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Political realism in the EEZ: The differences between Greece and Turkiye as an issue of maritime security

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Abstract: This study critically examines the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) delimitation and regional cooperation efforts impacting Greco-Turkish relations in the Eastern Mediterranean, focusing on their influence on both nations' maritime security definitions. With the increasing strategic significance of maritime areas, Greek and Turkish perspectives on security are becoming ever more significant. This paper posits that the interrelations between Greece and Turkiye significantly shape their respective maritime security frameworks. Through a comprehensive review, we juxtapose the evolution of general security concepts with the specific developments in maritime security as perceived by each country. This approach reveals the profound impact of bilateral tensions on maritime security perceptions and policies. The analysis extends to the implications of these dynamics for regional stability and international maritime law, underpinning the urgent need for a collaborative and equitable approach to resolve ongoing maritime disputes. This research contributes to the broader field of international relations by highlighting the intricate relationship between historical conflicts, national security paradigms, and maritime sovereignty claims, proposing new directions for future research in regional security cooperation and conflict resolution.

Keywords: Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); Eastern Mediterranean; maritime security; International Maritime Law; national security; Greece; Turkiye

1. Introduction

Maritime security refers to the protection of a nation's maritime interests, including territorial waters, exclusive economic zones (EEZs), and the continental shelf. It encompasses various threats such as piracy, illegal fishing, and territorial disputes. As defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), an EEZ extends up to 200 nautical miles from the coast of a state, within which the state has special rights regarding the exploration and use of marine resources. The continental shelf refers to the extended perimeter of each continent, which is submerged under shallow seas and oceans. It includes the seabed and subsoil and extends to the outer edge of the continental margin, or 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.

The issue of security and opportunities at sea continues to influence research and literature on international relations (Buzan, 2015; Chao and Cho, 2022; Peters 2014; Roach, 2004). In recent years, particularly after 2010, the debate about the return of geopolitics has led to an increase in state-oriented analyses in the concept of security. Even in the new security issues fueled by soft power debates, a

traditional state-oriented approach is evident. In this shift, the main roles experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic process and the effectiveness of the state's role in mitigating the pandemic, not only in health but also in the field of economy and welfare state, discussions on the role of the state have come to the fore.

The protection and management of vital resources for national security is once again a priority for the state. This has led to an increase in security studies in both Greece and Turkiye with maritime security becoming a common topic (Demiryol, 2018; Kollias and Paleologou, 2003; Kaliber, 2005). While a military perspective is often taken, a constructivist theoretical approach can provide a more realistic analysis. The ongoing maritime dispute between Greece and Turkiye in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly concerning their exclusive economic zones (EEZs), can be better understood and potentially resolved through a constructivist theoretical approach rather than a military-focused realist one. Constructivism emphasizes the role of social constructs, identities, and norms in shaping state behavior and interests, providing a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural contexts that influence Greek and Turkish policies and perceptions (Checkel, 1998). This approach prioritizes dialogue, diplomacy, and the creation of mutual understanding over military confrontation, leading to more sustainable and peaceful resolutions by addressing the underlying causes of conflict (Adler, 2013). Furthermore, constructivism emphasizes the role of international norms, laws, and institutions in shaping state behavior, with adherence to frameworks like the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) facilitating cooperation and conflict resolution (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). By reducing the risk of escalation and unintended consequences inherent in military approaches, constructivist methods seek to achieve long-term peace and stability through understanding and addressing the root causes of conflict (Risse, 2000). Overall, constructivism offers a more comprehensive and sustainable pathway to resolving the Greece-Turkiye maritime dispute by fostering long-term peace through diplomatic engagement and adherence to international norms.

Thus, it is crucial to examine how the concept of security, including maritime security, is constructed and handled in both countries.

This article aims to answer how Greece and Turkiye have approached maritime security and how this approach has evolved in the context of their relations. It will begin by exploring how the concept of security is developed from a constructivist perspective in the international relations literature, followed by the evolution of maritime security. The final section will discuss the development of maritime security in Greek-Turkish relations and reveal the key role played by these bilateral issues in the concept of maritime security in both countries.

2. Development of the concept of security

This section will systematically explore the evolution of security concepts within international relations, with a particular focus on maritime security, EEZs, and the continental shelf. The goal is to provide a coherent framework that links these concepts to the geopolitical realities in the Eastern Mediterranean. Understanding these concepts is crucial for analyzing the geopolitical dynamics in

the Eastern Mediterranean.

The interactions between maritime security, EEZs, and continental shelves are particularly significant in regions where territorial waters and resource rights are contested, such as between Greece and Türkiye. The evolution of the concept of security in international relations emerged as a discipline in 1917 with the goal of promoting peace and resolving conflicts through diplomatic means in the aftermath of the Great War. As a result, it prioritized liberal values, multilateralism, and international organizations, as reflected in the early political science literature that aimed to counter pessimism about international politics. In this context, the concept of security has evolved and transformed over time, influenced by the spirit of the period, the priorities of nations, and the characteristics of academics (Collins, 2022). The popularity and frequency of security-related concepts, as well as their meaning, were closely linked to current conditions, political preferences and priorities, and the resources allocated to them.

A prime example of this is Hans Morgenthau (Fonseca Junior and Uziel, 2022). When Morgenthau arrived at the University of Chicago in the 1930s, power politics was viewed as a controversial and discouraged field of study within American social science. The prevailing political understanding at the time was idealistic, with the belief that mutual economic interdependence and communication would help overcome international conflicts, and that security issues between states could be resolved through negotiation. Consequently, the issue of security was approached differently in these two separate spheres of thought.

During the interwar period, totalitarian regimes promised freedom and welfare on the basis of the nation rather than the individual, leading to the rise of irrational behaviors and human nature. This prompted the voices of realists in Europe to sound the war bells, and after the Second World War, security once again became a prominent issue, particularly in light of the Cold War and the ongoing great controversy. In the 1980s, an increasing number of realist academics emerged, making security references in their studies. Kahler (2018), in his article “Inventing International Relations: International Relations Theory After 1945”, argues that, “Security studies, which were heavily funded in the 1980s, undoubtedly strengthened neorealism”, while discussing the relationship between theoretical developments and the international agenda. Although current developments and research on political and economic issues are crucial for bringing the subject to the fore, the theoretical stance of individuals working in this field also shapes the ideas they produce.

However, with the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of its threat, security-oriented studies lost their ground once again. In the 1990s, arguments for non-state representation with a Kuhnian understanding of ethics and transnational structures beyond the state resurfaced, referenced by Shortwell. Buzan (2015), an important figure in constructionism, summarized the reasons for the decreased interest in security studies in the 1990s as follows: 1) it is difficult and ambiguous to define the concept of security; 2) the various critiques of realism have been preoccupied with other concerns, such as technology and politics, and thus have not given adequate attention to the security concept.

The field of security studies has undergone significant transformations over the years. In the early days of international relations, security was viewed as a matter of

state security and military defense. However, with the end of the Cold War and the emergence of new global threats such as terrorism and transnational crime, the concept of security has expanded beyond military concerns and has come to encompass issues such as economic, social, and environmental security.

Baldwin (1997), a prominent scholar in the field of international relations, has argued that the concept of security has been overused in contemporary discussions on international politics. According to Baldwin, a focus on security can lead to a narrow and restrictive perspective on the role of the state and the individual in society, often resulting in the restriction of individual freedoms and a cover-up of broader social and political issues. Baldwin notes that during the Cold War, the study of security was dominated by academics with military backgrounds, and as a result, military power became a central issue in security studies.

In the 1990s, the definition of security expanded with a more value-oriented understanding that prioritized individuals and defined the state as a security provider. This period also saw an increased role for the international community in providing security in cases where the states were unable to do so. However, this period also highlighted the importance of military elements and calculations in security issues.

The dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and the subsequent conflicts in Africa showed the continued importance of the state as a provider of security. The concept of security also became an important topic in the UN and other international organizations as global actors prioritized their national interests in a new colonial order.

Mearsheimer's (2001) work on security in this period emphasized that states are actors that aim to maximize their security. This approach broadened the definition of security but still maintained the idea that states are the most influential actors in international relations. The emergence of superpowers in the 2000s, promising to improve the functions of states through values and international organizations, has not led to a decrease in global conflict. Instead, war has returned in different and more brutal forms, leading to a renewed focus on the role of national states in providing order and peace.

Nation-states have continued to be considered important actors in the field of security, which has regained prominence in many areas, from pandemics to cyberattacks. Even the supranational European Union, the only successful alternative to the nation-state, faced problems with interstate coordination on security during the pandemic, while national states played an important role. In this context, the EU has tried to produce global strategies and regional policies to adapt to the new period, while also talking about its integration in foreign policy at a level that can compete with the states. Although it is difficult, a discourse of European interest similar to national interest is being attempted to be produced in foreign policy.

The most popular definition of security in recent years is Wolfers' (1952) definition of "the state of being free from all kinds of threats." The building blocks of this definition, such as "core values" and "threat" elements, reflect the national and regional characteristics of security studies. The multidimensionality of the concept of security raises questions about what value, what threat, which tool, and at what cost. These building blocks are defined in the international order, and some global actors with the power to determine the hegemonic power, such as the USA,

are taking various steps against China, which they see as a threat to their hegemony and a potential adversary.

In the ongoing competition in the Eastern Mediterranean, maritime has become the most important factor. China's One Belt One Road project reveals the ways in which it will connect with the world, and the importance of maritime is gradually increasing, bringing waterways and canals to the forefront, as was the case in the 19th century. While the materialist explanation provides a foundation, it is crucial to consider the historical and cultural elements that play a significant role in the ongoing competition, especially concerning Russia's aggressive attitudes in the Mediterranean. Russia's Mediterranean policy is closely related to its aggressive attitudes in both the Black Sea, the Balkans, and Eastern Europe. The definition of 'vital interests' or 'core values' changes in parallel with developments in different fields, such as political preferences, national history, basic assumptions in consciousness, and technology, bringing new security issues to the fore. Maritime security has also come to be defined in this context, as the seas are once again at the center of geopolitics.

Development of maritime security concept

Maritime security is a crucial aspect of national security as it directly affects a country's power and prosperity. It encompasses various threats to trade, geopolitical concerns, and the protection of vital economic, political, and social elements. The emphasis on maritime security has increased with the recognition of the importance of the seas in geopolitics. The concept of security associated with maritime has a long history, and its definition has evolved over time. The absence of threats in Wolfers' definition of security forms the basis of maritime security. However, the existence of a good and balanced order in the seas is closely related to the concept of security, which is determined by dominant actors such as states. The national historical narratives of these states shape their basic values, which affects their definitions of threat and interest. Maritime areas are important not only for trade but also for geopolitical control of economic and transmission routes. The control of sea areas, waterways, and ports has become more intertwined with issues of sovereignty. The right of free passage in maritime trade and transportation is a crucial feature that distinguishes the seas from the land. Although the principle of free trade still holds importance, the concept of sovereignty cannot be fully applied to the seas as it is difficult to achieve full control in deep sea areas. In summary, maritime security is a complex issue that involves various factors, including trade, geopolitics, sovereignty, and the dominant actors shaping the values and definitions of threat and interest.

Maritime security is a complex issue that is intertwined with various geopolitical and economic interests. It is closely linked to the concept of power, as the protection of vital economic, political and social elements is crucial for national welfare and the assurance of a country's future. Maritime security has long been a concern, but its meaning has evolved over time. Today, the concept encompasses threats to trade and geopolitical concerns, including the security of trade routes.

The development of technology has had a significant impact on maritime law concepts, such as the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone, and has led

to the establishment of an international maritime law framework based on multilateralism. However, countries still have different definitions and rules due to the unique characteristics of their seas and terrestrial morphology. As technology advances, coastal states are attempting to exert greater control over more maritime areas.

Maritime jurisdiction areas, such as the continental shelf and the EEZ, are sources of conflict and can remain ambiguous in the field of politics. For example, disputes over islands and their associated powers can create conflict over maritime boundaries. The Eastern Mediterranean is one such example.

Maritime security is closely related to national interest and international order. Global power shifts and structural changes, such as the rise of China, are threatening to disrupt the current understanding of order and create new definitions of threats. While issues such as piracy, coast guard, border security, European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), and initiatives to stop immigration and human smuggling are often discussed in the context of maritime security, a comprehensive security concept must be broader.

Bueger's (2015) definition of maritime security identifies four main areas of study: national security, human security, economic development, and maritime safety and environmental considerations. National security involves issues related to power projection at sea, such as naval forces and armament, interstate conflicts, and terrorism. Human security focuses on irregular migration and human smuggling activities. Economic development covers issues related to smuggling, piracy, and fishing. Lastly, maritime safety and environmental considerations refer to environmental factors and accidents at sea.

These areas are mostly within the jurisdiction of nation-states, and as such, national institutions play a significant role. Military bureaucracy and maritime institutions are particularly active due to national security concerns and threats to sovereignty. Coastal states are major actors in economic and humanitarian issues in the seas, which reinforces the view that the seas are primarily a domain of state activity. Political culture, geographical tensions, and history all play a significant role in shaping states' perspectives on maritime security.

3. Maritime security in Greek-Turkiye relations

To provide a coherent analysis, this section will first outline the historical context of Greek-Turkiye maritime disputes, followed by an examination of current security policies and practices. By systematically addressing each element, we aim to highlight the interconnectedness of maritime security issues and their impact on regional stability.

As Turkiye's interest in the seas increases, the concept of maritime security has become more relevant. As the definitions of threats and opportunities vary from state to state, the concept of maritime security is linked to Turkiye's own interests. In Turkiye foreign policy, there has been an effort to establish a more effective presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Many crises in Greek-Turkiye relations have developed in the context of maritime security. While the Cyprus issue has been a longstanding problem in bilateral relations, tensions in the Aegean have persisted

since the 1970s.

Since Türkiye does not have any land borders with Greece except for the minority issue in Western Thrace, maritime security plays a significant role in shaping bilateral relations. Although Türkiye is often seen as a land power in the literature on Turkish foreign policy, tensions in the seas have always been an important factor in defining national interests. The discourse of “encirclement from the south” and “constrained in Anatolia,” which emerged in Greek-Turkish tensions, reflects this reality. The concept of maritime security, which has gained more prominence in Türkiye following the adoption of the “blue homeland” doctrine, has been particularly relevant in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean.

At this point, it should be noted that the competing actors in the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean regions have been Greece and Cyprus. The Eastern Mediterranean started to heat up after the negotiations between Tasos Papadopoulos and Egypt in 2002, and the extraction of resources in the Eastern Mediterranean became more and more controversial after the 2009 economic crisis in Greece. Similarly, in 1973, the extraction and use of natural resources off the island of Thasos in Greece caused problems with Türkiye in the Aegean. Therefore, determining the maritime borders with Greece has been a longstanding maritime security problem for Türkiye, and bilateral relations and dialogues with relevant parties have a significant impact on maritime security studies in Türkiye.

Maritime security as a conflict of differing academic views

While both Greek and Turkish academics recognize the importance of maritime security, their approaches differ markedly. Greek scholars prioritize legal and cooperative mechanisms, whereas Turkish academics focus on strategic autonomy and military strength. These differing perspectives reflect broader national strategies and historical experiences, shaping how each country navigates its maritime disputes.

It is worth mentioning that, in the literature on Greek-Türkiye relations, academics have made significant efforts to resolve problems through peaceful means, although the concept of security has not been emphasized until recently, particularly with the effect of the 1990s and the EU membership process. Studies on peaceful solutions and mechanisms dominate many maritime and maritime security crises, such as the Imia (Kardak) Crisis between Türkiye and Greece in the 1990s (Berling et al., 2022). Nevertheless, it is evident that academics with military or bureaucratic backgrounds utilize the concepts of national interest and national security more prominently (Eker, 2023; Kaliber, 2005).

The concept of expanded security has had an impact on maritime security studies in Greek-Türkiye relations, particularly after issues of human security, migration, and irregular immigrants became more prominent. While migration and human smuggling are given more attention in university studies on migration, the issue is not often discussed in the context of maritime security, and the concept of security is not always viewed sympathetically.

Ole Waever’s concept of securitization, developed in 1993 (Berling et al., 2022), highlighted the need to study migration without using the concept of security.

Similarly, there has been an effort to avoid framing trade and other issues as matters of security. However, the concept of maritime security has undergone a developmental process in both Greece and Türkiye. To gain a better understanding of the subject, it is essential to examine how the maritime security topics are reflected in Greek-Türkiye relations.

In terms of national security, the issue of power elements in the seas has been a significant concern. In response, Türkiye has attempted to develop its navy through projects such as National Ship, Milli Gemi (MİLGEM) (Eker, 2023). The development of both naval and air forces in Greece and Türkiye has been closely linked to the Cyprus problem. From Türkiye's perspective, Greece is pursuing expansionist policies, and Türkiye is trying to address this threat perception. Conversely, Greece views Türkiye as a larger and more powerful country that wants to return to the Ottoman period and destroy Greece. Such sentiments are closely tied to historical memory.

Moreover, the armament of the islands is viewed differently by the two countries. While Greece considers it a means of legitimate defense, Türkiye regards it as an example of expansionist policies. Similarly, the relocation of the navy was perceived as a threat due to the prevailing intellectual and historical context, which views such moves as indicative of broader strategic intentions. Terrorism has also emerged as a significant maritime security issue, with reports in Türkiye media that individuals fleeing to Greece have participated in anti-Türkiye operations, such as those in Libya, during the Apo crisis in 1999 or after the Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETO) events.

In terms of human security, irregular migration and human smuggling activities are intricately connected to the broader geopolitical landscape, particularly under the lens of Greek-Türkiye relations. This complex issue is shaped by both historical narratives and current geopolitical strategies, where immigrants are often portrayed in Greek media as instruments of Türkiye governmental policies, frequently tied to narratives of radical Islam. This portrayal exacerbates the security dilemma, turning human migration into a politicized security issue. Additionally, the Greek Coast Guard's maneuvers against migrant boats not only raise concerns over safety and human rights but also highlight the intricate blend of national security with human security concerns in maritime operations.

The intersection of human security with national security becomes especially pronounced in the context of irregular migration and human smuggling. These activities challenge traditional security paradigms by highlighting the need for a more nuanced approach that incorporates human rights, safety, and international cooperation. The portrayal of migrants in media and political discourse significantly influences public perception and policy responses, underscoring the need for a balanced approach that respects human dignity while addressing security concerns.

Academic references to consider for expanding this discussion include works by Triandafyllidou and Dimitriadi (2014), who explore the impact of media narratives on migration policies and perceptions in the Mediterranean region. Their research sheds light on how migrants are framed as security threats and the implications of such framing for maritime security operations and migrant safety. Additionally, Panebianco (2016) provides an in-depth analysis of Greek and Turkish policies

towards irregular migration, highlighting the complexities of maritime security in the Eastern Mediterranean. Their work underscores the importance of regional cooperation and a human-centric approach to security and migration management.

The protection of sovereignty areas is crucial to ensure security and is shaped by the diplomatic and military actions taken by parties after identifying threats. For Greece, the armament of the islands is seen as a means of legitimate defense, while Türkiye views it as an expansionist policy. The relocation of the Türkiye navy to Aksaz after the Gölcük Earthquake is seen as a serious threat due to this intellectual background. Terrorism also emerges as a significant concern, with reports in the Türkiye media of people fleeing to Greece and participating in anti-Türkiye operations, for example, in Libya. Irregular migration and human smuggling activities are linked to the aforementioned intellectual background and pose a threat to human security. These activities also create a maritime security problem, with the Greek media associating immigrants with the Turkish government and radical Islam. Coast Guard maneuvers against migrant boats, which also cause problems in terms of maritime safety, further exacerbate the issue.

4. Institutional approach of maritime security

In Greece, maritime security is managed by several key institutions, each playing a distinct role in ensuring the safety and security of the nation's maritime domain. The Hellenic Navy is the primary military force responsible for defending Greece's maritime interests. It conducts regular patrols, naval exercises, and surveillance operations to safeguard Greek waters. The strategic focus of the Hellenic Navy includes protecting the Aegean Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean, countering threats such as piracy, illegal fishing, and territorial incursions. Additionally, the Navy participates in international missions and joint exercises with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU) partners, reinforcing Greece's commitment to collective security (Kyriazanos et al., 2001).

The Hellenic Coast Guard plays a crucial role in maritime law enforcement, search and rescue operations, and managing irregular migration. With a mandate that covers both security and safety, the Coast Guard is pivotal in implementing Greece's maritime security policies. It operates a fleet of patrol vessels, helicopters, and aircraft, enabling rapid response to emergencies and enforcement actions. The Coast Guard collaborates closely with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) to address challenges such as human trafficking and smuggling (Mazokopakis et al., 2004).

The Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy oversees the regulatory framework for maritime activities, including shipping, port operations, and maritime safety. This ministry is responsible for developing and implementing policies that enhance Greece's maritime infrastructure and promote the sustainable use of marine resources. It also coordinates with international bodies like the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to align Greece's maritime policies with global standards (Charitou et al., 2021).

Türkiye's maritime security framework is similarly complex, involving multiple institutions that address various aspects of maritime safety and defense. The Turkish

Navy is central to Türkiye's maritime security strategy. Its modernization efforts, exemplified by the MİLGEM project (National Ship Project), aim to enhance Türkiye's naval capabilities and assert its presence in contested waters. The responsibilities of the Turkish Navy include protecting Turkish interests in the Black Sea, Aegean Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean. It also plays a key role in power projection, participating in international operations and exercises to showcase Türkiye's naval prowess (Perçin et al., 2012).

The Turkish Coast Guard is tasked with maritime law enforcement, search and rescue operations, and border security. It is instrumental in Türkiye's efforts to combat smuggling, illegal fishing, and irregular migration. The Coast Guard operates a variety of vessels and aircraft, ensuring comprehensive coverage of Türkiye's extensive coastline. It collaborates with other national and international agencies to address maritime security challenges effectively (Makras et al., 2001).

The Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure is responsible for maritime transportation policies and the development of maritime infrastructure. This ministry plays a crucial role in regulating shipping activities, ensuring maritime safety, and promoting the efficient use of Türkiye's ports and waterways. Its initiatives support Türkiye's strategic objective of becoming a regional maritime hub (Velonakis et al., 1989).

While both Greece and Türkiye have robust maritime security frameworks, their institutional approaches reflect their strategic priorities. Greek institutions emphasize international cooperation and legal compliance, leveraging their EU membership to strengthen maritime security. In contrast, Turkish institutions focus on strategic autonomy and military strength, underscoring Türkiye's regional ambitions and geopolitical aspirations (Oikonomou and Dikou, 2008).

One notable trend is the emphasis on international collaboration within Greek institutions. The Hellenic Navy and Coast Guard frequently engage in joint exercises and operations with EU and NATO partners. This collaboration enhances Greece's maritime security capabilities and reinforces its position within the broader European security framework. Conversely, Türkiye's emphasis on naval modernization, through projects like MİLGEM, reflects a strategic shift towards enhancing its military capabilities and asserting its presence in the region (Papazoglou et al., 2023).

Economic development is a crucial aspect related to maritime security, which can also become a point of contention (Menzel, 2022). Despite ongoing cruises, smuggling continues to pose a maritime security problem, and incidents of fishing boats being shot have been reported (Petza et al., 2017). The issue of drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean is a critical example of how security concerns intersect with migration issues in Greco-Turkish relations. Clarify the purpose of discussing migration here and emphasize the exemplative nature. Although the Navigational Telex (NAVTEX) system serves as a technical tool to warn ships passing through the area, it has been transformed into a sovereignty struggle between the parties involved (Stergiou, 2022).

Given that maritime security is closely linked to national security in the context of Greek-Turkish relations, most publications and productions in this field from the Turkish side have come from civil and military bureaucrats. However, new

institutions are being established to develop the concept of maritime security, with academic and bureaucratic centers being established for this purpose. The Turkiye Ministry of Maritime still holds a critical role in this regard, and for a unified approach, documents published on fishing and search and rescue need to be harmonized (Petza et al., 2017).

The current situation is not unique to Turkiye, as Greece is also facing similar challenges within the framework of the EU. To address this, the EU has been developing a Maritime Strategy since 2014, as part of its Global Strategy (Larsson and Widen, 2022), and a text was prepared during the Greek presidency to define the strategy. The Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs has touted the development of the strategy as a success, with a focus on identifying risks, increasing joint security, promoting good governance, and enhancing the flexibility of member countries. Many analyses are conducted on a national, regional, and global scale, emphasizing knowledge sharing and developing cooperative capacity in various fields. However, there have been challenges in preparing the Action Plan, as national priorities have taken precedence over the broader EU objectives.

In many studies published in both the EU and Turkiye, the impact of technological changes on the development and socialization of maritime issues is seen as significant (Jo and D' Agostini, 2020; Muirhead, 2004). This is particularly relevant to concepts such as the continental shelf and exclusive economic zone, which are closely linked to national sovereignty rights. The use of energy resources in these areas has contributed to heightened tensions in already strained Greek-Turkiye relations. It is worth noting that the dispute between Greece and Turkiye over sovereignty is a long-standing issue, but one that has taken on added urgency as more activities take place in the seas and resources become available beyond maritime transportation and trade, thus impacting freedom of movement. Greece's interest in maritime issues can also be traced back to the establishment of the Maritime Ministry in 1822, which was brought under the Ministry of National Defense in the 1950s.

Another ministry focused on maritime, tourism, and the economy, the Ministry of Shipping and Island Policies, was also established due to the presence of islands. News and announcements related to maritime issues have been published, such as reports on protective activities for life in the eastern Aegean and on the islands, particularly in the context of human security, human smuggling, and migration since 2015. The implication of danger in the eastern Aegean, which is a reference to national security, is evident in how the issue of migration is discussed in terms of security (Kalfeli et al., 2022).

The so-called "Map of Seville," which delineates potential maritime boundaries in the Eastern Mediterranean, has often been cited in discussions about maritime jurisdiction (Stergiou, 2022). However, it is important to note that this map was not an official document endorsed by any international authority. It was produced as part of a European Union-funded study and has no legal standing. Nonetheless, it has been used in media and political rhetoric to assert territorial claims, particularly by Greece, further complicating the already contentious maritime disputes in the region.

Greece and Turkiye view the issue as maritime containment (Guner, 2004; Kirtsoglou, 2006). While the imperialist Western discourse is used in Turkiye, the

discourse of neo-Ottomanism and the danger of expansionism stands out in Greece (Grigoriadis, 2022). An image of a revisionist and dangerous state is tried to be given by reference to Türkiye's regional activities, and a serious effort and time is spent on this image. On the other hand, the issue of immigration has affected bilateral relations (Sakellariou, 2017; Tsitselikis, 2013). In this context, the idea that the concept of European security is emphasized and that the threat originates from Turkish government is constantly developing. Greece, which defines immigrants as a military threat beyond being an economic and social threat, presents them as soldiers of Erdogan and radical Islam, since the majority of the immigrants are young males. In this context, the concept of maritime security has developed as an existential concept.

In addition to the Türkiye image in Greek history, new images that are tried to be created in Europe are also articulated. Even the Karabakh issue has been an issue that has been tried to be discussed in the EU Council. A new dimension of this effort is emerging. Türkiye has been left out of Frontex missions (Sarantaki, 2023). As a matter of fact, developments gradually strengthened Türkiye's not participating in the missions. Today, existing images are strengthened by the ideas that the issue of being pushed out of NATO and the EU candidacy need to be clarified.

5. Future research

Future research should deeper focus into the impacts of technological advancements in maritime surveillance and defense capabilities on Greek-Türkiye relations. Emerging technologies, such as unmanned maritime systems, cyber warfare in naval contexts, and satellite surveillance, are reshaping maritime security paradigms (Deibert, 2008; Lobastova, 2020). Understanding these technologies' implications for conflict escalation or resolution could provide valuable insights.

Additionally, the role of international organizations and legal frameworks in mediating maritime disputes warrants further analysis. Research could explore the efficacy of international legal bodies like the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in resolving Greek-Türkiye maritime issues and how these decisions impact regional security dynamics (King et al., 2017; Rosenbach and Mansted, 2019).

Given the increasing importance of energy resources in maritime regions, future research should also focus on the geopolitics of energy exploration and exploitation in the Eastern Mediterranean. This includes examining how energy discoveries affect Greek-Türkiye relations and regional alignments, with a particular focus on gas pipeline routes, exclusive economic zones, and environmental sustainability (Lebrouhi et al., 2022; Su et al., 2021).

The rise of non-state actors and their influence on maritime security is another area ripe for exploration. Studies could assess the impact of migration flows, piracy, and terrorism on Greek-Türkiye maritime security policies and practices, as well as on broader regional stability (Marino et al., 2017; Turner and Roberts, 2023).

Lastly, the broader geopolitical implications of Greek-Türkiye maritime tensions on NATO and EU dynamics should be examined. The intersection of maritime security with broader geopolitical strategies, including the United States' and Russia's roles in the Eastern Mediterranean, presents a complex landscape for

future research (Dodds and Woon, 2019; Østhagen, 2019).

6. Conclusion

In the context of Greek-Turkiye relations, the concept of maritime security is critically intertwined with national sovereignty, where naval and coast guard capabilities become central in the struggle for maritime dominance. This segment, primarily dominated by military-oriented research, lacks a global transformative factor, making a shift towards a more idealistic perspective challenging. The absence of a rational framework promoting principles like multilateralism and equity further complicates the scenario. Notably, the erosion of collective security concepts, particularly highlighted by NATO's unsuccessful mediation efforts, reinforces a security paradigm deeply rooted in nationalistic views. The Turkish perspective frames maritime security as an inter-country confrontation, seeking to sideline other international actors, whereas Greece interprets it within the broader context of EU-Turkiye relations.

To comprehensively understand maritime security dynamics, it is essential to dissect the evolving situations in Greece and Turkiye, acknowledging their unique stances and priorities. These perspectives significantly shape their maritime security definitions, impacting regional stability and bilateral ties. Expanding on this analysis requires further emphasis into historical contexts, where territorial and resource disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean have perpetuated tensions (Güner, 2004; Grigoriadis, 2022). The evolution of maritime security, from a constructivist lens, must consider technological advancements, legal frameworks, and regional power dynamics (Jo and D'Agostini, 2020; Larsson and Widen, 2022). Moreover, addressing the complex interplay between national security and human security elements, as seen in migration and smuggling activities, is crucial (Bueger, 2015).

Finally, the integration of newer academic contributions can provide alternative perspectives on resolving these enduring disputes. By examining case studies and applying theoretical frameworks from recent scholarly work, such as Bueger's concepts of maritime security (Bueger, 2015), we can propose more nuanced solutions that transcend traditional power politics and embrace cooperative security frameworks. This approach not only aligns with contemporary security studies trends but also offers a pathway towards de-escalating Greek-Turkiye maritime tensions.

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