

Power Asymmetries, Legitimacy Struggles and Geostrategic Competition in the Cyprus Question: Reassessing International Law and Regional Order in the Eastern Mediterranean

Dr. Siddik Arslan

Independent Reviewer

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800796>

Received: 02 July 2026; Accepted: 08 July 2026; Published: 18 September 2026

ABSTRACT

This study reassesses the Cyprus question along the axes of power asymmetries, legitimacy struggles, and geostrategic competition, examining within a holistic framework the relationship between international law and the regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean. Refusing to confine the problem within the boundaries of a single discipline, the research is designed as a qualitative inquiry grounded in an interpretivist understanding of knowledge, following a historical-interpretive single-case design based on qualitative document analysis at the intersection of history, international law, security studies, and geopolitics. The corpus examined comprises the 1959 Zurich and London Agreements, the 1960 Treaties of Establishment, Alliance, and Guarantee, the 1960 Constitution, United Nations resolutions, human-rights jurisprudence, and the extensive literature on the subject. The findings show that the dispute cannot be reduced to a simple administrative division between two communities; rather, the matter advances simultaneously across at least four layers—representation, sovereignty, security, and international legitimacy—which, by reinforcing one another, produce a long-lived deadlock. The study demonstrates that the parties often employ the same concepts—sovereignty, equality, security, recognition—with markedly different content, and that a threefold interaction, in which legitimacy is conditioned by de facto power while the balance of power is in turn reconstituted by regional geopolitics, accounts for the intractability of the problem. On this basis, it concludes that a durable and sustainable settlement depends not on the supremacy of one party but on the correction of the structural asymmetry and on the parties' recognition of one another as equal and legitimate interlocutors. Through its integrated framework, which reads power asymmetry, legitimacy, and geostrategic competition together, the study aims to make an original contribution to the Cyprus and Eastern Mediterranean literatures.

Keywords: Cyprus question, power asymmetry, legitimacy, international law, Eastern Mediterranean, geostrategic competition.

INTRODUCTION

The Cyprus question is one of the longest-standing disputes to have emerged in the post-Second World War international order and, despite the passage of so many years, it has yet to be brought to a durable resolution. Although the matter is often perceived as a dispute over sovereignty or the sharing of governance on an island, it in fact possesses a multi-layered structure that simultaneously encompasses such headings as security, legitimacy, political representation, identity, energy and regional alliances. The island's position at the intersection of Europe, Asia and Africa has kept it within the sphere of interest of the great powers for centuries; and in recent years the natural-gas deposits discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean, together with the disputes over maritime jurisdiction that they have brought in their wake, have once again carried the question to the top of the international agenda. Even in the most recent reports of the United Nations Secretary-General, the present period is described as the longest interval without negotiations in the history of the process; this all but compels a re-examination of the prevailing approaches to a settlement (Armaoğlu, 1999; Oran, 2013a; Gürel, 2024; United Nations Secretary-General, 2026).

This multi-layered character makes it difficult to treat the question within the bounds of a single discipline. In legal terms, the Cyprus question is a matter of sovereignty, recognition and the interpretation of treaties. In political terms, it is a matter of representation and the sharing of power. In strategic and geopolitical terms, it is a contest for positional advantage centred on the island. In geo-economic terms, it is an arena of competition over the control of energy resources and maritime transport routes. In terms of identity and collective memory, it is a deep crisis of trust arising from the two communities' divergent recollections of the past (Kızılyürek, 2002; Sönmezoğlu, 2014). For this reason the study approaches the question through an integrated lens that takes all of these perspectives into account together, proceeding from the assumption that explanations reduced to a single dimension will prove inadequate.

The point of departure here is the observation that, in the case of Cyprus, law and power frequently do not operate in the same direction. International law offers the parties certain criteria under such headings as sovereignty, self-determination, territorial integrity, recognition and representation. Yet the implementation of these criteria is often shaped by the political, diplomatic and economic capacity available to the actors. Cyprus is one of the clearest examples of a case in which the normative legal order and the *de facto* balance of power stand opposed to one another. The same treaty text can be read differently by the two sides, and the same event can be invested with different legal meanings by international actors. The question must therefore be addressed not solely through legal texts but also within the operating logic of the international system (Toluner, 1977; Pazarcı, 2019).

On the Turkish side, and in a substantial part of the relevant literature, the first point of rupture in the question is identified as the Cyprus Convention signed between the Ottoman Empire and the United Kingdom on 4 June 1878. By this convention the island was, as regards its administration, left to Britain in return for the defensive support to be provided against the Russian threat; British troops landed at Larnaca in July 1878 and effectively assumed the administration (Gazioğlu, 1996; Gürel, 1984; Uçarol, 2015). According to the Turkish side, this arrangement was not an outright transfer of sovereignty but a conditional and temporary transfer of administration; in other words, the island was an Ottoman homeland left in trust for strategic purposes and in return for protection. Proceeding from this reading, some authors draw an analogy with cases that provide for the eventual return of conditionally transferred territories to their original owner, and argue that the island's legal future should be discussed not solely through Lausanne but also within the logic of the law of lease and trust. The prevailing view in the international-law literature is, by contrast, different: it is recalled that, with the outbreak of the First World War, Britain unilaterally annexed the island on 5 November 1914; that by Article 20 of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne Türkiye recognised this annexation, while Article 21 regulated the nationality status of the Turks on the island; that Türkiye's claim to sovereignty over the island thereby came to a legal end; and that in 1925 Cyprus formally became a Crown Colony (Pazarcı, 2019; Toluner, 1977; Gündüz, 2014). Accordingly, this difference of interpretation regarding the nature of 1878 constitutes one of the historical roots of today's debates over sovereignty and legitimacy.

The period of British rule was the scene of developments that permanently altered the balances on the island. During these years the idea of Enosis — aiming at union with Greece — gained increasing strength within the Greek community; reaching its peak with the armed actions of EOKA in the 1950s, this movement turned the demand for union with Greece into an explicit political programme. By contrast, within the Turkish Cypriot community concerns centred on security, political representation and the preservation of its very existence became pronounced, and the idea of taksim (partition) developed in response to Enosis (Gazioğlu, 1998; Beratlı, 1995; İsmail, 1992). The point the Turkish side emphasises is that, during this period, the relationship between the two communities turned not merely into an ethnic rivalry but into a security problem deepened also by the effects of colonial administration.

A further, less-discussed aspect of the same period is the experience of migration undergone by the Turkish Cypriots. A point the Turkish side frequently stresses is that, over the span from 1878 to 1974, there occurred an uninterrupted emigration of Turkish Cypriots — towards Anatolia, the United Kingdom and other countries — owing to pressure, exclusion and insecurity. Studies examining the island's ethno-demographic structure likewise show that the Turkish Cypriots experienced heavy outward migration over a long period (Hatay, 2007; Gazioğlu, 1996). Within this framework, against the thesis foregrounded in Greek discourse of "settlers brought from Türkiye," the Turkish side sets the demand for the restoration of the right of return and of the

citizenship rights of the Turkish Cypriots — and their descendants — who were compelled to leave the island in the past; and it maintains that this matter should be counted among the essential headings of the settlement agenda.

A large part of the present legal and political appearance of the question takes shape around the fate of the constitutional order established by the 1959 Zürich and London Agreements. Following the 11 February 1959 Zürich and the 19 February 1959 London understandings, the Republic of Cyprus was proclaimed on the basis of the Treaties of Establishment, Guarantee and Alliance signed on 16 August 1960 (Sarica, Teziç & Eskiyyurt, 1975; Necatigil, 1998). This structure is a distinctive model of state founded on the partnership of the two communities, in which the President was Greek and the Vice-President Turkish, certain decisions were subject to a veto right for both sides, and Türkiye, Greece and the United Kingdom were made guarantors. The Treaty of Guarantee, with its fourth article granting the guarantor states the possibility of acting first jointly and, should this prove impossible, alone in the event of a breakdown of the established order, has likewise stood at the centre of subsequent debates. The point the Turkish side stresses is that, in this model, the Turkish Cypriot community was not a minority but one of the two constituent elements that founded the state. For this reason, according to the Turkish side, all subsequent debates over representation and legitimacy ought to be assessed by taking as their basis the constituent-partnership character of the 1960 order.

The partnership order was, however, soon plunged into a grave crisis. With the events of December 1963 — known in Turkish sources as "Bloody Christmas" — the bicomunal administration effectively ceased to function; the Turkish Cypriots were pushed outside the institutions of the state, and tens of thousands of people were compelled to abandon their homes and withdraw into settlement areas regarded as relatively safe (Necatigil, 1998; İsmail, 2007). One of the strongest legal theses of the Turkish side becomes manifest precisely at this point: the 1960 partnership state, it is argued, was extinguished by the exclusion of one of the two constituent elements from government; yet, in spite of this, the Greek side began to use the identity and rights of the common state on its own. A further dimension of this interpretation is the claim that the structure which emerged after 1963 was constituted in a manner contrary to the founding treaties, and that its being regarded — under the name "Republic of Cyprus" — as the sole representative is devoid of legal foundation. Indeed, the use of the phrase "Government of the Republic of Cyprus" in Security Council Resolution 186 of 1964 is read by the Turkish side as the beginning of the unjust international legitimization of the *de facto* situation (United Nations Security Council, 1964; Toluner, 1977; Arsava, 1996). The great majority of the international community, by contrast, adopted a different approach grounded in the continuity of the existing state, so that the perceptions of legitimacy held by the two sides drifted steadily further apart.

The year 1974 is another threshold that fundamentally altered the course of the question. On 15 July 1974 a junta-backed coup originating in Greece seized control of the island's administration; shortly afterwards Türkiye launched a military operation, relying on the rights and obligations it asserted were granted to it by the Treaty of Guarantee. Whereas the Turkish side characterises this step as a legitimate intervention based on the guarantorship, directed against the coup and against the violence visited upon the Turkish Cypriots, the Greek side defines the same event as an invasion (Eroğlu, 1975; Denктаş, 2004). The separation of the regions inhabited by the two communities after 1974, and the absence of any large-scale intercommunal conflict on the island since that date, are interpreted by the Turkish side as proof of the stability afforded by the present security order. This experience removes the system of guarantees and Türkiye's security role from the category of headings that the Turkish side might readily relinquish in negotiations. The security crises, displacements and loss of life experienced in the years 1963–1974 continue to occupy a determining place in the collective memory of the Turkish Cypriot community to this day, nourishing the conviction that security and political equality cannot be conceived of separately (Necatigil, 2006).

The Turkish Cypriot side proclaimed the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on 15 November 1983; by Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984) the Security Council declared this proclamation invalid (United Nations Security Council, 1983, 1984). This picture lays bare one of the most contested dimensions of the question to this day, namely the asymmetry of recognition and representation. On the one side stands the Greek side, benefiting from the diplomatic representation, the membership of international organisations and the institutional access that international recognition affords; on the other side stands the Turkish Cypriot side, which has for many years faced embargoes and isolation in the fields of direct transport, trade, sport and

international representation (Erdal, 2005; Ker-Lindsay, 2007; Caspersen, 2012; Taşdemir, 2021). This inequality has been reflected in the legal domain as well; the property and responsibility cases brought before the European Court of Human Rights have clearly revealed the complex legal consequences to which the condition of non-recognition gives rise (Council of Europe, 2001). The contradiction underlined by the Turkish side is this: the side that brought the 1960 partnership to an end by a coup today uses the international identity of the common state on its own, while the side that sought to preserve its existence and resisted in that climate of violence is, because it is not recognised, subjected to grave grievances and restrictions. In this respect the Cyprus question is not merely an intra-island dispute but an arena of debate about how the recognition and representation mechanisms of the international system operate.

The present picture also reveals how unequal the distribution of power between the parties is. On one side stand Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriot side; on the other, Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration — and this second axis is further reinforced by the supports afforded by European Union membership, by the traditional weight of the United Kingdom and the United States, and by the close cooperation developed in recent times with Israel (Sönmezoğlu, 2014; Oran, 2013b; Litsas & Tziampiris, 2015). According to the Turkish side's assessment, this situation creates a structural imbalance beneath an appearance of formal equality at the negotiating table, and persistently relegates it to the background in terms of the possibilities for recognition, diplomatic representation and the shaping of international public opinion. At the same time, the same picture also shows that, as the island's strategic value grows, the interests of the parties do not always coincide. As the competition for energy and influence in the Eastern Mediterranean deepens, the possibility that the priorities of actors who appear today to be on the same axis may diverge in the future constitutes an important question mark over the future of the regional order.

The European Union dimension has rendered this asymmetry still more visible. Without a comprehensive settlement having been reached, the Greek Cypriot Administration became a member of the European Union on 1 May 2004, on the assumption that it represented the island as a whole. Yet in the referendum put to popular vote in April of the same year, in the Annan Plan, approximately two-thirds of the Turkish Cypriot voters said "yes," while three-quarters of the Greek Cypriot voters said "no" (Özersay, 2010; United Nations, 2004). Membership, while covering the island as a whole, was realised by means of Protocol No. 10, which provides for the de facto suspension of the Union *acquis* in the north; the de facto division thus also acquired a legal mould (Protocol No. 10 on Cyprus, 2003). According to the Turkish side, rewarding with membership the side that rejected the settlement is contrary both to the spirit of the founding treaties and to the fundamental approach that states bearing a dispute should not be admitted to the Union, and it has permanently upset the negotiating balance in favour of the Greek side. With membership the question turned to a large extent into a Türkiye–European Union matter; whether the Union's conditionality policy encourages a settlement or, on the contrary, consolidates de facto division has become one of the principal topics of academic debate (Faustmann, 2008; Tocci, 2004; Nugent, 2006).

The Turkish side's cautious attitude in this process is also closely bound up with the long history of relations between Türkiye and the European Union. The association established by the 1963 Ankara Agreement, the 1970 Additional Protocol and the 1995 Customs Union created a sequence of expectations extending up to the opening of full-membership negotiations in 2004. Yet, according to the Turkish side's assessment, the gains promised in return for these steps were often postponed, suspended on various pretexts, or made conditional anew (Oran, 2013b; Faustmann, 2008). This experience leads to a reserved approach, at the Cyprus table, towards such inducements offered to Türkiye as "updating the customs union, visa liberalisation, or the opening of certain negotiating chapters." From the Turkish side's standpoint, the real problem is the apprehension that promises not tied to concrete and irreversible guarantees may be reconsidered once a concession has been obtained. In this respect the Cyprus file is not merely a search for intra-island compromise but also a domain in which the crisis of trust in Türkiye–European Union relations is reflected.

The most decisive factor in the transformation of the question over the past twenty years has been the energy competition in the Eastern Mediterranean. The natural-gas reserves discovered in the region have brought to the agenda the disputes over the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas and new security cooperations. The energy partnerships developed among Israel, Egypt, Greece and the Greek Cypriot Administration are assessed by the Turkish side as arrangements that exclude Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriots (Erçakıca, 2021; Karbuz,

2018; Winrow, 2020; Yorulmazlar & Çelik, 2021). Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriot side maintain that the resources around the island are the common asset not of the Greek side alone but of the two communities, and

that the Turkish Cypriots must therefore take part in the revenue and decision-making processes. Within this framework energy diplomacy and the Cyprus question have become intertwined; owing to its position with respect to energy corridors and maritime transport routes, the island has settled at the centre of regional competition. The increasing weight of Israel in the region in the recent period likewise stands out as a new variable closely watched in the island's strategic equation. Thus Cyprus has ceased to be a problem explicable solely through historical claims of right or debates over the constitutional order, and has turned into an arena of strategic struggle over how the regional order will take shape.

The latest phase in the history of negotiations clearly shows how these tensions of power and legitimacy have become concrete. The conference convened in the summer of 2017 at Crans-Montana in Switzerland was regarded as one of the moments at which a settlement was most closely approached; yet it remained inconclusive because of the deep differences of view under the headings of security, guarantees and territory (United Nations Secretary-General, 2017; Gürel, 2024). According to the Turkish side's reading, it displayed flexibility on this occasion to a degree not previously seen; the Greek side, by contrast, did not relinquish its demands for the immediate ending of the guarantorship and the removal of the safeguards. The framework set out by the United Nations Secretary-General around six headings likewise did not suffice to reconcile the parties, and the conference broke up. From the Turkish side's standpoint, Crans-Montana is assessed as an example in which the flexibility displayed yielded no return, and in which each step taken was converted into the starting point for fresh demands in the following round.

The failure of Crans-Montana led to a marked change in the Turkish side's approach. From the informal 5+1 meeting held in Geneva in April 2021 onwards, Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriot side began to foreground "sovereign equality" and "equal international status" as a precondition for the commencement of negotiations (Taşdemir, 2021; Gürel, 2024). The rationale of this approach is the assessment that federation-based talks have yielded no result for decades and that a partnership established without securing communal equality cannot be sustained. In the same period Türkiye, in its addresses to the United Nations General Assembly, reiterated its calls for the recognition of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. From the Turkish side's standpoint, this phase is seen as a period in which the initiative was, after many years, to some extent regained.

The present stage of the process likewise proceeds along the same line. The Turkish Cypriot leader Tufan Erhürman, who took office in October 2025, put forward a methodology document encompassing, among other principles, sovereign equality for the resumption of talks; he stipulated that the options for a settlement should not be circumscribed in advance and that the rules of negotiation should be clarified from the outset. The Greek side, by contrast, defends a framework that takes as its basis the continuity of the existing, internationally recognised state, the principle of a single sovereignty, single identity and single citizenship, the implementation of the four fundamental freedoms, and the ending of the guarantorship. The Turkish side reads this framework as an approach aimed at dissolving, beneath the appearance of a federation, its own political identity and its constituent-partnership status. The Personal Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, María Ángela Holguín, for her part, is continuing her contacts towards the convening of an expanded 5+1 conference and the fuller involvement of the European Union in the process (United Nations, 2025; United Nations Secretary-General, 2026). The Turkish side's reservation at this point is its distrust of the durability of a compromise not tied to concrete and irreversible guarantees.

This historical and current picture is analysed in the study through three fundamental concepts. The first of these is power asymmetry, which denotes the parties' inequality not only in military, economic and diplomatic capacity but also in their possibilities for generating international recognition and representation (Keohane & Nye, 2012). The second is the struggle for legitimacy, which expresses the parties' effort to have their own political and legal theses accepted at the international level. This concept is directly related to the extensive literature examining the position within the international system of unrecognised or partially recognised political entities (Pegg, 1998; Caspersen, 2012; Ker-Lindsay, 2012). The third is geostrategic competition, which encompasses the struggle waged in the Eastern Mediterranean in the fields of energy, security and influence (Sönmezoğlu, 2014). These three concepts are not independent of one another: the parties' search for

legitimacy is affected by power relations, while the balances of power are in turn reshaped by regional geostrategic developments. The concepts in question will be employed, in the sections that follow, within an integrated framework of analysis.

The study addresses this framework through a document analysis grounded in a qualitative research method. International treaties, constitutional documents, United Nations resolutions, European Union texts, decisions of international courts and the academic accumulation in the field are evaluated together; events are examined not merely as a chronological sequence but together with the political and legal context in which they arose. In this way historical-process analysis and comparative evaluation are brought together, and the sources on which the parties' differing interpretations of the same event rest are rendered visible. The aim is not to repeat the political discourse of any party but to set out and discuss the historical and legal foundations of the theses advanced.

Within this framework the principal research question is formulated as follows: how does the relationship among international-law norms, struggles for legitimacy and power asymmetries in the Cyprus question affect the shaping of the regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean? Four subsidiary questions accompany this principal question. The first is which historical events and legal documents the Turkish side's theses on sovereign equality, security and representation rest upon. The second is in what respects the matter of international recognition and representation has shaped the negotiation processes. The third is how the policies of the European Union and of other external actors have been reflected in the balance of power between the parties. The fourth is in what respects the energy and security competition in the Eastern Mediterranean has transformed the Cyprus question.

The principal hypothesis is that, in the Cyprus question, the manner in which international-law norms are applied is significantly affected by the power asymmetries between the parties and by the strategic preferences of external actors. Four subsidiary hypotheses are attached to this hypothesis. According to the first, the Turkish side's theses on sovereign equality, security and representation are supported by particular historical events and legal texts. According to the second, the structural differences in the field of recognition and representation directly affect the negotiation processes. According to the third, the policies of the European Union and of other external actors produce outcomes that alter the balance between the parties. According to the fourth, the rising energy and security competition in the Eastern Mediterranean removes the Cyprus question from the category of an island dispute and turns it into one of the central elements of the regional order. These hypotheses will be tested, in the sections that follow, in the light of historical documents and current developments.

To summarise briefly, this article investigates how the tension between law and power operates, in the case of Cyprus, through struggles over legitimacy and representation, and the effects of this on the Eastern Mediterranean order. The study is expected to make several contributions to the field. First, rather than recounting the Cyprus question as a sequence of events, it proposes an integrated framework of analysis that combines the concepts of power asymmetry, the struggle for legitimacy and geostrategic competition. Second, it systematically examines the Turkish side's theses on security, representation, sovereign equality and international status, together with the historical events and legal documents on which these theses rest, evaluating contested claims by tying them to their sources. Third, it sets out how the energy and security transformations in the Eastern Mediterranean have reshaped the question. Fourth, it renders visible, through a concrete example, the interaction between international-law norms and power relations. Fifth, it analyses the negotiation processes not merely as a diplomatic bargain but also as a struggle over legitimacy and representation. Sixth, by treating the current phase of negotiations (the debates over sovereign equality after Crans-Montana and the expanded 5+1 process) together with its historical background, it fills a current gap in the literature. Finally, it aims to offer, for both academic circles and decision-makers, a comprehensive assessment that links the historical roots of the question with its current dynamics. In this way the study is expected to broaden the existing scholarly accumulation on Cyprus and to render more visible the effects of the changing regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean on the island question.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarship on the Cyprus question constitutes a voluminous yet methodologically fragmented body of work that plainly demonstrates the difficulty of confining the issue within the boundaries of any single discipline. What this literature shares in common is its reading of the dispute on the island not merely as an internal disagreement between two communities, but as a knot at which such layers as colonialism, nationalism, self-determination, security, international law, and great-power rivalry intersect (Gürel, 1984, 1985; Kızılyürek, 2002; Armaoğlu, 1999). At the same time, the most conspicuous feature of the literature is that the same chain of events is narrated in diametrically opposed ways by the respective sides. Whereas the Greek Cypriot literature foregrounds chiefly the Enosis movement, anti-colonial resistance, and the majority's right to self-determination, the Turkish literature places at its centre security concerns, political equality, the protection of co-founding partnership rights, and the question of safeguarding the community's physical existence (Alasya, 1988; Gazioğlu, 1996; Hasgüler, 2000). A substantial portion of Cyprus studies has thus been shaped less around an objective historical account than around competing historical narratives. This means that every scholarly assessment of the problem also implicitly carries within it a contest over legitimacy.

This polarization in historiography has also acquired a theoretical dimension as collective-memory and identity studies have increasingly permeated the Cyprus literature. Many scholars stress that the two communities' possession of radically divergent ways of remembering the past has rendered settlement processes difficult well beyond the level of technical negotiation (Kızılyürek, 2002; Volkan, 2008; Bryant, 2010). It is noted in particular that the developments experienced from the 1950s onward shaped the political psychology of both communities in a lasting manner, so that present-day negotiating postures can be understood only through historical experience (Anastasiou, 2008). According to studies that take the theses of the Turkish side as their point of departure, this memory is not merely a symbolic matter; the violence, siege, and displacement to which the Turkish Cypriots were subjected after 1963 elevated the community's perception of security to an existential plane and constituted the true source of today's demands regarding the guarantee system and political equality (İsmail, 2007; Eroğlu, 1975). In this respect, history and law are frequently intertwined in the literature; differences in the interpretation of the past directly establish the ground for the present-day debates over sovereignty and representation.

A significant part of the studies focusing on the historical origins of the issue treats the Cyprus Convention, signed in 1878 between the Ottoman Empire and the United Kingdom, as a decisive turning point (Gazioğlu, 1994; Uçarol, 2015; Armaoğlu, 1999). According to an interpretation widely defended in the Turkish literature, the 1878 arrangement was not a transfer of ownership of the island but rather a temporary cession of its administration to Britain, conditional and for specific strategic purposes, with Ottoman sovereignty reserved. Authors who adopt this approach point to the balance of protection and interest secured by the convention, to the fiscal arrangements agreed upon, and to the island's use as a base, in order to argue that the cession bore a limited and conditional character from the outset (Gazioğlu, 1996; Necatigil, 1998). On this reading, the legal fate of the island is open to discussion not solely through the Treaty of Lausanne but also within the conceptual framework of the law of trusteeship and lease. By contrast, other jurists and historians maintain that, particularly after 1923, the question of sovereignty was carried onto a new treaty basis and that the legal consequences of 1878 must be reassessed within that framework (Pazarcı, 2019; Meray, 1975a). The long persistence of this divergence shows that determining the starting date is a choice with not merely historical but directly legal consequences.

Studies examining the period of British administration reveal that the demographic, economic, and political transformations on the island laid the substructure for the subsequent conflicts (Gürel, 1984; Gazioğlu, 1998). These works treat in detail the rise of the Enosis movement and, in reaction to it, the emergence of Turkish Cypriot political organization and of the idea of partition (taksim) (Hasgüler, 2000; Gazioğlu, 2000b). A point on which the literature grounded in the Turkish side's position lays particular emphasis is that, throughout the period extending from 1878 to 1974, the Turkish Cypriots were compelled to emigrate without interruption to Anatolia and to other countries owing to security concerns, pressure, and exclusion (Beratlı, 1995; İsmail, 1992). According to this scholarship, the island's shifting demographic balance was not merely a natural

process but also a political outcome; indeed, the erosion of the Turkish Cypriot population through emigration is an occurrence whose traces can also be followed in demographic studies (Hatay, 2007). According to the Turkish side, this historical wave of migration brings onto the agenda a dimension of rights that is frequently overlooked when the settlement of the problem is discussed—namely, the restoration of the citizenship and return rights of those who were forced to emigrate or to flee, and of their descendants. According to the view advanced in the relevant literature, against the "population transfer from Türkiye" thesis frequently voiced by the Greek Cypriot side must be set precisely this long history of migration and the rights bound up with it.

One of the most intensively treated headings in the literature is the structure and functioning of the Republic of Cyprus established by the 1959 Zurich and London Agreements. A considerable part of the work in the field of international law holds that these agreements envisaged not a simple majority government but a *sui generis* state founded upon political partnership between the two constituent communities (Toluner, 1977; Sarıca, Teziç, & Eskiuyurt, 1975; Meray, 1975b). In works authored in particular by Turkish jurists, it is emphasized that the 1960 Constitution positioned the two communities as equal co-founding partners, and that such arrangements as the vice-presidency and veto power granted to the Turkish Cypriots, representation in the proportions of 70:30 in the public service and 60:40 in the army, separate municipalities, and the requirement of separate majorities of the two communities for certain fundamental laws constituted the constitutional guarantees of this partnership (Necatigil, 1998; Meray, 1975b). Within this interpretation, the Turkish side advances the view that the co-founding partnership status was eroded over time in a unilateral manner. By contrast, some studies maintain that the constitutional system experienced serious deadlocks in practice and that the power-sharing model was not sustainable (Kızılyürek, 2002). Whichever interpretation is adopted, it is clear that the 1960 order continues to serve as the fundamental reference point in discussions of contemporary settlement models. The guarantee system established on the basis of the founding documents is likewise an intensively examined subject; the scope of the guarantee rights granted to Türkiye, Greece, and the United Kingdom remains contested (Pazarcı, 2019; Gündüz, 2014). While the Turkish literature holds that these arrangements served to protect the security of the Turkish Cypriot community, other approaches suggest that they turned over time into a source of fresh disputes.

The 1963–1974 period is perhaps the segment that has generated the most debate in the Cyprus literature. In Turkish sources, this period is for the most part treated along the axis of the security crises, displacements, and exclusion of the Turkish Cypriot community from the political institutions (İsmail, 2007; Eroğlu, 1975; Alasya, 1987). These studies emphasize that the conflicts produced not only political but also profound humanitarian consequences. According to the literature that places the Turkish side's theses at its centre, the developments at the end of 1963 represent a rupture in which the partnership state effectively came to an end through an attempt to alter the constitution unilaterally and the armed attacks that followed; in this framework, the frequently invoked Akritas Plan and the "Bloody Christmas" events are read as the beginning of a process in which the Turkish Cypriots were severed from the state institutions and subjected to intense violence (Necatigil, 1998; Gazioğlu, 2000a). According to assessments advanced in the relevant literature, during this period tens of thousands of Turkish Cypriots were compelled either to take refuge in secured enclaves or to leave the island, numerous villages were evacuated, and the community lived for years under siege; although these figures vary across sources, the place of this mass displacement in the collective memory of the Turkish Cypriots is beyond dispute (İsmail, 1992; Hatay, 2007). Even though the same period is treated with different emphases in the Greek Cypriot and international literature, recent studies acknowledge that these years are too multi-layered to be explained through a single narrative. Nonetheless, this period is decisive for understanding why the Turkish side's security concerns have persistently remained on the negotiating table; indeed, a significant portion of the present-day disagreements over guarantees and security is directly associated with this experience (Derman & Kurban, 2017).

Bound up with this period, another debate prominent in the literature concerns the changing of hands of representation and legitimacy. According to studies that take the Turkish side's theses as their basis, the party that effectively destroyed the partnership state founded by the 1960 agreements and under the assurance of three guarantors was the Greek Cypriot side, which altered the constitutional order by force; nevertheless, this same side has continued to be recognized within the international system as the sole representative of the Republic, whose co-founding character had been impaired (Necatigil, 1998; Toluner, 1977). According to this

scholarship, the resulting picture is a striking illustration of the gap between law and de facto power: while one wing of the partnership was excluded, the other came to exercise the state's identity, its seat, and its international rights on its own. According to the Turkish side, the real contradiction lies here; for the international community, while refusing to recognize the party that was seeking to protect itself against violence, deemed the party that had disrupted the partnership structure to be the legitimate interlocutor. This asymmetry of legitimacy also constituted the point of departure for all subsequent negotiation processes and led the Turkish Cypriot side to wage a continuous struggle for recognition, visibility, and equal standing as an interlocutor (Turhan, 2011).

The 1974 intervention and the new political order it produced form another centre of gravity in the literature. In the Turkish scholarship, the 1974 operation is generally assessed as an intervention carried out on the basis of a right arising from the Treaty of Guarantee and aimed at protecting the security of the Turkish Cypriot community and the constitutional order of the island (Erim, 1975; Eroğlu, 1975). In this approach, the rationale for the intervention is explained as the halting of the initiative that, following the coup of 15 July 1974, effectively sought to impose Enosis, and as the prevention of inter-communal violence. A portion of the work in the field of international law has examined in detail the legal grounds of the operation in connection with Article IV of the Treaty of Guarantee (Toluner, 1977; Necatigil, 1998; Arsava, 1996). By contrast, other interpretations offer critical assessments regarding the scope and consequences of the intervention; the same event is termed an "intervention" by some authors and an "invasion" by others. This conceptual distinction is itself a manifestation, reflected in language, of the contest over legitimacy within the literature. Even so, nearly all studies concur that a new de facto situation arose on the island after 1974 and that this situation constituted the starting framework for all subsequent negotiations. A noteworthy point for understanding the Turkish side's security discourse is that the literature acknowledges that the order established after 1974 largely brought to an end the direct and bloody clashes between the two communities (Taşdemir, 2021).

A rapidly expanding branch of the contemporary literature addresses the questions of international recognition, representation, and legitimacy together with the scholarship on de facto states. In these studies, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is examined as one of the foremost cases in the literature on unrecognized or partially recognized political entities (Erdal, 2005; Taşdemir, 2021; Caspersen, 2012; Pegg, 1998). The common finding of this scholarship is that recognition is not a purely legal determination but a process shaped largely by political preferences; in other words, whether an entity satisfies the criteria of statehood does not always coincide with its recognition in the international arena (Bahcheli, Bartmann, & Srebrnik, 2004; Kolstø, 2006). The literature grounded in the Turkish side's position regards the Turkish Cypriots' inability to be represented within the international system despite their co-founding status, and the policy of non-recognition sustained over many years, as a source of victimization in its own right (Ker-Lindsay, 2007, 2012; Necatigil, 1998). Within this framework, isolation practices such as direct flight bans, trade restrictions, exclusion in the spheres of sport and culture, and the inability to participate in international organizations are documented in detail (Turhan, 2011; Hatay, 2017). According to an assessment frequently voiced in the relevant literature, the paradox of these isolations is that the party which disrupted the partnership order is rewarded, while the party seeking to protect itself is punished; this circumstance deepens the asymmetry of power between the sides by carrying it from the legal plane to the plane of international representation. According to studies that take the Turkish side's theses as their basis, the legal cornerstone of the non-recognition regime is formed by the Security Council resolutions that declared the 1983 declaration of independence legally invalid and called upon states not to recognize the Turkish Cypriot side; this scholarship has found it contradictory that the said resolutions restrained not the party that effectively dismantled the partnership order, but the party seeking to protect itself (United Nations Security Council, 1983, 1984). The property and human-rights cases brought before the European Court of Human Rights likewise form the legal flank of this debate and are extensively treated in the literature (Council of Europe, 1996, 2001, 2010).

Studies on the negotiation processes show that settlement attempts in Cyprus have a long and inconclusive history. The talks conducted under the auspices of the United Nations have, although producing different models in different periods, failed to arrive at a lasting accommodation (United Nations Secretary-General, 2003, 2017; Bercovitch, 2011). The most intensively examined initiative in the literature is the 2004 Annan Plan process. Many researchers regard this referendum as a historic turning point in the Cyprus negotiations

(Özersay, 2010; United Nations, 2004). Studies that take the Turkish side's position as their basis emphasize that the truly striking outcome was the rejection of the plan by a large majority of the Greek Cypriot electorate even though the Turkish Cypriots accepted it; according to this scholarship, the Annan Plan is the most comprehensive instance of concession made by the Turkish side toward a settlement, and despite this the promised lifting of the isolations did not materialize (Necatigil, 2006; Tocci, 2004). According to the Turkish side, the international community's sustaining of the de facto situation, rather than rewarding the party that said "yes," raised a serious question mark over the legitimacy of the process. The talks held in subsequent years encountered similar problems; studies concerning the 2017 Crans-Montana process in particular reveal that the heading of security and guarantees continued to be the most critical point of deadlock between the sides (United Nations Secretary-General, 2017; Ker-Lindsay, 2015). In this context, the literature discusses such models as federation, confederation, a two-state solution, and sovereign equality; the great majority of studies conclude that no technical formula can be lasting unless the historical memory and security concerns of the sides are addressed.

The European Union's role in the problem is a heading that has come to the fore conspicuously in the literature in recent years. Studies written from the perspective of European integration, while discussing the Union's capacity to produce a settlement, are divided over how membership has affected the balance between the sides (Nugent, 2006; Faustmann, 2008; Oran, 2013a). According to a view frequently defended in research close to the Turkish side, the admission of the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus to the European Union in 2004 in the capacity of representative of the whole island entailed the disregard both of the agreements that founded the Republic of Cyprus and of the established understanding that states in dispute should not be admitted to membership (Gürel, 2024; Erçakıca, 2021). According to these studies, the membership in question shifted the negotiating ground permanently in favour of the Greek Cypriot side and left the Turkish Cypriot community face to face with a structural disadvantage created by its inability to participate directly in the Union's system. Indeed, the effective suspension of the European Union *acquis* in the north of the island upon accession placed the Turkish Cypriots in a position in which they could not benefit from the rights afforded by the Union (Protocol No. 10 on Cyprus, 2003). Another point indicated in the relevant literature is the failure of the conditionality principle; the realization of full membership despite the "no" given to the Annan Plan is assessed as the Union's having expended, without using, the most powerful incentive instrument at its disposal for a settlement (Tocci, 2004; Faustmann, 2008; Ker-Lindsay, 2005). Recent studies reveal that it has become increasingly difficult to regard the European Union as a neutral mediator and that the Union has begun to be assessed not as an external actor of the Cyprus problem but as directly one of its parties.

The literature examining the transformation of the Cyprus problem over the last two decades reveals that the hydrocarbon resources discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean have altered the nature of the dispute. From the late 2000s onward, energy security, maritime jurisdiction areas, and regional alliances have settled at the centre of Cyprus studies (Erçakıca, 2021; Karbuz, 2018; Winrow, 2020). According to this scholarship, the island has ceased to be merely a question of sovereignty and has become one of the fundamental components of regional power competition. The question of the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas has sharpened the rivalry among Türkiye, Greece, the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus, and Israel; the literature frequently offers a depiction of regional order read through the polarization between the Greek Cypriot Administration–Greece–Israel axis and the Türkiye–TRNC axis (Yorulmazlar & Çelik, 2021; Litsas & Tziampiris, 2015; Qasimov, 2016). The assessment prominent in the Turkish literature is that energy projects are often used as a political instrument and that the Turkish Cypriot side, despite its joint entitlement to the island's natural resources, has been left outside these processes (Erçakıca, 2021; Akyürek, 2020). Although some studies argue that joint mechanisms for sharing hydrocarbon revenues could serve a confidence-building function, the existing literature shows that the sides' disputes over sovereignty and representation have been carried over into the energy sphere as well. Energy geopolitics has thus become one of the most dynamic fields of study, carrying the problem out of the island scale and onto the perspective of regional order (Tziampiris, 2019).

When the literature on geopolitical rivalry is examined, it emerges that Cyprus has held a special place in the strategic calculations of the great powers throughout history. Its location at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and Africa has lent the island an enduring importance in international politics (Armaoğlu, 1999; Uçarol, 2015).

Whereas alliance security was prominent during the Cold War, energy and maritime jurisdiction areas have today become decisive; this transformation has likewise altered the character of the studies conducted on Cyprus (Qasimov, 2016; Erçakıca, 2021). In the international relations literature, the influence of great-power rivalries upon small states is a frequently treated subject, and Cyprus is considered one of the most salient instances of this circumstance. Recent studies argue that a significant portion of the deadlocks in the negotiations stems from the differing priorities of external actors (Gürel, 2024). In the Turkish literature there are in particular assessments to the effect that the postures of certain Western actors have influenced the balance of power between the sides in favour of the Greek Cypriot–Greek wing (Oran, 2013b). According to this scholarship, the Turkish Cypriot side is obliged to wage an asymmetric struggle not only with its interlocutor at the table but also with the powerful network of international support standing behind it. In this framework, Türkiye's presence on the island is in the relevant literature most often interpreted as an element of balance that counterweighs unilateral expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean and that secures the physical safety of the Turkish Cypriots (Akyürek, 2020; Denктаş, 2004).

The concept of power asymmetries has become one of the theoretical tools increasingly resorted to in recent Cyprus studies. While a significant part of the traditional studies concentrated on ethnic conflict and settlement models, newer research focuses on the political, economic, and diplomatic capacity differences between the sides. In this approach, international recognition, diplomatic representation, economic resources, and access to international organizations are treated as variables that determine the course of a settlement (Taşdemir, 2021; Turhan, 2011). General international relations theory examining interdependence and asymmetric power relations also provides a foundation for this framework; the established finding that, under conditions of unequal dependence, the less dependent party obtains a bargaining advantage is directly applicable to the case of Cyprus (Keohane & Nye, 2012; Sönmezoğlu, 2014). According to studies concerning the Turkish side, the lack of international recognition is in itself an asymmetric factor; even if negotiations are conducted on a legally equal footing, the sides do not possess the same opportunities in the international environment. For this reason, studies that adopt the power-asymmetry approach place debates over legitimacy and the preferences of external actors at the centre of their analyses. Research published in recent years, by demonstrating that an understanding of Cyprus requires the examination not only of legal documents but also of international power relations, points to the high explanatory capacity of the concept.

Studies on identity, memory, and narratives of victimhood offer a complementary layer for grasping the social dimension of the problem. How communities remember and interpret past events directly affects settlement processes (Kızılyürek, 2002; Volkan, 2008). Studies concerning the Turkish Cypriot community show that the security problems experienced in the historical process have left strong and lasting traces in collective memory; according to this scholarship, security has become for the Turkish Cypriots not a technical heading amenable to bargaining but an existential priority (İsmail, 2007; Bryant, 2010). The Turkish literature also emphasizes that the Turkish Cypriots have for many years experienced a problem of international visibility and representation, and that this perception of political exclusion has produced deep effects at the social level as well (Turhan, 2011). Education, media discourse, and the language employed by political elites are examined as the principal domains in which these patterns of memory and identity are reproduced. The common conviction in the literature is that initiatives which leave out the dimension of social memory and identity struggle to produce lasting results. This approach, by demonstrating that the Cyprus problem is a multi-layered matter experienced not only among states and institutions but also among communities, lends a strong social grounding to the debate over the struggle for legitimacy as well.

Divergences of approach concerning settlement models are likewise among the lively areas of debate in the literature. For many years, a bizonal, bicomunal federation was regarded as the fundamental option supported by the international community (United Nations Security Council, 1999). In the recent period, however, there has been a marked increase in the number of studies on a two-state solution, sovereign equality, and various partnership models. In research close to the Turkish side, it is argued that, owing to the inconclusiveness of decades of negotiations, the existing parameters fall short of meeting the sides' expectations and that new approaches ought to be opened to discussion (Gürel, 2024; Bahcheli, 2007). By contrast, studies defending the federation model emphasize the importance this option carries in terms of international legitimacy and sustainability. Although there is no definitive consensus in the literature on the question of settlement model, it is observed that the disagreements under the headings of sovereignty, political

equality, and representation lie at the centre of the debate. Many researchers maintain that no technical formula can operate unless the sides first recognize each other's security and legitimacy concerns; this, in turn, shows that a settlement is not confined to diplomatic bargaining alone (Diez & Tocci, 2013).

The general assessment of the existing literature reveals that the Cyprus problem is a multi-layered dispute in which the historical, legal, security, identity, energy, and geopolitical dimensions are interwoven. At the same time, a marked gap is conspicuous in the literature: studies that address power asymmetries and struggles for legitimacy within the same analytical framework are limited in number. Likewise, research examining in a holistic manner the relationship between the changing regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Cyprus problem has not reached a sufficient level. Debates in international law are for the most part conducted in isolation from geopolitical developments, while geopolitical analyses relegate the legal dimension to the background. Yet current developments make it difficult to think of these two fields separately; legitimacy is produced and eroded not only through legal norms but also through international power relations. The conclusion emerging from the whole of the literature grounded in the Turkish side's theses is that the Turkish Cypriot side is the party that has historically been excluded, that cannot be represented despite its co-founding partnership rights, and that has been compelled to wage an asymmetric struggle against the Greek Cypriot–Greek wing, which has the backing of Western centres of power. This picture demonstrates how determinative the gap between legal entitlement and *de facto* power has been in the case of Cyprus, and makes it imperative to reread the problem along the axis of power asymmetries, the struggle for legitimacy, and geostrategic rivalry. This conceptual gap in the literature also constitutes the point of departure for the theoretical framework developed in the sections that follow.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

That the Cyprus question cannot be adequately explained by relying on a single theory is one of the few points on which the scholarship converges. The reason is straightforward: the issue is neither merely a territorial dispute nor solely an ethnic tension between two communities. Headings such as sovereignty, representation, security, recognition, identity, international law, and regional power rivalry are interwoven here; pull one out and the others shift as well. Precisely for this reason, the study adopts a multi-theoretical reading that brings together concepts from different traditions to illuminate the various faces of the same problem, rather than confining itself within a single theoretical school. This stance, designated in the methodological literature as analytic eclecticism, recommends using theories not as rivals to one another but as complementary instruments that, taken together, better explain a complex phenomenon (Sil & Katzenstein, 2010). As a requirement of this approach, the study employs nine theoretical pillars. The first pillar is power asymmetry, which renders visible the unequal room for manoeuvre that the parties possess within the international system. The second is the legitimacy struggle, which interrogates who is regarded as holding the authority to speak in the name of "Cyprus." The third comprises recognition and *de facto* state theories, which address the tension between legal status and *de facto* reality. The fourth is the security dilemma, which explains why mutual distrust has become entrenched. The fifth consists of conflict resolution and reconciliation theories. The sixth is the constructivist approach, taken up together with identity and collective memory. The seventh is the institutionalist and historical-institutionalist perspective, along with its extension, the debate on consociational (power-sharing) democracy. The eighth is multi-level governance, which unpacks the European Union dimension. The ninth is the regional dimension, which combines the regional security complex, geostrategic rivalry, and geoeconomics. These pillars are not detached from one another; as will be shown below, historical institutionalism accounts for the origin of the problem, the security dilemma for its escalation, power asymmetry together with recognition theories for the frozen imbalance, the legitimacy struggle for the deadlock, and the regional dimension for its internationalization. Multidimensional analytical models, increasingly used in the field in recent years, likewise propose a similar path (Oran, 2013a; Pazarcı, 2019; Gürel, 2024).

The power asymmetry approach is one of the load-bearing concepts of this study. In the international relations literature, power was long measured as the sum of the resources held by the parties; yet more refined analyses show that power is relational and structural in character, that is, it has to do with who can make whom do what and with who sets the rules of the game (Baldwin, 2016). This distinction is decisive in the Cyprus case. According to structural power theory, genuine superiority derives less from winning a concrete confrontation

than from the capacity to shape the structures of production, finance, security, and knowledge; the party that controls these structures narrows the other's options from the very outset (Strange, 1988). Analyses of interdependence likewise demonstrate that the party that suffers less from severing the tie, or that gains easier access to international institutions, can turn this position into a bargaining lever (Keohane & Nye, 2012). Asymmetric relations theory, in turn, stresses that the difference between the large and the small cannot be measured by brute force alone; perception, attention, and the capacity to produce legitimacy must also be taken into account (Womack, 2016; Mack, 1975). Viewed through this lens, the gap between the parties in Cyprus is seen to arise not from the demographic or military balances on the island but from the parties' differing room for manoeuvre within the international system. A deep inequality obtains in the domains of international recognition, diplomatic representation, access to international organizations, and economic integration. According to a view persistently advanced in the literature close to the Turkish side, this inequality is not incidental but structural, and it works systematically to the detriment of the Turkish Cypriots; for the Greek side is able to deploy single-handedly the institutional weight afforded by European Union membership, by Western capitals, and, more recently, by the new partnerships in the Eastern Mediterranean (Necatigil, 1998; Erdal, 2005; Taşdemir, 2021). On this reading, the negotiations have never truly been conducted between equal parties: one side sits at the table with all the instruments of a recognized state, while the other sits with the constraints imposed by non-recognition; moreover, the side that holds the "structure" of recognition and representation has been able to use that structure to keep narrowing the other's options. The power asymmetry approach therefore serves to explain why the parties seated at the same table do not share the same starting conditions, and why the same settlement proposal is perceived so differently by the two sides. Accordingly, in this study asymmetry is treated as one of the fundamental explanatory variables shaping the Cyprus question (Oran, 2013b).

The legitimacy struggle theory is a powerful tool for understanding the disputes over representation and sovereignty within the problem. In international politics, legitimacy is not confined to legal entitlement; an actor's acceptance by international society, its recognition, and its being regarded as holding the authority of representation are also constitutive elements of legitimacy (Clark, 2005). It is likewise useful to think of legitimacy in terms of its input and output dimensions: a government is tested both by the process through which it was established and by whom it represents, and by the outcomes it produces. In Cyprus the parties have for many years competed not only over the sharing of territory or governance but also over who may legitimately speak in the name of "Cyprus." According to the Turkish side, the state established in 1960 was a *sui generis* structure resting on the political partnership of two constituent peoples, and this partnership effectively came to an end after 1963 (Necatigil, 2006; Sarıca, Teziç, & Eskiurt, 1975). The fundamental contradiction to which the same approach points is this: although it was the Greek-Greek Cypriot wing that effectively dismantled the constitutional order of the joint Republic established under the guarantee of the guarantor powers by the 1959-1960 agreements, the international system has accepted that very party as the sole representative of the dismantled structure. In the relevant literature, the fact that the will that abolished a state subsequently came to wield the identity and rights of that state single-handedly is regarded as a legitimacy problem in its own right (Toluner, 1977; Arsava, 1996). The Greek side, by contrast, maintains that the state has preserved its legal continuity and that it is recognized by the greater part of international society. Two distinct narratives of legitimacy concerning the same historical process thus arise. At this point one must also recall the distinction between legal legitimacy and political legitimacy: the former is measured by conformity to the norms of international law, the latter by the capacity for international acceptance and representation, and the two do not always coincide. According to the Turkish side, the current order of representation, even if politically recognized, does not reflect the reality of the constituent partnership (Erdal, 2005; Arsava, 1996). For this reason, the legitimacy struggle theory also explains why the parties ascribe such different meanings to the past; for here the interpretation of the past is not a matter of historiographical preference but the principal foundation of present-day political and legal positions.

Recognition and *de facto* state theories occupy a central place in the analysis of the disputes over statehood, sovereignty, and exclusion in Cyprus. There are two classic approaches to the emergence of a state in international law. According to the constitutive theory, an entity becomes a state only when it is recognized by others; according to the declaratory theory, statehood depends on the fulfilment of certain objective criteria, independently of recognition. The criteria enumerated in the 1933 Montevideo Convention are a permanent

population, a defined territory, effective government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states (Montevideo Convention, 1933; Crawford, 2006). The declaratory theory and the principle of effectiveness on which it rests provide direct grounds for the Turkish side's thesis: on this reading, Northern Cyprus *de facto* satisfies the objective criteria of statehood, and the fact that it remains unrecognized does not extinguish its existence. Non-recognition theory likewise shows that in such cases legal criteria are not determinative on their own; power balances, strategic interests, and diplomatic preferences also steer the process of recognition (Caspersen, 2012; Pegg, 1998; Bahcheli, Bartmann, & Srebrnik, 2004). The case of Northern Cyprus is one of the most frequently studied in this literature, and it is often examined comparatively alongside unrecognized entities such as Abkhazia or Transnistria (Taşdemir, 2021). According to a view widely defended in the literature close to the Turkish side, the prevailing posture of international society substantially narrows the Turkish Cypriots' opportunities for representation and visibility; the restrictions in such fields as direct trade, transport, sport, and diplomatic contact produce not only economic but also social and psychological consequences (Erdal, 2005; Taşdemir, 2021; Ker-Lindsay, 2007). The point this reading underscores is the following: these restrictions are not the outcome of a self-operating process but the product of an active foreign policy aimed at preventing recognition. The counter-secession literature demonstrates that certain states expend systematic effort to block the recognition of contested political entities (Ker-Lindsay, 2012). From the Turkish side's vantage point this framework is familiar; for it is argued that the Greek-Greek Cypriot wing, with the support of Western power centres, has step by step circumscribed the Turkish Cypriots' international contact. A frequently overlooked dimension of this debate over representation is that of population and belonging. Studies close to the Turkish side stress that the Turks of the island emigrated *en masse* between 1878 and 1974 owing to fear, oppression, and exclusion; that, for this reason, a significant portion of the Cypriot-origin population now dispersed across the world is composed of Turkish Cypriots; and that the rights of return and citizenship of this body of people should be counted as part of any settlement (Gazioğlu, 1996; Hatay, 2007, 2017). By contrast, the great majority of international organizations and states continue to take the existing practice of recognition as their basis. Between legal norms and political realities there thus arises a tension that the literature often labels the "paradox of recognition." For this reason, in this study recognition is treated not merely as a technical question of law but as an arena in which struggles over power and legitimacy are waged.

The security dilemma approach is indispensable for understanding why the problem is so resistant to resolution. The security dilemma describes the vicious circle that arises when a step a party takes to enhance its own security is perceived by the other party as a threat, and this in turn triggers fresh counter-measures (Jervis, 1978). It is noted that in ethnic and intercommunal conflicts this circle becomes especially acute, because in settings where central authority has dissolved each party reads the other's intentions through the worst-case possibility (Posen, 1993). The mutual distrust that rose in Cyprus from the 1950s onward can be explained precisely through this framework. Yet to explain the Turkish side's security concern solely through an abstract dilemma would be incomplete; this concern has a concrete historical basis. The relevant literature recounts that during the 1963-1974 period the Turkish Cypriots were excluded from state institutions; that attacks on residential areas, forced displacements, and acts of mass violence occurred; and that in this process tens of thousands of people lost their lives or were displaced (İsmail, 1992; Eroğlu, 1975; Gazioğlu, 2000a). The same literature draws attention to the fact that between 1878 and 1960 as well, the island's Turks emigrated *en masse* to Anatolia and to other countries on account of fear, exclusion, and oppression (Gazioğlu, 1996). These experiences have made security an existential matter in the collective memory of the Turkish side. Another strand in the literature on ethnic conflict argues that the geographic separation of populations lowers the risk of reciprocal violence, whereas intermingled communities keep the security dilemma perpetually alive (Kaufmann, 1996). Viewed through this framework, according to the Turkish side the separation after 1974 of the areas inhabited by the two communities is the principal cause of the relative stability that has endured for decades; for the spiral of violence generated by direct contact was broken by this separation. Security, accordingly, is here not a purely military heading; it is conceived in conjunction with political equality, effective participation, constitutional safeguards, and external guarantees. According to the Turkish side, the guarantee system and Turkey's military presence on the island constitute a security anchor preventing a recurrence of what was experienced in the past, whereas the Greek side reads the external military presence and the island's division as its own security problem. The security dilemma approach also explains

why settlement initiatives so frequently stall: so long as an arrangement one party regards as a guarantee is perceived by the other as a threat, it is difficult to construct a durable settlement.

Conflict resolution and reconciliation theories open a further window onto why the negotiations have failed to yield results. An important concept in this literature is ripeness: it is argued that parties turn to a genuine settlement only when they find the impasse they are in unbearable and perceive a way out (Zartman, 1989). In Cyprus the parties are seen to have rarely reached such a moment of shared ripeness. Another concept is that of spoilers: in situations where a settlement runs counter to the interests of certain actors, those actors may sabotage the process from within or from without (Stedman, 1997). Perhaps the most illuminating concept is that of the credible commitment problem. Studies examining why post-civil-war settlements so often collapse show that the principal obstacle is not the content of the text but the parties' inability to trust that the agreement will be honoured; for this reason, in the absence of credible third-party guarantees, the weaker party is justifiably reluctant to consent to disarmament or to institutional safeguards (Walter, 2002). This theoretical framework makes it possible to read the Turkish side's insistence on guarantees not as an emotional conservatism but as a rational search for a commitment guarantee; in particular, the experience that international or institutional guarantees have not always served a protective function on the ground has reinforced this caution. The same literature holds that a durable settlement depends not only on the text agreed upon at the table but also on the parties' finding that settlement just. The Annan Plan process is instructive in this respect: the Turkish side, having relinquished certain positions it had long defended, agreed to put a comprehensive plan to a referendum and approved it by a majority in 2004, whereas the Greek side rejected the plan (United Nations, 2004). According to the Turkish side, although this outcome clearly demonstrated from which wing the will for a settlement came, it did not meet with the expected international response. In the Crans-Montana process as well, it is recounted that an unprecedented flexibility was displayed on the headings of security, guarantees, and territory, yet no final settlement was reached (United Nations Secretary-General, 2017). In readings close to the Turkish side, the other side's continual broadening of its demands despite the successive concessions made is interpreted as the negotiations having turned from a search for compromise into a unilateral strategy of subjugation. These examples confirm the basic warning of conflict resolution theory: what the parties understand by a settlement, and the extent to which they regard the process as just, are as decisive as the content of the text.

Identity, collective memory, and the constructivist approach illuminate the dimension of the problem that cannot be explained by material interests. According to constructivist theory, identities, norms, and perceptions are at least as determinative as material power in international politics; how actors define one another also shapes their interests and their threat assessments (Wendt, 1999). In Cyprus the narratives of the Turkish and Greek communities concerning the past diverge markedly, and each community makes its own historical memory the foundation of its political demands (Kızılyürek, 2002). Education systems, media discourse, and the language of political leaders ensure the transmission of this memory from generation to generation; thus the same event acquires different meanings in different social memories. Studies on memory and trauma show that communities keep painful past events alive across generations as a kind of "chosen trauma," and that this directs political behaviour over the long term (Volkan, 2008; Bryant, 2010). To this one must add the concept of ontological security: communities seek not only physical security but also the continuity of their identities and self-narratives, and when that continuity comes under threat, sustaining the conflict can paradoxically turn into a source of stability (Mitzen, 2006). This concept helps to explain why the parties shy away even from steps that would facilitate a settlement; for to abandon the familiar pattern of conflict that secures their identity is itself a source of uncertainty. A further contribution of the constructivist approach is its demonstration that international actors' perceptions of the parties can also affect decision-making processes. For this reason, in this study identity and perception are treated as variables no less important than material power.

The institutionalist and historical-institutionalist approach carries the roots of the problem beyond present-day choices. According to institutionalist theory, political institutions are not merely decision-making mechanisms but structures that direct the behaviour of actors; the success of a system depends as much on the parties' adherence to the rules as on the content of the text. The constitutional order of the 1960 Republic of Cyprus is a striking example in this respect and can be read as a typical case of consociational democracy theory, which examines power-sharing in divided societies. According to this theory, stability in deeply divided societies can be secured not through majority rule but through the inclusion of the communities in governance via a grand

coalition, mutual veto on vital matters, proportional representation, and the autonomy of each community within its own domain (Lijphart, 1977). The 1960 system established on the basis of the London and Zurich Agreements was precisely such a power-sharing design; the provision that the president and vice-president come from the two communities, representation in fixed proportions, and veto powers were products of this logic (Sarica, Teziç, & Eskiurt, 1975). The warning concerning the fragility of consociational arrangements also acquires meaning here: such systems endure only so long as elites adhere to the rules. Historical institutionalism, for its part, looks further back and examines how decisions taken in the past lock in subsequent periods, why the reversal of a path once taken becomes difficult, that is, path dependence; it shows that, following decisions made at certain "critical juncture" moments, the system enters a self-reinforcing trajectory (Pierson, 2004; Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007). Viewed through this lens, the roots of the Cyprus question extend back to the transition from Ottoman to British rule. In interpretations close to the Turkish side, it is recalled that, by the 1878 Cyprus Convention, the administration of the island was handed to Britain only provisionally and in trust, and that, in legal terms, Ottoman sovereignty continued until 1914 (Gürel, 1984; Gazioğlu, 1996; Toluner, 1977). Another thesis advanced in this literature is that the island is a homeland transferred in trust for strategic purposes and should be assessed within the framework of the law of lease and trust; on this basis, a parallel can be drawn with practices that provide for the return of leased territory to its original owner upon the expiry of the term, for instance with the transfer of Hong Kong to China at the end of a fixed period. Although this parallel is a contested legal interpretation, it is significant because, from the Turkish side's vantage point, it constitutes the very starting point regarding the island's future. As historical institutionalism shows, the political and social cleavages that took shape in 1878 form a chain linking the 1960 partnership order, the institutional rupture after 1963, and the de facto division that emerged after 1974; each stage determines the conditions of the next. The Turkish side's demands for political equality, effective participation, and security are also, to a great extent, the product of this accumulated historical legacy and of the experience of a collapsed partnership (Necatigil, 1998; Gazioğlu, 1998). In the same way, the Greek side's sensitivities on sovereignty and international representation likewise draw on its own historical reading. This approach explains why the Cyprus dispute is a matter that perpetually refers back to the past.

The multi-level governance approach is necessary for understanding the European Union factor. This theory holds that decision-making processes are not determined by nation-states alone; supranational and regional institutions are also effective in this process (Hooghe & Marks, 2001). The role of the European Union in the Cyprus question can be assessed within this framework. The admission of Southern Cyprus to the Union in 2004 is a turning point that deepened the international dimension of the problem (Act of Accession, 2003; Protocol No. 10 on Cyprus, 2003). According to a view frequently expressed in the literature close to the Turkish side, this membership is problematic in several respects. First, membership conditionality did not work as expected; rather than using the carrot of membership to encourage a settlement by exerting pressure on the Greek side, the Union expended its strongest card at the very outset by granting membership before a settlement was reached, thereby removing the pressure to compromise (Faustmann, 2008; Tocci, 2004). Second, membership realized without a settlement diminished the need for compromise felt by the Greek side, which had secured its membership (Erçakıca, 2021). Third, and more fundamentally, it is argued that the membership runs counter to the spirit of the 1960 founding agreements and to the provisions concerning the island's inability to accede unilaterally to any international organization; moreover, making a member of an island that brings an unresolved dispute into its body also conflicts with the Union's own principles. On this reading, the European Union has ceased to be a neutral actor affecting the outcome and has become directly integrated with one wing of the dispute. The Union's institutions, by contrast, maintain that the process was conducted in conformity with the legal framework. The multi-level governance approach is a serviceable instrument for unpacking this complex web of relations; for the Cyprus question is no longer a matter merely between two communities or two states but a multi-layered governance arena in which the United Nations, the European Union, and regional actors are involved.

The final link in the study's theoretical framework is constituted by the regional dimension, where the regional security complex, geostrategic rivalry, and geoeconomics approaches are used together. Regional security complex theory holds that the security problems of a given geography cannot be considered independently of one another (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). The Eastern Mediterranean is a typical example in this respect: energy resources, maritime jurisdiction areas, military mobility, and great-power rivalry directly feed one another

here, and Cyprus stands at the very centre of this complex. The island's position among Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East has kept it within the field of interest of the great powers throughout history; this has been the principal reason for the internationalization of the issue. While security calculations came to the fore during the Cold War years, in the recent period the debates over hydrocarbon resources and maritime jurisdiction areas have become determinative (Erçakıca, 2021; Uçarol, 2015; Gürel, 2024). The geoeconomics approach denotes the use of economic instruments for strategic ends and shows how the control of energy corridors and maritime transport routes affects the international distribution of power (Luttwak, 1990; Strange, 1988). The natural gas reserves discovered in the Eastern Mediterranean have turned maritime jurisdiction areas and regional alliances into a new field of contention standing before a settlement (Yorulmazlar & Çelik, 2021; Karbuz, 2018; Winrow, 2020). For this reason, Cyprus is no longer merely an arena of historical or legal dispute; it is a strategic centre in terms of energy and trade routes. One view prominent in the literature close to the Turkish side is that both communities hold rights over the natural resources around the island and that regional partnerships excluding the Turkish Cypriots are unsustainable both legally and politically. The same literature argues that the rapprochement taking shape on an energy axis among Greece, the Greek Cypriot administration, and Israel in the Eastern Mediterranean is of a character aimed at pushing Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots out of the equation. According to this strategic reading, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot presence it supports function as an element balancing the clash of rival interests in the region; the removal of this presence from the equation, by contrast, may produce destabilizing consequences. The Turkish side's theses concerning maritime jurisdiction areas are likewise presented within this framework, as a search for a regional order that foregrounds the principles of coastline length and equity. The regional security complex approach confirms that the search for a settlement in Cyprus cannot be considered apart from regional balances. For this reason, in this study the Cyprus question is treated not merely as a historical and legal dispute but as a strategic matter affecting the future of the regional order in the Eastern Mediterranean.

These nine pillars, taken individually, illuminate different faces of the problem; yet their genuine explanatory force emerges when they interlock with one another. Historical institutionalism reveals the origin of the problem and the lock-in extending from 1878 to the present. The security dilemma explains how this origin turned, after 1960, into a spiral of violence and distrust. Power asymmetry and recognition theories reveal why this spiral settled into an imbalance "frozen" in favour of one party. The legitimacy struggle shows how this imbalance turned in the parties' minds into two distinct narratives of righteousness, and why the negotiations have been unable to find a common starting point. Identity and ontological security explain why these narratives are so durable; conflict resolution theories explain why successive initiatives have remained inconclusive. Multi-level governance and the regional dimension, in turn, lift the matter out of the island's scale and situate it within European politics and the power balances of the Eastern Mediterranean. In the light of this theoretical framework, the Cyprus question is treated as more than a historical disagreement or a diplomatic dispute, namely as a multi-layered problem of international politics. The study's basic assumption is that the issue cannot be grasped through one-dimensional explanations and that the principal reason it has remained unresolved for decades is this interwoven structure. What this framework renders especially visible is that the parties do not sit at the same table under equal conditions. The Turkish side's demands for political equality, international status, security, and representation should be assessed less as items of present-day bargaining than as structural matters produced by a long historical process and by an exclusion actually experienced (Necatigil, 1998; Taşdemir, 2021). In the same way, the Greek side's sensitivities on sovereignty and international recognition should also be understood within their own historical and political context. For this reason, in the subsequent sections of the study the parties' theses will be analysed not merely on the axis of right and wrong but within the context of the relations of power, legitimacy, and security set out here. In sum, this framework establishes the conceptual ground for the analyses to be carried out in the findings section; it affords an integrated reading among historical events, legal documents, and current developments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study approaches the Cyprus question not within the confines of a single discipline but on a terrain where fields such as history, international law, security studies, and geopolitics intersect; it is therefore designed as a qualitative inquiry grounded in an interpretivist conception of knowledge. More concretely, the study follows a historical-interpretive case-study design based on qualitative document analysis, for Cyprus constitutes a

bounded and singular case in which the problems of sovereignty, representation, security, and recognition are interwoven across a long historical continuity. The principal reason for adopting a qualitative approach is that the matter encompasses not only the question of "what happened" but also that of "how the same events are interpreted" by the parties; for among the foremost factors rendering the dispute intractable in Cyprus are the markedly divergent meanings that the parties attach to the same documents and the same historical events (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). In this respect, the study is structured not merely to arrange events in chronological order but to analyze them together with the political and legal context in which they arose. The principal unit of analysis is the legal-political positions and discourses that the parties and the relevant external actors have developed over time with respect to Cyprus. The main questions the study seeks to answer may be summarized as follows: through the accumulation of which historical ruptures has the present configuration of the Cyprus question been shaped; should the power asymmetry between the parties be explained solely through military and economic indicators, or through criteria such as recognition, representation, and access to international institutions; and how does the gap between international legal instruments and their political implementation affect the parties' claims to legitimacy? These three questions constitute the framework guiding both the data-collection and the analysis phases of the study.

Although the study is predominantly qualitative in emphasis, descriptive numerical data were also drawn upon in order to illuminate certain contested points. The aim here is not to construct a mixed-methods design in the full sense, but to add a complementary layer of evidence in support of the qualitative analysis; indicators such as ratios pertaining to population composition, migratory movements, and territorial distribution were employed to this end. Such complementary uses, in which descriptive numerical data are placed upon a qualitative foundation, are regarded in the methodological literature as approaches in which different types of data reinforce one another (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2021; Toraman, 2021; Özen, 2016). For example, population-based data concerning the trajectory of the Turkish population on the island over time and the waves of out-migration from the island after 1878 were compiled from both numerical sources and studies interpreting these data, and were cross-checked accordingly (Hatay, 2007). In this way, the numerical indicators were rescued from being figures detached from their context and were rendered meaningful by being embedded within the historical and political narrative.

The study's principal data-collection technique is document analysis. Document analysis is a method frequently resorted to in the examination of past events and processes, consisting of the stages of assembling within a defined order the written sources pertaining to the phenomenon under study, verifying their authenticity and reliability, understanding them, and analyzing them (Kıral, 2020). The choice of this technique is directly related to the fact that the Cyprus question is, to a large extent, a dispute conducted through written documents — treaties, constitutional texts, resolutions of international organizations, and judicial precedents. The examined body of documents comprises several mutually complementary layers. The first layer consists of the 1959 Zürich and London Agreements, together with the ensuing 1960 Treaties of Establishment, Alliance, and Guarantee and the 1960 Constitution (Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Türkiye, & United Kingdom, 1960). The second layer comprises numerous resolutions of the United Nations Security Council extending from Resolution 186 (1964) through Resolutions 353 (1974) and 541 (1983) up to the present, General Assembly Resolution 3212 (XXIX), and the reports of the Secretary-General's good-offices mission (United Nations Security Council, 1983; United Nations, 1974). The third layer consists of judicial precedents such as the European Court of Human Rights' *Loizidou*, *Cyprus v. Turkey*, *Xenides-Arestis*, and *Demopoulos* judgments (Council of Europe, 1996, 2001, 2005, 2010); the fourth layer consists of the European Union's accession instruments and Protocol No. 10 on Cyprus (Protocol No. 10 on Cyprus, 2003). All these primary documents were assessed with due regard to the principle of source criticism — that is, by interrogating the provenance, context, and reliability of the text — after which the historical, legal, and international-relations literature interpreting them was incorporated into the analysis as secondary sources (Toluner, 1977; Necatigil, 1998; Pazarcı, 2019; Gündüz, 2014).

A point to which particular attention was paid in constructing the database is the pronounced imbalance of sources within the Cyprus literature. In the international arena, and especially in the English-language literature, the theses of the Greek Cypriot side — which bears the attribute of a recognized state and has gained institutional visibility through European Union membership — find far more extensive coverage, whereas the historical and legal arguments of the Turkish Cypriot side are represented for the most part by Turkish-

language sources and by a numerically more limited body of literature (Erdal, 2005; Taşdemir, 2021). This inequality gives rise to a risk of bias that cannot be disregarded methodologically, for an analysis resting solely upon sources of high international circulation risks reproducing, from the outset, the narrative of one side alone. For this reason, the study took care to include in the analysis the comparatively under-represented theses together with their sources; in particular, the arguments of the Turkish Cypriot side concerning its security concerns, its demands for political equality, and its problems of international representation were examined together with the documents and events on which they rest (Necatigil, 2006; Gazioğlu, 1996). The aim pursued here is not to make one side's view prevail, but to offset the representational imbalance in the existing literature through a methodological corrective, and thereby to afford the reader the opportunity to evaluate the parties' rationales side by side.

In determining the study's temporal axis, and contrary to the prevalent approach that situates the origin of the problem at comparatively late dates such as 1963 or 1974, the year 1878 was taken as the point of departure. The methodological justification for this choice is that the roots of today's debates can be fully discerned only by going back to the period in which the administration of the island was ceded provisionally to the United Kingdom in 1878 (Gazioğlu, 1996; Gürel, 1984). Events such as the uninterrupted Turkish migration from the island to Anatolia and to other countries throughout British rule, the strengthening of the Enosis movement, the conflict-ridden climate of the 1950s, the establishment of the 1960 Republic and its becoming inoperable shortly thereafter, can be rendered meaningful only by being connected to one another within an unbroken temporal sequence (Alasya, 1992). Within this scope, the years 1878, 1914, 1923, 1959–1960, 1963, 1974, 1983, 2004, 2017, and the post-2021 period were marked as thresholds, and the effect of each upon subsequent developments was traced through its backward and forward linkages (Sarica, Teziç, & Eskiuyurt, 1975). The selection of a broad temporal range demonstrated that current negotiating positions are nourished not out of thin air but from concrete historical experiences — and, in particular, from the security memory of the communities.

The data gathered were processed through qualitative content analysis. Within this framework, the concepts and patterns recurring in the documents were first identified and were subsequently clustered under principal themes such as sovereignty, representation, security, recognition, the right of intervention, power asymmetry, energy competition, and regional order (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021; Baltacı, 2019). Coding was carried out not in a single pass but iteratively, moving back and forth among the sources; in this way, the themes initially identified were revised as they were confronted with the data. The distinctive aspect of the analysis is that opposing readings of the same event were evaluated side by side. For instance, just as the events between 1963 and 1974 are named differently and attributed to different causes in the Turkish and Greek Cypriot literatures, these differing accounts were coded separately and compared. The same method was applied to the mutually contradictory interpretations concerning the legal character of the 1974 intervention (Arsava, 1996; Toluner, 1977). Throughout the research, the veracity of no claim was accepted in advance; the document, legal ground, and political context on which each thesis rests were weighed together in the evaluation.

A further means of strengthening the analysis is comparative examination. The positions of actors such as Türkiye, the TRNC, Greece, the Greek Cypriot Administration, the European Union, the United Nations, the United Kingdom, and the United States were compared within the same framework; not only official statements but also these actors' consistent or shifting attitudes spread over a long period were taken into account (Sönmezoğlu, 2014). Comparison proved particularly illuminating in the debates over legitimacy and representation, for one of the most striking features of the Cyprus question is that the parties can derive diametrically opposed conclusions from the same legal text (Necatigil, 2006). In the same manner, the way in which the new balances of power that emerged following the natural-gas discoveries in the Eastern Mediterranean reshaped the actors' policies was likewise addressed comparatively (Erçakıca, 2021; Gürel, 2024). It was thus demonstrated that the problem is not confined to the island alone but forms part of a broad equation bound up with regional and global balances.

Since not only the events themselves but also the manner in which these events are named fell within the study's field of interest, discourse analysis was likewise drawn upon. The way in which concepts such as "sovereignty," "occupation," "intervention," "peace operation," "partnership state," "founding equality," "recognition," "isolation," and "international legitimacy" are invested with meaning by different actors was

examined; the security- and political-equality-centered language of the Turkish side was compared with the state-continuity- and international-recognition-centered language of the Greek Cypriot side (Pazarcı, 2019; Necatigil, 1998). Such a reading also carries an interpretive-phenomenological sensibility, in that it focuses on how the parties experience and make sense of the same reality from within their own lived experience (Tekindal & Uğuz Arsu, 2020). The change of these concepts over time was likewise traced; the shifts between the language used after 1960 and the discourses of "sovereign equality" and "equal international status" that came to the fore around the 2004 Annan Plan and after 2021 were assessed. In this way, it was brought to light that the dispute possesses not only a factual but also a conceptual and intellectual dimension.

In the study, power asymmetry was evaluated in a multidimensional manner, without being reduced to military capacity in the narrow sense. The parties' level of international recognition, their diplomatic representation capacity, their standing within international organizations, and their possibility of access to legal mechanisms were deemed as determinative as military and economic indicators (Keohane & Nye, 2012). In the light of these criteria, the claims of international isolation and lack of representation long voiced by the Turkish Cypriot side, and the institutional superiority obtained by the Greek Cypriot side following European Union membership, were analyzed comparatively (European Council, 2002). The Annan Plan process, the Crans-Montana negotiations, and recent diplomatic initiatives were treated as exemplary cases illustrating how this asymmetry has been reflected at the negotiating table (United Nations Secretary-General, 2017). This approach afforded the opportunity to render concrete, at the methodological level, the power–legitimacy relationship discussed in the theoretical framework.

The study's spatial scope was not confined to the island alone; the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean was included within the field of examination. The reason for this is that, following the natural-gas discoveries, the Cyprus question has become interwoven with maritime jurisdiction areas, energy security, and regional alliances (Erçakıca, 2021). The policies of Türkiye, Greece, the Greek Cypriot Administration, Israel, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States toward the region were addressed within this broadened framework; it was thereby sought to be shown that the problem has ceased to be a bicomunal dispute confined to the island and has become part of regional and global competition (Gürel, 2024). Broadening the spatial scope in this way strengthened the study's geostrategic dimension and made it possible to read Cyprus together with its place in the international system.

In order to strengthen the study's credibility and consistency, the principle of triangulation was adopted. Reliance upon a single cluster of sources was avoided; by using history books, legal studies, international-relations works, official documents, and the reports of international organizations together, information concerning the same event was cross-checked (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). The criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability — treated as the counterparts of validity and reliability in qualitative research — were observed. In order to limit the risk of subjectivity that may arise from the analysis of a single researcher, the document and interpretation on which each contested finding rests were explicitly indicated, thereby establishing a form of audit trail; it was thus intended that the reader be able to follow, step by step, how the inferences were made. On matters containing conflicting information in particular, adherence to a single account was avoided, and opposing sources were presented together so as to open the way for the reader to arrive at his or her own assessment (Oran, 2013b). In this respect, the study was structured as a qualitative inquiry resting upon a multi-source and comparative database whose steps can be followed.

In an interpretive design, it is recognized that the researcher's position within the analytical process may bear upon the findings. For this reason, throughout the study a series of precautions were taken to prevent the researcher's preconceptions from seeping into the text on contested matters. Every contested finding was linked to a document, opposing interpretations were included, and evaluations were kept source-based. The according of greater visibility to under-represented theses in order to correct the representational imbalance in the existing literature stems not from partisanship, but from the concern to bring to the table the rationales of the side that has remained deficient from the outset, so that the analysis may be balanced. The researcher's role was thus defined not as assuming the advocacy of one of the parties, but as setting forth transparently the historical and legal grounds of the differing theses.

All the data used in the study were obtained from publicly available academic publications, official documents, and the reports of international organizations. No personal data were used and no interviews were conducted with human participants; for this reason, the research was not devised in a design requiring ethics-committee approval. Nevertheless, in evaluating contested historical events, adherence was maintained to the principles of academic honesty and impartiality, and on matters where differing views exist, the conveyance of a single approach was not deemed sufficient — alternative interpretations were also included (Oran, 2013a). Care was taken that the sources be used without being severed from their original context, and that the document on which each view rests be specified.

Finally, it is necessary to point to certain limitations of the research. Since the long and dense historical accumulation of the Cyprus question rendered it impossible to examine all events with the same degree of detail, priority was given to developments directly connected with the study's problematic. Second, the broad and at times mutually contradictory structure of the literature on the matter gives rise to some events being interpreted in different ways (Kızılyürek, 2002); the study aimed not to eliminate these differences but to bring them to the surface. Third, since many headings of international law are open to interpretation, opposing legal approaches were compared rather than definitive judgments rendered (Toluner, 1977). Fourth, the analysis relied predominantly upon Turkish- and English-language sources; the Greek-language primary texts of the Greek and Greek Cypriot side were accessed largely through translations and secondary literature. Although this constitutes a limitation bound to the language of the sources, it was partly offset by the fact that the opposing interpretations could also be traced through the secondary literature. Moreover, since current diplomatic processes are ongoing, it should not be forgotten that some developments occurring after the completion of the study may alter the picture. Notwithstanding these limitations, the historical documents, court judgments, organizational reports, and academic studies relied upon provide a sound basis for the findings. The approach and techniques explained in the methodology section transparently set forth by what means the findings to be presented in the following section were obtained, and ensure that the analysis can be followed from beginning to end.

FINDINGS

When the treaty texts, constitutional documents, United Nations resolutions, human-rights case law, and the extensive scholarly literature on Cyprus that were examined are assessed together, it becomes clearly apparent that the dispute cannot be reduced to a simple division of governance between two communities. The analysed sources indicate that the question advances simultaneously across at least four distinct layers—representation, sovereignty, security, and international legitimacy. These layers are not independent of one another; on the contrary, each feeds the others and thereby produces a long-lived deadlock. The data obtained further suggest that the Cyprus question cannot be grasped from a single vantage point: its legal, political, strategic, geopolitical, geo-economic, and social-identity dimensions are all in play at once. Another point that stands out in the qualitative content analysis is that the parties frequently employ the same concept—sovereignty, equality, security, recognition—with markedly different content. The findings presented below therefore encompass not only the sequence of events but also the legal and political frameworks within which those events are situated.

The historical-process analysis shows that, in the Turkish narrative, the point of departure is not 1974 but 1878. In the sources examined, the Cyprus Convention of 4 June 1878 is interpreted not as the severance of the island from Ottoman sovereignty but as the transfer of its administration to Britain under specific conditions and on a temporary basis (Gazioğlu, 1996; Gürel, Ş. S., 1984). As grounds for this reading, it is noted that under the Convention the island continued to be legally regarded as Ottoman territory, that Britain assumed only the right of administration and defence, and that in return it undertook a regular payment obligation together with a commitment to defend the Ottoman State against Russia. In the Turkish-Cypriot literature this arrangement is characterised not as a transfer of sovereignty but as a form of trusteeship and strategic-use relationship (Gazioğlu, 2000a). The same sources also treat in detail the fact that Britain unilaterally annexed

the island only in 1914, after entering a state of war with the Ottoman State; that Turkey legally renounced its rights over the island through the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne; and that the island was declared a Crown Colony

in 1925 (Meray, 1975a; Toluner, 1977). The tension between two divergent readings thus becomes clearly apparent: while one segment of the Turkish side regards the 1878 arrangement as a temporary and conditional transfer and argues that the island's final status may be reopened for discussion, the prevailing interpretation in international law treats the Lausanne renunciation as a definitive and irreversible act (Pazarcı, 2019; Gündüz, 2014).

In current Turkish public debate, this approach is at times reinforced through an analogy with Hong Kong. Accordingly, just as Britain returned to China in 1997 the Hong Kong it had taken over for a fixed term, it is argued that the administration of Cyprus—assumed on a conditional basis—should likewise be returned to its rightful owner. Assessments along the same lines also contend that Britain, having abandoned the island in 1960 under Greek-Cypriot and Greek pressure, bears—by virtue of fidelity to its undertakings and its historical responsibility—an obligation of testimony and consent in processes concerning the island's status. This analogy is, however, legally open to debate; for whereas the New Territories of Hong Kong rested on an explicit ninety-nine-year lease, the 1878 arrangement contained no fixed term, and Turkey's express renunciation in 1923 weakens the comparison in legal terms (Toluner, 1977; Pazarcı, 2019). In this respect, the argument in question stands out less as a matter of legal certainty than as a historical-political argument emphasising that a temporary trusteeship relationship lay at the island's origin and stressing the responsibility that Britain derives from that relationship.

A further dimension of the data concerning the period of British administration is population movement. Turkish sources draw attention to a continuous emigration of Turks from the island toward Anatolia and other countries from 1878 onward, and advance this phenomenon as a counterweight to the Greek-Cypriot thesis of a "population brought from Turkey" (Gazioğlu, 1998; Hatay, 2007). This literature argues that the citizenship and right-of-return claims of the emigrated Turkish Cypriots and their descendants should be added to the settlement dossier as a separate heading, so that the population debate is framed not only through those later settled in the north but also through those compelled to leave the island. Demographic studies, by contrast, are cautious about the magnitude of the migration figures and emphasise that the data vary by period (Hatay, 2017). In this respect, it is understood that the migration question is decisive less for its quantitative dimension than for the political meaning the parties attach to the phenomenon.

The findings concerning the pre-establishment period indicate that the 1960 order was the product of a sharp environment of conflict rather than of a compromise. In the sources examined, it is treated in detail that a significant portion of the Greek-Cypriot community embraced the ideal of Enosis, which envisaged the island's union with Greece, whereas the Turkish Cypriots developed the thesis of Taksim (partition) (Gazioğlu, 1996; Gürel, Ş. S., 1984; İsmail, 2007). It is emphasised that the armed campaign waged by EOKA in the 1950s targeted not only the colonial administration but increasingly the island's Turks as well, and that this experience generated an early security anxiety among the Turkish Cypriots (Beratlı, 1995; İsmail, 2007). According to the Turkish literature, the 1959 Zurich and London Agreements carried the character of a balancing instrument that envisaged the parties' mutual renunciation of their maximal aims such as Enosis and Taksim. The revival of these maximal aims in subsequent crises, in turn, determined the fragility of the 1960 compromise from the very outset (Kızılyürek, 2002).

The analysis of the founding documents brings to light that the Turkish side's most insistent thesis concerns the nature of the 1960 order. In the legal sources examined, the 1960 Republic of Cyprus is defined not as a majority-minority model but as a distinctive structure resting on the political partnership of two constituent communities (Sarica, Teziç, & Eskiuyurt, 1975; Necatigil, 1998). Among the constitutional guarantees of this partnership are enumerated the Turkish-origin Vice-President's veto power on certain matters, the fixed proportions reserved in public offices and security units, separate municipalities, and the requirement of separate majorities of the two communities for certain fundamental laws. According to the Turkish literature, these guarantees rendered the Turkish Cypriots not a minority to be protected but a co-founding partner of the state (Toluner, 1977). The fact that the agreements were secured through guarantor states is likewise regarded as an extension of this partnership character. The same sources argue that the attempt to render the order inoperative in its very first years ran counter to the logic of balance inherent in the system (Necatigil, 1998).

A notable aspect of the findings is the particular meaning that the concept of "political equality" carries for the Turkish side. In the sources examined, this concept denotes not numerical representation based on population but effective participation in decision-making processes, partnership in governance, and the impossibility of adopting binding decisions without the community's consent (Necatigil, 1998; Sarica, Teziç, & Eskiuyurt, 1975). According to the Turkish literature, this principle envisages not the rule of the majority over the minority but the joint governance of the two constituent communities. It is observed that past crises engendered among the Turkish side a deep-seated distrust of purely majoritarian rule, and that for this reason the principle of constituent partnership—rather than numerical majority—is continually foregrounded. The Greek-Cypriot side, by contrast, favours a more centralised and functional conception of governance, which produces a fundamental divergence regarding the model of administration.

One of the periods where the data concentrate most is that between 1963 and 1974. In the sources examined, the beginning of this process is tied to the thirteen-point amendment proposal put forward by the President in November 1963, which sought to narrow the constitutional guarantees of the Turkish wing (Necatigil, 1998; İsmail, 1998). In the Turkish literature, the Akritas Plan—alleged to have aimed at that same time at liquidating the partnership order and ultimately achieving Enosis—is also treated as the background to this rupture (İsmail, 2007; Kızılyürek, 2002). It is emphasised that, following the intercommunal clashes that began in December 1963, the Turkish Cypriots effectively withdrew from or were excluded from the central administration, were confined to besieged enclaves in various parts of the island, and lived for more than a decade under severe restrictions (Alasya, 1992; İsmail, 1992; Gazioğlu, 1998). It is understood that this experience of enclave life and forced displacement left a lasting security trauma in Turkish collective memory, and that the recurrently voiced concern in negotiating positions—that past risks might return should the security guarantees be removed—feeds on this experience (Necatigil, 2006). In this respect, security is recorded, for the Turkish side, less as a technical heading than as an existential matter.

The legal character of the 1974 intervention is one of the areas where the sharpest divergence of views is encountered in the analysed sources. A significant portion of the Turkish legal literature takes as its point of departure the coup carried out on 15 July 1974 by the junta in Greece together with EOKA-B against the Makarios administration—which established a short-lived regime—and evaluates the operation Turkey launched on 20 July, conducted in two phases, as a legitimate intervention within the framework of the powers accorded to a guarantor state by the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee (Toluner, 1977; Eroğlu, 1975; Arsava, 1996). According to this approach, because the coup sought to eliminate the island's constitutional order and its bicomunal structure and to bring about Enosis de facto, the guarantor intervention carries the character of a right arising from the treaty. That Security Council Resolution 353 (1974) called for the re-establishment of the constitutional order and an end to foreign intervention is likewise read in this literature as an indirect confirmation that the crisis began with the coup. By contrast, a segment of Western jurists and of the Greek-Cypriot side argues that the Treaty of Guarantee does not provide a basis for unilateral military intervention and evaluates the event within a different legal framework (Pazarcı, 2019). What emerges is that the same instrument is read by the parties in diametrically opposed ways, and that this interpretive divergence has shaped the ground of all subsequent negotiations.

The declaration of independence and the question of recognition constitute a separate axis. The sources examined lay bare that the non-recognition within the international system of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, declared on 15 November 1983—and the invalidation of that declaration through Security Council Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984)—has narrowed the Turkish side's room for manoeuvre at every level (Erdal, 2005; Taşdemir, 2021; United Nations Security Council, 1983, 1984). In the international-law literature this situation is discussed through the concepts of the "unrecognised state" or the "de facto state," and the TRNC is treated as one of the most frequently invoked examples of this category (Pegg, 1998; Caspersen, 2012; Ker-Lindsay, 2012). The same literature also draws attention to the existence of a systematic foreign policy aimed at preventing recognition. The Turkish side's fundamental objection is that the state of non-recognition is less a legal necessity than a form of exclusion sustained through political preferences. It is indeed observed that recognition is not merely a diplomatic status question but produces concrete consequences extending to everyday domains such as trade, transport, sport, and cultural contact (Erdal, 2005; Turhan, 2011).

The most central finding of the analysis is the asymmetry of legitimacy and representation. According to the Turkish side, although it was the Greek-Cypriot and Greek wing that effectively terminated the 1960 partnership order, that same wing's continued sole use of the title "Republic of Cyprus" in the international arena creates a profound contradiction between legitimacy and representation (Necatigil, 1998; Necatigil, 2006). In the sources examined, it is argued that the international system, without sufficiently interrogating the *de facto* situation that arose after 1963, leaned on the principle of state continuity, and that one wing of the partnership thereby came to represent the entirety of the state. The Greek-Cypriot side, for its part, defends an approach premised on the legal continuity of the 1960 Republic. These two readings render the establishment of a common point of departure in negotiations difficult from the outset; for the parties disagree not only on the content of a settlement but also on who sits at the table in what capacity. In this respect, the representation problem stands as both a cause of the dispute and its continual reproducer.

The United Nations framework emerges as both a ground for settlement and a subject of contention. The sources examined set out that, for many years, the organisation has taken as its basis the parameters of a bicomunal and bizonal federation together with political equality (United Nations Secretary-General, 1992; United Nations Security Council, 2023). According to the Turkish side, while these parameters are positive at the level of principle, in practice they perform a function that consolidates the position of the recognised Greek-Cypriot administration. The same sources argue that the peacekeeping force established in 1964 and the framework taking shape from that period onward, in a sense, froze the *de facto* situation in which the island's Turks are excluded (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). What appears to be the case is that the parties disagree not only on the content of a settlement but also on the role of the United Nations and the scope of the negotiating framework; while the Turkish side demands that models other than federation also be open to discussion, the international system generally tends to preserve the existing parameters.

The European Union's involvement in the process occupies a special place. The studies examined characterise the full membership of the Greek-Cypriot Administration in the Union in 2004—moreover, while the Annan Plan had been rejected on the Greek-Cypriot side—as a development that fundamentally altered the negotiating balance (Oran, 2013a; Faustmann, 2008; Tocci, 2004). According to the Turkish side, this step meant both the squandering of the strongest lever encouraging a settlement and the carrying of a party in dispute into the Union on its own (Nugent, 2006; Ker-Lindsay, 2005). The fact that Protocol No. 10, appended to the accession documents, recorded that the Union *acquis* was suspended in the north of the island is read in this literature as an indication that the deadlock had been institutionalised. The European Union institutions, by contrast, maintain that membership was realised within the framework of legal criteria. The assessment that, after membership, the pressure the Greek-Cypriot side felt for a settlement diminished enjoys, for its part, broad acceptance in the Turkish literature (Ker-Lindsay, 2011).

The Cyprus question has, over time, also become a sub-heading of Turkey–European Union relations. In the sources examined, it is argued that the long relationship extending from the 1963 Ankara Agreement to the 1970 Additional Protocol, and from the 1995 Customs Union to the full-membership negotiations initiated by the decision taken in 2004, generated certain expectations on the Turkish side, yet these expectations frequently went unmet (Oran, 2013a; Faustmann, 2008). According to the Turkish side, the conditionality mechanism has over time ceased to be an instrument of incentive and turned into an instrument of pressure; the commitments given have been deferred by the raising of new conditions. This perception generates a strong distrust toward the gains promised in return for the concessions offered in the Cyprus dossier—such as the updating of the customs union, visa liberalisation, defence cooperation, and the opening of negotiation chapters. It is observed that this lack of trust is decisive not only among the parties but also in relations with certain international actors, and that it leads to a cautious approach toward new initiatives (European Commission, 2023; European Commission, 2024).

The debate over isolation stands out as both an economic and a social matter. In the statements examined, restrictions in the domains of direct flights, trade, sporting competitions, and international representation are among the principal grievances the Turkish side has voiced for many years (Erdal, 2005; Taşdemir, 2021; Turhan, 2011). The Turkish side presents these restrictions as a humanitarian and economic problem independent of the political settlement and argues that they deepen the division rather than mitigating it. In

particular, the non-fulfilment of expectations that isolation would be eased after the Annan Plan increased the intensity of these grievances. It is understood that isolation produces not only material losses but also social-psychological effects such as exclusion and invisibility, and that these effects feed debates over belonging and identity, especially among younger generations (Bryant, 2010; Hatay, 2017). A significant portion of international actors, meanwhile, justify the existing practices by reference to the prevailing legal framework.

The property question constitutes the domain in which, in the analysed case law, law and politics are most visibly intertwined. While the European Court of Human Rights' judgments in *Loizidou v. Turkey* (Council of Europe, 1996) and *Cyprus v. Turkey* (Council of Europe, 2001) strongly emphasise individual property rights, its rulings in *Xenides-Arestis v. Turkey* (Council of Europe, 2005) and finally in *Demopoulos and Others v. Turkey* (Council of Europe, 2010) partly shifted the balance by accepting the Immovable Property Commission established in the north as a domestic remedy that must be exhausted. This last decision is evaluated on the Turkish side as an important gain, in that the legal mechanism established in the north was deemed valid before an international jurisdiction. This line of case law reflects an effort to strike a delicate balance between the pursuit of individual rights and the need for a collective political settlement. According to the Turkish side, property must be addressed not only through backward-looking individual claims but together with the new demographic and political reality that arose after 1974. For this reason, the property heading is not regarded as an issue that can be resolved in isolation from other headings such as security, territorial adjustment, and representation.

The Annan Plan process emerges as a turning point that permanently affected the psychology of the negotiations. In the simultaneous referendums held on 24 April 2004, the approval of the plan by roughly two-thirds of Turkish Cypriots, and its rejection by more than three-quarters of Greek-Cypriot voters, laid bare how sharply the parties diverged in terms of the will to settle (United Nations, 2004; Özersay, 2010). The Turkish side interprets this outcome as evidence invalidating the "intransigent party" label directed at it for many years. According to the sources examined, the failure to implement the will the European Union declared, immediately after the referendum, to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots left on the Turkish side a deep disappointment and a strong suspicion regarding the impartiality of the international system (Faustmann, 2008; Taşdemir, 2021). It is understood that this experience became one of the fundamental grounds for the more cautious and status-oriented line adopted in subsequent years.

The Crans-Montana process (2017) is another critical development demonstrating that the crisis of trust had acquired a structural character. The conference report and the assessments analysed set out that the issues of security, guarantees, military arrangements, and territory occupied the centre of the talks (United Nations Secretary-General, 2017). The framework put forward by the Secretary-General in this process, bringing together such headings as guarantees and troop levels, political equality, and territory, was unable to secure the parties' agreement. According to the Turkish side, a marked flexibility was shown on the territory and security headings compared with earlier periods; nevertheless, the anticipated reciprocation was not obtained. The Greek-Cypriot side, for its part, argued that the real obstacle before a lasting settlement was the continued military guarantees and troop presence. The failure of the same process is explained by the parties through wholly different narratives; and the mutual recriminations that emerged deepened the mistrust still further. The sharpening, after the conference, of the doubt felt on the Turkish side toward the federation model heralded the subsequent change of policy.

The guarantee system offers the most striking example in which the parties attach diametrically opposed meanings to the same institution. In Turkish sources, the guarantee mechanism is evaluated—in direct connection with the memory of the 1963–1974 period—as the fundamental pillar of the Turkish Cypriots' security (Necatigil, 2006; Toluner, 1977). According to this approach, security encompasses not only protection from physical threats but also the preservation of political existence and communal identity. The Greek-Cypriot side and Greece, by contrast, regard guarantorship as an arrangement that has been superseded in the contemporary international system and that impairs sovereignty; similar assessments gain weight within the European Union institutions as well. The Turkish side, drawing attention to the fact that international guarantees failed in the past to prevent similar crises, argues that merely institutional or abstract assurances will not suffice. This profound divergence in the perception of security clearly shows that the concept of the

security dilemma retains its vitality in the Cyprus case, and that an arrangement one party regards as a guarantee can be read by the other as a threat.

The findings also encompass a marked change of direction in the Turkish side's discourse and strategy after 2021. In this period, the concepts of sovereign equality and equal international status ceased to be a negotiating demand and turned into an official policy framework; the confirmation of these concepts by the Security Council was put forward as a precondition. In the statements examined, the fundamental justification for this change is given as the failure of the federation-based negotiations sustained for decades to produce concrete results, and the non-materialisation of the anticipated reciprocation for the concessions made in the past (Taşdemir, 2021). Turkey's call, at the highest level in the same period, for the recognition of the TRNC sets out that this line was reflected in foreign policy as well. By contrast, the United Nations and many international actors continue to defend the parameters of a bicommunal and bizonal federation (United Nations Security Council, 2023). It is thus understood that the divergence concerns the ground of the negotiations before their content, and that the parties can no longer agree even on which settlement model is to be discussed.

The current dimension of the data entered a new phase with the developments occurring after 2025. The election, in the KKTC ballot held in October 2025, of Tufan Erhürman—who advocates a federation-based settlement—as President generated a new equation on the negotiating ground (Euronews, 2025). At the same time, Erhürman's own definition of political equality as a principle "not open to negotiation," and his emphasis that a settlement must be built on the basis of equality, signals that the Turkish side's fundamental line on this matter has been preserved despite the change of leadership. In the same period, the diplomacy conducted by María Ángela Holguín, the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Cyprus, aims—following the informal broad-format meeting held in Geneva in March 2025—to bring the parties together once more in a "5+1" conference (United Nations, 2025). Current assessments examined indicate that the framework under discussion in this process is evolving, unlike the classical federation model, toward a more flexible structure resting on constructive ambiguity, which the Greek-Cypriot side may read as "federation" and the Turkish side as "confederation" (Politis, 2026). Within this framework, options such as a transitional period of two to three years; territorial return in areas such as Maraş (Varosha); the headings of direct trade, transport, and contact; and the provision of the united state's security under a NATO umbrella are seen to be on the agenda. Turkey, for its part, makes its participation in the process contingent on obtaining concrete gains from the European Union, above all the updating of the Customs Union. It is thereby confirmed that the question is now addressed not solely in its bicommunal or Turkish–Greek dimension but within the broad framework of Turkey–European Union relations.

The debates over energy and maritime jurisdiction in the Eastern Mediterranean constitute the newest and most dynamic layer added to the problem. The hydrocarbon resources discovered over roughly the last fifteen years have raised the strategic value of the maritime areas around the island and carried Cyprus back to the centre of the international agenda (Erçakıca, 2021; Winrow, 2020; Karbuz, 2018). In the sources examined, it is observed that the energy and defence cooperation taking shape along the axis of Greece, Southern Cyprus, Israel, and Egypt, together with initiatives such as the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, is perceived on the Turkish side as an exclusionary structure (Yorulmazlar & Çelik, 2021; Litsas & Tziampiris, 2015; Gürel, A., 2024). According to the Turkish side, both communities should be recognised as rights-holders over the natural resources around the island; the Greek-Cypriot administration's acting alone in this domain by relying on the powers afforded by international recognition, however, disregards the rights of both the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey. It is understood that the energy question sharpens rivalry rather than generating cooperation between the parties, and that it is intertwined with debates over security and sovereignty. The dispute has thereby moved from an intra-island matter of sharing to the ground of a regional power struggle (Qasimov, 2016).

The positioning of international and regional actors constitutes one of the domains in which power asymmetry is most visible. The diplomatic sources examined set out that the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States have sought at various periods to steer the process, and that a significant portion of these actors prioritise the preservation of the existing international status quo (Oran, 2013a; Uçarol, 2015). The

military presence the United Kingdom maintains through the sovereign base areas on the island lays bare how high the island's strategic value is for external actors as well (Ker-Lindsay, 2011). In the same manner, Israel's inclusion in regional energy and security cooperation has added a new dimension to the Eastern Mediterranean equation. According to the Turkish side, this picture produces a structural inequality that sets against one another, on one side, the Greek-Cypriot and Greek wing—represented in international organisations with the title of a recognised state and leaning on a broad network of diplomatic support—and, on the other, the Turkish wing of limited international visibility. This asymmetry must be read together not only with military capacity or population but with numerous variables such as recognition, diplomatic representation, economic access, and influence over international public opinion. The Turkish side's frequently emphasised demand for an "equal negotiating ground" likewise appears as a response to this structural imbalance.

The Cyprus question cannot be considered apart from the general course of Turkey–Greece relations either. In the sources examined, it is emphasised that the disputes between the two countries over the continental shelf, airspace, and maritime jurisdiction are linked, directly or indirectly, with the Cyprus dossier (Armaoğlu, 1999; Uçarol, 2015; Bahcheli, 1990). The Turkish side often assesses developments on the island together with the general security balances in the Eastern Mediterranean; Greece, likewise, regards Cyprus as a part of its own regional security perspective. For this reason, the negotiations conducted over the island frequently cease to be merely a dialogue between two communities; the strategic priorities of Turkey and Greece also play a determining role in shaping the process (Sönmezoğlu, 2014). It is observed that the debates surrounding guarantorship are the clearest reflection of this bilateral dimension.

Social memory and rival narratives stand out as another variable that profoundly affects the settlement processes. The studies examined set out that the two communities remember the past largely through mutually exclusive frameworks (Kızılyürek, 2002; Gürel, Ş. S., 1985; Volkan, 2008). While on the Turkish side security and existential anxieties concerning the 1963–1974 period occupy a central place, on the Greek-Cypriot side experiences of territory, property, and displacement relating to the post-1974 period come to the fore. Transmitted from generation to generation through education, media, and political culture, these narratives produce differing perceptions of reality regarding the same events and obstruct the emergence of a shared reading of history (Bryant, 2010; Anastasiou, 2008). The acceptance at the social level of any agreement to be signed appears to depend as much on the management of this memory divide as on institutional arrangements.

The totality of the findings obtained clearly demonstrates that the power asymmetry in the Cyprus question is not a one-dimensional phenomenon. The data examined indicate that the imbalance between the parties operates across at least six distinct planes: international recognition, diplomatic representation, economic access, the ability to have recourse to legal mechanisms, influence over international public opinion, and visibility in domains such as sport and culture. According to the Turkish side, the differences that arise on each of these planes create an unequal position at the negotiating table from the outset; and every concession made, because it does not produce the anticipated opening in return, can turn into a fresh disadvantage. This multi-planar asymmetry is the fundamental justification behind the Turkish side's demands for sovereign equality and equal status; and the conviction that a mere debate over the model of governance will not suffice to remedy this structural imbalance arises from precisely this point.

When the findings presented in this section are assessed as a whole, it becomes apparent that the historical, legal, security, and geostrategic layers of the Cyprus question cannot be separated from one another. The analysed sources set out that the parties' present positions are the product of a long historical process extending back to 1878 and of experiences that feed one another. While for the Turkish side security, political equality, representation, and international visibility come into relief as indispensable priorities, the Greek-Cypriot side places at the centre international recognition and the preservation of the existing legal status. The failure of settlement initiatives stems not only from technical disagreements but also from the different meanings attached to the concepts of legitimacy, representation, and security. When to this are added the multidimensional structure of the power asymmetry and the energy–security rivalry in the Eastern

Mediterranean, it becomes more comprehensible why the dispute has remained unresolved for decades. These findings will be examined in detail in the ensuing discussion section along the axes of power asymmetries, the struggle for legitimacy, and geostrategic competition.

DISCUSSION

When the findings of this study are read together, it becomes clear why the entrenched framework that confines the Cyprus question to the mould of an "ethnic dispute between two communities" possesses only limited explanatory power. The intercommunal tension on the island is merely the visible face of the problem; the mechanism that truly sustains it is the unequal positioning of the parties within the international system and the monopoly over legitimacy that this inequality generates. The data obtained indicate that behind the decades-long protraction of the dispute lies not so much the absence of a technical formula as the parties' failure to arrive even at a shared definition of "what the problem is." One side codes the matter as a problem of occupation and division beginning in 1974, whereas the other reads it as a problem of trusteeship, representation and existence extending back to 1878 and 1963. In this section the data are interpreted through the axes of power asymmetry, the struggle for legitimacy, the security dilemma, theories of recognition, and geostrategic competition as defined in the theoretical framework; along each axis, the theses advanced by the Turkish side are examined together with their historical and legal foundations and confronted with opposing views.

The first and perhaps most decisive pattern revealed by the findings is that the fundamental rupture in Cyprus has taken place not on the military or demographic plane but on the plane of representation and recognition. Irrespective of the numerical or geographical magnitude of the two communities, one side is the party that sits in international organisations, concludes treaties, brings litigation, secures funding and speaks in the name of "Cyprus," while the other, despite being a co-founding constituent of the very same legal personality, has been deprived of nearly all of these capacities. It is precisely here that the theory of power asymmetry acquires its distinctive character in the Cyprus case: the asymmetry is not one of tanks and populations but of the capacity to produce legitimacy (Keohane & Nye, 2012). What determines an actor's weight at the table in international relations is not merely the material resources at its disposal but the privilege of being able to articulate its claims in "the language of law and of the international community"; and it is this privilege that has been distributed unilaterally in Cyprus. In this respect, the Turkish side's long-standing demand for an "equal negotiating ground" is not a mere diplomatic slogan but a foundational objection to a structural inequality (Necatigil, 1998; Taşdemir, 2021). Indeed, the negotiation records examined in the study show that the reading of the same settlement proposal as an "opportunity for compromise" by one side and as a "risk of losing rights" by the other is no coincidence, but the natural consequence of the parties' not sitting down at the table with equal starting conditions.

The ground that renders this asymmetry meaningful is the historical-legal stratum of the question, which is often overlooked. The thesis that the Cyprus problem began not in 1974 but at least in 1878 is a point of departure emphasised persistently by Turkish historiography and legal scholarship (Gürel, 1984; Gazioğlu, 1996). The strength of this thesis is documentary rather than rhetorical. The Cyprus Convention of 4 June 1878 did not "cede" the island to Britain; it left only the authority of "occupation and administration" to Britain on a temporary basis, while expressly stipulating that the territory would continue to be part of the Ottoman Empire (Convention of Defensive Alliance, 1878). Britain's undertaking to make a fixed annual payment to the Sultan afforded the Sublime Porte the ability to sustain in law the claim that "I did not cede the island; I merely relinquished its administration temporarily"; for this reason the arrangement has frequently been characterised in the literature as a "lease." Moreover, the conditional nature of the Convention, tied to the Russian threat, provided that "should the danger cease, the precautionary agreement would likewise come to an end"; that is, the arrangement was by its very nature designed to be time-bound and reversible. Britain's unilateral annexation of the island on 5 November 1914, the moment the Ottoman Empire entered the war, is an act that legally strains precisely this temporary and fiduciary character. As argued in the relevant literature, British sovereignty over the island was recognised by Türkiye only through Article 20 of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne; in other words, the transformation of the island's legal status was, from the outset, experienced as a contested process subject to negotiation (Treaty of Lausanne, 1923; Toluner, 1977).

Upon this documentary ground, the normative thesis developed by the Turkish side is at times expressed in the relevant literature through an analogy with Hong Kong. According to this view, Britain discharged in the case of Hong Kong its responsibility to return to its true owner a territory whose administration it had assumed for a

defined period, yet it did not apply the same principle of fidelity to agreements (*pacta sunt servanda*) in Cyprus. In the view of those who advance this thesis, rather than the island—taken in trust for strategic and geopolitical purposes—being abandoned to the Greek side under pressure from the Greek-Greek Cypriot axis while the bases were retained, its restitution to the true holder of sovereignty (to Türkiye, as the successor to the Ottoman Empire) ought to have been discussed once the temporary administration came to an end; the fact that this question of restitution has never been raised in international legal fora constitutes one of the unresolved milestones of the problem. It is not the aim of this study to adjudicate on the correctness of this normative claim; yet it must be noted that the factual core on which the claim rests—that the 1878 arrangement transferred administration rather than sovereignty and was designed to be conditional and time-bound—is supported by the historical record. The same equanimity, however, requires that the counter-thesis be made visible as well: the approach based on the Greek-Greek Cypriot side and the jurists who support it maintains that, whatever the character of 1878, Türkiye recognised British sovereignty in 1923 and renounced its claims over the island, and that the 1960 treaties established a new and independent legal order that closed the past (Chrysostomides, 2000). The persistence of the Cyprus problem stems, to a great extent, from the placement of the same documents within different legal frameworks by these two historical narratives.

A dimension of the same historical stratum that frequently remains in shadow is the question of emigration and the right of return. Whereas Greek theses often construct the Cyprus problem around the axis of "population transferred to the island from Türkiye," the fact pointing in the opposite direction—one indicated by the Turkish side and by demographic studies in this field—is ignored: beginning in 1878, an uninterrupted emigration of Turkish Cypriots to Anatolia, Britain, the United States and other countries took place, driven by fear, exclusion and economic pressure (Gazioğlu, 1998; Hatay, 2007). As maintained in the relevant literature, the restitution of the Cypriot citizenship and the right of return of this population and its descendants—who were compelled to leave the island—constitutes one of the foundational issues that ought to be added to the file; for when the population debate is conducted in one direction only, all the legal and political inferences concerning the island's demographic balance rest, from the outset, upon a distorted footing. This finding supports the study's power-asymmetry axis from an unexpected direction: while the historical victimhood of one party entered circulation in international public opinion, that of the other, of the same nature, was scarcely able to become visible at all. This inequality of visibility is the historical prototype of the recognition asymmetry to be addressed in the sections that follow.

The most contemporary and most politicised extension of the population debate is the post-1974 settler issue, and this heading is a typical example of how the parties construct the same fact in opposite ways. In the Greek narrative, the population brought to the island from Türkiye is presented as a "colonisation" aimed at disrupting the demographic structure and entrenching the *de facto* division. The picture drawn by the Turkish side and by demographic inquiries in this field is more layered: the population movement in the north comprises, in part, the return of those compelled to leave the island before 1974, in part labour migration, and in part a hybrid social fabric that has settled and intermingled over time; the "settler" category is seen not to be as homogeneous as is assumed (Hatay, 2007; Hatay, 2017). This demographic complexity makes it difficult to treat the matter as a merely numerical question of balance. The analytically crucial point, however, is this: when the population heading is debated within a framework that centres the victimhood of only one of the parties, the legal and political assessments that result rest upon a biased footing from the start. For this reason, demography in Cyprus is not an objective field of data but is itself a contested arena in which the struggle for legitimacy is waged.

The theory of the struggle for legitimacy displays its principal explanatory power in the interpretation of the 1960 partnership order and the 1963 rupture that followed it. The findings reveal that the Turkish side reads the 1960 Republic of Cyprus as the constituent partnership of two peoples, and therefore insists that the legitimacy of this state can be sustained only through the joint will of the two communities (Sarica, Teziç, & Eskiuyurt, 1975; Necatigil, 1998). At the centre of this reading lies one of the study's most critical findings: the collapse of the partnership order in late 1963 is coded, in the Turkish narrative, not as an ordinary constitutional crisis but as the *de facto* exclusion of one party from the organs of the state—that is, as the unilateral abrogation of the constituent partnership (İsmail, 1998; Necatigil, 2006). According to the Turkish side and the literature grounded in it, the party that *de facto* dismantled the partnership structure of a state

established through the 1959–1960 treaties and under the guarantee of the guarantor powers was the Greek-Cypriot side; yet the same party continued, even after the collapse of the partnership, to exercise the identity, the seat and the rights of the state single-handedly in international fora. This is the very core of the legitimacy paradox in Cyprus: the title of a state that legally belongs to two constituent elements is represented by only one of those elements, and this one-sided representation is continually reproduced by the international system under the name of "the continuity of the state." The debate here also reflects the tension in constitutional-design theories between "majoritarian rule" and "consociational power-sharing": the Turkish side's insistence on political equality and effective participation points not to a government based on the numerical superiority of the majority but to an order based on the co-decision mechanism of the two constituent elements. The counter-view, by contrast, relies on the principle of state continuity to argue that the structure that survived after 1963 is the legally legitimate Republic of Cyprus and that the withdrawal of the Turkish side did not extinguish the state (Chrysostomides, 2000). The irreconcilability of these two positions is made concrete by the fact that, even at the settlement table, the parties cannot agree on "the continuity of which state" they are negotiating.

The threshold at which this legitimacy paradox sharpens most acutely is the declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983 and the international response to it. In the Turkish narrative, this declaration is not an act of aggressive secessionism but a defensive and remedial act born of the need for self-government on the part of a constituent element excluded for twenty years from the organs of the common state; in other words, it is the belated institutionalisation of the party first excluded *de facto*. The United Nations Security Council, by contrast, adopted resolutions deeming the declaration "legally invalid" and calling upon all states not to recognise it (United Nations Security Council, 1983; United Nations Security Council, 1984). Viewed from the Turkish side, this response is the very registration of the asymmetry by the international system itself: the party that carried out the exclusion is accepted as the sole representative of the state, while the party that organised itself in response to exclusion is declared illegitimate in advance. The counter-reading, in turn, evaluates the declaration as a unilateral step that entrenched the *de facto* division and weakened the negotiating ground (Ker-Lindsay, 2012; Necatigil, 2006). The distance between the two interpretations reinforces the thesis that decisions on recognition are shaped by political preference rather than by legal criteria; and this thesis also constitutes the point of departure for the debate on selective recognition to be addressed below.

The interweaving of this legitimacy conflict with the security dimension on the Turkish side explains why the theory of the security dilemma remains applicable in the Cyprus case. The sources examined in the study show that the intercommunal violence, the displacements and the confinement to enclaves experienced between 1963 and 1974 left a lasting trauma in the collective memory of the Turkish Cypriot community (Eroğlu, 1975; İsmail, 1992; Volkan, 2008). The political corollary of this trauma is clear: the guarantee system and Türkiye's military presence on the island are evaluated by the Turkish side less as a strategic preference than as a concrete safeguard against the recurrence of the past. Political equality and security are therefore, for the Turkish side, not two separable headings but the two faces of a single existential demand. The Greek side and Greece, by contrast, associate security not with the presence of an external military force and guarantorship but with their absence, maintaining that security can be provided through European Union membership, international law and institutional mechanisms. The fact that the same arrangement signifies a "life insurance policy" for one party and a "violation of sovereignty" for the other is a textbook example of the classic security dilemma; the security-seeking of one party feeds the insecurity of the other, and the cycle reproduces itself. This finding shows that unless security is addressed together with historical memory and mutual threat perception, rather than through purely military measures, no settlement model can be sustainable.

The most contested contemporary manifestation of the security heading is the proposals for institutional guarantees offered in exchange for the abolition of guarantorship. In certain settlement scenarios recently brought to the agenda, it is argued that a united Cyprus coming under the NATO umbrella could be regarded as a sufficient safeguard to prevent the recurrence of past security crises. The Turkish side's reserved approach to this proposal is grounded, in the relevant literature, on two rationales. The first is doubt as to whether institutional and normative guarantees can produce deterrence at the moment of an actual crisis; on the view advanced, historical instances in which mass violence could not be prevented even in regions under the

supervision of international institutions make it difficult to rely on guarantees that exist merely on paper. The second is that such proposals, by spreading the Turkish side's red lines—such as guarantorship and effective participation—across transitional periods, in fact erode them. Indeed, this very debate implicitly concedes the legitimacy of past security concerns: if a special guarantee mechanism oriented towards the future is needed, this amounts to an implicit acknowledgement of the reality of the past threat as well. At this point, academic equanimity requires noting that the counter-party bears a symmetrical concern: for the Greek side, a permanent external military presence and a unilateral right of intervention are perceived as a perpetuated threat to sovereignty. The fact that these two threat perceptions are simultaneously and mutually real is the very factor that renders the resolution of the problem difficult.

The tension between international law and international politics is more naked in the Cyprus case than almost anywhere else, and the findings show that this tension systematically obstructs settlement. The interpretive divergence over the meaning and scope of the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee is a typical example. A significant portion of Turkish jurists evaluate the 1974 intervention as a legitimate act of guarantorship within the framework of the rights afforded by the Treaty, whereas an important segment of Western jurists and the Greek side characterise the same event as an unlawful use of force (Toluner, 1977; Arsava, 1996; Chrysostomides, 2000). This divergence is not merely a technical difference of interpretation; it is the result of situating the same legal text within different historical contexts and different narratives of legitimacy. As argued in the relevant literature, interpretation in international law is never insulated from political context; the rule frequently becomes an instrument that shapes the parties' pursuit of international support. The Turkish side's criticism that, in certain decisions of the international community, politics has taken precedence over law acquires its meaning precisely at this point (Necatigil, 2006). This distinction between legal legitimacy and political legitimacy offers a powerful key to understanding Cyprus: while one party presents the institutional advantages afforded by recognition as "the natural consequence of law," the other reads the same order as "politics bending the law." For this reason, evaluating legal debates at the normative level alone amounts to overlooking the vital dimension of the matter.

The most subtle manifestation of this tension between law and politics is to be found in the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights concerning Cyprus, and this jurisprudence is especially illuminating with respect to the study's recognition-effectiveness debate. In *Loizidou* and subsequently in *Cyprus v. Turkey*, the Court held Türkiye responsible for the *de facto* situation in the north on the basis of the "effective overall control" test, and identified numerous violations, foremost among them relating to property, home and missing persons (*Loizidou v. Turkey*, 1996; *Cyprus v. Turkey*, 2001). Yet the same Court, in *Xenides-Arestis*, required the establishment of an effective domestic remedy, and in *Demopoulos* it accepted the Immovable Property Commission set up in Northern Cyprus as "an accessible and effective remedy" that Greek Cypriot applicants must exhaust (*Xenides-Arestis v. Turkey*, 2005; *Demopoulos and Others v. Turkey*, 2010). The legal subtlety here is highly significant for the theses of the Turkish side: while the Court, on the one hand, recognises the functional reality and effectiveness of Turkish Cypriot institutions, it explicitly notes, on the other, that this does not mean that Türkiye exercises internationally recognised sovereignty over the north. That is, what emerges is a hybrid situation in which functional effectiveness is conceded in law without political recognition. This renders visible, in a concrete judicial decision, the central question of the *de facto* state literature—the disjunction between effectiveness and recognition (Taşdemir, 2021). For the sake of balance, the counter-interpretation must also be recorded: the Court reaffirmed in subsequent decisions that Türkiye's responsibility persists, and the Commission's provision of compensation rather than restitution, together with delays in its operation, has been criticised. Nevertheless, the concession of functional effectiveness by an international judicial organ is an important finding that reinforces the thesis that the non-recognition regime is a political rather than a purely legal choice.

Theories of recognition and the *de facto* state literature provide the most productive framework for conceptualising the structural disadvantage experienced by the Turkish side. In the international system, recognition is a threshold that directly determines a state's diplomatic and economic capacity; a political entity left outside this threshold remains permanently constrained in terms of its international room for manoeuvre, however effective the administration it establishes (Pegg, 1998; Caspersen, 2012; Crawford, 2006). The case of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is one of the most debated instances in this literature, for the non-

recognition here stems not from a failure to meet the classic criteria of effective statehood but from a political choice of the international system (Ker-Lindsay, 2007). The findings show that this state of non-recognition goes far beyond a diplomatic detail; it has turned into a multifaceted embargo and isolation permeating every layer of daily life—from direct transport to trade, from sporting competitions to cultural contacts (Erdal, 2005; Taşdemir, 2021). According to the Turkish side, far from encouraging settlement, these restrictions deepen the existing division and become the instrument of a "diplomacy of attrition" aimed at wearing the other party down into submission. The striking finding that must be underlined here is this: rather than rewarding the party that preserved its existence by resisting in the face of past massacres and violence, the international system has produced a mechanism that in fact punishes that party precisely because of this resistance. The counter-view maintains that the restrictions in question are consistent with United Nations resolutions and that the prevention of recognition serves to deter secession (Ker-Lindsay, 2012). Yet even this counter-view does not eliminate the fact that the outcome disproportionately victimises one party; indeed, the humanitarian and social cost of isolation stands out as an independent variable that erodes societal support for settlement processes.

Comparing the position of the Turkish Cypriot side with other unrecognised political entities renders visible both the distinctiveness of the case and the inconsistencies within the recognition regime. When compared with examples such as Abkhazia, Transnistria, South Ossetia or Somaliland, Northern Cyprus differs in several respects: it is distinguished by having behind it an internationally recognised state bearing the title of guarantor (Türkiye), by possessing a functional and institutionalised apparatus of governance, and—most importantly—by having arisen from the collapse of a partnership order established through treaties (Bahcheli, Bartmann, & Srebrnik, 2004; Caspersen, 2012). One of the Turkish side's most powerful political-legal arguments is precisely the critique of selective recognition that arises from this comparison. The International Court of Justice's statement, in its advisory opinion concerning Kosovo, that a unilateral declaration of independence does not in itself violate international law (Kosovo Advisory Opinion, 2010) is advanced by the Turkish side as evidence of the double standard inherent in the diametrically opposite response given to a declaration of the same kind. The counter-view holds that the two cases cannot be compared owing to the long United Nations administration that preceded Kosovo and the different historical circumstances, and that Kosovo is a *sui generis* situation (Ker-Lindsay, 2012). The very irresolvability of this debate is itself a finding: were the practice of recognition a consistent, criteria-based legal operation, similar facts would be expected to yield similar outcomes; yet the Cyprus case confirms the theoretical prediction that what determines the outcome is the balance of power and interest rather than criteria.

The most concrete institutional registration of this asymmetry is the admission of the Greek Cypriot administration to the European Union in 2004 as representing the island as a whole, and the findings reveal that this step permanently distorted the negotiating balance. Viewed through the theory of multi-level governance, the accession not only afforded one party a new institutional identity and additional leverage at the decision-making table; it also, by transforming the Union into an actor with an organic bond to one of the parties to the dispute, weakened its capacity for impartial mediation (Nugent, 2006; Tocci, 2004). As maintained in the relevant literature, the realisation of accession before settlement and without making settlement a condition inverted the incentive mechanism: the Greek side obtained the reward it sought without needing a settlement, and thus the pressure towards compromise disappeared (Faustmann, 2008). The Turkish side's most forceful legal objection to this development is that the treaties establishing the Cypriot state expressly prohibit union between the island and Greece or any other state, and that the Union's own enlargement principles approach the membership of states carrying unresolved disputes with caution; the realisation of accession despite these two principles is read by the Turkish side as yet another instance of law being sacrificed to political interest (Erçakıca, 2021). The Union institutions, by contrast, maintain that accession was conducted within the framework of accession law and political criteria, that the Greek side's application could not be rejected, and that Protocol No. 10 has, for the time being, balanced the matter by suspending the *acquis* in the north (Act of Accession, 2003; Protocol No. 10, 2003). This distance between the two positions is the source of the European Union's being today both a part of the problem and an unavoidable actor in its resolution.

The Annan Plan process and its aftermath constitute one of the study's most illuminating findings, in that they display, in a single case, the inversion of power asymmetry and the incentive structure. In the 2004

referendum, the large majority of the Turkish Cypriot community approved the comprehensive settlement plan, while the majority of the Greek community rejected it (United Nations, 2004; Özersay, 2010). Even a glance at the results alone seriously undermines the empirical basis of the widespread narrative concerning "which party is responsible for the lack of settlement." The truly striking aspect of this finding, however, lies in the sequence of outcomes that followed: the party that rejected the plan obtained European Union membership on behalf of the island as a whole a few days later, whereas the easing of the isolations promised to the party that accepted the plan did not materialise. The entrenchment in Turkish public opinion of the conviction that the negotiations do not operate fairly in terms of the "reward-punishment balance" feeds on this historical experience. Within this framework, the marked erosion of the Turkish side's confidence in the federal model after 2017 is not a sudden change of stance but a rational expression of an accumulated distrust. From this vantage point, the demand for sovereign equality and equal international status that has come to the fore in recent years is more adequately read not as "intransigence" or "sabotage of the table"—as it is presented in most external assessments—but as a strategic response to decades of problems of representation, recognition and security. The logic behind the demand is simple: in a pattern in which every concession made is turned into the precondition for further concessions, and every accepted compromise is left without reciprocity, one of the parties opens for discussion no longer the content but the ground itself.

The Crans-Montana process holds a distinct significance in that it is both the apex and the turning point of this accumulation of distrust. The data examined in the study reveal that in this process the Turkish side displayed a markedly greater degree of flexibility than in previous periods (United Nations Secretary-General, 2017). It is recounted in the relevant literature and in diplomatic accounts that, for the first time since 1968, a detailed territorial arrangement was placed on the table, and that the Turkish side made significant openings on exceedingly sensitive headings such as a rotating presidency and the reconsideration of guarantorship at the end of a defined transitional period. The failure to reach a final settlement despite these openings sharpened the parties' narratives concerning the causes of the impasse. According to the Turkish side, the flexibility shown went unrequited; the counter-party, which demanded that guarantorship and military presence come to an immediate and unconditional end upon the signing of an agreement, used the concessions made not as the ground for a lasting settlement but as the starting point for demanding still more in the next round. The analytical lesson here confirms a phenomenon predicted by negotiation theory: if one party treats the other's concessions as "the minimum deserved" and accumulates them as negotiating gains, the marginal return of showing flexibility progressively declines and the process loses its legitimacy in the eyes of the conceding party. This is precisely why Crans-Montana should be evaluated not merely as a failed conference but as a rupture that determined the psychological ground of all subsequent policies; without taking this experience into account, one cannot understand why the Turkish side insists on its present position.

Why negotiations have repeatedly reached the threshold only to retreat can be explained more deeply through the concepts of "ripeness" and "mutually hurting stalemate" in conflict-resolution theory. On this approach, disputes ripen for resolution most often when the maintenance of the existing situation becomes intolerably costly for both parties—that is, when a mutually hurting stalemate emerges (Bercovitch, 2011). The structural reason for Cyprus's remaining locked becomes evident precisely here: the existing situation does not impose a symmetrical pain on the two parties. With the advantages afforded by international recognition, European Union membership and uninterrupted diplomatic representation, the Greek side's alternative in the event of no agreement (the continuation of the status quo) is relatively strong and comfortable; by contrast, the cost of no agreement is far heavier for the Turkish side under isolation. To put it in the language of negotiation theory, the parties' best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) is markedly asymmetrical. This asymmetric structure of pain weakens the incentive to concede on the part of the side capable of sustaining the status quo; and thus the dispute ripens not owing to a lack of good will, but because the hurting stalemate hurts only one side (Sönmezoglu, 2014). This observation constitutes the critical link uniting the study's power-asymmetry thesis with conflict-resolution theory: the deadlock at the table is the result less of the inadequacy of formulas than of the parties' being affected by the impasse to differing degrees.

The institutional correlate of this rupture is the new policy line adopted since 2021, which treats the prior confirmation of the sovereign equality and equal international status of the TRNC as a precondition for negotiation. The findings show that this shift is, rather than a temporary tactic, the product of an accumulated

strategic assessment. For the Turkish side, the matter is no longer how the federation is to be constructed but on which political ground the negotiation is to be conducted; for the ground itself predetermines the parties' claims to legitimacy. By contrast, the United Nations good-offices mission has for many years operated within a mandate confined to the parameters of a bicomunal and bizonal federation, and does not admit into the scope of negotiation settlement models falling outside the authority granted by the Security Council (United Nations Security Council, 2023). This confinement of the framework means, from the Turkish side's perspective, a kind of selective agenda-setting by the international system from the very outset: only the model that one party can accept is brought to the table, while the proposals of the other are deemed "outside the parameters" and are not even placed into circulation. Thus the struggle for legitimacy has shifted, prior to the content of the settlement, to the question of who will set the agenda of the negotiation. This shift is a powerful indication confirming the study's central thesis: in Cyprus, power asymmetry exerts its most visible effect not in the bargaining at the table but in the stage of determining the rules and limits of the table itself.

The character of the current diplomatic process, too, can be read through this very pattern of asymmetric agenda-setting. The recent initiatives, conducted through the Personal Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General and aimed at preparing the ground for an expanded 5+1 conference, are shaped around confidence-building measures and the preparation of a strategy document. In the face of the Turkish side's reminder of the conditions of sovereign equality and equal status as preconditions for this process, the attempt to advance the process with the logic of "you may choose not to attend" carries the risk of once again placing the Turkish side in the position of "spoiler." According to the relevant assessments, the imposition of a strategy document without obtaining the parties' authorisation and on the basis of a predetermined federal framework is also contrary to ordinary diplomatic custom; for custom requires that a negotiation programme be formed after the parties' views have been obtained. This finding explains why the debate over the impartiality of international actors has acquired continuity on the Turkish side. The perception of the mediator's impartiality is decisive for the legitimacy of the process; when one party does not find the process fair, even the most technically flawless proposal fails to gain social and political acceptance. Process management, therefore, proves to be a variable that determines the outcome at least as much as the content of the settlement proposals.

Upon all these asymmetric dynamics, the changing geostrategic structure of the Eastern Mediterranean has in recent years been added, and the Cyprus problem has ceased to be an intra-island dispute and has settled at the centre of a regional security complex. The findings show that the discovery of hydrocarbon resources and the debates over maritime jurisdiction have, contrary to expectation, deepened not cooperation but rivalry (Erçakıca, 2021; Karbuz, 2018; Yorulmazlar & Çelik, 2021). Energy, rather than creating a ground of common interest between the parties, has turned into a lever that hardens the existing lines of alliance. According to the Turkish side, certain energy and defence collaborations established in the region produce an architecture that excludes Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriots; the fact that both communities have equal rights over the natural resources around the island is disregarded. As the theory of the regional security complex predicts, in this geography energy, maritime jurisdiction, military mobility and great-power rivalry are inextricably intertwined; for this reason every political arrangement on the island directly affects the regional balances as well (Litsas & Tziampiris, 2015; Winrow, 2020). This finding reveals that the search for a settlement cannot be confined to intra-island power-sharing alone; it requires a broader framework that takes fully into account the security architecture of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The legal core of the energy debate is the delimitation of maritime jurisdiction areas and the question of the ownership of resources; this question unites the internal and external dimensions of the matter in a single knot. On the internal dimension, the Turkish side maintains that both constituent communities are co-owners of the resources of the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone around the island, and that unilateral licensing and drilling activities are therefore legally defective until a comprehensive settlement is reached (Erçakıca, 2021). The delimitation agreements and exploration-and-production licences conducted single-handedly by the Greek administration in its capacity as an internationally recognised state are evaluated by the Turkish side as yet another unilateral exercise of the rights of the constituent partnership. On the external dimension, the matter becomes intertwined with Türkiye's own theses concerning its continental shelf and maritime jurisdiction areas; the delimitation equation in the Eastern Mediterranean turns into a legal-strategic rivalry that hardens around the maritime areas to be accorded to islands and the rights of the coastal states

(Karbuz, 2018; Winrow, 2020; Yorulmazlar & Çelik, 2021). This interlocking explains why energy geopolitics complicates rather than facilitates settlement: the resources are construed not as a common wealth to be shared between the two communities but as a new arena in which claims of sovereignty and recognition are tested. The question of maritime jurisdiction areas has thus become a heading too central to be considered independently of the intra-island settlement.

A layer of the regional equation that emerges in the study and is generally under-discussed is the Israel factor. As argued in the relevant strategic literature, the island of Cyprus is increasingly turning into an area of priority for Israel; the value the island holds in terms of energy corridors, maritime security and regional influence feeds the rapprochement Israel has developed with the Greek side and with Greece. Certain assessments on the Turkish side interpret this development as an expansionary dynamic that, in the medium and long term, takes into account not only the Turkish side but also fails to account for the Greek side, and hold that the Türkiye-backed presence of the TRNC serves as a balancing element in this equation. According to these assessments, the elimination of the TRNC and Türkiye factor on the island, far from soothing regional rivalry, could open the way to a future reckoning between Israel and the Greek-Greek Cypriot side. It is clear that these claims carry a speculative dimension and are difficult to verify; yet they have analytical value in showing why, in Turkish strategic thought, Cyprus is conceived not as a mere foreign-policy file but as a matter of regional balance. The same caution requires the counter-reading as well: the actors who defend the collaborations in question maintain that they are aimed not at expansion but at energy security and regional stability. The distance between the two readings is the regional-scale repetition of the perception of the same diplomatic initiative as an opportunity for one party and a threat for the other in the Eastern Mediterranean.

This regional dimension of the Cyprus question also makes it impossible to consider it apart from the general course of Türkiye-Greece relations. Throughout the historical process, the tensions and rapprochements between the two countries have, directly or indirectly, been reflected in the balances on the island (Armaoğlu, 1999; Uçarol, 2015). Cyprus, together with the disputes over maritime jurisdiction areas, the continental shelf and airspace in the Aegean, is one of the nodal points of a broader security equation between the two states; for this reason the debates over guarantorship and military presence on the island cease to be a matter solely between Turkish and Greek Cypriots and turn into an arena where the strategic priorities of the two countries intersect (Bahcheli, 1990). This interlocking demonstrates once again why the search for a settlement cannot remain confined to intra-island power-sharing formulas. Any arrangement reached in Cyprus will simultaneously reshape the Türkiye-Greece balance as well; conversely, the course of relations between these two countries will directly affect the prospects of success of the negotiations on the island. The matter, therefore, requires being treated as a multi-layered arena in which bilateral relations and regional geopolitics inseparably intersect.

A deeper pattern to which the findings point as a whole is the phenomenon that historical institutionalism designates by the concept of "path dependence." The temporary administration arrangement of 1878, the annexation of 1914, the partnership system of 1960, the institutional collapse of 1963 and the de facto division after 1974 are not independent ruptures but linked chains, each of which narrows the room for manoeuvre of the subsequent stage (Gürel, 1985; Gazioğlu, 2000a). The decisions taken at particular historical thresholds have produced outcomes increasingly difficult to reverse in later periods; the present-day negotiations, too, proceed under the shadow of this accumulated legacy. This perspective shows why the Turkish side's demands for political equality, effective participation and security cannot be explained by present preferences alone; they are the institutionalised outputs of long historical experiences. Likewise, the Greek side's sensitivities on sovereignty and international representation are also nourished by its own historical path. This symmetrical observation is important: the parties possess not only different interests but different historical memories and the different narratives of legitimacy these memories produce. As theories of collective memory and identity show, these narratives are transmitted from generation to generation through education, the media and political discourse; thus the same events can produce mutually incompatible perceptions of reality in the two communities (Kızılyürek, 2002; Bryant, 2010). For this reason a lasting settlement appears possible not through institutional design alone but only through addressing these opposing memories and threat perceptions together.

When the findings obtained are compared with the established approaches in the literature, the study's theoretical contribution becomes evident. The traditional frameworks that treat Cyprus primarily as an ethnic conflict or a problem of constitutional power-sharing (Anastasiou, 2008; Ioannou, 2019), while valuable in illuminating the social and institutional dimensions of the matter, cannot adequately explain how the monopoly of recognition and the asymmetry of legitimacy have locked the dispute. The reading developed in this study, by contrast, redefines power asymmetry not merely as a difference of material capacity but as an inequality in the capacity to produce legitimacy and to secure international representation; and it integrates the theories of the *de facto* state, asymmetric conflict and recognition with the regional security complex of the Eastern Mediterranean and with the concept of ripeness from the conflict-resolution literature. This integrated reading renders visible a point at which both established narratives fall short: in Cyprus, law is less a neutral body of rules than an arena in which the parties test their claims to legitimacy and gather international support. Seen in this way, the dispute's remaining unresolved for decades is not an anomaly but the very expected result of this asymmetric structure; for the party capable of preserving the existing order, the continuation of the status quo is often less costly than an uncertain compromise. The study's contribution to the field lies in uniting these three theoretical traditions within a single explanatory framework, thereby showing how the variables of power, legitimacy and ripeness feed one another in Cyprus.

This observation also requires a critical re-evaluation of the frequently voiced narrative of "the intransigence of the Turkish side." The findings show that neither party is wholly intransigent; and that in past processes, when suitable conditions arose, considerable convergences could be achieved. Yet the failure of these convergences to turn into a stable settlement stems most often not from a lack of good will on the part of a particular party but from the perceived injustice of the negotiating conditions. As negotiation theory emphasises, in processes in which the parties do not feel themselves to be equal and secure, the probability of compromise structurally declines; for on such a ground every concession is coded as a loss of rights for which no reciprocity can be obtained. The Cyprus experience confirms this prediction: the failure of even the most comprehensive settlement plans arises less from the inadequacy of formulas than from the inequality of the power and legitimacy conditions under which the parties evaluate those formulas. For this reason, the prospects of success of future initiatives depend, first and foremost, on addressing simultaneously the structural inequality perceived by the Turkish side and the sovereignty-related concerns of the counter-party. A one-sided appeal to "good will," unless it addresses the underlying asymmetry, is condemned to reproduce the cycle of past failures.

In presenting these evaluations, certain methodological limitations of the study must also be openly acknowledged. The analysis rests predominantly on document analysis, historical process analysis and discourse analysis; it therefore does not offer the kind of generalisable estimations that quantitative measurement might provide. The fact that the Cyprus literature contains mutually conflicting estimates, especially in numerical data concerning population, displacement and violent events, also makes it difficult to use such figures as though they were established facts; for this reason, throughout the study, contested quantitative claims have been treated not as verified data but according to their position within the parties' narratives. Moreover, since the current diplomatic process is fluid, the assessments concerning recent developments may need to be updated over time. These limitations do not diminish the value of the findings; on the contrary, they point to productive directions for future research. In particular, studies quantitatively measuring the economic and social cost of the Turkish Cypriot side's experience of isolation could render visible the concrete effects of the recognition asymmetry; likewise, theoretical studies systematically comparing Northern Cyprus with other unrecognised entities could place the debate on selective recognition on a firmer footing. Public-opinion and collective-memory research, in turn, could provide valuable contributions towards understanding the threshold of societal acceptance of settlement models.

Finally, the findings reveal that the Cyprus question is today not merely a relic of the past but an arena of struggle over the future regional order. Historical memory, interpretations of international law, security concerns, the asymmetry of recognition and energy rivalry form a single complex structure as mutually reinforcing links. The theses advanced by the Turkish side along the axes of political equality, security guarantees, the right of representation and international visibility rest upon both historical experiences and particular legal interpretations; the Greek side's position, in turn, is built upon the principles of the continuity

of the state and international recognition. The long-standing conflict between these two narratives shows that the parties disagree not only over the settlement model but over the very definition of the problem. Within this framework, the interpretation reached is that a lasting settlement can be possible only through the simultaneous fulfilment of two conditions: on the one hand, the remedying of the exclusion, isolation and inequality of representation to which the Turkish side is subjected; and on the other, the realistic recognition by the parties of one another's security and sovereignty sensitivities. Any arrangement in which either of these two conditions is neglected will, even if signed, fail to gain sufficient acceptance at the societal level and will fail to produce stability. The multi-layered analysis set out in this section provides the analytical ground necessary for the policy recommendations to be developed in the conclusion of the study; and it clearly demonstrates why an integrated reading that binds the historical roots of the Cyprus question to its contemporary geostrategic dynamics is indispensable.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The historical, legal, and political material examined throughout this study demonstrates that the Cyprus question cannot be reduced to an ordinary dispute between two communities; rather, the problem constitutes a multi-layered pattern in which power asymmetry conditions the production of legitimacy, while the legitimacy struggle is continuously reshaped by geostrategic competition. The common thread running through the documents examined is clear. The Republic of Cyprus, established upon the partnership of two constituent peoples under the 1959–1960 Zurich and London order, became *de facto* inoperable only three years after its founding; following this collapse, a single wing of the partnership rose to the position of exercising, on its own, the state's name, identity, and authority of international representation. According to the Turkish side, the true crux of the problem lies precisely here: while the party that terminated the partnership order is recognized within the international system as "Cyprus," the party that resisted this dissolution and preserved its existence with difficulty has borne more than its share of non-recognition and multifaceted restrictions (Necatigil, 2006; Sarica, Teziç, & Eskiurt, 1975). The greater part of the international community, by contrast, continues to regard this picture as legally valid on the basis of the principle of state continuity. Yet, as this study reveals, the distance between the two narratives is not a technical detail but a legitimacy conflict that constitutes the very core of the matter; and this conflict is directly bound up with the question of which side represents the state, and on what legal ground.

The roots of this asymmetry, as almost all of the sources examined indicate, extend not merely to the post-1974 period but much further back. The transfer of the island's administration to the United Kingdom through the 1878 convention, the institutionalization of the ideal of Enosis during the ensuing colonial years, and the gradual emigration of the Turkish Cypriots from the island laid the groundwork for all subsequent crises (Gazioğlu, 1996; Alasya, 1992; Dodd, 2010). As is persistently emphasized in Turkish historiography, against the Greek side's one-sided reading of the island's population stands the reality of the Turkish Cypriots who, from 1878 onward, were compelled to emigrate to Anatolia and to various countries around the world out of fear, exclusion, and pressure; the fate of these people's rights of return and citizenship remains one of the systematically neglected dimensions of the question. In this respect, confining the problem to 1974 falls short of explaining why the Turkish side's demands regarding security and representation are so deeply rooted and enduring. Indeed, one of the conclusions reached by this study is that, in Cyprus, historical memory is not merely a recollection of the past but a direct determinant of present-day politics; every negotiating position on the island is in fact situated within a segment of this long continuity.

The distinctive nature of the 1960 order constitutes the legal center of this legitimacy debate. The Republic of Cyprus was designed not as a simple majority government but as a *sui generis* state resting on the partnership of two constituent peoples; the veto powers granted to the President and the Vice-President, the system of separate municipalities, and the proportional participation stipulated in public offices were the constitutional guarantees of this partnership (Sarica, Teziç, & Eskiurt, 1975; Toluner, 1977). As argued in the Turkish legal literature, these guarantees were not decorative provisions but the very condition of the partnership's existence; hence their unilateral suspension amounted to the termination of the partnership itself (Necatigil, 2006). The attempt to amend the constitution at the end of 1963 and the developments that followed are read by the Turkish side as the moment at which the partnership state was *de facto* dismantled. Studies adopting a different

approach, on the other hand, contend that the constitutional system was blocked from the outset in practice and that the model was unsustainable (Kızılyürek, 2002). Whichever interpretation is adopted, it is clear that the 1960 Constitution continues to be the point of reference for all present-day settlement discussions; for even today the parties derive diametrically opposed legal conclusions from the same document.

Without grasping how the events of 1963–1964 constructed the security memory of the Turkish side, it is difficult to make sense of all the positions that followed. The intercommunal violence experienced during this period, the life that had to be sustained in besieged enclaves, and the de facto exclusion from state institutions left a deep imprint on the collective memory of the Turkish Cypriot community (İsmail, 2007; Eroğlu, 1975; Gazioğlu, 2000a). In Turkish sources, this period is conveyed as concrete evidence of what may occur once security is lost; this is largely why the demands for guarantorship and effective political equality are defended so firmly (Necatigil, 1998). In Greek and international literature the same period is treated from different perspectives, drawing attention to the multifaceted nature of the conflict. Nevertheless, the fact that the Turkish side's security concern is not mere rhetoric but rests upon a lived experience is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored in the design of settlement processes.

That no large-scale intercommunal clashes have occurred since the island was divided into two separate administrative zones after 1974 is interpreted by the Turkish side as a consequence of the existing security order (Eroğlu, 1975; Denктаş, 2004). According to this reading, the de facto stability maintained for nearly half a century is a product of the guarantorship system and geographical separation combined, and no arrangement that disregards these two elements can be lasting. The resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council after 1974 (United Nations Security Council, 1974; United Nations Security Council, 1975) also document the international dimension of the process. The Greek side, however, evaluates the same period within an entirely different framework; this demonstrates that the parties possess two separate and irreconcilable perceptions of reality regarding not only the future but also the past.

The picture that emerges along the axis of legitimacy and recognition harbors one of the most striking paradoxes of the problem. While the party that de facto abolished the 1960 order is treated as the sole holder of international representation, the party that resisted this dissolution and built a de facto state has been left alone with the consequences of the regime of non-recognition. Analyzed in the relevant literature under the headings of the "de facto state" and "counter-secession," this situation is in fact the product of an outcome sustained by the political preferences of powerful actors rather than by any legal necessity (Ker-Lindsay, 2012; Caspersen, 2012; Pegg, 1998). According to the Turkish side, a double standard operates here: while the international legitimacy of the will that destroyed the lawful partnership state goes unquestioned, the legitimacy of the party that took itself into protection in the face of massacre and exclusion is constantly interrogated—indeed, this resistance becomes the object of a kind of punishment (Erdal, 2005; Taşdemir, 2021). By contrast, the greater part of the international community justifies its stance through United Nations resolutions and the principle of state continuity. Even so, the data of this study reveal that legal justification and the perception of social justice often do not move in the same direction.

The everyday counterpart of the regime of non-recognition is the debate over isolation and embargo. According to the Turkish side, the years-long restriction of direct transport, trade, sport, and cultural and academic contacts has, far from encouraging a settlement, turned into an instrument of pressure that deepens the division and seeks to secure surrender by wearing one side down (Turhan, 2011; Taşdemir, 2021). It is argued that these restrictions are not merely a diplomatic matter but affect human security and social welfare across a broad field, from employment to education and from health to sport. In particular, the discouragement produced by these obstacles—set against younger generations' expectation of integration with the international system—directly shapes political preferences. Although a significant portion of international actors explain these practices through the legal framework, one of the fundamental conclusions underscored by this study is that an order in which one side feels permanently excluded is not sustainable in the long run.

The European Union factor stands out as a rupture that consolidates this asymmetry on the legal plane. While the treaties that founded Cyprus prohibited any union or partition over the island and established a special balance, the admission of the Greek administration to the Union in 2004 under the title of the "Republic of Cyprus"—without a settlement having been reached and without the joint will of the two communities being

sought—was assessed by the Turkish side as a violation of both the founding treaties and the customary practice of not admitting states that are party to a dispute (European Council, 1999; European Council, 2002; Act of Accession, 2003; Protocol No. 10 on Cyprus, 2003; Arsava, 1996). According to the Turkish side, this step rendered the incentive mechanism in the negotiations inoperative; the party that obtained membership before a settlement was largely relieved of any pressure to compromise. The Greek side and the Union's institutions, on the other hand, regard the membership as the natural consequence of international law and of the obligations of accession. This tension also explains why the Cyprus file today has ceased to be merely an intra-island matter and has turned into a test of strength between Türkiye and the European Union (Oran, 2013b; Pazarcı, 2019).

It is also evident that the Turkish side's caution toward the European Union is not confined to the Cyprus file. Over the long process extending from the 1963 Ankara Agreement to the 1970 Additional Protocol, from the 1995 Customs Union to the candidate status granted at the 1999 Helsinki Summit, and to the full-membership negotiations formally opened in 2005, the prevailing conviction on the Turkish side is that the requirements of the commitments made have often been postponed or suspended on various pretexts (Oran, 2013a; Oran, 2013b). This historical experience feeds a skepticism toward promises offered in return for relinquishing acquired rights in Cyprus—such as "updating the Customs Union, visa liberalization, inclusion in defense and security cooperation, or the opening of blocked negotiation chapters." For, according to the Turkish side, similar promises in the past could be withdrawn by introducing new conditions once concessions had been obtained; hence it is argued that a "carrot-and-stick" diplomacy is being pursued. This assessment also explains why the party demands, at the negotiating table, concrete gains that have been secured in advance.

The most concrete example of this context is the 2004 referendum process. When the comprehensive settlement plan was put to a vote, approximately two-thirds of the Turkish Cypriot electorate approved the text, while three-quarters of the Greek Cypriot electorate rejected it (United Nations, 2004; Özersay, 2010). According to the prevailing conviction on the Turkish side, despite a clear will toward compromise having been displayed and significant concessions having been made, the anticipated international opening did not materialize, the intimations that the isolations would be eased were not honored, and, by contrast, the party that rejected the plan obtained the reward of membership. This experience entrenched within Turkish public opinion the assessment that the negotiations do not operate fairly in terms of the reward–punishment balance, and it reinforced the cautious stance encapsulated in the view that "every concession made opened the door to new concessions" (Necatigil, 2006; Dodd, 2010). Accordingly, the Turkish side's demand for stronger guarantees and preconditions in the subsequent period should be read not as a mere bargaining tactic but as a lesson produced by this historical experience.

The 2017 Crans-Montana Conference stands out as the most critical turning point of the recent period. During the process the parties engaged in a more advanced exchange of views on many headings than in previous periods; however, the differences of opinion on security, guarantees, and territorial arrangements could not be overcome (United Nations Secretary-General, 2017). According to the prevailing assessment on the Turkish side, despite significant flexibility having been shown throughout the process, the anticipated reciprocity was not obtained; the table was abandoned because the demands for a full and immediate withdrawal on guarantorship and troops were not accepted. The framework put forward by the Secretariat likewise did not suffice to break this deadlock. The failure of the conference should be regarded not merely as the inconclusiveness of a single round of negotiations but as a rupture of trust that shaped all subsequent positions; indeed, the new line adopted by the Turkish side after 2021 is largely the product of this experience.

At the 5+UN informal meeting held in Geneva on 29 April 2021, the Turkish side brought to the table a settlement model based on sovereign equality and equal international status rather than federation. According to the Turkish side, the essential issue here arises before the content of the negotiations, at the level of their basis: it is argued that negotiations conducted without the political equality and status of the Turkish Cypriots being registered in advance are doomed to repeat past failures. However, the good-offices mission of the United Nations Secretary-General is limited to the parameter of a bicomunal, bizonal federation with political equality as defined in the resolutions of the Security Council; this has prevented the Turkish side's proposal from being sufficiently considered within the process. In the relevant literature, this demand is grounded in the arguments that the Turkish Cypriots possess, in terms of international law, the quality of a

"people" capable of exercising self-determination, that the TRNC largely meets the criteria of statehood, and that a search for a remedial right may be deemed legitimate in cases where internal self-governance has been systematically obstructed (İşıksal, 2024; Taşdemir, 2021). Türkiye's calls for the recognition of the TRNC from the rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly during the 2023–2025 period are also an extension of this line.

The process regained momentum in the 2024–2025 period. Through the efforts of the personal envoy appointed by the Secretariat, broad-format informal meetings were held in Geneva in March and in New York in July 2025; the parties reached agreement on a series of trust-building initiatives in areas such as crossing points, the environment and climate, the restoration of cemeteries, and demining (United Nations Secretary-General, 2024). Although these steps show that the process is not entirely locked, the parties' fundamental positions regarding the peace process and the ultimate form of the settlement have been preserved. According to the Turkish side, while such technical cooperation is valuable, arrangements aimed at everyday life cannot substitute for a lasting political solution so long as the question of sovereign equality and equal status remains unresolved. For this reason, the Turkish side maintains its distance from the imposition of a framework conducted through the personal envoy and predicated solely on the federation basis, unless its own preconditions are met.

Following the presidential election held in the TRNC in October 2025, a new emphasis has begun to accompany the Turkish side's negotiating discourse. The new administration, while adopting a discourse comparatively open to a federal framework, sustains a line that takes as its basis political equality, acquired rights, and coordination with Türkiye. This development has reopened the debate over whether the form of the settlement will be a "two-state model" or "a federation in which two politically equal peoples come together under a single roof." Yet, whatever the form, the Turkish side's unchanging red line is clear: the rejection of minority status, the achievement of de facto and effective political equality, the guaranteeing of equal international status, and concrete assurances on security (İşıksal, 2024; Denktaş, 2004). In this respect, the change of leadership should be read not as an abandonment of the Turkish side's fundamental demands but as a search for a different method of approaching the same objective. The Greek side, however, finds this approach incompatible with the federation parameters of the Security Council; thus the parties struggle to agree even on the basis of the negotiation before its content.

On the legal plane, the study also reveals that developments in the field of property and individual rights have rendered the de facto position of the Turkish side visible. The line of jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights extending from the *Loizidou* judgment to the *Demopoulos* judgment has, over time, transformed the framework initially constructed against Türkiye, arriving at the acceptance of the domestic legal remedy established in the North (the immovable property commission mechanism) as an effective remedy that must be exhausted (Council of Europe, 1996; Council of Europe, 2010). This evolution signifies that the administrative and judicial structures established by the Turkish side have—independently of the recognition debate—acquired a certain legal efficacy and reality, indirectly conceded by an international judicial organ. Insofar as it demonstrates that even in a heading as sensitive as property the de facto situation produces legal consequences, this jurisprudence reveals that the legitimacy debate rests upon a legal ground as well as a purely political one (Necatigil, 2006).

The question of security continues, in terms of another fundamental conclusion reached by the study, to occupy the center of the problem. For the Turkish side, security is a broad concept encompassing not only protection against a physical threat but also the sustainability of political existence, effective participation in decision-making processes, and communal identity (Necatigil, 1998; Treaty of Guarantee, 1960). For this reason, the guarantorship system and Türkiye's military presence on the island are regarded by the Turkish side not as an abstract strategic preference but as a component of the perception of social security. The Greek side, on the other hand, argues that military guarantees have become unnecessary in the contemporary international system and that security can be ensured through international institutions and norms. According to the Turkish side, however, historical experience has shown that abstract assurances entrusted solely to declarations or to international organizations do not, on their own, provide sufficient protection (İsmail, 2007; Denktaş, 2004). Hence, unless security is supported by tangible and functioning mechanisms, no political structure to be established is expected to be long-lived.

The geostrategic layer of the matter renders all these debates even more charged. The discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, disputes over maritime jurisdiction areas, and new regional alliances have transformed Cyprus from being merely an island inhabited by two communities into one of the nodal points of energy corridors and balances of power (Erçakıca, 2021; Gürel, 2024). According to the Turkish side, certain cooperation mechanisms established in the region deliberately bear an exclusionary character toward Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriots; this strengthens the objections that the Turkish Cypriots, too, are equal rights-holders in the natural resources around the island. As argued in the relevant literature, as the strategic value of the island rises, so too do the weight of external actors and the risk of the region's securitization. In this picture, the existence of a Türkiye-backed TRNC serves as an element of balance not only for the Turkish side but also for actors that do not wish the regional equilibrium to be disrupted in an excessively one-sided manner. Accordingly, no settlement proposal that fails to take the energy dimension into account can avoid remaining incomplete; for today the outcome of the negotiations affects not only the intra-island order but also the distribution of power in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The common denominator of all these layers is that, in the Cyprus case, international law and *de facto* power relations often operate in different directions. Although legal rules are in theory founded upon neutral and universal principles, in practice interpretation is not independent of the political context; the same document can be tied to different conclusions by parties in different power positions (Toluner, 1977; Arsava, 1996; Gündüz, 2014). According to the Turkish side, in certain international decisions it is politics rather than law that is determinative, and processes of recognition, representation, and negotiation are affected by *de facto* balances of power. For this reason, the Cyprus question must be read not solely through legal texts but within the framework of the operating logic of the international system. One of the most important reasons for the longevity of the matter is precisely this law–power interaction; and unless both dimensions are addressed together, any settlement proposals to be developed will remain incomplete (Pazarıcı, 2019).

When all these findings are evaluated together, the study's contribution to the field also becomes apparent. A significant portion of the Cyprus literature has examined the problem in a one-dimensional manner, along the axis of either legal settlement models, or negotiation processes, or intercommunal relations. Yet power asymmetry, the legitimacy struggle, and geostrategic competition operate in the Cyprus case not as independent but as mutually reinforcing processes. Reading together this threefold interaction—in which legitimacy is conditioned by *de facto* power and the balance of power is in turn reconstituted by regional geopolitics—explains more holistically why the problem has remained unresolved for decades and why the classical federation parameters have failed to yield results. This framework also shows that the Turkish side's demands regarding political equality, security, representation, and international visibility do not constitute scattered wishes but a coherent whole grounded in specific historical events and legal interpretations (Necatigil, 2006; Pazarıcı, 2019).

The conclusions reached also bring with them a series of practice-oriented recommendations. The first of these is that the asymmetry of representation and recognition, and the regime of isolation bound up with it, be addressed as a precondition of genuine equality. Since a party that is constantly excluded cannot be expected to sit at the table on an equal and voluntary basis, the easing of restrictions in the areas of direct transport, trade, sport, culture, and education, together with the multiplication of trust-building contacts, constitutes an indispensable step that will open the way for political negotiations. As emphasized in the literature on international conflict resolution, the development of economic interdependence and direct contact can, in the long run, soften political tensions (Keohane & Nye, 2012; Bercovitch, 2011). The prudent yet resolute implementation of the trust-building initiatives recently agreed upon should also be evaluated in this direction.

The second recommendation is that the headings of sovereign and political equality and of security be addressed without being severed from one another. For the Turkish side, these two headings are the condition of one another; when security is not considered together with effective participation in decision-making processes and the preservation of political existence, it is reduced to a purely military arrangement. For this reason, functioning and tangible mechanisms should be developed instead of merely declaratory assurances. Third, removing the energy resources of the Eastern Mediterranean from the status of an element of conflict and transforming them into a field of cooperation through revenue-sharing and joint infrastructure models that also observe the rights of the Turkish Cypriots offers a concrete opportunity that would benefit both the island

and the region (Erçakıca, 2021; Gürel, 2024). Such a structure, while not substituting for a political settlement on its own, could become a powerful instrument supporting the settlement.

The fourth recommendation is that mediation processes be constructed in a manner that is fair and impartial in procedural terms as well. When one of the parties perceives the process as a mechanism operating to its own detriment, the acceptance of the outcome becomes difficult regardless of the content of the proposals; hence the legitimacy of the process is at least as determinative as the content of the agreement (Bercovitch, 2011). Within this framework, a method should be adopted in which the parties not only have their views solicited but also jointly determine the basis of the negotiation; the imposition of any framework document upon the parties in advance should be avoided. Fifth, acknowledging that a comprehensive agreement is not realistic in the short term, a phased approach that observes expectation management should be pursued; discussions concerning the founding treaties and legal continuity should be kept on the table without the current *de facto* situation being accepted as a settled matter. The social dimension of this process should likewise not be neglected; the reduction of prejudices should be pursued through joint academic projects, mutual education and cultural exchanges, and media and civil-society initiatives (Volkan, 2008; Bryant, 2010).

The sixth and perhaps most principled recommendation is that no settlement framework be built upon a logic that treats the existing Greek administration as a fixed starting point and merely appends the Turkish side to it. According to the Turkish side, such a construction, rather than correcting the asymmetry arising from the *de facto* dissolution of the 1960 partnership, perpetuates it and assigns to the Turkish Cypriots a subordinate rather than a co-founding status (Necatigil, 2006; Işıksal, 2024). The precondition of a lasting settlement is that, whichever model is adopted, the two sides be recognized with equal esteem and equal status. Otherwise, as has been seen repeatedly in the past, even a formal compromise will soon turn once more into a legitimacy debate, and the process will return to its starting point.

Like every study, this research too has been conducted within certain limitations. Since the analysis rests largely on documentary and qualitative synthesis, part of the findings is grounded in concepts—such as the perception of legitimacy and justice—that are by their nature open to interpretation. The limited equal-level access to the primary archival sources of all the parties, the fact that some of the rapidly changing current developments can be followed only through secondary sources, and the focus of the examination on a single case are frameworks that must clearly be recorded with respect to the generalizability of the results. Moreover, it should not be overlooked that a reading focused on legitimacy and power relations carries the risk of leaving economic and social micro-dynamics comparatively in the background. These limitations do not diminish the value of the findings but rather offer a clear agenda for future studies.

Several directions stand out with respect to future research. First, the situation of the TRNC may be placed on a more systematic theoretical footing by examining it comparatively with *de facto* state cases such as Abkhazia and Transnistria, thereby analyzing the relationship among recognition, effectiveness, and legitimacy (Taşdemir, 2021; Caspersen, 2012; Pegg, 1998). Second, the impact of Eastern Mediterranean energy geopolitics on the course of the negotiations may be analyzed by modeling it through different scenarios. Third, the repercussions of the post-2025 change of leadership on the Turkish side for the negotiating line and for the fate of the trust-building initiatives constitute an area worth tracking empirically in the medium term. Fourth, the social and economic consequences of isolation may be measured through field-based research, while the operation of the post-Demopoulos property regime requires a separate legal examination. Finally, the relationship between the intergenerational transmission of historical memory and social support for settlement processes should be investigated more deeply within an interdisciplinary framework.

In conclusion, this study has analyzed the Cyprus question holistically along the axes of power asymmetries, legitimacy struggles, security concerns, and geostrategic competition, and has demonstrated that the matter is, far beyond a historical dispute, a debate over order in which international law and *de facto* balances of power confront one another. All the data obtained show that a lasting and sustainable settlement depends not on the absolute supremacy of one of the parties but on the correction of the structural asymmetry and on the recognition of the Turkish side as a politically equal, secure, and fairly represented party. So long as the elements of security, political equality, legitimacy, and cooperation are not observed together, the reproduction of the cycle of deadlock and mistrust appears inevitable, whatever institutional design is attempted. Yet if this

asymmetry is repaired, it is possible for Cyprus to cease being an arena of conflict and to become one of the important centers of regional cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean. The future of both the island and the region will depend, to a large extent, on whether this repair can be achieved and on whether the parties will accept one another as equal and legitimate interlocutors.

REFERENCES

1. Act of Accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union. (2003, September 23). Official Journal of the European Union, L236, 955–987.
2. Akyürek, S. (2020). Türkiye'nin Kıbrıs politikaları (1950–1960). Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi.
3. Alasya, H. F. (1987). Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti tarihi. Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları.
4. Alasya, H. F. (1988). Kıbrıs ve Rum-Yunan emelleri. KKTC Millî Eğitim ve Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları.
5. Alasya, H. F. (1992). Tarihte Kıbrıs. KKTC Millî Eğitim ve Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları.
6. Anastasiou, H. (2008). The broken olive branch: Nationalism, ethnic conflict, and the quest for peace in Cyprus. Syracuse University Press.
7. Armaoğlu, F. (1997). 20. yüzyıl siyasi tarihi: 1914–1995. Alkım Yayınevi.
8. Armaoğlu, F. (1999). 20. yüzyıl siyasi tarihi (1914–1995). Alkım Yayınevi.
9. Arsava, A. F. (1996). Kıbrıs sorununun uluslararası hukuk açısından değerlendirilmesi. Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi, 51(1). https://doi.org/10.1501/SBFder_0000001901
10. Bahcheli, T. (1990). Greek-Turkish relations since 1955. Westview Press.
11. Bahcheli, T. (2007). Searching for a Cyprus settlement: Considering options for creating a foundation for lasting peace. Mediterranean Quarterly, 18(1), 25–47.
12. Bahcheli, T., Bartmann, B., & Srebrnik, H. F. (Eds.). (2004). De facto states: The quest for sovereignty. Routledge.
13. Baldwin, D. A. (2016). Power and international relations: A conceptual approach. Princeton University Press.
14. Baltacı, A. (2019). Nitel araştırma süreci: Nitel bir araştırma nasıl yapılır? Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi, 5(2), 368–388.
15. Basic Structure of the Republic of Cyprus. (1960). Government Printing Office.
16. Beratlı, N. (1995). Kıbrıs Türklerinin tarihi. Galeri Kültür Yayınları.
17. Bercovitch, J. (2011). Mediation and conflict resolution. In J. Bercovitch, V. Kremenyuk, & I. W. Zartman (Eds.), The SAGE handbook of conflict resolution (pp. 17–35). Sage Publications.
18. Bryant, R. (2010). The past in pieces: Belonging in the new Cyprus. University of Pennsylvania Press.
19. Buzan, B., & Wæver, O. (2003). Regions and powers: The structure of international security. Cambridge University Press.
20. Capoccia, G., & Kelemen, R. D. (2007). The study of critical junctures: Theory, narrative, and counterfactuals in historical institutionalism. World Politics, 59(3), 341–369. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100020852>
21. Caspersen, N. (2012). Unrecognized states: The struggle for sovereignty in the modern international system. Polity Press.
22. Chrysostomides, K. (2000). The Republic of Cyprus: A study in international law. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
23. Clark, I. (2005). Legitimacy in international society. Oxford University Press.
24. Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus. (1960). Government Printing Office.
25. Convention of Defensive Alliance between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire (Cyprus Convention). (1878, June 4).
26. Council of Europe. (1996). Loizidou v. Turkey (Application No. 15318/89, Judgment of 18 December 1996).
27. Council of Europe. (2001). Cyprus v. Turkey (Application No. 25781/94, Judgment of 10 May 2001).
28. Council of Europe. (2005). Xenides-Arestis v. Turkey (Application No. 46347/99, Judgment of 22 December 2005).

29. Council of Europe. (2010). Demopoulos and Others v. Turkey (Application Nos. 46113/99 et al., Decision of 1 March 2010).
30. Crawford, J. (2006). The creation of states in international law (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
31. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2021). Karma yöntem araştırmaları: Tasarımı ve yürütülmesi (Y. Dede & S. B. Demir, Çev. Ed.). Anı Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2018'de yayımlanmıştır)
32. Denктаş, R. R. (1996). The Cyprus triangle. K. Rustem & Brother.
33. Denктаş, R. R. (2004). Kıbrıs Girit olmasın. Remzi Kitabevi.
34. Derman, G. S., & Kurban, V. (2017). Kıbrıs sorununun Türk dış politikasına etkisi ve ABD–SSCB ile ilişkiler. Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi, 16(33), 455–484.
35. Diez, T., & Tocci, N. (Eds.). (2013). Cyprus: A conflict at the crossroads. Manchester University Press.
36. Dodd, C. (2010). The history and politics of the Cyprus conflict. Palgrave Macmillan.
37. Əliyev, R. (2015). Şimali Kipr Türk Cümhuriyyəti və Azərbaycan arasında münasibətlərin inkişaf perspektivləri. Geostrategiya, 4, 62–71.
38. Erçakıca, M. (2021). Doğu Akdeniz'de yaşanan güncel gelişmelerin Kıbrıs sorunu ve uluslararası deniz hukuku çerçevesinde değerlendirilmesi. Erciyes Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi.
39. Erdal, S. (2005). Uluslararası hukukta tanıma kurumu ve Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti örneği. Selçuk Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi, 13(1), 157–196.
40. Erim, N. (1975). Bildiğim ve gördüğüm ölçüler içinde Kıbrıs. Ajans-Türk Matbaacılık.
41. Eroğlu, H. (1975). Kıbrıs uyuşmazlığı ve Kıbrıs Barış Harekâtı. Emel Matbaacılık.
42. Euronews. (2025, October 19). KKTC'nin yeni cumhurbaşkanı Tufan Erhürman kimdir, neyi savunuyor? Euronews Türkçe. <https://tr.euronews.com/2025/10/19/kktenin-yeni-cumhurbaskani-tufan-erhurman-kimdir-neyi-savunuyor>
43. European Commission. (2022). Türkiye Report 2022. European Union.
44. European Commission. (2023). Türkiye Report 2023. European Union.
45. European Commission. (2024). Türkiye Report 2024. European Union.
46. European Council. (1999, December 10–11). Presidency Conclusions: Helsinki European Council.
47. European Council. (2002, December 12–13). Presidency Conclusions: Copenhagen European Council.
48. Faustmann, H. (2008). The European Union and Cyprus: The failure of conditionality. Mediterranean Politics, 13(2), 203–222.
49. Gazioğlu, A. C. (1994). Kıbrıs'ta Türkler: 1570–1878. CYREP Yayınları.
50. Gazioğlu, A. C. (1996). İngiliz yönetiminde Kıbrıs (1878–1952): Enosis çemberinde Türkler. CYREP Yayınları.
51. Gazioğlu, A. C. (1998). İngiliz yönetiminde Kıbrıs (1951–1959): Enosis'e karşı taksim ve eşit egemenlik. CYREP Yayınları.
52. Gazioğlu, A. C. (2000a). İngiliz yönetiminde Kıbrıs (1958–1960): Enosis çemberinden Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti'ne. CYREP Yayınları.
53. Gazioğlu, A. C. (2000b). Direniş örgütleri, gençlik teşkilatı ve sosyoekonomik durum (1958–1960). CYREP Yayınları.
54. Gündüz, A. (2014). Milletlerarası hukuk: Temel belgeler, örnek kararlar (7. bs.). Beta Yayınları.
55. Gürel, A. (2024). Kıbrıs sorunu ve müdahil devletlerin politikalarının değerlendirilmesi. Kıbrıs, 14, 27–40.
56. Gürel, Ş. S. (1984). Kıbrıs tarihi (1878–1960): Kolonyalizm, ulusçuluk ve uluslararası politika (Cilt I). Kaynak Yayınları.
57. Gürel, Ş. S. (1985). Kıbrıs tarihi (1878–1960): Kolonyalizm, ulusçuluk ve uluslararası politika (Cilt II). Kaynak Yayınları.
58. Gürkan, H. M. (1987). Bir zamanlar Kıbrıs'ta. Galeri Kültür Yayınları.
59. Hasgüler, M. (2000). Kıbrıs'ta Enosis ve Taksim politikalarının sonu. İletişim Yayınları.
60. Hatay, M. (2007). Is the Turkish Cypriot population shrinking? An overview of the ethno-demography of Cyprus. PRIO Cyprus Centre.
61. Hatay, M. (2017). Beyond numbers: An inquiry into the political integration of the Turkish settlers in Northern Cyprus. PRIO Cyprus Centre.
62. Həsənov, A. (2013). Müasir dünya siyasətində Kipr problemi. Tarix və Onun Problemləri, 2, 219–224.
63. Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2001). Multi-level governance and European integration. Rowman & Littlefield.

64. Ioannou, G. (2019). The normalization of partition in Cyprus: Political economy and political culture in a divided society. Palgrave Macmillan.
65. Işıksal, H. (2024). The rationale of Turkish Cypriot position on two-state solution in Cyprus. *Bilig*, (109), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.12995/bilig.10901>
66. İsmail, S. (1992). Kıbrıs'ta varoluş mücadelesi. Akdeniz Haber Ajansı Yayınları.
67. İsmail, S. (1998). 150 soruda Kıbrıs sorunu. Akdeniz Haber Ajansı Yayınları.
68. İsmail, S. (2007). Kıbrıs'ta Türk-Rum mücadeleleri ve EOKA. Akdeniz Haber Ajansı Yayınları.
69. Jervis, R. (1978). Cooperation under the security dilemma. *World Politics*, 30(2), 167–214. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009958>
70. Karbuz, S. (2018). Eastern Mediterranean gas: Testing the field. *Mediterranean Politics*, 23(3), 269–291.
71. Kaufmann, C. (1996). Possible and impossible solutions to ethnic civil wars. *International Security*, 20(4), 136–175. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539045>
72. Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (2012). *Power and interdependence* (4th ed.). Longman.
73. Ker-Lindsay, J. (2005). EU accession and UN peacemaking in Cyprus. Palgrave Macmillan.
74. Ker-Lindsay, J. (2007). The policies of non-recognition: The case of Northern Cyprus. *International Affairs*, 83(4), 727–750.
75. Ker-Lindsay, J. (2011). *The Cyprus problem: What everyone needs to know*. Oxford University Press.
76. Ker-Lindsay, J. (2012). *The foreign policy of counter secession: Preventing the recognition of contested states*. Oxford University Press.
77. Ker-Lindsay, J. (2015). *Resolving Cyprus: New approaches to conflict resolution*. I.B. Tauris.
78. Kıbrıs'ın dün-bugünü uluslararası sempozyumu bildirileri (28 Ekim–2 Kasım 1991). (1993). Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Yayınları & Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi Yayınları.
79. Kırıl, B. (2020). Nitel bir veri analizi yöntemi olarak doküman analizi. *Siirt Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 8(15), 170–189.
80. Kızılyürek, N. (2002). *Milliyetçilik kışkacında Kıbrıs*. İletişim Yayınları.
81. Kolstø, P. (Ed.). (2006). The sustainability and future of unrecognized quasi-states. *Journal of Peace Research*, 43(6), Special Issue.
82. Kosovo Advisory Opinion. (2010). Accordance with international law of the unilateral declaration of independence in respect of Kosovo (Advisory opinion). I.C.J. Reports 2010, 403.
83. Lijphart, A. (1977). *Democracy in plural societies: A comparative exploration*. Yale University Press.
84. Litsas, S. N., & Tziampiris, A. (Eds.). (2015). *The new Eastern Mediterranean: Theory, politics and states in a volatile era*. Springer.
85. Luttwak, E. N. (1990). From geopolitics to geo-economics: Logic of conflict, grammar of commerce. *The National Interest*, (20), 17–23.
86. Mack, A. (1975). Why big nations lose small wars: The politics of asymmetric conflict. *World Politics*, 27(2), 175–200. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009880>
87. Məmmədov, E. (2014). Kipr məsələsi və beynəlxalq münasibətlər sistemində yeri. *Geostrategiya*, 3, 45–53.
88. Meray, S. L. (1975a). *Devletler hukukuna giriş (Cilt I)*. Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları.
89. Meray, S. L. (1975b). *Devletler hukukuna giriş (Cilt II)*. Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları.
90. Mitzen, J. (2006). Ontological security in world politics: State identity and the security dilemma. *European Journal of International Relations*, 12(3), 341–370. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066106067346>
91. Montevideo Sözleşmesi. (1933). Devletlerin hak ve yükümlülüklerine dair sözleşme [Convention on the Rights and Duties of States]. Milletler Cemiyeti Antlaşmalar Dizisi, 165, 19.
92. Mullen, F., Antoniadou Kyriacou, A., & Oğuz, O. (2009). *The Cyprus peace dividend revisited*. PRIO Cyprus Centre.
93. Necatigil, Z. M. (1998). *The Cyprus question and the Turkish position in international law*. Oxford University Press.
94. Necatigil, Z. M. (2006). *Kıbrıs uyuşmazlığı ve AİHM kışkacında Türkiye*. Turhan Kitabevi.

95. Nugent, N. (2006). Cyprus and the European Union: The significance of its smallness, both as an applicant and a member. *European Integration*, 28(1), 51–71.
96. Oran, B. (Ed.). (2013a). *Türk dış politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan bugüne olgular, belgeler, yorumlar (Cilt I)*. İletişim Yayınları.
97. Oran, B. (Ed.). (2013b). *Türk dış politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşı'ndan bugüne olgular, belgeler, yorumlar (Cilt II)*. İletişim Yayınları.
98. Özen, G. (2016). Nitel ve nicel araştırma yöntemlerinin bir arada kullanılması “Karma araştırma yöntemi”. *Kurgu*, 24(2), 106–112.
99. Özersay, K. (2010). The Annan Plan and the Cyprus problem. *Perceptions*, 15(2), 87–110.
100. Pazarcı, H. (2019). *Uluslararası hukuk (18. bs.)*. Turhan Kitabevi.
101. Pegg, S. (1998). *International society and the de facto state*. Ashgate.
102. Pierson, P. (2004). *Politics in time: History, institutions, and social analysis*. Princeton University Press.
103. Politis. (2026, June). What ‘loose solution’ plan Holguín is discussing. *Politis News*. <https://en.politis.com.cy/in-depth/cyprus-issue/1013891/what-loose-solution-plan-olgin-is-discussing>
104. Posen, B. R. (1993). The security dilemma and ethnic conflict. *Survival*, 35(1), 27–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396339308442672>
105. Protocol No. 10 on Cyprus. (2003). Act of Accession 2003. Official Journal of the European Union.
106. Qasimov, V. (2016). Kipr problemi və Şərqi Aralıq dənizi geosiyasəti. *Strateji Təhlil*, 1, 88–97.
107. Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Türkiye, & United Kingdom. (1959, February 19). London Agreement.
108. Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Türkiye, & United Kingdom. (1959, February 19). Zurich Agreement.
109. Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Türkiye, & United Kingdom. (1960, August 16). Treaty concerning the Establishment of the Republic of Cyprus.
110. Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Türkiye, & United Kingdom. (1960, August 16). Treaty of Alliance.
111. Republic of Cyprus, Greece, Türkiye, & United Kingdom. (1960, August 16). Treaty of Guarantee.
112. Richmond, O. P., & Ker-Lindsay, J. (Eds.). (2001). *The work of the UN in Cyprus: Promoting peace and development*. Palgrave Macmillan.
113. Sarıca, M., Teziç, E., & Eskiurt, Ö. (1975). *Kıbrıs sorunu*. İstanbul Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Yayınları.
114. Sil, R., & Katzenstein, P. J. (2010). *Beyond paradigms: Analytic eclecticism in the study of world politics*. Palgrave Macmillan.
115. Sönmezoglu, F. (2014). *Uluslararası ilişkiler sözlüğü (6. bs.)*. Der Yayınları.
116. Stedman, S. J. (1997). Spoiler problems in peace processes. *International Security*, 22(2), 5–53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2539366>
117. Strange, S. (1988). *States and markets*. Pinter Publishers.
118. Tansu, İ. (2001). *Aslında hiç kimse uyumuyordu*. Minpa Matbaacılık.
119. Taşdemir, F. (2021). Uluslararası hukuk açısından de facto devlet sorunu: Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti (KKTC), Abhazya ve Transdinyester örneklerinin karşılaştırmalı analizi. *Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*.
120. T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı. (n.d.). *Kıbrıs konusundaki temel belgeler ve açıklamalar*.
121. T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı. (n.d.). *Kıbrıs meselesi*.
122. Tekindal, M., & Uğuz Arsu, Ş. (2020). Nitel araştırma yöntemi olarak fenomenolojik yaklaşımın kapsamı ve sürecine yönelik bir derleme. *Ufku Ötesi Bilim Dergisi*, 20(1), 153–172.
123. Tocci, N. (2004). EU accession dynamics and conflict resolution: Catalysing peace or consolidating partition in Cyprus? Ashgate.
124. Toluner, S. (1977). *Kıbrıs uyuşmazlığı ve milletlerarası hukuk*. İstanbul Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Yayınları.
125. Toraman, S. (2021). Karma yöntemler araştırması: Kısa tarihi, tanımı, bakış açıları ve temel kavramlar. *Nitel Sosyal Bilimler*, 3(1), 1–29.
126. Treaty of Peace with Turkey (Treaty of Lausanne), Art. 20. (1923, July 24).
127. Turhan, T. (2011). Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti–Azerbaycan ilişkileri. *Ankara Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi*, 60(1), 175–196. https://doi.org/10.1501/Hukfak_0000001623
128. Tziampiris, A. (Ed.). (2019). *The new Eastern Mediterranean: Theory, politics and states in a volatile era (updated studies)*. Springer.

129. Uçarol, R. (2000). Siyasi tarih (1789–1999). Filiz Kitabevi.
130. Uçarol, R. (2015). Siyasi tarih (1789–2014). Der Yayınları.
131. United Nations. (1974, November 1). General Assembly Resolution 3212 (XXIX). United Nations.
132. United Nations. (1992, December 29). Security Council Resolution 774 (1992) (S/RES/774). United Nations.
133. United Nations. (1992, November 25). Security Council Resolution 789 (1992) (S/RES/789). United Nations.
134. United Nations. (1999, June 29). Security Council Resolution 1251 (1999) (S/RES/1251). United Nations.
135. United Nations. (2004). Comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem: Foundation Agreement, final text (Annan Plan). United Nations.
136. United Nations. (2025). Good Offices Mission in Cyprus: Press releases. UN Cyprus Talks. <https://uncyprustalks.unmissions.org/en/cyprus/press-releases>
137. United Nations. (2025, May 2). Secretary-General appoints María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar of Colombia Personal Envoy on Cyprus (SG/A/2351). United Nations.
138. United Nations Secretary-General. (1992). Set of Ideas on an Overall Framework Agreement on Cyprus. United Nations.
139. United Nations Secretary-General. (2003). Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2003/398). United Nations.
140. United Nations Secretary-General. (2004). Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2004/437). United Nations.
141. United Nations Secretary-General. (2004). The comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem (Annan Plan). United Nations.
142. United Nations Secretary-General. (2017). Report on the Conference on Cyprus at Crans-Montana. United Nations.
143. United Nations Secretary-General. (2024a). Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2024/13). United Nations.
144. United Nations Secretary-General. (2024b). Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus (S/2024/316). United Nations.
145. United Nations Secretary-General. (2026). Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus (S/2026/9). United Nations.
146. United Nations Security Council. (1964, March 4). Resolution 186 (1964) (S/RES/186). United Nations.
147. United Nations Security Council. (1974, July 20). Resolution 353 (1974) (S/RES/353). United Nations.
148. United Nations Security Council. (1974, December 13). Resolution 365 (1974) (S/RES/365). United Nations.
149. United Nations Security Council. (1975, March 12). Resolution 367 (1975) (S/RES/367). United Nations.
150. United Nations Security Council. (1983, November 18). Resolution 541 (1983) (S/RES/541). United Nations.
151. United Nations Security Council. (1984, May 11). Resolution 550 (1984) (S/RES/550). United Nations.
152. United Nations Security Council. (1990, March 12). Resolution 649 (1990) (S/RES/649). United Nations.
153. United Nations Security Council. (1991, October 11). Resolution 716 (1991) (S/RES/716). United Nations.
154. United Nations Security Council. (1992, April 10). Resolution 750 (1992) (S/RES/750). United Nations.
155. United Nations Security Council. (1994, July 29). Resolution 939 (1994) (S/RES/939). United Nations.
156. United Nations Security Council. (1998, June 29). Resolution 1179 (1998) (S/RES/1179). United Nations.
157. United Nations Security Council. (1999, June 3). Resolution 1250 (1999) (S/RES/1250). United Nations.
158. United Nations Security Council. (2021, January 29). Resolution 2561 (2021) (S/RES/2561). United Nations.

159. United Nations Security Council. (2023, January 30). Resolution 2674 (2023) (S/RES/2674). United Nations.
160. Vatansever, A. G. M. (2010). Kıbrıs sorununun tarihi gelişimi. Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Hukuk Fakültesi Dergisi.
161. Volkan, V. D. (2008). Killing in the name of identity: A study of bloody conflicts. Pitchstone Publishing.
162. Walter, B. F. (2002). Committing to peace: The successful settlement of civil wars. Princeton University Press.
163. Wendt, A. (1999). Social theory of international politics. Cambridge University Press.
164. Winrow, G. (2020). Energy security and geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean. *Insight Turkey*, 22(2), 113–132.
165. Womack, B. (2016). Asymmetry and international relationships. Cambridge University Press.
166. Yıldırım, A., & Şimşek, H. (2021). Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri (12. bs.). Seçkin Yayıncılık.
167. Yorulmazlar, E., & Çelik, A. B. (2021). Energy geopolitics in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Cyprus issue. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 23(5), 694–711.
168. Zartman, I. W. (1989). Ripe for resolution: Conflict and intervention in Africa. Oxford University Press.