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Not only reunification talks: Cyprus' geopolitical momentum.

Nobody knows which kind of outcome the ongoing Cyprus talks will have. Inter-Cypriots negotiations are tight, but the regional timeframe seems no more favourable to an agreement as it was few months ago and will likely produce another stalemate. But this time is different. The isle of Cyprus has reacquired an outstanding geostrategic role in the Eastern Mediterranean and this trend has not to be missed by analysts: geopolitics has re-emerged in Cyprus' waters.

At the crossroads between the European region and the Middle Eastern one, Cyprus -as a synthesis- stands where a series of security dynamics reach a point of interdependence: the Syrian conflict, Turkey's instability, Russian military build-up in the East Med, recent gas discoveries in the Levant Basin, transnational jihadism and the refugee crisis.

As a matter of fact, the Mediterranean is no more "the NATO lake" it supposedly used to be, but it has become the global players' place for strategic projection, as confirmed by the first Russian-Chinese joint military naval drills in 2015. Of such a dynamic, the East Med sub-region, and specifically Cyprus, is more and more the centre of gravity.

As usual, trade and energy can't be disentangled from the security dimension, with particular regard to waterways, encouraging spill-over effects. China's "New Silk Road" project ("One Belt, One Road") passes through the Mediterranean and the South-eastern corner, especially after COSCO's acquisition of the Pireus Port Authority in 2016. In the same year, the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) and India signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in the economic and industrial fields, as well as the RoC and Iran agreed to deepen cooperation in maritime, aviation and port fields. In 2016, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan opened resident embassies in Nicosia.

From a stricter military point of view, Cyprus is attractive since it is a land of stability in a highly uncertain neighbourhood: a paradox given the existence of a conflict on the isle, even though 'frozen'. A deal signed in 2015 allows Russia's military ships for the use of RoC's ports: a vital site for refuelling and resupplying amid Moscow's permanent naval base in Tartus (Syria) and the probable, next Moscow's military outpost in the Libyan coasts.

From Ankara's perspective, North Cypriot coasts could become more strategic than ever, now that Turkey is actively engaged on the Syrian soil. Looking at the Global Coalition against Daesh, UK's aircrafts start from Akrotiri and Dhekelia permanent military bases (as France did after Paris attacks in November 2015), to strike against jihadists amid Syria and Iraq. With the same purpose, the UK have also used RoC's sovereign air base in Paphos.

Whatever scenario will emerge from the Cyprus talks is going to affect regional security. At the same time, a fluid picture regarding Cyprus will be of interest for global players' strategic reflections. Obviously, reunification would lead to a new, federal security balance: the implementation of the agreement, rather than the agreement per se, would be decisive to promote a stable security environment. But a stalemate, after the possible negotiation failure, would become an unpredictable vector of changes, since Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots will likely seek for strengthened and/or new security alliances to preserve their positions and cope with harsh financial conditions.

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