

**MOMENTARY PARTNERS:****THE LIMITATIONS OF THE GREEK-TURKISH DISASTER DIPLOMACY IN 2023**Dr. Nikolaos STELGIAS<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** In February 2023, major earthquakes struck the southern part of Türkiye, while significant tensions in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean dominated the Greek-Turkish relations. A few weeks later, dozens of civilians were killed when a train overturned in Tempe, Greece. Greece was among the first countries to aid Türkiye after the earthquakes and Türkiye reciprocated by expressing its condolences to Greece for the great train accident. Thus, 24 years after the 1999 earthquakes in Greece and Türkiye, which triggered the first wave of disaster diplomacy between the two countries, a new opportunity for dialogue and cooperation emerged in 2023. This paper intends to review two waves of Greek-Turkish disaster diplomacy in 1999 and 2023 with the aim of establishing their correspondence to the theory of disaster diplomacy. It also intends to compare two waves and point out similarities and differences. Moreover, the paper intends to argue that disaster itself does not lead to new diplomatic initiatives. As it is evident in the case of Greek-Turkish relations after the two waves of disaster diplomacy, cooperation can help build trust and goodwill between countries. Nevertheless, if disaster diplomacy does not develop into something more than a tactical diplomatic move and if the countries do not rush to instrumentalize the brief window of opportunity offered by the disasters, then the accumulated problems are expected to overshadow the attempts of building a long-lasting cooperation once again.

**Keywords:** *Türkiye, Greece, Disaster diplomacy, Dialogue, Cooperation.*

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**ANLIK ORTAKLAR:****2023'TE TÜRK-YUNAN FELAKET DİPLOMASİSİNİN SINIRLARI**

**Öz:** Ege ve Doğu Akdeniz'deki önemli gerilimlerin Türk-Yunan ilişkilerine damgasını vurduğu bir dönemde, Şubat 2023'te, Türkiye'nin güneyinde büyük depremler meydana geldi. Büyük depremlerden birkaç hafta sonra, Yunanistan'ın Tempe kentinde bir trenin devrilmesi sonucunda ise onlarca sivil hayatını kaybetti. Yunanistan, depremlerin ardından Türkiye'ye yardım eden ilk ülkeler arasında yer aldı. Türkiye de, büyük tren kazası nedeniyle Yunanistan'a başsağlığı dileyerek Atina'nın jestine karşılık verdi. Böylece, iki ülke arasında ilk afet diplomasisi dalgasını tetikleyen 1999 Yunanistan ve Türkiye depremlerinden 24 yıl sonra, 2023'te yeni bir diyalog ve iş birliği fırsatı ortaya çıkmış oldu. 1999 ve 2023'teki iki farklı Türk-Yunan afet diplomasisi dalgasını incelemeyi amaçlayan bu makale, bu süreçlerin afet diplomasisi teorisine uygunluklarını tespit etmeyi amaçlıyor. Ayrıca, iki dalgayı karşılaştırmayı ve benzerlik ve farklılıklara işaret etmeyi hedefliyor. Dahası, makale, felâketin kendisinin yeni diplomatik girişimlere yol açmadığı tezini desteklemeyi amaçlıyor. İki afet diplomasisi dalgasından sonra Türk-Yunan ilişkilerinde görüldüğü üzere, afet diplomasisi taktiksel bir diplomatik hamleden daha fazlasına dönüşmezse ve ülkeler afetlerin sunduğu kısa fırsat penceresini enstrümantalize etmekte acele etmezlerse, biriken sorunların bir kez daha uzun süreli bir iş birliği kurma girişimlerini gölgelemesi beklenebilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Türkiye, Yunanistan, Afet diplomasisi, Diyalog, İş birliği.*

## Introduction

In May 2022, the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis officially visited the United States (U.S.) and addressed the U.S. Congress. In his speech, Mitsotakis referred to the problems his country faces in its relations with Türkiye: *“I ask you, esteemed members of Congress, not to forget an open wound that has caused Hellenism unending pain over the past 48 years. I am referring to the invasion and subsequent division of Cyprus. This issue must be resolved under international law and in line with the relevant decisions of the United Nations Security Council. The same is true for all other regional disputes. We will not accept open acts of aggression that violate our sovereignty and territorial rights. These include overflights over Greek islands, which must stop immediately.”*<sup>2</sup>

Mitsotakis’ criticism and Greece’s plea to the U.S. to prevent the sale of new military hardware to Türkiye frustrated Ankara. Regarding Mitsotakis’ statements, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, *“We were supposed to have a 'strategic council meeting' this year. For me, Mitsotakis no longer exists as a person. (From now on) I will never agree to meet with him.”*<sup>3</sup>

A few months after these statements, on February 6, 2023, and the period following, strong earthquakes hit southern Türkiye, while significant tensions darkened Greek-Turkish relations in the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean. On February 28, 2023, following the deadly earthquakes in Türkiye, dozens of civilians were killed when a train overturned in Tempe, Greece. Greece was one of the first countries to support Türkiye after the earthquakes. Türkiye reciprocated by offering condolences to Greece for the great tragedy. Thus, the criticisms of the Greek Prime Minister and the Turkish President have been stifled by a new wave of disaster diplomacy in Greek-Turkish relations. Once again, after the first wave of disaster diplomacy triggered by the earthquakes of 1999, Greece and Türkiye put their differences aside and acted as good neighbors to one another.

In this paper, I intend to discuss whether a disaster can cause a long-lasting positive shift in the diplomacy objectives of two opposing countries. To put it simply, could Greece and Türkiye ride the disaster diplomacy wave and work on their accumulated differences? For this, I will

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<sup>2</sup> Office of the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic (2022), “Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis’ Address to the Joint Session of the US Congress”, 17.05.2022, Date of Accession: 15.05.2023 from <https://www.primeminister.gr/en/2022/05/17/29339>.

<sup>3</sup> *Cumhuriyet* (2022), “Erdogan: Artık benim için Miçotakis diye birisi yok”, 24.05.2022, Date of Accession: 15.05.2023 from <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/siyaset/erdogan-artik-benim-icin-micotakis-diye-birisi-yok-1939068>.

first review the existing literature discussing the theory of disaster diplomacy and examine whether the two waves of Greek-Turkish catastrophe diplomacy align with the theoretical framework. Namely, I aim to examine whether key elements of disaster diplomacy such as the pre-existing foundations of diplomatic understanding and dialogue, the willingness of the parties to participate in disaster diplomacy, and the factors that make it possible, are present in the 1999 and 2023 waves of disaster diplomacy. Moreover, the paper aims to compare two waves of disaster diplomacy, locate similarities and differences, and argue that even though disaster alone cannot cause a substantial positive change in the diplomatic relations of quarreling neighbors, it can nevertheless serve as the basis of fruitful dialogue.

### 1. The Theory of Disaster Diplomacy

“*Disaster diplomacy*” is a term used to describe the use of disasters to improve relations between countries.<sup>4</sup> The available literature discussing disaster diplomacy offers a theoretical framework for understanding how disasters can be used to promote cooperation in diplomatic relations. As scholars have argued, a disaster can encourage diplomatic collaboration ties and facilitate the resolution of existing problems. Kelman underlines that “*disaster diplomacy investigates how and why disaster-related activities do and do not influence conflict and cooperation*”.<sup>5</sup> Disaster-related activities in trade, resource management, sports, and culture, as well as domestic and non-domestic politics, can influence diplomacy.<sup>6</sup> Natural disasters, resource shortages, major sporting events, and cultural shifts often have cross-border impacts that affect international relations. A severe drought in one country, for example, can strain shared water resources and escalate tensions with neighboring states. On the other hand, countries coming together to provide disaster relief after events such as tsunamis or earthquakes can bring nations closer together diplomatically. Major sporting events, such as the Olympics or the World Cup, require international cooperation and are sometimes used by host countries to improve their global image and relations. Cultural changes, such as the rise of social media, have allowed for more direct diplomatic communication between citizens,

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<sup>4</sup> Ilan Kelman (2007), “Hurricane Katrina Disaster Diplomacy”, *Disasters*, Vol. 31, no: 3, pp. 288-309; Jean-Christophe Gaillard & Elsa Clavé & Ilan Kelman (2008), “Wave of peace? Tsunami disaster diplomacy in Aceh, Indonesia”, *Geoforum*, Vol. 39, no: 1, pp. 511-526; Ilan Kelman (2012), *Disaster Diplomacy: How Disasters Affect Peace and Conflict*, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 18-52.

<sup>5</sup> Ilan Kelman (2018), “Disaster Diplomacy”, in *The Encyclopedia of Diplomacy*, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, pp. 1-6.

<sup>6</sup> Ilan Kelman (2014), “Does Disaster Diplomacy Improve Inter-State Relations?”, *E-International Relations*, 04.11.2014, Date of Accession: 17.05.2023 from <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/11/04/does-disaster-diplomacy-improve-inter-state-relations/>.

while exposing internal problems to outside scrutiny. Domestic insecurity caused by natural disasters, resource conflicts, or economic conditions can limit or shift a country's foreign policy priorities as leaders prioritize domestic issues first. Finally, while diplomats strive to maintain stable international relations, events driven by nature, resources, domestic politics, sports, culture, and other factors within or outside a country's borders often have a significant impact on diplomatic relations.

In addition, major disasters often provide an opportunity for nations to unite in a common cause. Setting aside differences and prejudices to work together on disaster relief and recovery efforts can help foster international goodwill and understanding. For example, in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, many countries, including the U.S., India, and Japan, worked with Indonesia despite previous grievances or rivalries. The common goal of providing life-saving aid and rebuilding communities in need allowed the diplomacy of these nations to overcome any tensions at the time. More recently, in the shadow of the conflict in Ukraine, relations between Türkiye and its neighbors have thawed somewhat as both countries have provided humanitarian aid and participated in mediation efforts. While geopolitical differences remain, working together in times of crisis has opened the door to dialogue. When people are in need, political leaders often realize that providing disaster relief transcends politics and can even help heal old wounds. Putting aside prejudices to participate in joint rescue, relief, and reconstruction efforts often brings out the best in people and nations. Overcoming disasters together can overcome diplomatic hurdles and foster understanding between adversaries when it matters most, thanks to open communication and successful cooperation.<sup>7</sup>

Scientists' interest in disaster diplomacy peaked after the Second World War.<sup>8</sup> In the mid-1950s came one of the first studies focusing on the U.S.-Mexico cross-border cooperation to deal with natural disasters.<sup>9</sup> *The Rio Grande Flood: A Comparative Study of Border Communities in Disaster*<sup>10</sup> study was the first of its kind. Following in the same vein, 20 years

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<sup>7</sup> Ilan Kelman & Theo Koukis (2000), "Introduction", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 14, no: 1, pp. 214-214.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Fiott (2018), "Humanitarian Diplomacy", in *The Encyclopedia of Diplomacy*, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., pp. 1-10.

<sup>9</sup> Stavros Mavrogenis & Ilan Kelman (2013), "Perceptions of Greece-Türkiye Disaster Diplomacy: Europeanization and the Underdog Culture", *Balkanistica*, Vol. 26, pp. 73-104.

<sup>10</sup> Roy A. Clifford (1956), *The Rio Grande Flood: A Comparative Study of Border Communities in Disaster*, Washington: National Academy of Sciences-National Research Council.

later, Quarantelli and Dynes investigated whether catastrophic disasters resulted in post-disaster community conflict.<sup>11</sup> In 1976, Glantz examined catastrophe politics concurrently and from a global standpoint. His book, based on the Sahelian drought, discusses how disasters affect politics.<sup>12</sup>

Kelman was one of the first scientists to deal thoroughly and multidimensionally with disaster diplomacy in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Kelman and Mavrogenis' study was one of the first analytical studies to use the term disaster diplomacy.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, researchers like Gaillard and Clavé, concentrating mainly on disaster-related activities affecting diplomacy, sought to address how and why disaster-related actions do and do not generate diplomatic advantages.<sup>14</sup> Olson and Gawronski, on their part, authored a study that offers a historical review, primarily from the U.S. viewpoint, of the literature discussing politics and disaster.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Platt detailed how disasters have been dealt with within the context of democracy, again from the U.S. perspective.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, Nel and Righarts summarized existing references indicating a long history of disasters affecting warfare in a larger geographical and international context.<sup>17</sup> Olson and Drury also provided quantitative data from the long history of disaster-conflict studies.<sup>18</sup>

According to the existing literature, there are two schools of thought on disaster diplomacy.<sup>19</sup> Advocates of disaster diplomacy argue that it can foster cooperation and communication between countries. They point to examples such as the U.S. and Cuba working together after Hurricane Sandy or India and Pakistan working together after the 2005 Kashmir earthquake.

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<sup>11</sup> Russell R. Dynes & E. L. Quarantelli (1975), *Community Conflict: Its Absence and Its Presence in Natural Disasters*, University of Delaware Disaster Research Center.

<sup>12</sup> Michael H. Glantz (1976), *The Politics of Natural Disaster: The Case of the Sahel Drought*, Praeger.

<sup>13</sup> Stavros Mavrogenis & Ilan Kelman (2013), "Perceptions of Greece-Türkiye Disaster Diplomacy: Europeanization and the Underdog Culture".

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Christophe Gaillard & Elsa Clavé & Ilan Kelman (2008), "Wave of peace? Tsunami disaster diplomacy in Aceh, Indonesia", pp. 511-526.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Stuart Olson & Vincent T. Gawronski (2010), "From Disaster Event to Political Crisis: A '5C+ A' Framework for Analysis", *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 11, no: 3, pp. 205-221.

<sup>16</sup> Rutherford H. Platt (2012), *Disasters and Democracy: The Politics of Extreme Natural Events*, Island Press.

<sup>17</sup> Philip Nel & Marjolein Righarts (2008), "Natural Disasters and the Risk of Violent Civil Conflict", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 52, no: 1, pp. 159-185.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Stuart Olson & A. Cooper Drury (1997), "Un-Therapeutic Communities: A Cross-National Analysis of Post-Disaster Political Unrest", *International Journal of Mass Emergencies & Disasters*, Vol. 15, no: 2, pp. 221-238; A. Cooper Drury & Richard Stuart Olson (1998), "Disasters and Political Unrest: An Empirical Investigation", *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, Vol. 6, no: 3, pp. 153-161.

<sup>19</sup> Eugene S. Yim et al. (2009), "Disaster Diplomacy: Current Controversies and Future Prospects", *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, Vol. 24, no: 4, pp. 291-293.

On the other hand, critics of disaster diplomacy argue that it politicizes disaster response and contradicts the humanitarian principle of impartiality. They point to examples such as the U.S. using disaster relief to promote its interests in the Philippines after the Typhoon Haiyan. The literature on disaster diplomacy suggests that it can be active and passive. In some cases, countries may deliberately use disaster diplomacy to improve relations. In other cases, disaster diplomacy may occur more passively, as countries cooperate in responding to a disaster without necessarily intending to strengthen ties.<sup>20</sup>

Scholars evaluate the case studies by concentrating on three key elements. These three points will serve as the foundation for our examination of the two waves of Greek-Turkish disaster diplomacy later in our paper. First, the theory of disaster diplomacy argues that to engage in disaster-related activities, there must be a pre-existing basis that could result in the strengthening of diplomatic ties. An interaction framework such as continuing negotiations, official or informal cultural linkages or trade ties, must exist before the disaster in order to facilitate diplomacy immediately after it.<sup>21</sup> On this basis and for a limited period, the disaster opens a window of opportunity for disaster-related activities to influence conflict and cooperation. As Comfort mentions that, “*disaster -or threat of disaster- provides opportunities for enhancing collaboration among states, but the properties and mechanisms for adaptation must either exist or be developed for effective results.*”<sup>22</sup>

Second, the sides must lean on this pre-existing basis to facilitate diplomacy. Kelman underlines that “*disaster diplomacy could emerge if the parties with power decide it should be pursued*”.<sup>23</sup> Disasters can be an opportunity to improve relations between countries, but this is the case only on some occasions. Several factors, such as the lack of interest in improving ties or the focusing on other priorities, can prevent governments from taking advantage of these opportunities.<sup>24</sup>

Third, factors such as geographical proximity, who offers the help, and with what intent may influence disaster diplomacy.<sup>25</sup> In other words, disaster diplomacy can take many shapes, serve

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<sup>20</sup> Ilan Kelman (2012), *Disaster Diplomacy: How Disasters Affect Peace and Conflict*, p. 96.

<sup>21</sup> Ilan Kelman (2014), “Does Disaster Diplomacy Improve Inter-State Relations?”

<sup>22</sup> Louise K. Comfort (2000), “Disaster: Agent of Diplomacy or Change in International Affairs?”, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 14, no: 1, p. 31.

<sup>23</sup> Ilan Kelman (2018), “Disaster Diplomacy”.

<sup>24</sup> Ilan Kelman (2006), “Acting on Disaster Diplomacy”, *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 59, no: 2, pp. 215-240.

<sup>25</sup> Ilan Kelman & Theo Koukis (2000), “Introduction”.

many purposes, and have various results. Factors that add to the success of disaster diplomacy may be the involvement of both governments and non-governmental organizations in the delivery of aid, the efficient and rapid delivery of assistance to the affected people, and the fostering of scientific cooperation. Moreover, particular emphasis should be applied to the fact that the aid offered aims at healing wounds rather than cultivating diplomacy. Also, as Kelman proposes, disaster diplomacy must not be imposed. Aid should be offered spontaneously and with no hint of coercion. Otherwise, the disaster diplomacy attempts may easily collapse. Similarly, if the help offer is later used as a diplomatic weapon, the entire initiative is likely to fail. Furthermore, no matter how successful the disaster diplomacy actions might be, relying solely on them offers little hope for long-term diplomatic solutions. In addition, raising excessive expectations that cannot be met in a fair amount of time is a surefire way to failure. In these situations, disasters frequently exacerbate the tense relationships between opposing parties.

Finally, it is essential to emphasize that disaster diplomacy has a transient impact. It resembles a wave, which the “*surfers*” of diplomacy are asked to ride, and it lasts only a few days to several months. Even when parties strive for disaster diplomacy, it only sometimes works. Sometimes, disaster-related actions have aggravated conflicts or had no effect. The disaster-related steps could also be “*a distraction from more pertinent issues*”.<sup>26</sup> Disaster diplomacy is appealing because it is a quick remedy for resolving conflict. However, as the literature emphasizes, it is naïve to assume that decades or centuries of differences could be suddenly eliminated just because a town was devastated by a tornado or a big earthquake stroke a region.

## **2. The Greek-Turkish Disaster Diplomacy in 1999**

The relationship between Greece and Türkiye has a long history of mistrust and conflict. The territorial dispute over the Aegean Sea and the Cyprus Problem are only two of the persistent disputes between the neighbors. Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the continuous hostility between the two countries climaxed with the “*Imia/Kardak crisis*” standoff in 1996.<sup>27</sup> The severe earthquakes that struck Türkiye on August 17, 1999, and then Greece a few weeks later, on September 7, 1999, brought the two countries together as they rushed to send rescue teams

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<sup>26</sup> Ilan Kelman (2006), “Acting on Disaster Diplomacy”.

<sup>27</sup> Fuat Aksu (2001), “Turkish-Greek Relations: From Conflict to Détente, the Last Decade”, *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, Vol. 6, pp. 167-201.



and provide humanitarian aid to each other. Although short-lived, the Greek-Turkish reconciliation after the 1999 earthquakes marked a crucial turning point in their relationship.

The literature has thoroughly studied the first wave of disaster diplomacy in Greek-Turkish relations. Aydın<sup>28</sup>, Economides<sup>29</sup>, Evin<sup>30</sup>, Gundogdu<sup>31</sup>, Heraclides<sup>32</sup>, Kuşku<sup>33</sup>, Öniş and Yılmaz<sup>34</sup>, Rumelili<sup>35</sup>, and Vathakou<sup>36</sup> are scholars who have analyzed how both Greece and Türkiye moved quickly to help and support one another. Following the 1999 earthquakes, Greece and Türkiye had launched a series of confidence-building measures, including opening more border posts, signing agreements in the fields of culture and education, and establishing a direct communication line. They had also collaborated in trade, tourism, energy, as well as combating organized crime and terrorism. Articles from that period make mention of how the earthquakes pushed the peoples of both countries towards a more heart-felt friendship. As the Greek President told the Turkish relief workers at the time “*Greeks will always remember you with profound feelings of friendship*”.<sup>37</sup> The positive shift in common opinions was accompanied by growing cooperation that included visits from military personnel, the revival of a business cooperation council, journalists publishing each other’s columns in their newspapers, and Greece dropping its opposition to Türkiye’s European Union (EU) membership bid. Moreover, the political leaderships of the two countries continued on the same path of dialogue and cooperation.

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<sup>28</sup> Mustafa Aydın (2004), “Contemporary Turkish-Greek Relations: Constraints and Opportunities”, in (eds. by Mustafa Aydın & Kostas Ifantis) *Turkish-Greek Relations*, Routledge, pp. 41-72.

<sup>29</sup> Spyros Economides (2005), “The Europeanisation of Greek Foreign Policy”, *West European Politics*, Vol. 28, no: 2, pp. 471-491.

<sup>30</sup> Ahmet O. Evin (2005), “The Future of Greek-Turkish Relations”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 5, no: 3, pp. 395-404.

<sup>31</sup> Ayten Gundogdu (2001), “Identities in Question: Greek-Turkish Relations in a Period of Transformation”, *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 5, no: 1, March 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Alexis Heraclides (2002), “Greek-Turkish Relations from Discord to Détente: A Preliminary Evaluation”, *The Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 1, no: 3, pp. 17-32.

<sup>33</sup> Eda Kuşku (2008), “The Shadow of Past Rivalry: Limits of Post-1999 Dynamism in Greco-Turkish Relations”, *Caucasian Review of International Affairs (CRIA)*, Vol. 2, no: 3.

<sup>34</sup> Ziya Öniş & Şuhnaz Yılmaz (2008), “Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: Rhetoric or Reality?”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 123, no: 1, pp. 123-149.

<sup>35</sup> Bahar Rumelili (2003), “Liminality and Perpetuation of Conflicts: Turkish-Greek Relations in the Context of Community-Building by the EU”, *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 9, no: 2, pp. 213-248.

<sup>36</sup> Eugenia Vathakou (2007), “The Emergence of a Greek-Turkish Cooperation System as the Result of a ‘Butterfly Effect’”, *Etudes Helléniques/Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 15, no: 1, pp. 107-132; Eugenia Vathakou (2009), “Greek–Turkish Peace Processes as Autopoietic Systems”, *Türkiye ’s Accession to the European Union: An Unusual Candidacy*, pp. 133-146.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Kinzer (1999), “Earthquakes Help Warm Greek-Turkish Relations”, *The New York Times*, 13.09.1999, Date of Accession: 20.05.2023 from <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/13/world/earthquakes-help-warm-greek-turkish-relations.html>.

As it is obvious from the above, all three main elements necessary for a country to engage in disaster-related actions were present in the first wave of Greek-Turkish disaster diplomacy. First, there was a pre-existing basis for further diplomacy development, second, the parties were determined to invest in disaster diplomacy and third, other important factors were also present. As Aksu mentions, diplomatic dialogue between the two countries in fact began two months before the earthquake.<sup>38</sup> Prior to that, Türkiye was taking early steps toward the EU integration process, whilst the Greek foreign policy was on the Europeanization track. These developments, according to Mavrogenis and Kelman, facilitated the disaster diplomacy.<sup>39</sup> As for the reconciling effect that the deteriorating situation in the Balkans had on Greece's and Türkiye's relations, Ker-Lindsay states that "*although the two countries may have had their respective sympathies for the Serbs and Albanians, they soon realized that the conflict posed a severe security threat to them both.*"<sup>40</sup> In a similar spirit, Aksu emphasizes that the disintegration of Yugoslavia at the end of the Cold War mainly contributed to the collapse of a stable regional environment.<sup>41</sup> As the Cold War ended, Greece and Türkiye felt abandoned by their Western allies and experienced similar isolation.

Furthermore, the political elites of the two countries appeared determined to invest in disaster diplomacy.<sup>42</sup> More particularly, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries (Ismail Cem and George Papandreou), who were the protagonists of the 1999 disaster diplomacy, made the strategic decision to exploit the existing basis for dialogue and cooperation and invest in disaster diplomacy. Also, the Social Democrats who led the two nations in 1999 undoubtedly helped unite the neighbors. Moreover, as Ganapati, Emel, Kelman, and Koukis pointed out, in 1999, both in Ankara and Athens, there was "*a realization and acceptance that neighbors should come to each other's help in times of disaster*".<sup>43</sup>

In addition to the above, other important factors were also present in 1999. Namely, beyond the official governments, the civil societies likewise took part in the disaster diplomacy.

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<sup>38</sup> Fuat Aksu (2001), "Turkish-Greek Relations: From Conflict to Détente, the Last Decade".

<sup>39</sup> Stavros Mavrogenis & Ilan Kelman (2013), "Perceptions of Greece-Türkiye Disaster Diplomacy: Europeanization and the Underdog Culture".

<sup>40</sup> James Ker-Lindsay (2007), *Crisis and Conciliation: A Year of Rapprochement between Greece and Türkiye*, London & New York: I.B. Tauris, p. 40.

<sup>41</sup> Fuat Aksu (2001), "Turkish-Greek Relations: From Conflict to Détente, the Last Decade".

<sup>42</sup> James Ker-Lindsay (2007), *Crisis and Conciliation: A Year of Rapprochement between Greece and Türkiye*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>43</sup> Theodore Koukis & Ilan Kelman & N. Emel Ganapati (2016), "Greece-Türkiye Disaster Diplomacy from Disaster Risk Reduction", *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, Vol. 17, August 2016, pp. 24-32.

Another positive factor was mutuality. When Türkiye supported Greece following the September earthquake, the donor-recipient nature of the aid relationship changed to one of mutual help. This development enabled the “*tit-for-tat*” disaster diplomacy strategy.<sup>44</sup>

Although the 1999 disaster-related activities were crucial to bring two countries closer, nevertheless, the first wave of disaster diplomacy was short-lived. Significant problems in Greek-Turkish relations reignited in the 2000s and especially in the 2010s.<sup>45</sup> Academics support that Greek and Turkish governments had introduced disaster diplomacy into their bilateral relations without clear goals or a new diplomatic agenda. In this vein, key factors, such as establishing informal communication channels and academic involvement in bilateral discussions, were not addressed. The 1999 disaster diplomacy has been criticized for overemphasizing earthquakes as the primary cause for the dialogue and cooperation developed between two neighbors. This understanding needs to be corrected because the dialogue and cooperation predated the earthquakes themselves.<sup>46</sup>

Indeed, the 1999 experience supports Kelman’s view that long-standing disagreements cannot be resolved quickly based solely on societies’ response and cooperation in the face of catastrophic events. Also, Reinhardt and Lutmar stress that disasters and conflicts should be seen as intertwined processes/cycles, not discrete events.<sup>47</sup> Responding to disasters and conflict resolution needs a strategic approach, meaningful dialogue, and the intent of seeking common ground, not just crisis response. Moreover, as the literature shows, the exclusive focus on disaster impacts may ultimately overshadow diplomatic goals. Therefore, while collaborative disaster response can remind rival societies of their shared humanity, lasting relationships require the gradual building of a common understanding through reasonable faith efforts on all sides over a period of time.

### 3. The Second Wave in 2023

During the 2010s, Greece and Türkiye’s relations followed in the same vein of hostility and mistrust. Nevertheless, two neighbors kept the dialogue alive and struggled to establish a solid

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<sup>44</sup> Stavros Mavrogenis & Ilan Kelman (2013), “Perceptions of Greece-Türkiye Disaster Diplomacy: Europeanization and the Underdog Culture”.

<sup>45</sup> Theodore Koukis & Ilan Kelman & N. Emel Ganapati (2016), “Greece-Türkiye Disaster Diplomacy from Disaster Risk Reduction”.

<sup>46</sup> James Ker-Lindsay (2007), *Crisis and Conciliation: A Year of Rapprochement between Greece and Türkiye*, p. 118.

<sup>47</sup> Gina Yannitell Reinhardt & Carmela Lutmar (2022), “Disaster diplomacy: The intricate links between disaster and conflict”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 59, no: 1, pp. 3-11.

and fruitful partnership. Political upheavals, economic recessions, and geopolitical developments characterized this decade and led to deteriorating relations between the two countries.<sup>48</sup>

One of the most persistent quarrels in Greek-Turkish relations which further deteriorated during this period was the territorial dispute over the Aegean Sea.<sup>49</sup> Specifically, according to the “*Mavi Vatan*” (Blue Homeland) doctrine, Greek islands too close to the Turkish coast should not be granted an exclusive economic zone. The Greeks on the other hand have serious doubts about this doctrine. Tensions have also risen over energy development and the discovery of gas reserves in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>50</sup> Conflicting claims and unilateral drilling initiatives were followed by Türkiye’s decision to send drilling vessels to the Eastern Mediterranean. The refugee crisis<sup>51</sup>, the confrontation between the Turkish and Greek navies, and Greece’s failure to extradite Turkish coup plotters who fled to Greece in 2016<sup>52</sup>, all contributed to the worsening of relations between the two neighbors. Also, the Crans-Montana Summit in 2017 failed to find a solution due to disagreements over the details of the federal formula, leaving the Cyprus issue unresolved.

The 2017 Crans-Montana Summit was touted as a historic opportunity to finally resolve the Cyprus Problem or the Cyprus Dispute after decades of conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. However, after 10 days of intense negotiations, the talks failed to produce a result. A number of factors contributed to this failure. A major sticking point was disagreement over security guarantees: Türkiye wanted to keep a military presence on the island to protect Northern Cyprus, while Greece wanted Turkish troops to leave completely. There were also territorial disagreements, with the two sides unable to agree on how much land would be returned to Greek Cypriot control following reunification. Another contentious issue was power sharing, with disagreements persisting over governance and the rotation of the presidency between a Greek and a Turkish leader. While both parties appeared willing to

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<sup>48</sup> Ioannis N. Grigoriadis (2022), “Between Escalation and Détente: Greek-Turkish Relations in the Aftermath of the Eastern Mediterranean Crisis”, *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 23, no: 5, pp. 802-820.

<sup>49</sup> Andreas Stergiou (2022), *The Greek-Turkish Maritime Dispute: Resisting the Future*, Springer Nature.

<sup>50</sup> Ioannis N. Grigoriadis (2020), “The Eastern Mediterranean as an Emerging Crisis Zone: Greece and Cyprus in a Volatile Regional Environment”, *Eastern Mediterranean in Uncharted Waters: Perspectives on Emerging Geopolitical Realities*, 02.12.2020, pp. 25-30.

<sup>51</sup> Dionysios Stivas (2023), “Greece’s Response to the European Refugee Crisis: A Tale of Two Securitized”, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 28, no: 1, pp. 49-72.

<sup>52</sup> Adamantia Rachovitsa (2016), “On the Sidelines of the Failed Coup d’État in Türkiye: Can Greece Extradite the Eight Turkish Military Officers to Türkiye”, *European Human Rights Law Review*, Vol. 6, pp. 645-655.

continue negotiating, they were unable to reach an agreement on their core demands. The summit in Crans-Montana was the latest in a long line of diplomatic failures to unite Cyprus under a power-sharing federation. Negotiations remain stalled in the absence of compromise on issues such as security, territory, and governance. After the summit's failure, the negotiation process in Cyprus remained in deadlock. In addition to the above, Turkish Foreign Policy underwent a significant transformation in the 2010s<sup>53</sup>, with Ankara concentrating on expanding its influence in the countries situated on the former territories of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>54</sup> This led to a militarization of Turkish Foreign Policy<sup>55</sup>, focusing on the Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East, and Africa.<sup>56</sup> In contrast, Greece moved towards closer relations with the West and its allies in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>57</sup>

Despite their disagreements on various issues and different approaches in the field of foreign policy, in early 2023, two neighbors put aside their differences. At the heart of this development were the 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye and the train crash in Greece that claimed the lives of thousands of people. Despite the varying size and scope of the disasters that struck the two countries, the tragedies of February 2023 reopened the way for disaster diplomacy. The political actors leading the disaster diplomacy between Greece and Türkiye in 2023 were the same political figures who bore a sizeable share of responsibility for the rising tension in Greek-Turkish relations in the previous period. Nevertheless, immediately after the first earthquake, Türkiye's President, and Greece's Prime Minister, along with their Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Defense restarted the dialogue.<sup>58</sup>

Greece was among the first countries to assist Türkiye after the devastating earthquakes in February 2023. Soon after the first earthquake, the Greek government offered to send search and rescue teams, medical personnel, and supplies. A Greek rescue team arrived in Türkiye on

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<sup>53</sup> Ayşe Ömür Atmaca & Zerrin Torun (2022), "Geopolitical Visions in Turkish Foreign Policy", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 24, no: 1, pp. 114-137.

<sup>54</sup> Knud Erik Jørgensen (2023), "Diverging or Converging? European and Turkish Foreign Policy", in (eds. by Siret Hürsoy) *Turkey's Quest for the EU Membership Towards 2023*, Ege University Press, pp. 95-114.

<sup>55</sup> Hakan Mehmetcik & Arda Can Çelik (2022), "The Militarization of Turkish Foreign Policy", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 24, no: 1, pp. 24-41.

<sup>56</sup> Knud Erik Jørgensen (2023), "Diverging or Converging? European and Turkish Foreign Policy".

<sup>57</sup> Charalambos Tsardanidis (2019), "Greece's Changing Role in the Eastern Mediterranean", in *The New Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: Trilateral Partnerships and Regional Security*, Re-imagining the Eastern Mediterranean Series: PCC Report: 3, Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre.

<sup>58</sup> Ezgi Akin (2023), "Turkey and Greece maintain post-disaster diplomacy after train crash", *Al-Monitor*, 01.03.2023, Date of Accession: 17.05.2023 from <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/03/turkey-and-greece-maintain-post-disaster-diplomacy-after-train-crash>.

February 7, and they were joined by additional Greek personnel in the days that followed. The Greek government provided financial assistance to Türkiye and worked with the Turkish government to coordinate relief efforts.<sup>59</sup> A campaign to supply Türkiye’s citizens with necessities and offer support also began at the same time in Greece and Cyprus by grassroots groups.<sup>60</sup> The Greek Foreign Minister hurried to southeast Türkiye and toured the earthquake-devastated Turkish cities with his Turkish counterpart, demonstrating his country’s willingness to put aside political differences in the face of humanitarian need.<sup>61</sup> Responding to his Greek counterpart’s statement, the Turkish Foreign Minister referred to the first wave of 1999 disaster diplomacy and added that, “*We do not need to wait for another earthquake or disaster to improve our relations. We will try to resolve our differences sincerely through dialogue.*”<sup>62</sup> Just weeks after this remark, Greece was too struck by tragedy, a head-on train collision in the Tempe region on February 28, 2023. The deadliest crash in Greek history claimed at least 57 lives. Türkiye was one of the first countries to offer its condolences and support, sending a team of experts to help with the rescue and recovery efforts.<sup>63</sup>

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes and train crash in 2023, Greece and Türkiye made several positive moves toward normalizing their relations. The two countries supported each other’s candidacies for international organizations<sup>64</sup> and Türkiye congratulated Greece on

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<sup>59</sup> *In.gr* (2023), “Σεισμός Τουρκία: Οι 21 πυροσβέστες της ΕΜΑΚ που μεταβαίνουν στην Τουρκία για βοήθεια [Earthquake Türkiye: The 21 firefighters of the ΕΜΑΚ going to Türkiye to help]”, 06.02.2023, Date of Accession: 20.05.2023 from <https://www.in.gr/2023/02/06/greece/seismos-tourkia-oi-21-pyrovvestes-tis-emak-pou-metavainoun-stin-tourkia-gia-voitheia/>.

<sup>60</sup> The Press Project (2023), “Συλλογή ειδών πρώτης ανάγκης για τους σεισμόπληκτους σε Τουρκία και Συρία [Collection of essentials for the earthquake victims in Türkiye and Syria]”, 07.02.2023, Date of Accession: 21.05.2023 from <https://thepressproject.gr/syllogi-eidon-protis-anagkis-gia-tous-seismopliktous-se-tourkia-kai-syria-deite-pos-boreite-na-voithisete/>.

<sup>61</sup> *Naftemporiki* (2023), “Δηλώσεις Δένδια-Τσαβούσογλου: «Να μην περιμένουμε ένα σεισμό για να βελτιώσουμε τις σχέσεις μας» [Dendias-Cavusoglu statements: ‘We should not wait for an earthquake to improve our relations’]”, 12.02.2023, Date of Accession: 22.05.2023 from <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/politics/1438383/tsavoysogloy-oi-scheseis-kalis-geitonias-fainontai-se-tetoies-dyskoles-meres/>.

<sup>62</sup> *Posta* (2023), “Çavuşoğlu ve Dendias Hatay’da: ‘İlişkileri düzeltmek için bir depreme daha ihtiyaç yok ’ [Cavusoglu and Dendias in Hatay: ‘We don’t need another earthquake to restore relations’]”, 12.02.2023, Date of Accession: 21.05.2023 from <https://www.posta.com.tr/gundem/cavusoglu-ve-dendias-hatayda-2609700>.

<sup>63</sup> *TRT Haber* (2023), “Türkiye’den Yunanistan’daki tren kazasında ölenler için taziye mesajı [Condolences from Türkiye for the victims of the train crash in Greece]”, 01.03.2023, Date of Accession: 22.05.2023 from <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/dunya/Turkiyeden-yunanistandaki-tren-kazasinda-olenler-icin-taziye-mesaji-749772.html>.

<sup>64</sup> *Naftemporiki* (2023), “Η Άγκυρα ψηφίζει την Ελλάδα για το Συμβούλιο Ασφαλείας του ΟΗΕ [Ankara votes for Greece for the UN Security Council]”, 20.03.2023, Date of Accession: 22.05.2023 from <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/politics/1452259/i-agkyra-psifizei-tin-ellada-gia-to-symvoylio-asfaleias-toy-oie/>.

the anniversary of its independence.<sup>65</sup> Meetings between the two countries' envoys became more frequent and there were reports that they were considering various measures to improve relations. Additionally, the spirit of goodwill spilled over to the Greek and Turkish societies. This was widely reflected in both traditional media and social media which were flooded by positive coverage and messages of sympathy. Also, a widespread sense of solidarity between the neighboring peoples and the development of a more positive view for one another, was noted in the aftermath of the catastrophes.

To sum up, the 2023 wave of disaster diplomacy between Greece and Türkiye had all the necessary ingredients to successfully use disaster-related activities for diplomatic purposes. First, two countries already had a solid foundation for diplomacy and engagement. While tensions had existed in the past, leaders on both sides had recently become more open to dialogue and greater cooperation. This meant that they were able to capitalize on newly formed diplomatic ties when disaster struck. Second, political elites in both countries were eager to invest political capital in substantive disaster diplomacy. Rather than simply sending symbolic aid, leaders saw joint relief efforts as an opportunity to foster deeper partnerships. They devoted significant resources and attention to coordinated planning and implementation of aid distribution, infrastructure reconstruction, and long-term reconstruction projects. Third, civil societies in both countries actively participated in disaster-related activities, ranging from fundraising to volunteering in disaster-affected areas abroad. This civic engagement gave the diplomatic outreach a sense of authenticity, rather than appearing to be a government publicity stunt. The post-disaster activities had all the necessary elements to produce a significant improvement in diplomatic relations between the two nations: the foundations for diplomacy were already in place, the political will to focus on joint disaster relief, and the genuine participation of civil society.

#### **4. The Parallels of the Two Waves of Greek-Turkish Disaster Diplomacy**

Although the disasters that struck Greece and Türkiye in February 2023 were not comparable in size or magnitude, their effects on Greek-Turkish relations were notable. As in 1999, so in 2023, the solidarity of the two neighboring countries paved the way for the reactivation of diplomatic dialogue. Disaster diplomacy's first and second waves in Greek-Turkish relations

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<sup>65</sup> *Naftemporiki* (2023), "Τσαβούσογλου: Ευχετήρια επιστολή στον Ν. Δένδια για την 25η Μαρτίου [Cavusoglu: Congratulatory letter to N. Dendias on March 25]", 25.03.2023, Date of Accession: 23.05.2023 from <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/politics/1454245/tsavoysogloy-eychetiria-epistoli-ston-n-dendia-gia-tin-25i-martioy/>.

have several parallels. One of the most noteworthy is that significant geopolitical changes contributed to both waves. In 1999, the collapse of the communist bloc and Yugoslavia changed the security environment in the region and caused Türkiye and Greece to search for synergies in diplomacy, such as strengthening relations between them and with Western allies. In this vein, when the catastrophes stroke, both countries were ready to improve their relations. Similarly, in 2022, the Ukrainian crisis affected the regional balances.

Although Erdoğan's administration refrained from penalizing Moscow or blockading its airspace, the divergence between Turkish and Russian national interests—which were already strained because of recent conflicts in Syria, Libya, and the Nagorno-Karabakh region—increased due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Above all, the invasion of Ukraine was and continues to be severely detrimental to the Turkish economy.<sup>66</sup> The Ukrainian crisis has also had an impact on Greek foreign policy. Marghélis notes that Greece was one of the first countries to deliver weapons to Ukraine and that it has used particularly harsh language towards Moscow. This deviation from Greece's traditional stance of adhering to EU and NATO policies while maintaining working relations with Russia suggests that Greece is seeking to take advantage of the situation in Ukraine to strengthen its position in the emerging regional security structure.<sup>67</sup>

Moreover, the war in Ukraine has increased uncertainty in the global energy market and sped up Western efforts to find alternative energy sources.<sup>68</sup> With the discovery of significant natural gas and oil reserves in recent years, the Eastern Mediterranean has emerged as a potential new energy source for Europe. While political disputes over maritime borders and drilling rights have slowed development, the region holds great promise as an energy producer. The option of transporting natural gas from the Eastern Mediterranean to Europe via Türkiye remains viable in mid-2023. For this route to be successful, cooperation between historical rivals is needed. Cyprus, Greece, Israel, and Egypt have all lobbied for the proposed EastMed pipeline to bypass Türkiye and go directly to Greece. A pipeline through Türkiye, where infrastructure already exists, may be more cost effective. If political relations improve, an agreement could be reached for Mediterranean gas to reach Europe via this transit route.

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<sup>66</sup> Lionel Segantini (2022), "Engaging Türkiye In The Eastern Mediterranean During A Time of Crisis", *MEInsights*, Vol. 13, no: 3, pp. 1-4.

<sup>67</sup> Aris Marghélis (2022), "War in Ukraine: what are the stakes for Greece?", Fondation Méditerranéenne d'Études Stratégiques, 21.07.2022, Date of Accession: 25.05.2023 from <https://fmes-france.org/war-in-ukraine-what-are-the-stakes-for-greece/>.

<sup>68</sup> Elena Schislyaeva et al. (2022), "The EU - Russia - Türkiye Energy Triangle: Legal and Economic Conditions of Gas Transportation via the TurkStream Pipeline", *Transportation Research Procedia*, Vol. 63, pp. 1984-1990.



Türkiye would benefit from transit fees. Gas exports could also help ease tensions over disputed drilling rights. Regardless of past animosities, the parties may decide that mutually beneficial energy cooperation serves their long-term interests. As Europe seeks to reduce its energy dependence on Russia, the Eastern Mediterranean's ability to provide a stable supply could encourage diplomatic solutions. Developing the region's gas reserves would contribute to Europe's energy security while improving the region's economic prospects.

The Greek-Turkish dialogue in early 2023 was also motivated by the Greek financial crisis and the Turkish economic unrest. In the decade of 2010, the Greek financial crisis led to a loss of confidence in the Greek economy while by 2017, a severe economic crisis also hit neighboring Türkiye. Within this framework, both countries were motivated to prioritize dialogue over costly tensions to create peaceful conditions for upcoming elections.

Another important parallel is that the 2023 wave of disaster diplomacy in Greek-Turkish relations was built on the same foundation as the first wave in 1999. In both cases, the two countries political leaders made a strategic decision to cooperate in the aftermath of the disasters. For instance, in 2023, the personalities of the Turkish President and Foreign Minister, as well as those of the Greek Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, undoubtedly played a significant role in this development. All four political figures were deeply involved in the peak of tension in Greek-Turkish relations before the significant disasters. However, they also strove to build bilateral contacts during the previous era. For example, in 2004, despite opposition at home, the President of Türkiye supported the reunification of Cyprus. In addition, the Greek Prime Minister's party backed Türkiye's European aspirations. Personal relationships and the shared experience of working together to respond to disasters helped create a foundation of trust and cooperation that was essential for the success of the second wave of disaster diplomacy.

Furthermore, the 2023 and 1999 waves of Greek-Turkish disaster diplomacy, are a constructive example of how proximity, government intervention, civil society involvement, and mutuality were all crucial factors in turning the calamity into a catalyst for positive dialogue on both sides of the Aegean. For instance, in 2023 the proximity factor made it easy for Greek rescuers to be among the first international responders to arrive in Türkiye's earthquake-affected regions. The Greek government played a crucial role in coordinating this effort, and Turkish officials quickly reciprocated with their support after the significant train accident in Tempe. This cooperation was broader than the governmental level. Ordinary people from Greece and Cyprus also actively participated in the aid effort by organizing campaigns to bring supplies to

Türkiye. The second wave of Greek-Turkish disaster diplomacy was a shining example of mutuality. Türkiye reciprocated Greek assistance by offering support and solidarity for the Greek people after the deadly train accident in Tempe.

### **Conclusion: A Short Wave for Athens and Türkiye to Seize**

On May 8, 2023, only a few days before the presidential and parliamentary elections in Türkiye, the Turkish Foreign Minister whilst referring to the improving climate in Greek-Turkish relations after the major earthquakes in his country and the train accident in Greece noted that: “[Greece] may want to maintain the positive atmosphere, but unless we solve the problems that have been going on for years, it is impossible for this positive atmosphere to last.”<sup>69</sup> The Greek Prime Minister’s speech, which came a few days after the one made by the Turkish diplomat, gave little cause for optimism for the immediate resolution of the significant issues in Greek-Turkish relations: “I hope the new Turkish government will reconsider how it deals with the entire West, not just Greece, Europe, NATO, and the US. We will continue to have a clear foreign policy because I must be pragmatic. This means we will continue strengthening our deterrent and defensive capabilities. I wish I didn't have to spend much over 2 % of my GDP on defense. But unfortunately, we are in a dangerous neighborhood where a country considerably larger than ours is acting violently. That's unfortunate. We don't have to wait for a catastrophe. But creating an environment of trust and goodwill is challenging when the Turkish government constantly warns that it will invade our islands.”<sup>70</sup> Similarly, the Greek Prime Minister criticized Ankara when developments on another open front, the Cyprus problem, were unfavorable. During this period, the Cyprus issue remained at a standstill, with the parties involved sticking to their positions.

Although it has not been long since the great catastrophes in Türkiye and Greece, the new wave of disaster diplomacy lends validity to the phenomenon’s theoretical underpinnings. The exchange of accusations, despite the warm mood that reigned following the 2023 tragedies, indicates that the new wave of disaster diplomacy in Greek-Turkish relations is no exception. The Greek-Turkish case study shows that the effects of disaster diplomacy are ephemeral. The

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<sup>69</sup> *Yeni Şafak* (2023), “Bakan Çavuşoğlu Yunanistan’ın ikili ilişkileri pozitif yönde devam ettirmek istediğini belirtti: Sorunları çözmeden mümkün değil”, 05.05.2023, Date of Accession 25.05.2023 from <https://www.yenisafak.com/secim/bakan-cavusoglu-yunanistanin-ikili-iliskileri-pozitif-yonde-devam-ettirmek-istedigini-belirtti-sorunlari-cozmeden-mumkun-degil-4528928>.

<sup>70</sup> *Naftemporiki* (2023), “Κ. Μητσοτάκης: Θα τείνω χείρα φιλίας στον νέο ηγέτη της Τουρκίας, αλλά δεν είμαι αφελής [Mr Mitsotakis: I will extend a hand of friendship to Türkiye’s new leader, but I am not naive]”, 12.05.2023, Date of Accession: 28.05.2023 from <https://www.naftemporiki.gr/politics/1470477/k-mitsotakis-tha-teino-cheira-filias-ston-neo-igeti-tis-toyrkias-alla-den-eimai-afelis/>.

latest disaster diplomacy sparked the dialogue, as in the case of the first wave. However, this approach only had a temporary impact. Just a few weeks after the initial cooperation, the main issues in Greek-Turkish relations were again at the forefront. Similarly, the activation of the unofficial communication channels and the disaster risk response and management measures were soon dropped.

This paper argues that after a devastating event, disaster diplomacy proposes cooperation between adversarial nations aiming at improving relations. However, long-standing disagreements and conflicts cannot be quickly resolved solely through collaborative disaster response. While catastrophes may temporarily shift priorities and encourage goodwill gestures, underlying animosity remains. Disasters may momentarily change people's priorities and inspire charitable deeds, but does not necessarily inspire new diplomatic engagement.

To break from the previous aggressive diplomatic pattern, long-term diplomacy requires that fundamental issues be settled through deep deliberation and creative solutions, not tactical diplomatic maneuvers. Years of opposing interests, priorities, and beliefs led to tensions between Greece and Türkiye. Even though helping one another following recent earthquakes and accidents was an example of constructive cooperation, this cannot erase the persistent differences plaguing the two countries' relationship. Lasting diplomacy requires addressing fundamental differences through extended negotiations and new strategies. The tensions between Greece and Türkiye developed over decades due to conflicting interests, values, and priorities too complex to solve only via disaster-related acts. Furthermore, as seen in Greek-Turkish relations in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, concentrating solely on disaster repercussions may overshadow diplomatic objectives.

After a major disaster, countries often have a brief window of opportunity to improve their relations. This is because disasters can create a sense of common purpose and cooperation. However, this window of opportunity is often fleeting, and therefore countries need to rush to instrumentalize it. One way to do this is to use the compartmentalization method. This involves breaking down more significant problems into smaller, more manageable ones. By focusing on specific issues, countries can progress without getting bogged down in more critical, more intractable problems. For example, scientists from two countries at odds over a territorial dispute could collaborate on research to mitigate the effects of a disaster or prevent future tragedies. The parties involved can progress on specific problems by using the compartmentalization method. This can help improve countries' relations and lay the foundation for lasting peace.

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