

Chapter 3

# Cyprus: Leveraging the Energy Factor to Support Peacemaking

Ahmet Sözen



## A. Introduction

The Cyprus conflict, a good example of a protracted situation, has been occupying the agenda of the international community since the 1950s. The UN has been the main third party working to advance conflict resolution on the island, in addition to the United Kingdom (UK) and the US, the former being the colonial power during 1925-1960 and the latter the superpower and the main ally of the three guarantor powers who played a crucial role in the establishment of the 1960 Republic of Cyprus (RoC), namely Greece, Türkiye and the UK.

Since the 1963 constitutional crisis and the eruption of the ethnic clashes between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, which led to the stationing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in 1964, many important initiatives to solve the Cyprus conflict had been tried. Unfortunately, there has been no breakthrough yet. In recent years, the discovery of natural gas around Cyprus has brought a new dimension to the Cyprus conflict, which has not been creatively and positively utilised and, instead, has even fuelled tensions further. In this chapter, I look at the Cyprus conflict from a fresh perspective that combines the energy issue with novel conflict resolution and diplomatic mechanisms and propose policy recommendations for breaking the deadlock in Cyprus to relevant stakeholders.

## B. Background of the conflict

Cyprus was conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1571, regarded as the ancestors of the Turkish Cypriots on the island, while the current Greek Cypriot people mostly trace their history to the Byzantine. In 1871, the Ottomans rented the island to the UK in return for support in its war against the Russian Empire. The UK unilaterally annexed the island when the Ottomans entered the First World War in alliance with Germany. After the establishment of Türkiye, the inheritor of the Ottoman Empire that signed the Treaty of Lausanne, Cyprus became a British Crown Colony until 1960. In 1960, the British withdrew from Cyprus while keeping two sovereign bases (Akrotiri and Dhekelia) and also becoming a guarantor of the (semi-)independent RoC along with the two motherlands – Greece and Türkiye. The three guarantors had the responsibility to guarantee the independence, security, territorial integrity, and constitutional order of the RoC. They also retain the right to unilaterally intervene in case one or more of these four provisions are violated – for the purpose of restoring them.

The RoC was established as a bi-communal state where the functions of the state were divided between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities in all three branches: executive, legislative and judiciary. For example, while the president would be a Greek Cypriot, elected by the Greek Cypriot community, the vice-president would be a Turkish Cypriot elected by the Turkish Cypriot



community, each one having veto power on important decisions. The cabinet, the unicameral parliament, as well as public services, had been filled with 70 percent Greek Cypriots and 30 percent Turkish Cypriots, based on the 7:3 ratio inscribed in the Constitution.

This arrangement – a kind of functional federation – where the competencies of the state were shared by the two communities – one bigger (Greek Cypriot community) and one smaller (Turkish Cypriot Community) – had never been acknowledged and accepted by the Greek Cypriot leadership and political elite. Hence, in November 1963, the Archbishop and the President of the Republic Makarios proposed 13 changes to the constitution in his perspective to make the non-functional Constitution workable, which was nothing but to strip the Turkish Cypriot community of all its veto rights and reduce it to a simple minority in a Greek Cypriot dominated republic. At Christmas 1963, this constitutional crisis resulted in the eruption of ethnic clashes between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The result of these clashes was the expulsion of the Turkish Cypriots from all branches of the RoC where the republic effectively became a de facto Greek Cypriot Republic. In March 1964, the UN Security Council decided to establish a peacekeeping force in Cyprus in order to stop the bloodshed in the ethnic clashes (UN SC Resolution 186).

Since 1964, the UN has had two missions in Cyprus: peacekeeping and peacemaking. Inter-communal peace negotiations between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities started in 1968 under the aegis of the UN.

After the Greek coup d'état and the successive Turkish military operations in 1974, the island had been physically divided into two geographical zones: a Greek Cypriot-dominated south (known as the continuation of the 1960 RoC, which was originally a bi-communal state) and a Turkish-dominated north (the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, 1983, only recognised by Türkiye). Since the two High-level Agreements (1977 and 1979) between the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, dozens of UN-led as well as non-UN-led conflict resolution initiatives had been tried in Cyprus with the main aim of reaching a comprehensive solution to the conflict, based on the establishment of a federal state that would be bi-communal (with regard to the constitutional aspects) and bi-zonal (with regard to the territorial aspects).

The 1993 UN's Ghali Set of Ideas provided a 100-paragraph draft framework agreement: the run-up to the Annan Plan, which produced the first and last completed comprehensive solution plan for Cyprus drafted by the UN and put to simultaneous and separate referendums in 2004; and the Switzerland five-partite meetings (Geneva January 2017, Mont Pelerin January-February 2017, and Crans-Montana June-July 2017), the so-called International Cyprus conference. These have been the most important attempts/milestones in trying to establish a federal state in Cyprus based on the 1977 and 1979 High-Level Agreements. However, all of these initiatives have failed to produce a breakthrough in Cyprus.

The discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean in the last two decades became an added component of the existing conflicts in the region, despite initial hopes that it would serve as an incentive for cooperation and conflict resolution. Of course, Cyprus is not an exception in this regard.

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## C. Energy dimension

The discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean and, more specifically, offshore Cyprus, in a way added a new layer of clash to the already existing complex, multi-layered Cyprus conflict, rather than being a game-changer and facilitating the solution of the existing conflicts. According to Hayriye Kahveci Özgür (2017), these discoveries have led to the “hydrocarbonising” of the Cyprus Problem.

The discovery of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean started with Israel’s Noa field (1999) and Mari-B (2000) and continued with several others, most notably Tamar (2009) and Leviathan (2010). The Israeli discoveries initially motivated the (Greek Cypriot) RoC leadership to engage with the hydrocarbon issues. On the one hand, the RoC got engaged in seismological studies around Cyprus starting in the early 2000s and, on the other, was involved heavily in drafting EEZ delimitation agreements with Egypt (2003), Lebanon (2007, though not yet ratified) and Israel (2010). In 2007, the RoC defined 13 exploration blocks within what it declared as its EEZ and issued its first Exploration Licensing Round. A year after signing the Israeli-Cyprus delineation agreement, US firm Noble Energy started its exploratory drilling in Block 12. Three days after Noble’s drilling, as retaliation, the Turkish Cypriot side (the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, TRNC) and Türkiye signed a continental shelf delimitation agreement. This was followed by an exploration licence granting agreement between the TRNC and the TPAO (Turkish Petroleum). Piri Reis (Turkish seismographic ship) accompanied by Turkish naval ships started a seismic study in northern offshore Cyprus.

In December 2011, Noble Energy announced the discovery of the Aphrodite gas field, which was close to the Israeli Leviathan field. This discovery motivated the RoC to launch its Second Exploration Licensing Round in 2012. Türkiye declared that it would not let companies involved in the licensing to operate in Türkiye and stopped Italian ENI operations in Türkiye in 2013. Meanwhile, on the diplomatic front, in September 2012 the Turkish Cypriot leader Derviş Eroğlu sent a four-point proposal to the UN Secretary General to be communicated to the Greek Cypriot side on the hydrocarbons issue. The proposal called for the postponement of all exploration activities until a solution to the Cyprus problem is reached. In case the postponement was not possible, the Turkish Cypriot side proposed that a bi-communal committee of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots should be established in order to deal with all the exploration issues where the revenue of any discovered gas field would not be spent on militarisation but solely on the reconstruction of peace in the island.



The Turkish Cypriot proposal was rejected outright by the Greek Cypriot leader, President Anastasiades. According to the Greek Cypriot leadership, it is the sovereign right of the RoC government to conduct any activities related to hydrocarbon discoveries and exploitation, and he refused to include this issue as a basis of negotiation in the official UN-led inter-communal negotiations with the Turkish Cypriot leader. Since then, there has been no flexibility on the Greek Cypriot side to discuss the hydrocarbon issue with the Turkish Cypriot side. Instead, the Greek Cypriot side – together with motherland Greece – followed the dictum that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend” and tried to form an anti-Türkiye bloc in the region which includes Türkiye’s new antagonists, Israel, Egypt and the UAE. Türkiye’s relations with Israel became sour after the Mavi Marmara flotilla crisis (2010), with Egypt after the Egyptian army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi’s military coup (2013), and finally with the UAE after the attempted coup in Türkiye where the AKP government blamed the UAE for financially supporting the putsch.

Since then, crises and tensions have increased between the RoC and the Turkish side offshore Cyprus. In 2016, the RoC had the Third Exploration Licensing Round. Following the discovery of Aphrodite (2011), the next discovery was made by the ENI-Total consortium at the Onesiphoros prospect in Block 11 in 2017. The discovery of the gas field Calypso in Block 6 by the ENI came in late 2017. Finally, in 2019 Exxon-Mobil and Qatar Petroleum consortium discovered the Glaucus gas field in Block 10.

Türkiye opposed these developments on two fronts: (1) the RoC claimed EEZ clashes with its maritime boundary; and (2) the Greek-Cypriot dominated RoC ignores the Turkish-Cypriot community in all decision processes involving hydrocarbons. Based on these, Türkiye responded to the Greek Cypriot steps with a mixed set of actions. The Turkish government reiterated its support for the 2012 Turkish Cypriot proposal for the establishment of a bi-communal committee on the hydrocarbon issue. All this time Türkiye continued rejecting the 2003 Egypt-Cyprus EEZ delineation agreement, sent its navy to the region to prevent ENI from drilling in 2018 and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of National Accord (GNA) of Libya in 2019 to delineate the maritime boundaries between the two countries, directly challenging the 2003 agreement. In addition, over the years Türkiye purchased its own exploration and drilling ships, all carrying the names of Ottoman sultans – Yavuz, Fatih, Kanuni, and most recently Abdülhamid Han – and sent them to the region and the Black Sea for natural gas explorations.

Meanwhile, cooperation between the RoC, Greece, Egypt and Israel finally led to the establishment of the EMGF informally first in 2019 and then legally in March 2021, which also included France, Italy, Jordan and Palestine. The EMGF left Türkiye – one of the biggest countries, with the longest shores in the Eastern Mediterranean – outside the new organization.





Discovery of new natural resources can be used as game-changers in solving the existing problems.

Starting in 2019, the Council of Europe adopted decisions where Türkiye's drilling activities in the Eastern Mediterranean have been criticised and called on Türkiye to act in the spirit of good neighbourliness and respect the sovereignty of the RoC. Most recently, in October 2022, Türkiye and the GNA of Libya signed a deal on joint energy explorations in the region.

It is clear from the developments catalogued above that all the bilateral EEZ and maritime-related agreements in the Eastern Mediterranean have not solved the maritime boundaries of the littoral states but rather made them – at least for some countries – more problematic. There is clearly a need for a comprehensive multi-lateral effort/mechanism in order to mitigate the demands of the littoral states on their respective maritime boundaries. This is definitely essential if one wants to change the formula that discovery of new natural resources makes the existing problems more acute to a reverse formula that discovery of new natural resources can be used as game-changers in solving the existing problems. Do we have a defining moment, a new window of opportunity to do this in the aftermath of the blatant invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and with the precedent set by the Israel-Lebanon agreement?

## D. Conflict resolution and diplomatic initiatives during the post-Annan Plan

### 1. Christofias-Talat “Cypriot-owned and Cypriot-led” talks (2008-2010)

During the end of the referendums (2004) until the new Greek Cypriot presidential elections, there were almost no meaningful negotiations due to the intransigence of the Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos, despite the presence of a pro-solution Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat supported by the majority of the Turkish Cypriots and the then pro-solution, pro-EU Turkish leadership under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. After the election of the Greek Cypriot communist leader Demetris Christofias as president in February 2008, a new opportunity emerged for the resumption of the formal inter-communal peace negotiations. Both left-wing and pro-federation leaders, Christofias and Talat, decided to quickly establish six working groups and seven technical committees<sup>12</sup> in April 2008.

The inter-communal peace negotiations in Cyprus were divided into six folders: (1) governance and power-sharing; (2) economic matters; (3) EU matters; (4) property; (5) territory; and (6) security and guarantees. These were the working groups established in order to prepare the groundwork as to where the positions of the two Cypriot sides were – their areas of agreement and disagreement –

<sup>12</sup> Seven technical committees were established in order to solve the day-to-day problems of the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. These committees were: (1) crime and criminal matters; (2) economic and commercial matters; (3) cultural heritage; (4) crisis management; (5) humanitarian matters; (6) health matters; and (7) environment.

on the Cyprus peace negotiations and assist the two leaders in the leaders-led negotiations. During 2008-2010 the two leaders met dozens of times and tried to accumulate the areas of convergences/agreements by tackling the areas of disagreement on the six negotiation issues. They managed to reach substantive convergences in governance and power-sharing, economic matters, EU matters, and property issues. Security and guarantees were the only dossier where the two sides made the least progress as it also required the involvement of the three guarantors (Greece, Türkiye and the UK) in the later stage. There was also a tacit understanding that the territory – essentially the future map of a united Cyprus showing the administrative line between the two constituent states – would be left to the end of the process after the two sides reach substantive progress on the other dossiers.



Christofias-Talat negotiations came to be described as a Cypriot-owned and Cypriot-led negotiation process. This Cypriot characteristic was endorsed by the two leaders and used to fend off any criticism that could come from the nationalists of the two sides who might have described the whole negotiations as foreign interventions – similar to what they did for the Annan Plan. Furthermore, the six negotiation dossiers also continued to form the structure of all the negotiations until almost the collapse of the talks in Crans-Montana (2017).

Unfortunately, the Christofias-Talat negotiations ended without a breakthrough and became the victim of election cycles later. In 2010, Talat lost the election to nationalist Turkish Cypriot leader Derviş Eroğlu. Eroğlu and Talat and later Eroğlu and Nicos Anastasiades, who came to power in 2013, made very little progress on the peace negotiations. The financial crisis on the Greek Cypriot side (2012-2013) and the rise of tensions in offshore Cyprus due to hydrocarbon explorations played an important role in the lack of progress on the Cyprus talks.

## 2. Anastasiades-Akinci “Road to Switzerland, International Cyprus Conference” talks (2015-2017)

In April 2015, the left-wing progressive and pro-solution Mustafa Akinci was elected Turkish Cypriot president and the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community. He and the Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades – known for his support for the Annan Plan in 2004 – as two Limassolite<sup>13</sup> gentlemen came to be seen as the perfect duo to finally solve the Cyprus conflict.

Though the negotiation process was slow, nonetheless the two leaders made further progress in the negotiations during 2015-2016 and, especially with the push of the Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, carried the bi-communal negotiations to a five partite international conference where the three guarantor states were also included. The Switzerland five-partite meetings – the so-called

<sup>13</sup> Both leaders, Anastasiades (born in 1946) and Akinci (born in 1947) are originally from the city of Limassol in Cyprus, which is known for being a port city with intensive international contact and where the inhabitants of Limassol came to be viewed as more liberal than the Cypriots in the rest of Cyprus.

International Cyprus conference – took place in January 2017 in Geneva, in January-February 2017 in Mont Pelerin, and finally in June-July 2017 in Crans-Montana.

In the final stage in Crans-Montana, the two Cypriot leaders were accompanied for almost 10 days by the Turkish and Greek Foreign Ministers, Mevlut Çavuşoğlu and Nikos Kocias respectively, and the UK Minister of State for Europe and the Americas Alan Duncan, in addition to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Frederica Mogherini as an observer. In this high-level 10-day long conference, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres also joined the negotiations trying to iron out the last two sticking issues: (1) political equality of the two Cypriot communities in the governance and power-sharing dossier; and (2) troop size and right of intervention of the three guarantors in the security and guarantees dossier. Although Türkiye demonstrated a degree of flexibility on the rapid reduction of Turkish troops in Cyprus right after a solution and agreed to review the Treaty of Guarantee after a certain transitional period, the Greek Cypriot leader Anastasiades insisted on “zero-troops and zero-guarantees” as a precondition before he agreed on the political equality of the two Cypriot sides. Guterres tried to save the process from collapsing with a final push where he invited all the parties to dinner on 6 December.

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The gap between the two sides in terms of agreeing on common ground and a common vision is too big which prevents the resumption of formal peace negotiations.

The conference, which began on the evening of 6 July, lasted until the early hours of 7 July. During the conference, Akıncı suggested continuing it for a few days more by also including the prime ministers. He also said: "While we were making suggestions, they [the Greek Cypriots] had their luggage ready. Not ours, but their luggage was ready. I guess their flight time was also already decided" (Anadolu Agency, 2017).

It was very clear from the framework that Guterres presented to the two sides that the solution would be reached after mutual concessions from both sides. More precisely, the Turkish side was expected to show flexibility on the intervention right and troop size while the Greek Cypriot leadership was expected to accept political equality of the Turkish Cypriot community without any reservation. However, Anastasiades came to believe that he would not be able to get the majority of the Greek Cypriots to agree on this mutual compromise. Hence, as was the case in the earlier talks, “Anastasiades was suspected of inventing pretexts to stay away from the negotiating table” (Christou, 2022). Guterres announced the end of the international Cyprus conference and Anastasiades instead of negotiations focused on his election campaign, where he managed to be re-elected as President of the RoC in February 2018.<sup>14</sup>

The collapse of the talks in Crans-Montana was not a small bump on the road, but a watershed moment. The 2004 Annan Plan referendums, the Crans-Montana talks, as well as all the other attempts and failures by the two Cypriot leaders in between, created a sense of exhaustion and frustration on the Turkish side,

<sup>14</sup> See this interesting interview to have a better understanding of the negotiations in Crans Montana: What really happened at the Crans Montana conference on Cyprus (2020).



and more precisely on Türkiye, which is also ready to realign its foreign policy in accordance with the new power configurations on both global and regional levels. As part of Türkiye's more assertive foreign policy posture, it started changing its policy – at least in discourse – on Cyprus. Instead of supporting formal Cyprus talks on the basis of a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation, Türkiye insists on the “sovereign equality and equal status of the two sides in Cyprus” as a precondition for the resumption of the formal peace negotiations. In line with this, Türkiye openly supported Ersin Tatar – a long-time “two-state solution” supporter during the 2020 presidential election in the TRNC. Now, President Tatar as the new leader of the Turkish Cypriot community is the fervent champion of this new policy.

After the election of the new Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar, the UN tried to see if the two Cypriot sides have a common vision and a mutually acceptable common basis for the resumption of formal inter-communal negotiations. Hence, the UN Chief Antonio Guterres brought the two sides together with the three guarantors in the so-called 5+1 informal meeting that took place during 27-29 April 2021 in Geneva. Another informal meeting, this time the UN Chief hosting the two Cypriot leaders in a luncheon, took place on 27 September 2021 in New York. In both informal meetings, it was clear that the gap between the two sides in terms of agreeing on common ground and a common vision is too big which prevents the resumption of formal peace negotiations.

## **E. Conclusions and policy recommendations<sup>15</sup>**

During the last two decades, the Eastern Mediterranean has become an important, almost distinct, sub-region within the greater Euro-Mediterranean region. Scholars, statesmen and think-tankers have been mostly studying this region from an interconnection of security, geopolitics, and traditional energy politics. With the war on Ukraine, this importance has been multiplied. However, more recently a new perspective is envisioned for the region that emphasises the growing importance of renewable energy resources. Here, the idea is to transform the area into a region of cooperation and stability, as well as an extension of the EU's European Green Deal. An option is to develop the Euro-Mediterranean region to produce renewable energy in addition to hydrocarbons, finally transitioning into a complete green energy production.

It is clear that the Russian war and its attempt to invade Ukraine have accelerated the general transition to renewable energy on the global level. Europe and the US are looking for alternative sources of energy to replace the current Russian energy (natural gas and oil). One way to substitute Russian energy – in the short run – is to use natural gas and oil from other countries. The other way is to increase the proportion of renewable energy resources in the overall global market, at least in the medium and long run. Here, the Cyprus conflict is an

<sup>15</sup> I would like to thank my colleagues, Dr. Hayriye Kahveci, Devrim Şahin and Serpil İşlek, for their valuable discussions and suggestions for this part.

important issue within the region that has the potential to be a key to unlocking other issues in the Eastern Mediterranean if it can be solved, or at least a more cooperative modus vivendi can be designed in Cyprus. In short, good news in Cyprus, similar to the deal between Israel and Lebanon in 2022, can spill over to or trigger other good news elsewhere in the region.

Although the current situation is not conducive to any meaningful initiative towards cooperation due to the programmed elections in the RoC (presidential elections in February 2023), in Türkiye (presidential and general elections in summer 2023), and in Greece (general elections in summer 2023), nonetheless one should be ready with concrete proposals in order to utilise the window of opportunity that the elections may create after the summer of 2023.

There are two broad veins that can be utilised for future cooperation and a probable comprehensive solution. The first is a general approach that can be termed ‘engagement without recognition’ or ‘overcoming the recognition paranoia’ and the second is more specific and can be dubbed as ‘bringing in the energy’.

## **1. Engagement without recognition**

One important barrier facing cooperation of the two communities in Cyprus is the fear of the Greek Cypriot side to cause the upgrade of the status of the pseudo-state – what the Greek Cypriot side usually refers to as the TRNC. There is what the majority of the diplomatic community in Cyprus calls serious recognition paranoia of the Greek Cypriot leadership in potential cooperation with the Turkish Cypriot side. Hence, the Greek Cypriot leadership should be ready to engage with the relevant Turkish Cypriot authorities through creative mechanisms – sort of “engagement without recognition” similar to the example where the Greek Cypriot side purchased electricity from the Turkish Cypriot authorities after the explosion in Mari in 2011 when one third of the Greek Cypriot power plant was destroyed.

Engagement without recognition through creative diplomatic means, such as the US mediation in the Israel-Lebanon deal in 2022, can change the political climate to positive on the island. There are potential areas where the cooperation of the two Cypriot sides can not only create thousands of new jobs that would make the everyday lives of ordinary Cypriots but also spill over to other areas and trigger a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus conflict. In that sense, a package of confidence building areas (CBA) can greatly change the dynamics between the two communities and trigger a comprehensive solution:

- Opening the fenced area of Varosha to be handed to UN control as a free zone where the two communities can cooperate. Here, the persons, capital, goods and services will enter and exit the two sides freely. This will create thousands of new jobs that can positively change the lives of ordinary Cypriots and create a very positive cooperation atmosphere between the two communities.
- Direct flights for Turkish Cypriots via Ercan airport and linking the port of Varosha for direct trade of Turkish Cypriots with the EU would ease the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community and, hence, improve the political atmosphere more conducive to cooperation.
- Cooperation of the two Cypriot sides on energy can actually be a game-changer and open new and novel venues of cooperation through spill-over effects in other areas.

## 2. Bringing in the energy

Energy and energy security, especially after the energy crisis caused by the Russian war on Ukraine, became paramount in world affairs. Although energy, more specifically the discovery of hydrocarbons offshore Cyprus, has so far played a negative role, it is also possible that it can play a positive role, as the recent deal between Israel and Lebanon brokered by the US mediation demonstrated. The maritime delineation and sharing of resources between Israel and Lebanon can be a source of inspiration for Cyprus. Here, the key is to include energy in both informal and formal Cyprus peace talks – sort of bringing in the energy into the mix.

Some concrete suggestions:

- *Aligning with the EU vision and policies.* Bringing in the energy through EU energy security not only in terms of oil and natural gas shortage stemming from the Ukrainian crisis but also in terms of greater interconnectivity and interdependence for a cleaner energy consumption. To this end, reigniting the energy highways, especially in terms of electricity and supporting the regional renewable potential is crucial. The success of such a dialogue requires a non-exclusionary dialogue since exclusionary policies proved to be unproductive so far in terms of the energy security of the region both as consumers and as suppliers.

The Israel-Lebanon deal proved to regional countries that if there is a will there is a way. Engagement without recognition not only can help bring in a new dynamism to Cyprus negotiations but can

also help create a new Eastern Mediterranean energy regime. The electricity purchases between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have been working both ways over the years even during the tensest moments. This can be expanded as a model for regional cooperation without necessarily immediately leaving the regional power struggles and national agendas. International cooperation on vaccines during the COVID pandemic can also be used as an example for such dynamism since existing practices are not necessarily contributing to anyone's energy independence, security and supremacy in the region. While bringing in the energy there has to be a careful diplomatic manoeuvring to prevent energy issues from being haunted by the long-standing regional disputes. So depoliticising energy is essential.

- *Implementing a bi-communal renewable energy institution in Cyprus as a CBM.* The Eastern Mediterranean, a region rich in solar and wind energy, stands out in the intercontinental undersea electricity connection plans that the EU envisages establishing so that it can import renewable energy. However, any EU effort to realise these plans with a fait accompli by excluding the Turkish side, as happened in the development of the EastMed pipeline project, would lead to new tensions. Instead, there is a need for an inclusive negotiation process that would begin intense diplomacy between all relevant parties. In this context, implementing a bi-communal renewable energy institution in Cyprus as a CBM is of great importance in contributing to peace. Such an effort will ensure that not only the renewable energy sources produced in southern Cyprus but also the renewable energies produced in Northern Cyprus are connected to the planned undersea grid. In addition, this bi-communal institution can spill over to become a bi-communal energy institution and represent Cyprus in terms of both Greek Cypriot (GC) and Turkish Cypriot (TC) communities in a future all-stakeholders conference in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- *Enhanced involvement of the EU and the UN in the energy-related issues in Cyprus.* In an environment shaped by divisive claims and arguments on both sides of Cyprus, the gas and renewable energy debate can encourage mutually agreeable conditions. Here, the UN and the EU should have more active roles to decrease the tensions between the sides and foster cooperation. In particular, the EU should have a more proactive position. The EU can foster diplomacy channels on the basis of energy debate and adoption of renewable energy. Despite the fact of suspension of *acquis communautaire* in the north, the island of Cyprus is an official member of the Union as a whole. Therefore, EU regulations, adjustment policies and funding apply to Cyprus as a whole island. In this sense, the EU should work to promote clear, well-defined policies and projects to engage the parties in the negotiation process.



In order to stabilise the political conditions shaped by the nationalist narratives recently, the UN is needed to re-establish the reunification negotiation process. Rather than leaving the sides on their own, the UN should increase its presence to soften the political environment. The UN should initiate formation of bi-communal working groups on the domestic energy needs. It should be considered within the scope of ongoing bi-communal technical communities. This could help achieve some progress and resume the negotiation process after the failure of Crans-Montana talks in 2017.

In line with the sustainable energy and environmental plans of the EU and the UN, the need for de-carbonisation and promotion of more sustainable resources for energy production should be included/integrated into the infrastructural development as well as negotiation process. The daily lives of both communities, industrial production and business sectors are heavily dependent on effective and sustainable energy production/electricity use. The existing power plants use fossil fuels. Due to the rising oil prices, the energy authorities have the risk of fuel crises as well. In particular, the politically isolated Turkish Cypriot government and electricity authority are struggling with inability to maintain enough electricity for the rising demand. Particularly during the winter and summer seasons, the increased electricity use in daily lives of people causes inefficient supply of energy. As a result, the authorities apply rotational energy cuts every day in order to balance energy production and consumption. Hence, the focus on the domestic energy needs and the energy security/diversification for the EU can be a potential opportunity for progress in peace talks and mutual agreement in Cyprus. Despite development of energy needs, better planning and longer-term investments, current domestic and international factors in terms of socioeconomic interests play an important role in fostering cooperation and creating a relatively more stable political framework. In general, commercially and politically feasible projects and policies should be encouraged for exploitation of gas and development of energy transition.



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