

SYLLABUS

Peace, Conflict and International Politics: Lessons from the Mediterranean Region

SPRING SEMESTER

Instructor: Dr. Thanos Dokos

Description

This course focuses on unfolding events in the regions of the eastern Mediterranean, Southeastern Europe (including Greece and Turkey) and the Black Sea region from the perspective of peace and conflict. During this critical juncture for Europe and the greater region of the Middle East and North Africa our course is also taking another dimension as it will be looking at the geopolitical dimensions of the economic crisis in Europe and the current turmoil in the Middle East.

The course's main concern is conflict analysis (causes and consequences) with an emphasis on conflict prevention, management and resolution. It examines the reasons that contribute to the emergence and endurance of a conflict as well as the implications for regional and international peace and security. Moreover, the course examines different threats and challenges to international security such as terrorism and religious extremism. It also presents the different approaches to conflict analysis in order to canvass the conceptual framework within which to analyze the case studies.

We will also examine and discuss the main trends and drivers that will shape the region in the next 10 years. The focus will be on both existing and new facets of security with the potential to disrupt a linear evolution of the security environment. As there is an obvious linkage with global trends and changes, there will be a brief reference to key global trends and drivers (with an emphasis on the role of emerging powers and of non-state actors, population/demographic dynamics, economy, natural resources and technology) and their potential influence on regional developments.

Assigned readings are designed to reflect alternative points of view permitting constructive synthesis based on a continuing in-class dialogue. Among the conflicts and challenges to be considered are: (1) the crisis in Ukraine and the current state of relations between the West and Russia; (2) migration/refugee flows from Europe's southern neighborhood (3) the challenge of Jihadist terrorism (4) the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the explosive situation in several countries of the Middle East after the failure of the Arab revolts, (5) the Greek-Turkish rivalry and the Cyprus problem (6) the energy sector and its influence on regional international security and (7) the integration of the Western Balkans into the European security architecture and remaining challenges in that region.

Requirements and Grades

- Participation and attendance: 10% (*see note at the end of the syllabus*)

- Mid-term: 10%
- Class presentations: 15%
- Term paper/poster: 30%
- Final Take Home Exam (approximately 2,500 words): 35%

There will also be optional assignments, such as brief oral presentations of articles and debates between students on topical issues. Such assignments will offer additional credit.

Topics for the term paper (3,000 words):

- (1) The emergence of a new international system: main actors, key trends and drivers
- (2) The US role in the 21st century international system
- (3) Mapping international conflict: Where and what type?
- (4) EU: Challenges and prospects
- (5) The crisis in Ukraine: causes and consequences
- (6) The Syrian civil war: causes, main players and possible solutions
- (7) The Islamic State: what kind of entity, how dangerous, can it be somehow accommodated, can it be defeated?
- (8) A final opportunity to resolve the Cyprus problem?
- (9) Arab revolts: causes and consequences
- (10) The mother of all conflicts: how can the Israeli-Palestinian problem be resolved?
- (11) The regional role of Turkey
- (12) The Balkans today: problems and prospects for the future
- (13) U.S. interests in the "Greater Middle East"
- (14) The geopolitics of hydrocarbons in the Eastern Mediterranean
- (15) Is there a new Cold War between Russia and the West?

If two students wish to submit a joint paper, the length should be approximately 5,000 words

Paper due: Last day of classes (they can be submitted in electronic or printed format)

**Week 1 (Jan.30, Feb. 1): (a) *Introduction to the course: Scope and Goals*
(b) Global and regional trends and drivers**

There is increasing agreement among experts and policymakers that the American unipolar moment is already behind us and that the future international political system will be multipolar, with the US as *primus inter pares*, but with China (already the second largest global economy and projected to surpass the US sometime in the next 20 years), India, Japan, the EU and probably a number of regional powers playing an increasing role. In combination with the financial and political crises of the last 2-3 years and of other global challenges, this raises questions of global governance. Ambitious regional powers will cause turbulence and tension in various parts of the world, the Middle East included.

The larger number of poles of power and of active and influential international actors, the increasing number and role of non-state actors [be they agents or spoilers of cooperation] have transformed the global and regional security chessboards into substantially more complex environments. We will discuss a number of key global trends and drivers (with an emphasis on the role of emerging powers and of non-state actors, population/demographic dynamics, economy, natural resources and technology) and their potential influence on regional developments.

Readings:

- Global Strategic Trends- Out to 2045

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/348164/20140821_DCDC_GST_5_Web_Secured.pdf

- Global Trends 2035: Alternative Worlds

<https://www.dni.gov/index.php/global-trends-home>

- [**Global Trends to 2035 - European Parliament**](#)
www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/...

- Eduard Soler i Lecha, Thanos Dokos, Mediterranean 2020: The Future of Mediterranean Security and Politics, GMFUS
(<http://www.gmfus.org/publications/mediterranean-2020-future-mediterranean-security-and-politics>)

Week 2 (Feb. 6, 8):

- (a) [**Global and regional trends and drivers \(continued\);**](#)
- (b) [**Clash of Civilizations; The Democratic Peace Theory**](#)

Readings:

- Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" in Betts, pp. 207-224.
- Bruce Russett, "The Fact of Democratic Peace," in Michael E. Brown et. al., eds., *Debating the Democratic Peace* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 82-115.

Week 3 (Feb.13, 15):

Hot spots and sources of insecurity in Europe's Eastern Neighborhood

The crisis in Ukraine is indeed Europe's most serious post-Cold War security challenge since the Balkan Wars. After the shooting down of Flight MH17 the situation has escalated, efforts to resolve the crisis through diplomatic means have met with very limited success so far and the end result may very well be a new Cold War of unknown duration and consequences between the West and Russia. To better manage the next stages of the crisis, it is important to understand how the situation escalated to this degree.

It will be argued that there are obvious differences on a range of topics and diverging short and medium-term interests between the West (although, of course, there may be differences between the US and Europe or among Europeans on several issues) and Russia. Given, however, the energy [inter]dependence and the [rather] converging long-term geostrategic interests of the EU and [a 'satisfied' and integrated] Russia (for example, managing the challenges of Islamic extremism and of rapidly increasing Chinese power), there are many good reasons to avoid further escalation of the crisis. Of course, accidents and miscalculations constitute an integral part of international politics, as demonstrated by the explosive outbreak of the First World War exactly one hundred years ago.

- ⊕ **Students will briefly present the interests and policies major actors (Ukrainian government, Russia, EU, US, NATO, etc.)**

Readings:

- John Mearsheimer, 'Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault', *Foreign Affairs*, September-October 2014
 - Nicu Popescu, '*First lessons from the Ukrainian crisis*', EU-ISS, October 2014
 - Simon Serfaty, 'Why we need to be patient with Russia', *Europe's World*, Summer 2014 (<http://europesworld.org/2014/06/15/why-we-need-to-be-patient-with-russia/#.VebotCxtlHw>)
 - Thanos Dokos, The Ukraine Crisis: A tale of misperceptions, miscalculations and mismanagement. Is there still time to avoid permanent damage to the European security order?, ELIAMEP THESIS 2014/1 (http://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ELIAMEP-Thesis-1-2014_Th.Dokos_3.pdf)

Week 4 (Feb. 20, 22):

The Eastern Mediterranean conundrum I

The civil war in Syria and regional security

Although some analysts have described the Syrian conflict as a confrontation between Iran-led and pro-Western camps, a different narrative suggests a deepening Sunni-Shia rift in the Middle East, with Syria being the main area of competition, with the Assad regime, Iran and Hezbollah on one side and Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Egypt on the other. Of course, the Sunni-Shia divide is also seen as running through societies, not just across them. Furthermore, one should not downplay the profound divisions and tensions within the Sunni camp (for example the rivalry between Salafi and more moderate Islamist forces or the different agendas and ambitions of the main Sunni states). If there is no diplomatic solution, the Syrian conflict may have profound consequences for the whole region.

Several scenarios are theoretically possible and none of them is attractive: the transformation of Syria into a failed state, its fragmentation, protracted civil war, or a new regime dominated by Islamist forces. The stabilization of the country and the processes of reconstruction and reconciliation will be extremely difficult challenges for the international community.

-  ***Students will briefly present the interests and policies major actors (Assad regime, EU, US, Turkey, ISIS, etc.)***

Week 5 (March 6, 8):

The Eastern Mediterranean conundrum II

The situation in Iraq and the Kurdish question

Four years after the beginning of the Arab revolts, the Mediterranean and the Middle East have changed considerably and the key words describing the regional security environment are fluidity, instability and unpredictability. There has been regime change in several countries (Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya –in the latter case also as a result of a NATO operation), violent suppression of the protests in Bahrain, continuing instability in Yemen and a brutal civil war in Syria.

Current regional instability is the result of a combination of factors: a number of weak, artificial states (most of them created by the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916) crumbling

under strain, the extremely unfortunate choices of major powers still plaguing the region, the lack of a regional security architecture, an evolving global and regional system, poverty and lack of democracy, existing regional conflicts, the ambitious agendas of regional powers, Islam's struggle to find its position in the modern world and the appearance of sectarian tensions, and a serious economic and political crisis in Europe, combined with concerns about the future of the EU and weak leadership in Europe. All those factors combined to form an almost perfect storm in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

The Kurds remain the largest ethnic group without a state. Their total number is estimated at 25 to 30 million, and they live mainly in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Their desire to create an independent Kurdish state has been causing varying degrees of concern to host countries. The Kurds of Northern Iraq have enjoyed wide autonomy for two decades and are unlikely to willingly relinquish it. If circumstances allow in the future they may try to replace de facto with de jure independence. Despite Turkey's clever policy of economic and political engagement of the Kurdish entity in northern Iraq, there is concern that Ankara's inability to resolve its own Kurdish problem may increase the future attractiveness of a Kurdish state for Turkey's own Kurdish population. The same is true, to a lesser extent, for Kurdish populations in Iran and Syria.

The Arab revolts: Causes and consequences

The situation in North Africa: Libya, Egypt and Tunisia

The Arab revolts have already caused an exponential increase in the region's volatility and unpredictability. Considerable uncertainty and fluidity will remain standard features of the region, and several regimes will face substantial challenges for their survival, probably including –in the future- Saudi Arabia and Iran. Short- and longer-term concerns include the nature and stability of new regimes, the consequences for relations between the West and the Arab world (including the impact on oil prices) and implications for transatlantic policies towards the region. The Arab revolts are likely to lead to a far more heterogeneous and fragmented region and possibly to an increasingly polarized Mediterranean.

Revolts –caused as much by the need for greater political participation and the emancipation of the citizens of Arab countries, as by the increase of food prices and growing economic hardship– overthrew or seriously challenged regimes in six countries: Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria. The uprisings also affected the domestic political situation and developments in Morocco, Jordan and some GCC countries. For different reasons in each case, Lebanon, Iraq, Algeria and Palestine have been relatively unaffected by the revolts, although Lebanon's stability may be seriously challenged as a result of the conflict in Syria. One could also situate Arab countries in a continuum. The criterion would be the level of conflict which resulted from the uprisings: violent, political, festering or minimal. In such a continuum Syria would be placed at one end and Algeria on the other.

Week 6 (March 13, 15):

- a. **The rise of the Islamic State, Salafist ideologies and Jihadist terrorism**
- b. **Population movements across the Mediterranean**

By early September 2015, the UN announced that 7 million people had been displaced in Syria from a pre-war population of 22 million, with more than 4 million seeking safety outside Syria. Of those 2.1 million Syrians registered by UNHCR in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, and 1.9 million Syrians registered by the Turkish government. It is possible that the actual numbers, especially in Jordan and Lebanon, may be higher. Although these facts have been known for some time, the sudden increase in the influx of refugees from Syria and other conflict ridden regions (Iraq, Eritrea, Afghanistan, etc.) caught Europe by surprise.

With Greece and Italy as the main gates, most asylum seekers follow the so-called Balkan corridor through FYROM, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary and Austria in an effort to reach Germany and other northern European countries. Countries of first entry, transit and final destination have been trying, rather unsuccessfully, to manage the refugee/migration flows.

The Schengen Agreement, one of Europe's most tangible and widely recognizable achievements, is now faced with considerable, even existential challenges. The limited enthusiasm of several EU states (mainly in Eastern Europe but also in other parts of the continent), with the notable exceptions of Germany and Sweden (although the former already finds itself under tremendous pressure because of the large numbers of asylum seekers), to undertake any meaningful commitments in the context of a burden sharing agreement promoted by the European Commission, is once more testing the concept of a border free Europe, the limits of European solidarity and the idea of common European policies.

Week 7 (March 20, 22):

- a. Mid-term
- b. The regional role of Turkey

Turkey's regional role and international role has been significantly upgraded in the last few years as a result of the country's impressive economic performance and its ambitious multi-directional foreign policy of "zero problems with the neighbours". Professor Ahmed Davutoglu, the "guru" of AKP's foreign policy, frequently refers to Turkey as a "central" power and has been using the country's soft power and the Ottoman cultural heritage as means to extend/increase Turkish influence in the Middle East, the Balkans and beyond. Undoubtedly Ankara has evolved into a more autonomous regional actor, a potentially important energy player (as an energy hub), a willing mediator in various conflicts and an influential power in the Muslim world (and possibly as a model of the co-existence of political Islam and democracy).

Some of the questions debated by foreign policy establishments in various interested countries include whether the AKP government has been gradually transforming Turkey into an Islamic-“lite” country and whether this may cause a strong reaction by Kemalist and other pro-secular forces in Turkish society, whether its regional policies are compatible with transatlantic interests and whether it is drifting away from the West (“who lost Turkey?”). There is also a feeling in some circles that Turkey may at some point fall into the trap of strategic over-extension (i.e. failure to match means and objectives), but this remains to be seen. The majority of policy-makers persist that it is in the best interest of all sides if Turkey remains anchored to Western institutions, but that this may not be an option anymore as far as EU membership is concerned as there is increasing opposition not only in Europe but also in Turkey itself. Key questions for Turkey's future regional role will be the Syrian question, the possible reaction of Egypt and Iran to the attempted expansion of Turkish regional influence, the evolution of its relationship with Israel, the resilience of the “Turkish economic miracle” and the management of the Kurdish issue. Also, the impact of the failed coup d'état of July 14, 2016, will be examined.

Week 8 (March 27, 29):

- a. The Palestinian problem: Current situation, problems, prospects for a solution

Probably accurately labeled the 'mother of all conflicts', it remains, at least symbolically, if not in substance, the most important regional conflict in the Middle East. If not resolved in a

mutually acceptable and viable manner, it will continue to cause tension and suffering in all parties involved, and to be used by radicals in the Muslim world as a justifying cause for their jihad(s). There are three possible scenarios:

- (1) a peace settlement based on the two-state model and the parameters of various plans tabled in the past several years (Camp-David [2000], Taba, Saudi Peace Initiative, Geneva Initiative, etc.) Israel and the Palestinians reach an agreement. A Multinational Force (MNF) is deployed to guarantee the implementation of the agreement. Problems between Israel, Syria and Lebanon are resolved in the context of a Middle East Peace Treaty. This could lead to a large-scale [positive] transformation of the whole region;
- (2) continuation of the *status quo*. A 'slight' deterioration is more likely as time passes by without a peace agreement;
- (3) severe deterioration. Feeling that they have little to lose, the Palestinians decide to escalate the conflict and take their actions to the next level of violence, seeking ways to inflict damage that the Israeli society will find unacceptable and will therefore decide to negotiate along the lines of scenario 1. Scenario 3 may involve radical Middle Eastern governments and non-state actors, acting overtly or covertly against Israel.

Students will briefly present the interests and policies major actors (Israel, Fatah, Hamas, EU, US, Egypt, etc.)

Readings:

- William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), pp. 336-362 and 458-499.
- International Crisis Group, *No Exit? Gaza & Israel Between Wars*, 26 Aug 2015,
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/israel-palestine/162-no-exit-gaza-and-israel-between-wars.aspx>
- The Geneva Initiative, <http://www.geneva-accord.org/>
- The Israel lobby and U.S. foreign policy, John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt,
<http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/IsraelLobby.pdf>

***Documentary: 5 Broken Cameras* by Emad Burnat & Guy Davidi (2011)**

Week 9 (April 10, 12):

The Cyprus problem

For quite some time there have been two main obstacles: (a) Turkey's unwillingness to change its perception of the island's geostrategic importance and the resulting 'need' for direct or indirect control of Cyprus through hard power (interestingly, a view expressed not only by the Kemalist establishment but also by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu in his book "Strategic Depth"); (2) the Greek Cypriots' inability to make a final decision or to state openly what kind of (realistic) solution they wish to have. There seems to be an obvious reluctance to share political and economic power with the Turkish Cypriots. Indeed, to many Greek Cypriots (especially among the younger generation), the status quo looks more appealing than any proposed alternative. The International Crisis Group (ICG), in a report published in the fall of 2009, suggested that "the island may be accelerating a slide toward permanent partition and that some elements in both communities given 36 years of

futility and the wide differences of opinion over each item on the table from property rights to Turkish settlers to governance, may be willing to concede the possibility of a permanently divided island.”

Currently, the most serious obstacle ahead is not whether the involved parties will agree to a settlement. Although far from guaranteed, it is not impossible to achieve. The most difficult part will be to secure that a legitimizing majority will vote in favour of a settlement plan in a referendum. How can we address the concerns and fears of both communities? What would it take to convince undecided citizens on both sides that the status quo is not the best option, that the other side is serious about finding a solution and that an acceptable solution is within grasp, with obvious and tangible benefits for all involved? How could the Turkish government be persuaded to take –in turbulent domestic but also regional times-concrete and constructive steps towards a solution, at the same time shielding itself from domestic criticism (as the nationalist “Cyprus lobby” has not lost all power and influence in Turkey)?

Students will briefly present the interests and policies major actors (Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Turkey, Greece, EU, US, etc.)

Readings:

- Crisis Group Report, Divided Cyprus: Coming to Terms on an Imperfect Reality (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/cyprus/229-divided-cyprus-coming-to-terms-on-an-imperfect-reality.pdf>)
- Philippos Savvides, “Resolving the Cyprus Conflict and Reenergizing Turkey’s EU Accession Process” *The Cost of No EU-Turkey III*, Open Society Foundation (Istanbul: May 2011), pp. 14-19.

Documentary: Sharing an Island by Danae Stylianou (2011)

Week 10 (April 24, 26):

The geopolitics of energy

The global energy landscape is changing, shaped by shifting demand patterns, new deposits and fields entering the production stage, new players, alignments and evolving rules. The energy dimension will remain extremely important in the wider Middle East geopolitical landscape. Caspian resources could provide an important additional long-term source of energy for world markets, although still much less significant than Middle Eastern sources. European oil dependence on the Middle East will continue, thus providing a strong incentive for securing the continuous supply of energy products. Of course, shale gas and oil-related developments in the US and its predicted transformation to an energy exporter (in combination with other developments such as the pivot to Asia and a possible rapprochement with Iran) may have a profound impact on US perceptions and policies vis-à-vis the Middle East.

The discovery of significant natural gas deposits in the exclusive economic zones of Israel and Cyprus and the alleged deposits of the Levant Basin may provide an additional energy source outside the former Soviet space and the Middle East proper and therefore contribute to the diversification of Europe’s natural gas suppliers. Although the deposits discovered so far in Cyprus and Israel are not expected to have a transforming effect on Europe’s energy situation, they can hardly be ignored as long as Europe continues to voice concerns about its

energy security (and especially after the evolving crisis in Ukraine). In any case, the picture may change as there are additional explorations under way in Cyprus, Israel and Greece.

Readings:

Crisis Group Report, Aphrodite's Gift: Can Cypriot Gas Power a New Dialogue? (<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/cyprus/216-aphrodites-gift-can-cypriot-gas-power-a-new-dialogue.pdf>)

Greek-Turkish relations

Greek-Turkish relations remain, of course, at the top of Greek foreign policy agenda. Overall, the two countries are better off today in terms of bilateral relations (including trade and people-to-people contacts) than they were a few years ago [before 1999 to be more precise]. Having said that, neither country has moved from their firm positions regarding 'high politics' issues and Greece and Turkey continue to perceive each other through a Hobbesian prism. Although the majority of Greek policy-makers have been moving away from "zero-sum game" perceptions regarding Greek-Turkish relations, scepticism and distrust continue to linger. For different reasons neither side appears prepared to make any meaningful concessions in order to resolve their differences, and that will remain the case for the immediate future. Both sides should focus on improving economic relations and avoiding conflict on energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean through respect for the relevant provisions of international law. They could also explore ideas for confidence-building measures regarding overflights, violations and dogfights in the Aegean. Such agreements would greatly help in keeping tensions low, thus preparing the ground for an eventual full normalization of bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey.

Readings:

Panayotis J. Tsakonas, *The Incomplete Breakthrough in Greek-Turkish Relations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 31-88.

Week 11 (May 3):

a. **Are the Balkans still the powder keg of Europe?**

Kosovo, FYROM, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Albanian factor

Approximately one hundred years ago the Balkans were, literally, the powder keg of Europe. In the 1990s, the brutal Yugoslav civil wars brought back painful memories and served as a wake-up call for Europeans regarding the security and stability of the continent. Although it is becoming clear that this wake-up call went so far largely unheeded, at least the Balkans are now a relatively more quite neighbourhood and inter-state conflict is rather unlikely. However, there are other security concerns, especially in the Western Balkans. As nicely phrased, 'Over twenty years after Dayton, in most countries and entities in the Western Balkans, the objective of building integrated and cohesive societies in which diversity is considered a strength and a resource to be properly managed is far from being achieved'.

Readings:

Sabina Kajnč Lange, Zoran Nechev, Florian Trauner (eds.), *Resilience in the Western Balkans*, EU Institute for Security Studies, September 2017
(https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Report_36_Resilience%20in%20the%20Western%20Balkans_0.pdf)

Crisis Group Report, Serbia and Kosovo: The Path to Normalization
(<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/balkans/kosovo/223-serbia-and-kosovo-the-path-to-normalisation.pdf>)

Crisis Group Report, Bosnia's Future
(<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/balkans/bosnia-herzegovina/232-bosnia-s-future.pdf>)

Week 12 (May 8, 10):

- a. Are the Balkans still the powder keg of Europe? (continued)
- b. Revision class

Final exam (take home)

***Readings are subject to change given the fluidity of contemporary developments.**

Important Note: CLASS ATTENDANCE and ABSENCE POLICY

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site as essential. Absences are recorded and have consequences. A component of the final grade is the extent of your participation in class discussions. Attendance is taken at each class meeting. Only **one (1)** unexcused absence is allowed. Further absences may result in the lowering of your final grade. In case of illness it is your responsibility to contact me and to make up for missed work (see the general stipulations in the CYA student handbook). If you have to miss a class due to illness, you should notify the Student Affairs Office.