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### Treaty Revisionism in Turkey's foreign policy - a threat to the security of Greece and the European Union

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Artur Adamczyk

## Treaty Revisionism in Turkey's foreign policy - a threat to the security of Greece and the European Union

**Abstract:** Turkey's current foreign policy is based on the slogans of the revision of the Lausanne Treaty of 1923, which established the external borders of the Turkish state. The revision demands of this treaty are particularly dangerous to the security of Greece and the territorial integrity of this country. Turkey questions the limits of the continental shelf, the exclusive economic zone, the territorial sea and airspace of Greece. Since the mid-1990s, Turkey has also begun to question the Greekness of the Aegean islands. The danger of an outbreak of conflict between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean Sea may lead to the renewal of conflicts in the Balkans and thus to the decreased security of other European Union countries.

**Keywords:** Turkey, Greece, Treaty of Lausanne, foreign policy, European security

### Introduction

Revisionism is a term with multiple meanings, but for the purposes of this article, the most important one comes from the area of international relations. Revisionism derives from the Latin word *revisio*, which can be interpreted as taking a second look, seeing something that previously was not visible or examining something from a completely different perspective. Revisionism means striving to undermine, critique and even overthrow existing theories and views<sup>1</sup>. In

1 R. Stobiecki, 'Różne oblicza historycznego rewizjonizmu' [Different faces of historical revisionism], *Sensus Historiae*, vol. XIX, no. 2, 2015, p. 17.

international relations, revisionism is understood as the policy of a state aimed at amending or abolishing existing international treaties. According to Edmund Osmańczyk, this is the term that is “used to describe a tendency to change the status quo by revising the peace agreements in place”<sup>2</sup>.

Revisionism then can be observed, when the existing *status quo* in international relations ceases to satisfy one of the sides, which then begins to undermine and question the legitimacy of the current state of affairs. Usually such state points out that the ongoing situation is disadvantageous, unfair, unjust or inadequate to meet the demands of today’s international challenges. According to such state, the existing system limits its existence, functioning, activity, stifles its growth opportunities not allowing it to achieve its full potential. The revisionist aspirations are also very often a consequence of historical breakthroughs, making big changes in the international system, and changes in the balance of power that can be perceived by the state as an opportunity to strengthen its international position.

Revisionism as an action of the state which is aimed at changing existing international treaties, especially those concerning territorial issues. It very often refers to the duty of “taking care” of the fellow-countrymen living in neighbouring countries. Therefore, the concept of irredentism is often associated with revisionism. It, according to Jacob M. Landau, can be defined as “extreme expressions, ideological or organizational, aiming at joining or uniting (i.e. annexing) territories that ethnic or cultural minority group inhabits or has inhabited at some historical date”<sup>3</sup>.

An analysis of contemporary European history draws attention to the policy of Germany from the inter-war period, which sought to change the borders established in the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. In its rhetoric, Germany appealed to the unjust and unfair provisions of this treaty, which limited the possibility of development of their state, and the main argument for the need to change the borders was the desire to “take care” of compatriots living in Czechoslovakia and Po-

- 2 E. Osmańczyk, *Encyklopedia ONZ i stosunków międzynarodowych* [Encyclopedia of the UN and international relations], Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1986, p. 456.
- 3 J. M. Landau, ‘The Ups and Downs of Irredentism: The Case of Turkey’, in: N. Chazan (ed.), *Irredentism and International Politics*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991, p. 81.

land. History has shown that one consequence of this revisionist policy of the Third Reich was the outbreak of World War II, which was the greatest tragedy in the history of mankind. Observing Turkey's contemporary foreign policy, one can find many analogies to the German foreign policy of the inter-war period.

The main objective of this article is to present the evolution of the policy of revisionism in Turkey since the country's founding in 1923. The author pays special attention to the revisionist and irredentist elements of Turkey's contemporary policy towards Greece. At the same time, the article attempts to emphasize that Turkey's policy of revisionism towards Greece in the Aegean Sea is a massive threat to the stability of the situation in the Balkan region, thus also posing a threat to the security of our continent as a whole. This policy undermines the foundations of NATO's cohesion as the main organization guaranteeing the security of most European countries.

## **1. The Treaty of Lausanne and the evolution of revisionist tendencies in Turkey's foreign policy in the interwar period**

The Treaty of Lausanne signed on 24 July 1923<sup>4</sup> was the culmination of a period of bloody wars waged by the Turks in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, starting with the Balkan wars, through World War I, and ending with the Greek-Turkish war in Asia Minor, which the Turks call the War of Independence. The treaty ended the occupation of Turkey by the European countries and set new state borders. Turkey regained sovereignty over Anatolia and Eastern Thrace. The Ankara Government relinquished the Aegean Islands off the coast of Asia Minor<sup>5</sup> to Greece and the Dodecanese archipelago and Kastel-

4 The representatives of Turkey, Greece, Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Romania and the Kingdom of SHS participated in the peace talks in Lausanne.

5 Turkey retained its sovereignty only over the islands of Imbros, Tenedos and the Rabbit Islands (tr. *Tavşan Adası*) after: Article 12 of the Treaty of Lausanne – the full text of the Treaty can be found at: [https://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty\\_of\\_Lausanne](https://www.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Lausanne).

lorizo<sup>6</sup> to Italy<sup>7</sup>. In Lausanne it was decided that Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits as well as Greek Islands off the coast of Asia Minor will be demilitarized. During the Conference of Lausanne an agreement between Greece and Turkey on the exchange of population was also signed<sup>8</sup>. The agreement allowed the Greek diaspora living in Istanbul to stay in Turkey while the Greeks agreed to allow the Muslims living in the Western Thrace to remain there<sup>9</sup>. This treaty shaped the new political reality in Greece and Turkey. For the Greeks, it marked the end of the fight for the implementation of the “Megali Idea”<sup>10</sup>, while for Turkey it was a symbolic end to the plans to rebuild the Ottoman Empire. The signing of this treaty opened a new era in Greek-Turkish relations, which became more stable and peaceful.

Kemal Pasha Atatürk, the charismatic president of the Turkish republic, set new goals and standards in the implementation of the foreign policy of the young state. The saying “peace at home, peace in the world”<sup>11</sup> became his catchphrase, as well as the determinant of Turkey’s diplomatic activity. Weakened by many years of war, Turkey had to concentrate on solving internal problems and carrying out deep reforms that required it to stabilize the situation and settle relations with its neighbours. Atatürk knew very well that the young state is too weak to rebuild its influence in the former territory of the Ottoman Empire; therefore he dissociated himself from the expansive policy of the Ottomans<sup>12</sup>. He declared respect for the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne and believed that Turkey should not interfere in its former Ottoman provinces. This attitude has resulted in the signing of a series

6 Both of the Dodecanese Archipelago and the island of Kastellorizo were overwhelmingly inhabited by Greeks.

7 Article 15 of the Treaty of Lausanne – the full text of the Treaty can be found at: [https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty\\_of\\_Lausanne](https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Lausanne).

8 In the framework of the population exchange agreement, around 1200 thousand Hellenes of Asia minor were resettled to Greece and 380 thousand Muslims left for Turkey.

9 R. Clogg, *Historia Grecji nowożytnej* [The history of modern Greece], Warszawa: KiW, 2006, p. 123.

10 The “Great Idea” (gr. *Μεγάλη Ιδέα*) – promoted by Greek politicians was the vision of creating a strong Hellenistic country around the Aegean sea, along with territories inhabited by Greeks in Asia minor, with the capital in Constantinople.

11 U. Uzer, ‘The Revival of Ottomanism in Turkish Foreign Policy: “The World Is Greater than Five”’, *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2018, p. 30.

12 J. Paszkiewicz, ‘Uwarunkowania geopolityczne bałkańskiej polityki Turcji w latach 20. i 30. XX wieku’ [Geopolitical conditions of Turkey’s Balkan politics in the 1920s and 1930s], *Balkanica Posnaniensia*, vol. XXI, 2014, pp. 185-187.

of agreements with Turkey's neighbours. Greece, which in the 1930s concluded several treaties with Turkey, including the Treaty on neutrality, conciliation and arbitration, also benefited from this policy<sup>13</sup>.

Despite Atatürk's anti-revisionist declarations, Turkey used changes in the international situation twice in the interwar period to revise the Lausanne Treaty. From the very beginning Ankara questioned the record concerning the demilitarisation of the Black Sea straits, believing that they constitute its inland waters. In 1936, during an international conference in Montreaux, the Convention on the Remilitarisation of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles by Turkey was signed<sup>14</sup>. As an act of solidarity with Greece, Ankara agreed to the militarization of the Greek islands of Limnos and Samothrace near the Dardanelles Strait outlet. The second demonstration of Turkey's revisionist approach to the international situation was the annexation of Hatay Province in 1939<sup>15</sup> when Turkey took advantage of France's withdrawal from Syria and seized the district justifying it with the decision of an alleged Turkish majority living in this Syrian province.

## 2. Turkey's revisionist policy after World War II

Another attempt to revise the Treaty of Lausanne was made by Turkey after the end of World War II, when it hoped to take control of the Dodecanese archipelago belonging to the defeated Italy. However, Ankara's negotiating position on this issue was very weak, as Turkey remained neutral almost until the end of the war. The main candidate for the takeover of these islands was Greece, which after participating in the war on the side of the Allies, was expecting a territorial reward. Its position in the negotiations was much stronger as the Islands were predominantly inhabited by Greeks. Turkish politicians, however, to the very end hoped for the division of the archipelago between the two countries. However, the threat from the USSR and Turkey's sup-

13 G. Koukoudakis, 'The Role of Citizens in the Current Greek-Turkish Rapprochement', Paper for the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Political Studies Association, April 4-6, 2006, p. 4, <http://www.gpsg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/2006-P3-Koukoudakis.pdf> [2018-10-03].

14 D. H. Aslan and B. Selcuk, 'Reflections of the Second World War on Turkey's Foreign Policy', *Kwartalnik Naukowy Uczelni Vistula*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2014, p. 144.

15 S. B. Gulmez, 'Turkish foreign policy as an anomaly: revisionism and irredentism through diplomacy in the 1930s', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2017, pp. 38-40.

port for the countries of the Western bloc forced Turkish politicians to give up these demands in the name of maintaining good relations with Greece and its then protector, the United Kingdom<sup>16</sup>. The 1947 Paris Peace Treaty with Italy granted sovereignty over the Dodecanese archipelago and the island of Kastellorizo to Greece.

Another proof of Turkey's revisionist ambitions was the issue of the future of Cyprus. In the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 Turkey has renounced all rights and claims for the island, recognising the United Kingdom's sovereignty over the island<sup>17</sup>. In the 1950s, decolonization sentiment began to dominate on the island and the Greek community (80%) demanded that the island be joined to Greece (gr. *enosis*) as part of the right to self-determination. The government in Ankara demanded the handover of the island of Turkey, citing the fact that it previously belonged to the Ottoman Empire, and close to 20% of the island's population is Turkish. During the negotiations, it reduced the demands to divide the island (tur. *taksim*) between Greece and Turkey. Finally, in 1960 in London, during a tripartite conference between Greece, the United Kingdom and Turkey, it was agreed that the island would become independent under the name of the Republic of Cyprus<sup>18</sup>. But the future of Cyprus was not yet finalized. In 1974, there was a coup on the island as a result of which the then president of the state, Makarios, was overthrown<sup>19</sup>. Turkey took advantage of the coup and, citing the defence of the constitutional order on the island and the protection of its minority, it invaded Cyprus, occupying almost 40% of its territory. Despite the restoration of constitutional order, Turkey is occupying the north of the island until now. It created a puppet quasi state, with almost 40 thousand Turkish troops stationed there. The Turkish invasion and occupation of the island is a violation of international law and constitutes a standing proof of Turkey's revisionist and irredentist policy. This aggressive step showed that Turkey im-

16 H. Papuççular, 'Fragile Balances: Turkish Foreign Policy on the Sovereignty of the Dodecanese Islands (1940-1947)', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 20, no. 5, 2018, pp. 410-415.

17 A. Adamczyk, *Cypr. Dzieje polityczne* [Cyprus. Political history], Warszawa: Dialog, 2002, p. 77.

18 More about Cyprus in: M. Misztal, *Historia Cypru* [History of Cyprus], Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, 2013; P. Osiewicz, *Konflikt cypryjski* [Cyprus conflict], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2013.

19 The coup d'état was organized by the Athenian junta, which hoped for the implementation of the *enosis* idea.

plemented its *taksim* plan, while the fact that mass resettlement from Turkey to the occupied part of the island is underway proves that it does not intend to withdraw from the island. The Turkish occupation of Cyprus has contributed to a strong deterioration of the relations between Ankara and Athens.

Turkey's aggressive policy towards Cyprus caused tremendous unrest in Greek society, which began to fear that it could be the first step to the occupation of more islands in the Aegean Sea. The fears of Greek politicians were all the more justified because the government in Ankara established an Aegean army within the Turkish armed forces, which was equipped with landing equipment and completely excluded from NATO control. In response, the Greek government decided to prepare the Greek Islands in the Aegean Sea to defend themselves. Despite the fact that both countries are members of NATO, relations between them remain strained. The invasion of Cyprus caused the escalation of further conflicts in Greek-Turkish relations. The Aegean Sea became the arena of a whole complex set of problems between Athens and Ankara. The Turks began to question the right of the Greek islands to have their own continental shelf, and denied Greece the possibility to extend the territorial sea and airspace to 12 nautical miles, in line with the Convention on the Law of the Sea adopted by the United Nations. They also demanded the demilitarisation of the Greek islands off the coast of Anatolia, although they themselves have created an Aegean army. Since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in the early 1990s, there have been several crises in Greek-Turkish relations. However, they have always been mitigated by American diplomacy and NATO countries, which could not afford an open military conflict within the Western bloc when the greatest threat was seen in the Soviet Union. Turkey realised that it was a front country of the North Atlantic Treaty and could not afford to get involved in other conflicts. In a sense, during the Cold War period, Turkey was a peripheral country, which was reliant on cooperation with the US and Western European countries. At the same time it could not pursue relations behind the eastern border for obvious reasons, and it did not want to get involved in the problems of the Middle East. This geopolitical situation ensured that Turkish revisionism-oriented ambitions had no chance of being implemented.

The geopolitical situation of Turkey changed substantially in the early 1990s, along with the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the end of the Cold War. The breakup of the two-block system and the emergence of new republics on the ruins of the USSR, whose societies in the past were under the Ottoman influence, opened up new opportunities for Ankara to form contacts. The breakup of Yugoslavia and the emergence of new states with Muslim communities was also perceived by politicians from the Bosphorus area as an opportunity to shape new relations with this region. In the first half of the 1990s Turgut Özal, the President of Turkey, preached the idea of building a “Turkish World stretching from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China”<sup>20</sup>. Özal expressed the conviction that Turkey should show greater involvement in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia, which undoubtedly would strengthen its international position. In the rhetoric of Turkish politicians, the slogans describing Turkey as the Eurasian state began to appear, and the importance of common cultural, religious and historical values that would enable to build wider cooperation in the region under the leadership of Turkey was emphasized. This direction in foreign policy began to be described as neo-Tomaniac and was initially used very cautiously in fear of creating a negative resonance among neighbours who might consider this activity to be Turkish neo-imperialism. For Greece this direction of Turkish policy was nothing new. Already during the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, Greek politicians used the term neo-tomaniac as an assessment of Turkey’s aggressive revindication policy. Özal publicly criticized the decisions of the Turkish authorities, who in 1947 during a peace conference in Paris agreed to hand over the islands of Dodecanese and Kastellorizo to Greece. The President of Turkey believed that it was a great historical error and the archipelago should belong to Turkey<sup>21</sup>. In his time, the idea of sending Muslims to the Greek islands off the coast of Turkey in order to gradually take control over them began to be considered. It was supposed to be a kind of a demographic weapon applied to Greece, and this idea in Athens is referred to as “Özal’s

20 G. Tuysuzoglu, ‘Strategic Depth: A Neo-Ottomanist Interpretation of Turkish Euroasianism’, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Spring 2014, p. 90.

21 H. Papuççular, ‘Fragile Balances: Turkish Foreign Policy on the Sovereignty of the Dodecanese Islands (1940-1947)’, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 20, no. 5, 2018, p. 405.

doctrine”<sup>22</sup>. In 1995, the Turkish-Greek relations deteriorated even further, as the Turkish Parliament adopted a declaration in which it threatened Greece with war in case it extends its territorial waters to 12 nautical miles. This was a response to Greece's ratification of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which established this possibility<sup>23</sup>.

The issue of territorial claims against Greece and undermining the treaties setting the borders of Turkey increasingly began to appear in the declarations of Turkish politicians. In 1996, there has been another crisis in relations between Athens and Ankara. This time the dispute concerned the Greek islands of Imia (tur. Kardak), to which Turkey made territorial claims. The situation was so tense that it threatened an open war between the two countries. Again, the crisis was averted thanks to the intervention of American diplomacy. The dispute over the affiliation of the Imia islands to Greece gave rise to a series of successive territorial claims by Turkey against the Aegean islands under Greek control. In 1998, the President of Turkey Suleyman Demirel declared that in the Aegean there are more than 130 islands that should belong to Turkey<sup>24</sup>, as their status is not specified in the treaties, and in the past they belonged to the Ottoman Empire. Since then, Turkish politicians have begun to call these islands grey zones of the Aegean<sup>25</sup>. Greece referred to the Treaty of Lausanne, which made it clear which islands in the Aegean belong to Turkey and which to Greece and Italy (in this case it concerned the Dodecanese and Kastellorizo, which were later transferred to Greece in the Paris Treaty of 1947). According to the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey owns islands within 3 nautical miles

22 J. M. Nomikos, 'Illegal Immigration and Organized Crime in Greece', *RIEAS Research Paper*, no. 144, 2010, p. 11.

23 'Turkey and Greece: Time to Settle the Aegean Dispute', *Europe Briefing no. 64*, International Crisis Group Working to Prevent Conflict Worldwide, Istanbul, Athens, Brussels, 19 July 2011, p. 3, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkey-and-greece-time-settle-aegean-dispute> [2018-07-24].

24 A. Paulenoff, 'The Aegean Sea Continental Shelf Dispute: Greek and Turkish Interpretations', *Perspectives on Global Issues*, Spring 2009, p. 3 (footnote 13).

25 Y. Inan and Y. Acer, 'The Aegean Disputes', in: A. L. Karaosmanoglou and S. Tashan (eds), *The Europeanisation of Turkey's Security Policy: Prospects and Pitfalls*, Ankara: Foreign Policy Institute, 2004.

of its coastline. However, Ankara makes claims on the islands which are decidedly further than specified in the Lausanne Agreement<sup>26</sup>.

The revisionist and irredentist rhetoric of successive Turkish governments has been softened with the improvement in Greek-Turkish relations since 1999. Turks who expressed their willingness to join the European Union realised that tense relations with a member of the EU prevented Turkish integration. The Greeks, in turn, hoped that a Europeanised Turkey would not resort to aggressive behaviour and would renounce the questioning of the Greek character of the Aegean islands.

### **3. Contemporary Turkish revisionism as a threat to Greece and Europe**

When in 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won in the Turkish parliamentary elections, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan its leader and Ahmet Davutoğlu, chief architect of the Turkish foreign policy, expressed willingness to continue the vision of Turguta Özala. The new doctrine of Turkish diplomacy was dubbed as “strategic depth”<sup>27</sup>. It was a reference to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, and at the same time it took into account the geopolitical situation of Turkey<sup>28</sup>. In Ankara, it began to be emphasized that thanks to its geopolitical location, Turkey is not only a regional player, but is also a country located in the centre of the world, and as such destined for the role of a central state. Thanks to its location, the country can play an important role in the Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East, Central Asia, in the Gulf, in the Mediterranean, Black Sea and Caspian Sea – it is a strategic Center of Eurasia. According to Davutoğlu, Turkey’s policy to date has been limited to close cooperation with Western countries. Thus, Turkey has self-restricted itself and underestimated its potential resulting from its location<sup>29</sup>. Turkey allowed itself to be degraded to the role of a state that was used in the game of the great powers, which was ex-

26 The Imia islands, for example, are located 3,9 nautical miles from the Turkish coast.

27 I. I. Kouskouvelis, ‘Turkey, Past and Future. The Problem with Turkey’s “Zero Problems”’, *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 20, no. 1, Winter 2013.

28 T. Stępniewski, *Geopolityka Morza Czarnego w postzimnowojennym świecie* [Geopolitics of the Black Sea in the post-Cold war world], Lublin and Warszawa: IEŚW, 2011, p. 45.

29 N. Yesilyurt and A. Akdevelioglu, ‘Turkey’s Middle East Policy under the JDP Rule’, *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, vol. 40, 2009, pp. 40-41.

ploited to promote the interests of other forces in its neighbourhood. The new doctrine assumed that Turkey's interests would be strictly adhered to and that its position would be used to promote its own vision of shaping the international environment as a regional and global power<sup>30</sup>. To this end, Turkey intended to use its *soft policy* attributes that is take advantage of economic and cultural contacts, to gain the most influence in its proximity. Thus, Ankara has started to implement a multi-sectoral policy aimed at its entire neighbourhood. Of course, one of the objectives of this policy was the process of integration with the European Union while maintaining good relations with Greece.

However, with the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2009 in the EU, which especially affected Greece<sup>31</sup>, Turkey began to distance itself from European countries, and its relations with Greece deteriorated again. Ankara increased its activity in the Mediterranean basin, which became particularly evident in the first phase of the Arab Spring. At that time, Turkey was politically involved in particular with many Arab countries, hoping to become a leader in the region and an example of political, economic and social solutions for states touched by the “revolutionary fever”. It turned out, however, that the situation exceeded the capacity of Turkish diplomacy, and Ankara became entangled in numerous disputes and conflicts, including those with Egypt, Israel, Syria and Iraq. Political and military events in the neighbouring countries coincided with the implementation of major political changes in Turkey. President Erdoğan wanted to change the constitutional system to the presidential system and thus planned a constitutional referendum in 2017. In order to secure the victory in this project, Erdoğan and the members of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) who supported him resorted to nationalist and populist slogans, knowing that by playing the national sentiments they could achieve success. It should be pointed out that the referendum campaign coincided with

30 I. Grigoriadis, 'Turkey's foreign policy activism: vision continuity and reality checks', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2014, p. 161.

31 A. Visvizi, *Greece, The Greeks, and the Crisis: Reaching Beyond "That's how it goes"*, Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, September 2016, [https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles\\_papers\\_reports/787](https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/articles_papers_reports/787) [2018-07-24]; R. Pedi, 'Greece in the Aftermath of the Economic Crisis Needs to Change Its Strategy in the International System: Choosing Between Melians and David', in: J. Marangos (ed.), *The Internal Impact and External Influence of the Greek Financial Crisis*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, pp. 143-160.

the deterioration of relations between Ankara and the European Union, and particularly with Germany, the Netherlands and France. The rise of aggressive nationalist rhetoric also followed the failed coup in July 2016, in which some members of the military tried to overthrow President Erdoğan. The attempt failed, and as a result of the purges in the military, Erdoğan took control of the army completely. On this occasion, it was made public that already in 2003 a group of Turkish military planned to invade the Greek island of Kastellorizo in order to provoke a crisis in Greek-Turkish relations and overthrow the Erdoğan government.

In the rhetoric of Turkish politicians, claims against Greece in the area of the Aegean Sea have appeared again. The slogans questioning the Greekness of the Aegean islands started to reappear, and Turkish politicians went as far as to call for an immediate end to the occupation of the Aegean islands by the Greeks<sup>32</sup>. Greece was threatened with the “release” of thousands of immigrants to the Greek islands and accused of discrimination against the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. Turkish pilots regularly violated the Greek airspace, while near the Greek islands of Limnos, Samothrace, Chios, Lesbos, Rhodes, Karpathos and Kastellorizo, an increased traffic of Turkish submarines was reported, which also breached the territorial waters of Greece<sup>33</sup>. It seemed that hate speech would be stopped after the constitutional referendum won by Erdoğan and his supporters on 17 April 2017. One might have thought that the nationalist and revisionist moods in Turkey would calm down and Greek-Turkish relations would normalize. None of this followed. The politically empowered Erdoğan increasingly used the slogans of the revision of the Treaty of Lausanne. In order to improve relations, the Greek Prime Minister Cipras invited the Turkish President to Athens, hoping that the visit would help to ease tensions and guarantee another positive opening for the relations

32 Kathimerini, ‘US stepping in to ease Greece, Turkey tensions’, *Kathimerini*, 1 March 2017, <http://www.ekathimerini.com> [2018-07-24].

33 C. Koliopoulos, ‘From Imperial Backwater to Strategic Minefield: the Mediterranean and the EU’, in: E. Latoszek et al. (eds), *European Security and Stability in A Complex Global Order – the Case of Neighbourhood Policy*, Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2017, pp. 240-241; Kathimerini, ‘Greece complains to NATO over Turkish submarines in Aegean’, *Kathimerini*, 8 October 2016; Kathimerini, ‘Turkish subs in Aegean “unacceptable tactic”, Vitsas says’, *Kathimerini*, 10 October 2016; <http://www.ekathimerini.com> [2018-07-24].

between the two countries. On December 7, 2017, President Erdoğan's historic visit to Greece took place. It was the first visit of the incumbent President of Turkey since 1952 onwards. Cipras clearly stressed that it is in Athens' interest to "build bridges, not walls", demonstrating his conciliatory attitude. Visit of the Turkish President, however, was preceded by events negative for the Greek-Turkish relations. In November 2017, Turkish deputy Prime Minister Hakan Cavusoglu came to Greece and at a meeting with the Muslim community referred to them as Turkish citizens in Greece. The meeting was the reason for the cancellation of the planned meeting with Prime Minister Cipras. In turn, Erdoğan stressed in his public speeches that Turkey gave Greece in Lausanne some of the Aegean islands which are home to Turkish shrines and mosques, and that Greece did not understand Turkey's current situation<sup>34</sup>.

Erdoğan's visit did not leave the Greeks under any illusions. He did not make any conciliatory gestures, but he sent a clear signal to the Greeks that Turkey is seeking a revision of the Treaty of Lausanne, as it is not adapted to the current political situation in the region and is disadvantageous for Turkey. He also stressed that Turkey felt obliged to protect the Turkish population in other countries. During his stay in Greece, he visited the town of Komotini, which is predominantly Muslim, where he demonstrated his interest in this community by criticizing the Greek Government for restricting the rights of Muslims. He also called for the opening of the first mosque in Athens. The Greek media reported that Erdoğan's visit was both belligerent and non-diplomatic<sup>35</sup>. After his return to Turkey, the Turkish president was criticised by the main opposition Republican Party for being too gentle at the time of his visit and not insisting that Athens should return the 18 Aegean islands occupied by Greece<sup>36</sup>.

34 Greek City Times, 'Greeks outraged by Turkish President's remarks: "We gave away the Greek Island"', *Greek City Times*, 30 September 2016, <https://greekcitytimes.com/greeks-outraged-by-turkish-presidents-remarks-we-gave-away-the-greek-islands/> [2018-07-24].

35 The New York Times, 'Erdogan, on Landmark Visit to Greece, Sets Diplomacy Aside', *The New York Times*, 7 December 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/07/world/europe/erdogan-greece-turkey-visit.html> [2018-07-12].

36 Kathimerini, 'Turkish opposition chief challenges Erdoğan over Greece visit', *Kathimerini*, 12 December 2017, <http://www.ekathimerini.com> [2018-07-12].

As it may be expected, all suggestions related to the possibility of the revision of the Treaty of Lausanne were rejected by Greek politicians, with President Prokopis Pavlopoulos in the forefront<sup>37</sup>. The array of Greco-Turkish issues, however, is still expanding. Greeks refuse to deport Turkish troops who fled to Greece after the coup attempted in July 2016 and who, fearing for their lives, asked for asylum. In turn, Turkey has in custody two Greek soldiers who accidentally crossed the border in Thrace during their patrol in April 2018. The Turkish Government declares that it will release them in exchange for the release of the Turkish troops<sup>38</sup>.

Undoubtedly Erdoğan's behaviour is very confrontational, and Greece which is only now coming out of the economic crisis cannot afford to present a tougher international rhetoric, because it is not in its interest. Turkey, which is increasingly distancing itself from Europe, remains an even greater threat to Greece, which is rightly concerned about the security of its borders. However, this threat is not only to Greece, but to the whole of Europe. Any crisis in the Aegean could result in the outbreak of further conflict in the Balkan peninsula, which is home to some fragile, unstable states. The societies of the Balkan countries are still nationally and religiously divided, in many of them Turkey has strong influence, e.g. in the Republic of Macedonia/FYROM, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Albania. Any destabilization in the Balkan Peninsula has always contributed to the crisis in most European countries. One example are the wars in the former Yugoslavia, which led to destabilization causing the economic and refugee crisis in the countries of Western Europe in the 1990s.

Turkey as long as it is distancing itself from Europe remains unpredictable. From time to time, Ankara threatens to break the agreement with the European Union concluded in 2016 concerning refugees and to open its eastern borders in order to allow migrants to enter Europe. Any explosion of the crisis at the European Union borders is very disadvantageous, not only because of the direct threat to the

37 The New York Times, 'Erdogan, on Landmark Visit to Greece, Sets Diplomacy Aside', *The New York Times*, 7 December 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/07/world/europe/erdogan-greece-turkey-visit.html> [2018-07-12].

38 *Turkey using Greek soldiers as "bargaining chips"*, <http://www.euronews.com/2018/04/22/turkey-using-greek-soldiers-as-bargaining-chips-> [2018-07-12].

Member States, their societies or economies. It is also a threat to the internal unity and cohesion of the EU, and the process of deepening integration itself, which is currently endangered because of Brexit and internal turbulences associated with a lack of solidarity on issues emerging within the EU.

Also tightening relations between Ankara and Moscow are very unfavourable for the EU. Cooperation and engagement of both countries in the Middle East undermines the stability and effectiveness of the North Atlantic Alliance, which guarantees the security of European countries. It seems that Russia, which is in bad relations with the European Union countries (most of which are members of NATO), due to the annexation of Crimea and intervention in the east of Ukraine, is now an ally of Turkey. Both countries share a common denominator – the occupation of a foreign country and an attempt to expand their influence in their neighbourhood, which is in line with Erdoğan's revisionist slogans. Both countries also rely on arguments that refer to the protection of their national minorities outside their borders. In the case of Turkey, this is the Turkish population in Greece, Bulgaria, Iraq and Syria.

The situation in south-eastern Europe is extremely unstable, while the previous mediator in Greek-Turkish relations, the US, which has always relieved tensions in the Aegean Sea, has increasingly less influence on decision-makers in Ankara.

## Conclusions

The collapse of the double block system completely changed the international stage shaped in Yalta. Turkey, which was a peripheral, front country within the Western bloc, focused on cooperation with Western European countries, in the new international system is trying to obtain the status of a regional or even global power. The dominant doctrine in Turkey's foreign policy is neo-Tomanism, which means the restoration of Turkish influence in areas historically subordinate to the Ottoman Empire and which, as a result of the Treaty of Lausanne signed in 1923, were taken away from Turkey. This means that Turkish politicians are adopting a revisionist attitude towards the provisions of this treaty. Turkish revisionism, however, is not a new phenomenon. It can already be observed from the 1950s when Turkey

demanded the return of Cyprus, and then its division between it and Greece. As part of its revisionist policy, Turkey resorted to the use of force when, in 1974, it invaded the northern part of Cyprus, which it occupies to date. After this act of aggression, Ankara's territorial claims against Greece had been increasing. They concern the division of the continental shelf, the exclusive economic zone, the borders of the territorial sea and the airspace. From the mid-90s Turkey also began to question the Greekness of the Aegean islands, claiming that many islands are unregulated and are so-called grey areas that once belonged to the Ottoman Empire and should now be controlled by Turkey. As part of the implementation of the neo-Tomaniac vision, Turkey today is not only using soft power instruments, but it is also resorting to the direct use of force, an example of which is the continuous violation of Greek territory by Turkish planes and ships. The Turkish army is also entering the neighbouring countries of the Middle East. This is the case with the seizure of the Afrin district in Syria<sup>39</sup>, or the interventions in northern Iraq. Within the framework of revisionist policy President Erdoğan also uses irredentist slogans, in which he claims to be the guardian of Turkish population living outside of Turkey. This is true not only for Greece or Bulgaria, but also Iraq and Syria. The pretext for Turkey's military intervention in neighbouring countries is to build its security zone in an unstable environment. In truth, Turkey is trying to extend its influence in the region, and gain control over territories rich in energy resources. This includes calling into question the right of the Greek islands to have their own continental shelf where hydrocarbon resources are located. Paradoxically, this Turkish policy contributes to greater instability and unpredictability in the eastern Mediterranean and poses a threat to Europe, while Turkey's entanglement in the problems of the Middle East and its cooperation with Russia are also a threat to NATO's cohesion.

39 The Guardian, 'Turkey claims Afrin city centre is under "total" control', *The Guardian*, 18 March 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/18/turkey-claims-afrin-city-centre-under-total-control-syria> [2018-07-08].

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