek Cypriots still control the officially recognized government of Cyprus, named *Republic of Cyprus* (**RoC**).

The island's frozen conflict has been branded *the Cyprus problem*, a problem in which historic rivalry, communal antagonism and the question of how Cyprus should be governed continue to divide the communities and their respective motherlands. Numerous peace talks to reunify the country and establish a new federal Cyprus have been held, often facilitated by the United Nations. However, these *Cyprus talks* have always ended without settling. After five and a half decades the talks might best be described as highly complex and problematic. Nonetheless, there have been notable achievements and instances when settlement seemed to be within hand's reach. Failure and progress have fluctuated, often informed by internal dynamics and events (e.g. party's willingness to concede, shifting values and interests) as well as developments outside of peace talks. Regarding the latter, the course and dynamics of the Cyprus talks have also been influenced by events in national and regional political spheres, such as economic crises and the EU membership of the RoC.<sup>4</sup>

In light of this, one can also contemplate the impact of the discovery of natural gas on the Cyprus talks. There is an interesting duality to the potential of Cypriot gas with regard to the Cyprus problem, which also relates that gas to the peace talks. On the one hand, gas can serve as a peace tool as it offers incentives for cooperation between the key parties involved in the Cyprus problem. As is elaborated in later chapters, working together on its exploitation and monetization could bring them status and financial rewards, while simultaneously improving their relations in ways that benefit the peace talks.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, gas can serve as a spoiler, introducing additional points of contention and escalation. As such, the Cyprus problem can intensify, and peace talks can be complicated due to contention over this new and valuable interest. However, whether the discovery of gas incentivizes peace or intensifies conflict ultimately depends on the decisions and actions of the important parties involved.

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3 Morelli, Vincent. "Cyprus: reunification proving elusive." Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, 2014, 1.

4 See: Zervakis, Peter A. "Cyprus in Europe: Solving the Cyprus problem by Europeanizing it?." *Connections* 3.1 (2004): 107-132. See also: Ioannou, Gregoris, and Giorgos Charalambous. "The social and political impact of the Cyprus economic crisis (2010-2017)." (2017).

5 Gürel, Ayla, and Laura Le Cornu. "Can gas catalyse peace in the Eastern Mediterranean?." *The International Spectator* 49.2 (2014): 26, 27.

## | QUESTION & MOTIVATION

This MA thesis sets out to explain how the politics surrounding Cypriot gas involving the key parties to the Cyprus problem<sup>6</sup>, has impacted the peace talks in Cyprus. This research views gas in Cypriot waters and a peace settlement in Cyprus as related political interests around which collective actors, in this case governments, have acted strategically. In this research, focus is on the RoC, the government of the TRNC and the government of Turkey, which are understood as the most important parties to the Cyprus problem. The time period chosen is between December 2011 and July 2017. As December 2011 marks the month and year in which the first gas field was discovered in Cyprus, July 2017 is when the latest peace talks broke down.

Furthermore, the Cyprus talks and the politics of Cypriot gas are conceptualized as interdependent *strategic action fields* (SAFs) in which *strategic action* takes place. As will be demonstrated in chapter one, these concepts, drawn from McAdam and Fligstein's theory of fields, offer to elucidate the impact of that politics of gas on the peace talks. In each of these latter domains collective actors vie for a position of power and control over particular material and status rewards, and in ways that may affect what happens in other domains. As such they are viewed here as strategic action fields, which McAdam and Fligstein define as "socially constructed arenas"<sup>7</sup> and "the basic structural building block of modern political/organizational life in the economy, civil society, and the state"<sup>8</sup>. Strategic action is defined by these authors as the attempt "to create and sustain social worlds by securing the cooperation of others. Strategic action is about control in a given context"<sup>9</sup>. These ontological and theoretical ideas will help answering the research question:

How has the politics surrounding Cypriot gas, involving the RoC, the government of the TRNC and the government of Turkey, affected the peace talks in Cyprus between December 2011 and July 2017?

This question is relevant for multiple reasons. First, it helps explain the growing complexity of the peace talks in Cyprus. These are talks which are not only of critical importance to the political, economic and social situation of the country but that also influence the stability and the political configuration of the wider Eastern Mediterranean region. The Cyprus problem pits re-

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6 From hereon also referred to as politics of (Cypriot) gas or (political) issue of gas. Importantly politics is defined as "the activities of governments concerning the political relations between states". See: "politics". English Oxford Living Dictionaries, Oxford. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/politics>. Accessed 19 April 2019.

7 Fligstein, Neil, and Doug McAdam. A theory of fields. Oxford University Press, 2012, 5.

8 Ibidem, 3.

9 Ibidem, 17.

gional countries against one another and peace talks are key to mending their relations. If the political decisions surrounding gas have influenced the Cyprus talks it is paramount to understand how that has happened, especially since these talks have been ongoing for decades while gas is a newer issue. Second, this research allows for a better understanding of the events around gas, which are of notable significance to Cyprus' national future. While gas can raise tensions and incentivize peaceful cooperation, from its commercial exploitation it could also upgrade the political and financial situation of the country.

This research also fills a gap in academic debate. A number of political- and social scientists have tried to explain the linkages between natural resources and the onset of violent conflict. Different mechanisms, such as the *greedy rebels mechanism*<sup>10</sup> and the *greedy outsiders mechanism*<sup>11</sup> have been identified by scholars such as Collier, Hoeffler and Dashwood. Their studies place primary commodities at the center stage of civil conflict, with human greed viewed as either directly or indirectly responsible for the start or continuation of violent conflict.

Much less attention has gone to the linkages between natural resources and peace. Siri Rustad and Helga Binningsbo are among the few scholars who have actually studied these. In their article 'A price worth fighting for? Natural resources and conflict recurrence' they also remark how "surprisingly little research examines how these linkages [between natural resources and conflict onset] affect peace processes and the sustainability of peace"<sup>12</sup>. Their study finds that the effect of natural resources on peace depends on how a country's natural resources can constitute a motive or opportunity for armed conflict"<sup>13</sup>. Other scholars who have studied the topic are Siri Aas Rustad, Päivi Lujala, and Philippe Le Billon. In their book *Building or spoiling peace?* they emphasize the dual nature of high value resources. They find that "high-value natural resources offer a considerable advantage for countries emerging from armed conflict. If extracted and managed in a careful way, such resources can yield both an economic boost and an incentive for keeping the peace"<sup>14</sup>, but that "the opportunities associated with high-value resources are accompanied by considerable challenges. In fact, when it comes to sustaining peace and long-term development, resource-rich countries tend to fare worse than others"<sup>15</sup>.

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10 See also: Collier, P., and A. Hoeffler. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War: Working Paper WPS 2000-18." Washington DC: World Bank (2011).

11 See also: Dashwood, Hevina Smith. *Zimbabwe: The political economy of transformation*. University of Toronto Press, 2000.

12 Rustad, Siri Aas, and Helga Malmin Binningsbø. "A price worth fighting for? Natural resources and conflict recurrence." *Journal of Peace Research* 49.4 (2012): 531.

13 Idem.

14 Rustad, Siri Aas, Päivi Lujala, and Philippe Le Billon. "Building or spoiling peace? Lessons from the management of high-value natural resources." *High-value natural resources and post-conflict peacebuilding* (2012): 613

15 Idem.

These and other scholars who have written about the linkages between natural resources and peace have mostly emphasized peace and peace processes, making little distinction between the various peace efforts such as peacemaking, peacebuilding and peacekeeping (at the local, national and international level). This also means, that no special emphasis is placed on the linkages between natural resources and peace talks, which do constitute a category of peace effort that could be understood in its own right. Peace talks are most often complex, fragile and highly dynamic processes, and as noted earlier, their outcomes can be crucial to national and regional stability in political, economic and social terms. By filling this gap in academic debate this research seeks to make another important contribution.

#### | THESIS OUTLINE

The outline of this thesis is as follows. The first chapter introduces the theoretical framework and methodology, providing a better understanding of the data-collection techniques and the theoretical concepts that have been used for conducting this research. The second chapter provides contextual knowledge of the Cyprus problem, which underlies the relationship between the Cyprus talks and the politics of gas. The third chapter provides an analysis of the Cyprus talks. While special focus is on the peace talks, there is discussion of other peace efforts here as well. The fourth chapter then introduces the discovery of natural gas in Cyprus and views its related politics. These latter two chapters ultimately lay the basis for the final chapter, which answers the research question. The conclusion of this thesis will reflect on the important findings and make recommendations for future research.



# 1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

McAdam and Fligstein's theory of fields informs the analytical framework of this MA thesis. This chapter will make sense of the important parts of their theory. The first section briefly situates the authors' work alongside other studies and looks at their ontological assumptions. The second section explains the concepts that constitute the theoretical framework. The last section explains the methods used for conducting this research.

## 1.1 | MCADAM AND FLIGSTEIN'S THEORETICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

In devising their theory McAdam and Fligstein have built on multiple theoretical works and perspectives. The authors have drawn heavily from institutional theory, social movement studies and network analysis and have revisited fundamental ideas about how organizations control their environment, how in social life 'the rules of the game' are made, and how skilled actors shape and organize social environments. These authors tend to the core concern of these studies: collective strategic action. However, instead of solely focusing on the abilities of social actors to control their environments (i.e. agency) they also look at the functions of social structures. Their theory attempts "rethinking the problems of the relationship between agency and structure and the interactions between macrosocial process and micro-interactions"<sup>16</sup>. For them, it is less about solving the structure vs. agency problem and more about empirically defining those concepts of structure and agency: providing a "sociological view of how actors enact structure in the first place and the role they play in sustaining or changing these structures over time"<sup>17</sup>. Crucial to that sociological view are also the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens. Bourdieu's theoretical approach of situating action in fields in which he uses his main concepts of capital, habitus and field to explain individuals relative power positions, is one important example.<sup>18</sup> Another is Giddens' theory of structuration, which sees social struc-

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<sup>16</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A theory of fields*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Idem.

<sup>18</sup> See: Bourdieu, Pierre, and Richard Nice. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Vol. 16. Cambridge: Cambridge university press, 1977.



tures as both reproduced and changed by the actions of the individuals within them. Individuals can reproduce and rely on the predictable rules of their social environment but at the same time break away from normative actions when they lose trust in those rules, and by doing that, potentially transform the structures they find themselves in.<sup>19</sup>

McAdam and Fligstein try to advance on Bourdieu's and Giddens' theories. They do this not only by also emphasizing the nature of *collective* action, but also by providing more specificity regarding why and how actors behave and how that changes the social structures in which they are embedded. At the same time, they bring the works of Bourdieu and Giddens and the aforementioned studies together to offer a "theory of social change and stability rooted in a view of social life as dominated by a complex web of strategic action fields"<sup>20</sup>. Their theory accounts for interaction between those fields and "their very real potential to effect change in one another"<sup>21</sup>.

## 1.2 | THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK EXPLAINED

The theoretical concepts of strategic action and strategic action fields (from hereon **SAF**) are the central components of the theoretical approach of McAdam and Fligstein. These related concepts offer a view of the Cyprus talks and the politics surrounding Cypriot gas, as constituting these socially constructed orders in which there is "something at stake"<sup>22</sup>, in which individual and collective actors compete over material and status rewards, and in which they are:

... attuned to and interact with one another on the basis of shared (which is not to say consensual) understandings about the purposes of the field, relationships to others in the field (including who has power and why), and the rules governing legitimate action in the field.<sup>23</sup>

Where issues are identified as salient, actors are said to construct SAFs. Where new SAFs are constructed others become less relevant. Thus, the emergence and the salience of SAFs are situational and their boundaries shift based on what are perceived as important stakes.<sup>24</sup> Underpinning the construction of the SAF are the shared understandings between the actors in the field. In that respect, McAdam and Fligstein formulate four preconditions. First, there needs to be general consensus between the actors involved over what is at stake. Second, within the field are actors with different de-

19 Fligstein and McAdam, A theory of fields, 26, 27.

20 Ibidem, 8.

21 Ibidem, 9.

22 Ibidem, 27.

23 Kluttz, Daniel N., and Neil Fligstein. "Varieties of sociological field theory." Handbook of contemporary sociological theory. Springer, Cham, 2016, 191.

24 Fligstein and McAdam, A theory of fields, 10.

degrees of power who are generally aware of their position and how it relates to those of others. Third, there are shared understandings of the *field rules*, meaning actors know what tactics they can use and whether they are legitimate. Fourth, and last, actors bring their own interpretive frames to make sense of the actions of others. Those actions are often viewed from their own position in the field.<sup>25</sup>

In explaining the composition of any given SAF, McAdam and Fligstein distinguish between *incumbents* and *challengers*. These are the two sets of actors considered to be competing over control of the field and its popular resources. Incumbents are actors who often see the rules of the field adjust to their interests, and see shared meanings supporting and legitimizing their privileged position. They are actors who:

... wield disproportionate influence within a field and whose interests and views tend to be heavily rejected in the dominant organization of the strategic action field. Thus, the purposes and structure of the field are adapted to their interests, and the positions in the field are defined by their claim on the lion's share of material and status rewards.<sup>26</sup>

Challengers on the other hand are those actors who hold less privileged positions and have only limited control over the operation of the SAF, meaning they have less influence over what happens and who enjoys particular resources and advantages. McAdam and Fligstein contend that while challengers "recognize the nature of the field and the dominant logic of incumbent actors, they can usually articulate an alternative vision of the field and their position in it".<sup>27</sup> However, according to the authors, this does not imply that these actors:

... are normally in open revolt against the inequities of the field or aggressive purveyors of oppositional logics. On the contrary, most of the time challengers can be expected to conform to the prevailing order, although they often do so grudgingly, taking what the system gives them and awaiting new opportunities to challenge the structure and logic of the system.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, their theory assumes that all actors in the SAF vie for advantage, and in ways that are largely informed by their particular position in the field. They engage in strategic action to either control others or the attribution of resources, maintain relative power, or contest an unbeneficial status

25 Kluttz and Fligstein. "Varieties of sociological field theory", 191.

26 Fligstein and McAdam. A theory of fields, 13.

27 Idem.

28 Idem.

quo. Their strategic action is about shaping and maintaining social worlds, about fashioning shared worlds by securing that actors in the field cooperate. It is about “control in a given context”<sup>29</sup>. For McAdam and Fligstein what determines part of the success of this strategic action is the capacity of actors to successfully frame lines of action and mobilize people “in the service of broader conceptions and of themselves”<sup>30</sup>.

Where many SAFs are stable in the sense that the relative positions of actors within the field are reproduced over longer periods of time, there can also be field instability, especially in the form of *periods of contention*. The latter is defined by McAdam and Fligstein as “a period of emergent, sustained contentious interaction between ... [field] actors utilizing new and innovative forms of action vis-à-vis one another”<sup>31</sup>. These episodes are characterized by a deep sense of uncertainty among actors regarding the order of the field, particularly the power relations and the rules that constitute that order. Stable fields can be met with this state of crisis, but it also informs the phase in which a new SAF emerges. Moreover, periods of contention last until the general sense of order and certainty, and consensus about positions of incumbents and challengers, return.

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The theoretical concepts explained so far allow for a structural analysis of the Cyprus talks and the politics of Cypriot gas as two strategic action fields, as these can be explained individually as distinct orders in which political actors strategize for advantage in power and resources. However, where the goal of this research also lies in explaining a relationship between these two fields, particular other notions are crucial as well. These are the dependency and interdependency of strategic action fields. SAF's are conceived by McAdam and Fligstein as embedded in a broader environment that consists of countless of other fields: “a complex web of strategic action fields”<sup>32</sup>. Not only might the boundaries of those SAF's overlap, fields can influence one another. Assuming they are in close proximity they can be linked in that dependent or *interdependent* manner. First, field dependence means that a SAF is subject to the influence of another field. This dependence could stem from various sources, “including formal legal or bureaucratic authority, resource dependence, or physical/military force”<sup>33</sup>. Second, the interdependence of fields means that two fields exercise about equal influence over one another:

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<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 17.

<sup>30</sup> Klutetz and Fligstein, "Varieties of sociological field theory.", 194.

<sup>31</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, A theory of fields, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, 8.

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, 18.

The main theoretical implication of the interdependence of fields is that the broader field environment is a source of routine, rolling turbulence in modern society. A significant change in any given strategic action field is like a stone thrown in a still pond sending ripples outward to all proximate fields. This does not mean that all or even most of the ripples will destabilize other fields. Like stones, changes come in all sizes. Only the most dramatic are apt to send ripples of sufficient intensity to pose a real threat to the stability of proximate fields.<sup>34</sup>

What happens in one SAF can affect what happens in others, and as described above it can even destabilize them. It is regarding the latter phenomena that McAdam and Fligstein write about *exogenous shocks*, shocks that can lead surrounding fields into episodes of contention and send them into a state of field crisis.<sup>35</sup>

Importantly, these ideas constitute the theoretical framework of this thesis. Where McAdam and Fligstein's theoretical notions have commonly been used to make sense of collective action and social orders at the meso-level (e.g. local organizations, social movements) here their ideas will be used to explain politics at the macro or inter-state level. This means that the international political sphere is equally viewed as made up of strategic action fields. The focus here will be on governments engaging in strategic action rather than individuals. McAdam and Fligstein contend that "one of the central insights of our theory is that the basic structure of any given strategic action field is the same as any other field regardless of whether or not the field is made up of individual people, groups, organizations, or nation-states"<sup>36</sup>. By using parts of their theory of fields to explain the international political level this research bridges disciplinary boundaries between the social sciences and political sciences. From the same ontological position that McAdam and Fligstein take in, it emphasizes the interplay between (collective) agency and structure at the macro-level as shaping our world.

### 1.3 | THE METHODOLOGY OF THIS RESEARCH

This ontological perspective of our social and political world as consisting of countless embedded strategic action fields has informed a research strategy that uses qualitative methods to explain the impact of the politics of Cypriot gas on the Cyprus talks. This research approaches these domains as distinct and interdependent SAFs in order to provide that explanation. The chosen methodology closely relates to what is called *explaining-outcome process tracing* which in political sciences is frequently used as a form of within-case study analysis. Derek Breach defines this method as: "a case-

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, 19.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, 19, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Ibidem, 59.

centric method that attempts to craft a minimally sufficient explanation of an outcome using an eclectic combination of theoretical mechanisms and/or non-systematic, case-specific mechanisms”<sup>37</sup>. He asserts that the explanations that this type of method generates are relevant to a specific case rather than generalizable, and that:

... explaining outcome PT are studies that attempt to craft a minimally sufficient explanation of a historical outcome in a specific case, such as why the US decided to go to war against Iraq in 2003. Here the aim is not to build or test more general theories; instead the ambition is to craft a (minimally) sufficient explanation of the case.<sup>38</sup>

For this research, the ‘historical outcome’, namely the impact of the politics of gas on peace talks between 2011 and 2017, has been examined by use of an inductive approach to process tracing which Beach describes as “a bottom-up type of analysis, using empirical material as the basis for building a plausible explanation of causal mechanisms whereby X (or multiple X’s) produced y”<sup>39</sup>. For each of the constituent parts of aforementioned relationship (politics of gas/peace talks) data has been gathered guided by the notions of strategic action, field actors, important stakes, and periods of contention. This evidence was coded using the same concepts but also by means of historic timelines. Through the comparison of the collected data, causal mechanisms were then identified (X’s). These mechanisms were used to sensitize subsequent data-collection and the body of evidence for each was finally assessed in terms of its inferential weight, using the criteria used in so-called *straw in the wind tests*, *hoop tests* and *smoking gun tests*.<sup>40</sup>

Further, among the sources have been secondary sources such as books and academic articles, but also primary sources such as research reports, newspapers, UN reports, official government statements and public remarks by politicians from the relevant period. One crucial source that has been consulted is the newspaper the ‘Cyprus Mail’, the only daily newspaper in Cyprus written in English. This is generally considered to be a politically independent and trustworthy Cypriot newspaper. Further data has been obtained from ‘Reuters News Agency’ and the ‘reports of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus’. The latter reports have provided especially valuable first-hand data on the progression of negotiations.

37 Beach, Derek, and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. "What is Process-Tracing Actually Tracing? The Three Variants of Process Tracing Methods and Their Uses and Limitations." *The three variants of process tracing methods and their uses and limitations* (2011): 7.

38 Ibidem, 3.

39 Ibidem, 25, 26.

40 CDI Centre For Development Impact, Applying Process Tracing in Five Steps, Number 10 Annex Available at: [https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/5997/CDIPracticePaper\\_10\\_Annex.pdf?sequence=2](https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/5997/CDIPracticePaper_10_Annex.pdf?sequence=2)

Where the Cyprus problem often informs overly biased representations of the peace talks, by citizens, politicians and journalists on both sides of the island, the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) and his advisors, through their mediating role, provide one of the more objective accounts. Further, specialized reports by neutral and renowned research institutes such as by the 'Peace Research Institute Oslo', 'International Crisis Group' and the 'Congressional Research Service' have provided important background information.

Here, it might be fruitful to discuss some of the drawbacks of this research. One of these is that due to language barriers only English written sources have been used. It is noted that these sources have still offered valuable and objective data. Another limitation, one that limits any research into the Cyprus talks, is the official secrecy about what is discussed at the negotiation table. The UN Secretary-General repeatedly requested that parties be more transparent about the precise content of the peace talks. For example, in 2011 he stated that: "while I respect the need for confidentiality in the process of achieving compromise, I continue to believe that the official secrecy of the negotiations, broken only by the selective leaking of texts through the media, is not conducive to constructive negotiations"<sup>41</sup>.

However, information is often leaked, especially when it comes to negotiations that have been held further in the past. Accounts such as those by the UNSG, and politicians' statements to the press, have still been highly useful. Lastly, where this research touches upon strategic decision-making by governments, a final limitation is that is not always certain why particular decisions are made. In such instances, key decisions have been carefully speculated combining and triangulating data from different external sources.

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41 United Nations, Security Council. Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus, S/2011/112 (4 March 2011) available from <http://undocs.org/S/2011/112>, 4.



## 2 LONG-LASTING CONFLICT AND A DEEPLY DIVIDED COUNTRY

This chapter attempts to capture in brief the extensive and complex history of conflict in Cyprus. What are the roots of an internal conflict that has divided this small Mediterranean island for decades? And who are the important parties involved? Answering these questions provides a contextual understanding that is necessary for grasping the contents of this thesis. This will also be the important task of this second chapter. The first section discusses the cultural and societal development of Cyprus under Greek-, Ottoman-, and British rule, revealing the origins of an ethnic nationalism that has shaped the Cyprus conflict. The second section sheds light on how Cyprus's colonial inheritance informed the episodes of ethnic violence and the political and territorial division of the island that occurred in the 1960's and 1970's. Lastly, the third section provides a discussion of how this enduring division and conflict have affected the country up to present times.

### 2.1 | CYPRUS BEFORE INDEPENDENCE: PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND THE RISE OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM

At the center of the Cyprus conflict stand two ethnic communities that over the centuries have formed the country's dominant population groups: the Turkish Cypriot community and the Greek Cypriot community. The Greek Cypriots make up approximately 77 percent of the current Cypriot population, whereas that number for Turkish Cypriots is much lower, at only 18 percent. The remaining Cypriot population is constituted by predominantly Maronite Christians and Armenians.<sup>42</sup> The Greek influence on the island can be traced back to as early as 1400 BC, when Cyprus was first peopled by Greeks from Asia minor and the Aegean. Over time, under Roman- and later Byzantine rule, Cyprus developed as a Greek speaking- and Christian orthodox territory. It was not until the 16th century that Turkish influence became prominent as well, reason being the victory of the Ottomans over the at the time rulers of the island, the Venetians. Subsequently, Turks from Anatolia settled on Cyprus, changing its demographic makeup into

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42 Morelli, Cyprus: reunification proving elusive 2014, 1.



one-fourth Turk.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, Ottoman rule introduced a loosely authoritarian power structure through which both the Greek Orthodox church and Greek Cypriots were awarded a fair amount of religious freedom and political autonomy.

Through most of Ottoman rule (1571-1878) and much of later British rule, Greek- and Turkish Cypriots shared the island in a relatively harmonious fashion. Although there could not be spoken of a united Cypriot people, as both ethnic communities lived in separate villages and their relationship was not void of tension, there was some degree of intermingling and a tolerance of each other's religious difference.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, at the end of the nineteenth century, when the Ottoman empire and the British empire struck a deal allowing the British administrative control over Cyprus, hostile nationalist expressions increasingly began to arise.<sup>45</sup> Of vital importance here was the idea of *enosis* which had inspired Greek Cypriots and essentially meant a wish of establishing union of Cyprus with Greece. When this nationalist idea first sprung up in Cyprus after the Greek revolution of 1821, its spreading was successfully suppressed by the Ottomans.<sup>46</sup> Under British rule, it became popular once more.

Where the British excluded the Orthodox church from governance, they allowed religious leaders to transform into advocates for the nationalist cause. Where they modernized infrastructure, the printing press and the educational system, they permitted nationalist thinking to develop and to be transferred across the Cypriot population.<sup>47</sup> However, Greek Cypriot pleas for *enosis* at the address of the British would fall on deaf ears for most of the latter's presence in Cyprus. Where, at the onset of the First World War, the British Empire had annexed Cyprus from the Ottoman enemy, it was reluctant to cede the island to Greece. Not least due to its important strategic location, but also because of the interests of its Turkish Cypriot minority. The question arose what had to become of their fate if Cyprus fell in Greek hands.<sup>48</sup>

As Greek Cypriot nationalism grew throughout the first half of the 20th century, so did Turkish Cypriot fears of *enosis*, an uncertainty that led a number of Turkish Cypriots to awaken to their own identity as Turks, especially younger generations. During the interbellum, these Turkish Cypriot nationalists would not only become increasingly convinced of the threat of Greek Cypriot nationalism, they also developed hostility towards the colonial

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43 Dodd, Clement. The history and politics of the Cyprus conflict. Springer, 2010, 1.

44 Ibidem, 2.

45 Ker-Lindsay, James. The Cyprus Problem: What Everyone Needs to Know. Oxford University Press, 2011, 21.

46 Michael Michalis. Resolving the Cyprus Conflict: Negotiating History. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 8.

47 Ibidem, 11, 12.

48 Dodd, The history and politics of the Cyprus conflict, 5, 6.

rule. Thus, in this period, the British ruler struggled not only with an increasingly fanatic group of Greek Cypriot nationalists but also with a reactionary Turkish Cypriot nationalism.

Where the British responded harshly in suppressing upsurges of anti-colonial sentiments they initiated a regime that was much less tolerant of ideological expressions.<sup>49</sup> The effectiveness of that regime, however, was soon cut short by the arrival of the Second World War which impaired British ability to maintain authority over its overseas territories. Where in the war years enosis had made its comeback, after the war the suppression of Greek Cypriot nationalism became too difficult a task. Not only had anti-colonialism won ground at the United Nations, Greek Cypriot nationalists also became violent in their efforts for union with Greece.<sup>50</sup> Their first acts of organized violence in 1955, heralded over four years of Guerilla revolt and terrorism against the colonizer. Violence that, although not necessarily aimed at Turkish Cypriots, also created casualties among the latter ethnic group, sparking concerns of an inter-communal war.

Consequently, the Turkish government, believing rumors that Turkish Cypriots were about to be massacred and that Cyprus was heading towards enosis, stepped up as their guardian and stated that: "this country will absolutely not accept any change in the status of Cyprus either today or tomorrow that will be against the interests of the [Turkish] state"<sup>51</sup>. In the midst of crisis, and with Turkey drawn into the Cypriot turmoil, the British realized the necessity of a permanent political solution.<sup>52</sup> Where they could safeguard some of their strategic interests regarding Cyprus, such as maintaining a military base on the island to fend off communism, they were no longer opposed to relinquishing their sovereignty.

What was negotiated at the end of 1950's was a model of governance where Greek- and Turkish Cypriots would share power over a presidential Cypriot republic. Cyprus would become independent through an integrative constitution with the agreement that the governments of Turkey, Greece and Britain reserved a right to intervene, and restore order, if power-sharing agreements were ever breached, something that was established under a *Treaty of Guarantee*.<sup>53</sup> Under great pressure from the Greek government, Greek Cypriot (and nationalist) leader Makarios also signed this settlement, knowing that otherwise the British would opt to formally partition the island, which would shatter all future dreams of enosis. Consequently, in 1960 the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) was established as an independent government

49 Ibidem, 6.

50 Antoniadou, Nicholas James. "Ethnic Nationalism and Identity Formation in Cyprus, 1571 to 1974." (2017): 14, 15.

51 Dodd, The history and politics of the Cyprus conflict, 20, 21.

52 Idem.

53 Michalis, Resolving the Cyprus Conflict: Negotiating History, 23-25.

with its very own constitution.<sup>54</sup> However, rather than a joyous historical turning point, grounds had been prepared for episodes of ethnic violence that would severely traumatize and transform the country.

## 2.2 | CYPRUS BETWEEN 1960 AND 1983: RIVALRY, BLOODSHED AND INEVITABLE STATE FAILURE

In the years prior to independence, tensions between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots had risen considerably. Where Greek Cypriot nationalists, largely supported in their cause by the Greek government, had fanatically pursued their wish for enosis, the Turkish government and Turkish Cypriot nationalists had embraced their own wish for the partition of Cyprus, called *Taksim*. After independence, the new constitution prescribed that such aspirations, on either side, should be put to rest. The island had to be governed in a collective manner. That same constitution also prescribed that the important interests and cultural values of each ethnic group be protected, and that a communal dualism would inform all spheres of governance. Important examples of the latter were that the president was to be a Greek Cypriot and the vice president a Turkish Cypriot, and that fixed numbers of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were to constitute the council of ministers. Similar dualism was to be institutionalized in the judicial system, the police apparatus, and the army.<sup>55</sup>

On the whole, this new political arrangement of Cyprus, largely imposed by guarantors Britain, Greece and Turkey, was greeted differently by Greek Cypriots then by Turkish Cypriots. For most of those belonging to the former group independence was seen as a defeat and was to be viewed as a temporary circumstance until enosis could finally be achieved. Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, despite their own hopes for a partition not being met, mostly favored the newly founded republic. Their community had been granted a formalized influence over the governance of Cyprus, dodged a union of the island with Greece, and was now also protected by a powerful 'big brother' named Turkey.

With such a discrepancy in these communities' sense of reward and their loyalty to the Cypriot state, effective implementation of the new constitutional framework proved more than difficult. One important area of disagreement was the establishment of separate Turkish Cypriot- and Greek Cypriot municipalities in the urban districts. In 1963, after one year of negotiating this heavily contested issue, President Makarios made a decision that would herald a decade of episodic, intercommunal violence. Despite explicit warnings by the governments of Turkey and Greece that changing the con-

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<sup>54</sup> Dodd, The history and politics of the Cyprus issue, 41.

<sup>55</sup> Joseph, Joseph S. Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics: From Independence to the Threshold of the European Union. Palgrave Macmillan, 1985, 21– 23.

stitution would lead to severe trouble, he introduced constitutional amendments meant to 'smoothen' the running of the Cypriot government.<sup>56</sup> Where these amendments seriously undermined the political power of the Turkish Cypriot community they were quickly rejected by most Turkish Cypriots, sparking heightened tension between the two communities. These tensions would soon escalate into protests and from there into ethnic violence that spread across the whole of Cyprus and that lasted for several months.<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, many Cypriots were forced to flee from their homes and Turkish Cypriots retreated into their own concentrated enclaves spread across the island. Importantly, they also withdrew from all national state institutions.

Had there been any sense of unity before, from 1964 onwards Cypriots were separated in social, political and demographic terms. A UN mission, employed in that same year, now served to keep the national peace. By doing so, it also withheld the Turkish government from executing the military operation it had planned to protect the Turkish Cypriot community.<sup>58</sup> Such an operation again nearly occurred in 1967, when a second round of fighting broke out between the two ethnic communities. This time between Greek Cypriot nationalist soldiers and Turkish Cypriots who clashed inside an enclave near the city of Larnaca. Moreover, where the Greek government had gradually established an unauthorized military presence in Cyprus to support the Greek Cypriot community, Turkish leaders provided it with an ultimatum to either withdraw its troops or find Turkish soldiers land on the island. Where Greek leaders complied with this Turkish demand, successfully evading international crisis that year, this would not prevent the Turkish military operation of 1974.<sup>59</sup> This traumatic event, which has been of fundamental importance to many of the political problems of Cyprus until present day, can be described as the pinnacle of the country's interethnic struggle.<sup>60</sup>

In the years prior to that historic event, Turkish-Greek relations had suffered greatly under the backlash of the military Junta that took place in Greece in 1967. This Greek regime had renounced its support for an independent Cyprus, openly promoted enosis, and taken a hostile stance against Cypriot President Makarios. What triggered the Turkish military response in 1974 was that the new Greek regime and hardline Greek Cypriot nationalists, would stage a coup to overthrow the Cypriot president and his government. This illegal and bloody installment of a Greek extremist puppet regime in Cyprus was met with a Turkish demand that the island be parti-

56 Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 30, 31.

57 Ibidem, 31, 32.

58 Michalis, *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict: Negotiating History*, 27.

59 This event is typically referred to by Greek Cypriots as an 'invasion' or 'occupation', and by Turkish Cypriots as an 'intervention' or 'peace operation'. For the sake of neutrality, with regard to what is a very emotionally charged and seemingly perpetual debate, in this thesis it will be referred to as the Turkish military operation of 1974.

60 Bose, Sumantra. *Contested lands*. Harvard University Press, 2007, 83, 84.

tioned, as well as a large-scale military offensive by Turkish forces to push that demand through.<sup>61</sup>

Within a month, over 37 percent of Cypriot territory was overrun by Turkish soldiers, the seizure of power by Greek- and Greek Cypriot nationalists had ended and thousands of Cypriots had either been killed or gone missing. Additionally, around 150 000 Cypriots were displaced, with many Greek Cypriots forced to flee their homes in the occupied area, and Turkish Cypriots leaving their protected enclaves to inhabit the new territory. Moreover, as violent and traumatic as this event had been for both communities, for the Turkish Cypriot community its outcome was rather favorable. Where Turkish Cypriots had been under an effective form of siege in the 1960's, with Greek Cypriot soldiers at times even preventing food and medicine from getting into their enclaves, they now controlled a large amount of own territory in the northern part of Cyprus.

When Turkish Cypriots announced the formation of the *Turkish Federated State of Northern Cyprus* in 1975 there was relatively little resistance to it by Greek Cypriots. Knowing that Turkish Cypriots had no longer an incentive to participate in a unitary state, and that the latter were protected by a militarily superior Turkey, Greek Cypriots increasingly realized that enosis had died as a realistic ambition and that a federal state structure was likely to be the best option for peaceful coexistence.<sup>62</sup> Accordingly, by the end of the 1970's, peace talks between the two communities had produced the initial groundworks for a reunified Cyprus under a federal government.

However, agreement over the specifics of that new federal system was largely absent, once again resulting in a political deadlock that would carry into the 1980's. In 1983, to the surprise of both Greek Cypriots and many Turkish Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriot leadership unilaterally declared the full independence of Northern Cyprus. In doing so, it announced the foundation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), a decision that breached the Cyprus agreements of 1960, and was therefore viewed as illegal by the international community. Although some of the reasons for this widely condemned move have been linked to the personal aspirations of Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash, a hardline separatist, a full explanation has never been provided.<sup>63</sup>

Nonetheless, Denktash' action can be added to the list of decisions that crucially shaped the contemporary history of Cyprus. As will become clear in the final section of this chapter, his move helped solidify the communal and political division in Cyprus that still exists today. It has also meant a troublesome isolation of Turkish Cypriots on the world stage, as the de facto

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61 Ibidem, 85, 86.

62 Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem: What Everyone Needs to Know*, 50.

63 Ibidem, 50, 51.

status of their self-proclaimed republic has for the last four decades excluded them from international politics and much of the global market. Where only the Turkish government has formally recognized the TRNC, the Greek Cypriot community has fared much better with the persistent absence of a reunification deal. Much like in 1983, today's Cyprus remains a divided island, and Greek Cypriots have the advantage of running its internationally recognized government. From the south of the island, Greek Cypriots officially control what is still always known as the Republic of Cyprus.

### 2.3 | CONTEMPORARY CYPRUS: FROM CYPRUS PROBLEM TO FROZEN CONFLICT

The problems concerning the political destination of Cyprus, especially that of the contrasting political preferences among the islands' dominant ethnic groups, have traditionally been captured under the name the Cyprus problem. With the latter essentially meaning the difficulties that arise when asking how Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots can ever peacefully share power and sovereignty over Cyprus. Importantly, how this Cyprus problem is understood, and what it has meant for Cypriots themselves, has changed considerably throughout history. Was it about communal fears and an incompatibility of political ambitions during and shortly after British rule, after 1974 it was also about territorial division, cultural trauma and an internalized mistrust between communities.

Where the violence ended in that same year, 1974, one can no longer speak of a violent conflict since. Essentially, from colonial times until the present, the Cyprus problem has evolved from a conflict, to a violent conflict, to what has been termed a *frozen conflict* within the field of conflict studies. With the latter defined by Brittany Pohl as "a war in stasis where formalized combat is halted but the underlying causes of the conflict still exist without a permanent peace treaty or agreed upon political framework towards reconciliation"<sup>64</sup>. And indeed, for Cyprus, the mutual incompatibility that led to widespread violence in the 60's and 70's, has lived on in present times, albeit in a largely altered manner (as will be discussed further in the following chapter). Most notably, the countries' 220-kilometer-long border zone called the Green Line, erected in 1974 by Turkish forces to demarcate the two different territories, has served as the starkest reminder of its frozen state of affairs. This iron curtain, which cuts across the island and is presently guarded by UN-peacekeepers, has since the Turkish military operation served as symbol and a means of division.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, other such 're-

64 Pohl, Brittany A. "Frozen Conflicts, De Facto States, And Enduring Interests in The Russian Near Abroad." (2016): 3.

65 Bose, Contested Lands, 88.

mindings' include: the 30 000 Turkish troops still present in Cyprus, the ongoing peace talks, and the political isolation of the TRNC.

Furthermore, where Cyprus has been split as a nation, with Greek Cypriots governing the RoC and Turkish Cypriots controlling the much poorer TRNC, both have mastered the 'blame game'. Each side has had their own, contrasting account of national history, in which victimhood and the shifting of blame have always played leading roles. Such variations in historical narratives become especially apparent when looking at history textbooks at Cypriot public schools. With clear examples being that Greek Cypriot students have read of Turkish Cypriots as historically savage people, responsible for conflict and suffering on the island.<sup>66</sup> And similarly, Turkish Cypriot students have read of Greek Cypriots as 'Rums' (non-Greek subjects of the Ottoman empire) who caused tremendous pain and struggling for Turkish Cypriots until the "happy peace operation of 1974"<sup>67</sup>.

Finally, where Cyprus, since its period of violence, has been marked by cultural trauma, division and an ongoing war of words, the country has also witnessed some first steps towards grassroots reconciliation, intercommunal contact, and cooperation. This 'rapprochement', as it has often been called by Cypriots, especially occurred over the past two decades. While this will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapter, it can be mentioned that confidence-building measures (CBM)<sup>68</sup> and communal interdependency have gradually brought Cypriots at least a little closer together. Additionally, where decades have passed since the last episode of intercommunal bloodshed, new generations of Cypriots identify less and less with the grievances of older generations. In fact, young Cypriots today have become more detached from the Cyprus problem, and it is mostly the older politicians and hardline nationalists that seem to keep the it from being solved.<sup>69</sup>

## | CONCLUSION

This second chapter has sought to provide a solid basis for understanding the history and contemporary state of the conflict in Cyprus, otherwise known as the Cyprus problem. As mentioned before, this conflict has evolved considerably over the years, which may seem understandable viewed in light of its long duration. Essentially, when the governments of

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66 Papadakis, Yiannis. "Narrative, memory and history education in divided Cyprus: A comparison of schoolbooks on the "history of Cyprus"." *History & Memory* 20.2 (2008): 133.

67 Ibidem, 136.

68 CBM's are "bilateral or multilateral measure that builds confidence, arrests the undesirable drift towards open hostilities, reduces tensions and encourages the adversaries to make contact for negotiations without taxing too much the operative policy pursuits". See also: Ashraf, Mian Muhammad Tahir. "Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) as an Instrument of Peace Building Between India and Pakistan: A Historical Analysis-I." *Journal of Research (Humanities)* 27 (2007): 112.

69 Christodoulou, Ioanna, et al. "Investigating the roots of political disengagement of young Greek Cypriots." *Contemporary Social Science* 12.3-4 (2017): 12, 13.

Britain, Greece and Turkey arranged their agreements for Cyprus in 1960, they imposed a lethal political solution to a persistent and complicated conundrum. Subsequently, the 1960 Republic of Cyprus inherited two incompatible ethno-nationalisms and a highly contested framework for political cooperation, a combination that inevitably spelled disaster. And indeed, ethnic violence, widespread displacement and multifaceted division have torn apart the country afterwards. At the same time, and in more recent decades, Cyprus seems to have found its own ways in dealing more peacefully with its national predicament. As the upcoming chapter will clarify, there has been some progress regarding political cooperation and the reunification of Cypriot citizens. Nonetheless, in most other respects, and with the country continuously hostage to its peace talks, Cypriots still bear the brunt of their historic problem.





### 3 PURSUING PEACE IN A DIPLOMATS' GRAVEYARD

This third chapter looks into the severely intractable peace process that has held Cyprus in its grip for over half a century. Where there will be discussion of different peace efforts that have been employed towards the stability and reunification of Cyprus, special focus will be on the peace talks in the country, otherwise known as the Cyprus talks. The first section of this chapter describes some of the key CBMs and peacekeeping initiatives undertaken over the past decades, whilst painting a more general picture of the Cyprus talks and their history. Its discussion of the important parties involved, the typical dynamics of the negotiations, and the pivotal moments in early peace talks also provide the knowledge necessary for comprehending the closer analysis in the second section. That section will focus entirely on the talks held over the past decade and discuss how these have progressed and what the important causes of their outcomes have been. Moreover, the Cyprus talks are conceptualized as an SAF and explained using the different theoretical concepts presented in chapter one.

#### 3.1 | THE PEACE PROCESS: UN INTERVENTION, PEACE TALKS AND THE ANNAN PLAN

Today Cyprus is still internally divided along its infamous green line. Nonetheless, the past 54 years have seen numerous attempts by both national and international actors to prevent violence on the islands and to reunite the two communities. Where the former goal was achieved soon after the events of 1974 the other goal of reuniting the two communities has proven to be a persistent challenge. There have been countless mediation efforts, CBMs and peace talks that have either led to limited success or have failed altogether. Here, the peace talks specifically are explained as an SAF that was produced over a longer period of time and in which what is essentially at stake for each of the core parties, or field actors, is a peace deal that best serves its interests at a given time. All the actions of parties towards establishing a favorable outcome or position in peace talks are considered as strategic actions.

One crucial actor within the peace process has been the United Nations. Shortly after the constitutional breakdown of 1963, which led to ethnic violence and the retraction of Turkish Cypriots into isolated enclaves, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (**UNFICYP**) was dispatched. As the Cyprus conflict dragged on so did the UN's presence. To this day, the UN has been actively engaged in a wide range of peace initiatives in Cyprus, varying from peacekeeping to the issuance of resolutions and the drafting of settlement plans.<sup>70</sup> It has also played a crucial role in facilitating and leading the different rounds of talks.

Moreover, in their efforts to reunify Cyprus, UN secretaries-general have often called for the support of the government of the United States in incentivizing the parties at the negotiation table. The hegemonic status of the US and its special relationship with Turkey and Greece have allowed the US government to exert considerable political influence on those parties. American involvement with the Cyprus problem has been inextricably linked to its geopolitical interests. Where Americans have historically perceived conflict in Cyprus as threatening the eastern flank of the NATO alliance (the strategic alignment between Greece and Turkey) this has been one important motive for their assistance in the peace talks.<sup>71</sup> Cyprus's crucial strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean and natural gas discoveries around its shorelines have been additional incentives.<sup>72</sup>

However, for both the UN and the US government it can be noted that their efforts for settlement have all too often failed in grasping the complexity of the Cyprus problem. As discussed in the previous chapter this problem has also transformed over time, becoming especially protracted after the Turkish military operation of 1974. Accordingly, peace talks between 1963 and 1974 were met with partially different and less intractable issues than talks in the decades after. Where from 1963 until 1974 there was besides communal separation also a recurring ethnic violence, negotiations did still center on re-establishing a unitary state. Within talks the obstacle to settlement seemed to be primarily the issue of political representation. Where the Turkish Cypriot community refused any downgrade of its equal political status, as documented in the 1960 constitution, the Greek Cypriot community demanded that a minority of the population should not be granted such disproportionate power.<sup>73</sup>

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70 Campbell-Thomson, Olga. "Pride and Prejudice: The Failure of UN Peace Brokering Efforts in Cyprus." *Perceptions: Journal of International Affairs* 19.2 (2014): 59-60.

71 Michael, Michalis S. "The Cyprus peace talks: A critical appraisal." *Journal of Peace Research* 44.5 (2007): 594.

72 Gürel, Ayla, and Laura Le Cornu. "Can gas catalyse peace in the Eastern Mediterranean?" *The International Spectator* 49.2 (2014): 30.

73 Campbell-Thomson. "Pride and Prejudice: The Failure of UN Peace Brokering Efforts in Cyprus.", 64-66.

Negotiations after 1974 then became markedly more complex in nature, while political representation did remain a key issue. Where in 1977 the aim of peace talks changed to achieving a federal state solution, an outcome of the first meeting between Cypriot leaders Denktash and Makarios<sup>74</sup>, the underlying negotiation positions thereafter have been unfavorable towards that objective. For the Greek Cypriot community, the Turkish military operation of 1974 introduced a general sense of insecurity with lasting fears of a complete Turkish occupation of Cyprus. It also internalized a distrust of Turkish Cypriot secessionist ambitions – all deeply entrenched sentiments which can be said to have influenced many positions of Greek Cypriot politicians within peace talks and to have diminished their motivation for achieving a federal solution.<sup>75</sup> While the latter have still seemed fairly committed to the cause, the preferred mode of action has always remained the return to a unitary state, one similar to that of Cyprus in 1960 but with more political power in the hands of the Greek Cypriot majority.<sup>76</sup> Where the contemporary status quo in Cyprus has been tremendously favorable for Greek Cypriots, as they unilaterally run the internationally recognized government, that has never boosted their enthusiasm about a federal solution either.

At the same time, for the Turkish Cypriot community, the events of 1974 confirmed the legitimacy of convictions that had already materialized during the 60's and early 70's. The most notable belief being that in a unitary Cyprus their political equality would never be respected and that as a minority they were inherently vulnerable to Greek Cypriot domination. Subsequently, the negotiation positions and strategic actions of Turkish Cypriot politicians within peace talks have been largely informed by an objective of enhancing and legitimizing the conditions of national division and self-governance.<sup>77</sup> While Turkish Cypriot politicians have generally supported the idea of a federal Cyprus, their preferred solutions have always been independence or a confederal state model.<sup>78</sup>

This disparity between the underlying attitudes and wishes of the two core parties has all too often stood in the way of successful peace talks. Talks have often been a zero-sum game characterized by mutual mistrust, antagonism, and refusals to concede.<sup>79</sup> Additionally, where Turkish Cypriot politi-

74 These Makarios-Denktash accords in 1977 produced a general framework for intercommunal negotiation that would inspire the frameworks of all future peace talks. The most important guideline was that Cyprus would have to become an independent, non-aligned, bicomunal federal republic. With a federal solution implying that a future Cyprus would be divided in two constituent states, one Greek Cypriot and one Turkish Cypriot, brought together under a federal government.

75 Michael, "The Cyprus peace talks: A critical appraisal.", 591.

76 Paul, Amanda. "Cyprus and the Never-Ending Search for a Solution.", *Caucasus International* 3.4 (2014): 131.

77 Michael, "The Cyprus peace talks: A critical appraisal.", 591-592.

78 Paul, "Cyprus and the Never-Ending Search for a Solution.", 131.

79 Fisher, Ronald J. "Cyprus: The failure of mediation and the escalation of an identity-based conflict to an adversarial impasse." *Journal of Peace Research* 38.3 (2001): 322.

cians have put tremendous effort into achieving international recognition of their TRNC, Greek Cypriot politicians have rejected and obstructed this at every turn. Contrasting interpretations of core issues have also impeded progress over the years. Within talks, the Cyprus problem itself has always been defined differently by both sides, something that has hindered mutual understanding and often damaged the confidence and will to negotiate on either side. Where after 1974 the Greek Cypriot side defined it as an issue of illegal occupation and foreign invasion, the Turkish Cypriot side defined the Cyprus problem as one of minority oppression, neglect and Greek Cypriot nationalism.<sup>80</sup>

Importantly, it can be said that both these parties, or field actors within the SAF, have had their own interpretive frame through which they have made sense of the field position and actions of the other. McAdam and Fligstein explain how “in most fields, for example, we expect that dominant or incumbent actors will embrace a frame of reference that encapsulates their self-serving view of the field, while dominated or challenging actors will adopt/fashion an “oppositional” perspective”<sup>81</sup>. The Greek Cypriot community can be explained as having occupied an incumbent position in the SAF as its unilateral control of the RoC has granted it with the better negotiation position. Greek Cypriot politicians have always been able to try and negotiate their preferred settlement, knowing that if talks collapsed they would remain in control of the official government of Cyprus. Moreover, their frame of reference has been informed by the sense of victimhood mentioned earlier but also by the rules of international law which have legitimized their belief that they rightfully govern the RoC without the Turkish Cypriot community. For Greek Cypriot politicians “the rules of the field tend to favor them”.

At the same time, the Turkish Cypriot community can be said to have taken in an oppositional position as challenger in the SAF, as the field rules, which have been shaped by those same rules of international law, have not predominantly been in its favor. From the Turkish Cypriot community’s position in the SAF it can be said to have had the lesser negotiation position and to have benefited most from a change in the status quo of the field. Turkish Cypriot politicians have perceived the logics of the SAF from their own perspective of victimhood, and “grudgingly”<sup>82</sup> conformed to the order of the field, all the whilst “awaiting new opportunities to challenge the structure and logic of the system”<sup>83</sup>.

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80 Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, Maria, and Lenos Trigeorgis. "Cyprus: An evolutionary approach to conflict resolution." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37.2 (1993): 346-347.

81 Fligstein and McAdam, *A theory of fields*, 11.

82 *Ibidem*, 13.

83 *Idem*.

Furthermore, what has complicated peace talks is that the governments of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom have had a continued influence over the Cypriot communities and the peace process, something that has been especially true for the Turkish government. While after 1974 Greek politicians have taken on a more limited role in Cyprus, and the British government has understood that its guarantor status is mostly a remnant from history, the Turkish government has remained a highly involved and dominant actor. Its stationing of over 30 000 Turkish troops on the island has granted it with a substantial degree of influence. Moreover, the TRNC has had a heavy economic and political reliance on Turkey, and the Turkish government has been the only government that has recognized the TRNC as a legitimate state.<sup>84</sup>

In many areas (including the Cyprus talks) this dependency has meant that few important decisions are made by the leaders of the TRNC without the approval of Turkish leaders. They have very often formed a united front. This has been especially true since 1998, when their governments joined in an association agreement that allowed for increased integration of their economies and militaries.<sup>85</sup> Importantly, their coalition has granted the Turkish government substantial say over Cypriot affairs and the proceedings of the peace talks. It has allowed Turkish politicians to not only safeguard Turkish Cypriot interests but also their own interests. As will be explained more elaborately in the next chapter, this cooperation can be viewed as a particular form of strategic action. McAdam and Fligstein explain that “a political coalition reflects an alliance between two or more groups in relation to other groups. Our ideal typical view of political coalitions is that they are based on cooperation. This cooperation is generally rooted in a combination of shared interests and a common collective identity”<sup>86</sup>.

Despite the intractability that has characterized the peace process, some concessions and small steps towards reunification have been made. Next to concessions by both sides on achieving a federal state solution, Greek Cypriot politicians have generally stepped away from promoting enosis.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, the two sides have engaged in CBMs which have not so much led to groundbreaking political solutions but have helped improve relations at the societal level. The most important of these being the permanent opening of the Green Line in 2003 which allowed Cypriots from both communities to travel to the other side for the first time in decades. Since then, thousands of Cypriots have crossed every day to work or visit friends and a number of

84 Campbell-Thomson, "Pride and Prejudice: The Failure of UN Peace Brokering Efforts in Cyprus.", 71.

85 Fisher, "Cyprus: The failure of mediation and the escalation of an identity-based conflict to an adversarial impasse.", 311.

86 Fligstein and McAdam, *A theory of fields*, 15.

87 Michael, "The Cyprus peace talks: A critical appraisal.", 591.

Turkish Cypriots have capitalized on their sustained rights as citizens of the RoC (e.g. using healthcare benefits and collecting child allowance). Additionally, there has been cooperation of the two Cypriot governments in areas such as water management and electricity supply for the island, developments that illustrate a degree of interdependency and how life has partially moved on despite the Cyprus problem. Importantly, it has not been exclusively about hostility and division over the past decades.<sup>88</sup>

Similarly, while easily characterized as problematic, peace talks have not solely been about conflicting positions and lack of consensus either. While in the end always without settlement there have been periods of exceptional progress, often sustained by conducive political configurations or special historical conditions. One such historic window of opportunity arose from 2002 to 2004 when secretary-general Kofi Annan pursued his plan to use EU membership as an incentive for reunification in Cyprus.<sup>89</sup> Through the promise of EU membership for a united Cyprus and aided by favorable global developments<sup>90</sup> settlement came closer than ever before. Where in 2004 the communities had drafted an agreement to be approved by Cypriot citizens through separate referenda, an historic breakthrough was widely anticipated.<sup>91</sup> At this time, the EU had begun its irreversible procedure of accepting the RoC as an EU member, expecting Cyprus to be internally unified by the time it was fully admitted.

However, where a majority of Turkish Cypriots voted in favor of Annan's settlement proposal most Greek Cypriots voted against the plan. Where Greek Cypriot President Papadopoulos had come to reject the settlement, he had motivated Greek Cypriot citizens to vote against it as well. As a result, Cyprus remained divided, but the RoC still entered into the European Union.<sup>92</sup> Along with Turkish Cypriots, the international community felt it had been manipulated by Greek Cypriot politicians. It had, however, noted commitment to a solution by the Turkish Cypriot community and international (moral) support for the latter increased substantially. Nonetheless, onwards only the Greek Cypriot side of Cyprus would enjoy EU membership and its benefits. What could have become a groundbreaking development had turned into another painful and trust breaking moment in Cypriot history.

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<sup>88</sup> Paul, "Cyprus and the Never-Ending Search for a Solution", 136, 137.

<sup>89</sup> Lindenstrauss, Gallia. "Moving Ahead in Cyprus, Looking Back at the Failure of the Annan Plan." *Strategic Assessment* 10.4 (2008): 95, 96.

<sup>90</sup> In these years at least two developments helped create highly favorable conditions for a settlement (besides the EU-membership for Cyprus). First, the relationship between Greece and Turkey was at a remarkable high in their historically difficult relationship. Second, as Turkey was an EU candidate itself and very much looked towards Europe in these years, this incentivized it to put more pressure on the TRNC leadership to solve the Cyprus problem.

<sup>91</sup> Anastasiou, Harry. "Nationalism as a deterrent to peace and interethnic democracy: the failure of nationalist leadership from the Hague talks to the Cyprus referendum." *International Studies Perspectives* 8.2 (2007): 196.

<sup>92</sup> Asmussen, Jan. "Cyprus after the Failure of the Annan-Plan." in *ECMI Brief #11* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2004): 8, 9.

### 3.2 | THE PEACE TALKS BETWEEN 2008 AND 2017: FAILURE, PROGRESS AND THEN SOME MORE FAILURE

In 2008, two years after the disastrous outcome of the Anan Plan, the Cyprus talks resumed. The subsequent ten years of peace talks would also bring raised hopes and excitement among Cypriot citizens, politicians and international actors, as well as recurring disappointment and discouraging setbacks. The difficulties in the talks of this decade have included: ideological differences between the two Cypriot presidents, inconducive political environments, and ineffective methods used for conducting negotiations. At the same time, what has allowed for occasional progress has been the preparedness of parties to return to the negotiation table, relative like-mindedness of particular Cypriot presidents, and intensive effort by the UN to mediate and facilitate the overall peace process. Additionally, an economic crisis, a six-month EU presidency of the RoC and multiple congressional and presidential elections held over the past decade are important external developments that have affected proceedings as well.

This is especially true for Cypriot elections, which have reconfigured parts of the political landscape in Cyprus at some pivotal stages in the peace talks and have often slowed down or rushed developments. The two leader-led rounds of talks held in the past decade have witnessed the inaugurations of two presidents of the RoC and three presidents of the TRNC, all of whom have had their own negotiation styles and views on the Cyprus problem and its settlement. Some years, peace talks have been more conducive to progress than in other years, in part because the two Cypriot leaders were more likeminded or had stronger support from their respective parliaments for how they handled negotiations. Additionally, the mere prospect of elections coming up has also repeatedly undermined the process.

This was also the case when Greek Cypriot president Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot president Mehmet Ali Talat faced each other in talks between 2008 and 2010. At this time, they re-affirmed their communities' commitment to establishing a 'bizonal, bicomunal federation' with political equality, a single international personality and two constituent states of equal status.<sup>93</sup> While their two years of negotiating a settlement witnessed a promising start, that was soon followed by a substantial slowing down of pace and a final phase in which looking ahead at presidential elections of the TRNC impeded progress. For Greek Cypriot politicians the idea prevailed that if President Talat was replaced by his much more hardline opponent, Dervis Eroglu, talks would have to start over completely. Therefore, they refused to weaken their future hand by making any further concessions

<sup>93</sup> United Nations, Security Council. Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus, S/2009/610 (30 November 2009) available from <http://undocs.org/S/2009/610>, 1.



in negotiations with Talat.<sup>94</sup> Going into 2010, peace talks had reached a stalemate and of the six important chapters under negotiation (namely power-sharing, EU membership, economy, property, territory and security guarantees)<sup>95</sup> only limited progress was made in the first four chapters.<sup>96</sup>

The example of the Christofias-Talat talks illustrates particularly well one way in which elections have hampered the Cyprus talks. Election days have been informally perceived as definite deadlines for ongoing peace talks, putting pressure on the overall process. This phenomenon can be attributed to the problematic methodology chosen for conducting negotiations. All Cypriot presidents in the past decade have engaged in the Cyprus talks with the understanding that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”<sup>97</sup> meaning there can never be any fixed convergences or closed chapters prior to a comprehensive solution. While this method of conducting negotiations could sound appealing, as it allows parties to renegotiate previous agreements, it has undermined progress for that same reason.

Besides adding problematic ultimatums to the talks, the method has a number of other disadvantages that have also applied to the past decade of talks. For one, convergences can never be implemented instantly, something that could otherwise stimulate advancement on other issues. Secondly, talks only seem to go well as long as there are no substantial disagreements along the way. Where there are disagreements, what has happened within Cyprus talks is that problematic chapters are postponed until the final stages of talks, thus creating bottlenecks for the future.<sup>98</sup> As is explained later in this section, this has been done consistently to the crucial chapters of territory<sup>99</sup> and security guarantees<sup>100</sup>. Thirdly and lastly, this method permits a linking together of particular chapters that increases chances of complication and can become a point of contention itself.

The disadvantages laid out in the previous paragraphs equally applied to the UN sponsored talks led by Demetris Christofias and Dervis Eroglu between 2010 and 2012. When in April 2010 Eroglu took office as newly

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94 Morelli, V. *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive*. Diane Publishing, 2018, 3-6.

95 While not all of these chapters will be discussed here, the most relevant chapters will be explained briefly in these footnotes.

96 United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus, 3.

97 Morelli, *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive* 2018, 23.

98 Tzimitras, Harry, and Mete Hatay. *The Need for Realism: Solving the Cyprus problem through linkage politics*. Center on the United States and Europe at Brookings, 2016, 5.

99 The territory chapter concerns the question of how much land goes to each constituent state in a federal Cyprus. This chapter has been sensitive as territorial adjustments can have a major impact on Cypriots living in the implicated areas. Moreover, the issue also touches upon historic grievances related to the displacement of both Greek- and Turkish Cypriots since 1974.

100 The chapter of security guarantees deals with the question of whether the Treaties of Guarantee and the Treaty of Alliance of 1960, which assigns Turkey, Greece and the UK as military guarantors of the island, should remain valid. Currently these countries are legally permitted to intervene in case of new communal violence. Especially Turkey is strongly in favor of a continued guarantor role and has been very reluctant to remove its troops from Cyprus.

elected President of the TRNC, this heralded an especially problematic era of Cyprus talks. While negotiations resumed from where they had left off, they almost immediately stalled and virtually no progress was made within their first seven months.<sup>101</sup> In fact, by July 2012, when talks got formally suspended, there had been only one short-lived moment of positive momentum with some advancement in areas relating to the economy, EU-membership and internal security, but in the end no tangible progress towards settlement.<sup>102</sup> With the arrival of Eroglu, widely known as a proponent of partition in Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot position had shifted from relatively moderate to one more maximalist. Consequently, there was much less room for compromise in a position that demanded among other things a continued role for Turkey as military guarantor of the Turkish Cypriot community.<sup>103</sup> It can be stated that Eroglu's hardline made settlement considerably less likely than in previous talks. As such, the distance between the core parties and their leaders would lead to severe problems in negotiating sensitive and complicated chapters. One example being the chapter of property<sup>104</sup>. Eroglu's refusal of linking this chapter to that of territory, something Greek Cypriot politicians plead for, became an additional point of contention.<sup>105</sup> Tellingly for the Christofias-Eroglu years, in 2011 UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon would report to the Security Council that he had:

Repeatedly pointed out to the leaders, as I did in my last report, that the United Nations expects the two sides to assume primary responsibility for driving the process forward. The Cypriot-led and Cypriot-owned process has the full support of the United Nations, but it is the two leaders who must take the necessary actions to reconcile the differences between their two communities.<sup>106</sup>

When in early 2012 the two sides reached a complete stalemate, this lack of responsibility, combined with the persistence of blame games and disappointing overall results, moved the UN to abandon its support for the Cyprus talks. At least "until there was a clear indication that both sides had something substantial to conclude"<sup>107</sup>. While this decision was important to the

101 United Nations, Security Council. Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus, S/2010/603 (24 November 2010) available from <http://undocs.org/S/2010/603>, 5, 6.

102 United Nations, Security Council. Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus, S/2011/112 (4 March 2011) available from <http://undocs.org/S/2011/112>, 2.

103 Napolitano, Luigi. *The Cyprus Peace Process Since March 2008: Short History, State of the Art and What is Next in Store*. Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2011, 7.

104 In the property chapter the central problem is how to compensate the many Cypriots who lost their properties in 1974, when they were either forced out of their house or forced to leave it because of the division of Cyprus.

105 Napolitano, *The Cyprus Peace Process Since March 2008: Short History, State of the Art and What is Next in Store*, 8.

106 United Nations, Security Council. Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus, S/2011/498 (8 August 2011) available from <http://undocs.org/S/2011/498>, 2.

107 Morelli, *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive 2018*, 8.

subsequent suspension of peace talks, there were two other reasons for that suspension as well. The first of these was that a six-month EU Presidency of the RoC was starting in July 2012. This date became a natural deadline for talks as Greek Cypriot politicians refused to let that presidency be overshadowed by the Cyprus problem. The second development was the economic crisis hitting the RoC in that same 2012. For President Christofias getting the RoC back on track financially came to receive full priority over organizing peace talks.<sup>108</sup>

That would also remain the case for the better part of 2013. Eventually the resumption of talks was even delayed until 2014, also due to Cypriot presidential elections and recurring debate between Eroglu and new president of the RoC Nikos Anastasiades over the content of the joint declaration marking new peace talks.<sup>109</sup> Nonetheless, by early 2014, agreement on how to restart negotiations was reached (aided by firm pressure from the United States)<sup>110</sup> and talks resumed. However, in this new round, negotiations were not only quickly met with more problems but they were also interrupted by a crisis over natural gas between Turkey and the TRNC on one side and the RoC on another. Where this event will be discussed in the next chapter it suffices to say that it put further pressure on an already bad relationship between them. It also caused negotiations to be put on hold until May 2015.<sup>111</sup>

Where the Cyprus talks have been explained in this chapter as an SAF, it can also be explained from the above paragraphs that this SAF has witnessed multiple periods of contention. Since the first peace talks were organized in Cyprus in the early 60's, when the SAF can be said to have emerged, there have been multiple breakdowns of, or standstills in negotiations (for different reasons), which can each be viewed as a period of contention or period of "emergent, sustained contentious interaction between ... [field] actors"<sup>112</sup>. The periods in between rounds of peace talks have always been characterized by a sense of uncertainty among parties concerning the future of the SAF. It can be said that this uncertainty has always lasted until new peace talks were organized and the particular period of contention was over.

May 2015 until July 2017 would bring the last peace talks held to date. In this period, with the TNRC's hardline president Eroglu replaced by Turkish Cypriot politician Mustafa Akinci, domestic and international hopes of a set-

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<sup>108</sup> Morelli, *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive* 2018, 8.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibidem*, 10.

<sup>110</sup> Following multiple important gas discoveries in the region the US government stepped up its diplomatic efforts in regard to the Cyprus problem. This will be discussed further in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. See also: Gürel, Ayla, and Laura Le Cornu. "Can gas catalyse peace in the Eastern Mediterranean?." *The International Spectator* 49.2 (2014): 30.

<sup>111</sup> Economic Development Foundation. *Reuniting Cyprus New Dynamics and Implications for Turkey-EU Relations*. Publications No: 282, 2016, 53-55.

<sup>112</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, *A theory of fields*, 21.

tlement became exceptionally high.<sup>113</sup> These years saw the Cyprus talks again mediated by the UN but now led by two more like-minded and moderate politicians, Anastasiades and Akinci. These two leaders not only maintained a friendly relationship with one another but were also outspoken proponents of a federal solution for Cyprus.<sup>114</sup> Throughout 2015, and most of 2016, talks would be characterized by a highly positive atmosphere and intensive cooperation with remarkable overall progress. The UN Secretary General reported in 2016 that both leaders had “consistently shown great determination and political will to pursue their common objective of reaching a comprehensive settlement as soon as possible”<sup>115</sup>. Additionally, he would praise them for allowing close involvement of the EU in preparing the implementation of its *acquis communautaire* (body of law).<sup>116</sup>

Furthermore, while in 2016 the political environments in both communities became increasingly hostile towards the presidents and their negotiation styles (with nationalist parties gaining ground in the RoC’s house of representatives and a breakdown of the Akinci-friendly government in the TRNC) peace talks continued to progress.<sup>117</sup> However, by the end of the year talks would run into insurmountable problems. Where the two sides had advanced through most of the chapters under negotiation, now came the time to address the thorny issues that had been shelved during all previous negotiations. In particular, the chapters of territory and security guarantees had consistently been pushed to the final stages. Now, as a settlement appeared on the horizon these chapters would present themselves as major obstacles.<sup>118</sup> The end of 2016 witnessed the first standstill in nineteen months as the parties struggled over the territory chapter and additionally ran into disagreement over the date of a historic five-party conference in Geneva<sup>119</sup> to finalize the Cyprus talks. What had helped complicated matters was that Turkish leaders had instructed Akinci to refrain from any concessions on the territory issue without agreement on security guarantees.<sup>120</sup>

Where the Turkish government had been relatively supportive of the Cyprus talks in prior years, in 2017 its role became gradually more problematic. In this final stage, with the guarantor states directly involved in the

113 Tzimitras et al., *The Need for Realism: Solving the Cyprus problem through linkage politics*, 9.

114 Grigoriadis, Ioannis N. "Faraway, so close: approaching the endgame in the Cyprus negotiations." (2017): 2.

115 United Nations, Security Council. Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus, S/2016/15 (30 November 2009) available from <http://undocs.org/S/2016/15>, 1.

116 Ibidem, 2.

117 Morelli, Vincent. *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive*. Diane Publishing, 2016, 14, 15.

118 Grigoriadis, Ioannis N. "Cyprus negotiations thwarted by issues on security and guarantees: how can the peace process be revived?." (2017): 1.

119 This conference would include, besides the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities, the governments of guarantor countries Turkey, Greece and the UK. They were directly included in talks to discuss their future security role and their positions on the final settlement.

120 Morelli, *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive* 2018, 17.

peace talks, Turkish leaders introduced the complicated demand that EU freedoms in a future Cyprus would also have to apply to Turkish citizens living on the island.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, they rejected Greek Cypriot territorial demands and held onto the highly problematic position that Turkey's guarantor role remain intact in the future and that Turkish troops would have to remain stationed in Cyprus. These issues of security also proved to be major sticking points of subsequent negotiations. Where Greek Cypriot politicians demanded that historic guarantees and troops be removed, Turkish- and Turkish Cypriot leaders rejected that demand arguing that the Turkish Cypriot community would feel insecure due to Cyprus' history of ethnic violence.<sup>122</sup> The Turkish government was likely also reluctant to give up most of its military influence over Cyprus for geo-political reasons.

Related clashes in negotiations and a deteriorated relationship between Akinci and Anastasiades created a detrimental atmosphere in the last meetings of 2017. The friendship of these presidents became severely damaged after the RoC's parliament approved legislation allowing for the commemoration of a 1950 enosis referendum in Cypriot public schools, and Akinci saw no immediate action from Anastasiades to oppose that legislation. In February talks even came to an eight-week standstill as Akinci demanded that the provocative legislation be repealed.<sup>123</sup> In July 2017, after a disappointing first half of 2017 in which blame games between the two Cypriot sides had regained popularity and the most crucial negotiation chapters had proven too difficult, the last round of Cyprus talks to date would come to an end.<sup>124</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This third chapter has presented a history of the peace efforts in Cyprus and provided a thorough analysis of the peace talks. It has illustrated how the most prominent parties within the Cyprus talks, or field actors within this SAF, have been the Greek Cypriot community<sup>125</sup>, the Turkish Cypriot community<sup>126</sup> and the Turkish government, and how the UN has played a crucial role in sustaining the various peace efforts in Cyprus. Additionally, the Greek government as guarantor of the Greek Cypriot community, the British government as guarantor, and the US government as influential superpower, have also taken part, albeit in a much more limited fashion.

One problem standing in the way of reunification has been that these parties have often sought to attain that goal through self-interested or maximal-

<sup>121</sup> Ibidem, 18.

<sup>122</sup> Ibidem, 30.

<sup>123</sup> Ibidem, 19, 20

<sup>124</sup> Morelli, Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive 2018, 20-23.

<sup>125</sup> Represented by the RoC since 1960.

<sup>126</sup> Represented by the government of the TRNC since 1983

ist positions. Another factor underlying the lack of success is that both communities have ultimately preferred a different scenario than a federal solution. Most Turkish Cypriots have long dreamt of their own state and many Greek Cypriots have believed that Cyprus should return to a unified state dominantly controlled by them. Nonetheless, whilst failure has been the overall theme in reunifying Cyprus, both sides have also repeatedly come close to reaching a final settlement. Under the right circumstances it seems possible for citizens and politicians from both sides of the island to step away from historical mistrust and blame games.

Looking at the past ten years of peace talks, what becomes clear is the disruptive potential of parliamentary- and presidential elections and the highly problematic nature of the method of negotiation. Where this method leaves talks open-ended, and settlement requires demanding national and regional parties to come to an agreement, what seems needed are near perfect political circumstances. These would have to be circumstances that also allow for agreement on the extremely difficult and sensitive chapters of territory and security guarantees.



## 4 THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF GAS DISCOVERY IN CYPRIOT WATERS

This fourth chapter considers the discovery of natural gas in Cyprus and the related politics involving the RoC, the government of the TRNC and the government of Turkey. As will be discussed here, promising discoveries off the coast of Cyprus have opened up major opportunities for Cypriots, while also heightening tensions between the Turkish/Turkish Cypriot side and the Greek Cypriot side. What is also discussed in this chapter is what efforts have been made towards the exploration and exploitation of natural gas in Cypriot- and Mediterranean waters. Accordingly, the first section focuses on gas discoveries in Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean and views their political and economic implications. The second section views how different disputes have arisen over Cypriot gas, primarily between the aforementioned parties. It is explained how these parties can be viewed as situated in another SAF. The final section explains their important strategic actions and the military and political confrontations between them in the period from 2011 until mid-2017.

### 4.1 | GAS DISCOVERIES IN CYPRIOT- AND MEDITERRANEAN WATERS

In 2003 a significant discovery of natural gas off-shore Egypt made in Egypt's North East Mediterranean concession block called NEMED caught the serious interest of other countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, including Cyprus, Turkey, Greece, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel. Subsequently, awareness of the presence of natural gas under the Mediterranean seabed led these states to their own exploratory activities.<sup>127</sup> Over the past fifteen years this has resulted in several other major gas finds in the region, of which the first were the Leviathan and Tamar gas fields, discovered in Israeli waters in 2010.<sup>128</sup> It was estimated in that same year that the Levant Basin Province, a long marine stretch overlapping the maritime areas of the levant states, potentially held up to 122 trillion cubic feet of gas.<sup>129</sup> While that amount is modest on a global scale (for instance it accounts for around eight

127 Gürel, Ayla, Fiona Mullen, and Harry Tzimitras. The Cyprus hydrocarbons issue: Context, positions and future scenarios. Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2013, 1.

128 Gürel, Ayla, and Laura Le Cornu. "Can gas catalyse peace in the Eastern Mediterranean?" The International Spectator 49.2 (2014): 19.

129 Gürel, Ayla, and Laura Le Cornu. "Turkey and Eastern Mediterranean Hydrocarbons." (2013): 4.



percent of Russia's total gas reserves) these prospects have been met with widespread excitement.<sup>130</sup> Not only could such quantities cover the rapidly increasing energy needs of the Eastern Mediterranean they also allow for substantial new revenue streams flowing into the region.<sup>131</sup>

However, while there have been multiple discoveries of gas fields in Mediterranean waters, the only proven<sup>132</sup> gas reserves in 2018 are those of Israel and Syria. What is of note here, is that discovering gas fields does not equate with also being able to recover gas or immediately profit from it. Nonetheless, considering the different estimates and what has already been recovered in the past years it can be asserted that natural gas will likely have a big impact on the future economic situation of the Eastern Mediterranean region. That is however, if existing regional conflicts do not undermine necessary cooperation in this area, something that has certainly happened in the past.<sup>133</sup>

In Cyprus, the RoC undertook the first steps towards gas exploration at the start of the twenty-first century. Up until 2010, different maritime delimitation agreements were signed with the governments of Egypt, Lebanon and Israel which resulted in the demarcation of a 51 square kilometer stretch of sea where contracted gas companies could explore for natural gas.<sup>134</sup> This so-called Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)<sup>135</sup>, located in the waters south of Cyprus, was then divided into thirteen licensing blocks to be offered to companies during multiple international tenders. The first of those were organized in 2007 when interest in possible Cypriot gas reserves was low and US-based Noble Energy was the only company bidding on and receiving a license for exploration.<sup>136</sup> Contrastingly, during the RoC's second international tender in 2012 the turn-out was a more notable fifteen bidders, all of whom had legitimate interests in attaining licenses. What had changed was that in 2011 Noble Energy had made a highly promising discovery in Aphrodite, a gas field located in Block 12 of the RoC's EEZ.<sup>137</sup> Naturally, this discovery had also sparked major enthusiasm among Cypriots themselves. Where first estimates spoke of billions of US dollars in revenue from Aphrodite alone, domestic expectations for Cyprus' financial future

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130 Ibidem, 4.

131 Kaynak, Akif Bahadır. "The Outlook for Peace in Cyprus after the Financial Crisis and Gas Discoveries." *Journal of Cyprus Studies* 19.43 (2017): 7.

132 A gas reserve is 'proven' when it is probable that about 90 % of its gas can be recovered whilst also remaining financially profitable.

133 Ellinas, Charles. "Hydrocarbon Developments in the Eastern Mediterranean." Washington DC: Atlantic Council (2016): 1.

134 Gürel et al., "Turkey and Eastern Mediterranean Hydrocarbons.", 7.

135 The EEZ is a maritime area in which, as prescribed by the United Nations Law of the Sea, a state has the right to recover marine resources, including natural gas or oil. See also: article 55 of UNCLOS, [http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/part5.htm](http://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/part5.htm).

136 Gürel et al., The Cyprus hydrocarbons issue: Context, positions and future scenario, 3.

137 Giamouridis, Anastasios. "The Offshore Discovery in the Republic of Cyprus-Monetisation Prospects and Challenges." *Oil, Gas & Energy Law Journal (OGEL)* 11.3 (2013): 19.

peaked. This would hold especially true for Greek Cypriot citizens and politicians, who in 2012 came to view gas profit as a means to avert the difficult financial crisis of the RoC.<sup>138</sup> However, intense optimism would gradually be tempered by numerous setbacks occurring between 2013 and 2016. Not only were estimates for Aphrodite revised downwards in 2013, the subsequent two years would also see gas companies TOTAL and ENI get bad results in exploring for gas. For that reason, these companies withdrew from earlier commitments, causing exploratory activity in the EEZ to come to a standstill by 2016.<sup>139</sup> For many Cypriots, these unfortunate developments replaced earlier over-optimism about gas with a more grounded and realistic outlook.

Hopes remained high however, and recent years brought a rekindled interest in Cyprus from the side of international actors and gas companies. Where in 2015 major new discoveries were made in the Egyptian waters neighboring the Cypriot EEZ that came to be viewed as promising for more finds around Cyprus. Subsequently, more exploration in Cypriot waters took place and in February of 2018 the second promising discovery was confirmed. The discovery of a gas field called Calypso added another 6 to 8 trillion cubic feet of gas to the 3 to 6 tcb that was already estimated to lie within Aphrodite. This also added considerable value to Cyprus as a regional energy player.<sup>140</sup>

Nonetheless, at the time of writing no natural gas has yet been recovered or monetized. For the RoC the past decades have primarily been about exploratory drilling, demarcation of maritime boundaries and aligning energy interests with those of other regional actors. Those activities have been met with serious obstacles, some of which can be said to cast a large shadow over hopes that Cyprus will profit from its gas reserves in the near future.

#### 4.2 | HOW NATURAL GAS BECAME SUBJECT OF DISPUTE(S)

Since 2003 two new disputes and a rivalry have come into existence that can be viewed as the key political developments following from gas exploration in Cyprus. These are also relevant to and largely determined by the Cyprus problem. The first of these disputes is between the RoC and the government of the TRNC over the ownership of Cypriot gas and the rights of its exploration. Importantly, the Turkish government has played a crucial role here as well. The second dispute is between the RoC and the Turkish gov-

138 International Crisis Group (ICG). "Aphrodite's Gift: Can Cypriot Gas Power a New Dialogue?." (2012): 3.

139 Tsakiris, Theodoros. "Cyprus's Natural Gas Strategy: Geopolitical and Economic Preconditions." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 28.1 (2017): 36.

140 Kamblas, Michelle. "Eni/Total find natgas off Cyprus in field close to Zohr." *Reuters*, 8 February 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cyprus-natgas/eni-to-tal-find-natgas-off-cyprus-in-field-close-to-zohr-idUSKBN1FS1G3>. Accessed 19 December 2018.

ernment over the limits of maritime boundaries, as part of what the RoC has demarcated as its EEZ is located in what the former claims to be its so-called continental shelf. Thirdly, the RoC and the Turkish government have rivaled over becoming an energy hub for the Mediterranean region. The fundamentals of these distinct yet interwoven clashes around natural gas will be explained one by one below. The related military confrontations and strategic actions are discussed in the last section.

The fundamental problem informing the first-mentioned dispute is that politicians in the RoC and the TRNC have contrasting views on who holds the legal rights over Cyprus's natural resources. This debate is inextricably linked to the Cyprus problem as it stems from that crucial question concerning the sovereign ownership over Cyprus. Where the actions towards gas exploration by the RoC have excluded the TRNC, and Greek Cypriot politicians have refused to discuss cooperation or the sharing of future revenue with their Turkish Cypriot counterparts, that has led to a dispute.<sup>141</sup> Turkish Cypriot politicians claim that Greek Cypriots have no right to exclude them from the decision-making on natural gas as the Turkish Cypriot community legally shares in these resources through the 1960 constitution and its prescription of equal sovereignty for both Cypriot communities.<sup>142</sup> This position is also fully supported by the Turkish government. Moreover, Turkish Cypriot politicians argue that since the breakdown of formal power-sharing structures in 1963 there has been no suitable government in place to legitimately (and in accordance with the 1960 constitution) represent both the Greek Cypriot community and the Turkish Cypriot community. As such, they argue that no gas exploration should be initiated as long as the Cyprus problem remains unresolved and there is no new government in place.<sup>143</sup> They have proposed that otherwise there should exist a joint committee that can manage natural gas on account of both the RoC and the TRNC. Importantly, the issue here is less about financial gains and more about the Turkish Cypriot community not being recognized as co-owner of Cypriot gas reserves (and of Cyprus for that matter).<sup>144</sup>

Greek Cypriot politicians view matters differently. Through what is called the doctrine of necessity<sup>145</sup> and the illegality within international law of the

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141 Kaymak, E. "Wealth Sharing and Geopolitical Strategies: Excluding Hydrocarbons from the Cyprus Negotiations, w: Cyprus Offshore Hydrocarbons: Regional Politics and Wealth Distribution, pod red." H. Faustmann, A. Gürel, GM Reicheberga, PCC Report 1 (2012): 21.

142 Gürel et al., The Cyprus hydrocarbons issue: Context, positions and future scenarios, 44, 45.

143 Gürel, Ayla, Harry Tzimitras, and Hubert Faustmann. "East Mediterranean Hydrocarbons: Geopolitical Perspectives, Markets and Regional Cooperation." PCC Reports (2014): 8-10.

144 Ibidem, 9.

145 The doctrine of necessity is a provision that is often invoked in law in instances of national emergency and that since 1964 has justified and allowed for the continued functioning of the government of the Republic of Cyprus without the participation of the Turkish Cypriot community.

1983 creation of the TRNC, the RoC is internationally recognized as the only legitimate government of Cyprus. This fact has also informed the argument that it has every right to explore and drill for gas without the involvement of the government of the TRNC. As explained by the Greek Cypriot Minister of Foreign Affairs, Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, in 2012:

The decisions and actions of the Republic of Cyprus to explore and exploit its natural resources within its EEZ fall squarely within its sovereign rights, which are in full conformity with international law, as these are recognized by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, of which Cyprus is a state party.<sup>146</sup>

While Greek Cypriot politicians have repeatedly stated that they will eventually share the gas wealth, a notion that most Turkish Cypriots have never believed, they also reject the idea that prior to settlement Turkish Cypriot politicians have any say over what happens to Cypriot gas. This is also why Greek Cypriots politicians have refused to discuss in any way<sup>147</sup> the subject or include it as a chapter in the Cyprus talks. Additionally, they have ignored all Turkish- and Turkish Cypriot demands to stop drilling or to set up a joint committee.<sup>148</sup> As proposed by Turkish Cypriot president Eroglu in 2011 such a committee would have to “seek approval and demand written consent on treaties and licenses from authorities on both sides of the island”<sup>149</sup>. It would also have to warrant agreement “on how to share distribution areas (utilization of ) of the wealth”<sup>150</sup>. To the frustration of Turkish Cypriot- and Turkish politicians, the international community has stood behind the Greek Cypriot position. As the International community recognizes the RoC as the only government of Cyprus, it naturally also considers its actions towards gas exploration as in accordance with international law. Nonetheless, the Security Council has made clear that it expects eventual revenue from gas to benefit both communities of Cyprus equally.<sup>151</sup>

A second important dispute relating to the natural gas in Cypriot waters is primarily between the Turkish government and the RoC. While Turkish politicians already condemn the RoC’s efforts towards gas exploration for the reasons explained above, they also contend that the demarcation of the latter’s EEZ vio-

146 Address by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis, on ‘New Challenges and Prospects in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Cyprus Perspective’, at the Paasikivi Society think tank, Helsinki, 10 May 2012, <http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2016.nsf/All/89EAC3A50A9B98C5C2257FAA0030DDA3?OpenDocument&print>. Accessed 2 December 2018.

147 One exception to this was the offer that Anastasiades made in 2015 that hydrocarbons could be discussed at the final phase of the Cyprus talks. This offer was quickly withdrawn as tensions over gas rose and Greek Cypriot politicians firmly protested the offer made by Anastasiades. See also: “Turkey issues new Navtex”, Cyprus Mail, 8 January 2015, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2015/01/08/turkey-issues-new-navtex/>. Accessed 8 December 2018.

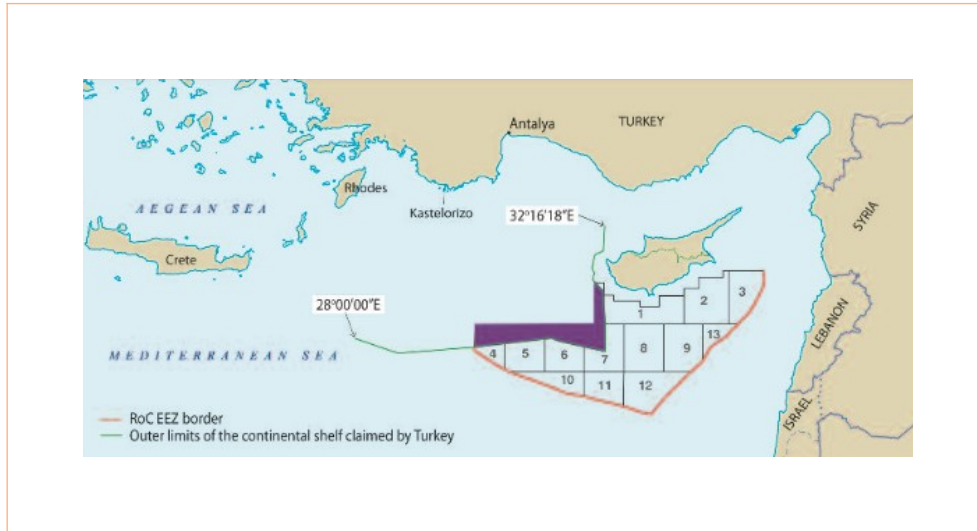
148 Gürel et al., “Can gas catalyse peace in the Eastern Mediterranean?”, 18.

149 Gürel et al., The Cyprus hydrocarbons issue: Context, positions and future scenarios, 46.

150 Idem.

151 Ibidem, 60.

lates Turkish sovereignty. Namely because parts of that EEZ are located in what the Turkish government has claimed as its continental shelf. These are the concession blocks located in the west of the EEZ alongside a maritime boundary that was demarcated by the government of Egypt and the RoC in 2003.<sup>152</sup> The map below (figure 1) shows how parts of concession blocks 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 overlap with what the Turkish government claims as its continental shelf.



**FIGURE 1.** MAP SHOWING OVERLAPPING CLAIMS BETWEEN THE ROC'S EEZ AND TURKEY'S PROCLAIMED CONTINENTAL SHELF.

Disagreements over maritime boundaries have characterized the Eastern Mediterranean's current era of gas exploration. For the Turkish government and the RoC in particular, there is conflictual interpretation of the charters of the Law of the Sea that prescribe maritime demarcation. While the specifics of their legal debate will not be discussed thoroughly, some things can still be mentioned here. For one, Turkish leaders have argued that an island, like Cyprus, should be limited in its legal capacity to demarcate maritime zones when there is competition over natural resources between that island and a coastal state, such as Turkey.<sup>153</sup> This position has been rejected by Greek Cypriot politicians who have argued that since the Turkish government did not object to the RoC submitting its laws and coordinates for demarcation to the UN (in 1974 and 1993) it has tacitly acknowledged that the RoC holds rights over the disputed area. Additionally, over the past decades both sides have repeatedly objected to the other's explanation through the UN.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Gürel et al., "East Mediterranean Hydrocarbons: Geopolitical Perspectives, Markets and Regional Cooperation.", 10-12.

<sup>153</sup> Gürel et al., The Cyprus hydrocarbons issue: Context, positions and future scenarios, 26.

<sup>154</sup> Ibidem, 29.

Furthermore, what will be discussed here as a third important development related to gas in Cyprus is the rivalry between the RoC and the Turkish government over becoming an energy hub for the region. Gas discoveries in Cyprus, but also the island's geographic location, have made it interesting to the governments of neighboring countries, especially those of Israel and Egypt who have sought commercially viable export routes for their own natural gas. What these governments have investigated over the past decade is how gas from their countries' reserves can be transported through Cyprus, onwards to bigger markets such as those of Europe. The EU has maintained a wish of diversifying its gas sources away from the Russian supply on which it is currently highly dependent.<sup>155</sup>

Nonetheless, there have been other conceivable plans for the export of Eastern Mediterranean gas to Europe, and the RoC has engaged in intensive diplomatic efforts to try and position itself as a key player in those plans. Those efforts have once again positioned Greek Cypriot politicians against Turkish politicians, as they have helped direct lucrative plans for gas exportation away from Turkey.<sup>156</sup> Where Turkey's geographic location and its demanding energy market<sup>157</sup> make it the logical corridor for export of East Med gas to the EU, which could also transform the country into an international energy hub, that opportunity has been threatened by the RoC's ambitions.<sup>158</sup> Strikingly, while the most ideal pipeline network for export from Israel and Egypt is one that connects Cyprus and Turkey, the bad diplomatic relations between the RoC and Turkish leaders have so far prevented such a route from materializing. Greek Cypriots politicians have rejected the idea of even the slightest energy dependency on the Turkish government and have only seemed to consider regional energy cooperation that excludes the latter.<sup>159</sup> Additionally, the RoC has also obstructed the Turkish government in its ambition of laying pipelines between Israel and Turkey. Where those pipelines are to run through Cypriot waters that would require legal permission from the RoC, something Greek Cypriots politicians have declined to give.<sup>160</sup>

While one could speak of a rivalry here rather than a dispute, the matter has still added notable tension to the diplomatic relations between the TRNC and Turkey and the RoC. What applies to this rivalry, as well as to the disputes discussed earlier, is that if their governments were to step over their

155 Kaynak, "The Outlook for Peace in Cyprus after the Financial Crisis and Gas Discoveries.", 4.

156 Kontos, Michalēs, Jonathan Warner and David W. Lovell, eds. *Contemporary Social and Political Aspects of the Cyprus Problem*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016, 9.

157 Turkey itself offers one of the biggest markets for natural gas in the region. Its government currently has to import over 98 % of its total gas demand. While it is looking to take part in plans for the export of natural gas, it is also looking to satisfy its own energy needs. Moreover, the Turkish government has been looking to diversify its energy sources to limit its dependency on Russia. See: Gürel et al., "Can gas catalyse peace in the Eastern Mediterranean?.", 14.

158 Ellinas, Charles, "Hydrocarbon Developments in the Eastern Mediterranean.", 8.

159 Gürel et al., "Can gas catalyse peace in the Eastern Mediterranean?.", 27.

160 Ibidem, 26.

fundamental political differences that would reward them with major political and economical benefits. A pipeline between Cyprus and Turkey would not only be the cheapest and fastest method of shipping gas to Europe, such cooperation could also constitute the trust-building that is needed to solve the Cyprus problem.<sup>161</sup>

What has been shown above is that these sides compete in different ways, over control of the natural gas that is located in Cypriot waters. The governments of the TRNC, Turkey and the RoC can be viewed as the prominent field actors in another SAF, one that emerged when Cypriot gas became of political interest to them. Control over natural gas and the material and status rewards that come from the exploration and commercialization of that gas can be explained as what is at stake between these parties. Not only is there a shared and clear understanding of this purpose of the SAF, the field rules governing what is deemed legitimate action also seem to be known by each field actor (as the next section will illustrate). These rules are again largely determined and shaped by the rules of international law, as breaching international law may come with serious political repercussions.

Moreover, there can be said to be different degrees of power when it comes to who has control over gas and its commercialization. In that respect, the RoC could be regarded as occupying an incumbent position in the SAF. Where its actions are supported by the international community and recognized by international law, the RoC sees many of its interests reflected in what happens within the SAF. Because of that international support it has felt confident in its unilateral gas operations, and governments of regional countries and gas companies have approached the RoC for energy cooperation. At the same time, the governments of the TRNC and Turkey can be viewed as challengers as they are not supported in their positions in similar manner, and they have less control over the operation of this particular SAF. Where these actors firmly oppose the status quo of the SAF they can very “easily articulate an alternative vision of the field and their position in it”<sup>162</sup>. Especially the government of Turkey has engaged in innovative forms of strategic action to try and alter that disadvantageous status quo.

#### 4.3 | STRATEGIC ACTION AND GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY: HOW NATURAL GAS LED TO POLITICAL- AND MILITARY CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN 2011 AND 2017

The politics of Cypriot gas has in many ways fallen victim to the decade-old Cyprus problem, particularly to the historically bad relations between the Turkish/Turkish Cypriot side and the Greek Cypriot side. While the dis-

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<sup>161</sup> Ibidem, 26, 27.

<sup>162</sup> Fligstein and McAdam, A theory of fields, 13.



putes discussed in the previous section did exist earlier, they intensified considerably from 2011 onwards. This was the year that Noble energy began its first exploratory drilling on behalf of the RoC and the Aphrodite gas field was discovered in Cypriot waters. After that discovery gas truly became an economically and politically relevant issue, which also made the surrounding SAF relevant. As such, the stakes were raised in all related disputes. The discovery also led to inclusion of the RoC in regional energy plans, which allowed for its competition with the Turkish government over becoming an international energy hub.

When tensions over Cypriot gas heightened around 2011 that also meant a change in the foreign policies of the governments of the TRNC, Turkey and the RoC. Those tensions would even lead to multiple moments of crisis in the subsequent seven years. One especial source of escalation would be the dispute between the governments of the TRNC and the RoC over gas ownership and rights of exploration. Where the RoC ignored Turkish Cypriot pleas for energy cooperation, the Turkish government stepped up as protector of Turkish Cypriot interests. Where prior to 2011 the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot side had mainly challenged the RoC's gas-related activities by registering objections through the UN, that peaceful tactic changed from 2011 onwards.<sup>163</sup> Turkish officials became much more aggressive in their rhetoric and even began warning of military confrontation if the RoC allowed for drilling in the parts of their EEZ that the Turkish government had also claimed. When Noble-Energy prepared its first exploratory drilling in September of 2011 one Turkish high official stated that:

Doing this in waters where they have no jurisdiction is illegal. Turkey will rely on international law to pursue its rights to the fullest extent. This is what we have the navy for. We have trained our marines for this; we have equipped the navy for this. All options are on the table; anything can be done.<sup>164</sup>

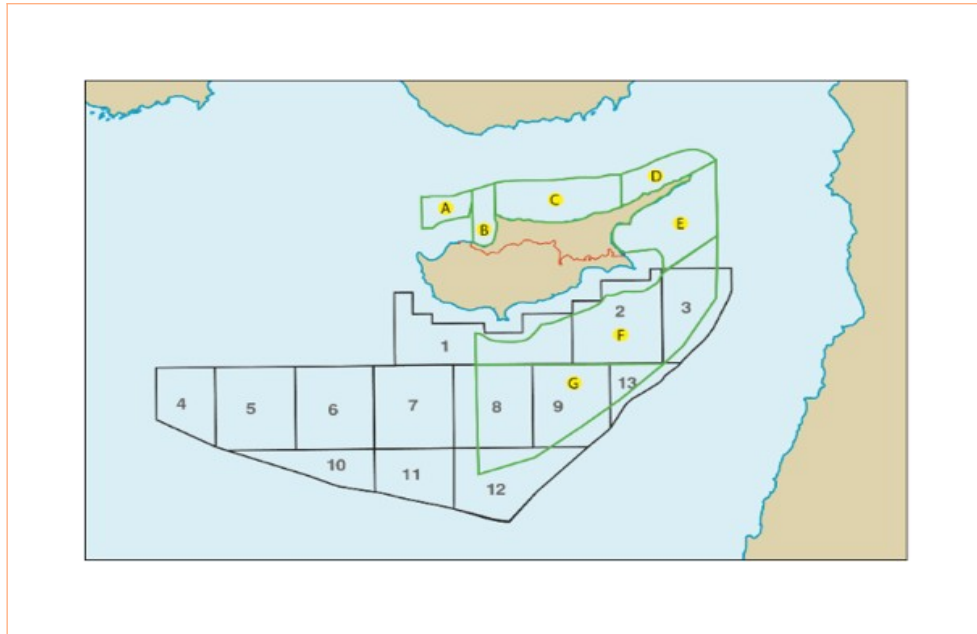
Around this time, the Turkish government and the government of the TRNC also signed a so-called continental shelf delineation agreement. With that agreement they demarcated a maritime area around Cyprus, where they reserved rights to explore for gas. This move turned out to be especially problematic as the demarcated area overlapped with the RoC's EEZ (see figure 2).<sup>165</sup>

163 Ozgur, Hayriye Kahveci. "Eastern Mediterranean Hydrocarbons: Regional Potential, Challenges Ahead, and the 'Hydrocarbon-ization' of the Cyprus Problem." *Perceptions* 22.2-3 (2017): 40-42.

164 Yanatma, S., "Turkish minister warns Greek Cypriots about oil exploration in Mediterranean." *Sunday's Zaman*, 4 September 2011. Available at <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-255674-turkish-minister-warns-greek-cypriots-about-oil-exploration-in-mediterranean.html>. Accessed 9 November 2018.

165 Economic Development Foundation, *Reuniting Cyprus New Dynamics and Implications for Turkey-EU Relations*, 20.





**FIGURE 2.** A MAP SHOWING THE TRNC'S AND TURKEY'S LICENSING BLOCKS (A-G) OVERLAP WITH THE RoC'S LICENSING BLOCK (1-13).

Nonetheless, it enabled the governments of Turkey and the TRNC to reciprocate the RoC's actions in a tit-for-tat fashion. Over the next years, they would issue their own exploration licenses and threaten to drill whenever the RoC did.<sup>166</sup> These inherently strategic actions were about gaining control and challenging the structure and logics of this SAF surrounding Cypriot gas.

In September 2011 the new reciprocal strategy had led to a first instance of early military crisis. When Noble Energy ventured out for its first exploration on behalf of the RoC, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan warned that Turkey would send its own research vessel, which would be escorted by assault boats and military frigates. Subsequently, uncertainty in the RoC broke out over whether an intervention by the Turkish military was imminent. While this would eventually prove not to be the case, the presence of Turkish warships and Turkish military exercises, had done little to alleviate those fears.<sup>167</sup>

Over the next three years, the Turkish government would also refrain from military intervention but would pair a strategy of reciprocity and shows of military strength with demands that the RoC cooperate on gas with the government of the TRNC, demands that were repeatedly rejected.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, the Turkish government also warned that countries would damage

<sup>166</sup> Faustmann, Hubert, Ayla Gürel, and G. M. Rechberg. "Cyprus Offshore Hydrocarbons: Regional Politics and Wealth Distribution." Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre (2012): 25.

<sup>167</sup> Gürel et al., "The Cyprus hydrocarbons issue: Context, positions and future scenario," 67, 68.

<sup>168</sup> Kahveci, "Eastern Mediterranean Hydrocarbons: Regional Potential, Challenges Ahead, and the 'Hydrocarbon-ization' of the Cyprus Problem.", 40, 41.

their diplomatic relationship with Turkey if they collaborated with the RoC. Additionally, international oil and gas companies were told that if they worked with the latter, they would be excluded from Turkish energy plans in the future.<sup>169</sup> In these years the RoC increased its defense cooperation with the governments of Israel and Italy, largely in response to Turkish threats and Turkish military policies in the region. It also established increased cooperation on natural gas with the governments of Egypt, Israel and Greece.<sup>170</sup>

McAdam and Fligstein explain that SAFs are generally structured around competition, coercion or cooperation, but that often elements of all three forms of interaction are visible in the SAF. In this case, coercion and competition best describe the nature of the strategic actions of the aforementioned parties.<sup>171</sup> As shown in the previous paragraph, these important field actors have also used political alliances as one form of strategic action. McAdam and Fligstein write that “strategic actors use cooperative coalitions and enforced hierarchies as alternative means to organize fields. They can form coalitions with some groups in a strategic action field to build a larger group and then use that larger group to coerce or compete with other groups”<sup>172</sup>. Where, through their alliance, the governments of Turkey and the TRNC can be said to have improved their position in the SAF, the RoC has fortified its incumbent position by signing agreements on defense- and energy cooperation with regional countries.

The RoC’s increasing defense- and energy cooperation helped motivate the strategic actions by the Turkish government in 2014. Where the governments of the TRNC and Turkey had been unsuccessful in moving the RoC to stop its unilateral exploration, the Turkish government began resorting to more drastic measures. In February 2014 the Turkish navy expelled a Norwegian exploration vessel contracted by TOTAL which planned to conduct research in block nine of the RoC’s EEZ.<sup>173</sup> Later, in September 2014, a Turkish seismic exploration vessel moved into that same EEZ and send out a so-called Navigational Telex (Navtex). What was communicated was that seismic operations would be conducted on behalf of Turkey until April 2015, unless Turkish Cypriots were granted a better standing in the Cyprus talks and gas sharing was discussed at the negotiation table.<sup>174</sup> These demands were rejected and Greek Cypriot politicians condemned Turkish actions as an un-

169 Gürel et al., *The Cyprus hydrocarbons issue: Context, positions and future scenario*, 72, 73.

170 Grishin, Yakov Ya, and Aydar Sh Mullayanov. “European Union and Gas Factor in the Cyprus Issue.” *Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication* 6 (2016): 2267.

171 Fligstein and McAdam, *A theory of fields*, 14.

172 Ibidem, 15.

173 “Turkish Frigate Harasses Research Vessel in EEZ.” *Cyprus Mail*, 3 February 2014, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2014/02/03/turkish-frigate-harasses-research-vessel-in-eez/>. Accessed 15 December 2018.

174 Grishin et al, “European Union and Gas Factor in the Cyprus Issue.”, 2267.

acceptable intrusion of territorial sovereignty. President Anastasiades immediately pulled out of the Cyprus talks and talks would be suspended until the end of Turkish seismic operations in 2015.<sup>175</sup> This Navtex crisis as it came to be known (and especially its effect on the Cyprus talks) is elaborated in the final chapter.

These moments of early military crisis can be explained as periods of contention within the SAF. In instances where strategic actions by the Turkish government have been especially threatening and have broken the rules of international law they can be explained as “new and innovative forms of action”<sup>176</sup> that introduced a deep sense of uncertainty among all other field actors about the structure and logics of the SAF. As McAdam and Fligstein contend: “in the case of fields already characterized by well-established incumbents and challengers, the mobilization of both groups can take on extraordinary intensity”<sup>177</sup>.

Between 2015 and 2017 the leaders of the RoC remained relatively unfazed in their energy plans and even issued additional licenses for gas exploration to international gas companies. Although by now there was certainly increased awareness of the escalatory potential of such activities. At the same time, the Turkish government would refrain from strategic actions such as during the Navtex crisis but would still send out threats, and together with Turkish Cypriot politicians would consistently remind the RoC of their fundamental disapproval.<sup>178</sup> Nonetheless, in 2017, the Turkish energy minister announced that Turkey would be seriously stepping up its drilling and exploration in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>179</sup> This was largely a response to the RoC’s intensified exploration and to its licensing of block six, one of the concession blocks which the Turkish government claimed belonged to Turkey’s continental shelf. The announcement was also informed by the promising outlooks on particular gas fields at this time and the materializing of a viable energy plan for East Med gas to Europe between the RoC and the governments of Israel and Greece. Israeli president Netanyahu stated in 2017 that the East-Med pipeline that these countries intended to realize “would be a revolution”<sup>180</sup>.

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175 Morelli, *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive* 2018, 12, 13.

176 Fligstein and McAdam, *A theory of fields*, 21.

177 *Idem*.

178 See for example: Dolan, David. “Turkey warns Greek Cypriots, oil companies against offshore energy grab.” *Reuters*, 10 July 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cyprus-conflict-turkey/turkey-warns-greek-cypriots-oil-companies-against-offshore-energy-grab-idUSKBN19V0WL>. Accessed 20 December 2018.

179 “Block 11 looks extremely promising, gas expert says.” *Cyprus Mail*, 9 March 2017, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2017/03/09/block-11-looks-extremely-promising-gas-expert-says/>. Accessed 20 December 2018.

180 Tagaris Karolina, “Greece, Israel, Cyprus to speed up Mediterranean pipeline efforts.” *Reuters*, 15 June 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-greece-israel-natgas/greece-israel-cyprus-to-speed-up-mediterranean-pipeline-efforts-idUSKBN1962XK>. Accessed 22 December 2018.

| **CONCLUSION**

This fourth chapter has discussed the subject of Cypriot gas and explained the related politics. While Cyprus may profit tremendously from its gas reserves in the future and could become a key energy player in the Eastern Mediterranean, those prospects are seriously overshadowed by difficult political realities. The Cyprus problem has shaped the relationship between the important sides as one that is highly competitive and antagonistic in nature. This has also led the issue of natural gas to become another point of contention between them. As problems arise over sharing an island, similar problems seem to arise over sharing its valuable natural resources. Where energy cooperation would lead to major benefits for the RoC and the governments of the TRNC and Turkey, the issue of natural gas has so far only seemed to exacerbate their historic tensions. These parties interact within an SAF that is not structured around efficient cooperation, but rather around firm competition and coercion, which leaves no room for collective profits.



## 5 HOW THE POLITICS OF CYPRIOT GAS IMPACTED THE CYPRUS TALKS

Late 2011 was when natural gas in Cyprus became of great interest to the RoC, the government of the TRNC and the Turkish government, and their related interactions became more competitive and antagonistic. For these parties, the period between 2011 and mid-2017 involved political tensions and instances of early military crisis. So how has this politics of gas impacted the Cyprus talks in these years? In this chapter, final answers are provided to the research question, which is aided by McAdam and Fligstein's theoretical ideas on the embeddedness of SAFs. The first section briefly presents some of the linkages that can be said to have contributed positively to the conduct of peace talks. The second section explains in what ways gas has played a more negative role in peace talks. The third section explains how Cypriot gas has been used by parties as one particular means of controlling what happens in peace talks.

### 5.1 | NATURAL GAS AS AN INCENTIVE FOR SOLVING THE CYPRUS PROBLEM

Chapters three and four have illustrated how the politics of gas and the Cyprus talks can be understood as distinct SAFs. However, the theoretical notion that has guided this research and underlies this final chapter, is that these particular SAFs are both embedded in a broader field environment and that, most importantly, they are related to one another in an interdependent manner. While the focus of this research is primarily on one part of their relationship, there is a mutual influence going on between these distinguished fields.

It has been discussed earlier how the exploitation of the natural gas in Cyprus could incentivize peaceful relations between the TRNC and Turkey and the RoC. If these parties were to cooperate on natural gas that would open up a range of opportunities that could be in their serious economic and political interest. A friendly political environment for gas exploration would attract new investors and allow for better deals to be made with international oil and gas companies. Natural gas in Cypriot waters would be ex-

plored, transported and monetized much faster and more efficiently, maximizing financial gains for all those involved. Financial gains that could then be spent on improving the economies of both the RoC and the TRNC, which have been struggling over the past years. Cooperation would also allow Turkey and Cyprus to *both* secure a favorable position within regional energy plans. Together these countries could constitute a highly efficient energy transport link for Eastern Mediterranean gas to Europe. Most importantly, energy cooperation would become a trust-building exercise between their governments that could help solve the Cyprus problem.<sup>181</sup>

Unfortunately, and as the previous chapter has shown, the past decade has not seen any such cooperation. The same competitive and antagonistic relational dynamics that have defined the Cyprus problem have also characterized the politics of gas, something that has blinded actors for the political and financial benefits that would come from unified efforts. In light of this fact, it is perhaps unsurprising that the discovery of natural gas has not been a blessing for peace talks either. It can be said that sides have grown further apart over natural gas rather than closer and that the related disputes have even returned a military component to their interactions.

Yet, it could be imagined how a desire for the rewards from energy cooperation still incentivized parties to come to a settlement sooner. This is what many Cypriots hoped would happen when gas was discovered in Cyprus in 2011. Solving the Cyprus problem would by definition allow for cooperation and therefore enable those political and financial rewards. In fact, similar considerations have seemed to have played a role in the recontinuation of peace talks in 2014, when after an 18-month impasse talks were resumed between Cypriot presidents Anastasiades and Eroglu. It is highly conceivable that at this time Greek Cypriot politicians felt such a pressure from the decline of worldwide gas prices<sup>182</sup> and the financial crisis of their RoC that they were more willing to negotiate a possibly game-changing Cyprus solution. At the same time Turkish- and Turkish Cypriot politicians would have likely been more inclined to engage in new negotiations, having taken notice of increased energy cooperation between regional countries and the RoC and successful gas exploration by the latter.<sup>183</sup>

However, the more evident reason for those renewed negotiations in 2014 was that successful exploration in Cypriot waters had also been observed by a United States government, which began persuading parties in Cyprus to restart the peace talks.<sup>184</sup> It is noted here that these diplomatic ef-

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181 Gürel et al., "Can gas catalyse peace in the Eastern Mediterranean?," 26, 27.

182 Tsai, Kristen, and Jason Upchurch. "Natural gas prices in 2016 were the lowest in nearly 20 years.", U.S. Energy Information Administration, 13 January 2017, <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=29552>. Accessed 15 February 2019.

183 Grishin and Mullanov, "European Union and Gas Factor in the Cyprus Issue.", 2267.

184 Senay and Ekinçi, "The Last Chance for a United Cyprus: Negotiations for a Federal Solution.", 22.

forts by the US were induced by its own energy related motives, among which an economic interest in Cypriot gas reserves and a wish to free the EU from gas dependence on Russia.<sup>185</sup> When talks resumed in February of 2014 Cypriot leaders would acknowledge the pivotal role the US had come to play in making that happen, presumably through firm diplomatic pressure.<sup>186</sup>

What it is not concluded from this section is that potential rewards from gas have ever been considered crucial enough by parties for them to take in softer positions within negotiations themselves. On the contrary, more convincing evidence was found which indicates that in the past decade negotiation positions have hardened and that the gas-related disputes have affected the progression of the Cyprus talks in a seriously negative manner.

## 5.2 | NATURAL GAS AS A SPOILER IN THE CYPRUS TALKS

*"The source of many of the opportunities and challenges a given field faces stems from its relations with this broader environment."*<sup>187</sup>

It can be said that, from the onset, what happened politically around Cypriot gas has worsened parties' mutual trust at the negotiation table and reduced their faith in the success of negotiations. In 2010, when the RoC unilaterally delineated the boundaries of its EEZ with Israel, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot politicians already seemed to link those actions to their confidence in peace talks. In a Turkish press release it was stated that "by ignoring Turkish Cypriots' rights, Greek Cypriots' efforts for concluding such agreements, are highly untimely and raise questions as to their real intentions and sincerity regarding the settlement process"<sup>188</sup>. When negotiations between Cypriot presidents Christofias and Eroglu began to stall in late 2011, when Noble Energy had just discovered Aphrodite and the Turkish side had adopted its more aggressive energy strategy, animosity over gas contributed to the negative atmosphere that led in their full suspension. However, and as explained in the second chapter, there were various reasons for the collapse of those talks, the most important reason being that these two leaders held such opposite views of what constituted a proper Cyprus solution.

Additionally, it is conceivable that the disputes over gas could intensify during the Eroglu-Christofias years precisely because that settlement seemed so very unlikely. For instance, in September 2011 the RoC could ap-

185 "Vice President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden to Travel to Romania and Cyprus.", White House Statements & Releases, May 12, 2014.

186 Hazou, Elias. "Anastasiades: gas crucial to US role in talks." Cyprus Mail, 18 February 2014, <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/02/18/anastasiades-gas-crucial-to-us-role-in-talks/>. Accessed 15 February 2019.

187 Fligstein and McAdam, A theory of fields, 3.

188 Gürel et al., The Cyprus hydrocarbons issue: Context, positions and future scenarios, 52.



prove the first exploratory drillings, knowing that this controversial move would do no important harm to the ongoing Cyprus talks. Those were considered hopeless anyway at this time. Similarly, where the governments of Turkey and the TRNC would have no imminent peace deal to consider in how they reciprocated the RoC's gas ventures, that permitted them to respond more provocatively. In 2012 and 2013, when the Cyprus talks were fully suspended, these parties could engage in their own explorations and maintain a threatening rhetoric against the RoC (especially Turkey) free of concern about how that might impede peace talks.

Furthermore, the round of peace talks between Anastasiades and Eroglu that began in 2014 was put on hold after just eight months because of tensions over gas. The exact reason being the Navtex crisis mentioned in the previous chapter. In September of that year, amidst once again failing negotiations,<sup>189</sup> the RoC initiated a new drilling operation and ratified a formal agreement with the government of Egypt to jointly exploit natural gas.<sup>190</sup> These developments were likely what motivated the Turkish government to move a research vessel into the RoC's EEZ one month later and reserve several concession blocks, which prompted Anastasiades to declare a breach of Cyprus' maritime sovereignty and withdraw from the Cyprus talks. In a letter sent to UN-Secretary Ban Ki-Moon, he warned that Turkish actions had "the potential to destroy the efforts of creating a good and positive environment and to actually derail the whole negotiating process"<sup>191</sup>. He wrote that while Turkish military ships and aircraft had previously harassed drilling vessels this was the first time that a Turkish ship had actually entered the EEZ to carry out seismic surveys and that this "served only to undermine the peace process and to raise more doubts as to Turkey's commitment to it"<sup>192</sup>. Anastasiades made it very clear that talks could continue only if the Turkish government would halt its "aggressive activities"<sup>193</sup>.

However, for the Turkish government there were various motives. The most important one being, as communicated by Turkish prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu, that Turkish Cypriot politicians could not be kept away from the decision-making on gas, and that "in Cyprus, if everyone agrees that natural resources around the island belong to the entire island and use these

189 In these months the sides were actually backtracking on a number of issues and politicians from both sides would remark that no progression of significance was being made. See also: Morelli, Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive 2018, 11, 12.

190 "Egypt ratifies agreement with Cyprus for co-exploitation of hydrocarbons.", Cyprus Mail, 11 September 2014, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2014/09/11/egypt-ratifies-agreement-with-cyprus-for-co-exploitation-of-hydrocarbons/>. Accessed 15 March 2019. And: Hazou, Elias, "Saipem starts drilling in block 9", Cyprus Mail, 26 September 2014, <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/09/26/saipem-starts-drilling-in-block-9/?hilite=block+9>. Accessed 15 March 2019.

191 Christou, Jean, "Anastasiades' letter to Ban circulated at Security Council.", Cyprus Mail, 21 October 2014, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2014/10/21/anastasiades-letter-to-ban-circulated-at-security-council/>. Accessed 15 March 2019.

192 Idem.

193 Christou, Jean, "Anastasiades pulls out of talks.", Cyprus Mail, 7 October 2014, <https://cyprusmail.com/2014/10/07/cyprus-talks-suspended/>. Accessed 16 March 2019.

resources in a shared vision towards peace, everyone stands to gain”<sup>194</sup>. Until April 2015, Cyprus talks would remain at a standstill with the Turkish government sticking to its plans of surveying in the RoC’s EEZ, while also pushing for gas to be adopted as a priority issue at the negotiation table.<sup>195</sup> What was hoped for was not only the inclusion of the subject within negotiations, but an immediate agreement that Turkish Cypriot- and Greek Cypriot politicians would decide over gas together in the immediate future.<sup>196</sup> The Turkish government would also have been well aware that escalating tensions could spoil the climate for energy exploitation around Cyprus and scare off foreign investors. However, it was clear at this time that Turkish intentions were not to prevent companies contracted by the RoC from carrying out their drilling operations.<sup>197</sup>

From the above paragraphs, it can be said that contention in the SAF surrounding gas has contributed to contention in the Cyprus talks, and, presumably, vice versa. It can also be explained that the Navtex crisis, mentioned earlier as an example of a period of contention, has created an exogenous shock that started another period of contention within the peace talks. This can be linked directly to McAdam and Fligstein’s notion that:

A significant change in any given strategic action field is like a stone thrown in a still pond sending ripples outward to all proximate fields. this does not mean that all or even most of the ripples will destabilize other fields. Like stones, changes come in all sizes. Only the most dramatic are apt to send ripples of sufficient intensity to pose a real threat to the stability of proximate fields.<sup>198</sup>

Furthermore, by April 2015, the research vessel *Barbaros* had been removed from Cyprus. Through UN mediation, the Turkish government had agreed not to extend its activities in Cypriot waters. As exploration on behalf of the RoC had been forced to a standstill, after gas companies had withdrawn from their contracts with the RoC because of bad results, that opened up a window for the resumption of the Cyprus talks. With no exploratory operations scheduled in the immediate future, and thus no need for reciprocal steps by Turkey and the TRNC, talks were free to resume from where they had left off.<sup>199</sup>

194 Anastasiou, Angelos, “Davutoglu: you can’t do what you want with the gas.”, Cyprus Mail, 23 November 2014, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2014/11/23/davutoglu-you-cant-do-what-you-want-with-the-gas/>. Accessed 16 March 2019.

195 Grishin and Mullayanov, “European Union and Gas Factor in the Cyprus Issue.”, 2276.

196 Anastasiou, Angelos, “Davutoglu: you can’t do what you want with the gas”, Cyprus Mail, 23 November 2014, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2014/11/23/davutoglu-you-cant-do-what-you-want-with-the-gas/>. Accessed 16 March 2019.

197 Hazou, Elias, “Anastasiades: measures according to developments.”, Cyprus Mail, 15 October 2014, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2014/10/15/anastasiades-measures-according-to-developments/>. Accessed 17 March 2019.

198 Fligstein and McAdam, A theory of fields, 19.

199 “Turkey’s new Navtex unrelated to Cyprus EEZ.”, Cyprus Mail, 16 April 2015, <https://www.cyprusprofile.com/en/articles/turkeys-new-navtex-unrelated-to-cyprus->

The peace talks that followed would see no standstills because of gas-related contention such as during the Navtex crisis. As discussed in the second chapter, these talks, led by Cypriot presidents Anastasiades and Akinci, saw a truly productive first twenty months in which there was this unusually positive atmosphere at the negotiation table. However, there would still be disruptive moments. In early 2016 the RoC announced another off-shore licensing round that granted new licenses to international companies as to rekindle gas exploration around Cyprus. As this announcement put at risk the remarkable progress that was being made within negotiations, it was widely criticized and branded as an “ill-advised political decision”<sup>200</sup>. The Turkish government would protest and Akinci reminded the Greek Cypriot side of the Navtex crisis, reiterating that gas could be an asset to all “if wisely prepared and conducted in a way not to trigger yet (more) tension in the area”<sup>201</sup>. The Turkish Cypriot leader said he had believed parties to have had an agreement that “there was no urgency on drilling”<sup>202</sup> but that seemingly he had been wrong in thinking that. He remarked that: “my understanding was that when we started the negotiation this was not going to create trouble for our process. Now I see the potential danger”<sup>203</sup>.

The announcement of a new off-shore licensing round would not be met with Turkish reciprocal actions, likely because a solution to the Cyprus problem appeared so close at this time.<sup>204</sup> What did follow was a statement from the Turkish government that it would not allow any exploratory drilling by foreign companies in the future.<sup>205</sup> Nonetheless, throughout the remaining Anastasiades-Akinci talks the RoC would continue with the granting of licenses, the signing of agreements on regional energy cooperation and the preparation of exploratory operations. From the beginning of 2017 onwards, when negotiations became increasingly difficult, such actions, as well as Turkish responses to them, began to seriously overshadow the Cyprus talks. During the Geneva conference news broke that gas company Total prepared exploratory drilling on behalf of the RoC, and that the governments of Greece, Israel, Italy and the RoC would review their earlier plans of building an East-Med pipeline.<sup>206</sup> While these events did not impede the discussion

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eez/. Accessed 16 March 2019.

200 Kahveci, “Eastern Mediterranean Hydrocarbons: Regional Potential, Challenges Ahead, and the ‘Hydrocarbon-ization’ of the Cyprus Problem.”, 47.

201 Hadjicostis, Menelaos, “AP Interview: Turkish Cypriot head: Gas may fund peace deal.”, *Businessinsider*, 4 April 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/ap-ap-interview-turkish-cypriot-head-gas-may-fund-peace-deal-2016-4?international=true&r=US&IR=T>. Accessed 16 March 2019.

202 Idem.

203 Idem.

204 Olgun, Ergun, “Is hydrocarbons’ crisis the final nail?.” *Cyprus Mail*, 13 May 2017, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2017/05/13/hydrocarbons-crisis-final-nail/>. Accessed 17 March 2019.

205 Christou, Jean, “Turkey warns over Cyprus’ third licensing round.” *Cyprus Mail*, 26 March 2016, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2016/03/26/turkey-warns-over-cyprus-third-li-censing-round/>. Accessed 17 March 2019.

206 Morelli, *Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive* 2018, 31.

on core issues, they did heighten tension over gas at a critical stage in the peace talks. After the Geneva conference, in between the final negotiation sessions, additional news was released which confirmed that the East-Med pipeline would be build and that Total would start its operations around July.

Akinci responded by saying that July would be the natural deadline for peace talks as Total's operation would come to impede a sufficiently positive atmosphere. He also remarked that: "making explorations [for hydrocarbons] in Eastern Mediterranean at a time when there is not an agreement [on Cyprus] would mean supporting the Turkish [Cypriot] side acting similarly"<sup>207</sup>. Shortly after that, the Turkish government announced that it had scheduled military exercises as well as exploratory drilling operations for July.<sup>208</sup> By the time the final peace talks collapsed completely, tensions over gas had again become very high. Where the chapter of security guarantees had proven the big sticking point of these negotiations, as explained in the third chapter, it is highly probable that the aforementioned developments also hardened the positions on that subject. The Turkish government would likely have been even more reluctant to give up its role as guarantor and withdraw its troops from Cyprus. At the same time, in light of aggressive Turkish responses to the RoC's gas ventures, Greek Cypriot politicians would likely be all the more convinced that that was exactly what needed to happen.

### 5.3 | USING NATURAL GAS AS LEVERAGE FOR A FAVORABLE PEACE SETTLEMENT

Another important point must be made, which is that parties, in different ways, have used Cypriot gas to try and nudge the other side to a more favorable peace settlement. In that sense, Cypriot gas has also informed strategic action within the SAF surrounding peace talks. First, the Turkish government has maintained that its controversial delineation of its continental shelf, an important element of the gas dispute between the Turkish government and the RoC, is "related to the comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus question"<sup>209</sup>. Second, and as discussed in the previous chapter, Greek Cypriot politicians have made a peace settlement a precondition for cooperating on gas exploitation with the Turkish Cypriot community, a decision they have defended by referring to the legal status of the RoC as the only legitimate government of Cyprus. While that decision has been partially informed by their refusal to acknowledge the TRNC as a legitimate state, it has

207 "Akinci says July is a 'natural timetable', says attacks against TCs growing.", Cyprus Mail, 17 April 2017, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2017/04/17/akinci-says-july-natural-timetable-talks/?hilit=%27gas%27%2C%27peace%27%2C%27talks%27>. Accessed 7 April 2019.

208 Morelli, Cyprus: Reunification Proving Elusive 2019, 35.

209 Gürel et al., The Cyprus hydrocarbons issue: Context, positions and future scenarios, 72.

also been informed by strategic intentions of incentivizing Turkish Cypriot politicians to make concessions within Cyprus talks. Awareness of the motive that gas presents to the Turkish Cypriot community is apparent from a speech held at the UN General Assembly in 2011.<sup>210</sup> In that speech Greek Cypriot president Christofias explained that:

We believe that the possible discovery and extraction of hydrocarbons shall constitute yet another motive for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to expedite a just, functional and viable solution to the Cyprus problem, so that both communities can enjoy the natural wealth of our country in conditions of peace, security and prosperity.<sup>211</sup>

While remarking in a later interview, and in regard to Turkish Cypriot politicians coming to a solution to the Cyprus problem, that:

I can assure the Turkish Cypriots that they have nothing to lose, on the contrary they will gain a great deal, because all these issues relating to the exploitation of hydrocarbons will be handled by the central government in a federal Cyprus.<sup>212</sup>

Greek Cypriot politicians have also admitted that they view natural gas as a useful incentive to the Turkish government. Government spokesman of the RoC, Nicos Christodoulides, said in 2014 that “natural gas is the greatest incentive to Turkey to work toward a settlement of the Cyprus issue; any other formula would constitute a disincentive and the optimal scenario for those who are pushing for a Plan B [partition of Cyprus]”<sup>213</sup>. As Greek Cypriot politicians have believed, the Turkish government is more committed to the Cyprus talks because a settlement would enable it to buy Cypriot gas and help fulfill its regional energy ambitions. It would also see Turkish Cypriot energy interests satisfied. Additionally, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, a settlement would enable the Turkish government to build a gas pipeline between Turkey and Israel, something that has so far been obstructed by the Cyprus problem. Where said pipeline has to run through Cypriot waters, the RoC has declined to grant permission and made it clear that the pipeline can only be built after a solution to the Cyprus problem.<sup>214</sup>

210 Ibidem, 45.

211 Ibidem, 43.

212 Idem.

213 Hazou, Elias, “‘no’ to linking gas with peace talks.”, Cyprus Mail, 18 November 2014, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2014/11/18/no-to-linking-gas-with-peace-talks/>. Accessed 7 April 2019.

214 Gürel et al., “Can gas catalyse peace in the Eastern Mediterranean?.”, 26.

## | CONCLUSION

Cypriot gas and its politics have undermined peace talks more than helped reach a settlement in Cyprus. The important parties have seemed more open to engaging in peace talks, but under specific circumstances. Contention over gas has hampered trust between parties, negatively affected the atmosphere at the negotiation table and caused negotiations to stand still completely, facts that have all contributed to the failure of the Cyprus talks between 2011 and mid-2017. Moreover, exploratory operations on behalf of the RoC have repeatedly introduced deadlines by which peace talks have come to an end, as they were followed by a degree of contention inconducive to productive negotiations. Underlying that contention has also been the fact that Turkish government and the RoC have used Cypriot gas, in different ways, as leverage for a more favorable progression of peace talks.



## 6 CONCLUSION

When natural gas was discovered in Cypriot waters in 2011 that started a high-stake political game between the RoC, the government of the TRNC and the government of Turkey, which was highly related to the decade-old conflict in Cyprus. The goal of this MA thesis has been to explain how the peace talks in Cyprus were affected by this politics of Cypriot gas between late 2011 and mid-2017, something that was done by use of McAdam and Fligstein's theory of fields and a method of explaining outcome process tracing. The research question that was asked was: *How has the politics surrounding Cypriot gas, involving the RoC, the government of the TRNC and the government of Turkey, affected the peace talks in Cyprus between December 2011 and July 2017?*

This question has been answered in different steps. First, contextual knowledge was provided on how Cyprus has come to be characterized by its so-called Cyprus problem and how nationalism and the island's colonial history have contributed to a complex internal conflict with intrastate dimensions. The Cyprus problem was explained as an ever-evolving conflict which has structurally undermined peaceful relationships between the two dominant ethnic communities of Cyprus and their motherlands. It was emphasized how in its contemporary form this conflict could be viewed as a frozen conflict, as many of its important underlying causes have remained present despite an absence of violence.

Second, it was illustrated how the Cyprus problem has been accompanied by a multifaceted peace process and how, since the UN send its peacekeeping force there in 1964, the island has witnessed a range of efforts to prevent national- and intrastate violence and reunify its two communities. The peace talks were explained as a highly intractable endeavor, fundamentally hampered by an insufficient willingness of especially Cypriot- and Turkish politicians to step away from historical mistrust and maximalist negotiation positions. Some crucial other factors that were mentioned as having contributed to the failure of the Cyprus talks include: the contrasting communal preferences regarding a new state model in Cyprus, an inefficient method for negotiations and untimely elections in Cyprus.



Third, it was discussed how over the past decades discoveries of natural gas in Mediterranean waters have opened up economic and political opportunities for states in the Eastern Mediterranean region, including Cyprus. It was noted how Cypriot gas, as a valuable political interest, has inspired new disputes involving the RoC, the government of the TRNC and the Turkish government, and how these interconnected clashes have been a consequence of many of the same causes and relational dynamics that have also informed the Cyprus problem. It was shown how the political tensions over gas have re-introduced a dangerous military component to their relationship, leading to several moments of early military crisis over the past decade.

Fourth and finally, the research question was answered. It was found that Cypriot gas played a positive role in the recontinuation of the Cyprus talks in 2014, not only because it helped motivate parties to reengage in peace talks, but also because related strategic interests incentivized the US government to apply the necessary diplomatic pressure. Other findings have indicated a much more negative impact of the politics of gas on the Cyprus talks. Its resulting contention has repeatedly damaged mutual trust, negatively affected the atmosphere at the negotiation table and caused talks to come to a standstill. The start of exploratory operations of the RoC have come to be viewed as natural deadlines for negotiations, due to their contentious nature. Lastly, it was found that the issue of gas has been used by the RoC and the Turkish government as leverage to push the other side to a favorable settlement in peace talks.

Importantly, this research has not concluded that this politics surrounding gas has also been responsible for the overall failure of the Cyprus talks in the relevant period. There were many factors that have contributed to this phenomenon. In the end, most problematic have been the fundamental antagonism and grievances brought on by the Cyprus problem that have characterized these parties relations, as well as the severe discrepancies in how they imagine a future Cypriot state. These essential problems have structurally obstructed a settlement, whilst creating newer problems that have served to complicate the peace talks only further. One of those problems being the issue of natural gas, which can ultimately be said to have become much more of a spoiler than a peace tool with regard to the Cyprus talks.

That also supports the finding by Rustad et. al that “when it comes to sustaining peace and long-term development [for countries emerging from armed conflict], [high value] resource- rich countries tend to fare worse than

others”<sup>215</sup>. However, where these authors have looked at the broader concepts of peace and peace process, this research has studied the relationship between natural resources and peace talks. Notably, where it has shed a light on this under researched topic, its findings cannot automatically be generalized across cases. Instead, this research has provided a better understanding of these political developments in and around Cyprus through a within-case explanation. However, its findings may still help sensitize future research and become the building blocks for other scholars to explain similar effects across cases. The explanation provided here, may also help grasp events in the future, as peace talks are likely to be organized again and Cypriot gas has so far remained a contentious political issue. Not only has this research proven the predominantly negative impact of this new politics of gas on the progression of the Cyprus talks, its findings may help understand better the dynamic of future Cyprus talks and the manners in which their progress could be affected.

Finally, McAdam and Fligstein’s theory of fields has helped explain strategic action and change in the SAFs that have been studied. Their ideas have helped make sense of the complex manners in which parties have sought to strengthen their strategic position vis a vis each other and in relation to these high-stake political interests of a favorable settlement in Cyprus and Cypriot gas. These SAFs have been explained as two interdependent fields, and it was emphasized how contention, or periods of contention, in the SAF surrounding gas have impacted the field stability of the Cyprus talks. This research has focused on only one part of this interdependent relationship but has nonetheless found a strong indication that breakdowns of peace talks have allowed for a serious intensification of the different gas-related disputes. As such, future research could look closer into how since 2011 strategic actions and changes within the Cyprus talks have affected the politics of gas.

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215 Rustad et al., "Building or spoiling peace? Lessons from the management of high-value natural resources.", 613.



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